

Major milestones in Mickey Mouse history

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It is almost certain that one name will get votes in the 2008 presidential election. Of course, that would be Mickey Mouse.

Mickey was created in February 1928, by 26-year-old Walt Disney. He was returning to Hollywood from New York, where he had met with distributor Charles Mintz about his successful Oswald the Rabbit cartoon series.

While there are many stories about how Mickey began, the most common one is that Disney knew he needed a new character, and thought of the mice running around his studio.

At first Disney thought of the name Mortimer Mouse, but his wife Lilly preferred Mickey instead. Disney and his key animator, Ub Iwerks, designed the character to take the shape of the Mickey we know today. Mickey's birthday is celebrated as Nov. 18, 1928, when he made his first appearance in the short cartoon "Steamboat Willie," the first sound cartoon shown in theaters. It featured the voice of Mickey, his friend Minnie, and a parrot. But Mickey and Minnie actually debuted earlier that year in the cartoon "Plane Crazy."

In that cartoon Mickey was trying to be another Charles Lindbergh, and eventually Minnie parachuted out of the plane as Mickey lost control. The cartoon portrayed him as being somewhat mischievous yet romantic, characteristics that have stuck with him.

Mickey's fame began to mushroom in the 1930s. He first appeared in comic book form, with "Mickey Mouse in Death Valley," and "Mr. Slicker and the Egg Robbers" in 1930. In 1935 Mickey made his first color film appearance in "The Band Concert."



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From plush figures to watches, Mickey Mouse collectibles have been popular for more than 75 years.

In 1929 Disney created the original Mickey Mouse Club, which later served as the basis for the popular 1950s TV show. On Nov. 18, 1978, in honor of Mickey's 50th anniversary, he became the first cartoon character to have his own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He was also the Grand Marshal of the Tournament of Roses Parade in 2005.

In recent years, Mickey has also starred in computer and video games, including Nintendo's "Mickey Mousecapade," Super Nintendo's "Disney's Magical Quest," and the Game Boy "Mickey Mouse: Magic Wands."

For trivia buffs, a few facts may surprise you. In 1957, Walt Disney was presented with the 25th million Mickey Mouse watch. During 1967-1970 sales of the watches tripled because of their popularity among teens and hippies poking fun at the establishment. In World War II, Mickey Mouse was the code name for Allied troops.

Due to his enormous popularity, Mickey Mouse memorabilia appeals to all ages and pocketbooks. Recent sales of Mickey Mouse items include:

- Mickey Mouse 1960s phonograph, \$76
- Coca-Cola Tin Tray, celebrating Mickey's 75th anniversary, \$10
- Mickey Mouse illustration from Disney Studio, \$660
- Walt Disney signed drawing of Mickey Mouse, \$561
- Mickey Mouse thimble set, \$131
- Mickey Mouse toothbrush holder from the 1930s, \$96
- Figural phone from the 1970s, \$120; a napkin ring, \$132
- Tin sand pail, \$98.

A major reference guide on the subject is "Disneyana" by Robert Heide and John Gilman. The book is full of illustrations and gives you a good idea on how widespread Mickey Mouse collectibles can range.