



Prominent Foreign-Born Americans

Throughout our nation's history, foreign-born men and women have come to the United States, taken the Oath of Allegiance, and contributed greatly to their new communities and country. The United States welcomes individuals from nations near and far and immigrants have played an important role in establishing this country as the "land of opportunity." America takes great pride in being known as a "nation of immigrants."

The following section provides examples of individuals who have

come to the United States, become citizens by choice, and left a lasting impression on our society. This list is by no means all encompassing, as a comprehensive record would be nearly impossible. Instead, it serves the purpose of highlighting a selection of foreign-born Americans, coming from a wide range of countries, who have had a significant impact on the United States as we know it today.



JOHN PAUL JONES (1747–1792)

American naval officer.

John Paul was born July 6, 1747, in Kirkbean, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland (now Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland). At age 21, he commanded his first ship and quickly became a very successful merchant skipper in the West Indies. In the mid 1770s, he moved to the British colonies in North America, adopting the last name “Jones.” At the beginning of the American Revolution, he joined the Continental navy and was commissioned first lieutenant. During the

war, Jones commanded several vessels, including the *Duc de Duras*, which he renamed *Bon Homme Richard* in honor of Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Aboard this ship on September 23, 1779, Jones engaged the British vessel *HMS Serapis* off the coast of England. Jones defeated the *HMS Serapis* in one of the most storied battles in United States naval history. He is now entombed beneath the chapel of the

U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.



“John Paul Jones” by George Bagby Matthews.

Courtesy of the U.S. Senate



The *Bon Homme Richard*.

Courtesy of the National Archives, NARA File # 019-N-10430

ALEXANDER HAMILTON (1757–1804)

First Secretary of the Treasury, serving under President George

Washington. Hamilton was born January 11, 1757, on the island of Nevis, British West Indies (now part of the independent country of Saint Kitts and Nevis). Hamilton moved to America in 1772, where he attended preparatory school in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. At the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776, Hamilton entered the Continental army in New York as captain of artillery. In 1777, he was appointed aide-de-camp to General George Washington. Hamilton was one of three men responsible for the *Federalist Papers*, and was a guiding spirit behind the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. With the adoption of the Constitution in 1787, Hamilton, like all other residents of the new nation, became an original “founding” citizen of the United States. He was also a founder and leader of the first political party in the United States, the Federalists.



WILLIAM A. LEIDESDORFF (1810–1848)

American businessman and first African American diplomat.

Leidesdorff was born in the Danish West Indies (now the U.S. Virgin Islands) to a Danish man and an African woman in 1810. He was raised by a wealthy English plantation owner and obtained a formal education while in the Danish West Indies. Upon his caretaker’s untimely death, he moved to the United States, settling in New Orleans, Louisiana. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1834. Leidesdorff became active in the mercantile industry and soon developed a trade route between Yerba



William Leidesdorff.

Courtesy of the Virtual Museum of the City of
San Francisco

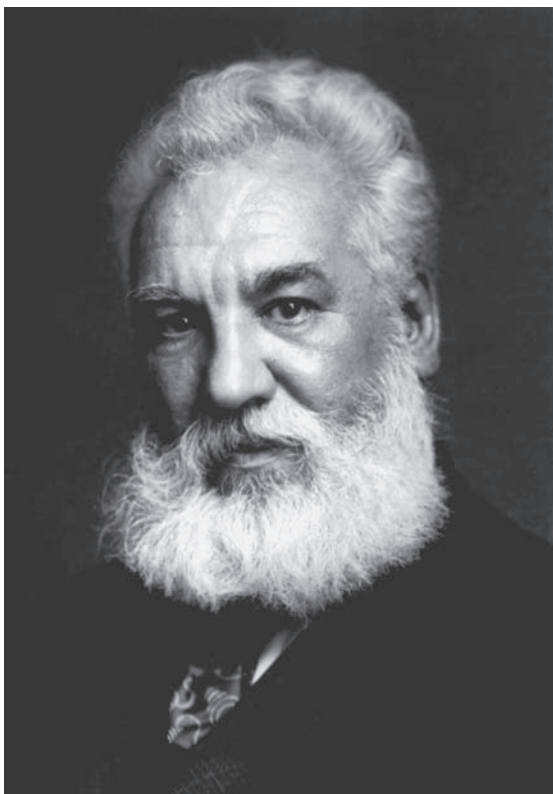
Buena (now San Francisco), California, and Honolulu, Hawaii. In 1844, while living in California (then part of Mexico), he became a Mexican citizen in order to increase his landholdings. On October 29, 1845, Thomas O. Larkin, U.S. consul in Monterey, California, appointed Leidesdorff as vice consul at Yerba Buena. Leidesdorff secretly helped the United States annex the region of California. His service as vice consul lasted until the U.S. occupation of northern California in July 1846.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL (1847–1922)

American inventor, introduced the telephone in

1876. Bell was born March 3, 1847, in Edinburgh, Scotland. In 1872, he moved to the United States, where he taught at Boston University. Bell became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1882. At an early age, he was fascinated with the idea of transmitting speech. While working with his assistant, Thomas Watson, in Boston, Bell shared his idea of what would become the telephone. In 1876, Bell introduced the telephone to the world at the Centennial Exposition

in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The invention of the telephone led to the organization of the Bell Telephone Company. Bell was also responsible for inventing the photophone in 1880, an instrument that transmitted speech by light rays. In addition, he was a co-founder of the National Geographic Society, and served as its president from 1898 to 1904.



Alexander Graham Bell.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-14759



Alexander Graham Bell's first telephone.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-D420-2988

JOSEPH PULITZER (1847–1911)

American newspaper publisher. Pulitzer was born April 10, 1847, in Makó, Hungary. He immigrated to the United States in 1864 to serve in the American Civil War, joining the First New York Cavalry. Pulitzer began his newspaper career as an employee of a German-language daily in St. Louis, Missouri. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1867. After buying two St. Louis newspapers and merging them into the successful *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1878, Pulitzer purchased the *New York World* in 1883. He shifted the newspaper's focus toward human-interest stories, scandals, and fighting corruption as the *World's* circulation grew from 15,000 to 600,000—the largest in the United States. Before his death in 1911, Pulitzer pledged money to set up a school of journalism at Columbia University in New York as well as the Pulitzer Prizes for journalists. The Pulitzer Prizes are now considered the most prestigious awards in print journalism.



FRANCES X. CABRINI (1850–1917)

American humanitarian and social worker, first U.S. citizen to be canonized by the Catholic Church. Cabrini was born July 15, 1850, in Sant'Angelo Lodigiano, Italy. After taking vows to become a nun in 1877, she began teaching at an orphanage in Codogno, Italy. In 1889, Pope Leo XIII sent her to New York to begin ministering to the growing number of new immigrants in the United States. She became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1909. Throughout her lifetime, Cabrini worked with all those in need, including the poor, the uneducated, and the sick. She helped organize schools, orphanages, and adult education classes for immigrants in her nearly forty years of ministry. In 1946, Pope Pius XII canonized her, making her the first U.S. citizen to be canonized. Cabrini is now the Catholic Church's patron saint of immigrants.

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-103568



MICHAEL PUPIN (1858–1935)



Michael Pupin.

Public domain photo

American physicist and inventor. Pupin was born October 4, 1858, in Idvor, Austria-Hungary (now Serbia). In 1874, he moved to the United States, settling in New York. Pupin graduated from Columbia University with a degree in physics in 1883. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen that same year. In 1889,

Pupin obtained his doctorate from the University of Berlin. Upon graduation, he returned to Columbia University where he taught for more than forty years. Pupin was well known for his improvement of long-distance telephone and telegraph communication. Throughout his career, he received thirty-four patents for his inventions. In 1924, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his autobiography, *From Immigrant to Inventor*.



SOLOMON CARTER FULLER (1872–1953)

American psychiatrist, first known African American psychiatrist in the United States. Fuller was born in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1872. In 1889, he moved to the United States to attend Livingston College in Salisbury, North Carolina. He received his



Solomon Carter Fuller.

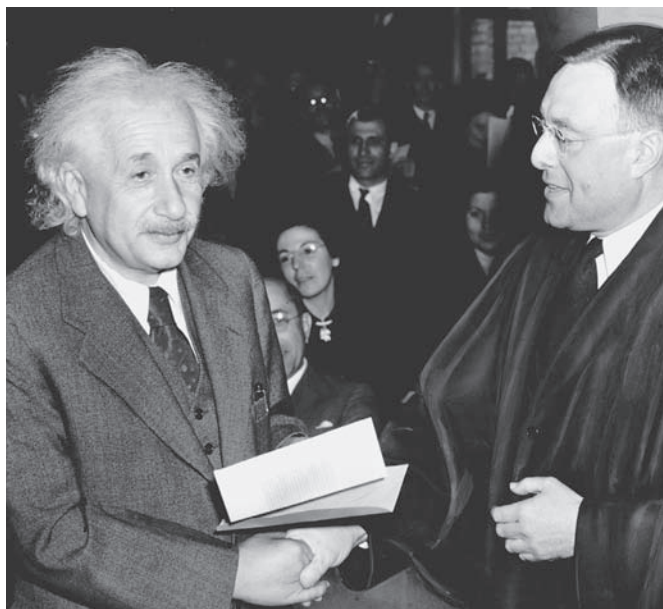
Courtesy of Boston University

M.D. from Boston University's School of Medicine in 1894, and began teaching there in 1899. Fuller spent a year in Munich, Germany, studying psychiatry. Much of his research centered on degenerative brain diseases including Alzheimer's disease, which he attributed to causes other than arteriosclerosis, a theory that was fully supported by medical researchers in 1953. Fuller became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1920.



ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879–1955)

American scientist and Nobel laureate in physics, widely considered to be the greatest scientist of the twentieth century. Einstein was born March 14, 1879, at Ulm, in Württemberg, Germany. In 1921, he received the Nobel Prize in Physics for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect. Einstein's special theory of relativity containing the famous equation $E=mc^2$ also won him international praise. When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, he immigrated to the United States and joined the newly formed Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University. Einstein became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1940.



Albert Einstein
receiving his
certificate of
American
citizenship,
October 1,
1940.

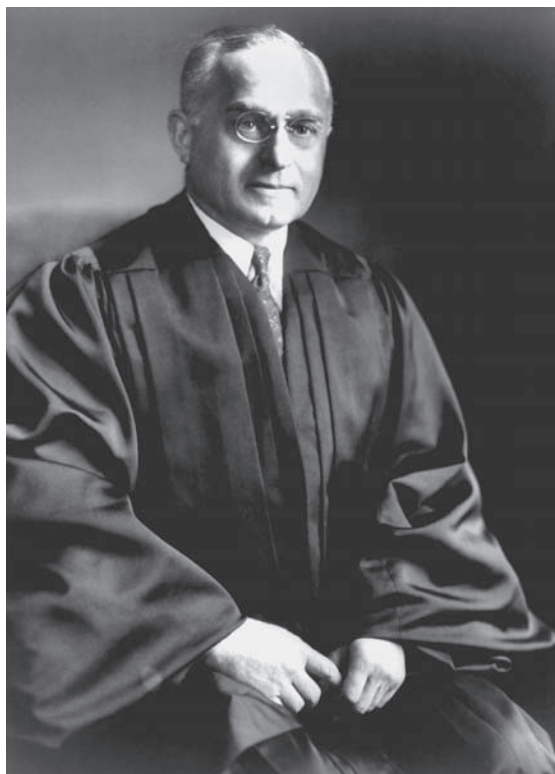
Courtesy of the
Library of Congress,
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IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

American composer. Stravinsky was born June 17, 1882, in Oranienbaum, Russia (now Lomonosov, Russia). His early career was spent composing in Switzerland and Paris, France. Stravinsky's works include *The Rite of Spring* (1913), *The Soldier's Tale* (1918), *Oedipus Rex* (1927), and *Perséphone* (1934). In 1939, he left Europe and settled in the United States. Stravinsky became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1945. The various styles of music he experimented with made Stravinsky one of the most influential composers of his time. He is now widely regarded as one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century.



FELIX FRANKFURTER (1882–1965)



American legal scholar and U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Frankfurter was born November 15, 1882, in Vienna, Austria-Hungary (now Austria). In 1894, he immigrated to the United States and attended both City College of New York and Harvard Law School. By virtue of his father's naturalization, Frankfurter became a naturalized U.S. citizen. He went

Justice Felix Frankfurter.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress,
LC-USZ62-36966

on to serve as an assistant U.S. attorney in New York State (1906-1910) and a legal officer in the Bureau of Insular Affairs (1911-1914). From 1914 to 1939, Frankfurter was a professor at Harvard Law School. In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him an associate justice to the U.S. Supreme Court.



KNUTE ROCKNE (1888–1931)

American football player and coach. Rockne was born March 4, 1888, in Voss, Norway. His father brought the family to the United States in 1893. By virtue of his father's naturalization, Rockne became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1896. As the head football coach of the University of Notre Dame from 1918 to 1930, he achieved the greatest winning percentage of all time at .881 percent. During his years as head coach, Rockne collected 105 victories, twelve losses, five ties, and six national championships. He also coached Notre Dame to five undefeated seasons. Both as a player and a coach, Rockne popularized the use of the forward pass, which significantly changed how the game was played.



Knute Rockne, seated, at a Notre Dame football practice in the late 1920s.

Courtesy of the University of Notre Dame

IRVING BERLIN (1888–1989)



Irving Berlin.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-37541

American composer and songwriter.

Berlin was born May 11, 1888, in Mogilyov, Russia (now Belarus). In 1893, his family immigrated to the United States. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1918. Berlin wrote music and lyrics for Broadway shows such as *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946) and *Miss Liberty* (1949), as well as for films such as *Holiday Inn* (1942), *Blue Skies* (1946), and *Easter Parade* (1948). He also wrote popular songs such as “There’s No Business Like

Show Business,” “God Bless America,” and the holiday classic “White Christmas.” In 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower recognized Berlin’s patriotic songs by presenting him with a special medal authorized by the U.S. Congress. In 1986, Berlin was one of twelve naturalized U.S. citizens to receive the Medal of Liberty from President Ronald Reagan.



FRANK CAPRA (1897–1991)

American film director and producer. Capra was born May 18, 1897, in Palermo, Italy. In 1903, his family immigrated to the United States,

settling in Los Angeles. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1920. Capra is known for directing such films as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), for which he won the Academy Award for Best Director. Although it was considered a box office failure upon its release, his 1946 film *It's a Wonderful Life* has become one of the most beloved holiday films of all time.



DALIP SINGH SAUND (1899–1973)

American congressman and first Asian American to serve in the U.S. Congress. Saund was

born September 20, 1899, in Chhajulwadi, Punjab, India. He graduated from the University of Punjab in 1919 and moved to the United States the following year to attend the University of California. Saund earned both a master's degree and a doctorate from the University of California. He then became a successful lettuce farmer in the Imperial Valley of California. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1949. In 1952, Saund was elected judge of Justice Court for the Westmoreland Judicial District in California's Imperial County, a position he was

denied two years earlier because he had not been a U.S. citizen for more than a year. In 1956, he was elected to represent the 29th Congressional District of California in the U.S. House of Representatives, becoming the first Asian American to serve in the U.S. Congress.



Dalip Singh Saund.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-102603

MARLENE DIETRICH (1901–1992)

American actress and singer. Dietrich was born December 27, 1901, in Berlin, Germany. She began her acting career in Berlin where she quickly became popular in the theater and in silent films. In 1929, she was cast in the film *The Blue Angel* (1930) by American director Josef von Sternberg. Her performance was widely acclaimed and Dietrich promptly moved to the United States. She starred in a variety of films during her career, including *Morocco* (1930), *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935), *Desire* (1936), and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961). She became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1939. During World War II, Dietrich made over 500 appearances before American troops overseas.



BOB HOPE (1903–2003)



American entertainer.

Hope was born May 29, 1903, in Eltham, Great Britain. In 1907, his father moved the family to Cleveland, Ohio. In 1920, by virtue of his father's naturalization, "Bob"—the name he took for the rest of his life—became a U.S. citizen. Throughout his career, he appeared in a variety of films and television specials, and performed many shows for American

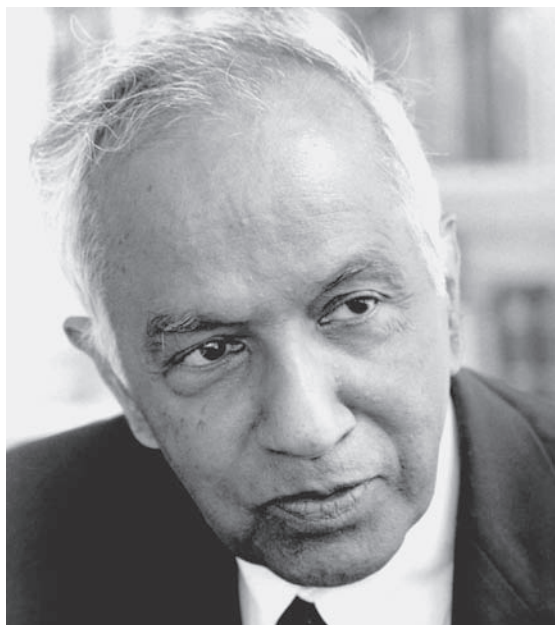
Bob Hope.

Courtesy of the Bob Hope Collection

troops overseas, including World War II (1939–1945), the Korean War (1950–1953), the Vietnam War (1959–1975), and the Persian Gulf War (1991). In 1997, President William Clinton named him an honorary military veteran.



SUBRAHMANYAN CHANDRASEKHAR (1910–1995)



Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar.

Courtesy of the University of Chicago

American scientist and Nobel laureate. Chandrasekhar was born October 19, 1910, in Lahore, India (now Pakistan). He earned a bachelor's degree in physics at Presidency College in Madras, India, and a doctorate from Trinity College in England. Chandrasekhar immigrated to the United States in 1937, where he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1953.

Chandrasekhar was the first to theorize that not all stars end up as white dwarf stars, but those retaining mass above a certain limit, known today as “Chandrasekhar’s limit,” undergo further collapse. In 1983, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for his theoretical studies of the physical processes important to the structure and evolution of stars. In 1999, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) named one of its four “Great Observatories” orbiting the Earth in space for Chandrasekhar.

KENNETH B. CLARK (1914–2005)

American psychologist.

Clark was born July 14, 1914, in the Panama Canal Zone. In 1919, he moved to the United States, settling in New York with his mother and sister. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1931. Clark obtained a bachelor's degree from Howard University in 1935 and a master's degree in 1936. He went on to earn a doctorate in experimental psychology from Columbia University in 1940, becoming

the first African American to earn a doctorate in psychology at the school. In 1946, he and his wife Mamie founded the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem, New York, where they began conducting research on racial bias in education. A 1950 report from Clark on racial discrimination was cited in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which ruled public school segregation unconstitutional. Clark was also the first African American to serve as president of the American Psychological Association. In 1986, he was one of twelve naturalized U.S. citizens to receive the Medal of Liberty from President Ronald Reagan.



Kenneth B. Clark.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-115757

CELIA CRUZ (1925–2003)



Celia Cruz.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-118256

**American singer,
known as the
“Queen of Salsa.”**

Cruz was born October 21, 1925, in Havana, Cuba. She became famous in Cuba in the 1950s, singing with the band La Sonora Matancera. Cruz left Cuba for the United States in 1960, after Fidel Castro came to power. She was soon headlining the Hollywood Palladium in California and Carnegie Hall in New

York. Cruz became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1961. She appeared in several films, including *The Mambo Kings* (1992) and *The Perez Family* (1995), and sang a duet with David Byrne for the 1986 film *Something Wild*. During her long career, Cruz received a Smithsonian Lifetime Achievement Award, a National Medal of the Arts, and honorary doctorates from Yale University and the University of Miami.



Naturalization ceremony in the Rotunda of the National Archives in Washington, DC,
December 15, 2005.

Courtesy of the USCIS Office of Communications

