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American History

History Reimagined

HIGHLIGHTS AND FEATURES

The Civil War and Reconstruction: 1860–1876

Ultimate and Proximate Causes May 1846–November 1860
In 1860, the people of the United States faced the greatest internal crisis that they had since their founding. That crisis burst into a disastrous civil war in 1861 that lasted four...

Secession, Border States, and First Battles December 1860–December 1861
In the weeks between the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in November and his inauguration on March 4, 1861, the crisis that had been impending for at least a decade culminated...

From Slavery to Freedom: Battlefield Emancipation and Contrabands May 1861–June 1862
The original seven states of the Confederacy that announced their secession and the formation of a new nation did so explicitly because of the election of Lincoln as a presidential candidate...

Blockade Ships and River Gunboats January 1861–December 1862
The naval and maritime side of the Civil War tends to hold a lesser place in public memory than the conflict between the armies on land. Part of the reason may lie in the fact that battles in...

Two Bitter Years January 1862–December 1863
Throughout 1862 and 1863, the Civil War increased in intensity, with numerous but heavy casualties that convinced both sides they were in for a long and bitter war. A number of factors...

Emancipation and the Mind of Lincoln July 1862–March 1865
Although abolitionists and radical Republicans continually urged Lincoln to take...

Videos and Slideshows

Manifest Destiny
David Wilmore sat at the table with several other members of Congress. The group had held regular meetings for weeks, trying to formulate a strategy that would challenge the administration of...

The Origins of Manifest Destiny
The phrase Manifest Destiny is used to express the belief that it was the fate of the United States to expand across the American continent. The idea of Manifest Destiny was not new to America...

Expansion and the Early Republic
The Treaty of Paris of 1763 ended the American Revolution. Under the terms of this agreement, Great Britain recognized her former colonies as a sovereign and independent nation. In addition, Great...

Territories and National Policy
In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the United States greatly extended its territorial holdings through the Louisiana Purchase. Just 16 years later, the young nation added Florida...

Claiming Ownership of Oregon Territory
The Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804–1806 proved that no waterway connected the east and west coasts of North America. The expedition brought back descriptions of flora, fauna, and nature...

Texas Becomes a State
Oregon certainly played its role in the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. It was in Texas, however, that the best and worst of Manifest Destiny exposed itself, revealing the dual nature of America...

The War with Mexico
The influx of American settlers into lands claimed by Mexico led to increased tensions between Mexico and the United States, following the Texas' 1846 victory at San Jacinto, Mexico...

The Race to the Moon

Original Crew of Apollo 13
Left to right: Commander James A. Lovell, copilot Thomas K. Mattingly, and lunar module pilot Fred W. Haise pose for a publicity shot before the Apollo 13 mission. Mattingly was scrubbed from the flight because he had been exposed to measles; he was replaced with James Swigert.

Source: NASA, Johnson Space Center.

Contemporary Female Leaders

First Four Female Supreme Court Justices
The first four women to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States pose together in the Justices' Conference Room, prior to Justice Elena Kagan's Investiture Ceremony on October 1, 2010. From left to right: Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (Ret.), Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Justice K. Bharat Gombarg, and Justice Elena Kagan.

Source: Collection of U.S. Supreme Court.

Land and Sea Battles
Battle of Shiloh
This painting by Thure de Thulstrup shows the Battle of Shiloh, an important Northern victory that secured western Tennessee and provided access to Mississippi in April 1862. Confederate troops launched a surprise attack on Union soldiers near Shiloh Church, forcing General William Tecumseh Sherman to withdraw his army. However, General Ulysses S. Grant and Don Carlos Buell soon arrived with reinforcements. The fighting continued for several days, until the Confederate army could no longer hold its line and General P. G. T. Beauregard ordered his troops to retreat into Mississippi. Each army suffered more than 20,000 casualties.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Chronograph, 1888.

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