



PRIMARY SOURCES FOR "THE FIRST THANKSGIVING" AT PLYMOUTH

There are 2 (and only 2) primary sources for the events of autumn 1621 in Plymouth:
Edward Winslow writing in *Mourt's Relation* and
William Bradford writing in *Of Plymouth Plantation*

Edward Winslow, *Mourt's Relation*:

"our harvest being gotten in, our governour sent foure men on fowling, that so we might after a speciall manner rejoyce together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labours ; they foure in one day killed as much fowle, as with a little helpe beside, served the Company almost a weeke, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Armes, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoyt, with some ninetie men, whom for three dayes we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deere, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governour, and upon the Captaine and others. And although it be not always so plentifull, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so farre from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plentie."

In modern spelling

"our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their 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 and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*:

In the original 17th century spelling

"They begane now to gather in ye small harvest they had, and to fitte up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health & strenght, and had all things in good plenty; fFor as some were thus imployed in affairs abroad, others were excersised in fishing, aboute codd, & bass, & other fish, of which yey tooke good store, of which every family had their portion. All ye somer ther was no want. And now begane to come in store of foule, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besids water foule, ther was great store of wild Turkie, of which they tooke many, besids venison, &c. Besids, they had about a peck a meale a weeke to a person, or now since

harvest, Indian corn to yt proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty hear to their freinds in England, which were not fained, but true reports."

In modern spelling

"They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."

NOTE: The *Mayflower* arrived in Plymouth in December of 1620. No further ships arrived in Plymouth until immediately after that "First Thanksgiving" - the *Fortune* arrived in November of 1621. One of the passengers on the *Fortune*, William Hilton, wrote a letter home that November. Although he was not present at that "First Thanksgiving," he does mention turkeys.

The letter of William Hilton, passenger on the *Fortune*

(The letter was written in November of 1621)

From Alexander Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841.

Loving Cousin,

At our arrival in New Plymouth, in New England, we found all our friends and planters in good health, though they were left sick and weak, with very small means; the Indians round about us peaceable and friendly; the country very pleasant and temperate, yielding naturally, of itself, great store of fruits, as vines of divers sorts in great abundance. There is likewise walnuts, chestnuts, small nuts and plums, with much variety of flowers, roots and herbs, no less pleasant than wholesome and profitable. No place hath more gooseberrries and strawberries, nor better. Timber of all sorts you have in England doth cover the land, that affords beasts of divers sorts, and great flocks of turkey, quails, pigeons and partridges; many great lakes abounding with fish, fowl, beavers, and otters. The sea affords us great plenty of all excellent sorts of sea-fish, as the rivers and isles doth variety of wild fowl of most useful sorts. Mines we find, to our thinking; but neither the goodness nor quality we know. Better grain cannot be than the Indian corn, if we will plant it upon as good ground as a man need desire. We are all freeholders; the rent-day doth not trouble us; and all those good blessings we have, of which and what we list in their seasons for taking.

Our company are, for most part, very religious, honest people; the word of God sincerely taught us every Sabbath; so that I know not any thing a contented mind can here want. I desire your friendly care to send my wife and children to me, where I wish all the friends I have in England; and so I rest

Your loving kinsman,
William Hilton



THE 53 PILGRIMS AT THE FIRST THANKSGIVING:

4 MARRIED WOMEN: Eleanor Billington, Mary Brewster, Elizabeth Hopkins, Susanna White Winslow.

5 ADOLESCENT GIRLS: Mary Chilton (14), Constance Hopkins (13 or 14), Priscilla Mullins (19), Elizabeth Tilley (14 or 15) and Dorothy, the Carver's unnamed maidservant, perhaps 18 or 19.

9 ADOLESCENT BOYS: Francis & John Billington, John Cooke, John Crackston, Samuel Fuller (2d), Giles Hopkins, William Latham, Joseph Rogers, Henry Samson.

13 YOUNG CHILDREN: Bartholomew, Mary & Remember Allerton, Love & Wrestling Brewster, Humility Cooper, Samuel Eaton, Damaris & Oceanus Hopkins, Desire Minter, Richard More, Resolved & Peregrine White.

22 MEN: John Alden, Isaac Allerton, John Billington, William Bradford, William Brewster, Peter Brown, Francis Cooke, Edward Doty, Francis Eaton, [first name unknown] Ely, Samuel Fuller, Richard Gardiner, John Goodman, Stephen Hopkins, John Howland, Edward Lester, George Soule, Myles Standish, William Trevor, Richard Warren, Edward Winslow, Gilbert Winslow.

FAMILY GROUPS:

- **ALDEN:** John
- **ALLERTON:** Isaac with children Bartholomew, Mary, Remember; the Allerton servant William Latham
- **BILLINGTON:** John & Eleanor with sons Francis, John Jr.
- **BRADFORD:** William
- **BREWSTER:** William & Mary with sons Love, Wrestling; their ward Richard More
- **BROWNE / BROWN:** Peter
- **CARVER:** The Carver ward Desire Minter; the Carver servant John Howland; the Carver maidservant Dorothy.
- **CHILTON:** Mary
- **COOKE:** Francis with son John
- **CRACKSTON:** John
- **EATON:** Francis with son Samuel
- **ELY:** Unknown adult man
- **FULLER:** Samuel with nephew Samuel 2d
- **GARDINER:** Richard
- **GOODMAN:** John
- **HOPKINS:** Stephen & Elizabeth with Giles, Constance, Damaris, Oceanus; their servants Edward Doty and Edward Leister.
- **MULLINS:** Priscilla
- **ROGERS:** Joseph
- **STANDISH:** Myles

- **TILLEY:** Elizabeth
- **TILLEY:** Tilley wards Humility Cooper and Henry Samson
- **TREVOR / TREVORE:** William
- **WARREN:** Richard
- **WINSLOW:** Edward & Susanna with her sons Resolved White & Peregrine White; Winslow servant George Soule
- **WINSLOW:** Gilbert

Note: In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford lists the *Mayflower* passengers and also tells us who died during the first winter of 1620/1621 and spring of 1621. No other ships arrived in Plymouth until after the "First Thanksgiving" celebration. The Pilgrims at the "First Thanksgiving" are all the *Mayflower* survivors.