

THE NEBRASKA SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS BURT & BECKY WHEDON 2015 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

HANNAH CAROLINE BASSETT
LINCOLN LUTHERAN MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL, LINCOLN, NE



HANNAH IS A SENIOR AT LINCOLN LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL IN LINCOLN WHERE SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY, STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND VARSITY TRACK TEAM MEMBER. SHE PARTICIPATED IN CORNHUSKER GIRLS STATE AND HUGH O'BRIEN YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM. SHE WILL ATTEND NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE IN ORANGE CITY, IOWA, IN THE FALL.

IN HIS LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION, HANNAH'S TEACHER, JEFFREY SCHOETTIN, WROTE "HANNAH IS A DELIGHTFUL YOUNG WOMAN. SHE IS INTELLECTUALLY CURIOUS, AND A VERY DILIGENT AND THOROUGH STUDENT. SHE HAS ALWAYS HAD A VERY POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN THE CLASSROOM AS SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND EXERCISES. HANNAH IS A PERSON OF HIGHEST CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY. SHE HAS BECOME A LEADER WITHIN HER CLASS, AND IS ALWAYS READY TO HELP HER FELLOW CLASSMATES IN ANY WAY SHE CAN."

THIS YEAR'S ESSAY TOPIC FOCUSES ON THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT:

ON NOVEMBER 11, 1620, THE PILGRIMS COMPOSED AND SIGNED A DOCUMENT WE NOW KNOW AS THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT. SHIPS VISITING PLYMOUTH COLONY GAVE THE PILGRIMS THE OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE LETTERS TO THEIR FAMILIES IN ENGLAND AND HOLLAND.

APPLICANTS WERE ASKED TO COMPOSE AN ESSAY, BETWEEN 750 AND 1,000 WORDS, IN THE FORM OF A LETTER TO FAMILY IN ENGLAND DESCRIBING THE IMPACT THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT HAD ON THE EARLY LIFE OF PLYMOUTH COLONY. THE ESSAY MUST INCLUDE REFERENCES TO DOCUMENT THE FACTS IN THE LETTER.

ESSAYS WERE EVALUATED FOR CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, STYLE, GRAMMAR AND CREATIVITY. SOURCES MUST BE CITED IN APPROPRIATE BIBLIOGRAPHIC STYLE.

**PLIMOTH, MASSACHUSETTS
APRIL 2 ANNO 1621**

MY OWN DEAR SISTER,

THE HARROWING AND ABNORMALLY LONG PASSAGE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC CAN NEVER BE ADEQUATELY DESCRIBED ON THIS SINGLE SHEET OF PAPER I USE TO WRITE TO YOU. LET IT SUFFICE IF I SAY THAT DRY GROUND NEVER SEEMED SO PRECIOUS. BUT EVEN THEN, THIS LONG WINTER AND SPRING HAVE NOT ALLOWED US TO FARE WELL. OF THE 102 OF US THAT BEGAN THIS JOURNEY TO VIRGINIA, BARELY HALF REMAIN. THE CONDITIONS WE ENDURED TRIED OUR FAITH IN GOD AND MOST CERTAINLY OUR PATIENCE WITH EACH OTHER. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE COMPACT WE AGREED TO BACK IN NOVEMBER, I AM CERTAIN OUR SURVIVAL WOULD HAVE BEEN DOOMED.

YOU MUST KNOW THAT WE NEVER MADE IT TO VIRGINIA, OUR INTENDED DESTINATION. THE WEATHER WE ENDURED MADE FOR A ROUGH PASSAGE AND WHEN LAND WAS SIGHTED IN NOVEMBER WE DROPPED ANCHOR. OUR SHIP'S CAPTAIN ASCERTAINED THAT OUR LOCATION WAS FAR NORTH OF THE CHESAPEAKE. IN FACT, WE WERE IN MASSACHUSETTS. AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO SAIL THE COAST BUT THE DUAL COMBINATION OF THE CONDITION OF OUR PEOPLE AND POOR SAILING WEATHER FORCED US BACK TO THE SAFE CONFINES OF WHAT WE CALLED PROVINCETOWN. IT WAS HERE THAT AN ARGUMENT AROSE ABOUT THE LEGALITY OF OUR STAYING IN THIS LOCATION. SOME OF THE MEN WERE ADAMANT THAT WITH NO LEGAL PATENT WE COULD NOT STAY WHERE WE WERE. OTHERS COUNTERED THAT WE COULD NOT CONTINUE ON WITH OUR JOURNEY AND THAT FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE WE MUST FIND A PLACE TO ESTABLISH WINTER SETTLEMENT, IF NOT PERMANENT SETTLEMENT, SOON. RAISED VOICES WERE USED AND I GREATLY FEARED THAT THERE MIGHT BE VIOLENCE OR A SPLIT BETWEEN US. EITHER SITUATION WOULD BE OUR UNDOING.

IT WAS FINALLY SUGGESTED THAT WE WRITE UP A COMPACT, AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN US THAT WOULD CREATE A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE WHERE "JUST AND EQUAL LAWS, ORDINANCES, ACTS, CONSTITUTIONS, AND OFFICES" WOULD GOVERN US AND THAT FROM TIME TO TIME THE MEN

WOULD MEET TO DISCUSS THE CONDITIONS OF THE SETTLEMENT. [1] OF COURSE, THIS SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE IS PREDICATED ON THE FACT THAT WE BEGAN THIS JOURNEY “HAVING UNDERTAKEN, FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, AND ADVANCEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH” TO ESTABLISH A COLONY IN VIRGINIA. [2] WE CLEARLY SAW THAT ABOARD SHIP OUR RELATIONS SUFFERED UNDER DURESS. WITHOUT A “CIVIL BODY POLITIC” WE WOULD SURELY HAVE DEVOLVED INTO DISORDER AND ANARCHY. WHERE, IN THAT, WOULD GOD BE GLORIFIED?

THE ONE POLITICAL DIFFICULTY WE FACED BEFORE THE WINTER HAD ITS HOLD ON US REMAINED IN THE “STRANGERS” THAT HAD COME ACROSS THE ATLANTIC WITH US. WE, OF COURSE, CAME TO THE NEW WORLD SO AS TO MORE FREELY PRACTICE OUR RELIGION AND TO ESCAPE THE ANGLICAN CHURCH THAT REFUSED TO BE PURIFIED FROM ITS CATHOLIC ROOTS. THE “STRANGERS” WE TRAVELED WITH DID NOT SEEM A DIFFICULTY OR BURDEN WHILE ON THE SHIP. BUT WHEN A PEOPLE DOES NOT SHARE YOUR BELIEFS IT IS A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE INEVITABLE CONFLICT WILL ARISE. WITHOUT PROPER GOVERNANCE WE COULD NOT DARE ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THESE MEN AND THEY THREATENED THAT THEY “WOULD USE THEIR OWN LIBERTY; FOR NONE HAD POWER TO COMMAND THEM.” [3] WHAT THEN WOULD BEFALL OUR FLEDGLING COLONY IF ONE PORTION OF THE PEOPLE REFUSED TO BE SUBJECT TO LAWS? ON BOARD THE SHIP, THE CAPTAIN COULD ENFORCE LAWS, BUT ON LAND, WITHOUT A PROPER CHARTER, THESE MEN THREATENED TO DO AS THEY WISH. THIS COMPACT PROVIDED FOR THE GOOD GOVERNANCE OF ALL PEOPLE AT A TIME WHEN OUR VERY LIVES WERE THREATENED BY SICKNESS, HUNGER, AND ATTACK FROM THE SAVAGES WE HAD DISCOVERED EVIDENCE OF BUT HAD NOT SIGHTED OR ENCOUNTERED UPON OUR ARRIVAL AND FOR SOME WEEKS AFTER THE SIGNING OF OUR GOOD COMPACT.

WITH THE SIGNING OF THE COMPACT, WE FELT FREE TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT SETTLEMENT FOR THE WINTER MONTHS AT THE LEAST. CHOOSING A SITE FOR OUR SETTLEMENT WAS DEBATED AND OUR COMPACT PROVED VALUABLE IN SETTLING THE ISSUE WHEN ONE PARTICULAR HILL WAS CHOSEN FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, FOR ITS GOOD HARBOR, AND CLEAN FLOWING WATER. WEATHER REMAINED A BURDEN FOR BUILDING BUT WE MANAGED TO CONSTRUCT A COMMON MEETING HOUSE BEFORE THE TERRIBLE BLIGHT OF SICKNESS TOOK ITS

STRANGLEHOLD ON OUR PEOPLE. WINTER WAS NOT KIND TO OUR FORTUNES AND WE LOST MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE WEEKS FOLLOWING THE CHOOSING OF A SETTLEMENT LOCATOIN. BUT TWO THINGS REMAINED FIRM: OUR FAITH IN GOD AND HIS DIVINE PROVIDENCE, AND THE COMPACT THAT UNITED US IN TIMES OF SEVERE DISTRESS AND SORROW. THESE, MY DEAR SISTER, ARE THE ENDURING LESSONS OF THE WINTER OF 1620-21. MEN ARE SINFUL AND DEBASED, BUT GOOD GOVERNANCE BASED ON GOD’S RIGHTEOUS LAWS WILL STAND STRONG DESPITE THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT WILL SURELY COME TO DESTROY GOOD PEOPLE.

MY LETTER WILL BE SOON DESPATCHED BACK TO ENGLAND ABOARD THE VERY SHIP THAT BROUGHT US ACROSS THE FAR OCEAN MANY MONTHS AGO. ITS NAME, MAYFLOWER, SPEAKS OF NEW CREATION AND BEAUTY. SURELY WE HAVE ENDURED THE WORST OF WHAT THIS WORLD MAY HAVE AND ARE OUSELVES SOON TO BE MAYFLOWERS BEARING BRIGHT AND CLEAR WITNESS TO WHAT PEOPLE MAY ACCOMPLISH IN FAITH AND THROUGH JUST GOVERNMENT, NOT THE HEAVY HAND OF KINGS WHO SEEK ONLY THEIR BENEFIT AND NOT THE NENEFIT OF ALL JUST MEN.

PEACE BE WITH YOU MY DEAR SISTER, ANN. [4] AND MAY GOD BLESS YOUR HOME.

SAMUEL

1. AVALON PROJECT – MAYFLOWER COMPACT: 1620 (N.D).

2. AVALON PROJECT – MAYFLOWER COMPACT: 1620 (N.D).

3. BRADFORD, WILLIAM (1898). “BOOK 2, ANNO 1620.” IN HILDEBRANDT, TED. BRADFORD’S HISTORY ‘OF PLYMOUTH PLANTATION.’ (PDF) BOSTON: WRIGHT & POTTER.

4. BANKS, CHARLES EDWARD. THE ENGLISH ANCESTRY AND HOMES OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS: WHO CAME TO PLYMOUTH ON THE MAYFLOWER IN 1620, THE FORTUNE IN 1621, AND THE ANNE AND THE LITTLE JAMES IN 1623. BALTIMORE: GENEALOGICAL PUBLISHING CO., 2006.