

## 13 Famous Columbia Alumni and How They Changed the World



1. Columbia sociologist and professor Robert King Merton developed the focus group, a model now widely used by marketers.

2. The New York City subway system, opened in 1904, was engineered by a Columbia graduate and future trustee, William Barclay Parsons.



*Rodgers and Hammerstein, pictured here with Irving Berlin, at the St. James Theatre in 1938.*

*Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

3. Iconic composers Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, who changed the face of American musical theatre with classics like *Oklahoma!*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music*, met and began their partnership at Columbia.

4. Legendary Hollywood screenwriter Howard Koch received a law degree from Columbia in 1923. He won the

Academy Award in 1943 for his script *Casablanca* which featured the iconic line, "Here's looking at you kid."

5. Scientist and Columbia faculty member Wallace Eckert is known for his calculations, which helped guide the Apollo mission to the moon. A crater on the moon is named in his honor.

6. Samuel Bard, one of the founding members of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (then Kings College) was George Washington's personal physician. Bard saved Washington's life in June of 1789 by surgically removing a malignant tumor from the president's thigh.

7. Edwin H. Armsrong, a Columbia engineering graduate from the class of 1913, invented the FM radio in 1933.

8. Thanks to Dr. William Halsted, who attended Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1877, surgeons now wear gloves during operations. He first requested gloves when one of his nurses (whom he later married) complained of a rash from the chemicals she was required to wash with.

9. Mythologist and Columbia College graduate Joseph Campbell (class of 1925) is credited as being the originator of the phrase “follow your bliss.”

10. Screenwriter and Columbia graduate Herman Mankiewicz co-authored the script for *Citizen Kane*.



*Mankiewicz (center), with Orson Welles and John Houseman while writing Citizen Kane.*

11. James T. Shotwell, a professor of History at Columbia for almost 50 years in the early 20th century, was present at the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1919 that ended the Great War and created the League of Nations.

12. Columbian and Biblical scholar Clement Clarke Moore is believed to have written the original version of *The Night Before Christmas*, first published in 1823.

13. It was Columbia faculty member, Thomas Hunt Morgan, whose studies on fruit flies laid the foundation for modern genetics. His work is featured in most introductory biology textbooks today.

### **EXTRA CREDIT: Did you know?**

- A total of four U.S. Presidents have been graduates of Columbia: Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Barack Obama.
- There are five Columbia alumni in the National Baseball Hall of Fame: Lou Gehrig, Eddie Collins of the Chicago White Sox, Sandy Koufax, pitcher John Montgomery Ward and sports reporter Leonard Koppett.

- The Beat Generation is said to have begun at Columbia University when students Allen Ginsburg, Lucien Carr, Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, John Clellon Holmes and Herbert Hunke met. Ginsburg and Carr met on their shared floor freshman year.
- Columbia University graduates have founded four major American publishing houses including Simon and Schuster, Harcourt, Inc., Random House, and Alfred A. Knopf publishers (now part of Random House).

Treasures of New York: Columbia University *premieres on WLIW Sunday, September 21 at 7 p.m., and on THIRTEEN Monday, September 22 at 9 p.m.*

