



Chronicling 100 Years of the U.S. Economy

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Top Influencers

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and its journal, the *Survey of Current Business*, are respected sources of data on the health of our national economy due in large part to the individuals who influenced BEA and its predecessor agencies over the past century. From economic theory to the mechanics of producing reliable statistics, their contributions helped make BEA and its accounts the reliable, authoritative sources of economic data they are today. The *Survey* has chronicled the evolution of BEA's output for almost a century.

As we celebrate the centennial of the *Survey*, some of these top influencers will be profiled on the [centennial website](#). This month, we present economist **Robert Nathan**.

Robert Nathan

A Pioneer in National Income Accounting

As an economist, lawyer, author, and consultant, Robert Nathan had a varied and illustrious career. A student of Simon Kuznets, he was tapped by Kuznets to help develop the first real measurements of U.S. national income. As a leader at the Bureau of Economic Analysis' (BEA) predecessor agencies, he wrote comprehensive explanations and evaluations of national income accounting.



Robert R. Nathan

Photo credit U.S. Office of War Information, Albert Freeman, photographer; *Robert R. Nathan, Assistant Director of Progress Reports, War Production Board, one of the members of the Planning Committee which acts in an advisory capacity to Donald M. Nelson, Chairman of War Production Board, between 1940 and 1946, photograph, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.*

After many federal positions, he founded a very successful consulting firm. Nathan was a man who put his stamp on so many facets of federal economic measurement. One of Nathan's less acknowledged legacies may be his candid assessments of national income methodology, which set a tone of transparency that is still present in BEA today.

For more on Nathan and his contributions to national income accounting, see "[A Tribute to Robert Nathan](#)," published in the February 2002 *Survey of Current Business*.