The History of Veterans Day

We celebrate Veterans Day every year, but how many of us actually know where the holiday came from? Most people know that Veterans Day is a day to honor Americans who have sacrificed their lives for our country, but there is more to the story than you may have realized. To help you celebrate this holiday more deeply, here are some things you may not already know about Veterans Day.

On the 11th Hour of the 11th Day of the 11th Month

On June 28, 1919, WWI had officially ended with the Treaty of Versailles, in the Palace of Versailles in France. However, the fighting continued for an additional seven months and finally ended with an armistice, or a peace agreement, between the Allied Nations and Germany on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, or November 11. The day was commemorated the following year on November 11, as Armistice Day, and was intended to dedicate a day to remind nations to seek peaceful relationships between one another, in hopes that we will never again be divided. Unfortunately, we know, this was not the case.

Armistice Day to Veterans Day

By 1954, our country survived two more major wars, WWII and the Korean War. American effort during World War II (1941-1945) saw the greatest mobilization of the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force in the nation’s history (more than 16 million people); some 5.7 million more served in the Korean War (1950). At the urging of the service organizations, the 83rd Congress decided to reinstate ‘Armistice Day’ as ‘Veterans Day’ to honor veterans of all wars. President Eisenhower signed the legislation on June 1, 1954.

Veterans Day hasn’t always been celebrated on November 11. In 1968 the Uniforms Holiday Bill ensured three-day weekends for federal employees by celebrating four national holidays on Mondays: Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day. This bill assigned the fourth Monday of October as Veterans Day, despite the disapproval of many states who chose to continue to celebrate the holiday on its original day.
Celebrating Veterans Day

President Gerald R. Ford recognized that the significance of the actual date of Veterans Day carried historical and patriotic value to Americans and veterans who deserved to be honored. So in 1978, he signed a new law returning Veterans Day home to November 11. If November 11 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the holiday is celebrated the previous Friday or Monday, respectively. This way, Veterans Day will be able to credit the intentions of the Uniforms Holiday Bill while also serving to those who have a deep association with the holiday.

By holding true to the date, Americans are able to focus on the importance of Veterans Day, which is to honor and celebrate veterans for their patriotism, passion for our country, and selflessness in serving for the common good.

http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/history-of-veterans-day
http://www.military.com/veterans-day/history-of-veterans-day.html
http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp