

# Menotomy Minutes



NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2022



## Arlington Advocate 150th Anniversary

### A Look Back to the Beginning

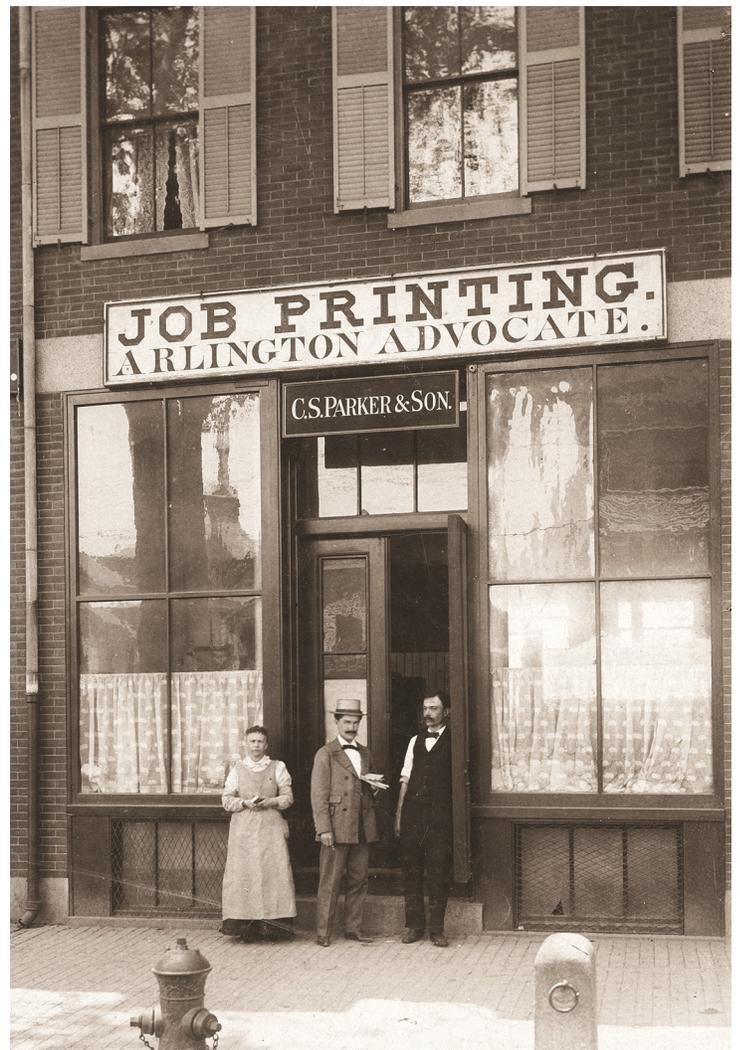
by Richard A. Duffy

On December 16, 1871, volume 1, number 1, of the Arlington Advocate was published. It was distributed “gratuitously” throughout the town to acquaint residents with its arrival. Unfortunately, “owing to error” not enough copies were printed, so the Arlington Public Library—of all places—missed receiving the inaugural issue. (This is a situation that the author personally will seek to rectify as his way of honoring the periodical’s sesquicentennial!)

The Advocate had its debut on the same day as the Lexington Minute-Man. This was no coincidence; both were published and edited by John L. Parker, owner of the weekly Woburn Journal, whose steam-powered printing press propelled his business expansion. In their earliest years, save for their nameplates and mastheads, the Advocate and the Minute-Man were essentially mirror images of each other in editorial content and advertising.

The “Introductory” by the publisher was grandiose: “For the first time in the history of Arlington is a newspaper offered to the public bearing the name of the town. Every considerable village feels the need for a medium for the expression of ideas, the discussion of topics of public interest, and a critical observer of general affairs. The weekly newspaper furnished the desired means, and wherever one is published the social and moral health of the community is greatly improved.” The Advocate did not get underway as a regular weekly until January 13, 1872, and therefore it identified 1872 as its year of establishment. It was four pages in length, sold for three cents a copy, and an annual subscription cost but a dollar.

*(Continued on page 4)*



Charles S. Parker, who succeeded his brother John to serve as editor and publisher for over 50 years, is flanked by daughter Grace and son Edgar. Circa 1890 photograph.

# President's Corner: The Battle of Menotomy

April 19, 1775, dawned bright and chilly. Just after midnight, 700 British army regulars had crossed the Charles River in rowboats. Their mission was to march to Concord to seize munitions gathered by the colonials for armed resistance to the Crown.

They then marched about four miles and entered Menotomy around 2:00 a.m. Scouts had reported to the British commander, Lt. Colonel Francis Smith, that a crowd had gathered on Lexington Green. Smith sent a message back to Boston requesting reinforcements. A contingent of 1,000 additional British regulars under the command of Lord Hugh Percy was sent.

In the meantime, the Smith contingent marched the six miles from Menotomy to Lexington Green, arriving about dawn. Minutemen were on Lexington Green and were ordered to disperse both by Smith and by their own officers, but before they could disperse, shots rang out. It is not clear who fired the first shots, but seven Minutemen and one British regular fell. After an additional confrontation at the Old North Bridge in Concord, the British retreated toward Boston and safety.

Smith's column met Percy's relief column in Lexington. Cannon fire from the combined forces gave the exhausted regulars a brief respite from the fire of the Minutemen, but they were soon on the march again.

Companies of Minutemen from Danvers and Lynn (including the present-day municipalities of Peabody, Swampscott, and Lynnfield) had marched into Menotomy. They quickly discovered that the stone walls and buildings along the route of

march were ideal spots for firing at the retreating British. A fierce battle took place at the Foot of the Rocks. Once again, British cannon were used to push the attackers back.

The column arrived at the Jason Russell farmhouse in the late afternoon. Russell, two neighbors, and several Minutemen from other towns attempted to ambush the retreating British.

What these simple farmers did not know was that, when professional armies march down a road, they deploy highly mobile groups of soldiers, called flankers, out about one hundred yards on either side of the line of march. These flankers caught Russell and his companions from behind. Numerous bullet holes in the Russell house can

be seen to this day, attesting to the bloody battle that took place there so long ago.

When Russell's wife, now a widow, returned to her home, she found her husband and eleven others laid out in her kitchen. They were buried the next day in the Old Burying Ground in a common grave. Two British soldiers who fell in Menotomy were also buried in the Old Burying Ground in an area reserved for enslaved persons. Two British flags appear in the Old Burying Ground every Patriots Day marking this site. The British troops eventually gained safety under the guns of the British fleet moored in Boston Harbor.

British casualties on this day were 73 killed, 173 wounded and 26 missing. Colonial casualties totaled 49 killed, 41 wounded and five missing. More people died in Menotomy on that day than in any other town along the Battle Road.

- George H. Parsons



Powder horn belonging to William Chase, Menotomy veteran.

## Society Stork Report

It's rare that we have a "stork report" in Menotomy Minutes, so we are especially delighted to share the news of the birth of daughter, Ruby, to our museum director, Sara Lundberg and her husband, Jon.

The newly expanded family are enjoying the spring weather while Sara is on parental leave. We send our very best wishes and look forward to Sara's return this summer.



The tight angle and view of this circa 1931 postcard was necessary because of surrounding buildings that were razed in 1960 to reopen the landscape of the 1775 battlefield.

# The Jason Russell House Reopens



By Elaine Ropi

The Arlington Historical Society is delighted to announce the reopening of the Jason Russell House for the 2022 season and the opening of our new April 19th exhibit “Menotomy - Road to Revolution.” We are eager to welcome the public inside the house once again to explore where some of the fiercest fighting occurred on April 19, 1775.

So much about this season's JRH experience is new, giving those familiar with the house new reasons to return. In “Road to Revolution” visitors learn the stories of free and enslaved Menotomy residents who mobilized to defend their homes and their village from retreating British troops. Featured artifacts from the Society's collection never before on display include the musket and spectacles of Captain Benjamin Locke who led the Menotomy Minutemen on April 19th and a Royal Artillery pouch discarded by a British soldier.

Led by our dedicated volunteer guides, tours highlight new information and additional bullet holes discovered during the 2020 ballistics study by Joel Bohy who shared his findings at November's AHS lecture. And all of this will be in the comfort of our new climate control and air filtration system.

**Tours run May 28th - October 30th, Saturdays and Sundays 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.** Admission: Adults \$8; Students age 6-18 \$4; Children 5 and under, Society and NARM members and active military FREE.

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## Business Partnerships

Partnerships between businesses and non-profits are based on mutual interests. For businesses, such partnerships demonstrate community interest, improve their visibility in the community, and promote employee engagement. For non-profits, such partnerships provide an important source of funding and promotes the services of these businesses to their members and the visiting public.

The Arlington Historical Society was established in 1897 and is probably best known for its iconic Jason Russell House. The Society acquired the Jason Russell House in 1923 and has been its faithful steward to this day. The Jason Russell House was the site of the bloodiest encounter of the first day of the American Revolution on April 19, 1775.

During our stewardship of the Jason Russell House, we have been awarded competitive grants from the Town of Arlington and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that have enabled us to restore and preserve this historic treasure and the attached museum. We have worked with carefully selected vendors who have supplied us with expert services. We now wish to share

our experience with our Society members and with the wider Arlington community.

A partnership agreement with the Arlington Historical Society provides businesses with recognition that they are a valued vendor to the Society. This recognition will be visible in our quarterly newsletter, on an easel mounted poster at the

entrance to the museum, and on the Society website. And the

advertisement of the Society's business supporters will be seen by the hundreds of attendees at the beer garden to be held on the lawn of the

Jason Russell House on Saturdays from 2:00 – 7:00 p.m., June 4 through the end of September.

The cost of this partnership is \$1,000 per year. Partnerships are renewable annually on mutual agreement, and at this point are exclusive by category of business (e.g., only one bank or one restaurant is designated as a business partner of the Arlington Historical Society).

For details, please email George Parsons, president of the Society, at [ghparsons@msn.com](mailto:ghparsons@msn.com).



Leader Bank is the inaugural business in the Society's new Business Partnerships program.

When 1872 dawned, Arlington had been Arlington for under five years, having changed the name of its independent municipality from West Cambridge in 1867. The town then unified Main and High streets as Arlington Avenue (to become Massachusetts Avenue in 1894). Spy Pond was re-baptized Arlington Lake, but that moniker soon sank with barely a ripple. There was no “East Arlington,” just plains whose sandy soils were being systematically “amended” by manure to create ever more fertile farmlands. Nor was there a village of Arlington Heights—merely a railroad stop called Gilboa. As for the horse-drawn street railway, its terminus was at Academy Street, considered the outer limit of civilization in the town. There were about 3,300 residents of Arlington, which seems a thin base to support a local newspaper. But this population was a 22% increase over the previous decade and steadily climbing, as the rural community began transforming into a commuter suburb. The influx of immigrants, chiefly from Ireland, contributed significantly to this growth, with almost half of all marriages taking place between persons “of foreign birth” and more than 60% of births being to immigrant parents.

Arlington’s first public drinking water supply came online in 1872 with the completion of the Arlington Reservoir, which was welcome new infrastructure—improved firefighting with street hydrants was cited. But the diversion of waterflow forced factory owners downstream on Mill Brook to convert from cheap, renewable energy to coal- and wood-fired steam

power. The Town of Arlington was in constant argument with the privately held Arlington Gas Light Co. to extend its service area, for more streetlighting and to attract construction of new dwellings piped for utilities. Also on the improvement front, taxpayers were frustrated to have spent \$8,000 to build a wide new street with sidewalks, named Highland Avenue, only to have a dead end because Belmont delayed (for all eternity) its section of what was supposed to be a thoroughfare. A smallpox outbreak led the town to hastily build a quarantine hospital (the Advocate labeled it the “pest house”) on the edge of Mount Pleasant Cemetery—it turned out to be more of a scare than a pandemic, so the expense was for naught.

By the end of 1872, two massive residential subdivisions in the west end of the town, Arlington Heights, and Crescent Hill, were laid out and marketed with hyperbole that would make the boldest real estate agent blush today. These large-scale projects would take much longer than anticipated to be developed, but they were collectively the most transformative event of the nineteenth century in Arlington.

Although the Great Financial Panic of 1873 that led to a national economic depression (what the Advocate gently referred to as prolonged “dull times”) could have spelled the end of the new local newspaper, the Advocate had already cemented the role it set out to play and would endure to record generations of change in the life of the town. ♦

## Snippets

*Our readers can greatly aid us, by furnishing our reporters with information. A hint or a suggestion, the mention of a rumor, will sometimes start the trained news-gatherer on a scent that will lead to an item.*

*Healy’s shop is a good place to get your horse calked this snowy winter.*

*No other man can sell us tea or cheese, or sugar or kerosene. We advise our numerous readers to try W. F. Wellington’s groceries, that is, the few who don’t trade there already.*



*W.H. Pattee has opened a branch store opposite the depot. Arlington can’t be beat on the bread question, and Pattee is the prince of bakers.*

# EXTRA! Here Comes The Advocate & Star

The 150th anniversary year of the Arlington Advocate will see the greatest change in local print journalism since its introduction. On May 12, 2022, a newspaper covering Arlington and Winchester, under the banner “The Advocate & Star,” will begin publication. The newspapers’ parent company, Gannett, announced on March 16 “This business decision reaffirms The Arlington Advocate’s and The Winchester Star’s commitment to the sustainable future of local news . . . valuable community journalism and effective platforms for advertisers.”

This turn of events has an interesting parallel in the history of the Arlington Advocate. On what was essentially the eve of the Advocate’s centennial in 1971, it acquired the Winchester Star.

The groundwork for establishing this move came in 1969. After 97 years of ownership by branches of the Parker family, the Advocate had been purchased as the first newspaper of Century Publications, a corporation established by C. Peter Jorgensen and his wife, Kathryn. Peter had been a newspaper carrier for the Advocate as a boy and was a graduate of Arlington High School. He met “Kay” when both were earning master’s degrees in journalism at Boston University.

This change in leadership ensured continuity of a deep commitment to the community. It also ushered in a true heyday in the newspaper’s journalistic quality and reach. Peter Jorgensen’s prominent editorial stances made the Advocate a truly compelling read. But the Jorgensens understood the financial struggles of a standalone suburban newspaper. They pursued a regional business model that would facilitate a wider reach for advertisers. After the Winchester Star acquisition, Century Publications grew to have six newspapers under its umbrella when it was sold to the nationwide Harte-Hanks chain in 1986. In the decades to follow, rationalization and consolidation in the newspaper industry has seen the Advocate pass to three different owners. The challenge in the 21st century has been for the Advocate to remain relevant facing the threat of digital media and a generational decline in newspaper readership

## Arlington Advocate Purchases The Star

Century Publications, Inc. of Arlington, publisher of The Arlington Advocate, has purchased The Winchester Star from Ernest and Jason Dade.

C. Peter Jorgensen, president of Century, will become Editor and Publisher of the Star. Jason W. Dade will be Assistant Publisher of the Star and Controller of Century Publications, Inc.

Ernest B. Dade will continue as Chairman of the Board of The Star.

William T. Jordan will remain the Star’s Managing Editor and Susan B. Hagblom will continue as Assistant Editor.

In a joint statement, Mr. Jorgensen and the Dades said that the combined strength of the two newspapers will benefit both communities. There will be five full-time editors and reporters available to cover news and feature stories in the two towns and advertising space will be available to local merchants on a combination basis.

Mr. Jorgensen said that all



C. PETER JORGENSEN

Star employees are being retained and that the Star’s stationery

Announcement in the Winchester Star, May 13, 1971

broadly speaking. Many publications, in places big and small, have simply ceased to exist in any form. In the Advocate’s sesquicentennial year, will combining with the Winchester Star on the editorial side of the business allow Arlington’s traditional newspaper of record to be a meaningful resource to future historians?

*The rooms in Town Hall, used by the town officers, are better than most country towns possess.*

*The people of Arlington are said to be great readers. The newsman at the Fitchburg depot in Boston says that when the Arlington R.R. changed to the Lowell road, he lost half his customers.*

*TEMPERANCE—The Total Abstinence Society has made a bold step in the right direction. The society, under the supervision of Mr. Dennis O’Mahoney, was instituted for the benefit of the Catholics.*

*Do you want a good clean shave? Go to Ronco’s room above Upham’s Market.*

# Exciting News from Robbins Library

## Meet Local History Librarian Steven Prochet

Meet Arlington's new local history librarian, Steven Prochet, at a drop-in session on **Tuesday, April 26 at 2:00 p.m.** in the Local History Room on the 4th floor of the Robbins Library. Prochet will be on hand to answer questions about local history and resources of the Robbins Library's local history room.

The library welcomed Prochet to the team in November 2021, and he brings a wealth of experience in libraries, local history collections, and archives to his new role. "I am very excited to have the opportunity to work at the Robbins Library. Throughout my life and my library career, I have always had a great passion for learning about history." Prochet says, adding, "The history of this town and library is what really attracted me to this position."



# Digitization of Arlington's Newspapers



National Library Week, April 3-9, 2022, began in a special way, with the on-line launch of Historical Arlington Newspapers. Thanks to a gift from local historian Richard A. Duffy to the Arlington Libraries Foundation, the Arlington Advocate and other historical Arlington newspapers dating from 1871-2005 have been digitized. The Historical Arlington Newspapers online resource includes searchable full-page scans complete with photos and vintage ads. But be warned, there is so much there that you may not get anything else done! You can find more information about this amazing new resource and upcoming sessions on how to use it on the Robbins home page ([robbinslibrary.org](http://robbinslibrary.org)).

**Weather**  
Today and tomorrow partly cloudy with showers. High 60, low 40. Wednesday moderate to fresh weather with showers.

**Weather**  
Today and tomorrow partly cloudy with showers. High 60, low 40. Wednesday moderate to fresh weather with showers.

## ARLINGTON DAILY NEWS

ARLINGTON, MASS., THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1932

PRICE TWO CENTS

**Arlington Population, 36,694**  
The Second Largest Growing Town in Massachusetts

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**HIGH SOPHOMORES WIN INTER-CLASS TRACK MEET HERE**

Class Track Men Roll Up 50 Points in Annual Clash With Juniors—Senior Classmen Unable To Take Part Because of Examinations—Gateway Wins One-Mile Run—Sophomore Team Also Tops Juniors in Relay Race

The high school track meet at the Robbins High School today was the first of the season. The boys' team won 50 points, while the girls' team won 15 points. The boys' team was led by Jack Deane, who won the one-mile run. The girls' team was led by Mary Cliffe, who won the one-mile run. The boys' team also won the relay race, while the girls' team won the relay race.

**Arlington Police To Play Against Bedford Outfit**

Although the Arlington police department has not yet received a charter, it is expected to play a part in the town's defense. The police department is expected to be organized in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**Good Scouts**

The Good Scouts of Arlington are expected to play a part in the town's defense. The scouts are expected to be organized in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

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**Woman Injured In Odd Mishap Here Last Night**

A woman was injured last night in an odd mishap. The woman was walking on the sidewalk when she tripped over a hole in the pavement. She was taken to the hospital and is expected to recover.

**Legion Plans Official Tours To Convention**

The Legion is planning official tours to the convention. The tours are expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**PRIZES ARE AWARDED AT BRADFORD ACADEMY**

Prizes were awarded at the Bradford Academy. The prizes were given to the students who performed well in the exams. The students who received prizes were Mary Cliffe, Jack Deane, and John Smith.

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**MARYCLIFFE ACADEMY PUPILS TO GET RECITAL**

The pupils of the Marycliffe Academy are expected to give a recital. The recital is expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**Girl Scout Gets New "Island" Trip To Ireland**

A girl scout is going on a new trip to Ireland. The trip is expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**Garrett Club Meets**

The Garrett Club is expected to meet. The meeting is expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

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**Two Arrested After Local Officers Join In Sensational Chase**

Two men were arrested after a sensational chase. The chase was led by local officers and resulted in the arrest of the two men. The men are expected to be charged with a crime.

**Cambridge Pair Arrested on Charge of Violating Automobile Law Attempts To Get Away**

A pair of men from Cambridge were arrested on a charge of violating automobile law. The men were attempting to get away from the police and were caught. The men are expected to be charged with a crime.

**Final Tribute Paid To Former Police Officer**

A final tribute was paid to a former police officer. The tribute was held in the town hall and was attended by many people. The officer was a member of the police department for many years.

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**JANET GAYNOR AGAIN LEADING IN POPULAR MOVIE STAR CONTEST**

Janet Gaynor is leading in a popular movie star contest. The contest is expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**Local Formerly Held Until Ann Harding's Fight Between First and Second Place Stars**

Local former stars were held until Ann Harding's fight. The fight was held in the town hall and was attended by many people. The former stars were expected to be charged with a crime.

**Issue Challenge To Police Team**

An issue was challenged to the police team. The issue was expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

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**SAVE TINFOIL FOR THE SHRINKERS' HOSPITAL**

Save tinfoil for the Shrinkers' Hospital. The hospital is in need of tinfoil for its patients. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**ARLINGTON DAILY NEWS**

The Arlington Daily News is expected to be published. The news is expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

**Subscription Blank**

Subscription blank. The subscription is expected to be held in the near future. The town is expected to have a police department by the end of the year.

## Upcoming Lectures

Programs are held at 7:30 p.m. at the Masonic Temple, 19 Academy St. (disabled access at rear). Recordings available later on our YouTube channel.



Tuesday, April 26

### GEORGE Y. WELLINGTON REMEMBERS

Portrayed by A. Michael Ruderman

I helped found the Arlington Historical Society and was its second president. I also was a surveyor for the Lexington & West Cambridge Rail Road and continued railroading in Cincinnati. I later managed the Arlington horse street-railway and made my financial success in the insurance business. This will be my first talk before the Society in over 100 years, where I shall reminisce about some of the changes Arlington has undergone during my lifetime.



Tuesday, May 24

### The Louise Ruma Ivers Memorial Lecture CONSTANTS AND CHANGES IN SHARING ARLINGTON HISTORY: A 25-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE CONVEYED IN IMAGES

Richard A. Duffy

In my 25+ years showcasing a vast array of topics on Arlington's history, the ways of discovery and depth of resources have changed more than in any previous quarter-century. We've been handed golden keys to our past. How do we use them to properly unlock its secrets? My story unfolds using familiar and never-before-shown images of Arlington.

## Thanks to Our Generous Supporters! Acknowledging Donors to the 2021-2022 Annual Fund

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Maryellen Remmert-Loud  
Sabin Russell  
William Russell  
Donald Vitters



Foot of the Rocks, Junction Massachusetts Avenue and Lowell Street, ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Mass.

Located at the junction of Massachusetts Avenue and Lowell Street, the sliver of a public park has honored the fighting between British soldiers and American colonials in the area known as the "Foot of the Rocks." The site is currently being studied to enhance its visibility in relating events of April 19, 1775. Circa 1915 postcard.

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## Menotomy Minutes

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 George Parsons, Elaine Ropi

The Arlington Historical Society is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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 Arlington, MA 02476-6410

The Grand Army of the Republic, the Civil War Veterans organization, originated Memorial Day observances.