

# 100 Years Ago

## NOTABLE NATIONAL EVENTS

**M**ary Pickford became the first female star to get a million dollar contract (from Adolph Zukor) and second only to Charlie Chaplin in pay and popularity. In the 1910s and 1920s, she was the most famous woman in the country. The Canadian-born actress often played young girls and starred in 52 feature films during her career. She controlled the distribution and other production aspects of her films.



Pickford in 1916.

- The **Federal Aid Road Act** was enacted on July 11. It was the first legislation that shared federal funds with states for road construction. It was introduced by Rep. Dorsey W. Shackelford of Missouri. Until this time, road funding was the responsibility of counties and the state. It provided for a 50-50 match, including rural post (mail) roads. Although underfunded, primarily because of World War I, it set the precedent for federal funding of highways. Subsequent legislation in 1921 expanded that role.

- The National Park Service was created on August 25. National parks and monuments were originally managed by the Department of the Interior. Conservationists and bureaucrats alike thought an independent agency dedicated to these federal lands would lead to better utilization. President Wilson signed

legislation directing the agency “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”



Businessman and conservationist **Stephen Mather** (above) was instrumental in the campaign to create the NPS and was rewarded with the appointment as first director and served until 1929.

- The first self-service supermarket, **Piggly Wiggly**, was opened by Clarence Saunders in Memphis, Tennessee (below). Shopping in grocery stores of that time required that the customer give an order to the store clerk. The clerk retrieved the items from the store stock. Saunders realized that this was inefficient, requiring more help than was necessary. He also knew that many small businesses failed because of bad debt.



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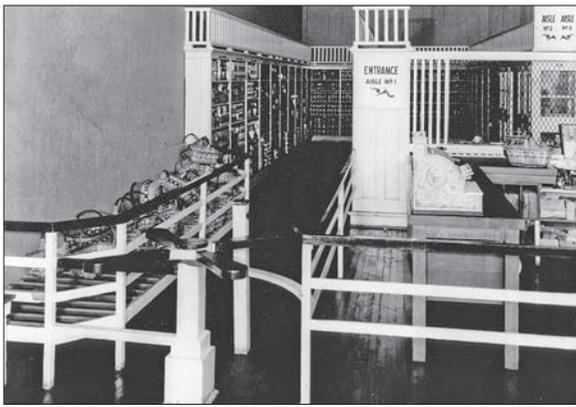
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Saunders equipped his store on Jefferson Street with accessible shelves and provided shopping baskets (above, lower left corner). Customers walked the aisles, passing items they might not have thought they needed, and paid cash only at the check-out register. Needless to say, the business model was successful—and with us every day. By 1922, there were 1,200 stores in 29 states. Ten years later, there were double that number of stores, some company owned and some franchised.

• Much of the newsprint was devoted to the war raging in Europe. **President Woodrow Wilson** was narrowly reelected on November 7, defeating Republican Charles E. Hughes. Wilson had campaigned with a slogan of “he kept us out of the war.” On April 6, 1917, America declared war against Germany.

**Births**

**Walter Cronkite**, November 4—was born in St. Joseph, Missouri. He spent more than 40 years with CBS News, 19 years as anchorman of the *CBS Evening News*. During the 1960s and 1970s, he was often called “the most trusted man in America.”



**Betty Grable**, December 18—born in St. Louis, Missouri. Betty was an actress, dancer, and singer whose career reached its zenith with 20th Century Fox in the 1940s. In 1947, she was the biggest box-office draw in the world and the highest paid entertainer in the United States. Her studio insured her legs for a million dollars. Grable’s bathing suit poster made her the number one pin-up girl for soldiers during World War II. *Life* magazine included the poster on a list of “100 Photographs that Changed the World.”



**Deaths**

**Al Ringling**, January 1—66 years old, died of Bright’s Disease in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Al was the leader and oldest of the seven Ringling brothers, circus owners.

**Jack London**, November 22—author of *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*, two very popular books set in the Klondike gold rush. He also wrote fiction for popular magazines. London was also a socialist, promoting unionization and workers’ rights. London died at the age of forty of uremic poisoning.



Compiled by Terry Primas. Photos of Pickford, Cronkite, Grable, and London courtesy Library of Congress; Piggly Wiggly courtesy Jan and Terry Primas.

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