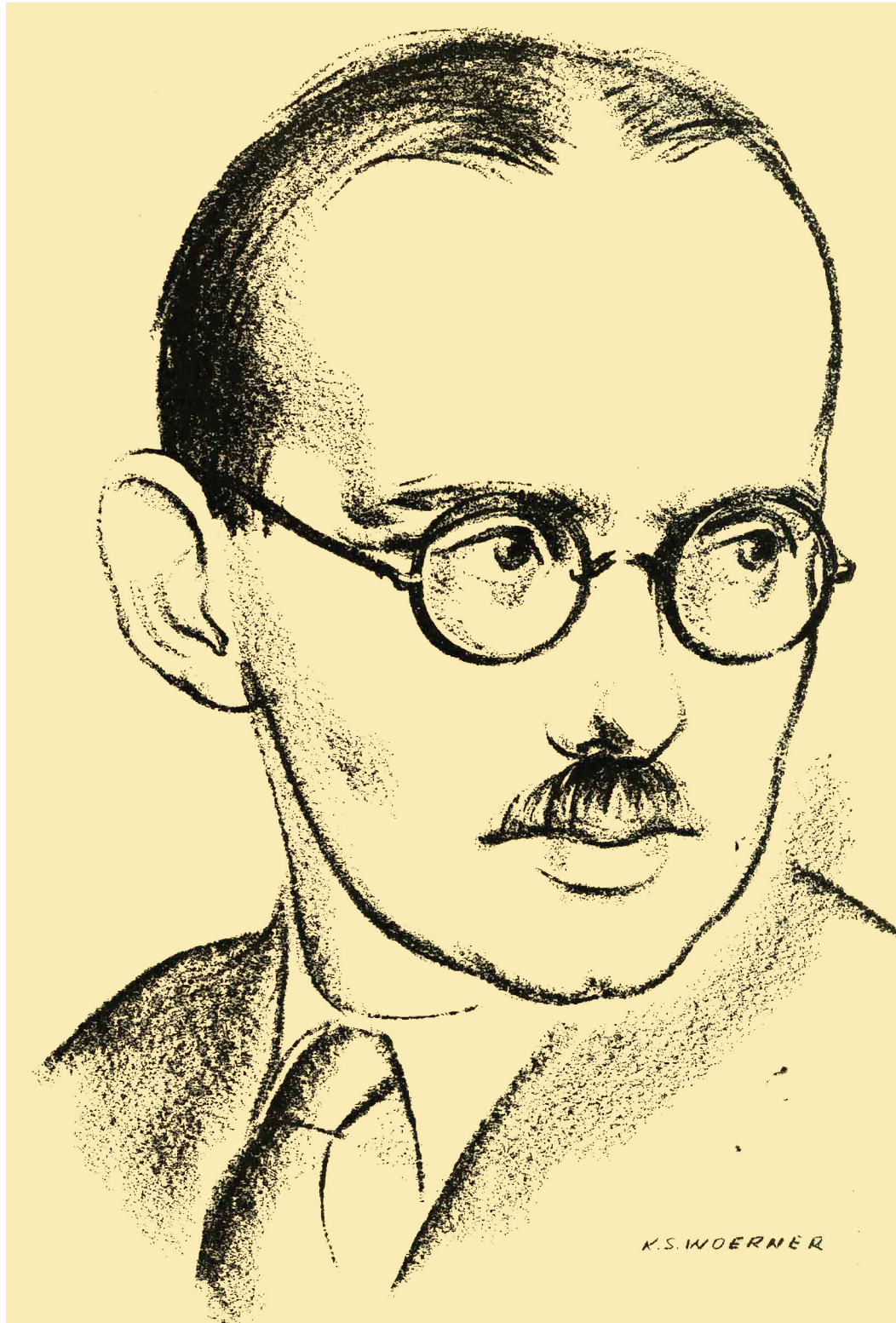


# Stephen Vincent Benét

Author (1898–1943)



Benét was a poet, short story writer, and novelist best known for his book-length narrative poem of the Civil War, *John Brown's Body* (1928), for which he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1929.

Benét was born in Pennsylvania, and spent most of his boyhood in California. At age 10 he was sent to the Hitchcock Military Academy in Marin County, California. He attended Yale, where he was a member of Wolf's Head Society and "the power behind the Yale Lit," according to THORNTON WILDER. Benét published his first book of poetry at age 17 and was awarded an M.A. in English upon submission of his third volume of poetry in lieu of a thesis.

Benét's best-known short story, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, won an O. Henry Award in 1937. His poem, *Johnny Appleseed*, written with his wife Rosemary in 1933, was recently published as an illustrated book with an introduction by their son THOMAS BENÉT.

Benét was elected to the Century in 1933, three years after the election of his brother, WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT, a poet and anthologist largely remembered for his desk reference, *Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia*. Stephen served on the Committee on Admissions and penned a poem upon leaving, part of which reads:

So the letters—and we read them—even those in pale blue ink—  
Then we heard from those who knew him and we did our best to think,  
Weigh the merits, give the judgment, without prejudice or blame,  
Mindful of the ship we served in and her old and gallant fame.

Benét died of a heart attack in New York City at the age of 44 and was awarded a posthumous Pulitzer Prize in 1944 for *Western Star*, an unfinished narrative poem on the settling of America.