



# America's Children



## Mary of Plymouth

by James Otis

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*by*

JAMES OTIS



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## A NOTE TO THE READER

This book was written in the early 20th century, a time when societal attitudes and language were significantly from what we recognize today. As you delve into its pages, you might come across terms and descriptions that our modern sensibilities find offensive or inappropriate. These echo the beliefs and biases of that era, some of which were fueled by ignorance, fear, and misunderstanding.

We've chosen to preserve the original text, providing an unvarnished window into the past. It's essential to approach this reading with an open heart and mind, recognizing the historical context that shaped these terms and views. While we've made progress as a society, the shadows of these old attitudes sometimes persist.

By recognizing and reflecting on the profound impact such perspectives have left on our culture, we can deepen our understanding of history and chart a course towards a more inclusive and compassionate future.



## WHY THIS STORY WAS WRITTEN

My name is Mary, and I am setting down all these things about our people here in this new world, hoping some



day to send to my dear friend, Hannah, who lives in Scrooby, England, what may really come to be a story, even though the writer of it is only sixteen years old, having lived in Plymouth since the day our company landed from the *Mayflower* in 1620, more than eleven years ago.

If Hannah ever really sees this as I have written it, she will, I know, be amused; for it is set down on pieces of birch bark and some leaves cut from the book of accounts which Edward Winslow brought with him from the old home.

Hannah will ask why I did not use fair, white paper, and, if I am standing by when she does so, I shall tell her that fair, white paper is far too precious in this new world of ours to be used for the pleasure of children.

In the last ship which came from England were large packages of white paper for the settlers at Salem, who came over to this wild land eight years after we landed, and when I asked my father to buy for me three sheets that I might make a little book, he told me the price



would be more for the three sheets than he paid for the two deer skins with which to make me a winter coat.

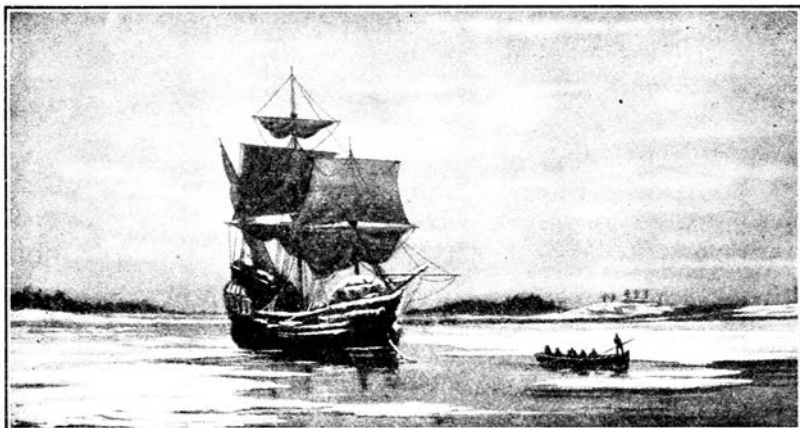
Of course I put from my mind all hope of having paper to write on; but these sheets of bark take very well the ink made from elderberries which mother and I brewed the second winter after our new home was built. The pen is a quill taken from the wing of a wild goose shot by Captain Standish.

## THE LEAKING *SPEEDWELL*

HANNAH's father must have told her how much of trouble we had in getting here, for when the first vessel in which we set sail, named the *Speedwell*, put back to Plymouth in England because of leaking so badly, her master could not have failed to tell the people of Scrooby how all the hundred and two of us, men, women and children, were crowded into the *Mayflower*.

From the sixth day of September until the eleventh day of November, which is over sixty long dreary days, we were on the ocean, and then our vessel was come into what Captain John Smith had named Cape Cod Bay.

Mother believed, as did the other women, and even we children, that we would go on shore as soon as the *Mayflower* had come near to the land; but before many



hours were passed, after the anchor had been dropped into the sea, even the youngest of us knew that it could not be.

We were weary with having been on board the vessel so long, and had made ourselves believe that as soon as we were arrived in the new world, food in plenty, with good, comfortable homes, would be ours.

Master Brewster, as well as the other men, said that houses must be built before we could leave the ship, and it was only needed we should go on deck and look about us, to know why this was so. Everywhere, except on the water, were snow and trees. It was a real forest as far as I could see in either direction, and everywhere the cold, white snow was piled in drifts, or blowing like feathers when the wind was high.

So deeply was the land covered that we, who watched the men when they went ashore for the first time to seek out some place whereon to make a village, thought that they had fallen into a hole while stepping off the rocks, because we lost sight of them so soon. Instead of its being



an accident, however, we could see that they were floundering in the snow, Master Bradford, whose legs are the shortest, being nearly lost to view.

We waited as patiently as possible for them to come back, though I must confess that Sarah, a girl of about my own age who came aboard the *Mayflower* at Plymouth when we put back because of the *Speedwell's* leaking so badly, and I could not keep in check our eagerness to hear from those people in Virginia, who it was said were living in comfort.

Not for many days did we come to realize that the settlers in Virginia were far, very far away from where we were to land, and to see them we should be forced to take another long voyage in a ship. We had come amidst the snow and the savage Indians, instead of among people from England, as had been planned when we set out on the journey.

## SEARCHING FOR A HOME

FATHER was wet, cold, weary, and almost discouraged when he came on board the vessel after that first day on shore. The men had found no place which looked

as if it might be a good spot for our village. Father said that he was not the only member of the company who had begun to believe it would have been better had we stayed in Leyden,



or in any other place where we would have been allowed to worship God in our own way, rather than thus have ventured into a wild forest where were fierce animals, and, perhaps, yet more cruel savages.

On that very night, soon after our fathers were on board again, a great storm came up. The vessel tumbled about as if she had been on the broad ocean, and when we heard the men throwing out more anchors, we children were afraid and cried, for Sarah's father said he believed the *Mayflower* would be cast ashore and wrecked on the cruel rocks over which the waves were dashing themselves into foam.

Some of the women were frightened, although my mother was not of the number, and it was only when Master Brewster came among us, praying most fervently, and saying that God would watch over us even as He had on the mighty ocean, that the cries and sobs of fear were checked. Truly did I think, while Sarah and I hugged each other very hard so that we might not be heard to cry, that this was a most wretched place in which to make a new home, and how I wished we had never left