

History of Father's Day

Sonora Dodd, of Washington, was one of the first people who had the idea of a "Father's Day." She thought of the idea for Father's Day while listening to a Mother's Day sermon in 1909.

Sonora wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. Smart, who was a Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife died while giving birth to their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Washington state.

After Sonora became an adult she realized the selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent. It was her father that made all the parental sacrifices and was, in the eyes of his daughter, a courageous, selfless, and loving man. Sonora's father was born in June, so she chose to hold the first Father's Day celebration in Spokane, Washington on the 19th of June, 1910.

Even before Dodd, however, the idea of observing a day in honor of fathers was promoted. Dr. Robert Webb conducted what is believed as the first Father's Day service at the Central Church of Fairmont, West Virginia in 1908. It was Dodd's efforts, however, that eventually led to a national observance.

President Calvin Coolidge, in 1924, supported the idea of a national Father's Day. Then in 1966 President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day.