

Filler

Thanksgiving is a unique holiday in the fact that retailers do not know how to spin it to increase their bottom line, which is probably why after Halloween Christmas is put out on the shelves. The fact is for most of us it is a large meal that begins with preparation early in the morning culminating in an early afternoon feast shared with the immediate family or extended for those more fortunate. Then some members break off after the meal to settle into a catatonic state in the living room while others take a walk in the late fall air before taking in a traditional desert like pumpkin or apple pie. The final act of course it to clean all the fine china, the silverware, and cooking dishes while others begin looking at sale adds to plan their shopping excursions.

Thanksgiving for the numismatist though may bring thoughts of the Pilgrim Tercentenary commemorative half since it of course has all the correct motifs from our childhood years that being a Pilgrim with head bowed slightly holding a bible on the obverse and a highly sculpted Mayflower on the reverse. Did you know though that a more appropriate coin to have in mind would be the common Lincoln cent, yes I did almost type penny. The reason why is it was President Lincoln who on October 3, 1863 made a proclamation establishing Thanksgiving as the last Thursday of November. No it was not to celebrate a feast of Pilgrims and Native Americans, as taught to children, it was to be thankful for ours blessings both as a people and a Nation during the Civil War. So in addition to the cent there is actually a wealth numismatic items that are associated with Thanksgiving from commemoratives featuring our great President Abraham Lincoln to the various Civil War commemorative coins and tokens and even Confederate currency. As for the latter item Lincoln viewed the nation as a whole since he had kin who fought for the Confederacy and a Confederate note was among one of his possessions at his untimely death.

There is another coin that also comes to mind too in thinking of Thanksgiving and that is the Roosevelt dime. This time though it is not in an effort to be thankful, no this is about Christmas as a retail holiday we know today. In 1939 the president of the time moved Thanksgiving back one week that November for the simple purpose of increasing the number of shopping days between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Yes a little more than seventy years ago the retail industry was already pushing to get people into the shopping spirit earlier and earlier. Then in 1941 Congress passed a resolution which Roosevelt subsequently signed making the fourth Thursday the nationally recognized holiday of Thanksgiving which we celebrate still today. This whole event was best portrayed in an animated scene featured in the movie Holiday Inn where the turkey tries to correctly place himself on the November calendar.

That said take a moment this Thanksgiving to be first and foremost Thankful and when that is done maybe you can take a moment to share with some of your non-numismatic friends a little trivia about the holiday using just your pocket change or maybe theirs.

Happy Thanksgiving, Your Corresponding Secretary, James L. Haney