

Resources – Famous Hoosiers

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Born or Bred in Indiana

Yes, Letterman, Lincoln and Larry all hail from the Hoosier state. That's long-time late-night talk show host David Letterman, who grew up in Indianapolis, went to Broad Ripple High School and Ball State University before heading to the national airwaves. It's also Abraham Lincoln, who spent his boyhood days here – you can visit those sites in southern Indiana. And the current president of the Indiana Pacers, Larry Bird, first bounced the ball in his hometown of French Lick and then took Indiana State University to the NCAA National Championship in 1979.

So, do you know where “Hoosier” came from? For many decades the answer to this question has been up for debate. One explanation is maybe it was about dialect – “Who’s there?” (“Who’sh-‘ere?”). Another is maybe it was about corn – the Indian word for corn is Hoosa. But the most likely answer is that in the early 1800s a contractor by the name of Hoosier hired much of his workforce from Indiana, thus becoming known as “Hoosier’s men.”

Whatever the origin, Indiana is proud of these famous Hoosiers:



Johnny Appleseed
Fort Wayne
1774-1845

John Chapman was a colorful character of Indiana’s 1800s frontier. Born in Massachusetts, he became a national folk hero after he traveled the countryside on foot planting orchards in Indiana and surrounding areas so that the new frontier could have apples. A 1948 Disney cartoon immortalized his life with a depiction of him wearing a tin pot for a hat. The Fort Wayne Tin Caps baseball team is named in his honor. Celebrate at the annual Johnny Appleseed Festival in September and see his gravesite marker, a National Historic Landmark.



Joshua Bell
Bloomington
1967-

This world-renowned violinist came to national attention at the young age of 14 when he made his orchestral debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He then made his Carnegie Hall debut and recorded his first LP at age 18. As of 2012, he had recorded more than 36 CDs and won many awards including 2010 Instrumentalist of the Year by Musical America Bell and a Grammy Award. He has earned titles such as “classical music superstar” and “poet of the violin.” Bell was also one of the first classical artists to have a music video on VH1.



Larry Bird
West Baden Springs
1956-

Born in West Baden Springs, Larry Bird grew up in both West Baden and the adjoining town of French Lick. A strong basketball player, Bird enrolled at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Indiana, and led the Sycamores to the NCAA championship game in 1979. He went on to pursue a 13-year career in the NBA with the Boston Celtics. From 1997 to 2000, Bird served as the coach of the Indiana Pacers and in 2003 assumed the role of the Pacers' President of Basketball Operations.



Hoagy Carmichael
Bloomington
1899-1981

Born in Bloomington, Carmichael attended Indiana University and maintained a lifelong affiliation with Indiana University. In 1937 he wrote the song "Chimes of Indiana," which was presented to the school as a gift by the class of 1935. It was made Indiana University's official co-alma mater in 1978. Carmichael was a star performer on records, radio and stage with a signature style, and appeared in several movies, most memorably in *To Have and Have Not* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*. In 1951 he won an Oscar for "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening."



Jim Davis
Marion
1945-

Growing up with asthma when you live on a farm is tough. Stuck indoors, Jim was lucky his mom gave him a pencil and stack of paper when he was young. He continued drawing and went on to study at Ball State University in Muncie. He first worked for an advertising agency but pursued the cartoon venture, drawing on memories of the farm cats he knew growing up. Hence, Garfield was born! The strip made its first appearance in 1978 and is now in almost every newspaper in the world – more than 2,600 of them.



James Dean
Marion
1931-1955

Born in Marion, James Dean spent much of his adolescent life with his aunt and uncle in Fairmount, Indiana. After graduating from Fairmount High School, he went on to study drama at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is most famous for his role as Jim Stark in the film *Rebel Without a Cause*, which many consider to be the first film to seriously address the phenomena of teen angst.



Eugene V. Debs
Terre Haute
1855-1926

Debs was a political activist, union leader and advocate of social justice in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Eventually he aligned with the American Socialist Party and ran as that party's Presidential candidate five times. He held memberships and official positions in two labor unions: the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and the American Railway Union. He later helped found the Industrial Workers of the World, promoting workers' right to organize unions and to strike for better working conditions. A humanitarian, he also fought for the rights of women, children and African Americans. You can tour the Debs home in Terre Haute.



Theodore Dreiser
Terre Haute
1871-1945

The ninth of 10 children of German immigrants, Theodore Dreiser grew up in poverty, spent a year at Indiana University and became a newspaper reporter. His first novel, *Sister Carrie*, was published in 1900, followed by several others. His first commercially successful novel was *An American Tragedy*, published in 1925. The novel's highly critical view of the American legal system made him the adopted champion of social reformers. In addition to eight books, Dreiser's other works included short stories, plays and essays.



Bill Gaither
Alexandria
1942-

Bill Gaither and his wife, Gloria, have written more than 700 songs, produced hundreds of recordings, won numerous awards, written a dozen musicals and a collection of books. He formed his first gospel group, The Bill Gaither Trio, in 1956. After a stint as a teacher, he was married and began collaborating with Gloria on time-honored songs including "Because He Lives," "He Touched Me" and "There's Something About That Name." Collectively they have won eight Grammy Awards, more than two dozen Dove Awards and have earned the title of Gospel Music Association's "Songwriter of the Year" eight times. You can visit the Gaithers' recording studio in Alexandria.



Virgil Ivan "Gus" Grissom
Mitchell
1926-1967

Born in Mitchell, Grissom received a mechanical engineering B.S. from Purdue University in 1950 and then enlisted in the United States Air Force. Grissom was the second American in space as one of the original NASA Project Mercury astronauts. In 1967, Grissom was killed during an Apollo 1 mission pre-launch test at the Kennedy Space Center. The Grissom Memorial at Spring Mill State Park honors Grissom's work in space exploration.



George D. Hay
Attica
1895-1968

George Dewey Hay was the founder of WSM's Grand Ole Opry, playing a vital role in the promotion of country music. With a background as a newspaper columnist and late-night radio announcer, Hay found he had a natural flair for the radio business, bringing a sense of showmanship and style to it that others had not. In 1924 he won the Radio Digest poll as America's most popular announcer. He had an idea to create a barn dance on the radio, and that's what eventually became the Grand Ole Opry. Hay is rightfully included in the Country Music Hall of Fame, and others are thrilled when they are inducted into the George D. Hay Music Hall of Fame.



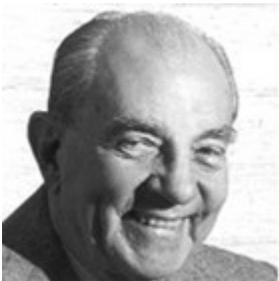
Florence Henderson
Dale
1934-

Born in Dale, Florence Henderson was one of 10 children and the daughter of a tobacco farmer. She is an actress and singer best known for her role as Carol Brady in the television program *The Brady Bunch*.



Tony Hinkle
Logansport
1899-1992

The legendary Hinkle Fieldhouse at Butler University pays tribute to this great coach, teacher and athletic administrator. He began his almost-50-year career as Butler's football, basketball and baseball coach, but was best known for basketball. His career record at Butler was 560-392, proving the worth of the "Hinkle System," a disciplined offensive strategy focusing on motion, passing, picks and screens. Hinkle Fieldhouse was featured in the revered movie, *Hoosiers*. Hinkle invented the orange basketball and was inducted into both the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame.



Mark C. Honeywell
Wabash
1874-1964

Born in Wabash on Dec. 29, 1874, Mark C. Honeywell attended Eastman Business College in New York – where he graduated in 1891. As a young engineer, Honeywell developed a water heating system and formed Honeywell Heating Specialties Co. based in Wabash and began making thermostats in 1906. Honeywell later merged his company with Minneapolis Heat Regulator Co. in 1927 to form Minneapolis Honeywell Regulator Company with Mark Honeywell as its president. The company eventually dropped the word "Minneapolis" and became known as Honeywell, Inc. Today, Honeywell Inc. is a Fortune 500, multi-national company based in New Jersey.



Michael Jackson
Gary
1958-2009

“The King of Pop” hailed from Indiana, starting his career with his brothers as The Jackson Five. Five of his solo albums are still among the top sellers of all time, including “Thriller,” the largest-selling album worldwide. Famous for the moonwalk and groundbreaking videos for “Billie Jean,” “Beat It,” and “Thriller,” Jackson revolutionized the music industry in the early 1980s. His sound, style and dance moves continue to inspire pop, soul, R&B and hip-hop artists. He won 13 Grammy Awards and received the American Music Award’s Artist of the Century Award.



The Jackson 5
Gary

The Jackson Five was an American popular music quintet from Gary. The group, fully active from 1966 to 1990, regularly played from a repertoire of R&B, soul, funk, and later disco. The Jackson Five was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997. The group is also notable for launching the careers of their lead singers: pop icons Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson and Jermaine Jackson.



David Letterman
Indianapolis
1947-

A graduate of Broad Ripple High School in Indianapolis and Ball State University in Muncie, David Letterman began his career in broadcasting in his hometown. He worked in radio as a talk-show host and also worked in television as an announcer and weekend weatherman. He now hosts The Late Show with David Letterman on CBS.



Colonel Eli Lilly
Indianapolis
1838-1898

The founder of the giant pharmaceutical company bearing his name, Eli Lilly was also a soldier and industrialist. He moved to Indiana with his family in 1852 when he was 14. Though he apprenticed as a printer, he became interested in chemicals at an early age when he visited an apothecary. He became a pharmacy apprentice in Lafayette, where he learned both how to mix chemicals as well as how to operate a business. He enrolled in Asbury University (now DePauw) to study pharmacology. Sometime after the Civil War, where he served in the Union Army, he began his manufacturing venture, with the first innovation being gelatin coating for pills and capsules. Sales of all the products expanded rapidly, and by the late 1890s the company was creating tens of millions of capsules and pills per year. Lilly retired a millionaire and was extremely involved in philanthropic endeavors.



Abraham Lincoln
Spencer County
1809-1865

Abraham Lincoln, America's 16th president, moved to Indiana at the age of 7 and spent 14 years in what is now Spencer County in southern Indiana. It was in Indiana that Abraham Lincoln formed his early ideas about character and honesty and developed a love of learning that stayed with him the rest of his life. This man of humble Hoosier heritage will long be remembered for his presidency and for his leadership in ending slavery in the United States.



Carole Lombard
Fort Wayne
1908-1942

Born Jane Alice Peters, Carole Lombard was a 5'2" beauty and a comedy hit in 1930s and 40s movies. She was spotted by a director playing baseball in the street when her mother had moved the family to L.A. and was cast as a tomboy at age 12 in the silent film, *A Perfect Crime*. She signed with Fox and had the lead in *Hearts and Spurs* in 1925. At the height of her career she commanded one of the top salaries in the business. She was married to her second husband, Clark Gable, when she was killed in a plane crash in 1942.



Shelley Long
Fort Wayne
1949-

Her role as Diane Chambers in the wildly popular 1980s sitcom, *Cheers*, earned Shelley Long an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series and two Golden Globe Awards for Best Actress. Her acting career began in Chicago when she was a member of the Second City troupe. She also wrote, produced and co-hosted a Chicago magazine program called "Sorting It Out." Her movie credits include *Irreconcilable Differences*, *The Money Pit* and *The Brady Bunch Movie*.



Jon McLaughlin
Anderson
1982-

Singer/songwriter Jon McLaughlin won a school competition at Anderson University, where he was studying piano, that allowed him to release his self-titled debut album in 2004. After another release, he auditioned for major labels, which led to the nationwide release of *Indiana* in 2007. His career got a boost later that year when his Oscar-nominated song, "So Close," was featured in the Disney film, *Enchanted*. Popular singles have included "Industry," "Beautiful Disaster," "Human," "Beating My Heart" and "Summer is Over" (featuring Sara Bareilles).



Steve McQueen
Beech Grove
1930-1980

Born in Beech Grove, he was the ultra-cool male film star of the 1960s, and rose from a troubled youth spent in reform schools to being the world's most popular actor. Over 25 years after his untimely death from cancer in 1980, Steve McQueen is still considered hip and cool, and he endures as an icon of popular culture.



John Mellencamp
Seymour
1951-

A native of Seymour, John Mellencamp is a seasoned musician and painter. Hits like "Crumblin Down," "The Authority Song," "Small Town," "Lonely Ol Night," "R.O.C.K. In The U.S.A." and "Cherry Bomb" remain popular today many years after their release in the 1980s. Over his multi-decade career he has won a Grammy Award, Billboard Century Award and the Woody Guthrie Award. He continues to call Indiana his home, currently residing in Bloomington. You may see the only public display of a private collection of his paintings at the Southern Indiana Center for the Arts in Seymour.



Wes Montgomery
Indianapolis
1923-1968

Wes Montgomery was born in Indianapolis to a musical family. Today he is often considered the greatest of modern jazz guitarists. While many jazz players are regarded as virtuosos, Montgomery was unique in his wide influence on other virtuosos who followed him, and in the respect he earned from his contemporaries. Montgomery's hometown of Indianapolis has named a park in his honor.



Jane Pauley
Indianapolis
1950-

Margaret Jane Pauley was born in Indianapolis and graduated from Indiana University in Bloomington, with a bachelor's degree in political science. At the age of 21, she worked as a daytime and weekend newscaster at WISH-TV in Indianapolis. Pauley has had continued success in broadcast media and is best known for her role as a morning correspondent on NBC's *Today Show* and *Dateline NBC*. Currently she hosts a monthly feature on the *Today Show* called *Your Life Calling*, a series produced by AARP.



Cole Porter
Peru
1891-1964

One of the greatest popular songwriters of the 20th century, Cole Porter wrote more than 800 songs. Dozens became standards, still being recorded today. *Anything Goes* is a good example of a Broadway show by Porter recently revived. Other hit musicals were *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Can-Can*; and *Fifty Million Frenchmen*.



Ernie Pyle
Dana
1900-1945

Pyle was born on a tenant farm near Dana and briefly attended Indiana University. He became an American journalist who wrote as a roving correspondent. His articles, about the out-of-the-way places he visited and the people who lived there, were told in a folksy style much like a personal letter to a friend. He enjoyed a loyal following in as many as 200 newspapers. Pyle won the Pulitzer Prize in 1944 for his wartime writings during World War II.



Dan Quayle
Indianapolis
1947-

Born in Indianapolis and raised in Huntington, Dan Quayle received his bachelor's degree in political science from DePauw University. He later became the youngest person ever elected to the U.S. Senate from the state of Indiana. Quayle went on to become the 44th vice president of the United States. In 1993 the Dan Quayle Center and Museum opened in Huntington. Today, it is known as the Quayle Vice Presidential Learning Center and teaches the history, responsibilities and contributions of the Office of the Vice President in government.



Orville Redenbacher
Brazil
1907-1995

Orville was born on a farm in Brazil and spent most of his life in the agriculture industry, serving as a Vigo County Farm Bureau Extension agent in Terre Haute and at Princeton Farms in Princeton. He perfected his popcorn hybrid in 1965 and to this day it is considered by some to be the best-selling brand of popcorn. He is still celebrated in his Indiana hometown with the annual Popcorn Festival of Clay County.



James Whitcomb Riley
Greenfield
1849-1916

James Whitcomb Riley was born in a log cabin in 1849 and grew up among simple-living, kind people. That upbringing was the source of inspiration for many of his famous poems such as “Raggedy Man” and “Orphant Annie.” He became known as The Hoosier Poet as well as America’s Children’s Poet. His poems were reproduced in beautifully illustrated books that became popular nationally and internationally, making him the wealthiest writer of his time.



Oscar Robertson
Indianapolis
1938-

This basketball superstar first learned to play basketball growing up extremely poor in a segregated housing project in Indianapolis. He played for Crispus Attucks High school, where he averaged 24 points per game and was named Indiana’s Mr. Basketball his senior year. He then played for the University of Cincinnati, followed by a 14-year NBA career where he became the top-scoring guard of all time. He paved the way for other African American players and was elected to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1980.



Axl Rose
Lafayette
1962-

Born William Bruce Rose, Jr., he changed his last name to Bailey after his father left and his mother remarried. Though he grew up active in the Pentecostal church, he began to get in trouble in high school before he dropped out and headed to L.A. to follow a guitarist friend, Jeff Isbell (now known as Izzy Stradlin). By then he was calling himself W. Axl Rose, and the band that became Guns N Roses was formed with him on vocals, Stradlin on rhythm guitar, Slash on lead guitar, Duff McKagan on bass and Steven Adler on drums.



David Lee Roth
Bloomington
1955-

Best known as the lead singer of the rock group Van Halen, David Lee Roth is also a songwriter, actor, author and former radio personality. He had moved to California by his late teens, where he was singing solo as well as with a group called the Red Ball Jets. Alex and Edward Van Halen had another group, and they invited Roth to sing with them. Soon Van Halen was formed. Their first album sold more than two million copies and was followed by five more successful albums over the next seven years.



Colonel Sanders
Henryville
1890-1980

Harland Sanders had many jobs during his life: farmhand, mule-tender, locomotive fireman, railroad worker, insurance sales, amateur obstetrician and even a gas station operator. Throughout it all, though, he enjoyed cooking and eventually became a restaurateur. At the age of 65, a new interstate highway took the traffic away from his restaurant. With his secret recipe of 11 herbs and spices in hand, he devoted himself to developing a chicken franchising business. In under 10 years, he had more than 600 KFC franchises in North America. The “colonel” title? That was bestowed upon him in 1935 by the Kentucky governor in recognition of his contributions to the state’s cuisine.



Chris Schenkel
Bippus
1923-2005

“It was Chris Schenkel who put ABC Sports on the map,” said a former ABC executive. Indeed, his versatility and genial style made him one of the most important sports broadcasters from the 1950s to 70s. His career began when he was the television voice of the Giants football team, and he went on to cover horse races, the Masters golf tournament, basketball and even bowling.



John Schnatter
Jeffersonville
1961-

“Papa John” began delivering pizza from his father’s co-owned tavern at the age of 22 after attending Ball State University. He then sold his 1971 Camaro Z28 to purchase the other half of the tavern. He is founder, CEO and spokesman for Papa John’s International, Inc., which has more than 3,400 restaurants in all 50 states and 30 countries.



Richard Bernard “Red” Skelton
Vincennes
1913-1997

Richard Bernard Skelton was born to humble circumstances in Vincennes but went on to become one of the best known comedian-entertainers of the 20th century. Early in his career, Red traveled and performed in a Vaudeville show across the nation and in Canada. In 1952 Skelton won an Emmy and tried to give it to Lucille Ball, his supporting actress. The Red Skelton Museum of American Comedy is located next to the Red Skelton Performing Arts Center at Vincennes University.



T.C. Steele
Owen County
1847-1926

A member of the noted "Hoosier Group" of American Impressionist painters, T.C. Steele was attracted to Brown County by the scenery he encountered while hiking in the area. The area now known as the T.C. Steele State Historic Site includes 211 acres of wooded hills and ravines that inspired the artist to paint some of his most famous works. As Indiana's premier portraitist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Steele also painted many of Indiana's "rich and famous." He became a nationally recognized painter in the 1890s.



Tony Stewart
Columbus
1971-

Stewart is a Columbus native who grew up with dreams of racing at Indianapolis. Stewart's racing career began at age seven behind the wheel of a go-kart, with his father, Nelson, serving as car owner and crew chief. He has won 12 championships in his career, including three times at the Sprint Cup Series, two times at the Allstate 400 at the Brickyard and six times at the NASCAR Nationwide Series race. Stewart is the first and only driver to win championships in stock cars, Indy cars and open-wheel Midget, Sprint and Silver Crown cars. Stewart still resides in Columbus as well as Mooresville, North Carolina.



Izzy Stradlin
Lafayette
1962-

Jeffrey Dean Isbell grew up in Lafayette in the 1960s and 70s. He loved listening to Alice Cooper, Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones, but his biggest influence was his grandmother, who was in a band. He switched from drums to guitar in high school, where he started playing in a band with his friend, William Bailey (see Axl Rose above). He headed to L.A. to join the music world, where he was eventually joined by Axl Rose, and they formed Guns N Roses.



Booth Tarkington
Indianapolis
1869-1946

Booth Tarkington was graduated from Princeton University in 1893 after also having attended Purdue University, and he went on to become one of the most popular American novelists of his time. *The Two Vanrevels* and *Mary's Neck* appeared on the annual bestseller lists nine times. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1919 for his novel *The Magnificent Ambersons* and then again in 1922 for *Alice Adams*. His novels explored middle-class America, romantic illusions and the power and corruption of wealth.



Kurt Vonnegut
Indianapolis
1922-2007

Vonnegut was one of the most influential writers in America in the 20th century. He blended satire, black comedy and science fiction into well-known works such as *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Cat's Cradle* and *Breakfast of Champions*. Prior to launching his writing career, Vonnegut served in the U.S. Army, where he was captured in Europe and held as a prisoner of war. Those experiences definitely influenced his writing. Vonnegut was known for a unique writing style, employing long sentences and little punctuation.



Madam C.J. Walker
Indianapolis
1867-1919

Though her life started rough as an orphan, Madam C.J. Walker went on to become the first self-made female millionaire after she cornered the market on African American women's hair care. In 1905 she invented a method for straightening her own kinky hair. At that time she moved from St. Louis to Denver, which was her home base as she traveled the country selling her products. She settled in Indianapolis in 1910, where she established the headquarters of Madam C.J. Walker Laboratories. "Walker Agents" were trained as sales beauticians at this manufacturing plant, and they promoted her products throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean.



General Lew Wallace
Brookville
1827-1905

This Mexican War and Civil War soldier is best known for his great literary work, *Ben-Hur*, one of the most popular novels of the 19th century which was made into a movie starring Charlton Heston in 1959. He also wrote poetry and a play, but his reputation lies upon *Ben-Hur* and two other historical novels: *The Fair God* and *The Prince of India*. You may visit his Crawfordsville home where he wrote *Ben-Hur*.



Robert Wise
Winchester
1914-2005

When his family couldn't afford his second year at Franklin College, Robert Wise left for Hollywood to find work. During his long career, he was a film director, producer and editor. Wise won four Academy Awards, including Best Director and Best Picture for *West Side Story* (1961) and *The Sound of Music* (1965). He worked on many films from 1934-2000. Wise was born in Winchester and then moved to Connersville, where he went to high school.



John Wooden
Centerville
1910-2010

John Wooden was one of the most revered basketball coaches of all time, after he took the UCLA Bruins from being one of the weakest teams in the Pacific Conference to winning the conference multiple times, and then going on to win the NCAA championship in both 1964 and 1965. Wooden played college ball for Purdue University, then went on to teach and coach at the high school level followed by a stint at Indiana State Teachers' College (now Indiana State University). The basketball court there is named in his and his wife's honor.



Fuzzy Zoeller
New Albany
1951-

Frank Urban (Fuzzy) Zoeller won 10 tournaments on the PGA Tour, including The Masters and the U.S. Open. Zoeller is one of only three golfers to have won The Masters in his first appearance. He is known for talking with the galleries and kidding his competitors. He's still active on the Champions Tour and is involved in charity work, corporate golf outings and golf course design. In fact, Fuzzy's Charity for Kids has raised more than \$2 million to aid children in Indiana and Kentucky.