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Young Family Historians Essay Contest

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Stephen Hopkins

Our ancestors have many unique stories to tell. They show us who we are today and from where we come. Stephen Hopkins, my 10th great grandfather, also has many adventures to share, like being arrested for rebellion, being shipwrecked, and having Native American friends.

Stephen Hopkins is a valuable part of American history, as well as my own.

Stephen Hopkins's feat starts with the Sea Venture. The Sea Venture was one in a fleet of nine ships to travel to a colony in North America. The Sea Venture was the largest ship in that group, and left England in 1609. On the sea venture, Stephen Hopkins served as an assistant to Reverend Richard Bucke. The Sea Venture took off from London and traveled to Virginia, my home state. However, the ship was severely damaged off the east coast of Bermuda when they encountered a hurricane. The crew managed to make it to an island. On the island, Hopkins was a part of a small group of people who would do anything to get off this island and continue their journey. Two men claimed that Hopkins had encouraged them to disobey the captain, as such, Hopkins and his group did get arrested for rebellion. This was punishable by being hanged. Hopkins pleaded to be set free, and he and his party were pardoned soon after.

Stephen Hopkins and the people on the island were eventually rescued and returned to England. Later, he boarded the Mayflower, possibly convinced by his business acquaintances,

the Separatists. The Mayflower was one of the London Company merchant fleets where One hundred and two people, including Stephen Hopkins, boarded. During the first winter nearly half of the crew died, but Hopkins survived those brutal times. During his journey, Hopkins signed the Mayflower Compact. This is the first form of a government of people, by the people, for the people. Eventually they landed in Plymouth, New England, where Hopkins became one of the wealthiest people among the colonists.

Stephen Hopkins did have an exciting life in America. Hopkins built the first wharf in Plymouth, and he was a member of the governor's council. Hopkins became friends with a Native American, whom he entertained in his home.

Stephen Hopkins shows us how to be part of a community. Hopkins was a good member of their community by getting along with Native Americans and quickly grasping their ways and language. He appears to have run a general store, which provided supplies to everyone in need. He also contributed to the community by building houses. Hopkins fulfilled his role as a citizen and shows us nowadays what we can do to help out our community.

I learned a lot from Stephen Hopkins and how he helped shape the nation. I learned that the Mayflower led the path to a new world with religious freedom. For example, the Separatists were independent and did not want to go along with the corrupt church of England. They formed their own churches and believed in the Holy Spirit, not the people or the state. The Separatists encouraged the responsibility of groups to solve their own affairs. In the past, the Mayflower came over and helped promote religious freedom, and currently we have those religious rights. According to journalist Frank James, about 70% of the world don't have religious freedom. In the United States, we are blessed to have freedom to worship whomever we please without risking our lives for it.

While learning about Stephen Hopkins I discovered a lot about my ancestry. I was proud to discover that Stephen Hopkins was the only person to travel on both the Sea Venture and the Mayflower, showing that he was a hardworking person with lots of courage. What I learned about myself is how lucky I am to be a part of a nation with religious freedom. People are killed everyday for their religious beliefs and faith. According to author Linda Bordoni with the Vatican News, “Every day, 13 Christians worldwide are killed because of their faith, 12 churches or Christian buildings are attacked and 12 Christians are unjustly arrested or imprisoned, while another 5 are abducted.” As a Christian, I will keep them in my prayers. I am immensely grateful to not live in a place like that. The world needs more people like Stephen Hopkins who are willing to risk their lives to solve this problem in society.

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