



# 1000

# HEADLINES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD



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James Maloney



A Herman Graf book  
Skyhorse Publishing

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# INTRODUCTION

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As a journalist as well as an author with a keen interest in history and a fascination with newspapers, I found compiling this book was an absolute joy for me. I soon realised that there was no shortage of headlines from which to choose. The problem was what to leave out. This wealth of riches meant that some momentous events did not find their way into the pages of this book.

I had been very aware from the outset that my final choice of *100 Headlines* would cause disagreement, incredulity and possibly some anger amongst readers. How could such-and-such be left out? Why has *that* been included? Did that really *change* the world? It would be impossible to please all, perhaps even the majority, so in the end I have just had to please myself.

I could quite easily have filled the book with war and conflict or natural disasters, murder or scientific discoveries. All have been plentiful over the years. But I have striven to bring variety, and so we have tragedies co-existing with medical breakthroughs, heroic feats, political disasters and wonderful inventions.

Sadly, there have been all too many tragedies in history. I have had to be highly selective in choosing which to include. My criterion has not been solely based on the number of deaths or injuries in an incident. Nor have I adhered doggedly to global impact. I have endeavoured to bring together a selection of headlines that caused shock, disbelief and a considerable amount of emotional outpouring at the time of the happening. And so we have the likes of the 1958 Munich air disaster which tore apart the young Manchester United football team – the most exciting team of the era – or the devastating Boxing Day tsunami of 2004 which saw the loss of over 200,000 lives. General Custer's last stand finds a place, as do the First and Second World Wars. And so on.



The main theme of the book is that headlines – or events— should have changed the world. Some of the chosen headlines clearly did change the world, while others may have had a less obvious impact. Ultimately the choice is subjective. It could also be argued that everything and anything changes the world to some degree.

This is a book of headlines, the stories behind them and the impact they would have on the future of the world. I have delved into the world's newspaper archives and found some remarkable articles on famous events such as the sinking of the *Titanic*, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the serial murders of Jack the Ripper. But some things I imagined might include I had to abandon because I was unable to find a headline. These are mostly inventions, scientific discoveries and medical advances that were not fully appreciated at the time and so, outside of scientific, medical and other specialist publications, they received little or no attention in mainstream newspapers. For some I have managed to find a later headline with which to write a retrospective piece. This I did with the advent of Microsoft, for example, by including it under a headline announcing Bill Gates's departure from the company he set up.

The Internet, social networking sites and 24-hour TV and radio news have changed the way we hear the news. But in this book, many of the headlines you see were the main source of information at the time. News travelled at a slower pace in decades past and so major events were often not reported in newspapers until days – sometimes weeks – later.

Old newspapers' front pages were very different from today's. Many of them had classified adverts on the front and the news stories, however major, were 'buried' inside in small columns easily overlooked in the 'wall of print'.

While it is true that newspaper readership has declined as the electronic media have flourished, the printed word still carries great impact. Newspapers are both fascinating social documents of the time and records of history. There is nothing like seeing and holding an old newspaper in your hands, knowing that the very paper itself was there when the event

actually happened – be it the first man to set foot on the moon or the Russian revolution of 1917. It feels like living history.

Newspapers have been around in one form or another for hundreds of years. The ancient Romans can probably lay claim to distributing the first form of public news in the form of bulletins carved in metal or stone and prominently displayed for all to read. In 59 BC Julius Caesar informed the public about social, political and military events with information written on large white boards and placed in prominent places. In 8th-century China, hand-written newsheets were distributed. And in 1556 the Venetian government published *Notizie scritte*, for which readers paid a small coin or ‘gazzetta’, hence the popular newspaper name of *Gazette*.

But the newspaper as we might recognise it did not begin to appear until the 17th century as printing presses became more widespread and newspapers appeared more regularly.

The arrival of the telegraph in 1844 meant that information could be relayed much more quickly. This enabled newspapers to be more timely and relevant in reporting distant events. They became the most important means of communication and, as more and more national and local newspapers appeared, the headlines became increasingly bigger and more attention-grabbing in an attempt to entice people to buy them. *100 Headlines That Changed The World* features some of the most memorable banner headlines with the stories behind the headlines retold in as concise a form as possible to put the headline in context and explain how these stories from the past helped to shape the world that we live in today.

# PENNY POSTAGE PICTURES

*(Liverpool Standard, 12 May 1840)*

**THE PENNY BLACK** was the world's first adhesive postage stamp used in a public postal system. It was issued in Britain on 1 May 1840, for official use from 6 May 1840 and it marked a turning point in social history.

Prior to 1840, the post service was too expensive for most people to use. The cost of sending a single letter could equate to a working man's daily wage, or more. Postage was charged by the number of sheets of paper used and the distance travelled. And it was paid by the recipient. But all Members of Parliament and Lords had the right to frank and receive a number of letters free.

The expense meant it was difficult for family or friends living long distances apart to communicate with each other. Sending letters was, therefore, a privilege of the wealthy, but to save money it became common practice to cram as many words as possible onto both sides of a sheet of paper. There was no such thing as an envelope. Letters were simply folded and sealed with wax. There were no pillar boxes, so it would have to be taken to a post office. If the addressee lived in a remote area they might never receive the letter. And the recipient of a costly letter could simply refuse delivery.

## GUMMED LABELS

All of this began to cause some concern to the government in the 1830s. Some maintain that James Chalmers, a bookseller and printer from Dundee, first came up with the idea of pre-paid gummed labels. But it was Rowland Hill, a teacher turned civil servant from Kidderminster, Worcestershire, who is widely credited with the invention of the adhesive stamp and the basis of the modern postal system.

## BROKEN HEARTED

Hill, so the story goes, was inspired to begin planning a whole new postal system when he came across a sobbing young woman, broken hearted because she had no money and could not afford to pay for a letter that had been sent to her by her fiancé.

In 1835, Hill embarked on a study of the existing postal system and, two years later, he produced a pamphlet called 'Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability.' The mainstay of Hill's reform proposals was a penny post, which meant that any letter weighing less than half an ounce (14 grams) could be sent anywhere in Britain for one penny.

The Postmaster General, Lord Lichfield, was startled by such a radical concept and commented 'Of all the wild and visionary schemes which I ever heard of, it is the most extravagant.' But merchants and reformers backed Hill, seeing the benefit of allowing the common man to be able to afford to send letters.

Hill's pre-paid system advocated the use of stamped 'covers' consisting of 'a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash'. This was to eventually become the Penny Black. He also suggested the use of envelopes.

## CONTROLLER OF STAMPS

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Hill appointed his older brother, Edwin, as the first Controller of Stamps, a position he would retain for the next 32 years. Edwin also invented a machine for making envelopes. The covers (stamps) were designed by artist William Mulready, based on an engraved head of the reigning monarch, Queen Victoria, as a young woman. The black background included the word 'POSTAGE' at the top of the stamp and 'ONE PENNY' at the bottom, along with flourishes around the borders and ornamental stars. Stamps would be printed in sheets of 240 that could be cut by the postmaster or postmistress using scissors or a knife.

But the rather sombre design was disliked by some and the *Liverpool Standard* newspaper in a lengthy article headlined, 'Penny Postage Pictures' criticised the stamp, describing, 'little bits of stuff like sticking plaster, with a dirty looking bust of Her Majesty, for dabbing on the back of a letter.' It added, 'Perhaps Rowland Hill, Esq. or the artist W. Mulready, Esq. R.A. can explain, but for our part we give up the attempt in despair.'

The Penny Postage Bill was passed by Parliament on 17 August 1839, whereby prepayment would become the standard for sending letters and the basic cost would be a one-penny stamp.

The Penny Black first went on sale on 1 May 1840, although they were only valid for postage from 6 May 1840. It was followed a day later by the Two Penny Blue. This new postal system became an instant success with a huge increase in people sending letters, which provided lucrative revenue.

### RED INK PROBLEMS

But the Penny Black was in use for a little over a year. The red cancellation mark that was used on the stamp was found to be hard to see on a black background and the red ink was easy to remove, making it possible to re-use stamps after they had been cancelled.

In 1841, it was determined that black ink was more robust and so the Treasury switched to the Penny Red and issued post offices with cancellation devices with black ink.

By the end of 1840, more than 160 million letters had been sent in Britain and by the turn of the century, the figure had rocketed to 2.3 billion.

### STAMPS SPREAD WORLDWIDE

The use of an envelope brought added privacy to letter writing, which encouraged people to write more confidential messages, including 'love letters'.

Adhesive postage stamps were gradually introduced throughout the world. The head of the reigning monarch has featured on British stamps ever since. Because the Penny Black and Two Penny Blue were the world's first postage stamps, they did not name their country of origin and British stamps are still the only ones in the world that carry on this tradition. •

# GOLD MINE FOUND

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(*Californian*, 15 March 1848)

**RUMOURS OF GOLD** in California had existed for years but it wasn't until gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill that the Gold Rush began. People from all over the United States and from around the world made their way to this sleepy backwater and changed the face of California for all time.

On 4 January 1848, James Marshall, who was building a sawmill for Swiss emigrant John Sutter in Sacramento, found what he thought might be gold along by the river. He took it back to show Sutter and tests showed that it was, indeed, gold.

Worried that the find would bring an onrush of prospectors to his land and that his own workforce would desert him, Sutter asked his workers to stay quiet about the find. But word soon got out.

When this local newspaper report relayed the story of the find at Sutter's Mill, hordes of gold hunting Californians began to make their way to the area. And after major newspapers began to report the find, President James Polk, speaking to Congress on 5 December 1848, confirmed that gold had been discovered in California. It was then that 'gold fever' broke out in earnest.

## MINER FORTY-NINERS

By 1849 the rush was on. Many miners or 'forty-niners', as they were nicknamed after the year of their arrival, expected to find rivers overflowing with gold and were unprepared for the gruelling necessity for panning and digging.

Gold was found throughout much of California and made some rich, but many went away with little or nothing at all. As more and more people arrived, those with an entrepreneurial flare gave up the hunt for gold and, instead, used their skills as carpenters, traders, builders and teachers, to service the mining industry.

## ANGER AT FOREIGNERS

As gold became increasingly more difficult to find, anger and fighting broke out. Americans became incensed that foreigners were raping their lands and drove them out of mining camps so that they had to set up camps of their own.

California had become a possession of the U.S. following the war with Mexico but was not a formal territory. It was a pretty lawless place and anyone who found gold was quickly surrounded by other miners. Thieves, thugs and conmen found their own 'shortcut' ways of getting their hands on the treasure.

Claim laws had to be set on which pieces of land individuals were allowed to mine. And camps set up claim officers to patrol mines and settle disputes.

Gradually, California was being transformed. Towns and cities were chartered and roads and houses and stores built. A state constitution was drawn up, elections were held and representatives sent to Washington, D.C., to negotiate the adoption of California as a state.

## POPULATION EXPLOSION

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Before the gold rush, California was largely inhabited by missionaries and Native Americans – a total of about 2,000 people. By late 1849 its population had grown to 15,000, and by 1853 there were over 300,000 people living there.

When silver was discovered in Nevada in 1859, the miners headed there and the California Gold Rush came to an end.

Many of the communities that had been built – full of shacks, shops and saloons – became ‘ghost towns.’ But, by this time, California had a growing economy of farming and commerce with many people staying on to take advantage of the rich agricultural land and business opportunities.

## CALIFORNIAN DREAM

Roads, schools, churches, railways and civic organisations were created throughout the land. On September 9, 1850 California became part of the United States of America. The phrase ‘California Dream’ was used to describe the varied opportunities to flourish and prosper in this new golden state.

The population quickly expanded, especially with the coming of the trans-continental railroad line in 1869, and today more people live in California than in any other state.

They still hunt for, gold, too with tourists and hobbyists panning gravel in streams across the state and there are almost 25,000 official active gold mining claims. Despite the high price of gold however, the meagre amounts that are extracted today are not likely to bring on another bout of gold rush fever. •

# MASSACRE OF ENGLISH AT DELHI

(Daily Telegraph, 29 June 1857)

**A** REBELLION WITHIN the Indian Army caught the British government by surprise when it escalated across the country and gained the support of thousands of citizens.

Britain, as the colonial power, was used to acquiescence amongst Indian troops and had failed fully to appreciate the warning signs over the years that all was not well. And when the troops finally took stand, there was shock and outrage at what was seen as a betrayal.

The *Daily Telegraph* reported how from Calcutta to Lahore the troops of the Bengal Presidency were in 'open or undisguised mutiny'.

Variouly described as 'The Indian Mutiny', 'The Great Rebellion', 'The Sepoy Uprising' or 'India's First War of Independence', it was a result of mounting tension among Indian troops over unfair treatment from European officers.

It began on 10 May 1857 when sepoys (native Indian soldiers) of the British East India Company army, in the town of Meerut, shot their British officers and marched on Delhi. Word of the uprising quickly spread and other sepoys rebelled in different parts of India.

## THE SEPOY SOLDIERS

The background to the rebellion was a series of incidents which led to mounting grievance, resentment and anger. The sepoys were a combination of Hindu and Muslim soldiers who made up the bulk of the army in the East India Company (which effectively governed India). The forces were divided into three Presidency armies – the Bombay, the Madras and the Bengal.

There had been some early resentment amongst the soldiers when the army's campaign to annex more land forced them to serve in distant areas such as Burma in the Anglo-Burmese Wars of 1851. There were more grievances when, under the General Service Act, new recruits would no longer receive a pension on retirement. Another cause of friction was the increasing number of European officers in the battalions, which made promotion for the rank and file increasingly slow and difficult. The Bengal Presidency had extra cause to feel bitter because they were paid less than Bombay and Madras.

## NEW CARTRIDGES

The final spark which ignited this seething pressure can of resentment was the issue of new paper cartridges to use with the new Enfield rifles. The cartridges came pre-greased and to load the rifle sepoys had to bite the cartridge open to release the powder. But the tallow used to grease the paper was believed to be made with cow and pig fat, upsetting the religious sensibilities of both Hindus and Muslims.

On 26 February 1857 the 19th Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) refused to use the cartridges and the angry colonel confronted them on the parade ground, backed with artillery. But after some negotiation, the artillery was taken away and the next morning's parade was cancelled.

## LONE REBEL COURT-MARTIALLED

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A month later, a 29-year-old sepoy of the BNI named Mangal Pandey told his colleagues he was going to rebel against his commanders. On hearing of his intent, Sergeant-Major James Hewson went to investigate, only to have Pandey shoot at him.

Pandey had failed to incite others to join him in the rebellion but they showed their support by refusing orders to arrest him – save for one man, Shaikh Paltu, who managed to restrain him.

Pandey was court-martialled on 6 April and hanged two days later. The regiment was disbanded and stripped of its uniforms for its failure to act.

On 24 April, all apart from five of the 90 men of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry at Meerut refused to accept the cartridges. Retribution was severe. On 9 May, 85 men were court martialled and most were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment with hard labour.

The entire garrison was put on parade to witness the men being stripped of their uniforms and placed in shackles. As they were marched off to jail, some of them chided their comrades for their lack of support.

There was some protest in the city amongst civilians, with fires started in several of the buildings.

## OFFICERS KILLED

The following day, the 3rd Cavalry, broke into revolt. Officers were killed when they tried to curtail them. Then European civilians' quarters were attacked with 50 Europeans killed, including soldiers, four male civilians, eight women and eight children.

The sepoys freed their 85 imprisoned comrades from jail, along with 800 other prisoners, and marched towards Delhi in the evening.

With other rebellions breaking out across India, garrisons were beleaguered for several months before the British could send reinforcement troops.

Early on 11 May the 3rd Cavalry reached Delhi and called for Emperor Bahadur Shah in his palace to acknowledge and lead them, which he later did. Meanwhile, the house of the Chief Magistrate was destroyed and European officials and their families were killed by sepoys or other crowds of rioters.

Panicking British officers felt they could trust no one and opened fire on their own sepoy, managing to turn some potentially faithful men into enemies.

## SIEGE OF DELHI

It wasn't until the beginning of July that British troops arrived on the outskirts of Delhi and established a base on the ridge to the north of the city. Heavy artillery rained down on the rebels, what became known as 'The Siege of Delhi' and by mid-September the city had been retaken. Bahadur Shah was arrested and many Indian citizens and sepoys were killed in retaliation.

A shocking incident had taken place in June when rebel sepoys in Cawnpore took 120 women and children hostage and killed them when they realised that all was lost.

In Lucknow, the besieged British Residency was rescued when a small column of relief soldiers managed to overcome the rebels.

## REBELS DEFEATED



The last of the rebels were defeated in Gwalior in June 1858.

The bloodshed had sent shockwaves throughout colonial Britain, which had hitherto taken India for granted. The rebellion led to the dissolution of the East India Company with direct control of the region being assumed by the British Government in the form of the new British Raj. •

# DISCOVERY OF A SUBTERRANEAN FOUNTAIN OF OIL

*(New York Tribune, 8 September 1859)*

**T**HE PRESENCE OF OIL around Titusville in Pennsylvania had been known for years. Native Americans had been using it in medicinal remedies and by the mid-19th century it was being refined into kerosene for lamp oil.

Early methods of extracting it included digging trenches along Oil Creek or collecting it from seeps in the ground, but it was slow and laborious and not very efficient.

Knowing that there were big bucks to be made from oil, a group of investors formed the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company and hired former railroad conductor Edwin Laurentine Drake to help them extract it. He had no engineering background and was principally hired because he was entitled to free rail travel, which would save the company money.

In his mid-30s, he retired due to ill health but, when the company became Seneca Oil with some new backers, he was tempted to return by its president, New Haven banker James M Townsend. His mission was to extract oil on a large scale basis at Titusville.

## SINKING A SHAFT

Drake, who was hired at \$1,000 dollars a year, had been frustrated by his earlier attempts and this time he decided on a new method based on that used by salt-well drillers. He would bore into the ground and sink a shaft straight to the source.

He was given the title of 'Colonel' to impress Titusville residents but they were less than respectful when he and his team arrived in March 1858.

At that time Titusville was a sleepy town, mostly involved in lumber, and the locals laughed at him for digging for oil – it was something that nobody had ever done. His effort was quickly dubbed 'Drake's folly', as they were convinced it wouldn't work.

After setting up the rig, drilling started in early August 1859, using a steam engine to drive a heavy iron bit into the ground to break the rock. The work was slow, averaging just a couple of feet a day and the Seneca Oil directors were losing faith and interest, but Drake persevered.

## PENNSYLVANIA OIL RUSH

On 27 August the drill bit had reached a depth of 69.5ft (21m) when the workers stopped for the day. But they hadn't realised that they had finally made it. The next morning when Drake's driller, Bill Smith, looked into the hole he saw crude oil rising up.

He excitedly rushed to tell Drake that they had struck oil and 'Drake's folly' became the prototype for future oil well construction. It was the first commercially viable oil well in the United States producing 25 barrels a day and was the beginning of the Pennsylvania oil rush.

The town's population of 250 swelled to 10,000 as eight refineries were built between 1862 and 1868, spawning an ever-growing oil support industry.

## BOOM TOWNS

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New towns grew out of what were previously small settlements, oil wells springing up around the unimaginatively named Petroleum Center, while nearby, Pithole grew from nothing to have more than fifty hotels, three churches and a population of at least 20,000.

Prior to the oil boom, Titusville, which was originally called Edinburgh when Jonathan Titus founded the settlement in 1796, had around 250 residents, most of whom were involved in the lumber business. The town very quickly expanded to have a population of more than 10,000 and, unlike Petroleum Center and Pithole which became almost ghost towns when their oil ran dry, Titusville is still thriving today, albeit with a greatly reduced population.

## OIL MILLIONAIRES

The first oil millionaire was Jonathan Watson, who owned the land where Drake's well was drilled. He was soon joined by many other millionaires but Drake was not one of them. He was to die an invalid confined to a wheelchair and virtually penniless.

The Seneca Oil Company, which was now earning a fortune, paid him off with \$2,167 in June 1866. Drake's subsequent business ventures were not a success. He lost what money he had made in bank investments and by May 1866 he was so down on his heels that he wrote to a friend asking for money. His wife supported their family by sewing dresses and taking in boarders.

In 1873, the state of Pennsylvania, by way of thanks for founding the oil industry, granted him an annuity of \$1,500. He died on 9 November 1880. •

# THE WAR BEGUN

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*(New York Herald, 13 April 1861)*

**THIS SUCCINCT HEADLINE** marked the start of the bloodiest war in American history, which was to last four years and result in the deaths of around 600,000 people.

The article was a despatch from Charleston, on the previous day which read, 'Civil war has at last begun. A terrible fight is at this moment going on between Fort Sumter and the fortification by which it is surrounded.'

Hostility between those in the North and South had been going on for years. The agricultural South favoured strong state government and relied on slaves to work on their land, while the more industrial North wanted a unifying federal government and sought to curtail the use of slaves.

The election of Abraham Lincoln as President in November 1860 was the final trigger for war between the two sides. Lincoln wanted to limit the expansion of slavery, but not abolish it. He was sworn in on 4 March 1861, and in his inaugural address he stated he had no intention to invade Southern states, nor did he intend to end slavery where it existed, but that he would use force to maintain possession of Federal property in the South.

## SOUTHERN STATES SECEDE

The South did not want a Republican to be its President and abhorred Lincoln's views. As a result many Southern states left the Union. South Carolina had been the first to secede on 20 December 1860, now several others followed. Civil war was brewing as the two sides began to build up their armies.

## THE BLUE AND THE GREY

The Union's soldiers in the North were called either 'Federalists', 'Northerners' or 'Yankees' and wore blue uniforms. And the Confederacy in the South dressed in grey uniforms and were often referred to as 'Rebels' or 'Johnny Rebs'.

One of the Federal government's key forts in the South was Fort Sumter, because controlling it was integral to controlling Charleston harbour, one of the busiest ports in the South.

In charge of the fort was Major Robert Anderson, who sent a message to Lincoln that their supplies were running low in the fort and would only last six more weeks. Lincoln ordered new supplies to be delivered but the Confederates were determined to drive the Union out of their states and increased the pressure on the weakened Fort Sumter.

## DEAL REJECTED

On 11 April 1861, Confederate General Pierre Beauregard demanded that Major Anderson evacuate the fort. Anderson played for time, saying he would leave the fort at noon on 15 April. But as Beauregard was aware that supplies would be delivered by then, he rejected the deal and at 4.30am the

following day, he gave the order to open fire on the fort.

~~Short of ammunition, as well as food, the Federals did not return fire until about 7am. The firing stopped at night before re-starting the following day. When a cannonball set the barracks alight Anderson agreed to a truce at about 2pm.~~

### **STRAY SPARK TRAGEDY**

Incredibly, no one on either side had been killed. But when Anderson was allowed to stage a 100-gun salute to the U.S. flag, a pile of cartridges blew up from a spark, killing two of his men.

In the aftermath, Lincoln called for 75,000 men to enlist in the army to protect Federal property in the South and the Confederates were also swelled by eager young men willing to fight for their rights.

### **BLOODIEST BATTLE**

A number of inconclusive engagements were fought during 1861-62 as the Confederates repulsed Union attempts to capture their capital at Richmond, Virginia, although the Confederates were defeated in Maryland at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862.

In 1863, General Robert E. Lee struck north and was eventually halted by Union forces at Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, where more lives were lost than in any other battle of the war. Union forces fared far better in the west and, when western commander Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant took charge of Union forces in the east, it spelled the end for the Confederacy.

After four years of warfare, including ferocious battles for Atlanta and Richmond, Robert E. Lee ultimately surrendered to Grant on 9 April 1865 at Appomattox Court House in Virginia.

As a result, slavery was outlawed throughout the nation and the role and influence of the Federal Government was enormously enhanced. •

# **IMPORTANT ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN**

## **THE PRESIDENT SHOT AT THE THEATRE LAST EVENING**

(*New York Herald*, April 15 1865)

**IT WAS THE NEWS** that shocked the nation. Many could scarcely believe it and crowds took to the streets in alarm and bewilderment.

The long-running American Civil War was just coming to a close as the victorious President Abraham Lincoln took time out with his wife, Mary, to enjoy a night at the theatre. But it would prove to be his final act as the curtain came down abruptly on his extraordinary life.

The Lincolns and their guests, Major Henry Rathbone and his fiancée Clara Harris, arrived at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., at 8.40pm on Good Friday, 14 April 1865, to watch the British play *Our American Cousin*.

### **THE PRESIDENT BOWS**

As they walked across the balcony to the Presidential Box, the wealthy theatregoers broke out into a round of applause, because of the satisfactory end of the Civil War. A delighted Lincoln paused to bow to the audience before continuing on his way.

The curtain went up and the play got under way and the audience enjoyed much of the humour. Then, during the third and final act a man made his way through a corridor to Lincoln's box, armed with a derringer and a hunting knife, and shot him in the back of the head at the moment when a particular line was said in the play which routinely elicited the biggest laugh.

The sound of the laughter partially muffled the gunshot and for a while the audience didn't quite know what had happened until they saw the President slump forward in his seat. Mary screamed and Major Rathbone grappled with the gunman but was stabbed in the arm. The attacker then leapt from the box to the stage, eleven feet below. He landed awkwardly, snapping the fibula bone in his left leg just above the ankle. Stumbling across the stage, he brandished his knife at the startled audience, and shouted, '*Sic Semper Tyrannis!*' (Latin for 'Thus always to tyrants', and the state motto of Virginia).

### **THE GUNMAN ESCAPES**

He made his escape backstage and out onto the street where he had left his horse with a theatre employee, and rode off.

A couple of doctors in the audience rushed to the President's aide but on seeing the bullet hole in the back of his head, they knew the wound was fatal. However, he was still breathing and so needed to be moved. They thought better of a bumpy carriage ride back across town to the White House and instead he was carried across the street to William Petersen's boarding house, where he was laid on a bed in a first-floor room.

Here a vigil took place for the dying President. The *New York Herald* reported how he was

surrounded by his Cabinet, many in tears. As the news spread, people thronged the streets outside anxious for more information.

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Meanwhile, some members of the theatre's orchestra had identified the gunman as the actor John Wilkes Booth. He had performed throughout the country and was the lead in several of Shakespeare's plays. He had also played at Ford's Theatre on 12 occasions and so knew the layout well.

Booth was a Southern sympathiser who was incensed by Lincoln and his Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves within the Confederacy.

By January 1865, he had organised a group of co-conspirators to capture Lincoln when he attended a play at a hospital just outside Washington and hold him in return for the release of Confederate prisoners of war. But the plot was foiled when the President changed his mind about attending.

## **CONFEDERATE SURRENDER**

With numbers of the Army of Northern Virginia – the main army of the Confederacy – having dwindled to 35,000, General Robert E. Lee accepted the inevitable against General Ulysses S. Grant's Union soldiers of 120,000. He surrendered on 9 April, thereby ending the war.

But Booth refused to give up the fight and decided on drastic action. When he heard that Lincoln would be going to Ford's Theatre with General Grant, he saw it as a perfect opportunity to kill them both. At around the same time his gang of co-conspirators would kill Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward.

In the end, Grant didn't attend and Rathbone took his place. Lincoln died on the morning of 15 April, aged 56. No attempt to kill Johnson was made and Seward was stabbed at his home but it failed to kill him.

Booth was discovered 11 days later with a co-conspirator in a barn at a farm in rural Virginia by Union soldiers. After Booth had shouted that he would not be taken alive, one of the soldiers crept up behind the barn and shot him dead.

Abraham Lincoln was the first American president to be assassinated. He left a lasting impression on the United States, preserving the Union, cementing democracy and laying the foundation for the abolition of slavery. He is widely regarded as being the greatest President in American history. •

# AUDIBLE SPEECH BY TELEGRAPH

## PROF. A. GRAHAM BELL'S DISCOVERY

### SUCCESSFUL AND INTERESTING EXPERIMENTS BETWEEN BOSTON AND CAMBRIDGEPORT

(*New York Times*, 21 October 1876)

**A** REPORTER FROM the *New York Times* was impressed by a demonstration given by Alexander Graham Bell and his assistant, Thomas Watson, on the evening of October, 1876.

Telephones were placed at either end of a telegraph line from an office in Boston to a factory in Cambridgeport – two miles away. It was the first, long-distance, two-way telephone call.

‘Articulate conversation then took place through the wires,’ said the report. ‘The sounds, at first faint and indistinct, became suddenly quite loud and intelligible. Mr Bell in Boston and Mr. Watson in Cambridge then took notes of what was said and heard, and the comparison of the two records is most interesting, as showing the accuracy of the electrical transmission.’

As with most inventions, there were several others working on similar ideas at the same time but Bell is credited with inventing the first practical telephone, having submitted an application for his model on 14 February 1876, just two hours before his rival, Elisha Gray.

### WRITTEN SYMBOLS

Born in Edinburgh, he developed an interest with forms of communication from his father and grandfather, who both taught elocution. His mother was deaf and his father pioneered a method of communication called ‘Visible Speech’ – a set of written symbols designed to aid the deaf in speaking.

By the time the family emigrated to Canada in 1870, Bell junior was also teaching the deaf to communicate and later travelled to Boston in the U.S. to give lectures on Visible Speech.

He became professor of vocal physiology at Boston University in 1873. A year later he met an experienced electrical designer and mechanic named Thomas Watson and he hired him as his assistant in experimenting with the idea of transmitting speech over telegraph wires.

Their work eventually led to their succeeding in making their first telephone message on 10 March 1876, when Bell, in his Boston laboratory, summoned his colleague via the device from the next room with the now famous words, ‘Watson, come here. I want to see you.’

In his journal, Bell later wrote, ‘To my delight he came and declared that he had heard and understood what I said.’

The following year, Bell and Watson went on a tour of the Northeast, demonstrating their invention with great success to enraptured audiences.

The Bell Telephone Company was founded in 1877 and by 1886 over 150,000 people in the U.S. owned telephones.



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