

Top 10 Greatest Frauds in History

By Peter Baxter (<https://historycollection.co/top-10-greatest-frauds-in-history/>)

Fraud, embezzlement, con-artists, there is nothing new about any of them. In 193 AD, the Roman Empire was sold to the highest bidder by the Praetorian Guard, and the ill-fated Emperor Didius Julianus enjoyed its ownership for a blissful nine weeks, before the fraud fell apart and he went the way of a great many Roman emperors. Fraud has not always been perpetrated for financial gain. Everything from geographic discovery to educational attainment, from religious belief to political power has at one time or another been the subject of deception or manipulation.



Victor Lustig, Charles Ponzi and Frederick Cook, Great Frauds and Possible Frauds. World Finance/Wikicommons/Mark Horrill

Fraud, of course, depends in large part on the credulity of the victim, or victims, but it also demands much skill and virtuosity on the part of the fraudster. That is probably why everybody loves a tale of a well executed, elegantly conceived scam, assuming, of course, that the victim is someone else, and in particular someone deserving of ignominy of being duped. Here is a list of some of the most creative, brazen and successful fraudsters, con artists and scam merchants in history, and some of their more imaginative escapades. We are quite sure that there are many others worth mentioning, but these are the Top Ten.



Sir Isaac Newton, Warden of the Royal Mint. Daily Mirror

William Chaloner

William Chaloner is probably better known for who finally caught him than the frauds he perpetrated. Forgery was his game, and the great Isaac Newton his nemesis.

The story begins in the 1650s, with the birth to an impoverished Warwickshire weaver of a son. The child grew into a willful youth with dishonest tendencies, prompting his despairing father to apprentice him to a Birmingham nail maker.

Birmingham at the time was the center of a thriving, and illegal cottage industry in the counterfeiting of 'groats', an ancient silver-based coin valued at four old pence. The

counterfeit version was heavily adulterated with iron, and usually it entered circulation without raising too many eyebrows. Counterfeiting was a risky business, however, with punishments ranging from hanging to burning at the stake, and graduating from forging the humble groat to the more lucrative, and dangerous French *Pistoles* and English gilded guineas took daring, and considerable skill.

By then William Chaloner was working in the thriving counterfeit industry of London, and growing wealthy at it. In the 1670s he purchased a large country estate, moving his minting process out of earshot of the law. The main risk was in the passing of fake coins into circulation, and for this he hired middlemen, who were not infrequently caught and hanged. The fact that Chaloner himself remained one step ahead of the law is fair testimony to what a slippery character he was.

Then, in 1696, the great English physicist, Sir Isaac Newton, after a long and spectacularly successful career, accepted the position of Warden of the Royal Mint. English currency was moving towards notes and paper money, and needless to say, William Chaloner wasted no time in applying his skills to this. He had numerous narrow escapes, but avoided punishment simply because the development of paper money was in advance of any laws procreated to outlaw its forgery. He was, however, now firmly in the crosshairs of the establishment, and leading that establishment was Sir Isaac himself.

What followed was a carefully stage-managed cat-and-mouse game between two highly intelligent men. Chaloner, however, had left behind him a long paper trail of arrests and indictments, all of which he had slipped through or wriggled out of, but which collectively painted a picture of a long career outside the law. Unfortunately also, the canny forger had paid for his freedom many times by selling-out fellow counterfeiters, and among those that had escaped the gallows, Sir Isaac was able to gather together many prepared to point the finger.

William Chaloner was arrested and brought to trial, facing the testimony of old enemies, and the widows of many others who had swung. Newton presided over the hearings, and the

notorious hanging judge Sir Salathiel Lovel brought the hammer down on a guilty verdict, and a sentence of death.

Feigning madness, wheedling and conniving, attempting blackmail and simple pleas for forgiveness, William Chaloner was marched to the gallows March 22nd 1699, and thus the long and lucrative career of a master forger thus came to an end.



Gregor MacGregor, the King of Conmen. Carlos Felice

Gregor MacGregor

This little-known trickster is often regarded as the 'King of Conmen', the creator of a bogus nation, and he really is deserving of more notoriety than history has given him.

The essence of an excellent fraud is to make people believe in something that does not exist. The Nazi propaganda machine relied on the principle that the bigger the lie the more likely it is to be believed. Gregor MacGregor did not think small, and his scam is probably justly regarded as the greatest confidence trick of all time.

He was born on Christmas Eve of 1786 at the ancestral home of Clan MacGregor on the north shore of Loch Katrine. After a career in the British army, MacGregor made his way to South America to fight as a soldier of fortune in the Venezuelan War of Independence. He married Simón Bolívar's cousin, and led a number of freebooting military campaigns to the

Caribbean. While accumulating a rich stock of adventures, wealth seemed always to elude him, until one day he alighted upon a simple but brazen scheme. In 1820, he persuaded an indigenous king, George Frederic Augustus, to grant him title to 8 million acres of the Mosquito Coast, a vast tract of virgin jungle, and upon the basis of this he invented and entirely fictitious country.

In Mid-1921, McGregor was back in England, presenting himself in British society as the *Cazique* of Poyais, a princely title of a non-existent country which he portrayed as prosperous, heavily endowed with natural resources and begging for foreign investment. The native 'Poyers', he said, were a friendly and hardworking people, and the capital St Joseph a picturesque European settlement, with well-appointed civic buildings and an opera house. A deep water port offered easy access, and a pleasant climate negated the usual tropical diseases. Poyais was nothing less than a paradise on earth awaiting just the administrations of British capital.

All of this was brought to attention of a cash-flush English public through a finely crafted publicity campaign using guidebooks, testimonials, lavish illustrations, coats-of-arms, currency and flags. A great deal of fine salesmanship on the part of 'His Highness Gregor' did the rest. Prospective settlers purchased plots of 100 acres of pristine farmland for £11, while military men purchased commissions in the Poyais army for considerably more. Concessions to open banks and business were sold, and prospective civil servants offered comfortable contracts for the settlement of a small fee.

How much Gregor McGregor netted from this scam is usually put at about £200,000, which in the 1820s was utterly phenomenal. Various other bond market scams ran to about £1.3 million, which would probably be in the region of £3.6 billion today.

Needless to say, when the first boatload of settlers arrived in Poyais, they found a disease infested wilderness, and, of course, the *Cazique* slipped away and settled for a time in Paris. He died in Venezuela in 1845, astronomically wealthy, and never convicted of any crime.



The only known portrait of confidence trickster Jeanne de Valois-Saint-Rémy. Wikicommons

Jeanne de Valois-Saint-Rémy

The 1785 *Affair of the Diamond Necklace* is one of the most deliciously audacious scams in history, with the monumental conclusion that it collapsed the French monarchy and brought the guillotine down on the head of Marie Antoinette.

The story begins with a desperate French Cardinal Louis René Édouard de Rohan, a handsome but rather irresponsible head of the French Church, who had, through various social and political mishaps, smudged his card with the French monarchy. It was customary in those days for senior church figures to take up high political office, but Rohan's poor relations with the French Crown seemed likely to frustrate this.

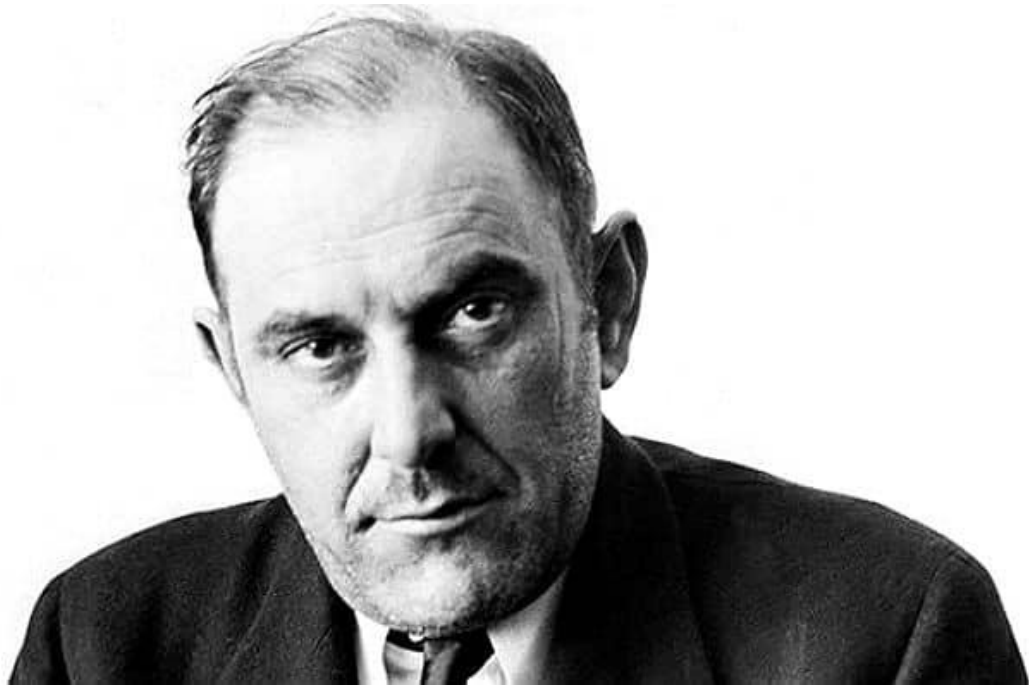
Then, in 1785, Rohan acquired as his mistress Jeanne de Valois-Saint-Rémy, a member of the illegitimate branch of the royal Valois family, better known simply as Jeanne de la Motte. The pillow talk between these two presumably touched on Rohan's frustrated ambitions, and the resourceful Jeanne devised a scheme. She claimed to be a close friend and confidante of Marie Antoinette, and promised Rohan that she would intervene on his behalf. What followed then was a long correspondence ostensibly between Rohan and the Queen. Marie Antoinette forgave Rohan his transgressions, promised his rehabilitation in court and even hinted the possibility of a love affair.

The letters, of course, were the creation of Jeanne de la Motte and her husband, but Rohan was completely taken in. When he insisted on a meeting with the Queen, Jeanne secreted him into the gardens of the Versailles, and paired him up with a prostitute who looked somewhat like Marie Antoinette.

The payoff, however, was more subtle. King Louis XV of France, wishing to impress his mistress, ordered the royal jewellers, Boehmer and Bassenge, to create a diamond necklace of astronomical worth, which he died before he could take delivery of. Stuck with this white elephant of a piece, which only royalty could afford, the jewelers offered to Marie Antoinette, but she, perhaps aware of the tenor of the times, thought better of it.

Enter once again Jeanne de la Motte. If Rohan believed she was a close friend of the Queen, the jewellers were anxious to believe the same. They approached her to use her undeniable influence to persuade the Queen to buy the necklace before they were bankrupted. Jeanne immediately approached the love-struck Rohan, who, after his encounter with a prostitute in the gardens of Versailles, believed the Queen was in love with him. With majestic skill, he was manipulated into buying the piece on the Queen's behalf, which he did, handing it then to Jeanne to deliver, and needless to say it was never seen again.

Marie Antoinette, wholly innocent of any crime, was deeply discredited, adding to the momentum of revolution, while Rohan and Jeanne were arrested and tried. Rohan escaped, thanks to his office, although much lighter in purse. Jeanne was sentenced to life imprisonment with flogging and branding. What happened to the necklace, of course, will never be known.



Victor Lustig, the smoothest conman in history. Molly Winans

Victor Lustig

Victor Lustig was the *'The Man Who Sold the Eiffel Tower'*, also known as the smoothest conman that ever lived. The first time he sold the Eiffel Tower – he tried it twice – was in 1925, but that was not by any means his most elegant or lucrative scam. Lustig was to the con game what Michelangelo was to art. His main business was counterfeiting, and it was counterfeiting that brought him down, but it was the Eiffel Tower that made him famous. By 1925, France was recovered from WWI, and like the rest of industrialized world, Paris was booming. Lustig, an Austro-Hungarian, read one morning in the newspaper that the city authorities were concerned at the cost of upkeep of the Eiffel Tower, which gave him an idea. Posing as a government minister, he approached six wealthy French scrap metal dealers, inviting tenders from each to dismantle and carry away the Tower. It had never, in fact, been intended to be a permanent fixture on the Paris skyline. A meeting was held, a limousine hired and a tour of the Tower undertaken. Lustig pulled off a masterful performance, and by evening his marks had their hands halfway in their pockets. Just one suspicious wife threatened to upset the entire deal. Why, she asked, was it all so secretive? Lustig took her aside. Yes indeed, he confessed, he was a corrupt official. The deal was under the table, and naturally it had to proceed in

secrecy. Now this was something that she and everyone else could understand. Corruption was rife in France, and a bent civil servant was easier to swallow than an honest one. Money changed hands, and before long Lustig was on board a train to Vienna with a suitcase full of cash.

A few month later, Lustig crept back into Paris, and was surprised and gratified to discover that the mark, a dealer by the name of Andre Poisson, was so humiliated at being taken so easily that he made no official complaint. Lustig gathered up his counterfeit documents and approached a new set of scrap dealers, but this time the ruse reached the ears of the police, and the effort was foiled. Lustig shrugged his shoulders, slipped easily through the net and resumed his career as a conman.

The year 1935 found him in the United States, and there he was finally arrested. On his person, authorities found a key which they traced to a locker at the Times Square subway station. Inside the locker they found \$51,000 in counterfeit bills and the plates from which they had been printed. The game was up.

Lustig was locked up, but escaped the day before his trial. His life on the lam was brief, however, and he was re-detained and tried, and sentenced to twenty years in Alcatraz. He served twelve years before dying of pneumonia on 9 March 1947. Thus passed one of the most accomplished and successful conmen of the age.



George C Parker, the conman who sold the Brooklyn Bridge. News Geeks

George C Parker

Selling the Eiffel tower certainly marked a high-water-mark in the world of confidence tricksters, but selling Brooklyn Bridge twice a week for thirty years trumps that in sheer audacity.

New York in the 1880s was a melting pot of immigrants arriving in the New World from all corners of the globe. Most came in impoverished, but there were some who arrived with investment capital, eager to exploit on the American dream. A hapless newcomer might notice as he looked around the city a 'For Sale' signed pinned to a pillar of the majestic, recently completed Brooklyn Bridge.

Likely then he would have been approached by a well-dressed man wearing a bow tie and a flat cap who would introduce himself as the owner of the bridge, and in casual conversation, reveal that he, George C Parker, proposed to erect a toll booth on the bridge, from which he anticipated accruing a fortune. He also happened to be searching for a reliable person to work in the booth, and since the 'mark' was new to New York, Parker would, of course, be happy to offer him the job.

Then it would follow that the Bridge was in fact for sale, hence the 'For Sale' signs pinned against the brickwork, and if our credulous immigrant really wanted to make a fortune, he could purchase the bridge for a very reasonable sum and erect a toll booth himself.

How many times this ruse worked is anybody's guess, but the George C Parker myth will have it that Parker sold the bridge twice a week for thirty years. Prices paid vary from \$50 to \$50,000, depending on who. Once an agreement was struck, the mark would be guided to an official looking office, presented with very authentic looking paperwork, after which the money would change hands and Parker would never be seen again.

On days that business selling the bridge was quiet, Parker busied himself selling other major New York landmarks, at various time disposing of the original Madison Square Gardens, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Grant's Tomb and the Statue of Liberty.

He operated successfully for over forty years, before, on December 17, 1928, he was finally tried and convicted of three counts of fraud. His crimes earned him a mandatory life sentence in New York's notorious Sing Sing Prison.

Life, however, proved to be just eight years, and George C Parker died behind bars in 1936. His legend, however, lives on in the popular idiom, *'if you'll believe that, then I have a bridge to sell you!'*



Piltdown Man, the creation of fraudster Charles Dawson. Skepticism

Charles Dawson

Charles Dawson was the resourceful amateur archaeologist responsible for the discovery of legendary 'Piltdown Man'. This tale proves that not all swindles and scams are perpetrated in the interest of cash, and that fame, notoriety or professional credibility can be equally powerful motivators.

Charles Dawson as a lawyer and an enthusiastic member of the amateur archaeological pack in England at the turn of the 20th century. On December 18, 1912, he presented a finding to the Royal Geological Society of London that would turn the academic world upside down. In a gravel pit in southeast England, Dawson unearthed fragments of a cranium and jawbone, which he claimed represented a previously unknown species of extinct hominoid, *Eoanthropus dawsoni*.

The artefacts were duly presented to the palaeontology department of the British Museum, and after exhaustive testing and examination, *Eoanthropus* was accordingly accepted as providing that elusive bridge between man and ape, known then as the 'Missing Link.' The archaeological establishment fell into line, and Piltdown man entered the scientific record as precisely what its discover claimed it to be.

Over the next couple of years Dawson discovered numerous other tools and artefacts that he claimed were part of the same complex, all recognized and accepted by the establishment. As long as Piltdown man was acknowledged, parallel discoveries in Africa, centering around *Homo Erectus*, could not gain academic traction. The Piltdown theory, however, remained sacrosanct until, in 1926, a study of the gravel pits themselves revealed geology much less ancient than previously thought. Ongoing archaeological research was finding more ancient hominoids, and soon Piltdown man was sufficiently isolated in the archaeological record that a more detailed investigation of the relics began.

In the end, Piltdown man proved to have the jawbone and teeth of an Orangutan and a chimpanzee, all touched up and aged with an iron sulphate acid solution. The teeth too had been modified to mimic the human mode of flat wear. Charles Dawson, fortunately, was long dead by then, and he escaped the professional and personal ridicule that would certainly have followed. The only question that remained was who forged the relics. This remained a mystery for very long time, with numerous possible culprits cited. In 2009, however, scientists at John Moores University in Liverpool began to investigate. DNA sequencing not only confirmed the teeth and jaw as orangutan, but also the same orangutan.

While it was always believed that someone other than Charles Dawson produced the artwork, in the end, the weight of evidence points to him. He made no money out of it, but for the remainder of his life he enjoyed and confidence and society of the greatest archaeologists in Britain, and that was what it was about for him.



Charles ponzi, creator of the most famous scheme of all time. Wikicommons

Charles Ponzi

One of the most notorious, but still surprisingly common confidence tricks is the great 'Ponzi Scheme'. Investigators, criminologists and economists consistently express amazement that this simple, yet evergreen scam can still reap such lucrative rewards. The greatest fraud in modern history, the Bernie Madoff episode, netted a breathtaking \$65 billion, and Madoff owes his pedigree to the man who gave his name to the mighty pyramid scheme, Charles Ponzi.

The Ponzi Scheme works on a simple but powerful formula. Greed drives every successful confidence trick, and the willingness of otherwise intelligent and educated people to suspend their disbelief in the interests of quick and healthy profit never seems to fail.

Charles Ponzi had a particular angle on this scheme. Born in Parma, Italy in 1882, he arrived penniless in Boston in 1903. Like most immigrants, he began work doing odd jobs, passing off bad checks as a sideline, which earned him three years in a Quebec prison. Another two years was spent in prison in Atlanta for people trafficking, before he finally alighted on the idea that would make him a fortune.

One day he received a letter from a Spanish company that contained what was known then as an *International Reply Coupon*. This, in essence, allowed the receiver to purchase stamps at the expense of the sender by cashing the coupon in at a local post office. Ponzi realized that the amount laid out in Spain, or Italy for that matter, was much less than the cost of the stamps in the United States, so he began to organize a network of suppliers abroad to send him IRCs, which he used to buy stamps, which he then sold for a profit.

It was a simple, and reasonably legitimate business model, but to ramp-up sales, he offered access to the scheme by investment, and this very quickly morphed into a pyramid scheme. Promising investors the usual outrageous returns, he slipped into a pattern of attracting investment and paying the promised return by exploiting new investment. This, of course, is a commonly understood principal now, but then, in the freerolling, capital-heavy days before the great stock market crash, it was a new idea, and Ponzi made a fortune.

As, of course, was inevitable, the scheme began to unravel as the press began to investigate the astronomical returns. The investigation triggered a run on Ponzi's company, and inevitably it collapsed. Ponzi was arrested on August 12, 1920 and charged with 86 counts of mail fraud. He subsequently spent 14 years in prison, and he died penniless in Rio de Janeiro in 1949.

Charles Ponzi may have made and lost fortunes, but the genius of his scheme lies in its simplicity. For so long as man is driven by greed, the sleight of hand and slick tongue of men like Charles Ponzi will seduce investors to put their hands in their pockets and hand over the loot in pursuit of quick and easy profit. It never lasts forever, but while the going is good, it is very good indeed.



The Drake Fortune Swindle was one of the great confidence tricks of the 20th century. CNN

Oscar Hartzell

One of the most successful and audacious scams of recent history was the *Drake Fortune Swindle*, the brainchild of brilliant con-man with one superb trick.

Oscar Hartzell was born in 1876, the son of a modestly wealthy farmer from Madison County, Iowa. Sometime in 1915, he ran into couple of grifters who promised him that they could turn \$6,000 held by his mother into \$6 million by cutting him in on a share of the unclaimed inheritance of the great English maritime explorer Sir Francis Drake.

Hartzell was not taken in at all, and the two cons went on their way. But the idea settled in his mind, and he thought he would try it out himself. Approaching the con in a slightly more scientific manner, he created fake documentation and credentials and set about contacting anyone in Iowa with the surname 'Drake', spinning a well research but elaborate story on the same basic lines.

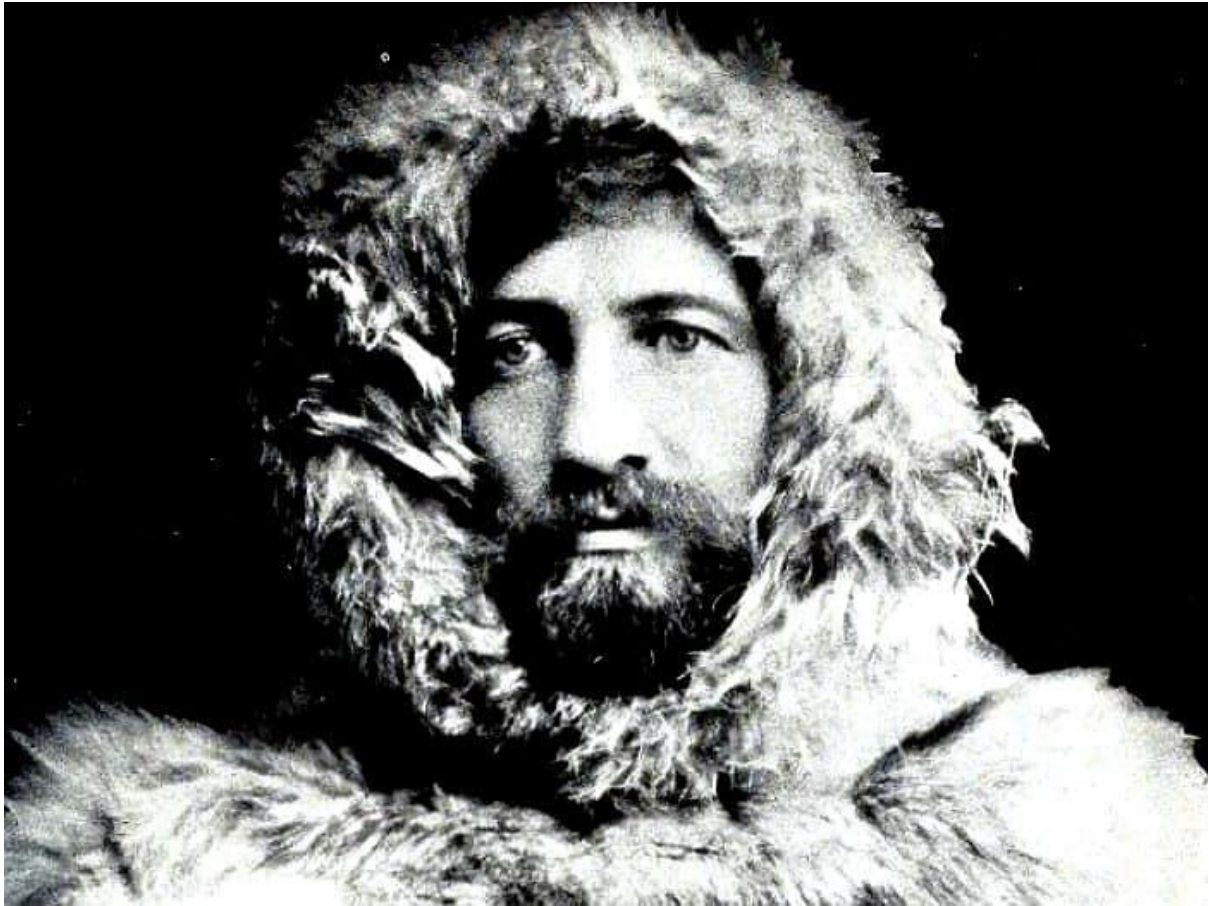
Sir Francis Drake certainly died a very wealthy man. He was, according to the terminology of the time, a 'privateer', which was a polite word for pirate. During the Elizabethan Era, private

agents were authorized by the crown to attack the Spanish fleet, and loot Spanish ports in the Caribbean, which Drake did with both delight and enormous success. Some of the booty went to Crown, but most remained in his own hands.

Oscar Hartzell claimed that upon Drake's death in 1596, his estate was never paid to his heirs, with the result that it remained in the Bank of England accruing interest, and was now worth in excess of \$100 billion dollars. Everyone bearing the name 'Drake' was entitled to a share, assuming his legal campaign to sue the British government for the release of the funds was successful. He invited investment of any sum, promising a return of \$500 on every \$1 invested. To add a little glitter to the bait, he also stated that the inheritance would include the entire British city of Portsmouth.

Money flooded in, and in the end, tens of thousands of credulous Iowans dipped into their pockets and handed over their savings. Hartzell then expanded the ruse to subscribers outside of Iowa, including many with no connection to the name Drake at all, and still the money flooded in. Realizing that it had probably run its course, Hartzell then took himself to London, ostensibly to attend to legal proceedings, but in reality simply to live well and keep sucking on the pipeline for as long as a little cash trickled through. Periodically he submitted a request for additional funds, which invariably were given. Somehow he managed to keep the whole ship afloat until the Great Depression, and even then a few die-hards continued to support him.

It was not until 1933 that the law finally caught up with him. He was deported from Britain to the United States, where he stood trial for fraud. He died in Leavenworth in 1943, leaving up to 100,000 still waiting for their share of Drakes fortune. Even in prison, donations kept coming through.



Frederick Cook, the man who may or may not have been the first to reach the North Pole. Mark Horrill

Frederick Cook

The second to top spot in this list is reserved for a man who certainly did not do it for the money. The enigma, however, is whether he did it at all. The Cook/Peary controversy over who exactly reached the North Pole first could place Frederick Cook in the seat as the conman, but it could quite easily also place his rival, Robert Peary, in the same seat, and that is what make this story so interesting.

Cook was the son of German immigrants who made his way up through the hardscrabble streets of New York. In 1890, he graduated from New York University Medical School, but he lost his wife in childbirth, and sought distraction as an expedition doctor on the first major journey of Robert Peary.

Peary, a bombastic and attention seeking US Navy officer, was as much interested in fame as he was geographic discovery. As an expedition leader, he tended to promote his own interests at the cost of his crew. His relationship with Cook, therefore, did not survive that

first adventure, after which the two men fell into competition to be the first to reach the North Pole.

Cook set off from Gloucester, Massachusetts, in July 1907, while Peary's expedition took to the ice almost exactly a year later, in August 1908. Cook was the first to emerge, in February 1908, almost 14 months after he had set out. A few months later, he announced to the world that he had attained the pole.

Now the crucial point is simply that Cook reached civilization at Annoatok, on the northwest coast of Greenland, and storing his journals and instrumentation for later forwarding, he hurried south to announce that he had reached the Pole.

Initially, his claim was treated with the respect it was due, and matter was inserted into the record. Peary, however, soon returned to civilization himself, and he too claimed to have reached the Pole. He also returned via Annoatok, but once he had passed through, en-route south to make his own claim, none of Cook's journals, documentation or instrumentation were ever seen again.

Peary, with the naval establishment behind him, challenged Cook to prove that he had discovered the Pole, which, without documentation, he could not do. Peary's own documentation presented a more authentic picture than no picture at all, and in the end the historic record shifted in the favor of him. Cook retired from the battle, and never pressed the point, but for years he has been regarded as a fraud. Recent comparisons, however, between Cook's description of the Pole and those of modern explorers has tended to reinforce his claim. Since his and Peary's description of the Pole differed, one or other of the two was lying, the question is simply who.

The first undisputed overland claim was made on April 19, 1968, by the explorer Ralph Plaisted.



Donald Crowhurst who faked his round-the-world yacht race victory. Source: Collider

Donald Crowhurst

The top spot on this list goes to the man who faked victory in the *Sunday Times Golden Globe Race*, a non-stop, single-handed around the world yacht race. The Donald Crowhurst story is part adventure, part fraud and part tragedy.

The story begins in 1968 with the launch of the competition by the Sunday Times, with a prize of £5,000. The race attracted the cream of the international solo yachting world, but one late entry was a complete outsider. Donald Crowhurst, an English electronics engineer put his name in the hat at the last minute.

Crowhurst was seen as an enthusiastic amateur, a weekend sailor, but nothing more. He invented and patented various maritime navigation devices, and had a keen interest, but no real experience at all. He mortgaged his house and business to build his own boat, a forty-foot trimaran. It was an untested design that performed badly in trials, but as the date of the race neared, Crowhurst had no choice but to pull it into commission and hastily prepare and provision it for an around the world journey.

On the afternoon of October 31, 1968, Crowhurst set off from Teignmouth in the English West Country. Initially, things seemed to be going well. Crowhurst's press agent in England

received the news on December 10, after about six-weeks at sea, that his client was averaging an astonishing 243 miles a day, putting him well ahead of the pack. By then, quite a number of his competitors had retired from the race, and it was beginning to seem that this weekend sailor might just pull off the impossible. Christmas came, and Crowhurst reported a position off the coast of Cape Town. Then, in April, 1969, the triumphant announcement came through that Crowhurst had cleared Cape Horn, and was on the home straight, sailing northwards across the Atlantic.

Now it takes no genius to imagine what was taking place. Crowhurst's trimaran was a dud, it was leaking like a sieve and could manage just a few knots with the wind behind it. It is hard to tell exactly when it began, but at some point in the mid-Atlantic, Crowhurst began sending out false positions, and as he lingered in the South Atlantic, the world cheered his incredible performance.

He reasoned that if he did not come first, his performance would not be too deeply investigated. Two competitors were ahead of him, but as misfortune would have it, one dropped out and another registered a slower time. Crowhurst would be the winner. He was sunk.

Only July 1, 1969, Crowhurst trimaran was found drifting off the Cayman Islands with no sign of its captain. Madness, desperation and isolation clearly drove him into the water. His body was never found, but his logs revealed the ruse. That is the story of Donald Crowhurst, the weekend sailor with a vast ambition.

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