

**A SKETCH OF THE LIFE  
OF MARK HOPKINS,  
OF CALIFORNIA**

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A Sketch of the Life of Mark Hopkins, of California by B. B. Redding

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## MARK HOPKINS.

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AMONG the adventurous and energetic men who came to California immediately after the announcement of the discovery of gold, there are few who have done more to shape the destinies of the State and develop its resources than Mark Hopkins.

Unpretentious and unassuming in manner, slow and deliberate of speech, self-disciplined against indulgence in theory and speculation, he was not given to the origination of new schemes and new ideas. When these were presented to him, his mind grasped them, and he possessed the judicial instinct that discarded all of the ornamentation and glitter, stripped them of their non-essentials, weighed all of the influences that might add or detract from their value, and his conclusions as to their practical worth seemed imbued with the prescience of prophecy.

The few men of Sacramento who believed that the time had passed for hoping and dreaming for a railroad that would unite the coasts of the Atlantic and Pacific, and who were willing to devote their lives and fortunes to its realization, did not feel that the enterprise could take practical shape without his indorsement and hearty concurrence. It was therefore in his office that the scheme was born; for not until after all the plans had passed through the crucible of his intellect, and received his

approval, did the building of the road assume a practical shape. When he consented to take a part in the enterprise and become its financial manager, his associates felt that his unerring judgment, prudent counsel, sterling integrity, and unyielding perseverance would go far to create success, if success were possible. He lived to see the road completed, uniting the east and the west, and held the position of director and its treasurer from the day of the organization of the company until he passed from earth. It is a part of the interior history of the building and management of this and the other railroads with which he was connected, that in all times of doubt and uncertainty, and in all questions of debatable policy, his associates rarely opposed the conclusions to which he had deliberately arrived.

In all the various enterprises with which he was connected, during an active and industrious life, his associates, and all who came in contact with him, were impressed with the fact that he was a man of firm will and strong passions, held under complete control by reason and philosophical intellect; that neither word nor action was dictated by passion or prejudice, and that even where his personal interest was involved he was capable of discarding self, and arriving at conclusions that were unprejudiced, honest, and best. He neither sought nor avoided the company of the leading and wealthy men of the country, with whom he was necessarily brought in contact, but was always accessible to the poor and needy. To their troubles and difficulties he would patiently listen, and it afforded him real pleasure to tell them what was best to be done, and to relieve them in their necessities. He had great fondness for animals, and possessed an extraordinary power over them—the most vicious horses and crossst

dogs soon fell under his influence and were glad to obey him.

Mark Hopkins was descended from a long line of active and energetic ancestors, who exerted a marked influence on the early history of New England. The family in England was Puritan, and attached to the cause of Cromwell. John Hopkins, the founder of the family in America, was born at Coventry, in England, where the house in which he first saw the light is still standing. He came to America in 1634, and the records show he was made a freeman of Cambridge, Massachusetts, on the fourth of March, 1635. He afterwards removed to Hartford, Connecticut, of which town he was one of the original proprietors. He died in 1654, leaving a widow, Jane, a son, Stephen, and daughter, Bethia. Stephen was a freeman of Hartford in 1657. He married Dorcas, daughter of John Bronson. Stephen died in October, 1689. He left six children, John, Stephen, Ebenezer, Joseph, Dorcas, and Mary. Dorcas, the wife of Stephen, died May 13, 1697. John, the eldest son of Stephen, settled in Waterbury, Conn. He had eight children, of whom one was Samuel, who graduated in Yale College in 1718, and was a clergyman at West Springfield, Mass., and famous for his historical memoirs of the Housatonic Indians; and another Timothy, the fourth son, born November 16, 1691. Timothy married Mary Judd, June 25, 1719. They had nine children, of whom the eldest was Samuel. Timothy was a justice of the peace in Waterbury, and from 1727 up to the time of his death, February 5, 1749, was frequently its representative in the Legislature.

Dr. Samuel Hopkins was born September 17, 1721. He graduated at Yale in 1741. January 13, 1748, he married Joanna Ingersol, at Great Barrington, Mass.,



where he was then settled as a clergyman. They had five sons and three daughters, all born in Great Barrington. The eldest son was Gen. David Hopkins, who removed to Baltimore, where he became a man of large property and influence. His second son, Moses, born March 21, 1751, resided in Great Barrington until his death, March 9, 1838. He was a leading and influential citizen of the town, was its justice of the peace and postmaster, and held the position of county register for more than fifty years. He died at the age of eighty-four. Dr. Edwards A. Parks records that "he was eminent for his strength of mind, and for his sterling virtues."

Dr. Samuel Hopkins, the eminent divine, removed to Newport, R. I., where he died December 20, 1803, at the age of eighty-three. He was the most powerful and influential clergyman in New England during the time in which he lived, and probably did more than any other man to mold and harden New England life into its peculiar characteristics. He originated a system of theology which intensifies and carries extreme Calvinism to its ultimate conclusions; yet, in his private life was the most forgiving, lovable, and amiable of men.

"For never by faith's unreason  
A saintlier soul was tried,  
And never the harsh old lesson  
A tenderer heart belied."

Mrs. Stowe, who has founded a novel on the story of his life, says he is remarkable as having been the first clergyman in America, who publicly, from the pulpit, advocated the immediate abolition of slavery, because, slavery was contrary to the teachings of Christ. His system of theology still bears his name.

Mark Hopkins, Sr., one of the nine children born to

Moses, and father to the subject of this sketch, was born at Great Barrington, and after becoming of age, was engaged there in mercantile pursuits. He married Anastasia Lukins Kellogg. In 1806, he removed with his family to Henderson, N. Y. He arrived in Henderson February 16, having been ten days in making a journey which can now be accomplished in a few hours. His children were, Augustus, Samuel, William, Henry, Mark, Moses, and Ezra. Mark Hopkins was the fifth son, and was born in Henderson at 11 A. M., September 1, 1813.

As has been stated, his mother's maiden name was Anastasia Lukins Kellogg, and it is worthy of record that his grandmother Hopkins and grandmother Kellogg were sisters. His more remote ancestors, on the female side, were of the families of Whiting, Otis, and Bradford, names prominent in the colonial history of New England.

Mark Hopkins' education commenced in the public schools at Henderson, and was continued in the public schools in Michigan, at the town of St. Clair, to which place his father removed in 1825. Mark Hopkins, Sr., died in 1828. After his father's death, Mr. Hopkins, at the age of sixteen, left his home to commence with the world the battle of life. He removed to Reynolds' Basin, Niagara county, N. Y., and became the junior clerk in the mercantile house of Hayward & Rawson. After two years, this firm dissolved, and Rawson, taking Mark with him, removed to Lockport, N. Y., where he continued in the same business. In a few years, Mr. Hopkins left Rawson, and went into partnership, the firm name being Hopkins & Hughes. After two years, the firm of Hopkins & Hughes dissolved, and Mr. Hopkins commenced the study of law at Lockport, in the office of his brother Henry. His law studies were pursued from 1837 to

1839. Mr. Hopkins always expressed the highest esteem for the ability and attainments of his brother Henry, whose memory he revered, and frequently acknowledged that his brother's counsel and advice, and the severe and exact legal training he received in his office, had been beneficial to him through life. It is not to be doubted that the exact and critical analysis which Mr. Hopkins gave to every subject brought to his investigation, and that logical habit of mind which caused him to give due value to all the influences affecting it, were in part due to the legal training given him by his brother Henry.

While at Lockport, in the study of law, he took an active part in public matters, and, considering his age, was quite prominent. He was at this period of his life much interested in military affairs, and became a major and brigade inspector in the State militia. While in the office of his brother Henry, he became acquainted with a Mr. Williams, who had invented and owned a new improvement in plows. He joined Mr. Williams in the enterprise of manufacturing and selling these plows, and during the next two years traveled through the States of New York and Ohio, disposing of large numbers, frequently receiving payment in horses (of which he was an excellent judge), which were sold at a profit in Lockport and vicinity. His venture with Williams appears to have been profitable. After closing up his business with Williams, he removed to the city of New York, and went first as clerk or bookkeeper in the commission house of James Rowland & Co. There were several partners in the firm. After a few years, some had retired and the interests of others were purchased by Mr. Rowland, who soon intrusted the entire control of the business to Mr. Hopkins.