

# Plymouth Colony Time Line

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## Introduction

The “Pilgrim Story” is often considered to begin with the sailing of the *Mayflower* and end with the “First Thanksgiving.” However, the roots of Plymouth Colony extend back to the beginnings of Christian reform. The inhabitants of this small New England colony lived, died, struggled and prospered through the 17th century. In 1692, Plymouth Colony and Maine were absorbed into Massachusetts Bay Colony.

## Prologue

**1517** • Martin Luther nails 95 theses on the Wittenburg church door, beginning the German Reformation.

**1533** • John Calvin breaks with Rome and institutes reform in Geneva.

**1534** • Henry VIII, King of England, breaks from Rome and establishes the Church of England.

**1552** • The Act of Uniformity is passed in which attendance at any form of service other than the official church is made punishable by imprisonment.

**1582** • Puritan Robert Browne publishes *Reformation without Tarrying for Any*.

**1593** • Some Separatist groups, followers of Browne, begin moving to Holland in order to worship as they believed.

**January, 1604** • The Hampton Court Conference is held at which Puritan proposals for reform are rejected.

**1604** • John Robinson joins the Separatist congregation in Nottinghamshire.

**1606** • The Scrooby Separatist church is formally organized, with John Clyfton as pastor and John Robinson as his assistant.

**1608** • The Scrooby Separatists emigrate to Holland. They settle in Amsterdam.

**February 12, 1609** • The Separatist congregation is given permission to relocate to Leiden.

**1616** • Disease wipes out the Natives in the Plymouth area.

**Fall, 1617** • After the decision is made to leave the Netherlands, members Robert Cushman and John Carver are sent to negotiate a patent from the Virginia Company.

**June, 1619** • A patent in the name of John Wincop is secured, but is apparently rejected by the congregation.

## Beginnings & Proceedings 1620-1621

**February 2, 1619/20** • Another patent, this time to “John Peirce and associates” is secured.

**July 31, 1620** • The colonists leave Leiden for Delftshaven and from there to Southampton, aboard the *Speedwell*. At Southampton they meet the rest of the settlers and the *Mayflower*.

**August 5, 1620** • The *Speedwell* and *Mayflower* set sail for the “northern parts of Virginia.”

**August 13, 1620** • The *Speedwell* proves leaky and the two ships put into Dartmouth.

**August 23, 1620** • After repairing the *Speedwell*, the two ships set sail. The ship continues leaking, and they both put back into Plymouth.

**September 6, 1620** • The *Speedwell* and some of the passengers are left in Plymouth, and the *Mayflower* sails on alone.

**November 9, 1620** • They spot the tip of Cape Cod, north of the land authorized in their patent. They attempt to sail south, but are defeated by treacherous shoals.

**November 11, 1620** • The *Mayflower* anchors in Provincetown Harbor. The document now known as the Mayflower Compact is drawn up and signed by most of the men. This establishes a provisional governmental structure until a new patent can be obtained from the New England Company.



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**November 15 to December 7, 1620** • Parties of men go exploring in search of a good site for settlement.

**December 8, 1620** • A party of explorers encounter Wampanoag for the first time on Cape Cod. Although shots are exchanged, no one is hurt in this “first encounter.” In the evening the men arrive in Plymouth Harbor.

**December 11, 1620** • The shallop party lands in Plymouth and explores the coast.

**December 16, 1620** • The *Mayflower* drops anchor in Plymouth Harbor.

**December 20, 1620** • The colonists choose an abandoned Wampanoag village called Patuxet for their new home. The former inhabitants had died or been scattered in an outbreak of European disease four years before.

**December 23, 1620** • Men go ashore and begin gathering building materials. Work continues as weather and health permit. During the winter, about half of the colonists die of scurvy and other diseases.

**March 16, 1620/1** • Samoset, a Monhegan (Maine) Native, arrives in the colony and greets them in English.

**March 17, 1620/1** • Samoset returns, bringing Tisquantum (Squanto) and announces the imminent arrival of the Wampanoag leader, Massasoit. Governor Carver and Massasoit conclude a treaty of peace. Squanto stays with the colonists.

**April 5, 1621** • The *Mayflower* returns to England.

**Mid-April, 1621** • Governor Carver sickens and dies. William Bradford is elected governor.

**Late September/early October, 1621** • The colonists hold a harvest celebration. Massasoit and a number of Natives participate.

## Initial Growth, 1621-1627

**November 9, 1621** • The ship *Fortune* arrives, bringing 35 new colonists, mostly men.

**July/August, 1623** • Two more ships, *Anne* and *Little James*, arrive bringing almost 100 more colonists. Together with the passengers of the *Mayflower* and *Fortune*, they comprise the “Old Comers.” These early colonists often received preferential treatment in later colony transactions.

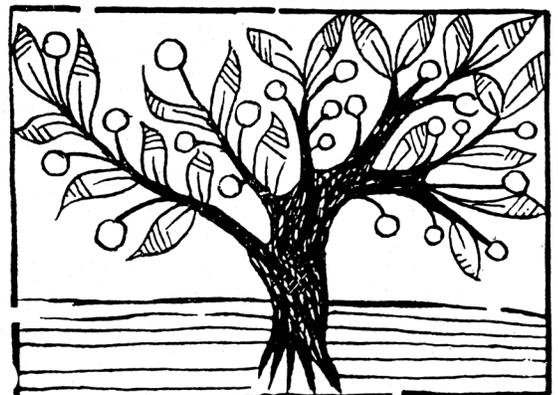
**1623** • The colonists receive their own land on which to plant crops.

**November, 1623** • A fire destroys several buildings in Plymouth. An unknown number of colonists, having lost the homes and possessions, return to England.

**1624** • A religious controversy centering around the Reverend John Lyford results in many leaving Plymouth for England or other areas of New England.

**1626** • Plymouth builds its first trading house at Aptuxet on the southwestern side of Cape Cod. There they trade with the Natives of both Cape Cod and Narragansett Bay.

**May 22, 1627** • The colony begins to divide its major assets, beginning with livestock. The resultant document lists most of the Plymouth inhabitants by name.



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## Growth beyond New Plymouth, 1627-1640

**January 3, 1627/8** • The Plymouth Court begins to distribute land, 20 acres per share, to the colonists.

**1628** • Plymouth establishes the second trading post of the east bank of the Kennebec River (Augusta, ME). Another post is set further north on the Penobscot River the following year. The *White Angel* arrives in Plymouth.

**September 6, 1628** • John Endicott and company arrive in Salem aboard the *Abigail*.

**1629** • A number of ships arrive in New England with colonists for Salem. Some ships also carry passengers bound for Plymouth, including the *Lyon* and the *Mayflower*.

**1630** • The “Winthrop fleet” of eleven vessels arrive in Massachusetts Bay with about 700 passengers, some of whom settle in Plymouth Colony.

**October 29, 1630** • The *Handmaid* arrives in Plymouth with sixty passengers.

**1632** • Some Plymouth men are granted land at Green’s Harbor, which is incorporated as the town of Marshfield in 1640.

**1633** • An outbreak of disease kills many Natives and about 20 colonists. Another trading house is built on the Connecticut River at Matianuck (Windsor, CT).

**November 25, 1633** • First reference in the court records of the land north of Plymouth as “Duxburrow,” although Duxbury is not incorporated as a separate town until 1637.

**1633/4** • The first mention of the “ward of Scituate.”

**1634-6** • Plymouth loses all four of its trading houses.

**1636** • Connecticut settled by colonists from Massachusetts Bay.

**1636-1638** • War with the Pequots and the English in Connecticut. Hundreds of Natives die. Plymouth was not directly involved, but the war set the tone for future English/Native relations.

**March 7, 1636/7** • Seven men are identified in the court records as being of Cohannett, which becomes known as Taunton.

**April 3, 1637** • A group of ten men from Saugus receive permission to settle in Plymouth Colony and choose the future Sandwich on Cape Cod.

**September 4, 1638** • The first mention of the inhabitants of “Mattacheese or Yarmouth.”

**March 5, 1638/9** • The first mention in the court records of the “men of Barnstable.”

## Plymouth Colony, 1640-1692

**1640** • The lucrative trade in cattle to Massachusetts Bay colonists crashes with the slowing of immigration. Plymouth goes into an economic decline.

**1640-1660** • The Puritan success in the English Civil War ends large-scale migration to New England. Many New Englanders, among them Plymouth Colony governor Edward Winslow, return to England during this period.

**August 2, 1642** • The first mention of Seconk, which in 1645 becomes the town of Rehoboth.

**1644** • Some colonists from Plymouth move to Nauset on Cape Cod. In June 1646, Nauset becomes a town. Its name is changed to Eastham in 1651.

**March 23, 1649** • The Plymouth colonists purchase a tract of land from Ousamequin (Massasoit) which will be named Bridgewater.



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**1650-1660** • Problems increase between the colonists and Natives during this period. English expansion into Native territory, though done by purchase, brings English livestock in close proximity with Native fields. Incidents of livestock trespass and damage become common.

**May 9, 1657** • William Bradford, governor of Plymouth Colony for many years, dies. Thomas Prentice is elected governor at the June court.

**June 13, 1660** • By June, Massasoit is dead. At the death of his father, Wamsutta desires to change his name “according to the custome of the natives.” He requests and receives from the Plymouth Court English names for himself and his brother – “Alexander Pokanokett” and “Philip.”

**June 5, 1661** • Charles II is restored to the English throne.

**Summer, 1662** • Alexander dies under suspicious circumstances and Philip succeeds.

**August-September, 1671** • Controversy develops between Philip and the Plymouth government as Plymouth attempts to confiscate the weapons of Philip’s people, the Pokanoket.

**September 29, 1671** • Philip signs a new treaty, promising obedience to the Plymouth government.

**March 29, 1673** • Governor Thomas Prentice dies and Josias Winslow succeeds him as governor.

**June 20, 1675** • The “great Indian war” which will become known as King Philip’s War begins with an attack by some Wampanoag on Swansea.

**July 1675** • The war spreads, with attacks on Taunton, Middleboro and Dartmouth.

**Late March, 1676** • Captain Michael Pierce’s company is wiped out in a battle at Pawtucket. Two days later, Philip’s men burn Rehoboth. Towns begin to refuse to send more troops.

**May 1676** • The remaining houses in Middleboro burn, more die in Taunton and part of Scituate burns. Communications cease between Plymouth and Boston.

**July 1676** • The tide of war turns and the colonists begin to capture or kill Natives, now desperately short of food.

**July 22, 1676** • The Plymouth court arranges for many Wampanoag children to be placed as servants with colonial families until they reach the age of 24 or 25.

**August 9, 1676** • Governor Josiah Winslow approves the sale of 110 Natives to be sold as slaves out of the country.

**August 12, 1676** • Philip and his forces are surrounded in a swamp at Mount Hope. A Pocasset Native named Alderman shoots and kills him, and Philip’s body is quartered. The war is over although “mopping up” operations continue over the next few months.

**1681** • Plymouth Colony Governor Thomas Hinckley negotiates for a royal charter.

**December 20, 1686** • Sir Edmund Andros arrives as governor of the Dominion of New England, which combines New York and the New England colonies into one political unit.

April 22, 1688 Hearing of the accession of William & Mary to England’s throne, Plymouth rises up against Andros. Thomas Hinckley resumes the governorship.

**October 7, 1691** • England combines Plymouth and Maine colonies with Massachusetts Bay.

**May 14, 1692** • Sir William Phips arrives in Boston with the new charter.

**June 8, 1692** • The last meeting of the Plymouth General Court.



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