

JOHN BILLINGTON OF THE *MAYFLOWER*

Among those on board the ship *Mayflower* when it finally arrived in New England in November, 1620 was John Billington.

He was born in England about 1579 and married Ellinor (----). John died by hanging in Plymouth Colony in September, 1630, after he was convicted of murdering John Newcomen. This was the only hanging in the early history of the Colony. Usually the penalty was confinement to the stocks, a structure which locked the hands and head in an uncomfortable position in public view. His wife Ellinor slandered a Plymouth man, and she was sentenced to sit in the stocks and be whipped.

John was a strong supporter of the revolt against Governor Bradford. He and his sons John and Francis often got into trouble during the first decade of the colony's existence.

While the *Mayflower* was anchored off Cape Cod, Francis Billington fired a musket on board the ship. According to tradition, Francis climbed a tree soon after arrival in Plymouth and spotted what he called a "great sea," believing it to be the Pacific Ocean. He and one of the *Mayflower's* crew members went to explore the sea, but became alarmed when they saw some abandoned Native American houses. They were alone with only a single gun. In memory of Billington's error, the pond was called "Billington's Sea."

And son John did his share of mischief as well. In 1621, he wandered off and went missing for five days. Native Americans from Nauset eventually found him. The Pilgrims left to intervene, but John was returned peaceably without any threat of war or attack.

Children of John and Ellinor (----) Billington:

1. JOHN
2. FRANCIS

Which child of Pilgrim John Billington
is your *Mayflower* ancestor?

Sources:

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