

SEPTEMBER - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Labor Day

Labor Day began as a local celebration in New York City, sponsored by the Central Labor Union. The union adopted a proposal and appointed a committee to plan the first-ever Labor Day rally and picnic held on September 5, 1882. The observance paid tribute to the vast social and economic achievements of American workers. From there, the idea spread across the United States. Finally, on June 28, 1894, an act of Congress officially declared the first Monday in September of each year as the legal and national holiday of Labor Day. Special events are held throughout the country, including parades, picnics, and rallies with high-profile speakers.

2. National Grandparents Day

This holiday was first conceived in 1970 by Marian Lucille Herndon McQuade, a housewife from West Virginia. She had been working extensively with senior citizens and thought it appropriate to set aside a special day to pay tribute to them. With the support of West Virginia Senator Jennings Randolph, the idea gained momentum. In 1973, the first Grandparents Day was proclaimed by West Virginia's Governor Arch Moore. Eventually, legislation passed by the United States Congress on August 3, 1978, officially declared the first Sunday after Labor Day each year as National Grandparents Day. President Jimmy Carter signed the proclamation and cited three purposes for its observance: to honor grandparents, to allow grandparents to show love for their children's children, and to help children become aware of the strength, information, and guidance older people can offer. September was chosen for the holiday to signify the "autumn years" of life. Today, National Grandparents Day is celebrated throughout the United States.

3. Grandma Moses' Birthday

Anna Mary Robertson (later known as Grandma Moses) was born in Greenwich, New York, on September 7, 1860. She had a happy childhood on her family's farm. As a young child, Anna Mary loved to draw colorful outdoor scenes. However, she did not begin painting until later in life. In 1887, she married Thomas Moses, and settled on a farm in Eagle Bridge, New York. At the age of seventy-six, Anna Mary gave up embroidery and began to paint. She painted from memory and mostly portrayed pleasant scenes of rural life. In 1938, her paintings were discovered by an art collector named Louis Caldor. He purchased many of her artworks and displayed them at New York's Museum of Modern Art. By 1943, there was a demand for Anna Mary's paintings, partly because her country scenes brought back delightful memories for many people. Grandma Moses died in December of 1961 at the age of 101. Her paintings are still displayed in museums today.

SEPTEMBER - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. National Save the Tiger Month

The tiger is the largest of the cat species and can measure nine feet. Hundreds of thousands of tigers once roamed across Asia, but they are now an endangered species. It is estimated that there are currently fewer than 4,000 wild tigers, and they occupy only about seven percent of their historical range. Urban development has eliminated large portions of the tigers' natural habitat, while illegal poaching has diminished their population. In an effort to save the tigers from extinction, serious conservation programs are underway in countries like India, China, Russia, and Tibet. September has been designated as National Save the Tiger Month to increase awareness of this global problem and raise support for these conservation projects.

5. Milton Hershey's Birthday

Milton Hershey, the man who created Hershey's chocolate, was born on September 13, 1857. He dreamed of owning a candy-making business and, as a teenager, served a four-year apprenticeship to a candy maker in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His first few business attempts failed, but Hershey did not give up. Finally, he discovered a tasty caramel recipe and created the Lancaster Caramel Company, which began shipping all over the United States and Europe. In 1893, Hershey became fascinated with the art of making chocolate. He purchased German machinery and began producing chocolate to coat his caramels. It quickly became apparent that there was a growing demand for chocolate by itself, and so, Hershey started the Hershey Chocolate Company. After years of trial and error, he developed a viable formula that allowed him to realize his dream of mass-producing and distributing milk chocolate candy. What had been a treat for the rich now became something everyone could afford and enjoy – the Hershey chocolate bar. Hershey's business proved so hugely successful that he constructed an entire town to contain his manufacturing plants while at the same time creating a caring community where he could provide for the welfare of his employees and their families. The town of Hershey, Pennsylvania, with its many attractions, continues to host thousands of tourists and conventioners annually.

SEPTEMBER - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. National Honey Month

The National Honey Board (NHB) recognizes and promotes the importance of honeybees. These amazing little bees annually pollinate approximately 80% of the crops grown in the United States. They also produce one of the world's favorite natural sweeteners – honey. There are approximately 300 varieties of honey. In 1989, the National Honey Board, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, officially declared September as National Honey Month because that is when much of the honey in the United States is harvested. Americans consume approximately 1.3 pounds of honey per person each year. More and more is being discovered about the versatility of this all-natural ingredient. It is used not only in foods but in a wide variety of other products, as well, such as medicines and cosmetics. Over 200 new products containing honey have been introduced since 1998. National Honey Month gives people an opportunity to learn more about honey and appreciate its many and varied uses in everyday life.

7. Roald Dahl's Birthday

Famous children's author Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, Wales, on September 13, 1916. His first career was as a salesman for Shell Petroleum in Africa. During World War II, he joined the British Royal Air Force as a pilot. He later became a liaison in Washington, D.C. While there, he met author C.S. Forester. Forester encouraged Dahl to write about his war experiences. In the 1960s, Dahl transitioned to writing stories for children. He is perhaps best known for his book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, published in 1964. It tells the tale of a poor urchin who wins a tour of a magical candy factory owned by Willy Wonka. The story was made into a feature film, which has also become a beloved favorite of children and adults alike. Other well-known titles by Dahl are *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Danny the Champion of the World* (1975), and *Matilda* (1988).

SEPTEMBER - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

8. Constitution Day

On September 17, 1787, the 39 delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia met for the final time to complete and sign the document they had long deliberated. The United States Constitution became the law for the country. It established the government for the new nation born on July 4, 1776. It embodied the principles on which America was founded, such as commitment to the rule of law, limited government, and the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice for all citizens. In 2004, Congress passed a law establishing September 17 as Constitution Day. The act mandates that on that day all publicly funded educational institutions will teach lessons about the Constitution. Members of Congress deemed it important for students to learn about the current and historical significance of this governing document.

9. National Piano Month

The piano was invented in Italy in the early 1700s by Bartolomeo di Francesco Cristofori. The piano was preceded by similar stringed instruments, such as the harpsichord, but they offered limited variation in volume. The artistic desire for more controlled musical expression led to the invention of the piano, on which loudness and tone could be altered with the force of one's fingers. Cristofori's new instrument was first exhibited in Florence, Italy, in 1709. It was named *gravicembalo col piano e forte*, which meant "soft and loud keyboard instrument." Later, the name was shortened to *fortepiano* or *pianoforte*, and finally to just piano. Cristofori's earliest surviving instrument dates from 1720 and can be found on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The National Piano Foundation has designated September as National Piano Month, highlighting the value of one of America's most popular instruments and its more than 20 million players. During this month-long observance, people of all ages are encouraged to study and enjoy the piano.

10. Johnny Appleseed's Birthday

Johnny Appleseed was born in Leominster, Massachusetts, on September 26, 1774. His real name was John Chapman, but he became known as Johnny Appleseed because of his love for growing apple trees. He traveled throughout the mid-western United States, supplying pioneer families with apple seeds. Chapman was a skilled nurseryman and owned tree nurseries in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Illinois, and Indiana, where he grew, sold, traded, or gave away countless apple trees and apple seeds. He was a religious man with a kind and giving spirit. He led a simple life and died at the age of 70 after spending nearly 50 years spreading his beloved apple trees across much of the country.