

HISTORY SECTION

THE HISTORY OF THANKSGIVING DAY

WITH American Indians as guests of honor, around tables loaded with wild turkeys and venison, wild fruits from the forest, and corn-bread and vegetables from their new gardens, the Pilgrims celebrated their first American Thanksgiving festival in October, 1621, in the Massachusetts Colony on the northeastern coast of the United States. That was at the same time as the early days of Philippine history under the Spanish regime. It seems to have been a period of exploration and colonization in various parts of the world by some of the foremost countries of Europe.

But let us go back to our history of that first Thanksgiving Day of the Pilgrims. A quaint old account thus describes the occasion: "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men hunting fowls (turkeys), so that we might after a more special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. The four men in one day killed as many fowls, as with other things beside, served as food for our company almost a week."

Many of the American Indians, among them Chief Massasoit, the Pilgrims' friend and ally, joined in the three days of feasting. There was plenty of roast turkey, for the fowlers found "great store" of the now famous Thanksgiving bird in the neighboring woods.

Although we read of feasts and of "thanksgiving days" being observed during each year, it is not until ten years later that we find record of a celebration such as is now kept on Thanksgiving Day.

In the first year of his office, George

Washington, first president of the United States, issued a proclamation recommending that November 26, 1789, be kept as a day of "national thanksgiving" for the establishment of a form of government that made for safety and happiness.

In 1864 President Lincoln issued a proclamation in which he "appointed and set aside" the last Thursday in November as a day of national thanksgiving.

Since Lincoln's time, each president has set aside the last Thursday of November for a like festival, so that Thanksgiving Day is now as firmly fixed a national festival in the United States as the Fourth of July. The proclamation is usually followed by one issued by the governor of each state.

The observance of Thanksgiving Day has spread to some extent to the Philippines, where it is a legal holiday, and to some other countries as well.

Although Thanksgiving Day is an American institution, harvest festivals have been known since time immemorial. It was long customary in England and elsewhere to hold special days to celebrate with "thanksgiving and feasting" Nature's annual bounty and other marks of God's favor.

The front cover of this issue of *The Young Citizen* reflects the spirit of preparation for an early Thanksgiving feast by the early Pilgrims. The dress illustrated was characteristic of the time. The well-filled basket contains fruits and vegetables for the Thanksgiving dinner, for which there is to be pumpkin pie and roast turkey as illustrated by the artist.