

This is an image of the original *Mayflower Compact* which men aboard ship agreed to before they disembarked. It sets forth the system of government they would follow after they went ashore.

Historians believe this document is the first self-governing agreement which Europeans made after reaching the shores of the New World. Interestingly, eight American presidents are signer-descendants. They are:

- John Adams;
- John Quincy Adams;
- Zachary Taylor;
- Ulysses S. Grant;
- James A. Garfield;
- Franklin D. Roosevelt;
- George H.W. Bush; and
- George W. Bush.

To better understand the Compact, as you look at the original document, note that "y" also stands for "t" (so "ye" means "the") and "v" also stands for "u" (so "vnderwriten" means "underwritten"). Its transcription is:

In ye name of God Amen · We whose names are vnderwriten, the loyall subjects of our dread soueraigne [soverign] Lord King James by ye grace of God, of great Britaine, franc, & Ireland king, defender of ye faith, &c Haueing [having] vndertaken, for ye glorie of God, and aduancemente of ye christian ^faith and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia · doe [do] by these presents solemnly & mutualy in ye presence of God, and one of another, couenant, & combine our selues [ourselves] togeather into a ciuill [civil] body politick; for ye our better ordering, & preseruacion & fur=therance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof, to enacte, constitute, and frame shuch just & equall lawes, ordinances, Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete & conuenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: vnto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witnes wherof we haue herevnder subscribed our names at Cap=Codd [Cape Cod] ye ·11· of Nouember, in ye year of ye raigne of our soueraigne Lord king James of England, france, & Ireland ye eighteenth and of Scotland ye fiftie fourth. Ano: Dom ·1620 [November 11, 1620].

In today's English - and broken into paragraphs for easier reading - the document says:

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience.

IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini; 1620.

Forty-one men signed this document.

Click on the image to examine it in much closer detail.

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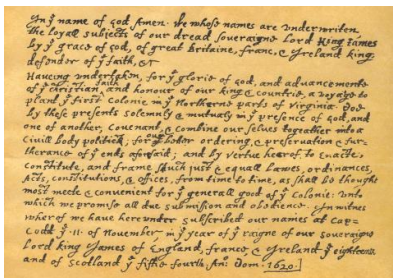
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Mayflower Compact - Original Document

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