

This Day in History... August 22, 1893

Happy Birthday Dorothy Parker

Poet and writer Dorothy Parker (born Dorothy Rothschild) was born on August 22, 1893, in Long Branch, New Jersey. A founding member of the Algonquin Round Table, she was known for her sharp wit.

Parker's mother died when she was just four years old. She went on to have an unhappy, though privileged, childhood living with her father and stepmother. After her father's death when she was 20, Parker earned money by playing piano at a dance school.

Parker sold her first poem to *Vanity Fair* in 1914. Within a few months she was hired as an editorial assistant for *Vogue* magazine. Two years later she took a job as a staff writer for *Vogue*. She then met and married stockbroker Edwin Pond Parker II.

While working at *Vanity Fair*, Parker wrote theater reviews and met fellow writers Robert Benchley and Robert Sherwood. Almost every day, the three writers met for lunch at the Algonquin Hotel, forming the basis of the Algonquin Round Table. Over time other writers joined them and they shared stories, jokes, and witty remarks. Newspaper columnists Franklin Pierce Adams and Alexander Woollcott began sharing some of their stories in print, which helped earn Parker a national reputation for her wit. Among her more memorable quotes are, "I don't care what is written about me as long as it isn't true" and "Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses."

In 1924, Parker worked with Elmer Rice to create the Broadway play *Close Harmony*. It received positive reviews and later became a touring production titled *The Lady Next Door*.

In 1925, Parker was on the board of editors for *The New Yorker*. With that magazine she gained even more fame for her humorous poems. Parker's career boomed in the 1920s, when she published about 300 poems in *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *McCall's*, and *The New Republic*. She published her first volume of poetry in 1926 called *Enough Rope*, which sold 47,000 copies. Her most famous short story, "Big Blonde," was published in 1929 and earned the O. Henry Award for best short story of the year.

In the 1930s, Parker moved to Hollywood and began working on movies. In all she contributed to more than 15 films, including the lyrics for "I Wished on the Moon" in *The Big Broadcast of 1936*. Parker also helped to write the script for *A Star is Born*, which earned her an Academy Award nomination.

Over time, Parker became more politically active, forming the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League in the 1930s and joining the Joint Anti-Fascist Rescue Committee (JAFRC) in the '40s. As part of the JAFRC, Parker chaired the Spanish Refugee Appeal, which supported the Republicans against fascist leader Francisco Franco's Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. For this, she was accused of being a communist and was blacklisted from Hollywood in the 1950s. She went on to write book reviews for *Esquire* magazine and do some work in radio.

Parker died on June 7, 1967. She left her estate to Martin Luther King Jr., and after his death it went to the NAACP, which later created a memorial garden in her honor.



Stamp issued on Parker's 99th birthday.



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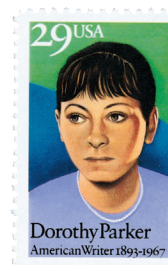
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