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Thanksgiving Day is the fourth Thursday in November, but many Americans take a day of vacation on the following Friday to make a four-day weekend, during which they may travel long distances to visit family and friends. It is a time when family and friends remember our Pilgrim forefathers who founded this nation at a great sacrifice to their own lives.

The holiday dates back to 1620, the Mayflower set sail on her historic voyage, having on board Pilgrims, people from London Merchant Enterprise and laborers. The Puritans arrived in Massachusetts, determined to practice their dissenting religion without interference. After a rough winter, in which about half of them died, they turned for help to neighboring Indians, who taught them how to plant corn and other crops. The next fall's bountiful harvest inspired the Pilgrims to give thanks by holding a feast.



The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition -not only because so many other Americans have found prosperity but also because the Pilgrims' sacrifices for their freedom still captivate the imagination. In 1789, our first United States President, George Washington issued a proclamation calling for a day of "public thanksgiving and prayer" But it wasn't until more than 70 years later - at a time when America faced its greatest crisis - that Thanksgiving became a yearly celebration, and Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that all Americans set aside the day for a public expression of gratitude to God.



To this day, Thanksgiving dinner almost always includes some of the foods served at the first feast: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, and pumpkin pie. Before the meal begins, families or friends usually pause to give thanks for their blessings, including the joy of being united for the occasion.

Every year the OISS celebrates by giving away many tickets so international student and scholars can experience a typical Thanksgiving luncheon together. Be sure to stay tuned for this celebration during International Education Week (IEW). The OISS staff is grateful each Thanksgiving to work with Rice internationals!

