

Origin of Thanksgiving Day



Thanksgiving is a very special holiday in America celebrated every year on the fourth Thursday in November. Its origin can be traced back to the 16th century when the first thanksgiving dinner is said to have taken place.

Journey of the Pilgrims

The legendary pilgrims crossed the Atlantic in the year 1620 in the Mayflower, a 17th century sailing vessel. About 102 people traveled for nearly two months with extreme difficulty. This was so because they were kept in the cargo space of the sailing vessel. No one was allowed to go on the deck due to terrible storms. The pilgrims comforted themselves by singing Psalms, sacred Biblical songs.

Arrival in Plymouth

The pilgrims reached Plymouth Rock on December 11th 1620, after a sea journey of 66 days. Though their original destination was somewhere in the northern part of Virginia, they could not reach it owing to the winds that blew them off course. Nearly 46 pilgrims died due to extreme cold that winter. However, in the spring of 1621, Squanto, a native Indian taught the pilgrims to survive by growing food, hunting and fishing.

First Thanksgiving Feast

It is said that the pilgrims learnt to grow corn, beans and pumpkins from the Indians, which helped them survive. In the autumn of 1621, they held a grand celebration where 90 people were invited including Indians. The grand feast was held to thank God for his favors. This communal celebration is popularly known as “The First Thanksgiving Feast”. However, there is no record to prove that it actually took place.

Turkey and the First Thanksgiving Feast

There is no evidence to prove if the customary turkey was a part of the original feast. According to the first hand account written by the leader of the colony, the food included, ducks, geese, venison, fish, berries etc.

Pumpkin and Thanksgiving Feast

Pumpkin pie, a modern staple adorning every dinner table, is unlikely to have been a part of the first Thanksgiving feast. They probably did not have any bread either, as their supply of flour must have been very low. The Pilgrims however, did have boiled pumpkin and many kinds of other vegetables that the Indians taught them to grow.

