

**National Patriotic Instruction
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War**

November 2024

Thanksgiving

In July 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg resulted in more than 50,000 American casualties. Despite these losses, the United States gained a great victory during these three days. On October 3, 1863, with this victory in mind, as well as its cost, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation:

I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, ...to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving... And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him ..., they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.

This proclamation is viewed as the beginning of the national holiday of Thanksgiving Day. It was one of nine similar proclamations that Lincoln issued during the Civil War. Lincoln issued the proclamation, but he did not author it. Secretary of State William Seward penned the October 1863 proclamation.

President Lincoln's proclamation may have never been issued had it not been for Sarah Josepha Hale, also styled as "The Mother of Thanksgiving."

Hale is known for her work as editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, and as the author of *Mary Had a Little Lamb*. Mrs. Hale also played a very large role in making Thanksgiving Day an annual national holiday.

In 1827, as editor of *Boston's Ladies' Magazine*, she began to write essays calling for the national holiday. In 1846, now as the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, Mrs. Hale launched a letter-writing campaign to support her cause. Finally on September 28, 1863, she wrote directly to President Lincoln, asking him to use his powers to create the holiday. Her 36-year quest was finally fulfilled.

During this month of Thanksgiving, let us all count our blessings and be thankful for those who came before us, who worked and sacrificed so much, that we may enjoy those blessings!

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Tad D. Campbell, PCinC
National Patriotic Instructor



Sarah Josepha Hale in 1831