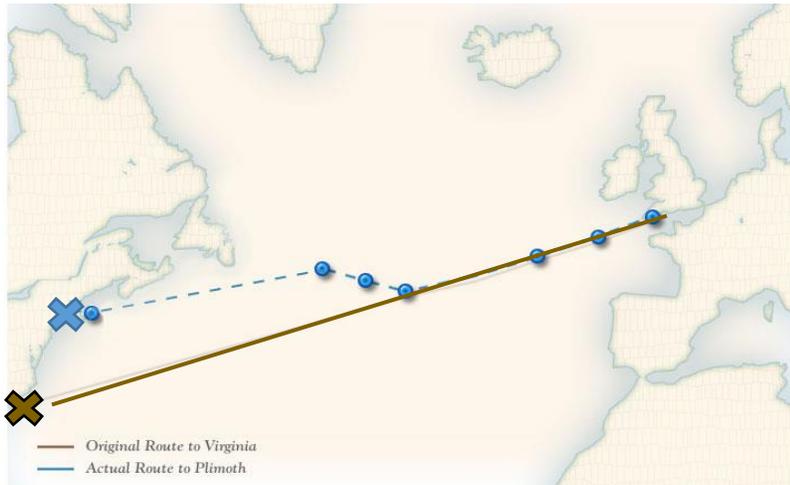


# Today in Our History

## The 66-Day Adventure on the Atlantic ~ September 6, 1620 – November 11, 1620

The ship *Mayflower* set out on a solo adventure on September 6, 1620. The previous two failed attempts at a paired voyage with the cargo ship *Speedwell*, altered history. In our last story, *Today in Our History, Setting Sail September 6, 1620*, we discovered that the resilient Separatists were determined to travel to the New World. They were not going to allow a leaking *Speedwell* to prevent them from establishing a new home in America, so they packed their belongings and wedged themselves onto one ship, the *Mayflower*.



[www.scholastic.com/scholastic\\_thanksgiving/voyage/journey.htm](http://www.scholastic.com/scholastic_thanksgiving/voyage/journey.htm)

They had their sights set on Virginia, where New York is today, but violent storms not only blew the small cargo ship off course, the storms caused quite an adventure on the Atlantic.

The map on the left indicates how storms changed the course of the *Mayflower's* voyage. These storms also resulted in passengers becoming very seasick. The crew was accustomed to the dipping and rolling of the ship and smug sailors would, therefore, ridicule the passengers. One sailor threatened to throw the sick overboard and keep their belongings. Before the boastful

sailor could follow through with his threat, he became ill with a disease and died. The only available burial was ... overboard!

~ The passengers' meals, called provisions, included dried meats, moldy cheese, ship's biscuit and beer. There were no showers, no restrooms and no bedrooms. The passengers made their own cots or hung cloth slings, such as the one pictured to the right on the replica ship, *Mayflower II*. They slept wherever space was available, such as inside the small sail boat brought along, called a shallop. They were squeezed into a very small space with friends and strangers. Of the 102 passengers, 35 of them were energetic children, including 4 travelling all alone. Would this be the adventure that they had imagined?



Photo courtesy of Plimoth Plantation

~ When October arrived, so did the high winds and waves. Separatist passenger William Bradford, later to become Governor of Plymouth Colony, wrote in Chapter 9 *Of Plymouth Plantation*, "In many of these storms the winds were so fierce, and the seas so high, as they could not bear a knot of sail, but were forced to heave to [face into the wind to stop the ship], for many days together."



Mike Haywood painting, *Pilgrim Overboard*  
[www.mikehaywoodart.co.uk](http://www.mikehaywoodart.co.uk)

~ A young passenger name John Howland, apparently the curious type, ventured onto the deck of the ship during one of the fierce storms. You guessed it, he was swiftly tossed into the brutally cold North Atlantic Ocean. William Bradford historically recorded this event by writing: "... young man called John Howland, coming upon some occasion above the gratings was, with a seele of the ship, thrown into sea; but it pleased God that he caught hold of the topsail halyards which hung overboard and ran out at length. Yet he held his hold (though he was sundry fathoms under water) till he was hauled up by the same rope to the brim of the water, and then with a boat hook and other means got into the ship again and

his life saved. And though he was something ill with it, yet he lived many years after and became a profitable member both in church and commonwealth."



Photo courtesy of Leiden American Pilgrim Museum

~ The passengers were wet and shivering because planks of *Mayflower's* upper decks leaked as the waves washed over. The cargo ship was an aged vessel when it was purchased and was only intended to sail between England and Europe, not on the unpredictable waters of the Atlantic. The late start of the departure in September also meant that the autumnal storms were going to become a factor at a time when most ships were docked in safe harbors for winter.

~ During one such storm in October or early November, a main beam "bowed and cracked", causing a fear among the passengers that the ship would not make it. Even experienced sailors wanted to turn back. But when the cracked beam was secured by a great iron screw which was thought to be *providentially* brought along by the Pilgrims, the voyage could continue. Today, some believe that the iron screw was brought from Holland to support a printing press; others feel that its intent was to raise heavy timbers for roofs of the new homes of the colonists. Whichever purpose it served, its use as a support for the splintered beam saved their lives and preserved our history.

~ The first baby born on the *Mayflower* was born sometime between September and early November during this oceanic voyage. The proud parents, Elizabeth and Stephen Hopkins, named him Oceanus!



<http://www.mayflowersteps.co.uk/mayflower/mayflower.html>

~ Most of the 66 days aboard the *Mayflower* were spent in the dark. Passengers were sandwiched between the upper deck and the cargo area, named the 'tween deck. Not only was it dark day and night, it was wet and smelled of many aromas! The passengers could only go to the deck for sunlight and fresh air during calm seas.

~ A young man in his 20s or 30s named William Butten, was the apprentice to *Mayflower* passenger Dr. Samuel Fuller. Sadly, he passed away only three days before land was sighted at Cape Cod.

~ In November 1620, a new *Mayflower* passenger was added to the list after anchoring in Cape Cod Harbor! A baby boy named Peregrine was born to Susanna and William White. The name is derived from the Latin name, *Peregrinus*, which means "traveller". Are you descended from Peregrine? He was the first Englishman born in New England!



Peregrine White's cradle can be seen at the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth. It is said to have been brought from Holland on the *Mayflower*.

Separatist husbands and parents of children surely spent much of their time in prayers of thanksgiving, particularly giving thanks each morning for another day! The adventure on the Atlantic was a 2,750 mile journey, travelling 2 miles an hour on a good day, giving passengers ample time to worry about pirates, illnesses aboard the ship, hungry families and their future in this New World they called America.

#### Sources:

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