



Shake, Rattle 'n' Roll: Laurel in the 1950s

Step back into the 1950s with the
Laurel Historical Society!

What Things Cost in 1950:

Car: \$1,750

Gasoline: 27 cents/gal

House: \$14,500

Bread: 14 cents/loaf

Milk: 82 cents/gal

Postage Stamp: 3 cents

Stock Market: 235

Average Annual Salary: \$3,800

Minimum Wage: 75 cents per hour

www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org

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Entertainment:

Throughout the 1950s, entertainment and leisure time was at its height. During this time of relative prosperity, while basking in the WWII victory, Americans were very entertained. In 1950 alone there were 2,200 drive-in movie theatres, twice as many as in 1949, and approximately 10,500,000 TV sets in 10,400,000 homes.

Television:

Once there were TVs in most homes, it became clear that Americans craved programs like westerns, variety shows, sitcoms, crime/mystery dramas, and game shows. In many ways, these 1950s shows have become classics and their legacy has been deeply embedded into American television culture.

Remember These?

I Love Lucy, Bonanza, Gunsmoke, The Ed Sullivan Show, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, Father Knows Best, Leave It To Beaver, The Lone Ranger, Dragnet, The Bob Hope Show, The Jackie Gleason Show, The Honeymooners, The \$64,000 Question, The Colgate Comedy Hour.

Film:

As leisure time increased, so did the number of films. Films of the 1950s were of a wide variety as studios and companies competed with the increased amount of televisions in American homes. Movie makers became creative, presenting their films through widescreen and big-approach methods, such as Cinemascope, VistaVision, and Cinerama as well as gimmicks like 3-D film. Many movies of the 1950s are considered classics of all time and have been remade over the years.

Remember These?

An Affair to Remember, Rock Around the Clock, The Bad Seed, A Streetcar Named Desire, East of Eden, Rebel Without a Cause, Jailhouse Rock, The Blob, Broken Arrow, Dial M for Murder, White Christmas, Cinderella, Ben-Hur, The Ten Commandments, Sunset Boulevard, Singin' in the Rain, All About Eve, The African Queen, Some Like It Hot, Guys and Dolls, South Pacific, Carousel, Oklahoma!, The King and I, Kiss Me Kate, Funny Face, Rear Window, On the Waterfront, The Pajama Game, Three Coins in the Fountain, Auntie Mame, 3:10 to Yuma, The War of the Worlds, The Day the World Stood Still, Peter Pan, The Lady and the Tramp, Alice in Wonderland, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Roman Holiday, The Seven Year Itch, Godzilla (Gojira), Vertigo, and West Side Story.



Music: The decade of the 1950s captures the notorious time of transition from Bubblegum pop into the birth of Rock and Roll.

Number One Hits of the 1950s:

White Christmas—Bing Crosby (1950)

Come On-a My House—Rosemary Clooney (1951)

Unforgettable—Nat King Cole (1952)

You, You, You—Ames Brothers (1953)

That's Amore—Dean Martin (1954)

Rock Around the Clock—Bill Haley & His Comets (1955)

Hound Dog/Don't Be Cruel—Elvis Presley (1956)

Love Letters in the Sand—Pat Boone (1957)

It's All in the Game—Tommy Edwards (1958)

Mack the Knife—Bobby Darin (1959)

In addition to these chart-topping songs, the 1950s were filled with a great number of artists that continue to influence the musical and cultural world:

Johnny Cash, Perry Como, Little Richard, Paul Anka, Ricky Nelson, Buddy Holly, Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Carl Perkins, The Diamonds, Bobby Day, The Four Aces, The Drifters, Johnny Mathis, Frankie Avalon, Connie Francis, Ray Charles, and even the Chipmunks made their debut during this decade!

Literature:

Important fiction authors of the 1950s included Langston Hughes, Ayn Rand, Jack Kerouac, J.D. Salinger, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, James Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Carl Sandburg, Chinua Achebe, James A. Michener, and Ernest Hemingway

1950s Bestsellers:

Dr. Zhivago—Boris Pasternak

Lolita--- Vladimir Nabokov

Please Don't Eat the Daises --- Jean Kerr

The Eloise Series --- Kay Thompson

Belles on Their Toes --- Frank Gilbreth Jr. & Ernestine Gilbreth Carey

From Here To Eternity --- James Jones

East of Eden --- John Steinbeck

The Old Man and the Sea --- Ernest Hemingway

The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit --- Sloan Wilson

No Time for Sergeants --- Morton Thompson

Peyton Place --- Grace Metalious

Auntie Mame --- Patrick Dennis

Atlas Shrugged --- Ayn Rand

Rally Round the Flag, Boys! --- Max Shulman

