

Early American Industrialists

Co-Moderators – Edie Kirk and Janet Nichols

This seminar is about the rich – in fact, the extraordinarily rich – how they became rich, and how they administered and distributed their wealth during their life or following their death.

As a seminar participant, you will be asked to choose one person from thirty-four industrialists on the list below. Participants are expected to share a 30-minute talk/presentation, providing information about the person in a format most comfortable to the participant. Please focus your study not only on how the wealth was accumulated but also on whether the person “administered [any of his wealth] for the common good” and include this in your presentation. If you prefer to choose someone not included in the list provided, please check with the moderator, and ensure that his or her birth date is before 1850.

Phillip Danforth Amour b. 1832

John Jacob Astor b. 1763

George Fisher Baker b. 1840

John Insley Blair b. 1802

Andrew Carnegie b. 1835

Peter Cooper b. 1791

Ezra Cornell b. 1807

Charles Crocker b. 1822

Thomas Eddy b. 1758

Marshall Field b. 1834

Henry M. Flagler b. 1830

Benjamin Franklin b. 1705

Henry Frick b. 1849

Stephen Girard b. 1750

Edward Henry Harriman b. 1848

George Hearst b. 1820

James J. Hill b. 1838

Johns Hopkins b. 1795

Eli Lilly b. 1838

Cyrus McCormick b. 1809

J P Morgan b. 1837

George Peabody b. 1795

Henry Phipps b. 1839

Stephen Van Rensselaer b.1764

John D. Rockefeller b. 1839

Henry Huddleston Rogers b. 1840

Issac Merrit Singer b. 1811

Leland Stanford b. 1824

Alexander Turney Stewart b. 1803

William Thaw, Sr. b. 1818

Cornelius Vanderbilt b. 1794

William Weightman b. 1813

Frederick Weyerhaeuser b. 1834

Peter Widener b. 1834

Hopefully, you will enjoy learning about a few of the people who shaped America in their own lifetime, and through their philanthropy in the decades that followed.

There is no specific required reading for the seminar. Listed below are references that may be of interest.

E. H. Harriman, Railroad Tycoon, A Biography Michael Klepper and Robert Gunther. The Wealthy 100, From Benjamin Franklin to Bill Gates – A Ranking of the Richest Americans, Past and Present, Citadel Press 1996.

Joseph J. Thorndike, Jr. The Very Rich, A History of Wealth, American Heritage Books, New York 1976.

Vincent P. DeSantis. The Shaping of Modern America, 1877 – 1920, Third Edition. Harlan Davidson, Inc. Illinois, 1989.

Gustavus Myers. History of Great American Fortunes – Volume I, Chicago, 1910.

Robert Bremmer. American Philanthropy, Second Edition. The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

George Keenan. E. H. Harriman, Railroad Tycoon, Vol I. 1922. Independently Published.

Mark Twain, Charles Dudley Warner, Louis J. Budd. The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today (Xist Classics). Kindle Edition.

Virginia Cowles. The Astors, Sharpe Books, 2018.