

GOVERNOR WILLIAM BRADFORD OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the ship *Mayflower* when it finally arrived in New England in November, 1620 was William Bradford, who was baptized in Austerfield, England on March 19, 1590. He had been orphaned at a young age and was raised by his uncles. He became part of the Separatist group that met in nearby Scrooby, Nottinghamshire. Here he came under the lifelong influence of William Brewster.

The Separatists were persecuted in England for their religious beliefs. Many escaped to Holland, where there was greater religious freedom. Bradford went there about 1607 and married in Leyden in 1613 Dorothy May. The voyage from Holland to the New World was planned to gain their freedom of religion, to worship as they wished. It took 66 days of stormy weather on the Atlantic before arriving at what was to become Plymouth Colony in the month of November. Unfortunately, wife Dorothy fell overboard and drowned while the ship was still anchored in Provincetown Harbor.

William Bradford was perhaps one of those who wrote the Mayflower Compact, which was signed on board the ship before they all landed at Plymouth Rock. This now famous historic document was an agreement to work together and cooperate, our earliest form of democratic government. Today we call this group of people who settled Plymouth Colony the Pilgrims. Bradford survived that terrible first winter, when half of those who had just arrived died from some unidentified epidemic.

Governor Carver died in 1621, and William Bradford was elected colony governor, a position that he held for most of the rest of his life. He is recognized as a great leader of Plymouth Colony as he was fair and just in his decisions.

In 1623 William Bradford was again married to Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, the widow of Edward Southworth. She died in Plymouth March 26, 1670.

It is from Bradford's writings, his accounts of the Pilgrims and their families, that we learn about the early history of the Pilgrims in Plymouth Colony. He died May 9, 1657, revered and respected by all.

Children of William and Dorothy (May) Bradford:

1. JOHN married twice but had no children.

Children of William and Alice (Carpenter)(Southworth) Bradford:

2. WILLIAM married three times.
3. MERCY married BENJAMIN VERMAYES but had no known surviving children.
4. JOSEPH married JAEL HOBART.

Which son of Pilgrim William Bradford is your Mayflower ancestor?