

William Bradford

1590-1657



Biography:

- born on March 19, 1590 in Yorkshire (England)
- in his early childhood, both parents died
- in his adolescence, he became a member of the Separatists (religious group who wanted to separate from the Anglican Church)
- in 1609, James I began to prosecute Separatists for their belief
→ Bradford fled with the Separatists to Amsterdam for religious freedom
- the Separatists soon settled in Leiden, Bradford learned the production of silk and worked as a textile worker
- the discontent of the Separatists and the alliance of the Dutch government with England led to the decision to start for the New World
- in 1620, the Separatists under the lead of Bradford sailed on the Mayflower and settled in Cape Cod instead of Virginia (reason: storm)
- between 1620 and 1647, he wrote his famous autobiographical journal "Of Plymouth Plantation", the most important source of information about the Pilgrims and their colony
- on December 7, 1620, the "Mayflower Compact" was signed as their corpus of law and first democratic document
- in 1621, Bradford was appointed as the colony's governor and re-elected 30 times
- he died 1657 in Plymouth
- on his grave is etched: "What our forefathers with so much difficulty secured, do not basely relinquish."

The Mayflower Compact

In ye name of God Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread soveraigne Lord King James, by ye grace of God, of Great Britaine, France, & Ireland King, defender of ye faith, &c.

Haveing undertalken, for ye glorie of God, and advancemente of ye Christian faith and honour of our King & countrie, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly & mutually in ye presence of God, and one of another, covenant, & combine ourselves together into a Civill body politick; for our better ordering, & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances, Acts, constitutions & offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meete & convenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witnes whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Capz-Codd ye -11- of November, in ye year of ye raigne of our soveraigne Lord King James of England, France & Ireland ye eighteenth, and of Scotland ye fiftie fourth. Anno Dom. 1620.

John Cunn
 William Bradford
 Edward Winsor
 William Brewster
 Isaac Allerton
 Myles Standish
 John Alden
 Samuel Borton
 Christopher Mottis
 William Mullins
 William White

Richard Worton
 John Howland
 Stephen Hopkins
 Edward Tillyer
 John Tilley
 Thomas Cook
 Thomas Leveson
 Thomas Tinker
 John Bigelow
 Samuel Mullins

John Turner
 Thomas Eaton
 John Clark
 John Carver
 John Cushman
 Thomas Hilditch
 John Burdett
 Thomas Hunt
 Thomas Willson
 Robert Worsley

Samuel Margrant
 Peter Browne
 Robert Little
 George Burdett
 Richard Clark
 Richard Sanderson
 John Allott
 John Pugh
 Edward Doty
 Edward Little

Will of William Bradford

9 May 1657

The last Will and Testament Nunckupative of Mr William Bradford senir: Deceased May the Ninth 1657 and exhibited to the court held att Plymouth June 3d 1657

Mr William Bradford senir: being weake in body but in prfect memory haveing Defered the forming of his Will in hopes of haveing the healp of Mr Thomas Prence therin; feeling himselfe very weake and drawing on to the conclusion of his mortall life spake as followeth; I could have Desired abler then myselfe in the Desposing of that I have; how my estate is none knowes better then youerselfe, said hee to Lieftenant Southworth; I have Desposed to John and William alreddy their proportions of land which they are possessed of;

My Will is that my son Joseph bee made in some sort equall to his brethern out of my estate;

My further Will is that my Deare & loveing wife Allice Bradford shalbee the sole Exequitrix of my estate; and for her future maintainance my Will is that my Stocke in the Kennebecke Trad be reserved for her Comfortable Subsistence as farr as it will extend and soe further in any such way as may bee Judged best for her;

I further request and appoint my welbeloved Christian ffrinds Mr Thomas Prence Captaine Thomas Willett and Lieftenant Thomas Southworth to be the Suppervissors for the Desposing of my estate according to the prmises Confiding much in their faithfulness

I comend unto your Wisdome and Descretions some smale bookes written by my owne hand to bee Improved as you shall see meet; In speciall I Comend to you a little booke with a blacke cover wherin there is a word to Plymouth a word to Boston and a word to New England with sundry usefull verses;

These pticulars were expressed by the said William Bradford Govr the 9th of May 1657 in the prsence of us Thomas Cushman Thomas Southworth Nathaniell Morton; whoe were Deposed before the court held att Plymouth the 3d of June 1657 to the truth of the abovesaid Will that it is the last Will and Testament of the abovesaid Mr William Bradford senir.

à <http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth/bradfordwill.html>

Tanja Wolff