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November 11 - 1620: Mayflower Compact signed in Provincetown Harbor

Called America's first Constitution, the Mayflower Compact, is signed by the Pilgrim males (only)

ARTICLE | **CAPE COD HISTORY** | NOVEMBER 11, 2018 12:01 AM | BY **WALTER BROOKS**



Signing the Mayflower Compact 1620, a painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris.

1620: Historians call the Mayflower Compact America's first Constitution

On this day in 1620, aboard the Mayflower at anchor in waters later to be known as Provincetown harbor, the males on board the vessel signed the **Mayflower Compact**.

The Mayflower Compact was the first governing document of Plymouth Colony. It was drafted by the Pilgrims who crossed the Atlantic aboard the

Mayflower seeking religious freedom in what was then the "New World".

It was signed on November 11, 1620 by 41 of the ship's more than one hundred passengers, in what is now Provincetown Harbor at the tip of Cape Cod.

The **Mayflower** was originally bound for the **Colony of Virginia**, financed by the **Company of Merchant Adventurers of London**, but storms forced them to anchor in Provincetown Harbor. This inspired some of the passengers to proclaim that since the settlement would not be made in the agreed upon Virginia territory, they "would use their own liberty; for none had power to command them...."

To prevent this, many of the other colonists chose to establish a government. The Mayflower Compact was based simultaneously upon a **majoritarian** model (taking into account that women could not vote) and the settlers' allegiance to the king. It was in essence a contract in which the settlers consented to follow the compact's rules and regulations for the sake of order and survival.

A month later the Mayflower's Pilgrims, having failed to find sufficient fresh water on this sandy peninsula, sailed across Cape Cod Bay and settled in what is now Plymouth Massachusetts.

The text of 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, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our



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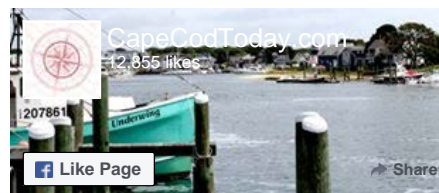
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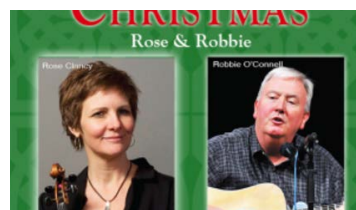
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King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our 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 hereunto 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, 1620.

See **"Everything Else Which Happed Today"** including in 1647 Massachusetts passes **1st US compulsory school attendance law**. The Massachusetts General Court passed a law requiring every town to create and operate a grammar school. Fines were imposed on parents who did not send their children to school and the government took the power to take children away from their parents and apprentice them to others if government officials decided that the parents were "unfit to have the children educated properly"



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About the Author »



Walter Brooks

Founding Editor

Walter Brooks (1930-2018) was the Founder of **CapeCodToday.com**. He was also the founder of **Best Read Guide** and wrote the **Blogfather** blog. Walter served as volunteer Managing Editor of Cape Cod Today until the day he died.

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