Virginia State History -- 20th Century (1900 to 1920)

Allied, Central and Neutral Powers in WWI
Timeline of Major Events

1900 VA State Population drops to 17th among United States (1,854,184 people)
1902 VA’s 5th State Constitution goes into effect July 10, 1902
1902 Maggie L. Walker (1st Women Bank President/CEO) lived/worked in Richmond, VA

1904 US Begins Work on the Panama Canal

1907 T. Roosevelt speaks at Exposition celebrating the 300th Anniversary of Jamestown and launches round the world voyage of the Great White Fleet from Norfolk, VA

1908 Republican William H. Taft elected President – Virginia votes for William G. Bryan (a Democrat)

1909 VA Equal Suffrage League organized in Richmond by Lila Meade Valentine, et al

1911 Manassas holds “Peace Jubilee” – 50th Anniversary Celebration of its Civil War Battle - President Taft is Speaker

1912 Sinking of the Titanic when it hits an iceberg in the North Atlantic ocean
1912 Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat born in Virginia, is elected the 28th President of the United States by a landslide

1913 VA Senator Carter Glass Sponsors Federal Reserve Banking Act of 1913

1914 Panama Canal Opened for Shipping between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

1915 1st Transatlantic Telephone Communication between Arlington, VA and Paris, France

1916-1917 VA Militia involved in the Mexican Border Punitive Expedition under General Pershing
1916 Virginia Prohibits Sale of Alcohol throughout the State in November (3 years before National Prohibition began)

1917-1918 US Involvement in WWI as part of the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF) in Europe
1918 Gen. Samuel D. Rockenbach (Lynchburg, VA) appointed Chief of Army Tank Corps.
1918 Hampton Roads shipyard produced the most naval tonnage in America for the War effort

1917-1919 From June-Dec 1917 many suffragettes are arrested for picketing the White House and imprisoned in Fairfax Co., VA

1920 Women’s right to vote -- 19th Amendment Becomes Law (VA Gen Assembly didn’t ratify until 1952)
The Virginia State Constitution of 1902

Political pressure mounted within Virginia to eliminate the black vote, ostensibly as a way to stop electoral fraud and corruption. The 1901 constitutional convention met during this climate, and the convention was primarily focused on restricting such voting rights without violating the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution or disenfranchising poor whites.

The delegates created requirements that all prospective voters had to pay poll taxes or pass a literacy test. An exemption was granted for military veterans and sons of veterans, who were virtually all white. The changes were effective in disenfranchising black voters, though many illiterate whites were also unable to meet the new requirements -- succeeding elections showed that the Virginia electorate had effectively been cut in half as a result of the changes.

Other significant provisions of the 1902 Constitution included the requirement of racial segregation in schools and the abolition of the county court system. The 1902 Constitution was adopted without ratification by the electorate.
In 1902, Maggie L. Walker began publishing the *St. Luke Herald* and became president of the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank, which absorbed all other African American banks in Richmond in 1929-1930, becoming the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company.

Maggie Walker became president of the state branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and her efforts earned her many honors, including an honorary degree from Virginia Union University and a Richmond high school named after her.
One of the largest and most difficult engineering projects ever undertaken, the "Panama Canal" had an enormous impact on shipping between the two oceans. After a 1st French attempt failed, the United States launched a second effort, incurring a further 5,600 deaths but succeeding in opening the canal in 1914.
To celebrate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Jamestown colony in Virginia, a Jamestown Exposition was built in Norfolk, Virginia on the present-day site of the Norfolk Naval Station. Rivaling the national trend of world fairs and other national expositions, the 1907 Jamestown Exposition included a world Naval Review, state exhibit buildings and a huge array of entertainment-oriented exhibits.
The “Great White Fleet” was the popular nickname for the United States Navy battle fleet that completed a circumnavigation of the globe from 16 December 1907 to 22 February 1909 by order of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt who spoke at the 300th Anniversary celebration and saw the ships put to sea from Norfolk. The fleet consisted of 16 battleships divided into four squadrons, along with various escorts. Roosevelt sought to demonstrate growing American military power and its blue-water naval capability.

USS Connecticut (Flagship of the Great White Fleet)

Great White Fleet’s Route for Circumnavigation of the Globe

USS Kansas sails ahead of the USS Vermont as the fleet leaves Hampton Roads, Virginia on 16 December 1907.
1908 William H. Taft (below) elected President; most Southern States including Virginia voted for William Jennings Bryan (the Democrat)

President William H. Taft speaks (right) at the 50th anniversary civil war battlefield “Peace Jubilee” celebration in Manassas (1911) with Union/C.S.A. Veterans
1912 Sinking of the RMS Titanic on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York on 14 April 1912 when it hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic ocean
Thomas Woodrow Wilson was born in Staunton, Virginia on December 28, 1856 as the third of four children of Reverend Dr. Joseph Ruggles Wilson. Woodrow became the 28th President of the United States. As a leading intellectual of the “Progressive Era,” he served as President of Princeton University from 1902 to 1910 and then as the Governor of New Jersey from 1911 to 1913. With Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft dividing the Republican Party vote, Wilson (the Democrat) was elected President in 1912.
In his first term, Wilson persuaded a Democratic Congress to pass the Federal Reserve Act, Federal Trade Commission, the Clayton Antitrust Act, the Federal Farm Loan Act and America's first-ever federal progressive income tax in the Revenue Act of 1913. Wilson brought many white Southerners into his administration and tolerated their expansion of segregation in many federal agencies.

The Clayton Anti-Trust Act expanded government powers to act against anti-trust violations (i.e., monopolies). It also made corporate officers personally responsible for violations. In addition, it exempted unions, labor cooperatives, and union members (pictured left) from provisions of the act.
Wilson’s Federal Reserve Banking Act of 1913 was Written and Sponsored by VA Senator Carter Glass (below)

The administration’s currency bill, was passed by the House and in many ways fundamentally altered banking in America. It was passed by the Senate on December 19, 1913 and signed immediately by President Wilson.

The legislative idea was that banking and currency reform would, when threatened by financial panics, provide a ready reserve of liquid assets and allow the amount of currency and credit to expand and contract seasonally within the U.S. economy.

The Act established 12 regional “Federal Reserve Banks”--overseen by a single Federal Advisory Committee--and a single new United States currency, the “Federal Reserve Note.”
Narrowly re-elected in 1916, Wilson's second term centered on World War I. He based his re-election campaign around the slogan "He kept us out of the war". However, the German government proposed an alliance with Mexico against the U.S. and began sinking every American merchant ship its submarines could find.
First Transatlantic Radio Signals.

The photograph (at right) shows Marconi at Signal Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland, seated beside the apparatus that he used to receive the first transatlantic radio signals on December 12, 1901. The object near the corner of the table probably is the telephone receiver on which he heard the signals.
In 1915, telephone communication across the Atlantic was not as simple as just laying a cable. The voltages involved in telephone calls were too low to be passed through such a long cable and there was no known technology for repeater amplifiers that would work underwater. It required the invention of wireless to provide telephone links across the oceans.

Bell System engineers achieved the first voice transmission across the Atlantic, connecting Arlington, Virginia and Paris, France briefly in 1915. A year later they held the first two-way conversation with a ship at sea. However, these were just experimental demonstrations. Regular trans-Atlantic telephone service began in 1927.
When AT&T opened the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable (TAT-1) in 1956, the initial capacity was 36 calls at a time. Before trans-Atlantic telephone service opened in 1927, calls had traveled across the ocean via radio waves since 1915.

The new submarine cable service provided much higher signal quality, avoided atmospheric interference and offered greater capacity and security.

Laying the 1st Trans-Atlantic submarine cable in the 1920s.
The Royal Merchant Ship *Lusitania* was an early 20th century British ocean liner that gracefully plied the North Atlantic between Liverpool and New York City one time each month until it was mortally struck by a German submarine torpedo off the southern coast of Ireland on Friday, May 7, 1915. The majestic *Lusitania* listed heavily to starboard and sank in only eighteen minutes in about 300 feet of water. Nearly 1,200 men, women, and children perished in the disaster, including 128 Americans. The sinking of the *Lusitania*, according to Arthur S. Link, had a “more jolting effect upon American opinion than any other single event of the World War.” The sinking convinced many Americans that Imperial Germany had “run amuck and was now an outlaw among civilized nations.”
Virginia prohibition began in November 1916, three years before national prohibition began. Although Virginia established statewide prohibition through a popular referendum, it nonetheless faced several challenges in enforcing the new law. Its long coastline made it difficult to prevent smuggling, i.e. rum-running. It bordered on a wet state, Maryland, which made barely an effort to enforce national dry laws from 1920-1933. Virginia contained several cities which were reluctantly dry, most notably Alexandria, Richmond and Norfolk. In addition, Virginia had a long-established moonshining tradition in the mountainous western part of the state. As a result, Virginia struggled to live up to the dry ideal it set for itself.

Virginia went dry only after a long, protracted political battle led by groups such as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) [shown above pleading with a saloon keeper] and the Anti-Saloon League (ASL).
The Monticello Wine Company was a Charlottesville, Virginia cooperative founded in 1873 by local grape growers, located at the end of Wine Street, near Hedge Street. It was the largest winery in the South; but, it shut down with the onset of Prohibition in Virginia, which took effect on November 1, 1916.

The company was best known for its Virginia Claret Wine, produced with Norton grapes—it "won a major international award in 1873 at the Vienna Exposition."
Inspector William Payne (top right) who served with the Virginia Department of Prohibition Enforcement, was gunned down in Alexandria County (later renamed Arlington County), Virginia, on February 21, 1919.

At the time, he held his department’s record for the highest number of arrests. Demonstrating his dedication to the job, he had already been shot and wounded during another raid the previous year.

The badge (at right) is now where it belongs and will forever be a symbol of the supreme sacrifice that five Virginia Prohibition Inspectors—and hundreds of other brave local, state, and federal law enforcement officers—made during Prohibition. It is one of several objects that rotate on exhibition in the Virginia Museum's “Gangsters and G-men Time Capsule.”
The Pancho Villa Expedition was a military operation conducted by the United States Army against the paramilitary forces of Francisco "Pancho" Villa (top right) from 1916 to 1917. The “Punitive Expedition” was in retaliation for Villa’s illegal incursion into the United States and attack on the village of Columbus in Luna County, New Mexico during the Mexican Revolution.

Militia from every state were called up to provide a “show of force” on the US/Mexican border. The Expedition did not capture Pancho Villa; but, it was deemed successful anyway.

[Expeditionary troops were under the command of General Pershing and many of these volunteers subsequently went with him to fight WWI in France.]
Julien Gaujot (Va Tech Class of 1894) received the Medal of Honor for actions on the Mexican Border in 1914. He is the only soldier ever awarded the Medal for actions of a peacekeeping nature. In Douglas, Arizona, stray bullets from fighting among Mexican rebels and government troops caused American casualties. Julien Gaujot crossed the border under heavy fire. He moved between the two groups of belligerents for an hour, amongst heavy fire. This secured the safe passage of the Mexican soldiers and American prisoners over the border to the United States. His actions saved five Americans taken prisoner by the Mexicans, 25 Mexican soldiers plus Americans and Mexican rebels who would have died in continued fighting.
In April 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war on the Central Powers (i.e., German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires).
WWI began with the assassination on 28 June 1914 of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophie. [This was seen as the immediate trigger for the war, though long-term causes, such as imperialistic foreign policy, played a major role.]

Several alliances, that had been formed over the previous decades, were invoked by the assassination. So within weeks, the major powers were at war; with all having colonies, the conflict soon spread around the world.
World War I was a military conflict that lasted from 1914 to 1918 and involved most of the world's great powers, assembled in two opposing alliances: the **Allies** (centered around the Triple Entente of Britain, France, and the United States) **VS** the **Central Powers** (principally Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey)

Some countries remained neutral (e.g., Spain, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden).

More than 15 million people were killed, making it one of the deadliest conflicts in history.
The conflict opened with the German invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg and France; the Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia and a Russian attack against Prussia (i.e., East Germany).

After the German march on Paris was brought to a halt, the Western Front settled into a static battle of attrition with a trench line that changed little until 1917.

In the East, the Russian army successfully fought against the Austro-Hungarian forces but were forced back by the German army. Additional fronts opened with the Ottoman Empire joining the war in 1914, Italy in 1915 and Romania in 1916. Imperial Russia quit the war in 1917.
German Soldiers in the Trenches (1916)
Hampton Roads, Virginia

Beginning in 1917, as the United States became involved in World War I under President Woodrow Wilson, formerly rural Sewell's Point (circled) became the site of what grew to become the largest US Naval Base in the world and is now known as the “Naval Station Norfolk.”

Hampton Roads is the name for the southeastern region of Virginia. The region's most notable geographic characteristic is proximity to a variety of waterways. Bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, Hampton Roads is where the James, Nansemond and Elizabeth rivers pour into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

The harbor area of Hampton Roads, from official state map of pre-civil war Virginia circa 1858. *image from the Library of Virginia*
The Norfolk Naval Shipyard, often called the Norfolk Navy Yard and abbreviated as NNSY, is a U.S. Navy facility in Portsmouth, Virginia, for building, remodeling, and repairing the Navy's ships. It's the oldest and largest industrial facility that belongs to the U.S. Navy as well as the most multifaceted. Located on the Elizabeth River, the yard is just a short distance upriver from its mouth at Hampton Roads. The name was changed from Gosport Shipyard in 1862.

From the Reconstruction Era until 1917, the shipyard was used both for ship repair, construction, and for ship stationing. The Norfolk Navy Yard served as the official Homeport for ships stationed in the Hampton Roads region.

No major expansion occurred at the facility until World War I when it was expanded to accommodate 11,000 employees and their families. The shipyard was again expanded in World War II, doubling its physical size, and greatly expanding its productive capacity. During its peak, from 1940 to 1945, 43,000 personnel were employed and 6,850 vessels were built.
SM UB-43 was a Type UB II submarine or "U-boat" for the German Imperial Navy (in port – 1915)
The class of vessel known as the “Subchaser” originated during World War I. In 1916 the United States was still neutral but during that summer two German submarines visited the U.S. and shortly after leaving audaciously sank five ships. This galvanized the navy into action. Spurred by a young Assistant Secretary of the Navy named Franklin D. Roosevelt the navy undertook its own design for an effective antisubmarine vessel.
Samuel Dickerson Rockenbach, United States Army officer, was born on January 27, 1869 in Lynchburg, Virginia. He was graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1889 and in 1891 was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. He married Emma Baldwin on October 19, 1898. Prior to World War I he saw tours of duty in Cuba, the Philippines, various U.S. posts, and served as a military observer in Germany in 1914. He arrived in France in June 1917 with the American Expeditionary Force and from 1917-1919 served as Chief of the newly formed Tank Corps, A.E.F. He was notable for his role in the establishment of the Tank Corps and for his work in the development of tank warfare.
Col. Samuel Rockenbach was named temporary head of the AEF Tank Corps. Rockenbach, Patton’s commanding officer, was his opposite in temperament and approach. Rockenbach used a deliberate approach in dealing with the bureaucratic morass of the French and British, so Patton could focus on developing the new tank center.

In 1922, General S. G. ROCKENBACH witnessed a demonstration of the AMPHIBIOUS TANK (pictured with text was the invention of Walter Christie). This machine was expected to revolutionize modern warfare. The demonstration was performed on the Hudson River near the Palisades for the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.
American GIs
Studying French in the Trenches (Oct. 1917)
Earle D. Gregory, Va Tech Class of 1923, a native of Chase City and graduate of Fork Union Military Academy, studied Electrical Engineering at Virginia Tech. As a senior at Virginia Tech he was a Cadet Captain and company commander, President of the Corps of Cadets, and selected as Most Popular Cadet.

Earle Gregory received the Medal of Honor for actions as an army sergeant during the Meuse Argonne Offensive in World War I. He is considered to be the first WWI Virginia Veteran to receive the medal and often called the Sergeant York of Virginia.

Earle Gregory, armed with a rifle and a mortar shell which he used as a hand grenade, single handedly captured a machine gun and three enemy soldiers. Continuing his advance, he captured a howitzer and 19 enemy soldiers.
After a 1917 German offensive along the western front, American forces entered the trenches and the German armies were driven back in a series of successful allied offensives. Germany surrendered on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918 (i.e., at the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month).

By the war's end, four major imperial powers—the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires—had been militarily and politically defeated, with the last two ceasing to exist.

The revolutionized Soviet Union emerged from the Russian Empire, while the map of central Europe was completely redrawn into numerous smaller states. The League of Nations was formed in the hope of preventing another such conflict.

The title piece of *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems* (1919) was written by Canadian Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae on 3 May 1915.

“In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.”
“Flanders Field” American Cemetery and Memorial in Waregem, Belgium
The armistice between the Allies and Germany was signed in a railway car in the Compiègne Forest on 11 November 1918, and marked the end of the First World War on the Western Front. Principal signatories were Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the Allied Commander-in-chief, and Matthias Erzberger, Germany's representative.

The European nationalism spawned by the war, the repercussions of Germany's defeat, and of the Treaty of Versailles which concluded WWI in 1919 would eventually lead to the beginning of World War II in 1939.

Signed in Ferdinand Foch's own railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne, the Armistice ended WWI. (Foch is second from the right)
The Treaty of Versailles concluded the war between Germany and the Allied Powers.

It was signed on 28 June 1919, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The other Central Powers on the German side of World War I were dealt with in separate treaties.

Although the armistice signed on 11 November 1918 ended the actual fighting, it took six months of negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to conclude the peace treaty. Of the many provisions in the treaty, one of the most important and controversial required Germany to accept sole responsibility for causing the war.

Major Allied Power Representatives at the 1919 Peace Conference (From left): UK Prime Minister Lloyd George, Italian Prime Minister Orlando, French Prime Minister Clemenceau, and US President Wilson
The League of Nations was Woodrow Wilson’s idea of how to “prevent or end wars”. It was an inter-governmental organization founded as a result of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919–1920, and the precursor to the United Nations. At its greatest extent from 28 September 1934 to 23 February 1935, it had 58 members. The League's primary goals, as stated in its Covenant, included preventing war through collective security, disarmament, and settling international disputes through negotiation and/or arbitration.
U.S.S. Kentuckian arriving in the U.S. with troops from Europe, 1919
A *Harper’s Weekly* cartoonist (above left) depicts protesting suffragettes in an unsavory fashion, with signs reading “We Don’t Want a Thing We Are Just Showing Off” and “America: The Land of the Woman — The Home of the Girl!”. Following a long national campaign, public sentiment would gradually shift, resulting in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in June of 1919. **Virginia, however, was one of nine southern states not to ratify the amendment**, even though it went into effect as national law in August of 1920. **In 1952, the Virginia General Assembly finally ratified the Amendment**. This cartoon first appeared in *Harper’s Weekly*, Vol. II, No. 2642, pp. 1166-7.
Rally of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia at the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond on May 1, 1916. The speaker, Rabbi Edward Calisch of Temple Beth Ahabah, called votes for women "a matter for simple justice."
Women’s Suffrage picketers at the White House were arrested for “blocking traffic” and imprisoned in Fairfax Co., VA (i.e., at the Occoquan Workhouse — now the Lorton Prison).

The picketers (i.e., “Silent Sentinels”) were a group of women in favor of women's suffrage organized by Alice Paul to protest in front of the White House during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. The protests started January 10, 1917 and lasted until June 1919 when the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution passed both the House of Representatives and US Senate.

During those two and a half years, more than a thousand different women picketed every day and night except Sunday. During their illegal imprisonment for “picketing”, the women went on a hunger strike and were physically abused by guards.
Born in Richmond, Virginia, Lila Meade Valentine (1865-1921) was one of the lesser known participants in the woman's suffrage movement. Valentine actively campaigned for not only women's rights, but also for higher public health standards and a better public education system.

She was the founder and president of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia. Created in 1909, the primary goal of this group was to achieve equal voting rights for women in the state of Virginia. After women were given the right to vote, through the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, the organization she founded was renamed the Virginia League of Women Voters.

Valentine also co-founded the Richmond Education Association.

Lila Meade Valentine – Virginia’s Suffragette. Too ill to go to the polls in 1920, she died without ever voting.
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