

Mansfield Memories - Gooseberry Pie for All!

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In the 1920's the people of Mansfield cemented a lasting friendship with Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, England that lasts to this day. And not surprisingly it was done through food.

Mansfield, England observed its 700th anniversary in 1927. The celebration included Mayor D.H. Maltby cutting a gooseberry pie, a "formal ceremony executed with great pomp" before a large crowd.

Mansfield, Massachusetts, under the leadership of Town Manager William Plattner and historian Jennie Copeland, sent an exhibit and materials for a float to England for their anniversary parade. Our English friends responded by sending back a traditional gooseberry pie.



Gooseberries look like green or red grapes. They are often described as tasting like tart or even sour grapes. But when combined with sugar and baked into a pie the taste is equally sweet and tart.

Mayor Maltby and Councilor J.H. Mann (the latter a baker) wanted to thank their American friends. Mann baked a 20-pound gooseberry pie. It was about 10 inches across, seven inches high, and filled

with fresh green gooseberries. The pie was frozen, then packed by a Mr. Graham of the Mansfield Ice Company "in a stout wooden box" and heavily insulated.

Shipping agents Messrs. King and Bird dispatched the box to Liverpool. From there it began a nine-day transatlantic voyage aboard the Cunard steamship Samaria, arriving in Boston on August 15, 1927. The pie was brought to Mansfield the next day. It was in good condition and locals were impressed by how well it was packed.

Town Manager Plattner quickly arranged a public pie cutting ceremony for Saturday, August 20th. It was clear that interest was running high and the English pie could not serve everyone. So Plattner contracted local baker William Harlor to provide hundreds more gooseberry tarts.

The pie cutting took place on Saturday, August 20, 1927. Leslie B. Allen was appointed "Town Crier" for the day, donning breeches and a long plush coat. "Oyez, oyez, oyez," he shouted, drawing the attention of

PUBLIC CUTTING OF GOOSEBERRY PIE, GIFT FROM OLD COUNTRY, WILL FOLLOW OLD ENGLISH CUSTOM

**TOWN MANAGER WILL
PRESIDE AT CUTTING**

WILLIAM PLATTNER

20 Pound Pie, Ancient English Delicacy, Arrives from Mansfield Overseas to be Cut at Big Public Gathering at Town Hall Tomorrow Afternoon—Cong. Martin Will Be Speaker—Ceremony will Imitate Formal Cutting in Mansfield, Eng., Celebration Last July.

The gooseberry pie, ancient delicacy from ancient Mansfield, England, sent to this Mansfield as a gift from Councilor J. A. Mann through the enterprise of the "Reporter" overseas, was received here by Town Manager Plattner Tuesday afternoon and will be cut at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon at a public cutting in front of the town hall following the old English custom, at the request of the donor and several other overseas dignitaries interested in this unique goodwill feature.

The cutting of the gooseberry pie, it may be said, was one of the traditional features of the July celebra-

hundreds of residents gathered in front of the town hall. Allen read a proclamation explaining the gooseberry pie tradition, then called on Jennie Copeland and “Miss Mansfield” Mary Halliday to present the pie.

Plattner thanked Mr. Mann and Mayor Maltby from afar. He lauded of the “goodwill and friendly feeling” that existed between the two towns. Congressman Joseph Martin, who recently visited Mansfield, England, assured the crowd that there was a “warm spot for you in the hearts of the people” there.

The time had come to cut the gooseberry pie. Town Crier Allen declared: “Draw near good people and you shall see / the gooseberry pie from over the sea / a pie so succulent and brown / sent to the people of our town! May you all enjoy the unique treat.” The town manager cut the pie and served the dignitaries gathered on the stage. Plattner noted that ale is part of the ceremony in England and apologized for its absence due to prohibition laws. The people of Mansfield greatly enjoyed their “unique treat.”

The following year Mansfield, Mass., repaid England’s generosity. Two geese were taken from the Austin Goose Farm to Boston’s Statler Hotel, where they were cooked by its renowned chef. From there they were shipped to Mansfield, England and served amid great fanfare at their annual Swainmote dinner. The English diners marveled at the taste and were effusive in their appreciation for the gesture of goodwill and friendship.



Town Manager William Plattner