

The life of andrew carnegie

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A man of Scotland, a distinguished citizen of the United States, and a philanthropist devoted to the betterment of the world around him, Andrew Carnegie became famous at the turn of the twentieth century and became a real life rags to riches story. Born in Dunfermline, Scotland, on November 25, 1835, Andrew Carnegie entered the world in poverty. The son of a hand weaver, Carnegie received his only formal education during the short time between his birth and his move to the United States.

When steam machinery for weaving came into use, Carnegie's father sold his looms and household goods, sailing to America with his wife and two sons. At this time, Andrew was twelve, and his brother, Thomas, was five. Arriving into New York on August 14, 1848, aboard the *Wiscasset* from Glasgow, the Carnegies wasted little time settling in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh, where relatives already existed and were there to provide help. Allegheny City provided Carnegie's first job, as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory, working for \$1.20 a week.

His father also worked there while his mother bound shoes at home, making a miniscule amount of money. Although the Carnegies lacked in money, they abounded in ideals and training for their children. At age 15, Carnegie became a telegraph messenger boy in Pittsburgh. He learned to send and decipher telegraphic messages and became a telegraph operator at the age of 17. Carnegie's next job was as a railroad clerk, working for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He worked his way up the ladder, through his dedication and honest desire to succeed, to become train dispatcher and then division manager.

At this time, young Carnegie, age 24, had already made some small investments that laid the foundations of his what would be tremendous fortune. One of these investments was the purchase of stock in the Woodruff Sleeping Car Company. In 1864, Carnegie entered the iron business, but did not begin to make steel until years later. In 1873, he built the Edgar Thomson works in Braddock, Pennsylvania, to make Bessemer steel. He established many other steel plants, and in 1892, he merged all of his interests into the Carnegie Steel Company.

This act from Carnegie is fitting with one of his most famous quotations, "Put all of your eggs in one basket, and then watch that basket." This firm became one of the greatest industrial enterprises in America. Carnegie later sold it to J. P. Morgan's United States Steel Corporation in 1901 for \$400 million, which would be a little over \$4 billion today! After retiring, Carnegie's fortune was estimated to be as large as half a billion dollars. From that time on, with the philosophy that the rich have a moral obligation to give away their money, he devoted himself to philanthropy.

Although ironic, this man of great fortune strongly believed in the merits of poverty for the development of character and work ethic, and determined that wealthy men should not leave their fortunes to their children, but should give it away, claiming "The man who dies thus rich, dies disgraced." The picture of community service, Carnegie is quoted as saying, "Pittsburgh entered the core of my heart when I was a boy, and cannot be torn out. I can never be one hair's breadth less loyal to her, or less anxious to help her in any way, than I have been since I could help anything."

My treasure is still with you, and how best to serve Pittsburgh is the question which occurs to me almost every day of my life." Colonel James Anderson, who Carnegie believes to be his childhood benefactor, established a public library in his hometown of Allegheny City. This library was the first opportunity for Carnegie to take advantage of free information, and he developed a vast interest for knowledge, checking out at least one book a week, and developing himself as a young boy.

With Colonel Anderson's generous contribution to his society molding Carnegie's childhood, and his beliefs on how large fortunes can be used for the betterment of society, it becomes obvious that Carnegie would focus particularly on promoting education, establishing 2,811 free libraries in all. Of these, 1,946 were located in the United States with at least one in every state except Rhode Island. Also, 660 were founded in Britain and Ireland, 156 in Canada, and a handful of libraries were also scattered in New Zealand, the West Indies, and even Fiji.

Carnegie's contributions gave existence to his dream of establishing chances of self-education in a time when public libraries were scarce. Not only did he give large amounts of money to libraries, but also to other philanthropic organizations, establishing some of his own. The Carnegie Corporation of New York was established for "the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding." The \$135 million donated by Carnegie was used in grants to colleges, universities, and other educational institutions.

Money also went to organizations that conduct basic research and experimental programs dealing with education and public affairs. The

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace was founded to promote international peace and understanding, conducting programs of research, discussion, publication, and education in the international affairs and United States foreign policy. Currently the program focuses on issues such as arms control, international law, and relations between the United States and foreign countries.

It publishes the quarterly journal, *Foreign Policy*, and has offices in New York City and Washington, D. C. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching promotes the dignity in the teaching profession and the cause of higher education. Chartered by Carnegie in 1905 with \$15 million, the foundation established the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association in 1918, and currently provides retirement pensions for teachers of colleges, technical schools, and universities in the United States and Canada. Their studies have had much influence on American higher education. Also benefiting from Carnegie's charity include various Carnegie museums of history, science, and art, Carnegie Hall in New York, and other public spirited organizations.

Before 1919, when Carnegie died, he had given away \$350,695,653, and at his death, the last \$30 million was likewise given away to foundations, charities, and pensioners. He left a mark on society not only through his enormous monetary provisions, but also with his own literature. Carnegie loved to promote his ideas and opinions in print, and has written many works outlining these philosophies, including *Triumphant Democracy* (1886), *The Gospel of Wealth* (1900), *The Empire of Business* (1902), *Problems of Today* (1908), and an *Autobiography* (1920) (Mitzen 182).

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Although Carnegie only stood somewhere between 5' 2" and 5' 6", he " had to be a great, tough, disciplined giant of a man. " His commitment to others is not only seen through his many munificent works, but in the way he lived, including his tombstone in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery of North Tarrytown, New York, where the epitaph reads, " Here lies a man who was able to surround himself with men far cleverer than himself. "