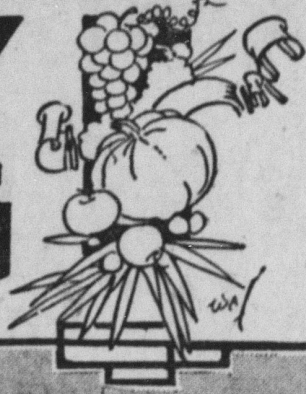
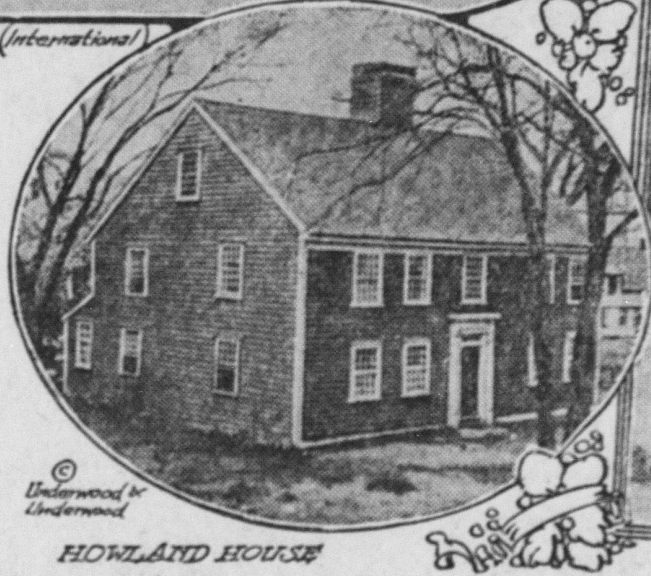
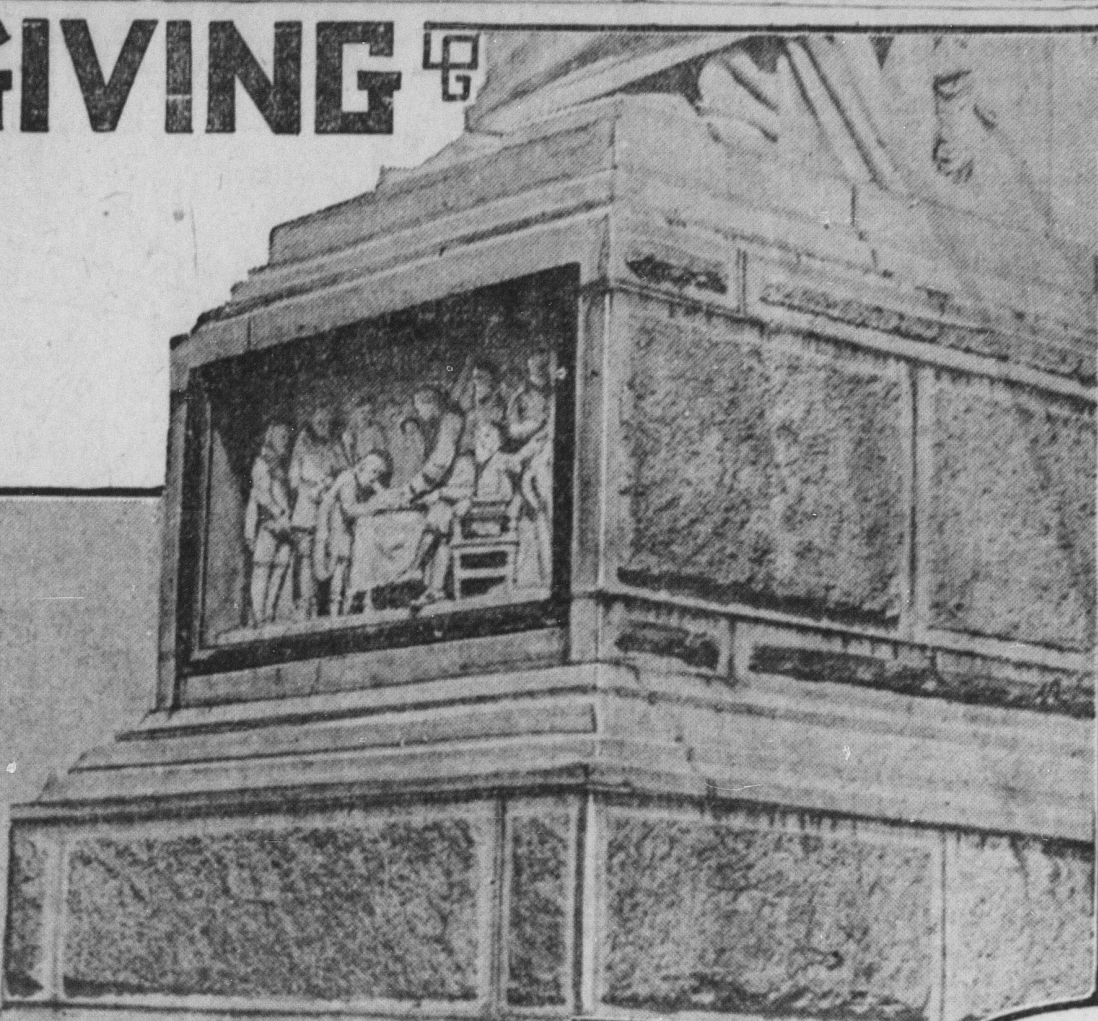


THANKSGIVING DAY 1925



PRESIDENT COOLIDGE AT PLYMOUTH (International)



HOWLAND HOUSE



NEW ENGLISH MONUMENT (International)

By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN

ALVIN COOLIDGE, thirtieth President of the United States of America, and "The First Lady of the Land" at Plymouth of the Pilgrims—a pleasing and significant picture to all good Americans at Thanksgiving time! For Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday peculiarly our own. It's the happiest sort of combination of sober and sincere gratitude to Divine Providence, of feasting and jollity and of home and state. And in its historical associations it's a century and a half older than even Independence Day. Thanksgiving Day takes us back, willy, nilly, to Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims of 1620. And it should be Will I, rather than Nill I.

The President's gaze is fixed, you will note, on the bas-relief depicting the signing in the cabin of the Pilgrim ship of the "Mayflower Compact." That deservedly famous document should be read by all on every Thanksgiving Day—and here it is:

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

Having undertaken for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith, and honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the Northern part of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly & mutually in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, acts constitutions, officers from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names. Cape Cod 11th, of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereigne Lord King James of England, France and Ireland 15 and Scotland 54. Anno Domini 1620.

It would be interesting—and important—to know the thoughts of President Coolidge at the monument, for he has long been a close student of his country's history. Moreover, his American ancestry goes back to the beginning of things in New England and his first American ancestors lie close by, in the old burial ground of Water-town. These ancestors were Puritans, not Pilgrims. John Coolidge (1604-1691), the first of the American line, arrived among the first of the Puritans in 1630, with his wife Mary and one child. His son Simon (1632-1693), was the first American-born Coolidge.

Every good American should know the difference between the Pilgrims (1620) and the Puritans (1630). The Pilgrims—"Separatists"—withdrew from the established church of England in order to have the right to choose their own ministers, then appointed by bishops. They held church and state to be separate; several influential members of the Plymouth colony were not church members. They were not concerned about the religion of others; they asked only religious freedom for themselves. They were largely simple country folk. They were without capital. They practically sold themselves to hard labor for seven years to get to the New World.

The Puritans did not separate from the established church. They undertook to make formal changes to suit themselves. They held church and state to be one; only church members had the rights of freemen and the power to vote. All other creeds were anathema. The Puritans of 1630 under Gov. John Winthrop included many of the English gentry and came in a fleet of ten ships to Massachusetts bay, with goods and live stock valued at one million dollars.

We may know in general the thought of President Coolidge regarding the Pilgrims. As governor of Massachusetts he delivered an address at the Tercentenary Celebration at Plymouth, saying in part:

There was among them small trace of the vanities of life. They came undecked with orders of nobility. They were not the children of fortune but of tribulation. Persecution, not preference, brought them hither. But it was a persecution in which they found a stern satisfaction. They cared little for titles, still less for the goods of this earth, but for an idea they would die. Measured by the standards of men of their time they were the humble of the earth. Measured by later accomplishments they were . . . a mighty host, of whom the world was not worthy, destined to free mankind. No captain ever led his forces to such a conquest. Oblivious to rank, yet man trace to them their lineage as to a royal house . . . What an increase, material and spiritual, three hundred years have brought that little company is known to all the earth. No like body ever cast so great an influence on human history. Civilization has made their landing place a shrine.

The first American Thanksgiving Day was celebrated December 13, 1621, within a few days of

the first anniversary of the landing on Plymouth Rock. During the first terrible winter of 1620-21 nearly half of the Mayflower company had died. But the fall of 1621 had assured them of an abundant harvest. Moreover, the Fortune had arrived in November with thirty-five more colonists. So there was every reason why Gov. William Bradford should set apart a day for Thanksgiving.

The Puritans, who arrived in force beginning with 1630, apparently adopted the Thanksgiving Day of the Pilgrims. Or possibly they evolved a Thanksgiving Day of their own. Anyway, the Puritans at Water-town had a Thanksgiving Day celebration in 1634. The famous Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia Christi Americana; Or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England" has a chapter on the life of the Rev. John Sherman (1613-85), A. B., A. M. (Trinity, Cambridge), who arrived in Water-town in the summer of 1634, in which he says:

So much was religion the first sought of the first come into this country, that they solemnly offered up their praises unto Him that "inhabits the praises of Israel" before they had provided habitations wherein to offer those praises. A Day of Thanksgiving was now kept by the Christians of a new, here called Water-town, under a tree; on which Thanksgiving Mr. Sherman preached his first sermon, as an assistant unto Mr. Phillips: there being present many other divines, who wondered exceedingly to hear a subject so accurately and excellently handled by one that had never before performed any such public exercise.

Cotton Mather, it will be noted, makes no mention of a Thanksgiving feast following the "public exercises" "under a tree." It is to be hoped that the famous divine was a bit forgetful—otherwise the Puritans of Water-town must have been obliged to be satisfied with "a feast of reason and a flow of soul." Incidentally it is interesting to note that in all human probability President Coolidge's great-great-great-great-great-grandfather was one of the congregation that listened to that Thanksgiving sermon.

The first national observance of Thanksgiving Day took place 100 years after the first celebration at Plymouth. It is generally stated that the first national observance was November 26, 1789, in accordance with a proclamation by President Washington. That, however, is an historical error.

In the proceedings of the Second Continental Congress it is recorded that September 13, 1781, "on motion of Mr. Sherman, seconded by John Witherspoon of New Jersey, it was resolved that Thursday, December 31, 1781, be appointed as a Day of Public Thanksgiving throughout the United States and that a committee be appointed to prepare and report a proclamation suitable to the occasion." The committee appointed consisted of Mr. Sherman, Mr. Witherspoon, Joseph Montgomery and James Mitchell Varnum. The proclamation, reported October 26, 1781, recites, among other things, that the year is one in which "the confederation of the United States has been completed" and "in which, after the success of our allies by sea, a General of First Rank, with his whole army, has been captured by the allied forces under the direction of our Commander in Chief."

In the first session of the first congress, organized April 8, 1789, we find Mr. Sherman one of a committee of three to request President Washington "to recommend to the people a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording an opportunity peaceably to establish a Constitution of Government for their safety and happiness." It was in accordance with this request that President Washington by proclamation set apart November 26, 1789, as a day of public thanksgiving.

The "Mr. Sherman" in both cases was Roger

Sherman of Connecticut (1721-93), who is unique in American history in that he helped prepare and signed the four great documents: Articles of Association (1774), Declaration of Independence (1776), Articles of Confederation (1781) and Constitution of the United States (1787). He was a great-grandson of Capt. John Sherman of Water-town, who heard his cousin, Reverend John, preach the Thanksgiving sermon "under a tree." And it was Roger Sherman's grandson, United States Senator George Frisbie Hoar of Massachusetts, who procured the return from England in 1896 of the manuscript diary of Gov. William Bradford containing the "Mayflower Compact."

Thanksgiving Day, as a recurrent national holiday by Presidential proclamation, had its beginning in 1863. In October of that year President Lincoln by proclamation so recommended the day to the people and set aside the last Thursday in November for its observance. Such has been the slow growth through three centuries of the observance of Thanksgiving Day, which has marched across the continent with the American people.

Plymouth attracts more than 250,000 visitors a year. These visitors make much of the "Old Howland House," which dates back to 1696 and was owned by Jabez Howland, son of the John Howland of the Mayflower. It now belongs to the Howland Descendants of America. John Howland was that "lustie younge man" of whom Gov. William Bradford writes, in his "History of the Plymouth Plantation":

In sundrie of these storms the winds were so fetter and the seas so high as they could not beare a knot of saile, but were forced to hull—strike saile and toss with the waves—for diverse days together. And in one of them, as they thus lay at hull, in a mighty storme, a lustie younge man (called John Howland) coming upon some occasion above the gratings, was, with a seale—roll—of the shippe thrown into the sea; but it pleased God that he caught hold of the top saile halliards, which hunge overboard, and rane out at length, yet he held his hold (though he was sundrie fadomes under water) till he was held up by the same rope to the brims of the water, and then with a boathooke and other means got into the shippe againe, and his life saved; and though he was something ill with it, yet he lived many years after, and became a profitable member both in church and commonwealth.

This "lustie younge man," thus miraculously saved, married Elizabeth Thille, who was on the Mayflower, and their descendants are many in the land. Moreover, tradition has it that John Howland was the last of the Mayflower passengers to die.

Many places in the south of England have associations with the Pilgrims and have honored their memory with memorials of various kinds. The latest memorial to be set up is a stone at Immington creek, at Hull. It was unveiled in the presence of representatives of the American, British and Dutch navies. The photograph reproduced shows Capt. A. P. Fairchild, U. S. N., delivering an address on the Pilgrims.

On Thanksgiving Day the good American should give thanks to the Divine Providence which has so often aided the progress of this one nation of earth dedicated to liberty, to equality of rights and opportunity and to the pursuit of happiness. Never in all history has the individual citizen had so great an opportunity to achieve a competence, establish a home and found a family. Never before has a people enjoyed such material comfort. And the nation is the wealthiest and most powerful of earth.

With power comes responsibility; such is the unwritten law. Also prosperity tries the soul of man quite as much as does adversity; such is human nature. And so it is with nations. The good American should therefore add dignity and importance to Thanksgiving Day by taking stock of the past and the present and by making resolves for the future.

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