



John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937)

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

John D. Rockefeller was an oil industry tycoon and philanthropist who lived in Cleveland, Ohio. Born in New York in 1839, he moved with his family to northeast Ohio in 1853. At age sixteen, he began his involvement with the business world as an assistant bookkeeper for a produce commission business. He soon began his own produce commission company before joining the oil refinery industry in 1863. He established Standard Oil of Ohio in 1870, and this is where he made most of his wealth. By 1878, the company controlled 90% of all U.S. oil refineries (it was declared a trust by the U.S government in 1911). In addition to his business interests, Rockefeller regularly donated a portion of his income to charities supporting education and public health. Rockefeller died in 1937 and is buried in Lake View Cemetery in Cleveland. He is widely recognized as the wealthiest American of all time.

Important Dates

- July 8, 1839: John Davison Rockefeller is born in Richford, New York.
- 1853: The Rockefeller family moves to Strongsville, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio.
- 1863: Rockefeller and business partner Maurice B. Clark build an oil refinery in "The Flats" area of Cleveland.
- 1864: Rockefeller marries Laura Celestia "Cettie" Spelman.
- January 10, 1870: Standard Oil of Ohio is formed and grows rapidly over the next decade, eventually forming a monopoly.
- 1903: Rockefeller's General Education Board is founded.
- 1911: U.S. Supreme Court declares that Standard Oil Company of New Jersey is a trust, and it is broken into subsidiaries.
- 1913: Rockefeller Foundation is established.
- May 23, 1937: Rockefeller dies in Ormond Beach, Florida.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Search the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), as phrases or in proximity: John D. Rockefeller, Rockefeller, Standard Oil, Rockefeller Foundation, trust, Sherman Antitrust Act, philanthropy.
- Limit your search by date to find information about specific aspects of Rockefeller's life and career.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Trust Bill Must Pass](#)" *Bellefontaine Republican* (Bellefontaine, OH), Feb. 10, 1903, Image 2, col. 2-3.
- "[Rockefeller May Ask the Court for an Injunction](#)" *Stark County Democrat* (Canton, OH), August 20, 1907, Image 6, col. 1-4.
- "[Oil King Plans to Aid Mankind](#)" *Democratic Banner* (Mt. Vernon, OH), March 4, 1910, Image 1, col. 1-2.
- "[John D.'s Wife Dies](#)" *Greenville Journal* (Greenville, OH), March 18, 1915, Image 3, col. 6.
- "[Rockefeller Organizes and Finances His Own 'Labor Union'](#)" *Labor Advocate* (Cincinnati, OH), October 16, 1915, Image 2, col. 1-3.
- "[John D. Lives Like a Hermit](#)" *Jasper News* (Jasper, MO), October 14, 1920, Image 8, col. 1-3.