On This Day – 13th February 1744

Birth of David Allen

David Allen was a celebrated Scottish painter, and was born in Alloa, where his father was a shore master. His drawing skills were recognised almost by accident at the age of 8, when he was told to draw on the floorboards of his home with chalk to keep himself amused while home from school.

Self-portrait. Wikicommons

He would later attain the patronage of the Erskine of Mar, after a period studying in Edinburgh, which allowed Allen to travel to Rome where he was schooled in the tradition of the Italian 'old masters' like Da Vinci and Raphael. He made many paintings depicting life in Rome and Naples, but his most famous from this era would come to be 'The Origin of Portraiture', which showed a woman tracing the outline of her lover's shadow on the wall so that she had something of his to remember when he went into battle.

Allen later returned to Edinburgh where he painted a series of portraits of Scottish life.

Allen died in Edinburgh in 1796, and a self-portrait of his currently hangs in the National

More information:

[The Origin of Painting](#)

[Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen](#)

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