

SEPTEMBER 1776-2026 AMERICA 250

THIS MONTH IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Sept. 3, 1783

The United States of America and the British sign the Treaty of Paris, formally ending the Revolutionary War.

Sept. 13-14, 1814

Francis Scott Key writes “The Star-Spangled Banner” during the War of 1812’s Battle of Baltimore.

Sept. 1, 1864

Atlanta falls to Union forces.

Sept. 6, 1901

President William McKinley is shot and dies eight days later.

Sept. 16, 1920

Wall Street is bombed, killing 38 people. It is the deadliest act of terrorism on U.S. soil until the Oklahoma City bombing.

Sept. 16, 1940

The U.S. institutes its first peacetime military draft through the Selective Training and Service Act.

Sept. 2, 1945

Officials from Japan and the United States sign the Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri, officially ending World War II.

Sept. 23, 1957

President Dwight Eisenhower orders federal troops to Little Rock’s Central High School to enforce integration.

Sept. 26, 1960

Sen. John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon hold the first televised presidential debate.

Sept. 20, 1962

James Meredith attempts to become the first Black student at the University of Mississippi and is blocked by the governor, sparking a federal response.

Sept. 9-13, 1971

Attica prison uprising in upstate New York reveals inhumane conditions for inmates and comes to a deadly end when 500 law enforcement agents storm the prison. A longtime lawsuit ends in August 2000 with the prisoners receiving a \$12 million settlement.

Sept. 8, 1974

President Gerald Ford pardons Richard Nixon.

Sept. 17, 1978

Israel and Egypt sign the Camp David Accords, leading to an eventual peace treaty and shared Nobel Peace Prize. The pivotal moment for American diplomacy is witnessed by U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Sept. 6, 1995

The Baltimore Orioles’ Cal Ripken Jr. breaks Lou Gehrig’s consecutive games streak of 2,130 and goes on to play 502 more consecutive games.

Sept. 21, 1996

U.S. President Bill Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act into law, defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman, banning same-sex marriage in the country.

Sept. 8, 1998

The St. Louis Cardinals’ Mark McGwire breaks the single-season home run record in a race with the Chicago Cubs’ Sammy Sosa that reinvigorates interest in baseball following the 1994 players strike.

TERRORISTS STRIKE U.S. ON 9/11

Nineteen terrorists from the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four jetliners and, in a coordinated effort, flew or attempted to fly them into iconic American buildings on Sept. 11, 2001.

Two planes struck the World Trade Center in New York City, one plane crashed into the Pentagon in Virginia and the fourth plane — likely targeting the White House or the U.S. Capitol — was overtaken by passengers and crew, crashing into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

A total of 2,996 people were killed, including 2,763 at the World Trade Center, where the infernos caused by the crashes caused the buildings to collapse.

Among the dead in NYC were 343 fire-fighters and paramedics, 23 New York City police officers and 37 Port Authority police officers who were attempting to evacuate buildings and save office workers trapped on the upper floors.

The events dwarfed the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing, which killed 168 people, to become the deadliest terror attack on American soil.

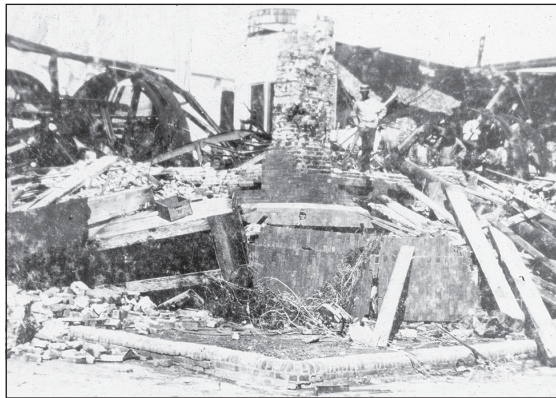
The U.S. response to the attacks included the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the military invasion of Afghanistan and the eventual killing of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.



The Associated Press file photo

Smoke rises from the burning twin towers of the World Trade Center after hijacked planes crashed into the towers on Sept. 11, 2001, in New York City.

BY THE NUMBERS: GALVESTON HURRICANE



National Archives

The hurricane that destroyed Galveston, Texas, on Sept. 8, 1900, remains the nation’s deadliest national disaster 126 years later. Data, including the death toll, are imprecise but staggering:

8,000	15.7 feet	2,636
Galveston residents killed. Two other cities on the island were devastated, bringing the estimated island death toll to as many as 12,000.	Estimated high-water mark from a storm wave that caused most of the damage. The sudden rise in water depth left the entire city inundated.	Number of houses destroyed in Galveston.
		\$28-\$30M
		Cost of property losses in the city.
		120 mph
		Estimated top speed of wind gusts. Gusts of 100 mph had been recorded before the instruments were blown away.
300 feet or 1,500 acres		
Amount of shoreline destroyed by the storm.		



16TH STREET CHURCH BOMBING

A bombing killed four little girls — 14-year-olds Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson and 11-year-old Cynthia Wesley — who were preparing to take part in the Sunday adult service on Youth Day at the 16th

Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on Sept. 15, 1963.

The attack shocked the nation and drew international attention to the civil rights fight in Birmingham. More than 8,000 people attended the girls’ funerals.

DEFINING AMERICA

September was a busy month for the United States of America’s founders and people who defined what it meant to be an American.

On Sept. 5, 1774, the First Continental Congress convened to determine retaliation for Britain’s Intolerable Acts — taxes on sugar, coffee, tea, molasses, printed documents, etc. Two years later, America declared its independence.

On Sept. 17, 1787, the U.S. Constitution was signed in Philadelphia, setting up the country’s federal government structure, dividing power to stop tyranny and protecting the basic human rights for citizens living in the country.

Two years and eight days later, on Sept. 25, 1789, Congress sent the Bill of Rights to states for ratification. The document included the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, further elaborating on the rights of Americans.

James Madison wrote the Bill of Rights and is considered the primary architect of the Constitution.



National Archives

THE AMERICAN MILITARY’S BLOODIEST DAY

Beyond the bloodshed and lives lost during the World Wars and every U.S. military operation since, the Battle of Antietam in Maryland during the U.S. Civil War remains the bloodiest single day in American military history.

The National Park Service describes the 12 hours of combat on Sept. 17, 1862, as savage. According to the service, 23,000 soldiers were killed, wounded or missing following the fight.

The battle ended the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia’s first invasion into the North and led to President Abraham Lincoln issuing the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation just five days later, on Sept. 22.

AMERICANS BORN THIS MONTH

- Samuel Adams, Sept. 27, 1722
- William Howard Taft, Sept. 15, 1857
- Jane Addams, Sept. 6, 1860
- Grandma Moses, Sept. 7, 1860
- Upton Sinclair, Sept. 20, 1878
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sept. 24, 1896
- William Faulkner, Sept. 25, 1897
- Warren Burger, Sept. 17, 1907
- Jesse Owens, Sept. 12, 1913
- Lauren Bacall, Sept. 16, 1924
- Truman Capote, Sept. 30, 1924
- BB King, Sept. 16, 1925
- Adam West, Sept. 19, 1928
- Arnold Palmer, Sept. 10, 1929
- Ray Charles, Sept. 23, 1930
- Roger Maris, Sept. 10, 1934
- Buddy Holly, Sept. 7, 1936
- Raquel Welch, Sept. 5, 1940
- Otis Redding, Sept. 9, 1941
- Bill Clinton, Sept. 19, 1946
- Stephen King, Sept. 21, 1947
- Bruce Springstreet, Sept. 23, 1949
- Bill Murray, Sept. 21, 1950
- Michael Keaton, Sept. 5, 1951
- Adam Sandler, Sept. 9, 1966
- Michael Johnson, Sept. 13, 1967
- Gwyneth Paltrow, Sept. 27, 1972
- Beyonce, Sept. 4, 1981
- Serena Williams, Sept. 26, 1981
- Hilary Duff, Sept. 28, 1987
- Zendaya, Sept. 1, 1996
- Jenna Ortega, Sept. 27, 2002

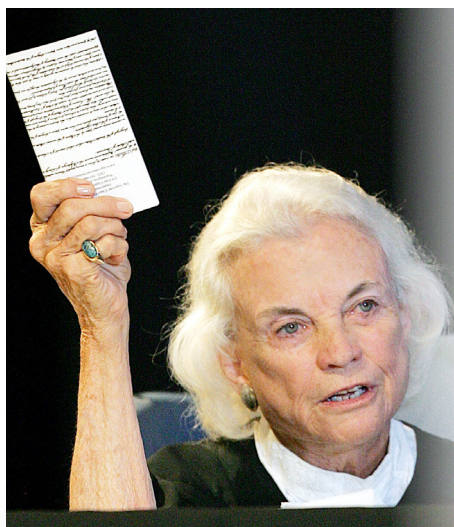
JUSTICE O’CONNOR MAKES HISTORY

Sandra Day O’Connor became the first woman justice on the United States Supreme Court on Sept. 25, 1981, ending 191 years of male exclusivity on the country’s highest court.

President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the court, where she served for 24 years and four months.

At left, she’s shown holding up a copy of the U.S. Constitution she carried with her.

She died Dec. 1, 2023. Her invitation-only memorial service was attended by hundreds.



JFK REPORT RELEASED

The Warren Commission’s report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy Jr. was made public on Sept. 27, 1964, to immediate speculation that gave rise to alternative theories about the killing.



The Associated Press file photo

President John F. Kennedy waves from his car in a motorcade about one minute before he was shot on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

LEHMAN BROS. AND THE GREAT RECESSION

On Sept. 15, 2008, investment banking behemoth Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy after losing 93% of its market share.

The company, which had embraced subprime lending, came to exemplify the global financial crisis that started in 2007 and 2008 and is considered the largest victim of the Great Recession.