

ROSALIND RUSSELL

"Live, live, live. Life is a banquet and most of you poor suckers are starving to death."

— From Auntie Mame

Comedy, wit, and style helped transform Waterbury native Rosalind Russell from a local tomboy into one of Hollywood's greatest motion picture stars. Her mother was a fashion editor for Vogue magazine and her father was a trial lawyer and bank director. The named her after the steamship S.S. Rosalind.

After graduating from Notre Dame Academy in downtown Waterbury, Russell attended Marymount College for two years, leaving to study at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, from which she graduated in 1929.

From 1930 to 1934 she worked in stock companies and appeared in various Broadway plays. In 1934, while touring in *The Second Man*, she was seen by a talent scout and directed to Hollywood. She displayed incredible versatility during a career which began that year with *Evelyn Prentice* and ended in 1972 with *The Crooked Hearts*. Her four Oscar nominations demonstrated her excellence in comedy - *My Sister Eileen* in 1942 and *Auntie Mame* in 1958 and drama - *Mourning Becomes Electra* in 1947 and *Sister Kenny* in 1946. Many authorities believe she should have been nominated for *His Gal Friday*, *Picnic* and *Gypsy*. She is best remembered for her comedies which ranged from sophisticated to zany.

Often cast as the independent, not-quite-beautiful type who won men with her smarts in words and clothes, Russell frequently played career women, including doctors, lawyers, and executives. These businesswomen characters matched wits and bossed around the leading men of the day including Clark Gable, Cary Grant, Walter Pidgeon, and Fred MacMurray.

Russell starred on Broadway with *Wonderful Town* in 1953 for which she won a Tony award and *Auntie Mame* in 1956. She received the Academy's Hersholt Humanitarian Award in 1972, won a Golden Globe Award as best actress for "*Mourning Becomes Electra*" and was presented the National Artists' Award in 1974. She appeared on the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Life* magazines.

Her autobiography is entitled *Life is a Banquet* and tells the story of "Rosalind Russell Homecoming Day" in Waterbury which was broadcast on the Dave Garroway Show from the Elton Hotel on August 18, 1955, the day of "The Flood". The Rosalind Russell State Theater was named for her that day. She also was the co-author of the screenplay for *The Unguarded Moment* and, (using her mother's name), *Mrs. Pollifax-Spy*.

She died on November 28, 1976 in Beverly Hills after a forty year career that included fifty-one motion pictures.

