
Who Was Walt Disney?

Walt Disney liked being the class clown. He once said that he would do anything for attention. His schoolmates in Marceline, Missouri, loved his performances.

Once he caught a field mouse and made a leash for it out of string. He waltzed into class and paraded his new pet around the room.



Somebody saw the little critter and screamed. Walt's teacher marched right over, put an end to the mischief, and punished Walt. But he didn't care. He and his mouse were famous for a day.

Walt Disney didn't know it then. But one day another mouse—one named Mickey—would make him famous all over the world.

Chapter 1

The Farm

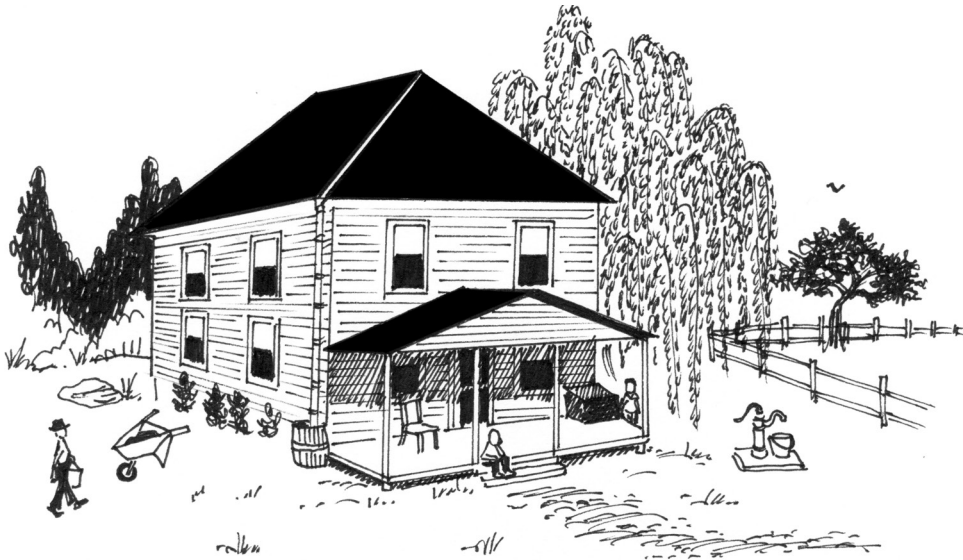
On December 5, 1901, Walter Elias Disney was born in an upstairs bedroom of a two-story cottage on North Tripp Avenue in Chicago. Walt's father, Elias, had built the house himself.



Walt's mother, Flora, was trained as a teacher. But she gave up a career to raise her five children. She was as friendly and warm as her husband was short-tempered and stern.

By the time Walt was four, the neighborhood was growing rough. So the family moved to a farm in Marceline, Missouri. It was the happiest time in Walt's childhood.

Walt loved his new home. Even though Marceline was a small town, it was still exciting



for Walt to head down to Main Street with all its little stores.

Around the farm were weeping willows and apple, peach, and plum trees. Walt watched rabbits, squirrels, opossums, foxes, and raccoons scurry around the pond.

He liked to ride on pigs even though he



often fell off and landed in mud. And he and his friends trotted on Charley, an old farm horse. Charley charged through the trees without caring about his riders. Walt had to jump off to keep from bonking his head on a branch.

Walt's parents and older brothers—Herbert, Raymond, and Roy—were too busy with farm chores to take Walt to school. So he didn't start until he was almost seven. By then, his younger sister Ruth, who was five, was ready for school, too. Walt said that starting school with his younger sister “was the most embarrassing thing that could happen to a fellow.”

After school, Walt fished and skinny-dipped. In winter he went sledding or skating on a frozen creek. On Sundays the Disneys visited neighbors. Sometimes Elias played fiddle. It was one of the few times he saw his father having a good time.

Walt always wanted to entertain people, to make them have a good time. Once a group of



actors came to town to perform *Peter Pan*. It was about a boy who never grows up. Walt loved the play and got to play Peter in his school's production of the play. His brother Roy hooked up wires to lift Walt into the air. To the audience it looked like he was flying. But the wires broke. And Walt went flying into the surprised crowd.

Almost as soon as he could hold a pencil, Walt spent hours and



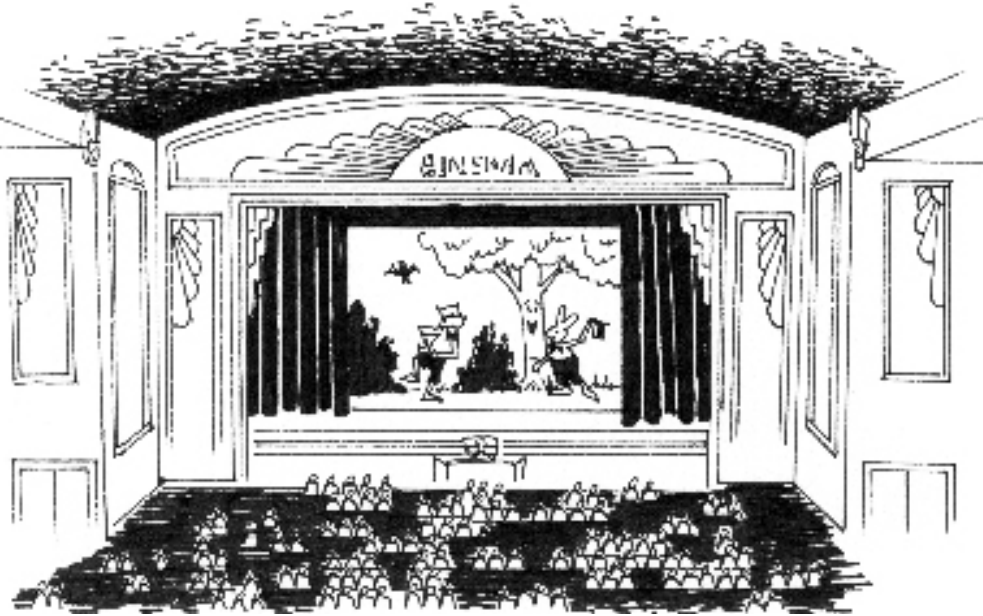
hours drawing. He told everybody that he was an artist. His proudest possessions were crayons and drawing paper from his Aunt Margaret.

Walt definitely did have talent. His neighbor Doc Sherwood thought Walt was so good that he asked for a picture of his horse. The horse wouldn't stand still, and Walt had trouble drawing his portrait. But Doc Sherwood and his wife praised the picture. It made Walt very proud.

Even drawing could get Walt into trouble. One day he discovered a barrel of black tar. It was as



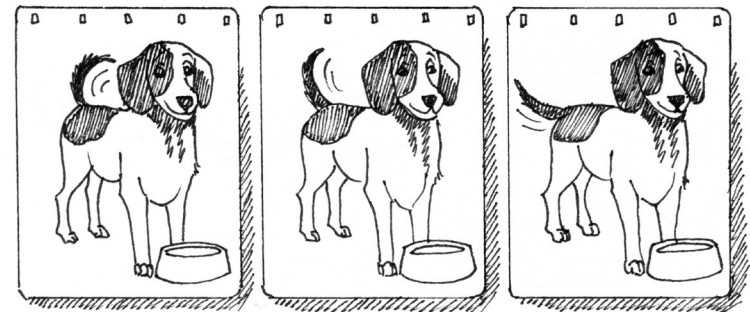
Soon after, Walt and Ub found jobs at the Kansas City Slide Company. It turned out to be a lucky break. The slide company changed Walt's life. He learned all about animation.



Animation is a film of drawings that move. Cartoons. In 1920 cartoons were something new. Audiences were amazed to watch drawings of funny people and animals actually moving on the screen.

ANIMATION BASICS

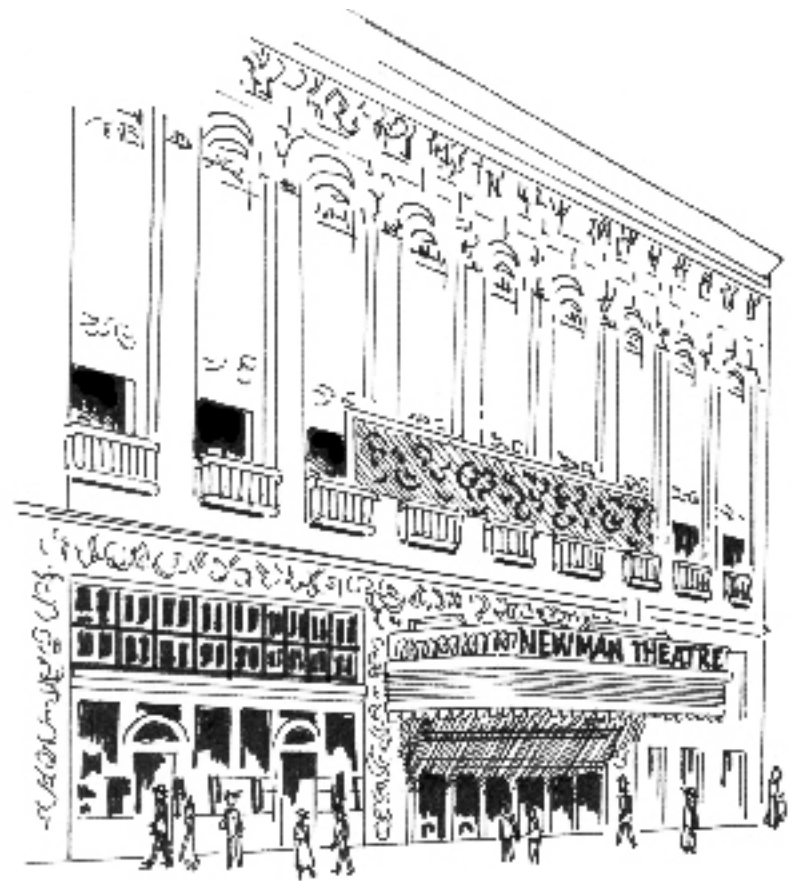
AN ARTIST CREATES SIMPLE ANIMATION (FOR EXAMPLE, A DOG WAGGING ITS TAIL) BY DRAWING THE SAME CHARACTER OVER AND OVER ON SEPARATE PIECES OF PAPER. IN EACH DRAWING, THE POSITION OF THE TAIL WILL BE A LITTLE DIFFERENT. WHEN THE PIECES OF PAPER ARE FLIPPED REALLY FAST, TO THE HUMAN EYE THE TAIL APPEARS TO BE MOVING. FOR FILMS, PROFESSIONAL ANIMATORS CREATE THE ILLUSION OF MOTION BY RECORDING THE SCENE CHANGES FRAME BY FRAME.



Artists competed with each other to invent new techniques for cartoons. Walt wanted to get in on the action. So he went to the library and took out a book called *Animated Cartoons: How They Are Made, Their Origin and Development*, by Edwin G. Lutz. He studied the book. Then he set up a studio in the shed behind his house.

Every evening he drew cartoon characters in different positions and filmed them. It might take eighteen drawings just to show a person raising an arm. Animation takes lots of time. But hard work never stopped Walt.

He called his cartoons *Laugh-O-Grams*. They were silent, full of slapstick humor, and only lasted a couple of minutes. Some were based on fairy tales. But Walt would change the story a little to make it funnier. After selling a *Laugh-O-Gram* cartoon to the Newman theaters in Kansas City, he started up a small company to make more.



Walt recruited artists to help him make cartoons. After all, he couldn't do all the drawing himself. The problem was he couldn't afford to pay a steady salary. Instead, he promised to share any money earned from the cartoons. His friend

Ub Iwerks and a few other young men joined Walt in his new business. They spent the day drawing characters, making up jokes, and goofing around with a movie camera.



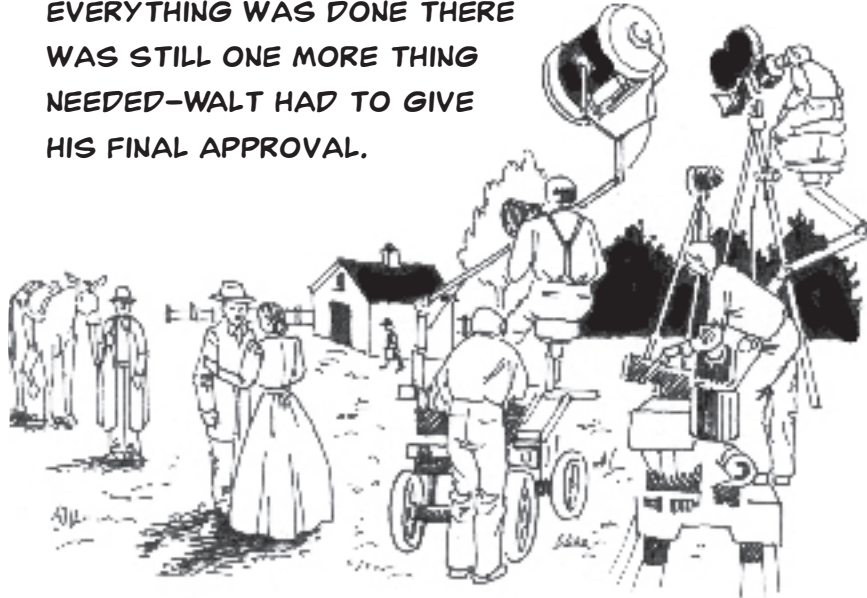
Walt worked on one film called *Alice's Wonderland*. It was about a real little girl named Alice, played by a four-year-old actress named Virginia Davis. Walt's Alice finds herself in a cartoon world. Mixing live actors with animation was something new. But before he finished *Alice's Wonderland*, Walt's company went bankrupt. He even had to sell his movie camera.

Kansas City was not the center of the entertainment business. Walt knew that. If he wanted to make it big, he had better go where movies were made.

Hollywood.

MAKING AN ANIMATED DISNEY FILM

WALT DISNEY AND HIS WRITERS STARTED PLOTTING OUT A STORY SCENE BY SCENE. THEN ANIMATORS DREW EACH CHARACTER IN THOUSANDS OF DIFFERENT POSES TO CREATE THE ACTION. INKERS TRACED THE LINES OF EACH DRAWING ON PIECES OF CLEAR CELLULOID. PAINTERS COLORED ON THE CELLULOID DRAWINGS. OTHER ARTISTS PAINTED BACKGROUND SCENES. AFTER CAMERA OPERATORS PHOTOGRAPHED EACH DRAWING ON THE RIGHT BACKGROUND, SOUND SPECIALISTS RECORDED THE VOICES AND SOUND EFFECTS AND ADDED IN THE BACKGROUND MUSIC. ONCE EVERYTHING WAS DONE THERE WAS STILL ONE MORE THING NEEDED—WALT HAD TO GIVE HIS FINAL APPROVAL.



Chapter 5 Hollywood

After World War I, Hollywood became home to film studios such as Universal, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). Movies were now a big business.

In August 1923, Walt packed a cardboard suitcase with his clothes and drawing materials. He bought a train ticket to California where his





older brother Roy was already living. Walt moved in with an uncle, paying a few dollars a month for room and board.

Walt had big dreams for himself. But he certainly didn't look like much of a success. He was stick-thin and wore shabby clothing. He spiffed himself up as best he could and went to every movie studio in town. Nobody offered him a job. So, he went back to his old idea of making and selling cartoons.

In October, he finally got a break. A woman named Margaret Winkler saw and liked what Walt had done in *Alice's Wonderland*. She agreed to pay Walt for a series of Alice cartoons, which she would sell to theaters.

This was terrific news except for one thing. Walt had only three months to make a new film. His young actress, Virginia Davis, still lived in Kansas City. Also, Walt needed money to make the movie. He didn't even have a movie camera



first show aired in 1955. For many years it ran five days a week.

He also created a western miniseries called *Davy Crockett*. Davy Crockett was a real-life frontiersman from Tennessee who lived in the early 1800s.

DAVY CROCKETT To play Davy, Walt chose a good-looking young actor named Fess Parker. There were only three episodes of *Davy Crockett*. But every kid wanted a coonskin cap like Davy's. Every kid



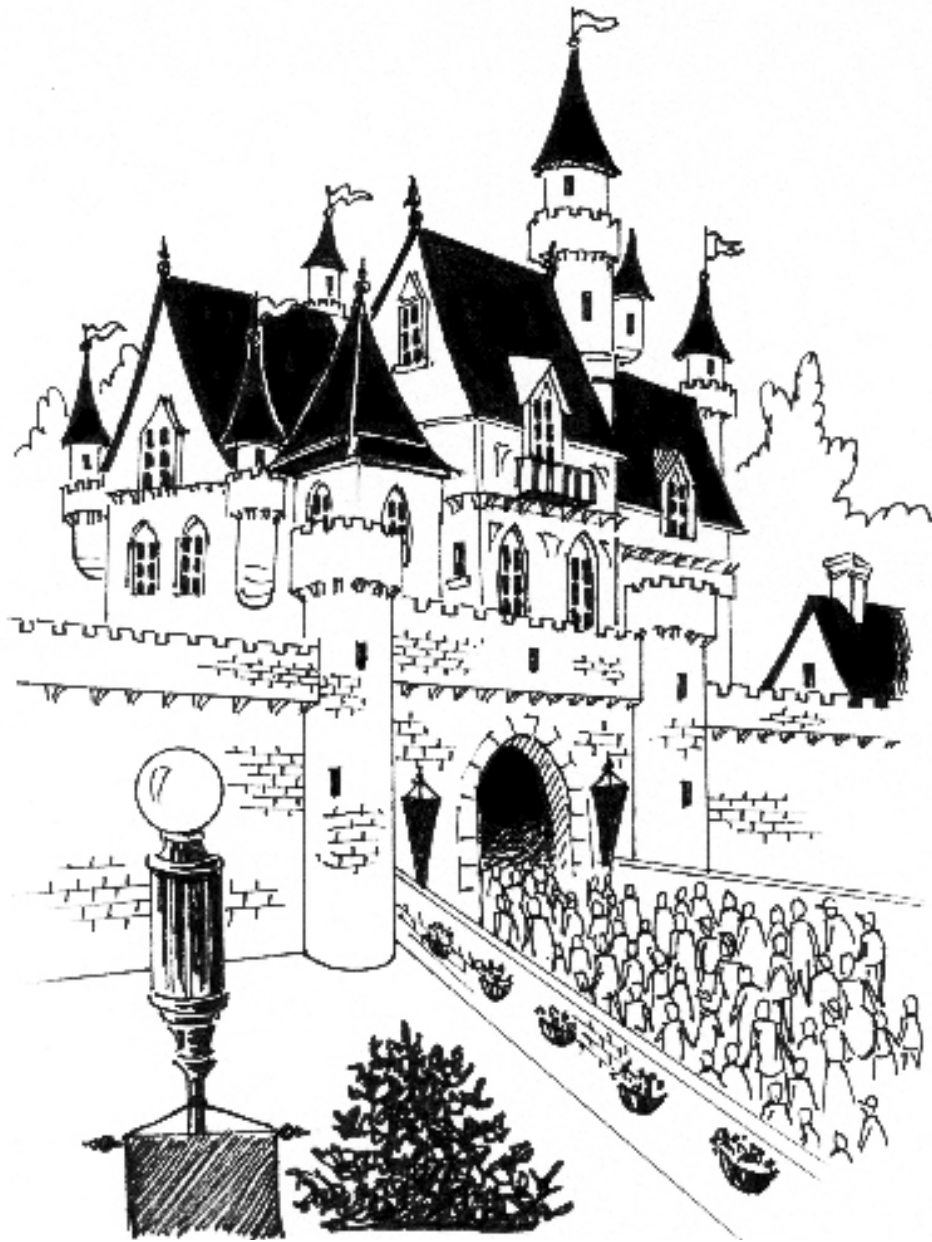
knew the words to the theme song.

The studio made a lot of money in television. Television helped Walt build his Disneyland dream. As with all of the other big Disney projects, Walt was in control. He loved working on the theme park. If he wanted to create a jungle, he did. If a lake wasn't big enough, he had it made bigger.

Disneyland opened on July 17, 1955, in Anaheim, California. Just four days earlier he and Lillian had their thirtieth wedding anniversary.

Opening day did not go smoothly. Crowds stood in line in one hundred degree heat. Some of the rides weren't working. The train didn't lead anywhere—it came to a dead end. There were not enough trash cans or water fountains.

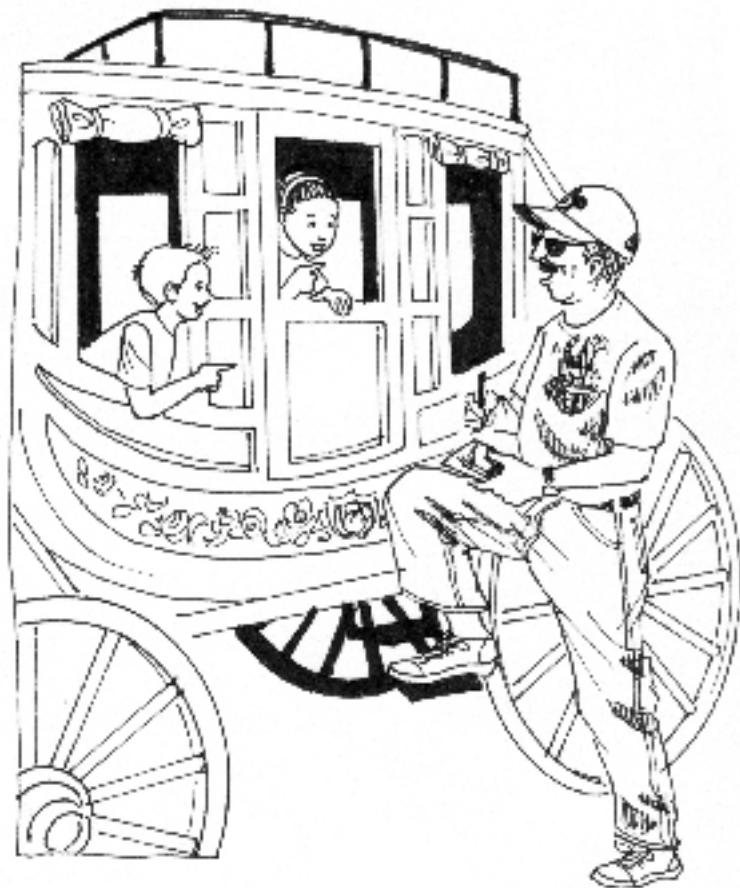
But Walt had things fixed right away. Soon the place was spotless. Everyone who worked there was polite and cheerful. (They had to go to “Disney University” to learn exactly how to behave toward visitors.)



People all over the world were flocking to Disneyland. They could spend time in Fantasyland with its fairy-tale castle and fairy-tale characters in costume. They could look for hippos and other wild animals in Adventureland, or ride on the Mark Twain Riverboat. There was Main Street that looked very much like the one in Marceline, Missouri.



Walt enjoyed Disneyland as much as anyone. But he had to disguise himself in a floppy hat and sunglasses or else fans would mob him. Sometimes a child still recognized him. Walt would put his finger to his lips and secretly slip the child an autograph.



After hours, Walt had Disneyland all to himself. He drove a mini fire engine through the streets or relaxed in his private apartment over the firehouse on Main Street. Already he was thinking about the next big thing—a city of the future. Walt’s plan for EPCOT—Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow—included monorails and underground roads to keep children safe from cars. City streets would be designed to look like different places from around the world. It would be just the kind of place Walt would want to live in himself!

EPCOT

EPCOT IS A THEME PARK AT WALT DISNEY WORLD IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA. THE WORD EPCOT STANDS FOR EXPERIMENTAL PROTOTYPE COMMUNITY OF TOMORROW. IN THE 1960S, WALT DISNEY PLANNED EPCOT TO BE A MODEL TOWN WHERE PEOPLE LIVED AND WORKED. THERE WOULD BE NO CRIME, SLUMS, OR TRAFFIC. AFTER HIS DEATH, THE DISNEY COMPANY DECIDED THAT IT



DID NOT WANT TO RUN A CITY, SO THE IDEA FOR EPCOT—WHICH OPENED IN 1982—CHANGED. IT IS A SHOW-CASE FOR DIFFERENT CULTURES AND CUSTOMS OF COUNTRIES ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

Chapter 11 Final Act

Some men slow down as they age, but not Walt Disney. He had too many ideas to quit working.

In 1964 a giant world's fair was held outside of New York City. Some of the best exhibits were



TIMELINE OF WALT DISNEY'S LIFE

- 1901 — Walt is born December 5 in Chicago, Illinois
- 1906 — The Disneys move to a farm in Marceline, Missouri
- 1910 — The Disneys move to Kansas City, Missouri
- 1917 — The Disneys move to Chicago
- 1918 — Walt drives ambulances in France during World War I
- 1919 — Walt opens his first commercial art company
- 1920 — Walt learns animation at the Kansas City Slide Company
- 1922 — Walt makes *Laugh-O-Gram* cartoons
- 1923 — Walt and brother Roy start the Disney Brothers Studio
- 1925 — Marries Lillian Bounds on July 13
- 1928 — Releases Mickey Mouse film called *Steamboat Willie*
- 1937 — Releases *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
- 1950 — Walt appears on TV in *One Hour in Wonderland*
- 1955 — Walt opens Disneyland on July 17
- 1964 — Disney exhibits at the New York World's Fair
- 1965 — Buys lands in Florida for EPCOT
- 1966 — Walt dies of lung cancer on December 15

TIMELINE OF THE WORLD

- Marconi sends his first transatlantic radio signal — 1901
- Wright Brothers' first flight — 1903
- Titanic* sinks and 1,513 people die — 1912
- Russian Revolution begins — 1917
- World War I ends — 1918
- New York Yankees sign Babe Ruth — 1920
- Abraham Lincoln Memorial is dedicated — 1922
- Adolf Hitler publishes his book *Mein Kampf* — 1925
- Amelia Earhart flies solo across the Atlantic — 1932
- Dr. Seuss's first children's book is published — 1937
- Germany invades Poland and World War II begins — 1939
- Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor and U.S. joins war — 1941
- World War II ends — 1945
- Albert Einstein dies — 1955
- Martin Luther King Jr. gives "I Have a Dream" speech — 1963
- Beatles' song "Yesterday" becomes a number-one hit in the U.S. — 1965
- Pampers disposable diapers become popular — 1966
- Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* published — 1998

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*Books for young readers

**Here is a list of some of the famous
movies made by Walt Disney.**

<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i>	1937
<i>Pinocchio</i>	1940
<i>Fantasia</i>	1940
<i>Dumbo</i>	1941
<i>Bambi</i>	1942
<i>Song of the South</i>	1946
<i>Cinderella</i>	1950
<i>Treasure Island</i>	1950
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	1951
<i>Peter Pan</i>	1953
<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i>	1954
<i>Lady and the Tramp</i>	1955
<i>Old Yeller</i>	1957
<i>Sleeping Beauty</i>	1959
<i>Swiss Family Robinson</i>	1960
<i>The Parent Trap</i>	1961
<i>The Sword in the Stone</i>	1963
<i>Mary Poppins</i>	1964