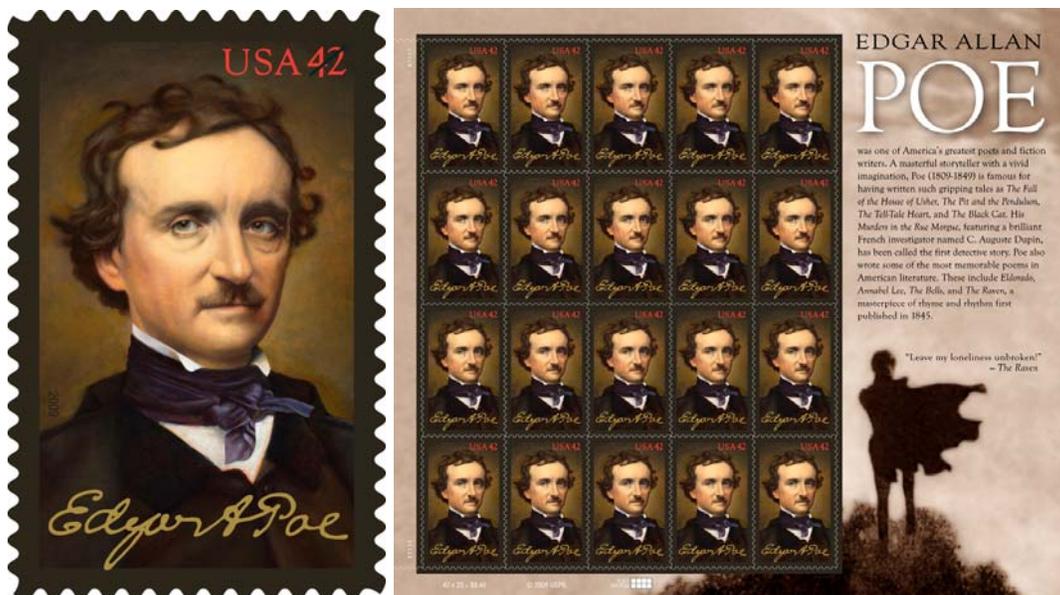


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Friday, Jan. 16, 2009

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Release No. 09-005



***Edgar Allan Poe Stamp: for Now, Not Nevermore***  
***Revered Poet, Father of Mystery Novel, commemorated on 200th Birthday***

*A high-resolution image of the stamp is available to media only by e-mailing [roy.a.betts@usps.gov](mailto:roy.a.betts@usps.gov)*

RICHMOND, VA — The father of the “mystery novel,” and one of America’s most extraordinary poets and fiction writers was immortalized on postage today when the U.S. Postal Service celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe. The stamp honoring Poe was dedicated at the Library of Virginia in Richmond where several dignitaries — including Poe’s distant cousin — spoke of his accomplishments. The 42-cent First-Class commemorative stamp is available nationwide today.

“It is ironic that a man who faced loneliness, poverty and despair throughout much of his life, should be so richly loved by so many so long after his death,” said U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors member Katherine C. Tobin in dedicating the stamp. “He invented the detective story and elevated literary criticism to an art form. Poetry, however, was his self-declared passion. His works are found, or referenced in seemingly every form of art — in plays, movies, musicals, operas, symphonies, recordings, comics, cartoons, television, sculpture, paintings and more. From Alfred Hitchcock to Bart Simpson to The Beatles — who placed Poe center stage on the cover of their Sgt. Pepper album — the legendary writer, poet and literary critic has captured the public imagination as few, if any, have ever done.”

For more than a century and a half, Poe and his works have been praised by admirers around the world, including English Poet Laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who dubbed Poe “the literary glory of America.” British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle called him “the supreme original short story writer of all time.”

Joining Tobin in dedicating the stamp were Dr. Harry Lee Poe, president of the Poe Museum of Richmond, whose great, great grandfather was Poe’s cousin; National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Dana Gioia; and portrait artist Michael J. Deas, who in addition to being the artist of the Edgar Allan Poe stamp, is also a leading authority on portraits and daguerreotypes of Poe.

“Poe was called mad throughout the 19th century because he proposed the original big bang theory, since everyone believed that time and space were different, and that the infinite universe had always existed,” said Poe’s cousin, Dr. Harry Lee Poe, a theologian who serves as Charles Colson Professor of Faith and Culture at Union University in Jackson, TN. “One hundred sixty years after the publication of *Eureka*, we take Poe’s cosmology for granted. He was not correct about all the details, but his essay demonstrates that he was correct about the value of imagination for science, faith and every other field of human endeavor.

While Poe was slandered and libeled in America before his bones lay cold in his grave,” he continued, “the French adopted Poe as their own almost immediately as did the Russians. Jules Verne, Charles Baudelaire, Claude Debussy, and the Impressionists all took their inspiration from Poe. Dostoyevsky was inspired by Poe’s psychological tales and Rachmaninoff set ‘The Bells’ to music. Belgian scientist Lemaitre, who formally proposed the Big Bang theory in the 20th century, was devoted to Poe. Alfred Hitchcock sought to achieve in film what Poe achieved through prose.”

NEA Chairman Gioia said, “It’s time to say the obvious. No author stays internationally popular for 150 years by accident. Poe is one of the classic authors of American literature — a master of the short story, a magician of the short poem, and a critic of brilliance and originality. And no small part of his artistic magic is that he appeals to readers from childhood to old age. Let us underestimate him nevermore!”

### **Edgar Allan Poe Stamp Image**

The stamp portrait of Edgar Allan Poe is by award-winning artist Deas, whose research over the years has made him well acquainted with Poe’s appearance. In 1989, Deas published “The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe,” a comprehensive collection of images featuring authentic likenesses as well as derivative portraits.

The portrait for the stamp was done in oils on a wooden panel. The selvage art is by Edmund Dulac (1882-1953), a French-born British illustrator whose works have appeared in such classics as “The Arabian Nights” (1907), “The Tempest” (1908), and “The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám” (1909). The selvage illustration is from “The Bells and Other Poems” (1912). The quotation on the stamp sheet is from Poe’s most famous poem, “The Raven,” first published in 1845.

The event took place as a partnership with the Poe Museum [www.poemuseum.org](http://www.poemuseum.org), the St. John’s Church [www.historicstjohnschurch.org](http://www.historicstjohnschurch.org) and the Library of Virginia [www.lva.lib.va.us](http://www.lva.lib.va.us).

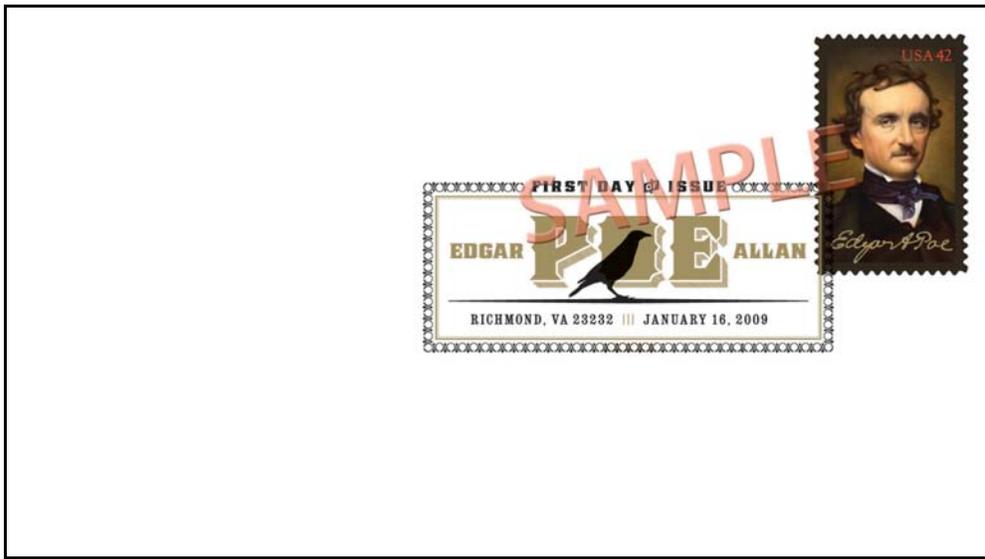
## Philatelic Products

There are five philatelic products available for this stamp issue:



464473, Limited Edition, Raven Book w/block of 4 stamps, \$12.95

One of Poe's best-loved poems "The Raven," was first published in 1845. In this special commemorative booklet edition, French artist Emmanuel Polanco graphically interprets "The Raven" in six original illustrations. The booklet also includes commentary by stamp artist Michael J. Deas and a block of four *Edgar Allan Poe* stamps with mount.



464465, Digital Color Postmark First-Day Cover, \$1.50

464461, First-Day Cover, \$0.80

464491, Ceremony Program, \$6.95

464499, Digital Color Postmark Keepsake w/full pane, \$9.90

### **How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark**

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, or at the Postal Store Web site at [www.usps.com/shop](http://www.usps.com/shop) or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes, to themselves or others, and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Edgar Allan Poe Stamp  
Postmaster  
Attn: Customer Relations Coordinator  
1801 Brook Rd.  
Richmond, VA 23232-9993

After applying the first-day-of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by March 17, 2009.

### **How to Order First-Day Covers**

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

Information Fulfillment  
Dept. 6270  
U.S. Postal Service  
P.O. Box 219014  
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

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**Please Note:** For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the USPS Newsroom at [www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/welcome.htm](http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/welcome.htm).

An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 146 million homes and businesses, six days a week. It has 37,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services, not tax dollars, to pay for operating expenses. The Postal Service has annual revenue of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail. To learn about the history of the Postal Service visit the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum: [www.postalmuseum.si.edu](http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu).

## Edgar Allan Poe Background

Edgar Allan Poe was born “Edgar Poe” on Jan. 19, 1809, in Boston, MA. He lost both of his parents, actors David Poe and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, before his third birthday. His father disappeared and his mother died. Many years later, Poe would share his feelings about the early loss of his parents in a letter to a man who had known his mother, “I have many occasional dealings with Adversity,” he wrote, “but the want of parental affection has been the heaviest of my trials.” Poe grew up in the care of John and Frances Allan, wealthy residents of Richmond, VA (where Poe’s mother had died in Dec. 1811), and though the Allans shared their name with Poe, they never formally adopted him.

In his youth, Poe received an excellent education at private schools in England and Virginia. He is known to have written poems about some of his Virginia classmates in the early 1820s, but those verses have apparently been lost. His earliest surviving poetic work, penned in 1823 or 1824, consists of just two lines—“Last night, with many cares and toils oppress’d, / Weary, I laid me on a couch to rest—” and is simply titled “Poetry.”

In 1826, Poe enrolled at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He did well in ancient and modern languages but had to withdraw after only one term. Deeply in debt, largely from gambling losses, he appealed to his foster father for additional financial help and was refused.

Poe left Virginia and over the next several years lived in various places along the East Coast, struggling to get by and to get his writings into print. He found publishers for *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827), *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* (1829), and *Poems* (1831), yet made very little money. During that period, he survived with the help of paternal relatives in Baltimore, MD, and by joining the U.S. Army. He even managed to obtain an appointment to the U.S. Army Military Academy at West Point. He was admitted in 1830 but was dismissed in early 1831 for “gross neglect of duty” and “disobedience of orders.”

In October 1833, Poe’s fortunes took a turn for the better when he won a short-story contest sponsored by a Baltimore newspaper. His “MS. Found in a Bottle” brought him \$50 in prize money and greatly improved his job prospects. He accepted a job as editor for the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond in 1835 and, soon after, married Virginia Clemm of Baltimore. At the *Messenger*, Poe published many of his own works and added “literary critic” to his résumé. But his reviews of other authors’ works, while often commended for their astuteness, occasionally took a caustic tone and made him more than a few enemies. He left Richmond in 1837.

From 1838 to 1844, Poe, his devoted wife, and his supportive mother-in-law resided in Philadelphia. While there, he took an editorial position with *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* (*Graham’s Magazine*, as of 1841) and continued writing reviews, poetry, and fiction. A masterful storyteller with a vivid imagination, he published some of his most terrifying tales during this period. These include “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Black Cat,” “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Pit and the Pendulum.”

In April 1841, *Graham’s* printed Poe’s “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” which introduced the fictional character C. Auguste Dupin. The analytical talents of this Parisian investigator were later featured again in “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” and “The Purloined Letter.” Poe’s Dupin stories would inspire a host of mystery writers, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes. In the early 1900s, Doyle wrote of Poe’s influence, “To him must be ascribed the monstrous progeny of writers on the detection of crime.... Each may find some little development of his own, but his main art must trace back to those admirable stories of Monsieur Dupin, so wonderful in their masterful force, their reticence, their quick dramatic point.... But not only is Poe the originator of the detective story; all treasure-hunting, cryptogram-solving yarns trace back to his ‘Gold Bug’....”

“The Gold-Bug” won a \$100 prize for Poe in 1843. He set the story on Sullivan’s Island, SC, an area he knew well from having served there in the Army. That same year, he also published *Prose Romances* and began a popular lecture series on poetry, or “the rhythmical creation of beauty,” as defined by Poe. Often described as a lyric poet, he composed verse that was rich in allusion and atmosphere, with a rhythmical style suggestive of song — hence the memorable meter of “The Raven.” Poe published “The Raven” in 1845 in New York, where he and his family had moved the previous year. The poem made him a star of literary society, and yet his income, which continued to come mostly from work on periodicals, was never more than barely adequate.

On Jan. 30, 1847, Poe's wife died of tuberculosis, leaving him despondent. His own health was precarious, and his financial situation was grim. Still, he had hopes of getting back on his feet by starting his own magazine or eventually marrying again — but to no avail. On Oct. 3, 1849, Poe was found “in great distress” and “in need of immediate assistance” in Baltimore. He was taken by carriage to a hospital, where he died from “congestion of the brain” on Oct. 7. He was laid to rest in Baltimore's Westminster Burying Ground.

Poe left behind a literary legacy that includes the following well-known tales (in addition to the previously named works): “The Masque of the Red Death,” “William Wilson,” and “The Cask of Amontillado.” Poems include “To Helen,” “Lenore,” “Ulalume,” “Eldorado,” “Annabel Lee,” and “The Bells.” He also wrote a novel titled “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.”

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