

Memorial Day History and Local Observances

According to the usmemorialday.org, here is a brief history of Memorial Day.

“Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America. Over two dozen cities and towns claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day. While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it’s difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day.

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](#). “The 30th 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 churchyard in the land,” he proclaimed. The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it wasn’t the anniversary of any particular battle.

On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, and 5,000 participants decorated the graves of the 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried there.

The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war).

It is now observed in almost every state on the last Monday in May with Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 – 363). This helped ensure a three day weekend for Federal holidays, though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead: January 19th in Texas; April 26th in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10th in South Carolina; and June 3rd (Jefferson Davis’ birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.”

Locally, we observe Memorial Day in many ways and here are some of the scheduled events for Memorial Day 2016.

The Moorhead American Legion Post 21 and Dilworth VFW Post 1223 Color Guards will be at the following locations on Memorial Day Monday May 30th. Military Honors will be given at each location which includes: Rifle Salute, Prayer, and Taps. The public is invited to view the Military Honors and attend the ceremony at the Moorhead National Guard Training and Community Center (Armory) 1002 15th Ave. N. Moorhead at 11:00 AM. Guest Speaker is Curt Cannon, Veterans Service Officer, Clay County, MN. Below times are Approximate.

7:00 AM Main Ave Veterans’ Memorial Bridge – Laying of Flowers on the river

9:00 AM Main Ave Veterans' Memorial Bridge – Vietnam Veterans of America

8:45 AM Moorhead Memorial Gardens (S. Moorhead)

9:15 AM Sabin (Elmwood Cemetery)

9:25 AM Sabin (Trinity Cemetery)

10:00 AM Evergreens (S. Moorhead)

10:15 AM Prairie Home (by Concordia)

10:30 AM Riverside (N. Moorhead)

10:40 AM St Joseph's (N. Moorhead)

11:00 AM Program @ National Guard Armory