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STEPHEN HOPKINS

Tavernkeeper, Plymouth, Massachusetts, by 1637

The only passenger from the *Mayflower* who engaged in the sale of spirituous liquors is perhaps the most colorful member of that voyage – **STEPHEN HOPKINS**. He was born by about 1582 and came to America from London, being originally from Hursley, Hampshire, England. His first wife's name was Mary _____, and he was married to her in or very near 1603, at Hursley. Within 10 years' time, she was dead. He married secondly at St. Mary Matfellow, Whitechapel, London on February 19, 1617/8 to Elizabeth Fisher, who died at Plymouth between 1640 and 1644. Hopkins died at Plymouth in the year 1644, between June 6, when he wrote his will, and July 17, when it was proved at court.

It is fair to say that Hopkins was one of the most "colorful" individuals on American soil in his day. Equally it is fair to say that in between the frequent and numerous references found in court records regarding his civil service to the Colony, he appears to have been a person of tenacious quality, regularly distressed by complaint against him. Beginning in 1632, when the first court records appear to have been kept, his name appears no fewer than 47 times. No fewer than 5 of those entries record for admonition by the court for improper conduct in regard to his tavern-keeping.

Evidence of Hopkins' operation of a tavern at Plymouth is first found in the court record of January 2, 1637, wherein are found two entries:

William Reynolds is p'sented for being drunk at Mr Hopkins his house, that he lay vnder the table, vomiting in a beastly manner, and was taken vp betweene two. The witness hereof is Abraham Warr, als Hoop, als Pottle, and sayth that there was in company Francis Sprague, Samuell Nash, & George Partrich.

Mr. Hopkins is p'sented for sufferinge excessiue drinking in his house, as old Palmer, James Coale, & William Renolds, John Winslow, Widdow Palmers man, Widdow Palmer, Thomas Little, witnesses & Stephen Travy.*

Only nine months later (October 2, 1637), Hopkins was presented to the Grand Jury at an inquest.

Mr Stephen Hopkins, first p'sentment, (for suffering men to drink in his house vpon the Lords day, before the meeting be ended, and also vpon the Lords day, both before 7 after the meeting, servants & others to drink more then for ordinary refreshing) is respited vntill the next Court, that the testimony of John Barnes be had therein.

A separate entry reads:

* Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, 12 vols. in 10 (Boston: 1855-61), vol. 1, p. 75.

Mr. Steephen Hopkins, psented for suffering servants and others to sit drinkeing in his house, (contrary to the orders of this Court,) and to play at shouell board, & such like misdemeanors, is therefore fined fourty shillings.*

Eight months later, on June 5, 1638, under presentations before the Grand Jury:

Mr. Steephen Hopkins is presented for selling beere for ij d the quart, not worth j d a quart. Witness, Kenelme Winslow.

Item, for selling wine at such excessiue rates, to the oppressing & impouishing of the colony. Kenelme Winslow & John Winslow, witnesses.†

At the court held September 4, 1638, Hopkins was fined:

Mr. Steephen Hopkins, vpon two psentmnts against him the last Court, and three psentmnts this Court, for selling wine, beere, strong waters, and nutmegs at excessiue rates, is fyned.‡

And finally, on December 3, 1639, the court ordered:

Mr. Steephen Hopkins, vpon his psentment for selling a looking glasse for 16d, the like whereof was bought in the Bay for ix d is referred to further informacon.

Mr. Steephen Hopkins, for selling strong water without lycense, proued & confesed in Court is fyned iiii d.§

The children of Stephen Hopkins and his first wife, Mary, were baptized at Hursley, Hampshire. They were: Elizabeth (bapt. 1604; d. young in England), Constance (bapt. 1606; m. Nicholas Snow) and Giles (bapt. 1607/8, m. Catherine Whelden). Hopkins's children with his second wife, Elizabeth Fisher, were: Damaris (b. Eng., [say] 1618; no further record), Oceanus (b. on the *Mayflower* betw. 6 Sep and 11 Nov, O.S.; no further record), Caleb (b. [say] 1623; d. in Barbados), Deborah (b. [say] 1626; m. Andrew Ring), Damaris (b. [say] 1628; m. Jacob Cooke), Ruth (b. [say] 1630; d. unmarr. betw. 1644 and 1651), and Elizabeth (b. [say] 1632; prob. never marr., and likely d. by 1659).

Additional Bibliography

Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins* (3 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 1995), pp. 986-9.

Caleb Johnson, "The True Origin of Stephen¹ Hopkins of the *Mayflower*," in *The American Genealogist* 73:161-71 (1998).

Alexander Bannerman, #97-23

* *Id.*, p. 68.

† *Id.*, pp. 86-7.

‡ *Id.*, p. 97.

§ *Id.*, p. 137.