

## JOHN TILLEY OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the ship *Mayflower* when it finally reached New England in November, 1620 were John Tilley and his wife, Joan (Hurst) Rogers, and their daughter Elizabeth. John Tilley was baptized in Henlow, Bedfordshire, England on 19 Dec. 1571, son of Henry and Johan (-----) Tilley. Joan Hurst was baptized there 20 Sept. 1596, daughter of William and Rose (-----) Hurst. Joan was the widow of Thomas Rogers. Brother Edward Tilley and his wife Ann Cooper were also passengers on the *Mayflower*, as well as her niece, Humility Cooper, and nephew, Henry Samson.

A religious group called the Separatists had fled from England to Holland to escape the fines and punishments for their illegal religious practices. After about 10 years in Holland, the Separatists found that jobs were hard to find and they were poor. They did not approve of the Dutch customs and way of life, and they did not approve of their children mixing with the Dutch children. They wanted to keep their English customs and their own religion, so they decided to go to the New World in search of religious freedom.

After several financial and political problems, two ships were obtained. The *Speedwell* (which leaked and could not make the trip) sailed from Leyden, Holland with the Separatists aboard. And the *Mayflower* sailed from Southampton, England with the London and English group (including the Tilleys). One problem after another delayed their departure until they had to cross the stormy North Atlantic Ocean during a bad time of the year. After 66 miserable days at sea with 102 passengers packed in that tiny ship, they finally anchored near Provincetown on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Because of the mumbling and grumbling on board the ship, an agreement was signed by 41 men, including both Tilley brothers, called the Mayflower Compact. This famous historic document is an example of our country's earliest democratic government.

It was December and very cold before the area at Plymouth Rock was finally selected as the site to establish Plymouth Colony. Today we call this group of people who settled there the Pilgrims. Daughter Elizabeth survived that first terrible winter when half of those who had just arrived perished from some unidentified epidemic, but both John Tilley and his wife died as well as brother Edward Tilley and his wife, who had no known children.

Adolescent Elizabeth Tilley, baptized in Henlow 30 Aug. 1607, lived with one of the surviving Pilgrim families until her marriage to Pilgrim John Howland of the *Mayflower*.

Which of the 10 children of John and Elizabeth (Tilley) Howland is your *Mayflower* ancestor?