

"As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation."

- William Bradford

# Pilgrim News

*San Diego Colony of Mayflower Descendants*

Vol. 2, Issue 3, Governor William "Budd" Leaf

May 2026

## Governor's Message

### Spring Greetings to You and Your Family!

How the months (and years) roll along! Callie and I just returned from an April road-trip to visit sons Matt and Erich and their families. It's becoming an annual trip East for us, though we only go as far as New Mexico. We had a great time, and just like we're used to in San Diego, the weather was fantastic this year (no snow this time in Silver City NM – a first). I love travel, especially when it includes family.

Did you miss our February Meeting? Naughty you! Our Guest Speaker for this meeting was author and speaker, Donna Watkins. She spoke to us a couple of years ago and we loved her so much, we invited her back.

Donna is the author of "Diverse Gashes: Governor William Bradford, Alice Bishop and the Murder of Martha Clark, Plymouth Colony 1648". Alice Bishop is Donna's Ninth Great Grandmother, so this had to be an interesting topic, right? It was, too! Not only did we learn of her GGx9 Alice's sad circumstances, but we also perhaps learned way too much about general CRIME and PUNISHMENT in the 17th Century. My takeaway was that maybe those olden times were not so great – I'm thinking! Many thanks to Donna for a most interesting program.



Our Program Speaker for the May 16th Meeting is going to be Mr. Thomas Sanger. He will be sharing a personal drama with us regarding his grandmother and a fateful day on the Atlantic that she endured just before WWII. Additionally at this meeting, we'll be introducing the slate of nominees for the new 2026-2028 Board and holding the election for these positions. We'll also be announcing the winner of our Colony Scholarship for this year.

The next Colony Meeting will be my last as your Governor. Oh, I'll still be around but just maybe sitting in the back somewhere chatting it up too loud at your table. It's been a while since I've actually finished a meal, so that'll be different. Over my two terms, I've met so many members, both in our Colony and at the California Board Meetings. We have a lot of really nice 'COUSINS' out there, up and down our State! I'd like to thank the General Membership – YOU - for coming to our meetings. I hope you've enjoyed our programs as we try to keep them interesting and varied. Next, I'd like to thank our Assistant Governor, Martha Anderson. She's done an amazing job finding speakers for us – some from within our Colony and some from the community. And finally, a huge thank you to our Colony Board for their time putting our

meetings together.

From the 'Pilgrim News' issues (Judith), to the \$dollar\$ crunching (Connie), we count on all of them more than you know, and they always come through. Thank you all so much!

It's been a wonderful and insightful experience getting to know so many people who share a common background. We have exactly 284 active and paid-up members of our SD Colony, with many more Friends who are interested in the Mayflower story. I know most of you by name from our email list, and many of you by your beautiful smiles. Thank you all so much for sharing your time with us.

May will be another guaranteed interesting program for us, so please attend if you're able. Our meetings are always open to all who are interested in historical facts and tales.

**Budd Leaf, SD Colony Governor**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Colony Meeting Program \_\_\_\_\_ Pg. 2  
Tom Sanger

Colony Memories \_\_\_\_\_ Pg. 3

2025 Colony Scholarship Winner \_\_\_\_\_ Pg. 4

Colony Items \_\_\_\_\_ Pg. 5

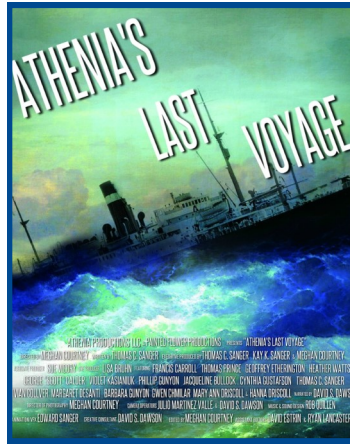
The **Mayflower**  
Society  
General Society of Mayflower Descendants®

# May 18, 2026 SD Colony Meeting Program

Our guest speaker for our May meeting is Tom Sanger.

After earning a journalism degree, Tom worked in Los Angeles as a radio news writer and a reporter for the Associated Press. During a tour of duty in Vietnam, he served as an information specialist, writing hometown news releases and stories for the military newspaper Stars & Stripes. In Sydney, Australia, Tom researched and wrote documentary scripts for two years at the Australian Broadcasting Corp., before starting a 34-year career in corporate communications and executive operations in southern California.

He is the author or co-author of three books, including *Without Warning*, a novel about the sinking of the passenger ship *Athenia* at the



start of WWII. Tom was drawn to the long-forgotten *Athenia* story because his grandmother, Rhoda Thomas, was a passenger on the ship when it was torpedoed by a German submarine. Two years after the novel's publication, Tom and his wife, Kay, set out to bring *Athe-*

*nia's* story to a wider audience by producing a documentary film, titled *Athenia's Last Voyage*. After six years in development, the film was released in early September 2025, on Amazon Prime Video. Tom sees the documentary, like the novel, as a lasting memorial to the *Athenia's* passengers whose heroism and sacrifices have been overshadowed by WWII's devastation.



*Athenia's Last Voyage*  
Producers, Tom and Kay Sanger

## The Story of Rhoda Thomas, an Excerpt from *Athenia's Last Voyage*

"The threat of war was not a major consideration for my grandmother, Rhoda Thomas, when she visited relatives and friends in her native England during the summer of 1939. Although German Chancellor Adolf Hitler was making territorial demands on Poland, few people thought the situation would lead to war.

But on August 24th a news bulletin from Moscow cast a pall over all of Great Britain. Germany and Russia announced they signed a non-aggression pact in which they agreed not to go to war with each other or to aid an enemy of the other country. The announcement seemed to make war a more realistic possibility.

That evening the radio carried news that the U.S. Embassy was warning all American citizens in Britain to leave for home immediately due to the threat of war. Rhoda ar-



ranged passage on the liner *Athenia*, leaving from Liverpool Saturday, Sept. 2. Her plans to travel to Liverpool had to be changed twice due to the evacuation of school children from large cities and troop mobilizations.

Friday morning, Sept. 1, the German army began invading Poland. War now seemed unavoidable. Rhoda caught an express train to Liverpool, arriving Friday evening. The next morning while waiting to board *Athenia*, she sent a cable to her family in Rochester, NY, saying she would arrive in Montreal, Canada, Sept. 10.

The next day, Sunday, Sept. 3, a dining room steward told Rhoda at lunch that England had just declared war on Germany. Passengers talked about the danger posed by German submarines, but almost everyone believed the ship would be out of the

danger zone before anything could possibly happen. That evening after dinner, Rhoda went up on deck with her heavy coat to get a breath of fresh air before retiring. Seated with a friend on the starboard side of the ship, she watched the stars winking on in the twilight sky."

"All at once, there was a terrific explosion. Something struck [the] port side of the ship and she seemed to keel over on her side and the water came over the deck. The lights went out all over the inside of the ship and a dense cloud of gas-filled smoke seemed everywhere. I was thrown down and as I picked myself up and turned around, I saw out on the water about a half a mile away, a long-shaped dark object with black smoke around it, and in a flash I knew what had happened."

To read the rest of her story, click the link above.

# Memories, 2024-2026 Colony Photos



# San Diego Colony, Mayflower Society

## Scholarship Winning Essay, 2025

Plymouth Colony, North America

May 1, 1625

Dear Brother,

I hope this letter finds you safe and that you and our family are well. It's been over five years since Father and I left Holland for North America. Not a day goes by that I don't think about our family and our home in Leiden. How are our sisters Evi and Hanna? They were just toddlers when Father and I left home. I miss you all dearly and hope our family will be reunited someday.

Life here in Plymouth is difficult, far more than I expected when we set sail. The first winter was terrible, and the number of colonists' deaths was devastating. We lived on the Mayflower for nearly five months while we built our new settlement. Because of this, we were in close quarters, and the disease spread quickly. Many became sick, and too many didn't survive. We estimate that at least half of the original colony members have died since arriving. It was hard to keep our faith through such sorrow, but those who remain have grown stronger in spirit. Those fortunate enough to survive have built homes, cleared fields, and learned to live together in this new land.

One of the greatest blessings has been the help of the native people, the Patuxet, part of the more prominent Wampanoag tribe, called "People of the First Light." Without them, we wouldn't have known how to plant corn or find food in the woods. Since forming our peaceful relationship, we've learned to fish, hunt, and live with the land instead of fighting against it. The winters here are harsh, so we spend a lot of time preparing for the cold and ice that move in swiftly. In the year following our arrival, 1621, our colony benefited from a large crop and celebrated for three days. The leader of the Wampanoag, Massasoit, joined us with his men and brought us deer to add to the feast. Since then, we have taken time each fall to pay homage to those who have helped us survive, express our thanks and gratitude, and spend time with our families and new friends.

I miss our books, learning, and hearing Dutch spoken in the streets back in Holland. Father brought a few books from home, so I spend time reading and practicing my writing when possible. I also wake up early each morning to read my Bible and reflect on God's word. Although I couldn't finish my studies before leaving home, this arduous journey has been worth it, and I've found a new purpose here.

With so many chores and tasks to complete, there's little time for rest. I spend most of my days working alongside Father in the fields, chopping wood, or helping build and repair homes. Unfortunately, some of the women have lost their husbands, so Father and I do what we can to help them. Still, there's something peaceful about the hard work, especially when we can gather together at the end of the day and give thanks.

Sometimes, I even find joy living in this new adventurous land. On the Lord's Day, we gather to worship, and once in a while, we young folks walk along the shore or race through the woods. The world here is vast and wild. It's not easy, but it feels free and filled with endless opportunities.

Please give my best to our mother, sisters, and those back home. I miss you all more than words can describe. Maybe, if God wills it, you'll come to North America one day. There is room for many more; though the cost is high, the reward is far greater.

May God be with you always.

Your brother always,

**San Diego Colony  
 Executive Board  
 2024-2026**

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**Education Chair**

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**Parliamentarian**

Judith Reale

**Hospitality Chair**

June Carter  
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***A Big Thank You to the 2024-2026  
 Colony Board for Your Service!***

**Governor:** William "Budd" Leef  
**Assistant Governor:** Martha Anderson  
**Recording Secretary:** Sharon Gardner  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Judith Reale  
**Treasurer:** Connie Bloodworth  
**Elder:** Ken Whittemore  
**Delegate to State:** Gail Raser  
**Historians:** Bev Willey, Kathy Loftman  
**Membership Chair:** Renee Neale  
**Education Chair:** Amy Conboy  
**Hospitality Chair:** June Carter  
**Web Master:** Budd Leef  
**Parliamentarian:** Judith Reale



***Nominees for the 2026-2028 Colony Board***

**Governor:** Martha Anderson  
**Assistant Governor:** Renee Neale  
**Recording Secretary:** Sharon Gardner  
**Corresponding Secretary:**  
**Treasurer:** Callie Leef  
**Elder:** Stephen Taylor  
**Delegate to State:** Renee Neale  
**Historians:** Bev Willey, Kathy Loftman  
**Membership Chair:**  
**Education Chair:** Amy Conboy  
**Hospitality Chair:** June Carter  
**Web Master:** Budd Leef  
**Parliamentarian:** Judith Reale

**Congratulations to  
 our New Members!**

Nov. 2025-Apr. 2026

- **Sharon Gardner** ~ Elizabeth Tilley
- **Terri Kidd** ~ George Soule
- **Jacqueline Badal** ~ Edward Doty
- **Michael Huff** ~ Edward Doty
- **Curtis Horton** ~ Francis Cooke
- **Conner Sullivan** ~ William Bradford
- **Thomas Sullivan** ~ William Bradford
- **Carl Sullivan** ~ William m Bradford

**Do You Need a Badge?**  
 As members, we proudly display our names and the name of our Ancestor.



**In the Fall**

If you are a new member, a Mayflower Friend, or just need a new badge, follow these steps:

Contact June Carter at [starmorn@outlook.com](mailto:starmorn@outlook.com)  
 Include your name, your Ancestor's name, or names. They must be from an application or supplemental that has been verified by Plymouth. If you have several lines of ancestors, please check with June about a possible price increase.

Pay at a meeting or send your check for \$14.00 made payable to, "SD Colony of Mayflower Descendants" to:  
 Information will be available in the fall!