



# Celebrating America's storied history and Montana's legacy

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*Kristina Mattices*

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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE | FULL TEXT

WORDS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

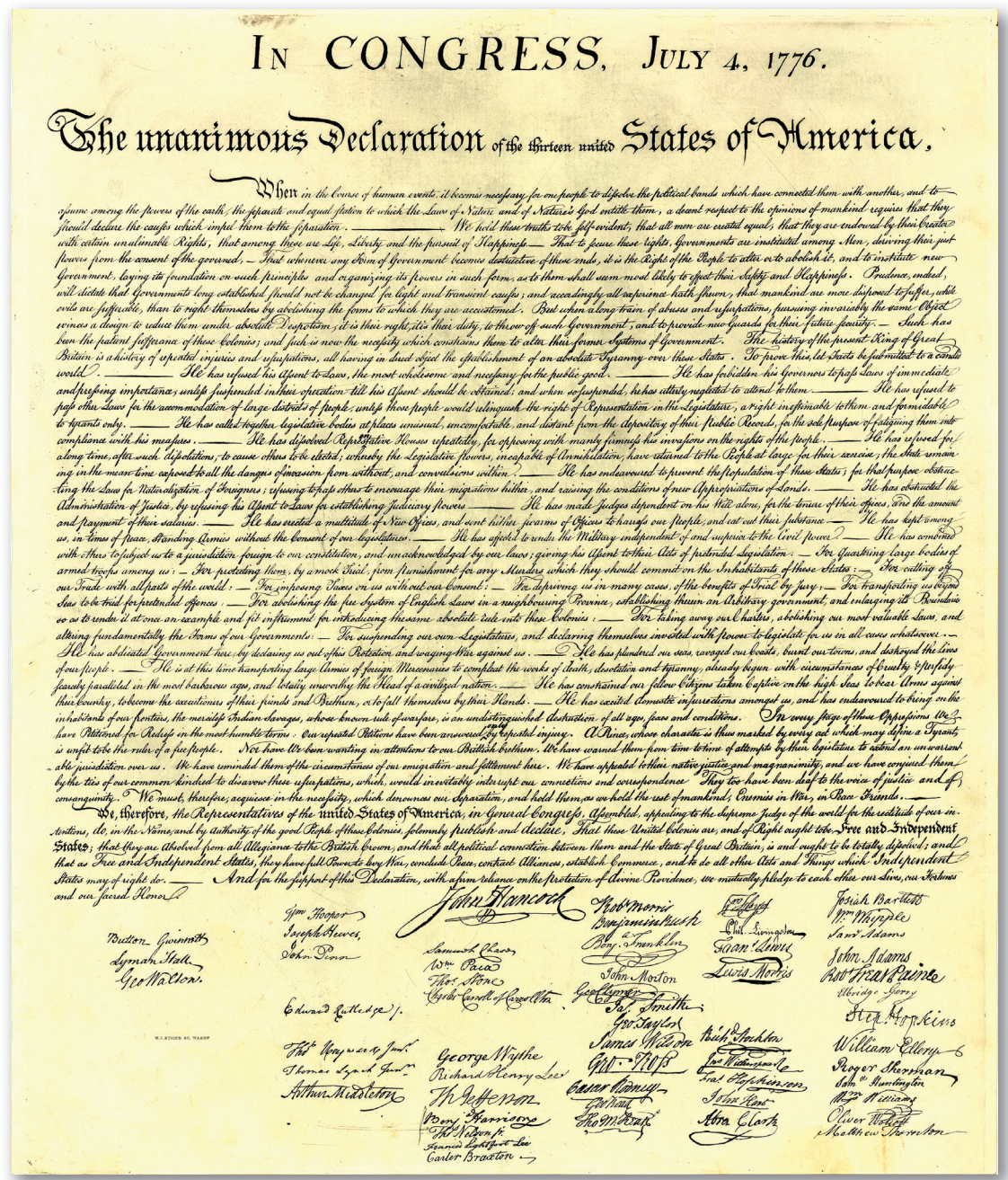
The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Thomas Jefferson was its primary author, with input from other delegates, and he presented it to Congress after delegates approved a resolution to declare independence on July 2. Congress spent the next two days revising it, finally adopting it on the 4th of July.

Source: National Archives



THE WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

"The Signing of The Declaration of Independence" by French artist Charles Edouard Armand Dumaresq



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 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 British 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.

Georgia Button Gwinnett Lyman Hall George Walton

North Carolina William Hooper Joseph Hewes John Penn

South Carolina Edward Rutledge Thomas Heyward Jr. Thomas Lynch Jr. Arthur Middleton

Maryland Samuel Chase William Paca Thomas Stone Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia George Wythe Richard Henry Lee Thomas Jefferson Benjamin Harrison

Thomas Nelson Jr. Francis Lightfoot Lee Carter Braxton

Pennsylvania Robert Morris Benjamin Rush Benjamin Franklin John Morton

James Clymer George Smith George Taylor James Wilson George Ross

Delaware Caesar Rodney George Read Thomas McKean

New York William Floyd Philip Livingston Francis Lewis Lewis Morris

New Jersey Richard Stockton John Witherspoon Francis Hopkinson John Hart Abraham Clark

New Hampshire Josiah Bartlett William Whipple Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts John Hancock Samuel Adams John Adams Robert Treat Paine Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island Stephen Hopkins William Ellery

Connecticut Roger Sherman Samuel Huntington William Williams Oliver Wolcott



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Tourists aboard the Blackfeet-led Sun Tours bus stop to take photos of sculptures titled “The Iron Tipis” by artist Duane After Buffalo that stand before the St. Mary Valley on Wednesday, June 3 outside Glacier National Park.

# THOUSANDS OF GENERATIONS

## Indigenous life etched into Glacier National Park

SAM WILSON

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**Editor’s note:** This story is part of America 250, a series that examines Montana through both a historical and modern day lens. As we celebrate America turning 250 this year, we in turn are celebrating the people, places and things that have shaped the Treasure State.

**EAST GLACIER PARK** — Steering a 25-seat tour bus along the thin ribbon of pavement that cuts through Glacier National Park’s iconic peaks, Derek DesRosier is no stranger to awed visitors remarking on the “pristine” scenery around them.

It’s one of the misconceptions he’s happy to dispel as a member of the Blackfeet Nation and the general manager of Sun Tours, the Glacier-focused tour guide company his father founded. Today, the tribe’s reservation shares a border with one of America’s most-visited national parks.

But long before the idea of an independent United States germinated two-and-a-half centuries ago, Glacier has been part of a wider homeland for thousands of generations of Indigenous communities who lived, hunted, held ceremonies and managed ecosystems in its million-acre landscape.

“The fresh water, the medicines that can be found here, everything

that we used in our cultural day-to-day life was so valuable, and we protected it as such,” DesRosier told his busload of passengers on a brisk, cloud-dappled day in early June.

“It wasn’t an untouched utopia,” he added.

The Blackfeet are most often associated with Glacier, part of what they’ve long called the “Backbone of the World.” But its landscape is part of a shared homeland for countless tribes whose lives, beliefs and day-to-day activities were interwoven with present-day northwest Montana for tens of thousands of years.

When a tourist on his bus asked how many Indigenous groups once lived in the park, DesRosier responded, “It just depends on how far back you go.”

In the centuries leading up to and following the European colonists’ westward expansion, the Blackfeet (Pikunni), Kootenai (Ksanka/Ktunaxa), Salish and Qlispe tribes have been among the most active in what later became Glacier National Park.

Before European contact, that landscape reflected both natural processes and the ecological guidance of its Indigenous population. Glaciers covered more of the land, but the ice-age remnants were receding at a far slower pace than today’s climate-fueled



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Sun Tours general manager Derek DesRosier speaks to a tour group on Wednesday, June 3 in Glacier National Park.

retreat. Beavers, later decimated by trappers seeking valuable pelts, had engineered extensive networks of ponds and marshes that kept more water on the land and humidity in the air.

And it would be hard not to notice the millions of bison that roamed not just across the grasslands east of the Continental Divide, but also through the mountain valleys farther west. Instead of roads

and barbed wire fences, DesRosier tells visitors to envision “a moving blanket” of buffalo flowing across the rolling prairie at the mountains’ edge.

“When they go through an area, they make every insect, every animal, every bird — everything that comes behind them is healthier and it’s a better ecosystem because of the buffalo,” DesRosier said.

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## Glacier

From 3

### Within a balance

Under the care of nomadic tribes, many of the region's mountain valleys were also more open, with ancient, old-growth trees dominating a younger, green understory.

Setting regular, small-scale fires was a common practice for the Ksanka, Salish and Qlispe tribes. Only in recent decades have non-Native residents and government agencies recognized the value of these periodic prescribed burns to avoid devastating, large-scale wildfires, and to establish more diverse plant and animal habitat.

"Western culture is trying to figure out how can we kind of put the balance back in the natural world, and restore the balance of what had been here before," said Vernon Finley, an educator and the director of the Ksanka Culture Committee. "Whereas before America, the people lived within that balance."

Like most of the region's tribes, the Ksanka were nomadic. Along with associated Kootenai bands in the north, their historical homeland extends from present-day Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming to 300 miles past Glacier's border with Canada. Seasonal camps were driven by traditions and by the availability of food, medicine and other resources.

After packing up camp, they'd set small fires to clear the area — which Finley likened to the modern-day motto of "leave no trace."

"You don't stay in one place until you deplete everything," he said. "As you leave, you burn it and it grows back green. It grows back healthy again and you just go from place to place and do the same thing."

In addition to the Kootenai and Blackfeet, Salish-speaking tribes were also periodically present in Glacier: The Salish and the Qlispe, also known as Pend d'Oreille or Kalispel.

Sadie Peone-Stops, director of the Salish-Qlispe Culture Committee, described a Salish and Qlispe approach to land management that, like the Kootenai, grew from the ecological knowledge they acquired over millennia.

"That's a part of caring for the land, is moving around to different places and camping and inhabiting areas," Peone-Stops said. "There were specific foods or medicines from plants, or other specific food sources or game sources that were plentiful."

The mountains in Glacier National Park provided specific types of rock to make items like stone axes and tools for scraping hides, Peone-Stops said. Bitterroot, the plant the local Salish band is named for and an important food source for the region's tribes, was more often sought in drier valleys to the south and west. Members of the Salish Tribe continue this sustainable harvest annually, separating the "heart" from the thick roots and replanting it in the ground.

Tim Ryan, a culture and language studies professor at Salish Kootenai College, noted that the tribes' annual cycles of travel would take them from winter grounds in northwest Montana's valleys south to Yellowstone and north into Canada. During these travels, they harvested berries, medicines, teas and other resources. Trunks of centuries-old pine trees in the North Fork area still retain scars where tribes would carefully harvest the nutritious cambium layer, while ensuring the trees' survival.

In the summer, Salish and Qlispe tribes followed populations of buffalo and other big game into the park's high alpine areas. Archaeological evidence shows the animals would migrate there, Ryan said, likely in search of cooler, less mosquito-ridden grazing spots.

### Critical sites

The mountains within and around Glacier National Park hold religious sites critical for ceremonies for nearly every tribe that passed through.

"In the sense of getting closer to the spiritual world in those vision quests, high mountains were always important," Ryan said.

As his tour bus passed a series of snowcapped peaks jutting out toward the eastern plains, DesRosier focused on one prominent feature out of view. Chief Mountain, the distinctly



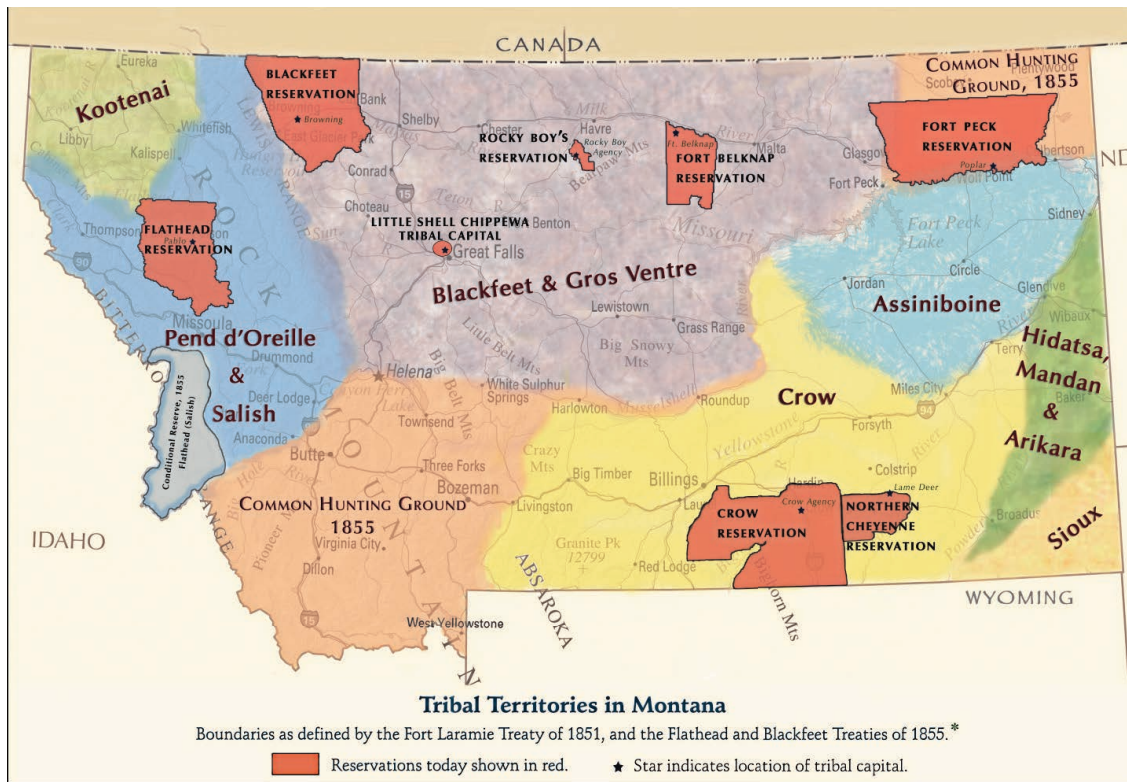
PHOTO BY GEORGE GRANT ALEXANDER, COURTESY THE GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ARCHIVES

Blackfoot tipis stand at Logan Pass before the dedication of Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park on July 14, 1933.



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Vernon Finley, the director of the Ksanka Culture Committee, pictured on Monday, June 1 in Elmo, Montana.



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Tribal territories established through early agreements with the U.S. government are shown alongside present-day reservation borders, in a map produced by the University of Montana's 2010 Regional Learning Project. Those pre-reservation territories were far smaller than the overlapping historical homelands of the region's

square-shaped mountain closer to the Canadian border, has long been a frequent site for Blackfeet ceremonies.

To the Blackfeet, its position farther out on the prairie symbolizes a chief leading his people, DesRosier explained. According to the Pikunni Traditional Association, it's also where Napi, the first human in Pikunni origin stories, escaped a massive flood with a group of animals and created the rainbow — Napi's rope — to lasso the clouds and finally make it stop raining.

On Glacier's west side near the foot of the iconic Lake McDonald, the Kootenai traditionally held a winter camp around the time of the solstice, Finley said. A series of circular dances to welcome the coming year provides the Kootenai name for the Apgar area, which roughly translates to "Place Where They Dance."

"The spirit came and told the people to sing three particular songs, and each song had a purpose for it," Finley said. "You would be putting health in your path for the coming year, the same with food, the same with

material things."

Like most tribes, Finley said the Ksanka's relationship with the land shaped a worldview in which "everything has a spirit, everything has songs, everything has the potential to reveal to us some kind of help for our survival, for our existence."

### Mountain crossings

Glacier's iconic rock spires and jagged peaks were shaped by the power of its brutal winters. Heavy snows accumulated over millennia into massive glaciers that carved their way through its mountains and valleys.

Yet those winters didn't stop the region's tribes from crossing the rugged mountain passes to hunt plains buffalo, Ryan said, when their coats were thickest and produced better winter clothing and bedding.

The Salish and Qlispe would most often use mountain passes to the south, Ryan said, which can produce a white-knuckled winter driving experience even on today's modern highways.

Within Glacier, the Kootenai moved through the heart of the

park's jagged peaks at Logan Pass, which they call "Pull the Packs Up." Their methodical system for crossing the Continental Divide is described in "People Before the Park," a 2015 book by archaeologist and ethnohistorian Sally Thompson. In it, she quotes a passage from Chief Paul David describing Kootenai men standing on each others' shoulders to scale cliffs between the rock shelves leading up to the pass.

With one man stationed on each ledge with strips of rawhide, "the equipment was pulled to the top first, then the babies in the cradle boards and then the children and the women."

Finley recalled the story from one February in the 1800s, when a group of Kootenai walked across a frozen Lake McDonald on snowshoes. They then traveled across Logan Pass to make peace with the Blackfeet east of the Continental Divide. (For reference, so much snow falls in those avalanche-prone alpine reaches that it can take until July for the park's convoy of plows to finish clearing snowdrifts as high as 80 feet)

"I don't know who could do that, besides wolverines," Finley added with a laugh.

Today, it's the only place where a road bisects the park, and the expensive, years-long engineering feat that produced Going-to-the-Sun Road is well-established in park lore. DesRosier's tour bus wound along part of it as he continued to explain the history of the park and tribal nations.

While most of the mountains, rivers, lakes and glaciers in the park were named by and for many of the white Americans who came later, DesRosier noted the name of Glacier's famous east-west highway carries some accidental meaning to the Blackfeet.

In the Blackfoot language, the root of the word for "sun" can also mean "creator."

"When we go up into the mountains, we are reestablishing our connection to the creator," DesRosier said. "It's ironic, because it can have sort of a dual meaning."

### Trouble in the East

In 1776, historic events unfolding on the East Coast posed a threat to the tribes' long-standing connection to those lands.

Great Britain's policy forbidding its American subjects from displacing Native tribes west of the Appalachian Mountains played a key role in motivating the colonists' independence movement.

"The British government was trying to reserve a kind of place for Native people west of the mountains, where they could still engage in the fur trade, and trap beavers in particular," said Dan Flores, a retired University of Montana history professor who studies the westward expansion. "The American colonists, they were not willing to put up with a barrier like that, and particularly a barrier that would prevent them from exploiting not only the wildlife trade but getting the lands of the Native people."

In particular, the proclamation angered many of the colonies' influential land speculators — including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin — who stood to enrich themselves through the sale and economic development of those lands.

As the Revolutionary War raged on, a different struggle was taking place in the Glacier Park region.

"It's kind of in a way a similar sort of revolutionary upheaval, really, in northwestern Montana," Flores said.

Displaced tribes from the east were now being pushed west by the American colonists, increasing competition and conflict within the local tribes' traditional homelands.

Within several years after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Blackfeet Nation on the park's east side began trading buffalo robes and other goods directly with European colonists. That trade introduced tools to firearms, a tool that supercharged conflicts between Indigenous groups.

Flores said the combination of guns and horses "produces a consolidation of power on the part of the Blackfeet around what

## Glacier

From 4

becomes Glacier National Park” by the late 1700s.

While much has been written about inter-tribal conflicts — particularly between the Kootenai and Blackfeet around Glacier — those relationships were more harmonious prior to colonial influence.

Indigenous groups who traditionally moved through present-day Glacier at times camped together and bonded through trade, alliances and marriage between members.

The Salish and other tribes would often share territories and hunting camps, according to Peone-Stops.

“In those times tribes were more peaceful with one another and got along pretty well,” she said. “But after the introduction of horses and visitors to this area, that put a lot more pressure when tribes were being forced west and forced together.”

Earlier conflicts, when they happened, were far less likely to be lethal. For the Ksanka, killing someone merely proved physical strength, explained Finley, while failing to demonstrate spiritual strength attained by learning ceremonies and songs.

“If you’re going to be shooting your arrows at me and I’m able to ride up to you and clobber you with my coup stick and then ride off, and you haven’t been able to kill me, that proves my spiritual protection is much greater than yours,” he said. “... But if I ride up to you and take a club and kill you, that proves physical strength — so what?”

### Taking the land

Following the American Revolution, the new country’s

colonizing presence in western Montana was mostly limited to the fur trade, which wound down by the 1840s. The following decade, the U.S. negotiated treaties with the region’s tribes that established Native territories and their right to fish, hunt and gather in their traditional areas.

But it wasn’t until the 1880s, Thompson wrote in “People Before the Park,” that new pressures began to dramatically upend the tribes’ traditional lifestyles.

Railroads began to slice through Indigenous lands and non-Native settlements began popping up in the valleys around Glacier. Growing conflicts with white settlers, according to Thompson, prompted restrictions on Indigenous people exercising their off-reservation rights. Years later, that dynamic was horrifically demonstrated by the Swan Valley Massacre south of Glacier, when a Montana game warden shot and killed three Qlispe men and a child at a family hunting camp.

The 1880s also saw the disappearance of wild buffalo herds that once numbered as high as 60 million across the North American plains. It was the product of increased hunting pressures by white settlers, along with a successful campaign by the U.S. government to remove the Native populations.

“It was for fun, for sport, but primarily it was because they knew that it was our main source of life basically, our nutrition,” DesRosier told his tour group. “And they knew that it would affect our tribe, because what is now Glacier National Park, we were standing in the way of that, our people.”

A series of agreements in the 1850s had established most of

north-central Montana as territory for the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre tribes. Subsequent actions by the U.S. government dramatically shrank those boundaries in the following decades, to the Blackfeet Reservation’s present-day borders.

The final change to the map came in 1895, as American naturalists and business interests were eyeing the landscape that would become Glacier National Park 15 years later.

### ‘Disagreement of 1895’

In the years prior, waves of deadly smallpox had wrought extensive losses for the Blackfeet population, along with the region’s other tribes.

Aboard his Sun Tours bus, DesRosier described how those forces culminated in the “Starvation Winter” of 1883-84, which killed an estimated one-quarter to half of the Blackfeet.

“Our way of life had changed so drastically that we just didn’t have access to the same things, and were living kind of a skeleton of ourselves,” he said.

Under that pressure, the tribe signed an agreement to sell 800,000 acres of their mountain lands that extended to the Continental Divide. The northern half of that “Ceded Strip” today forms the east side of Glacier.

DesRosier wryly recalled that event as “the Disagreement of 1895,” with Blackfeet leaders believing they would still retain ownership. Given the multiple languages through which the negotiations were translated, he said, “I would wager to say that it wasn’t completely understood on our side.”

U.S. negotiators at the time included the conservationist George Bird Grinnell, who was an influential nature writer and

publisher, friend of President Theodore Roosevelt and later a forceful lobbyist for the creation of Glacier National Park.

Those efforts were joined by aggressive lobbying by the owners of the Great Northern Railroad, which had cut across the Blackfeet Reservation to Marias Pass in 1891. They viewed both a national park and the Blackfeet Nation as tourist attractions to drive passenger rail traffic.

That lobbying paid off in 1910, when President William Howard Taft signed a bill designating Glacier as the nation’s 10th national park.

### ‘What was lost’

While no Indigenous nation is allowed to reside in the park, today’s Glacier still holds their history and traditions, along with evidence of their successful management of its landscape.

“It’s often not acknowledged, for one the Native history that’s always there and the Native people that have been relocated or removed, but also the fact that the area looks and functions the way it does is because of Indigenous management for thousands of years,” DesRosier said. “And it would look differently if that were not the case.”

The Blackfeet Nation continues to assert its claim to the east side of Glacier National Park, though it took a federal appeals court decision in the 1990s to confirm the right of Derek DesRosier’s father to continue the tour-bus business he founded there.

Still, DesRosier said his relationship with the National Park Service has grown in the years since, along with continued success of Sun Tours. The agency, along with many of Glacier’s visitors, are growing more informed

about the history his company provides, he said.

The Ksanka, Salish and Qlispe were forced in the 1800s to merge onto the Flathead Reservation, 60 miles south of the nearest park entrance. The same year Glacier became a national park, the Homestead Act opened the reservation to non-Native settlement, accelerating the loss of those remaining tribal lands. Tribal elders frequently note how those losses extended beyond the land itself, according to Peone-Stops.

“Not being able to go somewhere,” she said, “to actually be able to physically be on the landscape with your children and grandchildren and say this is how this place was once used, this is what you can find here and how to use it, that knowledge of our traditional way of life is what was lost.”

But she also credited park officials who in recent years have increased consultation with the region’s tribes on management decisions in Glacier, and placed more focus on cultural programming. Along with Finley, she participates in the park’s long-running “Native America Speaks” lecture series.

“We’re always grateful that the park is protected, and I’m happy today we can have discussions about additional ways of protecting the park and ways we can reconnect tribal people back to the places that our ancestors once walked and lived,” Peone-Stops said. “Although some of those things have been lost along the way, I don’t think the land forgets its people and I don’t think the people forget the land.”

Sam Wilson is the outdoors and environment reporter at the Missoulian.



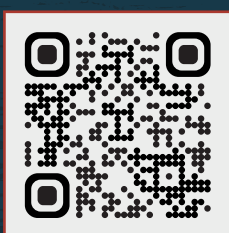
SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

A sow grizzly bear and her two cubs wander near a Sun Tours bus driving along Glacier National Park’s Going-to-the-Sun Road near St. Mary on Wednesday, June 3.

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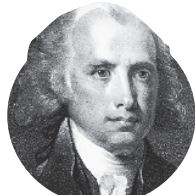




**JOHN ADAMS**  
 Born: 1735 | Died: 1826  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1797–March 3, 1801  
**Number of note**  
 Both Adams and Jefferson died **July 4, 1826**.



**THOMAS JEFFERSON**  
 Born: 1743 | Died: 1826  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1801–March 3, 1809  
**Number of note**  
 Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence at **age 33**.



**JAMES MADISON**  
 Born: 1751 | Died: 1836  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1809–March 3, 1817  
**Number of note**  
 The White House was burned in **1814** during the War of 1812.



**JAMES MONROE**  
 Born: 1758 | Died: 1831  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1817–March 3, 1825  
**Number of note**  
 Monroe was the **last** Founding Father to be president.



**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**  
 Born: 1767 | Died: 1848  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1825–March 3, 1829  
**Number of note**  
 Quincy Adams was John Adams' **second** child and **first** son.



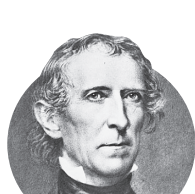
**ANDREW JACKSON**  
 Born: 1767 | Died: 1845  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1829–March 3, 1837  
**Number of note**  
 Jackson was involved in at least a **dozen** duels.



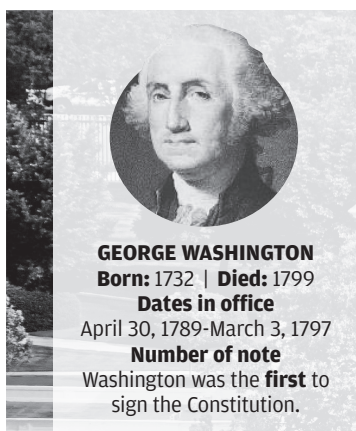
**MARTIN VAN BUREN**  
 Born: 1782 | Died: 1862  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1837–March 3, 1841  
**Number of note**  
 In **1837**, the nation faced a financial panic.



**WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON**  
 Born: 1773 | Died: 1841  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1841–April 4, 1841  
**Number of note**  
 In **1841**, Harrison became the first president to die in office.



**JOHN TYLER**  
 Born: 1790 | Died: 1862  
**Dates in office**  
 April 6, 1841–March 3, 1845  
**Number of note**  
 Tyler was the **first** to assume office after a president's death.



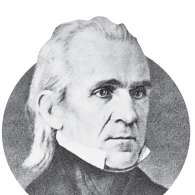
**GEORGE WASHINGTON**  
 Born: 1732 | Died: 1799  
**Dates in office**  
 April 30, 1789–March 3, 1797  
**Number of note**  
 Washington was the **first** to sign the Constitution.



# MEET THE PRESIDENTS

A by-the-numbers look at our 45 commanders in chief

KEN CEDENO, REUTERS



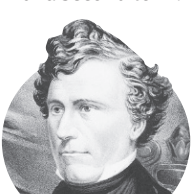
**JAMES K. POLK**  
 Born: 1795 | Died: 1849  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1845–March 3, 1849  
**Number of note**  
 California and New Mexico were purchased for **\$15 million**.



**ZACHARY TAYLOR**  
 Born: 1784 | Died: 1850  
**Dates in office**  
 March 5, 1849–July 9, 1850  
**Number of note**  
 Taylor spent only **16 months** in office.



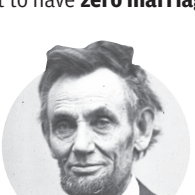
**MILLARD FILLMORE**  
 Born: 1800 | Died: 1874  
**Dates in office**  
 July 10, 1850–March 3, 1853  
**Number of note**  
 Fillmore was not nominated for a **second** term.



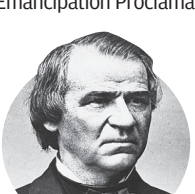
**FRANKLIN PIERCE**  
 Born: 1804 | Died: 1869  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1853–March 3, 1857  
**Number of note**  
 At **24**, Pierce started his political career in New Hampshire.



**JAMES BUCHANAN**  
 Born: 1791 | Died: 1868  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1857–March 3, 1861  
**Number of note**  
 Buchanan was the only president to have **zero marriages**.



**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**  
 Born: 1809 | Died: 1865  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1861–April 15, 1865  
**Number of note**  
**4 million slaves** were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation.



**ANDREW JOHNSON**  
 Born: 1808 | Died: 1875  
**Dates in office**  
 April 15, 1865–March 3, 1869  
**Number of note**  
 Johnson was the **first** president impeached by the House.



**ULYSSES S. GRANT**  
 Born: 1822 | Died: 1885  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1869–March 3, 1877  
**Number of note**  
 On **April 9, 1865**, General Grant won the Civil War.



**RUTHERFORD B. HAYES**  
 Born: 1822 | Died: 1893  
**Dates in office**  
 March 5, 1877–March 3, 1881  
**Number of note**  
 Hayes was elected by a close electoral margin – **185 to 184**.



**JAMES A. GARFIELD**  
 Born: 1831 | Died: 1881  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1881–Sept. 19, 1881  
**Number of note**  
 On **July 2, 1881**, Garfield was shot while in office.



**CHESTER A. ARTHUR**  
 Born: 1829 | Died: 1886  
**Dates in office**  
 Sept. 20, 1881–March 3, 1885  
**Number of note**  
 Arthur was the **first** president to take the oath in his home.



**GROVER CLEVELAND**  
 Born: 1837 | Died: 1908  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1885–March 3, 1889  
**Number of note**  
 His first presidential election was won by just **1,200 votes**.



**BENJAMIN HARRISON**  
 Born: 1833 | Died: 1901  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1889–March 3, 1893  
**Number of note**  
 He was the **first** to have electricity in the White House.



**GROVER CLEVELAND**  
 Born: 1837 | Died: 1908  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1893–March 3, 1897  
**Number of note**  
 Cleveland was the first president to serve **two separate terms**.



**WILLIAM MCKINLEY**  
 Born: 1843 | Died: 1901  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1897–Sept. 14, 1901  
**Number of note**  
 McKinley died **Sept. 14, 1901**, after he was shot in Buffalo, N.Y.



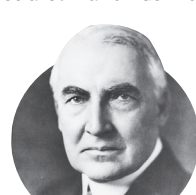
**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**  
 Born: 1858 | Died: 1919  
**Dates in office**  
 Sept. 14, 1901–March 3, 1909  
**Number of note**  
 At **42**, he was the youngest man to become president.



**WILLIAM H. TAFT**  
 Born: 1857 | Died: 1930  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1909–March 3, 1913  
**Number of note**  
 Taft went on to serve on the Supreme Court in **1921**.



**WOODROW WILSON**  
 Born: 1856 | Died: 1924  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1913–March 3, 1921  
**Number of note**  
 On **April 6, 1917**, the U.S. declared war on Germany.



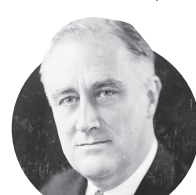
**WARREN G. HARDING**  
 Born: 1865 | Died: 1923  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1921–Aug. 2, 1923  
**Number of note**  
 Harding died during his **third year** in office.



**CALVIN COOLIDGE**  
 Born: 1872 | Died: 1933  
**Dates in office**  
 Aug. 3, 1923–March 3, 1929  
**Number of note**  
 On **June 2, 1924**, he made all Native Americans citizens.



**HERBERT C. HOOVER**  
 Born: 1874 | Died: 1964  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1929–March 3, 1933  
**Number of note**  
 In **1932**, Hoover lost reelection amid the Great Depression.



**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**  
 Born: 1882 | Died: 1945  
**Dates in office**  
 March 4, 1933–April 12, 1945  
**Number of note**  
 FDR had **four terms** – the only president with more than two.



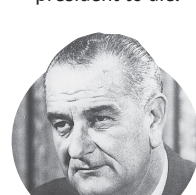
**HARRY S. TRUMAN**  
 Born: 1884 | Died: 1972  
**Dates in office**  
 April 12, 1945–Jan. 20, 1953  
**Number of note**  
 In 1945, the U.S. dropped **two atomic bombs** on Japan.



**DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER**  
 Born: 1890 | Died: 1969  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1953–Jan. 20, 1961  
**Number of note**  
 He saw the addition of the final **two** states: Alaska and Hawaii.



**JOHN F. KENNEDY**  
 Born: 1917 | Died: 1963  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1961–Nov. 22, 1963  
**Number of note**  
 At **46**, JFK was the youngest president to die.



**LYNDON B. JOHNSON**  
 Born: 1908 | Died: 1973  
**Dates in office**  
 Nov. 22, 1963–Jan. 20, 1969  
**Number of note**  
 Johnson's victory margin was **15 million votes** in 1964.



**RICHARD M. NIXON**  
 Born: 1913 | Died: 1994  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1969–Aug. 9, 1974  
**Number of note**  
 In 1974, Nixon became the **first** president to resign.



**GERALD R. FORD**  
 Born: 1913 | Died: 2006  
**Dates in office**  
 Aug. 9, 1974–Jan. 20, 1977  
**Number of note**  
 Ford served **895 days** in office after Nixon's resignation.



**JAMES E. CARTER**  
 Born: 1924 | Died: 2024  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1977–Jan. 20, 1981  
**Number of note**  
 Carter lived **100 years**, longer than any other president.



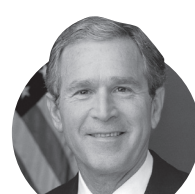
**RONALD REAGAN**  
 Born: 1911 | Died: 2004  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1981–Jan. 20, 1989  
**Number of note**  
 Reagan was shot **69 days** after his inauguration.



**GEORGE H. W. BUSH**  
 Born: 1924 | Died: 2018  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1989–Jan. 20, 1993  
**Number of note**  
 Bush flew **58 combat missions** in the Navy in World War II.



**WILLIAM J. CLINTON**  
 Born: 1946  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 1993–Jan. 20, 2001  
**Number of note**  
 Clinton was the **second** president impeached.



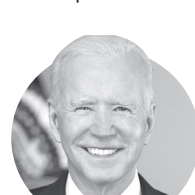
**GEORGE W. BUSH**  
 Born: 1946  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 2001–Jan. 20, 2009  
**Number of note**  
 Bush was the **second** to follow his father's footsteps.



**BARACK H. OBAMA**  
 Born: 1961  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 2009–Jan. 20, 2017  
**Number of note**  
 Obama was the **first** Black man to hold the office.



**DONALD J. TRUMP**  
 Born: 1946  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 2017–Jan. 20, 2021  
**Number of note**  
 Trump was the only president to be impeached **twice**.



**JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.**  
 Born: 1942  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 2021–Jan. 20, 2025  
**Number of note**  
 At **78**, Biden was the oldest to start his first term.



**DONALD J. TRUMP**  
 Born: 1946  
**Dates in office**  
 Jan. 20, 2025–present  
**Number of note**  
 Second president to serve **two** nonconsecutive terms.

# BOOMTOWNS, BEAVER AND BISON

How trade posts shaped Montana



A scene from a historical re-enactment organized by the Fort Connah Restoration Society at Fort Connah in August 2012.  
ARTHUR MOURATIDIS, MISSOULIAN

GRIFFEN SMITH AND DAVID ERICKSON  
griffen.smith@missoulian.com  
david.erickson@missoulian.com

Iconic Montana historian K. Ross Toole described the state's economy as a system of resource extraction. From the rise of the Copper Kings to today's ballooning tourism economy, someone has always looked to take something out of Montana.

"The Montana pattern has been brief, explosive, frenetic, and often tragic," Toole wrote in his book, *Montana: An Uncommon Land*, first published in 1959. "The economic picture has often been one of exploitation, overexpansion, boom-and-bust. The political scene has been equally extreme — from fiery, wide-open violence to apathetic resignation."

Some of the first white settlers traveling west to Montana did so to acquire highly sought-after furs and hides: beavers

Please see **TRADE**, Page 8



A view of a two log structure, likely small trading stores, near Fort Union, Dakota Territory, with a couple tipis nearby and a larger camp in the distance. The Indians are possibly Assiniboine. This area was in Dakota Territory just east of the territorial boundary. The photo was taken during the Fisk Expedition of 1866 on the way from Minnesota to Montana Territory.

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**Above:** View of the buildings associated with the Fort Owen trading post in the Bitterroot Valley near Stevensville. The buildings had largely ceased serving as a trading post in the 1880s.

**Left:** A view of the Bourgeois House in the interior of the Fort Union Trading Post in Dakota Territory with a man sitting on wooden planks on the ground in the center of the Fort. The post manager and his family lived in this building. Fort Union was in Dakota Territory just east of the territorial boundary. This image was during the Fisk Expedition of 1866 on the way from Minnesota to Montana Territory.

## Trade

From 7

and, later, bison pelts. The initial colonial settlements were established under the idea of trading with Native American tribes and white fur trappers.

Before the first Europeans stepped foot on the land that would become Montana, intermountain tribes traded through hubs across the state for thousands of years, often near the confluences of key rivers and hunting grounds.

The emergence of European fur trappers, and later settlers, created conflicts between Indigenous people and colonizers, who sought to extract Montana's critters for profit, leading to the near extinction of beavers and bison.

"Why did all this power and intrigue fasten on the lowly beaver in his mountain stream?" Toole questioned in his book. "Because fur was of a vital importance in Europe in terms of apparel. Wool was common. But there were no synthetic dyes, and wool was drab except for the brilliance lent by indigo or cochineal ... It is not too much to say that the first economic development of Montana was a consequence of fashion five-thousand miles away."

While most of these trading hubs faded over 250 years of American history, including several before Montana became the 41st state in 1889, some evolved into modern towns, while other posts have been preserved as remote historic sites.

### Indigenous people trade at buffalo jump

On cliffs outside Ulm, Montana, stands a reminder that for thousands of years Indigenous people strategically hunted bison through "buffalo jump" structures.

Historians argue the First Peoples Buffalo Jump is one of the longest continually used communal hunting and meeting sites in North America. The tribes used the landscape and bison behavior to accomplish much of the hunting.

Buffalo jumps feature the construction of rock barriers along the edges of plateaus in the Great Plains. The barriers, combined with the topography, allowed Indigenous hunters to drive herds toward cliffs, where bison became injured or were killed in the fall.

The space also needed ideal conditions to draw in a herd of bison and strategic hiding spots to surprise the animals and push them into drive lines.

More than 1,400 rock cairns still stand at First Peoples Buffalo Jump, forming 47 stone alignments in the area, according to the Montana Historical Society. Historians estimate tens of thousands of bison were processed by tribes in the area.

"They ate some of the meat right away, but cut most of it into thin strips, which they then air or smoke-dried on pole racks," historian Martha Kohl wrote in "A History of Montana in 101 places," a 2025 book published by the Montana Historical Society. "Portions of the preserved meat were made into pemmican by pounding it together with berries, fat and bone marrow. The meat not only nourished the hunters and their families but was also an important commodity in the trade between northern plains hunters and the Indigenous farming villages downriver along the Missouri!"

Tipi rings still stand at the site, along with pictographs and a large stone circle that historians hypothesize was used for ceremonies. Estimates pin the use of



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY RESEARCH CENTER PHOTOGRAPH ARCHIVES

A scene on Front Street in Fort Benton, Montana, of a stagecoach with a four-horse team on a dirt street, commercial businesses visible in background along with an additional stagecoach to the right. The image captures a stage driver and another man riding beside him, passengers in the stagecoach, and U.S. mail under the driver's seat. The sign on top of both stagecoaches advertises Weisenhorn Carriage Company.



MISSOULIAN

An undated historical photograph showing men lining the bar at the Grand Union Hotel in Fort Benton.

the site between 4,000 BC until around 1,700 AD.

Its use declined as more settlers expanded westward to colonize the Rocky Mountains and introduced horses to Indigenous tribes.

Bison also sharply declined with westward expansion. Historians estimate between 30 million to 50 million bison once roamed North America, but by the 1880s, only a few hundred remained.

Bison were a primary food supply for many Plains tribes, but increased harvesting of bison by white settlers and the U.S. Army led to starvation and weakening of the tribal nations.

Several treaties between the U.S. and Indigenous tribes led to the reservation system seen today, although initial agreements called for common hunting grounds for bison, like in the 1855 Blackfeet Treaty.

Decades later, Montana tribes like the Blackfeet, Sioux and Assiniboine have reestablished buffalo herds on their land.

Today, First Peoples Buffalo Jump sits within a state park, including a visitor center, interpretive trail and picnic tables, according to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

### Fort Manuel Lisa brought boom, bust to fur trade

With the return of Lewis and Clark in 1806, establishing new trading posts for the fur trade accelerated.

Fort Manuel Lisa or "Manuel's Fort," was established at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Big Horn rivers in 1807 by the Missouri Fur Trading Company, owned by Manuel Lisa. He employed help from members of Lewis and Clark's exploratory party.

The settlement, reportedly just temporary living quarters and one two-room trading house with a loft, did not survive long. Settlers faced routine attacks from hostile

tribes. The fur trade led to dozens of temporary forts that fizzled within a year or two.

Fort Manuel was abandoned by 1811, but the Missouri Fur Trading Company kept launching exploratory operations into Montana. Several fur trading companies from the United States and Canada quickly competed for sites and trading partners.

The boom and bust did not last, and as Toole noted, just one Montana fur trading post stood the test of time and grew into a larger town.

"Between 1808 and 1821 the Missouri Fur Company established four posts. All were abandoned," Toole wrote. "Canadian fur companies between 1808 and 1846 constructed five posts in Montana. No settlements grew up around them. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company set up two posts, neither of which existed long. The great American Fur Company established Fort Benton in 1847 where Fort Benton is today. It alone of some eleven American Fur Company posts in Montana survived the end of the trade."

### Fort Benton bridged trading post to larger commerce hub

Next to the Missouri River that cuts at the plateaus of central Montana, the town of Fort Benton is still considered the "birthplace of Montana," where trading was a center point.

The fort was established in 1846 as a robe trading post for the American Fur Company, but had the unique ability to transport materials using the Missouri River. Fort Benton was often the last navigable town along the meandering river.

Its location was key for trade and the expanding transportation network for settlers in the area. The Mullan Trail starts in Fort Benton and crosses the Rocky

Mountains before reaching Walla Walla, Washington.

"Steamboats plied the Missouri River to Fort Benton for thirty years, until the railroad signaled an end to this town's prominence as the 'World's Innermost Port,' the modern town's website reads. "This once feisty outpost played such a vital role in the expansion of the West, that it is now registered as a National Historic Landmark."

At times, settlers in the fort clashed with members of the Blackfeet Tribe, including the killing of a chief's brother and son in 1869. Ten more members of the tribe were killed by Fort Benton settlers and soldiers in 1870 for alleged cattle raiding. No charges were brought by local officials.

While the site first stood as a fur trading post, the innermost port reinvented itself for other commodities, including the gold rush, which hit Montana in the mid-19th century.

"The first steamboat had reached Fort Benton on the high waters of the spring of 1860," Toole wrote. "Thus the mountain region of Montana was accessible for the first time. All of this brought prospectors almost by droves in the early 1860s"

Today, Fort Benton has roughly 1,500 residents and is situated within Montana's "golden triangle" known for its sizable wheat production.

### Fort Connah boasts state's oldest standing building

While the Hudson's Bay Company of Canada was effectively shut out of fur trapping in the United States with the Oregon Treaty of 1846, Fort Connah just barely squeaked by, since it was under construction at the time.

First named Fort Conoh, the site was the last trading post launched by the Hudson's Bay Company in the Mission Valley between St. Ignatius and Pablo. It was one of the only trading posts in the area with a large selection of goods, the Montana Historical Society wrote.

"Fort Connah was an important trading post for tribes on either side of the Rocky Mountains. Furs were the main commodity, but buffalo meat, pemmican, saddle blankets, rawhide, and rope were the other key trade items, as the Hudson's Bay Company could not obtain them at its posts farther west," said Montana Historical Society wrote.

The original fort layout included a wooden bastion, or defensive wall, several storerooms, a home

and a corral. The last remaining building on the site was estimated to be constructed in 1846 or 1847, likely making the structure the oldest standing building in Montana.

After the fort was decommissioned by the Hudson's Bay Company, its original operator, Angus McDonald, acquired the land. He later died at the site in 1899. Today, the site is under care by the Fort Connah Historic Restoration Society, and the original building can be seen from Highway 93.

### Fort Union had large trading draw

Fort Union, located just east of the Montana border, in North Dakota, was an important hub in the region's fur trade from 1828 to 1867, according to the Montana Historical Society.

"The Northern Plains tribes, mostly Assiniboine, but including Cree, Blackfeet, Chippewa, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara and Sioux, delivered beaver pelts and brain-tanned buffalo hides for shipment downriver to St. Louis," the society's page about Fort Union says.

### Fort Owen remains in Bitterroot

Fort Owen was established in 1852 in the Bitterroot Valley by John Owen, a trader who carried goods and supplies for the U.S. Army, according to the Montana Historical Society.

The area was and still is the homeland of the Bitterroot Salish Tribe, who were forcibly removed from the Bitterroot Valley in 1891.

Fort Owen was Montana's first European-style settlement, and it also served as a trading post, a grist mill, a school and an agricultural center.

It's believed that Fort Owen played host to Montana's first sawmill, first European-style irrigation system and first cattle herd.

Owen sold supplies to trappers, military surveyors, Native Americans, prospectors and traders. The site served as a community gathering place, and St. Mary's Mission nearby later turned into the town of Stevensville.

The site is now called Fort Owen State Park and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Griffen Smith is the local government reporter for the Missoulian. David Erickson is the business reporter for the Missoulian

# Time capsule has items from every state, territories

SWASTI SINGHAI | USA Today

“America’s Time Capsule” has been officially sealed in commemoration of the United States’ 250th birthday.

The 900-pound steel cylinder contains over 200 artifacts, records and objects to tell America’s story when it is opened 250 years later.

The capsule will be buried in Philadelphia on July 4 as part of the hundreds of events for America’s 250th anniversary that will take place nationwide.

America250, the official non-partisan commission designated by Congress to organize the July 4 celebrations, spearheaded the work to design the capsule and collect relics. All 50 states in conjunction with numerous national organizations contributed items (ranging from a vial of sand to an Olympic gold medal) reflecting the people, places and moments that shaped their history.

California contributed a NASA photo, an AI prediction and a fusion superconductor segment. Arizona contributed a copper ingot and a laser-etched challenge coin. Maine contributed a whale bone and a woven bookmark. And Utah contributed tickets to their amusement parks and George Washington’s prayer medal.

“Now that America’s Time Capsule has been sealed, it carries with it a remarkable record of this moment in our nation’s history,” said Chair of America250 Rosie Rios.

Below is a list of an item contributed from each state and territory of the United States.

**Alabama:** A series of poems written by author and professor James Matthew Wilson entitled “America.”

**Alaska:** A map of New Archangel, Alaska, when Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867.

**American Samoa:** A set of two uncirculated quarters from 2009 and 2020 with images of American Samoa.

**Arizona:** A laser nano-etching of the text and signatures of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution on a coin.

**Arkansas:** A diamond found at the

This beadwork, created by Apsáalooke, Arikara and Hidatsa artist Karis Jackson of Browning, will represent Montana in the time capsule.

COURTESY, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Crater of Diamonds State Park, the only place in the United States where people can search for diamonds and keep what they find.

**California:** A Claude AI prediction of what California will be like in 250 years on archival paper. This will serve as a “tangible representation” of AI in 2026.

**Colorado:** A set of postcards selected to represent “what life was like in Colorado in 2026.”

**Connecticut:** The Official Proclamation document for the state.

**the District of Columbia:** A challenge coin with “Washington, D.C. 250” on one side and a building with flags and the Mayor’s name etched on the other.

**Delaware:** A set of 12 notecards with writings and drawings from the state’s citizens to answer what Delaware is to them.

**Florida:** The Florida Senate Booklet from 2024 to 2026, which describes the operations of the Senate.

**Georgia:** A distinct medallion of The Masters Logo, which has a yellow silhouette of the United States with a red flagstick to mark where Augusta, Georgia is located.

**Guam:** A Gualofan ornament pendant, which is a traditional ornament that has become a “modern expression of Chamorro identity.” The pendant represents the full moon.

**Hawaii:** A letter from Gov. Josh Green.

**Idaho:** A star garnet, which is the state’s official gemstone found only in Idaho and one other place in the world. The garnet is meant to highlight the state’s geological heritage.

**Illinois:** A poem authored by Illinois Poet Laureate Mark Turcotte titled “Dear New Blood.”

**Indiana:** The Indiana 250 Annual Report, which shares the mission and objectives of the commission working to celebrate July Fourth.

**Iowa:** Astronaut Peggy Whitson’s International Space Station medallion, which commemorates Whitson’s leadership as the first woman to command the International Space Station.

**Kansas:** A document identifying Kansas250 commissioners and news items from the last year.

**Kentucky:** A commemorative coin from the Sons of the Revolution, intended to serve as a reminder of how the American Revolution influenced Kentucky.

**Louisiana:** A necklace with a Krewe of Bacchus pendant, a collectible from Mardi Gras, and glass beads.

**Maine:** A whale bone from the North Atlantic right whale, which is one of the world’s most critically endangered large whale species.

**Maryland:** A challenge coin with Gov. Wes Moore’s name and a map of the state on it.

**Massachusetts:** A set of archival prints, including a print of the Boston Massacre and a letter from John Adams and Benjamin Franklin to the Massachusetts Council.

**Michigan:** The state stone, or the Petoskey stone, which is native to the shores of Lake Michigan and formed nearly 350 million years ago.

**Minnesota:** The state’s flag.

**Mississippi:** Four brass coins commemorating the U.S.’s largest

rocket engine test site and the Birthplace of America’s Music, among other notable events.

**Missouri:** A letter from Gov. Mike Kehoe to Americans 250 years later.

**Montana:** A beaded artwork created by an Arikara artist representing the state’s landscapes and heritage.

**Nebraska:** An archival photo of the Vice Grip pliers, which symbolize the state’s commerce and history.

**Nevada:** A set of gambling chips to reflect the history of casinos across the state, which legalized gambling during the Great Depression.

**New Hampshire:** A print of a sticker depicting the center emblem of a flag carried by the Second New Hampshire Regiment of the Continental Army.

**New Jersey:** A stainless steel plate with greetings to people in 2276, with “the hope that the values that guide us in 2026 – liberty, opportunity, cooperation, love and respect for one another – continue to shape society.”

**New Mexico:** A handcrafted red chile tile created by Mexican American artist Jennel Juarez. The tile is one of New Mexico’s long-standing cultural symbols.

**New York:** A written reflection from New York State.

**North Carolina:** A copper disk engraved with an image of the North Carolina State Capitol Building.

**North Dakota:** A commemorative coin representing the opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota.

**Northern Mariana Islands:** A crescent-hewn symbol representing the Chamorro ancestors’ leadership and noble standing.

**Ohio:** Fabric from the Wright Brothers’ flight honoring the state’s connection to the birth of aviation.

**Oklahoma:** A belt buckle that features images that represent the “grit, determination and spirit” of the state.

**Oregon:** A handcrafted pin created by Native American artist Lillian Pitt.

**Pennsylvania:** A “Greetings from Harrisburg” letter from Gov. Josh Shapiro.

**Puerto Rico:** A rosary to represent the importance of faith in the island.

**Rhode Island:** A holiday ornament meant to honor the state’s Revolutionary War legacy.

**South Carolina:** A coin commemorating the work done by the state’s 250 Commission.

**South Dakota:** A poetry book celebrating the state’s rivers, wildlife and homestead culture through a special edition of “This Far Country” authored by Joseph Bottum.

**Tennessee:** An original poster designed by one of the state’s artists to highlight Tennessee’s agricultural history and cultural symbols, including its role in the Civil Rights movement and women’s suffrage.

**Texas:** The state seal on a chiseled glass paperweight. The seal was designed in 1836 during the Texas Revolution.

**U.S. Virgin Islands:** A letter from Gov. Albert Bryan, Jr.

**Utah:** A set of 101 paper cards with different people that shaped Utah history.

**Vermont:** A Battle of Hubbardton ornament. The battle was the only Revolutionary War battle fought entirely on what is now considered Vermont.

**Virginia:** A challenge coin representing the state’s commemoration of America’s semiquincentennial.

**Washington:** A letter from Washington State Lt. Gov. Denny Heck to the future.

**West Virginia:** A student essay authored by Alyssa Dalton titled “Remembering our Foundation” celebrating the nation’s 250th birthday. The essay was solicited from a statewide essay contest to recognize how “the young people ... will continue to guide our state.”

**Wisconsin:** An Eagle feather and photo of Old Abe, an American bald eagle who served with the Eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the Civil War.

**Wyoming:** A letter from Gov. Mark Gordon to future Americans.

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**FRIDAY** ★ **PARADE STARTING AT 9:30AM** ★  
DOWNTOWN SHOPPING ★ WILD WEST ARTS FEST  
& LIVE MUSIC IN CITY PARK  
**JULY 3** ★ **STAMPEDE RODEO**

**SATURDAY** ★ **PARADE STARTING AT 9:30AM** ★  
DOWNTOWN SHOPPING ★ WILD WEST ARTS FEST  
& LIVE MUSIC IN CITY PARK  
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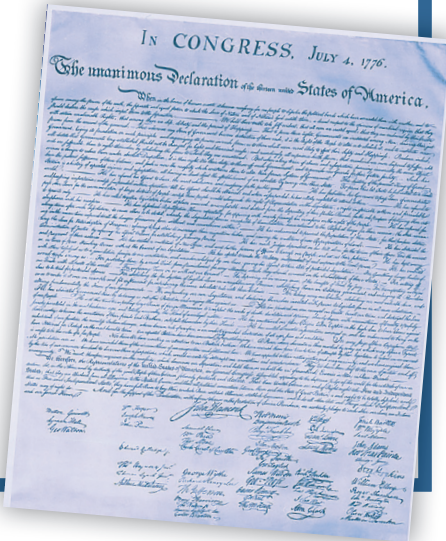
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# BUILDING OF A NATION

## JULY 4, 1776

The Declaration of Independence was approved by the 2nd Continental Congress, leading 13 colonies to gain independence.

Philadelphians marked the first anniversary of American independence with a spontaneous celebration. However, observing Independence Day became commonplace only after the War of 1812.



## STATUE OF LIBERTY

**Oct. 28, 1886**

Date the Statue of Liberty was officially dedicated. It was constructed from 1875 to 1884 in France, disassembled and shipped to New York in 1885, where it was reassembled atop its pedestal.

**About 3.8M**

People per year who visit the Statue of Liberty.

**\$300K-\$600K**

Estimated cost to build, about \$17 million to \$22 million today.

## STATES' ADMISSION

1. Delaware, Dec. 7, 1787
2. Pennsylvania, Dec. 12, 1787
3. New Jersey, Dec. 18, 1787
4. Georgia, Jan. 2, 1788
5. Connecticut, Jan. 9, 1788
6. Massachusetts, Feb. 6, 1788
7. Maryland, April 28, 1788
8. South Carolina, May 23, 1788
9. New Hampshire, June 21, 1788
10. Virginia, June 25, 1788
11. New York, July 26, 1788
12. North Carolina, Nov. 21, 1789
13. Rhode Island, May 29, 1790
14. Vermont, March 4, 1791
15. Kentucky, June 1, 1792
16. Tennessee, June 1, 1796
17. Ohio, March 1, 1803
18. Louisiana, April 30, 1812
19. Indiana, Dec. 11, 1816
20. Mississippi, Dec. 10, 1817
21. Illinois, Dec. 3, 1818
22. Alabama, Dec. 14, 1819
23. Maine, March 15, 1820
24. Missouri, Aug. 10, 1821

25. Arkansas, June 15, 1836
26. Michigan, Jan. 26, 1837
27. Florida, March 3, 1845
28. Texas, Dec. 29, 1845
29. Iowa, Dec. 28, 1846
30. Wisconsin, May 29, 1848
31. California, Sept. 9, 1850

32. Minnesota, May 11, 1858
33. Oregon, Feb. 14, 1859
34. Kansas, Jan. 29, 1861
35. West Virginia, June 20, 1863
36. Nevada, Oct. 31, 1864
37. Nebraska, March 1, 1867

38. Colorado, Aug. 1, 1876

39. North Dakota, Nov. 2, 1889
40. South Dakota, Nov. 2, 1889
41. Montana, Nov. 8, 1889
42. Washington, Nov. 11, 1889
43. Idaho, July 3, 1890
44. Wyoming, July 10, 1890

45. Utah, Jan. 4, 1896

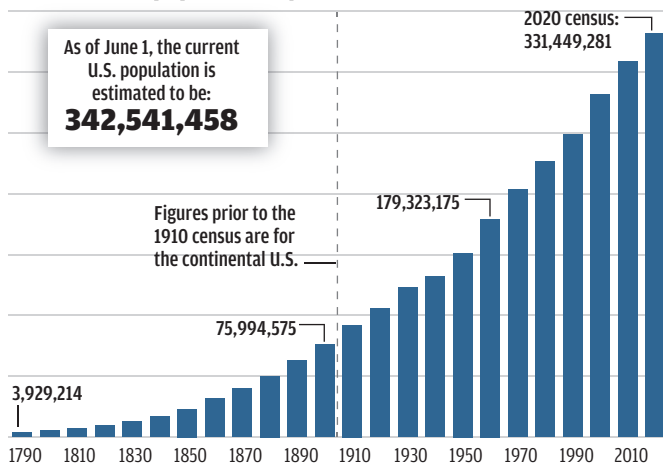
46. Oklahoma, Nov. 16, 1907

47. New Mexico, Jan. 6, 1912
48. Arizona, Feb. 14, 1912

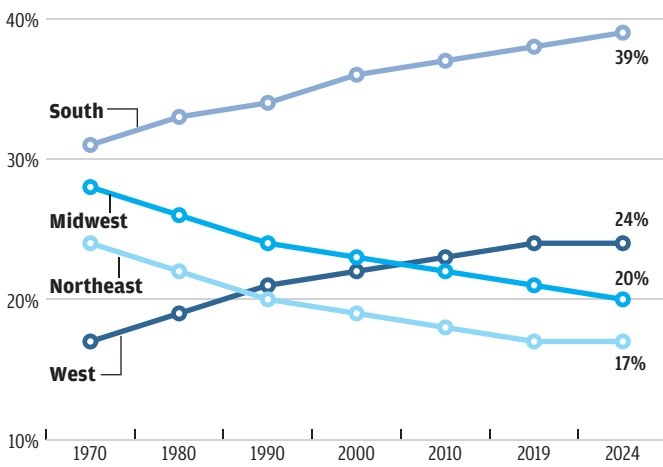
49. Alaska, Jan. 3, 1959
50. Hawaii, Aug. 21, 1959

## POPULATION

### United States population by census

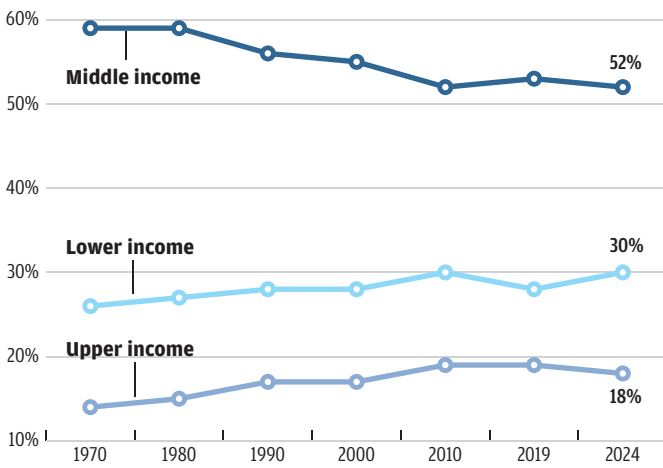


### Regional total of US population



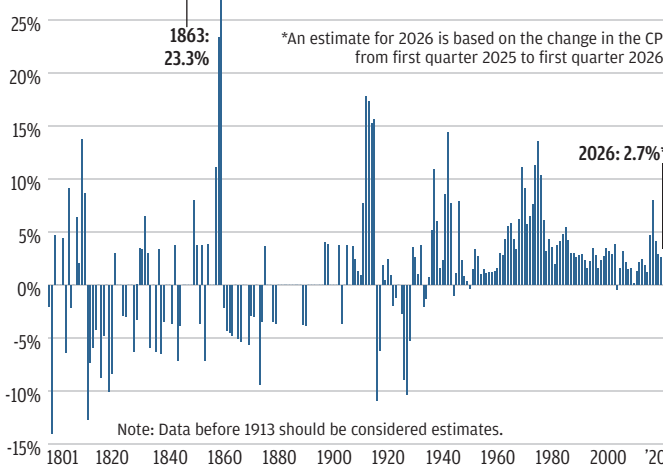
## INCOME

### Percentage of US population by income



## PRICES

### Inflation rate, annual percent change



## NATIONAL FACTS

**2.53**  
Average number of people per household (2020-2024 census)

**\$80,734**  
Median household income (2020-2024, in 2024 dollars)

**California**  
Most populous state (39,538,223 people as of the 2020 census)

**Wyoming**  
Least populous state (576,851 people as of the 2020 census)

**Alaska**  
Largest state by land area: 571,241.6 square miles

**Rhode Island**  
Smallest state by land area: 1,033.9 square miles

Deborah Hile, Lee Enterprises illustration

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# ‘Our right to roam:’ The Battle of Little Bighorn 150 years later

**PAUL HAMBY**  
phamby@billingsgazette.com

Drive the stretch of paved road that leads from Little Bighorn Battlefield’s visitor center and the hills look the same as when Wooden Leg and Half Yellow Face rode through it, minus the red and white granite gravestones.

A half a day of violence in some of the quietest land in the country turned this spot into part of the American canon, joining the likes of Saratoga, Gettysburg and Okinawa, names rich in tragedy and elation, fodder for thousands of books, movies and documentaries.

“There was no dancing nor celebrating of any kind in any of the camps that night,” recalled Wooden Leg in the wake of the Battle of the Little Bighorn, according to an account compiled by the physician and Northern Cheyenne historian Dr. Thomas B. Marquis. Wooden Leg, a Northern Cheyenne man, fought in the battle that ended with the decimation of the 7th Cavalry and the Battle of the Rosebud that preceded it.

“Too many people were in mourning,” Wooden Leg said, “among all of the Sioux as well as among the Cheyennes. Too many Cheyenne and Sioux women had gashed their arms and legs, in token of their grief. The people generally were praying, not cheering.”

After the Civil War, the completion of rail lines that connected the contiguous United States galvanized westward expansion. It also stoked tensions between encroaching homesteaders and the continent’s first peoples. Through policies of either assimilation or extermination, the federal stance on Native Americans through the 19th century was not ambiguous.

In an 1830 address to Congress, President Andrew Jackson celebrated the forced removal of Native Americans from their traditional lands in the Southern United States, opening wide the expansion of farming and, consequently, chattel slavery. Pushing tribes further west, he asserted, would alleviate all hostilities in the long run.

“It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government,” Jackson said, “steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation.”

By 1850, pressures from the westward expansion of the United States brought Cheyenne and Lakota into the eastern portion of the Crow’s territory in what is today Montana, Wyoming and the Dakotas. A treaty negotiated the following year at Horse Creek near Laramie, Wyoming, included representatives from the Crow, Cheyenne, Lakota Sioux, Arapaho, Assiniboine, Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara. The ratified treaty resulted in the Crow ceding roughly half of their traditional land.

The Crow, despite allying with the U.S. against the Cheyenne, Dakota and Lakota, didn’t make them immune to federal policy shifting from extermination to assimilation, with disease and the near extinction of the bison decimating the tribe’s population by the end of the 1800s. Every tribe, allied with and fighting against the United States, faced similar hardships.

Tensions continue to boil over in the form of massacres, skirmishes and all-out warfare. Red Cloud’s War, fought between a coalition of tribes from the Great Plains, the Lakota and Northern Cheyenne among them, and the United States turned what would become portions of Montana and Wyoming into a battleground. The Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 brought peace. It didn’t last.

Such was the fraught environment for all Indigenous people who lived in the country from California to Maine; however, in early April 1876, the U.S. Army launched a campaign to combat those Indigenous tribes who refused to adhere to their designated reservations. The Army enlisted the assistance of scouts from the Crow Tribe, with men like Half Yellow Face and White Man Runs Him serving as scouts for the U.S. Army.

In June 1876, three columns of U.S. cavalry and infantry marched into what would become South-Central Montana: one headed southeast along the Yellowstone River, one walking north from Fort Fetterman in the Wyoming Territory and a third marching in from Fort Abraham Lincoln to the east, under the command of George Armstrong Custer.

At the start of that same month, a religious ceremony along Rosebud Creek



JAKE IVERSON, BILLINGS GAZETTE

The Custer National Cemetery is seen at the Little Bighorn Battlefield.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Lakota warrior Chief Sitting Bull was one of the key players in defeating the U.S. 7th Cavalry at the Little Bighorn in 1876.



LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT  
George Armstrong Custer, 1865, by Mathew Brady.

ended with the Hunkpapa Lakota man Sitting Bull having a vision that the Lakotas interpreted as a premonition of a great victory. Sitting Bull, a respected leader, had amassed a massive camp of allies united in their resistance to being relegated to reservations.

“I have seen nothing that the white man has,” Sitting Bull is quoted as saying, “which is as good as our right to roam and live on the open plains as we choose.”

Those serving under Gen. George Crook in the northbound column of U.S. troops made their way to Rosebud Creek, traveling lightly with only a few days’ worth of rations. They expected to find a village along the creek to attack, with the violence limited to brief hit-and-run encounters.

There was no village, and on the morning of June 17, anywhere from 700 to 1,500 Northern Cheyenne and Lakota led by Oglala Chief Crazy Horse and Cheyenne chiefs Two Moons, Young Two Moon and Spotted Wolf sprang on Crook’s men while they rested their horses.

For the next several hours, a battle occurred over a three-mile front in volleys that saw soldiers fending off repeated charges. Although federal troops managed to hold their ground against the Northern Cheyenne and Lakota, one Army officer marveled at the skill and tactics showcased by those he fought, later writing, “They proved then and there that they were the greatest cavalry on earth.”

With the shooting over by 2:30 in the afternoon, Crook counted nine of his men dead, along with a Shoshone scout. The Sioux and Northern Cheyenne, who refer to the battle as “Where the Girl Saved Her Brother,” fought the federal troops to a standstill, and accounts of their total losses vary. Although his losses were limited to nine men, Crook retreated in the aftermath of the Battle of the Rosebud, taking his column several miles south to regroup and await reinforcements.

The same bands that fought and stalled Crook at Rosebud Creek would overwhelm Lt. Colonel George Custer just eight days later at the Battle of Little Bighorn, where some 7,000 Lakota Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho were camped nearby.

On the morning of June 25, 1876, Custer

command were dead. Six more would later die from their wounds.

Like the interpretation of Sitting Bull’s vision, there was a victory. But by the close of the century, there were no more battles and no major opposition to federal forces. Within a year of the battle, the Sioux and Cheyenne had surrendered to the U.S.

“We were having a good many days of hunger,” Wooden Leg remembered in the weeks leading up to his band’s surrender. “Out horses had plenty of grass, but our own ribs were becoming thin. Our clothing was wearing out, and we could not get enough of skins to renew them and to keep our beds and our lodges in good order. My soldier coat and breechers were gone, and my last shirt and cloth breeches were almost in tatters. The only good article of wear I had now was my big white hat I had captured at the Rosebud battle.”

In recent decades, Indigenous recognition and input have shaped the battlefield’s grounds. Along with exhibits documenting how the battle erupted due to the U.S. government’s larger campaign to quash Native American resistance to federal expansion, an entire memorial was dedicated to Indigenous men and women who fought in the battle and red granite markers dot the landscape where they died in the fighting.

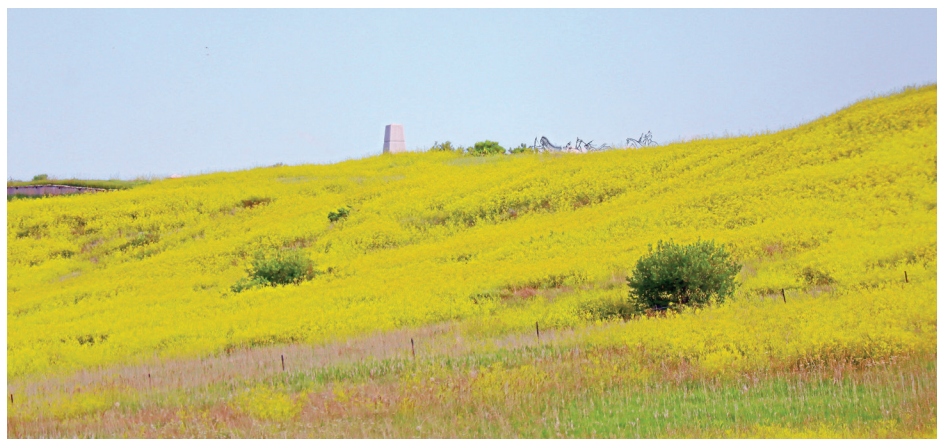


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The Little Bighorn Memorial obelisk and the Indian Memorial sit atop Last Stand Hill.

# MONTANA MINERALS

From gold to coal, how mining molded the Treasure State's rich history

TRACY THORNTON, JIM LUKSIC, DUNCAN ADAMS, THOM BRIDGE, CHRISTINE COMPTON

**Editor's note:** This story is part of *America 250*, a series that examines Montana through both a historical and modern-day lens. As we celebrate America turning 250 this year, we in turn are celebrating the people, places and things that have shaped the Treasure State.

**F**rom Montana's rugged highlands to its vast plains, a storied history stands as a living testament to the earth's raw value.

For more than a century and half, adventurers, businessmen and prospectors demonstrated ambition, skills and endurance while extracting and marketing hidden treasures that have defined Butte, Helena and many other pockets of Montana.

Our state's apropos nickname of the Treasure State stems from the ground underneath the communities' streets and in their hills, which hold massive deposits of copper that helped power the electrical age; seams of coal that literally fueled trains and furnaces; and deep pockets of shiny sapphires that continue to yield some of the world's most-prized gems.

Gold was the first valuable find circa 1864, ultimately netting hundreds of millions of dollars from the precious yellow metal found in Bannack and Last Chance Gulch.

What started as a swath of prospectors' tents evolved into an industrial behemoth that shaped fortunes, towns and countries. The following collection of chronicles explores many layers while telling of individuals, immigrants and companies that created communities forged in smoke and fire while teeming with innovation. Fast-forward to 1980, the CERCLA (or the Superfund) was created, and Montana has never been the same.

Here's a look back at copper's dominance, coal's essential contribution, striking gold, the unexpected burst of sapphires, and Superfund sites — revealing how these resources left their respective marks on the Treasure State.

Please see MINERALS, Page 14



Copper miners, Butte, Montana in 1939  
ARTHUR ROTHSTEIN/  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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## Minerals

From 13

### Butte: The copper capital

Mining made Butte. But decades of extracting underground metals has left city in a precarious state.

Its mining district, which includes the Berkeley Pit, is part of one of the largest Superfund sites in the United States.

Through sheer grit and stubbornness, Butte earned the nickname “Richest Hill on Earth,” and the entire nation benefitted from the town’s abundance of minerals.

More than 160 years ago, gold lured early-day prospectors to the area. Striking it rich with silver would become another attainable goal. But it was the abundance of copper that would become the game-changer.

Aubrey Jaap, director of the Butte-Silver Bow Archives, said as early as 1882 the Butte mines were generating 10% of America’s total copper output.

“The creation of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway, linking the mining communities of Butte and Anaconda, further increased copper production in the area,” she said. “Together the communities of Butte and Anaconda gave witness to history and events that influenced our nation for more than half a century.”

According to Jaap, no other mining community in America had a more profound impact upon the world’s copper industry than Butte.

“In terms of total metal production alone, Butte remains unrivaled. No other single metal mining district in the United States was worked so intensively for such a long period of time,” she said.

By 1900, adventurers from across the country would make their way to the mining camp. Immigrants would stake their claims as well.

Copper and other metals proved to be extremely profitable and put Butte on the map. As for the nation, the copper extracted underground was instrumental in electrifying the country.

Jaap said during the Age of Electricity, production of copper in Butte exploded, feeding some of America’s greatest technological advances, including revolutionizing transportation and manufacturing, and modernizing domestic life.

“Copper from Butte and Anaconda brought electricity to our nation and would set the framework for communication systems as we know them today,” she said.

The Butte Miner told its readers on Dec. 16, 1900, that the Mining City’s metal output for 1900 totaled more than \$54 million. That was an enormous chunk of change back then and nothing to sneeze at today.

That “chunk of change” from 1900 is worth \$2.1 billion today.

Keep in mind, Montana’s population 126 years ago was estimated at only 243,329. By comparison, Colorado, another western state with mining interests, was at nearly 540,000 people, while the gold rush of 1848 to 1855 helped to populate California — which, by 1900, boasted a population of about 1.4 million people.

Mining helped Butte’s population to grow, too. At the dawn of the 20th century, nearly 47,000 Montanans lived in Butte. With its new-found fame, the town’s success would not come without some harsh criticism.

“There is but one meanest city in the United States, and that is Butte, Montana,” was an April 13, 1900, opinion voiced by “The Oracle” in The Transcript-Telegram in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

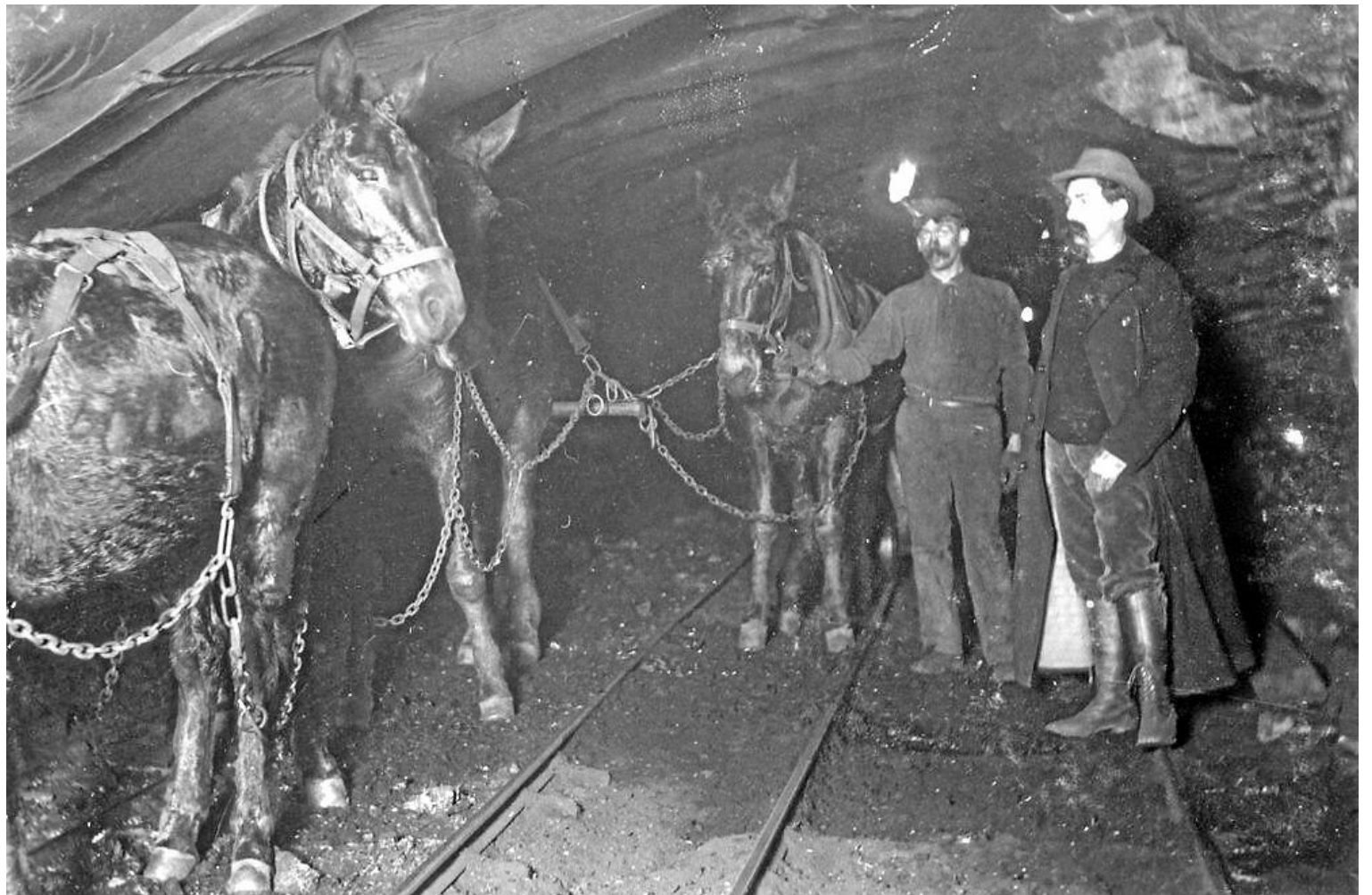
“Its own inhabitants are compelled to take frequent trips into other parts of the state in order to preserve within themselves a semblance of confidence in the goodness of God,” wrote the columnist.

The May 30, 1902, view in The La Harper newspaper in La Harpe, Illinois, was no less harsh: “Butte is regarded by some persons as the most wicked city on earth.”

Wicked may have been the town’s unfortunate reputation, but on the flipside, the mining camp also had a reputation as being a prosperous venture for investors.

Across the country, early 20-century newspapers featured large Butte mining advertisements.

“Copper is King” was the prominent ad featured in the Chicago Tribune on Oct. 9, 1901. Butte Mining and Development Co. was looking for stockholders, calling Butte “the ideal El



Two men in Rocky Fork Mine with two horses in Dec. 1896

CARBON COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

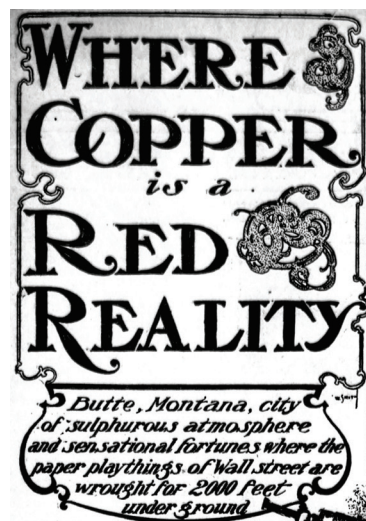


DUNCAN ADAMS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Work on Smelter Hill to grade the west slope of black slag east of Anaconda to prepare it for soil cover and seeding in 2025.



**LEFT:** Randy Gneiting points to Yogo sapphires in Aug. 2013. His ring includes a rare two carat Yogo sapphire valued at about \$28,000. He and his wife, Katie, specialize in yogo sapphires at their store Montana Gem in Columbus. **RIGHT:** ‘Where Copper is a Red Reality’ was the headline for a story on Butte in the Los Angeles Herald on Jan. 22, 1905.



BILLINGS GAZETTE FILE



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

View of a hydraulic mining operation in Last Chance Gulch north of Helena, Montana, with Mount Helena and the city in the background. A few men are visible working, one with a wheel barrow and one with a pick axe. Another miner operates the water hose shooting a stream of water at the dirt and rocks. (MHS Photo: PAC 97-32.7)

Dorado of the world.”

The sheer number of advertisements placed nationwide made sense. At the time, Butte had an estimated 280 working mines.

“Buy Butte and Greenwater Copper Stock” was the

encouraging advertisement featured in The Los Angeles Times on Nov. 11, 1906.

Local historian Jim McCarthy said because Butte was the center of the copper industry, the town would continue to grow to become the Northwest’s top city.

“We were the premier provider of metals at that time, and Butte would become a destination point,” said McCarthy.

Proof of the town’s success could be found inside a turn-of-the-last-century Butte City Directory.

“The sheer volume of businesses, restaurants, churches and schools listed was immense,” said McCarthy, “and the theaters provided first-class entertainment.”

National newspapers would talk about Butte and its copper.

Reporting on President Theodore Roosevelt’s visit of May 28, 1903, to the Mining City, The Bakersfield Morning Echo in California called Butte the “heart of the great copper mining state.”

The Los Angeles Herald of Jan. 22, 1905 described Butte as being a “mile higher than the New York Flatiron building, lies in a mountain basin scooped from the lofty slopes of the Rockies. The basin is a vast reservoir of copper and silver veins.”

Ralph Meeker was the reporter on the story. Meeker recognized Butte’s value and the men who profited from the abundance of its minerals.

“Here Marcus Daly, Senator W.A. Clark, Augustus Heinze, John D. Rockefeller, Henry A. Rogers and other Standard Oil interests have made fortunes,” wrote Meeker.

Indeed, they did. The minerals extracted underground made these men rich beyond belief.

In a March 17, 1907, Los Angeles Times article, Helen Fitzgerald Sanders said Butte came into prominence when capital and labor flocked to the mining camp.

“The day of the old prospector who owned and worked his little holdings was gone forever,” wrote Sanders. “The hill was too rich and the stake too big for single individuals. Henceforth, it was to be company and union — magnate and labor.”

As the end of 1909 fast approached, President William Howard Taft stopped by to pay the Mining City a visit on Sept. 27.

“To a man whose eyes are accustomed to the green fields of the East and see a city spring as like magic out of what seemed nothing is a revelation,” Taft said to the crowd.

The audience was even more receptive as he told them he would soon head underground.

“I am going to visit your city underground,” said Taft. “And I am going to see that wonderful system of galleries from which you have taken the wealth that has been a marvel to the world.”

### Gold crowned Montana’s queen

Copper may have been Butte’s metal, but gold gave Montana its queen.

So the legend goes, four unsuccessful prospectors (nicknamed the Four Georgians despite only one actually being from Georgia) gave their dig one “last chance” in a Helena stream in July 1864.

They struck gold by the wagonful. Around \$800 million in shiny metal was pulled from the aptly named “Last Chance Gulch” over the next decade, drawing massive waves of workers and industry to the would-be capital city and Montana Territory.

It was not the first time gold had put the Treasure State on the settler map. That honor goes to the boomtown Bannack, which surged in 1862 and paved the way for Abraham Lincoln to establish

## Minerals

From 14

the Montana Territory. Virginia City's Alder Gulch saw prospectors strike gold in 1863.

But by 1888, the Queen City of the Rockies was home to the most millionaires per capita in the entire world.

Despite most of the ore being turned up in the first 10 years, Helena attracted guests with its glittering status, becoming a place where the powerful commissioned towering buildings and mansions to show off their wealth — even in the face of repeated fires that destroyed the valley and gave birth to the city's iconic fire tower.

One of said power brokers was William A. Clark, an infamous Copper King who actually had his start in Bannack with the Treasure State's first gold boomtown. Despite his signature metal being found in Butte, Clark had grand political aspirations, and Helena businessmen had the coin to get him there.

In a fierce battle with fellow copper mogul Marcus Daly, who wanted his company town Anaconda to be the capital, Clark successfully funded the campaign for Helena to be voted the permanent seat of government in 1894.

### Montana's diverse history of sapphire mining

As legend has it, there was no paucity of sapphires around central Montana centuries and decades ago.

Upward of 125 years ago, The Butte Daily Post dated Aug. 16, 1901, included a nugget of a story headlined "A GENUINE AMERICAN GEM: Montana Sapphires Are Attracting the Attention of the World."

A gentleman named Joseph Hyde Pratt reported from Great Falls that the "only systematic mining" for sapphires was taking place in Montana.

According to the Post article, and one J. Lawrence Smith, gold miners along the river east of Helena found the gemstones in 1873. Although some sapphires were discovered near Beartooth, not many existed below the

American Bar.

The story went on to assert, as of 1900, the sapphire deposits weren't lucrative. "They are for the most part pale greenish or greenish-yellow color, and do not command a very high price" market-wise.

Conversely, those unearthed at Yogo Gulch and Rock Creek (near Philipsburg) comprised gemstones ranging in hue from blue to red. Among all Montana gems, Yogo sapphires grabbed everyone's attention.

In fact, Helena's Franz Cobalt was quoted as saying, "Future development at this locality may show these deposits to be of considerable importance and extent."

The Sapphire Mountains, naturally, were named after the prized blue stones.

In a feature posted on the University of Montana's website, grad student Patrick Shea described the gemstones' popularity at the Gem Mountain Mine like so: "Small round sapphires were initially sought after and shipped to Switzerland, where they were used as watch bearings."

Gem Mountain continues to be active while repurposing its branding, Shea wrote, despite sapphire mining diminishing due to synthetic gemstones.

Decades later, during World War II, The Montana Standard ran a story out of Helena that proclaimed: Montana Sapphires May Have Place in National Defense.

"The Atlantic blockades ... may steer the western world to Montana's doorstep" for the blue gemstones, according to the story. From a national defense perspective, according to the report, affordable natural sapphires were used as bearings for the likes of scales, gauges, compasses, power meters and navigation instruments.

More recently — which is to say a half-century ago — The Montana Standard published a September 1978 historical chronicle with the instructive headline: "Mine your own gems." Vici White's report told of prospectors Dick Stingle happening upon sapphires in Cornish Gulch circa 1910. The man continued his venture for a considerable time

before selling out to a mining company in New York.

In addition, a piece by The Montana Standard in July 1969 was titled, "Sapphire hunting can be profitable." Its opening paragraph cuts to the case: "A fast-growing hobby and pastime in the Treasure State is weekend sapphire hunting."

To properly hunt for them, the story goes on, not many resources are required. A shovel, pair of tweezers, a pail and rocker screen, the last of which is described as "a small wooden box made with a heavy screen on bottom, used to wash the gravel," was all that's needed.

The same Standard article stated, in effect, the juice was worth the squeeze: Digging up sapphires could net \$200 to \$450 per carat. That valuable information was unbeknownst to the earliest Montana miners circa 1860, who discarded the gemstones that clogged their sluice boxes.

What's more, the story points out that Chinese laborers near Helena initially used the precious sapphires as gravel for roads.

### Montana coal: a fuel for the nation

Montana's history of mineral extraction is not only confined to the geography of its western region. Coal, a formidable fuel source, became a big industry in eastern Montana starting in the 1880s.

According to the Montana Historical Society, who told Montana's coal mining history in the 1989 documentary "Against the Darkness," the industry's history starts in 1882 when Burlington Northern first brought rail to Montana. As those rails lines were laid, coal became a required source of fuel.

"By 1900, coal miners had blasted more than a half-million tons from the underground mines, heralding the coal boom in Montana," said Joseph Campanella, host of the MHS documentary. "The gold, copper and silver drawn from Montana's hardrock mines required the refining smelters of Butte, Anaconda, East Helena, Wicks and the giant Boston and Montana smelter at Great Falls."

Following coal deposit discoveries, mining towns popped up in their wake. The primary coal sources under the state were located near Great Falls, Bozeman, the upper Musselshell River valley and from the front of the Beartooth Mountains to the state's eastern border.

The increased mechanization of coal mining at the turn of the century led to a drop in the cost of coal mining and therefore less need for coal miners. The peak of the economic downturn occurred in 1924, when North Pacific Railroad developed a massive strip mine in eastern Montana. The Great Depression of the 1930s did not help Montana's already weak coal industry, either.

However, to feed the nation's involvement in World War II, coal was sought again to feed the factories churning out military equipment, leading to a production peak of around 5 million tons, according to a 2004 Department of Environmental Quality energy report. The coal economy bottomed out again around 1958 as the last of the steam locomotives were phased out.

Then came the power plants. In the late 1960s, production began to grow again when Western Energy Company began shipping coal from Colstrip to a generating plant in Billings owned by its parent, Montana Power Company.

In 1969, the coal industry mined 1 million tons. A decade later, it was over 32 million tons. Production continued to increase to around 43 million tons in 1998; from there, it stayed fairly consistent through the first quarter of the 21st century.

According to the State of Montana's website, in 2023, mines across the state produced about 29 million tons of coal, followed by about 27 million tons in 2024, a drop from more than 38 million tons in 2018, due to an industry shift away from coal to fuel power plants.

### Superfund: The enduring legacy of mining in Montana

It ranks among the worst corporate decisions in U.S. history. That's how Sandy Stash, an

Atlantic Richfield engineer who was the oil company's regional acolyte during the 1990s, characterized the company's purchase in 1977 of the Anaconda Co.

Three years later, following Love Canal and similar environmental calamities, Congress passed the law known as Superfund. That same year, the copper smelter closed in Anaconda, and not long after, the mines shut down in Butte.

Atlantic Richfield was on the hook for remediation of sprawling Superfund units stretching from Butte to Anaconda to Milltown. The Anaconda Smelter site alone included roughly 200 square miles of contaminated soils, black slag and hillsides bereft of vegetation.

A century of mining and smelting, generally unfettered by regulation, had polluted soils, groundwater, surface water and the Clark Fork River floodplain with heavy metals, arsenic and other pollutants.

Negotiations began with Atlantic Richfield, seeking agreement about the extent of cleanup and related financial settlements. The parties included EPA, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and others.

The Superfund process has moved since then like a giant tortoise with three legs.

Some sites within the Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit are approaching remediation nearly four decades after EPA added Butte to its National Priorities List.

Cleanup work on the Clark Fork River is scheduled to end in 2038, but the money might run out long before.

On a more positive note, commercial activities by private contractors surveying and analyzing Superfund sites, designing and performing remedies, moving dirt and other activity have spawned what's been described as a "remediation economy" in the region.

The historic exploitation of copper in Butte enriched Copper Kings, but it also helped electrify the nation and support the country during two world wars.

It can be argued that every American owes a debt to Butte, a debt the community continues to pay.

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**Analysis by Rate.net as of 5/20/2026**



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# MILESTONE MOMENTS

A decade-by-decade look at significant events in American history

## 1770s

- British soldiers kill five colonists March 5, 1770, in the Boston Massacre, fueling anti-British sentiment.
- Colonists protest British taxation by dumping tea into Boston Harbor in 1773.
- The British punish the colonists for the Boston Tea Party with harsh laws in 1774. Delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies meet in Philadelphia to coordinate a response.
- The first military battles of the Revolutionary War take place April 19, 1775 at Lexington and Concord. The colonies form the Continental Army and name George Washington commander.
- The Continental Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, declaring the colonies to be free and independent states. Delegates had earlier appointed a committee to draft a plan for a central government. That plan became the Articles of Confederation, which were presented to Congress in July 1776 and approved in 1777.
- In 1778, France officially enters the war on the American side, providing military and financial aid, after the American victory at Saratoga in 1777.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND PUBLIC DOMAIN IMAGES

An 1819 depiction, by artist John Trumbull, of the July 4, 1776, signing of the Declaration of Independence.

## 1780s

- The Articles of Confederation are ratified March 1, 1781.
- The final major battle of the Revolutionary War is fought in Yorktown in 1781, with American and French forces trapping British Gen. Charles Cornwallis, leading to his surrender and effectively ending the war.
- The Treaty of Paris is signed Sept. 3, 1783, by Great Britain and the U.S., officially ending the war and recognizing the United States as an independent nation.
- In 1787, 55 delegates from 12 of the 13 states meet in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. The convention ultimately drafts the U.S. Constitution, which is ratified June 21, 1788.

## 1790s

- President George Washington delivers the first State of the Union Address on Jan. 8, 1790.
- The Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, is ratified Dec. 15, 1791, guaranteeing individual liberties.
- The U.S. Post Office Department is established in 1792.

## 1800s

- In 1803, while negotiating to purchase New Orleans from France, the United States is instead offered an 828,000-square-mile territory for \$15 million. The acquisition becomes known as the Louisiana Purchase.
- Lewis and Clark begin their expedition May 14, 1804, to explore and map the newly acquired western territory.
- President Thomas Jefferson signs the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves of 1807, ending the legal transatlantic slave trade to the U.S.



A depiction of Gen. George Washington in 1781 at the Battle of Yorktown

## 1810s

- Francis Scott Key writes "The Star-Spangled Banner" while witnessing the Sept. 13-14, 1814, British bombardment of Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. The U.S. and Great Britain fought the war from 1812 to 1815 over British interference with U.S. trade and other disputes.



Key

## 1820s

- During his annual message to Congress on Dec. 2, 1823, President James Monroe introduces what becomes known as the Monroe Doctrine, declaring that European attempts to recolonize the Americas would be considered a hostile act toward the U.S.
- The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad is incorporated on Feb. 28, 1827, becoming the first chartered railroad in the U.S. to transport people and goods.

## 1830s

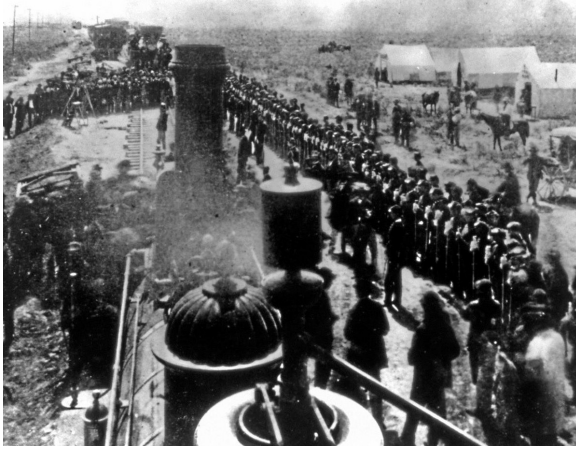
- President Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act in 1830. In 1838 and 1839, the federal government forcibly removes thousands of Native Americans from the Southeast to land west of the Mississippi River. Thousands die on the journey, which becomes known as the Trail of Tears. Native Americans are mostly confined to reservations by the 1880s.
- After months of increasing inflation and shrinking credit, the Panic of 1837 begins, causing bank failures, business closures and unemployment.

## 1840s

- On May 24, 1844, Samuel F.B. Morse sends the first telegraph message from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore.
- Gold is discovered in California in 1848, sparking the Gold Rush and westward migration.
- The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is signed in 1848, ending the Mexican-American War. In exchange for \$15 million and the assumption of \$3.25 million in American claims against Mexico, Mexico cedes about 525,000 square miles of territory to the U.S.

## 1850s

- The Gadsden Purchase, completed Dec. 30, 1853, adds a strip of land in present-day southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico to the U.S.
- The Supreme Court's March 6, 1857, Dred Scott decision rules that Scott, an enslaved man who had lived in free territory, was still a slave despite residing in a free state, and that he was not a U.S. citizen.



A "Wedding of the Rails" ceremony marks the first intercontinental railroad on May 10, 1869.

## 1860s

- Eleven southern states secede from the federal Union as they seek to establish a confederacy where slavery is protected. The North insists that secession is unconstitutional and is willing to use military force to keep the South in the Union. The result is a costly and bloody Civil War that lasts from 1861 to 1865.
- President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, declaring enslaved people in Confederate-held territory to be free. The 13th Amendment abolishes slavery in December 1865. The 14th Amendment (1868) grants citizenship to those born or naturalized in the U.S. and guarantees equal protection. The 15th Amendment (1870) prohibits states from denying the right to vote based on race. Lincoln is assassinated in April 1865 and does not live to see the amendments ratified.
- In 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton found the National Woman Suffrage Association.
- Congress passes the Pacific Railway Act in 1862, authorizing the construction of the first transcontinental railroad. By 1900, five railroads connect the Eastern United States and the Pacific Coast.



A soldier guards a cannon during the Civil War in City Point, Va.

## 1870s

- The U.S. Army Signal Service issues the nation's first official weather forecast.
- President Ulysses S. Grant signs legislation designating Yellowstone the first national park on March 1, 1872.

## 1880s

- President James Garfield is shot on July 2, 1881, by Charles Guiteau, a disappointed office-seeker. Garfield dies Sept. 19.
- The Statue of Liberty arrives in New York Harbor as a gift from France in June 1885.
- Between 1870 and 1900, nearly 12 million immigrants arrive in the U.S., many from Germany, Ireland and England. Large numbers of Chinese immigrants also arrive in the 19th century. But the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 largely halts their migration.

## 1890s

- The Ellis Island Immigration Station begins processing immigrants Jan. 1, 1892.
- On Aug. 28, 1894, Congress passes the first peacetime federal income tax.

## 1900s

- On Sept. 6, 1901, Leon Czolgosz shoots President William McKinley, who dies Sept. 14.
- Orville and Wilbur Wright are the first to fly a controlled, powered and sustained heavier-than-air airplane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on Dec. 17, 1903.
- Henry Ford begins production of the Model T in 1908.
- More than 15 million immigrants arrive in the U.S. from 1900 to 1915, mostly coming from southern and eastern Europe, especially Italy, Poland and Russia.



The Wright brothers' famous flight took place Dec. 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, N.C.



World War I battlefield near Arras, France.

## 1910s

- The RMS Titanic strikes an iceberg April 14, 1912, and sinks early the next day.
- President Woodrow Wilson signs the Jones-Shafroth Act on March 2, 1917, granting U.S. citizenship to residents of Puerto Rico.
- War breaks out in Europe in the summer of 1914. While the U.S. tries to remain neutral, it is drawn into the conflict, declaring war on Germany on April 6, 1917. An armistice agreement Nov. 11, 1918, ends World War I.
- The 18th Amendment is ratified in 1919, banning the manufacture, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages. It's repealed in 1933.
- From spring 1918 to spring 1919, three waves of the Spanish flu sweep the country, killing 675,000 Americans.
- Congress passes the 19th Amendment in 1919. It's ratified in 1920, granting women the right to vote.

## New Home Ownership Option for Adults (62+) Coming to Billings

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Email: [billings@reeddevelopment.com](mailto:billings@reeddevelopment.com)

For more details, visit:  
[www.villagecooperative.com](http://www.villagecooperative.com)



Home owners know that with the good comes the bad. There are a myriad of financial benefits to property ownership, but that also means bills, repairs, maintenance, and a number of other unpleasant surprises. As we age, these hassles become more draining.

Active adults now have a new option that allows

them to reap the financial rewards of home ownership, as well as the joy of a vibrant community, without all the difficulty: **The Village Cooperative of Billings.**

"The Village Cooperative coming to the Billings area provides active adults (62+) a new housing option that offers them home ownership—and all the financial and tax benefits



that go with it—without any of the headaches of maintenance, repairs or repair bills," says Steve Von Schmidt, VP of Marketing for the Village Cooperative.

"Finally, there is a housing option for seniors and retirees that is affordable and yet has all the amenities they want in their next home."

### NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION



Architectural rendering of the Village Cooperative of Billings (Image courtesy of Village Cooperative)

The Village Cooperative is a nationwide network of senior cooperative housing communities, sometimes called "co-ops." "While it's not a new concept, it is new to the Billings area," says Von Schmidt. "In fact, senior cooperatives have been around for over 40 years, primarily found throughout the Midwest." Real Estate Equities Development—the development company behind the Village Cooperatives—has been in business since 1972 with a primary focus on cooperatives since 2003.

all maintenance costs for much less than a local apartment's rent, makes this a no-brainer for many people," says Von Schmidt. Additionally, he added that the sense of community created extends well beyond one's specific neighborhood. "In fact, we have members who communicate and have developed relationships with members in other cooperatives," he says.

Billings, with all of its cultural and recreational activities, made it a natural choice for this new Village

Cooperative location. "When we look to develop a new housing community for active adults, we carefully select the area using a whole host of data points," says Von Schmidt. "But these communities don't serve data points, they serve real people. That is why we are so excited about our Village Cooperative community that is coming soon to the Billings area. It is an opportunity for residents in the area to stay close to friends & family in a fantastic location and still be active in the local community."



their home's interior finishes to suit their personal tastes," says Von Schmidt. Each home is equipped with a washer and dryer, in-home storage, walk-in closets and individually-controlled HVAC systems. Starting at about 900 square feet to well over 1,500 square feet, the homes are carefully laid out in a secure, three story building that includes a number of amenities for residents, such as a club room, reading areas, hobby/shop space, guest suite, a central elevator and exterior garden plots. The underground temperature-controlled garage even features a car wash bay. For active travelers or those who choose to live elsewhere part of the year, The Village Cooperative offers comprehensive "while you're away" services.

each other as much and have little or no say in how the property is managed." Furthermore, The Village Cooperative provides an active and social alternative to assisted living for seniors who are ready to spend less time worrying about home maintenance and more time doing the things they love, with the ones they love.

Pre-opening reservations are being taken for the Village Cooperative of Billings and homes are selling fast. Now is the time to reserve your place in this active new senior housing community. "Now with 51 locations operating, under construction or planned for construction in the coming year, we are the national leader and believe this is the best option available with all the amenities and at such a great value," says Steve Von Schmidt.



There are two primary costs associated with cooperative living: the equity share purchase, which is a one-time payment based on the size of your home; and the monthly fee for operating expenses. Upon purchase of a home, each individual within the community owns an equity share in the Cooperative Corporation. The value of this equity share will increase in a predictable way, appreciating at 3 percent for every year that members live at the Village Cooperative. "The fact that the equity goes back to our members with a three percent annual equity increase, and the monthly payment includes

**"It's different from other senior housing because it provides all the amenities for a fraction of the price of a patio- or ranch-style home in the area."**

The Village Cooperative of Billings will feature 58 homes available in a variety of spacious designs, from one bedroom/one bathroom to two bedroom/two bathroom homes, some with dens. "Those who reserve soon can choose



While these amenities contribute to the ease and convenience of cooperative living, it is your neighbors who will bring joy to life at the Village Cooperative. "The people really make the cooperative their own and each has its own personality," says Von Schmidt. "It's different from other senior housing because it provides all the amenities for a fraction of the price of a patio- or ranch-style home in the area. It's better than a condo because resident members own a share in the entire development and with that ownership comes a sense of pride and commitment not seen in condos or townhomes, where residents don't engage with

Contact Rhonda today at **(406) 831-0331** to attend an upcoming free informational seminar & get more details about this new community. For more information, visit: [VillageCooperative.com](http://VillageCooperative.com)



**Local Office:**  
300 S. 24th St. West  
(In Rimrock Mall)  
Billings, MT 59102

**Moments**

From 16

**1920s**

- Charles Lindbergh lands the Spirit of St. Louis plane in Paris on May 21, 1927, completing the first solo nonstop trans-Atlantic flight.
- The Great Depression begins with the stock market crash of October 1929. Black Tuesday, on Oct. 29, 1929, marks one of the market's steepest declines. As stocks continue to fall during the early 1930s, businesses fail, unemployment rises, people lose life savings and families are forced out of their homes.

**1930s**

- The Great Plains suffers a severe drought in what becomes known as the Dust Bowl. Thousands of farm families flee the region, many heading west in search of work.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected president in 1932 with plans to end the Great Depression. He establishes bank reforms, emergency and work relief programs, union protections, agricultural programs and the Social Security Act.
- Pilot Amelia Earhart disappears over the Pacific Ocean on July 2, 1937, while trying to circumnavigate the globe.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PHOTOS

Aftermath of an April 1936 dust storm in Oklahoma.

**1940s**

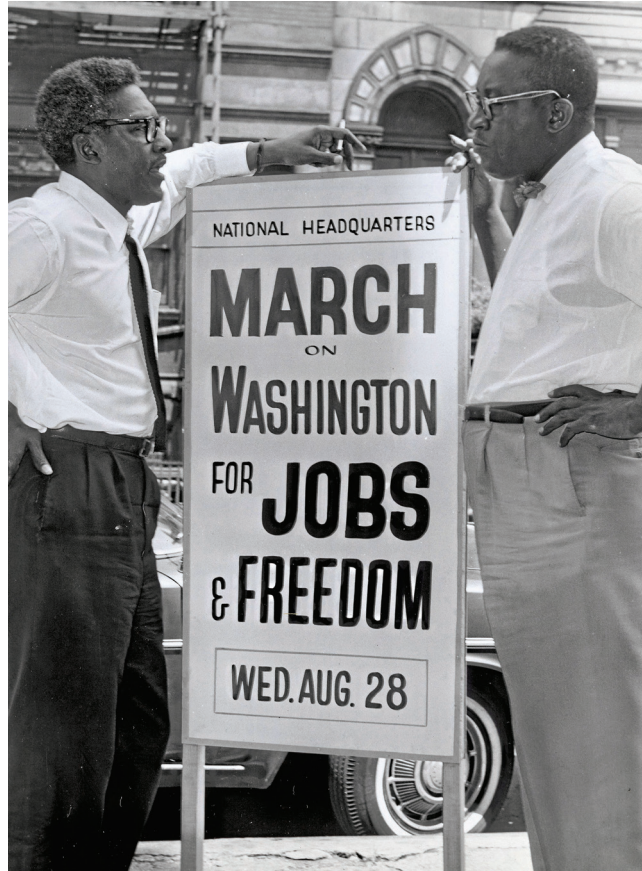
- The U.S. is drawn into World War II with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. The U.S. declares war on Japan, and Germany and Italy then declare war on the U.S. Germany surrenders in May 1945. The U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, on Aug. 6 and Aug. 9, 1945. Japan surrenders soon after.



■ After about 14 years, carving at Mount Rushmore National Memorial concludes in October 1941 in Keystone, South Dakota.

**1950s**

- After WWII, the rise of atomic weapons, along with competing ideologies of the U.S. and Soviet Union, set into motion an era of mistrust known as the Cold War. Nuclear drills and fear of nuclear war become part of life.
- The Korean War begins in 1950 when North Korea invades South Korea. The U.S. supports South Korea, sending nearly 1.8 million U.S. service members to fight between 1950 and 1953.
- In Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court rules unanimously in 1954 that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," overturning legal segregation in public schools.
- On Oct. 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launches the first artificial satellite, Sputnik-1. It shocks Americans, who had hoped the U.S. would be first. The U.S. launches its first satellite, the Explorer 1, on Jan. 31, 1958.



Bayard Rustin, left, and Cleveland Robinson, organizers of the Aug. 28, 1963, March on Washington.

**1960s**

- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., launches a campaign of demonstrations and marches in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 to protest the city's segregation policies.
- In August 1963, hundreds of thousands of people arrive in Washington, D.C., in one of the largest-ever civil rights demonstrations in the U.S. It ends with King's "I Have a Dream" speech.
- President John F. Kennedy is assassinated Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.
- The Civil Rights Act passes in 1964, followed by the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Together, they outlaw discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin; ban discrimination in public accommodations, public education and employment; and prohibit race-based restrictions on voting.
- The U.S. 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade arrives in Vietnam on March 8, 1965.
- King is assassinated April 4, 1968, as he stands on a balcony at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.
- On July 20, 1969, Apollo 11 becomes the first manned mission to land on the moon.



JIM HANSEN, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

American soldiers outdoors with equipment on Aug. 13, 1969, in Vietnam.

**1970s**

- The Watergate scandal begins with the 1972 burglary of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. Two years of investigations lead to the resignation of President Richard Nixon on Aug. 9, 1974.
- In 1972, Congress passes Title IX legislation that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions and programs receiving federal funding.
- In Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court rules in 1973 that the Constitution protects a woman's right to abortion, subject to certain limitations.
- Most U.S. military personnel leave Vietnam in 1973. Saigon falls to North Vietnamese forces on April 30, 1975, marking the end of the Vietnam War.
- NASA's Viking 1 spacecraft lands on Mars on July 20, 1976.

**1980s**

- AIDS is identified in 1981 and becomes a major public health crisis. By 1992, AIDS is the leading cause of death among U.S. men ages 25 to 44.
- The Space Shuttle Challenger explodes 73 seconds after liftoff on Jan. 28, 1986, killing all seven crew members.
- The stock market loses 22.6% of its value on Black Monday, Oct. 19, 1987. Stock markets around the world plunge, sparking fears of another crash and Depression, but it doesn't materialize.

**1990s**

- On Aug. 2, 1990, the Iraqi army invades Kuwait. When negotiations fail, a U.S.-led coalition of military forces attacks Iraq in January 1991 and liberates Kuwait on Feb. 26, 1991.
- In 1998, President Bill Clinton issued an executive order prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal civilian workforce.
- Impeachment proceedings begin against Clinton on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. On Dec. 19, 1998, the House votes in favor of two articles of impeachment. The Senate holds a trial and acquits Clinton on Feb. 12, 1999.



Smoke billows Sept. 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center in New York after a terrorist attack.

**2000s**

- On Sept. 11, 2001, hijacked airplanes crash into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing nearly 3,000 people.
- The U.S. leads an invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 to remove the Taliban government that had sheltered al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. The 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was often linked to the broader war on terrorism, though Iraq was not involved in the 9/11 attacks.
- On Feb. 1, 2003, the Space Shuttle Columbia breaks apart during reentry, killing all seven astronauts.
- Hurricane Katrina, one of the costliest hurricanes in U.S. history, hits southeast Louisiana on Aug. 29, 2005.
- U.S. housing prices peak in 2006 and begin to decline, contributing to rising mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures. The housing downturn helps trigger the financial crisis of 2007-09 and the Great Recession.
- Barack Obama is elected president Nov. 4, 2008, and becomes the country's first Black president.

**2010s**

- On May 2, 2011, U.S. Navy Seals raid a residence in Pakistan and kill Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
- The Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, passes in 2010 and mostly takes effect on Jan. 1, 2014, marking the largest expansion of social welfare in decades and providing healthcare to millions of Americans.
  - In the 2015 case of Obergefell v. Hodges, the Supreme Court rules that the right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples and that all states must recognize marriages of other states.

**2020s**

- In January 2020, the first confirmed COVID-19 case is reported in the United States. The pandemic ultimately kills more than 1 million Americans.
- Black Lives Matter protests surge with the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis while he is being restrained by police May 25, 2020.
- On Nov. 3, 2020, Democrat Joe Biden defeats incumbent GOP President Donald Trump. Biden's running mate, Kamala Harris, becomes the nation's first female, Black and Asian vice president.
- On Jan. 6, 2021, the U.S. Capitol is attacked by a crowd trying to stop Congress from certifying the electoral votes of the 2020 presidential election.
- Trump becomes the first and only U.S. president to be impeached twice – first in 2019-20 and again in 2021. The Senate acquits him both times.
- The U.S. evacuates more than 120,000 Americans, allies and Afghan civilians from Afghanistan in August 2021, ending the U.S. military mission there after nearly 20 years.
- In 2022, the Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade and establishes that abortion is not a constitutional right, leaving abortion laws to the states.



President Barack Obama talks about the nation's housing recovery and unveils a new plan to boost homeownership during a speech on Jan. 8, 2015, in Phoenix.

USA TODAY NETWORK

Compiled by Robyn Gautschy Skaggs, Lee Enterprises. Sources include Library of Congress, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of State's Office of the Historian, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA Today

We the People  
Article I

1776



2026

# 250 YEARS OF AMERICAN COURAGE

OUR HISTORY. OUR RIGHTS. OUR TRADITION.



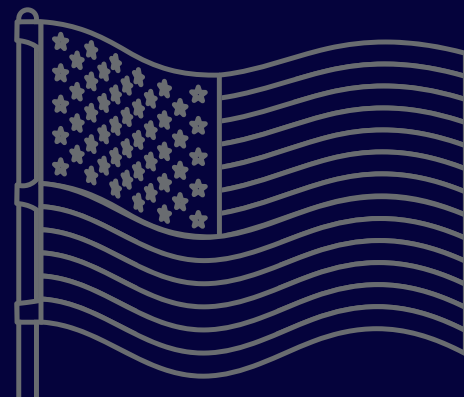
From the signing of the Declaration of Independence to the challenges of today, **AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS STOOD UP TO POWER TO PROTECT OUR RIGHTS AND OUR FREEDOMS.**

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# THE RISE AND FALL OF AN EMPIRE

A history of the rail industry in Montana



**TOP:** Engine 1530 of the Northern Pacific at Red Lodge, Montana.

**PHOTO BY WARREN MCGEE,** COURTESY OF THE MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**BOTTOM:** Amtrak used to run its North Coast Hiawatha train route through Billings, but the train ceased operation in October 1979. There have been multiple attempts to restore the North Coast Hiawatha, but the costs necessary were determined to be too high.

BILLINGS GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

EVAN BUTOW | ebutow@billingsgazette.com

In the mid-1870s, investors in Utah and railroad barons from around the country saw an opportunity.

If they could build a railway north, connecting the newly completed Union Pacific transcontinental railroad to the emerging mines in Montana, they could make an immense financial profit by transporting raw materials to the rest of the country.

In support of this goal, they formed what became known as the Utah and Northern Railway and started construction in earnest.

Beginning in Ogden, Utah, the railroad worked its way north over the years, snaking through northern Utah and eastern Idaho before eventually crossing into Montana via Monida Pass on May 9, 1880. It was the first railway to enter the then-Montana Territory.

Construction eventually reached the mines of Butte in 1881 before hitting its northern terminus in Garrison, connecting to another transcontinental railroad, the Northern Pacific.

In the decades that followed, a sprawling network of railways appeared around the territory ushering in a new age of settlement and development. Montana was transformed from one of the last vestiges of the mythical American West into its 41st state.

## Transcontinental railways and the Empire Builder-

While the Utah and Northern Railway was the first railroad to enter Montana, it was not nearly the largest nor the most impactful.

The Northern Pacific Railroad, first chartered by Congress in 1864 and the northernmost of the country's land-grant railroads, first crossed into the eastern part of Montana territory in 1881.

Construction on the Northern Pacific finished in late 1883 when the company's two construction crews met near Gold Creek in modern day Powell County. A grand ceremony was held to commemorate the occasion on Sept. 8, 1883, and the final "golden spike" of the railway was driven into the ground by former president and Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant.

Only a few years later, a railroad baron based out of St. Paul, Minnesota, named James Jerome Hill formed the Montana Central



JAKE IVERSON, BILLINGS GAZETTE

Grain elevators rise above the central Montana town of Hobson, population 179. The town was established along a spur line of the Great Northern Railway.

Railway along with several influential local businessmen. Their goal was to construct a rail line between the towns of Helena, Great Falls and Butte.

Much like the founders of Utah and Northern, Hill was looking to profit from the transportation of raw materials from the mines in Helena and Butte.

At the same time construction on the Montana Central was being completed, another rail line owned by Hill — the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway — was expanding westward across the northern part of the state.

The two lines linked in Great Falls in 1887 and afterward Hill consolidated both, along with several other of his rail holdings, into a new company, the Great Northern Railway.

Afterward, the Great Northern expanded westward at a rapid pace, topping Marias Pass through the Continental Divide in December 1889 and completing a golden spike ceremony near Scenic, Washington, on Jan. 6, 1893. For his determination to build a railroad across the far northern reaches of the United States, Hill was christened "The Empire Builder" by admirers.

In the years following the completion of the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern, a third transcontinental railroad, the Milwaukee Road, made its way through the central part of the state and many more smaller rail lines were constructed.

Overall, several thousand miles of railroads were constructed

across the state. While an accurate total historical count has remained elusive, the Montana Department of Transportation counted around 3,000 miles of rail still active in December 2024.

Once completed, the transcontinental railroads ushered in a new age for the United States. For the first time in the nation's history, large numbers of people as well as large quantities of goods and services could safely, affordably and reliably travel from coast to coast.

## Population boom

Thousands of laborers were required to build and operate the new railways and, as a result, Montana's population exploded.

Federal census records from 1880 show the total population of Montana Territory at 39,150. Forty years later, in 1920, the state's population had increased 14-fold to just under 550,000.

Railroad workers and their families needed places to live, eat and enjoy themselves. Existing cities such as Bozeman, Missoula and Great Falls saw their populations explode while towns such as Havre, Livingston, Laurel and Whitefish were specifically founded because of their designations as railroad hubs.

Perhaps the most famous of Montana's railroad towns is its largest city, Billings.

Named after Frederick Billings, the president of the Northern Pacific Railway from 1879 to 1881, the city earned the moniker "The Magic City" for developing into a major population center

seemingly overnight after its March 1882 founding.

Statewide infrastructure soon followed, largely along the route of the Northern Pacific.

"Because of the Northern Pacific route through southern Montana that was in existence when it became a state in 1889, to this day most of the Montana state institutions are located along the Northern Pacific," Dale Martin, author of "Ties, Rails, and Telegraph Wires; Railroads and Communities in Montana and the West," and former Montana State history instructor, said of the development of Montana's statewide infrastructure following the railroads.

## Copper, Cattle and Lumber

The dawn of the railroad also allowed Montana to flex its industrial muscle as not only did the railways allow the exportation of raw materials, but they also let companies such as the Anaconda Copper Mining Company bring in new technology to increase their production and diversify their businesses.

Founded in Butte in 1881, Anaconda Copper was arguably the most successful of all of Montana's businesses in leveraging the railways for their own financial gain.

Raw copper mined in Butte could be shipped and subsequently sold all over the country, or to the company's succession of smelters in Anaconda — constructed using materials shipped

in by rail — where it was refined and sold for an even higher price.

So successful was Anaconda Copper that at its peak in the 1920s it was estimated the company produced a quarter of the world's copper supply and carried a total value of \$500 million. It also owned several daily newspapers in Montana including the Billings Gazette, Montana Standard, Missoulian and Helena Independent Record. Anaconda sold them all to Lee Enterprises in 1959.

Much like the state's mining, Montana's lumber industry also exploded following the arrival of the railroads as copper mining and railroad construction both required extensive amounts of timber.

Anaconda Copper operated its own lumber division, known as the Big Blackfoot Milling Company, for decades centered around a sawmill in Bonner. James Hill also dipped into the lumber business, owning the Somers Lumber Company based out of Somers, whose mills churned out thousands of rail ties a year.

Finally, the railways also helped give rise to the third and final prong of Montana's industrial economic powerhouses, the agricultural industry.

Homesteading acts and marketing campaigns from the railroads helped create a "homesteading boom" in Montana in the early 1900s as settlers and immigrants from all over the world came to Montana over the rails seeking to make a life for themselves and their families.

Trying to attract homesteaders to little populated, very dry southeastern Montana, the Milwaukee Road released an ad showing a settler plowing up a field, gold coins spilling out of the earth.

"Hypnotized by the powerful sway of a well-financed propaganda machine, homesteaders flooded into Montana. Between 1900 and 1909, a veritable tsunami of settlement descended upon the state," Derek Strahn wrote on the influence of the railroads' marketing campaigns in a column for the University of Montana's "This Is Montana" page.

Just as the railroads brought mass numbers of homesteaders, they also began to export large amounts of agricultural products, such as grains and cattle, out of the state.



# As American as ...

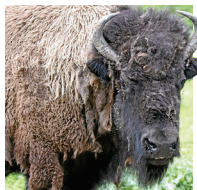
7 official symbols of the United States as ...

COMPILED BY ROBYN GAUTSCHY SKAGGS, LEE ENTERPRISES

Hot dogs, apple pie, baseball, Uncle Sam, the Statue of Liberty, the American Dream, the Liberty Bell — a long list of words comes to mind when we think “America.” But in actuality, Congress has designated only seven national symbols, as laid out in Title 36 of the U.S. Code. Here’s a look at them.

### National mammal: North American bison

Congress designated the North American bison as the national mammal in 2016. The Congressional Record called the bison a “unifying symbol” of the U.S., noting how the species was once abundant, almost went extinct by the 1880s and was restored by a number of collaborative efforts. The record also noted the bison’s importance to Native Americans, and emphasized the animal’s restoration on tribal lands.



### National motto: ‘In God we trust’

Congress adopted “In God we trust” as the national motto in 1956. Congress previously ordered the phrase to be placed on certain coins, and in 1955 made it mandatory on all currency and coins of the United States.



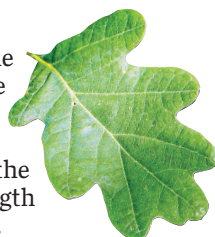
### National floral emblem: The rose

Congress designated the rose as the national floral emblem in 1986 and asked that the president issue a proclamation, which Ronald Reagan did on Nov. 20 of that year. The rose was chosen because it is native to North America, can be found in every state and represents “love, friendship, peace” and Americans’ devotion to their country, according to the congressional resolution.



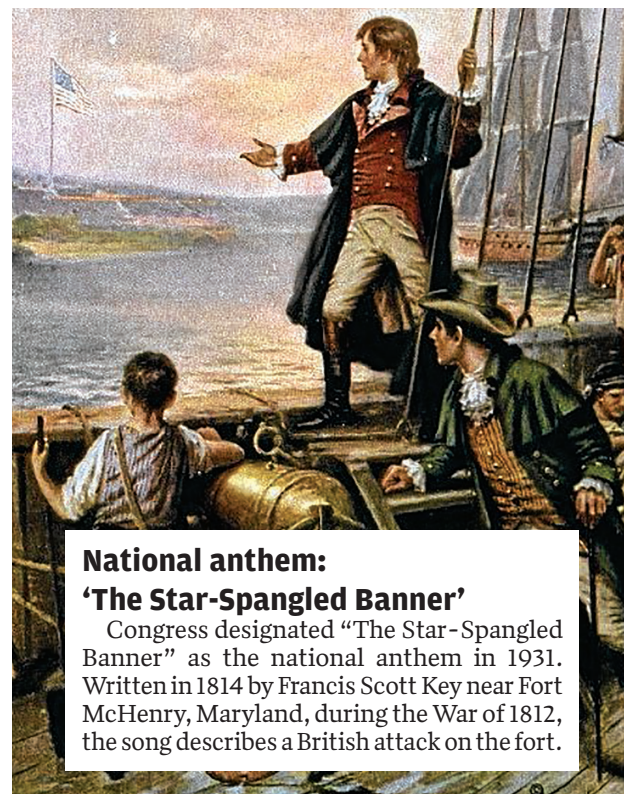
### National tree: Oak

Congress recognized the oak as the national tree in 2004, noting the tree is common in all 50 states and several states had already chosen the oak as their state tree. Congress also noted the tree’s roles in U.S. history and its strength and durability as a building material.



### National bird: Bald eagle

The bald eagle officially became the national bird in 2024. As noted in House debate on the legislation, “since 1782, the bald eagle has been a symbol of America featured on the Great Seal; however, it has never been officially designated as the national bird. It remains a symbol of freedom across the country.” The eagle also appears on military flags and insignia, U.S. passports, flags and seals of several states, on money and in variations of the Great Seal used by the president, House of Representatives, Senate and federal agencies and departments. The designation also noted the eagle’s role in Native American belief systems and traditions.

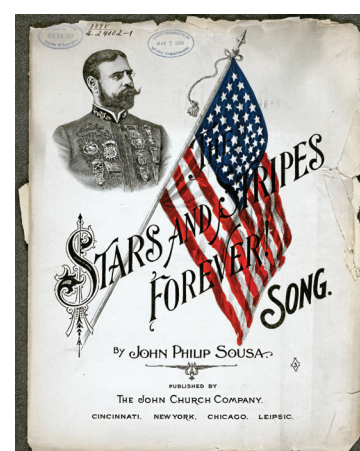


### National anthem: ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’

Congress designated “The Star-Spangled Banner” as the national anthem in 1931. Written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key near Fort McHenry, Maryland, during the War of 1812, the song describes a British attack on the fort.

### National march: ‘The Stars and Stripes Forever’

Congress designated John Philip Sousa’s “The Stars and Stripes Forever” as the national march in 1987. First performed in 1897, the march had become “an integral part of the celebrations of American life and in many ways, already is the de facto national march,” according to the Congressional Record.



IMAGES: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, ADOBE STOCK, LEE FILE

Source: congress.gov

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## Empire

From 20

Hundreds of grain elevators began dotting the skyline, storing and loading massive amounts of grain onto railcars. Stockyards too began to crop up around the state, serving as meeting places for ranchers to gather cattle before shipping them out of state via rail.

Montana's industrial sector powered its economy for many years, but the passage of time brought the decline of the state's mining and lumber industries. Anaconda Copper sold to the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) in 1977, and the timber mill in Bonner finally shut down in 2008.

Despite its decline, the industrial sector remains a significant part of Montana's economy, largely powered by modern freight rail.

Now dominated by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, or BNSF, a study of 2022 rail data from the Association of American Railroads estimated the industry supported around 2,700 jobs across the state and originated nearly 5 million tons of agricultural products shipped across the country.

"It would have taken 5.4 million trucks to handle the freight that moved by rail in Montana in 2022," the AAR wrote on the study's webpage.

### The human cost of rail

For as much as they contributed to the development of Montana, the railroads also left a trail of destruction in their wake.

Rail workers, especially immigrant laborers from sections of Europe and eastern Asia, were severely exploited by the companies they worked for. Workdays on the railroad were long and conditions were harsh and unforgiving. Many workers died along the way.

Unfortunately, many of these "laborers were not afforded much more respect in death than in life, sometimes being buried in mass unmarked gravesites.

In 2019, one of these sites was discovered near the ghost town of Taft in the Bitterroot Mountains. Subsequent work on the site revealed the remains of as many as 72 rail workers.

In the years following the railroads' completion, historians have never been able to accurately place the number of laborers who died, not just in Montana but across the country during the construction of the railroads.

Montana's Native American tribes were also severely impacted by the railroads. By the time the railroads made their way to Montana Territory in the 1880s, the plains tribes had already seen their way of life severely disrupted through the overhunting of bison by white settlers and continued conflicts with the United States military.

The railroads, however, arguably dealt many tribes their final blow, carving out large sections of their territory and permanently forcing many onto reservations.

To finance the construction of the Northern Pacific Railway, the federal government devised the checkerboard system in which alternating plots of land were granted to the privately held railroads while the government retained ownership of the other half.

The rail companies were then free to do with these plots of land as they wished and many along the Northern Pacific line were sold to other private interests to help raise needed capital.

Much of the land the federal government gave away to the railroads in Montana was land previously set aside in treaties as belonging to Native American tribes such as the Crow and Northern Cheyenne.

Unlike its southern counterpart, the Great Northern Railway was not formally aided by federal land grants. As he was not directly granted any land by the government, James Hill went about more duplicitous means of acquiring it.

Hill, his financial partners and his allies in Washington, D.C., waged many pressure campaigns focused on convincing tribes like the Blackfeet, Assiniboine, Salish and Kootenai to sell their land to the federal government, which would then sell the land to Hill and his railway at greatly reduced rates.

Already faced with the loss of their traditional livelihoods primarily through the overhunting of bison, these coercive land transfers proved to be the final blow for many tribes in Montana, forcing them onto reservations still in existence today.

### Modern solutions for centuries-old problems

When rail towns began cropping up across the state, some, like Laurel, were planned using the "T" method, wherein development built out perpendicular to the railroads on the same side as the train depot. In others, like Billings, development cropped up on both sides of the tracks.

To the present day, Billings and the state of Montana are still dealing with the after-effects of this decision.

The Billings Bypass, a roadway with sections crossing over the railroad connecting Billings Heights with Lockwood, is currently under construction at a cost of roughly \$127 million and is expected to be finished by 2029.

Concurrently, the city is also looking at options to increase the clearance on its notoriously low 21st Street underpass, still owned by BNSF Railway, with price



JAKE IVerson, BILLINGS GAZETTE

The Milwaukee Road railroad – the tracks long since pulled up – leaves a ghostly grade along U.S. Route 12 west of Ingomar.



CONTRIBUTED MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY / PAC 87-23.A1 P053A

5 men standing before the opening of Chicago, Milwaukee and Puget Sound Railroad's St. Paul Pass Tunnel near the Montana-Idaho border in 1908. 72 laborers are estimated to have died during the construction of this particular rail tunnel.



CONTRIBUTED BY MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY / PAC 82-62.0412

An electric train in Silver Bow Canyon, Montana, pulling cars filled with ore from mines at Butte, Montana, to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company smelter in Anaconda, Montana. The train is on a railroad bridge above the Silver Bow Creek.

estimates ranging anywhere from \$8 million to \$30 million.

The city of Laurel, in which development primarily occurred on its northern side, is not currently facing any similar issues.

Another legacy of the railroads still causing problems today is corner crossing, a method of diagonal property hopping and a long-lost remnant of the checkerboarding system.

Over the century-plus since its inception, much of the land originally granted to the railroads has changed hands many times while much of the land retained by the government is still under federal control.

This confusing mix of public and private property lines caused many problems, particularly for hunters.

While on public lands, some hunters would chase game diagonally from one section of public land to the other, or "corner crossing." Many property owners took issue with the practice, arguing

it was a violation of their property rights. Many court battles occurred over the years trying to force the government to decide on the issue once and for all.

In late 2025, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the practice of corner crossing legal in Wyoming. However, state officials in Montana, under the jurisdiction of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, quickly confirmed the practice was still illegal across the state.

As has happened so often in other areas of American history, a lack of foresight in planning from railroad barons in Montana has evolved over time and continues to cause problems for present generations to solve.

### Death by automobile

As much as the railroads relied on money from industry and the transport of raw materials for their rapid expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so too did they rely on revenues brought in from passenger rail services.

Much like they did with homesteaders, the railroads extensively marketed the beauty of Montana's natural landscapes, trying to attract passengers while also helping to spread the myth of the "pristine wilderness."

Again, much like their marketing campaigns to attract homesteaders, the railroads' nature marketing campaigns were wildly successful and helped bring about the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and Glacier National Park in 1910.

Originally owned by the Blackfeet Tribe, a pressure campaign from James Hill and the allies of the Great Northern Railway played a large role in the federal government purchasing the tract of land from the tribe and creating Glacier National Park. In modern times, Glacier is one of only two of the country's 63 national parks with an Amtrak station inside its borders.

Like its industrial sector, increased passenger rail services helped Montana boom economically in the early 20th century, with the increased freedom of movement giving more individuals opportunities for financial gain than ever before.

However, also like the state's industrial sector, passenger rail services sharply declined over the course of the 20th century until Amtrak took over services in 1971. While many factors contributed to its decline, arguably the two largest were the rise of the automobile and the creation of the federal interstate system.

Cars acted as a great economic equalizer, even more so than passenger rail, giving individuals almost total autonomy over their travel schedules.

"Someone in Glendive who's going to Montana State University in 1955 probably took one of the two trains. Put that same person in 1970, if one of their parents had given them a car they'd probably drive or they'd take the bus. The Interstate system really damaged what remained of passenger trains," Martin said of the impact automobiles and the federal highway system had on passenger rail service in Montana. "It gave people a lot of freedom, instead of scheduled stops, that person could drive from Glendive to Bozeman almost nonstop, maybe depending on how much coffee they drank."

Through the federal highway system, however, the impact of the rail industry also shines through as many highways closely follow routes originally mapped out by Montana's railroads.

"Take the Hi-Line, the former Great Northern runs pretty much next to U.S. Route 2 almost the whole length, especially across the Great Plains," Martin said. "Of course, if you're crossing Montana on I-94 you're going west and in Billings it becomes I-90, you're in view of what was the Northern Pacific and the Union Pacific between Silver Bow Butte and Ogden, Utah, is right next to I-15."

### A Big Sky Revival

When Amtrak took over passenger rail services across the country in 1971 until 1979, it operated two passenger rail lines across the state.

Along the old Great Northern, the Empire Builder route between Chicago and Washington state still operates with daily passenger rail service. Until its 1979 closure, Amtrak ran the North Coast Hiawatha route along the path of the old Northern Pacific, also from Chicago to Seattle.

After the North Coast Hiawatha closed, most of the state's largest population centers, such as Billings, Bozeman, Helena and Missoula, all lost passenger rail service and remain without it to the present day.

However, in the 21st century many local activists rallied around the idea of bringing Amtrak service back to southern Montana.

In 2023, several Montana counties formed the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority, an intergovernmental agency with the goal of restoring a portion of the old North Coast Hiawatha Line by the mid-2030s and reviving memories of Montana's former railroad empire.

# Seeing stars

As each state joined the Union, the American flag gained a star

**▲ 13 STARS**  
1777-1795  
Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island



**20 STARS**  
1818-July 3, 1819  
Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi



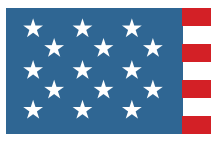
**23 STARS**  
July 4, 1820-July 3, 1822  
Alabama, Maine



**25 STARS**  
July 4, 1836-July 3, 1837  
Arkansas



**27 STARS**  
July 4, 1845-July 3, 1846  
Florida



**15 STARS**  
1795-1818  
Vermont, Kentucky



**21 STARS**  
July 4, 1819-July 3, 1820  
Illinois



**24 STARS**  
July 4, 1822-July 3, 1836  
Missouri



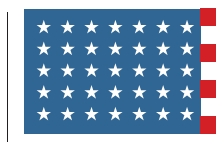
**26 STARS**  
July 4, 1837-July 3, 1845  
Michigan



**28 STARS**  
July 4, 1846-July 3, 1847  
Texas



**29 STARS**  
July 4, 1847-July 3, 1848  
Iowa



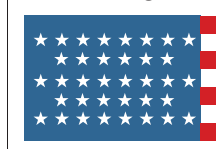
**35 STARS**  
July 4, 1863-July 3, 1865  
West Virginia



**44 STARS**  
July 4, 1891-July 3, 1896  
Wyoming



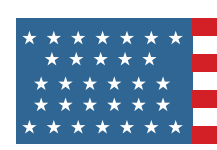
**30 STARS**  
July 4, 1848-July 3, 1851  
Wisconsin



**36 STARS**  
July 4, 1865-July 3, 1867  
Nevada



**45 STARS**  
July 4, 1896-July 3, 1908  
Utah



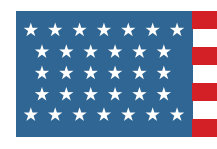
**31 STARS**  
July 4, 1851-July 3, 1858  
California



**37 STARS**  
July 4, 1867-July 3, 1877  
Nebraska



**46 STARS**  
July 4, 1908-July 3, 1912  
Oklahoma



**32 STARS**  
July 4, 1858-July 3, 1859  
Minnesota



**38 STARS**  
July 4, 1877-July 3, 1890  
Colorado



**48 STARS**  
July 4, 1912-July 3, 1959  
New Mexico, Arizona



**33 STARS**  
July 4, 1859-July 3, 1861  
Oregon



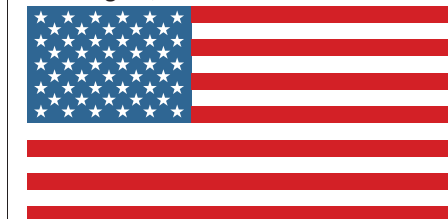
**43 STARS**  
July 4, 1890-July 3, 1891  
North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho



**49 STARS**  
July 4, 1912-July 3, 1960  
Alaska



**34 STARS**  
July 4, 1861-July 3, 1863  
Kansas



**50 STARS** July 4, 1960-present | Hawaii

**When are new stars added?**

The Flag Act of 1818 provided for 13 stripes and one star for each state to be added to the flag on the Fourth of July following the admission of each new state. James Monroe – the fifth president – was in office.

**What happened when states seceded?**

At no time did the national flag lose stars. Since the United States believed that secession from the Union was illegal, the flag continued to bear the stars of all the states of the Union, even the Southern states, during the Civil War.

**Did the American flag always have stars?**

America's first flags didn't have stars. Congress adopted the flag design with stars in 1777.  
Sources: Smithsonian, Library of Congress, National Parks Service, Adobe Stock



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