

Seven Generations of the Hastings Family

By Inga Milbauer



The Boylston Historical Society and Museum is delighted to announce its re-opening on Monday May 30, 2022. During the Boylston Memorial Day festivities in the museum at the Town Common, the new exhibit “*Seven Generations of the Hastings Family*” will be released. The exhibit covers the history of the Hastings family in Boylston, Massachusetts from the 1700’s to the present day with artifacts related to the Hastings family from the museum’s collection, deeds, letters, photographs, and so much more!



As Matthew Davenport writes in *A Brief Historical Sketch of Boylston, Massachusetts* published in 1831, we find the Hastings family were among the early settlers of Boylston, Massachusetts: “The descendants of this family are the most numerous in this town of any of the first settlers. They were

from Newton.”¹ Daniel Hastings (1702 - 1777) purchased Shrewsbury Settlers Lot #41 from the original owner Caleb Rice. He moved from Watertown, Massachusetts to the wilderness (later known as Boylston) with his wife Sarah Ball around 1725 to raise a family. Daniel served as one of the leaders in the settlement of the North Precinct of Shrewsbury, and held the position of Town Clerk and Precinct Treasurer for many years.² He and Sarah had 10 children. Three of their sons fought in the Revolutionary War: Stephen Hastings (1727 – 1792), Lieutenant John Hastings (1738 – 1802) and Corporal David Hastings (1739 – 1823). All joined Captain Beaman’s Company to fight for independence. John Hastings was elected to the first Board of Selectmen of the Town of Boylston in 1786.



**HASTINGS HOMESTEAD
DANIEL HASTINGS HOUSE (c. 1890)
NORTHBOROUGH ROAD, BOYLSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

Many descendants of Daniel and Sarah Hastings became prominent in Boylston’s history, one of which was Silas Hastings. He was the son of Silas and Esther Perry Hastings (1780 – 1833). He

built the first brick tavern and inn, located at 701 Main Street, in the center of Boylston. He was Town Selectman from 1825-1828 and Treasurer for seven years in the 1820s and 1830s. At the end of this article is an excerpt of the article *Silas Hastings Tankard* by Judith Haynes describing the pewter tankard which once belonged to Silas Hastings.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, George R. Hastings (1841-1912) and George A. Hastings (1865-1926) were well known in town. George R. Hastings owned and operated the general store in the center of Boylston from 1888-1912. The store also housed the Boylston Centre Post Office, and he was confirmed as postmaster on November 24, 1890. His son, George A. Hastings took over the store and post office duties after his father's death. George A. Hastings was confirmed as postmaster on April 4, 1913 and served until November 1915.

As a contemporary member of the Hastings family, Gordon Hastings has written about growing up in 1950s Boylston on the land his ancestors settled more than two hundred years earlier. Excerpts from his book, *Rocky Road to Dublin* (available on Amazon.com) have been published in some of our newsletters and can also be read on our website.

We invite you to visit us, and find out more about the Hastings family, at the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, located in the Historic Town Hall at 7 Central Street in Boylston, Massachusetts. While there, you can also try out your skills on our new fun “*Can You Identify Current Locations?*” board!

Acknowledgements:

¹ A Brief Historical Sketch of Boylston, Massachusetts, by Matthew Davenport, published by Carter, Andrews and Company, Lancaster, 1831

² Boylston Historical Series by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.109

https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Silas_Hastings_Tankard/c110

<https://www.boylstonhistory.org/images/Postmasters%20of%20Boylston4.pdf>

<https://www.findagrave.com/>

Boylston Historical Series by Bruce Filgate, 2012, Volume II, IV, VIII

Photography by Carrie Crane

Editor, Nancy A. Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Massachusetts

Excerpt from Silas Hasting Tankard by Judy Haynes:



In our collection there is an attractive pewter tankard dating back to the early 1800's. It is 6 2/3" high, 4" in diameter, and weighs two pounds. On the cup are the engraved initials 'SH' for Silas Hastings who was the proprietor of The Hastings Tavern and Inn, a federal style brick building he had built from the bricks of the John Howe brickyard of Boylston. Licensed in 1818, Silas operated the tavern in Boylston Center until his death in 1833, when his son-in-law took over and ran it until 1839.

The American Heritage College Dictionary describes a tankard as a “large drinking cup having a single handle and often a hinged cover.” One could compare it to a stein or a mug. Pewter is lasting, less expensive than silver, yet still considered a good choice for a drinking cup by “discerning drinkers since the Middle Ages.” Pewter is malleable, and was then made of tin and lead and had been around since the Bronze Age with artifacts of pewter even found in Egyptian tombs. It didn't tarnish easily, thus making less work for servants who once had to polish the silver in eating and drinking establishments. The hinged cover had its advantages also. If a hot drink was served, it cooled more slowly, and if a cold drink was within, it would stay cold longer. The cover would also have kept out any flying insects or dust that may have been present. Pewter tankards could have been made either by casting in a mould, by sheet-working and then joined, or by spinning, a traditional method, but one that requires a skilled craftsman and was often used for more elegant products with fancy designs. The vintage Hastings tankard was crafted using the sheet-metal technique with a double horizontal band around the widest part of the drinking vessel.

Pewter tankards can vary in size, but the most popular was a 'pint' or a 'quart' size. It is said that when the bartender reminded his customers to watch how much they were drinking, he would say "Mind your P's and Q's" – thus the origin of the phrase, it is believed, and one we may still use today, but with a broader meaning.

The tankard now in our collection remained in the Hastings family and was even passed down one time as a wedding present. The initials SH appears to indicate this was Silas Hastings personal cup. Regulars often kept their own mugs at their favorite drinking establishment. Silas was active in various town offices holding positions as Boylston selectman and treasurer. Town politics were likely discussed over a cup of grog or other beverage at the inn, as that was a usual practice.

Acknowledgements:

¹ A Brief Historical Sketch of Boylston, Massachusetts, by Matthew Davenport, published by Carter, Andrews and Company, Lancaster, 1831

² Boylston Historical Series by Bruce Filgate, 2012, p.109

https://www.boylstonhistory.org/category/Silas_Hastings_Tankard/c110

<https://www.boylstonhistory.org/images/Postmasters%20of%20Boylston4.pdf>

<https://www.findagrave.com/>

Boylston Historical Series by Bruce Filgate, 2012, Volume II, IV, VIII

Photography by Carrie Crane

Editor, Nancy A. Filgate, Director, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Massachusetts