

## First Encounter

The Pilgrims decide to emigrate to America despite the perils and dangers:

"all great & honourable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and must be both enterprised and overcome with answerable courages.

It was granted ye dangers were great, but not desperate; the difficulties were many, but not invincible. For though there were many of them likely, yet they were not cartaine; it might be sundrie of ye things feared might never befall; others by providente care & ye use of good means, might in a great measure be prevented; and all of them, through ye help of God, by fortitude and patience, might either be borne, or overcome.

True it was, that such attempts were not to be made and undertaken without good ground & reason; not rashly or lightly as many have done for curiositie or hope of gaine, &c. But their condition was not ordinarie; their ends were good & honourable; their calling lawfull, & urgente; and therefore they might expecte ye blessing of god in their proceeding.

Yea, though they should loose their lives in this action, yet might they have comforte in the same, and their endeavors would be honourable. They lived here but as men in exile, & in a poore condition; and as great miseries might possibly befall them in this place, for ye 12. Years of truce [the truce between Holland and Spain] were now out, & there was nothing but beating of drums, and preparing for warr, the events wherof are allway uncertaine. (Bradford)

On September 6 (September 16), 1620, the Mayflower departed from Plymouth, England, and headed for America. The first half of the voyage went fairly smoothly, the only major problem was sea-sickness. But by October, they began encountering a number of Atlantic storms that made the voyage treacherous.

### Arrival at Cape Cod

The voyage itself across the Atlantic Ocean took 66 days; November 9 (November 19), 1620 they sighted Cape Cod. The Pilgrims safe arrival at Cape Cod aboard the Mayflower:

"Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees & blessed ye God of heaven, who had brought them over ye vast & furious ocean, and delivered them from all ye periles & miseries thereof, againe to set their feete on ye firme and stable earth, their proper elemente.

And no marvell if they were thus joyefull, seeing wise Seneca was so affected with sailing a few miles on ye coast of his owne Italy; as he affirmed, that he had rather remaine twentie years on his way by land, then pass by sea to any place in a short time; so tedious & dreadfull was ye same unto him.

But here I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this poore peoples presente condition; and so I thinke will the reader too, when he well considered ye same. Being thus passed ye vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembred by yt which wente before), they had now no friends to wellcome them, nor inns to

entertaine or refresh their weatherbeaten bodys, no houses or much less townes to repaire too, to seeke for succoure. ...

Let it also be considred what weake hopes of supply & succoure they left behinde them, yt might bear up their minds in this sade condition and trialls they were under; and they could not but be very smale. It is true, indeed, ye affections & love of their brethren at Leyden was cordiall & entire towards them, but they had litle power to help them, or them selves; and how ye case stode betweene them & ye marchants at their coming away, hath already been declared.

What could not sustaine them but ye spirite of God & his grace? May not & ought not the children of these fathers rightly say : Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this willdernes; but they cried unto ye Lord, and he heard their voyce, and looked on their adversitie..." (Bradford)

### **Native Americans**

As the chill of an approaching winter settled in, the native people who lived 400 years ago in what is now the outermost region of Cape Cod were likely spending their days preparing for the change in weather and moving inland to be away from winds coming off the sea.

The men would have been stockpiling meat and catching fish to provide food for their families; the women foraging, gathering nuts and fallen branches as firewood. In the evenings, family members would have been sharpening tools or making mats and pottery. (Bragg, USA Today Network)

### **Initial Exploring Party**

William Bradford writes of how the exploring party from the Mayflower, sailing in the shallop, survived a storm and landed on Clark's Island. After spending the Sabbath on the island, the party finally landed for the first time in Plymouth:

From hence they departed, & co[a]sted all along, but discerned no place likely for harbor; & therefore hasted to a place that their pillote, (one Mr. Coppin who had bine in ye cuntrie before) did assure them was a good harbor, which he had been in, and they might fetch it before night; of which they were glad, for it begane to be foule weather.

After some houres sailing, it begane to snow & raine, & about ye midle of ye afternoone, ye wind increased, & ye sea became very rough, and they broake their ruder, & it was as much as 2 men could doe to steere her with a cupple of oares. But their pillott bad them be of good cheere, for he saw ye harbor; but ye storme increasing, & night drawing on, they bore what saile they could to gett in, while they could see.

But herwith they broake their mast in 3 peeces, & their sail fell over bord, in a very grown sea, so as they had like to have been cast away; yet by Gods mercie they recovered them selves, & having ye fload with them, struck into ye harbore. But when it came too, ye pillott was deceived in ye place, and said, ye Lord be mercifull unto them, for his eys never saw yt place before; & he & the mr. mate would have rune her ashore, in a cove full of breakers, before ye winde.

But a lusty seaman which steered, bad those which rowed, if they were men, about with her, or ells they were all cast away; the which they did with speed. So he bid them be of good cheere & row lustly, for ther was a faire sound before them, & he doubted not but they should find one place or other wher they might ride in saftie.

And though it was very darke, and rained sore, yet in ye end they gott under ye lee of a smale iland, and remained ther all yt night in saftie. But they knew not this to be an iland till morning, but were devided in their minds; some would keepe ye boate for fear they might be amongst ye Indians; others were so weake and cold, they could not endure, but got a shore, & with much adoe got fire, (all things being so wett,) and ye rest were glad to come to them; for after midnight ye wind shifted to the north-west, & it frose hard.

But though this had been a day & night of much trouble & danger unto them, yet God gave them a morning of comforte & refreshing (as usually he doth to his children), for ye next day was a faire sunshinig day, and they found them sellvs to be on an iland secure from ye Indeans, wher they might drie their stufe, fixe their peeces, & rest them selves, and gave God thanks for his mercies, in their manifould deliverances.

And this being the last day of ye weeke, they prepared there to keepe ye Sabath. On Munday they sounded ye harbor, and founde it fitt for shipping; and marched into ye land [Plymouth], & found diverse cornfeilds, & litle runing brooks, a place (as they supposed) fitt for situation; at least it was ye best they could find, and ye season, & their presente necessitie, made them glad to accepte of it. So they returned to their shipp againe with this news to ye rest of their people, which did much comforte their harts. (Bradford)

### Further exploration ...

Wednesday, the 6th of December, it was resolved our discoverers should set forth, for the day before was too foul weather, and so they did, though it was well o'er the day ere all things could be ready. So ten of our men were appointed who were of themselves willing to undertake it, to



wit, Captain Standish, Master Carver, William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Tilley, Edward Tilley, John Howland, and three of London, Richard Warren, Stephen Hopkins, and Edward Doty, and two of our seamen, John Allerton and Thomas English. Of the ship's company there went two of the master's mates, Master Clarke and Master Coppin, the master gunner, and three sailors. The narration of which discovery follows, penned by one of the company.

... we set out, being very cold and hard weather. We were a long while after we launched from the ship before we could get clear of a sandy point which lay within less than a furlong of the same.

In which time two were very sick, and Edward Tilley had like to have sounded with cold; the gunner also was sick unto death, (but hope of trucking made him to go), and so remained all that day and the next night.

At length we got clear of the sandy point and got up our sails, and within an hour or two we got under the weather shore, and then had smoother water and better sailing, but it was very cold, for the water froze on our clothes and made them many times like coats of iron.

We sailed six or seven leagues by the shore, but saw neither river nor creek; at length we met with a tongue of land, being flat off from the shore, with a sandy point. We bore up to gain the point, and found there a fair income or road of a bay, being a league over at the narrowest, and some two or three in length, but we made right over the land before us, and left the discovery of this income till the next day.

As we drew near to the shore, we espied some ten or twelve Indians very busy about a black thing - what it was we could not tell - till afterwards they saw us, and ran to and fro as if they had been carrying something away.

We landed a league or two from them, and had much ado to put ashore anywhere, it lay so full of flat sands. When we came to shore, we made us a barricade, and got firewood, and set out our sentinels, and betook us to our lodging, such as it was. We saw the smoke of the fire which the savages made that night, about four or five miles from us.

In the morning we divided our company, some eight in the shallop, and the rest on the shore went to discover this place, but we found it only to be a bay, without either river or creek coming into it. Yet we deemed it to be as good a harbor as Cape Cod, for they that sounded it found a ship might ride in five fathom water.

We on the land found it to be a level soil, though none of the fruitfulest. We saw two becks of fresh water, which were the first running streams that we saw in the country, but one might stride over them. We found also a great fish, called a grampus, dead on the sands; they in the shallop found two of them also in the bottom of the bay, dead in like sort.

They were cast up at high water, and could not get off for the frost and ice. They were some five or six paces long, and about two inches thick of fat, and fleshed like a swine; they would have yielded a great deal of oil if there had been time and means to have taken it. So we finding nothing for our turn, both we and our shallop returned.



We then directed our course along the sea sands, to the place where we first saw the Indians. When we were there, we saw it was also a grampus which they were cutting up; they cut it into long rands or pieces, about an ell long, and two handful broad. We found here and there a piece scattered by the way, as it seemed, for haste.

This place the most were minded we should call the Grampus Bay, because we found so many of them there. We followed the track of the Indians' bare feet a good way on the sands; at length we saw where they struck into the woods by the side of a pond.

As we went to view the place, one said he thought he saw an Indian house among the trees, so went up to see. And here we and the shallop lost sight one of another till night, it being now about nine or ten o'clock.

So we light on a path, but saw no house, and followed a great way into the woods. At length we found where corn had been set, but not that year.

Anon we found a great burying place, one part whereof was encompassed with a large palisade, like a churchyard, with young spires for or five yards long, set as close one by another as they could, two or three feet in the ground. Within it was full of graves, some bigger and some less; some were also paled about, and others had like an Indian house made over them, but not matted.

Those graves were more sumptuous than those at Cornhill, yet we digged none of them up, but only viewed them, and went our way.

Without the palisade were graves also, but not so costly. From this place we went and found more corn-ground, but not of this year. As we ranged we light on four or five Indian houses, which had been lately dwelt in, but they were uncovered, and had no mats about them, else they were like those we found at Cornhill but had not been so lately dwelt in.

There was nothing left but two or three pieces of old mats, and a little sedge. Also, a little further we found two baskets full of parched acorns hid in the ground, which we supposed had been corn when we began to dig the same; we cast earth thereon again and went our way. All this while we saw no people.

We went ranging up and down till the sun began to draw low, and then we hasted out of the woods, that we might come to our shallop, which when we were out of the woods, we espied a great way off, and called them to come unto us, which they did as soon as they could, for it was not yet high water.

They were exceedingly glad to see us (for they feared because they had not seen us in so long a time), thinking we would have kept by the shore side. So being both weary and faint, for we had eaten nothing all that day, we fell to making our rendezvous and get firewood, which always costs us a great deal of labor.

By that time we had done, and our shallop come to us, it was within night, and we fed upon such victuals as we had, and betook us to our rest, after we had set out our watch.

About midnight we heard a great and hideous cry, and our sentinels called, "Arm! Arm!" So we bestirred ourselves and shot off a couple of muskets, and the noise ceased; we concluded that it was a company of wolves or foxes, for one told us he had heard such a noise in Newfoundland. (Mourt's Relation)

## **First Encounter**

About five o'clock in the morning [December 8, 1620] we began to be stirring, and two or three which doubted whether their pieces would go off or no made trial of them, and shot them off, but thought nothing at all.

After prayer we prepared ourselves for breakfast and for a journey, and it being now the twilight in the morning, it was thought meet to carry the things down to the shallop. Some said it was not best to carry the armor down; others said they would be readier; two or three said they would not carry theirs till they went themselves, but mistrusting nothing at all.

As it fell out, the water not being high enough, they laid the things down upon the shore and came up to breakfast. Anon, all upon a sudden, we heard a great and strange cry, which we knew to be the same voices, though they varied their notes.

One of our company, being abroad, came running in and cried, "They are men! Indians! Indians!" and withal, their arrows came flying amongst us.





Our men ran out with all speed to recover their arms, as by the good providence of God they did. In the meantime, Captain Miles Standish, having a snaphance ready, made a shot, and after him another.

After they two had shot, other two of us were ready, but he wished us not to shoot till we could take aim, for we knew not what need we should have, and there were four only of us which had their arms there ready, and stood before the open side of our barricade, which was first assaulted.

They thought it best to defend it, lest the enemy should take it and our stuff, and so have the more vantage against us.

Our care was no less for the shallop, but we hoped all the rest would defend it; we called unto them to know how it was with them, and they answered, "Well! Well!" every one and, "Be of good courage!" We heard three of their pieces go off, and the rest called for a firebrand to light their matches.

One took a log out of the fire on his shoulder and went and carried it unto them, which was thought did not a little discourage our enemies.

The cry of our enemies was dreadful, especially when our men ran out to recover their arms; their note was after this manner, "Woach woach ha ha hach woach." Our men were no sooner come to their arms, but the enemy was ready to assault them.

There was a lusty man and no whit less valiant, who was thought to be their captain, stood behind a tree within half a musket shot of us, and there let his arrows fly at us. He was seen to shoot three arrows, which were all avoided, for he at whom the first arrow was aimed, saw it, and stooped down and it flew over him; the rest were avoided also. He stood three shots of a musket.





At length one took, as he said, full aim at him, and after which he gave extraordinary cry and away they all went.

We followed them about a quarter of a mile, but we left six to keep our shallop, for we were careful about our business. Then we shouted all together two several times, and shot off a couple of muskets and so returned; this we did that they might see we were not afraid of them nor discouraged.

Thus it pleased God to vanquish our enemies and give us deliverance. By their noise we could not guess that they were less than thirty or forty, though some thought that they were many more.

Yet in the dark of the morning we could not so well discern them among the trees, as they could see us by our fireside.

We took up eighteen of their arrows which we have sent to England by Master Jones, some whereof were headed with brass, others with harts' horn, and others with eagles' claws.

Many more no doubt were shot, for these we found were almost covered with leaves; yet, by the especial providence of God, none of them either hit or hurt us though many came close by us and on every side of us, and some coats which hung up in our barricade were shot through and through.

So after we had given God thanks for our deliverance, we took our shallop and went on our journey, and called this place, The First Encounter. (Mourt's Relation)

All here is from Bradford; Mourt's Relation.

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