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## The Roaring Twenties

Marc Skulnick looks at a vibrant decade of peace, prosperity and social change

*By Marc Skulnick*

After the dark times of the previous decade, the 1920s offered a welcome respite, a time to kick back and enjoy the prosperity and promise that was evident in nearly every facet of society.

Technological innovation and advancement meant that more "life-improving" products than ever before were available. The economy was booming, the standard of living was improving, jobs were plentiful and consumers were looking to buy: from cars and houses to fridges and radios. Industrialization and mass production made many goods--previously considered a luxury--affordable. And if they couldn't afford it, banks and businesses were more than willing to let people buy on credit. Not only were people spending, but the stock market had them investing as well, so much so, that throughout the decade, the Dow Jones climbed to record highs. A collapse, some of the more pessimistic experts warned, was all but inevitable.

This vibrancy was evident in the bold jazz music, and fancy night clubs that inspired everything from the controversial fashions of the flappers to the movie stars of the silver screen. The entertainment medium--radio and movies--came to the fore, as did sports and literature. The '20s were the decade of Valentino and Hemingway, of a mouse named Mickey and a baseball player called Babe.

The Roaring Twenties was the decade of the US's failed attempt at Prohibition, of speakeasies and bootleggers--when it was illegal to drink but only if you got caught. Organized crime, borne out of the widespread lawlessness of Prohibition, saw the age of the gangster--of Al Capone and Bugs Moran--

thrust itself into the mainstream of a nervous American public.

It was the decade that saw the rise of Lenin and Communism in Russia, the rise of fascism and Mussolini in Italy and the disturbing popularity of the Ku Klux Klan in America, which saw the secret society's membership hit an all-time high. It was a time of treaties, most notably the Washington Naval Treaty, which attempted to quell an arms race, in this period of uneasy peace, by limiting the size of the naval armaments.

Politically, the suffrage movement scored a long overdue victory at the beginning of the decade when women were given the right to vote (Canadian women had been allowed to vote federally since 1918). It soon became obvious that women weren't afraid to flex their new power, both politically and socially.

Unaware of the hardship and poverty that was to follow, the Roaring Twenties, allowed people to forget about the Great War and look to the future with a rare sense of optimism.

## Mickey Mouse

*"Mickey Mouse is the symbol of goodwill, surpassing all languages and cultures. When one sees Mickey Mouse, they see happiness."--Former US President Jimmy Carter*

Mickey Mouse, the cheerfully animated rodent synonymous with Disney for over 75 years, made his silver screen debut on 18 November 1928 in *Steamboat Willie*.

According to popular legend, Walt Disney came up with Mickey Mouse as he was returning, via train, from a business meeting in New York to his home in Los Angeles, California. Disney had just lost the rights to his most recent creation, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, and the crestfallen 26-year-old cartoon artist was determined to come up with a replacement character to work on back at his small studio.

By the end of the journey, Disney had come up with a red velvet clad mouse he christened Mortimer Mouse. However, Disney's wife, Lillian, hated the name Mortimer and recommended Mickey instead. The name stuck and it wasn't long before Disney's newest creation starred in *Plane Crazy* and *The Gallopin' Gaucho*. The only problem was, Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature film to have synchronized sound, has just been released and nobody wanted silent cartoons anymore. Not only could Disney not find a studio willing to finance his animated shorts, but audiences didn't seem all that impressed with his mouse to begin with. Disney and his team of animators went back to the drawing board.

In late November 1928, Disney--who had invested everything he had into a mischievous dancing mouse--screened *Steamboat Willie*, complete with sound, for a group of film exhibitors. Three weeks



later, Mickey Mouse was running at the Colony Theater and taking New York cinema-goers by storm. Although sound was still a relatively new development in feature films, most theaters in the US had installed sound systems and Disney took full advantage. He quickly added sound to Mickey Mouse's previously ignored silent cartoons and began production on a fourth Mickey Mouse feature, *The Barn Dance*. Soon audiences across the US couldn't get enough of Mickey and over the next year, 12 more Mickey Mouse cartoons would be released.

*Steamboat Willie* also heralded the introduction of Minnie Mouse, Mickey's eventual girlfriend. An interesting bit of trivia is that Mickey--voiced by Disney himself until 1946--did not speak until *The Karnival Kid* in 1929, although purists can note that Mickey Mouse does whistle in *Steamboat Willie*. Even back then, it didn't take long for the Disney merchandising juggernaut to swing into action and the first Mickey Mouse merchandise--a children's school book--hit the shelves by the end of the decade. The first Mickey Mouse Club started around that time also.

Mickey Mouse would go on to become the world's most famous cartoon character, starring in more than 120 animated features and helping to spawn a multi-billion dollar animation and theme park empire. Talk about the mouse that roared!

## Prohibition

When the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution went into effect on 16 January 1920, it became illegal to manufacture, sell or transport alcohol of any kind, anywhere in the United States of America. America was officially dry and the era of National Prohibition would soon usher in a vibrant but deadly subculture of organized crime, speakeasies and bootleggers.

However, the seeds of prohibition were sown decades earlier during the aggressive temperance (anti-drinking) movements of the mid 19th century. In an effort to reduce the widespread public drunkenness that was becoming problematic, a number of states had passed temperance laws. Temperance groups, promoting strict abstinence from booze, blamed alcohol for the widespread degradation of society, for the poverty and crime that seemed to settle around the saloons and taverns. One of the most powerful and influential temperance groups was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which was founded in 1874. It was groups such as the WCTU and the Anti-Saloon League, led by the likes of Frances Elizabeth Willard and Carry Nation and working with the small but powerful Prohibition Party, that successfully lobbied the US government for a National Prohibition law.

The 18th Amendment was passed in conjunction with the Volstead Act, an act which legally defined an alcoholic beverage and gave authorities the power to investigate and prosecute those who proved to be in violation of the anti-liquor laws.



**Illegal Booze Seized  
During Prohibition  
Raid**

An FBI agent inspects a cache of illegal booze seized in a raid during Prohibition.

Prohibition, despite the best efforts of the police, proved impossible to enforce. Bootleggers (makers and distributors of illegal booze) and speakeasies (an establishment that sold illegal alcoholic beverages) openly defied the country's anti-alcohol laws and courtrooms across the US were snowed under with alcohol-related offenses. In Chicago alone, the first six months of Prohibition saw over 600 liquor violation charges. In short, the legal system was collapsing under the weight of the apparent lawlessness and blatant disregard for Prohibition. Organized crime was rampant in New York and Chicago and in the first three years, more than 30 prohibition enforcement officers were murdered. Gangsters simply bribed government officials, who conveniently ignored any illegal activity. Of course, not all officials were corrupt and people like Elliot Ness, Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith became popular for their dogged determination to uphold the law, however futile it seemed.

Since Prohibition in Canada was left up to the individual provinces, rum runners did brisk business smuggling legally produced booze into the U.S. This led to violence and crime at many of the US-Canada border crossings.

In 1921--the first full year of Prohibition--there were 34,175 individual arrests and over 30,000 illegal distilleries and stills were seized. By 1928, over 75,000 arrests were being made and more than 280,000 illegal stills had been shut down. Authorities estimated there were between 200,000 and half a million speakeasies operating illegally across the country. The saloons and taverns had closed (just like the Anti-Saloon League had wanted), but were now replaced by the speakeasy and people were still spending their hard-earned wages on alcohol. Even the seemingly lawful use of alcohol for medicinal purposes was being abused; in 1928 alone, it is suspected that doctors prescribed over one million gallons and earned as much as \$40 million US by illegally prescribing medicinal alcohol to thirsty patients. For a law that was aimed at reducing crime and other illegal behavior, it was proving to do anything but.

In the late 1920s, an increasing number of Americans, politicians included, began to find the idea of repealing Prohibition attractive. Not only was it expensive to enforce, but the federal and state governments no longer had the tax from the sale of alcohol. This meant as much as half a billion dollars annually was no longer available. More importantly, anti-Prohibition groups, such as the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA)--which happened to be made up of the nation's wealthy and elite--started to spring up and pressure their friends in high places about the inconvenience of not being able to drink. Of course, everybody was drinking; they were simply doing it illegally and behind closed doors. Prohibition tried to eliminate the supply without reducing the demand and by the end of the decade, it became obvious it wasn't working. Crime rates were nearly double that of pre-Prohibition.

In 1932, Presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt wisely advocated a repeal of the country's costly Prohibition laws. The country was in the throes of the Depression and not only did Prohibition deprive people the opportunity to (legally) drown their sorrows in a drink, but it also deprived people of desperately needed jobs. Prohibition was repealed in 1933 with the adoption of the 21st Amendment and one of the most disastrous eras of law enforcement in US history came to an end.

## **The Jazz Age**

If the war years were about cutting back, the 1920s were about cutting loose; they didn't call it the Roaring Twenties for nothing. Also known as the Jazz Age, the 1920s signified a time of prosperity, technological innovation and social change; it was a time to be young, a decade of unbridled optimism.

The most noticeable change in North America after the Great War was the widespread prosperity; there was an improved standard of living and after scrimping and saving through the lean years of WWI, people were looking to spend. The industry of mass production that had manufactured the necessities of war had now expanded to produce the necessities of life and then some. This meant that former luxuries--which had existed prior to this period--such as telephones, refrigerators, radios and cars were now affordable. Coupled with more spending power (the result of a booming economy), advertisers had no problems attracting customers to a range of life improving products.

Radio came to prominence during the '20s and by 1923 there were over 500 radio stations broadcasting everything from news and sports to music and comedy shows. In fact, by the end of the decade, over 10 million homes in the US would boast at least one radio.

Radio's success was helped by the overwhelming popularity of jazz music. Musicians such as Louis Armstrong, King Oliver and Sidney Bechet ushered in a new era of musical expression. Jazz music seemed to sum up the mood of the decade: it was bold, modern, stylish and exuberant. Nightclubs--where patrons could dance, smoke and drink illegal hooch from hip flasks--dedicated to this new type of music sprang up across America. Scatting, in which nonsensical words are sung or harmonized, became hugely popular. Not only did the music anger the establishment, it led to controversial dance moves like the Charleston and the One Step, which took the younger generation by storm and further threatened the morals of society.

America's vibrant music and nightclub scene influenced the style and fashion that reflected a woman's increasing power in society. Women not only had the vote, but they could drink, smoke, dance and carouse with the best of them. These brash females, with their bobbed hair, short dresses and heavy make-up became known as flappers, due in part to the way in which their arms flapped when they danced.

It was during the '20s that the age of the "movie star" was born. Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* was the first "talkie" and stars like Rudolph Valentino and Clara Bow were earning a fortune starring in feature films. Movies like *The Mad Whirl*, *The Plastic Age* and *Walking Back* helped to define an era. By the end of the decade, over 100 million people a week went to the movies.

The '20s also saw an unprecedented period of literary excellence that introduced both coveted and controversial works by the likes of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner. Fitzgerald and Hemingway were part of a group of writers known as the "Lost Generation", eschewing



**Flappers of the  
Roaring Twenties**

America's rampant materialism for Paris and living there for much of the '20s and '30s. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, is said to be a classic depiction of the Jazz Age.

Not everything about the Roaring Twenties was positive. There was Prohibition, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, and of course, the Stock Market Crash of 1929, which would usher in the Great Depression of the '30s.

## **The Washington Naval Treaty**

In the years following WWI, it became obvious that one way of avoiding another war was to limit the size of each nation's armaments.

This, however, appeared to fly in the face of the naval arms race that was brewing between the victorious allied nations, not to mention the mounting tensions surrounding the strategically important Pacific. The goal of the International Washington Naval Conference, which was held between November 1921 and February 1922 in Washington, DC, was to establish an agreed upon set of regulations among the naval forces of the nations involved.

The resulting Washington Naval Treaty was signed on 6 February 1922 by representatives from the US, Britain, Japan, France and Italy. The agreement actually incorporated three separate treaties: The Four-Power Treaty, the Five-Power Treaty and the Nine-Power Treaty.

The Four-Power Treaty, signed by the US, Britain, Japan and France covered each respective nation's naval bases in the Pacific, with the countries involved basically agreeing to continue to run existing naval bases but making it illegal to build new fortifications in specified areas around the Pacific.

The Five-Power Treaty which included Italy, essentially limited the total capital ship tonnage of each of the signatory nations. A ratio which took into account the balance of military power at the time was established between the nations. For every five US and UK battleships, Japan was allowed three ships and France and Italy were allowed 1.75 ships. While allowing certain exceptions for ships in current use, a ship building moratorium was declared for a period of 10 years.

Finally, the Nine-Power Treaty saw the Big Four, plus Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and China formally agree to respect Chinese territorial integrity and independence.

The nations attempted to get around the main Five-Power Treaty, working to figure out ways to have the fastest, lightest and deadliest ship under the treaty. For most of the navies, this involved retrofitting existing ships.

Although the treaty appeared to be effective, critics argued that it lacked sufficient enforcement authority to ensure the nations stuck to its regulations. It could also be argued that the treaty had the biggest adverse affect on the US, who, along with Britain, had the largest area to defend but had its shipbuilding program halted by the agreement. For most of the nations that had signed the

Washington Naval Treaty, battleships had become so valuable that by the start of WWII, they were seldom used for fear they would be sunk.

A further agreement--called the London Treaty--would follow in 1930. Japan, unhappy with the treaty from the start, would be the first nation to terminate its involvement in 1936, effectively ending the treaty.

## **The Stock Market Crash of 1929**

When the New York Stock Exchange crashed on 24 October 1929, it not only left millions of investors penniless, but it signaled an end to a decade of prosperity.

Otherwise known as Black Thursday, the Wall Street Crash followed an unprecedented period of economic growth throughout America as new life-improving technology and industrialization had the US economy booming.

Millions of Americans were investing heavily in the stock market and from 1921 to 1929, the Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped from 60 points to over 350. Self-made millionaires were everywhere and eager investors were doing everything from mortgaging their homes to investing every last penny of their life savings to get into the stock market. As a result, this drove share prices up to artificially high levels, which in turn, encouraged more and more people to invest, causing stock prices to skyrocket even further. Of course, this caused even more people to invest everything they had, convinced that the stocks would simply continue to rise further. This frenzied trading, which saw people go heavily into debt, created an over-inflated economic bubble which was set to burst at any time.

On 24 October 1929 it did just that, as more than 12 million shares were liquidated by panicked investors desperate to unload the soon-to-be worthless stocks. In the days after Black Thursday, a further 30 million shares--which were now worthless, were sold--wiping out over \$5 billion worth of investments.

By the end of the year, another \$16 billion worth of shares would devalue and the results were devastating. People were left both penniless and homeless, as banks, desperate to recoup some of the money they lent out, repossessed homes and businesses. Making matters worse was the fact that the banks themselves had ploughed over \$140 billion of their clients' savings in the stock market, which meant that even those customers who hadn't even invested in the stock exchange had lost everything without even knowing it.

Whether the stock market crash was the sole cause of the ensuing Great Depression or simply a contributing factor has been debated for decades. Regardless, it left millions of people broke and jobless, forcing the formerly well off to struggle to make ends meet. Poverty was rampant and it would be almost 30 years before the Dow Jones would return to the heights it reached during the Roaring (and booming) Twenties.

One good thing to come out of the crash were safety measures that would temporarily halt trading in the event of sudden decline, preventing the mass panicked selling that caused Black Thursday. This helped to ensure that subsequent crashes were never as severe financially.

## Charles Lindbergh's Flight

While working as a mail pilot in St. Louis, Missouri, Charles Lindbergh heard about the lucrative \$25,000 US reward being offered by Raymond Orteig, a wealthy hotel baron, to the first person(s) to fly non-stop between New York, USA and Paris, France. The offer had been on the table for well over five years, without any takers. Lindbergh decided he was just the person to claim the prize.

With the financial support of a group of local businessmen, Lindbergh set about designing his customized plane, which he called *The Spirit of St. Louis* in their honor. With a modest budget of \$15,000 US, Lindbergh's design, which was centered on a single engine, appeared to fly in the face of conventional airplane ideology, which was all about multiple engines and improved power.

Lindbergh, on the other hand, reasoned that a single engine meant less weight, which would ultimately mean increased fuel efficiency. Never mind that flying over the Atlantic Ocean with one engine left him no room for error.

The only problem was, Lindbergh couldn't find an airplane manufacturer willing to construct his plane. Worse still, with airplane technology slowly improving, others were making well publicized plans to take a run at the as yet unclaimed prize.

Lindbergh hit pay dirt when he was contacted by the Ryan Airlines Corporation of San Diego, California. Not only could they build Lindbergh's plane, but it would only cost him \$6,000 of his total budget, minus the engine.

Scheduled to be airborne within two months, the tiny plane was built strictly to get from New York to Paris without stopping and as a result, features such as additional fuel tanks were incorporated into the design. To keep the plane's weight down, every item was carefully scrutinized for its heft, which meant that necessities such as a parachute and radio were out of the question. Lindbergh even cut his navigational papers down to size, keeping only what was needed for his journey.

When *The Spirit of St. Louis* was finished two months later, it weighed a mere 2,150 lbs and had a flight range of 4,000 miles, more than enough to get from Paris to New York.

On 20 May 1927, after waiting eight days for favorable weather conditions, Lindbergh and his tiny, silver plane took off from Roosevelt Field in Long Island, New York bound for Paris, France. Over 33 hours and 3,600 miles later, after battling ice, fog and fatigue, "the flying fool" as he was known in



**Charles Lindbergh  
and the Spirit of St.  
Louis**

Charles Lindbergh stands in front of The Spirit of St. Louis prior to takeoff. A map shows the historic route.



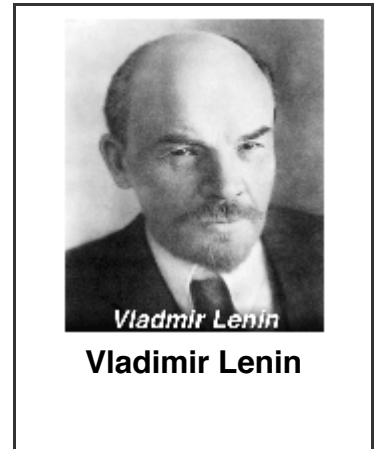
some media circles, was standing safely on Le Bourget Field in France surrounded by over 100,000 rapturous well wishers. Lindbergh, a fool no more, had become the first person to fly solo, non-stop across the Atlantic Ocean. "Lucky Lindy" as he was now known, became a global media darling.

After touring Europe as the guest of various governments, Lindbergh returned to a hero's welcome back in America, where he was presented with both the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Flying Cross by the United States government. Many credit "Lucky Lindy" with helping to commercialize the global aviation industry. In fact, even today, many airlines still use the same commercial routes that Lindbergh helped chart in the years following his famous trans-Atlantic flight.

## The Growth of Communism in Russia

Communism, the belief that every individual in a society should be considered equal and share their wealth, with property held by the state, became popular in Russia in the early 20th century and a political juggernaut in the 1920s.

However, the roots of communism can be traced back to the mid 19th century with the formation of the Communist League in 1848. The League, an organization of German emigre workers based in London, asked Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels to help them write a document that summed up their beliefs. Marx and Engels would go on to write the *Communist Manifesto*.



Modern Communism in Russia, however, started with the split, in 1903, of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (also known as the Marxist Party) into factions of Bolshevism (meaning majority) and Menshevism (meaning minority). The more radical Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Ilych Lenin, advocated revolution and violence to bring about the downfall of capitalism and the establishment of an international socialist state. Lenin further believed that the workers should control the means of production and that society should be for the working class, not just the wealthy.

Russia's defeat in WWI left the country with nothing and the Russian people were ready to support another uprising. The triumph of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution of 1917, also called the October Revolution, gave them the leadership in socialist action, and they created the Communist party in 1918. Not everyone, however, supported Lenin and the fractured support gave rise to the Russian Civil War in 1918.

The civil war, between the Bolsheviks (also called "Reds") and the liberals, conservatives and moderate socialists (also called the "Whites") who opposed Lenin resulted in widespread suffering for millions of Russians. The Bolsheviks would wage a long, hard civil war before they could claim victory.

From 1918 until 1921, a period which became known as war communism, banks, railroads and shipping were nationalized and the economy was restricted. Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for opposition, including strikes and mutinies, to begin. The workers, who wanted to be paid in cash for

their products, didn't like having to turn over their surplus grain to the government as a part of its war policies. Making matters worse was the devastating food shortage that killed tens of thousands of Russian peasants. Faced with growing peasant opposition, Lenin began a retreat from war communism known as the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921.

As part of the NEP, workers were permitted to sell any surplus production for profit in the open market. However, the state continued to be responsible for transportation, banking, public utilities and heavy industry. Around the same time as the implementation of the NEP, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was established as a federation on 30 December 1922.



### **Symbol of Communism**

The hammer and sickle is recognized as a symbol of communism and communist parties. The hammer stands for the industrial proletariat and the sickle is a symbol of the peasant. Placing them together is meant to symbolize the union of the agricultural and industrial workers.

Lenin's program was highly successful and the economy, devastated by years of civil war and unrest, recovered. However, the NEP would be faced with increasing opposition from within the party in the years following Lenin's death in 1924.

A power struggle followed Lenin's passing, between Leon Trotsky, Lenin's right-hand man and leader of the Soviet Red Army, and Joseph Stalin, a high-ranking government official. Trotsky was defeated and fled, leaving Stalin to adapt Lenin's existing communist policies to his liking. Stalin would become dictator and prove to be a ruthless leader.

In 1929, Stalin ended the existing NEP and replaced it with the first of many five-year plans, under which heavy industry was to be expanded. In rural areas, the peasant farmers were forced to join together in collective farms. Many peasants objected to Stalin's new co-op policy. Workers destroyed their crops and slaughtered their animals in protest rather than conform.

The resulting Great Terror, would see millions of protesters murdered for opposing Stalin's Communist vision. Not even widespread famine in 1932, which saw Stalin continue to export grain even though it was needed to feed the Russian people, could get him to alter his hardline stance. It is estimated that five million Russians perished, with millions more murdered in "purges" ordered by the Russian dictator.

Stalin would go on to terrorize his own people until his death in 1953. Proponents of Communism--choosing to overlook Stalin's murderous and inhumane methods--point to the fact that from 1929 to 1941, Russian industry grew rapidly as proof that Communism can work.

1920-1929

1920

The US Government's 18th Amendment prohibiting the making, selling, possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages goes into effect, ushering in the era of Prohibition.

Arthur Meighen is sworn in as Prime Minister of Canada, replacing Robert Borden.

Republican Warren Harding becomes president of the United States of America.

Fourteen British officers are executed by the IRA, sparking a day of violence and murder throughout Ireland.

United States passes the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote.

## 1921

Canadians Frederick Banting and Charles Best discover insulin.

The Russian navy mutinies to protest food shortages and the ongoing economic crisis. The Bolshevik government crushes the revolt, which leads to Lenin's economic policy reforms.

Oklahoma race riots erupt, as many as 300 people are killed and 35 city blocks are destroyed.

Britain's post-war recession worsens, with unemployment at 18 percent (two million people).

## 1922

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is published.

Pope Benedict XV, who reigned as pope of the Roman Catholic Church since 1914, dies and is replaced by Pope Pius XI.

The German mark begins to devalue due to heavy WWI reparation demands, ushering in a period of hyperinflation.

The Washington Treaty is signed by the US, Britain, Japan, France and Italy. The agreement limits the size of the naval armaments of the nations involved.

Andrew Bonar Law becomes Prime Minister of Britain.

Vladimir Ilych Lenin proclaims the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Benito Mussolini becomes Prime Minister of Italy.

## 1923

Hyperinflation is rampant in Germany. In an effort to rescue the economy, the Reichsbank introduces a new German mark, called the *rentenmark*, which is worth a trillion existing marks.

King Tut's tomb, discovered the previous year by George Carnarvon and Howard Carter, is opened.

Ku Klux Klan claims membership of one million people across America and targets anyone who is not white and Protestant.

UK Prime Minister Andrew Bonar Law is diagnosed with throat cancer, resigns and is replaced by Stanley Baldwin.

US President Harding dies in office and is replaced by vice-president Calvin Coolidge.

## **1924**

Lenin dies; Joseph Stalin becomes his successor.

James Ramsay MacDonald becomes the first Labour Prime Minister of Britain. He is defeated later that same year by the very man he replaced, Baldwin.

Republican Coolidge is elected as president of the US.

The US stock market hits a five year high with 2.33 million shares traded on the New York exchange in one day.

Nellie T. Ross becomes the first female governor in the US.

Adolf Hitler is sentenced to five years for his part in the failed "Beer Hall Putsch" of the previous year. During his time in prison, he composes *Mein Kampf*.

## **1925**

Tennessee bans the teaching of evolution. School teacher John Scopes is later arrested for teaching the theory of evolution and found guilty.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is published.

Part one of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is published.

## **1926**

Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King resigns in the wake of the King-Byng Affair and subsequent customs scandal.

Stricken with acute peritonitis, silent film star Rudolph Valentino dies suddenly at age 31.

Leon Trotsky is expelled from the Soviet Communist Party, leaving Stalin with undisputed control of the Soviet Union.

Emperor Taisho (Yoshihito) of Japan dies. He is succeeded by his son, Hirohito.

## 1927

Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* becomes the first feature film to have synchronized sound.

First transatlantic commercial telephone service goes into operation. A three-minute call between New York and London costs \$75 US.

One thousand people a week die in Britain from widespread influenza epidemic.

## 1928

Penicillin is discovered by Alexander Fleming.

Stalin's first five-year plan is announced, calling for development of heavy industry, seizure of farms and collectivization of all workers.

Seventy years in the making, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is completed.

## 1929

The New York Stock Exchange crashes, ushering in what will be a world-wide economic crisis.

Ramsey MacDonald again replaces Baldwin as Prime Minister of Britain.

Herbert Hoover, a republican, becomes 31st president of the US.

More than two million people die of starvation in China and continued famine threatens millions more.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences gives out its first Academy Awards of Merit, later dubbed "the Oscars".

"After the dark times of the previous decade, the 1920s offered a welcome respite, a time to kick back and enjoy the prosperity and promise that was evident in nearly every facet of society. Technological innovation and advancement meant that more 'life-improving' products than ever before were available. The economy was booming, the standard of living was improving, jobs were plentiful and consumers were looking to buy....Industrialization and mass production made many goods--previously considered a luxury--affordable." (**History Magazine**) In this article, the author discusses the 1920s, "a vibrant decade of peace, prosperity and social change." A timeline highlights notable events from each year of the decade.

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## Citations

### MLA 8

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## Related Subjects

Drinking of alcoholic beverages   Lindbergh, Charles (1902-1974)   Nineteen twenties

Organized crime   Prohibition   Soviet Union, History, 20th century

Soviet Union, Politics and government   Transatlantic flights   Jazz Age

Alcohol, Law and legislation   Stock Market Crash (1929)   Washington Naval Treaty

Communism, Russia



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