2026 The Wilcox Foundation Essay Contest
Rules, Judging & Awards

For questions, contact Lisa Howard by email lisahoward333@comcast.net

Essay Contest Rules

You must be a high school senior residing in the Plymouth Canton School District. All Plymouth or Canton mailing addresses are included. You may be currently attending classes at any of our local public, private or charter high schools, but you must live within the boundaries of the PCCS district.

*** Essays are due time and date stamped at or before 11:59pm on Tuesday, April 7, 2026.**

* Essays should be submitted by email to lisahoward333@comcast.net

* The essay should be 5-10 pages in length, not including the cover page or citations page. You may include additional pages with notes, photos with captions, illustrations. Be sure to include sources for everything.

* Your essay should be in Google docs format, 12 point Arial or Times Roman, double-spaced with 1" margins. Please allow Google Doc access permission for our judges.

* Resources and works cited should be on the last page of your document. A minimum of 5 citations is required. Essays with no documentation will not be accepted. Please refer to the web link below if you have questions about proper formatting for different types of resource materials.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

* Your cover page should have the following information included in this order, please.

2026 Wilcox Foundation Essay Contest

"Dedicated to the belief in education - desiring to encourage learning about the history of Plymouth"

Your Name, High School Name

Home Mailing Address, City, State, Zipcode

Email Address (the email that you check regularly)

Phone Number (the number that you check regularly)

By submitting this essay for scholarship consideration, I *your full name here* , acknowledge that the words are my own and I have not used artificial intelligence to compose my essay. I understand that use of AI in writing this essay makes me ineligible to receive any scholarship funds.

Judging

Originality, creativity, accuracy in use of supporting data, organization and essay structure will all be considered in the judging. However, we will not necessarily be looking for the most scholarly written or academically superior paper. While academics and service to the community are applauded by our committee, this contest is based on your essay and depth of research, not your classroom grades or community volunteer efforts. Please do not include transcripts or volunteer hours with your essay.

The primary idea behind this program is to encourage students to discover the tools available in our community for historical research, and participate in a project that will give them insight into the history of the Plymouth area. This opportunity to make personal connections with another generation, look through actual museum archives, read news from another time, and view photographs of Plymouth places of the past will help to keep our history alive. The Wilcox Foundation's goal is that this project provides not only financial awards, but a memorable and meaningful experience, an important educational component for these students as they become our society's future decision makers.

Information drawn directly from Sam Hudson's popular history of Plymouth book may be used for ideas, but must not be used, quoted or referenced in your essay. Certain special situations in this process may occur and these will be addressed per individual.

New for this 2026 contest and moving forward, each student will be asked to include an honor pledge on their cover sheet stating that AI was not used to write any part of their essay. Essays that are found to have AI content (Artificial Intelligence or Chat GPT) OR do not include the pledge on the cover sheet will not be eligible to receive a scholarship award.

Hints for a successful essay

1. Start early. People and places may have limited hours for your research, so be sure to find out, make contacts and do some preliminary fact finding ahead of time.

2. Be resourceful! The Plymouth Historical Museum and Plymouth District Library staff are ready to help you access a wide variety of information. The judges value a combination of hands-on research together with internet and electronic documents.

3. Add a first person interview, as that will add a unique and exciting component to your research and maybe take it in a different direction that you initially planned.

4. Make sure you establish connections between people, places and events.

5. Recognize the different points of view which the past and present offer. Consider historical context.

The Awards

Each essay will be read and judged on the stated Rules and Judging criteria. The decision of the judges is final.

There will be First place, Second place and Random Draw winners. First place will be a minimum of $2000; Second place minimum of $1500; After first and second place winners are selected, remaining essays are eligible for the Random Draw scholarships of $1000 each. The judges may choose additional winners, and also increase the amount stated above to be awarded to the winners. The maximum amount of scholarships awarded will not exceed $26,000. The Scholarships must be used for post-high school educational purposes. They are not renewable. Scholarship awards will be sent directly to your educational institution by the Wilcox Foundation.

Award winners will be notified by phone or text, as well as an emailed letter. **Please be sure the information you provide on your essay cover sheet is updated and accurate.** Scholarship award certificates will be formally presented at your HS Honors Convocation. If your school does not have a formal presentation program, other arrangements will be made individually.