



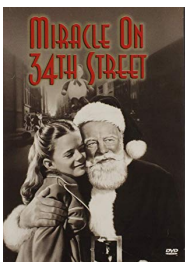
Hollywood: Her Story December 2019 ENewsletter Christmas Movies

As we approach the holiday season, we are reminded of the Christmas movies that warm our hearts and have become movie classics. Two specific examples are *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. In this month's newsletter, we focus on the actresses in the leading roles in those movies: Donna Reed and Natalie Wood.



Donna Reed won the 1954 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in *From Here to Eternity*, but is probably best known for her role as Mary Hatch Bailey in the 1946 movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. Reed grew up in Iowa and went to Los Angeles to attend college. Although she had no intention of becoming an actress, she was asked to do screen tests and signed with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) in 1941. A starlet who played love interests, she was also a popular pin-up girl during World War II and wrote response letters to the troops.

MGM lent her to RKO studios to act in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Reed said it was "the most difficult film I ever did. No director [Frank Capra] ever demanded as much of me." The movie has been named by the American Film Institute as one of the best 100 American films ever made. She continued to act in movies in the 1950s and had her own television show from 1958 to 1966 for which she won a Golden Globe award and received Emmy nominations.



Natalie Wood was eight years old when she co-starred in *Miracle on 34th Street*. She had begun her acting career at age four and received three Oscar nominations before she was 25. Born in San Francisco to Russian immigrants, Wood made her film debut in *Happy Land* in 1943. She caught the attention of the director, Irving Pichel. After two additional films with him, her mother signed her to a contract with 20th Century Fox and she portrayed Susan Walker in *Miracle on 34th Street*. This classic movie has been deemed culturally significant and has been selected for preservation by the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress.

Wood's career blossomed and as a teenager she was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for *Rebel Without a Cause* (1956). As she transitioned to an adult, her career continued on an upward trajectory. She was nominated for two Best Actress Oscars – for *Splendor in the Grass* (1962) and *Love with the Proper Stranger* (1964). Wood continued to work in film and television until her untimely death at age 43.

Women in front of and behind the camera make the movies that we all welcome into our hearts and homes. Women across all the areas of moviemaking from actress to animator, editor to stuntwoman, costume designer to screenwriter, producer to director have contributed to the success of the movie industry since its founding in the 1890s. Help us celebrate these women who are written into movie history in *Hollywood: Her Story*.

Jill S.Tietjen and Barbara Bridges

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