

THANKSGIVING AS A NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN PEACE AND WAR:

Its Celebration and Its Food

Virginia Mescher

When we think of Thanksgiving Day, we usually think of the Pilgrims, Indians and a great deal of food. There has been a controversy about the date of the first Thanksgiving celebration in America. The dates range from 1513 to 1621, but the date of the first thanksgiving celebration is secondary to the acceptance and continuation of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. Most of us take the holiday for granted and assume it has always celebrated nationwide since Thanksgiving was first noted but this was not the case.

In 1777, the thirteen colonies celebrated a day of thanksgiving commemorating the victory over the British at Saratoga, but it was only celebrated as a one time occasion. It was not until October 3, 1789, that George Washington issued a proclamation declaring Thanksgiving day a national holiday in remembrance of the hardships suffered by the citizens in the struggle for independence, but dissension between the colonies prevented the observance from becoming a reality. Different communities celebrated Thanksgiving at different times of the year and for different reasons, so it was difficult even to have it declared a statewide holiday, much less have all the states agree on a specific day for the celebration of Thanksgiving as national holiday. Many Americans did not think that the hardships the colonists suffered were deserving of national status and even Thomas Jefferson condemned national recognition in both of his terms of office and no other president deemed it necessary to nationalize the holiday.

Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Ladies' Book*, should be given credit for the establishment of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. As early as 1827 she began a one-woman crusade to have Thanksgiving celebrated as a national holiday. In her book, *Northwood*, she wrote, "We have too few holidays. Thanksgiving like the Fourth of July should be considered a national festival and observed by all our people . . . as an exponent of our Republican institutions." Using the magazines that she edited, *Ladies' Magazine* and *Godey's Lady's Book*, as platforms for her crusade, she continued to campaign for Thanksgiving as a national holiday. In 1835, she wrote, "There is a deep moral influence in these periodical seasons of rejoicing, in which whole communities participate. They bring out, and together, as it were, the best sympathies in our natures." She viewed the nationwide celebration as a logical bond of the Union.

In 1847, Sarah began in earnest her promotion of Thanksgiving Day. She petitioned presidents and the governors of all the states and territories to establish a common day in which to celebrate Thanksgiving. She advocated, like Washington, that the last Thursday of November should be set aside for the day. In the January 1847 issue of *Godey's*, she wrote, "We have but two holidays that we can call entirely national. The New Year is a holiday to all the world, and Christmas to all Christians but the 'Fourth of July' and 'Thanksgiving Day' can only be enjoyed by Americans. The annual observance of Thanksgiving Day was, to be sure, mostly confined to the New England States, till within a few years. We are glad to see this good old puritan custom is becoming popular throughout the Union . . . Would the next Thanksgiving might be observed in all the states on the same day. Then, though the members the same family be too far separated to meet around one festive board, they would have the gratification of knowing, that all were enjoying the blessings of the day. . . The 'Lady's Book' then suggests that, from this year, 1847, henceforth and forever, as long as the Union endures, the last Thursday in November be the DAY set apart by every State for its annual Thanksgiving. Will not the whole press of the country advocate this suggestion?" Every year after that, beginning in June or July, she would announce in her editorials in *Godey's*, the progress toward her goal of national acceptance. In November 1851, she offered the governors of the thirty-one states and territories the opportunity to proclaim a Thanksgiving day. She wrote, "We hope this month will be the commencement

of this universal observance; the first year of the half century is a good starting point. Now we have twenty-three millions of people to enjoy the festival; at the close of the century there will, probably, be a hundred million." Over the years, she wrote hundreds of letters in her quest and in October 1852, she announced that twenty-nine states (all except Virginia and Vermont) and all the territories, in 1851, had celebrated Thanksgiving on the same day.

Sarah continued to report the progress of her quest. In 1859, she believed that the national celebration of Thanksgiving would bring the Union together and avert war. In her September 1859 editorial, Sarah stated, "If every state would join in Union Thanksgiving on the 24th of this month, would it not be a renewed pledge of love and loyalty of the Constitution of the United States which guarantees peace, prosperity, progress and perpetuity to our great Republic?" In that year, thirty states and two territories (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, California, Kansas Territory, Nebraska Territory, and District of Columbia) celebrated Thanksgiving Day on the last Thursday of November. In November 1860, she reported that Americans in European cities celebrated Thanksgiving Day. With war looming on the horizon, her plea in 1860 was that all the States and Territories hold their Thanksgiving on that day [the last Thursday in November] there would be a complete moral and social reunion of the people of America in 1860 and would it not be a "good omen for the perpetual political union of the States?" Her valiant efforts and pleas to establish a national day of thanksgiving and for the preservation of the Union did not stem the tide of war.

War did not stop Sarah in her relentless crusade for a national day of thanksgiving and she wanted it declared a national holiday in order to assure the observance every year. She begged, in her November 1861, editorial for a Thanksgiving Day of Peace, pleading that "we lay aside our enmities and strifes [sic] . . . on this one day." In 1863 her quest was met with success. The Union had recently won the battle of Gettysburg and Sarah visited Lincoln, pleading her cause. Her editorial in the September, 1863, issue of *Godey's* contained a fervent and patriotic plea, "to offer God our tribute of joy and gratitude for the blessings of the year." She also suggested that a proclamation should be issued by the President of the United States and then be applied by the governors of each state. Together with the Gettysburg victory and her editorial, Lincoln was prompted to issue a proclamation on October 3, 1863, setting aside the last Thursday in November as day of national Thanksgiving. His proclamation read in part: "In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union . . .

. . . I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens." Even though Lincoln had declared the day to be celebrated as a nation, his proclamation was not upheld in the Confederate states and Sarah would have to wait until war's end to see her dream realized.

In her editorial of November 1865, Sarah rejoiced in the celebration of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. She stated, "Our annual Thanksgiving Day - *the last Thursday in November* - is near at hand. Then, throughout the length and breadth of our Great Republic, the song of peace may be chanted, and good-will or union, as the fruit of peace, should it not be the key-note to sound our joy and rejoicing over the wide world."

"... Hitherto the observance of the day has been circumscribed. To the Eastern colonies we must look for the beginning of this custom. The Pilgrim Fathers incorporated a yearly thanksgiving day among the moral influences they sent over to the New World. After our Independence the light crept slowly onward and westward, broken by

State enactments into stars that glimmered at different times and at distant intervals; yet still it blessed and beautified the homes it reached, thus suggesting its shine out together and make joy and thanksgiving throughout United America. It would be like a new revelation of dayspring from on high. And now the time and day are come.”

“... Thus our own ideal of AMERICAN THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL will be realized, as we described it in 1860. The 30th of November 1865, will bring the consummation. ‘On *that* DAY our citizens, whether in their own pleasant homes, or in the distant regions of Oriental despotism, will observe it - on board every ship where our flag floats there will be a day of gladness . . . and in our Great Republic, from the St. John’s to the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all our people, as one Brotherhood, will rejoice together, and give thanks to God for our National, State and Family blessings.’”

THANKSGIVING CELEBRATIONS

Thanksgiving has been a traditional day to give thanks, to enjoy the company of friends and family, and a bountiful meal. Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, suggested that thanksgiving celebrations could be divided into three distinctive types: a harvest celebration for bountiful crops, which was not intended to be an annual event; a religious observance usually called a “Day of Thanksgiving” and usually called by a religious leader; and a special day of thanksgiving proclaimed by a civic community to celebrate a momentous event such as victory in battle or the ending of a war. All of these events are celebrated at one time or another, but our modern Thanksgiving Day seems to have incorporated some aspects of each type.

Charles Mackay, an Englishman, described in his book, *Life and Liberty in America*, a typical Thanksgiving Day in America. “Thanksgiving-day is generally fixed in November, and corresponds in its festive character to the celebration of Christmas in England. The people shut up their stores and places of business; go to church, chapel, or conventicle in the forenoon or afternoon, or both, and devote the remainder of the day to such social pleasure and jollity as the custom of the place may sanction. The dinner, at which is the *pièce de rigueur* is roast turkey, is the great event of the day. As roast beef and plum pudding are upon Christmas-day in Old England, so is turkey upon Thanksgiving-day among the descendant of the Puritans in New England. “

Numerous poems have been written in honor of Thanksgiving Day but perhaps the most well known is “A Boy’s Thanksgiving.” It is probably more familiar as the song “Over the River and Through the Wood..” Lydia Maria Child was the author and it was published in 1844 in *Flowers for Children*, Volume 2. The original poem was twelve stanzas but the song only incorporated six stanzas. There was no information found as to when or who set the poem to music.

A Boy’s Thanksgiving

Over the river, and through the wood,
to Grandfather’s house we go;
the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh
through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river, and through the wood,
to Grandfather’s house away!
We would not stop for doll or top,
for ’tis Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river, and through the wood
oh, how the wind does blow!
It stings the toes and bites the nose,
as over the ground we go.

Over the river, and through the wood.
with a clear blue winter sky.
The dogs do bark and the children hark,
as we go jingling by.

Over the river, and through the wood,
to have a first rate play.
Hear the bells ring, "Ting a ling ding!"
Hurray for Thanksgiving Day!

Over the river, and through the wood
no matter for winds that blow;
Or if we get the sleigh upset
into a bank of snow.

Over the river, and through the wood,
to see little John and Ann;
We will kiss them all, and play snowball
and stay as long as we can.

Over the river, and through the wood,
trot fast my dapple gray!
Spring over the ground like a hunting hound!
For 'tis Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river, and through the wood
and straight through the barnyard gate.
We seem to go extremely slow
it is so hard to wait!

Over the river, and through the wood
Old Jowler hears our bells;
He shakes his paw with a loud bow wow,
and thus the news he tells.

Over the river, and through the wood
when Grandmother sees us come,
She will say, "O, dear, the children are here,
bring pie for everyone."

Over the river, and through the wood
now Grandmother's cap I spy!
Hurrah for the fun! Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!

There was one tradition of Thanksgiving that is usually associated with a Halloween custom. [See the archived article in "Virginia's Veranda" on Halloween Customs.] An Irish tradition, called "a'souling" took place on All Soul's day when children would dress up in cast off clothing and beg door to door for contributions to the poor. The English celebration of Guy Fawkes' Day or "Pope's Day" borrowed from the Irish custom but the observance of Guy Fawkes' Day in America seemed to have ceased around the time of the Revolution. About the same time, in New York and Brooklyn, often children of poorer Catholic families would dress in ragged costumes and go door to door begging on Thanksgiving Day. The practice soon spread to children from all backgrounds and costumes became more fancier and the celebrants, rowdier. By 1881, the streets of New York and other large cities rang with the exploits and pranks of the "ragamuffins" and city officials were at a loss to stem the riotous behavior. In 1924 Macy's Department Store, in New York City, established the tradition of an annual Thanksgiving Day parade in hopes to control the out of control actions of the celebrants. Despite the parade, the practice of begging treats in Thanksgiving Day continued but with the advent of the Depression in the 1930s, when Thanksgiving begging was discouraged. The children, needing a similar outlet, resumed the "trick or treat" tradition on Halloween.

THE THANKSGIVING FEAST

Thanksgiving is often associated with a groaning table of food but the menu depended on the region, ethnic background, and the availability of specific foods. Little primary documentation indicate exact foods served at the original Thanksgiving meal. According to the Pilgrim Hall Museum, there are only two primary sources that discuss food in relation to the 1621 celebration. Edward Winslow wrote that fowl (the type not specified) and deer, but no other foods were mentioned. William Bradford included the following foods in his recollections, *Of Plymouth Plantation* and wrote that cod, bass and other fish were served as well as water fowl, wild turkeys, and venison. There was also about a peck of meal per week for each person in addition to Indian corn.

In 1779, Juliana Smith described her Thanksgiving meal and roast beef, venison, roast pork, roast turkey, good, pigeon pasties [pie], vegetables, mince pie, apple tarts, Indian pudding, cider, suet pudding, dried plums and

cherries, preserved and ginger were all mentioned.

Diana Appelbaum quoted Reverend Samuel Lowrie of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; he wrote about his memories of his first Thanksgiving Day as a boy of seven. “The part assigned to me was to baste the turkey, which was roasting in a reflector oven before the open grate fireplace . . . The canned oysters that came from Baltimore were properly cooked and served . . . There were, of course, pumpkin pie and apple butter and, also sweet cider . . . “

In the *Ladies' Repository* in 1848, a Thanksgiving dinner was described. Turkey, savory ham, broiled chickens, chicken pies, cranberry and apple sauces, pickled beets, peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, roast apples, wheat bread, butter, cheese, suckatash [sic], plum and custard pudding, apple and mince pies, and green tea was on that particular menu.

Sarah Hale devoted an entire chapter in *Northwood* to Thanksgiving dinner. Some of the foods mentioned in the dinner description were: roasted turkey with a savory stuffing, sirloin of beef, leg of pork, loin of mutton, gravy, a goose, ducklings, chicken pie (described in detail), pickles, preserves, butter, wheat bread, vegetables (no specific ones were mentioned), plum pudding, pumpkin pie, several rich cakes, sweetmeat (sweet pickles), fruits, wines, ginger-beer, and coffee. No specific Thanksgiving menus were found in *Godey's* or *Peterson's* but some dinners were briefly described in the fiction of the magazines or in books. One dinner was described in “Thanksgiving” by S. G. B. in the November 1863 issue of “*Godey's*. In this story, the pies seemed to be the most important item of the meal with cranberry tarts, and pumpkin, apple, grape, mince, lemon, custard and chicken pies mentioned.

In Barry Gray's book, *Out of Town*, there were several chapters on Thanksgiving Day. In a discussion of an old-fashioned Thanksgiving meal, a roasted turkey was required. A large number of vegetables, pies of mince, pumpkin and apple, saucers of calves' feet jelly, dishes of apples, raisins, walnuts also graced the table. In another chapter, the origin of Thanksgiving was explained with remarks on how the holiday was nationalized.

A Thanksgiving menu was found in *Buckeye Cookery and Practical Housekeeping*, published in 1877. The following menu presented possible selections for a Thanksgiving dinner but it is doubtful that every item listed was served at one meal. One will notice that a great many of the dishes were preserved meats, vegetables, dried fruits, fruit preserves, pickles and relishes, root vegetables or late maturing vegetables that would have been still available in November.

“THANKSGIVING DINNERS. — Oyster soup; boiled fresh cod with egg sauce, roast turkey, cranberry sauce; roast goose, bread sauce or currant jelly; stuffed ham, apple sauce or jelly; pork and beans; mashed potatoes and turnips, delicate cabbage, canned tomatoes and corn, baked sweet potatoes, boiled onions, salsify, macaroni and cheese; brown bread and superior biscuit; lobster salad; pressed beef, cold corned beef, tongue; celery, cream slaw; watermelon, peach, pear, or apple sweet-pickles; mangoes [stuffed and pickled young melons, bell peppers, peaches, or cucumbers], cucumbers, chow-chow, and tomato catsup; stewed peaches or prunes; doughnuts and ginger cakes; mince, pumpkin, and peach pies; plum and boiled Indian puddings; apple, cocoa-nut, or almond tarts; vanilla ice-cream; old-fashioned loaf cake, pound cake, black cake, white perfection cake, ribbon cake, almond layer cake; citron, peach, plum, or cherry preserves; apples, oranges, figs, grapes, raisins, and nuts, tea and coffee. “

THANKSGIVING AMONG THE TROOPS IN THE CIVIL WAR

A discussion of Thanksgiving in the 1860s would not be complete without some mention of how the soldiers celebrated Thanksgiving during the war. *The Tribute Book* devoted an entire chapter on Thanksgiving Day, 1864 in the army, navy and hospitals. Although Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving to be a national holiday, it was not celebrated the military in 1863. Some units did organize and prepare special dinners, but it was not widespread. In 1864, the Union League club of New York City collected money in order to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for Union soldiers and sailors. They published the following plea, "We desire that on the twenty-fourth day of November, there shall be no soldier in the Army



A SOLDIER'S BILL OF FARE FOR THANKSGIVING DAY.

of the Potomac, the James, the Shenandoah, and no sailor in the North Atlantic Squadron who does not receive tangible evidence that those for whom he is periling his life, remember him . . .

We ask primarily for donations of cooked poultry and other proper meats, as well as for mince pies, sausages and fruits . . . To those who are unable to send donations in kind, we appeal for generous contributions in money."

The Union League was successful in its mission: they collected over \$57,000 which purchased 146,586 pounds of poultry and money from donations purchased an additional 225,000 pounds of poultry. Donations of large quantities of other meats, cakes, gingerbread, pickles, apples, vegetables, cheeses, and mince pies were valued at \$150,000. The express companies did not charge for shipping the boxes of holiday delights to the soldiers. Adams' Express delivered sixty tons of Thanksgiving supplies to soldiers from Boston. People from Maine shipped thirteen hundred packages to Pensacola, Florida. The Christian Commission supplied the camps and hospitals of Pittsburgh with two hundred barrels of apples, ten barrels of canned fruit, and mince-meat for six thousand pies.

One newspaper wrote, "Let us turn from the screaming of one American bird [the eagle] to the slaughter and roasting of another . . . No tent should be without that noble bird [a turkey] for a Thanksgiving feast. The young men who will recall on that day the loved faces around the fireside at home, the games of ball on village greens, the shooting-matches, the skating frolics on Northern ponds, the sleighing parties over New England hills, the dance in the evening, the dear 'girls they left behind them,' must not sit down to a Thanksgiving dinner of hard tack and salt pork . . . Put a 'drum-stick' in every fist for another purpose than to beat the long roll . . . "

Captain George F. Noys, the purveyor of the Army of the Shenandoah which was commanded by Phil Sheridan, supplied the soldiers with fifty thousand turkeys on Thanksgiving eve. Not having enough spits or any tin kitchens, did not stop the preparation of the feast in the army camps. The turkeys were boiled or stewed but the lack of a properly roasted turkey did not lessen the enjoyment. One soldier wrote, "It isn't the turkey, but the idea that we care for."

Soldiers in the armies of the James and Potomac enjoyed three hundred thousand pounds of turkey as well as dough-nuts, pea-nuts, pickles, apples, gingerbread, onions, tapioca, turnips, and other vegetables, sent by the

home-front population. Periodicals and religious tracts were also included with the food.

The soldiers in the hospitals were not forgotten. The commissary sergeant of the 143rd Pennsylvania Volunteers wrote a thank you note for the enormous amount contributed by the people from home. They received one hundred sixty-eight pounds of roasted turkeys and chickens, one hundred ninety-eight pounds of Spitzenberg apples, a keg of apple butter, twenty pounds of cakes, nine minced pies, and eighty-four pounds of vegetables.

Some soldiers wrote home to loved ones about how Thanksgiving was celebrated among the troops. In one letter to the editor of Plymouth's *The Old Colony Memorial* newspaper, a soldier sent a description of an 1861 celebration in Newport News, Virginia. The writer described the hall and wrote the following, "We actually sat down to a table with a white cloth, loaded with all manner of good things, and handled knives, forks and spoons, like civilized men. Moreover, those who wanted it, drank cider out of a tumbler. The men ate heartily, and yet seemed to remember that too great a change of diet would be injurious. Turkey, chicken pie, and pudding disappeared . . ."

Harlow Vale of the 124th Illinois Infantry wrote home from Henry County, Illinois, in 1861, "You ask how I spent Thanksgiving well I had — a bully dinner, hard bread, salt pork or bacon as we call it & coffee. That was the extent of my thanksgiving dinner, during the day I thought of you at home having your nice dinners & wishing maybe that you might present a plate to some of us soldiers filled with some of your own goodies . . ."

Zebina Y. Bickford of the 6th Vermont Infantry wrote from Camp Griffin, Virginia: "Thanksgiving supper is over. You can't imagine what a lot of fine things we had for supper, so I must tell you. In the first place we had a piece of sour bread and salt pork. This is what we usually have although the bread is not always sour . . . After the bread and meat I had some of mother's cookies and doughnuts that came in our box. They tasted a good deal like Vermont victuals."

Sargent W. A. Slocum of the 9th Maine Regiment wrote in 1862, "Thanksgiving is over and I expect the young folks had a grand time at home. We did not get ours until last night [November 25]. We rec'd 4 turkeys, 6 chickens and 3 ducks which made of a very good supper, but don't you think I lost all of mine. I was taken sick in the night."

In 1863, Lieutenant A. Mason of the 38th Massachusetts, wrote from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, "The dinner passed off in grand style and no one got drunk though many toasts were given . . . Our appetites had been sharpened by a very pleasant ride of some three hours . . . Most of the companies had some extra dish for Dinner and on the whole thanksgiving in the 38th was well marked."

On November 27, 1863 the *Peoria Morning Mail* contained a piece on Thanksgiving Day. "To-day the great heart of the people of the north is lifted up in reverence and Thanksgiving to the Lord of Hosts . . . It [Thanksgiving Day] has survived the vicissitudes of fortune, the changes of circumstances, and promoted by a career of prosperity and abundance, its annual recurrence has ever been one not of mere formality, but of genuine heartfelt Thanksgiving. To-day even in the midst of fraternal strife, in the tumult of contention, national discord and civil war, it comes to us none the less hallowed and blessed. For it speaks to the heart hope for the time when these things shall cease to be, when a country re-united and prosperous shall again bless us. . . It suggests a future filled not with the din of battle, the mighty tread of contending armies, and loved ones distant, suffering and dying, but it whispers to the heart hope of pleasant and peaceful associations, domestic re-unions and happy homes. . .

To-day all grades of society unite in one common tribute to Heaven for the blessings with which we have been favored in the year that has passed . . . Thanksgiving is one of the common levelers of mankind. The high and the low, the rich and the poor alike . . . at the same altar, chant the same hymn of praise, and unite in the same

supplications to the Great Dispenser of mercies . . .

Let states, towns, and cities join in thanksgiving and praise . . .”

The *Nashville Daily Union*, on November 24, 1864 pleaded with the population, while giving thanks for the “bounteous and overflowing harvests” not to forget the suffering of the poor and grieving. “And while in thousands of homes the day will pass with mirth and pleasure, we hope those who are suffering will not be forgotten. The consciousness of kind deeds performed, of hearts made glad, and will add a keen relish to all the pleasures of the day . . . Let some concerted action . . . be taken and the day will be made a Thanksgiving day indeed.”

Harper’s Weekly printed many illustrations and references to Thanksgiving Day both before and during the war years. In the November 29, 1862 an engraving of Thanksgiving in Camp was published. Men were eating fish and hardtack and the sutler’s store advertised pies, herring, and cider. No turkey was in sight. The December 5, 1863 issue of *Harper’s Weekly* was devoted almost entirely to Thanksgiving Day, with numerous pictures, poems and stories on Thanksgiving. The December 3, 1864 issue followed the same form.

Appelbaum also included some soldiers’ descriptions of Thanksgiving in her book. Rev. H. Clay Trumbull, chaplain of the 10th Connecticut wrote, “[the men] seriously requested to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. It seemed hardly less than a mockery . . . friends of the soldiers of Connecticut sent to the regiment a good supply of turkeys and cranberries, of apples and hickory nuts . . . “

After a feast, there were other activities enjoyed by the celebrants. Apparently, football is not just a modern Thanksgiving tradition. A soldier from an Indiana regiment wrote, “We had an excellent dinner here Thanksgiving Day, turkey, chicken pies, cakes, nuts, apples and everything nice. We have the best kind of times. We have a foot ball and we have a good deal of fun with it. The boys are in a game now.” There were also references to ball games, dances, balls and musical entertainment.

Since Thanksgiving, in the mid-nineteenth century, had been primarily a New England holiday, there was little reference to special Thanksgiving Day celebrations in southern newspapers but thanksgiving proclamations and sermons were mentioned. The *Bellville Countryman* on December 4, 1861, indicated that Thanksgiving Day was generally observed by the citizens and most attended services; there was a dinner with music and the day ended with a Calico Ball. On November 27, 1861, the *Dallas Herald* stated that the Governor of Texas declared that November 28 be a general day of thanksgiving for the many blessing of the last ten months of war. The *Charleston Mercury*, on September 17, 1862 reported that Jefferson Davis proclaimed that September 18, 1862 be observed as a Day of Thanksgiving for the Confederate triumphs and the order of service was included. Although some southern newspapers did report Thanksgiving Day observances, diaries and letters of civilians did not contain references for any special services or meals in observance of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving continued to be celebrated by the nation on the last Thursday of November until 1939, when Franklin Roosevelt changed day of celebration to the third Thursday of November. Store merchants petitioned the President the make the change, so there would be more shopping days between Thanksgiving and Christmas. This change outraged many Americans and in protest they continued to celebrate Thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November. In the spring of 1941, Roosevelt admitted that a mistake had been made, and shifted the holiday back to the original day of the last Thursday in November.

Our national observance of Thanksgiving Day resulted from a long struggle of one woman. In 1863, her labors succeeded and by a proclamation by Lincoln, it was made a national holiday. Although Thanksgiving Day is more associated with the Pilgrims, it should be remembered as a holiday that came of age to a nation during the Civil War.

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In America, Thanksgiving is a cultural holiday that symbolises peace, thankfulness, and the beginning of the holiday season. Download the new Independent Premium app. Sharing the full story, not just the headlines. Download now. Thanksgiving is a national holiday in the United States celebrated in November. The annual feast is in honour of the "first" Thanksgivings in America, in 1619 in Virginia, and in 1621, when colonists in Plymouth, Massachusetts, later known as the Pilgrims, shared a meal with the Wampanoag Indians, who were native to the land. Created with Sketch. Most Americans consider the holiday a day to gather and express their thanks through food, family, and football – with multiple NFL teams playing on the holiday. Thanksgiving holidays in the colonies were sporadic at first. They would often follow harvests or periods when the colonists were particularly thankful. As time went on, Thanksgiving feasts became more widespread, and formal dates were set for Thanksgiving. It wasn't until the Civil War, in 1863, that Thanksgiving was set as an annual National holiday. In response to a number of letters written by Sarah Hale, Abraham Lincoln declared that the final Thursday of November would be a National day of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving remained on the last Thursday of November until 1939 when, in an attempt to revive the economy during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved it to the fourth Thursday. Thanksgiving Day, annual national holiday in the United States and Canada celebrating the harvest and other blessings of the past year. Americans generally believe that their Thanksgiving is modeled on a 1621 harvest feast shared by the European colonists (Pilgrims) of Plymouth and the Wampanoag people. How did Thanksgiving become a national holiday? Writer Sarah Josepha Hale campaigned for a national Thanksgiving in the United States during the 19th century, eventually winning President Abraham Lincoln's support in 1863. He and subsequent presidents proclaimed a national day of thanksgiving annually until 1941 when Congress made Thanksgiving official. In Canada, Parliament established a national Thanksgiving Day in 1879. How is Thanksgiving determined?

Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday in the United States, and Thanksgiving 2019 occurs on Thursday, November 28. In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. Abraham Lincoln finally heeded her request in 1863, at the height of the Civil War, in a proclamation entreating all Americans to ask God to "commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife" and to "heal the wounds of the nation." Thanksgiving was founded as a national holiday by one of the most famous presidents of the United States. Do you know who it might've been? We'll show you the answer at the end of this video. Thanksgiving, to a large extent, is about having a feast with friends and family. Turkey is the traditional main course, with yams, squash, pumpkin pie, cranberries, and other rich and filling foods rounding out the meal. Abraham Lincoln established Thanksgiving during the dark days of the American Civil War. Even though the holiday was officially born during this conflict, it's more associated with the initially good relations between the first European immigrants and the Native Americans. How was this lesson? Did you learn something interesting? The writer O. Henry called Thanksgiving the one holiday that is purely American. It is not a religious holiday. But it has spiritual meaning. Some Americans travel long distances to be with their families. Finally, in eighteen sixty-three, President Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November as a national holiday of thanksgiving. Later, Congress declared that the holiday would be celebrated every year on the fourth Thursday in November. VOICE ONE: As in the past, many Americans will gather on Thursday with family and friends. We will share what we have. And we will give thanks for the good things of the past year.

Thanksgiving is a federal holiday in the United States, celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. It is sometimes called American Thanksgiving (outside the United States) to distinguish it from the Canadian holiday of the same name. It originated as a harvest festival, and to this day the centerpiece of Thanksgiving celebrations remains Thanksgiving dinner. The dinner traditionally consists of foods and dishes indigenous to the Americas, namely turkey, potatoes (usually mashed), stuffing, squash. Thanksgiving is a national holiday that is celebrated primarily in North America. It's celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November in the United States and on the second Monday in October in Canada. The end result of the rather disorderly party was a treaty between the two groups that lasted until King Philip's War in 1675. Early Thanksgivings. Thanksgiving as a National Holiday. The first general day of Thanksgiving was proclaimed by President George Washington, who at the request of Congress recommended Thursday, 26 November, 1789, to the people of the United States "as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God." Read about Thanksgiving History and Traditions. Thanksgiving Day is deeply rooted in American history. Here you will find some interesting facts about the Pilgrims. Technically there are no "national" holidays but most of them are celebrated nationally. The states observe federal public holidays. These are Thanksgiving, Independence Day, Christmas, New Year's Day and some others. Throughout American history, people have found reasons to give thanks for peace and prosperity. Over the years, they have remembered the first Thanksgiving: the Pilgrims, the Native Americans, the Mayflower, and a delicious feast. Some Facts About the Pilgrims. The word pilgrim means "one who journeys to a foreign land".