

DEGORY PRIEST OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the ship *Mayflower* when it finally reached New England in November, 1620 was a man named Degory Priest. He had been married in Leyden, Holland on November 4, 1611 to Sarah Allerton, the widow of John Vincent and sister of Pilgrim Isaac Allerton, but her husband left her behind in Holland.

A religious group called the Separatists had fled from England to Holland to escape the fines and punishments for their illegal religious practices. Degory Priest was perhaps a part of this religious group. After about 10 years in Holland, the Separatists found that jobs were hard to find and they were poor. They did not approve of the Dutch customs and way of life, and they did not approve of their children mixing with the Dutch children. They wanted to keep their English customs and their own religion, so they decided to go to the New World in search of religious freedom.

After several financial and political problems, two ships were obtained. The *Speedwell* (which leaked and could not make the trip) sailed from Leyden, Holland with the Separatists. And the *Mayflower* sailed from Southampton, England with the London and English group. 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. Because of the mumbling and grumbling on board the ship, an agreement was signed by 41 men, including Degory Priest, called the Mayflower Compact. This famous historic document is an example of our country's earliest democratic government.

It was December and very cold before the area at Plymouth Rock was finally selected as the site to establish Plymouth Colony. Today we call this group of people who settled there the Pilgrims. Degory Priest died during that first terrible winter when half of those who had just arrived perished from some unidentified epidemic.

Widow Sarah (Allerton) (Vincent) Priest then was married again in Leyden on November 13, 1621 to Godbert Godbertson by whom she had a son Samuel. The Godbertsons and the two Priest daughters came to Plymouth Colony on the *Anne* in 1623.

Children of Degory and Sarah (Allerton) (Vincent) Priest born in Leyden, Holland:

1. MARY born about 1613 married PHINEAS PRATT and had eight children.
2. SARAH born about 1615 married JOHN COOMBS and had two children.

Which daughter of Pilgrim Degory Priest is your Mayflower ancestor?

Compiled by Margaret Harris Stover from various sources, 2006
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