

A genealogical profile of Thomas Willett

Birth: Thomas Willett was born about 1608, possibly in Norwich, Norfolk.

Death: He died on August 3, 1674, in Swansea.

Ship: Unknown, 1630

Life in England: Thomas Willett has been identified as the son of Thomas and Alice (____) Willett of Norwich, Norfolk.

Life in Holland: Thomas accompanied his parents to Leiden and lived on Jacobsgracht. He was one of six children, one of whom was buried in 1615.

Life in New England: Thomas Willett was in New England by 1630, when he was sent to the Penobscot trading post to be a partner to Edward Ashley. William Bradford described him as “an honest young man that came from Leyden, with [Ashley] as his fellow (in some sort) and not merely as his servant. Which young man being discreet, and one whom they could trust...” Ashley was eventually removed from the post and Willett continued for the next few years. He became a freeman of Plymouth on January 1, 1633/4. Willett became a very prominent member of Plymouth Colony, serving many years in important government positions. He succeeded Captain Miles Standish as captain of Plymouth’s military company on March 7, 1647/8. In 1664, he was part of the English force which took New Amsterdam from the Dutch, and became the renamed New York’s first English mayor. He returned to Plymouth Colony in 1668, to Swansea, where he died in 1674. He was a prosperous merchant, and had an estate of about £2,800 when he died. He owned hundreds of acres of land, numerous livestock, a large quantity of merchant’s stock, and a library of over 100 books.

Family: Thomas Willett married (1) Mary Brown on July 6, 1636, in Plymouth and had thirteen children. She died on January 8, 1669/70. He married (2) Joanna (Boyse) Prudden on September 19, 1671, in Milford but had no children. She married (3) Rev. John Bishop as his second wife.

Children of Thomas and Mary Willett:

- Mary was born on November 10, 1637. She married (1) Samuel Hooker on September 22, 1658, in Plymouth and had eleven children. She married (2) Thomas Buckingham on August 10, 1703.
- Martha was born on August 6, 1639. She married John Saffin on December 2, 1658, and had five children. He married (2) _____ Lee and (3) Rebecca Byfield.
- John was born on August 21, 1641. He married Abigail Collins in 1663. He died on February 2, 1664. She married (2) Lawrence Hammond as his second wife.
- Sarah was born on May 3, 1643. She married John Eliot by 1662 and had one child. He married (2) Elizabeth Gookin on May 23, 1666, in Cambridge.
- Rebecca was born on December 2, 1644. She died on April 2, 1652, in Plymouth.

- Thomas was born on October 1, 1646. There is no further record.
- Hester was born on July 6, 1648, in Plymouth. She married Josiah Flint on January 24, 1671/2, and had four children. He died on September 16, 1680, in Dorchester. She died on July 26, 1737. James was born on November 24, 1649, in Plymouth. He married (1) Elizabeth Hunt on April 17, 1673, in Rehoboth and had one daughter. He married (2) Grace Frinck on August 2, 1677, in Swansea.
- Hezekiah was born on July 20 in Plymouth, and died on July 26, 1651.
- Hezekiah was born about November 16, 1653. He married Anna Brown on January 7, 1675/6, in Swansea. He was killed during King Philip’s War.
- David was born on November 1, 1654. There is no further record.
- Andrew was born on October 5, 1655. He married Susannah Holbrook on March 6, 1693/4, in Braintree and had five children.
- Samuel was born on October 27, 1658. He is supposed to have moved to Flushing, New York, married and had a large family. Unfortunately, the records are confusing as there was another Willet family there.

For Further Information:

Robert C. Anderson. *The Great Migration Begins*. Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1995.

Robert C. Anderson. *The Pilgrim Migration*. Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2004.

Bradford, William. *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*. Edited by Samuel Eliot Morison. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952.

George Canning Burgess. “Thomas Willett of Leyden and Plymouth, First Mayor of New York.” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 61 (1907): 157–64.

John I. Coddington. “Pedigree of the Boyce Family.” *The American Genealogist* 19 (1942): 139–40.

Samuel Deane. *History of Scituate, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to 1831*. Boston: James Loring, 1831.

John L. Sibley. *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts*. Vol. II. Cambridge: Charles William Sever, 1881.



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Where do I go from here?

Researching your family's history can be a fun, rewarding, and occasionally frustrating project. Start with what you know by collecting information on your immediate family. Then, trace back through parents, grandparents, and beyond. This is a great opportunity to speak to relatives, gather family stories, arrange and identify old family photographs, and document family possessions that have been passed down from earlier generations.

Once you have learned all you can from family members, you will begin to discover other sources. A wide variety of records can help you learn more about the lives of your ancestors. These include birth, marriage, and death records; immigration and naturalization records; land records; census records; probate records and wills; church and cemetery records; newspapers; passenger lists; military records; and much more.

When you use information from any source — an original record, a printed book, or a website — always be careful to document it. If you use a book, you should cite the author or compiler, the full title, publication information and pages used. Also be sure to record the author's sources for the information. If the author's sources aren't provided, you will have to try to find the original source. Many genealogical works contain faulty information, and the Internet also contains many inaccuracies. In order for your work to be accepted — by lineage societies and other genealogists — it must be properly documented.

IMPORTANT GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES

New England Historic Genealogical Society

Founded in 1845, NEHGS is the country's oldest and largest genealogical society. The library contains over 200,000 books, plus significant manuscript and microfilm collections, and a circulating library by mail. NEHGS members receive two periodicals, the *Register* and *New England Ancestors*, and can access valuable genealogical data online.

NEHGS, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116;
888-296-3447; www.NewEnglandAncestors.org.

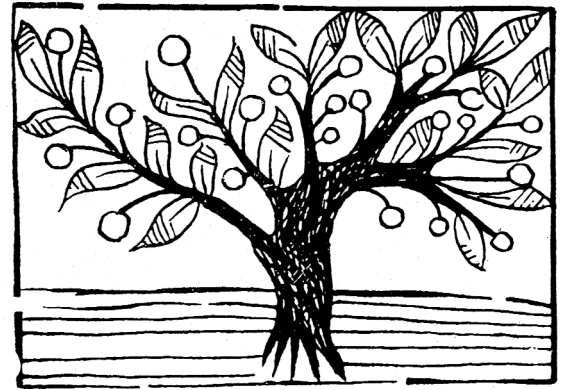
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RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

- www.PlymouthAncestors.org
- www.CyndisList.com
- www.FamilySearch.org
- www.USGenWeb.org



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GENEALOGICAL LIBRARIES IN PLYMOUTH

General Society of Mayflower Descendants Library

A collection focused principally on the genealogies of the descendants of the *Mayflower* passengers.

4 Winslow St., Plymouth; 508-746-3188; www.mayflower.org

Plymouth Collection, Plymouth Public Library

Over 1200 items relating to the descendants of the Pilgrims, as well as the many other immigrants who settled in the area.

132 South St., Plymouth; 508-830-4250;
www.plymouthpubliclibrary.org

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Genealogy by Christine Rose and Kay Germain Ingalls, Alpha Books, 1997.

Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research by Marcia Melnyk, NEHGS, 1999.

Shaking Your Family Tree: A Basic Guide to Tracing Your Family History by Ralph J. Crandall, NEHGS, 2001.

Unpuzzling Your Past by Emily Croom, Betterway Books, 2003.

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