

A Document from University History: The Baltimore American's Coverage of the Death of Mr. Johns Hopkins

December 24, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Dennis O'Shea

Office: 443-997-9912 / Cell: 410-499-7460

The following is coverage of the Dec. 24, 1873, death of Mr. Johns Hopkins, founder of the university and hospital that bear his name, from one of the local newspapers of the time, *The Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*.

Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser, Dec. 24, 1873, front page, center column

DEATH OF JOHNS HOPKINS

JOHNS HOPKINS died this morning at 3:34 A.M. Mr. Janney, Mr. Mercer, and his servant James were with him at the time.

Baltimore American, Thursday, December 25, 1873, front page, center column

THE NEWS

The death of Mr. Johns Hopkins occurred just before four o'clock yesterday morning and was announced in THE AMERICAN of yesterday exclusively. He died upon the eve of the great Christian festival of the year and less than twenty-four hours after an assemblage of his friends had met to do honor to the mercantile wealth and prosperity of the city, as manifested in a splendid ship which bore his name. Elsewhere in our issue of to-day the story of his life is fully told.

Right hand column, front page, Dec. 25, 1873, carried over to fourth page

JOHNS HOPKINS.

Another of the prudent, honest, sagacious, far-seeing men, who have given to Baltimore its solid commercial property, has passed away. The death of Johns Hopkins, was announced in THE AMERICAN of yesterday morning. It was not unexpected, and took no one by surprise. He had lived out the full numbers of the days allotted to man, although his friends hoped that "by reason of strength," he might attain to fourscore years. His seventy-eighth birthday was celebrated on the 19th of last May, and if he had lived nineteen months longer, he would have reached the expected goal. For the last three or four years his health has been precarious, although it was only at rare intervals that he was incapacitated from attending to business. Whenever he was ill, there were always anxious inquiries about his health, far beyond the circle of personal friends and acquaintances. Although he was a plain, unostentatious citizen, who never held any official position, except as a trustee in charitable and beneficiary institutions, and a director of moneyed corporations, he was in the largest sense a public man. His extended commercial enterprises and colossal investments, to say nothing of his magnificent charities, made his name a household word and interested many thousands in his welfare who never saw his face.

Johns Hopkins was born in Anne Arundel county, Maryland, May 19, 1795. He was the son of Samuel Hopkins of Anne Arundel county, and of Hannah Janney Hopkins of Loudon country, Virginia. His father was descended from an English Quaker family of respectability and substance. Soon after the colonization of Maryland six brothers of that family determined to emigrate to America. On reaching this country two of these brothers agreed to make their home

in New England, and four journeying to Maryland, selected large tracts of land situated on Deer creek, Harford county, Maryland; in Baltimore county, near Govanstown, and at the end of South river, in Anne Arundel county, Maryland. Johns Hopkins, the grandfather of the deceased, was the descendant of that one of the brothers who established his home upon South river, Anne Arundel county. He had eleven children. At that period slave labor was essential to profitable farming in the colony but debate arose in his mind as to the rightfulness of keeping negroes in bondage, and he therefore gave freedom to all his slaves, cultivating his estate afterwards by his own labor, aided by the toil of his sons and such free labor as could then be procured.

His son, Samuel Hopkins, was much beloved for his popular and social manners. He married in early life Hannah Janney, a lady belonging to a wealthy and highly respected family which had long been established in the Valley of Virginia, where many descendants from it yet remain. She was a woman of great intelligence and force of character, and exercised marked influence, not only on the social circle by which she was surrounded, but also in the General Society of Friends, of which she was a member. Soon after his father's death, Samuel Hopkins became, by purchase from the other children, the sole owner of the property on which his father had resided, and in his turn cultivated the estate with the assistance of his sons. In 1812, however, Johns Hopkins, who was one of three sons, being then in the eighteenth year of his age, showed a strong disposition to engage in mercantile life, and was, therefore, allowed to enter the counting room of Gerard T. Hopkins, his uncle, who was then conducting a wholesale grocery business in Baltimore. Johns Hopkins brought to this new occupation the habits of industry and intelligent observation which he had developed upon his father's farm and entered upon the duties with an energy to which his former life had given no outlet. He acquired rapidly a knowledge of all the details of the trade in which he was engaged, and by 1819, with the consent of his uncle, formed a partnership with Benjamin P. Moore for the purpose of carrying on the wholesale grocery business, under the name of Hopkins & Moore.

The new firm had no money capital whatever. It began business upon the credit which the energy of Johns Hopkins had already created, and with no other assured aid, except certain endorsements for purchase of merchandise with which Gerard T. Hopkins obliged the firm. In 1822 the partnership was dissolved, and Mr. Hopkins confident in his individual resources, called to his aid two younger brothers, both under age, gave them an interest in his business, and inaugurated the new firm of Hopkins & Brothers. The business of this house was rapidly developed by the great personal energy of the senior and principal partner. Its trade with the Valley of Virginia where Mr. Hopkins had, as has been said, many family connections, was very large, and it rapidly extended through other parts of the State of Virginia and into adjoining States. Mr. Hopkins remained connected with this firm for twenty-five years. During all this period, which was marked by many periods of general financial embarrassment, the house of Hopkins & Bros. maintained the highest credit. His means had rapidly increased and the business proved capable of producing even greater results; but he determined to lessen the amount of personal labor devolving upon him, and after the active toil of quarter of a century, relinquished the business to his brothers and to two clerks. He did not, however, abandon his interest in commercial affairs. After the resignation of the late James Swan, who had for many years filled with credit the office of President of the Merchants' Bank of Baltimore, Mr. Hopkins was elected his successor, and has ever since discharged the duties of that office with great ability and energy. He has always been a close observer of the conduct, character and intelligence of the young men who were entering business life in the city of Baltimore, and he has uniformly exercised his power as a bank officer, in such manner as to extend assistance to those who by their diligent good sense and integrity attracted his attention and esteem, even in cases where he had no personal acquaintance with them. It is well known, indeed, that many young merchants to whom liberal discounts were extended during

periods of commercial embarrassments have learned for the first time, when their obligations were paid at bank, that they were indebted for the discounts which they had received to the voluntary and unsolicited endorsement of their paper by Johns Hopkins himself, acting as a member of the board, to which it had been committed for consideration.

Mr. Hopkins had been from an early period in its history a close observer of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. He knew thoroughly the resources of the country through which it was proposed to construct it, and was deeply interested in promoting the progress of the work, first to the coal fields of the Alleghany regions, and then to the Ohio river. In the year 1847, being already a holder of a large amount of the stock of the company, he was induced to become a director, and thenceforth took an active part in its management. In 1855 he was appointed Chairman of the Finance Committee of the company, a position which he continued to hold up to the time of his death.

Throughout his business career Mr. Hopkins maintained a firm confidence in the increasing commercial importance of the city of Baltimore. He not only used his ample means to build highways for transportation, but it was always his endeavor to assist the merchants of the city in developing and retaining its growing trade. In the sections of the city near the tidewater he built a number of costly and substantial warehouses, and thus located certain branches of trade in places convenient and proper.

But the name of Mr. Hopkins will be remembered longest in connection with his charities. The Johns Hopkins University, the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and the Johns Hopkins Orphan Asylum are the three monuments which will tell posterity that he lived and labored and prospered in Baltimore city. On the 16th of June, 1870, we published an article concerning these projected institutions a portion of which is here re-produced:

All great cities have great benefactors. By some hidden law of civilization, a certain proportion of the fortunes built up in any particular community in the end is invested for the benefit of that community, and the proceeds disbursed for the common good. The struggle for wealth does not crush out the humanities; it rather develops them. In the bosoms of most men whom God has prospered in their business pursuits there is a sentiment that impels to the giving of alms in one form or another. Some are open handed in their charities, and sow their gifts broadcast over the earth; others are systematic in their methods and *invest* for the benefit of all, rather than *give* for the relief of particular cases.

Institutions of learning have within the present century fared well at the hands of wealthy patrons and descendants, but many of the donations and legacies are deformed by narrow sectarian conditions and restrictions.

A man who has amassed a large fortune by extended commercial and mercantile enterprises, if he has a large heart, becomes, so to speak, cosmopolitan in his tastes and sympathies, and when he founds a charity it is broad, comprehensive, and free from sectarian limitations. Such are the charities projected by Mr. Johns Hopkins, one of the wealthiest citizens of Baltimore and of the State who has amassed a magnificent fortune during an active and busy life as a merchant and banker in Baltimore city and now proposes to invest a part of it for the benefit of the city, the State and the country at large. His donations for the purpose mentioned below will cover several millions of dollars.

Mr. Hopkins has taken the preliminary steps for the founding of a University, to be located at "Clifton," within a mile of the city. The University has been incorporated in Baltimore county, with Messrs. Galloway Cheeton, John W. Garrett, Francis White, Hon. George W. Dobbin, Lewis N. Hopkins, Thomas N. Smith, William Hopkins, George William Brown, Reverdy Johnson, Jr., Francis T. King, Charles J. Gwinn and Dr. Dr. James C. Thomas. The plan for the University has not yet been fully developed, but it will be endowed by its founder so liberally that young men in limited circumstances can avail themselves of the educational advantages it offers. Mr. Hopkins contemplates a *practical* school, and the natural sciences will be the leading feature of the course of study. It must be understood, however, that the classics and polite branches of learning, which lead to elegant culture are not to be excluded. Mr.

Hopkins has been celebrated for the completeness of thoroughness with which he has accomplished everything which he has undertaken, and the "Johns Hopkins University" will be no exception to the rule.

The second institution for the public benefit contemplated by Mr. Hopkins is a Free Hospital for the treatment of indigent sick without charge. This is truly a noble enterprise, and worthy of the generous founder's largest gifts. To the eternal honor of the medical profession, be it said, the poor are not often allowed to suffer because they have not the means to pay a physician; but oftentimes their homes are so wretched that recovery is impossible, unless the patient is removed from the pestilential locality and placed where some of the attentions that belong to the sick chamber can be had. And to the thousands who have not even a miserable home to shelter them in their sufferings – for those homeless wanderers, overtaken by disease, the Free Hospital will be a boon of mercy.

A certain class of surgical cases can be treated much better in a hospital, where there are all appliances, than in private houses. Even to those who are in comfortable circumstances and able to pay, the hospital is sometimes an absolute necessity. These institutions are the centers which concentrate the best medical talent. The trustees of the projected hospital are Francis T. King, President of the Board; John W. Garrett, Francis White, Galloway Cheston, Hon. George W. Dobbis, Lewis N. Hopkins, Thomas M. Smith, Wm. Hopkins, Richard M. Janney, Dr. Alan P. Smith, Charles J. M. Gwinn and Joseph Merrifield.

Mr. Hopkins never married, and that portion of his large estate which has not been appropriated to the institutions which he has founded will be divided among collateral heirs, the children and grandchildren of his brothers and sisters. Most of them are persons already in easy circumstances. His property real and personal, is said to be worth eight millions of dollars. It will thus be seen that, notwithstanding his large charities, his relatives will all be made wealthy by the distribution of his estate. Since the death of Dr. John Fonderden, who was for many years the family physician of Mr. Hopkins, Dr. W.C. Van Bibber has been his medical adviser. During the Summer Mr. Hopkins was taken very ill in Cape May, while Dr. Van Bibber was absent at the Warm Springs of Virginia. He suffered from a violent attack of cholera morbus, from which he recovered in about a week, but was not entirely well when he returned to Baltimore. He soon resumed his usual active habits. He was greatly occupied during the panic, as he had the management of large transactions for companies and private individuals. His ailment took the form of sleeplessness, and this, with his usual busy habits, weakened his constitution. The immediate cause of his last illness is believed to have been the construction of a venetian door that opened upon his bed and communicated with an unheated hall that was lined and floored with marble. This caused a hurtful draft. Mr. Hopkins, however, was in apparent good health until December 1st, when he was attacked with a cold, a simple catarrh. At the same time he complained of a feeling of stiffness in his joints and limbs. He remained in his house four days. On Friday two weeks ago, contrary to the advice of his physician, walked down town to business without an overcoat, and very thinly clad. He remained at business all that day, having large transactions on hand, and at 5 or 6 o'clock P.M. he walked home and ate a very hearty dinner. The next day (Saturday) he was seized with a violent paroxysm of asthma, which continued until Thursday following, growing less and less each until it finally was conquered on Thursday. During this asthmatic attack Dr. Van Bibber had consultations with Prof. N.R. Smith and Prof. A.P. Smith. On Thursday it was found that the right lung was very seriously deteriorated by congestion, which, it was feared, might be the first stage of pneumonia. This also gradually yielded to treatment, but the confinement and disease prostrated him and on last Saturday a delirium commenced and continued until his death. Since last Saturday he has been semi-conscious. Up to Saturday his mind was perfectly good. Since that his mind has seemed to wander when he was left to himself, though it could be held to one subject for a minute or two when he was spoken to. He seemed to be quietly sinking to rest.

There was no change until (at shortly after 3 o'clock yesterday morning) he breathed his last. The funeral is expected to take place at 11 o'clock on Friday, from the late residence of the deceased.

As an evidence of the appreciation of the usefulness of this lamented citizen by our business men, it is suggested that during the time that his remains are being borne to their last resting place the various stores and places of business be closed.

December 24, 2014 Tags: [Mr. Johns Hopkins, obituary](#)

Posted in [Giving](#), [University-Related](#)

Office of Communications

Johns Hopkins University

3910 Keswick Road, Suite N2600

Baltimore, Maryland 21211

Phone: 443-997-9009 | Fax: 443 997-1006

Source: <https://releases.jhu.edu/2014/12/24/1873-hopkins-obit/>