

Happy Mother's Day

Mother's Day is a time of commemoration and celebration for Mom. It is a time of breakfast in bed, family gatherings, and crayon scribbled "I Love You's." Restaurants love the holiday because there won't be an empty seat in the house. But what are the origins of this now hugely marketed day?

Who started the celebrations? Did the tribes in prehistoric times gather flowers in the fields to bring to their moms back in the caves? Did the Egyptians row up the Nile to send papyrus cards to their moms? Experts don't seem to have answers for all of these questions, but they can trace family celebrations honoring Moms back to the Middle Ages in Europe.

Children as young as eight or nine would leave home to learn their trade as an apprentice or to become servants in the homes of the wealthy. These children usually were in neighboring towns, but transportation was hard to come by and expensive. For most of the year they did not get to see their family. During Lent, before preparations for the Easter feasts required them to be busy and back at work, the young people would be allowed to return to their homes and families for a weekend. This became known as "going a-mothering."

Children walked the roads picking spring wildflowers to give to their mothers when they arrived back at their homes. They often brought small gifts from the merchants or nobles they worked for as presents for the family.

The Sunday of their return, the whole family would go to church and present gifts to the mothers and offerings to the church. This was a day of feasting when all of the restrictions of Lent were put aside for the day...in a way it was the Easter celebration for the working classes. This feast day became known as Mothering Sunday. After Mothering Sunday, the children would return to their labors and would not visit home again until Christmas time.

The tradition of gifts, flowers and festive meals has endured to become what we know as Mother's Day. It took awhile to become a holiday here in the States, from the time it was first presented in 1870, as a way for mothers of killed Civil War children to unite in their grief, to 1909, when the country as a whole adopted the holiday.

In our feature, *Musings on Motherhood*, we ask a cross section of St. Simons Island mothers who inspired them and how they are passing down these traditions to their children.

Let me be the first to wish all the mothers a Happy Mother's Day, and thanks for keeping us kids, young and, in my case, older, in line. You're the best!

Bob Swinehart

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Cindy Lane with her daughters, from left, Emma, Sarah, Kate and Abby

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