

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 bacteria at St. Mary's Hospital in London. He was shocked to discover a mold growing on the plate that 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."

Two University of Oxford researchers, pathologist Howard Florey and biochemist Ernst Chain, continued his work. They determined his strain could not be made in large enough quantities to actually help people. A laboratory assistant named Mary Hunt arrived at the lab with a cantaloupe covered with a "pretty, golden mold." This was the strain that produced 200 times the amount of penicillin of Fleming's strain - which made Fleming, Florey, and Chain win the Nobel Prize.

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.

"There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor."

— *Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol*

Happy Birthday!

Goldia W.

9/7



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Townehall Place News & Events

4460 Orchard Lake Rd.
West Bloomfield, MI 48323



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.



All of us at Townehall Place would like to extend a warm welcome our new Executive Director, Rich!

