

Dorcas Honorable

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Dorcas Honorable (c. 1770 – 1855) was Nantucket Island's last indigenous inhabitant. She was of Wampanoag origin, and was raised speaking the Massachusett language, a language that is now extinct.

History

Born circa 1770, Dorcas Esop was the daughter of Sarah Tashama Esop, daughter of Benjamin Tashama. Dorcas's grandfather Benjamin was a teacher and a preacher and opened a school for Wampanoag children. Dorcas's mother Sarah was the daughter of a Wampanoag chief who had helped European settlers survive the cold winter on the island. Dorcas Honorable was born during the American Revolution, just ten years after an illness brought by Europeans killed 222 of 358 Wampanoags on Nantucket.

Unlike her acquaintance Abram Quarry, who was generally recognized as the second-to-last Wampanoag on Nantucket and the last male native to the island, Dorcas Honorable was known to have remained out of public knowledge during her lifetime, particularly after the death of her mother. Dorcas worked as a domestic and worshiped as a Baptist Christian.

Dorcas Esop was married several times. In 1792, Dorcas Esop was married to Isaac Freeman, but by 1800 Dorcas had likely gone back to live with her mother Sarah because a census from 1800 shows that Sarah ran a household of two people. Dorcas would remarry in 1801 to Bill Williams, in 1808 to Henry Mooers, in 1817 to John Sip, and in 1820 with Thomas Honorable. It remains obscure whether Dorcas's husbands were indigenous or non-indigenous. It is also unclear why Dorcas was married so many times in a period of thirty years.

Some historical records indicate that Dorcas's fourth husband John Sip was the victim of a violent assault in New Guinea, but his marriage to Dorcas is the last record of him in Nantucket's recorded history.

Dorcas had her only known child with Thomas Honorable. Their child was a daughter named Emmeline. By 1830, it would appear that Dorcas and Thomas Honorable were living in Guinea, but they returned to Nantucket 1850, around the time that Dorcas was widowed. Dorcas lived the rest of her life in the household of Thaddeus Coffin on Nantucket.

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Born	Dorcas Esop Circa 1770 Nantucket, Massachusetts, United States
Died	Winter 1855 (aged 84 years) Nantucket, Massachusetts, United States
Nationality	Wampanoag
Known for	Nantucket's last Native American

After Abram Quary's death in the late months of 1854, it was generally believed that the Native American race on Nantucket had gone extinct within 100 years of European arrival. But Dorcas died in the early months of 1855, and it was then that Europeans acknowledged her as the last indigenous Nantucketer. A Baptist congregational ceremony was held for Dorcas's death at her church.

References

<http://www.nha.org/history/hn/HN-karttunen-dorcas.htm>

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/pictureshow/2012/11/21/165663934/nantuckets-last-wampanoags>

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