**Watergate: The Scandal That Brought Down Richard Nixon**

**“Watergate” is a general term used to describe a complex web of political scandals between 1972 and 1974. The word specifically refers to the Watergate Hotel in Washington D.C** [**THE BURGLARY**](http://watergate.info/burglary)

*Watergate* has entered the political lexicon as a term synonymous with corruption and scandal, yet the Watergate Hotel is one of Washington’s plushest hotels. Even today, it is home to former Senator Bob Dole and was once the place where Monica Lewinsky laid low. It was here that the Watergate Burglars broke into the Democratic Party’s National Committee offices on June 17, 1972. If it had not been for the alert actions of Frank Wills, a security guard, the scandal may never have erupted. [MORE](http://watergate.info/burglary)

[**CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS**](http://watergate.info/chronology)
The story of Watergate has an intriguing historical and political background, arising out of political events of the 1960s such as Vietnam, and the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1970. But the chronology of the scandal really begins during 1972, when the burglars were arrested. By 1973, Nixon had been re-elected, but the storm clouds were building. By early 1974, the nation was consumed by Watergate. [MORE](http://watergate.info/chronology)

[**RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON**](http://watergate.info/nixon)
Richard Milhous Nixon is one of the most fascinating political figures of the 20th Century. His long political career began in 1947 when he was elected to the House of Representatives. By 1952, Nixon had been chosen as Dwight Eisenhower’s vice-presidential running mate, but not before he was embroiled in a scandal that led to the infamous Checkers Speech.

Nixon served as Vice-President for eight years, then lost the 1960 election to John F. Kennedy. He recovered from political defeat to be chosen again as the Republican Party’s candidate at the 1968 election. Following a year of turmoil, including two political assassinations, Nixon became the nation’s 37th President on January 20, 1969. Later that year, he delivered his ‘Silent Majority’ speech on the Vietnam War, articulating his belief that the bulk of the American people supported his policies and programs. He was vindicated by winning a landslide re-election. He was sworn in for a second term in Janury 1973. [MORE](http://watergate.info/nixon)

[**NIXON REACTS TO WATERGATE**](http://watergate.info/nixon/speeches.shtml)
Nixon made three major speeches on the Watergate scandal during 1973 and 1974. The first was on April 30, 1973, in which he announced the departure of Dean, Haldeman and Ehrlichman. A more defiant speech was delivered on August 15, 1973. Perhaps the politically most difficult speech was the one on April 29, 1974, in which Nixon released partial transcripts of the White House tapes. [MORE](http://watergate.info/nixon/speeches.shtml)

[**THE INVESTIGATIONS**](http://watergate.info/impeachment)
Initial investigations of Watergate were heavily influenced by the media, particularly the work of two reporters from the *Washington Post,* Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, along with their mysterious informant, Deep Throat.

Political investigations began in February 1973 when the Senate established a Committee to investigate the Watergate scandal. The public hearings of the Committee were sensational, including the evidence of John Dean, Nixon’s former White House Counsel. The Committee also uncovered the existence of the secret White House tape recordings, sparking a major political and legal battle between the Congress and the President.

In 1974, the House of Representatives authorised the Judiciary Committee to consider impeachment proceedings against Nixon. The work of this Committee was again the spotlight a quarter of a century later when Bill Clinton was impeached. [MORE](http://watergate.info/impeachment)

[**THE FINAL DAYS**](http://watergate.info/nixon/resignation-letter.shtml)
Nixon’s last days in office came in late July and early August, 1974. The House Judiciary Committee voted to accept three of four proposed Articles of Impeachment, with some Republicans voting with Democrats to recommend impeachment of the President.

The final blow came with the decision by the Supreme Court to order Nixon to release more White House tapes. One of these became known as the ‘smoking gun’ tape when it revealed that Nixon had participated in the Watergate cover-up as far back as June 23, 1972. Around the country, there were calls for Nixon to resign.

At 9pm on the evening of August 8, 1974, Nixon delivered a nationally televised resignation speech. The next morning, he made his final remarks to the White House staff before sending his resignation letter to the Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger. [MORE](http://watergate.info/nixon/resignation-letter.shtml)

[**GERALD FORD – THE MAN WHO PARDONED NIXON**](http://watergate.info/ford)
Gerald Ford became the 38th President of the United States when Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974. He was the first Vice-President and the first President to ascend to both positions without being elected. Regarded on all sides of politics as a decent man, Ford will be remembered for his controversial pardon of Richard Nixon. [MORE](http://watergate.info/ford)

[**THE AFTERMATH OF WATERGATE**](http://watergate.info/aftermath)
Watergate had profound consequences in the United States. There was a long list of convictions and other casualties. For example, the aftermath of Watergate ushered in changes in campaign finance reform and a more aggressive attitude by the media. By the time the 25th anniversary of Watergate occurred in 1997, a vast library of books and films existed. Watergate’s influence was felt in the Clinton Impeachment of 1998-99.

Nixon died in 1994 and was eulogised by the political establishment, although he was still a figure of controversy.

The investigations into Watergate that led to the resignation of Richard Nixon are a case study in the operation of the American Constitution and political values. [MORE](http://watergate.info/aftermath)