

The United States celebrates Thanksgiving Day each year in November. Americans owe this day of feasting to Sarah Josepha Hale. Sarah worked most of her life to have Thanksgiving made a national holiday.

Sarah Josepha Buell was born in 1788. The Buells were farmers. And every year they celebrated the fall crops with a great feast. Sarah's mother filled the table with corn, peas, and beans fresh from their fields. Her father helped to cook the turkey. Sarah and the four other Buell children gazed with delight at the pies and rolls. They could hardly wait for dinner. Before eating, they thanked the Lord for their good food.

As early as 1789 George Washington had said that a day of Thanksgiving should be celebrated. In the years that followed, states celebrated this day whenever they wished. Many states did not celebrate a day of Thanksgiving at all.

As a young woman Sarah married David Hale. He died in 1822, leaving her with five children. Sarah needed a job. She had a gift for writing. She had written many letters and articles. Her writings urged the people of the United States to remember Thanksgiving.

A publisher, Louis Codey, asked Mrs. Hale if she would come to work for his *Lady's Book*. To do so would be a daring thing for a woman at that time. Women who left their homes to work were much criticized. Mrs. Hale took the job. She saw her duty to women. They needed more than just recipes for jams and cakes. Sarah wrote about issues of national interest.

In 1846, trouble was brewing between the states of the north and south. Mrs. Hale wrote:

If the women of the land write this day, the leaders of the states will hear our voices. So, let us ask that Thanksgiving Day be held the last Thursday in November.

Mrs. Hale thought that if all states could celebrate Thanksgiving together, a civil war might not take place.

By 1856, more than 150,000 people were reading the *Lady's Book*. Mrs. Hale was being read and quoted. Fourteen states were celebrating Thanksgiving on the same day. But Mrs. Hale was not finished.

"Our nation has but two holidays," she wrote. "We have Washington's birthday and Independence Day. Let us have a third one—Thanksgiving."

Year after year, Mrs. Hale wrote to leaders of the states with her plea. Then, in 1863, Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday. It was a day to give thanks for this country. The woman who worked so hard to make Thanksgiving a national holiday was seventy-five years old that year.

Sarah Josepha Hale celebrated many more Thanksgivings, for she lived to be ninety-one. We owe thanks to this great lady—a fine writer, and a woman who refused to give up. Because of her, all states now celebrate Thanksgiving on the same day.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. **In the United States, Thanksgiving Day is celebrated**
 - A on a different day each year
 - B in November
 - C in Massachusetts only
2. **Every year the Buell family celebrated**
 - A the fall harvest
 - B the first day of winter
 - C George Washington's birthday
3. **The Buell family members were**
 - A writers
 - B farmers
 - C politicians
4. **In 1789 a day of Thanksgiving was suggested by**
 - A George Washington
 - B Thomas Jefferson
 - C King George III
5. **Sarah Hale found a job easily because**
 - A she had a gift for writing
 - B she was Andrew Jackson's friend
 - C her father owned a factory
6. **Mrs. Hale was asked to work for**
 - A the *New York Times*
 - B the government
 - C *Lady's Book*
7. **Sarah Hale told her readers to ask that**
 - A women be given the vote
 - B war with Mexico be avoided
 - C a day of Thanksgiving be celebrated
8. **In 1856 the number of people reading *Lady's Book* was**
 - A 7000
 - B 15,000
 - C 150,000
9. **Before the Civil War the United States had two national holidays,**
 - A Easter and Christmas
 - B Lincoln's Birthday and Arbor Day
 - C Neither A nor B
10. **Thanksgiving Day was made a national holiday by**
 - A Theodore Roosevelt
 - B James K. Polk
 - C Abraham Lincoln