



THEY CHERISHED A GREAT HOPE AND INWARD ZEAL

THE VOYAGE OF THE *MAYFLOWER* (1620)

IN CONTEXT

FOCUS

North American colonization

BEFORE

1585 English settlers found Roanoke Island Colony in North Carolina, but within five years it is abandoned.

1607 The first permanent English settlement in North America is founded at Jamestown, Virginia.

1608 French settlers found Quebec in Canada.

AFTER

1629 English settlers found the Massachusetts Bay Colony on North America's east coast.

1681 English Quaker William Penn founds Pennsylvania to provide a refuge for fellow Quakers.

1732 English settlers found Georgia, the last of the 13 original colonies on the northeast coast.

In 1620, a group of English people who could not legally worship as they wished to in England set sail across the Atlantic to begin a new life in America. This group later became known as the Pilgrims. They set off on two ships, but one proved unseaworthy so they had to continue in just one, the *Mayflower*. Winter storms ravaged the 66-day crossing and the ship's main beam fractured. While still aboard, the Pilgrims drew up the *Mayflower Compact*, which pledged their loyalty to the Crown but also asserted their right to make their

own laws within the English legal framework. They settled at Plymouth and, although many died that first winter, their community endured.

Early colonization

At that time, England, like other countries, was competing to establish colonies in North America. Jamestown had been founded thirteen years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, but it was not a religious community. The Colony of Virginia, centered around Jamestown, had been established by English colonists in 1607 under

English **Protestants** seeking **religious freedom** sail to **North America** on the *Mayflower*.

More **religious separatists** follow, swelling the **colony's population**.

Other English colonies are founded by **companies** granted **royal charters** from the **Crown**.

The colonists develop a form of government based on the pursuit of religious freedom, following the English parliamentary model.

See also: Christopher Columbus reaches America 142–47 ■ The opening of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange 180–83 ■ The signing of the Declaration of Independence 204–07 ■ The opening of Ellis Island 250–51



The *Mayflower* attempted to depart England on three occasions: from Southampton and then Dartmouth in August, and finally from Plymouth on September 6, 1620.

Navigation Acts, which required that all commodity trade take place in British ships crewed by British sailors. The colonists came to see these measures as a willful suppression of their trade and manufacturing. Tensions arose on both sides of the Atlantic as British and colonial merchants sought to protect their interests.

Colonial growth

Relations between the colonists and the indigenous peoples of the East Coast were also starting to strain. The increasing colonial population put pressure on land and resources, pushing people west to settle on land belonging to American Indians.

The groups struggled to coexist harmoniously. An uneasy peace, punctuated by violence, typified relations between settlers and American Indians for many years. ■

a charter from the Crown, and was their first permanent settlement in the Americas. French explorers had established fur trading posts up the rivers of Canada; Dutch and Swedish colonists arrived in North America in the early 17th century, and in 1613 the Dutch established a trading post on the western shore of Manhattan Island.

legislature had to work within the framework of existing English law. However, the king and government in London, working with the governor, saw the colonies as a resource, rich in raw materials, that they could exploit to their advantage.

To ensure America remained a ready market for British industry, colonial trade was restricted by the

Government and trade

Both Plymouth and Jamestown developed representative institutions in which colonists elected officials to govern their own affairs. Inspired by the English parliamentary model, and growing out of the assertion of rights articulated in the *Mayflower Compact*, these early developments established a model of self-rule that came to characterize English colonization in North America.

Each colony had a governor, appointed by the British monarch, and a legislature, elected by the colonists. There was often tension between the two, because the

Religious persecution

In the early 17th century, the English were legally obliged to worship as prescribed by the Church of England. Although the English church had already broken from the Catholic Church, many people still felt that its hierarchical priesthood and set rituals, hymns, and prayers were Catholic features that should be swept away.

Puritans, so-called because of their desire for religious purity, hoped to reform the church from within. Other

groups, known as Separatists, set up their own “separate” congregations, but when their leaders were imprisoned or even executed, they moved to the more tolerant Netherlands. Here they could adopt the simpler form of worship they preferred, but it was very hard to earn a living because the country’s professional guilds were closed to them. This is part of the reason that the Pilgrims, and later others, decided to seek a new life in North America.