

MANHATTAN'S HISTORIC LANDMARKS & DISTRICTS

Damon Runyon House

The Damon Runyon House is historically significant for its association with Damon Runyon, a prominent newspaper columnist, sportswriter, novelist, playwright and screenwriter in the first half of the twentieth century. The author of well known musical works such as *Guy and Dolls*, Damon Runyon is regarded as the “father of Broadway” in New York City and the creator of “Runyonese”, a syntax and grammar he invented to convey New York vernacular speech in the 1920s.

The house was built in 1880 by Damon’s parents, Alfred Lee (A.L.) and Libbie Damon Runyan. A.L. came to Manhattan as a young boy in 1855 with an immigration party aboard the steamship *Hartford*. A.L. worked for two Manhattan newspapers and was among the first volunteers for the 19th Regiment, which

was a support regiment in General Sherman’s campaign to suppress western Indians. A.L. co-founded a new paper called the *Manhattan*



Damon Runyon House, 400 Osage Street

Enterprise, which became the *Mercury* in 1888, and which continues today as the city’s only daily newspaper.

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Damon was born in the front parlor of the house in 1880 and lived there until moving with the family to Pueblo, Colorado in 1891. Damon moved alone to Denver to work as a cub reporter at age 14, fought in the Spanish American War at the age of 18, and soon thereafter was hired as a reporter by William Randolph Hearst for the New York Sporting News. Runyon's first short stories centered on the underworld of sports and organized crime, but he also wrote about his and his father's life in the West in small towns like Pueblo and Manhattan.

*Source: Kansas State Historical Society
National Register of Historic Places - Nomination Form*