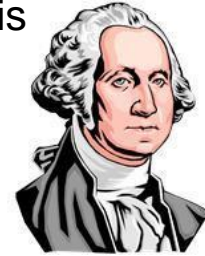## Presidents' Day History

Presidents' Day, celebrated each year on the third Monday in February, is a day intended to honor all the American presidents, but most significantly George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

In 1796, during the last full year of Washington's presidency the United States decided to honor him by celebrating his birthday. According to the Gregorian calendar that is most commonly used today, George Washington was born on February 22, 1732. Although according to the Julian calendar that was used in England until 1752, his birth date was February 11th. By the early 1800s Washington's Birthday had become an established, though not official, national holiday.

Abraham Lincoln was a well respected and important president and it was thought his birthday should also be honored. In 1865, one year after his assassination, both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address, on the day of his birth, February 12.

Washington's Birthday became an official holiday in 1880, becoming the first federal holiday to honor an American citizen. It was to be celebrated on February 22. Lincoln's birthday did not become a national holiday like Washington's, but it did become a legal holiday in several states.

In 1968 Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Bill, which moved 3 federal holidays to Mondays, including Washington's Birthday. The change was designed to simplify the calendar and give federal employees several fixed 3-day weekends. It was also proposed that Washington's Birthday be renamed Presidents' Day to honor the birthdays of both Washington and Lincoln. The name change was rejected by Congress. And although this holiday is still officially known as Washington's Birthday, it has become popularly known as Presidents' Day. This now makes the third Monday in February a day for honoring both Washington and Lincoln, as well other presidents.