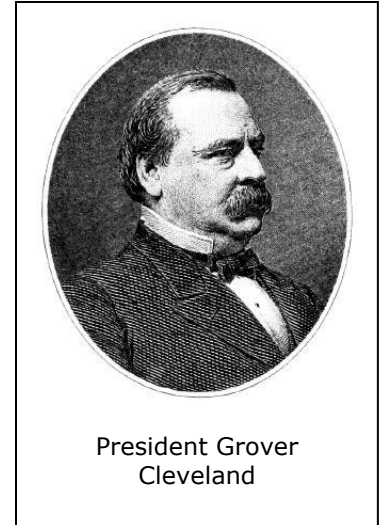


Fiftieth Congress

Dec. 2, 1887-Mar. 3, 1889

First Administration of Grover Cleveland

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Historical Background

On January 20, 1887, during the waning days of the 49th Congress, the Senate approved a lease on Pearl Harbor in the Kingdom of Hawaii to develop a major naval base for the Pacific Fleet. The lease of Pearl Harbor came on the heels of a period of rapid development in the island kingdom following the approval of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875 with the United States. That rapid development would contribute to a crisis that developed in the kingdom in the months following the Senate’s approval of the naval base at Pearl Harbor. On June 30, 1887 members of the Reform Party of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the Honolulu Rifles, a militia composed of white military veterans settled in Hawaii, met and demanded that King Kalākaua dismiss his cabinet. The move was sparked by concern over the kingdom’s growing debt and a series of controversial moves initiated by the King at the behest of Walter M. Gibson, a politician from the King’s party who had allied himself with the King and joined his cabinet. King Kalākaua sought counsel from the representatives of several foreign governments, including U.S. Minister to Hawaii George W. Merrill, who suggested that the King comply with the demands of the insurgent group. The insurgent politicians, led by Sanford B. Dole and Peter Cushman Jones, who was president of a major sugarcane plantation in Hawaii, drafted a new constitution, stripping the King of much of his authority, and demanded the King sign it. The Bayonet Constitution, so called due to the mercenary imposition of the document on the King, signaled the beginning of the end for the independent Kingdom of Hawaii and ushered in the series of events that would culminate on Hawaii’s accession to statehood.

The final two years of President Grover Cleveland’s first administration saw Congress and the White House working to continue reforming the Federal government to maximize its effectiveness in meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The President had positioned himself as a reformer during the 1884 election and throughout his first term he worked to

House	Senate
Majority Party: Democrat (182 seats)	Majority Party: Republican (39 seats)
Minority Party: Republican (141 seats)	Minority Party: Democrat (37 seats)
Other Parties: Independent Republicans (2 seats); Labors (2 seats); Independent (1 seat); National (1 seat)	Other Parties: None
Speaker of the House: John Griffin Carlisle	President Pro Tempore: John J. Ingalls

maximize the impact of the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act by increasing the number of merit-based civil service positions in the Federal bureaucracy. The President also joined those concerned about the impact of rapid industrialization on the country, including the growing power of industrial concerns and the appearance of trusts and other monopolistic business practices. The railroad industry, which expanded at a dizzying rate following the Civil War, was especially prone to abuses, taking a number of forms, and proving too difficult for state regulators to control. The Interstate Commerce Act was passed during the 49th Congress to address some the abuses of the railroad industry and to create an independent Federal regulatory body, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), empowered to investigate and prosecute abuses. The ICC carried out its investigatory mission during the 50th Congress, though the problems with the railroads would need stronger action to get under control. To complement the work of the ICC and to address the growing labor tensions in the railroad industry, Congress enacted the Boards of Arbitration Act. The Act, approved in October 1888, provided for voluntary arbitration in railroad labor conflicts and empowered the President to name an investigatory committee with power to act as a board of conciliation.

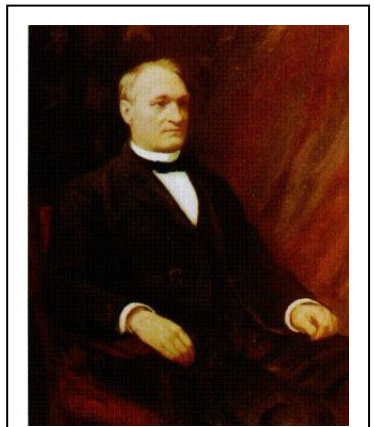
The Haymarket Affair of May 1886, in which a peaceful gathering of workers lobbying for an 8-hour workday turned bloody, convinced many policymakers that it was past time to address the manifold issues pertaining to labor in industrialized economies. In June 1888, Congress enacted the Department of Labor Act. The Act reformed the National Bureau of Labor, which was created within the Department of the Interior in 1884, to the independent Department of Labor, charged with compiling data and serving as an information clearinghouse for issues relating to labor and its relation to capital.

In February 1889, near the close of President Grover Cleveland's first Administration, Congress raised the Department of Agriculture to Cabinet status. Its establishment culminated a decade-and-a-half popular movement supported by the National Grange, the new farmer alliances, and other farm groups for a Department in Washington to represent their interests and clothed the agricultural community with the same dignity and power of other executive departments.

President Grover Cleveland was able to easily secure the Democratic Party nomination during the party's 1888 convention. Factions that had developed over the issues of trade, civil service reform, organized labor activism, and the growth of trusts and monopolies complicated the typical partisan divisions among the electorate. Cleveland's opposition to trade tariffs, which he based on his contention that tariffs disproportionately impact the poor, put him against most Republican elected officials, who tended to favor protectionist trade policies. However, his principled commitment to civil service reform lent him the support of the Mugwumps in the Republican Party. When the votes were tallied, Cleveland had won the popular vote with a plurality of the ballots cast, however, it wasn't enough to prevail in the electoral vote tally, which was won by the Republican candidate, former Senator from Indiana Benjamin Harrison. Despite his defeat, Cleveland



President Pro Tempore
John J. Ingalls



Speaker of the House
John Griffin Carlisle

would again be nominated by the Democratic Party in 1892 and win a second, non-consecutive term as President, the only person to do so in U.S. history.

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

War or Peace?

In 1888 President Cleveland stated that the United States was enjoying a state of “domestic tranquility and [was] at peace with all nations.” He also claimed that all “international questions which still await settlement are all reasonable within the domain of amicable negotiation.” Opposed to any kind of expansionist or imperialistic policy, President Cleveland insisted upon grounding his foreign policy initiatives in economic concerns. One such matter concerned a long-running dispute with Great Britain over fishing rights in waters at the U.S.-Canada border. President Cleveland tasked Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard with negotiating a treaty with the British. A Commission was convened in Washington in June 1887 and by the following February the Bayard-Chamberlain Treaty was complete. Mindful that entrenched interests in Congress could prevent the treaty from gaining Senate approval, the negotiators built a two-year working agreement into the treaty, which would allow fisherman to work unmolested in the event the treaty were rejected, which it was, by a vote of 27-30.

Samoa Crisis

A more serious crisis emerged in the South Pacific when the German Navy, under Chancellor Otto von Bismarck attempted to increase its sphere of influence in Samoa by supporting the case of a pretender to the Samoan throne called Tamasese Titimaea after the reigning king, Malietoa Laupepa, was usurped and exiled. At the time, Samoa had treaty arrangements with Germany, Great Britain and the United States, guaranteeing each the right to trade and establish naval bases in the island kingdom. President Cleveland and his British counterparts were wary of German moves that threatened Samoan sovereignty. Secretary of State Bayard issued a note of protest to Germany and the three governments agreed to convene talks in Washington in June 1887, though these failed to bear fruit. Samoans, meanwhile, were antipathetic to Tamasese. Another pretender, Mata’afa Iosefo, instigated a rebellion, prompting the Germans to dispatch three warships to Samoa, which prompted the U.S. to deploy three of its own warships in response. In 1889, with war looking increasingly likely, the Germans agreed to convene another conference. However, on March 15, 1889, just two weeks later, a powerful cyclone struck Samoa, sinking all six German and U.S. warships docked there and effectively relieving much of the pressure. The three naval powers agreed to a tripartite protectorate of Samoa and returned Malietoa Laupepa to the throne.

Kingdom of Hawaii and the 'Bayonet Constitution'

In Hawaii, the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875 between the United States and the Kingdom of Hawaii had led to substantial new investment in the island kingdom. The treaty granted free access to U.S. markets for sugar and other Hawaiian exports and in return, the United States was granted the right to build a major naval base Pu'u Loa, renamed Pearl Harbor by the Americans. The immediate impact of the treaty was a boom in the development of new Hawaiian sugar plantations. As the industry grew, so too did the influence of the plantation owners.

In 1878, Walter M. Gibson, who had come to Hawaii 1861 to found a colony for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church), successfully ran for a seat in Hawaii's House of Representatives as a member of the King's Party. Gibson, who had been excommunicated by the Mormon Church in the face of accusations of mismanagement and preaching false doctrine, portrayed himself as a voice for Hawaiians and quickly won the trust of King Kalākaua, who alternately appointed him Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. At Gibson's urging, the King had launched several controversial initiatives, including a failed attempt to form a Polynesian empire.

On the evening of June 30, 1887, a group of politicians from the Reform Party of Hawaii and members of the Honolulu Rifles, a white settler militia, convened a meeting. The group was responding to the kingdom's mounting debt, which they attributed to Kalākaua's profligate spending and the imprudent influence of Walter M. Gibson. The group demanded that Kalākaua dissolve his cabinet. Kalākaua summoned U.S. Minister to Hawaii George W. Merrill for advice. President Cleveland and Secretary of State Bayard, in keeping with the President's general philosophy of foreign affairs, were determined that the policy of the United States should be to protect American lives, property and commercial interests and issued instructions to that effect to Merrill. Merrill thus advised Kalākaua to accede to the demands of the political insurgents. The group, which was led by Peter Cushman Jones, who owned the largest sugar plantation in Hawaii, and Sanford B. Dole, whose cousin James Dole would found the Dole Food Company, drafted a new constitution, of which Kalākaua had no choice but to sign. The Bayonet Constitution, as it was called due to the use of intimidation in extracting the King's signature, removed the King's absolute veto authority, instead allowing for any veto to be overridden by a two-thirds majority in the legislature. Indeed, the new constitution stripped the King of virtually all personal authority and granted the cabinet and the legislature the authority to oversee the King. Hoping to contain the King's profligate spending habits, the document required the King to appoint a Minister of Finance to oversee all government spending and submit annual budgets to the legislature. Perhaps most significantly, the new constitution completely upended democratic rights in Hawaii. Non-Hawaiian Asians were explicitly denied the right to vote, including citizens who'd voted legally under earlier constitutions. Voting rights were restricted to Hawaiian, American, and European men who met new, substantially increased wealth requirements. It also allowed resident aliens who otherwise met the requirements the right to vote for the first time. The events leading to the Bayonet Constitution

marked the beginning of the end of Hawaiian sovereignty as a series of rebellions over the intervening years would prompt U.S. intervention, culminating in Hawaii's accession to statehood.

Apache Skirmishes and Removal

After the final capture of the Chiricahua Apache leader Geronimo in Mexico in 1886, Geronimo and the other captured Apaches were moved to Fort Pickens in Florida and hundreds of Apache were removed from their reservation in Arizona first to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, where as many as a third quickly succumbed to tuberculosis, before being relocated en masse to the Mt. Vernon Barracks in Alabama due to their "savage and cruel instincts." Another quarter of the Apaches died of tuberculosis in Alabama. There would be pockets of resistance to U.S. authority among the remaining Apaches in the years immediately following Geronimo's ultimate capture, but the long conflict was effectively over. The remaining Apache, including Geronimo, who would play out his final years as a popular attraction at fairs and carnivals, were ultimately resettled in Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where each was given a small tract of land.

Source:

Cleveland, Grover. [*State of the Union address*](#). House, Dec. 3, 1888. 50th Congress, 2nd Session, H.exdoc.1/1 (Pr22.1:888). ProQuest Congressional, 2626 H.exdoc.1/1

Economic Trends and Conditions

Throughout the 50th Congress President Cleveland was unremitting in his push for tariff reform after the government continued to run on a surplus due to high tariffs. In his 1887 State of the Union address he argued that "our institutions guarantees to every citizen the full enjoyment of all the fruits of his industry and enterprise, with only such deduction as may be his share toward the careful and economical maintenance of the Government which protects him, it is plain that the exaction of more than this is indefensible extortion and culpable betrayal of American fairness and justice." Many members of the Republican Party, however, believed that higher tariffs were necessary in order to protect American industries. 1887 also saw the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 which sought to further regulate the railroads and ensure fair rates.

The following year, President Cleveland commented in his State of the Union address on the growing disparity between the "employers and the employed" due to the "existence of trusts, combinations and monopolies." He argued that "corporations, which should be the carefully-restrained creatures of the law and the servants of the people, are fast becoming the people's masters." He also spoke against the passage of private pension bills as unjust discrimination and vetoed many throughout the 50th Congress. In 1887 the annual average income for a non-farm worker was at \$462 and by 1888 this had risen to roughly \$466.

The contemporary debates surrounding the major issues arising from the explosion of industrialization in the years following the Civil War also included discussions of the impact on immigration to the economic well-being of Americans. Though not infected with the more virulent strains of nativism that often accompanied debates about immigration, President Cleveland considered that decisions on immigration should take into account the likelihood that immigrants from any given nationality would successfully integrate into American life. In California, the gold rush of the 1840's-1850's and the development of the railroads had attracted large numbers of immigrant Chinese laborers. As the end of the Civil War and economic downturn led to changes in the California labor market there was growing resentment of the presence of Chinese workers. In 1882 Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited new Chinese immigration for a period of ten years. However, as abuses against Chinese immigrants in California continued, the President despaired of the ability of Chinese immigrants to successfully assimilate in the face of racist sentiments and he dispatched Secretary of State Bayard to negotiate an extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The resultant Bayard-Zhang Treaty called for China to restrict emigration to the United States. However, popular outcry in China and among Chinese immigrants in the U.S. led the Chinese government to withdraw from the treaty. The President and the Congress were then determined to act unilaterally and enacted the Scott Act, which prohibited Chinese immigrants who had returned to China or were otherwise abroad from returning to the United States.

Sources:

Cleveland, Grover. [*Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, for the Year 1887*](#). House, Dec. 6, 1887. 50th Congress, 1st Session, H.exdoc.1/1 (Pr22.1.887). ProQuest Congressional, 2532 H.exdoc.1/1

Cleveland, Grover. [*State of the Union address*](#). House, Dec. 3, 1888. 50th Congress, 2nd Session, H.exdoc.1/1 (Pr22.1:888). ProQuest Congressional, 2626 H.exdoc.1/1

Morton, Rogers Clark Ballard. [*House Documents, Vol. 22-2, Historical Statistics of U.S. Parts 1 and 2, Colonial Times to 1970*](#). Department of Commerce, Jan. 1, 1976. 93rd Congress, 1st Session, H.Doc. 93-78. ProQuest Congressional, 13051-2 H.doc.78

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Runkle v. U.S., holding that the president cannot delegate the power vested in him to approve the proceedings and sentence of a court-martial because he is the only person bestowed with the judicial power of making final determination, 122 U.S. 543 (1887)

Kidd v. Pearson, erected a distinction between manufacture and commerce and held that an Iowa law prohibiting the manufacture of alcohol was constitutional as it did not conflict with the power of Congress to regulate interstate commerce, 128 U.S. 1 (1888)

The Telephone Cases (*Dolbear v. American Bell Telephone Company*; *Molecular Telephone Company v. American Bell Telephone Company*; *American Bell*

Telephone Company v. Molecular Telephone Company; Clay Commercial Telephone Company v. American Bell Telephone Company; People's Telephone Company v. American Bell Telephone Company; Overland Telephone Company v. American Bell Telephone Company - a series of cases collectively known as The Telephone Cases), upholding the priority of the patents belonging to Alexander Graham Bell, 126 U.S. 1 (1888)

Source:

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. ProQuest Congressional, 14152 S.doc.6

1887 Events

- **Jan. 20:** U.S. Senate authorizes lease of Pearl Harbor as a naval base
- **Jan. 28:** [Construction of the Eiffel Tower begins in Paris, France](#)
- **Feb. 2:** [First Groundhog Day is observed in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania](#)
- **Feb. 4:** [The Interstate Commerce Act is signed into law, regulating the railroad industry](#)
- **Feb. 8:** The Dawes Act authorizes surveying of Native American tribal land and divides it into allotments for individuals
- **Mar. 3:** Anne Sullivan begins teaching Helen Keller
- **Mar. 4:** [Gottlieb Daimler unveils his first automobile](#)
- **Apr. 21:** The Schnaebelen incident, which was incited by the arrest by German secret police of a French police inspector under obscure circumstances, occurs on the French and German border nearly leading to war
- **June 21:** British Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebration takes place, marking the 50th year of her reign
- **July 6:** [King Kalākaua is forced to sign the 1887 Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawaii, known as the 'Bayonet Constitution,' creating a constitutional monarchy](#)
- **Aug.:** National Institute of Health is founded in Staten Island, New York, as the Laboratory of Hygiene
- **Nov.:** Sherlock Holmes makes his first appearance in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'A Study in Scarlet'
- **Nov. 8:** Emile Berliner is granted a patent for his gramophone
- **Nov. 11:** August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Michael Schwab, and Samuel Fielden are hanged for inciting riot and murder in the Haymarket Affair
- **Nov. 13:** *Bloody Sunday* - London Police clash with radical and Irish nationalist protesters in what would be known as Bloody Sunday

1888 Events

- **Jan. 13:** The National Geographic Society is founded in D.C.
- **Mar. 11:** Along the East Coast of the United States, the 'Great Blizzard of 1888' begins, resulting in over 400 deaths

- **May 1:** [Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is established in Montana Territory](#)
- **June 3:** The Kingdom of Sedang is formed in modern-day Vietnam
- **June 29:** Handel's *Israel in Egypt* is recorded onto wax cylinder at The Crystal Palace in London
- **Aug. 31-Nov. 9:** The mutilated bodies of Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Jane Kelly are found in the impoverished Whitechapel district of London during a series of gruesome murders considered to be the work a single serial killer named "Jack the Ripper" by the media
- **Sept. 4:** George Eastman registers the trademark Kodak, and receives a patent for his camera which uses roll film
- **Oct. 9:** [Washington Monument officially opens to the general public in Washington, D.C.](#)
- **Nov. 6:** Grover Cleveland wins the popular vote, but loses the Electoral College vote to Benjamin Harrison
- **Dec. 23:** Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh infamously cuts off the lower part of his own left ear in a brothel

Sources:

Cleveland, Grover and John Sherman. [\[Report of Joint Commission for completion of Washington Monument on memorial blocks, etc.\]](#). Committee on Appropriations. Senate, June 23, 1888. 50th Congress, 1st Session, S.misdoc.142. ProQuest Congressional, 2517 S.misdoc.142

Committee on Foreign Relations. Senate. [Hawaiian Islands](#). Senate, Dec. 27, 1893; Jan. 2-4, 9-11, 13, 15, 17, 19-20, 22, 25-26, 29-31, Feb. 5, 7-8, 13, 1894. 53rd Congress, 2nd Session, SFO 53-A-1. ProQuest Congressional, HRG-1893-FOR-0001

[Decisions and proceedings of Interstate Commerce Commission under Interstate Commerce Act of Feb. 4, 1887, together with all decisions of courts relating to interstate commerce, with notes, May 1887 to June 1888](#). Interstate Commerce Commission, Jan. 1, 1887. Interstate Commerce Reports, Vol. I (IC1.6/1:1/[2]). ProQuest Congressional, IC106a-2.1

'General plan of the Eiffel Tower' in [Reports of the United States commissioners to the Universal Exposition of 1889 at Paris. Published under direction of the Secretary of State by authority of Congress. Paris](#). Universal Exposition, 1889. Department of State, June 1, 1890. 51st Congress, 1st Session, H.exdoc.410 (S6.11:R29/3). ProQuest Congressional, 2755 H.exdoc.410, map 9

["Groundhog Day."](#) Congressional Record, 100th Congress, 1st Session (Feb. 2, 1987) Vol. 133, p. 2494. ProQuest Congressional, CR-1987-0202

Smith, Hoke. [Letter from the Secretary of the Interior. Transmitting an Agreement Made and Concluded Oct. 9, 1895, with the Indians of the Fort Belknap Reservation, in Montana \[...\]](#). Committee on Indian Affairs. Senate, Feb. 12, 1896. 54th Congress, 1st Session, S.doc.117. ProQuest Congressional, 3350 S.doc.117

[Special consular reports. Vehicle industry in Europe](#). Bureau of Foreign Commerce, Department of State, Jan. 1, 1900. 56th Congress, 1st Session, H.doc.741/2 (S4.9:21). ProQuest Congressional, 3950 H.doc.741/2

Major Acts

Department of Labor Act. Transformed the National Bureau of Labor (created in 1884 as part of the Department of Interior) into an independent

agency, but without Cabinet rank (which was achieved in 1913). Approved June 13, 1888. ([25 Stat. 182, Chap. 389](#))

Boards of Arbitration Act. Provided for voluntary arbitration in railroad labor conflicts and empowered the President to name an investigatory committee with power to act as a board of conciliation. Approved Oct. 1, 1888. ([25 Stat. 501, Chap. 1063](#))

Department of Agriculture Act. Raised the Commission on Agriculture to Cabinet level under the supervision and control of a Secretary of Agriculture who was to be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Approved Feb. 9, 1889. ([25 Stat. 659, Chap. 122](#))

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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