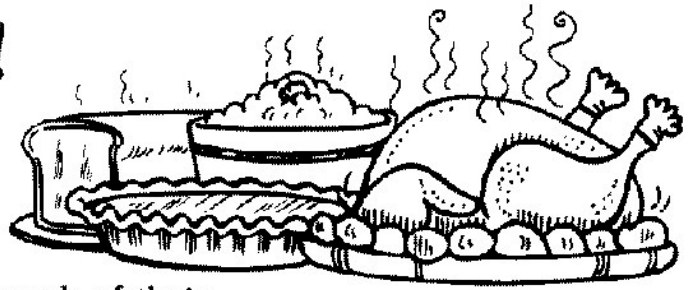


The Pilgrim Story!



The group of people now known as "Pilgrims" were unhappy about events taking place in their home country of England. There was much religious persecution. King James would not allow them to attend the church of their choice. Because of this, the Pilgrims decided to leave England and find a place that would let them worship God in their own way. The Pilgrims set sail for Amsterdam and finally settled in Leyden, Holland, where they were warmly welcomed.

They soon realized, however, that they could not stay in Holland unless they were willing to give up their English customs and language. The decision was made to set sail for North America where they could establish their own community and preserve the English language.

After much difficulty, they were able to finance and supply two small ships, the "Speedwell" and the "Mayflower." They then began their journey across the Atlantic Ocean. Unfortunately, the "Speedwell" soon began developing a leak and both ships had to return to port. On September 6, 1620, the "Mayflower" set sail alone with 102 people aboard.

This was a difficult time for the Pilgrims. Food was scarce and consisted mostly of salted meat and dry biscuits. They were unable to build fires for either cooking or warmth for fear of burning the ship. Many became ill due to these poor conditions. One happy event did take place during the voyage. A baby was born to the Hopkins family and suitably named "Oceanus."

Land was first sighted on November 11, but it was not until November 21, 1620, that they dropped anchor and began to build a settlement near the present day area of Provincetown, Massachusetts. Before leaving the ship, all of the men signed the "Mayflower Compact," an agreement stating that they were still loyal to the king of England but would set their own laws to provide for their general good and welfare.

Their first winter was extremely difficult. There was little food, and their simple shelters provided little relief from the cold. The Pilgrims quickly made friends with the Indians, who taught them to build stronger houses and hunt for food. When spring finally arrived, the Pilgrims went straight to work plowing the land and planting seeds that they had carried from England. An Indian named Squanto became a very good friend and helped with the planting.

When harvest time came, there were more than enough fruits and vegetables to store for the next winter. The Pilgrims were so thankful that they decided to invite their Indian friends for a feast of thanksgiving.

On the day of the feast, the Pilgrims covered the tables with good things to eat from their gardens. The Indians brought wild turkeys, game and shellfish. Before the feast began, everyone bowed their heads and said a prayer of thanksgiving to God. This first Thanksgiving was a joyous occasion which lasted three days.

Today, Thanksgiving is a legal holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. In millions of homes across America, families reunite and remember to thank God for all the good that has been given them.