

PETER BROWN OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the ship *Mayflower* when it finally reached New England in November, 1620 was a young man named Peter Brown. His name does not appear in the church records of Leyden, Holland, so he was probably part of the group from London. The religious group called 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 group found that jobs were hard to find and they were very poor. They did not approve of the Dutch customs, and they did not approve of their children mixing with the Dutch children. They wanted to keep their English language and their English customs. So the Separatists decided to go to the New World in search of religious freedom.

After financial and political problems, two ships were obtained to make the voyage: the *Speedwell* (which leaked and could not make the trip) and the *Mayflower*. 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.

While the *Mayflower* was still anchored in Provincetown Harbor, 41 men (including Peter Brown) signed the Mayflower Compact. This famous historic document is an example of our country's earliest democratic government.

Peter Brown would have been involved in building shelter and protection for the little group of people who finally selected the site near Plymouth Rock to establish Plymouth Colony. It was December and it was cold. Today we call all of those in this group the Pilgrims.

Peter Brown survived that first terrible winter though half of those who had just arrived died from some unidentified epidemic. He became a part of the community as he gave financial support in 1628 as one of the men who assumed the debt that was due to those Englishmen who had financed their voyage. And he became a freeman in 1633 with the rights and privileges of the community.

Pilgrim Peter Brown married first in 1626 the widow Martha Ford, who came to Plymouth in 1621 on the ship *Fortune* with two small Ford children. She must have died before long as Brown married again about 1630 a woman named Mary. He only had three surviving children by both wives.

Though Peter Brown survived the first epidemic, he must have died during the second epidemic in 1633 as his estate was administered November 11, 1633 by Widow Mary Brown.

Children of Peter and Martha (----) Ford Brown:

1. MARY married EPHRAIM TINKHAM and had nine children.
2. PRISCILLA married WILLIAM ALLEN but had no children.

Child of Peter and Mary (----) Brown:

3. REBECCA married WILLIAM SNOW and had eight children.

Which daughter of Pilgrim Peter Brown is your Mayflower ancestor?

Compiled by Margaret Harris Stover from various sources, 2006
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