

Father's Day, [holiday](#) in honor of fathers that is celebrated in many countries around the world. It originated in the [United States](#), and [credit](#) for the holiday is generally given to Sonora Smart Dodd. Dodd's father, a [Civil War](#) veteran, raised her and her five siblings after their mother died in childbirth. The first Father's Day was held on June 19, 1910, the month of the birthday of Dodd's father. It became a U.S. national holiday in 1972, when Pres. [Richard Nixon](#) signed legislation designating the third Sunday of June as Father's Day. It is celebrated with cards, gifts, and family meals, among other activities.

While many other countries also celebrate the holiday on the third Sunday of June, some mark the observance at other times of the year. Notably, a number of [Catholic](#) countries celebrate it on March 19, the feast day of [St. Joseph](#), the earthly father of [Jesus](#).

Origins

In 1908 a service to honor fathers took place in [Fairmont](#), [West Virginia](#), following the Monongah mining disaster. It was organized by Grace Golden Clayton, whose father was killed in the accident. She asked that a special church service be held to [commemorate](#) her father and others who had died. While some consider this to be the first Father's Day service, the event garnered little attention outside Fairmont, and it was not held the following year.

Did You Know?

Mother's Day became a national holiday in 1914.

Sonora Smart Dodd in [Spokane](#), [Washington](#), also decided to hold a service for Father's Day. She came up with the idea in 1909 while listening to a sermon on [Mother's Day](#). Local religious leaders supported Dodd's idea, and the first Father's Day was celebrated on June 19, 1910, the month of the birthday of Dodd's father. However, the holiday met

some resistance, particularly from men who questioned the “manliness” of an event connected to Mother’s Day and flowers. Others saw it as a “commercial gimmick.” Nevertheless, the holiday began to spread across the country. In 1924 U.S. Pres. [Calvin Coolidge](#) gave his support to the observance, and in 1966 Pres. [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) issued a proclamation that recognized the day. In 1972 Father’s Day became a national holiday.

Traditions

Although it was originally largely a religious holiday, Father’s Day has been commercialized with the sending of greeting cards and the giving of gifts. In addition, [family](#) meals are often held. Some observe the custom of wearing a red rose to indicate that one’s father is living or a white rose to indicate that he is [deceased](#). Other males—for example, grandfathers or uncles who have assumed parenting roles—are often also honored on the day.

[The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#)

This article was most recently revised and updated by [Amy Tikkanen](#).