

COLONY SAYS THANKS FOR HEALTHY HARVEST

SETTLERS PRAISE THE LORD AFTER EPIC STRUGGLE



By our diarist in Plymouth
October 3, 1621

WE DREAMED about this moment. As we carefully gathered in our harvest, the Governor of our community

declared that we rejoice and celebrate the fruits of our labors.

After months of hard work, our faith in God has given us the chance to start anew. Our first crops of corn, squash, and beans have been harvested, and William

Bradford, our newly elected Governor, ordered a party of men to go out fowling to fetch birds back for the feast. There was also a good store of wild turkeys—large, strange-looking birds that are a common sight here.

We were about 50 in number and were joined by our new ally Massasoit and at least 90 of his people, who brought deer for the feast. We were all mesmerized by the sight of deer and birds turning on wooden spits over outdoor fires, transforming into succulent cooked meats.

We ate heartily and shared the best of what we had with Massasoit and his people. The feast lasted three days, and we played games. Everywhere around us looked as beautiful as God intended, the green leaves of summer turning brilliant yellow and red.

What began as a terrible year of struggle and sickness is ending in a spirit of gratitude to God.

The colony's future now seems more assured. We are less fearful of the Native people as some have now become our trusted allies. We give thanks for our good fortune.

TRADITION has it that the first Thanksgiving took place in 1621, when the Plymouth settlers shared a meal celebrating the harvest with their Native allies. But it wasn't until 1789 that President George Washington officially named Thursday November 26 as a "Day of Publick Thanksgiving." The dates of Thanksgiving varied under subsequent presidents until Abraham Lincoln's famous 1863 proclamation that it should be held in November.