



America's Children



Ruth of Boston

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.

A PROPER BEGINNING



TRULY it seems a great undertaking to journey from London into the land of America, yet I have done so, and because of there being very few girls only twelve years of age who are likely to make such a voyage, it seems to me well if I set down those things which I saw and did that might be interesting to myself in the future, when I shall have grown to be an old lady, if God permits, or to any other who may come upon this diary.

Of course I must first set down who I am, in case strangers should some day chance to find this book, and, growing interested in it for who can say that I may not be able to tell a story which shall be entertaining, because of there being in it much which the people of England have never seen—give me credit for having written a diary without a proper beginning.

You must know, then, that my name is Ruth. In the year of our Lord, 1630, when, as I have said, I was but twelve years of age, my father joined that company led by Master John Winthrop, whose intent it was to go into America to spread the gospel, and there also build up a town wherein should live only those who were one with them in the worship of God.

This company was made up of four classes of people.

First there were those who paid a sum of money for their passage to America, and, because of having done so, were to be given a certain number of acres of land in the New World.

In the second class were those who, not having enough money to pay the full price for their passage, agreed to perform a sufficient amount of work, after arriving in America, to make up for the same.

In the third class were those called indentured servants, which is much the same as if I said apprentices. The fourth and last class had in it those people who were to work for wages, at whatsoever trade or calling they were best fitted.

It needs not that I should say more by way of a beginning, for surely all the people in England, if they do not know it now, will soon come to understand why we, together with those who have gone before us, and the companies that are to come after, have journeyed into America.

ON THE BROAD OCEAN

It was decided that my parents, and, of course, myself, should sail in the same ship with Master Winthrop, and the name of that vessel was the *Arabella*, she having been so called in honor of Lady Arabella Johnson, who journeyed with us.

My mother was sadly grieved because of Mistress Winthrop's deciding not to go on the voyage with her husband, but to join him in the New World later, and



this decision was a disappointment to very many of the company. I am in doubt as to whether the *Lady Arabella* would have gone with us on this ship, had she not believed Mistress Winthrop also was to go.

It was on the twenty-second day of March, in that year which I have previously set down, that, having already journeyed from London to Southampton, we went aboard the *Arabella*, counting

that the voyage would be begun without delay, and yet, because of unfriendly winds and cruel storms, our ship, with three others of the company, lay at anchor until the eighth day of April.

Then it was, after the captain of the ship had shot off three guns as a farewell, that we sailed out on the broad ocean, where we were tossed by the waves and buffeted by the winds for nine long, dreary weeks.

Had it not been for Master Winthrop's discourses day after day, we should have been more gloomy than we were; but with such a devout man to remind us of the mercy and goodness of God, it would have been little short of a sin had we repined because of not being carried more speedily to that land where was to be our home.

There was one day during the voyage, when it seemed verily as if the Lord was not minded we should journey away from England.

We had not been out from the port many days, when on a certain morning eight ships were seen behind us, coming up as if counting to learn what we were like; and then it was that all the men of the company believed these were Spanish vessels bent on taking us prisoners, for, as you know, at that time England was at war with Spain.

It was most fearsome to all the children, but very much so to Susan, a girl very nearly my own age, with whom I made friends after coming aboard, and myself.

MAKING READY FOR BATTLE

WHEN Susan and I saw the men taking down the hammocks from that portion of the vessel which was called the gun deck, loading the cannon, and bringing out the powder-chests, truly were we alarmed.

Standing clasped in each other's arms, unheeded by our elders, all of whom were in a painful state of anxiety or fear, we watched intently all that forenoon the ships which we believed belonged to the enemy.

Then I heard one of the sailors say that the Spaniards were surely gaining on us, and the captain of the vessel, as well as Master Winthrop and my father, must have believed it true, for all preparations were made for a battle.

The small cabins, leading from the great one, were

torn down that cannon might be used without hindrance, and the bedding, and all things that were likely to take fire, were thrown overboard. The boats were launched into the sea and towed alongside the ship so that when the worst came we might fly in them, and then that which was most fearsome of all, the women and children were sent down into the very middle of the vessel, where they might not be in danger when the Spaniards began to send iron balls among us, as it seemed certain they soon would.



While we were huddled together in the darkness, many weeping, some moaning, and a few women, among whom was my mother, silent in the agony of grief, Master Winthrop came down to pray with us, greatly to our comforting, after which, so I have been told since, he went up among the men where he performed the same office.

It was not until an hour after noon that our people discovered that those ships which we believed to be Spanish, were English vessels, from which we had nothing to fear.

Then word was sent down to us in that dark place