

Valentine's Day was not always for the romantic

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Valentine's Day did not begin as a celebration of romantic love. Its roots stretch back thousands of years and are tied to ancient Roman traditions, early christianity, and later medieval European culture. Before Valentine's Day existed, ancient Romans celebrated a festival called Lupercalia, held every year from February 13-15.

What was Lupercalia?

It was an ancient pagan festival held each year in Rome on February 15 to purify the city, promoting health and fertility in both people and crops. The festival honored Faunus (The Roman) and was also linked to the legendary founder of Rome.

During Lupercalia, Roman priests known as Luperci performed ritual sacrifices of goats and dogs. The hides of the sacrificed animals were cut into strips and used in ceremonies where women were lightly struck. Romans believed this act increased fertility and eased childbirth. The festival also included matchmaking practices, in which men and women were paired by chance, sometimes forming relationships that lasted beyond the festival.

Lupercalia was loud, physical, and ritualistic, reflecting Roman beliefs about fertility, survival, and divine favor. These traditions were deeply rooted in Roman culture and stood in stark contrast to later Christian values.

The Role of Christianity and the End of Pagan Rituals

As christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, church leaders sought to eliminate pagan festivals and replace them with Christian observances. By the late fifth century, pagan traditions such as Lupercalia were seen as incompatible with Christian teaching.

In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius first officially banned Lupercalia. To provide a Christian alternative, the Church designated February 14 as a feast day honoring Saint Valentine, a Christian martyr. This marked a turning point in the holiday's history, shifting it from pagan fertility rituals to a religious observance.

Saint Valentine

The identity of Saint Valentine is unclear, as historical

records suggest there were multiple Christian martyrs named Valentine who lived during the third century. The most popular legend involves a priest in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudis II around 270 AD.

According to legend, Emperor Claudius II believed that unmarried men made better soldiers and banned marriage for young men. Valentine, believing the law to be unjust, secretly performed Christian marriage ceremonies. When discovered, he was arrested and imprisoned.

While in prison, Valentine is said to have formed a close bond with the jailer's daughter, whom he may have healed of blindness. Before his execution, Valentine allegedly wrote her a farewell letter signed "From your valentine." Although historians debate the accuracy of this story, it strongly influenced the association between Valentine's Day and love.

Saint Valentine's death made him a symbol of sacrifice, faith, and devotion, values that aligned closely with early Christian beliefs.

Valentine's Day as a Religious Feast

For centuries, Valentine's Day was primarily a religious feast day within the Catholic Church. The focus was not romantic love, but spiritual devotion and martyrdom. Love was understood in a religious sense, selfless, faithful.

There were no romantic traditions, gifts, or cards associated with the holiday at this stage. Instead, it served as a reminder of religious commitment and moral virtue.

The birth of Romance

The transformation of Valentine's Day into a romantic holiday occurred during the Middle Ages, particularly in England and France. During this period, a cultural movement known as courtly love emerged, emphasizing admiration, loyalty, emotional devotion. People in medieval Europe believed that birds began mating in mid-February, reinforcing the idea that February 14 symbolized love and fertility. Writers and poets began associating Valentine's Day with romantic partnership.

One of the most influential figures in this transformation was Geoffrey Chaucer, a 14th-century English poet. In his poem Parliament of Fowls, Chaucer linked Valentine's Day with romantic partnership. His writing helped establish

February 14 as a celebration of romance.

The Rise of Valentine's Messages and Symbols

By the 15th century, Valentine's Day had become a popular occasion for exchanging handwritten love notes. These early "valentines" often included poems, affectionate language, and symbolic imagery. The heart became a symbol of love because medieval medicine believed it was the center of emotion. Other symbols, such as cupid, were borrowed from Roman mythology. Cupid, based on the god Eros, represented desire and attraction.

Valentine's Day in America

Valentine's Day was brought to the United States by European settlers, but it did not gain widespread popularity until the 19th century. The Industrial Revolution made printed materials more affordable, allowing Valentine's cards to be mass-produced. A key figure in popularizing the holiday was Esther Howland, who began producing decorated Valentine's cards in the 1840s. Her success helped establish Valentine's Day as a commercial celebration. By the late 1800s, exchanging cards, chocolates, and flowers had become common. Businesses recognized the holiday's economic potential, further shaping its modern form.

Criticism and Cultural Debate

Despite its popularity, Valentine's Day faces criticism for its commercialization and the pressure it places on relationships. Some argue that the holiday promotes unrealistic expectations of love and excludes those who are single. However, supporters argue that Valentine's Day provides an opportunity to reflect on love in all forms, including family, friendship, and self-respect. Valentine's Day is the result of centuries of cultural evolution. What began as a pagan fertility festival transformed into a Christian feast day, then into a medieval celebration of romance, and finally into a modern global holiday. Its history reflects how societies redefine traditions to match changing beliefs and values. Though its meaning has shifted over time, Valentine's Day continues to represent humanity's enduring desire for connection, affection, and love. Understanding its past allows us to see the holiday not just as a commercial event, but as a reflection of cultural, religious, and emotional history.

Education that saves lives: how one patient's commitment changed everything

When Justin Cuskey arrived at Stillwater Medical Center's emergency department, he believed he was facing a lung problem. A longtime smoker and someone working a physically demanding job, shortness of breath felt like something he could explain away. What he did not expect was a life-changing diagnosis—or the education that would ultimately help him

reclaim his health.

Cuskey had grown accustomed to powering through discomfort. For months, he experienced nighttime breathing issues, occasional dizziness, and unexplained weight gain. Like many people, he brushed off the symptoms as stress, aging, or the natural consequences of years of manual labor. "I never once thought it was my heart," he said.

That changed the morning he woke up unable to catch his breath. Within hours of arriving at Stillwater Medical Center, Cuskey learned he was experiencing congestive heart failure related to long-standing hypertension and fluid buildup around his heart and lungs. The diagnosis was sobering, but what stood out to him most was how clearly his care team explained what was happening and why it mattered.

"Dr. Trad drew me



Education and personalized care are central to visits in the cardiology clinic, where the care team helps patients better understand their heart health.

a diagram to show how my arteries were welling up, and I wasn't getting the oxygen I needed, because of my diet and lifestyle choices," Cuskey said.

This introduction to the extensive education that would follow was the turning point for Cuskey.

During his hospital stay, Cuskey lost more than 12 pounds of excess fluid in just one night. As the physical symptoms eased, the learning began. His care team walked him through the importance of sodium restriction, fluid management, blood pressure monitoring, and lifestyle changes. For the first time, Cuskey understood how everyday choices, many of them seemingly small, could affect his heart's health.

"They kept telling me how important it was to watch my salts," he said. "I never even thought about how much is in processed foods and everything else I eat."

After leaving the emergency department, Cuskey immediately applied what he had learned. "When I went home, I threw out my groceries, and I had just gone shopping the night before, because everything was obviously full of way too much salt," he said.

He began reading labels, tracking intake, monitoring weight, and paying attention to his blood pressure. "I try to keep myself to just about a liter of water a day," Cuskey said, "and I try for 1,000 milligrams of salt, or less, which is very hard."

Cuskey credits his progress to listening closely and committing fully. "I just instantly started with that first thing, which was cutting everything I previously ate out," he said, "and I mean everything. No drinking and no smoking too."

This decision was reinforced by a candid conversation with his doctor.

"He told me he had 8 patients with the exact same condition as mine, for the same reasons, and six of them lived," Cuskey said. "The two that didn't went back to their old ways."

That moment solidified his resolve. "I don't want to be three out of nine," he said.

Looking back, Cuskey sees education as the key to everything. "Honestly, if anything, the one thing I did do is listen," he said. "I took everything they said to heart."

Cuskey credits his experience at Stillwater Medical with giving him not only treatment, but the tools to move forward. The guidance he received empowered him to take ownership of his health—something he believes saved his life.

His message during Heart Month is simple but powerful: get screened, ask questions, and listen to your care team. "I just did, and still am doing, what they told me," Cuskey said. "That's what my story is. I think people should listen, and get checked out, because it works."

Stillwater Medical offers cardiovascular screenings for only \$50 year-round with no physician referral required. To schedule, visit www.stwmedical.com/ cardioscreenings

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OKLAHOMA TURNPIKE AUTHORITY CIMARRON TURNPIKE ADVERTISEMENT FOR PROPOSAL MOWING CONTRACT NO. CI-M-26

OKLAHOMA TURNPIKE AUTHORITY NOW REQUIRES ONLINE BIDDING. To sign up for online bidding, contact Bid Express at www.BidExpress.com/users/new or call (888) 352-2439. All bids must be submitted over the Internet via Bid Express to the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

NO BID WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER 9:30 A.M. on the scheduled bid opening date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026. Proposals will be publicly opened at 10:35 A.M. via Zoom.

Join Zoom Meeting

One tap mobile: US: +16692545252,,1611333577# or +16692161590..1611333577#

Meeting URL: <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1611333577?pwd=ZiKaluDKuO8lam9RbssYYuhAKjiJPP.1>

Meeting ID: 161 133 3577

Passcode: 694103

Proposals will be in accordance with the following:

- I. The bidder shall submit with the Proposal a certified or cashier's check or a bid bond or an amount not less than five percent (5%) of the amount of the proposal to guarantee the bidder, if successful, will enter into a contract and obtain a bond in agreement with the requirements of the Specifications. The check shall be payable to the order of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.
- II. No bids which are tied to, or contingent upon. Other work with the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority will be accepted.
- III. Bidders shall familiarize themselves with the conditions and shall understand that full cooperation in executing the requirements of the Specifications and Special Provisions is expected.
- IV. The Proposal shall be prepared as directed by the 2010 Standard Specifications for Turnpike Construction.
- V. A set of bidding documents, including proposal forms, contract forms, Special Provisions, and 2010 Standard Specification for Turnpike Construction, may be examined at the Maintenance Division's office of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, located at 3500 N. Martin Luther King Blvd., OKC, OK 73111.
- VI. There will be a mandatory mowing pre-bid meeting scheduled at 10:45 A.M. on Friday, February 27, 2026, at the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Administration Offices, 3500 North Martin Luther King Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73111.
- VII. The work to be performed under Contract Number CI-M-26 consists of:
 Mowing, trimming, and possibly hay baling of designated right-of-way, interchanges, toll plaza areas, picnic areas, and median areas, to include hand trimming around bridges, guardrail, bridge headers, sign structures, trees and drop inlets as required. Contract area will include 988 clear zone and interchange acres and 1,614 acres outside the clear zone from mile 0.0 to mile 59.2, and the Stillwater Spur consisting of 8.8 miles, all located on the Cimarron Turnpike in Noble, Payne, and Pawnee Counties, Oklahoma.
- VIII. In awarding the contract, the Authority reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive informalities, and to act for the best interests of the Authority without technicalities as to procedure. The Procurement Division Manager may award the Contract to more than one bidder by awarding the Contract(s) by item or groups of items, or may award the Contract on an ALL OR NONE basis, whichever is deemed by the Procurement Division Manager to be in the best interest of the State of Oklahoma. Contract awards will be made to the lowest and best bidder(s) unless the solicitation specifies that best value criteria is being used.
- IX. Policies of insurance will not be cancelled without first giving the OTA 30 calendar days advance notice. This statement must be on the Description of Operations section of the Certificate of Insurance.
- X. All the contractors that desire to provide the OTA with manual service work are required by state statute to complete an employee E-Verify Form.
- XI. Upon award of contract to a successful bidder, the contract will be completely and correctly executed by the contractor and returned to the Authority within twenty (20) calendar days from the date of award. The Authority will have thirty (30) working days from the date of award to complete its execution of the contract.

OKLAHOMA TURNPIKE AUTHORITY
 By: s/s Joe Echelle, Director

LPXLP

(Published in the Perry Daily Journal February 14, 2026)

NOTICE

On the 9th day of February 2026, the Board of Trustees for the Town of Morrison, Oklahoma, approved Ordinance No. 2026-01 which amends Chapter 2, Article 3 of the Morrison Municipal Code 2025 entitled "Town Records". Ordinance No. 2026-01 was passed with an emergency clause. Ordinance No. 2026-01 implements the amendment to the Oklahoma Open Record Act Title 51, Oklahoma Statutes §24A. 1 et seq. made by Senate Bill 535. These amendments help municipalities in working with records requests that do not describe the requested records with reasonable specificity. To have reasonable specificity, a request shall: "a) specify a general time frame within which the requested records would have been created or transmitted, b) seek identifiable records, rather than general information without any qualifiers or other specifications, and c) include search terms that are sufficiently specific to assist the public body in identifying the requested records. If a public body has engaged with the requestor to seek the information needed to fulfill the request and to identify the records sought by the requestor, including providing the requestor with general topics or a specific list of records related to the request, the request may be denied if it is still not reasonably specific." Ordinance No. 2026-01 also implements a new fee schedule which is consistent with the schedule adopted by the Attorney Generals Office. A copy of the ordinance is available at Town Hall or by calling the Town Clerk at 580-724-3531. It is presented for publication by title only:

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-01
 AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE TOWN OF MORRISON, OKLAHOMA, AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE MORRISON MUNICIPAL CODE 2025 BY THE AMENDMENT OF ARTICLE 7 ENTITLED "TOWN RECORDS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-701 ENTITLED "PURPOSE"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-702 ENTITLED "STATEMENT OF POLICY"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-703 ENTITLED "APPOINTMENT OF OPEN RECORD AND RECORD RETENTION CUSTODIANS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-704 ENTITLED "OPEN RECORD REQUESTS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-705 ENTITLED "PROCESSING RECORD REQUESTS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-706 ENTITLED "SCOPE OF RECORD SEARCH"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-707 ENTITLED "RECORDS IN STORAGE"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-708 ENTITLED "COMPUTER RECORDS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-709 ENTITLED "FEES FOR RECORDS"; PRO-

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VIDING FOR SECTION 2-710 ENTITLED "ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FUNDS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-711 ENTITLED "OPEN RECORD FORM ADOPTED"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-712 ENTITLED "LEGAL QUESTIONS"; PROVIDING FOR SECTION 2-713 ENTITLED "DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS; SCANNING AND STORING PUBLIC RECORDS"; PROVIDING FOR THE REPEALER OF THE CURRENT SECTION 2-701 THROUGH 2-714 AND SECTIONS 2-711, 2-712 AND 2-713 IN CHAPTER 18 ENTITLED "FEE SCHEDULE"; PROVIDING FOR SAVINGS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.
 Cortney Walden
 Town Clerk

(Published in the Perry Daily Journal February 7 and 14, 2026)

IN THE DISTRICT COURT IN AND FOR NOBLE COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF JUDITH COLLEEN NOAH, Deceased.

Case No. PB-2026-1
 NOTICE TO CREDITORS
 All creditors having claims against JUDITH COLLEEN NOAH, DECEASED, are required to present the same, with a description of all security interests and other collateral (if any) held by each creditor with respect to such claim, to the named Personal Representative, c/o LeAnn Ellis, Attorney for the Personal Representative, 711 S. Husband, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074, on or before the following presentment date: April 6, 2026, or the same will be forever barred.
 DATED this 29 day of December, 2025.

SHERI L. PEREZ,
 Personal Representative of the Estate of JUDITH COLLEEN NOAH, DECEASED