

WHO'S ON TIME?

*A Study of TIME's Covers
From March 3, 1923 to January 3, 1977*

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A Study of TIME's Covers From March 3, 1923 to January 3, 1977

by Donald J. Lehnus

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ADVERTENCE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The idea for this study; the research and analysis of the data; the organization and presentation of the information; and the conclusions drawn are entirely those of the author, who is solely responsible for the contents.

This author did not consult or use in any form or manner any employee, or anyone who is or ever was connected with TIME; nor did he consult or use any bibliothecal or archival material, or any other files or records that TIME may possess. This author is not now and has never been associated in any way with TIME—except as a reader and subscriber.

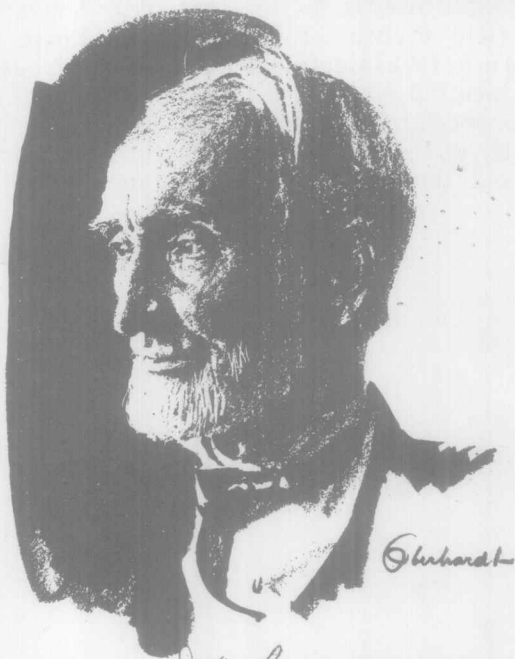
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D.J.L.

TIME

FIFTEEN CENTS

The Weekly News-Magazine



VOL. 1, NO. 1

MARCH 3, 1923

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JOSEPH G. CANNON, Appeared on the first cover of TIME. b. Guilford, North Carolina-1836. d. 1926. A Representative from Illinois for twenty-three terms and Speaker of the House from 1903-11, declined renomination for Congress at the end of the Sixty-seventh Congress (March, 1923).

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF TIME

As early as 1921 the idea of a newsmagazine was conceived in the minds of two recent graduates of Yale University (Class of 1920), Henry Robinson Luce (1898-1967) and Briton Hadden (1898-1929). These two young men talked over many aspects of their future newsmagazine, and the possibilities and probabilities of its survival and later excelling all other such publications. They discussed such questions as:

... How differently would they treat the news in their magazine? How could news be more quickly told for busy readers? How could it be better organized? How could it be made more visually attractive? How could they maintain readers' interest in a weekly whose news would necessarily be far in arrears of daily papers with international wire-service facilities?

They studied the newsmagazines they would have to buck, headed so decisively by the Literary Digest that they hardly had to consider the others. The Digest seemed to settle any doubts that "old news" was readily marketable. It was a national institution, circulation 1,200,000, fat with advertising, seen on every respectable fumed-oak table and assigned to high school and college students for its coverage of current events. Its "news service" was very nearly scot-free. It consisted of subscriptions to the more important American newspapers and a few published elsewhere in the world. The Digest frankly stole its news from these papers, usually quoting them directly. The victims seldom complained because the magazine gave them full credit and because by the time it used their property it was several days old—waste material by daily journalistic standards. In that sense the Digest ran the most profitable news junk shop in the world. But it performed a useful service, an advance over the breathless patchwork and discontinuity of the dailies and bringing vital issues into more leisurely focus. It gave two or more sides to contentious issues by quoting newspapers holding opposing opinions—important to a public that wished to be informed, but often done with tiresome verbosity.

Luce and Hadden thought they could do better with Facts, the working title of their creation.¹

... [They were not] satisfied with the title Facts, and Luce later said that it was he who hit on the title Time as he rode home on the subway in exhaustion late one night. Alas, the evidence trips him in a mendacity. A magazine named Time, edited by Edmund Yates, had been published in England from 1879 to 1890, with a distinctive logotype identical in its hand-lettered design with that taken by its American descendant, ...²

... [Luce and Hadden] consulted Melville Stone, the recently retired head of the Associated Press, as to the propriety of lifting news from daily papers. Stone assured them that news was public property after a day or two of aging. ... The trio slaved over a prospectus that buttered the upper-crust educators and financiers from whom they would solicit prestige and capital. It warned them that they risked being unenlightened because until then "NO PUBLICATION HAS ADAPTED ITSELF TO THE TIME WHICH BUSY MEN ARE ABLE TO SPEND ON SIMPLY KEEPING INFORMED." Time would inform them swiftly

because of its condensation and systematic organization of the news.³

. . . The first issue of Time, after more than a year of preparation, was dated March 3, 1923.⁴

The purpose of Time, said the New York Herald Tribune in a two-paragraph notice hidden on page 7, "is to summarize the week's news in the shortest possible space." It compressed the world's events into twenty-eight pages, minus six pages of advertisements sold at give-away rates. Although this was a time of big news—the American quarrel over Prohibition, the French occupation of the Ruhr, the German protests, the turmoils of the League, the famine in Russia—Time's account of it all could be easily read in a half-hour.

It was of course not for people who really wanted to be informed. It was for people willing to spend a half-hour to avoid being entirely uninformed. The editors so well redeemed their promise of brevity that Time seemed the capsulized abridgment of a condensation. Yet, considering the youth of its founders and the hectic conditions of its production, it was a surprising achievement.⁵

At the time Luce and Hadden began publishing their newsmagazine they probably never dreamed that TIME would soon overtake the *Literary Digest* and later take it over. This was reported in an article in TIME under the heading, "*Digest* Digested," and stated:

After a life of 48 years, during which it achieved a unique place in U.S. journalism, the *Literary Digest* last week was taken over by TIME, thus ceasing to exist as a separate publication. First issue of the *Literary Digest* appeared on March 1, 1890. Its publishers, Isaac Kauffman Funk & Adam Willis Wagnalls, classmates at Wittenberg College (Springfield, Ohio) and ordained Lutheran ministers, conceived the magazine as "a repository of contemporaneous thought and research as presented in the periodical literature of the world." In 1905, this formula was extended to include newspaper comment on the news. . . . On February 24 it suspended publication.⁶

The cover of TIME's first issue on March 3, 1923, portrayed the U.S. Congressman, Joseph Gurney Cannon, who was retiring at the age of 86. About this choice James A. Linen wrote:

TIME's young founders, Henry R. Luce and Briton Hadden, had asked advertising agency friends for advice on the art layout for their first cover. During this consultation, they decided to use the portrait of a personality outstanding in the current news—a TIME tradition ever since.⁷

Because of his impending retirement from the U.S. House of Representatives after having served twenty-three terms, Cannon seemed the obvious choice for the cover. TIME's first cover story was entitled "Uncle Joe" and reads thusly in its entirety:

Joseph Gurney Cannon, grand old man of Congress, will retire from public life. At the age of 86, having served 23 terms in the House of Representatives, he feels that he has earned the right to spend the rest of his life in the quiet seclusion of Danville, Illinois. Uncle Joe is something more than a politician with an age-record.

He is the embodiment of a tradition, a political theory, a technique of party government and discipline that is fast perishing. He represents the Old Guard in the very flower of its maturity, in the palmy days of McKinley and Mark Hanna, when "a little group of wilful men" did more than make gestures of government; they actually ruled Congress, shrewdly, impregably, and without too much rhetoric.

Uncle Joe in those days was Speaker of the House and supreme dictator of the Old Guard. Never did a man employ the office of Speaker with less regard for its theoretical impartiality. To Uncle Joe the Speakership was a gift from heaven, immaculately born into the Constitution by the will of the fathers for the divine purpose of perpetuating the dictatorship of the stand-patters in the Republican Party. And he followed the divine call with a resolute evangelism that was no mere voice crying in the wilderness, but a voice that forbade anybody else to cry out—out of turn.

On March 4 Uncle Joe will be gone and Henry Cabot Lodge alone will remain to carry on the banner of the ideal. To the American people, however, the senior Senator from Massachusetts must perforce seem a little too genteel, too cold, too Back Bay to serve as an adequate trustee for the Old Guard tradition. They will long for the homely democracy of Mr. Cannon, so often expressed by those homely democratic symbols—Uncle Joe's black cigar and thumping quid.⁸

TIME was quite popular from the very beginning and seems to have met a need of the American public for just such a newsmagazine, because in 1929 readers were asking for lifetime subscriptions. There were three letters published in the May 27, 1929, issue (page 4). Mr. Bigelow Green of Boston stated, "I should be interested to have you quote me a 'life' subscription to TIME . . .," and George P. Jenks of Germantown, Pa., opined,

I think you fail to appreciate the calibre of most of your subscribers. Has it ever occurred to you that some of them would prefer to take out a life subscription at \$100 now than be bothered every year about renewing? Think it over TIME. Meanwhile here's my check for \$8 for another two years.

Also, Miss Dagmar Edwards of Brooklyn asked, "If you ever give out Life Subscription Blanks please don't forget me, as yours is the only magazine of its type that I have found I enjoy reading from cover to cover—reading many things which are not only good for me but entertaining." To these three letters the Editor responded: "Do other TIME subscribers want 'life' subscriptions? If there is sufficient interest to warrant establishing a life subscription rate, it shall be done forthwith."

In the June 10, 1929, issue there appeared more letters of the kind given above. The Editor's response in that same issue (page 8) was, "A Perpetual (that is, to the end of TIME) and Inheritable Subscription would cost little more than a life subscription. TIME's decisions will await further comment from subscribers." In the following three issues (June 17, June 24 and July 1, 1929) there appeared more correspondence from readers on the subject and by this time TIME had made the

decision not to offer a “life” subscription, but rather a “perpetual” subscription. The coupon that appeared in these three issues reads:

In announcing a Perpetual TIME Subscription, the publishers believe their action is without precedent in Publishing history. Life Subscriptions there have been. But the thought of TIME's being limited to a single lifetime is incongruous. TIME is timeless and so, too, is TIME's Perpetual Subscription.

Sixty dollars, payable at the expiration of your present subscription, will bring TIME to you during your lifetime—to your heir and his heir—to the end of TIME.

Perpetual Subscriptions are transferable, inheritable, non-cancellable. Enter your Perpetual Subscription now—when your present subscription expires you will receive a bill for \$60. Once paid, TIME will forever after bring to you and your descendants all the news of all the world—every week—to the end of TIME.

How many persons took advantage of this fantastic offer has not been ascertained by this writer, but according to James A. Linen in “A Letter from the Publisher” (Jan. 23, 1950, page 7) there were 189 ongoing perpetual subscriptions at that time. One may think that \$60 was a very cheap price when today's annual subscription rate is \$31 a year, but in the summer of 1929 wages were not high, nice apartments in Washington, D.C., were renting for \$40 to \$80 a month, and a new Pontiac Six was selling for \$745. Grocery ads announced bread at 9¢ a loaf; a 24-pound bag of flour, 95¢; milk, 13¢ a quart; and six pounds of cabbage for 15¢. This outstanding offer was made for a very short time and then withdrawn forever, but the fact that readers were desirous of such an offer does prove TIME's positive impact on the American public during its early years.

Thus it can be seen that from the very early years TIME was very well received and its popularity seems not to have diminished over the years, but rather to have increased considerably. TIME replaced the old *Literary Digest*, and now it is TIME that is found in every respectable place and “assigned to high school and college students for its coverage of current events.”

- Notes: 1. Swanberg, W.A. *Luce and his empire*. New York: Scribner's, 1972, p. 50.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 53
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 56
5. *Ibid.*, p. 57
6. TIME, May 23, 1938, p. 46.
7. TIME, Apr. 30, 1956, p. 15.
8. TIME, Mar. 3, 1923, p. 2.

CHAPTER 2

THE STUDY: ITS SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

Since that first issue of TIME with "Uncle Joe" Cannon on the cover many other persons and topics have been depicted to point out the person or topic of the week. TIME's subtitle is "the weekly newsmagazine" indicating that the purpose is to keep the American people informed about national and international news once a week. The cover illustration is used to indicate the important news story of the week. This has been explained by John A. Linen in editorials which appeared under the heading, "A letter from the publisher," in which he stated:

Being on the cover of TIME can, in its way, be a recognition of position of fine achievement—but not necessarily. TIME's gallery of cover subjects, as varied as life itself, is composed of men and women well remembered and long forgotten. The criterion for being on the cover was, and has always been, that they were news.⁹

Many . . . [readers] have written to ask why TIME has on occasion "honored" the enemies of the U.S. by placing them on the cover. The answer: TIME's covers reflect the news.¹⁰

A starting point for this study was the publication *TIME faces in the news*, which reproduced in miniature form 2,812 TIME covers and on the back cover of which the editors wrote:

For fifty years, the faces on TIME have been the faces of the world. The makers of peace and war, the prophets, merchants and creators, the rebels and kings, the heroes of the age or of the moment—they are the cast of TIME's cover characters. Occasionally, a cover picture will symbolize an event, a trend or an idea. But always the individual reappears. For TIME believes that history is made by men and women, no matter how strong the forces and movements that carry them along. TIME also believes that history has meaning, that the rush of events can be grasped, reported and interpreted in an organized pattern.¹¹

In the light of these comments it can be assumed that the person or topic on each week's cover is the newsmaker of the week. An accumulation of these covers would therefore point out the persons and topics which have been the newsmakers of any given period.

This study covers the period from March 3, 1923, to January 3, 1977, a period of almost 54 years during which time 2,814 issues (regular and special) of TIME were published. These dates were chosen because the first issue of TIME was dated March 3, 1923, and as the study was first begun in March of 1977 it was decided to include the years 1923 to 1976. The first issue of 1977 was also included in order to incorporate the cover for the Man of the Year of 1976. This author is basing the study on the idea that IF each of TIME's covers portrays the "newsmaker" of the week (albeit a person or a topic)

THEN an analysis of a cumulation of 2,814 covers would point out the persons and topics that have been the "newsmakers" in the American news during this 54-year period. If each of TIME's covers does indeed depict the most newsworthy person (or persons) or topic of the week, then some very interesting questions arise, such as: (1) Who were the people that appeared the most times? (2) Which topics have most frequently been on the covers? (3) Is there any professional or occupational group that has dominated TIME's covers? (4) Since TIME is an American newsmagazine are foreigners often on its covers? (5) Are women, blacks or other such groups considered newsworthy enough to make TIME's covers very often? and (6) Are non-living persons ever represented on the covers? The following analysis of TIME's covers will answer these questions and many more about the persons and topics which have been selected to appear on the covers of this weekly newsmagazine.

The original published form of the cover of every issue was perused, except in a few cases where it was necessary to utilize microfilm copy. This perusal included a complete examination of the cover, and often required reading the cover story to determine who was on the cover. Sometimes it was necessary to compare cover figures with other sources in order to identify those whose likenesses were on the covers. The covers used were those of the standard U.S. edition. There are several editions of TIME each week and not all editions have the same cover, especially the foreign editions which often have different covers as well as different cover stories for the same issue published and distributed in the United States.

The person may have been represented by a photograph, drawing, painting, sculpture, caricature, or by any other means through which his (or her) likeness was either identifiable by this author or identified by TIME. On those covers where more than one person appeared NO importance was given to the fact that (1) certain persons were the primary topics while others were placed in a secondary or background position, and (2) often two or more persons were presented as the primary topics and of equal importance for the cover theme. Sometimes the person's appearance was just incidental to the topic of the cover, but this author made no attempt to determine which persons were on the covers by design and who by chance. The only determining factors used were that a likeness of the person did appear on the cover and the person was identifiable. Thusly any person who was represented in any form whatsoever and was identifiable was accorded full treatment in this study as a person appearing on a cover. Such covers were considered as "person" covers.

A "topical" cover is one on which no identified or identifiable person appears. Often models are used to illustrate a cover story; if they were identified then the cover was considered as a "person" cover, but on the other hand, if they were not identified or identifiable, it was considered as a "topical" cover.

No attempt was made to classify covers by topics when there were identified persons on them. Animals were consistently considered as "topics" even though they were identified by name.

Of the 2,814 covers analyzed in this study there were 2,613 which depicted 3,336 identified persons and 201 covers which were classified as "topical" because no identified or identifiable person appeared thereon. The number of persons on each cover ranges from one to twenty-seven, thus explaining why there are 723 more persons than there are "person" covers. Among these 3,336 "persons" there are many "individuals" who appeared more than once. In those cases where a person's likeness was reproduced two or more times on the same cover he was considered as "one person" on that cover, e.g., several photographs of Howard Hughes were used for the cover of the Jan. 24, 1972, issue, but Hughes was counted as appearing once on that cover; a photograph of Nixon was replicated ten times on the cover of Oct. 24, 1969—it was counted as a cover portraying a single person.

Even though the terms "person" and "individual" are synonymous they have been used with different meanings in this study. People who appeared more than once are considered as a "person" for each cover appearance, but as an "individual" when referred to by name, e.g., Richard Nixon appeared fifty-five times and this was counted as fifty-five persons appearing on the covers, but when referred to by name he is considered as a single individual. In his case he is an "individual" who accounts for 1.65 percent of all the "persons" on the 2,613 covers depicting identified people. Thusly there are 2,344 "individuals" who comprise the 3,336 "persons."

A file card was made for each identified person on all covers published from Mar. 3, 1923, to Jan. 3, 1977. Every time the same individual appeared a new file card was made. Each of these 3,336 cards contained the following information: (1) name, as currently known at the time of this study, (2) age at the time of his appearance on the cover, (3) birth and death dates, (4) profession, occupation or position at the time he "made" *TIME's* cover, (5) nationality, (6) date of the issue on which he appeared, and (7) other biographical data relevant to the person such as sex, race and reason for appearing on the cover when it could be determined. All biographical data were gathered from standard reference sources, viz., biographical dictionaries and directories, general and specialized encyclopedias, biographies, indexes, newspapers, periodicals, etc. Perhaps one of the most frequently consulted sources was the cover story from the issues of *TIME*. *TIME* was considered as a reliable reference source for biographical data and in many cases was the only source used when all necessary data were found in the "cover story."

The information from each of the 3,537 cards (3,336 “person” and 201 “topical” cards) was coded and keypunched for computer analysis. The results from the computer printout analysis formed the basis for most of the various items included in this study.

Notes: 9. *TIME*, June 22, 1959, p. 9.

10. *TIME*, Oct. 20, 1952, p. 17.

11. *TIME faces in the news: a gallery of 2810 [i.e., 2812] TIME cover paintings and photographs*. New York: *TIME*, Inc., 1976.

CHAPTER 3

THE COVERS

The following tables point out the number of persons which have been portrayed on each cover. Table 1 shows the total number of persons which have appeared on the 2,814 covers; Tables 2-A to 2-F show the breakdown for each of the six periods into which this study was divided; and Table 3 is a summary of the foregoing ones. The inclusive dates for each of the six periods are:

1. Mar. 3, 1923 - Dec. 28, 1931
2. Jan. 4, 1932 - Dec. 30, 1940
3. Jan. 6, 1941 - Dec. 26, 1949
4. Jan. 2, 1950 - Dec. 29, 1958
5. Jan. 5, 1959 - Dec. 29, 1967
6. Jan. 5, 1968 - Jan. 3, 1977

TABLE 1.—Number of Persons on Each Cover for the Six Periods, Mar. 3, 1923, to Jan. 3, 1977

2,334 covers with	1 person	= 2,334 persons
153 covers with	2 persons	= 306 persons
44 covers with	3 persons	= 132 persons
25 covers with	4 persons	= 100 persons
16 covers with	5 persons	= 80 persons
14 covers with	6 persons	= 84 persons
7 covers with	7 persons	= 49 persons
2 covers with	8 persons	= 16 persons
5 covers with	9 persons	= 45 persons
2 covers with	10 persons	= 20 persons
1 cover with	11 persons	= 11 persons
4 covers with	12 persons	= 48 persons
1 cover with	13 persons	= 13 persons
2 covers with	15 persons	= 30 persons
1 cover with	20 persons	= 20 persons
1 cover with	21 persons	= 21 persons
1 cover with	27 persons	= 27 persons
<hr/>		
2,613 covers with		3,336 persons
201 topical covers		
2,814 covers		

TABLE 2-A.—Number of Persons on Each Cover for Period 1, Mar. 3, 1923, to Dec. 28, 1931

437 covers with	1 person	= 437 persons
12 covers with	2 persons	= 24 persons
4 covers with	3 persons	= 12 persons
1 cover with	4 persons	= 4 persons
1 cover with	5 persons	= 5 persons
1 cover with	9 persons	= 9 persons
<hr/>		
456 covers with		491 persons
5 topical covers		
461 covers		

TABLE 2-B.—Number of Persons on Each Cover for Period 2, Jan. 4, 1932, to Dec. 30, 1940

433 covers with	1 person	= 433 persons
19 covers with	2 persons	= 38 persons
3 covers with	3 persons	= 9 persons
4 covers with	4 persons	= 16 persons
2 covers with	5 persons	= 10 persons
2 covers with	6 persons	= 12 persons
1 cover with	7 persons	= 7 persons
464 covers with	525 persons
6 topical covers		
470 covers		

TABLE 2-C.—Number of Persons on Each Cover for Period 3, Jan. 6, 1941, to Dec. 26, 1949

437 covers with	1 person	= 437 persons
16 covers with	2 persons	= 32 persons
5 covers with	3 persons	= 15 persons
1 cover with	4 persons	= 4 persons
1 cover with	6 persons	= 6 persons
460 covers with	494 persons
9 topical covers		
469 covers		

TABLE 2-D.—Number of Persons on Each Cover for Period 4, Jan. 2, 1950, to Dec. 29, 1958

414 covers with	1 person	= 414 persons
22 covers with	2 persons	= 44 persons
7 covers with	3 persons	= 21 persons
2 covers with	4 persons	= 8 persons
1 cover with	7 persons	= 7 persons
1 cover with	10 persons	= 10 persons
447 covers with	504 persons
23 topical covers		
470 covers		
