



Elgin, Texas

The City of Elgin will celebrate its Sesquicentennial in 2022. As we look forward to a year to commemorate, educate and celebrate in our community we look forward to sharing retrospectives about the community.

## **Elgin Chamber of Commerce Decides Thanksgiving Day for 1939**

Several requests were made from 1623 to the end of the civil war for recognition of a National Day of Thanksgiving in the United States. Finally at the urging of Sarah Josepha Hale, the author of the nursery rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb" she convinced President Abraham Lincoln to declare an annual National Day of Thanksgiving in 1863 for the last Thursday of November. This continued without question until 1939.

The United States continued to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday as Thanksgiving Day until 1939. The University of Texas vs. Texas A&M had played their annual football game on Thanksgiving Day since 1919, but November, 1939 had a 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday and this created a controversy. Store owners in New York appealed to President Franklin Roosevelt to observe Thanksgiving on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday so that people could have another week to shop at Christmas. The President felt this might help the economy. The University of Texas vs. Texas A&M game was scheduled for the last Thursday and Texas stood firm to keep the scheduled game on a holiday. Much of the country wanted to continue to follow the last Thursday and a compromise developed that there could be 2 dates to celebrate. The two opposing football coaches agreed to change the game date to the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday. Elgin allowed the Chamber of Commerce to determine when celebration would occur and Elgin chose to follow the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday. However, an announcement in the *Austin American* appeared that the Elgin National Bank would observe both days.

In 1941 federal regulations set the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in November as a national holiday to celebrate Thanksgiving and it has been celebrated for 80 years on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday.

Special thanks to Sydna Arbuckle, native Elginite and local historian for sharing these images and the oral interview excerpt. The Depot Museum, operated by the Elgin Historical Association manages the photography collection and archives. In addition, several books on Elgin area history, Elgin, and stories from Elgin people are available at the Depot Museum 14 Depot Square in downtown Elgin.

Join the celebration for the Elgin Sesquicentennial – volunteer by emailing [community@ci.elgin.tx.us](mailto:community@ci.elgin.tx.us) or call 512-229-3227.