

## HISTORY OF MODERN MOTHER'S DAY CELEBRATION

The Mother's Day holiday, in the United States, celebrates motherhood generally and the positive contributions of mothers to society. It falls on the second Sunday of each May. It is the result of a campaign by **Anna Marie Jarvis (1864-1948)**, who, following the death of her mother on May 9, 1905, devoted her life to establishing Mother's Day as a national, and later an international, holiday.

Precedents for the currently observed "Mother's Day" include:

- "Mothering Sunday" in the UK and Ireland is on the fourth Sunday of Lent. It was originally a time when Catholics were supposed to travel to attend Mass in their "Mother Church" (the regional cathedral) rather than in their local parish. By the Reformation, it had changed into an occasion for children to visit parents. An 1854 source mentions a couplet: "On 'Mothering Sunday,' above all other/Every child should dine with its mother."
- "Mother's Day Work Clubs" organized by Anna Jarvis's mother, **Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis (1832-1905)**, to improve sanitation and health in the area. These clubs also assisted both Union and Confederate encampments controlling a typhoid outbreak, and conducted a "Mothers' Friendship Day" to reconcile families divided by the Civil War.
- The "Mother's Day" anti-war observances founded by **Julia Ward Howe** in 1872

### Julie Ward Howe's Mother's Day

**Julia Ward Howe (1819 1910)** was a prominent American abolitionist, social activist, and poet most famous as the author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Julia Ward Howe's Mother's Day, celebrated on June 2nd, was first proclaimed around 1870 by Julia Ward Howe's Mother's Day Proclamation, and Howe called for it to be observed each year nationally in 1872. As originally envisioned, Howe's "Mother's Day" was a call for pacifism and disarmament by women.

Early "Mother's Day" was mostly marked by women's peace groups. A common early activity was the meeting of groups of mothers whose sons had fought or died on opposite sides of the American Civil War.

### Anna Marie Jarvis' Mother's Day

In 1907, Mother's Day was first celebrated in a small, private way by Anna Jarvis in Grafton, West Virginia, to commemorate the anniversary of her mother's death two years earlier on May 9, 1905. Jarvis's mother, named Ann Jarvis, had been active in Mother's Day campaigns for peace and worker's safety and health since end of American Civil War. The younger Jarvis launched a quest to get wider recognition of Mother's Day. The celebration organized by Jarvis on May 10, 1908 involved 407 children with their mothers at the Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton (this church is now the Mother's Day Shrine]). Grafton is, thus, the place recognized as the birthplace of Mother's Day.

The subsequent campaign to recognize Mother's Day was financed by Philadelphia clothing merchant John Wanamaker. As the custom of Mother's Day spread, the emphasis shifted from the pacifism and reform movements to a general appreciation of mothers. The first official recognition of the holiday was by West Virginia in 1910. A proclamation designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day was signed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson on May 14, 1914.

By the 1920s, Anna Jarvis had become soured on the commercialization of the holiday. She incorporated herself as the Mother's Day International Association, claimed copyright on the second Sunday of May, and was once arrested for disturbing the peace. She and her sister Ellsinore spent their family inheritance campaigning against the holiday. Both died in poverty. Jarvis, says her New York Times obituary, became embittered because too many people sent their mothers a printed greeting card. As she said, "A printed card means nothing except that you are too lazy to write to the woman who has done more for you than anyone in the world. And candy! You take a box to Mother and then eat most of it yourself. A pretty sentiment!"

### Ideas for Mother's Day in the spirit of the original

- If you're able to, visit Mom in person.
- If you've already bought a card to send, tuck a personal letter inside of it this year.
- Send a contribution in Mom's name to a cause that she supports or supported.
- Consider taking in a foster child who doesn't have a mother (or father).
- Take a conflict resolution course and have more peace in your home.
- Patch up a quarrel before it's too late.
- Help a friend who's a Mom by taking care of her kids one day or evening next week, so she can have some time to do whatever she wants.
- Plant some flowers or a tree where they'll bring beauty to the world and pleasure to those who see them.
- Make a meal for your Mom or for another Mom. Just be sure to clean up ALL the dishes, including those you cooked in -- and wipe that splash off the wall, too!

#### MOTHER'S DAY PROCLAMATION

Julia Ward Howe

Arise, then, women of this day!  
Arise, all women who have hearts,  
Whether our baptism be of water or of tears!

Say firmly:

"We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies,  
Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.  
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn  
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.  
We, the women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country  
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

From the bosom of the devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own.  
It says: "Disarm! Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."  
Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor violence indicate possession.  
As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war,  
Let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel.  
Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.  
Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means  
Whereby the great human family can live in peace,  
Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,  
But of God.

In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask  
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality  
May be appointed and held at someplace deemed most convenient  
And at the earliest period consistent with its objects,  
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,  
The amicable settlement of international questions,  
The great and general interests of peace.