Moments That Made Us - full text with description

This single webpage provides the full text from the thirty-three Moments That Made Us exhibit panels and provides textual description of images presented on the subject panels. Each theme panel is printed on a Red, White, and Blue background. Each subject panel has a portion of an illustration under the Title and is described following the illustrations title. Next on the panel will be an image of a related artifact which will have added description within the artifacts text. The bottom section of the panel has three vertical text columns with a title and image at the top of each column. A description of each of these images will follow their caption. Users will find that screen readers and browser's read aloud functions will work smoothly in this simple text file. The following text provides a table of content of the exhibit panels with a link that will take you directly to the selected panel text. At the end of each panel text section there is a link that will return you to the content page.

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MOMENTS THAT MADE Us

Two hundred and fifty years ago, delegates from the thirteen self-proclaimed United States of America signed the Declaration of Independence and changed the world. The signers gambled their lives on the future of a new nation, uncertain of what would follow as the ink dried.

The new **free and independent states** proclaimed their right to break from an unjust ruler and formed a government based on the **consent of the governed**, not a king. Their statement that all men are **created equal** introduced a new idea of freedom and argued that governments exist to protect natural rights to **life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness**. The founders **pledged to each other their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor**, beginning a national experiment that each generation has carried forward, writing our story one moment at a time. The ink is still drying.

Moments that Made Us explores these founding principles and shares multiple perspectives from some of the United States's most significant moments. They show how the nation has advanced the founders' ideals, and when we've fallen short, inviting us to reflect on what it means to be American.

They show us that our path was never inevitable. We shaped it at every turn.

Moments that made Us was adapted from an exhibition at the History Colorado Center as a signature Initiative of the America 250 - Colorado 150 Commission.

This adaptation was developed as a collaboration between Arizona America 250, History Colorado, Idaho State Historical Society, Oklahoma Historical Society, and Washington State Historical Society.

With Additional Pacific Northwest content developed by the Washington State Historical Society and the Oregon Historical Society.

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LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The United States began with a bold idea: the natural right to **Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.** The notion that these rights were inherent to individuals, rather than granted by a monarch, was politically radical. So, too, was the thought that the government's purpose was to protect these rights, not just the desires of the Crown or of Parliament.

To the founders, these natural rights extended beyond individuals. Rather, happiness implied a shared obligation of every person to live well, act with integrity, and contribute to the well-being of their community. These revolutionary ideals became the justification for American independence and the north star guiding what that new nation would become.

"The form of government, which communicates ease, comfort, security, or in one word happiness to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best."
—John Adams, "Thoughts on Government," 1776

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1607 ENGLISH COLONIZATION

Illustration of Jamestown, Courtesy National Park Service. This is a colored image of Jamestown in 1607. In the background are three sailing ships tied to the shores of Virginia. In the foreground is a group of men building a vertical log enclosure around a group of white tents.

Tobacco made the American economy.

Tobacco was already popular in Europe, but its success with English growers in the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, set the struggling colony on a path to prosperity. The cash crop sustained it as the first permanent English settlement in North America.

Robert Cotton, a tobacco pipe maker, came to Jamestown in 1608. He imprinted a distinctive cross shape on these pipes as a way to sign his work. The look blended Indigenous and English pipe design at a time when tobacco was driving trade across the Atlantic for goods and people.

Two Tobacco pipe fragments
About 1608–1624, Robert Cotton, Pipes are made of clay, Loan, Preservation Virginia's Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation at Historic Jamestowne
IL.2025.4.1-2

"Tobacco, which passes there as current Silver, and by the oft turning and winding it, some grow rich, but many poore…"

> —John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & The Summer Isles*, 1622

A Fine Weed

John Rolfe, Everett Collections Historical / Alamy. This is a black and white illustration of John Rolfe, a white man with a hat, beard, long coat, and knee-high boats hoeing tobacco in a field with trees in the background.

English farmer and merchant John Rolfe began growing tobacco in Virginia several years after Jamestown was founded. He had noted that the local Powhatan people grew a local variety of tobacco, but the English did not like its taste. Instead, Rolfe cultivated tobacco seeds from the Caribbean in Virginia's soil. The colony exported the first barrels of this tobacco to England in 1614 to rave reviews. Within five years, tobacco was so crucial to the colonial economy that it practically functioned as currency.

“Tobacco, whose goodnesse mine own experience and triall induces me to be such, that no country under the Sunne, may, or doth affoord more pleasant, sweet and strong Tobacco, then I have tasted.”
—Ralph Hamor, Secretary of the Virginia Colony, 1615

Tribes and Trade

Bronze Bust of Chief Powhatan, Dennis Tarnay Jr. / Alamy. This is a photograph of the bronze relief bust of Chief Powhatan, with traditional Powhatan tribal headdress and buckskin top

Tribes participated in the new tobacco economy to obtain European goods and gain power. Tobacco had long played both medicinal and ceremonial roles in Indigenous societies on the Atlantic Coast. But for the Powhatan Confederacy of tribes in what became Virginia, tobacco became an important trade good in the 1600s with the arrival of Europeans. The crop could be exchanged for European-made items like metal goods and firearms. Booming demand for tobacco in Europe created economic opportunity, enhancing the Powhatans’ wealth and influence in the region.

“The Virginians [Indians] call Tobacco, *Opoak,* and it is everywhere…”
“An advice how to plant tobacco in England,” 1615

Enslaved Africans Come Ashore

“A Tobacco Plantation” around 1745 – 1865; Courtesy New York Public Library. This is a black and white illustration showing four enslaved African men, two men are coopers, barrels makers, and the other two men rolling barrels.

Virginia’s prosperity rested on the labor of enslaved Africans. As Europe’s hunger for tobacco fueled explosive growth, planters demanded ever more workers for the brutal fields. In 1619, the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia, marking the beginning of a system that would shape the colonies for centuries. Thousands followed, forced across the Atlantic on the horrific Middle Passage, their lives and labor sustaining the wealth that built early America.

“He brought not any thing but 20. and odd Negroes, which the Governor and Cape Marchant bought for victualls.”
John Rolfe, reporting the arrival of slaves aboard the ship the White Lion, 1620

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1849 GOLD RUSHES

Gold Miners, El Dorado, California, Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white illustration of nine men, that appear to be all white men, standing along a stream with mining equipment and two large dogs, with tents in the background.

Glittering flakes lured tens of thousands to the West.

From California to Alaska, gold strikes across the West set off one of the biggest migrations in American history. Those who struck it rich needed ways to turn raw metal into usable wealth. Assayers employed scales like these to test the quality and the value of gold and silver. The US Treasury established mints in San Francisco and Denver, transforming the towns into key hubs for processing the West's wealth.

While miners scoured the earth for flakes and nuggets of precious metals, other savvy opportunists put up boomtowns almost overnight. Some of those towns became thriving cities that extended the American economy from coast to coast.

Assayer's scales
This is a photograph of brass weighting scales which are attached to a short wooden table. Around 1860, Fairbanks and Company, New York. History Colorado H.545.1

Gold samples
This photograph shows five small and one large piece of gold. Around 1860, Chaffee, Colorado, Loan, Denver Museum of Nature and Science EGM.8057.1-6

"It was an uncontrollable eruption—a great river of human life rolling toward the setting sun—at once a triumph and a prophecy."
—A.D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi,* 1869

Striking It Rich
California gold diggers, as seen by an eyewitness, 1850s, hand colored woodcut of illustration in Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion 1856, Vol. 11. North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy. This is an image of four miners with picks and shovels at the edge of a stream with a white tent behind them. In the background are additional mine camps and high cliffs.

People from around the world came to the gold fields with dreams of quick wealth and a fresh start. They built boomtowns, dug mines, and claimed land. Many American argonauts set out with a sense of Manifest Destiny—the

belief that the nation had a divine right to expand westward. For these prospectors, the gold rush was a chance at freedom, fortune, and a better life. Some struck it rich, others left empty-handed, but many stayed to set up businesses and create a brand-new way of life.

> **"The fact is that gold is plenty here and the accounts received before I left home did not exaggerate the reality."**
> —William Swain, letter from California gold diggings, 1850

Homelands Under Siege

Ute Camp at Los Pinos, William Henry Jackson, 1874." History Colorado, 84.192.1628. This is a black and white photograph with four tipis in the center and a herd of several goats in front of the tipis.

For Indigenous peoples across the country, gold rushes were not a dream—they were a disaster. Thousands of miners and settlers flooded their lands, hunting game, polluting rivers, and building cities like Denver, Colorado, and Lewiston, Idaho, without permission. Treaties were broken. Sacred spaces were trampled. As settlers pushed in, Native communities were pushed out. Native nations held onto culture and fought to defend their homelands in the face of invasion. Armed conflict soon broke out, resulting in violence and even massacres of Native peoples.

> **"The Utes must GO!"**
> —Political rallying cry in Colorado, promoted by Governor Pitkin, 1880s

Caught in the Middle

"El Arastra," in Adventures in the Apache Country: A Tour Through Arizona and Sonora With Notes on the Silver Regions of Nevada, J. Ross Browne, 1871. This is a black and white image of perhaps a Mexican man and woman sitting on the ground with a donkey dragging a long pole in a circle.

Mexican American communities had already put down deep roots in the Southwest—farming, ranching, and living on land granted from the Spanish and Mexican governments. Yet, as the gold rush surged, Anglo settlers and courts swiftly disregarded their rights. Discriminatory laws like California's Foreign Miners' Tax targeted Chinese, Mexican, and other non-white miners. Violent attacks forced many from their claims. Still, some resisted and hung on to their claims in court cases and through community organization well into the next century.

“The law, as all monsters should, died. But the memory of it remains, as the memory of all monsters will.”

—Editor of the *Daily Alta California,* on the repeal of the 1850 Foreign Miners Tax, 1851

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1956 INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS

Photograph, Courtesy History Colorado. This is a color aerial photograph of a section of Interstate Highway with two overpasses and several connecting ramps with multiple cars and trucks.

Highways put the American Dream within driving distance.

By the 1950s, Americans were already in love with the open road. But as highways knitted the country together after the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956, a nation on the move was soon going farther and faster than ever before.

But first they had to stop for gas. This pump began filling up cars in Golden, Colorado, in the 1930s. With the tank topped off, automobile owners found a new kind of freedom in a country increasingly built for travel by car. From the layout of our cities to roads through our national parks, modern America and automobiles were made for each other.

Gasoline pump

This is a color photograph for a gasoline pump that is a tall and thin red metal cylinder with black hose, topped with a glass cylinder and circular red metal top, 1930s–1970s, Steel, glass, and porcelain, History Colorado, 79.165.5

"Travel my way, take the highway" —"(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66,"
recorded by Nat King Cole, 1946

A Car for Everyone

Drives ancient 'Lizzie' to White House to show Henry Ford..., Harris & Ewing, 1938.Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white photograph of an early Ford Model T, that was known as a Tin Lizzie, parked in front of a white building.

Henry Ford's motor company changed Americans' relationship to gasoline forever when the Ford Model T debuted in 1908. Before the "Tin Lizzie" hit the market for everyday Americans, cars had been luxury vehicles. With innovative assembly line production, Ford mass produced vehicles and lowered their price, enabling millions of Americans to purchase their first cars. As more and more Americans hit the road, the nation's appetite for oil, from which gasoline is made, grew nearly insatiable.

> **"Failure is only the opportunity more intelligently to begin again."**
> — Henry Ford, in his autobiography, 1922

Driving a New Way of Life

"I'm no millionaire but it's mine!" Plymouth advertisement, 1957. Public domain. This is a color advertisement of a young white man leaning on the front of a red Plymouth.

Suburban streets after World War II gleamed with chrome and optimism. Veterans used G.I. Bill benefits to buy homes outside dense city limits—and bought cars to get themselves to work. Highways stretched outward, linking neighborhoods and cities increasingly designed for drivers. Parking garages rose, traffic thickened, and car culture roared to life. With Mustangs and Thunderbirds on the move, America's love affair with the open road hit full speed.

> **"And she'll have fun, fun, fun /**
> 'Til her daddy takes the T-Bird away"
> —Brian Wilson and Mike Love, "Fun, Fun, Fun" by the Beach Boys, 1964

Haves and Have-nots

Mayor Robert Wagner (right) joined by Robert Moses (left)...New York City, Walter Albertin for World-Telegram, 1956. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white photograph of three white men standing in a street with building construction in the background.

City planners once saw cars as a cure-all for urban problems. In New York, powerful planner Robert Moses claimed highways would "clear slums" and modernize the city. Instead, they carved it apart—reinforcing racial and economic divides. Neighborhoods near busy roads endured noise, pollution, and the haze of leaded gas. Highways cut walkable connections and isolated whole communities. Suburbs boomed with the help of G.I. loans, but redlining kept many veterans of color shut out of the American Dream.

> **"When you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax."**
> —Robert Moses, New York City urban planner, 1964

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WESTERN EXPANSION

Watercolor painting depicting Fort Vancouver around 1845, courtesy Clark County Historical Museum. Fort Vancouver is shown in the left center of the image with additional buildings to the right and left of the fort along the Columbia river's edge. In the foreground is a field and garden. There is a sailboat in the river and forest on the opposite shore.

Western expansion created a collision of cultures.

Images of "rugged settlers seeking free land" have long shaped stories of the American West. These familiar scenes blur reality. Migration west was a story shaped by convergence, complexity, and conquest. For settlers, the West represented promise and possibility. For Indigenous peoples, westward expansion caused devastating interruptions to sovereignty, culture, and ways of living.

Leather "housewife" (folding case) used on the Lewis and Clark Expedition c. 1800. This is a photograph of an open green and red leather folding case showing a handwritten letter inside. Oregon Historical Society Museum 4014

"Our homeland was neither an unoccupied frontier nor a wilderness."

> Roberta Conner, "Our People Have Always Been Here," Lewis and Clark Through Indian Eyes, 2007.

A Federal Expedition

White salmon trout drawing by William Clark, March 16, 1806, Missouri Historical Society, N26621. This drawing shows a fish drawn vertically on the left side of the paper with extensive handwriting to the right of the fish drawing.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806) brought one of the earliest encounters between the United States and Tribal nations in what is now Oregon. Expedition members entered the region desperate for food, knowledge, and horses. Early interactions with Tribal nations were shaped by trade and negotiations. With the travelers appearing to be merely passing through, the Nez Perce, Wanapum, Chinook, Clatsop, and other Tribes engaged the newcomers with a mix of support and caution. This federally directed military expedition helped lay the groundwork for American colonization.

> **"In all your intercourse with the natives treat them in the most friendly and conciliatory manner."**

President Thomas Jefferson, instructions to Meriwether Lewis, June 20, 1803

Spreading the Word

Spalding printing press, Oregon Historical Society Museum, 686. This is a photograph of a simple metal printing press sitting atop a wooden base. The press has a metal tray for the type, an ink roller, and a hand turned gear press.

In the 1830s, missionaries traveled to the Pacific Northwest believing it was their duty to spread Christianity and change Indigenous ways of life. Henry Harmon and Eliza Hart Spalding traveled west with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in 1836 and started the Lapwai Mission among the Nez Perce (Nimiipuu) in what is now Idaho. In 1839, they brought a printing press from Hawaii to Lapwai, the first in the Pacific Northwest, and used it to print Bible passages in the Nez Perce language. Some of these early printed materials have survived and become important sources of information about Nez Perce culture and language during a time of major loss.

> **"At first [we] thought there was room enough for all to live in peace . . . But we soon found that the white men . . . were greedy to possess everything the Indian had."**
> Chief Joseph, as quoted through a translator in "An Indian's View of Indian Affairs," North American Review, April 1879

Community over Prejudice

Cast iron tea kettle used by the George Bush family, 1840-1855, Washington State Historical Society, C1941.7.24. This is a photograph of a black cast iron kettle with a metal wire handle, a lid with hexagonal design, and a squared spout.

As a free Black man facing severe racial prejudice in Missouri, George Bush and his family migrated west on the Oregon Trail in 1844. Exclusion laws in the Oregon Territory prevented Black settlers from owning land, so the Bushes moved north and settled near what is now Tumwater, Washington. They farmed and built a sawmill and gristmill, benefiting area farmers. The Bush family's land became threatened due to the 1850 Oregon Donation Land Claim Act, which limited land claims to white sellers. Because of their standing in the community, friends and neighbors helped petition Congress for a special exception to confirm Bush's land claim.

> **"The wrong was so flagrant in this particular case that a special act of Congress enabled this old, bighearted pioneer of 1845 to hold his claim."**

Ezra Meeker, speaking of George Bush, Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound, 1905

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POWER OF RIVERS

Grand Coulee Dam in the early construction phase 1939. Washington State Historical Society, 2000.170.56. This is a black and white photograph which shows a high and long trestle bridge structure across the river.

Hydroelectricity carries benefits and costs.

The United States has always drawn power and prosperity from land and water. In the Pacific Northwest, dams have delivered reliable, low-cost electricity, supporting agriculture, industry, and cities. But dams have also disrupted the rivers and the lives of people who lived on them since time immemorial. Dams change the very nature of a river, blocking salmon migration, allowing toxic algae build up, and introducing species like carp and shad. Tribes whose lifeways center on salmon have been deeply affected.

Core drilling sample from the site of the Grand Coulee Dam c. 1935
This photograph shows a core sample. The sample is a cylinder-shaped piece of soil that has been extracted by a drilling machine. Washington State Historical Society 1995.45.3

"The Government itself must make these waters available; no one else can; for no one else has the capacity to do it."

> Representative Francis G. Newlands of Nevada, speech to the U.S. House of Representatives, June 13, 1902

Deserts Transformed
Dignitaries at the headgates of the Milner Dam, 1905, Idaho State Archives, D228 G25-13. This is a black and white photograph showing 16 people standing on the wooden boardwalk over the dam gates.

In Idaho, dams helped to transform dry sagebrush into irrigated farmland under the 1894 Carey Act. The act allowed private companies to build irrigation systems in the western semi-arid states and profit from water sales. The 1905 Milner Dam and a system of canals diverted Snake River water and boosted settlement in what became known as the Magic Valley. Under this law, private industry and the federal government transformed southern Idaho. Nearly 60% of all Carey Act lands in the United States are in Idaho, a higher percentage than any other western state.

> **"As the water flowed into the big canal to be carried out to transform and redeem a desert, cheer after cheer was given and bottles of wine were broken over the gates."**

J. B. Warrington, speaking about the March1905 completion of Milner Dam

Shaping History

Sheep crossing the Grand Coulee Dam, Washington State Historical Society, 2006.0.269. This is a black and white photograph of a man leading a long line of a herd of sheep that is covering about one third of the road surface across the dam with the reservoir to the left and the spillway to the right.

Grand Coulee Dam in central Washington stretches nearly a mile and was the largest concrete structure ever built when completed in 1941. The dam created thousands of jobs during the Great Depression. The cheap electricity helped manufacture aluminum for Boeing bombers in World War II and produce nuclear weapons at the Hanford Nuclear Works. On a visit in 1963 President John F. Kennedy said the power of the river "changed the entire history of the world." The dam also flooded thousands of acres of land vital to Tribes across the region. Without a fish ladder, it permanently blocks salmon migration to the Upper Columbia Basin.

"And on up the river is Grand Coulee Dam,
The mightiest thing ever built by a man,
To run these great factories and water the land,
It's roll on, Columbia, roll on."
Woody Guthrie, "Roll on Columbia," 1941

Changing Priorities

Former site of the John C. Boyle Dam near Keno, Oregon, September 2024, Public Domain. This is a color photograph of a river along the bottom of what was once a reservoir.

Efforts to restore rivers in the Pacific Northwest have intensified in recent decades. removal of four dams on the Klamath River in southern Oregon in 2023 and 2024 reflects a focus on restoring river ecosystems and supporting Tribal priorities. Tribes, along with state and federal agencies, coordinated across Oregon and California to plan and implement restoration efforts. The benefits of removal have been almost immediate. Water quality has improved, water temperatures are stabilizing, and Chinook salmon and steelhead are returning. Today, the work to fully rebuild the river ecosystem and its cultural connections continues.

"The work is not done, by any means. There's still so much to do after the dams come out."
Oshun O'Rourke, senior fisheries biologist with the Yurok Tribe, September 2023

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CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

The Declaration of Independence made a radical claim that power comes from **the consent of the governed**. King George III, like all monarchs, claimed to rule by divine right, or the will of god, but American Patriots insisted that political authority came from the people. They asserted that government must be accountable to the governed, or be replaced.

The founders argued that the Revolution was not simply a rebellion, it was necessary because the British Crown and Parliament did not protect their rights. The new United States would be a nation in which the government derived its power and legitimacy from the people.

"A government of our own is our natural right."
—Thomas Paine, Common Sense, 1776

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1676 BACON'S REBELLION

The Burning of Jamestown by Howard Pyle. Public Domain. This is a portion of a black and white illustration showing the faces of 15 white men in 17th century clothing.

Resistance to aristocratic rule established a revolutionary tradition.

Colonists rebelled against the Crown a century before the Revolutionary War. Nathaniel Bacon—an English aristocrat—led Black and white colonists in a revolt against Virginia's royal government and the region's Native Tribes in 1676. Their list of grievances included "great unjust taxes" and "having protected, favored, and emboldened the Indians."

Bacon began by attacking Tribal settlements, but soon was leading his forces against the colonial capital at Jamestown. These exploded grenades were found in the capitol's ashes. If Bacon hadn't died of dysentery during the ongoing campaign, the American revolution might have been very different.

Iron grenade fragments
This image shows a cross shaped iron stand holding three fragments of an exploded grenade. 1676 Iron, Loan, Preservation Virginia's Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation at Historic Jamestowne IL.2025.3-5

"We accuse Sir William Berkeley as guilty…and many of his faithful loyal subjects by him betrayed and in a barbarous and shameful manner exposed to the incursions and murder of the heathen."
—Nathaniel Bacon, "Declaration of the People," 1676

Rebels with a Cause
No Caption, North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy. This is a colored illustration of an assembly of white men wearing 17th century long coats, knee high boots, and hats. They are gathered outside of a building doorway where a white man in a red coat addresses them.

Bacon's rebels were a diverse group of English colonists united by their poverty and unfulfilled expectations. Many who joined the rebellion came from the colony's lower classes, and wondered if they would ever achieve the security and stature life in the colonies had promised. They thought royal governor William Berkeley's policies favored the upper-class and Native Peoples over the wellbeing of poorer English colonists. Struggling and fearful of retaliation from Native Peoples whose homelands were being trampled, they saw armed rebellion as the only way to claim the life they desired.

“How miserable that man is that Governs a People when six parts of Seaven at least are Poor Endebted Discontented and Armed.”
—Colonial Governor William Berkeley, 1676

War on Their Doorstep

No Caption, Courtesy John Carter Brown Library. This is an image of part of a treaty signed by the English Colonizers with the Pamunkey people. The wording on the image states: “The sign of the Queen of Pamunkey, on behalf of her self and the several Indians under her subjection.”

Cockacoeske, longtime leader of the Pamunkey people, engaged in diplomacy even as she recognized that the colonists were unreliable partners. When Virginia’s royal governor, William Berkeley, sought the Tribe’s military assistance during Bacon’s Rebellion, Cockacoeske reminded him that her husband and many other Pamunkey had died when fighting other Tribes alongside the English—sacrifices that had never been compensated. She agreed to send only twelve fighting men, and instead of joining the conflict, she and her people hid themselves in the Dragon Swamp. After the rebellion, she signed a peace treaty with the English that expanded her authority among the region’s Tribes.

“The Quenn of Pamunkey… entred the chamber with a comportment gracefull to admiration…”
—Thomas Matthew, “The Beginning, Progress and Conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia, in the years 1675 & 1676,” 1705

Divide and Rule

Ruins of Jamestown, 1676. Public Domain. This is a black and white illustration showing a roadway flanked by partially destroyed structures on each side, small groups of men with rifles on the roadway and a ship is seen in the distance.

Both Black and white Virginians joined Bacon’s Rebellion, united by their demands for a better life. But the colony’s ruling class saw this multiracial coalition of the poor as a threat. Virginia’s House of Burgesses responded with laws making race the basis for slavery. They passed “An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections” in 1680, just four years after the rebellion. Its dehumanizing provisions restricted Black peoples’ movement, their access to weapons, and applied to “any negroe or other slaves.” To be Black became synonymous with being a slave.

“it shall not be lawfull for any negroe or other slave to carry or arme himselfe with any club, staffe, gunn, sword or any other weapon of defence or offence.”

—*An Act for Preventing Negroes Insurrections*, General Assembly of the Virginia Colony, 1680

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1773 BOSTON TEA PARTY

Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor, N. Courier, 1846. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a colorized image which shows on the right side 9 white men dressed as Indians on the deck of a ship throwing boxes of tea overboard. In the center is another ship further out with boxes of tea floating on the water, On the left side is a crowd cheering them on.

Coffee was the drink of American patriots who rejected England and its obsession with tea.

Copper coffee pots appeared in many more American homes after the Boston Tea Party, when the Sons of Liberty dumped 92,000 pounds of British tea into the Boston Harbor on December 16, 1773.

Patriotic plots stirred in Boston’s coffee houses, where revolutionaries like Samuel Adams and Paul Revere strategized for independence. A silversmith by profession, Revere’s spoons also stirred their coffee.

Coffee pot

This is an image of a tall and thin copper coffee pot with a fluted bottom, the spout curving up from the middle, and a handle of turned wood at ninety degrees from the spout. The lid has a small round knob. 18th century, Copper and wood, Loan, Winterthur Museum, IL.2025.34.1

Tablespoon

This is an image of a silver tablespoon with small rope shaped decoration on the edge of the handle. 18th century, Paul Revere Jr., Silver, Loan, Winterthur Museum, IL.2025.34.2

“Tea must be universally renounced.”
—John Adams, letter to Abigail Adams, 1774

No Taxation Without Representation

John Adams, by Gilbert Stuart, around 1800–1815. Courtesy National Gallery of Art. This is a portrait of John Adams as an elderly man, with white curly hair and balding in the middle. He is wearing a white ruffle shirt and a black coat. He is facing to the left with head turned back toward the center.

Colonists were weary of the constant waves of tax increases the British imposed to pay for the Seven Years’ War with France. First came a sugar tax in 1764, then the Stamp Act in 1765. Then five more taxes, levied on everyday goods in 1767 and ’68. With the cost of living soaring, a resounding cry united many: No taxation without representation. Colonists had no member of

Parliament to advocate for their interests. This motto rallied the Sons of Liberty to orchestrate the Boston Tea Party.

> **"This Destruction of the Tea is so bold, so daring... it must have so important Consequences, and so lasting, that I cant but consider it as an Epocha in History."**
> —John Adams, in his diary, 1773

Save Your Money and Save Your Country!

A Brief History of the United States, Joel Dorman Steele and Esther Baker Steele, 1885. Public Domain. This is a black and white illustration of a Colonial Living Rom. In the room is a fireplace with cooking pot over the fire, a rifle leaning on the windowsill, a white woman in a long dress sitting at a spinning wheel and also showing a young child seated on the floor.

Women in colonial America made their own patriotic protests in the 1760s and '70s. This Homespun Movement began in 1767 encouraging colonists to refrain from buying British goods and instead use products made in America. The Daughters of Liberty organized spinning bees for groups of women to make thread or yarn together as early as 1769. Since social custom barred women from gathering with men in coffee houses to organize the Revolution, they met over home-brewed coffee or their household mending to sow their patriotic spirit.

> **"The Ladies... are contributing to bring about the political Salvation of a whole continent."**
> —*The Essex Gazette*, 1769

The World Turned Upside Down

John Malcom, around 1780–1790. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white illustration of the attack on customs Officer John Malcolm. The image shows a horse drawn cart with patriot men abducting Malcom.

Not everyone in the colonies was slurping coffee and spouting revolution. Between 15 and 30 percent of people living in British North America remained loyal to the Crown through the 1770s. Often, loyalists were those who had the most to lose if America broke away. They were merchants, importers, government officials, and clergymen, among others. Most colonists considered themselves English, not American, until the Seven Years' War and the taxes that followed. For these loyalists, a revolution seemed less like fighting for independence and more like civil war.

“I will not raise my hand against my Sovereign nor will I draw my sword against my Country.”

—Isaac Wilkins, *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, 1775

CONTENT

1846 WAR WITH MEXICO

General Scott's entrance into Mexico, Plate 45," Carl Nebel, 1851, Courtesy New York Public Library. This is a segment of a colored drawing of United States General Scott entering Mexico. The left side shows about a dozen frightened civilians watching a large assemblage of soldiers and cannons passing by. The soldiers are on and off horseback. All are dressed in blue United States Army uniforms.

The Mexican-American War reshaped land and lives forever.

US troops spilled across the Mexican border in 1846. President James K. Polk had promised to expand the United States in pursuit of the nation's Manifest Destiny. He used military force to claim disputed lands along the Rio Grande River.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War on February 2, 1848. By the time the ink was dry, Mexico had given up more than half its territory while the US nearly doubled in size. A printer in Mexico City published this Spanish language version of the treaty so residents of the surrendered lands could make sense of the war's consequences.

Tratado de Paz Amistad, Límites Y Arreglo Definitivo Entre la República Mexicana y los Estados Unidos de América

Translation: Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Boundaries, and Definitive Settlement Between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic
This is an image of the cover page of the treaty between Mexico and the United States with the title written in Spanish. 1848, Ignacio Complido, printer, History Colorado, 2024.137.1

"those who shall remain in the said territories after the expiration of that year...shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States."
—Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Article VIII, 1848

America's Manifest Destiny

Battle of Churubusco, Fought near the city of Mexico, 20th of August 1847, N. Currier, Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a colored illustration of the battle of Churubusco. The United States troops are shown on the left wearing blue coats and white pants. They stand in line holding their rifles fitted with bayonets. The Mexican troops are shown on the right wearing gray coats and white pants. Some Mexican troops are laying on the ground wounded and others are hidden in a cloud of gun fire.

Every American soon felt the profound consequences of the war. The nation now stretched from Atlantic to Pacific, fulfilling what many Americans believe was their Manifest Destiny to expand across the continent. Gold discovered in California immediately gave the United States a new source of enormous wealth. But the territorial expansion also inflamed simmering tensions between those who were committed to slavery and those who wanted to end it. Many Northerners saw the war as a conspiracy to expand territory for slavery. The debate over whether the new territory would be slave or free fueled sectional anger pushing the nation toward civil war.

> **"Mexico will poison us."**
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson, American writer, 1846

In a New Nation

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, before 1895. Public Domain / Wikimedia. This is a black and white portrait of Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton seen as a middle-aged Mexican woman. She is wearing a period dark dress with a white collar and cuffs. She has dark shoulder length hair. She is standing in an interior of a dwelling.

Nearly 100,000 Mexicans remained in the new US territory and became Americans under the terms of the treaty. Many of them experienced the treaty as a profound and disorienting disruption, as the border crossed them. Despite the treaty's guarantees to respect their rights, those protections were often ignored. New laws discriminated against Mexican Americans living in the ceded territory, and many quickly began to experience the loss of their property and their culture.

> **"The treaty said that our rights would be the same as those enjoyed by all other American citizens."**
> —Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*, 1885

Protecting Tribal Homelands

Comanche War Party on the March, Fully Equipped," George Catlin, 1846–1848. Courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum. This partial image of a George Catlin painting shows three Comanche warriors on horseback in the foreground of a prairie landscape and sky.

Although jurisdiction over the land changed on paper when the treaty was signed, Indigenous Peoples still controlled the region, having lived there for centuries. Many had prior agreements with the United States, but the war's end brought a new wave of conquest. Settlers and gold-seekers poured in. They repeatedly violated treaties as the US government ignored citizens

claiming Native land. For these Tribes, the treaty meant a sudden flood of Americans into their territory. Tribal leaders now had to navigate another wave of conquest with a new power asserting a paper claim on their homelands.

> **“What might have been the result had the Indians been allowed to remain below the line… of the settlements, is hard to tell.”**
> —“News from Texas,” in *The New York Herald,* 1848

CONTENT

NUCLEAR LANDSCAPES

B Reactor in Richland, Washington, Historic American, Engineering Record, 1968, Courtesy Library of Congress, WA0703 This is a black and white photograph of horizontal metal tubing.

Nuclear energy took on new meaning after the Atomic Age.

From World War II through the Cold War, the Pacific Northwest engineered, produced, and stored vast quantities of conventional, chemical, and nuclear weapons. State and federal agencies are now spending billions to remedy the environmental impacts of the country's nuclear program. At the same time, nuclear innovation continues as scientists explore the technology for alternate uses.

Nuclear Waste Isolation Card

This is an image of a Nuclear Waste Isolation Card. The card shows a diagram of the containment layers for nuclear waste and definitions of the different layers. Additionally on the card is seen a marble made of borosilicate glass.
Pacific Northwest Laboratory in Richland, Washington, c. 1950s, Washington State Historical Society, 2019.2.87

"The more important responsibility [is] to devise methods where by this fissionable material would be allocated to serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind."

President Dwight Eisenhower, "Atoms for Peace" speech, December 8, 1953

A Nuclear First

Light bulbs at the Idaho National Laboratory lit with electricity generated from a nuclear reactor, December 20, 1951, Idaho State Historical Society, 79-2-33b. This is a black and white photograph showing a string of four bright lights hanging between two rectangular stands set on a raised floor.

Late at night on July 17, 1955, Arco, Idaho, became the world's first nuclear-powered town. A reactor at what is now the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) overrode Arco's electrical grid and kept the lights on for nearly an hour. The site developed the first water-cooled reactors to generate electricity using plutonium, and prototype thermal reactors to prove the theory of nuclear propulsion, making Idaho's desert the test bed for the world's first nuclear submarine, the USS Nautilus. Engineers there also tested systems to prevent overheating, which led to nuclear meltdowns at Three Mile Island in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986. Today, INL is the nation's leader in advanced nuclear research and development.

“The nation that first develops nuclear engines will rule the oceans of the world.”
Admiral Hyman Rickover, known as the “Father of the Nuclear Navy,” c. 1950s

One Thousand Igloos
Ammunition “igloos” at the Umatilla Army Ordnance Depot, 1941, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, 013045. This is a black and white photograph of a row of storage bunkers, referred to as igloos by the military, on a gravel road.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, the Department of Defense selected the Umatilla Army Ordnance Depot near Hermiston, Oregon, to store weaponry. It built more than 1,000 large reinforced concrete bunkers known as “igloos” and covered them with two feet of dirt. About the size of a tennis court, the igloos are still visible from I-84. Between 2004 and 2011, hundreds of thousands of conventional and chemical weapons were incinerated, and microbes were used to treat contaminated soil and water. Cleanup is nearly complete, and the once contaminated land is being used as a wildlife reserve and a National Guard training facility.

“Rather than posing a burden, this facility can be cleaned up and put to beer use for the entire community.”
Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, statement on the closure decision for the Umatilla Chemical Depot, August 2005

Polluting Tribal Land
Workers at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation photographing the interior of a reactor tank, J.D. Morton photographer, 1957, Washington State Historical Society, 2003.62.7. This is a black and white photograph of four men in white protective coveralls and gas masks lowering a camera assembly into an underground tank.

The bomb that the United States dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, at the end of World War II was made with plutonium developed in Hanford, Washington. The hazards of nuclear material manufacture and storage proved enduring as radioactive sludge stored in underground tanks began leaching in the 1990s, contaminating soil and threatening the Columbia River. Because of the contamination, Tribes like the Yakama Nation have been denied access to this land for more than eighty years, despite hunting and fishing rights granted in the 1855 Yakama Treaty. It is unclear when hunting and fishing can resume with the cleanup estimated to last another sixty years as the sludge is converted into glass for long-term storage.

“Our ties to the Hanford Area run deep in our veins as we are the descendants of the Yakama matriarchs and warriors of the Columbia Plateau.”
Trina Sherwood, cultural specialist, Yakama Cultural Center, February 13, 2025

CONTENT

SOVEREIGNTY AND RESILIENCE

Canoe journey across Puget Sound, 2011, courtesy of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. This is a color photograph of a Coast Salish canoe traveling across calm waters on the Puget Sound. The canoe shown in the foreground has nine paddlers. The canoe is painted black featuring a wolf head on the bow.

Tribal treaties arm Tribal rights.

In the 1800s, Tribes entered into treaties under intense pressure from the United States, resulting in the loss of much of their homelands to the federal government. Tribes retained some "reservation" lands as well as rights to hunt, fish, and gather in "usual and accustomed" places. Later federal policies and ongoing treaty violations have further divided Tribal land and threatened Tribal rights. Despite repeated efforts to undermine their sovereignty, Tribal communities across the Pacific Northwest have continuously defended their treaty rights in court and continue to practice and pass on cultural knowledge and traditions.

Protest proclamation of the United Indians of All Tribes from the Fort Lawton Occupation March 1970
This is a picture of a copy of the typed proclamation. In the upper right corner in red pencil is written – Rec'd from Bernie Whitebear 3/24/70. Seattle Municipal Archives, 5804_05_016_001_001

"The federal government must use its authority to honor our treaties. Because our treaty rights are both civil rights and property rights, they are protected under the U.S. Constitution."

Billy Frank, Jr., testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, July 19, 2012

Boarding Schools
Students at the entrance of the Chemawa Indian Training School, c. 1900, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, BB003857. This is a black and white photograph showing multiple rows of young Indigenous boys wearing school uniforms of long coats, pants, and high boots. The front row is lined up directly under the arched sign that reads Indian Training School with an eagle on top. In the background trees line the way to the school.

Beginning in the 1860s, the federal government established boarding schools to erase Tribal culture through the forced assimilation of children. Students had to speak English, adopt white dress and hairstyles, and practice Christianity. Punishment for nonconformity was violent, abuse and neglect were rampant, and many children died at the schools. Schools closed as

federal funding began to decline in the 1920s. The Chemawa Indian School near Salem, Oregon, has remained open, after Tribal leaders and community members chose to preserve it in the 1960s. Chemawa is still federally controlled but has an all-Tribal advisory board and integrates Tribal history, language, and culture into its curriculum.

> **"It is uncomfortable to learn that the country you love is capable of committing such acts . . . [we must gain] a full understanding of their impacts so that we can unravel the threads of trauma and injustice that linger."**
> Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Washington Post, June 11, 2021

Breaking up Tribal Land
Alice Fletcher photographed by E. Jane Gay, c. 1889-1892, Idaho State Archives, MS756 Box 8 P078 E. This is a black and white photograph of Alice Fletcher while seated taking notes as four men are positioned in front of her under a wooden roofed structure.

In 1889, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent Alice Fletcher, one of the first female Indian agents, to Idaho Territory to survey and assign plots on the Nez Perce reservation. Families assigned lots were first made wards of the state because officials believed Tribal people were incapable of managing their own affairs. Allotments were held in trust for twenty-five years, or until owners were considered competent. Few certificates of competency were ever issued. As an anthropologist, she contributed to the understanding of Idaho's Tribes by transcribing oral histories and writing about village life. E. Jane Gay, a photographer and Fletcher's life-long companion, created a visual record of Nez Perce life.

> **"[Allotment] was a way to break up the whole tribal structure of Native American nations. Instead of saying you are a group of people, all of a sudden you are individual landowners."**
> Charlotte Black Elk, speaking in The West documentary by PBS, 1996

Right of Discovery
Bernie Whitebear reading a proclamation ending the protesters' encampment at Fort Lawton, April 3, 1970, Museum of History and Industry, 2000.107.230.06.02. This is a black and white photograph of Bernie Whitebear, a young Indigenous man. He stands on a street corner, at a press conference reading the proclamation flanked by handheld microphones. He is wearing a light-colored dress shirt and a jean jacket. There are three other young Indigenous men standing behind him.

The 1956 Indian Relocation Act attempted to remove the sovereign status of Tribal nations by emptying Tribal reservations and undermining treaty obligations. The Act's promises of employment and job training in cities were often not upheld and some Tribal members returned to reservations. Others remained and built strong urban intertribal communities. This strength was on display in 1970 when about a hundred Tribal people occupied the decommissioned Fort Lawton in Seattle, citing treaty language that would return surplus military land to its original owners. After three months, the standoff ended with city officials issuing a 99-year lease of twenty acres for $1 per year. Today that land is home to the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center.

> **"We, the Native Americans, reclaim the land known as Fort Lawton in the name of all American Indians by the right of discovery."**
> United Indians of All Tribes, Fort Lawton occupation proclamation, March 1970

CONTENT

CREATED EQUAL

Perhaps the most famous line of the Declaration of Independence reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are **created equal**." The founders understood equality as a collective right, that no person was inherently superior to another, not even a king.

The world remained divided by race, gender, and class, even as Americans broke free from monarchy. But the promise of equality was powerful. Those excluded from the meaning of these words in 1776 still recognized that by the founders' logic, equality should mean that all people deserve access to the ideals promised by the Declaration of Independence.

"The Decree is gone forth, and it cannot be recalled, that a more equal Liberty, than has prevail'd in other Parts of the Earth, must be established in America."

—John Adams to Patrick Henry, 1776

CONTENT

1870 FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT

The first vote, by A.R. Ward, courtesy Library of Congress. This is a small section of the black and white drawing titled "The First Vote." It shows the outstretched clothed right arm of an African American man holding a slip of paper in his hand. There are two more men lined up behind him. One man is wearing a dress coat, and the other man wears a military jacket featuring an important medal.

Constitutional amendments defined the Civil War's meaning.

The Fifteenth Amendment gave Black men the right to vote. It was the last of three additions to the US Constitution securing the rights so many had fought for in the Civil War.

Not two months after its ratification, Thomas Mundy Peterson made history as the first Black man to vote under the amendment's protections. He cast his ballot in a local election in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, on March 31, 1870. His fellow citizens later gave him a medal, celebrating the moment the nation moved one step closer to fulfilling the promise of equality in the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Mundy Peterson medal
1884, Citizens of Perth Amboy, New Jersey. This is an image of the circular medal with raised inscription stating: "Presented by Citizens of Perth Amboy to Thomas Peterson the first colored voter in the U. S. under the provisions of the 15th Amendment at an election held in that city March 31st, 1870." Tin and lead alloy cast from same stamp as gold medal, Loan, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, IL.2025.29.1

"And so we meet to decorate,
By token on the Freedman's coat,
The man who was in any State,
The first to cast a Freedman's vote."

—William Paterson, presenting Peterson with the medal from the citizens of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, 1884

To the right of the text there is a black and white image of Thomas Peterson an older African American man with a beard wearing a suit and tie showing the medal pinned onto his vest.

Uncertain Equality

Ulysses S. Grant, Thomas Le Clear, around 1880. Courtesy National Portrait Gallery. This is a colorized portrait of President Grant from the waist up posing with his right arm across his waist. He has a clean-cut beard, white shirt, and dark jacket.

The Civil War ended with Union victory, but freedom was far from secure. Many white Northerners wrestled with the idea of African Americans as equals. President Ulysses S. Grant, who had led the Union Army to victory in war, was at first hesitant to embrace full voting rights for recently freed slaves and other Black Americans. However, as he watched white Southerners oppose and undercut Reconstruction, he came to believe that the vote was the only way for the Black community to protect its rights, and the only way to stabilize the nation's politics moving forward.

> **"[T]he fifteenth amendment to the Constitution completes the greatest civil change and constitutes the most important event that has occurred since the nation came into life."**
>
> —President Ulysses S. Grant, Special Message to Congress on the Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, 1870

Rights and Wrongs

Portrait of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, G.P. Lasselle, 1876. Courtesy Boston Anthenaeum. This is a black and white portrait of Frances Harper, who is a person of color. Her braided hair is styled and wrapped around her head. She is wearing small drop earrings and a light-colored jacket with dark collar.

When the Fifteenth Amendment granted Black men the right to vote but excluded women, many suffragists felt deeply disappointed. Members of the National Woman Suffrage Association, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, argued that white women deserved the vote before Black men—a stance rooted in racism and elitism that was common at the time. Meanwhile, members of the American Woman Suffrage Association, like Francis Ellen Watkins Harper and Lucy Stone, supported the Amendment, advocating for voting rights for both Black and white women. The exclusion of women deepened the rift in the suffrage movement and highlighted its racial tensions.

> **“You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs.”**
>
> —Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, “We Are All Bound Up Together,” 1866

Beyond Black and White

Hon. John A. Bingham of Ohio, around 1860–1875. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white portrait of John Bingham, who is an older white man. He is clean-shaven and seated in an armchair with his hands clasped in front. He is wearing a long medium-colored coat with a dark collar.

Ohio Representative John A. Bingham stood in the minority when he pushed for a universal suffrage amendment, advocating for voting rights for all, rather than only men. As rising nativism fueled anti-immigrant sentiment, northern Republicans blocked any move to extend the vote to recent immigrants from China, Ireland, and Italy. At the same time, Congress avoided reopening the issue of voting rights for former Confederates, who had been disenfranchised by the Fourteenth Amendment. While the Fifteenth Amendment secured a major Reconstruction victory, it left important debates unresolved.

> **"Equality of the law is the very rock of American institutions."**
> —Congressman John A. Bingham, debating universal suffrage in the House of Representatives, 1869

CONTENT

1914 LABOR WARS

No title, Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library. This is a black and white photograph of a large gathering of laborers standing in front of canvas tents. They are mostly men and a few boys. Most are wearing coats and hats, and many are wearing ties.

Workers and their families fought and died for better conditions.

Zanetell family rocking chair

This is an image of the Zanetell rocking chair that survived the burning of the miners' camp at Forbes City. The chair is a wooden rocking chair with an upholstered seat. It has turned legs and spindles, an open back with a curved center board and a wide board across the top. 1890–1913, Wood, History Colorado, 87.292.8

This chair was one of the few possessions in the Zanetell family's tent when the Colorado Militia burned the striking coal miners camp at Forbes City in March 1914. Strikers like the Zanetells were protesting unfair employment practices at the Colorado Fuel & Iron company.

John D. Rockefeller, owner of the company and one of the richest men in the world, called on private security and the Colorado Militia to put down the uprising that became known as the Colorado Coalfield War. The conflict came to a tragic head during the Ludlow Massacre in April 1914. Twenty-one people died, including women and children. It was a pivotal episode in the battle between workers and corporations that shaped labor in America's industrializing economy.

"We were so afraid you would kill our children,
We dug us a cave that was seven foot deep,
Carried our young ones and pregnant women
Down inside the cave to sleep."
—Woody Guthrie, "Ludlow Massacre," 1946

Strikers' Stand

John R. Lawson, Bain News Service, 1915. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white photograph of John Lawson, a middled aged white man who is seen seated, wearing a medium-colored suit and tie.

Coal miners and their families built lives in canvas tents after walking off the job in 1913. They demanded fair pay, safer working conditions, and the right to unionize. Women cooked over open fires, children played in the dust, and men stood guard against strikebreakers. Their courage came at enormous

risk. When violence erupted at Ludlow, flaming tents consumed families hiding in pits below—forever searing the memory of the strike into Colorado's history.

> **"We are striking for improved conditions, better wages, and union recognition. We are sure to win."**
> —United Mine Workers of America, call to strike, 1913

The Company's Grip

John D. Rockefeller, full-length portrait, walking on street with John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1915. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white photograph of John D. Rockefeller and his son John D. Rockefeller Junior on a city street. They are wearing long coats and top hats. The elder man stands on the left and the younger man stands on the right possibly chatting with each other.

For mine owners, order meant profit while strikes meant disaster. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, backed by Rockefeller wealth, refused miners' demands and framed the strike as rebellion. Company guards and deputized militia patrolled the coalfields, often with rifles trained on the camps. Officials claimed they defended property and jobs, but their tactics fueled resentment. To strikers, these forces looked like armies of intimidation, but to mine owners, they were necessary shields against union threats to their authority.

> **"The United Mine Workers' leaders believe…that the mine and coal lands are theirs and not the property of the men whose capital, energy and brains had made them."**
> —L.C. Paddock, editor of the *Daily Camera* newspaper, 1914

Voices for Change

Mother Jones marching with strikers in Trinidad, Colorado, 1913. Courtesy Newberry Library. This is a black and white photograph of Mother Jones wearing a full-length dark dress and hat, leading a group of labor marchers down a city street.

The Ludlow massacre ignited outrage across the nation. Journalists carried the story into headlines, and reformers demanded justice. Fierce labor activist Mary Harris Jones, better known as Mother Jones, marched into Colorado coal country, denouncing mine owners and rallying miners' families with her fiery speeches. Her voice, along with union leaders and sympathetic politicians, turned public opinion against unchecked corporate power. Though the strike ended in defeat, the courage of its advocates helped spark reforms that strengthened labor rights and inspired future movements.

“Strike, and may God help you to hoist the banner of industrial freedom over Colorado’s coal fields!”

—Mother Jones, speech to coal miners in Colorado, 1913

[CONTENT]

1990 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Protesters en route to the Colorado capital in Denver. Bill Peters, The Denver Post via Getty Images. A strip of a black and white photograph shows twelve male and female young people, mostly in wheelchairs, marching across a Denver intersection.

Disability rights activists made change by demanding accessibility.

Activists demanded equal rights for people with disabilities throughout the 1970s. In San Francisco, hundreds occupied a federal building for weeks in 1977, calling for better enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws. The next year in Denver, a group known as "The Gang of 19" stopped traffic downtown, laying in front of public buses not accessible to all.

Their campaign would continue on for decades until disability rights advocates celebrated the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. For these protestors, equality came in bursts as some companies began offering more accessible services. Frontier Airlines introduced this low-vision-friendly braille emergency procedure pamphlet in 1977.

Frontier Horizon flight information

This is an image of the braille version of an airline flight information pamphlet. Visible in the image is the braille transcript. 1983, Frontier Horizon Airlines, Braille paper, History Colorado, MSS.970.14

"These kinds of issues—civil and human rights—are not issues that people with disabilities can compromise any further."
—Ed Roberts, Congressional testimony, 1977

The Gang of 19 Demonstrate in Denver

No caption, Lyn Alweis, The Denver Post via Getty. This is a black and white photograph of two protesters seated in wheelchairs. The one on the left is a young man with long hair, mustache and sunglasses, wearing a dark jacket over a white t-shirt. The person on the right has their back to the camera, they are carrying a hand printed protest sign.

In July 1978, a group of activists stopped Denver city bus operations by removing themselves from their wheelchairs and lying on the asphalt in front of buses on Colfax Avenue. The "Gang of 19" gained national attention for delaying transit for twenty-four hours, with the demand "we will ride!" calling for all buses to accommodate wheelchairs. Denver listened, and became the first major city in the United States with an accessible bus fleet. The Atlantis Community and American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT)

led the fight for passing the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, including organizing the Capitol Crawl in Washington, DC.

> **"Taxation Without Transportation!"**
> —Sign held by activist during Gang of 19 protest in Denver, 1978

Deaf President Now!

No caption, The Washington Post via Getty. This is a black and white photograph of I. King Jordan giving a speech using American Sign Language. Mr. Jordan is a middle-aged man with short hair and is wearing a suit and tie, with a watch on his left wrist.

American Sign Language dates to the 1810s, and the nation's first deaf college, Gallaudet University, began in the 1860s. Deaf education focused on aiding students' hearing and teaching them to read speech patterns rather than communicating in sign language until the 1960s. In the midst of the disability rights movement and the lead up to the Americans with Disabilities Act, students at Gallaudet University led a week-long "Deaf President Now" campaign in 1988. They successfully lobbied the Board of Trustees, who hired I. King Jordan as the institution's first deaf president that year.

> **"Deaf people can do anything hearing people can do, except hear."**
> —I. King Jordan, president of Gallaudet University, 1988

A Range of Abilities

President George Bush signs into law the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 on the South Lawn of the White House. Courtesy National Archives. This is a color photograph of President George W. Bush signing the ADA bill on a small table outside the White House. Flanking him seated in wheelchairs from left to right are Evan Kemp, Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and Justin Dart, Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Standing behind the president from left to right are Reverend Harold Wilke and Swift Parrino, Chairperson, National Council on Disability. Also, shown is a fountain in the background and in the distance a crowd of bystanders.

For generations, chronically ill and disabled people faced stigma, institutionalization, and forced sterilization in the United States. Activism in the 1950s and '60s challenged these practices and expanded access to education, keeping students with disabilities in school alongside their peers. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) marked a major step forward, preventing discrimination and requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodations. Its protections benefit people with permanent and

temporary conditions alike—from chronic conditions to injuries or pregnancy—helping ensure full participation in work, school, and public life.

> **“We will not accept, we will not excuse, we will not tolerate discrimination in America.”**
>
> —President George H.W. Bush, signing the Americans With Disabilities Act, 1990

CONTENT

CHINESE EXCLUSION

First Street in Portland, Oregon, attributed to Lorenzo Lorain, 1857, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Org. Lot 1416, F02, 002. This is a section of a black and white photograph showing Chinese men wearing business suits and hats on a boardwalk in front of several wooden framed businesses on First Street in Portland Oregon. The street appears to be muddy and there are two unmanned horse drawn wagons parked on the street.

A nation of immigrants closed its doors.

The Pacific Northwest's natural resources have drawn workers and entrepreneurs from many places. Industries that demanded long hours and dangerous conditions, such as mining, logging, and railroads, relied heavily on immigrant labor, including Chinese immigrants. Racist views of those immigrants were codified by Congress with the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. The Act effectively banned Chinese immigration and prevented immigrants already in the country from becoming citizens, with few exceptions, until its repeal in 1943.

Gold scales from Warren, Idaho
This image shows a wooden hand balanced scale with a weighting pan hanging from one end and a weight hanging from a balance point. Idaho State Historical Society, 75-228-70

"In the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities."
Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

Chinese in Warren
Unidentified Chinese man, c. 1900, Idaho State Historical Society, 75-148-21B. This is a black and white photograph of a Chinese man standing on what appears to be the bank of a stream. He wears a jacket over a vest and shirt, and a round wide brimmed hat. He is holding a handled jar.

Chinese miners arrived in Idaho Territory soon after gold was discovered. Many of them came from California. By 1870, they made up about a quarter of the population, working claims and supporting mining towns as cooks, gardeners, launderers, packers, and merchants. The Warren Mining District, organized in 1862, prohibited Chinese claims, but in 1869, Warren miners voted to open the district to Chinese miners. Although Chinese miners were prohibited from purchasing land, they could buy claims or lease rights. From

1870 to 1900, there were more Chinese people than non-Chinese people in Warren.

> **"No Chinaman . . . shall . . . take gold from the mines of this territory . . . unless they pay the tax."**
> An Act To Provide for the Taxing of Foreign Miners, Idaho Territorial Session Laws, 1865

Forced Expulsion
Chinese Exclusion Handbill from Tacoma, Washington, July 23, 1892, Washington State Historical Society, 1903.1.200. This is an image of a handbill on yellowing paper. In large letters it asks CHINESE? Followed by NO NO NO. In pencil at the top is the date July 23, 1892. In the center it says: Come to 10th and A streets at 7:30 Monday evening and express your opinion on the Chinese question.

In November 1885, Tacoma city leaders and white residents drove out an entire Chinese community in a single, planned action. After months of agitation, town meetings, and threats, Tacoma's mayor and chief of police led "committees" of men through town who removed more than 600 Chinese from their homes and businesses. Tacoma's Chinese were marched at gunpoint to the Northern Pacific Railroad depot, where they boarded southbound trains the following morning and told not to return. The "Tacoma Method" became nationally known and was replicated through 168 other expulsions in thirteen western states.

> **"The Tacoma method is the only solution of the Chinese question."**
> Tacoma Daily Ledger, November 1885

Prescription for Resilience
Portrait of Ing Hay, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, BB006126. This is a black and white portrait of Ing Hay, a Chinese man, wearing a dark shirt with a turned up short collar, and a tight-fitting cap.

Amidst the violence and discrimination against Chinese immigrants, stories of community also emerged. Ing Hay (Wu Yunian), known as "Doc Hay," arrived in John Day, Oregon, in 1887. Trained in traditional Chinese medicine, he treated both Chinese and white patients for six decades, becoming popular for his medical successes in both communities. The Kam Wah Chung Company Building, where Hay lived and practiced alongside his business partner Lung On, is now a heritage site and museum, preserving their clinic and apothecary as well as other histories of Chinese Oregonians.

“The Kam Wah Chung Company Building and its material collection are the greatest single surviving group of materials known . . . that reflect the lives of Chinese immigrants in the American West.”
Kam Wah Chung Company Building National Historic Landmark nomination form, 1973

CONTENT

LGBTQ+ CIVIL RIGHTS

Pride flag on top of the Space Needle in Seattle Washington, 2016, Public domain. This is a color photograph of the Pride flag flowing in the breeze from the spier on top of the Seattle Space Needle against a bright blue sky.

Americans fighting for equal protection.

Like members of other communities seeking a place in American life, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people have shied the social and political landscape. Grassroots groups built networks, staged protests, and pursued legal challenges that have reshaped public institutions. Changes have taken decades of personal courage, community building, and advocacy, which continue today amid resurging challenges to LGBTQ+ rights and protections

"Love makes a family" button

This is a photograph of a circular button with a rim of orange and small black triangles. The button's background is black and features three figures with hearts over them in orange and below them are printed in white is "Love Makes A Family." c. 1990s, Oregon Historical Society Museum, 2012-104.24

"We the people. This core American belief is why the other marriage-equity plaintiffs and I, and so many others before us, stood up to fight for our rights."

Jim Obergefell, plaintiff in Obergefell v. Hodges, which legalized marriage equality nationwide, Washington Post, January 13, 2016

Seeds of Support

Seattle magazine cover featuring Peter Wichern, November 1967, courtesy Seattle Public Library. This is a color photograph of the November 1967 Seattle Magazine cover. The magazine cover has a white background. On the cover is Peter Wicham, a middle-aged white man with short hair and dark framed glasses. He is wearing a dark suit with a red vest. He is seated in an office chair of blue with a briefcase beside the chair.

The Dorian Society was established in 1967 as Seattle's first organized LGBTQ+ rights group with University of Washington professor Nicholas Heer serving as its first president. In November 1967, Peter Wichern, a Dorian Society member, publicly disclosed his sexual orientation in a groundbreaking article in Seattle magazine. He shared his experiences of being a "closeted man" and the relief of opening his life to others. He said he hoped that "all homosexuals will be able to take off the mask." The Society opened the Dorian House in

1969, a counseling and employment center that was one of the first organizations in the nation to offer affirmative care to LGBTQ+ people.

> **"[Dorian Society] membership was still very small. They were all using aliases, and Peter was the only one in the group willing to use his real name."**
> Louis Giguere, partner of Peter Wichern, oral history for the Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project, April 1, 2002.

Resistance and Persistence

Group of men at Gay Pride in Portland, Oregon, 1992, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Org Lot 1430 Box 12 F07. This is a black and white cropped photograph with four young white men. All four are clean-shaven and have short haircuts. They wear aviator-style sunglasses. Each one is wearing a T-shirt with a single large letter. From left to right the letters are P R O U.

In 1972, Oregon legislators were early in the nation to repeal laws that criminalized consensual sex between men. A year later, the American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from its list of mental illnesses. But progress doesn't often follow a straight line, and conservative activists formed the Oregon Citizens Alliance in 1986 as part of a national backlash. In response, Oregon Citizens for Human Rights (now Basic Rights Oregon) formed in 1993 and helped Oregon voters defeat repeated ballot measures against LGBTQ+ civil rights. The U.S. Supreme Court's Lawrence v. Texas decision in 2003 struck down all remaining state laws criminalizing consensual sex between men.

> **"Moral disapproval of a group cannot be a legitimate governmental interest under the Equal Protection Clause."**
> Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, written opinion for Lawrence v. Texas, 2003

Road to Marriage Equality

Courtroom one of the U.S. Court of Appeals Building in San Francisco, California, Carol Highsmith photographer, 2009, Library of Congress, 2010719375. This is a color photograph of an empty ornate court room. The room has wooden pews in the foreground and the judges' chairs and bench at the far end of the room.

Idaho voters approved a state constitutional amendment defining civil marriage as the union of one man and one woman in 2006. Supporters wanted to affirm long-standing beliefs about family and keep decisions about marriage at the state level. Eight years later, several same-sex Idaho couples

challenged that amendment and filed a federal lawsuit, Latta v. Otter, which argued that Idaho's ban violated the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process. This decision was one of a growing number of rulings across the country that laid the groundwork for arguments before the Supreme Court in Obergefell v. Hodges, which legalized marriage equality nationwide in 2015.

> **"The history of marriage is one of both continuity and change."**
> Justice Anthony Kennedy, written opinion for Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015

CONTENT

FREE & INDEPENDENT STATES

The Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776 to consider independence from Great Britain. But whose independence did the delegates have in mind? Were Americans one people held together by common bonds, or a collection of **free and independent states?**

Representatives of all thirteen colonies approved the Declaration of Independence on behalf of “the good people of these Colonies.” But the document only began to address the balance of power between the states and their commitment to a shared goal. It would take the Articles of Confederation in 1777, and ultimately the Constitution in 1787, to strike a more considered balance, with debates continuing as more states joined the Union.

“The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite.”
—James Madison, “Federalist No. 45,” 1788

CONTENT

1787 CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

"Signing of the Constitution," Howard Chandler Christy, 1940. This image is the lower third of the oil painting "Signing of the Constitution" and shows the faces of eleven seated delegates witnessing the signing of the constitution. Benjamin Franklin is in the center of the image with Alexander Hamilton seated to his left. The full painting shows thirty-nine of the fifty-five delegates. The men are all wearing long coats of various colors. The painting measures twenty by thirty feet and hangs in the House of Representatives.

One of the hardest questions about establishing a new country was how to pay for it.

Continental currency was America's earliest cash. Benjamin Franklin masterminded a design with blue thread inside the paper and a print made from a real leaf. David Hall printed these notes in Philadelphia while the country was still governed by the Articles of Confederation.

When Congress could not repay the loans it took out for wages and supplies during the Revolutionary War, it provoked a crisis. Calls grew for a new, more effective national government. In 1787, a convention met in Philadelphia to write a new Constitution, creating a federal government with more power and the ability to manage the nation's debt.

Continental Currency Notes

1770s, Hall and Sellers, Philadelphia, Ink and mica flakes on paper with blue thread. These four images show four bills; Six-dollar, Seven-dollar, Three-dollar, and Twenty-dollar. The bills are rectangular on yellowing paper printed with black ink. The seven- and twenty-dollar bills have a leaf design with the value and printers name on the side shown. The three- and six-dollar bills have circular images and text of the value and the authorization by congress. History Colorado, War Relic Collection, WR.1702.1, WR.1699.1, WR.1708.1, and WR.1707.1

"I consent, Sir, to this Constitution, because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best."

> —Benjamin Franklin, to the members of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia before signing, 1787

The Price of Revolution

1/6 Dollar, Continental Congress, 1776, courtesy National Museum of American History. This image is of the One Sixth of a Dollar printed on yellowing paper. The center circle states: "We are one – American Congress." Around these words are thirteen linking rings with the names of the thirteen states.

Benjamin Franklin championed paper money when others doubted it. He recognized that gold and silver were too scarce to fuel colonial trade and pay workers. Instead, he proposed a national currency backed by land. Most states ignored him, printing their own paper bills backed only by future taxes. But by the 1780s, state money collapsed in value, and the government under the Articles of Confederation struggled to respond to the economic depression. The financial crisis confirmed the need for a strong central government that could manage the nation's money—the type of government Franklin would support at the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

> **"If you would know the value of money, go try to borrow some."**
> —Benjamin Franklin, *The Way to Wealth*, 1758

Veterans Go Unrewarded

No caption, Public domain, Wikimedia. This is a color image of early American patriot men dressed in long coats and the triangle hats. A large crowd is standing near a building looking down an embankment to a stream where two men are fighting. A man in a blue coat is pushing a man in a red coat into the water, while a hat flies through the air. In the background more men from a church building run to join the crowd.

Few soldiers could afford to fight for free, and their pay was a constant crisis for the Continental Army. Recruitment bonuses and wages went unpaid while British counterfeiting made their money nearly useless—giving rise to the saying that something worthless was "not worth a Continental." Few veterans ever got what they were promised, and many left the service broke or in debt. One of these men, Daniel Shays, led a rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786 that shook Americans' faith in their new nation. Shays's Rebellion prompted public outcry for a stronger and more functional government that could pay its debts.

> **"When the country had drained the last drop of service it could screw out of the poor soldiers, they were turned adrift like old worn out horses…"**
> —Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier,* 1830

The Moment That Made the US

Alexander Hamilton, around 1806, John Trumbull, Public Domain / National Gallery of Art. This is a painting of Alexander Hamilton. He is depicted as a middle-aged man in a dark coat with a ruffle white cravat. He is clean shaven with short white hair.

Alexander Hamilton was convinced a constitution and a central bank would stabilize the new nation. The new federal government he and the other men created included two houses of Congress, a centralized presidency, and a Supreme Court—each branch balanced by the others. It preserved slavery, dehumanizing the enslaved by counting them as only three-fifths of a person. Hamilton joined with James Madison and John Jay to campaign for the Constitution in a series of essays known as the Federalist Papers. Their arguments prevailed, and every state ratified the new constitution by 1790.

> **“If men were angels, no government would be necessary.”**
> —Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist No. 51,* 1788

CONTENT

1850 FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT

The Underground Railroad, Charles T. Webber, oil on canvas, 1893. Ian Dangall Computing / Alamy. This image is from the center third of the painting "The Underground Railroad" which depicts the arrival of escaping slaves at the Levi Coffin Farm in Indiana. The painting shows a white farm family assisting a group of African American men, women, and children from a hay wagon in the middle of winter. The painting measures approximately four by six feet and is on display at the Cincinnati art museum.

Black Americans were fugitives in a free land.

Black men, women, and children resisted enslavement, often fleeing north despite the dangers of capture and the pain of family separation. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act made escape even riskier, allowing slave catchers to work in free states, overruling local laws guaranteeing freedom for Black men and women. Suddenly, even free Black people living in northern states weren't safe from slave catchers.

These runaway slave advertisements reveal both the determination of those seeking freedom and the persistence of masters trying to keep them in bondage in the decade before the Civil War.

Fugitive Slave Newspaper Listings
$100 Reward!, February 12, 1861, Broadside and $150 Reward for Nace Dorsey, a runaway slave, July 15, 1860, Broadside. These are images of typical newspaper advertisements for run away enslaved people as seen in northern newspapers after the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act. They offer a substantial reward for the person's return and provide detailed description of each person. Loan, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History IL.2025.19.2 and IL.2025.19.1

"It was the beginning of a reign of terror to the colored population."
—Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* 1861

Seeking Freedom
Portrait of Harriet Tubman, by Benjamin Powelson, around 1868. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white portrait of Harriet Tubman, an African American woman. She is seated sideways on a wooden spindled back chair. Her hair is pulled back, and she is wearing a white skirt and a mostly dark long sleeve blouse with a white collar and a wide white accent above her chest from side to side.

Traveling by night to avoid slave catchers, in 1849 Harriet Tubman escaped enslavement in Maryland. She fled to Pennsylvania, across the Mason-Dixon line that separated slave states from free. Despite the risk she could be captured and re-enslaved, she returned numerous times to lead others out of slavery as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Even the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act did not deter her, compelling her only to guide her passengers north all the way to Canada. They called her Moses for leading them to the promised land.

> **"I should fight for my liberty as long as my strength lasted."**
> —Harriet Tubman to Sarah H. Bradford, 1886

Demanding Property Protection

Jefferson Davis, Senator from Mississippi, Thirty-fifth Congress, head and shoulder portrait, facing right, by Julian Vannerson, 1859. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white portrait of Jefferson Davis as an older man, wearing a dark coat over a white shirt with a dark cravat. He is clean-shaven with medium length wavy hair.

Mississippi Senator Jefferson Davis argued the Fugitive Slave Act merely enforced what was already in the Constitution. Referring to enslaved people as property entitled to the same legal protections as any other type of property, Southern politicians insisted the Union could survive only if free states returned escapees. Their arguments revealed how deeply the nation's laws and politics were tangled up with slavery in every corner of America.

> **"The representatives of the South have not entered into arguments upon the blessings and evils of slavery…they claimed for it only the protection which the Constitution accords to every other species of property."**
> —Senator Jefferson Davis, debating slavery in the territories, 1850

Northerners Becoming Activists

Portrait of Henry W. Longfellow, by F. Gutekunst, around 1876. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white portrait of the poet Longfellow as an elderly man. He has white hair and beard. He is wearing a dark coat over a dark vest and white shirt with bow tie.

In northern cities like Boston and Philadelphia, the sight of Black men and women seized under the Fugitive Slave Act provoked outrage. Some Northerners struggled to remain moderate, objecting to slavery but committed to following the law. Others were moved to act. Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow began donating to organizations that helped enslaved people escape. The law pushed many Northerners into the

abolitionist movement, deepening sectional divisions and fueling the growing conflict over slavery in the United States.

> **“Shame, that the great Republic, the ‘refuge of the oppressed,’ should stoop so low as to become the Hunter of Slaves!”**
> —Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, American poet, 1851

CONTENT

1920 WOMEN'S VOTE

"Woman Suffrage," Harris & Ewing, 1917. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a segment of a black and white photograph showing twelve suffragettes standing in front of a building holding suffrage banners and wearing suffrage sashes. They are wearing heavy coats and hats and some have large fur muffs.

Western women led the movement for the Nineteenth Amendment.

Women had campaigned for the vote since before Americans declared independence. But it was in the new states out west—Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho—where women first won the franchise.

Colorado's voters marked their ballots for equal suffrage in 1893. It was the first time women won the right to vote through a statewide referendum. Women like Ellis Meredith led the effort in Colorado, and then focused on winning the vote for women nationwide. Thanks to generations of hard work, states ratified the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. It guaranteed many American women—but not yet all—the right to vote.

Ballot, Pitkin County, Colorado
This is an image of a paper ballot on yellowing paper from Pitkin County, Colorado. Interestingly the parties on the ballot are; People's Party, Pitkin County Citizen Silver, and Democratic. The candidates appear to be all men. 1893, History Colorado, 2020.9.1

Ellis Meredith's National American Woman Suffrage Association life membership certificate
This is an image of a fifty-dollar Life Membership certificate of the National American Woman Suffrage Association signed by Susan B. Anthony Honorary President. 1915–1920, History Colorado, MSS.427.130

"The vote is an indefinable something that makes you part of the plan of the world. It means the same to women that it does to men."
—Ellis Meredith, Atlantic Monthly, 1908

Black Women's Suffrage

Elizabeth Piper Ensley, 1904. Denver Public Library. This is a black and white portrait of Elizabeth Piper Ensley, seen as an older black woman. She has shorter white hair brushed up. She wears a dark ribbon around her neck and a wispy fabric covering her shoulders.

Black women were leaders in the suffrage campaign in Colorado, where they had better access to voting than African Americans in other parts of the country, particularly in the South. Elizabeth Piper Ensley, a Black woman and former professor at Howard University, was the Treasurer of the Colorado Non-Partisan Equal Suffrage Association in 1893. She worked to persuade Black men and women to support the campaign. Ensley later became the Denver correspondent of The Woman's Era, a Boston-based newspaper published by and for Black women.

> **"Among the many objections met with during our suffrage campaign, were that the best women would not vote....The best women have been the ones most interested."**
> —Elizabeth Piper Ensley, in *The Woman's Era,* 1894

Dry Times Ahead

"Marching through Georgia," by L.M. Glackens, for Puck, 1908. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is an image of an editorial featuring a large temperance march. All the people in the march are depicted as caricatures in blue and black. The march is led by a group of four women carrying a large temperance banner that states: "The Lips that Touch Corn Likker Shall Never Touch Ourn." The women are followed by a large barrel wagon pulled by a white horse. The line of men and women marchers extends to the horizon.

The liquor and brewing industries feared that a large block of women voters would provide the push necessary to tip the nation into Prohibition. Calls to ban booze were nothing new in America, but amid a national drinking binge that saw alcohol consumption rates skyrocket into the early 1900s, women were bearing an unequal share of alcohol's social problems. Political organizations aimed squarely at this issue, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, one of the largest and strongest political organizations in the country, led the charge towards national Prohibition, which began in 1920.

> **"The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine."**
> —Women's Christian Temperance Union slogan

Leading from the West

Anthony, Miss Susan B., C.M. Bell, 1891. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white profile portrait of Susan B, Anthony as an elder woman. She is seated in an armchair. She has light hair pulled back. She is wearing wirer rim glasses, and she is wearing a heavy dark dress with front buttons.

Ellis Meredith, a reporter for Denver's Rocky Mountain News, served as vice president of Colorado's Non-Partisan Equal Suffrage Association in 1893. She

connected with suffrage advocates nationwide, offering guidance and encouragement, and traveled to the Chicago World's Fair to meet Susan B. Anthony. After Colorado's landmark victory, Anthony wrote, "Oh how glad I am that at last we have knocked out our first state by the popular vote." Meredith's leadership helped turn Colorado into a suffrage trailblazer, inspiring other states to follow its example.

> **"If Colorado goes for woman's suffrage, you may count on a landslide in that direction throughout the West."**
> —Ellis Meredith, to Susan B. Anthony, 1893

CONTENT

STATEHOOD AND SELF-GOVERNANCE

Boundary between Oregon and Idaho from the junction of the Snake and Owyhee Rivers, 1868, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, G4290 1868.Un3h. This is a colored image of the 1868 topological map of the region along the Oregon and Idaho border. The map depicts the terrain and river systems.

Territorial residents sought federal representation through statehood.

Boundary formation in the massive "Oregon Country" started with the 1846 Oregon Treaty with England, setting the 49th parallel as the northern border of the United States. The admissions of Oregon (1859), Washington (1889), and Idaho (1890) to the union were entangled in the political struggles of the day from border disputes to exclusionary laws.

Map of Oregon and Washington showing territorial and county boundaries
This is a reproduction of the original square map of the Oregon and Washington territories, 1853, Washington State Historical Society, 2008.0.2553.4

"The people of Idaho are now living under a form of Territorial government little better than a colonial system under foreign rule."

> Territorial Governor George L. Shoup, calling for delegates to the Idaho Constitutional Convention, May 11, 1889

Against All Odds
Letitia Carson Certificate of Homestead, June 19, 1868, Oregon State Archives, Oregon-58. This is the image of Letitia Carson's Homestead certificate. Letitia Carson was a formerly enslaved person. The certificate documents that Letitia paid for the land and describes the land by section, township, and range,

Letitia Carson, a formerly enslaved woman who settled near present-day Corvallis, Oregon, migrated west with David Carson, a white man who filed a claim under the 1850 Donation Land Claim Act. The Act granted 320 acres each to white men and their wives, but Black residents were excluded and interracial marriages were not legally recognized. When David Carson died without a will, the estate's executor ruled that she and her two children were not lawful heirs and sold the land. Letitia Carson remained, despite exclusion laws in Oregon's Constitution, and successfully sued the estate, receiving $2,000 in damages. In 1869, Carson secured a homestead claim in her own name, becoming the only Black woman known to receive land in Oregon under the federal Homestead Act of 1862.

“I, Letitia Carson . . . do solemnly swear, that I am the head of a family, being a widow having two children; that I am a native Citizen of the United States.”
Affidavit accompanying Letitia Carson’s Homestead Act application, June 17, 1863

Years in the Making
Statehood Day at the Washington Territorial Capitol Building, November 18, 1889, Washington State Historical Society, C2019.0.39. This is a black and white photograph of a large crowd assembled in the front yard and on the porch of the two-story wood framed Capitol building. The building has a bell tower on the front. The front is covered with colorful bunting. In the foreground stand three horse-drawn carriages outside the fence.

When Washington achieved territory status in 1853, it would take 36 years to become a state, three times longer than Oregon. Voters were initially focused on survival and building homesteads, rejecting proposals to call a statehood convention four times. As the population grew, so did the desire for a stronger voice in the nation’s capital. An 1878 constitution drafted in Walla Walla and approved by voters never made it out of committee in the Democratic controlled U.S. Congress, since Washington was a Republican territory at the time. The Republican sweep in the 1888 federal election turned the tables. Republicans passed the Omnibus Bill of 1889, adding four states to the union: North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington in November 1889.

“Should . . . experience teach that any of its provisions are unwise, or others required . . . then let amendments be prepared in the manner provided.”
Governor Elisha Ferry in his inaugural address speaking of the new Washington State Constitution, November 18, 1889

United We Stand
“An Act to Provide for the Admission of the State of Idaho into the Union,” 1890, Idaho State Archives, Territorial Collection, AR1, 20200009. This is an image of the Idaho statehood document with the red United States Department of State seal in the lower left corner.

The boundaries of Idaho Territory that were established in 1863 bore little resemblance to the Idaho we know today. Residents of northern Idaho, long angered by the loss of their capital city, Lewiston, to Boise in 1864, lobbied Congress for years to split north and south Idaho. They argued that the two regions had no shared interests. In 1887, the U.S. Congress responded and

approved legislation to attach northern Idaho to Washington. But this move caused Nevada to contemplate annexing southern Idaho. In response, southern Idahoans persuaded President Grover Cleveland to veto the proposed legislation. Three years later, Idaho joined the union as the 43rd state, with its panhandle intact.

> **“The northern part of Idaho is an almost impassable mountain barrier. The people in the Pan Handle [sic] desire to be annexed to Washington.”**
> Representative William McKendree Springer of Illinois, February 23, 1886

CONTENT

INITIATIVES AND REFERENDUMS

Photograph of Sawtooth Mountains from Custer County, Idaho, August 1942, Library of Congress, LC-USF34-074009-D. This is a black and white photograph of jagged granite mountain peaks with a forest of trees in the foreground.

People can shape their government.

Exercising control over a government is a fundamental expression of free and independent people. Initiatives and referendums provide a legal means to solve problems by creating public policy. Voters in Oregon (1902), Idaho (1912), and Washington (1912) approved ballot measures that established the initiative and referendum process. These powers give the people the ability to place issues directly on the ballot.

"Reckon you won't find much left to do in there, my friend," states a newspaper cartoon

This is a black and white political cartoon reproduced from January 10th, 1911, Morning Oregonian newspaper. In this editorial stands a mock paper roll figure depicting the People's Power to vote for initiative and referendum. On the right is a white male legislator walking away and distancing himself from the People's Power figure. January 10, 1911, Morning Oregonian, courtesy of the University of Oregon

"I consider [initiatives and referendums] the basic principle of the theory of government by the people."

Judge Andrew C. Smith, May 31, 1902

A Powerful Charter

"City wins case" headline in the Morning Oregonian, December 22, 1903, courtesy of the University of Oregon. This is an image of a portion of the front page of the December 22nd, 1903, Morning Oregonian newspaper. This portion shows an article "City Wins Case" declaring that the peoples initiatives are constitutional.

Oregon voters approved a constitutional amendment granting initiative and referendum powers to the people in 1902, establishing the state as an early adopter of direct democracy. This authority allowed residents to draft a new Portland city charter, which was approved by voters. A local businessman and landowner sued when the city levied new taxes and bypassed a 90-day waiting period for emergency street improvements. He argued that the charter, and the constitutional amendment, violated the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of a republican form of government. In Kadderly v. City of Portland

(1903), the Oregon Supreme Court ruled in favor of the city, upholding that the initiative process was constitutional.

> **"The adoption of this amendment will give the people power . . . to enact laws in the interest of the whole people."**
> G.Y. Harry, Organizer State Federation of Labor speaking of the initiative and referendum amendment, May 31, 1902.

Sportsmen Take the Lead
Idaho Game Warden's office, 1916, Idaho, State Historical Society, P1962-20-3925. This is a black and white photograph of an assemblage of citizens in the Idaho Game Warden's office. There are four white men and one white woman seated in the front row with the woman in the middle. Standing behind them are four white men, two on each side with a table of taxidermized birds and an elk's head mounted on the wall between them. The men are all in suits and ties and the woman is wearing a white long sleeve blouse and long dark skirt.

Idaho adopted the power of direct legislation through a 1912 revision to its state constitution. The first test of this power came as a 1938 initiative proposing the creation of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission. Idaho's State Fish and Game Warden, a governor appointee, previously enforced the state's fish and wildlife laws, but politics sometimes influenced decisions about hunting seasons, fishing limits, and wildlife protection. Attempts at reform were unsuccessful until citizens used the 1912 constitutional provision to bring a new system of management directly to the ballot. Their initiative created a nonpartisan, professional Fish and Game Commission to set regulations and protect Idaho's resources.

> **"The Commission is indeed grateful . . . for the publicity which made it possible for the people of the State to be adequately and accurately informed of changes in fish and game regulation."**
> Commissioners, Idaho Fish and Game Commission Biennial Report, 1939-1940

Ambitious Progressive Voters
"Vote Washington Dry" envelope, 1914, Washington State Historical Society, 1998.31.1.154 This image depicts an envelope that was mailed to solicit temperance political support in the state of Washington.

Washington State also secured the power of direct legislation through a constitutional amendment in 1912. Progressive voters wasted no time putting their new powers to work. In the 1914 election, they collected enough signatures to put nine measures on the ballot. Only two passed: Initiative 3

prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol, while Initiative 8 prohibited employers from charging fees to secure employment or interviews for employment. Measures to allow noncitizens to purchase land, the eight-hour workday, requiring employers to cover medical expenses for injured workers, and creating a retirement fund for public school teachers were all defeated by wide margins.

> **“Prohibition is immoral, being based on false assumptions that man can be legislated into morality.”**
> Argument against Initiative Measure No. 3 from the Washington State voters’ pamphlet for November 3, 1914

CONTENT

WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE TO EACH OTHER

Delegates to the Continental Congress in 1776 concluded the Declaration of Independence with a powerful promise: "**We mutually pledge to each other** our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred honor." With these words they acknowledged their commitment to a shared purpose and responsibility, for which they risked everything.

The signers of the Declaration understood that fighting for independence would mean war, and possibly death. By pledging everything to one another in the face of these risks, they turned their own struggles, and that of each colony, into a common cause for freedom.

"We must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."
—Benjamin Franklin, at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, 1776

CONTENT

1776 AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Washington Crossing the Delaware, by Emanuel Leutze, 1851. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is an image of a very small section of the iconic painting “Washington Crossing the Delaware” that shows Washington’s head and shoulders in profile and behind Washington stands his flag bearer who holds a red, white, and blue American flag.

George Washington knew it would take more than determined soldiers to win the Revolution.

General George Washington took these spurs off his boots and gave them to Lieutenant Thomas Lamb at Valley Forge in January 1778. The Continental Army was running perilously low on supplies and equipment, and Lamb had volunteered for the dangerous mission of delivering Washington’s plea for support to patriots in Boston. There was one problem: Lamb did not have his own set of spurs.

The dream of a new nation hung by a thread that winter at Valley Forge. Facing Britain’s overwhelming military might, Washington’s leadership united the struggling American army. Nearly four years later, in October 1781, he would lead them to victory at Yorktown and a new nation to independence.

General George Washington’s spurs
This is a color photograph of a pair of Washinton’s spurs. 1775, Silver, steel, and leather, Loan, The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, IL.2025.2.1

"...as the Sword was the last Resort for the preservation of our Liberties, so it ought to be the first thing laid aside, when those Liberties are firmly established.”

—George Washington to the Executive Committee of the Continental Congress, 1777

Out of Many, One

Illustration of Continental Army soldiers during the winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge. North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy. This is a color illustration of patriot soldiers at Valley Forge in a winter encampment. In the foreground, three soldiers sit on logs around a fire under a tree. One soldier wears his left arm in a sling. In the background, other soldiers gather around campfires while the American flag on a pole is flying in the breeze.

After a year and a half of chaotic fighting, individual state militias came together at Valley Forge outside of Philadelphia to train as one army. For

soldiers, a severe winter inflicted discomfort, disease, and death. The tired, cold soldiers wanted to go home. Morale plummeted as the army struggled to find supplies. One in three men did not have shoes. Washington appealed to the Continental Congress for funds to feed, clothe, and pay the soldiers. He instituted general inoculation against smallpox to slow the spread of disease, and drilled them to create a unified fighting force that could defeat the world's most powerful military.

> **"No history...can furnish an instance of an army's suffering such uncommon hardships as ours."**
>
> —Washington to John Banister, April 21, 1778

General George Washington

George Washington (Lansdowne Portrait), by Gilbert Stuart, 1821. Public Domain / National Portrait Gallery. This is a picture of the 1821 Gilbert Stuart portrait of an elderly General George Washington wearing civilian clothes, that includes a long black coat.

George Washington led the Continental Army in more defeats than victories. But he guided it through hardships and won when it mattered. His strategy wore down the British Army, earning him respect from his enemies and devotion from his troops. He resigned his role in the military after a lifetime of service, but when the nation needed its first president, Americans turned to the leader they trusted. He defined the presidency, not only by his actions in office, but also how he chose to leave. He stepped down after two terms, setting the standard for the peaceful transfer of power.

> **"Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of Action."**
>
> —George Washington, resigning his commission, 1783

Independence for Some

George Washington and William Lee, by John Trumbull, 1780.
Public Domain / Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is a picture of General George Washington standing and wearing his patriot blue uniform, painted by John Trumbull in 1780. Additionally, standing behind Washington is William Lee, his African American slave, aged about 30 years old, wearing a red turban and a dark coat with a red collar.

Black men fought in the Revolution, but most did not win freedom. William Lee was at Washington's side at Valley Forge, and throughout the war. He witnessed the victory at Yorktown, and he watched as the new nation proclaimed a radical notion of individual liberty. But not for him, or for the other hundreds of enslaved Black people Washington owned. While

Americans celebrated a new nation where “all men are created equal,” countless men, women, and children like William Lee remained enslaved. Washington emancipated Lee and 124 others in his will, but the majority of his enslaved laborers remained in bondage.

> **“There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it.”**
> —George Washington, letter to Robert Morris, 1786

CONTENT

1863 EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Assault of the Second Louisiana (Colored) Regiment on the Rebel Works at Port Hudson, May 27, in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, June 27, 1863. Courtesy Library of Congress. This image is about one quarter of the illustration printed on June 27th, 1863, in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper. The full illustration shows the siege of Port Hudson. The picture shows the battle between confederate soldiers and black union soldiers, of the Second Louisiana Native Guard.

Black soldiers fought for abolition and citizenship.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, freeing those still in bondage across the South in January 1863, swept aside any lingering doubts: The Union Army was fighting to abolish slavery. But until that moment, Black Americans had been kept on the sidelines, unable to enlist to fight for freedom.

That changed in May 1863 when the US Colored Troops became the first Black military regiments. Recruitment posters went out by the thousands, connecting African Americans' military service to ideals of manhood, citizenship, equality.

"Men of Color: To Arms! To Arms! Now or Never"
This is a black and white picture of an 1863 poster designed to recruit African Americans into the Union Army. The text on the poster seems to be intimidating and challenging black people to enlist in the Union Army. For example, "Fail Now, & Our Race is Doomed" and "Are Freeman Less Brave Than Slaves." 1863, Broadside, Loan, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, IL.2025.19.5

"We are all liberated by this proclamation
—Frederick Douglass, "The Proclamation and a Negro Army," 1863

Fighting for Freedom

Reading the Emancipation Proclamation, H.W. Herrick and J.W. Watts, 1864, Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white image of an interior gathering of African Americans ranging in age from toddler to senior citizens. The gathering listens to an African American soldier reading the Emancipation Proclamation.

Black men North and South responded to the Emancipation Proclamation by joining the fight. With the formation of the United States Colored Troops, roughly 179,000 Black men enlisted in the Union Army and nearly 20,000 joined the Navy. Though they were in segregated units, Black troops served in

the infantry, artillery, at sea, and in support roles. Those who fought in the South risked extreme mistreatment if captured. Approximately 40,000 sacrificed their lives. They fought to protect the freedom declared by the Emancipation Proclamation and for the constitutional abolition of slavery, all of which depended on Union victory.

> **"I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."**
>
> —Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation, 1863

Freed Fighters, White Captains

"Union Soldier (Sgt. Henry F Steward)." Courtesy Massachusetts Historical Society. This is a black and white photograph of Sgt, Henry Steward, a member of the Union Army. The photograph has been embellished by the use of gold on the buttons and buckles of his uniform.

The Louisiana Native Guard originally had Black officers leading Black soldiers and fought for the Confederacy. The southern government used the unit as propaganda to counter northern assertions of racism. Later, when the unit started fighting for the Union side, African American units were reorganized into the US Colored Troops with white officers replacing Black leaders. The Union often treated Black soldiers paternalistically, assuming they required guidance that white troops did not. Despite their proven courage, African American men had to fight not only the Confederacy but also the limits of white military authority.

> **"[W]hen the country called for all persons, I could best serve my God by serving my country and my oppressed brothers...I enlisted for the war."**
>
> —Sergeant William H. Carney, 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment, US Colored Troops, 1863

Union and Abolition

24th Regt. U.S. Colored Troops. Let Soldiers in War, Be Citizens in Peace, around 1865. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white photograph of an iconic flag of the 24th Regiment U.S. Colored troops. There is a floral wreath surrounding a picture of an African American soldier standing with his arms outstretched. On this iconic image the words "Fiat Justitia" (Let there be Justice) is overlayed above the outstretched hands of the soldier.

Abolishing slavery in the South made it clear that the war really was over slavery, and strengthened the military by opening recruitment to Black men. Regiments remained segregated, but contributed to the Union effort together in many battles, including the significant and reaching Vicksburg campaign in 1863. The US Army remained segregated until 1948, ending the discriminatory practice decades before it was outlawed in 1964.

> **"The Negro gave one in three of his number to the cause of freedom. Did we with our valor do half as well?"**
>
> —"The Organization of Colored Troops," in *the New York Tribune,* 1865

CONTENT

1944 D-DAY

Robert F. Sargent. Courtesy National Archives. This is a black and white photograph of the allied forces storming the beach at Normandy, France.

A massive Allied invasion turned the tide against fascism.

Five years into World War II, Axis powers ruled most of Europe. Only Great Britain held out against Nazi Germany's onslaught. There, Allied forces planned an invasion in the summer of 1944.

Captain David Hall wore this helmet as one of many American soldiers stationed in England in the build up to the invasion. A Black soldier serving in a segregated unit, Captain Hall was responsible for top secret operations in support of the 1st Army's beach landing on D-Day. The unprecedented June 6 assault on the French coast at Normandy broke through Hitler's defenses, beginning the Allied march to victory.

US Army M1 combat helmet
This is a photograph of Captain David Hall's Army helmet. It is a green metal combat helmet covered by cord netting. 1940s, Steel, plastic, and khaki netting, History Colorado, H.6369.1

"We all knew what we were there for. We were ready."
—Captain David Hall, 1st US Army, recalled in an oral history, 1998

Eisenhower's Daring Gamble

General Dwight D. Eisenhower gives the order of the day, "Full victory--nothing else", 1944. Courtesy Library of Congress. This is a black and white photograph of General Eisenhower delivering an address to a group of soldiers.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower launched the historic D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. "The eyes of the world are upon you," he told his troops as nearly 160,000 soldiers prepared themselves to storm Normandy's beaches. The brave young men facing formidable German defenses were backed by 12,000 aircraft and 7,000 ships. The cost was steep—over 10,000 casualties, including roughly 4,400 killed, that first day. Amid surf, mines, and gunfire, they forged a foothold in Europe that ignited the march to Nazi Germany's defeat less than a year later.

“[Y]ou will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.”

—General Dwight D. Eisenhower, orders for D-Day invasion, 1944

Black Soldiers Fight for a Double V

African American soldiers in France. By Gedicks, 1944. Courtesy National Archives. This is a black and white photograph of three African American soldiers tethering a small dirigible.

Nearly two thousand Black troops took part in the D-Day invasion. Members of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion landed early on June 6, launching balloons designed to shield the troops from German air attacks. Many others served in support roles, moving weaponry and supplies ashore to sustain the attack. Although they faced the same risks as the white soldiers they fought alongside, all of them served in all-Black units in the racially segregated US Army. Such discrimination prompted many Black troops to embrace the Double V Campaign, fighting to defeat fascism abroad and racism at home.

“We landed in water up to our necks...Once we got there we were walking over dead Germans and Americans on the beach. Bullets were falling all around us.”

—Private Henry Parham, member of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, recalling his landing at Omaha Beach on D-Day in 1944

A Personal Fight for Jewish Soldiers

Joseph Eaton, 1945. Courtesy United States, Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is a black and white photograph of two American soldiers posing for the camera in an Army truck. One soldier is seated behind the steering wheel, and the other soldier is standing.

Thousands of Jewish men landed on D-Day, including refugees who had escaped Hitler’s Germany. Many had joined the US Army to personally fight back against the violent Nazi antisemitism that had driven them away—and had killed their family and friends. The US government had known about Hitler’s genocide of European Jews since late 1942, but had not taken direct action to stop it, instead focusing on winning the war as the best strategy for defeating Nazism. By the time Allied troops liberated the death camps, six million Jewish men, women, and children had been murdered in the Holocaust.

“I'm a German Jew. And there's nothing that I wanted more is to get some revenge on Hitler who killed my uncles, and my aunts and my cousins and there was no question in my mind…”

—Lieutenant Paul Fairbrook, on enlisting in the US Army in 1943

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JAPANESE INCARCERATION

Minidoka concentration camp in Hunt, Idaho, 1943, Idaho State Historical Society, P1973-184-1. This is a black and white photograph of incarcerated Japanese American families held in the Minidoka concentration camp. The photograph also shows the wood framed barracks the families were forced to live in.

A community was uprooted.

Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized the forced removal and incarceration of innocent people of Japanese ancestry. Families were given days to sell their property, close businesses, and leave behind their lives. Two-thirds of those imprisoned were U.S. citizens, incarcerated without charges or trials. The Civil Liberties Act, signed by President Ronald Reagan in 1987, issued a formal apology for Japanese American incarceration stating that "a grave injustice was done . . . motivated by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."

Crocheted doily made at the Minidoka concentration camp
This is a photograph of a doily crocheted by one of the inmates at Minidoka.
c. 1941-1945, Oregon Historical Society Museum, 91-109.2

"What is done to the least of us can be done to all of us."
Minoru Yasui, reflecting on constitutional rights and civic responsibility

All Kinds of Japanese Goods
Calendar from the Yasui family's general store, 1942, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, MSS 2949, box 26. This is a color photograph of the Yasui Brothers business calendar. The Yasui Brothers ran an import and export business in Hood River Oregon. The calendar is a wall hanging made from bamboo with a paper tear sheet calendar attached.

The Yasui family's general store in Hood River, Oregon, opened in 1908 and became a community cornerstone, helping Japanese immigrants find work, housing, and social support. Owned by Masuo Yasui and his brother Renichi for more than 30 years, the store was abruptly closed after the 1941 attack by Japan. In April 1942 the U.S. military forcibly removed the Yasui family and 149 other people of Japanese heritage from Hood River. Some store goods and family records were packed away and would not be revisited until the 1990s. The Yasui family helped catalog and then donated thousands of items to the Oregon Historical Society, preserving a lasting record of the story of one American family.

“There is something powerful about objects from the past. They bring forth memories and stories that otherwise might not surface.”
Barbara Yasui, reflecting on her family’s commitment to preserve and share the Yasui story, 2023

Resilience Despite Injustice
Map of Minidoka Concentration Camp, 1943, Idaho State Historical Society, 76-29-1J. This is a black and white image of the map of the Minidoka Concentration camp. The map shows the layout of the living barracks blocks, the children’s school buildings, and the camp’s large gardens.

Nearly 13,000 incarcerated people survived extreme conditions at the Minidoka War Relocation Center in Hunt, Idaho. Tar-paper-covered buildings provided little protection against harsh winters and constant dust storms. Families lived in small spaces with minimal privacy and worked surrounding fields to feed camp residents. Despite this, they built community by creating schools, social institutions, organizing daily responsibilities, and supporting one another. The federal government subdivided the land aer the war, but in 2001 President Bill Clinton designated 73 acres as a national monument. Now 338 acres, the Minidoka National Historic Site includes original structures as well as buildings reconstructed for interpretation and memorialization.

“When . . . we were freed from Minidoka . . . we buried our pain, suff-ering and shame, choosing to try to forget the past, persevere, and for the sake of the children move forward with our lives.”
Fumiko Hayashida, testifying to the U.S. House of Representatives,

Nidoto Nai Yoni (Let it Not Happen Again)
Fumiko and Natalie Hayashida, March 30, 1942, Museum of History and Industry, PI28050. This is a black and white photograph of Fumiko holding her baby daughter Natalie. They are standing in a parking lot on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Fumiko and her daughter Natalie are both wearing an identification tag attached to their coats.

Residents with Japanese ancestry on Bainbridge Island, Washington, became the first in the nation to be forcibly removed from their homes on March 30, 1942. They could take only what they could carry, compelling Fumiko Hayashida and her daughter Natalie, to wear multiple layers of clothing. After a ferry to Seale, they were bused to California’s Manzanar concentration camp and many later relocated to Minidoka concentration camp in Idaho. Today, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial stands at the former Eagledale Ferry Dock as part of the Minidoka National Historic Site. As

the oldest surviving Bainbridge Island internee at the time, 98-year-old Fumiko Hayashida spoke at its 2009 groundbreaking.

> **“May the spirit of this memorial inspire each of us to safeguard constitutional rights for all.”**
> Inscription at Nidoto Nai Yoni (Let it Not Happen Again), the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial

CONTENT

WILDERNESS PROTECTION

Vista House at Crown Point and the Columbia River Gorge, c. 1952, Washington State Historical Society, 2010.185.13715-1. This is a black and white photograph of the Columbia River flanked by high hills.

Protecting wilderness is a balancing act.

Tribes have long stewarded the mountains, forests, rivers, and coastlines of the Pacific Northwest and continue to do so today. “Wilderness” has never been empty land and the concept of it needing protection emerged through growing public awareness of the ecological damage of industrial development like logging, mining, and building dams. The creation of the National Park Service in 1916 reflected early federal efforts focused on preserving the beauty of nationally significant landscapes.

Ice axe used by Fay Fuller
This is a color photograph of Fay Fuller’s ice axe. The axe has a light-colored long-wooded handle and a metal head with a point on one end and a flat chisel shape on the other end. c. 1890, Washington State Historical Society, 1898.2.2

“The service thus established shall promote and regulate . . . by such means as will leave [parks] unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”
National Park Service Organic Act, August 25, 1916**.**

Mount Rainier
Posed portrait of Fay Fuller dressed in mountaineering clothing, 1890, Washington State Historical Society, 2009.0.473. This is a black and white photograph of Fay Fuller posing for the camera. She is wearing a long dark dress, hat, and a waist belt holding a canteen and she holds a wooden walking stick.

The mountain known by many names, including Tahoma, was renamed “Rainier” by Captain George Vancouver in 1792 and became a national park in 1899. It was the fourth national park in the nation behind Yellowstone, Sequoia, and Yosemite. Early summits of the mountain by white climbers generated attention for its protection including Fay Fuller, the first known white woman to summit. She made her 1890 ascent in a heavy wool and flannel bloomer suit. Fuller’s enthusiasm for climbing influenced her later career as the first female newspaper reporter in Tacoma. Her writing, including a column titled “Mountain Murmurs,” helped build public support for establishment of the national park.

> **“A heavenly moment . . . words cannot describe scenery and beauty, how could they speak for the soul! Such sensations can be known to only those who reach the heights.”**
> Fay Fuller’s description of reaching the summit of Mount Rainier, 1890

Craters of the Moon
George Washington’s “profile” at Craters of the Moon, Idaho State Historical Society, P1970-86-12. This is a black and white photograph of a rock that people say resembles President George Washington in profile. The rock is located at Craters of the Moon National Monument in Idaho.

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in south central Idaho is a landscape of lava flows created through fissure eruptions dating from about 2,100 to 15,000 years ago. As white settlers traveled through the area, folklore emerged about its supposed resemblance to the moon's surface. Geologist Harold T. Stearns first used the name “Craters of the Moon” in 1923, but it was Robert Limbert’s use of that name in his 1924 National Geographic magazine article that popularized it. Limbert surveyed and heavily promoted the area, advocating for the protection of its volcanic features. The distinctive name became official when President Calvin Coolidge established the national monument later that year.

> **“It is the play of light at sunset across this lava that charms the spectator. It becomes a twisted, wavy sea . . . It is a place of color and silence.”**
> Robert Limbert, “Among the ‘Craters of the Moon,’” National Geographic, 1924

Columbia River Gorge
Hand colored photograph of Multnomah Falls from Perdition Trail, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, BB008654. This is a color photograph of Multnomah Falls. The image shows a sheer rock formation framing a thin stream waterfall.

In 1937, John Yeon, a prominent Portland architect, planner, and preservationist wrote that development in the Columbia River Gorge, like the construction of the Bonneville Dam, threatened its “prevailing beauty,” but also acknowledged the Gorge’s significant “economic potentialities.” Decades of conservation culminated in the formation of the Friends of the Columbia Gorge, led by Nancy Neighbor Russell, which generated the political support necessary to establish the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in 1986. The nation’s largest scenic area, it is managed cooperatively by the U.S. Forest Service and the Columbia River Gorge Commission, a bi-state agency representing Oregon and Washington.

“The Gorge and how we have chosen to manage it reflect the values that we, as a region and as a nation, have placed on environmental protection and stewardship.”
Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield, hearing statement for the ten-year anniversary of the Scenic Area, September 13, 1996

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Reflections: Moments that Made YOU

Americans have wrestled with the promises of the Declaration of Independence and their meaning for 250 years. Each generation has defined its ideals in its own way. Now it's your turn.

What do liberty, equality, and mutual responsibility mean to you today? Which moment in American history, whether personal, local, or national, shaped your understanding of what it means to be American?

Click the link to **record your story,** reflection, or memory. Your voice will become part of your state's documentation of how Americans commemorated and celebrated the nation's semiquincentennial. Your contribution will help inform the collective story of America's unfinished journey towards a more perfect union.

RECORD YOUR STORY **CONTENT**

DECLARATION OF INDEPENCE

In Congress, July 4, 1776
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.
He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.
He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.
He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.
He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.
He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.
He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.
He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.
He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.
He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.
He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.
He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:
For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:
For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:
For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:
For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:
For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:
For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:
For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:
For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.
He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.
He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.
He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.
He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.
He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.
In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.
Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

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