

The Gilded Age to the Great War: America at the Turn of the Century Timeline

- 1868 Congress enacted an eight-hour workday for federal workers.
- 1869 Union Pacific and Central Pacific completed the first transcontinental railway link.
- 1869 The women's movement splits into two hostile groups: the National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton; and the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone.
- 1869 The first collegiate game of football was played between Rutgers University and Princeton University. Rutgers won, 6 to 4.
- 1869 Knights of Labor, the first national union, was formed.
- 1869 Wyoming Territory granted women the right to vote.
- 1870 The Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed African Americans the right to vote.
- 1870 John D. Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company, which emerged as the country's first industry-dominating trust.
- 1870 Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate and Joseph Rainey of South Carolina became the first African American to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- 1870 The Utah Territory was created, and granted women the right to vote.
- 1871 Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan Act, which made state officials liable in federal court for depriving anyone of their civil rights or the equal protection of the laws, and made the KKK's intimidation tactics federal crimes.
- 1871 William "Boss" Tweed's corrupt practices were exposed in a series of New York Times articles.
- 1871 In opposition to Asian immigration to the U.S., race riots erupted in Los Angeles and fifteen Chinese workers were lynched.
- 1872 Montgomery Ward began selling goods to rural customers by mail.
- 1872 Susan B. Anthony and other women's suffrage advocates were arrested in Rochester, New York for attempting to vote.
- 1872 Yellowstone National Park was created.
- 1873 Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner published *The Gilded Age*.
- 1873 Congress passed the Comstock Act, which made it illegal to send any "obscene, lewd and/or lascivious" materials in the mail, including contraceptive devices and information, and banned the distribution of information on abortion.
- 1873 The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Slaughter-House Cases that the Fourteenth Amendment's Privileges and Immunities Clause affected only United States citizenship and not state citizenship.
- 1874 The Black Hills Gold Rush began in the Dakota Territory, leading to escalating conflict as white miners moved onto land reserved for Native Americans.
- 1874 The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was founded to advocate for social reforms such as a prohibition on the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs, and for labor laws, prison reform and women's right to vote.

- 1875 Congress passed the second Civil Rights Act, which required state governments to provide equal access to African Americans in public facilities such as schools, and to allow African Americans to serve on juries.
- 1876 The National League played its first official baseball game. Boston beat Philadelphia 6 to 5.
- 1876 In *Munn v. Illinois* the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state legislatures did not have the authority under the Constitution to regulate commerce between states.
- 1876 Colorado became the 38th state.
- 1876 Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and 265 soldiers were killed at the Battle of Little Bighorn by a force of warriors led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.
- 1877 American railroad unions began the forty-five-day Great Railroad Strike of 1877 at Martinsburg, West Virginia, after the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad imposed a wage cut for the second time in a year. President Rutherford B. Hayes sent in federal troops to stop the strike.
- 1879 Twenty thousand African Americans known as Exodusters left the South to establish farms in Kansas.
- 1880 Andrew Carnegie monopolized the steel industry.
- 1881 Clara Barton created the Red Cross.
- 1881 Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers was founded and headed by Booker T. Washington.
- 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned Chinese immigration for ten years.
- 1883 Buffalo Bill Cody started his Wild West Show, which helped create a romantic and mythological view of the West in the American cultural imagination.
- 1883 In the Civil Rights Cases, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Congress lacked the constitutional authority under the Fourteenth Amendment to outlaw racial discrimination by private individuals and organizations, rather than state and local governments.
- 1883 Washington Territory granted women the right to vote.
- 1884 William LeBaron Jenney designed the skyscraper.
- 1884 Construction began in Chicago of the first building in the U.S. with a steel skeleton.
- 1886 Haymarket Square bombing occurred in Chicago when a bomb exploded among 1,400 people during a workers strike demanding an eight-hour work day.
- 1886 The American Federation of Labor was founded in Columbus, Ohio as an alliance of skilled craft unions; Samuel Gompers was elected president.
- 1886 Dr. Stanton Coit opened the first settlement house in New York City.
- 1886 Albert Parsons, head of the Chicago Knights of Labor, marched in support of the eight-hour day. Over the next few days, they were joined nationwide by 350,000 workers who went on strike at 1,200 factories.
- 1887 Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act.
- 1887 A proposed Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution granting women the right to vote was rejected by the Senate 34-16.
- 1887 Congress passed the Hatch Act, which gave federal funds to state land-grant colleges.
- 1889 Tennessee became the first of many Southern states to enact a poll tax on all adult citizens in the state, the effect of which was to disenfranchise thousands of impoverished African Americans.
- 1889 North Dakota became the 39th state; South Dakota the 40th state; Montana the 41st state and Washington the 42nd state.
- 1899 Andrew Carnegie consolidated his steel companies into Carnegie Steel.
- 1889 Jane Addams founded Hull House in Chicago to provide a range of social and educational services to the poor and immigrants.

- 1890–
- 1908 Ten of the eleven former Confederate states passed provisions for poll taxes, residency requirements, literacy tests and grandfather clauses that effectively disenfranchised African Americans.
- 1890 Between 200 and 300 Sioux men, women and children were killed at Wounded Knee in the Dakota Territory by the U.S. cavalry
- 1890 Congress passed the Sherman Antitrust Act, which was the first law to restrict monopolistic trust and business combinations.
- 1890 Idaho became the 43rd state and Wyoming the 44th state.
- 1890 Congress passed the McKinley Tariff, which was designed to protect domestic industries from foreign competition by increasing the average duty on imports to almost fifty percent.
- 1890 Yosemite National Park was created.
- 1890 National American Woman Suffrage Association was created.
- 1891 James Naismith invented basketball.
- 1892 The Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers went on strike following a wage cut at Andrew Carnegie's Homestead, Pennsylvania steel mill. After thirteen people were killed and many injured, the governor sent state militia to end the strike, which continued for another five months.
- 1892 Ellis Island opened.
- 1893 The Panic of 1893 caused the worst depression the U.S. had ever experienced. It was caused by railroad overbuilding and shaky railroad financing, and led to bank and business failures and mass unemployment.
- 1893 The American Railway Union was founded in Chicago to unionize railway workers regardless of craft or service.
- 1893 Historian Frederick Jackson Turner developed the "Frontier Thesis," which extolled the positive role played by the western frontier in shaping the American character and its institutions.
- 1893 The Chicago World's Fair was held in Chicago to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World.
- 1893 Colorado granted women the right to vote.
- 1893 Joseph Lowthian Hudson built the J. L. Hudson Department Store in Detroit.
- 1894 The American Railway Union, led by Eugene Debs, began a strike in Pullman, Illinois against the Pullman Palace Car Company, after it reduced wages 25%. Federal troops called out by President Cleveland killed seven workers.
- 1894 Congress made Labor Day an official federal holiday. Thirty states had already made Labor Day an official state holiday.
- 1896 William McKinley was elected president.
- 1896 A U.S. Supreme Court decision in Plessy v Ferguson affirms the legality of Jim Crow laws in the South that permitted or required "separate but equal" facilities for African Americans and whites.
- 1896 Utah becomes the 45th state.
- 1896 Idaho granted women the right to vote.
- 1898 After the sinking of the USS Maine in Havana harbor, the U.S. began the ten-week Spanish-American War, during which U.S. forces defeated the Spanish in the Philippines and Cuba. This victory began a debate in the U.S. about imperial expansion.
- 1899 The United Fruit Company was founded, which later became influential in the internal affairs of a number of Central American countries.
- 1899 Rudyard Kipling published his poem, "White Man's Burden" in McClure's, which advocated for American imperialism as a noble enterprise, civilizing the nations of the developing world.

1899–

1902 Filipino revolutionaries began the Philippine–American War to gain their independence after the annexation of the Philippines by the U.S.

1900 Congress established a limited popular civilian government for Puerto Rico.

1900 The Galveston Hurricane, with estimated winds of 145 miles per hour, caused between 6,000 and 12,000 deaths, making it the deadliest hurricane in U.S. history.

1901 President McKinley was assassinated by anarchist Leon Czolgosz while attending a reception in Buffalo; Theodore Roosevelt became president.

1901 The Socialist Party of America was founded. It elected two U.S. Representatives, dozens of state legislators, more than a hundred mayors, and countless lesser government officials.

1901 Andrew Carnegie sold Carnegie Steel to J.P. Morgan for \$450 million, which made him the richest man in the world.

1901–

1906 Robert La Follette served as governor of Wisconsin and championed numerous progressive reforms, including the minimum wage, non-partisan elections, direct election of U.S. Senators, women’s suffrage and progressive taxation.

1901 The United States Steel Company was formed by J.P. Morgan, who created the first billion-dollar corporation in America.

1901 President Roosevelt announced his “Big Stick” style of foreign policy of “speaking softly, and carrying a big stick,” which articulated the idea of negotiating peacefully while simultaneously threatening military force.

1901 Ransom Olds of Geneva, Ohio invented the assembly line process.

1902 Morris Michtom created the teddy bear.

1903 President Theodore Roosevelt established the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, which was the first national wildlife refuge in the U.S.

1903 Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first successful flight of an airplane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

1903 The Ford Motor Company was founded.

1903 The U.S. and Cuba signed the Cuban–American Treaty, by which Cuba perpetually leased to the U.S. the Guantánamo Bay area for the purpose of building a coaling and naval station.

1903 The first World Series of baseball was played.

1904–

1914 Construction on the Panama Canal.

1904 Theodore Roosevelt was elected president.

1904 President Theodore Roosevelt announced the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which declared that the U.S. had the right to exercise military force in Latin American countries in order to keep European countries out.

1904 Ida Tarbell published “The History of the Standard Oil Company.”

1904 Lincoln Steffens, a New York reporter, published “The Shame of the Cities.”

1904 The St. Louis World’s Fair was an international agricultural, trade and scientific exposition held to celebrate the centennial of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.

1905 The Industrial Workers of the World was founded by William “Big Bill” Haywood. The IWW hoped to create “one big union.”

1906 Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, which exposed conditions in the U.S. meat packing industry.

1906 Congress passed the Federal Meat Inspection Act to prevent adulterated or misbranded meat and meat products from being sold as food, and to ensure that meat and meat products were slaughtered and processed under sanitary conditions.

- 1906 Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act which required manufacturers to list “dangerous” ingredients on product labels.
- 1906 The San Francisco earthquake killed nearly 3,000 people and destroyed more than 80% of the city.
- 1906 President Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace Prize for his successful efforts to broker an end to the Russo-Japanese War.
- 1906 The San Francisco Board of Education passed a regulation whereby children of Japanese descent would be required to attend separate, racially specific schools.
- 1907 The Panic of 1907 began when the New York Stock Exchange fell almost 50% from its peak the previous year.
- 1907 The U.S. and Japan informally agreed that Japan would not allow further emigration of Japanese workers to the U.S.
- 1907 Oklahoma became the 46th state.
- 1908 William Howard Taft was elected president.
- 1908 Henry Ford introduced the Model T.
- 1909 U.S. Navy engineer Robert Peary claimed to have reached the North Pole, accompanied by Matthew Henson and four Inuit men, Ootah, Seegloo, Egingwah, and Ookehah.
- 1909 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded.
- 1909 President William Howard Taft announced his foreign policy of Dollar Diplomacy, by which the U.S. would use its economic power to protect and extend American commercial and financial interests.
- 1910–
- 1930 Known as the first Great Migration, 1.6 million African Americans migrated from mostly rural areas in the South to Northern and Midwestern industrial cities.
- 1910 The Boy Scouts of America was organized.
- 1910 Andrew Carnegie created the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a philanthropic organization, to advance the cause of world peace.
- 1911 In *Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court found Standard Oil guilty of monopolizing the petroleum industry and divided Standard Oil into several geographically separate firms.
- 1911 The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City caused the deaths of 146 garment workers, most of whom were young Jewish and Italian immigrant women.
- 1911 Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Corporation, a philanthropic organization, to aid colleges, universities, technical schools and scientific research.
- 1911 The first Indianapolis 500 was held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.
- 1912 Woodrow Wilson was elected president.
- 1912 The Titanic sank off the coast of Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- 1912 New Mexico and Arizona became the 47th and 48th states, respectively.
- 1912 The Girl Scouts of America was organized.
- 1912 Theodore Roosevelt was shot while campaigning for the presidency in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- 1913 Henry Ford’s adapted conveyor system was introduced.
- 1913 Congress passed the Federal Reserve Act, which created the Federal Reserve System.
- 1913 President Woodrow Wilson ordered the segregation of the federal Civil Service.
- 1913 The Sixteenth Amendment established the federal income tax.
- 1913 The Seventeenth Amendment established direct election of U.S. senators by voters rather than state legislatures.
- 1913 The Department of Labor was created.

- 1914 Margaret Sanger launched The Woman Rebel, a monthly newsletter which promoted contraception using the slogan “No Gods, No Masters.”
- 1914 The Panama Canal opened.
- 1914 Congress passed the Clayton Antitrust Act, which prohibited interlocking corporate directors, and exempted labor unions from the Sherman Antitrust Act.
- 1914 The Federal Trade Commission was created to prevent unfair trading practices by companies.
- 1914 Henry Ford offered an eight-hour workday and a \$5 per day wage, more than doubling the pay of most of his workers.
- 1915 The British passenger ship Lusitania was sunk by a German U-boat off the Irish coast killing 1,198 passengers, including 128 Americans.
- 1915 The National Birth Control League was founded.
- 1915 Birth of a Nation, a silent drama film directed by D. W. Griffith and based on the novel and play The Clansman, both by Thomas Dixon Jr., opened to commercial but controversial success.
- 1916 Jeannette Rankin of Montana was elected the first woman to the U.S. Congress.
- 1916 Congress created the National Park Service to manage all national parks, national monuments and other conservation and historical properties.
- 1917 The United States entered World War I after Germany declared the use of unrestricted submarine warfare. Two million American soldiers were sent to fight in Europe.
- 1917 Congress passed the Selective Service Act, authorizing the federal government to raise a national army for the American entry into World War I through conscription. The law was canceled with the end of the war in 1918.
- 1917 Congress passed the Espionage Act, which severely limited First Amendment rights during World War I.
- 1917 President Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information to influence U.S. public opinion via a prolonged propaganda campaign concerning American participation in World War I.
- 1918 President Woodrow Wilson announced his “Fourteen Points” as the path to world peace.
- 1918 Congress passed the Sedition Act, which further limited free speech during World War I by prohibiting anyone from uttering, writing or publishing any “disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language” about the U.S. government, its flag or its armed forces, or that caused others to view the American government or its institutions with contempt.
- 1918 President Woodrow Wilson sent 13,000 U.S. Army troops to intervene in the Russian Civil War against the Bolsheviks.
- 1918–
- 1919 A deadly influenza pandemic, which infected 500 million people around the world, killed between 500,000 and 675,000 people in the U.S. Considered one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history, it is estimated that this pandemic killed between 40-50 million people worldwide.
- 1918 The Allies signed an armistice with Germany that ended World War I.
- 1919 The Treaty of Versailles was signed by the Allied Powers and Germany, ending World War I.
- 1919 The U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and join the League of Nations.