



**Hillermann's
Kids' Club**

The First Thanksgiving



After the pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock, the first winter was devastating. The cold, snow and sleet were exceptionally heavy, interfering with the workers as they tried to construct their settlement. March brought warmer weather and the health of the Pilgrims improved, but many had died during the long winter. Of the 110 Pilgrims and crew who left England, less than 50 survived the first winter. On March 16, 1621, an Indian brave walked into the Plymouth settlement. The Pilgrims were frightened until the Indian called out "Welcome" (in English!).

His name was Samoset and he was an Abnaki Indian. He had learned English from the captains of fishing boats that had sailed off the coast. After staying the night Samoset left the next day. He soon returned with another Indian named Squanto who spoke better English than Samoset. Squanto told the Pilgrims of his voyages across the ocean and his visits to England and Spain. It was in England where he had learned English.

Squanto's importance to the Pilgrims was enormous and it can be said that they would not have survived without his help. It was Squanto who taught the Pilgrims how to tap the maple trees for sap. He taught them which plants were poisonous and which had medicinal powers. He taught them how to plant the Indian corn by heaping the earth into low mounds with several seeds and fish in each mound. The decaying fish fertilized the corn. He also taught them to plant other crops with the corn.

The harvest in October was very successful and the Pilgrims found themselves with enough food to put away for the winter. There was corn, fruits and vegetables, fish to be packed in salt, and meat to be cured over smoky fires. The Pilgrim Governor William Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving to be shared by all the colonists and the neighboring Native Americans. They invited Squanto and the other Indians to join them in their celebration. Their chief, Massasoit, and 90 braves came to the celebration which lasted for 3 days. They played games, ran races, marched and played drums. The Indians demonstrated their skills with the bow and arrow and the Pilgrims demonstrated their musket skills. Exactly when the festival took place is uncertain, but it is believed the celebration took place in mid-October.

Indian Corn Napkin Rings

- Empty rolls of paper towels or toilet paper (cut into 1-1/2" wide pieces)
- White Glue
- Indian Corn off of the ear

Take your pieces of paper towel rolls and roll the outside surface in glue. Roll the glued side in the Indian corn. You're done! Enjoy your Thanksgiving Holiday!

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