

Let's Celebrate
MEMORIAL DAY



BY Barbara deRubertis

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A very special holiday is celebrated on the last Monday in May—Memorial Day. It is the day we honor all the brave men and women in our armed forces who died while fighting to protect our country, our freedoms, and us.

How did this important American holiday come into being?



How Memorial Day Began

From 1861 to 1865, the American Civil War was fought. The northern states did not want to continue allowing slavery, but eleven southern states did. The southern states withdrew from the United States and formed a new country, the Confederate States of America.

President Abraham Lincoln refused to recognize this new country. So the North's Union soldiers and the South's Confederate soldiers went to war.

When the war ended, the United States was “united” again. And slavery would soon be ended. But over half a million soldiers had died fighting on the two sides of the war—far more soldiers than have died in any other American war. The whole country grieved.





Decoration Day

During and after the Civil War, graves of fallen soldiers on both sides were decorated in honor of their sacrifices.

In 1868, General John Logan issued a proclamation: Decoration Day should be held on May 30 every year. He chose that date because flowers would be in bloom and could be used to decorate the graves of all those who died in the Civil War.

A large observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Speeches were given, followed by people placing flowers on both Union and Confederate graves while singing hymns and saying prayers.

A flowering tree at Arlington National Cemetery



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