

THANKSGIVING FUN FACTS

For the Whole Family

by Capturing  Wonderland

THANKSGIVING FUN FACTS ABOUT

the First Thanksgiving

50 PILGRIMS & 90 NATIVES

OUT OF THOSE ONLY 5 WOMEN.

There were 50 Pilgrims (what was left after disease and starving to death in the harsh conditions) and 90 Wampanoag Indians.

WILD TURKEYS

ARE NOT THE SAME AS THEIR DOMESTICATED COUNTERPARTS.

The domestic turkeys we eat at Thanksgiving today are quite different from the wild turkeys European settlers would have been eating. Due to selective breeding domestic turkeys are about twice their weight and cannot fly.

THE GOVERNMENT PROCLAIMED

A DAY OF THANKSGIVING AS RAIN FELL ENDING THEIR DROUGHT.

Governor William Bradford declared a day of Thanksgiving to give thanks for the rain that had ended a drought and saved their harvest. Bradford wrote in his journal that the rain fell “with such sweet and gentle showers as gave them cause of rejoicing and blessing God.”

THE PILGRIMS WEREN'T THE FIRST TO DECLARE

A THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL.

Native Hawaiians Thanksgiving festival called “Makahiki” (meaning “year”) vastly predates the pilgrims. This festival lasts for four months, from October or November through February or March, making it the longest Thanksgiving celebration in history.

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

WAS CELEBRATED

in the year of 1621.

HISTORIANS DISAGREE

ABOUT WHERE THE FIRST THANKSGIVING TOOK PLACE.

Some historians argue that Florida, not Massachusetts, may have been the true site of the first Thanksgiving in North America.

ILLUSTRATORS TOOK CREATIVE

LICENSE WITH PILGRIM FASHION.

Pilgrims didn't dress in all black with funny hats and oversized buckles. This representation of pilgrims began in the 19th century when illustrators needed to create an image for the European settlers, who were becoming more recognizable as part of the Thanksgiving myth. That clothing was more fashionable in the 17th century, buckles would have been too expensive for poor settlers.

NO RECORD OF TURKEY

THOUGH AFFECTIONATELY REFERRED TO AS TURKEY DAY, TURKEY WASN'T A DISH AT THE FIRST THANKSGIVING FEAST.

There was however plenty of delicious food like venison, duck, goose, oysters, lobster, eel, pumpkins, cranberries, and fish. Colonist Edward Winslow's record of the event mentions “wild fowl” served, but never specifies which fowl he means. (Duck and geese were other possibilities.)

5 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT

the Wampanoag Tribe

THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE IS NATIVE TO NEW ENGLAND

The Wampanoag are a Native American people of New England. They traditionally lived in villages in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and on nearby islands.

THEIR CHIEF MASSASOIT MADE A PEACE TREATY THAT LASTED 40 YEARS.

Massasoit died in 1661. By that time the relationship between the Wampanoag and the settlers had become tense. Some settlers were taking Wampanoag lands without payment. Massasoit's son Metacom—known to the Pilgrims as King Philip—became chief in 1662. He got other tribes to help the Wampanoag fight the settlers in what became known as King Philip's War. Metacom was killed, and the Wampanoag were defeated.

A WAMPANOAG TRIBE

STILL LIVES IN MARTHA'S VINEYARD.

The Wampanoag survivors fled their lands. Some traveled to the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. At the end of the 20th century, there were about 2,000 Wampanoag, mostly on Martha's Vineyard.

THE FIRST NATIVE AMERICANS TO MAKE RELATIONS WITH THE ENGLISH SETTLERS.

The Wampanoag were the first Native Americans to deal with the English settlers known as the Pilgrims. The Pilgrims established a colony at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620. The Wampanoag taught the Pilgrims the skills they needed to survive in their new home.

LIVED TOGETHER AS OTHER NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES.

The Wampanoag built dome-shaped houses called wigwams, or wetus. Several families lived in each wigwam.

8 PRESIDENTIAL FUN FACTS ABOUT

the Presidents & Thanksgiving

SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

IS BASICALLY THE MOTHER OF THANKSGIVING AS A HOLIDAY.

President Abraham Lincoln made a Thanksgiving proclamation and made Thanksgiving a national holiday on October 3, 1863. However, only after Sarah Josepha Hale, author of "Mary Had A Little Lamb," convinced the President by writing letters for 17 years.

PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON DECLARED

A NATIONAL DAY OF THANKS AFTER IMPORTANT BATTLE WINS.

In 1789, President George Washington again called for a national day of thanks on the last Thursday of November to commemorate the end of the Revolutionary War and the ratification of the Constitution.

And during the Civil War, both the Confederacy and the Union issued Thanksgiving Day proclamations following major victories.

THOMAS JEFFERSON REFUSED

TO DECLARE NATIONAL DAYS OF THANKSGIVING.

Thomas Jefferson famously refused to declare days of thanksgiving and fasting in the United States as He believed in a separation of Church and state. And he did not believe it was the place of the President to push religious celebrations on the population.

LINCOLN WAS THE FIRST

TO PARDON A TURKEY FROM BECOMING A THANKSGIVING MEAL.

Many historians trace turkey pardoning back to President Lincoln in the 1860s, who informally pardoned his son Tad's pet turkey, Jack. President Truman was the first to receive a live turkey from the National Turkey Federation, however, he ate it for dinner. John F. Kennedy was the first to let a Thanksgiving turkey go, followed by Richard Nixon who sent his turkey to a petting zoo. George H.W. Bush is the president who formalized the turkey pardoning tradition in 1989.

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

FINALLY SIGNED A LAW DECLARING THE OFFICIAL DAY OF THANKSGIVING.

In 1941, President Roosevelt signed a bill into law stating that the holiday would be celebrated on the last Thursday of November.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

CHANGED THE DATE OF THANKSGIVING TO STIMULATE THE HOLIDAY ECONOMY.

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt changed the date of Thanksgiving to try to stimulate the holiday economy. Instead of the fourth Thursday of the month, he moved it up a week to lengthen the Christmas shopping season.

8 PRESIDENTIAL FUN FACTS ABOUT 2

the Presidents & Thanksgiving

IT WAS INITIALLY PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S IDEA

FOR YOUR MODERN-DAY "BLACK FRIDAY" TO BRING THEIR BOOKS OUT OF THE RED INTO THE BLACK.

Despite President Franklin Roosevelt's desire to boost department store sales during the great depression, Black Friday didn't become a thing until the 1960s in Philadelphia.

THE TURKEY WAS ALMOST THE NATIONAL BIRD OF THE UNITED STATES.

Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the National bird of the United States. He felt that the eagle had a "bad moral character" and wanted to honor the turkey as a "native" bird with relevance to our nation's history of celebrating overeating. Instead, the bald eagle was chosen.

THANKSGIVING FACTS ABOUT FOOD

the Thanksgiving Table

PUMPKIN PIE WAS A STAPLE

AS FAR BACK AS THE TURN OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

However, some of these early “pumpkin pie” recipes varied widely, and some had no crust or consisted of a custard or apples baked inside of a hollowed-out pumpkin itself. As legend would have it, the town of Colchester, MA delayed Thanksgiving in 1705 due to a molasses shortage that ruined any plans for pumpkin pie. The first published pumpkin pie recipe in the US appears in Amelia Simmons’ extremely popular cookbook *American Cookery* (1796), and in fact, contains 2 variations.

GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

WAS CREATED IN 1955 BY CAMPBELL SOUP.

In its original form, green bean casserole (or GBC, for short) was made with canned green beans, Campbell’s canned condensed cream of mushroom soup, and French’s fried onions, so it’s not surprising that this dish was invented in the Campbell Soup test kitchen in 1955, the heyday of canned convenience.

SWANSON CREATED THE VERY FIRST TV DINNERS

OUT OF A CREATIVE NEED TO USE UP AN ABUNDANCE OF TURKEY.

Due to the abundance of Turkey unsold every year, a Swanson employee came up with a creative use for leftover turkey in 1953. They sold it as part of a packaged meal served in aluminum trays that individuals could heat up for convenience. We now refer to those as TV dinners.

MANY MODERN THANKSGIVING STAPLES

WERE NOT AT THE FIRST FEAST.

Modern Thanksgiving staples like cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin pie were also not at the first celebrations. There was no mention of cranberry sauce until the 1660s, about 40 years after the colonists’ first gathering.

Also, pilgrims of the time wouldn’t have been eating sweet potatoes, because there weren’t any potatoes at all around that time.

THANKSGIVING FUN FACTS ABOUT

Macy's Day Parade

MACY'S PARADE WAS THE

DEPARTMENT STORE'S ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE HOLIDAYS.

The last Thursday of November 1924 was the first Macy's Day Thanksgiving Parade. This was the Macy's department store's annual holiday parade. And it wasn't until 1927 that they decided to change the name since the annual event always fell on Thanksgiving.

CHARACTER BALLOONS

HAVE BEEN AROUND SINCE 1927 WHEN THEY REPLACED LIVE ANIMALS.

The first ever character balloon was Felix the cat in 1927. But Snoopy has appeared the most of any character, for a total of 40 parades since 1968, and has had 7 different designs.

MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY

PARADE WAS FIRST BASICALLY A PARADING ZOO.

The first parade consisted of handlers and live animals borrowed from the Central Park Zoo itself. Which were then led to parading down the streets of New York City. It didn't last long as you can imagine, the live animals scared children.

MACY'S CREATED A FUN RACE

TO CAPTURE THE BALLOONS WITH A REWARD OF \$100.

There was a race to capture the free-floating balloons from 1928 to 1938 which had return addresses printed on them. And there was a \$100 reward for their return.

IN 1932 AN AIRPLANE ALMOST CRASHED

AFTER COLLIDING WITH A FREE-FLOATING CAT BALLOON.

In 1932 they called off the balloon races. This was because an airplane student decided to ram a free-floating cat balloon at 5,000 feet and almost crashed.

MACY'S IS THE #2 CONSUMER

OF HELIUM IN THE WORLD.

During the 1958 Helium shortage, the museum got creative and hung balloons filled with regular air from cranes. Then slowly toted them on the route. It takes 90 minutes to inflate each large balloon, but a mere 15 minutes to deflate them.

THANKSGIVING FUN FACTS ABOUT 2

Macy's Day Parade

MACY'S PARADE IS THE LARGEST, BUT NOT THE OLDEST THANKSGIVING PARADE.

Despite Macy's being the largest parade, the oldest Thanksgiving parade was held in Philadelphia in 1920 by the Gimbels department store. It's continued today as the Dunkin Donuts parade and recently they partnered with Ikea.

THE PERSON WHO IS IN CHARGE

OF THE BALLOON IS CALLED A "BALLOON PILOT".

While it takes 90 people to navigate each balloon, there is only one balloon pilot. The long ropes affixed to the bottom and sides are called "bones". Each rope has to be held just so as to keep it taut while being paraded.

THE BALLOONS WERE

AT ONE POINT JUST LET FREE AT THE END OF THE PARADE.

Handlers from 1928 to 1938 would just let the balloons float away after the parade since there was no way to deflate them.

THANKSGIVING FUN FACTS ABOUT

Thanksgiving Lesser Known

THERE ARE MULTIPLE TOWNS NAMED TURKEY, IN MULTIPLE STATES ACROSS THE US.

There are four towns in the United States with the name "Turkey." They're located in Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, and North Carolina.

THE TRADITION OF FOOTBALL GAMES ON THANKSGIVING BEGAN IN 1876.

The tradition of football on Thanksgiving began in 1876 with a game between Yale and Princeton. The National Football League would get into the act in 1934, with the Detroit Lions playing the Chicago Bears.

THANKSGIVING IS NOT JUST FOR AMERICANS.

Thanksgiving isn't just an American holiday, our Canadian neighbors to the north also celebrate it, just on the second Monday of October.

THERE IS AN "UNTHANKSGIVING DAY"

CELEBRATED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.

Every year on Alcatraz Island the International Indian Treaty Council puts on "Unthanksgiving Day" to commemorate the struggles of indigenous Native Americans against European imperialism.

JINGLE BELLS WAS WRITTEN AS A THANKSGIVING SONG ORIGINALLY.

'Jingle Bells'. Originally named 'The One Horse Open Sleigh', James Lord Pierpont composed the song in 1850 for his Thanksgiving Sunday school class. The jingling bells refer to New England sleigh races that were popular in the 1800s. After Pierpont performed the song during a Thanksgiving concert, it was officially published in 1857.