



Thanksgiving History

One of the most popular first Thanksgiving stories recalls the three-day celebration in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in **1621**. Over 200 years later, President Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November as a national day of thanksgiving, and in **1941** Congress established the fourth Thursday in November as a national holiday.

Since President Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving holiday in **1863**, Thanksgiving has been observed annually. However, various earlier presidents (including George Washington, John Adams, and James Madison) all urged Americans to observe various periods of thanksgiving. President Madison declared that Thanksgiving should be held twice in **1815**. Neither celebration occurred in the autumn.

Considered the "Mother of Thanksgiving," Sara Hale (**1788-1879**) was an influential editor and writer who urged President Lincoln to proclaim a national day of thanksgiving. She believed a national thanksgiving holiday would unite Americans and "awaken in Americans' hearts the love of home and country, of thankfulness to God, and peace between brethren. Mrs. Hale was also the first person to advocate women as teachers in public schools, the first to advocate day nurseries to assist working mothers, and the first to propose public playgrounds. She was also the author of two dozen books and hundreds of poems, including "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Pilgrims did not wear buckled hats or dress only in black and white. Buckles did not come into fashion until later in the **17th** century, and the pilgrims usually saved their formal black and white colors for Sunday.

The famous pilgrim celebration at Plymouth Colony Massachusetts in **1621** is traditionally regarded as the first American Thanksgiving. However, there are actually **12** claims to where the "first" Thanksgiving took place: two in Texas, two in Florida, one in Maine, two in Virginia, and five in Massachusetts.

The Pilgrim's thanksgiving feast in **1621** in Massachusetts occurred sometime between September **21st** and November **1st**. It lasted three days and included **50** surviving pilgrims and approximately **90** Wampanoag Indians, including Chief Massasoit. Their menu differed from modern Thanksgiving dinners and included berries, shellfish, boiled pumpkin, and deer.

Forefather's Day also celebrates the pilgrims, but it celebrates their landing at Plymouth Rock on December **21st**, **1620** rather than the plentiful harvest in **1621**. It is celebrated on

December **21st** usually only in New England. Forefather's Day was first celebrated in **1769** among a group of pilgrim descendants.

The first Thanksgiving football was in **1876**.

In **2007**, President George W. Bush granted a pardon to two turkeys named May and Flower. The tradition of pardoning Thanksgiving turkeys began in **1947**, though Abraham Lincoln is said to have informally started the practice when he pardoned his son's pet turkey.

Turkey Talk

In **1953**, Swanson overestimated the number of frozen turkeys that it would sell on Thanksgiving by **26** tons. The company decided to slice up the extra meat and repackage it...creating the first ever TV dinner.

The average American will consume about **4,500** calories on Thanksgiving Day, or about **3,000** for the meal and an additional **1,500** for snacking.

Americans eat roughly **535** million pounds of turkey on Thanksgiving. On average, it takes about **7** hours to cook a Thanksgiving dinner. People spend about **16** minutes eating it.

The Butterball Turkey hotline answers over **100,000** questions every November and early December.

Stuffing or dressing? People who cook the bread side-dish separately from the turkey or live in the South tend to call it dressing. People who cook it in the turkey or live elsewhere, tend to call it stuffing. Stove Top stuffing sells around **60** million boxes of stuffing around Thanksgiving every year.

Domestic turkeys (making up the main course of the typical thanksgiving feast) usually weigh twice as much as wild turkeys and are too large to fly.

Only male turkeys gobble, which is probably why they are called "gobblers." Both female and male turkeys have snoods, the red droopy thing on top of their beaks. Baby turkeys are called poults and all turkeys have two stomachs.

Thanksgiving Travel, Traditions & Tidbits

The average long-distance Thanksgiving trip is **214** miles, compared with **275** miles over the Christmas and New Year's holiday. Roughly **38.4** million Americans traveled more than **50** miles to be with family for Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Day is actually the busiest travel day, even more so than the day before Thanksgiving, as most people believe.

The song "Jingle Bells" was originally written as a Thanksgiving song.

Black Friday is the busiest day for Roto-Rooter, a major plumbing service. They are called in to clean up “overwhelmed” sewer systems.

Approximately **50** million people watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on television, **3** million attend in person. Established in **1924**, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade ties for second as the oldest Thanksgiving parade. The Snoopy balloon has appeared in the parade more often than any other character.

The people of the Virgin Islands, a United States territory in the Caribbean Sea, celebrate two thanksgivings, the national holiday and Hurricane Thanksgiving Day. Every Oct 19th, if there have been no hurricanes, Hurricane Day is held and the islanders give thanks that they have been spared.

Thanksgiving Values & Quotes

In **2001**, the U.S. Postal Service issued a Thanksgiving stamp to honor the tradition “of being thankful for the abundance of goods we enjoy in America.”

“Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”– **Charles Dickens**

“Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will.”– **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”– **John Fitzgerald Kennedy**

