



ALBERT L. LORENZO

Cultural Center

MACOMB COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The 1940s: Through the War and Beyond

TIMELINE

1940

- *Gone with the Wind* wins Best Picture at the Academy Awards.
- Walt Disney releases his second big animated film, *Pinocchio*.
- American journalist Tom Brokaw is born.
- The first McDonalds restaurant opens in San Bernardino, California.
- Women's nylon stockings manufactured in the U.S. first go on sale.
- Sturgis Motorcycle Rally held for the first time in South Dakota.
- France formally surrenders to Nazi Germany.
- Bugs Bunny makes his first appearance in a cartoon.
- The Olympic Games, scheduled to be held in Tokyo, are cancelled due to the war.
- American automobile pioneer Walter Chrysler dies at age 65.
- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacts the Selective Training and Service Act, creating the first peacetime draft in U.S. history.
- Japan invades Indochina. The U.S. subsequently enacts a partial trade embargo against the Japanese Empire for this aggression.
- Charlie Chaplin releases one of his most popular works, *The Great Dictator*.
- Franklin Roosevelt is elected to an unprecedented third term in office.
- Walt Disney releases the movie *Fantasia*, a failure at the time, though it later became a classic.
- Captain America and Bucky is make their first comic book appearance as Captain America Comics #1 hits newsstands.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, American author of *The Great Gatsby*, dies at age 44.

1941

- FDR was sworn in for a third term as president on January 20th in Washington DC, by Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes.
- The USO is created to entertain American troops.
- Radio station W47NV begins broadcasting out of Nashville, Tennessee as the first FM station in the country.
- Washington State's Grand Coulee Dam first begins to generate electricity.

- The U.S. formalizes the Lend Lease Act permitting allies to “borrow” American-made war materiel. This represents a first step towards the U.S. involving itself in the war.
- Auto plants begin converting to the production of war materiel and Michigan becomes known as the “Arsenal of Democracy.”
- General Mills introduces Cheerios cereal.
- American songwriter and performer Bob Dylan born as Robert Zimmerman.
- Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* premieres. It is still considered a significant hallmark in American cinema.
- New York Yankees centerfielder Joe DiMaggio enjoys an unprecedented (and still unmatched) 56-game hitting streak.
- The first Jeep manufactured by the Willys Corporation rolls off the assembly line. The Jeep is later a staple of the U.S. military and of the civilian marketplace.
- The final carvings are made into Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota.
- On December 7th, the Empire of Japan declares war upon the United States with the surprise attack on the American bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The bombing is one of the bloodiest days in U.S. history, as over 2,500 people lost their lives.
- The following day, during a radio address, President Roosevelt calls the attack on Pearl Harbor “a day which will live in infamy,” and asks the United States Congress for a declaration of war against Japan. He states that we shall win no matter how long it takes.
- Italy and Germany formally declare war against the United States on December 11th. The U.S. declares war against them in return.

1942

- Japanese forces land in the U.S.-held Philippines, starting the Battle of Bataan. It ends months later as one of the worst American losses in World War II.
- American boxer and activist Muhammad Ali is born, named Cassius Clay.
- With fears of Japanese espionage at a high, FDR issues Executive Order 9066 ordering the internment of Japanese Americans. Over 100,000 people are forcibly removed from their homes and their property is seized by the government. To a lesser extent, Italian and German Americans are also detained.
- Daylight Savings Time is enacted in the United States.
- American B-52 bombers transported by aircraft carriers launch the Doolittle Raid to bomb Japanese cities in retaliation for the Pearl Harbor attack.
- The Battle of the Coral Sea, between the U.S. and Japan, becomes the first engagement fought primarily by aircraft carriers in U.S. military history.
- The United States Navy begins to integrate African-American servicemen, opening the full range of shipboard jobs to them, but only on two ships.

- The U.S. begins offensive ground operations against the Japanese on the South Pacific Island of Guadalcanal. This is the first time U.S. and Japanese troops engage.
- Disney debuts its classic movie *Bambi* to audiences.
- The U.S. launches Operation: Torch against Nazi forces located in North Africa. This is the first serious engagement between U.S. and Axis ground troops in the War.
- Gasoline rationing begins in the U.S., the first of many resources to be eventually rationed for the War, including many food items such as sugar, meat, coffee and other raw materials including copper, silk, rubber, and more.

1943

- The Pentagon, completed in Washington DC in just short of 3 years, becomes the largest office complex in the world at the time.
- The U.S. government begins the censorship of American movies in the name of American morale. The film studios give their blessing.
- Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* debuts on Broadway, and goes on to be one of the most successful integrated musicals in history.
- Edsel Ford, Henry's son and current president of Ford Motor Company, dies of stomach cancer at the age of 49.
- The U.S. army contracts the University of Pennsylvania to develop ENIAC, the first computer.
- The Detroit Race Riots, one of the largest race riots in American history, occurs.
- The PT 109 torpedo boat commanded by Lieutenant John Kennedy is sunk by Japanese forces off the coast of the Solomon Islands. For his actions under fire, Kennedy becomes a national hero. This fame helps him in his post-war political career.
- The American and Allied armies under U.S. General George S. Patton begin the invasion and subsequent liberation of the island of Sicily.
- American forces begin the liberation of the Italian Peninsula. This campaign lasts the rest of the war.
- Thanks to the mobilization of American industry to meet war demands, U.S. economists officially declare an end to the Great Depression which has plagued the U.S. for nearly 15 years.

1944

- *Casablanca* wins Best Picture at the Academy Awards.
- The United Negro College Fund is incorporated in the U.S.
- The Olympic Games, scheduled to be held in London, are cancelled again due to war.
- U.S. forces liberate Rome from Nazi oppression.

- Operation Overlord, the liberation of the European continent, begins with the American forces crossing the English Channel in the largest amphibious operation in history. The U.S. moves the equivalent of a medium sized city in a few days' time.
- FDR signs the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, a precursor to the GI Bill. This bill allows returning veterans to acquire favorable loans for housing and education.
- IBM creates the first practical electronic calculator.
- American forces liberate the city of Paris from nearly four years of Nazi occupation. A month later, they liberate the Belgian city of Brussels.
- FDR is elected to a historic fourth term in office.
- U.S. and Filipino forces begin the liberation of the Philippines, captured by the Japanese three years prior.
- The film *National Velvet* debuts, making Elizabeth Taylor a rising film star.
- The Battle of the Bulge begins in Germany between Allied and Axis forces. It is one of the largest battles of World War II, and in American history.

1945

- A visibly aged FDR takes the oath of office for a fourth time.
- The Battle of Manila, the single largest naval battle in U.S. history, occurs.
- A team of medical researchers wins the Nobel Prize for Medicine for discovering how to manufacture penicillin and use it to treat disease.
- The Battle of Iwo Jima, one of the most significant engagements in the Pacific War, also becomes known as one of the most notable engagements in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. Combat reporter Joe Rosenthal takes the infamous picture of U.S. Marines and Navy Corpsmen raising the American flag over the island high point of Mt. Suribachi. This image is legendary in U.S. history, and the most reproduced image in the history of photography.
- Using newly acquired positions in the Pacific, American air forces begin bombing raids against the Japanese mainland in one of the most devastating campaigns in the history of human warfare.
- Advancing Allied forces begin to discover Nazi "work camps." The Holocaust is uncovered and exposed to the world. The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews and five million other persons by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.
- American journalist and war correspondent Ernie Pyle is killed on the front lines by Japanese fire on the island of Ie Shima.
- President Roosevelt dies in office on April 12. Harry Truman assumes the presidency.
- Adolph Hitler and his staff commit suicide in their Berlin bunkers on April 30, with Soviet forces approaching. Admiral Karl Doenitz assumes command of the Nazi Reich.

- On May 8, Nazi Germany formally surrenders to the Allied Powers, ending the war in Europe. This day becomes known as V-E Day worldwide.
- National Broadcasting Company (NBC) begins the first regularly scheduled television network service in the nation.
- U.S. intelligence services begin Operation: Paperclip to rescue and recover key Nazi scientists and their research. This program and its components will become the starting point for the American Space Program.
- The United Nations is chartered by delegates from 50 nations, to establish "a general international organization to maintain peace and security".
- The Trinity Test occurs in New Mexico on July 16. This is the first time a nuclear device is exploded.
- The densely populated Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are decimated by a pair of American nuclear devices on August 6 and 9, respectively. The bombings were designed to end the war with the Japan. They represent the first and only two instances of nuclear devices used upon humans in war.
- The Japanese government accepts the Allied terms of surrender on August 14 and 15. The Pacific War ends (V-J Day) as does the World War II. The official surrender is signed on September 2.
- As a part of the agreed post-war rebuilding efforts, U.S. and Soviet forces occupy and split Korea into two halves.
- The Detroit Tigers win the World Series.
- The first practical ball point pens are sold in the United States.
- Ebony magazine is first published.
- American cartoon character "Casper the Friendly Ghost" makes his debut.
- Millions of American servicemen and women begin to return home. By the time the war ended, 673,000 Michigan men and women had served in the armed forces.

1946

- As American servicemen return home from the war, a phenomenon known as the "baby boom" begins. American birthrates soar for the next nearly 20 years.
- On March 5, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill uses the term "Iron Curtain" to describe the division of Europe into western and eastern spheres of influence, acknowledging that the U.S. and Soviet are now antagonistic forces.
- Benjamin Spock publishes *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, which sells millions of copies worldwide.
- The Basketball Association of America, the precursor to the modern NBA, is formed.
- Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini becomes the first American saint.

- American comedic team Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis make their first stage performance.
- The Major War Criminals trial in Nuremberg concludes. Twelve Nazi leaders (including 1 tried in absentia) are sentenced to hang.
- Holidayland, the first true American amusement park, opens in Indiana, preceding Disneyland by nearly a decade.
- Showing a desire for a new, less progressive slant in American politics, both the U.S. House and Senate become Republican majorities for the first time in decades.
- Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh begins a war for liberation against colonial French forces.

1947

- The U.S. Military launches rocket “Blossom 1” into space containing insects and flowers, the first instance of animals being launched into space.
- The Truman Doctrine is signed, obligating the U.S. to stem the global tide of communist ideology wherever it is found. This is the basis of U.S. involvement militarily and otherwise throughout the world for the next 50 years.
- The first planned suburban community, Levittown on Long Island, New York starts to sell.
- The term “Cold War” is used by President Truman’s advisors for the first time.
- Automotive pioneer Henry Ford dies.
- Jackie Robinson becomes the first African-American to play Major League Baseball in the 20th century, ending baseball’s “gentlemen’s agreement” regarding segregation.
- U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall initiates the “Marshall Plan” outlining a reconstruction and relief plan for post-war Europe. This is the largest instance of American foreign aid in history.
- President Truman issues an order creating the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Defense (DOD), the Joint Chiefs, and the National Security Council.
- The sighting and crash of an unidentified aircraft in Roswell, New Mexico sparks claims that it was an extraterrestrial spaceship.
- U.S. pilot Chuck Yeager officially breaks the sound barrier flying his rocket craft.
- *Meet the Press* debuts on NBC and runs to the present day, claiming the title of the longest running television show ever.
- Attempting to investigate and end suspected Communist infiltration in the U.S., congressional hearings spearheaded by Senator Joseph McCarthy begin.
- The legendary children’s TV program *Howdy Doody* show debuts on NBC, starring Buffalo Bob Smith and his puppet, Howdy Doody.
- Walter Reuther assumes the presidency of the U.A.W.
- WWJ-TV, Detroit, begins commercial television broadcasting in Michigan.
- Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* published.

1948

- In *McCullum V. Board of Education* the U.S. Supreme Court rules that public schools may not deliver religious instruction as such violates the constitutional provision for the separation of church and state.
- *The Ed Sullivan Show* first debuts on CBS, as does the *Texaco Star Theatre* featuring Milton Berle on NBC.
- The 33rpm LP (long-play) vinyl record is introduced in the U.S. by Columbia Records.
- President Truman officially desegregates the armed forces.
- Baseball legend Babe Ruth dies at age 53.
- The Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade is televised for the first time.
- Incumbent president Harry Truman wins his first full term as president by a historically close margin.
- G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams is first elected governor of Michigan. He goes on to serve six terms.
- Alfred Kinsey publishes his report "Sexual Behavior in the American Male."
- The nation of Israel is established, according to a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly.
- Alger Hiss, former high-ranking U.S. State Department official, is indicted on perjury charges after denying he passed secret documents to Soviet communist spy ring.
- Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* wins the Pulitzer prize for Drama.

1949

- The first Emmy Awards for excellence in the new field of television are presented at the Hollywood Athletic Club.
- Truman proposes his Point Four Program to help the world's less developed areas.
- Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* opens on Broadway.
- Joe Louis officially retires from boxing.
- American test plane the "Lucky Lady" completes the first around-the-world flight without landing, but receiving 4 mid-flight refuelings.
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is founded by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations.
- The first televised Western, *Hopalong Cassidy*, appears on TV.
- The Soviet Union detonates its first nuclear weapon.

- The American Housing Act is enacted. Part of President Truman's Fair Deal, it provides financing for slum clearance, increases authorization for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and extends federal money to build public housing.
- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller wins the Pulitzer prize for Drama.