

1920s TIME LINE

■ 1920

- Boxer Sugar Ray Robinson, known for being “as sweet as sugar” was born in Detroit.
- Boston Red Sox star Babe Ruth signed a contract of \$125,000 to play with the New York Yankees. A year later, Babe Ruth hit 59 home runs in a season.
- The prominent features of women’s clothing in the ’20s were short skirts, dropped waistlines, flapper dresses, and feathered headbands. Women’s fashions were deemed so revealing that Catholic Pope Pius XI urged a movement against them.
- Thoroughbred Man O’ War beat Triple Crown winner Sir Barton in Ontario, Canada, in one of our history’s most renowned matches. After winning 20 of 21 races, Man O’ War was retired.
- The U.S. Post Office Department ruled children could not be sent by parcel post.
- The 18th Amendment to the Constitution became law, prohibiting the making, selling, possession, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. (The law was repealed in 1933.)
- The American Professional Football Association was organized. In 1922, the APFA was renamed the National Football League.
- The Grand Canyon National Park was officially dedicated.
- Census reports showed the United States’ population at 117.8 million. For the first time in U.S. history, the urban population exceeded rural population. (The population of the U.S. in 2000 was 295 million.)
- The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was adopted and guaranteed all American women the right to vote.
- The Ku Klux Klan, revived in 1915, gained strength.

■ 1921

- The United States reported 9 million autos in 1920.
- First Miss America Pageant was held in Atlantic City.
- “Bobbed hair” became a fashion statement. Complementing bobbed hair was the cloche hat, which, when worn correctly, was pulled over the eyes, making the wearer have to lift up her head, giving the impression of peering arrogantly down her nose.
- The Ohio Bell Telephone Company formed.
- *Tarzan of the Apes* opened on Broadway to generally unfavorable reviews.
- Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics.
- “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier” was established with burial of an unknown soldier at the Arlington National Cemetery.

■ 1922

- *Reader’s Digest* debuted.
- Annie Oakley broke women’s trap shooting record, hitting 98 out of 100 targets.
- Gandhi was arrested and imprisoned for civil disobedience.
- The Lincoln Memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day in Washington, DC.
- Frances Ethel Gumm, better known as Judy Garland, was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.
- Johnny Weissmuller, who later was known as the movie screen’s Tarzan, was the first to break the one-minute mark in the 100-meter swim.
- Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone on March 10, 1876, died.
- Jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong left New Orleans to play jazz in Chicago with mentor, King Oliver. Armstrong is noted for many hits, including *What a Wonderful World*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Mack the Knife*, *It Takes Two to Tango*, and *Blueberry Hill*.
- A silent-screen version of *Robin Hood* starring Douglas Fairbanks premiered at the grand opening of Grauman’s Chinese Theatre in Hollywood.
- Insulin was isolated, marking the first successful treatment for diabetes.
- Tuberculosis vaccine was tried on children in France.

■ 1923

- First issue of *Time*, a weekly news magazine, was published.

- Dance marathons began to gain popularity. The one step, foxtrot, waltz, tango, shimmy, and Charleston were popular dance steps.
- First transcontinental airplane flight (from New York to San Diego) took 26 hours and 50 minutes.
- President Harding died of a stroke in a San Francisco hotel room. Calvin Coolidge succeeded him.
- An 8.3 magnitude earthquake destroyed one-third of Tokyo and Yokohama, Japan; 200,000 were killed with 800,000 casualties.
- Actor Charlton Heston, later known for his roles in *Ben Hur*, *Planet of the Apes*, and *Hamlet*, was born in Evanston, Illinois.
- Sigmund Freud published his famous work, *The Ego and the Id*.
- *Yes! We Have No Bananas* was a popular song sung by “Jelly Roll” Morton.

■ 1924

- First Winter Olympics was held in the French Alps.
- In Egypt, King Tut’s tomb was discovered and opened.
- KLEENEX® Facial Tissue was introduced, and a package of 100 sheets sold for 65 cents.
- J. Edgar Hoover’s temporary job for the Bureau of Investigations (later the FBI) became permanent on December 10.
- Congress declared American Indians to be U.S. citizens.
- RCA first transmitted pictures by wireless telegraph from London to New York.
- Film star Charlie Chaplin scandalously married 16-year-old Lita Grey. They divorced about a year later.
- The United States boasted of 2.5 million radio sets.

■ 1925

- Al Capone took control of the Chicago mob. Capone’s most notorious killing was the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre.
- Crossword puzzles gained popularity.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel, *The Great Gatsby*, was published.
- Malcolm X, African-American civil rights leader, was born in Omaha, Nebraska.
- Chrysler Corporation was founded.
- Hitler reorganized the Nazi party.

■ 1926

- Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky was dedicated. It is the longest recorded cave system in the world, with more than 360 miles explored and mapped.
- Norma Jean Mortenson Baker, a.k.a. Marilyn Monroe, was born in California.
- Jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman made his first record. His greatest hits include *Let’s Dance*, *Six Flats Unfurnished*, *Benny Rides Again*, and *Goodbye*.
- Henry Ford instituted a five-day workweek and eight-hour day at his auto plants to reduce overproduction.
- Houdini, the world’s most famous magician and illusionist, died from peritonitis resulting from appendicitis in Detroit.
- NBC, the National Broadcasting Co., was founded.
- Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* was introduced as the “Bear of Very Little Brain.”
- The first telephone call between New York and London took place.
- Aerosol spray was invented in Norway.
- The canine, Rin Tin Tin, was the biggest box-office star of the year.

■ 1927

- AT&T launched a commercial transatlantic telephone service to London using two-way radios. Initially, these calls cost \$75 for each three-minute call.
- The Supreme Court declared Texas law barring blacks from voting in the state’s primary election unconstitutional.

- Legendary Mae West was found guilty of obscenity by a court and sentenced to 10 days in jail for suggestive material and ad libs in her popular Broadway show, *Sex*.
- Charles Lindbergh, i.e., “Lucky Lindy,” made the first one-person, nonstop, transatlantic airplane flight, from New York to Paris, in his *Spirit of St. Louis* monoplane in just more than 33 hours and became a national hero.
- The “Iron Lung,” which helped polio victims breathe, was invented.
- Al Jolson starred in *The Jazz Singer*, the forerunner of sound pictures.
- In New York City, Gershwin’s *Funny Face*, starring Fred Astaire, premiered.
- The comic duo Laurel and Hardy gained popularity.

■ 1928

- Amelia Earhart was the first woman to fly an airplane across the Atlantic.
- In London, Alexander Fleming discovered a bacteria-killing compound, i.e., penicillin.
- Baird mechanical scanning disc television sets were presented to the public and considered to be the first commercially produced television sets in the world.
- The world’s first fully synchronized sound cartoon, Walt Disney’s *Steamboat Willy* starring Mickey Mouse, premiered at the Colony Theatre in New York City.

■ 1929

- Mae West’s *Diamond Lil* was a Broadway success.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. was born.
- Some Emily Dickinson poems were found that had been hidden for 40 years.
- The U.S. stock market started a dramatic downward crash on “Black Thursday,” with 13 million shares sold. The crash, combined with other negative factors in the U.S. and world economies, brought to an end the decade of the 1920s and hastened the Great Depression.
- Count Basie, jazz pianist and future bandleader/composer, made his first record. His greatest hits include *One O’clock Boogie*, *Jumpin’ at the Woodside*, *Hey Pretty Baby*, and *Swingin’ the Blues*.
- Alfred Hitchcock’s *Blackmail*, generally acknowledged as the first British talkie, was released. Hitchcock shot the majority of the film as a “silent” but then re-shot certain scenes when new “talking” technology was introduced.
- The daily wage at Ford Motor increased from \$6 to \$7.
- Jean Patou introduced a dress collection with natural waistlines and longer hemlines, bringing an end to the 1920s’ look.
- Car radios were invented. Consumers had to purchase the radios separately.
- Popular children’s games included marbles and jump rope.

1920s POPULAR PHRASES

- All Wet - Described an unsound idea or individual, as in “She’s all wet.”
- Applesauce - As in “Horsefeathers!” and “That’s crazy!”
- Bee’s Knees - Astonishing person, thing, or idea, the greatest
- Big Cheese - High-ranking person, the boss, a “big shot”
- Blind Date - On a date with someone you don’t know
- Bump Off - To kill
- Carry a Torch - To have a crush on a person
- Cat’s Meow - Best, greatest, or most wonderful
- Crush - To be infatuated with someone
- Drugstore Cowboy - Man who lingers on a street corner trying to pick up girls
- Dumb Dora - Brainless female
- Fall Guy - Casualty of a frame
- Flapper - Trendy, brash, self-gratifying young woman
- Frame - To set up someone using bogus evidence
- Giggly Water - Alcoholic beverage
- Gin Mill - Bar
- Hard Boiled - Sturdy, strapping guy

- Heebie-jeebies - The jitters
- Hooper - Dancer or performer
- Hotsy-totsy - Enjoyable or pleasing
- Jalopy - Old automobile
- Joint - Establishment that sells alcohol
- Keen - Eye-catching or appealing
- Kisser - Mouth
- Lounge Lizard - Promiscuous guy
- Neck - Kissing with fervor
- Pushover - Person easily influenced
- Ritzy - Elegant, swanky
- Scram - "Get Lost!", leave immediately
- Sheba - Woman with sex appeal (like the Queen of Sheba)
- Sheik - Man with sex appeal (originated from Valentino movies)
- Spiffy - Chic look
- Struggle Buggy - Backseat of a car
- Stuck On - Having a crush on someone
- Swell - Magnificent; a rich man
- Take for a Ride - To drive off with someone in order to murder him
- Upchuck - To get sick after binge drinking
- Whoopee - Having fun

FOOD

■ 1920

- Italian immigrants in California began growing and popularizing broccoli.
- Curtiss Candy company created a chocolate-covered, caramel-peanut bar, called it Kandy Kake, then renamed it Baby Ruth.

■ 1921

- Wonder Bread hit the market (in Indianapolis, Indiana).
- An Iowa confectioner coated a vanilla ice cream bar with chocolate, called it I-Scream, then renamed it Eskimo Pie.
- The Quaker Oats Company introduced quick-cooking oatmeal.
- Vitamin C was isolated and identified.
- Betty Crocker was "born."
- America's first hamburger chain, White Castle, began in Wichita, Kansas.

■ 1922

- An electric milk shake blender was patented in Racine, Wisconsin, home of Horlick's malted milk.
- Vitamin D was identified and named, and Vitamin E was discovered.

■ 1923

- Sanka decaffeinated coffee came to America.
- Inventor J.L. Rosefield developed a new process that kept peanut butter from separating. Swift's quickly adopted it for its Peter Pan brand.

■ 1924

- The Popsicle, frozen fruit on a stick, was patented.
- Caesar Salad was created by Caesar Cardini at his restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico, and it immediately became a Southern California classic.
- Wheaties went on sale.

■ 1925

- Tomato juice was canned and became an instant hit.

- The first “green giant” appeared, a marketing icon for Minnesota Valley Canning of Minneapolis. He was white and dwarfish, a figure out of Grimms’ fairy tales who “wore a scowl and a scruffy bearskin rather than a suit of leaves and a smile.” A makeover 10 years later made him “jolly” and “green.”

■ **1926**

- Thiamin (vitamin B₁) was shown to cure beri-beri.

■ **1927**

- A Nebraska chemist concocted Kool-Aid.
- Harry Lender emigrated from Poland to Connecticut and began making Old World Jewish bagels.
- The automatic toaster arrived.
- Milk was homogenized.
- Fruit canners agreed upon a simple recipe for canned fruit cocktail.

■ **1928**

- Riboflavin (vitamin B₂) was identified.
- Loaves of bread were factory sliced.

■ **1929**

- Chiffon pies became the rage.
- 7UP[®] went on sale.
- Gerber’s introduced canned baby food.