

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## A Fitting Memorial Day

On October 15, 1951, a Joint Resolution was introduced in the United States House of Representatives authorizing the President of the United States to proclaim January 13 of each year Stephen Foster Memorial Day. The date — January 13 — was designated to commemorate the death of America's most-loved troubadour. The Joint Resolution read:

Whereas Stephen Collins Foster has become a national expression of democracy through his clear and simple embodiment of American tradition in his world-famous lyrics; and

Whereas Stephen Collins Foster was signally honored by being the first musician elected to the National Hall of Fame in New York City; and

Whereas the following States have honored Stephen Collins Foster in the construction of memorials: Pennsylvania — Foster Hall, University of Pittsburgh; Indiana — Lilly Hall, Indianapolis; Michigan — Ford Village, Dearborn; Kentucky — Old Kentucky Home, Bardstown; and Florida — Stephen Foster Memorial, on the Suwannee River at White Springs; and

Whereas the songs of Stephen Collins Foster belong to the people and are the musical essence of democracy, so that he is now recognized as the father of American folk music and the true interpreter of the fundamental spirit of music; . . .

*Resolved, etc.,* That the President of the United States is authorized to issue a proclamation designating January 13 of each year as Stephen Foster Memorial Day, and calling upon the people throughout the United States to observe such day with appropriate ceremonies, pilgrimages to his shrines, and musical programs featuring his compositions.

The above joint Resolution was engrossed, read a third time and passed, and then forwarded to the President for his approval. Shortly afterwards the President issued the following proclamation:

*Now, Therefore, I, Harry S. Truman, President* of the United States of America, do hereby designate Sunday, January 13, 1952, and each succeeding January 13 throughout the years, as Stephen Foster Memorial Day; and I call upon the people of the United States to observe such day with appropriate ceremonies, pilgrimages to the shrines of this beloved composer, and musical programs featuring his compositions.

The State of Iowa is proud to join its sister states in this tribute to the memory of Stephen Foster on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of his death on January 13, 1864. Few, if any, Americans have entwined themselves more closely around our heartstrings.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN