

# The Truth about Thanksgiving

In 1620, it is said that the Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower to what they then named Plymouth Rock. What is not always expressed in history is that that area was already named, "Patuxet," by the Wampanoag Native Americans that had lived there for thousands of years.

A year after their arrival was the feast that our society has deemed as the, "First Thanksgiving." Many historians today, however, would like to bring to light what the origins of "Thanksgiving" really are.

Many say that we can find the origin through an analysis of the Pequot Massacre that occurred in 1637, which begins with the murder of an Englishman. It is said that he was murdered by a few in the Pequot tribe, as the tribe suspected that the Englishman was kidnapping their children.

In revenge, a group of colonists took action at the Pequot tribes annual Green Corn Dance ceremony. They attacked the village and murdered anyone that could be found. Some members of the tribe tried to escape but they were later hunted down and killed. The final death toll was set at 700 men, women, and children, which was many of the final members of the tribe in the area.

This brutal massacre was praised by colonial authorities such as the Massachusetts Bay Governor, John Winthrop, who prayed to the fact that the colonists arrived home safely and that the Pequot village was destroyed. This was the beginning of the "Thanksgiving" feast tradition, as after a massacre everyone would celebrate with a dinner of gratitude for those that returned home safely.



*Attack on the Pequot Fort.*



"The First Thanksgiving 1621," oil painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, circa 1912-1915

The image of the Pilgrims and Native Americans sharing a meal together peacefully was engrained in our society through the use of textbooks. This "Thanksgiving" image has been deemed as cultural propaganda by some researchers, as it has created a false idea of what actually led to the Thanksgiving Dinner.

Today, while many families celebrate Thanksgiving with a feast, others gather together for the National Day of Mourning. This event has been annually since 1970 on the day of Thanksgiving to honor the Native Americans that died from the series of massacres that ravaged their villages.

It is also a day to expose the real history of Thanksgiving and also bring to light the issues that affect Native Americans today. Those taking part go to Cole's Hill in Plymouth, Massachusetts, which is the hill right above the historic Plymouth Rock area.

National Day of Mourning began when a Wampanoag man, Wamsutta Frank James, was asked to speak at a dinner that was commemorating the 350th anniversary of the pilgrims arriving at Plymouth Rock. He refused to give the speech because of how awful the Native people were treated by the, "white man."

Those that take part at the National Day of Mourning are begging to finally be heard about what actually happened regarding Thanksgiving. It is important that this topic is shared with our society, as those that had this land first were brutally murdered and no consequences were given.