

Turkeygate, The Thanksgiving Scandal  
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SEACOAST HISTORY HUMOR

Massachusetts has had a lock on history for too long. The northern New England states get no respect and scarcely show up in the history books. But one New Hampshire satirist has had enough, and blowing the lid off the oldest and fishiest scandal in American history.

NH Founder Fed Pilgrims in 1623

The lid is off, Massachusetts. And we're steaming.

For nearly 400 years New Hampshire residents have watched Bay Staters wallow in holiday gravy, taking credit for the founding of our Nation, but the cover-up is over. We know there was a second Thanksgiving, and we know why.

It was a neat little scam all right. Just pretend it never happened, pretend that those Massachusetts settlers survived with a little help from the Indians and God. The truth is, right from the start, New Hampshire was bailing the Pilgrims out of a desperate situation.

The record shows that life took a turn for the worst after that first fat Thanksgiving, and by 1623 people in Plymouth Colony were real depressed, even for Puritans. That's why Governor Bill Bradford sent Miles Standish off to find food, anything to keep the newborn colony alive.

NH saves the Pilgrims

Of course Standish made a beeline north, like a Bostonian heading to New Hampshire for cheap cigarettes. He crossed the imaginary border and right away met David Thomson (some spell it "Thompson"). The first New Hampshire settler, who was only a few weeks into building his "great house" called Pannaway Manor, which stood near present day Portsmouth. Now we call that scenic spot on the coast Odiorne's Point. It's a big hit with the tourists.

Thomson, an early entrepreneur, dropped his housework and brought as much codfish as he and his crew of fishermen could sail down to Plymouth. He knew the Separatists were an odd lot who liked to exile themselves from other

countries, but New Hampshire's first citizen was big hearted, and looking to make a profit.

Old English records show that Thomson might have been a Scot and an apothecary. Reports say he was a just, scholarly, and gentle man who could easily converse with the Indians. Thomson was the kind of self-made, selfless, fish seller you could build a national holiday around - if you had a nation - which we didn't yet.

### The second Thanksgiving

According to Pilgrim father Edward Winslow, that's exactly what happened in July 1623. In a letter to a friend in England, Winslow mentioned a terrible famine and the fortuitous arrival of a man from "Pascatoquack, where he liketh well". Those of us who today live on the Piscataqua River still liketh it very much.

Soon after Thomson and his cod came to the rescue, a supply ship from England arrived, and Pilgrim father Winslow wrote that it would not be proper to "content ourselves with private thanksgiving for that, which by private prayer could not be obtained." So, in the Pilgrim's words, another solemn day was set apart and appointed for that end." Thanksgiving II, courtesy of New Hampshire.

The Codfish Thanksgiving never made it into the history books. Bradford wasn't going to let a fishmonger from the Granite State take the tang out of his cranberry sauce. Bradford does mention Thomson's visit in his chronicle of Plymouth Plantation, but says nothing of the celebration. Whenever he mentions Thomson again in his writings, it is only to carp about how the man's crew was overfishing the Atlantic Ocean, or to complain that the Piscataqua settler was giving shelter to the rogues being tossed out of Plymouth. Thomson, you will remember was a kind hearted sort.

A few years later, even Winslow was referring to the commercially successful fishing settlement at Pannaway as just another "abortive attempt" at colonization. Next thing you know, the Massachusetts Bay Colony decided to annex the whole province of New Hampshire. We don't get no respect in the history books, then or now. Sure Thomson tried to make a few pence off the Pilgrims.

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