

Harry S. Truman

A President Who Shaped the Modern World



Early Life in Missouri



- Truman was born on May 8th, 1884, in Lamar, Missouri
- He grew up on a farm near Independence, Missouri
- He needed glasses to see from a young age
- He enjoyed reading and music, specifically piano
- He did not attend college, but instead worked a variety of jobs

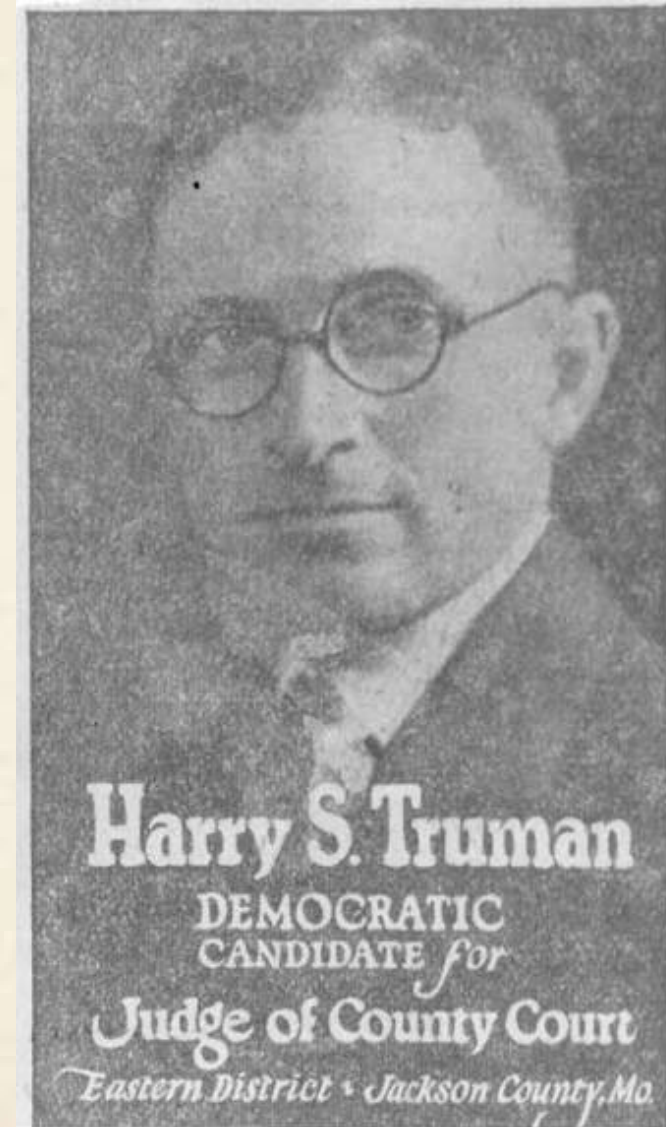
Service in World War I

- Truman served in the Army before, during and after World War I
- Upon retirement, Truman had attained the rank of colonel
- His leadership skills helped turn a particularly rowdy regiment into an efficient group
- His unit, Battery D, suffered no combat deaths



Truman Begins His Political Career

- After returning from service, Truman opened a haberdashery with his best friend, Eddie Jacobsen, which failed after a few years
- After this failure, Jim Pendergast acquired Truman a position with his uncle, Tom Pendergast
- Tom Pendergast, the political boss of Kansas City, later decided to support Truman for a Senate Seat (which Truman won)



Truman Works for the Pendergast Machine

- Unlike a modern judge, he did **not** spend most of his time hearing legal cases or conducting trials
- The Jackson County Court functioned more like a county governing board than a court of law
- Truman's "judge" position was much closer to that of a **county executive** or **commissioner** than a courtroom judge



Truman Works for the Pendergast Machine



- **County Administration:** Truman Oversaw the management of county government including budgets, contracts, and public services
- **Roans and Infrastructure Projects:** As the **presiding judge** (elected in 1926), he supervised the construction and improvement of roads, bridges, and public buildings throughout Jackson County
- **Financial Oversight:** He helped prepare county budgets, controlled spending, and worked to ensure that taxpayer money was used responsibly
- **Public Works:** Truman directed major construction projects, including improvements to the county courthouse and other public facilities



Why Truman's Service was Important

- Truman earned a reputation for honesty, efficiency, and integrity
- Although he had political ties to Kansas City's Democratic organization led by Thomas J. Pendergast, Truman became known for awarding contracts fairly and resisting corruption
- His successful management of county government helped launch his political career, leading to his election to the U.S. Senate in 1934 and eventually to his presidency in 1945

The Truman Committee

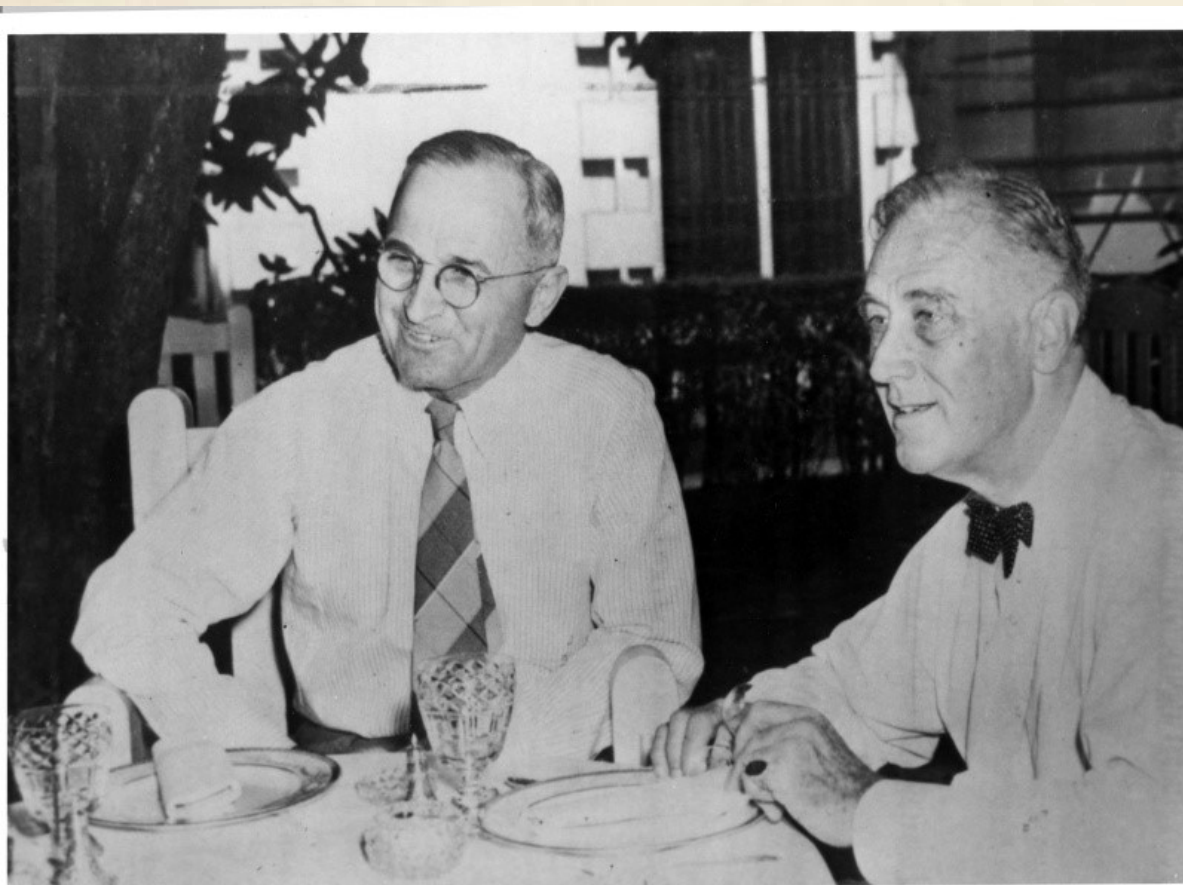


- During his time as a senator, Truman became chairman of the Truman Committee
- The Truman Committee investigated war equipment companies including quality of equipment, and the overpricing of supplies during World War II
- This committee also addressed poor working conditions of companies producing equipment for the troops
- These investigations helped protect American soldiers by providing them with safe, quality gear
- It also helped taxpayers by saving billions of dollars

Why Roosevelt Chose Truman as His Vice President

- Roosevelt chose to drop Henry Wallace as his running mate in favor of Truman
- Truman was a senator of the border state, Missouri, thus making him more appealing to the conservative members
- Truman walked the "Middle of the Road" - his support of the New Deal pleased liberals of his party, while his practical perspective satisfied the party's moderates
- Truman was a much more reliable and uniting candidate in comparison to Wallace, which pleased Democratic party bosses and conservative Democrats
- The leaders of the Democratic Party coordinated a shift from Wallace to Truman so that he could be presented as the most preferable candidate, and aid in FDR's reelection





- Truman became Roosevelt's third vice president in 1944
- He did not have a deep relationship with Roosevelt
- Primarily presided over the Senate and attended ceremonial functions
- He was not deeply involved in Roosevelt's war plans
- Truman served as Vice President for only 82 days due to Roosevelt's sudden death

Vice President Under Roosevelt



Truman Attends Tom Pendergast's Funeral

- In 1945, Truman took an Army transport plane to attend the funeral of Tom Pendergast
- Many leaders in politics were present for this somber occasion

Truman is Sworn into Office as President in 1945

- During this time, World War II was nearing its conclusion
- Many crucial choices concerning the war and post-war effort were left to Truman to decide
- Truman was not aware the Manhattan Project existed prior to becoming president



- Attended by President Truman, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin
- This conference discussed how to handle Germany after the war
- This included disarming Germany, disbanding the German military, banning Nazi laws, trying German leaders for war crimes, and setting borders in Europe
- This conference also discussed war costs and the ultimatum given to Japan: surrender or suffer destruction



The Potsdam Conference

Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb



- After much debate, discussion, and controversy, Truman authorized use of the atomic bomb
- Atomic bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

- Supporters argue the decision to defend our country from Japanese invasion prevented hundreds of thousands of casualties
- Others criticize the deaths of Japanese civilians
- This decision led to Japan's surrender, and brought an end to World War II



Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

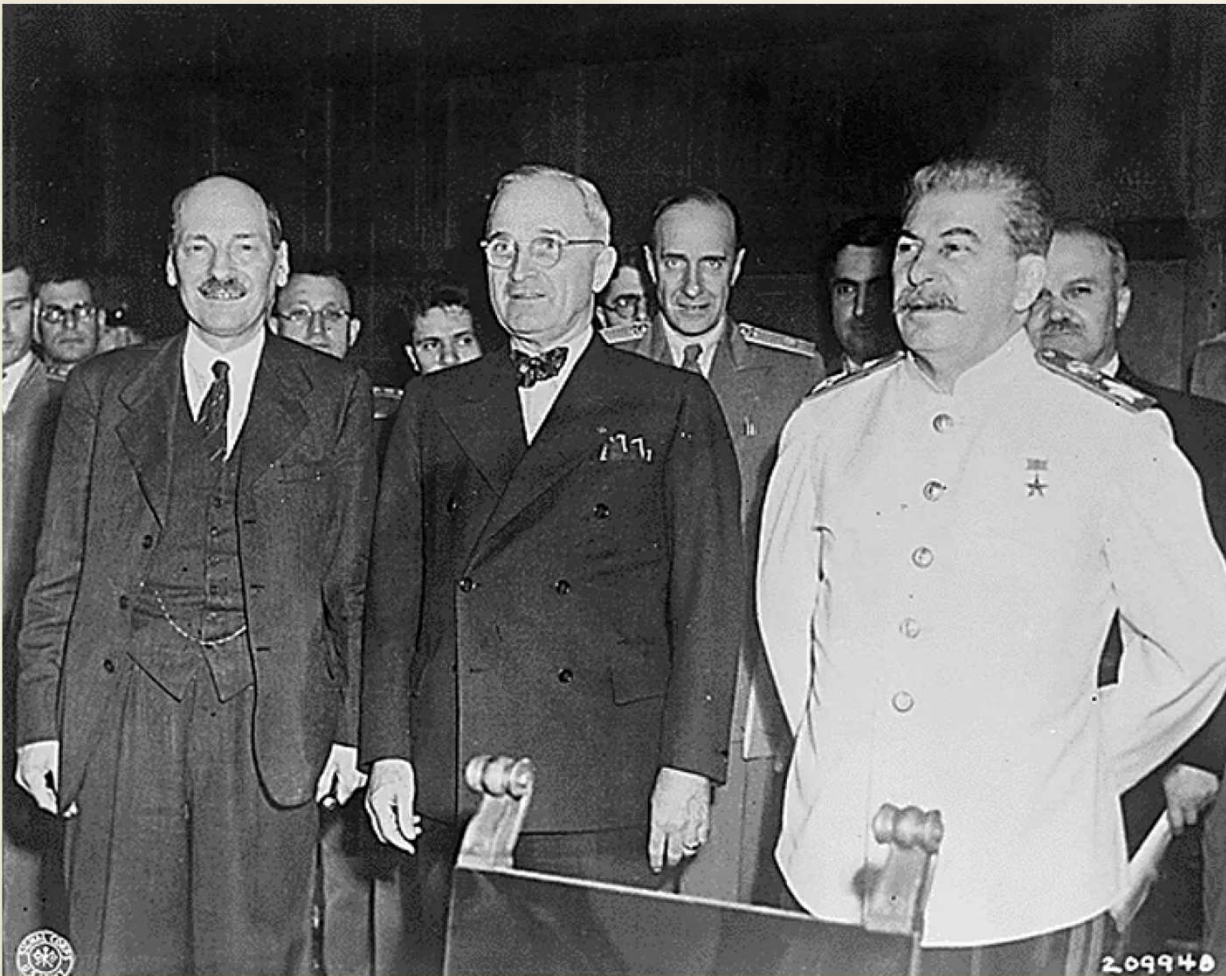
Japan Surrenders

- Japan agreed to the Allies terms of absolute surrender
- This officially brought World War II to an end



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The Beginning of the Cold War



- Following the Potsdam Conference, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had declined
- This would lead to the Cold War



- Announced in 1947 in a joint session of Congress
- During this address, Truman asked for \$400 million to assist countries who were trying to prevent communism's influence
- Turkey and Greece were the countries of highest concern
- This doctrine reflected Truman's belief that the US should assist free peoples from the dangers of communist threats

The Truman Doctrine

The Marshall Plan



- The Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, was later known as the **Marshall Plan**
- The Marshall Plan was heavily influenced by Secretary of State, George Marshall, and his ideas for Europe's economic reconstruction
- These ideas, which Truman adopted into his message to Congress, included advising Europe to create a financial plan, and for the US to provide financial assistance
- Truman believed the recovery of the economy would strengthen democratic governments and weaken communism's appeal
- Commonly referred to as one of the **most successful foreign aid programs in history**, as it provided billions of dollars to European economies, and strengthened Western European alliances with the US

Eddie Jacobsen – Truman's Closest Friend



- Truman's best friend, Army comrade, and former business partner
- This American Jewish businessman played an influential role in convincing Truman to recognize Israel as a country

Recognition of Israel

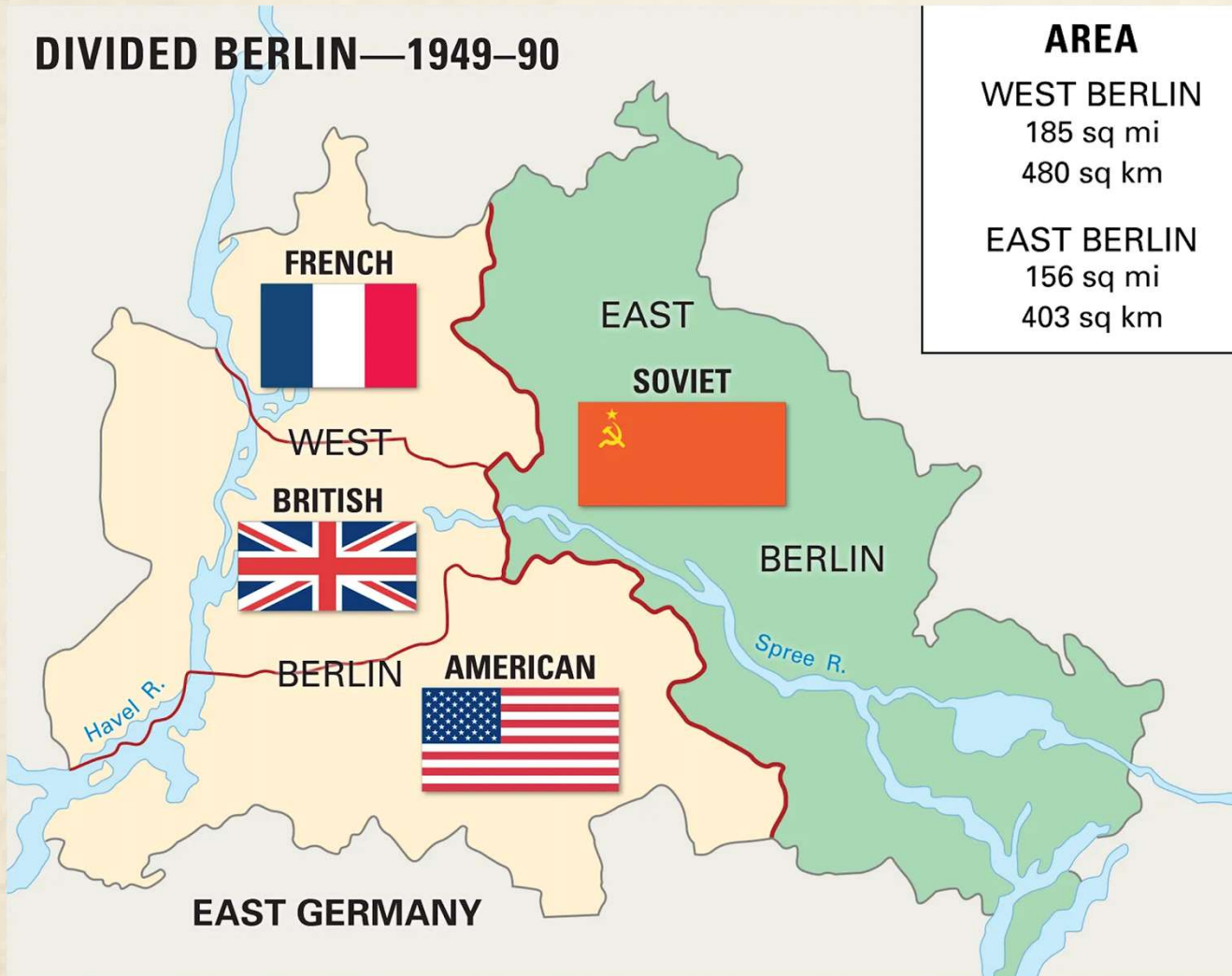


- After Great Britain's inability to continue ruling Palestine, the United Nations declared a new country, Israel, for the Jewish community that was residing in Palestine during the war
- Just 11 minutes after the creation of this new country, Truman recognized Israel as a country
- This makes the US the first country to recognize Israel

David Ben-Gurion Declares Independence for Israel



DIVIDED BERLIN—1949–90



Berlin Blockade

- Berlin Crisis of 1948-1949
- The Soviet Union blocked land access to West Berlin
- Many believed this would lead to Berlin falling under communist control

Berlin Airlift

- A massive operation
- American and allied forces supplied Berlin with fuel, food and various other necessities
- Very successful
- Soviet blockade was eventually lifted
- This event demonstrated Truman's determination to resist Soviet pressure while not provoking direct military conflict



Creation of NATO



- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- Formed in 1949
- Established a military alliance among the United States, Canada, and several Western European Nations
- Participants agreed that an attack on one member would be an attack on all members
- Strengthened the West's security during the Cold War
- Still considered one of the most crucial international organizations today

Fair Deal Program

- Sought to expand Roosevelt's New Deal reforms
- Advocated for more Social Security benefits, national health insurance, public housing, and increased minimum wages
- Congress blocked some of his proposals, but many important measures were passed
- Truman believed that the government should promote economic opportunity and social welfare



Civil Rights Leadership

- In 1948, Truman issued an executive order desegregating the US military
- Also supported anti-lynching legislation
- Supported measures taken to protect African American voting rights
- Laid important groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement, which would take place in the following decades



1948 Campaign for Presidency

- The whistle-stop train campaign was made after receiving a 36% approval rating
- It was 9,000 mile campaign trip
- Worked to build a coalition of laborers, farmers, liberals and African Americans
- This was the first time an effort was made to have African Americans affect the outcome of a presidential race



Dewey Defeats Truman



- Truman's win of the 1948 presidential election is known as one of the largest upsets in the history of presidential elections
- His success is largely attributed to his direct style of talking, especially during his interactions with voters
- A newspaper headline mistakenly reported that "Dewey defeats Truman" in response to Truman's surprising win for president

Korean War Begins

- Communist North Korea invades South Korea in 1950
- Truman sends American forces to aid and defend South Korea
- While originally seeming poor, the war later experienced triumphant military operations





General MacArthur

- Highly respected for his successes in World War II
- Truman personally picked General MacArthur to lead in South Korea
- At first, he succeeded in pushing North Korean forces out of South Korea

Dismissal of MacArthur

- Truman and MacArthur had disagreements in handling the Korean War, including pushing North Korea back further and whether to bomb allying countries
- After MacArthur's public challenges of presidential policy, Truman dismissed him
- MacArthur was dismissed in 1951
- This reinforced the idea of civilians having control over the military
- Though the war did not end until after his presidency, the way Truman handled the Korean War showed his passion for opposing communist aggression while not involving the US in a war with China or the Soviet Union



Leaving the White House

- After his presidency, Truman returned to Independence, Missouri
- He oversaw the construction of his presidential library located in Independence
- He continued commenting on political events
- Enjoyed the company of old friends, family, dignitaries, and political allies
- He especially liked speaking with important guests, scholars who were interested in his time as president, and school groups of children



Truman and His Family

- Truman was very family-oriented
- He had a close relationship with his mother and siblings
- Was very protective of his daughter, Margaret
- Lunched with his wife, Bess, most days
- When his evenings were free, he and Bess would enjoy music or a movie, along with a cocktail



Harry S. Truman Library and Museum



Historical Reassessment

- At the time Truman left office, he had the **lowest** approval rating of any president
- Now, he is recognized as one of half a dozen of the **best** presidents in American history



Historical Reassessment

- During his time as president, he was faced with incredibly difficult challenges
- The decisions he made in response to these issues helped shape modern America



Legacy

Truman's actions as president impact American and international history:

- He navigated the end of World War II
- Actively pushed back against communist threat in America and around the world
- Established policies for that influenced the outcome of the Cold War including the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and NATO

Legacy

- He influenced the Civil Rights Movement through desegregating the armed forces of America
- Through his Fair Deal, he sought to expand economic opportunity
- Showed his decisiveness and responsibility in both the Korean War and use of atomic weapons
- Made decisions that continue to affect American policies today
- Is Recognized by his most famous quote, "The buck stops here."



Legacy

Though many of his choices remain controversial, Harry S. Truman's legacy was an influential leader of both the United States and the world.

“I never gave anybody hell. I just told the truth, and they thought it was hell.”

-Harry S. Truman