

Thanksgiving



In 1621, when the Pilgrim Fathers held their first Thanksgiving in Plymouth Colony, they were not strangers to the custom. They had taken part in similar observances in both England and Holland.

Yet Thanksgiving as an annual national observance is firmly established as a custom of the New World, in the United States and Canada. And it was Abraham Lincoln who in 1863 formalized Thanksgiving as a regular national holiday in the United States. He was responding to the suggestion of Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godley's Lady's Book*, and his words hold a timeliness for people today:

"The year that is drawing to its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and provoke their aggressions, peace has been preserved with all nations . . . the laws have been respected and obeyed and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

"Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased . . . and the country . . . is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

"No human counsel hath devised, nor hat any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

"It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens . . . to set apart and observe the last Thursday in November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens, And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become . . . sufferers in the lamentable civil strife and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and restore it . . . to full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity, and union."—*Rotary Magazine*.

We, the undersigned businesses and professional men of this area, are thankful to you people that you are our patrons and friends. We are thankful for the right and privilege to serve you. We hope your fortunes have been the best, and that your prospects are brighter. Let us pause a few moments today and re-count our blessings.

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