

General Sickness

“... in these hard and difficult beginnings ...”

There were 102 passengers on the Mayflower including 37 members of the separatist Leiden congregation who would go on to be known as the Pilgrims, together with the non-separatist passengers. In addition to the original 102, one child was born at sea on the way (Oceanus Hopkins) and another was born while they were at anchor at Cape Cod (Peregrine White).

Of the original 102, there were 50 men and 19 women, 14 young adults and 19 children - 18 were listed as servants, 13 of which were attached to separatist families. There are thought to have been 31 children on the Mayflower.

There were five Mayflower passengers who died at sea or at anchor in November/December 1620.

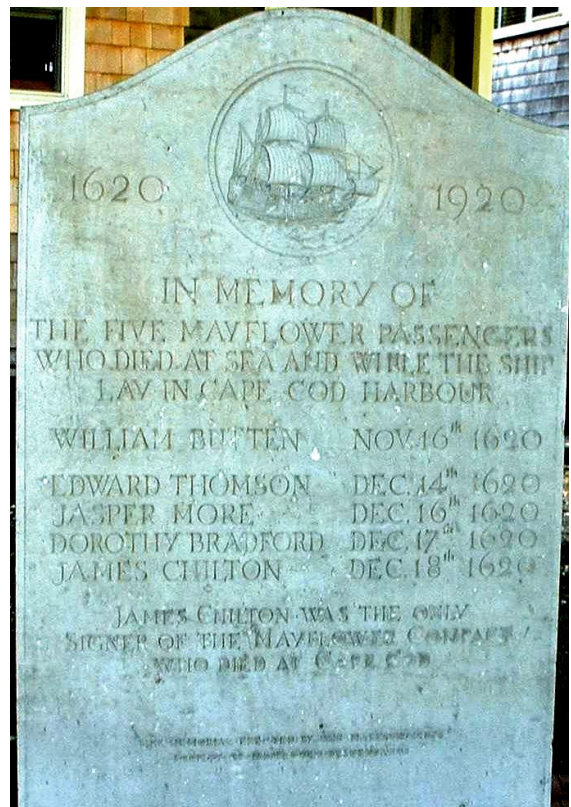
William Butten. He was the first Mayflower passenger to die, dying at sea November 6/16, just three days before the coast of New England was sighted. He was believed to have been sick for much of the two-month voyage. Bradford recorded: "in all this voyage there died one of the passengers, which was William Butten, a youth, servant to Samuel Fuller, when they drew near the coast". He was a "youth," as noted by William Bradford and a servant of Samuel Fuller.

Edward Thompson. He died December 4/14, 1620, and was the first person to die after the Mayflower arrived in America. This was several weeks before the Pilgrims located and made plans to settle at Plymouth. He was a servant of William White.

Jasper More. He was a 7-year-old boy from Shropshire and a servant of John Carver. Bradford recorded (441, 443) that Jasper died "of the common infection" on 6/16 December.

Dorothy Bradford. She was about 23 years old and the wife of Pilgrim William Bradford, having married him in Holland in 1613 when she was 16. She had one son, John, who did not travel on the Mayflower. On December 7/17, she possibly slipped, falling from the deck of the Mayflower and drowning in the icy water of Cape Cod harbor. This happened while her husband was with an expedition ashore.

James Chilton. He was about 64 years old and a Separatist from Leiden. He died on December 8/18 and William Bradford wrote that he died in the First Sickness.



THE MAYFLOWER PASSENGERS

ALDEN John (16)	ALLESTON Barnabas, Bartholomew, Isaac, Mary, Mary (16) (16) (16) (16) (16) (16)	ALLERTON John (16)	BRADFORD Dorothy, William (16) (16)	BREWSTER Worship, William, Mary, Lever (16) (16) (16) (16) (16) (16)	BUTTERIDGE Richard & Mary, Mary (16) (16) (16)	BROWNE (16)	CAKVER John (16)	CHILTON Mary (16)	CLARKE Richard (16)	COOKE Francis, John (16) (16)	CRACKSTON John, John (16) (16)	EATON Francis, Sarah, Samuel (16) (16) (16)	ELY Unknown first name (16)	ENGLISH Thomas (16)	FLETCHER Moses (16)	FULLER Edward & his wife, Samuel (16) (16) (16)	FULLER Samuel, William, Thomas (16) (16) (16)	GARDNER (16)	GOODMAN (16)	HOPKINS Dennis, Elizabeth, Othman, Stephen, Constantine, Otho (16) (16) (16) (16) (16)	MARGESSON Francis (16)	MARTIN Christopher, Mary, Pinner (16) (16) (16)	MULLINS William, Abigail, Penelope (16) (16) (16) (16) (16)	PALEST Dorothy (16)	RODGERS Thomas, Joseph (16) (16)	STANDISH Euse, Miles (16) (16)	TILLEY Edward, Ann (16) (16)	TINKER Thomas & his wife, Young, Master (16) (16)	TREAVOR William (16)	TURNER John, Young, Master, Thomas (16) (16) (16) (16)	WARREN Richard (16)	WHITE William, Constantine, Richard, Elizabeth, Thomas (16) (16) (16) (16) (16)	WILLIAMS Thomas (16)	WINSLOW Elizabeth, Edward, George, Soble, Elias, Shory (16) (16) (16) (16) (16)	WINSLOW Othman (16)
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William Bradford served as governor of the Plymouth Colony five times between its founding in 1620 and his death in 1657. His famed history of the colony, *Of Plimouth Plantation*, published the year before his death, recounts the hardship of the Pilgrims' first winter.

The following is Bradford's account of the colony's founding after the adoption of the Mayflower Compact on November 11, 1620.

After [the signing of the Mayflower Compact] they chose, or rather confirmed, Mr. John Carver (a man godly and well approved amongst them) their Governor for that year. And after they had provided a place for their goods, or common store (which were long in unloading for want of boats, foulness of the winter weather, and sickness of diverse [various kinds]) and begun some small cottages for their habitation, as time would admit, they met and consulted of laws and orders, both for their civil and military Government, as the necessity of their condition did require, still adding thereunto as urgent occasion in several times, and as cases did require.

In these hard and difficult beginnings they found some discontents and murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches and carriage in other; but they were soon quelled and overcome by the wisdom, patience, and just and equal carriage of things by the Governor and better part, which clave faithfully together in the main.

But that which was most sad and lamentable was that in two or three months' time half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting [lacking] houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvy and other diseases, which this long voyage and their inaccomodate condition had brought upon them, so as there died sometimes two or three of a day, in the aforesaid time, that of one hundred and odd persons, scarce fifty remained.

And of these in the time of most distress, there was but six or seven sound [healthy] persons who, to their great commendations be it spoken, spared no pains, night or day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health, fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed [prepared] them meat, made their beds, washed their loathsome clothes, clothed and unclothed them; in a word, did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing herein their true love unto their friends and brethren. A rare example and worthy to be remembered. . . .

But I may not hear pass by another remarkable passage not to be forgotten. As this calamity fell among the passengers that were to be left here to plant [farm], and were hasted ashore and made to drink water, that the seamen might have the more bear, and one in his sickness desiring but a small can of beer, it was answered, that if he were their own father he should have none; the disease began to fall amongst them also, so as almost half of their company died before they went away, and many of their officers and lustiest [hardest] men, as the boatswain, gunner, quartermasters, the cook, and others.

At which the master was something stricken and sent to the sick ashore and told the Governor he should send for beer for them that had need of it, though he drunk water homeward bound.

But now amongst his company there was far another kind of carriage in this misery than amongst the passengers; for they that before had been boone companions in drinking and jollity in the time of their health and welfare, began now to desert one another in this calamity saying they would not hazard their lives for them, they should be infected by coming to help them in their cabins, and so, after they came to lie by it, would do little or nothing for them, but if they died let them die

But such of the passengers as were yet aboard showed them what mercy they could, which made some of their hearts relent, as the boatson (and some others), who was a proud young man, and would often curse and scoff at the passengers; but when he grew weak, they had compassion on him and helped him; then he confessed he did not deserve it at their hands, he had abused them in word and deed. O! saith he, you, I now see, show your love like Christians indeed one to another, but we let one another lie and die like dogs.

Another lay cursing his wife, saying if it had not been for her he had never come this unlucky voyage, and anon [soon] cursing his fellows, saying he had done this and that for some of them, he had spent so much and so much amongst them, and they were now weary of him and did not help him, having need.

Another gave his companion all he had, if he died, to help him in his weakness; he went and got a little spice and made him a mess [meal] of meat once or twice, and because he died not so soon as he expected, he went amongst his fellows, and swore the rogue would cousen [deceive] him, he would see him checked before he made him any more meat; and yet the poor fellow died before morning. ...

Anno. 1621 - They now began to dispatch the ship away which brought them over, which lay till about this time, or the beginning of April.

The reason on their part why she stayed so long was the necessity and danger that lay upon them, for it was well towards the end of December before she could land anything here, or they able to receive anything ashore.

Afterwards, the 14th of January the house which they had made for a general randevoze [rendezvous/meeting house] by casualty fell afire, and some were fain to retire aboard for shelter. Then the sickness began to fall sore amongst them, and the weather so bad as they could not make much sooner any dispatch.

Again, the Governor and chief of them, seeing so many die, and fall down sick daily, thought it no wisdom to send away the ship, their condition considered, and the danger they stood in from the Indians, till they could procure some shelter; and therefore thought it better to draw some more charge upon themselves and friends, than hazard all.

The master and seamen likewise, though before they hasted the passengers ashore to be gone, now many of their men being dead, and of the ablest of them (as is before noted) and of the rest many lay sick and weak, the master durst [dared] not put to sea, till he saw his men begin to recover, and the heart of winter over.

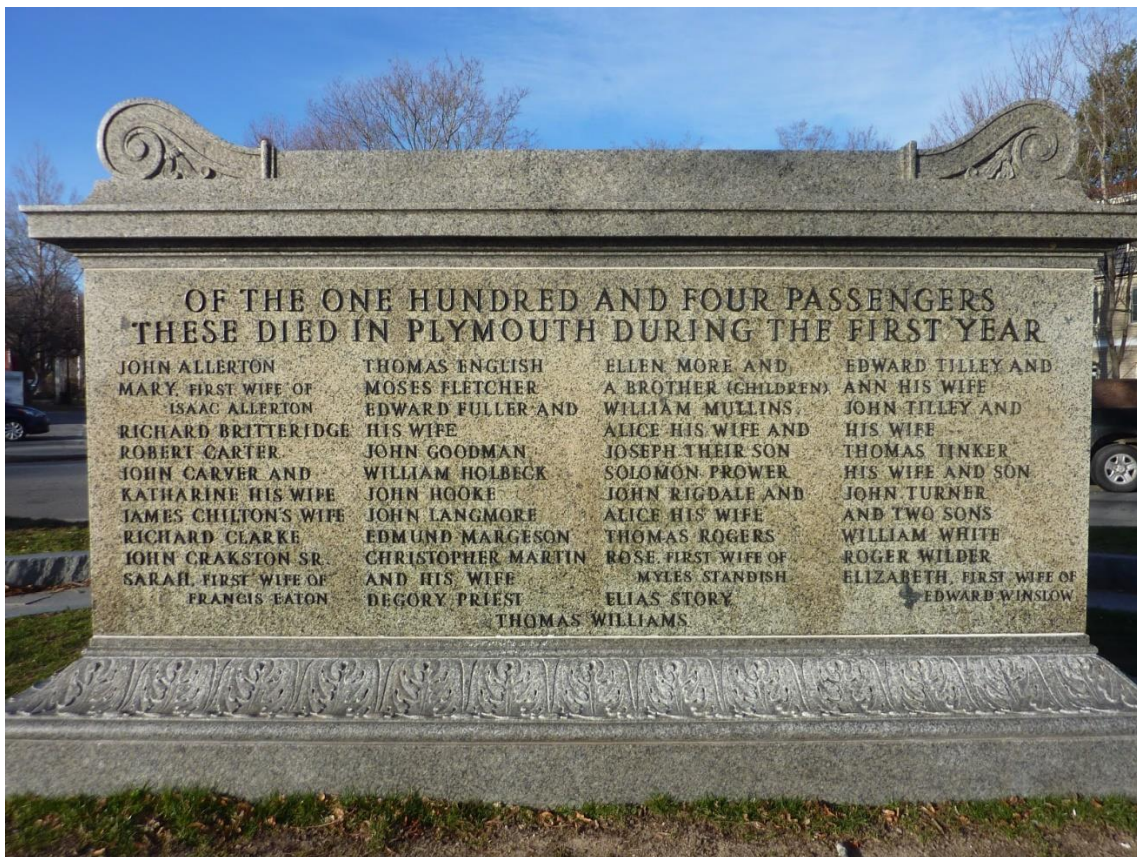
Afterwards they (as many as were able) began to plant their corn, in which service Squanto stood them in great stead, showing them both the manner how to set it, and after how to dress and tend it.

Also he told them except they got fish and set with it (in these old grounds) it would come to nothing, and he showed them that in the middle of April they should have store enough come up the brook, by which they began to build, and taught them how to take it, and where to get other provisions necessary for them; all which they found true by trial and experience. Some English seed they sow, as wheat and peas, but it came not to good, either by the badness of the seed or lateness of the season, or both, or some other defect.

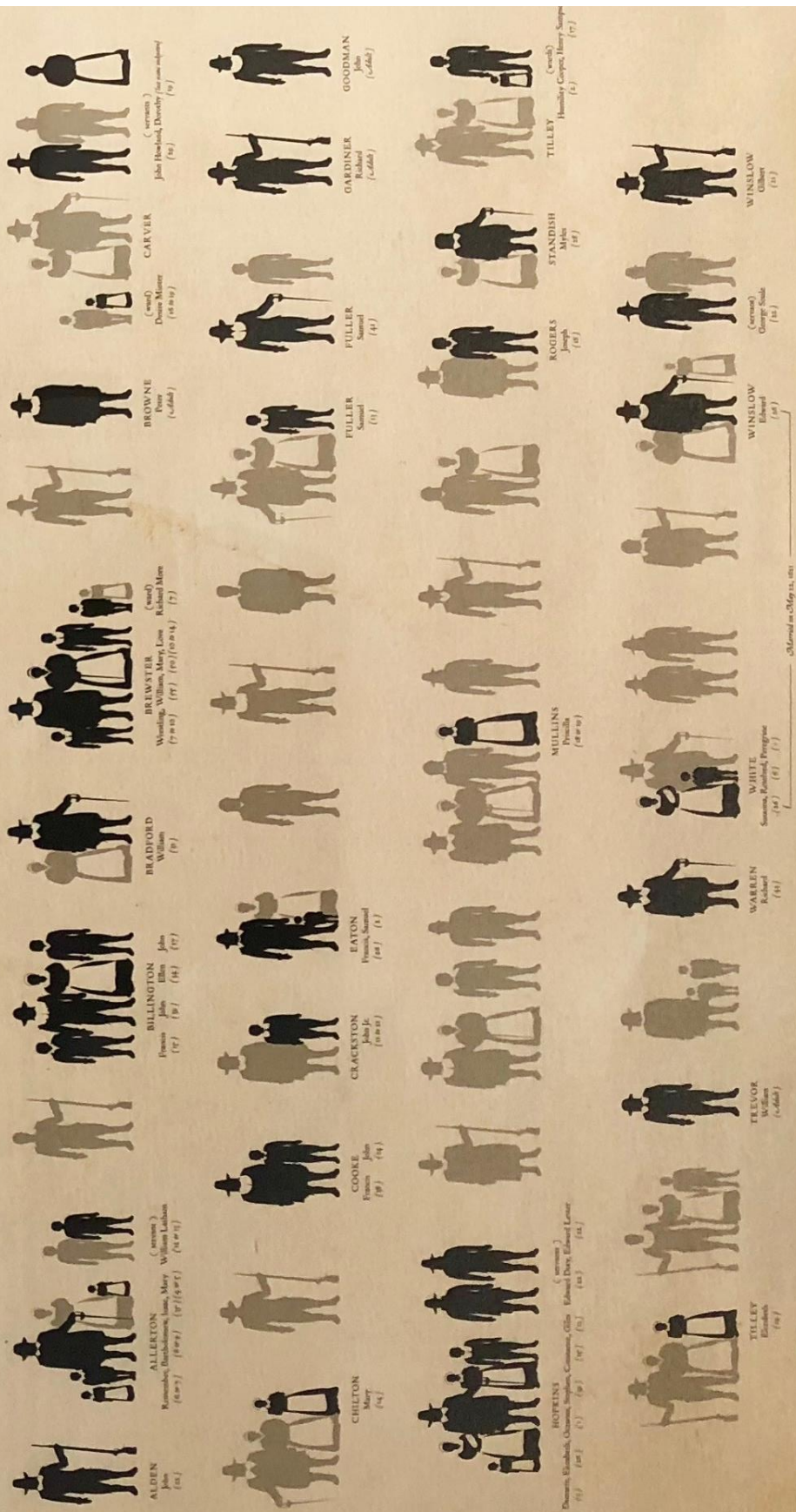
In this month of April whilst they were busy about their seed, their Governor (Mr. John Carver) came out of the field very sick, it being a hot day; he complained greatly of his head, and lay down, and within a few hours his senses failed, so as he never spake more till he died, which was within a few days after.

Whose death was much lamented and caused great heaviness amongst them, as there was cause. He was buried in the best manner they could, with some volleys of [gun] shot by all that bore arms; and his wife, being a weak woman, died within five or six weeks after him. . . .

Within weeks, fifty-two of the 102 passengers who had reached Cape Cod were dead, including fourteen of the twenty-six heads of families. All but four families had lost at least one member. Of the eighteen married couples who had sailed from England, only three had survived intact.



Those who made it to the first Thanksgiving in 1621...



Listing of those that died in those early times, what they called The General Sickness (alphabetical listing by Deetz)

Allerton, Mary (Norris): Mr. Allerton his wife died with the first, and his servant John Hooke," Bradford, p. 444. Register: Dies Mary, the wife of Master Isaac Allerton," Feb. 25, 1621.

Allerton, John: "Died in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447.

Bradford, Dorothy (May): "William Bradford his wife died soon after their arrival," Bradford, p. 444. Register: "wife to Master William Bradford" died Dec. 7, 1620.

Richard Britteridge: "Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447. Register: He died on Dec. 21, "the first to die in this harbour."

Butten, William: "Mr. Fuller, his servant died at sea," Bradford, p. 445. Register: "the only passenger who dies on the voyage," Nov. 6, 1620.

Carter, Robert (servant to William Mullins): "Died the first winter," Bradford, p. 445.

Carver, John and Carver, Katherine (White) (Leggatt) (wife): Mr. Carver and his wife died the first year, he in the spring, she in the summer," Bradford, p. 443.

Chilton, James and Chilton, Susanna (Furner): "James Chilton and his wife also died in the first infection," Bradford, p. 446. Register: James Chilton died on Dec. 8, 1620, on board the Mayflower.

Clarke, Richard: "Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447

Crackstone, John: "Died in the first mortality," Ibid., p. 445.

Eaton, Sarah: "Francis Eaton his first wife died in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 446.

English, Thomas: "Died in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447.

Fletcher, Moses: "Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447.

Fuller, Edward and Wife: "Edward Fuller and his wife died soon after they came ashore," Bradford, p. 446.

Goodman, John: "Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447. Goodman was still alive in mid-January 1621 (Mourt's Relation, pp. 45-48), although not in good physical shape. He is listed as one of those who received land in 1623 (PCR 12: 4). He is not listed among those who were part of the cattle division of 1627, so he must have died by then.

Holbeck, William (servant to William White): "Mr. White and his two servants died soon after their landing," Bradford, p. 445.

Hooke, John: Servant to Isaac Allerton, "died with the first," Bradford, p. 444.

Langmore , John (servant to Christopher Martin): "Mr. Martin, he and all his died in the first infection, not long after the arrival," Bradford, p. 445.

Margesson, Edmund: Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447.

Martin, Christopher: "Mr. Martin, he and all his died in the first infection, not long after the arrival," Bradford, p. 445.

Martin, Marie (Prower) (wife): "Mr. Martin, he and all his died in the first infection, not long after the arrival," Bradford, p. 445.

More, Ellen: "One of his [Edward Winslow's] servants died, as also the little girl [Ellen More] soon after the ship's arrival," Bradford, p. 444.

More, Jasper: "Died of the common infection," Bradford, p. 443. Register: "a boy of Master Carver's" died Dec. 6, 1620.

More, Mary: "Richard More's brother [sic] died the first winter," Bradford p. 444. Probably "brother" is an error, and Bradford, writing thirty years later, had forgotten that Richard had a second sister who died. Jasper, his older brother, had already been mentioned by Bradford under his accounting for the Carvers. See Anderson, p. 1283.

Mullins, William: "Mr. Mullins and his wife, his son and his servant died the first winter," Bradford, p. 445. Register: died Feb. 21, 1621.

Mullins, Alice (wife of William Mullins).

Mullins, Joseph (son of William Mullins).

Alice Mullins left a nuncupative will, which was taken back to England on the Mayflower, on her return voyage. She sailed from Plymouth on 5 April 1621. At that date Alice and Joseph Mullins must have been alive, as they were beneficiaries under the will and there was no official notification of their death attached to it. They presumably died in the spring or summer of 1621.

Priest, Digory: "Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447. Register: Priest died on Jan. 1, 1621.

Prower, Samuel (stepson of Christopher Martin): "Mr. Martin, he and all his died in the first infection, not long after the arrival," Bradford, p. 445. Register: died Dec. 24, 1620.

Rigsdale, John and Wife: "So did John Rigsdale and his wife, [die in the first sickness]," Bradford, p. 446.

Rogers, Thomas: "Thomas Rogers died in the first sickness," Bradford, p. 446.

Standish, Rose: "Captain Standish his wife died in the first sickness," Bradford, p. 445. Register: died Jan. 29, 1621.

Story, Elias: "One of his [Edward Winslow's] servants died . . . soon after the ship's arrival," Bradford, p. 444.

Thompson, Edward (servant to William White): "Mr. White and his two servants died soon after their landing," Bradford, p. 445

Tilley, Edward and Tilley, Agnes (Ann) (Cooper): "Edward Tilley and his wife both died soon after their arrival," Bradford, p. 446.

Tilley, John and Tilley, Joan (Hurst) (Rogers): "John Tilley and his wife both died a little after they came ashore," Bradford, p. 446.

Tinker, Thomas, Wife and Son: "Thomas Tinker and his wife and son all died in the first sickness," Bradford, p. 446.

Turner, John and two Sons: "John Turner and his two sons all died in the first sickness," Bradford, p. 446.

White, William: "Mr. White and his two servants died soon after their landing," Bradford, p. 445. Register: William White died the same date as William Mullins, Feb. 21, 1621, "with two more."

Wilder, Roger (servant to John Carver): "Died of the common infection," Bradford, p. 443.

Williams, Thomas: "Died soon after arrival in the general sickness," Bradford, p. 447. In Mourt's Relation, p. 56, reference is made to a "Mr. Williamson," who with Captain Standish on March 22, 1621, met Massasoit at the brook. As there was no Williamson among the passengers, the editor, Dwight Heath, suggests that this was in fact Thomas Williams.

Winslow, Elizabeth (Barker): "Mr. Edward Winslow his wife died the first winter," Bradford, p. 444. Register: Elizabeth Winslow died on March 24, 1621.

Such were the first experiences of the colonists of New Compared England. (Scot)

All here is from Bradford; National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox; Deetz.

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the Mayflower, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young