

1848 - It's Not Only About Revolutions

1848 was a pivotal year in world history. But the events of 1848 were not, in most part, stand-alone ones. Rather, they were, mainly, the starting points for long-term, major changes in the creation of the modern age. In some cases they were the endpoints of changes that began earlier.

In this workshop we want to explore the events of 1848 and discuss their impact on the world in 1848 alone, as they culminated in 1848 or as they influenced and evolved into later events. The following are examples of each of these situations. Many are political, in the broad sense of the term, but others are social, sociological, or artistic. There are others that may be found and discussed, at the choice and through the interests of our members.

In continental Europe, 1848 is often referred to as “**The Springtime of the Peoples.**” Revolutions broke out in France, Hungary, Italy, a number of German states and parts of the Austrian Empire. Over 50 countries were affected. Many of these were quickly suppressed, but the ideas and movements behind these revolts continued to grow and eventually resulted in major political change. Much of the upheaval was the result of the new concept of **Nationalism**.

In Britain, 1848 was the year in which the long-running **Chartist Movement** had its final gasp. It was put down, but its memory stuck with the political class, and its aims eventually gained almost total acceptance. That year also saw the passing of the **Public Health Act** and the establishment of local Boards of Health - the first national legislation that brought modern science and cleanliness to the forefront and dramatically improved health and mortality. Unfortunately, 1848 also the return of a **Potato Famine** in Ireland.

Karl Marx and Frederich Engels had their “**Communist Manifesto**” published in 1848. It sparked 150 years of upheaval across the world.

Years after the violent rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, Canada saw the establishment of **Responsible Government** in 1848. This provided an impetus that eventually led to Confederation.

In the United States, thousands of European, mainly German, refugees and exiles from the revolts of 1848 immigrated and brought their ideas and belief in freedom and human rights, including anti-slavery, with them. The first non-British ship to bring immigrants to Australia was a German ship carrying exiles. These exiles from Germanic and Habsburg states to many countries were called **Forty-eighters** or **48ers**. Among their efforts, the **48ers** were important in New York State and elsewhere, where William Lyon Mackenzie was residing after the uprising in 1837 against The Family Compact (Upper Canada) and The Chateau Clique (Lower Canada).

1848 was the year of the first **Women's Rights Convention** in Seneca Falls, New York. In other advances for women, 1848 saw the establishment of Queen's College, London - the first British university to grant degrees to women - and the Boston Female Medical School - the first women's medical school.

In **South America**, revolts exploded in New Granada (present day Colombia, Panama and parts of five other countries), leading to years of upheaval and political liberalization.

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Mexico lost the **Mexican-American War** and much of its northern territory, including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. It was also the year in which **gold** was discovered in California. These two events started a major demographic movement to the American west. The end of the war was also directly responsible for internal Mexican political changes and liberalizations.

Opera lovers might be interested to know that two of the books published in 1848 were "La Dame aux camélias," by Alexandre Dumas, and "Scènes de la vie de Bohème", by Henri Murger. For **art lovers**, 1848 saw the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

So join us, follow your personal interests to the year 1848, and help flesh out why it was such an important year on the way to our present world.

A book recommended by one of our participants is: "Revolutionary Spring: Europe Aflame and the Fight for a New World, 1848-1849" by Christopher Clark.