

THE NEBRASKA SOCIETY OF MAYFLOWER DESCENDANTS IS
PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE 2024 BURT & BECKY WHEDON
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT.

*This year's essay topic focused on choosing one Pilgrim from the list of 51
Mayflower passengers who left descendants and write about his or her
contributions to Plymouth Colony AND his or her place in history.*

*Essays were evaluated for content, organization, style, grammar and creativity. A
bibliography was also required.*

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The award amount of \$1620 will be used toward college expenses at the South Dakota
School of Mines for the 2024/25 academic year.



I am Samuel Eaton, the son of Francis and Sarah Eaton. I was born in England shortly before my family embarked on their journey to a new life, taking the 66-day trek across the Atlantic Ocean. We rode on a carrack called The Mayflower. The ride was no pleasure voyage, there were over 100 people, two dogs, and a plethora of swine, caprine, and poultry (Abilene Public Library, 2006). While I have no memories of the ship ride because I was still nursing, growing up my father would tell me all kinds of stories about my mother and the ship ride. He would tell tales of the cold nights when we got to the new world. Mother died the first winter in Plimouth.

My father married Mother Dorothy about two years after Mother's passing, but she too became ill and soon passed, so Father married a third time, in about 1626, to Christian Penn (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2020). We kept a few animals on the farm, but Mother Christian convinced Father to get some cattle. Father was a carpenter, and he could be sure they were adequately protected from the weather (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2020). I was content taking care of the animals, and helping work the farm, but then on December 30, 1631, my father sold 12 acres of land to the schoolmaster, in exchange for schooling for me.

However, after my father's passing on November 5, 1633, I discovered that he was in a great deal of debt. The schoolmaster thankfully held his agreement with my father and taught me until I was 16. In August of 1636, Mother Christian arranged for my apprenticeship to John Cooke Jr. Mother Christian requested a 7-year term, from October 1, 1636-1643 (Morison, 2017).

Master Cooke held several offices while I was his apprentice. He served on a jury on October 4-5, 1636; a Grand Inquest or Grand Jury, on March 7, 1637, and on June 5, 1638; he was also appointed to the committee to be added to Governor and Counsell to make laws on May 16, 1639 (Behling, 2023). Yet by far, the most important meeting I attended was the drafting of the Fundamental Orders of 1639 (Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008).

My apprenticeship concluded after seven years. It had been nine years since my father's passing. At the end of my term, Mr. Cooke gave me one suit of clothing besides two others, one for the Sabbath, and one for ordinary wear. Additionally, he gave me 12 bushels of Indian corn, a first-year heifer, and he gave me free use of the spring for watering her (Behling, 2023).

Once I had settled in, everything was chipper, until the winters of 1640-1642, which were the most "intolerable piercing winters," (Mellon Faculty Fellowship at Harvard University

& Kupperman, 2017) I tried everything to keep warm, I brought the cows inside, but the cold persisted still. Despite my efforts, the farm failed, so as soon as I could collect my things and leave, I did.

On March 10, 1646, I sold the land to Love Brewster and moved to Duxbury where I met my wife, Elizabeth. She was a comely young woman. We soon got married, and she gave birth to two beautiful girls. (Bradford, 1909) In early 1652, Elizabeth passed away, I was overcome with sadness.

I wanted a family, but I was left with two motherless babes. In my grief, I left them with Mother Christian. For some time, I found myself scrounging for a purpose, what was I to do without my Elizabeth? I wandered aimlessly that winter, I felt as though I had nothing to lose. In my haze, I coveted my neighbor's possessions. It caught up to me on March 2, 1652, when I was sentenced to sit in the stocks for pilfering and stealing (Morison, 2017). While in the stocks I reflected upon what I had done, and how far I had fallen. My time in the stocks was transformative, for I found purpose in restoring my life and I resolved to reform my ways.

On October 5, 1652, I was called into court after Rachel Ramsden, my married half-sister, stated in her deposition, "Goodwife Eaton said that Christopher Winter and Samuell Eaton were together on Munday last; and that she heard her husband say that he bid Goodman Winter not deny that he had cutt the coult." I was facing a difficult decision, do I help Christopher Winter and damn myself, or damn him and save myself? In my deposition on October 5, 1652, I stated that "Goodman Winter said the coult was cutt, and told me he knew who cutt it" (Morison, 2017).

On June 16, 1659, I sold Edmond Chandeler of Duxburrow two acres of meddow. Swiftly after I sold my land, I moved to Middleboro where I met a lovely woman by the name of Martha Billington, we got married on January 10, 1660. We birthed four children, Sarah a beautiful girl, was born in late 1663, Samuel Jr was born late summer the following year, Mercy was birthed the summer of 1665, and Bethiah my youngest daughter was born 3 years later in the early summer of 1668 (Rockwell & The Mayflower Project, 2023)

I have known no other land than Plimouth Colony. I have endured many losses and made mistakes but I have also made my way. It has been a good life for me.

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