

Father's Day - June 17th

Exploring the origins of Father's Day

Once there was no Father's Day... but that was back in 1909. Then, in 1910, Mrs. John Bruce Dodd's concept of honoring American fathers, inspired by her own father's devotion and dedication to his motherless family of a daughter and five sons, was first observed in Spokane, Washington. Sometimes a good idea like Father's Day takes a long time to gestate—and it was a year before Mrs. Dodd, a young and appreciative mother herself, organized her idea into a city-wide celebration. She worked with the churches and their ministers, with the YMCA, with other civic groups. She cajoled, she persuaded, she communicated. Her hope was to have the first Father's Day observed on her father's birthday which fell on

the first Sunday of June in 1910. Then her crusade met up with another hurdle—the ministers of Spokane couldn't get themselves put together with especially prepared sermons to meet her deadline. So they all compromised on the third Sunday of June. And, they began a tradition, now written into the laws of the land by Joint Congressional Resolution. From the very beginning, into this, its 74th year, Father's Day has been observed the third Sunday of June. Although the idea got some official recognition from the very beginning—William Jennings Bryant, Presidents Wilson and Coolidge all admonished the country to observe the occasion—it wasn't until the National Father's Day Committee was organized back in 1931, that

Father's Day "took off" as a truly integrated national holiday. Today, 53 years later, Father's Day is so widely observed as to be universal in its acceptance. One of the more interesting aspects of Father's Day is the way it flourished into national prominence. Mrs. Dodd's father, William Smart, the man who inspired Father's Day, died in 1919 but, by that time, the observance of Father's Day had been recognized, if not yet a truly national event. It was his satisfaction to witness the mushrooming acceptance of the idea. This year, as fathers go back to work in a swelling stream, there is more happiness in more families than we have witnessed in several years.

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