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THE HISTORY OF CORN AND THE PILGRIMS

By Kathleen M. (Kathy) Myers

*Come, ye thankful people, come, raise the song of harvest
home;*

*All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide for our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come, raise the song of har-
vest home.¹*

As another growing season comes to a close in Pennsylvania, the words from the old hymn, *Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*, bring to mind a crop that is unique to the Americas---corn. Part of the grass family, the many varieties of corn were developed from wild plants over a period of time by the people native to the Americas. These include dent corn, flint corn, flour corn, popcorn, sweet corn, waxy corn and pod corn.

The list of corn related foods in use in the USA is extensive--- corn meal, corn on the cob, corn bread, johnnycakes, corn fritters, corn oil, corn margarine, corn flakes, corn syrup, corn soup, corn pudding, and corn chips, just to name a few, as well as corn grown as feed for cattle, chickens and other livestock. All around our nation, companies are turning corn into ethanol, an alternate source of fuel to power our cars.

The word "corn" in other countries refers to grains such as wheat, barley and rye. But here, the crop that we today call corn was known as maize to the early settlers, coming from the Native American word "mahiz", which means "that which sustains us".² "Archaeological and paleobotanical discoveries provide evidence that cultivated corn has existed in the southwestern US for at least 3,000 years. Discoveries in the Tehuacan Valley of southern Mexico have yielded evidence that wild corn existed there from 5,000 to 3,400 B.C."³ As to the cultivation of corn, "Archaeological evidence of corn's early presence in the western hemisphere was identified from corn pollen grain considered to be 80,000 years old obtained from drill cores 200 feet below Mexico City"⁴ Wherever corn

originated, it was known to Native Americans long before Europeans reached this continent.

Corn spread throughout North America along the various trade routes of rivers and trails traveled by the Native Americans. Some speculate that "...cultivating corn is responsible for turning the Native American tribes from nomadic to agrarian societies."⁵ Research reveals that corn was a well-established crop in North America by the time of the arrival of the Pilgrims in 1620.

Corn was taken to Europe by the early Spanish explorers and eventually spread around the world. "At first, corn was only a garden curiosity in Europe, but it soon began to be recognized as a valuable food crop. Within a few years, it spread throughout France, Italy and all of southeastern Europe and Northern Africa. By 1575 it was making its way into western China...."⁶

Were our Pilgrim ancestors familiar with corn before their arrival in the new world? According to an account by William Bradford, probably not.



Indian Corn

It was during a scouting expedition that men from the *Mayflower* found a cache of corn buried underground in a place still known today as Corn Hill. Recorded in William Bradford's writings *Of Plymouth Plantation*, we read, "Which, they digging up, found in them divers fair Indian baskets filled with corn, and some in ears, fair and good, of divers colors, which seemed to them a very goodly sight (having never seen any such before)." With supplies running low and an uncertainty as to whether the grains they brought with them would grow in this new land, the Pilgrims took corn from this cache at Corn Hill with the understanding that they would provide compensation to its owners.

The Wampanoag (meaning People of the First Light), had been living for thousands of years in the region where the Pilgrims landed. The next spring, it was Squanto, of the Wampanoag Nation, who taught our ancestors how to grow

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

corn.



Squanto Bust
Courtesy Pilgrim
Hall Museum

At <http://www.plimoth.org> we find the following account by the Wampanoags, "Around 1,000 years ago, the elders tell us, our relative the Crow flew from the Southwest to the Wampanoag Nation, bringing us the first corn and bean seeds (weachamin gka tuppquam wskan-nemuneash) as a gift from the Creator. Since that time we have learned from our grandmothers and grandfathers how to sow, tend and harvest these wonderful plants."

To the Native Americans, "...corn was of divine origin---it was the food of the gods that created the earth."⁷ William Bradford said, "And sure it was God's good providence that we found this corn for we know not how else we should have done."

For additional information on the Pilgrims and the history of the Wampanoag Nation, visit www.plimoth.org

¹ Words: Henry Alford, *Psalms and Hymns*, 1844; Music: St.

George's Windsor, George J. Elvey, 1858

² <http://www.rlrouse.com/history-of-corn.html>

³ Funk and Wagnell's New Encyclopedia

⁴ *Origin, History and Uses of Corn (Zea mays)*, Gibson and Benson, Iowa State Univ., Dept. of Agronomy

⁵ <http://www.rlrouse.com/history-of-corn.html>

⁶ Origin, History and Uses of Corn Ibid

⁷ <http://www.ontariocorn.org/classroom/history.html>



A Wampanoag cornfield with a Wetu (house) at the back at Plimoth Plantation. Beans and squashes are also planted with the corn and the three are called "Three Sisters." Photo Courtesy of Plimoth Plantation.

PLYMOUTH, SUMMER 2010

Editor's Note: The following email is printed with permission of our Western Colony member, Nancy Kotchman, a descendant of Pilgrim John Alden and grandmother of the writers: Monday, July 05, 2010 1-:25 PM

Hi Grandma and Grandpa! We are having so much fun on vacation. Right now we are at Cape Cod on our little porch watching some small fireworks across the river. You will never guess what we did today



Halle Kotchman

We visited Plymouth Massachusetts! We visited the park and saw some statues and we got to see Mayflower II !! We also got to see Plymouth Rock!! And the best part of all of this is that we got to see John Alden's House..... We have pictures but the house



Rachel Kotchman

wasn't open, cuz of the holiday I think, so we peeked through the windows and we saw the exterior of the house!! Today was so much fun and tomorrow we're waking up early to see a light house and go to the fish market then relaxing on the beach and we're also gonna go parasailing tomorrow or the day after!!

Love You!!!!!!
Halle and Rachel.

DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL? Yuur editor is always looking for stories or artwork about the Pilgrims, their Native American friends, famous descendants and our own members. You may contact the editor at the address listed below.

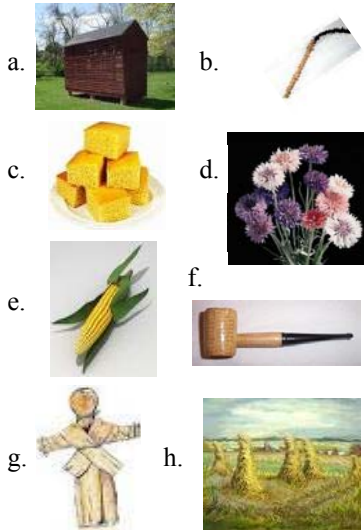
A RIDDLE: What food do you throw away the outside and cook the inside, then eat the outside and throw away the inside? Answer (backwards): boc eht no nroc.

ANSWER TO THE GOV. WILLIAM BRADFORD CRYPTOGAM: "... they got seed to plant them corn the next year, or else they might have starved, ..." In modern English from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Morison/Knopf 1959 edition, p. 66. **Keyword:** INDIAN CORN

Any comments or suggested topics for the feature articles of this newsletter? Perhaps an article for consideration? If so, please contact Stacy B. C. Wood, Jr., Editor, "JR PA Mayflower," 1530 South Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147-6218 or by e-mail at sbcwjr@comcast.net.

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORD AND THEN MATCH WITH THE PICTURE

- A. Corn ARE = _ _ _ _
- B. Corn BCO EIPP = _ _ _ _
- C. Corn KHUS LODL = _ _ _ _
- D Corn BCIR = _ _ _ _
- E Corn EFLORW = _ _ _ _
- F Corn SCHKOS = _ _ _ _
- G.Corn EFKIN = _ _ _ _
- H Corn ABDER = _ _ _ _
- _____



ANSWERS: A = ear e, B = cob pipe f, C = husk doll g, D = crib a, E = flower d, F = shocks h, G = knife b, H = bread c

ALTHOUGH WE DON'T HAVE AN AMAZING MAIZE (CORN) MAZE, TRY THIS.

HAMPTON COURT MAZE, LONDON, ENGLAND

BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED AS EARLY AS 1689 FOR KING WILLIAM III OF ENGLAND WHO REIGNED 1689-1702. IT COVERS 1/3RD OF AN ACRE AND HAS 1/2 MILE OF PATH.



A GOVERNOR WILLIAM BRADFORD CRYPTOGRAM
 TBCY RLT SCCA TL MHIKT TBCJ DLQK TBC KCXT YCIQ
 LQ CHSC TBCY JERBT BIVC STIQVCA Answer on page 2.

More than three centuries ago, at the season of the gathering in of the harvest, the Pilgrims humbly paused in their work and gave thanks to God for the preservation of their community and for the abundant yield of the soil. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1931 Thanksgiving proclamation, the first to mention the Pilgrims! For all of the proclamations to date see www.PilgrimHall.org.

ANSWER: Unused letters from the Corn 16 x 20 WordSearch spell "as about some six months afterward." From Bradford's history *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Morison/Knopf 1959 edition, p. 66.

CORN 16 X 20 WORDSEARCH

A S L A B H B A S K E T S S C O L U S P
 Z I H A M E X I C O T S G O A A E W E U
 T O M M C M K O R L C E A C C W V E I R
 E X P E D I T I O N N O O I H S I A L Y
 H S R A E S G N W I R S N E E K D C P S
 U R O L E P A O R F E A A T S A E H P M
 A E V V F H I A L B T Y P I I N N A U I
 C D I X T E G A I O S L M E E N C M S R
 A L D E M R K R B O E R A S X E E I E G
 N E E N A E T O T H W A W S P M N N T L
 I U N M S R E V I D H E H A L U R O T I
 H F C C U L T I V A T E D C O N O M L P
 C A E M A U Q A P P U T F I R E C A E U
 C O M P E N S A T I O N T R E A P D R O
 D I S C O V E R I E S E R F R S O I S S
 W O S A G R A R I A N W A A S H P C R D

CORN 16 X 20 WORDSEARCH The following words are found in this issue. The unused letters answer the question "How long did it take the Pilgrims to repay the Indians for the corn they took?"

AFRICA, AGRARIAN, ARCHAEOLOGICAL, BASKETS, CACHE, CHINA, COMPENSATION, CONTINENT, CROW, CULTIVATED, DISCOVERIES, DIVERS, EARLY, EARS, ELDERS, ETHANOL, EVIDENCE, EXPEDITION, EXPLORERS, FEED, FLAKES, FUEL, HEMISPHERE, LIVESTOCK, MAHIZ, MARGARINE, MEAL, MEXICO, NOMADIC, PALEOBOTANICAL, PILGRIMS, POPCORN, PROVIDENCE, SETTLERS, SOCIETIES, SOUP, SOW, SOUTHWESTERN, SUPPLIES, SYRUP, TEHUACAN, TRIBES, TUPPAQUAM, WAMPANOAGS, WEACHAMIN, WSKANNEMUNEASH.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL?

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| | O | C | L | I | |
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| | D | R | F | C | |
| | R | O | I | D | |
| | C | L | E | F | |
| | I | E | O | R | |
| | F | N | C | E | |
| | E | F | D | N | |

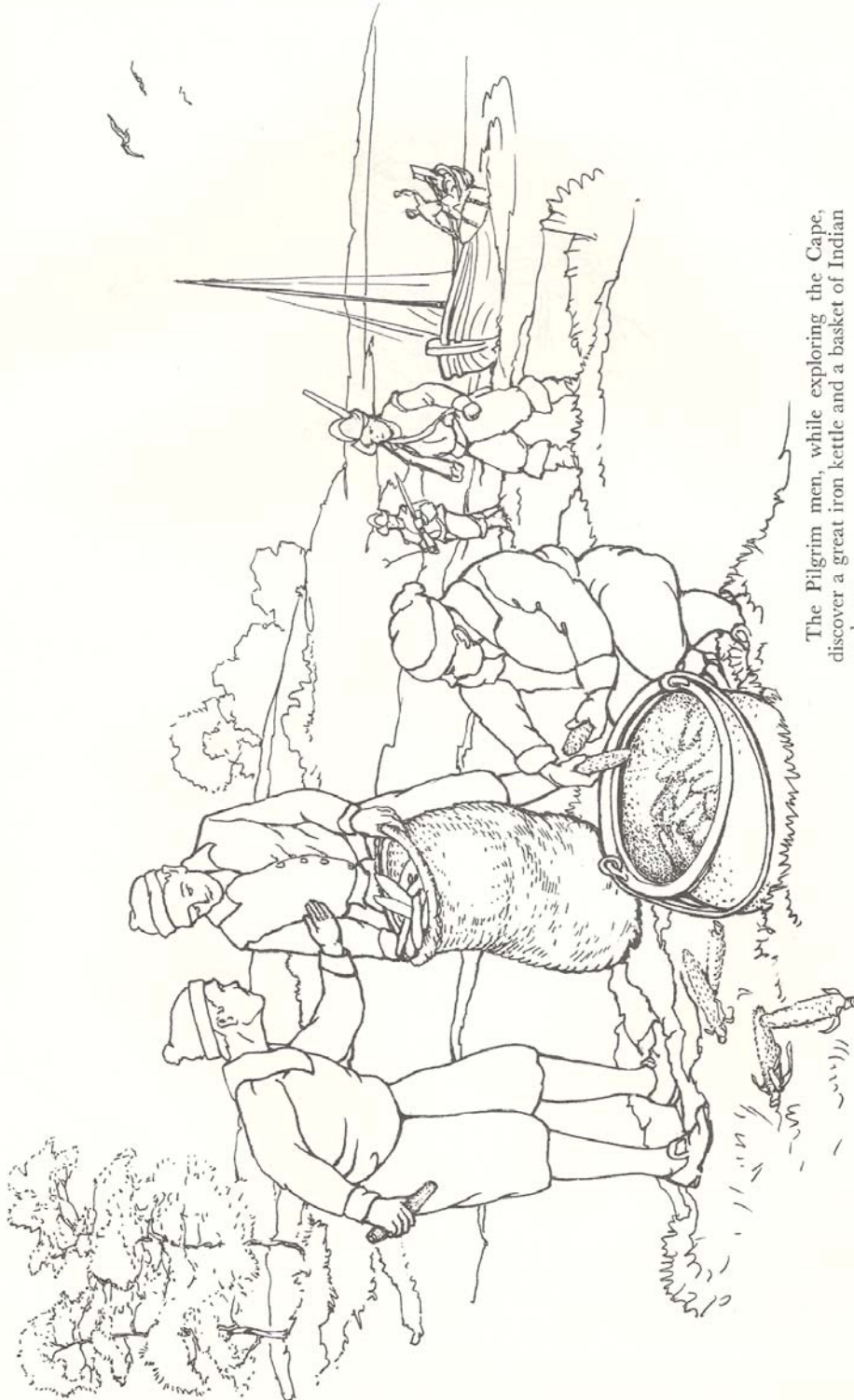
The Corn Rows Sudoku puzzle uses nine non-repeating letters instead of numbers. The answer is below. Plant the empty rows.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | N | I | D | R | C | F | L | E | C | F |
| D | L | E | D | C | L | E | D | R | F | O |
| F | C | R | F | L | O | C | R | F | N | I |
| R | O | F | R | O | L | D | E | O | F | I |
| L | E | R | F | O | C | I | N | D | L | E |
| I | O | D | L | R | N | F | E | C | I | O |
| E | L | E | F | L | E | C | I | N | D | L |
| N | I | D | I | N | F | O | R | C | E | L |
| C | O | R | O | C | F | L | E | C | F | N |

CORN ROWS SUDOKU CLUE: One column or row spells the keyword in the clear either top to bottom or side to side..

A PAGE TO COLOR

Do you think that you have a Pilgrim ancestor among this group? If so print his name here and color his coat blue: _____



The Pilgrim men, while exploring the Cape, discover a great iron kettle and a basket of Indian seed corn.

From *The Pilgrim Story* = A picture book For Coloring, Drawings by Charles H. Overly Courtesy of Plimoth Plantation.