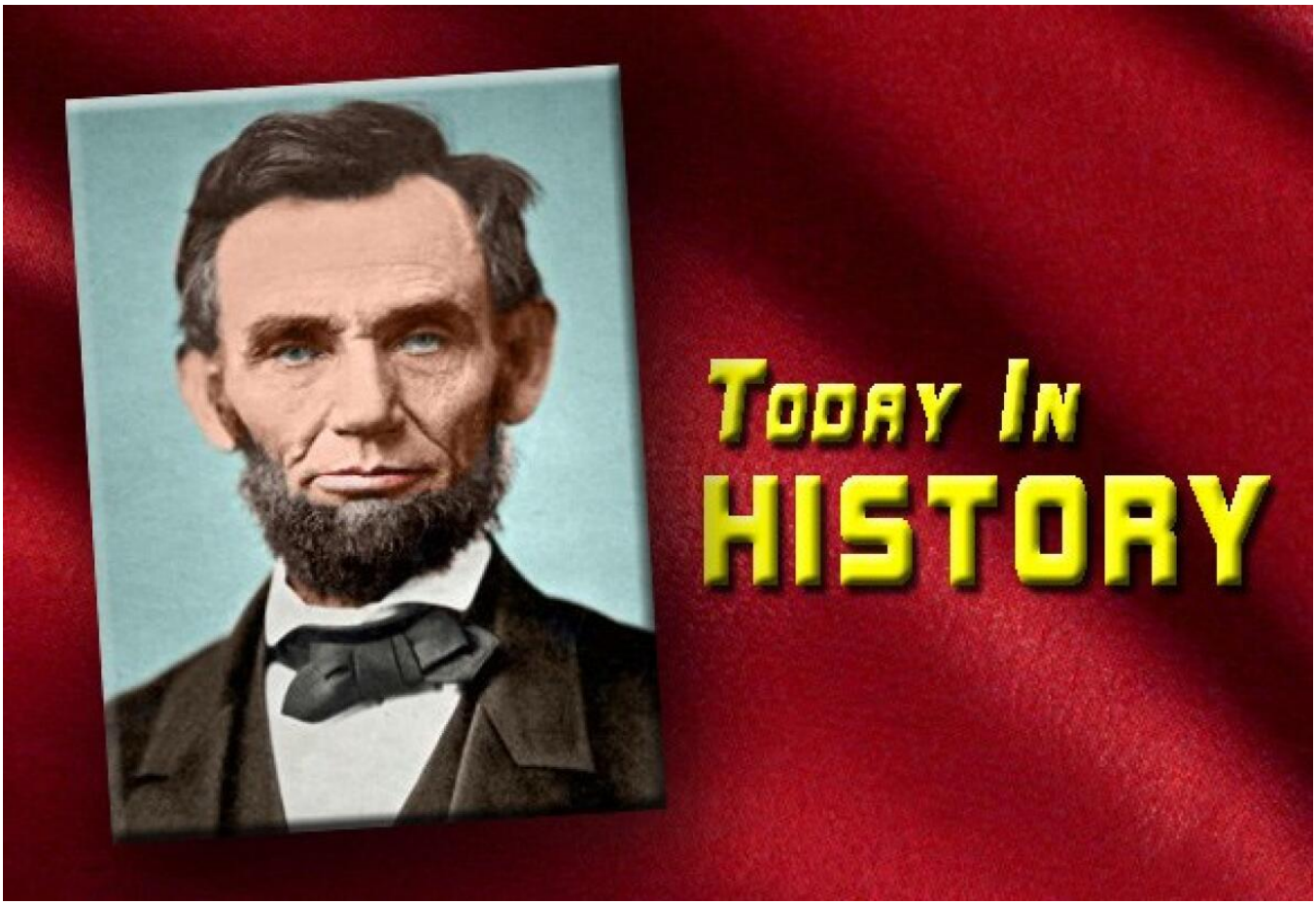

Today In History – December 31

Lincoln Herald Staff

Today in History in 1862 – Abraham Lincoln signs the Act creating the state of West Virginia and thus splitting Virginia in two; in 1946 President of the United States Harry S. Truman officially declares an end to hostilities in World War II; and in 1999 The Panama Canal is transferred from US control to Panama's control.

The On This Day In History archives at "Simple English Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia" contains over 200,000 events, birthdays and deaths from 6,000 years of history. Here is a roundup of a few of them:

December 31 is the 365th day of the year (366th in leap years) in the Gregorian calendar. This date is well known for New Year's Eve as it is the last day of a given calendar year, as the following day is January 1st, the first day of the following year.

Events

192 – Narcissus murders Roman Emperor Commodus.

406 – Vandals, Alans and Suebians cross the Rhine, beginning the invasion of Gaul.

1225 – The Ly Dynasty in Vietnam ends after 216 years, as Tran Thai Tong, still a boy, becomes Emperor. This is the beginning of the Tran Dynasty.

1472 – The throwing of snowballs is banned in Amsterdam.

1494 – First Italian War: Troops of King Charles VIII of France enter Rome.

1600 – The British East India Company is created.

1660 – James II of England is named Duke of Normandy by Louis XIV of France.

1687 – The first Huguenots set sail from France for the Cape of Good Hope.

1695 – Window tax is introduced in England. As a result, many people brick up their windows in order not to have to pay the tax.

1703 – An earthquake and tsunami damage Tokyo, Odawara and several nearby towns, killing around 10,000 people.

1720 – A storm flood ravages the North German coast, separating a dune on Heligoland from the main island.

1775 – American Revolutionary War: In the Battle of Quebec, British forces repulse an attack by Continental Army General Richard Montgomery.

1790 – Efimeris, the oldest Greek newspaper still in print, is published for the first time.

1796 – Baltimore, Maryland, is incorporated as a city.

1857 – Queen Victoria chooses Ottawa as the capital of Canada.

1862 – Abraham Lincoln signs the Act creating the state of West Virginia and thus splitting Virginia in two.

1862 – American Civil War: The Battle of Stones River in Tennessee begins.

1862 – The battleship USS Monitor sinks in a storm in heavy seas off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

1878 – In Mannheim, Germany, Karl Benz files a patent on his reliable two–stroke gas engine.

1879 – Thomas Edison publicly demonstrates incandescent light in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

1891 – A new immigration depot is opened on Ellis Island, New York.

1904 – What is now Times Square, New York, holds its first New Year celebration.

1909 – The Manhattan Bridge is opened.

1917 – British troop transporter Osmanieh hits a mine laid by German U–boat UC 34 off Alexandria, Egypt, sinking with 99 deaths.

1923 – The BBC broadcasts the chimes of Big Ben in London for the first time.

1929 – The Glen Cinema Disaster in Paisley, Scotland, kills 70 children.

1944 – World War II: Hungary declares war on Germany.

1946 – President of the United States Harry S. Truman officially declares an end to hostilities in World War II.

1948 – The 100,000th landing of the Berlin Airlift occurs.

1951 – The Marshall Plan expires after giving over $ 13.3 billion to help war–torn parts of Europe.

1955 – General Motors becomes the first US Corporation to make over a billion US Dollars in a year.

1960 – The farthing coin stops being the legal tender in the United Kingdom.

1963 – The Central African Federation officially breaks apart, and eventually becomes Zambia, Malawi and Rhodesia.

1964 – A three–day census in East Germany ends, determining the population to be 17,003,632.

1965 – Jean–Bedel Bokassa leads a coup against David Dacko in the Central African Republic.

1968 – Marien Ngouabi becomes President of the Republic of the Congo.

1973 – AC/DC is formed.

1981 – In a military coup in Ghana, Jerry Rawlings takes control.

1983 – A military coup in Nigeria is led by Muhammadu Buhari.

1986 – In San Juan, Puerto Rico a fire at the Dupont Plaza Hotel kills 97 people.

1987 – Robert Mugabe becomes President of Zimbabwe.

1988 – Pittsburgh Penguins' Mario Lemieux becomes the only NHL player, to this date, to score goals in five different ways – even strength, shorthand, power play, penalty shot and empty net, in an 8–6 win over the New Jersey Devils.

1989 – Arved Fuchs and Reinhold Messner reach the South Pole on their cross–Antarctica journey.

1990 – Garry Kasparov successfully defends his world chess title against Anatoly Karpov.

1991 – The Soviet Union officially comes to an end.

1992 – Czechoslovakia peacefully dissolves, splitting into the Czech Republic and Slovakia the next day.

1994 – This date is skipped altogether in Kiribati, as the International Date Line is shifted to the east of the Line Islands and Phoenix Islands.

1999 – Boris Yeltsin resigns as President of Russia.

1999 – The Panama Canal is transferred from US control to Panama's control.

2004 – The Taipei 101 tower is opened in Taipei, Taiwan.

2006 – The total of US troops killed in the Iraq War reaches 3,000.

2009 – In Espoo, Finland, Ibrahim Shkupolli shoots his former girlfriend dead, then shoots four people to death at a shopping mall before committing suicide.

2009 – The Ignalina power station in Lithuania is shut down.

2014 – The first same–sex marriages in Scotland take place.

2014 – US and UK forces withdraw from Afghanistan.

2014 – Beji Caid Essebsi becomes President of Tunisia.

2014 – A crush at a New Year celebration in Shanghai kills 36 people.

2015 – Fire breaks out at a hotel near the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

2016 – Bomb attacks in Baghdad kill at least 28 people.

2017 – A bus crash near Migaa, Kenya, kills at least 36 people.