

## Timeline

**1492**

Christopher Columbus sets sail from Spain to discover a route to Asia. Instead, he lands in the Americas and sets up the colony of Hispaniola.

**1500**

A Spanish investigator finds Hispaniola in revolt. Columbus is arrested and sent back to Spain.

**1502**

Columbus is released from prison and embarks on his final voyage to find a sea route to Asia. He lands in modern-day Honduras.

**1540**

Spanish explorers first meet Cherokees while searching for gold in the New World.

**1607**

Ships carrying 105 colonists from England arrive in Chesapeake Bay. The colonists build a fort at Jamestown, the first English colony in North America.

**1608**

The French set up a small settlement and trading post at Quebec, in New France, part of modern-day Canada.

**1619**

The first slaves are brought from Africa to what would become the United States.

**1620**

The Pilgrims aboard the *Mayflower* arrive in the New World.

**1621**

The colonists invite their Wampanoag neighbors to a harvest feast. It is later called the First Thanksgiving.

**1667**

William Penn becomes a Quaker.

**1681–1682**

Penn is granted a Royal Charter of Pennsylvania by King Charles II. He writes laws to govern his new colony that protect individual rights. Penn travels to the colony in 1682.

**1692**

Several young girls in Salem Village, Massachusetts, begin accusing other townspeople of being witches. Twenty-seven people are put on trial for witchcraft, and nineteen are hanged. Many others are imprisoned.

**1693**

The governor of Salem Town puts an end to the witch trials by freeing more than one hundred accused witches.

**1701**

The Charter of Privileges in Pennsylvania gives more power to elected officials and less to William Penn. Penn returns to Britain for good.

**1711**

The colony of Massachusetts declares most of the people hanged in the witch trials innocent and begins to pay retribution to their families.

**1754**

George Washington's troops attack a group of French soldiers led by Joseph Coulon de Jumonville. Washington later surrenders to French and Indian forces at Fort Necessity.

**1756**

Great Britain and France officially declare war.

**1759**

The British Army defeats French troops at the Battle of Quebec, the last battle of the French and Indian War. France and Great Britain continue to fight in other places around the world.

**1763**

Great Britain and France sign a peace agreement, the Treaty of Paris. Leaders draw a new map of North America.

Pontiac stirs Native American nations to attack British settlements. The conflict becomes known as Pontiac's War.

**1765**

The British Parliament passes the Stamp Act.

**1766**

Pontiac's War ends, but colonists and Indians continue to clash.

**1770**

Five colonists die in the Boston Massacre.

**1773**

Patriots dump 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor. This event is later called the Boston Tea Party.

**1775**

The Revolutionary War between the American colonies and Great Britain begins with the battles of Lexington and Concord in April. On May 10, the Second Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia. In June, Congress appoints George Washington commander in chief of the Continental Army.

**1776**

On July 4, Americans formally declare independence from Great Britain by signing the Declaration of Independence. On July 8, the Declaration is read in public for the first time.

**1777**

Vermont is the first state to outlaw slavery. Other northern states soon follow. Congress approves the Articles of Confederation.

**1781**

Maryland is the last state to ratify (approve) the Articles of Confederation.

**1783**

American colonists defeat the British Army to win the Revolutionary War.

**1787**

The U.S. Constitution is adopted by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.

**1788**

The Constitution is ratified and signed into law.

**1789**

George Washington is chosen as the first president of the United States.

**1791**

The Constitution is amended to include the Bill of Rights.

**1793**

Congress passes the first Fugitive Slave Act. It allows slave catchers to cross into free states to capture fugitive slaves.

**1800**

Washington, D.C., becomes the nation's capital.

**1803**

The Louisiana Purchase doubles the size of the United States.

**1804–1806**

The Lewis and Clark Expedition begins in Saint Louis, Missouri. In November 1805, the Corps of Discovery reaches the Pacific Ocean. The expedition ends when the Corps returns to Saint Louis in 1806.

**1812–1815**

Robert Stuart blazes the Oregon Trail between 1812 and 1813.

The War of 1812 begins when the United States declares war on Great Britain. Plans for building the Erie Canal are delayed. In 1815 the United States defeats Great Britain, ending the war.

**1817**

Construction begins on the Erie Canal at Rome, New York.

**1820**

Congress passes the Missouri Compromise. As a result, slavery is banned north of the 36° 30' line of latitude, with the exception of Missouri, and Maine is admitted to the Union as a free state.

**1825**

The Erie Canal is completed.

**1830s**

In 1830 Congress passes the Indian Removal Act.

The first wagon train travels west on the Oregon Trail.

The abolitionist movement begins to gain strength. The Underground Railroad gets its name around this time.

**1838–1839**

Cherokees are forced to walk westward on the Trail of Tears.

**1843**

A wagon train of about one thousand emigrants heads west on the Oregon Trail. This is sometimes called the Great Migration.

**1847**

Brigham Young leads the first group of Mormons to the Great Salt Lake valley. Many Mormons settle in the area.

**1848**

The United States wins the Mexican-American War.

Oregon becomes a U.S. territory.

**1849**

Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery.

Thousands of people head west in the California gold rush.

**1850**

Congress passes a tougher Fugitive Slave Act. Fugitives begin fleeing to Canada. Harriet Tubman goes on her first rescue mission.

**1860s**

The U.S. government begins creating reservations—lands where they claim Native Americans can live and hunt free from white settlers.

**1861**

Eleven southern states secede from the Union and form the Confederate States of America. The Civil War begins.

**1863**

President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation. About twenty thousand slaves are immediately freed.

**1864**

U.S. soldiers kill more than 150 Cheyenne in the Sand Creek Massacre.

**1865**

President Lincoln is assassinated. Congress passes the Thirteenth Amendment, outlawing slavery across the nation.

**1866–1868**

Battles break out between Native Americans and U.S. soldiers along the Bozeman Trail in Montana and Wyoming. The battles are called Red Cloud's War.

**1869**

The transcontinental railroad is finished. It links the eastern and western coasts of the United States.

**1876**

Native American forces defeat the U.S. Army, led by Lieutenant Colonel Custer, at the Battle of Little Bighorn.

**1957**

The State of Massachusetts officially apologizes for the Salem Witch Trials.