

Thanksgiving Day

is the expression of a deep feeling of gratitude by our people for the rich productivity of the land, a memorial of the dangers and hardships through which we have safely passed, and a fitting recognition of all that God in His goodness had bestowed upon us.

In early New England, it was the custom at Thanksgiving time to place five kernels of corn at every plate as a reminder of those stern days in the first winter when the food of the Pilgrims was so depleted that only five kernels of corn were rationed to each individual at a time. The Pilgrim Fathers wanted their children to remember the sacrifice, sufferings, and hardships through which they had safely passed -- a hardship that made possible the settlement of a free people in a free land.

They wanted to keep alive the memory of that sixty-three day trip taken in the tiny Mayflower. They desired to keep alive the thought of that stern and rock-bound coast, its inhospitable welcome, and the first terrible winter which took such a toll of lives.

They did not want their descendants to forget that on that day when their rations were reduced to five kernels of corn, only seven healthy colonists remained to nurse the sick, and that nearly half their members lay in the windswept graveyard on the hill. They did not want to forget that when the Mayflower sailed back to England in the spring, only the sailors were aboard.

