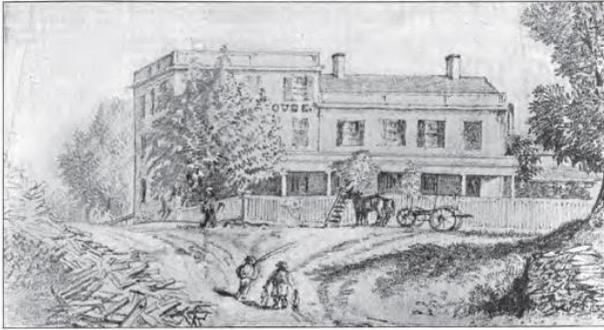


THANKSGIVING THROUGH THE YEARS

Because Thanksgiving was always a family affair, not much was written. There were; however, references to Thanksgiving in diaries and other unrelated articles. As a bonus, we also get updates on the weather, which appears to have been considerably colder than today. Here's a look back on how Islanders handled Thanksgiving in the 'old days.'



HOMESTEAD OF DATUS KELLEY ON KELLEY'S ISLAND, WITH LATER THREE STORY ADDITION FOR HOTEL.

The first Kelley house was built on Division Street and used as a temporary residence until a larger house was built, and what better site then overlooking the lake and the steamboat dock. A detailed history of the house was written by Sarah Rush. "The site chosen for the new [Kelley] house was on Lot 6 and the building was to be a two story frame structure [the right side in the drawing]... The house was finished in the spring of 1844 and the family moved in. For many years, Grand

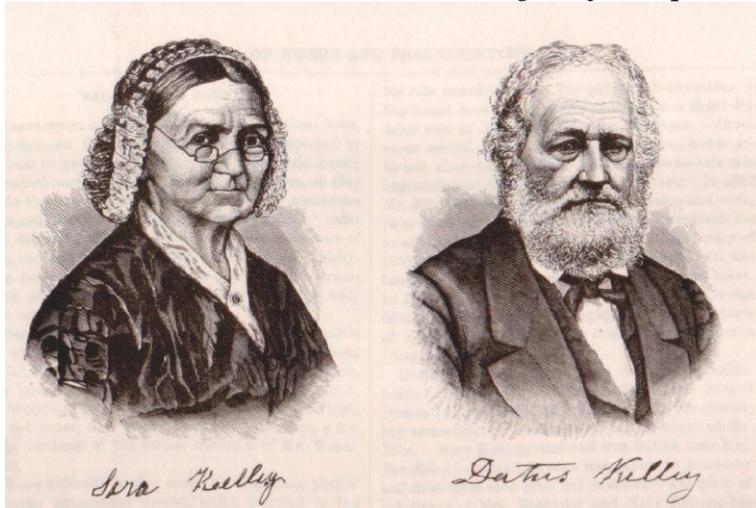
Father and Grand Mother Kelley occupied the house always giving the friend or the stranger a hospitable welcome and annually spreading the Thanksgiving Feast for their children and grandchildren, all of whom Grand mother said must be seated at the long table, even to the little one which had to be tied into a high chair and whose head wobbled around regardless of the consequences to its neck."



1854 - "The steamer *Island Queen* was built on the south shore of Kelley's Island by Captain Dibble of Sandusky ... The keel of the steamer was 'laid down' during the month July in the year 1854... The work of construction went along steadily and rapidly and when early fall arrived the hull was almost completed and a launching day was set. The hull was to be launched on Thanksgiving Day in the year 1854. Winter started in early that year and when Thanksgiving Day arrived, it was found impossible to float the hull on account of the ice. The lake was frozen over from the island to

the mainland. The launching did take place however, several days after Thanksgiving."

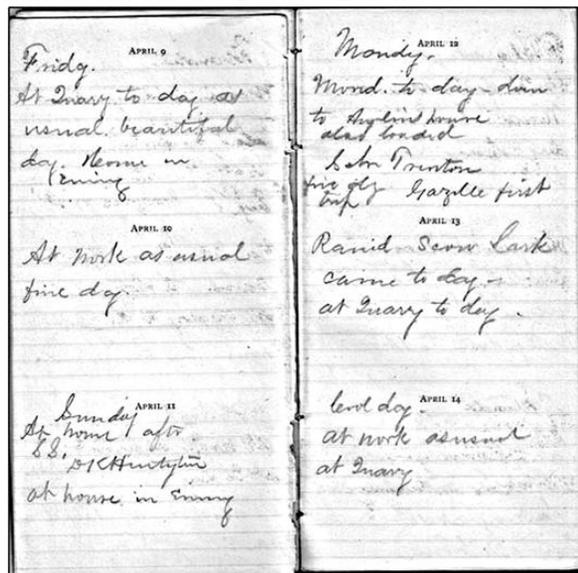
Douglas Ottinger Kelley, grandson of Datus and Sara, wrote a paper entitled 'Reminiscences of Childhood on Kelley's Island, 1844-1851' in which he mentioned Thanksgiving at his Grandmother's house. He recalled his youthful impressions of his grandparents, noting that



Datus "was a great reader, very intelligent in all matters of current interest – social, political with very positive opinions of his own on most subjects. He was exceedingly fond of 'arguing.' In appearance he has fratsiaschal head, very bald – face clean shaven – deliberate in speech – of medium height and rather heavy and slow in movement. Grandma Kelley was fond of children. – She used always to have good things for us to eat when we children came to see her – and always had a family gathering on Thanksgiving Day –

and that meant quite a lot of grandchildren at the table. She was of rather less than medium size – not at all stout and very active and domestic.”

Over the years, Thanksgiving was celebrated much like today with gatherings of the family in homes across the Island. But much like today, there was some down time and, as you can see



from George Bristol's diary entries, some work never stopped.

As November 1868 came to a close, George Bristol's diary contained these accounts of how he spent his days. This is what George Bristol's diary looked like.

Thanksgiving was celebrated on November 26. "November 2 – Picked Grapes, finished today. November 3 – At election all day. Republican majority for Grant – President 44. November 4 – Dug potatoes. November 10 – Worked at Hall today, cold. The Council for the ordination of Mr. Holbrook assembled tonight. November 14 – Electa, children and I went to Sandusky today. Got pictures taken. November 19 – Snowed today, all day. Put up some fish and solid wood. November 26 – Up to dock in forenoon. Thanksgiving. H. Cattenach sick.

November 28 – Husked corn today for Father [Woodford]. I got about 25 bushels corn. November 30 – Star made last trip today. Cold.”

A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT THANKSGIVING - Thanksgiving in the United States was observed on differing dates. The final Thursday in November became the customary date in most US states. Modern Thanksgiving was proclaimed for all states in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln as the final Thursday in November in celebration of the bounties that had continued to fall on the Union and for the military successes in the war. Because of the ongoing Civil War, a nationwide Thanksgiving celebration was not realized until Reconstruction was completed in the 1870s. Newspapers reminded everyone “No one will forget that Next Thursday, one week from to-day, is the day appointed by the President for a general thanksgiving.” November 23, 1871

On October 31, 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a presidential proclamation changing the holiday to the next to last Thursday in November in an effort to boost the economy. This earlier date created an extra seven days for Christmas. On December 26, 1941, Roosevelt signed a joint resolution of Congress changing the official national Thanksgiving Day to the fourth Thursday in November starting in 1942.

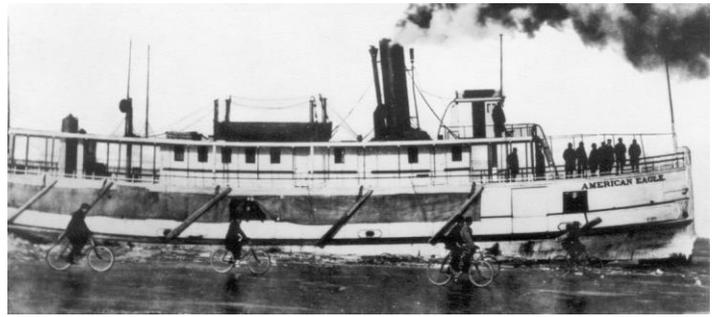
With the official designation of the final Thursday of November as the Thanksgiving. George Bristol wrote on November 28, 1878 – “At quarry 1/2 day. At Uncle A. to dinner – Thanksgiving to day.”

November 27, 1879 – Bristol noted “Thanksgiving Day. I at quarry all day loading scow. N. K. went to Detroit. Electa and children over to Aunt Ann's to tea. I over in evening. Pleasant day.” *It might have been pleasant and Thanksgiving Day, but he still worked.*

November 17, 1880 – Kelley noted that it snowed the week before Thanksgiving this year. “About four inches snow on ground this morning. Somewhat drifted. Sleighs out today. Commenced studying Philosophy today. Spent one hour on Philosophy in p.m. November 19 – 10°. Mercury below zero in Sandusky. Hauled in last of corn stalks from Peach orchard this evening with A. Kelley.” November 20 – “Had Jared Dwelle haul two loads of fodder today. November 22 – The Cooke has gone to Detroit to lay up. The *American Eagle* came down this a.m. and went into Sandusky, going through about five or six inches of... ice in the bay. Returned on usual time.

November 23 – The whole head of the lake to the Bass Islands is full of ice. Over 60 vessels are frozen in. Also the Steamer *Northwest*. The Steamer *Jay Cooke* had to return to Put-in-Bay on account of this.

November 25 – Thanksgiving Day, had company to dinner. *Eagle* [pictured here] made round trip.”



September 24, 1889 – “The twine fishermen were compelled to remain on shore the past few days on account of the storm. The bass fishermen at our hotels are waiting patiently for quiet weather. John Moysey was searching for his turkeys (10 in number) Sunday which disappeared very mysteriously Saturday night. Whether the turkeys mistrusted Thanksgiving Day or somebody wants to provide for that day on time cannot be decided.”

1892 – “The ladies of the Congregational Church serve an oyster supper in the basement of Kelley’s Hall on election night. The Catholic fair begins the next evening to last a week or 10 days, and the Brass Band will give a dance on Thanksgiving eve, so we will have plenty of recreation for some time to come. Then too the winning side in the coming election may have a ‘blow out’ in the meantime.”

Today, we still celebrate with friends and families. Often people will invite Thanksgiving ‘orphans’ into their family gatherings, so no one gets left out. The Village Pump holds an after-Thanksgiving pot-luck that has become an Island tradition. Thanksgiving also marks the last big exodus from the Island as people close their houses for the winter. Even the ferry makes two rounds trips in the morning and in the late afternoon to accommodate travelers.