

The Truth Behind the Puritans' First 'Thanksgiving'

As you gather together for Thanksgiving this weekend with your friends and family to participate in a feast American's have celebrated for hundreds of years, you may have questions about the true origin of Thanksgiving.

"Today when you think of Thanksgiving, you think of that festival in 1621 as the beginning of the modern American tradition, but actually, it wasn't a Thanksgiving, it was a harvest festival," says James Bake a Historian at Plymouth Plantation.

In 1995, Charisma Media did a special debunking some of the commonly believed myths that have evolved over the years. In 1621 the Mayflower pilgrims who founded the Plymouth Colony celebrated their first harvest that many now refer to as the first Thanksgiving, except their feast was never repeated.

The pilgrims gathered together with some of the Wampanoag tribe for a three day feast outside. At the time, they didn't have a building large enough to fit everyone who attended so they set up tables and feasts outdoors.

The colonists enjoyed the abundant autumn harvest they brought in with the assistance of their Native American neighbors.

For the pilgrims it was a day of prayer and fasting. Their fest went on for three days and included 90 American Indians who came with venison. There was enough food brought in for everyone to be able to eat for an entire week.

Just over 100 pilgrims came to America to escape the religious controversy and economic problems of their time. Many were

Puritan separatists who believed that the membership in the Church of England violated the biblical precepts for true Christians.

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They left England and broke away from the church which at the time was looked at as treason.

Through the help of the Native Americans, the Mayflower voyagers learned how to cultivate the land to bring in a harvest. Their first feast in 1621 with the Wampanoag tribe, was meant to celebrate their first successful corn harvest. Even though we don't know exactly what they ate on that day, many believe there was turkey served.

It wasn't until more than 200 years later that Thanksgiving became a national holiday. President Abraham Lincoln decided during the Civil War, the holiday should be held the fourth Thursday of every November.

When you sit down at your dining room table this year with a plate filled to the brim, it's a great time to give thanks to God for all He has provided for you in your life. With food so readily available and at our fingertips, we often forget the simple blessings right before us. {eoa}

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