

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
ON THE *MAYFLOWER* PILGRIMS' PHOTO-ESSAY

- All quotes in this photo essay on the *Mayflower* Pilgrims are from William Bradford's work "*Of Plimoth Plantation*" unless otherwise noted.
- **Spelling:** When William Bradford was writing, standardized spelling did not exist. It wasn't until Samuel Johnson published his *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755 that spelling started to become widely standardized.
- **Calendar:** On January 1, 45 BC, Julius Caesar introduced the Julian calendar to the world but the calculation of the length of the year was off by 11 minutes.

Over the course of 15 centuries, the 11-minute-per-year error caused a shift of 10 days. In other words, by 1582, the vernal equinox according to the Julian calendar fell on March 11th rather than on March 21st when the sun was directly over the equator.

The remedy was to reset the calendar. October 4, 1582 (Old Style) was followed by October 15, 1582 (New Style).

Because this reform was instigated by Pope Gregory, the new calendar was rapidly adopted by Catholic countries. But Protestant countries were slower to make the change. England adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1752.

Greece did not adopt the Gregorian Calendar until 1923.

This photo-essay uses the Gregorian calendar to reflect the actual date.

For example, understanding that the Pilgrims arrived at Cape Cod on November 21, rather than on November 11 (Julian or "Old Style"), more clearly conveys the pressure they were under to find a place to settle as quickly as possible before winter set in.

- **"Pilgrims":** In his writings, Bradford used the term "pilgrimes" once, when he and the others were leaving Leiden on the *Speedwell*. Bradford and his comrades called themselves "Separatists" or "Dissenters." The term "Pilgrims" to describe the

community at Plymouth was popularized by influential orator, Daniel Webster, in the early 19th century.