

August 2019

YOUR LETTERHEAD

Name of your community * Address * Phone number * Fax number * Other information



Celebrating August

**Read a Romance Novel
Month**

**American Artists
Appreciation Month**

International Clown Week
August 1-7

Sandcastle Day
August 3

Bowling Day
August 10

**International Left Handers
Day**
August 13

International Geocaching Day
August 17

Bow Tie Day
August 28

The Fairest of Them All

By the month of August, summer is in full swing, and nothing says summer like the state fair. With live music, animals, wacky inventions, crazy competitions, carnival rides, and a fascinating assortment of deep-fried foods, state fairs offer the ultimate Americana experience for Americans and foreign visitors alike.

The oldest state fair in America is the Great New York State Fair. Although the first fair did not take place until 1841, its story began in 1832 when a group of farmers formed the New York State Agricultural Society. The group tasked itself with innovating and sharing agricultural practices for New York's farmers. In 1841, the Society held its first ever state fair in Syracuse to showcase the bounty of New York's farms. It is estimated that 15,000 people gathered for the fair, where they heard speeches, viewed livestock, sampled fresh produce, and cheered on the contestants of a plowing contest. This first state fair was not much different from the Great New York State Fair of today, which is still held in Syracuse.

New York's state fair may have been the first, but these grand events are found in almost every state of the union, and each fair boasts the unique flavor of its home state. The Kentucky State Fair is known for its World Championship Horse Show, a prestigious competition that has been held since 1902. Every year, the Iowa State Fair boasts a cow sculpted entirely of butter; the first was carved by J.K. Daniels in 1911 and the tradition continues today. Additional butter sculptures have also included Elvis Presley, John Wayne, and the Last Supper. Washington's state fair, known locally as the Puyallup, ranks as one of the biggest in the world.

Speaking of unique flavors, one of the best parts of every fair is the food. Traditional fair fare includes everything from Fisher scones dipped in honey butter and jam, to deep-fried butter, to corn dogs. All across America, there is a state fair to suit every taste.

It Be Arr-gust, Matey



Yarr, Matey, Arr-gust be International Pirate Month. But you don't have to talk like a pirate to appreciate the fascinating history and characters from the Golden Age of Piracy.

Spanning from 1650 to the late 1720s, piracy's golden age left an impression on historians and pirate fans alike. Many factors contributed to this era becoming such a golden age. For starters, many of the most famous pirates of this age were former sailors from European navies, with valuable training and experience. Secondly, this was a period when prized cargoes, such as gold and newly discovered tradable goods, were shipped via boat between the New World and Europe. Thirdly, European powers were unable to stretch their influence all the way across the Atlantic to the New World, leaving the North American colonies and sea routes vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, enlistment in the Navy was akin to indentured servitude, with hard labor and little freedom. Piracy, on the other hand, was more democratic and far better paying when successful. These factors made the era ripe for lawlessness and thievery.

Perhaps the grandest prize sought by pirates were the Spanish galleons bringing gold and silver back through the Caribbean to Europe. The English, French, and Dutch—all enemies of Spain—commissioned pirates called privateers to attack Spanish ships. Perhaps the most famous privateer in history was Sir Francis Drake, nicknamed “my pirate” by Queen Elizabeth I herself. Others, too, sought such valuable prizes. Captain William Kidd was initially hired to hunt down pirates, only to turn a pirate himself. John “Calico Jack” Rackham and Anne Bonny roamed the Caribbean like a pirate-era Bonnie and Clyde. Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, was one of the most feared pirates of the era and chief inspiration for popular depictions of pirates in books like *Treasure Island* and movies like *Pirates of the Caribbean*. The romantic legacy left by the pirates is worth billions today.

Light the Way

August 7 is Lighthouse Day, a day that commemorates the signing in 1789 of the Act for the Establishment and support of Lighthouse, Beacons, Buoys, and Public Piers. The newly formed U.S. Congress thought this Act so important that they signed it into law before establishing their own pay. The Act did not just dictate that the U.S. Treasury pay to maintain lighthouses, beacons, buoys, and piers, but it called for the construction of a new lighthouse at the entrance of Chesapeake Bay. That lighthouse was the Cape Henry lighthouse, the very first constructed under the Lighthouse Act and the first federally funded public works project in America. Nowadays, sailors may use GPS systems, radar beacons, buoys, and nautical charts to find their way, but lighthouses still serve the same purpose as they did in 1789. They are both navigational aids and warnings of dangerous areas such as shoals or rocky coasts. Visiting a lighthouse may whisk you back in time, but these towers of light remain integral to modern navigation.

The First “Marinette”



When the first recruiting station for female Marines opened up in Washington, D.C., on August 2, 1918, Opha May Johnson was the first in line. The very next day, after passing her physical examination, she was officially sworn into the Marine Corps. Why Johnson joined and how she felt as the first female Marine are lost to history, for Johnson did not keep any personal records of the experience. However, records of her 14 years of service in the Interstate Commerce Department where she worked as Clerk to the Quartermaster General show her to be whip-smart. As such, she was likely invited to enlist. She was the first of 300 women who took over office jobs at Marine Corps headquarters so that men could serve overseas during World War I. They were first nicknamed the “Marinettes,” but soon were considered so vital that all pretenses were dropped and they were simply Marines.

The Great Moon Hoax of 1835



On August 25, 1835, the *New York Sun* newspaper published the first of six articles describing the discovery of strange new life on the moon, including unicorns, two-legged beavers that walked upright and lived in huts, and winged, bat-like humanoids that worshipped at the Temple of the Moon. These organisms frolicked on white sand beaches amidst pyramids and massive amethyst crystals. While the discovery may sound far-fetched today, it was very believable then, especially since it was purported to be a reprint of a paper published in the *Edinburgh Journal of Science*. The articles were written by Dr. Andrew Grant, who was describing the findings of his colleague, the esteemed astronomer Sir John Herschel, who had already gained fame for establishing an observatory on South Africa's Cape of Good Hope. What the public did not know was that the *Edinburgh Journal of Science* had folded the year previous and Dr. Grant was completely fictional. The articles had been deliberately written as satire in order to poke fun at those who had written serious articles about life on the moon.

Readers, however, did not recognize the pieces to be satire, and the *New York Sun* suddenly enjoyed skyrocketing sales. Scientists from Yale University even traveled to New York trying to get their hands on the scientific papers from Edinburgh. The articles were reprinted in newspapers across Europe. What is now known as "The Great Moon Hoax" duped readers not just in America but around the world. When Herschel learned that the bogus discoveries had been attributed to him, he could only laugh. Horror writer Edgar Allan Poe was also amused. He had recently published the short story "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall," where a man voyages to the moon in a hot-air balloon. Poe was working on a follow-up when the articles broke, but he abandoned his work because he felt that he could not compete with the fantastic fictional reporting. *The Sun*, for its part, did not admit that the story was a hoax until a month later and never did apologize.

The Lammas Harvest

Lammas Day is a traditional agricultural holiday celebrated every August at the start of the season of the wheat harvest. The term *lammas* comes from "loaf," for loaves of bread, and "mass," meaning a religious feast. On Lammas Day, the first loaves of bread baked from the newly harvested wheat were taken to churches to be consecrated. The blessed loaves would then be broken into four pieces, and each piece would be placed in a different corner of the barn to protect the newly harvested grain stored there. Wheat is not the only grain harvested at Lammas time. Barley, oats, rye, corn, sunflowers, and Calendula were also part of the Lammas harvest season. This was also the day, in olden times, when tenants were supposed to present the first freshly harvested wheat to their landlords. These days, thousands of people still celebrate Lammas by baking bread that is shaped to look like a sheaf of wheat, an owl, or even a pagan figure of the "corn god." These symbols show how closely related Lammas is to other old harvest celebrations such as the Irish Lughnasadh.

Lincoln's Penny



On August 2, 1909, the very first Lincoln cents were put into circulation by the U.S. Mint. Before 1909, a president's visage had never appeared on a coin. In January of 1909, the Mint approached artist Victor David Brenner to design a coin depicting President Abraham Lincoln to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth. Two years earlier, Brenner had completed a plaque of Lincoln in profile for the Gorham Manufacturing Company; it was this plaque that became the design for the Lincoln cent, with Brenner imprinting his initials VDB on the reverse. When the cent was released, Treasury facilities were mobbed by those seeking the new pennies. Just one week after the minting, production of the pennies was halted to remove the VDB initials on the reverse, making the original VDB pennies invaluable collector items.

Roanoke's "Lost Colony"

On August 18, 1587, Virginia Dare was born, becoming the very first child born in the New World to English parents. This honor alone would have been enough to grant the girl fame, but she became even more famous for her mysterious disappearance as a member of the "Lost Colony" of Roanoke.



The founding of the Roanoke Colony in 1585 was the first attempt at establishing a permanent English settlement in the New World. The attempt was not successful, however. Due to a lack of supplies and bad relations

with the local Croatan tribe, most of the settlers returned to England. A second contingent of settlers, led by John White, returned to the colony in 1587. Shortly after their arrival, Virginia Dare, White's granddaughter, was born. This small success was overshadowed by other hardships. Desperate for assistance, White sailed back to England in late 1587, leaving behind Dare and the others. If White had hoped for a quick return to Roanoke with fresh supplies, he was badly mistaken. The Anglo-Spanish War broke out, and White's return was delayed for three years.

White did eventually return to Roanoke, ironically landing on August 18, 1590, his granddaughter Virginia Dare's third birthday. The settlement, though, was completely deserted, and there was no trace of the 118 people he had left behind. Even stranger, there was no sign of a battle. The only clue left was the word "CROATOAN" carved on a fence post. White believed this to mean that the colony had moved to the nearby Croatoan Island. The colony, however, was never found, and their disappearance remains a mystery. Theories abound as to the colony's fate. Some believe they moved north and integrated with a local tribe, only to be slaughtered by another. Others say they perished during a drought. Still others claim they attempted to sail back to England and were lost at sea, or that they were killed by the Spanish. Whatever their fate, archaeologists and anthropologists have been searching for clues for centuries.

August Birthdays

In astrology, those born between August 1–22 are Lions of Leo. Leos are natural leaders: intelligent, courageous, and bold. Leos' social natures also make them excellent friends. Those born between August 23–31 are Virgo's Virgins. Virgos love paying attention to details—not to be picky, but to help others. Their industrious efficiency makes them smart problem-solvers and fact-finders.

Maria Mitchell (astronomer) – August 1, 1818
Louis Armstrong (musician) – August 4, 1901
Neil Armstrong (astronaut) – August 5, 1930
Matthew Henson (explorer) – August 8, 1866
Alfred Hitchcock (director) – August 13, 1899
Davy Crockett (frontiersman) – August 17, 1786
H. P. Lovecraft (writer) – August 20, 1890
Dorothy Parker (writer) – August 22, 1893
Sean Connery (actor) – August 25, 1930
Charlie Parker (musician) – August 29, 1920
Frank Robinson (ballplayer) – August 31, 1935

Getting Bugged Down



It's probably no surprise to hear that the sport of competitive bog snorkeling was invented by two buddies during a conversation at a bar in Wales in 1976. From

this bar banter grew a sporting event like no other. Held every August, hundreds of swimmers from around the world converge on the stinking Waen Rhydd bog in Llanwrtyd Wells, Wales, to see who can swim two laps the fastest. Most of the fun, of course, comes in dressing in the most garish getup, and prizes are awarded for the craziest costume. The main event, however, is always the race. Wetsuits are encouraged, but the only equipment contestants are allowed are a pair of flippers and a snorkel. Swimmers swim two 90-foot laps as fast as they can. The bog races are all in good fun, but there is another message, too. The races are an opportunity to raise environmental awareness about the importance of peat bog habitats for animals, not just crazy human snorkelers.