

Regulating Chaos Around the World

Compulsory car registration for all vehicles driving over 18mph took effect throughout France on September 30, 1901, as more and more countries began regulating automobile traffic. Early city roads were often a din of crowded chaos, streets mired in mud and shared by horses, cars, and streetcars. However, phenomenal increases in traffic and accidents brought an end to the laissez-faire attitude of the road. Nine years after France began its registration policy, dividing lines appeared, followed by traffic signs, traffic lights, and one-way streets.

Cervantes is Baptized

On October 9, 1547, Miguel de Cervantes is baptized in Alcalá de Henares, Spain, a university town near Madrid. Cervantes, the fourth son of a deaf apothecary, studied with Madrid humanist Juan Lopez before traveling to Rome, where he worked for a future cardinal in the late 1560s. He enlisted in the Spanish fleet to fight against the Turks, and his left hand was maimed at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. He was later stationed at Palermo and Naples.

While returning to Madrid in 1575, Cervantes was captured by Barbary pirates and held captive in Algiers. Cervantes was ransomed after five years of captivity and returned to Madrid, where he began writing. Although his records indicate he wrote 20 to 30 plays, only two survive. In 1585, he published a romance. During this time, he married a woman 18 years his junior and had an illegitimate daughter, whom he raised in his household. He worked as a tax collector and as a requisitioned of supplies for the navy, but was jailed for irregularities in his accounting. Some historians believe he conceived the idea for Don Quixote while in jail.

In 1604, Cervantes received license to print Don Quixote. Although the book began as a satire of chivalric epics, it was far more complex than a simple satire. The book blended traditional genres to create a sad portrait of a penniless man striving to live by the ideas of the past. The book was a huge success and brought Cervantes literary respect and position but did not generate much money. He wrote drama and short stories until a phony sequel to his first novel, penned by another writer, prompted him to write Don Quixote, Part II in 1615. He died the following year.

Nurse Executed in WWI

On October 12, 1915, British nurse Edith Cavell is executed by a German firing squad in Brussels for helping Allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium during World War I.

The 49-year-old Cavell first entered the nursing profession in 1895, and in 1907 she became the matron of the Berkendael Institute in Brussels. Following the German invasion of neutral Belgium, Cavell sheltered British, French, and Belgian soldiers at the Institute before helping them escape to Holland. In August 1915, Cavell and several others were arrested and tried by a court-martial. Cavell made a full confession and was sentenced to death on October 9. Despite protests from neutral governments such as the United States and Spain, which thought a death sentence, too harsh, German authorities carried out the execution.

Cavell was idealized as a hero by the Allied press and was honored with a statue in St. Martin's Place, just off London's Trafalgar Square.

The Worse Driver in American History

On October 15, 1966, in McKinney, Texas, it was reported that a 75-year-old male driver received 10 traffic tickets, drove on the wrong side of the road four times, committed four hit-and-run offenses, and caused six accidents, all within 20 minutes. It is ironic that the record book's worst driver is a native Texan, because Texans, especially residents of Houston, are consistently ranked as the best drivers in the nation.

On another record-breaking bad driver note, Mrs. Fannie Turner of Little Rock, Arkansas, finally overcame her driving demons in October 1978 when she finally passed the written test for drivers - it was her 104th attempt.

The Muscle Car

Chevrolet introduced the El Camino on October 16, 1958, a sedan-pickup created to compete with Ford's popular Ranchero model. Built on the full-size Chevrolet chassis, the big El Camino failed to steal the Ranchero's market and was discontinued after two years.

Fall Anniversaries

Four years later, in 1964, the El Camino was given a second life as a derivative of the Chevelle series, a line of cars commonly termed "muscle cars." The Chevelles were stylish and powerful vehicles that reflected the youthful energy of the 1960s and early 1970s, and sold



Newer and much safer techniques for storing gas and building tanks were developed in the wake of this disaster.

well. The Chevelle Malibu Super Sport was the archetypal muscle car, featuring a V-8 as large as 454 cubic inches, or 7.4 liters. Chevelles came in sedans, wagons, convertibles, and hardtops, and, with the reintroduction of the El Camino in 1964, as a truck. The station wagon-based El Camino sedan-pickup had a successful run during its second manifestation as a Chevelle, and proved an attractive conveyance for urban cowboys and the horsey set.

Napoleon Retreats

One month after Napoleon Bonaparte's massive invading force entered a burning and deserted Moscow, the starving French army is forced to begin a hasty retreat out of Russia.

Following the rejection of his Continental System by Czar Alexander I, French Emperor Napoleon I invaded Russia with his Grande Armée on June 24, 1812. The enormous army, featuring more than 500,000 soldiers and staff, was the largest European military force ever assembled to that date.

During the opening months of the invasion, Napoleon was forced to contend with a bitter Russian army in perpetual retreat. Refusing to engage Napoleon's superior army in a full-scale confrontation, the Russians under General Mikhail Kutuzov burned everything behind them as they retreated deeper and deeper into Russia. On September 7, the indecisive Battle of Borodino was fought, in which both sides suffered terrible losses. On September 14, Napoleon arrived in Moscow intending to find supplies but instead found almost the entire population evacuated, and the Russian army retreated again. Early the next morning, fires broke across the city set by Russian patriots, and the Grande Armée's winter quarters were destroyed. After waiting a month for a surrender that never came, Napoleon, faced with the onset of the Russian winter, was forced to order his starving army out of Moscow.

During the disastrous retreat, Napoleon's army suffered continual harassment from a suddenly aggressive and merciless Russian army. Stalked by hunger and the deadly lances of the Cossacks, the decimated army reached the Berezina River late in November but found its route blocked by the Russians. On November 26, Napoleon forced a way across at Studienka, and when the bulk of his army passed the river three days later, he was forced to burn his makeshift bridges behind him, stranding some 10,000 stragglers on the other side. Six days later, the Grande Armée finally escaped Russia, having suffered a loss of more than 400,000 men during the disastrous invasion.

Gas Explosion in Cleveland

Two liquid gas tanks explode in Cleveland, Ohio, killing 130 people, on October 20, 1944. It took all of the city's firefighters to bring the resulting industrial fire under control.

At 2:30 p.m., laboratory workers at the East Ohio Gas Company spotted white vapor leaking from the large natural gas tank at the company plant near Lake Erie. The circular tank had a diameter of 57 feet and could hold 90 million cubic feet of the highly flammable gas. Ten minutes later, a massive and violent explosion rocked the entire area. Flames went as high as 2,500 feet in the air. Everything in a half-mile vicinity of the explosion was completely destroyed.

Shortly afterwards, a smaller tank also exploded. The resulting out-of-control fire necessitated the evacuation of 10,000 people from the surrounding area. Every firefighting unit in Cleveland converged on the East Ohio Gas site. It still took nearly an entire day to bring the fire under control. When the flames went out, rescue workers found that 130 people had been killed by the blast and nearly half of the bodies were so badly burned that they could not be identified. Two hundred and fifteen people were injured and required hospitalization.

The explosion had destroyed two entire factories, 79 homes in the surrounding area and more than 200 vehicles. The total bill for damages exceeded \$10 million. The cause of the blast had to do with the contraction of the metal tanks: The gas was stored at temperatures below negative 250 degrees and the resulting contraction of the metal had caused a steel plate to rupture.

Pretty Boy Floyd is killed

On October 22, 1934 Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd is shot by FBI agents in a cornfield in East Liverpool, Ohio. Floyd, who had been a hotly pursued fugitive for four years, used his last breath to deny his involvement in the infamous Kansas City Massacre, in which four officers were shot to death at a train station. He died shortly thereafter.

Charles Floyd grew up in a small town in Oklahoma. When it became impossible to operate a small farm in the drought conditions of the late 1920s, Floyd tried his hand at bank robbery. He soon found himself in a Missouri prison for robbing a St. Louis payroll delivery. After being paroled in 1929, he learned that Jim Mills had shot his father to death. Since Mills, who had been acquitted of the charges, was never heard from or seen again, Floyd was believed to have killed him.

Moving on to Kansas City, Floyd got mixed up with the city's burgeoning criminal community. A local prostitute gave Floyd the nickname "Pretty Boy," which he hated. Along with a couple of friends he had met in prison, he robbed several banks in Missouri and Ohio, but was caught in Ohio and sentenced to 15 years. On the way to prison, Floyd kicked out a window and jumped from the speeding train. He made it to Toledo, where he hooked up with Bill "The Killer" Miller.

The two went on a crime spree across several states until Miller was killed in a spectacular firefight in Bowling Green, Ohio, in 1931. Once he was back in Kansas City, Floyd killed a federal agent during a raid and became a nationally known criminal figure. This time he escaped to the backwoods of Oklahoma. The locals there, reeling from the Depression, were not about to turn in an Oklahoma native for robbing banks. Floyd became a Robin Hood-type figure, staying one step ahead of the law. Even the Joads, characters in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, spoke well of Floyd.

However, not everyone was so enamored with "Pretty Boy." Oklahoma's governor put out a \$6,000 bounty on his head. On June 17, 1933, when law enforcement officials were ambushed by a machine-gun attack in a Kansas City train station while transporting criminal Frank Nash to prison, Floyd's notoriety grew even more. Although it was not clear whether or not Floyd was responsible, both the FBI and the nation's press pegged the crime on him nevertheless. Subsequently, pressure was stepped up to capture the illustrious fugitive, and the FBI finally got their man in October 1934.

The First Parachutist

On October 22, 1797, the first parachute jump of note is made by André-Jacques Garnerin from a hydrogen balloon 3,200 feet above Paris.

Leonardo da Vinci conceived the idea of the parachute in his writings, and the Frenchman Louis-Sebastien Lenormand fashioned a kind of parachute out of two umbrellas and jumped from a tree in 1783, but André-Jacques Garnerin was the first to design and test parachutes capable of slowing a man's fall from a high altitude.

Garnerin first conceived of the possibility of using air resistance to slow an individual's fall from a high altitude while a prisoner during the French Revolution. Although he never employed a parachute to escape from the high ramparts of the Hungarian prison where he spent three years, Garnerin never lost interest in the concept of the parachute. In 1797, he completed his first parachute, a canopy 23 feet in diameter and attached to a basket with suspension lines.

On October 22, 1797, Garnerin attached the parachute to a hydrogen balloon and ascended to an altitude of 3,200 feet. He then clambered into the basket and severed the parachute from the balloon. As he failed to include an air vent at the top of the prototype, Garnerin oscillated wildly in his descent, but he landed shaken but unhurt half a mile from the balloon's takeoff site. In 1799, Garnerin's wife, Jeanne-Genevieve, became the first female parachutist. In 1802, Garnerin made a spectacular jump from 8,000 feet during an exhibition in England. He died in a balloon accident in 1823 while preparing to test a new parachute.

The Pony Express

On October 24, 1861, the first transcontinental telegraph system was completed, making it possible to transmit messages rapidly (by mid-19th-century standards) from coast to coast. This technological advance, pioneered by inventor Samuel F.B. Morse, brought an end to the Pony Express, the horseback mail service which had previously provided the fastest communication between the East and the West.

Established in April 1860 as a subsidiary of a famous freight company, the Pony Express operated between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, using a continuous relay of the best riders and horses. The nearly 2000 mile route - running through present-day Kansas, Nebraska, the northeast corner of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California - included vast stretches of rugged terrain once thought impassable in winter. Pushing the physical limits of man and beast, the Pony Express ran nonstop. Summer deliveries averaged ten days, while winter deliveries required twelve to sixteen days,

approximately half the time needed by stagecoach. When delivering President Lincoln's Inaugural Address the Express logged its fastest time ever at seven days and seventeen hours.

The Pony Express was founded with high hopes for securing a lucrative government contract. Political pressures and the outbreak of the Civil War prevented such an arrangement. When the enterprise closed it was in the red, its founders having lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Although a financial failure, the Pony Express is considered a success for keeping communication open with California during the early months of the Civil War and proving that a central route to the West could be traveled year round. Additionally, the mail service is credited with having lost only one mail pouch, or mochila, during its entire run.

Some 200 horsemen rode for the Pony Express. Most were in their late teens and early twenties and small in stature; theoretically, the lighter the rider, the faster the horse could travel. Famous riders included William "Buffalo Bill" Cody and "Pony Bob" Haslam.

During a typical shift riders traveled 75 to 100 miles, changing horses every ten to fifteen miles at relief stations along the route. Station keepers and stock tenders ensured that changes between horses and riders were synchronized so that no time was wasted. For their dangerous and grueling work riders received between \$100 and \$125 per month.

The Volstead Act

On October 28, 1919, Congress passed the Volstead Act providing for enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified nine months earlier. Known as the Prohibition Amendment, it prohibited the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" in the United States.

The movement to prohibit alcohol began in the early years of the 19th century when individuals concerned about the adverse effects of drink began forming local societies to promote temperance in consumption of alcohol. The first temperance societies were organized in New York in 1808. Many members belonged to Protestant evangelical denominations frequently met in local churches.

The Anti-Saloon League, founded in Ohio in 1893 and organized as a national society in 1895, helped pave the way for passage of the Eighteenth Amendment with an effective campaign calling for prohibition at the state level.

By January 1920, thirty-three states had already enacted laws prohibiting alcohol. Between 1920 and 1933, the Anti-Saloon League lobbied for strict federal enforcement of the Volstead Act.