

ELDER WILLIAM BREWSTER OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the *Mayflower* when it finally arrived in New England in November, 1620 were Pilgrim William Brewster, his wife Mary and their children Love and Wrestling. Brewster was born about 1556 in Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, England, attended Cambridge University for a time and later went to the Netherlands in foreign service. But he returned to Scrooby, where he was one of the early members of the Separatist religious group. Because of the threats of fines and legal punishment, many of the group fled to Holland where religious differences were accepted. Brewster even spent some time in jail in Boston, Lincolnshire, England before finally escaping the English intolerance.

In Leyden Brewster published forbidden books on his printing press that were critical of England, its king and its religious intolerance. An English warrant for Brewster's arrest was issued. After about 10 years the Separatist group decided to leave Holland, and plans were made to finance two ships in their efforts to attain religious freedom – the *Speedwell* (which leaked and could not make the voyage) and the *Mayflower*. The journey across the stormy Atlantic Ocean took 66 days. Today we call this small group of people who founded Plymouth Colony the Pilgrims.

William Brewster, an educated man and a teacher, was certainly one of those who wrote the Mayflower Compact. This famous document was signed on board the *Mayflower* before they landed, our first example of democratic government. Brewster, though almost age 60 and among the oldest men of the group, survived that first terrible winter in Plymouth as half of those who had just arrived did not survive the unidentified epidemic.

Pastor John Robinson remained in Leyden with the majority of his flock. William Brewster became the Ruling Elder of the Separatist group on the *Mayflower* and in Plymouth Colony. A minister did not arrive until 1627. As their moral and religious leader, he was a humble and gentle man. He has been described as sincere, devout, tolerant, charitable and cheerful. He taught twice on Sunday and mentioned no salary. Brewster built his own house in Plymouth and also the one in Duxbury and worked his own farm until he was 80 years old.

Children of William and Mary (-----) Brewster born in Scrooby, England and Leyden, Holland:

1. JONATHAN born August 12, 1593; married LUCRETIA OLDHAM.
2. PATIENCE married THOMAS PRENCE.
3. FEAR married ISAAC ALLERTON, son of Pilgrim Isaac Allerton of the *Mayflower*.
4. CHILD died Leyden 1609.
5. LOVE born 1611; married SARAH COLLIER.
6. WRESTLING born 1614; died unmarried.

Which child of Pilgrim William Brewster is your Mayflower ancestor?