

C H A P T E R 7

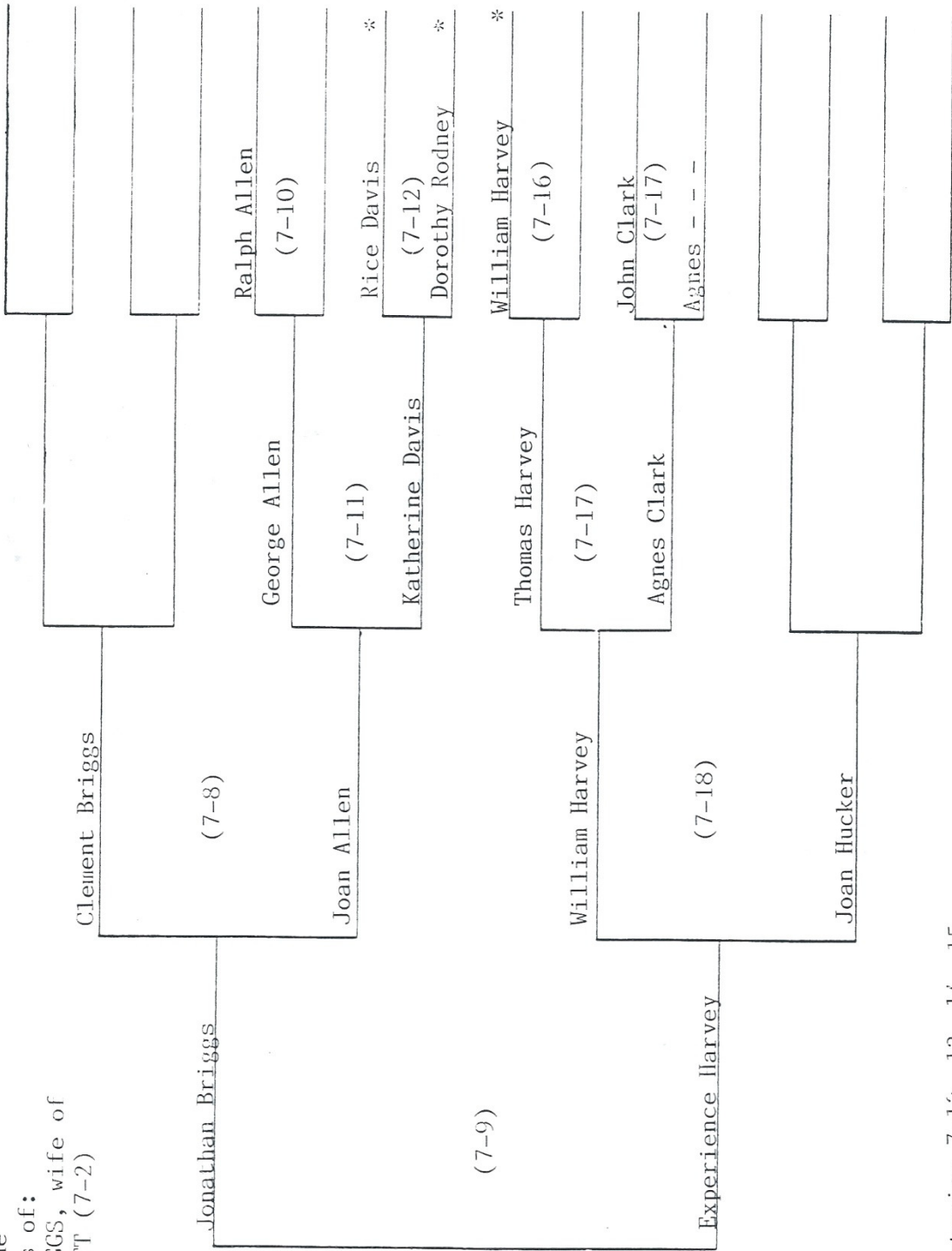
P A R T 2

Ancestral lines of
ELIZABETH ALMIRA BABBITT, wife of
LEONARD GURLEY RICE (1-7)

Extended by the parental lines of
ELIZABETH BRIGGS, wife of
ELKANAH BABBITT (7-2)

PEDIGREE CHART

Book of Leonard Gurley
 Ancestral lines of his wife
 ELIZABETH ALMIRA BABBITT (1-7)
 Extended by the
 parental lines of:
 ELIZABETH BRIGGS, wife of
 ELKANAH BABBITT (7-2)



*Extended in stories 7-12, 13, 14, 15

Note: See appendix #14 for explanation of the questionable ancestry of Joan Allen(7-8).

CLEMENT BRIGGS (abt. 1605-1650)
 JOAN ALLEN (before 1640)

The name of Briggs is common through many counties in England, but chiefly in Norfolk. L. Vernon Briggs visited Norfolk and other areas in England prior to his writing "History and Genealogy of the Briggs Family" in 1938 but since he was a descendant of Walter Briggs of Scituate, Massachusetts, he made no mention of our Clement Briggs of Plymouth and later Weymouth, Massachusetts. There were several Briggs who were early immigrants to America but according to the D.A.R. research none came as early as Clement Briggs who arrived in Plymouth in 1621, just one year from the time the Mayflower and its consort of vessels had landed in Plymouth. In fact, of all the immigrant ancestors recorded in this work, Clement Briggs was the first to arrive in America. He spent ten or more years as one of the Pilgrims in that lonely shoreline settlement of Plymouth.

The 1620 Pilgrim group were Separatists, who, in conflict with the established Church of England, and outside its pale, had suffered persecution and hardships. One congregation had fled from England to Holland; had lived there for twelve years practising their austere faith. Of the one hundred and two who finally made the voyage, thirty five were of this group, the remainder being from London. The Pilgrims had endured a severe winter and had grimly set themselves to the tasks of working out their destiny in the New World.

Though the story of the Plymouth Pilgrims is a familiar one, the incidents associated with Clements' life would not be complete without mention of the circumstances surrounding the events that pervaded those early years among a people whose destinies were marked by an interdependence for their very survival.

"Historians tell us that only a few years before the coming of the Mayflower (1620) there had been a plague of smallpox among the Indians which carried off great numbers of them and forced them to desert some of their original strongholds; villages and planting fields. The settlers found clearings and even meadows ready to their hand in many instances. Bradford tells us that Plymouth itself had evidently been one such a place, but was entirely deserted by the terrified natives after the fearful scourge Gosnold, who was at Cape Cod in 1602, before the Plague, in speaking of the Indians, said, 'This coast is very full of people,' and Capt. John Smith who was there in 1614 said, 'It is well inhabited with many people,' and speaking of the country (Massachusetts coast in general) said, '... It is a Paradise of all those parts, for here are many planted with corn, groves, mulberries, savage gardens and good harbours. The seacoast, as you pass, shows you all along large corn fields.' It is estimated that on arrival of the English before 'Plymouth' there were about 20,000 Indians within fifty miles of the Plymouth location... Plymouth itself had evidently been a flourishing Indian community before the dreadful smallpox epidemic, but only a few dared show their faces in the place when the Pilgrims came." ¹

The Pilgrims were poor folk, too poor to have outfitted an expedition to America without assistance and so had mortgaged themselves to a group of London merchants for a term of seven years. The authors Edward Warwick and Henry Pitz tell us that:

"For the most part they were artisans and laborers, small farmers and tradesmen, but they were well equipped in many ways to cope with the

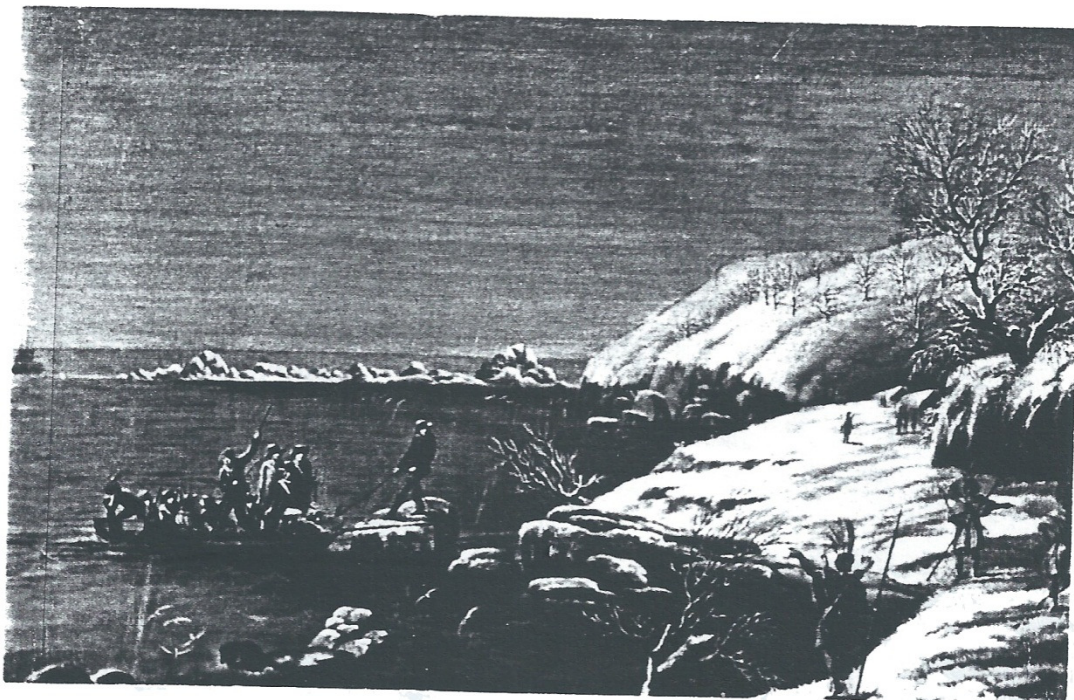
strange conditions of their new home. They were zealous, full of fierce energy, determined, unyielding. They were accustomed to grinding toil and rough living. There was nothing either in their religion or in their experience to lead them to expect ease and untroubled ways in this world. In fact, their interpretation of the Bible encouraged them to welcome trials and hardships as tests of their faith. They were a unit in thought and purpose, which fact alone gave them tremendous advantage over odds. They set themselves to the task of building, clearing, and planting, casting no backward glances at the England they had left... seeing in all things the hand of God, doubting not that they were carrying out His will.

". . .They built a log meeting house on a hill, a stout fortresslike structure, loopholed and barricaded, with gun platforms on the roof, using it at once as a place of prayer and a haven of refuge in time of danger. Around it clustered their little cabins and their sparse fields of Indian maize. The dark forest pressed closely on three sides. A Dutch traveler of the time gives this picture of their life:

" ' Upon the hill they have a large square house, with a flat roof made of thick-sawn planks, stayed with oak beams, upon the top of which they have six cannons, which shoot iron balls of four or five pounds, and command the surrounding country. The lower part they use for a church, where they preach on Sundays and the usual holidays. They assemble by beat of drum, each with his musket or firelock, in front of the captain's door; they have their cloaks on, and place themselves in order, three abreast, and are led by a sergeant without beat of drum. Behind comes the governor in a long robe; beside him on the right hand comes the preacher with his cloak on, and on the left hand the captain with his side arms and cloak on, and a small cane in his hand; and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him.'



"During the early years the lonely settlement was always like a small camp. It hugged the shore; the unexplored wilderness hemmed it in. There were on that great Bay area no white faces close than the Dutch trading - posts on the Hudson; no English neighbors nearer than the planters' cabins on the James River. Yet it grew and prospered in a modest way...This Pilgrim colony never became a factor greatly influencing the development of New England. It lacked material wealth and intellectual attainments. Its numbers were few. In 1630 they totaled but two hundred and fifty souls. . ." 2



LANDING OF THE PILGRIMS AT PLYMOUTH,
MASSACHUSETTS, DECEMBER 11, 1620
From a painting in Pilgrim Hall



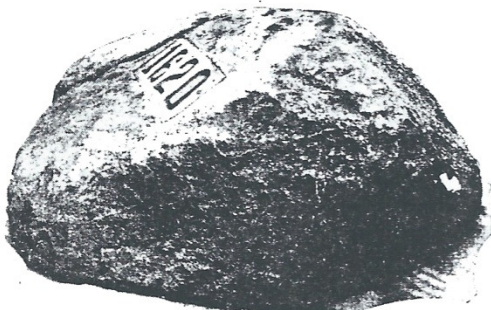
THE FIRST THANKSGIVING



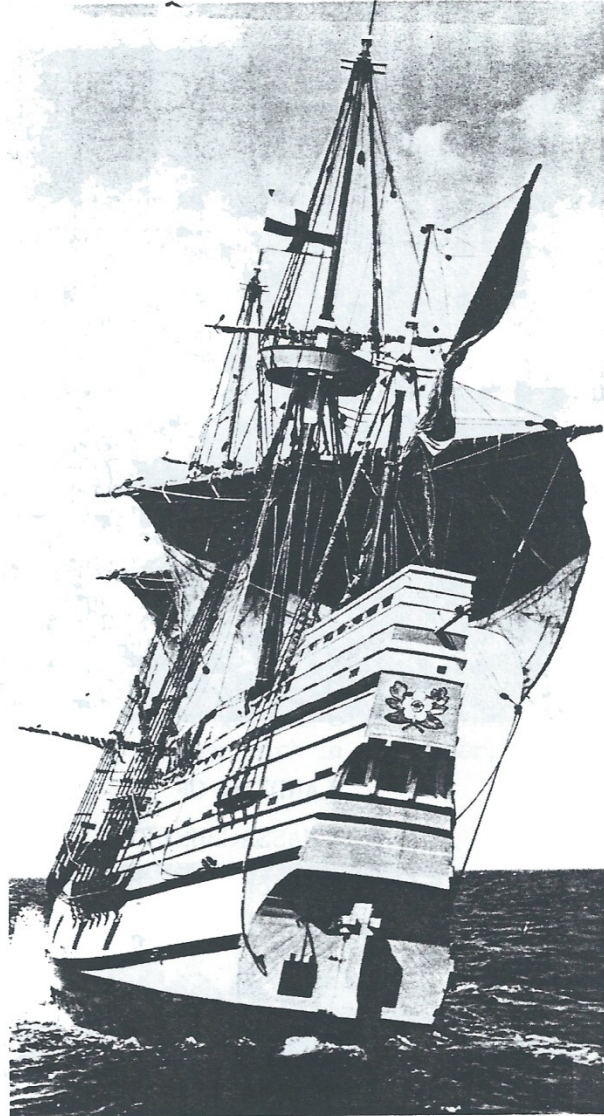
Plimoth Plantation



Palisades
and Fort

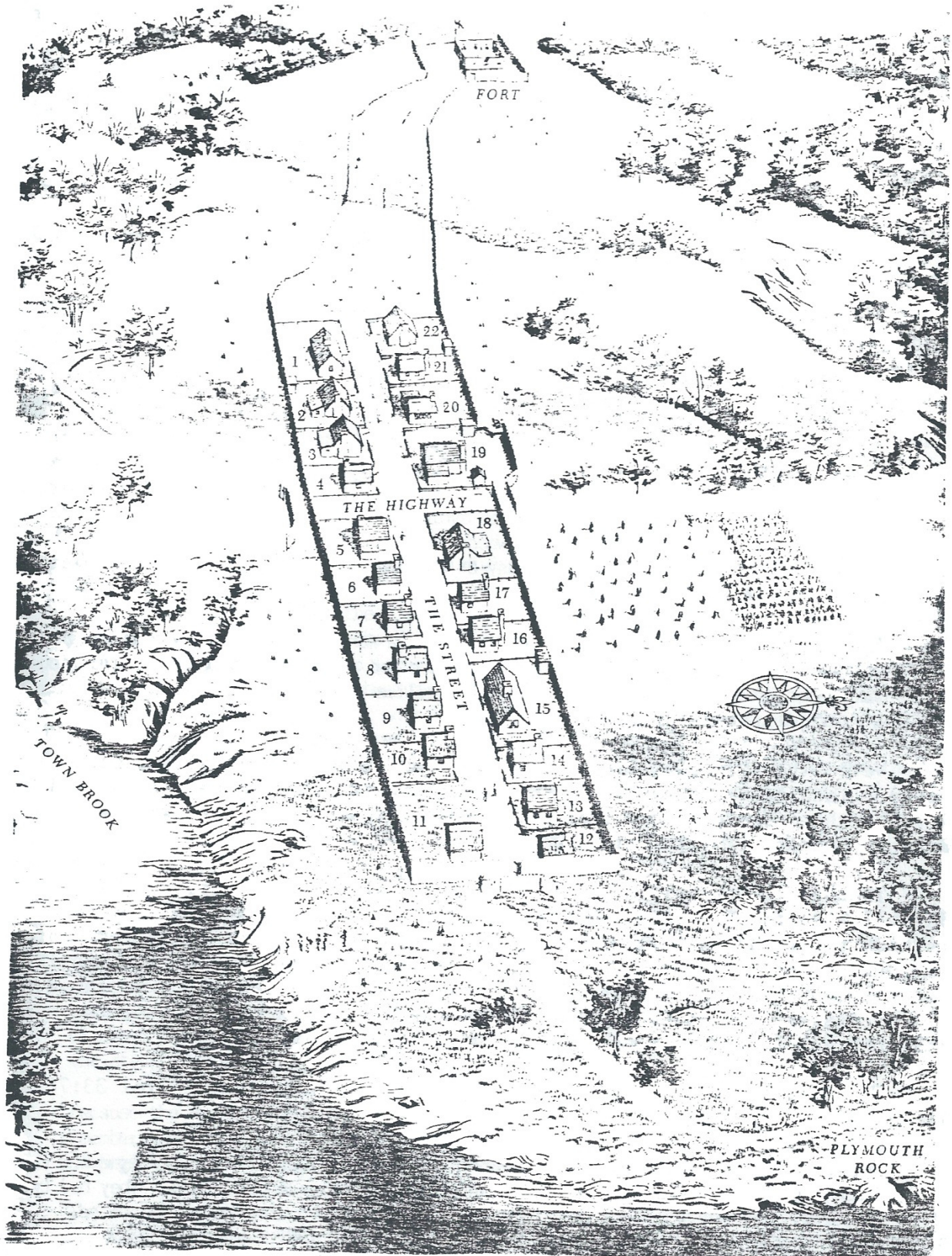


Plymouth Rock, where the Pilgrims are believed to have first set foot when they landed on the shores of Plymouth Bay.



The Mayflower

Pictured on the next page is a modern sketch of Plymouth showing the town in 1627, when it held less than 200 persons. The houses shown were occupied by the families of 1, Josiah Winslow; 2, Francis Cooke; 3, Isaac Allerton; 4, John Billington; 5, William Brewster; 6, Johathan Brewster; 7, Thomas Prence; 8, Peter Brown; 12, Nicholas Snow; 13, Francis Eaton; 14, George Soule; 15, Richard Warren; 16, Dr. Samuel Fuller; 17, John Howland; 18, Stephen Hopkins; 19, Governor William Bradford; 20, Degory Priest; 21, John Alden; 22, Captain Miles Standish. Numbers 9 and 10 were common houses; number 11, a store house. The palisade was finished in March, 1622; the fort was built the following summer. By 1643, Plymouth Colony held 3,000 persons, and other towns had been founded.



Clement's American venture begins, then, in November of 1621 when he landed at Plymouth. The pilgrims had suffered great hardships during their first winter of 1620-21. He found a group of people weakened by lack of sufficient food, much severe exposure and sickness; almost half of their number had died during the cold winter. What food they had been able to store from their efforts of the summer must now be shared with the new arrivals of the ship "Fortune."

We might assume that Clement came as a young lad for he did not marry until nine or ten years later. Nothing is recorded to show that he came with parents or relatives. His history during those first years in a new land is entwined with that of the Plymouth Colony.

It may not be known what motivated our young Clement to board the ship "Fortune" bound for New England, but several reasons can be assumed as in common with other immigrants who came at that early time. Generally the passengers were obliged to be examined by the clergymen of the Church of England.

"touching their conformity to the discipline of the Church, and to ascertain that they had taken the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy before joining the ranks of the colonists in New England . . . Still among the thousands who emigrated, a large number evidently left England to avoid religious persecution or avoid payment of hateful fines and subsidies imposed upon them and there were others whose consciences would not permit them to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. Many of these left secretly and their names were thus not recorded on any passenger list. . .

". . .The proceedings which were taken against the nonconformists was severe enough that the prisons of London were filled with objectors who had spoken out in behalf of religious freedom. Such proceedings caused many English families to consider emigrating to America by any scrupulous means possible." 3

We can be sure that Clement Briggs came to America legally because the passenger lists bear the names of only those who left the shores of England by legal right. The greatest pressures were put upon the people who began to migrate in larger numbers by 1630.

Though Clement Briggs was not a "Mayflower" Pilgrim, still he shared those first few years of trials and struggles to survive in Plymouth. By 1630 new colonists came and settlements spread beyond the confines of the town into the surrounding country. Clement looked to Weymouth, a shore settlement in its infant beginnings, some distance north of Plymouth (see map #2). He found a wife in Dorchester (now Milton), a new settlement to the north of Weymouth; a coastal town that is now a town within the greater Boston area.

The D.A.R. research taken from "The American Genealogist" Vol 33:76 states that:

"Clement Briggs came in the ship "Fortune" to Plymouth, 1621, settled in Weymouth, Mass., 1633. In 1630/1 he married Joan Allen of Dorchester, (now Milton) Mass. They had two children:

1. Thomas Briggs, b. June 14, 1633, lived in Taunton, Mass.
2. Jonathan Briggs, b. 14 June 1635, lived in Taunton, Mass." 4 (7-9)

According to Brainard T. Peck, of Lakeside, Conn., nationally recognized genealogist of New England research, Clement's wife, Joan, died sometime before 1639 and Clement married 2nd, Elizabeth _____.⁵ We find in the D.A.R. report that four more children were born to the second marriage:

- "3. David Briggs, b. Aug. 23, 1642; he removed to Long Island, N.Y.
4. Clement Briggs, Jr. b. Jan 1, 1642/3; md, 3 Nov. 1677, Elizabeth Field; died, 1669, at Weymouth, Mass.
5. Remember Briggs, lived in Taunton, Mass.
6. John Briggs, died"⁶

Weymouth became Clement's permanent residence until his death in 1650. It can be reasoned that all of his children were born there. His oldest, Thomas, was seventeen and Jonathan was fifteen years of age when their father passed away and the children of the second family were eight years and younger.

Little is known of personal reference but it is of interest that the conditions of life in the early settlements of the Bay area and the people who were their founders be entered here, since these matters influenced every individual of the time. The forementioned authors, Warwick and Pitz, continue their discourse with these words:

"Ten years after the Pilgrim landing a much more important migration began to spread along the shores of the bay to the north. It was the beginning of the real Puritan exodus, that was to overshadow quickly the Plymouth settlements and to shape the destiny of New England. The new-comers were akin to the Plymouth people in many ways. They possessed the same tendencies toward more primitive forms of worship; toward simplicity of life and plainness of dress. They looked upon the business of living as a grim and difficult thing, giving scant welcome to anything that might soften or brighten it. They were not, as were the Pilgrims, or Separatists, in open revolt against the Church of England, but reformers inside its ranks, would-be purifiers from within. Yet these religious distinctions between the two groups, however large they may have loomed in England or in the earliest years of the colony, quickly lost their importance under the new conditions in America. In practice at least, the theological distinctions between Puritan and Pilgrim, Nonconformist and Separatist, gradually ceased to exist.

"It is a fact of supreme importance that only about one-fifth of the population of early Massachusetts were members of the Puritan Church, and since church membership was the qualification for suffrage, a small minority controlled the destinies of the colonies. Even this comparatively small number of church members and voters were swayed and dominated by their preachers and leaders, a group of vigorous-minded and aggressive zealots. It is from the ranks of these zealots that the characteristics have been taken which go to make up the picture of the stern Puritan as he is usually conceived.

"Because the Puritan image has been so much pictured and written about, it is difficult to remember that his numbers were few; that he was an extreme and eccentric type; that even in New England of the seventeenth century his was not a common figure.

"The Puritans came well equipped for colonizing. There was a great deal of wealth among the later colonists. They brought with them stores of all kinds for their own use and for trade with the Indians. They brought tools and farming implements, live stock and seed. The wealthier ones came with hopes to transfer their estates almost wholly to Massachusetts, with an intent to erect in New England a social order corresponding to the one they had left behind."⁷

The wealth and rank of the menfolk were reflected in their attire. The clothes they brought from England were cut in the fashions that had evolved through the years and was now well established. The trunk hose were replaced by full knee-length breeches, the ruff still lingered among the older generation; the doublet was looser and longer. The wide sombrero hat was still worn and was to be popular until almost the middle of the century. The foot-gear was still the square-toed shoes tied with ribbons, or boots of varying lengths and widths, often turned down in a bell-like flap.

The women wore skirts that were gathered full at the hips and allowed to hang freely to the ground. The bodices were becoming lower in the neck and higher at the waist, with short tabs like the doublet. The sleeves were loose and often gathered in a single puff. The broad, falling collar of linen had replaced the whisk and ruff. Veils and hoods or a broad-brimmed hat similar to that used by the men were worn outdoors. Variations, however, from the basic ideas described, were commonly seen and are familiar to readers of today.



"...The wealthy Puritans had hoped to establish a colony of farms, of large landed estates, owned by themselves; and small freeholds to be distributed among the yeoman class. There were, however, certain factors outside their calculations. The geography and climate of New England conspired against such a system or social order. The winters were long, farming and navigation were difficult. The early coastal settlements with their many harbors with fishing close at hand, their seemingly inexhaustible forests furnishing timbers drew the people to shipbuilding, fishing and to trade. Men were drawn into a variety of promising pursuits. He built rude sawmills at the fall line of navigable streams. He erected mills for grinding maize and wheat, tanneries, and, later, mills for fulling the homespun cloth. He evaporated sea-water for salt, and dug in the swamps and lowlands for bog iron.

"These small industries, and the first tentative shipping ventures, were, through the middle years of the seventeenth century, already helping to shape the social and political character of New England. They were developing a practical-minded, adaptable, self-reliant,

type, the Yankee, a man who could turn his hand to a half-score of trades, and who could solve with competence the many new problems life in the early colonies was constantly presenting. Just as geography and climate made impractical the development of large plantations with their landed aristocracy, encouraged instead the small land holder and yeoman farmer. The diversification of trade and industry permitted a merchant class that depended for its success a large body of independent, skilled artisans, and of intelligent, capable middle-class clerks and tradesmen . . .

"Then too, any aristocratic tendencies in the social fabric were checked by the New England system of land-ownership. Each community was virtually self-governing, the land passing from the hands of town corporations into the possession of individuals with certain land held for the common use." ⁸

During the lifetime of Clement Briggs, New England produced hundreds of these self-governing and self-supporting communities or towns. Weymouth became one of these independent villages of which Clement became an early proprietor. It was soon inhabited with a group of home-loving settlers. It was a village clustered around the steepled and clapboarded church, which faced the trim village green. About the green were spaced in ample grounds the log homes of the citizens; a tavern with its stable-yard and sheds and its painted sign; a square log or boarded school-house, and perhaps the platform of the town pillory. Upon either side of the highroad leading away from the green were other cottages and huts, shaded by some of the forest trees left standing, or by elms or willows brought as seedlings from the home country. By 1650, many New England villages had an air of quiet spaciousness and dignity.

Most of the houses were mere cottages of one story and an attic, with a broad sweeping roof covering the kitchen and sheds in the rear, and often linking the house to the barn. The roofs were frequently thatched particularly in communities close to the sea, where the salt marshes afforded a liberal supply of suitable reeds.

Within, the houses were dark, oiled paper being more common than glass; while in the evenings hand-made candles and a flickering log fire in the fireplace gave but a dim yellow light. Earthen floors were still common though floors of heavy sawn planks were soon to be seen. The walls were of boards or more often of clay mixed with chopped straw. Against these rough textured walls was placed the limited furniture of the home - the heavy post frame of bed, the chests, cupboards and heavy chairs. Most of New England's somewhat scanty supply of furniture was home-made. The makers were the settler himself who was not without skill and taste. They succeeded in copying the imported pieces in a rougher and ruder form that often had a striking character and flavor of its own but not without a particular beauty. Many things were fashioned by the land-owner himself. He made stools, benches, and rude tables.

Since metal was scarce, most of the articles for household use were contrived from materials at hand. Plows, shovels, rakes, and almost all farm implements, made in the new land, were of wood. Churns, trays, firkins, tubs and troughs were made of wood. Pewter was not common, and pottery was rare. Cups

and bowls were made of gourds; shells were used for spoons or dippers; and the trenchers, tankards, flagons, and basins were wooden. During the long winter evenings, the men of the household whittled and wrought, "exercising considerable ingenuity in the working of native materials into shapes of use, and often of beauty.

". . .the stores of clothing brought over by the new arrivals from England and that imported from the London merchants were insufficient to supply the needs of the colony and had to be supplemented by native products. Almost from the first, homespun materials were made. Some of the first fields to be cleared of forests and rocks were put out in flax; and soon every farm had its blue-flowered flax patch. The gathering and preparation of the flax were difficult and tedious. Before it was ready to be spun into thread, over twenty different operations were necessary, all of them requiring considerable skill and experience. The greatest dexterity was needed in the spinning of the yarn into thread on the small flax-wheel. Finally came the bleaching, washing, and weaving. The home-woven linen of the time was a sturdy, closely woven material, so resistive to hard wear that linen covers, testers, and even shirts and bands were willed as heirlooms down through several generations.

"Woolen materials began to be made almost as early as linen. In 1643 a contemporary writer says: 'They are making linens, fustians, dimities and look immediately to woolens from their own sheep.' Sheep were brought over in many of the early boats, and in 1644 there were estimated to be three thousand in the Massachusetts Bay Colony . . .

"For dyes they used the flowers, roots, and barks of the country-side and other materials at hand. . . Brown was easily obtained from the bark of trees. . ." ⁹

Much more can be said to elaborate on the environment and setting of the early Weymouth town and community. It was the usual custom in the settlements of this country to form churches immediately after taking possession of an area of ground. The Gorges Company had obtained English titles vested in governmental grants and with the coming of this company in 1623 to Weymouth, came Rev. William Morrell, a clergyman assigned to be a spiritual leader as well as a holder of much civic power. The Pilgrims believed in a theocracy which did not necessarily mean a 'separation from the State.' Their clergy was the 'word of God' and to obtain the rights of a freeman one must be a member of the Church.

"So, then, our facts relative to the early settlement are briefly these. A permanent settlement in the fall of 1623, by Capt. Robert Gorges and his followers, continual additions during the next few years, . . .the visits of Gov. Winthrop on his way to and from Plymouth, until the erection of the settlement into a plantation and the right given for a deputy to represent them in the Plymouth General Court. All this before 1633 . . .

"It will be remembered that the original settlers of Wessagusset, the Indian name for Weymouth, were what would now be termed "squatters," and their titles simply those of possession, the real owners being the Indians, whose rights were general and not individual. The English titles were grants given to large companies like the Plymouth Company, the Gorges Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company. These early settlers came into the territory of Wessagusset before it fairly was in the possession of either company; consequently they could only acquire such title as the native holders could give them, to be confirmed by later authority, whatever that might be. Weymouth extinguished the Indian title by purchase; the deed dating 26 April, 1642, was executed by the resident chiefs and is recorded among the Suffolk Deeds . . . The town was therefore now in a position to confirm the planters in

their possessions, and the existence of the list of proprietors (including the land transactions of Clement Briggs), made soon after, seems to indicate that this was done." 10

About 1634 Rev. Joseph Hull arrived in Weymouth with a company of immigrants who made a temporary stay. They were soon to realize that Weymouth was beginning to be crowded and if they wanted new land they must move to new out-posts. Most of Hull's company decided, with other discontented settlers, to move to Barnstable, on Cape Cod. Reference to this move is made in the story of Thomas Lombard (7-45). Like Boston and the towns of the Bay settlements, all eastern settlements became 'jumping off places' for migrations southward and westward. Weymouth saw many newcomers and many outgoers in the years that followed. The name Briggs, like many others, became common in all New England.

In American colonial records of the Colony of New Plymouth, Samuel Briggs, member of the "Historical Society in Cleveland Ohio, 1880, gathered the following data on Clement Briggs:

"Clement, who came in the "Fortune" Nov. 1621, rec. 1 acre land 1623 - Clement, rec. 1 of 4 'heyfers' which came in the ship "Jacob," 22, May 1627, - Clement, trades 4 acres of land with John Browne, 8 Oct. 1637, - Clement, sells land to Robert Heeks, 29 Aug. 1638, - Clement, owned land at Joane's River, 3 Feb. 1648. . ." 11

Other facts found in the Plymouth Colony Records state:

"1637 Clement has land lying on the south side of 'Joane's River' now Kingston, Mass., (see map # 2) and in 1640 a commission is appointed to range the bounds between his lands and those of Gov. Thos. Prince.

"In 1638 Clement Briggs of Weymouth, feltmonger (worker of hides and furs), came into court and deposed (to affirm under oath) that he dwelt with Samuel Lathame in Barmundsey Street, Southwark, England, two and twenty years ago; (which would make the time about 1616, prior to Clements coming to New England) that he discerned how many pelts his master pulled in a week, and that those of Robert Hicks were better and cheaper than those of his master." 12

This latter item may seem trivial but it tells us a great deal. Clement had been apprenticed to a master, Mr. Samuel Lathame, of the trade of feltmongers when he was a young boy in England and had probably learned the trade while working for his room and board, as was the custom in English workshops at that time. One's heart is rent when we envision such a young lad confined, by force, to long hours of labor at the expense of educational pursuits so available to our young boys of today. Perhaps, by 1621, he had completed his obligations to his master and was ready to go out into the world to see what he could do for himself. Whether it was the call of adventure, the lure of independence, or a religious attachment to the Puritan reform of thought that may have been the reason for Clement's migration, we can only venture to assume.

If a fortune was his idea of the opportunities in this new land, his motive has long since been satisfied by the accomplishments of his posterity in America. Individually, his fortune lay in the lands he acquired for himself and his sons; something he could never have done in Old England. The only

land owners in England were Lords of Manors who held the tenure of property. Often the lease or rent was made to an amount almost equal to a man's wage. To own land made the settler in New England feel like a King and even if his circumstances were hard, he held his head high in the pride of his soul.

Clement Brigg's Will, dated 1648, proved Aug. 24, 1650, is evidence of his successful ventures in this new land. His death is recorded as 1650 in Weymouth where he and his first wife Joan (Allen) were most likely buried. His wife Elizabeth, died 28 July 1659. ¹³

It is noted that three of Clement's children removed to Taunton, Mass. Taunton is situated on the banks of the Taunton river whose outlet is the Bay Port on the shore line of what is now Rhode Island. The town is south of Weymouth about 30 or 35 miles and to the west of Plymouth. (see map # 2)

Taunton was also the home of our earliest Babbitt ancestors. A daughter of Johathan Briggs (7-9) married Elkanah Babbitt, the son of the immigrants, Edward and Sarah (Tarne) Babbitt. (7-1)

1. #44 Preface p. xi, xii
2. #67 pp. 86, 88, 89
3. #44 Preface pp. viii, ix
4. #71 p. 11
5. # 2 Vol 2 sheet (17-42)
6. #71 p. 11
7. #67 pp. 89-92
8. ibid p. 94-96
9. ibid p. 99, 100
10. #145 p. 94, 95
11. # 45 pp. 87, 88
12. ibid p. 173
13. ibid p. 111