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Contrary to popular belief, not all passengers who participated in the voyage of the *Mayflower* were considered true Pilgrims. What is commonly left out in our early teachings as pupils is the diversity of humans who made up the 102 passengers embarking for the New World. The untold story of the “strangers” who boarded the *Mayflower* on September 6, 1620 not only deserves attention, but also sheds light on how the foundations of Plymouth Colony impacted the becoming of America.

After continually seeking religious freedom from the oppressive Church of England, a group known as the Separatists were successful in receiving a patent from the London Virginia Company. This company, comprised of merchants, desired to invest their money in settlements abroad with intentions of receiving financial gains. They saw the Separatists from Leiden as an opportunity to capitalize on investments in America.

Initially filled with elation for their journey ahead, many Pilgrims were quickly met with dismay as they experienced multiple setbacks, delaying their voyage. As a result, many Leiden members abandoned the plan and returned to Holland. Despite the disapproval and resentment against bringing outsiders from the England community along to the New World, many of the remaining Separatists began to understand the necessity of their investment to finance the voyage.

The group that would come to be referred to as “strangers” were just so. A misfit group of people, each with their own best interests in mind. In contrast to the Separatists’ desire for religious freedom, many jumped at the opportunity to access new land, build more economically stable futures for their families, escape criminal persecution, pursue the thrill of adventure, etc. Others were forced to become, or optionally became, indentured servants to Separatist passengers with hopes of a new life after their served time. Their varied backgrounds gave the Plymouth Colony an expanded chance of survival against the foreign territory and rough terrain they were inevitably going to endure.

As they set sail for what would become a 66 day journey full of emotional and physical turmoil, neither group understood the value of one another’s presence. The Separatists soon became known as “saints” to those not apart of the Leiden group, and “strangers” was the term used when referencing all others, besides crew members. With most of their time spent below deck due to extreme weather from Atlantic storms, each group was constantly immersed in the other’s beliefs and actions. The “saints” often portrayed themselves as self-righteous and sanctimonious in the eyes of both “strangers” and crew members. However, “strangers,” with their non-religious views, regularly antagonized Separatists’ beliefs with bigotry. Both saw each other as an obstacle in the way of obtaining what they sought in the New World. The *Mayflower*

Compact became the compromise between the groups that ensured law abiding citizens and equal justice for all. With a turbulent winter in their future, building a civilization would require all hands on deck.

Although it's possible the Separatists alone may have been able to find a way to survive the first winter, it's unlikely many would have been left by the end of the gruesome season. The "strangers" of Plymouth Colony contributed immensely to the Pilgrim's ability to escape more atrocities than were experienced that fateful winter. Familiarizing ourselves with who these individuals were is crucial to understanding their impact on our history. Some imperative "strangers" were Stephen Hopkins, the Moore children, and the Billington family. This assortment of different beings represent the diversity of characteristics they brought to the New Land. Common jobs amongst the "strangers" included indentured servants, laborers, tradesmen, and craftsmen. From the list, one can see the labor impact they would have made on the colonization of the Pilgrims. Their ability to provide necessary services for a functioning community, especially since most Separatists were unfamiliar with this assortment of work, was instrumental to the survival of that first winter and beyond.

After immersing myself in this topic, it became clear more citizens should be correctly informed of the *Mayflower's* true impact on history and the reverberations we experience today. In a sense, we are all strangers of a sort. It's our own unique talents, ambitions, and goals which drive us to maintain a working community. The "strangers" of the *Mayflower* were everyday people like you and me. It is because of them, along with the contributions of the "saints," that the first sign of democracy was established on the lands that would later become known as the United States of America.

### **Bibliography**

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