



The Florida Pilgrim

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On the cover is a photograph of the *Mayflower II*. Image credit: The General Society of Mayflower Descendants.

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Recreation of Plymouth Colony at Plimoth Patuxet Museum, Plymouth MA, 2019. Credit: Bill Cheshire

MESSAGE FROM OUR GOVERNOR

Greetings Florida Pilgrims!

I hope you had a great July 4 celebrating our Country's 250 years. I did. We had a good meeting in April at the Villages and I want to thank the Chilton Colony for a very good time. We heard from the nominating committee on the next board. If you are interested in serving on the society board, nominations will be taken from the floor. Mark Rhodes updated on the status of the database, very impressive. Please go online and get familiar with the software.



As my tenure as Society Governor comes to an end, I want to thank all those on the BOA and especially the executive committee for their help and dedication. We have an outstanding BOA who keeps us on track.

The Fall meeting will be in Cocoa in November, and the Spring meeting will be in Pensacola. We do not have any other colony hosting a meeting in the future.

Have a great summer, and stay cool.

Best wishes,

Brian McWaters
Governor, Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants





Drafters of a Just Treason

America Is Older than Its Semiquincentennial

by William P. Cheshire

Seven score and sixteen years before Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, the 250th anniversary of which we celebrate this year, the passengers aboard the *Mayflower* drafted what would come to be called the Mayflower Compact, the first document of American democracy. These two documents mark significant events in the history of our great nation, which was founded not on the basis of blood or soil but by noble ideals. To trace their connections is to chart the trajectory of American liberty.

Both documents asserted a radical

right of self-governance. In the case of the 1620 Compact, the drafters declared the right themselves to “enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony.”¹ This was an act of necessity, as the *Mayflower* passengers held a patent for their intended destination, Virginia, that was not valid where storms had forced them to land. Patents were legal charters granted by the English crown authorizing groups

¹ [The Mayflower Compact](#)



Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, *The Mayflower Compact*, image in public domain

to establish colonies. William Bradford wrote that, once the *Mayflower* anchored off the coast of Cape Cod, some passengers blustered that “when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to command them, the patent they had being for Virginia and not for New England.”² These “discontented and mutinous speeches,” as Bradford called them, threatened the survival of the colony. In the struggle to decide how to govern themselves, against all odds they reached a consensus. As their ship dipped and nodded with each wave, yet with steady hands they signed the document that would bind them together in “a civil body politic.” At the same time, the

Mayflower signatories exculpated themselves from the potential accusation of disloyalty by affirming their allegiance to the crown, signing their names as “Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James.”

If, in establishing self-governance, the *Mayflower* passengers steered a cautious path in avoidance of treason, the signatories of the Declaration of Independence ran headlong into it. The 1776 document went much further, pronouncing separation from the English crown and asserting a “Right of the People to alter or abolish” a system of government that had become tyrannical. Unlike the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration also

² William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, 1620.

outlined specific grievances against the king. These were dangerous words, but they were proportionate to the severity of adverse and unjust treatment that Colonial Americans had endured. Writing from the Graff House in Philadelphia in the midst of mounting transatlantic tensions, Jefferson was quite aware that his words were nothing short of treason. And yet he composed them with a steady hand, knowing the truths he held to be “self-evident.”³

Both documents were written in the midst of great political uncertainty. These were the times, wrote Thomas Paine, “that try men’s souls.”⁴ We may ask, then, what gave Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers the confidence to sign their names to a document declaring independence from the crown, a document that, had America lost the ensuing war, would have surely meant their executions? The answer is the same principle that gave the *Mayflower* passengers the confidence to declare in writing their right to self-governance. The text of the Mayflower Compact speaks of King James’s authority not as absolute, but given to him “by the Grace of God.” The purpose of the *Mayflower* voyage, according to the Compact, was not only to honor the king but, more importantly, “for the Glory of God.” And it was “in the Presence of God and one another,” holding themselves accountable to God

and to the community, that they resolved to “combine ourselves together into a civil body politic.” In this document, anthropologist Peter Wood writes, “America was catching a first glimpse of itself.”⁵

Economist Lawrence Reed opens his book on the American founding with praise of the Mayflower Compact.⁶ A reviewer writes, “Reed traces a line from that document to the Declaration, and the line holds because the ideas were carried consciously. The Pilgrims knew what they were doing. So did the founders who remembered them.”⁷ The Mayflower Compact, according to Reed, was the earliest document of self-governance and “a definition of what America would become.”⁸ The British author Rebecca Fraser writes, “The Mayflower Compact has a whisper of the contractual government enunciated in the 4th July 1776 Declaration of Independence, that governments derive their just powers ‘from the consent of the governed.’”⁹

Looking ahead to 1776, in the most familiar sentence in the Declaration, Jefferson wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are *endowed by the Creator* with certain unalienable Rights,

3 US Declaration of Independence

4 Thomas Paine, “The Crisis,” *Common Sense*, December 23, 1776.

5 Peter W. Wood, *1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project* (New York: Encounter Books, 2020), 123.

6 Lawrence W. Reed, *Born of Ideas: How Principles, Faith, and Course Forged America* (Grove City, PA: Faith & Freedom Press, 2026).

7 Surse Pierpont, “The Founders’ Reading List: The Curriculum Behind the Constitution,” *The Daily Economy*, June 18, 2026.

8 Lawrence W. Reed, “America at 250: Born of Ideas: How Principles, Faith, & Courage Forged America,” Institute for Faith and Freedom, May 14, 2026.

9 Rebecca Fraser, *The Mayflower: The Families, the Voyage, and the Founding of America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2017), 55.



John Trumbull's painting of the Declaration of Independence being presented to Congress, image in public domain

that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (emphasis added). The moral authority to declare independence, according to Jefferson, was based on “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.”

This affirmation derived from divine revelation as well as from reason. In his first draft, in place of “self-evident,” Jefferson had written “sacred and undeniable.”¹⁰ Commenting on the Declaration of Independence, political scientist John G. West writes: “the ‘Laws... of Nature’s God’—points to the Founders’ conviction that the laws of human nature ultimately derive their authority from God himself. It also hints that humans

have access to these laws not just through reason and conscience, but also through God’s special revelation to us—the Bible.”¹¹ The politically dangerous idea that was understood by the Founding Fathers and by the *Mayflower* passengers was that human rights are given by God rather than by government. On this solid judicial foundation a free nation can enable its citizens to prosper.

Having arrived safely in the New World, Bradford records that the Pilgrim Separatists “fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the

10 *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 1, 1760-1776*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 243–247

11 John G. West, *Endowed by Our Creator: The Bible, Science, and the Battle for America’s Soul* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2026), 36.

perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element.”¹² Trust in God and gratitude for his providence appear throughout his historical account, *On Plimoth Plantation*. And Jefferson, though a deist and Enlightenment rationalist, recognized the “obligation of the moral precepts of Jesus”¹³ to be consistent with reason.

President Washington invited “divine blessing”¹⁴ from the same God whom the Pilgrims had set their desires upon.¹⁵ In his first inaugural address, Washington tendered “homage to the Great Author of every public and private good” and offered his “fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes...”¹⁶ Though in some matters they held to differing theological doctrines, the Founders all acknowledged God as the final authority and believed no government to be the supreme power commanding human allegiance.

At least two signatories of the Dec-

¹² William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, 1620.

¹³ Thomas Jefferson to James Fishback, September 27, 1809, in *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, ed. Dickinson W. Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 343.

¹⁴ President George Washington's First Inaugural Address, April 30, 1789.

¹⁵ William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, 1608.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

laration of Independence, both from Massachusetts, were descended from *Mayflower* passengers who had signed the Mayflower Compact. John Adams (1735-1826), who would become the second president of the United States, was descended from John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, his third-great-grandparents. Adams's son John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) gave an oration at Plymouth in 1802, before he was elected the sixth president of the United States, in which he spoke of the Mayflower Compact, “by which they formed themselves into a body politic” as, “perhaps, the only instance in human history, of that positive, original social compact, which speculative philosophers have imagined as the only legitimate source of government.”¹⁷ Of interest to Florida readers—as secretary of state, John Quincy Adams negotiated the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819, which ceded Spanish Florida to the United States.

The second Declaration signatory was Robert Treat Paine (1731-1814), a third great-grandson of Constance Hopkins, daughter of Stephen Hopkins, both *Mayflower* passengers. Paine served as Massachusetts' first attorney general and associate justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Paine's fourth great-grandson by the same name, the ecologist Robert Treat Paine (1933-2016), conducted the field research for his dissertation at Bay Mouth Bar, a small spit of land off the coast of northern Florida just

¹⁷ John Quincy Adams “Oration at Plymouth,” December 22, 1802.

south of Tallahassee.¹⁸ His study of carnivorous snails led to seminal work and the concept of “keystone species,” which are organisms that have a disproportionately large impact on their natural environment. One might say the Mayflower Compact is a keystone document in American history, having had a disproportionately *positive* impact on the development of representational government, carrying forward to the drafting of the Constitution.¹⁹

18 “A Tribute to Robert Treat Paine (1933–2016),” FSU Coastal and Marine Laboratory.

19 Lisa Pennington, “From Compact to Constitution: Inspiring the Revolutionary Generation,” *The Mayflower Quarterly Magazine*, Summer 2026, Vol. 92, No. 2, 2.

From the *Mayflower* landing to the American Revolution, up to the present and into the future, God’s providence, wrote Bradford, is “wonderful...in all ages, for his mercy endureth forever.”²⁰ A biblical understanding of human rights, on which just governance is based, is what has made America exceptional. Thomas Paine’s words are still true, that “The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind.”²¹

20 William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, 1623.

21 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, February 14, 1776.



William P. Cheshire, M.D., Deputy Governor, Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants
and a tenth great-grandson of William Bradford

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. — We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such Principles and organizing its Powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. — But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Tyranny, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former system of Government. — The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. — To prove this, let facts be presented to a candid world. — He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. — He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would assent to the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right infinitely to them and permitted to tyrannize only. — He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. — He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. — He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise, the state remaining long the same as if no Dissolution had taken place. — He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Migration of his Subjects, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Land. — He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing Judiciary Powers. — He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. — He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. — He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the consent of our Legislature. — He has endeavored to render us, in times of peace, Militarily independent of and superior to the civil powers. — He has combined with us to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation. — For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: — For exercising them, by a strict discipline, in manner which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: — For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: — For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury: — For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences: — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with powers to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging war against us. — He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. — He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to combat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty, perfidy and barbarity, which are provoking to the resentment of every Man of sense and honor, a rebellion among the people, to fall themselves by their Swords. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the Inhabitants of these frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. — In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered by insult and injury. — A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. — Nor have we been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. — They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of conciliatory. — We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends. — We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Boston, Gwinnett
Lynch Hall
G. W. Wallcut

John Hancock
Joseph Hewes
John Adams

Edward Rutledge

Thos. Heyrick
Thos. Heyrick
Arthur Middleton

Samuel Chase
Wm. Reed
Thos. Stone
G. B. Smith

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Thos. Jefferson
Wm. Harrison
Thos. Nelson
Charles Bracken

John Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Adams
John Jay

James Wilson
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MAYFLOWER SCHOLARSHIP

The Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants awards scholarships each year to a high school senior or a returning member of the US military who will be attending a college or university or vocational school. Students must be sponsored by a biological relative of a current member in good standing of the Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants. Applications are judged on the basis of a personal essay, unweighted grade point average, school transcript, evidence of leadership, extracurricular and volunteer activities, and letters of recommendation.

**THE FLORIDA SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS IS
PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE ITS 2026 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES**



Aubrey Reese Stickney of Lexington, South Carolina, is sponsored by Stephen Reese Crapo of the Stephen Hopkins Colony and will be attending Clemson Honors College, where she aspires to a career in dentistry.

Bethany Hope Adhikari of Somerset, New Jersey, is sponsored by Barbara Ann Scheve Kelsky and will be attending the University of Delaware, majoring in physical therapy.

Emily Noble Derby of Bear, Delaware, is sponsored by Melissa L. Derby of the Stephen Hopkins Colony and will be attending Indian River State College, after which she aspires to become a psychiatrist.

Madison Michelle Trafton of Tallahassee, Florida, is sponsored by Joshua Mills Trafton of the Edward Winslow Colony and will be attending Tallahassee State College to study criminology. She aspires to become an intelligence analyst with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

THE SCHOLARS' ESSAYS

We are pleased to share the essays submitted by this year's scholarship awardees, each of whom has graciously given permission for her essay to be included, unedited, in this issue of *The Florida Pilgrim*.

How Having a Mayflower Ancestry Impacted My Life

by Aubrey Reese Stickney

Being a descendant of Miles Standish has impacted my life in many ways. It has built resilience within me to overcome hardships. Further, it has built my self-esteem to possess the confidence that I am capable of high achievement even in times of stress. It has also fostered a strong connection to history and pride in our country.

This special ancestry has built resilience in me academically and personally. Myles Standish displayed great resilience as the military leader of Plymouth Colony. Despite losing his wife during their brutal first winter, he remained their dedicated military leader, fulfilling military and civil duties. As I read about the hardships of the Pilgrims, where disease and hunger killed about half of the settlers, I imagine the events that took place and am in awe of the strength they had. They put the greater good ahead of themselves. Having a father who did 4 combat tours flying the F/A-18 for the Navy, it occurred to me that my family was making a sacrifice for our country much like Myles did. I reminded myself that Myles is somewhere within me, therefore I have the strength to get through the hardship of having my father in combat.

Owning my resilience during challenges has contributed increasing my feeling of

self worth. Myles Standish was not only a fierce military leader, but a kind person who helped the sick during their first winter and served the common good of the colony. The fact that I share even a speck of DNA with a man who was so capable has helped me to believe in my capabilities. Further, academic rigor also became manageable as my perspective on hardship was influenced by my connection to my ancestors. On long nights of studying, I have often considered that my challenges are nothing compared to what he endured. I'm not afraid to go through discomfort in order to push myself to achieve my goals. I have pushed myself to take the hardest math and science classes offered at my high school. Currently, I am the only female in Advanced Placement BC Calculus at my large high school. Thinking back to middle school when my teachers identified me as a student to be placed in advanced mathematics, I remember feeling confident that I could be successful. I took on the challenge and now mathematically perform at the top of my class of almost 600 students.

My personal link to the establishment of American democracy through Myles Standish signing the Mayflower Compact fills me with pride. I will never take for granted the freedoms I hold today that

were initiated by the Pilgrims. My mother grew up on Cape Cod which enabled me to spend a lot of time there. When I first saw the Pilgrim Monument in Providence, stepped foot onto First Encounter beach in Eastham, and visited the town of Plymouth, I was filled with emotion. I imagined the arrival of the Pilgrims on that narrow tip of Cape Cod, interactions with the Natives, and the establishment of Plymouth Colony on land that had been cleared by the Patuxet before they were hit by plague. It all felt so personal to me. When I see all the places named after Myles Standish, I feel pride in

all that he overcame and accomplished. This pride has fueled me to give my best to my work so that I can contribute to society in a way that would make my ancestors proud. Recently, I earned a spot on the competitive Clemson Honors College as a Health Science Pre-professional Health Studies major on a pre-dental track.

My ancestry has been a significant gift building resilience, self-esteem and pride within me. This rich heritage pushes me to be my best as I prepare to serve my community as a dentist.

How Having a Mayflower Ancestry Impacted My Life

by Bethany Hope Adhikari

Learning that I am descended from Francis Cooke, a Mayflower passenger, has transformed my understanding of history and my own identity. Rather than remaining a passive observer, I now feel compelled to confront uncertainty and help shape a new future for my family.

Francis Cooke was born in England in the late 1500s and later joined English Separatists who relocated to Leiden, Netherlands, in pursuit of religious freedom. In 1620, he sailed on the Mayflower to the New World, initially leaving his family behind, and helped establish Plymouth Colony under challenging circumstances. His risk-taking, adaptability, and willingness to begin anew are qualities I recognize in myself and actively seek to embody.

The concept of being among the “first” now holds greater significance for me. Although the Mayflower passengers were not

pioneers in every respect, they confronted uncertainty as they established a new society. This perspective resonates with the University of Delaware’s motto, “Dare to be first,” which encourages individuals to take initiative even when the outcome is uncertain.

This principle is personally significant. I will be the first in my family to pursue a doctorate, and for me, this represents more than academic achievement; it is an act of venturing into the unknown. Although I do not have a fully defined plan, I embrace both the uncertainty and the responsibility, aspiring to ease the journey for those who follow. Francis Cooke’s decision to cross the Atlantic demonstrated perseverance and a conviction that initiating change is worthwhile despite risks. While my circumstances differ, I have learned that being first often involves confronting discomfort and uncertainty, yet still

choosing to move forward.

This perspective has influenced my approach to challenges. During a pre-college physical therapy program last summer, I learned that a student with special needs had experienced vandalism of his belongings. Although I was not directly involved, I chose to report the incident. The program leaders responded by supporting the student and revising policies. This experience showed me that “daring to be first” can also mean being the first to advocate for others.

I observe this principle in practice during my weekly internship at a physical therapy clinic, where I am forming my professional identity as a clinician. Many patients arrive discouraged by pain or physical limitations. One patient, “Angel,” found even basic exercises challenging due to fatigue. Through consistent encouragement and support, I witnessed her gradual improvement in strength and independence, reinforcing my belief that progress often begins with a single, uncertain effort—for both patients and clinicians.

Studying early colonial history has also led me to reflect critically on legacy. While Plymouth’s narrative is one of perseverance, it is equally marked by the displacement and suffering of Indigenous peoples. Understanding the full history remind me that being “first” entails responsibility as well as pride and demands careful consideration of what is created, whom it affects, and the legacy left behind. This awareness challenge me to ensure that the paths I forge expand opportunity rather than cause harm.

Ultimately, having a Mayflower ancestor has taught me that “daring to be first” is defined by the willingness to begin rather than by securing a guaranteed outcome. As I strive to become the first in my family to earn a doctorate in physical therapy, I remain mindful of this lesson.

Every significant journey begins with uncertainty, and it is courage that transforms potential into progress. I am prepared to take this initial step for my family because I am committed to contributing to a better future.

How Having a Mayflower Ancestry Impacted My Life

by Emily Nicole Derby

When I was a little girl, my grandmother was researching my grandfather’s ancestry and would tell me stories about my Mayflower Passenger ancestors. She told me not to look at the profiles as gray and white but as people of strength, determination, and courage. I didn’t think too much about it at the time, but when I started to learn the history of our country, I began to appreciate

my Mayflower ancestors. I understood the risks they took when they made the decision to leave the familiar behind and head off to an unfamiliar place where they could start a new life defined by their values without the fear of persecution. Their decision took courage, strength, bravery, determination, and perseverance.

Their story of their perseverance beginning

with the day they set sail on the Mayflower, the adversities and struggles they endured, and how they came together as a colony by working hard and helping one another has been the motivation that has guided my decisions along the way.

My Mayflower ancestors showed me that with determination, bravery and courage, anything is possible, even in the face of adversity and struggle. It is these values and strengths that have helped shape my journey through life.

Their determination showed me that hardship is not an ending but a beginning. My personal challenge came from a series of concussions and medical conditions that sidelined me from sports and disrupted my focus in school. For weeks I struggled with headaches and memory issues, wondering if I would ever be myself again. Each time doubt crept in, I reminded myself that I am a Mayflower descendant and I have the determination, strength, and courage to persevere through physical setbacks, to remain resilient and brave enough to travel the long and sometimes tiring road to recovery. I worked hard, I stayed strong. It took courage, strength, determination and perseverance. I made that voyage to

recovery.

Learning about their early days in Plymouth Colony, motivated me to help others whether it be volunteering at various PTO events at school, assisting lower grade teachers with after school clubs, helping friends, or through community service.

Overall, being a Mayflower descendant has become my source of motivation to work hard, stay strong, during struggles and challenges, and not let fear of the unknown keep me from succeeding.

Determination, courage, strength and bravery in the face of adversity, and perseverance have shaped my personality. As I look ahead to my future and begin a new chapter in my life, I will continue to carry those values with me.

Thanks to my Mayflower ancestors, I am brave enough to try new things, strong enough to handle new challenges, kind enough to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and make choices and decisions that I can be proud of.

I am proud to be a descendent of a Mayflower passenger, and proud to be an American.

How Having a Mayflower Ancestry Impacted My Life

by Madison Michelle Trafton

The global coronavirus pandemic of 2019 caused quite a disruption around the world. It placed an unparalleled strain on our medical system. It led to a large global recession with food and supply shortages. There were many lives lost. It created ethical issues as well

often pitting public health protocols against individual rights. It was a period I hope that I will never see again. I suppose there was a silver lining in all this: we were at home with our families more. More time: to get things done, to take on new challenges, to explore new interests. One of these

interests was exploring our genealogical roots, specifically retracing our already established line to William Brewster. In doing so, I learned and discovered so much. While retracing the lineage to William Brewster, we discovered that we have many lines to the Mayflower. It was a surprise! I am not only a lineal descendant of William Brewster, but to six other passengers: Stephen Hopkins and his children Giles and Constance, Thomas Rogers and his son Joseph, and Henry Samson. Through these seven passengers, we have authenticated ten lines with the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, with nine more to go. That's right, 19 lines!

When I look at my Mayflower ancestry, I am drawn to the children. Four of the seven passengers I am a descendant from were under the age of eighteen at the time of the Mayflower's voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. Giles Hopkins was 12. His sister Constance was 14. Henry Samson was 16. Joseph Rogers was 17. I am 17 now, and I try to see this journey unfold through their eyes. It is hard to imagine: leaving your home, and some of your family behind, to sail on an undersized ship and in unsavory conditions across the ocean for two months, and to land somewhere unexpected and having to make it work in brutal conditions, only to see many of those you traveled with or called family perish that first winter.

My everyday life is my ancestors dream come true. They risked their own lives

in pursuit of a better future for both themselves and their future families. Without their bravery, there is a good chance that I would not be where I am today.

I can not even begin to fathom the harsh conditions that they had to endure on the journey to America. Between the packed living arrangements, scarcity of food and bad weather, I am not sure if I would have made it. While my ancestors were sleeping for weeks on end in a cramped boat, I am lucky enough to sleep in the safety of my own bed. On the Mayflower or in the early Plymouth Colony, when they became ill, they did not have doctors that could treat them with medicine. I am lucky enough to live in a country where I have access to modern-day medicine that can cure most every ailment.

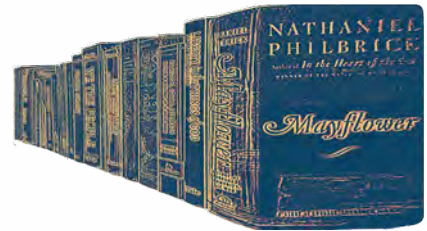
I am very thankful for their bravery in making this voyage as they did not know what would be waiting for them. I have elected to stay in my hometown for college because I do not want to leave my family to pursue an education across the country. I appreciate the safety that my hometown provides.

The bravery shown by my ancestors and their desire to provide a better life for me in America is appreciated daily. I hope that I can make the future a better place by using their example of bravery and perseverance as I pursue a degree in Criminology to become an Intelligence Analyst.





From the Archives



The Florida Pilgrim, Vol. XI, No. 1, December 1985

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 13, 1985

I am very pleased to send warm greetings to the members of the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of Florida as you gather for your Annual meeting. I send special regards and congratulations to the members of the Elizabeth Tilley Colony of Sarasota on being chosen as the hosts for this prestigious meeting.

In perpetuating the memory of your illustrious Pilgrim ancestors, you render a great service to all Americans. The brave men and women who undertook the perilous voyage across the Atlantic aboard the MAYFLOWER 365 years ago were among the first to risk everything for the God-given rights they had been denied in the Old World. Their courage, perseverance and above all, faith in the Almighty made an imperishable contribution to the institutions of freedom on which our beloved Republic was later to be founded.

The Society of Mayflower Descendants continues to revere those values your forefathers cherished. You form an inspiring bulwark of support for the principles of liberty enshrined in the Mayflower Compact.

Nancy and I send our best wishes for a successful and memorable occasion. God bless all of you.

Ronald Reagan



What Is Scurvy?

And What Role Did It Play in the Death of Pilgrims That First Winter?

by David Nash, M.D.

As *Mayflower* descendants we are all aware of the tragic deaths during that first winter after the arrival of our Pilgrim ancestors. Only half of the Pilgrims survived that first winter. There were many factors that contributed to the death toll. Challenges included delays in departure depleting some of the



Johann Wolfgang Baumgartner (1702-1761), "38-year-old man suffering from scurvy," 1929, Wellcome Collection, London, Wikimedia Commons image in public domain.

food supplies and crowded unsanitary conditions aboard the *Mayflower* on a 66-day voyage with many suffering seasickness. 102 Pilgrim passengers had to share the "tween deck" below the main

deck and above the cargo hold. This was about 80 feet by 20 feet, and the ceiling was about five feet high. That's less than 16 sq. ft. per person (4'x4' or 8'x2'). Just try to [imagine](#) that confinement for 66 days at sea. The journalist George F. Willison wrote that "the ship had only the crudest of conveniences and no sanitary facilities of any kind except the traditional bucket, as there was no provision for bathing or even cursory washing (even if it had been a practice of the time to indulge), the air in the narrow, crowded quarters below deck must have been nauseating at best and at worst simply staggering."¹

Incommodious quarters were conducive to a number of sicknesses potentially affecting the health and weakening the condition of the passengers. Unsanitary conditions could lead to dysentery, also referred to as the "bloody flux" associated with bloody diarrhea, fever, abdominal pain, and dehydration. Crowded close quarters were also conducive to the spread of viral respiratory illnesses. Long voyages were also known to be associated with the development of scurvy. Scurvy was the only specific disease referred to in the account of the Pilgrims contributing to the many deaths.

After arrival on November 11th at Cape Cod, they spent many days exploring in wet, cold, and freezing conditions to establish a suitable place to establish their settlement.

¹ George F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), 128-129.



"Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink," illustration by Gustave Doré from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1877, page 6, image in public domain.

Mourt's Relation, written by Edward Winslow and William Bradford in 1621, recounts: "wading to shore in ice cold water... marching 6-7 miles in half foot of snow... unseasonable cold and wet lodging... the water froze on our clothes making them 'like coats of iron'... most if not all had coughs and colds leading to scurvy and death... scarce many of us were free from vehement coughs."² Although scurvy was

a well-recognized condition at the time of the Pilgrims, coughs and colds were not the cause leading to scurvy as suggested by Winslow.

So, what causes scurvy, and what are its symptoms that can lead to death?

Scurvy had been referred to as "the plague of the seas," and it was estimated that it killed more than 2 million sailors between the time of Columbus's voyage in 1492 and the mid-19th century. Long voyages would often lose 50% of their sailors due to death from scurvy.³ The signs and symptoms of scurvy include: lethargy, debilitating weakness, aching joints, swelling arms and legs, easy bruising, gums becoming spongy, bleeding and teeth loosening, internal hemorrhaging, old wounds reopening and mucous membranes bleeding, and without treatment eventually death. That's a pretty gruesome set of

symptoms.

So, what is the real cause of scurvy? Scurvy is caused by the lack of vitamin C in the diet. The *Mayflower* provisions for their journey included: hardtack biscuits, salt pork, dried fish and cow tongue, oats, peas, rice, wheat, butter, sweet oil, mustard seed, cheese, vinegar, water, cider and beer. Vitamin C is primarily found in many fruits and vegetables notably absent in the provisions of the Pilgrims and not available

² Edward Winslow and William Bradford, *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth*, ed. J. D. Fiore, originally published 1622 (Applewood, 1963).

³ Catherine Price, "The Age of Scurvy," *Distillations Magazine*, August 14, 2017.

locally at the time of their arrival at New Plymouth. Due to their lack of vitamin C, they were vulnerable to developing signs and symptoms of scurvy compounded by the cold and other challenging conditions of their voyage. No details were actually given of scurvy symptoms to confirm this as a primary cause of death, but certainly the dietary vitamin C deficiency can be at least considered as a contributing factor in the death toll that winter.

So, what is vitamin C and how does it contribute to our health and well-being? Vitamin C is one of the 13 essential vitamins. It's an antioxidant scavenging harmful free radicals that can injure cells. It is helpful in forming blood vessels, cartilage, muscle, and collagen in bone. It is also helpful in wound-healing and absorbing iron we need for making our red blood cells. An interesting fact is that all mammals except the guinea pig, fruit bat, and primates make their own vitamin C and are not dependent on vitamin C in their diets.

In 1747, a Scottish naval surgeon, James Lind, performed an experiment on his sailors and clearly documented that citrus fruits (oranges and lemons) in the sailors' diets were able to prevent and cure the symptoms of scurvy. It is interesting that

Edward Winslow, in the last paragraph of *Mourt's Relation* written in 1621, advises what future emigrants to New Plymouth should bring. He advises, "bring juice of lemons, and take it fasting; it is of good use."



David Nash, M.D., Surgeon General,
General Society of Mayflower Descendants

Although scurvy is well understood today and a very rare condition requiring treatment, it was for a long time in history a condition that affected many lives, causing debilitation and death. Some of our Pilgrim ancestors probably fell victim to its ravages while others were fortunate to recover and establish a colony whose history we treasure and honor. Just remember to eat your fruits and vegetables.



flag background for Dr. Nash, Joshua Nathanson, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Flag_Backlit.jpg

IN GRATITUDE

Florida Society Contributions to the Plymouth

Meeting House Project Are Making a Difference

Dear Mayflower Members and Friends of Florida,

We are thrilled to share that the Florida \$50,000 Challenge Fundraiser for the Mayflower Meetinghouse has successfully reached its goal. Because of your generosity, Florida donors raised \$50,000, and with the anonymous donor's match, that brings the total impact to \$100,000 for the Meetinghouse.

Thank you for this incredible generosity. Your support moves us closer to the ambitious goal of raising a total of \$20 million to complete the Mayflower Meetinghouse, preserving this sacred and historic place for generations to come.

Your leadership has already inspired Mayflower supporters in Texas to take on the same challenge. Three generous donors came together to commit to match up to \$50,000 from Texas supporters through August.

Thank you, Mayflower members and friends of Florida, for your generosity, enthusiasm, and leadership. Your energy is spreading across the country and helping build momentum for the future of the Mayflower Meetinghouse.



If you would like to learn more, visit, or continue to give, please reach out to me directly, or learn more on our website: **[The Mayflower Society Meetinghouse Project](#)**

With heartfelt thanks,

Cheryl Soares

Executive Director, The Mayflower Society



IN MEMORIAM

The Rev. Dr. Albert E. Myers (18 September 1931–22 May 2026)

Contributed by Robert McGuire

The Henry Samson Colony has lost one of its founding officers, much beloved, who will be greatly missed for his genuine warmth and good humor. He never was lacking in sound wisdom and advice, he was a cherished mentor to me and many others.

While he was indeed a member of the pre-computer age cohort, he quickly adapted to its use as a tool for research and communications. He created and maintained the Colony Facebook

very involved in the DAR. This led to his many interests to continue the research, that resulted with 35,000 names in his data base.

His [obituary](#) in the Fort Myers and Cape Coral News-Press states that he was born in Akron, Ohio, to Forrest D. Myers and Marian H. Conner. He attended Swarthmore College, The University of Akron, Wittenberg University, Hama Divinity School, Oberlin College Graduate School of Theology, and held a D. Min. degree from Vander-



page and ensured that photos from meetings were promptly posted along with historical tidbits. He hosted genealogy workshops at Shell Point to share lineage research skills with others.

After several years of fund-raising to support the "flag fund," the Colony was finally able to present its new flag at the March 2016 meeting. Of course, Albert was a significant contributor to the effort and joined in the photo that includes the early Colony leaders.

In more recent years, Albert has been able to add more members to our Colony in addition to his wife, Patricia. His son, Forrest and grandson Camden are also part of our Samsonite crew now.

Albert was a clergyman who spent many years with congregations, especially in PA and other locations. He was encouraged to look into his family history by his grandmother, who was

bilt University. He served as a Lutheran minister and as an honorary Canon in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Stephen in Harrisburg, PA. He also served as Executive Director of the PA Council of Churches. Near Fort Myers, he was a member of Peace Lutheran Church and often attended his wife's church, Chapel by the Sea, on Estero Island.

Myers served as Elder of the Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants and was a member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the Castine (ME) Scientific Society, the Castine (ME) Historical Society, the Penobscot (ME) Historical Society, the Perry County (PA) Historians, the Somerset Chapter of Magna Carta Barons and the Order of Founders of North America, and the First Families of Ohio.

He is author of *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Church Press, 1970).

IN MEMORIAM

Clara Waterman Powell (24 September 1943–8 January 2026)

The Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants mourns the passing of its devoted member Clara Waterman Powell.

Clara delighted in tracing her family history, especially back to her ancestors who sailed on the *Mayflower* and signed the Mayflower Compact in 1620. She contributed substantially to the Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants, including chairing the Juniors' Scholarship Committee. She also served as elder and governor of the William Brewster Colony and was a member of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants Junior Membership Committee. In 2025, the General Society of Mayflower Descendants honored her with the Distinguished Service Award.



She was born in Hartford, CT, to Arnold Waterman and Doris May Bennett. The eldest of five children,

she was raised in Glastonbury and West Hartland, CT, and attended Wilson College in PA and Northeastern University in MA. She earned degrees from the University of Hartford and Nova University in Florida. By profession, she was an industrial engineer specializing in management information for companies including Quality Name Plate, United Technologies, Raytheon, Boeing 747, the University of Washington, Aetna Life & Casualty, Eastern Airlines, and John Alden. In her retirement, she was active in small business development in South Dade.

In 2012, she received the Alliance for Aging's Positive Living Award for her dedication and commitment to her community. Her numerous contributions included volunteering for the Kids and the Power of Work Program, at the Homestead Hospital, for the Homestead Jobs Corp Center, and at the Visitor Center of the Tropical Everglades Visitor Association. She served on the Little Angels Foundation Board and the Homestead Historic Preservation Board. She was a charter member of the Toastmaster Club of Homestead.

A generous soul, her final gift was the donation of her organs to offer life to others. She is survived by her husband, Edward Charles Powell.



A PRAYER FOR OUR NATION

Fternal Father,
As we reflect on 250 years of America, we praise You for instilling in us an unsatiable desire for freedom—freedom to worship You in spirit and in truth, with open hearts and according to the dictates of our consciences. We have been emboldened by Your faithfulness to take risks that others dare not chance. We glorify You and the values You have given us—among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We thank You for providing us with leaders who demanded liberty and fought to ensure it. We are grateful for our founding fathers, who declared independence and crafted a constitution, outlining our representative democracy, a document that is flexible enough to right wrongs and strong enough to adhere to its founding principles.

We thank You for this land, rich in resources, beauty, and diversity. We marvel at the people of America, coming from across the globe to blend their cultures into the mosaic of America. Thank you, Lord.

Help us, dear Lord, to protect and preserve this great country, to honor the values on which it was founded, and to take responsibility to serve one another in unity and peace. Impress upon our minds the principles of liberty which made this United States of America endure for 250 years, and direct the thoughts of our hearts toward you and to our neighbors, so that our country will endure for another 250 years or more.

May the United States of America always be one nation under God.

Amen.



Jackie Arsenault
Elder, Florida Society of
Mayflower Descendants

2026 – Spring FSMD Meeting was held April 24–25, 2026, The Villages, Florida

Future Meeting Dates

2026 – Triennial General Congress - September 11-15, 2026

Plymouth, Massachusetts

2026 – Fall Annual FSMD Meeting - November 20-21, 2026

Hosted by the Stephen Hopkins Colony, Coco Beach, Florida

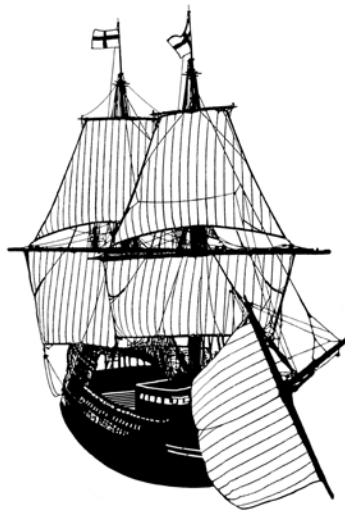
Elections of state officers will be held

2027 – GBOA – Hosted by the Georgia Society, Atlanta, Georgia

2028 – GBOA – Northern California in September, Hosted by the California Society

2029 – Triennial General Congress - Plymouth, Massachusetts

2030 – GBOA – Hosted by the Virginia Society



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The *Florida Pilgrim* is a digital newsletter distributed to FSMD members by their colony governors. We are exploring ways to make the newsletter downloadable in the future from the FSMD website at www.flmayflower.com.

Members of FSMD, please send submissions, comments, or suggestions to the editor at the email listed below. Items submitted for publication may be edited and published at the editor's discretion. Images should be accompanied by identification of all persons depicted so that an appropriate caption can be included. Sister Mayflower societies have permission to reprint any material herein with appropriate attribution. All others must obtain prior written permission from the editor.

All published items represent the opinions of their authors and not necessarily of FSMD, which does not vouch for the accuracy of any information contained herein. William P. Cheshire, Editor pilgrim@flmayflower.net



Membership Benefits

- Floridians receive a subscription to *The Florida Pilgrim*, the digital newsletter of the Florida Society of Mayflower Descendants, published two-to-three times a year
- Subscription to *The Mayflower Quarterly*, a genealogical magazine published in print by the General Society of Mayflower Descendants four times a year
- Free use of the genealogical collection in the Mayflower Library located at the Mayflower Society headquarters at the historic Edward Winslow House in Plymouth, MA
- Fellowship and camaraderie of fellow genealogical enthusiasts at Colony, Florida Society, and General Society meetings
- Junior memberships at nominal cost for members' children and grandchildren, which they can convert to regular memberships between ages of 18 and 25
- Eating Thanksgiving dinner twice, if you attend the Fall meeting

Objectives of the Mayflower Society

- To perpetuate to remote posterity the memory of our Pilgrim Fathers.
- To maintain and defend the principle of civil and religious liberty as set forth in the Compact of the Mayflower, "For the glorie of God, and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our countrie."
- To cherish and maintain the ideals and institutions of American Freedom, and to oppose any theory or actions that threaten their continuity.
- To transmit the spirit, the purity of purpose, and steadfastness of will of the Pilgrim Fathers to those who shall come after us, an undiminished heritage of liberty and law.



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