

November Multicultural Connection

The Days of the Dead (Los Dias De Los Muertos) November 1-2, 2013



Every autumn monarch butterflies, which have summered north in the United States and Canada, return to Mexico for the winter protection of the fir trees. The local inhabitants welcome back the returning butterflies, which they believe bear the spirits of their departed. Los Dias de los Muertos, the Days of the Dead, is a traditional Mexico holiday honoring the dead. It is celebrated every year at the same time as Halloween and the Christian holy days of All Saints Day and All Souls Day (November 1st and 2nd). Los Dias de los Muertos is not a sad time, but instead a time of remembering and rejoicing. Skeletons and skulls are found everywhere. There are chocolate skulls, marzipan coffins, and white chocolate skeletons. Special loaves of bread are baked, called pan de muertos,

For more information: www.holidays.net

Election Day – November 5, 2013

Why is **Election Day** the Tuesday after the first Monday in November?

For much of our history, America was a predominantly agrarian society. Lawmakers therefore took into account that November was perhaps the most convenient month for farmers and rural workers to be able to travel to the polls. The fall harvest was over, but in the majority of the nation the weather was still mild enough to permit travel over unimproved roads.

Why Tuesday?

Since most residents of rural America had to travel a significant distance to the county seat in order to vote, Monday was not considered reasonable since many people would need to begin travel on Sunday. This would, of course, have conflicted with Church services and Sunday worship.



Why the first Tuesday after the first Monday?

Lawmakers wanted to prevent **Election Day** from falling on the first of November for two reasons. First, November 1st is All Saints Day, a Holy Day Roman Catholics. Second, most merchants were in the habit of doing their 2 books from the preceding month on the 1st. Apparently, Congress was worried that the economic success or failure of the previous month might prove an undue influence on the vote! Source: Federal Election Commission

Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) – November 9, 2013

The origin of this observance goes back to the late 1930s. Under Adolf Hitler's leadership as Chancellor of Germany, the Nuremberg Laws were passed that included limiting the right of Jewish citizens in Germany to religious observance, to attend school, to earn a living, to ride streetcars, and to visit parks. On November 9, 1938, Nazi storm troopers, members of the Nazi secret police, and the Hitler youth went on a rampage in Jewish neighborhoods in Germany and Austria—breaking into Jewish homes and businesses smashing windows and beating or killing those inside. They destroyed synagogues (Jewish places of worship) and holy books. The night of November 9-10 became known as Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). It is believed to be the catalyst event that served as the beginning of the Holocaust. Kristallnacht is observed throughout the world, often in synagogues and Jewish cemeteries.

For more information: www.ushmm.org



Veterans Day – November 11, 2013

In 1918, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day in the eleventh month, the world rejoiced and celebrated. After four years of bitter war, an armistice was signed. The "war to end all wars" was over.

Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar Congressional action. If the idealistic hope had been realized that World War I was "the War to end all Wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, war broke out in Europe.

Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of WW II and Korea, Congress was requested to make this day an occasion to honor those who have served America in all wars. In 1954 President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as **Veterans Day**.

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of **Veterans Day** to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11th was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.



The Story of **Veterans Day**

- November 11th is **Veterans Day**. A veteran is a soldier who has served his/her country.
- Thirty-five countries fought in World War I. They fought for five years, from 1914 to 1918. The United States fought in the war from 1917 to 1918. Finally the countries stopped fighting. The leaders signed an armistice. They signed the armistice on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The armistice meant that the war was over. Americans were very happy to hear about the armistice. No more soldiers would die in the war. The soldiers could come home. People went out into the streets and laughed and danced. They blew horns and whistles and rang bells. They sang songs. They thought that there would never be another war.
- President Wilson made November 11th a holiday to remember the end of the war. The holiday was called Armistice Day. At eleven o'clock in the morning, everyone stopped doing whatever they were doing. People were completely silent for one minute. This minute was to remember all the soldiers who have died in wars.
- The body of an unknown soldier was brought to America from the cemetery in France. His body was buried in a tomb at Arlington National Cemetery. It was called the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.
- The U.S. was in three more wars: World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The name of the holiday was changed to Veterans Day.
- The bodies of three more unknown soldiers were brought to the cemetery. On Veterans Day, there are special services at the Tomb of the Unknowns.
- Americans remember and honor all the veterans.



Thanksgiving – November 28, 2013

In the United States, **Thanksgiving** is always celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November.

The Pilgrims who sailed to America were originally members of the English Separatist Church. Before going to America they had fled to Holland to escape religious persecution. Although, in Holland, they enjoyed more religious tolerance, but they eventually became disillusioned with the Dutch way of life. In the hope of a better life in, they took the help of a London stock company to move to America.

They reached Plymouth in 1620. There, they had to face a terrible winter. Forty-six of the original 102 had died by the next fall. But fortune turned in their favor and the harvest of the next year was bumper. And the remaining colonists decided to celebrate with a feast -- including 91 Indians who had helped the Pilgrims survive their first year. It is believed that the Pilgrims would not have made it through the year without the help of the natives. The feast was more of a traditional English harvest festival than a true "thanksgiving" observance. It lasted three days. Governor William Bradford sent "four men fowling" after wild ducks and geese. It is not certain that wild turkey was part of their feast. However, it is certain that they had venison. The term "turkey" was used by the Pilgrims to mean any sort of wild fowl.

Another modern staple at almost every **Thanksgiving** table is pumpkin pie. But it is unlikely that the first feast included that treat. The supply of flour had been long diminished, so there was no bread or pastries of any kind. However, they did eat boiled pumpkin, and they produced a type of fried bread from their corn crop. There was also no milk, cider, potatoes, or butter. There were no domestic cattle for dairy products, and the newly discovered potato was still considered by many Europeans to be poisonous. But the feast did include fish, berries, watercress, lobster, dried fruit, clams, venison, and plums. This "thanksgiving" feast was not repeated the following year. But in 1623, during a severe drought, the pilgrims gathered in a prayer service, praying for rain. When a long, steady rain followed the very next day, Governor Bradford proclaimed another day of **Thanksgiving**, again inviting their Indian friends. It wasn't until June of 1676 that another Day of Thanksgiving was proclaimed.

On June 20, 1676, the governing council of Charlestown, Massachusetts, held a meeting to determine how best to express thanks for the good fortune that had seen their community securely established. By unanimous vote they instructed Edward Rawson, the clerk, to proclaim June 29 as a day of thanksgiving. It is notable that this thanksgiving celebration probably did not include the Indians, as the celebration was meant partly to be in recognition of the colonists' recent victory over the "heathen natives". October of 1777 marked the first time that all 13 colonies joined in a thanksgiving celebration. It also commemorated the patriotic victory over the British at Saratoga. But it was a one-time affair.



George Washington proclaimed a National Day of **Thanksgiving** in 1789, although some were opposed to it. There was discord among the colonies, many feeling the hardships of a few Pilgrims did not warrant a national holiday. And later, President Thomas Jefferson scoffed at the idea of having a day of thanksgiving. It was Sarah Josepha Hale, a magazine editor, whose efforts eventually led to what we recognize as **Thanksgiving**. Hale wrote many editorials championing her cause in her Boston Ladies' Magazine, and later, in Godey's Lady's Book. Finally, after a 40-year campaign of writing editorials and letters to governors and presidents, Hale's obsession became a reality when, in 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as a national day of **Thanksgiving**. After Lincoln **every president proclaimed Thanksgiving**. The date was changed a couple of times, most recently by Franklin Roosevelt, who set it up one week to the next-to-last Thursday in order to create a longer Christmas shopping season. Public uproar against this decision caused the president to move **Thanksgiving** back to its original date two years later. And in 1941, **Thanksgiving** was finally sanctioned by Congress as a legal holiday, as the fourth Thursday in November.

