

## Pages for All Ages:

# Elizabeth Hooton Persisted

by Nancy Wood

### Some words and phrases to know before you read

- persistence,
- persistent, persist
- publicly, in public
- minister
- preach
- England
- transformed
- direct relationship
- “truth to power”
- priest
- persecuted, persecution
- banish
- authorities
- Boston, Massachusetts
- companion
- arrested
- wilderness
- confront
- a royal permit
- the stocks
- torments
- shunned

Persistence means to keep doing something, no matter what. Elizabeth Hooton was persistent about defending the Quaker faith. She was the first woman to speak publicly as a Quaker minister. She preached about the Quaker Way everywhere she went, even when it got her into terrible trouble.

When Elizabeth Hooton met George Fox in 1647, she was a middle-aged married woman with grown-up children. She and her family lived comfortably in England, but the country was full of upset, killings, and war.

Many people were looking for new ways to find God. These people were called Seekers. Elizabeth and her husband were Seekers. They belonged to a Baptist group, where Elizabeth was a minister. But when

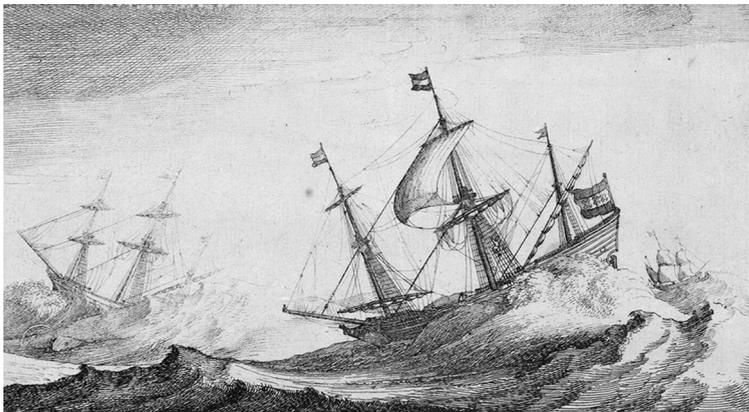
Elizabeth Hooton heard George Fox preach about the Inward Light, she was transformed. She knew that Fox was right when he said that anyone – man, woman, or child – could have a direct relationship with God.

Hooton left her family and her comfortable life to travel and preach. She spent the rest of her life in the Quaker ministry. Her belief in the Inward Light drove her to speak “truth to power.” It gave her strength and courage.

Hooton was put in jail the first time in 1651. She stood up in church and said that the priest was telling lies by acting like he was the only person there who understood God. Hooton knew that God could speak directly to anyone! She was thrown into jail for saying that. Then right after she got out of jail, she stood

up in a different church and told the people there about Quakerism, and she got thrown into jail again. This became the pattern of her life. She persisted in speaking out and getting into trouble.

In 1661, when Hooton was 61 years old, she traveled to North America, where Quakers were being persecuted even worse than they were in England. They were being banished, jailed, and even killed for their beliefs. Hooton knew that if she went to North America, the authorities there



might kill her, but she felt called to go to Boston, Massachusetts, anyway. She had to convince the authorities there to stop hurting Quakers.

It was against the law for ships to take Quakers to Massachusetts, so Hooton and her companion sailed to Virginia instead. They landed almost 800 miles away from Boston. It took many days of riding in horse-drawn carriages and walking on dangerous roads and trails to get to Boston.

The first thing the two women did when they arrived in Boston was to visit the Quakers in jail there. The sheriff immediately arrested the two women and took them to the Governor, who demanded to know why they had come. Hooton explained that God had sent her to warn the authorities to stop killing Quakers. The two women were jailed and beaten. Then they were taken on a two-day journey into the wilderness, where they were left to die. But the women found some wolf tracks in the snow, followed those tracks to a village, and got help. Hooton tried to visit Boston again, but instead, she was arrested and sent back to England.

Even though it was dangerous, Hooton persisted. When she got back to England, she went to talk to the King about the persecution of the Quakers. The King refused to let her into the palace, so she waited for him outside. Whenever the King came out, Hooton followed him. She followed him to his tennis court and on his walks in the royal parks. She confronted him and talked to him about the Quakers.

Finally, Hooton decided she needed to go back to Boston. She wrote to the King and asked for his protection. He gave her a royal permit, which said that she had the right to live in Massachusetts. Hooton traveled there with her daughter, but when the two women arrived, the authorities ignored the King's permit and arrested the two women.

In the middle of winter, Elizabeth Hooton was put in the stocks for four days. Then she was stripped to the waist, her hands were tied to the back of a cart, and she was forced to walk through deep snow for eighty miles. She was paraded half-naked through many



towns and was whipped in front of many crowds. Then for the second time, the authorities left her in the wilderness to die. But, again, she survived.

Hooton returned to Boston at least five more times. Each time, she suffered unimaginable torments. Her own comfort and even her own life were far less important to her than convincing the authorities to stop persecuting Quakers. Hooton continued to preach until the end of her life at age 73. She died in Barbados, on a mission trip to bring Quakerism to the people there.

Even though she was jailed, whipped, beaten, humiliated, and shunned for defending her beliefs, she persisted. Because of her persistence, Elizabeth Hooton's life still speaks to us today.

- Describe a time when you persisted.
- What are some things that people don't like to talk about, even if they believe them?
- When a person has just failed at something, what can help them feel some hope again?

*"Three ships in a rough sea" was drawn by Wenceslaus Holler in the mid-1600s. The picture of people in the stocks was drawn by John Cassel in 1865. Both images are in the public domain.*