

## **Francis Cooke Society Newsletter**

### **October 2004**

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#### **About the Francis Cooke Society (FCS)**

The FCS was formed in 2003 when it came to the attention of several founding members that there was no existing group named in Pilgrim Francis Cooke's memory. In addition to honoring Francis Cooke's contributions to Plymouth Colony, FCS serves as a forum for members to exchange information and assists descendants of Francis Cooke in acquiring acceptable proofs of eligibility for membership in the General Society of Mayflower Descendants.

#### **Contact Information**

Members of the FCS are in communication through an e-mail group at:  
Francis\_Cooke\_Society@yahoogroups.com.

The FCS Website: <http://www.FrancisCookeSociety.org>

President: J. Scott McKay, [scottsfamilytree@aol.com](mailto:scottsfamilytree@aol.com)

Membership Chair: Judy Hughes, [judyh@dnet.net](mailto:judyh@dnet.net)

Secretary and Genealogy Coordinator: Valeria Reckert, [LadyGenes@comcast.net](mailto:LadyGenes@comcast.net)

Cooke Historian: Richard Worthington, [rlworthi@wisc.edu](mailto:rlworthi@wisc.edu)

Publicity Coordinator and Newsletter Editor: Christine Chirokas, [chirokas@comcast.net](mailto:chirokas@comcast.net)

#### **Committee Updates**

**Charter and Bylaws:** A committee is reviewing draft bylaws developed by members Michael Cook and Harry Hollien. We are also very fortunate to have the expertise of member Jill Sybalsky to help in this process. We will keep members informed on the status of this endeavor and resulting activities, such as election of officers.

**Membership:** Membership Chair Judy Hughes reports FCS has 140 members. If you are interested in becoming a member of FCS (no fee) or are a member who has not completed a membership form, please contact Judy at [judyh@dnet.net](mailto:judyh@dnet.net) or 295 Young Cove Road, Franklin, NC 28734 and she will send you a brief membership form.

**Publicity:** If you have ideas on how to spread the news about FCS, please contact Chris Chirokas at [chirokas@comcast.net](mailto:chirokas@comcast.net).

#### **Get Involved!**

Currently there is only a small group of people involved in making FCS work and we could really use some help! Here are a few of the many opportunities to make a difference:

--Help Scott McKay plan a FCS meeting to coincide with the September 2005 Triennial Meeting of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants. This would be a small time

commitment and would involve finding a suitable time and place in Plymouth to meet. Please contact him at [scottsfamilytree@aol.com](mailto:scottsfamilytree@aol.com).

--Keep a database of famous descendants of Francis Cooke. Contact Scott McKay for more information.

--Monitor Rootsweb's Cook and Cooke e-mail lists for postings from Francis Cooke descendants and contact the posters with information on FCS. Contact Judy Hughes at [judyh@dnnet.net](mailto:judyh@dnnet.net) if you can help with this.

### **GSMD Triennial Meeting**

The Triennial Meeting of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants will take place in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on September 10-13, 2005. Scott McKay would like to hold our first society meeting in Plymouth during that time.

If you are planning to attend from out of state, you may want to book a hotel room early. There are many places in and around Plymouth in a variety of price ranges. There is a block of rooms for members of the Mayflower Society at the Radisson (508) 747-4900.

### **Thanksgiving**

By Chris Chirokas

With Thanksgiving around the corner, it is a good time to learn more about how Francis Cooke and the other Mayflower passengers celebrated the first harvest at Plymouth and how that evolved into the Thanksgiving holiday we know today.

President Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863. The Pilgrims likely celebrated the first harvest in early October, and Lincoln's chosen date was probably picked to correspond with the November 21, 1620 anchoring of the *Mayflower* at Cape Cod. In 17<sup>th</sup> century Plymouth, a day of "Thanksgiving" would be a religious day spent entirely in the meetinghouse to thank God for something specific.

Caleb Johnson's website, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~macplymo/index.html#thanksgiv>, offers abundant information on Thanksgiving including excerpts from two accounts of the first Thanksgiving.

The first excerpt is from a December 12, 1621 letter written by Edward Winslow that was first published in 1622 and is included in the book [Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth](#):

*Our corn [i.e. wheat] did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. 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 although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.*

The second description was written about 20 years after the fact by William Bradford in his *History Of Plymouth Plantation*, which was rediscovered in 1854 after having been taken by British looters during the Revolutionary War:

*They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercising in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.*

Johnson's website also includes information on foods available for the first Thanksgiving--fish, birds and other meat, grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Foods not available include ham, sweet potatoes, corn-on-the cob, popcorn, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie (although they may have had pumpkin pudding).

For some old New England Thanksgiving recipes, see America's Homepage on Plymouth at <http://pilgrims.net/plymouth/recipes.htm>.

Many of the lessons we learned in history class about the "First Thanksgiving" are now considered more myth than fact. Plimoth Plantation has an indoor exhibit called "Thanksgiving: Memory, Myth & Meaning," which leads you from present-day traditions back through time to discover the origins of this American holiday. This exhibit culminates with a new look at the 1621 harvest celebration, now popularly called "The First Thanksgiving," from the perspectives of the Wampanoag and English participants. For more information on the exhibit, see <http://www.plimoth.org/visit/what/exhibit.asp>.

Pilgrim Hall Museum also offers some insight into the history of Thanksgiving. Visit there in person on Thanksgiving Day and you will be treated to the once-a-year display of the original 1622 book, *Mourt's Relation*. Visit the museum's website at

<http://www.pilgrimhall.org/thanksg.htm> for more Thanksgiving related topics, including the Native American Day of Mourning.

**Recommended Websites\*:**

Member Donna Cotter recommends the Redfern Family History website <http://www.jrredfern.com/genealogy/>. It includes the genealogy of John Tomson/Thompson/Thomson and Mary Cooke for five generations and information on the Kendrick family of Cape Cod as well as others.

Chris Chirokas suggests visiting the Gary Boyd Roberts' Notable Kin website, <http://www.notablekin.org/>. Many are familiar with Roberts' published works, including *The Great Migration* volumes. Roberts is on staff at New England Historic and Genealogical Society (NEHGS), who sponsors the website. Included on the website is information on the blood relationship between George Bush and John Kerry (9<sup>th</sup> cousins twice removed via Elizabeth Cooke and Edmund Reade).

\*Websites are recommended by FCS members, and the society does not vouch for their accuracy.

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