

1955 in the United States

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Events from the year **1955 in the United States**.

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Incumbents

Federal Government

- President: Dwight D. Eisenhower (R-Kansas/New York)
- Vice President: Richard Nixon (R-California)
- Chief Justice: Earl Warren (California)

- Speaker of the House of Representatives: Joseph William Martin, Jr. (R-Massachusetts) (until January 3), Sam Rayburn (D-Texas) (starting January 3)
- Senate Majority Leader: William F. Knowland (R-California) (until January 3), Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Texas) (starting January 3)
- Congress: 83rd (until January 3), 84th (starting January 3)

Governors and Lieutenant Governors

Governors

- Governor of Alabama: Gordon Persons (Democratic) (until January 17), Jim Folsom (Democratic) (starting January 17)
- Governor of Arizona: John Howard Pyle (Republican) (until January 3), Ernest McFarland (Democratic) (starting January 3)
- Governor of Arkansas: Francis Cherry (Democratic) (until January 11), Orval Faubus (Democratic) (starting January 11)
- Governor of California: Goodwin Knight (Republican)
- Governor of Colorado: Daniel I.J. Thornton (Republican) (until January 11), Edwin C. Johnson (Democratic) (starting January 11)
- Governor of Connecticut: John Davis Lodge (Republican) (until January 5), Abraham A. Ribicoff (Democratic) (starting January 5)
- Governor of Delaware: J. Caleb Boggs (Republican)
- Governor of Florida: Charley Eugene Johns (Democratic) (until January 4), LeRoy Collins (Democratic) (starting January 4)
- Governor of Georgia: Herman Talmadge (Democratic) (until January 11), Marvin Griffin (Democratic) (starting January 11)
- Governor of Idaho: Leonard B. Jordan (Republican) (until January 3), Robert E. Smylie (Republican) (starting January 3)
- Governor of Illinois: William G. Stratton (Democratic)
- Governor of Indiana: George N. Craig (Republican)
- Governor of Iowa: Leo Elthon (Republican) (until January 13), Leo A. Hoegh (Republican) (starting January 13)
- Governor of Kansas: Edward F. Arn (Republican) (until January 10), Fred Hall (Republican) (starting January 10)
- Governor of Kentucky: Lawrence W. Wetherby (Democratic) (until December 13), Happy Chandler (Democratic) (starting December 13)
- Governor of Louisiana: Robert F. Kennon (Democratic)
- Governor of Maine: Burton M. Cross (Republican) (until January 5), Edmund Muskie (Democratic) (starting January 5)
- Governor of Maryland: Theodore R. McKeldin (Republican)
- Governor of Massachusetts: Christian A. Herter (Republican)
- Governor of Michigan: G. Mennen Williams (Democratic)
- Governor of Minnesota: C. Elmer Anderson (Republican) (until January 5), Orville L. Freeman (Democratic) (starting January 5)
- Governor of Mississippi: Hugh L. White (Democratic)
- Governor of Missouri: Phil M. Donnelly (Democratic)
- Governor of Montana: J. Hugo Aronson (Republican)
- Governor of Nebraska: Robert B. Crosby (Republican) (until January 6), Victor E. Anderson (Republican) (starting January 6)
- Governor of Nevada: Charles H. Russell (Republican)
- Governor of New Hampshire: Hugh Gregg (Republican) (until January 6), Lane Dwinell (Republican) (starting January 6)
- Governor of New Jersey: Robert B. Meyner (Democratic)
- Governor of New Mexico: Edwin L. Mechem (Republican) (until January 1), John F. Simms (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Governor of New York: W. Averell Harriman (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Governor of North Carolina: Luther H. Hodges (Democratic)
- Governor of North Dakota: Clarence Norman Brunsdale (Republican)
- Governor of Ohio: Frank J. Lausche (Democratic)
- Governor of Oklahoma: Johnston Murray (Democratic) (until January 10), Raymond D. Gary (Democratic) (starting January 10)
- Governor of Oregon: Paul L. Patterson (Republican)
- Governor of Pennsylvania: John S. Fine (Republican) (until January 18), George M. Leader (Democratic) (starting January 18)
- Governor of Rhode Island: Dennis J. Roberts (Democratic)
- Governor of South Carolina: James Francis Byrnes (Democratic) (until January 18), George Bell Timmerman, Jr. (Democratic) (starting January 18)
- Governor of South Dakota: Sigurd Anderson (Republican) (until January 4), Joe Foss (Republican) (starting January 4)
- Governor of Tennessee: Frank G. Clement (Democratic)
- Governor of Texas: Allan Shivers (Democratic)
- Governor of Utah: J. Bracken Lee (Republican)
- Governor of Vermont: Lee E. Emerson (Republican) (until January 6), Joseph B. Johnson (Republican) (starting January 6)
- Governor of Virginia: Thomas Bahnon Stanley (Democratic)
- Governor of Washington: Arthur B. Langlie (Republican)
- Governor of West Virginia: William C. Marland (Democratic)
- Governor of Wisconsin: Walter J. Kohler, Jr. (Republican)

- Governor of Wyoming: Clifford Joy Rogers (Republican) (until January 3), Milward L. Simpson (Republican) (until January 3)

Lieutenant Governors

- Lieutenant Governor of Alabama: James B. Allen (Democratic) (until January 17), William G. Hardwick (Democratic) (starting January 17)
- Lieutenant Governor of Arkansas: Nathan Green Gordon (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of California: Harold J. Powers (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Colorado: Gordon L. Allott (Republican) (until January 11), Stephen L. R. McNichols (Democratic) (starting January 11)
- Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut: Edward N. Allen (Republican) (until January 5), Charles W. Jewett (Democratic) (starting January 5)
- Lieutenant Governor of Delaware: John W. Rollins (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Georgia: Marvin Griffin (Democratic) (until January 11), S. Ernest Vandiver (Democratic) (starting January 11)
- Lieutenant Governor of Idaho: Edson H. Deal (Republican) (until January 3), J. Berkeley Larsen (Republican) (starting January 3)
- Lieutenant Governor of Illinois: John William Chapman (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Indiana: Harold W. Handley (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Iowa: Leo Elthon (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Kansas: Fred Hall (Republican) (until January 10), John McCuish (Republican) (starting January 10)
- Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky: Emerson Beauchamp (Democratic) (until December 13), Harry Lee Waterfield (Democratic) (starting December 13)
- Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana: C. E. "Cap" Barham (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts: Sumner G. Whittier (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Michigan: Clarence A. Reid (Republican) (until January 1), Philip A. Hart (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota: Donald O. Wright (Republican) (until month and day unknown), Karl Rolvaag (Democratic) (starting month and day unknown)
- Lieutenant Governor of Mississippi: Carroll Gartin (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Missouri: James T. Blair, Jr. (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Montana: George M. Gosman (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Nebraska: Charles J. Warner (Republican) (until September 24), vacant (starting September 24)
- Lieutenant Governor of Nevada: vacant (until month and day unknown), Rex Bell (Republican) (starting month and day unknown)
- Lieutenant Governor of New Mexico: Tibo J. Chavez (Democratic) (until January 1), Joseph Montoya (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of New York: vacant (until January 1), George DeLuca (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina: vacant
- Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota: Clarence P. Dahl (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Ohio: John William Brown (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Oklahoma: James E. Berry (Democratic) (until month and day unknown), Cowboy Pink Williams (Democratic) (starting month and day unknown)
- Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania: Lloyd H. Wood (Republican) (until January 18), Roy E. Furman (Democratic) (starting January 18)
- Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island: John S. McKiernan (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina: George Bell Timmerman, Jr. (Democratic) (until January 18), Ernest Hollings (Democratic) (starting January 18)
- Lieutenant Governor of South Dakota: Rex A. Terry (Republican) (until January 4), L. Roy Houck (Republican) (starting January 4)
- Lieutenant Governor of Tennessee: Jared Maddux (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Texas: Ben Ramsey (Democratic)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lieutenant Governor of Vermont: Joseph B. Johnson (Republican) (until January 6), Consuelo N. Bailey (Republican) (starting January 6) ▪ Lieutenant Governor of Virginia: Allie Edward Stokes Stephens (Democratic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lieutenant Governor of Washington: Emmett T. Anderson (Republican) ▪ Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin: George M. Smith (Republican) (until January 3), Warren P. Knowles (Republican) (starting January 3) |
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Events

January–March

- January 7 – Marian Anderson is the first African-American singer to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.
- January 22 – The Pentagon announces a plan to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) armed with nuclear weapons.
- January 28 – The United States Congress authorizes President Dwight D. Eisenhower to use force to protect Formosa from the People's Republic of China.
- February 1 – Major tornadoes in Mississippi.
- February 10 – The Seventh Fleet of the United States Navy helps the Republic of China evacuate Chinese Nationalist army and residents from the Tachen Islands to Taiwan.
- February 12 – U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sends the first U.S. advisors to South Vietnam.
- February 22 – In Chicago's Democratic primary, Mayor Martin H. Kennelly loses to the head of the Cook County Democratic Party, Richard J. Daley, 364,839 to 264,77.
- March 2 – Claudette Colvin, a fifteen-year-old African-American girl, refuses to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, to a white woman after the driver demands it. She is carried off the bus backwards whilst being kicked and handcuffed and harassed on the way to the police station. She becomes a plaintiff in *Browder v. Gayle* (1956) which rules bus segregation to be unconstitutional.
- March 5 – WBBJ signs on the air in the Jackson, Tennessee as WDXI, to expanded U.S. commercial television in rural areas.
- March 7 – The 1954 Broadway musical version of *Peter Pan*, starring Mary Martin, is presented on television for the first time by NBC (also the first time that a stage musical is presented in its entirety on TV exactly as performed on stage). The program gains the largest viewership of a TV special up to this time and becomes one of the first great television classics.
- March 12 – African-American jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker dies in New York City at age 34.
- March 19 – KXTV of Stockton, California signs on the air as the 100th commercial television station in the U.S.
- March 20 – The film adaptation of Evan Hunter's *Blackboard Jungle* premieres, featuring the famous single "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley & His Comets. Teenagers jump from their seats to dance to the song. On July 9 it becomes the first Rock and roll single to reach Number One on the U.S. charts.
- March 26 – Bill Hayes tops the U.S. charts for five weeks with "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" and starts a (fake) coonskin cap craze.
- March 28 – The important income tax case of *Commissioner v. Glenshaw Glass Co.* is decided in the Supreme Court.^[1]

April–June

- April 5 – Richard J. Daley defeats Robert Merrian to become mayor of Chicago by a vote of 708,222 to 581,555.

- April 12 – Jonas Salk's polio vaccine, having passed large-scale trials earlier in the U.S., receives full approval by the Food and Drug Administration.
- April 15 – Ray Kroc opens his first McDonald's in Des Plaines, Illinois.
- May 21 – Chuck Berry records his first single, "Maybellene", for Chess Records in Chicago.
- June 7 – *The \$64,000 Question* premieres on CBS television, with Hal March as the host.
- June 16 – *Lady and the Tramp*, Walt Disney's 15th animated film, premieres in Chicago.

July–September

- July 18
 - The first atomic-generated electrical power is sold commercially, powering Arco, Idaho.
 - Illinois's Governor William Stratton signs the Loyalty Oath Act, that mandates all public employees take a loyalty oath or lose their jobs.
 - The Geneva Summit between the U.S., Soviet Union, United Kingdom and France begins.
 - The Disneyland theme park opens to the public in Anaheim, California.
- July 23 – The Geneva Summit ends.
- August 19 – Hurricane Diane hits the northeast, killing 200 and causing over \$1 billion in damage.
- August 22 – Eleven schoolchildren are killed when their school bus is hit by a freight train in Spring City, Tennessee.^[2]
- August 28 – Emmett Till is killed in Money, Mississippi.
- September 10 – *Guns Smoke* debuts on the CBS television network.
- September 24 – President Dwight D. Eisenhower suffers a coronary thrombosis while on vacation in Denver.
- September 26 – "America's Sweethearts", singers Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, marry.
- September 30 – Actor James Dean, aged 24, is killed when his Porsche 550 Spyder collides with another automobile at a highway junction near Cholame, California.



April 15:
McDonald's



July 18: Disneyland
opens to the public

October–December

- October 3 – *The Mickey Mouse Club* airs on the ABC television network.
- October 4 – The Brooklyn Dodgers win the World Series, defeating the New York Yankees 2–0 in Game 7 of the 1955 Fall Classic.
- October 11 – 70-mm film is introduced with the theatrical release of Rodgers and Hammerstein's masterpiece *Oklahoma!*.
- October 20 – Disc jockey Bill Randle of WERE (Cleveland) is the key presenter of a concert at Brooklyn High School (Ohio), featuring Pat Boone and Bill Haley & His Comets and opening with Elvis Presley, not only Elvis's first performance north of the Mason–Dixon line, but also his first filmed performance, for a documentary on Randle titled *The Pied Piper of Cleveland*.
- November 1 – A time bomb explodes in the cargo hold of United Airlines Flight 629, a Douglas DC-6B airliner flying above Longmont, Colorado, killing all 39 passengers and 5 crew members on board.
- November 5 – Racial segregation is forbidden on trains and buses in U.S. interstate commerce.
- November 12 – The Bugs Bunny cartoon *Roman-Legion Hare* debuts.
- November 20 – Bo Diddley makes his television debut on Ed Sullivan's *Toast Of The Town* show for the CBS network.
- November 27 – Fred Phelps establishes the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas.

- December 1 – Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to surrender her seat on a bus to a white person.
- December 5
 - The American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merge to become the AFL-CIO.
 - The Montgomery Improvement Association is formed in Montgomery, Alabama by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other Black ministers to coordinate a Black boycott of city buses.
- December 14 – Tappan Zee Bridge in New York opens to traffic.
- December 15 – Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues", recorded on July 30, is released by Sun Records.
- December 22 – Cytogeneticist Joe Hin Tjio discovers the correct number of human chromosomes.
- December 31
 - General Motors becomes the first American corporation to make over USD 1 billion in a year.
 - Michigan J. Frog, a Warner Bros. cartoon character, makes his debut in *One Froggy Evening*.

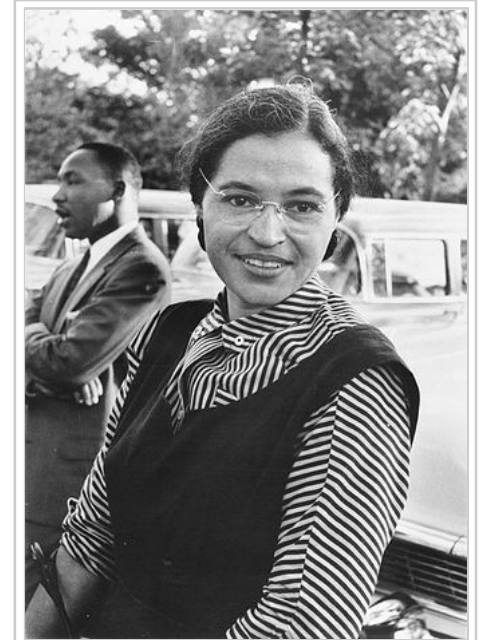
Ongoing

- Cold War (1945–1991)
- Second Red Scare (1947–1957)

Births

January–June

- January 11 – Max Lucado, writer on Christian themes
- January 12 – Rockne S. O'Bannon, writer and producer
- January 13 – Jay McInerney, novelist
- January 18 – Kevin Costner, film actor, producer and director
- January 21 – Jeff Koons, "kitsch" artist
- January 27 – John Roberts, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the U.S. from 2005
- January 29 – Eddie Jordan, basketball player and coach and politician
- February 8 – John Grisham, writer of legal thrillers
- February 12 – Bill Laswell, bass player and producer (Massacre, Material, Tabla Beat Science, Painkiller and Praxis)
- February 21 – Kelsey Grammer, TV actor
- February 24 – Steve Jobs, entrepreneur and inventor (d. 2011)
- March 2 – Ken Salazar, U.S. Senator from Colorado from 2005 to 2009
- March 5 – Penn Jillette, magician
- March 17 – Gary Sinise, film & TV actor
- March 19 – Bruce Willis, actor
- April 6 – Michael Rooker, actor



December 1: Rosa Parks, with Martin Luther King in 1955



Steve Jobs and Bill Gates

- April 7
 - Grace Hightower, philanthropist, actress and singer
 - Gregg Jarrett, lawyer-journalist
- April 8
 - Ron Johnson, U.S. Senator from Wisconsin from 2011
 - Barbara Kingsolver, novelist, essayist and poet
- April 29 – Kate Mulgrew, TV actress
- May 6 – Tom Bergeron, TV game-show host
- May 9 – Kevin Reed, theologian and author
- May 10 – Mark David Chapman, murderer
- May 16 – Debra Winger, film actress
- May 17 – Bill Paxton, film actor (d. 2017)
- May 29 – John Hinckley Jr., attempted assassin of Ronald Reagan
- June 7 – Joey Scarbury, singer-songwriter
- June 16 – Laurie Metcalf, TV actress
- June 25 – Patricia Smith, African-American poet, "spoken-word performer", playwright, author and writing teacher

July–December

- July 1
 - Lisa Scottoline, writer of legal thrillers
 - Keith Whitley, country music singer (d. 1989)
- July 8 – Lindsey Graham, U.S. Senator from South Carolina from 2003
- July 18 – Nancy Garrido, kidnapper
- July 21 – Howie Epstein, bass player, songwriter and producer (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers) (d. 2003)
- July 22 – Willem Dafoe, actor
- August 2 – Caleb Carr, writer
- August 4 – Billy Bob Thornton, film actor, director, screenwriter, producer and singer-songwriter
- August 13 – Daryl, magician
- August 24 – Mike Huckabee, Governor of Arkansas
- August 31 – Edwin Moses, track & field athlete
- September 17 – Charles Martinet, actor and voice actor
- September 29 – Joe Donnelly, U.S. Senator from Indiana from 2013
- October 17 – Tyrone Mitchell, murderer (suicide 1984)
- October 20 – Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. Senator from Rhode Island from 2007
- October 28 – Bill Gates, software designer and entrepreneur
- October 30 – Heidi Heitkamp, U.S. Senator from North Dakota from 2013
- November 5 – Kris Jenner, TV personality
- November 13 – Whoopi Goldberg, African-American comic actress
- November 23 – Mary Landrieu, U.S. Senator from Louisiana from 1997 to 2015

- November 30
 - Richard Burr, U.S. Senator from North Carolina from 2005
 - Kevin Conroy, stage, screen and voice actor
- December 11
 - Gene Grossman, economist and academic
 - Stu Jackson, basketball player, coach and manager
- December 19 – Rob Portman, U.S. Senator from Ohio from 2011
- December 21 – Jane Kaczmarek, TV actress
- December 26 – Evan Bayh, U.S. Senator from Indiana from 1999 to 2011

Deaths

January–June

- January 1 – Arthur C. Parker, part-Seneca archeologist and ethnographer of Native Americans (born 1881)
- January 20 – Robert P. Tristram Coffin, poet, essayist and novelist (born 1892)
- January 21 – Archie Hahn, sprinter (b. 1880)
- January 24 – Ira Hayes, Native American U.S. Marine flag raiser on Iwo Jima (b. 1923)
- January 31 – John Mott, YMCA leader, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (b. 1865)
- February 11 – Ona Munson, actress (b. 1903)
- February 12 – Thomas J. Moore, Irish-American film actor (b. 1883)
- February 20 – Oswald Avery, physician and medical researcher (b. 1877)
- February 27 – Trixie Friganza, actress (b. 1870)
- March 3 – Katharine Drexel, Roman Catholic saint (b. 1858)
- March 8 – William C. deMille, screenwriter and director (b. 1878)
- March 9 – Matthew Henson, African-American explorer (b. 1866)
- March 12 – Charlie Parker, African-American jazz saxophonist (b. 1920)
- April 7 – Theda Bara, silent film actress (b. 1885)
- April 14 – Cleveland L. Abbott, African-American football player and coach (born 1892)
- April 18 – Albert Einstein, German-born theoretical physicist who developed the general theory of relativity (born 1879)

- May 2 – Truman Abbe, surgeon who received awards for his research on radium in medicine (born 1873)
- May 10 – Tommy Burns, boxer (b. 1881)
- May 11 – Bradley Walker Tomlin, painter (b. 1899)
- May 14 – Charles Pelot Summerall, general (b. 1867)
- May 16 – James Agee, writer (b. 1909)
- May 18 – Mary McLeod Bethune, educator (b. 1875)
- May 22 – Richard "Skeets" Gallagher, actor (b. 1891)
- May 30 – Bill Vukovich, race-car driver (b. 1918)

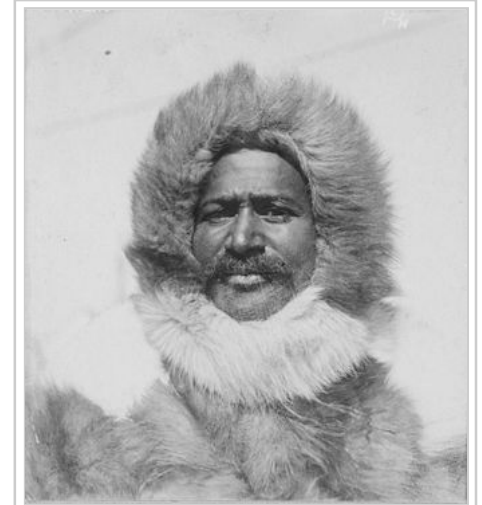


January 24: Ira Hayes found dead

- June 5 – Pattillo Higgins, oil pioneer and businessman (b. 1863)
- June 10 – Margaret Abbott, golfer, first American woman to take first place in the Olympics (born 1876)
- June 11 – Walter Hampden, film actor (b. 1879)
- June 17 – Carlyle Blackwell, actor (b. 1884)

July–December

- July 13 – Stanley Price, film and television actor (b. 1892)
- July 23 – Cordell Hull, United States Secretary of State, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (b. 1871)
- July 31 – Robert Francis, actor (b. 1930)
- August 2 – Wallace Stevens, poet (b. 1879)
- August 8 – Grace Hartman, actress (b. 1907)
- August 11 – Robert W. Wood, optical physicist (born 1868)
- August 12 – James B. Sumner, chemist, Nobel Prize laureate (b. 1887)
- August 14 – Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress (born 1861)
- August 22 – Olin Downes, music critic (b. 1886)
- August 28 – Emmett Till, murder victim (b. 1941)
- September 1 – Philip Loeb, actor (b. 1891)
- September 20 – Robert Riskin, screenwriter (b. 1897)
- September 23 – Martha Norelius, Olympic swimmer (b. 1808)
- September 27 – Leslie Garland Bolling, African-American sculptor (b. 1898)
- September 30
 - James Dean, film actor (b. 1931)
 - Louis Leon Thurstone, pioneer of psychometrics and psychophysics (born 1887)
- October 1 – Charles Christie, film studio owner (b. 1880)
- October 8 – Iry LeJeune, Cajun musician (b. 1928)
- October 9 – Alice Joyce, actress (b. 1890)
- October 19 – John Hodiak, film actor (b. 1914)
- October 31 – William Woodward, Jr., banker and horse breeder, shot in mariticide (b. 1920)
- November 1 – Dale Carnegie, writer and lecturer (b. 1888)
- November 4 – Cy Young, baseball player (Cleveland Spiders), member of MLB Hall of Fame (b. 1867)
- November 7 – Tom Powers, actor (b. 1890)
- November 11 – Jerry Ross, lyricist and composer (b. 1926)
- November 14 – Robert E. Sherwood, playwright (b. 1896)
- November 15 – Lloyd Bacon, actor and film director (b. 1889)
- November 22 – Shemp Howard, film actor and comedian (The Three Stooges) (b. 1895)
- November 29 – Rene Paul Chambellan, sculptor (b. 1893)
- December 1 – Chief Thundercloud, character actor (b. 1899)
- December 6



March 9: Matthew Henson dies



August 2: Wallace Stevens dies

- George Platt Lynes, photographer (b. 1907)
 - Honus Wagner, baseball player (Pittsburgh Pirates), member of MLB Hall of Fame (b. 1874)
- December 22 – Otto Eppers, cartoonist (b. 1893)
- December 25
 - Thomas J. Preston, Jr., professor of archeology at Princeton University; second husband of Frances Cleveland (widow of President Grover Cleveland) (b. 1862)
 - Elizabeth Harrison Walker, daughter of President Benjamin Harrison and Mary Dimmick Harrison (b. 1897)



September 30: James Dean killed in auto accident

See also

- List of American films of 1955

References

1. 348 U.S. 426 (1955).
2. "School Bus, Train Wreck Memorial Set For Aug. 21". *Chattanooga.com*. 2004-08-18.

External links

-  Media related to 1955 in the United States at Wikimedia Commons

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Categories: 1955 in the United States

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