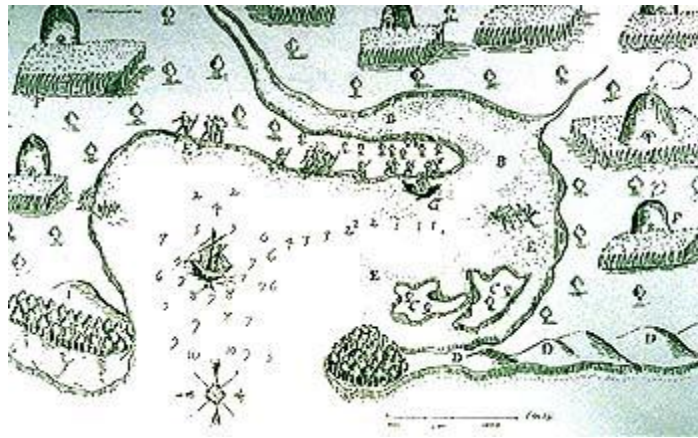


Journey by Sea:

Canoes and Shallops

Both the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag used small craft to cross rivers and travel along the coast.



Champlain's 1605 map of Plymouth harbor

The Wampanoag built canoes from hollowed-out logs (*not* from birchbark, which was used north of here). Men used fire to burn out the center of a log, and then scraped out the burnt wood with stone gouges. The heavy canoes held several people. Besides crossing rivers, people used canoes for traveling (to islands) and for fishing.



Detail of Champlain map showing canoe at right

The heavy canoes held several people. Besides crossing rivers, people used canoes for traveling (to islands) and for fishing.

The Pilgrims used small wooden boats, called shallops, and larger pinnaces. With no bridges, it was easier to sail along the coast than to walk. After 1627 many of the original colonists moved away from

Plymouth to new towns. Most built houses close to the shore for easy water access: the Howlands and Bradfords in what is now Kingston, the Standishes and Brewsters in Duxbury, and the Winslows in Marshfield. In the 1630s the colonists dug a canal at Green Harbor to ease water travel between Duxbury and Marshfield. The canal, "18 foot wide and 6 foot deep" may be America's first canal.

The Pilgrims also used small craft to travel to trading posts. There they purchased furs from the Natives to send back to England. They also traded for European goods like shoes and clothing. In 1634 they set up a trading post at what is now Windsor on the Connecticut River. They had another trading post in Maine on the Kennebec. Trading posts on major rivers were logical places to set up trading posts.

Coastal travel was risky, as the Plymouth colonists found out in late 1622, on a trip to Nauset (near present-day Barnstable) to trade for corn:

...the wind being fair [they departed for] the bottom of the bay of Cape Cod, to a place called Nauset; where the sachim used the Governor very kindly, and where they bought eight or ten hogsheads of corn and beans... During the time of their trade in these places, there were so great and violent storms, as the ship was much endangered, and our shallop cast away, so that they had now no means to carry the corn aboard that they had bought...

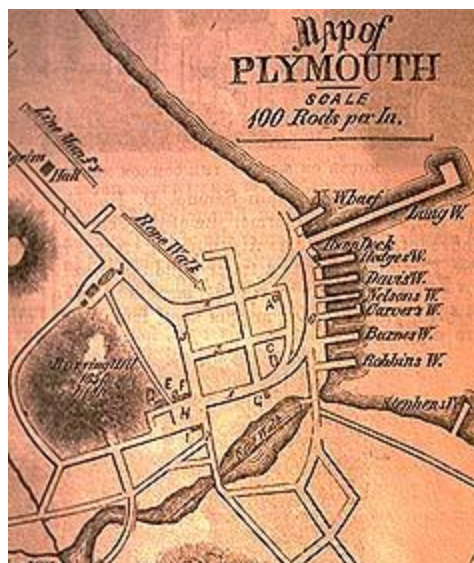
The Nauset Wampanoag helped them to look for their cast away shallop, which they found buried in sand nearby. Governor Bradford asked the Nausets to look after the corn, and proceeded to return to Plymouth on foot.

And having procured a guide, it being no less than fifty miles to our Plantation... came safely home, though weary and subrated...
Edward Winslow, *Good Newes from New England*

Packet Boats

Water transport was the backbone of New England's economy. By the early 19th century, vessels made frequent trips between South Shore towns and Boston. Generally they carried cargo to trade from one port to another. Many also carried passengers.

Small sloops (around 60 tons) carried cargo from coastal towns like Plymouth to Boston, Salem and Portsmouth, NH.



1832 map of Plymouth

In the 1830s Plymouth had six 60-ton sloops which brought raw materials like iron and cotton to Plymouth's growing factories. Many sloops sailed to Boston on a weekly basis. Plymouth had a thriving waterfront with many wharfs.

Two 90-ton schooners were used for longer trips to ports like New Bedford, New York or Nantucket. Special lumber ships were dispatched to Maine to bring back timber.



Topsail schooners and brigs were used for the coastal trade. Local vessels sailed along the Atlantic coast to Hartford, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond and Charleston. Often coasters carried ship from one port, like fish from New England, to trade for goods at another port, and then trade that cargo at a port further south for goods like cotton to bring back to New England factories. Some traveled to the West Indies to trade for bananas and other fruit.

The fact that many New England railroads connected with port towns reflects the continuing significance of coastal transport.

Steamboats

Sailing vessels were dependent on wind and weather. Inventors began experimenting with steam-powered boats in the late 1700s, but it wasn't until Robert Fulton's success in Albany with the side-wheeler *Clermont* in 1806 that steamboats became viable. Steamboats were not dependent on wind. The use of steam power allowed for regular journeys with scheduled departures and arrivals for both passengers and freight.



Steamship *Eagle*

Oil on Canvas, c 1900 by Fred Pansing (1844-1912)

The first steamboat to sail into Plymouth was the *Eagle*, in 1818.

Traveling at about 5 miles per hour, the *Eagle* took 8 hours to paddle from Boston to Plymouth. The *Eagle* was not destined for travel to Plymouth, and soon began service between Boston and Nantasket.

Steamboat service was started between the Plymouth and Boston in 1828 with the steamer *Lafayette*. There was already stagecoach service to Boston however, so there was not sufficient need for a steamer line. Service was discontinued the next year.

By the late 1830s, steamboat service resumed to Boston. The newer steamers were much faster, covering the 55 miles in 3 1/2 to 4 hours, in about the same time as the stagecoach. While some steamers carried passengers for business, others were excursion boats which ran trips for visitors in the summer as early as 1839.

In the late 1800s, the steamer arrived at noon and left at 4, providing visitors with four hours to see the sights of Plymouth aboard the carriages which waited at the wharf. At the right is the canopy over Plymouth Rock (the current portico was built in 1921).



Steamboat lines soon connected with new railroad lines. Service from New York to Fall River began in 1846. From Fall River, travelers connected to Boston by rail, thereby avoiding the dangerous sea voyage around Cape Cod. The New York to Boston route via Fall River is known as "America's oldest through route." Steamers brought passengers to Fall River through 1937.

By the 1920s, steamers provided not only transportation, but excursions for recreation as well. Although the Depression hurt steamboat lines, they revived after World War II to provide excursion service between Boston and Plymouth. Many boats featured entertainments like dance bands.

The Fall River Line

With the establishment of a railroad line to Fall River in 1847, the port city became an important link on the through route from New York to Boston. One of the best known steamship companies was the Fall River Line.

The Fall River Line was known for its fast, luxurious ships. The 176-mile journey from New York to Fall River took between 8 1/2 and 9 hours. Ships like the *Pilgrim*, *Puritan* and *Plymouth* were known as "floating palaces" with elaborate, gilt Renaissance interiors. The ships carried more than 1200 passengers each, and were popular among the elite:

...her furniture and upholstery are of the finest materials, design and finish.. Here one meets the elite of every land... representing the wealth and culture of every nation and people.

After the construction of the Cape Cod Canal in 1914, the Fall River Line ships sailed through the Canal to Boston. Many families drove down to the canal on Sunday night to watch the ships pass through.

The Cape Cod Canal

The sea route around Cape Cod was dangerous because the sand shoals around Nausett Beach on the Outer Cape frequently shifted. Ships often ran into the shoals, tearing their bottoms and wrecking. Beginning with the *Sparrow-Hawk* in 1626, a wreck occurred every few weeks. More than 3000 vessels were destroyed over almost three centuries. As early as the 1600s, a canal to cut off the perilous sea journey was suggested.

The most logical place to dig a canal was between the Scussett and Bourne Rivers south of Plymouth. The Wampanoag showed the Pilgrims the short land route between the rivers which connected Buzzards' Bay to Cape Cod Bay. While there was interest in building a canal during the Revolution, nothing was done until the late 1880. 400 Italian immigrant workers were brought to Sandwich to dig a canal, using shovels and wheelbarrows. The project was soon abandoned.

In 1909 financier August Belmont, who had built the elevated system in New York City, funded construction of a canal using dredges and later, steamshovels. The Cape Cod Canal was completed in 1914. It had two road bridges and one rail bridge. To pay for the multi-million dollar project, Belmont charged tolls. The canal was narrow, and only one ship could pass through at a time. The new route did save time, however, cutting 7 hours off the journey to Boston.

The US Army Corps of Engineers took over the canal in 1928, and the canal operated free of charge. During the Depression, public works projects funded improvements. The canal was widened and deepened to allow two-way traffic.



PRESIDENT'S YACHT (MAYFLOWER) PASSING THROUGH CAPE COD CANAL.

The Bourne and Sagamore Bridges were completed in 1935, and the vertical lift Railway Bridge the next year. Today, both commercial and recreational vessels use the canal.