

YOUR LETTERHEAD

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The Klondike Gold Rush

On August 16, 1896, an American prospector named George Carmack was fishing with his wife at the mouth of the Klondike River. Many of the other prospectors did not particularly like Carmack. They distrusted him for marrying the daughter of a local Native American chief and for his habit of telling tall tales, a habit that earned him the nickname "Lyn' George." But it is no exaggeration to say that Carmack's adventure on that morning would change the course of history.

Carmack and his wife were traveling with her brother and nephew, "Skookum" Jim Mason and Dawson Charlie, both members of the Tagish First Nation. While history often reports that it was Carmack who discovered gold at Rabbit Creek near the Klondike River, it is far more likely that Skookum Jim made the first discovery. But because Carmack was the only American in the group, he filed the claim. There was enough gold in the creek to make Carmack and his family rich beyond measure. He renamed the waterway

August Birthdays

In astrology, those born August 1–22 are Leo's Lions. These "kings of the jungle" are natural-born leaders, full of creativity, confidence, and charisma. Leos use their generosity and sense of humor to unite different groups into a common cause. Those born August 23–31 are Virgo's Virgins. Virgos pay attention to details and like to keep things organized. Their deep sense of humanity and love of others makes them defenders of justice, goodness, and purity.

- Jason Momoa (actor) – August 1, 1979
- Barack Obama (president) – August 4, 1961
- Whitney Houston (singer) – August 9, 1963
- Viola Davis (actress) – August 11, 1965
- Magic Johnson (athlete) – August 14, 1959
- Angela Bassett (actress) – August 16, 1958
- Kobe Bryant (athlete) – August 23, 1978
- Kenny Rogers (Musician) – August 21, 1938
- Katherine Johnson (physicist) – August 26, 1918
- Buddy Hackett (comedian) – August 31, 1924

Lights in the Darkness

The romantic allure of lighthouses has endured for centuries. Our love of lighthouses runs so deep that we have preserved and protected 700 in the United States, and even designated August 7 as Lighthouse Day. Our affinity for lighthouses amounts to more than nostalgia for a simpler, bygone era or our attraction to picturesque rocky coastlines. As beacons of light in the treacherous darkness, lighthouses are steadfast symbols of safety and reliability, characteristics that we crave and value above all else.

One cannot appreciate the lighthouse without appreciating the solitary lighthouse keeper. Indeed, the lighthouse and its keeper are so interconnected that we cannot help but imbue the tower itself with human characteristics.

Fannie Boston 3rd

Ted Spears 9th

Helen Galloway 11th

Shirley Vee Finley 14th

Bonita Caffey 15th

Vera Johnson 18th

JC Fog 25th

Sheryl Hughes 26th

Virginia Bradac 26th

Nellie Williams 26th

Diane Williamson 27th

Janie Hayes 28th

William Burton 30th

Katie Jackson 31st

Bonanza Creek, and, despite his newfound wealth, he spent the remainder of his days searching for gold in California and the Cascade Mountains of Washington.



So remote was Canada's Yukon that word of Carmack's discovery did not reach civilization until a year later. Upon hearing the news, 100,000 prospectors, called "stampedeers" for their frenzied rush north, headed to the Klondike in search of their own fortunes. The Canadian government required prospectors to carry a literal ton of equipment and supplies to ensure that they would survive the trip. Men carried the loads themselves, scaling treacherous routes such as the Chilkoot Trail through the mountains. The journey was so taxing that only 30,000 made it to the Klondike River, and most all of these a full year later. Worst of all, those that did make it to the Klondike found that the region had already been mined. Of the original 100,000 prospectors, only 4,000 found gold, and just a few hundred became rich. Regardless of the facts of history, the name Klondike will forever be synonymous with gold.

Celebrating August

International Pirate Month

American Adventures Month

Read a Romance Novel Month

International Clown Week *August 1–7*

Braham Pie Day *August 6*

Sturgis Motorcycle Rally *August 6–15*

Sandcastle Day *August 7*

Elvis Week *August 11–17*

Bowling Day *August 14*

Chef's Appreciation Day *August 21*

International Dog Day *August 26*

Pony Express Day *August 29*

Virginia Woolf, the author of *To the Lighthouse*, may have put it best when she said, "Lighthouses are endlessly suggestive signifiers of both human isolations and our ultimate connectedness to each other." For Woolf, lighthouses are monuments to the human condition: the sea of collective humanity consists of drops, individual and unique. We, like lighthouses, exist to shine our light upon others.

Throughout history, no light has shone brighter than the lighthouse known as Pharos of Alexandria. Egypt's lighthouse was both the first and largest of its kind ever built. Rising 330 feet tall, a massive mirror reflected the blazing sun by day, while raging bonfires lit its apex by night. Sailors could spy its light from 30 miles away. Modern lighthouses act as warnings of rocky coastlines or hidden reefs, but Pharos acted as a grand entrance marker to Alexandria's port, a hub of commerce, technological innovation, and free thought. Built in 280 BC, Pharos stood for 1,600 years, earning renown as a Wonder of the World and surviving three earthquakes before toppling into the sea. In a sense, all the world's lighthouses are descendants of that world wonder, and those who study lighthouses and their signal lights are proudly called *pharologists*, in memory of great Pharos.

A Macabre Month

During the seventh lunar month, from August 8 to September 6, Taiwan celebrates Ghost Month. Taoists and Buddhists believe that the gates of the underworld are thrown open, allowing “hungry ghosts” to roam the land. These lost souls, commonly called “Good Brothers” and “Good Sisters,” demand tribute from ancestors who have forgotten to honor them. August 22 is especially important, for it is on this day that families perform rituals and make offerings to appease the restless ghosts.

In order to satisfy the cravings of the ghosts, families leave offerings of food and hold large feasts with empty seats to appease the Good Brothers and Sisters. It is also traditional to use joss paper, a fragrant incense-like paper, to create papier-mâché offerings that look like clothing, gold, cars, televisions, and other goods. Even money known as “hell bank notes” is printed on joss paper. All the offerings are then burned, so that the gifts can be transported to the underworld and enjoyed by the hungry ghosts.

The goal of the month is to appease the ghosts, not attract them. For this reason, there are certain taboos every family should avoid. While lanterns are hung in temples to light the way for the lost souls, one should never hang lanterns or wind chimes in the home lest the ghosts find a way into



your house. Since the ghosts are believed to enjoy cold, damp, and dark spaces, it is important to let a lot of light into the house. Families open windows, install bright lamps, prune trees or shrubs that block the sun, and refrain from painting rooms in dark hues to repel the Good Brothers and Sisters. It is commonly believed that the toes of one’s shoes point to where you are located. For this reason, people always point the toes of their shoes away from the bed while sleeping, so that the hungry ghosts cannot find them. At last, to lead the hungry ghosts back to the underworld, lanterns are lit and set on water. When the lights go out, families know that the ghosts have found their way back home.

That’s Preposterous!

Preposterous packaging is so commonplace that it enjoys its own day of recognition, Particularly Preposterous Packaging Day, on August 7. We’ve all been there: You order some small batteries to be delivered, and they arrive in a ridiculously oversized box filled with a thousand Styrofoam peanuts. Or you go to the grocery store and find that each banana is individually wrapped in plastic. Or perhaps the packaging misidentifies the contents. These are examples of wasteful or inane packaging practices. Another common packaging mistake is to encase a product in an impenetrable cocoon of plastic. There is even a condition known as “wrap rage” that describes the aggravated feelings that overwhelm people when they cannot open a package. Each year, thousands of people suffer cuts on their hands or sprained wrists due to their struggles to open packaging, injuries that require visits to an emergency room. The best solution to this modern problem may be to avoid preposterous packaging altogether and buy local.

Smooth Sale-ing



Highway 127 runs from Addison, Michigan, to Gadsden, Alabama, and, at almost 700 miles long, it hosts the World’s Longest Yard Sale from August 5–8. The 127 Yard Sale, as it is known by locals, was invented in 1987 by a Tennessee city official named Mike Walker. In an effort to encourage drivers to avoid interstate travel, take local scenic routes, and thereby support local businesses, Walker suggested that local residents line their front yards with goods for sale. Each year, thousands of motorists drive the route, perusing the wares for sale and catching the unique attractions found in the six participating states. Route 127 doesn’t just offer the world’s longest yard sale but it also provides the backdrop of what may be America’s strangest (and most profitable) road trip.

Decoding History



August 14 is Code Talkers Day, a day to recognize the invaluable contributions of the World War II Navajo code talkers. Using a complex Navajo-based code, these cryptographers encoded and transmitted messages to American forces working in the Pacific theater. The encoded language was so unique that it was never cracked by the Japanese.

While tremendous gratitude is owed to the famed Navajo code talkers of World War II, they were not the first Native American code talkers to be employed by the U.S. military. During World War I, a small group of Cherokee soldiers from western North Carolina were attached to British troops fighting the Germans off the west coast of France. When it was discovered that the Germans were intercepting communications, the Cherokee cleverly volunteered to transmit messages in their native language. The soldiers had guessed correctly. The Germans could not translate the communications. This tactic proved so effective that it was reused during World War II.

It was Philip Johnston, a non-native speaker of Navajo and a World War I veteran, who suggested the use of the Navajo language as code to the Marine Corps. Johnston knew enough of the language to know that it would be indecipherable to the Japanese. The Marines quickly recruited Navajo and helped them develop a code that could be rapidly transmitted and decoded. Throughout the entirety of the war, the Navajo code talkers would gain a stellar reputation for the skill, speed, and accuracy of their code-making. The Navajo may be the most famous of the code talkers, but they were in no way alone. Native speakers of Comanche, Assiniboine, Cree, Meskwaki, Mohawk, Muscogee, and Tlingit also provided unbreakable code for U.S. forces. The Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008 finally recognized every Native American code talker with a Congressional Gold Medal.

Mastering Mahjong

If you’re looking for a challenging new game to play, then consider taking up mahjong on August 1, International Mahjong Day. This Chinese tile-trading game is similar to rummy, where the object is to collect and trade matching sets of tiles.

The game was not developed in ancient China but was created around Shanghai in the mid-1800s. One story suggests that it was a servant of the emperor who applied the rules of popular card games to a newly designed set of tiles. The game grew in popularity locally amongst the Chinese, and Americans visiting China brought it back to America in the 1920s. Before long, mahjong was a popular and common parlor game played everywhere from living rooms and parks to sidewalks and resorts. The appeal of the game comes not just from the intellectual challenge and strategy involved, but from the social interaction required during play. The trading of tiles encourages talk between players across the table, and for many players, this table talk is what makes mahjong so enjoyable.

Feeling Left Out



It may be fitting that International Lefthanders Day falls on Friday, August 13. Like many superstitions associated with Friday the 13th, left-handedness was once believed to be a source of evil. The Devil himself is thought to be left-handed, and in the Middle Ages, lefthanded people were thought to practice witchcraft. Luckily, modern science has put such unsettling notions to rest. There are really no great differences between right- and left-handers in personality, health, or thinking. For the 10% of the population that is left-handed, things might be more inconvenient—after all, the majority of the world is right-handed, so many products and designs cater to right-handed people.