

Mother's Day is a celebration honoring the [mother](#) of the family or individual, as well as [motherhood](#), [maternal bonds](#), and the influence of mothers in society. It is celebrated on different days in many parts of the world, most commonly in March or May. It complements similar celebrations honoring family members, such as [Father's Day](#), [Siblings Day](#), and [Grandparents' Day](#). Countries around the world have a multi-century history of a day to celebrate mothers.

In the United States, the modern version of the holiday began in the early 20th century at the initiative of [Anna Jarvis](#). She organized the first Mother's Day [service of worship](#) and celebration at [Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church](#) in [Grafton, West Virginia](#), which serves as the International Mother's Day Shrine today.^[1] It is not directly related to the many traditional celebrations of mothers and motherhood that have existed throughout the world over thousands of years, such as the [Greek](#) cult to [Cybele](#), the mother deity [Rhea](#), the Roman festival of [Hilaria](#), or the other Christian ecclesiastical [Mothering Sunday](#) celebration (associated with the image of [Mother Church](#)).^{[2][3][4][5]} However, in some countries, Mother's Day is still synonymous with these older traditions.^{[6][7][8]}

The American version of Mother's Day has been criticized for having become too commercialized.^{[9][10]} Jarvis herself, who began the celebration as a liturgical observance, regretted this [commercialism](#) and expressed that this was never her intention.^{[1][11]} In response, [Constance Adelaide Smith](#) successfully advocated for Mothering Sunday as a commemoration of a broader definition of motherhood in many other parts of the [English-speaking world](#).^[12]

Establishment of holiday



[Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church](#), the site of the first Mother's Day religious service in 1908, is the International Mother's Day Shrine.

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The modern holiday was first celebrated in 1908, when [Anna Jarvis](#) held the first Mother's Day service of worship at [Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church](#) in [Grafton, West Virginia](#).^{[1][13]}

Andrew's Methodist Church now holds the International Mother's Day Shrine.^[1] Her campaign to make Mother's Day a recognized holiday in the United States began in 1905, the year her mother, [Ann Reeves Jarvis](#), died. Ann Jarvis had been a peace activist who cared for wounded soldiers on both sides of the [American Civil War](#), and created Mother's Day Work Clubs to address public health issues. She and another peace activist and suffragist, [Julia Ward Howe](#), had been urging for the creation of a "Mother's Day For Peace" where mothers would ask that their husbands and sons were no longer killed in wars. Forty years before it became an official holiday, Ward Howe had made her [Mother's Day Proclamation](#) in 1870, which called upon mothers of all nationalities to band together to promote the "amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace."^[14] Anna Jarvis wanted to honor this and to set aside a day to honor all mothers because she believed a mother is "the person who has done more for you than anyone in the world".^[15]

In 1908, the [U.S. Congress](#) rejected a proposal to make Mother's Day an official holiday, joking that they would also have to proclaim a "Mother-in-law's Day".^[16] However, owing to the efforts of Anna Jarvis, by 1911 all U.S. states observed the holiday,^[17] with some of them officially recognizing Mother's Day as a local holiday^[18] (the first being West Virginia, Jarvis's home state, in 1910). In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating Mother's Day, held on the second Sunday in May, as a national holiday to honor mothers.^[19]

Although Jarvis, who started Mother's Day as a liturgical service, was successful in founding the celebration, she became resentful of the commercialization of the holiday, and it became associated with the phrase "[Hallmark holiday](#)". By the early 1920s, [Hallmark Cards](#) and other companies had started selling Mother's Day cards. Jarvis believed that the companies had misinterpreted and exploited the idea of Mother's Day, and that the emphasis of the holiday was on sentiment, not profit. As a result, she organized boycotts of Mother's Day and threatened to issue [lawsuits](#) against the companies involved.^[20] Jarvis argued that people should appreciate

and honor their mothers through handwritten letters expressing their love and gratitude, instead of buying gifts and pre-made cards.^[19] Jarvis protested at a candy makers' convention in [Philadelphia](#) in 1923, and at a meeting of [American War Mothers](#) in 1925. By this time, [carnations](#) had become associated with Mother's Day, and the selling of carnations by the American War Mothers to raise money angered Jarvis, who was arrested for [disturbing the peace](#).^{[19][20]}

In Britain, Constance Adelaide Smith was inspired to advocate for [Mothering Sunday](#), an already-existing Christian ecclesiastical celebration in which the faithful visit the church in which they received the [sacrament](#) of [baptism](#), as an equivalent celebration.^{[21][22][23][24]} She referred to [medieval](#) traditions of celebrating [Mother Church](#), 'mothers of earthly homes', [Mary, mother of Jesus](#), and [Mother Nature](#).^{[23][12]} Her efforts were successful in the [British Isles](#) and other parts of the English-speaking world.^[25]

Spelling

In 1912, Anna Jarvis trademarked the phrase "Second Sunday in May, Mother's Day, Anna Jarvis, Founder", and created the Mother's Day International Association.^[26] She specifically noted that "Mother's" should "be a singular possessive, for each family to honor its own mother, not a plural possessive commemorating all mothers in the world."^[27] This is also the spelling used by U.S. President [Woodrow Wilson](#) in his 1914 presidential proclamation, by the U.S. Congress in relevant bills,^{[28][29]} and by various U.S. presidents in their proclamations concerning Mother's Day.^[30]

Dates around the world

While the United States holiday was adopted by some other countries, existing celebrations, held on different dates, honoring motherhood have become described as "Mother's Day", such as [Mothering Sunday](#) in the United Kingdom^[31] or, in Greece, the [Eastern Orthodox](#) celebration of the presentation of [Jesus Christ](#) to the temple (2 February of [Julian Calendar](#)). Both the secular and religious Mother Day are present in [Greece](#).^[32] Mothering Sunday is often referred to as "Mother's Day" even though it is an unrelated celebration.^[31]

In some countries, the date adopted is one significant to the majority religion, such as [Virgin Mary Day](#) in Catholic countries. Other countries selected a date with historical significance. For example, Bolivia's Mother's Day is a fixed date, May 27, commemorating a battle in which women participated to defend their children.^[33]

Some [Ex-communist countries](#), such as [Russia](#), celebrate [International Women's Day](#) instead of Mother's Day^[34] or simply celebrate both holidays, which is the custom in Ukraine. Recently in 2012, Kyrgyzstan introduced Mother's Day.^[35]