

The Origin of Arbor Day



PRESIDENT WILSON HELPING PLANT TREES ON WHITE HOUSE GROUNDS

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

ALTHOUGH the date for the observance of Arbor day varies in different states of the Union, most of the celebrations are held during the months of April and May. It is therefore appropriate to recall at this time the man to whom we are indebted for this holiday and his service to the nation in taking this step to conserve one of the great natural resources of this country.

The "Father of Arbor Day" was J. Sterling Morton who at a meeting of the state board of agriculture in Nebraska on January 4, 1872, introduced a resolution setting aside April 10 for tree-planting. Nebraska had always been known as "a treeless state" but in that year, as a result of Morton's suggestion, more than a million trees were planted. The custom was continued during the following years and in 1875 Kansas and Tennessee followed the example of Nebraska by setting aside one day in the year as Arbor or Tree-Planting day. In 1876 Minnesota, alarmed by the destruction of her white pine forests, began to observe Arbor day, North Dakota began in 1882 and in Missouri the idea was taken up in 1886.

Ohio first celebrated Arbor day on April 27, 1882, at Cincinnati, as a result of a visit to that city by Baron Richard Von Steuben, the royal chief forester of the then German empire. Of that occasion an Ohio historian writes:

Von Steuben, a descendant of the famous General Von Steuben who had aided General Washington so conspicuously in the Revolutionary war, had come to America in 1811 with other Von Steubens to unite in the centennial celebration of the surrender at Yorktown.

Baron Von Steuben's work in forestry in Germany had gained him a worldwide reputation, and when he visited Cincinnati it was but natural that advocates of forest conservation in the Middle West should seek him out for advice.

"Plant trees," he told them. "For every tree you cut down, plant another, or two, if possible."

A committee was appointed to create public interest in the subject of tree planting, and its work culminated in a three-days' meeting in Music Hall, beginning April 25, 1882. The schools were dismissed on the last two days to enable the pupils and teachers to take part in a celebration of tree planting in the public parks. The governor of Ohio had designated April 27 as Arbor day. Extensive preparations had been made for its observance in Eden park.

Cincinnati was in holiday attire. The soldiery and organized companies of citizens formed an immense procession and marched to the park. Thousands of school children were already massed there when the marchers arrived.

"At the firing of a signal gun," writes Henry Howe, the historian, "Presidents' Grove, Pioneers' Grove, 'Battle Grove,' Citizens' Memorial Grove, and Authors' Grove were planted and dedicated with loving hands and appropriate ceremonies. Addresses were made by ex-Governor Noyes, Doctor Loring, Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky, Durbin Ward and others. No sight more beautiful, no ceremonies more touching, had ever been witnessed in Cincinnati. An important lesson in forestry had indeed been brought home to the hearts of the people."

In 1883 the Ohio State Forestry association was organized. The same year the Ohio legislature, by joint resolution, fixed the fourth Friday in April as Arbor day.

Howe declares that the groves planted in Cincinnati were "the first

memorial groves ever planted in America; the first public planting of trees in honor of the memory of authors, statesmen, soldiers, pioneers and other distinguished citizens."

He might also have added that this was the beginning of the part played by school children in the Arbor day celebration which has become such a marked feature of the celebrations since that time.

Another result of this Cincinnati celebration was that it led directly to the formation of the American Forestry association of which George E. Loring of Salem, Mass., was first president and with which, incidentally, Morton was closely associated for many years. In 1883 the American Forestry congress (as the American Forestry association was then known) met in St. Paul, Minn. B. G. Northrop of Connecticut introduced a resolution recommending the observance of Arbor day in all the schools of the country. A committee was appointed to press the matter with Mr. Northrop as chairman. In 1884 he secured the adoption of the following resolution at the annual meeting of the National Education association.

Resolved, That in view of the valuable results of Arbor day in the six states where such a day has been observed, alike upon the school and the home, this association recommends the general observance of Arbor day for schools in all our states.

Since then the observance of Arbor day has spread beyond the United States. In 1887 the first Friday in May was set aside in the province of Ontario for tree planting. Spain adopted the plan officially in 1896. Hawaii took it up in 1905, and it is now observed in all the dependencies of the United States and in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, the English West Indies, South Africa, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Japan and China.

In 1885 the Nebraska legislature, wishing to further honor the man who had originated the idea of Arbor day, passed an act changing the date of its observance to April 22, Morton's birthday, and making it a legal holiday in that state. Morton was born at Adams, Jefferson county, N. Y., in 1832. He received his early education at the Methodist Episcopal academy at Albion, Mich., to which state his parents had moved. In 1850 he was a student at the University of Michigan. He graduated from Union college in 1854, and the following year settled in treeless Nebraska, first at Bellevue, and later at Nebraska City, where he founded and edited the Nebraska City News, the first newspaper to be established in that state.

In 1856 and 1857 he was elected to the territorial legislature, and in 1858 was appointed secretary of the territory by President James Buchanan. Upon the resignation of Gov. W. A. Richardson, a few months later, he became acting governor and local representative of the administration in the bitter struggle in the territory. In 1866 he was the Democratic candidate for governor, but was defeated. From that time until 1881, when he was again a candidate for governor, he took no active part in politics.

In 1893 he entered the cabinet of President Grover Cleveland as secretary of agriculture, remaining in office until 1897.

By 1895 the Nebraska legislature was able to proclaim to Nebraska's

sister states that henceforth she was to be known as the "Tree-Planter State" because this commonwealth, which had once been so markedly destitute of this form of verdure, now had more than 700,000 acres planted in trees.

The celebration of Arbor day in 1922 had special significance since it was the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Arbor day and at that time Charles Lathrop Pack, president of the American Tree association, announced his far-seeing plan for celebrating the centennial of Arbor day in 1972. His idea is summed up in these words: "Plant a centennial tree and register it with the American Tree association so that your name will be on the honor roll of tree-planters and good citizens fifty years from now." Since then the association has urged this idea upon Americans so that thousands of trees will be planted and marked by 1972 and the centennial celebration of that year may be made the greatest ever held in this country.

The dates on which Arbor day is observed in the various states and in the possessions are:

- Alabama—February 22.
- Arizona—In five northern counties, Friday following the first day of April. Elsewhere, Friday following the first day of February.
- Arkansas—First Saturday in March.
- California—March 7.
- Colorado—Third Friday in April. The governor issues a proclamation each year.
- Kansas—Option of the governor.
- Kentucky—In the fall by proclamation of the governor. No definite date.
- Louisiana—Second Friday in January, by resolution of state board of education.
- Illinois—Proclamation of the governor.
- Indiana—Third Friday in April each year.
- Iowa—Proclamation of the governor.
- Kansas—Option of the governor.
- Kentucky—In the fall by proclamation of the governor. No definite date.
- Louisiana—Second Friday in January, by resolution of state board of education.
- Maine—Option of the governor.
- Maryland—Second Friday in April.
- New Jersey—By law, second Friday in April.
- New Mexico—Second Friday in March.
- New York—Friday following first of May.
- North Carolina—Friday after November 1.
- North Dakota—Option of the governor.
- Ohio—Proclamation of the governor. About the middle of April.
- Oklahoma—Friday following the second Monday in March.
- Oregon—Second Friday in April.
- Pennsylvania—Proclamation of the governor.
- Porto Rico—Last Friday in November.
- Rhode Island—Second Friday in May.
- South Carolina—Third Friday in November.
- South Dakota—No law, but generally observed in April.
- Tennessee—Appointed by county superintendents, in November.
- Texas—February 22, by statute.
- Utah—April 15, by statute.
- Vermont—Option of the governor. Usually first Friday in May.
- Virginia—Proclamation of the governor. In the spring.
- West Virginia—Usually observed on the second Friday in April.
- Wisconsin—Proclamation of the governor. Usually the first Friday in May.
- Washington—Proclamation of the governor. Usually the first Friday in May.
- Wyoming—Proclamation of the governor. Usually the first Friday in May.

and that it takes anywhere from 6 to 14 seconds to light a cigarette, a cigar or a pipe. It is in this burning remnant that the menace lies; and that it is a menace is proved by the many fires attributed each year to matches tossed aside carelessly—Exchange.

Daily Thought

Do not be troubled because you have not great virtues. God made a million spears of grass where He made one tree. The earth is fringed and

carpeted not with forests but with grasses. Only have enough of little virtues and common fidelities and you need not mourn because you are neither a hero nor a saint.—Henry Ward Beecher.

Just a Moment

Doctor Samp—Pahdon me fo' jes' a second, brother Lee. Oh, I's got to hab the drill.
Anopheles Lee—Fo' law' sakes, can't Ah get mah tooth filled 'thout havin' a rehusal?

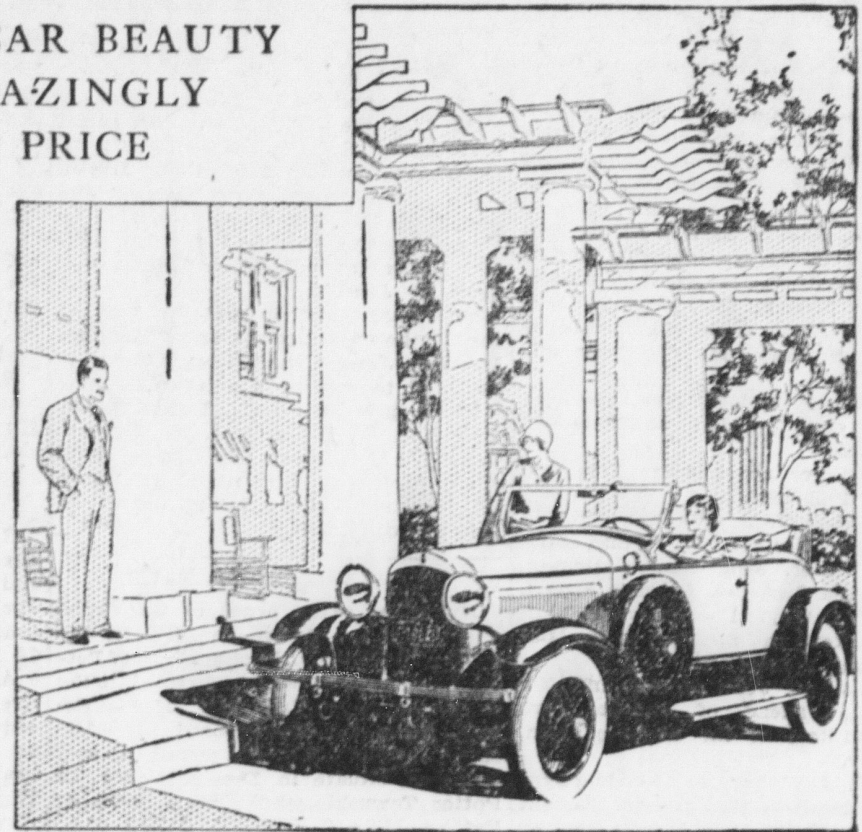
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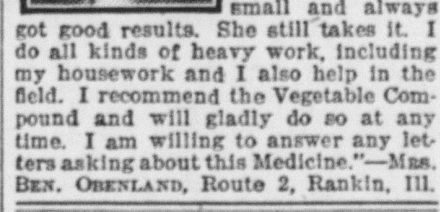
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