



Uncle Sam

Every American has the same uncle—Uncle Sam. He has long white hair and whiskers. He wears a top hat, coat, vest, and striped pants. How did everybody get the same uncle?

In the early 1800s, there was a businessman in upstate New York. His name was Samuel Wilson. He was friendly, and people called him "Uncle Sam." Uncle Sam was in the meat business. He sold meat to the United States army. He always wrote "U.S." on his boxes of meat. What did "U.S." mean—Uncle Sam or United States?

American soldiers ate Uncle Sam's meat. They began to call the U.S. government "Uncle Sam." Soon, there were cartoons about Uncle Sam in the newspapers. His picture became popular. During World War I, there was a famous poster* with a picture of Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam pointed his finger and said, "I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY."

After this poster, everybody called the U.S. government "Uncle Sam." Some people didn't believe there really was an Uncle Sam Wilson. But in 1961, Congress said officially that the name "Uncle Sam" came from Samuel Wilson.