

# Mayflower

The Pilgrims had heard that flight to the Netherlands meant “freedom of Religion for all men.” Yet flight, too, involved suffering and hardship. It meant exile . . . abandoning homes and farms that had been in their families for generations. It meant learning a strange new tongue and conforming to strange new ways.

**T**HE LAW forbade any subject to leave the realm without permission of the Crown. The Pilgrims (as they were eventually to be called), had to escape by stealth and pay a shipmaster to transport them illegally. Late in 1607, they set out on foot for the small town of Boston, on the Lincolnshire coast. After a few days’ delay, the ship to carry them abroad arrived offshore. After collecting his fees, the shipmaster turned them over to the local authorities, first to be paraded in public, then thrown in jail, and finally sent back home. In 1608 they made another attempt at freedom. They took a small boat upriver to the mouth of the River Humber, but the Dutch ship that was supposed to pick them up ran aground on a mud bank. Half the company were on board, the other on land, when a large armed mob of locals



arrived on the scene to harass them. A furious gale then developed, blowing the ship out into the North Sea and almost all the way across to Norway. More than once the vessel nearly sank. As the wind roared through the rigging and angry waves swept across the deck, the frightened farmers prayed fervently, “even without any distraction when ye water ran into their mouthes & ears.” One mountainous wave crashed into the ship and laid her beam-ends almost under water. “We sink, we sink!” cried the Dutchman and his crew. “Yet, Lord, thou canst save!” moaned the sick and battered Saints. And thereupon, so these Pilgrims reported, the ship righted herself.

George F. Willison: *Saints and Strangers* (Reynal & Hitchcock, N.Y., 1945). Illustrated is Edward Winslow, the sole authentic portrait of a Pilgrim.

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# Mayflower Italic

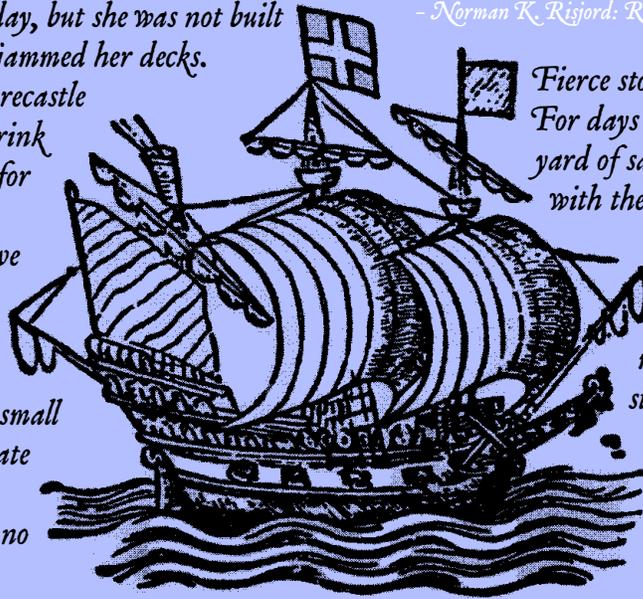
The *Mayflower*, carrying 42 Puritan 'Saints' and 60 'Strangers,' set sail from Southampton September 6, 1620. After a rough Atlantic crossing, the ship reached Cape Cod on November 9.

The *Mayflower*, measuring 113 by 26 feet, was not a small ship for her day, but she was not built for the load of humanity that jammed her decks.

The crew of 30 occupied the forecabin on the main deck; food and drink filled the hold. The only place for the 102 passengers to sleep was between decks, and it must have been indescribably crowded. The galley could only accommodate the crew for meals. Passengers had to cook over a small charcoal fire on deck. Most ate their food cold. There was not enough water for bathing and no privacy in any case. Most

passengers probably did not change clothes from the beginning of the voyage to end.

- Norman K. Risjord: *Representative Americans: The Colonists* (D.C. Heath & Co., Lexington, 1981)



Fierce storms came roaring out of the west. For days at a time it was impossible to carry a yard of sail, the ship drifting under bare poles with the helmsman desperately trying to hold her into the wind as she wallowed through mountainous seas... the pounding of heavy seas opened up many seams in the deck and superstructure, letting cascades of icy water down upon the ill and frightened passengers curled up in their narrow bunks below.

- George F. Willison: *Saints and Strangers* (Reynal & Hitchcock, N.Y., 1945).

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# Mayflower Xtras

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