

Van Dine, S. S. (1888-1939) Encyclopedia Article

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The "Golden Age" of the detective novel is generally considered to have been the years between World Wars I and II. S. S. Van Dine's first Philo Vance detective novel, *The Benson Murder Case* (1926), is often cited as the book that began this era. Although there were only 12 Vance novels and his popularity fell as quickly as it rose, Vance was by far the bestselling mystery character of his time. Born Willard Huntington Wright in Charlottesville, Virginia, Van Dine first became known as an editor and literary critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and then for *Smart Set* magazine. By the 1930s Van Dine's following as a mystery writer was already beginning to fade. He began writing for motion pictures and contributed a chapter to *The President's Mystery Story*, published by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935.

Further Reading:

Loughery, John. *Alias S. S. Van Dine*. New York, Scribners, 1992.