



The Insider

FALL 2020

Of Puritans and Pumpkin Pie

By Barb Nicolls

Thanksgiving has its roots in Puritan New England, and as I recently discovered, so do we. Great-grandma Harriet Beebe Nicolls's mother was Jennie Cheney whose ancestry I've traced back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Our 10th great-grandparents James Allen and Ann Guild were married Mar. 16, 1638 in Dedham, and our 9th great-grandmother Mary Allen Clark was born there Dec. 4, 1641. The Congregational Church was the official church of the colony, and if you disagreed with church authorities, you were banished. So, considering our ancestors were original settlers of Medfield and stayed there for over a century, it's safe to assume they were Puritans.

Back in ye olden tymes, Puritans celebrated Fast days and Thanksgiving days; one to repent and appease God after bad things happened and one to rejoice and praise God after good things happened. These days weren't on any set date and could be proclaimed locally or regionally, and both holy days involved going to church. Over the years, Fast day disappeared and Thanksgiving day morphed into the holiday we now celebrate. Thanksgiving ain't what it used to be.

Even the iconic pumpkin pie ain't what it used to be. Pumpkins are native to North America and were favored by the Puritans because they were easy to grow and fed a lot of people. Some say that the earliest "pie" was a hollowed-out pumpkin filled with milk, honey, and spices which was then baked in hot ashes. After pumpkins were introduced in Europe, a 1653 French cookbook had a recipe for "Tourte of Pumpkin" which sounds similar to a modern pumpkin pie, but the English came up with a weird pie made of sliced pumpkin dipped in a batter of eggs and sugar, fried, layered in a crust with apples, currants, and spices, and baked. The fad of pumpkin pie faded in Europe while it endured in the colonies.

The first known pumpkin pie recipes published in the U.S. appeared in the 1796 cookbook *American Cookery*, and

they resemble the pies we make today, each recipe using the familiar ingredients of stewed and strained pumpkin, cream, eggs, and spices baked in a crust. An article in *The Massachusetts Gazette* dated Dec. 12, 1786 reported that during a recent Thanksgiving in Connecticut 200,000 pumpkin pies were made and were of "such an excellent quality that their southern neighbours would have mistaken them for Custards."

In December 1792 a syndicated humor piece appeared in New England newspapers written "by a batchelor" in which he declared that the focus of Thanksgiving had shifted from going to church to going to the "old cupboard." In his opinion, "the principle business of the day [was] to gormandize," and, not bothering with the incalculable amounts of wine, nuts, and apples, he estimated the amount of food consumed by the 685,000 residents of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island to be as follows:

- 85,694 mugs of flip (beer, rum, eggs, molasses, and spices whipped into a warm frothy concoction with a red hot poker!!)
- 40,000 plum puddings
- 85,694 turkeys and geese
- 128,541 chicken pies
- 514,164 minced pies
- 514,164 apple pies
- 257,082 rice or potato pies
- 514,164 tarts
- and a staggering 1,028,328 pumpkin pies!!

Seriously, he thought a family of 8 would eat 12 pumpkin pies, and it wasn't a typo because ALL the newspapers gave that number. And I guess a family was expected to

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*Silver Bucks have filed a
legal challenge and final
results may not be
available until fall of
2021.*

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wash all that down with a single mug of flip. Despite these wild estimates, the article does reveal that the post-Revolutionary Thanksgiving is more familiar to us than the original Thanksgiving. It

also reveals that the Nicolls Friday-after-Thanksgiving dessert table was grossly under stocked! So, this Thanksgiving, honor our Puritan New England ancestors by giving thanks and eating 1 1/2 pumpkin pies all by yourself.



Turkey Bowl XXXVI Recap (Unverified) By Jake Grover

The final score I have is 44-0. Some highlights below:

- Scoreless first 5 possessions - not a sign of things to come.
- A penguin ran on the field.
- Danny caught a TD, Tyler got extra point, 8-0.
- Halftime score was 8-0, Youngs.
- Jake brought out the afro at halftime - made all the difference.
- Jake caught a TD, Anthony got extra point, 16-0.
- Bobby got a pick-six, Tyler extra point, 24-0.
- Toss-up into the end-zone for a TD Jake to Bobby, extra point no good, 30-0.
- Silvers are clearly winded.
- Tyler intercepts a pass and then on the next play gets a forearm shiver in the back from Jonathan. Surely coincidental.
- Jake caught a TD on a goal-line and the extra point, 38-0.
- Danny interception then the (mercy) bell rang on snap of last play - unclear if it counted. Flea flicker lateral to Jake who threw a full-field bomb to Tyler in the endzone, 44-0. No extra point.
- Ian MVP for Silvers, Tyler (well-deserved) MVP for Youngs. Youngs clearly only won due to the inexplicably flat field.