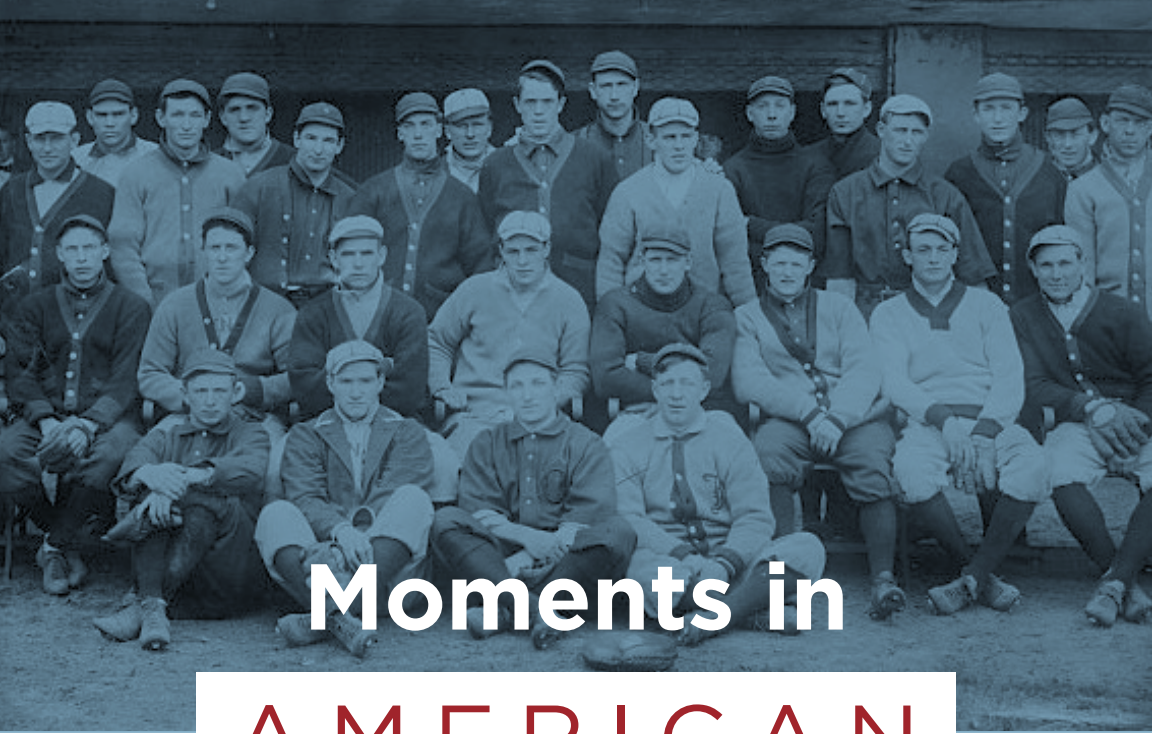
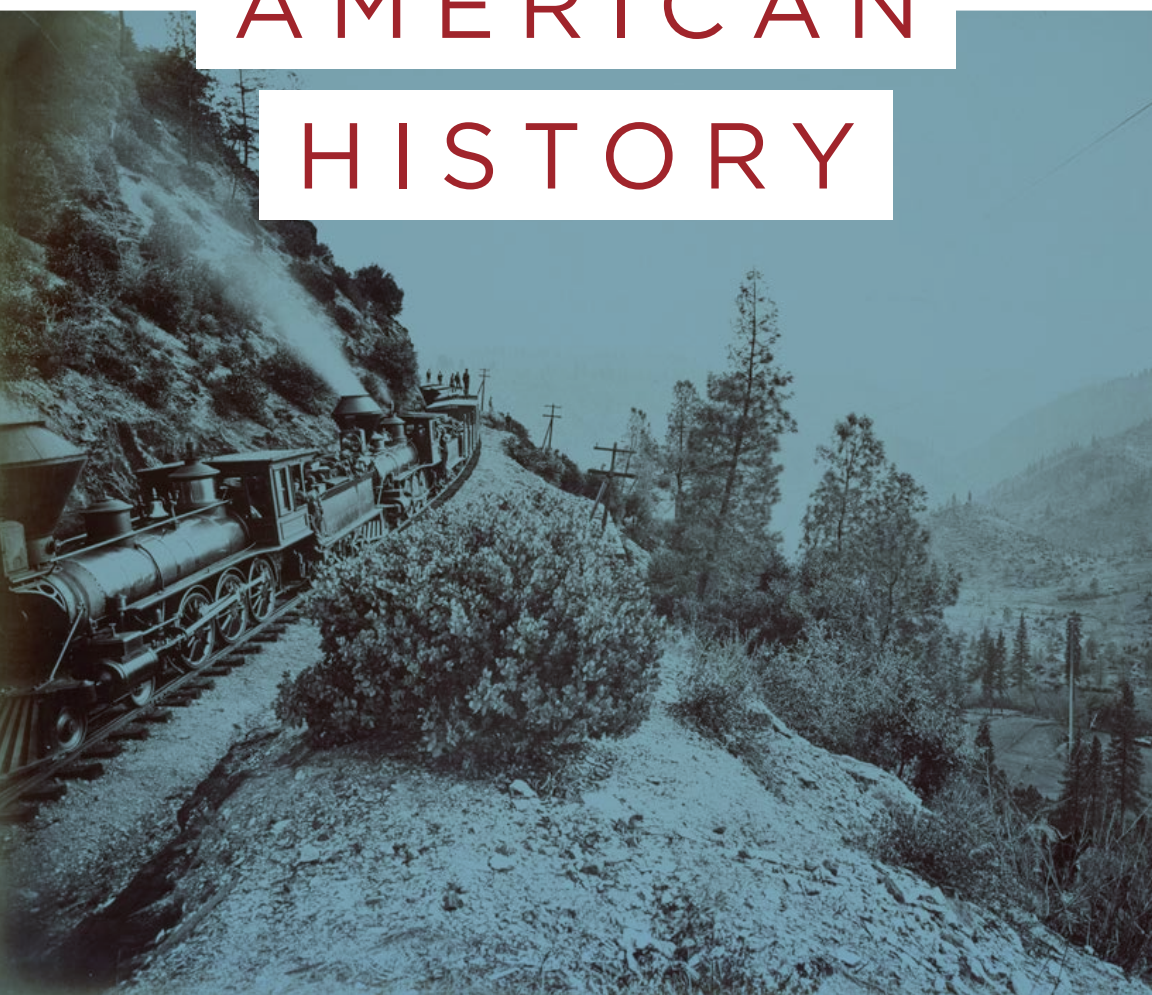




Moments in AMERICAN HISTORY



Moments in AMERICAN HISTORY





January 9, 1790

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, AS THE COUNTRY'S FIRST SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, UNDER PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON, NOTIFIED THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON "A PROPER PLAN FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC CREDIT." The United States, only seven years after the end of the Revolution, was heavily in debt, and many voices advised outright repudiation of the debt, or massive tax increases, or "discrimination" (paying off only the debt held by the first lenders). Each of these plans would have yielded only short-term relief, and probably guaranteed the eventual collapse of the United States.

Hamilton ignored each plan. In his "Report Relative to a Provision for the Support of Public Credit" (which he sent to Congress on January 14), Hamilton not only insisted on pledging a complete funding of the debt to all of its owners, but assuming the states' debt as well. "The debt of the United States," wrote Hamilton, "was the price of liberty" and must be fully paid off "to promote the encreasing respectability of the American name." This not only sent the value of American securities rocketing upward on European money markets; it firmly subordinated the restless state

governments to a national economy. Hamilton's "Report," together with two subsequent reports on manufacturing and a national banking system, laid the foundation for a stable American economy, and America's growth over the following century into a world economic power.¹

¹Forrest McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 163–188; Forrest McDonald, *The Presidency of George Washington* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1974), pp. 47–55; "Report Relative to a Provision for the Support of Public Credit," *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, in H. C. Syrett, ed., Vol. 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 65–110; John Steele Gordon, *Hamilton's Blessing: The 1790 Extraordinary Life and Times of Our National Debt* (New York: Walker, 2010), pp. 11–30; and Richard Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton: American* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), pp. 81–100.





February 14, 1876

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL APPLIES FOR A PATENT FOR THE TELEPHONE.

Although in the United States the invention of the telephone is still popularly associated with Bell, the first prototype for an apparatus that could use electrical impulses to convey the sound of a human voice at a distance to a vibrating needle, coil, or plate to reproduce the voice's sounds was devised in 1860 by a German inventor, Johann Philipp Reis. Several other inventors made subsequent efforts to develop a practical version of what Reis called a Telefon.

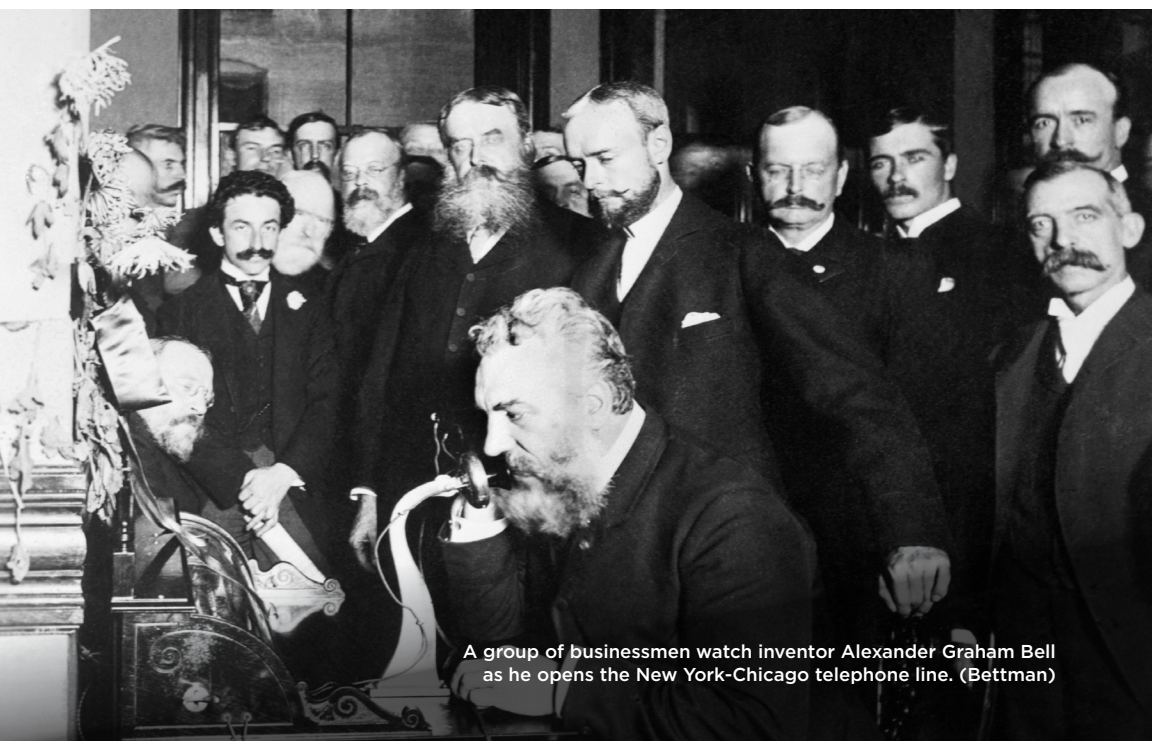
Bell, whose grandfather and father were teachers of elocution who had devised systems for teaching the deaf to speak, opened a school for deaf speakers in Boston in 1872 and began pursuing the creation of a “harmonic telegraph” that could transmit speech along a telegraph wire. By 1875, Bell had created a provisional “acoustic telegraph,” and on February 14, 1876, his lawyer, veteran patent attorney Marcellus Bailey, filed a patent for his design—just ahead of a rival patent filing by Illinois engineer Elisha Gray.

Bell did not achieve a working model of his device until March 10, 1876, when he used a transmitter to summon

his assistant, Thomas Watson, from an adjoining room: “Mr. Watson, come here—I want to see you.” Bell’s model telephone was so successful that he was able to demonstrate it at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition that June, where the Brazilian emperor, Dom Pedro II, gasped in amazement, “My God, it talks!” In October 1877, a telephone line was installed in the White House, linking President Rutherford B. Hayes’s office with the Treasury Department.

By 1893, there were 250,000 telephones in use in the United States, and 30 million by 1948. The company that Bell founded, the Bell Telephone Company, became American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) when Bell acquired Elisha Gray’s Western Electric Manufacturing Company. AT&T was granted a practical monopoly on telephone communication in the United States by the Willis-Graham Act in 1921, a monopoly that persisted until 1984.²

² Vaclav Smil, *Creating the Twentieth Century: Technical Innovations of 1867–1914 and Their Lasting Impact* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 226–236; George B. Prescott, *The Speaking Telephone, Talking Phonograph, and Other Novelties* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1878), pp. 202–217; Robert V. Bruce, *Bell: Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 157–181; and Seth Shulman, *The Telephone Gambit: Chasing Alexander Graham Bell’s Secret* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), pp. 163–172.



A group of businessmen watch inventor Alexander Graham Bell as he opens the New York-Chicago telephone line. (Bettman)



March 4, 1789

THE FIRST CONGRESS UNDER THE NEW U.S. CONSTITUTION ASSEMBLED. The old Congress under the Articles of Confederation adjourned permanently the previous October, and there was some anxiety that there would be difficulty in getting the new Congress assembled and operating, especially since two states—North Carolina and Rhode Island—had thus far refused to ratify the Constitution.

When the new Congress finally assembled in New York City on March 4, it lacked a quorum for conducting business in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Not until April 6 was a quorum present in the Senate, which was sufficient to announce the unanimous election of George Washington as the first President of the United States, and to arrange for Washington's Inauguration on April 30. Fifty-two Representatives and 22 Senators initially sat in this Congress. They moved at once to pass a remarkable series of legislative enactments: a sweeping tariff to protect American products from foreign competition (July 4); the three major presidential Cabinet offices (State, Treasury, and War), an attorney general, and a system of federal courts (September 24); and, above all, a series of amendments to the Constitution which became known as the "Bill of Rights" (also on September

24). In its second session, from January 4 to August 12, 1790, Congress received Alexander Hamilton's three reports on the American economy, and enacted legislation to implement his recommendations. Its third and last session, from December 6, 1790, to March 3, 1791, met in the new capital of Philadelphia and admitted the first new state beyond the original 13, Vermont.

This First Congress was a remarkable proof of how effectively the new Constitution could operate, especially compared to the feebleness of the Articles of Confederation. “In no nation, by no Legislature, was ever so much done in so short a period for the establishment of Government, order, public Credit & general tranquillity,” wrote John Trumbull, who represented Connecticut in the House of Representatives. Vice President John Adams agreed: “The National Government has succeeded beyond the expectations, even of the sanguine, and is more popular...than I expected ever to live to see.”³

3 *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789–March 3, 1791*, 20 Volumes (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972–2017); Charlene Bangs Bickford and Kenneth R. Bowling, *Birth of the Nation: The First Federal Congress, 1789–1791* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1989), pp. 9–22; Fergus M. Bordewich, *The First Congress: How James Madison, George Washington, and a Group of Extraordinary Men Invented the Government* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), pp. 301–306; Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 31–75; and Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 52–114.





March 4, 1801

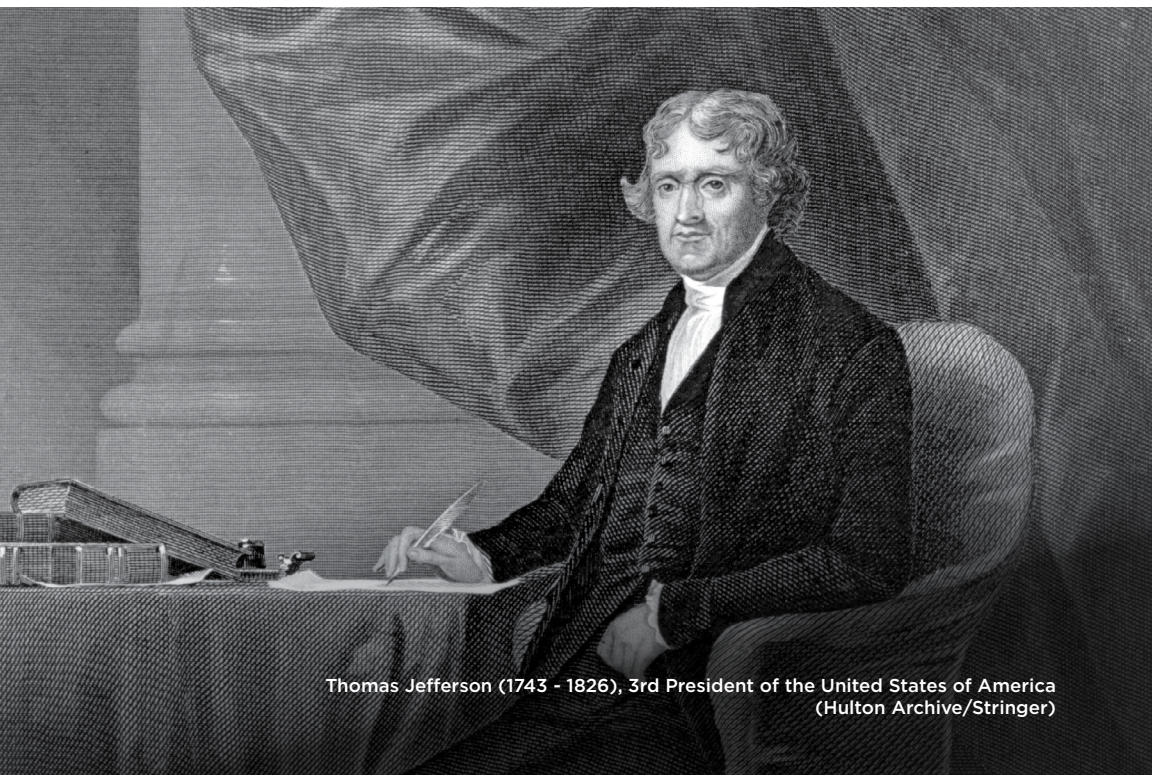
THOMAS JEFFERSON IS INAUGURATED AS THE THIRD PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Jefferson's election over the Federalist candidate and incumbent, John Adams, had come at the conclusion of both a shockingly nasty political campaign, and then a damaging constitutional imbroglio. Adams and Jefferson had been close collaborators in the move to independence, but their political philosophies had since diverged. In 1796, Adams barely beat off a challenge for the presidency by Jefferson. Federalist partisans predicted that a Jefferson presidency would witness "the Bible cast into a bonfire, the vessels of the sacramental supper borne by an ass in public procession, and our children, either wheedled or terrified, uniting in chanting mockeries against God." Nevertheless, in 1800, the unpopularity of the Alien and Sedition Acts, and a split in the Federalist Party, allowed Jefferson to carry nine of the 16 states and outscore Adams in the Electoral College by 73 to 65. However, under the prevailing rule for counting in the Electoral College, Jefferson's vice presidential nominee, the ambitious Aaron Burr, also scored 73 electoral votes. The resolution of this conundrum moved to the House of Representatives, where Burr was suspected of conspiring to win the presidency himself. Not until February 17, 1801,

after 36 ballots, was Jefferson declared the President-Elect, and duly inaugurated two weeks later.

Jefferson's inauguration represents the first peaceful surrender of power by the President (John Adams) of one political party to a new President (Jefferson) of an opposing political party (the Democratic-Republicans). Although there were threats that Jefferson's Inauguration would be "the first day of revolution and Civil War," no such uprising occurred, and Jefferson sought to placate any anxieties by affirming in his Inaugural Address (all of 1,716 words) that "We are all Republicans—we are all Federalists." This demonstrated that a democratic republic would not necessarily disintegrate into violence when presidential power changed hands, and set a pattern for peaceful transfers of power in American political life, which was interrupted only once, by the American Civil War.⁴

⁴ Stephen H. Browne, *Jefferson's Call for Nationhood: The First Inaugural Address* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), pp. 3–11; John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 162–174; Susan Dunn, *Jefferson's Second Revolution: The Election of 1800 and the Triumph of Republicanism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), pp. 190–214; and Edward B. Foley, *Presidential Elections and Majority Rule: The Rise, Demise, and Potential Restoration of the Jeffersonian Electoral College* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 23–26.



Thomas Jefferson (1743 - 1826), 3rd President of the United States of America
(Hulton Archive/Stringer)



April 12, 1861

THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND THE NEWLY FORMED CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA OPENED AN ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT OF A U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATION, Fort Sumter, in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Fort Sumter was built as part of an ambitious scheme of masonry fortifications designed to protect the entrances to major American harbors. Planned in 1828 for a sandbar beside Charleston's main ship channel and built on 70,000 tons of granite rubble, Fort Sumter was named for Revolutionary War hero Thomas Sumter, and emerged as a brick pentagon intended to house 146 pieces of artillery and 650 soldiers. Budget problems had delayed completion of the project for 30 years.

When South Carolina announced its secession from the United States on December 20, 1860 (and thereafter joined the Southern Confederacy), there was no garrison in the fort. The two companies of artillerymen were assigned instead to a shore-side facility, Fort Moultrie. Seeing how vulnerable Fort Moultrie was to attack, the commanding officer, Major Robert Anderson, shifted his command to Fort Sumter under cover of night. Anderson's two

companies were scarcely adequate for defending Sumter. Nevertheless, Anderson refused a demand to surrender the fort. Confederate authorities, hoping to avert outright war with the United States, alternately planned for negotiations with the United States and attempts to starve Sumter into submission. But in April 1861, newly inaugurated President Abraham Lincoln announced his intention to hold or re-occupy all federal property in the Confederacy, and to resupply Fort Sumter. The Confederates responded on April 12 with a bombardment from their own shore batteries that forced Sumter's surrender on April 14. One day later, President Lincoln proclaimed a state of insurrection, called on the militia of the states, and began enrolling volunteer forces to confront "combinations too powerful to be suppressed by ordinary means." With this began the American Civil War, which would last for four years and cost 750,000 lives.⁵

⁵ William A. Swanberg, *First Blood: The Story of Fort Sumter* (New York: Scribner's, 1957); David Detzer, *Allegiance: Fort Sumter, Charleston and the Beginning of the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt, 2001); Robert N. Rosen and Richard W. Hatcher III, *The First Shot* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011); W. A. Harris, *The Record of Fort Sumter, From Its Occupation by Major Anderson, to Its Reduction by South Carolina Troops, During the Administration of Governor Pickens* (Columbia, SC: South Carolinian Steam Job Printing Office, 1862); and David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 336–375.



This photograph, taken in April 1861, by a Confederate photographer shows damage to Ft. Sumter. (Bettmann)



April 29, 1803

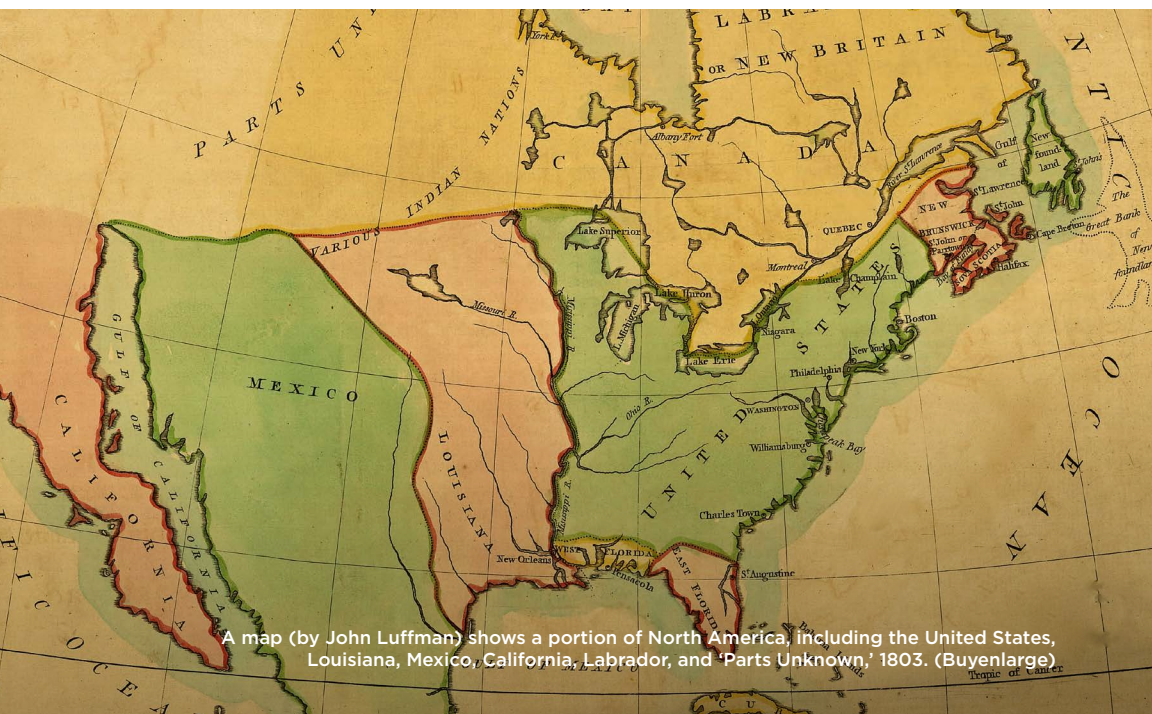
THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE WERE COMPLETED IN PARIS. At the end of the American Revolution, Britain ceded to the newly independent United States all of its territory south of Canada, extending to the Mississippi River. That, however, entangled the United States in a lengthy series of negotiations with Spain, which owned the western half of the North American continent and gave the Spanish economic control of the Mississippi. Spain was itself usurped by Napoleon Bonaparte, who forced Spain to cede a substantial stretch of Spain's North American territory known as Louisiana (including New Orleans) to Bonaparte's France. Bonaparte dreamed of recreating a French empire in the New World, using the French islands of the West Indies as the bridge between France and North America. These plans were upset by a massive slave uprising on the French-held island of Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), which Bonaparte's soldiers were unable to quell. Frustrated in his plans, Bonaparte offered to sell the entirety of Louisiana to the United States in 1803.

Negotiations for the purchase treaty began on April 11 between French Foreign Minister Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand and François Barbé-Marbois, and the American diplomatic

representative in Paris, Robert Livingston. Livingston joined President Thomas Jefferson's special envoy for the talks, James Monroe (the future fifth President of the United States). The negotiations took only three days, and involved an outright purchase of New Orleans and 827,000 square miles of the trans-Mississippi stretching north to Canada for \$15 million. The Louisiana Purchase treaty was officially signed on May 2, and the accompanying side agreements by May 9. President Jefferson was uncertain whether he actually had the constitutional sanction to authorize the treaty. Nevertheless, the U.S. Senate confirmed it on October 20.

The Louisiana Purchase effectively doubled the size of the United States. It also secured American control of New Orleans and the entire Mississippi River system that it controlled. Above all, it re-oriented American attention from transatlantic sea commerce to development as a continental land power that would reach to the Pacific Ocean.⁶

⁶ Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 259–283; Charles A. Cerami, *Jefferson's Great Gamble: The Remarkable Story of Jefferson, Napoleon and the Men Behind the Louisiana Purchase* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2003), pp. 179–206; Lynne Cheney, *The Virginia Dynasty: Four Presidents and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Viking, 2020), pp. 227–234; and Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., *The Louisiana Purchase: A Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002).



A map (by John Luffman) shows a portion of North America, including the United States, Louisiana, Mexico, California, Labrador, and 'Parts Unknown,' 1803. (Buyenlarge)



May 4, 1869

THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL GAME IS PLAYED BETWEEN THE CINCINNATI RED STOCKINGS AND THE CINCINNATI GREAT WESTERNS. An outdoor game of batted balls that can be recognized as baseball became popular in the 1840s with the organization of the first baseball club, the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York City, and in 1858, a National Association of Base Ball Players was formed. The original baseball clubs were local, social, and amateur, but rivalry between the clubs soon led to payments to recruit talented players, and by 1868, the Association agreed to “recognize and govern” professional players. The Red Stockings took the field in 1869 as the first all-professional team, and the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players (NAPBBP) was formed two years later. From there springs the modern apparatus of American professional sports and athletes. Professional baseball has given us some of our most enduring cultural icons—Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson, Ted Williams, Walter Johnson, Connie Mack—and today generates over \$10 billion in revenue.⁷

⁷ Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 15 and 35, and Maury Brown, “MLB Sees Record \$10.7 Billion in Revenues for 2019,” *Forbes*, December 21, 2019.



May 10, 1869

THE LAST SPIKE—A 17.6 CARAT GOLDEN ONE—IS DRIVEN AT THE JUNCTION AT PROMONTORY POINT, UTAH, uniting the Central Pacific Railroad (from Sacramento) and the Union Pacific Railroad (from Omaha) to create the first transcontinental railroad system. The event completed a process that began with the inauguration of America's first railroad service on July 4, 1828, by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in ceremonies featuring the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, Charles Carroll of Carrollton. The transcontinental railroad was a joint public-private venture, with land grants made by the Lincoln Administration under the terms of the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, and accelerated the process of economic development in the West that was begun by the Homestead Act of the same year. By 1900, there were 193,346 miles of railroad track in the U.S. Railroad passenger miles per person peaked at 448 in 1919, declined to 256 in 1929 because of the automobile, and were overtaken by air passenger traffic in 1956.⁸

⁸ Robert J. Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 378.



May 20, 1862

PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN SIGNS THE HOMESTEAD ACT. Even before his election as President in 1860, Lincoln advocated “cutting up” the “Government lands” in the West “so that every poor man may have a home.” It was hoped that this would pre-empt any movement by slaveowners to the West. Homestead legislation was introduced in Congress in February 1862, opening public lands to any claimant willing, for little more than a filing fee, to occupy and improve up to 160 acres of land. The first claim was filed by Daniel Freeman (1826–1908) in the U.S. Land Office in Brownville, Nebraska, on January 1, 1863, and over the next 50 years, 4 million settlers would file 2.5 million claims to 270 million acres—approximately 10 percent of the entire U.S. landscape. The Homestead Act was the greatest single act of privatization of government property in American history and remained in effect until 1976 (with provisions for homesteading in Alaska until 1986).⁹

⁹ “An Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain,” in *The Statutes at Large, Treaties and Proclamations of the United States of America*, ed. George P. Sanger (Boston: Little, Brown, 1863), Vol. 12, pp. 392–393; Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies During the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 144–149; and Senator Carl T. Curtis in *Hearing, Homestead Act Centennial, Subcommittee on Federal Charters, Holidays, and Celebrations, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., July 26, 1961*, p. 2.

10

June 12, 1630

THE ARBELLA, THE FIRST OF A FLEET OF FOUR SHIPS BEARING ENGLISH EMIGRANTS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF JOHN WINTHROP, arrived at Salem, Massachusetts, where they joined an advance contingent of emigrants sent out the previous year. Over the next several months, Winthrop supervised the establishment of a new town, to be called Boston, in a large bay created by the confluence of the Mystic and Charles Rivers. Although English settlers had established earlier colonies on the American coast, Winthrop's Massachusetts colonists were unusual for being a cohesive group of Puritan religious dissenters from the state-established Church of England. An earlier religious colony had been established in Massachusetts in 1620, but its settlers were religious separatists seeking escape from the English state religion. Winthrop's settlers saw themselves as agents for transforming that religion and brought with them a vision that was captured in words attributed to Winthrop: "[W]e shall be as a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us." This sense of having a transforming mission has come to permeate much of American identity and has given Americans an energy for moral crusade.¹⁰

¹⁰ Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 188 and 191; John Winthrop, journal entry for June 6 and 12, 1630, in *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, ed. Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 18, note 24; 25, note 42; and 27.

11

June 14, 1777

THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS ADOPTS A RESOLUTION PRESCRIBING A GENERAL AMERICAN FLAG TO SUPERSEDE THE AD HOC COLLECTION OF FLAGS used by the Continental Army and Navy (and displaying various mottoes: “Don’t Tread on Me,” “An Appeal to Heaven,” “Liberty and Union,” and “Liberty or Death”) during the two years since the beginning of the American Revolution. In January 1776, George Washington introduced the use of a red-and-white striped flag (similar to one employed by the East India Company) with the British Union Jack in the upper-left corner and known as the Grand Union Flag. The Continental Congress’s resolution set the standard for “the flag of the United States” as a field (or fly) of “thirteen stripes, alternate red and white,” with a blue upper-left corner (or union) displaying “thirteen stars” in white, “representing a new constellation.” The flag remained unaltered until 1794, when Congress passed legislation to add two stars and two stripes to the flag in recognition of the admission of Vermont and Kentucky to the Union. A third statute in 1818 permanently fixed the number of stripes at 13. Because no pattern for the stars in the union was specified in the June 14 resolution, Revolutionary flags alternately displayed the stars as a circlet or a pattern of

five columns (with alternating three and two stars). In fact, no overall flag code was adopted until 1942. In 1780, Francis Hopkinson claimed to have been the original designer of the flag, and in 1870, the descendants of Betsy Ross advanced the claim that she had sewn the first flag at the behest of George Washington in 1776. Both claims are dubious. Although an early version of the flag may have been used at the Battle of the Brandywine on September 11, 1777, the most famous use of the flag in battle would not occur until the War of 1812, when Francis Scott Key immortalized the garrison flag flown by the defenders of Baltimore's Fort McHenry as "the Star-Spangled Banner."¹¹

¹¹ Journal entry for June 14, 1777, in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1907), Vol. 8, p. 464; "An Act making an alteration in the Flag of the United States," January 13, 1794, and "An Act to Establish the flag of the United States," April 4, 1818, in *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America, from the Organization of Government in 1789, to March 3, 1845*, ed. Richard Peters (Boston: Little & Brown, 1845), Vol. 1, p. 341, and Vol. 3, p. 415; Marc Leepson, *Flag: An American Biography* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2006), pp. 4, 13, 15, and 28–29; John R. Vile, *The American Flag: An Encyclopedia of the Stars and Stripes in U.S. History, Culture, and Law* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2018), pp. 107–110; and Marla R. Miller, *Betsy Ross and the Making of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2010), pp. 16 and 175–177.



12

July 4, 1776

THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS, MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA'S STATE HOUSE (NOW INDEPENDENCE HALL), ADOPTED A DECLARATION written by Thomas Jefferson that announced the reasons for the separation of the 13 British North American colonies from the British Empire and their organization as the United States of America. This declaration was intended to frame a resolution offered on June 7 by Richard Henry Lee—"That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States...absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown"—that was adopted without a dissenting vote by the Congress on July 2. Jefferson's accompanying declaration had been submitted on June 28 and was confirmed as the Congress's official statement on July 4. Although much of the document lists the technical reasons for the repudiation of British authority, the opening sentences establish American independence based on the "Laws of Nature and Nature's God" and the "self-evident" possession by "all men" of "certain inalienable rights," which included "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." The Congress thus not only created a republic rather than a monarchy, but justified that republic on the basis of natural law and natural right in harmony with the political theory

of the 18th-century Enlightenment. The Declaration was printed as a broadside by John Dunlap for distribution and celebration the day after its adoption, but an official copy, on parchment, was not submitted to members of the Continental Congress for their signatures until August 2.¹²

12 Edmund Cody Burnett, *The Continental Congress* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), pp. 171 and 188–189; Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1997), p. 131; Barry Alan Shain, ed., *The Declaration of Independence in Historical Context: American State Papers, Petitions, Proclamations, and Letters of the Delegates to the First National Congresses* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2014), p. 482.



John Trumbull's painting, *Declaration of Independence*, depicting the five-man drafting committee of the Declaration of Independence presenting their work to the Congress.

13

July 20, 1969

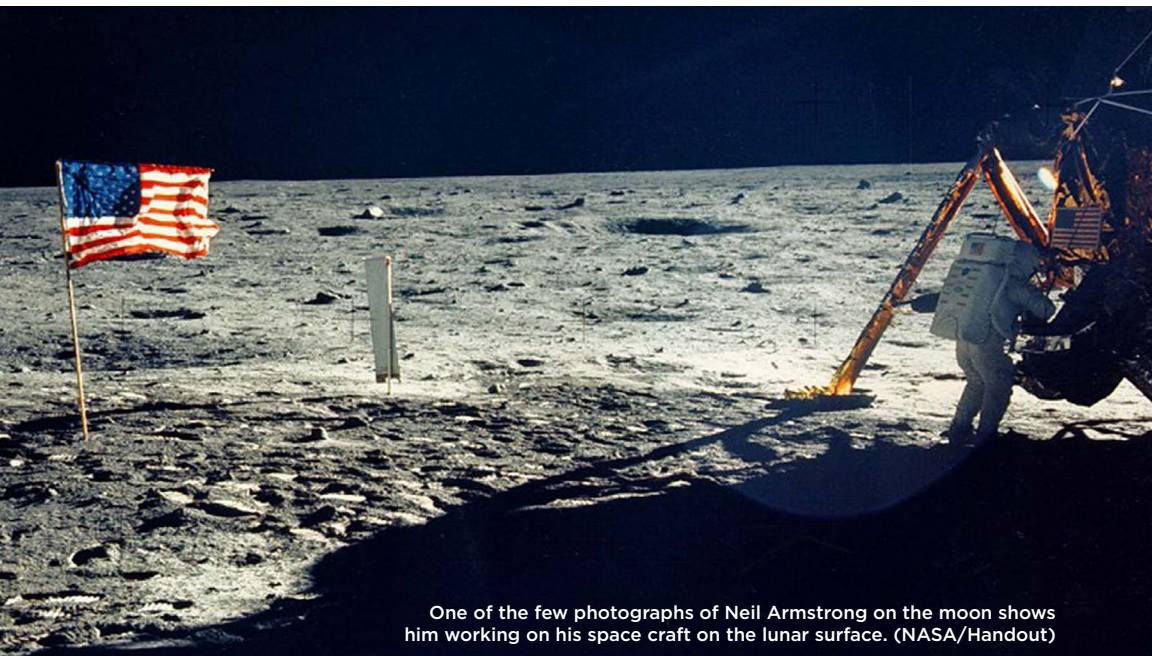
IN 1957, AT THE APEX OF THE COLD WAR, THE SOVIET UNION LAUNCHES THE FIRST DESIGNED SATELLITE, SPUTNIK 1. This assertion of technological superiority over the United States was at once challenged by President Dwight Eisenhower, who created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and President John F. Kennedy, who vowed in 1961 that “before this decade is out,” the United States would lead the Soviets in “landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth.” A series of manned Earth orbits, known as the Gemini series, tested NASA’s ability to place astronauts safely in space.

Gemini was followed by the Apollo series, beginning in 1967, which tested the viability of Moon orbits. Finally, at 9:32 am on July 16, 1969, Apollo 11—crewed by astronauts Michael Collins, Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin, and Neil Armstrong and designed to make the first live landing—was propelled into Earth orbit by a Saturn V rocket and then launched on its own power on a three-day journey to the Moon. Once in lunar orbit, on July 20, Armstrong and Aldrin used a detachable lunar module, the Eagle, to descend to the surface of the Moon while Collins remained aboard the

command module Columbia. The Eagle touched down in the Sea of Tranquility at 4:17 pm, and Armstrong radioed back to NASA, “Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.” At 10:56, Armstrong exited the Eagle, climbed down a short ladder, and planted the first human step on the Moon, saying, “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” Aldrin joined Armstrong for a brief two-and-a-half-hour exploration of the Moon’s surface and then planted a U.S. flag, collected surface samples, and took photographs. The crew returned safely to Earth on July 24 and were retrieved after an ocean landing by the USS Hornet.

Although few serious scientific discoveries emerged from the landing, the Soviets suffered a major humiliation and never succeeded in making a live Moon landing of their own. Five subsequent live Apollo landings took place until the program ceased in 1972, and NASA subsequently dropped from a Cold War high of 5 percent of the U.S. federal budget to 0.5 percent of the budget.¹³

¹³ Andrew Chaikin, *A Man on the Moon: The Voyages of the Apollo Astronauts* (New York: Viking, 1994); James Donovan, *Shoot for the Moon: The Space Race and the Extraordinary Voyage of Apollo 11* (New York: Little, Brown, 2019); Charles Fishman, *One Giant Leap: The Impossible Mission That Flew Us to the Moon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019); James R. Hansen, *First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005); John M. Logsdon, John F. Kennedy and the Race to the Moon (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2010); and Charles Murray and Catherine Bly Cox, *Apollo: The Race to the Moon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989).



One of the few photographs of Neil Armstrong on the moon shows him working on his space craft on the lunar surface. (NASA/Handout)

14

August 18, 1920

IT WAS A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF ENGLISH COMMON LAW THAT IN MATTERS OF MEN AND WOMEN, “THE HUSBAND AND WIFE ARE ONE, AND THAT ONE IS THE HUSBAND.” Hence, voting and other aspects of public life, were a field of action for men; women were present only virtually. But virtual representation was one of the principal sticking points cited by the American Revolutionaries in declaring independence from Great Britain, and in two states (New Jersey and Kentucky), women had the right to vote in some elections through the early years of the 19th century.

In the 1840s, the abolitionist Liberty Party called for “universal suffrage in its broadest sense, including women as well as men.” The boldest stride toward equal voting rights came at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 with a Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions that affirmed a woman’s “inalienable right to the elective franchise.” However, the process of turning this into a legislative reality was slow. In 1866, Kansas held a referendum on women’s suffrage that failed by a 3-to-1 margin, and over the ensuing half-century, 479 efforts were mounted in state legislatures for women’s suffrage. Few achieved their goal.

In 1872, a national proponent of women's voting rights, Susan B. Anthony, persuaded voting inspectors, on the strength of the Fourteenth Amendment, to allow her to vote for Ulysses S. Grant as President, only to be arrested and fined \$100. Eventually, four states granted women voting rights before the end of the century, followed by seven more by 1914. Finally, in 1918, President Woodrow Wilson urged adoption of a women's suffrage amendment to the Constitution. Congress narrowly adopted the amendment in June 1919, but full ratification did not arrive until 1920, when the Tennessee legislature voted—by a single vote—to ratify what then became the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18. Secretary of State Robert Lansing certified the ratification on August 26, just in time for 9.4 million American women (approximately 35 percent of those eligible) to vote in the national elections that fall.¹⁴

14 Proceedings of the Free Convention: Held at Rutland, Vt., July 25th, 26th, and 27th, 1858 (Boston: J. B. Yerrington and Son, 1858); "An Act to establish a System of Common Schools in the State of Kentucky," February 16, 1838, in Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (Frankfort, 1838); History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. 1, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1889); Joelle Million, *Woman's Voice, Woman's Place: Lucy Stone and the Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (New York: Knopf, 1999), p. 110; Nancy Wolocho, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: Knopf, 1984); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020); and "The Woman's Vote in National Elections," in Editorial Research Reports 1927, Vol. II (Washington: CQ Press, 1927).



15

August 25, 1939

THOMAS ALVA EDISON MAY HAVE INVENTED THE EARLIEST VERSION OF A “MOVIE”—a rapid series of pictures that simulates motion to the viewer—with his vertical-feed “kinetoscope” in 1892, but it was Thomas Armant’s “vitascope” that created a process for projecting large-scale images with steady movement. Armant sold the “vitascope” to Edison, who began to produce short films of everyday life, sharing space with vaudeville and theatrical acts in theatres. By 1915, the films were lengthening into full-scale narratives and had taken up residence in their own arcades and “movie palaces.” By 1922, weekly movie attendance had reached 40 million people (36 percent of the population), but it was not until 1939 that American moviemakers moved beyond the shallow genres of westerns, gangster films, and dance comedies to produce a series of the greatest film epics seen in the 20th century. This series began on August 25, 1939, with the nationwide debut of *The Wizard of Oz*, an adaptation of L. Frank Baum’s children’s fantasy *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). Directed by Victor Fleming and starring Judy Garland as Dorothy Gale, with songs by Harold Arlen and E. Y. “Yip” Harburg, *The Wizard of Oz* combined a whirlwind of technical tricks (alternating black-and-white with the new Technicolor

process, a simulated tornado) with a wistful storyline of loss and return. The film earned more than \$3 million in its first year and would go on to become the most watched movie in film history. Hard on the heels of *The Wizard of Oz* came the release of *Gone with the Wind* in December, followed by *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Fantasia* (1940); *Citizen Kane* (1941); and *Casablanca* (1942). Together with *The Wizard of Oz*, these films made the American movie the most flexible and popular form of entertainment in history. In 2019, movies in the U.S. grossed more than \$11 billion (compared to \$9.6 billion in live theatre revenues and \$190 million in revenues for college football).¹⁵

15 Robert Henry Stanley and Charles Side Steinberg, *The Media Environment: Mass Communications in American Society* (New York: Hastings House, 1976), pp. 45–47; Robert J. Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 197–203; Graeme Ross, “Why 1939 Was the Greatest Year in Film History,” *The Independent*, April 4, 2019; Daniel Eagan, *America’s Film Legacy: The Authoritative Guide to the Landmark Movies in the National Film Registry* (New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 2 and 292–293; Rebecca Rubin, “Global Box Office Hits New Record in 2019 with \$42.5 Billion,” *Variety*, January 10, 2020; “Live Performance Theaters in the US—Market Size 2001–2026,” IbisWorld, updated October 26, 2020, <https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/market-size/live-performance-theaters-united-states/>; National Collegiate Athletic Association, “Finances of Intercollegiate Athletics Database,” September 2020, <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/finances-intercollegiate-athletics-database>.



Publicity photo of American entertainers; (L–R) Jack Haley, Ray Bolger, Judy Garland and Bert Lahr promoting the January 9, 1966 CBS broadcast of the 1939 MGM feature film *The Wizard of Oz*. (CBS Television Network, Public Domain)

16

September 11, 2001

WHAT HAS BECOME KNOWN SIMPLY AS “9/11” BEGAN AT 8:46 AM when American Airlines flight 11, which had been hijacked by five Islamic militants associated with the terrorist faction known as Al-Qaeda, was flown by them into the north face of the north tower of New York City’s world trade center. Seventeen minutes later, a second hijacked passenger jet, United Airlines Flight 175, which had also been hijacked, struck the south tower of the WTC. After an hour, the resulting damage and fires caused the south tower to collapse. The north tower collapsed at 10:28 am, and another building in the WTC complex sustained collateral damage and collapsed several hours later. At almost the same time that the WTC towers were struck, a third hijacked passenger jet was flown into the Pentagon. A fourth hijacked aircraft was probably intended to attack the Capitol, but its passengers fought for control of the plane and forced it to crash in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The attacks were masterminded by Osama bin Laden, leader of al-Qaeda. All told, the victims of the attacks included 2,606 people in the World Trade Center, 175 in the Pentagon, and 265 on the four aircraft. Nineteen hijackers also died. In addition, 343 firefighters and 72 policemen perished trying to save the lives of people in the two towers.

Three days after the attacks, Congress passed an Authorization for the Use of Military Force, and President George W. Bush addressed the nation on September 20 to outline a response. A “War on Terrorism” directed at al-Qaeda and its affiliates (principally the Taliban in Afghanistan) began on October 7 with aerial bombing campaigns. A Homeland Security Act created a new Department of Homeland Security, which, together with the Patriot Act (signed by President Bush on October 26), helped the United States to tighten its domestic security against further attacks.

Bin Laden was eventually tracked down and killed by American forces in Pakistan in 2011. In 2003, in an effort to prevent al-Qaeda from establishing itself in Iraq, the United States invaded Iraq and deposed its leader, Saddam Hussein. Overall, United States forces sustained approximately 3,800 combat deaths in the invasion and occupation of Iraq and another 1,800 in Afghanistan. Ultimate success in eliminating al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and similar Islamic terrorist organizations, however, has proven elusive, and much of the war-related legislation adopted by Congress remains in force.¹⁶

16 National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Authorized Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004); Wilborn Hampton, *September 11, 2001: Attack on New York City* (New York: Candlewick Press, 2003; updated edition, 2011); Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Vintage, 2007); Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn, *102 Minutes: The Unforgettable Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers, 2nd edition* (New York: Times Books, 2011); Mitchell Zuckoff, *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11* (New York: Harper, 2019); David Zucchino, *Thunder Run: The Armored Strike to Capture Baghdad* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004); Mark Owen with Kevin Mauer, *No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission That Killed Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Dutton Books, 2012).

17

September 27, 1908

THE FIRST MODEL T FORD AUTOMOBILE, DESIGNED BY HENRY FORD, WAS PRODUCED AT THE FORD PIQUETTE AVENUE PLANT IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN. Although an early self-propelled carriage, or automobile, with a two-stroke engine had been created by Karl Benz in 1879, followed by an automobile with a powerful six-cylinder engine by Wilhelm Maybach in 1906, Henry Ford's Model T was uniquely durable and made attractively inexpensive by integration of the production and assembly of parts under one roof.

At first, production was limited to less than a dozen a month, but in 1910, Ford moved production of the Model T to a new plant in Highland Park, Michigan, where construction of the cars was shifted onto a moving assembly line. A year later, in 1911, more than 34,000 Model Ts were produced. As production geared up, the price dropped from \$950 for the basic model in 1910 to \$290 in 1920, easily undercutting Ford's chief competitors, Oldsmobile and Chevrolet.

The Model T was what one Ford advertisement called "a necessity to every business man, doctor, salesman or

farmer,” and it transformed where Americans lived, how they worked, and where they could travel. By 1929, the ratio of automobiles to American households had reached 90 percent, with fully half of them manufactured by Ford.¹⁷

¹⁷ Robert J. Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 153–168; Robert Lacey, *Ford: The Men and the Machine* (New York: Random House, 1986), pp. 75–83 and 102–105; Ray Batchelor, *Henry Ford, Mass Production, Modernism, and Design* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 22–23; Lindsay Brooke, *Ford Model T: The Car That Put the World on Wheels* (Minneapolis: Motorbooks, 2008), pp. 9–17.



A Ford Model T car parked in a dirt road next to the fence of a typical American house in 1908.
(Mondadori Portfolio\Mondadori via Getty Images)

18

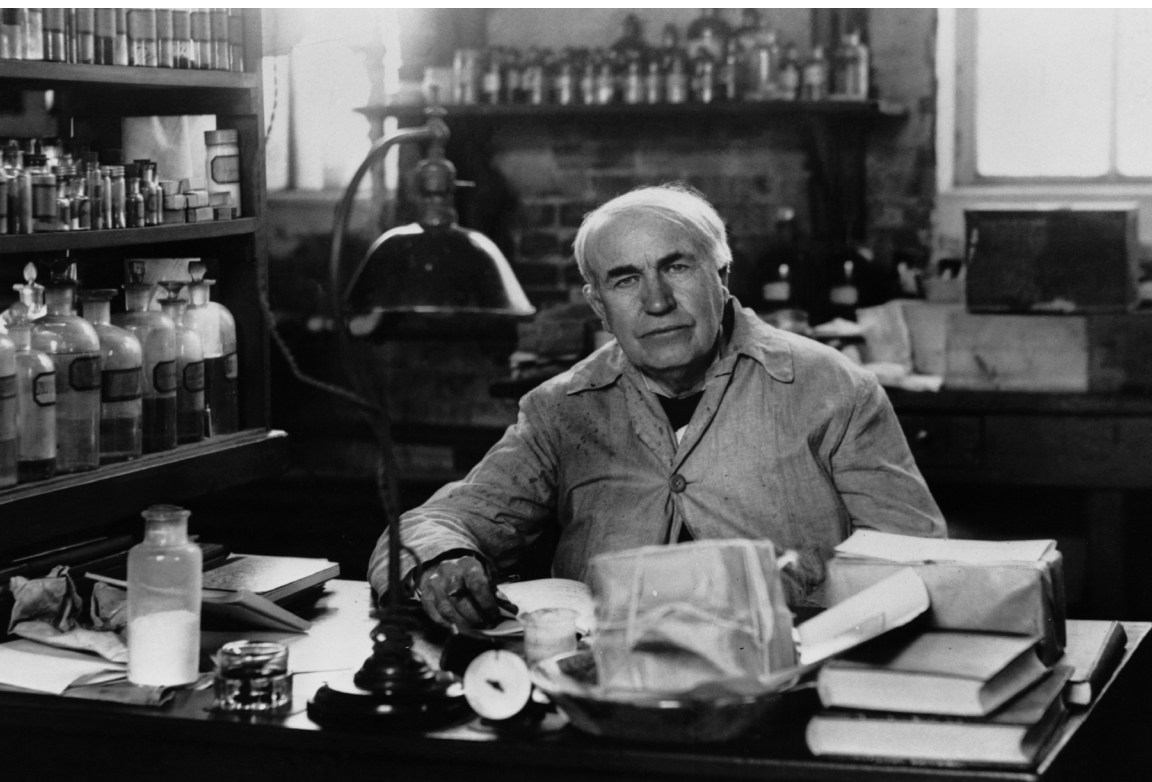
October 22-23, 1879

JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT, THOMAS ALVA EDISON TESTED A WORKING ELECTRICAL INCANDESCENT LIGHT BULB. This was the culmination of a long series of experiments in the use of electrical power that had been taking place for more than a century before Edison's midnight achievement. In 1810, Sir Humphrey Davy introduced the first electrical "arc light" (a stream of electrical light between two carbon rods) to the Royal Society, and in 1877, Charles Brush illuminated Monument Park in Cleveland with arc lights. Edison's incandescent bulb, however, brought electrical lighting down to the scale of household usage.

The key element was the filament, housed in a glass bulb, which electrical power would burn and thus generate light. Edison actually debuted an incandescent bulb in 1878, but its platinum filament burned for only a few minutes. It was not until he substituted carbonized sewing thread that the bulb burned for 40 hours and allowed him to announce to The New York Times that "the electric light is perfected." Compared to the light emitted by candles (equivalent to 13 lumens), Edison's 100-watt electrical light bulb emitted 1,200 lumens.

There was still much to do—developing switches, sockets, fixtures, and above all a central plant in Manhattan for powering household electrical lighting—but by 1940, 78 percent of American homes were lit electrically, and 95 percent of all urban areas were served by home electricity for a variety of other uses—refrigeration, cooking, appliances—so that residential electricity use would double every decade from 1910 to 1960.¹⁸

18 Ernest Freeburg, *The Age of Edison: Electric Light and the Invention of Modern America* (New York: Penguin, 2013), pp. 4–30; Randall E. Stross, *The Wizard of Menlo Park: How Thomas Alva Edison Invented the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2007), pp. 73–97; Robert J. Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 115–122; Edmund Morris, *Edison* (New York: Random House, 2019), pp. 559–580.



Inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931) at work in his West Orange, New Jersey laboratory.
(© Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS/Corbis/Getty Images)

19

October 29, 1929

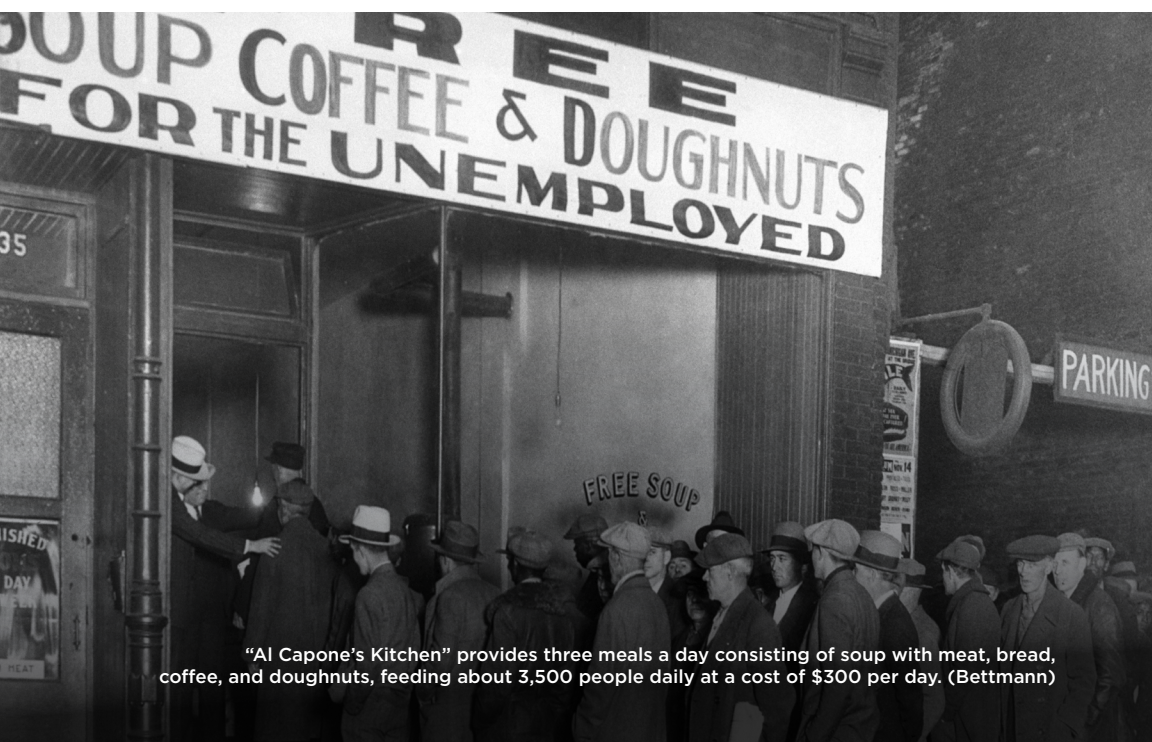
THE GREAT NEW YORK STOCK MARKET CRASH HITS AN UNPRECEDENTED BOTTOM, HERALDING THE START OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION. For a decade after World War I, the U.S. economy had been the only healthy one among the world's major economies. Between 1913 and 1929, the United States' share of global production rose from 33 percent to 42 percent, while the economies of Britain, France, and Germany, wrecked by the war's impact, together fell to only 28 percent of global output. And while world steel production fell by 33 percent from 1913 to 1920, American steel production rose by 25 percent. The massive loss of lives in Europe during the war meant that a new generation of maturing consumers had been wiped out, and by 1929, there was no longer enough demand to absorb American production.

By the fall of 1929, shares on the New York Stock Exchange had begun to drop, and by the last week of October, the contraction turned into a rout. On Thursday, October 24, 12.9 million shares were sold off at steeply declining prices; the following Tuesday, October 29 ("Black Tuesday"), 16.3 million shares were sold at an estimated loss of \$10 billion. As investment value disappeared, production shuddered to a halt. By March 1930, 3.25 million American workers were

unemployed; by 1932, the number had reached 13 million, and unemployment rates had reached 27 percent.

President Herbert Hoover struggled unavailingly to stem the receding tide, and in 1932, he was swept from office by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promised a “New Deal” to revive the economy. Roosevelt sponsored unprecedented peacetime governmental interventions to restart the economy. Nevertheless, unemployment remained at 24.9 percent in 1933 and was still at 17.4 percent as late as 1938, leaving the scar of want on many American families and triggering a powerful wave of cultural cynicism about capitalist economics. In the end, it was the onset of World War II in Europe and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that revived consumption and production, dropping unemployment to 9.9 percent in 1941 just before the United States’ entry into the war itself, thus bringing the Great Depression to an end.¹⁹

19 Amity Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pp. 85–104; Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States of America* (Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 505–534; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon, 1995), pp. 85–108; Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History: From Colonial Times to 1940*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), pp. 583–682; Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobsen Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867–1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 299–419.



"Al Capone's Kitchen" provides three meals a day consisting of soup with meat, bread, coffee, and doughnuts, feeding about 3,500 people daily at a cost of \$300 per day. (Bettmann)

20

November 3, 1920

PITTSBURGH RADIO BROADCAST STATION KDKA WENT ON THE AIR TO BROADCAST THE RESULTS OF THE 1920 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION as the first continuous American commercial radio broadcaster of news and entertainment. The station made its debut from a makeshift “shack” atop the Westinghouse Electric building in East Pittsburgh with a 100-watt transmitter designed by Frank Conrad, an engineer with the Westinghouse Corporation. The announcer, Leo Rosenberg, received tallies of the national presidential voting by phone from the Pittsburgh Post and then relayed them on-air to approximately 1,000 subscribers.

The background to KDKA’s premier radio broadcast began with the development of the electrical telegraph by Samuel F. B. Morse in 1844, followed in 1896 by Guglielmo Marconi’s substitution of wireless power for radio signals and Reginald Fessenden’s first broadcast of a live voice in 1906. Development of a public commercial radio broadcast was delayed by World War I and a government ban on radio experiments during the war’s duration. But in the wake of KDKA’s success, General Electric and the Radio Corporation of America moved at once to create rival commercial radio stations in American cities and then radio station networks.

By 1924, 556 radio stations were in operation, and the competition for available wavelengths was so great that Congress passed the Radio Act, which assigned frequencies and created an oversight commission, the Federal Radio Commission, which eventually became the Federal Communications Commission in 1934. Radio became the first modern mass communications medium, and by 1930, cabinet radios had become an indispensable piece of household furniture in 45 percent of American homes.²⁰

²⁰ Robert J. Gordon, *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 191-196; E. D. Salaman, *Pittsburgh's Golden Age of Radio* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2010), pp. 7-16; Paul King, *Iconic Pittsburgh: The City's 30 Most Memorable People, Places and Things* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2020), pp. 70-73; Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 3-17; Robert L. Hilliard and Michael C. Keith, *The Broadcast Century and Beyond: A Biography of American Broadcasting* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005), pp. 21-29.



Broadcaster Frank Mullen reads copy into the microphone at KDKA, one of first American commercial radio stations, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 1922. (PhotoQuest)

21

December 1, 1955

ROSA LOUISE MCCALEY PARKS (1913-2005), A BLACK WOMAN IN MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, REFUSED TO GIVE UP HER SEAT ON A CITY BUS TO A WHITE MAN, FOR WHICH SHE WAS ARRESTED.

On December 5, Rosa Parks was tried and fined \$14. She appealed the conviction, but more importantly, the local chapter of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) and black churches announced a boycott of the city's busses that same day. Her arrest sparked the creation of the Montgomery Improvement Association and led to a 382-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system by black Americans. Parks was not the first black woman to be arrested for defying the racial seat rule on Montgomery's busses. But she was the secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP, and was in a position to motivate other black women who had been forced to surrender seats on the city's busses to join in a federal civil suit.

The U.S. Supreme Court eventually ruled on November 13, 1956, in *Browder v. Gayle*, that the Montgomery bus statute violates the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. The arrest of Rosa Parks, and the subsequent bus boycott, became the trigger for an ever-widening circle of protests

against racial segregation and discrimination, culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (There are also ongoing anti-discrimination actions today.)

Parks herself suffered from the glare of publicity thrown upon her: She and her husband lost their jobs, developed stress-related health problems, and just eight months after the conclusion of the boycott, were forced to move, first to Hampton, Virginia, and then to Detroit, due to a variety of factors, including unwanted publicity and family health. It was not until 1965, when Parks was offered a staff position by Representative John Conyers (D-MI), that her family's finances at last stabilized. After her death, she was the first black American to be honored with a monument in the U.S. Capitol's Statuary Hall.²¹

²¹ Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013); Joyce Hanson, *Rosa Parks: A Biography* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011); Douglas Brinkley, *Rosa Parks: A Life* (New York: Viking, 2000); Susan Reyburn, *Rosa Parks: In Her Own Words* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020); Fred D. Gray, *Bus Ride to Justice: Changing the System by the System*, revised edition (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2012).



American Civil Rights activist Rosa Parks (center, in dark coat and hat) rides a bus at the end of the Montgomery bus boycott, Montgomery, Alabama, December 26, 1956. (Don Cravens)

22

December 7, 1941

THE NAVAL FORCES OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE STRUCK THE U.S. PACIFIC FLEET at its base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Tensions between Japan and the United States had been building since 1937, as Japan waged a long-running war against China, and especially after Japanese aircraft attacked and sank the U.S. gunboat Panay on the Yangtze River. Once World War II began in 1939, Japan tightened its ties with the Axis powers (Nazi Germany and fascist Italy), while the U.S. gave encouragement and support to the Allies, especially Great Britain. In January 1941, the Japanese navy began planning a preemptive attack on U.S. territories and installations across the Pacific Ocean, and especially targeted Pearl Harbor in an effort to neutralize at one blow the eight U.S. battleships and three aircraft carriers based there.

The attack, code-named Operation Z, would be a wholly aerial attack, launched from six aircraft carriers, without any diplomatic notice or a declaration of war by Japan. The audacity of such an attack across the breadth of the Pacific caught the U.S. Navy entirely by surprise. The attack came in two major waves, and lasted more than 90 minutes; 2,403 American lives were lost and 20 U.S. Naval vessels

sunk, including four battleships (one of which, the USS Arizona, was destroyed in an explosion that accounted for 1,100 dead).

The next day, President Franklin Roosevelt described December 7 to a joint session of Congress as “a day which will live in infamy,” and later that day signed a declaration of war against Japan. The attack not only plunged the U.S. into a four-year war with Japan (which ended with Japan’s unconditional surrender on September 2, 1945), but made the U.S an ally of Great Britain and the Soviet Union, as Germany and Italy declared war against the United States. Italy officially surrendered on September 3, 1943, and Germany on May 7, 1945. But the Soviet Union’s desire to expand its rule, and its communist ideology, led almost at once to the Cold War, which lasted until the 1991 downfall of the Soviet Union.²²

²² Craig Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness* (New York: Scribner, 2016); Michael Slackman, *Target: Pearl Harbor* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); Eri Hotta, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy* (New York: Knopf, 2013); and Walter Lord, *Day of Infamy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1957).



Thick smoke billows up from stricken American warships (from left, USS West Virginia and USS Tennessee) along battleship row during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii, December 7, 1941. (Interim Archives)



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