

Migration to Plymouth Colony 1620-1633

Introduction

Plymouth Colony was begun in December 1620 by a small company of English men, women and children. One hundred and two passengers arrived at Cape Cod aboard the *Mayflower* in November, and eventually chose the abandoned Native town of Patuxet as the site of their new home. In the next few months, half of them died due to scurvy and other diseases. Those who lived went on to build homes, plant crops and raise families. Other English settlers followed, and the colony expanded. As the English population increased, the colonists pushed out to land in the east, north and west, establishing additional towns. This brought them into increased contact, and eventually conflict, with the Native Peoples living there.

Plymouth Beginnings

The core group of *Mayflower* passengers were members of a reformed Christian church, referred to at the time as Separatists or Brownists, who were living in Leiden, Holland. They had originally emigrated from England to Holland in order to worship as they believed right. In separating from the Church of England, they had committed treason, and so faced prison or worse if they stayed and were caught. Many of those who went to Holland were from the Scrooby, Nottinghamshire area of England. The Leiden records reveal, however, that there were English men and women from a number of English counties, including Essex, Kent and Somerset.

In 1620, the group emigrating from Leiden was joined by about fifty others recruited by the colony's investors. It is probable that many of them were then living in the London area. They may, however, have come from other parts of England originally. In the next few years, three other ships arrived bringing additional settlers for Plymouth Colony – the *Fortune* in 1621, and the *Anne* and *Little James* in 1623. Most of the colonists for whom a place of origin has been identified, came from the east and south of England. There were a few, however, that came from places as far north as Berwick-upon-Tweed close to the Scottish border, and as far west as Bristol on the River Severn.

Plymouth 1624-1633

After 1623, there were few other large groups of passengers for Plymouth. In the next five years, only a handful of colonists arrived, generally aboard ships bringing supplies to the area. In 1629 and 1630, numerous ships came to the Massachusetts Bay bringing approximately 1000 settlers for that colony. In these two years, Plymouth also got an additional influx, ten or so aboard the *Mayflower* (not the 1620 ship) and 35 aboard the *Talbot* in 1629, and about 60 in the *Handmaid* in 1630. Many of them were Leiden Separatists. Some people moved from Massachusetts Bay Colony to Plymouth and vice versa, seeking a more congenial home. Small numbers of additional Plymouth colonists trickled in during the next three years.

Plymouth Colony, 1633

By 1633, the population of Plymouth Colony was approximately 400 individuals. The colonists expanded beyond the bounds of the town of Plymouth. A few moved across Plymouth Bay to Mattakesett, which became Duxbury. Some men were granted land at Conahasset, known as Green's Harbor (and later Marshfield), in 1632. While these early expansions were peaceful, in later years the increased contact between the Native Wampanoag and the English colonists led to friction, ultimately resulting in King Philip's War (1675-1676).

A collaboration between PLIMOTH PLANTATION™ and the
NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY®
supported by the INSTITUTE FOR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES
www.PlymouthAncestors.org



PLYMOUTH ANCESTORS