#### F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1896 - 1940: Between Laurels

**September 24, 1896**: Into a family that traces its ancestry to the author of "The Star Spangled Banner," Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald is born in his parents' house on Laurel Avenue in St. Paul, Minnesota.

#### The Way Up

Although Fitzgerald's father went bankrupt, Fitzgerald still played with the rich kids in town. This paradox would later inform his fiction. His awareness of his situation sharpened during his years at Princeton, where he studied from 1913 to 1917 until he accepted a commission from the U.S. Army. He never saw combat. During World War I, Fitzgerald was stationed near Montgomery, Alabama, where he began revising what became his first novel, This Side of Paradise (1920). There he also met the love of his life, Zelda Sayre, the charming, mercurial daughter of a judge. Fitzgerald's early literary successes soon made him and Zelda celebrities of the Jazz Age—a term he coined. During the 1920s, Zelda served as his editor, confidante, and rival. Their appetite for excess made them notorious in an age when excess was the norm. The Fitzgeralds moved to France in 1924 with their young daughter, Frances (nicknamed Scottie), where they fell among a group of American expatriate artists whom the writer Gertrude Stein christened the Lost Generation. In 1925 publisher Charles Scribner's Sons came out with Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, which has become his most enduring work.

#### The Way Down

Fitzgerald would not publish another novel for nine years. In 1932, Zelda suffered a breakdown from which she never fully recovered. She spent most of her remaining days in mental institutions. Fitzgerald sold stories to The Saturday Evening Post and Esquire to keep financially afloat. Implicitly acknowledging his wife's mental illness and his own alcoholism, he drew on their life abroad in the novel Tender Is the Night (1934). Fitzgerald relocated to Hollywood in 1937 to write screenplays. His sole screen credit from this period is for the film Three Comrades (1938). It joins his other script credit, Pusher-in-the-Face (1929), from an earlier California stint. Eventually Fitzgerald began sustained work on his novel The Last Tycoon (1941). Tragically, his end came before the book's did. Several chapters shy of finishing, Fitzgerald died of a heart attack in the apartment of his Hollywood companion, columnist Sheilah Graham, while eating a chocolate bar and listening to Beethoven's Eroica symphony.

**December 21, 1940**: Fitzgerald dies of a heart attack. His final address: 1403 N. Laurel Avenue, Los Angeles, California.