

Excerpt from *Matriarch of the Mayflower: Mary Brewster*
By Kathryn Brewster Haueisen

Mary Brewster was one of nineteen adult women who arrived in the New World via the *Mayflower in 1620*. In the years before the crossing, she lived in exile in Holland with her husband, Elder William Brewster and their children. The family emigrated from England to Holland in 1608 with around a hundred other like-minded religious refugees to escape fines, arrest, and potentially torture and death. That was the frequent fate of those who participated in non-conformist movements that swept through England following the launch of the Protestant Reformation. While in exile, Elder Brewster established a publishing business. Most of his work consisted of translating various religious books into English. However, his publishing business also published works criticizing the British King and Established Church of England hierarchy. I hope you'll enjoy this scene from the forthcoming *Matriarch of the Mayflower: Mary Brewster*.

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I love my husband, truly I do. But when the city magistrates came to the house in search of his publishing work, I had equal measures of fear, consternation, and anguish. Mixed together, they made a bitter stew of trouble. We lived in Leyden then, in a small home along Stink Alley. The alley led from the main cobble street along a canal and past Town Hall, and ended at a large open area on the back side of Pieterskerk Cathedral. It is a magnificent cathedral, with ceilings as high as the sky and beautiful stained-glass windows all around. The leaders of our Covenant Community denounced such elegance, but I thought them alluring; a thought I know well enough to keep to myself.

Our fellowship group did not worship there, but those who did proved good neighbors to us when first we settled in Leyden. We gathered in homes at the start, then in a room at the University. After a few years, we procured a place of our own large enough to provide housing for Pastor Robinson and his family and gather us all for worship and meetings.

Once we settled in Leyden, I felt it safe to relax a bit for the first time since my husband started to meet with the controversial non-conformist Pastor Clyfton back in England. My days of contentment came to an abrupt halt in 1619. I remember the day well. It was a cool spring day; but sunny, so I felt warm and quite comfortable in the sun. I had the younger children with me - my young sons Love and Wrestling, and the poor little orphans Ann and Robert Peck. They were kin to William, so naturally, when William heard of their plight, he made haste to settle the financial details with a relative back in England and arrange for their passage to us. Our oldest, Jonathan, had his own apartment, but my daughters Patience and Fear, along with my younger sons Love and Wrestling, were all at home. With the addition of the Peck orphans, I never lacked for something to do.

That day I took the younger children to market with me. Shopping with four children slowed my progress and tested my patience; yet it also helped. All were of sufficient age to carry a small basket or two, so I could purchase more and make fewer trips to the shops. It was a lovely early spring day with skies the color of robins' eggs. The children and I paused on a bench outside the town hall to gaze at the lovely, fluffy white clouds. I told them a dog chasing a cat in the clouds.

Love pointed up. "I see a cow grazing."

"Mama, look, see, a horse and rider," said Wrestling.

Ann Peck shook her little head so hard her blond hair flew in every direction. “A tiger! There. See?” How on earth the child would know what a tiger looked like mystified me. Perhaps she’d seen one in a book somewhere.

“Bloody fool,” accused her brother. “I see a dog chasing a cat, too,” he said. It was like him to solicit some special favor from me by agreeing with me.

Those few moments were the last peaceful ones I would know for the next two years and more. Robert and Love saw them first. “Look!” they said together and pointed toward our house. Two men knocked furiously on our door. Before I could reach the house, I saw the door open. I collected our baskets and sent the children down the alley, around the cathedral to the Robinson home. “Tell Mrs. Robinson I shall come for you once I learn what these men want of us. Go straight there. Stay until I come for you. Or send Patience or Fear to fetch you. Go now.” I waited until I was certain they were doing as directed. Then I scurried to see what was going on. Patience peered around the open door. I heard one of the men demanding of her, “Where is your father? Your mother?”

I said a quick prayer that I might keep my wits about me, and called out to the men from behind them, “I’m Mrs. Brewster. I’ve just returned from the shops. I reached around the men to hand the baskets to Patience. Then I walked ahead of them into the house. Fear cowered by the fire place.

“Fear, please go look after the children. I sent them to call on the Robinsons. Mrs. Robinson will welcome your assistance.” She cautiously approached the door. The men stood aside to let her pass. When she was past the visitors, she quickly disappeared down the alley. The men turned to me, one of them waving a paper in my face. “We’ve orders to fetch Mr. Brewster. Hate to disrupt you Mrs. Brewster, but your husband’s caused quite a stir with his publishing affairs. King James himself said we’re to round him up and make him give an account for the trouble he’s caused.”

My heart thumped in my bosom, pounding out, “Danger. Danger. Danger.” I couldn’t speak. My mind raced with ideas of what to say, trying them on one at a time to see how they might fit this situation. Nothing I could think to say seemed the right approach. When I didn’t say anything for, I really can’t say how long, one of them said, “I have orders here to confiscate anything related to his publishing work. We know he prepares what he prints here. In this very house.”

The one with the papers added, “Would save us the trouble and you the misery of searching the whole house if you’d point out where he does his work.” I nodded my consent and pointed up the stairs to the garret where William, Mr. Winslow, Pastor Robinson, and others pored over manuscripts they planned to publish. I stood at the bottom of the stairs, clutching Patience’s hand, frantically thinking what I should do. I knew my husband was likely at the university at that time of day, and might come home at any moment. Would they take him away?