

## Mother's Day History

The history of Mother's Day is centuries old. One of the earliest historical records of a society celebrating a Mother deity can be found among the ancient Egyptians, who held an annual festival to honor the goddess Isis, who was commonly regarded as the Mother of the pharaohs. The ancient Greeks held spring celebrations to honor Rhea, the Mother of the Gods. In Rome, offerings were made to the major Mother deity, Cybele, the Great Mother of Gods.



The early Christians in England celebrated a day to honor Mary, the mother of Christ. It fell on the fourth Sunday Lent. They also used the day to honor the church in which they were baptized, which they knew as their "Mother Church."



In the 1600's a clerical decree in England broadened the celebration to include all Mothers, referring to the day as Mothering Day. Many of England's poor worked as servants for the wealthy. Most jobs were located far from their homes; the servants would live at the houses of their employers. On Mothering Sunday, the servants would have the day off and were encouraged to return home and spend the day with their mothers. A special cake, called the mothering cake, was often brought along.



When the first English settlers came to America, they discontinued the tradition of Mothering Day due to lack of time and because it conflicted with their puritan ideals. They practiced a more conservative form of Christianity and ignored the more secular holidays.

It was not until 1870 that Boston poet and social activist, Julia Ward Howe, introduce the idea of Mother's Day in the United States with a Mother's Day Peace Proclamation. Although she was the author of The

Battle Hymn of the Republic, she became horrified at the death and carnage of the civil war. She called on mothers to come together to protest the futility of their sons killing the sons of other mothers.



She began promoting the idea of a "Mother's Day for Peace" to be celebrated on June 2, honoring peace, motherhood, and womanhood. In 1873, women in Boston and several other cities in America held a Mother's Day for Peace gathering. For the next ten years she held meetings in Boston on Mother's Peace Day. The celebrations eventually died off when Howe found other ways to promote peace around the country. Although Howe failed in her attempt to get a formal recognition of Mother's Day, in 1988 a stamp was issued in her honor to acknowledge her achievements.



Anna Marie Jarvis was the originator of our modern Mother's Day. She created the first official Mother's Day in 1908 to memorialize her mother, and her work with families during the Civil War. A celebration took place at Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia. Jarvis handed out her mother's favorite flower, the white carnation. Anna devoted herself full time to the creation of national Mother's Day. She began to lobby politicians and prominent businessmen like John Wannamaker to support her campaign to create a special day to honor mothers. In 1910, West Virginia became the first state to observe the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.



Anna's hard work paid off in 1914 when Woodrow Wilson signed a bill recognizing Mother's Day as a national holiday. He asked

Americans to give a public expression of reverence to mothers through the celebration of Mother's Day:

"Now, Therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the said Joint Resolution, do hereby direct the government officials to display the United States flag on all government buildings and do invite the people of the United States to display the flag at their homes or other suitable places on the second Sunday in May as a public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country."

Mother's Day was meant to be spent in church and afterwards children would write loving letters to their mothers. Carnations were worn that day. White carnations were worn to honor deceased mothers, while pink or red carnations pay tribute to mothers who are still alive.

Gradually, Mother's day became very popular and gift giving increased. All the commercialization of the Mother's day infuriated Anna as she believed that the day's sentiment was being sacrificed at the expense of greed and profit. By 1924 she was so enraged by the commercialization of the holiday that she petitioned to abolish it. She was even arrested for disturbing the peace at a convention selling carnations for a war mother's group. She spent the rest of her life and her family inheritance fighting the holiday. She died in 1948, regretting ever starting the Mother's Day tradition.

Since then Mother's Day has become one of the most commercially successful U.S. occasions. According to the National Restaurant Association, Mother's Day is now the most popular day of the year to dine out at a restaurant in the United States and telephone lines record their highest traffic on that day.

