

CHAPTER 6: Puritans and Separatists; Plymouth Colony

WORLD HISTORY FOCUS

Puritans and Separatists

Church History in Brief

Puritans were strict English Protestants who wanted to remake the ceremony-loving Anglican Church into a much more strictly Protestant church than it was under Queen Elizabeth and King James I:

- Puritans wanted to eliminate every church tradition that didn't come directly from the Bible.
- Puritans wanted to fill their church services with strong Biblical preaching, not with fancy ceremonies, chants and incense.
- Puritans wanted Sunday to be a day of worship and rest, not a day of play.
- Puritans wanted to choose their own church leaders, instead of accepting bishops chosen by the king.
- Puritans wanted to stop greedy Anglican bishops from growing rich off their people's church donations.

The early Puritans who settled in New England, North America came in two main types:

1. **Separatists**, Puritans who separated from the Anglican Church because they feared it would never be pure enough. The Pilgrims who settled Plymouth Colony in 1620 were Separatists.
2. Puritans who remained loyal to the Anglican Church, hoping to bring all Anglicans around to their way of thinking. The Puritans who settled Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 were loyal Anglicans— at least at first.

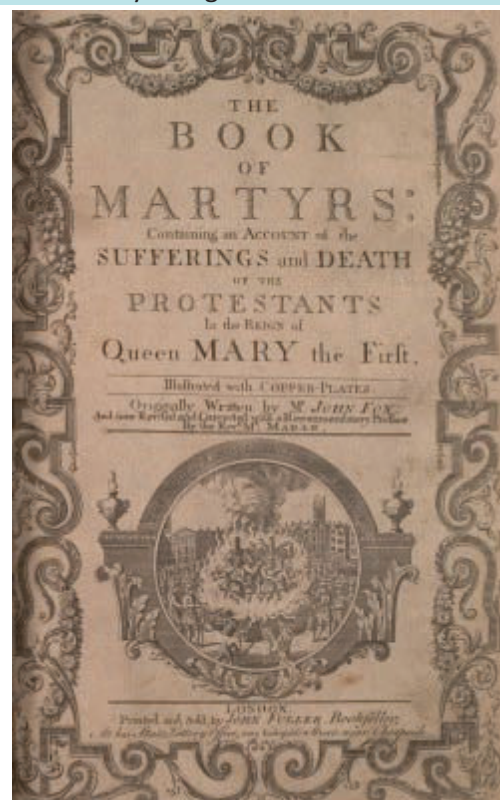
FASCINATING FACTS: Foxe's Book of Martyrs

Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* is a long collection of highly detailed, often illustrated stories about the lives and deaths of hundreds of Christian martyrs— especially the **Marian Martyrs**, the ones Bloody Mary burned to death at her dreaded execution ground in Smithfield, London (see Year Two). Former Marian Exile John Foxe published the first edition of his *Book of Martyrs* in 1563, five years after Mary's passing. Foxe would go on to publish several more editions, rewriting and expanding his book into a massive two-volume set nearly four times as long as the Bible. All of Foxe's editions were giant hits, selling countless copies and influencing countless Christians.

Naturally, Protestants and Catholics held two very different opinions of the *Book of Martyrs*:

1. Because Foxe condemned Catholic brutality, Protestants often quoted his popular book to argue that Catholicism was evil.
2. Catholics claimed that Foxe embellished his stories with exaggerations, as well as outright anti-Catholic lies.

However Foxe may have embellished some of his stories, though, he certainly did not invent them. Rather, Foxe backed up his writing with careful research and eyewitness interviews, making his *Book of Martyrs* the best surviving record of the inhuman punishments Bloody Mary inflicted on English Protestants.



DEFINITION: **Puritans** were strict English Protestants who sought to purify the Anglican Church after Bloody Mary's reign. Now that their church was independent and Protestant, Puritans hoped to remove the last traces of Catholic influence from its worship and government— to base their church on the Bible alone, and not on any inherited human traditions.

REFRESHING REMINDERS: The **Marian Exiles** were English Protestants who fled England to escape persecution and death during the five-year reign of Queen Mary I, the notorious “Bloody Mary” (1553 – 1558).

Puritan Complaints

The Marian Exiles returned to England in 1558 filled with suggestions for the Anglican Church's improvement— for in Puritan eyes, England's state church remained all too Catholic. Prominent Puritans like Thomas Cartwright and William Fulke criticized the supposedly-Protestant Anglican Church for continuing several Catholic traditions:

- **Holy Communion:** Puritans felt that the communion service in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer was still too much like a Catholic Mass— still a proud repetition of Christ's sacrifice, and not a humble memorial service in honor of Christ's sacrifice.
- **Midwife Baptism:** The Anglican Church still allowed midwives to baptize stillborn babies, in the belief that these babies could never go to heaven without a church-approved baptism. Puritans regarded midwife baptism as both anti-Biblical and superstitious— for they believed that God, not the church, decided who went to heaven.
- **Vestments and Surplices:** Some Puritans objected when Anglican priests tried to set themselves above other Christians by wearing special priestly robes called surplices. Such lavish robes offended Puritans, who believed in the **Priesthood of All Believers**— the idea that no Christian needed a priest to stand between him and God, because all true Christians belonged to a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).



Etching of the Marian Persecutions from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*

Puritans also objected to the Anglican Church's government, for two reasons:

1. **Corruption:** Many of the archbishops, bishops and other lofty prelates who led the Anglican Church were wealthy landholders who lived extravagant lifestyles at church expense— lifestyles which in no way resembled Christ's humble life of self-sacrifice (Matthew 8:20). For example, Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift often traveled with a kingly honor guard of 800 attendants.
2. **Church Polity:** Puritans wanted to trade episcopal church polity for a form of church government they considered both more Biblical and less corruptible: presbyterian church polity. That is, Puritans wanted to toss out corrupt, Crown-appointed bishops, and replace them with church-elected elders who would be more accountable to the people they served.

FASCINATING FACTS: The Martin Marprelate Tracts (1588 – 1589)

Martin Marprelate was a pseudonym, or false pen name, for an anonymous Puritan author whose aim was to mar the prelates— that is, to besmirch the reputations of corrupt Anglican officials like Archbishop of

Canterbury John Whitgift. In 1588 – 1589, Martin published seven mocking tracts in which he blatantly ridiculed England's bishops and archbishops, calling them "proud, popish, presumptuous, profane, paltry, pestilent and pernicious prelates." Martin denounced all Anglican bishops as "petty popes and petty Antichrists, whosoever usurp the authority of pastors over [Christians]— who by the ordinance of God are to be under no pastors. For none but Antichristian popes & popelings ever claimed this authority unto themselves..."

Because criticizing the state church was as dangerous as criticizing the state itself, Martin Marprelate had to print his tracts on roving printing presses carefully concealed from the prying eyes of the law. Infuriated by Martin's insulting tone, Archbishop Whitgift assiduously hunted down every one of these illegal presses, punishing each printer harshly in the hope that one of them might reveal Martin's true identity. In 1593, Whitgift executed one likely candidate for the true Martin: a Cambridge-educated Puritan printer named John Penry.

Other interesting facts:

- The persecuted and martyred John Penry happened to be a Cambridge University classmate of William Brewster, the Pilgrim father who helped settle Plymouth Colony in 1620.

The Act against Puritans (1593)

To keep rebellious Puritans like Martin Marprelate under control, Queen Elizabeth passed a new law against criticizing England's lawfully-established state church. Elizabeth's 1593 **Act against Puritans** required all Englishmen over 16 to:

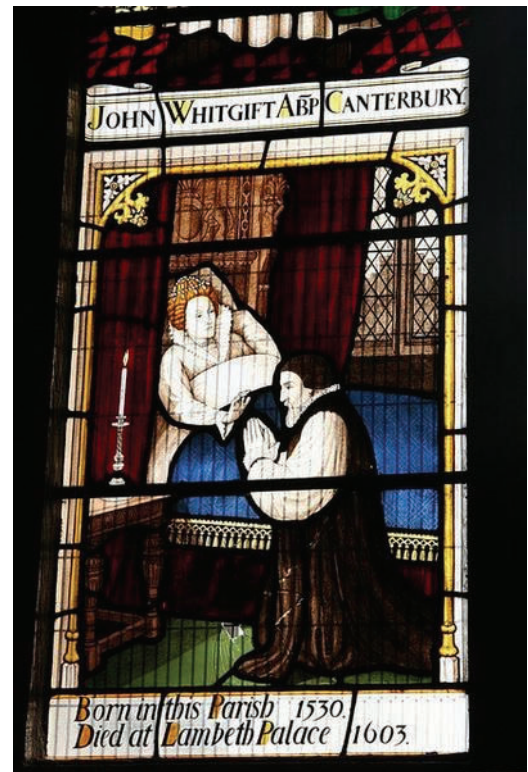
1. Attend Anglican Church services regularly, at least once per month.
2. Observe Holy Communion in the way the church offered it, without complaint or criticism.
3. Avoid **conventicles**, special gatherings that met to teach Puritan ideas and criticize the church.

Any Englishman who refused to abide by these requirements went to prison, there to remain without hope of release until he could swear the following oath convincingly:

"I... do humbly confess and acknowledge, that I have grievously offended God in condemning her majesty's godly and lawful government and authority, by absenting myself from church, and from hearing divine service, contrary to the godly laws and statutes of this realm; and in using and frequenting disordered and unlawful conventicles and assemblies, under pretense and color of exercise of religion: and I am heartily sorry for the same, and do acknowledge and testify in my conscience that no other person has or ought to have any power or authority over her majesty..."

INTERESTING IDEAS: Note that it was not enough merely to speak the words of this oath; rather, the accused must "testify in... conscience." The same Elizabeth who had once said "I have no desire to make windows into men's souls" now insisted on knowing her people's consciences.

By adding the Act against Puritans to existing anti-Catholic laws, Elizabeth outlawed criticism from both extremes— from both Catholics who denied her authority, and Puritans who questioned her theology. The only safe place for an Englishman to stand was in the middle, in firm agreement with the Anglican Church.



Stained glass of Archbishop John Whitgift praying beside Queen Elizabeth's deathbed, photo by Richard Croft

The Millenary Petition (1603)

Both Catholics and Puritans had high hopes that their prospects might improve when England's next monarch, King James VI and I, took Elizabeth's place. Because James came from Scotland, where the strict Protestant ideas of John Knox were popular, Puritans especially hoped that James might prove as Protestant as themselves.

Almost in the moment when James assumed his throne in 1603, a group of Puritan ministers petitioned him to adopt several Puritan-style reforms for the Anglican Church. This petition's name, the Millenary Petition, came from the fact that somewhere near 1,000 ministers— about 10 per cent of all ministers in England at the time— signed it (*mille* is Latin for 1,000). These ministers assured their new king that they were not trying to divide the church; rather, they were “faithful servants of Christ and loyal subjects to your majesty” who only wanted to make the Anglican Church more Biblical.

To the Puritans' earlier complaints against the Anglican Church's overly Catholic practices, the Millenary Petition added several more:

- **Biblical teaching:** Puritans wanted more and better teaching in Anglican worship. Instead of focusing on communion, as the Catholic Mass did, they wanted good, Biblical teaching to go along with communion.
- **Superstitious gestures:** Puritans wanted Anglican ministers to stop using superstitious, anti-Biblical gestures like (1) crossing themselves during baptism ceremonies and (2) bowing at the mention of Jesus' name.
- **Church government reform:** Among other church government reforms, Puritans wanted the king to block single bishops from receiving multiple incomes from the church. Kings and archbishops liked to reward their favorite churchmen with rich incomes from church-owned estates. In some cases, incomes that had once supported two, three or even several churchmen now lined the pockets of just one wealthy bishop.



Canterbury Cathedral

The Hampton Court Conference (1604)

The Millenary Petition was one reason King James convened the Hampton Court Conference, the same conference that led to the translation of the King James Bible (see Chapter 3). Unfortunately, one Puritan at Hampton Court dared to mention something the Millenary Petition didn't— presbyterian church polity, the idea of replacing the king's bishops with church-elected elders. James didn't mind some of the Puritans' other suggestions; but when they recommended ejecting his bishops, the king exploded:

“If you aim at a Scottish presbytery, it agrees as well with monarchy as God with the devil! Then Jack, and Tom, and Will, and Dick, shall meet and censure me and my council, and all our proceedings!”

Having already suffered through a great many arguments with Scottish elders, King James knew how stubborn and uncontrollable elders could be. The king regarded the election of elders as an assault on his royal authority, an uncontrollable system that allowed mere commoners to challenge royalty. Wanting no part of such a chaotic system, James went on to express his strong preference for bishops over elders:

“I approve the calling and use of bishops in the Church; and it is my aphorism, ‘No Bishop, no King’... If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves— or else I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse!”

King James having made his strong feelings against presbyterian church polity quite clear, Puritans who longed for greater church reforms than the king would allow had three options:

1. They could protest the king's decision— and be “harried out” of England.
2. They could continue to worship as their king and bishops demanded, hoping to reform the church later.
3. They could organize secret, illegal churches where they could worship as they chose.

A sub-group of the Puritans called Separatists selected the third option.



Hampton Court Palace, site of the Hampton Court Conference

DEFINITION: Separatists were Puritans who elected to separate themselves from the Anglican Church so they could worship God in the way they believed the Bible demanded. Separatists abandoned the Anglican Church for the same reason Protestants abandoned the Catholic Church: because they felt that both older churches insisted on clinging to human-based traditions, rather than adopting Bible-based reforms.

A LOOK AHEAD: The Pilgrims who will settle Plymouth Colony in 1620 will be Separatists; while the Puritans who will settle Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 will remain loyal to the Anglican Church, at least at first.

INTERESTING INDIVIDUALS: Robert Browne (1550 – 1633)

Even before the Hampton Court Conference, Puritan ministers like Robert Browne encouraged true Christians to set up independent churches of their own, governed only by their own congregations. In a 1582 pamphlet titled *A Treatise of Reformation Without Tarrying for Any*, Browne chided his fellow ministers for waiting on the government to set up Biblical churches, when they should be doing so themselves:

“We hold all those preachers and teachers accursed which will not do the duties of pastors and teachers till the magistrates [government officials] force them to. They say the time is not yet come to build the Lord's house; they must tarry for the magistrates and for parliaments to do it; they lack the civil sword... Indeed, can the Lord's spiritual government be no way executed but by the civil sword?”



Robert Browne was such an influential figure among Separatists that for decades, most Englishmen referred to all Separatists as **Brownists**. Loyal Anglicans regarded Brownists as dangerous schismatics— traitors bent on destroying England by splintering its strong, united state church into thousands of weak, disunited congregations.

Other interesting facts:

- The argument that cost Captain John Smith several weeks in *Susan Constant's* brig may have been an argument over Brownism. According to one version of the story, future Jamestown Council President Edward Wingfield accused Captain Smith's minister friend of being a Brownist. In the process of defending his friend, Smith insulted Wingfield, leading Wingfield to accuse Smith of mutiny (see Chapter 3).

The Pilgrims

DEFINITIONS:

- A **pilgrim** is any believer, Christian or otherwise, who undertakes a pilgrimage (journey) for his faith.
- The **Pilgrims** were Separatist Christians from around Scrooby, England whose faith journeys led them first to the Netherlands in 1607, and then on to Plymouth Colony, New England in 1620.

Separatists at Scrooby, Nottinghamshire

Scrooby, Nottinghamshire was a small village that lay along the Old North Road between the big cities of London and York. For centuries, Scrooby's main feature was its ancient manor house, a 40-room half-timber, half-brick-and-stucco structure that served as inn, tavern and post office as well as the local lord's home. From about 1589 – 1607, the master of Scrooby Manor was a Cambridge-educated Puritan-turned-Separatist named William Brewster.



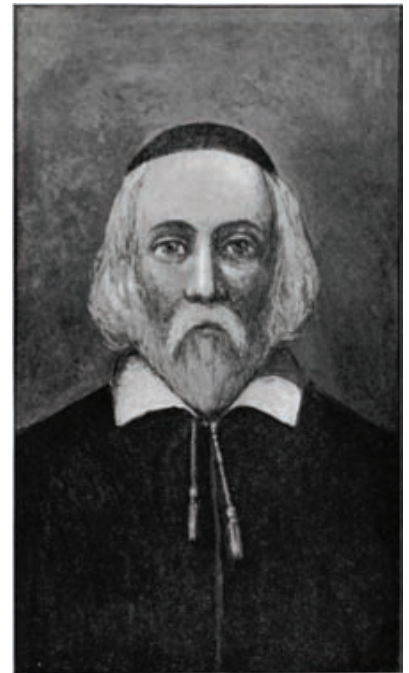
Scrooby Manor

GIANTS OF THE FAITH: William Brewster (1566? – 1644)

William Brewster was probably born at Scrooby, where his father served as lord, innkeeper and postmaster. Young Brewster's education at Cambridge University fell during the early 1580s, around the time Robert Browne's *Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any* touched off the Separatist movement. Because Cambridge was a reform-minded university, Brewster certainly learned some of his Puritan ideas there, and perhaps some of his Separatist ones as well. From Cambridge, Brewster moved to London, where he served as an assistant to a doomed diplomat named William Davison.

In 1587, Brewster's brief government career was ruined by the same scandal that ruined his mentor Davison's: the scandal over the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Sometime in 1586, Queen Elizabeth's spies finally convinced her that her cousin Mary must die for plotting against the queen's life. However, Elizabeth didn't want to appear responsible for executing a fellow royal; so she placed her diplomatic assistant Davison in charge of doing away with Mary. Then when Davison had done Elizabeth's bidding, the queen claimed that she had never wanted her cousin executed at all, and cast Davison into the Tower of London— thus making Davison her scapegoat for the whole scandalous affair.

With his mentor's career destroyed, William Brewster had no more reason to remain in London. Therefore in 1589, Brewster moved back home Scrooby, where he soon took his father's place as lord of Scrooby



Manor. Years later, when Brewster became a Pilgrim father and settler of Plymouth Colony, his brief experience in London made him one of the few Pilgrims with any knowledge of law and government. Brewster also became Plymouth's spiritual leader, a much-beloved mentor and encourager in the Christian faith.

Soon after moving back to Scrooby, William Brewster started traveling every Sunday to the nearby village of Babworth, where Richard Clyfton ministered All Saints' Anglican Church. Unlike most country ministers of his day, Clyfton searched the Scriptures every week for good teaching to share with his flock. Over the next several years, Clyfton's teaching grew steadily more Puritan, more insistent that the Anglican Church must dispense with every last trace of Catholic ritual. In place of those rituals, Clyfton suggested a new style of worship that was really an old style—the style the Early Church recorded in the New Testament.

By 1605 or 1606, the results of the Hampton Court Conference convinced the Puritans of Scrooby that King James would never reform his too-Catholic Anglican Church. Therefore they decided to form a new, more Biblical church of their own. With no Anglican officers to choose their leaders for them, the Separatists of Scrooby chose Richard Clyfton to be their pastor, and William Brewster to be their teaching elder. At the time, Brewster's good friend and protégé William Bradford was too young to be a church officer.



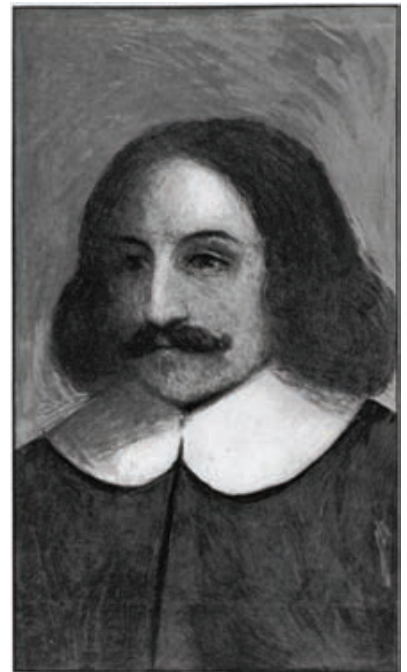
All Saints' Church in Babworth, Nottinghamshire, photo by Richard Croft

GIANTS OF THE FAITH: William Bradford (1590 – 1657)

William Bradford was born in 1590 at Austerfield, Yorkshire, just a few miles from Scrooby and Babworth. Sadly, both of William's parents died before his eighth birthday. Young William's guardians, his uncles, wanted him to follow them into farming; but instead, the bookish William preferred to study the Scriptures.

When William was about 12, a friend invited him to services at Babworth, where he met William Brewster. The elder William took the younger William under his wing, mentoring him and guiding him in his study of the Scriptures. When Brewster's congregation separated itself from the Anglican Church in 1606, the then 16-year-old Bradford gladly joined his mentor in working toward a more Bible-based church.

Years later, when Bradford became a Pilgrim father and settler of Plymouth Colony, he would serve as Plymouth's governor for more than 30 years. The diary Bradford kept as governor would provide the only surviving record of a great many Plymouth happenings.



Other interesting ideas:

- It was William Bradford who coined the name "Pilgrims" to describe the Scrooby Separatists. To Bradford, he and his people were wandering pilgrims whose true home lay nowhere on earth, but rather in heaven.

Persecution

In the Pilgrims' day, most loyal Englishmen regarded Separatists and Brownists as treasonous criminals. Because church and state were one and the same, to separate from one was also to separate from the other.

Therefore when Separatists showed disloyalty to the Anglican Church, some accused them of disloyalty to England as well. Even Puritan Anglicans criticized Separatists for creating divisions in church and country. Well-educated Anglican priests liked to mock Separatists with deriding nicknames like “Simon the Saddler” and “Billy the Bellows Maker”— in other words, untutored bumpkins who had no business offering their ridiculous opinions on church affairs.

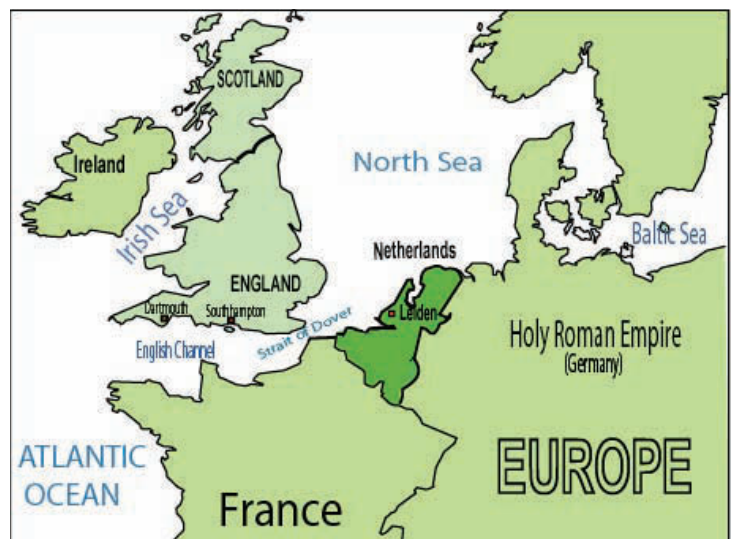
Criticism was hard enough, but legal troubles were far worse. Less than a year after the Pilgrims separated from the Anglican Church, English authorities started harassing them, jailing some and fining others. For his disobedience to the Anglican Church, a court ordered William Brewster to pay a large fine. Even worse, Brewster lost his church-appointed place as lord of Scrooby Manor. The terror of this time in the Pilgrims’ lives is reflected in the unusual name Brewster chose for his newborn daughter in 1607: “Fear Brewster.” The Pilgrims lived in constant fear of King James’ wrath, never knowing when the king’s men might be watching them.

Forced to choose between their faith and their country, the Pilgrims began to think the unthinkable—that they might have to leave behind friends, livings and every home comfort they had ever known to find new homes in a new country, one that wouldn’t persecute them for following their consciences. As true followers of Christ, the Pilgrims placed their faith in Christ’s promise from Mark 10:29-30:

“...no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields— along with persecutions— and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Pilgrimage to Amsterdam

Just across the North Sea lay a country that was far friendlier to Separatists than England: the Netherlands. After struggling against Philip II of Spain through all the long years of the Dutch Revolt (see Chapter 2), some Dutchmen understood the need to separate from an oppressive state church. Other oppressed English Separatists had already fled for the safety of Amsterdam, including some from the Scrooby area. With great difficulty, the Pilgrims followed their friends to Amsterdam, arriving there homeless and penniless in 1608.



GIANTS OF THE FAITH: John Robinson (1576 – 1625)

Shortly before the Pilgrims left for Amsterdam, they elected new church member John Robinson as assistant pastor to Richard Clyfton. Robinson was a Cambridge-educated former Anglican priest who left the priesthood for two reasons: because he stopped believing in the priesthood when he became a Puritan, and because he wanted to marry. When Robinson joined the Pilgrims at Scrooby during their troubled year of 1607, they immediately recognized his great teaching talent. They soon elected Robinson as one of their leaders, and followed Clyfton, Robinson and Brewster to Amsterdam.

At Amsterdam, the Pilgrims briefly mingled with a band of bickering Separatists called the Ancient Brethren. To the delight of their Anglican critics back home, the Ancient Brethren demonstrated one of the pitfalls of Separatism: that when churches have no bishops, they have no one to break up their arguments. The Ancient Brethren moved from one conflict to the next: when they weren’t battling over how to interpret the Bible, they were accusing one another of immoral behavior. The Pilgrims had come to the Netherlands hoping to worship in peace; but instead, they found themselves entangled in a bitter theological war.

Pilgrimage to Leiden

In 1609, eager to be free of the Ancient Brethren's incessant quarrels, the Pilgrims embarked on their second pilgrimage. While Pastor Clyfton remained in Amsterdam to help pastor the Ancient Brethren, Pastor Robinson and Elder Brewster led the Pilgrims on to the smaller, quieter city of Leiden. The Pilgrims would call Leiden, Holland home for the next eleven years.

FASCINATING FACTS: The Holy Discipline

In Leiden, where they were finally free to worship as they chose, the Pilgrims perfected an intensely Bible-centered style of life and worship called the Holy Discipline. Determined that his church must honor God, not man, Pastor John Robinson stripped his services of their last faint traces of Catholic or Anglican ceremony, and instead focused on a solemn worship style gleaned directly from the Bible.

Morning Worship

A Pilgrim worship service began at around 8 o'clock on Sunday morning with a process called "dignifying the meeting." To avoid the distractions of family life during the service, Pilgrim families dignified the meeting by splitting up: the men sat on one side of the meeting hall; the women sat on the other; and the children sat in back, under the watchful eye of deacons who would not hesitate to switch them if they dared show disrespect for God by fidgeting.



Pieterskerk or St. Peter's Church, near where the Pilgrims met in Leiden, Holland

dignified the meeting by splitting up: the men sat on one side of the meeting hall; the women sat on the other; and the children sat in back, under the watchful eye of deacons who would not hesitate to switch them if they dared show disrespect for God by fidgeting.

- Each service began with about an hour of prayer— often led by the eloquent Elder Brewster, who had a special gift for God-honoring prayer. The Pilgrims always stood to pray; for to sit in prayer was disrespectful to God, while to kneel was Catholic-style idolatry.
- After prayer, Pastor Robinson read Scripture from his Geneva Bible, adding comments to be sure his listeners understood— for understanding was crucial to the Pilgrims. To Pilgrim minds, hearing Scripture without comment was too much like sitting in a Catholic ceremony, listening to a priest chant Scriptures in Latin without understanding a word he said.
- The Pilgrims sang only God-written Psalms, never man-written hymns.
- To focus their attention on the meaning of the words, rather than the distracting beauty of the music, the Pilgrims never sang with instruments or in harmony; rather, they always sang *a capella* and in unison.
- Pastor Robinson usually took the rest of the morning to preach a sermon up to three hours long.

Afternoon Worship

After the noon meal came the part of Pilgrim worship Anglicans especially despised: prophesying. Pastor Robinson opened the afternoon service with another Scripture reading; but after that, any male church member was free to speak his interpretation of that Scripture, or to encourage his fellow believers with personal stories of God's faithfulness. Unlike Catholics and Anglicans, the Pilgrims believed that God's Word might inspire any true believer— even an uneducated commoner— to say something His people needed to hear.

A LOOK AHEAD: The fact that any male Pilgrim was free to speak in church naturally made Pilgrim commoners more independent-minded, more eager to express their opinions than Catholic or Anglican commoners. When the Pilgrims reach the New World, these independent-minded commoners will demand the right to express their opinions not only in church, but also in their colony's government.

Other interesting facts:

- The Pilgrims celebrated no special holy days, not even Christmas or Easter. Pastor Robinson based his church strictly on the Bible; and because the Bible didn't mention Christmas or Easter, neither did the Pilgrims.

Even in liberal Leiden, though, the Pilgrims were not free to live out their faith entirely as they chose. Although Dutch law allowed the Pilgrims freedom of worship, it did not allow them to **proselytize**— that is, to seek new converts to their faith. The Netherlands also held other discomforts for the Pilgrims:

- **Poverty:** The secrecy of the Pilgrims' 1607 flight from England forced them to leave behind jobs, property and every other kind of wealth, leaving them homeless and penniless. Eleven years later, many of them were still just as penniless.
- **Dutch Language and Culture:** Because the local language and culture were Dutch, the Pilgrims were watching their children grow up more Dutch than English. The Dutch also tended to have looser morals than the English, making the morally upright Pilgrims all the more eager to keep their children separate.
- **The Dutch Revolt:** There was still a chance that the Netherlands might lose the ongoing Dutch Revolt to Spain. If that happened, then Catholic Spain might force the Protestant Dutch— and the Pilgrims as well— to swear allegiance to the Catholic Church they despised.



Modern-day windmill at Leiden, Holland

In their search for yet another new home, one where they could earn decent livings in complete religious freedom, the Pilgrims considered several possibilities:

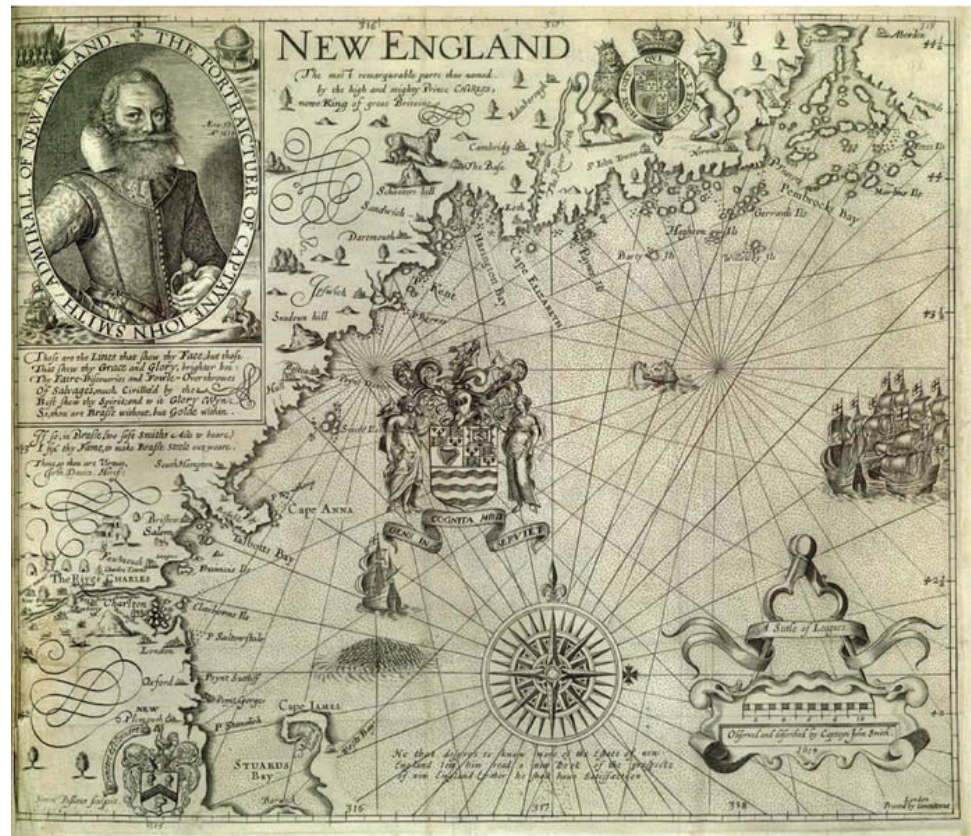
- **The northeast coast of South America**, where no European had yet settled. One problem with Spanish- and Portuguese-dominated South America was that any colony there would have to be Catholic.
- **Virginia**, where the Virginia Company of London had settled Jamestown in 1607. One problem with Virginia was that the Separatist-despising Anglican Church already held sway there.
- **The mouth of the Hudson River**, where the Dutch had settled a few trading posts (see Chapter 7). One problem with the Hudson River was that the Dutch Reformed Church already held sway there.
- **New England**, where the Virginia Company of Plymouth had so far failed to settle a long-term colony.

FASCINATING FACTS: *A Description of New England* by Captain John Smith

After Captain John Smith left Jamestown in 1609 to recover from his gunpowder burn (see Chapter 4), he made it back to the New World just once. In 1614, Smith persuaded a group of English merchants to finance a voyage to New England, promising to reward their investment with shiploads of valuable beaver pelts, whale oil and fish. Upon reaching New England, Smith left most his crew to their fishing while he himself traveled up and down the coast, mapping the area. Back in England, Smith used his proven map-making skills to produce the best map of the New England coast so far.

In 1616, around the time the Pilgrims in Leiden started looking for a promising place to move, Smith published his map in *A Description of New England*— a short book he wrote partly to encourage King James' son, Prince Charles, to sponsor a colony in New England. Some of the Pilgrims also bought copies of Smith's book, and took in his glowing descriptions of the fantastic opportunities New England offered— bountiful wealth for anyone brave and industrious enough to go and get it.

Because New England held the best hope of perfect religious freedom, combined with the hope of striking it rich in the fishing and fur industries, the Pilgrims finally decided to settle there.



Captain John Smith's map of New England

INTERESTING IDEAS: Before 1620, all English territory in the New World officially bore the name "Virginia." In 1620, though, the Virginia Company of Plymouth received permission from King James to rename the northern half of Virginia **New England**— a name suggested by Captain John Smith, and approved by Prince Charles. Under its new charter, the Virginia Company of Plymouth reorganized itself as the **Plymouth Council for New England**.

The Pilgrim Press

In the middle of this momentous decision about where to go, a short-lived printing operation called the **Pilgrim Press** almost kept the Pilgrims from going anywhere at all. Around 1618, William Brewster— always one of the wealthier Pilgrims— scraped together enough money to buy a small printing press, movable type and everything else he needed to print and bind books. The Pilgrim Press's stated purpose was to earn money for its owner, Brewster. Its real purpose, though, was to print Puritan and Separatist literature— books and pamphlets that were illegal in England, and infuriating to King James.

In 1619, Elder Brewster found himself in deep trouble over a book that James found particularly infuriating. On a rare trip back to Scotland in 1618, James had ordered the Scots to adopt rules that made the presbyterian Church of Scotland more like the episcopal Anglican Church. In response, a bold Scot named David Calderwood wrote a scathing critique of the king's tyranny titled *Perth Assembly*. As it was neither legal nor safe to print such criticisms in Britain, Calderwood hired his friend William Brewster to print *Perth Assembly* in Leiden. When King James found out, he ordered his Dutch ambassador to arrest Brewster.

Accused of treachery against his king, Elder Brewster was in serious danger of being hanged, drawn and quartered if the king's men found him. This deadly threat to their beloved elder encouraged the Pilgrims to move quickly. Fortunately, Brewster was wily enough to go into hiding, and to remain hidden until it was time to join the Pilgrims aboard *Mayflower*.

Dividing the Church

The Pilgrims' poverty forced them to make two unpleasant decisions:

1. With shipping costs so high, the Pilgrims couldn't afford to move their whole church at once. Therefore they decided to split up: while Pastor Robinson remained behind with the main body of the church, Elder Brewster would lead a small group of Pilgrims to New England. Although parting was painful, all of the Pilgrims hoped to reunite in New England someday— if their colony was successful.
2. With their funds so low, the Pilgrims had to seek help from a company of wealthy English investors who cared nothing for the Pilgrims' Separatist beliefs.

FASCINATING FACTS: The Strangers

To boost their colony's chances of success, the investors who helped finance the Pilgrims' expedition filled out Brewster's small company of Pilgrims with non-Separatist recruits. Because these recruits didn't belong to the Pilgrims' church, the Pilgrims called them "Strangers"— although many of them later joined the Pilgrims' church, and thus were Strangers no longer.

Interestingly, the Strangers aboard *Mayflower* outnumbered the Pilgrims by about half. Of the 102 settlers who sailed to New England aboard *Mayflower* in November 1620, only 41 were Pilgrims. The other 61—including the well-known Miles Standish, John Alden and Priscilla Mullins— were all Strangers.



Woodcut of a 1500s-era printer's shop

Pilgrimage to New England

The Pilgrims' third and last pilgrimage, the one to New England, began aboard two ships:

1. The expedition's hired flagship, *Mayflower*, was about 100 feet long and displaced about 180 tons. *Mayflower's* commander and one-fourth owner, Captain Christopher Jones, had the experience necessary to guide the Pilgrims safely to New England.
2. The Pilgrims purchased *Speedwell*, a small, aging ship that displaced about 60 tons, to serve two purposes in their new home: she was to be both their fishing ship and their lifeline back to Europe. To make the aging *Speedwell* seaworthy, the Pilgrims had to pay for several expensive repairs before they left Holland.



Mayflower II, a modern-day replica of the original *Mayflower*

In late July 1620, about 50 Pilgrims boarded the newly-repaired *Speedwell* at a harbor near Rotterdam, the Netherlands. From there, *Speedwell* passed through the North Sea and the Strait of Dover to Southampton, England, where she rendezvoused with the larger *Mayflower*. Somehow, the fugitive Elder Brewster somehow managed to slip aboard at Southampton undetected by the king's men. Then in early August, *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* bore their combined payload of Pilgrims, Strangers and tons of supplies westward through the English Channel and out into the broad Atlantic.

Predictably, *Speedwell* soon sprang so many leaks that her captain feared she might sink; so he asked to turn back to Dartmouth, England for repairs. After a two-week repair delay, *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* struck westward a second time.

This time, the two ships were about 300 miles out into the Atlantic when *Speedwell* sprang a second crop of leaks, and had to turn back a second time. When the shipwrights of old Plymouth, England couldn't find the source of *Speedwell*'s persistent leaks, the Pilgrims had no choice but to (1) abandon the only ship they actually owned, (2) send some of their people home, and (3) carry on in the hired *Mayflower* alone.

This weeks-long *Speedwell* delay had dangerous consequences:

- The Pilgrims' first departure date, early August, already left them little enough time to build shelter before winter set in. Now, thanks to *Speedwell*, they were departing in September. As a result, the first frost of the frigid winter of 1620 – 1621 would reach New England long before the Pilgrims.
- The delay also pushed the Pilgrims' voyage deeper into the Atlantic's late fall storm season. Sure enough, fierce storms blew in from the west about midway through the voyage, forcing *Mayflower* to tack back and forth across violent, contrary winds. As the dreadfully seasick Pilgrims belowdecks prayed for their lives, one mighty wave heeled *Mayflower* over so violently that a main cross timber cracked. Fortunately, the ship's carpenter was able to reinforce the broken timber with a large iron screw jack and some bracing.



"The Gust" by artist W. van de Velde the Younger

Finally, in early November 1620— two seasick months out of old Plymouth, and four months out of their old home in Leiden— the Pilgrims struck land at what is now Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

U.S. GEOGRAPHY FOCUS

The Cape Cod / Massachusetts Bay Region

Cape Cod Bay is a fine Atlantic Ocean bay that is well known for its abundant fish, including the Atlantic codfish for which it is named. The U.S. state of Massachusetts encloses Cape Cod Bay on three sides:

- To the east and south, **Cape Cod Bay** is enclosed by **Cape Cod peninsula**— the odd shape of which reminds some people of a fishhook, and others of a human arm flexing its muscles.
- To the west, Cape Cod Bay is enclosed by the Massachusetts mainland.

At Cape Cod Bay's northeast corner, inside the fishhook's barb, lies the harbor where the Pilgrims first made landfall: **Provincetown Harbor**.

At Cape Cod Bay's northwest corner lies the protected bay where the Pilgrims built England's first long-term colony in New England: **Plymouth Bay**, home of Plymouth Colony. A string of sandy barrier beaches helps isolate Plymouth Bay from the rougher waves of Cape Cod Bay.

To the north, Cape Cod Bay opens into the larger **Massachusetts Bay**. At Massachusetts Bay's west end, about 35 miles up the coast from Plymouth, lies the well-protected harbor that quickly replaced Plymouth as Massachusetts' busiest port: **Boston Harbor**.

South of Cape Cod lie three more large bodies of water:

1. **Buzzards Bay**, which divides mainland Massachusetts from Cape Cod and the long, narrow chain of the Elizabeth Islands. In modern times, the Cape Cod Canal connects Buzzards Bay to Cape Cod Bay.
2. **Vineyard Sound**, which divides the Elizabeth Islands from the large, wealthy island of Martha's Vineyard.
3. **Nantucket Sound**, which lies between Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Island.

Together, all of these bays and sounds give Massachusetts its nickname: "The Bay State."

U.S. HISTORY FOCUS

Plymouth Colony

Meeting the Natives

Like the natives who lived around Jamestown, the natives who lived around Plymouth Colony spoke languages from the Algonquian family. Most of the natives the Pilgrims met came from one of four main Algonquian-speaking groups, three of whom had already paid dearly for earlier brushes with Europeans.

The Wampanoag: The Wampanoag people lived on the Massachusetts mainland west of Cape Cod Bay, Cape Cod and Buzzards Bay. Around 1600, perhaps 12,000 Wampanoag lived in about 40 villages.

All of these villages belonged to a loose union called the **Wampanoag Confederacy**. Each village had its chief, or sachem; but over all of these sub-chiefs presided a paramount chief called the Grand Sachem. As of 1620, Grand Sachem Ousamequin, whom the Pilgrims knew as Massasoit, led the Wampanoag Confederacy.

INTERESTING IDEAS: Because *Massasoit* is Algonquian for "Grand Sachem," the Pilgrims were calling Ousamequin by his title rather than his given name.

The Nauset: The Nauset were a smaller people who lived mainly on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Because the Nauset sometimes paid tribute to the Wampanoag Confederacy, they are sometimes considered a sub-tribe of the Wampanoag.

The Massachusett: The Massachusett people lived north of their Wampanoag rivals, mainly around what is now Boston Harbor. Around 1600, perhaps about 3,000 Massachusett lived in about 20 villages.

The Narragansett: The Narragansett people lived southwest of their Wampanoag rivals, around Narragansett Bay in what is now Rhode Island. Like the Wampanoag, the Narragansett concentrated their might by forming a loose confederacy. Around 1600, perhaps 10,000 Narragansett lived under the Narragansett Confederacy.



TERRIBLE TRAGEDIES: The Great Plague of the 1610s

Captain John Smith's 1614 fishing/mapping expedition was only one of many early visits Europeans paid to coastal New England. Around that time, the French were struggling to build colonies in Acadia (see Chapter 5); the Dutch were building colonies at the mouth of the Hudson River (see Chapter 7); and the English and others were fishing around Newfoundland every summer. Wherever these Europeans found natives friendly enough to trade, they gladly exchanged knives, hatchets, copper kettles and the like for the natives' valuable beaver pelts.

On one or several of these trading visits, the Europeans left behind an unseen menace that led to one of the greatest tragedies in New England history. Over the years from about 1614 – 1619, a wave of epidemics crashed over New England's natives, claiming so many lives that there were often no living left to bury the dead. Some of the **Great Plague of the 1610s'** victims probably died of smallpox, the same disease that killed so many Aztecs and Incas. Others probably died of measles, tuberculosis, influenza or any of several other illnesses against which New England's natives had no inborn immunity.



Aztecs suffering from smallpox

INTERESTING IDEAS: On a percentage basis, the scale of the Great Plague of the 1610s was even greater than that of the Black Death/Bubonic Plague epidemic that struck Europe, Asia and North Africa during the 1360s (see Year 2). That earlier epidemic killed about 30 – 60% of Europe's population, an unspeakably tragic loss; but the Great Plague of the 1610s killed an astonishing 75 – 95% of some New England peoples.

The Wampanoag, Nauset and Massachusetts peoples were so decimated by the Great Plague that entire villages lay empty, their huts and paths littered with unburied corpses. According to Pilgrim Robert Cushman, hardly 1 in 20 of the Wampanoag around Plymouth survived the Great Plague of the 1610s.

AMAZING NATIVE AMERICANS: Tisquantum or Squanto (1585? - 1622)

One of the few Wampanoag who survived the Great Plague of the 1610s— for a time, at least— was the Pilgrims' friend and translator Tisquantum, whose name the Pilgrims butchered as "Squanto."

Squanto was born in the Wampanoag village of Patuxet, which lay in what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts. Squanto's early life is mysterious, with different storytellers telling different tales. However, all agree that in 1614, Squanto was captured and enslaved by a rogue English sea captain named Thomas Hunt. Hunt came to New England with Captain John Smith's 1614 fishing/mapping expedition; and when Smith departed, he left Hunt behind to pursue riches through the honest fur trade. Hunt, however, determined to pursue riches through the dishonest slave trade as well. With alluring promises of profitable trade, Hunt beguiled a number of Wampanoag and Nauset natives into boarding his ship; but when they climbed aboard, he promptly kidnapped them to sell as slaves.

Fortunately for Squanto, Hunt didn't bear his captives to the West Indies, where merciless slave drivers often drove slaves into early graves. Instead, Hunt bore his captives to Spain, where Spanish friars rescued Squanto from Hunt and slavery and taught him about Christianity. From Spain, the liberated Squanto somehow made his way to England, where English fishermen started hiring him for their annual fishing trips to Newfoundland.

Meanwhile back in New England, the Wampanoag and Nauset were so furious over Captain Hunt's crimes that they cut off trade with all Europeans. The English were eager to restore this profitable trade, but had no way to make peace— that is, until Captain Thomas Dermer realized that Squanto was a Wampanoag. In 1619, Dermer carried Squanto back to his native land to serve as translator, peacemaker and trade negotiator between English and Wampanoag.

After five years away from home, Squanto probably expected warm, excited greetings from long-lost family and friends. Instead, he found tragedy— for while Squanto was away, the Great Plague of the 1610s massacred entire Wampanoag villages. Squanto's own native village, Patuxet was an appalling boneyard peopled only by the unburied, scavenger-scoured skeletons of Squanto's lost loved ones.

Squanto's tragic loss abruptly cancelled Captain Dermer's plan to restore peace. With nowhere else to go, the orphaned Squanto went to live with the Wampanoag survivors gathered around Grand Sachem Massasoit in his home village of Pokanoket, about 30 miles from Patuxet. A year later, when the Pilgrims chose the former Patuxet as the site for their new colony, they found Squanto living nearby— well-qualified and eager to serve as their translator, guide and survival coach.



Squanto

Choosing Cape Cod Bay

By accident or design, when the Pilgrims struck land at Cape Cod, they were well north of where they were supposed to be. Back in England, Pilgrim agents had obtained a shadowy permission to settle on Virginia Company of London territory, which ended at 41° north latitude. Cape Cod, however, lay at 42° north— which made it part of New England, where the Pilgrims had no permission to settle. Different storytellers offer different versions of how the Pilgrims chose Cape Cod:

1. According to William Bradford, the Pilgrims tried to settle farther south, but had little luck. Captain Jones did his best to sail *Mayflower* south around Cape Cod; but as he approached the bend near what is now Chatham, treacherous winds and ship-killing shoals chased him back to the north. After their exhausting voyage across the Atlantic, the Pilgrims needed rest, not more danger; so they abandoned their plan to settle farther south, and instead sailed west into Cape Cod Bay.
2. Some historians suggest that the Pilgrims never meant to settle anywhere but Cape Cod, which they had chosen for its ideal location midway between two possible sources of unwanted religious interference: Dutch New Netherland to the southwest, and French Acadia to the northeast.

Whichever tale is the true one, *Mayflower* finally dropped anchor in what is now Provincetown Harbor— just inside the barb of the Cape Cod fishhook— in November 1620.

The fact that the Pilgrims had no legal permission to settle in New England led to an important argument before they disembarked.

FASCINATING FACTS: The Mayflower Compact

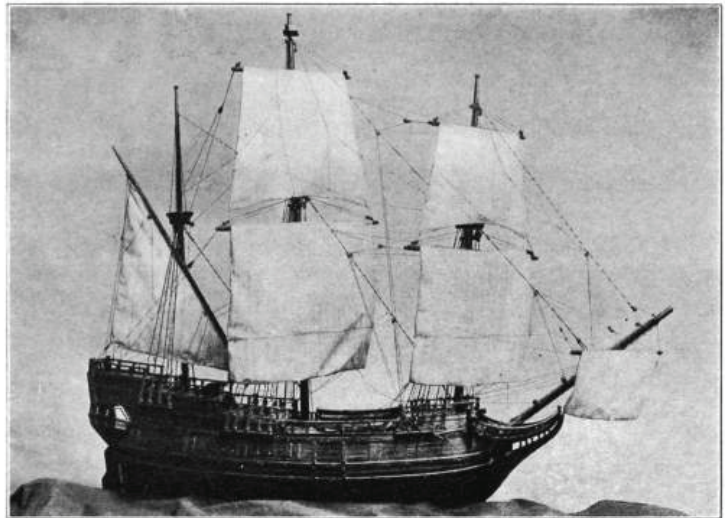
As the company of Pilgrims and Strangers aboard *Mayflower* prepared to row ashore at Provincetown Harbor, a troubling legal question arose. Because the Pilgrims had no legal permission to settle in New England, they could not claim to be under King James' law. Therefore the Strangers wondered: if not James' law, then whose? Without a proper legal system to protect them, the Strangers worried these strange religious zealots with whom they had sailed might write strange, arbitrary laws.

Before they disembarked, Pilgrim and Stranger resolved their legal question with a short agreement called the **Mayflower Compact**. Although the original Mayflower Compact is lost, a Pilgrim-written book titled *Mourt's Relation* records its words:

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620."

In other words, the *Mayflower* pioneers claimed two surprising new powers for themselves:

1. The power to form their own government and write their own laws, without waiting for approval from king and parliament.
2. The power to give all men, not just wealthy nobles, voices in that government. The list of men who signed the Mayflower Compact was as remarkable as the Compact itself; for in addition to the dozen or so wealthy gentlemen aboard, the signers included more than two dozen poor men, and even a few servants. Between the Virginia House of Burgesses and the Mayflower Compact, North America in 1620 was already becoming a place where commoners could enjoy far more freedom than in England.



"The Mayflower Compact, 1620" by artist Jean Ferris

A LOOK AHEAD: More than 150 years later, the principles in the Mayflower Compact will help guide the Founding Fathers who will write the founding documents of the United States, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

INTERESTING INDIVIDUALS aboard *Mayflower*

Besides William Brewster and William Bradford, other well-known names aboard *Mayflower* included:

John Carver: Immediately after signing the Mayflower Compact, the *Mayflower* pioneers elected wealthy Pilgrim John Carver to be their first governor— making Carver the first New World governor elected by the people he was to lead. Carver served the Pilgrims so energetically that he died of exhaustion in April 1621, less than six months after his election.

His replacement was William Bradford, who would guide Plymouth Colony for most of the next 30 years.

Dorothy Bradford: While the pioneers were still looking for the best place to settle, Dorothy Bradford— wife of future Governor William Bradford— slipped off *Mayflower's* deck and

drowned in the cold water of Provincetown Harbor. Some historians speculate that Dorothy didn't really slip, but instead committed suicide— perhaps out of grief over an infant she had just lost.



"Landing of the Pilgrims," a painting from the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. Elder William Brewster stands at center.

Miles Standish: Before departing England, the Pilgrims considered hiring the highly experienced Captain John Smith to lead their expedition. In the end, though, they found it cheaper to buy Smith's map than his presence. Instead of Smith, the Pilgrims hired the belligerent Captain Miles Standish to head their small but potent militia, which Standish commanded from 1621 until his death in 1656. Although many other Strangers eventually joined the Pilgrims' church, Standish never did.

DEFINITIONS:

- A **blunderbuss** was a large-barreled musket that could fire nails, pebbles or broken glass as well as iron balls or shot.
- A **shallop** was a collapsible sailboat that could be broken down and stored below decks for long voyages.

Trouble with the Nauset

The Pilgrims' first landing at Provincetown Harbor placed them in Nauset territory. Because they hadn't met Squanto yet, they didn't know that Captain Hunt had made enemies of the Nauset (see above); but the Nauset knew.



Flintlock blunderbuss from the 1700s. The Pilgrims' blunderbusses were matchlocks.

Almost from the moment they landed, the Pilgrims confirmed the Nauset's worst suspicions about Englishmen. First, the curious Pilgrims dug into Nauset burial mounds, disturbing and stealing some of the grave goods the Nauset had buried with their dead. Next, they dug into the Nauset's underground granaries, stealing bushels of stored corn. The Pilgrims saw this corn as a gift from God, seed corn to plant when spring came. The Nauset, on the other hand, saw the men who stole their corn as detestable thieves and grave robbers.

After the ship's carpenter finally assembled and repaired the expedition's shallop, a party of 18 Pilgrims and Strangers set out to search the frosty coast for a more permanent settlement site. About fifteen miles down Cape Cod's west coast, the expedition put in at what is now Wellfleet Harbor to build a fire against the bitter cold. The next day, they explored down the coast toward the great bend in the cape, where they built another campsite. Wherever they camped, the ever-cautious Miles Standish always felled trees and piled them into barricades, just in case the natives decided to attack.

Standish's caution was fortunate, for it was at this second campsite that the Nauset decided to punish the Pilgrims for grave robbery and theft. As the Pilgrims were breaking camp, a Nauset war party suddenly burst through the trees, howling war whoops and letting fly with their arrows. Most of the Pilgrims raced for the safety of the barricade; while a few raced for the shallop, where they had left their blunderbusses. When the Nauset charged after these, several Pilgrims charged from behind the barricade to intercept them with swords. Things might have gone badly for the Pilgrims had not Captain Miles Standish stayed behind the barricade, calmly blasting away with his blunderbuss until the Nauset finally ran off. Incredibly, not one Pilgrim or Stranger received so much as a scratch in this hasty exchange. As for the Nauset's wounds, no one knows.

Choosing Plymouth Harbor

After their heart-stopping first encounter with the Nauset, the party quickly continued on around the coast, hoping the danger was past for the day. Incredibly, the danger was only beginning— for a few hours later, a fierce storm blew up and snapped their rudder, sending them careening across the bay with only their oars to guide their heavy sailboat. Around dark, their mast snapped as well, and the drag of its sail almost capsized them before they could cut it away.

Now rudderless, mast-less and lightless, the party somehow managed to ride the inflowing tide to a safe landing amid the rocks and shoals of some unseen shore. On the morning after the storm, the Pilgrims found themselves on Clark Island, a small island in what Captain John Smith had named Plymouth Bay.

As they explored the coast around Plymouth Bay, they realized that they had found what they were looking for. Near the bay's southern end, they found an excellent settlement site furnished with (1) running freshwater brooks, (2) fields ready-cleared for crops, (3) good hills for defensive cannon, and (4) good stone for building. The Pilgrims had stumbled upon Squanto's abandoned home village of Patuxet, which they would soon rename Plymouth.



"Mayflower in Plymouth Harbor" by artist William Halsall

While Plymouth was a far better site than Jamestown Island in many ways, it was worse in one way: near the shore, Plymouth Harbor was too shallow for large ships. When Captain Jones piloted *Mayflower* into Plymouth Harbor several days later, shallow water forced him to anchor her about 1-1/2 miles from shore. Over the next three months, Pilgrims and Strangers spent countless hours ferrying themselves from the shore, where they set to work building shelter, to the ship, where they spent their nights.

TERRIBLE TRAGEDIES: The Deadly Winter of 1620 – 1621

Unfortunately, the Pilgrims had taken too long to find Plymouth. Just as they started work on their first buildings, the full force of a bitter New England winter pressed down upon them. The combination of so many stresses— disease, exhaustion from their hard journey, lack of fresh food and exposure to frigid weather— proved too much for their constitutions to bear.

Like Jamestown and Quebec City, Plymouth paid a high price in death and grief for being the first long-term European settlement in its region. Over the months from December 1620 – March 1621, two, three or more Pilgrims, Strangers and sailors died every week. When that long, sad winter finally dragged to an end, 55 of the original 102 colonists lay dead, along with half of *Mayflower's* crew.

Samoset

Throughout that hard first winter, the Pilgrims rarely even saw a native, much less spoke to one. That surprising situation changed one day in March 1621, when a near-naked brave named Samoset abruptly strode into Plymouth's new common house and boldly pronounced "Welcome, Englishmen!" Samoset, it turned out, was not one of the local Wampanoag; rather, he came from what is now Maine, where he had learned a bit of English from traders more trustworthy than Thomas Hunt.

Despite his distant origins, Samoset knew enough to tell the Pilgrims all about the Wampanoag: how they were organized (the Wampanoag Confederacy); the name of their Grand Sachem (Massasoit); and why the Pilgrims had found Plymouth abandoned (because of the Great Plague of the 1610s). Samoset also told the Pilgrims who the Nauset were, and why they had attacked them— to punish them for theft and grave robbery. The Pilgrims promised then and there to repay the Nauset for all they had taken; and later, when the honest Pilgrims got the chance, they did.



"Landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock, 1620" by artist P. Rothermel

Peace with the Wampanoag

About a week after Samoset's friendly visit to Plymouth, Grand Sachem Massasoit strode majestically into Plymouth's common house to negotiate a peace treaty with Governor John Carver. The terms of this peace, translated by Massasoit's aides Squanto and Samoset, were these:

- Massasoit granted the Pilgrims permission to occupy about 12,000 acres of land around Plymouth. At the moment, this land meant little to Massasoit— for with all of Patuxet's people except Squanto dead, there were no more Wampanoag to occupy it.
- Both Pilgrim and Wampanoag agreed to do no harm to one another.

- If a Wampanoag violated the treaty by harming a Pilgrim, then he would be sent to the Pilgrims for punishment; and if a Pilgrim violated the treaty, then he would be sent to the Wampanoag for punishment.
- Each side agreed to come to the other's aid if the other was unjustly attacked by outsiders.

Massasoit's historic visit to Plymouth was the beginning of the **Peace of Massasoit**, a comfortable peace that was to last for more than 40 years. Peace with the Wampanoag held life-saving benefits for the Pilgrims:

1. Peace relieved the Pilgrims' constant fear of attack, and provided them with a powerful ally in case they were attacked.
2. Peace allowed the Pilgrims to trade freely with the Wampanoag and other tribes, developing the fur trade that would help them pay off the debts they owed investors back in England.
3. Peace allowed the Pilgrims to gain all sorts of helpful knowledge from Squanto and the other Wampanoag, knowledge that almost certainly saved their lives.



Massasoit and Governor John Carver sealing their peace treaty with a peace pipe

INTERESTING IDEAS: One reason Massasoit was so quick to negotiate peace was that the Great Plague of the 1610s, which had decimated his Wampanoag people, had somehow missed his rivals the Narragansett—perhaps because the Narragansett lived farther from the plague's origin. Now that Narragansett badly outnumbered Wampanoag, Massasoit was glad to find new allies against them, especially allies armed with gunpowder.

ILLUMINATING LESSONS: What Squanto Taught the Pilgrims

Soon after he translated Massasoit's peace treaty, Squanto moved to Plymouth to serve as the Pilgrims' full-time translator, negotiator, guide and survival coach. Governor William Bradford, who replaced Governor Carver after Carver died in April, took Squanto into his home, taught him the Holy Discipline and generally treated him like the invaluable member of the community he was.

In exchange for Bradford's kindness,



Squanto teaching the Pilgrims to fertilize corn by burying fish in each corn hill

Squanto taught the Pilgrims the skills they needed to survive in New England. Back in Leiden, the Pilgrims had been city folk, not outdoorsmen. When they first arrived in New England, they were much like the “Babes in the Wood” from the well-known nursery tale— so deficient in fishing, hunting and farming skills that without Squanto’s help, they all might have starved to death.

One of the many skills Squanto taught the Pilgrims was how to grow native corn. Because the soil around Plymouth wasn’t fertile enough for crops— having been drained of nutrients over years of plantings— Squanto’s people had learned to fertilize the soil by planting three dead herring around each corn hill, their heads all pointing toward the seeds at the center. As the herring decayed, their bodies provided the nutrients corn needed to thrive. Squanto also taught the Pilgrims other necessary skills, like (1) how to build traps for the herring that ran up Plymouth’s Town Brook every spring; and (2) how to guard their corn hills so that wolves couldn’t dig up their herring fertilizer and ruin their crops.

FASCINATING FACTS: The Three Sisters



Some Native Americans planted their three main staple crops— corn, pole beans and squash— together in an arrangement called the Three Sisters. Each one of the Three Sisters provided the others with some advantage: the corn stalk provided a natural pole to hold up the pole beans’ vines; the pole beans’ roots added needed nitrogen to the soil; and the squash’s leafy vines shaded the soil around the corn hill, slowing the growth of choking weeds.

INTERESTING INDIVIDUALS: In addition to Squanto, the Pilgrims also took in another important translator and guide: a Wampanoag named Hobomok, who quickly became Captain Miles Standish’s favorite.

Raid on Nemasket (1621)

Not all of the Wampanoag were happy that Grand Sachem Massasoit made peace with the Pilgrims so easily, or that Squanto was being so helpful to them.

One day in the summer of 1621, Squanto and Hobomok went to visit their fellow Wampanoag in the village of Nemasket, about 15 miles west of Plymouth. Nemasket’s sub-

chief, a rebellious Wampanoag named Corbitant, apparently considered Squanto a traitor for helping the Pilgrims; so, according to Hobomok, Corbitant seized Squanto and threatened to slit his throat. Hobomok, who was feeling the threat of Corbitant’s knife himself, didn’t wait around for Corbitant to fulfill his threat. Instead, he fled back to Plymouth, where he breathlessly reported that Corbitant had murdered Squanto.

The Pilgrims received Hobomok’s news with great alarm. All agreed that if they did nothing to punish



Miles Standish at the head of the small Pilgrim army, guided by Hobomok

the murder of Squanto, their most trusted Wampanoag friend, then their friendship meant nothing. Furthermore, to do nothing would be to invite attack, as it would almost certainly cost them the Wampanoags' respect. For both of these reasons, a hastily-called Pilgrim council decided to send Miles Standish and his heavily-armed militia to punish Corbitant.

That night, Standish and his squad quietly slipped into Nemasket and surrounded Corbitant's hut. On Standish's signal, the Pilgrims burst inside, brandishing their blunderbusses and demanding Corbitant's head. When several frightened Wampanoag tried to escape, the Pilgrims opened fire, wounding a few.

After the smoke cleared, the Pilgrims learned that the whole affair might have been for nothing— for in the first place, Squanto was not dead, as Corbitant had never made good on his threat; and in the second place, Corbitant had already fled Nemasket before the Pilgrims arrived.

Even so, Standish's raid on Nemasket accomplished this much: it taught the Wampanoag that the Pilgrims were a formidable fighting force. After the raid, several frightened Wampanoag sub-chiefs paid meek visits to Plymouth to assure the Pilgrims that they wanted peace, not war. In Wampanoag eyes, the Pilgrims might not know much about feeding themselves, but they certainly knew how to defend themselves.

FASCINATING FEASTS: The First Thanksgiving

As Plymouth Colony's first successful harvest season drew to a close in the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims celebrated God's blessings with a festival of thanksgiving. The authors of *Mourt's Relation* record:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling [bird hunting], that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labor... many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted..."



"The First Thanksgiving" by artist J. Ferris

This first Thanksgiving was no solemn occasion, although the Pilgrims certainly offered prayers. Rather, it was a glad three-day celebration filled with games, demonstrations of military skill and, of course, plenty of food. Governor Bradford records that the menu included ducks, geese and wild turkey, "of which they took many." *Mourt's Relation* records that the Wampanoag bagged five deer for the occasion. Another item that was certainly on the menu was seafood, for the Pilgrims fished Cape Cod Bay from their shallop every day the weather allowed. Certain other items that have since become parts of the traditional USA Thanksgiving menu— such as pumpkin pie, cranberries, stuffing, mashed potatoes and ham— are mentioned in no Pilgrim record.

The Pilgrims would have been disappointed to know that this first Thanksgiving became an annual celebration; for the Holy Discipline recognized no holy days. The Pilgrims' thanksgiving always arose from their hearts, never from some Anglican bishop's calendar. For the same reasons the Pilgrims rejected Christmas and Easter, they also would have rejected any annual celebration of Thanksgiving. However, any Christian who genuinely wanted to give thanks for God's blessings would have found the Pilgrims standing beside him in joyful agreement.

A LOOK AHEAD: In 1863, the middle year of the U.S. Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln will ask all Americans to set aside the last Thursday of November as a day of (1) thanksgiving to God and (2) prayer for all of the orphans, widows and mourners created by that war. The U.S. will observe Thanksgiving every year thereafter.

FASCINATING FATES

Squanto: In November 1622, only about 1-1/2 years after Squanto entered the Pilgrims' service, the doom of Squanto's people caught up with him. On an expedition around Cape Cod's east coast, Squanto suddenly took ill with what the Pilgrims called "Indian fever"; and sadly, neither English nor native medicine could save him.

Pastor John Robinson: Although the Pilgrims' beloved Pastor John Robinson often encouraged them or chided them with his long letters, he was never to join them in Plymouth; for in 1625, Robinson died at Leiden, Holland.

ROMANTIC RHYMES: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Courtship of Miles Standish"

Miles Standish and two other Strangers, John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, formed three corners of a love triangle romanticized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1858 poem "The Courtship of Miles Standish." According to Longfellow's poem, Standish longed to marry Mullins, but was too shy to propose marriage directly; so he asked Alden to propose to her on his behalf. When Alden proposed as Standish asked, though, Mullins coyly replied, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" Whether or not Longfellow's lovesick tale is true, none can say; but it is true that Priscilla Mullins married John Alden, not Miles Standish.

SUSPICIOUS STONES: Plymouth Rock



Plymouth Rock is a half-buried boulder that juts out of the water on Plymouth Beach at low tide, but is mostly submerged at high tide. Tradition holds that the very first time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, they stepped out of their longboat onto Plymouth Rock. However, this tradition does not come from the oldest Pilgrim records, which nowhere mention the rock. Instead, it comes from the memory of a Pilgrim descendant named Thomas Faunce, who identified the rock in 1741. Even at the advanced age of 95, Faunce still wasn't old enough to have

witnessed the landing first-hand. Because of this, some have doubted his story ever since he told it.

In 1774, as the American Revolutionary War threatened, a band of Massachusetts patriots decided to adopt Plymouth Rock as a symbol of American independence. To this end, the patriots hooked a chain around the rock and hauled on it with oxen, hoping to drag it uphill to Plymouth's meeting house. Unfortunately, the stress of lifting the heavy boulder out of the sand broke it in two, leaving the patriots only the boulder's broken top to display. Over the years, souvenir hunters chipped away at this broken top until only about one-third of it remained. In modern times, that one-third has been restored to its original place on the beach, where visitors may view it— but not chisel chips from it— from street level.

