

September 13 in History: Michelangelo Begins David, Oslo Accords Signed, and More

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September 13 2026 9:00 AM



On September 13, 1501, the artist Michelangelo began work on what would become one of the most famous sculptures in history: the marble statue of *David*. At the time, this was not just an artistic commission in Florence. It was also a public statement about civic pride, skill, and the values of the Renaissance, a period when many people in Europe were rethinking art, learning, and the place of human ability in the world. The statue still matters today because it helped define ideals of artistic excellence and showed how a work of art could become a symbol for an entire city and, later, for a much wider cultural tradition.

The block of marble Michelangelo used had already frustrated other sculptors. It had been quarried decades earlier and left partly neglected because of flaws and its difficult shape. When Michelangelo took on the project, he was still a young artist, but he transformed the damaged stone into a figure that seemed remarkably lifelike and confident. Completed in 1504, *David* was placed in Florence as a symbol of vigilance and self-rule. Over time, it came to represent not only biblical heroism, but also the technical ambition and intellectual energy of Renaissance art.

More than a century later, September 13, 1759 marked a major turning point in world history with the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, fought outside Quebec during the Seven Years' War. British forces under General James Wolfe defeated French forces led by the Marquis de Montcalm. The battle itself was brief, but its consequences were lasting. Control of New France began to shift, and the conflict helped reshape the balance of power in North America. The result influenced the future development of Canada and altered the wider rivalry among European empires.

A very different kind of change arrived on September 13, 1848, when Phineas Gage survived a terrible railroad construction accident in Vermont. An iron tamping rod passed through his skull, yet he lived. Doctors and later scientists studied his case closely because reports suggested that his personality and behavior changed after the injury. While some details became simplified in later retellings, Gage's survival helped draw attention to the relationship between the brain's physical structure and human behavior. His case became an important reference point in the history of neuroscience and psychology.

By the late nineteenth century, industrial life was transforming cities, labor, and public expectations. On September 13, 1899, Henry Bliss became the first person in the United States known to be killed in an automobile accident, in New York City. The event reflected a world entering the age of motor transport. Cars were still rare, but they were beginning to change streets, industry, and daily movement. Bliss's death also pointed to a new challenge of modern life: how societies adapt laws, infrastructure, and safety rules when new technology spreads faster than public systems can respond.

On September 13, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo Accords on the White House lawn, with U.S. President Bill Clinton present. The agreement was not a final peace settlement, but it was a major diplomatic milestone. For many observers at the time, it suggested that direct negotiation might create a framework for coexistence after decades of conflict. The accords remain historically important because they reshaped diplomacy in the Middle East, even though many core issues remained unresolved.

Science and innovation also leave their mark on this date. On September 13, 1956, IBM introduced the 305 RAMAC, the first commercial computer to use a hard disk drive. By modern standards it was enormous, expensive, and limited. Still, it represented a crucial step in how information could be stored and retrieved. Data no longer had to be managed only through punch cards or slower systems. This development helped open the path toward modern computing, business data processing, and eventually the digital world that now touches nearly every part of daily life.

Culture and media offer another lens on history. On September 13, 1969, the animated television series *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* premiered in the United States. Although made for children, the show became an enduring part of global popular culture. Its simple formula—young investigators, apparent mysteries, and a rational explanation behind the fear—made it widely accessible. Decades of reruns, adaptations, and international broadcasts turned it into a familiar reference across generations, showing how television entertainment can become part of shared cultural memory.

September 13 has also produced a number of notable births. In 1916, children's author Roald Dahl was born in Wales to Norwegian parents. He became one of the most widely read writers of the twentieth century, with books such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, and *James and the Giant Peach*. His stories combined humor, dark fantasy, and a strong sense of the child's point of view, influencing children's literature around the world.

Composer Clara Schumann, born on this date in 1819, was one of the most respected musicians of the nineteenth century. A gifted pianist, composer, and teacher, she performed across Europe and helped shape concert culture at a time when women often faced limits in professional artistic life. She is remembered not only for her own music and performances, but also for preserving and promoting the works of Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms.

This date is also associated with the deaths of several important figures. On September 13, 1592, Michel de Montaigne died in France. His essays explored human behavior, uncertainty, education, and self-examination in a personal and accessible voice. Because he helped develop the essay as a literary form, his influence can still be seen in modern nonfiction writing and reflective prose.

Much later, in 1996, rapper Tupac Shakur died after being shot in Las Vegas. He was one of the most influential artists in hip-hop, known for music that addressed inequality, violence, ambition, and personal conflict. His death at a young age made him a lasting cultural figure, and his recordings continued to shape music, public language, and artistic expression long after his lifetime.

Taken together, the events of September 13 show how history is shaped in many different ways.