

Day of Rest in Plimouth Colony

From the journal of Governor William Bradford who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620. He governed Plimouth Colony for 32 years. He died in 1657 and 199 years after his death his journal was published in Boston under the title of "Of Plimouth Plantation."

TRAVEL BACK WITH ME ABOUT 386 YEARS AND LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT A TYPICAL CHURCH SERVICE IN THE NEW WORLD.

8 AM Call to Worship:

A young boy played a loud drumbeat to gather all the saints

Families come out of their houses and formed a line along the street

Order of line up:

Soldier first

Three Pilgrim leaders (Captain Myles Standish, Elder Brewster, Governor Bradford)

The rest of the people fell into three lines, with children in the middle.

Simple greetings but no ongoing conversation. Their Sabbath started at sundown on Saturday and there was to be no idle chatter until the Sabbath ended at sundown that evening.

Attire:

The pilgrims wore sad, dark shades of blue, red, and brown of the women's dresses so faded one could scarcely see the original colors. Skirts down to the ankles were frayed and great patches covered their worn garments.

Men's knee breeches were also patched. The pilgrims suffered especially from cold feet because their stockings were only leggings with a loop under the foot to keep them in place. Inside their shoes, the Pilgrims' feet were bare.

Typical Service:

Except for the guard on duty all pilgrims had to be accounted for.

The pilgrims sat on backless pews made of sawed off logs.

The meetinghouse was extremely plain and dark. Only enough light filtered in through narrow openings in the walls to allow Elder Brewster to read from the Bible (1599 Geneva Bible).

There was no heat but many had warming pans filled with live coals where they rested their feet, extra shawls wrapped around them and lap blankets as the icy winds blew into the meeting house.

Bats darted and dove about the meeting house, often creating pandemonium.

Men sat on one side of the room.

Ladies sat on the other side of the room.

Children sat in the back by themselves.

(Arrange the congregation in this sitting order, if possible, at this point.)

No musical instrument was allowed but someone with a good voice "set the pitch" and others joined in.

Elder Brewster began with a prayer that lasted anywhere from **one to two hours** (he prayed for food, protection from Indians, friends and family still in England, those waiting to come over, much needed supplies to arrive from England, good health, spiritual state of the saints.) **All attendees stood** during the entire prayer.

After prayer Elder Brewster **preached for about two hours.**

At noon the pilgrims left the meetinghouse as solemnly as they entered and rested for the day.

Attitude toward the Sabbath:

Work and play were forbidden.

Meals were prepared the day before. In winter fires could be built to heat the food.

Married couples were fined for quarrelling on Sunday.

No travel permitted.

One man was brought before the congregation for writing a letter before sundown.

Late Sunday afternoon they gathered again for the second service.

After sundown people gathered in homes, visited the sick, read the Bible and sang hymns, and enjoyed each other's fellowship.

Discipline in Church:

They were watched over by Dr. Samuel Fuller, the deacon of the church who was also the one who was to keep order.

He was referred to as the Tithing Man.

In his hand he held a long birch, also known as a bone-headed rod. At the end of this rod was a large bone that dangled on a string.

When one was caught misbehaving or sleeping he got a surprise sharp rap from the tithing man.

(Recruit two deacons for the position of Tithing Man to stand among the congregation with their long branches and bones attached.)

Some of the infractions that caused the Tithing Man to apply discipline are listed in the book, "Saints and Strangers" (P. 371). Read this while the tithing men walk about the congregation: (This is with the old English spelling.)

"Youngsters at Plymouth, particularly the boys, stood charged with many 'indeencies' in the meeting house. They fidgeted in their seats - they stamped their feet - they pinched one another - they giggled - they even 'larfed out loud' when the tithingman smartly used his rod upon sleeping elders. They were guilty, too, of 'frequently passing and repassing by one another in the Galleries,' of sitting down during two-hour prayers, of sitting with their hats on 'during ye whole exercise,' of 'running out of ye meeting house before prayer be done and ye Blessing pronounced,' even of sneaking out during the always exhaustive sermon.

And the girls were not much better, it appears. They fidgeted in their seats - stamped their feet - pulled one another's hair - giggled - 'larfed out loud' at the boys' 'indeencies' - and were even caught making eyes at them - all in the meeting house!"

Ending on a Serious Note:

Isn't it wonderful that we can enter the house of the Lord with great joy and a solemn, wholesome honor toward our holy God! Share Psalm 100 in closing.

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