Today in History - June 6

June 6
Select date: June 16 Go

Today's Stories: **D-Day: Operation Overlord** | **John Trumbull**

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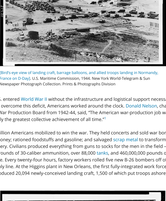
D-Day: Operation Overlord

In the early morning hours of **June 6, 1944**, Americans received word that three years of concerted war efforts had finally culminated in D-day—military jargon for the undisclosed time of a planned British, American, and Canadian action. During the night, over 5,300 ships and 11,000 planes had crossed the English Channel and landed on the beaches of Normandy. The goal of every soldier and civilian involved in the effort was to drive the German military back to Berlin by opening a western front in Europe.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower Gives the Order of the Day, "Full victory–nothing else" to paratroopers., U.S. Army photograph, June 6, 1944. Prints & Photographs Division

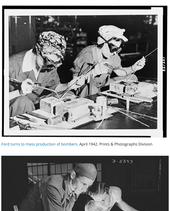
General Dwight David Eisenhower was in command of the invasion, which was code-named Operation Overlord. Just months prior, the 1915 West Point graduate had led the invasion of French North Africa.



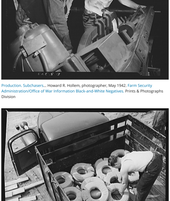
[Bird's-eye view of landing craft, barrage balloons, and allied troops landing in Normandy, France on D-Day], U.S. Maritime Commission, 1944. New York World-Telegram & Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection. Prints & Photographs Division

The U.S. entered *World War II* without the infrastructure and logistical support necessary to wein. To overcome this deficit, Americans worked around the clock. Donald Nelson, chairman of the War Production Board from 1942-44, said, "The American war-production job was probably the greatest collective achievement of all time."[1]

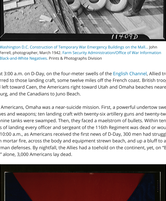
Sixty million Americans mobilized to win the war. They held concerts and sold war bonds to raise money; rationed foodstuffs and gasoline; and salvaged scrap metal to transform it into machinery. Civilians produced everything from guns to socks for the men in the field — 25 billion rounds of 30-caliber ammunition, over 88,000 tanks, and 460,000,000 pounds of cabbage. Every twenty-four hours, factory workers rolled five new B-26 bombers off of the assembly line. At the Higgins plant in New Orleans, the first fully-integrated work force in the U.S. produced 20,094 newly-conceived landing craft, 1,500 of which just troops active on D-Day.



Fond sorts to mass production of bombers. April 1942. Prints & Photographs Division



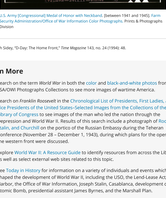
Production. Subchasers.., Howard B. Hollem, photographer, May 1942. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives. Prints & Photographs Division



Washington D.C. Construction of Temporary War Emergency Buildings on the Mall., John Parrish, photographer, March 1942. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives. Prints & Photographs Division

At about 3:00 a.m. on D-Day, on the four-meter swells of the English Channel, Allied troops transferred to those landing craft, some twelve miles off the French coast. British troops headed left toward Caen, the Americans right toward Utah and Omaha beaches nearer Cherbourg, and the Canadians to Juno Beach.

For the Americans, Omaha was a near-suicide mission. First, a powerful undertow swept away lives and weapons; ten landing craft with twenty-six artillery guns and twenty-two of twenty-nine tanks were swamped. Then, they faced a maelstrom of bullets. Within ten minutes of landing every officer and sergeant of the 116th Regiment was dead or wounded. Yet, by 10:00 a.m., as Americans received the first news of D-Day, 300 men had struggled through mortar fire, across the body and equipment strewn beach, and up a bluff to attack the German defenses. By nightfall, the Allies had a toehold on the continent, yet, on "Bloody Omaha" alone, 3,000 Americans lay dead.



U.S. Army (Congressional) Medal of Honor with Neckband. [between 1941 and 1945]. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Color Photographs. Prints & Photographs Division

[1] Hugh Sidey, "D-Day: The Home Front," *Time Magazine* 143, no. 24 (1994): 48.

Learn More

- Search on the term *World War* in both the color and black-and-white photos from the *FSA/OWI Photographs* Collections to see more images of wartime America.
- Search on *Franklin Roosevelt* in the Chronological List of Presidents, First Ladies, and Vice Presidents of the United States–Selected Images from the Collections of the Library of Congress to see images of the man who led the nation through the Depression and *World War II*. Results of this search include a photograph of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill on the portico of the Russian Embassy during the Teheran Conference (November 28 – December 1, 1943), during which plans for the opening of the western front were discussed.
- Explore World War II: A Resource Guide to identify resources from across the Library as well as select external web sites related to this topic.
- See Today in History for information on a variety of individuals and events which shaped the development of World War II, including the USO, the Lend-Lease Act, Pearl Harbor, the Office of War Information, Joseph Stalin, Casablanca, development of the Atomic Bomb, presidential assistant James Byrnes, and the Marshall Plan.
- See the online exhibition Women Come to the Front to learn more about eight women who sent news home from the war's front lines.
- World War II Military Situation Maps contains maps showing troop positions beginning on June 6, 1944 to July 26, 1945.
- Search on *war bonds* in the Photos, Prints & Drawings collections for photographs, cartoons, and posters relating to the war effort.
- To locate veterans' stories from the Veterans History Project, search the term *D-Day* with Notes selected in the "Contained In" menu. A selection of veterans' stories have been compiled to commemorate the 75th anniversary.
- To commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the Veterans History Project created D-Day Journeys, an interactive experience that features unique journeys of veterans who were part of the invasion. They also posted a series of stories based on materials from their collections in their Folklife Today blog. Search on *D-Day* using the search box on the left side to find the other posts.

John Trumbull

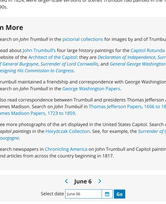
American soldier, diplomat, author, and painter John Trumbull was born on **June 6**, 1756, in Lebanon, Connecticut. Trumbull is best known for his historical paintings depicting the Revolutionary War that adorn the rotunda of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. His portraits of presidents Washington, Adams, and Jefferson are also renowned.

Declaration of Independence[1] John Trumbull, oil on canvas, 1818, placed 1826. LOC/Capitol Flickr. Photoshopped JP, Archivist of the Capitol

Trumbull, son of Connecticut governor Jonathan Trumbull, served as an aide to General George Washington during the Revolution and rose to the rank of colonel. After the war, he studied painting in London with Benjamin West. In about 1794, with encouragement from West and Thomas Jefferson, he began the series of historical paintings and engravings he worked on intermittently for the rest of his life.

In Trumbull's day, artists created engravings of their paintings that could be reproduced for sale. In 1791, Washington wrote to Lafayette encouraging him to purchase Trumbull's work, which he praised:

> *His pieces, so far as they are executed, meet the warm applause of all who have seen them. The greatness of the designs, and the masterly execution of the Work equally interest the man of a capacious mind and the conversing part of the Connoisseur. He has spared no pains in obtaining from the life the likenesses of those characters, French as well as American, who bore a conspicuous part in our Revolution; and the success with which his efforts have been crowned will form no small part of the value of his pieces.*
>
> Letter from George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, November 21, 1791. Series 2, Letterbooks 1754-1799. Letterbook 16, Sept. 5, 1791-March 30, 1794. George Washington Papers. Manuscript Division



James Madison to John Trumbull, January 10, 1818. Draft letter concerning a print of Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*. Series 1, General Correspondence, 1723-1836. James Madison Papers, 1723 to 1836. Manuscript Division

In 1817, Congress commissioned Trumbull to paint a series of four paintings in the rotunda of the Capitol: *Washington Resigning His Commission*, *The Surrender of Cornwallis*, *The Surrender of Burgoyne*, and, best known of all, *The Declaration of Independence*. These paintings, completed in 1824, were larger-scale versions of scenes Trumbull had painted in the 1780s and 1790s.

Learn More

- Search on *John Trumbull* in the pictorial collections for images by and of Trumbull.
- Read about John Trumbull's four large history paintings for the Capitol Rotunda on the website of the Architect of the Capitol: they are *Declaration of Independence*, *Surrender of General Burgoyne*, *Surrender of Lord Cornwallis*, and *General George Washington Resigning His Commission to Congress*.
- Trumbull maintained a friendship and correspondence with George Washington. Search on *John Trumbull* in the George Washington Papers.
- Also read correspondence between Trumbull and presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Search on *John Trumbull* in Thomas Jefferson Papers, 1606 to 1827 and James Madison Papers, 1723 to 1859.
- See more photographs of the art displayed in the United States Capitol. Search on *Capitol paintings* in the Horyclub Collection. See, for example, the *Surrender of General Burgoyne*.
- Search newspapers in Chronicling America on John Trumbull and Capitol paintings to find articles from across the country beginning in 1817.

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