

4. Fire Prevention Week

Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate two massive and tragic fires that began on October 8, 1871. The first took place in Chicago, Illinois, and killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres before it was finally extinguished on October 9th. The second fire, and perhaps the most devastating in American history, took place in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. It roared through the Northeast part of the state, burning down 16 towns, killing 1,152 people, and scorching 1.2 million acres. Those who survived never forgot their ordeals and recounted many stories of bravery and heroism. On the 40th anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire, the Fire Marshals Association of North America (known today as the International Fire Marshals Association) decided that the anniversary should be observed in a way that would promote public information about fire prevention and safety. President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation in 1920. Since 1922, Fire Prevention Week has been observed on the Sunday through Saturday period in which October 9th falls.

5. National Pretzel Month

The pretzel is believed to have originated with an Italian monk around 610 A.D. He twisted leftover bread dough into what he thought resembled his students with their arms folded across their chests in prayer. He called his creations “pretiolas” which in Latin means “little rewards”. The dough treats were given to children for memorizing Bible verses. Somehow, the pretzel caught on and spread throughout Europe. Pretzels remain a popular snack food today and are considered by many to be a symbol of good fortune, long life, and prosperity. October is National Pretzel Month.

6. Henry John Heinz

H. J. Heinz was born in 1844 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He became very interested in gardening at an early age and by fourteen tended his own section of the family’s garden. Already, he had a loyal following of produce customers. Heinz attended Duff’s Mercantile College where he learned sound business practices. The first product he sold after college was horseradish. In 1888, Heinz developed a relationship with retailers in England and built a factory on the Allegheny River. He had a benevolent style of management and treated his workers well. He sought to sell quality products that guaranteed purity to his customers. Heinz was instrumental in the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. His hard work, perseverance, and integrity made him and his products internationally known and respected. Perhaps his company’s best-known product is ketchup.