

Plymouth's Ancient Book of Laws

(Plymouth Colony Records 11:1-4)

Orders agreed on at several times for the general good of the Colony and the better government and preservation of the same.

It was ordained 17 day of December anno 1623 by the Court then held that all criminal facts, and also all matters of trespasses and debts between man and man should be tried by the verdict of twelve honest men to be impaneled by authority in form of a jury upon their oaths.

It was decreed by the Court held the 29 of March anno 1626: that for the preventing of such inconveniences as do and may befall the plantation by the want of timber. That no man of what condition soever sell or transport any manner of works as frames for houses, planks, boards, shipping shallops, boats, canoes, or whatsoever may tend to the destruction of timber aforesaid how little soever the quantity be without the consent, approbation and liking of Governor and Council. And if any be found faulty herein and shall embark or any way convey to that end to make sale of any the goods aforesaid expressed or intended by this decree the same to be forfeited and a fine of twice the value for all so sold to be duly taken by the Governor for the use and benefit of the Company.

It was further decreed the day and year abovewritten for the preventing of such abuses as do and may arise amongst us that no handy-craftsman of what profession soever as tailor, shoemakers, carpenters, joiners, smiths, sawyers, or whatsoever which do or may reside or belong to this plantation of Plymouth shall use their science or trades at home or abroad for any strangers or foreigners till such time as the necessity of the Colony be served. Without the consent of the Governor and Council: the breach thereof to be punished at their discretion.

It was ordained the said 29 of March 1626: for the preventing scarcity as also for the farthering of our trade that no corn, beans or peas be transported, embarked or sold to that end to be conveyed out of the Colony without the leave and license of the Governor and Council. The breach whereof to be punished with loss of the goods so taken or proved to be sold: and the seller farther fined or punished or both at the discretion of the Governor and Council.

It was agreed upon by the whole Court held the sixth of January 1627 that from hence forward no dwelling house was to be covered with any kind of thatch, as straw, reed, etc., but with either board, or pale and the like; to wit: of all that were to be new built in the town.