

## Walt Disney, 1901-1966: It All Started with a Mouse

Disney's popular cartoon movies led to huge and successful entertainment parks. *Transcript of radio broadcast:*  
27 October 2007

VOICE ONE:

I'm Shirley Griffith.

VOICE TWO:

And I'm Ray Freeman with the VOA Special English program, PEOPLE IN AMERICA. Every week we tell about a person who was important in the history of the United States. Today, we tell about Walt Disney and the movie company he created.

(MUSIC: "When You Wish Upon a Star")

VOICE ONE:

That was the song "When You Wish Upon a Star." It is from Walt Disney's animated movie "Pinocchio." For many people, it is the song most often linked with Walt Disney and his work. The song is about dreams -- and making dreams come true. That is what the Walt Disney Company tries to do. It produces movies that capture the imagination of children and adults all over the world.



Walt Disney

VOICE TWO:

Millions of people have seen Disney films and television programs. They have made friends with all the Disney heroes: Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Snow White, Pinocchio, Peter Pan. Millions more have visited the company's major entertainment parks. There is Disneyland in California. Disney World in Florida. Tokyo Disneyland in Japan. Euro Disney in France.

Probably no other company has pleased so many children. It is not surprising that it has been called a dream factory.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:

Walter Elias Disney was born in Chicago, Illinois in nineteen-oh-one. His family moved to the state of Missouri. He grew up on a farm there. At the age of sixteen, Disney began to study art in Chicago. Four years later, he joined the

Kansas City Film Ad Company. He helped make cartoon advertisements to be shown in movie theaters. Advertisements help sell products.

In nineteen twenty-three, Walt Disney moved to Hollywood, California to join his brother Roy. He wanted to be a movie producer or director. But he failed to find a job. So he decided to make animated movies. In them, drawings are made to move in a lifelike way. We call them cartoons. Disney the artist wanted to bring his pictures to life.

VOICE TWO:

A cartoon is a series of pictures on film. Each picture is a little different from the one before. Each shows a tiny change in movement. When we see the movie, the pictures seem to be alive. The cartoon people and animals move. They speak with voices recorded by real actors.

Disney opened his first movie company in the back of an office. For several years, he struggled to earn enough money to pay his expenses. He believed that cartoon movies could be as popular as movies made with actors. To do this, he decided he needed a cartoon hero. Help for his idea came from an unexpected place.

VOICE ONE:



**Walt Disney drawing**

Disney worked with Ub Iwerks, another young artist. They often saw mice running in and out of the old building where they worked. So they drew a cartoon mouse. It was not exactly like a real mouse. For one thing, it stood on two legs like a human.

It had big eyes and ears. And it wore white gloves on its hands. The artists called him "Mickey." Earlier filmmakers had found that animals were easier to use in cartoons than

people. Mickey Mouse was drawn with a series of circles. He was perfect for animation.

The public first saw Mickey Mouse in a movie called "Steamboat Willie." Walt Disney himself provided the voice for Mickey Mouse. The film was produced in nineteen twenty-eight. It was a huge success.

VOICE TWO:

Mickey Mouse appeared in hundreds of cartoons during the years that followed. He became known all over the world. In Japan, he was called "Miki Kuchi." In Italy, he was "Topolino." In Latin America, he was "Raton Miquelito." Mickey soon was joined by several other cartoon creatures. One was the female mouse

called "Minnie." Another was the duck named "Donald," with his sailor clothes and funny voice. And there was the dog called Pluto.

VOICE ONE:

Mickey Mouse cartoons were extremely popular. But Walt Disney wanted to make other kinds of animated movies, too. In the middle nineteen thirties, he was working on his first long movie.

It was about a lovely young girl, her cruel stepmother, and the handsome prince who saves her. It was "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." "Snow White" was completed in nineteen thirty-seven after three years of work. It was the first full-length animated movie to be produced by a studio. It became one of Hollywood's most successful movies.

VOICE TWO:

Movie experts say Walt Disney was responsible for the development of the art of animation. Disney's artists tried to put life into every drawing. That meant they had to feel all the emotions of the cartoon creatures. Happiness. Sadness. Anger. Fear. The artists looked in a mirror and expressed each emotion. A smile. Tears. A red face. Wide eyes. Then they drew that look on the face of each cartoon creature.

VOICE ONE:

Many movie experts say Disney's art of animation reached its highest point in nineteen forty with the movie "Pinocchio." The story is about a wooden toy that comes to life as a little boy.

Disney's artists drew two-and-one-half million pictures to make "Pinocchio." The artists drew flat pictures. Yet they created a look of space and solid objects. "Pinocchio" was an imaginary world. Yet it looked very real. Disney made other extremely popular animated movies in the nineteen forties and nineteen fifties. They include "Fantasia," "Dumbo," "Bambi," "Cinderella," "Alice in Wonderland," "Peter Pan," "Lady and the Tramp," and "Sleeping Beauty." These movies are still popular today.

VOICE TWO:

In addition to cartoons, Walt Disney produced many movies and television programs with real actors. He also produced movies about wild animals in their natural surroundings. Real or imaginary, all his programs had similar ideas. In most of them, innocence, loyalty and family love were threatened by evil forces. Sad things sometimes happened. But there were always funny incidents and creatures. In the end, good always won over evil. Disney won thirty-two Academy Awards for his movies and for scientific and technical inventions in filmmaking.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:



**Walt Disney with models of Disneyland**

In nineteen fifty-five, Walt Disney opened an entertainment park not far from Hollywood, California. He called it "Disneyland." He wanted it to be the happiest place on Earth. Disneyland recreated imaginary places from Disney movies. It also recreated real places -- as Disney imagined them. For example, one area looked like a nineteenth century town in the American West. Another looked like the world of the future.

Disneyland also had exciting rides. Children could fly on an elephant. Or spin in a teacup. Or climb a mountain. Or float on a jungle river. And -- best of all -- children got to meet Mickey Mouse himself. Actors dressed as Mickey and all the Disney cartoon creatures walked around the park shaking hands.

VOICE TWO:

Some critics said Disneyland was just a huge money machine. They said it cost so much money that many families could not go. And they said it did not represent the best of American culture. But most visitors loved it. They came from near and far to see it. Presidents of the United States. Leaders of other countries. And families from around the world.

Disneyland was so successful that Disney developed plans for a second entertainment and educational park to be built in Florida. The project, Walt Disney World, opened in Florida in nineteen seventy-one, after Disney's death.

The man who started it all, Walt Disney, died in nineteen sixty-six. But the company he began continues to help people escape the problems of life through its movies and entertainment parks.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:

This Special English program was written by Shelley Gollust. I'm Shirley Griffith.

VOICE TWO:

And I'm Ray Freeman. Join us again next week for another PEOPLE IN AMERICA program in Special English on the Voice of America.