

History of Poppy as Memorial Day Flower Started in France

It was not by chance that the poppy was chosen as the memorial flower of the American Legion and the American Legion auxiliary—the poppy sprang from the hearts of these two great organizations. The idea of wearing the poppy in remembrance of all who died in the World War was presented to the American Legion by one who, from all information obtainable, was the first in America to thus wear the poppy—Miss Moira Michael. The greater part of the following was taken from her history of its adoption:

Reads Poem

It was on the morning of November 8, 1918, while she was serving on the staff of the Y. M. C. A. overseas headquarters at Hamilton hall, Columbia University, New York, that a soldier placed in the hands of Miss Moira Michael a copy of the Ladies' Home Journal with Col. John McCrae's "We Shall Not Sleep," illustrated, in it:

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing,
Fly,
Scarce heard among the guns below.
"WE ARE THE DEAD. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
"Take up our quarrel with the foe!
To you from falling hands we throw
The torch. Be yours to hold it high!
If we break faith with you who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."

Catches Message

Alone in her office Miss Michael read and reread this beautiful verse which immortalized the poppy, and studied the graphic illustration. She caught the message, and as she had dedicated herself to the service of her country the night war was declared, she at this time made a second dedication—to keep the faith and always wear a poppy of Flanders fields as a sign of remembrance of the sacrifices made by those who fell. She wrote this dedication in verse, considered by many to be the most beautiful answer ever written:

"Oh you who sleep in Flanders fields
Sleep sweet—to rise anew.
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the faith
With all who die.
"We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows in fields where valor bled;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a luster to the red
Of the flowers that bloom above
In Flanders fields.
"And now the torch and poppy red
We wear in honor of our dead,
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We've learned the lesson that ye taught
In Flanders fields!"

As she was penning the last line of this dedication a committee from the twenty-fifth conference of the Y. M. C. A., which was meeting there at that time, brought her a check for \$10 in appreciation of her efforts to make an attractive hostess house in their headquarters. She had before this time furnished the flowers from her own purse. "How strange," she replied, "and I shall buy bright red poppies, Flanders fields poppies, do you know why?" and she showed the men the poem and her answer. They were so impressed that they asked the privilege of presenting the idea to the twenty-fifth conference, then meeting upstairs.

Conference Moved

The conference also was impressed, and that afternoon Miss Michael bought silk poppies at Wannamaker's store, and after the adjournment of the conference the men came downstairs and asked for poppies to wear—the first scene in America of wearing the poppy for all who died.

The armistice was signed. Other conferences adopted the poppy. The Gotham Arts Company of New York manufactured buttons and pins with the torch and the poppy as the emblem of remembrance and token of the pledge to keep faith. Memorial poppy gardens were planted—Sandusky, O., had in the spring of 1919 one of the most noted of these gardens.

The first street sale of the poppies in a large city was held in Milwaukee, Wis., June, 1919, to raise money for the thirty-second Division homecoming. The American Legion in Milwaukee sold the poppy to raise money for service work just before Memorial Day, 1920—before the poppy had been adopted as the memorial flower of the Legion.

Sentiment Grows

It was in 1920 that Dr. Pender Jensen of Tacoma, Wash., went back overseas to search for his "buddy's" grave in the cemeteries of France. He was so impressed by the crimson waving masses that upon his return he had his Legion post adopt the poppy as its memorial flower.

Miss Michael was year after year increasingly impressed by the need of a token—"lest we forget." Her vision was far-reaching—she realized we could not have beautiful memorials in every corner of the land from whence our heroes came, but the poppy could be worn as a memorial everywhere.

Although not a member of the American Legion, Miss Michael is

held in very high regard by the Legion Department of Georgia and has been granted an honorary membership on its historical commission because of her services to the organization. Miss Michael wanted the American Legion to be the first national organization to adopt the poppy, and on the eve of the Georgia department convention of the American Legion held in Savannah August 18-20, 1920, Miss Michael appeared at the Legion headquarters in Atlanta, Ga., and turned over to the post all her data concerning the poppy being made the Legion memorial flower. Mr. Charles M. Gallienne, commander of Atlanta Post No. 1, took charge of the material and presented the movement to the convention. The poppy was adopted and the dedication to the national convention to be held in Cleveland, O., the following month was instructed to present the resolution at Cleveland and to support it.

The resolution was presented by the Georgia department at the national convention held in Cleveland September 27-29, 1920, and the poppy was adopted as the memorial flower of the American Legion—its first adoption by a national organization in America.

Poppy Adopted

At its organizing convention in Kansas City, October, 1921, the American Legion Auxiliary adopted the poppy as its memorial flower, and pledged the profits 100% to welfare relief of the service men and women and their families.

The poppy is now the memorial flower of the French, British and Canadian World War veterans' organizations. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, another patriotic organization of America, adopted the poppy in the spring of 1922. The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary cannot claim a sole right to the poppy, for the poppy is God's flower and cannot be copyrighted, and has been chosen by other organizations, but the

American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary can always claim to have been the first large national organizations of this country to have adopted this flower.

The poppy has won a place in the hearts of the people all over the world, and every year through the annual sale of the poppy by the American Legion and Auxiliary, the American public is afforded the opportunity of purchasing the poppy, thus helping those for whom the war is not yet over, and of wearing it in memory of all who died in service.

Four Big Acts To Go on Orpheum

A quartet of unusual stellar features will make its appearance at the Orpheum starting Sunday matinee, May 8. Daphne Pollard, petite comedy star of the English music halls, will present "Songs, Characterization and Comedy"; Vera Gordon, the famous "matinee" of the screen, will return to vaudeville in a new playlet, "Her Triumph," by Edgar Allen Woolfax and William Siegel; the American tenor, Allan Rogers, late star of "Rose-Marie," will return after an absence of nearly a year; and the Dodge twins, the two American girls who became the rage of Europe, will present "Their Own Ideas in Songs and Steps." Lewis and Dody, the two popular comedians, will offer their hilarious skit, "Hello, Hello, Hello," in another feature spot on the new bill. Other interesting offerings will include George Ford and Flo Cunningham in "Even as You and I," the "Tumbling Clowns," and one other act.

Kiwanians Hear Address by Fire Chiefs' Executive

Members of the Kiwanis Club enjoyed a splendid meeting last Friday when they listened to an address by Jay W. Stevens, executive secretary of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, Mr. Stevens spoke on "Forestry and Fire Prevention." He was chiefly responsible for the filming of the great picture, "The Fire Brigade." Chief Hannebrink and members of the Torrance Volunteer Fire Department were guests of Kiwanis at the luncheon and greatly enjoyed Mr. Stevens' address.

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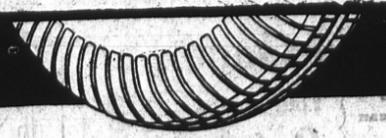
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