

An Alpine History Mystery:

Why is November 11, 1885 Important to Alpine?

November 2014

The date, November 11, marks an event remembered in many countries around the world. For it was on this day in 1918 that the Allies of World War I signed the Armistice with Germany at Compiègne, France to end fighting on the Western Front. This day became widely known as Armistice Day in the Allied Nations, or by the popular name “Poppy Day” in some areas. You see, the Western Front passed right through the red poppy flowers of *Flanders Fields* in France and Belgium. In memory of the soldiers who gave their life fighting the “war to end all wars” many people still wear paper poppies on this day. Well, sadly, this war did not end all wars, and after World War II the United States changed the name of this holiday to Veterans Day, which is a day to honor American veterans of all wars. Many other nations changed the name to Remembrance Day, but in France it is still Armistice Day.



Throughout history, this day offers much to celebrate in many different areas. Did you know that on this day in the year 1417 Oddo Colonna was elected as Pope Martinus V, bringing an end to the “Great Western Schism”? For you math majors, this day in 1675 is when Gottfried Leibniz demonstrated integral calculus for the first time. “First Lady” historians may remember November 11, 1744 as the birthdate of Abigail Smith who married the revolutionary John Adams and later became the second First Lady of the United States. And if you know anyone who was in Chicago, Kansas City, Oklahoma City or Springfield (MO) on November 11, 1911, they can tell you a tale that will chill you right to the bone. You see, that was the day the “Great Blue Norther” blew into the mid-west from Canada. In the early morning those cities set all-time record high temperatures for the date, but by midnight of the same day temperatures had dropped as much as 72 degrees setting all-time record low temperatures!

Then, on November 11, 1926, the famous US Route 66 was established and two years after that, radio station KXO-AM began radio transmissions in El Centro (CA). And on the radio this day in 1938, Kate Smith performed for the first time a song written just for her by Irving Berlin – America’s all-time favorite patriotic song “*God Bless America*”.



In California, November 11 in the year 1885 is noteworthy for three completely different reasons. In San Gabriel, George Smith Patton was born. This West Point graduate served as a tank officer in WWI and went on to become one of the great US Generals in WWII. Meanwhile, in Palo Alto, this date marks the Founding Grant for Stanford University, whose stated objective was “to qualify its students for personal success, and direct usefulness in life”. Well, how could you do better than that? But, did you know that November 11, 1885 marks an important date in the history of our home town? Do you know what happened here in Alpine, on November 11, 1885? Well, I guess you have figured out by now that *that*, dear readers, is our history mystery question for November.