

Two of the World's Most Significant Documents And Their Relationship to Us Today

By D. A. Sharpe
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The Magna Carter and the Mayflower Compact are the two documents cited here, due to their far-reaching impact upon democracy as we know it in the world today. One English woman, Alice Carpenter, is a unique tie between these two documents in a very interesting way.

Alice Carpenter, widowed from Englishman Edward Southworth, came to the new Plymouth Colony in the New World the summer of 1623 on the sail ship "Anne." Soon, she married William Bradford, the new Governor of the colony, which was the first marriage of that colony. Their acquaintance reached back to the Leiden group days when she and her first husband, Edward, were a part of that group. Probably the marriage was planned in advance and was the reason that she traveled at that time.

Alice represents connections to two of the most significant historical documents in the world that deal with government, freedom, human rights and democracy. Her first husband, Edward Southworth, is the 11th great grandson of King Edward I, known as "Longshanks," due to his great height.

Edward was the grandson in a trilogy of three generations of Kings (John of Lackland, Henry III and himself) who issued 17 known editions or versions, beginning in 1215 AD, of what became known as the Magna Carta. The significance of these documents is they laid out in written order the concepts that the king was not all powerful. Instead, the King did need to consult with the citizenry (*the Barons in these cases, a group similar to what we might think of as legislatures*) about certain matters. This was the beginning seeds of civil and human rights first expressed in a national government level official document in World History.

It must be remembered that the three Kings agreed to these things under pressure from the Barons, and not because the Kings felt magnanimous for the people's rights. These Kings consented to these royal limitations in order to remain on the throne without inviting civil rebellion.

Fifteen of the known copies of the Magna Carta reside in various British institutions, one is in Australia and one is in the United States, the property of the Perot Foundation of Dallas, Texas. The foundation's originator, Mr. H. Ross Perot, Sr., is an acquaintance of mine and a member of the church where I was on staff for 22 years prior to retirement, Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Texas. The Magna Carta copy Mr. Perot has was issued by King Edward I in 1297 AD and its significance is that it was the only one of the 17 editions that actually found its way into wording of legislation in England. There are 37 sections to that edition and ten of them are reportedly still on the law books of England today as originally put. Mr. Perot gave me a couple of copies of posters he had made illustrating that copy of the Magna Carta and they are nicely framed for my personal display.

Though the document primarily is one of governance, it does attribute the validity of its authority to the Grace of God. One of the first elements made plain is the freedom to worship that the Church of England was to have. The Church was to be free from direct governmental management. There still was indirect government management, through the appointment of bishops, etc.

Alice's second husband, William Bradford, was a significant leader and a man of God among the Mayflower Pilgrims. Though he was not formally educated, his self-education was such to make him probably the most learned and literate man among those 102 Mayflower passengers. His knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin enabled him to expound Biblical teachings with authority. He also had abilities in two other languages. He went on later to be elected as their Colony Governor in 33 of the first 35 years of their history.

The men among those passengers signed what was to be called the **Mayflower Compact** shortly after arriving at the new land, but prior to setting foot on the new land. It was a document to outline a system of self government by which these people would live in freedom, in God's grace, but would have an understood order of authority from the citizens necessary for their new society to prosper. This was the first such document in the New World to affirm these concepts in writing, and it was rooted deeply in the belief of God through Christianity.

Though it is not reported exactly who composed that document (*it presumably was a document of expression from all of them*), it is fairly likely that Bradford was a co-author, if not the principle author of its composition. After all, no one knows where the original copy disappeared, but the only reason we have the words captured today is that Bradford, in his writing of the history of the Plymouth Colony, cited the words, which obviously were exactly familiar to him.

Alice's Carpenter family has a significance of its own. Notice the thread of strong achieving character cited in this following information about her father and her sisters. The Carpenter family had roots deep and long in England, and one source cites the family estate in the early 1700's as having a value of what would be equivalent to over \$100 million.

Alexander Carpenter, Alice's father, was from Wrington, Somersetshire, England. The five Carpenter sisters were the daughters of Alexander Carpenter. They had a brother, but he died early in life. Alexander and his family were members of John Robinson's congregation who moved to Leiden. Three of Alexander's daughters married in Leiden. One of these married daughters died without children, but the remaining four immigrated to Plymouth after 1620 and occupied important positions in the civic life in Plymouth.

Juliana married George Morton, in Leiden in July 1612. Juliana and George and their children arrived in Plymouth in 1623, probably aboard the Anne. Morton was one of the authors of *Mourt's Relation*, the first account of life in Plymouth written to entice Englishmen to settle in Plymouth. George Morton died in 1624. Juliana subsequently married Manasseh Kempton, but had no children by him. In the 1627 cattle division, Juliana, Manasseh, and her children by Morton (Nathaniel, John, Ephraim and Patience) were listed in Bradford's company. Juliana's oldest son Nathaniel was born in Leiden in 1613. In 1647, Nathaniel became clerk of the Plymouth court, a position he held until his death in 1685. Throughout his life, Nathaniel held strong opinions that influenced civic life in Plymouth. Juliana died in 1664/5 and Nathaniel died in 1685.

After the death of her father Alexander, Mary Carpenter cared of her mother in Leiden. After she died, William and Alice (Carpenter) Bradford wrote to Mary in 1645, asking her to come to Plymouth to live with them. Mary immigrated to Plymouth, but never married.

Alice Carpenter married Edward Southworth in Leiden in 1613. Edward died before 1620. After the death of his wife in 1620, Dorthea May, William Bradford wrote to Alice, inviting her to come to Plymouth. She arrived on the Anne in June 1623 and married Bradford in August 1623. Alice's two sons by Southworth were Constant (b 1614/6) and Thomas (b 1616/20). They moved to Plymouth Colony about 1628 to live in the Bradford's home. Three children were born to Alice and William Bradford: William, Mercy and Joseph. William later served as assistant to his father.

Agnes Carpenter married the widower Dr. Samuel Fuller in Leiden in April 1613. They had no children. She died sometime before 1617 and Samuel Fuller married Bridget Lee in Leiden in 1617. Bridget arrived in America in 1623 aboard the Anne. Fuller was a signer of the Mayflower Compact in 1620 and served the colony as surgeon, physician and church deacon. Bridget became the colony's midwife and is thought to be a deaconess as well. Fuller died in Plymouth before the cattle division in 1627.

Priscilla arrived in Plymouth after the cattle division of 1627. She married William Wright in Plymouth after 1627, but before 1633. William arrived in Plymouth on the Fortune in 1621 and assumed leading roles in Plymouth affairs. Unfortunately, he died in 1633. Priscilla then married John Cooper in 1634. John Cooper's sisters, Ann and Lydia Cooper, married Ephraim and Nathaniel Morton. John and Priscilla moved to Scituate, where he was constable in 1639. They later moved to Barnstable, where he was a deputy in 1642. John's will is dated in 1676.

So, it is with blessing and honor that I associate with these people and with these two significant documents that have represented major governance freedom for men and women in our nation and in England. Let us not forget the people behind those great concepts of governance that have endured so well. Let us not allow development in

our nation to erode the qualities of freedom, self governance and freedom of religion. Let us remain free to be men, woman and children who know and revere God, the creator.

We can be thankful for the experience of knowing about Alice Carpenter, a woman whose two marriages brought together family lines of two such high profile men in history who were associated with the very fundamentals of freedom and all that we, as Americans, hold dear for our self governance.

Now, to expand upon the Theory of Relativity, it is with great pleasure and fun that note can be made that King Edward I, in addition to being the 11th great grandfather of Edward Southworth, is also my 12th cousin, 21 times removed on my Mother's side of the family. On top of that, my son-in-law is the 24th great grandson of King Edward I. That makes him related to my daughter before their marriage as 34th cousins, four times removed! I suppose that is distant enough not to worry.

In addition to that significance on relativity with Alice Carpenter's first marriage, it is also true that her second marriage, which was to Gov. William Bradford, created the family and descendants in which my life has been lived, for they are my eighth great grandparents.