

PILGRIMS IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD:
Atlantic influences and the New Plymouth colony's commercial impact on
New England

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A NOTE ON PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

The English and Swedish primary documents and records included in this essay reflect the Julian calendar, when the year began on March 25, instead of January 1. The Dutch primary documents and records reflect the Gregorian calendar, which Pope Gregory XIII published in 1582, which was ten days ahead of the older Julian calendar.

FOREWORD

An Introduction to the New Plymouth Colony

The familiar image of one hundred and two pious “Pilgrims” coming alone to the rocky, windswept shores of Cape Cod in 1620 tended to stereotype them as isolated actors surviving against the rigors of the barren American frontier. The New Plymouth colonists, known today as the “Pilgrims,” existed in a world much more expansive than the one they called home. They lived in a time when Europe was torn apart by war and religious strife, when their home country of England existed as a fledgling power, and when new trading networks emerged that would tie the Old World to the new one. New Plymouth became the crossroads among Native American, inter-colonial and European trade. Indeed, their experience captures Europe’s transition from a late medieval to an early modern international economy. Once they arrived in the New England, they quickly began developing trade networks that extended from the interior of the continent to the markets of Britain, the Caribbean and beyond. The New Plymouth colony exemplifies how the earliest colonies acted as export driven business enterprises. Once we get beyond the myth to examine the real story of the Pilgrim experience in the New World, it becomes clear that the survival and success of the colony was closely tied to its place in the international political economy of the Atlantic world. Without Atlantic commerce, it would have been impossible for the Pilgrims to receive the financing necessary to establish the colony or sustain its existence.

The Puritan Separatist migration in 1620 aboard the *Mayflower* proved to be one of the most influential events in Atlantic history. Yet, the New Plymouth colony’s role in the Atlantic world is not fully appreciated or understood. This paper analyses the colony’s place in the Atlantic world by identifying the commercial demands that influenced its creation, and how, in turn, the New Plymouth colony influenced the commercial development of colonial New

England. Analysis of primary documents from the time period show that the Plymouth Plantation played a decisive role in the development of English colonial business models and culture, as well as the growth of an English commercial economy fully tied into the Atlantic world.

The first chapter of this paper explores the development of the commercial incentives that fostered the financing and establishment of the New Plymouth colony. Starting with John Cabot's voyage in 1497, the chapter traces the evolution of English colonization. The chapter then delves into how two Atlantic commodities, north Atlantic cod and pelts collected by Native Americans, created the economic impetus for the colonization of New England. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the motivations for the Pilgrims' removal from the Netherlands to New World, and examines how they expected to prosper via Atlantic commerce. The second chapter examines the New Plymouth colony as an investment. The Planters and investors in the colony expected a return on their investment. In order to repay this investment, the chapter looks at how the colony adapted to the commercial demands of both Europeans and Native Americans. The third chapter looks at the growth of New England and New Plymouth's transition from London owned to Plymouth owned. The chapter begins in 1628 with the buyout of the joint stock company by the eight Plymouth colonists and ends in 1645 with the repayment of debts.

Despite the popularity of the "Pilgrim Fathers" and the growing interest in examining colonial settlements and interactions through an Atlantic lens, no recent historian has dedicated a study specifically to the commercial history of New Plymouth. Indeed, there is no historical scholarship devoted specifically to how the demands of trans-Atlantic commerce influenced the creation of the New Plymouth colony, and how, in turn, the colony promoted the commercial development of New England. A close examination of the colony can capture how commercial

colonization evolved in its earliest and most formative years, yet both Atlantic and traditional Pilgrim historians have neglected this area of study.

Traditional Plymouth and Pilgrim historians focus on the social and political history of the colony. Often, they contrast the primary documents with myths that emerged later about the “Pilgrims” in American history. Of the Plymouth historians, Ruth McIntyre is the only one who addresses the financial and business history of the colony. While her work focuses on the financial history of the colony, it largely neglects the role of Native American and inter-colonial trade - effectively leaving New Plymouth out of the Atlantic world view. Instead of looking to assign blame to the Pilgrims or the investors in London, this paper discusses New Plymouth’s commercial influence within the larger Atlantic world.

Like the neglect of the Atlantic world in the Pilgrim histories, the Pilgrim role in the development of international Atlantic commerce is also largely neglected. Most historians writing about Atlantic history do not mention the Pilgrims, and the ones that do, only explain narrow details of their settlement. John Martin’s *Profits in the Wilderness* describes how Plymouth entrepreneurs founded 17 towns in the 1630s, but neglects to describe the financing of the colony, the first ten years of its existence and the first entrepreneurial endeavors to develop trade in the region. In fact, most Atlantic historians writing about New England or the Atlantic world begin immediately after the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. For example, Bernard Bailyn’s *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* explains the context of the world in which the Pilgrims lived, but not the Pilgrims themselves. This paper seeks to fill in the gap left by both traditional Pilgrim and Atlantic historians, by examining the colony and the influence it had on English colonization in New England in its first years.

After 388 years, few primary documents remain to explain the “true” Pilgrim story yet the sources that do exist provide a wealth of information. Originally published in 1622 by a London printer, *Mourt's Relation* was the first work written about the Plymouth colony. Designed for a London audience, this providential and nationalistic pamphlet testified to the Pilgrims' first year in the New World. Inspired by Captain John Smith's 1608 *A True Relation*, which described the establishment of Jamestown, Edward Winslow and William Bradford wrote *Mourt's Relation* to describe the establishment of the Plymouth colony. Stories of the New World would have interested a curious English population, and was likely created to induce future settlement. Interestingly, it “provides the only contemporary report of the Mayflower and the first months of the colony, including a brief account on the first Thanksgiving.”¹ This primary document also provides important information about the colonists' plans for the development of the fishing and fur trades, their signing of the *Mayflower Compact*, the first interactions with Native Americans, the influence of the merchant adventurers on the design of the colony, and detailed descriptions of economic activity. It is also useful because it provides a “much fuller and detailed”² account of the establishment of the colony than William Bradford's history.

Although *Mourt's Relation* presents a detailed look at the first year of settlement, William Bradford's history *Of Plymouth Plantation* is the most important and influential primary source on the Pilgrims and their experience in the New World. Bradford records the lives of the Puritans who migrated to Plymouth from 1620 to 1647. As the colony's governor, he provides important insights about all aspects of life in the colony, including the fur trade, disputes with neighbors, and fundamental disagreements about colonial accounting with the colony's First

¹ Bradford, William and Winslow, Edward. *Mourt's Relations* (ed. Dexter, Henry Martyn). 1969, p. v

² Bradford, William and Winslow, Edward, 1969, p. vi

Assistant (or Vice-Governor) Isaac Allerton. For my focus on business history, Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* is the main source used in this paper. For this paper, I use Samuel Elliot Morison's edited version of Bradford's seminal work. Morison's version includes Bradford's original history, his letterbook, and other contemporary documents – most of which deal with the business history of the colony. Bradford's work, the most comprehensive history of the colony, provides valuable insights into colonial development of entrepreneurial enterprises, the financing of the colony, trade negotiations, and commercial disputes.

Edward Winslow's writings offer another important primary document recounting the Pilgrim experience. As a governor, assistant governor, agent, and commissioner in the United Colonies of New England, Edward Winslow's books, correspondence, and religious tracts reveal important aspects of life in Plymouth, from the sinking of ships, such as the *Little James*, to his negotiations with Massasoit the chief of the Wampanoag tribe.

Additionally, it is also necessary to look at what contemporaries thought about the Pilgrims. Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop's *Journal* and his history of New England offer markedly different perspectives from those presented by Plymouth's governor William Bradford and its later governor Edmund Winslow.³ As governor of the neighboring (and sometimes rival) Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop Sr. recorded ordinary matters that affected both colonies, including disputes over the fur trade, the arrival of ships from the home country, and court cases involving members of both colonies. Those journal entries are short, but they effectively represent a clear record of the colonization of New England. The paper also draws on accounts from fellow colonists, such as Thomas Morton and John Josselyn to explain how English commercial colonization developed in New England. A journal from

³ Winthrop, John Sr. *Original Narratives of American History: Winthrop's Journal History of New England 1630-1649 Volume I*. (ed. Hosmer, James Kendall). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.

Johan Risingh, New Sweden's governor, shows just how integrated New Plymouth was in the inter-colonial economy. Letters from Dutch governor Isaac de Raisieres, Englishmen John Pory, and merchant Emmanuel Altham are also included. In order to provide context for financing and establishment of the colony, the paper also includes accounts by seminal figures in colonial history, like French explorer Jacques Cartier, colonial promoter Ferdinando Gorges and Captain John Smith. Altogether, these documents show that New Plymouth was actively engaged in developing Atlantic trade, and that its influence was pervasive in the region.

CHAPTER ONE: ALBION'S HOPE FOR THE NEW WORLD

Commercial Incentives for settlement in New England (1497-1620)

“Brownists of England, Amsterdam, and Leyden went to New Plimouth, whose humorous ignorances, caused them for more than a year, to endure a wonderful deal of misery, with an infinite patience; saying my books and maps were much better cheap to teach them, than myself.”⁴

-Captain John Smith, 1630

John Cabot led the first English exploratory expedition to the America in 1497.

Commissioned by Henry VII, he was the first European to explore the northern coastlines of North America since Leif Erickson's voyages in the early eleventh century. Despite John Cabot's success in reaching the New World in 1497, England's desire to dominate the British Isles and its conflicts with the mainland powers of Europe prevented serious English expansion into the New World until the late 1500s. For colonial historian Paul Lucas, England's "ability to establish permanent, prosperous, colonies in the New World" stemmed from the country's rapid population and economic growth, and the transformation of Britain into a centralized nation state (where royal authority was strong, but nevertheless balanced by a parliament) in the late 1500s. These factors precipitated successful colonial expansion in the 1600s by creating incentives and opportunities for entrepreneurs and merchants. Accordingly, these individuals, rather than a king or queen, led the march towards colonization. Nobles, like Humphrey Gilbert, Walter Raleigh, Richard Eburne, Francis Walsingham, Francis Drake, and Richard Hakluyt were the first to begin "a campaign to encourage British exploration and colonization of North America."

Although "early attempts by the English to colonize America failed miserably in part because the colonizers lacked the experience to adequately plan and finance such ventures," the English learned quickly. Indeed, "better planning and financing were important aspects of

⁴ Smith, John. *True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captaine John Smith*. In: *Early English books, 1475-1640 - microfilm 939:15*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968.

seventeenth century endeavors. Financing, in particular, proved critical, and it was supplied by the merchants – the paladins of an expanding England and a growing English economy.”⁵

The Pilgrims and the investors who financed New Plymouth existed in a European “world of information.” European explorers’ accounts created a vast and public source of information that inspired interest in colonization. Many of these accounts were designed specifically to inspire Europeans to venture their lives and fortunes in the New World. In the late 1500s, Richard Hakluyt continuously wrote essays to persuade Elizabeth I and England’s elite on the benefits of colonization. His essays reflected strong nationalistic and religious motivations, but emphasized that these ends would be met by the commercial benefits that colonization provided. His essays ultimately attempt to show that colonization would justify the investment.⁶

In preparation for their own colony in America, the Pilgrims read extensively on the discoveries in the “New World.” It is clear from *Mourt’s Relation* and *Of Plymouth Plantation* that they read about Captain Bartholomew Gosnold’s 1602 voyage.⁷ Gosnold sailed to the Azores and then across the Atlantic to the coast of “Northern Virginia” (which later became known as “New England”). He mapped the coastlines, and in the process identified many local landmarks, including “Cape Cod,” that would guide future settlers. Colonial traveler John Josselyn wrote that “Cape-Cod was so called at the first by Captain Gosnold and his Company Anno Dom. 1602, because they took much of that fish there.”⁸ In addition to mapping, Gosnold briefly attempted to establish a trading post on Elizabeth Island off the coast of present-day

⁵ Lucas, Paul. *American Odyssey 1607-1789*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984, p. 32-34

⁶ Sacks, David Harris. 'Discourses of Western Planting: Richard Hakluyt and the Making of the Atlantic World.' In Mancall, Peter C. (ed.), *The Atlantic world and Virginia, 1550-1624* (Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina Press, 2007) p. 420-424

⁷ Bradford, William. *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. Edited by S.E. Morison. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. p. 61, 82, 305

⁸ Josselyn, John. *An Account of Two Voyages to New England In: A Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of Two Voyages to New England*. Edited by Paul Lindholt. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988. p.111

Massachusetts. Gosnold abandoned the post when he realized he had insufficient supplies for his crew to winter there. After a short voyage, he returned to England a hero, and made a fortune from the sales of sassafras, furs, and fish he collected there.⁹

Captain John Smith brought similar news of the opportunities in New England in his *Description of New England*. After serving as the Governor of Jamestown, John Smith continued to actively promote English colonization in North America. After returning from a voyage to New England, he published his *Description of New England* in 1616, which sought to induce English colonization in the region. His manuscript included an account of his voyage, descriptions of the local geography, hand drawn maps, and a report on the economic opportunities available. After searching for gold and copper and unsuccessfully attempting to catch whales, Smith recorded that the abundant “fish and fures” would create profitable commercial opportunities. He wrote that:

Of dry fish we made about 40000. of Cor fish about 7000. Whilst the sailers fished, my selfe with eight or nine others of them might best bee spared; Ranging the coast in a small boat, wee got for trifles neer 1100 Beuer skinnes, 100 Martins, and neer as many Otters; and the most of them within the distance of twenty leagues.

Smith attempted to show his readers that “New England,” as he called it, was a largely untapped source of lucrative commodities. Along the same lines, Smith wrote that New England contained many open harbors and “all sorts of excellent good woodes for building houses, boats, barks or shippes;” a necessary condition for an investment based on export back to England. After his return Smith “became rich from cod,”¹⁰ which he sold on the Spanish market. He also received a fortune in beaver and otter furs in exchange for what he described as “trifles” from the

⁹ Kelso, William M. *Jamestown Rediscovery 1994-2004*. Jamestown: Association for the Preservation of Virginia, 2004. p. 22, 40

¹⁰ Kurlansky, Mark. *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*. New York City: Penguin Books, Cod, p. 66

local Native American tribes. Smith further explained that self sufficiency could be achieved quickly and that “the ground is so fertill, that questionless it is capable of producing any Grain, Fruits, or Seeds you will sow or plant.” “New Plimoth,” the original name of the colony, came from the maps Smith made of the Massachusetts coast. Smith’s goal of inducing settlement succeeded with the New Plymouth, and Smith would continue to encourage settlement there through the 1630s. After publishing his work, he offered to serve as a guide for the New Plymouth colony. The fiscally-conscious Pilgrims and their investors rejected Smith’s offer. Reflecting on his life and the Pilgrims’ refusal, Smith wrote in his 1630 *True Travels, Adventures and Observations* that the “Brownists of England, Amsterdam, and Leyden went to New Plimouth, whose humorous ignorances, caused them for more than a year, to endure a wonderful deal of misery, with an infinite patience; saying my books and maps were much better cheap to teach them, than myself.”¹¹

The English Commercial Colonies - Roanoke, Popham, and Jamestown

Early efforts by English explorers, nobles, merchants, and entrepreneurs to build colonies in North America largely failed. Roanoke Island was the first English attempt at a permanent settlement in the North America. Sir Walter Raleigh and other notable members of the English gentry financed and organized the colony in 1584 and 1585. Roanoke’s organizers thought the colony “would serve both as a privateering base for English fleets and a beachhead from which colonists could explore inland.” Yet, due to rigid control from London, a strict militaristic organization, severe re-supply problems, and no clear plans for profit or self-sufficiency, the colony languished and then collapsed. The colonists, who were mostly soldiers, also made the mistake of sparking hostility with the local Indians – thus endangering their security and

¹¹ Smith, John. *True Travels, Adventures and Observations* In: *Early English books, 1475-1640 – microfilm 1157:5*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan: 1968.

preventing trade for necessities, like corn. After a three year interval, the re-supply fleet led by John White found the colony abandoned. By 1590, it was clear that future English colonization would require more extensive planning, better supply lines, stronger defensive capabilities, and a more viable economic motive. The disaster at Roanoke delayed English colonization in Virginia, but yielded valuable lessons that enabled Jamestown's to succeed twenty years later. In the same way, the failure at Popham and other early colonies in New England created valuable experience that aided the successful establishment of New Plymouth.¹²

When the Anglo-Spanish War ended in 1604, efforts to colonize the New World became a national and economic priority again in England. In 1606, James I issued two charters for the establishment of colonies in "Virginia," the name he applied to the area between Spanish Florida and New France in present day Canada. His charter split this region between the Virginia Company of London, which was composed primarily of London merchants and the Virginia Company of Plymouth, which was composed of merchants from Bristol and the west country. The Virginia Company of London received title to all land between 34° and 41° North latitude, while the Virginia Company of Plymouth received title to the territory between 38° degrees and 45° degrees North latitude. The charter stipulated also that each of the two companies could not start a colony within one hundred miles of each other, and that the companies be led by a council of thirteen private individuals. A royal council maintained authority over the companies' councils, in order to "have superior managing and direction... of ... matters that... concern the government."¹³

¹² Horn, James. 'Imperfect Understandings: Humor, Knowledge, and Uncertainty in Early Virginia.' In Mancall, Peter C. (ed.), *The Atlantic world and Virginia, 1550-1624* (Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina Press, 2007) p. 518-523

¹³ Bailyn, 1955, p. 2-5

After receiving King James I's charter, the leadership of the Virginia Company of Plymouth moved quickly to establish a colony. In August of 1606, the Plymouth Company, at Sir John Popham's request, dispatched an expedition to explore and settle Northern Virginia, the area that later became known as "New England."

Captain Henry Challons led twenty Englishmen and two Abenaki natives (Manida and Assacomoit) aboard the *Richard*, taking his vessel along the southern Atlantic route, skirting the Canary Islands and the Caribbean. Unfortunately, the Spanish captured the ship in the Caribbean near Florida on November 10, 1606. The Plymouth Company sent another expedition to Northern Virginia in October of 1606. Thomas Hanham, the captain of the ship, and Martin Pring, an experienced shipmaster, prepared a detailed account of the economic geography of New England. After scouting suitable locations for a colony, Hanham returned to England. The next year, an expedition of three ships set out carrying 120 colonists. Building a fortified trading post along the mouth of the Kennebec River in present day Maine (then the Sagadahoc River), the colonists, as Bernard Bailyn observes, "proceeded on the assumption that North America, abounding in natural wealth, could be exploited by establishing trading factories to which the native would bring local products... This fundamental miscalculation in the planning of the settlement as a commercial enterprise doomed it to failure." Although the colonists constructed a fort, planted crops, and engaged in some trade with the local Abenaki, the colony could not generate enough of a return to justify continued re-supply and provisioning. One of the colony's main organizers, Ferdinando Gorges, complained that the Indians they expected to trade with "shew themselves exceedingly subtile to and conninge, concealing from us the places, wheare they have the commodities wee seeke for." As a result, the colony showed "no returne, to satisfy

the expectation of the Adventurers.”¹⁴ After a year, the fledgling colony’s impatient and discouraged inhabitants returned to England, effectively ending the Plymouth Company’s ambitions of permanent settlement. Over the next decade, only seasonal fishing ships maintained an English presence in New England.¹⁵

While the colonization of “Northern Virginia” failed in 1607, the Virginia Company of London proved that English commercial colonies could succeed in the New World. Organized as a joint stock company, the colony’s investors came primarily from England’s gentry and merchant class. The company dwarfed the Popham colony’s investment by raising a £52,624 12s. 9d, a vast amount by 1619. Yet, like the Popham colony, the London Company’s high hopes for immediate profits also ended quickly. Disease, infighting, famine, economic stagnation, and violent conflict with local Native American tribes marred the first years of the colony.¹⁶ After years of losses, the investors continued to pour their fortunes into the failing colony. Finally, relative peace with the local Native Americans and John Rolfe’s development of a vigorous hybrid strain of tobacco capable of thriving in Virginia enabled the company to return some profit to investors. Profits from the sale of tobacco and raw materials on the European market brought prosperity and sparked interest in establishing future colonies in Virginia. Reforms throughout the 1610s focused on increasing incentives for settlement, which in turn, accelerated the growth of the colony and the English presence in the region. Ultimately, Jamestown showed that colonization in North America could be made to yield a profit, and in the process Virginia tobacco tied the Chesapeake into a larger Atlantic international economy. The

¹⁴ Gorges, Ferdinando. *Gorges to Earl of Salisbury (7. Feb 1607)*. In: *Sir Ferdinando Gorges in his Province of Maine III*. Edited by James P. Baxter. Boston: Publications of the Prince Society, 1890. p. 161, 154

¹⁵ Bailyn, 1955, p. 2-5

¹⁶ Langdon, 1966, p.15 quoting John Smith’s *A True Relation of Occurrences and Accident in Virginia*

Jamestown experience, more than anything, showed the importance of developing an easily exportable commodity that could justify an initial investment and the high cost of re-supply.

For the Greater Glory of Cod

Catholic Europe's insatiable hunger for codfish served as the single most important reason the New Plymouth settlers chose to settle in "Northern Virginia." In *Mourt's Relation*, Edward Winslow and William Bradford admit that the settlers initially viewed "fishing [as] our principall profit."¹⁷ *Of Plymouth Plantation* also records that, "the major part inclined to go to Plymouth, chiefly for the hope of present profit to be made by fish found in that country."¹⁸

Ferdinando Gorges, John Popham, Thomas Weston and even Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop all sought to build a profitable cod fishing industry in New England. For over a century, English explorers and fishermen exploited the rich fishing banks off the coast of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New England. Europe first became acquainted with the lucrative fishing opportunities in 1497 with John Cabot's voyage. Raimondo di Soncino, Milan's envoy in London, wrote a letter to the Duke of Milan in December of 1497 about the tales he had heard from the returning sailors and Cabot himself, writing:

The Sea there is swarming with fish which can be taken not only with the net but in baskets let down with a stone, so that it sinks in the water... These same English, his companions, say that they could bring so many fish that this Kingdom would have no further need of Iceland, from which there comes a great quantity of stockfish.¹⁹

When Cabot and his men reported such tales back in Europe, it fueled a "cod rush" to the waters of Newfoundland. Between Cabot's voyage in 1497 and 1550, European fishing fleets made 128

¹⁷ Winslow, Edward and Bradford, William. *Mourt's Relation*. New York. Garrett Press, Inc. 1969, p. 63

¹⁸ Bradford, 1953, p. 39

¹⁹ di Soncino, Ramaindo. *Annuario Scientifico, Milan; Archiv d'Etat Milan*. In: *John Cabot*. Edited by Henry Harrisse. New York and London: The Hakluyt Society, 1896.

expeditions to the North American coast. Historically, cod served as an important and lucrative industry in Europe for centuries before his discovery. Cabot's discovery opened up a new and abundant source of this commodity. Cod was an excellent source of dietary protein; and if properly preserved cod could last significantly longer than other preserved meats.

The investors in New Plymouth viewed the exploitation of cod as their first source of revenue. They had several overlapping ideas of ways to make money. First, they expected to run their own fishing operation off the coast. They also anticipated that the colony could act as a way station for the English seasonal fishing expeditions. Certainly, the settlers must have thought they could sell foodstuffs, provisions, and the salt necessary for preserving cod to passing ships. They had good reason to develop such a ship-servicing business plan. For centuries, fishermen from northern Europe caught, then preserved, and then transported Baltic herring and Icelandic cod to the distant markets of southern Europe. In order to preserve the fish for the long voyage and transport to market, fisherman either salted or dried their catch. Salted cod was known as "green fish." But the salting process required an abundant supply of salt which mariners had to carry with them on the long voyage across the Atlantic.

The alternate process of drying cod made producing this commodity significantly cheaper. But, it required fisherman to make coastal encampments where they could construct drying racks. As a result, fishermen established the first year round settlements in North America. Dried cod could only be produced during the cold winter months, however, and it was generally disliked in the markets of Southern Europe. England, like most countries in northern Europe, lacked an abundant supply of salt. Accordingly, the English developed a preservation method that combined the drying fish out on racks with a light salting. The people of southern

Europe preferred the English dried and lightly salted fish over the dried “stockfish,” and as a result, exports of north Atlantic Cod fetched appreciably higher prices.²⁰

Although strict Calvinists in their religious views, the New Plymouth colonists were more than happy to feed Catholic Europe’s demand for north Atlantic cod. In addition to creating a fishing-fleet servicing industry, some of the Pilgrims sought to make money by catching cod and selling it directly to southern European Catholics. Catholic “lean days” forbade the consumption of meat, and as a result, fueled the demand for north Atlantic cod. In fact, the abundance of Catholic holidays in medieval Europe meant that “meat was forbidden for almost half the days of the year, and those lean days eventually became known as salt cod days.” This religious prohibition on traditional sources of dietary protein forced many Catholics to turn to cod as a substitute. Cabot’s discovery of the cod fishing grounds off the coast of New England, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland led to an explosion of maritime presence in the north Atlantic. By the late sixteenth century, cod was also a strategic commodity for the nations of Europe. England specifically relied on North Atlantic cod to supply the Royal Navy. Sir Walter Raleigh even noted the importance of the English cod fishing fleets, stating in 1595 that “If these should be lost it would be the greatest blow ever given to England.” Together, these forces produced an overwhelming demand for this simple fish, and by 1650 “60 percent of all fish eaten in Europe was cod, and this percentage would remain stable for the next two centuries.”²¹ Despite many political diversions in the sixteenth century that distracted England from establishing colonies in America, its private fishing fleets inadvertently laid the foundation for the growth of commercial

²⁰ Kurlansky, 1997. P. 52-54

²¹ Kurlansky, 1997, p. 24, 59, 58

colonies like New Plymouth.²² By exploiting the rich fishing grounds off New England, they founded an industry that proved profitable to anyone who could afford to fund the venture.²³

The cod industry also enabled merchants and entrepreneurs to become familiar with how to organize, provision, and finance long overseas journeys, and it familiarized them with the economic geography of the New World. By 1614, English fishermen had established yearly rendezvous stations at Damariscove Island, Pemaquid Point, Matinicus Island, and Monhegan Island in New England. These early fishermen were the first to trade with the coastal Native American tribes of New England.²⁴ In fact, when the settlers arrived in 1620, they were welcomed by a Native American named Samoset who, as *Mourt's Relation* records, "saluted us in English, and bade us welcome, for he had learned some broken English amongst the English men that came to fish at Monchiggon, and knew by name most of the Captaines, Commanders, & Masters, that usually come."²⁵ Samoset's speech testifies to the pervasiveness of this industry on the Massachusetts coast before arrival of the New Plymouth settlers. The initial seasonal bartering for food or small trinkets eventually transformed into the discovery of an even more lucrative opportunity – the fur trade.

The Fur Trade

Cod fisherman first traveled to North America for the rich fishing banks, but soon began augmenting their voyages' profit by trading for furs with coastal Native American tribes. Accounts from French and English explorers reflect the pervasiveness and extent of this trade. As early as 1524, French explorer Giovanni da Verrazano traveled to the coast of New England

²² Smith, John. *New England's Trials*. In: *Early English books, 1475-1640 – microfilm 1157:5*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968.

²³ Pope, Peter. *Fish Into Wine*. Chapel Hill, NC. University of North Carolina Press. 2004.

²⁴ Bailyn, Bernard, 1955, p. 5

²⁵ Winslow and Bradford, 1969, p. 83

and to his surprise found Native Americans ready and eager to trade for furs.²⁶ A decade later in 1534, French explorer Jacques Cartier recorded his interaction with the Micmacs on the St.

Lawrence River in present-day Canada, writing:

The next day part of the saide wilde men with nine of their boates came to the point and entrance of the Creeke, where we with our ships were at road... but soon as they saw us, they began to flee, making signes that they came to trafique with us, shewing us such skinnes as they cloth themselves withall, which are small of value. We likewise made signes unto them, that we wished them no evill: and in signe therof two of our men ventured to go on land to them, and carry them knives with other Iron wares, a red hat to give unto their Captaine... they brought us some of their skinnes, and so began to deale with us, seeming to be very glad to our iron wares and other things.²⁷

Despite being the first recorded voyage up the St. Lawrence, the Micmacs already knew who these Europeans were and what they sought to trade. English explorers recorded similar experiences on their journeys to New England. In fact, a popular 1619 woodcut engraving by Theodore de Bry shows Captain Bartholomew Gosnold trading European knives for Native Americans goods while exploring in 1602.²⁸ English explorer George Weymouth reported back to England the same experience on his 1605 voyage to the Maine coast, writing:

The Indians visited us on board, lying upon deck with us, and we ashore with them, changing man for man as hostages. We treated them very kindly, because we intended to inhabit their country. And they readily traded with us, the exchange of their furs for our knives, glasses, combs, and toys, being of great profit to us; for instance, one gave forty skins of beaver, otter, and sable, for articles of five shillings value.²⁹

Europeans prized the abundant otter, martin, and beaver pelts for their warmth, durability, weight and fashion. The sources of indigenous furs had long been depleted in northwestern Europe, and as Smith's and Gosnold's experience showed, anybody who could

²⁶ Richter, Daniel K. *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. p. 18

²⁷ Burrage, Henry. *Early English and French Voyages Chiefly from Hakluyt, 1534-1608*. New York. Charles Scribner Son. 1906. Translation of firsthand account of Cartier's the three voyages.

²⁸ Kelso, 2004, p. 124, Fig. 89, from the Virginia Historical Society

²⁹ Caldwell, 2001 reprint, p. 48

cheaply acquire this commodity stood to make a fortune. Indeed, English merchant adventurers founded the Muscovy Company in 1555 to exploit Russia's abundant supply of furs. In the same way, English merchants in the seventeenth century saw potential for profit in New England.³⁰ Before the *Mayflower* left harbor, the fur trade existed in New England, but it depended entirely on seasonal fisherman and the occasional explorer. Although the exchange of pelts for European manufactured goods was an increasingly omnipresent part of Native American life, New Plymouth's position as a year round trading partner radically amplified Native Americans' participation in the international Atlantic economy. By the mid 1620s, Plymouth's trading position served as a commercial inspiration to English settlers and investors. In turn, this fueled a significant inflow of cheap English and European goods that changed the traditional Native American way of life.

The Native American peltry trade became such an important industry in New England that many colonial promoters wrote prodigiously about it. Shortly after arriving in Massachusetts, William Wood wrote *New England's Prospect* in 1634 with the goal of attracting more settlers to New England. *New England's Prospect* provided extensive descriptions of the geography, climate, vegetation, wildlife, English plantations, tribes in the region, and Native American culture. He wrote at length about the beaver and peltry trade. In one section entitled "Beasts Living in the Water," he provides an extensive description of the four water mammals that provided pelts for export back to England. He wrote a short paragraph on the advantages of otters, martins, and "musquashes" (the Abenaki word for a muskrat), but observed that of the beaver, he could "make a volume." Over three paragraphs he meticulously described the physical attributes, behavior, and habitat of the beaver.

³⁰ Andrews, Kenneth R. *Trade, plunder and settlement: Maritime enterprise and the genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1984, p. 197

But the most valuable observation made about the fur trade explained how the English acquired beaver pelts. “[The beaver’s] wisdom secures them from the English who seldom or never kills any of them, being not patient to lay a long siege or to be so often deceived by their cunning evasions, so that all beaver which the English have comes first from the Indians whose time and experience fits them for that employment.”³¹ Native Americans played such a vital role in this trade because they were uniquely capable and willing to engage in the trade. The native people the Europeans encountered were not fools but, instead, entrepreneurs who compensated for their lack of capital goods by contributing sweat equity, *i.e.*, their labor. Their honed hunting skills, knowledge of the territory, and use of the bows and traps from childhood enabled them to be the best source of furs for European merchants. The Wampanoag, Narragansett, Nauset, Massachusetts, Pequot other northeastern tribes mastered the use of beaver traps and nets that would not damage the pelt.³² William Wood also related the importance of Native Americans to this industry by adding a list of important words from the northeastern Algonquin language family for readers and future settlers in what he called “A small nomenclatur of the Indian Language.” Of the words he chose to include, many of them relate to trade, and especially the beaver and peltry trade. For example, “Easu tommoc quocke” is his (likely rough) translation of “half a beaver skin.” Wood also included Indian translations for “will you truck?”, “let me see money”, “deerskin”, “codfish”, “tobacco”, the word for the Indian currency made from shells, “Wampompage,” as well as the entire Indian numeric system. In addition to these key vocabulary words, Wood’s “nomenclator” integrated other vital pieces of information for those

³¹ Wood, William. *New England's Prospect*. Edited by Alden T. Vaughn. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977. p.47-48

³² Richter, 2001, p. 47

interested in settling and trading, including lists of: navigable rivers, Indian villages, a calendar, and the names of the local Sagamores (or Kings).³³

The Separatists Look Westward

While English fisherman, explorers, and merchants looked westward across the Atlantic, the English Reformation transformed their country. The establishment of the Anglican Church in 1534 by Henry VIII rejected papal jurisdiction, sold Catholic land and property, and changed worship practices. Nevertheless, many Protestants believed there were still too many vestiges of the Catholic Church remaining. A group emerged in the 1560s that wanted to “purify” the Anglican Church of its “Romish” and “Popish” traditions and establish a Church based on Calvinist doctrine. This group called themselves the “Puritans.” While Elizabeth I adopted a tolerant policy toward Puritans her successor James I did not. After James I ascended the throne in 1604, many Puritan Separatists fled to the Netherlands to avoid persecution. English authorities considered them to be radicals because they advocated a total separation from the Church of England. The group known today as the “Pilgrims” was among one of these Separatist groups.³⁴

A significant number of the Pilgrim Separatists fled first to Amsterdam in 1608 and then to Leyden, in the Netherlands, where they could practice their Calvinist faith free from James I’s religious persecution. Despite their move, most of the Pilgrims did not intend to establish a permanent settlement in the Netherlands. Economically, many of the Separatists viewed their removal to the Netherlands as “an adventure almost desperate; a case intolerable and a misery worse than death... [where] they were not acquainted with trades nor traffic (by which that country doth subsist) but had only been used to plain country life and the innocent trade of

³³ Wood, 1977, p. 118-124

³⁴ Lucas, 1984, p. 31

husbandry.”³⁵ And with fears that their sons and daughters would remain aliens or assimilate in to Dutch society, many began looking for ways to maintain their English heritage while being free from persecution. Some also feared that their community in Leyden, in the southern part of the Netherlands, might end up on the front lines of a renewed war between the Dutch and the Spanish, for the Twelve Years’ Truce of 1609 was scheduled to end in 1621. Additionally, the religious strife that later came to be known as the Thirty Years War began in 1618, convincing many of the Pilgrims that their Leyden community was also in danger of destruction in a Catholic Protestant war for Europe.³⁶

Plans for the organization of the New Plymouth colony emerged as early as 1617. Originally, the Puritans debated between settling in Dutch Guiana or in English Virginia. Bradford recorded the debate of 1619 and 1620. He wrote that: “Those for Guiana alleged that the country was rich, fruitful, and blessed with a perpetual spring and flourishing greenness, where vigorous nature brought forth all things in abundance and with plenty without great labor or art of man.” However, he recorded that the critics of Guiana thought that, “such hot countries are subject to grievous diseases and many noisome impediments which other more temperate places are freer from, and would not so well agree with our English bodies... the jealous Spaniard would never suffer them long, but would displant or overthrow them as he did the French in Florida.”³⁷ In 1596, Sir Walter Raleigh published *Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtifull Empyre of Guinana* describing his voyage there. This account, like many of his other writings, described an early modern Atlantic world abounding in opportunities for economic

³⁵ Bradford, 1953, p. 11

³⁶ Bradford, 1953, p.23

³⁷ Bradford, 1953, p.23-28

improvement.³⁸ That same year, Lawrence Kemys published another account of his voyage to Guiana called the *Relation of a Second Voyage to Guiana*. In 1613, Robert Harcourt also published a book on Guiana, called the *Relation of Voyage to Guiana*, which included descriptions of economic opportunities there. Together, these works formed an extensive well of information that, like other works advocating English colonization in America, reflected a union of England's nationalistic and commercial interests. Although it is not clear which of these accounts the Pilgrims read, they knew about the both the climate and risks of settling in South America.³⁹

After a lengthy debate, the Pilgrims agreed that Guiana posed too many risks to themselves, their children and their goals. After concluding that Guiana was out of the question, the Pilgrims came to the conclusion that they were "to live as a distinct body by themselves under the general Government of Virginia; and by their friends to sue His Majesty that he would be pleased to grant them freedom of religion."⁴⁰ Ideally, the organizers wanted to plant the colony along the mouth of the Hudson River, not Cape Cod. Earlier explorers, like John Smith, had reported back to Europe on the geographic benefits of the river - and the investors in the colony rightly surmised that whoever established a colony there could take advantage of the region's unique geography for opportunities to trade and fish. Indeed, the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island, founded four years after New Plymouth, fully and successfully

³⁸ Schmidt, Benjamin. 'Reading Raleigh's America : texts, books, and readers in the early modern Atlantic world'. In Mancall, Peter C. (ed.), *The Atlantic world and Virginia, 1550-1624* (Chapel Hill (NC): University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 472-474

³⁹ Bradford, 1953, p. 28n

⁴⁰ Bradford, 1953, p. 29

exploited the Hudson for its access to the Native American trade in the interior of New England.⁴¹

Resolved to plant a colony in the New World, the Pilgrims focused their attention on acquiring investment capital and a patent. They knew that a transatlantic voyage would require extensive planning and financial backing, but none of the Pilgrims had any experience in colonization. Without a sufficient and steady source of capital and a means to secure a patent in the New World, their plan could not proceed. Consequently, they dispatched two of their leaders, Thomas Cushman and John Carver, to meet with investors and colonial organizers in London. After explaining their plans, Sir Edwin Sandys of the Virginia Company of London convinced the Secretary of State, Robert Naunton, to discuss the proposition with James I. Edward Winslow's 1646 *Hypocrisie Unmasked* recorded that James I inquired at that point, "How they intended to make a living?" Naunton replied, "By fishing," to which the James I answered, "So God have my soul, 'tis an honest trade, 'twas the apostles' own calling."⁴² Unfortunately, the Pilgrims could not secure the blessings of the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, for their journey, and thus plans stalled in 1617.⁴³

In 1619, the Puritans' agents in London met with Thomas Weston, who "headed a company of merchant adventurers"⁴⁴ looking for colonial investment opportunities. Although establishing a colony was an extraordinarily risky enterprise in the early seventeenth century, the London Adventurers agreed to help the Puritans carve out a new settlement in the New World. In 1620, Thomas Weston proposed the creation of a joint-stock company. Negotiations ensued

⁴¹ Shorto, Russell. *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan & the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America*. New York: Random House, 2004.

⁴² Winslow, Edward. *Hypocrisie Unmasked*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1969, p. 89

⁴³ Langdon, 1966 p. 9

⁴⁴ Bradford, 1953, p. 29-31

among Weston, the London Adventurers, and the Pilgrims' agents. By 1620, a contract establishing the joint-stock company existed. This business instrument provided as follows:

1. That Adventurers and Planters do agree, that every person that goeth being aged 16 years and upward, be rated at 10 pounds, and 10 pounds to be accounted a single share.
2. That he that goeth in person, and furnisheth himself out with 10 pounds in either money or other provisions, be accounted as having 20 pounds in stock, and in the division shall receive a double share.
3. The persons transported and the Adventurers shall continue their joint stock and partnership together, the space of seven years, (except some unexpected impediment do cause the whole company to agree otherwise) during which time all profits and benefits that are got by trade, traffic, trucking, working, fishing, or any other means of any person or persons, remain still in the common stock until the division.
4. That at their coming there, they chose out such a number of fit persons as many furnish their ships and boasts for fishing upon the sea, employing the rest in several faculties upon the land, as building houses, tilling and planting the ground, and making such commodities as shall be most useful for the colony.
5. That at the end of seven years, the capital and profits, viz. the houses, lands, goods and chattels, be equally divided betwixt the Adventurers and Planters; which done, every man shall be free from other of them of any debt or detriment concerning this adventure.
6. Whosoever cometh to the colony hereafter or putteth into the stock, shall at the end of the seven years be allowed proportion to the time of his so doing.
7. He that shall carry his wife and children, or servants, shall be allowed for every person now aged 16 years and upward, a single share in the division; or, if he provides them necessaries, a double share; or, if they be between 10 years old and 16, then two of them to be reckoned for a person both in transportation and division.
8. That such children as now go, and are under the age of 10 years, have no other share in the division but 50 acres of unmanured land.
9. That such persons as die before the seven years be expired, their executors to have their port or share at the division, proportionably to the time of their life in the colony.
10. That all such persons as are of this colony are to have their meat, drink, apparel, and all provisions out of the common stock and goods of the said colony.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Bradford, 1953, p. 40-41

The London Adventurers' willingness to sign this contract reveals important details about the development of the New Plymouth colony as a private business enterprise. The agreement describes how colonial enterprises were organized and financed in the early 1600s. The ten-point contract, which William Bradford memorialized in his journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, established a joint stock partnership between the settlers, who referred to themselves as "Planters," and the investors, who were referred to as the "Adventurers" because they were venturing their capital. However, the joint stock company's common ownership of all assets prevented the settlers from owning their own land or the improvements that they were to make upon it. In effect, the settlers were acting more as indentured servants than as partners in the ownership of the colony.

Another important aspect of the joint-stock company was its limited duration of only seven years. According to these original plans for the colony, after seven years, the assets of the company were to be divided up according to the number shares each man owned. Shares were apportioned in two ways, first to repay the Adventurers' capital contribution; and second to repay those who made the first voyage and settled, that is, those who "ventured" their persons instead of their capital. This contractual relationship also contained special provisions for the families of the Planters, and detailed information about property allocation to children, creating a unique form of a "company town." Ultimately, this agreement created a contractually-organized plan for running a colonial venture that mirrored the English business culture of the early 1600s. This partnership, albeit slanted to serve the interest of the investors, guaranteed that both investors and the settlers would share in the economic benefits of the colony, just as they shared in the colony's risks.

Nevertheless, this contract and its provisions proved very controversial. Originally, the Pilgrims believed that they would retain property rights to their individual “houses and improved land, and in particular gardens,” and would have the ability to work for themselves two days out of every week.⁴⁶ The Adventurers, headed by Weston, had a markedly different perspective on how the colony should be run and organized. The contract shows that Weston’s first priority was to guarantee a return on the Adventurers’ capital investment.

The Pilgrims’ agents, faced with little choice in 1619, eventually agreed to Weston’s demands and the Adventurers’ conditions. Nevertheless, when their agent’s letters and the agreement reached the Pilgrims in Holland, many refused to go along with it, and sent word to the agents not to exceed their authority. A letter from the Separatists’ leader John Robinson in June, 1620, to the Pilgrims’ agent revealed the Pilgrims’ frustrations with Weston’s proposal:

About the conditions, you have our reasons for our judgements of what is agreed. And let this specially be borne in minds, that the greatest part of the colony is like to be employed constantly, not upon dressing their particular land and building houses, but upon fishing, trading, etc. So as the land will be but a trifle for advantage to the Adventurers.⁴⁷

The letter clearly demonstrated the Pilgrims’ discontent with the Weston contract. However, it also reveals some of the expectations for the Pilgrims’ commercial activities. Robinson’s letters show that he believed that settlers needed two days per week to work for themselves. “Consider also how much unfit that you and your likes must serve a new apprenticeship of seven years,” he wrote, “and not a day’s freedom from task.”⁴⁸ Robinson and the Pilgrims also expected special protection of their property at the division of assets scheduled for 1627. In the end, neither side was able to agree. Despite the failure to come to an agreement, plans for the voyage were already in motion. The *Speedwell* took the first group of Pilgrims from the Netherlands to

⁴⁶ Langdon, 1966, p. 9

⁴⁷ Bradford, 1953, p.43

⁴⁸ Bradford, 1953, p.44

England in July of 1620. When they arrived in England, the *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell* were quickly provisioned and ready to leave. Both Weston and the Pilgrims refused to come to a resolution of their dispute while still in England. Surprisingly, the Pilgrims left for the New World in September, 1620 without inking a comprehensive agreement. The tenuous negotiations signified the start of a tense financial relationship that would deteriorate over the coming seven years.

Ultimately, the contract and subsequent negotiations provide valuable insights into how investors provided financial capital (and on what terms) to emerging colonial enterprises, as well as the growing importance of international trade in the early 1600s. The most astonishing fact about the New Plymouth colony is that it was organized entirely as a private enterprise.

Although some of the London Adventurers may have “sympathized with the religious aims of the Pilgrims, they expected the investment of their capital to yield a return, and that rather quickly.”⁴⁹ The organizational instruments of the colony reflected a widely-held Pilgrim expectation of an immediate return through the export of furs, fish, clapboards, and other raw materials available in abundance in the New World. As time passed and the trade in New England developed rapidly, England’s power as a nation would continue to grow.

In an age characterized by state-oriented economics and the absolute power of monarchs, it was a small group of London entrepreneurs who laid the foundations for the rise of English political and economic power in North America. Surprisingly, no support came from the royal government of James I or any of his ministries. The privately financed and organized English colonies differed from the previous state-sponsored colonization efforts, like Spain’s conquistador led subjugation of Mexico, the Yucatan, and Peru. In contrast, the English created

⁴⁹ McIntyre, Ruth. *Debts Hopeful and Desperate: Financing the Plymouth Colony*. Plymouth, MA: Plimouth Plantation, 1963, p. 21

an entrepreneurship empire. In 1620, when the Pilgrims were preparing to set sail, the only other permanent English colony in North America was Jamestown. And like the New Plymouth colony, it resulted from a private venture. If the business of America is business, as Calvin Coolidge once observed, that business began during the first two decades of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER TWO: THE BEST LAID PLANS

The Plymouth Colony as an investment and the transformation of New England (1620-1628)

“Our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, our plains were full of deer, as also our woods, and of turkeys, and our coves full of fish and fowl... But these English having gotten our land, they with scythes cut down the grass, and with axes fell the trees; their cows and horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks, and we shall all be starved.”⁵⁰

-Miantonomo of the Narragansett, 1642

Carrying within her hold the hope of the Plymouth colony, the *Little James* entered the English Channel in 1625 on the last leg of its long journey home across the Atlantic. Laden with valuable cod and 800 pounds of beaver pelts destined for the markets of Europe, the New Plymouth colonists expected the cargo to fetch a sizeable profit. The colony’s traders had spent months travelling up and down the coast of New England in small boats and on foot in search of furs and the Native American trappers who would trade for them. Beaver, otter, martin, and muskrat furs represented the height of fashion in the luxury markets of Protestant Northern Europe and promised a large return for anyone who could get them to market. Similarly, the fish they had spent months catching, salting, and drying were in high demand in Catholic Southern Europe where the strict observation of not eating “flesh” on Fridays created an expansive market. However, just as the *Little James* came within sight of port, a Turkish corsair struck. Sailing from the west into the English Channel, the Ottoman corsair quickly caught the crude English pinnace. Boarding swiftly, they butchered the crew, and captured the ship and its cargo.⁵¹

Two years earlier, the ill-fated *Little James* set out from England to turn colony’s commercial prospects around while also carrying vital provisions to re-supply the colony. Sent by the London investors who financed the establishment of the Plymouth Plantation in 1620, it left port expecting to capitalize on the lucrative fur trade and fishing industry. Yet, as soon as it

⁵⁰ Richter, 2001, p. 59

⁵¹ Bradford, 1953, p. 176-177

arrived in New England, it encountered disaster after disaster. On its first trading expedition to the Connecticut River, the Narragansett tribe refused to exchange more than a few beaver pelts and some corn for the “few beads and knives” that “were not much esteemed”⁵² by the Narragansett. To make matters worse, the *Little James* sank in a storm shortly thereafter. Determined to salvage the pinnace, the New Plymouth colonists spent precious weeks trying to raise the ship in 1624, paying carpenters and coopers in beaver pelts for their services. After raising and outfitting the ship at great expense, the Pilgrims loaded the ship with the goods they thought would start to pay off the onerous debt they had amassed starting the colony and keeping it provisioned. Unfortunately, the loss of the *Little James* pushed the colony further into debt and hastened the exit of many of its earlier investors. After poring thousands of pounds into the company, even the most zealous investors turned decidedly against future financial support of the colony.⁵³

Instead of abandoning the settlement after failures like the capture of the *Little James* and the loss of confidence by their investors, the individual colonists persevered. Early commercial calamities made the early settlers more desperate. But out of this desperation, the Planters pursued new means to profit, and steadfastly continued to build the colony.

This chapter examines the seminal period between 1620 and 1628 when the Planters and London Adventurers jointly owned and operated colony. This chapter opens with the provisioning of the colony in the summer of 1620, and ends before the final termination of the joint-stock company in 1628 (a turning point in the colony’s history that is saved for the next chapter). This period of eight years shows how the colonists adapted to the demands of the Atlantic economy (both European and Native American). And, in surviving and building the

⁵² Bradford, 1963, p. 139

⁵³ Bradford, 1963, p. 163

colony, they showed their countrymen in England that permanent settlement in New England was not only possible, but could even be profitable under the right circumstances. The New Plymouth colony in particular showed that men of modest means with families could create a thriving export-based colony that was also agriculturally self-sufficient for them and their families. The colony also showed, however, that developing such a colony took patience and sacrifice.

Undercapitalization and Inadequate Planning

Despite reading extensively about the importance of provisioning and financing properly, both the Planters and the Adventurers proved inept in making necessary preparations for the colony. Indeed, their expectations for both agriculture and commerce proved naïve. In total, Adventurers and Planters raised “between £1,200 and £1,600” for the initial voyage through the joint stock company.⁵⁴ That was not enough.

Among the many failures in planning the colony, the failure to provision adequately proved the most disastrous. Foreshadowing the division of 1628, the Planters, their agents, and the Adventurers fought over the cost of provisioning. The passionate disagreement between the three groups was captured in a series of letters. While making preparations for the voyage, the Pilgrims’ agent John Carver wrote to Robert Cushman claiming he was committing negligence for his failures to provision properly. John Carver responded on June 10, 1620, claiming that Thomas Weston and the Adventurers were responsible for the problems, and concluded that “there is already amongst us a flat schism, and we are readier to go dispute than to set forward a voyage.” Thomas Weston, in turn, decried the stubbornness of the Puritans in not signing off on the agreement that their agents had negotiated. As a result of the controversy, Weston withheld

⁵⁴ McIntyre, 1962, p. 19

the necessary capital for buying needed provisions. Bradford observed, “So he returned in displeasure and this was the first ground of discontent between them. And whereas there wanted well near £100 to clear things at their going away, he would not take to disburse a penny but let them shift as they could.” Instead of buying more provisions, the Planters were forced to “sell off some of their provisions to stop this gap, which was some three or four-score firkins of butter (between 3360 and 4720 lb.)” In the months after the landing, the Planters faced starvation. Tragically, the settlers exhausted most of their supply of necessary victuals within two months of landing on Cape Cod. Their experience showed that future ventures would require significantly better provisioning, and thus better financing. Winslow and Bradford described the harsh conditions of the first winter in *Mourt’s Relation* as a warning to future settlers in New England, a warning that the successful Massachusetts Bay Colony’s leadership later heeded ten years later in its planning, provisioning and financing.⁵⁵

Their mutual inexperience in colonization and capital disputes was exacerbated by the absence of a provisioning industry in England. In 1620, English ports provided merchants and fisherman with supplies, but the provisioning industry was not equipped for outfitting the construction and maintenance of a colony. Early American historian Samuel Elliot Morrison explains that “making provisions meant salting down beef, baking hardtack, providing casks for beer and water, and preparing other victuals so they would last a long voyage.” Unfortunately, “there were no ship chandlers in those days where such provisions could be bought; the cattle had to be purchased on the hood and the wheat in the ear, and people hired to prepare them.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bradford, 1953, p. 45, 49, 77

⁵⁶ Bradford, 1953, p. 44n

Despite the fiery accusations in England, the Separatists in Leyden readied themselves for the journey to Southampton, their last stop before leaving for the New World. Bradford recorded their departure:

After much travel and these debates, all things got ready and provided. A small ship was bought and fitted in Holland, which was intended as to serve to help transport them, so to stay in the country and attend upon fishing and such other affairs as might be fore the good and benefit of the colony when they came there.⁵⁷

The “small ship” was the 60 ton *Speedwell*, a ship designed primarily for coastal travel and trade. Indeed, Bradford’s account shows that *Speedwell* had a dual purpose. It would ferry the passengers over the Atlantic, and then provide for the fishing and other commercial interests of the colony when it arrived in New England. In June of 1620, the Pilgrims arrived in England after a decade of self imposed exile. On their arrival in England aboard the *Speedwell*, the Adventurers told the Pilgrims that they were sending specialized tradesman and a mercenary with them on the voyage. The Pilgrims called these people the “strangers” because they were not from the Leyden congregation, and they were not all Puritan. Instead, the Adventurers hired “strangers” to ensure that their investment would be protected. Together, the Puritan separatists and the “strangers” would become the founders of the first permanent settlement in New England.⁵⁸

As summer turned to autumn the Planters and Adventurers continued to disagree over the conditions of the agreement. In August, 1620 the colonists grew impatient and decided they had to leave before the onset of winter. As a result, the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* departed Southampton without a firm agreement and without being fully provisioned. Plymouth Plantation historian Ruth McIntyre concluded that the decision meant that “they left port

⁵⁷ Bradford, 1953, p. 47

⁵⁸ Bradford, 1953, p. 47-53

dangerously short of supplies, a fact which, as Cushman predicted, added to their hardships in the New World.”⁵⁹ To complicate matters further, the smaller 60 ton *Speedwell* that was intended to fish and engage in commerce sprang leaks. These leaks caused both ships to turn back twice. Once back in port, the colonists finally deemed the *Speedwell* unseaworthy. As a result, the *Mayflower* took on as many passengers and supplies as she could and left with haste for the New World on September 6, 1620. Already, the colony was undercapitalized, short on provisions, and had lost their primary instrument for returning profit to the investors in London.⁶⁰

Organizing the Colony and the Political Structure

After an unexpectedly long voyage and bad weather, the *Mayflower* arrived in the New World. Settling at “New Plimouth” in New England in 1620, however, was an accident. In a twist of fate, the *Mayflower* never made it to its intended destination on the Hudson River. Poor navigation by the ship’s captain and rough winter weather forced the *Mayflower* to land at Cape Cod. After several attempts to sail around Cape Cod failed, the leaders of the colony decided to search for a nearby site to start building the colony. Not only was Pilgrims’ landing spot not the one they planned, Cape Cod was not covered by the legal patent they received from the Virginia Company of London. The Adventurers had negotiated a patent for a settlement located around the Hudson River, south of the 41° northern limits of the Virginia Company. English colonial promoter Ferdinando Gorges reorganized the defunct Virginia Company of Plymouth as the Council for New England in June 1620, but the Adventurers had not approached Gorges for a patent.

Faced with the prospect of abandoning the venture, the Pilgrims chose to settle on Cape Cod, but had to find a way to legally claim the land. Many of the “strangers” used the

⁵⁹ McIntyre, 1963, p. 20

⁶⁰ Bradford, 1963, p. 58

opportunity to assert that the colony had no authority over the Cape Cod territory, and thus, they were free from their obligations to the company. To silence these “mutinous speeches,” and to establish legitimacy, the colony’s leaders drafted the “Mayflower Compact:”

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, and Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty fourth. Anno Domini 1620.⁶¹

By establishing a covenant among the settlers, the colonists ensured loyalty to a “Civil Body Politic,” in effect, a central authority for the company. The agreement gave the colonists the ability to elect their own governor and create their own laws. As a political organization, the governor ran the colony with a group of counselors, known as “Assistants” who aided him in his duty and acted on his behalf. The “Mayflower Compact” made all inhabitants, including the “strangers,” beholden to the laws of the colony, and to all intents and purposes, maintained the authority of the company (and its interests) despite the lack of a patent.

Fortunately for the settlers, London Adventurer John Pierce negotiated a patent with Ferdinando Gorges’ newly reorganized Council for New England on June 1, 1621 after the news of their inopportune landing reached London. In this agreement the Adventurers fought to ensure that the colony had the “freedom to fish and trade along the coast”⁶² – illustrating that they continued to believe that fishing and trading were keys to the success and profitability of the

⁶¹ Bradford, 1953, p 76

⁶² McIntyre, 1963, p. 21

colony. It also allocated “100 acres of land for every person shipped over, and 1500 for public purposes.”⁶³ The need for a legal agreement to establish a government, indeed a government to create laws and acts for the running of a company, testifies to a difference in the rights and responsibilities of corporations in the 1600s. Unlike the Jamestown militaristic government, the colonial population of New Plymouth governed itself. This form of corporate governance inspired many colonies like it, and it served as an important precedent for future English colonies in New England. The granting of corporate patents and charters also testifies to how the Royal government laid a legal foundation for privately backed colonies, but nevertheless, did not venture men or capital in the pursuit of colonial development.

After signing the “Mayflower Compact” in November of 1620, the settlers sent out scouting parties to find a suitable location to build the colony. Miles Standish, one of the “strangers” and a former mercenary, led heavily armed scouting parties around the eastern and southern shores of the Cape. Almost immediately, they came across a group of Nausets who fled at the first sight of the Europeans. Miles Standish and others continued scouting the eastern and southern parts of the bay through November and December of 1620. After a month of meticulously exploring and studying the coast, they agreed on a location to build the colony. The colonists explained their decision, “On Monday they sounded the harbor and found it good for shipping, and marched into the land and found diverse cornfields and little running brooks, a place as they supposed fit for situation.”⁶⁴ *Mourt’s Relation* explains the decision to settle in Plymouth in greater detail than Bradford’s journal, stating that the colonists debated three different locations along the coast. Other locations had “a convenient harbour for boates, though

⁶³ McIntyre, 1963, p. 21

⁶⁴ Bradford, 1953, p. 72

not for Ships,” a condition that would have been perilous to the fledgling colony.⁶⁵ Ultimately, they chose New Plymouth. As both accounts suggest, the deciding factors were the protected and deep bay and the “great hill, on which wee point to make a platform, and plant our Ordinance, which will command all round about, from thence we may see thence Cape Cod.”⁶⁶ Their strategic choice of location and the tedious weeks they spent scouting in the harsh Massachusetts winter, reflected their practical, defensive and ultimately commercial priorities. With an expectation of exporting commodities and receiving re-supply, the choice of where to settle was essential to their prospects of survival.⁶⁷

Construction of the colony began on December 25th with the erection of the common house, which the Planters used as a shelter for themselves and their goods. The months that followed proved very difficult for the colonists. The deep harbor enabled large ships to dock in the bay, but it also forced the settlers to use their shallop to get ashore. Using the shallop made the colonists wade “to the middle of the thigh, and oft to the knees, to foe and come from land; some did it necessarily, and some for their own pleasure, but it brought to the most, of not to all, coughes and colds, the weather proving sodainly cold and stormie, which afterward turned to the scurvery, wherof many dyed.”⁶⁸

The failure to provision properly also emerged as soon as the settlers arrived in Cape Cod. Winslow and Bradford wrote, “Again, we had yet some Beere, Butter, and Flesh, and other such victuals left, which would quickly be all gone, and then we should have nothing to comfort us in the great labour and toyle we were like to under-goe at the first; It was also conceived, whilst we has competent victuals, that the Ship would stay with us, but when that grew low, they

⁶⁵ Winslow, Edward and Bradford, William, 1969, p. 38

⁶⁶ Winslow, Edward and Bradford, 1969, p. 65

⁶⁷ Bradford, 1953, p. 59-72

⁶⁸ Winslow, Edward and Bradford, William, 1969, p. 27

would be gone, and let us shift as we could.”⁶⁹ Out of desperation, a party of settlers returned to the Nauset graves they had previously pillaged during the first weeks of scouting to look for more Indian corn. The building process also proved unexpectedly slow. During the day, the men unloaded the ship and began building several individual and common houses. At night, they would return in the shallop to the cramped *Mayflower* for lodging. Low on provisions and with little shelter from the winter winds and snow, the planters faced what Bradford called “the starving time,” writing:

But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months’ time half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccomodate condition had brought them in.⁷⁰

Of the 102 colonists who reached New Plymouth in the winter of 1620, only 52 survived to enjoy the summer of 1621. Only “12 of the original heads of families and 4 of the original unattached men or boys was left; and of the women who reached Plymouth, all but a few died.”⁷¹ After the disastrous first winter, the *Mayflower* departed in April of 1621. In a period of a few months, the high hopes of the Pilgrims drastically changed. Nearly 50% of their family, friends, and partners in the colony had died. Neither the Adventurers nor the planters ever expected such a high mortality rate.

The layout of New Plymouth reflected a strong emphasis upon security. In the first year, they built a fort and a palisade. Previous English experience with hostile Native Americans at Roanoke, Popham, and Jamestown made defensive planning a necessity. The planters chose the site for the fort very carefully, and erected it at the top of a hill, a key defensive position. In addition to providing for their security against Native American raids, the Pilgrims also erected

⁶⁹ Winslow, Edward and Bradford, William, 1969, p. 39

⁷⁰ Bradford, 1953, p.77

⁷¹ Bradford, 1953, p.77n

central common store house for their trade goods, foodstuffs, and gunpowder. For shelter, they replicated the designs of English cottages, erecting sturdy wood framed houses with thatched roofs. In preparation for possible attack, the colonists built their houses along a main street that led up to the fort. In his 1624 pamphlet promoting New England, Edward Winslow described how the colony organized its defense:

Captain *Standish* diuided our strength into foure squadrons or companies, appointing whom hee thought most fit to haue command of each; And at a generall Mufter or Trayning, appointed each his place, gaue each his Companie, giuing them charge vpon euery alarum to resort to their Leaders to their appointed place, and in his absence, to be commanded and directed by them.⁷²

Although defense was paramount to the colonists, they were always cognizant of their obligations to provide for a return on investment.

The Planters and Adventurers built their plans on the assumption the colony could quickly become self sufficient. Bailyn observes that this assumption was common to early colonial experience, writing:

Under the best conditions a wait of several months was required before the first crops were harvested, during which time the whole food supply had to be sent from home or brought from Maine fishermen. Conditions were usually against the quick raising of a food supply. Proper soil had to be found, the ground cleared, and the techniques of raising Indian corn acquired. Men engaged in raising crops on virgin soil could not fish or erect trading posts at the same time.⁷³

Indeed, experience shows that the Pilgrims were initially ill-prepared for surviving the rigors of life in the New World.

In the spring after their arrival, the settlers planted their first crops. The English quickly learned that they would have to adapt to the New England climate and soil in order to survive. Bradford wrote that, "some English seed they sowed, as wheat and pease, but it came not to

⁷² Winslow, Edward. *Good Newes from New England*. Boston: Applewood Books, 1996. p. 10

⁷³ Bailyn, Bernard. *The New England merchants in the seventeenth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955, p.11-12

good, either by the badness of the seed or lateness of the season or both, or some other defect.”

From then on, their main crop became Indian corn. The seed for their first harvest came from the looted Nauset graves. After establishing a peaceful relationship with the local Wampanoag, the colonists traded for seed corn. As the colonists built trade routes along the coast for furs, they also developed a network that traded for food, but particularly Indian corn.⁷⁴

Under the terms of the joint-stock agreement, all land and property was held in common. Under this corporate communal ownership model, agriculture initially stagnated within the colony. As a result, all harvests had to be carefully rationed in the colony's years. In fact, if the colony had not been able to trade for corn with the local Indian tribes, the colonists would have starved during their first three years. The communal ownership system continued until the colony's leaders finally decided to establish incentives through private allotments of land. Edward Winslow's *Good Newes from New England* captured the transition from communal company ownership to private allotment:

And because there was no small hope of doing good in that common course of labor that formerly we were in, for that the Governors that followed men to their labors, had nothing to give men for their necessities, and therefore could not so well exercise that command of them therein as formerly they had done, especially considering that self-love wherewith every man (in a measure more or less) loveth and preferreth his own good before his neighbors, and also the base disposition of some drones, that as at other times so now especially would be most burdenous to the rest; It was therefore thought best that every man should use the best diligence he could, for his own preservation, both in respect of the time present and to prepare his own Corn for the year following and bring in a competent portion for the maintenance of public Officers, Fishermen, etc.⁷⁵

This passage related a flaw in the company's original business plan. Weston and the Adventurer's insistence on working for the "benefit" of the company actually undermined the colony's ability to feed itself. Moreover, these reforms acted as the first step towards the

⁷⁴ Bradford, 1963, p. 113-115

⁷⁵ Winslow, Edward. *Good Newes from New England*. Boston: Applewood Books, 1996. p. 48

autonomy of the colony. Instead of following the rigid orders of the Londoners, the colonists mutually asserted that they knew what was in the best interest of the colony.

After the reforms of 1623, the colonists reaped huge agricultural surpluses, freeing more colonists to pursue the commercial interests of the colony. Winslow's description testifies to the division of labor existing in the colony. Specifically, his mention of giving corn for the "maintenance of public Officers, Fishermen, etc." indicated that the colony had an employment structure that divided the interests of the colony. The specialization of labor was absolutely necessary for the long fishing voyages and trading missions necessary for returning profits to London. Ultimately, the reforms of 1623 enabled the Planters to become agriculturally self-sufficient while also providing for the commercial interests of the colony. In making these reforms, the colonists showed how disconnected the original agreement was from the realities and rigors of colonization.

After 1623, the Planters attempted to create a salt making industry, a ship building industry, and a fresh water fish export industry. While these enterprises are a testament to entrepreneurial efforts of the colonists, these ventures failed. Cod fishing, which the colonists expected to thrive on, met with mixed success. Bradford blamed the loss of the *Speedwell*, the Pilgrims' inexperience in fishing, and the overfishing by the seasonal fishing fleets as the primary reasons for the colonists' mediocre results in fishing. Winslow also bemoaned their inability to fish despite the abundance of fish off the coast:

I confesse, we haue come so farre short of the meanes to raise such returnes, as with great difficultie wee haue preferred our liues; insomuch, as when I looke backe vpon our condition, and weake meanes to preferue the same, I rather admire at Gods mercy and providence in our preservation, then that no greater things haue beene effected by vs. But though our beginning haue beene thus raw, small, and difficult⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Winslow, 1996, p. 63-64

Indeed, the only industry that the Planters succeeded at was the export of pelts back to London, which Winslow wrote:

Much might be spoken of the benefit that may come to such as shall here plant by Trade with the *Indians* for Furs, if men take a right course for obtaining the same, for I dare presume vpon that small experience I haue had, to affirme, that the *English, Dutch,* and *French,* returne yeerely many thousand pounds profits by Trade onely from that *Iland,* on which we are feated.⁷⁷

In the end, the colony's layout showed strong defensive and commercial priorities, yet the Planters experienced numerous setbacks that prevented the immediate return of profits to the investors in London.

Schism between the Planters and the Adventurers

The beleaguered *Mayflower* arrived back in England with bad news and no trade goods. Instead of sympathy for the disasters of the first months, the Adventurers were outraged and felt betrayed by the settlers. Many feared their investment would collapse, like the Popham colony, and the other failed English commercial ventures in America. In letters to the colonists, Thomas Weston expressed his strong disapproval and contempt for the Planters and their inability to send back sufficient goods to sustain a short term profit. After seven months of no contact, the *Fortune* arrived at the plantation on November 10th, 1621 carrying a letter from Weston addressed to the late Governor Carver and the colony:

I durst never acquaint the Adventurers with the alterations of the conditions first agreed between us, which I have since been very glad of, for I am well assured had they known as much as I do, they would not have adventured a halfpenny of what was necessary for this ship. That you sent no lading in the ship is wonderful, and worthily distasted. I know your weakness was the cause of it, and I believe weakness more of judgment than weakness of hands. A quarter of the time you spent in discoursing, arguing and consulting would have done much more; but this is the past, etc. If you mean, bona fide, to perform the conditions agreed upon, do us the favour to copy them out and subscribe to them with the principal of your names. And likewise give us account as particularly as you can, how our moneys were laid out. And then I shall be able to give them some

⁷⁷ Winslow, 1996, p. 63

satisfaction, whom I am now forced with good words to shift off. And consider that the life of the business depends on the lading of this ship, which if you do to any good purpose, that I may be freed from great sums I have disbursed for the former and must do for the latter, I promise you I will never quit the business, though all the other Adventurers should.

We have procured you a charter, the best we could, which is better than the former, and with less limitation. For anything that is worth writing Mr. Cushman can inform you. I pray write instantly for Mr. Robinson to come to you. And so praying God to bless you with all graces necessary both for this life and that to come, I rest

London, July 6, 1621

Your Loving Friend,
Thomas Weston⁷⁸

Weston's letter shows that the high hopes that commerce would immediately deliver profit to the investors in London was short-lived. This disappointing first snag was only part of the problem faced by the London Adventurers. Outside economic forces magnified the failure of the Plymouth colony to load the ship with goods. Bernard Bailyn identified these forces in *New England Merchants in the 17th Century*, writing that "by 1620 the flush of prosperity that had accompanied the peace of 1604 had faded into depression. Harvests were bad, exports lagged, coin disappeared from the market, and confidence in a dependable future was shaken by continuing war on the Continent and the rumblings of civil storms at home."⁷⁹ In the early years the capital necessary to start and sustain a colony had become more dear – and with it, the return on this capital became more important to the investors.

After reading Weston's scathing letter, the colonists filled the *Fortune* with "good clapboard as full as she could stow, and two hogsheads of beaver and otter skins which they got with a few trifling commodities brought with them at first, being altogether unprovided for trade... The freight was estimated to be worth near £500." This simple record indicates that the

⁷⁸ Bradford, 1953, p. 93

⁷⁹ Bailyn, Bernard. *The New England merchants in the seventeenth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955, p.11

Planters worked to acquire goods that their London investors could profit from – despite the desperate conditions of the first year. While the colonists had not succeeded in fishing, they had identified two profitable new industries: pelts and wood. This entry reflected that the Pilgrims' trade goods were not initially sufficient for the peltry trade. Bradford inadvertently spoke to the colony's undercapitalization. In addition to writing about fish and furs, John Smith also indicated that New England had abundant sources of wood. The acquisition and packing of "clapboards" was a labor intensive process, yet one that the colonists were equipped to succeed in. The tools sent to build the colony also served as the source of their first exports.⁸⁰

Bradford also sent a reply to Weston's letter and the charges within it, writing: "At great charges in this adventure I confess you have been, and many losses may sustain; but the loss of [Governor Carver] and many other honest and industrious men's lives cannot be valued at any price. Of the one there may be hope of recovery; but the other no recompense can make good." Bradford furthered that in the colony's first months, "it pleased God to visit us then with death daily, and with so general a disease that the living were scarce able to bury the dead, and the well not in any measure significant to tend the sick. And now to be so greatly blamed for not freighting the ship doth indeed go near us and much discourage us."

After defending the colonists he governed, Bradford challenged the stay-at-home "Adventurers" in London, writing "Indeed, it is our calamity that we are, beyond expectation, yoked with some ill-conditioned people who will never do good, but corrupt and abuse others, etc."⁸¹ The first two letters between the Plymouth settlers and the London Adventurers relate the growing discontent on both sides of the Atlantic. These letters show that the colonists' priority was to profit through Atlantic based commerce.

⁸⁰ Bradford, 1953, 93-96

⁸¹ Bradford, 1953, p. 95

Relations between the colonists and London continued to deteriorate in 1623. Some settlers paid their own way over to the New Plymouth. As the *Fortune* delivered its passengers to the unsuspecting colonists, the “ship was in a short time laden with clapboard by the help of many hands. Also they sent in her all the beaver and other furs they had, and Mr. Winslow was sent over with her to inform of all things and procure such things as were thought needful for their present condition.”⁸² After the criticism of Weston’s letter, the colonists wanted to prove they were a worthwhile investment, and loaded the ship as quickly as possible so that it could embark as soon as possible. Interestingly, the settlers arrived on their own “Particular” were not beholden to the conditions of the joint-stock company. As a result of their unique situation, Bradford and the colony’s leaders made them beholden to the laws of the colony with this document:

1. That the Governor, in the name and with the consent of the Company, doth in all love and friendship receive and embrace them, and is to allot them competent places for habitations with tin the town. And promiseth to show them all such other courtesies as shall be reasonable for them to desire or us to perform.
2. That they on their parts be subject to all such laws and orders as are already made, or hereafter shall be, for the public good.
3. That they be freed and exempt from the general employment of the said Company (which their present condition of community requireth) except common defense and such other employment as tend to the perpetual good of the Colony.
4. Towards the maintenance of government and public officers of said Colony, every male above the age of sixteen years shall pay a bushel of Indian wheat, or worth of it, into the common store.
5. That, according to the agreement the merchants made with before they came, they are to be wholly debarred from all trade with the Indians, for all sorts of furs and such like commodities, till the time of the communality be ended.⁸³

These rules reflect the original Planters distrust of these newcomers. The important instrument, especially in its provision 5, also demonstrates the importance of commerce in the colony. Due to the harsh conditions of New England, many of these settlers returned to England. Another

⁸² Bradford, 1953, p. 132

⁸³ Bradford, 1953, p. 133

man, Reverend John Lyford, was expelled. On their return to England, some of the disgruntled settlers, including Lyford, charged that the colony's leaders mismanaged the Plantation and were abusing the trust of the investors in London. As a result, the company's treasurer, James Sherley, wrote the plantation to quote twelve widely-circulated English "Objections" to the colony. These objections ranged from "Neglect of family duties on the Lord's day" to fears of an abundance of "foxes and wolves in the country." Excerpted from the correspondence are a few of the "Objections" and Edward Winslow's witty responses:

5th obj.: Many of the Particular members of the plantation will not work for the General.
Ans.: This is not wholly true, for though some do it not willingly, and others not honestly, yet all do it; and he that doth worst gets his own food and something besides. But we will not excuse them, but labour to reform them the best we can; or else to quit the Plantation of them...

8th obj.: The fish will not take salt to keep sweet. Ans.: This is as true as that which was written, that there is scarce a fowl to be seen or a fish to be taken. Things likely to be true in a country where so many sail of ships come yearly a-fishing. They might well as well say there can no ale or beer in London be kept from souring...

11th obj.: The Dutch are planted near Hudson's Bay [sic] and are likely to overthrow the trade. Ans.: They will come and plant in there parts, also, if we and others do not, but go home and leave it to them. We rather command them than condemn them for it.⁸⁴

The trans-Atlantic correspondence shows serious and ongoing concerns about the management of the company's assets from London. It is true that things had gone very wrong in the colony, but the Pilgrims were not entirely to blame.

Beyond being upset at seeing no immediate returns for the fortunes they gambled, the investors had to constantly re-supply the colony with provisions and manufactured goods from England. This economic dependency was complicated by the danger posed to international shipping which made the process very difficult and very expensive to finance. Bailyn notes that,

⁸⁴ Bradford, 1953, p. 142-144

“the upheaval in England’s economic life was further increased in the middle of the decade when war brought a constant threat of depredation to merchant shipping. Under these circumstances, large commercial ventures to America, speculative by under normal conditions, became gambles that could be justified only by immediate and sizable profits.”⁸⁵

Piracy played a role in the colony’s difficult early years, too. The capture of the *Little James* by a “Turkish man of war” in 1625 was the “coup de grace to the staggering New Plymouth Company.”⁸⁶ Another ship sent by the Adventurers, the *Fortune*, was captured by French privateers. And although the ship eventually returned intact to England, the French pirates pilfered the all of the trade goods that the colonists expected to pay the debts the company had amassed. In a letter to the colony, Thomas Weston explained the impact of the stolen goods on investors, writing that “the conceit of so great a return doth much animate the Adventurers.”⁸⁷ The theft was yet another blow to an increasingly complex and cumbersome relationship. For the investors, it meant another year without anything to show for their investment, and for the Pilgrims it meant that all their months of efforts in trading and sending good home to England was all in vain.

The London Adventurers

From these letters, it might be asked, who were the London Adventurers? What were their motivations in financing the colony? Did they sympathize with the Puritan movement or were they simply seeking a return on an investment? Few records remain of these men; however, Captain John Smith recorded that the colony’s investors were “about 70. Some Merchants, some handy-crafts men, some adventuring great sums, some small, as their estates and affections

⁸⁵ Bailyn, 1955, p.11

⁸⁶ Bailyn, 1955, p.12

⁸⁷ Bradford, 1953, 104

served.”⁸⁸ Of these, we only know the names of forty eight, and almost half of these men were merchants.

In fact, the London Adventurers comprised a diverse crowd of investors that included: members of the gentry, well established lawyers, a tailor, a printer, and a future Lord Mayor of London. Thomas Weston, one of the principal organizers of the company, had experience in trade with the Netherlands before meeting with the Leyden Separatists. In 1622, he traveled to New Plymouth, and attempted to create several commercial ventures in the region before returning to England.

John Beauchamp also traded with the low countries, lent money, and served as an active member of the influential Goldsmith’s Company in London. James Sherley also participated in trade with the Netherlands trade before and after serving as the colony’s London treasurer. During the English Civil War, records reflect that he sided with the Royalist Catholic minority of London, not the Protestant rebels as might be expected. Another Adventurer, Thomas Brewer was an Anabaptist and a printer. Of the group, Thomas Andrews was the most notable. During the English Civil War, Cromwell personally knighted Thomas Andrews for his role in the struggle against Charles I. Later, Andrews became an Alderman and eventually Lord Mayor of London. Throughout his life, he heavily involved himself in politics, trade, finance, land speculation, and colonization. After helping launch the New Plymouth colony, he helped finance other overseas ventures, such as the Massachusetts Bay Company and the East India Company.⁸⁹ Yet, Thomas Andrews is not typical. Rather, most of the London Adventurers were “men of moderate prosperity and wealth, Puritan in religious outlook, and usually of some prominence in

⁸⁸ Smith, John. *True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captaine John Smith*. In: *Early English books, 1475-1640 - microfilm 939:15*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968.

⁸⁹ Pearl, Valerie, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*. Oxford. 1961. 309-311, 208, 240, 242

the City's affairs in the period of the Civil Wars." The tumultuous experience with the founding of New Plymouth pushed some of these men away from risky colonial investments, but for some, the investment served as a catalyst for future colonial investment. Richard Andrews, Thomas Andrews, Christopher Coulson, Thomas Goffe, Robert Keane, John Pocock, John Revell, Samuel Sharpe, and John White all invested in the Massachusetts Bay Company.⁹⁰ Of these men, Robert Keane, John Revell, and Samuel Sharpe eventually immigrated to Massachusetts in the 1630s. These men came from diverse backgrounds, pursued different endeavors throughout their lives, and had different faiths. An examination of their lives indicate a diversity of possible interests in financing, but in the end, they all likely saw the venture primarily as an investment. Some may have sided with the political or religious aims of the colony, but the diversity of experience and religion show a quick return was the most important consideration.⁹¹

Peace and War through furs

Trade prioritized peace and contact with local Native American tribes. As the *Mayflower* embarked from England, it carried weapons for defense and goods for trucking, ultimately pointing to both the fears and expectations of the colonists. Shortly after landing, Captain Standish and a scouting party encountered several Nausets who fled at the sight of the heavily armed Europeans. When the party traveled further inland, they found burial mounds, canoes, an abandoned Indian village, and signs of a thriving Native American community. On one of these exploratory missions, the Planters had their "First Interaction" with Native Americans:

One of their company being abroad came running in and cried, "Men, Indians! Indians!" And withal, their arrows came flying amongst them... The cry of the Indians was dreadful, especially when they saw their men run out of the rendezvous to recover their arms, the

⁹⁰ Bradford, 1953, p. 185

⁹¹ McIntyre, 1963, p. 43-46

Indians wheeling about upon them. But some running out with coats of mail on, and cutlasses in their hands, they soon got their arms and let fly amongst them and quickly stopped their violence. Yet there was a lusty man, and no less valiant, stood behind a tree within half a musket shot, and let his arrows fly at them; he was seen[to] shoot three arrows, which were all avoided. He stood three shots of a musket, till one taking full aim at him and made the bark or splinters of the tree fly about his ears, after which he gave an extraordinary shriek and away they went, all of them.⁹²

This scene captures the first conflict between two seemingly alien cultures. On one side, the Nauset war party carry bows, while the English carry steel and gunpowder weapons. Both *Mourt's Relation* and *Of Plymouth Plantation* mourn the nature of the "First Interaction."

Although justifiably ready to fight with their muskets, swords, and heavy armor, the settlers were also cognizant of the fact that the export of pelts depended on peaceful trade relations with the local tribes. If they could not secure trade relations, they knew the colony would be doomed to the same fate as their colonial predecessors.

After choosing a site to build the colony, the settlers continued to live in a state of paranoia. After hearing terrifying shrieks from the surrounding woods or spotting signs of Indians, the entire colony would drop everything and muster. Colonists frequently reported Native American scouting parties watching them. One group of Indians even stole some of the Planters' tools. This state of fear continued from December through March, until an Algonkian sagamore of Pemaquid Point named Samoset strode confidently up to the colony's hill to the fort and started speaking to the colonists in broken English. He proudly announced himself, and then proceeded to announce the arrival of the Massasoit in four or five days, the powerful sachem of the Wampanoag. When Massasoit arrived, the English governor welcomed the Wampanoag sachem with gifts and strong water. After a lengthy discussion, both sides agreed upon an alliance:

⁹² Bradford, 1953, p. 69-70

1. That neither he nor any of his should injure or do to any of their people.
2. That if any of his did hurt to any of theirs, he should send the offender, that they might punish him.
3. That if anything were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his.
4. If any did unjustly war against him, they would aid him; if any did war against them, he should aid them.
5. He should send to his neighbors confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong them, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.
6. That when their men came to them, they should their bows and arrows behind.⁹³

This simple agreement, recorded by Governor Bradford, testifies to the concerns and hopes of both negotiating parties. Their relationship proved to be mutually beneficial in terms of trade and security. As *Mourt's Relation* recorded, Massasoit "hath a potent Adversary the Narowhiganseis, that are at warre with him, against whom he thinks we may be some strength to him, for our peeces are terrible unto them."⁹⁴ Massasoit fully exploited the arrival of a technologically advanced group of foreigners in his war with the Narragansett. Massasoit cleverly knew that whichever side could command the loyalty of the English, could also access goods, such as copper and iron, which would be useful in battle. Each side manipulated and used each other, but both also enjoyed the benefits of their alliance. This alliance lasted for over 40 years until the outbreak of conflict between English colonists, their Native American allies and Massasoit's son, Metacom's forces, in King Phillip's War. After the two leaders concluded the agreement, Massasoit left the colony, but instructed the English speaking Tisquantum to stay with the colony as a sign of good will.

While Massasoit's visit to New Plymouth ensured peace, Edward Winslow and Stephen Hopkin's diplomatic mission to the Wampanoag capital sought to ensure the colony's commercial priorities. Leaving with Tisquantum for the Wampanoag capital, the ambassadors

⁹³ Bradford, 1953, p. 80

⁹⁴ Winslow and Bradford, 1969, p. 93

wanted to parlay with Massasoit to “know his mind, and to signifie the mind and will of our governour, which was to have trading and peace with him.” Upon arrival in Packanokik, the Wampanoag capital, the Pilgrims’ “Messenger made a speech unto him, that King IAMES saluted him words of love and Peace, and did accept him as his Friend and Alie, and that our Governour desired to see him and trucke with him, and to confirme a Peace with him.” Specifically, Winslow and Hopkins requested that “him that such as have skins, should bring them to us.” After making their requests for peace and trade, Massasoit heartily agreed and gave a long speech to his people. Subsequently, Tisquantum traveled “from place to place to procure trucke” and skins throughout the Wampanoag confederacy.⁹⁵ This diplomatic negotiation with Massasoit marked the beginning of the Pilgrims’ important beaver trade. This scene also clearly captures the Planters’ careful union of diplomatic and commercial interests. In the end, the colonists had to secure peace and good relations in order to allow the beaver pelts to flow into the colony. As time passed, the New Plymouth colonists extended the same diplomatic overtures to the surrounding tribes to expand their trade network. As beaver pelts became increasingly scarce among the Wampanoag, the Pilgrim traders made constant trips to the Massachusetts, Abenaki, Nauset, and even the Narragansett.

The Indians quickly learned how important pelts were to their new English neighbors. Winslow, in his 1624 publication *Good Newes from New England*, recorded that Massasoit offered beaver skins for Tisquantum’s life after a disagreement between the Sachem and the Pilgrims’ translator. Upon the refusal of Massasoit’s offer, Winslow remarked, “It was not the

⁹⁵ Winslow and Bradford, 1969, p. 92, 92, 100, 100, 107

manner of the *English* to sell mens liues at a price, but when they had deferred iustly to die, to giue them their reward, and therefore refused their Beauers as a gift.”⁹⁶

While, the Indians knew how important beaver pelts were to the English, the Planters at New Plymouth also knew how valuable European metals and manufactured goods were to the Indians. When the Plymouth settlers arrived on Cape Cod in 1620 they found many signs of pre-existing European trade and interaction. On a scouting party, Captain Standish and his men discovered “a great Kettle, which had been some Ships kettle and brought out of Europe” among Indian grave mounds.⁹⁷ They also uncovered a “bottle of oyle... two or three Baskets full of Indian Wheat, and a bag of Beanes.” Most perplexing to the scouting party was a ceremonially buried body of a man with “fine yellow haire” who was clearly of European origin. Among his body, “there was bound up with it a knife, a pack needle... two or three old iron things,” and a combination of other European goods and Indian relics. The English settlers could not discern who he was or why he was buried in a ritualistic fashion, but the grave provides tangible evidence of pre-existing European and Indian interactions along the coast of New England before 1620.⁹⁸ Subsequently, the party also came across an abandoned summer village. Amongst the buildings, they found European goods, a further sign of prior European contact in the region. Native American historian, Daniel K. Richter, notes that “the fundamental innovation [from European trade] was not firearms, but the introduction of metal cutting edges. Hatchets and war clubs embedded with iron blades made hand-to-hand combat far deadlier than stone and wood alone. More importantly, arrows tipped with brass were significantly more

⁹⁶ Winslow, 1996, p. 14

⁹⁷ Winslow and Bradford, 1969, p. 21-31

lethal than those with flint heads.”⁹⁹ *Mourt’s Relation* recorded that from their “First Interaction” with Native Americans, the Pilgrims “took up 18. of their arrows which we have sent to England by Master Jones, some where of were headed with brasse, others with Harts and horne, & others with Eagles clawes.”¹⁰⁰ From these simple descriptions, it is clear that Europeans and their goods were already part of indigenous life before 1620. Yet, it is unclear if these goods arrived in Nauset hands through direct or indirect interaction with Europeans. As unremarkable as these small finds may be, they represent the beginning of a transformation in Native American life. Instead of trading seasonally with Native Americans along the fishing routes, the Pilgrims expected to establish themselves as an important intermediary between the Native American interior and the markets of Europe. Daniel Richter observed: “Ironically, to continue to live as “Indians,” Native people needed to trade with Europeans. And to trade with Europeans, Native people needed beaver pelts or something equally valuable, such as the ability to make wampum.”¹⁰¹ He also wrote, that

The social and cultural implications of the beaver pelt’s economic importance were many and deep. Male work habits and migratory patterns transmuted in ways that oriented winter and spring hunts almost entirely to beaver; among the northern Algonquian hunter-gatherers in whose territories the thickest, most desirable pelts were found, commercial hunting was likely to crowd out almost all other economic pursuit, and make communities entirely dependent on European trading partners for nearly all their supplies.”¹⁰²

The Pilgrims were not the only colony in the 1620s to trade with the Native Americans. Two years after their landing, another English colony emerged at Mount Wolloston. Within months, the colony collapsed. Instead of going to Virginia, several of the colonists mutinied and decided to set up their own colony. Bradford recorded that:

⁹⁹ Richter, 2001, p. 49

¹⁰⁰ Winslow, Edward and Bradford, William. *Mourt’s Relation*. New York. Garrett Press, Inc. 1969, p. 55

¹⁰¹ Richter, 2001, p. 51

¹⁰² Richter, 2001, p. 51

After this they fell into great licentiousness and led a dissolute life, pouring out themselves into all profanes. And Morton became Lord of Misrule, and maintained (as it were) a School of Atheism. And after they had got some goods into their hands, and got much by trading with the Indians, they spent it a vainly in quaffing and drinking, both vine and strong waters in great excess (and, as some reported) £10 worth in a morning. They also set up a maypole, drinking and dancing about it many days together, inviting Indian women for their consorts, dancing and frisking together like so many fairies, or furies, rather; and worse practices. As if they revived and celebrated the feasts of the Roman goddess Flora, or the beastly practices of the mad Bacchanalians.¹⁰³

Their behavior and trade with the Indians enraged the Plymouth colonists. After several threats, Captain Miles Standish led a small army of English colonists against Thomas Morton and his trading post at Merrymount. Their stated grievance was the illicit trade of beaver pelts for European muskets and powder. The small settlements at Piscataqua, Naumkeag, Winnisimmet, Wessagusset, Natasket, Cocheco, and Shamut also sent troops and money to see that Thomas Morton was evicted from New England. After a quick battle, Captain Standish seized Morton, brought him back to New Plymouth and sent him back to England to await trial. Morton, wrote in his book *New England Canaan*, which was critical of the Pilgrims that the Separatists main motivation was the beaver trade, writing:

The Separatists, envying the prosperity and hope of the plantation at Ma-re Mount (which they perceived began to come forward and to be in a good way for gain in the beaver trade), conspired together against mine host (who was the owner of that plantation and made up a party against him and mustered up what aid they could, accounting of him as one great monster... There he would be a means to bring sacks to their mill (such is the thirst after beaver) and helped the conspirators to surprise mine host (who was there all alone.¹⁰⁴

In accelerating the growth of trade and commerce between Native Americans and Europeans, the New Plymouth colonists were willing to engage in peace and war. Inadvertently, their trade

¹⁰³ Bradford, 1953, p. 206

¹⁰⁴ Morton, Thomas. *New England Canaan by Thomas Morton of "Merrymount": Texts, Notes, Biography and Criticism*. Edited by Jack Dempsey. Scituate: Digital Scanning, 2000.

overcame ethnic and cultural barriers, and contributed to the creation of an Atlantic world inextricably linked not through a central government or authority, but through commerce.

CHAPTER III: NEW ENGLAND EMERGES Plymouth and the growth of New England

“What rule must wee observe in lending?

ANS: Thou must observe whether thy brother hath present or probable, or possible means of repaying thee, if there be none of these, thou must give him according to his necessity, rather then lend him as he requires; if he hath present meanes of repaying thee, thou art to looke at him, not as an Act of mercy, but by of Commerce, wherein thou arte to walke by the rule of Justice...If any of thy brethren be poor etc. thou shalt lend him sufficient than men might not shift off this duty by the apparent hazard... From him that would borrow of thee turne not away.

QUEST: What rule must wee observe in forgiveing?

ANS: Whether thou didst lend by way of Commerce or in mercy, if he have noething to pay thee [thou] must forgive him (except in cause where thou hast a surety or a lawful pledge)

Deut. 15. 2.”¹⁰⁵

-Governor John Winthrop, 1638

In the autumn of 1626, the Plymouth settlers sent Isaac Allerton, the colony’s First Assistant to London to renegotiate the debt and the joint-stock company contract on their behalf. In the Netherlands, he had conducted a successful tailoring business, a business that required keen knowledge of finance and a constant interaction with international merchants. Meeting with the Adventurers in London, Allerton negotiated an unprecedented agreement through which a select group of the colony’s leaders would “undertake” to repay the colony’s entire accumulated debt and then effectively buy out the Adventurers’ shares in the joint stock company. The negotiations show that he wanted to fully transfer the rights and title of all property in Plymouth to the settlers who lived there, while also ensuring that the colonists in New Plymouth had the autonomy they needed to respond to conditions on the rapidly changing frontier. In exchange for undertaking responsibility for repayment of the colony’s overwhelming debt, the “undertakers” asked for a monopoly on the prized commerce of the colony, specifically, exclusive fishing and peltry rights. The resulting contract essentially, a mortgage backed by an

¹⁰⁵ Winthrop, John. *Records of the Council of New England*. Edited by Charles Dean. New York: A.A.S. Procs, 1867. p. 70

agreement to share future fur-trade and fishing profits was a complex financial undertaking, and, quite possibly, the first leveraged buyout in American history.

After several voyages between Plymouth and London, Allerton returned to Plymouth in 1628 with an agreement that satisfied both the remaining London investors and the Planters. The final debt-funding was the product of two years of negotiations. The colony's governor, William Bradford recorded the agreement in his journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, and further discussed important aspects of the agreement in his correspondence. The agreement's first stipulation identified the "Undertakers" of the debt and specified their financial obligation to the others. According to a 1628 letter, William Bradford, Myles Standish, and Isaac Allerton were the original undertakers of the debt but "made choice" to include five other Planters and four London merchants in the agreement.¹⁰⁶ The eight Pilgrim settlers who undertook the debt were, "William Bradford, Captain Standish, Isaac Allerton, Edward Winslow, William Brewster, John Howland, John Alden, Thomas Prince." Four former London Adventurers, "James Shirley, John Beaucamp, Richard Andrews, and Timothy Hatherly," joined the eight Plymouth Undertakers in their new venture.¹⁰⁷ Together, they had "undertaken, and doe by these presents, covenante and agree to pay, discharge, and acquite the said collony of all the debtes both due for the purchass, or any other belonging to them, at the day of the date of these presents."¹⁰⁸ These twelve men took full legal and financial responsibility for payment of the colony's crippling debt. Bernard Bailyn, reflected on the choice of these men in his book *New England Merchants in the 17th Century*, writing,

¹⁰⁶ Underhill, Lora. *Descendants of Edward Small and New England, and the Allied Families, with Tracings of English Ancestry*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934, p. 769

¹⁰⁷ Underhill, 1934, p. 769

¹⁰⁸ Bradford, 1953, p.195

In this arrangement economic privilege within the Plymouth Colony has become the reward for orthodoxy. The eight Pilgrim monopolists were the chosen of the choice, the leaders of the colony in every sense. Economic privilege became 'the visible pearl of great price which alone could compensate the Elect of God for the toil and effort necessary to establish His Church in the New World.' Though these men controlled the government of the colony, they kept their political and economic powers separate. They had come to engross the fur trade by virtue of a grant by a government which felt their monopoly would prove to be of public benefit.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, the undertaking of the debt created the first signs of a commercial elite within the colony, which the monopoly on trade and fishing would only magnify in time. Interestingly, the New Plymouth settlers started out communally working land and rationing food, but by 1628 the egalitarianism that defined its earlier years gave way to a colonial that encouraged economic individualism.

In addition to giving the Undertakers a trade monopoly, the agreement also gave them the tools to repay the debt, including "the pinass [pinnacle] latly builte, the boat at Manamett, and the shalop, called the Bass-boat, with all other implements to them belonging, that is in the store of the said company; with all the whole stock of furs, fells, beads, corne, wampampeak, hatchets, knives, etc. that is now in the storre, or any way due unto the same uppon [open] accounte."¹¹⁰ Of all the colony's assets in 1628, the pinnacle, the boat at Manoment, and the bass boast were the most necessary to the Undertakers. Not only does this aspect of the agreement provide an account of the current assets in the colony, it provides details about the trading goods that European settlers used to truck with the New England tribes. The goods and the strategically located posts along the major rivers enabled the Undertakers to greatly expand the quantity of Native American goods, like furs, that they had access to.

¹⁰⁹ Bailyn, Bernard. *The New England merchants in the seventeenth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955, p.23

¹¹⁰ Bradford, 1953, p.195

The agreement's third stipulation granted the "whole trade to them selves their heires and assignes, with all the privileges thereof"¹¹¹ for six years. Thus, in addition to gaining the boats and trade goods, the Undertakers also obtained ownership of all trade rights of their patent. This meant that they could bar rivals from offering Native Americans and other settlers better terms of trade, and offered the prospect of forcing others to pay a high price for the furs they exported. These trade concessions were conceded by the London Adventurers to better guarantee that they would be paid back; they provided the Undertakers a way to not only pay off the debt, but make profit. The fourth stipulation set up an early version of a credit repayment plan. The Undertakers, by contract, agreed to make specified yearly debt payments. The contract stated that the Undertakers take a period of six years to pay back the debt of £1800. In exchange for assuming the massive debt of £1800, the eight Undertakers gained what they hoped would be a lucrative monopoly on the local fur trade and fishing industry – both of which involved the export of Native American products to Europe, furs for the northern Protestants, and Friday fish for the southern Catholics.¹¹²

While the deal seemed to favor the Undertakers, it was a significant risk and commitment. In the end, the agreement proved most beneficial to rest of the colonists because it finally gave them title to their land, enabling the community to expand its agricultural production. As farmers on the edge of the known world, individual colonists could not have paid off their share of the debt; collectively, organized as an international raw materials exporting company, they might yet create a profitable future for themselves and their families.

¹¹¹ Bradford, 1953, p.195

¹¹² Bradford, 1953, p.195

Ultimately, the international export of furs, fish, and raw materials to England, and New England's import of English manufactured goods were essential to the repayment of the debt.¹¹³

Plymouth and the Great Puritan Migration

The colonial experience in Plymouth influenced the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the emergence of New England. Before the arrival of the Plymouth settlers, "New England" was effectively empty of European settlers. It existed only as a claim on a map. The true New England was really Native American territory dominated by rival Sagamores and their tribes. Only the coastal inhabitants of this territory ever even interacted with Europeans.

Between 1620 and 1640, region known as "New England" became New England. William Wood's map of the colony in 1639, showed that English plantations, fishing villages, trading posts, hamlets, and towns pushing Native Americans away from the coast.¹¹⁴ In addition to the physical control the English exerted over the land, English and European inhabitation exponentially expanded in the two decades after the arrival of the New Plymouth colonists. In many ways, the English economic and population explosion owed its existence to the settlers at New Plymouth. Like Plymouth, the Massachusetts Bay Colony drew its financing from many of the same merchants. The colony's demographics mirrored Plymouth's. Indeed, like Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay brought families instead of single men. The colonists also practiced the same Calvinist based Puritan religion.

Mourt's Relation, Good Newes from New England and other early pamphlets celebrating English successes in the New World led many to reconsider investing in New England. The tons of beaver and cod that New Plymouth exported also had a significant effect on other Englishmen. The successor to the failed Plymouth Company, known as the Plymouth Council for New

¹¹³ McIntyre, 1963, p. 48

¹¹⁴ Wood, 1977, p. i

England established a small fishing village on the coast in 1623. The Dorchester Company ran the settlement on Cape Ann for two years, until the company's investors shut down in 1625. Its organizer, Puritan Reverend John White, continued to believe that the Massachusetts coast would prove to be a suitable location for permanent and profitable settlement, as well as a religious haven for Puritans. Some of the settlers from the fishing village at Cape Ann then moved to establish a new town. White worked in England to secure financial backing for this new town. He eventually obtained a land grant from the Council of New England for a land grant for permanent settlement in March of 1627. This patent became the foundation for the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Company.¹¹⁵

As a result, a group of one hundred settlers landed in New England in 1628. Led by John Endecott, the colony's first governor, these settlers founded Salem near the Native American village of Naumkeag. Another Reverend, Francis Higginson, led more settlers to the colony in 1629. John Josselyn recorded that:

In the year of our Lord 1628, Mr. John Endicot with a number of English people set down by Cape-Ann at that same placed called afterwards Gloster, but their abiding-place was at Salem, where they built a town in 1629. And there they gathered their first Church, consisting but of Seventy persons;¹¹⁶

Over the course of the next year, eleven ships arrived to populate New England. These ships later became known as the "Winthrop Fleet" after the Massachusetts Bay Colony leader, John Winthrop. These ships marked the beginning of the "Great Migration" where thousands of Puritan settlers fled religious persecution in England to settle along the coast of Massachusetts. Between 1628 and 1634, over 2,500 English settlers migrated to New England. Many of these

¹¹⁵ Spencer, Wilbur D. *Pioneers on Maine Rivers, with Lists to 1651*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1973. p. 240-255

¹¹⁶ Josselyn, John. *An Account of Two Voyages to New England*. In: *A Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of Two Voyages to New England*. Edited by Paul Lindholt. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988.

colonists chose to leave England because of the new perceived opportunities in the New England. Religious turmoil in England further strengthened many others' resolve to leave for New England. King Charles's wife Henrietta Maria was also a practicing Catholic and his political and religious policies were viewed with strong contempt by the Puritan separatists in England. The settlers at Plymouth showed that the New World could provide sanctuary for those seeking religious freedom. In fact, their Plymouth experience also showed future explorers they could also enjoy economic and political autonomy. The protest against Charles I was compounded by the efforts of Archbishop William Laud and the Church of England who were seeking to suppress the Puritan movement in England.¹¹⁷

Charles I approved a new Royal Charter for a land grant in 1629. Like Plymouth before them, the Massachusetts Bay Company relied on a group of investors to provide the capital for the voyage and early provisioning. The Massachusetts Bay Company also apportioned shares through a joint stock company. Interestingly, the King Charles' charter did not specify where the stockholders' would hold their annual meeting. This led to the Cambridge Agreement, which guaranteed local control for the New England colonists, a condition that allowed the colony to flourish under its own autonomy. The agreement stipulated that power rested in the hands of the settlers in Massachusetts and that the settlers were only accountable to the King. This agreement represents a stark contrast from the establishment of the Plymouth Colony, where the factions of each side of the Atlantic continually squabbled over the management of the company. It is likely, that many of the investors of the Plymouth Colony, who ran in the same Puritan circles as the founders of the Plymouth colony, likely learned that it was nearly impossible to run a colony

¹¹⁷Young, Alexander (ed.), 1846: *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, from 1623 to 1636*. Boston: Clearfield Company/Genealogical Publishing Company, 2004. P. 215-280

from London. The Undertakers agreement to transfer the corporate ownership to their own township likely solidified the demand for the same condition in Boston and Salem.¹¹⁸

With feelings of political and religious oppression mounting in England, Puritans continued to immigrate throughout the 1630s. Led by John Winthrop, Roger Williams, Thomas Hooker, and John Cotton, the colony grew swiftly in its early years. The leaders and settlers of the colony created a self governing body to run the colony known as the Massachusetts General Court, which was responsible for social, economic, military, and religious policy. Almost immediately after the establishment of Boston, the freemen of the colony held a vote which voted executive, legislative, and judicial power in the Council. The harbor of Boston, the volume of colonists, and the proven commercial resources of New England led to a quickly burgeoning economy. Like the colonists of Plymouth, a majority of the Massachusetts Bay Colonists were involved in agriculture. However, there was also a powerful commercial elite who were also vested with significant political power. The Puritan colony at Plymouth showed that a colony could survive and prosper in New England. Over time, as Massachusetts Bay Colony grew, and with its growth the demand for New Plymouth's cattle grew substantially. Instead of fur providing the sole source of liquid income to the colony, agriculture transformed into a valuable industry that also created liquid wealth.

Massachusetts Bay and New Plymouth maintained close relations during the 1630s. In 1634, Governor Winthrop wrote about Plymouth's offers to join them in the fur trade:

Mr. Edward Winslow, governor of Plymouth, and Mr. Bradford, came into the bay, and went away the 18th. They came partly to confer about joining in a trade to Connecticut, for beaver and hemp. There was a motion to set up a trading post there, to prevent the Dutch, who were about to build one; but, in regard the place was not fit for plantation, there being three or four thousand warlike Indians, and the river not to be gone into but by small pinnaces, having a bar affording six feet at high water, and for that no vessels can get in for seven months in the

¹¹⁸ Bailyn, p. 16-45

year, partly by reason of ice, and then violent stream, etc., we thought not fit to meddle with it.¹¹⁹

Although Winthrop ended up rejecting this overture, the two colonies worked together on many other trade and defense projects. During the 1640s, the colonies of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth benefitted from mutual trade and security, and each transitioned from fully export based enterprises to individual townships that also produced goods for sale in the domestic intra-colonial market.

The Dutch, the Introduction of Wampum, and the Collapse of the Beaver Trade

The Dutch of New Netherland (Nieuw Nederland) and the English of New Plymouth colony had a strong but tenuous relationship. The Dutch established a colony called New Amsterdam in 1624. Ironically, the Dutch built New Amsterdam along the Hudson in the same area as the New Plymouth settlers originally intended to build their colony. From Manhattan Island, the Dutch controlled much of the Hudson, and thus most of trade with the Native American tribes of the interior. To augment their trade of beaver pelts, the Dutch later established Fort Orange in present day Albany, New York. In 1628, the Dutch sent Isaac de Rasier to visit the colony and establish trade. *Of Plymouth Plantation* captured his arrival:

This year the Dutch sent again unto them from their Plantation both kind letters, and also commodities, as sugar, linen, cloth, holland, finer and coarser stuffs etc. They came up with their bark at Manomet, to their house there, in which came their Secretary, Rasier, who was accompanied with a noise of trumpeters and some other attendants... And after some few days' entertainment he returned to his bark, and some of them went with him and bought sundry of his goods. After which beginning thus made, they sent oftentimes to the same place and had intercourse together for diverse years. And amongst other commodities they vended much tobacco for linen cloth, stuffs, etc., which was a good benefit to the people, till the Virginians found out their Plantation.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Winthrop, John. "History of New England." ed. James Hosmer. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908, p. 103

¹²⁰ Bradford, 1953, p. 202-203

On this visit, the Dutch bought tobacco that the English at Plymouth imported from the English Virginia. Apparently, this trade continued until the Virginians found out that Plymouth was buying their tobacco and then reselling it at a higher price to the Dutch.

The most important aspect of the New Netherlanders' visit was the introduction to the Native American currency of "wampumpeag," the stringing of finely polished and drilled quahog and whelk shells. This introduction to and sale of wampum enabled to the English merchants at Plymouth to buy more furs from Native Americans, particularly the Abenaki and interior tribes, who prized the belts. The Dutch governor first introduced the Plymouth settlers to wampumpeage:

But that which turned most of their profit, in time, was an entrance into the trade of wampumpeag. For they now bought about £50 worth of it of them, and they told them how vendible it was at their fort Orania, and did persuade them they would find it so at Kennebec. And so it came to pass in time, though at first it struck, and it was two years before they could put off this small quantity, till the inland people knew of it; and afterwards they could scarce ever get enough for them, for many years together. And so this with their other provisions cut off their trade quite from the fisherman, and in great part from other of the stragging planters. And strange it was to see the great alteration it made in a few years among the Indians themselves; for all the Indians of these parts and the Massachusetts had none of very little of it, but the sachems and some special persons that wore a little of it for ornament.

But after it grew thus to be a commodity in these parts, these Indians fell into it also, and to learn how to make it; for the Narragansetts do gather shells of which they make it from their shores. And it hath now continued a current commodity about this 20 years, and it may prove a drug in time.

In the meantime, it makes the Indians of these parts rich and powerful and also proud thereby, and fills them with pieces, powder and host, which no laws can restrain, by reason of the baseness of sundry unworthy persons, both English, Dutch, and French, which may turn to the ruin of many...¹²¹

Instead of viewing the Pilgrims at Plymouth as competitors, the Dutch initially viewed them as valuable trade partners. The positive trade relations continued into the 1630s, when Governor John Winthrop noted that:

¹²¹ Bradford, 1953, p. 203-204

Our neighbors of Plymouth and we had oft trade with the Dutch at Hudson's River, called by them New Netherlands... They have a great trade of beaver, - about nine or ten thousand skins in a year. Our neighbors of Plymouth had great trade also this year at Kenebeck, so as Mr. Winslow carried with him into England, this year, about twenty hogsheads of beaver, the greatest part whereof was traded for wampampee.¹²²

However, Winthrop also wrote that there were fractures in the relationship between the Plymouth and Dutch merchants:

By a letter from Plymouth it was certified, that the Dutch of Hudson's River had been at Connecticut, and came in war-like manner to put Plymouth men out of their house there; but when they stood upon their defence, they departed, without offering any violence.¹²³

Increasingly, territorial and trade disputes became more common as beaver exports dwindled in the latter part of the decade. As the local Native American returned fewer and fewer pelts every season, the available pelts and the trading posts that traded for them became more prized.

Eventually, the over hunting of beaver led to a collapse in the beaver pelt export business. Yet, by this time, New Plymouth had transitioned to sale of cattle to their neighboring English. As the trade links strengthened between Massachusetts Bay and New Plymouth, so did the bonds that united them.¹²⁴

The 1630s offered the eight Undertakers a great business opportunity that would set them apart from their less entrepreneurial neighbors. Those who undertake great risks sometimes acquire great fortunes. Unfortunately for the eight, the plan did not work as well for them as it did for the other New Plymouth inhabitants. It took them almost two decades to pay off the debt, and they were forced to liquidate important assets and property in the process – including their homes in the town of New Plymouth in 1643 and 1644.¹²⁵ Accordingly, “when in 1647 the whole

¹²² Winthrop, 1908, p. 131

¹²³ Winthrop, 1908, p. 144

¹²⁴ Pory, John; Emmanuel Altham & Isaack de Rasières. *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth*. Edited by Sydney V. James. Plymouth: Plimouth Plantation Press: 1969.

¹²⁵ McIntyre, 1963, p. 64

enterprise was scrutinized and compounded the last time, it was discovered that the Pilgrims still owed £1,200 despite exports of beaver between 1631 and 1636 worth at least £10,000.”¹²⁶

Ultimately, the debt repayment agreement negotiated in 1626 and ratified in 1627 created a complex financial transaction that offered a way forward for a colony at the western edge of a rapidly developing global economy. It also acted as a further impetus for the colony’s leaders to develop more aggressive tactics in establishing their commercial dominance. This led to rivalries that extended beyond individual merchants or towns to rivalries between empires.

¹²⁶ Bailyn, 1955, p.25

CONCLUSION

New Plymouth's enduring commercial impact

Despite John Cabot's momentous discovery of North America in 1497, the English were not able to establish a successful permanent settlement in the region until the Plymouth colony in 1620. The founding of this small colony by a group of religious separatists and investors proved to be a watershed event in the formation of New England. Within thirty years, a vibrant and interdependent economy emerged that brought together the competing forces of the English, French, Swedish, and Dutch Empires.

The settlers we know today as the "Pilgrim Fathers" played a crucial role in the development of this Atlantic international economy. In fact, by the 1650s their commercial network was so significant, that the Governors of New Netherland, New Sweden, and Massachusetts Bay wrote about their commercial activity in their journals. Johan Risingh, the Governor of New Sweden, wrote about his contact with one of the Plymouth merchants, Isaac Allerton, in June 1654.¹²⁷

On the 24th, Saturday, an Englishman [Swedish, *en Engelsk man*] named Mr. Allerthon returned from Manaatan [Manhattan] to Fort Christina and brought with him in the ship 60 hogsheads [Swedish, *oxehövd*] of tobacco.¹²⁸

Rising later recorded his role in negotiating a complex commercial transaction with the former Pilgrim leader:

On the 28th we began to bargain with Mr. Allerthon on the tobacco which he had brought with him, and he asked us not to have let him made the costly journey in vain. He first asked for ten stivers per *lispund*, but we drove the price down to nine stivers per *lispund*. Allerthon protested that he could not sell it for any less without loss. We therefore found it advisable to let him ago. He offered, however, to give us half of the tobacco on credit until the next cargo should arrive

¹²⁷ Amandus Johnson, *Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Swedish Colonial Society. 1911. vol. II, p. 515.

¹²⁸ Dahlgren, Stellan, and Hans Norman. *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden: Governor Johan Risingh's Journal, 1654-1655, in its Historical Context*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiskell International, 1988, pp. 183-87.

for us. Now if he could receive payment for only half, he wished to take the risk at sea and on the market. If we received less than sixteen *stivers* for each *lispund* in Sweden, he would compensate that and draw it from his claim. But we considered the matter a few days.¹²⁹

In addition to trading with his fellow English, records show that Allerton also actively traded with local Native American tribes, the Swedes, the Dutch, the French and the Spanish.

Allerton's mercantile connections even led him to act as a diplomat between the colonies. His warehouses, trucking posts, and mercantile relationships stretched from the northern rivers of Maine down to island of Barbados in the Caribbean.¹³⁰ Isaac Allerton was not alone, Edward Winslow and Thomas Willet also played important roles as international merchants and diplomats that tied caused them to frequently interact with English, Dutch, Swedish, and Native American populations.¹³¹ Bradford, Standish, and John Alden also continued to pursue interests in real estate development, lending, cattle, peltry and agriculture through the 1650s.

Ultimately, Johan Risingh's *Journal* and many others like it provide a valuable insight into how developed and interwoven the economy had become since the landing of the *Mayflower*. Clearly, these records testify to the extent to which the colony and the surrounding economy had grown in just over thirty-four years. Before 1620, New England was only visited by occasional fisherman and explorers, but by 1654 the European population had exploded and with it came an economic revolution.

Overall, the world was becoming more "globalized" in seventeenth century, and the colony at New Plymouth was at the center of this shift. New trade networks were emerging

¹²⁹ Risingh, Johan. *The Rise and Fall of New Sweden: Governor Johan Risingh's Journal, 1654-1655, in its Historical Context*. Edited by Stellan Dahlgren and Hans Norman. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiskell International, 1988. p. 183-87.

¹³⁰ Underhill, 1934, p. 826

¹³¹ Bangs, Jeremy D. *Pilgrim Edward Winslow: New England's First International Diplomat*. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 2004.

tying the New World to the Old World. The Planters and Adventurers of New Plymouth built their colony around these new trade routes. In doing so, they adopted a business plan that sought to take advantage of demands on both of sides of the Atlantic. The idea that somehow the Pilgrims existed in a vacuum is false. In fact, the Pilgrims were constantly exploring new economic opportunities, traveling up and down the coast and as far as England, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the Caribbean to engage in trade. The evolution of the New Plymouth colony shows how business culture was adapting to meet the opportunities offered by international trade. Instead of strict control from London, New Plymouth showed that independence, self government, and autonomy could work. The Undertaking of the debt by eight individuals enabled the colony's long term success, and it rejected previous colonial principles of micromanagement from thousands of miles away.

The colonists at New Plymouth also showed their fellow English that America was not a world just for the gentry and their servants, but could allow men of modest means with families to survive and prosper. In adapting to the demands of the European market, the Pilgrims brought Native tribes of New England into a larger trading network. They also brought European goods to the Native Americans. Both forces would radically change life and culture in those societies. Although, trade had existed before the arrival of Pilgrims, men like Bradford, Winslow, Hopkins and Allerton set a powerful diplomatic precedent that established a mutually beneficial diplomatic and trade alliance. Once the Pilgrims arrived, Native American tribes sold them furs that would end up in the markets of London, Paris, Bilboa and Hamburg. Interestingly, it was not the powerful monarchs of Europe who led the charge towards the international trade that would ultimately expand their power; rather it was small groups of entrepreneurs and investors. The fact that a group of investors had the organizational and business skills to start a colony

thousands of miles away is incredible. Plymouth exemplified the shift towards a global commercial market in the seventeenth century.

Despite this lack of scholarship on their impact on the Atlantic world, it was the Pilgrims who first showed that settlement in New England was not only possible, but profitable. Colony after colony failed to survive in the region before the Pilgrims, but they were the ones that confirmed that the barren coasts of Massachusetts could be turned into arable land, and that profitable ventures could be made exporting pelts and fish. Without the Pilgrims, it is unlikely English colonization of the region would have expanded as quickly as it did in the 1630s and 40s. An English power vacuum in the region may have led to the expansion of the Dutch from the New Netherland colony or the French in Acadia, or possibly even the Swedes in New Sweden. Starting with the New Plymouth Colony, England maintained an early lead in colonial expansion. As time passed, New England would become a commercial base and military launching point for the burgeoning British Empire. Without New Plymouth, its eager investors, and steadfast colonists, European, American, and Native American history would be radically different.

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