

This Day in History... June 9, 1891

Happy Birthday Cole Porter

Cole Albert Porter was born on June 9, 1891, in Peru, Indiana.

Porter was the only child of a wealthy Indiana family. His grandfather, J.O. Cole, was considered the richest man in the state and had earned his money in the coal and timber industries.

J.O. Cole hoped his grandson would be a lawyer, but Porter's mother had introduced him to music at an early age. Porter learned to play violin when he was six and the piano when he was eight. He was already writing songs by the time he was ten. J.O. Cole sent his grandson to Worcester Academy in Massachusetts in 1905.



Ethel Merman appeared in the first five Cole Porter musicals.

Porter brought a piano with him and his abilities helped him build many friendships. He was also an excellent student and graduated as class valedictorian – J.O. Cole congratulated him by sending him to tour France. Porter attended Yale University in 1909 and studied English, French, and music. He wrote approximately 300 songs at Yale, including the school's fight songs that are still used today.

In 1915, Porter had his first song make it to Broadway, "Esmeralda." After that, Porter spent time in France. After he returned to the US, his music began to gain popularity in the late 1920s.

He then went on to write many successful songs and musicals including "I Get a Kick Out of You," "Night and Day," "I've Got You Under My Skin," and "In the Still of the Night." He was eventually approached by E. Ray Goetz to write the score for his musical, *Paris*, which turned out to be a hit.

When the stock market crashed in October 1929, Broadway business declined, but Porter managed to keep working. *Anything Goes* debuted in 1934 and was considered one of Porter's greatest scores of the time.

In 1937, Porter had a horseback riding accident that left him permanently disabled, but he only stopped composing for about seven months. In 1948, Porter wrote the score for his most successful and well-loved musical, *Kiss Me Kate*. The show won the first ever Tony Award for Best Musical, and Porter received the Tony for best composer and lyricist.



Fitzgerald was the 30th honoree in the Black Heritage Series.

Several of Porter's songs also appeared in popular films. He produced the scores for *You'll Never Get Rich*, *Something to Shout About*, and *Mississippi Bell*. He also assisted in the creation of *Night and Day*, a largely fictional story based on his life starring Cary Grant. While it was panned by the critics, it was popular with moviegoers for the large number of classic Porter songs. Porter's last major hit song, "True Love," was featured in the Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Grace Kelly film *High Society*.

Porter's health never fully recovered after his accident and he had to have a leg amputated. He never wrote again after that, and died six years later on October 15, 1964. Over the years, several artists recorded entire albums of his work, including Ella Fitzgerald, Rosemary Clooney, and Frank Sinatra.



Issued for Porter's 100th birthday.



Stamp issued 10 years after Sinatra's death.

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