

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

### A Note from the Author, Beverly Whitaker

---

This document started out as a lecture for the SAR (Sons of the American Revolution) on the occasion of their Holiday Brunch in December of 1995. Having noted with interest a number of significant historical events that happened near Christmas, I chose as my topic, "It Happened At Christmas." As the years have rolled by, I've added paragraphs to highlight items of special interest. Now, the Internet provides the opportunity to share with others who might also find this to be an interesting subject.

As a professional genealogist, I've made extensive use of time-lines to coordinate family matters with historical events. We learn that our ancestors were influenced and sometimes influential with their interactions with both their near and far surroundings.

Regardless of one's religious beliefs and practices, Americans have always found that with all its traditions and trimmings, Christmas dominates the month of December. Business, industry, local and national government — all operate just a little differently amid the feelings and festivities associated with the holiday. One frequently hears the comment, "I'll get back to that, after Christmas." But with both the minutia of daily life and the monumental events of world affairs, life goes on. And each December we can expect to encounter events that will leave a mark on our lives.

So, as you observe your own family traditions, I hope you will pause to think of your heritage and of the events in our country's history which bring us to this time of celebration as we know it— both a sacred holiday and a festival to push away winter's darkness and the poor man's miseries. And may we as Americans grow in appreciation of our very rich heritage.

---

Copyright ©1995-2008. Beverly Whitaker  
E-mail: [gentutor@yahoo.com](mailto:gentutor@yahoo.com)

Visit: <http://home.roadrunner.com/~gentutor>  
an index page to more than 50 web sites I've composed,  
pertaining to history, religion, and genealogy.

---

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

(Events occurring in December affecting America's History.)

Copyright ©1995-2008. Beverly Whitaker

Permission is granted to LINK to this document, but publication is restricted.  
<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gentutor/timeline.pdf>

---

- 1492** The first Christmas to be celebrated in the New World was marked not by mass or carols or feasting and sports, but by hard labor to keep afloat the *Santa Maria* and to salvage her stores of cargo and equipment. They were off the coast of Haiti. Just as midnight ushered in Christmas Day, the "Santa Maria" settled on a coral reef. So Columbus lost one of his ships. However, the shipwreck enabled him to discover a gold mine, for which he proceeded to set up a fortified camp close by, leaving behind 39 excess crew members. Columbus named it *Villa de la Navidad* which means: "Christmas town."
- 1604** The first recorded celebration of Christmas in New England was held in 1604 on a tiny island off the coast of present-day Maine. There at St. Croix, a group of 80 French settlers held Christmas services in their rough timber chapel. Among them was Father Nichols and a Huguenot minister. Afterwards they engaged in traditional sporting events as they had done on *le jour de Noel* in France.
- 1607** In 1607 at Jamestowne, Virginia, about 40 survivors of the original 100 settlers commemorated Christmas Day in the crude wooden chapel of their fort.
- 1620** On December 21, 1620, the Pilgrims reached Plymouth, Massachusetts, aboard the *Mayflower* after a 63-day voyage. Their company consisted of 41 men and their families. The Pilgrim fathers permitted no frivolity and declared that the observance of Christmas by Christians was a "corruption" because it coincided with pagan celebrations of the Winter Solstice. Writing in his diary, William Bradford referred not to Christmas but merely that "[on] the 25th day" they began to erect the first house for common use.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1621** Remember though that not all settlers at Cape Cod were Puritan Separatists. The following year, Bradford's history notes: "On the day called Christmas Day, the Governor called them out to work....But the most of this company excused themselves and said it went against their consciences to work on that day. So the Governor told them that if they made it a matter of conscience, he would spare them till they were better informed; so he led away the rest and left them. But when they came home at noon from their work, he found them in the street at play, openly; some pitching the bar, and some at stool-ball and such like sports. So he went to them and took away their implements, and told them that was against his conscience, that they should play and others work. If they made it a matter of devotion, let them keep their houses, but there should be no gaming or revelry in the streets."
- 1659** When Puritanism was at its height, the term "Christmas Keeper" was a dangerous accusation! In 1659 the General Court of Massachusetts enacted a law which read, "Whosoever shall be found observing any such days as Christmas or the like, either by forbearance of labor or feasting, or in any other way as a festival shall be fined five shillings." To make it still more specific, and to include in this prohibition even the cooks and certain musicians, the Puritans spelled it out: "No one shall read Common Prayer, keep Christmas or saints' days, make minced pie, dance, play cards, or play on any instrument of music except the drum, trumpet and jews-harp."
- 1776** Imagine Christmas Day of 1776 when the end seemed desperately near for George Washington and his ragged troops. On the snowy banks of the Delaware, they faced the well-equipped Hessian troops on the opposite shore. But knowing the German mercenaries would spend the day carousing, Washington and his men crossed the Delaware on Christmas and attacked the next morning before the Hessians could recover.
- 1777** On December 17 of the next year, Washington retired with his troops to Valley Forge for a long and bitter winter.
- 1783** By Christmas of 1783, America was an independent country. George Washington believed that his usefulness to the nation had ended on December 4 when the last British troops set sail from New York harbor. On that day he prepared to take leave of the army and return to his beloved Mt. Vernon.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1783** Before leaving New York City, Washington had one last meeting with his officers. Then at noon on December 23rd, 1783, Washington appeared before the Continental Congress at Annapolis to formally resign his Commission as Commander-in-Chief of the American Army. "Washington soon departed with his two companions and was happy to be riding home as a private citizen. Just at dusk, on that snowy Christmas Eve, the Virginia Gentleman rode up the winding driveway at Mount Vernon for the first Christmas after serving his country for eight years, six months and eight days."  
--*SAR Magazine*, December, 1983.
- 1791** Following ratification by the state of Virginia, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution, known collectively as the *Bill of Rights*, become the law of the land. The *Bill of Rights* went into effect on December 15, 1791.
- 1799** At 10:00 P.M. on December 14, 1799, George Washington died at his Mt. Vernon home after five decades of service to his country. Washington was sixty-seven years old.
- 1803** December 20, 1803. The United States took title to all of Louisiana, doubling the area of the United States. Napoleon, who had recovered Louisiana from Spain by secret treaty, sold us all of Louisiana, stretching to the Canadian border.
- 1814** On Christmas Eve of 1814, at Ghent (in Belgium), the United States signed a peace treaty with Great Britain to end the War of 1812.
- 1822** In 1822, two days before Christmas, a professor of divinity (Dr. Clement Clarke Moore) recited to his children some verses he had written as a Christmas treat. They made up a poem which he called, "The Visit of St. Nicholas," and which was published anonymously a year later: "Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house...." Much later, in "Harper's Illustrated Weekly" of 1863 and onwards, Thomas Nast began to draw his conception of the figure invented by Dr. Moore and named him "Santa Claus."
- 1835** In 1835, gold was discovered on Cherokee land in Georgia. On December 20, the Cherokees were forced to cede their lands and cross the Mississippi.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

**1844** The Indians of the West recognized that the pioneers' Christmas was a big occasion; they called it, "the Big Eating." In districts frequented by French trappers who kissed each other as they exchanged gifts, it was known as "Kissing Day." Missionaries in the West also contributed to making an occasion of Christmas. On Christmas afternoon of 1844, a Belgian missionary in the Pacific Northwest united more than 50 couples in marriage; some of these brides and grooms were over 80 years old--a Christian wedding thus becoming almost the concluding rite of a long life.

**1856** President Franklin Pierce set up the first Christmas tree inside the White House in 1856. Hessian troops had introduced the Christmas tree into America during the Revolutionary War. By the early 19th century, the Christmas tree was customary among German settlers in Pennsylvania, but it wasn't until the mid-1800s that the idea spread, particularly after a picture of Queen Victoria's elaborate tree appeared in *Godey's Lady's Book*, the fashionable women's magazine of the day.

In pre-Civil War days, the Old South had its yule log, called the Christmas log. Contracts between overseers and plantation owners often specified a week of rest for the slaves so it was a time of high revelry and dancing in the quarters. By custom, the holiday could last as long as the Christmas log burned; so the slaves sprinkled it with water to prolong the holiday.

**1864** On December 21, 1864, upon the Union capture of Savannah, a treasury agent suggested to General William Tecumseh Sherman, "Have you thought of sending the President the city as a Christmas gift? If you sent it by boat, a message would reach Fortress Monroe by Christmas and could be telegraphed from there. I know Lincoln enjoys such pleasantries." Sherman saw the aptness of the proposal and dashed off this message:  
*I beg to present to you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah, with 50 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton.* Sherman's telegram reached the president on Christmas Eve and newspapers throughout the North published it.

**1865** One year later, on December 18, 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment took effect, abolishing slavery. Less than a week later, in Pulaski, Tennessee, on Christmas Eve, the Ku Klux Klan was formed.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1870** In 1870, Marcus Ward and Company of London introduced Christmas cards to New England importers. A few years later, the L. Prang and Company of Boston began to compete with a line of its own. In 1880 and 1881, when Prang offered a prize for the best original designs, 600 were submitted.
- 1882** During the Christmas season of 1882, just 3 years after Edison invented the electric light, a reporter visited the home of the Edison Company's vice president and found there a "large Christmas tree--brilliantly lighted with many colored globes about as large as an English walnut....There were 80 lights in all, encased in these dainty glass eggs...one can hardly imagine anything prettier."
- 1884** On December 6, 1884, workers placed the 3,300 pound marble capstone on the Washington Monument, and topped it with a nine-inch pyramid of cast aluminum, completing construction of the 555-foot Egyptian obelisk. Nearly fifty years earlier, the Washington National Monument Society chose Robert Mills's design to honor George Washington. The privately-funded organization laid the monument's cornerstone on Independence Day, 1848.
- 1890** December 29, 1890. The Battle of Wounded Knee in South Dakota was the last major conflict between the Indians and U.S. troops. Ironically, during that same week as we pushed aside native American Indians, we opened our doors to the world at Ellis Island, December 31, 1890. I once saw a photograph of immigrants spending their first Christmas in the New World on Ellis Island. It had been a cramped, dirty crossing through the terrible seas of the midwinter Atlantic; now these apprehensive Eastern European immigrants were stopped midway through a day of baffling procedures to have their picture taken in front of a Christmas tree at the Ellis Island immigration depot. A bin of apples suggested the scant charity awaiting them in their new home. The great tree with its dolls hung carefully out of reach of the children may simply have been the first of an unending number of puzzling American customs. Even as those who came before them had altered the shape of the holiday with their own customs, so these newcomers' traditions eventually would leave their imprint on the season.
- 1903** At Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, a week before Christmas in 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright waited out the gusty winds; both knew that getting into the air that day would be flirting with death itself. It was approaching noon when Wilbur prepared for the fourth attempt of the day. It began at exactly twelve o'clock. He stayed in flight for 59 seconds. They had done it! The air age had begun!

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1907** The first known radio program of voice and music in the United States occurred on Christmas Eve of 1907.
- 1918** World War I ended November 11, 1918. Because the war was over, there was special reason for cheer that Christmas, particularly for those who had done the fighting. This letter was written home to Kansas from a hospital in France:
- Dearly Beloveds:*  
*A couple of letters ago I promised to tell you something about the Christmas holidays in a hospital. For me it was one of the merriest, happiest seasons of my life, despite the mud and rain, and the skeleton of home-sickness that is always skulking around in some dark closet. . . .*  
*Quite a lot of competition developed between the different wards and the different hospitals in the matter of decorations. We tacked up pine branches wherever a nail would hold. Somebody got a lot of red and green paper streamers and bunting and strewed them all over the place.*  
*The morning before Christmas there was a life-sized, genuine Christmas tree set up in every ward, and the nurses and the Red Cross workers spent the whole day trimming them with tinsel and candles and toys and all manner of cheerful junk . . . .*
- 1923** In 1923, President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge began the custom of lighting a National Christmas tree on the White House grounds. That same year, the newly constructed Country Club Plaza in Kansas City displayed a growing collection of art objects and also ornamented the shopping neighborhood with small lighted decorations, starting a treasured yearly tradition.
- 1932** On December 27, 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, thousands turned out for the opening of Radio City Music Hall, a magnificent Art Deco theater in New York City. Radio City Music Hall was designed as a palace for the people, a place of beauty where ordinary people could see high-quality entertainment. Located in New York City's Rockefeller Center, this theater is home to the *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, a [New York Christmas](#) tradition since 1933, and to the women's precision dance team known as the "Rockettes."
- 1933** Prohibition ended on December 5, 1933. The 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, repealing the 18th Amendment and bringing an end to the era of national prohibition of alcohol in America.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

**1941** On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes attacked the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Territory killing more than 2,300 Americans. The *U.S.S. Arizona* was completely destroyed and the *U.S.S. Oklahoma* capsized. The attack sank three other ships and damaged many additional vessels. More than 180 aircraft were destroyed.

**1941** In December of 1941, the Declaration of Independence and other historic documents were sent away from Washington, D.C., for safekeeping. On October 1, 1944, they were put on display again at the Library of Congress.

**1941** Christmas Eve in 1941 was grim. Only two weeks earlier the United States had entered World War II. After lighting the Christmas tree on the White House lawn, Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced his distinguished guest and ally, Winston Churchill, who summed up the historic significance of the occasion in this message to the American people:

*Here, in the midst of war, raging and roaring over all the lands and seas, creeping nearer to our hearths and homes, here, amid all the tumult, we have tonight the peace of the Spirit in each cottage home and in every generous heart. Therefore we may cast aside for this night at least the cares and dangers which beset us, and make for the children an evening of happiness in a world of storms. . . .*

**1944** One of the most fateful Christmases in American history was that of our airborne troops at Bastogne in 1944. History records that when the German commander had with arrogance demanded surrender, he received this brief reply, sent 22 December 1944, "To the German Commander. N U T S ! The American Commander."

**1944** Three days later, precariously encircled by German Panzer Divisions in the Bulge, the American commander McAuliffe addressed this hopeful Christmas Eve message to his exhausted troops:

### *MERRY CHRISTMAS*

*What's Merry about all this, you ask? We're fighting--it's cold--we aren't home. All true but what has the proud Eagle Division accomplished with its worthy comrades....Just this: We have stopped cold everything that has been thrown at us from the North, East, South and West....*

*We are giving our country and our loved ones at home a worthy Christmas present and being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms are truly making for ourselves a Merry Christmas.*

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1945** In the closing months of the year, shoe rationing ended on October 30; meat and butter rationing ended on November 23; and tire rationing ended on December 20.
- 1946** On December 14, 1946, the United Nations accepted a gift of \$8,500,000 from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., for the purchase of property along New York City's East River, for permanent UN headquarters.
- 1946** In Washington D.C., on December 31, 1946, President Harry S. Truman formally proclaimed an end to all hostilities in World War II
- 1950** President Harry S. Truman on December 16, 1950, declared a state of national emergency. U.S. Forces were under heavy attack in Korea from the Chinese Communist units.
- 1951** In 1951, on December 20, the first atomic-powered generator began to produce electricity at the U.S. Reactor Testing Station in Idaho. . . .
- 1953** A new airplane speed record was achieved on December 16, 1953, by U.S. Air Force Major Charles E. Yeager. He flew a Bell X-1A rocket powered plane more than 1600 mph.
- 1954** On the last day of the year in 1954, the New York Stock Exchange prices were the highest quoted since 1929. The volume of shares traded during 1954 (573,374,622) was the highest since 1933.
- 1955** On the evening of December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, an African American, was arrested for disobeying an Alabama law requiring black passengers to relinquish seats to white passengers when the bus was full. At that time, blacks were also required to sit at the back of the bus. Her arrest sparked a 381-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system. This led to a 1956 Supreme Court decision banning segregation on public transportation. Rosa Parks died on October 24, 2005 at the age of 92.
- 1955** On December 5, 1955, the AFL and CIO formally merged. The new organization, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was headed by George Meany, former AFL president.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1957** At Cape Canaveral, on December 17, 1957, the army tested the first Atlas I.C.B.M.
- 1958** The first radio broadcast from outer space occurred on December 19, 1958. It was a pre-recorded holiday message from U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Everyone on Earth with the correct radio equipment (including the Russians) heard Eisenhower's voice, saying:
- This is the President of the United States speaking. Through the marvels of scientific advance, my voice is coming to you from a satellite circling in outer space. My message is a simple one. Through this unique means I convey to you and to all mankind America's wish for peace on earth and goodwill toward men everywhere.*
- 1959** On December 30, 1959, the U.S.S. *George Washington*, the first nuclear submarine capable of carrying and launching missiles, was commissioned at Groton, Connecticut.
- 1962** Mariner 2, on its 109th day of flight (December 14, 1962) transmitted information about Venus for 42 minutes.
- 1962** With the Cuban crisis resolved, President John F. Kennedy saw reason for his fellow Americans to be hopeful when he officiated at the White House tree-lighting ceremony on December 17, 1962:
- . . . We greet each other at Christmas with some special sense of the blessings of peace. This has been a year of peril when the peace has been sorely threatened. But it has been a year when peril was faced and when reason ruled. As a result, we may talk, at this Christmas, just a little bit more confidently of peace on earth, good will to men.*
- Little did we know that it was to be his last Christmas.
- 1963** December 4, 1963, marked a major change in the Roman Catholic mass--the use of English in the U.S. In place of Latin for parts of the mass and for the sacraments was approved by the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Council.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1963** In New York City, on December 24, 1963, the Idlewild Airport was re-named the John F. Kennedy International Airport.
- 1965** On December 4, 1965, Gemini 7, piloted by Lt. Col. Frank Borman and Commander James A. Lovell, Jr., was launched from Cape Kennedy. On December 15, Gemini 6, piloted by Capt. Walter Schirra and Maj. Thomas Stafford, was launched. It made the first successful space rendezvous, with Gemini 7, some 185 miles above Earth.
- 1965** On December 8, 1965, Delta Airlines put the first DC-9 jet into service.
- 1967** In California, on December 14, 1967, it was announced that Stanford University biochemists had successfully synthesized D.N.A.
- 1967** By December 20, 1967, U.S. Troop strength in Vietnam reached 474,300.
- 1968** On December 1, 1968, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, warning against a national tendency toward violence, condemned as a police riot the actions of Chicago police during the Democratic Convention in August.
- 1968** From December 21-27, 1968, Apollo 8, manned by Commander Frank Borman, James Lovell, Jr. And William Anders, was launched from Cape Kennedy, Florida. Its mission included ten orbits of the moon which yielded spectacular photographs of Earth and the moon.
- 1968** On Christmas Eve (1968) Apollo 8 transmitted live TV pictures of the lunar surface and of the earth, hanging like a Christmas-tree ornament far distant in the sky. Then to conclude their Christmas Eve telecast before the view below was blotted out, the astronauts took turns solemnly reading the first ten verses of Genesis: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth . . ."
- 1969** On December 2, 1969, the Boeing 747, which cost \$21,400,000 to develop, made its first public flight, from Seattle, Washington, to New York City.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1970** On December 21, 1970, reduction of the voting age in national elections to 18 years was ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court.
- 1970** On December 23, 1970, the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City was topped out, making it the tallest building in the world. At 1350 feet, it was 100 feet taller than the Empire State Building.
- 1970** President Richard Nixon, on December 31, 1970, signed a clean air bill calling for the development of a cleaner auto engine and tightened national air quality standards for 10 major pollutants. Nearly 20 years later, in November of 1990, President George Herbert Walker Bush signed into law a strengthened version.
- 1971** Starting on December 26, 1971, U.S. Bombers struck massively in North Vietnam for 5 days in retaliation for alleged violations of agreements reached prior to the 1968 bombing halt.
- 1972** Following the breakdown of Paris peace negotiations, full-scale bombing of North Vietnam resumed December 18-30, 1972, with the “Christmas Bombing” of Hanoi and Haiphong by the United States. Then on January 15, 1973, U.S. bombing of North Vietnam was halted.
- 1972** Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States, died December 26, 1972, in Kansas City, Missouri, at the age of 88. He was buried at the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri.
- 1973** Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as vice president, on December 6, 1973, the first to take office under the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment.
- 1974** On December 31, 1974, a 41-year ban on private possession of gold was lifted. Early sales of bullion were light.
- 1975** On December 11, 1975, Congress passed legislation for voluntary conversion to the metric system within ten years.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1977** A nationwide farmers' strike was launched December 10, 1977, by the American Agriculture Movement, which held rallies in 30 state capitals in a drive to raise farmers' falling incomes.
- 1978** On December 14, 1978, the People's Republic of China and the United States proclaimed that the two nations would initiate full diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979. The agreement required the United States to sever diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan.)
- 1979** On December 2, 1979, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, Libya, was attacked by a mob. Two floors were damaged but the 21 people in the building escaped unharmed. The previous month saw attacks on the U.S. Embassy in both Teheran in Iran and Islamabad in Pakistan.
- 1979** In 1979, we left the Capitol's National Christmas tree unlighted out of respect to the 63 Americans taken hostage the month before at the American embassy in Teheran, Iran, by militant students. The hostages were released more than a year later.
- 1980** President Jimmy Carter, on December 2, 1980, signed into law preservation of huge tracts of land in Alaska.
- 1981** In an executive order issued on December 4, 1981, by President Ronald Reagan, covert domestic intelligence operations by the CIA and other agencies were authorized for the first time.
- 1981** The Supreme Court, on December 8, 1981, upheld the constitutionality of religious services in campus buildings by student organizations at public colleges and universities.
- 1981** On December 29, 1981, President Ronald Reagan reduced ties with the Russians, charging that the Soviet Union was largely responsible for Polish repression.
- 1982** In New York City, on December 12, 1982, the largest cash robbery in U.S. History occurred when thieves made off with \$9,800,000 from an armored truck company.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1982** In California, in December 1982, Apple Computer became the first personal computer firm to reach \$1 billion annual sales.
- 1985** On December 16, 1985, a new stock record was set by the Dow Jones industrial average, which closed at 1553.10. It had gained 17.89 points in one day.
- 1985** On December 23, 1985, the costliest farm bill in history was signed by President Ronald Reagan. Although expected to cost \$169,000,000,000 over five years, it nonetheless reduced income and price supports to farmers for the first time since 1933.
- 1986** On December 15, 1986, America's most famous music auditorium, Carnegie Hall in New York City, reopened with a gala concert featuring many noted musicians. It had been closed for seven months for a \$50,000,000 remodeling.
- 1986** On December 23, 1986, the experimental aircraft *Voyager* landed at Edwards Air Force Base in California, after nine days and four minutes in the sky. It had completed the first nonstop flight around the globe on one load of fuel. Piloted by Americans Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, *Voyager* was made mostly of plastic and stiffened paper and carried more than three times its weight in fuel when it took off from Edwards Air Force Base on December 14. After flying 25,012 miles around the planet, it had just five gallons of fuel left in its remaining operational fuel tank.
- 1989** After a December 3, 1989, summit meeting in Malta, President George Herbert Walker Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev hailed the end of Cold War.
- 1989** On December 20, 1989, U.S. Troops invaded Panama, overthrowing the government of Manuel Noriega, wanted on drug charges by U.S. Authorities. He surrendered January 3, 1990.
- 1990** The world awaited Iraq's response to the UN Security Council's order that Iraq's forces were to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. Actual hostilities involved a multinational force led by the U.S., beginning January 17 with Operation Desert Storm.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 1992** On December 9, 1992, a UN-sanctioned military force, led by U.S. Troops, arrived in Somalia.
- 1992** Presidents of the United States, Canada, and Mexico signed a North American Free Trade Agreement on December 17, 1992.
- 1994** Near the end of 1994, it was reported that nearly 1/3 of American homes had a computer.
- 1996** As usual, December put a heavy load on the U.S. Postal Service which overall handles nearly 600 million pieces of mail daily.
- 1997** Forecast is made that the Oscar-winning film *Titanic*, which cost \$300 million to make and market; will earn more than twice that.
- 1997** On December 23, 1997, Terry Nichols was convicted on charges related to the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.
- 1998** On December 19, 1998, the U.S. House approved two articles of impeachment charging President William Clinton with grand jury perjury and obstruction of justice in a cover-up of his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. He was acquitted, February 12, 1999.
- 1999** At the close of 1999, the Dow Jones closed at a record level of 11,497.12--25.2% above the 1998 close.
- 2000** In a televised address on December 13, 2000, Vice President Al Gore conceded the presidential election to Governor George W. Bush.
- 2001** In the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001, on December 11, the U.S. Government indicted Zacarias Moussaoui as an alleged conspirator in the attacks.
- 2001** On December 28, 2001, President George W. Bush formally granted permanent normal trade status to China, to be effective on January 1, 2002.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

- 2001** On December 28, 2001, President George W. Bush formally granted permanent normal trade status to China, to be effective on January 1, 2002.
- 2002** The United States and the United Kingdom were particularly watchful to see what the effect would be of the UN's Resolution 1441 on November 8, warning Iraq of "serious consequences" if it failed to cooperate fully and unconditionally with UN weapons inspectors. This led to Operation Iraqi Freedom launched March 19, 2003.
- 2003** Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was captured in an underground hideout southeast of Tikrit on December 13, 2003, after spending nine months on the run. His downfall began on March 19, 2003, when the United States led an invasion force into Iraq to topple his government, which had controlled the country for more than 20 years.
- 2004** On December 17, 2004, President George W. Bush signed an intelligence reform bill based on findings of the 9-11 Commission. The new law created a director of national intelligence to oversee the nation's intelligence agencies.
- 2005** A strike on December 20, 2005, shut down the New York City transit system. Millions of passengers had to find a new way of getting to work and to do their holiday shopping. The strike ended December 22, 2005.
- 2006** Our 38th President, Gerald R. Ford, died on December 26, 2006. Only three of our presidents have died in December: George Washington died on December 14, 1799; Harry S. Truman died on December 26, 1972. Doesn't it seem a bit ironic that both Ford and Truman died on the same date in December? Both men were of Middle America who inherited the presidency, were unpopular for a time and were willing to let history be the final judge.
- 2006** Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging on December 30, 2006, the first day of Eid ul-Adha, at "Camp Justice," an Iraqi army base in Kazimain, a neighborhood of northeast Baghdad. He was buried the next day at his birthplace of Al-Awja in Tikrit, Iraq.
- 2007** On December 19, 2007, President Bush signed H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

---

## IT HAPPENED AT CHRISTMAS

---

**2008**

The nation watched eagerly as President-elect Barack Obama began announcing his choices for cabinet positions and other high-ranking individuals for the upcoming administration. Obama made history in becoming the first African-American to be elected to the highest executive office in America. He and his running mate Joseph Biden will be inaugurated on January 20, 2009.

---

Copyright ©1995-2008. Beverly Whitaker  
E-mail: [gentutor@yahoo.com](mailto:gentutor@yahoo.com)

Visit: <http://home.roadrunner.com/~gentutor>  
an index page to more than 50 web sites I've composed,  
pertaining to history, religion, and genealogy.

---