

Tale of the turkey steeped in country's history

by W.W. Edger
staff writer

When you take your seat at the table on Thanksgiving day and bow your head in a prayer of thanks before din-

ing on the bronze bird, be sure and pay your prayerful respects to President Abraham Lincoln.

When "Honest Abe's" name is mentioned it is usually when talking of his famous Gettysburg address during the

Civil War or his Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves in the early '60s.

Overlooked most of the time is the fact that Thanksgiving Day, as we celebrate it today, was made possible by

President Lincoln when he stabilized the thankful celebration by setting aside the fourth Thursday in November as the national holiday that had become a conglomerate of festive days throughout the country.

LINCOLN ORDERED the stabilization in 1863 and it was broken only twice since then. The break came in 1939 when President Roosevelt, in an effort to improve the Christmas business in the Great Depression, advanced the celebration one week.

This change lasted only two years and ever since 1941 the fourth Thursday in November is the day of prayerful celebration.

Prior to Lincoln's proclamation the days of Thanksgiving were spread throughout the fall months with several places claiming to be the first to sponsor these prayers of thanks.

It long has been the popular belief that the first Thanksgiving Day celebration and feast was sponsored by the Pilgrims in Plymouth Massachusetts, in 1621, one year after they set foot on shore after the wild crossing of the Atlantic on the Mayflower.

It is this celebration that is recorded in the history books and tells the story of how Governor Bradford invited the Indians, under Chief Massasoit to join the feast and prayer. It is told that the Indians came as friends and brought with them five deer and told of the wild turkeys. This feast lasted a week.

THIS CLAIM of the Pilgrims has been disputed by the settlers who set foot on shore in Virginia, in a place called Charles City. They had their Thanksgiving on Dec. 4, 1619 — one year before the Pilgrims and Indians celebrated in Plymouth. Each group laid claim to being the Thanksgiving Day pioneers.

The idea of observing a day of thanks spread and in 1742 there were two Thanksgiving Days in Massachusetts. Prior to that the spread had been so that, according to the history books,

there were 22 different days set aside in Massachusetts to celebrate.

Finally, in 1789, three years after he took office as our first president, George Washington issued an order that Thursday, Nov. 26, be a national holiday to offer thanks. The Episcopal Church then set the first Thursday in November as the day.

This lasted only a few years, and for some time there was no regular Thanksgiving Day. Then, in 1855, the state of Virginia adopted the first Thursday in November as the official day.

Many other states at the time followed Virginia's lead, but many selected days other than the first Thursday in November.

With these celebrations springing up in all sections, President Lincoln issued his proclamation, designating a day of Thanksgiving in 1863 "to praise our beneficent Father" on the first Thursday in November.

THIS EDICT was followed until FDR, in his desire to boost business, advanced the day one week. But his order lasted only two years until Congress ordered the day back to the fourth Thursday as President Lincoln had ordered men years before.

Meanwhile, great changes were taking place in the feasts that started back in 1621 with meat and the deer the Indians brought, along with the wild turkey.

For years the dark (bronze) turkey was the official bird for Thanksgiving. It was a rather spindly thing, and it was the center of the feast that included many other items from the fields.



Edwin Pickens (center), a student at Farmington High School, recently was awarded an honorable mention by Lawrence Institute of Technology for his outstanding score on the National Engineering

Aptitude Search Test. Presenting him with his award is James Snoyd (left) and Farmington High School principal Gerald Potter. Awards were presented to the top 10 scorers.

Williams is elected Realtor director

Daniel Williamson, a Farmington Realtor, today was elected a director of the National Association of Realtors at the association's annual convention.

As a director, Williamson will participate in policy making for the national association and in deciding the thrust of Realtor programs.

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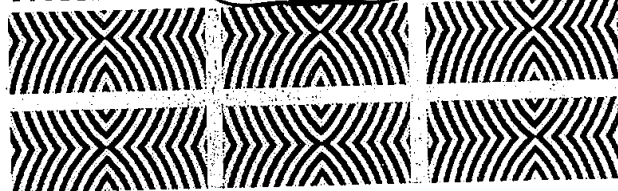
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