

Memorial Day traces its roots to Decoration Day – a day designated to remember those fallen in war. While placing flowers on graves is an age-old custom, after the Civil War, with roughly 750,000 fallen soldiers, this custom took on national significance for the United States.

Michigan made Decoration Day an official state holiday in 1871, and over the next 20 years, every other state had adopted it as well.

Various dates spanning late-April to mid-June were set aside as a way to remember those who died in defense of their nation.

Other wars followed, but none topped the magnitude of the war deaths during the Civil War.

In addition to the 750,000 who died during that war: over 116,000 died in the First World War; over 400,000 in the Second World War; more than 36,000 in Korea; and 58,000 in Vietnam. The current War on Terror claims nearly 7,000 fallen.

We also remember the more than 25,000 who died in the Revolutionary War; 15,000 in the War of 1812; 13,000 in the Mexican-American War; and the thousands who've died in various other wars, police actions, and battles.

There is a poem written by a British poet, Laurence Binyon, who died in 1943; which is used in English-speaking countries on their remembrance or veteran's days:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

For those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of their country, we salute you today, we remember you, and we mourn our loss at your passing.

Eternal rest ...