

Bell Acres History...

## Why We Celebrate Memorial Day



During the Civil War (1861-1865), decorating soldiers' graves with flowers became a springtime tradition for many families. The first formal ceremony, however, was organized in Charleston, SC on May 1, 1865 by former slaves who used the day to mark the end of the war and decorate the graves of Union prisoners buried in the city. Three years later, the GAR [Grand Army of the Republic] veterans' organization for Union soldiers declared May 30<sup>th</sup> as a national day of remembrance for Civil War dead.

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day has become a time to honor and remember all who have died while serving in the military. In 1968, Congress changed Memorial Day to the last Monday in May to create a three-day weekend for Federal employees. The change took effect in 1971 when Memorial Day became an official Federal holiday.

This Bell Acres History article also appeared in the **Sewickley Herald**.