

THE MAYFLOWER PILGRIMS  
& the Founding of America

Part II

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"The foundation of New England was "not laid upon schism,  
division or separation, but upon love, peace and holiness."

Edward Winslow, *Mayflower Pilgrim*

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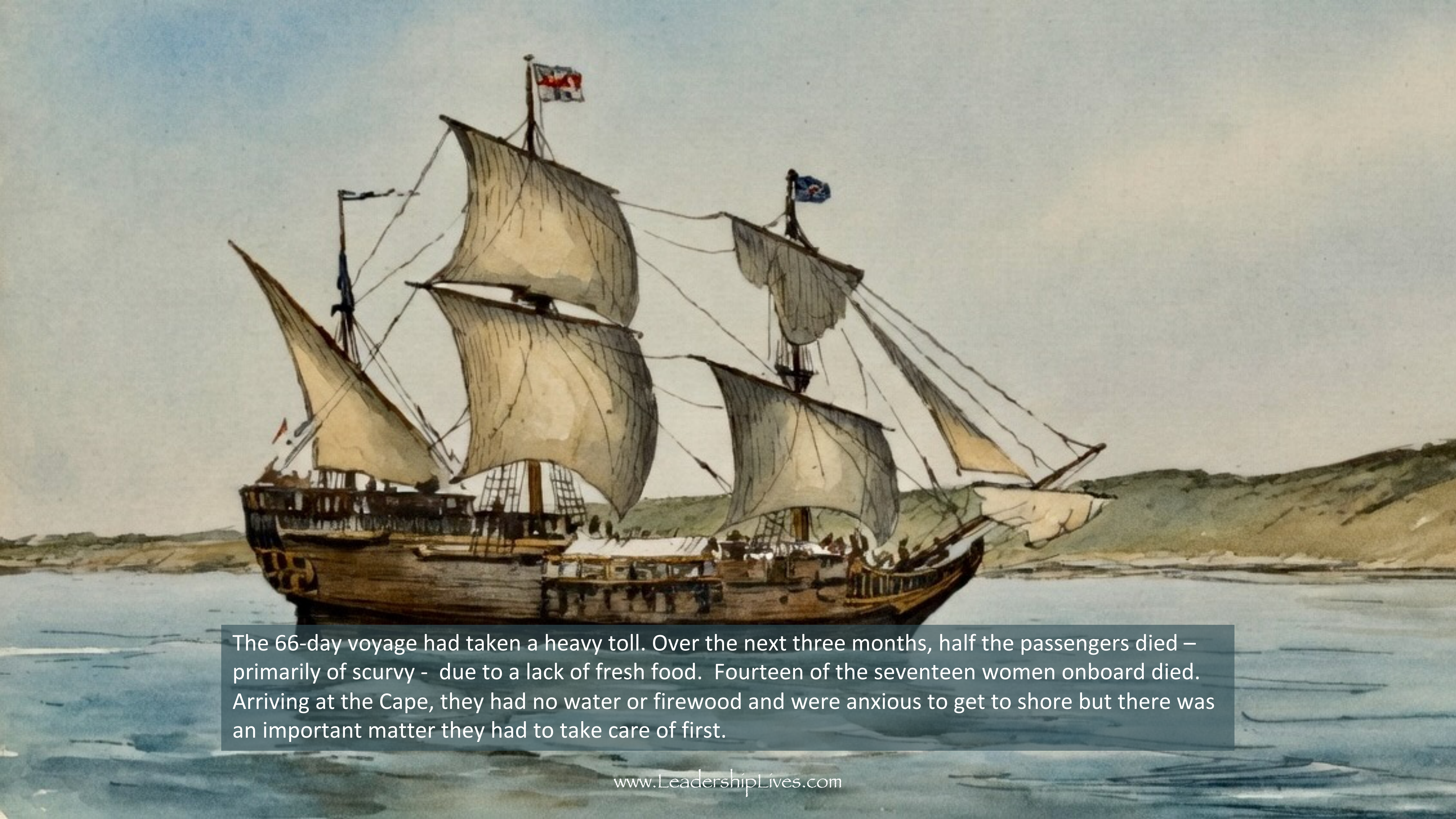
Arriving at Cape Cod on November 21, 1620, the Pilgrims "fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the periles and miseries therof." They had crossed the Atlantic during peak hurricane season.



Mayflower



Anchored in deep water and sheltered from the wind, they could see the shore "wooded to the brink of the sea with oaks, pines, juniper, sassafras, and other sweet wood." And "there was the greatest store of fowl that ever we saw." They were in one of the finest harbors on the Atlantic coast.



The 66-day voyage had taken a heavy toll. Over the next three months, half the passengers died – primarily of scurvy - due to a lack of fresh food. Fourteen of the seventeen women onboard died. Arriving at the Cape, they had no water or firewood and were anxious to get to shore but there was an important matter they had to take care of first.



The storms had pushed the *Mayflower* far off course from their intended destination. They were not in the territory governed by the London Company. Their contract with the company and with each other was null and void. Edward Winslow recalled "discontented and mutinous speeches," and that some on board were "not well affected to unity and concord." It was imperative they agree on "the first foundation of their govermente in this place" before leaving the ship.



They hastily drafted a short agreement of about 200 words. Today their document is known as the Mayflower Compact. The key passage was: "covenant and combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute and frame shuch just and equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete and convenient for the generall good of the Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience."



19<sup>th</sup> century author Francis Baylies, described the scene: "On the bleak shore of a barren wilderness, in the midst of desolation, with the blasts of winter howling around them, and surrounded with dangers in their most awful and appalling forms, the pilgrims of Leyden laid the foundation of American liberty."



Edward Winslow ca. 1651



Edward Winslow ca. 2026

Edward Winslow, the third person to sign the Mayflower Compact, is the only *Mayflower* passenger who left an image of himself. On a 1651 visit to London, Winslow, then in his fifties, had his portrait painted. The image on the right, created by Grok is based on the 1651 portrait and shows what Winslow might look like if he was alive in 2026.



Bradford wrote, "The same day, so soon as we could, we set ashore fifteen or sixteen men, well armed, with some to fetch wood, for we had none left; as also to see what the land was, and what inhabitants they could meet with."



The Pilgrims had "brought a large sholop with them out of England, stowed in quarters in the ship, they now gott her out and sett their carpenters to worke to trime her up; but being much brused and shattered in the shipe with foule weather, they saw she would be longe in mending."



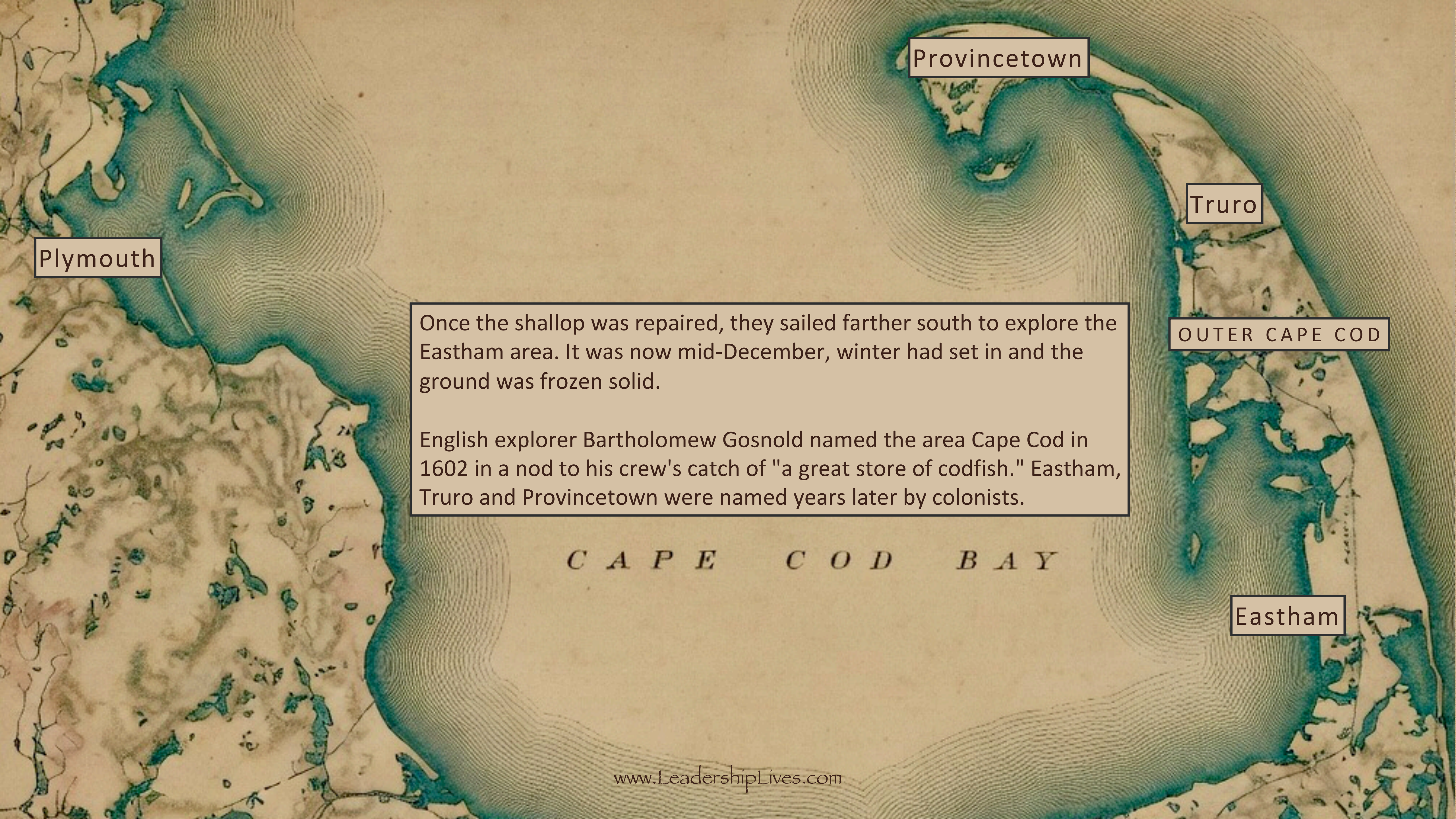
A shallop is a boat that can be used as a sailboat or as a rowboat. The Pilgrims' shallop could hold 30 men and was used to explore and transport people and cargo from the *Mayflower* to shore.



While the shallop was being repaired, the pilgrims explored the Cape in their longboat. They were searching for a reliable, year-round source of fresh-water. They found deserted campgrounds and occasionally caught glimpses of natives who they were eager to talk to and learn from. By early December, they concluded the area's soil was too sandy for farming.



On their first explorations, they found bushels of corn that had been stored for winter by the Nauset tribe and, vowing to pay back the loan, they took the corn to use as seed in the spring. Six months later, they repaid the Nausets in full to everyone's complete satisfaction. Bradford called it "a spetiall providence of God, and a great mercie to this poore people, that hear they gott seed to plant them corne the next year, or els they might have starved, for they had none."



Plymouth

Provincetown

Truro

OUTER CAPE COD

Once the shallop was repaired, they sailed farther south to explore the Eastham area. It was now mid-December, winter had set in and the ground was frozen solid.

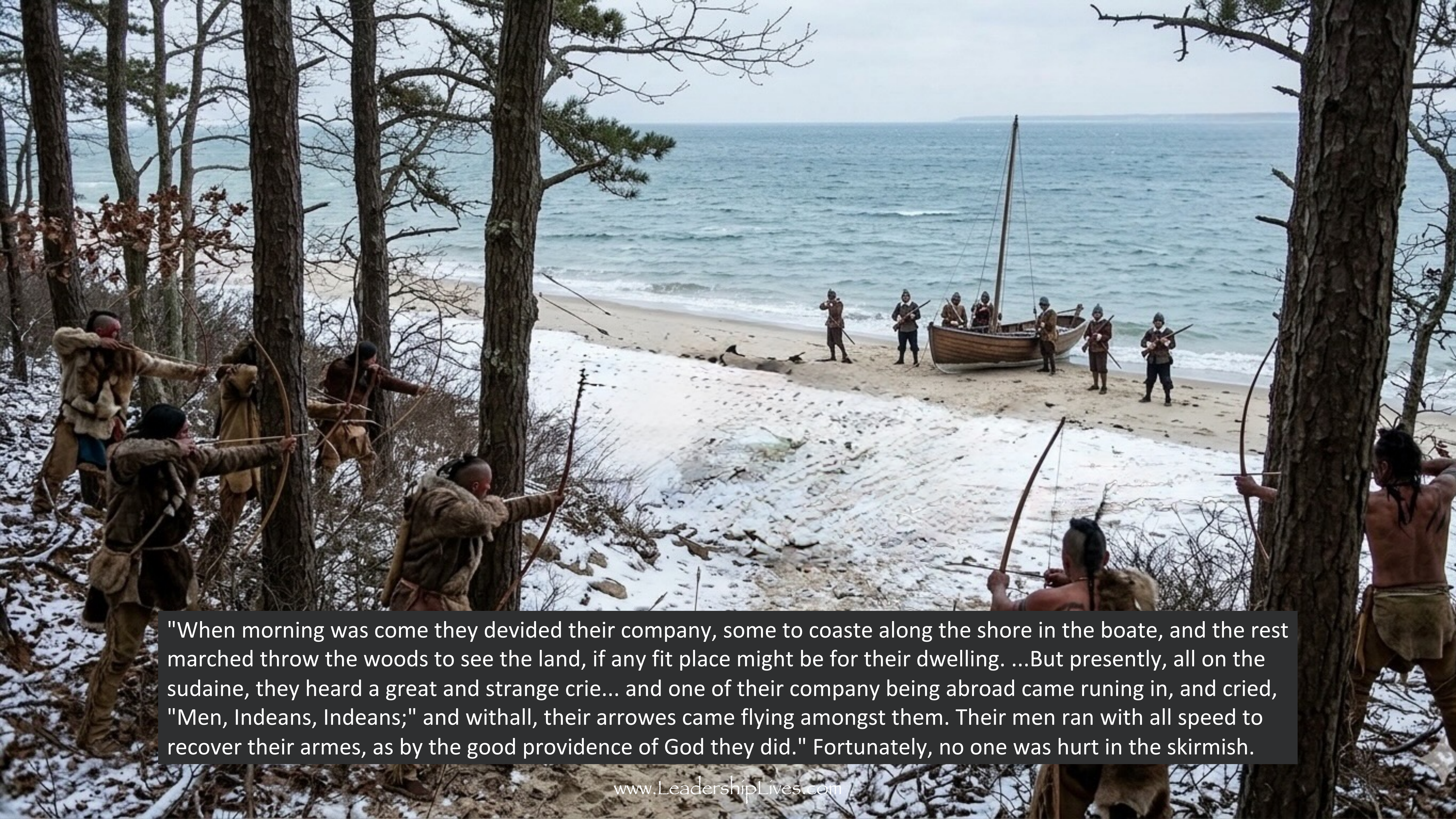
English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold named the area Cape Cod in 1602 in a nod to his crew's catch of "a great store of codfish." Eastham, Truro and Provincetown were named years later by colonists.

CAPE COD BAY

Eastham



At Eastham, "they made them a barricado (as usually they did every night) with loggs, stakes, and thike pine bowes, the height of a man, leaving it open to leeward, partly to shelter them from the cold and wind (making their fire in the midle, and lying round about it), and partly to defend them from any sudden assaults ..."



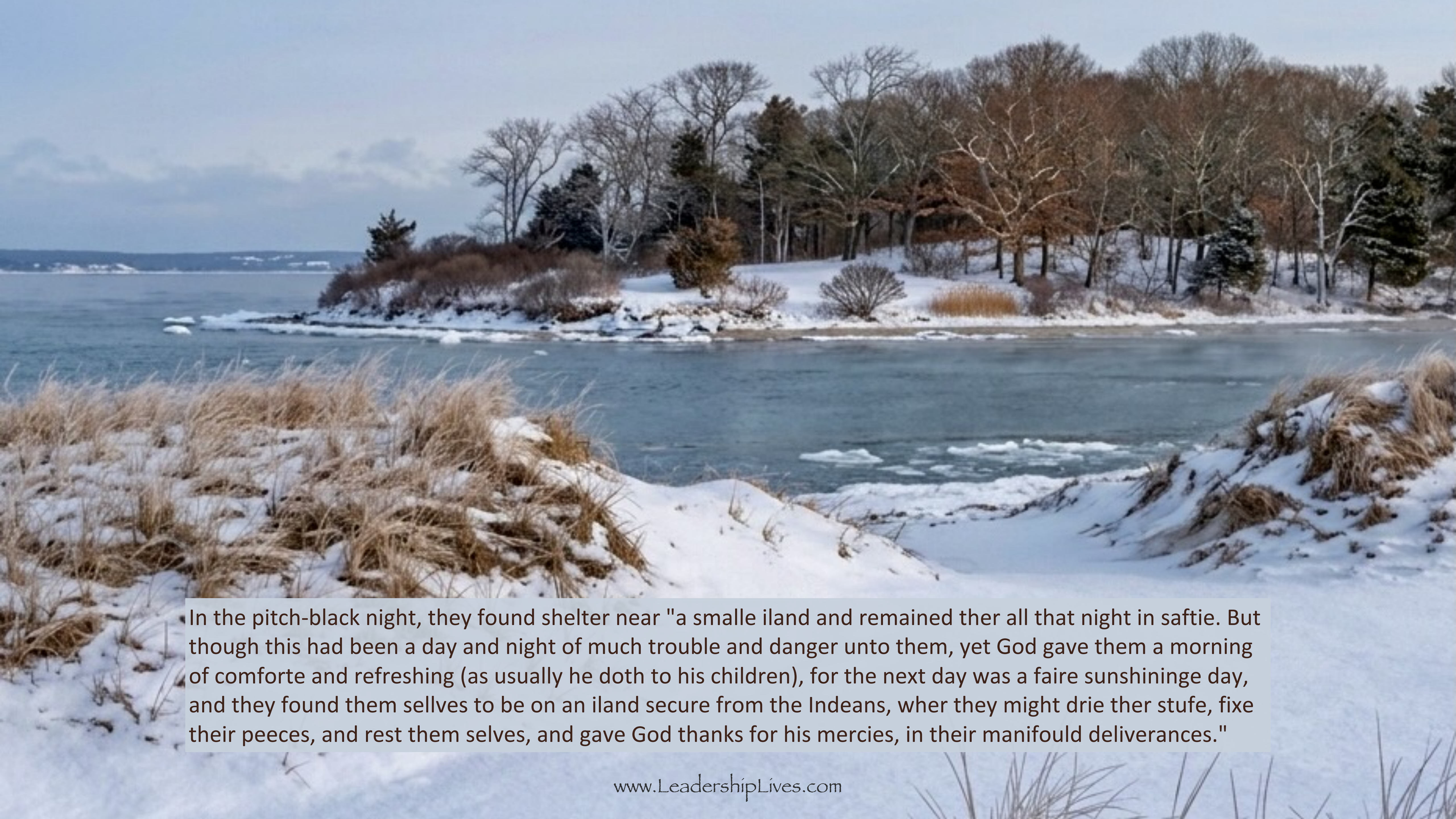
"When morning was come they devided their company, some to coaste along the shore in the boate, and the rest marched throw the woods to see the land, if any fit place might be for their dwelling. ...But presently, all on the sudaine, they heard a great and strange crie... and one of their company being abroad came runing in, and cried, "Men, Indeans, Indeans;" and withall, their arrowes came flying amongst them. Their men ran with all speed to recover their armes, as by the good providence of God they did." Fortunately, no one was hurt in the skirmish.



*Mayflower's* pilot, Robert Coppin, had visited the region on an earlier voyage. He urged them to sail 37 miles across the Bay to explore another harbor.



Mid-afternoon, they were hit by a winter storm that shattered the mast, destroyed the sail and broke the rudder. They saved themselves, and the boat, by rowing.



In the pitch-black night, they found shelter near "a smalle iland and remained ther all that night in saftie. But though this had been a day and night of much trouble and danger unto them, yet God gave them a morning of comforte and refreshing (as usually he doth to his children), for the next day was a faire sunshininge day, and they found them sellves to be on an iland secure from the Indeans, wher they might drie ther stufe, fixe their peeces, and rest them selves, and gave God thanks for his mercies, in their manifould deliverances."



They spent two nights on the island at the entrance to Plymouth harbor and kept the Sabbath. On Monday, Dec. 21st, they sounded the harbor and found it deep enough for seafaring ships.



On landing they "found diverse cornfeilds, & litle runing brooks, a place (as they supposed) fitt for situation; at least it was the best they could find, and the season, and their presente necessitie, made them glad to accepte of it. So, they returned to their shipp againe with this news to the rest of their people, which did much comforte their harts."



With the *Mayflower* anchored in the harbor, the men who were healthy enough scrambled to build a fort, a common storehouse and homes. The women, children and bedridden lived on the ship.



The Pilgrims "most sadd and lamentable" ordeal happened in their early days at Plymouth when fifty members of the group died, sometimes at the rate of two or three people a day. "In the time of most distres, ther was but 6 or 7 sound persons, who, to their great comendations ... spared no pains, night nor day, but with abundance of toyle and hazard of their owne health" fetched wood, prepared meals, made beds, washed dirty clothes, dressed and undressed the ailing. They did "all this willingly and cherfully, without any grudging in the least, shewing herein their true love unto their freinds and bretheren. A rare example and worthy to be remembred. Two of these 7 were Mr. William Brewster, ther reverend Elder, and Myles Standish, ther Captein and military comander, unto whom my selfe, and many others, were much beholden in our low and sicke condition."



On March 26th, to the astonishment of the community, a Nauset tribesman named Samoset "boldly" walked into the middle of their settlement, calling "Welcome, Englishmen!" He spoke some English and spent the night at the home of Steven Hopkins.



Samoset showed the Pilgrims how to plant and cultivate corn and how to catch fish in the streams.



Most significantly, Samoset introduced the pilgrims to Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag tribe, and to Squanto who spoke better English.



With Squanto acting as primary interpreter, the Pilgrims' governor, John Carver, and Massasoit composed and signed a peace treaty on April 1, 1621. Their pragmatic alliance lasted for over 50 years. Carver, who had guided the Pilgrims through the rough journey and difficult early days at Plymouth, dropped dead of sunstroke while working in the fields a few weeks later. His wife, Katherine, died a month after her husband.



On April 15, 1621, the *Mayflower* sailed for England. The ship arrived in the Thames a month later.




In early October 1621, after a three-day harvest, the Pilgrims celebrated their "First Thanksgiving" with Massasoit and about 90 Wampanoag guests.



Plimoth Plantation, 1622

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In 1889, the National Monument to the Forefathers was dedicated in Plymouth - a project sparked in 1820 by the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pilgrims' arrival.

The statue represents Faith pointing to heaven with her right hand and holding a Bible in her left. She stands on a pillar of the Pilgrims' core values – Morality, Law, Education and Freedom.

By 1630, “about twenty thousand souls  
had arrived in Massachusetts.”

Thomas Hutchinson

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Patrick Henry

“The constitutional freedom of religion  
[is] the most inalienable and sacred of all human rights.”

Thomas Jefferson

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In 1825, William Bradford's descendants installed a monument to mark his grave in Plymouth. Their inscription reads,

Quae patres difficillime adepti sunt  
nolite turpiter relinquere

“What our fathers with difficulty achieved, do not basely relinquish.”

The End

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