

HOPKINS

1. **Hopkins, Stephen**,¹ born England about 1580, possibly bp October 29, 1581, in Wortley, parish of Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire; died between June 6, 1644 and July 17, 1644; the name of his first wife is unknown; married the second time Elizabeth Fisher, February 19, 1617/8, as recorded in St. Mary's Church, Whitechapel, London, England. She came over with her husband on the Mayflower, and died at Plymouth, Mass., before 1640.

Stephen Hopkins was a many-sided character. He and Miles Standish had a number of points in common, and were close friends. In fact, Standish was executor of Stephen Hopkins' will. They had both been something of adventurers before making the voyage in the Mayflower.

One historian describes him as follows:

"Stephen Hopkins was a man of weight in the Colony. Like many another man he had faults and virtues. He was intelligent, robust, enterprising, practical, quick to see the point, and fertile in expedients, but he was a bit touchy and not at all averse to a setto with anybody who crossed his path."

The Pilgrims, Nobles, 1907, p. 181.

The history of his family in England is not determined, but there can be no doubt of its respectable standing. It is known he resided in London for some time, and was probably a merchant with some means, and a staunch "Separatist", which kept him on the defensive with the authorities.

Some writers claim that he was a great-grandson of Stephen Hopkins, Fellow and Professor in Kings College 1532, and Rector of Norfolk, Eng., 1551, and that his parents were Nicholas Hopkins and Mary Poole, sister of Sir Giles Poole.

The church register of St. Marys, Matfellow (Whitechapel), records the marriage of Stephen Hopkins to Elizabeth Fisher, February 19, 1617/8. This places him in the parish on the high road entering London at Aldgate, near which Bradford, Carver, Cushman and Southworth lived, in or near Heneage House, Aldgate ward.

It appears he was a born fighter, leader and of an extremely adventurous disposition.

The Mayflower voyage was not the first exploit of Stephen. As a matter of fact, when that trip was made in 1620, he was an experienced traveler, and could be useful in many directions, especially in the founding and settlement of new lands, where hardship and danger prevailed. He was well known to the Merchant Adventurers and Thomas Weston of London. They probably felt he was

a good type of person for the colony, and encouraged him to make the voyage.

On previous occasions Stephen had visited the Virginia Colony. In one instance, on May 15, 1609, the ship "Sea Adventure" set sail from London bound for the Virginia shores. Perhaps the name appealed to Stephen for he is on board. It was intended to make Virginia by way of the Bermuda Islands. After many days of peaceful sailing a severe storm wrecked the good ship Sea Adventure on the treacherous coast of Bermuda. Stephen immediately made himself useful.

Among other duties he was chosen to read the Psalms on Sunday, for it is recorded that he "had much knowledge of the Scripture and could reason well therein".

After some time on the Islands a certain portion of the party became restless. They desired to continue the voyage in some manner. A meeting was held of those who were not content to lead a peaceful life among the beautiful Bermudas, where the days come and go under a lazy semi-tropical sky, and no hope of anything happening.

The restless souls had a meeting, but it was marked with discord. Stephen Hopkins was a ringleader and outspoken in his opinion.

Sir George Summers, leader of the expedition, could not overlook the matter. He ordered the arrest of the leaders, and Stephen, together with his associates, was tried and found guilty of rebellion.

At last something had happened. Stephen found himself face to face with possible execution for insubordination.

Apparently the predicament did not discourage him, for he is soon petitioning for a pardon. It is recorded that—

"so penitent hee was and made soe much moane alledging the ruine of his wife and children"

that upon the plea of the rest of the party, the Governor pardoned him.

Following this exciting experience, a bark was fitted up and the company continued the voyage to Virginia.

After spending some time in the colonies Stephen returned to England, where he seemed to prosper. Probably while a small merchant in London, he became closely affiliated with the "Merchant Adventurers", that famous group of English business men who were actively engaged in promoting the settlement of the Virginia Colonies, and most of whom were "Separatists", or, at least, in sympathy with that movement.

Just when or how Stephen became attached to the contemplated Mayflower voyage of 1620 is not clear. No doubt it was due in part to the influence of Mr. Thomas Weston, manager for the "Merchant Adventurers", who were to finance the Mayflower expedition, and, naturally, were seeking substantial "Planters" for the colony.

Evidently the appeal was strong enough to convince Stephen, for bright and early on embarkation day he appeared at the wharves to board the Mayflower.

His party was the largest, and brought much baggage. Bradford in 1646 enumerates it as follows:

“Mr. Steven Hopkins & Elizabeth his wife, and .2. children, caled Giles, and Constanta a daughter, both by a former wife. And .2. more by this wife, caled Damaris & Oceanus, the last was borne at sea. And .2. servants called Edward Doty and Edward Litster.”

The embarkation of this family group must have been a lively event, and probably taxed the “touchy” temper of Stephen to the limit. Getting all parties and baggage aboard a ship in those days was a testy job, especially when the party included women and children.

No doubt, the two “servants” (Ed. Doty and Ed. Litster, boys working way over) were of some help in the matter. These two “servants”, by the way, were continually quarrelling with each other, perhaps over division of duties, and soon after landing at New Plymouth fought a duel, drawing blood. It had the distinction of being the first recorded duel in the colonies. Just what part, if any, Stephen had in starting the fight is not clear. However, the records show that Stephen appeared in court at Plymouth and pleaded for the young men.

The Pilgrims were supposed to have been a peaceful group, averse to fighting. However, the record appears to show that they were quite free with fists and other weapons on occasion. This, of course, could not be otherwise, as the venture had no appeal for weaklings.

We are not informed in detail how Stephen managed to get his family and belongings, consisting of an ill wife, baby Damaris, 2 years old (there was another youngster, Oceanus, born on the Mayflower), his thirteen-year-old son Giles, and daughter Constanta, aged fifteen years, deposited in the little row-boat at the wharf, and safely transported to the Mayflower, which was lazily riding at anchor, probably off “Blackhall” or “Wapping” near London, in the Thames, on that momentous mid-July day of the year 1620.

There were eight persons in Stephen Hopkins’ party, including the two “servants”.

Very likely Giles and Constance, two strong, healthy children, were of great aid to the parents in getting everything snugly on board. All members of this particular party were healthy enough to survive the “first sickness” in New Plymouth, which was an exceptional record, indeed.

To the children of the Mayflower, the confusion of embarking was exciting, with wide-eyed interest they watched the preparations for departure. Neither the children nor their elders realized at the

time the historical significance of the event, or the great parts they were to play in the drama of founding and building a nation.

With everybody aboard, the Mayflower, on Saturday, July 15, 1620 (O.S.), weighed anchor and dropped down with the tide to Gravesend. Owing to numerous delays at Southampton and other English ports, the ship did not leave Plymouth, England, for the New World until September 6, 1620 (O.S.), and after sixty-five days out sighted Cape Cod.

During the voyage Stephen became a great favorite of the children. He had many stories of adventure, which he was fond of telling and even the older persons were greatly interested in practical instruction which he gave in the art of building houses. He illustrated the constructions on the deck of the Mayflower by means of a series of sticks having suitable notches in them. With these sticks he made different types of "log-house" designs.

During the various landing "explorations" around Cape Cod, Stephen was much in evidence. His name and duties are frequently mentioned.

He became one of the "wealthiest" Planters of New Plymouth, and, in addition to much land, many cattle, and other possessions, he appears to have run a general store or "tavern".

For many years he was a member of the Governor's Council, but did not seek a high public office.

He built the first wharf in New Plymouth and was financially interested in shipping.

His services were called upon quite frequently in dealings with the Indians. He seemed to understand their ways and language, and had no fear of them. At one time it became essential for the colony to negotiate with Massasoit. Stephen, with an Indian named Squanto as a guide, was sent through the forest to see him. No timid man would have undertaken that job.

As previously stated Stephen made himself useful during the voyage, and in various contacts of a diplomatic nature with the Indians. He was a member of exploring parties, especially the Third Expedition which started out on Wednesday, December 16, 1620 (N.S.), to locate the place for settlement. "Mourt's Relation" 1622, states:

"So ten of our men were appointed who were of themselves willing to undertake it, to wit, Captaine Standish, Master Carver, William Bradford, Edward Winsloe, John Tilley, Edward Tilley, John Howland, and three of London, Richard Warren, Steeven Hopkins, and Edward Dotte."

Not only was Stephen in the Third Expedition, but he was an important member of the First Expedition, in which, from past experience, he identified a small tree bent over and attached to boughs and grasses woven together and covering a deep pit, as a trap used by Indians to catch deer.

When Samoset came to Plymouth to welcome the Pilgrims he was lodged over night at Stephen's house. Apparently he could understand him.

When the messenger of Canonicus brought the snake skin full of arrows to Plymouth, Standish and Hopkins had charge of him, Stephen acting as interpreter, which was his usual job.

The high position held by Hopkins in the little community, especially in "trade", and the rules governing that important occupation is shown in the following court orders, where there are appointed:

"at the general court held at New Plymouth the 3d of January 1636 in the xijth years of the Raigne of or sovaigne Lord Charles by the grace of God, of England, etc, King defendor of the faith etc before Edward Winslowe gent. Gounour, Wm Bradford, Thomas Prynce, John Alden, Steeven Hopkins, Wm Collier, Tymothy Hatherly, and John Brown Gentle. assistants"

"It is ordered by the court that Mr Collyer, Mr Hopkins, Mr Brown, Mr Done, John Jenny, Jonathan Brewster, John Winslow, Thomas Willet shall treat with those that have the trade in their hands & to prpare such conclusions concerning the same, that the Court being made acquainted therewith and approveing thereof may conclud the same with them."

Some historians have stated that Weston selected Hopkins to accompany the Mayflower Planters because of his previous experience in Virginia.

That Stephen had a fiery temper is amply borne out by the records of Plymouth. They also disclose him to be a man of wealth for that day, owning much land, many cattle, and employing considerable help, which were noted as "servants", but more aptly were plain "hired men".

He apparently maintained also a general store or tavern, and was a merchant to the colonists in some degree. His cattle and lands after a time spread into what is now Kingston and Yarmouth.

Some court orders are illuminating:

June 7, 1636—"John Tisdale, yeoman, entreth an accon. of battery against Steven Hopkins, assistant to the Govrn't by whom the said John was dangerously wounded, as he affirmeth."

"An accon. of battery was tried between John Tisdale, yeoman, plaintiff, & Stephen Hopkins, assistant to the goverment deft. Wherein the deft Stephen Hopkins, was cast in five pownds starling to our Sov. lord the King, whose pease he had broken, wch he ought after a special manner to have kept, and also in forty shillings to the plaintiffe, both wch he was adjudged to pay."

October 6, 1637—"Mr Steeven Hopkins psented for suffering servants and others to sit drinking in his house (contrary

to the orders of the court), and to play at Shovell board, & such like misdemeanors is therefore fined fourty shillings."

January 2, 1637/8—"William Renolds is psented for being drunck at Mr Hopkin's his house."

"Mr Hopkins is psented for sufferinge excessive drinking in his house."

In this instance he was acquitted, but it clearly discloses the problem of strong drink is very old, and still unsolved in the year 1936.

That Stephen sold liquor with an eye to profit seems clear from the following court order. In those days the "general store" sold rum of various types, and almost everybody used or drank a fermented beverage of some kind. For the most part it was home brew, and very mild.

June 5, 1638—"Mr Steephen Hopkins is psented for selling beere for ijd the quart, not worth jd a quart." He was fined "for selling beere at such excessive rates to the oppressing & impoushing of the Colony."

From this it would seem that Stephen catered to quite a large portion of the Colony.

However, Hopkins sold other things besides rum, and here again he exhibited his "genius" for trying to make a profit. Apparently, Stephen lost the good will of the court, and perhaps his neighbors, whenever he sold anything for much more than he paid for it.

No doubt, he developed the idea of buying at "wholesale," so that he could hide some of his profits. However, even that was not a sure solution, for we have the following court order:

October 7, 1639—"Mr Stephen Hopkins, upon his presentment for selling a looking glasse for 16d the like whereof was bought in the Bay for ix d (9d) is referred to further information."

Apparently, Mr. Hopkins sold the article for about twice what he paid for it. His "misdemeanor" occurred 300 years ago, but the lesson of the "presentment" seemingly has been lost, for modern merchants are still doing the same thing whenever they can get away with it.

After a busy and useful life in New Plymouth of about twenty-five years, Mr. Hopkins died, probably in June, 1644, leaving a large estate, and a very interesting will, as follows:

WILL OF STEPHEN HOPKINS

Stephen Hopkins died at New Plymouth in 1644, between June 6, the day his will was made, and July 17, the day his inventory was taken.

The will and inventory are recorded in the Plymouth Colony Wills and Inventories, Vol. I, folios 61, 62 and 63.

[61] The last Will and Testament of Mr Stephen Hopkins exhibited upon the oathes of Mr Willm Bradford and Captaine Myles Standish at the generall Court holden at Plymouth the xxth of August Anno dm 1644 as it followeth in these wordes viz.

The sixt of June 1644, I, Stephen Hopkins of Plymouth in New England, being weake, yet in good and pfect memory, blessed be God, yet considering the fraile estate of all men, I do ordaine and make this to be my last will and testament in manner and forme following, and first I do committ my body to the earth from whence it was taken, and my soule to the Lord who gave it, my body to be buryed as neare as conveniently may be to my wyfe Deceased.

And, first, my will is that out of my whole estate my funerall expences be discharged.

Secondly, that out of the remayneing part of my said estate, that all my lawfull Debts be payd.

Thirdly, I do bequeath, by this, my will, to my sonn Giles Hopkins, my great Bull wch is now in the hands of Mrs Warren. Also, I do give to Stephen Hopkins, my sonn Giles, his sonne, twenty shillings in Mris Warren's hands for the hire of the said Bull. Also I give and bequeath to my daughter Constance Snow, the wyfe of Nicholas Snow, my mare, also, I give unto my daughter Deborah Hopkins, the brod horned black cowe, and her calf, and half the cowe, called Motley. Also I doe give and bequeath unto my daughter Damaris Hopkins, the Cowe called Damaris heiffer, and the white faced calf, and half the cowe called Mottley. Also, I give to my daughter, Ruth, the Cowe called Red Cole, and her calf, and a Bull at Yarmouth wch is in the keepeing of Giles Hopkins, wch is an yeare, and advantage old, and half the curld Cowe.

Also, I give and bequeath to my daughter Elizabeth, the Cowe called Smykins, and her calf, and thother half of the Curld Cowe wth Ruth, and an yearelinge heiffer wth out a tayle, in the keeping of Gyles Hopkins at Yarmouth.

Also I do give and bequeath unto my foure daughters, that is to say, Deborah Hopkins, Damaris Hopkins, Ruth Hopkins, and Elizabeth Hopkins, all the mooveable goods, the wch do belong to my house, as linnen, wollen, beds, bed cloathes, pott kettles, pewter, or whatsoevr are moveable, belonging to my said house, of what kynd soever, and not named by their prticular names, all wch said mooveables, to bee equally divided amongst my said daughters foure silver spoones, that is to say, to eich of them one. And, in case, any of my said daughters should be taken away by death before they be marryed, that, then, the part of their division to be equally divided amongst the survivors.

I do also, by this my will, make Caleb Hopkins, my sonne and heire apparent, giveing and bequeathing unto my said

sonn aforesaid, all my Right title and interest to my house and Lands at Plymouth, wth all the Right title and interrest wch doth, might or of Right, doth, or may hereafter belong unto mee, as also I give unto my saide heire all such lande wch of Right, is Rightly due unto me, and not at prsent in my reall possession, wch belongs unto me by right of my first comeing into this land, or by any other due Right, as by such freedome, or othorwise, giveing unto my said heire my full & whole and entire Right in all divisions, allottments, appoyntments or distributions whatsoever, to all or any pt of the said lande at any tyme, or tymes, so to be disposed.

Also, I do give moreover unto my foresaid heire one paire or yooke of oxen, and the hyer of them wch are in the hands of Richard Church, as may appeare by bill under his hand.

Also, I do give unto my said heire, Caleb Hopkins, all my debts wch are now oweing unto me, or at the day of my death, may be oweing unto mee, either by booke, bill, or bills, or any other way rightfully due unto me. further more, my will is, that my daughters, aforesaid, shall have free recourse to my house in Plymouth, upon any occation, there to abide and remayne for such tyme as any of them shall thinke meete and convenyent & they single persons.

And for the faythfull prformance of this, my will, I do make and ordayne my aforesaid sonn and heire, Caleb Hopkins, my true and lawful Executor, further, I do, by this my will, appoynt and make my said sonn, and Captaine Miles Standish, joyntly supervisors of this, my will, according to the true meaneing of the same, that is to say, that my Executor & supervisor shall make the severall divisions, parts or porcons, legacies or whatsoever doth appertaine to the fullfilling of this, my will.

It is also my will, that my Executor & Supervisor shall advise, devise and dispose by the best wayes & meanes they cann for the disposing in marriage, or otherwise, for the best advanent of the estate of the forenamed Deborah, Damaris, Ruth, and Elizabeth Hopkins.

Thus trusting in the Lord, my will shal be truly prformed, according to the true meaneing of the same, I committ the whole Disposeing hereof to the Lord, that hee may direct you herein.

June 6th 1644

Witnesses hereof

Myles Standish,
William Bradford

By me

STEVEN HOPKINS

[62] An Inventory of the Goods and the cattells of Mr Steven Hopkins taken by Captaine Miles Standish, Mr Thomas Willet and Mr John Done the xviith of July 1644 xx^o Cal. Re.

This inventory is too long to insert here in detail, although exceedingly illuminating.

Broadly, the inventory shows clearly, that Mr. Hopkins must have been one of the wealthiest men of the colony, if not the richest.

He left a large herd of cattle for those days, about thirteen head, including a young "heiffer wthout a taylor". Also a yoke of oxen, pigges and poultry.

The debts "oweing unto mee, either by booke, bill, or bills" was considerable. Whether the Executor was able to collect these items is not disclosed.

The household articles included many items of interest. These went to his daughters. There was a "greene Rugg" and a "yellow Rugg", many blankets, and much bedding of all kinds. There were "pillow beares", "boulsters", "checkered blanketts", "table clothes".

There are "dymothy Caps", "wrought Caps", and the like.

He left a library consisting of "Divers Bookes", not named, however.

There are many items of clothing in the inventory, including shoes, garters, "Ruffe", "mohaire petticoate", "a petticoate of phillip & cheney", "a grogorm coate", "a prpetuam coate", "coate & jerkin", "a muffle".

Items for the kitchen and dining room include "a hogshead", "warming pann", "porringers", "frying pann", "quart potts", "laten candlesticks", "puter candlesticks", "bras pott", "skellets", "1 dozzen & half trenchers", "paire of bellows", "fire shovell & tongs".

In fact, the inventory discloses that Stephen had a very comfortable home, of which he was very fond, and, as his will clearly indicates, the death of his wife was a great blow to him, as she had been, no doubt, a fine home-maker.

He requested in his will "to be buried as neare as convenyently may be to my wyfe Deceased".

KNOWN CHILDREN BY FIRST WIFE (UNKNOWN)

- +2. Constance, b. Eng. abt. 1605, d. Eastham, Mass. Nov. 25, 1677, or about the middle of Oct. 1677; m. Nicholas¹ Snow.
- +3. Giles, b. Eng. abt. 1607, d. abt. 1690, or after Mar. 15, 1689, and before Apr. 26, 1690; m. Catone² Wheldon (Gabriel)¹. Stephen, bp. Dec. 22, 1609, St. Stephen, Coleman St., London, Eng. (a possibility only).

BY SECOND WIFE, ELIZABETH FISHER

- 4. Damaris, b. Eng. before 1618, d. young probably.
- 5. Oceanus, b. on the Mayflower, d. before June 1, 1627.
- 6. Caleb, b. Ply. before 1623, d. single, Barbadoes, before 1651.

- +7. Deborah, b. Ply. about 1625, d. after 1666; m. Andrew¹ Ring.
- +8. Damaris, b. Ply. after 1627, d. 1665/9; m. Jacob² Cooke, son
of Francis¹ Cooke.
- 9. Ruth, b. Ply, —, d. single probably.
- 10. Elizabeth, b. Ply., —, d. single probably.

Reg. Nos. 17, 69, 78, 79, 93, 136, 140, 171, 184, 264, 292, 502.