

## **Plymouth**

On September 6, 1620 (Old Style; September 16, New Style), the Mayflower departed from Plymouth, England, and headed for America.

After 65 days at sea, the Mayflower dropped anchor near present-day Provincetown on November 11 (OS; November, 21, 1620, NS), and 41 male passengers signed the Mayflower Compact, an agreement to enact “just and equal laws for the general good of the colony.”

The Separatists finally landed at Plimouth (or Plimoth, Plymouth) on December 16 (OS; December 26, 1620, NS)

Many believe that Plymouth was named by the Pilgrims after their port of departure in Plymouth, England,

It's coincidence that the Mayflower ended up sailing from a town called Plymouth in England and then landing in a town called Plymouth in America. And it's unlikely that the Mayflower's passengers felt any emotional connection to Plymouth, England.

Most of the Separatists had been living in exile in Holland for 10 years before sailing for America, and the rest of the passengers were drawn from the greater London area.

The Mayflower only ended up departing from Plymouth because bad weather and misfortune had prevented them from making the crossing on two earlier attempts - from Southampton and then from Dartmouth - before they finally succeeded in sailing from the port of Plymouth. (History-com)

In fact, the Separatists did not name Plymouth, Massachusetts; this area had been called Plymouth years before they arrived. It had been called a variety of things over the years, Patuxet, Accomack, Port Saint Louis and Plimouth.

### **Patuxet (the Traditional Name of the Area)**

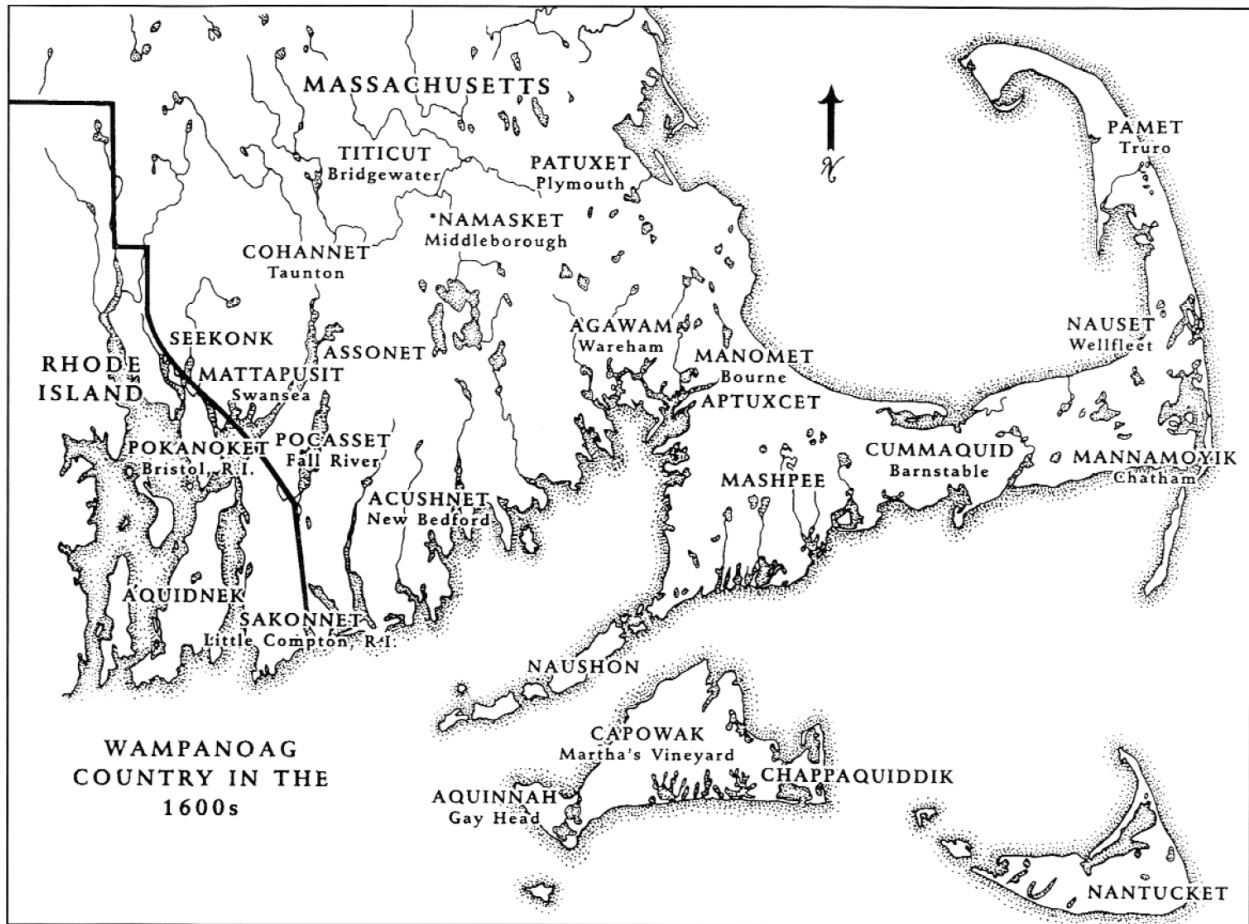
The Wampanoag (People of the First Light) were the first people of this area. It is said Moshup, a benevolent being, taught the people how to fish and to catch whales, and still presides over their destinies.

The ancestors of Wampanoag people lived at Aquinnah (Gay Head) and throughout the island of Noepe (Martha's Vineyard), pursuing a traditional economy based on fishing and agriculture.

In the 1600s, there were as many as 40,000 people in the Wampanoag Nation. The Wampanoag Nation once encompassed over 67 distinct tribal communities.

Their villages covered the territory along the east coast as far as Wessagusset (today called Weymouth), all of what is now Cape Cod and the islands of Nantucket (Nantucket) and Noepe, and southeast as far as Pokanocket (Bristol and Warren, Rhode Island). The Wampanoag have been living on this part of 'Turtle Island' (the earth) for over ten thousand years.

When the Mayflower arrived at Plymouth Harbor, the Pilgrims settled in an area known as Patuxet, a Wampanoag village abandoned four years prior after a deadly outbreak of a plague that killed thousands, up to two-thirds, of them.



**Exploration Brought Different People and, Ultimately, Different Names for Parts of America**

The first Europeans to arrive in North America were likely the Norse, traveling west from Greenland, where Erik the Red had founded a settlement around the year 985. In 1001 his son Leif is thought to have explored the northeast coast of what is now Canada and spent at least one winter there.

While Norse sagas suggest that Viking sailors explored the Atlantic coast of North America down as far as the Bahamas, such claims remain unproven.

In 1497, just five years after Christopher Columbus landed in the Caribbean looking for a western route to Asia, a Venetian sailor named John Cabot arrived in Newfoundland on a mission for the British king.

Cabot’s journey was later to provide the basis for British claims to North America. It also opened the way to the rich fishing grounds off George’s Banks, to which European fishermen, particularly the Portuguese, were soon making regular visits.

The first explorations of the continental United States were launched from the Spanish possessions that he helped establish. The first of these took place in 1513 when a group of men under Juan Ponce de Leon landed on the Florida coast near the present city of St. Augustine.

With the conquest of Mexico in 1522, the Spanish further solidified their position in the Western Hemisphere. The ensuing discoveries added to Europe's knowledge of what was now named America - after the Italian Amerigo Vespucci, who wrote a widely popular account of his voyages to a "New World."

While the Spanish were pushing up from the south, the northern portion of the present-day United States was slowly being revealed through the journeys of men such as Giovanni da Verrazano. A Florentine who sailed for the French, Verrazano made landfall in North Carolina in 1524, then sailed north along the Atlantic coast past what is now New York harbor.

A decade later, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier set sail with the hope - like the other Europeans before him - of finding a sea passage to Asia. Cartier's expeditions along the St. Lawrence River laid the foundations for the French claims to North America, which were to last until 1763.

Following the collapse of their first Quebec colony in the 1540s, French Huguenots attempted to settle the northern coast of Florida two decades later. The Spanish, viewing the French as a threat to their trade route along the Gulf Stream, destroyed the colony in 1565.

The great wealth which poured into Spain from the colonies in Mexico, the Caribbean and Peru provoked great interest on the part of the other European powers. With time, emerging maritime nations such as England, drawn in part by Francis Drake's successful raids on Spanish treasure ships, began to take interest in the New World.

In 1578 Humphrey Gilbert, the author of a treatise on the search for the Northwest Passage, received a patent from Queen Elizabeth to colonize the "heathen and barbarous landes" in the New World which other European nations had not yet claimed. It would be five years before his efforts could begin. When he was lost at sea, his half-brother, Walter Raleigh, took up the mission.

In 1585, Raleigh established the first British colony in North America, on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. It was later abandoned, and a second effort two years later also proved a failure.

It would be 20 years before the British would try again. This time - at Jamestown in 1607 - the colony would succeed, and North America would enter a new era. (Alonzo L Mamby)

The early 1600s saw the beginning of a great tide of emigration from Europe to North America. Spanning more than three centuries, this movement grew from a trickle of a few hundred English colonists to a flood of millions of newcomers. Impelled by powerful and diverse motivations, they built a new civilization on the northern part of the continent.

The first English immigrants to what is now the United States crossed the Atlantic long after thriving Spanish colonies had been established in Mexico, the West Indies and South America. Like all early travelers to the New World, they came in small, overcrowded ships. During their six- to 12-week voyages, they lived on meager rations. Many died of disease; ships were often battered by storms and some were lost at sea.

Between 1620 and 1635, economic difficulties swept England. Many people could not find work. Even skilled artisans could earn little more than a bare living. Poor crop yields added to the distress. In addition, the Industrial Revolution had created a burgeoning textile industry, which demanded an ever-increasing

supply of wool to keep the looms running. Landlords enclosed farmlands and evicted the peasants in favor of sheep cultivation. Colonial expansion became an outlet for this displaced peasant population.

Colonial settlement progressively replaced the supposedly indigenous districts with the European imposition of new regions: New France, New England, and the New Netherlands. First along the coast, and then along the major rivers into the interior, European and Native place-names fought their way across the surface of the maps.

### **Port Saint Louis (Named by Samuel de Champlain)**

Samuel de Champlain was a French explorer famous for his journeys in modern day Canada. During his travels, he mapped the Atlantic coast of Canada, parts of the St. Lawrence River, and parts of the Great Lakes.

The fleet set sail from France on March 15, 1603. He is best known for establishing the first French settlement in the Canadian territory, and founding the city of Quebec. Because of this, Champlain became known as the “Father of New France.”

He explored parts of New England, “... we weighed anchor to go to a cape we had seen the day before, which seemed to lie on our south south-west. This day we were able to make only five leagues, and we passed by some islands [the islands in Boston Bay] covered with wood. I observed in the bay all that the savages had described to me at Island Cape. As we continued our course, large numbers came to us in canoes from the islands and main land.”

“We anchored a league from a cape, which we named St. Louis, [Brant Point, Nantucket] ... While in the act of going there, our barque grounded on a rock, where we were in great danger, for, if we had not speedily got it off, it would have overturned in the sea, since the tide was falling all around, and there were five or six fathoms of water.”

“But God preserved us, and we anchored near the above-named cape, when there come to us fifteen or sixteen canoes of savages. In some of them there were fifteen or sixteen, who began to manifest great signs of joy, and made various harangues, which we could not in the least understand.”

“Sieur de Monts sent three or four men on shore in our canoe, not only to get water, but to see their chief, whose name was Honabetha. The latter had a number of knives and other trifles, which Sieur de Monts gave him, when he came alongside to see us, together with some of his companions, who were present both along the shore and in their canoes.”

“We received the chief very cordially, and made him welcome; who, after remaining some time, went back. Those whom we had sent to them brought us some little squashes as big as the fist, which we ate as a salad, like cucumbers, and which we found very good. ...”

“There is, moreover, in this bay a very broad river, which we named River du Guast. [Charles River] It stretches, as it seemed to me, towards the Iroquois, a nation in open warfare with the Montagnais, who live on the great river St. Lawrence. ...”

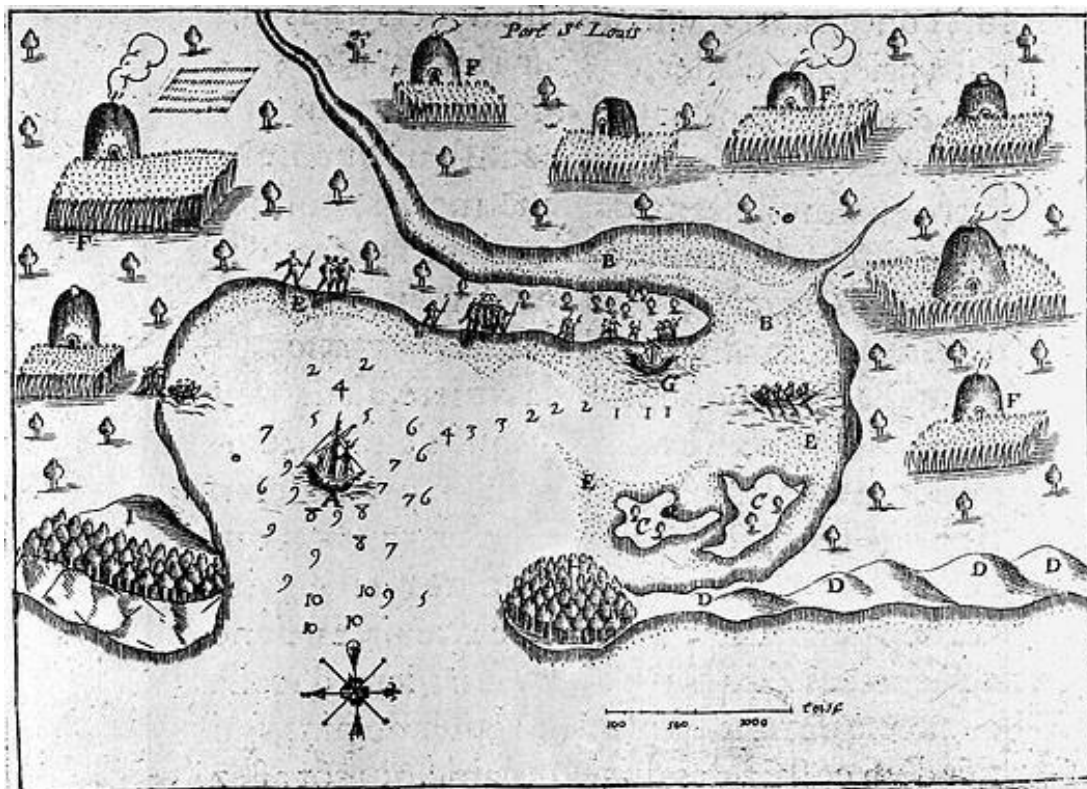
“The next day we doubled Cap St. Louis, [Cape Cod] so named by Sieur de Monts, a land rather low ... The same day we sailed two leagues along a sandy coast, as we passed along which we saw a great many

cabins and gardens. The wind being contrary, we entered a little bay to await a time favorable for proceeding. There came to us two or three canoes, which had just been fishing for cod and other fish, which are found there in large numbers. ...”

“I went ashore, where I saw many others, who received us very cordially. I made also an examination of the river, but saw only an arm of water extending a short distance inland, where the land is only in part cleared up. Running into this is merely a brook not deep enough for boats except at full tide.”

“The circuit of the bay is about a league. On one side of the entrance to this bay there is a point which is almost an island, covered with wood, principally pines, and adjoins sand-banks, which are very extensive. On the other side, the land is high. There are two islets in this bay, which are not seen until one has entered, and around which it is almost entirely dry at low tide.”

“This place is very conspicuous from the sea, for the coast is very low, excepting the cape at the entrance to the bay. We named it the Port du Cap St. Louis, [Plymouth Harbor] distant two leagues from the above cape, and ten from the Island Cape. It is in about the same latitude as Cap St. Louis.”



Port du Saint Louis (Plymouth) by Samuel de Champlain-1605

#### Coding for Champlain’s Port du St. Louis Map

The figures indicate fathoms of water.

A. Indicates the place where vessels lie.

B. The channel.

C. Two islands.

D. Sandy downs

E. Shoals.

F. Cabins where the savages till the ground.

G. Place where we beached our barque.

H. Appearance of an island, covered with wood

I. A high promontory.

## **Accomack (the Traditional Name for Plymouth Harbor)**

Against the European desire to name the new lands after those with which they were already familiar - John Smith's 1614 map of New England presents an extreme - the early settlers depended in large part upon trade and other contacts with the Native peoples and so necessarily adopted indigenous place-names. Ultimately, the local details of colonial settlement, endlessly repeated, produced the convoluted interweaving of English, French, and Native place-names that is the hallmark of modern New England. (Osher Map Library)

Smith's book, 'A Description of New England,' identifies a place he called Accomack, an area where the Patuxet settlement was situated. It was the native American name for the harbor that we now call Plymouth.

The second of June 1608, Smith left the Fort to performe his Discovery ... leaving the Phrenix at Cape Henry, they crossed the Bay to the Easterne shore, and fell with the Isles called Smiths Isles, after our Captaines name.

The first people we saw were two grim and stout Salvages upon Cape Charles, with long poles like Javelings, headed with bone, they (Ill. s6.) boldly demanded what we were, and what we would; but after many circumstances they seemed very kinde, and directed us to Accomack, the habitation of their Werowance, where we were kindly intreated. ...

The Sea Coast as you passe, shewes you all along large corne fields, and great troupes of well proportioned people: but the French hauing remained heere neere sixe weekes, left nothing, for vs to take occasion to examine the inhabitants relations, viz. if there be neer three thousand people vpon these lles; and that the Riuer doth pearce many daies iourneies the intralles of that COUNTRY. We found the people in those parts verie kinde; but in their furie no lesse valiant. ...

Then come you to Accomack, an excellent good harbor, good land; and no want of any thing, but industrious people. After much kindnesse, vpon a small occasion, wee fought also with fortie or fiftie of those: though some were hurt, and some slaine; yet within an houre after they became friendes.

Cape Cod is the next presents it selfe: which is onely a headland of high hils of sand, ouergrowne with shrubbie pines, hurts, and such trash; but an excellent harbor for all weathers.

This Cape is made by the maine Sea on the one side, and a great Bay on the other in forme of a sickle: on it doth inhabit the people of Pawmet: and in the bottome of the Bay, the people of Chawum.

Towards the South and Southwest of this Cape, is found a long and dangerous shoale of sands and rocks.

## **Plymouth – Plimouth (Named by Prince Charles, Who Changed 'Barbarous Names' to English)**

It was actually through Smith that the Plymouth name came about.

John Smith's book, 'A Description of New England,' is a presentation "To The High Hopeful Charles uses Prince of Great Britaine" that Smith states "So favourable was your most renowned and memorable Brother, Prince Henry, to all generous designs; that in my discovery of Virginia, I presumed to call two nameless Headlands after my Soueraignes heires, Cape Henry, and Cape Charles."

Smith then asks, "whereof I here present your Highness the description in a Map; my humble sute is, you would please to change their Barbarous names, for such English, as Posterity may say, Prince Charles was their Godfather."

However, "because the booke was printed ere the Prince his Highnesse had altered the names, I intreat the Reader, peruse this schedule; which will plainly shew him the correspondence of the old names to the new."

It noted the Accomack name was changed by Prince Charles to Plymouth. Smith's book was printed in 1616, four years before the Pilgrims landed at that site.



Portion of John Smith's 1614 Map Noting 'Plymouth'

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