

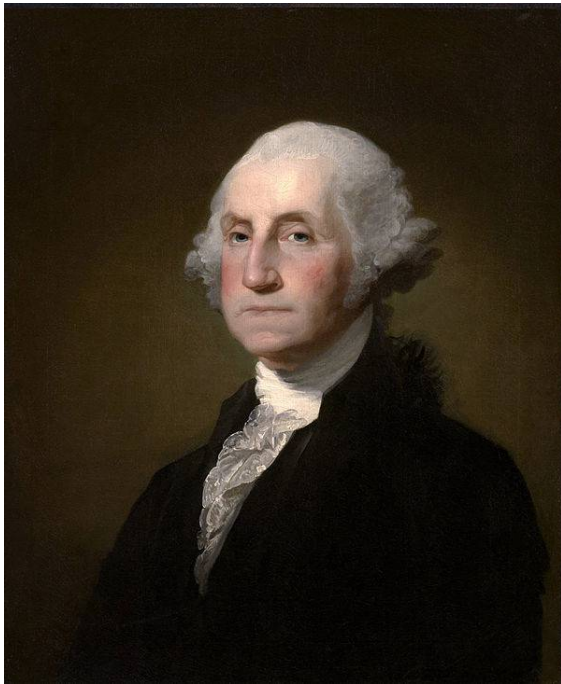
Wikijunior:Famous Americans

The following is a list of very well-known Americans, organized by how they contributed to the United States.

1 Statesmen

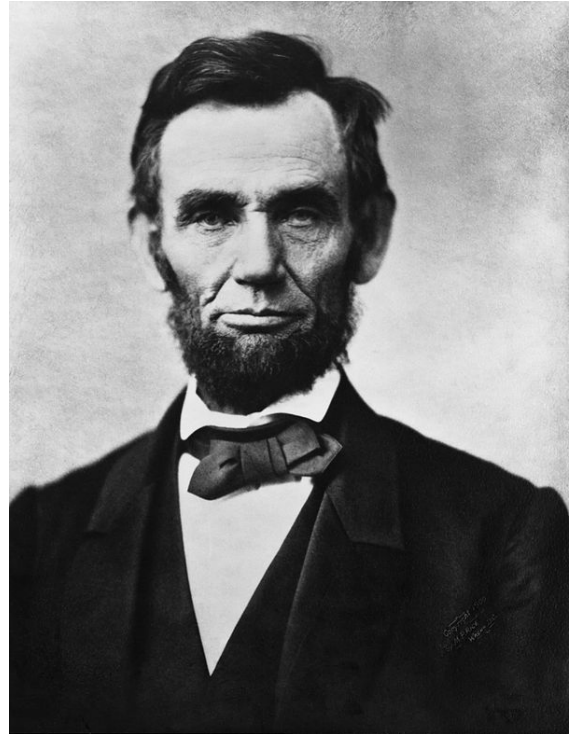
The following people all held high public office in the government of the United States, especially President.

1.1 U.S. Presidents



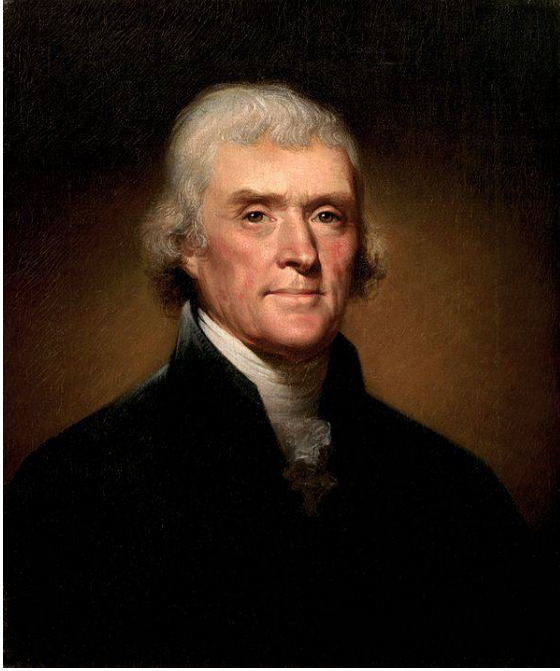
George Washington

- **George Washington** (1732-1799) was America's first President. Before becoming President, he was a soldier, serving as a colonel in the French and Indian War and as the leader of the Continental Army during the American Revolution. He was also head of the **Constitutional Convention**, when the United States wrote the basic laws that govern our country. He is called the "Father of Our Country" because without him, many believe that the United States would not have existed, at least as we know it.



Abraham Lincoln

- **Abraham Lincoln** (1809-1865) was President of the United States during the American Civil War, during which he tried to save the Union. He is known as the "Great Emancipator" because he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which eventually freed millions of slaves. He is also known for being born in a log cabin and giving a speech called the Gettysburg Address. He was the first President to be assassinated (he was shot and killed).
- **Thomas Jefferson** (1743-1826) was President of the United States from 1801-1809. During his presidency, the United States purchased a large area of land known as the Louisiana Purchase. Before he was President, he wrote most of the Declaration of Independence. He is also known for being a political thinker, founding the University of Virginia, and for bringing several innovations to America.
- **Theodore Roosevelt** (1858-1919) was President

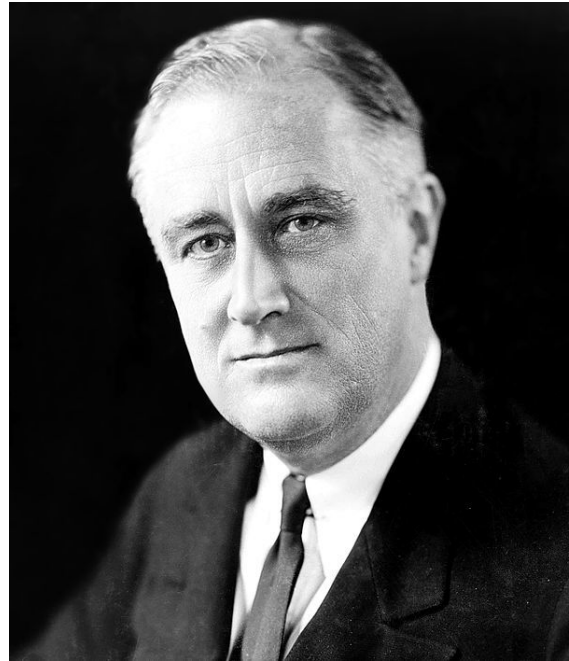


Thomas Jefferson



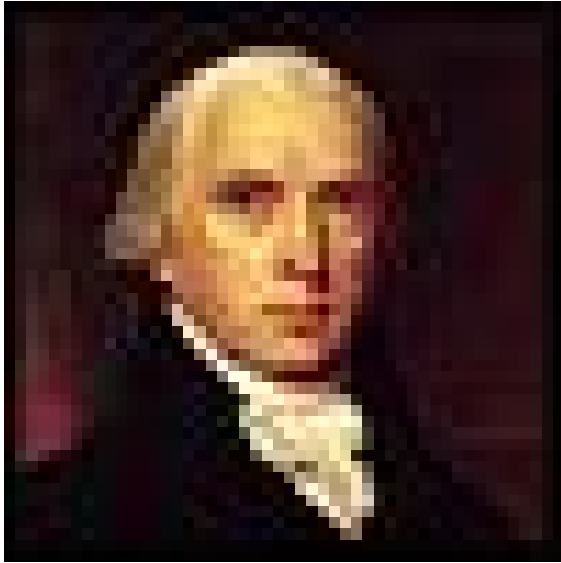
Theodore Roosevelt

from 1901-1909. Before being President, he fought in the Spanish-American War and was Governor of New York. He advocated a strong foreign policy known as the “Big Stick”, started building the Panama Canal, and broke up several monopolies (companies that control all of an industry). Thanks to his presidency, the United States became one of the most powerful countries in the world.



FDR

- **Franklin D. Roosevelt** (1882-1945) was President from 1933-1945. He took office during the Great Depression, a period when a quarter of the country had no jobs. He responded by creating a series of programs known as the New Deal, which created jobs and started federal welfare (giving money to people who don't have much). He was also President during the Second World War. He suffered from a disease called polio and could not use his legs very well.
- **James Madison** (1751-1836) was President from 1809-1817, during the War of 1812. He is known as the “Father of the Constitution” because many of the basic laws that govern our country were his idea. He wrote some of *The Federalist Papers*, which convinced people that the Constitution was a good idea.
- **John F. Kennedy** (1917-1963) was President from 1961-1963. He was popular among many Americans because he looked like a movie star. Kennedy was President during the Cold War, which was a struggle between the US and the Soviet Union to see who was more powerful. He was assassinated, meaning that somebody shot him and he died. He had brothers, Robert Kennedy and Ted Kennedy, who were also in politics.



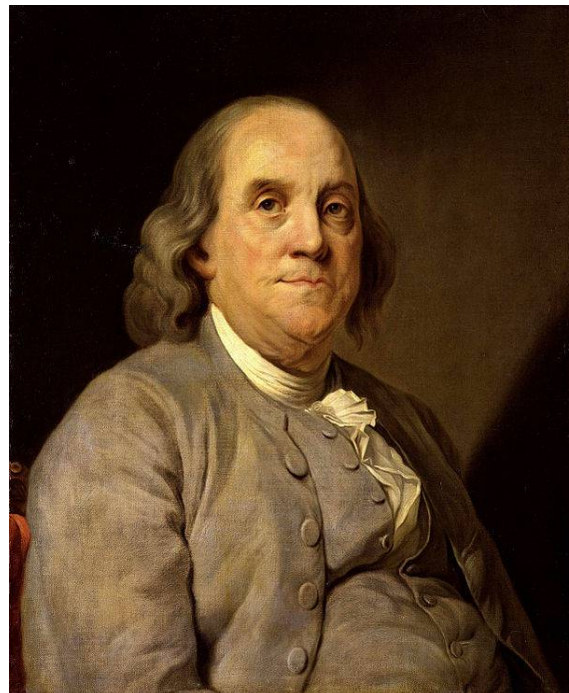
James Madison



Barack Obama



JFK



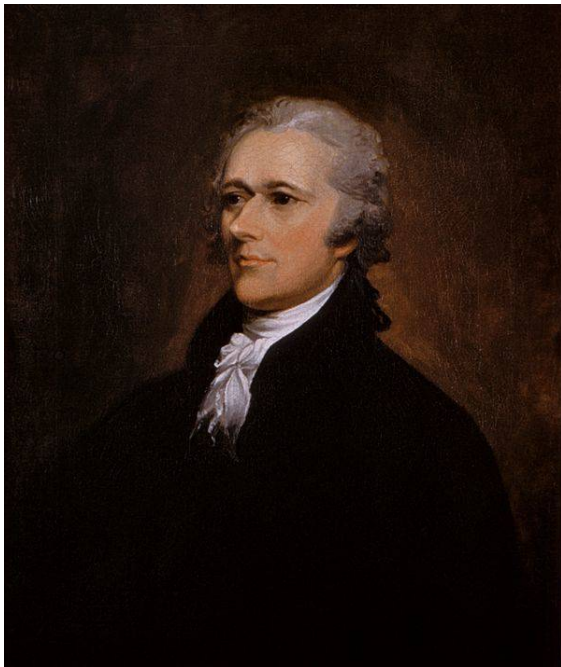
Ben Franklin

- **Barack Obama** (born 1961) is the current President of the United States and the first African-American President. Before being President, he gave a famous speech in 2004 and served as a Senator. He was elected President because many Americans thought he could bring hope and change to America. As President, he is having to deal with the worst economy since the Great Depression.

1.2 Other Statesmen

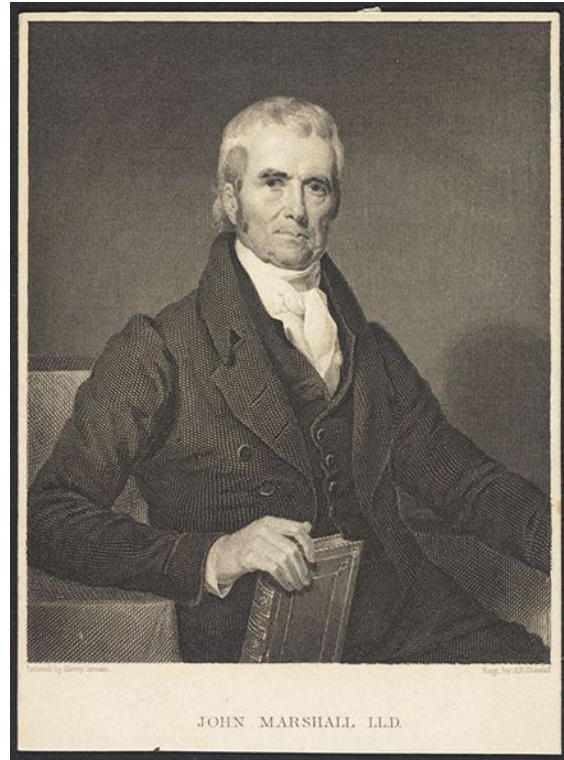
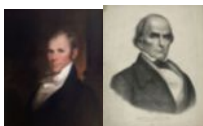
- **Benjamin Franklin** (1706-1790) was active in the movement to achieve independence from England. He helped write the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation (the laws that the

United States had before the Constitution). He lived much of his life in Philadelphia, but also went to England and France to represent America. Besides being a politician, he is credited with inventing the lightning rod and founded several institutions, including the first public library in the United States. He was a printer and an author of a yearly book called *Poor Richard's Almanack*.



Alexander Hamilton

- **Alexander Hamilton** (1755-1804) was active in the American government at its founding. He helped get the Constitution ratified, meaning he found support for it among the American people. He is credited for establishing American monetary policy, which is the way the United States and its government deal with money. He wanted the United States government to be very, very powerful, perhaps even more powerful than it is today.
- **John Marshall** (1755-1835) was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1801-1835. He started judicial review, meaning that the Supreme Court could undo a law if they thought it didn't fit with the U.S. Constitution. Many of his rulings influence what the U.S. government is able to do to this day.



John Marshall

- **Henry Clay** (1777-1852, *near right*) and **Daniel Webster** (1782-1852, *far right*) both served as Congressmen, Senators and Secretary of State (the person who is in charge of dealing with how the U.S. relates to other countries) during the early and mid-19th century. Though neither was elected President, both are thought to be two of America's greatest statesmen. Clay was known as the "Great Compromiser" because he made agreements that stopped states from leaving the Union until after his death. Webster was a great speaker and argued many important cases before the Supreme Court.

2 Generals

The following people served as high-ranking officers in the U.S. Army.

- **Ulysses S. Grant** (1822-1885) was a general in the American Civil War on the side of the Union (North). He is responsible for several victories, such as Vicksburg and Petersburg, that helped the North win the war. He eventually was in charge of all Union armies and forced the surrender of Robert E. Lee. He became President in 1869, but wasn't very good.
- **Dwight D. Eisenhower** (1890-1969) was a general



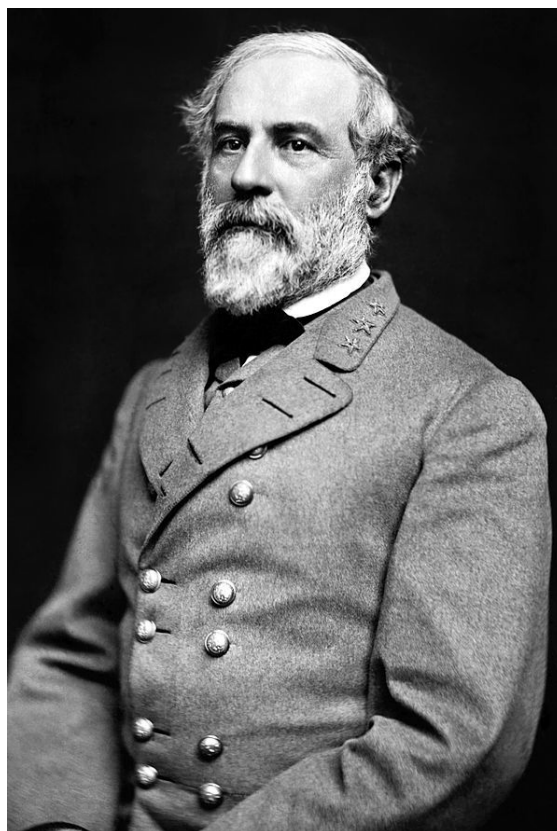
Ulysses S. Grant



Dwight Eisenhower

in World War II. He was placed in charge of all the Allied forces in Europe. He organized the troops that invaded Normandy on D-Day and helped the Soviets win the war in Europe. After the war, he was in charge of all the troops in NATO (a group of countries including the U.S., Canada, and most of

Europe) and became President.

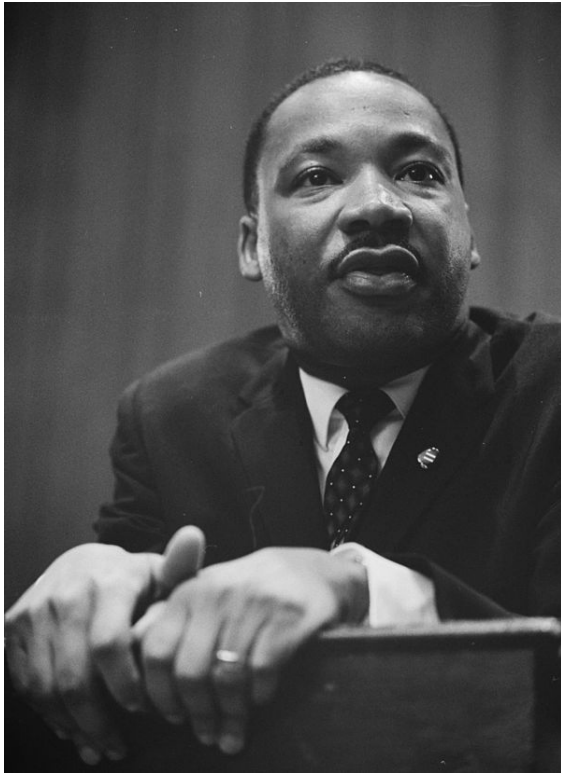


Robert E. Lee

- **Robert E. Lee** (1807-1870) was an officer in the U.S. Army who left to become a general in the Confederacy (the South, the states that were trying to leave the U.S.). Despite not having as many men, he won many battles because he was very smart. He eventually lost to Grant.

3 Pioneers of Equality

- **Martin Luther King Jr.** (1929-1968) was a Baptist minister and a leader in the fight for equality for African-Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. Before King, the South had a policy of discrimination, meaning blacks and whites in many areas had to go to different schools, sit in different places on the bus, and even use different drinking fountains. King led non-violent protests that led to laws that ended discrimination. In 1963, he led a March on Washington and gave the “I Have a Dream” speech.
- **Susan B. Anthony** (1820-1906, *standing*) and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** (1815-1902, *sitting*) were leaders of the women’s suffrage movement,



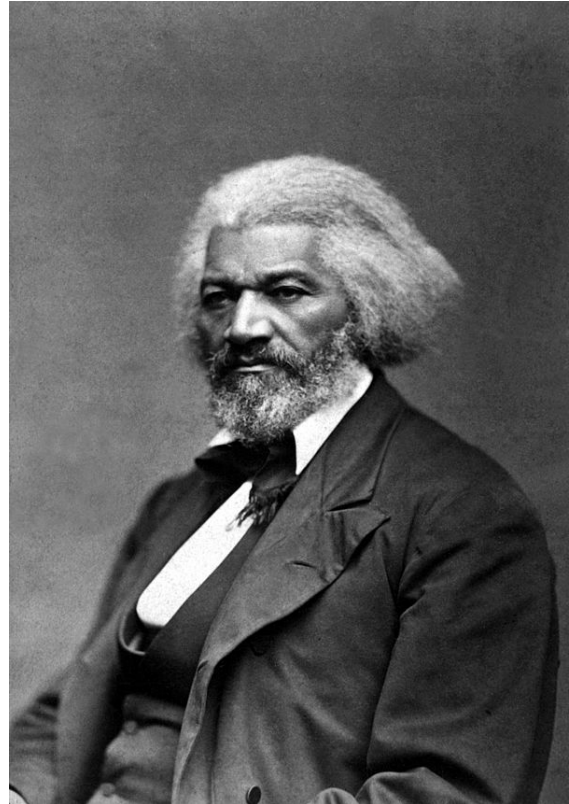
MLK Jr.



Anthony & Stanton

meaning that they fought for women's right to vote

(before 1920, women could not vote in elections for President). In 1848, Stanton organized the Seneca Falls Convention, which was a meeting of people who thought women should get rights equal to men. In 1872, Anthony attempted to vote for President to call attention to the fact that women were not allowed to vote.



Frederick Douglass

- **Frederick Douglass** (1818-1895) was an African-American and a leader in the Abolitionist movement, meaning that he wanted to end slavery. Douglass was born a slave, but escaped from slavery. He gave many speeches and wrote a newspaper and a book, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. He encouraged thousands of blacks to join the Union Army during the American Civil War. After the Civil War, he was the U.S.' man in Haiti.
- **Harriet Tubman** (1820-1913) was an African-American and a leader of the Underground Railroad, a secret effort to free slaves. She reportedly freed hundreds of slaves. She was a spy during the Civil War. After the Civil War, she was active in fighting for women to have the right to vote.



Harriet Tubman



Eleanor Roosevelt



Rosa Parks

- **Rosa Parks** (1913-2005) was an African-American and a leader in the Civil Rights movement. She was told by a white man to give up her seat on a bus in Birmingham, Alabama, but refused. This led to a boycott by blacks of Birmingham buses and ultimately to anti-discrimination laws. She was a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement.

- **Eleanor Roosevelt** (1884-1962) was the wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt. During his term as President, she was one of the most active First Ladies ever, interacting with many everyday citizens. After FDR died, she was a delegate to the brand-new United Nations, where she helped write and pass the Declaration of Human Rights (a statement of rights that everybody everywhere should have). This earned her the nickname “First Lady of the World.”
- **Cesar Chavez** (1927-1993) was a Hispanic farm worker. He started the United Farm Workers, a labor union for people working on farms to get paid and treated better.

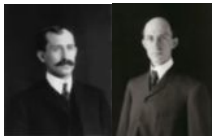
4 Inventors and Innovators

- **Thomas Edison** (1847-1931) is most famous for inventing the first practical light bulb in 1879. He also invented many other things, including the phonograph (an old way of listening to recorded sound) and the movie camera. He built the world’s first electrical power plant.
- **Alexander Graham Bell** (1847-1922) is most famous for inventing a telephone in 1876. He also



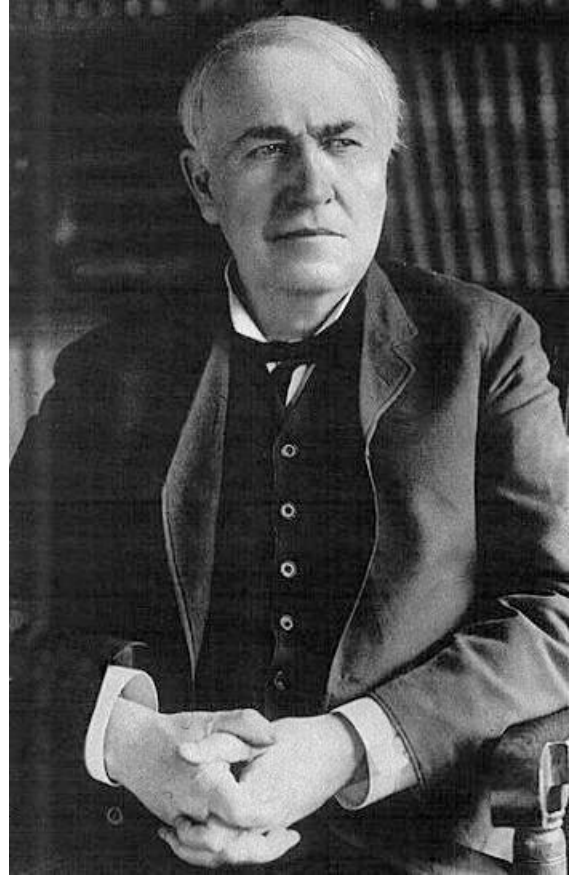
Cesar Chavez

invented the gramophone, which was similar to Edison's phonograph. He was one of the founders of the National Geographic Society, which makes *National Geographic* magazine. He was also a teacher for the deaf.

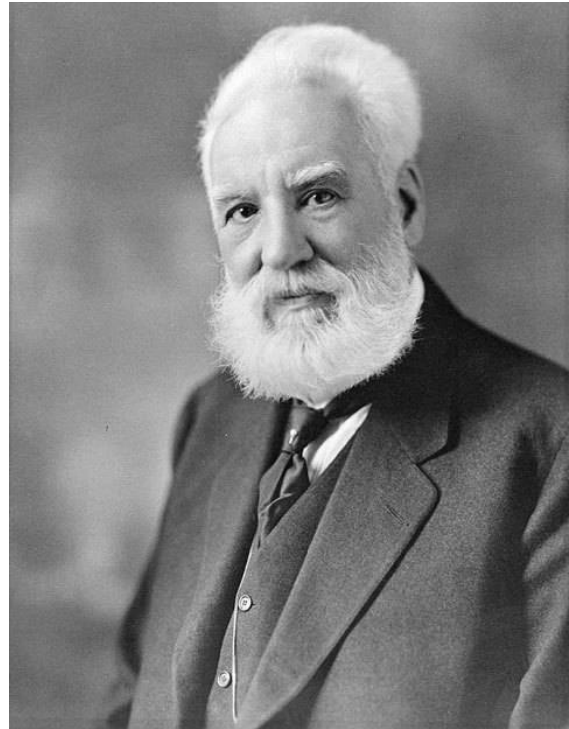


- The **Wright Brothers**, **Orville** (1871-1948, *near right*) and **Wilbur** (1867-1912, *far right*), are credited with the first practical, sustained, controlled, powered flight, which was at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903. This leads many to credit them with the invention of the airplane. They also invented the wind tunnel.

- **Albert Einstein** (1879-1955) was a German-American physicist. While still in Europe, he developed the theory of relativity and the equation $E=mc^2$. He later moved to United States and helped design the atomic bomb.

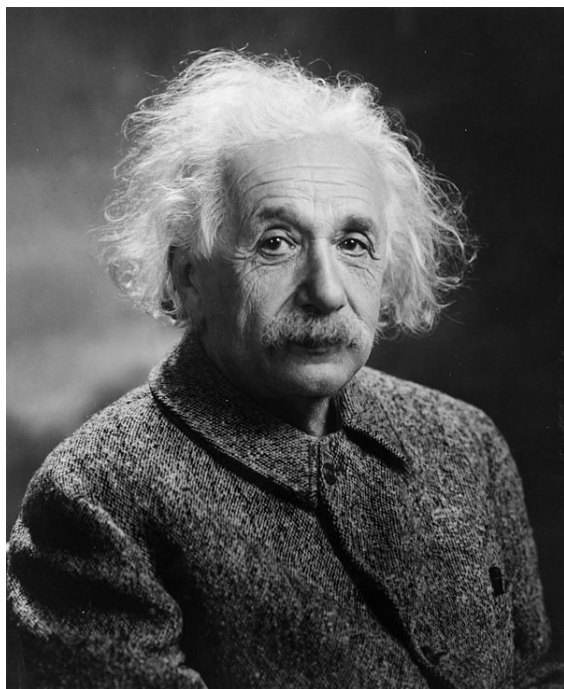


Thomas Edison

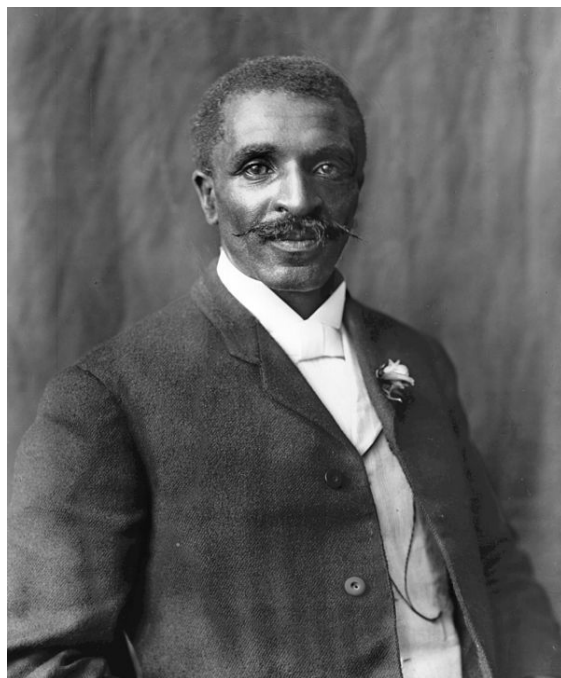


Alexander Graham Bell

- **Henry Ford** (1863-1947) was a businessman and pioneer in the auto industry. His company,



Albert Einstein



George Washington Carver

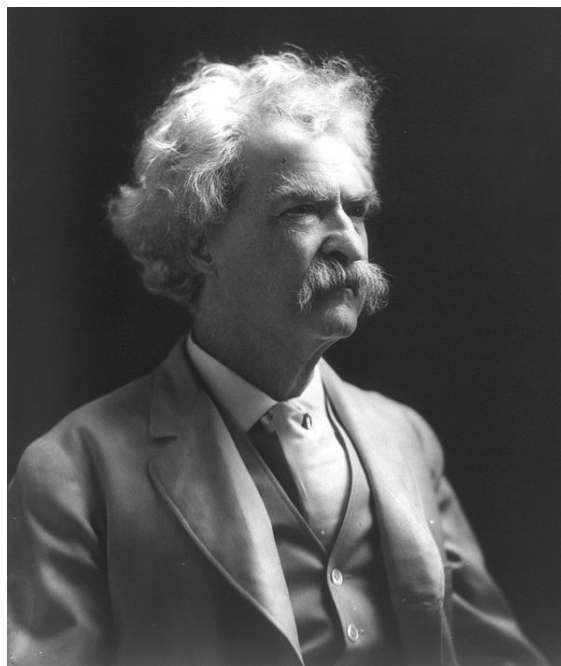
plants. He discovered hundreds of uses for peanuts, soybeans and sweet potatoes while teaching at Tuskegee, a black college in Alabama.



Henry Ford

Ford Motor Company, was the first to use moving assembly lines. to build cars, and the first to sell cars that most people could afford to buy.

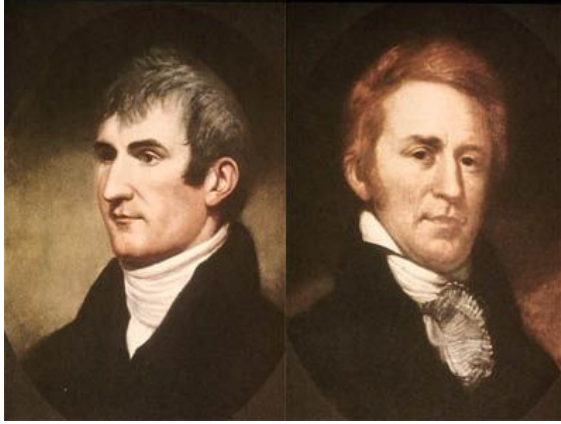
5 Other Famous Americans



Mark Twain

- **George Washington Carver** (1864-1943) was an African-American scientist who worked a lot with
- **Mark Twain** (1835-1910), whose real name was

Samuel Clemens, was a famous American author. Many of his books, such as *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, focus on the Mississippi River, where he once served as a steamboat pilot. He was also a humorist (a person who tells jokes and funny stories).



Lewis and Clark

- **Meriwether Lewis** (1774-1809, *near right*) and **William Clark** (1770-1838, *far right*) were chosen by Thomas Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Purchase, a large land area which today is much of the Central and Western United States. They left St. Louis in 1804, and reached the Pacific in 1806, viewing much of the West on the way and writing down what they saw. After their exploration, Lewis became Governor of Louisiana and Clark became Governor of Missouri.
- **Sacagawea** (1788?–1812?) was an interpreter and alleged guide to Lewis and Clark in their travels in the American West. She was the wife of a French fur trader who was a member of Lewis and Clark's Expedition. Very little is known about her life. She appears on one version of the dollar coin.
- **Clara Barton** (1821-1912) founded the American Red Cross, which is one of the world's largest relief organizations. She was inspired to do so by the death and injury she witnessed in the American Civil War, when she was in charge of finding missing men.
- **Elvis Presley** (1935-1977) was a popular American singer. He is one of the most famous singers of the Rock and Roll genre. He was from Memphis, TN.



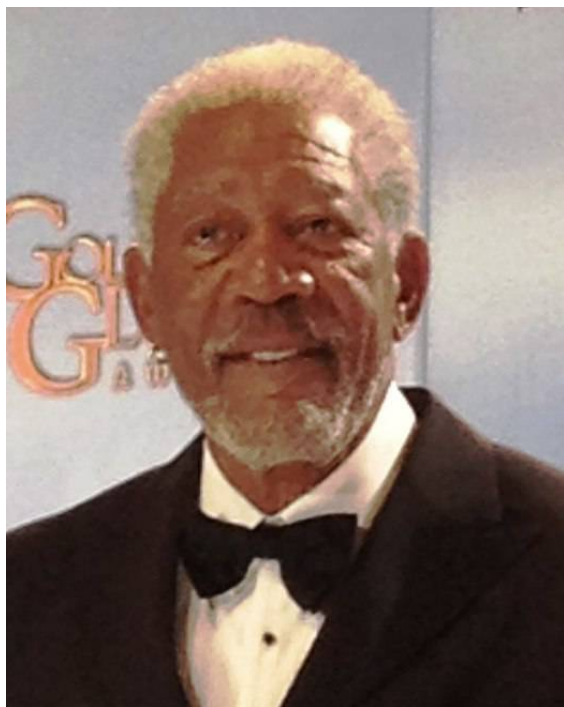
Clara Barton



Elvis Presley

- **Morgan Freeman** (1964–present) An African American actor known for his powerful voice.

Articles regarding these people can also be found both at the [Simple English Wikipedia](#) and at the [English](#)



Morgan Freeman

Wikipedia. Many of these people also have articles in other languages, such as Spanish.

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