

Fathers, May You Continue To Build Your Families And The Nation

The first Father's Day observance was held on July 5, 1908, at the Williams Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, Fairmont, West Virginia through the efforts of Mrs. Grace Golden Clayton. The seeds of a Father's Day Service were planted a half year before, on December 6, 1907, when a horrible mine explosion at Monongah, West Virginia, killed more than 360 men, 210 of whom were fathers. 250 widows and more than 1,000 children were left grieving.



Thoughts of these lonely persons touched Grace Clayton deeply. The Fairmont Times, September 23, 1979, quotes her. "It was partly the explosion that got me to thinking how important and loved most fathers are. All those lonely children and those heart-broken wives and mothers, made orphans and widows

in a matter of a few minutes. Oh, how sad and frightening to have no father, no husband, to turn to at such an awful time." She suggested to her pastor, Reverend Robert Thomas Webb at Williams Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that it would be wonderful if fathers were given a special day to be honored and remembered.

So, she suggested the Sunday closest to her father's birthday, which would be July 5, 1908. Her father had been Reverend Fletcher Golden, a Methodist minister, who had died in 1890, and she still missed his fatherly guidance. Like Rev. Webb, she had lost two children in early childhood and could feel the loss those families felt in Monongah.

During a Mothers' Day sermon in 1909, Sonora Smart Dodd, while listening to a Mother's Day sermon at the Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Spokane, Washington, felt inspired to similarly honor her own father, William Jackson Smart, an American Civil War veteran who single-handedly raised his six children after the death of his wife. She arranged a tribute for her father on June 19, 1910 (the month of her father's birth). She was the first to solicit the idea of having an official Father's Day observance to honor all fathers.

A bill was introduced in 1913, US President Calvin Coolidge supported the idea in 1924, and a national committee was formed in the 1930s by trade groups in order to legitimize the holiday. But it was not until years later, on

August 10 of 1962, that Ward Down, who had attended the first Fathers Day Service on July 5 in 1908, wrote the U.S. government and appealed to them. Because of his letter, it was made a federal holiday four years later when President Lyndon Johnson issued a proclamation in 1966, and signed into law in 1972 by President Richard Nixon.

Since that time, the observance of Fathers' Day has gradually gained momentum, allowing individuals everywhere to collectively ponder the importance of this role in our society and in our personal lives.



Searching even further back into North American history, fatherhood's role established the strength of our countries from the beginning. During a time when the father specifically was responsible for the discipline, education, and moral upbringing of his children, great leaders like Samuel Chase, Benjamin Franklin,

Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and many other founding fathers were shaped by the patriarchs of their homes.

This should come as no surprise to those who are familiar with the influence of a strong father in the home. Even now, the evidence of your impact is staggering:

- Your children generally do not engage in sexual activity as early as their peers.
- Your children are at a much lower risk for drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, suicide, criminality, and sexual abuse.
- Your children are much more likely to excel in school.
- Your sons are less likely to suffer from confused identities or aggressive behavior.
- Your daughters are much less likely to face teen pregnancy, anxiety, or depression
- In addition, your children are less likely to exhibit uncooperative behavior, antisocial behavior, or school suspensions.

As a community of those who believe in the family, we thank each and every father who daily chooses to be a part of the lives of his children. Not only are you blessing their lives today, but you are also blessing the lives of future communities of which they will be a better part. Like those great men who shaped the founding fathers of Canada and the United States, you too are nation-building in a way that no one else can.