

# Absolutely Guaranteed True facts

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## Who was the first president of the United States?

John Hanson, elected under the Articles of Confederation. George Washington, who voted for Hanson, sent a letter of congratulation. Washington himself would eventually also become president, the first elected under the Constitution.

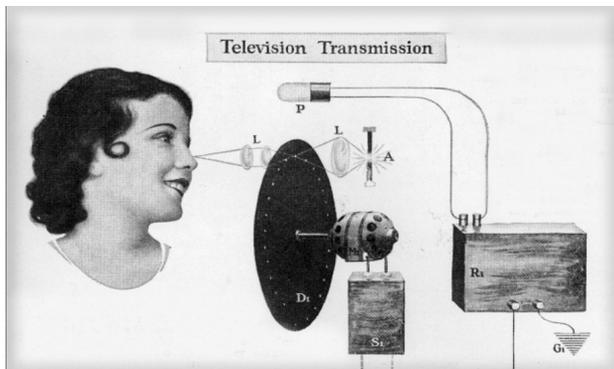


## When was the first practical computer built?

Herman Hollerith built one for the US Census Bureau in 1884. Counting the 1880 Census took years. It was estimated that the 1890 Census would take more than ten years to tally, meaning that before the full results would be available it would be time for a new Census! Hollerith's computer cut the actual time to a few months.

## When was the first TV transmission?

1884, by Paul Nipkow five years before the first radio broadcast, using cable instead of electromagnetic signals. One observer said the technology might someday be good enough for a very simple picture such as a closeup of a singer, but never a complex scene such as a field of football players.



## When was the first home video disk player sold?

In 1934, by Major Radiovision. The only available disk had only a simple, motionless test image, making very dull television. But since it often took an hour to tune the early TV receivers, and since the total day's broadcast might be only a half-hour, people used the disk to tweak their TVs before the broadcast. An earlier attempt, Phonovision in 1927, had successfully recorded moving video, but of an unsaleable quality.

## What was the first use of gunpowder?

Arthritis cure. The Chinese pharmacists who made this remedy often had accidents. Military planners eventually realized the benefit of inflicting similar accidents on their enemies.

## Who built the first practical printing press?

Sejong the Great, King of Korea. The Chinese had rejected the idea because setting type from a 5,000 character set was impractical. Sejong solved that problem by designing a small, perfectly phonetic alphabet that anyone who could talk could quickly learn to read (still used by modern Koreans). He also recalled all cash, redesigned the national mint into a metal type foundry, and melted the coins to make type. Later, when Johann Gutenberg built his press, he was forced to use less durable wooden type because he had no government mint at his disposal.

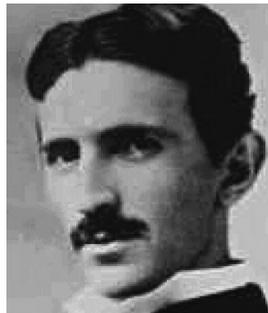


**How did Galileo measure the rate of gravitational acceleration?**

He sang. Galileo wasn't a good enough mathematician to invent calculus as Newton did to solve the same problem at the same time. But as the child of a family of professional musicians, Galileo knew his rhythm was perfect. Furthermore, because J.S. Bach had not yet standardized tuning, Galileo's string instruments had moveable gut frets tied around the neck of the instrument. He made an oversized fretboard and rolled a metal ball down the strings, adjusting the frets until the ball bounced on the frets to the beat of his song. From there, he only needed plane geometry to extrapolate the speed of a falling ball from that of a rolling one.

**Who invented radio?**

Nikola Tesla did. That's what the U.S. Supreme Court said in response to a suit by Tesla's heirs. Unlike the more famous Marconi, however, the insane genius Tesla saw no practical radio use other than communicating with his mentors on Mars. Tesla is better known for his development of the AC generator, still used by electric companies today.



**Who saved classical Greco-Roman literature from oblivion?**

The Irish, under the inspiration of Saint Patrick. As Europe became overwhelmingly Christian the ancient literature was largely dismissed as pagan. Patrick, a former slave who wasn't educated until adulthood, saw nothing wrong with the ancient tales. As he Christianized Ireland he did nothing to discourage the classics or, for that matter, belief in fairies and leprechauns. Irish monks went on to build scores of libraries and scriptoria across Europe as far south as Naples and as far east as Moscow.



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