

## Accidental Breakthrough

By many accounts, the Scottish physician Alexander Fleming was a rather careless and untidy lab technician. So when he left his laboratory for a two-week vacation to Scotland in 1928, perhaps it is unsurprising that upon his return he discovered that some of his petri dishes had been contaminated.



Fleming had been experimenting with influenza viruses and staphylococcus bacteria at St. Mary's Hospital in London. He was shocked to discover a "mould juice" growing on one staphylococcus plate. Even more surprising, after examining the mold under a microscope, he found that it had prevented the growth of the dangerous bacteria. Quite accidentally, Fleming had discovered the world's first antibiotic: penicillin.

Fleming wrote, "When I woke up just after dawn on Sept. 28, 1928, I certainly didn't plan to revolutionize all medicine by discovering the world's first antibiotic, or bacteria killer. But I guess that was exactly what I did."

Yet by 1931, Fleming had ceased all study of penicillin. Luckily, two University of Oxford researchers, pathologist Howard Florey and biochemist Ernst Chain, continued his work. Unlike Fleming, Florey ran an impeccable and well-funded laboratory. The men knew that Fleming's *Penicillium notatum* strain could treat bacterial infections, but it could never be made in sufficient quantities to reliably treat those infections. Another serendipitous encounter would lead to the necessary breakthrough that made penicillin the world's foremost antibiotic.

Florey was in America trying to develop a method to mass-produce *Penicillium notatum* when a laboratory assistant named Mary Hunt arrived at the lab with a cantaloupe covered with a "pretty, golden mold." This was *Penicillium chrysogenum*, a strain that produced 200 times the amount of penicillin of Fleming's strain. At last, the antibiotic could be mass-produced. The discovery would win Fleming, Florey, and Chain the Nobel Prize.

## September Birthdays

In astrology, those born from September 1–22 are Virgo's Virgins. Virgos pay attention to details and like to keep things organized. Their deep sense of humanity and love for others makes them defenders of justice, goodness, and purity. Those born from September 23–30 balance the scales of Libra. Peaceful and fair, Libras value balance and symmetry. For this reason, they often champion justice and equality. Using tact and calm, they resolve conflicts among family and friends.

- Beyoncé (singer) – Sept. 4, 1981
- Kim Yuna (figure skater) – Sept. 5, 1990
- Idris Elba (actor) – Sept. 6, 1972
- Hugh Grant (actor) – Sept. 9, 1960
- Misty Copeland (ballerina) – Sept. 10, 1982
- Tyler Perry (producer) – Sept. 13, 1969
- Dorothy Vaughan (mathematician) – Sept. 20, 1910
- Ray Charles (musician) – Sept. 23, 1930
- Serena Williams (tennis star) – Sept. 26, 1981
- Gene Autry (cowboy) – Sept. 29, 1907

### Celebrating September

**Intergeneration Month**

**Hispanic Heritage Month**

**Sewing Month**

**World Beard Day** *September 4*

**Labor Day (U.S.)** *September 6*

**Wonderful Weirdos Day** *September 9*

**Patriot Day** *September 11*

**Yom Kippur** *September 15* (Begins at sundown)

**International Country Music Day** *September 17*

**One-Hit Wonder Day** *September 25*

**Fall Foliage Week** *September 26–October 2*

**Ancestor Appreciation Day** *September 27*

# Village Voice

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## Southern Hospitality

During September in Savannah, Georgia, cooling winds blow away the oppressive, swampy heat of summer, and this "Hostess City of the South" gets to show what its famed Southern hospitality is all about. For non-Southerners, the notion of "Southern hospitality" might seem disingenuous, like a marketing pitch employed by southern businesses. For many Southerners, though, Southern hospitality is truly a way of life.

Southern hospitality is more than welcoming visitors with a neighborly sense of charm. Southern hospitality has six foundational characteristics: 1. *Politeness* and manners matter. When engaging with visitors, polite talk is a sign of respect. 2. Nothing says "Welcome to my home" better than good *home cooking*. Every Southern cook knows a few time-tested recipes that will warm the stomach, heart, and soul, such as peach cobbler, hummingbird cake, fried green tomatoes, or shrimp and grits. 3. *Kindness* extends not just to friends and neighbors but to strangers as well. 4. If someone is lost and needs directions or if a neighbor needs help fixing their lawnmower, one must always offer to *help*. 5. Southern *charm* can be magical. Witty small talk, compliments, and pleasantries put guests at ease and make them feel like old friends. 6. What some might call *charity*, others call the *golden rule*. Do unto others what you would have done unto you, and most importantly, do it freely and without any expectation of reciprocity. These characteristics provide a foundation on which Southern hospitality is built.

For those looking to experience firsthand the best of Southern hospitality, look no further than September in Savannah. The city's marquee event is Jazz Fest from September 23–26. Savannah's jazz scene is as old as that in New Orleans, and Jazz Fest has offered the best local acts for 40 years. Savannah's art walks also begin this month with free tours of galleries in the Historic District. For foodies, the annual Pin Point Seafood Festival features plenty of local dishes, from Gullah Geechee classics to modern cuisine. Everywhere you go, you're sure to be charmed by this lovely southern city.

*Joyce Logan-Cross 3<sup>rd</sup>*

*Johnnie Jones 4<sup>th</sup>*

*Lorenzo Smith 12<sup>th</sup>*

*Janet Peters 14<sup>th</sup>*

*Edward Allen 15<sup>th</sup>*

*Juanita Watts 21<sup>st</sup>*

*Ray Ricks 22<sup>nd</sup>*

*Sophonra Presley 25<sup>th</sup>*

*Jessie Moorer 25<sup>th</sup>*

*Alice Mazza 28<sup>th</sup>*

## Happiness on the Wing

Bluebirds, with their striking plumage and warbling song, are a pleasant sight to behold. But in many cultures, a bluebird is more than just another pretty bird: It is a powerful sign that happiness is just around the corner. For this reason, September 24 is Bluebird of Happiness Day.



In many Native North American cultures, the bluebird is a symbol of prosperity, fertility, and hope. The Cochiti people of New Mexico believe that the bluebird is the first-born offspring of the sun, and to this day it sings at first light to wake us up. The Ojibwa spirit Nanabozho, while putting color into the world, had his paint stolen by bluebirds. As the bluebirds flew through a waterfall's mist, the paint was scattered to create a rainbow. Nanabozho liked it so much that he decreed that every time the sun touches the mist of a waterfall, a rainbow should appear.

The Chinese have revered the bluebird for millennia. During the Shang Dynasty, dating back to 1766 BC, a bluebird was considered the messenger of Xi Wangmu, the Queen Mother of the West. The goddess began life as a fearsome immortal but evolved into a protector fairy queen. The appearance of a bluebird meant that Xi Wangmu was protecting young women who chose to break from traditional family roles: singers, nuns, and priestesses.

The bluebird of happiness features so prominently in the folklore of the Lorraine people of France that it inspired a stage play called *The Blue Bird*. Throughout the 20th century, it was developed into a children's novel, an opera, and seven films.

Of course, bluebirds are not the only birds with symbolic significance. Owls have been associated with wisdom since the worship of the Greek goddess Athena. Eagles are symbols of strength, courage, and freedom. Ravens symbolize knowledge and act as intermediaries for the gods. Cranes are symbols of healing and hope. But amongst all birds, perhaps none is more lighthearted and joyous than the bluebird.

## First, the News

On September 25, 1690, the first newspaper in America was published. Sadly for publisher Benjamin Harris, his *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick* lasted for just one edition before British censors shut it down. Harris was the owner of Boston's London Coffee-House, an establishment frequented by the city's intellectual elite. The cafe was the premier venue for sharing news of the world and debating the philosophies of the era. Harris, a savvy businessman, knew he had a captive audience for his monthly publication. But Harris was also a known rabble-rouser. He had published inflammatory pamphlets in England before fleeing to the colonies to evade fines and imprisonment. Harris would eventually return to London and the news business, publishing his *London Post* from 1699 to 1706.

## Free Money



It may sound crazy, but on September 15 people all over the world will hand out their own hard-earned money to complete strangers. This is Free Money Day, a day to show the world that generosity is always better than self-interest.

This holiday was invented in 2008 after America's financial crisis. International groups dedicated to economic equality thought that it was time for humans to reevaluate their relationship with money. While a certain amount of money is vital for securing basic needs, research shows that large amounts of money do not improve an individual's well-being or overall happiness. The overarching drive to secure wealth may actually be destructive to society and the planet. On Free Money Day, give two banknotes to a stranger. Encourage them to keep one and pass the other on to another stranger. Some give money away digitally through online apps like Venmo. Your generosity is bound to awe your recipient.

## Impressive History

The pressed penny is a curious souvenir. After all, why pay 50 cents to flatten and elongate a coin worth just one cent? Well, people love novelty and the delight that comes with finding something new and unusual, and they also love collecting memorabilia. Pressed pennies offer the best of both worlds. They are unique keepsakes that capture a moment in history. These souvenirs have grown so popular that they enjoy their own holiday, Pressed Pennies Day on September 3.

The first elongated coins were pressed by a jeweler in Vienna, Austria, in 1818. They used a modified jeweler's rolling mill, a common tool used to roll gold or other precious metals into wire or emboss patterns on sheets of metal.



Pressed pennies made their American debut at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. Visitors delighted when they rolled their pennies through a hand-cranked machine to press "Columbian Exposition 1893" on their faces. The exposition celebrated the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the "New World." Each pressed penny provided a souvenir of that anniversary. Coin collectors will note that 1893 was also the year that Indian Head pennies were in circulation. Some collectors may delight (while others cringe) to find a pressed Indian Head penny bearing the Columbian Exposition's imprint. These rare souvenirs are worth hundreds of dollars today.

Penny-pressing machines remain common sights at amusement parks and carnivals. Over 150 penny pressers are scattered throughout Disneyland, allowing visitors to imprint pennies with famous Disney characters, depictions of rides, or other commemorative images. Many museums, too, offer penny pressers for their exhibits. But don't attempt to press coins in Canada. Defacing Canadian currency is illegal. Instead, you may purchase blank coins to run through the pressing machines.

## Master Class in Classical Music

September is hailed as Classical Music Month, but what exactly is classical music? Some historians estimate the beginning of Western music to around 1000 AD when plainsong or Gregorian chanting was the traditional music of the Church. Centuries passed, and harmony and melody evolved so that multiple voices or sounds could complement each other. By the Renaissance, this music moved out of the church and into the royal courts and noble manors of Europe. Composers, freed from strict Church conventions, could experiment. By the 1500s, their elaborate musical compositions could be printed in books, allowing both singers and players to "weave" their multiple musical parts together.

Opera became popular in Italy in the late 16th century and with it the *sonata*, instrumental interludes dominated by predictable chordal patterns and rhythms. This led to ever-larger orchestras. At last, in the 17th century, the Baroque masters of classical music—Vivaldi, Bach, Handel—composed complex, masterful concertos. Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Chopin would follow, establishing classical music as both an era and enduring genre.

## Reliable by Nature



In 1870, former U.S. Representative and Civil War officer Henry Washburn led an expedition down the Yellowstone River to explore and survey a remote region of northwest Wyoming. Washburn's party was the first to map the area, explore its many lakes, and climb its mountains. What awed the explorers most were the many boiling and steaming thermal features of the region. One geyser fascinated them most of all. On September 18, 1870, the party realized that it would reliably erupt 100 feet into the air every 74 minutes. Washburn himself dubbed the geyser "Old Faithful." This famous geyser would help make Yellowstone America's first national park in 1872.