

## The Strangest Plague



The German city of Aachen was reeling from the Black Death when another plague hit on June 24, 1374. Hundreds of people began to dance uncontrollably. Records from the period indicate that the dancing plague swept from Germany into the Low Countries and then to France. Thousands danced for days or even weeks, screaming of terrible visions, begging monks to save their souls. Many perished from exhaustion. Amazingly, this was neither the first nor the last time dancing mania had struck Europe.

The Germans of 1374 called the dancing plague *St. John's Dance*, believing that the dancers had been cursed by the saint. Modern-day scientists struggle to come up with a better explanation. One theory is that the townsfolk suffered from ergot poisoning. Ergot, a type of fungus found growing on stalks of rye, can lead to hallucinations and involuntary spasms. While the dancing plague occurred in locales where people consumed rye and possibly ergot, it also occurred in places where people would not have suffered from ergot poisoning.

The prevailing theory is that all those suffering from dancing mania suffered a sort of mass delusion. Throughout Europe, people were under inordinate amounts of psychological stress. Years of disease and famine, punctuated in Aachen by a horrible natural disaster, had stretched people to their breaking points. Psychologists note that high levels of mental stress can lead people to enter involuntary trances. Records from the era describe people entering such states: blind stares, extraordinary levels of endurance that allowed them to dance for days on sore feet, descriptions of vivid visions. But still, why a trance state of *dancing*? Psychologists believe that dancing wasn't contagious as a true disease but as a psychology. Knowledge of previous dancing outbreaks and the prevalence of beliefs such as spiritual curses led to more of the same. It might not just be a coincidence that by the mid-1600s dancing mania had abated, coinciding with a new rationalism that rejected belief in the supernatural.

## June Birthdays

In astrology, those born June 1–21 are Twins of Gemini. Perhaps because twins are born with a companion, Geminis love to communicate with others. They are clever extroverts who can make persuasive arguments. Those born from June 22–30 are Crabs of Cancer. Crabs are very intuitive and sensitive to their environment. Their home is their sanctuary, and they are emotionally committed to family and loved ones.

- Morgan Freeman (actor) – June 1, 1937
- Angelina Jolie (actress) – June 4, 1975
- Prince (musician) – June 7, 1958
- Joan Rivers (comedienne) – June 8, 1933
- Gene Wilder (actor) – June 11, 1933
- Burl Ives (singer) – June 14, 1909
- Venus Williams (tennis star) – June 17, 1980
- Phylicia Rashad (actress) – June 19, 1948
- Lionel Richie (singer) – June 20, 1949
- Wilma Rudolph (Olympian) – June 23, 1940
- Derek Jeter (baseball player) – June 26, 1974
- Kathy Bates (actress) – June 28, 1948

## Juneteenth for All



June 19, better known as Juneteenth, was established as a federal holiday in 2021, but it has been observed as the date commemorating the end of slavery in the United States since 1865. It was on June 19, 1865, that U.S. General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with a force of federal troops to declare that "in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free." That proclamation was President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which had been signed a full two-and-a-half years earlier. Texas had been considered a haven for slavery, as it had been spared from much of the Civil War's fighting and the presence of Union troops. That all changed with General Granger's arrival. Later that December, slavery was formally abolished in America with the adoption of the 13th Amendment.



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### Celebrating June Men's Health Month

#### Camping Month Music with Neil Hewitt

*June 2nd*

#### National Hot Air Balloon Day

*June 5th*

#### Iced Tea Day

*June 10th*

#### Family History Day

*June 14th*

#### Father's Day

*June 19th*

#### Make Music Day

*June 21st*

#### Music with Dave Gray

*June 21st*

#### Public Service Day

*June 23rd*

### "Happy Birthday to You"

- June 10<sup>th</sup> Mary Presnall
- June 11<sup>th</sup> Lisa Dirksen
- June 14<sup>th</sup> Daisy Lopez
- June 16<sup>th</sup> Sarah Gardner
- June 17<sup>th</sup> Dick Coe
- June 24<sup>th</sup> Tim Klinefelter
- June 28<sup>th</sup> Blanca Perez

## Milk's Shaky History

June was declared Milk Month in 1937 as part of a campaign to help dairy producers sell excess milk produced during warm summer months when grazing was plentiful for dairy cows and milk production was at its peak. Dairies were keen to increase sales because the industry was grappling with significant change.

Where milk was once delivered daily door-to-door by milkmen, by the 1930s and '40s, home milk delivery was nearly obsolete. Thanks to the invention of home refrigeration, families were now able to store milk and perishable goods in their homes for long periods. Grocery stores, which had previously sold mostly dry goods, now had vast refrigerated sections that kept everything from milk to ice cream cold. The whistling milkman became a thing of the past, a piece of precious nostalgia.

Yet some modern families have embraced the return of daily milk delivery. Milkmen are once again making their rounds, delivering fresh milk in glass bottles. Not only is the milk fresh, often bottled and delivered within 24 hours, but the glass bottles are environmentally friendly, reducing the need for plastic jugs and paper cartons. Better yet, milkmen are also delivering fresh eggs, butter, cheese, and yogurt. If you're lucky, you can even receive chocolate or strawberry milk! Signing up for modern milk delivery is helping local farms flourish.

Despite these innovations, the future of dairy is a bit foggy. Anyone who has ventured into the milk aisle at the grocery store now sees several plant-based milk options: nut milk, coconut milk, and soy milk. Dairy executives might object to using the term *milk* to describe the white, milky, liquid that comes from crushing nuts into a paste and blending them with water, but such beverages have been drunk as "milk" for centuries by cultures around the globe. Many people who cannot enjoy dairy for health reasons are lucky to have these plant-based alternatives. Non-dairy milks can even be transformed into other dairy staples, such as butter, ice cream, and cheese. There's suddenly more to Dairy Month than ever before.

## Here, There Be Dragons

On the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese calendar, which arrives this year on June 3, dragon-shaped boats take to the water during China's annual Dragon Boat Festival.

One legend explains that the festival originated around 300 BC when poet and politician Qu Yuan was exiled from his royal house for arguing against an alliance proposed by the emperor. Qu Yuan was forced to live in exile, composing poetry and never forgetting his love for his dynasty. Years later, when the emperor was betrayed by his new ally and the capital was overrun, Qu Yuan despaired and drowned himself in the Miluo River. Locals raced out in their boats to save him. When Qu Yuan's body could not be found, they dropped balls of sticky rice, or *zongzi*, into the river so that the fish would consume the rice and not Qu Yuan's body. It is said that the dragon boat races honor those who raced out in their boats to find Qu Yuan, and it is still traditional to prepare and eat *zongzi* during the three days of the festival.



Why do the boats resemble dragons? The water was believed to be the domain of water dragons, powerful and benevolent spirits. Water dragons also controlled the rain. During the start of summer, and especially near the summer solstice, offerings of *zongzi* were made to water dragons in return for adequate rainfall for the summer crops. The dragon boats reflect a devout reverence of water dragons.

The Dragon Boat Festival is far more than the worship of water dragons and old dynastic legends. The fifth day of the fifth month is considered extremely unlucky, a time of natural disasters and illness. It is believed that five poisonous creatures begin to appear at this time: snakes, scorpions, centipedes, toads, and spiders. To ward off poison and disease, it is traditional to hang a sachet of five protective herbs—calamus, artemisia, pomegranate flowers, Chinese ixora, and garlic—over the doorway. Offerings to the water dragons also ensure protection from these malevolent creatures.

## On Eagle's Wings

On June 20, 1782, a picture of a bald eagle with wings outstretched was proposed to the U.S. Congress as the Great Seal of the United States. Not everyone accepted the bald eagle as the national bird, and a debate raged for years after its selection. Benjamin Franklin famously objected:

"I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country; he is a bird of bad moral character; like those among men who live by sharpening and robbing, he is generally poor, and often very lousy. The turkey is a much more respectable bird and withal a true, original native of America."

Franklin's objections would be overruled, and in 1787, the eagle was officially adopted as America's national emblem. America was not the first country to use an eagle as its symbol: the ancient Roman Empire and the First Persian Empire both used eagles to denote strength and glory.

## Women of the Water



For 40 years, Coney Island has held its annual Mermaid Parade in June, a day to revel in all things mermaid-related. Tales of mermaids date back as far as the oldest human records.

There are even centuries-old records of mermaids lurking in South Africa's desert basins. These fish-tailed humans dragged unsuspecting passersby into rock pools. But not all mermaids are so cruel. Mermaids have meant different things to different cultures. In West Africa, mermaids were the embodiment of water spirits; they were "Mothers of the Waters" who offered beauty, healing, and wisdom. The Thai mermaid Suvannamaccha is still revered as a princess and herald of good luck, while the Nibiinaabe of Canada's Ojibwe are skittish water sprites that keep to themselves. With over 3,000 in attendance at Coney Island's Mermaid Parade, you're likely to find mermaids of every sort.

## Marrying Traditions

Wedding bells will be ringing all through the month of June. After all, it is the most popular month for couples to be married. Some say it is because June's pleasant weather is best for a wedding, but this tradition has roots far deeper than any meteorologist could predict.



The month of June was named for the Roman goddess Juno, whose domain was marriage, childbirth, and family. As the patron goddess of Rome and all the Roman Empire, she was called *Regina*, or "Queen," and was part of a powerful triumvirate of gods that included Jupiter, king of the gods, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom, justice, and military strategy. Of the three, Juno was worshipped as the protector of the empire, and particularly as a protector of women. Roman women went so far as to call their souls *junos*, believing that they each possessed a small bit of their beloved *Regina's* spirit. June, unsurprisingly, was considered the most auspicious month to be married.

Historical evidence suggests that June might have been a popular month for marriage even before the time of the Romans. The Celts celebrated their springtime fertility ritual of Beltane on the cross-quarter holiday of May 1. Cross-quarter days were astronomical holidays that fell between quarter days, the equinoxes and solstices. It was a Beltane tradition for young couples to pair and plan for a wedding on the next cross-quarter day, which would not arrive until August three months later. Impatient young couples, eager to wed, would often not wait until August and instead marry in mid-June on the following quarter day, the day of the summer solstice. In this way, June became a traditional month for marriage.

It might come as no surprise that the following springs often coincided with a baby boom for couples married the previous June. This only provided more evidence of spring's powerful fertility as Earth sprang back to life with its blooming flowers and leafing trees.

## A Day for Dad

The very first celebration of Father's Day was on June 19, 1910, at a YMCA in Spokane, Washington. Sonora Smart Dodd had watched her father single-handedly raise six children. After hearing a sermon about the virtues of Mother's Day, Dodd approached her pastor and suggested a comparable holiday for fathers. Her pastor agreed and set the date for the third Sunday in June.

Father's Day became an annual observance in Spokane, but once Dodd left home to attend school at the Art Institute of Chicago, the holiday was quickly forgotten. Upon her return to Spokane, Dodd embarked upon a crusade to recognize Father's Day on a national level. She sought the help of trade groups that would benefit from such a holiday: tie and tobacco pipe manufacturers. The New York Associated Men's Wear Retailers group even founded a Father's Day Council to promote the holiday. Decades passed, and members of the U.S. Congress resisted founding a national holiday. It wasn't until 1972 that President Richard Nixon made Father's Day a permanent national holiday by signing it into law.

## You May Now Lick the Bride



It is well known that June is a popular month for weddings, but did you know that the second week in June is Pet Wedding Week, a week dedicated to the lasting union between animals? This unique holiday was

designed for pet owners who believe that their pets should be suitably paired and partnered into loving relationships for the purposes of companionship and breeding. There is even a National Pet Association of Ceremonies, a nationally recognized body of pet ceremony officiants, that will conduct official pet weddings. Like human weddings, costs can grow exponentially, with some paying thousands for catering, flowers, live music, and, of course, bridal gowns.