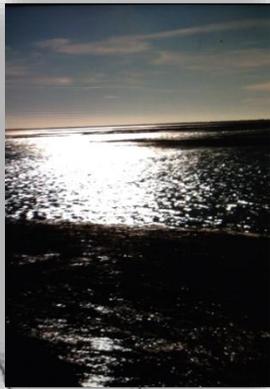


# Today in Our History

November 11, 1620



The *Mayflower* and its weary, yet excited passengers, arrived at the tip of Cape Cod on Saturday, November 11, 1620. There was work to do to restore calm among some passengers who were expecting to land in Virginia, not at the tip of Cape Cod, a bare and unwelcoming place. The Separatist's leader, Governor John Carver and other influential men, carefully wrote the Mayflower Compact, a legal agreement that bound the Pilgrims and other passengers together when they arrived in the New World. Adding to the discord among the "strangers" on the trip was the fact that the next day next day was the Sabbath! The Pilgrims insisted that they give thanks to God and sing praises. Their hymns were in the form of psalms of their Bible, sung from their Ainsworth Psalter as Elder William Brewster led them. The sailors and strangers had quite enough singing and praises of the Separatists on the uncomfortable and smelly ship after 66 days!

On Monday, November 13, Edward Winslow wrote that the men "unshipped our shallop and drew her on land, to mend and repair her." The shallop was in several pieces for storage, the storms had made a mess of the carpenters' plans for assembling and some passengers made beds from the boards. The repairs, thought to take a few days, took about two weeks. During that time, many passengers went on the shore to wash clothing that had not been cleaned in more than two months!



"Blue Monday" was wash day and your Pilgrim ancestors brought this tradition with them.

After several days of waiting for the carpenters to repair the shallop, a small boat with a sail, some of the men insisted that they explore the area on foot. Captain Miles Standish, the perfect man for the job, organized an expedition of 16 armed men, including William Bradford, Stephen Hopkins and Edward Tilley. After scouting about a mile of this barren land in the freezing cold, they saw a group in the distance with a dog. When the group dashed away in a flash, they knew that they had seen their first Indians.

The next morning, as they followed the Indians' tracks, they saw a deer which had led them to a spring with a pool of fresh water. They professed to have "drunk our first New England water with as much delight as ever we drunk drink in all our lives." The Pilgrim Spring, as it is called today, is truly a memorable sight to see.



Actual photo of Pilgrim Spring taken by this editor in 2013

After exploring four miles south of the spring that day, they camped for the night, building a fire to let those on the *Mayflower* know that they were safe. The next morning, a hill with freshly smoothed sand and dusted with snow, was spotted and believed to be hiding *something*. They found a buried basket of Indian corn, a method of preserving it. These explorers knew that the food supply of the *Mayflower* was depleted and for their survival, they decided that their only choice was to take it. They named the place, "Cornhill" and today the site is still remembered as Corn Hill.

With the shallop reassembled on November 27, Standish and his fellow explorers discovered deserted Indian houses, called wetus. They left beads as a "sign of friendship", and possibly an apology for taking their corn.

Life was very eventful for the Pilgrims. By December 5, Peregrine White, the name means “one who journeys to foreign lands” or “pilgrim”, was born on the *Mayflower*, as it was anchored in Cape Cod Bay. Passengers living aboard the *Mayflower* were very ill. One of Francis Billington’s sons nearly blew up the ship when he fired a gun near a barrel half-full of gun powder! Despite this, ten of the “discovers” would set off before the weather had become stormy, even though the temperature was well *below* freezing. William Bradford recorded this “chilling” account in his treasured journal:

*WEDNESDAY, the 6th of December, we set out, being very cold and hard weather... 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...But it was very cold; for the water froze on our clothes, and made them many times like coats of iron.*



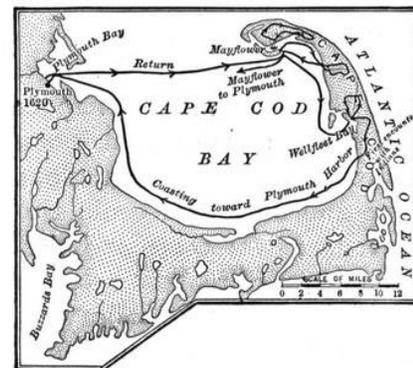
*Mayflower on Her Arrival in Plymouth Harbor by William Formsby Halsall*



First Encounter Beach

The scouts had sailed along the shore for about fifteen miles when they saw a group of Indians. The Indians dashed out of sight, so the Pilgrims built a barricade with a fire and camped for the night. The next morning they heard “a great and strange cry.” The Indians filled the early morning with arrows as the scouting troop was firing back with their muskets. The shots caused them to retreat again, this time, in fear of their own lives. William Bradford wrote, “afterwards they gave God solemn thanks and praise for their deliverance, and gathered up a bundle of their arrows and sent them into England afterward by the master of the ship, and called that place the FIRST ENCOUNTER.”

The next day, the winds were favorable for them to sail north to find a “good place to situate their families.” However, the rough seas caused the hinges of the rudder to break and two men had to row since they could no longer steer. Not only did the fierce wind then break the rudder, their mast broke into three pieces, their sail split and it began to rain! But, just as they thought they would have to give up their shallop, they made it into a harbor, which was later named Plymouth Harbor. They rowed onto the sandy beach of an island, Clark’s Island, named after the first mate of the *Mayflower*, John Clarke. The next morning, a Sabbath, was a day of prayer and rest. An attractive stretch of cleared land was spotted across this harbor. It had once been a Wampanoag village named Patuxet, but it was abandoned about three years earlier following a plague that had wiped out all of its residents. With their Separatist families so weak with illnesses, the colonists were very happy to settle there. After three more days of exploring the area, the scouts decided upon Plymouth as the most favorable location. The high hill would be an ideal location on which they could build a fort for protection, there was fertile soil, cleared land and a beautiful stream, now named Town Brook, flowed into the harbor.



The name Plymouth, or Plimoth as it was spelled, was not named by the Pilgrims at all. It had been discovered by explorer John Smith who had named the area years earlier. How providential it must have been to the Pilgrims to have left the shore of Plymouth, England aboard the *Mayflower*, with their final destination being the shore of Plymouth, their new home in the New World.