

Thanksgiving: From Pilgrim to Pioneer

Although Thanksgiving is most closely associated with the Pilgrims/Puritans, most of how we celebrate was created by Victorians building upon a nearly global tradition of celebrating the harvest in the fall. Starting in New England, it slowly spread across the country. By the 1850s the connection of Thanksgiving with turkey, pumpkin, and eating a big meal with the extended family (if possible) and the New York Times considered it a national holiday although the exact dates varied as they were proclaimed by each individual state governor until Lincoln's proclamation in 1863 and each year subsequently. Many parts of Thanksgiving came later than you would think (it wasn't made a fixed official federal holiday until 1941), but traditions slowly grew up over time. These myths and legends all gave credit to the Puritans to more modern traditions. This link focused America's history in general on Puritan New England instead of other earlier settlements and helped shape her values. It was supported by the repeated waves of Colonial Revival.

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- After 1815, no more Presidential Thanksgivings
- 1822, Account of 1621 thanksgiving rediscovered
- 1841, Alexander Young declared 1621 was first Thanksgiving
- 1854, NYT urges keep “institution as our Puritan grandmothers left it”
- 1855, NYT says Thanksgiving is now a national holiday
- 1863, American Thanksgiving, November
- 1876, First Big Football Game
- 1879, Canadian Thanksgiving, October
- 1889, Standish of Standish
- 1921, Gimble’s Thanksgiving Parade, Philadelphia
- 1924, Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade, New York
- 1924, Hudson’s Thanksgiving Parade, Detroit
- 1941, American Thanksgiving set by Congressional Joint Resolution to fourth Thursday in November