

# JOHN ALDEN OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the ship *Mayflower* when it finally arrived in New England in November, 1620 was a young man about 21 years old named John Alden. He had been hired as the cooper for the group. There was no refrigeration at that time, so food that would spoil was stored in barrels in a special preservative. So John Alden was their barrel maker, their cooper as the occupation was called at that time. The Alden house in Duxbury, which you can visit today, shows evidence of his skill with wood.

The voyage from Holland to America had been planned by a religious group called Separatists. They had been punished in their home country of England for their religious beliefs. Many of them went to Holland, where there was greater religious toleration. But work was difficult to find, and they were very poor. Also, they did not approve of the Dutch way of life and how it was affecting their children. Today we call this small group of people who founded Plymouth Colony the Pilgrims.

John was not originally a part of that religious group, and he probably did not plan to remain in this desolate country. But he married Priscilla Mullins about 1623. She was also very young, perhaps only 18 to 20 years old at the time. Her brother and her parents had all died during the first terrible winter in Plymouth, as half of those who had just arrived did not survive the unidentified epidemic.

The young couple received a grant of land in what is now Duxbury. John would cultivate his crops during summer, but they returned to Plymouth in winter so they could attend church. John became a respected citizen of the community and served in many public capacities over the years. He acquired a considerable amount of land, which he distributed to his sons before his death on September 12, 1687 as the last surviving signer of the Mayflower Compact. This famous historic document was signed on board the *Mayflower* before they landed an example of our country's first democratic government. John and Priscilla were both buried in the old Duxbury burying ground.

John and Priscilla (Mullins) Alden had 10 children:

1. ELIZABETH married WILLIAM PABODIE
2. JOHN.
3. JOSEPH.
4. SARAH married ALEXANDER STANDISH.
5. JONATHAN.
6. RUTH married JOHN BASS.
7. REBECCA married THOMAS DELANO.
8. MARY.
9. PRISCILLA.
10. DAVID married MARY SOUTHWORTH.

Which child of Pilgrim John Alden is your Mayflower ancestor?