

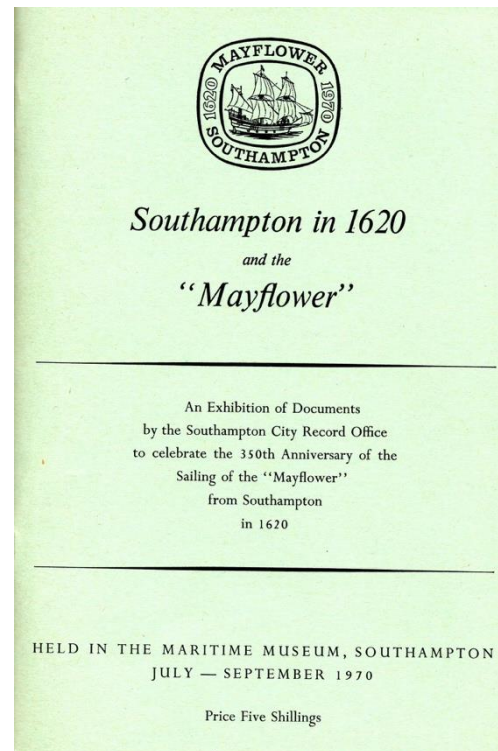
## Southampton in 1620 and the Mayflower

In 1970 the Southampton City Archivist Sheila Thompson was responsible for a publication describing the City in 1620 at the time the Mayflower and Speedwell were in Southampton. An exhibition of documents was displayed in the Maritime Museum then housed in the old Wool House, which is now The Dancing Man, a restaurant and brewery.

In the publication "Southampton in 1620 and the Mayflower" produced for the exhibition one section describes the growth of interest in the "Mayflower Story" and it says:

"Interest in the story of the voyage of the Mayflower and the first settlement, and the desire to learn about them, record and commemorate them is a 19th century development – after independence had come and the frontier moved far away.

*Cover of the booklet written by Sheila Thomson in 1970 to commemorate the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mayflower sailing from Southampton in August 1620. Photo: G Collyer*



The original name for the Mayflower settlers was “the Forefathers” the name “the Pilgrim Fathers” #1 coming into general use about 1840. The detailed record of the voyage by William Bradford “Of Plimouth Plantation” remained in manuscript until 1856 #2 and was for long periods lost to sight, so that family myth and legend had time to evolve and to take its hold on American minds – such as the Plymouth Rock, alleged to be the stone on which the Pilgrims first landed. Poems, songs, histories were written – some romantic like Longfellow’s poem about his ancestor John Alden, others scholarly works of research. Interest in the saga was steadily building up in America.

A Pilgrim Society had been founded in 1819 in Plymouth, and in 1896 the Society of Mayflower Descendants was formed. In 1920 these and other Societies naturally had tremendous celebrations for the 300th anniversary and in the years following a model village in the original pioneering style was built at Plymouth as a permanent exhibition. And interest spread to the old world as well, and various monuments and plaques were erected in the appropriate places. Southampton’s Mayflower Memorial erected in 1913, is a fine example of these, and a permanent record of the start of a mighty story. Three hundred and fifty years later we still applaud the courage and salute the enterprise of the Pilgrim Fathers.”

#1 The term Pilgrim was first used by William Bradford to describe the Leiden Separatists who were leaving Holland. The Mayflower's passengers were first described as “Our Leiden Pilgrim Fathers” in 1798. The name Pilgrims was probably not in popular use before about 1798, even though Plymouth celebrated Forefathers' Day several times before and used a variety of terms for Plymouth's founders. The first documented use was in 1798 at a Forefathers' Day celebration in Boston. A song composed for the occasion used the word Pilgrims, and the participants drank a toast to "The Pilgrims of Leiden" The term was used

prominently during Plymouth's next Forefather's Day celebration in 1800, and was used in Forefathers' Day observances thereafter.

By the 1820s, the term Pilgrims was becoming more common. Daniel Webster repeatedly referred to "the Pilgrims" in his December 22, 1820 address for Plymouth's bicentennial, which was widely read. Harriet Vaughan Cheney used it in her 1824 novel *A Peep at the Pilgrims in Sixteen Thirty-Six*, and the term also gained popularity with the 1825 publication of Felicia Hemans's classic poem "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers".

What has to be remembered is that many of those who sailed on the Mayflower were not sailing for religious reasons and therefore the term Pilgrim is inappropriate when applied to them.

#2 Bradford's manuscript at some point during the American War of Independence had been taken to London and deposited in the Bishop of London's library. This was a quite proper thing to have happened as the American Colonies came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London just as Southampton comes under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester. Its presence in the library was recorded in 1844 by the Bishop of Winchester Samuel Wilberforce. Bradford had recorded deaths and marriages as well as births in the document which was therefore seen as a parish record and as a consequence deposited with the Bishop. The manuscript was returned to America in 1897.

The recovery of the manuscript is in itself an interesting story and can be found here:

<https://www.dailyecho.co.uk/.../15797810.a-look-back-at.../>

This article was actually prepared and written for the Daily Echo by Godfrey Collyer, a Mayflower Heritage Guide for See Southampton.