

THE JOURNAL

The unofficial newsletter of Wilson County Historical Society



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Thanksgiving

by Anthony Delgado

Thanksgiving is known to be one of the oldest traditions in the United States when families gather to give thanks and celebrate with a traditional meal. What makes up that meal can differ but usually has at least a turkey, some dressing, and other side dishes. Our neighbors to the North, Canada, also celebrate Thanksgiving, though their celebration started well before the pilgrims gathered around a table with the First Americans. Read on to learn more about the real first Thanksgiving.

What food makes up your traditional Thanksgiving meal?

The First Thanksgiving Was *In Texas*?

Juan de Oñate was a member of a distinguished family that had loyally worked for the Spanish crown. His father had discovered and developed rich mines in Zacatecas, Mexico. Oñate, himself, had opened the mines of San Luis Potosí and performed many other services for the Spanish king. But he wanted to carve an unquestioned place in history by leading an important expedition into unexplored land.

He was granted land in the northern Rio Grande Valley among the Pueblo Indians by the viceroy of New Spain. The viceroy moved to a new post, however, and his successor was slow to grant Oñate permission to begin his expedition. Finally, in 1597, approval came. To reach his new holdings, Oñate chose to bypass the traditional route that followed the Rio Conchos in present-day Mexico to the Rio Grande and then northward along the Rio Grande into New Mexico. In the summer of 1597, Oñate sent Vicente de Zaldívar to blaze a wagon trail from Santa Barbara in southern Chihuahua, along which could be found adequate water supplies. Zaldívar underwent many hardships, including capture by Indians, in carrying out his instructions. No mention of the hardships was made, however, when he made his report to Oñate. (The trail blazed by Zaldívar has become the route of the modern highway between Chihuahua City and El Paso.)

By early March 1598, Oñate's expedition of 500 people, including soldiers, colonists, wives and children and 7,000 head of livestock, was ready to cross the treacherous Chihuahuan Desert. Almost from the beginning of the 50-day march, nature challenged the Spaniards. First, seven consecutive days of rain made travel miserable. Then the hardship was reversed, and the travelers suffered greatly from the dry weather. On one occasion, a chance rain shower saved the parched colonists.

Finally, for the last five days of the march before reaching the Rio Grande, the expedition ran out of both food and water, forcing the men, women and children to seek roots and other scarce desert vegetation to eat. Both animals and humans almost went mad with thirst before the party reached water. Two horses drank until their stomachs burst, and two others drowned in the river in their haste to consume as much water as possible.

The Rio Grande was the salvation of the expedition, however. After recuperating for 10 days, Oñate ordered a day of thanksgiving for the survival of the expedition. Included in the event was a feast, supplied with game by the Spaniards and with fish by the natives of the region. A mass was said by the Franciscan missionaries traveling with the expedition. And finally, Oñate read La Toma -- the taking -- declaring the land drained by the Great River to be the possession of King Philip II of Spain.

Some historians call this one of the truly important dates in the history of the continent, marking the beginning of Spanish colonization in the American Southwest.

A member of the expedition wrote of the original celebration, "We built a great bonfire and roasted the meat and fish, and then all sat down to a repast the like of which we had never enjoyed before. . . We were happy that our trials were over; as happy as were the passengers in the Ark when they saw the dove returning with the olive branch in his beak, bringing tidings that the deluge had subsided."

After the celebration, the Oñate expedition continued up the Rio Grande and eventually settled near Santa Fé. As one historian noted, when Jamestown and Plymouth were established early in the 17th century, they were English attempts to gain a foothold in the New World. Santa Fé was but one of hundreds of towns the Spanish already had established in the New World.

Read more about the celebrations at San Elizario:
<https://www.texasalmanac.com/articles/the-first-thanksgiving>.



The Floresville Opry
Presents a

Thanksgiving
SHINDIG
(With Dancing)

SAT., NOVEMBER 25, 2023

Live on stage

Freddy Cruz
And the
Nobie Outlaws
Band

**Wilson County Expo
& Community Center**
435 St Hwy 97 East out of Floresville
Doors open at 5:30 pm
Music from 7:00 to 10:30 pm

*Bring your own
adult beverages!*
Set-ups and soft drinks
available.

Smoked Ham Dinner available — \$12.00
by Witte's Catering

Reserved Table (Seats 8)
\$100.00
General Admission Ticket
Prepaid \$15.00 • At the Door \$20.00

**THE LOAN
HUNTER** Hermie
Talamantez
210.284.6185

Wilson County News
A proud sponsor of the Floresville Opry
gowilson360.com

CONCESSIONS - DESSERTS - SILENT AUCTION

Benefit for the Wilson County Jailhouse Museum upstairs windows
For info., or to reserve a table, call Viola (830) 391-1062

WCN Graphics • 830.216.4519

We can use help setting up on Friday, November 24th. If you're able, please join us at 1:00 PM at the Wilson County Expo Center

Thank You!!!!

The Wilson County Historical Society Floresville Opry wishes to give a big shout out of thanks and appreciation to the folks in the Wilson County Community and surrounding area for their sponsorship, donations, attendance, participation and support for the Opry since it started in 2011. Without YOU, it couldn't be successful.

A fundraising goal of the Society was to raise funds for restorations of the Wilson County Jailhouse Museum. A portion of the Museum restorations are open to visitors but the upstairs windows need replacement. \$50,000 is still needed to be raised. Any help is welcomed. Once again, the Opry thanks our community for its awesome support.

Floresville Opry Team
Wilson County Historical Society

NOVEMBER'S MEETING PROGRAM

American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions

November 21st 6:00 PM

Wilson County Courthouse

Texas Heritage Project

AITSCM's *Texas Heritage Project*, founded in 2014 by the Director, Rudy de la Cruz, Jr., and co-founders Ramon Juan Vasquez and Art Martinez de Vara. Together they have conducted primary research throughout the greater South Central Texas region and have developed a digital repository containing over 15,000 assets and are currently working on the 10th book of the AITSCM series on Texas Heritage.

To learn more about AITSCM's
Texas Heritage Program click here:

<https://aitscm.org/texas-heritage-project/>

Be sure to check
out our Website
and "like" our
Facebook page



<https://www.wilsoncountyhistory.org>



[facebook.com/wilsoncountyhistorical society](https://facebook.com/wilsoncountyhistorical%20society)

Have you
visited the
Wilson
County
Clerk's
Official
Records Site?

<https://wilson.tx.publicsearch.us/>

This year we will celebrate Thanksgiving on 11/23. What
was recorded in the Bill of Sale recorded on 11/23/1874?



Floresville Opry Lineup

Floresville Opry with Dancing

Nov. 2, 2023 Wyatt Aleman

Dec. 7, 2023 Mike Hughes

Jan. 4, 2024 Sean O'Brien

Feb. 1, 2024 Justin Trevino

Mar. 7, 2024 Tony Booth

Apr. 4, 2024 Billy Mata

May 2, 2024 Randy Carson

Jun. 6, 2024 Jody Jenkins

Floresville Opry House Band

Wilson County Expo & Community Center

435 St Hwy 97 East out of Floresville, Texas

Doors Open @ 5:00 pm—music 6:00–9:15 pm

Info: Viola Henke 830-391-1062

Gen Admission \$15.00 Reserved Table Seats (8) \$100.00

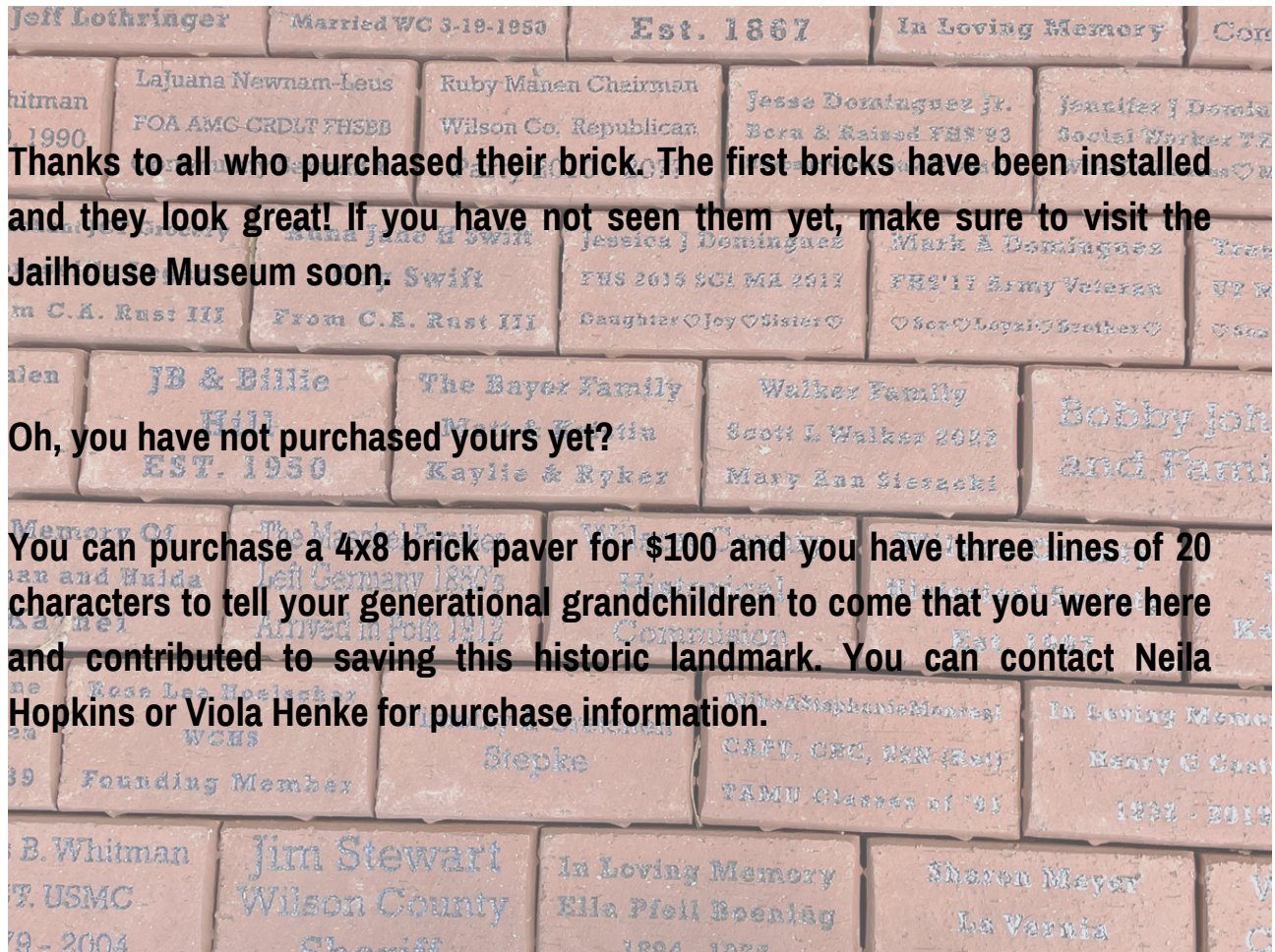
Dinner \$10.00 Desserts \$1.00 Concessions

Bring your own adult beverages.

Door Prizes Silent Auction



South Texas Hero's, Our Veterans, 2 November 2023



Submit your newsletter articles not later than the 5th of each month. Please send them via email to info@wilsoncountyhistory.org in MS-Word format. If sending pictures, please send them separate from the article and provide description of the picture(s). When taken, the location, and name of persons, if applicable, in the picture.