In this month's recap: Stocks closed the year with a solid rally, fueled by the rollout of multiple COVID-19 vaccines and the signing of a new fiscal relief bill.

Monthly Economic Update

Presented by Paula D. Porsch CPA, CRPC, CDFA
January 2021

U.S. Markets

A tumultuous year ended on a positive note as stocks rose in December, spurred by the rollout of multiple COVID-19 vaccines and the signing of a new fiscal relief bill.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which lagged all year, picked up 3.27 percent. The Standard & Poor's 500 Index gained 3.71 percent, and the Nasdaq Composite tacked on 5.65 percent.[1]

Vaccines Take Center Stage

Investors were buffeted by news of rising infections and new lockdowns even as they kept a close eye on the start of vaccine distribution in the U.K., which some observers referred to as "the beginning of the end" of the coronavirus pandemic.

Boost from the Stimulus Package

Much like November, stocks rallied when Congress made progress on the new fiscal stimulus bill but pulled back as talks seemed to stall. After some posturing, President Trump signed the new law, which helped stocks surge in the final week of trading.

All Eyes on the Election

As investors grappled with these headline issues, markets also saw several new and secondary equity offerings, including two high-profile technology initial public offerings (IPOs) during the month. This year, companies raised over $167 billion in IPOs, blowing past the record of $107.9 billion set in 1999.[2]

Sector Scorecard

The majority of industry sectors posted gains in December, including Communication Services (+2.35 percent), Consumer Discretionary (+2.18 percent), Consumer Staples (+0.10 percent), Energy (+3.97 percent), Financials (+4.45 percent), Health Care (+2.30 percent), Industrials (+0.12 percent), Materials (+1.58 percent), and Technology (+5.14 percent). The Real Estate (-1.04 percent) and Utilities (-1.69 percent) sectors lost ground.[3]

What Investors May Be Talking About in January

After the November election, markets rallied due to initial tallies that seemed to point to a potentially divided government, which historically has been a positive for the equity markets.[4]

However, Georgia's two Senate seats remain undecided and will go to a special election this month.

Ultimately, this runoff will determine which party controls the Senate and may give insight into the future legislative agenda of the incoming Biden administration.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Check your credit report annually for errors. Under federal law, you are entitled to a free annual credit reports from the big 3 credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) each year.

World Markets

International stocks enjoyed a strong month of performance, with the MSCI EAFE Index gaining 5.24 percent.[5]

Vaccine optimism and an exit agreement between the European Union and the U.K. helped power the markets.

Germany gained 3.22 percent while the United Kingdom picked up 3.10 percent. France lagged a bit, tacking on 0.60 percent.[6]

Pacific Rim markets also enjoyed a solid month. The Hang Seng Index rose 3.38 percent and the Nikkei tacked on 3.82 percent.[7]

Indicators

Gross Domestic Product: The final read on third quarter GDP was revised higher, from 33.1 percent to 33.4 percent.[8]

Employment: Nonfarm payrolls rose by a disappointing 245,000 in November. The unemployment rate ticked lower, falling from 6.9 percent to 6.7 percent. The labor-force participation rate was 61.5 percent, which is an improvement from April's low but remains at a historically low level.[9]

Retail Sales: Retail sales fell 1.1 percent in November, showing a slowdown in consumer spending amid economic lockdowns and continued uncertainty. October's retail sales number was revised downward, from an increase of 0.3 percent to a decline of 0.1 percent.[10]

Industrial Production: Rising for the seventh consecutive month, industrial output picked up 0.4 percent in November, powered by a 0.8 percent leap in manufacturing.[11]

Housing: Housing starts reached a nine-month high, rising 1.2 percent in November.[12]

Existing home sales declined 2.5 percent in November. It was the first decline in six months.[13]

New home sales slumped 11.0 percent compared to last month, but were 20.8 percent higher than in November 2019.[14]

Consumer Price Index: Prices of consumer goods and services rose by 0.2 percent in November, leaving the year-over-year inflation rate at 1.2 percent.[15]

Durable Goods Orders: Durable goods orders rose by 0.9 percent, marking the seventh consecutive month of gains.[16]

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Of all the hazards, fear is the worst."

SAM SNEAD

The Fed

In its last meeting of 2020, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) detailed its plan to continue purchasing $120 billion in Treasury and mortgage-backed securities.[17]

Fed officials said that they will continue the program until they see substantial progress toward meeting its inflation and employment goals. Officials at the Fed have indicated that achieving such goals may not happen for years.[17]

MARKET INDEX	Y-T-D CHANGE	December 2020
DJIA	7.25%	3.27%
NASDAQ	43.64%	5.65%
S&P 500	16.26%	3.71%

BOND YIELD	Y-T-D	December 2020
10 YR TREASURY	-1.00%	0.92%

Sources: Yahoo Finance, December 31, 2020

The market indexes discussed are unmanaged and generally considered representative of their respective markets. Individuals cannot directly invest in unmanaged indexes. Past performance does not guarantee future results. U.S. Treasury Notes are guaranteed by the federal government as to the timely payment of principal and interest. However, if you sell a Treasury Note prior to maturity, it may be worth more or less than the original price paid.

THE MONTHLY RIDDLE

What do the following six words have in common: fast, away, water, through, down, neck?

LAST MONTH'S RIDDLE: Daryl weighs 120 pounds more than his sister Julianne. Their combined weight is 180 pounds. How many pounds does Daryl weigh?

ANSWER: 150 lbs.

Paula Porsch may be reached at (816) 221-1606 or pporsch@paulaporsch.com
http://www.paulaporsch.com

Know someone who could use information like this?

Please feel free to send us their contact information via phone or email. (Don't worry – we'll request their permission before adding them to our mailing list.)

Securities offered through Cetera Advisor Networks LLC, member FINRA/SIPC. Advisory services offered through Summit Financial Group, Inc., a registered investment adviser. Summit and Cetera are affiliated and under separate ownership from any other named entity

This material was prepared by MarketingPro, Inc., and does not necessarily represent the views of the presenting party, nor their affiliates. The information herein has been derived from sources believed to be accurate. Please note - investing involves risk, and past performance is no guarantee of future results. Investments will fluctuate and when redeemed may be worth more or less than when originally invested. This information should not be construed as investment, tax or legal advice and may not be relied on for the purpose of avoiding any Federal tax penalty. This is neither a solicitation nor recommendation to purchase or sell any investment or insurance product or service, and should not be relied upon as such. All market indices discussed are unmanaged and are not illustrative of any particular investment. Indices do not incur management fees, costs, or expenses. Investors cannot invest directly in indices. All economic and performance data is historical and not indicative of future results. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a price-weighted index of 30 actively traded blue-chip stocks. The NASDAQ Composite Index is a market-weighted index of all over-the-counter common stocks traded on the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation System. The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is a market-cap weighted index composed of the common stocks of 500 leading companies in leading industries of the U.S. economy. The Russell 2000 Index measures the performance of the small-cap segment of the U.S. equity universe. The CBOE Volatility Index® (VIX®) is a key measure of market expectations of near-term volatility conveyed by S&P 500 stock index option prices. NYSE Group, Inc. (NYSE:NYX) operates two securities exchanges: the New York Stock Exchange (the "NYSE") and NYSE Arca (formerly known as the Archipelago Exchange, or ArcaEx®, and the Pacific Exchange). NYSE Group is a leading provider of securities listing, trading and market data products and services. The New York Mercantile Exchange, Inc. (NYMEX) is the world's largest physical commodity futures exchange and the preeminent trading forum for energy and precious metals, with trading conducted through two divisions – the NYMEX Division, home to the energy, platinum, and palladium markets, and the COMEX Division, on which all other metals trade. The SSE Composite Index is an index of all stocks (A shares and B shares) that are traded at the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The CAC-40 Index is a narrow-based, modified capitalization-weighted index of 40 companies listed on the Paris Bourse. The FTSEurofirst 300 Index comprises the 300 largest companies ranked by market capitalisation in the FTSE Developed Europe Index. The FTSE 100 Index is a share index of the 100 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange with the highest market capitalization. Established in January 1980, the All Ordinaries is the oldest index of shares in Australia. It is made up of the share prices for 500 of the largest companies listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. The S&P/TSX Composite Index is an index of the stock (equity) prices of the largest companies on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) as measured by market capitalization. The Hang Seng Index is a free float-adjusted market capitalization-weighted stock market index that is the main indicator of the overall market performance in Hong Kong. The FTSE TWSE Taiwan 50 Index is a capitalization-weighted index of stocks comprises 50 companies listed on the Taiwan Stock Exchange developed by Taiwan Stock Exchange in collaboration with FTSE. The MSCI World Index is a free-float weighted equity index that includes developed world markets and does not include emerging markets. The Mexican Stock Exchange, commonly known as Mexican Bolsa, Mexbol, or BMV, is the only stock exchange in Mexico. The U.S. Dollar Index measures the performance of the U.S. dollar against a basket of six currencies. Additional risks are associated with international investing, such as currency fluctuations, political and economic instability and differences in accounting standards. This material represents an assessment of the market environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. MarketingPro, Inc. is not affiliated with any person or firm that may be providing this information to you. The publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional services. If assistance is needed, the reader is advised to engage the services of a competent professional.

CITATIONS:

1. The Wall Street Journal, December 31, 2020
2. The Wall Street Journal, December 30, 2020
3. FactSet Research, December 31, 2020
4. HartfordFunds.com, October 2020. “The Election and Your Portfolio.”
5. MSCI.com, December 31, 2020
6. MSCI.com, December 31, 2020
7. MSCI.com, December 31, 2020
8. CNBC.com, December 22, 2020
9. CNBC.com, December 4, 2020
10. TheNewYorkTimes.com, December 16, 2020
11. FederalReserve.gov, December 15, 2020
12. CNBC.com, December 17, 2020
13. CNBC.com, December 22, 2020
14. Census.gov, December 23, 2020
15. BureauOfLaborStatistics.gov, December 10, 2020
16. AdvisorPerspectives.com, December 24, 2020
17. CNBC.com, December 11, 2020