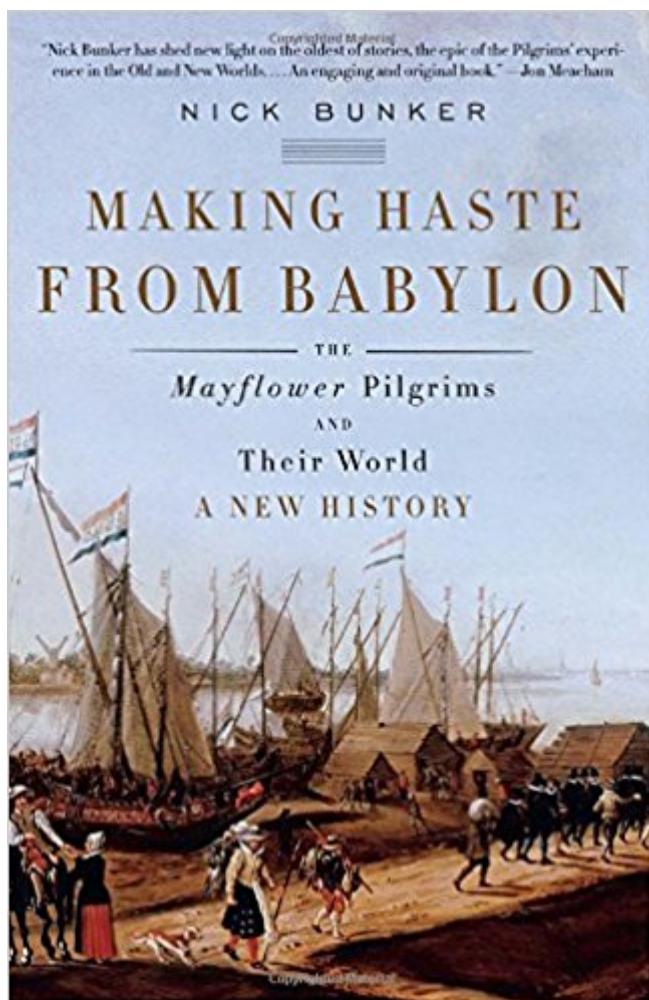


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Making Haste From Babylon: The Mayflower Pilgrims And Their World: A New History



Synopsis

At the end of 1618, a blazing green star soared across the night sky over the northern hemisphere. From the Philippines to the Arctic, the comet became a sensation and a symbol, a warning of doom or a promise of salvation. Two years later, as the Pilgrims prepared to sail across the Atlantic on board the Mayflower, the atmosphere remained charged with fear and expectation. Men and women readied themselves for war, pestilence, or divine retribution. Against this background, and amid deep economic depression, the Pilgrims conceived their enterprise of exile. Within a decade, despite crisis and catastrophe, they built a thriving settlement at New Plymouth, based on beaver fur, corn, and cattle. In doing so, they laid the foundations for Massachusetts, New England, and a new nation. Using a wealth of new evidence from landscape, archaeology, and hundreds of overlooked or neglected documents, Nick Bunker gives a vivid and strikingly original account of the Mayflower project and the first decade of the Plymouth Colony. From mercantile London and the rural England of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I to the mountains and rivers of Maine, he weaves a rich narrative that combines religion, politics, money, science, and the sea. The Pilgrims were entrepreneurs as well as evangelicals, political radicals as well as Christian idealists. *Making Haste from Babylon* tells their story in unrivaled depth, from their roots in religious conflict and village strife at home to their final creation of a permanent foothold in America.

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Customer Reviews

A Q&A with Author Nick Bunker Question: What made you, as an Englishman, want to tell the story of the Mayflower Pilgrims? Nick Bunker: Before they were American, they were English, and a

revolutionary war had to be fought before the two nations separated for good. Long after the Mayflower, the history of England and America remained deeply intertwined. You can't understand one without delving into the other as well. In my case there's also a family reason for my fascination with the American past. I'm called Bunker. For centuries the Bunkers lived lives of total obscurity, as farmhands and farriers and the like in the countryside northwest of London. Except for one Bunker, a yeoman farmer called George, born in about 1600. It seems that George Bunker became a Puritan and in 1632, he sailed to Massachusetts, most likely on the Lyon, a ship which also supplied the Plymouth Colony. He settled at Charlestown, where he gave his name to Bunker Hill, but George was a free-thinking man who upset the authorities by supporting the religious radical Anne Hutchinson. So they took away his gun, and banned him from holding public office. Even so, he did well. George Bunker became one of the earliest benefactors of Harvard College. His descendants were still living at Charlestown in 1775, when Bunker Hill became a battlefield. You won't find George Bunker in *Making Haste from Babylon*, but his story wasn't so very different from those of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. It raises the same kind of questions. Exactly why did they embark on this bold, hazardous project called New England? What did they find when they arrived? How and why did they succeed, so that families like the Bunkers, who'd been unknowns in England, came to be entrepreneurs in America, the kind of people you read about in *Moby Dick*? I find these questions fascinating, but very few Britons have shown any interest in answering them. That's why I decided to write the book. I felt that it was time the story was told from an English perspective, and I guessed that historians had overlooked a mass of relevant material here in the United Kingdom. Question: You unearthed an extraordinary number of documents relating to the Pilgrims and the early settlement of New England, most of them virtually untouched. How did you find these records? And what do they reveal? Nick Bunker: It's a matter of timing. In the 19th century, when people started to look to the Pilgrim Fathers and the Mayflower as the inventors of America, scholars from New England began to make visits to London in search of archive material that might shed more light upon them. By the time of the tercentenary in 1920, it looked as though every relevant document had been discovered. Since then, many books have appeared about the Plymouth Colony, both academic and popular. But with only one or two exceptions the authors have relied entirely upon sources which were already in print a century ago. Since 1945, record offices in England have made available huge quantities of new material from the Tudor and Stuart period, documents which were previously either hidden away in private hands, unlisted, or too badly damaged for use by scholars. Archivists have sorted out and numbered thousands of loose papers, created new

catalogues, undertaken conservation projects, and become far more open and accessible. Of course, only a tiny fraction of their holdings relate to people involved in the settlement of New England. Even so they contain a wealth of relevant detail which simply wasn't available to researchers until quite recently.

Starred Review. This superb book secures for the Pilgrims their iconic perch among the earliest founders of colonial America. Bunker, a British investment banker turned journalist, has succeeded in writing a major history, unprecedented in its sweep, of the Plymouth Colony, a history centered on the 1620s but not exclusive to that decade. If short on interpretation and on the drama inherent in the settlers' enterprise, it is long on facts. Bunker takes his history in two directions, downward into some never before used archives (which allows him to add detail and texture), and outward into the entire world context of the Pilgrim settlements. Never before has such a comprehensive and thoroughly researched study of the subject appeared. If sometimes fatiguing by the volume of detail (e.g., in a disquisition on one settlement, directions to the site include turn left at the Dunkin' Donuts), it scoops up every relevant character and links all to the basic tale of indomitable courage, religious faith, commercial ambition, international rivalry, and domestic politics. The results are stunning. Certain to be the dominating work on the Pilgrims for decades. 20 illus., 4 maps. (Apr.)

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I think we all knew that the arrival of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts was more than Puritans eking out an existence on Plymouth Rock, nearly starving the first year and celebrating w/ the neighbors when the harvest came in. For instance, no one ever explained how it was that Squanto was able to communicate w/ the Pilgrims. It turns out that he (real name Tisquantum) was captured by an English ship's master in 1614 and taken w/ some twenty-seven Native Americans back to England to be sold as slaves at Malaga, Spain. At Malaga, Spanish monks saved him and his fellow prisoners from slavery. He managed to make his way to England, learned English and found passage back to Massachussets, arriving just before the Pilgrims. The fact that New England was well explored by English ships looking for cod to take back to England prior to 1620 wasn't covered in my lessons about the founding of an English colony. The fact that the backers who paid for the voyage of the Mayflower hoped to recoup their expenses by opening a lucrative fur trade also wasn't covered. The circumstances that led strict Dissenters who we know as Puritans to the New World is also a more interesting story than the problems w/ King James and temporary refuge in

Holland. This book is an extremely well-researched and extremely well-written account of how it was that the Pilgrims came to the New World. It's much more interesting than I ever imagined. The details in this book and the incredible background in this book make it a superb addition to anyone's understanding. I guarantee that you will find out much that you never knew and the truth is much more interesting than the traditional Thanksgiving tale. I recommend this book highly.

I enjoy reading history. I ignored this book for several years after its publication. What could be new about Plymouth Rock? Well, plenty. Kudos to the author. He combed through the business records and shipping records in England and Europe, and re-traced the fur trading routes in what is now Maine and Massachusetts, to give an economic history of Plymouth colony. That sounds dull, but it is not. Prayer and a desire for land and freedom could not have led to the settling of New England--this book ties European commerce, and European wars, to the conditions that made risking the Atlantic crossing worth while for tens of thousands of English. Very informative and entertainingly written. Completely different from Nathaniel Philbrick's "Mayflower", which is a history of the New England settlers and the native inhabitants.

An interesting complex opinionated and very much researched description of the Pilgrims. It is particularly good at setting the complex background in England that gave rise to the pilgrims (Brownists as opposed to the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay.) Interesting in setting the economic reasons for the colonies success and describing the people who made it up. A much more nuanced history of the Plymouth colony set in broader historical terms than many accounts. All in all well worth reading if you are interested in America in the colonial period.

This verbose, tedious, and often scattershot book attempts to fill in the gaps behind the Puritan, actually Separatist, establishment of a colony at Plymouth in 1620. The author digs deep into many archives, primarily English, to add dimensions to the lives of those connected with this event. Unfortunately, the net result is not entirely successful. Separatism can hardly be discounted as the underlying motivation for establishing a new community in the New World, but many English factors such as geography, locale, demographics, economics, domestic and international politics, etc came into play. The author leaves few stones unturned in the pursuit of the relevancy of these areas, at times to the point of testing the durability of the reader. The amount of detail is both the strength and the weakness of the book. The detail is at times enlightening or overwhelming, often at the same time. The author's approach is a bit uneven, roaming across time and place as his various

themes take him. Also, perhaps surprisingly, the actual Plymouth colony becomes only a small part of the author's story.

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