

Way We Were  
Wednesday, May 7  
Sarah Hill, Research Librarian  
'The Best Mother Who Ever Lived'

On May 10, 1908, Anna Jarvis of Grafton, West Virginia held a memorial ceremony to honor her late mother and all the mothers who attended her church at Andrews Methodist Episcopal. She purchased 500 white carnation flowers to be handed out and worn in observance of the day. The white carnation was chosen by Jarvis because it is the symbol of purity, fidelity and mother love.

This is considered the first observance of Mother's Day in the United States. Jarvis campaigned to make the special day an official U.S. holiday, and in 1914 she was successful as President Woodrow Wilson made the proclamation that the second Sunday in May forever be the day of mothers. But to Jarvis's disappointment, the respectful day she created for appreciating our mothers soon became heavily commercialized, and by the 1920s florists were flooding the country with advertisements trying to turn a profit and greeting cards for the day were produced in mass.

The first Mother's Day celebrated in Park City was in May of 1910 with 500 white carnations and button pins being handed out at booths in Blyth Fargo and Welsh, Driscoll & Buck's stores. For years after, the holiday was put on by the fraternal order of the Elks and the Ladies of the Elks. They would host a program, inviting all community members, which included music, skits, poems, and refreshments. It became an annual event that with each year grew, until they began honoring their mothers both alive and deceased by giving back to the community in their names.

One such contribution came on Mother's Day of 1962, with a splendid donation to the Miners' Hospital. The *Park Record* detailed the undertaking by stating, "The redecoration and addition of drapes and new furniture for the reception room, and the installation of a fine big TV set in the room, for the use and pleasure of the patients at the hospital, especially the elder citizens who make the hospital their permanent home." The portable TV set was the highlight of the afternoon, even being held front and center for media photos!

Despite Anna Jarvis's protests, Mother's Day has become quite the commercialized holiday. However, it still holds the same meaning and warmth we feel for our mothers. Please help us remember the importance that is the 'second Sunday in May,' by honoring all mothers. Pay homage to the best mother that ever lived – your own!

The Park City Historical Society & Museum is celebrating 30 years of preserving, protecting, and promoting Park City's history and heritage.



Image# 1962.18.1

Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Kendall Webb Collection

Caption: Members of the Elks and Ladies of Elks stand in front of the Miner's Hospital for the dedication ceremony. As you can see, carnations were still worn, but by the 1930s red carnations were used to symbolize a living mother while white was to represent deceased.