

A History of Mother's Day

The first celebrations in honor of mothers were held in the spring in ancient Greece. They paid tribute to Rhea, the Mother of the Gods. During the 17th century, England honored mothers on "Mothering Sunday," celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent.

In the United States, Julia Ward Howe suggested the idea of Mother's Day in 1872. Howe, who wrote the words to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, saw Mother's Day as being dedicated to peace.

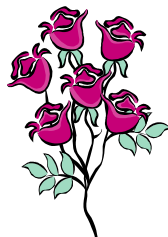
Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia is credited with bringing about the official observance of Mother's Day. Her campaign to establish such a holiday began as a remembrance of her mother, who died in 1905 and who had, in the late 19th century, tried to establish "Mother's Friendship Days" as a way to heal the scars of the Civil War.

Two years after her mother died, Jarvis held a ceremony in Grafton, W. Va., to honor her. She was so moved by the proceedings that she began a massive campaign to adopt a formal holiday honoring mothers. In 1910, West Virginia became the first state to recognize Mother's Day. A year later, nearly every state officially marked the day. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson officially proclaimed Mother's Day as a national holiday to be held on the second Sunday of May.

But Jarvis' accomplishment soon turned bitter for her. Enraged by the commercialization of the holiday, she filed a lawsuit to stop a 1923 Mother's Day festival and was even arrested for disturbing the peace at a war mothers' convention where women sold white carnations — Jarvis' symbol for mothers — to raise money. "This is not what I intended," Jarvis said. "I wanted it to be a day of sentiment, not profit!"

When she died in 1948, at age 84, Jarvis had become a woman of great ironies. Never a mother herself, her maternal fortune dissipated by her efforts to stop the commercialization of the holiday she had founded, Jarvis told a reporter shortly before her death that she was sorry she had ever started Mother's Day. She spoke these words in a nursing home where every Mother's Day her room had been filled with cards from all over the world.

Today, because and despite Jarvis' efforts, many celebrations of Mother's Days are held throughout the world. Although they do not all fall at the same time, such countries as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia and Belgium also celebrate Mother's Day on the same day as the United States.



Courtesy Of: By HOLLY HILDEBRAND
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