

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)
CHRONOLOGY BY PATRICK F. QUINN

- 1809 Born January 19, the second of three children, in Boston, where parents, David and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, are actors in a theatrical company. David Poe, son of an Irish-born Revolutionary War patriot, soon after abandons the family.
- 1811 Mother dies December 8 in Richmond, Virginia. Edgar is taken into the home of Frances and John Allan, a prosperous Richmond tobacco merchant born in Scotland.
- 1815-20 John Allan, planning to set up a branch office abroad, moves family to Scotland and then to London.
- 1820-25 Allan family returns to Richmond in July 1820. Allan's firm is dissolved in 1824 following a two-year period of financial trouble, but death of uncle in 1825 leaves Allan a rich man, and he buys a house in the fashionable quarter of town.
- 1826 Edgar enters University of Virginia(founded by Thoma Jefferson the year before) and distinguishes himself in ancient and modern languages. Finding Allan's allowance insufficient to pay expenses, resorts to gambling and loses \$2,000. Allan refuses to honor debt, and Poe returns to Richmond.
- 1827 Edgar complains of Allan's lack of affection and leaves household in March. In May enlists in United States Army as "Edgar A. Perry." Persuades a young printer to publish his first book, *Tamerlaine and Other Poems*, signed "by a Bostonian," a thin volume that goes unnoticed.
- 1828-29 After series of promotions Poe reaches the rank of sergeant major and seeks John Allan's help in obtaining appointment to U. S. Military Academy at West Point. Mrs. Allan dies February 26, and Poe, honorably discharged from his enlistment, lives with various Poe relatives in Baltimore. *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlaine and Minor Poems* is published under Poe's own name in December 1829.
- 1830-31 Enters West Point, May 1830, excels in languages and is popular among cadets for his comic verses making fun of the officers. John Allan remarries in October 1830 and shortly after breaks relations with Edgar. Poe intentionally disobeys orders to obtain release from Academy and in January 1831 is court-martialed and expelled. Goes to New York City in February. With funds donated by fellow cadets publishes *Poems, Second Edition*, including "To Helen." In Baltimore resides with paternal aunt Maria Clemm and her eight-year-old daughter Virginia.
- 1832-33 Submits tales in summer 1833 for contest announced by Baltimore *Saturday Visiter*; "MS. Found in a Bottle" wins first prize and "The Coliseum" places second in poetry competition.
- 1834-35 John Allan dies in March; though legitimate and illegitimate children are mentioned in his will, Poe is ignored. John P. Kennedy, a judge in the *Visiter* contest, recommends Poe to Thomas W. White, publisher of *Southern Literary Messenger*, and, beginning in March 1835, he contributes stories and book reviews. Poe's reviews, which earn him the nickname "tomahawk man," dramatically improve the circulation and national reputation of the *Messenger* and White hires him as editorial assistant and principal book reviewer.
- 1836 Marries Virginia Clemm in May, shortly before her fourteenth birthday.
- 1837-38 Disputes with White over salary and editorial independence lead to a resignation from *Messenger* in January 1837. Takes family to New York to seek employment, but is unable to find editorial post. Mrs. Clemm manages a boarding house to help make ends meet. Publishes poems and stories, including "Ligea"; *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* is published in July 1838. Poe moves family to Philadelphia.
- 1839-40 Offers editorial services to *Gentleman's Magazine*; early contributions include "The Fall of The House of Usher" and "William Wilson." Late in 1839 *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* is published.

- 1841-42 Becomes editor of *Graham's Magazine* beginning with the April 1841 issue; contributes "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the first of what he calls his "tales of ratiocination." In January 1842 Virginia bursts a blood vessel while singing, almost dies, and never fully recovers. Spring contributions include "The Masque of the Red Death" and a review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. Resigns from *Graham's* in May 1842, and is succeeded by Rufus Wilmot Griswold (later Poe's literary executor). Fall publications include "The Pit and the Pendulum."
- 1843 Invited by James Russell Lowell to contribute regularly to his new magazine *The Pioneer*; "The Tell-Tale Heart" appears there but magazine fails after three issues. Goes to Washington, D. C. to be interviewed for a minor job in the Tyler administration. Gets drunk and ruins his chances for the job; friends have to see him onto a train for his return to Philadelphia. In June "The Gold Bug" wins \$100 prize in a Philadelphia contest. Fall publications include "The Black Cat."
- 1844 Moves to New York City.
- 1845 "The Raven" appears in the January *Evening Mirror* and is an enormous popular and critical success, inviting many reprints and parodies. *The Raven and Other Poems* is published in November. Meanwhile, begins contributing to the *Broadway Journal*, becomes its editor in July and, soon after, on money borrowed from friends, becomes its proprietor. The "Longfellow War" (January-August), a private campaign against plagiarism with Longfellow the most eminent of those accused, brings notoriety and alienates friends such as Lowell.
- 1846 Illness, severe nervous depression and economic hardship force Poe to stop publication of the *Broadway Journal* after the January 3 issue. Moves family to cottage in Fordham, New York. Poe and family are mentioned as pitiable charity cases in various papers in New York and Pennsylvania. Seriously ill most of the year, still manages to publish "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Philosophy of Composition." Begins satirical sketches of "The Literati of New York City" in *Godey's Lady's Book* in May. Hears first rumors of nascent fame in France where translations and a long analytic criticism of *Tales* appear.
- 1847 Virginia dies January 30. Poe falls gravely ill and has least productive year.
- 1848 Begins year in better health. In a letter, ascribes his past intermittent drinking to insanity caused by constant fear of Virginia's death. While speaking in Lowell, Massachusetts, forms deep attachment to "Annie" (Mrs. Nancy Richmond), who becomes his confidante; subsequently, in Providence, Rhode Island, begins three-month courtship of forty-five-year-old widowed poet Sarah Helen Whitman, to whom he proposes marriage. When she delays answering because of reports of Poe's "unprincipled" character, he suffers severe anxiety and, after one trip to Providence, takes a dose of laudanum. Their brief engagement is broken off in December through influence of Mrs. Whitman's mother and friends.
- 1849 Active as writer and lecturer. In early summer, leaves for Richmond to seek Southern support for his magazine *The Stylus*. Stops in Philadelphia, sick, confused, and apparently suffering from persecution mania; friends care for him and pay for his train trip to Richmond. During two-month stay in Richmond, visits sister Rosalie, joins temperance Society, and becomes engaged to boyhood sweetheart Elmira Royster Shelton, now a widow. Possibly intending to bring Mrs. Clemm from New York, sails for Baltimore where, a week after arrival, he is found semi-conscious and delirious outside a polling booth on October 3. Dies October 7 "of congestion of the brain." "The Bells" and "Annabel Lee" appear posthumously late in the year. Slandorous obituary notice by Griswold blackens Poe's reputation for many years.