



(For release at 10:15 am EST- Wednesday, April 17, 2019)

## American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society Open Boston's Mayflower 400th Anniversary Commemorations with Tributes to Pilgrims and the Wampanoag Nation

April 17, 2019 – *Boston, Massachusetts* – American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) – the oldest and largest genealogical society in America – today held the first of a series of events in the U.S. commemorating the 400th anniversary of the landing of the *Mayflower* with a festive ceremony at their headquarters on Newbury Street in Boston, Massachusetts.

An imposing replica of the *Mayflower*, the ship that carried the Pilgrims to the new world in 1620, was christened the *Boston Mayflower* and placed in the organization's front courtyard to commemorate the significance of the event in the nation's history. Unveiled adjacent to it was an artistic tribute to the people and culture of the Wampanoag Nation, the Native Americans who met the Pilgrims after their arrival in Plymouth harbor.

"The sailing of the *Mayflower* stands as an icon in American history. The Mayflower Compact was formative to our democracy. And we are just as committed to telling the Native American story," said D. Brenton Simons, President and CEO of American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society.

"As the largest nonprofit involved in the commemoration – with more than 260,000 members and millions of online users – we have a responsibility to educate people everywhere about this historic occasion," Simons said. "We will carry out our work in many different ways – through events, tours, published scholarship, exhibitions, educational opportunities, and online research resources. We have had an important stake in telling this story since our founding in 1845 and we are dedicated to helping our members and the public connect to this important moment in American history," he added.

The *Boston Mayflower* is a large replica of the iconic, square-rigged, 17th century vessel, measuring 10 ft. long x 10 ft. 10 in. high, and was crafted by marine artist Terrance "Terry" Geaghan of Bath, Maine. Anchored at the main entrance to American Ancestors on Newbury Street – one of Boston's most-traveled pedestrian streets – it is constructed of eastern white pine. The replica was christened by Nancy S. Maulsby, of Greenwich, Conn., Chairman of the Board of Trustees of American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society.

In tribute to the Wampanoag people, an installation was unveiled by American Ancestors of a young Patuxet mother and child. Created by Steven Peters, creative director at SmokeSignals,

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a Native American consultancy located in Mashpee, Mass., the piece depicts the tradition in which the Wampanoag people shared stories of family through the creation of intricately woven, beaded wampum belts. These belts included symbols that informed a narrative, recorded a treaty, or represented a legacy. Usually a collaboration of many tribal artisans, these most sacred belts were held by elders, spiritual leaders, and sachems and were often left unfinished for the story to continue.

At the ceremonies on Wednesday, a new exhibit, *Origins and Legacy of the Mayflower*, was opened in the first floor gallery of American Ancestors. It explores the origins of the *Mayflower* migration and its lasting legacy and presents the story of the *Mayflower* – the quintessential American story – across four centuries, expressed through items drawn from New England Historic Genealogical Society. The exhibit complements the two art installations in honoring and learning from the enduring legacies of the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag. The art installations and the exhibit will be on view at the American Ancestors headquarters building through the end of the 2020 commemorative year.

Individuals around the world can trace their genealogical ties to one of the 26 Pilgrim families known to have left descendants. It is estimated that there are more than 35 million people today who are descended from a Pilgrim. American Ancestors offers its expertise in researching and documenting that lineage through its website at [AmericanAncestors.org](http://AmericanAncestors.org) and through specialized *Mayflower* products and services. A guest membership in American Ancestors is free and allows the member to research their family history online and to explore their own connection to the *Mayflower* story.

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### **About American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society**

New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), with its national headquarters located in Boston's Back Bay, is the oldest and largest genealogical society in America. NEHGS and its American Ancestors brand serve more than 260,000 members and millions of online users engaged in family history nationally and around the world. It is home to a world-class research library and archive, and an expert staff. NEHGS offers an award-winning genealogical research website at [AmericanAncestors.org](http://AmericanAncestors.org) with more than 1.4 billion records and maintains a publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials, including the *Mayflower Descendant*, a quarterly journal of Pilgrim genealogy and history.

**Note: Many high-res images are available for downloading covering all aspects of today's event at <https://photogallery.americanancestors.org/Mayflower-2020-Boston-Ceremony/>**



American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society  
Offer Programs and Resources  
Commemorating the *Mayflower* 400th Anniversary

Visit: [Mayflower.AmericanAncestors.org](http://Mayflower.AmericanAncestors.org)

April 17, 2019 – *Boston, Massachusetts*--Anticipating the 400th anniversary of the voyage of the *Mayflower* in 2020, American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) will play a major role in its national and international commemoration.

“The story of what happened in 1620 is foundational to the story of our democracy and has widespread genealogical and historical ramifications,” stated Brenton Simons, President and CEO of NEHGS, in an announcement of programs to be offered by the organization leading up to 2020. “As the largest nonprofit involved – with more than 260,000 members and millions of online users – we have a responsibility to educate people everywhere about this historic occasion,” he said. “We will carry out our work in many different ways – through events, tours, published scholarship, exhibitions, educational opportunities, and online research resources. We have had an important stake in telling this story since our founding in 1845 and we are dedicated to helping our members and the public connect to this important moment in American history,” Simons added.

***Mayflower* 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Boston Opening Ceremony at NEHGS on April 17**

With the “launch” on Newbury Street at the headquarters of American Ancestors of an imposing, large-scale replica of the ship that carried the Pilgrims to the new world, and the unveiling of a tribute to the Wampanoag community that met them, the *Mayflower* Boston events commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its landing in 1620 will be officially underway. On Wednesday, April 17, 2019, American Ancestors hosts the launch of the *Mayflower* replica and the unveiling of the Wampanoag Legacy Art Installation in ceremonies at its headquarters at 10:00 A.M. An Open House free to the public follows from 11:00 A.M. until 8:00 P.M.

**NEHGS Has Published the First Guide to the *Mayflower* 2020 Anniversary**

In spring 2018, NEHGS published a special *Mayflower* edition of *American Ancestors* – its quarterly magazine. The commemorative issue titled “2020 – Your Guide to the *Mayflower* 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” is devoted entirely to the history, relevance, and impact of the *Mayflower* and its passengers and crew. It is available in the online Bookstore at NEHGS at [AmericanAncestors.org/Store](http://AmericanAncestors.org/Store) for \$6.95 plus shipping.

Drawing on the extensive expertise of NEHGS staff and the contributions of partner

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organizations, this special issue is the first definitive guide to the *Mayflower* 2020 anniversary. Tours, events, resources, and organizations from the United States, Wampanoag Nation, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands are represented. The issue features a definitive guide to tracing *Mayflower* descent and a wide variety of topics, such as understanding the Pilgrims through their home libraries and artifacts, Wampanoag perspectives on colonization, Jewish influences on Pilgrim thought, and a reader's pilgrimage back to his ancestor's baptismal church. In it NEHGS resources are explored, including use of the NEHGS groundbreaking *Mayflower* website portal along with new and classic publications.

### **A *Mayflower* Interactive Website from American Ancestors**

American Ancestors launched [Mayflower.AmericanAncestors.org](http://Mayflower.AmericanAncestors.org) in 2017 – an interactive website providing extensive resources for researching *Mayflower* passengers and connecting family historians with *Mayflower* descendants. The site features a variety of databases of value to *Mayflower* researchers, as well as biographic sketches from NEHGS scholar Robert Charles Anderson's *Pilgrim Migration* (NEHGS, 2004), the definitive work on Plimoth Colony immigrants who arrived between 1620 and 1633. A modern *Mayflower* descendants reader-submitted gallery – the first of its kind – is found there, as are personal statements about what *Mayflower* ancestry means. An interactive world map, showing the location of these descendants, and a celebrity gallery of famous *Mayflower* descendants are also features of the innovative website.

Key elements of NEHGS programming to commemorate the *Mayflower's* 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary include:

**Exciting NEHGS *Mayflower* Heritage Tours**--exclusive tours directed by NEHGS experts that explore the sites of the *Mayflower's* inception and journey.

-In June 2019 NEHGS will host a "Pilgrim Escape to Leiden" tour in the Netherlands where we will explore the old university town of Leiden, where a group of about one hundred Pilgrims under Pastor John Robinson formed a congregation and sought permission to settle in 1609. In Leiden, Delftshaven, and Amsterdam, tour participants will gain an understanding of Pilgrim life outside of England prior to the voyage to the New World.

-In June 2020 NEHGS will lead a tour to the United Kingdom for a visit to Plymouth, Southampton, and Dartmouth, England, with world-renowned NEHGS *Great Migration* scholar Robert Charles Anderson as our guide. The tour will focus on the events leading to the embarkation of the *Mayflower* in 1620 – a journey that would change the world.

-"A New England Sojourn" in June 2020 and again in September 2020 will be two exclusive, three-day visits to historic sites in Massachusetts associated with the Pilgrims, including Plymouth, Provincetown, Duxbury, and elsewhere.

Information and registration for these NEHGS Heritage Tours is available by visiting [AmericanAncestors.org/Heritage-Tours](http://AmericanAncestors.org/Heritage-Tours).

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**American Ancestors Online Courses** – offered by some of NEHGS’s leading *Mayflower* genealogy experts:

-“Puritan Pedigrees – The Deep Roots of the Great Migration to New England.” Presented by Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, Director of the Great Migration Study Project at NEHGS, this recorded online course explores the deep roots of the puritan migration to New England and the events that led to the mass migrations of the 1620s and 1630s. The course includes more than eight hours of recorded content. It is available at \$74.95 for members of NEHGS, \$124.95 for non-members at [AmericanAncestors.org/Store](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Store).

-“Tracing Mayflower Lineage: Resources at AmericanAncestors.org” Presented by Don LeClair, NEHGS Associate Director, Database Search and Systems, this webinar will assist those interested in learning if you are descended from a *Mayflower* passenger. Discover the databases and online resources that can help you make the connection you've been looking for. From scholarly journals to compiled genealogies and study projects, you will learn how to leverage these resources in your family history research. Cost: FREE; available with registration as a free Guest Member at [AmericanAncestors.org](https://AmericanAncestors.org). Learn more about becoming a free [Guest Member](#) to access our [webinars](#).

**American Ancestors Published Scholarship** – our expertise has helped family historians of all levels expand their knowledge, skills, and understanding of their family and its place in history. Significant publications will appear in 2019 through 2020 and beyond, as sources for *Mayflower* genealogical information:

-*Puritan Pedigrees: The Deep Roots of the Great Migration to New England* by Robert Charles Anderson, FASG. In this long-anticipated new book published by NEHGS in December 2018, author Anderson explores the religious motivation behind the Great Migration to New England (1620 – 1640). He focuses not only on the Puritan leaders but also on ordinary laymen who formed a complex genealogical and intellectual network that extended across all of England and even to parts of Wales. (Available from The Bookstore at NEHGS at [AmericanAncestors.org/Store](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Store).)

-*The Mayflower Descendant – A Journal of Pilgrim Genealogy & History*: This highly respected scholarly journal is published twice a year by NEHGS with a winter and a summer issue. Edited by Christopher Challender Child – it is the leading resource leading researchers to *Mayflower* families and related genealogies, their origins in England and their lives and places of residence in America. Available now by subscription through the online Bookstore at NEHGS at [AmericanAncestors.org/Store](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Store); Members \$40.00, non-members \$50.00.

### **Upcoming Exhibits at American Ancestors**

“Origins & Legacy of the *Mayflower*,” opens officially on April 17, 2019 at the headquarters building of NEHGS in Boston’s Back Bay and considers the back stories of the *Mayflower* passengers--where they came from in England and what is known about their ancestry. The exhibit features a timeline of the events leading up to and immediately following the landing.

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American Ancestors and NEHGS is dedicated to helping its membership and the public connect to this important moment in American history. The organization looks forward to welcoming members and the public at all of our programs. 2020 will be a special time to visit New England!

NEHGS, with its national headquarters located in Boston's Back Bay, is the oldest and largest genealogical society in America. NEHGS serves more than 260,000 members and millions of online users engaged in family history nationally and around the world. It is home to a world-class research library and archive, and an expert staff. NEHGS offers an award-winning genealogical research website at [AmericanAncestors.org](https://AmericanAncestors.org) with more than 1.4 billion records and maintains a publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials, including the *Mayflower Descendant*, a quarterly journal of Pilgrim genealogy and history.

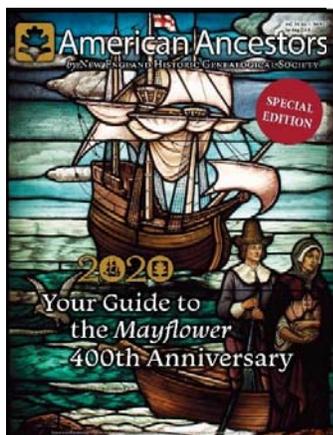
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(Image Left) The cover of *American Ancestors Magazine Special Edition: 2020 – Your Guide to the Mayflower 400th Anniversary*. (\$6.95 + shipping at [AmericanAncestors.org/Store](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Store))

(Image Right) The world's first online gallery of living *Mayflower* descendants created by American Ancestors allows participants to upload their name and photograph and link them to an original Pilgrim. Their place of residence appears on a global map showing a worldwide network of living *Mayflower* descendants. Visit the gallery at <https://Mayflower.AmericanAncestors.org>

(Image Bottom) The 2020 logo of American Ancestors by New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS).



## About the Exhibits

The Wampanoag mother and child exhibit was produced by SmokeSygnals, a Native American-owned marketing and communications company of Mashpee, Mass. All of the design, research, writing, and fabrication of the exhibit was done by members of the Wampanoag Tribe.



Paula Peters is the founder and principal of SmokeSygnals. She is a former journalist and columnist for the *Cape Cod Times* and was recognized regionally and nationally for her writing. She has also served as the director of public affairs for a major transportation agency and the director of marketing for a world-class, Smithsonian-affiliate museum. Paula is an active advocate for diversity initiatives locally and nationally.

Steven Peters is the Creative Director at SmokeSygnals. He's widely recognized for developing exhibits, messaging, and integrated marketing campaigns. His work with organizations such as the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., The Box Museum, the Bassett Law Museum, and Plymouth 400 Inc. have provided the public with a unique view of historic events.



Terry Geaghan is a Maine-based artist who consults with museums around the world on maritime exhibitions and collections. He is the owner of the Shipmasters' Gallery in Bath and Woolwich, Maine, which provides advice, valuations, and collection management in fine art to collectors, corporations, and institutions.

His passion for shipbuilding began early in life, when he landed a job as a curatorial assistant in the Maine Maritime Museum during high school. Since then, Terry has held board positions at a variety of museums and non-profits, including the Maine Historical Society, the Sagadahoc Preservation, Inc., and SAIL (Sail Adventures in Training), Inc.

His work has been featured in the Peabody-Essex Museum (Salem, Mass.), the Mystic Seaport Museum (Mystic, Conn.), the National Maritime Museum (Greenwich, England), and the National Museum of Bahrain (Manama, Bahrain), among many others.



## *Origins and Legacy of the Mayflower*

The story of the Mayflower is the quintessential American story – one that resonates across four centuries with themes of democracy, religious freedom, and cultural heritage. The 102 *Mayflower* passengers set sail from Plymouth, England, on September 6, 1620, bound for Virginia. After 66 days aboard a leaky wooden ship they arrived on the shores of Cape Cod, and the rest is history.

While not the first group of European settlers to arrive on the shores of America (earlier landings include those at St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565; Roanoke Island, North Carolina, in 1585; the Popham Colony in Maine in 1607; and Jamestown, Virginia, also in 1607), the *Mayflower* landing has become synonymous with the founding of America. But who were these Pilgrims, what motivated their departure from England, and why has their story been so ensconced in our nation's history?

The events leading up to the departure of the *Mayflower* began nearly a century earlier. In the 1530s the English king, Henry VIII, broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and created the Protestant Church of England. Over the ensuing years Henry VIII and his successors made many changes that divided the religious spectrum of England into old-time Catholics, conforming members of the Church of England (Protestants who followed the religious practices established by Elizabeth I), and a variety of non-conforming Protestants who came to be known as Puritans. This created a tension-ridden atmosphere between the varying religious groups and the government, who wanted to control them. These unstable conditions gave rise to constant turmoil, which led to some of the Puritans separating from the Church of England and leaving England in search of freedom to practice their religion without persecution.

One of the greatest legacies of the voyage is the Mayflower Compact, the first governing document of the Plymouth Colony. It was signed aboard the ship by the adult male passengers on November 11, 1620, as an agreement of self-government. This important, pioneering document helped maintain order and laid the groundwork for a civil society. This exhibit seeks to explore the origins of the *Mayflower* migration and its lasting legacy, as expressed through anniversary commemorations, American mythos, and modern-day descendants. Items in this exhibition are drawn from the R. Stanton Avery Special Collections and the Fine Art Collection at New England Historic Genealogical Society.

### *Origins and Legacy of the Mayflower*

On exhibit through December 2020 at New England Historic Genealogical Society,  
the headquarters of American Ancestors  
99-101 Newbury Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Free to the public | Hours: Tues. 9-1; Wed. 9-8; Thurs.-Sat. 9-5; Closed Sun. and Mon.

This exhibit has been generously supported by Ann Louise C. Van Nostrand, Brenda Williams, and Elizabeth H. Owens.

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## Photography

High-resolution images of the exhibits unveiled today are available for download at <https://photogallery.americanancestors.org/Mayflower-2020-Boston-Ceremony/>.

Sample images (Credit: Pierce Harman Photography for American Ancestors):





## Participants

### Mayflower 400th Anniversary Boston Opening Ceremony

#### Names and Titles



D. Brenton Simons  
President and CEO  
American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society



Harriet Cross  
Her Majesty's Consul General to New England



Nancy S. Maulsby  
Chairman, Board of Trustees  
American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society



Michele Pecoraro  
Executive Director, Plymouth 400, Inc.



Paula Peters  
President  
SmokeSygnals



Dusty Rhodes  
Chair, Plymouth Massachusetts 400th Commission



## Fact Sheet

### **American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society**

#### **WHO IS NEHGS?**

The New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) is America's founding genealogical organization and the most trusted name in family history research. Established in 1845, NEHGS is the nation's leading comprehensive resource for family history research and the largest Society of its kind in the world. We provide expert family history services through our website, scholarship, collections, staff, and education programs to help family historians of all levels explore their past and understand their families' unique place in history.

We are a nonprofit corporation dedicated to advancing the study of family history in America and beyond, by educating, inspiring, and connecting people through our scholarship, collections, and expertise.

#### **WHAT IS AMERICAN ANCESTORS?**

American Ancestors is the public brand and user experience of the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS). American Ancestors represents our expertise and resources for family historians of all levels researching their origins across the country and around the world.

Our online and onsite expertise, resources, and services include early American, Irish, English, Italian, Scottish, Atlantic and French Canadian, African American, Native American, Chinese, and Jewish family history.

AmericanAncestors.org, a component of the American Ancestors public brand, has special strength in English, New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont), New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia materials.

#### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEHGS AND AMERICAN ANCESTORS?**

New England Historic Genealogical Society is the nonprofit institution that provides the user experience American Ancestors, which is our public brand, including our website, AmericanAncestors.org, and our quarterly publication, *American Ancestors* magazine.

## FACTS

NEHGS is the oldest and largest genealogical society in the country. Founded in 1845, NEHGS serves more than 260,000 members in the U.S. and around the world through an award-winning website [AmericanAncestors.org](http://AmericanAncestors.org).

The NEHGS website, [AmericanAncestors.org](http://AmericanAncestors.org), is one of the most visited family history websites and it is the most visited genealogical society website in the world—serving a million users a year. It contains more than 1.4 billion historical and genealogical records from the United States and beyond.

The NEHGS research center, located at 99–101 Newbury Street in Boston’s Back Bay, is the nation’s leading comprehensive research center for family historians of every skill level. *USA Today* recently named NEHGS, with more than 28 million items in its collection, containing materials that span the globe and more than 7 centuries, one of the 10 greatest research centers of its kind in the world.

NEHGS is home to the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center. With the American Jewish Historical Society – New England Archives as its cornerstone, the Jewish Heritage Center at NEHGS engages historians, genealogists, youth, and the general public in programming and research to advance the study of the history, culture, and institutional legacies of Jewish families in New England and beyond by educating, inspiring, and connecting people through scholarship, collections, and expertise while serving as an archival and educational resource for other Jewish organizations and institutions.

NEHGS publishes the definitive research in the field of genealogy through a quarterly journal, a quarterly magazine, a weekly electronic newsletter, and more than 20 books a year.

Quarterly since 1847, NEHGS has published the peer-reviewed academic journal *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, the flagship publication of American genealogy.

Newbury Street Press (NSP), established in 1996, is the premier publisher of family histories. NSP builds on the New England Historic Genealogical Society’s 174-year history of publishing compiled genealogies of enduring value. Books that bear the NSP logo represent the Society’s high standards of documentation and authentication of genealogical research.

The 100 staff members at NEHGS represent some of the most respected and advanced in the profession. Research specialties include early American, Irish, English, Scottish, Italian, Atlantic and French Canadian, African American, Native American, Chinese, and Jewish genealogy.

A comprehensive capital campaign for the New England Historic Genealogical Society – “Connecting Families. Advancing History” – had a goal of \$55 million; at the conclusion of the campaign in 2016, gifts and commitments exceeded more than \$62.2 million.

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