



News from Livingston County, NY

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Memorial Day is a Time to Honor the Fallen

Mount Morris, NY, May 21, 2020 — In May of 1865, our nation faced the end of the Civil War. Over 620,000 deaths amassed between the Union and the Confederacy. This number represents 2.5% of the United States population at that time, which would be the equivalent of 8.275 million people today.

At the end of war, a local druggist, Henry C. Welles from Waterloo, New York mentioned that – while honoring living veterans was nice and celebrating the end of the war was good – more should be done to honor the deceased patriots. He wanted to place flowers and other decorations on their graves while grief was still eminent on the home front.

The following spring, Welles revisited this idea with General John B. Murray, a Brigadier General and a public servant. As Clerk of Seneca County, Murray was influential in setting Welles' ideas into motion. On May 5, 1866, to the beat of music, a group marched to three different cemeteries to decorate the graves of soldiers. This event was repeated again in 1867, and in subsequent years, other villages, towns, and cities followed in remembering our fallen service members.

Both the House of Representatives and Congress unanimously passed House Concurrent Resolution 587 in 1966 which states in part, "...one Hundred years ago in the Village of Waterloo, NY, does hereby officially recognize Waterloo, New York as the birthplace of Memorial Day..." It is a federal holiday to honor and mourn our fallen service members who took the oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States and never came home to their families on their own accord. Some, to this day, have never made it home.

Memorial Day was once recognized with closed storefronts, residential flags at half mast, and the marking of graves to honor the fallen. Today, many consider Memorial Day as an unofficial start to the summer season with parades, grilling, picnics, and other fond activities with family. Though celebrations have evolved from one man's ideas in 1865 to remembrances across the nation today, the significance of Memorial Day has not changed.

Today, we are confronted with an unprecedented pandemic that has changed the way we interact with each other. While you may not celebrate this year's Memorial Day on May 25th in a manner you are accustomed to, may you – in your own way – honor the sacrifices of our fallen service members and celebrate the lives that once were.

To the families of our fallen service members of generations past to present day, **WE SALUTE YOU** with honor and gratitude of a grateful nation.

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