

Kids Page

Lowndes County Historical Society
March-April 2008



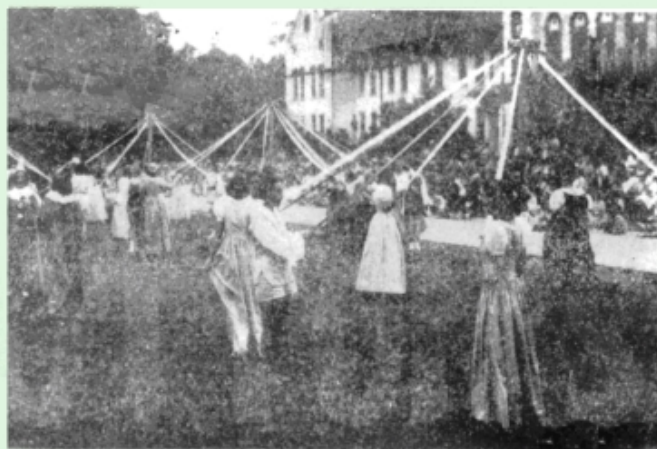
May Day

May Day is not a prominent American holiday. But in other parts of the world it is a time of celebration. The tradition dates back before the time of Christ.

May 1st falls between a solstice and an equinox making it a special day in early cultures. In the British Isles it was thought that May 1st divided the year into half. They called it the festival of Beltane. The other half of the year was on November 1st with the Samhain.

When the Romans came to the British Isles they brought a celebration called Floralia. This celebration honored the goddess of flowers and lasted five days from April 28th to the end of May 2nd. May Day may well be a combination of the two celebrations.

Many early customs did not pass down through the ages. May Day was discouraged by Puritans as non-Christian and was not celebrated as much in modern times or after Europeans settled in America. Parts of the ancient tradition still exist and are still observed. Most notably the May Pole and the celebration of children dancing around a pole tied with colorful streamers. Another tradition which survived is the hanging of May baskets of flowers on the doorknobs of friends and neighbors. Dancing and flowers—what a nice way to celebrate half a year!



May Day at Georgia State Womans College

May Day Festival at GSWC

One of the loveliest traditions at Georgia State Womans College was the annual May Day celebration, a gala occasion in which every student took part. The Queen of May was selected from the senior class by popular vote and the lowliest freshmen masqueraded as peasants.

Songs and dances on the green expressed the age-old sentiment regarding May Day—an old English tradition featuring milkmaids, lords and ladies and the winding of the multi-colored May poles. The lovely court procession of the Queen and her court, all typified the spirit of the May Day celebration from the time of the Druids.

All of the pageantry and splendor that marked the celebration of the Celts was carried on as a tradition at the college each May 1st. The May Day Festival was a particularly happy occasion since it celebrated the coming of spring and the promise of new life. The May Court, ruled over by the Queen, was held on the green in front of Converse Hall. After the Queen was crowned, there followed a program of dances for the pleasure of Her Highness, the Court and the guests.

(Text and photograph are from the May Day Exhibit at the Lowndes County Historical Society)



May Day queen and her court at Georgia State Womans College

For more about history ask your parents if you may visit our web site at www.valdostamuseum.org
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Did you know May Day is a celebration? Remember the song “April showers bring May flowers”? In ancient times it marked the mid-year and beginning of summer. May Day celebrations are not as popular today as they were in the past. Hanging a basket of flowers or children dancing around a May Pole are still practiced in Europe and sometimes in the United States. In early celebrations trees were also an important part of May Day and were perhaps the earliest “May Poles.”

May Day was celebrated at Georgia State Womens College through the mid-twentieth century. Visit the museum to see some of the beautiful dresses worn by Queens of the May and their ladies and maids. There are also yearbooks showing the May Day traditions at the college through the years.

Revive your own May Day celebration. Dance around a pole and give your neighbor flowers. Celebrate the coming of summer and traditions passed down through the ages.



May Day Word Find
- Are you up to the challenge?

B	R	I	T	I	S	H	H	N	W	N	U	J	C	L	Y
A	S	P	M	E	S	A	F	S	N	O	B	B	I	R	C
V	S	F	F	N	C	T	L	N	R	S	I	D	Y	E	E
C	U	S	G	I	H	O	O	P	L	R	V	G	G	K	R
H	M	A	Y	D	A	Y	W	T	S	N	A	M	O	R	E
Y	M	T	R	U	O	C	E	H	W	A	R	H	T	E	M
T	E	R	P	D	L	C	R	I	A	C	S	V	N	L	O
I	R	W	A	E	N	A	S	Q	R	I	I	I	E	C	N
S	L	E	R	C	E	N	E	E	U	R	T	L	G	C	Y
R	L	C	W	L	E	N	A	T	L	E	B	E	A	A	U
E	S	S	O	S	N	N	O	I	S	S	E	R	P	E	D
V	G	S	E	N	E	O	L	L	M	E	N	N	Y	O	A
I	S	N	R	O	L	F	K	B	E	G	S	D	V	E	R
N	I	G	M	E	O	R	A	I	L	A	R	O	L	F	G
D	A	N	C	E	P	L	I	N	E	D	A	R	G	I	V

Find the following words. They are written forward, backward, upside-down, and diagonally.

MAY DAY
BELTANE
PAGENT

QUEEN
COURT
POLE

RIBBONS
DANCE
FLOWERS

SUMMER
CEREMONY
FLORALIA

GSWC
ROMANS
BRITISH