



Uncle Sam, National Icon

- **Born:** c. 1812
- **Birthplace:** United States
- **Best Known As:** Cartoon symbol of the United States

Uncle Sam is the cartoon embodiment of the government of the United States of America, a character who appeared in newspapers and magazines beginning in the first part of the 19th century. The commonly accepted version of his origin, or at least the best explanation anyone's been able to supply, is that he was modeled after Samuel Wilson, a meat purveyor to the United States army during the War of 1812. Known as "Uncle Sam," Wilson put his initials on his goods. The initials U.S. were also taken to stand for United States. Over the years Uncle Sam evolved into a tall, white-haired man with beard, sporting patriotic colors and a top hat. The most common modern image can be traced to his depiction by James Montgomery Flagg from 1916, for a military recruitment poster calling "I Want YOU For the U.S. Army."