



Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.

DID YOU KNOW ??  
that the  
1st MOTHERS DAY  
was started by a  
Unitarian woman as  
a day for women all  
over the world to  
work for PEACE ?

JULIA WARD HOWE

Born 1819 - died 1910

This war need *not* have been fought at all!", exclaimed Julia Ward Howe angrily. "It was fought over a problem that could have been *easily* settled without killing people!"

Although that war was being fought in Europe, she knew all about the dying and despair that comes from war. Her own country, the United States, had just finished fighting the Civil War.

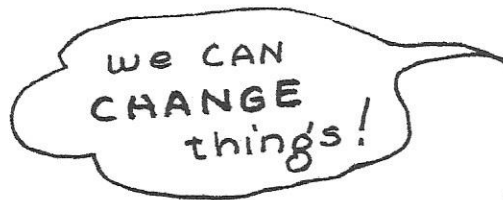


She thought to herself, "Mothers should step into these matters of wars. It is the *mothers* who have the babies and raise the children, and they do not want to waste human lives. Women have a responsibility to try to get leaders to use *peaceful* ways of settling problems."

Now, in those days, most people thought that women had no business getting into politics and world affairs. They should leave such things to *men*! That didn't stop Julia Ward Howe from trying.



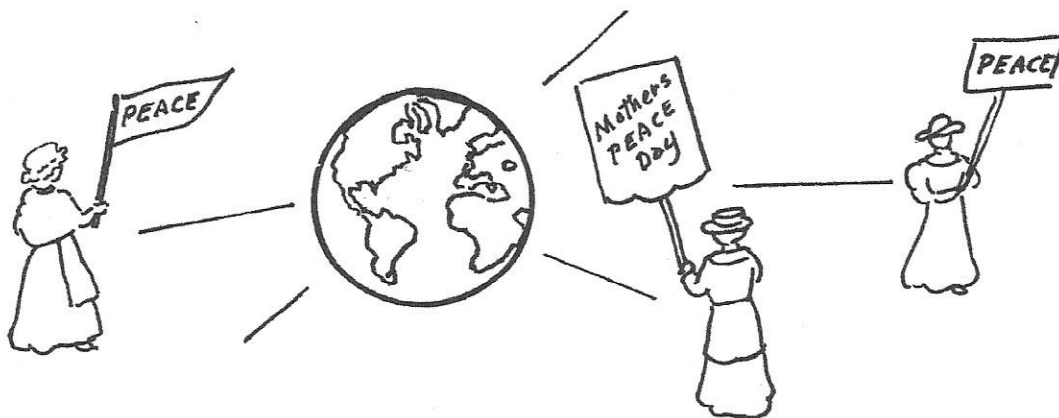
She was a tiny, red-haired, peppy woman, who really cared about people. When she saw unfair things happening, she would say, "It doesn't *have* to be this way! We can *change* things!"



As a famous writer and speaker, this Unitarian woman had worked hard against the slavery of black people. She also worked hard to change unfair laws that kept women and girls from having the same chances that men and boys had. Now, she was determined to try to get countries to handle problems without killing people.

She started a festival which she named "Mother's Day"— a special day when women all over the world would speak out for peace.

She chose June 2 as the date for Mother's Day, because the weather would be good at that time of year for holding big rallies outdoors. For many years after that, Mother's Day was celebrated on June 2 as a peace day in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and other cities in the United States, and also in England, Scotland, and Switzerland.



Then, in 1906, a woman named Anna Jarvis proposed that Mother's Day be celebrated on a *different* date and in a different way. She wanted it to be a day for honoring mothers, and she chose the second Sunday in May, because that was the anniversary of her own mother's death. Congress settled the matter by voting in 1913 for Anna Jarvis' plan.



After that, Julia Ward Howe's idea for a peace day was soon forgotten. Her idea seems to have been too modern for her time. She was remembered more, instead, for having written the famous song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic". Most people, today, don't know that *peace* was the real reason for Mother's Day in the beginning, over a hundred years ago.

♪ *Glory, glory, hallelujah!* ♪  
*her spirit lives on!*

Yet, her spirit lives on, because now, in many places, people are beginning to use Mother's Day as a time to hold rallies to stop the nuclear arms race. They celebrate Mother's Day with big crowds waving peace banners, singing peace songs, and listening to speeches. They sign petitions urging their government to stop preparing for war. Once again, it's becoming a Mother's Peace Day!

If Julia Ward Howe were alive today, she would say again, "We can change things!" And she is right.

