

**THE NEBRASKA SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS
BURT & BECKY WHEDON 2023 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENT**

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

**Thomas Kaus
Chadron High School
Chadron**



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

**CHOOSE ONE OF THE 51 MAYFLOWER PASSENGERS WHO LEFT
DESCENDANTS AND WRITE ABOUT HIS OR HER CONTRIBUTION TO
PLYMOUTH COLONY AND HIS OR HER PLACE IN HISTORY.**

**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.**

New York, January 1, 1864

“A happy new year” to thee, my own beloved Elizabeth Cady Stanton,

I hope this bright but cold morning finds thee brilliant as usual and enriched with many warm friends. Remember, among them all, thou shall not find one who loves thee more devotedly or would do more to render this and all thy future years "happy", than him whose hand traces these lines.

As I reflect upon the events of 1863: the Emancipation Proclamation, the Battle of Gettysburg, and our fight for justice for women and African Americans, it brings to mind our descendant, William Brewster, who came to these shores on the Mayflower. I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude for the sacrifices he made and the legacy he left behind. It is a legacy that hath shaped this country. I am inclined to believe the ideals being fought for in this War of Rebellion and those articulated in the Mayflower Compact, both represent important moments in American politics and the ongoing struggle to create “a more perfect union”.

If thee will recall, William Brewster made significant contributions to the Plymouth Colony and played a crucial role in shaping the early history of the colonies. He left an indelible mark on both religious and political institutions.

As an elder of the Separatist congregation, Brewster shaped the religious beliefs and practices of the Plymouth Colony and played an essential role in the establishment of the first church. His influence can be seen in the development of Congregationalism, a form of Protestantism that emphasized the independence of individual churches. He was known for his strong commitment to religious freedom and his belief in the autonomy of local churches. By way of example, he opposed the appointment of ministers by a centralized authority, instead advocating for the election of pastors by the congregation.

Think on this my lovely Elizabeth, Brewster's dedication to religious freedom and his commitment to justice are values that have been passed down through our family for generations. He believed that every individual had the right to worship as they saw fit, without fear of persecution or discrimination. This is a belief we share, as we fight for women's suffrage, abolitionism, and the rights of people to live free from oppression.

Furthermore, Brewster's commitment to religious freedom can be seen in interactions with Native American tribes. Brewster respected their religious beliefs and sought to build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. He was highly respected by the Native Americans for his wisdom, integrity, and fairness. As the Pilgrims' religious leader and advisor to Governor William Bradford, he worked to establish trade relationships with the Wampanoag led by Chief Massasoit and to negotiate treaties that would ensure peaceful coexistence. His leadership and guidance helped to establish a cooperative relationship between the two groups, which allowed both to prosper in the early years.

As you are well aware, it is important to note, Brewster continues to inspire those of us who seek to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between different cultures and communities.

For fear of doing Brewster an injustice, I feel I must speak of his political role in the establishment of civil government in the Plymouth Colony. He helped draft and signed the Mayflower Compact, which established a temporary government based on the consent of the

governed and self-government. This framework for self-governance served as a model for the United States Constitution. He was also involved in the administration of the colony; helping establish the legal and political frameworks. His influence can be seen in the development of the New England town meeting system, which emphasized local self-government and direct citizen participation in decision-making. He established a strong sense of community and shared purpose among the settlers. This sense of unity helped to create a strong and stable foundation for the early years of the colony.

Oh, Elizabeth! My heart weeps to think that the foundation is being tested. We must never forsake the fight for equality and justice in this War of Rebellion. Rather, look to William Brewster as a source of inspiration and guidance. His commitment to freedom, justice, and cooperation are values that we must continue to uphold and work towards. I pray each day this country will mend its tattered soul. Progress is the law of God and change is His breath.

As Brewster has done, so too do we endeavor to fight for freedom and justice through women's suffrage and abolitionism in the hopes future generations will do the same for injustices in their time.

We must ever be cognizant of Brewster's legacy which extends far beyond his contributions to the Plymouth Colony and serves as an inspiration for those, like us, who value freedom and democracy. Brewster's legacy can be seen in the lasting impact of Congregationalism and the New England town meeting system on American religious and political institutions.

I state emphatically that he must be remembered as a symbol of the values and principles that were central to the founding of the United States. He was a strong advocate for individual freedom, religious liberty, and the right to self-governance, all of which are fundamental to our democracy.

When I think upon it, I am inspired by his resilience and determination.

My dear Elizabeth, I feel a sense of responsibility to honor his legacy by living my life with purpose and integrity. I wish to make a positive impact on the world, just as he did. I will endeavor to continue our current social reforms including women's rights and suffrage, and abolitionism with thee by my side.

It is my fervent desire that William Brewster will now and forever continue to inspire those who fight for social justice today and in the future.

In closing, Dearest E, it does afford me so much pleasure to get a few lines dictated by your great heart, that the hours pass slowly till they come.

God bless you!

Your own,

Henry Brewster Stanton

Bibliography

Bradford, William, and Edward Winslow. Mourt's relation or journal of the plantation at Plymouth. ed by Dexter, Henry Martyn Boston, J. K. Wiggin, 1865. Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/03008746/>.

Winslow, who was one of the Pilgrims who sailed on the Mayflower, wrote "Mourt's Relation," a first-hand account of the early years of the Plymouth Colony. In this work, he describes Brewster as a "reverend and godly man" who was "sincerely affected with the welfare of religion."

Bradford, William, et al. Bradford's history of "Plimoth plantation.." Boston, Wright & Potter printing co., state printers, 1899. Image. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/13022179/>.

Bradford, who served as the governor of the Plymouth Colony, wrote extensively about the early years of the colony. In this work, he describes Brewster as a "lover of the truth and of peace".

"Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers." *Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/collections/elizabeth-cady-stanton-papers/?q=henry+stanton.

Collection of papers, essays, and articles regarding Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her work. This included documents from and about Henry B. Stanton.

Johnson, Caleb. "Mayflower Genealogy." *Mayflower History*, 2020, mayflowerhistory.com/mayflower-genealogy.

Provided basic information on the Mayflower, Plymouth Colony, Mayflower Compact, and descendant genealogy.

National Park Service Gettysburg National Military Park, editor. "Civil War Timeline." *National Park Service*, www.nps.gov/gett/learn/historyculture/civil-war-timeline.htm.

The website contained a timeline of major events in the Civil War.

Stanton, Henry Brewster, 1805-1887. [from old catalog]. *Random Recollections*. Johnstown, N.Y.: Blunck & Leaning, printers, 1885.

Henry Brewster Stanton was an abolitionist, social reformer, writer, and orator. In 1840, he married Elizabeth Cady Stanton. He was a founding member of the New York Anti-Slavery Society and joined the Free Soil Party. This work is the original version of his autobiography.