

Sarah, Mary, and Abigail
The Daughters of Captain John and Sarah

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Abstract

This is the last in a series of articles on the lives of Captain John Whipple and his immediate family. It is part of a book to be released by the authors, and as such is a work in progress. Please send corrections or additions to charles@whipple.net or brcgenealogy@yahoo.com.

Sarah Whipple Smith Arnold

Sarah Whipple¹, oldest of the Whipple daughters, like most of her siblings, married into one of the founding families of Providence. Immediately upon immigrating to Providence with her family in 1658/59, she married John Smith Junior, son of her father's former neighbor in Dorchester, Massachusetts. The births of their 10 children, all born and married in Providence, are approximate:

- i. John, born 1661; died 20 April 1737.*
- ii. Sarah, born 1663; died 14 Oct 1725; married Richard Clemence.*
- iii. Alice, born 1665; died 19 Feb 1735/36; married John Dexter*
- iv. Mary, born 1667; died 13 Dec 1737; married Arthur Fenner*
- v. Joseph, born 1679; died 13 Jan 1749/50; married Lydia Gardner*
- vi. Benjamin, born 1672, died 23 Apr 1751; married Mercy Angell*
- vii. Israel, born 1674; died 1683.*
- viii. Daniel; born 1676; died 1683.*
- ix. Elisha, born 14 Apt 1680; died Aft 25 Nov 1766 married Experience Mowry*
- x. William, born 1682; died 11 Dec 1753; married Mary Sayles*

"You may note that the Smiths named a daughter after her mother just as they named the son after the father. This common practice suggests that these early colonial women felt as strongly as the men about perpetuating their names, hence their identity. Though not legally allowed to keep their last names, at least this way they could pass on their first, but, regrettably, the women did not also suffix the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. as usually happened with the sons. From the historians' and genealogists' point of view, this repeated use of the same first names with and between families, along with so many

intermarriages amongst these early families, compounds the difficulty of tracing family members through the generations---and of ascertaining relationships."²

John Smith Senior's home in Massachusetts was at Ponkapog, in the southern foothills of the Blue Mountains. His name appears on the records of Dorchester in connection with a tract of land "about the mill." Captain John Whipple lived near this same mill, and is thought to have played a role, as an indentured servant, in its construction for Israel Stoughton in 1634.³

Smith was exiled after the Massachusetts General Court ordered that "John Smyth salbe sent within theis 6 weekes out of this jurisdiction for dyvers dangerous opinions, wch hee holdeth, & hath divulged, if in the meane tyme he removes not himselfe out of this plantation." He immediately joined Roger Williams, William Harris, Joshua Verin, Thomas Angell, and Francis Wickes as they fled through the wilderness to the mouth of the Moshassuck River. Williams stated on 17 November 1677, "I consented to John Smith, Miller, at Dorchester [banished also] to go with me."⁴ Smith was given the exclusive right to operate a gristmill on Mill Street as long as he provided satisfactory service in grinding corn for the townsmen. He served as Town Clerk in 1641 and died between 1647 and 1649. Below is a photo of the commemorative plaque that marks the location of the Smith gristmill. It is located approximately 100 yards northwest of where Mill (now James) Street crosses the Moshassuck River, and on the south side of the present Girl Scouts of Rhode Island Building.

"Smith, the miller (so-called to distinguish him from the other Smiths) was married to Alice (maiden name not found) who bore two children: John, Jr. and Elizabeth, who married Shadrach Manton, a cooper [Manton signed the Last Will and Testament of Captain John Whipple]. They found Shadrach dead on the road in 1714, but the town declared it of natural causes. Thirteen grandchildren and sixty-five great-grandchildren descended from Alice and John's two children. In his will John Smith left his mill to his son John, but it was his widow, Alice, who, after husband death in 1648, made an agreement with the town to continue the business, becoming, perhaps, the Colony's first businesswoman.... It was only after Alice had been operating it for two years that her son, John, Jr., took over...adding a sawmill. He operated both for the next thirty-five years."⁵

"Long before jail or meeting-house, the Town mill was the earliest institution of the Plantations. It received much careful oversight from the Town meeting....The mill fixed the centre of the town at the North end, and long kept it there. Around and near it, those who were able, set their houses, and it became not merely the nucleus of population, but



Site of Sarah Whipple-Smith Mill

the place of public rendezvous and exchange. It served the same purpose as the meeting-house in early Massachusetts, or as the newspaper and insurance offices of later days...it took part in many a sturdy encounter of the Baptist, the Gortonian, and the Quaker...During one hundred and eighty years the Town Mill fulfilled its office, and was one of the last memorials of primitive times. It was

destroyed at last, by the Blackstone canal...."⁶

"The earliest 'civic center' grew up in the vicinity of the falls of the Moshassuck, a short distance north of the present Mill Street bridge, where the town grist mill was established in 1646. John Smith, one of the original settlers, was a miller by trade. He was granted a home lot and erected a house on the Towne street but soon sold that property and removed to the Moshassuck valley. In 1646 the town granted him 'the valley wherein his house stands in case he set up a mill.' Upon its erection the mill became the center of the town's activities. On every second and third day of the week it was used 'for grinding of the Corne of the Town.' On other days it served as a place for informal gatherings by the townspeople and for occasional town meetings and religious services. The miller died about 1649 and was succeeded by his son, John Smith, Jr. The civic center was further developed in 1655 by the establishment of a tannery, operated by Thomas Olney, Jr., a short distance east of the mill at the foot of the 'Stampers', a hill formerly so-called rising east of Moshassuck river. A highway leading to the mill and tannery was laid out at that time..."⁷

Sarah Whipple and John Smith Junior inherited the Smith mill property, started a nearby sawmill on their own, and along with their 10 children, carried on the family business. Sarah and her family also played an important role in the Indian war. "On March 30, 1676, Providence was attacked by the Indians. Previously a large proportion of the citizens had removed to Newport with their families and effects, leaving only 27 men to defend the town...the Indians burned most of the houses on Town street as well as the mill, the tannery, and the miller's house on Moshassuck river. John Smith Jr., the miller, was then town clerk and the records were in his possession. They were thrown from his burning house into the millpond to preserve them from the flames, and to the present day they bear plenary evidence of the two-fold dangers they escaped, the two-fold injury they suffered."⁸ One wonders what part Sarah could have played in saving the records.

In addition to the paid position of clerk to the town council during the mid 1670s, other responsible civic positions John Smith Junior held, as listed in *The Early Records of the Town of Providence* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1892-1915), were town sergeant and constable. The council also appointed him to serve as a representative to the general assembly in Newport (XI:157). Like her younger sisters, Sarah endured the loss of her first husband through death. He died sometime between 22 February 1681/82 when he drew up his will (VI:60-62) and 10 April 1682 (VI:37) when "Sarah Smith (widow) hath this day preferred unto ye council a written paper for ye council to vew and approve for her deceased husbands will. And also a paper as an inventory of his estate..." On 2 June 1682, she and her son, John III, signed as administrators of his estate. And, also like her sisters, Sarah signed her name with an "x" (XVII:2).

John Smith's Last Will and Testament reads in part: "I bequeath to Sarah my wife halfe the mill with ye halfe of ye land neare it, viz ten acres upon ye hill and ye valley whereupon ye house standeth...and ye halfe of all the lande and meadow at ye west river...halfe of ye sawmill..." Her brother John Junior and brother-in-law William Hopkins inventoried his movable estate at a little over £90. "Smith Street bears the name of John Smith, father and son, the first millers of Providence."⁹ This major thoroughfare is one of the inner city's busiest, running east and west on the north side of the state capitol building. It intersects north Main Street where Captain John's lot was located.

Approximately six years later, on 21 May 1688, "Richard Arnold and Sarah Smith are this day Openly Published in way of Marriage in ye Open town meeting no person

objecting" (VIII:175). Richard Arnold was a 46-year-old Quaker widower with four children, two young enough still to be under his care. His first wife was Mary Angell, sister of the wives of two of Sarah's brothers.¹⁰ Sarah was also 46 years of age, with at least three children possibly still at home. They were married for 22 years, living on his estate about three miles west of Providence near her sister Abigail: "At a Town meeting August ye 16th: 1704 held at ye house of Captain Richard Arnold at Wanasquatuckett" (XI:92).

Captain Richard Arnold, Esq., was a wealthy farmer/industrialist who had been prominent in town politics for years.¹¹ He took an oath of allegiance to King Charles the Second 30 May 1667, the same day as Sarah's first husband (III:102). He was made a full purchaser (III:84). He began his lengthy tenure as a member of the town council in 1670, serving as its moderator on several occasions (VIII:110). He was frequently a deputy to the general assembly in Newport (VIII:47, VIII:92, X:54, XI:70) Among many civic activities, he served on a committee with John Whipple Junior to run "our western Line north from south which is the western bound of our plantation" (IV:43) And he was a member of the committee that met with Connecticut and Massachusetts to set the northern boundary of the colony (XVIII:153).

Richard Arnold died 22 April 1710. "First I give Sarah my wife for the time of her natural life my two lotts in the Towne with the orchard and house upon them and also my meadow at the west river...also two coves, and one third part of my household goods...and all the Estate that was hers before I married with her..." (VII:1-9). "The Towne council tenders the Administration of the sd estate unto Sarah Arnold, widow of the sd Capt. Richard Arnold, but she refused it, whereupon the councill granted it to his sons...." On 12 May 1710 she "Quitclaimed" the two lots and meadow property in the will to her stepsons, Richard, John, and Thomas: "because of her age could not manage it." In return she was to receive eight pounds annually for life (XX:380-81).

Captain Arnold appears to have been good to his stepchildren, even assisting them to improve and enlarge their holdings. For instance, he and John Smith III built a second saw mill "downe streame from the dam of sd John Smith for setting up a saw mill" (XI:102-03). The mills stayed in possession of the Smith family for several generations.¹² The entire Sarah Whipple-Smith-Arnold family is thought to have been members of the Society of Friends.¹³ And as noted, Sarah's granddaughter, Anne Smith, married her sister Abigail's grandson, Stephen Hopkins, in 1755, a few months before he became governor of Rhode Island at a Friend's Meetinghouse in Smithfield.¹⁴

Mary Whipple Olney

The John Whipple and Thomas Olney families witnessed marriages between two of their children: John Junior and Mary Olney and Mary Whipple and Epenetus Olney. Mary Whipple¹⁵ and Epenetus Olney, who were married 9 March 1665/66, lived in their tavern house in Providence until their deaths in 1698.¹⁶ Their children were born, married and died in Providence:

- i. Mary, born 13 Jan 1668; died Bef 19 Jun 1725; married Nathaniel Waterman*
- ii. James, born 9 Nov 1670; died 6 Oct 1744; married Hallelujah Brown*
- iii. Sarah; born 10 Sep 1672; married Nathan Waterman.*

- iv. Epenetus; born 18 Jan 1674; died 18 Sep 1740; married Mary Williams.*
- v. John, born 24 Oct 1678; died 9 Nov 1754; married Rachel Coggeshall.*
- vi. Mercy, born 1684*
- vii. Thomas, born 18 May 1686; died 28 Jul 1752; married Lydia Barnes.*
- viii. Lydia, born 20 Jan 1688/89; died 1728; married Henry Harris.*

The Olney family, of which Mary became an early member, was much revered from the earliest days of the colony. "Thomas Olney, the founder of this large and distinguished family, was among the first to take a title to 'Outlands' on the lower reaches of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket rivers. He was one of the original members of the First Baptist Church, Providence, of which his son Thomas was minister in 1668. Father and son held town offices from town clerk to assistant to the Governor for one hundred and fourteen years. The family estates extended from 'Observation Hill' on the east to 'Round Hill,' beyond the 'Seven Mile Line,' on the west, and included the section named Olneyville. The Olney name found its way into Smithfield and Glocester, with intermarriages with the Whipples, Sayles, Waterman and Williams families. In the fourth generation of this family, there were sixty of the name and blood."¹⁷

"The Olneys were another of Providence's early families. In 1635, Marie Ashton and Thomas Olney, Sr., originally from Hertfordshire, England, came on the ship Planter to Boston, Massachusetts. They had with them two young children: Thomas, Jr., three, and Epenetus.... Their daughters were Mary, who married John Whipple, Jr., son of Capt. John Whipple; and Lydia, who married Joseph Williams, son of Roger and Mary Williams.... In 1659, Thomas established his son, Epenetus and his daughter-in-law, Mary Whipple, the daughter of an innkeeper, in a house adjoining his and next door to that of Gregory Dexter, Pastor of the Baptist Society of Providence. There they established the Olney Tavern that would soon become intertwined with Providence's history; a place where religious and political influences would happily converge. The tavern's traditions were continued by their son, James, and his wife Hallelujah Brown, and then by their son Joseph under whom it became the site of the many festivities that made it famous."¹⁸

"Toward the end of the century public houses were becoming more numerous and more commodious. One of these was built by Epenetus Olney, replacing his former tavern, which had been destroyed by the Indians. It stood for many years and was the rendezvous for travelers over the Common Road to Pawtucket. The town stocks were erected on Dexter's lane, adjoining the tavern, and close by a blacksmith shop was established by John Olney in 1699."¹⁹

"Olney's Tavern, which shared with Whipple's and Turpin's a celebrity that endured well into the last century...enjoyed a longer life and greater celebrity than either of the other two...The property passed to the descendants of Epenetus Olney through several generations, and saw its rivals die while it continued its successful career as a hostelry well into the last years of the last century...when Joseph Olney dedicated his big elm on the green in front of it as a 'liberty tree.' But in 1803, when the city was drifting away from it and it had seen its best days, Colonel Jere Olney built a house on the green before it, and it was a matter of a few years only before it passed away."²⁰

As noted in the John Whipple Junior chapter, Mary and her husband owned competing taverns with her oldest brother and their father. The Olney tavern was just

around the corner and up the hill from the two John Whipple taverns at the northeast corner of Town Street and Olney Lane. Hotel-taverns were places of great importance "before the building of the county court house in 1729. Those of Whipple and Epenetus Olney were famous...."²¹ In 1682, a "competitor entered the field, and a rival hostelry now offered the town-meeting not house-room only, but 'fire roome and fireing and Candle at all their Towne Meeteings and Council meeteings,' nor does it admit of doubt that the inner man might also be warmed and comforted should the necessity arise. This enterprising competitor was no other than John Whipple Junior. John Junior kept a tavern for many years on Mill Street and a brother, Joseph, was also at one time a licensed innkeeper with the town of Providence."²² In the late 1690s, the Olney Tavern was the site of the Providence annual fair. Mary's brother-in-law, William Hopkins, was "clarke of the market."²³

In addition to serving in the typical civic positions of a man active in town life, such as juryman, constable, fences viewer, etc., as well as buying and selling hundreds of acres of land, Epenetus Olney appears in *The Early Records of the Town of Providence* (Snow & Farnham, 1892-1915) as a moderator of the town council, and a deputy to the general assembly at Newport (VIII:14 & III:122). He took the Oath of Allegiance the same time as Captain John Whipple (III:101). He was called a "shoemaker" in a land deal of 8 March 1669/70 (IV:254). He took the side of his relatives (John Whipple Junior, William Harris, etc.) in the controversy over Indian lands (VIII:61). He was granted land for a wharf and warehouse (VIII:17-18). On 27 January 1695/96, he joined his in-laws Joseph Whipple, William Hopkins, John Smith Junior, John Dexter, and others in an appeal to build a school house on Whipple property (XI:22). Epenetus Olney died 3 June 1698. His son, James, wrote "Whereas Epenetus Olney...died intestate...if he had, had the opportunitye to have a written will, he would have disposed of his landes amongst his sons...I make over into my said two brothers John and Thomas Olney all of that land...being at the place called caucaunjawalchchuck...140 acres...." Mary Whipple-Olney, relict and widow, was made adminitrix of the estate ((II:216). She died 12 July 1698.

Subsequent to the deaths of his parents, James inherited the tavern, and maintained the business until his death in 1744.²⁴ He passed it on to his son Joseph. At his death in 1777, Joseph Junior inherited the business, but closed it down and moved to the state of New York. During the time it was owned by Joseph Senior, the tavern began to be used as a stagecoach depot: "The first stage coach route, maintaining a regular schedule, was instituted... in 1767. It carried passengers every Tuesday morning from Olney's Tavern (North Main and Olney Streets) to Boston and made the return trip on Thursdays."²⁵

Several historians recount the engaging story of Joseph Olney Junior's sister Polly's romance with a Bostonian named William Palfrey. "It was a time (just before the Revolutionary War) when tavern-keepers were typically showmen, and their taverns places where young and old gathered to 'dance the old square dances and minuets'...The Olney inn was no exception.... It was at one of these assemblies at the Olney Inn that William Palfrey from Boston first met Polly Olney, and managed to engage Moses Brown as a go-between in Palfrey's pursuit of her." [Moses Brown was the youngest of the four merchant princes of Providence]. Polly was the 'charming and strangely facetious daughter of Joseph Olney,' who carried on the favorite Olney Tavern of his parents."

Joseph Junior arranged for his sister to meet Palfrey in secret on more than one occasion. A series of letters between Palfrey and Polly through Moses Brown, however, did not result in marriage. Instead, she married another Bostonian named Thomas Greene in 1764 and moved to that city. Moses Brown subsequently married Mary Olney, Polly's cousin. "Mary and Polly... were approximately the same age, their fathers both descendants of the pioneer settler, Thomas Olney, Sr., and both their fathers owned taverns in Providence."²⁶

Joseph Senior's brother, Captain Jonathan Olney, was founder of the town of Olneyville, Rhode Island.²⁷ Epenetus Junior and family lived in North Providence on Fruit Hill near the farm of Benjamin Whipple, his mother's brother, and was a founder of the town of Centerdale, Rhode Island.²⁸ Mary Whipple-Olney's descendants became some of Rhode Island's and New England's most respected military men, professionals, and statesmen.²⁹ The oldest house in Centerdale, Rhode Island, built in 1701, was that of Epenetus Olney Junior.³⁰ The destinies of the Whipple and Olney families were intertwined for many years.

Abigail Whipple Dexter Hopkins and Governor Stephen Hopkins

Abigail Whipple Dexter Hopkins, youngest daughter of Captain John, died in Providence 19 August 1725. The date and place of her birth are unknown. It has historically been placed at Providence about 1660. This arbitrary nativity assignment assumes that since records of her christening in Dorchester have not been found, she must have been born after the family's move to Providence. This places her birth four years subsequent to her brother David's christening in 1656, which is inconsistent with the ordinal positioning of her siblings.³¹ It may be that her parents had been adjudicated anathema in Massachusetts society by the time of her probable birth in 1657/58, thus obviating her baptism/christening. It is known that the Whipple's sold their property in Dorchester less than one month after Massachusetts passed a law, 19 October 1658, which required Quakers to absent the colony on pain of death.³² Abigail is thought to have married Stephen Dexter in 1672, also highly unlikely had she been born in 1660. Her husband was born 1 November 1647 and died in 1679. They were the parents of two children, who were born, married, and died in Providence:

- i. John Dexter, born 1673; died 22 Apr 1734; married Mary Field.*
- ii. Abigail Dexter, born 1675; died Aft 19 Aug 1725; married Thomas Field.*

On 5 February 1671/72, The Reverend Gregory Dexter, former governor of the colony³³, deeded to his twenty-five year old son, Stephen, several plots of land, including an eighty acre farm in the Louquisset about eight miles north of the settlement: "I acknoledg I do giue vnto my Eldest son Stephen Dexter...only Excepting which I do Relly Except this priueledge for the Inhabitance of the town of prouidence to fetch for their vse as much lime Rock from the rock Cled Hackeltons Rock as they please provided Also That Equall Allowance be alowed for a way to the said rock Through the said 80

acres be giuen to my said son...." ³⁴ "Stephen Dexter, eldest son of Gregory Dexter, began making lime at Dexter Ledge before King Philips War.³⁵ Shortly thereafter, Stephen married fourteen or fifteen year old Abigail Whipple.

The Dexter family began to "burn lime" in the mid 1660s on this property, which was immediately west of the farms of Abigail's brothers William and Eleazer, and her sister-in-law Mary Harris Whipple's father's family, at what became known as the "Limerock settlement." These families eventually went into the lime-manufacturing business together. Gregory Dexter was mentioned in a letter from Roger Williams to John Winthrop Junior, Governor of Connecticut, 19 August 1669. Part of the letter reads, "Sir I have encouraged Mr. (Gregory) Dexter to send you a Limestone and to salute You with this inclosed. He is an intelligent man, a Master Printer of London, and Conscionable (though a Baptist)...Sir if there be any occasion of Your Selfe (or others) to use any of this stone, Mr. Dexter hath a lusty Teame and lustie Sons and a very willing heart being a Sangwine Cheerfull Man to doe Your Selfe or any service upon very honest and cheap Considerations...."³⁶ "This limestone had been dug up at "Dexter's Lime Rocks" on Hackleton's Rock between the Moshassuck and Blackstone rivers in present Lincoln... Just how soon the Dexter limestone began to be hauled in carts to Boston is now uncertain, but by the early eighteenth century it was a common occurrence on the Post Road."³⁷

In explaining why the village of Limerock was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission stated, "The monopoly which the Dexters, Whipples, Harrises, Jenckesses, and Mowreys held for so long over the industry...kept Limerock a close community; the interconnections among these families were labyrinthine and contributed to the social and physical stability of the village."³⁸ Gregory Dexter died in the year 1700, and Stephen in 1679;³⁹ however, his son John and several more generations kept the Dexter family in the lime manufacturing business for another century and a half.⁴⁰

Abigail Dexter received approval, on 5 January 1679/80 from the town council to administer her deceased husband's estate.⁴¹ The young couple's inventory of movable goods of only 10 items amounted to £23. Abigail's brother-in-law, Epenetus Olney, took the inventory on 22 December 1679.⁴²

After the death of her husband, Abigail married Captain William Hopkins in 1682, their son being Major William Junior. William Junior's son was Governor Stephen Hopkins.

i. William, born 1683; died Aft 1739; married Ruth Wilkinson.

William Hopkins Senior's father, Thomas, came to New England with his sister Frances Man and their uncle William Arnold in 1635. He followed Roger Williams in 1636 from Plymouth to Providence. At first, he was assigned to a home share of land situated near the south end of the town, the fourth lot south of what is now Powers Street. He later moved to a location west of the Pawtucket River, about ten miles north of his first assigned home lot. "Another of those who early-on obtained wharves was Thomas Hopkins Sr. We must assume he is the same Thomas Hopkins who was the oldest of the three children of William Arnold's sister, Joanne, who came to this country with the Arnold family group in 1635....Thomas was allotted home shares at the south end of

town...and additional land ten miles further out in what is now Lincoln. He made this his home until he fled to Long Island during the King Philips' War, never returning. By the time of his death, the elder Thomas had over 1,000 acres of land..."⁴³

At his death in 1684, his son Captain William inherited the Pawtucket property and subsequently passed it on, in 1723, to his son Major William. Major William Hopkins, in turn, sold a portion of it to Colonel Joseph Whipple on 22 August 1724, a plot of land estimated to contain 80 acres. On 19 October 1728, he mortgaged "his dwelling house" to Colonel Whipple and soon removed to Scituate, as he was a resident there by 10 April 1733. In these deeds he was called a carpenter.⁴⁴ Joseph Whipple was Abigail's younger brother. The young Dexter widow apparently met William Hopkins Senior while he lived on the Pawtucket farm of his parents, since her first husband's property was also located in the Pawtucket (Louquisset, Lincoln) area.

According to *The Early Records of the town of Providence* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1892-1915), the Hopkins family had been politically prominent in Providence affairs from the beginning. Early on, Captain William served on the town council, was an assistant, and was its moderator on numerous occasions (IV:70, III:223, VIII:59). He was a representative from Providence to the Rhode Island General Assembly for many years (XVII:144). Along with his eventual father-in-law Captain John Whipple, he was one of those who "staid and went not away" when the Indians attacked (VIII:12), and as such was later appointed to a committee to sell captives as was his eventual brother-in-law John Whipple Junior (VIII:15). "...William was a deputy from Providence for fifteen years between 1674 and 1715, acted in the town council of Providence for over twenty years, was town treasurer, major of the militia for the mainland of the Colony, and assistant or senator for seven years and speaker of the House of Deputies, one year. William's son, William, resided in Providence where his son, Stephen, was born. In Stephen's veins flowed good ancestral blood from the vigorous Hopkins line, crossed with that of the Whipples, Wickendens, and Wilkensions, all of whom showed special capacity for patriotic public service."⁴⁵

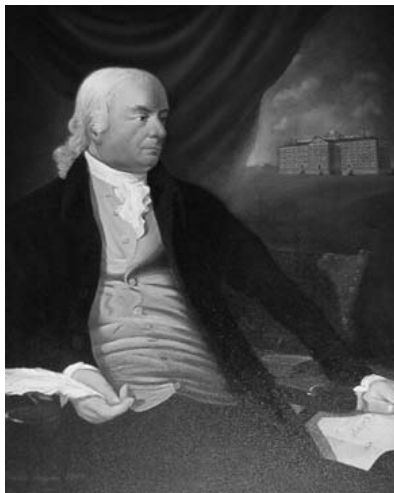
Abigail and William gave the Pawtucket farm to their son and moved to Masipague, about three miles east of Providence, where they lived out the rest of their married life. William died 8 July 1723, and Abigail was bonded to administer the estate (XII:70). In his last will and testament, the farm was given to their oldest grandson, William, providing that "he shall allow his Grandmother my Wife Abigaill Hopkins one Convenient Roome in my dwelling house...provide for her a sufficient maintenance bothe in sickness and in helth during the term of her natural life...." He also bequeathed to "my Grandson Rufus Hopkins my house Lott of Land which was Layd out upon my own Right upon the Hill Called the Stompers Hill in said Providence... in the last division of House Lotts..." Finally, "I Give and bequeathe unto my son William Hopkins all the Farme of Land and meadows: whereon he now dwells belonging to him to Give to & amongst his children..." The document was dated 1 July 1723.⁴⁶

Abigail Whipple Dexter Hopkins died 19 August 1725. In her last will and testament, dated 16 August 1725, she stated that "I Give & bequeathe unto my three Children John Dexter William Hopkins⁴⁷ and Abigail Ffield forty shillings a piece to be taken out of that mony that is due to mee from the proprietors of Providence for servis don by my husband...." Kitchen appliances, bedding, and household goods were given to grandchildren Abigail Dexter, Stephen Dexter, Hope Hopkins, and Abigail Hopkins. "I

give to my grand son William Hopkins my husband and his Grandfathers silver buttins for a shirt." The last named was made executor of the estate, which amounted to just over £98.⁴⁸ It is of interest that in neither will was their grandson Stephen Hopkins mentioned, although he was in his late teens by then.

Stephen Hopkins

The portrait of Stephen Hopkins below hangs elevated above the fireplace in the Corporation Room in University Hall (the building in the portrait) at Brown University. The caption reads "Stephen Hopkins, First Chancellor of Brown University, 1764-1783."



"He was the first Chancellor of Brown, a chief justice and four-time governor of the state. He even signed the Declaration of Independence, but after Stephen Hopkins died in 1785 no one was too sure what the ol' guy looked like. In fact, for nearly two centuries he was mistaken as someone else, a mistake that was only corrected about 20 years ago when a new painting of the colonial statesmen was hung in the State House.... The mix-up began when 'Signers of the Declaration of Independence,' the famous painting by 18th-century artist John Trumbull showing all of the signers of the historic document, mistakenly identified Hopkins as John Dickinson, the representative from Pennsylvania. Trumbull painted the work between 1788 and 1795.... When Trumbull was ready for Hopkins, the

Rhode Islander was dead. It is believed that a relative of Hopkins became the stand-in for Trumbull's original painting.... In 1819, Congress approved funding for a large engraving of the painting for the Capitol Rotunda. At that time, Trumbull mistakenly concluded that Dickinson- a Quaker pictured wearing a Quaker's hat - was Hopkins, who also was a Quaker. It was a mistake easily made, since the painting contained 47 individuals.... Trumbull's sketch of Hopkins' relative remained undiscovered for nearly 200 years, when an art historian spotted the discrepancy in the 1970s. John Hagen, the artist responsible for correcting the 200 year old faux pas and revealing Hopkins' true likeness, has put the finishing touches on a second Hopkins portrait that will hang in the Corporation Room of the University Hall...."⁴⁹

"Knowing nothing of armed ships, he (Adams) made himself expert, and would call his work on the naval committee the pleasantest part of his labors, in part because it brought him in contact with one of the singular figures in Congress, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, who was nearly as old as Franklin and always wore his broad-brimmed Quaker hat in chamber. Adams found most Quakers to be 'dull as beetles,' but Hopkins was an exception. A lively, learned man... he suffered the loss of three sons at sea, and served in one public office or other continuously from the time he was twenty-five. The old gentlemen loved to drink rum and expound on his favorite writers. The experience and judgment he brought to the business of Congress were of great use, as Adams wrote, but it was in the after-hours that he 'kept us alive.' His custom was to drink nothing all day, nor 'til eight o'clock in the evening, and his beverage was Jamaica spirits and

water...Hopkins never drank to excess, according to Adams, but all he drank was promptly converted into wit, sense, knowledge, and good humor.”⁵⁰

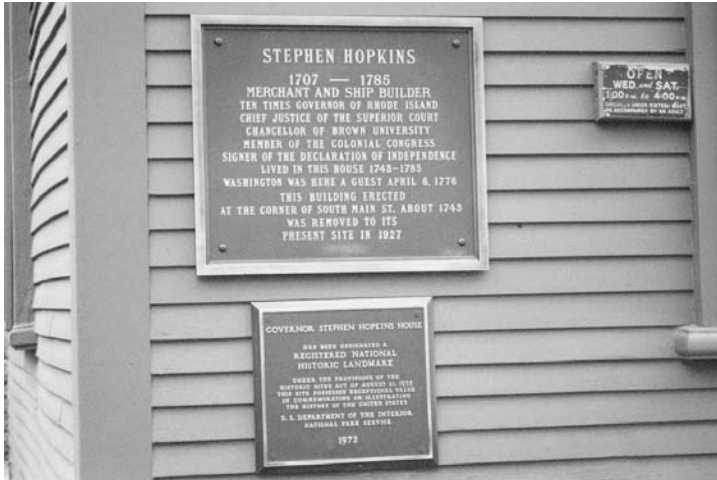
“Hopkin's was a grand figure who had seen a lot in life. You can't miss him in the painting. He's at the back with his broad-brimmed Quaker hat on. In after hours he loved to drink rum and expound his favorite writers. 'He read Greek, Roman, and British history, and was familiar with British poetry,' wrote John Adams, 'and the flow of his soul made his reading our own and brought recollection in all we had read...'”⁵¹

Hopkins reputation among his colleagues in the Continental Congress as an extraordinarily intelligent and well-read person has been traced to his roots in the home of his childhood." His father, Major William Hopkins Junior, the only child of Captain William and Abigail Whipple Hopkins, lived in Cranston, a suburb of Providence, where Stephen was born in 1707. His mother was Ruth Wilkinson daughter of Samuel Wilkinson and Plain Wickenden.”⁵² The Wilkinson farm in Smithfield was near the farms of Abigail's brothers Eleazer, William, and David, and that of her deceased first husband, Stephen Dexter. Abigail's brother Eleazer's oldest daughter, Deborah, also married into the Wilkinson family. “His grandmother, Abigail, was a daughter of Captain John Whipple, very prominent in plantation life about 1660-1685. The best instruction of all came from his mother, and it was thorough and comprehensive. His grandfather, William, taught him mathematics and surveying. (Actually, all four grandparents lived into the 1720s, thus conceivable made a direct contribution to Stephen's personality and intellectual development.) Although his formal early education was limited, yet he excelled in the practical branches of mathematics, particularly surveying.”⁵³ It would appear that Abigail was quite assertive, opinionated, and outspoken, when compared to typical women of that time. She objected to the town council that she was forbidden to vote, and almost single-handedly caused the Providence town council to change its scandalous policy of taxing “poore widows of low condition.”⁵⁴

In 1731, Hopkins early began making trips to Newport to participate in the philosophical society as one of its youngest members; the society had been founded by the Anglo/Irish philosopher and theologian George Berkeley. His cousin, Captain Joseph Whipple Junior, his grandmother Abigail's brother's son, was a fellow member of the society, and served as deputy governor of Rhode Island from 1753 to 1756, as did his son Joseph III, from 1749 until 1754. ⁵⁵ Hopkins himself helped found the first library in Providence in 1750; he himself cataloged its first collection. He also helped found Providence's first newspaper in 1762. Indeed, the intellectual vigor of his mental powers enabled him to eventually surmount the lack of formal educational opportunities, and his ardent pursuit of knowledge, at length, placed him among the distinguished men of his day.

As noted, after mortgaging their farm to his uncle Joseph Whipple, his parents moved to Scituate, a few miles west of Providence, when Stephen was a young man, where his father earned his living as a farmer. For several years, Stephen followed the same trade. It was while living there that he was chosen town clerk, and afterward elected a representative from that village to the general assembly at Newport, where he became speaker in 1741. He became a justice of the peace, and subsequently a justice of one of the courts of common pleas. Then, in 1733, at the age of 27, he became chief justice of the court in that district.

He moved to back Providence in 1742, where he erected a house in which he continued to reside for the rest of his life. The house is still standing at the corner of Benefit and Hopkins Street and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The memorial plaque below, on one corner of the house, commemorates his life and work. At Providence, he immediately entered the mercantile trading and ship building businesses, as well as engaging in what the British considered to be illegal smuggling. He was a



Stephen Hopkins Memorial Plaque

partner with the Brown brothers (for whom Brown University is named)' co-owning an iron foundry with them. Hopkins served as the first Chancellor of that same school in 1764. The Brown brothers-- Nicholas, Joseph, John, and Moses-- exchanged the profits from these iron products in their slave trading business. At about the time of the Revolutionary War, they employed about 75 men. Then, during the war, the foundry

produced guns and ammunition.

Subsequent to his move to Providence, Hopkins was often moderator of the town council and represented the town almost constantly in the general assembly at Newport, serving as its speaker in 1744 and 1749. He became Chief Justice of the Superior Court in 1751, and in 1754 was a delegate to the Albany convention in New York, where he voted for Benjamin Franklin's plan for the union of the colonies.

Ten years later, as governor of the colony, Hopkins wrote a pamphlet in defiance of England's intent to impose a tax on sugar. Called "The Rights of Colonies Examined," it was one of the first assertions of colonial rights. He asked, "Can it possibly be shown that the people in Britain have a sovereign authority over their fellow subjects in America? All laws and all taxation that bind the whole must be made by the whole. Thus early in the quarrel with the mother country, Rhode Island raised the cry no taxation without representation."⁵⁶ This pamphlet was widely distributed in America, bringing Hopkins instant fame through out the colonies.

In summary of his Rhode Island political career, Hopkins served in the general assembly from 1732 until 1752 and 1770 to 1775, and was its speaker in 1738 to 1744 and in 1749. He was elected governor ten times 1755-56, 1758-61, 1763-64, and 1767, and appointed chief justice of the superior court in 1751.



While attending the Continental Congress, where he served from 1774 until 1776, Hopkins helped to draft the Articles of Incorporation and served on the committee responsible for the development of the Continental Navy. He persuaded the Congress, in 1775, to outfit 13-armed vessels and to commission them as the Navy of the United

Colonies. He saw to it that Rhode Island received a contract to outfit two of these. He was able to get his brother, Esek, commissioned as Commander-in-Chief. His niece's husband, Abraham Whipple, the great grandson of his grandmother Abigail's brother Samuel, was then appointed Commodore of the Navy. Abraham and Esek had received their maritime training on slave ships owned by the Brown family.

Admirably, Hopkins, along with Moses Brown, was primarily responsible for securing action against slavery. In 1774, the Rhode Island general assembly passed an act prohibiting the importation of slaves. He also led the fight in the Continental Congress to ban slavery. At the time he signed the Declaration of Independence, Hopkins was almost 70 years old and of poor health, due probably to a paralytic stroke. He had to guide his writing hand with his other hand, stating that "My hand trembles, but my heart does not." Due to his deteriorating medical condition, he resigned in September of 1776. However, he continued to serve his state during the year that followed and even attended several New England political conventions. Then, in 1780, he left politics all together.

Stephen Hopkins, Esq., Governor of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, died 13 July 1785. The state of Rhode Island erected a monument to him in the North Burial Ground on which, with other commendations, is inscribed these words "His name is engraved on this immortal record of the Revolution, and can never die."⁵⁷

End Notes

¹ Sarah Whipple was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts 6 February 1641/42. *Records of the First Church at Dorchester in New England 1636-1734* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1891) 267 and 173. She died after 12 April 1710. *Early Records of the Town of Providence, 21 vols*, collected and printed by the Records Commissioners (Providence: Snow and Farnham, 1892-1915) XX:380-81 [hereinafter ERP].

² Barbara Mills, *Providence: 1630-1800, Women Are Part of Its History* (Bowie, Md: Heritage Books, 2002) 62.

³ If Smith had worked at the Stoughton Mill, this would have likely been the first time that John would have seen the consequences of religious bigotry in his new home.

⁴ Charles W. Hopkins, *The Home Lots of the Early Settlers of the Providence Plantations* (Providence: Providence Press Company, 1886) 26. In deference to Smith, Roger Williams allowed a destitute boy named Frances Wickes to escape with them. John Whipple bought the property of Wickes in Providence. Perhaps Wickes had been a fellow apprentice in Dorchester.

⁵ Mills, 61.

⁶ Henry C. Dorr, *The Planting and Growth of Providence. Rider's Tract #15* (Providence: Sidney S. Rider, 1882) 48-50

⁷ John H. Cady, *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950* (Providence: The Book Shop, 1957) 7. Welcome Arnold Greene, *The Providence Plantations for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Providence: J.A. and R.A. Reid, 1886) 36. "In the year 1646 the first public improvement in the town was commenced in the establishment of a grist mill under the town direction, by 'John Smith, the miller,' at the lower falls of the Moshassuck. The town granted him the land and water-power. He was to erect and repair the mill at his own cost; the town promising not to erect or permit another mill. The town directed that the second and fifth days of the week should be for grinding the corn of the town, the other days to be the miller's own. The one-sixteenth part of every bushel was to be the toll for grinding. The mill...pounded the grain into meal."

⁸ Cady, 12.

⁹ Thomas Bicknell, *The History of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 3 vols.* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1920) 3:893.

¹⁰ Mills, 327. Apparently, their first child was born out of wedlock.

¹¹ Greene, 393. "...the village of Woonsocket has long been known by this name, and was first settled by Richard Arnold and Samuel Comstock. The Arnold family became owners of a large portion of the land in the vicinity of the falls...The first sawmill on the river was built by Richard Arnold...About 1712 a corn and fulling mill was erected upon what is called the island by John Arnold..."

¹² Charles W. Farnham, *John Smith The Miller, of Providence Rhode Island: Some of His Descendants*, (Baltimore: Genealogies of Rhode Island Families from Rhode Island Periodicals, 1983) 2:6. Also, on line at <http://www.fortunecity.com/marina/mudhouse/2435/id74html>. Extracted from these sources and liberally summarized.

¹³ Richard was the son of Thomas Arnold "a well known Quaker coadjutor of Roger Williams. The first Quaker meeting house in Providence was built on Richard's property on Stampers Hill." Field, 2:112.

¹⁴ *The Pioneer Mothers or America: A Record of the More Notable Women of the Early Days of the Country, and Particularly of the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912) 3:88-89

¹⁵ Mary Whipple was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, 9 April 1648, *Records of the First Church at Dorchester*, 272 and 177.

¹⁶ *ERP*, VI:216 & X:45.

¹⁷ Bicknell, 3:921. Thomas Olney was one of the most powerful men in Providence. The Whipple family would have had to be highly respected and important itself to have allowed the marriage to take place. The Olneys left the First Baptist Church in 1652 to establish their own predestination church. Mary and her husband likely were members of this splinter group.

¹⁸ Mills, 72-73

¹⁹ Cady, 16.

²⁰ Richard M. Bayles, ed., *The History of Providence County, Rhode Island, 2 vols.* (New York: W.W. Preston and Company, 1891) 1:306.

²¹ William B. Weeden, *Early Rhode Island, A Social History of the People, 1636-1790* (New York: The Grafton Press, reprint, Bowie Maryland, Heritage Books, Inc.) 220.

²² Gertrude Kimball, *Providence in Colonial Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912) 126.

²³ Dorr, 190-91.

²⁴ *ERP*, VIII:9

²⁵ Edward Field, *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History. 3 Vols.* (Boston: Mason Publishing Company, 1902) II:544.

²⁶ Mills, 223. The account summarized from pages 213 through 218.

²⁷ "*Olney Family*" in *the state of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (New York: American Historical Society, 1920) 408-09.

²⁸ Preliminary Survey Report, Town of North Providence, Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, April 1978, 3

²⁹ Olney Family, 408-09.

³⁰ Frank C. Angell, *Annals of Centerdale* (Central Falls, RI: E.L. Freeman, 1909) 24. The house was located on Falco Street. It remained standing until 1898 when it was demolished.

³¹ Henry E. Whipple does not give the date 1660, nor does Austin, 223. Anderson, 1973, gives the date of 1658.

³² Suffolk Land Records, Deeds, 14 Volumes (Boston: 1630-1906) 3:204-05. Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966) 76. William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978) 36. "Beginning in October 1656, Massachusetts passed the first of a series of laws inflicting harsh penalties on Quaker and Quaker sympathizers. Starting with imprisonment, fines, and banishment, these laws subsequently included whipping, branding, ear cropping, and tongue boring. The final step, in 1658, was a law ordering death by hanging."

³³ Both of Abigail's husbands were from politically prominent families.

³⁴ *ERP*, III:228-29.

³⁵ Bicknell, 3:1185.

³⁶ Glenn W. LaFantasie, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams* (Providence; Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988) II:591

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- ³⁷ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience: Society in Rhode Island, 1636-1690* (Providence: Brown University, 1974) 87
- ³⁸ *Lincoln Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report*, P-L-I. RI Historical Preservation Commission, January 1982:15. See also, on line at <http://www.whipple.org/charles/louquisset/index.html>
- ³⁹ Dorr, 30.
- ⁴⁰ S.C. Newman, *Dexter Genealogy: Being a Record of the Families Descended from Rev. Gregory Dexter* (Providence: A. Crawford Greene, 1859) 14. Bradford Swan, *Gregory Dexter of London and New England* (Rochester, N.Y.: 1949). Gregory was at one time town clerk of Providence, and served as president of the colony 1653/54. Dexter, also a printer, printed Roger Williams' famous book *Key to the Language of America*. It is thus seen that both of Abigail's marriages were to men from politically prominent families.
- ⁴¹ *ERP*, VI:4-5. She signed her name with an "X".
- ⁴² *ERP*, VI:6-7. In the inventory of her worldly possessions she expressed her sense of the degeneracy of the times, or perhaps a lofty contempt of the vanity of the world by an entry of "a frying pan, a skillet, and other trumpery."
- ⁴³ Mills, 169-70.
- ⁴⁴ The Pane-Joyce Genealogy in http://babbage.clarku.edu/~djoyce/gen/report/rr08/rr08_490.html. 4-9-04.
- ⁴⁵ Bicknell, 3:1078.
- ⁴⁶ *ERP*, XVI:229-35. In genealogical literature William Senior has typically been referred to as "Captain" to distinguish him from his son. However, by the time of his death he also was called "Major."
- ⁴⁷ It should be noted that William Hopkins military rank was not honorary as was the case in many instances. "In 1739 England declared war against Spain, and during the following year Providence raised a company of 100 men under Capt. William Hopkins, to take part in the disastrous expedition against Carthagenia." Welcome Arnold Greene, 53.
- ⁴⁸ *ERP*, XVI:408-13.
- ⁴⁹ Glenn Hare, "Can't Remember the face, But The Name is Familiar," *George Street Journal* of Brown University, 26 February 1999, Vol. 23:191
- ⁵⁰ David McCullough, *John Adams*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001) 100
- ⁵¹ David McCullough, 32nd Annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, Ronald Reagan International Trade Center, Washington, D.C., 5 May 2003. From personal notes of the author taken at the lecture.
- ⁵² Israel Wilkinson, *Memoirs of the Wilkinson Family in America* (Jacksonville, Illinois: Davis and Penniman, 1869) 48. The Wilkinson and Wickenden families were well known Quakers.
- ⁵³ Weeden, 229
- ⁵⁴ *ERP*, XV:230-31. Due to its social significance to Providence history, it is presented herein. "To ye Towne mett June ye:6th:i681: Honrd Gentlemen, if ye poore and low Condition, of a poore Widdow haue noe Inflveance upon ye harts of yor rate makers, but to rate me where there is no justice for it before God nor man, that they should rate me to serjants wages, and House rent, I cannot see just Cause, for these reasons, first ye serjant haath neigher power, nor ocation to warne me to yor mettings, knowing I am not allowed any voate there, Seccondly all my lands meadows and orchard lys Comon to yor Benniffitt, and not to mine nor ye orphans of my Deceased Husbands. Thirdly if I should have Came to have Voated to day in yor Election, perhaps it would have benn sayd what had I to doe there: and Jf I have not to doe to Voate and make use of ye house you rate me for ye use there of, I leave to yor wisdoms to Judge of: praying your Consideration of it, and yor Determyation of the same, Yor poore Widow and ffriend, Abbigarll Dexter"
- ⁵⁵ On line at: www.whipple.org/charles/yeomenandprinces/index.html
- ⁵⁶ Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island, A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) 323
- ⁵⁷ In addition to the above references, the biography of Stephen Hopkins was extracted and summarized from several standard texts and journal articles.