The Puritans

In England, the Puritans were still struggling to worship the way that they wanted to. They wanted to change and purify the Church of England. When the Puritans heard about the Pilgrim's colony at Plymouth, they decided that they should try to do a similar thing. They came up with a plan to do just that.

In 1628, a number of Puritans, led by a man named John Winthrop, decided that they would establish a colony in New England to the north of Plymouth. The Puritans realized that they would have to be very organized. They had heard about the hardships faced by those who had already gone to the New World. They knew that many had died due to lack of food and shelter. They Puritans were determined to avoid these mistakes.

It was decided that a small group of Puritans would go ahead of the others and build a colony. It was also decided that this Puritan colony would be different from other English colonies. In order to live in this colony, people would have to live according to the Bible and strict Christian principles. John Winthrop believed that their colony should be an example to others in terms of how people should live.

In 1630, John Winthrop set sail for New England with three ships and about seven hundred colonists. They brought a good amount of food with them, as well as cows, horses, and tools. They were more prepared than and of the other English settlers so far. They established settlements in Salem, Charleston, Cambridge and Boston.

As planned, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was different from the colonies developing in the South. There were very strict laws. For example, everyone had to go to church. The pilgrims had been happy to separate from the Church of England, but the Puritans wanted to remain a part of it and were determined to change it.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony was very successful and grew quite rapidly. Each Puritan town was carefully planned, with each family being given enough land on which to build a home and farm. The most important building in the town was the meetinghouse. This was
where religious services and town meetings were held. The Puritans believed in the power of education. They wanted their children to be able to read so they could read the Bible.

As more and more people started coming to the colony, they started to disagree with some of the leaders. They felt that what was happening was too much like the English system they had tried to escape. As more and more people came to the colony, more and more land was also being taken from the Native Americans. Roger Williams, a minister from London, strongly believed that the Native Americans should be paid for the land. Leaders did not agree. Before long, the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony considered him to be a troublemaker. He was forced to leave the colony.

Roger Williams left the colony. A few of his supporters went with him. He eventually made his way south to what would become Providence, Rhode Island. He purchased land from the Narragansett, a local Native American Tribe. This area became the colony of Rhode Island.

Gradually, others who also found it difficult to follow the strict Puritan way of life followed Williams.

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