

Joden Kirkman, *Broseley*

Following the arrival of the more famous *Mayflower*, the *Fortune* was the second ship to arrive at Plymouth Rock. This ship arrived about a year after the *Mayflower* had first come ashore. At this point, many of the original pilgrims had died, and the remaining settlers were happy to see the *Fortune's* 35 passengers, as most were either friends or relatives. The pilgrims had struggled immensely in their time at the colony and had hoped that the *Fortune* would help them to survive. Yet this ship's arrival was bittersweet, coming with few supplies and more mouths to feed. Captain John Smith had written glowing accounts of this new world, saying it was teeming with gam fish and fruits. This was done so as to not discourage others from migrating to Plymouth Rock. Sadly, this oversold the newcomers on coming to North America, and the travelers brought almost nothing with them as a result. This influx of people would go on to swell the village by 50 percent. This led to the need for everyone to ration again, as had been done previously.



Along with these new settlers came a letter from the Merchant Adventurers, which chastised the pilgrims for failing to return goods with the *Mayflower* that had been promised in return for their support. The pilgrims were in dire straits, but knew they would have to send something back to England if they were to have any hope of receiving supplies again. They loaded up the *Fortune* with oak staves, beaver skins, and otter pelts. The cargo's value was estimated at about 500 pounds and was more than enough to send back to England on the *Fortune*. However, on the return journey, a navigation error caused the ship to miss the English Channel, and the *Fortune* sailed southeast to France. Here, the *Fortune* was confronted by a French warship, which led to all of the precious cargo being seized.

Two years after the *Fortune* had set anchor in Plymouth Harbor, two more ships arrived to bring additional cargo and passengers to the colony. This was much to the delight of the original settlers. These two ships were called the *Anne* and *Little James*. Many of the passengers aboard these ships were the wives and children that could not make the original journey. The *Anne* was a supply ship of roughly 140 tons of cargo space and carried the majority of the passengers.

The *Little James* was about a quarter of the *Anne's* size and carried mostly cargo. Two men on the *Little James*, William Stephens and Thomas Fell, would go on to create lots of turmoil. After seeing the poor conditions of the colony, these two men led the crew to strike. This strike continued until they were promised compensation. The *Little James* sailed around seeking trade relations, but had very little success. The crew had nothing of value to offer the natives in exchange for furs, nor could they compete against Dutch traders, who were willing to offer a better price. The crew of the *Little James* endured many hardships, including mutiny, death, and a shipwreck. After being repaired, the *Little James* sailed back to London. Once there, Fell and Stephens promptly sued both the investors and the Plymouth Colony for 40 pounds, to cover the wages they had been promised but were never issued.

By 1625, the *Little James* was again sailing in support of the pilgrims. This ship was also used to bring back payment to England. The colony arranged for the *Little James* to transport 500 beaver pelts back to England to help pay off their debt. But sadly, this ship was captured by pirates within sight of the English coast, and all 500 beaver pelts were stolen.

While providing some additional workers and family members to the Plymouth colony, these ships, for the most part, further increased the hardships experienced by the settlers. The result of so many new settlers, without additional supplies, led to near starvation for the colony. At the same time, the rising debt incurred by the people only seemed to worsen by the arrival and departure of the *Fortune* and *Little James*. Despite these challenges, the pilgrims went on to create a new nation that has flourished into the country we know today.

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