**How Things Have Changed**

**The actors in the first English play to be performed in America were arrested, as acting was considered evil. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 148)***

**Until 1930, all meals served aboard airliners in this country were cold meals. That year saw the appearance of the first stewardess aboard a domestic airline, a registered nurse. Before then, the copilot had the job of serving meals to the passengers. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia)**

**In 1915 the average annual American family income was $687. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 46)***

**In 1908, half of all Americans lived on farms or in towns with fewer than 2,500 people. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In the Middle Ages having ants in the house was a sign of good luck. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 8)***

**In the 1910s, there were about 300 auto companies in business in the United States. Today, just a small number of companies (primarily General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, and American Motors) put out “the American dream.” (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 65)**

**When the Wright Brothers made aviation history at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, their initial 12-second flight spanned a distance shorter than the wingspan of a Boeing 747 jumbo jet -- which measures 195.7 feet from tip to tip. (Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 20)**

**In 1937, the Chelsea Baby Club in London distributed metal cages that were hung outside of tenement windows to give babies fresh air and sunshine. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 254)***

**Barber’s striped pole: Men used to go to a barber’s shop for a haircut. Each shop had a red-and-white striped pole outside This was because barbers used to “bleed” people. They cut a person’s arm and let it bleed. This was thought to cure some illnesses. Barbers wrapped the used bandages around a pole and left it outside as a sign that they would bleed people. (The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts, p. 41)**

**Early this century, Philadelphia Athletics owner Connie Mack awarded pitcher Rube Waddell a contract stipulating that Waddell's battery mate, Ossie Shreck, could not eat crackers in bed when the pair shared a room on the road. In those days, baseball players had to share not only a hotel room when traveling, but the same bed as well! (Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 61)**

**Before 1859, baseball umpires sat behind home plate in rocking chairs. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 70)**

**A quarter of the people in Boston now live on land that was once under water. They filled it in. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Eight different cities--in addition to Washington, D.C. -- have served as the capital of the United States. Philadelphia was the first U.S. capital, and then Baltimore took over until March 1777. After that the capital was constantly moved because of fighting in the Revolutionary War. It was located in Lancaster and York, Pennsylvania, Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey, and Annapolis, Maryland. After the war, New York City became the capital -- then Philadelphia again, and finally, in 1800, Washington. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 69)**

**First American car race: Chicago, in 1895. Average speed: 7.5 mph. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 220)***

**Didn't one pope have a son who also became a pope? Yes. Pope Hormisdas, 514-523, was the father of Pope Silverius, 536-537. The first 37 popes weren’t committed to celibacy. (Boyd's Curiosity Shop, p. 75)**

**Cinderella’s slippers were originally made of fur. The story was inadvertently changed by a translator in the 1600s, who confused the very similar old French words for “glass” and “fur” – verre and vair, respectively. *(Harry Bright & Harlan Briscoe, in So, Now You Know, p. 117)***

**Hillary Clinton was once a Republican. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 151)***

**Up until the 1940s, pink was typically considered the color for boys and blue the color for girls. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 254)***

**It's infuriating to realize that the comic book confiscated by your mother 40 years ago may now be worth thousands of dollars. (Doug Larson, United Feature Syndicate)**

**It’s hard to believe now, but in its infancy, the only commercials shown on MTV were public service announcements. *(Sheila Folsom, in Tidbits of Loveland)***

**In the 1830s, more than a hundred years before the first generation of modern computers, Charles Babbage, the English mathematician, designed an “analytical engine” that would perform the four major functions of human computing: carrying out arithmetic operations, having a memory, making a choice of computing sequence, and being capable of numerical input and output. Steam-powered, the machine was designed to store a memory of 1,000 fifty-digit numbers; it was to work with punch-card entry; final results were to be printed automatically and set in type. When the machine required further values for calculations in progress, its operator would be summoned by a bell. Lack of money prevented its development. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 293)**

**C.W. Post introduced coupons in 1895 when he offered “one-cent off” to kick off sales for his new cereal, Post's Grape Nuts. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 84)**

**The Packard was the first car to cross the continent. It took 52 days in 1903. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 101)***

**Cupid was a symbol of pedophile love in ancient Greece. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 133)**

**They say that diamonds are a girl's best friend. However, diamonds were generally worn only by men until the 15th century. *(Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World, p. 43)***

**Duck tape was originally green and developed by Johnson & Johnson for the U.S. military, which wanted a waterproof tape that would keep the moisture out of (and blend in with) their ammunition cases. During the postwar housing boom, it was discovered that it was also good for heating and air conditioning duct work, so the color was changed from army green to silver, and duck tape became duct tape. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 19)**

**Good week for: Changing with the times, after Encyclopedia Britannica announced that after 244 years, it would no longer make its 32-volume print encyclopedia and instead focus on its digital business. *(The Week magazine, March 23, 2012)***

**What you and I might call fat was considered beautiful to the early Hawaiians, and any lady who weighed 300 pounds was approaching perfection. (Boyd's Curiosity Shop, p. 48)**

**Fat was fashionable right up till the turn of the twentieth century. The biggest sex symbol of the late 1800s was two-hundred-pound Lillian Russell. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 120)**

**The first practical fax machine weighed forty-six pounds. The first automatic answering machine stood three feet tall. The first bar code scanner was the size of an office desk. The first hearing aid was the size of a suitcase. The first electronic calculator was the size of a small room and the first “compact” calculator was the size of a typewriter. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 242)***

**In the early days of filmmaking, the people working the sets were called movies and the films were called motion pictures. *(Harry Bright & Harlan Briscoe, in So, Now You Know, p. 112)***

**The first women flight attendants, in 1930, were required to be single, trained nurses between twenty and twenty-six years of age, no more than five feet four inches tall and 118 pounds. *(Noel Botham, in The World’s Greatest Book of Useless Information, p. 76)***

**The Ford cost a mere one hundred and seventy-five pounds in England in 1914, and by 1924 one could be bought for one hundred and five pounds (two hundred and ninety dollars in the United States). *(Michael Sedgwick, in Early Cars, p. 51)***

**Goldfish were originally green. The Chinese bred them to be many different colors. Gold stuck. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 10)***

**The handshake is a friendly gesture today, but it originated in ancient times out of suspicion. Strangers shook hands to show that they were unarmed. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 28)**

**The first hard drive available for the Apple computer had a capacity of five megabytes. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 74)***

**It's hard to believe that there was a time when clothing and music were handed downs to the next generation. *(Doug Larson, United Feature Syndicate)***

**Fifty years ago parents were apt to have a lot of kids. Nowadays kids are apt to have a lot of parents. (Ernest D. Lawson)**

**From 1898 to 1910, the German pharmaceutical company Bayer advertised heroin as cough medicine for children and a non-addictive morphine substitute to cure morphine addiction. Eventually it was discovered that heroin is actually converted to morphine when metabolized in the liver, leading the company to discontinue their marketing. Bayer lost trademark rights to heroin after World War I. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 108)***

**America had no income tax at all for almost the first hundred years of the nation's history. The first income tax wasn't put into effect until the Civil War, in 1862. The tax didn't last long, because the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. The court cited Article I of the Constitution, which said Congress could levy taxes only with regard to the proportion of population in each state. The income tax didn't become permanent until 1913, when the Sixteenth Amendment was passed. That made it legal for the government to collect income tax for the first time in history. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 123)**

**In 1864, the top U.S. income tax rate was 3 percent. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 183)***

**Original intentions for five inventions: Play-Doh --cleaning compound; Neon lamps --for ordinary lighting; Air conditioning --to improve color printing; Cellophane --as a see-through tablecloth; Scotch tape --for auto spray-paint shops. (World Features Syndicate)**

**Kleenex tissues were originally manufactured as gas mask filters during World War I. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 10)**

**Until 1896, England had a law prohibiting any power-driven vehicle from traveling over four miles an hour on the public highways. (E. C. McKenzie, in Tantalizing Facts , p. 74)**

**A cave man’s life span was only 18 years. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 75)**

**At the turn of the century most light bulbs were hand-blown and cost the equivalent of half a day's pay for the average worker. (William S. Ellis, in National Geographic)**

**As postmaster of New Salem, Indiana, Abraham Lincoln’s salary was $55.70 -- per year. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 97)**

**Famous for its elegant atmosphere, lavish Christmas displays and Frango mints, Marshall Field’s department store has been a beloved landmark on State Street in Chicago, Illinois, since 1892. This fall, the store’s name will be changed to Macy’s as a result of last year’s acquisition by Macy’s Cincinnati-based parent company. (American Profile magazine, April 9, 2006)**

**George Washington grew marijuana in his garden. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 2)***

**When Mars had a life-friendly lake: NASA scientists have discovered evidence that a large freshwater lake existed on Mars billions of years ago, further strengthening the case that Earth's neighbor once harbored life. The lake was part of a network of waterways that could have lasted thousands or even millions of years -- possibly long enough for simple organisms to take hold there. Those conclusions come from an analysis of two mudstones drilled by the Curiosity rover during its exploration of the 96-mile-wide Gale Crater. The analysis dates the lake's existence to about 3.5 billion years ago -- roughly the same time life emerged on Earth -- when Mars was warm and wet rather than the cold and arid place it is today. The mudstones contained clay minerals, which form in waters with neutral pH, along with carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, sulfur, nitrogen, and phosphorus -- all elements critical to life as we know it. They also contained iron and sulfur minerals that could have been food for microbes like chemolithoautotrophs, which live on Earth deep underground and in caves and hydrothermal vents. "All the essential ingredients for life were present," Caltech geologist John Grotzinger tells The New York Times. "The whole thing just seems extremely Earth-like." (The Week magazine, December 27, 2013)**

**College grads now earn a master’s degree in two or three year programs, but until 1869, the M.A. was an honorary award. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 71)**

**Paul McCartney used the working words “scrambled eggs” before coming up with “yesterday” while composing that song. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 88)***

**The first minimum wage was established in America in 1938. It was 25 cents per hour. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 37)**

**Folding money, invented by the Chinese, was first made of deerskin. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 27)k**

**It took only 50 years for movies to go from silent to unspeakable. (Doug Larson, United Feature Syndicate)**

**A North American convergence: Have the Americans “been hosed down with maple syrup”? asked Doug Saunders. In just over a decade, majorities in the U.S. have embraced gay marriage, legal pot, and amnesty for immigration violations. “They seem to be on a crash program to mass-Canadianize themselves.” The two North American societies are still “very different in their core beliefs,” but they are drawing closer to one another, and almost all of that change is on the U.S. side. That’s the conclusion of two researchers, Canadian Michael Adams and American Celinda Lake, who have been studying attitudes in the two countries since 1992. The U.S. embrace of more-liberal social values “has surprised me, and many of its own citizens,” Adams said. Canada has changed too, though to a lesser degree, as a conservative government has brought a greater emphasis on law and order and individual responsibility. But we Canadians can’t take the credit for convincing the U.S. that our way is better. Adams thinks the shift in attitude has to do with the end of American exceptionalism, and the erosion of U.S. status on the global stage. “Now that our neighbors are no longer kings of the world, they’ve started to resemble the rest of it.” (The Week magazine, June 28, 2013)**

**Back in 1847, the idea of a stamp seemed radical enough to put some Americans’ backs up. Until then the federal postal system had operated without stamps. Mail usually traveled postage due. To claim a letter, the addressee, rather than the addressor, paid its postage. This C.O.D. system, paying for goods only upon delivery, made sense in the uncertain early years of the Republic. *(John Ross, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**Americans spend about 30 minutes preparing dinner every day, down from two and a half hours in the 1960s, according to a new market-research study. Women still do 80 percent of the cooking and cleanup. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 7, 2006)***

**Procter & Gamble originally manufactured candles before moving on to soap. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 97)***

**My, my, how times have changed! In the early 1800s, it was so tough to find people willing to fill minor jobs in public places that the State of Rhode Island passed a law making it a crime to refuse public office! Today, nearly one out of ten wage earners in the United States is on the public payroll. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 161)***

**During the Middle Ages, few people were able to read or write. The clergy were virtually the only ones who could. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 148)***

**The past 30 years have featured a massive redistribution of wealth in America from everybody else to the top 1 percent, and, much more radically, the top one-tenth of 1 percent (that is, the richest thousandth) of Americans. Consider these figures from the Economic Policy Institute. In 1979, the top 1 percent of wage earners made 9.4 times as much, on average, as the bottom 90 percent of the populace. This ratio had remained virtually unchanged since the end of World War II. Meanwhile, the top 0.1 percent made 21 times as much as the bottom 90 percent – again, a ratio that had barely budged in the postwar period. Since then, the income ratio of the top 1 percent relative to the bottom 90 percent has doubled, making it about the same as what the ratio of the top 0.l percent to the bottom 90 percent was for the first 35 years of the postwar period. That’s startling enough, but the most radical redistribution of income has been at the very top of the economic pyramid. The top 0.l percent now enjoys a wage ratio about 70 times that of the bottom 90 percent – an astounding generational transfer of literally trillions of dollars from nine out of 10 Americans to the superrich. *(Paul Campos, in Rocky Mountain News, October 22, 2008)***

**Remember when atmospheric contaminants were romantically called stardust? *(Lane Olinghouse)***

**The first Rolls Royce, marketed in 1906, sold for about $784. Now it would fetch about $295,000. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 74)***

**In colonial Boston, schoolteachers earned about seven cents a day. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 75)**

**Seashells can be found in rocks high up on some mountains, such as the Apennines in Italy. The rocks were once at the bottom of the sea. They were pushed upwards over million of years, as the crust of the Earth crumpled. (The Usborne Book of Facts & Lists: Omnibus Edition, p. 9)**

**Before 1920, it was technically legal to send children through the mail. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 181)***

**In 1885, The Home Insurance Company of Chicago was the tallest building in the world. The skyscraper was nine stories tall. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 11)**

**The military custom of sounding taps before bedtime originated in public houses, where a signal known as “taps-up” alerted drinkers that the tap room was about to close for the night. (Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia)**

**The original Stanley Cup, a silver bowl given to the National Hockey League champion each year, was worth $48.67 when Lord Stanley of Preston donated it back in 1893. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 93)**

**The Suez Canal was originally slated to be the site for the Statue of Liberty. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 84)**

**A device invented as a primitive steam engine by the Greek engineer Hero, about the time of the birth of Christ, is used today as a rotating lawn sprinkler. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 187)***

**Back in 1967, the game wasn’t yet Super, and the event not yet Super-sized. But as Super Bowl XL approaches Sunday, it’s clear everything about the big game has grown. Instead of $6 tickets, they are now $600, and a 30-second ad now costs $2.5 million, not $42,000. *(Lynn DeBruin, in Rocky Mountain News, February 3, 2006)***

**The tax on $4,000 annual income in 1913 was one cent. (L. M. Boyd)**

**In the course of the last decade, there have been 4,428 changes to the federal tax code, or more than one per day. As a result of the code’s growing complexity, Americans spent a total of 7.64 billion hours in 2010 negotiating tax-related paperwork – more than twice the working time of all the elementary school teachers in the U.S. (Reason.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 27, 2012)**

**Way back when, tombstones were first placed on plots over the dead so that the deceased could not come out and harm the living. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 80)  
Through the years, how long has it taken to travel from coast to coast? 1849 - 166 days by covered wagon**

**1860 - 60 days by stagecoach**

**1870 - 11 days by train**

**1923 - 26 1/2 hours by air**

**1938 - 17 1/2 hours by DC-3**

**1975 - 5 hours by 747**

**1981 - 8 minutes by space shuttle. (Rocky Mountain News)**

**Sorting a collection of books left to me by my grandfather, I came across a dictionary printed in 1901. Leafing through it my eye fell upon “uranium.” It was defined, “A worthless metal, not found in U.S.” (Owen W. Stout, in Phoenix Flame)**

**Women in ancient Egypt thought varicose veins on the legs and bosom were beautiful and even colored them with dye. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 121)**

**When the Washington Monument opened in 1888, men took the elevator but women were required to climb the 897 steps of the memorial. It was thought improper for men to accompany women in such an enclosed space for the 12 minutes that the elevator took to rise to the top of the 555-foot-tall monument. *(Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World, p. 43)***

**Then and now: The average American used between 5 and 10 gallons of water a day in 1904. Today’s American uses 100 gallons of water per day. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 101)***

**In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was fashionable to wear one’s wedding ring on the thumb. *(Harry Bright & Harlan Briscoe, in So, Now You Know, p. 168)***

**For the first time in U.S. history, there were more recorded deaths than births among white Americans in 2012, according to a new analysis of Census Bureau data. The difference was tiny – there were just 12,400 more deaths among non-Hispanic whites than births – but marked a demographic turning point, as the white population shrinks. (USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 28, 2013)**

**When the mansion was first provided for in the original design of the capital, it was referred to as the Palace. When it was first constructed, they called it the President’s House. After the British burned it during the War of 1812, it was painted white to hide the blackened paint. And it has been known as the White House ever since. Officially, however, it was called the Executive Mansion until Teddy Roosevelt decided the name should be the one it is called today: The White House. (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 243)**

**During The Flintstones’ first season, Fred, Barney, and Wilma smoked cigarettes in a Winston commercial that ran during the show. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 18)**

**The Wrigley Company, now famous for its chewing gum, originally sold scouring soap and baking powder. In 1892, William Wrigley came up with the idea of giving away two pieces of gum as a premium with each can of baking powder that he sold. In time, he found that the gum was more popular with his customers than his baking soda, and the Wrigley Company decided to change its focus. (Tidbits of Denver)**

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