Father's Day History

Father's Day, a holiday to honor fathers, is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. The first celebration was held in Spokane, Washington on June 19, 1910. Sonora Smart Dodd thought of the idea for Father's Day while listening to a Mother's Day sermon in 1909. She wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. Smart, a Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife died while giving birth to their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Washington.

As she grew up, Dodd realized how selfless and courageous her father was. Inspired by Anna Jarvis' struggle to promote Mother's Day, Sonora Dodd began a rigorous campaign to celebrate Father's Day in US. The Spokane Ministerial Association and the local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) supported her cause. Because William Smart's birthday was in June, the first Father's Day was celebrated on June 19, 1910 in Spokane.

Although President Woodrow Wilson approved of the idea in 1916, it took many years for Father's Day to become a national holiday. In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge recommended the idea of a national Father's Day to, "establish more intimate relations between fathers and their children and to impress upon fathers the full measure of

their obligations." Finally in 1966 President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day. President Richard Nixon signed the law which eventually made it permanent in 1972.

Roses are the Father's Day flowers: red to be worn for a living father and white if the father has died.