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SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

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Flag Day – June 14 First observed June 14, 1777

In the United States, Flag Day (more formally, National Flag Day), is celebrated on June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States, which happened that day by resolution of the Second Continental Congress in 1777. In 1916, Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation that officially established June 14 as Flag Day; in August 1949, National Flag Day was established by an Act of Congress.

Several men are claimed to have played early instrumental roles in the establishment of a National Flag Day: Perhaps the most fervent claim dates to 1885, when a schoolteacher, Bernard J. Cigrand, reportedly urged the students at the public school in Fredonia, Wisconsin, to observe June 14 as "Flag Birthday." He moved to Chicago to attend dental school, and in June 1886, wrote an article titled "The Fourteenth of June" which was published in the Chicago Argus newspaper. He continued to promote the idea and by June 1894 300,000 children gathered in parks throughout Chicago to celebrate the day.

Another claim is made on behalf of William T. Kerr, a resident of Collier Township, Pennsylvania for a number of years, who founded the American Flag Day Association of Western Pennsylvania in 1888, became that organization's national chairman one year later, and served as such for fifty years. He attended Truman's 1949 signing of the Act of Congress which formally established the holiday.

An older and less cited claim is in Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, published by Standard Publishing Company (Chicago) in 1912. It credits George Morris of Hartford, Connecticut: To George Morris of Hartford, Conn., is popularly given the credit of suggesting "Flag Day," the occasion being in honor of the adoption of the American flag on June 14, 1777. The city of Hartford observed the day in 1861, carrying out a program of a patriotic order, praying for the success of the Federal arms and the preservation of the Union.

A Busy Afternoon at Miss Shead's School for Young Ladies

For many years during the mid-nineteenth century Miss Carrie Shead ran a school for young ladies in the family home on the Chambersburg Pike, just west of the sleepy little town of Gettysburg in southern central Pennsylvania. Then, on the afternoon of July 1, 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg engulfed her home, as Union forces began to fall back from Seminary Ridge, just to the west. As the tired troops retreated on Gettysburg, some of them took shelter in the Shead house. One such was Col. Charles Wheelock of the 97th New York.

Wheelock ran into the house, closely followed by several Confederate soldiers intent on taking him prisoner. He fled down the basement, but the Rebels – and Miss Shead – followed him. Cornering the good colonel, a Confederate sergeant demanded that Wheelock give up his sword. The latter refused. Before the sergeant could take it, a second group of Rebels came thundering down the stairs, herding some Yankee prisoners before them. After a moment's confusion the sergeant renewed his demand for Wheelock's sword. But it was gone, taken, Wheelock said, by one of the other Confederate soldiers. The sergeant went off angrily, deprived of his precious souvenir. Wheelock was later herded out of the house with the other prisoners. Soon after, Wheelock managed to escape. Several days later he returned to the

Shed house to pay his compliments to Carrie and recover his sword, which she had hidden under her skirt.

The Shed house was crowded that day in July. Pvt. Asa S. Hardman of the 3rd Indiana Cavalry had fought all morning along Seminary Ridge. As was the case with many another soldier that afternoon, the Shed house provided him with temporary shelter. He too was taken prisoner, but unlike Wheelock, was unable to elude his captors. Eventually exchanged, Hardman also paid a return visit to the Sheds, so that he could marry Carrie's sister Louisa.