

Still a growing phenomenon, Mother's Day is 72 years young

When Mrs. Anna Jarvis conceived of Mother's Day, her visions of celebration were simple and earthy.

She foresaw recognition of the day as being a letter to Mother, the wearing of a carnation, a visit or simple gesture.

That was in 1908, two years after her Mother, Mrs. Anna Reeves Jarvis passed away.

And, in those dimmer days, Grafton, West Virginia, where the first Mother's Day was observed, was an unsophisticated country village. Simple, understated dedication was Ms. Jarvis' goal.

For she had been deeply devoted to her Mother, some say, almost obsessively so. (Her father seems to have been little regarded.)

Mother's Day was, to Mrs. Jarvis, a solemn occasion, one for contemplation and memories, and dedication to the ideal of Motherhood.

Ms. Jarvis wrote thousands of letters in support of Mother's Day, almost "lobbying" for its designation as a National Holiday.

Her efforts were first rewarded in 1910, when on April 28, Governor William E. Glasscock of West Virginia issued the first official Mother's Day Proclamation.

By 1912, she was so identified with the Mother's Day Movement that it had been generally conceded that she was authoress of the celebration.

National recognition came two years later, in 1912, when Congress, by Joint Resolution, established Mother's Day as the Second Sunday of every May (the anniversary of Mrs. Anna Reeves Jarvis' demise).

President Wilson signed the first Presidential Proclamation that year, ordering the national observance of Mother's Day.

Although the Jarvis family came from Grafton, West Virginia, they were living in Philadelphia at the time Mrs. Jarvis announced her intention to found a Mother's Day.

Her friends encouraged her. And even more important, she got the endorsement and active support of John Wanamaker, then Philadelphia's merchant-community leader.

One year after her initial conversations, the first Mother's Day was celebrated in Grafton. From that day on, the idea snowballed.

In fact, it grew so spontaneously that it almost got beyond the control of its founder, before she was ready to handle the emotional explosion.

In later years, Ms. Jarvis became defensive of her concept, perhaps even resenting its explosive growth and to her mind, "commercialization."

Today, more than 90 per cent of the American public observes and celebrates Mother's Day as a joyous and revered Holiday, all because Ms. Jarvis persisted in her ideals, and as a result of her dedication to her Mother.

When she died in 1948, she had lived to see Mother's Day not just a national observance, but one with international overtones as well.

True, it had grown beyond her ability to control its destiny, but in that growth were the seeds of satisfaction for millions and millions of sons and daughters, all around the world.

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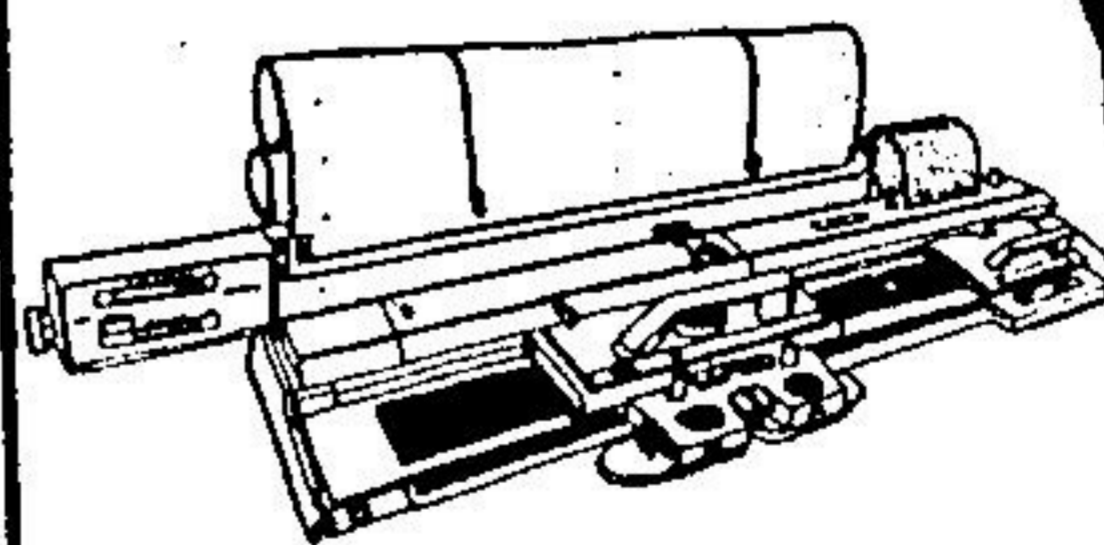


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