

Talking Turkey

Sara Arthurs of the Finday, Ohio *Courier* - November 23, 2009

Children's book author and former teacher **Lori Jordan-Rice** said there are many misconceptions about Thanksgiving. For example, the first Thanksgiving dinner was likely a seafood feast, **Jordan-Rice** said during a phone interview with The Courier.

Jordan-Rice, a resident of Saginaw, Texas, taught elementary school for 10 years. She said students didn't see history as a fun subject the way they did, for example, science, which had experiments. History was perceived as dull, "which is a shame, because it's got so many wonderful stories, and kids love stories."

She's writing the Miss Trimble's Trapdoor book series to remedy that.

"They are a series to teach U.S. history in a fun way," she said.

The books feature a little boy who falls through a trap door into the school basement, where there are magical books and a talking dog and he gets to witness history in person.

The first book introduced the series and the second focused on Christopher Columbus. Now, **Jordan-Rice** is working on the third book, which has to do with the Mayflower.

She said researching the subject has been interesting and has taught her that many people have misconceptions about the first Thanksgiving.

For example, not all of the "Pilgrims" were really pilgrims seeking religious freedom, she said. Some of the group were, but the rest were people looking for economic opportunities, she said.

"It was very cramped because they had intended to take two ships and one was leaky and so everybody had to cram onto the Mayflower," **Jordan-Rice** said.

She said children may have images of Pilgrim and American Indian children playing together, but only the adult men of the Wampanoag tribe were present at the first Thanksgiving, along with the Pilgrims.

"In reality, it was probably seafood (that) was their main course, being that they were in a costal area," she said.

The group also ate venison, fruits and vegetables. There may have been wild turkey, but it wasn't the main course, she said.

In fact, the first Thanksgiving wasn't one meal at all, but an informal, three-day-long gathering, **Jordan-Rice** said. It probably took place in mid-October.

Thanksgiving first became a national holiday by declaration of President Abraham Lincoln in 1863.