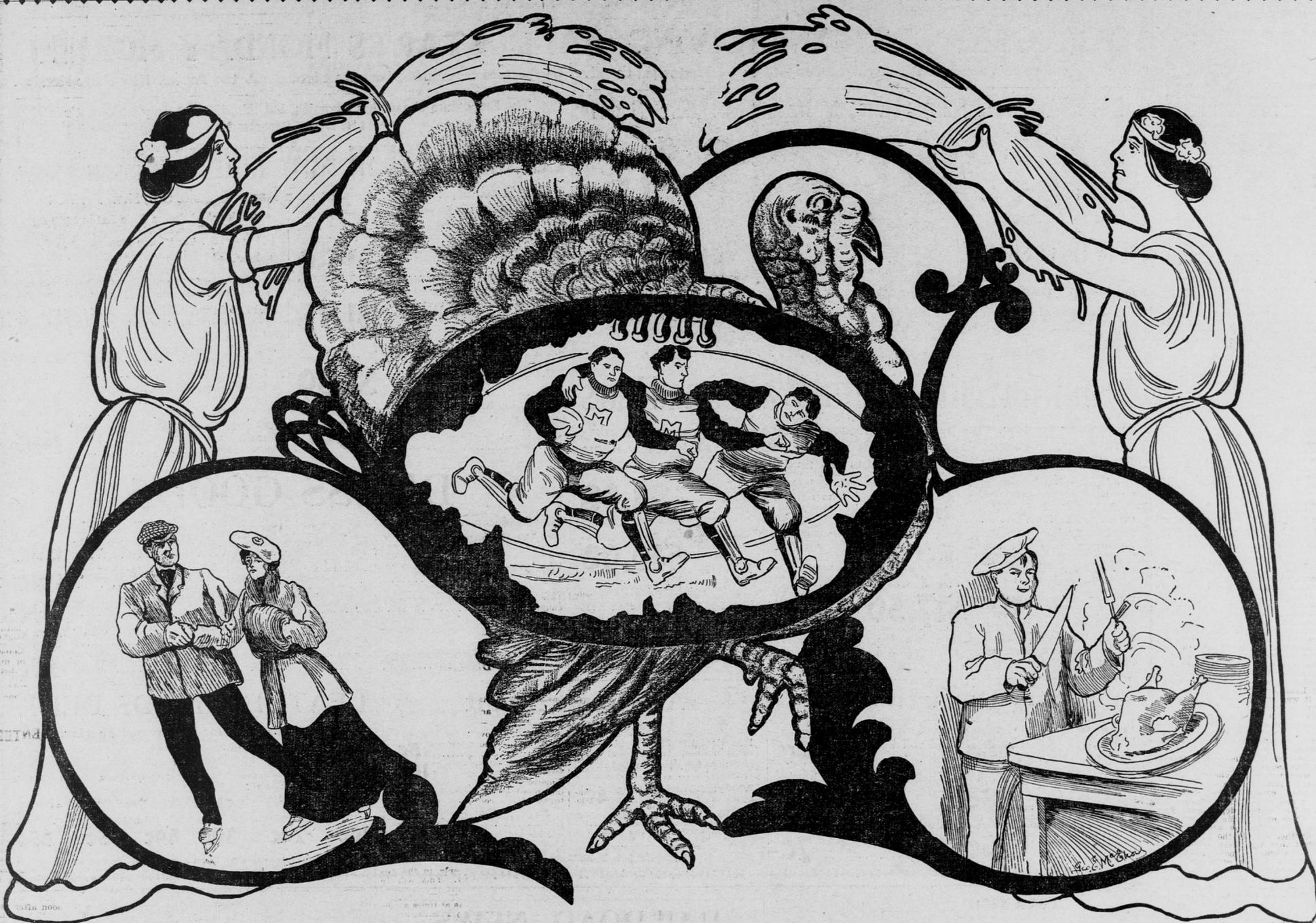


THANKSGIVING AN INSPIRATION PECULIAR TO THE NATION



DEEPLY penetrated with this sentiment, I, George Washington, president of the United States, do commend to all religious societies and denominations, and to all persons whomsoever, within the United States, to set apart and observe Thursday, the 19th day of February next, as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, and on that day to meet to-

gether and render sincere and hearty thanks to the great ruler of nations for the manifold and signal mercies which distinguish our lot as a nation; particularly for the possession of constitutions of government which unite and, by their union, establish liberty with order; for the preservation of our peace, foreign and domestic; for the reasonable control which has been given to a spirit of disorder in the suppression of the late insurrection, and generally for the prosperous condition of our affairs, public and private.

From the First National Thanksgiving Proclamation.

Of all the days marked red in this nation's calendar, Thanksgiving day means the most because it is the most fraught with memories. There was a Thanksgiving day one hundred years, at least before there was a Fourth of July. Independence day, indeed, marks a period, a glorious period in the nation's life, but Thanksgiving day marks the beginning of that life. It is rooted deep in the soil and it is indigenous to the soil. Other nations today celebrate their Fourths of July, most countries observe Christmas and Easter, but Thanksgiving day is meaningless to all nations except this.

Feast Days No Longer Original.

"Entire originality in the matter of feast days, fast days and holidays is a thing of the past," says a modern writer.

"Practically every day in the year was pre-empted for anniversary purposes long ago, and should a new nation spring into existence tomorrow and seek to mark the event by the establishment of a general public festival, some uneasy bookworm would rise up and prove by the production of a Chaldean or Assyrian or Aztec calendar, that a similar festival was annually observed by primeval man some 10,000 odd years more or less before the Christian era."

What this writer says is true enough but, after all, the strongest argument that can be brought forward to dispute the claim that this nation is the original Thanksgiving nation is that at various times other nations or other communities, feeling in a thankful mood, have set aside a day for the chanting of a psalm or for a holiday.

But no other nation has so closely interwoven with its history, no other nation today is called upon by its ruler or its chief executive to set apart one day for thanksgiving, no other nation feasts annually on roast turkey and pumpkin pie.

It is almost three hundred years ago that the first thanksgiving proclamation was issued in this country. It was not dictated to his secretary nor was it published in a newspaper. In fact, no formality at all marked its issuance. The governor merely bade his subjects, the men whom he governed to take their fowling pieces and go out and shoot some wild turkey in order that the people might feast and rejoice after they had gathered the fruit of their labor, but that action of the Plymouth governor was prompted by something more than a mere impulse. It was an inspiration and in spite of the informality of the proclamation, it wrote

with red ink one day in a nation's calendar.

The First Thanksgiving Day.

Alexander Young, the father of Judge Young of this city, in his "Chronicles of the Pilgrims," quotes a colonial writer's account of the first thanksgiving day ever observed in this country. The date of that Thanksgiving festival was Dec. 11, 1621, and it was held in Plymouth town.

"Our harvest being gotten in," wrote the colonist, "our governor sent four men out fowling, that we might, after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four, in one day, killed as much fowl as, with a little help besides, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king, Massasoit, with some ninety men whom, for three days, we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor and upon the captain and others." The governor, of course, was Bradford; the fowl, it is needless to state, was wild turkey.

The following year no Thanksgiving festival was observed in Plymouth town, but in July of 1623, a ship arriving from England with provisions that were sorely needed by the colonists, the governor again set a day of Thanksgiving.

Forgotten for Forty-Five Years.

The day was not revived until forty-five years later. Then it was forgotten again until June, 1689, when a thanksgiving service was held in honor of the accession of William and Mary to the English throne. In 1690 Thanksgiving was observed in the autumn and the next year, Plymouth colony becoming a part of Massachusetts colony, the Thanksgiving festival ceased, of course, to be connected with the name of Plymouth colony.

But various events inspired the other colonies to observe the festival and previous to the revolution it had become an annual holiday. An historical writer in giving an account of a Thanksgiving celebration held in 1775, to celebrate the victory over King Philip states that there were those in Church's expedition who had "much doubt then, and afterwards seriously considered, whether burning their enemies alive could be consistent with humanity and the benevolent principles of the gospel." Which goes to prove that even if those early Puritans lacked a sense of humor some of them did have a sense of the eternal fitness of things.

After the revolution Thanksgiving became an annual festival in New York, the governor issuing the proclamation. Finally, at the suggestion of congress, President Washington issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation which made the festival an annual holiday.

George Wrote Long Sentence.

One of the noticeable things about this proclamation was that it contained one sentence of 269 words. But it was devout in tone and coming as it did, directly after the suppression of the whisky insurrection in Pennsylvania,

had an excellent reason for being. Subsequent proclamations have been briefer but all have breathed the religious spirit that inspired Gov. Bradford when he begged the early colonists to rejoice and be thankful after they had gathered the fruit of their labor.

But Thanksgiving day possesses for each individual a personal as well as a national significance. It is the day of family reunions. Families who are separated during the rest of the year make an effort to be together on this day and because of these reunions, the festival has a peculiar sacredness though it is marked by feasting and fun. In her children's poem, "The Thanksgiving Tree," Harriet Prescott Spofford expresses something of the good cheer that marks this day. Here are three of the stanzas:

Thanksgiving Cheer.

"Of all the lovely trees that grow
The Christmas tree is the best,
You never heard of it? Why, dear,
It spreads its branches every year
And it must have a mighty root
To bear such quantities of fruit."

"What sort of fruit? Why, crisp and brown
It sends a fine roast turkey down—
Wishbone for me, drumstick for you—
And raisins in the stuffing, too.
And ducks with jelly cuddled close
In pastry; and along with these,
A ham all stuck with cloves, and
High with flaky crust, a chicken pie."

It's strange that you should never know
"How such a wonder came to grow,
Planted in your younger soil, indeed,
It sprung from the old roof tree seed;
You never heard of it? Why, dear,
In this great region of the West,
Yet one much like it over sea,
They call the old Mohogany Tree."

Every child is familiar with the old Thanksgiving poem that begins "Over the river and through the woods," and ends, "Hurrah for the fun, is the pudding done? Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!" The New England poet who wrote that appreciated the Thanksgiving spirit, and many children have journeyed with him on imagination's wings "to grandfather's house."

Tragic for the Turkey.

Of course, the turkey is the one tragic figure in the midst of all this rejoicing. He cannot be said to be the skeleton at the feast, but he is frequently a skeleton after the feast. He is but here to make the nation's Thanksgiving day. Had those first early hunters who went out with their fowling pieces brought in any other game, the turkey, today, would not have caused to regret Thanksgiving day. It is to those colonial nimrods that it owes its fate. Somebody has recently attempted to present the turkey's protest against Thanksgiving in rhyme and this is what has resulted:

"I'm an unpretentious turkey
And do not seek to rise
Above my station to a place
Among the great and wise.
Rich dressing isn't my taste;
I hate all grand display.
And I don't like the way, at all,
I'm served Thanksgiving day."

"I'm an unoffending turkey,
And never quite could see
Just why a horde of thanking souls

Should drive me up a tree.
If I were full of thanks, perhaps,
That might explain their way;
But I'm not and never was.
Gol darn Thanksgiving day."

The protest is not elegant, but it appears to be heartfelt. It is not probable, however, that it will disturb anybody's enjoyment on Thanksgiving day.

Like Christmas day, Thanksgiving day inspires most people with a desire to make others happy. Here in St. Paul it is not only thanks that are

given on this day. The churches and different philanthropic societies have their proteges and they see that those are well provided for on this festival day. Individuals supplement the efforts of these organizations. This thought for others envelopes the day in an atmosphere of good cheer that even a crusty Scrooge cannot resist.

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