



# Christopher Mitchell Sunter

## 1878 – 1934

There were four Sunter families in Elie and Earlsferry. The Sunters that lived in Durham Cottage Earlsferry High Street the home of James Maclean Sunter (q.v.); next door to them was Elizabeth Sunter in 1901 census aged 73 and her son David Sunter a mason, and moving to Liberty there were again two Sunter families in the 1901 census, Christopher Sunter Snr. aged 56 described as a builder (mason) and two doors down James Sunter, also a builder/mason. Our particular concern is with Christopher Sunter's family.

Christopher Snr, was born in 1845 and he married Robina Thomson Sunter, one year his junior. They had seven children - Amy, David, Christopher (Jnr), George, Andrew, William and Jane. We are particularly interested in Christopher Jnr who was born on 13 March 1878 and lived at Bassview and we think later became No 1 Liberty. In the 1901 Census he is designed as a mason's apprentice - obviously planning to follow the family tradition.

The work for masons was flagging and a few of Earlsferry's golfers had already made the journey across the Atlantic and on this occasion we think that Christopher Jnr having done some sort of golf club making apprenticeship (his cousin Andrew had been apprentice to Scott) decided or was solicited by the senior (John/Jack) Mackie boy on one of his early return visits to Earlsferry in 1906 from USA, where he had gone to seek his luck. It is not within the bounds of likelihood that Mackie tempted the younger Sunter with the prospects of being employed by Mackie himself. The ship's list of passengers for the 1906 crossing on SS Caledonia to New York in February showed traveller John (Jack) Mackie and his wife and right next to him on the manifest is Chris Sunter who is designed as a mason but whose address in USA is shown as being that of Jack Mackie's in Roseville.

His declaration of Intention, as shown on the right, is clear. He was throwing in his lot with the growth of the game in USA. His fiancée, shortly to become his wife, (she was born in Scoonie) arrived in New York and they were married in 21 August 1907 in Manhattan. They had their first and only child Isabell in 1908 and they are shown in the 1910 census as still living in the Bronx, but he is shown as being a bricklayer so he obviously did not immediately find employment as a golf professional. However another significant entry in the census of 1910 is that his brother Andrew B (q.v.) was living with him and was designed as a labourer.

**DECLARATION OF INTENTION**  
(Should be filled out seven years after the date hereof)

I, Christopher Sunter, of the State of New York, in the 13th Circuit Court of Southampton County of New York, do declare on oath that my personal description is: Color white, complexion fair, height 5 feet 8 1/2 inches, weight 160 pounds, color of hair gray, color of eyes gray, other visible distinctive marks None.

I was born in Elie, Scotland, on the 13th day of March, anno Domini 1878, now reside at 431 C. St. Street, City of New York. I emigrated to the United States of America from Scotland, Scotland on the vessel Caledonia; my last foreign residence was Elie, Scotland.

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to Edward VII, King of Great Britain and Ireland, of which I am now a subject. I arrived at the port of New York, New York, in the State of New York, on or about the 30 day of March, anno Domini 1906. I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein.

Christopher Sunter  
(Original Signature of Intendant)

The 1925 census shows him and his wife and daughter living at 120 Briggs Avenue, Yonkers but this census does not show his occupation but we know that when he registered for the 1914/18 war draft he was said to be in "sporting goods". And certainly by 1920 he was a golf instructor. Living in 120 Briggs Avenue Yonkers he would have been near Dunwoodie Golf Course. This was one of the pioneering golf courses of this area. The nearby St Andrews Golf Club is reckoned to be oldest formal club in USA but *"Dunwoodie Golf Course, is actually the [nearly] oldest, having been established in 1906 as a private club that claimed Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. as members."*

This according to the history of Westchester Golf in NY State. So, if he was a golf instructor in 1920 at Dunwoodie (see below right) and this was where he ended his career when he died in 1934, he may well have counted Douglas Fairbanks Jr as one of his pupils. By 1930 census he was still living in Briggs Avenue (below left) with his wife and as yet unmarried daughter Isabell and he is said there to be a golf professional. He died in 1934 and it is interesting who his pall bearers were (see inset left).

Isabell married John Erwin on 10 April 1936. He was a mechanical engineer and they had no children. She died on 7 March 1956. Her mother died in 1969.

**Luncheon for Mrs. Sunter**  
 Mrs. **Christopher Sunter**, 120 Briggs Avenue, was given a reception at her home yesterday afternoon by the past and present visitors of the Home Department of the Bryn Mawr Park Presbyterian Church. Mrs. **Sunter**, because of ill health, is retiring after a service of six years in this activity of the church. She was assistant superintendent for two years and superintendent for four years and at a luncheon served at the affair a huge cake was decorated with six candles symbolic of this term.  
 After luncheon Mrs. **Sunter** made an address in which she reviewed her work and expressed her appreciation for the aid she had received from the members, particularly Miss Margaret Dodge and Mrs. John Fyfe, who is temporarily filling the position vacated by Mrs. **Sunter**. The latter was presented with a Bible.



**CHRISTOPHER M. SUNTER**  
 Leading figures of the golfing world as well as a large number of other friends attended a funeral service for Christopher M. Sunter at his late residence, 120 Briggs Avenue, Sunday, at 2:30 P. M.  
 The Rev. Ernest T. Houghton, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, officiated. He was assisted by the Rev. W. P. Moody, pastor of the Bryn Mawr Park Presbyterian Church. Interment took place in Mount Hope Cemetery.  
 Mr. Sunter, who for many years was professional at Dunwoodie Golf Club, died Thursday at his home after a brief illness.  
 Delegations attended the funeral from A. G. Spalding and Weber and Heilbronner of New York, where Mr. Sunter had conducted golf instruction classes, and also from the Dunwoodie Club.  
 Honorary pallbearers were Frank T. Methven of Rye, Frederick Keddle of Yonkers, Jack Mackie of Inwood, L. I., William Mackie of Port Washington, L. I., Isaac Mackie of Flushing, L. I., and Daniel Mackie of White Plains. Other golfers present were George McLean, Andrew Robertson and Jack Foley.  
 Surviving besides his widow, Mrs. Agnes M. Sunter, is one daughter, Miss Isobel Sunter of Yonkers; his



*Researched and compiled by Graham Johnston*