



A Thankful Heart... the root of a great nation.

It is not always a smooth sea as we travel along life's path. But the storm that tests the very fiber is what brings forth true

Thanksgiving...

Before the founding fathers set their determined feet upon the decks of the Mayflower they were set... they would do whatever it took to reach their goal...

Thanksgiving Day is a day set aside each year for giving thanks to God for blessings received during the year. The first Thanksgiving Days in New England were harvest festivals, or days for thanking God for plentiful crops. For this reason, the holiday still takes place late in the fall, after the crops have been gathered.

In the United States, Thanksgiving is usually a family day, celebrated with big dinners and joyous reunions. The very mention of Thanksgiving often calls up memories of kitchens and pantries crowded with good things to eat. Thanksgiving is also a time for serious religious thinking, and prayer.

The first Thanksgiving was celebrated in Plymouth colony, New England, less than a year after the colonists had settled in America. The first dreadful winter there had killed about half the members of the colony. But new hope arose as the spring sunshine warmed the land. And by the summer of 1621 the settlers could see that a good corn harvest was on the way. Thus, in early autumn, Governor William Bradford arranged a harvest festival to give thanks to God for the progress the colony had made.

The festival lasted three days. The men of Plymouth had shot ducks, geese, and turkeys. The menu also included fish, wild plums and leeks, corn bread, and watercress. The women of the settlement supervised cooking over outdoor fires. About 90 Native Americans also attended the festival, and with them they brought five deer to add to the feast. Everyone ate outdoors at large tables and enjoyed true friendship. "Would to God" that this kind relation had been maintained! Oh, how different our history would have been. Similar harvest Thanksgivings were held in Plymouth during the next several years, but no traditional date was set at that time. The written accounts of that first thanksgiving tell the tale of men and women who felt the deep satisfaction of doing what they knew was right regardless of the personal suffering, and who reckoned their survival to the One who had all the hairs upon their heads numbered... they could not hold back the flood gate within the soul of every man that makes them want to "THANK"... they thanked their Creator.

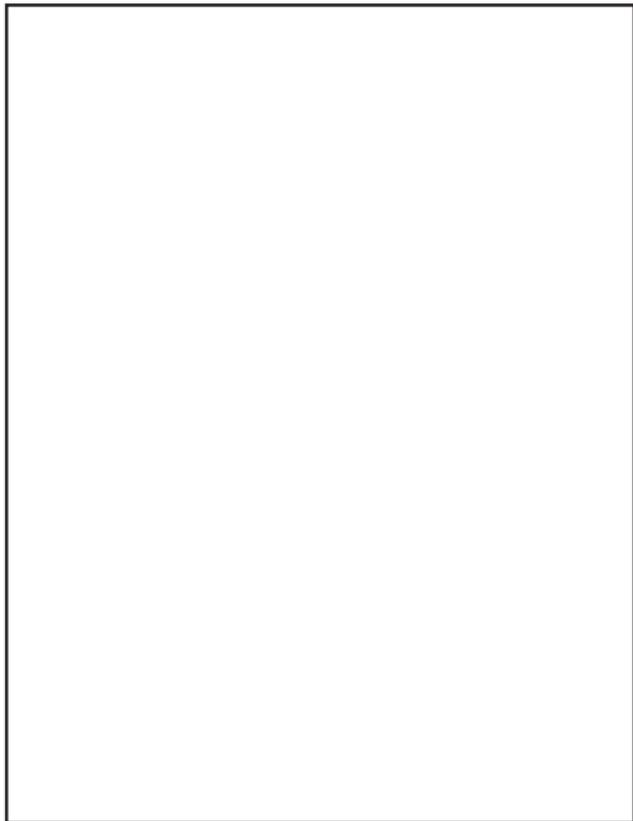
Those days of the history of this country were full of hardship. But those hardships only made the roots of character stretch deeper into the ground to support what would become a mighty nation. The harsh elements and sickness and even the loss of those closest to them could not daunt their determination. These are the deep roots of America...

The Mayflower sailed alone from Plymouth, England, in September with 102 passengers. The ship reached Cape Cod on November 11th, off what is now Provincetown Harbor. It reached the present site of Plymouth, Massachusetts a few days later, just as the depths of winter set in.



The *Mayflower* left Plymouth again on April 15, just as the spring sunshine began to warm the soil, leaving all its remaining passengers on the primitive shores of America. Not one of them opted to jump back onto the ship and return to England. The suffering had made them men of character...

The early Pilgrims included many *Separatists*. These people were a devoted group among the minority within the body of English Protestants known as *Puritans*. The Puritans wished to adopt reforms that would purify the Church of England, the nation's official church. But the Separatists eventually decided that they could not reform the church from within. They saw it best to separate from what they considered a very fallen church and return to the primitive pattern of the early believers... A noble goal for which they were ready to suffer, and suffer they did. And from these determined souls comes our first "Thanksgiving Day"...



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