

# Walt Disney

Film Producer  
1901-1966

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by Dory DeAngelo

Legend has it that the idea for Mickey Mouse came to Walt Disney from a memory of a friendly mouse that begged for food in his 1922 Kansas City art studio.

Walt Disney was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 5, 1901. His family moved to a farm near Marceline, Missouri, when he was five years old and to Kansas City when he was nine, where his father bought a *Kansas City Star* newspaper route. Walt and his brother, Roy, had to wake at 3:30 a.m. every day to deliver newspapers. While attending Benton Elementary School, Disney took Saturday drawing classes at the Kansas City Art Institute.

When his brother joined the army in World War I, Disney also tried to join, but was underage. He changed the date on his birth certificate and was accepted by the Red Cross as an overseas ambulance driver.

Disney returned to Kansas City after the war and was hired as an artist at an advertising agency. He began an animated film business with artist Ub Iwerks. The two produced "Laugh-O-Grams" for local movie theaters, but went bankrupt, prompting Disney to join his brother in Los Angeles.

Borrowing money from his brother, Disney again made animated films. Iwerks and other artists soon came west to work with him. They produced cartoons, but did not have a hit until Disney came up with an idea to do a cartoon about a mouse that talked and sang. "Steamboat Willie" opened September 19, 1928, making Mickey Mouse a big star and Disney a big success. Soon movie audiences couldn't get enough of Disney cartoons.

In 1937, Disney's full-length movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, hit the movie screens. It broke all box-office records and established Disney as an innovative filmmaker. By the time he opened Disneyland in 1955 he was acclaimed as one of the most powerful men in the motion picture industry.

Disney died on December 15, 1966. He once told a reporter, "There is a lot of Mickey in me."



**Sources**

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