

## FAMOUS MISSOURI JOURNALISTS

# Eugene Field

Throughout America there are many public schools named "Eugene Field." Who is this man who has been so honored?



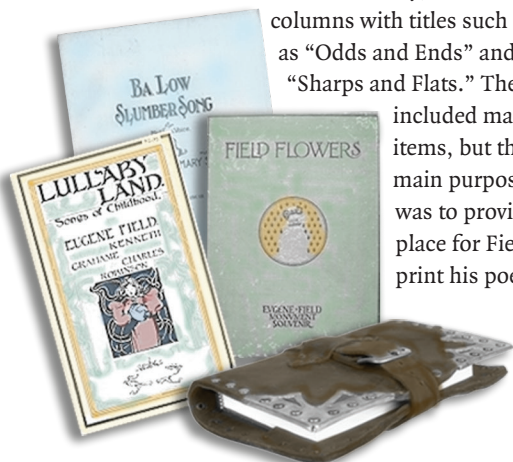
Eugene Field

Eugene Field was born in St. Louis in 1850, and his home is a museum there today. He attended several universities, including the University of Missouri in Columbia. But at these schools he is remembered as a fun-loving student, often using his talent in writing poems to poke fun at his friends and others.

Field's first experience in writing for newspapers began on the Galesburg, Ill., *Register*, which published his contributions. The rest of his career would be spent on newspapers in St. Louis, St. Joseph, Denver and Chicago. For years he was the official poet of the Missouri Publishers Association.

Field spent six months traveling in Europe before settling down to newspaper jobs. Back in St. Joseph in 1873, he married Julia Comstock, and they had eight children. Field frequently credited her with his success, inspiring many of his poems.

In each city, Field wrote columns with titles such as "Odds and Ends" and "Sharps and Flats." They included many items, but their main purpose was to provide a place for Field to print his poems.



Field loved the stage and became friends with many of the actors and actresses. He loved to join them in after-show get-togethers where he would play the piano and sing songs. He wrote about them in his columns, too.

For 12 years he wrote "Sharps and Flats" for a Chicago newspaper. During that time he wrote 2,000 words a day, or some seven million words before his death in 1895 at age 45.

Among those famous poems are "Little Boy Blue," "The Little Peach," and probably better remembered, "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod." The poem "Christmas Treasures" was his first, and it was widely reprinted in other newspapers. Many poems reflected memories of his work in various places, as "St. Jo" did about his Missouri job there.

School children wrote many letters to Field. He would tell them about his writings and his love for books, encouraging them to have the same habits.

He collected thousands of books. He opposed paperback books, believing "a book that is worth reading is surely worth keeping" and it needed a strong cover.

When the news came that Field had died it was reported that "All of the children of the land mourn their laureate."

— written by Dr. William H. Taft,  
Missouri Press Association Historian



Eugene Field House

