

A Review of our Trip to Plimoth Plantation

By Jack Wooldridge

My parents have been wanting to go to Plimoth Plantation since 1993, when they first heard about it. But like many things that they would like to do, it never happened. UNTIL NOW.

Have you heard of Plimoth? You know, where the Pilgrims settled to practice their faith beyond the long (long, long) arm of the Church of England. But there was more to it than that. A lot more. As I will explain as we journey through Plimoth, from the Wampanoag Homesite to Plimoth Plantation to the Crafts Center to the Mayflower II. I will try to take you through this without messing up the facts too much. Fortunately I have a collection of Plimoth facts and odds and ends in the form of my dad (since he read the book *Mayflower*), so he can help me out.

When we first arrived at Plimoth, we payed the money for our tickets, got a special bonus add-on that allowed us to go on the Mayflower II as well (woo-hoo!), and ambled away to see the Wampanoag Homesite. The Wampanoag Homesite was a recreation of a small portion of the Wampanoag village, where an extended family of about ten people would live in one three chimney bark house called a "weetu." As well as the big house, there were some smaller areas where Wampanoag people did chores such as splitting the cattails (which did not seem to be anyone's favorite job), tying the cattails into bundles, cooking, evaluating which houses needed to be fixed in the winter, and talking to visitors. In the village, the people were speaking from a 21st century perspective, which was good because if they were actors pretending that they were from the 17th century, it would have been hard to have a conversation with them!

However, in the Plimoth Plantation, the pilgrims were all actors, pretending that they were from the 17th century. It worked very well, and you could get into some interesting conversations, talking about the events of years ago as if they happened just yesterday. And the characters you would meet around the village were all very different from each other, all very knowledgeable about the period and all very good at acting as if they didn't know about the present. One interesting thing was the way that people from different churches all intermingled in the village and some of the tensions that caused. We had a great time talking to the people and learning about their characters' lives!

After we were done seeing the village, we headed over to the Crafts Center, where all the chairs, tables and other items of furniture used in the Plimoth Plantation are made. We met a master craftsman cabinet maker, who was very knowledgeable and very good at making boxes, furniture, you name it. He and his assistant were working on boxes and talked to us as they worked. We had a nice talk with him, and then went to see an exhibit on what the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims ate in different seasons. We would have also liked to see the potter, but they were having lunch. After we were done there we saw some goats and cows, and went to an exhibit on the first thanksgiving and what really happened. It was very interesting.

After we were finished at the Crafts Center, we headed over to the Mayflower II, a reproduction of the Mayflower. It was built in 1957, which is before my parents were born! There was a cool little exhibit on the ship, which explains a bit about the people we know sailed on the original Mayflower, a section about what conditions were like and what instruments they used, and pictures of the ship being constructed. There were pictures of the ship being launched, and pictures of it sailing. There was one picture of a frigate checking the Mayflower II out.

Then we boarded the ship. It actually seemed quite small when you got on it. Much too small for 102 passengers and 30 crew! It must have stunk in there! We talked to some very knowledgeable guides, who explained some of the reasons for the voyage and many of the tools used. There were supposed to be some actors on the ship, but it was nearing closing time and all but one had left.