

Edward Winslow Biography

Edward Winslow

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Biography

Edward Winslow (1595-1655) was a Pilgrim leader in colonial America. He conducted Plymouth's diplomatic business on both sides of the Atlantic and wrote histories of the colony.

The son of a salt dealer, Edward Winslow received a classical education and later became a printer's apprentice in London. Probably employed by William Brewster, he moved to Leiden, Holland, in 1617. Once associated with the Pilgrims there, he became an important supporter and invaluable servant.

Winslow sailed to America with the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* and from the first bore the Pilgrims' diplomatic responsibilities. He attended to Indian relations and was the colony's major trade representative. He went to the Maine coast to buy provisions from fishing ships and was active in the creation and defense of furtrading posts. He also served three terms as Plymouth's governor.

However, it was as Plymouth's agent in England that Winslow performed his greatest service. He went to England in 1623 to sell a supply of boards and furs and to report to the colony's investors. He returned to Plymouth the next year with a patent for a fishing center at Cape Ann and with three heifers and a bull, the beginnings of Plymouth's herd. In 1630 he replaced the questionable Isaac Allerton as Plymouth's agent to the London investors and in 1634 defended Plymouth's jurisdiction over its Maine trading fort. During the latter visit Winslow proposed that New England create a united military front against the encroachments of the Dutch and French. The proposal aroused political opposition, and he was imprisoned for 4 months for being a Separatist in religion. He undertook his last journey to England in 1646 as the agent of both Massachusetts and Plymouth to defend them from the attacks of their English enemies, notably Robert Childe and Samuell Gorton.

Winslow did not return to Plymouth but instead joined Oliver Cromwell's government in England. He was appointed one of the three joint commanders of the expedition that captured Jamaica in 1655, and he died on the return voyage. His departure from Plymouth and his death were sad losses for the colony.

Winslow wrote a number of pamphlets and tracts recording Plymouth's early history. *Mourt's Relation*, of which he was coauthor, and his *Good Newes from New England* were Plymouth's first authoritative histories.