

JOHN HOWLAND

OF THE

MAYFLOWER

Volume 1

THE FIRST FIVE GENERATIONS

Documented Descendants Through

his first child **Desire² Howland**

and her husband **Captain John Gorham**

by

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PICTON PRESS

CAMDEN, MAINE

1990

The Descendants of

JOHN HOWLAND

of the *Mayflower* for Five Generations

Volume 1

Through his First Child

Desire² Howland, and her husband, Captain John Gorham

1. John¹ Howland and his wife, Elizabeth Tilley

John Howland of Fenstanton, Huntingdonshire, England, a passenger on the famous ship *Mayflower*, which sailed from Plymouth, England, in the autumn of 1620, was the indentured manservant of Mr. John Carver, a wealthy Londoner, who became the first governor of New Plimoth Colony in Massachusetts. On 11 November 1620, as the ship lay at anchor in Cape Cod Bay, John Howland was the thirteenth man to sign the MAYFLOWER COMPACT, the agreement which laid the foundation for the new town that the able-bodied men on board the *Mayflower* planned to create when the group landed in what was to become Plymouth, Massachusetts.¹

The son of Henry and Margaret Howland, John Howland was born about 1592 and grew up in Fenstanton, a town nine miles northwest of Cambridge on the old Roman Road. No baptismal record has been found for John Howland but he was said to have been "above eighty years" when he died in Rocky Nook, Kingston, near Plymouth, 23 February 1672. His father, Henry Howland, yeoman, died in Fenstanton 17 May 1635, and his mother, Margaret, was buried there 31 July 1629. The identity of this family is proved by the probate records of John's brother, Humphrey Howland, a draper, who settled in St. Swithin's Parish in London. Humphrey Howland, in his will written in London 28 May 1646 and proved 10 July 1646 by his second wife, Anne, mentioned his brothers, Arthur, John, and Henry, his sister, Margaret, wife of Richard Phillips of Fenstanton, shoemaker, his "nephew," Simon Howland, and his "niece," Hannah Howland, Simon's sister. Additional information about John

Howland's family is found in the records of the intestate estate of another brother, George Howland, a merchant of St. Dunstan's, East London, who had died two years earlier, 10 February 1643/4. His estate was administered by Humphrey Howland's wife, Anne, 11 July 1646. Simon Howland was baptized in Fenstanton 19 August 1604, called "son of Henrye," and was probably the Simon Howland who was apprenticed 19 March 1622, to Humphrey Howland, "citizen and draper of London."²

Two of John's brothers followed John to Plymouth. Henry Howland, the youngest brother, was apprenticed to his brother, Humphrey Howland, in London and his name is found there on the Roll of the Drapers Company, 1 October 1623. But less than ten years later, Henry arrived in Plymouth where he was taxed 25 March 1633. John's oldest brother, Arthur Howland, soon followed his younger brothers to New England and was listed by Thomas Lechford 28 August 1640 as "of Duxbury in New England, Planter."³ Thus the progenitors of three separate Howland families arrived in Plymouth Colony during the first twenty years of its existence, making it difficult to sort out and identify their many descendants.

John Howland of the *Mayflower* was called by Governor William Bradford "a lusty younge man." He was one of the hired hands among the *Mayflower* company, being neither a "Saint," as the Pilgrims were called, nor a "Stranger," engaged for a specific duty, as was the soldier, Captain Myles Standish.⁴ During the voyage across the North Atlantic, the *Mayflower* was buffeted by severe autumn storms during which she was forced to drop her sails and head into the wind, wallowing in the mountainous waves. John Howland ventured on deck and was washed overboard into the boiling sea. In Governor Bradford's words, "It pleased God that he caught hould of ye halliards which hunge over board, and rane out at length; yet he was held up . . . and then with a boat hooke and other means got into ye ship again."⁵ It was this tenacity of purpose, perseverance, and the ability to deal with unexpected emergencies that helped John Howland to become a successful leader in the Plymouth community.

The Carver family with whom John lived, survived the terrible sickness of the first winter, during which many Pilgrims died. But the following spring, on an unusually hot day in April, Governor Carver, according to Bradford, came out of his cornfield feeling ill. He passed into a coma and "never spake more." His wife, Kathrine, died soon after her husband.⁶ Since the Carvers had no children, John Howland is thought to have inherited their estate. It has been said that he immediately "bought his freedom" but no record has survived.⁷

On or about what was then New Year's Day, 25 March 1623 (old style), John Howland married his fellow *Mayflower* passenger, Elizabeth Tilley. Elizabeth was baptized at Henlow, Huntingdonshire, England, 30

August 1607, the fifth and youngest child of a silk-weaver named John Tilley, and his wife, Joan (Hurst) Rogers. She was the only child of her parents recorded as coming with them to America.⁸ At the time of her marriage she was not quite sixteen years of age.

The early records of the Colony of New Plymouth contain an account of the Division of Land in 1623, in which John Howland, as head of a household, received four acres "on the Southside of the brook to the woodward." According to one researcher, John Howland was given one share (or acre) in his own right and three shares for his wife, Elizabeth Tilley, and her deceased parents, John and Joan Tilley.⁹ But Franklyn Howland, author of *The History of Arthur, Henry and John Howland and Their Descendants*, states that Governor Carver's family consisted of John Carver, himself, his wife, Kathrine, John Howland, Desire Minter, a man servant named Roger Wilder, a boy, Jasper More, a boy, William Latham, and an unnamed servant maid. When Elizabeth Tilley's parents, John and Joan Tilley, and her uncle, Edward Tilley, died the first winter, Elizabeth became part of the Carver household. Roger Wilder died the first winter. Governor Carver died a few months later, in April 1621, and his wife died in May 1621. The boy, Jasper More, died 6 December 1621, and the servant maid died soon after. That left John Howland as the head of the household containing four people, the other three being Elizabeth Tilley, Desire Minter and the lad, William Latham.¹⁰

Desire Minter, one of the members of John Howland's household, had come in the *Mayflower* with the Carvers. Desire must have been no more fifteen years of age when she arrived in Plymouth. She was the daughter of William and Sarah (Willet) Minter, members of the group of Separatists living in Leiden. Her father, William Minter, died before 1618 and her mother, Sarah, married Roger Symondsen in Leiden 18 August 1618. Roger was accompanied to his wedding by his friends, Daniel Fairfield and John Carver.¹¹ It was this same John Carver in whose care Desire Minter sailed in the *Mayflower* for Plymouth in 1620. Desire's mother was widowed a second time and, before 10 May 1622, she married her third husband, Roger Eastman. On that date Roger and Sarah Eastman signed an agreement with Thomas Brewer, the philanthropist who had supported Elder William Brewster's printing press in Leiden. In the agreement Thomas Brewer of Leiden was entrusted with 1,900 guilders to be invested, out of which he was to pay 120 guilders annually for the benefit and support of Desire Minter, Sarah's child by her first husband. Payment was to continue until the child reached the age of twenty-one. The contract was drawn up in the presence of John Kebel and William Jepson.¹²

Thomas Brewer returned to England where he was arrested for his support of the Pilgrim Separatists. On 20 October 1623, Roger Eastman,

Sarah's third husband, authorized John Kebel and William Jepson to collect Desire Minter's money from Thomas Brewer, who was in prison at this time.¹³ This would seem to indicate that Desire Minter was about fifteen years old when she traveled to Plymouth with John Carver and his wife, Kathrine, in 1620. She was still a minor when her mother and stepfather, Sarah and Roger Eastman, signed the second contract in Leiden in 1623. Therefor she was still under twenty-one, when she was living in the household of the newly married John and Elizabeth (Tilley) Howland at the time the Division of Land was made in 1623.

A few years later, Desire Minter returned to England, perhaps to claim her inheritance. She may have rejoined her mother and stepfather there for, on 1 December 1623, Roger and Sarah Eastman obtained a notarized statement of good character from Thomas Nashe and William Jepson, when they were planning to leave Leiden.¹⁴ John and Elizabeth Howland were very fond of Desire Minter and named their first child "Desire," in her honor.

In 1626 John Howland became one of the forty-two colonists who assumed Plymouth Colony's debt of £1800 owed to the Merchant Adventurers of London. In order to pay off this mortgage, a monopoly in the Colony's trade was granted to William Bradford, Isaac Allerton and Myles Standish, who chose John Howland as one of their partners, or undertakers, in the project. Later they established a trading post far to the northward, on the Kennebec River, at the present site of Augusta, Maine. John was put in charge of the trading post and a brisk trade developed there in beaver, otter and other furs gathered by the Indians.¹⁵ John's family may have spent some time with him in Maine, and some of his children may have been born there.

When the Division of Cattle was made 1 June 1627, (new style), only forty-two of the original group of ninety-nine people who reached Plymouth in the *Mayflower* were still living there. All of the members of each family were listed in the records, including John and Elizabeth Howland, who now had two children, Desire and John, Jr.¹⁶ Eight more children were born to them in the ensuing years, whom they named Hope, Elizabeth, Lydia, Hannah, Joseph, Jabez, Ruth and Isaac.¹⁷

In 1633 John Howland was made a freeman of Plymouth. During his lifetime he was appointed or elected to many public offices. In 1641, 1645, 1647 and 1648 he represented Plymouth at the General Court. In August 1643 he and his son, John, Jr., were listed among the men in Plymouth, aged 16 to 60, who were able to bear arms. In 1641 and 1644, and from 1647 to 1651, John Howland was one of the assessors of Plymouth. In 1650 he was a surveyor of highways. In 1652 and 1659, and from 1661 to 1668, and again in 1670, he was a Deputy to the General Court. In 1655 and 1666 he was a selectman in Plymouth.¹⁸

In 1639 the Old Comers were given a choice of several additional plantations for themselves and their heirs, around Yarmouth, Dartmouth and Rehoboth. Part of the land which John Howland chose was in Yarmouth, out on Cape Cod, where his son, John, Jr., and daughters, Desire (Howland) Gorham and Hope (Howland) Chipman, settled. It was also in the early part of 1639 that John paid £82 for John Jenny's land and dwelling house at Rocky Nook, now in Kingston but then part of Plymouth, which had been built in 1628. And there he lived with his family for the rest of his life.¹⁹

John Howland also owned a tract of land in Marshfield. Among the deeds that have survived the vicissitudes of time is one that settled an argument between John Howland, Sr., Thomas Bourne and John Dingley, concerning the boundaries of a "parcel" of marsh meadow there. It was agreed that "the line or Range shall begin att the beach next the sea upon a west line sett by a compas to a homacke in the marsh where there lves an Old Ceader tree there being noe other nor no more trees next to the great lland but that onely And from the aforesaid west line to the Basse creek To which agreement all the aforesaid parties freely assented unto as aforesaid; alsoe that this agreement bee upon Record both att Marshfield and the court booke att Plymouth to avoid all further Diference for time to Come about the prmises; in witness whereof we the said John Howland senir: Thomas Bourne and John Dingley have put to our hands this fourth of May 1655." This document was signed in the presence of Myles Standish and recorded in 1656.²⁰

The following year, on 5 March 1657, John Howland exchanged land in Marshfield for a "farme of land" in the Township of Barnstable owned by Christopher Winter, described as "the Govrs farmes," since it had belonged to Governor Bradford. It contained "fourscore and ten acres of upland according to the bounds be it more or less and ten acres of meddow . . . lying next unto the land of William Crocker." The exchange was acknowledged by Mr. John Howland and Christopher Winter in Plymouth.²¹ The ownership of this land was confirmed by deed to John Howland, Jr., 10 January 1667/8, when John, Sr., made a gift to him of "upland and meadows at Barnstable being late in possession of John Howland, Jr."²²

John Howland, Sr., died in Rocky Nook 23 February 1672/3. In his will dated 29 May 1672, John mentioned his beloved wife, Elizabeth, and his children, named as John, called "eldest son," Jabez, Isacke, and Joseph, and his married daughters, Desire Gorum (*sic*), Hope Chipman, Elizabeth Dickinson, Lydia Browne, Hannah Bosworth and Ruth Cushman. John Howland also mentioned his grandchild, Elizabeth Howland, "daughter of son John." The inventory of his estate included his dwelling house in Rocky Nook, meadow at the Jones River, half of a house and meadow in

Colchester, a meadow near the Jones River bridge in Duxborrow, a house and land in Middlebury, and land near Nemassakett Pond. Also listed among his possessions were "one great Bible and Annotations on the five books of Moses," as well as "Mr. Tindall's workes, Mr. Wilson's workes and seven more books."²³

John's widow, Elizabeth, died in Swansea, 21/31 December 1687, at 80 years of age, in the home of her daughter, Lydia Browne. Three of her daughters Desire Gorham, Hope Chipman and Ruth Cushman had already died, leaving heirs. In her will dated 17 December 1686, Elizabeth Howland named her sons, John, Jabez, Joseph and Isaac, her son-in-law James Browne, her surviving daughters Lydia Browne, Elizabeth Dickason (*sic*), and Hannah Bosworth, her granddaughters Elizabeth Bursley, Dorothy Browne and Desire Cushman, and her grandsons Nathaniel Howland and James and Jabez Browne. She charged her children to "walke in ye Fear of ye Lord, and in love and peace toward each other."²⁴

Children (Howland), first three probably born in Plymouth, Mass., next three possibly born in Maine, last four born in Rocky Nook, now Kingston, Mass.:²⁵

- +1 i. Desire², born probably in 1625.
- ii. John, born 24, 2, 1627 [24 April 1627].
- iii. Hope, born 30 August 1629.
- iv. Elizabeth, born about 1631.
- v. Lydia, born about 1633.
- vi. Hannah, born about 1637.
- vii. Joseph, born about 1640.
- viii. Jabez, born about 1644.
- ix. Ruth, born about 1646.
- x. Isaac, born 15 November 1649.

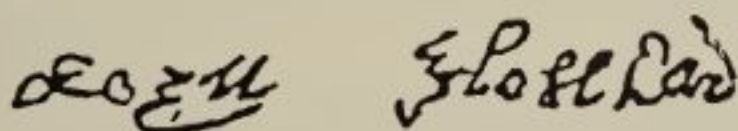
REFERENCES

1. *Mayflower Descendant*, [hereafter *MD*] 1:9; Franklyn Howland, *History of Arthur, Henry and John Howland and Their Descendants* (New Bedford, Mass. 1885), 315.
2. "English Research," *The Howland Quarterly* (January-April 1964) 28:6-7, and "Fenstanton," (July 1968) 32:2-4, include a brother, Simon, in this family, but Simon Howland is called "nephew" in Humphrey Howland's will as stated in "The Will of Humphrey Howland," (July 1964) 28:2-3.
3. *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* [hereafter *NGSQ*] (June 1983) 71:84; (June 1987) 75:105.
4. George F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers* (NY 1945), 443.
5. William Bradford, *History of Plimoth Plantation* (Boston 1898), 92-93.
6. *Ibid.*, 121-22.
7. Willison, 443.
8. *MD* 1:11-14; Robert Leigh Ward, "English Ancestry of Seven Mayflower Passengers," *The American Genealogist* [hereafter *TAG*] (Oct. 1976) 52:203.
9. *MD* 1:227-28; *Mayflower Quarterly* [hereafter *MQ*] (Feb. and May 1974) 40:8-13, 55-62.
10. Franklyn Howland, 321-22.
11. Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, "The Pilgrims and Other English in Leiden Records: Some New Pilgrim Documents," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* [hereafter *NEHGR*] (July 1989) 143:209.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Bangs, "Jonathan Brewster in Leiden Documents," *MQ* (Feb. 1986) 52:13.
14. *NEHGR* (July 1989) 143:209.
15. Franklyn Howland,

317-18; Bradford, 278, 280, 452-56, 478-79; Willison, 263, 278, 286-88; *MQ* (May 1981) 47:57-65. 16. *MD* 1:148-54. 17. *Ibid.* 2:70-77. 18. Franklyn Howland, 16-17. 19. *HQ* (July 1966) 30:4:4-6. 20. *MD* 10:72-73. 21. *Ibid.* 12:81-82. 22. *HQ* (July 1966) 30:6. 23. *MD* 2:70-77; Plymouth Colony Wills and Inventories 3:1:49-54 (John Howland). 24. *MD* 3:54-57; Bristol Co. Prob. 1:13-14 (Elizabeth Howland). 25. *MD* 2:70-77; 3:54-57; 10:66 where the date of John's birth, as given in Judge Sewall's Diary in "old style" (before September 1752), is incorrectly interpreted as 24 February 1627.

John Howland's Signature

John Howland's signature has been reproduced in several books published since 1849. All of the signatures are similar in appearance and appear to have been copied from an earlier, unidentified source. The original document has never been located.



The signature reproduced here was found in Thomas Weston's *History of Middleboro*, page 589, which was published in New York in 1906 and reprinted in Taunton, Mass., in 1975. A similar signature was used by Justin Winsor in his *History of Duxbury*, page 63, published in Boston in 1849. Winsor used it again in his *Narratives and Critical History of America* (3:268), published in 1884. It is to be hoped that the original document may still be hidden away in an archive or historical museum, or in a private collection, and will eventually be recognized and identified.