



Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday in America meant to celebrate the togetherness in our country and remember the true history of oppression and bloodshed that underlies the relationship between the Europeans and Native Americans. Celebrations began in the 1620s after the Plymouth colonists from England and the Native American Wampanoag people shared a harvest feast. It wasn't until 1863, amid the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving Day as a national holiday meant to be celebrated annually.

In September 1620, the Mayflower left Plymouth, England with 102 religious separatists seeking a new home where they can practice their religions freely and find land in the "New World" - America. After 66 days at sea, they landed near Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination of the Hudson River. One month later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where the Pilgrims began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth. Historians have suggested that the first Thanksgiving Day celebration included dishes using tradition Native American spices and cooking methods, mainly due to the Mayflower having no oven and no spices being left on the ship. The first feast did not include any pies or desserts that are now a tradition in contemporary celebrations.

In 1817, New York was the first state to begin the large celebrations of Thanksgiving, however many of these celebrations fell on different days and the south was not familiar with this new tradition. By 1863, Thanksgiving was celebrated nationally after President Lincoln announced Thanksgiving as a national holiday to be celebrated every year on the final Thursday of November. In 1939 President Roosevelt moved the celebration from the final Thursday to the fourth Thursday of November to help retail sales during the Great Depression.

In many American households, the holiday has lost much of its religious significance and is now focused on cooking and sharing a bountiful meal with family and friends. Turkey is the most popular food of them all, with 90% of Americans eating turkey for Thanksgiving, which may or may not have been part of the original celebrations with the Pilgrims. Thanksgiving is also a day where most Americans watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, which started in 1924. The parade centers around marching bands, performers, elaborate floats, and giant balloons shaped like cartoon characters. Many Americans also participate in fundraisers such as food drives and food banks.

Thanksgiving is a time to enjoy your loved ones in food and laughter, while embracing the true meaning of giving thanks. Let Thanksgiving Day be a day to enjoy and be thankful for those that you love, while feasting on delicious meals. Happy Thanksgiving Day from McGregor to you!

November 28, 2024, Written by: Kaitlyn Keenan, McGregor Marketing and Communication Intern, Graphics by: Kat Eddy, McGregor Marketing and Communication Intern

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