

Famous New Yorker: Fanny Brice

In the 1960s, Barbra Streisand became a star by playing the part of Fanny Brice in a play and a movie. That was a sure way to success, because Brice was one of the most beloved musical-comedy stars of the 20th century.

“Fanny Brice” was the stage name of Fania Borach, who was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan on October 29, 1891. Her parents owned several saloons in Newark, where little “Fannie” sometimes sang and danced on bars and tabletops. She didn’t lose the urge to perform even after her parents broke up and her mother took her to Brooklyn.

Fannie dropped out of school when she was fourteen years old, after winning her first amateur night competition at Keeney’s Theater. Amateur nights stopped being amateur for her once she started winning up to \$30 a week in contests all over town. Encouraged by success, Fannie tried out for professional stage parts. Unfortunately, by the beauty standards of the time, she was too tall to be a chorus girl.

Taking the Brice name from a family friend, Fanny found work in touring burlesque shows. She learned that she could win applause by emphasizing her apparent awkwardness for comic effect. Singing the song “Sadie Salome” with a Yiddish accent in an ill-fitting sailor suit, she scored her first hit in a 1910 show, *The College Girls*.

Brice’s performance got the attention of Florenz Ziegfeld, the impresario behind the spectacular “Ziegfeld Follies” variety shows. He made her a Ziegfeld star in seven Follies shows between 1910 and 1923. She flourished as a mimic and physical comedienne, parodying new dance styles and movie celebrities. At the same time, she scored hits as a serious singer with torch-song ballads like “My Man.”

Besides performing for Ziegfeld, Fanny Brice was also a vaudeville headliner and a star of numerous shows apart from Ziegfeld. When sound film arrived, movie studios hoped to take advantage of her comedic and musical talents, but Brice never felt comfortable on movie soundstages. She missed live audiences and was distracted by technicians working all around her. Nevertheless, she recorded some of her Ziegfeld skits for posterity in the films *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936) and *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946).

As Fanny Brice grew older, she became younger – much younger – in the American imagination. She achieved her greatest popularity as a radio star, reviving a character she had created in 1912. “Baby Snooks” was supposed to be a precocious, nosy little girl. It was absurd on purpose when Brice played Baby Snooks on stage, but on radio it suddenly seemed believable. She introduced Snooks to a new audience on *The Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*, and made her a regular character on weekly variety shows. In 1944 Brice became the star of her own *Baby Snooks* show.

Fanny Brice was still playing *Baby Snooks* when she died in Los Angeles on May 29, 1951. The success of *Funny Girl* as a play and movie proved that her fans wanted more, and preserved her place in American popular culture.



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LC-DIG-ggbain-34089]



Lower East Side, Manhattan was traditionally an immigrant, working-class neighborhood. It’s located in the south-eastern part of the island.

For more info about Fanny Brice and Broadway musicals you might want to explore, www.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/stars/brice_f.html. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Melvil Dewey

How did Melvil Dewey make libraries easier to use? We have Dewey himself to thank for making it easy to find the answer in a library.

Throughout his life, Dewey believed in making things simpler, including his own name. He was born Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey in Adams Center on December 10, 1851, but eventually simplified his name to Melvil Dewey. He attended the Hungerford Collegiate Institute before his family moved to Oneida, where he attended a Baptist seminary. In 1870 he enrolled in Amherst College and went to work in the school library.

After graduating in 1874, Dewey became the manager of the Amherst library. He was frustrated with the haphazard way in which many libraries stored their books. Libraries often shelved new volumes in the first available space, next to totally unrelated books. It was very time consuming to gather a set of books on one particular subject. Dewey thought it made more sense to store all the books on one subject in one location.

In 1876, Dewey published *A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloging and Arranging Books and Pamphlets in a Library*. This book introduced the Dewey Decimal System. Inspired by the English philosopher Francis Bacon's attempt to classify all forms of knowledge, Dewey created ten main categories and gave each a numeric code (100 for philosophy, 200 for religion, and so on). Within each category, he created subcategories, each with its own three-digit code (101, 102, etc.). Within each subcategory, he subdivided further, adding a decimal point and more numbers. Finally, books in a specific subcategory were put in alphabetical order according to the authors' last names and shelved together in one section of a library.

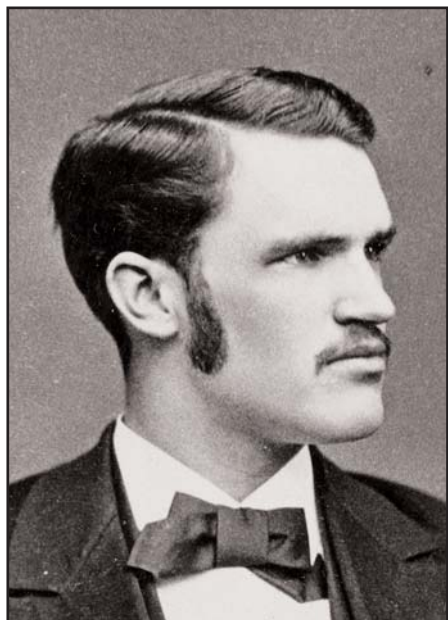
In the same year, Dewey helped create the American Library Association, becoming the first official member and the first editor of the *Library Journal*. He also found time to help establish the Metric Bureau, to promote American adoption of the metric system, and the Spelling Reform Association, to make many words easier to remember, including his own first name.

Dewey's big chance to implement his classification system came when Columbia College appointed him librarian-in-chief in 1883. His reforms increased the circulation of library books by 500% in a short time. While at Columbia, he created the world's first library school, and scandalized some college officials by opening the school to women.

In 1888, Melvil Dewey became the New York State Librarian and the secretary of regents for the State University. While he modernized the state library system and established travelling libraries, he worked to improve education standards. In private life, he expanded his Lake Placid Club from five to 10,000 acres and helped transform Lake Placid into a winter sports mecca that hosted two Olympiads. He created a Lake Placid Club Educational Foundation to continue his commitment to the metric system and spelling reform.

Long after Melvil Dewey's death on December 26, 1931, the Dewey Decimal system is still used in libraries across the country, making it simple for students to find his place in history.

To test your knowledge of the Dewey Decimal system try an interactive quiz online at <http://tinyurl.com/27manb>. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.



Courtesy of Amherst College Archives
and Special Collections



Adams Center is located in Jefferson County about about 10 miles south of Watertown.

Famous New Yorker: Frederick Douglass

When Frederick Douglass first passed through New York in 1838, he was a runaway slave with a false name. When he moved to Rochester a decade later, he was an international celebrity and a leader in the struggle against slavery.

Douglass was born Frederick Bailey in Tuckahoe, Maryland, in 1817 or 1818, to a slave mother and an anonymous white father. Taught to read by a relative of his owner, Frederick acquired books and newspapers whenever possible. Jailed once for trying to escape, he managed to escape with the help of a free black woman whom he later married. Using borrowed identity papers, he fled from Baltimore via train and boat to New York City.

Frederick changed his last name to Johnson before moving on to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Learning that Johnson was a very common name, he adopted “Douglass” to distinguish himself. He distinguished himself further as an eloquent spokesman against slavery and the author of a popular autobiography in 1845.

The book made clear that Douglass was really Frederick Bailey. To avoid recapture, Douglass traveled to Great Britain to promote his book. During his tour, wealthy friends raised money so Douglass could buy his freedom when he returned to the U.S. in 1847.

Douglass acquired a printing press to publish a weekly anti-slavery newspaper, *The North Star*. He based it in Rochester to avoid competition with anti-slavery papers in larger cities. His home and office became stations on the “Underground Railroad” that helped runaway slaves find refuge in Canada.

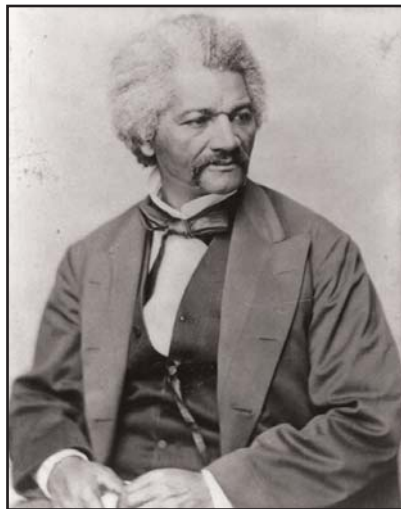
Befriending radical thinkers like Susan B. Anthony, Douglass attended the first women’s rights convention at Seneca Falls in 1848. He also gradually changed his political views. His original mentors were pacifists who wanted to dissolve the Union because the U.S. Constitution allegedly endorsed slavery. Douglass ultimately decided that the Constitution was opposed to slavery in spirit, and that slavery could be abolished by political action, or by force if necessary. His new stance alienated old friends, but won him many new supporters.

Douglass struggled to publish his newspaper, which eventually bore his own name, as well as a monthly magazine. Often deep in debt, he spent much of his time on the lecture circuit, while lobbying successfully to have Rochester’s public schools desegregated. He supported anti-slavery political parties, but soon realized that the new Republican Party had a better chance of realizing many of his goals.

Douglass fled the country again in 1859 after he was falsely implicated in John Brown’s attempted slave insurrection in Virginia. He returned in 1860, but folded his weekly paper soon afterward.

Douglass was re-energized by the opportunity to recruit black soldiers, including his three sons, to fight during the Civil War. Skeptical at first toward Abraham Lincoln, he ultimately gave the President credit for ending slavery.

After his house burned down in 1872, Frederick Douglass left Rochester for Washington D.C., where he held a number of political and diplomatic posts before his death on February 20, 1895. Today, the community of Rochester continues to honor his role in the city and our nation’s history.



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LC-USZ62-15887]



Rochester is located in Monroe County on the southern shore of Lake Ontario.

For more information about Frederick Douglass go to this resource page at the Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/douglass/>. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Elmer Ellsworth

Hundreds of thousands of young men died defending the Union during the Civil War. A New Yorker, Elmer Ellsworth, claimed the honor of being the first.

Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth was born in Malta on April 11, 1837. Growing up in Mechanicville Elmer was fascinated by military life. He read books on strategy and tactics and formed “the Black Plumed Riflemen of Stillwater” with his play-mates. He wanted to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, but his family lacked the necessary political connections. Instead, Elmer became a grocery clerk after leaving school.

As a young man, Ellsworth went west. He settled in Chicago, where he studied law and became a solicitor of patents. He indulged his military dreams by joining a volunteer cadet company.

Rising to the rank of commander, Ellsworth was inspired by a former French army surgeon who had served alongside Zouaves, soldiers who copied the costumes of Algerian tribesmen. The Zouaves’ colorful uniforms and acrobatic drilling style had made them famous worldwide. Ellsworth now wanted to turn his cadets into American Zouaves.

Ellsworth’s cadets adopted the Zouave uniform of baggy pants, short jacket and fez and practiced a Zouave-style drill. By 1860, he had turned the renamed U.S. Zouave Cadets into the country’s top drill company. He took them on a national tour that sparked a Zouave craze and made Ellsworth a minor celebrity.

The U.S. Zouave Cadets performed in Chicago during the 1860 Republican national convention, when Abraham Lincoln won the presidential nomination. Ellsworth befriended Lincoln, studied law in the candidate’s office and made campaign speeches for him. After winning the election, Lincoln invited Ellsworth to head a national militia bureau in Washington.

Lincoln’s determination to block the expansion of slavery provoked Southern states into seceding from the Union. Instead of organizing militia, Ellsworth concentrated on recruiting troops to suppress the rebellion. In New York City he turned volunteer firemen into the 11th New York Infantry Regiment, better known as the Fire Zouaves. Now a colonel, Ellsworth was stationed in Washington to await developments in Virginia.

On May 23, 1861, Virginia joined the rebellion. Ellsworth’s Zouaves were ordered to cross the Potomac River and take control of the strategically important city of Alexandria. They met no resistance as they entered the city on May 24.

On his way to capture a telegraph office, Ellsworth saw a large secessionist banner flying from the roof of the Marshall House hotel. He decided to enter the hotel and haul down the banner. He reached the roof and seized the flag, but was fatally wounded by the hotel proprietor as he went back downstairs.

Elmer Ellsworth was recognized and lauded as the first Union fatality of the Civil War. Lincoln called him “the greatest little man I ever met” and let his body lay in state in the White House. Ellsworth’s funeral train made stops throughout New York so thousands could pay their respects before he was buried in Mechanicville. His exploits inspired more men to join Zouave companies and continue the struggle for the Union.

For more information about the American Civil War go to <http://cwar.nps.gov/civilwar/>. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.



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Mechanicville is about 20 miles north of Albany and located in Saratoga County.

Famous New Yorker: Sarah Loguen Fraser



Painting by Susan Keeter, 2000.
Collection of Syracuse Medical Alumni
Association/SUNY Upstate Medical
University, Syracuse, NY

Sarah Loguen Fraser was more than a famous New Yorker. She wasn't just one of the first black women doctors in America, but was a pioneer for her profession in two countries.

Fraser's father was a famous New Yorker in his own right. The Rev. Jermain Wesley Loguen escaped from slavery to become the main conductor of the Underground Railroad in Syracuse, as well as a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His fifth child, Sarah Marinda Loguen was born into a relatively privileged position for black children on January 29, 1850. As a young girl Sarah helped care for the fugitive slaves that passed through her family home.

Sarah was inspired to become a doctor by her feeling of helplessness at an accident scene. With tutoring from her family doctor, she enrolled in the Syracuse University College of Medicine (now SUNY Upstate Medical University), vowing that she'd never again be unable to help a human being in need. Sarah was one of fifteen graduates, including four women, in the Class of 1876.

Her degree made Sarah Loguen the fourth black woman doctor in American history, but it was only the beginning of

her career. She took an internship at the Women's Hospital of Philadelphia, an institution created to give young women doctors practical experience.

If she'd been relatively privileged before, Dr. Loguen now knew privation. The Women's Hospital clinic was understaffed and underfunded. Sarah was constantly on call, doing the work of two people. She would often walk long distances from calls, spending her money on food instead of streetcar fare. Throughout her internship, she assured her family that she could stand the pressure, and she won the affection of patients who called her "Miss Doc."

In 1878 Dr. Loguen moved to the New England Hospital for Women and Children in Boston. In 1882, she became the first black woman to set up a private medical practice in Washington D.C. The nation's most prominent black leader, Frederick Douglass, personally hung her shingle for her.

Related to the Loguens by marriage, Douglass now played matchmaker by introducing Sarah Loguen to Dr. Charles Fraser, a pharmacist who practiced in Santo Domingo (now known as the Dominican Republic). Loguen married Fraser later in 1882, and after learning Spanish moved to Santo Domingo to work in his pharmacy. Sarah passed the University of Santo Domingo's medical exam in Spanish thus becoming the first woman doctor of any race in that country.

When Charles Fraser died in 1894, Sarah kept his pharmacy running for several more years before returning to the United States. She held several positions, including a residency at the Blue Plains Industrial School, but was often treated more like a servant than a doctor due to her race. She continued practicing medicine into retirement age ending her medical career back in Washington at the city's Women's Clinic.

Dr. Fraser's death on April 9, 1933 was recognized by a large article in Syracuse newspaper entitled "Woman Physician, Daughter of Negro Bishop." In Santo Domingo, flags were lowered to half-mast in her honor. In later years, Americans also recognized her place in medical history. A street on her old Syracuse campus, and a medical scholarship bear her name, and an annual Sarah Loguen Fraser Day celebrates her pioneering achievements at home and abroad.



Syracuse is located in central New York about half way between Albany and Buffalo.

To learn more about general health and fitness go to the [Body and Mind](#), a family friendly website by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.bam.gov. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Katharine Graham

At first, Katharine Graham didn't think herself capable of taking over the family business, but when tragedy put her in charge, she turned the *Washington Post* into one of the nation's most prestigious and powerful newspapers.

Katharine Meyer was born on June 16, 1917 at her family's home on 5th Avenue in New York City. Her father, Eugene Meyer, was a wealthy financier who provided Katharine with an elite education at the Madeira School in Virginia, at Vassar College, and the University of Chicago.

Among Eugene Meyer's acquisitions was a struggling newspaper in the nation's capital, the *Post*. Katharine shared her father's interest in newspapers. After graduating from college, she took a modest job as a reporter on the San Francisco News in 1938. Soon afterward, her father asked her to come to Washington and edit the *Post's* page of letters to the editor.

While working at the *Post*, Katharine fell in love with Philip Graham, an ambitious lawyer who was working as a Supreme Court clerk. They married in 1940. As Eugene Meyer prepared to retire, he chose to put Philip, not Katharine, in charge of the *Post*. Katharine didn't object; while she enjoyed journalism, she felt that she knew nothing about the actual business of newspaper publishing.

Philip Graham continued Eugene Meyer's effort to build the *Post* into a major paper. He acquired *Newsweek* magazine and new TV stations for the Washington Post company. On August 3, 1963, he committed suicide after years of mental illness. One month later, Katharine Graham was elected President of the Washington Post Company.

Although Katharine Graham served as Chairman of the Board from 1973 through 1991, she didn't become the official publisher of the *Post* until 1979. From 1963 on, however, she effectively ran the newspaper, learning the publishing and mass media business as she went with the help of loyal executives. She made all the most important decisions, two of which secured the *Post's* place in American history.

In 1971, the *Post* became the second newspaper to publish excerpts from the so-called Pentagon Papers. Graham authorized publication of the secret government documents about the Vietnam War after the White House blocked the New York Times from continuing publication. She resisted threats of legal action against the *Post* and was vindicated by a Supreme Court decision in favor of the newspapers.

One year later, she supported Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's investigative reporting of the break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. Her reporters eventually exposed President Nixon's role in the incident. Again defying White House Pressure, the *Post's* revelations helped pressure Nixon into resigning in 1974.

Katharine Graham also made history as the first woman to head a Fortune 500 company and serve as a director of the Associated Press and the American Newspaper Publishers Association. As a writer, she earned a Pulitzer Prize for her autobiography, *Personal History*, in 1997. Upon her death on July 17, 2001, Katharine Graham was recognized once more for her important role in American history.

For more information about Katharine Graham read her autobiography, Personal History. For information about the Washington Post go to www.washpost.com. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.



Courtesy of
The Washington Post Company



New York City is the largest city in the United States with a population of over 8 million.

Famous New Yorker: Leroy Grumman

For an American businessman, there was no greater gamble than starting a new venture at the start of the Great Depression. Leroy Grumman took the risk and won, and the country won with him.

The son of a carriage manufacturer, Leroy Grumman was born in Huntington, Long Island, on January 4, 1895. When the Wright Brothers invented the airplane, Leroy was fascinated by the newborn industry. He gave his salutatorian address on aircraft when he graduated from high school.

After earning a degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell in 1916, Leroy Grumman enlisted in the U.S. Navy when the country entered World War I. He became a pilot and flight instructor before he was assigned to M.I.T. for training in aeronautical engineering.

When the war ended, Grumman was a test pilot at the League Island Naval Yard near Philadelphia. He soon went to work for Albert and Grover Loening, who started their own aeronautical engineering company in New York City. Grumman became their general manager, supervising the construction of the company's popular amphibious Air Yacht.

When the Loening company was sold in 1929, the new owners decided to relocate the plant. Grumman and some other Loening employees decided to stay in New York and start their own business. Grumman Aircraft Company was founded on December 1929 with 16 employees and a facility in Baldwin, New York.

Grumman Aircraft initially specialized in repairing Loeming Air Yachts, but that wasn't enough to get the company through hard times. Fortunately, the Navy remembered Leroy Grumman's technical know-how. He was commissioned to design floats for seaplanes, to be built by Grumman Aircraft. From then on, the Navy was Grumman's principal patron.

In 1932, Grumman Aircraft moved to Farmingdale, where the company built the FF-1, a new Navy fighter plane with fully retractable gear that could fly at more than 200 miles per hour. In 1937, Grumman moved to a larger facility at Bethpage, where more than 500 employees produced civilian aircraft as well as Navy fighters. In 1940, Leroy Grumman personally designed a folding-wing fighter plane for use on aircraft carriers. The Grumman F4F was the primary Navy fighter plane when America entered World War II.

During the war, Grumman Aircraft became one of the nation's largest airplane manufacturers. At its own facility, and through licensing arrangements with General Motors, Grumman built tens of thousands of Wildcat and Hellcat fighters and Avenger torpedo bombers. Grumman's 25,000-strong workforce built more airframe pounds per person than any other company.

As Leroy Grumman began to withdraw from daily management after the war, his company continued to innovate. When he retired in 1966, Grumman was building a lunar module for the first manned flight to the moon. Honored by the National Academy of Sciences for his contributions to aeronautical engineering, Leroy Grumman was also a philanthropist. He helped found the North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, where he died on October 4, 1982. Grumman's name lives on as part of the Northrop-Grumman Corporation, and occupies a major place in the history of American aviation.



Grumman with eraser and paper clip showing how he came up with the "sto-wing" hinging design, a newer, safer way to fold carrier-based aircraft wings. The concept is still in use today. Courtesy of Northrop Grumman Corporation



Huntington lies in North Western Suffolk County on the North Shore of Long Island.

For more information about Leroy Grumman and history of flight go to www.centennialofflight.gov/index.cfm. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Alex Haley

Alex Haley was born in New York and spent some of his most productive years there, but as the world would learn, his roots went much deeper.

Haley's father was a graduate student at Cornell when Alex was born in Ithaca on August 11, 1921. Six weeks later, the Haley family traveled to Henning, Tennessee, where Alex and his mother lived with relatives while his father continued his studies. Alex's grandmother regaled him with stories of her ancestors, including "Kin-tay," the first one to be brought to America as a slave.

As a young man, Alex Haley had a growing interest in storytelling, but he was dissatisfied with college life. After studying at two schools, he dropped out to join the Coast Guard in 1939. At the time, opportunities for black sailors were still limited, but Haley found his niche as a journalist. As he rose to the rating of Chief Journalist, he started writing fiction. Years passed before publishers accepted Haley's submissions, but by the time he retired from the Coast Guard in 1959, he felt ready to begin a literary career.

Now based in Greenwich Village, New York City, Haley found success as a journalist and interviewer. He became *Playboy's* star interviewer, giving the adult magazine new prestige through discussions with cutting-edge celebrities from civil rights leaders to American Nazis. His interview with Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X became the basis for *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, a best-seller published after Malcolm's death in 1965.

Looking for another project, Haley was inspired by discovering the names of his great-grandparents in a Civil War document in the National Archives. Then, while touring Europe, he saw the Rosetta Stone, the tablet that allowed archaeologists to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphics. Haley decided to write a book that would similarly decode his family history, linking legends to facts.

Alex Haley began twelve years of research that climaxed in the nation of Gambia and the village of Juffure. There he heard a griot, a traditional storyteller, recount the capture by slavers of a young man named Kunta Kinte hundreds of years ago. Haley deduced that this was the "Kin-tay" of his grandmother's stories, his own distant ancestor.

The result of Haley's research was a work of "faction" – history told as a novel – called *Roots: The Story of an American Family*. The major best-seller earned Haley the National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize in 1976. The following year brought the TV version, one of the first TV miniseries and one of the most popular TV programs ever. *Roots'* appeal crossed racial lines, turning genealogical research into a popular hobby for Americans of all races.

For the rest of his life, Haley tried to recreate the TV success of *Roots* with programs like *Palmerstown U.S.A.* while working on new literary projects. The fact that he didn't succeed only testifies to the historic stature of his greatest works. By the time he died on February 10, 1992, Alex Haley had made permanent contributions to American literature and popular culture.



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Ithaca is in the heart of Tompkins County in the Finger Lakes region of the state.

For more information Alex Haley and to find out how to research your own "roots" go to the *The Kunta Kinte - Alex Haley Foundation* at www.kuntakinte.com/foundation.html. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton rose from poverty to power as the United States rose to nationhood. He became one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, but fell victim to the intensely personal politics of a new nation.

Hamilton was born on January 11 in 1755 or 1757 on the island of Nevis. An illegitimate child, he couldn't attend Church of England schools, but received private tutoring. Abandoned by his father, then orphaned by his mother's death, he held minor jobs until his newspaper report of a hurricane earned him a North American education.

In 1773 Hamilton enrolled in King's College in New York City. After visiting Boston he wrote newspaper articles and pamphlets defending colonial rights. When war broke out in 1775, Hamilton formed the Hearts of Oak, a volunteer military company that captured British cannon in a raid on the Battery.

Hamilton became an artillery commander, then a secretary to General George Washington. He demonstrated a knack for organization and administration while making important social connections. After marrying into the wealthy Schuyler family in 1780, he returned to combat and helped win the decisive Battle of Yorktown.

His army experience gave Hamilton ideas for an efficient centralized government. While practicing law, serving in the Continental Congress, and founding the Bank of New York, he grew frustrated with the weak national government. He advocated a national convention to strengthen the government, and joined the New York delegation to the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. While his New York colleagues opposed the plan, Hamilton signed the new U.S. Constitution. His contributions to the Federalist Papers and a powerful speech at the June 1788 Poughkeepsie Convention helped convince New Yorkers to join the new government.

President George Washington appointed Hamilton Secretary of the Treasury in 1789. Hamilton believed that the country should attract investment by establishing a sound financial system. He persuaded the federal government to take responsibility for all state debts while raising revenue through import and excise taxes. His policies led to the founding of a National Mint and a National Bank before he resigned in 1795.

Hamilton's plans alarmed Americans who thought he wanted to enrich bankers and merchants at everyone else's expense. To counter the growing opposition, Hamilton formed a coalition of supporters that became the Federalist Party. Hamilton started newspapers like the New York Post to make his case and attack opponents like Thomas Jefferson. The first political campaigns featured bitter negative campaigning. Each side accused the other of trying to destroy the country and made scandalous charges against leaders like Hamilton.

Politicians didn't take insults lightly in Hamilton's time, and often risked their lives to defend their personal reputations. Hamilton's eldest son died in a politically motivated duel in 1801, and in 1804 Vice President Aaron Burr challenged Hamilton for allegedly slandering him. Hamilton faced Burr at Weehawken, New Jersey, on July 11, 1804, and was mortally wounded. He died in New York City one day later. After the era's violent emotions subsided, Alexander Hamilton was recognized as an essential architect of the United States government.



Photo of a painting by John Trumbull, courtesy of New York State Archives



New York City is home to Columbia University known as King's College when Hamilton attended there, 1773-1775.

To listen to podcasts of the Federalist Papers go to <http://tinyurl.com/3e22sc>. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Johnny Hart

Johnny Hart used cavemen, kings and commoners to comment on modern American life. Whether comical or controversial, his work demonstrates the lasting influence of the American comic strip.

“B.C.,” the name of his best-known strip, also stands for Broome County, New York, where John Lewis Hart was born in the town of Endicott on February 18, 1931. Johnny drew cartoons constantly as a child, and when he joined the Air Force after high school, his first published cartoons appeared in the military newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*.

When he returned home after the Korean War, Johnny Hart tried to become a full-time cartoonist. He submitted single-panel gag cartoons to popular weekly magazines, earning \$65 for his first sale. Selling one cartoon at a time wasn’t enough to make ends meet, so Hart went to work in the art department of the Western Electric company.

While working full time, Hart submitted more gag cartoons to magazines. He was determined to sell cartoons about cavemen, but had no luck until a co-worker suggested turning them into a daily comic strip. Caveman strips already existed, but Hart was inspired by the success of Charles Schulz’s *Peanuts* to try a new approach. Just as *Peanuts* put adult anxieties in the mouths of children, Hart’s strip put a hip, sardonic modern sensibility in the mouths of cavemen.

B.C. was rejected repeatedly before the New York Herald Tribune Syndicate signed a contract with Hart and started running the strip in February 1958. Hart’s humor steadily gained an audience for *B.C.* until it became one of the nation’s most popular comic strips. It was honored as the best humor strip of 1967, while Hart himself won the National Cartoonists’ Society’s highest honor, the Rueben Award, in 1968.

By then, Hart was also writing *The Wizard of Id*, a strip he created with his friend Brant Parker in 1964. Set in a medieval kingdom, the new strip gave Hart greater scope for satire on politics and society. *The Wizard of Id* won the best humor strip award four times between 1971 and 1983. During that period, *B.C.* remained popular as a daily strip as well as in books, TV specials, and video games.

In 1987 Johnny Hart became the first comic strip artist to join the new Creators Syndicate, a group dedicated to giving artists greater ownership of their work. The founders of Creators Syndicate considered Hart one of their inspirations. The move gave Hart more confidence to express his personal beliefs in his comics.

B.C. became controversial in the 1990s when Hart paradoxically introduced his Christian faith into a strip supposedly set “Before Christ.” Newspapers sometimes censored *B.C.* when Hart seemed to disparage other religions, but most episodes maintained his old sense of humor. If anything, the controversies proved comic strips’ continued potential to influence a mass audience.

Johnny Hart died of a stroke at his drawing table on April 7, 2007. Friends and family members continue *B.C.* and *Wizard of Id* in hundreds of newspapers, assuring that Hart’s vision will continue to influence American pop culture.



Courtesy of Creators Syndicate



Endicott is located in the Southern Tier region along the border of Pennsylvania. It is about 8 miles west of Binghamton.

To view strips of *B.C.* and the *Wizard of Id* online go to www.creators.com/comics.html. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Robert R. Livingston

Robert R. Livingston helped create the Declaration of Independence, but never got to sign the historic document. Fortunately, Livingston had more opportunities to shape early American history.

The son of Judge Robert Livingston, Robert R. Livingston was born in New York City on November 27, 1746. He graduated from King's College in 1765 and studied law with a cousin before being admitted to the bar in 1770. In 1773, he was appointed Recorder of the City of New York. He presided over criminal trials before losing his post in 1775.

Livingston was replaced because he had spoken out in favor of American rights against the British colonial regime. He became a local patriot leader, then a New York delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Livingston was a moderate, warning against cutting ties with Britain too quickly, even though he thought the colonies would be independent eventually. Congress appointed Livingston to a five-man committee to draft a declaration of independence partly to make the document more acceptable to New York.

Livingston couldn't vote for the Declaration because New York hadn't issued instructions to its delegation. Before he could sign it, Livingston was recalled to New York to take part in an independence convention. By the time he reached New York, the convention had already approved the Declaration. Livingston played an important role in drafting New York's first state constitution before rejoining Congress in 1779. In reprisal, the British burned Livingston's home and his father's estate at Clermont, Columbia County, in 1777.

In New York, Livingston advocated the creation of a Board of Revision that would review all new legislation and the office of Chancellor, a Chancery Court judge who heard equity cases and appeals. He became the state's first Chancellor, and acquired the title as a nickname for the rest of his life. In Congress, he became Secretary of Foreign Affairs and supervised peace negotiations with Britain at war's end.

Livingston supported the strong federal government created by the U.S. Constitution of 1787, but soon joined the opposition faction led by Thomas Jefferson. He ran unsuccessfully for Governor in 1795, but returned to public life when President Jefferson appointed him Ambassador to France in 1801. In that post, he negotiated the Louisiana Purchase with Napoleon's government, vastly expanding America's western territory. Livingston considered the purchase his greatest accomplishment.

While in France, Livingston saw an opportunity to advance his own fortunes. He had been trying to develop steam-powered boats for years at home, and had a 20-year monopoly on steamboat navigation in New York before he even had a boat. While Livingston's plans had failed, inventor and fellow American, Robert Fulton suggested crucial technical innovations. After they returned to America, the Clermont, named after the Livingston family estate, became the first successful steamboat in 1807.

Livingston and Fulton's project eventually improved communications and expanded trade opportunities for all Americans. By the time Robert R. Livingston died on February 26, 1813, he had done much to make his country free, make it grow, and make it prosperous in generations to come.

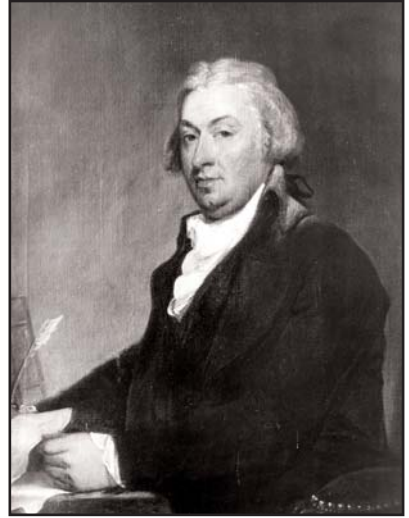


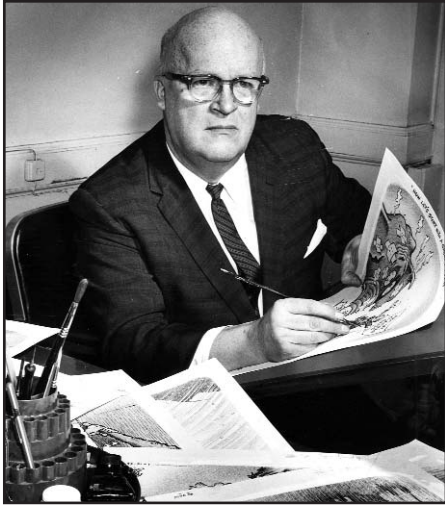
Photo of a portrait by Gilbert Stuart, courtesy of New York State Archives



Clermont is located on the east shore of the Hudson River approximately 50 south of the state's capital, Albany.

For a virtual tour of the Clermont Estate, Livingston's home go to www.friendsofclermont.org. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Bruce McKinley Shanks



Courtesy of The Buffalo News

Drawing cartoons is hard work. Drawing cartoons that express ideas effectively is an even bigger challenge. Through constant hard work, Bruce Shanks mastered the challenge and rose to the top of his profession.

Bruce McKinley Shanks was born in Buffalo to an artistically inclined family on January 29, 1908. His father was a sign painter and his sister was an artist. Bruce himself was colorblind, but that didn't block his artistic ambitions.

After graduating from Lafayette High School in 1927, Bruce landed a job at the Buffalo Express newspaper that paid \$18 a week. He started as a copy boy, carrying stories from reporters' typewriters to editors' desks. He drew cartoons on the side, hoping to become a staff artist. To his surprise, his work was already good enough to print.

In the early 1930s Shanks moved to the Buffalo Times. He worked as a sports cartoonist, drawing popular professional stars and local heroes. In 1933, he went to the Buffalo Evening News, where he remained for the rest of his newspaper career.

Bruce Shanks gradually rose through the artistic ranks at the News, illustrating news stories and retouching photographs. After serving in the Air Force during World War II, he drew a weekly news cartoon with rhyming commentary. He had to wait until 1951, when the News's editorial cartoonist retired, before he became the paper's top artist.

Shanks's cartoons were now featured on the News's editorial page. He had to draw six editorial cartoons a week along with his weekly news cartoon. He read the papers thoroughly every morning to find ideas. He might make a dozen sketches in one morning for his editors to choose from. He had to perfect recognizable caricatures of political leaders, develop symbolic characters like the "Average Guy," and make each cartoon's message easy to understand.

"When you draw a caricature, you emphasize the person's most noticeable feature – such as a prominent nose – and make it even more noticeable," Shanks explained, "In the same way, you take a news item which has in it a striking fact. Your cartoon emphasizes that fact."

His cartoons were often critical but not mean-spirited. He often received requests from politicians and foreign leaders for copies of his cartoons. "Regardless of how I knock people, they like to see themselves as others see them," he noted.

During the 1950s, Shanks won many awards from the Buffalo Newspaper Guild and national public service organizations. His August 20, 1957 cartoon, "The Thinker," earned the highest honor of all. He put a typical working man in the pose of the famous Rodin sculpture to ponder reports of labor union corruption. When it earned Shanks a Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning in 1958, he became the first Buffalo News employee to win the nation's most prestigious award for journalists.

Bruce Shanks retired from daily cartooning in 1974. He drew occasional cartoons from Boca Raton, Florida, until his death on April 12, 1980. His work made an indelible impression on generations of readers who remember him fondly to the present day.



Buffalo is second largest city in the state and is located on the eastern shore of Lake Erie.

For more information about editorial cartoonists go to www.editorialcartoonists.com. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.

Famous New Yorker: Philip Van Cortlandt

Philip Van Cortlandt had a privileged position in colonial New York, but risked everything to join the fight for American independence. It wasn't the last time he would surprise his peers.

Born on August 21, 1749, Philip was the son of Pierre Van Cortlandt, a prominent landowner of Westchester County. Pierre built a school on his estate where Philip studied alongside his siblings and neighbors before attending the Coldenham Academy. Instead of going to college, Philip went to work on his father's lands as a surveyor and mill operator.

By the 1770s, Pierre and Philip were opposed to the British colonial government. Realizing how influential the Van Cortlandts were, the government tried to win them back to the Tory side. Philip remembered how the Tories promised land and prestige to his father, who turned them down. Philip himself was wined and dined by leading Tories and was given a commission in the local militia. Like his father, Philip resisted temptation. When fighting broke out in 1775, Philip attended the New York Provincial Congress and joined the rebel army.

Sent upstate to raise troops, Philip wondered if he'd ever see his home again. He spent his own money to pay and equip his recruits and suppressed a mutiny when his men tired of poor conditions. In time, he got them into fighting shape. Van Cortlandt saw action at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777 and endured the grueling winter camp at Valley Forge. He fought pro-British Indians in New York and Pennsylvania before turning south to command forces at the decisive battle of Yorktown in 1781.

By the end of the Revolutionary War, Philip Van Cortlandt received the brevet rank of Brigadier General for his honorable service. He showed his commitment to veterans' interests by joining the Society of the Cincinnati, and stood by George Washington to stop soldiers from marching against the Continental Congress to get back pay.

Philip's father had been lieutenant governor of New York since 1777. Because of Pierre's political ties, Philip was expected to oppose the new U.S. Constitution drafted in 1787. He surprised his colleagues at the Poughkeepsie Convention by voting in favor of a stronger federal government. His vote marked him as a "Federalist," but Philip soon joined the followers of Thomas Jefferson in opposition to the Federalist Party.

Philip Van Cortlandt was elected to the Assembly in 1788, the State Senate in 1790, and the federal House of Representatives in 1792. He served eight terms in Congress, winning re-elections by 20 votes or less on two occasions. He was a loyal Jeffersonian Republican, but broke with President Jefferson in 1808 to oppose an embargo on trade with Europe. His independence cost him his seat.

Until his death in 1831, Philip Van Cortlandt was honored as a founding father. In 1825, as the highest ranking surviving officer of the Continental Army, he was an official escort for the Marquis de Lafayette's American tour. His persistent spirit of independence made him a perfect representative of the generation that won the nation's freedom.



Painting of Philip Van Cortlandt
by Ezra Ames, ca. 1810
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of Christian A. Zabriskie, 1940 (40.94)



Croton-on-Hudson is the location of Van Cortlandt Manor in Westchester County, about 40 miles north of NYC on the east shore of the Hudson River.

For more information about Philip Van Cortlandt and Van Cortlandt Manor go to www.hudsonvalley.org. This is one of a series of Famous New Yorker profiles written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2008.