

Part II: Who Came on the Mayflower: Separating the Facts from the Myths

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If all the people who have been claimed to have come on the *Mayflower* to New England in 1620 actually had come on that boat, it would have sunk mid-Atlantic. Likewise, all the ink used to write about the ship and her passengers in the succeeding 385 years could have floated her back to England. A great deal of what has been written is mistaken, imaginary, or outright fraudulent. So how do you know what is correct?

The best place to start is Caleb Johnson's website, <http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/>, which contains a list of all of the *Mayflower*'s passengers and what is known about them, whether they had descendants, transcriptions of books and documents (many of them written by the Pilgrims) pertaining to both the ship and passengers, and much more. If you don't see a person on this site, they didn't come on the *Mayflower*.

When the *Mayflower* left England she had 102 passengers. During the voyage, one passenger died (William Butten), and one baby was born (Oceanus Hopkins); thus, 102 passengers landed in New England (although it should be noted at least two other pregnant women made the voyage – Susanna White who gave birth to Peregrine White, the first European child born in New England, shortly after arriving at Cape Cod, and Mary Allerton who died in February, a few days after giving birth to a stillborn son). During the first year in Plymouth Colony, half of the passengers died.

Of these 102 passengers, the Mayflower Society recognizes 26 heads of families who have proved descendants. For the purposes of membership in the Mayflower Society, wives and children who also came on the *Mayflower* are grouped under the head of family:

- **John Alden**, also representing *Mayflower* passenger (hereinafter *MP*) Priscilla Mullins (daughter of **William Mullins**) whom he later married. John and Priscilla had ten children born in Plymouth and Duxbury, eight of whom had descendants (Elizabeth, John, Joseph, Jonathan, Ruth, Sarah, Rebecca, and David).
- **Isaac Allerton**, representing *MP*'s first wife Mary, son Bartholomew, and daughters Remember and Mary. Isaac's wife Mary died after giving birth to a stillborn son in February 1621. He remarried, to Fear Brewster (a daughter of *MP* William Brewster, who was not herself on the *Mayflower*), and later had a third wife. Bartholomew returned to England, where he married and had children, although nothing is known about further descendants. Daughters Remember and Mary both married and left descendants.
- **John Billington**, representing *MP*'s wife Elinor and sons John and Francis. All survived; however, the older John Billington, who had a history of troublemaking, became the first man to be hanged in the colony. Only son Francis left descendants.
- **William Bradford**, representing *MP*'s first wife Dorothy who died in December 1620. Their only child, John, left behind in Holland, came to New England later. He married, but left no children. William remarried, to widow Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, and had three more children (William, Mercy, and Joseph), all of whom left descendants.
- **William Brewster**, representing *MP*'s wife Mary and sons Love and Wrestling, who all survived. Left behind were son Jonathan and daughters Patience and Fear, who came later. All but Wrestling left descendants. Fear married *MP* **Isaac Allerton** as his second wife.
- **Peter Brown** came alone, later married twice and had four children, three of whom – Mary, Priscilla, and Rebecca – left descendants.
- **James Chilton**, representing *MP*'s wife Susanna and daughter Mary. James died in December 1620 and Susanna in January 1621. James and Susanna had ten children in total, but besides Mary, only their eldest daughter, Isabella (who came to New England later), survived. Both Isabella and Mary left descendants.
- **Francis Cooke**, representing *MP* son John. His wife Hester and three other children remained behind and came to Plymouth on the ship *Anne* in August 1623. Francis and Hester had two more children born in Plymouth. Five of their children (Jane, John, Jacob, Hester, and Mary) left descendants.
- **Edward Doty** came as a servant to Stephen Hopkins. He married twice and had nine children by his second wife (Edward, John, Thomas, Samuel, Desire, Elizabeth, Isaac, Joseph, and Mary), all of whom left

descendants.

- **Francis Eaton**, representing *MPs* wife Sarah and son Samuel. Samuel survived to have descendants. Sarah died in the first winter and Francis remarried twice. By his third wife, Christian Penn, he had three children, two of whom (Rachel and Benjamin), left descendants.
- **Moses Fletcher** came alone and returned to Holland. He married twice and at his death left ten children, thirteen grandchildren, and twenty great-grandchildren, all in Holland. One line of descent has been accepted by the Mayflower Society.
- **Edward Fuller**, representing *MPs* wife, name unknown, and son Samuel. Edward's wife died in January 1621. Their older son Matthew had remained in England, but came to the colony later. Both Matthew and Samuel left descendants. Edward was the brother of *MP* Samuel Fuller.
- **Samuel Fuller**, brother of *MP* Edward Fuller, Samuel left his third wife, Bridget Lee, and their son Samuel behind in Holland (he had three children by his second wife, Agnes Carpenter, who died without issue). Samuel, Jr., later came to New England and left descendants.
- **Stephen Hopkins**, representing *MPs* second wife Elizabeth, sons Giles and Oceanus, and daughters Constance and Damaris. Constance and Giles were by Stephen's first wife and both survived to leave descendants. Stephen and Elizabeth's children Damaris and Oceanus who were on the *Mayflower* both died young, but the couple had five more children born in Plymouth. Of these, only two daughters, Deborah and another Damaris, left descendants.
- **John Howland**, representing *MP* (later wife) Elizabeth Tilley, daughter of John Tilley. John and Elizabeth had ten children (Desire, John, Hope, Elizabeth, Lydia, Hannah, Joseph, Jabez, Ruth, and Isaac), all of whom left descendants.
- **Richard More** came as a child with his three siblings, Jasper, Ellen, and Mary, who all died in the first winter. Richard married twice and had seven children by his first wife, but only three (Richard, Susanna, and Christian) are known to have had children. Of these, only Susanna has known descendants. The More children are the only *MPs* with proved royal ancestry.
- **William Mullins**, representing *MPs* wife Alice, daughter Priscilla (who later married **John Alden**), and son Joseph. William, Alice and Joseph all died in the first year. Although William Mullins also had a son and daughter who remained in England, all of his known descendants are through Priscilla. The claim of Huguenot ancestry for William Mullins is a myth.
- **Degory Priest** came alone leaving behind his wife Sarah (a sister of *MP* Isaac Allerton) and two daughters, Mary and Sarah. He died in the first winter, but Sarah and the girls came to New England later. Both girls married and left descendants.
- **Thomas Rogers**, representing *MP* son Joseph Rogers. Thomas died in the winter of 1620/21. His wife had stayed behind with three other surviving children (two others had died). Joseph survived and he and his brother John have proved descendants. Two sisters, Elizabeth and Margaret, may have married and had issue, but this has not been authenticated.
- **Henry Samson** was a child who came with his cousins Edward and Ann Tilley. He married and had nine children born in Duxbury, eight of whom left descendants (Elizabeth, Hannah, a daughter [name unknown], Mary, Dorcas, James, Stephen, and Caleb).
- **George Soule** came alone as a servant of Edward Winslow. He married in Plymouth and had nine children, seven of whom had descendants.
- **Myles Standish**, representing *MP* first wife Rose, who died in January 1621. Myles remarried and had seven children, three of whom (Alexander, Myles, and Josiah) left descendants.
- **John Tilley**, representing *MPs* wife Joan and their youngest daughter Elizabeth (who later married **John Howland**). John and Joan died in the first year. In 1999 the Mayflower Society also accepted a line through John Tilley's son Robert, who remained in England.
- **Richard Warren** came alone leaving his wife Elizabeth and five daughters in England. Elizabeth and the girls came later and the Warrens had two sons born in Plymouth. All seven of the Warren children (Mary, Anna, Sarah, Elizabeth, Abigail, Nathaniel, and Joseph) left descendants. Claims of royal ancestry for Richard Warren are unfounded.
- **William White**, representing *MPs* wife Susanna and sons Resolved and Peregrine. William died in February

1621. Susanna remarried, to *MP* Edward Winslow (see below). Both Resolved and Peregrine White left descendants.

- **Edward Winslow**, representing *MPs* first wife Elizabeth and second wife Susanna, widow of **William White**. Edward's first wife died soon after landing in Plymouth and his marriage to the widow Susanna White in May 1621 was the first marriage in the new colony. He became stepfather to Susanna's two boys, Resolved and baby Peregrine White, and he and Susanna had five children born in Plymouth. Only two, Josiah and Elizabeth, had descendants.

The Mayflower Society has published books detailing the first four or five generations of most of these 26 families, which we will discuss in the next installment of this series. The list of books is available on <http://www.mayflower.org/>.

For the original, first-hand account of the voyage of the *Mayflower* and the early history of Plymouth Colony, William Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation* is a must read, and Samuel Eliot Morrison's edition of that work is the most readable. Another interesting work, *Mourt's Relation, A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth*, was written by the first settlers as an enticement to bring more people to the colony. A modern compilation that gives details on all of the early colonists is Eugene Aubrey Stratton's *Plymouth Colony, Its History & People 1620-1691* (information for all of the above and other books about the Pilgrims can be found on <http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/>), and Robert Charles Anderson's new work published by NEHGS, *The Pilgrim Migration: Immigrants to Plymouth Colony, 1620-1633* (updated sketches from his larger series *The Great Migration Begins*) provides everything you need to know about any immigrant to Plymouth Colony before 1634.

The story of the *Mayflower* and her passengers was romanticized in the nineteenth century by such people as orator Daniel Webster and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (author of the famous poem "Courtship of Myles Standish" that told the story of how Priscilla Mullins was wooed by both Standish and John Alden). Fanciful and romantic novels were written putting words into the mouths of the Pilgrims and describing imaginary details of their lives. Often these imaginary details found their way into so-called historical accounts. As the prestige of descent from a *Mayflower* passenger rose, the rush to find an ancestor on that boat led some to ignore good genealogical sources or even to make up connections that were never there. Since many of the surnames of the *MPs* are fairly common, some people have jumped to unfounded conclusions. For example, although there were two men on the *Mayflower* named Clarke – Richard, a passenger, and John the mate – neither man left descendants.[1] The Clarke family of Plymouth traces to Thomas Clarke, who came on the ship *Anne* in 1623.

Many of these imaginary *Mayflower* connections can still be found in print and have unfortunately been disseminated throughout the Internet, but only individuals on the above list are proved passengers of the ship *Mayflower*. Further information about the ship, passengers, and settlement in Plymouth Colony can be found on the websites of Pilgrim Hall (<http://www.pilgrimhall.org/>) and Plimoth Plantation (<http://www.plimoth.org/>).

NOTE:

[1] The crew of the *Mayflower*, perhaps as many as 25-30 men, are mostly unidentified and (other than Captain Christopher Jones) no family information is known about them. Only descent from a passenger qualifies for membership in the Mayflower Society.