

Plymouth Rock Foundation's Newsletter – Nov., 2021

Lessons from Plymouth by Dr. Paul Jehle, President (www.plymrock.org)

America's Hometown Thanksgiving: The 400th Anniversary of the 1621 Harvest Feast



There were only about 140 people who attended the first harvest feast in the fall of 1621. But on November 20, 2021 thousands lined the route of this year's Thanksgiving parade held in historic Plymouth, Massachusetts. Plymouth Rock Foundation, parent organization of America's Hometown Thanksgiving and original sponsor was again proud to be involved in this annual event. Board members from three states were on hand and participated throughout the weekend. As it

was in 1621, the Wampanoag were with the Pilgrims. In addition, first nation peoples, our veterans and thematic floats highlighted key moments in America's history. It was "Americana on parade."



Unlike the first harvest festival, this event was broadcast live (on WCVB Channel Five). Paul Jehle (President of Plymouth Rock Foundation) and Olly deMacedo (director of America's Hometown) joined Antoinette Antonio and Doug Meehan of Chanel Five to give color commentary during the parade. What makes this parade so unique is that it tells the story of America in chronological order,, emphasizing key events of influence throughout our history.

Highlighted this year was again the arrival of the *Mayflower*, then the first harvest festival in the fall of 1621, where for three days the native Wampanoag and English Pilgrim feasted. In the words of Edward Winslow: *"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as*



much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and



others. And like that first feast, an abundance of food choices were available for all after the parade!



From the original Militia organized in Plimoth in early 1621, to the veterans of today who deserve honor and recognition, America's Hometown Thanksgiving Parade has presented floats that cause us to reflect on the truth that liberty must be defended to be maintained. The recipe of God and



Country preserves true patriotism that is both God-fearing and grateful for the blessings of national liberty handed down to future generations. We never get tired of seeing the tears of gratitude from veterans when they see vintage World War I and II vehicles, the Vietnam “Welcome Home” Huey Helicopter float and those who re-enact all eras of military preparedness.



This year, we were honored once again to host the U.S. Army Golden Knights who parachuted down to historic Plimoth to help us honor a severely wounded Afghan veteran! Another float honoring veterans was the Mayflower Bell, a replica of an actual bell on the restored *Mayflower II* of Plimoth-Patuxet where veterans melted down their medals to invest the memory of their sacrifice to preserve liberty to future generations. What a symbol to have on the *Mayflower II*! Constructed from the sacrifice of veterans who followed the Pilgrims and their “stepping stone” to freedom of conscience, future generations will now be able to remember our veterans’ sacrifice!



The “thematic float” this year was surrounded by memorable images virtually everyone who saw the parade would remember. A float depicting America as a “beacon of hope” with a ship called *Liberty* taking immigrants to America highlighted “giving thanks through the years.” The “first Americans” – natives from Apache, Navajo, Yuchi, Sioux, Mohawk, and Kiowa nations were followed by the immigration float.



Various ethnic groups dressed in their native garb, followed with songs and dancing. Behind them, beginning with the three nations of England, Holland and America (where the Pilgrims began), flags from every nation on the earth were carried by those who



chose their native flag or were willing to carry it! After that, one giant American flag, carried by cadets, demonstrated in visual form “E Pluribus Unum” – out of many, one! Those who witnessed this either in person or on television were struck by the phenomenal images of unity and diversity that make up our great nation!

Each year our hope is that people will be inspired by the faith of the Pilgrims brought to these shores more than 400 years ago. The Pilgrims saw themselves as *stepping stones* unto future generations. Though America’s sins are evident from broken covenants with the Wampanoag and other natives, protecting slavery as an institution, and marginalizing groups without protecting their God-given equality, we would neither see these discrepancies nor seek to remove them had not true Christianity been brought to these shores. The reason we light a candle at the beginning of each parade is to demonstrate what Bradford wrote that “*one small candle can light a thousand, and the light here kindled can shine to our whole nation – let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise!*” From one small candle and step of faith, we all can be one nation under God!

