

The Walt Disney Family Museum Celebrates 100 Years of The Walt Disney Company

Never-before-seen treasures from the museum's collection and special programming will commemorate the 100th anniversary of The Walt Disney Company's founding;

The museum announces appointment of Walter E.D. Miller as President of the Board of Directors

San Francisco, October 19, 2023—To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of The Walt Disney Company, The Walt Disney Family Museum will be showcasing rare and unique objects from the museum's collection, which highlight important milestones in Walt's career and his Company's early history. These artifacts, which include recent acquisitions and fragile materials that have never been publicly displayed, will be on view for free in the museum's Awards Lobby and will rotate periodically from Thursday, October 19, 2023 and throughout the next year.

In July 1923, Walt Disney's initial foray into film production ended in disappointment with the collapse of the Laugh-O-gram Films studio. However, before the studio filed for bankruptcy, Walt, Ub Iwerks, and his team had been able to complete production of *Alice's Wonderland*—which would later become the pilot cartoon for the Alice Comedies series, combining a live-action young actress with animated backgrounds and characters. With the encouragement of his older brother Roy, and with the pilot reel in hand, Walt sold his film camera and put the money towards a one-way, first-class train ticket to Los Angeles, California. After arriving in "Hollywood", he set about finding a distributor for the Alice Comedies. Just a few months later, Walt and Roy went into business with M.J. Winkler Productions, the company of pioneering film producer Margaret J. Winkler, to develop a new series of short films featuring the live-action Alice and her adventures in the animated world of "Cartoonland". The contract with Winkler Productions marked the founding of the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, which we know today as The Walt Disney Company, on October 16, 1923.

Beginning Thursday, October 19, the first object the museum will place on temporary display is an original letter Walt penned to Mrs. T.J. Davis, dated October 16, 1923—the same day he and Roy signed the distribution contract with Winkler Productions. Davis was the mother of Virginia Davis, the first child actor to portray the titular character in the Alice Comedies series. In negotiating their agreement, Winkler specified that she wanted the same actress to portray Alice in subsequent installments of the Alice Comedies series. As a result, Walt implored Davis to allow her daughter to star in the series, praising Virginia's talent and vouching for Winkler's ability to promote the shorts. Virginia's parents soon agreed to move the family to California, and she became the Studio's highest-paid employee at the time. While a facsimile of this letter is exhibited in the museum's main galleries, the original document has previously never been on public view due to its highly fragile nature.

The Walt Disney Family Museum is also delighted to announce that Walter E.D. Miller—Walt's grandson, Ron Miller and Diane Disney Miller's son, and the museum's co-founder—was recently voted in as the new President of the Board of Directors. "I am honored to continue contributing to this inspirational space that my mother and I first envisioned so many years ago," says Walter Miller. "I personally feel that I owe my grandpa Walt so much, not only as a grandson who admires him, but mostly for what he gave to the world in his short life. I'm excited to embark on this new chapter in keeping his story alive." The position was previously held for four years by his sister, Tamara Miller, who will continue to serve as a member of the museum's Board.

Walter Miller is the Executive Producer of the film [Walt: The Man Behind the Myth](#) (2001), showcasing Walt's extraordinary life and career and offering an intimate look at a man whose legacy continues to inspire the world. He is also Executive Producer of *Walt & El Grupo* (2008), a film that explores Walt's 1941 goodwill and research tour to South America. The trip, which included several members of Walt's creative team, led to the production of

Latin American-themed animation features *Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1945), which were screened both domestically and internationally. Miller has also previously served as President of the Walt Disney Family Foundation.

To celebrate 100 years of The Walt Disney Company, the museum will also host a series of special public programming and members only events, beginning with “Growing up with the Sherman Brothers with Gregg and Jeff Sherman” on Saturday, November 4. Further talks and presentations, as well as ticketing information, will be announced in the coming months at waltdisney.org/calendar.

The museum continues to host *Disney Cats & Dogs*, a traveling exhibition originally presented in 2021 by the Walt Disney Animation Research Library, Walt Disney Archives, and Disney Japan at Matsuya Ginza—the historic department store in Tokyo—before traveling to additional destinations in Japan. In conjunction with this year’s celebration of The Walt Disney Company’s 100th anniversary, this unique and exciting exhibition is now on view for the first time in the United States in the museum’s Diane Disney Miller Exhibition Hall.

Due to its popularity, the museum recently announced that the run of *Disney Cats & Dogs* has been extended through Sunday, June 2, 2024.

ABOUT THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents the fascinating story and achievements of Walt Disney, the man who raised animation to the level of fine art, transformed the film industry, tirelessly pursued innovation, and created a global, yet distinctively American legacy. Opened in October 2009, the 40,000-square-foot facility features innovative technology alongside a vast collection of historic materials and artifacts that bring Disney’s achievements to life. Early drawings and animation, movies, music, listening stations, a spectacular model of Disneyland, and much more are presented in a myriad of interactive galleries. The museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in the scenic Presidio of San Francisco.

- Hours:** Open Thursday through Sunday: 10am to 5:30pm, last Main Museum entry at 4:30pm and last special exhibition entry at 4pm. Closed Monday through Wednesday and the following public holidays: January 1, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25.
- Where:** The Presidio of San Francisco, 104 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, CA 94129
- Tickets:** Main Museum ticket: \$25 adults; \$20 seniors & students; \$15 youth.
Disney Cats & Dogs special exhibition with Main Museum ticket: \$5 add-on for all.
Disney Cats & Dogs special exhibition stand-alone ticket: \$15 adults; \$10 seniors, students & youth.
 Museum admission and special exhibition admission is free for members, children under 5, and active and retired military personnel, as well as their spouses/dependents with valid ID.
- Contact:** 415.345.6800 | waltdisney.org
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