

# PILGRIM HOPKINS HERITAGE SOCIETY



Mayflower

# ATLANTIC CROSSINGS

ENGLAND ~ BERMUDA ~ JAMESTOWN ~ ENGLAND ~ PLYMOUTH



Sea Venture

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## The Old Comers' Perk by Judith Brister

When Stephen Hopkins boarded the *Mayflower* in 1620 with his pregnant wife Elizabeth and children Constance, Giles and Damaris, he was not a wealthy man. There is no evidence he left land behind him in England. When he died twenty four years later, he owned not just a large house and property in Plymouth, but vast tracts of land on Cape Cod, from Yarmouth to Eastham.

Just how he acquired this property is part of the broader story of the evolving patterns of land tenure and ownership in the 72 year Plymouth Colony. Many authors have explored this complex and fascinating subject. The focus here is narrower: to provide a brief overview of how Hopkins became entitled to this land.

Stephen Hopkins was one of 53 heads of household in good standing who resided in Plymouth in 1627. Their ranks augmented by five Lon-

don merchants, this group became known as the "Purchasers or Old Comers." After 1640, these 58 men – and their heirs – acquired unique privileges regarding land acquisition in the Plymouth Colony.

Until that year, land ownership in Plymouth had been in a constant state of flux. During the Colony's first few years, all able bodied settlers worked the land collectively. Their harvest was delivered to a central warehouse, and then redistributed in equal portions. This system, which might seem somewhat socialist today, was in fact the product of a painstakingly negotiated business arrangement between the settlers and their financial backers.

The Pilgrims could never have made their historic journey unless the expenses of their transportation and initial supplies had been covered by outside investors. To finance their settlement, the Pilgrims formed a joint-stock company with some 70 English investors, the Merchant Adventurers. In return for their indispensable financial backstopping, the Adventurers demanded that the Pilgrims work seven days a week for seven years for the joint-stock company. All profits above what was needed for subsistence would go to the Adventurers. All Colony assets, including the Pilgrims' houses and gardens, would be held in common. When the seven years were up, shares in the company



Photo by Eleanor Johnson

*As a Yarmouth pioneer, Stephen Hopkins probably used this harbor.*

would be divided. Each colonist 16 years or older would get one share worth 10 pounds and each Adventurer would get one share for every 10 pounds of his investment. On this basis, the Colony's property would then be divided up.

### The 1623 Division of Land

Both productivity and morale were low after the first few years under this system, and in March 1623 Governor Bradford and his advisors decided a change was needed. The land would still be collectively owned, as stipulated in their agreement, but the Colony leaders would assign one acre to each person living in the Colony. These plots would be for their personal subsistence. Under this "1623 Division of Land," the Hopkins family was assigned six acres of land to cultivate for the six members of the family at that time.

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Photo by Eleanor Johnson

*Mill pond near Hopkins' Yarmouth house.*

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## Message from the Governor



Photo by Harold Woolley

On September 7, The Pilgrim Hopkins Heritage Society held its triennial business meeting. Former Governor Chester Hopkins and Secretary Catherine Hopkins did an excellent job organizing this event. Many thanks for all their hard work on behalf of the PHHS during this initial and especially challenging period when our Society got up and running. Credit and appreciation is also due to Carol Dilley, Deputy Gov-


ernor, Ed Flaherty, Treasurer, Judy Elfring, Historian, Judith Brister, Editor, and Ruth Freyer, lineage data entry, and to all the other volunteers who helped the Society in various ways during the past three years.

The year 2008 seems to have been a year for me to investigate Hopkins Family's sites.

In March, my daughter Sarah and I made a trip to Hampshire, England. We were able to go into All Saint churches in both Upper Clatford and Hursley, and to the St. Swithin-over-Kingsgate church in Winchester. Our ancestor Stephen Hopkins is believed to have associations with all of them. We also visited Norman's Court Farm, where the Hopkins family raised crops for several generations.

This winter a trip to Bermuda allowed me to make another connection with our common past. I had hoped to dive down 30 feet and have a look at the wreck of the Sea Venture, but that was not possible for a few very good reasons. First, the wreck is now designated as a protected area. Second, the wreck is covered with sand when it is not being excavated in order to prevent deterioration of the wood by the elements. However, I was able to ride a scooter out to Saint Catherine's Beach, where the castaways landed and go into St. George's to visit the Deliverance II. I visited the Bermuda Maritime Museum inside the Royal Naval Dockyard to see the items salvaged the Sea Venture wreck. The artifacts are currently undergoing conservation and will be sent to Jamestown at the end of the Month for an exhibition at Jamestown Settlement opening March 1st 2009 to Oct 15th 2009. The exhibit is called Jamestown and Bermuda: Virginia Company Colonies.

September 11, 2009 will be the date of our next meeting. Information about this meeting has been posted on our website and there is an enclosed flier included in this mailing that will help you make you arrangements so that you and your family can attend.

Our society cannot function without volunteers. Please consider spending some time helping us with the many interesting activities to further our stated goals. There is another flier enclosed to help you decide and sign-up for your area of interest. 

Happy New Year  
Sincerely,  
Susan B. W. Abanor

## Minutes of the Second Triennial Meeting

The meeting was held on September 7, 2008 at the Radisson Hotel, Plymouth, Massachusetts at 9:30 a.m.

The Governor, Chester Hopkins, called the meeting to order, and distributed the Agenda.

Before starting the meeting, the attendees had a group picture taken at the back of the conference room.

Governor Hopkins opened the meeting by informing the members that the membership was now up to 150 from 75 three years ago. He introduced the Historian, Judy Elfring.

Governor Hopkins asked for a report from the Treasurer, Ed Flaherty. Mr. Flaherty informed the meeting that the income since inception was \$8,529.89. Expenses had been approximately \$3100, leaving a bank balance of approximately \$5,400. During the interim, the money had been invested in a bank Certificate of Deposit. One of the members asked about the tax status of the Society. He was informed that we were a non-profit organization with a tax ID, but that we had not filed for official status as a 501-C-3 organization. This may occur if the Society grows much larger.

There was a discussion of the proposed changes to the By-Laws which had been distributed. Governor Hopkins said that the essence of the changes was to have the term of the Governor, Board members, and Officers, coincide with the Hopkins Society meeting at the time of the General Society at Plymouth. Currently the terms end at the end of the calendar year after the membership meeting. After a brief discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and approved that the recommend changes be made to the current By-laws.

Governor Hopkins announced the slate of Board members and Officers proposed by the Nominating Committee. There was no one proposed as Secretary, but Ken Whittemore said he would stand for office. A nomination was made from the floor for the office of Assistant, but was withdrawn after a review of the By-Laws indicated that there could only be three Assistants. There being no further discussion, a voice vote was taken unanimously approving the slate as follows:

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# Minutes of Second Meeting

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Susan Abanor	— Governor
Ruth A. Freyer	— Deputy Governor
Kenneth Whittemore	— Secretary
Edward P. Flaherty	— Treasurer
Judith Elfring	— Historian
Carole J. Dilley	— Assistant
William R. Fleck	— Assistant
Everard Munsey	— Assistant

Governor Hopkins asked if there was any new business. A member talked about work being done with DNA. She suggested that with the males, should there be Y match, that the wives should get a DNA test to establish the mitochondrial line for future generations.

There being no further new business, the floor was turned over to the new Governor, Susan Abanor.

Governor Abanor told the members of the progress being made on the 8th Generation Project, where data from the Silver Books up the 8th Generation was being put on the Pilgrim Hopkins website to help existing and potential members researching their lines.

It also would allow existing members to post their lines on the site, if they so chose. Governor Abanor asked


that this information be sent to the Secretary who would forward it to the Historian.

Governor Abanor said that there was a need for volunteers for a number of projects and referred the members to sign-up sheets on the table at the corner of the room. She explained what each of the "teams" would be doing.

Two members, Carol and Cary Gagnon, volunteered to work on developing a program to get young people interested in the Society. Franklin Smith offered to consult on the running and development of the [www.pilgrimhopkins.com](http://www.pilgrimhopkins.com) website.

It was noted that the By-laws require that there be an Annual Meeting of the members unless the Board feels that a quorum would not be present. After some discussion, it was decided that the Board explore the possibility of holding the meeting at the same time and place as the General Meeting of the Mayflower Society. The next General Meeting is to be held in Annapolis, Maryland in 2009 and in San Diego, California in 2010.

Next, Steven Hopkins (John Jenks), from Plimoth Plantation, spoke to the meeting about his life in England and America.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. 

Harold Woolley  
Secretary Pro-tem



Photo by Franklin Smith

**Meeting Attendees** (alphabetical order): Susan Abanor, Sara Baker, Donald Ballam, Eunice Ballam, Judith Brister, Bea Brown, Rebecca Chin, Robert E. Davis, Winifred Edwards, Ken Farnsworth, Edward P. Flaherty, Judy Flaherty, Ruth Freyer, Carol A. Gagnon, Carrie Gagnon, Amollia Grossman, Amy K. Hall, Nancy Holden, Catherine F. Hopkins, Chester I. Hopkins III, William P. Hopkins, John Kemp, Elizabeth A. MacLean, Sharon A. Matyas, Carol MacPhail, Kerry Mark McCuiston, Velda Jun McCuiston, Detcha Monahan, Jim Morrison, Susan Morrison, Sarah Morse, Everard Munsey, Bernice Ann Munsey, Robert Nickerson, Kim Parmee, Gini Patterson, Richard Corbin Prowell, Charles Paul Smith, Franklin Smith, Loren Somes Sr., Carol Van Deusen, Donald C. Watson, Kenneth Whittemore, Harold Woolley.

## The Old Comers' Perk

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While a subsistence level living was achieved under this new arrangement, the Colony was producing few profits. In fact, as the *Fortune* was returning to England in December, 1621, loaded with goods to provide the first payment of the Colony debt, it was looted by pirates. The same occurred two years later with the goods aboard the *James* on its return trip. The Merchant Adventurers were becoming increasingly impatient.

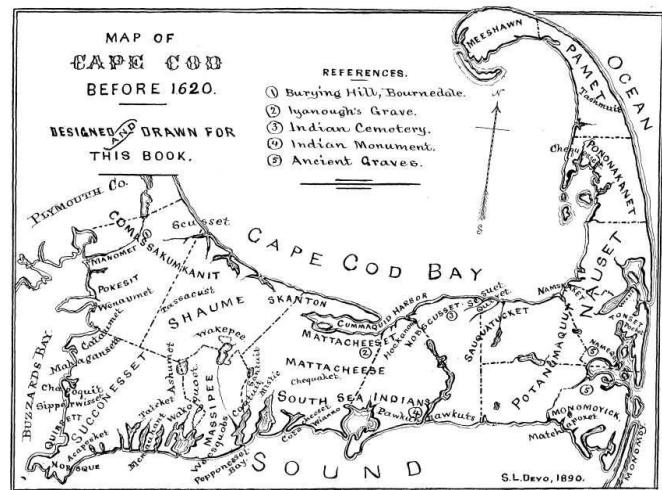
In the face of this business debacle, in 1626 the Colony leadership decided to buy out the Merchant Adventurers and thus take control of their own finances. For this purpose, they sent Isaac Allerton to England to negotiate a buyout over a period of years of the half interest of the Adventurers. The Merchant Adventurers were glad to extricate themselves from this unprofitable enterprise, and on 26 October 1626 an agreement to this effect was reached between Allerton, representing all the "planters," later known as the "Purchasers or Old Comers," and the Merchant Adventurers.

Under this agreement, the 53 Plymouth original colonists plus five London merchants who had been among their strongest supporters (i.e., James Sherley, John Beauchamp, Richard Andrews, Timothy Hatherly and William Thomas), became owners of all the property in the Colony.

### The 1627 Division of Cattle

In the wake of this agreement, there was a broad upsurge of demand for more privately-owned land. In response, under the "1627 Division of Cattle," the Colony leadership gave all settlers titles to the houses they had built, to their house lots, and to the acreage distributed in 1623. In addition, every single man, excluding servants, received 20 acres and every head of family received 20 acres per family member in full ownership. This arrangement was of course most beneficial to the larger families, such as Stephen Hopkins'. Meadows were still owned collectively, and everyone could cut hay on them or graze cattle after the hay was harvested. Finally, under this new arrangement, every man, woman and child living in the Colony was divided up in 12 groups of 13 persons, and one cow and two goats, previously owned collectively, were distributed to each of these groups.

Shortly after the 1626 buy out, Governor Bradford and seven leading men of the Colony (Edward Winslow, William Brewster, Miles Standish, John Alden, John Howland, Isaac Allerton and Thomas Prentice), plus four Londoners (Sherley, Beauchamp, Andrews and Hatherly), stepped forward and offered to pay, on behalf of the Colony, the 1,800 pound debt owed to the Merchant Adventurers at the rate of 200 pounds per year. In return for taking on this obligation, these 12 "Undertakers" would receive a six year monopoly on fur trade with the Indians and assume the responsibility for procuring those goods still needed from England, which they would sell to the colonists for corn (at six shillings per bushel). A key motivation for the Undertakers was to acquire the means to transport to Plymouth the group of Separatists who had been left behind in Leyden – a task the non-Separatists in the Colony (such as Hopkins) were understandably not interested in financing. Stephen Hopkins was among the 27 Purchasers to sign the agreement with the Undertakers on the above lines.



The "Purchasers and Old Comers" were required to "extinguish" the titles of Native Americans before they obtained clear land titles.

(Map from Simeon L. Deyo, *History of Barnstable County, Massachusetts*)

### The Three Patents

In light of all of these changes, a new patent was deemed necessary for the Plymouth Colony. This new patent was actually the last of three different patents from the English crown granting the Plymouth Colony Pilgrims permission in the eyes of English law to settle on land which the King claimed as British North America.

The first patent was never effective simply because the Pilgrims settled in the wrong place. It had been obtained in 1620 on their behalf by Mr. John Peirce, the president of the Merchant Adventurers, from the Virginia Company. This company had been set up in 1606 by King James I and two groups of noblemen, from London and Plymouth, respectively, to underwrite British settlements in America. By the time Peirce approached it, the Company had been burned by financially disappointing ventures in both Maine and Jamestown, and was no longer in the business of providing financial backing to new settlements. Instead, it offered a crown-backed franchise to settlers, who must find their own financing. The "First Peirce Patent" granted the Pilgrims permission to settle on land south of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parallel, in the "Northern part of Virginia," at the mouth of the Hudson river.

As is well known, the Mayflower Compact was a hastily drawn up interim agreement on self-government drawn up by the Pilgrims as they were about to land well north of what had been stipulated in the First Peirce Patent. When the *Mayflower* returned to England in April 1621, and the Merchant Adventurers learned the Pilgrims had settled at Plymouth instead of at the mouth of the Hudson, they approached the crown-backed Great Council for New England for a new, more appropriate patent. The Council, created in 1620 and comprised of 40 "noblemen, knights and gentlemen," for the establishment of the "... Planting, Ruling and Governing of New England in America..." on 1 June 1621 signed off on the Second Peirce Patent, again in the name of John Peirce of London and associates and for the benefit of the Pilgrims of Plymouth.

The Second Peirce Patent was provisional, providing that in seven years the settlement would be granted a perma-

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## Sensible DNA Testing by Dr. Bill Hopkins

*The relatively recent availability of DNA testing for genealogy purposes led Dr. Bill Hopkins to explore the pros and cons of getting himself tested. In the following article he shares his findings and insights about the practical aspects of testing the descendants of Stephen Hopkins, both male and female.*

### The Hopkins men

The direct male descendants of Stephen Hopkins is a cohort to which I strongly believe I am attached. I am personally aware of 100 or so members of this group, and feel there is likely a good number more of us out there. Time is of the essence to get those known direct male descendants of Stephen tested and catalogued.

Why test these "direct" Hopkins males? A compelling reason is that while it was common for there to be 4 or 5 male children in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century families, this is rare today. Statistically, as family sizes dwindle, the number of direct male descendants of Stephen Hopkins will rapidly decrease.

These relatively small numbers of direct male descendants are the only carriers of the Stephen Hopkins Y chromosome. It is what makes a baby male and is a record of our ancestry carried with males for the next generation of males to keep. It can remain unchanged for many generations, so a man will likely have the exact same Y-chromosome as his paternal g-g-g-g-g-grandfather. You will also often share the same surname as it is passed down the very same line (which is why it is so useful to genealogists!)

The Y-chromosome is but one half of a pair of sex chromosomes, and they are but one of 23 pairs of chromosomes, that exist in each cell in our bodies. They are made up of tightly packed DNA, which itself is made up of huge (and I do mean HUGE!) strands of but four molecules, known as "bases": adenine (A), thymine (T), Guanine (G), and Cytosine (C). Chemically, A binds to T, and G binds to C. Thus there are but four types of "base pairs": A-T, T-A, G-C, and C-G.

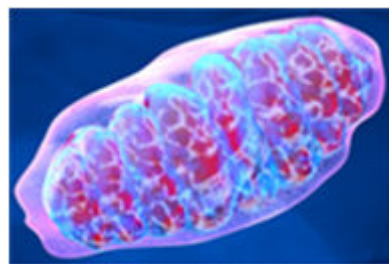


*The male mtDNA within the sperm's tail is lost as it enters the egg.*

It seems simple at this molecular level, but the entire set of 46 chromosomes contains about 3,000,000,000 base pairs. Yes, that was 3 billion! The Y chromosome we are discussing is itself made up of 58,000,000 (yes, 58 million!) base pairs.

Mistakes, or mutations, in the sequence of base pairs in these long chains can occur. They are rare events, on average occurring but once in 500 generations. But remember, these chains are very, very long, so there are many chances for such mutations to occur. These mutations form patterns which are used to define unique subgroups for each individual Y-DNA and mtDNA line.

The Y-DNA testing labs identify various areas of the Y chromosome that have a relatively high rate of mutation. These are called "markers". If you and I have the same sequence of "base pairs" in these marker areas, it is highly likely we are related. The more we share, the more likely we are related, as there have not been any mutations in the marker areas that make us "different".



*Many mitochondria are found in each cell, all containing mtDNA.*

If even a small percentage of marker area sequences differ, the likelihood of being related to someone drops off significantly.

Y-DNA testing is at its most powerful when used with the existing paper records in trying to prove (or disprove) a theory or connection between two males with the same or similar surname. This can also be expanded to compare many males with the same surname as part of a Surname Project.

It would behoove all possible direct male descendants of Stephen Hopkins to be tested, preferably with 37 or more "markers." This would give our progeny a "bedrock" of matched DNA males to which both male and female descendants could draw upon to establish their descent from Stephen Hopkins of the Mayflower, over 400 years from his birth in England, truly an accomplishment.

### The Hopkins women

In the paternal societies of Western Europe and the Americas, women's birth surnames are often lost to posterity when they marry. Maybe that is why one of the more common secret questions to unlock computer files, or recover a password, is "What is your mother's maiden name?" I assume not too many women responded to the call for any direct female descendants of Mary? Hopkins or Elizabeth (Fisher?) Hopkins, Stephen's two wives. If any are known, they are true treasures of the Hopkins trust!

Be that as it may, there is a paramount need for Stephen Hopkins female descendants to be tested, and I hope to convey the rationale behind this. I will start by discussing female DNA testing, which is decidedly different than male Y-DNA testing. But that is what makes women the more interesting, isn't it?

Your maternal ancestry can be followed back using a special type of DNA called mitochondrial DNA. We call it mtDNA for short, and short it is! mtDNA is a smidgeon of DNA, an extremely small chain of but 16,569 base pairs, yet packed with 37 known functional genes. Small but powerful, as is my wife and two daughters-in-law!

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## Sensible DNA Testing

From page 5

Mitochondria are found within each of our cells in both men and women. They are not inside of the cell's nucleus, where the chromosomes reside. Their main job is to produce energy so that when we run up a flight of stairs, just enough energy is produced for our cells.

However, it's the way that the mitochondria and, more importantly, the mtDNA inside is passed on to the next generation that is of most interest to genealogists and people looking into their past.

In one quick sentence, only females pass mtDNA onto their offspring (both their boys and girls).

Therefore, everyone will have received mtDNA from their mother and in turn, those mothers received their mtDNA copies from their mothers too. In this way, the path of the mtDNA has travelled down the generations through the direct maternal line.

MtDNA testing is as important or more important than male Y-DNA testing, as it allows us to set a maternal benchmark, 400 years distant from Stephen's time, which our daughters and their daughters can utilize in their genealogic adventures.

Now, remember from the above male discussion, that when testing a surname group (such as our Stephen Hopkins line), the more areas of the genome ("markers" on the male Y-DNA chromosome), that are compared between any two individuals, the more statistical power exists to say whether they are or are not related.

When the labs test the much smaller mtDNA, rather than the "marker" areas found on the huge Y DNA strand, they designate actual numbers of "base pairs" (the A-T, T-A, G-C, and C-G pairs) on the female mtDNA that they are comparing.

At the 2005 2nd International Conference of Genetic Genealogy (ICGG) the following information was provided to compare the two types of testing, of Y-DNA chromosomes, and of mtDNA:

Equivalent strength of testing, male Y-DNA vs. female mtDNA	
Y-Chromosome	mtDNA
1.5 markers	540 base pairs
2.5 markers	1,050 base pairs
12 markers	4,800 base pairs
25 markers	10,000 base pairs
37 markers	14,800 base pairs
41 markers	16,569 base pairs*
*Full mtDNA	

As you can see above, the mtDNA testing of 1050 "base pairs" (often named areas HVR1 and HVR2 by the testing labs), is not adequate to establish a common female ancestor, only the equivalent of testing 1 or 2 Y-DNA "markers" in male descendants. Testing these relatively

small areas of genetic material is helpful only in population studies over long, long periods of time. Thus when you have these HVR areas tested, the results often are "of Western European origin", or, "of African descent", etc.


So, a full mtDNA comparison (16,569 "base pairs") for two individuals in a female line would give a comparison of their relationship as robust as does 41 Y "markers" in a male line. However, there are diseases associated with some genes on mtDNA (remember that though small, it has several functioning genes). The test results are private and revealed only to the person tested. A person matching another person with the same mtDNA could share that they are a match without sharing the results of the test with anyone else.

The costs of a 37 to 43 marker y-DNA test for a male Hopkins descendant is currently around \$160-\$260. The cost of a 67 marker male y-DNA test is about \$350. The cost of a full mtDNA test is, at the time of writing, \$495. The cost of HVR1 and HVR2 mtDNA testing is \$130-\$190, and has the equivalent robustness of only 2.5 markers on a Y-DNA test, hardly worth the time, effort, and expense. These costs have come down considerably, and should come down further. For those interested, if these costs are not prohibitive, I suggest the following:

A minimum 21 marker Y-DNA test for all direct male descendants of Stephen Hopkins. Preferably a 37, and at best a 67 marker test should be considered.

A full mtDNA test should be considered by daughters of those male descendants of Stephen who have an exact match, or, at worst, one mismatched marker, again, to establish a baseline (or "bedrock, as I stated above) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for future Hopkins genealogists.

For those individuals with well documented lineage, but not direct male descendants, nor direct female to female descendants, testing would establish a baseline for your family line.

A single laboratory and surname registry would be preferable, but I hesitate to make any recommendations at this time, based on my limited knowledge of the various labs. 

**Dr. Bill Hopkins** lives in Cadott WI with his wife Mary. He works for Ministry Health Care, enjoying family practice at a clinic in Thorp, WI. An avid amateur genealogist, he has researched his Maine and Massachusetts cousins, particularly the 17 children of Dr. Theophilus Hopkins, a Revolutionary War surgeon who journeyed north to Maine following the War (see "Mayflower Families through Five Generations, Stephen Hopkins", Volume 6, 3rd edition, page 359).

In 2006 he completed "Kennebec, Part One: Into Maine," comprised of stories derived from his research. He is currently working on "Kennebec, Part Two: Out from Maine," focused on the cousins as they move across America in the mid 19th and 20th centuries.

Dr Hopkins is a member of the Mayflower Society, and current governor of the Mullins Colony in Gainesville, Florida. He is a member of the Pilgrim Hopkins Heritage Society, and of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

## The Old Comers' Perk

From page 4

nent patent. As the legal framework for the contract the Pilgrims had with the Merchant Adventurers, it granted Peirce and his associates 100 acres for every person who remained in the settlement for seven years or died in the attempt, and 1,500 acres for public uses, for a total of some 25,000 acres. The settlers were also granted freedom to fish on the New England coast. After the seven years, the land would be legally transferred to the "planters." Once the lands had been properly surveyed, at the expense of the grantees, ownership would be confirmed by deed, and letters of incorporation would be granted, with the Colony authorized to make its laws and constitutions of government. In the meantime, they were authorized to pass laws and ordinances and approve officers, "as they shall by most voices agree upon."

The third patent was obtained from the Council of New England by Governor Bradford and his associates in 1630, when they took on the Colony's debt. Known as the Bradford Patent, it considerably increased the Colony's territory, to include a large tract of land on the Kennebec River (to be used for trade with the Indians) and all of Cape Cod.

### The Three Plantations

The period from 1630 to 1640 was one in which three different groups within the Colony vied to reconcile their diverse interests vis-à-vis land ownership. The holders of the 1630 Bradford patent (Bradford and his associates) considered that until they were reimbursed for expenses in obtaining the third patent, they rightfully owned all of the Colony's land. The larger group of Purchasers and Old Comers, as the Colony's founders and owners of the Second Peirce Patent, who had struggled and sacrificed to get the Colony on its feet in the initial difficult years, thought they deserved special consideration with regard to land ownership. Finally, new settlers felt that it should be the Colony as a whole which should own and apportion land.

While these competing interests jostled, the Colony's population was growing and pressure from all settlers for more private land was mounting. Responding to this pressure, and in the context of the additional territory granted under the Bradford Patent, the Colony Court had simply begun to grant lands to individuals and to towns. This situation led to considerable confusion and controversy.

In 1640, after much consultation and deliberation, a way forward was agreed upon. It was decided that Bradford and his associates would be reimbursed by the Colony for their outlay in obtaining the Bradford Patent. In return, they would surrender their patent to the Colony as a whole. The Colony's General Court would thereafter dispose of all lands under the patent, as it saw fit, with one important exception. By virtue of their special status, the Purchasers and Old Comers could select three "plantations" or "reserves," large tracts of land over which they and their heirs would have proprietary rights forever.

The first plantation embraced the existing towns of Westport, Dartmouth, New Bedford, Fairhaven and Acushnet. The second bordered on the Narragansett Bay between the Warren and the Pawtucket rivers, land now partly in Rhode Island and partly in Massachusetts. The third, which



Photos by John W. Brister



Throughout his life Stephen Hopkins kept his home on the easterly corner of Main and Leyden Streets on the lot he was assigned upon arrival. The building shown above was constructed on this lot. Leyden Street ran from the fort down to the harbor.

among others benefited Stephen Hopkins and his heirs, was a huge chunk of Cape Cod, running from Yarmouth to Eastham, bay to ocean.

The Purchasers and Old Comers were required to jump through a few hoops before claiming full title to this land, however. Unlike like the town of Plymouth (called Patuxet by the Indians), which when the Pilgrims arrived was abandoned due to a disease that had killed off its inhabitants a few years earlier, much of the land in these three huge tracts was occupied by Native Americans. While vis-à-vis other settlers, the Purchasers and Old Comers had the exclusive right to purchase land rights from the Indians, they could not obtain complete titles until they did so.

It is clear that these two very different cultures -- the Native Americans and the new settlers -- occupied and used land in very different ways, and had quite divergent concepts of ownership. Nevertheless, the Purchasers and Old Comers, as well as other colonists, approached their land purchases from the Native Americans as economic transactions within English jurisdiction, rather than as a negotiation between two sovereign nations.

Books have been written about the legal and moral underpinnings of these transactions, and roles played in land

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## The Old Comers' Perk

From page 7

transfers by not only patents and contracts, but cultural misunderstandings, geopolitics, religion, disease, war, poverty, theocracy, capitalism, monopoly and racism. Suffice it to say here that the Purchasers and Old Comers did, in one way or another, "extinguish" the titles of the Indians before they obtained complete title to land. Moreover, given their prevailing view that land was essentially a commodity, they soon subdivided their large reserves for resale to other colonists, and Plymouth (unlike some other colonized areas on the continent) preserved its character as a colony of small farmers.

### Hopkins' Holdings

With regard to Stephen Hopkins' holdings, it is difficult to pin down just how many acres he actually left to his heirs. In his will he bequeathed his second son Caleb:

...all my Right title and interest to may house and lands at Plymouth...all such land wch of Right is Rightly due unto me and not at present in my reall possession wch belongs unto me by right of my first coming into this land or by any other due Right, as by such freedome or otherwise giving unto my said heire my full & whole and entire Right in all divisions allotments appoyntmens or distributions whatsoever to all or any pt of the said lande at any tyme or tymes...


Caleb died at sea shortly after the death of his father, bequeathing his entitlements to his older half brother Giles. Giles' will, probated on 26 April 1690, gives a better sense of the scale of these holdings, as reflected in these excerpts:

...my son Stephen Hopkins shall possess and Injoy all my upland and meadow Lying and being at Satuckit that is to say all my upland and meadow on ye southerly side of ye bounds of ye Towne of eastham that is to say all my Right and title Intrrest and claime to all those Lands from ye head of Namescakit to ye southermost part of ye long pond where mannomoiet cart way goes over to Satuckit and from thence to ye head of manomoiet river and so as our Line shall run over to ye south sea all ye Lands between thos bounds and ye westermost bounds of ye purchasers at satuckit river...

... all my Lands at Palmet both purchased and unpurchased both meadows and upland and all my Lands at Pochet and my third part of Samsons neck and what other Lands shall fall unto me as a pur-

chaser from ye fore mentioned Bounds of my son Stephen Hopkinses Lands and potanomacot all these fore specified Lands I give unto my sons Caleb and Joshua to be equally devided between them...

...I give unto my wife Catorne Hopkins and to my son William Hopkins the improvement of too acres of meadow Lying at ye head of Rock Harbor...I give unto my son Joshua Hopkins a meadow Lying at ye mouth of Rock Harbor...I give unto my son Caleb Hopkins a parcel of meadow Lying at Little Nameskeket ...I give unto my wife my now dwelling House and halfe my Land and halfe my orchard that is by my house... the other half of my Land and orchard I give to my son Joshua Hopkins...

In short, the many risks Stephen Hopkins took when he set foot on the *Mayflower* paid him and his heirs high returns indeed. 

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### Next Meeting

Friday, 11 September 2009

Doubletree Hotel

210 Holiday Court

Annapolis, MD 21401

Lower Ballroom 6:30 - 10:00 P.M.

Anyone related or interested in the Pilgrim Hopkins family is invited.

Reservations are required by 28 August 2009

The dinner will be \$34.28 per person.

If you would like to stay overnight there is a special room rate of \$129 if you mention the Mayflower Society.

Please call hotel directly for your room reservation: (410)224-3150

R.S.V.P. to [secretary@pilgrimhopkins.com](mailto:secretary@pilgrimhopkins.com)

### Contact us

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