

HAPPY THANKSGIVING



AMITY INSTITUTE 2007 THANKSGIVING NEWSLETTER

THANKSGIVING 2007 WILL BE ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22



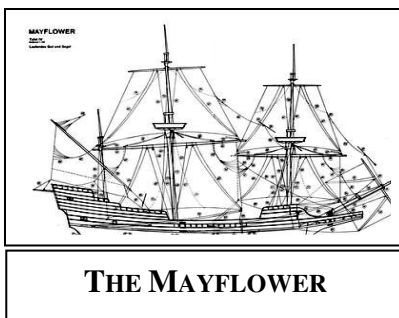
The end of November in the United States means Thanksgiving, or Turkey time. Whether the turkey is baked, broiled, barbequed, deep fried or made of tofu, it tastes great, and it is by far the most recognized symbol of Thanksgiving. For Americans Thanksgiving is often associated with big meals, family reunions, college football, mashed potatoes, candied yams and pumpkin pie with whipped cream. But you might be wondering what does this holiday mean to the United States' history and why is it celebrated with such fervor. To answer these questions, Amity has put together this short newsletter to introduce you to Thanksgiving.

WHAT IS THANKSGIVING?

James W. Baker, Senior Historian at Plymouth Plantation, states that, *"Thanksgiving is ... an invented tradition. It doesn't originate in any one event. It is based on the New England Puritan Thanksgiving, which is a religious Thanksgiving, and the traditional harvest celebrations of England and New England and maybe other ideas like commemorating the pilgrims. All of these have been gathered together and transformed into something different from the original parts."* You can see how Thanksgiving is created by many different events and ideas simply by watching how it is celebrated differently by each American family. To some Thanksgiving is a religious event and it is celebrated as such, but to others it is more of an opportunity for families to reunite and give thanks for all that has made them fortunate.

HISTORY

The story of Thanksgiving begins with a group of individuals called the Pilgrims, who in order to flee what they regarded as religious persecution in England, set sail on a ship called the Mayflower on September 6, 1620 bound for the "New World". The Mayflower was a small ship crowded with men, women and children, besides the sailors on board. The Mayflower passengers comprised two groups - the 'separatists', who called themselves the "Saints", and other passengers, who were called the "Strangers".



After land was sighted in November following 66 days of a lethal voyage, a meeting was held and an agreement was made between the two groups. This agreement was called the Mayflower Compact. The agreement guaranteed equality among the members of the two groups. They merged together to be recognized as the "Pilgrims", and they elected John Carver as their first governor. The Pilgrims settled at a place called Plymouth. It was Captain John Smith who named the place after an English port-city. Plymouth offered an excellent harbor and plenty of resources. The local Native Americans were also non-hostile.

Unfortunately the Pilgrims were ill-equipped to face the winter in this desolate land and suffered greatly during the first year. Luckily they were saved by a group of local Native Americans who befriended them and helped them with food. Soon the natives taught the settlers to cultivate corn, grow native vegetables and store food for the colder months. By the next winter, they had raised enough crops to keep them alive. The winter came and passed by without much harm. The settlers knew they had beaten the odds and it was time to celebrate.

However, the third year of the Pilgrim's settlement was extremely bad and the crops were severely damaged. Pilgrim Governor William Bradford ordered a day of fasting and prayer, and rain happened to follow soon after. To celebrate, the Governor proclaimed November 29th of that year a day of thanksgiving. This date is believed to be the real beginning of the present Thanksgiving Day.



CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH

THE WAMPANOAGS

The Native Americans who encountered the pilgrims when they stepped off of the Mayflower came from the tribe of Wampanoags. Wampanoag means "land where the sun comes up first." The Wampanoag's are called "People of the First Light" because they see the sun first. Their tribes are located from Canada to South Carolina and west to Wisconsin. The Wampanoag inhabited Plymouth thousands of years before the Pilgrims arrived there.

The tribe that first met with the Pilgrims lived close to the ocean and relied heavily on fishing, hunting, and the cultivation of crops. They were a friendly people that had good relations with the other Native American Tribes that lived near them. The Wampanoag had seen large boats before the Mayflower. Explorers like Verrazzano and Cabot had traveled to Wampanoag territory in the past, and Vikings from the north had frequently sailed into the area. In addition, European fishermen from Spain, Portugal, France, and Ireland fished for codfish off the Wampanoag coast years before the Pilgrims came in 1620.



A WAMPANOAG VILLAGE

When the first Thanksgiving was celebrated, all of the bounties of the land and the sea were made a part of this celebration. As the Pilgrims thanked their God in their own way, the Wampanoags thanked the Great Spirit for all of the bounties and blessings of food and drink that he bestowed upon them. It is this giving of thanks that Americans still celebrate today.

THE EVOLUTION OF THANKSGIVING



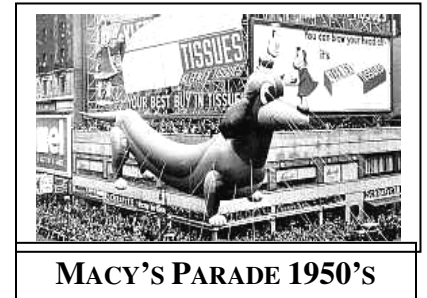
GEORGE WASHINGTON'S PRAYER AT VALLEY FORGE

Thanksgiving was first introduced on a National level as part of the proclamation during the American Revolution (late 1770's), when the Continental Congress suggested a day of national thanksgiving. Based on the Continental Congress's instruction, General George Washington and his army stopped in bitter weather in the open fields on their way to Valley Forge. Later, when Washington became the nation's first President, he declared November 26, 1789, as a national day of "thanksgiving and prayer."

In 1817 New York State adopted Thanksgiving Day as an annual custom, and by the middle of the 19th century many other states did the same. However, it was yet to assume a national significance. In 1827 Mrs. Sarah Joseph Hale began lobbying several Presidents for the proclamation of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. It didn't see success until 1863 when Abraham Lincoln finally made it a national holiday with his 1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation. President Lincoln designated that the holiday would be recognized on the last Thursday in November. It was President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939 (approved by Congress in 1941) that changed the celebration of Thanksgiving Day to the fourth Thursday of every November to accommodate the schedule of American businesses.

THE MACY'S THANKSGIVING PARADE

For over 75 years, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade has given us a tradition which both celebrates America and calls forth Christmas. The first parades began in the 1920's and were created by first-generation immigrants. Today the parade is as much a part of Thanksgiving as having turkey and you will find that many Americans plan to either watch the parade live in New York or from their living rooms on television.



SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS

Thanksgiving provides a great opportunity to get the kids interested in a number of different school subjects. Below you will find some links to internet sites that provide ideas on how to incorporate Halloween into your lesson plans.

- www.teacher.scholastic.com/thanksgiving/
- www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/thanks/
- www.educationworld.com/holidays/archives/thanksgiving.shtml
- <http://atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Thanksgiving/>
- www.lessonplanspage.com/Thanksgiving.htm
- www.teach-nology.com/teachers/lesson_plans/holidays/thanks/

LET'S GET READY TO EAT AND GIVE OUR THANKS, EVERYBODY!
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Information and pictures for this newsletter were acquired from the following websites: <http://www.theholidayspot.com/thanksgiving/history.htm>, <http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/thanksgiving/>, <http://www.plimoth.org/learn/history/thanksgiving/thanksgiving.asp>, http://www.nyctourist.com/macys_history1.htm, <http://teacher.scholastic.com/thanksgiving/plimoth/tscriptf.htm#relationship>, <http://www.all-model.com/list1/mayflower/mayflower.html>, <http://www.apva.org/history/jsmith.html>, <http://www.theprayeratvalleyforge.com/>, and <http://teacher.scholastic.com/thanksgiving/plimoth/daily.htm>