

This Day in History... September 1, 1875

Birth of Edgar Rice Burroughs

Author Edgar Rice Burroughs was born on September 1, 1875, in Chicago, Illinois. Burroughs wrote about 70 novels during his lifetime, including several about his most famous character, Tarzan.

The son of a Civil War veteran, Burroughs was descended from several Revolutionary War fighters. He was also related to at least seven people that signed the Declaration of Independence, including John Adams, his third cousin, four times removed.

Burroughs attended the Michigan Military Academy but failed the entrance exam for the US Military Academy at West Point. He then joined the 7th US Cavalry, but was found to have a heart problem and was discharged in 1897.

For the next several years, Burroughs worked a variety of jobs – cowboy, a worker in a battery factory, managing an unsuccessful gold dredge, and selling pencil sharpeners. Unhappy with all of these unfulfilling jobs, Burroughs began writing fiction in 1911. He had been reading pulp-fiction magazines and started thinking that if people were getting paid to write such odd stories, he could write something even more entertaining.

Burroughs' first story, *Under the Moons of Mars*, was published in 1912 over a series of issues of *The All-Story*. Because of the fantastic nature of his stories, Burroughs submitted his early works under the alias "Normal Bean," to show that he was in his right mind.

In 1912, Burroughs wrote the first of several Tarzan stories. These stories, turned into novels, were wildly popular. Burroughs recognized the story's popularity and sought to capitalize on it, allowing it to be adapted to a variety of different media, including a comic strip, movies, and merchandise. Some people cautioned him against this, saying that the other media would compete with his books. But Burroughs proved them wrong, and Tarzan remained popular in every media to which he was adapted.

A few years later, Burroughs purchased a large ranch in California that he named Tarzana. In 1927, the community surrounding the ranch officially became Tarzana, California. A town in Texas was also named Tarzan that same year.



There's a crater on Mars named for Burroughs.

Burroughs was living in Honolulu when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. Though he was 66 years old, he applied to become a war correspondent and was accepted. He was one of the oldest US war correspondents of the conflict.

After the war, Burroughs returned to California, but his health declined and he died on March 19, 1950. Because of his many stories set on Mars (which he called Barsoom in his books) and his influence on the real-world exploration of the planet, a crater on Mars was named after Burroughs. He was also inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame.



This stamp was issued in Tarzana, California.

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