

Otis James

# Ruth of Boston: A Story of the Massachusetts Bay Colony



James Otis

**Ruth of Boston: A Story of  
the Massachusetts Bay Colony**

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# **James Otis**

## **Ruth of Boston: A Story of the Massachusetts Bay Colony**

### **FOREWORD**

The purpose of this series of stories is to show the children, and even those who have already taken up the study of history, the *home life* of the colonists with whom they meet in their books. To this end every effort has been made to avoid anything savoring of romance, and to deal only with facts, so far as that is possible, while describing the daily life of those people who conquered the wilderness whether for conscience sake or for gain.

That the stories may appeal more directly to the children, they are told from the viewpoint of a child, and purport to have been related by a child. Should any criticism be made regarding the seeming neglect to mention important historical facts, the answer would be that these books are not sent out as histories, – although it is believed that they will awaken a desire to learn more of the building of the nation, – and only such incidents as would be particularly noted by a child are used.

Surely it is entertaining as well as instructive for young people to read of the toil and privations in the homes of those who came into a new world to build up a country for themselves, and such homely facts are not to be found in the real histories of our land.

*James Otis.*

## A PROPER BEGINNING

Truly it seems a great undertaking to journey from London into the land of America, yet I have done so, and because of there being very few girls only twelve years of age who are likely to make such a voyage, it seems to me well if I set down those things which I saw and did that might be interesting to myself in the future, when I shall have grown to be an old lady, if God permits, or to any other who may come upon this diary.

Of course I must first set down who I am, in case strangers should some day chance to find this book, and, growing interested in it – for who can say that I may not be able to tell a story which shall be entertaining, because of there being in it much which the people of England have never seen – give me credit for having written a diary without a proper beginning.

You must know, then, that my name is Ruth. In the year of our Lord, 1630, when, as I have said, I was but twelve years of age, my father joined that company led by Master John Winthrop, whose intent it was to go into America to spread the gospel, and there also build up a town wherein should live only those who were one with them in the worship of God.

This company was made up of four classes of people. First there were those who paid a sum of money for their passage to America, and, because of having done so, were to be given a certain number of acres of land in the New World.

In the second class were those who, not having enough money to pay the full price for their passage, agreed to perform a sufficient amount of work, after arriving in America, to make up for the same.

In the third class were those called indentured servants, which is much the same as if I said apprentices.

The fourth and last class had in it those people who were to work for wages, at whatsoever trade or calling they were best fitted.

It needs not that I should say more by way of a beginning, for surely all the people in England, if they do not know it now, will soon come to understand why we, together with those who have gone before us, and the companies that are to come after, have journeyed into America.

## ON THE BROAD OCEAN

It was decided that my parents, and, of course, myself, should sail in the same ship with Master Winthrop, and the name of that vessel was the *Arabella*, she having been so called in honor of Lady Arabella Johnson, who journeyed with us.

My mother was sadly grieved because of Mistress Winthrop's deciding not to go on the voyage with her husband, but to join him in the New World later, and this decision was a disappointment to very many of the company. I am in doubt as to whether the Lady Arabella would have gone with us on this ship, had she not believed Mistress Winthrop also was to go.

It was on the twenty-second day of March, in that year which I have previously set down, that, having already journeyed from London to Southampton, we went aboard the *Arabella*, counting that the voyage would be begun without delay, and yet, because of unfriendly winds and cruel storms, our ship, with three others of the company, lay at anchor until the eighth day of April.

Then it was, after the captain of the ship had shot off three guns as a farewell, that we sailed out on the broad ocean, where we were tossed by the waves and buffeted by the winds for nine long, dreary weeks.

Had it not been for Master Winthrop's discourses day after day, we should have been more gloomy than we were; but with such a devout man to remind us of the mercy and goodness of God, it would have been little short of a sin had we repined because of not being carried more speedily to that land where was to be our home.

There was one day during the voyage, when it seemed verily as if the Lord was not minded we should journey away from England.

We had not been out from the port many days, when on a certain morning eight ships were seen behind us, coming up as if counting to learn what we were like; and then it was that all the men of the company believed these were Spanish vessels bent on taking us prisoners, for, as you know, at that time England was at war with Spain.

It was most fearsome to all the children, but very much so to Susan, a girl very nearly my own age, with whom I made friends after coming aboard, and myself.

## MAKING READY FOR BATTLE

When Susan and I saw the men taking down the hammocks from that portion of the vessel which was called the gun deck, loading the cannon, and bringing out the powder-chests, truly were we alarmed.

Standing clasped in each other's arms, unheeded by our elders, all of whom were in a painful state of anxiety or fear, we watched intently all that forenoon the ships which we believed belonged to the enemy.

Then I heard one of the sailors say that the Spaniards were surely gaining on us, and the captain of the vessel, as well as Master Winthrop and my father, must have believed it true, for all preparations were made for a battle.

The small cabins, leading from the great one, were torn down that cannon might be used without hindrance, and the bedding, and all things that were likely to take fire, were thrown overboard. The boats were launched into the sea and towed alongside the ship so that when the worst came we might fly in them, and then that which was most fearsome of all, the women and children were sent down into the very middle of the vessel, where they might not be in danger when the Spaniards began to send iron balls among us, as it seemed certain they soon would.

While we were huddled together in the darkness, many weeping, some moaning, and a few women, among whom was my mother, silent in the agony of grief, Master Winthrop came down to pray with us, greatly to our comforting, after which, so I have been told since, he went up among the men where he performed the same office.

It was not until an hour after noon that our people discovered that those ships which we believed to be Spanish, were English vessels, from which we had nothing to fear.

Then word was sent down to us in that dark place that we might come up above, and once in the sunlight again, we found all the passengers rejoicing and making merry over the fears which had so lately beset them.

How bright the sun looked to Susan and me as we stood near the rail of our ship, gazing at the vessels which only a few hours before were a fearsome sight, but now seemed so friendly! It was as if we had been very near to death, and were suddenly come into a place of safety.



## THE REST OF THE VOYAGE

From that time until St. George's Day, which you all know is the twenty-third of April, nothing happened deserving of being set down here. Then it was, however, that during the forenoon the captain moved our sails so that the ship would remain idle upon the waters, which is what sailors call "heaving to," and the captains of the other vessels, together with Master Pynchon and many more gentlemen, came on board for a feast.

Lady Arabella and the gentlewomen of our company had dinner in the great cabin, while the gentlemen partook of their good cheer in the roundhouse, as the sailors call it, which is a sort of cabin on the hindermost part of the quarter-deck.

By four o'clock in the afternoon the feast was at an end; the gentlemen who had come to visit us went on board their own ships, and again were the vessels headed for that country of America in which we counted to spend the remainder of our lives.

Susan and I were much together during this voyage, for neither of us made very friendly with the other children, and I do not remember that anything of import happened until we were come, so the captain said, near to the New World.

It is not needed I should set down that again and again were there furious storms, when it seemed certain our ship would be sunk, for there was so much of such disagreeable weather during the nine weeks of voyaging, that if I were to make a record of each unpleasant day, this diary would be filled with little else.

I have set down, however, that on the seventh day of June, which was Monday, we had come, so Master Winthrop said, off "the Banks," where was good fishing to be found; but why this particular spot on the ocean should be called the Banks, neither Susan nor I could understand. The waves were much like those we had seen from day to day; but yet, in some way, the captain knew that we had come to the place where it would be possible to take fish in great numbers, and so we did.

It is not seemly a young girl should set down the fact, with much of satisfaction, that she enjoyed unduly the food before her, and yet I must confess that those fish tasted most delicious after we had been feeding upon pickled pork, or pickled beef, with never anything fresh to take from one's mouth the flavor of salt.

It was a feast, as Susan and I looked at the matter, far exceeding that which we had on St. George's Day, and surely more enjoyable to us, for what can be better pleasing to the mouth than a slice of fresh codfish, fried until it is so brown as to be almost beautiful, after one has had nothing save that which is pickled?

## THE FIRST VIEW OF AMERICA

Five days later, which is the same as if I said on the twelfth day of June, early in the morning, when Susan and I came on deck, we saw spread out before us the land, and it needed not we should ask if this was the America where we were to live, for all the people roundabout us were talking excitedly of the skill which had been displayed by the master of the *Arabella*, in thus bringing us directly to the place where we had counted on coming.

It can well be fancied that Susan and I overhung the rail as the ship sailed nearer and nearer to the land, watching intently everything before us; yet seeing, much to our surprise, little more than would have been seen had we come upon the coast of England.

I had foolishly believed that even the shores of this New World would be unlike anything to be found elsewhere, and yet they were much the same. The rocks rising high above the waters, with the waves beating against them, made up a picture such as we had before us even while we lay at anchor off Cowes. The trees were like unto the trees in our own land, and the grass was of no different color. Save that all this before us was a wilderness, we might have been off the coast of Cornwall.

I have said it was all the same, and yet because of the fears and the anxieties regarding the future, was it different.

This was the land to which we had come for the making of a new home; the place where our parents had pledged themselves to spread the gospel as the Lord would have it spread.

We knew, because of what had been written by our friends who had journeyed to this new world before us that here we were to find brown savages, many of whom, like wild beasts, would thirst to shed our blood. Here also could we expect to see fierce animals, such as might not be met with elsewhere in the world; and, in the way of blessings, we should meet those friends of ours who, for conscience sake and for the will to do God's bidding, had come to prepare the land that it should be more friendly toward us.

## THE TOWN OF SALEM

I had not yet been able to discover any of the dwellings which marked the town of Naumkeag, or Salem, when all the cannon on board our vessel were set off with a great noise. Then, as we came around a point of land, there appeared before our eyes a goodly ship lying at anchor, and beyond her the town that was – much to my disappointment, for I had fancied something grander – made up of a few log houses which seemed rather to be quarters for servants than dwellings for gentlemen's families, although we had been told that the habitations would be rude indeed.

A boat was put into the water from our ship, and as the sailors rowed toward the vessel which was at anchor, I heard my father say to my mother that they were going in quest of Master William Pierce, a London friend of ours.

As we watched, I asked that question which had come often in my mind during the voyage, which was, why this new town that Master Endicott had built should have two names.

Mother told me that the Indians had called the place Naumkeag, and so also did those men who first settled here; but when some of our people came, and gathered around them several from the Plymouth Colony, together with a number of planters who had built themselves homes along the shore, it was decided to name the new town Salem, which means peace, for here it was they hoped to gain that peace which should be on this earth like unto the peace we read of in the Book, which passeth all understanding.

And now before I set down that which we saw, and while you are picturing our company on the deck of the *Arabella* looking shoreward, impatient to set their feet once more on the earth, let me tell you what I had heard, since we left England; regarding this town of peace, and those of our people, or of other faiths, who settled here two years or more ago.

## OTHER VILLAGES

Master Endicott, who was of our faith, had come to these shores in March of the year 1628, with a company of thirty or forty people, and, finding other men living at the head of this harbor which the *Arabella* had entered after her long voyage, decided to build his home at this place.

In the next year, Master Higginson, coming over with six vessels in which were eighteen women, twenty-six children, and three hundred men, joined the little colony. These last brought with them one hundred and forty head of cattle, and forty goats.

However, only two hundred of this last company remained at Salem, the others having chosen to build for themselves a new town, which they called Charlestown, on that large body of water which is set down on the maps as Massachusetts Bay.

In addition to these two villages, it was said that there were five or six houses at the place called Nantasket; that one Master Samuel Maverick was living on Noddles Island, and one Master William Blackstone on the Shawmut Peninsula.

I have set this down to the end that those who read it may understand we were not come into a wild country, in which lived none but savages, and I must also add that not so many miles away was the town of Plymouth, where had been living, during ten years, a company of Englishmen who had worked bravely to make for themselves a home.

And now since I am done with explaining, and since the boat which put out from our vessel and which I left you watching, has come back from that other ship, bringing Master William Pierce, let me tell you what we did on the first day in this new world.

## VISITING SALEM

The gentlemen and ladies of our company were invited on shore to a feast of deer meat, while the servant women and maids were allowed to land on the other side of the harbor, where they feasted themselves on wild strawberries, which were exceeding large and sweet.

It would be untrue for me to say that deer meat made into a huge pie is not inviting, because of my having enjoyed it greatly, and yet I could not give so much attention to the dainty as I would have done at almost any other time, so intent was I upon seeing this village concerning which Master Endicott had written so many words of praise.

Had Susan and I come upon it within an hour after leaving the city of London, it would have looked exceedingly poor and mean; but now, when we were on the land after a voyage of nine long weeks, verily it seemed like a wondrous pleasant place in which to live.

More than an hundred dwellings, so my father said, had been built. Some were of logs laid one on top of the other in a clumsy fashion, with the places where windows of glass should have been, covered with oiled paper, and doors that were so cumbersome and heavy it was a real task for Susan and me to open and close them, but yet they had a homely look.

Then there were what might be called sheds, made of logs, or the bark of trees, and, in two cases, dwellings of branches laid up loosely as a child would build a toy camp.

It was as if each man had built according to his inclination and willingness to labor, the more thrifty having log dwellings, and the indolent ones rude huts.

Even Susan and I could understand that whosoever had decided upon the places where these homes should be built, had in mind the making of a large town; for paths, like unto streets, led here and there, while all around grew trees, not thickly, to be sure, but yet in such abundance as to show that all this had lately been a wilderness.

Even in these streets had been left the stumps of trees after the trunks were removed, which served to give an untidy look to the whole, making it seem as if one were in a place where had been built shelters only for a little time, and which would shortly be abandoned.

The welcome which was given us, however, was even warmer than we would have received at home in England, and little wonder that these gentlefolk whom we had known there, should be overjoyed to see us here.

Both Susan and I came to understand, not many months afterward, how great can be the pleasure one has at seeing old friends whom he had feared never to meet again in this world.

It was a veritable feast which these good people of Salem set before us, and yet so strange was the cookery, that I am minded to describe later some of the dishes at risk of dwelling overly long upon matters of no importance.

## MAKING COMPARISONS

Master Winthrop said, when we were going on board the ship again, that although it was nothing but peas, pudding, and fish, quite coarse as compared with what we would have had at home in England, save as to the venison pie, it all seemed sweet and wholesome to him.

When the day was come to an end, we went into the ship once more, for there were not spare beds enough in all the town to serve for half our party, and you may be very certain that once we were gathered again in the great cabin, all talked eagerly concerning what had been done; at least our parents did, for it would have been unseemly in us children to interrupt while our elders were talking.

Mother was not well satisfied with the houses, believing it would be possible to make dwellings more like those we left behind; but father bade her have patience, saying that a shelter from the weather was the first matter to be thought of, and that the pleasing of the eye could well come later, after we had more with which to work.

She, thinking as was I at the moment, of the floor in the house where we ate the venison pie, declared stoutly that there would be no more of labor in laying down planks, at least in the living-room, than in beating the earth hard, as it seemingly had been where we visited.

Then, laughingly, he bade her rest content, nor set her mind so strongly upon the vanities of this world, saying that if God permitted him to raise a roof, so that his wife and child might be sheltered from the sun and from the rain, he would be satisfied, even though the legs of his table stood upon the bare earth.

It was this conversation between my parents that caused the other women to talk of how they would have a home built, until Lady Arabella put an end to what was almost wrangling, – for each insisted that her plan for a dwelling in this New World was the best, – by saying that whatsoever God willed we should have, and that it would be more than we deserved.

## AN INDIAN GUEST AND OTHER VISITORS

Both Susan and I had gazed about us eagerly when we went on shore, hoping to see a savage. We were not bent on meeting him near at hand, where he might do us a mischief; but had the desire that a brown man might go past at a distance, and we were grievously disappointed at coming aboard the ship again without having seen one.

Therefore it is that you can well fancy how surprised and delighted we were next morning when, on going on deck just after breakfast to have another look at this new town, whom should we see walking to and fro on the quarter-deck with Master Winthrop, as if he had been one of the first gentlemen of the land, but a real Indian!

There were the feathers, of which we had heard, encircling his head and ending in a long train behind. His skin was brown, or, perhaps, more the color of dulled copper. He wore a mantle of fur, with the skin tanned soft as cloth, and that which father said was deer hide cunningly treated until it was like to flannel, had been fashioned into a garment which answered in the stead of a doublet.

I cannot describe his appearance better than by saying it would not have surprised me, had I been told that one of our own people had painted and dressed himself in this fanciful fashion to take part in some revel, for truly, save in regard to the color of his skin, he was not unlike the gentlemen who were on the ship.

As Susan and I learned later, he was the king, or chief man, among those Indians who called themselves Agawams. Father said he was the sagamore, which, as I understand it, means that he was at the head of his people, and his name was Masconomo.

A very kindly savage was he, and in no wise bloodthirsty looking as I had expected. He was a friend of Master Endicott as well as of all those who lived with him in this town of Salem, and had come to welcome our people to the new world, which, as it seemed to both Susan and me, was very thoughtful in one who was nothing less than a heathen.

The Indian sagamore stayed on board the ship all day, and our company, together with the people of Salem, were as careful to make him welcome as if he had been King James himself.

The reason for this, as father afterward explained to me, was because of its being of great importance that we make friends with the savages, else the time might come when they would set about taking our lives, being in far greater numbers than the white men.

Neither Susan nor I could believe that there was any danger that these people with brown skins would ever want to do us harm. Surely they must be pleased, we thought, at knowing we were willing to live among them, and, besides, if all the savages were as mild looking as this Masconomo, they would never be wicked enough to commit the awful crime of murder.

In the evening, after the Indian went ashore, the good people of Salem came on board in great numbers, and, seeing that it was a time when he might do good to their souls, Master Winthrop gathered us on deck, where he talked in a godly strain not less than an hour and a half.

It was indeed wicked of Susan to say that she would have been better pleased had we been allowed to chat with the people concerning this new land, rather than listen to Master Winthrop, who, so mother says, is a most gifted preacher even though that is not his calling, yet way down in the bottom of my heart I felt much as did Susan, although, fortunately, I was not tempted to give words to the thought.

## A CHRISTENING AND A DINNER

When another day came, we girls had a most delightful time, for there was to be a baby baptized in the house of logs where are held the meetings, and Mistress White, one of the gentlefolks who came here with the company of Master Higginson, was to give a dinner because of her young son's having lived to be christened.

To both these festivals Susan and I were bidden, and it surprised me not a little to see so much of gaiety in this New World, where I had supposed every one went around in fear and trembling lest the savages should come to take their lives.

The christening was attended to first, as a matter of course, and, because of his having so lately arrived from England, Master Winthrop was called upon to speak to the people, which he did at great length. Although the baby, in stiff dress and mittens of linen, with his cap of cotton wadded thickly with wool, must have been very uncomfortable on account of the heat, he made but little outcry during all this ceremony, or even when Master Higginson prayed a very long time.

We were not above two hours in the meetinghouse, and then went to the home of Mistress White, getting there just as she came down from the loft with her young son in her arms.

Mother was quite shocked because of the baby's having nothing in his hands, and while she is not given to placing undue weight in beliefs which savor of heathenism, declares that she never knew any good to come of taking a child up or down in the house without having first placed silver or gold between his fingers.

Of course it is not so venturesome to bring a child down stairs empty-handed; but to take him back for the first time without something of value in his little fist, is the same as saying that he will never rise in the world to the gathering of wealth.

The dinner was much enjoyed by both Susan and me, even though the baby, who seemed to be frightened because of seeing so many strange faces, cried a goodly part of the time.

We had wild turkey roasted, and it was as pleasing a morsel as ever I put in my mouth. Then there was a huge pie of deer meat, with baked and fried fish in abundance, and lobsters so large that there was not a trencher bowl on the board big enough to hold a whole one. We had whitpot, yokhegg, suquatash, and many other Indian dishes, the making of which shall be explained as soon as I have learned the methods.

It was a most enjoyable feast, and the good people of Salem were so friendly that when we went on board ship that night, Susan and I were emboldened to say to my father, that we should be rejoiced when the time arrived for our company to build houses.



## DECIDING UPON A HOME

Then we learned for the first time that it had not been the plan of our people to settle in this pleasant place. It was not to the mind of Governor Winthrop, nor yet in accord with the belief of our people in England, that all of us who were to form what would be known as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, should build our homes in one spot.

Therefore it was that our people, meaning the elders among the men, set off through the forest to search for a spot where should be made a new town, and we children were allowed to roam around the village of Salem at will, many of us, among whom were Susan and I, often spending the night in the houses of those people who were so well off in this world's goods as to have more than one bed.

Lady Arabella Johnson and her husband had gone on shore to live the second day after we arrived, for my lady was far from well when she left England, and the voyage across the ocean had not been of benefit to her.

Our fathers were not absent above three days in the search for a place to make our homes, and then Sarah and I were told that it had been decided we should live at Charlestown, where, as I have already told you, a year before our coming, Master Endicott had sent a company of fifty to build houses.

It pleased me to know that we were not going directly into the wilderness, as both Susan and I had feared; but that we should be able to find shelter with the people who had already settled there, until our own houses could be built.

It appeared that all the men of our company were not of Governor Winthrop's opinion, regarding the place for a home. Some of them, discontented with the town of Charles, went further afoot, deciding to settle on the banks of a river called the Mystic, while yet others crossed over that point of land opposite where we were to live, and found a pleasing place which they had already named Roxbury.

## A SAD LOSS

Susan and I believed, on the night our fathers came back from their journey, that we would set off in the ship to this village of Charlestown without delay, and so we might have done but for my Lady Arabella, who was taken suddenly worse of her sickness; therefore it was decided to wait until she had gained her health.

But alas! the poor lady had come to this New World only to die, and it was a sad time indeed for Susan and me when the word was brought aboard ship that she had gone out from among us forever.

We had learned during the voyage to love her very dearly, and it seemed even more of a blow for God to take her from us in this wilderness, than if she had been at her home in England.

Although it is not right for me to say so, because, of course, our fathers know best, yet would my heart have been less sore if some word of farewell could have been said when we laid my Lady Arabella in the grave amid the thicket of fir trees.

Mother says, that she is but repeating the words of Governor Winthrop, that it is wrong to say prayers over the dead, or to utter words of grief or faith. Therefore it was in silence we followed my lady in the coffin made by the ship's carpenter, up the gentle slope to the thicket of firs, the bell of the *Arabella* tolling all the while; and in silence we stood, while the body was being covered with earth, little thinking how soon should we be doing a like service for another who had come to aid in building up a new nation.

On the day after we left my Lady Arabella on the hillside, the ship *Talbot*, which was one of the vessels that should have sailed in company with the *Arabella*, arrived at Salem, and the grief which filled our hearts for the dead, was lightened somewhat by the joy in greeting the living who were come to join us.

## REJOICING TURNED INTO MOURNING

Governor Winthrop was among those who seemingly had most cause for rejoicing, because of his son Henry's having arrived on the *Talbot*, bringing news of his mother and of the remainder of the family.

Good Master Winthrop had so much of business to look after on this day, that he could not spend many moments in talking with his son, and mayhap he will never cease to regret that he did not give his first attention to the boy, for, during the afternoon, while his father was engaged with public affairs, Henry was moved by curiosity to visit some Indian wigwams which could be seen a long distance along the coast.

Not being of the mind to walk so far, he cast about for a boat of some kind, and, seeing a canoe across the creek, plunged into the water to swim over that he might get it.

Susan and I were watching the brave young man when he sprang so boldly and confidently into the water, never dreaming that harm might come to him, and yet before he was one quarter way across the creek, he suddenly flung up his arms with a stifled cry. Then he sank from our sight, to be seen no more alive.

He had been seized with a cramp, while swimming most-like because of having gone into the cold water heated, so my father said, for the day was very warm; but however that may be, eight and forty hours later we walked, a mournful procession, up the hill, even as we had done behind the earthly clay of Lady Arabella, while the bells of the ships in the harbor tolled most dismally.

Verily Governor Winthrop's strength is in the Lord, as my mother said, for although his heart must have been near to bursting with grief, no one saw a sign of sorrow on his face, so set and stern, as he stood there listening to the clods of earth that were thrown upon the box in which lay the body of his son.

Susan, who is overly given to superstition, I am afraid, declared that it was an ill omen for us to have two die when we had but just come into the new country, and when I told her that it was wicked to place one's faith in signs, she reminded me that I found fault because of Mistress White's baby's being taken out of the room for the first time with neither gold nor silver in his hands.

## THANKSGIVING DAY IN JULY

The ship *Success*, which was also of our fleet, having been left behind when we sailed from England, came into the harbor on the sixth of July, and then it was, although our hearts were bowed down with grief because of the death of Lady Arabella and the drowning of Henry Winthrop, that our people decided we should hold a service of thanksgiving to God because of His having permitted all our company to arrive in safety.

Word was sent to the people of Charlestown, and to those few men in the settlement which is called Dorchester, that they might join with us in the service of praise, and many came to Salem to hear the preaching of Master Endicott, Master Higginson, and Governor Winthrop.

## LEAVING SALEM FOR CHARLESTOWN

Four days later, which is the same as if I said on the twelfth of July, the fleet of ships sailed out of Salem harbor with those of our people on board who could not bear the fatigue of walking, to go up to the new village of Charlestown.

Before night was come, we were at anchor off that place where we believed the remainder of our days on this earth would be spent.

Because of the labor performed by those men whom Master Endicott had sent to this place a year before, there were five or six log houses which could be used by some of our people, and the governor's dwelling, which of course would be the most lofty in the town, was partially set up; yet the greater number of us did not go on shore immediately to live.

Governor Winthrop remained on board the *Arabella*, as did my parents and Susan's, and now because there is little of interest to set down regarding the building of the village, am I minded to tell that which I heard our fathers talking about evening after evening, as we sat in the great cabin when the day's work was done.

To you who have never gone into the wilderness to make a home, the anxiety which people in our condition felt concerning their neighbors cannot be understood. To us, if all we heard regarding what the savages might do against us was true, it was of the greatest importance we should know who were settled near at hand, if it so came that we were driven out from our town.

## OUR NEIGHBORS

Now you must know that many years before, which is much the same as if I had said in the year of our Lord, 1620, a number of English people who had been living in Holland because of their consciences not permitting them to worship God in a manner according to the Church of England, came over to this country, and built a town which was called Plymouth.

This town was not far by water from our settlement; indeed, one might have sailed there in a shallop, if he were so minded, and, in case the wind served well, perform the voyage between daylight and sunset.

It was, as I have said, settled ten years before we came to this new world, and the inhabitants now numbered about three hundred. There were sixty-eight dwelling houses, a fort well built with wood, earth and stone, and a fair watch tower. Entirely around the town was a stout palisade, by which I mean a fence made of logs that stand eight or ten feet above the surface, and placed so closely together that an enemy may not make his way between them, and in all respects was it a goodly village, so my father declared.

Near the mouth of the Neponset river Sir Christopher Gardner, who was not one of our friends in a religious way, had settled with a small company, and farther down the coast, many miles away, it was said were three other villages; but none among them could outshine Salem, either in numbers of people, or in dwellings.

When we were on the shore in Charlestown, looking straight out over the water toward the nearest land, we could see, not above two miles away, three hills which were standing close to each other, and Master Thomas Graves, who had taken charge of the people that first settled in the town of Charles, had named the place Trimountain; but the Indians called it Shawmut. There only one white man was living and his name was Master William Blackstone, as I have already told you.

It seemed to me a fairer land, because of the hills and dales, than was our settlement, and yet it would not have been seemly for me to say so much, after our fathers and mothers had decided this was the place where we were to live.

## GETTING SETTLED

The days which followed our coming to Charlestown were busy ones, even to us women folks, for there was much to be done in taking the belongings ashore, or in helping our neighbors to set to rights their new dwellings.

The Great House, in which Governor Winthrop would live, was finished first, and into this were moved as many of our people as it would hold.

Then again, there were others who, not content with staying on the *Arabella* after having remained on board of her so long, put up huts like unto the wigwams made by the Indians, which, while the weather continued to be so warm, served fairly well as places in which to live.

If I said that we made shift to get lodgings on shore in whatsoever manner came most convenient for the moment, I should only be stating the truth, for some indeed were lodged in an exceeding odd and interesting fashion.

Susan's father, going back some little distance from the Great House, cut away the trees in such a manner as to leave four standing in the form of a square, and from one to another of these he nailed small logs, topped with a piece of sail cloth that had been brought on shore from the *Talbot*, finishing the sides with branches of trees, sticks, and even two of his wife's best bed quilts. Into this queer home Susan went with her mother, while my parents were content to use one of the rooms in the Great House until father could build for us a dwelling of logs.

## **THE GREAT SICKNESS**

It seemed much as if Susan was in the right, when she said that the deaths of Lady Arabella and Henry Winthrop were ill omens, because no sooner had all our people landed from the ships, or come up through the forest from Salem, than a great sickness raged among us.



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