The early Donald Duck had a different appearance in the mid 1930s, as seen in this page from *Walt Disney Annual*, published by Whitman in 1937, a reprint of a 1934 issue of *Good Housekeeping*.

*Donald Duck*, a cartoon character created by the Walt Disney Company, is today the star of dozens of comic-book and comic-strip stories published each month (in certain parts of the world, each week).
Early Development

Early Debut

Donald may well have made his first printed appearance in *Mickey Mouse Annual* 3 (published 1932; the annual for 1933), a 128-page British hardback. This book included the poem *Mickey's Hoozoo, Witswitch and Wotswot*, which listed all of Mickey's then-current barnyard animal friends (most of Disney's major characters developed out of this barnyard scenario). Among them was a duckling named Donald Duck. Besides the name, however, there is little similarity between this character and the one introduced in *The Wise Little Hen* during 1934. *Mickey Mouse Annual* 3 was drawn entirely by Wilfred Haughton.

Comic Strip Debut

The Donald of *The Wise Little Hen* made his printed debut in the newspaper comic strip adaptation of that cartoon. It was released between September 16 and December 16, 1934 in the *Silly Symphonies* Sunday pages by Ted Osborne and Al Taliaferro. On February 10, 1935, Donald appeared in the *Mickey Mouse* daily strip by Ted Osborne and Floyd Gottfredson.

Featured Character

A supporting character in Mickey's strip, Donald came to dominate the *Silly Symphonies* strips between...
August 30, 1936 and December 12, 1937: At the time, Ted Osborne was credited as writer and Al Taliaferro as artist and inker. Later studies of their work, however, show that Taliaferro probably contributed plot ideas and gags as well. The duo turned Donald from a countryman to a city dweller. They also introduced the first members of The Duck family other than Donald himself, namely Donald’s identical triplet nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie, who debuted on October 17, 1937. The sons of his sister Della Duck (his sister in the animated shorts), the triplets were sent to spend some time with him as guests while their father recovered at the hospital from their latest prank. Nevertheless, Donald ended up serving as their adoptive parent.

### Comic Book Debut

At this time the first Donald Duck stories which was originally created for a comic book made their appearance. In the United Kingdom, Fleetway also created original stories with Donald Duck. “Donald and Donna”, published in Mickey Mouse Weekly #67 (May 15, 1937) is the first Donald Duck adventure ever. The story was 15 pages long and published in weekly episodes. The last appeared on August 21, 1937. All episodes were drawn by William A. Ward.

Disney had also licensed the Italian publishing house Mondadori to create stories with the Disney characters as their stars. The first to star Donald, under his Italian name Paolino Paperino, was “Paolino Paperino e il mistero di Marte” (later reprinted in the United States as “The Secret of Mars”, Donald Duck 286) by Federico Pedrocchi, first published on December 30, 1937. The story was only 18 pages long and crude by later standards, but it is credited as the first to feature Donald in an adventuring rather than a comedic role. It is also the first of many to depict Donald as a space traveler, in this case traveling to Mars (see Mars in fiction).

### Developments Under Taliaferro

Back in the USA, Donald finally became the star of his own newspaper comic strip. The Donald Duck daily strip started on February 2, 1938, and the Donald Duck Sunday page began December 10, 1939. Taliaferro drew both, this time co-operating with writer Bob Karp. Like before, Taliaferro continued to contribute plot ideas and gags, and some studies credit Taliaferro with most of the ideas that would turn his run of the strip into a so-called classic. He continued to work on the daily strip until October 10, 1968 and at the Sunday page until February 16, 1969.

Among other things, Taliaferro made several additions to Donald’s supporting cast. Bolivia, Donald’s petSt. Bernard first appeared in the strip on March 17, 1938, following his animated appearances in Alpine Climbers (July 25, 1936) and More Kittens (December 19, 1936). Donald’s second cousin Gus Goose, the son of Fanny Coot, made his first appearance on May 9, 1938—the first member of the Coot Kin to appear (he would make the leap to animation a year later in 1939’s Donald’s Cousin Gus). Daisy Duck first appeared in the strip on November 4, 1940, following her first proper animated appearance in Mr. Duck Steps Out, first released on June 7, 1940. Donald’s paternal grandmother Elvira (Elvira Coot, usually just called Grandma Duck) first appeared in a portrait on August 11, 1940 and in person on September 28, 1943. Taliaferro also reintroduced Donna Duck as a separate character from Daisy. This old flame of Donald rivaled Daisy for his affections between August 7, 1951 – August 18, 1951, before leaving him for another man. Though he did not create most of those characters, Taliaferro is credited with the development of their personalities as well as Donald’s own personality. It has been said that Taliaferro set the foundations for the later development of the character under Carl Barks and his successors.

### First Treasure Hunt

Donald had already been familiar to the American reading public through his newspaper comic strip by 1942. Then Disney licensed Western Publishing to create original comic book stories, with Disney characters as their stars. But the first American Donald Duck story originally created for a comic book was created by Studio-employed artists. More specifically it was Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold first published on October, 1942. The plot for the story had been originally suggested by Harry Reeves and Home Brightman, a cartoon that never reached production. The notes for the cartoon were given to Bob Karp, who had been assigned to write Western’s script. As intended, he used it as the basis for his story. Then it was given to Carl Barks and Jack Hannah to illustrate. Each of them drew half of the story’s 64 pages. More specifically Barks drew pages #1, 2, 5, 12-40. Hannah drew pages #3, 4, 6-11, 41-64. The story places Donald and his nephews on a treasure hunt for the lost treasure of Henry Morgan and it manages to combine elements of humor and adventure with dramatic moments and mystery rather well. Though it is an early drawing effort by Barks, his attention to detail is already visible. The script demanded him to draw a Harbor and a sailing ship. Barks decided to use issues of National Geographic, which he collected, as reference sources. The result was a largely accurate depiction of his subjects. Probably as a result of every person contributing in the story’s creation being more familiar with the standards of cartoons shorts and/or newspaper comic strips, rather than those of comic books, the story had very few dialogue scenes. The story is considered significant as both the first Donald story drawn by Barks for a comic book and the first to involve Donald in a treasure hunting expedition. Barks would later use the treasure-hunting theme in many of his own stories.

### Origins Of The Comic Book Version

Until this point, the development of both the animated and the comic strip version of Donald was the result of a combined effort by a number of different creators, rather than a single one, but the comic book version of Donald was mainly developed by Carl Barks beginning in 1943.

The comic version had already diverged from the animated one in a number of ways, as was the case with Mickey at the time. When Donald Duck gained his own separate newspaper comic strip, this meant that both he and his supporting characters had to be split off from the standard Disney cartoon world as featured in the Mickey Mouse strip. This same division between Mouse strips and Duck strips was generally followed in the comic books. This suited Barks who did not particularly like the Mouse stories. Carl later credited Floyd Gottfredson and his adventure stories for influencing his own work. However, he seemed to find Mickey and his supporting cast to be less than interesting as characters. In fact his only story with Mickey,
Barks largely did away with Donald's animated persona as a loafer, hothead whose main quality is his hardly understandable quacking. To make him suitable for a comic-book story, Barks redefined his personality, gave him articulated speech, and shaded emotions. To give Donald a world to live in, Barks developed the city of Duckburg in the American state of Calisota. He was allowed to focus entirely on his own cast of Duckburg citizens like the richest duck in the world, Uncle Scrooge McDuck, lucky cousin Gladstone Gander, and the peculiar inventor Gyro Gearloose. In the comics, Donald lives in a Duckburg house with Huey, Dewey and Louie Duck.

Much of this scenario would resurface in the 1987 television series DuckTales. In that cartoon, however, Donald works and lives as a sailor on an aircraft carrier, and Huey, Dewey and Louie live with Uncle Scrooge for a while.

**Early Developments Under Barks**

Barks quit working at the Studio and found employment at Western Publishing with a starting pay of twelve dollars and fifty cents per page. According to a later interview by Barks, the company originally expected him to illustrate stories based on the scripts of others. They had sent him a script along with the following note: “Here is a 10-page story for Donald Duck. Hope that you like it. You are to stage it, of course. And if you see that it can be strengthened, or that it deviates from Donald either in narration or action, please make the improvements.” Wanting to script his own stories, Barks started working on the script provided, freely changing whatever he wished. When he had finished with it, very little of the original remained. The story was The Victory Garden, first published in April, 1943. Barks had made his point by improving the original script beyond what had been expected of him. From then on, Barks both scripted and illustrated his stories.

His production during that year seems to be at the pace he would follow for much of the following decade. Eight 10-pagers to be published in Walt Disney’s Comics and Stories, published in a monthly basis, and a longer story for the sporadically published Donald Duck. In this case the story was The Mummy’s Ring, 28-pages long, first published in September, 1943. The shorter stories would usually focus on Donald’s everyday life and on comedy, while the longer ones were usually adventure stories set in exotic locales. The latter would often contain more dramatic elements and darker themes, and would place Donald and his nephews into dangerous and often near-fatal situations. To add realism to his illustration of those stories’ settings, Barks would still seek reference sources. The magazine National Geographic would usually provide most of the material he needed.

In both cases the stories presented Donald’s personality as having multiple aspects that would surface according to circumstance. Or as Barks would say later: “He was sometimes a villain, and he was often a real good guy and at all times he was just a blundering person like the average human being.” Adding another note of realism was the fact that Donald could end up being either the victor or the loser in his stories. And often even his victories were hollow. This gave a sense of realism to Donald’s character and the characters and situations around him.

His nephews accompanied him in those stories and Barks also gave many aspects to their personalities. In some cases they acted as the mischievous brats Taliaferro had introduced, often antagonizing their uncle. In some cases they got in trouble and Donald would have to save them. But in others they proved remarkably resourceful and inventive, often helping their uncle out of a difficult situation. But most of the time, they would appear to have developed a deeper understanding of things and level of maturity than their uncle.

**An Early Supporting-Cast Addition**

The first recurring character that Barks would introduce was Donald’s next-door Neighbor Jones. He was mentioned by name and made a cameo in Good Deeds, first published in July, 1943. He was mentioned as a neighbor who occasionally likes to harass, but more as a form of teasing than anything more serious. Then he made his first full appearance in Good Neighbors, first published on November 11, 1943. There Donald and he appear to have agreed to a truce. But when they misinterpret a number of chance events to be covert attacks by their respective neighbor, they resume their fighting with renewed determination. In the process of their backyard warfare, they almost managed to destroy each other’s houses. The Nephews, who had enough of this fighting, reported it to the houses’ owners. The two neighbors had to find new houses to rent. But to their disappointment, they found themselves as next-door neighbors. The fighting, not surprisingly, continues. Jones seems to always be in a bad mood and Donald just serves to make him angry. The two irrational and easily irritated neighbors would serve as the focus of a number of short stories. From 1947, Jones was also used by non-Barks comics writers; from the 1960s onward, he has frequently appeared in stories by a great number of authors.

**Introduction To Scrooge And Gladstone**

The next two recurring characters to be introduced by Barks were arguably more significant. Donald’s maternal uncle Scrooge McDuck made his first appearance in Christmas on Bear Mountain first published on December, 1947. The first member of The Clan McDuck to appear, his name was based on Ebenezer Scrooge, another fictional character from Charles Dickens’s A Christmas Carol. The story’s title was based on A Night on Bald Mountain by Modest Mussorgsky, a scene of Fantasia. Scrooge’s first appearance was almost immediately followed by that of Donald’s first cousin Gladstone Gander in Wintertime Wager, first published on January, 1948. In fact this is acknowledged in the stories’ internal chronology. The first story occurs on December 24, 1947 and has a scene occurring on the night of December 25, 1947. The second occurs on the morning of December 25, 1947.

Both characters didn’t yet have their familiar characteristics. Gladstone was presented as a rather arrogant cousin that had a claim on Donald’s house. More specifically, in summer he had gotten Donald to agree to
a wager. On Christmas he had to either swim in a lake near his house or to pass his house to Gladstone.

Gladstone does not yet lay claim to the title of _The Luckiest Duck in the World_ Daisy, who saves Donald from losing his house, still seems to have no interest in Gladstone. Their love triangle hadn't formed yet.

As for Scrooge, he was a bearded, bespectacled, reasonably wealthy old man who is visibly leaning on his cane. He was living in isolation in a Huge Mansion, which is said to be influenced by that present in Orson Welles's _Citizen Kane_. Concerning his sense of humor, he planned to entertain himself by inviting his nephews to his mountain cabin and then scaring them out of it.

**Developments On Gladstone**

In the following years both characters would become prominent members of Donald's supporting cast. In Gladstone's case, he soon started to rival his cousin in a number of personal wagers and organized contests. His alter-ego, a superhero called Paperinik in Italian, created by Guido Martin and Gian Battista Carpi. Giorgio Cavazzano and Carlo Chendi created Umerpio Bogarto (no consistent English name as of 2010), a detective whose name is an obvious parody on Humphrey Bogart. They also created OK Quack, an extraterrestrial Duck who landed on earth in a coin-shaped spaceship. When the ship shrank in size, OK Quack lost track of it among the coins in Scrooge's money bin. But OK befriended Scrooge and is now allowed to search through the bin time after time, looking for his ship.

Scrooge was soon established as a recurring character and various stories cast him as a featured character alongside Donald. By 1952, Scrooge had gained a magazine of his own. From then on Barks produced most of his longer stories in _Uncle Scrooge_ with Scrooge as their star and focusing on adventure, while his ten-pagers continued to feature Donald as their star and focused on comedy. Scrooge became the central figure of the stories while Donald and their nephews were cast as _Scrooge's Helpers_ hired helping-hands who followed Scrooge around the world. Other contemporary creators also reflected this change of focus from Donald to Scrooge in stories. Since then Scrooge remains the central figure of their Universe, coining the term Scrooge McDuck Universe.

**Losing Ground To Scrooge**

While Gladstone's development and establishment seemed to take about a year after his appearance, Barks continued to experiment with Scrooge's appearance and personality for the following four years. Barks would later claim that he originally only intended to use Scrooge as a one-shot character, but then he decided he could prove useful in further stories.

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**Further Developments**

Barks wasn't the only author to develop Donald. All over the world hundreds of other authors have used the character, sometimes with great results.

For example the Disney Studio artists, who made comics directly for the European market. Two of them, Dick Kinney and Al Hubbard created Donald's cousin Fethry Duck, an obsessive dreamer with a love of discovering new lifestyles and hobbies. Fethry remains one of the most popular Duck characters in Italy and Brazil, frequently carrying his own comic book title in the latter.

The American artists Vic Lockman and Tony Strobl, who were working directly for the American comic books, created Moby Duck.

Italian publisher Mondadori created many of the stories that were published throughout Europe. They also introduced numerous new characters who are today well known in Europe. One example is Donald Duck's alter-ego, a superhero called Paperinik in Italian, created by Guido Martin and Gian Battista Carpi.

Giorgio Cavazzano and Carlo Chendi created Umerpio Bogarto (no consistent English name as of 2010), a detective whose name is an obvious parody on Humphrey Bogart. They also created OK Quack, an extraterrestrial Duck who landed on earth in a coin-shaped spaceship. When the ship shrank in size, OK Quack lost track of it among the coins in Scrooge's money bin. But OK befriended Scrooge and is now allowed to search through the bin time after time, looking for his ship.

Romano Scarpa a very important and influential Italian Disney artist, created Brigitta MacBridge, a female Duck who is madly in love with Scrooge. Her affections are rarely returned by him, although she always keeps trying to make it happen. Scarpa also came up with Dickie Duck, the granddaughter of Glittering Goldie (Scrooge's possible love interest from his days in the Klondike), and Kildare Cool, an eccentric nephew of Grandma Duck.

Italian artist Corrado Mastantuono created Burn Burn Ghigno, a cynical, grumpy and not too good looking Duck who teams up with Donald and Gyro a lot.

The American artist William van Horn also introduced a new character: Rumpus McFowl, a rather fat old Duck with a giant appetite and laziness, who in his earliest stories is said to be a cousin of Scrooge. Only later, Scrooge reveals to his nephews that Rumpus is actually his half-brother. Later, Rumpus also finds out.

Working for the Danish editor Egmont, artist Daniel Branca and scriptwriters Paul Hails and Charlie Martin created Garvey Gull (British name "Sonny Seagull" more commonly seen), a mischievous orphan who befriends Huey, Dudy and Louie, and his rival, Mr. Phelps.

Among the most productive Duck artists today is Victor Arriagada Rios, who is better known under the name Vicar. He has his own studio where he and his assistants draw the stories send in by Egmont. With writers Stefan and Uuns Printz-Pålsson, Vicar created the character Oona, a prehistoric princess who...
According to Disney comics author Don Rosa, Donald was born somewhere around 1920, however, this is not an official year of birth. According to Carl Barks, Donald's parents are Hortense McDuck and Quackmore Duck. Donald's sister is named Della Duck, but neither she nor Donald's parents appear in the cartoons or comics except for special cases, like The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck. According to Rosa, Donald and Della are twins.

According to Donald Duck comics #85, Donald Duck grew up in Elm City, a town not far from Duckburg. When Donald got buffeted around, I tried to put it over in such a way that kids would see it couldn't depend on anything much; nothing is always going to turn out roses.” — May 29, 1973.

In fact I laid it right on the line. There was no difference between my characters and the life my readers were going to have to face. When the Ducks went out in the desert, so did Joe Blow down the street with his kids. When Donald got buffeted around, I tried to put it over in such a way that kids would see it couldn’t depend on anything much; nothing is always going to turn out roses.” — May 29, 1973.
could happen to them. Unlike the superhero comics, my comics had parallels in human experience.”

“I always felt myself to be an unlucky person like Donald, who is a victim of so many circumstances. But there isn’t a person in the United States who couldn’t identify with him. He is everything, he is everybody; he makes the same mistakes that we all make.”

“I carried in my head the idea that there was a whole town and a whole family of characters around these ducks at all times, he recalls. There were cousins and nephews and nieces, and villains and bankers and all kinds of people that they dealt with in everyday life. So whenever I needed a character, I would create one that apparently had been around but just hadn’t been used yet. The way I presented these characters was the way they were in my head: they had been there all the time”. — August 4, 1975.

“I’ve always looked upon the Ducks as caricature human beings. Perhaps I’ve been years writing in that middle world that J. R. R. Tolkien describes, and never knew it.” (After his retirement Barks started reading Tolkien, and discovered similarities between their stories. At this point he was comparing his Ducks to Tolkien’s hobbits of Middle-earth.)

“I broadened his character out very much. Instead of making just a quarrelsome little guy out of him, I made a sympathetic character. He was sometimes a villain, and he was often a real good guy and at all times he was just a blundering person like the average human being, and I think that is one of the reasons people like the duck.” — Spring, 1981.

“I didn’t expect any great rosy things out of life for my characters and it’s a good way to be, I think. If you get too darned optimistic, your stuff gets sweet like Pollyanna.”

“I even tried to tone down the malicious streak in Donald’s character. I resented it in Bugs Bunny; it just turned me off. I thought: why put that same character into Donald and turn off millions of readers? It was okay for the Ducks from time to time, provided there were reasons for it.”

A famous quote from Donald Duck himself:

“Four dollars is very little money when you got ‘em; but a heck of a lot of money when you ain’t got ‘em.” (From the Carl Barks story ‘A Christmas for Shacktown’.)

**Donald’s Car**

Taliaferro introduced Donald’s car, a 1934 Belchfire Runabout, on July 1, 1938. Donald is said to have constructed it himself from spare parts of various sources. It is recognizable by its license plate number 313.

The car is modeled around the 1938 American Bantam. Though Donald briefly drove other cars both in Taliaferro’s strip and in later stories, this car would stay with Donald throughout the following decades. The car’s constant breakdowns and need of repairs is often used as a source of humor. Immediately recognizable by readers, it seems to have become as much a trademark of Donald as his sailor shirt and cap. His alias Paperinik on the other side has the 313 (which sports a different plate, namely X) equipped with a lot of high tech gadgets by Gyro Gearloose to combat crime. in “Recalled Wreck”, Donald tells his nephews he can’t buy new car parts instead of having them fixed because his car is made of parts that are no longer produced.

**Comic Books**

**United States**

- Walt Disney’s Comics and Stories
- Donald Duck
- Donald Duck and Friends
- Uncle Scrooge
- Uncle Scrooge Adventures
- Donald Duck Adventures
- Mickey and Donald
- DuckTales
- Donald and Mickey
- Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse
- Walt Disney Giant
- Walt Disney’s Comics and Stories Penny Pincher
- Uncle Scrooge and Donald Duck
- The Adventurous Uncle Scrooge McDuck
- Donald Duck and Friends
- Mickey Mouse and Friends
- Disney’s Hero Squad
- Wizards of Mickey

**Brazil**

- Pato Donald
- Zé Carioca
- Aventuras Disney
- Mickey
- Tio Patinhas

**China**

- 唐老鴨故事集

**Czech Republic**

- Kater Donald
Denmark
- Anders And & Co.
- Anders And ekstra.
- Jumbobog.
- Mammutbog.

Estonia
- Miki Hiir

Egypt
- مجلة ميكي
- مكسي حب
- سور مكسي

Finland
- Aku Ankka
- Aku Ankka taskukirja (Donald Duck pocket book)
- Aku Ankka Sarjisekstra (Donald Duck Comic Extra)
- Aku-Palat (Donald Digest)
- Roope-setä (Uncle-Scrooge)
- lines (Daisy)

France
- Le Journal de Mickey
- Hardi présente Donald
- Picsou Magazine
- Mickey Parade Géant
- Super Picsou Géant

Germany
- Micky Maus Magazin
- Lustiges Taschenbuch
- Die tollsten Geschichten von Donald Duck
- Lustiges Taschenbuch Entenedition

Greece
- Ντόναλντ Μίκυ Μάους
- Κλασικά

Iceland
- Andrés Önd
- Syrpa

Indonesia
- Donal Bebek

Israel
- Ola mo Shel Disni

Italy
- Paperino (1930s)
- Topolino
- Zio Paperone
- Paperino Mese (changed name to Paperino in the late 90s)

Japan
- Kingdom Hearts – (manga adaption by Shiro Amano)
- Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories – (manga adaption by Shiro Amano)
- Kingdom Hearts II – (manga adaption by Shiro Amano)

Latvia
- Donalds Daks

Lithuania
- Donaldas ir Kiti (1997–present)

The Netherlands
Norway
- Donald Duck & Co.
- Mikke Mus
- Donald Duck Pocket / Onkel Skrue Pocket
- Fantonald

Poland
- Kaczor Donald
- Gigant Poleca
- MegaGiga
- Kaczogród
- Gigant Mamut

Romania
- Donald Duck

Russia
- Микки Маус

Slovakia
- Káčer Donald

Slovenia
- Miki Miška

Sweden
- Kalle Anka & Co
- Kalle Ankas Pocket

Turkey
- Donald Duck
- Donald Amca

Vietnam
- Donald và bạn hữu

See Also
- Disney comics
- Donald Duck pocket books

References
1. ^ Donald Duck #85 December 1962 “Business Before Pleasure”

External Links
- http://www.coa.inducks.org


Categories: Comic strips started in the 1930s | Donald Duck comics

Walt Disney
**Walter Elias Disney** (December 5, 1901 – December 15, 1966) was an American film producer, director, screenwriter, voice actor, animator, entrepreneur, entertainer, international icon, and philanthropist. Disney is famous for his influence in the field of entertainment during the 20th century. As the co-founder (with his brother Roy O. Disney) of Walt Disney Productions, Disney became one of the best-known motion picture producers in the world. The corporation he co-founded, now known as The Walt Disney Company, today has annual revenues of approximately USD $35 billion.

Disney is particularly noted for being a film producer and a popular showman, as well as an innovator in animation and theme park design. He and his staff created some of the world’s most famous fictional characters including Mickey Mouse, a character for which Disney himself was the original voice. He has been awarded four honorary Academy Awards and has won twenty-two competitive Academy Awards out of fifty-nine nominations, including a record four in one year, giving him more awards and nominations than any other individual. He also won seven Emmy Awards. He is the namesake for Disneyland and Walt Disney World Resort theme parks in the United States, as well as the international resorts Tokyo Disney, Disneyland Paris, and Disneyland Hong Kong.

Disney died of lung cancer in Burbank, California, on December 15, 1966. The following year, construction began on Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. His brother Roy Disney inaugurated the Magic Kingdom on October 1, 1971.

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**BORN**
- Walter Elias Disney
- December 5, 1901 (1901-12-05)[1]
- Hermosa, Chicago, Illinois, United States

**DIED**
- December 15, 1966 (1966-12-15) (aged 65)
- Burbank, California, U.S.
- Interred: Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California

**OCCUPATION**
- Film producer,
- Co-founder of The Walt Disney Company, formerly known as Walt Disney Productions

**YEARS ACTIVE**
- 1920–1966

**RELIGION**
- Christian

**SPOUSE**
- Lillian Bounds (1925–1966)

**CHILDREN**
- Diane Marie Disney
- Sharon Mae Disney

**PARENTS**
- Elias Disney
- Flora Call Disney
- Herbert Arthur Disney (brother)
- Raymond Arnold Disney (brother)
- Roy Oliver Disney (brother)
- Ruth Flora Disney (sister)
- Ronald William Miller (son-in-law)
- Robert Borgfeldt Brown (son-in-law)
- Roy Edward Disney (nephew)

**SIGNATURE**

[Signature]

Walt Disney in 1954
1901–1937: The Beginnings

Childhood

Walter Elias Disney was born on December 5, 1901, to Elias Disney, of Irish-Canadian descent, and Flora Call Disney, of German-American descent, in Chicago's Hermosa community area at 2156 N. Tripp Ave. [4][5] Walt Disney's ancestors had emigrated from Gowran, County Kilkenny in Ireland. Arundel Elias Disney, great-grandfather of Walt Disney, was born in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1801 and was a descendant of Robert d'Isigny, originally of France but who travelled to England with William the Conqueror in 1066 [6]. The d'Isigny name became anglicised as Disney and the family settled in the village now known as Norton.
His father, Elias Disney, moved from Huron County, Ontario, to the United States in 1878, seeking first for gold in California but finally farming with his parents near Ellis, Kansas, until 1884. He worked for Union Pacific Railroad and married Flora Call on January 1, 1888, in Acron, Florida. The family moved to Chicago, Illinois, in 1899 where his brother Robert lived. For most of his early life, Robert helped Elias financially. In 1906, when Walt was four, Elias and his family moved to a farm in Marceline, Missouri, where his brother Roy had recently purchased farmland. While in Marceline, Disney developed his love for drawing. One of their neighbors, a retired doctor named “Doc” Sherwood, paid him to draw pictures of Sherwood’s horse, Rupert. He also developed his love for trains in Marceline, which owed its existence to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway which ran through town. Walt would put his ear to the tracks in anticipation of the coming train. Then he would look for his uncle, engineer Michael Martin, running the train.

The Disneys remained in Marceline for four years, before moving to Kansas City in 1911. There, Walt and his younger sister Ruth attended the Benton Grammar School where he met Walter Pfeiffer. The Pfeiffers were theatre aficionados, and introduced Walt to the world of vaudeville and motion pictures. Soon, Walt was spending more time at the Pfeiffers’ than at home. During this time he attended Saturday courses as a child at the Kansas City Art Institute. While they were living in Kansas City, Walt and Ruth Disney were also regular visitors of Electric Park, 15 blocks from their home (Disney would later acknowledge the amusement park as a major influence of his design of Disneyland).

Teenage Years

Disney as an ambulance driver during World War I.

In 1917, Elias acquired shares in the O-Zell jelly factory in Chicago and moved his family back there. In the fall, Disney began his freshman year at McKinley High School and began taking night courses at the Chicago Art Institute. Disney became the cartoonist for the school newspaper. His cartoons were very patriotic, focusing on World War I. Disney dropped out of high school at the age of sixteen to join the Army, but the army rejected him because he was underage.

After his rejection from the army, Walt and one of his friends decided to join the Red Cross. Soon after he joined The Red Cross, Walt was sent to France for a year, where he drove an ambulance, but not before the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

In 1919, Walt, hoping to find work outside the Chicago O-Zell factory left home and moved back to Kansas City to begin his artistic career. After considering becoming an actor or a newspaper artist, he decided he wanted to create a career in the newspaper, drawing political caricatures or comic strips. But when nobody wanted to hire him as either an artist or even as an ambulance driver, his brother Roy, who worked at a bank in the area, got a temporary job for him at the Pesmen-Rubin Art Studio through a bank colleague. At Pesmen-Rubin, Disney created ads for newspapers, magazines, and movie theaters. It was here that he met a cartoonist named Ubbe Iwerks. When their time at the Pesmen-Rubin Art Studio expired, they were both without a job, and they decided to start their own commercial company.

In January 1920, Disney and Iwerks formed a short-lived company called, “Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists”. However, following a rough start, Disney left temporarily to earn money at Kansas City Film Ad Company, and was soon joined by Iwerks who was not able to run the business alone. While working for the Kansas City Film Ad Company, where he made commercials based on cutout animation, Disney took up an interest in the field of animation, and decided to become an animator. He was allowed by the owner of the Ad Company, A.V. Caugher, to borrow a camera from work, which he could use to experiment with at home. After reading a book by Edwin G. Lutz, called Animated Cartoons: How They Are Made, Their Origin and Development, he found cel animation to be much more promising than the cutout animation he was doing for Caugher. Walt eventually decided to open his own animation business, and recruited a fellow co-worker at the Kansas City Film Ad Company, Fred Harman, as his first employee.

Walt and Harman then secured a deal with local theater owner Frank L. Newman — arguably the most popular "showman" in the Kansas City area at the time — to screen their cartoons — which they titled “Laugh-O-Grams” — at his local theater.

Laugh-O-Gram Studio

Presented as “Newman Laugh-O-Grams”, Disney’s cartoons became widely popular in the Kansas City area. Through their success, Disney was able to acquire his own studio, also called Laugh-O-Gram, and hire a vast number of additional animators, including Fred Harman’s brother Hugh Harman, Rudolf Ising, and his close friend Ubbe Iwerks. Unfortunately, with all his high employee salaries unable to make up for studio profits, Walt was unable to successfully manage money. As a result, the studio
Hollywood

Disney and his brother pooled their money to set up a cartoon studio in Hollywood.[34] Needing to find a distributor for his new Alice Comedies — which he started making while in Kansas City[35] but never got to distribute — Disney sent an unfinished print to New York distributor Margaret Winkler, who promptly wrote back to him. She was keen on a distribution deal with Disney for more live-action/animated shorts based upon Alice’s Wonderland:[36]

Alice Comedies

Virginia Davis (the live-action star of Alice’s Wonderland) and her family were relocated at Disney’s request from Kansas City to Hollywood, as were Iwerks and his family. This was the beginning of the Disney Brothers’ Studio. It was located on Hyperion Avenue in the Silver Lake district, where the studio remained until 1939. In 1925, Disney hired a young woman named Lillian Bounds to ink and paint celluloid. After a brief period of dating her, the two got married the same year.

The new series, *Alice Comedies*, was reasonably successful, and featured both Dawn O’Day and Margie Gay as Alice. Lois Hardwick also briefly assumed the role of Alice. By the time the series ended in 1927, the focus was more on the animated characters, in particular a cat named Julius who resembled Felix the Cat, rather than the live-action Alice.

Oswald the Lucky Rabbit

Main article: Oswald the Lucky Rabbit

By 1927, Charles Mintz had married Margaret Winkler and assumed control of her business, and ordered a new all-animated series to be put into production for distribution through Universal Pictures. The new series, *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*, was an almost instant success, and the character, Oswald — drawn and created by Iwerks — became a popular figure. The Disney studio expanded, and Walt hired back Harman, Rudolph Ising, Carman Maxwell, and Friz Freleng from Kansas City.

In February 1928, Disney went to New York to negotiate a higher fee per short from Mintz. Disney was shocked when Mintz announced not only that he wanted to reduce the fee he paid Disney per short but also that he had most of his main animators—including Harman, Ising, Maxwell, and Freleng (notably, except Iwerks, who refused to leave Disney)—under contract and would start his own studio if Disney did not accept the reduced production budgets. Universal, not Disney, owned the Oswald trademark, and could make the films without Disney. Disney declined Mintz’s offer and lost most of his animation staff.

With most of his staff gone Disney now found himself on his own again.[26] It took Disney’s company 78 years to get back the rights to the Oswald character. The Walt Disney Company reacquired the rights to Oswald the Lucky Rabbit from NBC Universal in 2006, through a trade for longtime ABC sports commentator Al Michaels.[37]

Mickey Mouse

Main article: Mickey Mouse

After losing the rights to Oswald, Disney felt the need to develop a new character to replace him. He based the character on a mouse he had adopted as a pet while working in his Laugh-O-Gram studio in Kansas City.[38] Ub Iwerks reworked the sketches made by Disney so the character was easier to animate.

However, Mickey’s voice and personality was provided by Disney until 1947. In the words of a Disney employee, “Ub designed Mickey’s physical appearance, but Walt gave him his soul.”[38] Besides Oswald and Mickey, a similar mouse-character is seen in *Alice Comedies* which featured a mouse named like the Mouse, and the first Flip the Frog cartoon called Fiddlesticks, which showed a Mickey Mouse look-alike playing fiddle. The initial films were animated by Iwerks, his name was prominently featured on the title cards. The mouse was originally named “Mortimer”, but later christened “Mickey Mouse” by Lillian Disney who thought that the name Mortimer did not fit. Mortimer later became the name of Mickey’s rival for Minnie, and was taller than his renowned adversary and had a Brooklyn accent.

The first animated short with Mickey in it was titled *Plane Crazy*, which was, like all of Disney’s previous works, a silent film. After failing to find a distributor for *Plane Crazy* or its follow-up, *The Gallopin’ Gaucho*, Disney created a Mickey cartoon with sound called *Steamboat Willie*. A businessman named Pat Powers provided Disney with both distribution and Cinephone, a sound-synchronization process. *Steamboat Willie* became an instant success,[39] and *Plane Crazy*, *The Gallopin’ Gaucho*, and all future Mickey cartoons were released with soundtracks. After the release of *Steamboat Willie*, Walt Disney would continue to successfully use sound in all of his future cartoons, and Cinephone became the new distributor for Disney’s early sound cartoons as well.[40] Mickey soon eclipsed Felix the Cat as the world’s most popular cartoon character.[38] By 1930, Felix, now in sound, had faded from the screen, as his sound cartoons failed to gain attention.[41] Mickey’s popularity would now skyrocket in the early 1930s.[38]

Silly Symphonies

Following the footsteps of the *Mickey Mouse* series, a series of musical shorts titled, *Silly Symphonies* was released in 1929. The first of these was titled *The Skeleton Dance* and was entirely drawn and animated by Iwerks, who was also responsible for drawing the majority of cartoons released by Disney in 1928 and 1929. Although both series were successful, the Disney studio was not seeing its rightful share of profits from Pat Powers.[42] and in 1930, Disney signed a new distribution deal with Columbia Pictures. The original basis of the cartoons were musical novelty, and Carl Stalling wrote the score for the first Silly Symphony cartoons as well.[42]

Iwerks was soon lured by Powers into opening his own studio with an exclusive contract. Later, Carl Stalling would also leave Disney to join Iwerks' new studio.[44] Iwerks launched his *Flip the Frog* series with...
the first voice cartoon in color, “Fiddlesticks,” filmed in two-strip Technicolor. Iwerks also created two other series of cartoons, the Willie Whopper and the Comicolor. In 1936, Iwerks shut his studio to work on various projects dealing with animation technology. He would return to Disney in 1940 and, would go on to pioneer a number of film processes and specialized animation technologies in the studio’s research and development department.

By 1932, Mickey Mouse had become quite a popular cinema character, but Silly Symphonies was not as successful. The same year also saw competition increase as Max Fleischer’s flapper cartoon character, Betty Boop, would gain more popularity among theater audiences. Fleischer was considered to be Disney’s main rival in the 1930s, and was also the father of Richard Fleischer, whom Disney would later hire to direct his 1954 film 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. Meanwhile, Columbia Pictures dropped the distribution of Disney cartoons and was replaced by United Artists. In late 1932, Herbert Kalmus, who had just completed work on the first three-strip technicolor camera, approached Walt and convinced him to redo Flowers and Trees, which was originally done in black and white, with three-strip Technicolor. Flowers and Trees would go on to be a phenomenal success and would also win the first Academy Award for Best Short Subject: Cartoons for 1932. After Flowers and Trees was released, all future Silly Symphony cartoons were done in color as well. Disney was also able to negotiate a two-year deal with Technicolor, giving him the sole right to use three-strip Technicolor, which would also eventually be extended to five years as well. Through Silly Symphonies, Disney would also create his most successful cartoon short of all time, The Three Little Pigs, in 1933. The cartoon ran in theaters for many months, and also featured the hit song that became the anthem of the Great Depression, “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf.”

Walt Disney’s star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

First Academy Award

In 1932, Disney received a special Academy Award for the creation of “Mickey Mouse”, whose series was made into color in 1935 and soon launched spin-off series for supporting characters such as Donald Duck, Goofy, and Pluto; Pluto and Donald would immediately get their individual cartoons in 1937 and Goofy would get solo cartoons in 1939 as well. Of all of Mickey’s partners, Donald Duck—who first teamed with Mickey in the 1934 cartoon, Orphan’s Benefit—was arguably the most popular, and went on to become Disney’s second most successful cartoon character of all time.

Children

The Disneys’ first attempt at pregnancy ended up in Lillian having a miscarriage. When Lillian Disney became pregnant again, she gave birth to a daughter, Diane Marie Disney, on December 18, 1933. The Disneys adopted Sharon Mae Disney (December 31, 1936 – February 16, 1993).

1937–1941: The Golden Age Of Animation

“Disney’s Folly”: Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs

Wait Disney introduces each of the Seven Dwarfs in a scene from the original 1937 Snow White theatrical trailer.

After the creation of two cartoon series, Disney soon began plans for a full-length feature in 1934. In 1935, opinion polls showed that another cartoon series, Popeye the Sailor, produced by Max Fleischer, was more popular than Mickey Mouse. Disney was, however, able to put Mickey back on top, and also increase Mickey’s popularity further by colorizing him and partially redesigning him into what was considered to be his most appealing design up to that point in time. When the film industry came to know about Disney’s plans to produce an animated feature-length version of Snow White, they dubbed the project “Disney’s Folly” and were certain that the project would destroy the Disney Studio. Both Lillian and Roy tried to talk Disney out of the project, but he continued plans for the feature. He employed Chouinard Art Institute professor Don Graham to start a training operation for the studio staff, and used the Silly Symphonies as a
platform for experiments in realistic human animation, distinctive character animation, special effects, and
the use of specialized processes and apparatus such as the multiaplane camera; Disney would first use this
new technique in the 1937 Silly Symphonies short The Old Mill.[59]

All of this development and training was used to elevate the quality of the studio so that it would be able to
give the feature film the quality Disney desired. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, as the feature was
designed, was in full production from 1934 until mid-1937, when the studio ran out of money. To acquire the
funding to complete Snow White, Disney had to show a rough cut of the motion picture to loan officers at the
Bank of America, who gave the studio the money to finish the picture. The finished film premiered at the
Carthay Circle Theater on December 21, 1937; at the conclusion of the film, the audience gave Snow White
and the Seven Dwarfs a standing ovation. Snow White, the first animated feature in America and
Technicolor, was released in February 1938 under a new distribution deal with RKO Radio Pictures; RKO
had previously been the distributor for Disney cartoons in 1936, after it closed down the Van Beuren
Studios in exchange for distribution.[50] The film became the most successful motion picture of 1938 and
earned over $8 million in its original theatrical release.

The Golden Age Of Animation

The success of Snow White, (for which Disney received one full-size, and seven miniature Oscar
statuettes) allowed Disney to build a new campus for the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, which opened for
business on December 24, 1939; Snow White was not only the peak of Disney’s success, but it also
ushered in a period that would later be known as the Golden Age of Animation for Disney.[61][62] The
feature animation staff, having just completed Pinocchio, continued work on Fantasia and Bambi and the
dramatic films that mixed live action and animated scenes, including The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Der Fuehrer's Face
and the Seven Dwarfs. The latter had only two sections: the first based on The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Graham, and the second based on The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving. During this period, Disney also ventured into full-length
human animation, distinctive character animation, special effects, and

1941–1945: During World War II

Disney and a group of animators were sent to South America in 1941 by the U.S. State Department as part
of its Good Neighbor policy, and guaranteed financing for the resulting movie, Saludos Amigos.[64]

Shortly after the release of Dumbo in October 1941, the United States entered World War II. The U.S. Army
contracted most of the Disney studio’s facilities and had the staff create training films for the
military, home-front morale-boosting shorts such as Der Fuehrer's Face and the feature film Victory
Through Air Power in 1943. However, the military films did not generate income, and the feature film Bambi
underperformed when it was released in April 1942. Disney successfully re-issued Snow White in 1944,
establishing a seven-year re-release tradition for Disney features. In 1945, The Three Caballeros was the
last animated feature by Disney during the war period.

In 1944, William Benton, publisher of the Encyclopedia Britannica, had entered into unsuccessful
negotiations with Disney to make six to twelve educational films annually. Disney was asked by the US
Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), to make an educational film
about the Amazon Basin and it resulted in the 1944 animated short, The Amazon Awakens.[65][66][67][68][69]

1945–1955: Disney In The Post-War Period

The Disney studios also created inexpensive package films, containing collections of cartoon shorts, and
issued them to theaters during this period. This includes Make Mine Music (1946), Melody Time (1948),
Fun and Fancy Free (1947) and The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad(1949). The latter had only two
sections: the first based on The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Graham, and the second based on The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving. During this period, Disney also ventured into full-length
dramatic films that mixed live action and animated scenes, including Song of the South and So Dear to My Heart. After the war ended, Mickey’s popularity would also fade as well[70]

By the late 1940s, the studio had recovered enough to continue production on the full-length features Alice
in Wonderland and Peter Pan, both of which had been shelved during the war years, and began work on Cinderella, which became Disney’s most successful film since Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The studio also began a series of live-action nature films, titled True-Life Adventures, in 1948 with On Seal Island. Despite rebounding success through feature films, Disney’s animation shorts were no longer as popular as they used to be, and people began to instead draw attention to Warner Bros and their animation

1955, and Mars and Beyond in 1957.
Testimony Before Congress

Disney was a founding member of the anti-communist Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. In 1947, during the early years of the Cold War, Disney testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), where he branded Herbert Sorrell, David Hilberman and William Pomerance, former animators and labor union organizers, as Communist agitators. All three men denied the allegations. Sorrell testified before the HUAC in 1946 and there was insufficient evidence to link him to the Communist Party.

Additionally, Disney accused the Screen Actors Guild of being a Communist front, and charged that the 1941 strike was part of an organized Communist effort to gain influence in Hollywood.

1955–1966: Theme Parks And Beyond

Planning Disneyland

Disneyland: aerial view, August 1963, looking SE. New Melodyland Theater at top. Santa Ana Freeway (US 101 at the time, now I-5) upper left corner.

On a business trip to Chicago in the late-1940s, Disney drew sketches of his ideas for an amusement park where he envisioned his employees spending time with their children. He got his idea for a children’s theme park after visiting Children’s Fairyland in Oakland, California. This plan was originally meant for a plot located south of the Studio, across the street. The original ideas developed into a concept for a larger enterprise that was to become Disneyland. Disney spent five years of his life developing Disneyland and created a new subsidiary of his company, called WED Enterprises, to carry out the planning and production of the park. A small group of Disney studio employees joined the Disneyland development project as engineers and planners, and were dubbed Imagineers.

When describing one of his earliest plans to Herb Ryman (who created the first aerial drawing of Disneyland which was presented to the Bank of America while requesting for funds), Disney said, “Herbie, I just want it to look like nothing else in the world. And it should be surrounded by a train.” Entertaining his daughters and their friends in his backyard and taking them for rides on his Carolwood Pacific Railroad had inspired Disney to include a railroad in the plans for Disneyland.

Disneyland Grand Opening

Walt Disney giving the dedication day speech July 17, 1955.
Early 1960s Successes

Disneyland officially opened on July 18, 1955. On Sunday, July 17, 1955, Disneyland hosted a live TV preview, among the thousands of people who came out for the preview were Ronald Reagan, Bob Cummings and Art Linkletter, who shared cohosting duties, as well as the mayor of Anaheim. Walt gave the following dedication day speech:

To all who come to this happy place; welcome. Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past …… and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams and the hard facts that have created America …. with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world.

Carolwood Pacific Railroad

[Image]

The Lilly Belle on display at Disneyland Main Station in 1993. The caboose’s woodwork was done entirely by Walt himself.

Main article: Carolwood Pacific Railroad

During 1949, Disney and his family moved to a new home on a large piece of property in the Holmby Hills district of Los Angeles, California. With the help of his friends Ward and Betty Kimball, owners of their own backyard railroad, Disney developed blueprints and immediately set to work on creating a miniature live steam railroad for his backyard. The name of the railroad, Carolwood Pacific Railroad, originated from the address of his home that was located on Carolwood Drive. The railroad’s half-mile long layout included a 46-foot (14 m)-long trestle, loops, overpasses, gradients, an elevated berm, and a 90-foot (27 m) tunnel. Mrs. Disney named it for her husband. He named the miniature working steam locomotive built by Disney Studios engineer Roger E. Broggie “Lilly Belle” in his wife’s honor. He had his attorney draw up right-of-way papers giving the railroad a permanent, legal easement through the garden areas, which his wife dutifully signed; however, there is no evidence of the documents ever recorded as a restriction on the property’s title.

Expanding Into New Areas

As Walt Disney Productions began work on Disneyland, it also began expanding its other entertainment operations. In 1950, Treasure Island became the studio’s first all-live-action feature, and was soon followed by 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (in CinemaScope, 1954), Old Yeller (1957), The Shaggy Dog (1959), Pollyanna (1960), Swiss Family Robinson (1960), The Absent-Minded Professor (1961), and The Parent Trap (1961). The Walt Disney Studio produced its first TV special, One Hour in Wonderland, in 1950. Disney began hosting a weekly anthology series on ABC named Disneyland after the park, where he showed clips of past Disney productions, gave tours of his studio, and familiarized the public with Disneyland as it was being constructed in Anaheim, California. The show also featured a Davy Crockett miniseries, which started a craze among the American youth known as the Davy Crockett craze, in which millions of coonskin caps and other Crockett memorabilia were sold across the country.[78] In 1955, the studio’s first daily television show, Mickey Mouse Club, debuted, which would continue in many various incarnations into the 1990s.

As the studio expanded and diversified into other media, Disney devoted less of his attention to the animation department, entrusting most of its operations to his key animators, whom he dubbed the Nine Old Men. During Disney’s lifetime, the animation department created the successful Lady and the Tramp (in CinemaScope, 1955), Sleeping Beauty (in Super Technirama 70mm, 1959), One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961), and The Sword in the Stone (1963).

Production on the short cartoons had kept pace until 1956, when Disney shut down the shorts division. Special shorts projects would continue to be made for the rest of the studio’s duration on an irregular basis. These productions were all distributed by Disney’s new subsidiary, Buena Vista Distribution, which had assumed all distribution duties for Disney films from RKO by 1955. Disneyland, one of the world’s first theme parks, finally opened on July 17, 1955, and was immediately successful. Visitors from around the world came to visit Disneyland, which contained attractions based upon a number of successful Disney properties and films.

After 1955, the show, Disneyland came to be known as Walt Disney Presents. The show transformed from black-and-white to color in 1961 and changed its name to Walt Disney’s Wonderful World of Color, moving from ABC to NBC,[79] and eventually evolving into its current form as The Wonderful World of Disney. It continued to air on NBC until 1981, when CBS picked it up.[80] Since then, it has aired on ABC, NBC, Hallmark Channel and Cartoon Network via separate broadcast rights deals. During its run, the Disney series offered some recurring characters, such as Roger Mobley appearing as the newspaper reporter and sleuth “Galleger”, based on the writing of Richard Harding Davis.

Disney had already formed his own music publishing division back in 1949. In 1956, partly inspired by the huge success of the television theme song The Ballad of Davy Crockett, he created a company-owned record production and distribution entity called Disneyland Records.

Early 1960s Successes
By the early 1960s, the Disney empire was a major success, and Walt Disney Productions had established itself as the world’s leading producer of family entertainment. Walt Disney was the Head of Pageantry for the 1960 Winter Olympics.

After decades of pursuing, Disney finally procured the rights to P.L. Travers' books about a magical nanny. Mary Poppins, released in 1964, was the most successful Disney film of the 1960s and featured a memorable song score written by Disney favorites, the Sherman Brothers. The same year, Disney debuted a number of exhibits at the 1964 New York World’s Fair, including Audio-Animatronic figures, all of which were later integrated into attractions at Disneyland and a new theme park project which was to be established on the East Coast.

Though the studio probably would have made great competition with Hanna-Barbera, Disney had decided not to enter the race for producing Saturday morning cartoon series on television (which Hanna-Barbera had done at the time), because with the expansion of Disney's empire and constant production of feature films, there would be too much for the budget to handle.

Plans For Disney World And EPCOT

In early 1964, Disney announced plans to develop another theme park located a few miles west of Orlando, Florida which was to be called Disney World. Disney World was to include a larger, more elaborate version of Disneyland which was to be called the Magic Kingdom. It would also feature a number of golf courses and resort hotels. The heart of Disney World, however, was to be the Experimental Prototype City (or Community) of Tomorrow, or EPCOT for short.

Mineral King Ski Resort

During the early to mid 1960s, Walt Disney developed plans for a ski resort in Mineral King, a glacial valley in California’s Sierra Nevada mountain range. Disney brought in experts like the renowned Olympic ski coach and ski-area designer Willy Schaeffler, who helped plan a visitor village, ski runs and ski lifts among the several bowls surrounding the valley. Plans finally moved into action in the mid 1960s, but Walt died before the actual work had started. Disney’s death and the actions from preservationists made sure the resort was never built.

Death

In 1966, Disney was scheduled to undergo surgery to repair an old neck injury[81] caused by many years of playing polo at the Riviera Club in Hollywood[82]. On November 2, during pre-operative X-rays, doctors at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, across the street from the Disney Studio, discovered a tumor in his left lung[83]. Five days later he underwent biopsy of the tumor, which proved to be malignant, and to have spread throughout the entire left lung[83]. After removal of the lung, doctors informed Disney that his life expectancy was six months to two years.[83] After several chemotherapy sessions, Disney and his wife spent a short amount of time in Palm Springs, California.[81] On November 30, Disney collapsed in his home. He was revived by fire department personnel and rushed to St. Joseph’s. On December 15, 1966, at 9:30 a.m., ten days after his 65th birthday, Disney died of acute circulatory collapse, caused by lung cancer.[81] The last thing he reportedly wrote before his death was the name of actor Kurt Russell, the significance of which remains a mystery, even to Russell.[84]

Disney was cremated on December 17, 1966, and his ashes interred at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California. Roy O. Disney continued to carry out the Florida project, insisting that the name be changed to Walt Disney World in honor of his brother.

The final productions in which Disney played an active role were the animated features The Jungle Book and Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day, and the live-action musical comedy The Happiest Millionaire, both released in 1967. Songwriter Robert B. Sherman said about the last time he saw Disney:

He was up in the third floor of the animation building after a run-through of The Happiest Millionaire. He usually held court in the hallway afterward for the people involved with the picture. And he started talking to them, telling them what he liked and what they should change, and then, when they were through, he turned to us and with a big smile, he said, 'Keep up the good work, boys.' And he walked to his office. It was the last we ever saw of him.[85]

A long-standing urban legend maintains that Disney was cryogenically frozen, and his frozen corpse stored underneath the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland.[86] However, the first known cryogenic freezing of a human corpse did not occur until January 1967.[86]
Plaque at the entrance that embodies the intended spirit of Disneyland by Walt Disney: to leave reality and enter fantasy

After Walt Disney’s death, Roy Disney returned from retirement to take full control of Walt Disney Productions and WED Enterprises. In October 1971, the families of Walt and Roy met in front of Cinderella Castle at the Magic Kingdom to officially open the Walt Disney World Resort.

After giving his dedication for Walt Disney World, Roy asked Lillian Disney to join him. As the orchestra played “When You Wish Upon a Star”, she stepped up to the podium accompanied by Mickey Mouse. He then said, “Lilly, you knew all of Walt’s ideas and hopes as well as anybody; what would Walt think of it [Walt Disney World]?”. “I think Walt would have approved,” she replied. Roy died from a cerebral hemorrhage on December 20, 1971, the day he was due to open the Disneyland Christmas parade.

During the second phase of the “Walt Disney World” theme park, EPCOT was translated by Disney’s successors into EPCOT Center, which opened in 1982. As it currently exists, EPCOT is essentially a living world’s fair, different from the actual functional city that Disney had envisioned. In 1992, Walt Disney Imagineering took the step closer to Disney’s original ideas and dedicated Celebration, Florida, a town built by the Walt Disney Company adjacent to Walt Disney World, that hearkens back to the spirit of EPCOT. EPCOT was also originally intended to be devoid of Disney characters which initially limited the appeal of the park to young children. However, the company later changed this policy and Disney characters can now be found throughout the park, often dressed in costumes reflecting the different pavilions.

The Disney Entertainment Empire

Today, Walt Disney’s animation/motion picture studios and theme parks have developed into a multi-billion dollar television, motion picture, vacation destination and media corporation that carry his name. The Walt Disney Company today owns, among other assets, five vacation resorts, eleven theme parks, two water parks, thirty-nine hotels, eight motion picture studios, six record labels, eleven cable television networks, and one terrestrial television network. As of 2007, the company has an annual revenue of over U.S. $35 billion.

Disney Animation Today

Traditional hand-drawn animation, with which Walt Disney started his company, was, for a time, no longer produced at the Walt Disney Animation Studios. After a stream of financially unsuccessful traditionally animated features in the early 2000s, the two satellite studios in Paris and Orlando were closed, and the main studio in Burbank was converted to a computer animation production facility. In 2004, Disney released what was announced as their final “traditionally animated” feature film, Home on the Range. However, since the 2006 acquisition of Pixar, and the resulting rise of John Lasseter to Chief Creative Officer, that position has changed, and the largely successful 2009 film The Princess and the Frog has marked Disney’s return to traditional hand-drawn animation.

CalArts

In his later years, Disney devoted substantial time towards funding The California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). It was formed in 1961 through a merger of the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music and the
Chouinard Art Institute, which had helped in the training of the animation staff during the 1930s. When Disney died, one-fourth of his estate went towards CalArts, which helped in building its campus. In his will, Disney paved the way for creation of several charitable trusts which included one for the California Institute of the Arts and other for the Disney Foundation. In an early admissions bulletin, Disney explained:

A hundred years ago, Wagner conceived of a perfect and all-embracing art, combining music, drama, painting, and the dance, but in his wildest imagination he had no hint what infinite possibilities were to become commonplace through the invention of recording, radio, cinema and television. There already have been geniuses combining the arts in the mass-communications media, and they have already given us powerful new art forms. The future holds bright promise for those who imaginations are trained to play on the vast orchestra of the art-in-combination. Such supermen will appear most certainly in those environments which provide contact with all the arts, but even those who devote themselves to a single phase of art will benefit from broadened horizons.

**The Walt Disney Family Museum**

In 2009, the Walt Disney Family Museum opened in the Presidio of San Francisco. Thousands of artifacts of Disney’s life and career are on display, including 248 awards he received.

**Anti-Semitism Accusations**

Disney was long rumored to be anti-Semitic during his lifetime, and such rumors have persisted after his death. Disney’s 2006 biographer Neal Gabler, the first writer to gain unrestricted access to the Disney archives, concluded that available evidence does not support such accusations. “That’s one of the questions everybody asks me,” Gabler said in a CBS interview. “My answer to that is, not in the conventional sense that we think of someone as being an anti-Semite. But he got the reputation because, in the 1940s, he got himself allied with a group called the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, which was an anti-Communist and anti-Semitic organization. And though Walt himself, in my estimation, was not anti-Semitic, nevertheless, he willingly allied himself with people who were anti-Semitic, and that reputation stuck. He was never really able to expunge it throughout his life.” Disney ultimately distanced himself from the Motion Picture Alliance in the 1950s.

The Walt Disney Family Museum acknowledges that Disney did have “difficult relationships” with some Jewish men, and that ethnic stereotypes common to films of the 1930s were included in some early cartoons, such as *Three Little Pigs* but points out that he employed Jews throughout his career, and was named “Man Of The Year” in 1955 by the B’nai B’rith chapter in Beverly Hills.

**Academy Awards**

This display case in the lobby of the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco shows many of the Academy Awards he won, including the distinctive special award at the bottom for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Disney holds the records for the most number of Academy Award nominations (with fifty-nine) and number of awarded Oscars (twenty-two). He has also earned four honorary Oscars. His last competitive Academy Award was posthumous.

- **1932**: Best Short Subject, Cartoons for: *Flowers and Trees* (1932)
- **1932**: Honorary Award for: creation of *Mickey Mouse*.
- **1934**: Best Short Subject, Cartoons for: *Three Little Pigs* (1933)
- **1935**: Best Short Subject, Cartoons for: *The Tortoise and the Hare* (1934)
- **1936**: Best Short Subject, Cartoons for: *Three Orphan Kittens* (1935)
- **1937**: Best Short Subject, Cartoons for: *The Country Cousin* (1936)

A minor planet, 4017 Disneys, discovered in 1980 by Soviet astronomer Lyudmila Georgievna Karachkina, is named after him.[99] The Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California, opened in 2003, was named in his honor.

Walt Disney was the inaugural recipient of a star on the Anaheim walk of stars. The star was awarded in honor of Disney's significant contributions to the city of Anaheim, California, specifically, Disneyland, which is now the Disneyland Resort. The star is located at the pedestrian entrance to the Disneyland Resort on Harbor Boulevard. Disney has two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, one for motion pictures and the other for television.

Walt Disney received the Congressional Gold Medal on May 24, 1968 (P.L. 90-316, 82 Stat. 130–131) and the Légion d'Honneur in France in 1935.[98] In 1935, Walt received a special medal from the League of Nations for creation of Mickey Mouse, held to be Mickey Mouse award.[97] He also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom on September 14, 1964.[99] On December 6, 2006, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and First Lady Maria Shriver inducted Walt Disney into the California Hall of Fame located at The California Museum for History, Women, and the Arts.

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Beginning in 1993, HBO began to develop a Walt Disney biopic under the direction of Frank Pierson with Lawrence Turman. The project never materialized and was soon abandoned.[100]

### See Also
- Disney family
- The Mickey Mouse Club
- The Walt Disney Family Museum
- Walt Disney anthology television series

### Notes
15. Thomas 1994, pp. 42–43
37. Stay ’tooned: Disney gets ‘Oswald’ for Al Michaels, at ESPN web site, retrieved January 4, 2010
38. Thomas 1994