

# STANDARD DEVIATIONS: Happy Thanksgiving!

Greetings,

Welcome to the STANDARD DEVIATIONS newsletter in PDF! I had worried about sending out material in an attachment format when I first began this project, but the response to my outreach has been pretty enthusiastic. Hopefully we have established a degree of trust and the move to distributing the newsletter in PDF will transition well. This will allow me to present the information in a cleaner, improved format (once I learn how to do it). Let me know if there are issues with receiving the newsletter as an attachment.

Happy Thanksgiving! Ever wonder why it falls on a Thursday? Wonder what the real story of Thanksgiving is about? How do you think about the holiday: Pilgrims, parades, or poultry?

Thanksgiving services were routine in what became the Commonwealth of Virginia as early as 1607, with the first permanent settlement of Jamestown, Virginia holding a thanksgiving in 1610. In 1619, 38 English settlers arrived at Berkeley Hundred in Charles City County, Virginia. The group's London Company charter specifically required "that the day of our ships arrival at the place assigned... in the land of Virginia shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God."

These events had nothing to do with the Native Americans. They were celebrations of successful Atlantic crossings and survival in a hostile wilderness.

As early as 1610 native tribes were subjugated or slaughtered under dictates to Christianize. And the story of Pocahontas is one of tribal appeasement and diplomacy rather than romance and cooperation.

Most of the New World was not as amicable. After the Indian Massacre of 1622, the Berkeley Hundred site and other outlying locations were abandoned and colonists moved their celebration to Jamestown and other more secure spots.

Our earliest interactions with the indigenous were conflicts of territory and negotiations of trade essential to maintaining a foothold. The Indians we needed, we befriended; the ones in our way, we fought.

The famous Plymouth Thanksgiving of 1621 simply reflected an uneasy treaty.

Of the 100 or so men, women and children who had settled at Plymouth the previous winter, more than half were dead. Relations with the Wampanoag tribe were friendly, but the unexpected arrival of their leader Massasoit along with 90 warriors was alarming. Massasoit was greeted with a fusillade of gunfire and retreated, returning afterward with five deer, which he presented to each of Plymouth's leading men. Massasoit's conduct underscored the fact that the English were guests, not equals, making clear that Plymouth existed because he permitted it to exist.



Whatever peace existed between these groups fell apart when the son of Massasoit, Metacom, resisted colonial demands to surrender their guns. This resulted in the King Philip's War (1675-78), the deadliest conflict of the colonies and Indians.

Thanksgiving wasn't a special event. Long before 1621, Native Americans held celebrations and dances around a harvest and Europeans also held church-style services to give thanks. It didn't repeat every year. For a hundred years it was forgotten and not a yearly observation until the 1800's.

The original congressional proclamations of Thanksgiving are all about the need to give thanks for delivering the country from war and into independence.

The popularity of an Indian impact on our early Thanksgiving history didn't occur until the 1850's. The conflicts of the Western Indian wars inspired popular culture to embrace a mechanism to reconcile the horrors occurring. The U.S. government was removing native peoples from their land, authorizing massacre, attack and war. The Senate (a body of the States) voted 28 to 19 on the Indian Removal Act (1830) and reflected the South and West interest in expansion and control of territory. The House of Representatives (a body of the public) was almost evenly divided in the vote (101-97).

For many, Thanksgiving became a way to cope with a troubling pogrom of genocide and exploitation. One that many citizens objected to in the first place.

And then it became a vehicle of commerce.

In 1905 a Canadian department store, Eaton's, began the first Thanksgiving Day Parade by bringing a Santa Claus wagon with reindeer through downtown Toronto. It became a popular local event and in 1920, Gimbels Department Store in Philadelphia started the first American parade. In 1924, Macy's Department Store in New York City started its own parade. Staged to promote the gifting season, Macy's launched the idea that Thanksgiving marked the beginning of spending for Christmas. Gimbels and Macy's wanted to celebrate their success during the Roaring 20s. The float that traditionally ends the Macy's Parade is the Santa Claus float, the arrival of which is an unofficial sign of the beginning of the Christmas season. The parade boosted shopping for the following day. Retailers had a gentleman's agreement to wait until then before advertising holiday sales.



In 1939, during the Great Depression, Thanksgiving happened to fall during the fifth week of November. Retailers warned they would go bankrupt because the holiday shopping season was too short. They petitioned President Franklin D. Roosevelt to move the Thanksgiving holiday up to the fourth Thursday. In 1941, Congress ratified changing the holiday from the last Thursday to the fourth Thursday of November as a concession to FDR and the retail lobby.

Here's a brief timeline:

- 1789. Washington makes Thursday, November 26 1<sup>st</sup> nationwide "Day of Publik Thanksgivin".

- 1863. Lincoln keeps Thursday but makes the last Thursday of November the official holiday.
- October 6, 1941. The last Thursday amended to fourth Thursday by Congress. December 26, 1941 Roosevelt makes it law.

“Black Friday”—the day after Thanksgiving—has, over the years, become the unofficial launch of the Christmas buying season as well as the barometer of holiday mercantile prosperity. In Philadelphia, on the day after Thanksgiving, the streets would become so congested with shoppers that it was termed 'Black Friday'. In recent years, that phrase has made its way around America and is now a common name for the day after Thanksgiving. Another source for the name is based on the number of workers calling in sick after Thursday.

Even in Europe, Black Friday is becoming more common as retailers (probably led by the US internet sellers) use it to raise awareness of the shopping period. Opening stores at midnight began as a way to circumvent certain State’s “Blue Laws” as much as legally possible. And, now retailers have abandoned any respect for the original holiday and open their doors to shoppers earlier and earlier.

In 2018, the Day after Thanksgiving is a state holiday in California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. But not Utah....yet?

This year it falls on November 22. That is the earliest day of the month it can occur.

88% of Americans surveyed by the National Turkey Federation eat turkey on Thanksgiving. 46 million turkeys are eaten each Thanksgiving, 22 million on Christmas and 19 million turkeys on Easter. In 2011, 736 million pounds of turkey were consumed in the United States.



Have a quiet holiday, a great week, and be safe,

Bryan

p.s. Next week I'll be back with holiday leftovers, and it won't be appetizing.

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