

**HISTORICAL MEMOIRS  
RELATING TO THE  
HOUSATONIC INDIANS**

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Historical memoirs relating to the Housatonic Indians by Samuel Hopkins

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**SAMUEL HOPKINS**

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HISTORICAL MEMOIRS  
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BY  
REV. SAMUEL HOPKINS  
(1693—1755)

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

We have much pleasure in offering to our subscribers this, the first reprint of one of the rarest items of Americana. Sabin enumerates only five copies as known to exist; and since then one of these has been destroyed by fire. The Brinley copy sold for \$39, the Balcom for \$78, and the Hollingsworth (1910) for \$155.

It is so scarce that Rich had never seen it, and refers for it to Allen's American Biographical Dictionary.

"One of the rarest of works relating to New England, as it is one of the most intrinsically valuable. It is unmentioned in Field's or Pilling's Indian Bibliographies." (*Sabin.*)

The author seems to have written but this one book; and while it lacks the interest possessed by some others of our series, because dealing with subjects or epochs nearer our own time, its inherent value, as a record of the self-denying, arduous and wonderfully successful labors of a consecrated man among the Indians of western Massachusetts, is great. During the Revolutionary War these Indians remained faithful to their Christian professions, and a number of them enlisted in the patriot army. Their then chief, Nimham (possibly the Captain Konkapot of the narrative), and a number of his men were killed in a skirmish with British cavalry near Kingsbridge, N. Y., as narrated in the *Magazine of American History* for June 1892. (Vol. 27, p. 404.)

We regret that of Mr. Hopkins himself we can give but little information. Dr. Sprague, in his *Annals of the American Pulpit*, says he was born in Waterbury, Conn., in 1693, was graduated at Yale College in 1720, and became pastor of the church in West Springfield the same year, and died there in 1755.

Mr. Sergeant's wife was Abigail Williams, daughter of Colonel Ephraim Williams of Stockbridge, and half-sister of Colonel Ephraim Williams, the founder of Williams College. After Mr. Sergeant's death she married (1752) General Joseph Dwight, by whom she had a son and daughter. The latter married Theodore Sedgwick, Judge of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Mrs. Sergeant died February 15, 1791.



## PREFACE.

My design in writing this history is to give as clear and faithful an account as I am able, of the rise and progress of Christianity among the natives at Housatunnuk; particularly of Mr. SERGEANT'S Mission to them; of the measures he took to recover those Indians from their barbarity, ignorance and heathenism, and to inform them in the doctrines of the Gospel; and of the success which by the blessing of God attended his faithful endeavours to persuade them to embrace the true Religion.

In prosecuting this design I hope, in some measure, to do justice to the memory of that excellent man who, from generous and pious principles, undertook and with great industry and faithfulness prosecuted that self-denying work; to let the generous and pious donors to that good design know what the success of their liberal and charitable contributions to it has been; and to excite others to follow their laudable and generous example by giving freely of their substance to promote that good work, the conversion of the heathen to the Christian Faith. If these ends are answer'd, I shall not regret the trouble and pains I have been at.

It may perhaps be thought strange that this performance has been so long delayed. To which I would say, it was almost a year after Mr. SERGEANT'S death before I could satisfy myself that materials were to be found for such a purpose; and when I had collected what were to be had and entered upon it, I could proceed but very slowly, by reason of other business upon my hands and the many unavoidable avocations that attended me; and after I had finish'd it some unforeseen accidents and occurrences which I need not trouble the reader with, delay'd it for several months.

Why it is not more full and compleat, now it does appear, may



also be the subject of enquiry. To which I shall only say that it is in some measure owing to the want of those materials which I expected, and which might have been very helpful if they could have been obtain'd.

When it was first propos'd to me to undertake this business, I concluded that Mr. SERGEANT had preserv'd what was needful for such a work; for soon after he entered upon his Mission he wrote to me, desiring that I would send him an account of all transactions with these Indians, before he went to them—giving this as a reason why he desir'd it, viz: that he designed to collect and preserve materials for, and in time to come to give to the world a History of the Progress of Religion among the Indians—if his success among them should prove considerable—or to that purpose. I therefore concluded that he had not only kept a Journal of his own doings among them, but that he had also carefully preserv'd copies of all his letters to gentlemen with whom he maintain'd a correspondence, and their returns to him; and that little or nothing more would be needful than to transcribe, in their proper places, what he had preserv'd. But I found myself more or less disappointed upon all these heads. His Journal was indeed something large and particular for five or six years, but after that time it consisted only of a few brief hints, two or three pages in octavo upon common paper, containing the space of a year; and for two or three years it was wholly wanting. He was also so full of business that he had not time to preserve copies of those letters he wrote to gentlemen with whom he corresponded, either in this country or in Great Britain, except a very few. Yea, when he wrote an historical account of the success of the Gospel among the Indians at Stockbridge under his ministry, in compliance with the desire of the Committee of Directors for the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge,<sup>1</sup> in Scotland, signified to him by their president, George Drummond, Esq., and sent it to them, he had

<sup>1</sup> This Society was organized in 1698.

no leisure to preserve a copy of it. Some few letters, likewise, written to him, were not to be found.

When I became acquainted with these things I was much discourag'd: and had I not recover'd the originals which Mr. SERGEANT wrote to the Rev. Dr. Colman,<sup>1</sup> to whom he wrote more frequently and more freely than to any other man, I should not have attempted anything of this nature. And when I entered upon the business I little thought of composing anything that would be fit for publick view. My design was (seeing I had by me what materials I could come at) to preserve what might be most likely to be of use hereafter, which in all probability would soon have been lost by continuing in loose papers.

And now it is propos'd to publish what I have written. I hope the foregoing account will excuse me, tho' the performance be not so full and compleat as it might have been by the help of those things which I could not obtain. Every reader will be sensible that Mr. SERGEANT, and the good cause in which he was engaged, might have been placed in a more advantageous light, had those things which are wanting been preserv'd. He will also, I trust, be as sensible that Eloquence and Neatness of Stile are not what I have laboured after, but a plain Narrative of Facts, in a language which I hope will prove intelligible to all who take the trouble of reading what is here presented.

I cannot think any judicious person, upon mature consideration, will judge that which has been brought to pass by Mr. SERGEANT's ministry among the Indians is small and inconsiderable. In the year 1734, when he went first to those Indians, their number, great and small, was short of fifty, and they in the depths of Heathenism and Barbarity. In the year 1749, when he died, they

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin (1673-1747), the distinguished pastor of the Brattle Street Church in Boston (1699-1747), who refused the presidency of Harvard. He was greatly interested in the Housatonic mission and other benevolent enterprises.

were increased to 218; 182 Indians had been baptized by him, and a church consisting of forty-two Indian communicants commemorated the sufferings of Christ at the Lord's Table. Mr. Woodbridge's school (separate from the boarding-school) had belonging to it fifty-five scholars, who were taught to read and write, and were instructed in the principles of religion. This indeed is not like a Nation being born at once; but by the use of ordinary means greater things have seldom been brought to pass in so short a time. And we, in this part of the country, have seen nothing like it respecting the poor natives who live upon our borders. And if Mr. SERGEANT's life had been spar'd to have prosecuted the affair of the boarding-school according to his intention, and with his wonted wisdom, prudence and skill, is it not highly probable that we should by this time have seen a considerable number of the Indian youth educated there, in Labour, Industry and good Husbandry, as well as in learning; who probably might have prov'd not only useful members of society, but also of the Church of Christ?

If what I have written upon this subject may be a cause of many thanksgivings to God for his rich grace and mercy, exercised to the Indians at Stockbridge by Mr. SERGEANT's Ministry; if it may be a means of exciting pious and well dispos'd persons to charitable and generous contributions to promote the spiritual good of the poor Natives there or in other places; if it may be an inducement to any young gentlemen qualified for such a service, to follow the excellent example Mr. SERGEANT has given; however mean the Performance is, the Effect will be good and will answer the end of the unworthy Author,

SAMUEL HOPKINS.

SPRINGFIELD,  
November 14, 1752.