



FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 014

Name: Tilley, Elizabeth

Dates: (1607-1686)

Colonial Society: MA

Date added to ROA: 6-18-2012

Service: Mayflower Passenger, 1620

Authority: History of Plimoth Plantation, 532, 534

Biography:

Elizabeth Tilley was born in August 1607 in Henlow, Bedfordshire, England, to John Tilley and Joan (Hurst) Tilley and baptized on August 30, 1607, at St. Mary's Church in Henlow. The Tilley family was part of the English Separatist movement, which sought religious freedom from the Church of England. They became associated with the Pilgrims, who aimed to establish a new settlement in the Americas.

At the age of 13, Elizabeth embarked on the *Mayflower* with her parents, siblings and uncle, Edward Tilley, and his wife Ann. Although Elizabeth was her parent's youngest child, she appears to be the only one who survived the voyage. The *Mayflower* sailed in September 1620 and arrived in what would become Plymouth, Massachusetts in December 1620.

During the first harsh winter in Plymouth, Elizabeth's parents died leaving her orphaned by the spring of 1621 with no immediate family to care for her. She was taken in by John Carver, the colony's first governor, and his wife Katherine. Tragedy struck quickly again when both the Carvers died the next year. Elizabeth then became part of the John Howland household. John was a fellow *Mayflower* passenger and indentured servant to the Carvers. In 1623/4, Elizabeth married John Howland and became an integral part of the colony's development.

Elizabeth and John received land grants and were prominent members of Plymouth Colony. They had ten children together, all of whom survived to adulthood—an uncommon achievement for the day. Their descendants include some of the most well-known figures in American history, including four U. S. Presidents.

John Howland died on February 23, 1672/73. Elizabeth lived for another 14 years, dying on December 21, 1687, at the age of 80. She was buried in Swansea, Massachusetts (now East Providence, Rhode Island).