



The Allerton Family Journal

The Newsletter of the
Pilgrim Isaac Allerton Society
www.isaacallerton.com

Governor's Message:

As we enter into the third year of our society, we have much to be proud of. Thanks to our talented board members, Lisa Pennington and Linda Hart, we have our newsletter, "The Allerton Family Journal" and website, www.isaacallerton.org.

Linda also put the finishing touches on our membership certificate which all members have now received.

Treasurer Judy Needham has everything in place so that after our first annual meeting in September when we ratify our bylaws and elect our officers, she will apply for formal recognition as a 501c3 organization.

Plans for our first meeting are in place and details will be found elsewhere in this journal. I hope our members and friends will make plans to visit Plymouth during the time of the General Congress (Sept. 6-10) and join us on Saturday, September 6.

See you in Plymouth!

Sincerely,

Susan E. Roser

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First Annual Meeting of the Pilgrim Isaac Allerton Society

The Society will hold its Inaugural Meeting and Banquet for members and friends at the Radisson Hotel in Plymouth on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2014. We will have a Reception with a cash bar at 6:00 PM, followed by a dinner meeting at 6:45 PM.

Our special guest speaker will be none other than Isaac Allerton himself! He is otherwise known as Richard Pickering,, Deputy Director of Pilgrim Plantation, and a character actor there. We will also elect officers and approve bylaws.

Cost is \$40 per person. Make reservations by Aug. 20 and send to Judy Needham, 9 River Rd., Yarmouth, MA 02664-3139. Please advise if you need a special menu. For details, visit www.isaacallerton.org or email Judy at judyneedham@comcast.net. We hope to see you all there!

"People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors."

— Edmund Burke

Did Pilgrim Women Save Plymouth Colony?

By Lisa Pennington

Historical archeologist Lindsay Ann Randall wrote that “history’s most underrated participants in the colonization of New England were women and the cattle that were brought to the New World.” Admittedly, that is not what most people think of when they study the Mayflower Compact or the First Thanksgiving.

We forget that the Pilgrims were forced to endure difficult conditions in an unfamiliar landscape for years before their colony stabilized. Although the death toll slowed after the first winter, the Starving Time continued for another three years due to the lack of food and because the seeds they brought with them failed to thrive. Conditions were so bad, that William Bradford had to reduce the colonists to half-rations when new colonists arrived in 1621 and 1623 without adequate provisions.

On September 8, 1623, Bradford and Isaac Allerton wrote to the Merchant Adventurers in London imploring them to send goats and cattle in order “to make victuals both more plentiful and comfortable” and stating that “the Colony will never be in good estate till they have some.” The London investors agreed, and finally sent over one bull and three heifers in 1624 with Edward Winslow. From that time forward, the Starving Time came to an end.

Why would the addition of cattle make such a difference?



Redware milk pans and jars found at the Allerton farm



As the Pilgrims knew, the addition of milk, cheese and butter was so important to the diet of English colonists that they were called “white meat.” The concentrated calories, proteins, calcium and fats were life sustaining, and particularly important for preserving the lives of growing children.

Most of the Pilgrims came from yeoman farming backgrounds and knew how to effectively use dairy cows. Dairying was always “women’s work,” and it was hard, labor-intensive and exhausting. The Colony women would have worked from dawn to dusk taking care of their cattle.

By 1627, the colonists had sufficient cattle to actually divide them by family group. The Allertons, Isaac’s sisters’ family and two single men were charged with taking care of the “Great Black Cow,” one steer and two she-goats. The women and girls worked hard to ensure that they got the most out of their little herd of cattle.

They milked the cows and goats twice a day, then poured the milk into clean shallow redware pans to separate into cream. After two to five days, the cream was strained through a cloth and churned with a bowl and spoon. Once the butter had formed, it was cleaned with water and worked by hand to remove the buttermilk. The butter was then potted and stored for months at a time.

The cheese-making process was even more complicated and laborious. It involved heating the milk, inserting a two-inch piece of rennet (calf intestine), and waiting until curds were formed. The whey was then poured out and the curds cut with knives, then transferred to a ceramic press. A plunger was used to press down the curds which remained for two to three days. After the cheese was removed, it was covered with butter, left in a cheese-cloth and stored in a cool place.

“Mr. Isaac Allerton hath given leave to all other creditors to be fully discharged before he receives anything of his particular debts to himself, desiring rather to lose all than other men should lose any.” — *Hearing on Estate of Godbert Godbertson, 2 December 1633*

Pilgrim Isaac Allerton Society Board Nominees

It's time again to elect new officers for the next three-year term. The current officers have agreed to stay on for one more three-year term in order to provide continuity for our Society.

Voting will take place in September at our first annual meeting in Plymouth.

Governor: Susan Roser

Deputy Governor: Lisa Pennington

Secretary: Linda Hart

Treasurer: Judy Needham

Historian: Emily Palmer

Captain: David Hess

Elder: Ken Carter

Assistant: Judy Elfring

If you have any ideas for articles or have any suggested announcements, please contact Lisa Pennington, at Lpennington@bakerlaw.com.

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Breeding the cows, caring for, weaning, and gelding calves who were to become oxen were all additional duties that fell to the Colony's women. Women were also in charge of the dairy houses or cellars where the dairy products were kept cool. Young girls, such as Remember and Mary Allerton, were expected to assist their step-mother and aunt and to learn the dairying process so they could start their own successful dairy once they were married.

The cattle proved so successful, that the colonists needed more grass and land in which to graze their growing herds. Bradford reported that the introduction of cattle led to the colonists requesting farms so they could expand their dairying. In 1629, Bradford reluctantly agreed to distribute land to each family so they could establish their own farms. The colony women were so successful that Bradford despaired that the cattle profits had led to the dispersal of Plymouth village and would surely provoke "the Lord's displeasure against them."

The Allertons established a farm on the Jones River in what is now Kingston and primarily used it for dairying. At the Allerton farm, over 60% of all the artifacts discovered (45 different vessels) were ceramic milk pans, jars and pots used in the dairying process. Clearly, Fear Allerton and step-daughters Remember and Mary worked hard at their dairying operation.

New colonists came in 1630 to Boston with the Winthrop fleet and kept coming in huge numbers for a decade. The Plymouth farmers now had a market for their surplus, and busily sold butter, cheese and extra cattle to Bostonians at very profitable prices.

The colonists enjoyed a huge price boom throughout the 1630s. Cattle were selling for three times their price in England. Unfortunately, this booming market crashed in 1641 when immigration slowed because of the Puritan victory in the English Civil War. Cattle and dairy prices fell almost overnight. In May, 1641, Allerton donated one of his cows to reduce the Colony debt to the Merchant Adventurers. Originally valued at 25 pounds, the cow was eventually sold for only 4 pounds, 15 shillings.

Even though prices fell, cattle continued to play an important role in the Pilgrims' diet and economic stability. Without them, the Separatist experiment in the wilderness of New England might have failed, and many of us would not be here today!

"Our history begins before we are born. We represent the influences of our past, and our ancestors live in us."

— James Nasmyth

The 1627 Division of Cattle

The 1627 Cattle Distribution is a prized document for Plymouth historians and genealogists because it acts as a snapshot census for one day in May, 1627. The list was drawn up to equally divide the responsibility for taking care of the Colony's meager store of cattle and goats. The divisions were made by family groups of 13, and included single men who had been assigned to live with each family.

But for this census, we would not know that Isaac and Fear Allerton had a baby girl named Sarah. This list also helps us estimate that their marriage probably occurred in 1626. Sadly, Sarah Allerton disappeared from all later records. It is possible that she perished in the 1633-34 sickness that also claimed her mother, aunt and uncle.

Godbert Godbertson, listed in the Allerton group, was the third husband of Isaac Allerton's sister, Sarah. Her second husband, Degory Priest, came on the Mayflower with Isaac, but did not survive the first winter, dying on Jan. 1, 1621.

Sarah married Godbertson on November 13, 1621 in Leiden, and they came to Plymouth on the *Anne* with their son Samuel and her daughters Mary (Marah) and Sarah Priest. When Sarah and Godbert died in 1633, Isaac took care of his nieces and even advanced large sums of money to their struggling husbands in later years. Samuel Godbertson was born about 1622 in Leiden, grew up, married, and had one son. He later lived in Dartmouth.

Edward Bumpas was a single man who arrived on the *Fortune* in 1621. He later married and had 12 children in Marshfield. He struggled financially and later received a cow from Marshfield's stock for the poor in 1656.

John Crackston came with his father, John Crackston, Sr., on the *Mayflower* when he was about 18. Bradford reported that the father died the first winter. John Crackston, Jr. lived with the Allertons until the winter of 1628. Bradford wrote that Crackston "having lost him selfe in the wodes, his feet became frozen, which put him into a feavor, of which he dyed."



"The Great Black Cow" assigned to the Allerton family

Excerpt from the Division of Cattle:

"...2. The second lot fell to Mr. Isaac Allerton and his company joined to him his wife Fear Allerton

3. Bartholomew Allerton
4. Remember Allerton
5. Mary Allerton
6. Sarah Allerton
7. Godbert Godbertson
8. Sarah Godbertson
9. Samuel Godbertson
10. Mary Priest
11. Sarah Priest
12. Edward Bumpass
13. John Crackston

To this lot fell the Great Black cow came in the *Anne* to which they must keep the lesser of the two steers, and two she goats....

1627, May the 22. It was farther agreed at the same Court:

That if any of the cattle should by accident miscarry or be lost or hurt: that the same should be taken knowledge of by indifferent men: and judged whether the loss came by the negligence or default of those betrusted and if they were found faulty, that then such should be forced to make satisfaction for the companies, as also their partners damage."

"Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced...."

—William Bradford