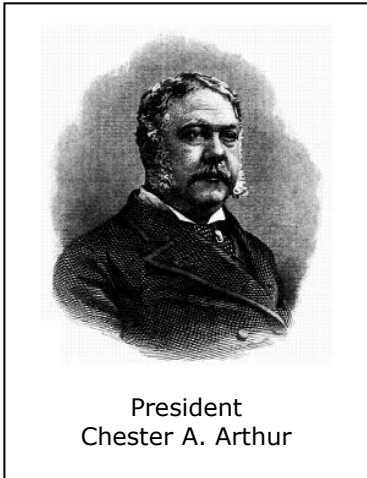


Forty-Eighth Congress

Mar. 4, 1883 - Mar. 4, 1885

Administration of Chester A. Arthur

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Historical Background

At least in symbolic terms, the 48th Congress signaled the end of the long sectional crisis in the United States. Though Republicans—“the party of Lincoln”—maintained their majority in the Senate, Democrats gained the majority in the House of Representatives in the election of 1882. The Civil War was over, as was the long period of Reconstruction of the former insurrectionist states. Congress continued its drift away from the activist, civil rights initiatives that were the hallmark of the Reconstruction era. Instead, the 48th Congress turned its attention to the challenges inherent to the newly industrializing, and contracting, economy.

The 48th Congress continued their predecessors’ strategy of targeting immigrant labor to remedy the nation’s economic woes. In July 1884, Congress enacted the Second Chinese Exclusion Act, which amended its predecessor, adding new restrictions and associated penalties designed to strictly limit Chinese immigration to the United States. The following February, Congress enacted the Alien Contract Labor Act, which limited the immigration of contract laborers to domestic servants and highly skilled laborers in new industries.

Another effort aimed at gaining control of the contracting economy was the enactment of the Bureau of Labor Act, which established the eponymous agency. The Bureau was organized to supply the government with accurate statistics for making evaluations regarding the Nation’s labor force and immigration policy. Congress also replaced military government in Alaska with a civil territorial government and modified tariff rates to encourage American shipbuilding.

House	Senate
Majority Party: Democrats (196 Seats)	Majority Party: Republican (38 seats)
Minority Party: Republican (117 Seats)	Minority Party: Democrats (36 seats)
Other Parties: Readjuster (4 seats); Independent Democrats (3 seats); Independent (2 seats); National (2 seats); Independent Republican (1 seat)	Other Parties: Readjuster (2 seats)
Speaker of the House: John G. Carlisle	President Pro Tempore: George F. Edmunds

Sources:

War or Peace?

Commercial Treaties and Policies

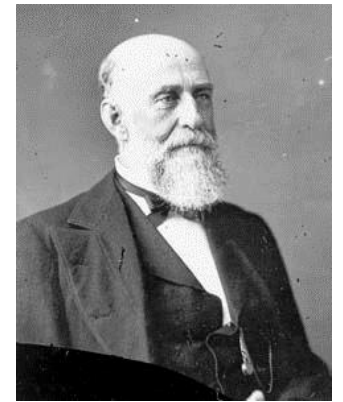
Foreign relations during this period continued to be focused on expanding and maintaining the commercial interests of the United States. From 1883 to 1885, a number of consular and commercial treaties were signed between the U.S. and developing countries in the East and newly organized European states. Border disputes between the U.S. and Mexico were formally investigated by a newly formed border commission between the two countries. At the same time, the Mexican and U.S. governments cooperated during these years to combat the problem of hostile Native American tribes in their respective territories by permitting reciprocal crossings of their shared frontier by the militaries of each country and facilitating coordination between the two forces to subjugate unruly indigenous populations.

The country's most intractable foreign policy challenge came from Spain, which at the time held both Cuba and Puerto Rico as colonial possessions. Spain had restricted trade between its Caribbean possessions and the United States for years, largely due to fears on the part of Spain that robust trade relations might eventually lead to U.S. annexation of Cuba and Puerto Rico, which fears were not entirely unfounded. Furthermore, the cycle of unrest and border disputes that followed the independence of Spain's former South American colonies led to Spanish interference between the newly independent states, especially Chile, and their North American trading partners.

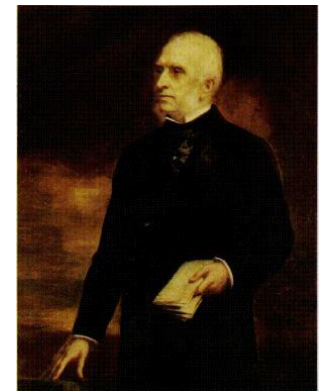
In his address before the first session of the 48th Congress, President Arthur lamented that requests for Spain to pay claims of U.S. citizens against the Spanish government had been repeatedly obstructed. But in something of a reversal the following year, Arthur explained that efforts to establish normalized trade relations between the U.S. and the Spanish Caribbean colonies warranted a postponement of the prosecution of these claims. Moreover, Arthur described his administration's efforts to stymie and prosecute those fomenting Cuban agitation against the Spanish government from U.S. territory.

Entering the second session of the 48th Congress, the U.S. continued to maintain amicable relations with foreign powers, despite troubles caused by colonization efforts put forth by European powers in East Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa. During this time, France gifted the Statue of Liberty to the U.S. as a show of friendship between the two countries. A treaty of commercial reciprocity was completed between the U.S. and Mexico, and, most notably, between the U.S. and Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan treaty authorized the U.S. to construct a railway, telegraph line, and canal across Nicaraguan territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Apache Wars



President Pro Tempore
George F. Edmunds



Speaker of the House
Robert Charles Winthrop

When the United States formally gained control of the former Mexican territories in California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, it also inherited one of Mexico's more intractable problems in the region: the various Apache tribes. As the U.S. took control of the territory, the Federal government established forts throughout the territory to aid in pacification of the tribes and established reservations, to which many of the Apache groups were reluctant to relocate. Of the various Apache bands, the Chiricahua created the most trouble for Mexico and this continued under U.S. jurisdiction. In 1874, after several decades of war, the Chiricahua chief Cochise agreed to make peace with Federal government and relocate his band to a reservation in the Chiricahua mountains. However, shortly after making this move, Cochise died, and the Federal government reversed its policy and now demanded the Chiricahua Apache relocate to the San Carlos reservation. While some complied, half of the band, led by Geronimo, resisted the move and instead escaped to Mexico, where he was captured and brought to the San Carlos reservation, only to escape to Mexico again in 1881. In 1883, General George Crook was installed as head of the New Mexico and Arizona reservations. Together with some 200 Apache, Crook traveled to Mexico and located Geronimo's camp and persuaded him and his group to return to the San Carlos reservation. Geronimo would escape to Mexico again in 1885, before finally being pacified in 1887, thereby bringing the Apache Wars to an end.

Sources:

Arthur, Chester A. [*Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, transmitted to Congress, with the annual message of the president, December 4, 1883. Preceded by a list of papers and followed by an index of persons and subjects*](#), House. Dec. 3, 1883, 48th Congress, 1st Session. H.exdoc.1/1 (Pr21.1:883) ProQuest Congressional, 2181 H.exdoc.1/1

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Folger, Charles J. [*Trade between Mexico and the United States. Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, in reply to the resolution of the House of Representatives passed January 31, 1884, information in regard to the trade between the United States and Mexico, and to the traffic over the railroads connecting the two countries*](#), Committee on Commerce. House, Feb. 7, 1884, 48th Congress, 1st Session. H.exdoc.86 (T37.2:M57) ProQuest Congressional, 2200 H.exdoc.86

Economic Trends and Conditions

The 48th Congress saw the worst of the 1882-1885 Depression. Later known as the third longest economic contraction in U.S. history, the Depression was precipitated by a significant drop in iron and steel prices when the boom in railroad construction of the preceding decades declined. The decline in railroad construction was rooted in a downturn in the agricultural sector, which in turn led to railroad companies suffering sharp reductions in

revenue. Railroad operators moved to rebalance their books by lowering construction costs. The results proved to have significant impact on ancillary industries, especially the steel and iron industry, and labor, which saw an increase in unemployment exacerbated by an influx of cheap foreign laborers brought in by contractors.

The Depression climaxed with the Panic of 1884, in which New York City national banks halted investments after gold reserves in Europe were depleted and the New York Clearing House was forced to bail-out banks at risk of failure. Thousands of small firms failed during the crisis. In response to the Panic, Congress created a special committee to examine the national banks in New York and the crisis's origins.

In addition to the pressures wrought by the Panic of 1884 and subsequent economic depression, the rapid industrialization of the country and its attendant mass demographic shifts created anxiety about the future of displaced populations. Here, too, economic and demographic changes and social disruption contributed to the growing suspicion aimed at the increasing flow of economic migrants entering the country. This suspicion translated to further Federal legislation aimed at stemming the flow of migrant workers from China and other locales.

The Second Chinese Exclusion Act of July 5, 1884, strengthened the restrictions against Chinese migrants entering the country, first by placing tighter controls on who will be considered a "merchant" under the auspices of the Act and tightening the rules for admitting non-laboring "visitors" from China. The Act further stipulated that the restrictions of the Exclusion Acts applied to Chinese immigrants, whether or not they originated from China proper. Then, in February 1885, the Congress enacted the Contract Labor Act. This latter law prohibited the importation of any foreign contract laborers.

Sources:

Arthur, Chester A. [*Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, transmitted to Congress, with the annual message of the president, December 4, 1883. Preceded by a list of papers and followed by an index of persons and subjects*](#), House. Dec. 3, 1883, 48th Congress, 1st Session. H.exdoc.1/1 (Pr21.1:883) ProQuest Congressional, 2181 H.exdoc.1/1

Arthur, Chester A. [*Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, transmitted to Congress, with the annual message of the President*](#). House, Dec. 1, 1884, 48th Congress, 2nd Session. H.exdoc.1/1 (Pr21.1:884) ProQuest Congressional, 2276 H.exdoc.1/1

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Pace v. Alabama, affirmed Alabama's anti-miscegenation statute banning interracial marriage and interracial sex was not a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, 106 U.S. 583 (1883)

The Civil Rights Cases (United States v. Stanley, United States v. Ryan, United States v. Nichols, United States v. Singleton, and Robinson v. Memphis & Charleston Railroad), ruled that the Civil Right Act of 1875 was unconstitutional, because Congress did not have constitutional authority to regulate the conduct of private individuals and businesses. The Court held

the law could only prohibit the denial of equal protection by states, 109 U.S. 3 (1883)

Hurtado v. California, concluded that a provision of the California State Constitution that authorized prosecution for felonies by information and not strictly by indictment by grand jury does not violate the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution, despite the fifth amendment's requirement of grand jury indictment for Federal felonies, 110 U.S. 516 (1884)

Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co. v. Sarony, upheld the power of Congress to extend copyright protection to photography, 111 U.S. 53 (1884)

Elk v. Wilkins, held that Native Americans, despite being born on American soil, were not eligible for citizenship because they held allegiance to a government (their tribe) other than the United States, 112 U.S. 94 (1884)

Sources:

Costello. George A. and Johnny H. Killian. [*Constitution of the United States of America. Analysis and Interpretation*](#). Senate, Jan. 1, 1996. 103rd Congress, 1st Session, S. Doc. 103-6 (Y1.1/3:103-6). ProQuest Congressional, 14152 S.doc.6

1883 Events

- **Jan. 4:** *Life* magazine is founded in New York City
- **Jan. 19:** First standardized incandescent electric lighting system employing overhead wires begins service in Roselle, New Jersey; it was installed by Thomas Edison
- **Feb. 13:** German composer Richard Wagner dies of a heart attack in Venice, Italy
- **Feb. 16:** The first number of the *Ladies' Home Journal* is published
- **Feb. 23:** Alabama becomes the first U.S. state to enact an antitrust law
- **Mar. 14:** German communist economist and philosopher Karl Marx dies
- **Mar. 20:** [Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property is signed, becoming one of the first treaties to protect intellectual property; it is still in force today](#)
- **May 19:** Buffalo Bill's Wild West show opens in Omaha, Nebraska
- **May 24:** [Brooklyn Bridge is opened to traffic in New York after 13 years of construction](#)
- **Aug. 21:** A tornado strikes Rochester, Minnesota, leading to the creation of the Mayo Clinic when founder William Worrall Mayo and his sons set up a make-shift hospital to treat the injured
- **Aug. 26-28:** [Krakatoa volcano in Indonesia erupts at 10:02 AM local time; 163 villages are destroyed, 36,380 killed, and the released sulfur dioxide creates chaotic weather patterns for the next five years](#)
- **Oct. 4:** Orient Express departs on its first official journey from Paris to Istanbul

- **Oct. 11:** General Standard Time Convention of 1883 is adopted by U.S. and Canadian railroads, creating the U.S. standard time system; it is implemented on November 18
- **Oct. 15:** Supreme Court declares Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional
- **Nov. 3:** Self-described "Black Bart the Poet" makes his last stagecoach robbery, but leaves a handkerchief with a laundry mark that eventually leads to his capture
- **Nov. 3:** Supreme Court rules that Native Americans are not U.S. Citizens

1884 Events

- **Feb. 23:** *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, the first fascicle of what will become *The Oxford English Dictionary*, is published in England
- **May 8:** Susan B. Anthony addresses U.S. House Judiciary Committee arguing for women's suffrage
- **May 1:** [The eight-hour workday is first proclaimed by the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions in the U.S.](#)
- **July 3:** Dow Jones Transportation Average, consisting of eleven transportation-related companies: nine railroads and two non-rail companies (Western Union and Pacific Mail), is created; the index is the oldest stock index still in use
- **July 4:** Statue of Liberty presented to the U.S. in Paris
- **July 5:** 2nd Chinese Exclusion Act passed by Congress
- **Aug. 10:** An earthquake, magnitude 5.5 (intensity VII), occurs off the northeast Atlantic coast of the U.S.; the area affected extends from central Virginia to southern Maine and west as far as Cleveland, Ohio
- **Sept. 15:** The use of local anesthesia by Karl Koller is made public at a medical congress in Heidelberg, Germany
- **Oct. 22:** [International Meridian Conference in Washington, D.C. fixes the Greenwich meridian as the world's prime meridian](#)
- **Nov. 2:** Timișoara is the first town of Europe with streets illuminated by electric light
- **Dec. 6:** [The Washington Monument is completed in Washington, D.C., becoming the tallest structure in the world to date](#)
- **Dec. 10:** *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain published in London (Published in the U.S. in Feb. 1885)

Sources:

Cleveland, Grover. [International Meridian Conference. Message from the President of the United States \[...\] recommending the government \[...\] to approve the resolutions of the International Meridian Conference \[...\]](#). Committee on Foreign Affairs, House. Jan. 9, 1888. 50th Congress, 1st Session, H.exdoc.61. ProQuest Congressional, 2557 H.exdoc.61

Committee on Education and Labor. [Relations Between Labor and Capital. Vol. 1: Testimony](#). Senate, Aug. 6-8, 13-18, 20-25, 27-30, Sept. 3-7, 1883. 47th Congress, 2nd Session, S28-0 (Y4.Ed8/3:L11/1). ProQuest Congressional, HRG-1883-EDS-0001

Corcoran, W.W.. [Letter from William W. Corcoran, Chairman of the Joint Commission for the Completion of the Washington Monument, transmitting the Annual Report of that commission.](#)

Committee on the Library. House, Dec. 18, 1884, 48th Congress, 2nd Session. H.misdoc.8. ProQuest Congressional, 2310 H.misdoc.8

Department of Docks, New York City. ['\[Manhattan Waterfront, Beckman Street to Brooklyn Bridge Pier, New York\]' in Annual Report of the National Board of Health, 1879](#), House. Jan. 10, 1880, 46th Congress, 2nd Session. H.exdoc.10. ProQuest Congressional, 1919 H.exdoc.10, map 13

[\[International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.\] Message from the President](#). Senate, Feb. 2, 1885. 48th Congress, 2nd Session, Exec.Doc.M, 48-2. ProQuest Congressional, SED-48-2-14

['\[Kratotoa Island, before and after eruption.\]' in Report of the Secretary of the Navy \[...\] at the beginning of the second session of the Forty-eighth Congress](#), House. Dec. 1, 1884, 48th Congress, 2nd Session. H.exdoc.1/10. ProQuest Congressional, 2284 H.exdoc.1/10, map 6

Major Acts

Bureau of Labor Act. Established a Bureau of Labor in the Department of the Interior to collect statistics on labor in the United States, its relation to capital, the hours of labor, and the earnings of laboring men and women, and the means of promoting their material, intellectual, and social prosperity. The Bureau became part of the Department of Labor in 1913. Approved June 27, 1884. ([23 Stat. 60, Chap. 127](#))

Second Chinese Exclusion Act. Amended the First Chinese Exclusion Act, limiting the meaning of the word "merchant," and making additional requirements of identification for "visitors." Placed stringent penalties on the master of any vessel attempting to land or permitting the landing of Chinese laborers. The law did not apply to those Chinese who were in the United States on or before November 17, 1880, or who were admitted on a certificate from the Chinese Government which had been endorsed by American diplomatic representatives abroad. Approved July 5, 1884. ([23 Stat. 115, Chap. 220](#))

Alien Contract Labor Act. Prohibited the immigration of contract laborers into the United States except for domestic servants or skilled labor not otherwise obtainable for new industries. Approved Feb. 26, 1885. ([23 Stat. 332, Chap. 164](#))

Source:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#). Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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