

Pilgrim Village Families Sketch: Robert Cushman

By Robert Charles Anderson

Birth: Robert Cushman was baptized on February 9, 1577/8, at Rolvenden, Kent, son of Thomas and Elinor (Hubbard) Cushman.

Death: He died in 1625, in England.

Ship: *Fortune*, 1621

Life in England: Robert Cushman was one of five children born to Thomas and Elinor Cushman. In his February 10, 1585/6, will, Thomas Cushman gave bequests to his three surviving children: sons Richard and Robert, and daughter Sylvester. Elinor Cushman married (2) Emmanuel Evenden on October 17, 1587, and (3) Thomas Tilden on November 6, 1593. Robert apprenticed to George Masters in Canterbury to learn the trade of grocer. If he served a full seven-year apprenticeship, then he started in 1598. In November 1603 while an apprentice, he was brought before the church court for saying, "he will not come to his parish church, because he cannot be edified and saith he can and will defend it by the word of God." He was excommunicated a year later, but granted absolution and received again into the church in July 1605. Shortly thereafter he became a freeman of Canterbury. Robert Cushman returned to England in the winter of 1621/2. He worked as Plymouth Colony's agent, sending supplies, etc. until his death in 1625.

Life in Holland: Robert Cushman and his family emigrated to Leiden sometime before November 4, 1611, when he purchased a house. He worked in the city as a woolcomber. Beginning in September 1617, Cushman spent much of his time in England, working on arrangements for the new colony. He and his family were among those that left England in the summer of 1620, but stayed behind when the *Speedwell* was abandoned.

Life in New England: Robert Cushman and his son, Thomas, traveled to Plymouth Colony aboard the *Fortune* in 1621. While there, Robert preached a sermon, published in 1846 as "The Sin and Danger of Self-Love." Leaving his son in the care of Governor William Bradford, Cushman returned to England with the *Fortune* that winter.

Family: Robert Cushman married (1) Sara Reder at St. Alphege, Canterbury July 31, 1606, and had three children. She was buried in Leiden on October 11, 1616. He married (2) Mary (Clarke) Shingleton, widow of Thomas Shingleton, on June 5, 1617. There are no recorded children, but some identify the Sara Cushman who married William Hoskins in Plymouth on November 2, 1636, as Robert Cushman's daughter by one of his wives. This theory remains unproved.

Children of Robert and Sara Cushman:

- Thomas was baptized at St. Andrew, Canterbury on February 8, 1607/8. He married Mary Allerton about 1636 and had eight children. He died in Plymouth on December 11, 1691. She died in Plymouth on November 28, 1699, the last of the Mayflower passengers.
- Child, buried at the Pieterkerk, Leiden on March 11, 1616.
- Child, buried at the Pieterskerk, Leiden on October 24, 1616.