

Annotated Bibliography of central sources for the study of early Plymouth Plantation  
Prepared for the Toronto Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society  
Carla Pestana, for the talk on 26 April 2021

Anon., *A Relation or Journall of the Beginning and Proceedings of the English Plantation settled at Plimoth in New England*. London, 1621.

This publication was the work of various (mostly unnamed) men who wrote about the first year in Plymouth. Over eighty pages in length, it was sent back on board the ship *Fortune* and published in London in 1622. The Plymouth supporter and eventual resident George Morton (or Mourt) helped see it into print, and before he did so he added a brief prefatory note “To the Reader”. His signature on this note led to the somewhat confusing (and inaccurate) practice of calling it “Mourt’s Relation.” In my book, I do not follow that naming practice.

Bradford, William. “Of Plimoth Plantation,” State Library of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts, and on their website in digital form: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/bradford-manuscript-of-plimoth-plantation>

This long, handwritten document offers an account of the Leiden church community and the early years in Plymouth (through 1646). William Bradford, Leiden and later Plymouth migrant, wrote it in two installments. A shorter part one explaining the background – beginning with the Protestant Reformation – up to the arrival in New England, was penned in 1630; and a longer account of events in New England provides year-by-year summaries interspersed with letters received. The manuscript has a fascinating history: it was lost for a time – see the description of its history on the page at the State Library via the link above – and not published until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many published versions exist. The most commonly available is that edited by Samuel Eliot Morison and first published in 1952 under the title *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*. Last year, a scholarly edition published for the anniversary avoided many of the problems of Morison (such as the removal of many of the letters into an appendix and the insertion of his own interpretations into headings as if they were part of the manuscript). This most recent edition is entitled *Of Plimoth Plantation by William Bradford: The 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, edited by Kenneth P. Minkema, Francis J. Bremer, and Jeremy D. Bangs, *Publication of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* XCIII (Boston, 2020).

[Cushman, Robert]. *A Sermon preached at Plimmoth in New-England*. London, 1622.

Cushman visited Plymouth briefly and while there preached a sermon which he then carried back to England to publish. He includes a 6-page preface that discusses Plymouth, including why the region is called New England, who should go to there, and relations with the original residents. He then prints the text of his sermon, which (like most Reformed Protestant sermons of this era) focused on a single text, in this case 1. Cor. 10: 24. “Let no man seeke his owne, But every man anothers wealth.”

James, Sydney V., Jr. *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth: Letters about the Pilgrim Settlement in New England during its first seven years, by John Pory, Emmanuel Altham and Isaack de Rasieres*. [n.p.]: Plimoth Plantation, Inc., 1963.

In support of my point about the connections that linked Plymouth to other places in the Atlantic world, three visitors among those who came to Plymouth in the first years left letters describing what they experienced. In addition to the letters from the three visitors, this work

includes a brief biographical sketch by James, and introductory sections by both Samuel Eliot Morison and James. The letters deal mostly with Native Americans or fishing and other economic matters.

Morton, Nathaniell. *New-Englands Memoriall: Or, A brief Relation of the most Memorable and Remarkable Passages of the Province of God, manifested to the Planters of New-England in America; with special Reference to the first colony thereof, Called New-Plimouth*. Cambridge, 1669.

Morton was William Bradford's nephew (as well as the son of George Morton, aka "Mourt"). He had access to Bradford's "Of Plimoth Plantation" as he was writing his own history. Based on Bradford to an extent, Morton's account focused particularly on major events in the churches throughout the region.

Plymouth. *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth*. Edited by Nathaniel B. Shurtleff. 12 vols. Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1855.

This nineteenth-century source is important because it gathers together all the official government records for the entire existence of the plantation. It includes laws passed but also actions taken by the government. So, for instance, for my book, it was helpful for all the work the Plymouth government did to regulate indentured servants.

Pratt, Phineas. "A Declaration of the Affairs of the English People (that first) inhabited New England" (1662) Printed in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 4: IV (1856): 474-87, and also posted at [https://www.winthropsociety.com/doc\\_pratt.php](https://www.winthropsociety.com/doc_pratt.php)

A 1662 account written by one of Thomas Weston's men who came to New England to participate in his trading outpost at Weesaguscus. Unlike the other participants in that ill-fated effort, Pratt did not leave the region when it collapsed but rather eventually settled at Plymouth. He composed this account in his old age in hopes of gaining some government support. It focuses heavily on relations with indigenous people, about whom Pratt has little good to say. Another version, with silent edits to the language and spelling, is available online.

W[inslow], E[dward]. *Good Newes from New England: Or A True Relation of Things very remarkable at the Plantation of Plimoth in New-England*. London, 1624.

Although single authored, this work is in some respects a continuation of *A Relation or Journall*. It follows a similar format in part, and Winslow himself was a contributing writer to the previous account. *Good Newes* continues the account of what happened in Plymouth, taking the tale from early 1622 to mid-1623. Winslow also pauses his recounting to discuss what he understands about native culture and the local environment.