



May Day Fairies & Flowers
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For thousands of years, people have celebrated ‘May Day’ as a springtime festival by giving and wearing flowers, gathering for music, feasting and dancing (sometimes around a maypole), and commemorating the sowing of seeds and the planting of crops. The month of May, took its name from the goddess Maia, a Greek and Roman goddess of fertility. The earliest recorded May Day celebrations were in honor of Flora, the Roman Goddess of youth, spring and flowers. The traditional dancing around a maypole and crowning of a ‘May Queen’ evolved in early, medieval Germany and Britain and were staples of celebrations in the United States until the late 1950s.

Early 20th century celebrations often followed many of the traditional customs and rituals from past eras. This author can remember dressing up in kindergarten and dancing in a circle where the boys portrayed ‘bees’ and the girls ‘flowers’. I’m not sure that custom has survived into the 21st century! The young “flowers” above were students at San Rafael’s West End School and dressed as “dream fairies” and “daisies” for their observance of the festivities on May 1, 1931. West End School was located at 1821 5th Ave and served the

families of San Rafael's western neighborhoods from 1924 until its closure due to falling enrollment in 1974. That fall, the site was converted into an off-campus childcare center for low-income mothers in College of Marin's "women's reentry program." Today the former school is home to the Rotary Manor Senior Community.

By the early 1960s the fear and hysteria of communism and socialism eclipsed the historical meaning behind the festival as worldwide labor organizations and countries such as Russia and China adopted May 1st as International Worker's Day. In a bizarre twist of irony, the US Government responded by designating the first of May as, "Loyalty Day" and subsequently, "Law Day." Traditional May Day celebrations were almost universally discontinued in American schools and towns as very few felt the desire to commemorate 'Law Day'. There has been a resurgence of traditional May Day celebrations within the last few decades and hopefully we will see more 'daisies' and 'dream fairies' in the coming years!

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