John Muir began studying botany and exploring the natural world via foot while taking on jobs to support himself. But in 1867, while working at a factory, he was involved in an accident in which he was blinded for a time. Upon regaining his sight, he fully embraced his devotion to nature.

After first visiting California’s Yosemite Valley in 1868 and taking on work as a shepherd, Muir began publishing ecology-oriented articles in the early 1870s, offering groundbreaking theories about Yosemite’s geological structures being formed by glacial activity, countering previous scientific assertions. His articles praised the natural world, speaking in poetic, spiritual terms about his affection for the ecology and humanity’s earth connection. Muir became a major figure in the creation of parks for the Grand Canyon and Sequoia regions as well.

Muir co-founded the Sierra Club in 1892, acting as president of the environmental-advocacy organization for more than two decades. In the new century he continued to make history with his 1903 three-night camping trip with Theodore Roosevelt, which helped shape the U.S. president’s own conservationist policies.
Jane Addams is best known as the founder of Hull House where she provided help for poor immigrants who had come to Chicago. The idea for Hull House came after she saw a similar institution in London. Hull House provided kindergarten and day care for the children of working mothers and after school activities for older children. Later an art gallery, employment bureau, library, public kitchen, music and art classes, as well as facilities for swimming and sports activities, were added. She also was involved in numerous organizations that promoted social reform involving the rights of children, African Americans and women. Jane Addams became active in the peace movement during World War I and was the first president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Because of her outstanding work, she was the first woman awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

Susan B. Anthony was born on February 15, 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts. Anthony’s family was very active in the reform movements of the day. They worked to end slavery in the abolitionist movement, and the fight against alcohol in the temperance movement. Anthony dedicated her life to the women’s suffrage movement. Along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she founded the National American Women Suffrage Association and the American Equal Rights Association. In 1868 Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton established the political weekly, *The Revolution*, that lobbied for women’s rights. Anthony toured the country making speeches on women’s rights. She was arrested, convicted and fined for voting in Rochester, New York. Anthony tried to turn her trial and conviction into political gains for the women’s suffrage movement. In recognition of her hard work and dedication to the women’s rights movement, the U.S. Treasury Department put Anthony’s portrait on one dollar coins in 1979, making her the first woman to be so honored.
Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919)

Andrew Carnegie was one of the richest men in the world in the early 20th century. He first started his empire by working in the rapidly growing railroad industry. Using the Bessemer process, he created a steel company to capitalize on the growing need for steel after the Civil War. A follower of Social Darwinism, he amassed great wealth by beating out all his competitors with his shrewd business sense. He justified this great wealth with his “Gospel of Wealth” doctrine. Following this doctrine, he believed it was the duty of the wealthy to spread their surplus wealth to improve the conditions of the poor who wanted to work hard to help themselves. During the last years of his life, he donated more than $350,000,000 to worthy causes. These causes included education, international peace, libraries, and cultural centers.

W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963)

W.E.B. DuBois was a leader in the struggle for civil rights for African Americans in the first years of the 20th century. In 1895, he became the first African American to receive a Ph.D from Harvard. DuBois broke from Booker T. Washington’s philosophy which preached that African Americans should work hard for economic gain and the respect of whites, even though it might mean they had to endure discrimination for the time being. DuBois believed Washington’s philosophy would perpetually continue the oppression of African Americans. In 1903, DuBois published perhaps his most famous book, *The Souls of Black Folks*. In 1909, he helped create the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). His later Pan-Africanism ideas were based on the belief that people of African descent from all over the world should unite to fight oppression. When he left the NAACP in 1934, he favored complete black separatism. After moving to Ghana, he became a citizen of Ghana and a member of the Communist Party. He died in Ghana on August 27, 1963, the eve of the March on Washington.
Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862-1931)

Born of slave parents in Mississippi just before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Ida B. Wells-Barnett grew up to become a journalist and newspaper editor who championed civil rights. Years before the Supreme Court ruled in Plessy v. Ferguson that public accommodations could be separate if equal, Wells sued a railroad for forcibly removing her from her seat in order for it to be given to a white man. Even though she won the suit in the local court, the Tennessee Supreme Court overturned the decision. This began her life long fight for justice and equality for women and African Americans. Appalled by the lynching of three of her friends by those trying to eliminate their business competition, she began an anti-lynching campaign. Afraid for her life, she moved to Chicago where she continued to investigate the practice of lynching. There she also became involved with the women’s suffrage movement. With Jane Addams, she fought to end segregated schools. She later was one of the founders of the NAACP and one of the first African American women to run for public office in the United States when she ran for a seat in the Illinois state legislature.

Frances Willard (1839-1898)

Frances Willard, born in 1839, was an influential reformer in the early part of the 20th century. She was the founder of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, a group concerned about the destructive effects of alcohol. During this time, women would meet in churches and then march to saloons to try to get owners to close their establishments. In 1882, she was instrumental in organizing the Prohibition Party. This party advocated the passage of the 18th amendment which prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol. As a writer, she would become the first woman dean at Northwestern University and the first woman to be represented in Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol.
Alice Paul was an American suffragist, feminist, and woman’s rights activist, and the main leader of the National Woman’s Party.

The NWP strategized events such as the Woman Suffrage Procession and the Silent Sentinels. They got themselves arrested and went on hunger strikes to campaign for the passage of the 19th Amendment.

**Alice Paul**  
**1185–1977**

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Upton Beall Sinclair, Jr. was an American writer of nearly 100 books and other works across a number of genres. Sinclair's work was well-known and popular in the first half of the twentieth century, and he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1943.

In 1906, Sinclair acquired particular fame for his classic muckraking novel, *The Jungle*, which exposed conditions in the U.S. meat packing industry, causing a public uproar that contributed in part to the passage a few months later of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act.

**Upton Sinclair**  
**1878–1968**
Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette was an American Republican politician. He served as a member of the US House of Representatives, Governor of Wisconsin, and was a Senator from Wisconsin. He ran for President of the United States in 1924 as the nominee of his own Progressive Party.

La Follette is best remembered as a proponent of progressive change in government by supporting increased public participation in government in the forms of initiative, referendum and recall to name a few.

Cyrus Hall McCormick was an American inventor and founder of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, which became part of International Harvester Company in 1902. From the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, he and many members of his family became prominent residents of Chicago.

Although McCormick is credited as the "inventor" of the mechanical reaper, he based his work on that of many others, including Roman, Scottish and American men, more than two decades of work by his father, and the aid of Jo Anderson, a slave held by his family. Cyrus McCormick filed patents for the invention, and his achievements were chiefly in the development of a company, marketing and sales force to market his products.
Mary Harris "Mother" Jones  
1837-1930

John Deere was an American blacksmith and manufacturer who founded Deere & Company, one of the largest and leading agricultural and construction equipment manufacturers in the world. Born in Rutland, Vermont, Deere moved to Illinois and invented the first commercially successful steel plow in 1837.

In 1837, Deere developed and manufactured the first commercially successful cast-steel plow. The wrought-iron framed plow had a polished steel share. This made it ideal for the tough soil of the Midwest and worked better than other plows. By early 1838, Deere completed his first steel plow and sold it to a local farmer, Lewis Crandall, who quickly spread word of his success with Deere's plow. Subsequently two neighbors placed orders with Deere. By 1841, Deere was manufacturing 75-100 plows per year.

Mary Harris Jones she began working as an organizer for the Knights of Labor and the United Mine Workers union. From 1897, at about 60 years of age, she was known as Mother Jones.

In 1902 she was called "the most dangerous woman in America" for her success in organizing mine workers and their families against the mine owners.

In 1903, to protest the lax enforcement of the child labor laws in the Pennsylvania mines and silk mills, she organized a children's march from Philadelphia to the home of President Theodore Roosevelt in New York.

She was a member of the Socialist Party and a co-founder of the International Workers of the World labor party. Jones was against woman’s suffrage because she believed that if women dabbled in politics they would neglect their children and contribute to juvenile delinquency.
William Tweed was an American politician most notable for being the "boss" of Tammany Hall, the Democratic Party political machine that played a major role in the politics of 19th century New York City and State. At the height of his influence, Tweed was the third-largest landowner in New York City and a director of the Erie Railroad, the Tenth National Bank, and the New-York Printing Company, as well as proprietor of the Metropolitan Hotel.

Tweed was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1852 and the New York County board of supervisors in 1858, the year he became the head of the Tammany Hall political machine. He was also elected to the New York State Senate in 1867, but Tweed's greatest influence came from being an appointed member of a number of boards and commissions, his control over political patronage in New York City through Tammany, and his ability to ensure the loyalty of voters through jobs he could create and dispense on city-related projects.

Tweed was convicted for stealing, escaped from jail once, but was returned to custody. He died in the Ludlow Street Jail.

Booker T. Washington called for black progress through education and entrepreneurship, rather than trying to challenge directly the Jim Crow segregation and the disenfranchisement of black voters in the South.

Washington mobilized a nationwide coalition of middle-class blacks, church leaders, and white philanthropists and politicians, with a long-term goal of building the community's economic strength and pride by a focus on self-help and schooling.

The Tuskegee Institute was established to educate blacks and further their economic opportunities. Washington strongly supported literacy and education as the keys to their future. Both men and women had to learn trades as well as academics. Washington helped raise funds to establish and operate hundreds of small community schools and institutions of higher educations for blacks. The Tuskegee faculty used all the activities to teach the students basic skills to take back to their mostly rural black communities throughout the South. The main goal was not to produce farmers and tradesmen, but teachers of farming and trades who taught in the new schools and colleges for blacks across the South.
J.P. Morgan was the leading financier of the Progressive Era, and his dedication to efficiency and modernization helped transform American business. Morgan has been described as America’s greatest banker.

Morgan arranged the merger of Edison General Electric and Thomson-Houston Electric Company to form General Electric in 1892. He was instrumental in the creation of the United States Steel Corporation, International Harvester and AT&T.

At the height of Morgan’s career during the early 1900s, he and his partners had financial investments in many large corporations and had significant influence over the nation's high finance and United States Congress members. He directed the banking coalition that stopped the Panic of 1907.

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Alexis de Tocqueville was a French political thinker and historian who traveled throughout the United States from 1831-1833 where he examined the political and social nature of the United States. Upon his return to France, he authored *Democracy in America*, in which he described the “exceptionalism” that he saw in America. He was impressed with the way that Americans formed social institutions and how those impacted society. He was impressed with the many different religious sects that he saw in America and their toleration of each other. His book dealt with many topics including religion, the press, class structure, and the role of government. Today it is still a text that is used in political science and history courses.
Ida Tarbell was an American journalist born on November 5, 1857, in Erie County, Pennsylvania. She was the only woman in her graduating class at Allegheny College in 1880. The McClure's magazine journalist was an investigative reporting pioneer. Like many young journalists of her era, Tarbell had become concerned by the proliferation of monopolies and trusts. In 1900, she proposed a series of articles and spent the next several years deeply immersed in research on the Standard Oil Company and John D. Rockefeller's business practices. Titled *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, the first installment was published by McClure's in 1902. In it she exposed Standard's often questionable practices, including those surrounding the events that had so greatly impacted her family and others in their area decades earlier. Tarbell's exhaustive study not only gave rise to a new style of investigative journalism sometimes referred to as muckraking but also was instrumental in the 1911 dismantling of the Standard Oil Company Trust behemoth, which was determined to be in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act.

Jacob Riis, born in Denmark, emigrated to the United States in 1870. In 1873 Riis became a police reporter his beat being the Lower East Side, a neighborhood riddled with crime and poverty. Riis was moved by what he saw and he taught himself basic photography and started taking a camera with him when he hit the streets at night. Flash photography had only recently been invented, and Riis became a pioneer in its use. The images he brought to the public's eye were full of crowded tenements, dangerous slums and poignant street scenes—images of a downtrodden underclass that most readers had only previously read about, at best. Riis' unflinching photos appeared in books, newspapers and magazines, and before long they were used as tools for social reform. In 1890, Riis' book of social criticism, *How the Other Half Lives*, was published, and proved to be an eye-opening experience for the reader. His book moved then Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt. Together Riis and Roosevelt walked around New York, with Riis showing the future president the deplorable conditions in which so many people lived. Roosevelt was moved to close the worst of the city's police lodging houses and demanded that city officials pass the first significant legislation to improve the state of affairs in immigrant neighborhoods.
Eugene V. Debs (1855-1926)

Labor organizer and socialist leader Eugene V. Debs began his rise to prominence in Indiana's Terre Haute lodge of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. He entered politics as a Democratic City Clerk in 1879, and in 1885 he was elected to the Indiana State Assembly. From his earliest days, Debs advocated the organization of labor by industry rather than by craft. After trying unsuccessfully to unite the various railroad brotherhoods of his day, he became president (1893) of the newly established American Railway Union. Debs successfully united railway workers from different crafts into the first industrial union in the United States. He gained greater renown when he was sentenced to six months in jail (May–November 1895) for his role in leading the Chicago Pullman Palace Car Company strike. During his prison term Debs was deeply influenced by his broad reading—including the works of Karl Marx—and grew increasingly critical of traditional political and economic concepts, especially capitalism. He also saw the labor movement as a struggle between classes. After announcing his conversion to socialism in 1897, he led the establishment of the Socialist Party of America. In 1905 he helped found the Industrial Workers of the World, but he soon withdrew from the group because of its radicalism. He was the Socialist party's presidential candidate in 1900, 1908, 1912 and 1920.

John D. Rockefeller (1855-1926)

A careful and studious businessman who refrained from taking unnecessary risks, Rockefeller sensed an opportunity in the oil business in the early 1860s. With oil production ramping he opened his first refinery in 1863 near Cleveland OH, and within two years it was the largest in the area. In 1870, Rockefeller and his associates incorporated the Standard Oil Company, which immediately prospered, thanks to favorable economic/industry conditions and Rockefeller's drive to streamline the company's operations. Standard's moves were so quick and sweeping that it controlled the majority of refineries in the Cleveland area within two years, and soon controlled (or owned) almost every aspect of the business. Standard's grip on the industry tightened as it bought up competitors and became an industry giant both coast-to-coast in the U.S. and abroad. In just over a decade since Standard Oil was incorporated, it had a near monopoly of the oil business in the U.S. Everything Rockefeller had done to this point had led to the first American monopoly, or "trust," and it would serve as a guiding light for others in big business following behind him. The public and the U.S. Congress took notice of Standard and its monopolistic behavior and 1890 found the company in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act. Rockefeller broke the company into 9 business, keeping overall control.
Born on February 11, 1847, in Milan, Ohio, Thomas Edison rose from humble beginnings to work as an inventor of major technology. He was deemed “difficult” by his teacher so his mother pulled him from school and taught him at home. In 1869, Edison moved to New York City and developed his first invention, an improved stock ticker, the Universal Stock Printer, which synchronized several stock tickers’ transactions. In 1870, Thomas Edison set up his first small laboratory and manufacturing facility in Newark, New Jersey where he devised the quadruplex telegraph, capable of transmitting two signals in two different directions on the same wire, but railroad tycoon Jay Gould snatched the invention from Western Union, paying Edison more than $100,000 in cash, bonds and stock. By the early 1870s, Thomas Edison had acquired a reputation as a first-rate inventor. In December of 1877, Edison developed a method for recording sound: the phonograph. Though not commercially viable for another decade, the invention brought him worldwide fame. After being granted a patent for the light bulb in January 1880, Edison set out to develop a company that would deliver the electricity to power and light the cities of the world. That same year, Edison founded the Edison Illuminating Company—the first investor-owned electric utility—which later became the General Electric Corporation. Edison’s career was the quintessential rags-to-riches success story that made him a folk hero in America.

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Charles Carroll was born in Maryland in 1737. Educated in Europe, he quickly became involved with the revolutionary spirit when he returned to America. When Maryland decided to send delegates to the Continental Congress, Carroll was one of those chosen. He wasn’t in time to vote for the Declaration of Independence, but he was there to sign the document. He served on the Board of War during the Revolution. After the war, he was involved in setting up the state government of Maryland and served a brief time as the only Catholic in the U.S. Senate once the U.S. Constitution was ratified. He was the last surviving signer of the Declaration when he died in 1832 at the age of 95.
John Hancock was raised in colonial Massachusetts. As an adult, he publicly spoke out against the British Stamp Act and reminded Americans about the deaths the British caused at the Boston Massacre. The British government offered large rewards for the capture of several patriot leaders, including Hancock. Hancock attended the First Continental Congress and in 1775 was elected President of the Second Continental Congress. He was the first man to sign the Declaration of Independence in July of 1776 and wrote his signature in large script at the center of the document. Hancock served as the first Governor of Massachusetts and died while serving his ninth term as governor. He was known for his patriotism and dedication to the American cause of independence.

John Hancock
(1736-1793)

John Jay was born in New York in 1745. He is considered one of the Founding Fathers. He served as a member of the Second Continental Congress. Even though he did not initially favor separation from Great Britain, he supported the cause once independence was declared. He was one of the men along with John Adams and Ben Franklin sent to Paris to negotiate the peace treaty with England after the war. In 1788, working with Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, Jay authored five of the eighty-five Federalist essays written to explain the Constitution and the need for its ratification. Washington later appointed him the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. In Adams' administration, Jay's diplomatic skills were once again needed as he negotiated a treaty with Great Britain to resolve continuing conflicts over trade in the U.S. territories obtained in the Treaty of Paris. While this probably averted another war with England, some felt it was too favorable to the British. When he returned from the negotiations, he resigned from the Supreme Court and became the Governor of New York for two terms. John Jay died in 1829.

John Jay
(1745-1829)
John Peter Muhlenberg was born in Pennsylvania. John was the son of a Lutheran minister. Eventually, he followed in his father's footsteps becoming a minister himself. While in Virginia, he became a follower of Patrick Henry. He is said to have supported the American cause in a sermon in which he cited the verse from Ecclesiastes which begins with the words, “To everything there is a season...a time of peace and a time of war. And this is a time of war.” He later served in the Continental Army fighting at Charleston, Brandywine, Stony Point, and Yorktown. He was also present during the winter at Valley Forge. After the war, he served in the Pennsylvania state government before being elected to the U.S. Congress. Even though he didn’t serve as a Lutheran minister again, he was active as a Lutheran layman until he died in 1807.

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Jonathan Trumbull Sr. was born in Connecticut. He studied theology at Harvard and later served as a colonial governor of Connecticut. During the American Revolution, he became the only colonial governor to support the American cause. He was a strong supporter of General Washington and spent the war doing what he could to recruit troops and raise supplies for the cause. General Washington is said to have depended on him for these things during the trying times of the Revolution. Since he supported the cause, he was the only colonial governor to remain in power after independence was declared. Governor Trumbull died in 1785 and is buried in Lebanon, Connecticut.
Benjamin Rush was born in Pennsylvania in 1745. He became a prominent physician, writer, and one of the founders of the United States of America. In 1773, he became active in the Sons of Liberty in Philadelphia. Later he continued his involvement in the revolutionary movement by attending the Continental Congress in June of 1776. He was present when the Declaration of Independence was debated and signed the document that July. During the Revolutionary War, he served as a surgeon general to the Continental Army. After the war, he returned to medicine until the Constitutional Convention was held in 1787. He served as a delegate supporting the ratification of that document. In 1797, he served as the Treasurer of the U.S. Mint. He is also thought to have been instrumental in helping bridge the rift between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams by encouraging them to resume writing to each other after their presidencies. His deep religious faith led him to be an avid social reformer believing in such causes as abolition and prison and judicial reform.

John Witherspoon was born in Scotland, and came in 1768 to the colonies to assume the presidency of Princeton University in New Jersey. He was also a prominent Presbyterian minister. While serving as the president of Princeton University, he strongly influenced the course of study. He believed that morality was crucial to all those holding public positions of leadership. Therefore, he instituted a required course called Moral Philosophy for the students. One of his most famous students was James Madison. Witherspoon was elected to the Continental Congress and was present to vote for and sign the Declaration of Independence. He served in the Congress all through the war and helped in the drafting of the Articles of Confederation. He later served as a delegate from New Jersey at the Constitutional Convention, voting for its adoption and advocating its ratification in New Jersey.