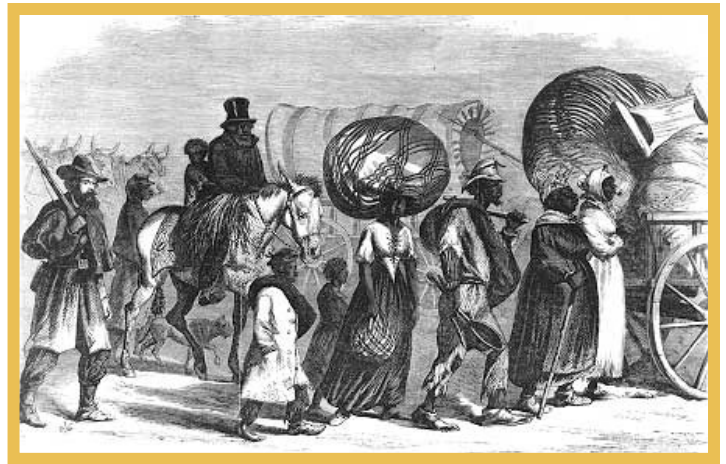


GET INSPIRED

On June 19, 1865, more than two months after the end of the Civil War, Union General Gordon Granger and 1,800 federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take control of the state and enforce the emancipation or the freedom of enslaved people. Juneteenth (short for “June Nineteenth”) is a holiday commemorating this day, which marked the effective end of slavery in Texas.

On January 1, 1863, two years before that first Juneteenth, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. While it was symbolically very powerful, Lincoln’s executive order didn’t actually free any enslaved people because the document only applied to Confederate territory outside of Lincoln’s control. Slavery was officially abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment, which took effect on September 18, 1865. Across the South, freedom came at varying times. As General Sherman made his famous “march to the sea” across Georgia in late 1864, 7,000 liberated slaves followed his army, with hundreds more dying of hunger and exposure. For the approximately 450,000 enslaved African Americans not in the footpath of Sherman’s armies, emancipation did not occur as quickly, and in some cases, slave owners withheld the information until after the harvest season of 1865.



Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper presented a sketch on March 18, 1865 that depicts newly emancipated African Americans following Union General William T. Sherman’s march to the sea. *Courtesy New Georgia Encyclopedia.*

In the ensuing decades, Juneteenth, or Freedom Day, commemorations featured music, barbecues, prayer services and other activities, and as African Americans migrated from Texas to other parts of the country the Juneteenth traditions spread. Here in West Georgia we know Emancipation celebrations have also been held by churches on or around January 1, the day the Emancipation Proclamation was signed. We don’t have records, though, detailing celebrations before the

1970s. In 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday; Georgia became the 37th state to recognize Juneteenth in 2011. In June of 2021, President Joe Biden made the date a national holiday.



In 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday; Georgia became the 37th state to recognize Juneteenth in 2011. In June of 2021, President Joe Biden made the date a national holiday.

One celebration of the enslaved culture is known as “jumping the broom.” In some African-American communities, marrying couples end their ceremony by jumping over a broomstick. This practice was used as a marriage ceremony for enslaved people in the Southern United States in the 1840s and 1850s who were often not permitted to wed legally. What began as a custom which slaves were forced to observe has been revived as a treasured tradition.

The significance of the broom to African American heritage originates in the West African country of Ghana. During the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the ladies of Ghana were known to keep the extremely clean courtyards and streets using locally made brooms. The broom symbolized sweeping away past wrongs. Brooms were also waved over the heads of marrying couples to ward off evil spirits.

HOW TO WHISK BROOM

To make a broom similar to those that enslaved individuals might have jumped over during a wedding or used to ward off spirits, follow these steps:

Materials Needed: Pine needles and at least six feet of twine.



Step One: Choose pine needles. The species of Pine trees vary, but most of what is here in West Georgia is the Loblolly Pine.

The clusters need to be approximately 8" long for this project. Dried needles are easily collected with a rake from the yard.



Step Two: Organize. Select the needles that are in small groups still attached at their base.

Loose, singular needles are more likely to fall out of the broom. Face all your needles in the same direction, and line up the base of the needles evenly. This allows for all the clusters to be wrapped tightly together.



Step Three: Wrap. Tie a simple slip knot at the base of the needles.

Use a six feet long length of twine. Wrap tightly at least halfway down the group of needles, which supports the area that is to be held in the hand. The tighter the cluster of needles, the more effective and practical its use.



Step Four: Trim and Finish.

The easiest step is to finalize the hand broom by using a pair of scissors to neatly trim the other end of the cluster considered the bristles of the broom. Snip off the ends to an even and uniform length.