

German Empire - Patriotic holidays Der BLUMENTAGE 1910 - 1914

Flower days took place in various German cities over the years 1910 - 1914. On each day, a particular flower was chosen as the leitmotif and for charitable purposes artificial flowers were distributed against monetary donations. The streets were decorated with the appropriate flowers and often food and drinks stalls erected, creating thus a festive atmosphere.

The most common flower day was the Margeritentag (otherwise called Margaretentag or Margarittentag). Other charitable flower days were the Cornflower Day, the Wild Rose Day and the Anemones Day.

Marguerite Day (Margeritentage)

The Margeritentage were organized by various community associations, who set themselves the goal of improving the children's nursing in the local hospitals. The marguerite was chosen as symbolically it was considered the "white flower of mercy ". The activities were under the patronage of Empress Auguste Victoria. Young women frequently wore white dresses decorated with flowers and distributed hand-crafted artificial flowers against a donation.

The practice of selling postcards with marguerite motifs for the benefit of the nursing funds continues to this day; and has led to the creation of many elaborately designed Blumentage postcards in different cities.

In Frankfurt am Main, the first Margeritentag was on 19 November 1910 and raised more than 100,000 Marks net income for the care of babies. In Guben on 15 May 1911 Margeritentag included singing performances, promenade concerts, and sports competitions, raising nearly 10,000 Marks needy children. In Göttingen, Margeritentag on 9 June 1911 found the streets decorated with garlands of flowers, banners and flags; young women and (for the day) soldiers wore corsages or "buttonholes"; a procession of forty carts was pulled through the decorated streets and the balloon "Hannover" hanging overhead. Photographs taken from the balloon were later sold as a postcard.

Other towns and cities celebrating Margeritentage in 1911 were Brandenburg an der Havel, Munich, Quedlinburg im Harz, Regensburg (there as a Children's Day under the patronage of the Archduchess Margarethe Klementine Maria of Austria, Her Imperial and Royal Highness The Princess of Thurn and Taxis), Bayreuth and Löbau, Chemnitz, Bad Neustadt, Berchtesgaden, Zittau, Plauen, Zwickau, Leipzig and Marburg, Trier, Berlin and Bautzen.

Cornflower Day (Kornblumentag)

The Kornblumentag traded on the concept of the corn flower as a Prussian and national symbol of Germanism. The organizers were often veterans' organisations, family members and well-wishers, and the funds collected assisted sick and needy veterans of the unification wars, the Austro-Prussian War (1866), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71). With time, this in itself became a contentious issue.

Postcard designs naturally featured the corn flower and often included the Iron Cross (1870) and images of veterans.

Other towns and cities that supported Kornblumentag included Frankfurt am Main, Freiburg im Breisgau, Essen, Altenburg, Jena, Trier, Mühlhausen, Badischer, Wuppertal, Chemitz (September 1913) and Dill-Weissenstein.

The Wild Rose Day (Heckenrosentag)

Heckenrosentag appears to have been infrequently celebrated on postcard. Though there are several stylised cards celebrating Heckenrosentag München May 1912, the iconic one is that illustrated by Friedrich August von Kaulbach (* 1850 - † 1920) "Heckenrosentag München Mai 1912".

The Anemones Day (Anemonentag)

Another infrequent event appears to have been Anemonentag which, judging from the postcards, appears to have been confined to Augsburg.

Contemporary political commentaries

Blumtage sparked a heated debate involving many social groups and organizations (charities, female bourgeois women's supporters and social reformers, members of the labour movement and unions). The main arguments put forward were that:

- * the cheap mass production of artificial flowers - most of which were made by women and children at home - continued to depress already low wages.
- * the collection on the streets was a moral hazard to the young girls.
- * "putting flowers into the buttonhole of young workers " conceptually was synonymous with the derisory figure of the Backfisch, representing contesting visions of female puberty in Wilhelmine Germany.
- * a poet criticized the notion as a social distraction by the conservative and wealthy bourgeoisie, thereby concealing blatant failings of the government (Kurt Tucholsky).
- * Helene Lange (* 1848 – † 1930), a pedagogue, feminist and symbolic figure of the international and German civil rights feminist movement, declared Blumentage as sentimental, a pretence created to give a false impression of "descent into the people" (that is the aristocracy descending to the level of the ordinary man and women in the street). .

By 1914, the concept had run its course and ceased with the start of WWI to be substituted by other festivals and charitable events in the decades that followed.

Contemporary poets who commented on the Flower Days included Kurt Tucholsky (* 1890 – † 1935) ("Blumentag") June 1911 and in 1913 Alfred Henschke Klabund (* 1890 – † 1928) ("Blumentag")

Known publishing houses active in printing cards der Vereinigung Göttinger Papierhändler (establ: 1907); Stengel & Co., Dresden (establ: 1889); Englert & Schlosser, Frankfurt

Known advertising sponsors: Richard Poetzsch GmbH coffee wholesale and coffee roasting, Leipzig (establ: 1888 by Richard Poetzsch [1861–1913])