



Memorial Day



What comes to mind when you think of Memorial Day? Several Americans see a weekend to relax with their families and friends, having BBQs, going on picnics, spending time at the beach, watching a NASCAR Race or any other outdoor activity. Others say it is a sign that summer has finally arrived. However, many Americans still attend Memorial Day Parades honoring those who have lost their lives and place flowers on the grave sites of their loved ones who served our country in the military. Have you ever wondered what is the true meaning behind Memorial Day, and how this amazing Holiday was born?

Towards the end of the Civil war, some women started putting flower on the graves of those who had lost their lives to remember them after the battle of Gettysburg in 1864. Many towns were beginning to do this for their lost solders by the late 1860's. In 1868, three years after the Civil War had ended, General John A. Logan called for the nationwide day of remembrance on the 30th of May that he called Decoration Day. He decided to call this day Decoration Day because it was not the anniversary of any particular battle during the Civil War. The first observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery, where General James Garfield addressed the crowd with a speech. Afterwards, soldier's children and other family members went through the cemetery placing flowers on all the graves and singing hymns. There were more than 5,000 people in attendance that day who participated in the ceremony. Later, Decoration Day, now known as Memorial Day, became a day to remember soldiers who lost their lives in all wars.

Numerous locations claimed to have been the first to observed Decoration Day, but in 1966 Lyndon B. Johnson declared the official birth place of Memorial Day was Waterloo, New York. The name Memorial Day did not take effect until sometime after World War II in 1967 when it was declared the official name. Congress made it a National Holiday in 1968, and it went into effect in 1971. The law said it would be observed on the last Monday in May, which created a three-day weekend for all federal workers to be able to observe.

Today many cities and towns across America host Memorial Day parades, incorporating military families in the parades to honor our fallen soldiers and our veterans. Still today, many Americans decorate the grave sites of their loved ones who served our country and have passed on with wreaths and flowers in similar fashion when Decoration Day first began. Cemeteries hold services where a 24-note bugle call is performed (Taps) and gunshot salute, to honor those fallen soldiers. Flags are also traditionally flown at half mast until noon on Memorial Day.

In 2000, a National Moment of Remembrance was established to encourage all Americans to stop at 3:00pm and have a moment of silence to remember those who fought for us and lost their lives, as well as to remind us of the true meaning of this Emotional National Holiday. Where picnics, BBQ's and car races are all great ways to spend time with family, the true reason we should be celebrating has nothing to do with these events. It is all about those in the military who lost their lives fighting for each one of us so we can be free. We need to step back this year, look at how we are celebrating and ensure we are taking time to honor and remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

