

The Daughtry Times[®]

Education through Integration[™]



The story of Thanksgiving is basically the story of the Pilgrims and their thankful community feast at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

The Pilgrims, who set sail from Plymouth, England on a ship called the Mayflower on September 6, 1620, were fortune hunters, bound for the resourceful 'New World'. The Mayflower was a small ship crowded with men, women and children, besides the sailors on board. Aboard were passengers comprising the 'separatists', who called themselves the "Saints", and others, whom the separatists called the "Strangers".

After land was sighted in November following 66 days of a lethal voyage, a meeting was held and an agreement of truce was worked out. It 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." They elected John Carver as their first governor.

Although Pilgrims had first sighted the land off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, they did not settle until they arrived at a place called Plymouth. It was Captain John Smith who named the place after the English port-city in 1614 and had already settled there for over five years. And it was there that the Pilgrims finally decided to settle. Plymouth offered an excellent harbor and plenty of resources. The local Indians were also non-hostile. Somehow they were saved by a group of local Native Americans who befriended them and helped them with food. Soon the natives taught the settlers the technique to cultivate corns and grow native vegetables, and store them for hard days. 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.

They celebrated it with a grand community feast wherein the friendly Native Americans were also invited. It was kind of a harvest feast, the Pilgrims used to have in England. The recipes entail "corn" (wheat, by the Pilgrims usage of the word), Indian corn, barley, pumpkins and peas, "fowl" (specially "waterfowl"), deer, fish. And yes, of course the yummy wild turkey.

However, the third year was real bad when the corns got damaged. Pilgrim Governor William Bradford ordered a day of fasting and prayer, and rain happened to follow soon. To celebrate - November 29th of that year was proclaimed a day of thanksgiving. This date is believed to be the real beginning of the present Thanksgiving Day.

Though the Thanksgiving Day is presently celebrated on the fourth Thursday of every November. This date was set by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939 (approved by Congress in 1941). Earlier it was the last Thursday in November as was designated by the former President Abraham Lincoln. But sometimes the last Thursday would turn out to be the fifth Thursday of the month. This falls too close to the Christmas, leaving the businesses even less than a month's time to cope up with the two big festivals. Hence the change.

1. Where did the history of Thanksgiving originate?
2. What was the name of the ship the pilgrims traveled on?
3. In paragraph form, explain the size of the ship as well as its occupants.
4. How many days was the voyage?
5. Explain the Mayflower Compact.
6. Who was the first elected governor for the Pilgrims?
7. Where did the Pilgrims *finally* decide to settle?
8. Explain the role of the Native Americans upon meeting the settlers.
9. What date is believed to be the real beginning of the present Thanksgiving Day?
10. When do we always celebrate Thanksgiving?
11. Who set this date? When?
12. What had it been previously?
13. Why a change in date?
14. In paragraph form, list at least five things in your life that you are thankful for.

Reference: <http://www.theholidayspot.com/thanksgiving/history.htm>