



## Flower Mart! - An Impressive History

As flowers grow, so has Flower Mart. Flower Mart began in 1939 as the "seed" of an idea planted by Miss Belle Gurnee and "cultivated" by the members of All Hallows Guild, volunteer stewards of the grounds of Washington National Cathedral. The site of that first Flower Mart, which made a little over \$1,000, was on the Pilgrim Steps on the South side of Washington National Cathedral. (Note: the scaffolding in the above photo. The Cathedral was under construction – the Pinnacle was raised in 1991). The dream was to raise money to support the Guild's mission to benefit the gardens, grounds and woodlands of the close.

Only the site is different today! Flower Mart has been nurtured to encourage good growth. This year Flower Mart booths and tents will surround the Cathedral and more than 20,000 people will attend the two-day Mart. The goal, however, remains the same and has allowed All Hallows Guild, the Stewards to the Gardens and Grounds of Washington National Cathedral, to donate more than \$4 million dollars to the landscape over the past twelve years.

From a bower of a dozen flower market stalls and carts, Flower Mart has been "clipped and pruned." With the resulting growth, Flower Mart now showcases 10-to-15 food vendors, more than 65 specialty item vendors, educational programs, children's rides and games, a puppet show, and an honored country with an

Embassy tent and activities representing its culture, history and even food - truly, Washington's premier family festival of fun and flowers.

### **Flower Mart Themes**

The 1954 Flower Mart Committee decided to bring international flair into the festival by seeking an embassy to be the honored country of the Mart. This provided that year's festival and all those that have followed with the opportunity to add the flavor, fun and culture of another country thereby enhancing Flower Mart in a unique and different way each year. The first country honored was France and Mrs. Richard M. Nixon cut the ribbon at the Opening Ceremonies. Since that time, 45 different Flower Marts honored a foreign country or countries and many have come to the Mart several times.

### **The Cathedral Theme**

Over the years Flower Mart honored many special occasions - the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cathedral in 1957, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of All Hallows Guild in 1966, the performing arts in 1977, and the Cathedral's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1982 and in 2008, the Washington National Cathedral's Centennial was celebrated.

On September 29, 1907, a group of visionary leaders, led by Bishop Henry Yates Satterlee, joined President Theodore Roosevelt and an audience of some 30,000 people atop Mount St. Alban to lay the foundation stone for Washington National Cathedral. Flower Mart will be the culmination of a year-long celebration and recognition of this momentous event in the life of the Cathedral – the home of the Mart.

### **Famous Guests**

Flower Mart has been honored by the participation of eight First Ladies over the years. Those opening or visiting the Mart include Mrs. Woodrow Wilson (she is said to have worked at the Fruit and Vegetable booth!), Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mrs. Harry S. Truman (who attended in 1946 and for the next 7 years), Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mrs. Richard M. Nixon, Mrs. John F. Kennedy, Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson and Mrs. George Bush. Many wives of Cabinet officers, Vice Presidents, Senators, Mayors and Ambassadors, have also participated in Flower Mart. In 2007, the Wife of the Mayor of Washington, DC, Michelle Fenty, participated in our Opening Ceremonies.

With the incredible location on the highest spot in the Nation's Capital, Flower Mart has happily honored the United States and the District of Columbia any number of times--each with a different theme such as the Bicentennial of Washington, DC in 1991 or the Bicentennial of the United States in 1976.

There were two "phantom" Flower Marts held during World War II, in 1943 and 1944, because of the war. In 1945 Dean Suter proposed a "Cathedral Festival" where All Hallows Guild had a booth in lieu of Flower Mart. (We were still at war with Germany until May 8 and with Japan until August). An interesting note is

that when the Embassy of Japan agreed to participate in Flower Mart 1995, it was in commemoration of "the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our new friendship."

### **Friendship & Tradition**

The thread of friendship--an enduring daisy chain of sorts--has formed the history of Flower Mart. It is a happy event (especially when the sun shines both days!). Fond memories include a Mart among the carved stones on the West Front during the lengthy construction of the Cathedral. Or, the area Garden Clubs who have come as volunteers to the Mart for more than 50 years. That friendship among the faithful, many who work at the Mart year after year, even decade after decade, and that friendship which blooms with the embassy families who bring so much to Flower Mart, is what sustains this unique festival. The special events that our honored countries have brought to the Mart are simply spectacular – everything from the enormous representation of the Capitol out of Legos and the Tivoli Marching Boys' Guard (Denmark); Italy's fantastic flag throwers, Spain's magnificent Andalusian horses, flags created out of thousands of flowers (by Canada's Ambassador's Wife) – just to name a very few.

### **Antique Carousel**

Each year All Hallows Guild brings out its antique carousel to delight young and old. In 1997, the carousel was placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service. It is a wonderful example of native American folk art, and is the last surviving carousel made by the U.S. Merry-Go-Round Company. The restoration of the carousel was lovingly done by the Cathedral's Master Carpenter, John Drew, and the members of the Nation's Capital Chapter of the National Society of Decorative Painters and was underwritten by our donors in memory of or to honor friends and family members. For pictures of these restored animals: [www.nca-usa.org/psp](http://www.nca-usa.org/psp) (scroll down to May 2008)

### **Flowers Around the World - Flower Mart's International Floral Displays Will Again Make the Cathedral Glow.**

The magnificent nave of Washington National Cathedral will be the backdrop for an array of beautiful floral arrangements by participating embassies from around the world. Exhibits will highlight each country's natural and floral heritage, as well as its topography, national colors, flags and symbols. Fifteen to twenty countries have participated each year. The Displays are open for the public to view both days of the Mart and as is often the case at Flower Mart – there is no charge to see these wonderful examples of native flowers presented by the brilliance of their floral designers.

