

**THE NEBRASKA SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS
BURT & BECKY WHEDON 2019 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENT**

THIS YEAR'S AWARD IS \$1,620.

**MADIGAN SANDRA BRODSKY
WESTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL/OMAHA**



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 INCLUDED REFERENCES TO DOCUMENT THE FACTS IN THE LETTER.

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

DECEMBER 18TH, 1620

**ELIZA FISHER
4321 FIRST STREET
MIDDLESEX, ENGLAND**

DEAREST SISTER ELIZA-

IT FILLS MY HEART WITH INEXPLICABLE JOY TO BE WRITING TO YOU, BEARING GREAT NEWS OF BOTH EXCITEMENT AND UNCERTAINTY IN THE NEW WORLD. MY SWEETEST CHERUB, DAMARIS, HAS FINALLY BECOME A SISTER! UPON OUR JOURNEY, IN A DEWEY, CRAMPED CABIN, MY SON OCEANUS CAME TO LIFE, NAMED AS A TESTAMENT TO THE GREAT SEA ON WHICH HE WAS BORN. WHILE HIS BIRTH BRIGHTENED THE DARK DAYS THAT I HAD TO REMAIN ABOARD THE *MAYFLOWER*, I WOULD HAVE WISHED THAT STEPHEN DEPART FROM ME IN MIDDLESEX AND THAT I MAKE THE JOURNEY ONCE OCEANUS WAS BORN AND GAINED HEALTH, FOR BOTH HIS SAKE AND MINE. AS YOU KNOW, FOR OUR COLLECTIVE LEVEL OF SECURITY, HE POSITIONED ME TO TRAVEL WITH HIM RATHER THAN LEAVE ME UNAIDED IN ENGLAND WITH ONE CHILD AND ANOTHER ON THE WAY. I WAS BEGINNING TO BECOME CONCERNED REGARDING THE WELL-BEING OF MYSELF AND MY CHILDREN, AS I WAS CONFINED ONLY TO THE DAMP, FILTHY, AND CRAMPED QUARTERS OF OUR VESSEL FOR MONTHS WHILE OUR HUSBANDS EXPLORED THE SHORES OF OUR FORTUITOUS DESTINATION.

WHILE STEPHEN AND THE OTHER MEN, WHO HAVE REMAINED IN ROBUST HEALTH, BUILT LIVING QUARTERS AND STOREHOUSES ASHORE, THOSE WHO HAD FALLEN ILL WITH PNEUMONIA TOOK REST ABOARD THE VESSEL WITH US. I PRAYED DAILY THAT STEPHEN REMAIN FAR FROM SICKNESS AND WAS SOON REASSURED AS HIS EXPERIENCE IN HUNTING AND SURVEYING THE NEW WORLD KEPT HIM ALIVE AND IS OF GREAT USE TO ESTABLISHING OUR SETTLEMENT. DISEASE RAN RAMPANT IN THOSE CONDITIONS, AND I WAS FORCED TO KEEP TO MYSELF TO AVOID THE EVER-LOOMING THREAT OF DEATH, ESPECIALLY WITH AN INFANT AND TODDLER BY MY SIDE. ONLY A MONTH AFTER OUR LANDING DID DOROTHY BRADFORD FALL UNEXPECTEDLY FROM THE RAILING OF THE SHIP INTO THE ICY WATERS OF THE HARBOR BENEATH. I DID NOT WITNESS THE ACCIDENT, BUT WAS MOVED BY HER DEATH, AS I BEGAN QUESTION MY OWN ABILITY TO SURVIVE AND PROVIDE FOR STEPHEN AND MY CHILDREN, AS WELL FACED TORMENTS IN MY DREAMS. I OFTEN WONDERED HOW LONG UNTIL MY FEET

WOULD TAKE THEIR LAST STEPS ON THE FLOORBOARDS OF OUR SHIP BEFORE STEPPING ON SOLID EARTH.

I, ALONG WITH MANY OF THE OTHER WOMEN ABOARD, WAS NOT EXPECTANT OF PROLONGED STAY ABOARD THE SHIP, AS OUR ASSEMBLY HAD OBTAINED A CHARTER FROM THE VIRGINIA COMPANY OF LONDON. OUR PREDETERMINED DESTINATION WAS IN THE ESTABLISHED COLONY OF VIRGINIA, FROM WHERE STEPHEN RETURNED FROM SIX YEARS AGO. WHILE OUR SHIP'S CHARTER GAVE PERMISSION TO INSTITUTE A SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTHERN REACHES OF THE COMPANY'S JURISDICTION, DUE TO A LATE DEPARTURE AND ROUGH STORMS, WE ARRIVED MUCH LATER AND MUCH FARTHER NORTH THAN WE ANTICIPATED. AFTER ATTEMPTING TO SAIL SOUTH TO VIRGINIA, IT WAS DECIDED BY THE MEN AND THE CAPTAIN TO REMAIN IN THIS LOCATION. UPON THE ONSET OF THIS PREDICAMENT, I LEARNED FROM MY SPARSE CONVERSATIONS WITH STEPHEN SMALL DETAILS REGARDING POLITICS OF AN ENSUING DEBATE, WHICH WAS RECENTLY RESOLVED. I KNOW YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN THE MACHINATIONS OF SUCH AFFAIRS, SO I WILL RELATE THEM TO YOU NOW BY MY BEST ABILITY.

ON ACCOUNT OF OUR UNEXPECTED DESTINATION, QUESTIONS WERE RAISED REGARDING THE ABILITY OF STEPHEN AND OTHER MEN HIRED BY THE COMPANY OF MERCHANT ADVENTURERS OF LONDON IN ASSERTING LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY IN GOVERNING OUR SETTLEMENT'S AFFAIRS. THE AUDACITY OF THESE STRANGERS IN ASSUMING DOMINANCE OVER THE MEN WHO HAVE FINANCED THIS VENTURE IS APPALLING! MORE IMPUDENT, STEPHEN CLAIMS, WAS THE DIVISIVE NATURE BY WHICH THEY ANTAGONIZE THE SEPARATISTS FROM LEIDEN, URGING FOR MUTINY. MY HEART TREMBLED AT THE POTENTIAL FOR POSSIBLE DANGEROUS DISSENT, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE SURVIVAL OF MY FAMILY HANGS IN THE BALANCE. I WAS RELIEVED TO HEAR FROM STEPHEN THAT A CONSENSUS WAS REACHED IN UNDERSTANDING THAT PERPETUATING THE SURVIVAL OF OUR WHOLE ASSEMBLY IS DEPENDENT ON DISREGARDING OUR DIFFERENCES. NOT JUST WAS OUR PHYSICAL SURVIVAL AT STAKE, BUT THE SURVIVAL OF ANY COHESIVE, ORGANIZED SETTLEMENT. BY THE WRITINGS OF A MAN NAMED WILLIAM - I DO NOT RECALL IF STEPHEN CLARIFIED HIM AS BREWSTER OR BRADFORD - ALL THE MEN SIGNED AN AGREEMENT THAT IS BEING CALLED THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT, WHICH AUTHORIZES OUR LEADERS TO ESTABLISH LAWS.

ALTHOUGH IT WAS SIGNED A LITTLE OVER A MONTH AGO, THE IMPACTS HAVE TAKEN HOLD UNLIKE ANYTHING I HAVE EVER BEEN FAMILIAR WITH IN ENGLAND. IN THE

OPINION OF STEPHEN AND MANY OTHER OF THE ENGLISHMEN, THE SEPARATISTS HAD A LARGE INFLUENCE IN THE CRAFTING OF THE GOALS AND STANDARDS OF THE COMPACT, AS THEY UNDERSTANDABLY TURNED TO THE MODEL OF THEIR OWN CHURCHES FOR DIRECTION. AS LOYAL SUBJECTS OF KING JAMES, STEPHEN HAS MADE IT COMPREHENSIBLE TO ME THE NECESSITY IN DOCUMENTING SUCH A CONSENSUS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE PURPOSE OF OUR ENTERPRISE: TO BENEFIT ENGLAND AND FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF GOD'S GLORY. AS I TEND TO THE FIRE IN OUR SMALL, ONE ROOM BOARD DWELLING, MY EARS SWELL WITH A TERM I HAVE HEARD TIME AND TIME AGAIN: *CIVIL BODY POLITIC*. STEPHEN HAS ALSO DESCRIBED THE NECESSITY OF THIS IDEAL TO ME; THE OATH OF THE SIGNATORIES IN ADOPTING AND OBEYING WHATEVER LAWS ARE NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF OUR SETTLEMENT AND TO ENSURE THE PROSPERITY OF ITS FUTURE. I AM CURRENTLY WRITING TO YOU WHILE STEPHEN ATTENDS AN ASSEMBLY OF OUR SETTLEMENTS GENERAL COURT. JUST YESTERDAY JOHN CARVER WAS ELECTED AS OUR GOVERNOR, WHO WILL PRESIDE OVER OUR SETTLEMENT AND AUTHENTICATE THE LAWS PASSED THROUGH THIS "BODY POLITIC." TO MY UNDERSTANDING, IT OPERATES IN A SIMILAR WAY TO HOW SOME SEPARATISTS ELECT THEIR OWN MINISTERS BY THE MAJORITY AND GOVERN THEMSELVES.

AS I CONCLUDE THESE ACCOUNTS OF OUR JOURNEY AND NEW HOME, I REMAIN THANKFUL FOR MY GOOD HEALTH, THE ENDURING NATURE OF MY HUSBAND, AND THE LIVES OF MY CHILDREN. I MISS YOU DEARLY AND PRAY TO GOD THAT YOU REMAIN IN GOOD CONDITION AND HAPPINESS.

GOD BLESS,
YOUR LOVING SISTER,
ELIZABETH HOPKINS

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