

The Great Migration: A Brief History of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600's



**A Presentation by Jonathan C. Dickey
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What We'll Cover

- Background to the Great Migration, 1534-1620: Henry VIII, the Church of England, and the Reformed Protestant movement in England
- The Mayflower, Plymouth Colony, Salem, and other permanent settlements in New England, 1620-1630
- The Great Migration, 1630-1640: the Puritans found the Massachusetts Bay Colony, with rapid expansion thereafter
- Strife among church leaders: Puritans & Pilgrims vs. Quakers and other Non-Conformists
- Strife with the Native Americans: attempts to “christianize” generally fail; wars erupt
- Genealogical resources for researching your early New England settlers

Background to The Great Migration

- 1534: Henry VIII creates the Church of England
- Under “Bloody Mary,” catholicism dominates English religious life; Protestant “heretics” are persecuted
- 1558: Elizabeth I ascends the throne; Protestant, but.....
- 1559: Acts of Supremacy and Conformity– compulsory church attendance and conformity with *Book of Common Prayer*
- 1603: King James I takes the throne; strongly supports the Church of England and religious conformity
- 1604: Church of England issues the “Canons”; many priests are removed for failure to take the oath of conformity
- King James I: *“make them conform, or I shall harry them out of the land, or do worse”*

The Basic Theology of the Separatists

- Separatists sought to worship like the “first Christian churches did... in the Apostles’ times”:
 - No church hierarchies, especially bishops “as in the old manner”
 - No trappings of clerical or ceremonial excess
 - No vestments
 - No crucifixes or other symbols of idolatry
 - No conformity to the *Book of Common Prayer*
 - Allow sermons!
- Basically, *Calvinists*

Basic Principles of Puritanism

- Main thesis: the Church of England was still too Roman Catholic, and did not sufficiently adopt the Reformed Protestant theology; *the Church must be reformed from within*
- Church should follow the Presbyterian model; elders would govern, not bishops (similar to the Separatist theology)
- “Covenant” theology: eternal life, derived from perfect obedience
- The Devil exists; witchcraft and demonic possession were *real*
- Only the “chosen” could receive God’s grace and salvation; *predestination*
- Personal behavior was to be highly regulated: no card games, dancing, etc.
- Strong emphasis on education (Harvard College founded in 1636); in New England, this included educating the “heathens”

Elsewhere in North America in the Early 1600's

- 1607-1620: the Virginia Colony is expanding west along the James River into the Carolinas, Maryland and beyond; tobacco becomes a profitable trade good
- By 1614: New Netherland extends to northern reaches of the Hudson River, east to Connecticut River, and south along the Delaware River; the Colony is a growing center of trans-Atlantic trade
- By 1600: Spain has a major presence in Florida and the West Indies; sugar and other trade goods are extremely profitable
- By 1604: “New France” has a significant presence in Canada and “Acadia” (Maine); fishing rights are a source of future disputes

When Did The Great Migration Start?

- 1620- 1630: After the Mayflower, sporadic immigration to New England, mostly Separatists migrating to Plymouth Colon
- Back in England, growing conflict between the Puritans and the Crown; Puritans gain majority of seats in Parliament
- 1625: King Charles I takes the throne
- 1626: King Charles I temporarily dissolves Parliament
- 1629: King Charles I *permanently* dissolves Parliament
- 1630- 1649: mass migration of settlers to Massachusetts Bay and elsewhere in New England

When Did The Great Migration End?

Several conflicting views...

- Robert Charles Anderson (The Great Migration Project):
 - *“we conclude, then, that 1639 was the last year of the Great Migration”*
 - *“with 1640 considered as a transitional year marking the end of The Great Migration, all those for whom there is record proof of presence in New England **prior to the Massachusetts Bay General Court of 2 June 1641** will be considered participants in the Great Migration.”*
- Winthrop Society: *“**prior to December 31, 1640**”*
- Hereditary Order of the First Families of Massachusetts: *“**Before the Year 1650**”* (based on the execution of Charles I, and the death of John Winthrop, both in 1649).

The First Major Migration: the Winthrop Fleet

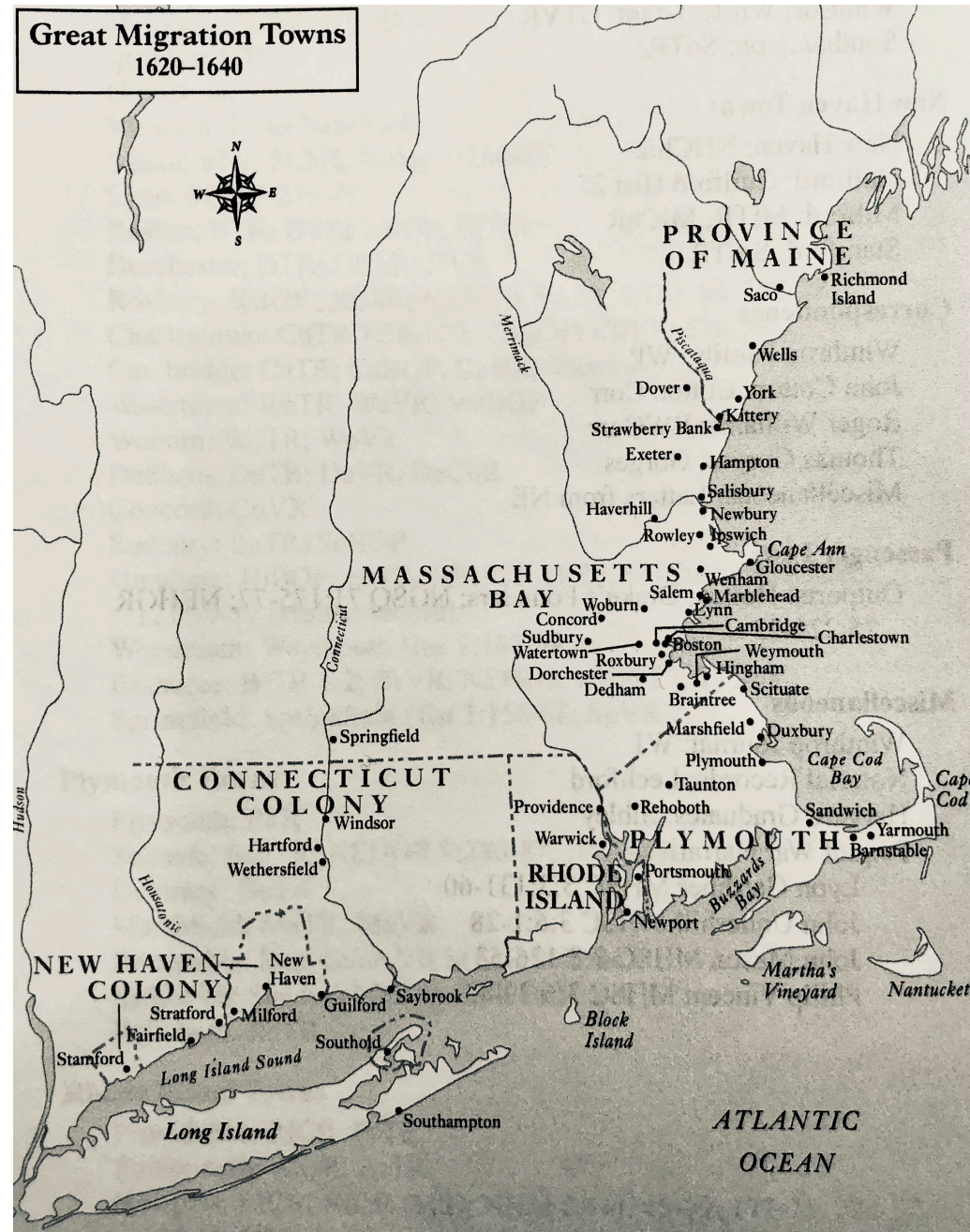


- April 8, 1630: John Winthrop leads 11 ships with 700 passengers to New England
- More ships follow
- A few notable passengers: John Winthrop; Thomas Dudley; Simon Bradstreet; William Pynchon; Rev. Stephen Bachiler; Thomas Mayhew; William Vassal

Ultimately *over twenty thousand settlers* arrive in New England between 1630 and 1640; today, well over *16 million descendants*

1630-1640: New England Quickly Expands

Dozens of new towns are founded in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Province of Maine, and the Connecticut, New Haven and Rhode Island Colonies, in addition to Plymouth Colony



Chronology of the Massachusetts Bay Colony

- 1628: 1st Charter issued for creation of the Massachusetts Bay Company
- 1629: John Endicott named 1st Governor
- 1630: Winthrop Fleet sets sail; Winthrop succeeds Endicott as Governor
- 1636: Pequot War
- 1643: 1st New England “Confederation”
- 1675: King Philip’s War
- 1684-88: Mass. Bay charter revoked by King Charles II; “Dominion of New England” created; the “Glorious Revolution” ends the Dominion
- 1691: Massachusetts Bay absorbs Plymouth Colony, Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket



Economic Conditions Are Challenging



- Fishing and furs are not enough to sustain the colonies; the future is in *land* to grow crops, harvest timber, and exploit other sources of trade
- No hard currency; wampum and furs are the most frequently used form of currency; no coins minted in America for decades (the *Willow Tree*, *Oak Tree*, and *Pine Tree* coins are first minted in 1652)
- Limited trade outside of New England

Strife Among Church Leaders and Congregants

- By the mid-1630's, theological disputes break out in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies
 - Roger Williams: convicted of heresy in 1635; founds Providence Plantations in 1636
 - Ann Hutchinson: banished in 1637
 - William Vassall: Remonstrance of 1646
- Quakers are persecuted



Strife With Native Americans

- Westward expansion from coastal regions leads to land grabs, culture clashes, and violent encounters
- "Christianizing" fails
- 1636-38 - Pequot War
- 1643- the "New England Confederation" is formed
 - First discussion of an alliance dates to 1637
- 1674-75- King Philip's War



*Information on Certain Relevant Lineage
Societies, and Genealogical Resources for
Research on Early New England Ancestors*

The Winthrop Society



- Several categories of qualifying ancestors (see next slide)
- Qualifying ancestors not listed on website, but see familypedia.wikia.org.
- Qualifying ancestor must have settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony or “Down East” **prior to December 31, 1640**
- Limited research info or links provided on website; some contemporaneous records are linked, including “lists and rosters” of early settlers
- Cost: \$110 annual dues or \$380 lifetime fee

Winthrop Society: Membership Criteria

Qualifying ancestors who arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony on or before 31 Dec 1640:

- passengers of the Winthrop fleet and the passengers of the *Mary & John*, 1630
- earlier Puritan settlers who arrived in the 1620s with Mr. Thomas Gardner, Capt. John Endecott, and Rev. Francis Higginson
- passengers of relief ships that arrived on or before 31 Dec 1640
- a certain few Plymouth men, such as Isaac Allerton, Hon. Roger Conant, Dr. Samuel Fuller & Gov. Edward Winslow, who made significant contributions to the early settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony
- worthy non-Puritans who settled in the Colony between 1622 and 1640 who remained in New England, such as Mr. Blackstone and Mr. Thomson
- pre-1640 settlers of Piscataqua, Sagadahoc, & Maine, such as the Hiltons & Mr. Wiggin;
- the Adventurers (investors) of Rev. John White's Dorchester Company, 1623-1628, and the Adventurers of the Massachusetts Bay Company, 1628-1640, whether or not they ever settled in Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Winthrop Society “Lists and Rosters”

“LISTS AND ROSTERS”

- [Officers](#) of the Commonwealth from 1630 to 1686.
- [Residents of New Towne](#) (later called Cambridge), from the original town Court records, 1632-1635, alphabetized.
- [Freemen of the Commonwealth](#): the complete rolls from 1630 to 1636.
- [Salem Residents](#), to the year 1651.

Winthrop Fleet Passenger List

FAM#	PER#	Person	FAM	Age	Birthplace	Deathplace
001	001	<u>Abbott, Daniel</u> (1584-1647)	Head	46	Bidlestone, Suffolk	Providence RI
002	001	<u>Abell, Robert</u> (1605-1663)	Head	25	Stapenhill, Derbyshire	Rehobath MA
xxx	xxx	Agar (See Eager)				
xxx	xxx	Alcock (See Olcott)				
003	001	Aleworth, Francis			POB	POD
004	001	Andrew Thomas			POB	POD
005	001	<u>Archer, Samuel</u> (1608-c1667)	Head	22	England	Salem MA
005	002	<u>Archer, Susanna</u> (1606-1674)	Wife?	24	England	Salem MA
006	001	<u>Aspinwall, William</u> (1602-1663)	Head	28	England	England
006	002	<u>Aspinwall, Elizabeth</u> (1606-c1650)	Wife	24	England	England
006	003	<u>Aspinwall, Mary</u> (1628-1676)	Child	02	England	Cambridge MA
007	001	Audley (Odlin), John			POB	POD
008	001	Avery, Christopher				

*The Winthrop Fleet
Passenger List
(familypedia.wikia.org)*

Sampling of Relevant Lineage Societies

- Hereditary Order of the First Families of Massachusetts (Prior to 1650)
- Order of the First Families of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation (Prior to January 1 1647/48)
- Order of the First Families of Maine (Between 1604-1652)
- Order of the First Families of Connecticut (Between 1633-1662)
- Order of the First Families of New Hampshire (Between 1622-1680)
- Order of the First Families of Vermont (Between 1609 and March 4, 1791)
- Plymouth Hereditary Society
- Order of the Founders and Patriots of America
- Colonial Dames XVII Century

Sampling of Online Collections and Databases

- Family Search (free)
- Ancestry.com (subscription-based)
- American Ancestors(NEHGS-subscription-based)
- Mayflower Society (themayflowersociety.org)
- Plymouth Colony Archives Project, including index to Plymouth Colony wills & inventories, 1670-85
- New England state and local government records departments, including Plymouth County Registry of Deeds (“virtual tour” available)
- New England state libraries and state archives, including Massachusetts Archives Collection (www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arccol/colmac.htm)
- New England Societies (newenglandsocieties.org)

Library Collections

- TMCC Genealogy Library (Reno NV)
 - Borrowing privileges from other libraries, in some cases
- LDS Family History Center (Reno NV)
- California State Library (Sacramento)
 - Borrowing privileges for certain books
- LDS Family History Library (Salt Lake City)
 - Borrowing privileges with Family History Center in Reno
- Sutro Library, San Francisco State University (San Francisco CA)
- California Genealogical Society (Oakland CA)
- California Mayflower Society Library (Oakland CA)

Questions or Inquiries?

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