

Living History: The 1950s



Segment One Run Time: 23:29

Overview

For many, the 1950s held a newfound sense of confidence. As the Baby Boomer generation matured, the population doubled with a significant shift from the cities to the suburbs. Blue-collar workers could achieve the “American Dream” by working at Bethlehem Steel, and newly invented electronics, like the transistor radio continued to pop up. Furthermore, the transportation industry flourished in the “great age of the automobile.”



Busses took a backseat to cars, the airport was completed, and Mack Trucks gained worldwide recognition for its aid in the Korean War. In the Lehigh Valley, high school sports drew crowds up to 20,000, peaking for Thanksgiving Day football. Women also got into the action with a softball team named “The Rockettes.”

Discussion/Questions

1. Why would the government try to sell the Korean War as only a “conflict?”
2. What are your thoughts on the fact that the government tried to sell the Korean war as a conflict?
3. In your own words, what is the “American Dream?”

Activities

1. Create a timeline of the 40s and 50s using the history of the Bethlehem Steel as a land marker.

Spotlight: The Hula Hoop

The majority of people believe that the Hula Hoop was born in the 1950s. Actually, Hula Hoops existed well before. The toy originated more than three thousand years ago in Egypt where children played with large dried grapevines. During the fourteenth century the Hula Hoop became popular among children and adults in England. The craze moved to England in the 4th century; however, the word hula was not associated with the toy until the early 1800s when British sailors visited the Hawaiian Islands and noted the similarity between "hooping" and hula dancing. Later in 1957, Australia began selling wooden rings in retail stores, and the hula hoop was first introduced in 1958. The item attracted the attention of Wham-O workers, Richard P. Knerr and Arthur K Melvin, a fledgling California toy manufacturer. The company manufactured a plastic hoop in a variety of bright colors, and the American Hula Hoop was thus born.



More information

<http://www.korean-war.com>

Academic Standards

Living History: The 1950s is specifically designed to address the Academic Standards for History as set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This program supports the successful achievement of standards 8.3 United States History, as defined under grade 12 measurement criteria: 8.3.12

C. Identify and evaluate how continuity and change have influenced Pennsylvania history from the 1890s to Present. -Innovation

