

Thanksgiving & Harvest Thanks



For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food,
For love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

IF YOU HAVE

food in your fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep

YOU ARE RICHER THAN 75% OF THE WORLD.

IF YOU HAVE

money in the bank, your wallet, and some spare change

YOU ARE AMONG THE TOP

8% OF THE WORLD'S WEALTHY.

IF YOU WOKE UP THIS MORNING WITH MORE HEALTH THAN ILLNESS YOU ARE MORE BLESSED THAN THE MILLION PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT SURVIVE THIS WEEK.

if you have never experienced the danger of battle, the agony of imprisonment or torture, or the horrible pangs of starvation

YOU ARE LUCKIER THAN 500 MILLION PEOPLE ALIVE AND SUFFERING.

IF YOU CAN READ THIS MESSAGE YOU ARE MORE FORTUNATE THAN 3 BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO CANNOT READ IT AT ALL.



*It is not happy people that are thankful.
It is thankful people that are happy.*

Interested in some uncommon Thanksgiving history or some Fact or Fiction information? Then read on ...





As we get ready to stuff our bird and get all the side dishes and treats ready for our big feast, it pays to look back to that “first thanksgiving” and reflect on the past year. We may not think it at first glance that we have much to be thankful for, but we do!



*Thank you for all that grows,
Thank you for the sky's rainbows,
Thank you for the stars that shine,
Thank you for these friends of mine,
Thank you for the moon and sun,
Thank you God for all you've done!*

Although the precise historical origin of this holiday in America is disputed it has its beginnings with the *Harvest Festival*. While not the first thanksgiving of any sort on the North American continent, the traditional origin of modern Thanksgiving in the United States is generally regarded to be the celebration that occurred at the site of Plymouth Plantation, in Massachusetts in 1621.



At that time the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn't until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.



Plymouth Plantation

The second Thanksgiving celebration in 1623 was to mark the end of a long drought that had threatened the year's harvest and prompted Governor Bradford to call for a religious fast. Days of fasting and thanksgiving on an annual or occasional basis became common practice in other New England settlements as well.

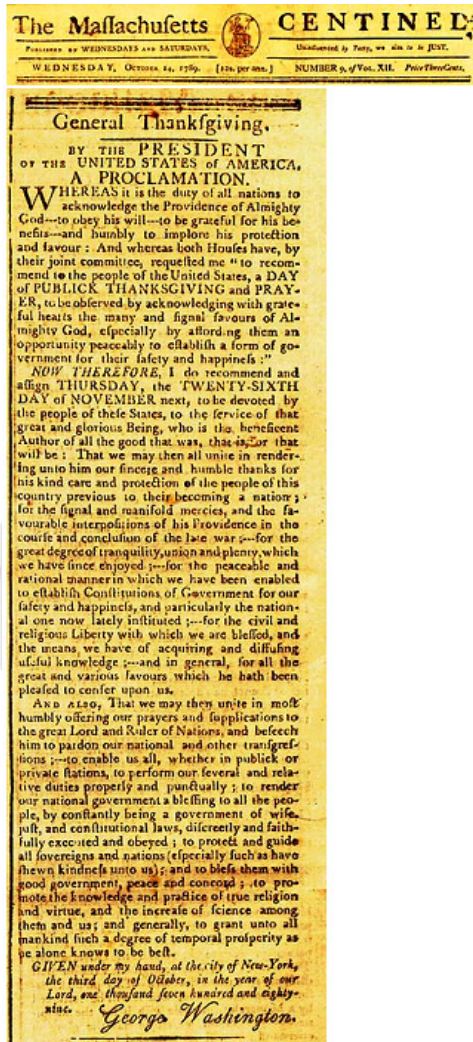


While the American concept of Thanksgiving developed in the colonies of New England, its roots can be traced back to the other side of the Atlantic. Both the Separatists who came over on the Mayflower and the Puritans who arrived soon after brought with them a tradition of providential

holidays—days of fasting during difficult or pivotal moments and days of feasting and celebration to thank God in times of plenty.



The Thanksgiving Proclamation



There are only two contemporary accounts of the 1621 Thanksgiving: First is Edward Winslow's account, which he wrote in a letter dated December 12, 1621. The complete letter was first published in 1622.

"Our corn [i.e. wheat] did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor

sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."



The second description was written about twenty years after the fact by William Bradford in his *History Of Plymouth Plantation*. Bradford's History was rediscovered in 1854 after having been taken by British looters during the Revolutionary War. Its discovery prompted a greater American interest in the history of the Pilgrims. It is also in this account that the Thanksgiving turkey tradition is founded.

"They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercising in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."

The primary sources above only list a few items that were on the **Thanksgiving "menu"**, namely five: deer, a large number of turkeys and waterfowl, cod, and bass; plus the harvest, which consisted of wheat, corn, barley, and perhaps a few peas.



To that list, we can add a few additional things that are known to have been native to the area and eaten by the Pilgrims: clams, mussels, lobster, eel, ground nuts, acorns, walnuts, chestnuts, squashes, and beans. Fruits and berries such as strawberries, raspberries, grapes, and gooseberries were available growing wild.



Pilgrim house-gardens may have included a number of English vegetables and herbs, perhaps things like onions, leeks, sorrel, yarrow, lettuce, carrots, radishes, currants, liverwort, watercress, and others.

It is unlikely much in the way of supplies brought on the Mayflower survived, such as Holland Cheese, olive oil, butter, salt pork, sugar, spices, lemons, beer, aqua-vitae, or bacon. It appears the Pilgrims may have had some chickens with them, so likely had access to a limited number of eggs. No mention of swine is found in any account of the first year. They did *not* have any goats or cattle: the first of those arrived on the ship Anne in 1623.

The Legend of the Five Kernels



The first winter the Pilgrims spent in their new home food was very scarce. Some days there was only enough for five kernels of corn. With the help of the Wampanoag Indians they learned about new foods and what would grow or not grow in this new land. So when spring came, the Pilgrims planted the remaining corn. The sun and rain helped the seeds to grow and much food was harvested in the fall. From then on, while fasting before every harvest around what has become Thanksgiving, the Pilgrims put five kernels of corn on each plate to remind themselves of their blessings. *Let us also remember!*



The first kernel reminds us of the autumn beauty around us.

The second kernel reminds us of our love for each other.

The third kernel reminds us to be grateful for all we have.

The fourth kernel reminds us of our friends.

The fifth kernel reminds us that we live in a free country.



Above all, no matter where we are or where we are from, this is an annual celebration of the harvest and its bounty that spans cultures, continents and millennia. It is a time to reap the benefits of our labors and take stock of all we can be thankful for as the tough winter approaches.



A Thanksgiving Day Prayer, by Brian F. King:

*○ Lord, with humble hearts we pray
Thy blessing this Thanksgiving Day
And ask that at table place,
Where grateful folk say words of grace,
That Thou will come to share the yield
Thy bounty gave to farm and field.
We pray thy love will bless, ○ Lord,
Each hearth, each home, each festive board;
And that Thy peace will come to stay
Where candles glow, Thanksgiving Day.*



Fact or Fiction Trivia (from History.com)

1. *Fact or Fiction:* Thanksgiving is held on the final Thursday of November each year.

Fiction. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln designated the last Thursday in November as a national day of thanksgiving. However, in 1939, after a request from the National Retail Dry Goods Association, President Franklin Roosevelt decreed that the holiday should always be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of the month (and never the occasional fifth, as occurred in 1939) in order to extend the holiday shopping season by a week. The decision sparked great controversy, and was still unresolved two years later, when the House of Representatives passed a resolution making the last Thursday in November a legal national holiday. The Senate amended the resolution, setting the date as the fourth Thursday, and the House eventually agreed.

2. *Fact or Fiction:* One of America's Founding Fathers thought the turkey should be the national bird of the United States.

Fact. In a letter to his daughter sent in 1784, Benjamin Franklin suggested that the wild turkey would be a more appropriate national symbol for the newly independent United States than the bald eagle (which had earlier been chosen by the Continental Congress). He argued that the turkey was "a much more respectable Bird," "a true original Native of America," and "though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage."

3. *Fact or Fiction:* In 1863, Abraham Lincoln became the first American president to proclaim a national day of thanksgiving.

Fiction. George Washington, John Adams and James Madison all issued proclamations urging Americans to observe days of thanksgiving, both for general good fortune and for particularly momentous events (the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, in Washington's case; the end of the War of 1812, in Madison's).

4. *Fact or Fiction:* Macy's was the first American department store to sponsor a parade in celebration of Thanksgiving.

Fiction. The Philadelphia department store Gimbel's had sponsored a parade in 1920, but the Macy's parade, launched four years later, soon became a Thanksgiving tradition and the standard kickoff to the holiday shopping season. The parade became ever more well-known after it featured prominently in the hit film *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), which shows actual footage of the 1946 parade. In addition to its famous giant balloons and floats, the Macy's parade features live music and other performances, including by the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes and cast members of well-known Broadway shows.

5. *Fact or Fiction:* Turkeys are slow-moving birds that lack the ability to fly.

Fiction (kind of). Domesticated turkeys (the type eaten on Thanksgiving) cannot fly, and their pace is limited to a slow walk. Female domestic turkeys, which are typically smaller and lighter than males, can move somewhat faster. Wild turkeys, on the other hand, are much smaller and more agile. They can reach speeds of up to 20-25 miles per hour on the ground and fly for short distances at speeds approaching 55 miles per hour. They also have better eyesight and hearing than their domestic counterparts.

6. *Fact or Fiction:* Native Americans used cranberries, now a staple of many Thanksgiving dinners, for cooking as well as medicinal purposes.

Fact. According to the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association, one of the country's oldest farmers' organizations, Native Americans used cranberries in a variety of foods, including "pemmican" (a nourishing, high-protein combination of crushed berries, dried deer meat and melted fat). They also used it as a medicine to treat arrow punctures and other wounds and as a dye for fabric. The Pilgrims adopted these uses for the fruit and gave it a name—"cranberry"—because its drooping pink blossoms in the spring reminded them of a crane.

7. *Fact or Fiction:* The movement of the turkey inspired a ballroom dance.

Fact. The turkey trot, modeled on that bird's characteristic short, jerky steps, was one of a number of popular dance styles that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States. The two-step, a simple dance that required little to no instruction, was quickly followed by such dances as the one-step, the turkey trot, the fox trot and the bunny hug, which could all be performed to the ragtime and jazz music popular at the time. The popularity of such dances spread like wildfire, helped along by the teachings and performances of exhibition dancers like the famous husband-and-wife team Vernon and Irene Castle.

8. *Fact or Fiction:* On Thanksgiving Day in 2007, two turkeys earned a trip to Disney World.

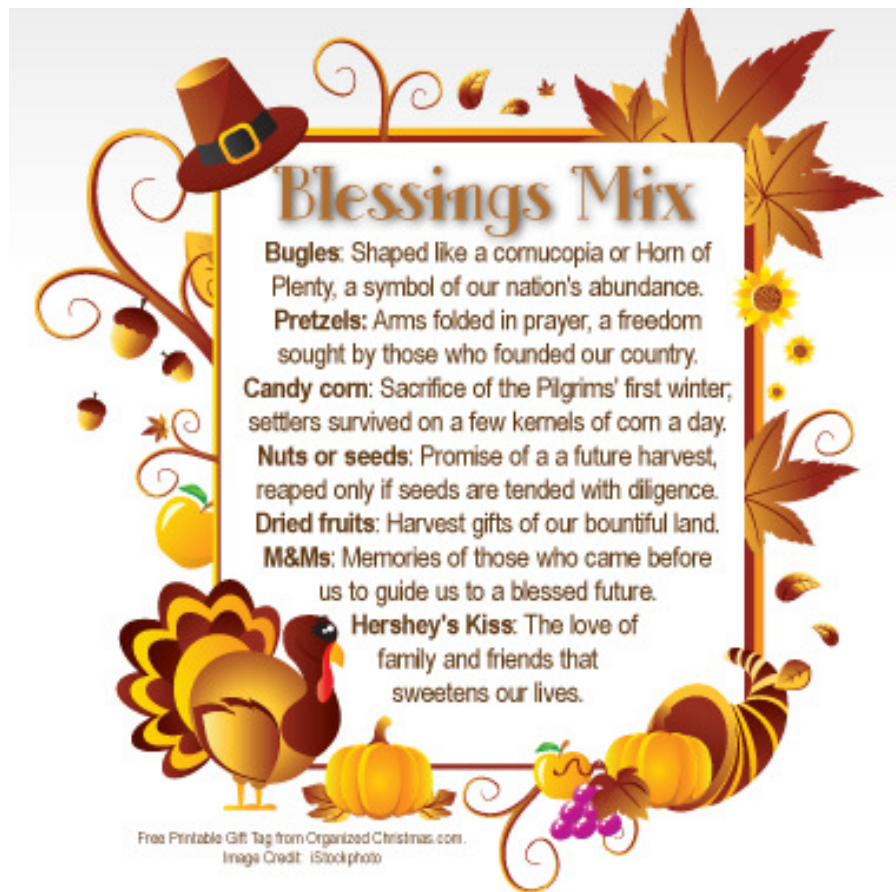
Fact. On November 20, 2007, President George W. Bush granted a "pardon" to two turkeys, named May and Flower, at the 60th annual National Thanksgiving Turkey presentation, held in the Rose Garden at the White House. The two turkeys were flown to Orlando, Florida, where they served as honorary grand marshals for the Disney World Thanksgiving Parade. The current tradition of presidential turkey pardons began in 1947, under Harry Truman, but the practice is said to have informally begun with Abraham Lincoln, who granted a pardon to his son Tad's pet turkey.

9. *Fact or Fiction:* Turkey contains an amino acid that makes you sleepy.

Fact. Turkey does contain the essential amino acid tryptophan, which is a natural sedative, but so do a lot of other foods, including chicken, beef, pork, beans and cheese. Though many people believe turkey's tryptophan content is what makes many people feel sleepy after a big Thanksgiving meal, it is more likely the combination of fats and carbohydrates most people eat with the turkey, as well as the large amount of food (not to mention alcohol, in some cases) consumed, that makes most people feel like following their meal up with a nap.

10. *Fact or Fiction:* The tradition of playing or watching football on Thanksgiving started with the first National Football League game on the holiday in 1934.

Fiction. The American tradition of college football on Thanksgiving is pretty much as old as the sport itself. The newly formed American Intercollegiate Football Association held its first championship game on Thanksgiving Day in 1876. At the time, the sport resembled something between rugby and what we think of as football today. By the 1890s, more than 5,000 club, college and high school football games were taking place on Thanksgiving, and championship match-ups between schools like Princeton and Yale could draw up to 40,000 fans. The NFL took up the tradition in 1934, when the Detroit Lions (recently arrived in the city and renamed) played the Chicago Bears at the University of Detroit stadium in front of 26,000 fans. Since then, the Lions game on Thanksgiving has become an annual event, taking place every year except during the World War II years (1939–1944).



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