

= Washington Irving =

Washington Irving (April 3 , 1783 ? November 28 , 1859) was an American short story writer , essayist , biographer , historian , and diplomat of the early 19th century . He is best known for his short stories " Rip Van Winkle " (1819) and " The Legend of Sleepy Hollow " (1820) , both of which appear in his book *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon , Gent* . His historical works include biographies of George Washington , Oliver Goldsmith and Muhammad , and several histories of 15th @-@ century Spain dealing with subjects such as Christopher Columbus , the Moors and the Alhambra . Irving served as the U.S. ambassador to Spain from 1842 to 1846 .

He made his literary debut in 1802 with a series of observational letters to the *Morning Chronicle* , written under the pseudonym Jonathan Oldstyle . After moving to England for the family business in 1815 , he achieved international fame with the publication of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon , Gent* . in 1819 ? 20 . He continued to publish regularly ? and almost always successfully ? throughout his life , and just eight months before his death (at age 76 , in Tarrytown , New York) , completed a five @-@ volume biography of George Washington .

Irving , along with James Fenimore Cooper , was among the first American writers to earn acclaim in Europe , and Irving encouraged American authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne , Herman Melville , Henry Wadsworth Longfellow , and Edgar Allan Poe . Irving was also admired by some European writers , including Walter Scott , Lord Byron , Thomas Campbell , Francis Jeffrey , and Charles Dickens . As America 's first genuine internationally best @-@ selling author , Irving advocated for writing as a legitimate profession , and argued for stronger laws to protect American writers from copyright infringement .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early years = = =

Washington Irving 's parents were William Irving , Sr. , originally of Quholm , Shapinsay , Orkney , and Sarah (née Sanders) , Scottish @-@ English immigrants . They married in 1761 while William was serving as a petty officer in the British Navy . They had eleven children , eight of whom survived to adulthood . Their first two sons , each named William , died in infancy , as did their fourth child , John . Their surviving children were : William , Jr . (1766) , Ann (1770) , Peter (1772) , Catherine (1774) , Ebenezer (1776) , John Treat (1778) , Sarah (1780) and Washington .

The Irving family settled in Manhattan , New York City , and was part of the city 's small , vibrant merchant class when Washington Irving was born on April 3 , 1783 , the same week city residents learned of the British ceasefire that ended the American Revolution ; Irving 's mother named him after the hero of the revolution , George Washington . At age six , with the help of a nanny , Irving met his namesake , who was then living in New York after his inauguration as president in 1789 . The president blessed young Irving , an encounter Irving later commemorated in a small watercolor painting , which still hangs in his home today . The Irvings lived at 131 William Street at the time of Washington Irving 's birth . The family later moved across the street to 128 William St. Several of Washington Irving 's older brothers became active New York merchants , and they encouraged their younger brother 's literary aspirations , often supporting him financially as he pursued his writing career .

An uninterested student , Irving preferred adventure stories and drama and , by age fourteen , was regularly sneaking out of class in the evenings to attend the theater . The 1798 outbreak of yellow fever in Manhattan prompted his family to send him to healthier climes upriver , and Irving was dispatched to stay with his friend James Kirke Paulding in Tarrytown , New York . It was in Tarrytown that Irving became familiar with the nearby town of Sleepy Hollow , with its quaint Dutch customs and local ghost stories . Irving made several other trips up the Hudson as a teenager , including an extended visit to Johnstown , New York , where he passed through the Catskill mountain region , the setting for " Rip Van Winkle " . " [O] f all the scenery of the Hudson " , Irving

wrote later , " the Kaatskill Mountains had the most witching effect on my boyish imagination " .

The 19 @-@ year @-@ old Irving began writing letters to the New York Morning Chronicle in 1802 , submitting commentaries on the city 's social and theater scene under the name of Jonathan Oldstyle . The name , which purposely evoked the writer 's Federalist leanings , was the first of many pseudonyms Irving would employ throughout his career . The letters brought Irving some early fame and moderate notoriety . Aaron Burr , a co @-@ publisher of the Chronicle , was impressed enough to send clippings of the Oldstyle pieces to his daughter , Theodosia , while writer Charles Brockden Brown made a trip to New York to recruit Oldstyle for a literary magazine he was editing in Philadelphia .

Concerned for his health , Irving 's brothers financed an extended tour of Europe from 1804 to 1806 . Irving bypassed most of the sites and locations considered essential for the development of an upwardly mobile young man , to the dismay of his brother William . William wrote that , though he was pleased his brother 's health was improving , he did not like the choice to " gallop through Italy ... leaving Florence on your left and Venice on your right " . Instead , Irving honed the social and conversational skills that would later make him one of the world 's most in @-@ demand guests . " I endeavor to take things as they come with cheerfulness " , Irving wrote , " and when I cannot get a dinner to suit my taste , I endeavor to get a taste to suit my dinner " . While visiting Rome in 1805 , Irving struck up a friendship with the American painter Washington Allston , and nearly allowed himself to be persuaded into following Allston into a career as a painter . " My lot in life , however " , Irving said later , " was differently cast " .

= = = First major writings = = =

Irving returned from Europe to study law with his legal mentor , Judge Josiah Ogden Hoffman , in New York City . By his own admission , he was not a good student , and barely passed the bar in 1806 . Irving began actively socializing with a group of literate young men he dubbed " The Lads of Kilkenny " . Collaborating with his brother William and fellow Lad James Kirke Paulding , Irving created the literary magazine Salmagundi in January 1807 . Writing under various pseudonyms , such as William Wizard and Launcelot Langstaff , Irving lampooned New York culture and politics in a manner similar to today 's Mad magazine . Salmagundi was a moderate success , spreading Irving 's name and reputation beyond New York . In its seventeenth issue , dated November 11 , 1807 , Irving affixed the nickname " Gotham " ? an Anglo @-@ Saxon word meaning " Goat 's Town " ? to New York City .

In late 1809 , while mourning the death of his seventeen @-@ year @-@ old fiancée Matilda Hoffman , Irving completed work on his first major book , A History of New @-@ York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty , by Diedrich Knickerbocker (1809) , a satire on self @-@ important local history and contemporary politics . Prior to its publication , Irving started a hoax akin to today 's viral marketing campaigns ; he placed a series of missing person adverts in New York newspapers seeking information on Diedrich Knickerbocker , a crusty Dutch historian who had allegedly gone missing from his hotel in New York City . As part of the ruse , Irving placed a notice ? allegedly from the hotel 's proprietor ? informing readers that if Mr. Knickerbocker failed to return to the hotel to pay his bill , he would publish a manuscript Knickerbocker had left behind .

Unsuspecting readers followed the story of Knickerbocker and his manuscript with interest , and some New York city officials were concerned enough about the missing historian that they considered offering a reward for his safe return . Riding the wave of public interest he had created with his hoax , Irving ? adopting the pseudonym of his Dutch historian ? published A History of New York on December 6 , 1809 , to immediate critical and popular success . " It took with the public " , Irving remarked , " and gave me celebrity , as an original work was something remarkable and uncommon in America " . Today , the surname of Diedrich Knickerbocker , the fictional narrator of this and other Irving works , has become a nickname for Manhattan residents in general .

After the success of A History of New York , Irving searched for a job and eventually became an editor of Analectic Magazine , where he wrote biographies of naval heroes like James Lawrence and

Oliver Perry . He was also among the first magazine editors to reprint Francis Scott Key 's poem " Defense of Fort McHenry " , which would later be immortalized as " The Star @-@ Spangled Banner " , the national anthem of the United States .

Like many merchants and New Yorkers , Irving originally opposed the War of 1812 , but the British attack on Washington , D.C. in 1814 convinced him to enlist . He served on the staff of Daniel Tompkins , governor of New York and commander of the New York State Militia . Apart from a reconnaissance mission in the Great Lakes region , he saw no real action . The war was disastrous for many American merchants , including Irving 's family , and in mid @-@ 1815 he left for England to attempt to salvage the family trading company . He remained in Europe for the next seventeen years . Irving was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in 1815 .

= = = Life in Europe = = =

= = = The Sketch Book = = =

Irving spent the next two years trying to bail out the family firm financially but eventually had to declare bankruptcy . With no job prospects , Irving continued writing throughout 1817 and 1818 . In the summer of 1817 , he visited Walter Scott , beginning a lifelong personal and professional friendship . Irving continued writing : he composed the short story " Rip Van Winkle " overnight while staying with his sister Sarah and her husband , Henry van Wart in Birmingham , England , a place that also inspired other works . In October 1818 , Irving 's brother William secured for Irving a post as chief clerk to the United States Navy , and urged him to return home . Irving turned the offer down , opting to stay in England to pursue a writing career .

In the spring of 1819 , Irving sent to his brother Ebenezer in New York a set of short prose pieces that he asked be published as The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon , Gent . The first installment , containing " Rip Van Winkle " , was an enormous success , and the rest of the work would be equally successful ; it was issued in 1819 ? 1820 in seven installments in New York , and in two volumes in London (" The Legend of Sleepy Hollow " would appear in the sixth issue of the New York edition , and the second volume of the London edition) .

Like many successful authors of this era , Irving struggled against literary bootleggers . In England , some of his sketches were reprinted in periodicals without his permission , a legal practice as there was no international copyright law at the time . To prevent further piracy in Britain , Irving paid to have the first four American installments published as a single volume by John Miller in London . Irving appealed to Walter Scott for help procuring a more reputable publisher for the remainder of the book . Scott referred Irving to his own publisher , London powerhouse John Murray , who agreed to take on The Sketch Book . From then on , Irving would publish concurrently in the United States and Britain to protect his copyright , with Murray being his English publisher of choice .

Irving 's reputation soared , and for the next two years , he led an active social life in Paris and Britain , where he was often feted as an anomaly of literature : an upstart American who dared to write English well .

= = = Bracebridge Hall and Tales of a Traveller = = =

With both Irving and publisher John Murray eager to follow up on the success of The Sketch Book , Irving spent much of 1821 travelling in Europe in search of new material , reading widely in Dutch and German folk tales . Hampered by writer 's block ? and depressed by the death of his brother William ? Irving worked slowly , finally delivering a completed manuscript to Murray in March 1822 . The book , Bracebridge Hall , or The Humorists , A Medley (the location was based loosely on Aston Hall , occupied by members of the Bracebridge family , near his sister 's home in Birmingham) was published in June 1822 .

The format of Bracebridge was similar to that of The Sketch Book , with Irving , as Crayon , narrating a series of more than fifty loosely connected short stories and essays . While some

reviewers thought Bracebridge to be a lesser imitation of *The Sketch Book* , the book was well received by readers and critics . " We have received so much pleasure from this book " , wrote critic Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* , " that we think ourselves bound in gratitude ... to make a public acknowledgement of it . " Irving was relieved at its reception , which did much to cement his reputation with European readers .

Still struggling with writer 's block , Irving traveled to Germany , settling in Dresden in the winter of 1822 . Here he dazzled the royal family and attached himself to Mrs. Amelia Foster , an American living in Dresden with her five children . Irving was particularly attracted to Mrs. Foster 's 18 @-@ year @-@ old daughter Emily , and vied in frustration for her hand . Emily finally refused his offer of marriage in the spring of 1823 .

He returned to Paris and began collaborating with playwright John Howard Payne on translations of French plays for the English stage , with little success . He also learned through Payne that the novelist Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley was romantically interested in him , though Irving never pursued the relationship .

In August 1824 , Irving published the collection of essays *Tales of a Traveller* ? including the short story " *The Devil and Tom Walker* " ? under his Geoffrey Crayon persona . " I think there are in it some of the best things I have ever written " , Irving told his sister . But while the book sold respectably , *Traveller* was dismissed by critics , who panned both *Traveller* and its author . " The public have been led to expect better things " , wrote the *United States Literary Gazette* , while the *New @-@ York Mirror* pronounced Irving " overrated " . Hurt and depressed by the book 's reception , Irving retreated to Paris where he spent the next year worrying about finances and scribbling down ideas for projects that never materialized .

= = = = Spanish books = = = =

While in Paris , Irving received a letter from Alexander Hill Everett on January 30 , 1826 . Everett , recently the American Minister to Spain , urged Irving to join him in Madrid , noting that a number of manuscripts dealing with the Spanish conquest of the Americas had recently been made public . Irving left for Madrid and enthusiastically began scouring the Spanish archives for colorful material .

With full access to the American consul 's massive library of Spanish history , Irving began working on several books at once . The first offspring of this hard work , *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* , was published in January 1828 . The book was popular in the United States and in Europe and would have 175 editions published before the end of the century . It was also the first project of Irving 's to be published with his own name , instead of a pseudonym , on the title page . Irving was invited to stay at the palace of the Duke of Gor , who gave him unfettered access to his library containing many medieval manuscripts . *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* was published a year later , followed by *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* in 1831 .

Irving 's writings on Columbus are a mixture of history and fiction , a genre now called romantic history . Irving based them on extensive research in the Spanish archives , but also added imaginative elements aimed at sharpening the story . The first of these works is the source of the durable myth that medieval Europeans believed the Earth was flat . (See *Myth of the flat earth* .) According to the popular book , Columbus proved the Earth was round .

In 1829 , Irving moved into Granada 's ancient palace Alhambra , " determined to linger here " , he said , " until I get some writings under way connected with the place " . Before he could get any significant writing underway , however , he was notified of his appointment as Secretary to the American Legation in London . Worried he would disappoint friends and family if he refused the position , Irving left Spain for England in July 1829 .

= = = = Secretary to the American legation in London = = = =

Arriving in London , Irving joined the staff of American Minister Louis McLane . McLane immediately assigned the daily secretary work to another man and tapped Irving to fill the role of aide @-@ de

@-@ camp . The two worked over the next year to negotiate a trade agreement between the United States and the British West Indies , finally reaching a deal in August 1830 . That same year , Irving was awarded a medal by the Royal Society of Literature , followed by an honorary doctorate of civil law from Oxford in 1831 .

Following McLane 's recall to the United States in 1831 to serve as Secretary of Treasury , Irving stayed on as the legation 's chargé d 'affaires until the arrival of Martin Van Buren , President Andrew Jackson 's nominee for British Minister . With Van Buren in place , Irving resigned his post to concentrate on writing , eventually completing *Tales of the Alhambra* , which would be published concurrently in the United States and England in 1832 .

Irving was still in London when Van Buren received word that the United States Senate had refused to confirm him as the new Minister . Consoling Van Buren , Irving predicted that the Senate 's partisan move would backfire . " I should not be surprised " , Irving said , " if this vote of the Senate goes far toward elevating him to the presidential chair " .

= = = Return to America = = =

Washington Irving arrived in New York , after seventeen years abroad , on May 21 , 1832 . That September , he accompanied the U.S. Commissioner on Indian Affairs , Henry Leavitt Ellsworth , along with companions Charles La Trobe and Count Albert @-@ Alexandre de Pourtales , on a surveying mission deep in Indian Territory , now known as Oklahoma . At the completion of his western tour , Irving traveled through Washington , D.C. and Baltimore , where he became acquainted with the politician and novelist John Pendleton Kennedy .

Frustrated by bad investments , Irving turned to writing to generate additional income , beginning with *A Tour on the Prairies* , a work which related his recent travels on the frontier . The book was another popular success and also the first book written and published by Irving in the United States since *A History of New York* in 1809 . In 1834 , he was approached by fur magnate John Jacob Astor , who convinced Irving to write a history of his fur trading colony in the American Northwest , now known as Astoria , Oregon . Irving made quick work of Astor 's project , shipping the fawning biographical account titled *Astoria* in February 1836 . In 1835 Irving , Astor and a few others founded the Saint Nicholas Society in the City of New York .

During an extended stay at Astor 's , Irving met the explorer Benjamin Bonneville , who intrigued Irving with his maps and stories of the territories beyond the Rocky Mountains . When the two met in Washington , D.C. several months later , Bonneville opted to sell his maps and rough notes to Irving for \$ 1 @, @ 000 . Irving used these materials as the basis for his 1837 book *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* .

These three works made up Irving 's " western " series of books and were written partly as a response to criticism that his time in England and Spain had made him more European than American . In the minds of some critics , especially James Fenimore Cooper and Philip Freneau , Irving had turned his back on his American heritage in favor of English aristocracy . Irving 's western books , particularly *A Tour on the Prairies* , were well received in the United States , though British critics accused Irving of " book @-@ making " .

In 1835 , Irving purchased a " neglected cottage " and its surrounding riverfront property in Tarrytown , New York . The house , which he named Sunnyside in 1841 , required constant repair and renovation over the next twenty years . With costs of Sunnyside escalating , Irving reluctantly agreed in 1839 to become a regular contributor to *The Knickerbocker* magazine , writing new essays and short stories under the *Knickerbocker* and *Crayon* pseudonyms .

He was regularly approached by aspiring young authors for advice or endorsement , including Edgar Allan Poe , who sought Irving 's comments on " *William Wilson* " and " *The Fall of the House of Usher* " . Irving also championed America 's maturing literature , advocating stronger copyright laws to protect writers from the kind of piracy that had initially plagued *The Sketch Book* . Writing in the January 1840 issue of *Knickerbocker* , he openly endorsed copyright legislation pending in the U.S. Congress . " We have a young literature " , he wrote , " springing up and daily unfolding itself with wonderful energy and luxuriance , which ... deserves all its fostering care " . The legislation did

not pass . In 1841 , he was elected in the National Academy of Design as an Honorary Academician .

Irving at this time also began a friendly correspondence with the English writer Charles Dickens and hosted the author and his wife at Sunnyside during Dickens 's American tour in 1842 .

= = = Minister to Spain = = =

In 1842 , after an endorsement from Secretary of State Daniel Webster , President John Tyler appointed Irving as Minister to Spain . Irving was surprised and honored , writing , " It will be a severe trial to absent myself for a time from my dear little Sunnyside , but I shall return to it better enabled to carry it on comfortably " .

While Irving hoped his position as Minister would allow him plenty of time to write , Spain was in a state of perpetual political upheaval during most of his tenure , with a number of warring factions vying for control of the twelve @-@ year @-@ old Queen Isabella II . Irving maintained good relations with the various generals and politicians , as control of Spain rotated through Espartero , Bravo , then Narvaez . However , the politics and warfare were exhausting , and Irving ? homesick and suffering from a crippling skin condition ? grew quickly disheartened :

I am wearied and at times heartsick of the wretched politics of this country The last ten or twelve years of my life , passed among sordid speculators in the United States , and political adventurers in Spain , has shewn me so much of the dark side of human nature , that I begin to have painful doubts of my fellow man ; and look back with regret to the confiding period of my literary career , when , poor as a rat , but rich in dreams , I beheld the world through the medium of my imagination and was apt to believe men as good as I wished them to be .

With the political situation in Spain relatively settled , Irving continued to closely monitor the development of the new government and the fate of Isabella . His official duties as Spanish Minister also involved negotiating American trade interests with Cuba and following the Spanish parliament 's debates over slave trade . He was also pressed into service by the American Minister to the Court of St. James 's in London , Louis McLane , to assist in negotiating the Anglo @-@ American disagreement over the Oregon border that newly elected president James K. Polk had vowed to resolve .

= = = Final years and death = = =

Returning from Spain in 1846 , Irving took up permanent residence at Sunnyside and began work on an " Author 's Revised Edition " of his works for publisher George Palmer Putnam . For its publication , Irving had made a deal that guaranteed him 12 percent of the retail price of all copies sold . Such an agreement was unprecedented at that time . On the death of John Jacob Astor in 1848 , Irving was hired as an executor of Astor 's estate and appointed , by Astor 's will , as first chairman of the Astor library , a forerunner to the New York Public Library .

As he revised his older works for Putnam , Irving continued to write regularly , publishing biographies of the writer and poet Oliver Goldsmith in 1849 and the 1850 work about the Islamic prophet Muhammad . In 1855 , he produced Wolfert 's Roost , a collection of stories and essays he had originally written for The Knickerbocker and other publications , and began publishing at intervals a biography of his namesake , George Washington , a work which he expected to be his masterpiece . Five volumes of the biography were published between 1855 and 1859 . Irving traveled regularly to Mount Vernon and Washington , D.C. for his research , and struck up friendships with Presidents Millard Fillmore and Franklin Pierce .

He continued to socialize and keep up with his correspondence well into his seventies , and his fame and popularity continued to soar . " I don 't believe that any man , in any country , has ever had a more affectionate admiration for him than that given to you in America " , wrote Senator William C. Preston in a letter to Irving . " I believe that we have had but one man who is so much in the popular heart " . By 1859 , author Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. noted that Sunnyside had become " next to Mount Vernon , the best known and most cherished of all the dwellings in our land " .

On the night of November 28 , 1859 , at 9 : 00 pm , only eight months after completing the final volume of his Washington biography , Washington Irving died of a heart attack in his bedroom at Sunnyside at the age of 76 . Legend has it that his last words were : " Well , I must arrange my pillows for another night . When will this end ? " He was buried under a simple headstone at Sleepy Hollow cemetery on December 1 , 1859 .

Irving and his grave were commemorated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his 1876 poem , " In The Churchyard at Tarrytown " , which concludes with :

= = Legacy = =

= = = Literary reputation = = =

Irving is largely credited as the first American Man of Letters , and the first to earn his living solely by his pen . Eulogizing Irving before the Massachusetts Historical Society in December 1859 , his friend , the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow , acknowledged Irving 's role in promoting American literature : " We feel a just pride in his renown as an author , not forgetting that , to his other claims upon our gratitude , he adds also that of having been the first to win for our country an honourable name and position in the History of Letters " .

Irving perfected the American short story , and was the first American writer to place his stories firmly in the United States , even as he poached from German or Dutch folklore . He is also generally credited as one of the first to write both in the vernacular , and without an obligation to the moral or didactic in his short stories , writing stories simply to entertain rather than to enlighten . Irving also encouraged would @-@ be writers . As George William Curtis noted , there " is not a young literary aspirant in the country , who , if he ever personally met Irving , did not hear from him the kindest words of sympathy , regard , and encouragement " .

Some critics , however ? including Edgar Allan Poe ? felt that while Irving should be given credit for being an innovator , the writing itself was often unsophisticated . " Irving is much over @-@ rated " , Poe wrote in 1838 , " and a nice distinction might be drawn between his just and his surreptitious and adventitious reputation ? between what is due to the pioneer solely , and what to the writer " . A critic for the New @-@ York Mirror wrote : " No man in the Republic of Letters has been more overrated than Mr. Washington Irving " . Some critics noted especially that Irving , despite being an American , catered to British sensibilities and , as one critic noted , wrote " of and for England , rather than his own country " .

Other critics were inclined to be more forgiving of Irving 's style . William Makepeace Thackeray was the first to refer to Irving as the " ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old " , a banner picked up by writers and critics throughout the 19th and 20th centuries . " He is the first of the American humorists , as he is almost the first of the American writers " , wrote critic H.R. Hawless in 1881 , " yet belonging to the New World , there is a quaint Old World flavor about him " .

Early critics often had difficulty separating Irving the man from Irving the writer ? " The life of Washington Irving was one of the brightest ever led by an author " , wrote Richard Henry Stoddard , an early Irving biographer ? but as years passed and Irving 's celebrity personality faded into the background , critics often began to review his writings as all style , no substance . " The man had no message " , said critic Barrett Wendell . Yet , critics conceded that despite Irving 's lack of sophisticated themes ? Irving biographer Stanley T. Williams could be scathing in his assessment of Irving 's work ? most agreed he wrote elegantly .

= = = Impact on American culture = = =

Irving popularized the nickname " Gotham " for New York City , later used in Batman comics and movies as the name of Gotham City , and is credited with inventing the expression " the almighty dollar " .

The surname of his Dutch historian , Diedrich Knickerbocker , is generally associated with New

York and New Yorkers , and can still be seen across the jerseys of New York 's professional basketball team , albeit in its more familiar , abbreviated form , reading simply Knicks . In Bushwick , Brooklyn , a neighborhood of New York City , there are two parallel streets named Irving Avenue and Knickerbocker Avenue ; the latter forms the core of the neighborhood 's shopping district .

One of Irving 's most lasting contributions to American culture is in the way Americans perceive and celebrate Christmas . In his 1812 revisions to A History of New York , Irving inserted a dream sequence featuring St. Nicholas soaring over treetops in a flying wagon ? a creation others would later dress up as Santa Claus . In his five Christmas stories in The Sketch Book , Irving portrayed an idealized celebration of old @-@ fashioned Christmas customs at a quaint English manor , that depicted harmonious warm @-@ hearted English Christmas festivities he experienced while staying in Aston Hall , Birmingham , England , that had largely been abandoned . He used text from The Vindication of Christmas (London 1652) of old English Christmas traditions , he had transcribed into his journal as a format for his stories . The book contributed to the revival and reinterpretation of the Christmas holiday in the United States .

In his biography of Christopher Columbus , Irving introduced the erroneous idea that Europeans believed the world to be flat prior to the discovery of the New World . Borrowed from Irving , the flat @-@ Earth myth has been taught in schools as fact to many generations of Americans .

The American painter John Quidor based many of his paintings on scenes from the works of Irving about Dutch New York , including such paintings as Ichabod Crane Flying from the Headless Horseman (1828) , The Return of Rip Van Winkle (1849) , and The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane (1858) .

= = = Memorials = = =

= = = = Artwork = = = =

As noted below , his portrait appeared on the bank notes of Irving Trust and contributed to their wide appeal .

As pictured above , a 1940 USPS stamp is dedicated to Washington Irving .

The Washington Irving Memorial by Daniel Chester French stands near the entrance to Sunnyside in the next village over , Irvington , which renamed itself from Dearman in his memory .

= = = = Literature = = = =

His name is frequently mentioned in Joseph Heller 's novel Catch @-@ 22 (1961) , in a recurring theme wherein his name is signed by other people to documents , which triggers several military investigations as to who Washington Irving is .

= = = = Municipalities = = = =

(Ordered alphabetically , by state)

The Chicago , Illinois neighborhood of Irving Park is also named after him .

The Indianapolis , Indiana neighborhood of Irvington is named after Washington Irving .

In 1854 , the village of Dearman , New York changed its name , by popular vote , to " Irvington " , to honor Washington Irving , who was still alive at that time and living in nearby " Sunnyside " ? which is today preserved as a museum . Influential residents of the village prevailed upon the Hudson River Railroad , which had reached the village by 1849 , to change the name of the train station to " Irvington " , and also convinced the Postmaster to change the name of the local post office as well . It was thus under the name of " Irvington " that the village incorporated on April 16 , 1872 .

The city of Irving , Texas , states that it is named for Washington Irving . Local historians believe that Irving co @-@ founders Otis Brown and J. O. Schulze decided in 1902 to name the city after the favorite author of Otis Brown 's wife , Netta Barcus Brown . Schulze , a graduate engineer from

the University of Iowa and member of the Washington Irving Literary Society , also was partial to the name Irving . The Irving City Council officially adopted author Washington Irving as the city 's namesake in 1998 .

The town of Knickerbocker , Texas , was founded by two of Irving 's nephews who named the town in honor of their uncle 's literary pseudonym .

= = = Organizations and enterprises = = =

West of Irvington and Tarrytown , New York , over the Catskills and in the Finger Lakes , Cornell University 's oldest continuous student @-@ run organization , The Irving Literary Society , is named for Washington Irving .

The Irving Trust Corporation (now the Bank of New York Mellon Corporation) was named after him . Since there was not yet a federal currency in 1851 , each bank issued its own paper and those institutions with the most appealing names found their certificates more widely accepted . His portrait appeared on the bank 's notes and contributed to their wide appeal .

= = = Outdoor areas and structures = = =

Visitors to Christ Episcopal Church in Tarrytown , where Irving served as a vestryman in the last years of his life , can see his pew .

Washington Irving 's home , Sunnyside , is still standing , just south of the Tappan Zee Bridge in Tarrytown , New York . The original house and the surrounding property were once owned by 18th @-@ century colonialist Wolfert Acker , about whom Irving wrote his sketch Wolfert 's Roost (the name of the house) . The house is now owned and operated as a historic site by Historic Hudson Valley and is open to the public for tours .

Throughout the United States , there are many schools named after Irving or after places in his fictional works .

The Community Area of Irving Park in Chicago was named in Irving 's honor .

A Washington Irving Memorial Park and Arboretum is located in Bixby , Oklahoma .

Washington Street and Irving Street in Birmingham , England .

= = Works = =

= = Coordinates = =