



**Tarrant County Veterans Council**

# **FACT SHEET**

***Saluting Our Nation... 250 Years of Veterans in Service***

## ***History of the Poppy***



In the spring of 1915, shortly after losing a friend in Ypres, a Canadian doctor, Lt. Col. John McCrae, was inspired by the sight of poppies growing in battle-scarred fields to write a now famous poem called *In Flanders Fields*.

After World War I, the poppy was adopted as a symbol of remembrance. During the war (1914–1918), much of the fighting took place in Western Europe. Previously beautiful countryside was blasted, bombed and fought over, again and again. The landscape swiftly turned to fields of mud – bleak and barren scenes where little or nothing could grow.

Bright red Flanders poppies (*Papaver Rhoeas*) however, were delicate but resilient flowers and grew in their thousands, flourishing even in the middle of chaos and destruction.

On impulse, Moina Michael bought a bouquet of poppies and handed them to businessmen meeting at the New York YMCA where she worked. She asked them to wear the poppy as a tribute to the fallen. That was November 1918. World War I had just ended, but America's sons would rest forever in Flander's fields. Later she would spearhead a campaign that would result in the adoption of the poppy as the national symbol of sacrifice.

On Sept. 27, 1920, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family to memorialize the soldiers who fought and died during the war. In 1924, the distribution of poppies became a national program of the Legion. The (Royal) British Legion, formed in 1921, 9 million of these poppies were ordered and sold them on November 11 that year.

### ***In Flanders Fields***

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly

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Scarce heard amid the guns below  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

*Lt. Col. John McCrae*

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