

Greg Carter, PCC
National Patriotic Instructor

Statement on Memorial Day Observances

HEADQUARTERS GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC
General Orders No.11, WASHINGTON, D.C., May 5, 1868

The 30th day 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 church-yard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose among other things, "of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." What can aid more to assure this result than cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes? Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. 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.

If other eyes grow dull, other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring-time; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to lend its friendly aid in bringing to the notice of comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith. Department commanders will use efforts to make this order effective.

By order of

JOHN A. LOGAN, Commander-in-Chief

N.P. CHIPMAN, Adjutant General

Official: WM. T. COLLINS, A.A.G.

It is part of our obligation as Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War to continue to observe General Logan's order. May 30 was originally selected by Logan because it was the only day in the calendar year when no battle took place during the American Civil War. It was changed by Congress to the current observance as part of the National Holiday Act of 1971. While there are movements to return the holiday to May 30, we must focus during the holiday on several key points in General Logan's order:

1. *"In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit."* With this provision, Logan left the observance of the holiday on the shoulders and honor of the membership to fulfill independently, as we must.
2. *"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."* Meeting prior to public services for the purpose of cleaning up the cemetery grounds, replacing flags, etc., is something very important to consider in planning observances for this holiday.
3. *"Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring-time; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor."* These are the only hints of direction provided by General Logan, and suggest to some degree two things we must do on Memorial Day in order to observe the holiday in the fashion he envisioned so long ago.

God bless you all on this very special day, and give you the fortitude to honor our brave ancestors.

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