

PLYMOUTH AND MASSACHUSETTS BAY

To understand the settlement of New England, one has to go back to religious controversies that began during the reign of Henry VIII. Angered by the Pope's refusal to grant him a divorce, Henry VIII separated the English church from the Roman Catholic Church. The new Church of England (commonly referred to as Anglican) kept many Catholic rituals.

Calvinism came to England from Europe at about the same time. Calvinists opposed Catholic rituals. Those who favored purifying the church of its Catholicism were "Puritans." Those believing it was better to depart and form their own church were "Separatists." Of these, Separatists were the more radical. They believed in individuals' rights to worship God in their own way. Calvinists were hard to persuade. Branding, flogging, or imprisonment only made them more stubborn. Elizabeth I was hard on them; James I made them miserable. The Separatists decided to leave. They moved to Holland from 1607–1609, were unhappy there, and began looking toward Virginia. The London Company gave them permission to settle in Virginia, and James I, eager to move them as far away as possible, agreed.

In 1620, 100 would-be settlers and 50 crew members boarded the little *Mayflower*. Not all the passengers were Separatists, and during the voyage, trouble broke out between the groups of travelers. The Pilgrims (as the Separatists called themselves) worried that some of the wild young men might cause trouble when they reached land. Before landing, 41 adults signed the MAYFLOWER COMPACT and agreed to obey whatever laws should be passed for the general good of the colony. They chose Deacon John Carver as governor, but he died in April 1621, and William Bradford replaced him. For 30 of the next 35 years, Bradford governed the colony.

The land they settled was outside that given to the London Company and had been given to the Council of New England (formerly the Plymouth Company). Naming their colony "Plymouth," they began the hard task of turning the rocky and not very fertile land into farms. Their first year would have been their last were it not for Squanto, an English-speaking Wampanoag, who helped establish friendly relations with the tribe. In gratitude for their help, the settlers held a harvest feast with the natives in the fall. The colony never drew many settlers, and when it merged with Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1691, it still had fewer than 1,000 residents.

Of the residents, none gave the Pilgrims more trouble than Thomas Morton, owner of Merrymount. Unlike the Pilgrims, he enjoyed the natives' company and traded them guns and liquor for furs. His merry band had a May Pole where they danced and sang songs that were offensive to the pious settlers. In 1627 Captain Miles Standish (whom Morton called



Governor John Winthrop wrote the charter for the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

"Captain Shrimp") arrived with an armed force, arrested him, and sent him to England. He returned in 1630, was arrested, and this time his property was seized and his house was burned. Again, he was exiled to England. He returned to Plymouth in 1645 and was ordered to leave. Going to Boston, he was jailed for a year, then released. He never gave them any more trouble.

MASSACHUSETTS BAY. Along the New England coastline, small fishing villages were being constructed in the 1620s. One of these villages, Cape Ann, was backed by a group of Puritans from Dorchester, England. Two motives for establishing a colony drove them: (1) economic, and (2) religious. In Puritanism, the two became one, because they believed God prospered those who best served him. Puritans were hard-working people.

The two men most important in establishing a colony were Reverend John White (who wanted a Christian mission to the natives and fishermen) and a devout Puritan lawyer, John Winthrop (who realized that royal persecution of the Puritans was increasing). Winthrop wrote the charter establishing the colony. A very important detail was left out: it did not say that the colony's meetings were to be held in England. None of the king's advisors caught that detail, and the king approved it. All company board members migrated to the colony. The charter granted to the Bay colonists gave them the power to rule the land under their control. They would elect a governor, deputy governor, and 18 assistants. These officers were to be picked by the "freemen" (males meeting voting qualifications) four times a year.

In March 1630, the *Arbella*, carrying Governor Winthrop and the charter, along with six other ships, sailed to Massachusetts. They were followed by more ships carrying 1,000 settlers. Boston quickly became their most important city and soon attracted thousands more.

The founders of the Bay Colony had a sense of purpose in what they were doing. On the way over, Governor Winthrop told them they were building "a city upon a hill," a godly community setting an example. In this community, none were to prosper at the expense of others. All would be reasonably poor together. They were short on cash, but not on food. Game was plentiful: large turkeys and deer were within gun range, and fish were just off shore.

They were also interested in educating their young people. Harvard College was established in 1636 with a grant of £800 from the legislature and the library from William Harvard's estate. Grammar schools stressing Latin and Greek were started. To stop Satan from keeping "men from the knowledge of the Scriptures," a 1647 law ordered towns with 50 or more families to appoint a schoolmaster. Towns of 100 families were to open a grammar school. Massachusetts became a center for education, and other New England colonies followed their example.

Activity

If you were going to establish a colony in the 1600s, considering the difficulty of getting supplies across the ocean, make a list of the major items you would bring with you.

Name _____ Date _____

CHALLENGES

1. Why was the name "Puritan" used to describe one group of Calvinists?

2. Why was "Separatist" used to describe another Calvinist group?

3. What was the effect of punishing them?

4. Who was the long-time governor of Plymouth colony?

5. By what name was the old "Virginia Company of Plymouth" now known?

6. What holiday do you think came out of the Plymouth harvest feast?

7. How did Thomas Morton offend the Pilgrims?

8. What important detail was not included in the Bay colony's charter?

9. Why was food not a serious problem in the Massachusetts Bay colony?

10. What two languages were stressed in grammar schools?

Name _____ Date _____

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why kinds of problems do you think the Separatists might have run into in Holland? (Think about the problems *you* would have living in a foreign country).

2. Why would someone like Morton draw so much attention from the Calvinist authorities in Plymouth and Massachusetts?

3. Why was it important that the Massachusetts charter be with the leaders of the new colony and not in England?
