



# Municipality of the District of Digby

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### The Elder Transcripts

#### A STRANGE TRAVELER (1890 Digby Courier)

Who knows of Jo Hopkins ? Whence he cometh and whither he goeth ? Jo is a " cullod g'eman " of medium size, and of course of prepossessing appearance, but beyond that nothing, from the glistening sable of his intelligent physog to the non-soapsidised odor of his venerable dungarees, betrays either his previous condition of servitude, or the ambition that rouses his rugged sole as he sets his salt-sack sail, and turns his coal tarred bow toward the land of the setting sun - lone traveler on a lonely sea. Whence and whither ?

During the early part of last week this strange mariner, seated in a red centre-board dory, without provision, or any indication of ever having had provision, without compass or chart, without anything save an old iron boiler that he built fires in, and called his "range", and a pair of oars, glided majestically into Westport harbor, and with much ceremony cast anchor after the dory had touched the beach. He was scripturally equipped, in that he had neither scrip nor stave, and his gall seemed not of this effeminate age, for he coolly ordered provender for the crew, and as coolly furnished the information that he couldn't pay for it. When asked his destination he replied that he "warn't dezackly aware 'bout his dessenation", but intended calling at Richmond, Virginia, for orders, and should likely proceed to "Liberia, sah, or dar abouts". He described to your correspondent the early days of his life, spent in slavery in Virginia and Arkansas. He was 17 at the close of the war, and he talked freely of those days, yet of the intervening quarter of a century between that time and the day on last June when he sailed from Port George (actual fact), for a seven days cruise, that the prophecy of his godmother, Deliah Sal, might be fulfilled, of that quarter of a century the deponent saith not.

He tarried 3 days, an unbidden guest, near the western light, fed and cared for by the gentlemen there, and on Monday last weighed the fifty pound stone that he used for an anchor, and set his salt-sack for Grand Manan. As he stood at eve on a bluff looking out to sea, his head thrown back, and his weird form outlined on the horizon, I thought of the lines of Matthew Arnold:

The thoughts that rain there steady glow  
Like stars on life's cold sea,  
That others know, or say they know,  
They never shone for me.

But then we are all mariner's on life's sea, and the improvised sail of poor Joe Hopkins may bring him safer to a haven tonight than our ambitions will bring some of us when life's voyage is over.

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