

Timeline of Events in the Life of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

Date: October 16, 1854

Event: Birth of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde

Oscar Wilde was born on October 16, 1854, at 21 Westland Row on the south side of the Liffey River in Dublin, Ireland. His parents were Sir William Wilde, who at the time was Ireland's leading eye and ear surgeon, and Jane Francesca Wilde, a poet with nationalist leanings and who published under the *nom de plume* of "Speranza." Their family home was situated on the north side of Dublin's tony Merrion Square.

Dates: 1864 to 1871

Event: Oscar Wilde's attendance at and graduation from Portuma Royal School for Boys

Oscar was sent by his parents to board at and attend the prestigious Portuma Royal School for Boys just outside of the town of Enniskillen, now in Northern Ireland. The school had been founded in 1608 during the reign of King James I of England.

Dates: 1871-1874

Event: Oscar Wilde's attendance at and graduation from Trinity College Dublin ("TCD")

In 1871, after graduating from Portuma, Oscar enrolled in TCD. During his four-year stay there, Oscar was a high achiever as evidenced by his capturing several important academic awards. He placed first in Classics in his graduation year and also received the college's highest honor for an undergraduate: TCD's Foundation Scholarship. Oscar was also awarded the college's Berkeley Gold Medal in Greek and was granted a scholarship to fund a portion of his costs and expenses at Magdalen College, Oxford.

Dates: 1874-1878

Event: Oscar Wilde's attendance and graduation from Magdalen College, Oxford

While attending college at Oxford, Oscar began to develop a reputation as an aesthete and rebel against the existing academic and social order. He began wearing his hair long and decorated his college room in a lavish and decadent manner. While at Magdalen, he participated in a trip to Greece with one of his TCD professors, John Pentland Mahaffy, and some other students. Upon graduating from Magdalen, Oscar was granted the prestigious Newdigate Prize for his poem, "Ravenna." Upon completing his Oxford career, Oscar moved to London.

Dates: January 3, 1882 to November 27, 1882

Event: Oscar Wilde's (almost) year-long tour of the United States of America

On January 3, 1882, Oscar arrived by ship in New York City's harbor to begin a lecture tour of the United States, which terminated on his departure from the Port of New York in late-November of that same year. Upon Oscar's arrival in New York City, he was asked by a U.S. Customs officer if he had anything to declare, to which Oscar famously responded that he had "nothing to declare but my genius." In 260 days of crisscrossing the USA and visiting Canada, Oscar gave 140 lectures. Not only did Oscar lecture in metropolises such as New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and Toronto, but he also made many stops at places such as Detroit Michigan and Cooperstown, New York. Here is the link to a comprehensive list of all places visited by Oscar during this tour. <https://www.oscarwildeinamerica.org/lectures-1882/the-full-list.html><https://www.oscarwildeinamerica.org/lectures-1882/the-full-list.html>. Also during these travels, he enjoyed personal visits with the American poets Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walt Whitman and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. Upon leaving New York City to return to London, he was asked by a reporter about his American visit, to which he responded as follows: "They say that when good Americans die, they go to Paris. I would add that when bad Americans die, they stay in America."

Date: May 29, 1884

Event: Oscar Wilde's marriage to Constance Lloyd in London

Constance Mary Lloyd was four years younger than Oscar and was the daughter of a Queens Counsel in London when he expired when Constance was 16 years old. Thereafter, she was raised by her mother and uncle in the City of London. While on their respective visits to Dublin, this couple met and began a courtship. Constance accepted Oscar's marriage proposal and they married in St. James Church in Paddington, London on May 29, 1884. Shortly thereafter, they took an apartment at 16 Tite Street, Chelsea, London, not too far from Cheyne Walk, where one of my cousins lived before she passed away last year.

Date: 1887

Event: Oscar Wilde's appointment as editor of the London magazine, "The Lady's World"

The magazine, "The Lady's World," was published in London and carried articles on a broad range of topics including parenting, culture, politics and fashion. After his appointment to this post, Wilde announced that he intended to make this publication "the organized organ for the expression of woman's opinions on all subjects of literature, art and modern life, and yet it should be a magazine that men could read with pleasure, and consider it a privilege to contribute to."

Date: June 20, 1890

Event: The publication of Oscar Wilde's only novel, "The Portrait of Dorian Grey"

In 1890, the prestigious "Lippincott's Monthly Magazine" published Oscar Wilde's novella, a dark story about excessive vanity, obsession with physical beauty, and consequent self-destructive behavior by the novel's protagonist. This work was popular upon its appearance but gave rise to substantial literary criticism on moral grounds. One year later, Wilde substantially revised and expanded the work's length, which revision was thereafter published by the London-based enterprise, Ward, Lock & Company.

Date: 1891

Event: Oscar Wilde becomes acquainted with Lord Alfred Bruce "Bosie" Douglas and their friendship developed into an intense homoerotic relationship

Lord Alfred Bruce "Bosie" Douglas was the third son of John Douglas, the Ninth Marquess of Queensbury and his first wife. Lord Alfred was sixteen years younger than Oscar and had attended, but not graduated from, Magdalen College, Oxford. He and Oscar had met through an introduction made by a cousin of Lord Alfred, and soon enough Oscar and Lord Albert became inseparable. It is likely that Lord Alfred expanded Oscar's sexual horizons by introducing him to having sex with male adolescents, many of whom proved later to be of low social standing. This relationship created a great distance between Oscar and Constance, which eventually led to her divorcing her husband in 1898. In addition, upon the discovery by Lord Alfred's father of the nature and extent of this relationship, the Marquess determined to cause the termination of this long-term affair and the destruction of Oscar's life.

Dates: 1892-1895

Events: Oscar Wilde's success on the London stage with the performance of four plays in London's West End

Between 1892 and 1895, four plays by Oscar Wilde opened at West End theatres in London and all were successful. At this point in his life, Oscar was at the zenith of his career, although his world would be in ruins by the spring of 1895. The title of these four plays are (i) "Lady Windermere's Fan" (opened February 22, 1892), (ii) "A Woman of No Importance" (opened April 19, 1893), (iii) "An Ideal Husband" (opened January 3, 1895), and (iv) "The Importance of Being Ernest" (opened on February 14, 1895).

Date: February 18-April, 1895

Event: The Ninth Marquess of Queensbury leaves his calling card for Oscar Wilde at London's Albemarle Club addressing Oscar as a "Sodomite," and Wilde subsequently commences a criminal libel proceeding against the Marquess

Sometime in early-1894, the Marquess discovered that his son was engaged in a long-running, homosexual relationship with Oscar Wilde and, being as hot-headed as he was, he vowed to end this affair and destroy Wilde in the process. On February 18, 1895, the Marquess delivered

his calling card to the front desk of the Albemarle Club with the written direction that it be delivered to the “sodomite,” Oscar Wilde. The club thereafter advised Wilde of this delivery, which caused him to seek counsel from his London lawyers concerning the filing of a charge of criminal libel against the Marquess. Against the advice of his lawyers, Wilde insisted that the charge be filed and the law firm complied. At trial, counsel for the Marquess, Edward Carson, advised the court that he would call as witnesses certain “young men,” who would testify as to the sexual escapades engaged in over time by Wilde and these proffered witnesses. At that point, Wilde’s trial counsel, Edward Clarke, advised Wilde to dismiss his suit against the Marquess and subsequently Wilde agreed to do so. Thereupon, Clarke advised the court of this withdrawal but in the meantime, Carson had forwarded the witness statements of the young men to the public prosecutor urging that criminal action be taken against Wilde. Based on a review of these statements, the Director of Public Prosecutions complied with the request and an arrest warrant was duly issued against Wilde, charging him with “gross indecency” as prescribed in the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1895.

Date: April 26, 1895

Event: Trial begins on the gross indecency charge against Oscar Wilde

Trial on the charge of gross indecency began in the Old Bailey on April 26, 1895 against Wilde and an alleged co-conspirator but resulted in a hung jury verdict against the defendants. Thereafter, a second trial was held on these same charges and, at its conclusion, the jury returned guilty verdicts on seven of the charges against Wilde. On May 25, 1895, the court sentenced Wilde to two years of hard labor in prison, and he was thereafter remanded to prison to serve out his sentence.

Date: May 19, 1897

Event: Release of Oscar Wilde from prison after serving his two-year sentence

Upon completing his sentence, Oscar Wilde was released from prison, and the next year, his most famous poem, “The Ballad of Reading Goal” was published.

Date: April 7, 1898

Event: Constance Lloyd dies in Genoa, Italy

On April 7, 1898, after having undergone unsuccessful surgery for an unknown ailment, Constance Lloyd Wilde expired in Genoa, Italy. Her remains are buried in Genoa’s Cimitero monumentale di Staglieno underneath a cross-shaped monument decorated with green shamrocks. Here is a link to a very short, YouTube video displaying her grave and the monument. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ugCNcCwyNg>

Date: November 30, 1900

Event: Oscar Wilde dies in Paris, France

On November 30, 1900, Oscar Wilde expired in his hotel room in Paris from complications caused by cerebral meningitis. His remains are buried under a monumental stone sculpture in Paris' Père Lachaise Cemetery. Here is the link to another YouTube video that finishes up with a visit to Wilde's grave in Père Lachaise. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akGuDT_kDJk.