

Edward Hopkins

Governor of the Colony of Connecticut
1640, 1644, 1646, 1648, 1650, 1652, 1654

Born: 1600, Shrewsbury, County Salop (now County Shropshire), England

College: None

Political Party: None

Offices: Assistant to the General Court, 1639; eventually became Chief Magistrate
Secretary of the Colony of Connecticut 1639, 1640

Deputy Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1643, 1645, 1647, 1649, 1651, 1653

Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1640, 1644, 1646, 1648, 1659, 1652, 1654

Member of Cromwell's Parliament 1657 and other English offices concurrently with Connecticut offices

Died: March 1657 in London, England

Edward Hopkins was born in 1600 in Shrewsbury, County Salop (now County Shropshire), England, the son of Edward (or Edmund) Hopkins and Katherine Lello. His mother was the sister of Sir Henry Lello, who was a knight, the warden of the fleet, and the keeper of the palace of Westminster. After Edward finished grammar school at Shrewsbury, he went to London, where he did well as a merchant specializing in goods from Turkey.

Edward Hopkins married Ann Yale, born about 1615, a daughter of David and Ann (Lloyd) Yale, of Wales, and step-daughter of Theophilus Eaton, first governor of the New Haven Colony. She liked to read, and even wrote books. Reading and writing, beyond the basic skills required by life, were not approved occupations for seventeenth century ladies. It was felt that such activities ruined a woman's health by exerting undue strain upon the female brain, which was believed to be weaker than the male brain. The causes of mental illness were also not understood. By 1647, Ann Hopkins showed signs of mental illness, and books were later seen as one of the causes. She gradually became insane, and remained so, until she died on December 14, 1698 at age 83 at Plas Grano, near Wrexham, Wales.

Edward Hopkins was an enterprising and progressive man. He was in charge of the supplies for the Puritan-owned ship *Abigail*, on which he and John Winthrop, Jr. sailed from England for Boston in the fall of 1635. Edward Hopkins and Winthrop began a life-long friendship when they sailed together on the *Abigail*. Edward would come to know John Winthrop, Jr. even better while serving as Deputy Governor under him, developing a great admiration for the talented politician and scientist.

Edward and his brother John joined the New Haven Colony in 1637. After about two months, Edward moved to Hartford, where he became an original proprietor. When John Haynes was elected Governor of the Colony of Connecticut in 1639, Hopkins, along with George Wyllys, Thomas Welles, and John Webster, was chosen as a magistrate or Assistant to the General Court. Church and state were closely allied in those days, and Hopkins was one of a committee of three, which consulted with designated church elders about the correct punishments to be formulated in the laws of the Colony for specific sins and offenses.

Governors were only allowed to serve terms of one year at a time in those days, and when Haynes' first term was over, Hopkins was elected in his place. Haynes and Hopkins alternated as governor from 1640-1655, with the exception of one term served by George Wyllys (1642-1643).

Edward Hopkins' main concern as Governor of the Colony of Connecticut was to protect it against outside attack. There were frequent clashes involving the English, Dutch, and the Native Americans. The Dutch, in addition to colonizing New Amsterdam, had an outpost at "Good Hope" in Hartford, claimed other lands along the Connecticut River, and in 1646 made a claim to Connecticut's coast. Even Hopkins' own life was not safe. In 1646, he was the target of an unsuccessful assassination attempt by one Native American tribe, because Connecticut was protecting a chief of a rival tribe. Governor Hopkins advocated the New England Confederation, a union of the English colonies formed in 1643 as a source of possible protection for the colonists. The idea of the Confederation was that if any New England Colony came under attack, the other colonies would send troops to its aid.

Edward Hopkins gave much to the Colony of Connecticut, but he also made money from it. He is the first attorney in Connecticut with a recorded case (1639). He had considerable wealth in

England, and in Connecticut he invested in land, owned a mill, had an early monopoly on the fur trade, developed a cotton industry, and owned a ship that traded goods to other colonial and English markets. He was a member of the small committee that built the first ship in the Colony of Connecticut. Although he was so active in his businesses that it restricted the amount of time that he could devote to being governor, his business enterprises did benefit the colony. For example, he was able to take goods produced by the settlers and sell them to other markets. He also used his ship to import goods that the settlers needed.

Governors Hopkins, Wyllys, Webster, and Welles all built homes along the same street in Hartford. It was called Governor Street until, in more recent times, its name was changed to Popieluszko Court.

Hopkins went back to England several times, possibly attracted by Cromwell's Puritan government. In 1652, Cromwell appointed him a commissioner of the navy, and an admiralty commissioner in December of 1655. In England he oversaw the printing of the first set of laws of the New Haven Colony and, in 1656-57, served in Cromwell's Parliament. However, he was so well respected in Connecticut that even though he was in England in the 1650s, he was still elected to the governorship of Connecticut in 1654. It was hoped that his reelection would induce him to come back to Connecticut, but it did not. Hopkins' brother, Henry, who had previously inherited the knighthood and royal offices held by their uncle, Sir Henry Lello, died in 1655, and those honors passed to Edward Hopkins on Henry's death. This was another reason for Hopkins to live in England. Thomas Welles, who was deputy governor, served in Hopkins' place, even though Hopkins had been officially elected.

Edward Hopkins died in March 1657, in the parish of St. Olave, Hart Street, London, aged about 58 years. He and his wife appear to have had no children, and his estate consisted of a substantial sum. In his will he left 1,000 pounds to support grammar schools in Hartford, New Haven (the Hopkins Grammar School), and Cambridge, Massachusetts. He also left 500 pounds to Harvard College. Money from his estate further purchased the land for Hopkinton, Massachusetts, which was named for him. His name appears on the Founders Monument in Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground.

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Portrait

There is no known portrait of Edward Hopkins.

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