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17th-Century English Village Backgrounder 2013

Plimoth Plantation's 17th-Century English Village is an immersive experience where Museum guests come face to face with life in Plimoth Colony. By 1627 Plymouth Colony consisted of approximately 28 houses and 155 people as well as a variety of livestock.

The Village consists more than fourteen re-created structures, including houses furnished to represent some of the specific historical homes of Plimoth Colony. The Village represents a working farm community staffed by talented men and women working as costumed role-players, interpreting and re-creating the lives of many of Plimoth Colony's original inhabitants. They speak in early English dialects and share the unique viewpoints of the time period. Daily cooking and chore presentations, demonstrations of house construction and animal husbandry are just a few ways that guests can interact directly with the Pilgrim interpreters.

The exhibit was not always as it is today. Originally the Museum consisted of two houses and the Fort/Meetinghouse on display near the Plymouth State Pier at Plymouth Harbor. Between 1957 and 1958, Plimoth Plantation expanded and moved to its current location, which began with the construction of four houses and the relocation of the Fort/Meetinghouse. Exhibits initially used costumed guides and hostesses to explain history in the houses that featured mannequins, antiques and audio recordings.

In 1969 an innovative new Plimoth Plantation emerged. Mannequins and antiques were replaced by real people, real livestock and reproductions of usable tools and furniture. In place of the clean, neat and idealized village, the Museum began to develop a highly detailed historical environment that is seen today in the 17th-Century English Village. By 1977 staff in the English Village were experimenting with the next logical step — playing the roles of actual Pilgrim colonists. In 1978 the role-playing that Plimoth Plantation is famous for was officially adopted.

Because the 17th-Century English Village is the Museum's interpretation of 1600s Plimoth history, it is a constantly changing exhibit as the Museum's understanding of the time period continually evolves. New research, hands-on experience working in the Village and archaeological finds regularly influence the updates in the presentation of the living exhibits. Subtle changes are always taking place, which makes a journey to Plimoth Plantation's 17th-Century English Village a new experience every visit.

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