

## GEORGE MORTON of PLYMOUTH COLONY

By John K. Alien

George Morton was one of the founders of the colony of New Plymouth in Massachusetts, having been of the company of Puritans who left England in the early part of the seventeenth century, found a brief asylum in Holland, and came to America to establish a Christian state. The causes leading to the settlement of Plymouth are so well set forth by Nathaniel Morton, a son of George Morton in "New England's Memorial," that his statement may well introduce this record as part of the family which thus came to be found in America.

"In the year 1602 divers Godly Christians of our English nation, to the North of England, being studies of reformation, and therefore not only witnessing against human inventions, and additions to the worship of God, but minding most the positive and practical part of divine institutions, they entered into covenant to walk with God, and one with another, in the enjoyment of the ordinances of God, according to the primitive pattern of the word of God. But finding by experience they could not peaceably enjoy their own liberty in their native county, without offenses to others, that were differently minded, they took up thoughts of removing themselves and their families into the Netherlands, which accordingly they endeavored to accomplish, but met with great hindrance; yet after some time, the good hand of God removing obstructions, thus they obtained their desires; arriving in Holland, they settled themselves in the city of Ley-den in the year or 1610, and there they continued divers years in a comfortable condition, enjoying much sweet society and spiritual comfort in the ways of God, living peacefully among themselves, and being courteously entertained and lovingly respected by the Dutch, among whom they were strangers, having for their pastor, Mr. John Robinson, a man of learned, polished and modest spirit, pious and studying the truth, largely accomplished with suitable gifts and qualifications to be the shepherd over his flock of Christ; having also a fellow helper with him in the eldership, Mr. William Brewster, a man of approved piety, gravity and lategrity very eminently furnished with gifts suitable to such an office."

This simple description of the beginning of momentous movement gives but a faint hint of the severity of the conflict for religious freedom which began at the little village of Scrooby. (He is from Austerfield, the same village in the North of England from which came William Bradford the Governor of Plymouth Colony.) There in the drawing room of William Brewster at Scrooby Manor, was formed that independent congregational church, under the leadership of John Robinson, numbering among its members the grave young man, William Bradford, later to become a brother-in-law of George Morton, and for some thirty years the governor of the colony, both assisted in establishing. Among those members is a quite possible to imagine George Morton, a thoughtful young man scarcely more than twenty, but of excellent education and great strength of purpose. No list of the members of this church exists nor are the names know of all those self-exiled Englishmen, who succeeded in escaping to Holland in 1610, but two years later it is known that George Morton was in their number, as in the Dutch record of his marriage is as follows:

First known record of George Morton: "George Morton, merchant from York in England, his brother, and Roger Wilson, his acquaintance, with Juliana Carpenter, maid from Bath in England, accompanied by Alexander Carpenter, her father, and Alice Carpenter, her sister, and Anna Robinson, her acquaintance. The banns were published Jul 6-16, 1612 and the Marriage took place 23 July- 2 Aug 1612."\* An interesting story is told of the marriage of William Bradford to Alice Carpenter the sister of Juliana Carpenter Morton wife of George Morton. An early attachment existed between Mr. Bradford and Alice and their marriage was prevented by her parents, on account of his inferior circumstances and rank. She afterwards married Sir Edwards Southworth. William Bradford, being now a widower (his first wife, whose maiden name was Dorothy May, having drowned December 7, 1820, by accidently falling from the deck of the Mayflower into \*

An interesting story is told of the marriage of William Bradford to Alice Carpenter the sister of Juliana Carpenter Morton wife of George Morton. An early attachment existed between Mr. Bradford and Alice and

their marriage was prevented by her parents, on account of his inferior circumstances and rank. She afterwards married Sir Edwards Southworth. William Bradford, being now a widower (his first wife, whose maiden name was Dorothy May, having drowned December 7, 1620, by accidentally falling from the deck of the Mayflower into the sea) sent letters to England, made overtures to Lady Southworth, who was then a widow. She accepted the proposal, and with generous resolution, she embarked (on the ship Ann) in 1623 to meet her intended partner, knowing that he could not well leave his responsible station in the new settlement.

(With her on the Anne were Mr. & Mrs. George Morton and their children. Mrs. Morton, who was Juliana Carpenter being Mrs. Southworth's sister.)

Conjecture as to his origins: This is the first positive record of him. Back of this he has not been traced certainly. But there was a Morton family, ancient and honorable, in Haworth, adjoining Bawtry and Austerfield, the Pilgrim region. It owned a large estate. In this family there grew up a contemporary of William Bradford, who lived a mile or two away, a George Morton. He is recorded.

About the time of the departure of the Pilgrims, he disappears. Some four years later a George Morton, of about corresponding age, and the progenitor of the Morton family in America turns up among the Pilgrims in Leyden. The inference is natural that the two George Morton's are identical, and that the Haworth George Morton had become a Puritan and a Separatist, had left Haworth about 1607 or 1608, had passed a part or the whole of the interval at York, and by 1612 had joined an old neighbors in Leyden. That a member of such family should become a merchant - if he were at York as well as Leyden, which the Leyden record may imply - is accounted for by the fact that his own family was intensely Roman Catholic and would have been almost certain to disinherit him." Morton Dexter in private letters to the author.

The vessels parted company at sea; the ANN arrived the latter part of June, and the LITTLE JAMES some week or ten days later; part of the number were the wives and children of persons already in the Colony The ship Anne arrived in Plymouth in July, 1623 accompanied by the Little James, bringing new settlers along with many of the wives and children that had been left behind in Leiden when the Mayflower departed in 1620. EMIGRANT ANCESTORS, John Camden Hotten, 1874.

The Morton Farm in England. The following quotation is from an article entitled, "In and About Scrooby," by Morton Dexter, published in "The Mayflower Descendants" Vol. 11, pp. 194-5. "The long mile northwest from the Crown Inn (Bawtry) and in Haworth Parish lies the large Martin Farm, the remainder of the large estate once owned by the Morton family, an ancient and honorable house which has furnished, in its descendants, at least one governor and one chief-justice of the supreme Court of Massachusetts.

Of interest is the old Morton Chapel, which, although close to the house of Bawtry really is just over the line of Haworth. Three hundred years or more ago the Motions, then Roman Catholic, built and endowed this Chapel and also just across the road two or three cottages as refuge for poor old women. This was also carried on by their Protestant successors.

The second reference to George Morton which we find is in the Dutch record of the X. marriage in Leyden, December 15-25, 1612 of Edward Pickering "merchant from London" with "Maycken Stuws," with George Morton as witness.

George Morton became an agent for the Pilgrims and published "Mort's Relations," a compilation from the journals of Bradford and Winslow. In 1623 he came to Plymouth in the "Anne" and he died in 1624. (William Bradford was like a father to many of his children)

The Authorship of "Mort's Relations" (The whole was intended, at least in part, to attract new settlers, and thus

emphasizes the peaceful relations with the Indians, the availability of food, and the pleasant [p.220] living conditions, though it also relates enough of the new colonists' sufferings and hardships to indicate that it is an honest history.)

George Morton is credited with having been the publisher in London of "Of Milford, Worcester, Massachusetts a volume of great interest because it was the first publication of information about the adventure of the Pilgrims. This volume was published under the name of "G. Mourt." and as to the identification of "G. Mourt" with George Morton, I quote the late Rev. Henry Martyn Dexter as follows:

*1. He had been formerly associated with the writers of these journals-Bradford and Winslow—to the degree that he could speak of them as "my both known and faithful friends."*

*2. He had always desired and was now intending soon to emigrate in person to join the company in New-Plymouth; inasmuch as he says "Myselfe then much desired and shortly hope to effect if the Lord will, the putting to of my shoulder in this hope full business."*

*3.—He had been intrusted with public employment in their behalf. He seemed to have been in London as an agent for them, while those negotiations were going on with Weston and others which resulted in the sailing of the Mayflower. He himself sailed with his family for New Plymouth in the Ann about the last of April in the following year. He was the only G.M. of whom these things were true.*

Mourt's Relation or Journal of the Plantation at Plymouth was also published in 1865. Boston. Two copies of the original edition of "Mourt's Relations" are in the Lenox Library in New York.

George came to Plymouth in the ship "Anne" during the latter part of July in the year of 1623. On the arrival of Mr. Morton, Nathaniel Morton his eldest son, say's in "New England Memorial" "About fourteen days after (the fast held about the middle of July) came in the ship Ann, whereof Mr. William Pierce was master. Two of the principal passengers that came in this ship were Mr. Hatherly and Mr. George Morton. Mr. Morton was a pious, gracious servant of God and very faithful in whatsoever publick employment he was betruſted withal, and an unfeigned well-wisher, and according to his sphere and condition a suitable promoter of the common good and growth of the plantation of New Plymouth; labouring to still the discontents that sometimes would arise amongst some spirits, by occasion of the difficulties of these new beginnings; but it pleased God to put a period to his days soon after his arrival in New England, not surviving a full year after his coming ashore. With much comfort and peace he fell asleep in the Lord, in the month of June, Anno. 1624."

Thomas Morton of Plymouth, Mass, writing March 9, 1807, "Partly from record and partly from tradition," says (in a manuscript owned by Marcus Morton, Esq. of Boston, Mass.) "Mr. George Morton attempted to come over before, and having obtained near half the passage the ship proved leaky and returned to England again." If this be a fact, George Morton was one of the "part of the company" which was returned to London on the "Speedwell" after putting in at Plymouth. (See "New England Memorial", Nathaniel Morton, Edition of 1826 p. 32.)

Death of George Morton Concerning the death of George Morton, Felt had this to say in his "Ecclesiastical History of New England"; "In June the colonists met with a great loss in the death of Geo. Morton, an exemplar Christian and a pillar of church and society\*\*\* Though his tarry here is short his memorial on high is everlasting."

In the division of land among those in the "Ann" it is recorded that George Morton and Experience Mitchell received eight acres abutting "against the swamps and Reed Ponde." In the same location Thomas Morton Jr. was allotted one acre.

After Mr. Morton's death, his widow married Manassah Kempton. She died February 19-29, 1665-6, age 81, and is mentioned in the Plymouth town records as a faithful servant of God. Mr. Kempton died January 14, 1662-3.

Children of George Morton:

Nathaniel born in Leyden, Holland about 1613

Patience born at Leyden, Holland 1615

John born at Leyden, Holland, 1616

Sarah born at Leyden, Holland 1618

Ephraim born 1623, it is said born on the "Anne" on passage to New England.

Nathaniel came to New England with his father in 1623 on the "Anne"; upon the death of his father he was adopted by Governor William Bradford, whose second wife Alice was Mrs. George Morion's sister. The benevolent man gave his nephew the care by which the early death of his father was denied and he received an education which fitted him for the great work he afterwards accomplished for the colonies.

John and Ephraim were probably also adopted by William Bradford upon the death of their father.