

Flowers and a Memorial Day Tribute

I remember when I was a little girl that we would always pick peonies for Memorial Day and put them on graves at the cemetery. This year I plan on going to Boalsburg, a little town in Pennsylvania that claims to be one of the original sites of Memorial or Decoration Day. Each year the town turns out to celebrate and remember the reason for Memorial Day. Below is the story that explains the claim.

Boalsburg is a quaint little village situated in Centre County, Pa., just off Route 322, in the picturesque foothills of the Alleghenies. It's only a dot on the map, and you as a casual driver might drive past it without even being aware that it is nestled there in the rolling valley beneath a coverlet of oaks and pines and cedars - were it not for a plain little marker by the side of the road: "Boalsburg. An American Village - Birthplace of Memorial Day"
What about that boast?

It happened in October, 1864. It was a pleasant Sunday and in the little community burial ground behind the village the pioneers of colonial times slept peacefully side by side with the recently fallen heroes of the Civil War.

It was this day that a pretty, young teen-age girl, Emma Hunter by name, and her friend, Sophie Keller, chose to gather some garden flowers and to place them on the grave of her father, Dr. Reuben Hunter, a surgeon in the Union Army, who died only a short while before. And it was this very same day than an older woman, a Mrs. Elizabeth Meyer, elected to strew flowers on the grave of her son Amos, who as a private in the ranks, had fallen on the last day of battle at Gettysburg.

And so the two with their friend met, kneeling figures at nearby graves, a young girl honoring her officer father, a young mother paying respects to her enlisted-man son, each with a basket of flowers which she had picked with loving hands. And they got to talking. The mother proudly told the girl what a fine young man her son had been, how he had dropped his farm duties and enlisted in the Union Army at the outbreak of the war, and how bravely he had fought.

The daughter respectfully took a few of her flowers as a token and placed them on the son's grave. The mother in turn laid some of her freshly cut blooms on the father's grave. These two women had found in their common grief a common bond as they knelt together in that little burial ground in Central Pennsylvania where Mount Nittany stands eternal guard over those who sleep there. Nor did they realize at the same time that their meeting had any particular significance - outside of their own personal lives; it was just that they seemed to lighten their burdens by sharing them. But as it happened these two women were participating in their first Memorial Day Service.

For the story goes that before the two women left each other that Sunday in October, 1864, they had agreed to meet again on the same day the following year in order to honor not only their own two loved ones, but others who now might have no one left to kneel at their lonely graves. During the weeks and months that followed the two women discussed their little plan with friends and neighbors and all heard it with enthusiasm. The report was that on July 4, 1865 - the appointed day - what had been planned as a little informal meeting of two women turned into a community service. All Boalsburg was gathered there, clergymen - Dr. George Hall - preached a sermon, and every grave in the little cemetery was decorated with flowers and flags; not a single one was neglected.

It must have been an impressive ceremony that took place that day in this peaceful mountain-rimmed valley where not so long before the red men had held their councils. It must have been such a scene as this that inspired Longfellow to write:

*Your silent tents of green
We deck with flagrant flowers:
Yours has the suffering been,
The memory shall be hours.*

It seemed such a fitting and proper way of remembering those who had passed on that the custom became an annual event in Boalsburg, and one by one the neighboring communities adopted a similar

plan of observing "Decoration Day" each spring. On May 5, 1868, just four years after that first meeting in the little burial ground, General John A. Logan, commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic issued an order naming May 30, 1868, as a day "for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country." He signed the order "with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year." And so it has.

Ceremonies at first were held to honor only those who had served the Union cause in the Civil War, later the program was broadened to embrace the men who fought in gray as well as in blue, finally to include all heroes who have made the supreme sacrifice in all American conflicts from the Revolutionary War to World War II. This, of course, is as it should be if Holmes' immortal words are not to become an empty, meaningless phrase-- "One flag, one land, one heart, one hand, one nation evermore?"

As a matter of fact, Memorial Day - and it should be noted that in 1882 the GAR urged that "proper designation of May 30 in Memorial Day" - not Decoration Day - is now observed by most people as a day when we pay respect to all who have died, in war or in peace, as soldiers or as civilians. To a very large extent Memorial Day has lost its pure military significance and in a broader sense has become the one day in the year when all of us pause in respectful tribute to those who have walked these paths before.

The above is an excerpt of an article which was written by Herbert G. Moore for the National Republic Magazine in May 1948 and which then Congressman James Van Zandt, representing his Centre County constituents, had reprinted in the Congressional Record of May 19, 1948. <http://www.rootsweb.com/~pacentre/memory.htm>

There are many different claims to the origins of Memorial Day. I visit this site. I've seen the memorial that was done as a tribute and participated in the celebration held every year. I know I'll be paying my respects and thinking about those who gave us the freedoms we enjoy.

I'm going to cut some peonies or other flowers and head off to the cemetery. How about you? Thank you to those who served and continue to serve our country and give us the freedoms that we have. Happy Memorial Day!

Summer Agriculture Institute Registration Now Open

The Ramada Inn and Conference Center in Morgantown will be the location for the 2009 Summer Agriculture Institute, on June 18 & 19. The Institute, sponsored by the West Virginia Farm Bureau Foundation, WVU Extension Service, and WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry and Consumer Sciences, gives teachers the opportunity to receive teaching materials and practical, hands-on applications for their classrooms; learn about nutrition, technology, and careers in agriculture; and earn graduate or professional credits. Teachers who have attended past Institutes are encouraged to reapply, as most content is new for 2009. The registration deadline for the popular seminar is June 1. Many county Farm Bureaus are offering scholarships to cover or help defray the cost. Interested teachers should contact the West Virginia Farm Bureau at 800-398-4630 x. 306 for more information on scholarships. Graduate and professional credits are available through WVU for an additional fee. Scholarships do not cover the fees for WVU credits. For a registration form and brochure, visit the West Virginia Farm Bureau website at www.wvfarm.org Follow the links from the above mentioned website or see WVU's site at www.caf.wvu.edu/resm/aee/aic/ for information on credits. Representing more than 19,000 members, the West Virginia Farm Bureau was founded in 1919 to provide leadership, education, information, training and economic services to county farm bureaus to enhance the quality of life for its membership.

Berkeley County Youth Fair Dates to remember

Poultry Blood Testing - Saturday, July 18, 2009 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.
62nd Annual Berkeley County Youth Fair dates are August 3 - 8, 2009

Farmers Needed to Participate in the West Virginia Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

The West Virginia Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WVFMNP) will authorize farmers' to participate in the 2009 FMNP. All farmers participating in WVFMNP must be a bona fide farmer and must sell at an authorized farmers' market or farmstand, or be a local farmer cooperative. In order for a farmer to be legally authorized to participate in the WVFMNP, the following must be met:

- a) Must be a bona fide farmer, meaning an individual authorized to sell eligible produce at participating farmers' markets or farmstands. The term farmer shall mean producer as termed A person or organization that grows or manufactures goods or services for sale.
- b) Must be a bona fide farmstand, meaning the structure should not be movable and is used primarily for the sale of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables (Vehicles, wagons, carts, trailers, or other wheeled equipment are not acceptable)
- c) Local Farmer Cooperative is individuals who exclusively sell produce from the local farmers and take the vouchers only for those products which are West Virginia grown from the local farmers. A list of those farmers whom you purchase from must be included on the Farmer Application.
- d) Farmer that is selling honey must have their colonies registered with the State and/or list the name of the apiarist they are buying honey from. Product labeling must have been approved through the WV Department of Agriculture and meet all Consumer Labeling Requirements.
- e) Farmer must submit a completed WVFMNP Application and Agreement to the WVFMNP office. All trainings must be completed by June 26 and paperwork received in Charleston by July 10, 2009. Failure to do so will result in farmer being unable to participate in the 2009 WVFMNP Program. All questions on the Application must be completed or the form will be returned.
- f) Each Application will be screened by the WVFMNP office.
- g) At least twenty-five (25%) of the produce sold by farmers, must be grown by the farmer, the remainder must be locally grown by a local producer. Locally grown means grown in West Virginia or in the adjacent county to West Virginia's border in a neighboring state. Locally grown is fifty miles (50). If your market organization designates different regulation and you are a member of that organization you must follow their regulations as long as they are in compliance with our WVFMNP Rules and Procedures.

The program begins July 1, 2009 and goes through October 31, 2009. This program is funded through The United States Department of Agriculture and the State of West Virginia.

Local farmers needing training to participate in the 2009 WVFMNP can call Mary Beth Bennett in the Berkeley County Extension Office telephone (304) 264-1936 before Wednesday, June 17th to be trained. Applications for the WVFMNP are available through local Extension Offices if the agents have been trained to conduct the program. More information on this program is available on request by contacting the number listed above.

Garden Tips

- Avoid planting tomatoes or peppers with blooms
- Seed sweet corn
- Remove strawberry blossoms on new plants
- Plant tomatoes and eggplant
- Prune azaleas, viburnum, forsythia, and lilac after blooming

Until next time ...Happy Gardening and Farming!