



Chronology

- c. 11,000 BCE:*
Native Americans use flint-tipped spears to hunt mammoths.
- c. 7,000 BCE:*
Disappearance of mammoths and other “big game” in the Americas; beginning of food cultivation.
- c. 1,500 BCE:*
Appearance of Olmec culture in Central America.
- c. 350 CE:*
Rise of Old Mayan Empire.
- c. 700 CE:*
Rise of Mississippian culture, last of the mound building cultures of North America.
- c. 1000:*
Viking settlements briefly established in Newfoundland.
- c. 1325:*
Tenochtitlan, capital of the Aztec Empire, is constructed.
- 1438:* Inca Empire founded in Peru.
- 1492:* First voyage of Christopher Columbus. Funded by Spain, the Italian-born Columbus discovers “The New World.”
- 1497:* Backed by England, explorer John Cabot sails along North American coast.
- 1507:* First reference to the New World as “America.”
- 1513:* Spaniard Ponce de Leon conducts slave raids and explores Florida and the Gulf Coast. Another Spaniard, Vasco de Balboa, crosses the Panamanian Isthmus to the Pacific Ocean.
- 1519:* Spanish adventurer Hernán Cortés begins his conquest of Mexico. Aztec Empire falls by 1521.
- 1533:* Spanish adventurer Francisco Pizarro conquers Peru.
- 1540s:* Spaniard Francisco Coronado leads explorations throughout modern-U.S. Southwest.
- 1565:* St. Augustine, oldest European settlement in the future United States, is established.
- 1579:* Englishman Sir Francis Drake explores the California coast during his circumnavigation of the world.
- 1607:* The English colony of Jamestown, Virginia, is founded by Captain John Smith.
- 1608:* City of Quebec founded by Frenchman Samuel Champlain.
- 1609:* Santa Fe, New Mexico, founded by Spanish. Henry Hudson explores Hudson River Valley.
- 1619:* First African slaves arrive at Jamestown.
- 1620:* Puritan settlers land at Plymouth, Massachusetts.
- 1626:* Dutch settle on Manhattan Island, naming their colony New Amsterdam.
- 1630:* Boston founded.
- 1634:* Maryland established as Catholic colony.
- 1637:* Fighting flares up between colonists and the Pequot Indians in New England.
- 1664:* New Amsterdam seized by English, who rename it New York.
- 1692:* Start of the Salem Witch Trials.
- 1699:* French settlement of Louisiana begins.
- 1713:* Queen Anne’s War, a colonial conflict between France and England, ends after eleven years of hostilities.

- 1732: Benjamin Franklin begins publishing *Poor Richard's Almanac*.
- 1748: Another colonial struggle, King George's War, ends after four years.
- 1763: The French and Indian War, the North American portion of the Seven Years' War, concludes with French loss of all territorial possessions in Canada and the Mississippi region to the British.
- 1764: Stamp Act passed by the British Parliament. An effort to raise money after the costly Seven Years' War by taxing colonists on sugar and stamps, the Stamp Act proves wildly unpopular in North America and is repealed two years later.
- 1770: The Boston Massacre: British soldiers open fire on Bostonian mob protesting against further taxes.
- 1773: A group of protesting Bostonians throw English tea into the harbor in what is later dubbed the "Boston Tea Party."
- 1775: The battles of Lexington and Concord mark the beginning of the American Revolution.
- 1776: The Declaration of Independence signed on July 2 and approved on July 4, signaling the British colonies' formal break from the mother country and laying out an agenda to create a more democratically-based government. December 26: Washington's surprise victory at Trenton.
- 1777: Winter at Valley Forge, the low point for Washington's army.
- 1778: Beginning of French-American alliance.
- 1781: Articles of Confederation adopted. Surrender of the British General Cornwallis marks the effective end of the Revolutionary War.
- 1783: September 3: Treaty of Paris signed, the formally ending the American Revolution; Britain cedes all territory east of the Mississippi River. Eighty thousand Loyalists emigrate to Canada.
- 1786: Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts.
- 1787: May 14: Constitutional Convention convened to rewrite Articles of Confederation.
- 1789: New U.S. Constitution ratified and put into effect. George Washington becomes the first president.
- 1790: U.S. population stands at 3,929,214.
- 1798: Alien and Sedition Acts, designed to bolster national sovereignty, are passed. Dissolution of French alliance.
- 1800: Federal government's capital moved to Washington, D.C. from Philadelphia. U.S. population stands at 5,308,483.
- 1801: American shipping encounters increasing trouble from the Barbary Pirates of North Africa.
- 1803: The Louisiana Purchase doubles the size of the United States.
- 1804: Beginning of Lewis and Clark expedition to explore the territory encompassed by the Louisiana Purchase.
- 1808: Slave trade outlawed by Congress.
- 1810: U.S. population stands at 7,239,881.
- 1811: Native Americans defeated in Battle of Tippecanoe in Indiana Territory.
- 1812: June 18: Beginning of the War of 1812 between the United States and Britain. August 19: The *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides") defeats the British *Guerriere*.
- 1813: September 10: Battle of Lake Erie. American forces maintain control over this body of water.
- 1814: August 25: British capture Washington, D.C. and put it to the torch. September 11: British defeated on Lake Champlain. December 24: Treaty of Ghent signed, ending war in stalemate.
- 1815: January 8: Battle of New Orleans, fought after peace declared, ends in a resounding U.S. victory.
- 1817: First Seminole War.
- 1818: U.S.-Canadian border established at 49th parallel.
- 1819: Florida purchased from Spain.
- 1820: Missouri Compromise restricts further expansion of slavery west of the Mississippi or north of the Mason-Dixon Line (except in Missouri). U.S. population stands at 9,638,453.
- 1821: Mexico declares its independence from Spain.
- 1823: President James Monroe outlines the Monroe Doctrine, creating a U.S. "sphere of influence" in Central and South America.
- 1825: Erie Canal opened, bringing trade to inland regions.
- 1828: Construction begins on first U.S. passenger railway.
- 1830: U.S. population stands at 12,866,020. Indian Removal Act mandates removal of Eastern Native American tribes.

- 1832: Black Hawk War.
- 1834: Indian Territory established.
- 1835: Second Seminole War.
- 1836: Battle of the Alamo and San Jacinto; Texas breaks away from Mexico, forming an independent republic.
- 1837: The telegraph is patented.
- 1838: The entire Cherokee Nation forced by American government to move from Georgia to Indian Territory, a journey known as the Trail of Tears. Thousands die along the way from disease, exposure, and privation.
- 1840: Opening of Oregon Trail. U.S. population stands at 17,069,453.
- 1844: First telegraph line established, connecting Baltimore and Washington, D.C.
- 1845: Republic of Texas admitted as U.S. state.
- 1846: 49th Parallel border with Canada extended to Oregon. Beginning of Mexican War.
- 1847: March 29: Capture of Veracruz by General Winfield Scott. U.S. victories in California and the taking of Mexico City follow.
- 1848: Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo concludes U.S. war with Mexico. Mexico cedes nearly half its territory, extending U.S. border to Pacific coast.
- 1849: Gold discovered in California; ensuing “gold rush” brings mass movement of settlers out west.
- 1850: U.S. population stands at 23,191,876.
- 1851: Fort Laramie Treaties outline Plains Indian tribes’ territories and rights. The conditions of the treaties will be systematically ignored or negated over the next forty years as white settlers stream west into Native American lands.
- 1853: With the Gadsden Purchase, the continental U.S. border attains its modern outline.
- 1857: Supreme Court issues Dred Scott decision. Tensions between pro- and anti-slavery factions escalate.
- 1858: Mountain Meadow Massacre in Utah.
- 1859: Abolitionist John Brown leads a raid on a federal armory at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia.
- 1860: Abraham Lincoln elected president. South Carolina secedes from the United States on December 20. U.S. population stands at 31,443,321.
- 1861: January-June: Secession of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee. April 14: Firing on Fort Sumter; the American Civil War begins. July 21: First Battle of Bull Run.
- 1862: Ulysses S. Grant first gains notoriety with the taking of Fort Donelson in February. March 9: *Monitor vs. Virginia*, first encounter between ironclad warships. April 6–7: Battle of Shiloh. April 25: New Orleans captured by Admiral David Farragut. August 30: Second Bull Run. September 17: Battle of Antietam. December 13: Battle of Fredericksburg.
- 1863: January 1: Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, guaranteeing the freedom of slaves in the Confederate States. July 1–4: The Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg mark a turning point in the Civil War in favor of the Union. November 19: Lincoln delivers his Gettysburg Address.
- 1864: May 6: Battle of the Wilderness. May 11: Battle of Spottsylvania. September 2: Union General Sherman captures Atlanta and burns it; his “March to the Sea” begins in November.
- 1865: April 3: Richmond evacuated by Confederates. April 9: Surrender of Lee at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia. April 14: Lincoln is assassinated. The Civil War ends; twelve-year period of Reconstruction begins in the South.
- 1867: “Seward’s Folly” the U.S. purchases Alaska from Russia.
- 1868: President Andrew Johnson impeached but not convicted.
- 1869: Completion of Transcontinental Railroad.
- 1870: U.S. population stands at 38,558,371.
- 1876: Battle of Little Big Horn results in the death of American General Custer along with all of the men fighting with him that day.
- 1880: U.S. population stands at 50,189,209.
- 1881: July 2: President Garfield shot, mortally wounded; dies on September 19.
- 1886: Statue of Liberty unveiled.
- 1889: Oklahoma (formerly Indian Territory) opened to settlers.
- 1890: Wounded Knee Massacre marks an end to open warfare between the U.S. and Native American nations. U.S. population stands at 62,979,766.

- 1896: Supreme Court rules that “separate but equal” facilities are legal.
- 1898: February 15: The battleship *Maine* blows up in Havana harbor. April 25: Congress declares war on Spain. May 1: Battle of Manila. July 3: Battle of Santiago. December 10: Peace treaty signed with Spain. U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War grants America control over Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Beginning of fifteen-year Philippine insurgency. Hawaii annexed.
- 1900: American forces assist in ending Boxer Rebellion in China. U.S. population stands at 76,212,168.
- 1901: September 6: President McKinley assassinated; Theodore Roosevelt becomes president.
- 1902: Cuban Republic established.
- 1903: United States backs Panamanian secession from Columbia. Panama leases Canal Zone to United States.
- 1906: San Francisco Earthquake (and subsequent fire) destroys most of the city.
- 1908: Model T Ford, the first affordable, mass-produced automobile, offered for sale.
- 1910: U.S. population stands at 92,228,496.
- 1914: Opening of the Panama Canal under U.S. control.
- 1917: April 6: United States enters into World War I.
- 1918: Spanish Flu epidemic spreads worldwide, killing millions.
- 1919: President Woodrow Wilson promotes his Fourteen Points at Versailles. U.S. Congress fails to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and stays out of the League of Nations when it is established in 1920.
- 1920: Women granted the right to vote in the United States. U.S. population stands at 106,021,537.
- 1925: Scopes “Monkey Trial” debates the teaching of Darwinian evolution in schools.
- 1928: First Mickey Mouse cartoon.
- 1929: February 14: Mob-related St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in Chicago captures nationwide attention. October 29: Crash of the New York Stock Exchange, beginning of the Great Depression.
- 1930: U.S. population stands at 123,202,624.
- 1931: Criminal kingpin Al Capone jailed for income tax evasion.
- 1932: Franklin D. Roosevelt elected president.
- 1933: Beginning of “New Deal” policy. End of Prohibition after thirteen disastrous years.
- 1935: Passage of Social Security Act.
- 1937: Golden Gate Bridge opened. May 6: *Hindenburg* disaster spells the end of lighter-than-air passenger service.
- 1940: U.S. population stands at 132,164,569.
- 1941: Mount Rushmore completed. December 7: Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, catalyzes U.S. entry into World War II.
- 1942: Japanese-Americans placed in internment camps for duration of the war. June 4–7: Battle of Midway marks turning point in Pacific War in favor of America.
- 1943: U.S. invasion of North Africa, Sicily, Italy. Italy surrenders and joins the Allies, but is occupied by German troops.
- 1944: June 6: D-Day landings in Normandy. Allies reach German border by December. German counterattack launched in last week of December, leading to “Battle of the Bulge.” U.S. forces land in the Philippines beginning in October.
- 1945: February: Battle of Iwo Jima. April–June: Battle of Okinawa. April 12: Death of Franklin Roosevelt. May 8: “V-E Day”; end of hostilities in Europe. August 6 and 9: Dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. August 15: “V-J Day”; end of World War II.
- 1947: Marshall Plan implemented to assist in rebuilding of Europe.
- 1948: Berlin Airlift. Harry Truman wins the presidency in a surprise upset.
- 1949: NATO established.
- 1950: United States leads U.N. forces in Korean War. Stalemate largely reached by end of year, although the war drags on for two more years. Height of anti-Communist paranoia; McCarthy hearings begin. U.S. population stands at 151,325,798.
- 1953: Julius and Ethel Rosenberg convicted of spying for the Soviet Union and executed.
- 1954: Segregation declared illegal in Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling.
- 1955: Disneyland opens. Rosa Parks touches off Montgomery Bus Boycott when she refuses to give up her seat on a public bus.

- 1959: Communist revolution in Cuba; Fidel Castro becomes dictator.
- 1960: U.S. population stands at 179,323,175.
- 1961: Soviets put first man into orbit.
- 1962: Cuban Missile Crisis brings world to the brink of nuclear war.
- 1963: November 22: Assassination of John F. Kennedy.
- 1965: Race riots in Los Angeles. Escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Malcolm X assassinated.
- 1966: Black Panther party founded. Anti-draft protests on college campuses across the country.
- 1968: Martin Luther King assassinated. Robert Kennedy assassinated. Tet Offensive begins turning general American opinion against the Vietnam War. Lyndon Johnson announces he will not seek re-election; Richard Nixon elected president.
- 1969: July 21: Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the Moon.
- 1970: Accusations surface of U.S. soldiers massacring Vietnamese women and children at My Lai. Kent State shootings kill four student protesters. U.S. population stands at 203,302,031.
- 1973: Last U.S. troops withdrawn from Vietnam. Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns amid accusations of corruption.
- 1974: President Richard Nixon resigns in the wake of the Watergate Scandal.
- 1977: Elvis Presley found dead.
- 1979: Iranian Revolution results in American hostages being taken in Tehran. Nuclear accident at Three Mile Island.
- 1980: Failed rescue attempt for Iranian hostages. May 18: Mount St. Helens erupts in Washington. Ronald Reagan elected president; his administration will drastically increase defense spending and launch the “War on Drugs.” Hostages released. U.S. population stands at 226,542,199.
- 1981: Assassination attempt on President Reagan. AIDS first identified.
- 1983: Bombing of U.S. embassy in Beirut, Lebanon.
- 1984: Vietnam Memorial opens in Washington, D.C.
- 1986: 1986 Space shuttle *Challenger* explodes. Iran-Contra scandal comes to light. U.S. bombs Libya.
- 1988: Pan Am Flight 103 bombed over Lockerbie, Scotland.
- 1990: U.S. population stands at 248,709,873.
- 1991: The Persian Gulf War: A U.S.-led coalition defeats Iraq after that country’s invasion of Kuwait.
- 1992: Riots in Los Angeles in wake of Rodney King verdict.
- 1993: World Trade Center bombed.
- 1995: Oklahoma City bombing; largest domestic terrorist act to date.
- 1999: President Bill Clinton found not guilty by the Senate after an impeachment trial.
- 2000: George W. Bush elected president after a controversial and divisive election. U.S. population stands at 281,421,906.
- 2001: September 11: Terrorists carry out the largest attack on American soil to date, hijacking planes and piloting them into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C. America invades Afghanistan a month later.
- 2003: U.S. and British forces invade Iraq.
- 2005: Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans.
- 2006: Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein executed.
- 2007: U.S. Coalition casualties for Iraq invasion and occupation top 4,000.