



General John A. Logan, Commander-in-Chief  
*HEADQUARTERS GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC*  
 General Orders No.11, WASHINGTON, D.C., May 5, 1868

1. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet church-yard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose among other things, “of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion.” What can aid more to assure this result than cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes? Their soldier lives were the reveille of freedom

to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or 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.

If other eyes grow dull, other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the

choicest flowers of spring-time; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from his honor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation’s gratitude, the soldier’s and sailor’s widow and orphan.

2. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year, while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to lend its friendly aid in bringing to the notice of comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.
3. Department commanders will use efforts to make this order effective.

*By order of JOHN A. LOGAN,  
 Commander-in-Chief*

*N.P. CHIPMAN, Adjutant General*

### ***Why Do We Celebrate Memorial Day?***

It’s easy to forget what Memorial Day actually means while you’re sitting by the pool and looking ahead at summer vacation—but the day signifies much more than just a three-day weekend.

Memorial Day is a solemn day of remembrance for everyone who has died serving in the American armed forces. The holiday, originally known as Decoration Day, started after the Civil War to honor the Union and Confederate dead.

It’s unclear exactly where the holiday originated – Charleston, S.C., Waterloo, N.Y., Columbus, Ga. and other towns all claim to be the birthplace of the holiday. The event in Charleston that may have precipitated the holiday offers poignant evidence of a country struggling to rebuild itself after a bloody war: 257 Union soldiers died in prison in Charleston during the Civil War and were buried in unmarked graves, and the town’s black residents organized a May Day ceremony in which they landscaped a burial ground to properly honor the soldiers.

In the years following the Civil War, Memorial Day celebrations were scattered and, perhaps unsurprisingly, took root differently in the North and South. It wasn’t until after World War II that the holiday gained a strong following and national identity, and it wasn’t officially named Memorial Day until 1967.

The final event that cemented the modern culture of Memorial Day in America was in 1968 when Congress passed the Uniform Holiday Act, designating Memorial Day as the last Monday in May rather than May 30, as it had previously been observed. This ensured a three-day weekend and gave the day its current status as the unofficial beginning of summer, mixing serious reflection with more lighthearted fun. Regardless of the exact date or location of its origins, one thing is clear—Memorial Day was borne out of the Civil War and a desire to honor our dead. *It was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11.*

## We Shall Keep the Faith

(by Moina Michael, November 1918)

Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,  
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!  
We caught the torch you threw,  
And holding high, we keep the Faith,  
With All who died.

We cherish, too, the poppy red,  
That grows on fields where valor led;  
It seems to signal to the skies,  
That blood of heroes never dies,  
But lends a lustre to the red,  
Of the flower that blooms above the dead,  
In Flanders Fields.

And now the Torch and Poppy Red,  
We wear in honor of our dead.  
Fear not that ye have died for naught;  
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought,  
In Flanders Fields.



*The Flanders Fields Red Poppy was first created as a symbol of Remembrance by an American teacher, Miss Moina Belle Michael. Moina described the way that the idea for a memorial emblem of the red poppy came to her in a moment of revelation. Moina's fascinating autobiography, *The Miracle Flower, The Story of the Flanders Fields Memorial Poppy* was published in 1941. Moina dedicates the book to the late Colonel John McCrae, whose poem 'In Flanders Fields' was the inspiration for her idea of the Flanders Fields Memorial Poppy.*

- "I read the poem, which I had read many times previously, and studied its graphic picturization [sic]. The last verse transfixed me—To you from failing hands we throw the Torch; be yours to hold it high. If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders Fields." This was for me a full spiritual experience. It seemed as though the silent voices again were vocal, whispering, in sighs of anxiety unto anguish, 'To you from failing hands we throw the Torch; be yours to hold it high. If ye break faith with us who die we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders Fields.'



## In Flanders Fields

(by John McCrae)

In Flanders fields the poppies blow,  
Between the crosses row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky,  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago,  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you, from failing hands we throw,  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow,  
In Flanders fields.

