

## This Day in History... October 3, 1789 and 1863

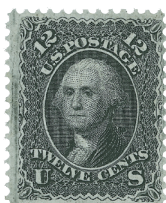
### Thanksgiving Day Proclamations

On October 3, 1789 and 1863, two sitting presidents called on Americans to celebrate a day of Thanksgiving in November.

Though colonists had held harvest celebrations of thanks since the 1620s, it wasn't an official holiday celebrated everywhere. That changed in 1789. On September 25, Elias Boudinot presented a resolution to the House of Representatives asking that President Washington "recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer... [for] the many signal favors of Almighty God."



*Though Thanksgiving celebrations were held since the 1620s, they didn't become an annual holiday until 1863.*



*Washington issued his proclamation to encourage Americans to celebrate their victory in the Revolution.*

Congress approved the resolution and appointed a committee to approach Washington. Washington agreed and issued his proclamation on October 3. In it, he asked all Americans to observe November 26 as a day to give thanks to God for their victory in the Revolution as well as their establishment of a Constitution and government. He then gave it to the governors of each state and asked them to publish it for all to see.

In the years that followed, Presidents John Adams and James Madison issued similar proclamations, but none were permanent. In 1817, New York officially established an annual Thanksgiving holiday. Other northern states followed suit, though they weren't all on the same day.



*Lincoln issued his proclamation to help heal the nation during the Civil War.*

Sarah Josepha Hale (famous for the nursery rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb") began a rigorous campaign in 1827 to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. She published articles and wrote letters to countless politicians, to no avail. Finally, in 1863, at the height of the Civil War, President Lincoln received one of her letters and was inspired. On October 3, he issued his own proclamation, establishing the last Thursday of November as a day of Thanksgiving. In particular to pray for those who lost loved ones in the war and to "heal the wounds of the nation."

Thanksgiving continued to be celebrated on the last Thursday of November until 1939, when President Franklin Roosevelt moved it up a week to increase retail sales during the Great Depression. Americans were outraged and dubbed it "Franksgiving." Two years later he reversed his policy and signed a bill making Thanksgiving the fourth Thursday of November, as it has remained ever since.



*The first Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade was held in 1924.*

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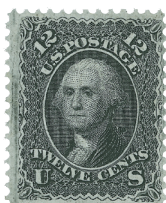
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