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Thanksgiving at PLIMOTH PLANTATION

Late in March of 1621 concluded a peace treaty with the Indians which was to last for fifty years.

FIRST THANKSGIVING AT PLIMOTH PLANTATION

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING celebrated at Plymouth in 1621 was a harvest festival, a gathering of family, friends and neighbors, and a time of games and feasting.

Almost half of the original 102 Pilgrims had survived the first winter. They had labored long and hard to build a village and plant crops. When their harvest was gathered, they celebrated.

In writing to a friend in England describing the First Thanksgiving, one of the Pilgrims said: "Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor William Bradford sent four men on fowling; so that we might after a more special manner, rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labours. They four, on one day, killed as much fowl as, with a little help besides served the company almost a week."

"And among the rest, their (the Indians) 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 (Myles Standish) and others."

In describing this Thanksgiving, which set the pattern for the traditional American celebration, other writers tell of foot racing, wrestling, exercising arms (infantry drill) and pitching the bar.

These scenes were acted out by citizens of Plymouth, Massachusetts, many of whom are descendants of those who celebrated the First Thanksgiving. Appropriately enough, the setting was at Plimoth Plantation, an outdoor museum where the first Pilgrim settlement is being re-created.



The Indians were invited to join the Pilgrims in celebrating a bountiful harvest.



When the multi-colored flint corn, which the Indians had taught the Pilgrims to plant, was harvested it had to be shelled and ground into a meal.



Although the First Thanksgiving was a harvest festival, the Pilgrims blessed their food and thanked God for a bountiful harvest.



When it was time to carve the bird, there were plenty of spectators.



Athletic events and contests of skill between Pilgrims and Indians made for another part of our Thanksgiving tradition.

