

BOOK REVIEW: "MAYFLOWER"

By Randy Seaver

The book "Mayflower" by Nathaniel Philbrick is currently #2 on the New York Times Non-fiction book list. I checked it out of the library three weeks ago and finished it today. It is excellent!

The author takes the reader from the Separatists who fled England to Holland, and then sailed on the "Mayflower" from England to New England in 1620, through the early settlements and flourishing to the dark times of King Philip's War in 1675-6. He focuses on the events before 1630 and then the events leading up to the conclusion of King Philip's War. One key theme is the relationships between the settlers and the natives throughout this period. He discusses the personalities and traits of many of the Pilgrims, especially the leaders Bradford, Winslow, etc.

I learned quite a bit about this period, including:

- * How small and desolate most of the early settlements in Plymouth Colony were, and how dependent they were on the natives early on.
- * That there were many tribes in New England, and they often warred against each other. Philip united most of them and waged an effective strategy for a long time, and had the English on their heels.
- * Benjamin Church and his vital role in winning King Philips War. By turning some of the tribes against Philip, and then using them effectively, he was the major actor.
- * Against Church's recommendations to the colonial governors, many of the natives who surrendered were shipped out to Bermuda and the Caribbean as slaves.

The book title "Mayflower" is a bit misleading - the ship is just a small part of this story.

This book is highly recommended for those with Plymouth Colony ancestry. I found reference to many of my ancestors in the book, although none played a vital role (but I knew that!).