



**PEACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
*Mothers' Day: Rooted in Peace & Justice*

Many people may believe Mother's Day was developed as a commercial holiday by Hallmark or some other company to sell cards, candy, and flowers. Or, they may believe it's a day solely to celebrate the domestic role of women in the home and family. Neither of these perceptions is accurate.

The story of modern Mother's Day begins in the peace movement and as a day recognizing women's social action.

After the Civil War, Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), a Boston writer, pacifist, suffragist, and author of the words to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, organized meetings as a rally for women, whom she believed bore the loss of human life more harshly than anyone else. As part of her efforts, Howe went on to head the American branch of the Woman's International Peace Association, which observed a day dedicated to peace in honor of mothers.

The official observance of Mother's Day in its present form is credited to Anna Jarvis (1864-1948). Anna's mother lost eight children under the age of seven and established work brigades to combat poor health and sanitation conditions that contributed to the high mortality rate of children.

To commemorate her mother's life, Anna announced the idea of a national day to honor all mothers and suggested celebrating it on the anniversary of her mother's death, the second Sunday of May. It was to be a day honoring all mothers as well as a day to remember those who work at peacemaking, reconciliation, and social action against poverty. By 1911, Mother's Day was celebrated nationwide and in 1914 it was made an official holiday.

Unfortunately, the story of Anna Jarvis has a bittersweet ending. At first, people observed Mother's Day by attending church, writing letters to their mothers, and spending time together. As the years passed though, more people began buying cards, presents, and flowers. Anna felt that Mother's Day became much too commercialized and later disavowed the holiday stating, "This is not what I intended. I wanted a day of sentiment, not profit."

Today, may we all reflect on the original sentiment of this day for mothers—peace and social justice.

*Next Meeting: Thursday, 5/24/07; 7:30-9:00, Room 227*  
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