

**Thomas Willett
(1611-1674)**

Willett came to Plymouth in 1630, a youth of twenty who had grown up as a member of the Pilgrim congregation in Leyden. The Pilgrims gave him the charge of their important trading post on the Kennebec at one time but later he engaged in trade with the Dutch settlers in Manhattan, whose confidence he won. He was an Assistant in the Government of the Colony for eighteen years and was made a Captain of the Plymouth trainband after the death of Captain Myles Standish. Two hundred and fifty acres of land at Triphammer above the bridge was granted to him by the Colony and here he built his house (the oldest house in Kingston still standing).

In 1664, when the King's Commissioners came to take possession of the Island of Manhattan for the English they asked Captain Willett to go with them. He did so and proved very helpful because of his previous connection with the Dutch settlers and the confidence that they had in him. When the Dutch finally realized that they must submit to English rule they said that Willett would be especially acceptable to them as Mayor because of his knowledge of the Dutch language and customs and he was appointed the first English mayor of New York. Later he served a second term as mayor.

He never returned to the area and died in Swansea. His great-grandson was Marinus Willett.