



HENRY A. HUNT  
Sixteenth Spingarn Medalist  
Fort Valley, Ga.

## Henry A. Hunt, Sixteenth Spingarn Medalist

By FRANK HORNE

"This is the porcelain clay of humankind"—Dryden.

BECAUSE of Henry Hunt, principal of the Fort Valley High and Industrial School, Fort Valley, Georgia, the gleam of civilization has caught another spark in the dark hinterlands of the Black Belt of Georgia. Born in the year 1866, on "Hunt Hill" in Hancock County, Georgia, one of a family of eight,—4 boys and 4 girls—he attended the public schools of Sparta, until at 16 he entered Atlanta University. In order to carry on his education, he worked as a journeyman carpenter during the summers, building school-houses in Alabama. While at the famous University, he lit his torch at the white flame of the devotion of Asa Ware and those first missionary teachers from the North who gave so unstintingly of themselves for the education of Negro youth.

Inspired by their slogan,—“to find a way or make one”—when he graduated from the University, he went to work in North Carolina at Johnson C. Smith University, then known as Biddle. His work there among the boys and young men for thirteen and a half years, early established his reputation for honesty, truthfulness and industry. While in North Carolina he married Florence S. Johnson, sister of E. A. Johnson, former Assemblyman of New York. This partnership of two devoted people of ideals and energy, now perpetuated in three children and four grand-children, was to conquer the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of pioneers and achieve the crown of success and national recognition. Hand in hand, they worked at Biddle; there Mr. Hunt organized the first Farmers' Conference held in the state of North Carolina; again hand in hand, in answer to the urgings of George Foster Peabody, Wallace Buttrick and Mrs. Warren Logan, they came to Fort Valley 26 years ago.

They descended into a barren wilderness; as principal, Mr. Hunt inherited one building already established by John W. Davison, a schoolmate at Atlanta University; he inherited a treeless, grassless, pebble-infected stretch of land for a campus; unfriendly and suspicious whites; ignorant, sodden, disinterested blacks. Si-

- The Spingarn Medalists*
1. Ernest E. Just, *Biologist*, 1915
  2. Charles Young, *Soldier*, 1915
  3. Harry T. Burleigh, *Composer*, 1917
  4. William S. Braithwaite, *Poet*, 1918
  5. Archibald H. Grimké, *Statesman*, 1919
  6. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Pan-African*, 1920
  7. Charles S. Gilpin, *Actor*, 1921
  8. Mary B. Talbert, *Social Worker*, 1922
  9. George W. Carver, *Chemist*, 1923
  10. Roland Hayes, *Singer*, 1924
  11. James Weldon Johnson, *Author*, 1925
  12. Carter G. Woodson, *Historian*, 1926
  13. Anthony Overton, *Business Man*, 1927
  14. Charles W. Chesnutt, *Author*, 1928
  15. Mordecai W. Johnson, *Educator*, 1929
  16. Henry A. Hunt, *Educator*, 1930

lently, heroically, devotedly, he went to work; a quarter century has rolled by. Fort Valley has become one of the best cultural and industrial schools of Georgia, with a beautiful, tree-shaded campus, 12 modern brick buildings, 91 acres of land, a plant worth \$450,000, a student body of 700, 45 teachers and workers, a friendly, respectful community of whites, an upright, self-respecting, voting community of blacks.

Not only has his influence spread through the many graduates who bear indelibly the impress of his school and his character—the stamp of culture, of accuracy, of thoroughness, of genuineness—but also by means of the extension workers who have made Fort Valley a true community school. Starting with the assistance of James H. Torbert, soon lost in a runaway accident, Mr. Hunt instituted farm and home demonstration agents, community nurse and Jeanes County school supervisor. His farmers' conferences preached better homes, better food, better farming, better schools,—

“own your home”—“own your farm”; the school nurse carried the light of health into the countryside; community classes were organized in chicken and hog raising, home nursing and hygiene, cooking, canning and preserving foods, gardening, marketing and citizenship. The school has become the hub of a gigantic wheel, radiating its influence into a vast community of 300,000 Negroes.

Mr. Hunt has stood up so bravely and continuously for justice that not only has he gained the respect and the good will of the entire community, black and white, but Negroes, at first afraid to register, have gained with their organized votes a complete 9 room training school building and effected the administrative division of Peach and Houston counties.

Henry Hunt, as founder of the Georgia Teachers and Educational Association, has organized teachers, professional men, preachers, business men, to send delegates to the state, county and city boards, continually asking for better school conditions; he has made the Negro in Georgia articulate in his demands for education.

There have been institutions that have been built at the terrible expense of racial, “hat in hand”, humiliation and sycophancy; but Henry Hunt, upright, fearless, straight-forward, has built his institution upon the bed-rock of his life—a clear-eyed self-respect, and unbounded devotion to the principles of truth and justice. He has had at Fort Valley three objectives—the building of a school plant with adequate buildings, equipment and working force; a course of study to meet the needs of the community; and the assurance of the continued existence of the school.

He is an active member of the N. A. A. C. P.; was a member of the Pan-African Congress, 1919; and has been twice delegate to the Republican National Convention. As his name joins the nationally acclaimed, we pay tribute to the quiet, heroic, self-effacing service of 25 years of a noble life, devoted to a burning desire for Negroes to get an education, advancing the vanguard of civilization on a front where the resistance has been most bitter, the battle most fierce, and the victory most glorious! Henry A. Hunt, 16th Spingarn Medalist, Civilizer of a Race!