

Will of William Bradford**BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:**

The early years of Bradford's life are described by Cotton Mather in his book *Magnalia Christi Americana* first published in 1702:

Among those Devout People was our William Bradford, who was Born Anno 1588. in an obscure Village call'd Austerfield, where the People were as unacquainted with the Bible, as the Jews do seem to have been with part of it in the Days of Josiah; a most Ignorant and Licentious People, and like unto their Priest. Here, and in some other Places, he had a Comfortable Inheritance left him of his Honest Parents, who died while he was yet a Child. and cast him on the Education, first of his Grand Parents, and then of his Uncles, who devoted him, like his Ancestors, unto the Affairs of Husbandry. Soon and long Sickness kept him, as he would afterwards thankfully say, from the Vanities of Youth, and made him the fitter for what he was afterwards to undergo. When he was about a Dozen Years Old, the Reading of the Scriptures began to cause great Impressions upon him; and those Impressions were much assisted and improved, when he came to enjoy Mr. Richard Clifton's Illuminating Ministry, not far from his Abode; he was then also further befriended, by being brought into the Company and Fellowship of such as were then called Professors; though the Young Man that brought him into it, did after become a Prophane and Wicked Apostate. Nor could the Wrath of his Uncles, nor the Scoff of his Neighbours now turn'd upon him, as one of the Puritans, divert him from his Pious Inclinations.

... Having with a great Company of Christians Hired a Ship to Transport them for Holland, the Master perfidiously betrayed them into the Hands of those Persecutors, who Rifled and Ransack'd their Goods, and clapp'd their Persons into Prison at Boston, where they lay for a Month together. But Mr. Bradford being a Young Man of about Eighteen, was dismissed sooner than the rest, so that within a while he had Opportunity with some others to get over to Zealand, through Perils both by Land and Sea not inconsiderable; where he was not long Ashore ere a Viper seized on his Hand, that is, an Officer, who carried him Unto the Magistrates, unto whom an envious Passenger had accused him as having fled out of England. When the Magistrates understood the True Cause of his coming thither, they were well satisfied with him; and so he repaired joyfully unto his Brethren at Amsterdam, where the Difficulties to which he afterwards stooped in Learning and Serving of a Frenchman at the Working of Silks, were abundantly Compensated by the Delight wherewith he sat under the Shadow of our Lord in his purely dispensed Ordinances. At the end of Two Years, he did, being of Age to do it, convert his Estate in England into Money; but Setting up for himself, he found some of his Designs by the Providence of God frowned upon, which he judged a Correction bestowed by God upon him for certain Decays of Internal Piety, whereinto he had fallen; the Consumption of his Estate he thought came to prevent a Consumption in his Virtue. But after he had resided in Holland about half a Score Years, he was one of those who bore a part in that Hazardous and Generous Enterprize of removing into New England, with part of the English Church at Leyden, where at their first Landing, his dearest Consort accidentally falling Overboard, was drowned in the Harbour; and the rest of his Days were spent in the Services, and the Temptations, of that American Wilderness.

William Bradford came on the *Mayflower* with his wife Dorothy (May), leaving son John behind in Holland. Dorothy fell off the *Mayflower* and drowned on 7 December 1620, when it was anchored in Provincetown Harbor.

This was an *accidental* drowning. The story of the suicide, affair with Captain Chrostopher Jones, etc. comes from a fictional "soap opera" story published in a national women's magazine in 1869--a story published as truth by the author, based on "family stories", but which the author later admitted was an invention of her own imagination. For further information on this, see *Mayflower Descendant* 29:97-102 , and especially 31:105.

After the death of John Carver in April 1621, Bradford was elected governor of the Plymouth Colony, and continued in that capacity nearly all his life. In 1623 he married Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, widow of Edward Southworth. A description of the marriage is found in a letter written by a visitor to Plymouth Colony, Emmanuel Altham, in 1623:

Upon the occasion of the Governor's marriage, since I came, Massasoit was sent for to the wedding, where came with him his wife, the queen, although he hath five wives. With him came four other kings and about six score men with their bows and arrows--where, when they came to our town, we saluted them with the shooting off of many muskets