
THE WIZARD OF OZ



(Lyman) Frank Baum (1856–1919)

L. Frank Baum was born in Chittenango, New York, as the son of the oil magnate Benjamin Ward Baum and Cynthia (Stanton) Baum, a women's rights activist. He was privately tutored at home and spent two years at Peekskill Military Academy (1868-69).

In 1873 Baum became a reporter on the *New York World*. Two years later he founded the *New Era* weekly in Pennsylvania. He was a poultry farmer with B.W. Baum and Son and edited *Poultry Record* and wrote columns for *New York Farmer and Dairyman*. In New York Baum acted as George Brooks with May Roberts and the Sterling Comedy in plays which he had written. He owned an opera house in 1882-83, and toured with his own repertory company. In 1882 he married Maud Gage; they had four sons.

Baum returned in 1883 to Syracuse to the family oil business and worked as a salesman in Baum's Ever-Ready Castorine axle grease. His own endeavor was not successful - Baum's Bazaar general store failed in South Dakota, and from 1888 to 1890 he ran the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*. He moved to Chicago, and tried sales positions. In 1897 he founded National Association of Window Trimmers and edited *Show Window* from 1897 to 1902.

Baum made his debut as a novelist with *Mother Goose in Prose* (1897). It was based on stories told to his own children. Its last chapter introduced the farm-girl Dorothy. In 1899 appeared *Father Goose: His Book*, which quickly became a bestseller. Baum's next work was *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a story of little Dorothy from Kansas who is transported by a 'twister' to a magical realm. The book, which was illustrated and decorated by W.W. Denslow, was published at Baum's own expense.

The first of the Oz books was made into a musical in 1901. Since its appearance the story has been filmed many times. Other novels in the series were *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), *Ozma of Oz* (1907), *Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz* (1908), *The Road to Oz* (1909), *The Emerald City of Oz* (1910), *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* (1913), *Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914), *The Scarecrow of Oz* (1915), *The Lost Princess of Oz* (1917), *The Tin Woodman of Oz* (1918), *The Magic of Oz* (1919), *Glinda of Oz* (1920), and *The Visitors from Oz*, which was adapted from a comic strip by Baum and appeared in 1960. Baum's former illustrator W.W. Denslow produced stories with Oz characters in the early 1900s. Although appreciated primarily as children's tales, the Oz books have also been read as incorporating Baum's views on American society. In 1914-15 Baum was the founding director of Oz Film Manufacturing Company (later Dramatic Features Company) in Los Angeles.

During his career Baum wrote more than 60 books, some of them for adults, including *The Last Egyptian* (1908). He gathered material for works aimed at teenagers during his motoring tours across the country and travels in Europe and Egypt.

Born with a congenitally weak heart, Baum was ill through much of his life. He died on May 6, 1919, in Hollywood, where he had moved to a house he called Ozcot. The Oz series was continued by other writers, among them Ruth Plumly Thompson and Baum's great-grand son Roger Baum.