

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

Thanksgiving Day Proclamations 1789 – Present

The [First National Proclamation of Thanksgiving](#) was issued by the Continental Congress in November of 1777, following the Colonial victories over British General John Burgoyne in the [Battles of Saratoga](#). In the Proclamation, Congress “recommended to the legislative or executive Powers of these United States to set apart Thursday, the eighteenth Day of December next, for Solemn Thanksgiving and Praise.” Near the end of the Revolutionary War—after the British House of Commons had voted to end the war in America, but before the formal signing of the Treaty of Paris—the Congress [proclaimed another Day of Thanksgiving](#), to be held on November 28, 1782.

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But the first Thanksgiving Day celebrated under the new Constitution took place on November 26, 1789, the first year of George Washington’s presidency. President Washington issued this proclamation recognizing November 26 as “a day of public thanksgiving and prayer.” John Adams and James Madison also issued proclamations calling on Americans to observe certain days with fasting, prayer, and thanksgiving, but after Madison no President of the United States issued a proclamation for Thanksgiving until Abraham Lincoln.

On October 3, 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln made the traditional Thanksgiving celebration a nationwide holiday. Since this proclamation, each of his successors as president has issued a Thanksgiving proclamation every year, appointing the day first specifically set by Lincoln—the “last Thursday in November.”

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt [moved the holiday](#) to the third Thursday of November to lengthen the Christmas shopping season. After a storm of protest, Congress established the Federal Thanksgiving Day holiday following the passage of a joint resolution, [H.J. Res. 41](#), by the House of Representatives on October 6, 1941, declaring the “last Thursday in November a legal holiday.” The Senate then passed an [amendment](#) “making the fourth Thursday in November a legal holiday.”

George Washington

[George Washington, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1789](#)

[George Washington, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1795](#)

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John Adams

[John Adams, A Day of Fasting and Humiliation, 1798](#)

[John Adams, A Day of Fasting and Humiliation, 1799](#)

James Madison

[James Madison, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1813](#)

[James Madison, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1815](#)

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Abraham Lincoln

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Andrew Johnson

[Andrew Johnson, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1865](#)

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[Andrew Johnson, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1868](#)

Ulysses S. Grant

[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1869](#)

[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1870](#)

[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1871](#)

[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1872](#)

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[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1874](#)

[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1875](#)

[Ulysses S. Grant, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1876](#)

Rutherford B. Hayes

[Rutherford B. Hayes, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1877](#)

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[Rutherford B. Hayes, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1879](#)

[Rutherford B. Hayes, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, 1880](#)

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Grover Cleveland

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Benjamin Harrison

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Grover Cleveland

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William McKinley

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Theodore Roosevelt

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William Howard Taft

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Woodrow Wilson

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Warren G. Harding

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Calvin Coolidge

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Herbert Hoover

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Dwight D. Eisenhower

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John F. Kennedy

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Lyndon B. Johnson

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Gerald R. Ford

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Jimmy Carter

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Ronald Reagan

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William J. Clinton

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George W. Bush

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Barack Obama

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