

By Nancy Whitaker:

GOBBLING NEWS FLASH! RUN TURKEYS RUN

This week there will be a holiday in which we take the time and thank God for his bountifulness. We know the Pilgrims celebrated this holiday in 1621, but did you know it wasn't until 1863 before this holiday, now known as Thanksgiving, was celebrated again?

We have all heard the stories about the Pilgrims and the Indians. We have been told stories of how the two groups gathered peacefully in Plymouth, Mass., to feast on juicy turkeys and colorful pumpkin pies.

The trouble is, almost everything we have been taught about the first Thanksgiving in 1621 is a myth. The holiday has two distinct histories. One report is what actually happened and then there is another portrayed that is more like what we celebrate today.

We base this holiday not only being thankful, but on a turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce. Then there is the pumpkin pie which is just one of several desserts that we partake in.

Regardless of how we celebrate today's Thanksgiving, the first one the Pilgrims held was a harvest celebration. Not only that, but that first celebration lasted for three days. From early reports it is suggested that the first Thanksgiving was held sometime between Sept. 21 and Nov. 11.

Also there were approximately 90 Wampanoag Indians and 52 colonists present. Most of the colonists who participated were women and children. The Wampanoag, led by Chief Massasoit, contributed at least five deer to the feast.

Besides food, the event included recreation and entertainment. I am just curious as to what they did for entertainment. Did they dance, shoot off guns, sing or play games? Did they wrestle, run races or play tag?

There are two written accounts of the first so-called Thanksgiving. One is in a letter dated December 1621. Edward Winslow wrote, "Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a more special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labor. King Massasoit, with some 90 men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others."

There is also a book written by William Bradford, the first governor of Plymouth, 20 years after the first Thanksgiving. His account, which was stolen during the Revolutionary War, resurfaced after being lost for almost 100 years.

That book, written by William Bradford so many years ago, spurred my interest. I felt an urge to see if I could find the old book, so I could see a firsthand report of the first Thanksgiving. Thanks to our local Paulding County Carnegie Library, they were kind enough get it for me with an inter-library book loan.

Our present Thanksgiving holiday would not be complete without the turkey. There are a lot of different ways to cook a turkey like roasted, deep fried, smoked, and barbecued.

Here are some good gobbling facts about our Thanksgiving bird, the turkey.

Turkeys have been around for over 10 million years. I wonder if they have always been a meat source?

Domesticated turkeys (farm raised) cannot fly, but wild turkeys can fly for short distances at up to 55 miles per hour.

I did not know this, but only male turkeys (toms) gobble. Females (hens) make a clicking noise. The gobble is a seasonal call during the spring and fall. Hens are attracted for mating when a tom gobbles. Wild toms love to gobble when they hear loud sounds or settle in for the night.

The fleshy growth from the base of the beak, which is very long on male turkeys and hangs down over the beak, is called the snood. That was a new word to me because I always thought that part was called the wattle.

What do you think they did at the first Thanksgiving? Do you serve the traditional turkey and dressing for Thanksgiving? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your thoughts.