

start

July 1, 1874

Four-year-old Charley Ross is taken from his front yard, claiming his place in history as the first ransom kidnapping. His father, Christian Ross, follows the police advice to not pay ransom. Eventually the supposed kidnappers are caught and killed in the capture, but the "lost boy" is never found.

1917–1918

In the buildup to WWI, the U.S. government launches a publicity machine which, through *Red, white, and blue* pamphlets and Four Minute Men speeches at movie intermissions, will ultimately bring anti-German (the "blond beast") sentiment into every American community. During WWI, sauerkraut's dubbed "liberty cabbage," and hamburgers "liberty sandwich." [Figure A]

1917

At the age of 18, Bruno Richard Hauptmann, a carpenter's apprentice in Kamenz, is drafted into the German army to serve as a machine gunner near Verdun, where he's wounded in the head by flying shrapnel.

November 26, 1923

On his third attempt, Bruno Richard Hauptmann successfully makes it to the U.S. by hiding in a coal bunker on the *SS George Washington*. He finds a job washing dishes and spends his evenings studying English. He reads the *New York Times* every day.

May 21, 1924

While the *New York Times* and the *Ladies' Home Journal* run articles commemorating fifty years since the disappearance of "Lost Boy" Charley Ross, Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold kidnap 14-year-old Bobby Franks from an elite schoolyard in Chicago. Bobby's body is found before his father even had a chance to respond to the ransom. [Figure B]

November 11, 1925

Richard Hauptmann marries Anna Schoeffler, a recently immigrated maid. Richard works as a carpenter and Anna in a bakery. [Figure C]

May 21, 1927

Charles Lindbergh, racing several teams of pilots to collect a prize for a New York-to-Paris flight, makes the first solo nonstop crossing of the Atlantic, taking about 34 hours and followed anxiously by people in America and Europe waiting by their radios. [Figures D & E]

December, 1927

Lindbergh meets Anne Morrow, still in college, on a Latin-American goodwill tour, through her banker-diplomat father. The Morrows let the papers believe he's after their older daughter Elisabeth. [Figure F]

January 13, 1928

Frances St. John Smith, a friend of Anne Morrow's at Smith College, disappears. Although many of Frances' acquaintances believe she committed suicide, the family receives many ransom requests, and tries to pay at least one with no success. Although a body matched by dental records is found in the river three months later, cause of death is never determined, and the case continues to receive publicity and speculation.

April 24, 1929

Constance, the youngest of the three Morrow sisters—who previously had stayed out of the public eye—receives an anonymous penciled letter at Milton Academy asking for \$50,000 and not to tell anyone or she would suffer the same fate as Frances St. John Smith and Alice Corbett, another Smith disappearance.

"Fame is a kind of death."

Anne Morrow Lindbergh



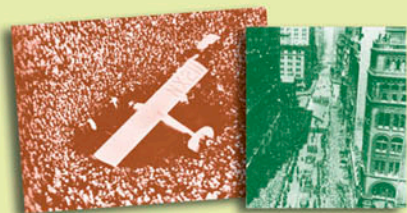
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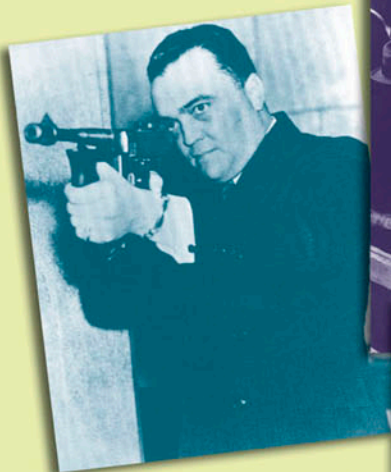
The relentless press earns Lindy's antipathy by storming the landing strips, once causing him to crash



The talkies of the twenties develop into lavish musicals in the Depression, and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers (above left) dance their way to king and queen. Shirley Temple (above right) exemplifies the 1930s' lionization of children, who, thanks to New Deal reform, get labor law protection (above).



As a hero (above left), Lindbergh becomes public property. His shirts at the laundry are kept as souvenirs. In St. Louis, women fight over a corncob he'd chewed. In Little Falls, MN, the doorknobs are torn off his childhood home. Joseph J. Corn calls "air-mindedness" a secular religion, and New York throws Lindy its biggest tickertape parade ever (above right).



J. Edgar Hoover (above) leads the FBI against Public Enemies from 1924–1972. A nation beset by world wars and economic strife idolize gangsters while proclaiming a crisis of civilization.



G



I



H



J

"The Eaglet" (son of the "Lone Eagle") on his first birthday.

Other Events of the 1930s— 1930

Gandhi's salt march.
Pluto discovered.
Sliced bread available.
Stalin begins collectivizing agriculture.
By November, 6000 people selling apples on streets of NY alone.

1931

Al Capone imprisoned for tax evasion.
Empire State Building completed.
Scottsboro Boys accused of rape (nine black youths are arrested for the suspected rape of two white girls. The last defendant would not be released until 1950.)
"Star-Spangled Banner" becomes official U.S. anthem.

1932

Air conditioning invented.
Amelia Earhart first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic.
Scientists split the atom.
Zippo lighters introduced.
The "Bonus Army" of WWI vets wanting their bonuses sieges D.C., and President Hoover, fearing a local version of the Russian Revolution, calls in the army.

May 26, 1929

Betty Morrow invites friends over for lunch, surprising them with the secret wedding of Anne Morrow to Lindbergh.

October 29, 1929

The stockmarket crash of Black Tuesday heralds the onset of the Great Depression. While some smalltime investors like Hauptmann find success in playing the cheapened stocks, by 1932 nearly one-third of the workforce is unemployed, and banks close nearly 1000 homes a day. [Figure G]

January, 1930

Lindbergh's war with the press only incites them further. He and Anne wear disguises to go out, but still stop Will Rogers' show as well as stopping traffic at the Lincoln tunnel as drivers abandon cars for an autograph. [Figure H]

March, 1930

Anne, now 6 months into her secret pregnancy, earns a glider's license. Charles has begun studying experimental surgery with Dr. Alexis Carrel at the Rockefeller Institute. The French Nobel prizewinner's writings combine mysticism and Social Darwinism.

April 20, 1930

Anne and Charles break a transcontinental speed record. [Figure I]

June 22, 1930

When Charles Lindbergh, Jr. is born, Lindbergh circumvents a media blitz by sending his mother a telegram with a prearranged message: "Advise purchasing property...Reuben Lloyd." Protectiveness of information about the baby leads to speculation about his health. [Figure J]

October, 1930

The Lindberghs purchase a house in the remote Sourland Mountain region of New Jersey. During renovation they stay in a temporary home, where they experience peeping toms and people demanding to inspect the baby.

October 5, 1931

The Lindberghs make the flight over Canada and Alaska, Japan and China, which will become the inspiration for Anne's first book, *North to the Orient*.

1931

The Hauptmanns finally enjoy a deferred honeymoon driving to California. During this trip, the German government defaults on reparation payments, unable to meet the requirements of the Treaty of Versailles, the banking system in central Europe collapses, and Great Britain leaves the gold standard. The NY stock market plummets again. Pro-Nazi groups in the U.S. accuse the House of Morgan (former bank of Anne's recently deceased father) of an anglophile plot to break the German economy.

January, 1932

In deference to Anne's second pregnancy, the Lindberghs divide their time between Next Day Hill (the Morrrows' house in Englewood, NJ) and weekends at the recently completed Highfields near Hopewell.

February 7, 1932

Columnist Walter Winchell reports a tip that Vincent Coll, an underworld king vying for control of Manhattan's organized crime and known for his kidnappings for ransom, would soon be gunned down by hit men from Detroit's Purple Gang. Coll becomes a symptom of gangland's experiments in new business as prohibition winds down, and the continued Depression makes the still prosperous feel even more a target for the "snatch racket." There are kidnapping syndicates in every major city; Chicago reports 400 ransom kidnappings between 1930 and March, 1932.

June 8, 1932

Gaston Means is tried and found guilty for swindling Evelyn McLean.

May 16, 1932

John Hughes Curtis confesses his hoax.

May 12, 1932

Two truck drivers find the remains of a dead baby, about four miles from the Lindbergh house. Betty Gow identifies the remains. The mortician performs the autopsy, since the county physician has arthritis in his hands. Photographers bribe their way in; Lindbergh is told they broke in through a window. After Charles' identification, the body is cremated.

May 9, 1932

Charles goes with Virginia boatbuilder John Hughes Curtis on a boat trip to rendezvous with the kidnapers Curtis claims to know.

April 10, 1932

As the press piece together the secrets, Schwarzkopf issues a statement. Ignoring Lindbergh's plea for silence on the recording of the gold notes, the papers publish the list of serial numbers.

April 5, 1932

Troopers detail an approximate tally of 38,000 letters received by the Lindbergh household.

April 2, 1932

Condon goes as instructed to St. Raymond's Cemetery, where (with Lindbergh nearby) he gives John a box of gold notes, with the numbers recorded. Condon convinces John to take \$50,000 rather than \$70,000, unfortunately withholding larger, easier to trace bills. Condon promises not to open John's note for six hours, but Lindbergh opens it, reading that the baby is on board the "Boad Nelly" between Martha's Vineyard and the Massachusetts mainland. Lindbergh and the coast guard search for the boat, with no luck. [Figure H: One of the traced gold notes.]

March 22, 1932

A self-appointed investigator demands to see the furnace at Highfields to find whether the baby was killed and dumped there by someone in the house.

March 12, 1932

Cab driver Joseph Perrone delivers a note telling Condon to go with the money to a vacant hot-dog stand at the last subway station, where he would find further instructions. At Woodlawn Cemetery, he meets a man who identifies himself as John, a Scandinavian sailor from Boston. John says the baby is on a boat with two nurses. At Condon's insistence, he agrees to send proof. A sleepsuit like Charlie's arrives four days later.

March 11, 1932

Condon receives a phone call from a man with a German accent, with voices in the background, including someone shouting "shut up" in Italian.

Between bouts at Madison Square Garden, the crowd of 15,000 prays for the baby's return.

March 10, 1932

The police find Mrs. Morrow's maid Violet Sharpe to be "high-strung" and vague about the details of her date on March 1 (possibly because of the romantic relationship with the Morrrows' butler). A search of her room yields nothing except a bank book with a high balance. Betty Gow's Norwegian boyfriend, Red Johnson, is also investigated.



June 10, 1932

Told to prepare for a fifth interrogation, Violet Sharpe swallows cyanide chloride (cleaning solvent used for polishing silver), and dies. [Figure I]

June 22, 1932

Congress makes ransom kidnapping across state lines a federal offense, and the new law quickly gains the name the Lindbergh Law.

Late June–early July, 1932

Hauptmann enters into a partnership with Isidor Fisch, investing in Fisch's fur trade and using Fisch's money to invest in the market. Fisch, a gambler with high medical bills, has a reputation for money laundering. [Figure J: Isidor Fisch, right, bound for Germany]

August 16, 1932

Anne gives birth to Jon Lindbergh.

April 5, 1933

FDR orders the switch from gold notes to greenback bills, giving a deadline for the trade-in of any stash of gold notes larger than \$100. [Figure K]

July, 1933

Wiley Post completes the first round-the-world solo flight.

August, 1933

NY Gov. Lehman proposes penalties against private negotiating with kidnapers.

November 26, 1933

Cecile Barr, a cashier at a movie house in Greenwich Village, takes a \$5 gold note, folded eight times, from a man purchasing a 55-cent ticket.

December 2, 1933

Fisch, leaving for Germany, gives Hauptmann several containers to store.

January, 1934

Ma Barker's gang kidnaps Edward Brememer, president of a St. Paul bank and sends a \$200,000 ransom note to his father, brewer Joseph Schmidt.

March 29, 1934

Isidor Fisch dies in Germany of tuberculosis.

August, 1934

The date Hauptmann gives for opening Fisch's box and finding \$15,000. As Fisch owed him \$7000, he begins spending.

September 15, 1934

A gas station attendant on the Upper East side, suspicious of a \$10 gold note for 98-cents' worth of gas, pencils the customer's license number on the margin of the bill. The 1930 blue Dodge is registered to Richard Hauptmann in the Bronx.

September 19, 1934

Police arrest Hauptmann and find a \$20 ransom note on his person. [Figure L]

September 20, 1934

At Hauptmann's refusal to confess, he's charged with extortion. Handwriting analysts compare Hauptmann's writing to the ransom notes. Investigators find \$13,760 in ransom bills in Hauptmann's garage.

September 21, 1934

Hauptmann is beaten by two unidentified police officers. He then asks "If I confessed, would it go easy on me?" Told that that would be Schwarzkopf's decision, Hauptmann replies "I don't trust him," and stops talking.

March 9, 1932

Condon receives a message. Because it has the correct symbol, Lindbergh authorizes him to answer. [Figure G: Condon, far right]

March 8, 1932

Dr. John F. Condon, an eccentric but respected retired teacher, writes a letter in the *Bronx Home News* (where he occasionally publishes poetry and pieces under acronyms like P.A. Triot or J.U. Stice) offering his services as an intermediary.

March 6, 1932

In D.C., Mrs. Evalyn Walsh McLean, owner of the Hope diamond, gives \$100,000 to investigator turned bootlegger Gaston Means, when Means claims connections to the kidnapping ring. She hopes to compensate for the heavily guarded short life of her own "million-dollar baby."

March 5, 1932

Lindbergh and his manager Henry Breckenridge receive letters explaining that because of the publicity, the exchange must be postponed, and more money (\$70,000) will be required—but the baby is "in gut health."

Al Capone, between prisons, issues a statement that he would offer \$10,000 for information that would lead to the rescue of the child and capture of the kidnapers. [Figure F]

March 4, 1932

Having heard nothing from the kidnapers, Lindbergh makes a radio appeal. Although frustrated, Schwarzkopf continues to cede decision-making to Lindbergh.

March 3, 1932

Lloyd's of London offers kidnap insurance.

Lindbergh funds Mickey Rosner, a bootlegger and con man who insists that his contacts could track down the kidnapers. [Figure E: Rosner, center]

Wednesday, March 2, 1932

Shortly after dawn, helpful and curious hundreds troop onto the estate. The phone company installs 20 phone lines to the garage. A local tracker identifies the woman's set of footprints as Anne's, and declares the larger footprints to be caused by two men. Police play out scenarios with a three-piece ladder found near the house. [Figure D]

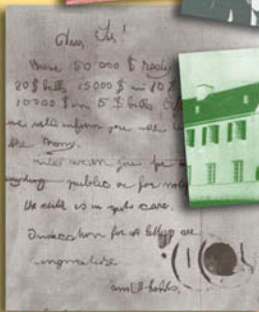
Tuesday, March 1, 1932

Anne calls the baby's nurse Betty Gow to come join them.

At about 8:30 PM Charles arrives home, having forgotten about a fundraiser in NYC. After dinner, Anne and Charles hear a crash, which they assume to be Whateley. Betty checks on the sleeping baby, finds he's missing. Assuming one of Charles' practical jokes, she gets Anne. Charles calls police. By 10:50 major roads are blocked. Police, led by Col. Norman Schwarzkopf, find ladder, chisel, and two sets of footprints. By the window they find a \$50,000 ransom note with the symbol of two interlocking blue circles, shaded red where they overlap, perforated by three square holes. The letter warns Lindbergh not to contact press or police. Soon nearly 30 reporters arrive, the first in darkroom-equipped ambulances. [Figure A: Betty Gow] [Figure B: Schwarzkopf, left] [Figure C: Ransom Note]

Monday, February 29, 1932

Anne decides that for the sake of her baby's chest cold she'll stay an extra night at Highfields with the housekeepers the Whateleys for company.



September 24–26, 1934

NYCP find Condon's phone number and serial numbers of ransom notes on a closet door trim in Hauptmann's house. (Later reporters claim to have written it.) They identify a gap in the attic floor which is assumed to have been the origin of Rail 16.

October 16, 1934

Hauptmann is taken to Flemington, NJ to await trial. Through the vagaries of NJ law, he will be tried for murder-felony, meaning if he's convicted of burglary, he's responsible for any related death.

November 2, 1934

In exchange for Anna Hauptmann's exclusive story, the *New York Journal* hires flamboyant Brooklyn defense attorney Edward J. Reilly to replace Hauptmann's lawyer.

December 3, 1934

Anne's sister Elisabeth Morrow Morgan dies after a long battle with heart disease. Long held by the press to be in love with Lindy, Elisabeth remains to some a suspect in the baby's death. [Figure M]

Other Events of the 1930s—

1932

Franklin Delano Roosevelt wins the presidency from Hoover. The radio blares both "Happy Days are Here Again" and "Brother Can You Spare a Dime."

1933

Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor, establishes the first concentration camp. Prohibition ends. FDR's New Deal offers "Alphabet Soup" programs like the CCC (Civilian conservation Corps).

1934

Cheeseburger created. Dust Bowl engulfs Oklahoma, Arkansas, the Dakotas. Parker Brothers sell the game "Monopoly." Bonnie and Clyde killed by police.

The Investigation

The investigation of the kidnapping is held up as both the pinnacle of modern forensics and as the epitome of sloppy police work. The New Jersey, New York, and federal agents often don't cooperate. Fingerprinting fails to find usable prints. Though many pictures are taken, no casts are made of the footprints. Meanwhile Arthur Koehler, the federal "Sherlock Holmes of wood" devotes himself fulltime to the analysis of the ladder, tracking the wood by type and sawmark to a mill, then back to a Bronx store by Nov. 1933. His biggest puzzle is "Rail 16," which has nail holes suggesting a previous use.

Money

The average per capita income in 1932 is under \$1500. Although the press report the Lindberghs to be worth \$2–\$3 million, much of that is in now nearly worthless aviation stocks. Unwilling to continue a bad history of money with Anne's mother, Charles borrows from J.P. Morgan & Co.

In 1932, the U.S. operates on the gold bullion standard. Legislation in 1933–34 moves away from dependence on gold, giving greenback currency a certain, fixed value. Anticipating this move, the Lindbergh advisors prepare the ransom money in gold notes, which will be easier to trace.

“What Bruno needs is a second act.” Jack Benny

January 2, 1935

The trial begins, under Judge William Trenchard, and an estimated 70,000-100,000 people descend upon Flemington. Locals sell toy ladders and “genuine locks of Baby Lindy’s hair” on the street. The sheriff makes a “gentleman’s agreement” with five newsreel companies to secretly film the trial. Long lines vie for entry. “It is considered chic to go to the Hauptmann trial,” according to Edna Ferber. [Figure A: Toy Ladders] [Figure B: Edna Ferber]

January 3–4, 1935

Anne and Charles testify; he wears a revolver in a shoulder holster under his suit, at the recommendation of Schwarzkopf, who fears an assassination attempt. He will attend every day; Anne will return only once.

January 7–14, 1935

Betty Gow identifies sleepsuit and thumbguard.

The nearsighted Amandus Hochmuth testifies that he saw Hauptmann with a ladder in Hopewell, March 1, 1932. Joseph Perrone testifies that Hauptmann paid him to deliver a letter to Condon.

John F. Condon testifies for two days. Eight documents examiners testify for four days. [Figure C: Handwriting expert Albert D. Osborn]

January 14–15, 1935

A sketchy election returns the Alsace-Lorraine from France to Germany. Jewish shops close and anti-Nazi faction flees.

Fisch’s relatives arrive from Germany to defend him.

January 17–20 1935

A Mercer County physician testifies that the baby died from a skull fracture.

After a former neighbor testifies that the Hauptmanns took a trip in early March 1932, Anna shouts, “You are lying.”

Reilly threatens to quit amid infighting on the defense team. [Figure D: Hauptmann (pictured center) and Reilly (right)]

January 23–24, 1935

Arthur Koehler testifies on the connection between the ladder and Hauptmann’s carpentry tools. [Figure E]

The prosecution rests. Hauptmann’s defense begins with his 5-day testimony, and an opening which attacks the police’s handling of the case.

January 25, 1935

Lead prosecutor David Wilentz begins Hauptmann’s 11 hours of cross-examination, bringing up his criminal past in Germany. [Figure F: Smooth-talking prosecutor David T. Wilentz with Jaisie.]

February 1–7, 1935

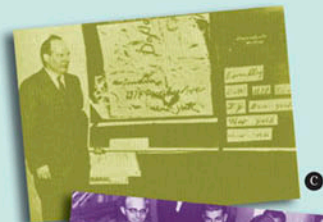
John Trendley, a documents examiner, says he doesn’t believe Hauptmann wrote the ransom notes.



“Trial of the Century,” complete with carnival souvenirs.



Edna Ferber, veteran of the Algonquin Round Table, writes disgustedly of the mink coats, movie stars, and mafia kingpins at the trial.



In 1977, the UN passes resolutions urging all nations to abolish or limit the death penalty. Several states find executions to be more expensive than life imprisonment, prejudicially applied, and not a deterrent to violent crime. The Stanford Law Review finds that 350 innocent persons were mistakenly convicted of capital crimes between 1900 and 1985, 23 of which were executed.



Anna Hauptmann (pictured here after her husband’s execution) continues to fight to clear her husband’s name until her death. Her surety and others’ lingering doubts (like those of Clarence Darrow and Eleanor Roosevelt) bring about some releases of evidence and inspire a host of commentaries, including books accusing family, servants, Fisch, and various gangsters—or claiming that the crisis was faked to distract the public from the Depression. More recent commentaries have focused on the inadequacies of the trial itself.



Hauptmann has been played by Anthony Hopkins and Steven Rea on screen, and a stage treatment makes a song of “The Lindbergh Baby Diet.” Ingrid Bergman plays Betty Gow in Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* (above), where several members of the Lindbergh household look guilty for the murder of an American millionaire posthumously revealed to be the true kidnapper.

Several would-be heirs have claimed to be the grown-up Eaglet. David Ives, in fact, in his play *Mere Mortals* (from *All in the Timing*), has a construction worker confess his Lindbergh identity to his friends—self-proclaimed Czar Nicholas Romanoff and a reincarnation of Marie Antoinette. Even Grampa Simpson claims “...I admit it. I am the Lindbergh baby. Waah!...I miss my fly-fly dada.”

Peter Sommer claims to have seen Violet Sharpe and Isidor Fisch with a baby on a ferry in NY on March 1—but he cannot identify Fisch from a photo.

Several of Hauptmann's friends testify they were celebrating his birthday with him on the night the gold note was given at the movies.

Lumberjack Charles J. Deibschop testifies to the similarity in many types of wood grain, and that Rail 16 of the ladder did not come from Hauptmann's attic.

February 11, 1935

Reilly's five-hour summation begins strongly, casting suspicion on everyone. After a four-drink lunch his arguments ramble.

February 13, 1935

After a 12-hour deliberation, the jury convicts Hauptmann of murder-felony, without recommendation of mercy, which under NJ law means he will be executed (the date is set for March 18, 1935). [Figure G: At the jury's verdict]

Mussolini sends troops into Ethiopia in response to regional instability.

February 14–16, 1935

Hauptmann refuses an offer to confess in exchange for a life sentence.

The FBI tracks a purchase of plane tickets with Lindbergh ransom money. Schwarzkopf closes the investigation, explaining the notes have been long in circulation.

October 15, 1935

Hauptmann granted stay of execution while U.S. Supreme Court considers his appeal.

December 22, 1935

The Lindberghs leave for England, tired of the press and concerned for son Jon's safety after a kidnapping threat. [Figure H: Anne with Jon at Long Barn in England, guarded by beloved dogs.]

January 12–16, 1936

NJ Governor Harold Hoffman grants Hauptmann a 30-day reprieve and orders the NJSP to reopen its investigation.

The U.S. Supreme Court denies writ of habeas corpus.

February 29, 1936

Disbarred attorney Paul H. Wendel denies the confession he'd made when kidnapped by Ellis Parker. The kidnapping discredits Gov. Hoffman's investigation, through association with Parker. During Wendel's investigation, Hauptmann receives a 48-hour reprieve. The NJ Court of Pardons denies his final plea for clemency.

April 3, 1936

Hauptmann dies in electric chair at New Jersey State Prison in Trenton, electrocuted by Robert Elliott.

May 2, 1936

Liberty magazine publishes Hauptmann's article "Why Did You Kill Me?"

June 24, 1938

Americans polled after the kidnap-murder of a five-year old in Princeton, NJ (one of many in the "epidemic" following the Lindbergh case) agree 2-to-1 that "it should be against the law for a family to pay ransom to a kidnapper."



E



F



G



H

After the trial, Charles Lindbergh crusades against American involvement in WWII, plummeting him from hero to villain, especially for his friendships with the German air staff and with the controversial Dr. Carrel. Nonetheless he trains flyers in the Pacific. (Lindbergh, pictured left, as star speaker of an "America First" isolationist rally.) After the war he turns his public work to environmental advocacy. Anne Morrow Lindbergh publishes several bestsellers, including *Gift from the Sea*.



Above: H. L. Mencken, Baltimore columnist, reports that Lindbergh thought of the trial as a drama, and was "happy to have such a good seat."

Left: Alexander Woolcott, self-proclaimed head of the Algonquin Round Table, brings his own brand of pomp everywhere, including Flemington.



Other Events of the 1930s & 1940s—1935

Social Security enacted in U.S.
Gloria Vanderbilt opens an evening gown shop in Manhattan.

1936

Carnegie Publishes *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.
Spanish Civil War begins.
Life magazine debuts.
Lindy Hop popularized.

1937

Disney strikes back at reality with *Snow White*.
Amelia Earhart vanishes.
Hindenberg explodes.
Japan invades China.

1938

Hitler annexes Austria.

1939

First commercial flight over Atlantic.

1941

Pearl Harbor attacked December 7, bringing the U.S. into WWII.