



Signing of the Mayflower Compact
by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris

The original document is lost to history.

This is the "Mayflower Compact" as written by Mayflower passenger William Bradford into his manuscript *History of Plymouth Plantation* about 1630.

In y^e name of god Amen. We whose names are underwritten
the loyall subjects of our dread soueraigne Lord King James
by y^e graco of god, of great Britaine, franc, & yreland king
defondor of y^e faith, &c
Haueing undertaken, for y^e glorio of god, and aduancements
of y^e christian^{faith} and honour of our king & countrie, a voyagd to
plant y^e first Colonie in y^e Northern parts of Virginia. Doe
by these presents solemnly & mutually in y^e presence of god, and
one of another, Couenant, & combine our selues together into a
Ciuilt body politick; for ^{our} better ordering, & preservation & fur=
therance of y^e 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 & conuenient for y^e generall good of y^e Colonie: vnto
which we promise all due submission and obedienc. In witness
whereof we haue hereunder subscribed our names at Cap=
Codd y^e .11. of Nouember, in y^e year of y^e raigne of our soueraigne
lord king James of England, franc, & yreland y^e eighteenth
and of scotland y^e fifth. fourth. An^o. Dom. 1620.]

History behind the Mayflower Compact

The Mayflower Compact was signed on November 11, 1620 on board the *Mayflower*, which was anchored in Provincetown Harbor. The document was drawn up in response to "mutinous speeches" that had come about because the Pilgrims had intended to settle in Northern Virginia, but the decision was made after arrival to instead settle in New England. Since there was no government in place, some felt they had no legal obligation to remain within the colony and supply their labor. The Mayflower Compact attempted to temporarily establish that government until a more official one could be drawn up in England that would give them the right to self-govern themselves in New England.

In a way, this was the first American constitution, though the Compact in practical terms had little influence on subsequent American documents. John Quincy Adams, a descendant of *Mayflower* passenger John Alden, did call the Mayflower Compact the foundation of the U.S. Constitution. In reality, the Mayflower Compact was superseded in authority by the 1621 Peirce Patent, which not only gave the Pilgrims the right to self-government at Plymouth, but had the significant advantage of being authorized by the King of England.

The Mayflower Compact was first published in 1622. William Bradford wrote a copy of the Mayflower Compact down in his *History Of Plymouth Plantation* which he wrote from 1630-1654, and that is the version given above. Neither version gave the names of the signers. Nathaniel Morton in his *New England's Memorial*, published in 1669, was the first to record and publish the names of the signers, and Thomas Prince in his *Chronological History of New England in the form of Annals* (1736) recorded the signers names as well, as did Thomas Hutchinson in 1767. It is unknown whether the later two authors had access to the original document, or whether they were simply copying Nathaniel Morton's list of signers.

The original Mayflower Compact has never been found, and is assumed destroyed. Thomas Prince may have had access to the original in 1736, and possibly Thomas Hutchinson did in 1767. If it indeed survived, it was likely a victim of Revolutionary War looting, along with other such Pilgrim valuables as Bradford's now lost *Register of Births and Deaths*, his partially recovered *Letterbook*, and his entirely recovered *History Of Plymouth Plantation*.

Source:

<http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/PrimarySources/MayflowerCompact.php>

In y^e name of God Amen· We whose names are underwritten,
the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James
by y^e grace of God, of great Britain, franc, & Ireland king,
defender of y^e faith, &c
Having undertaken, for y^e glorie of God, and advancement
of y^e Christian ^{^faith} and honor of our king & country, a voyage to
plant y^e first colony in y^e Northern parts of Virginia· doe
by these presents solemnly & mutually in y^e presence of God, and
one of another, covenant, & combine our selves together into a
civil body politick; for y^e our better ordering, & preservation &
furtherance of y^e ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof, to enact,
constitute, and frame such just & equal laws, ordinances,
Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be
thought
most meete & convenient for y^e general good of y^e colony: unto
which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness
whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape
Cod y^e ·11· of November, in y^e year of y^e reign of our sovereign
Lord king James of England, France, & Ireland y^e eighteenth
and of Scotland y^e fifty fourth. An^o: Dom ·1620·|

History behind the Mayflower Compact

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&.

Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the 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 of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, 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, 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 hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620."

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