



# PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

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## Inventing the Beach Read

Feeling guilty about kicking back with a paperback during vacation? There's a precedent for escapist holiday reading, particularly during times of anxiety.

It's the season for flopping on the beach with a romance novel or tucking a thriller into your carry-on bag. Light reading has been associated with summer vacations for a long time.

In the early 1800s, many well-to-do Americans began taking time off in the summer to travel by railroad or steamship to picturesque destinations like Niagara Falls or the Catskills. Within a century, the middle and even working classes were increasingly enjoying summer travel, even if it was just a day trip to the beach.

It didn't take long for publishers to see an opportunity. In 1853, Boston's Ticknor, Reed & Fields published *A Book for the Sea-Side*, a collection of ocean-themed poetry featuring work by Lord Alfred Tennyson, William Wordsworth, and others. In 1872, the *Book Buyer*, a trade journal from the Charles Scribner publishing house, ran its first ads for books explicitly labeled "summer reading." Among the beach reads of the 1870s was Scribner's own *Bric-A-Brac* series, gossipy stories about famous authors. In 1876, the *Book Buyer* reported that "'Have you seen the new *Bric-A-Brac*' was as common a question at Newport and Saratoga as 'Shall you be at the hop [dance] tonight?'"

Soon, each summer brought a flurry of novels that were both literally and figuratively lightweight. An 1885 ad in the *Book Buyer* touted "Summer Books in Paper Covers," including humorous fairy tale-like stories by Frank R. Stockton and early science fiction by Fitz James O'Brien. An 1899 review saw the value of these books in that they could be "taken up and laid down without fear of losing the trend of anything in it" and were "calculated to keep on in good humor under almost any circumstance."

Not everyone was pleased with the rise of frivolous summer reading, however. Brooklyn preacher Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage warned in an 1876 sermon that paperback romance novels were "literary poison." "Do not let the frogs and the lice of a corrupt printing press jump and crawl into your Saratoga trunk or White Mountain valise," he counseled.

But the industry leapt to the defense of summer reads. "After all," the *Book Buyer* editorialized in 1887, "the cakes and ale of literature have their legitimate time and place after the more solid intellectual dishes of the past season have been digested."

Light reading went hand-in-hand with a season of rest and rejuvenation, and it might be particularly welcome in tough times. An 1885 magazine column noted that the year's crop of summer novels was "peculiarly trivial" but suggested this might be because publishers had anticipated unusually high rates

of cholera and believed “that the general mind will be so far distraught by anxiety as to have no attention to spare for being critical.”

So, depending on what kind of year you’ve been having, there’s plenty of historical precedent for taking a break and treating yourself to the cakes and ale of literature.

## **A war with Russia led Florence Nightingale to revolutionize nursing**

By Jess McHugh

When Florence Nightingale arrived at the Scutari military hospital in Turkey in 1854, conditions there were almost as bad as on the battlefield. As Britain and its allies pushed back against Russian expansionism in the Crimean War — not far from recent fighting in today’s Russian invasion of Ukraine — the death rate for British soldiers soared, though many more were dying of preventable diseases than battle wounds.

The young English nurse saw soldiers festering in filth, many of them lying on the bare floor among the rats. Dirty bandages covered rotting wounds, and the neglected soldiers had to contend with lice, fleas and the stench of disease in the unventilated ward. There was about one bathtub per 150 soldiers, though that hardly helped: A dead horse had been left to rot in the water supply.

Nightingale and her team of 38 women immediately went to work on issues that others — including many of the doctors — saw as unimportant, such as sanitation and food quality. Instead of waiting for the 2,000-mile supply chain from England to deliver important goods, Nightingale went out into Constantinople — today’s Istanbul — and purchased soap, towels, clean linens and fresh food from local markets. She and her team quickly set to work disinfecting the hospital. Nightingale essentially became a hospital administrator, taking charge of procurement, hygiene and nutrition. Death rates declined, and Nightingale was hailed as an “angel.”

The “lady with the lamp” — as she was soon known for tending to patients at all hours of the night — would become the mother of modern nursing and one of the most admired women of her era. Yet even she was not exempt from the disregard and resistance toward nurses among the male professions of the military and medicine.

Her tendency to circumvent existing power structures irked more than one higher-up. “There is not an official who would not burn me like Joan of Arc if he could, but they know that the War Office cannot turn me out because the country is with me,” she wrote during the war. She would win over many detractors who soon witnessed her ability to get things done, whether it was securing fresh produce or obtaining basic supplies from Queen Victoria herself.

After observing the administrative failures at Scutari, Nightingale would dedicate her life to ensuring that what she witnessed during the war would not happen again, arguing that hygienic patient care was a necessity and not a luxury. She was a dedicated public reformer who spent much of her life advocating to make nursing a profession that would demand respect from both doctors and the public, and she would establish the first professional nursing school.

Much like Nightingale in the Crimean War, nurses are often forced to bear the brunt of structural failures over which they have little control. They are undervalued and overworked. The “Great Resignation” has hit the nursing field particularly hard, and nearly 200,000 nursing jobs are expected to go unfilled through 2030. A recent survey found that more than one-third of nurses plan to leave their jobs by the end of the year, and nearly half of them cited burnout as the reason.

## DNA evidence reveals where the Black Death began

By Dave Kindy

Today, he is known only by the inscription on his burial stone: “This is the tomb of the believer Sanmaq. [He] died of pestilence.”

That brief detail provided a tantalizing clue for historian Philip Slavin, an associate professor at the University of Sterling in Scotland. He wondered if Sanmaq—along with 117 other people buried with him in 1338 and 1339 at cemeteries in what is now northern Kyrgyzstan—could have been killed by the bubonic plague. Emerging in full force in Europe around eight years later, that pernicious pandemic claimed as many as 200 million lives across Europe, Asia and Africa during the 14th century.

“I was almost 100 percent certain it was the beginning of the Black Death,” Slavin told [Science](#) magazine

Now DNA research has confirmed his suspicion. Genetic material extracted from seven bodies shows that they had been infected with *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium responsible for one of the largest infectious disease catastrophes in human history. This strain started a deluge of death that would devastate human populations for the next 500 years. The plague first reached the United States in 1900, where it killed 119 people during an outbreak in San Francisco.

In a study published Wednesday in the science journal [Nature](#), Slavin and a team of international researchers claim to offer historical proof that Central Asia is where the late medieval bubonic plague actually began.

“Our study puts to rest one of the biggest and most fascinating questions in history and determines when and where the single most notorious and infamous killer of humans began,” Slavin said in a statement.

The historian said he always had been fascinated by the plague and began to wonder about its origins when he learned of the graves in Kyrgyzstan, a country located north of Afghanistan. The ancient cemetery had been discovered by Russian researchers in 1880s. Remains of 30 individuals had been moved to the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in St. Petersburg.

“Despite the risk of environmental contamination and no guarantee that the bacteria would have been able to be preserved, we were able to sequence aDNA (ancient DNA) taken from seven individuals unearthed from two of these cemeteries,” said one of the study’s authors, Maria Spyrou of the University of Tubingen, in a statement. “Most excitingly, we found aDNA of the plague bacterium in three individuals.”

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The plague first struck Europe in 1347 from ships sailing on the Mediterranean Sea after appearing beforehand around the Black Sea. It spread quickly, killing an estimated 60 percent of people in Asia, Europe, Middle East and North Africa. It ravaged populations globally for centuries until scientists discovered that fleas borne on rats were responsible for spreading the bacterium.

Initially known as the Plague or the Pestilence, people began to call it the Black Death in the 1750s, primarily because many victims exhibited tissue blackened by gangrene. The disease causes lymph nodes, or buboes—the source of the term “bubonic”—to swell and ooze pus. Most infected people died.

The 14th-century outbreak is remembered today as the Second Plague Pandemic, which followed another deadly disaster, the Great Famine of 1315-1317. The First Plague Pandemic occurred from 541 to 767 and is believed to have been an earlier form of the bacterium.

The headstone of "Sanmaq," a plague victim, with an inscription that reads in part, "This is the tomb of the believer Sanmaq. He died of pestilence," in the Chu-Valley within the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains of Kyrgyzstan in August 1886. (A.S. Leybin/AFP/Getty Images)

Researchers and historians have postulated about the origins of the second pandemic since it began. Some believed it started in China and moved westward with the invasions of the Mongol Empire about the same time. This new evidence disputes that theory, though.

In 2011, scientists sequenced the genome of *Yersinia pestis* from two bodies found in a burial pit in London. Using computer programs, they were able to determine the evolution of the bacterium from earlier versions dating back 5,000 years.

“Just like COVID, the Black Death was an emerging disease, and the start of a huge pandemic that went on for some 500 years,” another of the study’s authors, Johannes Krause of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, said in a statement. “It’s very important to understand actually in what circumstances did it emerge.”

The plague strain eventually evolved into a less lethal variety. Amazingly, the research team discovered that bacterium on wild rodents that still traverse the terrain near Sanmaq’s grave in Kyrgyzstan.

“What’s really remarkable is that today, in the rodents living in that region, we have the closest living relatives of that big bang strain (of plague bacteria),” Krause said at a news briefing. “We found not just the ancestor of the Black Death, but we actually found the ancestor of the majority of plague strains that are circulating in the world today.”

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# *Pannebakker Family Association*



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."