



State Library of Massachusetts - Special Collections Department

Manuscript 198

William Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation*: Guide

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator: Bradford, William

Call Number: Manuscript 198

Extent: 1 volume

Preferred Citation Style: William Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation*. State Library of Massachusetts Special Collections.

Provenance: Transferred from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1897.

About This Finding Aid: Description based on DACS.

Processed by: Finding Aid written by Beth Carroll-Horrocks, May 2014.

Abstract: This codex manuscript by Plymouth colonist William Bradford documents the life and travels of the Pilgrims from 1608-1647. It was during this time in which they departed England for the Netherlands, organized themselves as a company to settle in America, and weathered several decades of life in North America.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

William Bradford began writing the journal ten years after the arrival of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts in 1620. He recounts the congregation's travels from England to the Netherlands, their preparations to sail to North America, the ocean voyage, the establishment of Plymouth Colony and then the history of the colony, in great detail, to

1646. The journal documents the Colony itself – passengers on the *Mayflower*, births and deaths, encounters with the original inhabitants of Massachusetts, and both business and theological conflicts within the colony.

The following items accompany the manuscript:

- A decree from the Consistory Court of the Diocese of London documenting the conditions of the transferal of the Bradford Manuscript (or "The Log of the Mayflower") to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, dated April 12, 1897
- a newspaper clipping from "The Times" (London) describing the failed efforts to modify one of the conditions outlined in the decree, and the formal presentation of the "log" from the Bishop of London to Mr. Bayard, American ambassador to England, dated April 30, 1897
- Copy of a document signed by Thomas Francis Bayard asserting his intention to fulfill the conditions of the decree by depositing the "log of the Mayflower" with the Governor of Massachusetts, dated April 29, 1897
- The brown paper wrapper in which the volume travelled from England in 1897

Most likely these items traveled with the Bradford manuscript from London to the State House, and for this reason they have been added to the collection. The folder also contained an acidic envelope (discarded) with the note: "Log of Mayflower belongs in leather case." Also: a letter dated January 18, 1898 from Governor Wolcott to Caleb B. Tillinghast, State Librarian.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

The manuscript's author, William Bradford, was born in England at Austerfield, Yorkshire in 1590, his father a yeoman farmer and his mother the daughter of the village shopkeeper. In his mid teens Bradford joined a newly-formed Congregational church.

This group of religious dissidents believed it was necessary to separate from the Church

of England. Fearing persecution in England, Bradford and others of these "separatists" moved to Amsterdam, and then Leyden in 1607/1608. There Bradford followed the trade of weaver, he married, learned Dutch, Latin, and Hebrew, and acquired a sizable library. When the congregation decided to emigrate, Bradford helped arrange the trip across the Atlantic Ocean in 1620.

Bradford was married twice, first to Dorothy May, in Amsterdam. She fell from the deck of the Mayflower into the waters of Cape Cod harbor, where the ship was anchored, and drowned. This was while her husband was with others on an expedition ashore. They had left behind one son in England. In Plymouth, he married the widow Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, who brought two children to the marriage. Alice and William Bradford had three children.

At the age of 31 Bradford was elected the second governor of Plymouth Colony; he remained a principal leader of the colony until his death in 1657.

After Bradford's death the journal remained in the hands of his family and then in the collections of historians and clergymen, including the pastor of Old South Church in Boston, Thomas Prince, who had been writing a history of the early years of the Plymouth Settlement. Prince died before the volume could be returned to Bradford's great-grandson, who had loaned it to Prince early in the century (as early as 1726). It disappeared from Old South Church in 1775, during the British occupation of the city. It is likely that British soldiers took the volume, as it reappeared in the mid-nineteenth century in the library of the Bishop of London, where a historian from Massachusetts discovered it in 1855. After a long campaign on the part of prominent persons in Massachusetts and the United States, the volume finally returned to Massachusetts in 1897. The State Library has kept it secure since then.

Conditions Governing Access

The State Library requests that researchers consult one of these versions of the text: the digitized version of the manuscript, available on-line through the Library's DSpace depository and its Flickr site, the facsimile volume published in 1897 (*History of the Plimoth Plantation : containing an account of the voyage of the Mayflower, written by William Bradford* ; now reproduced in facsimile from the original manuscript, with an introduction by John A. Doyle), or one of the many transcribed and versions. For the safety and security of the original volume, access is granted under very limited circumstances.

Technical Access

Links to the State Library's DSpace Digital Depository and its Flickr site are available through the Library's home page: <http://www.mass.gov/lib>.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Copyright restrictions may apply. Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with Special Collections staff.

Languages and Scripts

The collection is entirely in English.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Deposited in the State Library of Massachusetts by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Roger Wolcott, in 1897.

Conservation Note

Preservation activities were performed on the collection as follows:

Book conservators at the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, Massachusetts, repaired and digitized the volume in 2013.

Description

The pagination in the volume is irregular; many pages have no page numbers, and in several places the page numbers are duplicated.

The volume contains the following sections, in this order:

- Inside front cover, on pastedown: note to the “Consistory Court of the Diocese of London” concerning transmittal of volume to The Honorable Thomas Francis Bayard, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in London of the United States of America, of *The Log of the Mayflower*,” signed by Harry W. Lee, Registrar.
- Page with pasted-in document, by Thomas Prince, describing custodial history of the volume; and Thomas Prince’s printed bookplate of “*The New-England Library*”
- Notes on custodial history of volume
- Notes in William Bradford’s hand on the Hebrew vocabulary
- Narrative “of plimoth plantation” (this narrative makes up the bulk of the book); includes the text of the Mayflower Compact, and a description of the first Thanksgiving”
- List of Mayflower passengers: “The names of those which came over first, in y^e year 1620 and were (by the grace of God) the first beginners, and (in a sort) the foundation, of all the plantations, and colonies, in New-England (And their families)
- Brief index (10 entries only)

In a separate folder containing two documents removed the volume during the conservation of the volume in 2013; these pages were 19th-century additions:

- Verses on the death of Mrs. Bradford
- Inscribed 19th-century flyleaves containing a copy of the transmittal agreement, 189