



BIOGRAPHY

O. Henry was born William Sidney Porter on September 11, 1862, near Greensboro, North Carolina. He moved to Texas in 1882. He first settled in Cotulla, where he worked on a ranch as a sheep herder, before making his way to Austin in 1884. There he met Athol Estes Roach, with whom he shared an affinity for singing and playing music. They eloped in 1887. That same year, Porter got a job as a draftsman at the Texas General Land Office. During the four-year period he was employed there, Athol gave birth to a daughter named Margaret. In 1891, out of work at the Land Office, Porter was hired as a teller at the First National Bank

of Austin. Soon thereafter, the Porter family moved into the Queen Anne-style cottage that now serves as the O. Henry Museum.

Business between the bank and its clients was conducted in a fast and loose manner. This led to inconsistencies in Porter's books, which were revealed when a federal banking examiner arrived on the scene in 1894. It's still up for debate whether Porter had siphoned money for his personal use, or whether his competing interest in writing, illustrating, and publishing his weekly humor rag *The Rolling Stone* made him inept as a banker. Regardless, Porter was convicted of embezzlement, and in 1898 he began a five-year sentence



in federal prison in Columbus, Ohio.



During this time, Porter earnestly assumed the pen name O. Henry and set about transforming himself into the famed short story writer who would go on to author such universal classics as "Gifts of the Magi," "The Ransom of Red Chief," and "The Cop and the Anthem." Upon his release from prison, Porter relocated to New York City, where he enjoyed a considerable amount of success before succumbing to cirrhosis on June 5, 1910. To this day, Porter's stories, known for their twist endings, continue to resonate with readers around the world.

SELECTED READING

Alias O. Henry, by Gerald Langford

Hard to Forget: The Young O. Henry, by Lollie Cave Wilson

Time to Write: How William Sidney Porter Became O. Henry, by Trueman E. O'Quinn and Jenny Lind Porter