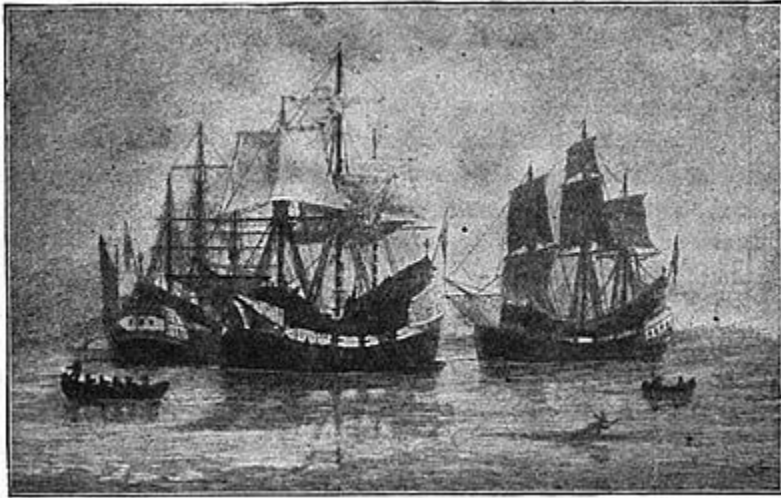


# The Winthrop Fleet

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 *Arrival of the Winthrop Colony*, by William F. Halsall

The **Winthrop Fleet** was a group of 11 ships led by John Winthrop that carried about 800 Puritans plus livestock and provisions from England to New England over the summer of 1630.

## Motivation

The Puritan population in England had been growing for many years leading up to this time. They disagreed with the practices of the Church of England, whose rituals they viewed as superstitions. An associated political movement attempted over many years to modify religious practice in England to conform to their views. King James wished to suppress this growing rebellious movement. Nevertheless, the Puritans eventually gained a majority in Parliament. James' son King Charles came into the greatest possible conflict with the Parliament, and viewed them as a threat to his authority, temporarily dissolving parliament in 1626, and again the next year, and finally dissolving parliament permanently in March 1629.<sup>[1]</sup> The King's imposition of Personal Rule gave many Puritans a sense of hopelessness regarding their future in that country, and many prepared to leave it permanently for life in New England.

Motivated by these political events, a wealthy group of leaders obtained a Royal Charter in March 1629 for a colony at Massachusetts Bay.<sup>[2]</sup>

A fleet of five ships had departed a month previously for New England that included approximately 300 colonists, led by Francis Higginson.<sup>[3]</sup> However, the colony leaders and the bulk of the colonists remained in England for the time being, to plan more thoroughly for the success of the new colony. Later that year, the group who remained in England elected John Winthrop to be Governor of the Fleet and the Colony. Over the ensuing winter, the leaders recruited a large group of Puritan families, representing all manner of skilled labor, to ensure a robust colony.

## Voyage

The initial group (Arbella and her three escorts)<sup>[4]</sup> departed Yarmouth, Isle of Wight on April 8,<sup>[5]</sup> the remainder following in two or three weeks.

Seven hundred men, women, and children were distributed among the ships of the fleet.<sup>[6]</sup> The voyage itself was rather uneventful, the direction and speed of the wind being the main topic in Winthrop's journal, as it affected how much progress was made each day. There were a few days of severe weather, and every day was cold. The children were cold and bored, and there is a description of a game played with a rope that helped with both problems. Many were sick during the voyage.

The Winthrop Fleet was a well planned and financed expedition that formed the nucleus of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. However they were not the first settlers of the area. There was an existing settlement at Salem, started in about 1626, populated by a few hundred Puritans, most of whom had arrived in 1629, and who were governed by John Endicott. Winthrop superseded Endicott as Governor of the Colony upon his arrival in 1630.<sup>[7]</sup>

The flow of Puritans to New England continued for another ten years, during a period known as the Great Migration.

## **Ships**

Winthrop's journal lists the eleven ships that were in his fleet:

- *Arbella*: The flagship, designated 'Admiral' in the consortship; named for Lady Arbella, wife of Isaac Johnson (see below).
- *Talbot*: Designated 'Vice Admiral'. Henry Winthrop, John Winthrop's son, sailed on this ship.<sup>[8]</sup>
- *Ambrose*: Designated 'Rear Admiral'.
- *Jewel*: Designated a 'Captain'.
- *Mayflower*: A different ship than that of the Pilgrims.
- *Whale*
- *Success*
- *Charles*.
- *William and Francis*.
- *Hopewell*.
- *Trial*.

Six other ships arrived at Massachusetts Bay in 1630, for a total of seventeen ships that year.<sup>[9]</sup>