

Important Events in American History

Date	Event	Significance
1492	Columbus first lands in America	begins sustained European contact
1607	founding of Jamestown, Va.	first permanent English colony
1620	Pilgrims at Plymouth	beginning of permanent settlement of New England
1754–1763	French and Indian War	Britain ends French presence in the colonies
1775–1783	Revolutionary War	U.S. wins independence from Britain
1776	Declaration of Independence	America breaks with Britain
1781	Articles of Confederation	first attempt at national government
1787	U.S. Constitution signed	federal government established
1793	First textile mill in U.S.	Industrial Revolution comes to America
1803	Louisiana Purchase	doubles the size of the country
1812–1814	War of 1812 with Britain	U.S. maintains independence
1831–1833	Nullification Crisis	South Carolina threatens to secede
1830s	Indian removal—Trail of Tears	Eastern native nations (especially Cherokee) forced west
1837	telegraph invented	long distance communication unites country
1846–1848	War with Mexico	U.S. gains additional territory in the Southwest
1850	Bessemer steel process developed	allows development of railroads, skyscrapers, bridges
1861–1865	Civil War	the Union is preserved and slavery ends
1869	first transcontinental railroad completed	faster travel coast to coast
1876	telephone invented	long distance voice communication
1877	end of Reconstruction	South begins era of segregation
1880	electric light bulb	inexpensive form of light for homes and businesses
1886	American Federation of Labor formed	first effective group of labor unions; still active today as AFL-CIO
1890	Battle of Wounded Knee	end of Indian Wars in the West
1892	Populist Party formed	farmers unite against railroads and big business
April–Aug. 1898	Spanish-American War	U.S. gains an empire in Caribbean and Philippines
1909	NAACP formed	African Americans organize to achieve equality
1910–1920	Great Migration of African Americans	growth of large African-American communities in Northern cities; racial tensions develop
1913	Ford produces one auto every 2 hours	mass production techniques make U.S. world industrial leader
1914	Panama Canal completed	travel between Caribbean and the Pacific eased
1914–1918	World War I	European conflict challenges U.S. neutrality
1917	U.S. enters World War I	tips the balance of power to the Allies; Central Powers defeated
1919	League of Nations chartered	agreement to settle differences without war
1919–1933	Prohibition	established shared popular culture across nation
1920	first commercial radio station	alcoholic beverages banned; flaunting of the law
1920	women get the right to vote	women achieve political equality sought since 1848
1919–1920	Red Scare	fear of Communist takeover of America
1924	immigration quotas set	limits Southern and Eastern Europeans; no Asians
1925	Scopes trial	debate between religion and science over teaching evolution
1927	Lindbergh flies solo across the Atlantic; first commercial air flights	modern age of air travel begins
1929	Stock market crashes	Great Depression begins
1930	major cities connected by paved roads	increased travel by car with greater speed and convenience
1933	New Deal begins	unprecedented expansion of the role of federal government
1933–1936	Dust Bowl	increased poverty; large numbers migrate to California

Important Events in American History *continued*

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Sept. 1939	Hitler invades Poland	World War II begins
Dec. 7, 1941	Japanese attack Pearl Harbor	U.S. enters World War II
1941–1945	U.S. involvement in World War II	U.S. becomes a world power
Feb. 1942	internment of Japanese Americans begins	violation of civil rights
June 1942	Battle of Midway	Japanese fleet decimated; U.S. begins island hopping
June 6, 1944	D-Day	Allies invade Normandy; begin liberation of Europe
Aug. 6 & 9, 1945	atomic bombs devastate Japan	ends World War II; begins nuclear age
1950–1953	Korean War	desire to contain Communism ends in stalemate
1950–1954	McCarthyism	fear of Communism leads to civil rights violations
1950s	TV becomes popular	shared popular culture expands; Americans now watch about 4 hours each day
1951	UNIVAC first computer sold commercially	Computer revolution begins, resulting in widespread personal computer and Internet use
1954–1973	American involvement in Vietnam	longest war in American history divides the nation
1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	Supreme Court mandates school desegregation
1954	polio vaccine introduced	elimination of deadly childhood disease within 20 years
Dec. 1955–Dec.1956	Montgomery bus boycott	first nonviolent civil rights protest
Sept. 1957	USSR launches Sputnik I satellite	begins the space race
Sept.1957	Little Rock (Arkansas) Nine	fight for school desegregation begins
1961	Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba	failed attempt by U.S. to overthrow Castro
1962	Cuban missile crisis	U.S. and USSR come to brink of nuclear war
1963	March on Washington; King’s “I Have a Dream” speech	leads to Civil Rights Act of 1964
Nov. 22, 1963	President Kennedy assassinated	tragedy unites the country in grief
1964	Tonkin Gulf Resolution	begins undeclared war in Vietnam
May 1964	Johnson launches Great Society	war on poverty; support for civil rights
1966	National Organization for Women founded	women unite to achieve equality
1967	race riots in major cities	civil rights movement turns violent
January 1968	Tet offensive	causes moderates to turn against the war in Vietnam
1968	Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy assassinated	sparks national rioting and protest
1969	Neil Armstrong walks on the moon	America wins the space race with USSR
April 22, 1970	first Earth Day	signals growing interest in environmentalism
May 1970	student protestors killed at Kent State	deepens division over the war
1972	Congress passes the Equal Rights Amendment	gender equality; not ratified
Feb. 1972	President Nixon visits China	opens relations closed since 1949
1973	U.S. troops withdraw from Vietnam	war turned over to the Vietnamese
1973	beginning of energy crisis	America’s overdependence on Middle Eastern oil
Aug. 1974	Watergate scandal; President Nixon resigns	diminishes faith in government
1975	fall of Saigon	communists rule Vietnam; war spreads throughout SE Asia
Nov. 1979–Jan. 1981	Iran holds 52 Americans hostage	conflict over the shah
1981	Sandra Day O’Connor appointed to Supreme Court	first woman justice
1989–1991	fall of the Berlin Wall; breakup of the Soviet Union	Cold War ends
1990–1991	Persian Gulf War	U.S. supports Kuwait; protects its oil supplies
Dec. 1998–Jan. 1999	President Clinton’s impeachment trial	remains in office
Sept 11, 2001	terrorists attack World Trade Center and Pentagon	U.S. begins war on terrorism
March 2003	U.S. invades Iraq	fear of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism; brutal dictator removed