

and training our men. And so all the bows and arrows was brought into the Governor's house, and he brought the Governor three or four bucks and a turkey. And so we had very good pastime in seeing them dance, which is in such manner, with such a noise that you would wonder. . . . And now to say somewhat of the great cheer we had at the Governor's marriage. We had about twelve pasty venisons, besides others, pieces of roasted venison and other such good cheer in such quantity that I could wish you some of our share. For here we have the best grapes that ever you say--and the biggest, and divers sorts of plums and nuts which our business will not suffer us to look for.

William Bradford died in 1657, having been governor of the Plymouth Colony for almost the entire period since 1621. Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* wrote that William Bradford:

. . . was a Person for Study as well as Action; and hence, notwithstanding the Difficulties through which he passed in his Youth, he attained unto a notable Skill in Languages; the Dutch Tongue was become almost as Vernacular to him as the English; the French Tongue he could also manage; the Latin and the Greek he had Mastered; but the Hebrew he most of all studied, Because, he said, he would see with his own Eyes the Ancient Oracles of God in their Native Beauty. He was also well skill'd in History, in Antiquity, and in Philosophy; and for Theology he became so versed in it, that he was an Irrefragable Disputant against the Errors, especially those of Anabaptism, which with Trouble he saw rising in his Colony; wherefore he wrote some Significant things for the Confutation of those Errors. But the Crown of all was his Holy, Prayerful, Watchful and Fruitful Walk with God, wherein he was very Exemplary. At length he fell into an Indisposition of Body, which rendred him unhealthy for a whole Winter; and as the Spring advanced, his Health yet more declined; yet he felt himself not what he counted Sick, till one Day; in the Night after which, the God of Heaven so fill'd his Mind with Ineffable Consolations, that he seemed little short of Paul, rapt up unto the Unutterable Entertainments of Paradise. The next Morning he told his Friends, That the good Spirit of God had given him a Pledge of his Happiness in another World, and the First-fruits of his Eternal Glory: And on the Day following he died, May 9, 1657 in the 68th Year of his Age. Lamented by all the Colonies of New England, as a Common Blessing and Father to them all.

William Bradford wrote *Of Plymouth Plantation*, chronicling the history of the Plymouth Colony, and the events that led up to their leaving England for Holland, and later to New England. William Bradford also wrote part of *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth*, and he recorded some of the important letters he wrote and received in a *letterbook* which still partially exists. Nathaniel Morton's 1669 book, *New England's Memorial* also records a *poem written by William Bradford* on his deathbed. There are also two elegy poems written in 1657 after Bradford's death--the *first elegy poem* is anonymous, and the *second elegy poem* was written by Josias Winslow.

The Pilgrim Hall Museum has in its collection William Bradford's armchair, and his Bible.

SOURCES:

1. *Mayflower Families in Progress: William Bradford for Four Generations*, by Robert S. Wakefield, General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 4th edition 1994.
2. *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims in Plymouth*, by William Bradford and Edward Winslow, first published London 1622.
3. *Of Plymouth Plantation*, by William Bradford, written c1630-c1654.
4. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 83:456-461, 84:5-11 (English ancestry of William Bradford)
5. *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth*, Sydney V. James editor, Plimoth Plantation 1963 (Emmanuel Altham's letter)
6. *Mayflower Descendant* 29:114-121 (Partial reprint of *Magnalia Christi Americana*).

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