



# CORN: An aMAIZEing History

## Native Americans

Corn has its roots in the Americas. Scientists (archeologists) believe corn was developed by native peoples from a wild grass over 7,000 years ago in the region now known as Mexico.

When Columbus arrived in the New World, Native Americans had already been growing corn for thousands of years. They called it maize. They learned the right time to plant for their particular climate. Some of the corn was eaten fresh, some dried, some saved for seed, and some ground into meal on a flat stone called a metate.

Many tribes boiled the tiny, tender corn in the husks and ate the ears whole. Others ate corn on the cob, or popped it! Northern tribes cooked corn with beans and called it misickquatash, which we call succotash today.

Native Americans stored corn for the winter; it was their main food, and their lives depended on it. Corn was so important to them, various tribes prayed to the Corn Gods they believed had sent it to them. They had festivals at planting and harvest times. They chanted and made music, and each tribe danced its own Corn Dance. Some tribes, such as the Pueblo of the Southwest, considered corn as one of the three sacred foods (along with beans and squash), and some groups even worshipped it.



# Pilgrims

Chief Massasoit taught the Pilgrims and other European settlers how to grow corn. The Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock would have starved in 1621 if Native Americans had not taught them how to grow corn. He showed them how to heap little mounds of earth, bury five corn seeds, and five herrings which would rot and make the soil rich. Maize saved the pilgrims' lives. On the first Thanksgiving, the Pilgrims and the Indians gave thanks for the corn harvest, as the Native Americans had always done.

The Pilgrims learned other uses for corn from the Indians such as stuffing mattresses with corn husks, burning the cobs for fuel, making toys from husks, and feeding corn to their livestock.

In England, one of the Pilgrims' favorite dishes was hasty pudding. It was made by boiling water and wheat flour in a cloth bag. But in America they had trouble growing wheat, so they made it with corn flour and called it corn pudding!



## Pioneers

Pioneer breads were baked in many ways. Corn bread was often baked in a three-legged iron pot called a bake kettle. Johnnycakes (little round cakes of cornmeal and water) were baked on a board that was propped in front of the fire. They cooked quickly and were served at almost every meal.

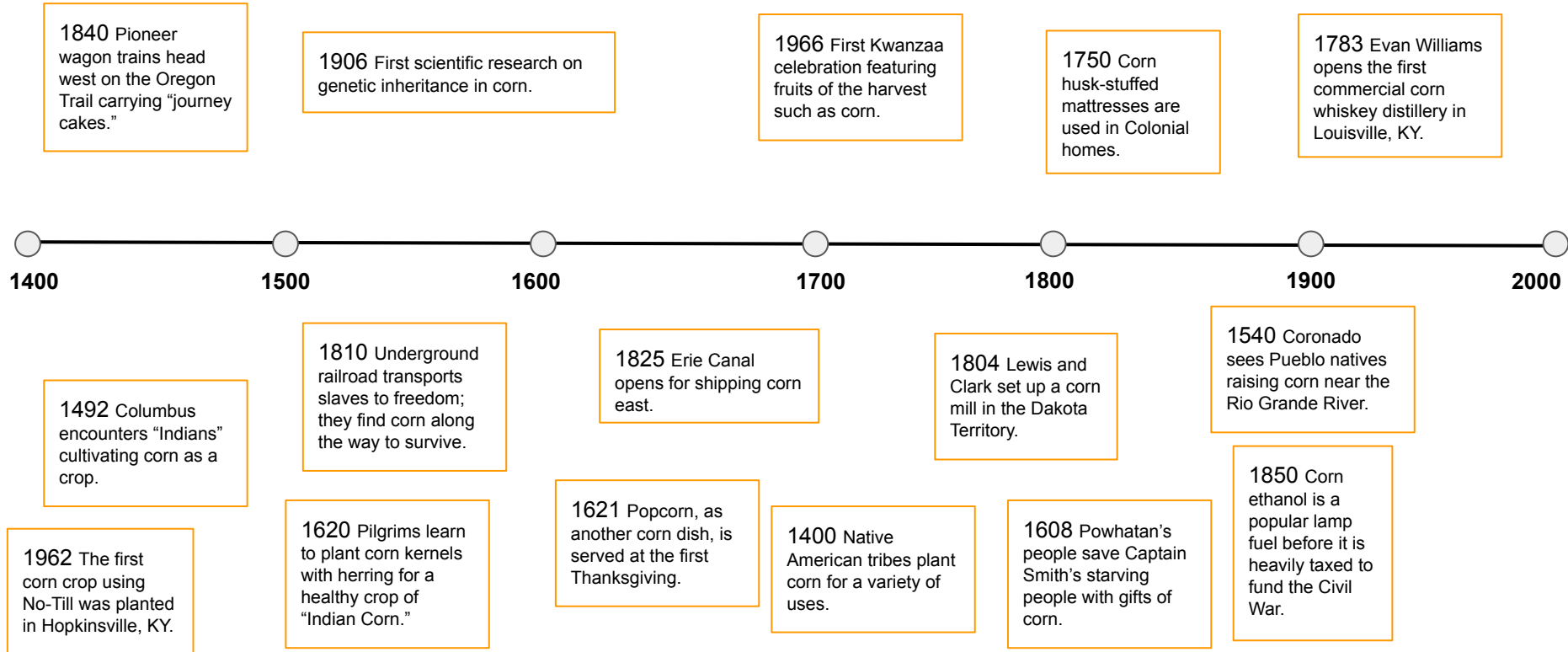
Since Johnnycakes were easy to carry, travelers often carried them in their pockets, thus the name “journey cake.”





# Corn Through History

There were many important historical events that centered around corn. Move the events into chronological order on the timeline and draw a line from the event to the timeline at the appropriate place.





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