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SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

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US Department of Veterans Affairs on Memorial Day History

Three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, the head of an organization of Union veterans — the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) — established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. Maj. Gen. John A. Logan declared that Decoration Day should be observed on May 30. It is believed that date was chosen because flowers would be in bloom all over the country. The first large observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

The ceremonies centered around the mourning-draped veranda of the Arlington mansion, once the home of Gen. Robert E. Lee. Various Washington officials, including Gen. and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, presided over the ceremonies. After speeches, children from the Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphan Home and members of the GAR made their way through the cemetery, strewing flowers on both Union and Confederate graves, reciting prayers and singing hymns.

Veterans Thoughts

Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations, that we have forgotten, as a people, the cost of a free and undivided Republic. ~John A. Logan

For love of country they accepted death...

~James A. Garfield

Heroism is latent in every human soul - However humble or unknown, they (the veterans) have renounced what are accounted pleasures and cheerfully undertaken all the self-denials - privations, toils, dangers, sufferings, sicknesses, mutilations, life-long hurts and losses, death itself - for some great good, dimly seen but dearly held.

~Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Courage - a perfect sensibility of the measure of danger, and a mental willingness to endure it.

~William Tecumseh Sherman

I have never been able to think of the day as one of mourning; I have never quite been able to feel that half-masted flags were appropriate on Decoration Day. I have rather felt that the flag should be at the peak, because those whose dying we commemorate rejoiced in seeing it where their valor placed it. We honor them in a joyous, thankful, triumphant commemoration of what they did. - Benjamin Harrison

"Our comrades were dear to us; we were mutually bound by ties of love, wrought in the arduous toils, deprivations and hazards of war, and by our mutual baptism of fire and strife of battle. We know them as we can never know other men, for they were tried before us in all the great qualities which challenge the admiration and commendation of men and brings one nearer to God, in a self-devotion to righteous duty. We stand on holy ground! for this field was the altar of God. The Master said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' Here, our comrades laid down their lives for love of country, for human right, for the love and service of man. ~Hiram Duryea, Commander 5th New York

Holidays and other special days http://suvcw.org/ftp/PI_handbook.pdf
National, Federal and Special holidays – Days the Flag should be Flown

Loyalty Day – May 1 First observed in the 1930s

The Maypole celebration apart, May Day is also important to all average Americans for yet another reason. Americans today celebrate May Day as Loyalty Day. It is a day of parades of veterans, drum and bugle corps, Boy Scouts, visits to national shrines and doing things in the honor of the patriots. Schools, churches, fraternal societies and different organizations come alive to sponsor these events. The motto is to instill the zeal to 'remain loyal to America', especially among children and the youth. It is a day meant for making everyone in America feel proud of his or her country.

Though the exact beginning of the date of observance is not known, the concept stemmed in the early 1930s. The idea to celebrate May Day as Loyalty Day came about as a counteractive bid against the Communist May Day exhibitions in the United States. Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars felt that a challenge must be given to what they considered as the 'disruptive forces of the communism'. They believed that the loyalty of Americans to American ideals had to be asserted in order to prevent the growth of communism in America. So, in the early 1930s they began urging war veterans to organize parades and ceremonies. Other patriotic organizations also joined. With the help of speaker's bureaus and an extensive letter-writing campaign, celebrations on the theme of loyalty to America took hold. This was aided by patriotic plays, oratory contests on national issues, and tours to national shrines. Schools, churches, labor unions, fraternal societies and other groups sponsored these events.

While the concept came into being early in the 1930s, it took until 1949 to officially proclaim the observance of Loyalty Day. Forty-nine states and territorial governors gave their support, thanks to the efforts of Senator Karl Mundt of North Dakota and Representative James E. Van Zandt of Pennsylvania. In May 1, 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made it a day of national observance. In 1932, some patriotic organizations were encouraged by the Loyalty Day concept and wanted to do something more to inspire loyalty to the nation. This gave birth to the concept of Americanism Day, which was to be celebrated on the same day as Loyalty Day. The first Americanism parade was held in Uniontown, Pennsylvania in 1932. The day has since merged with Loyalty Day.

Mothers Day – Second Sunday in May

Armed Forces Day – Third Saturday in May First observed in 1947

Armed Forces Day was established to combine the previous independent holidays of each of the branches of the Armed Forces. Its purpose is to honor Americans serving in the five services including the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. On this holiday, there are parades and other festive activities sponsored by the military. In addition, many military bases are open to the public for tours of the facilities, ships, planes, and other military assets. Sometimes there are also public demonstrations like parachute jumps, aircraft fly-bys and other events.

Memorial Sunday – The Sunday preceding Memorial Day

Memorial Sunday is defined in the "Ritual and Ceremonials" as the Sunday preceding Memorial Day. It should be observed by every Camp and every member by attending Divine services, preferably with members of the Allied Orders of the Grand Army of the Republic. Camp Commanders should issue instructions to members covering memorial Sunday, advising them in full detail time and place of the services and of needed information concerning participation of the Camp in the program.

Memorial Day – May 30 First observed in 1868

Memorial Day was originally known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, by proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former sailors and soldiers.

During the first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery. This 1868 celebration was inspired by local observances of the day in several towns throughout America that had taken place in the three years since the Civil War. In fact, several Northern and Southern cities claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day, including Columbus, Mississippi; Macon, Georgia; Richmond, Virginia; Boalsburg, Pennsylvania; and Carbondale, Illinois.

In 1966, the federal government, under the direction of President Lyndon Johnson, declared Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day. They chose Waterloo—which had first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—because the town had made Memorial Day an annual, community-wide event during which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags. By the late 1800s, many communities across the country had begun to celebrate Memorial Day and, after World War I, observances also began to honor those who had died in all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in May.