One of the things that keep most people from reading historical material is that the language from earlier times makes the reading tedious.

Here is an edition of a story almost 400 years old that has been made more clear to read.

The sense and meaning of the words has not been changed, just old fashioned terms have been updated.

Thou is now you, walketh is now walks, hath is now has, and so on.

The words are still Edward Winslow's, only the old forms of the words are updated. Nothing is changed or left out. Any time I added anything for clarity is it shown in brackets [like this] or it appears in a footnote.

Come, read this fascinating story for yourself. See how they survived the tough first few years.
Good News From New England
by Edward Winslow
1634

Edited by Norman P. Burdett with many old style words modernized without changing the meaning.
Notes by the editor.

New England History Series

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Good News From N. England
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From the editor

It has been my purpose here to make this informative and interesting account accessible to the general reader. At the same time, it was important that I did not alter the sense or meaning of the writer's words. To accomplish this end, I have changed the antique forms of some words to the modern form. So thou becomes you, durst becomes dares, shouldst becomes should; waketh is wakes, hath is has, and so forth.

Where I have supplied words to make a sentence read sensibly to our modern understanding, I have enclosed those words in brackets [like this]. In some cases there are explanations, which are shown as footnotes.

You may be confident that, to the best of my ability, I have presented what the author intended for you to know, in language that is less difficult for today's reader to understand. This is not to say that the text is in modern day conversational English. The words are overwhelmingly Winslow's. The story is purely his. My editing affects only a very small percentage of the words in the text. These changes may not suit the purist, who would have every letter and comma like the original, but this edition is not aimed at purists, but people who are interested in a good, accurate eyewitness account of early Plymouth.

The spelling of the name of the colony most commonly used by writers of the time was Plimouth, though sometimes Plymouth, which has survived to be the modern spelling.

The term Pilgrim is not found in any writings of the period. This term was coined much later in a speech about early settlers of Plymouth. They were Separatists because they separated from the Church of England, unlike the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, who wanted only to purify the Church of England from Roman influence.

~ Norman P. Burdett

About the Author

Edward Winslow

Edward Winslow was born October 18, 1595. He was one of the passengers on the first voyage of the Mayflower to Plimoth in New England in 1620. Shortly after their arrival, his wife, Elizabeth Baker died. He later married the widow of William White, Susannah. This was the first English marriage in the New England colonies.

Winslow served the Colony as an Assistant from 1624 to 1647 except 1633-34, 1636-37 and 1644-45. During those years he was Governor of the Colony. From the beginning, he was chosen to be the person to deal with the natives. He proved well suited for this, and developed a lasting friendship with Massasoit, the Chief Sachem of the Wampanoag Indians. He learned to speak their language over time while depending on Tisquantum and Hobomock to translate for him.

He served as a Commissioner from Plimoth to the United Colonies of New England in 1643. Winslow made several trips to England in behalf of both Plimoth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies to defend their interests at the court of King Charles I, and then at Parliament after the King was deposed and beheaded in the English Civil War. Edward Winslow remained in England for nine years after one of these trips, being appointed to a minor office under Oliver Cromwell. In 1655 he was sent by Cromwell as one of three commissioners to the West Indies. He died near Jamaica and was buried at sea.

His writings give us a clear look at life in the early years of the colonies. His son Josiah served as Governor during the war with "King" Philip (Massasoit's son) in 1675-1676. Sadly, Josiah did not share his father's gift for diplomacy with the Indians.
To All Well-Willers and Furtherers of Plantations in New England:
especially to such as ever have or desire to assist, the people of Plymouth in their just proceedings, Grace, and Peace, be multiplied.

Right Honorable and Worshipful Gentlemen, or whatsoever: since it has pleased God to stir you up to be instruments of his glory, in so honorable an enterprise as the enlarging of His Majesty's Dominions, by planting his loyal subjects in so healthful and hopeful a country as New England is; where the Church of God being seated in sincerity, there is no less hope of converting the Heathen of their evil ways, and convincing them to the true knowledge and worship of the living God, and so consequently the salvation of their souls by the merits of Jesus Christ, than elsewhere though it be much talked on, and lightly or lamely prosecuted. I therefore think it but my duty to offer the view of our proceedings to your worthy considerations, having to that end composed them together thus briefly as you see; wherein to your great encouragement, you may behold the good providence of God working with you in our preservation from so many dangerous plots and treacheries, as have been intended against us; as also in giving his blessing so powerfully upon the weak means we had, enabling us with health and ability beyond expectation, in our greatest scarcities, and possessing the hearts of the savages with astonishment and fear of us, whereas if God had let them loose, they might easily have swallowed us up, scarce being an handful in comparison of those forces they might have gathered together against us, which now by God's blessing will be more hard and difficult, in regard our number of men is increased, our town better fortified, and our store better victualed. Blessed therefore be his name, that has done so great things for us, and has wrought so great a change amongst us. Accept I pray you my weak endeavors, pardon my unskillful-ness, and bear with my plainness in the things I have handled. Be not discouraged by our former necessities, but rather encouraged with us, hoping that as God has wrought with us in our beginning of this worthy Work, undertaken in his name and fear; so he will by us accomplish the same to his glory and our comfort, if we neglect not the means. I confess it has not been much less chargeable to some of you, than hard and difficult to us, that have endured the brunt of the barrel, and yet small profits returned; only by God's mercy we are safely seated, housed, and fortified, by which means a great step is made unto gain, and a more direct course taken for the same, than if at first we had rashly and covetously fallen upon it.

Indeed, three things are the overthrow and bane (as I may term it) of plantations:
1. The vain expectation of present profit, which too commonly takes a principal seat in the heart and affection; though God's glory, etc., is preferred before it in the mouth with protestation.
2. Ambition in their Governors and Commanders, seeking only to make themselves great, and slaves of all that are under them, to maintain a transitory base honor in themselves, which God oft punishes with contempt.
3. The carelessness of those that send over supplies of men unto them, not caring how they be qualified: so that oft times they are rather the image of men endued with bestial, yea, diabolical affections, than the image of God, endued with reason, understanding, and holiness. I pray God I speak not these things experimentally, by way of complaint of our own condition, but having great cause on the contrary part to be thankful to God for his mercies towards us: but rather, if there be any too desirous of gain, to entreat them to moderate their
To the Reader.

Good Reader, when I first penned this discourse, I intended it chiefly for the satisfaction of my private friends, but since that time have been persuaded to publish the same: and the rather, because of a disorderly colony* that are dispersed, and most of them returned, to the great prejudice and damage of him [Thomas Weston] that set them forth; who as they were a stain to old England that bred them, in respect of their lives and manners amongst the Indians: so it is to be feared, will be no less to New England in their vile and clamorous reports, because she would not foster them in their desired idle courses. I would not be understood to think there were no well deserving persons amongst them: for of my knowledge it was a grief to some, that they were so yoked; whose deserts as they were then suitable to their honest protestations, so I desire still may be, in respect of their just and true relations.

Perhaps you will rather marvel that I deal so plainly, than any way doubt of the truth of this my Relation, yes it may be tax me therewith, as seeming rather to discourage men, than any way to further so noble an action? If any honest mind be discouraged, I am sorry, sure I am, I have given no just cause; and am so far from being discouraged myself, as I purpose to return forthwith. And for other light and vain persons, if they stumble hereat I have my desire, accounting it better for them and us that they keep where they are, as being unfit and unable to perform so great a task.

Some faults have escaped because I could not attend on the press, which I pray you correct as you find, and I shall account it as a favor you to me. -Thine E.W.

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*The plantation of Wessagusset was unsuccessful due to the disorderliness and lack of preparation on the part of the settlers. They resorted to stealing food from the Indians and hiring themselves to be servants to them. The settlers from Plimouth, although extremely short of supplies brought them food and eventually had to intervene and fight the Indians to prevent an uprising. Most from this plantation returned to England in disgrace, although some few joined in with Plimouth and stayed. The reports of those who failed are what he refers to above.
GOOD NEWES FROM NEW ENGLAND:

OR
A true Relation of things very remarkable at the Plantation of Plymouth in NEW ENGLAND.
Showing the wondrous providence and goodness of GOD, in their preservation and continuance, being delivered from many apparent deaths and dangers.

Together with a Relation of such religious and civil Laws and Customs, as are in practice amongst the Indians, adjoining to them at this day.

As also what commodities are there to be raised for the maintenance of that said other Plantations in the said Country.

Written by E.W. who hath borne a part in the fore-named troubles, and there lived since their first Arrival.

Whereunto is added by him a brief Relation of a credible intelligence of the present estate of Virginia.

LONDON Printed by I.D. for William Bladen and John Bellamie, and are to be sold at their shops, at the Bible in Paul’s Church-yard, and at the three Golden Lions in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange. 1624.
sparing to this effect; that he could not certainly tell, but thought they were enemies to us.

That night Captain Standish gave me and another charge of him, and gave us order to use him kindly, and that he should not want anything he desired, and to take all occasions to talk and inquire of the reasons of those reports we heard, and withal to signify that upon his true relation he should be sure of his own freedom. At first fear so possessed him, that he could scarce say anything; but in the end became more familiar, and told us that the messenger which his master sent in summer to treat of peace, at his return persuaded him rather to war; and to the end he might provoke him hereunto, (as appeared to him by our reports) disdained many of the things were sent him by our Governor, scorning the meanness of them both in respect of what himself had formerly sent, and also of the greatness of his own person; so that he much blamed the former messenger, saying, that upon the knowledge of his false carriage, it would cost him his life; but assured us that upon his relation of our speech than with him to his master, he would be friends with us.

Of this we informed the Governor and his assistant, and Captain Standish, who after consultation considered him howsoever but in the state of a messenger, and it being as well against the Law of Arms amongst them as us in Europe, to lay violent hands on any such, set him at liberty, the Governor giving him order to certify his master that he had heard of his large and many threatenings, at which he was much offended, daring him in those respects to the utmost, if he would not be reconciled to live peaceably as other his neighbors; manifesting withal (as ever) his desire of peace; but his fearless resolution, if he could not so live amongst them. After which he caused meat to be offered him, but he refused to eat, making all speed to return, and giving many thanks for his liberty. But requesting the other Indian again to return, the weather being violent, he used many words to persuade him to stay longer, but could not. Whereupon he left him, and said he was with his friends, and would not take a journey in such extremity.

After this when Tisquantum returned, and the arrows were delivered, and the manner of the messengers carriage related, he signified to the Governor, that to send the rattlesnake’s skin in that manner, imported enmity, and that it was no better than a challenge. Hereupon after some deliberation, the Governor stuffed the skin with powder and shot, and sent it back, returning no less defiance to Conanucus, assuring him if he had shipping now present thereby to send his men to Narragansett (the place of his abode) they should not need to come so far by land to us: yet withal showing that they should never come unwelcome or unlooked for. This message was sent by an Indian, and delivered in such sort, as it was no small terror to this savage King, insomuch as he would not once touch the powder and shot, or suffer it to stay in his house or country. Whereupon the messenger refusing it, another took it up, and having been posted from place to place a long time, at length came whole back again.

In the mean time, knowing our own weakness, notwithstanding our high words and lofty looks towards them, and still lying open to all casualty, having as yet (under God) no other defense than our arms, we thought it most needful to impale our town, which with all expedition we accomplished in the month of February and some few days, taking in the top of the hill under which our town is seated, making four bulwarks or jetties without the ordinary circuit of the pale, from whence we could defend the whole town: in three whereof are gates, and the fourth in time to be. This being done, Captain Standish divided our strength into four squadrons or companies, appointing whom he thought most fit to have command of each; and at a general muster or training, appointed each his place, gave each his company, giving them charge upon every alarm to resort to their leaders to their appointed place, and in his absence, to be commanded and directed by them. That done according to his
order, each drew his company to his appointed place for defense, and there together discharged their muskets. After which they brought their new commanders to their houses, where again they graced them with their shot, and so departed.

Fearing also lest the enemy at any time should take any advantage by firing our houses, Captain Standish appointed a certain company, that whenever they saw or heard fire to be cried in the town, should only betake themselves to their arms, and should enclose the house or place so endangered, and stand aloof on their guard, with their backs towards the fire, to prevent treachery, if any were in that kind intended. If the fire were in any of the houses of this guard, they were then freed from it, but not otherwise, without special command.

Long before this time we promised the people of Massachusetts [tribe] in the beginning of March to come unto them, and trade for their furs, which being then come, we began to make preparation for that voyage. In the meantime, an Indian called Hobomok, who still lived in the town, told us, that he feared the Massachusetts or Massachuseucks (for they so called the people of that place) were joined in confederacy with the Nanohigganneucks, or people of Narragansett, and that they therefore would take this opportunity to cut off Captain Standish and his company abroad: but howsoever in the meantime, it was to be feared that the Narragansetts would assault the town at home, giving many reasons for his jealousy, as also that Tisquantum was in the confederacy, who we should find would use many persuasions to draw us from our shallops to the Indians houses for their better advantage. To confirm this his jealousy he told us of many secret passages that passed between him and others, having their meetings ordinarily abroad in the woods: but if at home howsoever he was excluded from their secrecy, saying it was the manner of the Indians when they meant plainly to deal openly: but in this his practice there was no show of honesty.

Hereupon the Governor, together with his Assistant and Captain Standish, called together such, as by them were thought most meet for advice in so weighty a business, who after consideration hereof came to this resolution: that as hitherto upon all occasions between them and us, we had ever manifested undaunted courage and resolution, so it would not now stand with our safety to mew up ourselves in our new-enclosed town, partly because our store was almost empty, and therefore must seek out for our daily food, without which we could not long subsist; but especially for that thereby they would see us dismayed, and be encouraged to prosecute their malicious purposes, with more eagerness than ever they intended: whereas on the contrary, by the blessing of God, our fearless carriage might be a means to discourage and weaken their proceedings. And therefore thought best to proceed in our trading voyage, making this use of that we heard, to go the better provided, and use the more carefulness both at home and abroad, leaving the event to the disposing of the Almighty, whose providence as it had hitherto been over us for good, so we had now no cause (save our sins) to despair of his mercy in our preservation and continuance, where we desired rather to be instruments of good to the heathens about us, than to give them the least measure of just offense. All things being now in readiness, the forenamed Captain with ten men, accompanied with Tisquantum and Hobomok, set forwards for the Massachusetts: but we had no sooner turned the point of the harbor called the Gurnet's Nose (where being becalmed we let fall our grapnel, to set things to rights, and prepare to row) but there came an Indian of Tisquantum's family, running to certain of our people that were from home with all eagerness, having his face wounded, and the blood still fresh on the same, calling to them to repair home, oft looking behind him, as if some others had him in chase, saying that at Nemasket (a town some fifteen miles from us) there were many of the Narragansetts, Massasoit our supposed friend, and Corbitant our feared enemy, with many others, with a resolution to take advantage on the present opportunity, to assault the town in the Captain's absence, affirming that he received the wound in
his face for speaking in our behalf, and by flight escaped, looking oft backward, as if he suspected them to be at hand. This he affirmed again to the Governor, whereupon he gave command that three piece of ordnance should be made ready and discharged, to the end that if we were not out of hearing, we might return thereat. Which we no sooner heard, but we repaired homeward with all convenient speed, arming ourselves, and making all in readiness to fight. When we entered the harbor, we saw the town likewise on their guard, whither we hasted with all convenient speed. The news being made known unto us, Hobomok said flatly that it was false, assuring us of Massasoit’s faithfulness; howsoever he presumed he would never have undertaken any such act without his privity, himself being a pniæ*, that is, one of his chiefest champions or men of valor, it being the manner amongst them not to undertake such enterprises without the advice and furtherance of men of that rank. To this the Governor answered, he should be sorry that any just and necessary occasions of war should arise between him and any the savages, but especially Massasoit, not that he feared him more than the rest, but because his love more exceeded towards him than any. Whereunto Hobomok replied; there was no cause wherefore he should distrust him, and therefore should do well to continue his affections. But to the end things might be made more manifest, the Governor caused Hobomok to send his wife with all privacy to Pokanoket the chief place of Massasoit’s residence, (pretending other occasions) there to inform herself, and so us, of the right state of things. When she came thither, and saw all things quiet, and that no such matter was or had been intended, told Massasoit what had happened at Plymouth, (by them called Patuxet) which when he understood, he was much offended at the carriage of Tisquantum, returning many thanks to the Governor for his good thoughts of him; and assuring him that according to their first articles of peace, he would send word and give warning when any such business was towards.

* Also pniæ: A warrior captain.

Thus by degrees we began to discover Tisquantum, whose ends were only to make himself great in the eyes of this countrymen, by means of his nearness and favor with us, not caring who fell so he stood. In the general, his course was to persuade them he could lead us to peace or war at his pleasure, and would oft threaten the Indians, sending them word in a private manner, we were intended shortly to kill them, that thereby he might get gifts to himself to work their peace, insomuch as they had him in greater esteem than many of their Sachems; yea they themselves sought to him, who promised them peace in respect of us; yea and protection also, so as they would resort to him. So that whereas diverse were wont to rely on Massasoit for protection, and resort to his abode, now they began to leave him, and seek after Tisquantum. Now though he could not make good these his large promises, especially because of the continued peace between Massasoit and us, he therefore raised this false alarm, hoping whilst things were hot in the heat of blood, to provoke us to march into his country against him, whereby he hoped to kindle such a flame as would not easily be quenched, and hoping if that block were once removed, there were no other between him and honor; which he loved as his life, and preferred before his peace. For these and the like abuses, the Governor sharply reproved him, yet was he so necessary and profitable an instrument, as at that time we could not miss him. But when we understood his dealings, we certified all the Indians of our ignorance and innocence therein, assuring them till they begun with us, they should have no cause to fear. And if any hereafter should raise any such reports, they should punish them as liars and seekers of their and our disturbance, which gave the Indians good satisfaction on all sides.

After this we proceeded in our voyage to the Massachusetts, where we had good store of trade, and (blessed be God) returned in safety, though driven from before our town in great danger and extremity of weather.