

The Mayflower Compact

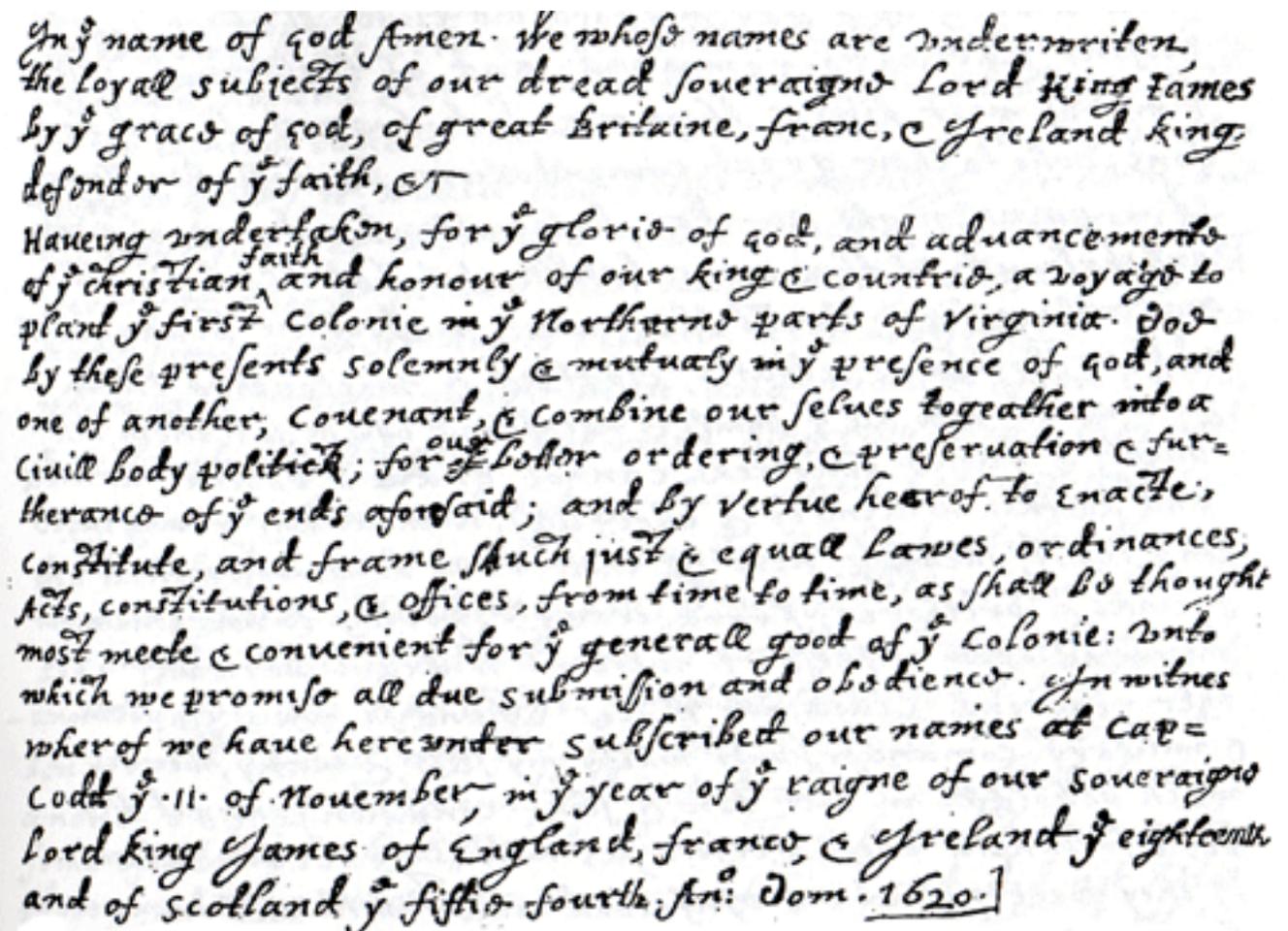
The "Mayflower Compact" was signed on 11 November 1620 onboard the *Mayflower* shortly after she came to anchor off Provincetown Harbor. The Pilgrims had obtained permission from English authorities to settle in Virginia, whose northern border at the time extended up to what is now New York. The Pilgrims had originally intended to settle near the mouth of the Hudson River, but due to dangerous shoals and a near shipwreck on their attempt to head south, they decided instead to plant themselves outside the bounds of the Virginia Company patent--which caused some "mutinous speeches" amongst some of the passengers.

William Bradford, the Pilgrim leader, was alarmed to learn that some of the others felt no obligation to respect the rules of the Pilgrims. In his words, they wanted to "use their owne libertie." The male heads of Pilgrim and non-Pilgrim families therefore drew up a compact that bound all signers to accept whatever form of government was established after landing. The compact created a "Civil Body Politic" to enact "just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices." Every adult male had to sign the agreement before going ashore. The compact remained in effect until Plymouth was incorporated into the short-lived Dominion of New England in 1686 and subsequently absorbed into the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1691.

The Mayflower Compact was an attempt to establish a temporary, legally-binding form of self-government until such time as the Company could get formal permission from the Council of New England. This formal permission came in the form of the Pierce Patent of 1621.

The original Mayflower Compact has been lost, perhaps falling victim to Revolutionary War looting. The text was first published in London in 1622 in *A Relation or Journal of the Beginning and Proceeding of the English Plantation Settled at Plymouth in New England*. A copy of it is found in William Bradford's handwritten history, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, made about 1630. And Nathaniel Morton, secretary for Plymouth Colony, published it, along with the earliest

known list of the signers, in his history, *New England's Memorial*, published in 1669. A list of signers is also found in Thomas Prince's 1736 book, *Chronological History of New England*; and Thomas Hutchinson published a list of signers in 1767 as well. It is uncertain if they had access to the original, or were basing their list of signers off Nathaniel Morton's. The following is an image of the original handwritten page of Governor William Bradford's history *Of Plymouth Plantation*. This is followed by an exact, line-by-line transcription. Spelling and punctuation have not been modernized.



In y^e name of god Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread soueraigne Lord King James by y^e graco of god, of great Britaine, franc, & yreland King defendor of y^e faith, &c

Haueing undertaken, for y^e glorio of god, and aduancements of y^e christian^{faith}, and honour of our king & countrie, a voyaige to plant y^e first Colonie in y^e Northward parts of Virginia. Doo by these presents solemnly & mutually in y^e presence of god, and one of another, Couenant, & combine our selues together into a Ciuill body politicke; for ^{our} better ordering, & preservation & furtherance of y^e ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof. to enacte, constitute, and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances, Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meeke & conuenient for y^e generall good of y^e Colonie: vnto which we promise all due submission and obedienc. In witness whereof we haue herevnder subscribed our names at Cap= Codd y^e 11. of Nouember, in y^e year of y^e raigne of our soueraigne lord King James of England, franc, & yreland y^e eighteenth and of scotland y^e fifth^e fourth. An^o Dom. 1620.]

In ye name of God Amen· We whose names are vnderwriten,
the loyall subjects of our dread soueraigne Lord King James
by ye grace of God, of great Britaine, franc, & Ireland king,
defender of ye faith, &c

Haueing vndertaken, for ye glorie of God, and aduancemente
of ye christian ^faith and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to
plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia· doe
by these presents solemnly & mutuall in ye presence of God, and
one of another, couenant, & combine our selues together into a
ciuill body politick; for ye our better ordering, & preservation & fur=
therance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof, to enacte,
constitute, and frame shuch just & equall lawes, ordinances,
Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought
most meete & conuenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: vnto
which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witnes
wherof we haue herevnder subscribed our names at Cap=
Codd ye ·11· of Nouember, in ye year of ye raigne of our soueraigne
Lord king James of England, france, & Ireland ye eighteenth
and of Scotland ye fiftie fourth. Ano: Dom ·1620·

Signers

John Carver

William Bradford

Edward Winslow

William Brewster

Isaac Allerton

Myles Standish

John Alden

Samuel Fuller

Christopher Martin

William Mullins

William White

Richard Warren

John Howland

Stephen Hopkins

Edward Tilley

John Tilley

Francis Cooke

Thomas Rogers

Thomas Tinker

John Rigsdale

Edward Fuller

John Turner

Francis Eaton

James Chilton

John Crackstone

John Billington

Moses Fletcher

John Goodman

Degory Priest

Thomas Williams

Gilbert Winslow

Edmund Margesson

Peter Browne

Richard Britteridge

George Soule

Richard Clarke

Richard Gardiner

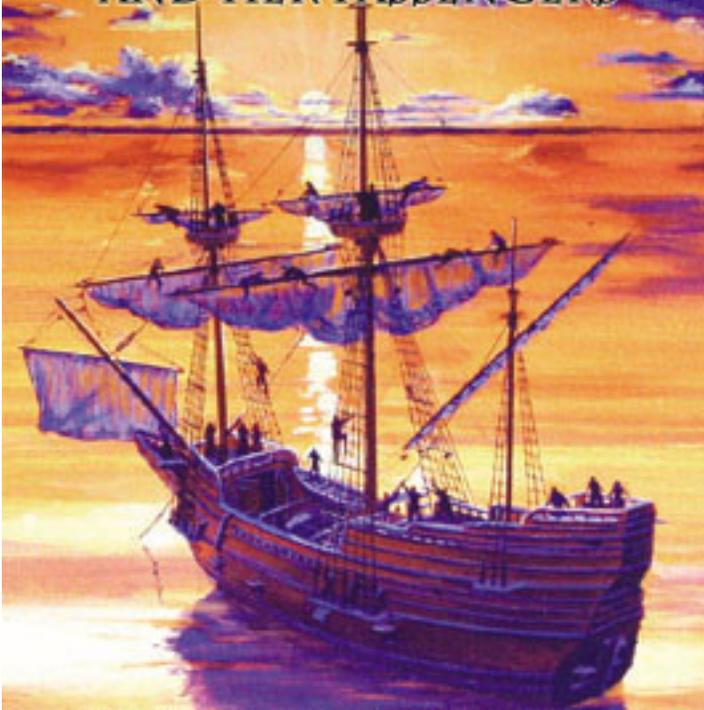
John Allerton

Thomas English

Edward Doty

Edward Leister

THE
MAYFLOWER
— AND HER PASSENGERS —



CALEB H. JOHNSON

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