

# History of Arbor Day in United States

J. Sterling Morton, Nebraska Pioneer, Leader in Movement for Forestation of Plains Country.

Read before the Woman's club by Miss Jessie Robertson:

Tree-planting festivals are probably as old as civilization. Sacred trees and groves, planted avenues and roadsides, shaded academic walks and memorial trees were common during the early Roman times. But Arbor Day, as we know it, is purely American-Nebraskan in origin and grew out of conditions peculiar to the Great Plains of the west, a country practically treeless over much of its area, but with a soil and climate well able to nourish tree growth.

The first man to call attention in this country in an impressive way to the value and need of forests, their influence on climate and rainfall, the necessity for their culture and growth, was the late George P. Marsh, of Vermont, for many years our representative at the courts of Italy and Turkey. In Europe he found the forests regarded as the most valuable crop which the ground can produce and every effort made to stimulate their growth to the utmost, in some countries it was a law of the land that every tree cut down must be replaced, regardless of who was the owner. In 1864 he called the attention of the American people to the ruthless destruction of their woodlands, the resultant effects on streams, climate, commerce, and national conditions, and advocated systematic measures for curtailing their waste and consumption.

But no definite action was taken on tree planting until 1872. At a meeting of the State Board of Agriculture, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, Thursday, January 4, 1872, Mr. D. T. Moore, offered the following resolution: "Resolved, That in order to encourage the planting of forest trees in the State of Nebraska, the State Agricultural Society will award premiums, in the year 1872 and every year thereafter, at the discretion of the board, to the person who will plant and cultivate the greatest number of acres in forest trees, said trees to be in good health, thrifty condition, and not more than four feet apart each way, as follows: For the best five acres or more planted in 1872, sixty dollars; for the second best five or more acres planted in 1872, thirty dollars."

And at the same meeting J. Sterling Morton offered the following resolution: "Resolved, That Wednesday, the 10th day of April, 1872, be... especially set apart and consecrated to tree planting in the State of Nebraska; and the State Board of Agriculture hereby name it 'Arbor Day'; and to urge upon the people of the State the vital importance of tree planting, hereby offer a special premium of one hundred dollars to the county agricultural society of that county in Nebraska which shall, upon that day, plant properly the largest number of trees, and a farm library of twenty-five dollars worth

of book, to that person, who, on that day, shall plant properly in Nebraska the greatest number of trees." The resolution was passed after some discussion of an amendment introduced by the late Chief Justice Oliver P. Mason, supported by J. H. Masters—both of Otoe county—which proposed to strike out the word "Arbor" and insert "Sylvan," but Mr. Morton insisted that the word "Sylvan" would apply only to forest trees, while the word "Arbor" would include all trees, hedge and shrubbery. At the close of the debate it was unanimously determined to call the new-born anniversary "Arbor Day."

Wide publicity was given to the plan, and over a million trees were planted in Nebraska on that first Arbor Day. One Lancaster county farmer, according to an early newspaper account, planted 10,000 cottonwood, soft maple, Lombardy poplar, box elder and yellow willow trees.

The first Arbor Day proclamation was made by Gov. Robert W. Furnas of Nebraska, in which he set apart the third Wednesday of April, 1874, as Arbor Day. Since then a similar proclamation has been issued annually by the Governors of Nebraska, and in 1885 an act was passed by the legislature designating the 22nd day of April, Mr. Morton's birthday, as the date for Arbor Day, and making it one of the legal holidays of the State. From being practically a treeless State, only about 3 per cent of the total area having originally been covered with natural timber, Nebraska has become one of the leaders in practical forestry and is so much identified with tree raising that the legislature of 1895, by joint resolutions, designated Nebraska as "The Tree Planter's State" and adopted the "Golden Rod" as our State Flower.

Kansas and Tennessee followed the lead of Nebraska in 1875, and the next year Minnesota fell into line. In Kansas the same comparatively treeless conditions as in Nebraska made the plan of immediate economic importance. In Minnesota the white pine forests were being destroyed with alarming rapidity, and no provision was being made for replacing them.

It was not until 1882 that more states began to celebrate the day—North Dakota and Ohio.

Before 1882 the efforts to extend the celebration of Arbor Day had been made through agricultural associations and town authorities. The first celebration of the day in Ohio, which was held during the sessions of a national forestry convention at Cincinnati, took an entirely new form at the suggestion of Warren Higley, president of the Ohio Forestry Commission. Under the direction of Superintendent of Schools John B. Peaslee, the school children of the city had a prominent part in the celebration, which included a parade through the streets to a local park where trees were planted in memory of distinguished men. About 20,000 children participated in the singing and reciting and in putting the soil about the trees. Two new elements were introduced into the Arbor Day plan—the day was made a school festival and the practice of planting memorial trees was inaugurated.

Tree planting by school children became a festival; and one of the greatest benefits of the observance of Arbor Day has been its effects in impressing upon the minds of the young people the value of trees and the necessity of conserving all the natural resources of the country.

In 1883 the American Forestry Congress at St. Paul, Minnesota, passed a resolution recommending the observance of Arbor Day in the schools of every state and a committee was appointed to demonstrate to school authorities the value of Arbor Day celebrations. N. G. Northrop, of Connecticut, author of the resolution, was made chairman of this committee. At the annual meeting of the National Educational Association in 1884 he offered a resolution similar to that adopted at St. Paul, and although no action was taken then the next year the association adopted the following:

"Resolved, That in view of the valuable results of Arbor Day work 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."

As a school festival the observance of Arbor Day has spread not only throughout the whole United States but far beyond its borders. In 1887 the educational department of Ontario set aside the first Friday in May as a tree and flower planting day. In 1895 the plan was adopted officially in Spain. It reached Hawaii in 1905, and is now in vogue in all the dependencies of the United States, and in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, the English West Indies, South Africa, New Zealand, France, Norway, Russia, Japan and China.

The time of the observance of Arbor Day varies greatly in different States and countries, being determined by climatic conditions. In many states it is combined with Bird Day. In general the date is early in the year in the South and is set further along toward summer in the northern states. In some states it is in the fall and in others two dates are set, one in the spring and the other in the fall.

More than half of the states have enacted a law for the observance of Arbor Day. In other states and also in the Territories the day is observed by proclamation of the governor, authorization of the superintendent of education, or by other action. In Nebraska and Rhode Island the day has been made a public holiday.

Tree plantings have such a far-reaching effect on the community spirit, and through that on civic and social betterment, that no community can afford to neglect them. Nothing so helps to beautify a city or town as trees. But it is not enough to put a tree in the ground and sing a song over it. One must see that it has water, light, and soil fertility necessary to enable it to grow.

The celebration of Arbor Day by plantings will lead to greater appreciation of the beauty and civic value of trees, shrubs, vines and even wildflowers in parks and woodlands. No one who has come to a full realization of this beauty and value will strip dogwood, laurel, and other flowering shrubs, trees, and flowers, or ruin them permanently for the sake

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of temporary personal gratification. In the sixty years since its first celebration Arbor Day has become firmly entrenched in the traditions of our country. It has its place in our history. Some one has aptly said: "The spirit of the day is unique in that it looks not backward but always forward. It directs the eyes of all not toward some achievement of the past but to a goal to be reached in the future. It celebrates not what we have done but what we hope and determine to do now and in the days to come. It appeals to the spirit of youth and to all that is generous and forward looking in men of every age. It carries with it the inspiration to work toward the betterment of the community, the State, and the Nation."

"The trees are God's great Alphabet. With them, he paints in shining green Upon the world, His thoughts serene. He scribbles poems across the sky." Of faith and hope and love, And bids us all like His own trees To put our trust in Him above.

### STANDARD BEARERS MEET

Tuesday evening, April 17, 1934, the Standard Bearers had a very pleasant meeting at the home of Mrs. L. S. Devoe. Devotions were led by Kathryn Armstrong in her usual pleasing manner.

A playlet telling of the trials and troubles of missionary doctors' busy lives was presented by several girls, which proved to be an interesting feature of the program.

The last lesson in the text book was given by Delta Day, and was very much enjoyed.

As the pleasant evening drew to a close, dainty refreshments were served by Mrs. Devoe, who was assisted by Miss Anne Ulrich.

A called meeting of the Standard Bearers was held April 5, 1934, at the lovely home of Mrs. C. C. Westcott.

The real purpose of this meeting was to have an extra text book lesson, and to complete quilt blocks. Mrs. Barkus was in charge of the inspiring lesson.

At an appropriate hour, delicious refreshments were served by Mrs. Westcott, who was assisted by several of the girls.

### SIGHT RETURNS GRADUALLY

New York.—A story of how her sight came back to her gradually, after doctors said she would be permanently blind is told by Gertrude Musier, 21. She became blind after suffering infantile paralysis when she was 3 years old, she said.

When she was about 19, Miss Musier related, vision returned to her, just for a flash, long enough for her to see a train conductor and his shiny brass buttons. After that, sight came back to her for fleeting periods, she said, but she never told anyone about them. She can now see what is going on on the stage or screen, Miss Musier said, adding: "I want to see Babe Ruth play baseball. This may be his last year. I want to see him more than anything."

### KARL DANE RITES HELD

Hollywood.—With only a handful of friends in attendance, funeral services were held here for Karl Dane, film comedian, who last Saturday night shot himself to death.

### POTATOES FOR SALE

Home grown potatoes, \$1.00 per bushel.—H. E. Warden, 1 1/2 miles north of Union, Nebr. a19-2tw

## GREENWOOD

Rex Peters was in Lincoln for a few days during the past week, serving as a juror in the federal court.

Arthur Stewart was busy during the latter portion of last week with the building of a sanitary pool at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Gribbell.

Donald Wyman who was selected at Plattsmouth a few days ago to go to one of the CCC camps was scheduled to go to Minneapolis where he will serve in a camp this summer.

The young people of the Christian church were meeting on last Friday night at the church parlors where they enjoyed a very fine social evening and also with a splendid program as well.

Mrs. W. C. Boucher and little granddaughter, Elizabeth Martin, were guests for the day and a very fine dinner with their friends, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Hillis on last

Ben Litch of Lincoln, where he has resided for many years, was a visitor in Greenwood for a short time on last Wednesday afternoon and was guest while in town of Clyde Newkirk and Mrs. G. M. Palling, he coming to visit with his sister, Mrs. W. E. Newkirk, who chanced to be visiting at that time at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Dr. L. D. Lee, and so he did not get to see her. However he enjoyed the visit here with other relatives and friends.

### Attended State Gathering.

Clyde Newkirk, who is a salesman for the Mid-Continent Petroleum Co. at Greenwood, was in attendance at a state gathering at Fremont for the various dealers of this product over the state. There was a general conference of the dealers, which disclosed the fact that the volume of the DX gas had grown greatly since a year ago. Mr. Newkirk also has had the same experience, as he had increased the volume of the DX gas over that of a year ago by nearly two fold.

### Visits Greenwood Tuesday.

Mrs. Lottie Rosencrans of Plattsmouth and her secretary were in Greenwood last Tuesday looking after the giving of employment to those who are looking for work under the FEERA and arranged for a number to go to work under the new provision.

### Hold Enthusiastic Meeting.

The members from the various seven lodges of the L. O. O. F. which met to form a new district, met as per schedule in Greenwood and had a large number of representatives and delegates present. The organization was formed and the various committees appointed. George Bucknell found a place on the publicity

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committee and Leo Peters on the reception committee.

Another meeting was called to meet at Havelock on May 1st, at which time there will be a school of instruction given during the afternoon and following which will be the supper and then degree work and other interesting numbers on as well as the program. There was at the Greenwood meeting some twenty-five from out of town.

### DECIDE TO SELL HOME

Hollywood.—The controversy between Mary Astor and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Longhankle, resulted in the father's announcement that he would sell their \$200,000 home at public auction. "We cannot hold on any longer," said Longhankle.

### Have Splendid Program.

Last Sunday night at the Christian church was held a very delightful program with special music and special numbers besides their regular program. James Jeffreys, who was the highest at the graduation at the school at Waverly gave a reading of the oration which he gave at the closing of school when he graduated, while Davis Hall who has just graduated from the school of music at Geneva rendered a group of numbers at the piano and with the other numbers of the special program made a very enjoyable evening.

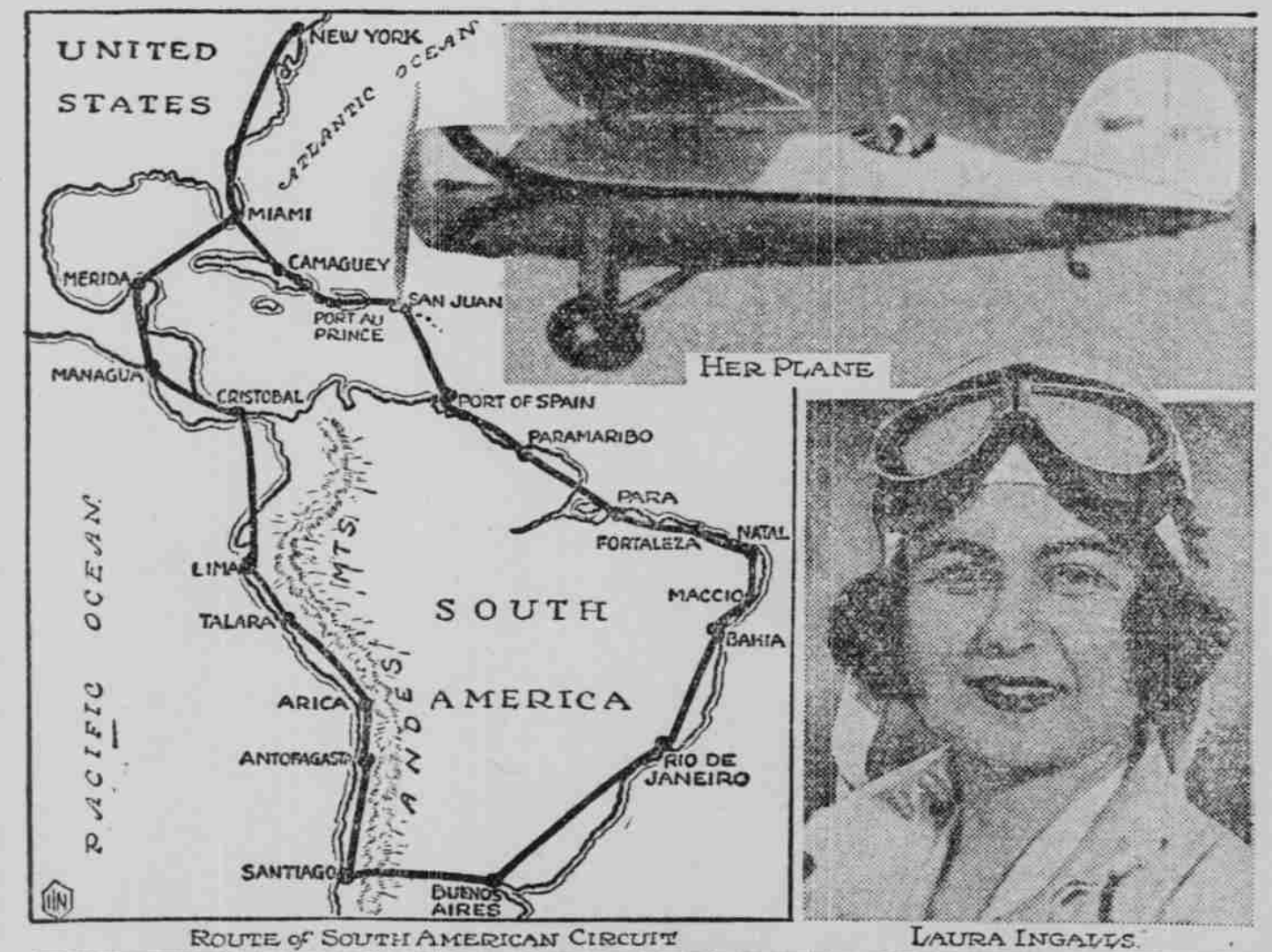
### Bible School Contest.

The Bible school of the Christian church of Greenwood have just inaugurated a peculiar contest which is known as the Thermometer contest and a number of things effect the rise and fall of the marker on the thermometer, such as attendance, new members and the offering. A portion of the school are pitted against another party, each having a number of classes on their side. Just what will be the result at the end of the three months which the contest is to run is not yet known, but a jolly good time will be had when the contest is concluded and a good time during the contest.

### Gave Wonderful Entertainment.

The membership of the Methodist church of Greenwood, gave a very

## U. S. Ladybird and Course Around South America



In danger of being just another "forgotten ladybird," after her plans for a trans-Atlantic flight flopped in 1931, Laura Ingalls, American aviatrix, has won a place among the foremost aviators of the world, male and female, by her remarkable solo flight around South America. Although Miss Ingalls asserted she was making the 15,000-mile trip "just for the fun of it," friends of the flier hope that the prestige thus obtained may get her backing for participation in the London-Melbourne international air race next October. Besides the glory that would fall to the winner of the derby from Britain to Australia, there is a cash prize of \$50,000. But Miss Ingalls would require a faster plane than the craft she used in her South American circuit, in which she became the third woman in history to fly across the Andes.

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