

Navigating the Silver Books: A Genealogist's Guide

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Introduction to the Silver Books

- **Overview:** The Silver Books, formally known as "*Mayflower Families*," detail 5+ generations of descendants of *Mayflower* passengers. Each volume focuses on one of the 25 of 26 *Mayflower* families with known descendants, providing an essential resource for lineage verification. They are an encyclopedia of *Mayflower* descendants.

Historical Insight

- **Beginnings:** The concept of tracing descendants was initiated in 1899, and the project aimed to trace descendants up to the American Revolution. Lewis E. Neff started the Five Generations Project (later the Silver Books Project) in 1959.
- **First book:** Published in 1975.
- **Latest Volume:** Published in 2024.
- **Time period covered:** 1500s in Europe before the sailing of the *Mayflower* in 1620 through the 19th century.

Practical Application for Genealogists

- **Research Use:** These volumes are vital for genealogists conducting lineage research, especially for those verifying *Mayflower* descents. They provide rigorously researched family sketches from the *Mayflower* passenger down through five+ generations. Lineage applications need to connect to the Silver Books.
- **Content Details:** Each book offers:
 - **Family Sketches:** Detailed sketches that include vital events, marriage details, and subsequent generations with sources for verification.
 - **Generational Coverage:** While the focus is primarily on the first five generations, details about more recent descendants are included when available.
 - **Sources and Citations:** Each entry is accompanied by citations to original records, making tracing and verifying lineage easier for researchers.
 - **"Probable" children:** Indirect evidence indicates a strong likelihood of a relationship, and those lines are carried forward.
 - **"Possible" children:** Weak evidence of parent/child relationship. Included in the manuscript to indicate the line has been researched, but there is no evidence to carry the line forward.
 - **Publications and Proof Arguments:** Well-researched and scholarly articles are cited in the Silver Books. We encourage people to contribute to scholarship by writing these types of articles.

Usage and Impact

- **For Genealogists:** These volumes are indispensable for anyone researching early American or *Mayflower* lineage, offering detailed narratives and well-cited genealogical trails.

- **Educational Value:** The books also act as educational resources, providing insights into colonial life, migration patterns, and the societal impacts of the *Mayflower* descendants.

Navigating the Silver Books

- **Start with the Silver Books Index:** Use the comprehensive index of over 226,000 people to find specific names across all volumes, which lists names alphabetically and notes their appearance in various volumes.
- **Cross-reference Information:** Utilize the detailed citations and sources provided to cross-reference with genealogical records.
- **Reference Guide to Silver Books:** 15-page reference guide of four sections. Alphabetical list, numerical list, and publication dates. Access this downloadable PDF on the GSMD website under the Silver Books Tab. <https://themayflowersociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/REFERENCE-GUIDE-TO-THE-GSMD-SILVER-BOOK-SERIES.pdf>

Where can you find the Silver Books

- **General Society of Mayflower Descendants website:** <https://themayflowersociety.org>
- **Family History Library**
- **Local genealogy libraries**
- **NEHGS – American Ancestors:** Fifth generation only online: <https://www.americanancestors.org>

Conclusion

- **A Dynamic Resource:** Silver Books are more than historical documents; they are a growing repository of colonial research.
- **Explore and Discover:** Whether confirming lineage, uncovering family stories, or contributing to scholarly work, the Silver Books are an invaluable asset to the genealogical community.
- **Join the Journey:** Discover more about your *Mayflower* lineage and explore the rich history documented in the Silver Books. Your journey into the past begins with these well-crafted volumes, each a chapter in the story of America's earliest settlers.

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