



PLYMOUTH, 1621

- ① By the autumn of 1621, the Pilgrims had some new successes.

Governor Bradford noted that “they began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter.” They had also made friends with the Wampanoag.

- ② The Pilgrims invited Massasoit to a great feast. He and 90 followers arrived. The Pilgrims had good reason to celebrate and thank God. This feast would later be thought of as our country’s first “thanksgiving.” The idea was not new since the English and the Wampanoag had celebrated good harvests before.

A Thanksgiving Feast

- ③ For three days the English hosts and their guests feasted. The Wampanoag brought five deer. The Pilgrims added wild turkey, geese, duck, and other food.



According to tradition, the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock (left) in 1620. A year later they celebrated Thanksgiving with the Wampanoag.

- ④ We do not know exactly what else they ate. Lobster, eels, oysters, and fish were plentiful. So was corn, which could be made into bread and pudding. Pumpkin may have been served. Cabbage, carrots, turnips, and onions grew. Also plums, gooseberries, and strawberries had been picked and dried in the spring.

At meals, the Wampanoag sat on the ground. The Pilgrims probably sat on stools around tables made of wooden planks.

The days were filled with games, races, and wrestling contests. Under the command of **Miles Standish**, Pilgrim men paraded and fired their guns. The Wampanoag showed their skills with bows and arrows and also performed their own harvest dances. It was, indeed, a celebration.

WHY IT MATTERS

At first the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims were friendly. But as the English took over more and more land they became bitter enemies. There are several Wampanoag communities today, and they preserve their values and culture.

Despite all the struggles the Plymouth colony survived and grew. Soon other English Protestants came to North America to seek religious freedom. Among them were the Puritans. The Puritans, too, had been treated badly in England for their beliefs. They hoped to make a safe home on the shores of New England. The Puritans also tried to govern themselves.

DID YOU KNOW?

How did Thanksgiving become a national holiday?

For many years the United States had no regular date on which to celebrate Thanksgiving. Then in 1863 President Abraham Lincoln officially made the last Thursday of November Thanksgiving Day. In 1941, the United States Congress made Thanksgiving the fourth Thursday of November. Thanksgiving also became a legal federal holiday.



✓ Reviewing Facts and Ideas

SUM IT UP

- Religious conflict led the Pilgrims to leave England for the Netherlands and then to North America.
- In 1620 the Pilgrims sailed on the *Mayflower* for Virginia but landed instead in New England. They drew up the Mayflower Compact.
- The Wampanoag were among the many Native American peoples in New England. Massasoit, their leader, became the Pilgrims' friend.
- In 1621, the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims celebrated a great harvest. Today many count that feast as our first Thanksgiving.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why did the Pilgrims draw up the Mayflower Compact? Why was it an important document?
2. What hardships did the Pilgrims face at Plymouth during their first year?
3. **FOCUS** Describe two ways that the Wampanoag helped the Pilgrims.
4. **THINKING SKILL** Read the excerpt on page 189 from *Of Plymouth Plantation*. List the facts Bradford gives in one column and the opinions in another.
5. **GEOGRAPHY** How did the climate affect the Pilgrims' attempts to settle in New England?