

6.4 The Settlement of Plymouth

The third English settlement in North America was started by people who were looking for religious freedom.

King James said that everyone in England had to belong to the Church of England. Some people refused. Among them were people called *Separatists*. The Separatists wanted to have a separate, or different, church.

The Separatists decided to move to a place where they could be free to have their own religion. In time, they came to be known as the Pilgrims.

In September 1620, the Pilgrims sailed from England on a ship called the *Mayflower*. After more than two months at sea, they landed on the tip of Cape Cod in what is now Massachusetts. Before going ashore, the Pilgrims drew up a plan of government to help them live together peacefully. Most of the men signed the agreement, which is known as the Mayflower

Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, they signed the Mayflower Compact. This agreement described the way the Pilgrims planned to govern themselves in the New World.





The Pilgrims, searching for a place where they could practice their religion, landed at Plymouth in winter. Almost half of the new settlers died during this first, terrible season.

Compact. (*Compact* means “agreement.”) Then they elected a governor.

After exploring the area, the Pilgrims decided to sail the *Mayflower* across the bay and land at a place they named Plymouth. In late December, they started building houses and a meeting hall, called the *Common House*.

The first winter was very hard. The Pilgrims had landed too late in the year to plant crops. The climate was cold and harsh. Nearly half of the 102 Pilgrims died before spring. Only six or seven of them were strong enough to help care for the others.

In March 1621, a Native American named Squanto from the nearby Wampanoags (wam-puh-NO-ags) visited the Pilgrims. Sailors had taken Squanto to England, where he learned English. Squanto stayed with the Pilgrims and taught them how to plant corn, catch fish, and get sweet syrup from maple trees. The Pilgrims were so grateful that they thought Squanto had been sent by God.

Squanto also told the Pilgrims about the many Native Americans who had died from a disease that they caught from English and French fishermen. Squanto’s entire tribe had died while he was overseas in England.



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Another Native American who visited the Pilgrims was Massasoit (MAS-uh-soit), the chief of the Wampanoag people. Squanto helped to arrange a peace treaty, or agreement, between Massasoit and the Pilgrims. The Wampanoags and the Pilgrims promised not to attack each other. They also said that they would help protect each other against attacks by other Native Americans.

The Pilgrims' corn ripened during the summer. In the fall, they decided to celebrate the harvest (the food they collected from the plants they had grown). They invited Massasoit to come to a feast of thanksgiving. The Wampanoags brought deer to cook and eat. The Pilgrims had goose, wild turkey, lobster, and corn bread. The feast of thanksgiving lasted three days. Today, Americans still celebrate Thanksgiving Day.

In 1621, William Bradford was elected governor of the colony. He served as governor for more than 30 years.

In the next few years, ships brought more and more settlers to Plymouth. In time, other groups would join the Pilgrims in the area we now call New England.

6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the first English settlements in North America. You used three figures of early English settlers to think about the problems of these settlers and why some settlements survived while others did not.

The early settlers faced many challenges and hardships. One settlement, on the island of Roanoke, disappeared. A second settlement, Jamestown, survived only after many difficult times. Settlers often did not have enough food, and they became sick from unhealthy surroundings. At times, local Native Americans helped them. At other times, the settlers and Native Americans fought with each other.

While earlier settlers came to America looking for riches, the Pilgrims were looking for religious freedom. Their settlement at Plymouth survived with the help of Native Americans.

These early settlements were the start of 13 English colonies in North America. Why did more people keep coming to America? Who were they, and where did they settle? You will find out in the next chapter.

