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## Notes

16A% Hopestill 4 Bigelow, fifth child and fourth son of Ebenezer 3 (Joshua 2, John 1) and Hannah (Browne) Bigelow, was baptised 2 June 1731 in MA. He married about 1756, Ester Benedict of Danbury, CT. Owing to the loss of early Danbury records, we have no birthdate for Esther, but in 1795 her Grandfather John Benedict drew up a will naming children of his son Samuel Benedict, including "Ester wife of Bigelow"; Jemima wife of John Whitlock; Patience, wife of Justus Olmsted, and Eunice, wife of Wm. Prindle." This implies that both Ester and her husband Hopestill were then living.

Hopestill Bigelow was an early Baptist preacher. They lived a number of years in Tyringham, Berkshire County MA. then removed to Skenesborough, now called Whitehall, Washington County, NY. They were listed there in 1790, but in 1800 Esther was listed as head-of-family, implying Hopestill's death between 1795 and 1800. Beyond this we have no records of either. Tenancy records show that Hopestill was a tenant of Philip Skene the British Loyalist.

The following letter, written in 1833 by a grandson, Hopestill the younger, tells of the family experiences during the Revolutionary War on the frontier:

My Son,

That you may not be ignorant of the patriotism and character of your forefathers and the value I place thereon, I send you the following information: At the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, your two great-grandfathers Hopestill Bigelow and Aaron Fuller, lived in Whitehall, New York, then called Skenesborough. Of my remote ancestors I have no definite knowledge. My great-grandfather had ten sons and two daughters, of whom I know only the names of Ebenezer, Joshua, Samuel, Hopestill, and Benorah [Benoni], and also Silance. Hopestill had three sons, Samuel, Ebenezer, and Thomas, and three daughters, Hannah, Nabby, and Esther. Samuel had six sons, Hopestill, Niram, John Whitlock, Samuel Liscom, James, and Asa Barney, and four daughters, Mary, Elizabeth, Tyla, and Roxina. All that I know of my grandmother Bigelow is that she was an Umpstead [Olmsted]. Of my mother's pedigree I know nothing beyond her own family.

My grandfather, Hopestill Bigelow, was a Baptist preacher and lived in No. One, now Tynningham, Mass. In 1759 he removed to Skenesborough at the head of Lake Champlain, N.Y., now known as Whitehall. It was called by its former name from a wealthy Englishman who moved from Canada and settled there. At this place grandfather became the pastor of a church. Adjoining him lived Aaron Fuller, a Justice of the Peace, a very noted man in public business in that region. At the beginning of the revolutionary war he was appointed Quartermaster and public Storekeeper. At the 'Falls' (so called by the falling of wood and white creeks about twenty feet into the Lake) was Major Skeens' borough or plantation, which he left in charge of a son and daughter and went to Canada to join the English. Soon after the son and daughter also went to Canada, leaving the farm, stock and everything, even the body of their own mother in the cellar of the house enclosed in the leaden coffin which the Major had kept unburied for several years for the sake of an income.

The property thus being left without protection and belonging to an enemy, grandfather Fuller was ordered to confiscate it for use of the army. When Skeene heard of it, he offered 1000 crowns for Esq. Fuller's scalp. The liberal bounty made it

very dangerous for him to attend to business, as the Tories and Indians were numerous and on the lookout for him. He was therefore obliged to ride in the night, and in the daytime hide in a cave in the edge of a dense swamp. Well do I remember when I was a small boy of my mother leading me and two older sisters to the cave, and telling us the story till the hair of my head would seem to stand erect and every rustle of a leaf would appear to be the step of an Indian or a Tory. I have suffered more thereby, and fireside war tales, than years afterward by the roar of cannon, the rattle of small arms, the beat of the muffled drum, the groans of the wounded, the sling of the bullet, and the flow of blood in the war of 1812.

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But to return. Not caring to leave the cave by day his food was carried stealthily to him, but at night he would put on his wife's long scarlet cloak and her bonnet (well do I remember the cloak) and mount his horse. If likely to meet anyone he would fling his legs both to one side [to appear as if riding side-saddle like a woman] pass on as quickly as possible, then with a leg a side put spurs to and haste away to buy supplies for the army.

He had a son about the age of my father, then fourteen, and a daughter about twelve, whom my father afterwards married, and whom I shall now call mother. The boys had both entered the army, my mother was left at home to take charge of her father's affairs. She was now the only dependence for all outside work, and was a stout rugged girl. Adapting herself to her business, she laid aside her own dress, and adopting her brothers' [trousers] she foddered the cattle, yoked and hitched the oxen to the sled, then she drove to the woods, chopped down trees, cut them into proper lengths, loaded and drew them home, where she prepared the wood for the fireplace.

Thus she did all necessary work during the winter, the bounty for her father's life standing good, the family was all the while kept in a frightful expectation that the house might be set on fire at night in hope of getting him. During the next summer and fall grandmother Fuller would send the children to the woods at night with blankets. After spreading one on the ground, my mother would sit in the middle of it and gather the rest around her (I think there were five of them), then spreading another blanket over them, she sitting up would keep them secure from suffocation and mosquitoes while they slept. During this time grandmother, with a babe in her arms, walked the house from side to side, looking out through her peep holes between the logs to see if any destroyers were near. She dared not have a fire or light in the house, lest it would attract attention and prevent her from seeing clearly if any one outside were approaching. Because of some sudden fear or alarm she often called up her children in the night and sent them into the woods, and they were accustomed to go without a murmur.

Amid all this anxiety and excitement the news came that the British were coming up the Lake. Men, women, and children were running from neighbor to neighbor inquiring what to do. Finally it was agreed to meet at my grandfather Bigelow's, he being the pastor. After consultation it was thought best to move to Sandy Hill about twelve miles distant, and after prayers and blessing pronounced on the trembling group, they started leaving their farms and all unnecessary property behind.

The alarm having blown over some returned, while others stayed, among whom was my grandfather Bigelow, who occasionally went up to see to his farm, at wheat harvest, with his wife, babe and my father, leaving his three daughters at home, the oldest eleven, the youngest four years of age in the care of a family of Prindles, distant relatives. Sandy Hill being a noted place and quite a village, was looked upon as a place of safety. Therefore many had resorted to it.

During their absence for harvesting, the tones with some indians made an assault, burned the place and having robbed the houses and killed the cattle and hogs fled to Canada. Grandfather Bigelow had five cows and six hogs killed The Prindles went with them [the Tories] leaving no trace of the girls. Picture to yourself, if you can, the grief and sorrow of my grandparents, when on their return from harvesting, instead of joyfully embracing their daughters, they saw only the ruins of their home and the embers still burning. After a diligent search they concluded they were burned up in the house, the shock was at first severe and painful almost beyond endurance, but it gradually passed away and they assumed their wonted cheerfulness.

Thus three years passed by, when a messenger rode up with a letter addressed to my grandfather. How great was their surprise to find it to be from their long lost children, then in the British camp in Canada. Although preparations were made to send for them, almost three months passed when your grandfather Samuel Bigelow set out for them. After six months more of negotiation and entreaty he safely returned

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with them to their father's and mother's arms.

Strong and clear is my remembrance when a small boy how I used to sit by the winter's fireside, the blazing back log threw its weird bright light and dancing shadows on the wall of the room, myself at my mother's knees and my two older sisters

on each side while her busy foot was making the flax wheel hum, spinning for our clothing, and father with his awl and thread, as was then common in every house, to make shoes for our feet, and hear them tell of the horrors of war, trembling as if it was a present reality, and look up at the old long gun which father carried, and say to myself, 'well father is a patriot and will fight.' You doubtless think it would be impossible for a young girl of twelve to do at this day work your grandmother did at that age, but she was large and strong and with sparkling eye and cheerful heart would tell us of her work and sufferings, and rejoice that she could do it, while her father and brother were battling for freedom.

Now, my son, you can judge from the above why I shouldered a gun and took the field in the late war with England, more especially when you consider the patriotic spirit of your forefathers, and I think by this time you begin to esteem more highly the pure republican stock from which you have emanated, for your grandfather Bates was a patriot, a soldier during the whole war, and fought at the taking of Burgoyne. The day on which you was born [July 4] was a glorious one to our fathers and hence I know you will ever support the principles of the day of your birth.

Hopetill Bigelow

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*Peter, I find this article interesting, telling of life back in 1731 through 1775. How bravery, self control learned,*