



William Bradford's life and influence have been chronicled by many. As the co-author of *Mourt's Relation*, the author of *Of Plymouth Plantation*, and the long-term governor of Plymouth Colony, his documented activities are vast in scope. The success of the Plymouth Colony is largely due to his remarkable ability to manage men and affairs. The information presented here will not attempt to recreate all of his activities. Instead, we will present: a portion of the biography of William Bradford written by Cotton Mather and originally published in 1702, a further reading list, selected texts which may not be usually found in other publications, and information about items related to William Bradford which may be found in Pilgrim Hall Museum.

Cotton Mather's Life of William Bradford (originally published 1702)

"Among those devout people was our William Bradford, who was born Anno 1588 in an obscure village called Ansterfield... he had a comfortable inheritance left him of his honest parents, who died while he was yet a child, and cast him on the education, first of his grand parents, and then of his uncles, who devoted him, like his ancestors, unto the affairs of husbandry. Soon a long sickness kept him, as he would afterwards thankfully say, from the vanities of youth, and made him the fitter for what he was afterwards to undergo. When he was about a dozen years old, the reading of the Scripture began to cause great impressions upon him; and those impressions were much assisted and improved, when he came to enjoy Mr. Richard Clifton's illuminating ministry...

"...he set himself by reading, by discourse, by prayer, to learn whether it was not his duty to withdraw from the communion of the parish-assemblies, and engage with some society of the faithful, that should keep close unto the written word of God, as the rule of their worship. And after many distresses of mind concerning it, he took up a very deliberate and understanding resolution, of doing so..."

For the complete text of the Life of William Bradford, from Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England*, click [HERE](#)

Selected Reading List

PRIMARY SOURCES

Bradford, William. *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Samuel Eliot Morison, Editor. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991. Heath, Dwight B., ed. *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth*.

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Plumb, Albert H. *William Bradford of Plymouth*. Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1920.

Westbrook, Perry D. *William Bradford*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978.

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Gay, Peter. *A loss of mastery: Puritan historians in colonial America*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1966.

Meyer, Isidore S., ed. *The Hebrew Exercises of Governor William Bradford*. Plymouth, Mass.: The Pilgrim Society, 1973.

Sargent, Mark L. "William Bradford's 'Dialogue' with history." *New England Quarterly* 65:389-421.

Wish, Harvey. *The American historian: a social-intellectual history of the writing of the American past*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.

William Bradford in Holland

From the Leyden Archives:

"Katfort [Bradford], William, Fustian-worker of Austerfield in England. betr[othed]. 15 Nov. 1613 to Dorethea May of Wisbech in England, Did not appear themselves but attestation delivered on their behalf.

"Braetfort, Willem, of Austerfield, Fustian-worker, aged 23 years, living in Leiden, where the banns were read upon him, declared he had no parents, on the one side, and Dorethea Mayer [May] of Wisbech in England, 16 years, living for 5 years on the Nieuwendijk, acc[ompanied]. by Herry Mayr [May] on the other side, etc."

Johanna W. Tammel, *The Pilgrims and other people from the British Isles in Leiden 1576-1640* (Isle of Man: Mansk-Svenska Publishing Co., Ltd., 1989), p. 57.

From the Amsterdam Archives:

"Appeared as before William Bradford from Austerfield, fustianworker, aged 23 years, dwelling in Leyden, where the banns are imposed upon him, declared to have no parents, on the one side, and Dorothy May, aged 16 years, from Wisbech in England, 5 years dwelling on the Niewendyk, assisted by Henry May, on the other side - and declared that they were betrothed and bound to each other with faith, asking their three Sunday proclamations, in order to solemnize after them the aforesaid faith and to carry out in all, as far as else no lawful hindrance may happen. And because they in truth declared that they were free persons and were not related to each other in blood - by which a Christian marriage might be hindered, the Banns have been permitted to them. William Bradford Dorothy May."

Leyden documents relating to the Pilgrim Fathers (Leyden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill Ltd., 1920), p. LXX.

From the Leyden Archives:

"Willem Bradfort Englishman, guar[anteed]. as Cit[i]z[en]. by Rogier Wiltzen [Wilson] and Willem Lisle. 30 March 1612. ...

"Crallens, Henrick (Henry Cullandt) of England, Bombasine-worker, living in Amsterdam, widr. of Margriete Grimsdeys, acc. by Eduwaert (Edward Southworth) and Willem Bredford (William Bradford) his acq. betr. 1 Nov. 1613, mar. 20 Nov. 1613 to Dorethea Pettinger of Moortel in England, acc. by Elyzabeth Pettinger her sister and Anna Ras her acq. ...

"Pantes, Willem of England, Fustian-worker, living in the Marendorp near Douveren, acc. by Willam Bruyster (William Brewster), Rogier Wilson and Eduaert Sutwaert (Edward Southworth) his acq. betr. 13 Nov. 1610, mar. 4 Dec. 1610 to Wybre Hanson of England, acc. by Janneken Wit, Anne Foller and Mary Botlaer her acq."

Johanna W. Tammel, *The Pilgrims and other people from the British Isles in Leiden 1576-1640* (Isle of Man: Mansk-Svenska Publishing Co., Ltd., 1989), p. 57, 163, 203.

William Bradford: Mayflower passenger

"The names of those which came over first, in the year 1620, and were by the blessing of God the first beginners and in a sort the foundation of all the Plantations and Colonies in New England; and their families..."

"William Bradford and Dorothy his wife, having but one child, a son left behind who came afterward."

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 441.

William Bradford: Signer of the Mayflower Compact

"I shall ... begin with a combination made by them before they came ashore ; being the first foundation of their government in this place. Occasioned partly by the discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall from them in the ship: That when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to command them, the patent they had being for Virginia and not for New England... And partly that such an act by them done, this their condition considered, might be as firm as any patent, and in some respects more sure.

"The form was as followeth: 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 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."

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 75-76.

William Bradford and the Early Exploration of Plymouth

"Monday, the 13th of November [1620]. We unshipped our shallop, and drew her on land, to mend and repair her, having been forced to cut her down in bestowing her betwixt the decks, and she was much opened with the people's lying in her; which kept us long there, for it was sixteen or

seventeen days before the carpenter had finished her. Our people went on shore to refresh themselves, and our women to wash, as they had great need. But whilst we lay thus still, hoping our shallop would be ready in five or six days at the furthest, (but our carpenter made slow work of it, so that) some of our people, impatient of delay, desired for our better furtherance to travel by land unto the country... The willingness of the persons was liked, but the thing itself, in regard to the danger, was rather permitted than approved; and so with cautions, directions, and instructions, sixteen men were set out, with every man his musket, sword, and corselet, under the conduct of Captain Miles Standish, unto whom was adjoined, for counsel and advice, William Bradford, Stephen Hopkins, and Edward Tilley... [This is followed by an account of several days exploration.]

"As we wandered we came to a tree, where a young spirit [sapling] was bowed down over a bow, and some acorns strewed underneath. Stephen Hopkins said, it had been to catch some deer. So as we were looking at it, William Bradford being in the rear, when he came looked also upon it, and as he went about, it gave a sudden jerk up, and he was immediately caught by the leg. It was a very pretty device, made with a rope of their own making and having a noose as artificially made as any roper in England can make, and as like ours as can be; which we brought away with us."

Mourt's Relation, ed. Jordan D. Fiore (Plymouth, Mass.:

Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1985), p. 15-20.

William Bradford and the "First Encounter"

This story appears both in *Mourt's Relation*, published in London in 1622, and in William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

"Wednesday, the sixth of December [1620]. It was resolved our discoverers should set forth... So ten of our men were appointed who were of themselves willing to undertake it, to wit, Captain Standish, Master Carver, William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Tilley, Edward Tilley, John Howland, and three of London, Richard Warren, Stephen Hopkins, and Edward Doten, and two of our seamen, John Alderton, and Thomas English. Of the ship's company there went two of the master's mates, Master Clarke and Master Coppin, the master gunner, and three sailors...

Mourt's Relation, ed. Jordan D. Fiore (Plymouth, Mass.:

Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1985), p. 27-28.

"...the 6th of December [1620] they sent out their shallop again with ten of their principal men and some seamen, upon further discovery, intending to circulate that deep bay of Cape Cod. The weather was very cold and it froze so hard as the spray of the sea lighting on their coats, they were as if they had been glazed. Yet that night betimes they got down into the bottom of the bay, and as they drew near the shore they saw some ten or twelve Indians very busy about something. They landed about a league or two from them... they made themselves a barricado with logs and boughs as well as they could in the time, and set out their sentinel and betook them to rest, and saw the smoke of the fire the savages made that night. When morning was come they divided their company, some to coast along the shore in the boat, and the rest marched through the woods to see the land, if any fit place might be for their dwelling. They came also to the place where they saw the Indians the night before, and found they had been cutting up a great fish like a grampus...

"So they ranged up and down all that day, but found no people, nor any place they liked. When the sun grew low, they hasted out of the woods to meet with their shallop... of which they were

very glad, for they had not seen each other all that day since the morning. So they made them a barricado as usually they did every night, with logs, stakes and thick pine boughs, the height of a man, leaving it open to leeward, partly to shelter them from the cold and wind (making their fire in the middle and lying round about it) and partly to defend them from any sudden assaults of the savages, if they should surround them; so being very weary, they betook them to rest. But about midnight they heard a hideous and great cry, and their sentinel called "Arm! arm!" So they bestirred them and stood to their arms and shot off a couple of muskets, and then the noise ceased. They concluded it was a company of wolves or such like wild beasts, for one of the seamen told them he had often heard such noise in Newfoundland.

"So they rested till about five of the clock in the morning; for the tide, and their purpose to go from thence, made them be stirring betimes. So after prayer they prepared for breakfast, and it being day dawning it was thought best to be carrying things down to the boat...

"But presently, all on the sudden, they heard a great and strange cry, which they knew to be the same voices they heard in the night, though they varied their notes; and one of the company being abroad came running in and cried, "Men, Indians! Indians!" And withal, their arrows came flying amongst them. Their men ran with all speed to recover their arms, as by the good providence of God they did. In the meantime, of those that were there ready, two muskets were discharged at them, and two more stood ready in the entrance of their rendezvous but were commanded not to shoot till they could take full aim at them. And the other two charged again with all speed, for there were only four had arms there, and defended the barricado, which was first assaulted. The cry of the Indians was dreadful, especially when they saw their men run out of the rendezvous toward the shallop to recover their arms, the Indians wheeling about upon them. But some running out with coats of mail on, and cutlasses in their hands, they soon got their arms and let fly amongst them and quickly stopped their violence...

"Thus it pleased God to vanquish their enemies and give them deliverance; and by his special providence so to dispose that not any one of them were either hurt or hit, though their arrows came close by them and on every side [of] them; and sundry of their coats, which hung up in the barricado, were shot through and through. Afterwards they gave God solemn thanks and praise for their deliverance, and gathered up a bundle of their arrows and sent them into England afterward by the master of the ship, and called that place the FIRST ENCOUNTER."

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed.

Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 68-72.

"Thursday, the eleventh [of January, 1621], William Bradford being at work, (for it was a fair day,) was vehemently taken with a grief and pain, and so shot to his huckle-bone [hip-bone], it was doubted that he would have instantly died. He got cold in the former discoveries, especially the last; and felt some pain in his ankles by time; but he grew a little better toward night, and in time, through God's mercy in the use of means, recovered."

Mourt's Relation, ed. Jordan D. Fiore (Plymouth, Mass.:

Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1985), p. 41.

"But the next day, being the 14th of January [1621], in the morning about six of the clock, the wind being very great, they on shipboard spied their great new rendezvous on fire... At their landing they heard... that the house was fired occasionally [accidentally] by a spark that flew into the thatch, which instantly burnt it all up; but the roof stood, and little hurt. The most loss was Master Carver's and William Bradford's, who then lay sick in bed, and if they had not risen with good

speed, had been blown up with powder; but, through God's mercy, they had no harm. The house was as full of beds as they could lie one by another, and their muskets charged; but, blessed be God, there was no harm done."

Mourt's Relation, ed. Jordan D. Fiore (Plymouth, Mass.: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1985), p. 42-3.

William Bradford: Governor of Plymouth Colony

William Bradford was elected Governor upon the death of John Carver in April of 1621:

"Shortly after, William Bradford was chosen Governor in his stead, and being now recovered of his illness, in which he had been near the point of death, Isaac Allerton was chosen to be an assistant unto him who, by renewed election every year, continued sundry years together."

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed.

Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 86.

Isaack de Rasieres, a visitor to Plymouth, wrote to Samuel Blommaert in 1628 describing Plymouth and the role of the governor:

"New Plymouth lies on the slope of a hill stretching east towards the sea-coast, with a broad street about a cannon shot of 800 feet long, leading down the hill; with a [street] crossing in the middle, northwards to the rivulet and southwards to the land. The houses are constructed of clapboards, with gardens also enclosed behind and at the sides with clapboards, so that their houses and courtyards are arranged in very good order, with a stockade against sudden attack; and at the ends of the streets there are three wooden gates. In the center, on the cross street, stands the Governor's house, before which is a square stockade upon which four patereros are moutned, so as to enfilade the streets. Upon the hill they have a large square house, with a flat roof, built of thick sawn planks stayed with oak beams, upon the top of which they have six cannon, which shoot iron balls of four and five pounds, and command the surrounding country. The lower part they use for their church, where they preach on Sundays and the usual holidays. They assemble by beat of drum, each with his musket or firelock, in front of the captain's door; they have their cloaks on, and place themselves in order, three abreast, and are led by a sergeant without beat of drum. Behind comes the Governor, in a long robe; beside him on the right hand, comes the preacher with his cloak on, and on the left hand, the captain with his side-arms and cloak on, and with a small cane in his hand; and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him. Thus they are constantly on their guard night and day.

"Their government is after the English form. The Governor has his Council, which is chosen every year by the entire community, by election or prolongation of term... The maize seed which they do not require for their own use is delivered over to the Governor, at three guilders the bushel, who in his turn send it in sloops to the north for the trade in skins among the savages; they reckon one bushel of maize against one pound of beaver's skins; the profits are divided according to what each has contributed, and they are credited for the amount in the account of what each has to contribute yearly towards the reduction of his obligation. Then with the remainder they purchase what next they require, and which the Governor takes care to provide every year."

Sidney V. James, Jr., editor, *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth* (Plymouth, Mass.: Plimoth Plantation, 1963), p. 76-78.

William Bradford & the 1623 Division of Land

The 1623 Division of Land marked the end of the Pilgrims' earliest system of land held in common by all. Governor Bradford explains it in this way:

"And so assigned to every family a parcel of land, according to the proportion of their number, for that end, only for present use (but made no division for inheritance) and ranged all boys and youth under some family. This had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been by any means the Governor or any other could use, and saved him a great deal of trouble, and gave far better content. The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn; which before would allege weakness and inability; whom to have compelled would have been thought great tyranny and oppression."

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed.

Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 120.

Plymouth Colony Records, Deeds, &c, Vol. I 1627-1651 is the oldest record book of the Plymouth settlement. It begins with the 1623 Division of Land, recorded in the handwriting of Governor William Bradford. The lands of William Bradford were among those designated as "their grounds which came first over in the May Floure, according as thier lotes were case" and described in this way "these lye on the South side of the brooke to the baywards."

A further division of land was accomplished in 1627. The allotments of land were laid out by six men: William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Howland, Francis Cooke, Joshua Pratt, and Edward Bangs. (PCR 11:4-5)

William Bradford & the 1627 Division of Cattle

Plymouth Colony Records, Deeds, &c, Vol. I 1627-1651 also tells of the 1627 Division of Cattle: "At a publique court held the 22th of May it was concluded by the whole Companie, that the cattell wch were the Companies, to wit, the Cowes & the Goates should be equally devided to all the psonts of the same company ... & so the lotts fell as followeth, thirteene psonts being pportioned to one lot...

"11 The eleuenth lott ffell to the Gouvernor Mr William Bradford and (2) those with him, to wit, his wife Alles Bradford and (3) William Bradford, Junior (4) Mercy Bradford (5) Joseph Rogers (6) Thomas Cushman (7) William Latham (8) Manases Kempton (9) Julian Kempton (10) Nathaniell Morton (11) John Morton (12) Ephraim Morton (13) Patience Morton. To this lott fell An heyfer of the last year wch was of the Greate white back cow that was brough ouer in the Ann, & two shee goats."

William Bradford: a 1626 "Undertaker"

In 1621, King James I authorized the Council for New England to plant and govern land in this area. This Council granted the Peirce Patent, confirming the Pilgrims' settlement and governance of Plymouth. Peirce and his associates, the merchant adventurers, were allotted 100 acres for each settler the Company transported. The Pilgrims had a contract with the Company stating all land and profits would accrue to the Company for 7 years at which time the assets would be divided among the shareholders. Most of the Pilgrims held some stock. The Pilgrims negotiated a more favorable contract with the Company in 1626. In 1627, 53 Plymouth freemen, known as "The Purchasers," agreed to buy out the Company over a period of years. In turn, 12

"Undertakers" (8 from Plymouth and 4 from London) agreed to pay off Plymouth's debts in return for trade benefits.

William Bradford was one of the 8 Plymouth "Undertakers," along with John Howland, Myles Standish, Isaac Allerton, Edward Winslow, William Brewster, John Alden and Thomas Prentice. Bradford had also been involved in the negotiations with the Merchant Adventurers that led to the more favorable contract. He wrote in his letter book:

"This next year being Anno. 1626, we sent Mr. Allerton into England, partly to make some supply for us, and to see if he could make any reasonable composition with the adventurers and because we well knew that nothing can be done without money, we gave him an order to procure some, binding ourselves to make payment thereof as followeth:

"Know all men by these presents, that whereas we William Bradford, Governour of Plymouth in New England, and William Brewster, Capt. Miles Standish, Isaac Allerton, Samuel Fuller, Edward Winslow, John Jenney, John Howland, and John Alden; being all inhabitants of Plymouth, aforesaid, are for ourselves, and divers others, our associates, &c. And whereas the said Isaac Allerton (by God's providence) for the necessary occasions of the colony aforesaid, is bound for England; and whereas divers of us above named, have acquainted divers of our worthy and approved friends (by our letters) with our raw and weak estate, and want of ability of ourselves to manage so great an action, as the upholding of the plantation aforesaid. If therefore God shall move the heart or hearts of any of our friends, in compassion of our wants and present straits, to lend us above named, the sum of one hundred pounds sterling, for the space of two years, upon any such terms as shall be agreed upon, between him or them and the said Isaac Allerton, our partner and agent, and deliver the same into his hands for our use; that we, the said William Bradford, William Brewster, &c together with the said Isaac Allerton, do bind ourselves, our heirs, &c. jointly and severally, for the faithful performance of such obligations, conditions, or covenants, as shall be agreed on, &c.

Mayflower Descendant, Vol. 5, p. 198-199.

This "Undertaking" appears again in the Plymouth Colony Records of 1645:

"Vpon the ending of all the differrences vpon a demaund of foure hundred pounds betwixt Mr John Beauchamp of London merchant on the one pt And Mr Willm Bradford Mr Edward Winslowe Mr Thomas Prentice Mr Miles Standish Mr John Alden Mr John Howland & Mr Isaack Allerton and the heires of Mr Willm Brewster deceased of thother pte these lands ensuing were seually acknowledge the xij'th day of March Anno Dni 1645 ..."

[The records contain several pages of rather complicated and legalistic exchanges of land, etc., among the various Undertakers and John Beauchamp.]

Plymouth Colony Records, Vol. 12, p. 128-131.

William Bradford's Marriages

Dorothy May, aged 16, and William Bradford, aged 23, were married in 1613. They lived in Leyden and Dorothy's name appears in the records:

"Wilson, Henrick (Henry Wilson) of Yarmouth in England, Pumpmaker, acc. by Willem Jepson and Jan Kerver (John Carver) his acq. betr. 13 May 1616, mar 27 May 1616 to Lijsbeth Claes (Elizabeth Nicolas) of Yarmouth in England, acc. by Sara Minther (Sarah Minter nee Willet) and Derreke Bretford (Dorothy Bradford nee May) her acq."

Johanna W. Tammel, The Pilgrims and other people from the

British Isles in Leiden 1576-1640 (Isle of Man: Mansk-Svenska Publishing Co., Ltd., 1989), p. 289.

William and Dorothy Bradford sailed on the Mayflower, leaving their young son John behind. Dorothy May Bradford died in December of 1620. Written in 1650, this is the only reference made by William Bradford to the death of his wife Dorothy:

"And seeing it hath pleased Him to give me [William Bradford] to see thirty years completed since these beginnings, and that the great works of His providence are to be observed, I have thought it not unworthy my pains to take a view of the decreasings and increasings of these persons and such changes as hath passed over them and theirs in this thirty years...

"William Bradford his wife died soon after their arrival, and he married again and hath four children, three whereof are married."

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed.

Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 443-4.

There are no other contemporary accounts of the death of Dorothy May Bradford. Cotton Mather first published his *Magnalia*, which contains a biography of William Bradford, in 1702. He wrote:

"...at their first landing, his dearest consort accidentally falling overboard, was drowned in the harbour"

Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford:

Silus Andrus & Son, 1853), vol. 1, p. 111.

This small sentence has been seized upon and embellished by historical novelists, some of whom have written that Dorothy Bradford committed suicide from her despair at the American wilderness. Others have alleged a "mystery" or even foul play. **THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THESE CLAIMS!** For further discussion, please read "Governor William Bradford's First Wife Dorothy (May) Bradford Did Not Commit Suicide" by George Ernest Bowman in the *Mayflower Descendant*, Vol. 29 No. 3 (July 1931), p. 97-102.

William Bradford's second wife was the widow, Alice Carpenter Southworth. She and her first husband had been members of the Separatist community in Leyden. The widowed Alice Carpenter Southworth arrived on the Anne in 1623 and soon thereafter married William Bradford.

The marriage of William Bradford and Alice Carpenter Southworth was noted in a letter written by Emmanuel Altham to his brother Sir Edward Altham in September, 1623:

"Upon the occasion of the Governor's marriage, since I came, Massasoit was sent for to the wedding, where came with him his wife, the queen, although he hath five wives. With him came four other kings and about six score men with their bows and arrows - where, when they came to our town, we saluted them with the shooting off of many muskets and training our men. And so all the bows and arrows was brought into the Governor's house, and he brought the Governor three or four bucks and a turkey. And so we had very good pastime in seeing them dance, which is in such manner, with such a noise that you would wonder...

"And now to say somewhat of the great cheer we had at the Governor's marriage. We had about twelve pasty venisons, besides others, pieces of roasted venison and other such good cheer in such quantity that I could wish you some of our share. For here we have the best grapes that ever you say - and the biggest, and divers sorts of plums and nuts which our business will not suffer us

to look for."

Sidney V. James, Jr., editor, *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth* (Plymouth, Mass.: Plimoth Plantation, 1963), p. 29-30.

For more information about Alice Carpenter Southworth Bradford, please click [HERE](#).

William Bradford and Pilgrim Hall Museum

Pilgrim Hall owns three significant possessions of William Bradford:

The first is his Bible, published in London by Christopher Barker in 1592. This was the Geneva Bible, with commentaries by John Calvin, used by the Pilgrim Separatists. Click [HERE](#) for a view of Bradford's Geneva Bible.

The second is his "great chair," made in New England between 1630 and 1655. This is probably one of the "2 great wooden chaires" listed in William Bradford's inventory. Click [HERE](#) for a view of the Bradford Great Chair.

The third is a silver wine cup, also mentioned in William Bradford's inventory. It stands 7" tall and has the initials "W. B." near the lip. It was produced in London in 1634. Purchased jointly by the Pilgrim Society and the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History, the silver wine cup spends alternating 3-year periods at each institution. Click [HERE](#) for a view of the Bradford Cup.

Pilgrim Hall Museum also owns several documents of Governor Bradford. These are kept in special storage and, for conservation reasons, can be displayed only rarely. This is the text of a letter from Bradford to John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, dated 1644 by internal evidence:

"To his much honoured freind Mr. John Winthrop, Gouvernour of the Massachusetts, these dd.
"BELOUED SIR, - Hauing so fite an opportunitie, I thought good to salute you with these few lines. We were much troubled when we heard you kepte watch in your townes the sharp weather, & so much the reather because we could not hear the reason therof, nor vnderstand any thing from the Indeans of our quarters. We have heard since of some messengers that haue been sent vnto you; if ther be any thing materiall concerning our comone saftie, I desire you would be pleased to informe vs in a word or 2 how things stand aboute the Narigansets or Mowhaks. We allso conceiue that our time of paimente to you, aboute Mr. Andrews money is expired, and therefore haue charged a bill on Mr. Hill to make this paymente vnto you. I pray you let vs hear a word of your acceptance. Sundrie haue been sicke amongst vs this winter, & some still are. God hath taken away Mr. Atwood, & Mr. Jeney by death; Mrs. Atwoods state being but low is intangled to Mr. Seawell of Ipswich, by a lone of .1000 li. She prayed me on her behalfe to craue your aduice whether she had best administer or no, her husband haueing made her exsecutrix; and if she refuse whether she may not haue her thirds; ther will be sufficente she conceiues to satisfie any accounts of money due to him, & some thing for her selfe, but by the bond the title of the land is to be restored to him, & Mr. Atwood hath sould it to Mr. Sherley, but he tould me it was only in trust, as he had it, but he tooke no writing vnder his hand that so it is. Thus comending you & all your affairs to the Lord, with salutations, I rest, in hast

Your louing friend

William Bradford

