

## 1930s, A History for Waiting For Lefty

### Events Leading up to the 1930s:

#### 1. Wall Street Crash of 1929:

In October 1929, the stock market crashed, causing the most devastating crash in the United State's history.

A Summary of the events by Harold Bierman Jr, Professor of Economics at Cornell

“ On September 3, 1929, the Dow Jones Industrial Average reached a record high of 381.2. At the end of the market day on Thursday, October 24, the market was at 299.5 — a 21 percent decline from the high. On this day the market fell 33 points — a drop of 9 percent — on trading that was approximately three times the normal daily volume for the first nine months of the year. By all accounts, there was a selling panic. By November 13, 1929, the market had fallen to 199. By the time the crash was completed in 1932, following an unprecedentedly large economic depression, stocks had lost nearly 90 percent of their value.”

#### 2. In 1924 J. Edger Hoover appointed FBI Director

He revolutionized the way the Unites States dealt with criminals and attacked organized crime.

#### 3. St. Valentine's Day Massacre-

According to the Chicage Tribune: “The St. Valentine's Day Massacre in 1929 was the climax of Prohibition-era wars between rival bootlegging gangs. Mobster Al Capone decimated the remnants of gangster Dion O'Banion's gang, control of which had passed to George "Bugs" Moran. Capone triggermen, posing as cops, stormed Moran's headquarters in a garage at 2122 N. Clark St., lined the seven men inside against a wall and opened fire with Tommy guns. Moran wasn't there, but later declared: "Only Capone kills like that." This crime shocked the nation by its brutality and made Capone a national celebrity.

### The 1930s: Key Events by Year

#### 1. 1930:

- a. Pluto Discovered
- b. Gandhi lead the salt march, one of the first non violent movements, to gain Indian Independence
- c. The Dust Bowl begins and continues for the next 6 years. Greatly affects the Prairie Lands and starts a mass migration movement.
- d. The first all talking, color film is released by Warner Brothers. It's called *Song of the Flame*
- e. Starting in 1930 and continuing to 1932, 'Hooverilles' popped up around the country. They contained homeless families, representing the depression.

**2. 1931:**

- a.** Empire State Building completed. At the time, it became the tallest building in the world. It became a major icon in New York and for New Yorkers. It became a symbol to New Yorkers that man could fight for the impossible dream
- b.** The United States gets a national anthem. On March 3, 1931, U.S. President Herbert Hoover signed an act that officially made "The Star Spangled Banner" the national anthem for the United States.
- c.** The Gandhi-Irwin Pact- Gandhi ends his civil disobedience campaign in exchange for round table discussion with the British Government about Indian independence.

**3. 1932:**

- a.** Amelia Earhart First Woman to Fly Solo Across the Atlantic
- b.** In November 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt elected President of the United States. He becomes the longest serving President of the United States being elected for four terms. His government marks the turn from the laissez-faire economics implemented in Herbert Hoover's regime to a more government hands on approach.
- c.** Aldous Huxley's book, *A Brave New World* is published. It was about our society in the future and what we had evolved into because of technology and our controlling government. The book was initially banned in some areas because of language, content, and anti religious leanings. It is today ranked by Modern Library as the fifth Greatest Book of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**4. 1933:**

- a.** Adolf Hitler Becomes Chancellor of Germany
- b.** On February 15, 1933, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, while in Miami, Florida, was shot at by Giuseppe Zangara, an Italian immigrant and unemployed bricklayer. Though he missed Roosevelt completely, he did kill the mayor of Chicago and was sentenced to death, where he died by electric chair.
- c.** Prohibition ends on December 5, 1933, with the ratification of the 21st Amendment, repealing the 18th. According to Robert Scott, "Prohibition, the manufacture, transportation, import, export, and sale of alcoholic beverages were restricted or illegal. Prohibition was supposed to lower crime and corruption, reduce social problems, lower taxes needed to support prisons and poorhouses, and improve health and hygiene in America. Instead, Alcohol became more dangerous to consume; organized crime blossomed; courts and prisons systems became overloaded; and endemic corruption of police and public officials occurred."
- d.** The New Deal enacted by President Roosevelt. It was comprehensive series of social and economic programs enacted during the Great Depression. According to the Franklin Roosevelt Heritage Center, "The New Deal gave the American people the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), which provided funding to farmers to curtail their production; the National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA), which provided for codes of fair competition to regulate industry, and for the first time in American history guaranteed the rights of labor to bargain collectively; the

Public Works Administration (PWA), which constructed roads, dams, and public buildings; the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which served to insure deposits in banks; the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which provided for navigation, flood control, electricity generation and economic development in the Tennessee River Valley, at the time one of the poorest and least developed regions of America.

The government also set up a special work program for the unemployed in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), whose members planted trees, built public parks, drained swamps to fight malaria, restocked rivers with fish, worked on flood control projects and a range of other work that helped to conserve the environment. Also through the New Deal the government refinanced mortgages, provided emergency relief for Americans who could not then support themselves, regulated the stock market through the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and provided Social Security to America. The New Deal also provided many more projects and programs to alleviate the suffering brought on by the Great Depression.”

- e. First Nazi Concentration Camp Established

#### 5. 1934:

- a. Bonnie and Clyde killed by Police.
- b. On February 1, 2000 rampaging Taxi drivers went on a strike. On their third day, they “terrorized” Wall Street to Times Square when the Mayor of New York, Fiorello Henry LaGuardia, wasn’t available for the taxi drivers petitions.
- c. On February 16, Thousands of socialists had a rally in New York at Madison Square Garden, where they battled Communists.
- d. On July 6, the first general strike in the United State’s history takes place. 12,000 members of the International Longshoreman’s Association went on a strike in San Francisco.
- e. On August 11, Alcatraz Maximum Security Prison opens up. Prisoners were not allowed to talk until 1937.

#### 6. 1935:

- a. Germany Issues the Anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws
- b. Social Security Enacted in U.S.
- c. Swing music becomes popular as Jazz music begins to fade.
- d. President Roosevelt signs the National Labor Relations Act, which established the National Labor Relations Board to prevent unfair labor practices.
- e. President Roosevelt signs the Revenue Act of 1935. This increases income tax rates for wealthy Americans and corporation
- f. Clifford Odet’s play, Waiting for Lefty, premieres at the Civic Repertory Theatre in New York.
- g. Babe Ruth retires from Basbeball

## 7. 1936

- a. King Edward VIII abdicates the throne of the United Kingdom. After only eleven months as king, he was forced to choose between the throne or the woman he loved. He chose Mrs. Wallis Simpson and signs over the throne to his brother King George VI.
- b. Hoover Dam completed by the Roosevelt regime.
- c. Germany leaves the League of Nations but hosts the Olympics that year.
- d. The Great Purge of 'old Bolsheviks' from the Communist Party began in 1936. This resulted in hundreds of thousands killed.
- e. "Eleanor Roosevelt hosts White House garden party for black female students of Washington's National Industrial School. School principal praises Roosevelt while Southern newspapers denounce her." University of Virginia, American Studies Dept.
- f. Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act sets minimum wages, 8 hour days, 40 hour weeks. Also any company with a government contract could not use child labor.
- g. 38% of families have annual income of less than \$1000. The official poverty line is \$1330.
- h. United Auto Workers begin sit-down strike at GM plant in Flint, Michigan; ends in 1937.

## 8. 1937

- a. Golden Gate Bridge Opened
- b. The Hindenburg Disaster: While crossing the Atlantic from Frankfurt Germany to New Jersey, the Hindenburg burst into flames and was completely destroyed.
- c. Second Sino-Japanese War- Japan invaded China. It became the largest Asian land war of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- d. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain tries an appeasement tactic on Hitler, regarding the western regions of Czechoslovakia. He signed the Munich Agreement, guaranteeing 'Peace in Our Time.'
- e. Ireland becomes a nation, ending their ties with the British Government.
- f. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is released, marking the first feature length animated film.
- g. The General Motors Strike starts, pulling 45,000 men, off the production lines. The strike eventually spread to six states. A month later, Chrysler employees strike, causing the company to pull 63,000 off their lines.
- h. "The Little Steel Strike" shuts down over a dozen plants across seven states, affecting over 90,000 workers.
- i. Congress passes the Fair Labor Standards Act which gives a minimum wage and maximum work week.

## 9. 1938

- a. Broadcast of War of the Worlds: On October 30, an adaptation of H.G. Wells *War of the Worlds* premiered as a radio show. Most people tuned in mid way through

the broadcast and missed the preface saying it was an adaption and assumed it was real. It caused mass chaos and panic.

- b.** Hitler annexes Austria
- c.** The Night of Broken Glass: On the Night of November 9, in Germany and Austria, Jews were beaten, raped, and murdered. Often thought of as the beginning of the Holocaust.
- d.** Radar was invented.
- e.** *Our Town* was written.
- f.** In San Antonio, Texas, a strike breaks out with the Pecan shellers after a fifteen cent wage decrease. One thousand out of the six thousand protestors were arrested.
- g.** “FDR signs the Fair Labor Standards Act that raises minimum wage from 25 cents to 40 cents an hour and limits the work week to 44 hours. The Act also prohibits manufacturing and mining businesses involved in interstate commerce from employing anyone under age 16.” University of Virginia, American Studies Dept
- h.** Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada The Supreme Court rules that the University of Missouri Law School must either admit African American students or build a separate but equal facility for them.

#### **10. 1939:**

- a. World War II Begins on September 1
- b. The Wizard of Oz and Gone With the Wind are both released.
- c. On February 27, sit down strikes are declared illegal by the US Supreme Court
- d. The United Mine Workers force a stoppage of soft-coal production when union and operators fail to reach an agreement, on May 05, though work resumes May 13 when a contract is signed.
- e. President Roosevelt hosts King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at his home in Hyde Park.

