

The Pilgrim Legacy



November 20, 2023
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Notes from the Governor

Dianna Saario

This will be our last newsletter for the year 2023, our new slate of Officers for 2024 (Executive Committee) were installed at our last meeting, November 4, 2023 at the Sunnyside Country Club in Fresno. Governor-Dianna Saario sjvcgovernor@gmail.com; Deputy Governor/Delegate/Co-Colony Membership Chair – Diane Nitta - tndnitta@gmail.com; Chaplin/Co-Colony Membership Chair – Beverly Wyman bevawyman@yahoo.com; Newsletter/Historian - Diane Brueggemann sndnboog@peoplepc.com; Secretary – Mark Storch kh2jx@earthlink.net; Treasurer – Faith Haag 5_haags@sbcglobal.net; and appointed to Executive Committee is the office of Webmaster – Dan Cabe dancabe@pacbell.net

I want to welcome our newly elected SJVC Officers. This is going to be an exciting year for us as we “Celebrate” our 50th year as the San Joaquin Colony of the California State Mayflower Society in 2024. At this point in time, we will celebrate during the month of June 2024. We are looking for members to serve on a “Celebration” Committee. Please contact Diane Nitta – 50th yr. Celebration Committee Chair at tndnitta@gmail.com Ideas are most welcome, please participate. The date is coming quickly, hope to see all of you there.

2024 Officers



(Left) Dan Cabe, Faith Haag, Diane Nitta, Dianna Saario, Beverly Wyman, Diane Brueggemann, (not pictured) Mark Storch

Treasurer's Report: Faith Haag

Beginning account balance on 4/22/2023 was \$4,325.61. After deposits (2) and expenses (4) for the June 3rd luncheon meeting the ending balance 9/29/23 is \$2,856.90.

June Meeting: Diane Nitta

The June 3, 2023, San Joaquin Valley Colony luncheon meeting was held at Sunnyside Country Club, led by Governor Dianna Saario. After the business portion of the meeting, a Remembrance of **John Erb** and **Bonnie Shakespeare** was read. Both were active, long-time members.

A special treat on our agenda was having Jordan Garcia, a John Alden descendant, and winner of one of the California State Mayflower Society Scholarships, read his winning essay. Jordan is the son of member Maryann Garcia and will be attending Cornell University in the fall. What a pleasure and inspiration to hear from the “next generation”!



As announced in the Spring edition of the California Mayflower Quarterly, our program featured two speakers. The first was author, artist, and visual historian, **Karen Rinaldo**, known for her renowned accurate portrayal of “The First Thanksgiving,” (shown at the left) and co-author **Kevin Doyle**, a retired combat veteran, Revolutionary War historian and author. These two talented and dynamic people did not disappoint! Their presentation “On the Road to the Mayflower” took us on a visual tour from Leiden and the tulip fields to The First Thanksgiving, and the Wampanoag Tribe. Photographs had us walking in the footsteps of the Pilgrims along the canals and buildings of Leiden with a journey through historic sites the Pilgrims saw daily. Karen shared “behind the scenes” stories of creating The First Thanksgiving painting, including early sketches, and the in-depth research for credible authenticity. Karen and Kevin recounted the challenges and accomplishments of the 53 survivors of the voyage that shaped the course of Colonial and indigenous history. This presentation was chock full of historical information, great stories and was truly enjoyed by all.

An added feature was the large banner depicting the painting and a reference key which made for a great photo moment as people identified their ancestor(s). In keeping with our program theme, our table décor included tulips, pieces of Quahog shells brought from the beaches of Cape Cod, and a photo of Karen and Kevin with Wampanoag Chief Flying Eagle and his daughters. Everyone received a postcard size print of “The First Thanksgiving” and a few Quahog shell wampum beads. A book signing and group photo followed our meeting adjournment.

Compact Meeting, November 4, 2023

Speaker: Caleb Johnson



At the conclusion of our November 4, 2023, San Joaquin Valley Colony compact meeting the members and guests were delighted to hear from the distinguished guest speaker Caleb Johnson, the author and historian behind

<http://mayflowerhistory.com>

Caleb graduated from Texas Tech University with two majors (History and English) and two minors (Computer Science and Archaeology). He subsequently earned an MBA with an emphasis in IT Management. In November 2020, he was elected as a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists. He has been researching and studying the *Mayflower* passengers for twenty-six years, and has authored and edited a number of books including the 1173-page reference tome, *The Complete Works of the Mayflower Pilgrims* (Vancouver, 2003); *The Mayflower and Her Passengers* (Xlibris, 2005); *William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation* (Xlibris, 2006), *The Brewster Book Manuscript* (Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants, 2019), and his best-selling work--a biography of

Mayflower passenger Stephen Hopkins entitled [Here Shall I Die Ashore](#) (Xlibris, 2007 - now also available in [audiobook form](#)). Several of these books were made available for sale and were signed upon request.

Caleb Johnson presented us with a slideshow that was entertaining and informative. His presentation included original documents, personal photos, and lots of stories. He spoke about his quest and findings of the passengers' life stories before leaving on the Mayflower. More specifically, the passengers known as **the strangers**. He wanted to determine if they were in fact strangers or if they had prior connections to the Pilgrims. The room was captivated by Caleb's extensive knowledge and listened intently as he revealed the connections the strangers, Billington, Browne, Hopkins, Mullins, Martin, Warren, Winslow and more had to the Leiden group. In his research he was able to find the term, 'strangers' written only twice, in Bradford's writings, and that it referred to those passengers who were not members of the *Leiden congregation*. Caleb was able to uncover, at times interpret, that in most instances the strangers were from neighboring separatist churches, had Puritan connections, friendships, or possible familial connections.

Finding leads to our ancestors can be difficult. He suggested that manorial (land) records are useful when church records take you to a dead end. Land records helped in discovering where they lived, moved, who and why land may be transferred or sold, and what connection that may have to other passengers. It was a manorial record of Stephen Hopkins that revealed he signed over his property rights to his widowed mother-in-law before sailing to Jamestown, in 1609. He was not allowed to sign over his property to his wife and children. A bit of history is shown here... wives were not permitted to own property unless they were widowed. (I think all the ladies in the room gasped at this news).

Caleb also debunked the myth that the Mayflower was way off course. Using google maps, he was able to determine that they were impressively only about 50 nautical miles north of their intended destination. Since they landed in the New England territories and not the Virginia colonies, for which they were permitted, they did attempt to travel south, but due to the threat of shipwreck they resolved to settle at Cape Cod. The Mayflower Compact was borne out of this lack of permission to settle in a New England territory.

The SJVC members and guests savored Caleb's visit. His twenty-six years of research was evident.

2024 Scholarship Announcement

The **California Mayflower Society** will be awarding four (4) scholarships to qualified applicants. Eligible applicants shall be high school seniors, who are Mayflower descendants, and will be attending a four-year college or university or two-year community college. To be considered for a Mayflower scholarship, the applicant must provide a valid California Mayflower Society membership number for either the applicant or for a parent, grandparent, or great grandparent who is a living and currently active member of the California Mayflower Society. **All application materials must be received no later than Monday March 1, 2024.**

For more information use the link(s) below:

<https://www.camayflower.org/society-scholarships.html>

or, contact Billie Mitchell Bmitchellcsmd43@gmail.com



First Place:
\$5,500



Second
Place:
\$3,500



Third
Place:
\$2,500



Fourth
Place:
\$1,000

50th Anniversary Celebration

Message from Diane Nitta

As noted in the Governor's message, our next meeting will be the **San Joaquin Valley Colony, California Society of Mayflower Descendants, 50th Anniversary**. SJVC was founded May 19, 1974 with 58 members from Kern, Fresno, Madera, and Merced counties. We are putting together a committee to plan a special celebration of our 50th year and would love to have any of you who are interested in participating. If you are, please contact Diane Nitta by email at tndnitta@gmail.com. The process will include brainstorming ideas for the celebration but also some research. We want to track down the charter members and/or their descendants, collect original documents, and be able to tell the story of our colony over the past half century. . . and have fun in the process! Of course, our Governor and board members will be ad hoc members of the committee as well. Please consider participating in this endeavor.

Where Can I Look for my Ancestor?

Fresno County Genealogical Society issued a handout at their latest meeting. They listed some of the following websites that might be of interest to you.

Family Search Wiki https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page

Places to look for New York Records, every county and some bigger towns have **town Historians**- find them here: <https://www.aphnys.org/Find-A-Historian> ;

<https://www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/NYCSearchDatabases.php>

NY Newspapers: <https://www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>

Jewish Records: JewishGen <https://www.jewishgen.org/> ; and AmericanAncestors.org

Reclaim the Records works to make sure public records are free and open to the public. They have made some great strides in recent years. Look here: <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/>

In addition, AmericanAncestors.org has *"the world's largest online database of authenticated Mayflower passenger genealogies."* If you are a member of the GSMD, and you are coming up for renewal, apply this **code: REWGSMD** and get a 10% discount. It will ask for your membership number, have it ready when you either start a new code: GSMD or renewal membership. If it doesn't accept your information, please contact them. Once you've created an account on AmericanAncestors.org, click on Signature Projects – Beyond Mayflower 2020 – Search Now. At this point you've entered the database. *"This database includes all applications and supplemental applications to the General Society of Mayflower Descendants starting from their founding in 1897, including only applicants who were born before January 1, 1920."* The information should make it infinitely easier to complete your research on a supplemental line or assist a friend or relative with their application. For more information contact American Ancestors: 1-888-296-3447, membership@nehgs.org

June 2024 Speaker: Donna Watkins

Our featured speaker for June 8, 2024, will be author Donna Watkins. Donna has a degree in American Studies (CSULA), a graduate degree in Library and Information Management (USC) and American Studies (CSUF). Her ninth-great-grandmother is Alice Bishop. She is the author of two books about Plymouth Colony: [*Diverse Gashes: Governor William Bradford, Alice Bishop, and the Murder of Martha Clark, Plymouth Colony, 1648*](#); and [*Weaker Vessels: The Women and Children of Plymouth Colony*](#). The location for our meeting is in the planning stages. Mark the date on your calendar!

Diane Brueggemann: Newsletter Editor
This newsletter is also available on our website:
<https://sanjoaquinvalleycolony.org>

