

Allerton Negotiates a New Agreement with the Merchant Adventurers

[With the death of Governor John Carver in April 1621, "Shortly after William Bradford was chosen Gover in his stead, and being not yet recoverd of his ilnes, in which he had been near ye point of death; Isaak Allerton was chosen to be an Asistente unto him, who, by renewed election every year, continued sundry years together".]

[The Pilgrims were not, in the beginning, experienced businessmen. In 1625, at the death of their "right hand" man in England, Robert Cushman, they found they needed Allerton's negotiating abilities and sent him post-haste as their agent to England.]

[This mission (the first of several) was particularly significant. It produced a change in the financial arrangements between the merchant Adventurers and the Pilgrims whereby the former sold their entire interest to the latter, know as Purchasers, for 1,800 English ponds. Allerton negotiated the agreement in 1626. (Society of Mayflower Descendants in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania)]

Bradford tells what happened,

This year [1626] they sent Mr. Allerton into England, and gave him order to make a composition with ye adventurers, upon as good termes as he could (unto which some way had ben made ye year before by Captaine Standish);

but yet injoynd him not to conclud absolutly till they knew ye termes, and had well considered of them; but to drive it to as good an issew as he could, and referr ye conclusion to them.

Also they gave him a commission under their hands & seals to take up some money, provided it exeeded not such a sume specified, for which they engaged them selves, and gave him order how to layout ye same for ye use of ye plantation.

And finding they rane a great hazard to goe so long viages in a smale open boat, espetially ye winter season, they begane to thinke how they might gett a small pinass; as for ye reason afforesaid, so also because others had raised ye prise with ye Indeans above ye halfe of what they had formerly given, so as in such a boat they could not carry a quantity sufficient to answer their ends.

They had no ship-carpenter amongst them, neither knew how to get one at presente; but they having an ingenious man that was a house carpenter, who also had wrought with ye ship carpenter (that was dead) when he built their boats,

at their request he put forth him selfe to make a trial that way of his skill; and tooke one of ye biggest of ther shalops and sawed her in ye midle, and so lengthened her some 5. or 6. foote, and strengthened her with timbers, and so builte her up, and laid a deck on her;

and so made her a conveniente and wholesome vessell, very fitt & comfortable for their use, which did them servise 7. years after; and they gott her finished, and fitted with sayles & anchors, ye insuing year.

And thus passed ye affairs of this year.

At ye usuall season of ye coming of ships [1627] Mr. Allerton returned, and brought some usfull goods with him, according to ye order given him. For upon his commission he tooke up 200li. which he now gott at 30. per cent.

The which goods they gott safly home, and well conditioned, which was much to the comfort & contente of ye plantation.



He declared unto them, also, how, with much adoe and no small trouble, he had made a composition with ye adventurers, by the help of sundrie of their faithfull freinds ther, who had also tooke much pains ther about.

The 1626 Allerton Agreement

The agreement or bargen he had brought a draught of, with a list of ther names ther too annexed, drawne by the best counsel of law they could get, to make it firme. The heads wherof I shall here inserte.

To all Christian people, greeting, &c. Wheras at a meeting ye 26. of October last past, diverse & sundrie persons, whose names to ye one part of these presents are subscribed in a schedule hereunto annexed, Adventurers to New-Plimoth in New-England in America, were contented and agreed,

in consideration of the sume of one thousand and eight hundred pounds sterling to be paid, (in maner and forme folling,) to sell, and make sale of all & every ye stocks, shares, lands, marchandise, and chatles, what soever, to ye said adventurers, and other ther fellow adventurers to New Plimoth aforesaid, any way accruing, or belonging to ye generalitie of ye said adventurers aforesaid;

as well by reason of any sume or sumes of money, or marchandise, at any time heretofore adventured or disbursed by them, or other wise howsoever; for ye better expression and setting forth of which said agreemente,

the parties to these presents subscribing, doe for them selves severally, and as much as in them is, grant, bargan, alien, sell, and transfere all & every ye said shares, goods, lands, marchandice, and chatles to them belonging as aforesaid, unto Isaack Alerton, one of ye

planters resident at Plimoth afforesaid, assigned, and sent over as agente for ye rest of ye planters ther,

and to such other planters at Plimoth aforesaid as ye said Isack, his heirs, or assignes, at his or ther arrivall, shall by writing or otherwise thinke fitte to joyne or partake in ye premisses, their heirs, & assignes, in as large, ample, and beneficiall maner and forme, to all intents and purposes, as ye said subscribing adventurers here could or may doe, or performe.

All which stocks, shares, lands, &c. to the said adven: in severallitie allotted, apportioned, or any way belonging, the said adven: doe warrant & defend unto the said Isaack Allerton, his heirs and assignes, against them, their heirs and assignes, by these presents.

And therefore ye said Isaack Allerton doth, for him, his heirs & assigns, covenant, promise, & grant too & with ye adven: whose names are here unto subscribed, ther heirs, &c. well & truly to pay, or cause to be payed, unto ye said adven: or 5. of them which were, at yt meeting afforsaid, nominated & deputed,

viz. John Pocock, John Beachamp, Robart Keane, Edward Base, and James Sherley, marchants, their heirs, &c. too and for ye use of ye generallitie of them, the sume of 1800li. of lawfull money of England, at ye place appoynted for ye receipts of money on the west side of ye Royall Exchaing in London, by 200li. yearly, and every year, on ye feast of St. Migchell, the first paiment to be made Ano: 1628. &c.

Allso ye said Isaack is to indeavor to procure & obtaine from ye planters of N. P. aforesaid, securitie, by severall obligations, or writings obligatory, to make paiment of ye said sume of 1800li. in forme afforsaid, according to ye true meaning of these presents.

In testimonie wherof to this part of these presents remaining with ye said Isaack Allerton, ye said subscribing adven: have sett to their names,* &c. And to ye other part remaining with ye said adven: the said Isaack Allerton hath subscribed his name, ye 15. Novbr. Ano: 1626. in ye 2. year of his Majesties raigne.

Below are the names of the adventurers subscribed to this paper, taken from Bradford's Letter-Book, 1 Mass. Hist. Coll., III. 48; being forty-two in number.

The names of six of these persons are found subsequently among the members of the Massachusetts Company, viz. John White, John Pocock, Thomas Goffe, Samuel Sharpe, John Revell, and Thomas Andrews.

Mr. Haven, who edited the Records of the Massachusetts Company, is of opinion that the first person on the list is the celebrated clergyman of Dorchester, the reputed anthor of the Planter's Plea. Emnu. Alltham is probably the same person named in the Council Records, under date January 21, 1622-3 : "Emanuel Altum to command the Pinnace built for Mr. Peirce's Plantation."

Smith speaks of "Captaine Altom" as commanding this vessell, but Morton says the name of the master of the Little James was Mr. Bridges, who it appears was

drowned at Damariscove, in March, 1624. See Coll. of the Amer. Antiq. Soc., III. 26, 62, Preface; Felt's MS. Memoranda from the Council Records; Smith's Generall Historie, p. 239; Morton's Memorial, p. 48.

John White,
John Pocock,
Robert Kean,
Edward Bass,
William Hobson,
William Penington,
William Quarles,
Daniel Poynton,
Richard Andrews,
Newman Rookes,
Henry Browning,
Richard Wright,
John Ling,
Thomas Goffe,

Samuel Sharpe,
Robert Holland,
James Sherley,
Thomas Mott,
Thomas Fletcher,
Timothy Hatherly,
Thomas Brewer,
John Thorned,
Myles Knowles,
William Collier,
John Revell,
Peter Gudburn,
Emnu. Alltham,
John Beauchamp,

Thomas Hudson,
Thomas Andrews,
Thomas Ward,
Fria. Newbald,
Thomas Heath,
Joseph Tilden,
William Perrin,
Eliza Knight,
Thomas Coventry,
Robert Allden,
Lawrence Anthony,
John Knight,
Matthew Thornhill,
Thomas Millsop.

This agreemente was very well liked of, & approved by all ye plantation, and consented unto; though they knew not well how to raise ye payment, and discharge their other ingagements, and supply the yearly wants of ye plantation, seeing they were forced for their necessities to take up money or goods at so high intrests.



[The original company of adventurers or “venture capitalists” was wound up in 1627, leaving a debt of £1,800 that was assumed by the Undertakers. In return a monopoly was granted to Bradford, Allerton, and Standish in their position as original Undertakers.]

Yet they undertooke it, and 7. or 8. of ye cheefe of ye place became joyntly bound for ye paimente of this 1800li. (in ye behalfe of ye rest) at ye severall days. In which they rane a great adventure, as their present state stood, having many other heavie burthens allready upon them, and all things in an uncertaine condition amongst them.

[The Plymouth “Undertakers” included 8 Pilgrims (Bradford, Standish, Allerton, Winslow, Howland, Alden, Brewster, and Prence) and four London partners (Sherley, Beauchamp, Andrews and Hatherly.)]

So ye next returne it was absolutly confirmed on both sids, and ye bargin fairly ingrossed in parchmente and in many things put into better forme, by ye advice of ye learnedest counsel they could gett; and least any forfeiture should fall on ye whole for none paimente at any of ye days, it rane thus: to forfeite 30s. a weeke if they missed ye time; and was concluded under their hands & seals, as may be seen at large by ye deed it selfe.

Now though they had some unto warde persons mixed amongst them from the first, which came out of England, and more afterwards by some of ye adventurers, as freindship or other affections led them, -- though sundrie were gone, some for Virginia, and some to other places,

yet diverse were still mingled amongst them, about whom ye Gover & counsell with other of their cheefe freinds had serious consideration, how to setle things in regard of this new bargin or purchas made, in respecte of ye distribution of things both for ye presente and future.

For ye present, excepte peace and union were preserved, they should be able to doe nothing, but indanger to over throw all, now that other tyes & bonds were taken away.

Therefore they resolved, for sundrie reasons, to take in all amongst them, that were either heads of families, or single yonge men, that were of abillity, and free, (and able to governe them selvs with meete descretion, and their affairs, so as to be helpfull in ye comone-welth,) into this partnership or purchass.

First, yey considered that they had need of men & strength both for defence and carrying on of bussinesses. 2ly, most of them had borne ther parts in former miseries & wants with them, and therefore (in some sort) but equall to partake in a better condition, if ye Lord be pleased to give it. But chiefly they saw not how peace would be preserved without so doing, but danger & great disturbance might grow to their great hurte & prejudice other wise.

Yet they resolved to keep such a mean in distribution of lands, and other courses, as should not hinder their growth in others coming to them.

[This agreement led to the first “dividend” of privately owned land (at 20 acres a person) to each resident family or single man – together with shares in valuable milk goats and cattle – that began the expansion of the settlement beyond the bounds of downtown Plymouth. (Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants)]



So they caled ye company together, and conferred with them, and came to this conclusion, that ye trade should be managed as before, to help to pay the debts;

and all such persons as were above named should be reputed and inrouled for purchasers; single free men to have a single share, and every father of a familie to be allowed to purchass so many shares as he had persons in his family; that is to say, one for him selfe, and one for his wife, and for every child that he had living with him, one.

As for servants, they had none, but what either their maisters should give them out of theirs, or their deservings should obtaine from ye company afterwards. Thus all were to be cast into single shares according to the order abovesaid;

and so every one was to pay his part according to his proportion towards ye purchass, & all other debts, what ye profite of ye trade would not reach too; viz. a single man for a single share, a maister of a famalie for so many as he had.

This gave all good contente. And first accordingly the few catle which they had were devided, which arose to this proportion; a cowe to 6. persons or shars, & 2. goats to ye same, which were first equalised for age & goodnes, and then lotted for;

single persons consorting with others, as they thought good, & smaler familys likewise; and swine though more in number, yet by ye same rule.

Distribution of Lands (1627)

[After two harvests the colony itself had decided that the task of raising food for the settlers would prosper only if it was separated from that of earning profits for London. In 1623 a parcel of land was allotted to each man to till for his family and to maintain those who were exempt from agricultural employment because of other duties. Each family was given one acre per family member.]

[In abandoning the “common course and condition” everyone worked harder and more willingly. The food problem was ended, and after the first abundant harvest under individual cultivation, the Pilgrims did not have to endure the meager rations of the first years. The plots assigned them permanently in 1624 became privately owned in 1627.]

[Three heifers and a bull sent over by the adventurers in response to Bradford's request thrived and multiplied, so there was cattle to be divided among the households when the general stock was terminated. (McIntyre)]

Then they agreed that every person or share should have 20. acres of land devided unto them, besids ye single acres they had allready; and they appoynted were to begin first on ye one side of ye towne, & how farr to goe; and then on ye other side in like maner; and so to devid it by lotte;

and appointed sundrie by name to doe it, and tyed them to certaine ruls to proceed by; as that they should only layout settable or tillable land, at least such of it as should butt on ye water side, (as ye most they were to layout did,) and pass by ye rest as refuse and comune; and what they judged fitte should be so taken.

And they were first to agree of ye goodnes & fitnes of it before the lott was drawne, and so it might as well prove some of ther owne, as an other mans; and this course they were to hould throwout. But yet seekeing to keepe ye people together, as much as might be, they also agreed upon this order, by mutuall consente, before any lots were cast:

that whose lotts soever should fall next ye towne, or most conveninte for nearnes, they should take to them a neigboure or tow, whom they best liked; and should suffer them to plant corne with them for 4. years; and afterwards they might use as much of theirs for as long time, if they would.

Allso every share or 20. acers was to be laid out 5. acres in breadth by ye water side, and 4. acres in lenght, excepting nooks & corners, which were to be measured as yey would bear to best advantage. But no meadows were to be laid out at all, nor were not of many years after, because they were but streight of meadow grounds;

and if they had bene now given out, it would have hindred all addition to them afterwards; but, every season all were appoynted. wher they should mowe, according to ye proportion of catle they had.

This distribution gave generally good contente, and settled mens minds. Also they gave ye Gover & 4. or 5. of ye spetiall men amongst them, ye houses they lived in; ye rest were valued & equalised at an indiferent rate, and so every man kept his owne, and he that had a better allowed some thing to him that had a worse, as ye valuation wente.



Information here is from Bradford; Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants; Society of Mayflower Descendants in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Debts hopeful and desperate - financing the Plymouth Colony, Ruth McIntyre; Plimoth Patuxet

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the Mayflower, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young