

How lone Mayflower traveller protected his family in Plymouth Colony

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With the odds firmly stacked against them, the passengers and crew aboard the Mayflower eventually reached Cape Cod after 66 long and perilous days at sea.

Among them was Richard Warren, who boarded the ship alone on 16 September, 1620 and went on to play an important role in establishing Plymouth Colony.

Warren was married with five children at that time, but left his family behind in England to wait until the Pilgrims had settled in America.

That decision proved to be extremely wise as disease, freezing weather and other dangers hit the group hard until fewer than half of the passengers and crew remained.

Three years later, when Warren finally deemed the conditions suitable, he brought his family over on the ship, Anne.

The fact that all of Warren's children subsequently survived into adulthood is, considering the times, hugely notable in itself - and a huge testament to his resolve and personal sacrifice.



Who was Richard Warren?

Richard Warren is believed to have been born in the late 1570s / early 1580s in Hertfordshire, where he later married Elizabeth Walker (born 1583) at Great Amwell in 1610.

Warren's parentage and apparent birthplace are uncertain, but there is a Warren family who may have been of that ancestry living in the vicinity of Therfield in Hertfordshire.

During their time in England the couple had five daughters, Mary, Ann, Sarah, Elizabeth and Abigail - who all remained behind in England when their father sailed to North America.

Warren was one of the few Merchant Venture financial backers who signed on to make the Mayflower voyage as a member of the Leiden contingent.

In William Bradford's recollection of that time, he noted: "Mr Richard Warren, but his wife and children were lefte (sic) behind, and came afterwards."



Time in Plymouth Colony

As one of the 41 "true" Pilgrims who signed the [Mayflower Compact](#), Richard Warren participated in some of the early expeditions of Cape Cod to find a place for Plymouth Colony to start building.

He sent for his family in England after the Pilgrims' settlement had been established, and they joined him in 1623 on the ship Anne.

The Warrens had two more children - both boys, named Nathaniel (born 1624) and Joseph (1626).

Warren received two acres of land in the Division of Land in 1623, and four years later his family shared in the Division of Cattle - receiving several animals that had arrived on the ship Jacob, apparently in 1625.

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Richard Warren's death and legacy

The only record of Richard Warren's death can be found in Nathaniel Morton's 1669 book titled 'New England's Memorial', in which he wrote: "This year (1628) died Mr Richard Warren, who... was an useful instrument and during his life bare a deep share in the difficulties and troubles of the first settlement of the Plantation of New Plymouth."

He was buried at Burial Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts - the same site as several other notable Pilgrims including William Bradford and William Brewster.

Warren's wife outlived him by some 45 years and died on 2 October, 1673, before also being laid to rest on Burial Hill.

The couple's seven children all survived into adulthood, married, and created large families. This means that Richard Warren is one of the most common passengers of the Mayflower from whom to be descended.

Some of his most notable descendants include former US Presidents Ulysses S Grant and Franklin D Roosevelt, astronaut Alan Shepard Jnr, and pop star Taylor Swift.