

= Plymouth Colony =

Plymouth Colony (sometimes New Plymouth or Plymouth Bay Colony) was an English colonial venture in North America from 1620 to 1691 . The first settlement of the Plymouth Colony was at New Plymouth , a location previously surveyed and named by Captain John Smith . The settlement served as the capital of the colony , and is the modern town of Plymouth , Massachusetts . At its height , Plymouth Colony occupied most of the southeastern portion of the modern state of Massachusetts .

Plymouth Colony was founded by a group of Separatists initially known as the Brownist Emigration and Anglicans , who came to be known as the Pilgrims . It was one of the earliest successful colonies to be founded by the English in North America , along with Jamestown and other settlements in Virginia , and the first sizable permanent English settlement in the New England region . The colony was able to establish a treaty with Chief Massasoit which helped to ensure its success ; in this , they were aided by Squanto , a Native American of the Patuxet people . It played a central role in King Philip 's War (1675 @-@ 1678) , one of the earliest of the Indian Wars . Ultimately , the colony was merged with the Massachusetts Bay Colony and other territories in 1691 to form the Province of Massachusetts Bay .

Despite the colony 's relatively short existence , Plymouth holds a special role in American history . A significant proportion of the citizens of Plymouth were fleeing religious persecution and searching for a place to worship as they saw fit , rather than being entrepreneurs like many of the settlers of Jamestown . The social and legal systems of the colony became closely tied to their religious beliefs , as well as English custom . Many of the people and events surrounding Plymouth Colony have become part of American folklore , including the North American tradition known as Thanksgiving and the monument known as Plymouth Rock .

= = History = =

= = = Origins = = =

Plymouth Colony was founded by a group of people (separatists) who later came to be known as the " Pilgrims . " The core group (roughly 40 % of the adults and 56 % of the family groupings) was part of a congregation of Christian separatists (Congregationalists) led by William Bradford . The congregation began to feel the pressures of religious persecution while still in the English village of Scrooby , near East Retford , Nottinghamshire . In 1607 , Archbishop Tobias Matthew raided homes and imprisoned several members of the congregation . The congregation then left England in 1609 and emigrated to the Netherlands , first to Amsterdam and then to Leiden .

In Leiden , the congregation gained the freedom to worship as they chose , but Dutch society was unfamiliar to them . Scrooby had been an agricultural community , whereas Leiden was a thriving industrial center , and the pace of life was hard on the Separatists . The community remained close @-@ knit , but their children began adopting Dutch language and customs , and some were also going into the Dutch Army . The Separatists were also still not free from the persecutions of the English Crown . English authorities came to Leiden to arrest William Brewster in 1618 , after he published comments highly critical of the King of England and the Anglican Church . Brewster escaped arrest , but the events spurred the congregation to move even farther from England .

The Congregation obtained a land patent from the London Virginia Company in June 1619 , after declining the opportunity to settle south of Cape Cod in New Netherland because of their desire to avoid the Dutch influence . This land patent allowed them to settle at the mouth of the Hudson River . They then sought financing through the Merchant Adventurers , a group of businessmen who principally viewed the colony as a means of making a profit . Upon arriving in America , the Pilgrims began working to repay their debts .

Using the financing secured from the Merchant Adventurers , the Colonists bought provisions and obtained passage on two ships : the Mayflower and the Speedwell . They had intended to leave

early in 1620 , but they were delayed several months due to difficulties in dealing with the Merchant Adventurers , including several changes in plans for the voyage and in financing . The Congregation and the other colonists finally boarded the Speedwell in July 1620 in the Dutch port of Delfshaven .

= = = Mayflower voyage = = =

The " Speedwell " was re @-@ rigged with larger masts before leaving Holland and setting out to meet the " Mayflower " in Southampton , England , around the end of July 1620 . (The Mayflower was purchased in London .) The original captains were Captain Reynolds for the Speedwell and Captain Christopher Jones for the Mayflower . Other passengers joined the group in Southampton , including William Brewster , who had been in hiding for the better part of a year , and a group of people known to the Leiden congregation as " The Strangers . " This group was largely made up of people recruited by the Merchant Adventurers to provide practical assistance to the colony and additional hands to work for the colony 's ventures . The term was also used for many of the indentured servants .

Among the Strangers were Myles Standish , who was the colony 's military leader , Christopher Martin , who had been designated by the Merchant Adventurers to act as shipboard governor during the trans @-@ Atlantic trip , and Stephen Hopkins , a veteran of a failed colonial venture that may have been the inspiration for Shakespeare 's The Tempest . The group that later became the Leiden Leaders after the merging of ships included John Carver , William Bradford , Edward Winslow , William Brewster , and Isaac Alberton .

The departure of the Mayflower and Speedwell for America was beset by delays . Further disagreements with the Merchant Adventurers held up the departure in Southampton . A total of 120 passengers finally departed on August 5 ? 90 on the Mayflower and 30 on the Speedwell . Leaving Southampton , the Speedwell experienced significant leakage , which required the ships to immediately put in at Dartmouth . The leakage was partly caused by being over masted and being pressed too much with sail . Repairs were completed , then a further delay ensued awaiting favorable winds . The two ships finally set sail on August 23 and made it only two hundred miles beyond Land 's End before another major leak in the Speedwell forced the expedition to return again to England , this time to the port of Plymouth . The Speedwell was found to be unseaworthy ; some passengers abandoned their attempt to emigrate , while others joined the Mayflower , crowding the already heavily burdened ship . Later , it was speculated that the crew of the Speedwell had intentionally sabotaged the ship to avoid having to make the treacherous trans @-@ Atlantic voyage . The delays had significant consequences ; the cost of the repairs and port fees required that the colonists sell some of their invaluable provisions , but , more importantly , the delays meant that everyone had to spend the entire winter on board the Mayflower off Cape Cod in what could only be described as squalid conditions .

The Mayflower departed Plymouth , England , on September 6 , 1620 , with 102 passengers and about 30 crew members in the small , 106 foot @-@ long ship . The seas were not severe during the first month in the Atlantic but , by the second month , the ship was being hit by strong north @-@ Atlantic winter gales , causing it to be badly shaken with water leaks from structural damage . There were many obstacles throughout the trip , including multiple cases of seasickness and the bending and cracking of a main beam of the ship . One death occurred , that of William Button .

After two months at sea , land was sighted on November 9 off the coast of Cape Cod . They attempted to sail south to the designated landing site at the mouth of the Hudson but ran into trouble in the region of Pollack Rip , a shallow area of shoals between Cape Cod and Nantucket Island . With winter approaching and provisions running dangerously low , the passengers decided to return north to Cape Cod Bay and abandon their original landing plans .

= = = Prior exploration and settlements = = =

The Pilgrims were not the first people in the area . Besides the indigenous tribes , there had been nearly a century of exploration , fishing , and settlement by Europeans . John Cabot 's discovery of

Newfoundland in 1497 had laid the foundation for the extensive English claims over the east coast of North America . One of the earliest maps of New England was produced c . 1540 by cartographer Giacomo Gastaldi and erroneously identified Cape Breton with the Narragansett Bay . The resulting map completely omits most of the New England coast . European fishermen had been plying the waters off the New England coast for much of the 16th and 17th centuries .

Frenchman Samuel de Champlain had explored the area extensively in 1605 . He had specifically explored Plymouth Harbor , which he called " Port St. Louis , " and made an extensive and detailed map of it and the surrounding lands . Patuxet , the native village upon which the town of Plymouth was later built , was shown by Champlain as a thriving settlement . However , an epidemic wiped out up to 90 % of the Native Americans along the Massachusetts coast in 1617 ? 1619 , including the Patuxet , before the arrival of the Mayflower . The epidemic has traditionally been thought to be smallpox , but a recent analysis has concluded that it may have been a lesser @-@ known disease called leptospirosis . The absence of any serious native opposition to settlement by the Pilgrims may have been a pivotal event to their success and to English colonization in the Americas .

Popham Colony , also known as Fort St. George , was organized by the Plymouth Company (unrelated to Plymouth Colony) and founded in 1607 . It was settled on the coast of Maine and was beset by internal political struggles , sickness , and weather problems . It was abandoned in 1608 .

Captain John Smith of Jamestown fame had explored the area in 1614 and is credited with naming the region of New England . He named many locations using approximations of Native American words . The future site of the Pilgrim 's first settlement was originally named " Accomack " by Smith . In consultation with Prince Charles , son of King James , Smith changed " Accomack " to New Plymouth . A map published in his 1616 work A Description of New England clearly shows the site of the future Pilgrim settlement named " New Plimouth . "

In the Mayflower settlers ' first explorations of Cape Cod , they came across evidence that Europeans had previously spent extensive time there . They discovered remains of a European fort and uncovered a grave that contained the remains of both an adult European male and a Native American child .

= = = Landings at Provincetown and Plymouth = = =

The Mayflower anchored at Provincetown Harbor on November 11 , 1620 . The Pilgrims did not have a patent to settle this area ; thus , some passengers began to question their right to land , complaining that there was no legal authority to establish a colony . In response to this , a group of colonists drafted and ratified the first governing document of the colony , the Mayflower Compact , while still aboard the ship as it lay off @-@ shore . The intent of the compact was to establish a means of governing the colony , though it did little more than confirm that the colony would be governed like any English town . It did , however , serve the purpose of relieving the concerns of many of the settlers . This social contract was written and signed by 41 Separatist men . It was modeled on the church covenants that Congregationalists used to form new congregations . It made clear that the colony should be governed by " just and equal laws , " and those who signed it promised to keep these laws .

The group remained on board the ship through the next day , a Sunday , for prayer and worship . The immigrants finally set foot on land at what became Provincetown on November 13 . The first task was to rebuild a shallop , a shallow draft boat that had been built in England and disassembled for transport aboard the Mayflower . It would remain with the Pilgrims while the Mayflower returned to England . On November 15 , Captain Myles Standish led a party of sixteen men on an exploratory mission , during which they disturbed a Native American grave and located a buried cache of Indian corn . The following week , Susanna White gave birth to son Peregrine White on the Mayflower . He was the first English child born to the Pilgrims in the New World . The shallop was finished on November 27 , and a second expedition was undertaken using it , under the direction of Mayflower master Christopher Jones . Thirty @-@ four men went , but the expedition was beset by bad weather ; the only positive result was that they found a Native burial ground and corn that had been intended for the dead , taking the corn for future planting . A third expedition along Cape Cod left on

December 6 ; it resulted in a skirmish with local Native Americans known as the " First Encounter " near modern @-@ day Eastham , Massachusetts . The colonists decided to look elsewhere , having failed to secure a proper site for their settlement , and fearing that they had angered the local Native Americans by robbing their corn stores and firing upon them . The Mayflower left Provincetown Harbor and set sail for Plymouth Harbor .

The Mayflower dropped anchor in Plymouth Harbor on December 16 and spent three days looking for a settlement site . They rejected several sites , including one on Clark 's Island and another at the mouth of the Jones River , in favor of the site of a recently abandoned Native American settlement named Patuxet . The location was chosen largely for its defensive position . The settlement would be centered on two hills : Cole 's Hill , where the village would be built , and Fort Hill , where a defensive cannon would be stationed . Also important in choosing the site was that the prior Native villagers had cleared much of the land making agriculture relatively easy . Fresh water for the colony was provided by Town Brook and Billington Sea . There are no contemporaneous accounts to verify the legend , but Plymouth Rock is often hailed as the point where the colonists first set foot on their new homeland .

The area where the colonists settled had been identified as " New Plymouth " in maps by John Smith published in 1614 . The colonists elected to retain the name for their own settlement , in honor of their final point of departure from England : Plymouth , Devon .

= = = First winter = = =

On December 21 , 1620 , the first landing party arrived at the site of what later became the settlement of Plymouth . Plans to immediately begin building houses , however , were delayed by inclement weather until December 23 . As the building progressed , twenty men always remained ashore for security purposes , while the rest of the work crews returned each night to the Mayflower . Women , children , and the infirm remained on board the Mayflower ; many had not left the ship for six months . The first structure was a " common house " of wattle and daub , and took two weeks to complete in the harsh New England winter . In the following weeks , the rest of the settlement slowly took shape . The living and working structures were built on the relatively flat top of Cole 's Hill , and a wooden platform was constructed atop nearby Fort Hill to support the cannon that would defend the settlement .

During the winter , the Mayflower colonists suffered greatly from lack of shelter , diseases such as scurvy , and general conditions onboard ship . Many of the able @-@ bodied men were too infirm to work ; 45 out of 102 immigrants died and were buried on Cole 's Hill . Thus , only seven residences (of a planned nineteen) and four common houses were constructed during the first winter . By the end of January , enough of the settlement had been built to begin unloading provisions from the Mayflower . In mid @-@ February , after several tense encounters with local Native Americans , the male residents of the settlement organized themselves into military orders ; Myles Standish was designated as the commanding officer . By the end of the month , five cannons had been defensively positioned on Fort Hill . John Carver was elected governor to replace Governor Martin .

On March 16 , 1621 , the first formal contact occurred with the Indians (or Native Americans) . A Native American named Samoset , originally from Pemaquid Point in modern Maine , walked boldly into the midst of the settlement and proclaimed , " Welcome , Englishmen ! " He had learned some English from interacting with English fishermen and trappers (most probably from Bristol) operating in the region . It was during this meeting that the Pilgrims learned how the previous residents of the Native American village of Patuxet had died of an epidemic thought to be smallpox . They also discovered that the supreme leader of the region was a Wampanoag Native American sachem (chief) by the name of Massasoit ; and they learned of the existence of Squanto (also known by his full Massachusetts name of Tisquantum) , a Native American originally from Patuxet . Squanto had spent time in Europe and spoke English quite well . Samoset spent the night in Plymouth and agreed to arrange a meeting with some of Massasoit 's men .

Massasoit and Squanto were apprehensive about the Pilgrims . In Massasoit 's first contact with the English , several men of his tribe had been killed in an unprovoked attack by English sailors . He

also knew of the Pilgrims ' theft of the corn stores in their landings at Provincetown . Squanto had been abducted in 1614 by English explorer Thomas Hunt and had spent five years in Europe , first as a slave for a group of Spanish monks , then in England . He had returned to New England in 1619 , acting as a guide to explorer Capt. Robert Gorges . Massasoit and his men had massacred the crew of the ship and had taken in Squanto .

Samoset returned to Plymouth on March 22 with a delegation from Massasoit that included Squanto ; Massasoit joined them shortly thereafter . After an exchange of gifts , Massasoit and Governor Carver established a formal treaty of peace . This treaty ensured that each people would not bring harm to the other , that Massasoit would send his allies to make peaceful negotiations with Plymouth , and that they would come to each other 's aid in a time of war .

On April 5 , 1621 , after being anchored for almost four months in Plymouth Harbor , the Mayflower set sail for England . Nearly half of the original 102 passengers had died during the first winter . As William Bradford wrote , " of these one hundred persons who came over in this first ship together , the greatest half died in the general mortality , and most of them in two or three months ' time " . By November 1621 , only 53 pilgrims were alive to celebrate the harvest feast which modern Americans know as " The First Thanksgiving " . Of the 18 adult women , 13 died the first winter while another died in May . Only four adult women were left alive for the Thanksgiving .

Several of the graves on Cole 's Hill were uncovered in 1855 ; their bodies were disinterred and moved to a site near Plymouth Rock .

= = = " First Thanksgiving " = = =

The autumn celebration in late 1621 that has become known as " The First Thanksgiving " was not known as such to the Pilgrims . The first " Thanksgiving " as the Pilgrims would have called it (referring to solemn ceremony of praise and thanks to God for a congregation 's good fortune) did not occur until 1623 , in response to the good news of the arrival of additional colonists and supplies . That event probably occurred in July and consisted of a full day of prayer and worship and probably very little revelry .

The event now commemorated in the United States at the end of November each year is more properly described as a harvest festival . The original festival was probably held in early October 1621 and was celebrated by the 53 surviving Pilgrims , along with Massasoit and 90 of his men . Three contemporaneous accounts of the event survive : Of Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford ; Mourt 's Relation probably written by Edward Winslow ; and New England 's Memorial by Plymouth Colony Secretary (and Bradford 's nephew) Capt. Nathaniel Morton . The celebration lasted three days and featured a feast that included numerous types of waterfowl , wild turkeys and fish procured by the colonists , and five deer brought by the Native Americans .

= = = Early relations with the Native Americans = = =

After the departure of Massasoit and his men , Squanto remained in Plymouth to teach the Pilgrims how to survive in New England , for example using dead fish to fertilize the soil . For the first few years of colonial life , the fur trade was the dominant source of income , buying furs from Native Americans and selling to Europeans , beyond subsistence farming . Shortly after the departure of the Mayflower , Governor Carver suddenly died . William Bradford was elected to replace him and went on to lead the colony through much of its formative years .

As promised by Massasoit , numerous Native Americans arrived at Plymouth throughout the middle of 1621 with pledges of peace . On July 2 , a party of Pilgrims led by Edward Winslow (who later became the chief diplomat of the colony) set out to continue negotiations with the chief . The delegation also included Squanto , who acted as a translator . After traveling for several days , they arrived at Massasoit 's capital , the village of Sowams near Narragansett Bay . After meals and an exchange of gifts , Massasoit agreed to an exclusive trading pact with the English ; thus , the French were no longer welcome , though they were also frequent traders in the area . Squanto remained behind and traveled throughout the area to establish trading relations with several tribes .

In late July , a boy named John Billington became lost for some time in the woods around the colony . It was reported that he was found by the Nauset , the same group of Native Americans on Cape Cod from whom the Pilgrims had unwittingly stolen corn seed the prior year upon their first explorations . The English organized a party to return Billington to Plymouth . The Pilgrims agreed to reimburse the Nauset for the corn which they had taken in return for the Billington boy . This negotiation did much to secure further peace with the Native Americans in the area .

During their dealings with the Nausets over the release of John Billington , the Pilgrims learned of troubles that Massasoit was experiencing . Massasoit , Squanto , and several other Wampanoags had been captured by Corbitant , sachem of the Narragansett tribe . A party of ten men under the leadership of Myles Standish set out to find and execute Corbitant . While hunting for Corbitant , they learned that Squanto had escaped and Massasoit was back in power . Several Native Americans had been injured by Standish and his men and were offered medical attention in Plymouth . They had failed to capture Corbitant , but the show of force by Standish had garnered respect for the Pilgrims and , as a result , nine of the most powerful sachems in the area signed a treaty in September , including Massasoit and Corbitant , pledging their loyalty to King James .

In May 1622 , a vessel named the Sparrow arrived carrying seven men from the Merchant Adventurers whose purpose was to seek out a site for a new settlement in the area . Two ships followed shortly thereafter carrying sixty settlers , all men . They spent July and August in Plymouth before moving north to settle in modern Weymouth , Massachusetts at a settlement which they named Wessagussett . The settlement of Wessagussett was short @-@ lived , but it provided the spark for an event that dramatically changed the political landscape between the local Native American tribes and the English settlers . Reports reached Plymouth of a military threat to Wessagussett , and Myles Standish organized a militia to defend them . However , he found that there had been no attack . He therefore decided on a pre @-@ emptive strike , an event which historian Nathaniel Philbrick calls " Standish 's raid " . He lured two prominent Massachusetts military leaders into a house at Wessagussett under the pretense of sharing a meal and making negotiations . Standish and his men then stabbed and killed the two unsuspecting Native Americans . The local sachem named Obtakiest was pursued by Standish and his men but escaped with three English prisoners from Wessagussett , whom he then executed . Within a short time , Wessagussett was disbanded , and the survivors were integrated into the town of Plymouth .

Word quickly spread among the Native American tribes of Standish 's attack ; many Native Americans abandoned their villages and fled the area . As noted by Philbrick : " Standish 's raid had irreparably damaged the human ecology of the region It was some time before a new equilibrium came to the region . " Edward Winslow reports in his 1624 memoirs Good News from New England that " they forsook their houses , running to and fro like men distracted , living in swamps and other desert places , and so brought manifold diseases amongst themselves , whereof very many are dead " . Lacking the trade in furs provided by the local tribes , the Pilgrims lost their main source of income for paying off their debts to the Merchant Adventurers . Rather than strengthening their position , Standish 's raid had disastrous consequences for the colony , as attested by William Bradford in a letter to the Merchant Adventurers : " [W] e had much damaged our trade , for there where we had [the] most skins the Indians are run away from their habitations " . The only positive effect of Standish 's raid seemed to be the increased power of the Massasoit @-@ led Wampanoag tribe , the Pilgrims ' closest ally in the region .

= = = Growth of Plymouth = = =

A second ship arrived in November 1621 named the Fortune , sent by the Merchant Adventurers one year after the Pilgrims first set foot in New England . It arrived with 37 new settlers for Plymouth . However , the ship had arrived unexpectedly and also without many supplies , so the additional settlers put a strain on the resources of the colony . Among the passengers of the Fortune were several additional people of the original Leiden congregation , including William Brewster 's son Jonathan , Edward Winslow 's brother John , and Philip Delano (the family name was earlier " de la Noye ") whose descendants include President Franklin Delano Roosevelt . The Fortune also carried

a letter from the Merchant Adventurers chastising the colony for failure to return goods with the Mayflower that had been promised in return for their support . The Fortune began its return to England laden with £ 500 worth of goods (equivalent to £ 78 thousand in 2010 , or \$ 119 thousand at PPP) , more than enough to keep the colonists on schedule for repayment of their debt . However , the Fortune was captured by the French before she could deliver her cargo to England , creating an even larger deficit for the colony .

In July 1623 , two more ships arrived : the Anne , under the command of Captain " Master " William Peirce and Master John Bridges ; and the Little James , under the command of Captain Emanuel Altham . These ships carried 96 new settlers , among them Leideners , including William Bradford 's future wife Alice , and William and Mary Brewster 's daughters Patience and Fear . Some of the passengers who arrived on the Anne were either unprepared for frontier life or undesirable additions to the colony and returned to England the next year . According to Gleason Archer , " those who remained were not willing to join the colony under the terms of the agreement with the Merchant Adventurers . They had embarked for America upon an understanding with the Adventurers that they might settle in a community of their own , or at least be free from the bonds by which the Plymouth colonists were enslaved . A letter addressed to the colonists and signed by thirteen of the merchants recited these facts and urged acceptance of the new comers on the specified terms . " The new arrivals were allotted land in the area of the Eel River , known as Hobs Hole , which became Wellingsley , a mile south of Plymouth Rock .

In September 1623 , another ship arrived carrying settlers destined to refound the failed colony at Weymouth , and they stayed temporarily at Plymouth . In March 1624 , a ship arrived bearing a few additional settlers and the first cattle . A 1627 division of cattle lists 156 colonists divided into twelve lots of thirteen colonists each . Another ship arrived in August 1629 , also named the Mayflower , with 35 additional members of the Leiden congregation . Ships arrived throughout the period between 1629 and 1630 carrying new settlers , though the exact number is unknown ; contemporaneous documents claimed that , by January 1630 , the colony had almost 300 people . In 1643 , the colony had an estimated 600 males fit for military service , implying a total population of about 2 @, @ 000 . By 1690 , on the eve of the dissolution of the colony , the estimated total population of Plymouth County , the most populous , was 3 @, @ 055 people . It is estimated that the entire population of the colony at the point of its dissolution was around 7 @, @ 000 . For comparison , it is estimated that more than 20 @, @ 000 settlers had arrived in Massachusetts Bay Colony between 1630 and 1640 (a period known as the Great Migration) , and the English population of all New England was estimated to be about 60 @, @ 000 by 1678 . Plymouth was the first colony in the region but , by the time of its annexation , it was much smaller than Massachusetts Bay Colony .

= = = Military history = = =

= = = Myles Standish = = =

Myles Standish was the military leader of Plymouth Colony from the beginning . He organized and led the first party to set foot in New England , an exploratory expedition of Cape Cod upon arrival in Provincetown Harbor . He also led the third expedition , during which Standish fired the first recorded shot by the Pilgrim settlers in an event known as the First Encounter . Standish had training in military engineering from the University of Leiden , and it was he who decided the defensive layout of the settlement when they finally arrived at Plymouth . Standish also organized the able @-@ bodied men into military orders in February of the first winter . During the second winter , he helped design and organize the construction of a large palisade wall surrounding the settlement . Standish led two early military raids on Indian villages : the raid to find and punish Corbitant for his attempted coup , and the killing at Wessagussett called " Standish 's raid " . The former had the desired effect of gaining the respect of the local Indians ; the latter only served to frighten and scatter them , resulting in loss of trade and income .

===== Pequot War =====

The first major war in New England was the Pequot War of 1637 . The war 's roots go back to 1632 , when a dispute arose between Dutch fur traders and Plymouth officials over control of the Connecticut River Valley near modern Hartford , Connecticut . Representatives from the Dutch East India Company and Plymouth Colony both had deeds which claimed that they had rightfully purchased the land from the Pequots . A sort of land rush occurred as settlers from Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies tried to beat the Dutch in settling the area ; the influx of English settlers also threatened the Pequot . Other confederations in the area sided with the English , including the Narragansetts and Mohegans , who were the traditional enemies of the Pequots . The event that sparked formal hostilities was the capture of a boat and the murder of its captain John Oldham in 1636 , an event blamed on allies of the Pequots . In April 1637 , a raid on a Pequot village by John Endicott led to a retaliatory raid by Pequot warriors on the town of Wethersfield , Connecticut , where some 30 English settlers were killed . This led to a further retaliation , where a raid led by Captain John Underhill and Captain John Mason burned a Pequot village to the ground near modern Mystic , Connecticut , killing 300 Pequots . Plymouth Colony had little to do with the actual fighting in the war .

When it appeared that the war would resume , four of the New England colonies (Massachusetts Bay , Connecticut , New Haven , and Plymouth) formed a defensive compact known as the United Colonies of New England . Edward Winslow was already known for his diplomatic skills , and he was the chief architect of the United Colonies . His experience in the United Provinces of the Netherlands during the Leiden years was key to organizing the confederation . John Adams later considered the United Colonies to be the prototype for the Articles of Confederation , which was the first attempt at a national government .

===== King Philip 's War =====

King Philip was the younger son of Massasoit and the heir of Massasoit 's position as sachem of the Pokanoket and supreme leader of the Wampanoag . (He was also known as Metacomet and other variations on that name .) He became sachem upon the sudden death of his older brother Wamsutta , also known as Alexander , in 1662 .

The cause of the war stems from the increasing numbers of English colonists and their demand for land . As more land was purchased from the Native Americans , they were restricted to smaller territories for themselves . Native American leaders such as King Philip resented the loss of land and looked for a means to slow or reverse it . Of specific concern was the founding of the town of Swansea , which was located only a few miles from the Wampanoag capital at Mount Hope . The General Court of Plymouth began using military force to coerce the sale of Wampanoag land to the settlers of the town .

The proximate cause of the conflict was the death of a Praying Indian named John Sassamon in 1675 . Sassamon had been an advisor and friend to King Philip ; however , Sassamon 's conversion to Christianity had driven the two apart . Accused in the murder of Sassamon were some of Philip 's most senior lieutenants . A jury of twelve Englishmen and six Praying Indians found the Native Americans guilty of murder and sentenced them to death . To this day , some debate exists whether King Philip 's men actually committed the murder .

Philip had already begun war preparations at his home base near Mount Hope where he started raiding English farms and pillaging their property . In response , Governor Josiah Winslow called out the militia , and they organized and began to move on Philip 's position . King Philip 's men attacked unarmed women and children in order to receive a ransom . One such attack resulted in the capture of Mary Rowlandson . The memoirs of her capture provided historians with much information on Native American culture during this time period .

The war continued through the rest of 1675 and into the next year . The English were constantly frustrated by the Native Americans ' refusal to meet them in pitched battle . They employed a form of

guerilla warfare that confounded the English . Captain Benjamin Church continuously campaigned to enlist the help of friendly Native Americans to help learn how to fight on an even footing with Philip 's warrior bands , but he was constantly rebuffed by the Plymouth leadership who mistrusted all Native Americans , thinking them potential enemies . Eventually , Governor Winslow and Plymouth military commander Major William Bradford (son of the late Governor William Bradford) relented and gave Church permission to organize a combined force of English and Native Americans . After securing the alliance of the Sakonnet , he led his combined force in pursuit of Philip , who had thus far avoided any major battles in the war that bears his name . Throughout July 1676 , Church 's band captured hundreds of Native American warriors , often without much of a fight , though Philip eluded him . Church was given permission to grant amnesty to any captured Native Americans who would agree to join the English side , and his force grew immensely . Philip was killed by a Pocasset Indian , and the war soon ended as an overwhelming English victory .

Eight percent of the English adult male population is estimated to have died during the war , a rather large percentage by most standards . The impact on the Native Americans was far higher , however . So many were killed , fled , or shipped off as slaves that the entire Native American population of New England fell by sixty to eighty percent .

= = = Final years = = =

In 1686 , the entire region was reorganized under a single government known as the Dominion of New England ; this included the colonies of Plymouth , Rhode Island , Massachusetts Bay , Connecticut , and New Hampshire . In 1688 , New York , West Jersey , and East Jersey were added . The President of the Dominion Edmund Andros was highly unpopular , and the union did not last . The union was dissolved after news of the Glorious Revolution reached Boston in April 1689 , and the citizens of Boston rose up and arrested Andros . When news of these events reached Plymouth , its magistrates reclaimed power .

The return of self @-@ rule for Plymouth Colony was short @-@ lived , however . A delegation of New Englanders led by Increase Mather went to England to negotiate a return of the colonial charters that had been nullified during the Dominion years . The situation was particularly problematic for Plymouth Colony , as it had existed without a formal charter since its founding . Plymouth did not get their wish for a formal charter ; instead , a new charter was issued , combining Plymouth Colony , Massachusetts Bay Colony , and other territories . The official date of the proclamation was October 17 , 1691 , ending the existence of Plymouth Colony , though it was not put into force until the arrival of the charter of the Province of Massachusetts Bay on May 14 , 1692 , carried by the new royal governor Sir William Phips . The last official meeting of the Plymouth General Court occurred on June 8 , 1692 .

= = Life = =

= = = Religion = = =

The most important religious figure in the colony was John Robinson , an original pastor of the Scrooby congregation and religious leader of the separatists throughout the Leiden years . He never actually set foot in New England , but many of his theological pronouncements shaped the nature and character of the Plymouth church . For example , Robinson stated that women and men have different social roles according to a law of nature , though neither was lesser in the eyes of God . Robinson taught that men and women have distinct but complementary roles in church , home , and society as a whole . He referred to women as the " weaker vessel " . In matters of religious understanding , he proclaimed that it was the man 's role to educate and " guide and go before " women . He also said that women should be " subject " to their husbands . Robinson also dictated the proper methods of child rearing ? he prescribed a strict upbringing with a strong emphasis on corporal punishment . He believed that a child 's natural inclination towards independence was a

manifestation of original sin and should thus be repressed .

The Pilgrims themselves were a subset of an English religious movement known as Puritanism , which sought to " purify " the Anglican Church of its " Catholic " trappings . The movement sought to return the church to its original state and to practice Christianity as was done in the times of the Apostles . Following Martin Luther 's and John Calvin 's Reformation , Puritans believed that the Bible was the only true source of religious teaching and that any additions made to Christianity had no place in Christian practice , especially with regard to church traditions , such as clerical vestments or the use of Latin in church services . In particular , they were strongly opposed to the Anglicans ' episcopal form of church government . They believed that the church was a community of Christians who made a covenant with God and with one another . Their congregations had a democratic structure . Ministers , teachers , and lay church elders were elected by and responsible to the entire congregation (Calvinist Federalism) . Each congregation was independent of all the others and directly subject to God 's (or Christ 's) government (theocracy) , hence the name Congregationalism . The Pilgrims distinguished themselves from the Puritans in that they sought to " separate " themselves from the Anglican Church , rather than reform it from within . It was this desire to worship from outside of the Anglican Communion that led them first to the Netherlands and ultimately to New England .

Each town in the colony was considered a single church congregation ; in later years , some of the larger towns split into two or three congregations . Church attendance was mandatory for all residents of the colony , while church membership was restricted to those who had converted to the faith . In Plymouth Colony , it seems that a simple profession of faith was all that was required for acceptance . This was a more liberal doctrine than some other New England congregations , such as those of the Massachusetts Bay Colony , where it was common to subject those seeking formal membership to strict and detailed cross @-@ examinations . There was no central governing body for the churches . Each individual congregation was left to determine its own standards of membership , hire its own ministers , and conduct its own business .

The church was undoubtedly the most important social institution in the colony . The Bible was the primary religious document of the society , and it also served as the primary legal document . Church attendance was not only mandatory , but membership was socially vital . Education was carried out for almost purely religious purposes . The laws of the colony specifically asked parents to provide for the education of their children , " at least to be able duly to read the Scriptures " and to understand " the main Grounds and Principles of Christian Religion " . It was expected that the male head of the household would be responsible for the religious well @-@ being of all its members , children and servants alike .

Most churches used two acts to sanction its members : censure and excommunication . Censure was a formal reprimand for behavior that did not conform with accepted religious and social norms , while excommunication involved full removal from church membership . Many perceived social evils , from fornication to public drunkenness , were dealt with through church discipline rather than through civil punishment . Church sanctions seldom held official recognition outside church membership and seldom resulted in civil or criminal proceedings . Nevertheless , such sanctions were a powerful tool of social control .

The Pilgrims practiced infant baptism . The public baptism ceremony was usually performed within six months of birth .

Marriage was considered a civil ceremony , rather than a religious one . Such an arrangement may have been a habit that had developed during the Leiden years , as civil marriage was common in the Netherlands . However , the Pilgrims saw this arrangement as biblical , there being no evidence from Scripture that a minister should preside over a wedding .

Besides the theology espoused by their religious leaders , the people of Plymouth Colony had a strong belief in the supernatural . Richard Greenham was a Puritan theologian whose works were known to the Plymouth residents , and he counseled extensively against turning to magic or wizardry to solve problems . The Pilgrims saw Satan 's work in nearly every calamity that befell them ; the dark magical arts were very real and present for them . They believed in the presence of malevolent spirits who brought misfortune to people . For example , in 1660 , a court inquest into the

drowning death of Jeremiah Burroughs determined that a possessed canoe was to blame . Massachusetts Bay Colony experienced an outbreak of witchcraft scares in the 17th century , but there is little evidence that Plymouth was engulfed in anything similar . Witchcraft was listed as a capital crime in the 1636 codification of the laws by the Plymouth General Court , but there were no actual convictions of witches in Plymouth Colony . The court records only show two formal accusations of witchcraft . The first , of Goodwife Holmes in 1661 , never went to trial . The second , of Mary Ingram in 1677 , resulted in trial and acquittal .

= = = Marriage and family life = = =

Edward Winslow and Susanna White both lost their spouses during the harsh winter of 1620 ? 1621 , and the two became the first couple to be married in Plymouth . Governor Bradford presided over the civil ceremony .

In Plymouth Colony , " courtships were usually initiated by the young people themselves , but as a relationship progressed toward something more permanent , the parents became more directly involved . " Parents were concerned with the moral and religious qualities of the proposed spouse , as well as the financial means of each party 's family . The first step toward marriage was generally a betrothal or pre @-@ contract , a ceremony carried out before two witnesses in which the couple pledged to wed in due time . Several weeks or months after the betrothal was contracted , the couple 's intentions were published . " A betrothed couple was considered to have a special status , not married but no longer unmarried either . " Sexual contact was prohibited between a betrothed couple , but the penalty for it was one @-@ fourth of what it was for single persons , and records indicate a relatively high number of babies born less than nine months after a wedding ceremony .

Marriage was considered the normal state for all adult residents of the colony . Most men first married in their mid @-@ twenties and women around age 20 . Second marriages were not uncommon , and widows and widowers faced social and economic pressures to remarry . On average , most widows and widowers remarried within six months to a year . Most adults who reached marriageable age lived into their sixties , so effectively two @-@ thirds of a person 's life was spent married .

Women in Plymouth Colony had more extensive legal and social rights compared to 17th @-@ century European norms . Women were considered equal to men before God from the perspective of the Church . God 's grace was available equally to all professed Christians . Women were , however , expected to take traditionally feminine roles , such as child @-@ rearing and maintaining the household , in Puritan families .

Plymouth women enjoyed extensive property and legal rights , unlike in Europe where women had few rights . A wife in Plymouth could not be legally " written out " of her husband 's will and was guaranteed a full third of the family 's property upon his death . Women were parties to contracts in Plymouth , most notably prenuptial agreements . It was common for brides @-@ to @-@ be (and not , notably , their fathers) to enter into contractual agreements on the consolidation of property upon marriage . In some cases , especially in second marriages , women were given exclusive right to retain control of their property separately from their husbands . Women were also known to occasionally sit on juries in Plymouth , a remarkable circumstance in seventeenth century legal practice . Historians James and Patricia Scott Deetz cite a 1678 inquest into the death of Anne Batson 's child , where the jury was composed of five women and seven men .

Family size in the colony was large by modern American standards , though childbirth was often spaced out , with an average of two years between children . Most families averaged five to six children living under the same roof , though it would not be uncommon for one family to have grown children moving out before the mother had finished giving birth . Maternal mortality rates were fairly high ; one birth in thirty resulted in the death of the mother , resulting in one in five women dying in childbirth . However , " the rate of infant mortality in Plymouth seems to have been relatively low . In the case of a few families for which there are unusually complete records , only about one in five children seems to have died before the age of twenty @-@ one . Furthermore , births in the sample [of about 90 families] come for the most part with relatively few ' gaps ' which might indicate a baby

who did not survive . All things considered , it appears that the rate of infant and child mortality in Plymouth was no more than 25 per cent " .

= = = Childhood , adolescence , and education = = =

Children generally remained in the direct care of their mothers until the age of about eight years old , after which time it was not uncommon for the child to be placed in the foster care of another family . There were any number of reasons for a child to be " put @-@ out " in this manner . Some children were placed into households to learn a trade , others to be taught to read and write . It seems that there was a theological reason for fostering children , as with almost every decision in the colony . It was assumed that children 's own parents would love them too much and would not properly discipline them . By placing children in the care of another family , there was little danger of them being spoiled .

Adolescence was not a recognized phase of life in Plymouth colony , and there was not a single rite of passage that marked transition from youth to adulthood . Several important transitions occurred at various ages , but none marked a single " coming of age " event . As early as eight years old , children were expected to begin learning their adult roles in life by taking on some of the family work or by being placed in foster homes to learn a trade . Most children experienced religious conversion around the age of eight as well , thus becoming church members . Orphaned children were given the right to choose their own guardians at age 14 . At 16 , males became eligible for military duty and were also considered adults for legal purposes , such as standing trial for crimes . Age 21 was the youngest at which a male could become a freeman , though for practical purposes this occurred some time in a man 's mid @-@ twenties . Twenty @-@ one was the assumed age of inheritance , as well , although the law respected the rights of the deceased to name an earlier age in his will .

Actual schools were rare in Plymouth colony . The first true school was not founded until 40 years after the foundation of the colony . The General Court first authorized colony @-@ wide funding for formal public schooling in 1673 , but only the town of Plymouth made use of these funds at that time . By 1683 , though , five additional towns had received this funding .

Education of the young was never considered to be the primary domain of schools , even after they had become more common . Most education was carried out by a child 's parents or foster parents . Formal apprenticeships were not the norm in Plymouth ; it was expected that a foster family would teach the children whatever trades they themselves practiced . The church also played a central role in a child 's education . As noted above , the primary purpose of teaching children to read was so that they could read the Bible for themselves .

= = Government and laws = =

= = = Organization = = =

Plymouth Colony did not have a royal charter authorizing it to form a government , yet some means of governance was needed . The Mayflower Compact was the colony 's first governing document , signed by the 41 able @-@ bodied Separatists aboard the Mayflower upon their arrival in Provincetown Harbor on November 21 , 1620 . Formal laws were not codified until 1636 . The colony 's laws were based on a hybrid of English common law and religious law as laid out in the Bible . The colonial authorities were deeply influenced by Calvinist theology , and were convinced that democracy was the form of government mandated by God .

The colony offered nearly all adult males potential citizenship . Full citizens , or " freemen " , were accorded full rights and privileges in areas such as voting and holding office . To be considered a freeman , adult males had to be sponsored by an existing freeman and accepted by the General Court . Later restrictions established a one @-@ year waiting period between nominating and granting of freeman status , and also placed religious restrictions on the colony 's citizens , specifically preventing Quakers from becoming freemen . Freeman status was also restricted by age

; the official minimum age was 21 , although in practice most men were elevated to freeman status between the ages of 25 and 40 , averaging somewhere in their early thirties .

The colony 's most powerful executive was its Governor , who was originally elected by the freemen , but was later appointed by the General Court in an annual election . The General Court also elected seven " Assistants " to form a cabinet to assist the governor . The Governor and Assistants then appointed " Constables " who served as the chief administrators for the towns , and " Messengers " who were the main civil servants of the colony . They were responsible for publishing announcements , performing land surveys , carrying out executions , and a host of other duties .

The General Court was both the chief legislative and judicial body of the colony . It was elected by the freemen from among their own number and met regularly in Plymouth , the capital town of the colony . As part of its judicial duties , it would periodically call a Grand Enquest , which was a grand jury of sorts , elected from the freemen , who would hear complaints and swear out indictments for credible accusations . The General Court , and later lesser town and county courts , would preside over trials of accused criminals and over civil matters , but the ultimate decisions were made by a jury of freemen .

The General Court , as the legislative and judicial bodies , and the Governor , as the chief executive of the colony , constituted a political system of division of power . It followed a recommendation in John Calvin 's political theory to set up several institutions which complement and control each other in a system of checks and balances in order to avoid , or at least to minimize , the misuse of political power . In 1625 , the settlers had repaid their debts and thus gained complete possession of the colony . The colony was de facto a republic , since neither an English company nor the King and Parliament exerted any influence ? a representative democracy governed on the principles of the Mayflower Compact (" self @-@ rule ") .

= = = Laws = = =

As a legislative body , the General Court could make proclamations of law as needed . These laws were not formally compiled anywhere in the early years of the colony ; they were first organized and published in the 1636 Book of Laws . The book was reissued in 1658 , 1672 , and 1685 . These laws included the levying of " rates " or taxes and the distribution of colony lands . The General Court established townships as a means of providing local government over settlements , but reserved for itself the right to control specific distribution of land to individuals within those towns . When new land was granted to a freeman , it was directed that only the person to whom the land was granted was allowed to settle it . It was forbidden for individual settlers to purchase land from Native Americans without formal permission from the General Court . The government recognized the precarious peace that existed with the Wampanoag , and wished to avoid antagonizing them by buying up all of their land .

The laws also set out crimes and their associated punishment . There were several crimes that carried the death penalty : treason , murder , witchcraft , arson , sodomy , rape , bestiality , adultery , and cursing or smiting one 's parents . The actual exercise of the death penalty was fairly rare ; only one sex @-@ related crime resulted in execution , a 1642 incidence of bestiality by Thomas Granger . Edward Bumpus was sentenced to death for " striking and abusing his parents " in 1679 , but his sentence was commuted to a severe whipping by reason of insanity . Perhaps the most notable use of the death penalty was in the execution of the Native Americans convicted of the murder of John Sassamon ; this helped lead to King Philip 's War . Though nominally a capital crime , adultery was usually dealt with by public humiliation only . Convicted adulterers were often forced to wear the letters " A.D. " sewn into their garments , much in the manner of Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne 's novel *The Scarlet Letter* .

Several laws dealt with indentured servitude , a legal status whereby a person would work off debts or be given training in exchange for a period of unrecompensed service . The law required that all indentured servants had to be registered by the Governor or one of the Assistants , and that no period of indenture could be less than six months . Further laws forbade a master from shortening the length of time of service required for his servant , and also confirmed that any indentured

servants whose period of service began in England would still be required to complete their service while in Plymouth .

= = = Official Seal = = =

The seal of the Plymouth Colony was designed in 1629 and is still used by the town of Plymouth . It depicts four figures within a shield bearing St George 's Cross , apparently in Native @-@ American style clothing , each carrying the burning heart symbol of John Calvin . The seal was also used by the County of Plymouth until 1931 .

= = Geography = =

= = = Boundaries = = =

Without a clear land patent for the area , the settlers settled without a charter to form a government and , as a result , it was often unclear in the early years what land was under the colony 's jurisdiction . In 1644 , " The Old Colony Line " ? which had been surveyed in 1639 ? was formally accepted as the boundary between Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth .

The situation was more complicated along the border with Rhode Island . Roger Williams settled in the area of Rehoboth in 1636 , near modern Pawtucket . He was forcibly evicted in order to maintain Plymouth 's claim to the area . Williams moved to the west side of the Pawtucket River to found the settlement of Providence , the nucleus for the colony of Rhode Island , which was formally established with the " Providence Plantations Patent " of 1644 . Various settlers from both Rhode Island and Plymouth began to settle along the area , and the exact nature of the western boundary of Plymouth became unclear . The issue was not fully resolved until the 1740s , long after the dissolution of Plymouth Colony itself . Rhode Island had received a patent for the area in 1693 , which had been disputed by Massachusetts Bay Colony . Rhode Island successfully defended the patent , and a royal decree in 1746 transferred the land to Rhode Island along the eastern shore of the Narragansett Bay , including the mainland portion of Newport County and all of modern Bristol County , Rhode Island . The border itself continued to be contested by Massachusetts , first as a colony and later as a state , until as late as 1898 , when the boundary was settled and ratified by both states .

= = = Counties and towns = = =

For most of its history , the town was the primary administrative unit and political division of the colony . Plymouth Colony was not formally divided into counties until June 2 , 1685 , during the reorganization that led to the formation of the Dominion of New England . Three counties were composed of the following towns .

Barnstable County on Cape Cod :

Barnstable , the shire town (county seat) of the county , first settled in 1639 and incorporated 1650 .

Eastham , site of the " First Encounter " , first settled 1644 and incorporated as the town of Nauset in 1646 , name changed to Eastham in 1651 .

Falmouth , first settled in 1661 and incorporated as Succonesset in 1686 .

Rochester , settled 1638 , incorporated 1686 .

Sandwich , first settled in 1637 and incorporated in 1639 .

Yarmouth , incorporated 1639 .

Bristol County along the shores of Buzzards Bay and Narragansett Bay ; part of this county was later ceded to Rhode Island :

Taunton , the shire town of the county , incorporated 1639 .

Bristol , incorporated 1680 and including the former locations of Sowams and Montaup (Mount

Hope) , which were Massasoit 's and King Philip 's capitals , respectively . Ceded to Rhode Island in 1746 and is now part of Bristol County , Rhode Island .

Dartmouth , incorporated 1664 . Dartmouth was the site of a significant massacre by the Indian forces during King Philip 's War . It was also the location of a surrender of a group of some 160 of Philip 's forces who were later sold into slavery .

Freetown , incorporated 1683 , originally known as " Freeman 's Land " by its first settlers .

Little Compton , incorporated as Sakonnet in 1682 , ceded to Rhode Island in 1746 and is now part of Newport County , Rhode Island .

Rehoboth , first settled 1644 and incorporated 1645 . Nearby to , but distinct from the Rehoboth settlement of Roger Williams , which is now the town of Pawtucket , Rhode Island .

Swansea , founded as the township of Wannamoisett in 1667 , incorporated as town of Swansea in 1668 . It was here that the first English casualty occurred in King Philip 's War .

Plymouth County , located along the western shores of Cape Cod Bay :

Plymouth , the shire town of the county and capital of the colony . This was the original 1620 settlement of the Mayflower Pilgrims , and continued as the largest and most significant settlement in the colony until its dissolution in 1691 .

Bridgewater , purchased from Massasoit by Myles Standish , and originally named Duxburrow New Plantation , it was incorporated as Bridgewater in 1656 .

Duxbury , founded by Myles Standish , it was incorporated in 1637 . Other notable residents of Duxbury included John Alden , William Brewster , and Governor Thomas Prentice .

Marshfield , settled 1632 , incorporated 1640 . Home to Governor Edward Winslow . Also home to Josiah Winslow , who was governor of the colony during King Philip 's War , and to Peregrine White , the first English child born in New England .

Middleborough , incorporated 1669 as Middleberry . Named for its location as the halfway point on the journey from Plymouth to Mount Hope , the Wampanoag capital .

Scituate , settled 1628 and incorporated 1636 . The town was the site of a major attack by King Philip 's forces in 1676 .

= = Demographics = =

= = = English = = =

The English in Plymouth Colony fit broadly into three categories : Pilgrims , Strangers , and Particulars . The Pilgrims were a Protestant group that closely followed the teachings of John Calvin , like the Puritans who later founded Massachusetts Bay Colony to the north . (The Puritans wished to reform the Anglican church from within , whereas the Pilgrims saw it as a morally defunct organization , and sought to remove themselves from it .) The name " Pilgrims " was actually not used by the separatists themselves . William Bradford used the term " pilgrims " to describe the group , but he was using the term generically to define the group as travelers on a religious mission . The Pilgrims referred to themselves as the Saints , First Comers , Ancient Brethren , or Ancient Men . They used such terms to indicate their place as God 's elect , as they subscribed to the Calvinist belief in predestination . " The First Comers " was a term more loosely used in their day to refer to any of the Mayflower passengers .

There were also a number of indentured servants among the colonists . Indentured servants were mostly poor children whose families were receiving church relief and " many homeless waifs from the streets of London sent as laborers " .

In addition to the Pilgrims , the Mayflower carried non @-@ Pilgrim settlers (" Strangers ") . This group included the non @-@ Pilgrim settlers placed on the Mayflower by the Merchant Adventurers , and later settlers who came for other reasons throughout the history of the colony and who did not necessarily adhere to the Pilgrim religious ideals . A third group known as the " Particulars " consisted of later settlers who paid their own " particular " way to America , and thus were not obliged to pay the colony 's debts .

The presence of outsiders such as the Strangers and the Particulars was a considerable annoyance to the Pilgrims . As early as 1623 , a conflict broke out between the Pilgrims and the Strangers over the celebration of Christmas , a day of no particular significance to the Pilgrims . Furthermore , a group of Strangers founded the nearby settlement of Wessagussett and the Pilgrims were highly strained , both emotionally and in terms of resources , by their lack of discipline . They looked at the eventual failure of the Wessagussett settlement as Divine Providence against a sinful people .

The residents of Plymouth used terms to distinguish between the earliest settlers of the colony and those that came later . The first generation of settlers , generally thought to be those that arrived before 1627 , called themselves the Old Comers or Planters . Later generations of Plymouth residents referred to this group as the Forefathers .

A fairly comprehensive demographic study was done by historian John Demos for his seminal 1970 work on the Pilgrims *A Little Commonwealth* . He reports that the colony 's average household grew from 7 @. @ 8 children per family for first @-@ generation families to 8 @. @ 6 children for second @-@ generation families , and to 9 @. @ 3 for third @-@ generation families . Child mortality also decreased over this time , with 7 @. @ 2 children born to first @-@ generation families living until their 21st birthday . That number increased to 7 @. @ 9 children by the third generation . Life expectancy was higher for men than for women . Of the men who survived until the age of 21 , the average life expectancy was 69 @. @ 2 years . Over 55 percent of these men lived past 70 ; less than 15 percent died before the age of 50 . For women , the numbers are much lower , owing to the difficulties inherent in childbearing . The average life expectancy of women at the age of 21 was only 62 @. @ 4 years . Of these women , less than 45 percent lived past 70 , and about 30 percent died before the age of 50 .

During King Philip 's War , Plymouth Colony alone lost eight percent of its adult male population . By the end of the war , one @-@ third of New England 's approximately 100 towns had been burned and abandoned . This represented a sizable demographic effect on the English population of New England .

= = = Native Americans = = =

The Native Americans in New England were organized into loose tribal confederations , sometimes called " nations " . Among these confederations were the Nipmucks , the Massachusett , the Narragansett , the Niantics , the Mohegan , and the Wampanoag . Several significant events dramatically altered the demographics of the Native American population in the region . The first was " Standish 's raid " on Wessagussett , which frightened Native American leaders to the extent that many abandoned their settlements , resulting in many deaths through starvation and disease . The second , the Pequot War , resulted in the dissolution of the Pequot tribe and a major shift in the local power structure . The third , King Philip 's War , had the most dramatic effect on local populations , resulting in the death or displacement of as much as 80 % of the total number of Native Americans of southern New England and the enslavement and removal of thousands of Native Americans to the Caribbean and other locales .

= = = Black slaves = = =

Some of the wealthier families in Plymouth Colony owned black slaves which were considered the property of their owners , unlike indentured servants , and passed on to heirs like any other property . Slave ownership was not widespread and very few families possessed the wealth necessary to own slaves . In 1674 , the inventory of Capt. Thomas Willet of Marshfield includes " 8 Negroes " at a value of £ 200 . Other inventories of the time also valued slaves at £ 24 ? 25 each (equivalent to £ 2 @. @ 81 thousand in 2010 , or \$ 4 @, @ 300 at PPP) , well out of the financial ability of most families . A 1689 census of the town of Bristol shows that , of the 70 families that lived there , only one had a black slave . So few were black slaves in the colony that the General Court never saw fit to pass any laws dealing with them .

= = Economy = =

The largest source of wealth for Plymouth Colony was the fur trade . The disruption of this trade caused by Myles Standish 's raid at Wessagussett created great hardship for the colonists for many years to come , and was directly cited by William Bradford as a contributing factor to the colonists ' economic difficulties in their early years . The colonists attempted to supplement their income by fishing ; the waters in Cape Cod bay were known to be excellent fisheries . However , they lacked any skill in this area , and it did little to relieve their economic hardship . The colony traded throughout the region , establishing trading posts as far away as Penobscot , Maine . They were also frequent trading partners with the Dutch at New Amsterdam .

The economic situation improved with the arrival of cattle in the colony . It is unknown when the first cattle arrived , but the division of land for the grazing of cattle in 1627 represented one of the first moves towards private land ownership in the colony . Cattle became an important source of wealth in the colony ; the average cow could sell for £ 28 in 1638 (£ 3 @, @ 400 in 2010 , or \$ 5 @, @ 200 at PPP) . However , the flood of immigrants during the Great Migration drove the price of cattle down . The same cows sold at £ 28 in 1638 were valued in 1640 at only £ 5 (£ 700 @. @ 00 in 2010 , or \$ 1 @, @ 060 at PPP) . Besides cattle , there were also pigs , sheep , and goats raised in the colony .

Agriculture also made up an important part of the Plymouth economy . The colonists adopted Native American agricultural practices and crops . They planted maize , squash , pumpkins , beans , and potatoes . Besides the crops themselves , the Pilgrims learned productive farming techniques from the Native Americans , such as proper crop rotation and the use of dead fish to fertilize the soil . In addition to these native crops , the colonists also successfully planted Old World crops such as turnips , carrots , peas , wheat , barley , and oats .

Overall , there was very little cash in Plymouth Colony , so most wealth was accumulated in the form of possessions . Trade goods such as furs , fish , and livestock were subject to fluctuations in price and were unreliable repositories of wealth . Durable goods such as fine wares , clothes , and furnishings represented an important source of economic stability for the residents .

= = Legacy = =

The events surrounding the founding and history of Plymouth Colony have had a lasting effect on the art , traditions , mythology , and politics of the United States of America , despite its short history of fewer than 72 years .

= = Art , literature , and film = = =

The earliest artistic depiction of the Pilgrims was actually done before their arrival in America ; Dutch painter Adam Willaerts painted a portrait of their departure from Delfshaven in 1620 . The same scene was repainted by Robert Walter Weir in 1844 , and hangs in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol building . Numerous other paintings have been created memorializing various scenes from the life of Plymouth Colony , including their landing and the " First Thanksgiving " , many of which have been collected by Pilgrim Hall , a museum and historical society founded in 1824 to preserve the history of the Colony .

Several contemporaneous accounts of life in Plymouth Colony have become both vital primary historical documents and literary classics . Of Plimoth Plantation by William Bradford and Mourt 's Relation by Bradford , Edward Winslow , and others are both accounts written by Mayflower passengers that provide much of the information which we have today regarding the trans @-@ Atlantic voyage and early years of the settlement .

Benjamin Church wrote several accounts of King Philip 's War , including Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip 's War , which remained popular throughout the 18th century . An edition of the work was illustrated by Paul Revere in 1772 . The Sovereignty and Goodness of God provides an

account of King Philip 's War from the perspective of Mary Rowlandson , an Englishwoman who was captured and spent some time in the company of Native Americans during the war . Later works , such as " The Courtship of Miles Standish " by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow , have provided a romantic and partially fictionalized account of life in Plymouth Colony .

There are also numerous films about the Pilgrims , including the several film adaptations of " The Courtship of Miles Standish " ; the 1952 film Plymouth Adventure starring Spencer Tracy ; and Desperate Crossings : The True Story of the Mayflower , a 2006 television documentary produced by the History Channel .

In 1970 , the United States Postal Service issued a three hundred and fiftieth year commemorative stamp recognizing the English dissenters first landing at the modern day settlement of Provincetown , Massachusetts in 1620 .

= = = Thanksgiving = = =

Each year , the United States celebrates a holiday known as Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November . It is a federal holiday and frequently involves a family gathering with a large feast , traditionally featuring a turkey . Civic recognitions of the holiday typically include parades and football games . The holiday is meant to honor the First Thanksgiving , which was a harvest feast held in Plymouth in 1621 , as first recorded in the book New England 's Memorial by Nathaniel Morton , secretary of Plymouth Colony and nephew of Governor William Bradford .

The annual Thanksgiving holiday is a fairly recent creation . Throughout the early 19th century , the U.S. government had declared a particular day as a national day of Thanksgiving , but these were one @-@ time declarations meant to celebrate a significant event , such as victory in a battle . The northeastern states began adopting an annual day of Thanksgiving in November shortly after the end of the War of 1812 . Sarah Josepha Hale , editor of Boston 's Ladies ' Magazine , wrote editorials beginning in 1827 which called for the nationwide expansion of this annual day of thanksgiving to commemorate the Pilgrim 's first harvest feast . After nearly 40 years , Abraham Lincoln declared the first modern Thanksgiving to fall on the last Thursday in November in 1863 . Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Congress ultimately moved it to the fourth Thursday in November . After some sparring as to the date , the holiday was recognized by Congress as an official federal holiday in 1941 .

Some of the modern traditions which have developed alongside the Thanksgiving holiday are the National Football League 's Thanksgiving Day games and the annual Macy 's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City .

= = = Plymouth Rock = = =

One of the enduring symbols of the landing of the Pilgrims is Plymouth Rock , a large granodiorite boulder that was near their landing site at Plymouth . However , none of the contemporary accounts of the actual landing makes any mention that the Rock was the specific place of landing . The Pilgrims chose the site for their landing , not for the rock , but for a small brook nearby that was a source of fresh water and fish .

The first identification of Plymouth Rock as the actual landing site was in 1741 by 90 @-@ year @-@ old Thomas Faunce , whose father had arrived in Plymouth in 1623 , three years after the supposed event . The rock was later covered by a solid @-@ fill pier . In 1774 , an attempt was made to excavate the rock , but it broke in two . The severed piece was placed in the Town Square at the center of Plymouth . In 1880 , the intact half of the rock was excavated from the pier , and the broken piece was reattached to it . Over the years , souvenir hunters have removed chunks from the rock , but the remains are now protected as part of the complex of living museums . These include the Mayflower II , a recreation of the original ship ; Plimoth Plantation , a historical recreation of the original 1620 settlement ; and the Wampanoag Homesite , which recreates a 17th @-@ century Indian village .

=== Political legacy ===

The democratic setup of Plymouth Colony had strong influences on the shaping of democracy in both England and America . William Bradford 's History of Plimoth Plantation was widely read in the motherland . It influenced the political thought of Presbyterian politician and poet John Milton , assistant to Oliver Cromwell , and philosopher John Locke . For example , Locke referred to the Mayflower Compact in his Letters Concerning Toleration . In America , Plymouth Colony initiated a democratic tradition that was soon followed by Massachusetts Bay Colony (1628) , Connecticut (1636) , Rhode Island (1636) , New Jersey , and Pennsylvania (1681) . In the latter four colonies , founded by Thomas Hooker , Roger Williams , and William Penn , respectively , religious freedom was added to democratic constitutions . These territories became safe havens for persecuted religious minorities . There were strong links between 17th @-@ century Puritanism and the political ideas of the 18th century . On the one hand , there was the congregational democracy practiced now by all Protestant churches , including to a large extent the Anglicans . On the other hand , most of the political concepts of the generation that carried out the Revolution were taken over from the radical Whig party in England (Commonwealthmen) , which fed on the liberal political theories of Milton , Locke , and other writers . As children the Revolutionaries had experienced the Great Awakening (c . 1740) . In the words of historian Robert Middlekauff : " The Awakening recalled a generation to the standards of reformed Protestantism , which had prevailed at the time of the founding of America . [...] Radical Whig perceptions of politics attracted widespread support in America because they revived the traditional concerns of a Protestant culture that had always verged on Puritanism . That moral decay threatened free government could not come as a surprise to a people whose fathers had fled England to escape sin . The importance of virtue , frugality , industry , and calling was at the heart of their moral code . [...] Radical Whiggery of the eighteenth century convinced Americans because it had been pervasive in their culture since the seventeenth . "

=== The Mayflower Society ===

The General Society of Mayflower Descendants , or The Mayflower Society , is a genealogical organization of individuals who have documented their descents from one or more of the 102 passengers who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620 . The Society , founded at Plymouth in 1897 , claims that tens of millions of Americans descend from these passengers , and it offers research services to people seeking to document such descents .

=== Locations related to Plymouth Colony ===

Alexander Standish House

Burial Hill , site of the first fort at New Plymouth , originally known as Fort Hill

Cole 's Hill , contained the original cemetery at New Plymouth , later moved to Burial Hill

First Parish Church in Plymouth , the modern descendant of the Scrooby congregation that founded Plymouth Colony

First Parish Church (Duxbury , Massachusetts) , another early congregation founded by the Pilgrims

Harlow Old Fort House , a private house built in 1677 in Plymouth , partially out of timbers of the original fort built in 1621

Jabez Howland House

Jenney Grist Mill

John and Priscilla Alden Family Sites

Leyden Street , claimed to be the first street in Plymouth Colony

Myles Standish Burial Ground contains remains of several important Pilgrims , including Myles Standish

Plymouth Village Historic District

Town Brook Historic and Archeological District

= = = Monuments and other commemorations = = =

Myles Standish Monument State Reservation

National Monument to the Forefathers

Pilgrim Hall Museum

Pilgrim Monument

Plimoth Plantation

Plymouth Antiquarian Society

Plymouth Rock