

matches, and athletic events, while the older men engaged in shooting competitions), and *prayer and thanksgiving* (for God's providence in watching over and providing for them).

This celebration began an annual tradition that slowly spread to the entire nation. Americans now celebrate a Day of Thanksgiving each November as part of our long American tradition of openly and publicly acknowledging God.

Among the many examples of the open acknowledgment of God is the Declaration of Independence, which declares:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

As Thomas Jefferson affirmed: *"And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis—a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?"*

It was standard practice for our leaders across the generations to acknowledge God as the Source of our national rights and blessings, and to give thanks to Him.

Some people believe America has strayed from the strong religious convictions of previous generations. Perhaps, but an important question is not just "Where is our country's faith?" but rather "Where do you stand on faith?" Have you thankfully

acknowledged the providence of Almighty God in your own life?

As you celebrate Thanksgiving, remember to retain the original gratefulness to God that has always been the spirit of this, the oldest of all American holidays.

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

PSALM 105:1

"I...appoint...a day of public thanksgiving and praise,...rendering to God the tribute of praise for His unmerited goodness towards us...in continuing to us... the Holy Scriptures which are able to enlighten and make us wise to eternal salvation....[We] present our humble and penitent supplication...that He would... cause the benign religion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to be known, understood, and practiced among all the inhabitants of the earth."

John Hancock
JOHN HANCOCK

To see hundreds of original Thanksgiving proclamations issued by Presidents, Governors, and other civil leaders across the generations visit WallBuilders.com.

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Thanksgiving in America



by DAVID BARTON



he tradition of Thanksgiving as a time to focus on God and thank Him for His blessings dates back almost four centuries in America.

While thanksgiving celebrations occurred as early as 1541 in Texas, and 1607 at Cape Henry, Virginia, it is from the Pilgrim festival of 1621 that we derive the current tradition of Thanksgiving.

The Pilgrims (a congregation of Bible-loving English Christians) set sail for America on September 6, 1620, and for two months braved the harsh elements of a storm-tossed sea. Upon arriving in what is now Massachusetts, and unprepared for the harsh New England winter, nearly half of them died before spring.

Emerging from that grueling winter, the Pilgrims were surprised when an Indian named Samoset approached them and greeted them in their own language, explaining to them that he had learned English from fishermen and traders. A week later, Samoset returned with a friend named Squanto, who also spoke English. Squanto lived with the Pilgrims and accepted their Christian faith.

Squanto taught the Pilgrims much about how to live in the New World, and he and Samoset helped forge a peace treaty that lasted for generations between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag Indians. Pilgrim Governor William Bradford described Squanto as “a special instrument sent of God for [our] good.”

“It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor....Now, therefore, I do recommend ...that we may all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection.”

GEORGE WASHINGTON

“It is therefore recommended...[a day] for solemn thanksgiving and praise, that with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts and...join the penitent confession of their manifold sins...and their humble and earnest supplication that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance...and to prosper the means of religion for the...enlargement of that kingdom which consisteth in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost [Romans 14:17]”

CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, 1777

That summer, the Pilgrims, through hard work, prayer and the assistance of helpful Indians, reaped a bountiful harvest. As Pilgrim Edward Winslow affirmed, “*God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn*”; “*by the goodness of God, we are...far from want.*” The grateful Pilgrims therefore declared a time in the Fall to thank God and to celebrate with their Indian friends—America’s first Thanksgiving festival.

Ninety Wampanoag Indians joined the fifty-three Pilgrims for three days of *feasting* (which included shellfish, lobsters, turkey, corn bread, berries, deer, and other foods), *athletic competition and play* (the young Pilgrim and Wampanoag men engaged in races, wrestling

“‘It be recommended to the several states...a day of public and solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God...to beseech Him that He would...pour out His Holy Spirit on all ministers of the Gospel; that He would...spread the light of Christian knowledge through the remotest corners of the earth...[and] that He would establish these United States upon the basis of religion and virtue.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON

“The year that is drawing towards it close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies...We are prone to forget the Source from which they come....They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God....I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens...[to] observe...a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer to our beneficent Father, Who dwelleth in the heavens.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

