

Thanksgiving Paul Jehle

The Pilgrims came to America for religious reasons. They had a motive to “*propagate the gospel*” as well as be “*stepping-stones*” unto future generations. In the fall of 1621, they held a three-day harvest festival with at least 140 people. It probably took place in the month of October. No one knows who invited whom, but it’s a good thing the Natives brought much of the food! Edward Winslow described it when he said:



“Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king, Massasoit, with some

ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation, and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others.”

Many cultures in North America gave thanks to God long before the Pilgrims arrived. Though holy days were called for prayer and fasting as well as thanksgiving in subsequent years by the pilgrims, this was not the root of the harvest festival of 1621. What makes Thanksgiving in Plymouth a “first” are its unique characteristics such as a three-day festival including feasting and possibly athletic games. The Peace Alliance in March paved the way for five decades of relative peace, an unusual occurrence at the time. At this time in our nation’s history, let us encourage each other to respect one another regardless of our differences, and live peaceably in a land of plenty, thanking God for our blessings!