

West Bloomfield Health and Rehabilitation Center

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Celebrating November

Aviation History Month

Native American Heritage Month

Adopt a Turkey Month

Polar Bear Week
November 1–7

Cliché Day
November 3

Veterans Day: U.S.
November 11

Rock Your Mocs Day
November 15

International Men's Day
November 19

Thanksgiving: U.S.
November 26

Square Dancing Day
November 29

A Bridge to the Past

Historic bridges are links to our past. They are exemplary of an era's architecture, engineering, art, and technology. They also tell the story of a region. Who built the bridge? Who used the bridge? What communities did it connect? During November, Historic Bridge Awareness Month, take the time to seek out a local historic bridge and learn the history it embodies.

The oldest bridge in America is a humble stone arch crossing of Pennypack Creek in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Built in 1697, men from the surrounding communities were expected to contribute to its construction either through labor or with money. Over the centuries, the three-span bridge has gone by many names: Pennypack Creek Bridge, the Holmesburg Bridge, the Frankford Avenue Bridge, and the King's Highway Bridge. It was originally built to carry America's first highway, the King's Road, from Philadelphia to New York. It was just 18 feet wide when it was built, large enough to accommodate two teams of horses. It is said that in April of 1775, a rider from Boston sped across the bridge into Philadelphia, delivering news of the Battle of Lexington and the start of the American Revolution.

Historic bridges range from the humble to the magnificent. On November 21, 1964, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge opened, a massive two-span suspension bridge connecting Brooklyn to Staten Island over the "Narrows," the mile-wide entrance to New York Harbor. When it was built, it was the longest bridge in the world, and it is still the longest suspension bridge in the Americas. New York's master planner Robert Moses, engineer Othmar Ammann, and the thousands of workers who risked their lives to construct such a marvel created more than a bridge; it is New York's grandest entrance and an enduring work of art. Its two monumental 70-story steel towers support four massive cables, which contain enough steel wire to stretch halfway to the moon. These bridges—artifacts of art, engineering, and history—are just two reminders out of thousands around the world that it is always better to build bridges than to burn them.

The Writing Life

Many writers believe that stories are alive inside all of us, just waiting for the moment to come alive when the pen is finally put to paper. November is both Novel Writing Month and Memoir Writing Month, providing inspiration for writers to develop a fantastical fiction or share personal histories.



All peoples and cultures tell stories. It has been said that storytelling is an essential part of human nature and society. We use stories to establish

social mores, preserve history, teach life lessons, explain the inexplicable, and entertain. The act of writing transposes oral stories into lasting works of art. This is a powerful act, one that defies even death, for written stories may last for centuries and even millennia after their creators are forgotten.

November 1 is Author's Day, a perfect day for self-reflection. What do you want to write? Is there a story inside you that you've been meaning to share? If you don't believe that you have a story worth sharing, think again. What is your fondest childhood memory? What moment most impacted your life? Remember, it is also human nature to find losses more powerful than gains. In many ways, sad stories about bad decisions or grave mistakes are just as compelling as those with happy endings. The writing process begins with a thought. The next step is to jot those thoughts down as notes. Only after you've amassed a wild jumble of ideas can you begin to organize them into the cohesive form of a memoir or novel. The human brain loves patterns. Organizing your thoughts into a beginning, middle, and end—creating a pattern—will help you create order out of ambiguity and could feel incredibly rewarding.

Most importantly, keep writing! November 15 is I Love to Write Day, a good reminder halfway through the month, in case you've forgotten. Even if you never publish the book you are writing, research has shown that writing is a valuable tool for personal growth and healing. When you write, you nurture yourself, and that's worth more than the most expensive book contract.

Thirsty for Customers

The Monday after Thanksgiving is widely known as Cyber Monday. It was created in 2005 by the National Retail Federation as a way to encourage people to shop online. E-commerce businesses are sure to lure hungry holiday shoppers with exclusive Cyber Monday deals and sales. The gimmick worked better than anyone could have hoped. In 2019, online sales surpassed traditional brick-and-mortar store sales for the first time, showing just how far e-commerce has come in the past 15 years. But not all businesses shared the economic success.

Fed up with the declining revenues suffered by traditional stores, a local bookshop in New Hampshire renamed Cyber Monday as *Cider Monday* in 2015. In an effort to draw customers away from their computers and back to main street businesses, Toadstool Bookshops offered free apple cider to shoppers. It did not take long for not just bookshops but all manner of small businesses across the country to follow suit. If you venture out on November 30 to do some local shopping, arrive thirsty for some cider.

Remembering Old Clem



November 23 is a special holiday for metalworkers and blacksmiths. It is St. Clement's Day, more casually known as Old Clem's Night, honoring Pope Clement I, the patron saint of metalworkers and blacksmiths. Celebrating the

holiday, or "Clementing," has died out in all but a few places. The festivities began at sundown with the firing of the anvil. Gunpowder was packed into a small hole in the anvil so when it was struck by a hammer, it exploded in a shower of sparks. Then the smith (or often an apprentice) dressed in a wig, cloak, and mask transformed himself into "Old Clem." Old Clem led a procession through the streets, visiting tavern after tavern, soliciting donations of ale and money to pay for the holiday dinner.

The Great Comet of 1680

For many of the 17th century, the appearance of a comet in the sky was something horrifying to behold. Comets were believed to be omens of disaster, foretelling earthquakes and storms, the death of kings, and the approach of disease. The year after a comet appeared over the skies of England in 1664, the Bubonic Plague killed 100,000 people in London. Then, in 1666, the Great Fire of London burned much of the central city to the ground. The word *disaster* comes from the Greek *dis*, meaning “bad,” and *aster*, meaning “star.” Indeed, many disasters were presaged by *bad stars*.



In November of 1680, a comet appeared in the heavens so big, so bright, and with such a long tail that it could be seen in the daytime. The appearance of the Great

Comet of 1680 threw many into confusion and dread. One letter from the time read: “God threatens us with dreadful punishments if we do not repent.” Others turned to science to explain the phenomenon.

The German astronomer Gottfried Kirch became the first man ever to see a comet from a telescope when he discovered the Great Comet on November 21, 1680. It came to be known as *Kirch's Comet*. A Spanish Jesuit priest, Eusebio Kino, charted the comet's course as he traveled from Cadiz, Spain, to Mexico City. His published account of the comet, the *Exposición astronómica de la cometa*, was one of the first scientific papers published in the New World. But the most famous investigator of the Great Comet was undoubtedly Isaac Newton.

Astronomer Johannes Kepler had previously argued that objects revolved around the sun in elliptical orbits. Alas, he never proved this theory. Newton, using data from the Royal Astronomer John Flamsteed, proved once and for all that the comet did indeed travel around the sun in an elliptical orbit. Newton's study of the Great Comet also led to his well-known theories of gravity.

Rights on “The Rock”

In 1963, the infamous prison Alcatraz, known as “The Rock,” closed its doors. Soon after, local Native American groups began lobbying for the island to become a cultural center and school. According to the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, Native Americans—referred to as Indians at the time—were allowed to take control of surplus federal lands. So, when a fire destroyed San Francisco's American Indian Center in October of 1969, a group of 89 activists, calling themselves “Indians of All Tribes,” occupied Alcatraz island during the morning hours of November 20, 1969.

The occupation lasted 19 months, with numbers on Alcatraz growing to 600. President Nixon chose to leave the peaceful occupiers alone. Officials visited to negotiate, but the occupiers demanded nothing less than the island itself, upon which they hoped to build a school, cultural center, and museum. Slowly, though, the political will of occupiers waned, and many departed, leaving behind a disorganized ragtag band. The activists may have given up Alcatraz, but they had propelled their rights movement forward and transformed Alcatraz into a symbol of Native American pride.

Nature Shows the Way



It's hard to believe in this digital age of GPS systems and hand-held cellular phone mapping that explorers once knew how to navigate without a compass. On November 6, Marooned Without a Compass Day, you, too, could learn how to find your way. At night under clear skies, it is easy enough to find your direction. Simply look to Polaris, the north star. During the day, find your way by planting a stick in the ground. Mark the end of its shadow with a rock. Wait 30 minutes and mark the new end of the shadow with another rock. The first rock is west. The second rock is east. Bisect the two to find north and south. You've just made your own compass!

Wedding Fit for a Queen

On November 20, 1947, Princess Elizabeth married Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, Duke of Edinburgh, a former Greek and Danish prince. Two thousand guests were invited to the ceremony at Westminster Abbey, and it was broadcast by the BBC over both radio and on television to the masses, which was groundbreaking coverage at the time. Not only did thousands of well-wishing Britons line the streets of London and swarm in front of Buckingham Palace, but an estimated 200 million people tuned in to the BBC broadcasts.



Princess Elizabeth's wedding dress was designed by Sir Norman Hartnell, designer to a long line of British royalty. His design was inspired by Botticelli's painting *Primavera*, an homage to spring and rebirth, and was submitted for review and accepted in mid-August, giving him just a few months to build the dress. It was made with ivory silk, fashioned with crystals and 10,000 seed pearls, and had a 15-foot silk tulle full court train. Because Britain was still subject to the rationing restrictions of World War II, Princess Elizabeth had to use rationing coupons to pay for her dress. Hundreds of Britons sent their personal coupons to the princess in a show of support. The Queen lent her daughter her grandmother Queen Mary's Russian Fringe tiara for the wedding day. Just as Elizabeth was set to leave for the Abbey, the tiara snapped and had to be quickly repaired on-site.

The royal couple received 11 wedding cakes, but only one was official, baked by Scotland's McVitie and Price. The cake stood nine feet high in four tiers. With food rationing still in place, ingredients from around the world were sent as wedding presents, including sugar from the Girl Guides of Australia. With ingredients coming from far and wide, the cake was known as the "10,000 Mile Cake." In an era of austerity, some balked at the spectacle of such a lavish affair. But most Britons reveled in the royals and their extravagant wedding. It would be decades before another wedding of such import.

November Birthdays

In astrology, those born from November 1–21 are Scorpio's scorpions. Scorpions are passionate and intense, yet you may never know given their calm demeanors. They value truth, loyalty, and justice in friends and family. Those born between November 22–30 are Archers of Sagittarius. The Archer's open mind, optimism, curiosity, and enthusiasm make them the travelers of the zodiac. They treasure freedom: freedom to roam, freedom of thought, and freedom to express themselves.

Will Rogers (cowboy) – November 4, 1879
William Wells Brown (writer) – November 6, 1814
Dorothy Dandridge (actress) – November 9, 1922
Neil Young (musician) – November 12, 1945
Whoopi Goldberg (comedian) – November 13, 1955
Danny DeVito (actor) – November 17, 1944
Dominique Dawes (gymnast) – November 20, 1976
Ricardo Montalban (actor) – November 25, 1920
Tina Turner (singer) – November 26, 1939
Samuel Clemens (writer) – November 30, 1835

Turbo-Charged Toboggan



On November 22, 1927, Carl Eliason patented his Motor Toboggan after years of experimentation, giving rise to the invention of the snowmobile. Eliason, having grown up in Wisconsin, was an avid outdoorsman, but he suffered a foot disability that prevented him from snowshoeing. So, in 1924, the 24-year-old Eliason decided to attach a pair of skis to the front of a toboggan outfitted with an outboard motor that powered a steel track. His "motor toboggan" became the world's first primitive snowmobile. After receiving the patent, Eliason went on to build 50 of the machines, each one an individual work of art. When an order for 150 came in from Finland, he sold the rights to a major manufacturer. The U.S. Army even ordered 150 of the machines to help soldiers defend Alaska's wild and wintry backcountry.