

We all know the story of the Mayflower – the ship that brought the earliest Pilgrims from England to Plymouth, Massachusetts to start the first successful colony in the new world. We know Pilgrims came to this country to practice their Puritan faith freely and without persecution. Little known however is that less than half the people onboard the Mayflower were actually Puritan. There were many different kinds of people who wanted to come to the new world and have a new life. They practiced their faith differently and held different ideologies, but banded together to share the journey

Unfortunately, past settlements had failed. An earlier settlement at Roanoke, Virginia ended in tragedy when all the settlers died of starvation. There was a later settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, which also failed, but for very different reasons. The Puritans came to America to practice their faith, but also saw in the failure at Jamestown what could happen when a settlement had no government, no rules which applied to everyone, regardless of religion.

The Pilgrims agreed there would be rules that everyone would abide by, for the sake of all the people, regardless of faith. They formed The Mayflower Compact. The Mayflower Compact was, in some ways, America's first Constitution. All the Pilgrims found they could be bound by decency and common sense. A portion of the Compact is below:

“...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 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.”

The Pilgrims drew on their knowledge of a “covenant.” The word was used in their faith, but they also saw the possibility of a covenant between people. A covenant is an agreement, and the Pilgrims saw it was necessary to form an agreement that all the people agreed to in order to have peace and order. It was perhaps the first time on American soil that a government for the people and by the people was seen as the only real option for fair government – which was necessary for their survival. The Compact laid the groundwork for the Constitution which would come 200 years later.

In fact, the Native American Squanto worked with the Pilgrims, and without his knowledge, they likely would have died that first winter. The Mayflower Compact was a covenant between different kinds of people with different beliefs and faith, all working together to benefit the survival of all.

Our Scout Programs

Our Scout Programs are by the Scouts and for the Scouts. They choose, organize, and lead their own meetings, programs, and activities. The Team Constitution is their own agreement, with the Scouts agreeing about what they want their team to be like. The Pilgrims discovered that only a government by and for the people is fair and can ensure peace and order. Our Scouts acquire the same knowledge.