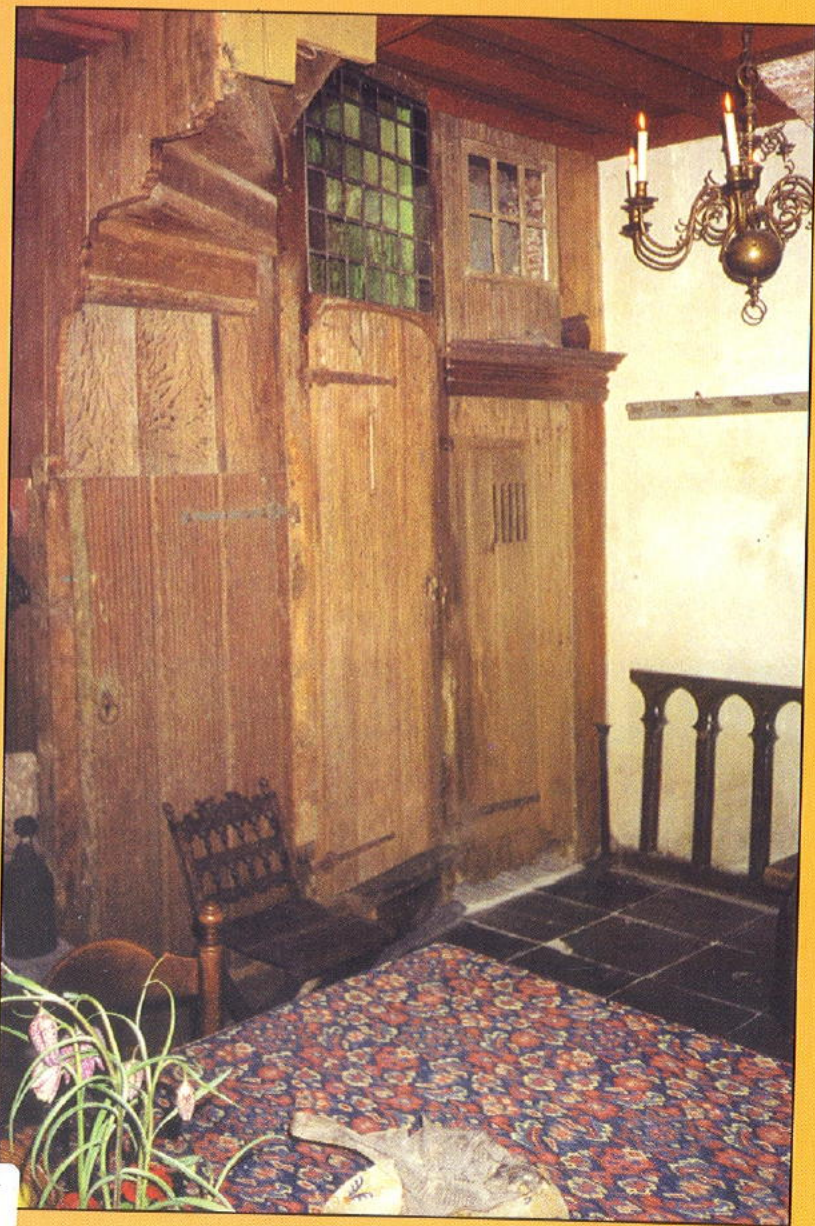




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Stephen Hopkins

Bermuda, Jamestown, and Plymouth

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Stephen Hopkins is one of the most interesting characters in the earliest years of Bermuda, Virginia and Plymouth. His life of roughly 64 years can be conveniently divided into five periods: his early life and first marriage in England; the shipwreck and Bermuda experience; in Jamestown, Virginia; the return to London and second marriage; and the *Mayflower* voyage to Plymouth, Massachusetts. He was the only Pilgrim who had been to the New World before.

What varied activities and character traits Hopkins demonstrated during his life! He was an adventurer, an artisan, a family man, a merchant, a statesman (Governor's Assistant), religious (as Chaplain's clerk), rebellious, argumentative, litigious, a man of means, and a "gentleman."

Early New Englanders were remarkably prolific. Stephen Hopkins, through two of his wives and four of their eleven children, has left numerous descendants. These people are eligible for membership in the Society of Mayflower Descendants. Because of Hopkins's stay in Jamestown, his descendants are also eligible for membership in the Jamestowne Society (a heritage group for descendants of those who were in Jamestown, Virginia prior to 1700).

Early Life in England

Wotton-under-Edge is a Cotswold village in Gloucestershire, England, a market town noted for its cloth industry. It was here that Stephen Hopkins was born 29 October 1581 according to a 1982 published source from Wotton-under-Edge. The General Society of Mayflower Descendants, in Volume Six of the *Mayflower Families* series (devoted to Stephen Hopkins and descendants), gives the date of birth as "about 1580." Was the 1581 date the baptismal date?

Robert Hopkins m. _____

15__-c. 1591

A "tithing man"

(peace keeper).

Stephen Hopkins, Sr. m.

15__- ?

Attended the Grammar School
of Wotton-under-Edge.

A yarn merchant.

Agnes _____

(Related to Sir Giles Poole,
Jonas Poole, a cousin of Agnes,
was on the 1607 voyage
to Jamestown.)

Son	Robert Hopkins	STEPHEN HOPKINS c. 1580-1644
	Moved to London. Merchant agent for his father.	The Plymouth Pilgrim

Stephen Hopkins was apprenticed to a weaver at age seven, but he seems to have interrupted this to attend the Free Grammar School at Wotton-under-Edge. (This ancient institution dated from 1385 Letters Patent under reign of King Richard II. Lady Katherine Berkeley founded and endowed the school.) One of young Stephen's teachers was John Stanton, the curate of Wotton parish, who took on Stephen as his clerk, that is, one who assisted in church services.

Stephen became a journeyman weaver and married locally a girl named Constance. This marriage, probably around 1604, produced four children, Constance, William, Giles, and a son born in London, who died as an infant. Hopkins was taxed at 20 shillings in 1608 in Wotton-under-Edge.

STEPHEN HOPKINS m. Constance Dudley
c. 1580-1644 15 ___ -1609

Constance 1605-1677, b. Wotton
William 1607-c. 1609, b. Wotton
Giles 1607-1689/90, b. Wotton
Son, b. 1609 London, d. infant

In 1608 Hopkins and family moved to London. They may have lived with his brother Robert on Coleman Street near the Guildhall. He was early an adventurer as he signed on with a convoy to the Virginia colony in 1609. This undertaking was to send supplies and reinforcements to the Jamestown settlers who had suffered "the starving time." Why did Hopkins, as a 29-year-old, leave his pregnant wife and family to go on the uncertain voyage to the New World? His adventurousness was no doubt a factor. An English source suggests that it might have to do with his mother's cousin, Jonas Poole, who had served under Raleigh and had been on the 1607 voyage to Jamestown.

The *Sea Venture*, the flagship, with the rest of the fleet of nine ships left Plymouth, England on 2 June 1609 (old style). Hopkins served on board as a clerk to the chaplain, the Reverend Richard Buck. Among other duties, he would read the scriptures and the prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer*. Hopkins had a good education for the times and had already served back in Wotton-under-Edge as a clergyman's assistant. On board the flagship were Sir Thomas Gates, Governor-designate of Virginia, Sir George Somers, Commander-in-Chief of the fleet, and Captain Christopher Newport of the *Sea Venture*.

Shipwreck on Bermuda

About 600 miles east of Bermuda, on 25 July 1609 (old style), a great storm scattered the fleet. There was constant bailing to keep the *Sea Venture* afloat. Land was sighted. It was Bermuda, uninhabited but known to sea captains. The ship went on a reef off shore near where Fort St. Catherine was later located. The date was Friday, 28 July 1609 (old style).

The 150 people on board went ashore on Bermuda and constructed primitive cabins. An Anglican service of Evensong was said that first evening. There was fish from the sea, wild hogs from an earlier Spanish shipwreck, turtles, and what provisions that could be salvaged from the ship kept the settlers alive.

The *Sea Venture* was stripped of all that could be brought ashore. Two smaller ships, the *Deliverance* and the *Patience* were built from these parts.

Dissension arose in the ranks. Stephen Hopkins was prominent among them. He began to question the authority of the Governor as he believed his authority ended with the shipwreck. They were not in Virginia. Hopkins was in no hurry to leave Bermuda and go on to Virginia. He even used the Bible for support in his argument. He was known as "a fellow who had much knowledge of the scriptures and could reason well therein." Such activity constituted mutiny and rebellion. A sentence of death by hanging was proclaimed for Hopkins.

Hopkins pleaded that his execution would cause the ruin of his wife and family back in London. The ship's captain, Christopher Newport, requested that the Governor release him. Stephen Hopkins was not executed.

John Rolfe, who later married Pocahontas in Virginia, with his first wife and a child, were among those in the Bermuda group. William Strachey and Silvester Jourdain, who left writings covering the Bermuda experience, were passengers on the *Sea Venture*.

William Shakespeare's *Tempest*, written in 1611 and published in 1623 is thought to be based upon the Bermuda shipwreck. The playwright may have used both Strachey and Jourdain for his sources. The Bermuda party left on 10 May 1610 (old style) for Virginia. Two men who had committed offenses were left behind.

St. Peter's Anglican Church, St. George, Bermuda, claims Stephen Hopkins as their first parish clerk. The parish evidently dates its origin to services held in 1609-1610. Hopkins left the island in 1610. The first church building here was erected in 1612.

Jamestown, Virginia

The *Deliverance* and The *Patience* reached Jamestown, Virginia on 24 May 1610. The colony was found to be in a severe condition of want and despair. Sir Thomas Gates, who on landing was now the Governor of Virginia, pending the arrival of Lord De La Warr, decided to abandon the blighted settlement. On the 10th of June, in four pinnaces, the inhabitants left with the intent of sailing up to

Newfoundland where English fishermen might be of assistance.

The next day, as they progressed down the James River, it was learned that the ship bearing Lord De La Warr was nearby. They returned to Jamestown. De La Warr did some rebuilding of forts and sent for supplies.

Stephen Hopkins was in Jamestown, but there is no record of his ownership of property or any participation in the affairs of the colony. It is not known if he served as chaplain's assistant while in Virginia. His recent escape from execution in Bermuda no doubt placed him under some stigma with Governor Gates and others in authority. He was probably eager to return to England to be with his family and awaited an opportunity to make the voyage. It should be remembered that Hopkins did not have the intent of immigrating to Virginia.

When did Hopkins return to London? Sir George Somers left Virginia on 19 June 1610 with a crew to get pigs on Bermuda. Somers died in Bermuda and the party went on to England with his body. In the autumn of 1610 Sir Thomas Gates returned to England. In March of 1611 Lord De La Warr returned. In May 1611 Sir Thomas Dale left for Bermuda and then on to England. Hopkins may have gone back in one of these voyages. Some sources indicate that he returned to England sometime in 1611 or 1612.

Back in London and the Second Marriage

The first date associated with Stephen Hopkins upon his return to London is that of marriage to his second wife, Elizabeth Fisher, on 19 February 1617 (old style). He was in England before 1617 and probably much earlier. While he was away in the New World, his first wife Constance had borne a son in December of 1609, but both had died soon after. His son William also disappears from records at this time.

After his return to London he was a merchant. He lived in the Aldgate section of East London. Aldgate (Aelgate = free gate) was one of the four original gates in the London Wall. The old Roman road to Colchester (now known as Whitechapel Road) passed through this gate.

His second marriage took place nearby at the parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel (also known as St. Mary Matfellow, the original name being obscure). The church was in existence as early as the 1300s. The edifice was in poor condition in the later 17th century and was taken down in 1673. It was rebuilt soon after. The building was burned in 1880 and was rebuilt the next year. A source reported that it was among the many buildings bombed during World War II. The church no longer exists.

The Mayflower and Plymouth Colony

Stephen Hopkins was a "merchant adventurer" with the group that planned the voyage to what was to be the Plymouth settlement. He had been to the New World before and perhaps this was a factor in the attraction of this undertaking. He may have seen a more prosperous future for him and his growing family than

possible in crowded London.

The *Mayflower* finally left Plymouth, England on 6 September 1620 after several delays. There were 102 passengers on board. Stephen Hopkins, wife, three children and two servants constituted the largest family group (seven) on board. Their son, named Oceanus, was born on board.

As the ship neared the coast of Massachusetts there was a near mutiny on board. A few of the passengers claimed that as the patent was for Virginia and not for New England, they would be free to do what they wanted when they landed.

This led to the *Mayflower Compact* that was signed off Cape Cod on 21 November 1620 (new style). There were 41 adult men that signed the document in order of their social-economic station in life. Stephen Hopkins, listed as "Mister," was the 14th signer.

In November of 1620 an exploratory party of William Bradford, Edward Tilley, and Stephen Hopkins went ashore on Cape Cod. When Samoset, the American Indian, paid a visit to Plymouth, he spent the night at the house of Stephen Hopkins. Hopkins was with the group that visited Chief Massasoit at Sowams (now Warren), Rhode Island in 1621.

At the division of land in 1623, Hopkins received a six-acre lot. He had built the first wharf in Plymouth and sold it for £60 in July of 1637.

Stephen Hopkins was made a "freeman" of Plymouth in 1633. From 1633 to 1636 he held the governmental position as Assistant Governor. This post made up of six or seven men served as sort of a Governor's Council.

In 1637, Stephen, with his sons Giles and Caleb, were volunteers in the Pequot War. They were not called for active service.

Hopkins built a house at Yarmouth, on Cape Cod, but later returned to Plymouth and gave the house to his son, Giles. This was said to be the first house built by Europeans on the Cape. Giles later moved to Eastham, farther out on Cape Cod.

The Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* can be separated into four groups: the "saints" (religious non-conformist Separatists), "Strangers" (those who joined for non-religious reasons), indentured servants, and members of the crew. Stephen Hopkins was listed as a "stranger." He was an Anglican (Church of England) but may have had Puritan leanings.

Among other involvements, Hopkins was a merchant and tavern keeper in Plymouth. Some items of litigation were related to these enterprises.

Stephen Hopkins was in the courts as result of litigation that might be expected for a man of his position in the colony. From 1635 through 1643 his name appears in the court records for numerous legal actions.

In 1635 there is a fine of £7 for assault. In 1637 £2 fine for having servants drinking in his house. In 1638 £1 for selling beer, wine and spirits at excessive prices. In 1638-1639 there was contempt of court in a case dealing with an apprentice, Dorothy Temple. In 1639 a fine of £3 for selling "strong waters" and in that same year presented in court for selling a mirror at an excessive price. In

1643 he was fined for selling beer at 2d per quart (not worth 1d) and for over-charging on wine.

Family of Stephen Hopkins in Plymouth Colony

STEPHEN HOPKINS - c. 1580-1644, m¹ Constance _____, .15____-1609
 Constance - 1605-1677, m. Nicholas Snow
 Giles - 1607-c. 1689-90, m. Catherine Whelden

STEPHEN HOPKINS m.² Elizabeth Fisher 15____-1640
 Damaris - 1619-c. 1627
 Oceanus - 1620-c. 1623
 Caleb - c. 1622-c.1651, Died in Barbados
 Deborah - c. 1625-c.1674, m. Andrew Ring
 Damaris - c. 1627-c. 1669, m. Jacob Cooke
 Ruth - 16____-c. 1651
 Elizabeth - 16____-c. 1659

Servants: Edward Leister
 Edward Doty

This last will and testament of Stephen Hopkins was on 6 June 1644. An inventory was taken of his estate on 17 July 1644. On 20 August 1644 the will was proved, William Bradford and Myles Standish signing. The value of the estate was about £130. The estate included livestock, house, lands, tools, clothing, household goods and "diverse books." His children Constance, Giles, Damaris, Caleb, Deborah, Ruth, and Elizabeth were mentioned in the will.

Hopkins died in Plymouth, Massachusetts during the summer of 1644, in June or July. He was buried near his wife (as he requested in his will) on Burial Hill, above the village, in Plymouth.

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Mr. Durnin is a member of the New Jersey and New York Societies of Mayflower Descendants. He served as Acting Governor of the New Jersey Society in 1984. He is descended from eleven Mayflower passengers, one of them being Stephen Hopkins.



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