

## MEMORIAL DAY

Three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, Decoration Day was established as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of those who died in the Civil War. U.S. Army Maj. Gen. John A. Logan, a noted American soldier and politician, declared a day of honor should be established on May 30 and ordered his posts to decorate graves *“with the choicest flowers of springtime”* and urged: *“We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. ... Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.”*

The first observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery. The ceremonies centered around the mourning-draped veranda of the Arlington mansion, once the home of Gen. Robert E. Lee. Various Washington officials, including Gen. and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, presided over the ceremonies.

By the end of the 19th century, Memorial Day ceremonies were being held on May 30 throughout the nation. State legislatures passed proclamations designating the day, and the Army and Navy adopted regulations for proper observance at their facilities. It was not until after World War I, however, that the day was expanded to honor those who have died in all American wars. In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress, although it is still often called Decoration Day.

In 2000, U.S. Congress passed The National Moment of Remembrance Act to *“encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity.”* The National Moment of Remembrance encourages all Americans to pause wherever they are at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day for a minute of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to the nation.

Let us not forget.