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Wildcat Echo

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Thanksgiving Traditions Vary for MV Students

by Jessica Krogmann

Remember only a few short months ago, how everyone gazed over the hazy steam coming from their grills to watch the fireworks on the 4th of July? Well those few short months really flew by, and now here we sit, cold, and with drab weather, waiting for that next national fiasco to get everyone moving again. Luckily, Thanksgiving is less than a week away! Despite the many Christmas lights already adorning many houses, it's easy to recollect the history of Thanksgiving, which everyone is either taught in elementary or church.

On December 11, 1620, a group of Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. Hailing originally from England, this group of brave people sailed away to find a land where they could practice their own beliefs and religions. At first they traveled to the Netherlands. However, they found the Dutch way of life to be ungodly in their eyes. So, striking up a deal with a London stock company, they were able to finance their pilgrimage to America on the "Mayflower." The first winter in the Americas was harsh and devastating. Having started with 102 Pilgrims, they lost 46. However, the coming spring and summer turned for the better and with help from the Native Americans there, the Pilgrims were bountiful and decided to have a feast to show how grateful they were- so grateful in fact, that the large feast lasted three days.

The following year, the feast didn't take place. However, in 1623, the newly settled Pilgrims gathered to pray for rain during a drought. The next day, a long steady rain fell to the earth and their Governor, William Bradford, declared another day of thanksgiving. After that, a thanksgiving feast didn't appear until 1676. It was then that the governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts held a meeting to decide when to set a day for their thanksgiving. With a unanimous vote,Thanksgiving was set for June, 29. This day most likely didn't include the Natives, as the settlers at this time were joyous for beating them.

In 1789, President George Washington declared a National Day of Thanksgiving, much to the dismay of many of the colonists, and later, President Thomas Jefferson was said to have scoffed at the idea of a day of thanksgiving. However, in 1863, President Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November as the national day of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving was then celebrated and proclaimed by every President following Lincoln with only a few changes in the date. Finally, in 1941, Congress sanctioned Thanksgiving as a legal holiday to be held the fourth Thursday in November.

Although the very first thanksgiving feast with the Pilgrims and Natives served geese, ducks, fish, berries, watercress, lobster, dried fruit, clams, venison, and plums, many people across America celebrate with food, only of a different assortment. Turkey is now one of the main dishes, as well as potatoes and pumpkin pie. And who can forget the cranberries and stuffing?

At Maquoketa Valley, it seems that the most carried out tradition and Thanksgiving custom is eating- which it should be! Many people go to their grandparents' to eat, including Jeff Sands and Jessica Harford, while some stay in the comfort of their own home, such as Cody Recker. Kim Nieman said that her family has turkey every year, and along with food, Maggie Seibert's favorite part of the eating is the stuffing! Although the food sounds mouthwatering now, there are some people who love it, yet find it challenging. Jennifer Schooley goes to three different Thanksgiving meals in one day! She says the first one is great, but after that, it's hard to clean her plate.

Activities after the eating become somewhat of a custom as well. While many people are watching football, Alex Kracke and his family play a well loved card game. Aaron Dunham keeps busy all day with his family by chopping wood, and Cody Recker says his day is simple; all he does is eat and sleep.

There are a few families out there who do really special things, like the Emily and Adam Ries family. They travel to Minnesota to spend time with their aunt and her family up there, and then go shopping! And since Thanksgiving is a time to give and be thankful, some people have traditions that do both of those things. Mr. Doyle said that for the past 22 years, he and his family have dropped off canned goods at the food bank.

Smashed between Halloween and Christmas, Thanksgiving is a holiday that is often side tracked or forgotten, but with the vast history and different customs, it's hard not to enjoy the day and the great food. So, for next week, ignore all the sparkling lights and the fake snow in the store windows, and change those channels about Christmas shopping, and enjoy the one day you're given to simply eat, relax, and give thanks.