

**Timeline of the History of La Belle Époque:  
World History**

# 1870

Prussia seeks to expand unification boundaries into France, resulting in the Franco-Prussian War (July 19, 1870 – January 28, 1871). Prussia defeats France. The Second French Empire, under Emperor Napoleon III, falls.



French soldiers by a cannon, July 23, 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War.  
Source: Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

# 1871

The Paris Commune occurs from March 18 to May 28. The Commune ends in a French Army suppression, known as “The Bloody Week,” from May 21 to May 28. Germany unifies under Otto von Bismarck. The Third French Republic forms under Adolphe Thiers.



Anton von Werner – *Proclamation of the German Empire*, 1885. Oil on canvas.  
Bismarck-Museum, Friedrichsruh, Germany.

# 1872

Yellowstone National Park in the United States is established as the world's first national park on March 1. In defiance of the law, American suffragist Susan B. Anthony votes for the first time on November 5. She is served an arrest warrant on November 18 and is fined \$100 in the subsequent trial; she never pays the fine.



Thomas Moran – *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872.

Oil on canvas mounted on aluminum.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

# 1873

The First Spanish Republic is established on February 11. On May 20, German immigrant Levi Strauss and Latvian immigrant Jacob Davis receive a patent for using copper rivets for strengthening the pockets of denim work pants. With this patent, Levi Strauss & Co. begin manufacturing the famous Levi's brand of jeans.

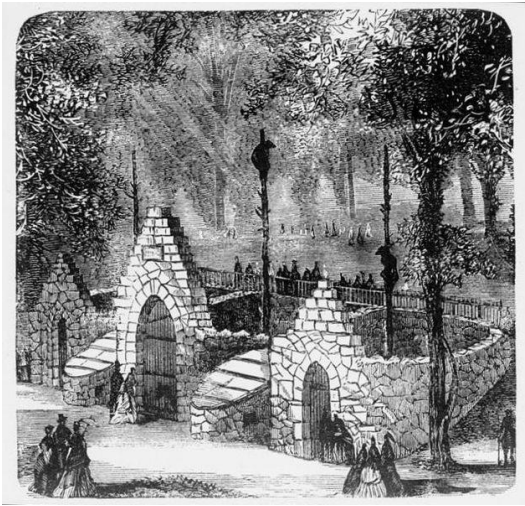


U.S. Patent #139,121: Using copper rivets for strengthening denim work pant pockets, May 20, 1873.

Source: United States Patent and Trademark Office.

# 1874

American doctor Andrew Taylor Still establishes the osteopathic medicine movement on June 22 in Kirksville, Missouri. The Philadelphia Zoo, the first public zoo in the United States, opens on July 1. The First Spanish Republic comes to an end on December 29.

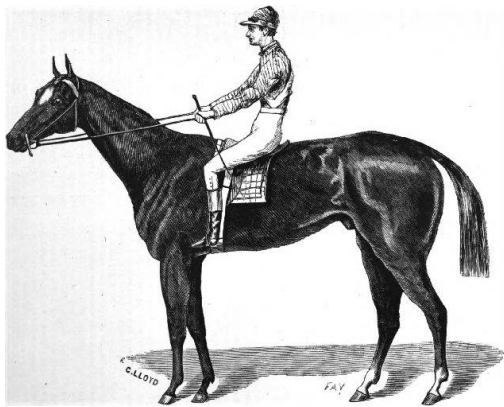


Philadelphia Zoological Gardens, “Bear Pits”, 1876. Steel engraving.

Source: Thompson Westcott, *Official Guide-Book to Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1876).

# 1875

The first Kentucky Derby is held on May 17; the racehorse Aristides is the winner. Two American colleges, Tufts University and Harvard University, play each other on June 4, in what is arguably the first college football game.

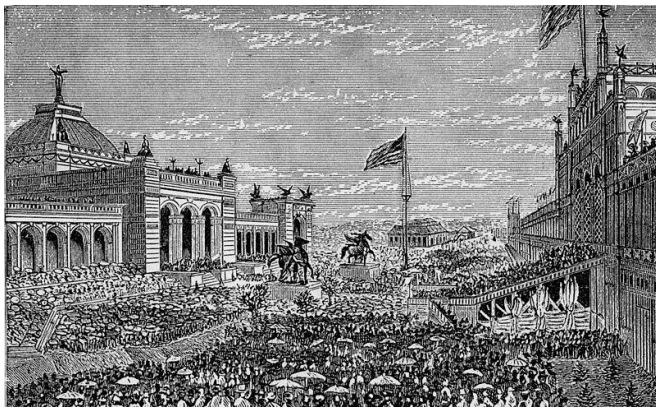


C. Lloyd – *Aristides*, 1877. Etching.

Source: Porter and Coates, "Famous Horses of America: Containing fifty-nine portraits of the celebrities of the American turf past and present" (Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1877).

# 1876

American librarian Melvil Dewey first publishes the Dewey Decimal System in March. Alexander Graham Bell is granted a patent for the telephone on March 7; on March 10, Bell makes the first successful telephone call. Friends Academy is founded by Gideon Frost in Locust Valley, New York on April 17. The United States celebrates its Centennial on July 4.



James Dabney McCabe - Opening day ceremonies at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, May 10, 1876. Engraving.

Source: James Dabney McCabe, "The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exposition Held In Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of American Independence (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Company, 1876).



# 1877

Queen Victoria is proclaimed *Empress of India* on January 1, by the *Royal Titles Act 1876*. Emile Berliner invents the microphone on March 4. The first Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is held in New York from May 8 to May 11. Thomas Edison announces his invention of the phonograph on November 21 and first demonstrates it on November 29.

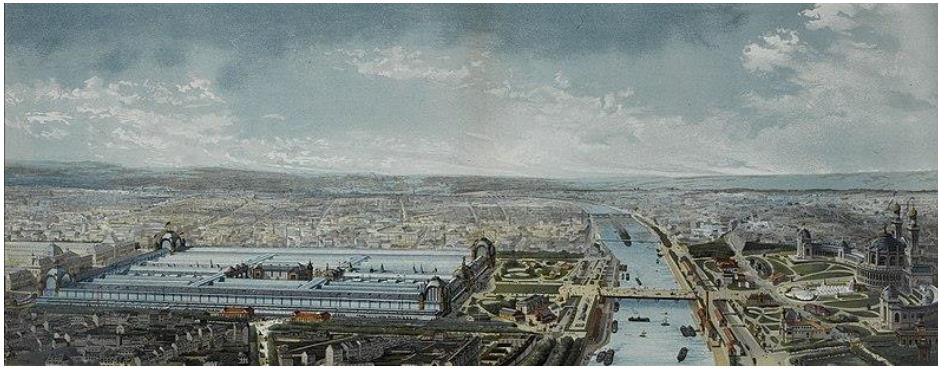


Levin Corbin Handy – Thomas Edison and his early phonograph, ca. 1877.  
Wet collodion print.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1878

*The Yale News* becomes the first daily college newspaper in the United States on January 28. From May 1 through November 10, the third Paris World's Fair (*Exposition Universelle*) is held to celebrate France's recovery after the Franco-Prussian War.

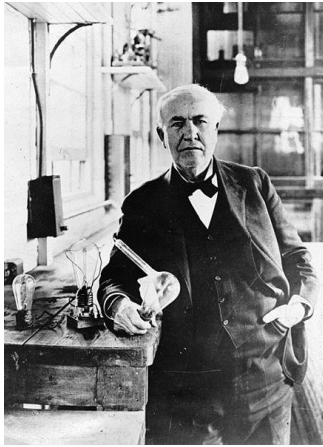


Stephen Sauvestre – *Panorama des Palais de l'Exposition Universelle de 1878*.  
Chromolithograph.

Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

# 1879

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español – PSOE*) is founded by Pablo Iglesias on May 2. Edison demonstrates incandescent lightbulbs for the first time on December 31; his patent would be granted on January 27, 1880.



Thomas Edison with his invented white lightbulbs from 1883, 1918-19.  
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

# 1880

Competing circus owners P.T. Barnum and James A. Bailey sign a contract in Bridgeport, Connecticut to create the Barnum & Bailey Circus on August 26; the circus would merge with Ringling Brothers in 1907. German pathologist Karl Eberth first visualizes the bacteria that would become known as *Salmonella* in the bodies of typhoid patients.



"The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth / Wonderful Performing Geese, Roosters and Musical Donkey," 1900. Chromolithograph.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1881

Tsar Alexander II of Russia is assassinated on March 13. His son, Alexander III, becomes Tsar of Russia. The American Red Cross is established by Clara Barton on May 21. U.S. President James A. Garfield is shot by Charles J. Guiteau on July 2; Garfield dies on September 19. Chester A. Arthur becomes President.



Ilya Repin – *Alexander III receiving rural district elders in the yard of Petrovsky Palace in Moscow*, 1885-86. Oil on canvas.

Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

# 1882

Robert Koch announces the discovery of the bacterium responsible for tuberculosis on March 24. The first United States Labor Day parade is held in New York City on September 5. The Great Comet of 1882 is sighted on September 18.



Sir David Gill - Photograph of the Great Comet of 1882, as seen from Cape Town, South Africa.

Source: South African Astronomical Observatory.

# 1883

*Life* magazine is founded in Los Angeles on January 4. Oxygen is liquified for the first time on April 5. After thirteen years of construction, the Brooklyn Bridge opens to traffic on May 24. In June, France begins the Tonkin campaign to occupy Northern Vietnam.



Currier and Ives – The Great East River Suspension Bridge, 1883.  
Chromolithograph.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1884

*A New English Dictionary on historical principles, part 1*, the first iteration of what would become known as *The Oxford English Dictionary*, is published in England on February 1. The eight-hour workday is first proclaimed by the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions in the United States on May 1; this date, May Day, would become a holiday recognized in almost every industrialized nation. Austrian ophthalmologist Karl Koller makes public his invention of local anesthesia in Heidelberg, Germany on September 15.



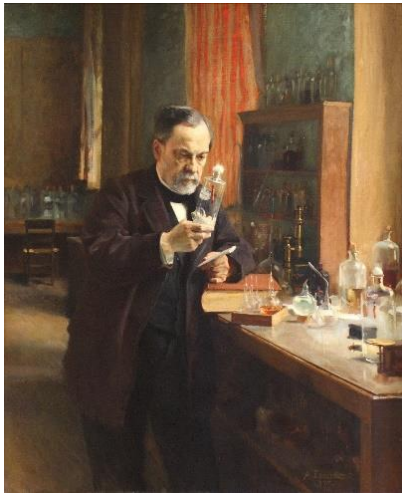
Walter Crane – *A Garland for May Day*, 1895. Relief print.

University of Michigan Libraries, Labadie Collection of Political Posters.



## 1885

LaMarcus Adna Thompson patents the roller coaster on January 20. U.S. President Chester A. Arthur dedicates the Washington Monument on February 25. Louis Pasteur and Émile Roux develop and successfully experiment with the rabies vaccine on July 6.



Albert Edelfelt – *Louis Pasteur*, 1885. Oil on canvas.  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

# 1886

The Tonkin campaign ends in April with a French victory. The Statue of Liberty, designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and constructed by Bartholdi and Gustave Eiffel, is dedicated in New York Harbor by U.S. President Grover Cleveland on October 28, resulting in the first ticker tape parade in New York City.



Edward Moran – *The Statue of Liberty Unveiled*, 1886. Oil on canvas.  
The Museum of the City of New York.

# 1887

The first Groundhog Day is observed in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania on February 2. Chester Greenwood patents earmuffs on March 13. Queen Victoria marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year of her reign in a Golden Jubilee Celebration on June 21. French Indochina, which encompasses present-day Vietnam and Cambodia, is established on October 17.

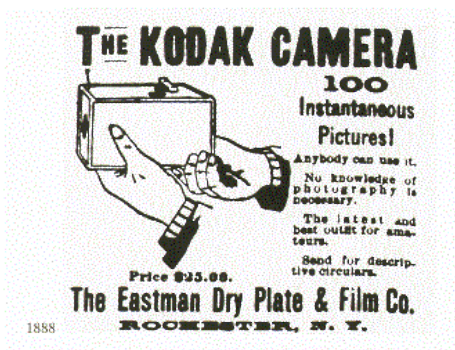


William Ewart Lockhart – *Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Service, Westminster Abbey, 21 June 1887*, 1887-90. Oil on canvas.

The Royal Collection, courtesy Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

# 1888

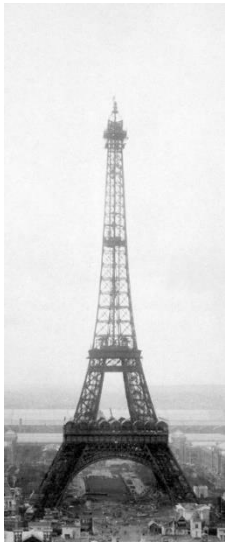
Wilhelm II becomes Emperor (Kaiser) of Germany and King of Prussia on June 15. On August 5, in Germany, Bertha Benz completes the first long-distance drive in the history of the automobile, using a car manufactured by her husband Carl Benz to drive 40 miles. George Eastman registers the trademark Kodak and receives a patent for his roll film camera on September 4.



Advertisement for the first Kodak Camera, Eastman Dry Plate & Film Co., Rochester, New York, 1888.

# 1889

The Coca-Cola Company is originally incorporated as the Pemberton Medicine Company in Atlanta on January 15. The Eiffel Tower, designed by Stephen Sauvestre under the engineering firm of Gustave Eiffel, is completed in Paris on March 31 for the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle. On June 19, a Neapolitan Baker named Raffaele Esposito invents the Pizza Margherita, named after Italian Queen Consort Margherita of Savoy; this is the forerunner to the modern pizza.



Théophile Féau – *Eiffel Tower*, 2 April 1889.

Source: Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais/R.G. Ojeda.

# 1890

Yosemite National Park is established on October 1. The Daughters of the American Revolution is founded in Washington, DC on October 11. The Wounded Knee Massacre, a domestic massacre of nearly 300 Lakota people by United States Army soldiers, occurs on December 29.



Carleton E. Watkins – *View of Tutocanula Pass, Yosemite, California*, ca. 1880. Mammoth plate.

Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

# 1891

On April 28, an act of the New York State Legislature establishes the New York Botanical Garden in The Bronx. William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, under Edison's supervision, first displays the prototype kinoscope moving picture system on May 20. In October, Eugène Dubois finds the first fragmentary bones of *Homo erectus* on the Solo River in Java, Indonesia.



New York. Hot Houses. Botanical Gardens, Bronx Park, 1891.

Source: LuEsther T. Mertz Library, New York Botanical Garden, The Bronx, New York.

# 1892

Ellis Island begins accommodating immigrants to the United States on January 1. The Sierra Club is founded in San Francisco on May 28 by John Muir. *Vogue* Magazine is first published in the United States on December 17.



*Arriving at Ellis Island*, published by Bain News Service, 1915.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.



# 1893

Rudolf Diesel receives a patent for the diesel engine on February 23. The 1893 World's Fair, also known as the World's Columbian Exposition, is held in Chicago. The first Ferris Wheel opens to the public during the Exposition. The Franco-Siamese War results in the annexation of present-day Laos into French Indochina.



C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham - Looking West from Peristyle, Court of Honor and Grand Basin of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

Source: *Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Chicago Photogravure Co., 1893).

# 1894

The Dreyfus affair begins on October 15 with the controversial conviction of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an officer of Jewish descent, of treason. The scandal, which would last until its resolution in 1906, infuriates intellectuals and divides the French public for decades. Nicholas II becomes Tsar of Russia on November 1.

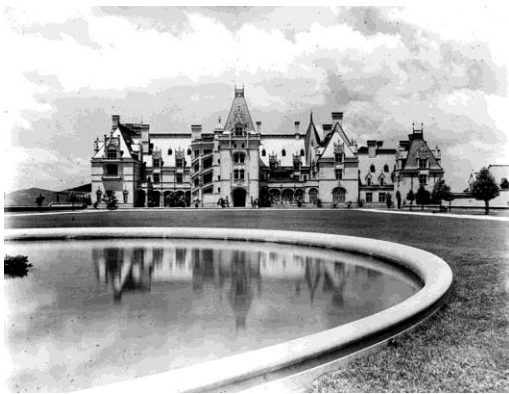


Henri Meyer - "The traitor: Degradation of Alfred Dreyfus, degradation in the Morland Court of the military school in Paris," *Le Petit Journal*, January 13, 1895.

Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

# 1895

Armand Kosman, Franz Weis and Daniel Swarovski found the Swarovski Company in Austria for the production of crystal glass. The first professional American football game is played in Latrobe, Pennsylvania on September 3. The first American automobile race, sponsored by the *Chicago Times-Herald*, is held in Chicago on November 28; this sparks significant American interest in the automobile. George Washington Vanderbilt II opens his Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina on December 24.



Biltmore House, with reflecting pool in the Biltmore Gardens Esplanade, 1900.  
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1896

The X-ray machine is exhibited for the first time on January 18. The first modern Olympic Games are held in Athens from April 6 through April 15. The United States Supreme Court establishes the separate but equal doctrine, upholding racial segregation with their 7-1 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling on May 18.



Cover of the Official Report of the 1896 Athens Summer Olympics.

# 1897

The Boston Marathon, the world's oldest annual marathon, is first held on April 19. Queen Victoria celebrates her Diamond Jubilee on June 22. Pharmacist Felix Hoffmann successfully synthesizes what would become known as "Aspirin" at the Bayer pharmaceutical company in Germany on August 10.



W. and D. Downey – *Queen Victoria photographed for her 1897 Diamond Jubilee*, 1893. Albumen cabinet card.

National Portrait Gallery, London.

# 1898

The USS *Maine* explodes and sinks in Havana Harbor, Cuba, resulting in the Spanish-American War, which lasts from February 15 to the signing of the Treaty of Paris between Spain and the United States on December 10. Spain cedes Cuba, the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to the United States. Marie and Pierre Curie announce the discovery of radium on December 26.

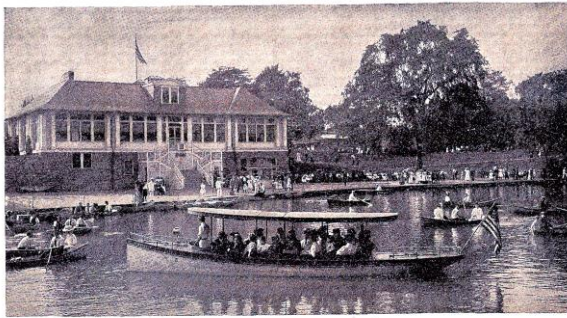


James H. Hare - Memorial Service at Grave of "Maine's" Dead, Havana, March 4; Front cover of *Collier's Weekly* for March 19, 1898.

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

# 1899

Mount Rainier National Park is established in Washington State on March 2. Guglielmo Marconi successfully transmits a radio signal across the English Channel on March 27. Giovanni Agnelli founds the car company Fiat on July 11. The Bronx Zoo opens on November 8 in New York.



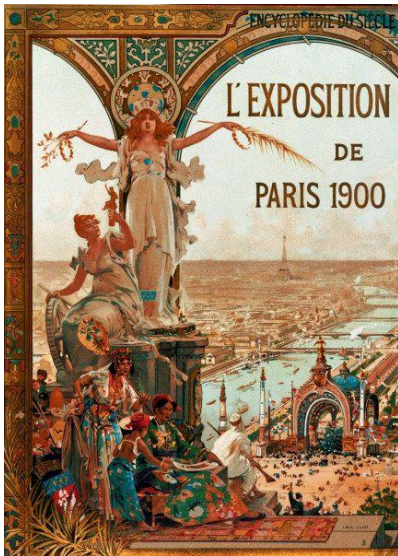
THE BOAT HOUSE, BRONX LAKE.

Boating in the Bronx Zoo, 1899.

Source: William T. Hornaday, Sc.D., *Popular Official Guide to the New York Zoological Park*.

# 1900

The Paris Exposition Universelle (April 14 – November 12) brings attention to Art Nouveau and to major technological innovations such as diesel engines. Max Planck discovers the law of black-body radiation on October 19 by introducing the notion of light quanta and beginning the Quantum Revolution in physics.



Paul Souze – Poster of the 1900 Exposition Universelle  
Éditions Montgredien et Cie, Paris.



# 1901

Queen Victoria dies on January 22 after more than 63 years on the British throne. Her eldest son succeeds her as King Edward VII. J. Pierpont Morgan incorporates U.S. Steel as the first billion-dollar corporation on February 25. U.S. President William McKinley is shot by Leon Czolgosz at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, on September 6; McKinley dies eight days later. Theodore Roosevelt becomes President.



Sir Luke Fildes – *Portrait of King Edward VII* (1902). Oil on canvas.  
National Portrait Gallery, London.

# 1902

The Vienna Psychoanalytic Society begins their meetings at the apartment of Sigmund Freud. The Electric Theater, the first movie theater in the United States, opens in Los Angeles on April 2. The retailer J.C. Penney is founded in Kemmerer, Wyoming on April 14. The store chain Target is founded on June 24.



First J.C. Penney store in Kemmerer, Wyoming. Originally called The Golden Rule Store, 1902.

Source: National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

# 1903

The first Tour de France is held from July 1-19. Orville Wright flies in an aircraft with a petrol engine in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in the first documented, successful, controlled, powered, heavier-than-air flight, on December 17.

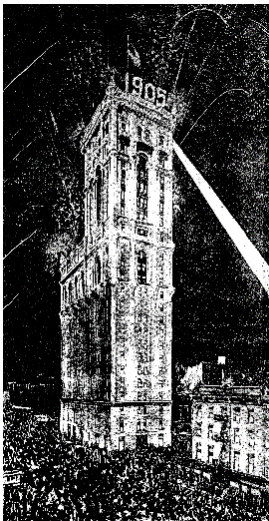


John T. Daniels – First successful flight of the Wright Flyer, by the Wright brothers, 1903.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1904

The United States gains control of the Panama Canal Zone for \$10 million on February 23. Cy Young, pitching for the Boston Americans, throws the first perfect game in the history of baseball on May 5 in a game against the Philadelphia Athletics. The first underground line of the New York City Subway opens on October 27. The first New Year's Eve celebration is held in New York's Times Square on December 31.



1904-05 New Year's Eve Celebration, Times Square, New York.

Source: *The New York Times*.

## 1905

The Bloody Sunday massacre of peaceful demonstrators occurs at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on January 22 triggering a failed revolution that begins on January 26 and lasts until 1907. Mutiny breaks out on the Russian ironclad *Potemkin* on June 27. In his “miracle year” of multiple published papers, Albert Einstein completes his doctoral dissertation on quantum physics and submits it on July 30. Einstein would later publish his famous  $E = mc^2$  equation on September 27.



Lucien Chavan – Albert Einstein, 1904 or 1905.

The Albert Einstein Archives, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

# 1906

On April 18, an estimated magnitude 7.8 earthquake hits San Francisco and devastates much of the city, killing at least 3,000 people and leaving 225,000 to 300,000 people homeless. The first Grand Prix is held in Le Mans, France on June 26. U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt signs the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 on June 30, establishing the Food and Drug Administration in the United States.



Arnold Genthe – “San Francisco: April 18, 1906.”

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1907

On June 15, investigator George Soper releases a finding that identifies “Typhoid Mary” Mallon as an asymptomatic carrier of typhoid in New York. Lord Robert Baden-Powell leads the first Scout camp on Brownsea Island, England from August 1-9. United Parcel Service (UPS) is founded by James E. Casey in Seattle, Washington on August 28.

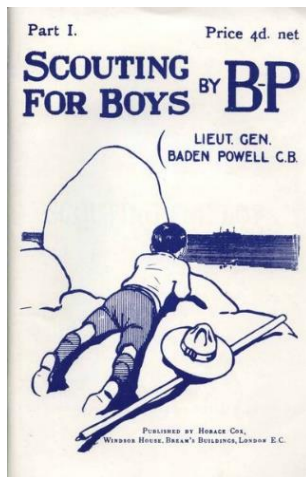


Merchants Parcel Delivery (UPS) fleet of vehicles, Seattle, 1916.

Source: United Parcel Service Archives, Seattle, Washington.

# 1908

Lord Baden-Powell publishes *Scouting for Boys* on January 24 in London, effectively beginning the worldwide Boy Scout movement. Henry Ford produces his first Model T automobile in Detroit on September 27.



Front Cover to Lord Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys, Part I*. (London: Horace Cox, 1908).



# 1909

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is founded in New York on February 12. The Indianapolis Motor Speedway opens on August 12. In September, Freud gives his only lectures in the United States at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, giving public recognition to the subject of psychoanalysis in the English-speaking world.



Otis Lithograph Co. – Advertisement for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, 1909. Color lithograph.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

# 1910

King Edward VII dies; George V succeeds his father as king on May 6. Professor Robert Williams Wood first publishes infrared photographs in the Royal Photographic Society's journal in October. The Mexican Revolution begins on November 20 with calls for an armed revolution against the presidency of Porfirio Díaz.



Sir Luke Fildes – *George V in Coronation Robes*, 1911. Oil on canvas.

The Royal Collection, courtesy Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

# 1911

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York kills over 146 people, many of them young immigrant women and girls, on March 25. Frank C. Mars starts the Mars Candy Factory, the origin of Mars, Incorporated, in Tacoma, Washington on June 23.

The Boston Sunday Globe. VOL. LXXIX, NO. 55. BOSTON, SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 26, 1911—EIGHTY PAGES. PER C. FIVE CENTS.

## FIRE IN FACTORY KILLS 148; GIRLS LEAP TO THEIR DEATH

Blazing Bodies Whirl to Street in Scores, Flames Pursue Victims to Ninth and Tenth Story Windows.

**ULTIMATUM BY RUSSIA TO CHINA**  
Demands Satisfactory Reply to Note of Feb 16 by Tuesday.  
Will Hold Chinese Responsible for Obstinacy—Situation Grave.

**DE LA GARZA FOR CABINET**  
Ambassador Will Be Chief Premier.

**PEACE MESSAGE FROM JAPAN.**  
Emperor Glad President Did Not Believe "Yah and Wicked Reports."

**Shirtwaist Operators Die at Machines in New York, Seared By Blast of Fire Sweeping Shop.**

**Women Cut Off From Exits, No Outside Escapes.**  
Pressure of the Maddened Crowd Hurts Dozens to Pavement.  
Elevator Shafts Clogged With Dead—After Hundreds Get Out.

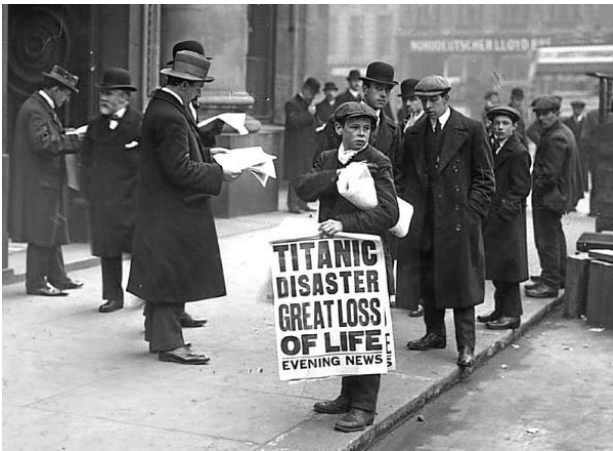
**MAP SHOWING LOCATION, MARKED BY CROSS, OF FIRE THAT KILLED 148.**

**NEW YORK, March 25**—Over hundred and forty girls were hurled to their death from the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City today when a fire broke out in the premises, which died in smoke or detached itself in a factory fire this

“Fire in Factory Kills 148; Girls Leap to their Death,” *The Boston Sunday Globe*, March 26, 1911.

# 1912

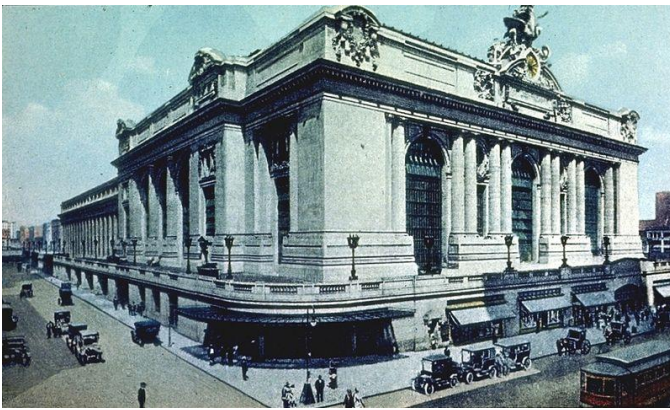
On her maiden voyage, the RMS *Titanic* strikes an iceberg and sinks in the northern Atlantic Ocean on April 14; over 1500 lives are lost. The Girl Scouts of the United States of America is founded by Juliette Gordon Low in Savannah, Georgia, on March 12. Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller first names Alzheimer's disease.



Ned Parfett, paperboy, outside the White Star Line offices in London, April 16, 1912.

# 1913

New York's Grand Central Terminal reopens as the world's largest railroad station on February 1. In Highland Park, Michigan, the Ford Motor Company's plant becomes the first automobile production facility in the world to implement the moving assembly line on October 7.



Grand Central Terminal, 1913.

Library of Congress, American Landscape and Architectural Design, 1850-1920  
Images of America: Lantern Slide Collection.

# 1914

Charlie Chaplin makes his film debut in the comedy short *Making a Living*, which premieres on February 2. Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife are assassinated by the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo on June 28, triggering the advent of World War I.



Achille Beltrame – Gavrilo Princip killing Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo.

Source: *Copertina della Domenica del Corriere* Year XVI, no. 27 (1914).

Timeline research and design by Alex C. Maccaro