

This Day in History... August 19, 1902

Birth of Ogden Nash

Ogden Nash was born on August 19, 1902, in Rye, New York. Having written over 500 poems during his life, Nash is considered America's best-known humorous poet.

Nash was descended from Abner Nash, a governor of North Carolina whose brother, Francis, was a Revolutionary War general and the namesake of Nashville, Tennessee. Nash's father ran an import-export business and moved the family often.

From the time he was six years old, Nash loved to rhyme. He also liked to make up his own words whenever he couldn't find a word that rhymed. Nash attended St. George's School in Newport County, Rhode Island before going to Harvard University. However, he had to drop out after a year when his father's finances declined.

Nash taught at St. George's for a year before moving back to New York where he sold bonds. He then got a job writing ads for streetcars for Barron Collier. From there Nash found work as an editor at Doubleday. Starting in 1930, he began publishing some of his poems in *The New Yorker*. The paper's editor quickly asked for more, saying, "They are about the most original stuff we have had lately."



In "Line-up for Yesterday," Nash honored baseball legends, including Cobb, writing "C is for Cobb, Who grew spikes and not corn, And made all the basemen Wish they weren't born."

Nash married in 1931, and that same year he published his first collection of poems, *Hard Lines*, which sold out an amazing seven printings in its first year. In 1933, Nash decided to write full time. Moving to Baltimore in 1934, Nash worked at home, jotting words on little note pads scattered about the house. He drew his inspiration from his own life and family. Nash wrote light-hearted, whimsical, and sometimes nonsensical verses. He often used an extremely large poetic license to create comical rhymes and puns. Nash's poems make people laugh, but they also contain some truths of human experience. Nash's verses about animals were some of the most popular and showed his playful use of words.

During his lifetime, Nash wrote more than 500 poems and published 19 books of poetry. He also wrote the lyrics for the 1943 musical comedy, *One Touch of Venus*, and the 1952 revue *Two's Company*. He was nationally known and appeared on comedy shows and lectured throughout the country.

Nash died on May 19, 1971, at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore from complications from Crohn's disease. In his obituary, *The New York Times* called Nash "the country's best-known producer of humorous poetry."

The Ogden Nash Stamp

The Ogden Nash stamp was issued on his 100th birthday at his Baltimore home. Six of his poems appear in the background of the stamp: "The Turtle," "The Cow," "Crossing the Border," "The Kitten," "Limerick One," and "The Camel."

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316



Nash was the 18th honoree in the Literary Arts Series.



Nash was most well known for his animal rhymes, such as "If called by a panther / Don't anther."

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