

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 815

*Commemorating the life of Edgar Allan Poe on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 30, 2009

Agreed to by the Senate, February 5, 2009

WHEREAS, 2009 marks the bicentennial of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, the poet, short-story writer, editor, and literary critic, who was born on January 19, 1809, and died tragically at the age of 40 on October 7, 1849; and

WHEREAS, often called "America's Shakespeare," Edgar Allan Poe was a literary giant of the American Romantic Movement and is best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre; he is considered the inventor of the detective-fiction genre and was a pioneer of the science fiction genre; and

WHEREAS, Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809, where his mother, Elizabeth Arnold Poe, was employed as an actress; and when his mother died in 1811, Edgar Allan Poe was taken in by John Allan, a Richmond tobacco merchant; and

WHEREAS, after attending schools in England and Richmond, Edgar Allan Poe registered at the University of Virginia in 1826 where he joined the Jefferson Literary Society, but the young Poe had to leave the university when John Allan failed to give him enough money for expenses and refused to allow him to continue his studies; and

WHEREAS, after a quarrel, Edgar Allan Poe was forced to leave the Allan home, and he went to live in Boston, where he was successful in publishing *Tamerlane and Other Poems* in 1827; and

WHEREAS, during his early career, Edgar Allan Poe served two years in the United States Army; resided with his aunt, Maria Poe Clemm, in Baltimore; briefly attended the United States Military Academy at West Point; and returned to live with his aunt after being dismissed from the Academy and finally finding himself abandoned by his foster father; while residing in Richmond in 1836, he married his 13-year old cousin, Virginia Clemm; and

WHEREAS, Edgar Allan Poe managed to sell a second book of verse, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*, in 1829; and he began writing haunting prose stories, five of which were published in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* in 1832; and

WHEREAS, while continuing to write, Edgar Allan Poe spent many years working for journals and periodicals as an editor and literary critic, moving between Richmond, where he worked for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, as well as Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City; *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* was published in two volumes in 1840 and *The Raven* became a phenomenal success in 1845; and

WHEREAS, how Edgar Allan Poe died remains a mystery—after lecturing at events in Norfolk and Richmond, he was discovered in Baltimore in an ill and unconscious state and taken to a hospital where he died on October 7, 1849; he is buried at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Baltimore; and

WHEREAS, in January 2009, the Poe Museum in Richmond began a year of exhibits, book signings, lectures, and other educational and cultural opportunities to celebrate Edgar Allan Poe's life and to explore his lasting influence on literature and popular culture; and

WHEREAS, in honor of Edgar Allan Poe's 200th birthday, the United States Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in Richmond on January 16, 2009, featuring the famous portrait of the writer by award-winning artist Michael J. Deas; and

WHEREAS, *Poe Revealed 1809 - 2009* is a cooperative effort among Virginia historic sites, museums, libraries, and performing arts organizations to commemorate the life and literary works of Edgar Allan Poe; and

WHEREAS, the Poe bicentennial consortium that will host events and activities in the year-long celebration of Edgar Allan Poe includes St. John's Church in Richmond, the Historic Richmond Foundation, the Library of Virginia, the University of Virginia, the Casemate Museum at Fort Monroe, and Hanover Tavern; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life, Edgar Alan Poe considered Virginia his home, and once while living in Philadelphia, he expressed his deep devotion to the Commonwealth in an 1841 letter in which he stated, "I am a Virginian"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commemorate the life of Edgar Allan Poe on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to representatives of the Poe bicentennial consortium as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude to the consortium's organizations for their commitment to educating the public

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regarding the life of Edgar Allan Poe and preserving and presenting his works for all to enjoy during the bicentennial and for years to come.