

PEOPLE WHO IMPACTED HISTORY: Noah Webster – Father of American Education & Scholarship

GOD'S PROVIDENCE	SPHERES OF INFLUENCE
<p>1. Webster's Family Heritage:</p> <p>A. Father – Noah, Sr. – descended from Puritan named John Webster (came to American in 1630s and followed Thomas Hooker to CT) who became governor of CT; he was rugged, Yankee farmer, served in French & Indian War; as a deacon in a Congregational Church, and as Justice of the Peace in West Hartford; intelligent & wise; his counsel was often sought in the community.</p> <p>B. Mother – Mercy Steele – great granddaughter of Gov. William Bradford of Plymouth Plantation; she was of great intelligence, gentle & loving in all her ways.</p> <p>C. Noah was fourth of five children who all lived long, productive lives. Born: October 16, 1758 on an 80-acre farm in West Hartford, CT</p> <p>D. Married <i>Rebecca Greenleaf</i>: witty, sensible, gay, & social woman at age of 30.</p> <p>E. Had seven living children (6 daughters and 1 son) whom he educated and continued a correspondence with all through life.</p> <p>F. He had many grandchildren, whom he loved.</p> <p>2. Providentially in Philadelphia during Constitutional Convention; his wisdom was sought often by the delegates.</p> <p>3. Converted at age of 49 and made a public confession in church in 1808 just prior to beginning his work on the <i>Dictionary</i>.</p> <p>Webster's Credo of Education – Laying cornerstone at Amherst college, 1820</p> <p>"The object of this institution . . . is one of the noblest which can occupy the attention and claim the contributions of the Christian republic. It is to second the efforts of the apostles themselves, in extending and establishing the Redeemer's empire – the empire of truth. It is to aid in the important work of raising the human race from ignorance and debasement; to enlighten their minds; to exalt their character; and to teach them the way to happiness and to glory. Too long have men been engaged in the barbarous works of multiplying the miseries of human life. Too long have their exertions and resources been devoted to war and plunder; to the destruction of lives and property; to the ravage of cities; to the unnatural, the monstrous employment of enslaving and degrading their own species. Blessed be our lot! We live to see a new era in the history of man – an era when reason and religion begin to resume their sway, and to impress the heavenly truth, that the appropriate business of men, is to imitate the Savior; to serve their God; and bless their fellow men."</p>	<p>1. Home, Family & Farm life in Connecticut:</p> <p>Lonely for children and provided long hours of work</p> <p>Noah expected to perform many tasks on the farm for his father who early trained him to severe and unremitting industry: early rising, strict temperance, vigorous exercise which all prolonged Noah's life</p> <p>Connecticut enjoyed more self-government than any other colony and its Constitution was a model for the U.S. Constitution;</p> <p>West Hartford – thrifty, industrious farming town</p> <p>Three influences in Connecticut that shaped thinking:</p> <p>a. Yankee philosophy of hard work</p> <p>b. Town Meeting form of civil government</p> <p>c. Congregational Church (State church) – Calvinism</p> <p>Blessing from his parents upon leaving for Yale:</p> <p>"We wish to have you serve your generation and do good in the world and be useful and may you so behave as to gain the esteem of all virtuous people that are acquainted with you; and gain a comfortable subsistence, but especially that you may so live as to obtain the favor of Almighty God and His grace in this world and a saving interest in the merits of Jesus Christ, without which no man can be happy."</p> <p>2. Church: His family attended the Congregational Church; active in music;</p> <p>father – deacon; as an adult he served in the church</p> <p>3. Education and Schooling:</p> <p>Connecticut had state law requiring elementary education 11 mo./yr. Noah attended when he wasn't needed on the farm</p> <p>Books: Psalter, KJV Bible, N.E. Primer; Christian Catechism</p> <p>Tutored for college entrance by Rev. Nathan Perkins for 2 years</p> <p>Entered Yale College at age of 15.</p> <p>Met G. Washington on campus.</p> <p>1778 – Graduated with B.A.</p> <p>Read Law with Olliver Ellsworth</p> <p>1781 – Admitted to the Bar</p> <p>1781 – received his M.A. Degree from Yale for his dissertation</p> <p>1822 – received LL.D. from Yale</p> <p>4. Friends and Associates – were all men of powerful intellect:</p> <p>Noah's Yale Graduating Class – Most Distinguished class until the Civil War: Joel Barlow – Poet; Alexander Wolcott & Abraham Bishop – Jefferson Compatriots; Zephaniah Swift – CT's greatest jurist; John Trumbull; Oliver Wolcott – Secretary of the Treasury; Uriah Tracy – U.S. Senator; Josiah Meigs – President of U. of Georgia</p> <p>Other Friends: George Washington; John Adams; John Jay; Timothy Puckering; Benjamin Franklin; James Madison, Benjamin Rush; Alexander Hamilton</p> <p>5. Noah's Hero: "the great genius – the immortal Newton"</p>

CHARACTER	CONTRIBUTIONS
<p>1. Physical Appearance: Tall and erect Slender, lithe, Yankee form Auburn hair; gray-blue eyes, square jaw Ruddy complexion Excellent health (but complained of ill health all his life)</p> <p>2. Internal Character: Lively disposition Sanguine temperament (warm, ardent, and confident) Energetic and enterprising Lover and defender of truth Honest Frank in his speech Generous with his time, counsel, and pen Thrifty with resources Bold, original thinker; candid mind Witty quick memory Eager love for learning, loved books Self-confident as a leader Polite – had a refinement of thought and feelings Thorough and precise Hard-working, diligent Self-reliant and persevering Patriotic and passionately interested in the welfare of our country Had no pride of opinion – was willing to change if incorrect Was <i>The Prompter</i> – sat behind the scenes to correct error and assist the memory</p> <p>3. Life Time Habits: Studied the Bible daily and prayed every morning after rising Maintained a daily schedule for writing, reading, and other tasks Set aside time each day to be with his family</p> <p>Maintained various jobs at the same time Performed original investigation and research Arranged all his acquired knowledge in a most exact order Kept a daily journal Preserved documents carefully, filed articles he read and wrote Marked all new words, corrected errors in margins of his books, kept references to corresponding passages in other works His method was his presiding principle of life His son-in-law, Chauncey Goodrich, said these qualities sustained Noah through difficulties that would have crushed other men's spirits.</p> <p>4. Quotes: “Education is useless without the Bible.” “An immense effect may be produced by small powers wisely and steadily directed.” “The basis of all excellence in writing and conversation is truth – truth is intellectual gold, which is as durable as it is splendid and valuable.” “In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children ought to be instructed.” “All government originates in families, and if neglected there, it will hardly exist in society . . . the foundation of all free government and social order must be laid in families and in the discipline of youth.”</p>	<p>1. Educator – America's Greatest Schoolmaster: Educated his own children Taught school while he studied law First teacher to develop a civics course Head, Episcopal School in Philadelphia Simplified spelling providing principles and pronunciation Taught millions of Americans to read Taught music</p> <p>2. Founder & President of Amherst College</p> <p>3. Lexicographer: Recognized the American language was different than England's language and wrote first American Dictionary Master of over 26 languages Made a profound study of philology and etymology of words Included over 70,000 words Took him nearly 20 years to complete (70 years old) Wrote Biblical definitions & exhortations Contained scientific terms – was more like an encyclopedia Changed and unified spelling Included 20,000 new words Reflected America's Christian philosophy of life & government</p> <p>4. Lawyer & Judge: Fought for and secured copyright laws in America Fought for uniform patent laws Active in anti-slavery movement Served as Judge in state court system Boston General Court member Representative from New Haven in State legislature</p> <p>5. Defender of the U.S. Constitution: Wrote “Sketches of American Policy” Proposed and fought for a U.S. Constitution Traveled around the new nation to promote the ratification</p> <p>6. Author, Editor, & Publisher: Wrote on a greater variety of topics than any other U.S. author Text books: “Blue-Backed Speller” – backbone of American Education (revealed the spirit of liberty and independence for it used a self-taught method); over 100 million published by 1910 – more than any other book in America) Readers – one contained geography & history of the United States Grammar Book Histories Catechism for U.S. Constitution Introduced Biology to Children Began a literary magazine (<i>American Magazine</i>) and <i>The Prompter</i> He translated the Bible</p> <p>7. Natural Scientist He compiled and wrote a <i>History of Epidemic Disease</i> which Johns Hopkins still uses today</p> <div> <p>BIBLIOGRAPHY</p> <p><i>American Dictionary of the English Language</i> (1828) by Noah Webster – added biography, “Noah Webster: Founding Father of American Education” by Rosalie J. Slater, F.A.C.E. 1967.</p> <p><i>The Life and Testimony of Noah Webster</i>, by Chauncey A. Goodrich, quoted in <i>Teaching and Learning America's Christian History</i>, Appendix, pp. 280–301.</p> <p><i>Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America</i>, by Harry R. Warfel, Macmillan Co, NY, 1936.</p> </div>