

The List

What do all these people have in
common?

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Gwenfrewi Santes Press

Introduction

What follows is a long list of names. Most of them may be familiar. Some may not be. The question is: what do all these people have in common. You will notice that most are Americans, but a few are not. Many are dead, but some are not. The fact that they all made some contribution to society is not the solution.

Study the list and try not to peek at the answer. The asterisks will be explained at the end too. I think you will be surprised.

What do all these people have in common?

Business people and industrialists

John Jacob Astor*
Glen Bell (Taco Bell)
William E. Boeing
Gail Borden
Arde Bulova
David Burpee
Adolphus Busch
Andrew Carnegie*
William James Chalmers* (of Allis-Chalmers)
Walter Chrysler
Ezra Cornell
Michael Dell
Walt Disney
Washington Duke*
George Eastman*
William Fargo*
Marshall Field*
James Fisk*
James A. Folger (coffee)
Henry Ford*
Henry C. Frick
Alfred C. Fuller* (brushes)
Bill Gates

Norman Bel Geddes
King Camp Gillette
Isaac Gimbel
Jay Gould
W.T. Grant*
Daniel Guggenheim
Edward Harriman*
John Hertz (rental cars)
Conrad Hilton
Johns Hopkins*
Howard Hughes
Steve Jobs (Apple Computers)
Howard Johnson*
Mary Kay
W.K. Kellogg*
James Kemper (insurance)
Ray Kroc* (McDonalds)
Sebastian Kresge
Estée Lauder
Herman Lay (Frito-Lay)
Charles Lubin (Sara Lee)
David McConnell (Avon)
Rowland Macy
Andrew Mellon
Charles Merrill (of Merrill-Lynch)
D. Ogden Mills
J.P. Morgan
John Ringing North (circus)
John Knudsen Northrop
Ransom Olds*
J.C. Penney

Charles Post (cereals)
John D. Rockefeller
Alvah Roebuck
Colonel Harland Sanders
Richard Sears*
William Steinway
Levi Strauss
John and Clement Studebaker
David Thomas (Wendy's)
Ted Turner
Cornelius Vanderbilt*
Matthew Vassar*
John Wanamaker*
Montgomery Ward*
T. J. Watson (IBM)
Henry Wells (Wells-Fargo)
George Westinghouse
F. W. Woolworth
Philip Wrigley

Entertainers: Actors, Dancers and Directors

Bud Abbott* and Lou Costello*
Alvin Ailey
Woody Allen
Desi Arnez
Adele Astaire*
Fred Astaire*
Joan Baez
Lucille Ball
P. T. Barnum

Tallulah Bankhead
Ethel Barrymore
John Barrymore
Lionel Barrymore*
Humphrey Bogart*
Sonny Bono
Edwin Booth
Robert Blake
John Bubbles*
George Burns*
Raymond Burr*
Lon Chaney*
Charlie Chaplin*
Katherine Cornell
Merce Cunningham
Clara Bow*
Major Bowes*
Walter Brennan
Bette Davis
Sammy Davis Jr.*
Isadora Duncan
Irene Dunne
Henry Fonda
Tennessee Ernie Ford
Clark Gable*
Lillian Gish
Samuel Goldwyn*
Arthur Godfrey*
Cary Grant*
W.D. Griffith
Oliver Hardy

Gabby Hayes*
Rita Hayworth
Audrey Hepburn
Alfred Hitchcock*
Hedda Hopper*
Rock Hudson
George Jessel*
Al Jolson
Gene Kelly
Grace Kelly
Peter Lawford*
Stan Laurel
Myrna Loy
Madonna
The Marx Brothers*
Raymond Massey
Adolphe Menjou
Marilyn Monroe*
Arthur Murray*
Dorothy Parker
Elvis Presley
Ginger Rogers
Will Rogers
Ruth St. Denis
Phil Silvers*
Frank Sinatra*
Kate Smith
Barbra Streisand
Ed Sullivan
Tina Turner
Rudolph Valentino

Jack Webb
Lawrence Welk
Orson Welles
Oprah Winfrey
Natalie Wood
Darryl Zanuck
Florenz Ziegfeld

Inventors, Naturalists, Scientists

John Abbott
James Audubon
Matthias Baldwin (locomotive)
Edward Bausch
Alexander Graham Bell
Clarence Birdseye
Luther Burbank*
Thomas Carvel
Bernard Castro*
Louis Chevrolet*
Samuel Colt*
John Deere*
Richard Drew (transparent tape)
Thomas Edison*
Max Factor*
Michael Faraday
Philo T. Farnsworth (T.V.)
R. Buckminster Fuller
Robert Fulton
Charles Goodyear*

Bette Nesmith Graham (white-out)
Elias Howe*
Frederic Ives *(Photography)
Candido Jacuzzi*
Edwin Land (camera)
Allan Lockheed*
Malcolm Lockheed
Guglielmo Marconi
Andre Michelin
Garrett Augustus Morgan* (traffic light)
John Muir
Marlin Perkins
James Ritty* (cash register)
Jacob Schick*
Christopher Lathan Sholer* (typewriter)
Isaac M. Singer (sewing machine)*
Charles Steinmetz
Nikola Tesla
Earl Tupper (tupperware)
Horace Wells (anesthesia)
George Westinghouse
Eli Whitney*
Granville Woods*
Orville* and Wilbur Wright
Linus Yale* (lock)
Frank Zamboni

Labor Leaders

I.W. Abel
Tony Boyle

Cesar Chavez*
Eugene Debs*
David Dubinsky*
Samuel Gompers*
William Green
Jimmy Hoffa*
Mary Harris "Mother" Jones
John L. Lewis*
George Meany*
Arnold Ray Miller
James Petrillo*
Walter Reuther*
Philip Randolph
Leonard Woodcock

Musicians

Marian Anderson
Louis Armstrong*
Count Basie*
Sidney Bechet*
Lead Belly*
Robert Russell Bennett*
Irving Berlin*
William Billings*
John Cage
Maria Callas
George M. Cohan
Nat King Cole
John Coltrane
Aaron Copeland

Walter Damrosch
Jimmy Dorsey*
Tommy Dorsey
Duke Ellington
Morton Feldman*
Ella Fitzgerald*
Stephen Foster
George Gershwin*
Ira Gershwin
Benny Goodman*
Morton Gould
Arlo Guthrie
Woody Guthrie*
Burl Ives
Victor Herbert
Earl Hines
Billy Holiday
Vladimir Horowitz
Mahalia Jackson*
Harry James
Gordon Jenkins
Scott Joplin
Stan Kenton
Jerome Kern
John Lennon
Frederick Loewe
Otto Luening*
Henry Mancini
Lowell Mason
Gian Carlo Menotti
Yehudi Menuhin

Ethel Merman
Glenn Miller
Thelonius Monk*
Charlie Parker*
Luciano Pavarotti
Jan Peerce*
Rosa Ponselle*
Richard Rodgers
Sigmund Romberg
Arthur Rubenstein
Arnold Schoenberg
Frank Sinatra*
John Philip Sousa
Bessie Smith*
Kate Smith
Joan Sutherland
Bruno Walters
Ethel Waters*
Andrew Lloyd Webber
Kurt Weill
Mary L.C. B. Zimbalist

Public Figures

Benedict Arnold*
Jimmy Byrnes
John Chancellor
Henry Clay*
Grover Cleveland
George Clinton

William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody
Clarence Darrow
Doris Duke
Amelia Earhart
Orval Faubus
Millard Fillmore
John Nance Garner
Horace Greeley*
Bobby Fischer*
Ben Franklin
Alexander Hamilton
William Henry Harrison
Jesse Helms
Wild Bill Hickok*
Robert Ingersol*
Andrew Jackson*
Oswald Jacoby (bridge)
Peter Jennings
Andrew Johnson*
Larry King
Fiorello LaGuardia
Charles Lindberg
Abraham Lincoln*
Huey Long
Clare Booth Luce
Malcolm X
Elsa Maxwell*
William McKinley
Golda Meier
Matthew Perry
Emily Post*

Eddie Rickenbacker*
George Lincoln Rockwell
Karl Rowe
Horatio Seymour
Stewart Symington
Wallis Warfield Simpson
Al Smith
Margaret Chase Smith
Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder
Henry Stanley
Zachary Taylor*
Harry S. Truman
William M. Tweed
Amy Vanderbilt
Martin Van Buren*
Booker T. Washington
George Washington
Walter Winchell*
Oprah Winfrey
Fernando Wood
Victoria Woodhull

Reformers and Spiritual Leaders

Susan B. Anthony
Alice Bailey
Adin Ballou
Black Elk
H.P. Blavatsky*
John Brown*
Orestes Brownson*

Alexander Campbell
Dorothy Day
Father Divine
Dorothea Dix*
Frederick Douglass
Mary Baker Eddy
Charles G. Finney
The Fox Sisters
Margaret Fuller
William Lloyd Garrison
Marcus Garvey
Sarah Grimke
Ann Lee
Jiddu Krishnamurti
Amiee Semple McPherson
Lucretia Mott
William Miller
Dwight L. Moody*
Henry Steel Olcott
Thomas Paine*
Oral Roberts
Margaret Sanger
Joseph Smith
Billy Sunday*
Lewis and Arthur Tappan
Harriet Tubman*
Theodore Weld
Jemima Wilkinson*
Lucy Wright (Shakers)
John Woolman
Brigham Young

Visual Artists, Architects, Photographers

Charles Addams
Ansel Adams
Peter Arno
Albert Bierstadt*
George Caleb Bingham*
Mathew Brady*
Al Capp
William Merritt Chase
Frederick Church
Thomas Cole
John Singleton Copley
Ralph Adams Cram
Jasper Cropsey
Currier *and Ives*
Arthur Bowen Davies
Walt Disney
Frank Doubleday*
Thomas Eakins
Alfred Eisenstaedt
Beatrix Jones Farrand
A.B. Frost*
Chester Gould
Marsden Hartley*
Childe Hassam
Edward Hicks
Winslow Homer
Philip Hooker (architect)*
Edward Hopper

Daniel Huntington
Henry Inman*
William Henry Jackson
Jasper Johns
Walt Kelly
Rockwell Kent
Dorothea Lange
Walter Lanz
George Luks
Grandma Moses*
Thomas Nast*
Georgia O'Keefe
Charles Willson Peale
Titian Peale
Rembrandt Peale
Raphaelle Peale
Jackson Pollack
Ernie Pyle
Norman Rockwell
Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe
Frederic Remington
Charles Schulz
Maurice Sendak
John Sloan*
Edward Steichen
John Twachtman
James Whistler
Grant Wood
Frank Lloyd Wright*
Andrew Wyeth*
Chic Young

Writers and Publishers

Edward Albee
Louisa May Alcott
Sherwood Anderson
Maya Angelou
James Baldwin
Frank L. Baum*
James Beard (cooking)
Josh Billings
Erma Bombeck
Ann Bradstreet
George Brett (Macmillan, pres.)
Joseph Brodsky*
William Cullen Bryant
Thornton W. Burgess
Edgar Rice Burroughs
Abe Burrows
Erskine Caldwell
Truman Capote*
John Cheever*
Agatha Christie
James Fenimore Cooper
Noel Coward*
Hart Crane
Stephen Crane
Robert Creeley
Fanny Crosby
Cyrus Curtis*
George Curtis

Charles Dana
Richard Dana Sr.
Emily Dickinson
Hilda Doolittle (H.D.)
Theodore Dreiser
Paul Dunbar
Ralph Ellison
William Faulkner
Edna Ferber
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Robert Frost
Erle Stanley Gardner
William Lloyd Garrison
Horace Greeley*
Alex Haley
Fitz-Greene Halleck*
Dashiell Hammett
James,* John,* and Fletcher* Harper
Joel Chandler Harris
Lorenzo Hart
Moss Hart
Bret Harte
William Randolph Hearst
Lillian Hellman
Ernest Hemingway
Eric Hoffer*
Julia Ward Howe
William Dean Howells
Langston Hughes
Washington Irving
Christopher Isherwood

Helen Hunt Jackson
Henry James
Alexander Bryan Johnson*
George Jones* (N.Y. Times)
George Kauffman
Jack Kerouac
Denise Levertov*
Jack London*
Amy Lowell*
Edgar Lee Masters
Carson McCullers
Herman Melville*
H.L. Mencken
Henry Miller
Margaret Mitchell
Anais Nin
Clifford Odetts*
Eugene O'Neill
Thomas Paine*
S. J. Perelman
Edgar Allan Poe
Katherine Anne Porter
George Putnam
James Whitcomb Riley
Edward Arlington Robinson
Carl Sandberg*
William Saroyan*
Anne Sexton
Sam Shepard
Isaac Bashevis Singer
Cornelia Otis Skinner

Gertrude Stein
John Steinbeck
Wallace Stevens
I. F. Stone
Tom Stoppard
Harriet Beecher Stowe
Bayard Taylor
Booth Tarkington
Sara Teasdale
T. B. Thorpe
James Thurber
Mark Twain*
H.G. Welles
Edith Wharton*
Phillis Wheatley
Walt Whitman*
John Greenleaf Whittier*
Elie Wiesel
Laura Ingalls Wilder*
P.G. Wodehouse
Richard Wright*

Give up? According to the *American National Biography* (1999), *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Who's Who in America* and several other sources, not one of these persons was awarded an earned degree by a college, university, or professional (art, theatre, etc.) school. Many took university level courses, but none graduated. Many, of course, received honorary degrees.

A star indicates that the person dropped out of, or never attended, high school. It may be that there are others on the list who did not graduate from high school for biographies are often vague about such matters. Also, if I have missed the bestowing of a degree, I apologize to all involved.

So what does it all mean, this list of prominent people who succeeded in life without benefit of higher education? To me it means that "Credentialist" America has gotten it all wrong, that being qualified has less to do with the number of degrees obtained and more with the quality of the person. We have come to prize above all the academic stamp on the forehead. Without that basic B.A. one qualifies for little; without the high school diploma one qualifies for virtually nothing. We moan about the number of high school dropouts who still defy the system without recognizing that among their ranks are Frank Lloyd Wright, Thomas Nast, Carl Sandberg, and Ed Kroc, among others. We are certain that without a B.A. no one will get far, forgetting all about Bill Gates, Ted Turner, Maya Angelou, and Aaron Copeland.

The argument is that the world is much more complicated now, that more and more education is needed in order to work in this complex world. But is that true? In fact, in many ways life in 19th century America was more complex than it is today. For instance, there was a time when, if you wanted to multiply or divide some numbers, you had to sit down with pencil and paper and work out the answer. Today, all you need is a little calculator and it does the job without difficulty. Now there are, of course, nuclear scientists who need much more mathematics than my calculator can provide, but if I am any example of how the world goes today, that little calculator is quite sufficient for most of us.

Certainly Herman Melville found it no easier to write a novel than does Toni Morrison. Winslow Homer found it no easier to paint a picture than does Jasper Johns. Abraham Lincoln was as successful in facing grave challenges as George W. Bush. In many ways, manufacturing, marketing, and distribution were more complicated for Sears and Woolworth than they are for their successors. On a more mundane level, technology has also made it much easier to be, for instance, a store clerk, secretary, or carpenter. Imagine clerks still adding up those long columns of numbers on a pad before you can pay for your groceries, or secretaries writing all letters long hand, or carpenters building houses without benefit of power tools or concrete mixer trucks.

Television and the Web provide us with basic news so that we don't even have to read a newspaper every day. Computers correct our spelling and some of our grammar and they open to all of us a wealth of information once available only by traveling, sometimes long distances, to a library or even to a foreign country. Not all of the information on television or the Web is reliable, but then not everything that has been taught in the classroom or put in print has been absolutely accurate either. The truth is we can now do research, take any one of a variety of courses on the Internet, or even learn a language via the computer, and, perhaps with a few books, educate ourselves.

Computers are complex instruments; yet I have met several young people who have mastered many of their secrets without benefit of any degrees at all. Some of the most successful hackers in the world are largely self-taught. The same is true in many other areas as well. In truth, it has become easier and easier to educate oneself either on the Internet, with CD Roms. or at some local educational institution where one can take what one likes without ever working toward a degree of any kind.

Of course, it is true that today one needs academic degrees to get ahead---one can statistically prove how valuable such a degree is--- but that need is based upon a self-fulfilling prophecy. As long as we believe that education at a certain level is essential, it will be. Should we believe it? Well, since I have been a part of higher education for the last forty-five years, I would

like to think so. Certainly an excellent college or university can provide educational opportunities not easily found on one's own. At least our vast and powerful educational establishment wants everyone to believe that. Nevertheless, much of what is offered could be acquired without benefit of the classroom and we, as a society, ought to recognize that fact.

Moreover, we should also recognize that education as it is presented often bores some students to tears and, in fact, may "vaccinate" them against any real intellectual interest. It becomes a game that they play in order to get through courses without ever learning very much. Our society keeps young people in perpetual adolescence when it might be better for them to experience real life and work. While our children, at age 15, are still getting the basic rudiments of an education, Thomas Nast was already working, learning to become one of the great illustrators and cartoonists of his generation. Was he deprived? No, I don't think so. In fact, he was so put off by school that had he been forced to endure it longer he might have been wounded for life.

Because we have emphasized the certificate and the degree, that is what has become important. Genuine learning has taken a backseat to garnering credit hours in order to get that stamp of approval that employers demand. If this list demonstrates anything, however, it is that many of the most creative people, in the arts, in business, in science and technology have worked better outside the system, learning on their own, creating on

their own, without the oppression that education can entail.

The great educational slogan triumphantly espoused by our present Administration is "No Child Left Behind," a worthy sentiment no doubt if one is fleeing a burning building. But we must ask: behind what? Maybe some children really need and want to go in a different direction entirely. Must every child proceed in lockstep toward some supposedly ideal goal conjured up by our representatives in Washington? Do they (or we) even have the least idea what our children will need to know forty years from now?

We assume that more education creates a society that is more cultured and better informed, but we must seriously ask ourselves: with the radical increase in the percentage of Americans with a college education since 1945 has our culture really improved? Are our novelists, poets, painters, and composers who now finish not only B.A.s but M.F.A.s as well really better than their less academically trained predecessors? Are our businessmen and women who now sport proudly their M.B.A.s really better than their high school drop-out predecessors and contemporaries? Certainly we can see vast advances in the sciences, in medicine, physics and all the various "-ologies", but those improvements should not blind us to the apparent lack of any real improvement in many other areas or to the fact that science has created as many problems for the world as it has solved. Moreover, many of our modern technological refinements rest upon the

basic discoveries and inventions by people like Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison and the Wright Brothers who had very little education at all.

So the list provided is just a contrarian reminder that our view of education may not conform to the realities of life and that maybe, just maybe, we should rethink the whole process. It could very well be that in the attempt to provide a universal education of rigorous high quality we are actually stifling creativity and turning large segments of our society into anti-intellectuals. The state of our culture today rather makes me think so.

Jay G. Williams, A.B., M. Div., Ph.D.
Professor of Religious Studies
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Here are a few more business executives for the list. These are taken from Yahoo.

1. Dennis Albaugh

Chairman, Albaugh
Type of Business: Pesticides
Education: Associate's degree from Des Moines Area Community College
Fun fact: He has a collection of more than 100 classic Chevrolets

2. Paul Allen

Founder and chairman, Vulcan
Type of Business: Media, telecommunications
Education: Dropped out of Washington State College after two years
Fun fact: He persuaded Bill Gates to drop out of Harvard. They later founded Microsoft (MSFT) together.

3. Richard Branson

CEO, Virgin Group
Type of Business: Travel, radio, TV, music, venture capital
Education: No college degree
Fun fact: He became an entrepreneur at age 16 with the creation of Student magazine.

4. Maverick Carter

CEO, LRMR Innovative Marketing & Branding
Type of Business: Marketing
Education: 3.5 years of college at Western Michigan University and University of Akron combined
Quote: "Don't be afraid if you see an opportunity to go and give it shot. You can finish school later; it's always there."

5. John Paul DeJoria

CEO, John Paul Mitchell Systems

Type of Business: Hair-care products

Education: No college

Fun fact: He started out selling greeting cards at age 9.

6. Michael Dell

Founder, chairman, and CEO Dell (DELL)

Type of Business: Computers

Education: Attended University of Texas, Austin; did not finish.

Quote: "When I started our company, it was very much an idea outside of the conventional wisdom, and if there were people telling me that it wasn't going to work, I wasn't really listening to them."

7. Felix Dennis

Founder and chairman, Alpha Media Group, formerly Dennis Publishing

Type of Business: Publishing (Maxim, The Week)

Education: No college degree

Fun fact: He wrote a biography and published a magazine about Bruce Lee; sales surged when the martial arts star died suddenly in 1973.

8. Barry Diller

Chairman and CEO of IAC/InterActiveCorp (IACI)

Type of Business: Media

Education: Dropped out of UCLA after three weeks

Fun fact: He started his career working in the mail room of the William Morris Agency.

9. Bill Gates

Co-chair and Trustee, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Chairman, Microsoft (MSFT)

Type of Business: Philanthropy. Software.

Education: Dropped out of Harvard

Fun fact: As a schoolboy, he created a program that allowed people to play tic-tac-toe on the computer.

10. Mukesh "Micky" Jagtiani

Chairman, Landmark International (Dubai)

Type of Business: Retailing

Education: No college degree

Fun fact: The billionaire mall developer flunked out of a London accounting school as a teenager and worked as a taxi driver before becoming an entrepreneur.

11. Dean Kamen

Founder and chairman, Segway

Type of Business: Motor vehicles

Education: Dropped out of Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Fun fact: Kamen founded FIRST, a robotics competition for high school students.

12. David Oreck

Founder, Oreck

Type of Business: Vacuum cleaners

Education: No college. At 17, enlisted in the army, and flew B-29 bombers during World War II

Quote: "Things are never as bad as they seem to the pessimist and never as good as they seem to the optimist."

13. Amancio Ortega Gaona

President, Inditex Group

Type of Business: Fashion retailing (Zara, Kiddy Class, others). (A Coruna, Spain)

Education: No college

Fun fact: Often cited as the richest man in Spain, he reportedly has never given any media interviews

14. Phillip Ruffin

Owner, Treasure Island

Type of Business: Casinos

Education: Attended Washburn University for three years and Wichita State University but never got his degree.

Quote: "You get the most experience from the business of life."

15. Alfred Taubman

Founder, Taubman Centers (TCO). Philanthropist

Type of Business: Shopping malls

Education: Attended the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor for three years but left to start a family and his career

Quote: "Become an expert in one fundamental area of your market or business. No one starts out as a generalist."

16. Ty Warner

Founder, Ty, Inc.

Type of Business: Toys (stuffed animals)

Education: Dropped out of college to pursue a career in acting. Later founded Ty Inc.

Fun fact: The plush animals his company manufactured retailed for only \$5 in the 1990s, but Beanie Baby-mania drove prices up to \$30 or more for the hard-to-get characters.