U.S. History Timeline, 1000 - 1763

33,000 B.C. or earlier – First humans cross into Americas. Europe? Asian cross Bering Land Bridge.

c. 5000 B.C. – Corn cultivated as a staple crop in Mexico.

c. 4000 B.C. – First civilizations develop in the Middle East.

c. 1200 B.C. - Corn planting reaches present-day American Southwest.

1000 A.D. - Leif Ericson, a Viking seaman, explores the east coast of North America and sights Newfoundland, establishing a short-lived settlement there.

c. 1100 – 1300 A.D. - Christian Crusades arouse European interest in Asia.

1215 - The Magna Carta document is adopted in England, guaranteeing liberties to the English people, and proclaiming basic rights and procedures which later become the foundation stone of modern democracy.

1488 – Diaz rounds the tip of Africa.

1492 - Christopher Columbus makes the first of four voyages to the New World, funded by the Spanish Crown, seeking a western sea route to Asia. On October 12, sailing the Santa Maria, he lands in the Bahamas, thinking it is an outlying Japanese island.

1494 – Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal.

1497 - John Cabot of England explores the Atlantic coast of Canada, claiming the area for the English King, Henry VII. Cabot is the first of many European explorers to seek a Northwest Passage (northern water route) to Asia.

1498 – Da Gama reaches India.

1499 - Italian navigator, Amerigo Vespucci, sights the coast of South America during a voyage of discovery for Spain.

1507 - The name "America" is first used in a geography book referring to the New World with Amerigo Vespucci getting credit for the discovery of the continent.

1513 – Balboa claims all land touched by the Pacific for Spain.

1513 - Ponce de León of Spain lands in Florida.

1517 - Martin Luther launches the Protestant Reformation in Europe, bringing an end to the sole authority of the Catholic Church, resulting in the growth of numerous Protestant religious sects.

1519 - Hernando Cortés conquers the Aztec empire.
1519-1522 - Ferdinand Magellan is the first person to sail around the world.

1524 - Giovanni da Verrazano, sponsored by France, lands in the area around the Carolinas, then sails north and discovers the Hudson River, and continues northward into Narragansett Bay and Nova Scotia.

1432 – Pizzarro crushes the Inca.

1540-1542 – Coronado explores the present day Southwest U.S.A.

1541 - Hernando de Soto of Spain discovers the Mississippi River.

1542 – Cabrillo explores California coast for Spain.

1548 - In Europe, the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the English results in Great Britain replacing Spain as the dominant world power and leads to a gradual decline of Spanish influence in the New World and the widening of English imperial interests.

Late 1500s – Iroquois Confederation is founded.

1606 - The London Company sponsors a colonizing expedition to Virginia.

1607 - Jamestown is founded in Virginia by the colonists of the London Company. By the end of the year, starvation and disease reduce the original 105 settlers to just 32 survivors. Capt. John Smith is captured by Native American Chief Powhatan and saved from death by the chief's daughter, Pocahontas.

1608 - In January, 110 additional colonists arrive at Jamestown. In December, the first items of export trade are sent from Jamestown back to England and include lumber and iron ore.

1609 - The Dutch East India Company sponsors a seven month voyage of exploration to North America by Henry Hudson. In September he sails up the Hudson River to Albany.

1616 - Tobacco becomes an export staple for Virginia.

1616 - A smallpox epidemic decimates the Native American population in New England.

1619 - The first session of the first legislative assembly in America occurs as the Virginia House of Burgesses convenes in Jamestown. It consists of 22 burgesses representing 11 plantations.

1619 - Twenty Africans are brought by a Dutch ship to Jamestown for sale as indentured servants, marking the beginning of slavery in Colonial America.

1620 - November 9, the Mayflower ship lands at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, with 101 colonists. On November 11, the Mayflower Compact is signed by the 41 men, establishing a form of local government in which the colonists agree to abide by majority rule and to cooperate for the general good of the colony. The Compact sets the precedent for other colonies as they set up governments.
1629 - In England, King Charles I dissolves parliament and attempts to rule as absolute monarch, spurring many to leave for the American colonies.

1630 - In March, John Winthrop leads a Puritan migration of 900 colonists to Massachusetts Bay, where he will serve as the first governor. In September, Boston is officially established and serves as the site of Winthrop's government.

1633 - The first town government in the colonies is organized in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

1634 - First settlement in Maryland as 200 settlers, many of them Catholic, arrive in the lands granted to Roman Catholic Lord Baltimore by King Charles I.

1636 - In June, Roger Williams founds Providence and Rhode Island. Williams had been banished from Massachusetts for "new and dangerous opinions" calling for religious and political freedoms, including separation of church and state, not granted under the Puritan rules. Providence then becomes a haven for many other colonists fleeing religious intolerance.


1638 - Anne Hutchinson is banished from Massachusetts for nonconformist religious views that advocate personal revelation over the role of the clergy. She then travels with her family to Rhode Island.

1640-1659 - English Civil War erupts between the Royalists of King Charles I and the Parliamentary army, eventually resulting in defeat for the Royalists and the downfall of the monarchy. On January 30, 1649, Kings Charles I is beheaded. England then becomes a Commonwealth and Protectorate ruled by Oliver Cromwell.

1646 - In Massachusetts, the general court approves a law that makes religious heresy punishable by death.

1652 - Rhode Island enacts the first law in the colonies declaring slavery illegal.

1660 - The English monarchy is restored under King Charles II.

1660 - The English Crown approves a Navigation Act requiring the exclusive use of English ships for trade in the English Colonies and limits exports of tobacco and sugar and other commodities to England or its colonies.

1663 - King Charles II establishes the colony of Carolina and grants the territory to eight loyal supporters.

1663 - Navigation Act of 1663 requires that most imports to the colonies must be transported via England on English ships.

1672 - The Royal Africa Company is given a monopoly in the English slave trade.
1673 - The British Navigation Act of 1673 sets up the office of customs commissioner in the colonies to collect duties on goods that pass between plantations.

1674 - The Treaty of Westminster ends hostilities between the English and Dutch and returns Dutch colonies in America to the English.

1675-1676 - King Philip's War erupts in New England between colonists and Native Americans as a result of tensions over colonist's expansionist activities. The bloody war rages up and down the Connecticut River valley in Massachusetts and in the Plymouth and Rhode Island colonies, eventually resulting in 600 English colonials being killed and 3,000 Native Americans, including women and children on both sides. King Philip (the colonist's nickname for Metacomet, chief of the Wampanoags) is hunted down and killed on August 12, 1676, in a swamp in Rhode Island, ending the war in southern New England and ending the independent power of Native Americans there. In New Hampshire and Maine, the Saco Indians continue to raid settlements for another year and a half.

1681 - Pennsylvania is founded as William Penn, a Quaker, receives a Royal charter with a large land grant from King Charles II.

1682 - French explorer La Salle explores the lower Mississippi Valley region and claims it for France, naming the area Louisiana for King Louis XIV.

1682 - A large wave of immigrants, including many Quakers, arrives in Pennsylvania from Germany and the British Isles.

1685 - The Duke of York ascends the British throne as King James II.

1685 - Protestants in France lose their guarantee of religious freedom as King Louis XIV revokes the Edict of Nantes, spurring many to leave for America.

1686 - King James II begins consolidating the colonies of New England into a single Dominion depriving colonists of their local political rights and independence. Legislatures are dissolved and the King's representatives assume all of the judicial and legislative power.

1688 - Quakers in Pennsylvania issue a formal protest against slavery in America.

1688 - In December, King James II of England flees to France after being deposed by influential English leaders.

1689 - In February, William and Mary of Orange become King and Queen of England. In April, New England Governor Andros is jailed by rebellious colonists in Boston. In July, the English government orders Andros to be returned to England to stand trial.

1690 - The beginning of King William's War as hostilities in Europe between the French and English spill over to the colonies. In February, Schenectady, New York is burned by the French with the aid of their Native American allies.
1691 - In New York, the newly appointed Governor of New England, Henry Sloughter, arrives from England and institutes royally sanctioned representative government. In October, Massachusetts gets a new royal charter which includes government by a royal governor and a governor's council.

1692 - In May, hysteria grips the village of Salem, Massachusetts, as witchcraft suspects are arrested and imprisoned. A special court is then set up by the governor of Massachusetts. Between June and September, 150 persons are accused, with 20 persons, including 14 women, being executed. By October, the hysteria subsides, remaining prisoners are released and the special court is dissolved.

1693 - The College of William and Mary is founded in Williamsburg, Virginia.

1700 - The Anglo population in the English colonies in America reaches 275,000, with Boston (pop. 7000) as the largest city, followed by New York (pop. 5000).

1700 - In June, Massachusetts passes a law ordering all Roman Catholic priests to leave the colony within three months, upon penalty of life imprisonment or execution. New York then passes a similar law.

1701 - In July, The French establish a settlement at Detroit. In October, Yale College is founded in Connecticut.

1702 - In March, Queen Anne ascends the English throne. In May, England declares war on France after the death of the King of Spain, Charles II, to stop the union of France and Spain. This War of the Spanish Succession is called Queen Anne's War in the colonies, where the English and American colonists will battle the French, their Native American allies, and the Spanish for the next eleven years.

1702 - In Maryland, the Anglican Church is established as the official church, financially supported by taxation imposed on all free men, male servants and slaves.

1706 - January 17, Benjamin Franklin is born in Boston. In November, South Carolina establishes the Anglican Church as its official church.

1707 - England, Scotland and Wales are combined into the United Kingdom of Great Britain by the Act of the Union, endorsed by Queen Anne.

1712 - In May, the Carolina colony is officially divided into North Carolina and South Carolina. In June, the Pennsylvania assembly bans the import of slaves into that colony. In Massachusetts, the first sperm whale is captured at sea by an American from Nantucket.

1713 - Queen Anne's War ends with the Treaty of Utrecht.

1720 - The population of American colonists reaches 475,000. Boston (pop. 12,000) is the largest city, followed by Philadelphia (pop. 10,000) and New York (pop. 7000).

1725 - The population of black slaves in the American colonies reaches 75,000.
1726 - Riots occur in Philadelphia as poor people tear down the pillories and stocks and burn them.

1727 - King George II ascends the English throne.

1728 - Jewish colonists in New York City build the first American synagogue.

1729 - Benjamin Franklin begins publishing The Pennsylvania Gazette, which eventually becomes the most popular colonial newspaper.

1733 - The Molasses Act, passed by the English Parliament, imposes heavy duties on molasses, rum and sugar imported from non-British islands in the Caribbean to protect the English planters there from French and Dutch competition.

1734 - In November, New York newspaper publisher John Peter Zenger is arrested and accused of seditious libel by the Governor. In December, the Great Awakening religious revival movement begins in Massachusetts. The movement will last ten years and spread to all of the American colonies.

1739 - England declares war on Spain. As a result, in America, hostilities break out between Florida Spaniards and Georgia and South Carolina colonists. Also in 1739, three separate violent uprisings by black slaves occur in South Carolina.

1740 - Fifty black slaves are hanged in Charleston, South Carolina, after plans for another revolt are revealed. Also in 1740, in Europe, the War of the Austrian Succession begins after the death of Emperor Charles VI and eventually results in France and Spain allied against England. The conflict is known in the American colonies as King George's War and lasts until 1748.

1751 - The Currency Act is passed by the English Parliament, banning the issuing of paper money by the New England colonies.

1752 - The first general hospital is founded, in Philadelphia.

1753 - Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter are appointed as postmasters general for the American colonies.

1754 - The French and Indian War erupts as a result of disputes over land in the Ohio River Valley. In May, George Washington leads a small group of American colonists to victory over the French, then builds Fort Necessity in the Ohio territory. In July, after being attacked by numerically superior French forces, Washington surrenders the fort and retreats.

1756 - England declares war on France, as the French and Indian War in the colonies now spreads to Europe.

1757 - In June, William Pitt becomes England's Secretary of State and escalates the French and Indian War in the colonies by establishing a policy of unlimited warfare. In July, Benjamin Franklin begins a five year stay in London.

1758 - In July, a devastating defeat occurs for English forces at Lake George, New York, as nearly two thousand men are lost during a frontal attack against well entrenched French forces at Fort Ticonderoga. French losses are 377. In November, the French abandon Fort Duquesne in the Ohio territory. Settlers then rush into the territory to establish homes. Also in 1758, the first Indian reservation in America is founded, in New Jersey, on 3000 acres.

1759 - French Fort Niagara is captured by the English. Also in 1759, war erupts between Cherokee Indians and southern colonists.

1760 - The population of colonists in America reaches 1,500,000. In March, much of Boston is destroyed by a raging fire. In September, Quebec surrenders to the English. In October, George III becomes the new English King.

1762 - England declares war on Spain, which had been planning to ally itself with France and Austria. The British then successfully attack Spanish outposts in the West Indies and Cuba.

1763 - The French and Indian War, known in Europe as the Seven Year's War, ends with the Treaty of Paris. Under the treaty, France gives England all French territory east of the Mississippi River, except New Orleans. The Spanish give up east and west Florida to the English in return for Cuba.