

The Key Part of America's History We Also Celebrate Today

America's first great governmental document, known as the Mayflower Compact, was signed on this day in 1620 by the adult male members of the Pilgrims before disembarking from their ship and voting to establish a new form of government in the New World.

The Mayflower Compact clearly stated what they had undertaken was for "the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." This agreement established the idea of self-government through the laws made by the people.

After 66 days at sea, including sailing through some treacherous storms, the Mayflower finally reached America. The Pilgrims had intended to settle in the northern parts of the existing Virginia Colony and had tried diligently to reach that region, but fierce winds providentially blew them far north to a region completely outside Virginia's jurisdiction. They finally put ashore at Cape Cod in the Massachusetts area and they found an empty and uninhabited location in which to settle. When the Pilgrims came ashore, they fell to their knees and thanked God, reaffirming their continuing reliance upon Him and bringing the Bible-based principles that became the seeds of the greatest and freest nation the world has ever known.

The core members of the Pilgrims' immigrant group were Separatists, members of a Puritan sect that had split from the Church of England, the only legal church in England at that time. Others in the group, had remained part of the Church of England, so not all the Pilgrims shared the same religion. However, the Pilgrims came together as a group of citizens who

would be governed by “just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most ... convenient for the general good of the colony; under which we promise all due submission and obedience.”

In 1802, John Quincy Adams described the Mayflower Compact as “the only instance in human history of that positive, original, social compact” and it is popularly believed to have influenced the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

The full text of the Mayflower Compact reads:

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 Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc. 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 of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together in 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, 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.

Liberty Counsel founder and Chairman Mat Staver said, “The Mayflower Compact was the first civil governing document written in America and was established upon a Judeo-Christian

foundation. This compact was the beginning of American constitutional government that gave birth to the U.S. Constitution.” {eo}

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