

CHRISTOPHER HOLDER

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When Christopher Holder sailed from Gravesend, England, on the Speedwell on the thirtieth of May 1656, the ship's list described him as from Winterbourne, nine miles from Bristol, and aged twenty-five; so born about 1631 [1]. Although he was thus a native of Gloucestershire, the Holder family was anciently of Yorkshire and probably of Danish origin, having entered Britain about 500 A.D. under a bold adventurer named Ida [2], who took for his men the region called the Holderness (meaning stronghold) which lies in the extreme southeastern part of Yorkshire, in the part called East Riding, and on the tongue of land that lies between the estuary of the Humber and the North Sea. From the Holderness the Holders got their name.

Christopher Holder was a man of education and a man of means. He was a convert to the Quaker faith when Quakerism was in its earliest stages. In 1655 he was put in jail at Ilchester, Somersetshire, for refusing to remove his hat [3], but soon released, and the next year, as noted above, took passage to America, being accompanied by seven others, eager like him to spread their religious views in the New World. They reached Boston harbor on the seventh of August, 1656, only two or three days after some women Quaker missionaries had been deported from that town [4]. The eight newcomers were not allowed to land until officers of the Colony had come aboard and searched their boxes for "erroneous books and hellish pamphlets" [5]. Then they were thrown into a foul prison, kept there for eleven weeks, their personal belongings being appropriated by the jailer for his fees, and after this sent back to England on the Speedwell, which had brought them [6].

No one now was willing to bring them to America, since heavy fines were imposed on captains who transported Quakers. But Robert Fowler of Bridlington, himself a Quaker, was building a new boat called The Woodhouse, and it was nearly finished, and he testified: "It was said within me several times, 'Thou hast her not for nothing' and also New England presented itself before me." [7]. He offered to carry the Quaker missionaries to America, and on the first of June 1657 eleven of them set sail with him [8]. "We saw the Lord leading our vessel as it were a man leading a horse by the hand," wrote Fowler in his log [7]. They missed their intended course, and after two months at sea came to land at New Amsterdam, where some remained to preach. Christopher Holder and John Copeland were among those who on the third of August set out in the Woodhouse for Boston [9], stopping en route to visit friendly people in Providence and far from friendly ones in Martha's Vineyard [10]. When they visited the church on the island, they were thrust out

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| 1 Holder: The Holders of Holderness (1902) p.23 | 6 Holder, op.cit., p.49 |
| 2 Ibid. p.3 | 7 Hinshaw: Encyc. of Amer. Quaker Genealogy 3:9 |
| 3 Spooner: American Families of Historic Lineage (1914) p.335 | 8 Holder, op.cit., p.49 |
| 4 Besse: Sufferings of the Quakers 1:345 | 9 Thompson: Hist. of L.I. (1843) 2:73 |
| 5 Jones: Quak. in the Am. Col. p.36 | 10 Holder, op.cit., p.56 |

and put in charge of an Indian, who was told to take them across to the mainland, which he did after he and his Algonquin friends had given them shelter for three days [1]. From the south coast of Cape Cod they went afoot to Sandwich, where their preaching met with great success, so that the authorities tried to prevent it and they were forced to hold their meetings in a secluded glen which to this day has been called "Christopher's Hollow"[2]. Eighteen families in Sandwich joined them [3]. By December of the following year (1658) someone wrote "almost the whole town of Sandwich is adhering towards them," and records show that in that year seventy-five persons were presented at court for attending Quaker meetings [4].

But to return to 1657. Holder and Copeland were arrested and deported to Rhode Island, where they were given asylum. Plymouth sent a warning to the Rhode Islanders, who referred the matter to England. In mid-September the two Quakers went on to Salem, where they were entertained in the home of Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick, devout Friends, whose act of hospitality led ultimately to their banishment and death [5]. On Sunday, September 21, after the regular church service had been concluded, (in the same church building which now stands on the grounds of Essex Institute) Holder rose and attempted to speak; but he was "hailed back by the hair of his head and a glove and handkerchief thrust into his mouth, and so turned out with his companion and next day had to Boston"[6]. In Boston Holder was examined by Governor Endicott and Deputy Governor Bellingham who ordered him--and also Samuel Shattuck, who had spoken up in his defense--to be given thirty stripes on Boston Common [7]. The hangman to whom this task was assigned "laid it on with thirty stripes a-piece at once, with a knotted whip of three cords, as near as could be in one place, the hangman measuring his ground, and fetching his strokes with the greatest strength and advantage he could, to cut the flesh and to put them to suffering--the cruelty of which was so great, that a woman, seeing it, fell down as dead." [8]. Holder and his friends were then put in jail, where they were kept for nine weeks, during the first three days of which they were left without any food and not so much as a draught of water, and where through their long stay they slept "lying on boards without bed or straw--without fire in the cold winter season"[6]. During this imprisonment Holder and Copeland wrote the famous Quaker "Declaration of Faith" and succeeded in getting it circulated, which so infuriated the Governor that he ordered the offenders to be whipped twice a week, with thirty lashes at the first whipping and three more each time, each stroke drawing blood; so that in all Holder received 357 lashes [9].

The more liberal Puritans began to enter protests; and on the twenty-fourth of November Endicott ordered that the prisoners be released and banished, telling them that if they attempted to preach there again their tongues would be bored through with hot irons [10]. The Quakers seem to have been shipped then to England [11], but soon were back and throughout 1658 glimpses of them are

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| 1 Holder: Holders of Holderness 59 | 7 Holder, op.cit., p.105 |
| 2 Crapo: Certain Comeoverers, p.384 | 8 Bishop: N. England Judged p.9 |
| 3 Freeman: Cape Cod 2:60 | 9 Holder, op.cit., p.121 |
| 4 Jones: Quak.in Amer.Col.p.36 | 10 Ibid. pp.123-124 |
| 5 Holder, op.cit., pp.74-8;101 | 11 Ibid. p.129 |
| 6 Sewell: Hist.of Quakers 1:317 | |

caught in Barbados, where Quakerism was spreading[1]; on Nevis and St. Christopher in the Leeward Islands; [2]; in Bermuda [3]; in Virginia and Maryland [4]; at Newport, R.I. [3]; and again in Sandwich on the twenty-third of April [5], where they were again arrested. Here, to quote Freeman, "The selectmen whose duty it was to see them whipped, entertained no desire to sanction measures so severe towards those who differed from them in religion and declined to act in the case. The marshal then took them to Barnstable to a neighboring magistrate about two miles distant, who he anticipated would lend a ready hand--an expectation which was fully realized. This functionary ordered them to be tied to a part of an outhouse, and then turning executioner he gave them each thirty-three lashes" [6]. Then they were again deported and were given refuge in Providence by Richard and Catherine (Marbury) Scott [3] and a life-long friendship established. In June 1658 Holder with two companions, John Copeland and John Rouse, set out again for Boston, but were arrested on reaching Dedham, taken again to Governor Endicott, who ordered their right ears cut off. The order was carried out on the seventeenth of July [7]. A law was now passed banishing Quakers on pain of death if they returned, and again after a period of imprisonment Holder was banished [8], and went on a preaching tour --this is when they went to Virginia and Maryland [9].

The early months of 1659 were occupied with formulating plans in Rhode Island, preaching in many places, sometimes with happy results as when he reported from Salem that he "hath had fine service among Friends in these parts" [10]; and sometimes with beatings and imprisonment. He was now "Holder, the Mutilated" [11]. In the autumn he was again in Boston jail, for the Court hesitated to carry out the death penalty. Seventeen other Quakers were in prison with him, and many of their friends came to visit them. On the eighth of October three women visited Holder: Mary Dyer, soon to be executed on Boston Common, Mary Scott, and Hope Clifton, the latter two destined in time to be his wives. All three were arrested for coming [12]. When, after many weeks of imprisonment, all the Quakers were released, the men were given 15 stripes with the lash; the older women were given ten; and the girls were simply admonished [12]. Again Holder was banished under pain of death if he returned. That was on 22 Nov. 1659 [13].

Meanwhile, great changes had been taking place in England. Cromwell was dead, and the Puritans out of power. Christopher decided to visit his homeland and lay the case of the Quakers before the new monarch, Charles II. Together on the boat with him went Catherine Scott and her daughter Mary. In the General Register Office, Somerset House, London, is this entry: "Christopher Holder of Orsott within the gift of Olveston in the countie aforesaid and Mary his wife formerly called Mary Scott whose dwelling was within the jurisdiction of Boston in New England did take each other to be man and wife that is to say that Christopher Holder did in the

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| 1 Holder: Holders of Holderness 120 | 8 Ibid. p.148 |
| 2 Jones: Quakers in Am. Col. p.75 | 9 Ibid. p.151 |
| 3 Crapo: Certain Comeoverers p.387 | 10 Ibid. p.153 |
| 4 Sewell: Hist. of the Quak. 1:317 | 11 Crapo, op.cit., p.392 |
| 5 Holder, op.cit., p.131 | 12 Ibid. p. 389 |
| 6 Freeman: Cape Cod 2:60 | 13 Mass. Bay Col. Records |
| 7 Holder, op.cit., p.145 | 4, part 1, p.391 |

public meeting of the people of God held at Olveston in the Countie aforesaid on the 12th day of the 6th month called August in the year 1660 take the aforesaid Mary Scott to be his wife and the said Mary there and then did also take the said Christopher to be her husband and to live together in mutuall love and fellowship in the faith till by Death they were separated."

Holder's mission to the King of England proved highly successful. Charles II released some seven hundred Quakers from English jails and listened to Holder's story of happenings in New England. Colonial magistrates trembled as reports of these things crossed the ocean, and sent maligning letters against the Quakers to the King; but Christopher's mutilated ear spoke powerfully in his behalf, and just then (in 1661) George Bishop brought out his blistering "New England Judged," showing the inhuman treatment to which Friends in the colonies were subjected. Charles II ordered Governor Endicott to release all Quakers in jail under his jurisdiction; and he sent the message to Endicott by the hand of Samuel Shattuck, one who had been a chief target of Endicott's wrath--a bitter pill [1].

When Holder returned to America, he entered upon a period of peace, a happy home life, and even honors; and traveled about to preach unmolested. They lived on Patience Island, in Narragansett Bay, which island had come to Mary as her marriage dower [2], her father having bought it about 1651 from Roger Williams [3]. Their two children, Mary and Elizabeth, were born on this island [2], the mother dying at Elizabeth's birth. She was buried in the Clifton burying ground at Newport, land for which had been given to the Friends Society by Thomas Clifton, father of Hope [2]. That was on 7 Jan. 1664/5 [4]. For a time his home was in Providence, where Mary's parents lived. There on the thirtieth of December 1665 he married Hope Clifton, daughter of Thomas and Mary (Butterworth) [5] and they removed to Newport, where Christopher owned fifty acres of land in the center of the town [6], land that had formerly been owned by Thomas Clifton [5] and so had probably come to Christopher and Hope as a gift from their father. Seven children were born to them there; but five, possibly six, died in infancy. These were quiet years. Except for the records of the births of his children, Christopher's name seems to appear in no public documents for a stretch of six years' time. I neglected to note that in September 1664 (while he and his first wife were living on Patience Island) Christopher Howlder was named as executor of the will of Alice Cowland [7]. These were the quiet 1660's.

In the 1670's Holder's name appears somewhat more frequently. In 1672 George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, was in America, and Holder went on a preaching mission with him to New York State, visiting Long Island towns especially [8]. On 6 May 1673 Christopher Holder and others, "all freemen of the towne of Newport, are admitted freemen of this Colony" [9]. In 1676 he and

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| 1 Holder: Holders of Holderness 165 | 6 Holder: Quakers of Great Brit- |
| 2 Wing Genealogy (The Owl) p. 716 | ain and America (1913) p. 458 |
| 3 Register 22 (1868) p. 14 | 7 Early Portsmouth Rec. p. 404 |
| 4 Newport Quaker Rec., Book 822 | 8 Thompson: Hist. of L. I. (1843) 2:82 |
| 5 Austin: Genealogical Dict. of R. I. | 9 Rec. of the Col. of R. I. 2:482 |

George Fox went on another preaching tour together. They were in the manor of Nathaniel Sylvester on Shelter Island and preached on Long Island [1]. On 4 Apr. 1676 Rhode Island Assembly voted: "That in these troublesome times and straits in this colony this Assembly desiring to have the advice and concurrence of the most judicious inhabitants, if it may be had for the good of the whole, do desire at their next sitting the company and counsel of" -- then follow sixteen names, of which that of Christopher Holder was one [2]. As in large affairs, so also in small ones Christopher was trusted and loved. When Nicholas Easton in his will wished to leave a house and small lot for "the people called Quakers," it was to his uncle, John Easton, and to Christopher Holder that he consigned them. He wanted a fence built around his wife's grave, and designated Christopher as the one to attend to it, and left him a barrel of pork from the proceeds of which to defray the expense; and he left his best hat to Holder [3]. Newport Quaker records show that Christopher Holder was at many Quaker weddings.

16 January 1681 Christopher's wife Hope died. His children were grown now, or nearly so; the oldest of them already married. He decided with the others to return to the old English home. His last years were again to be hard ones. The Quakers of England were being terribly persecuted -- and under the same Charles II who had treated them leniently at first. At the time Holder arrived, almost every Quaker near Bristol was in jail [5]. In May 1682 Holder was imprisoned for refusing to take an oath, and again in the same year he was arrested in Somersetshire for preaching. In May 1683 he was arrested at Bellipool. When Charles II died in 1685 and James II ascended the throne, Holder had been in English prisons for the greater part of four and a half years [6]. James was a Catholic. On his ascension, the Quakers of England sent him this address: "We are come to testify our sorrow for the death of our good friend Charles, and our joy for thy being made our governor. We are told thou art not of the persuasion of the church of England, no more than we: wherefore we hope thou wilt grant us the same liberty which thou allowest thyself. Which doing, we wish thee all manner of happiness." [7]. James set free all the Quakers who were in prison, just as Charles had done at the beginning of his reign [5]. And so Christopher Holder was free for the two or three years of life that remained to him. The record of his death reads: "Christopher Holder, of Puddimore in the county of Somerset, died at Ircott, in the parish of Almondsbury 13 4 mo 1688" [3]. So we see that his home during his last years had been in Somersetshire, but that he died in his native parish in Gloucestershire. He was fifty-seven years old when he died, and had preached for thirty-three years. He left a memory that every descendant can be proud of.

There is a beautiful Holder Memorial at Clinton, Mass., 17 miles northeast of Worcester. In it have been preserved all obtainable relics of the early Quakers, and of Christopher Holder [8].

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| 1 Crapo: Certain Comeoverers 392 | 5 The Holders of Holderness, p. 181 |
| 2 Rec. of the Col. of R. I. 2:482 | 6 Am. Fam. or Hist. Lineage, p. 335 |
| 3 Austin: Gen. Dict. of R. I. | 7 Hume: Hist. of England 6:285 |
| 4 Newport Quaker Rec. Book 822 | 8 Wing Gen. (The Owl) p. 716 |

And at Princeton University, Holder Hall, with its beautiful tower, the gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, is a grand and fitting memorial to this the first and one of the bravest of American Quakers. In the building is a tablet with the following inscription:

Holder Hall
Named in honor of Christopher
Holder A member of the Society
of Friends in America in the
Seventeenth Century. Devout,
Loving, Loyal to Duty, Patient
in Suffering. For this Hall
and Tower Princeton University
is indebted to his Descendant
Margaret Olivia Sage. 1909 [1]

Christopher Holder's children were

By Mary Scott, daughter of Richard and Catherine (Marbury):

- 1 Mary, born 6 May 1662 [2]; married about 1680 [3] Peleg Slocum, born 17 Aug. 1654, son of Giles and Joan of Portsmouth [4]. Peleg was an owner of boats engaged in coastal trade and often transported Quaker missionaries, and himself also was a preacher [5]. His home was in Dartmouth. His will, written 13 Jan. 1731, was proved 7 Feb. 1733 [4]. Mary died at the home of her son-in-law, Peter Easton, in Newport 20 Sept. 1737 at 75-4-14 [6].
- 2 Elizabeth, born 4 Jan. 1664/5; married John Alloway in England, as is shown by a land record in R.I. Archives: "29 July 1714 John Alloway and Mary Alloway, daughter of Elizabeth (Holder) Alloway of Minehead in County of Somerset, Eng., long since deceased, by whom one daughter now twenty-nine years of age, Mary, registered power of attorney in Bristol, England. Sold to Peleg Slocum one-half Patience Island 20 July 1715 [8].

By Hope Clifton, daughter of Thomas and Mary (Butterworth):

- 3 Christopher, born 25 Dec. 1666 [9]; married at Hallatrow, Somersetshire, 15 Feb. 1691 Elizabeth Daniel of Winterburne, Gloucestershire [10]. He was a clothier and lived at Winterburne, his father's native village. On 9 July 1692 he sold to Roger Goulding for £100 the fifty acres in Newport inherited from his father [4]. His wife was a Quakeress [11]. Christopher died in 1720 [10].
- 4 Hope, born 25 Mar. 1668 [9]. If, as is likely, she removed with the family to England, she probably married and died in that country. We find no record of either marriage or death.
- 5 Patience, born 2 Feb. 1669 [9]; evidently died young.
- 6 Patience, born 16 Aug. 1671 [9]; died 4 Aug. 1676 [12].
- 7 John, born 20 Aug. 1672 [9]; died 25 Aug. 1672 [12].
- 8 Content, born 22 May 1674 [9]; died 24 Aug. 1676 [12].
- 9 Ann, born 29 Feb. 1675/6 [9]; died 21 Mar. 1676 [12].

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| 1 Holder: Quakers in Gt. Br. & Am. 338 | 7 Newport Quaker Records, Book 822 |
| 2 Turner MS. at Newport Hist. Soc. | 8 R.I. Land Records 3:193-194 in |
| 3 Holder: Holders of Holderness, 272 | R.I. Archives, Providence |
| 4 Austin: Genealogical Dictionary | 9 Savage |
| 5 Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches, Nos. 29 and 70 | 10 "Boston & East. Mass." p. 1824 |
| 6 Register 34 (1880) p. 393 | 11 Am. Fam. of Hist. Lineage, p. 335 |
| | 12 Arnold's Vital Records 7:108 |