

Of plimoth plantation

And first of y^e occasion, and Indisments ther vnto; the which
that I may truly unfold, I must begin at y^e very roote, & rise
of y^e same. The which I shall endeavor to manesest in a plain
file; with singular examples, as my slender Iudgements can attaine
at least a little, as my slender Iudgements can attaine
the same.

William Bradford's Of Plimoth Plantation

1. Chapter

It is well knowne vnto y^e godly, and judicious; how euer since y^e
first breaking out of y^e lighte of y^e gospell, in our Honourable Na
tion of England (which was y^e first of nations, whom y^e Lord adora
t ther with, after y^e grosse darknes of popery which had cover
t, & ouerspred y^e Christian world) what warrs, & oppositions eue
ince satan hath raised, maintained, and continued against the
aints, from time, to time, in one sorte, or other. Some times by
bloody death & cruell torments; other whiles ymprisonments, banis
ents, & other hard vsages. As being loath his kingdom should goe
owne, the truth preuaile; and y^e Churches of god reuerte to the
cientie path, and decay, which they had receiued.

A Treasure of the Commonwealth

But when he could not preuaile by these means, against
e maine truths of y^e gospell; but that they began to take rooting
the same, hee sent forth with y^e bloud of y^e martires,

Brief Chronology of Bradford and the Manuscript

1590 William Bradford is born in Austerfield, Yorkshire, England.

1608 Bradford leaves England with members of a Separatist group who believed that the Church of England should institute reforms to eliminate the rituals and practices of the Roman Catholic Church and form a more “pure” Christian church; they relocate to the Netherlands.

1608-1620 Bradford works as a weaver, marries, and works with the congregation to plan emigration to the Colony of Virginia.

1620 Separatist families and about 50 other colonists leave England and the Netherlands on the *Mayflower* to sail to the mouth of the Hudson River. After a voyage of 66 days, they reach Cape Cod on November 9. In December, the colonists relocate to the current site of Plymouth and begin planning their settlement.

1621 Bradford is elected Governor of the colony after the death John Carver.

1630 Bradford begins writing *Of Plimoth Plantation*, a detailed history of the founding of Plymouth Colony and the lives of the colonists from 1621 to 1647. Bradford writes his last notes in the volume in 1650.

1657 Bradford dies in Plymouth on May 9.

ca. 1657-1775 Manuscript volume remains in Bradford’s family, who allow it to be used by historians and clergymen to document the history of the colony. Last known location is the library of the Old South Church, Boston, before the volume is presumably removed by British soldiers during the American Revolution.

1855 Volume is rediscovered in England, in the library of the Bishop of London.

1897 Volume is returned to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; State Library is given custody. Facsimile edition of the entire volume is published.

2012-2014 State Library secures funding to conserve and digitize the manuscript and to make an online version freely available to the public.

Introduction

The State Library of Massachusetts is honored to list among its collection of historical treasures the original copy of *Of Plimoth Plantation*, which details the travels and everyday lives of a small group of religious Separatists, who set out from England to seek the religious freedom they felt was not available to them back home. Written by William Bradford, a Pilgrim Father and leader in the religious Separatist movement, the book presents in manuscript format the initial authoritative account of the *Mayflower* voyage and the settling of what would become the first permanent settlement of Europeans in New England, using the newly-signed Mayflower Compact as the colony's governing document.

Lost for nearly a century and often believed by many to be Bradford's personal journal in the new land, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, which is also commonly known as the "Bradford Manuscript," represents a written retrospection on his experiences and observations initially written as two books, the second of which was never completed. As Professor Walter P. Wenska wrote:

*"Bradford writes most of his history out of his nostalgia, long after the decline of Pilgrim fervor and commitment had become apparent. Both the early annals which express his confidence in the Pilgrim mission and the later annals, some of which reveal his dismay and disappointment, were written at about the same time."**

The Bradford Manuscript gives historical scholars, researchers, and everyday history enthusiasts a first-hand account from the perspective of a European settler of the founding of Plimoth Plantation, or Plymouth Colony, as it is now known. The original settlers were beset by diseases and illnesses that killed nearly half of the original 100 settlers within the first six months of the expedition. They suffered as well from a scarcity of food, harsh and unforgiving

out with most of their brethren out of y^e country
called Veltos-Hauen wher the ship lay vnder
goodly & pleasante Citie, which had been their
Heb. 11. they knew they were pilgrimes, & looked not
eyes to y^e heauens, their dearest cuntry; and

weather, and conflicts with the indigenous populations in the area over land and traditions. These colonists, who were originally called “Old Comers,” persevered through their hardships, frequently aided by the area’s original inhabitants, and went on to mark a place for themselves in the annals of American history.

Although it appears Bradford never attempted to publish his manuscript, he made it clear that he wanted it preserved and read by future generations:

*“I have been the larger in these things, and so shall crave leave in some like passages following, (though in other things I shall labour to be more contract) that their children may see with what difficulties their fathers wrestled in going through these things in their first beginnings, and how God brought them along notwithstanding all their weaknesses and infirmities. As also that some use may be made hereof in after times by others in such like weighty employments; and herewith I will end this chapter.”***

In January 2012 the State Library initiated a project to conserve and digitize the Bradford Manuscript. The work was completed in late 2013, and the entire volume is now fully restored and available in our digital repository, DSpace, accessible through the State Library’s website at www.mass.gov/lib.

As State Librarian, I take great pleasure in presenting the Bradford Manuscript to the residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and beyond, especially as we commemorate the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower’s* arrival in Plymouth.



Elvernoy Johnson
State Librarian of Massachusetts
July 2019



State Librarian Elvernoy Johnson delivers the volume to conservator Mary Patrick Bogan with a State Police escort.

*Wenska, Walter P. “Bradford’s Two Histories: Pattern and Paradigm in *Of Plymouth Plantation*,” in *Early American Literature*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Fall 1978, pages 151-164.

**Bradford Manuscript, page 36.

William Bradford

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. As an orphan 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. While in the Netherlands, Bradford became a weaver, 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, of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. The couple had one son, John, whom they left behind in England when they set out for the voyage on the *Mayflower*. After the ship had crossed the Atlantic and had anchored at Cape Cod harbor, Dorothy fell from the deck of the ship and drowned while her husband was away from the ship on an expedition ashore. In 1623, Bradford married the widow Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, who brought two children to the marriage. Alice and William Bradford had three additional children.

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



*Statue of William Bradford
by Cyrus Dallin,
Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth*

William Bradford

The Bradford Manuscript

Of Plimoth Planation, or the Bradford Manuscript, is an original document from one of the most significant periods in Massachusetts history: the settlement in 1620 by pilgrims from England (via the Netherlands) in the area now known as Plymouth. As the colony's most prolific author, William Bradford kept detailed records and wrote the colony's history.



Bradford began writing the manuscript in 1630, ten years after the Pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts. He finished through Chapter X that year and then wrote the rest “in pieces” until 1647, though he wrote some entries as late as 1650. His handwritten journal recounts the congregation’s travels from England to Amsterdam and Leyden, their preparations to sail to North America, the ocean voyage, the establishment of Plymouth Colony, and then a narrative history of the colony, in great detail, to 1646. The manuscript also includes a list of passengers on the *Mayflower*, along with their birth and death dates, encounters with the original inhabitants of Massachusetts, and both business and theological conflicts within the colony.



*Seal of the
Registrar of the
Bishop of London*

After Bradford’s death in 1657, the manuscript remained in the hands of his family and then in the collections of historians and clergymen, including the Reverend Thomas Prince (1687-1758), the pastor at Old South Church in Boston. Prince had been writing a history of the early years of the Plymouth settlement, but he died before the manuscript could be returned to Bradford’s great-grandson, who had loaned it to him as early as 1726. On Prince’s death, the manuscript became part of the library at Old South Church, where it remained until the American Revolution. It is likely that

British soldiers took the manuscript, as it reappeared in the mid-19th century in the library of the Bishop of London, where a scholar discovered it in 1855.

After a long campaign on the part of prominent persons in the United States, especially in Massachusetts, the volume crossed the Atlantic Ocean once more and was returned to the Commonwealth in 1897. It was placed in the custody of the State Library of Massachusetts, where it has remained ever since.



The Bradford Manuscript on display in the State Library's reading room in 1899. The volume was installed in a special exhibit case, seen at the lower right.

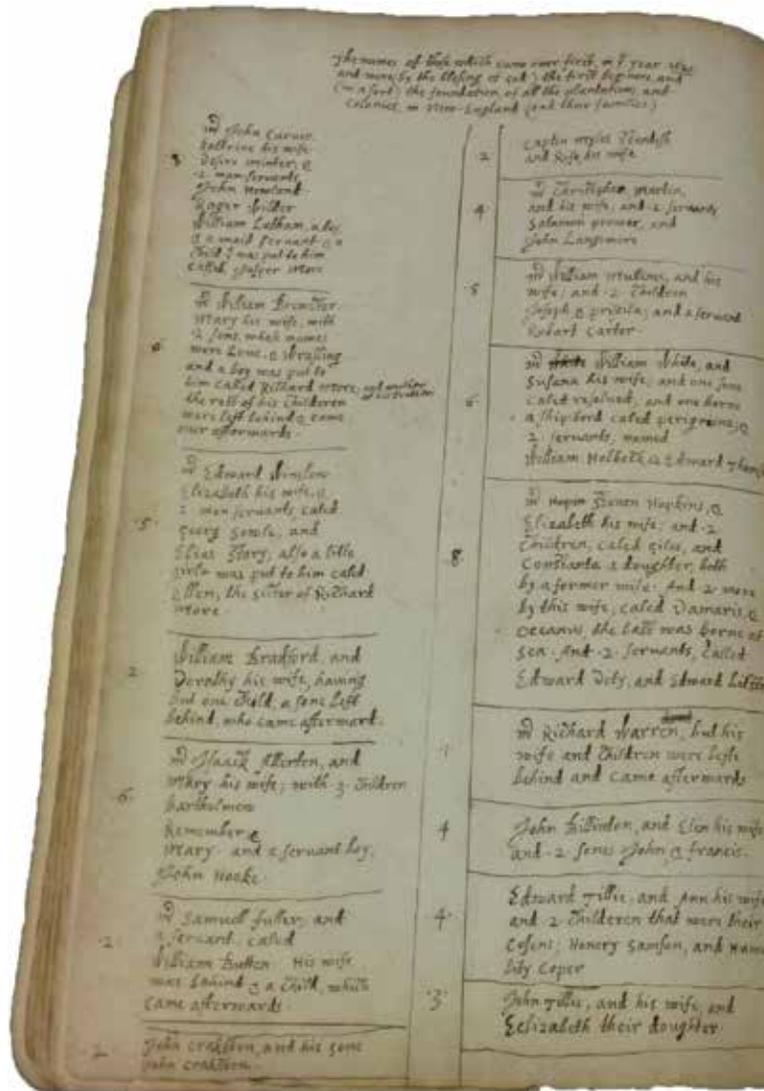


The Bradford Manuscript in its current storage - a custom-made box that supports the manuscript on all sides, keeping it protected from light and dust, and which is kept under controlled environmental conditions.

The names of those which came
and were (by the blessing of God
(in a sort) the foundation, or
Colonies, in New-England

“ William Bradford, and
Dorothy his wife,
having but one child, a
son left behind, who
came afterward. ”

“ Mr. Steven Hopkins, &
Elizabeth, his wife, and
2. children, caled Giles,
and Constanta, a
daughter, both by a
former wife; and 2. more
by this wife, caled
Damaris & Oceanus; the
last was borne at sea; and
2. servants, called
Edward Doty and
Edward Litster. ”



me over first, in y^e year 1620.
 od) the first beginners, and
 f all the plantations, and
 d. (And their families.)

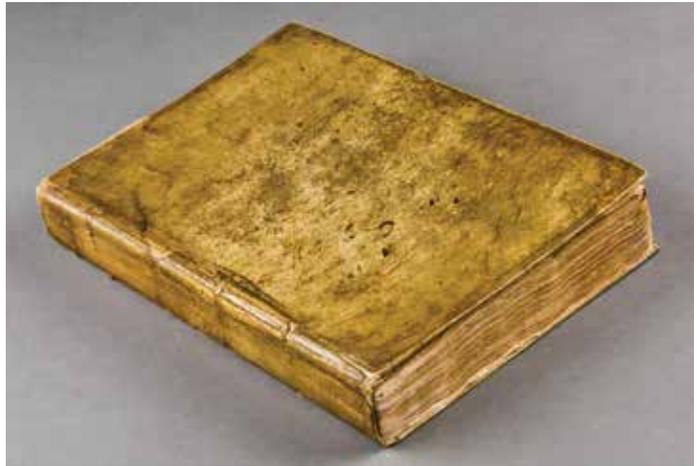
Francis Cooke, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
Thomas Rogers, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
Thomas Under, and his wife, and his children.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
John Tipton, and his wife, and his children.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
Thomas Tilton, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
Edward Fuller, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
John Trench, and a son, he had a daughter, came from England, after his death abroad.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
Francis Eden, and Sarah his wife, and several their sons, a young child.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
Thomas Fletcher John Goodman Thomas Williams Dionis Smith Edmond Mearns Peter Beane Richard Kirkbride Richard Clark Richard Cauter Gilbert Jenkinson	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.
John Alden was hired for a Cooper, at South-Hampton when the ship was built; and being a hopfull young man was much desired, but left to his owne liking to go, or stay when he came home, but he stay- ed, and married here.	John Boston, and his wife, and his children, after his death abroad.

“ John Alden was hired
 for a cooper, at
 South-Hampton, wher the ship
 victuled; and being a hopfull
 yong man, was much desired,
 but left to his owne liking to go
 or stay when he came here; but
 he stayed, and maryed here. ”

“ There were allso other 2.
 seamen hired to stay a year
 here in the country, William
 Trevore, and one Ely. But
 when their time was out, they
 both returned. ”

Physical Description of the Volume

The Bradford Manuscript is bound in what appears to be seventeenth-century vellum. It measures approximately 11 ½” by 7 ¾” and contains about 580 pages. The paper is cream-colored handmade laid rag paper, and the ink is a dark brown, iron gall ink. There is some question about the original order of the pages – not helped by William Bradford’s own erratic page numbering – and evidence that pages were added to the volume, probably after its return to Massachusetts in the late 1890s. Conservators removed most of these 1890s additions during the volume’s restoration in 2013.

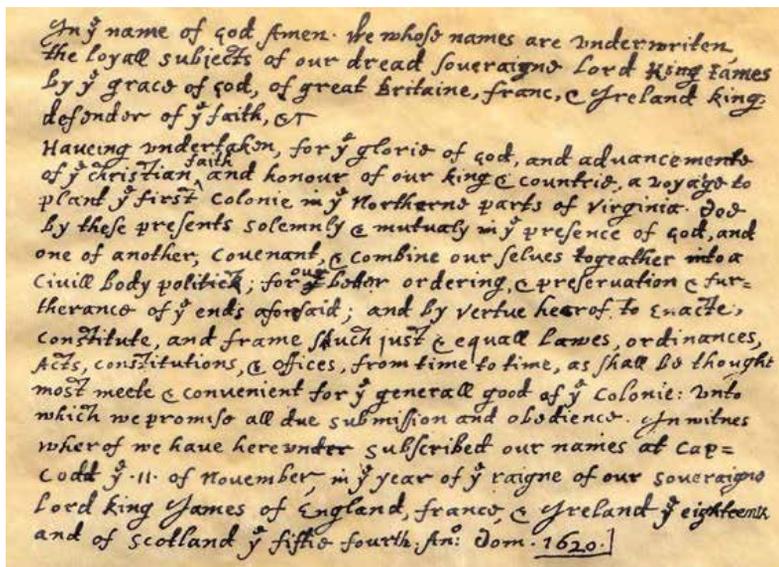


The Mayflower Compact

One of the most important parts of the Bradford Manuscript is the handwritten record of the Mayflower Compact, which the Pilgrims formed as a rule of law to govern themselves. When the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, they realized that they were not in Virginia (for which they had a patent), so while still aboard the ship they created an agreement that became known as the Mayflower Compact. Most of the adult male passengers signed the agreement, which bound them in a “civil body politic” and assured that order would be preserved in this new world until the Pilgrims’ right of self-government could be confirmed by a valid company patent or royal charter.

Though the original Mayflower Compact no longer exists, three 17th-century versions are available. It was printed in *Mourt's Relation* (1622) and *New-Englands Memorial* (1669), along with Bradford’s *Of Plimoth Plantation* (1650). This manuscript has been reprinted many times since 1897, but the only existing handwritten version of the Mayflower Compact is found in the Bradford Manuscript in the State Library.

Text of the Mayflower Compact



In y^e name of god Amen. We whose names are vnderwritten
the loyall subjects of our dread soueraigne Lord King James
by y^e grace of god, of great Britaine, franc, & Ireland king,
defondor of y^e faith, &c
Haueing vnderfaken, for y^e glorio of god, and aduancement
of y^e christian ^{faith} and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to
plant y^e first Colonie in y^e Northerne parts of Virginia. Doe
by these presents solemnly & mutuallly in y^e presence of god, and
one of another, Couenant, & Combine our selues together into a
Ciuill body politick; for ^{our} better ordering, & preservation & fur=
therance of y^e ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof, to enacte,
constitute, and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances,
Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought
most meete & conuenient for y^e generall good of y^e Colonie: vnto
which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness
wherof 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, france, & Ireland y^e eighteenth
and of Scotland y^e fiftie fourth. An: Dom. 1620.]

*In ye name of God Amen • We whose names are vnderwritten,
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 vnderfaken, 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 & mutuallly 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 witness
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 •*

Project to Repair and Digitize the Manuscript

In 2012, with support from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the State Library began a project to conserve and digitize the Bradford Manuscript. The plan called for comprehensive treatment at a professional conservation laboratory and high-resolution digital imaging before and after treatment at the center's digital imaging laboratory.

The treatment at the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, Massachusetts, included:

- An initial digital capture to document the current condition and order of pages
- Collation, surface cleaning, testing of inks, and measurement of pH before and after treatment
- Dis-binding, documentation and removal of sewing
- Removal of front internal hinge repair and flyleaves
- Mending of significant tears
- Removal and relining of two previously-lined leaves
- Washing and alkalization of pages, sizing of pages with gelatin
- Re-assembly of text block and placement of 19th-century pages in separate buffered folders
- Repair of the binding
- Construction of a drop-spine box



Images clockwise from top

- *The volume before repair*
- *The pages are washed*
- *The treated folios await scanning*



The Manuscript under Repair

Northeast Document Conservation Center, 2013



Images clockwise from top left

- *Conservators consult over the volume*
- *Pages are repaired with Kozo paper*
- *The cloth spine lining is removed*
- *The volume is sewn with linen thread*



Acknowledgments

For help with the conservation and digitization of the William Bradford Manuscript, the State Library of Massachusetts gratefully acknowledges

Senator James Eldridge, Chair, State Library of Massachusetts Board of Trustees
Secretary Michael J. Heffernan, Executive Office for Administration and Finance

Nick Bunker

Beth Carroll-Horrocks

Casey E. Davis

Bruce Diloreto

Betty Booth Donohue

Christopher Dupuis

Susan Greedyke Lachevre

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)

Silvia Mejia

Nathaniel Philbrick

Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC)

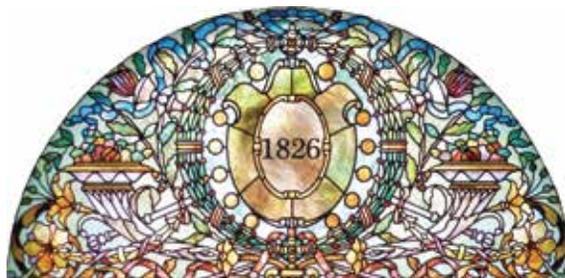
Alix Quan

Elizabeth Roscio

Laura Schaub

Gregor Trinkaus-Randall

Kelly J. Turner



State Library of Massachusetts



The Pilgrims on the Mayflower by Henry Oliver Walker

Image Credits

All images of the manuscript are from William Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation*. Manuscript 198, State Library of Massachusetts.

Page 3: William Bradford. Statue by Cyrus Dallin, 1920. Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth. Photograph by Casey E. Davis.

Page 4: Seal of the Registrar of the Bishop of London on a document transferring custody of The Log of the Mayflower to Thomas Francis Bayard, former ambassador to the Court of St. James, April 12, 1897. Manuscript 198, State Library of Massachusetts.

Page 5: Photograph of State Library reading room, ca. 1899. Legislative Souvenir, 1899. Photograph of the volume courtesy of the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC).

Pages 10-11: Images of the volume under repair courtesy of NEDCC.

Inside back cover: *The Pilgrims on the Mayflower*. Mural by Henry Oliver Walker, 1902. Hall of Flags, Massachusetts State House. Courtesy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Art Commission.

Back cover: Stained glass image of the Mayflower, 1890s. Room 433, Massachusetts State House. Photograph by Bruce Diloreto.



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Elvernoy Johnson, State Librarian

Second revised edition, 2019



State Library of Massachusetts