

## The Mayflower Compact – 1620

Although the Pilgrims worshipped freely in Holland, they wanted to retain their English language and customs. Moreover, they disapproved of the easy manners of the Dutch people who might corrupt their young. In 1620, the Pilgrims left Holland for Plymouth, in England, where the Plymouth Trading Company – a cod fishing company, planned an expedition to America by special permission from the King. In August 1620, the Company's ship, the "**Mayflower**" – set sail for America. On board were 100 passengers, but less than half were Pilgrims. The others were what the Pilgrims called "strangers" (ordinary people) seeking a better life in America.

After 66 freezing days at sea, being without food and overcrowded while having to listen to Pilgrims' endless singing of psalms and praying, the irritated "strangers" were much divided with the others. Thankfully land was sighted at what came to be called Cape Cod.

For a moment, everybody was content, but when they examined the barren coastland amid its windy weather, they became disappointed. The Company crew wanted to return home immediately while the "strangers" declared their independence from the Pilgrims and demanded to be taken to Virginia.

To avoid further conflict among the passengers, an agreement was signed in the Captain Miles Standish's cabin. This agreement, called the **Mayflower Compact**, declared that all free men, whether Pilgrim or "stranger" would elect a governor and an assembly - a "civil body politic". Once elected the governor would neither be responsible to King James I nor to the Plymouth Company, but only to those who had elected him. As a result, this **Compact** produced the first popularly elected government in modern history.

## 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 Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honor 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 Politick**, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof do 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*