Mother's Day

Philadelphia—Anna H. Jarvis, lonely spinster who founded Mother's Day and then fought vigorously, but in vain against its commercialization, died (Wednesday) at 84—blind and penniless.

Her death in a quiet sanitarium in suburban West Chester followed a long illness.

Partially deaf and unhappy in her last years, Miss Jarvis died of old age, doctors said. She had lived in the home since early 1944 when friends learning of her impoverished plight collected funds and placed her there.

Deeply sentimental, Miss Jarvis started the Mother's day observance on the second anniversary of her own mother's death—May 9, 1907—by gathering a few friends at her home for a memorial service.

The movement spread. Miss Jarvis wrote to legislative and executive officers of nations and states urging adoption of the day legally. Finally her prodding pen, waxing sentimental, won over President Woodrow Wilson. In 1914 he proclaimed the second Sunday in May a "flag holiday"—honoring the nation's mothers.

Early in life she became active in woman's suffrage and in welfare and temperance movements.

Then her mother died—and she began the single-handed struggle to make Mother's Day into an international observance. The occasion now is recognized in forty countries.

The success of the movement led Miss Jarvis to give up her former work as clerk for an insurance company. In time her correspondence with churches, businessmen, governors and others overflowed the red brick house in which she lived with her blind sister, Elsinore. She bought the house next door for storage. Elsinore died in 1944.

She channeled her every activity and her modest fortune into enshrining motherhood. Her own mother had once organized in West Virginia a mothers' friendly day to weld families split by the Civil War.

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