

MEMORIAL DAY



Dear Friend,

As we approach our long holiday weekend, it seems appropriate to pause and reflect upon what it is exactly we are celebrating.

Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of The United States of America.

Memorial Day was borne out of The Civil War and a desire to honor our dead. It was officially proclaimed on May 5th, 1868 by General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11. "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land," he proclaimed. The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle.

On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there. The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war).

It is now observed in almost every state on the last Monday in May with

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Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 – 363). This helped ensure a three-day weekend for Federal holidays, though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19th in Texas; April 26th in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10th in South Carolina; and June 3rd (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.

In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields," Moina Michael replied with her own poem: "We cherish too, the Poppy red, that grows on fields where valor led, It seems to signal to the skies, That blood of heroes never dies."

She then conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She was the first to wear one, and sold poppies to her friends and co-workers with the money going to benefit servicemen in need. Later a Madam Guerin from France was visiting the United States and learned of this new custom started by Ms. Michael. When she returned to France she made artificial red poppies to raise money for war orphaned children and widowed women. This tradition spread to other countries. In 1921, the Franco-American Children's League sold poppies nationally to benefit war orphans of France and Belgium. The League disbanded a year later and Madam Guerin approached the VFW for help.

Shortly before Memorial Day in 1922 the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell poppies. Two years later their "Buddy" Poppy program was selling artificial poppies made by disabled veterans. In 1948 the US Post Office honored Ms. Michael for her role in founding the National Poppy movement by issuing a red 3 cent postage stamp with her likeness on it.





We continue to honor our fallen to this day. Not only from the Civil War, but the brave men and women from every war, skirmish, conflict, insurrection and others who made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedoms.

God has blessed this great land and its people because we have, throughout our history, honored Him first and given Him the glory. As we move forward into the future, we need to insure that our traditions are preserved, that we continue to rely on Him for our protection and provision and that we honor our fallen heroes, not only on Memorial Day, but every day.

In closing, I have listed some memorable quotes that illustrate the true meaning of Memorial Day and the Character of Great American Patriots, who have come before us.

“I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” – Nathan Hale

“The patriot’s blood is the seed of Freedom’s tree.” – Thomas Campbell

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” – Joseph Campbell

“Patriotism is supporting your country all the time and your government when it deserves it.” – Mark Twain

“My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” – John F. Kennedy

“Your silent tents of green we deck with fragrant flowers; Yours has the suffering been, the memory shall be ours.” – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“Memorial Day this year is especially important as we are reminded almost daily





of the great sacrifices that the men and women of the Armed Services make to defend our way of life.” – Robin Hayes

“It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived.” – George S. Patton

“And I’m proud to be an American, where at least I know I’m free. And I won’t forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.” – Lee Greenwood

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected and handed on for them to do the same.” – Ronald Reagan

May God Bless you this Memorial Day as you remember those who gave their lives to preserve your freedom and May God Bless America as we continue to turn to Him for our daily needs.

Sincerely,
Mark and Larry Peabody

