

GOING HOLLYWOOD

By Ellen Knight¹

In 1936, a member of Winchester High School's latest graduating class made the headlines for having a role in a Hollywood movie. That summer a group of Winchester residents became extras in a "March of Time" documentary. But anyone wanting to see these people at the movies had to go out of town, since Winchester did not have a moving picture theater.

For about three decades Winchester residents fought for and against licensing a movie theater in town. At the same time, several of its young people, who not only wanted to see movies but also be in them, were heading off to Hollywood and New York to try to break into show business and the movies.

Though the struggle to get a movie theater in Winchester was long and contentious, in 1936 Winchester was finally on its way to having its first movie house when the Board of Selectmen granted the first license to show moving pictures to the E. M. Loew chain.

By that time, former Winchester resident Bette Davis was already a success in the movies. Winchester's Dudley Murphy was out in Hollywood, too, directing films. Then, in February 1936, Winchester's Martha Tibbetts made the news for having a supporting role in Howard Hawks' *Ceiling Zero*.

Whatever side one took on the movie theater controversy, everyone acknowledged that there were good films out there, and it was always newsworthy when a local went Hollywood. The list of film people who came out of Winchester includes actors, directors, and producers, some of whom won Oscars, Golden Globe, and Obie awards. Presented here are short notices of some of them, in chronological order.

THURSTON HALL (1882-1958)

"The highest point in everything is only met by work and study," Winchester resident Ernest Thurston Hall (1882 - 1958) observed about learning on the job. In his case, the job was acting and his first professional engagements were on the stage. Later he went into movies and television becoming a familiar figure on the silver screen. Often, wherever there was a role for an important, authoritative, or even pompous figure like a senator, bank president, or successful businessman, it was likely to go to Thurston Hall. His most memorable television role was as Mr. Schuyler, Cosmo Topper's boss in the television series *Topper* (1953-55) with Leo G. Carroll.

Hall felt encouraged to take up acting as a career by his successes in Winchester. Hall lived in the town from about age 8, having acquired a step-father from Winchester. He was born in Jamaica Plain, the son of Edward K. and Ellen (Freeman) Hall. In 1890, Ellen Hall became the fourth wife of Samuel S Holton, a long-time Winchester resident and former member of the Board of

Selectman and School Committee. Two years after he died in 1894, Ellen Hall Holton married Winchester native Henry Chamberlain Blood (1851-1919). From 1896 through the time he left Winchester to become an actor, Hall lived with his mother, step-father, and sister at 24 Vine Street.

Hall attended the Wadleigh Grammar School (class of 1896) and Winchester High School. He played on the football team and had his first theatrical experience. "While attending Winchester High School, he used to amuse his fellow students with impromptu performances and he usually participated in the school shows at the town hall. His mother was convinced that he would be a great actor." During the 1899-1900 school year, he was on the Recorder editorial staff, football team, and assumed the role of Charles Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer*.



*Hall in a photo of the
1899 WHS football
team*

After high school, he had a job at the post office but left that in 1901 to go on the stage, becoming one of the first Winchester residents to enter show business professionally. He toured with New England stock companies and went to England. Forming his own troupe, he toured America, Africa and New Zealand. He also got roles in Broadway productions. In March 1903, Winchester Star readers learned that "he has traveled over 16,000 miles and been in 25 states in the union and two provinces of Canada."

For a few years, little news items about Hall would appear in the local paper. For example, on October 1903, Winchester read that his mother journeyed to New York to visit her son before he left for Kentucky, where "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" premiered. Playing "Mr. Bob," "Mr. Hall was finely noticed by the local papers." In 1904, it was reported that some Winchester friends had gone to New York to see the show and later that Hall had entertained members of the cast at his Winchester home. Following the example of his step-father, Hall became a member of local masonic lodge in 1905.



However, he began to lose his ties to Winchester with the death of his mother in 1905. In June 1906, *Star* readers learned that Hall, "well known in theatrical circles" and having "many friends and acquaintances in town" had married Lucille Perry of Winthrop, the ceremony performed by the pastor of Winchester's First Congregational Church. It was said they would reside in Chicago. The next family wedding was in 1907 when his stepfather married Annie (Hall) Burpee. His step-father died in 1919.

From about 1915, Hall appeared in several silent films, including the 1917 version of *Cleopatra*, in which he played Mark Antony to Theda Bara's *Cleopatra*. He returned to Broadway and went back to Hollywood, appearing in – to name a very few – such pictures as *Pride of the Marines* (1936), *Theodora Goes Wild* (1936) with Irene Dunne, *Out West with the Hardys* (1938) with Mickey Rooney, *You Can't Cheat an Honest Man* (1939) with W.C. Fields, *Dodge City* (1939), *The Blue Bird* (1940) with Shirley Temple, *Tuxedo Junction* (1941), *The Great Gildersleeve* (1942),

Sherlock Holmes in Washington (1943), Brewster's Millions (1945), Secret Life of Walter Mitty (1947), and Carson City (1952). On television, he was a guest star on Adventures of Rin Tin, The Lone Ranger, Circus Boy, and Maverick.

REPORTING TO WINCHESTER

By request, in 1902, Hall wrote a few articles on stage life for the local newspaper. He titled the first "Anticipation" "to signify those days and weeks of the actor's forced idleness and those months in the summer when he is wondering 'what next?'"

"Many are the highest and best in the profession who roam up and down Broadway, the home of all great theatrical enterprises, endeavoring to place themselves for next season." He concluded that "success is due, not wholly to luck but to untiring perseverance and steadiness. There is a place for those who are fitted for it, and the greater the experience the larger the place."

In the article "Rehearsal" he revealed that "my first experience with a repertoire company was extremely tedious and difficult. In five days I was obliged to get up in eight parts of no mean length....But it was a good experience and the very best training for a starter. One will surely find out after a few months in that life whether or no he should have been a ploughman instead of an actor."



He said he had to learn how to walk, stand still, talk, laugh, and take criticism on all sorts of ordinary behavior. Of his current engagement he wrote, "On the first day of rehearsal it became necessary for me to learn how to rise from a chair. The manager said I unfolded like a jack-knife, a remark which never cut me at all for I have been used to such remarks. I remember playing a soldier in 'The House of Barcarolle' in Winchester in ninety-eight, I was told by a friend that I marched like a goat. In one town this year someone said I made goo-goo-eyes. Well, we expect everything like that. After all, rehearsals are a pleasure, tiresome as they are. They are the best school, the only school for an actor, and to me are very pleasant. The highest point in everything is only met by work and study."

About "First Night" Hall wrote that "waiting for our cue, our feeling is very similar to that felt by the football player just before the kickoff. As soon as the ball soars into air he's off. All feeling of heaviness about the legs are gone, his nerves get steady and he is in to win. So it is with the actor. As soon as he enters the scene, assumes his character, he forgets everything in love of his art."

He told several stories of scenes being ruined by small things, mostly the lack of the right prop. "Playing DeVillefort in Monte Cristo, I made the arrest of Edmond Dantes.... I made my entrance, spoke my lines which finish 'behold the accusing papers,' and I reached for the papers...they did not materialize. It was absolutely necessary to get those papers so I wrote a few lines of my own and went off in search of them.... I couldn't find a piece of white paper anywhere. ...At last,

desperate, I seized a newspaper, forgetting that Dantes would have to open it. Poor Dantes, when he opened that paper to see the accusation, his eye fell on a black heading reading 'Your liver is bad.' It broke him up completely and the newspaper did likewise to the audience."

At the end of the third article, Hall wrote that he would tell stories about incidences and accidents in a future number to be titled "On the Road," however, that never appeared. Although Hall discontinued writing for the paper, the editor did not forget him but continued from time to time to carry reports about Hall's career, ending with his obituary in 1958.

DUDLEY MURPHY (1897-1968) & CARLENE BOWLES MURPHY SAMOILOFF (1900-1985)

Children of two artists, Dudley Murphy and his sister Carlene followed careers in film and theater. Born in Winchester to Hermann Dudley Murphy and Caroline Bowles, the siblings were "rooted in art," as Dudley's his biographer Susan Delson wrote of him.² They lived at 314 Highland Avenue in a house designed by their father. The children attended Winchester schools, and father and son sailed with the Winchester Boat Club on the Mystic Lakes. However, after their parents divorced in 1916, Dudley and Carlene moved with their mother to California. (The Murphy house was occupied by Sonny Tufts' family (q.v.) before they moved to Stratford Road.)



Murphy returned east to study at MIT and trained to become a Navy pilot during World War I. After the war he returned to California where he became attracted to movie-making. His first job was as an extra on a Cecil B. DeMille film. He then got a job as a film critic but wanted to make films not write about them. He got several jobs in studio drafting and art departments. After raising some money, Murphy made his first movies, short experimental silent films, "short on plot, long on beauty shots, and inspired by classical music," as Delson described them.

His career took him to New York City, to Paris where he worked with Ezra Pound, Man Ray, George Antheil, and others on an experimental film titled *Ballet mécanique*, and back to California. With the advent of talkies, Murphy turned away from art to reality in his pictures. His short film *St. Louis Blues* with Bessie Smith playing the St. Louis Woman, was a solid hit with a nation swept up by the Jazz Age. Murphy went to work for Paramount until David O. Selznick became head of production at RKO and gave Murphy his first opportunity to be sole director of a feature-length talking picture, *The Sport Parade*, starring Joel McCrea.

Murphy's goal, however, was to achieve independence from the Hollywood system. What is probably his most famous film grew out of his own idea of bringing Eugene O'Neil's play *The*

Emperor Jones to the screen. The play was adapted by DuBose Heyward (author of *Porgy and Bess*) and the movie starred Paul Robeson. Among the many newspapers which ran reviews, *The Boston Traveler* remembered his local connection and ran a story "Director of Film 'Emperor Jones' is the Son of Winchester Artist" and (tactlessly) captioned a photo of Murphy with his father and sister after the local premiere, "A Winchester Murphy Makes Good."

Murphy's career in film-making continued through the 1940s with a few further feature films for major studios and several soundies (three-minute musical films displayed on the Panoram, a coin-operated film jukebox). He directed his last two movies in Mexico in the late 1940s.

In one known instance, Murphy worked with another Winchester resident who made his way into movies, Thurston Hall (q.v.). Their joint movie was *Don't Gamble with Love*, released in 1936, the year Winchester finally granted the first license for a moving picture theater in town.

Meanwhile, Carlene Murphy studied dance in California with Ruth St. Denis and in New York, where she also studied production at the Neighborhood Playhouse. She spent four years at the American Laboratory Theatre doing scenery, costuming and acting. When a senior in high school, she became intrigued with Russian theater. While in Europe several years later, she arranged to travel with Stanislowski's Moscow Art Theater, becoming the first and only American to tour with that group. During their world tour of 1922, she appeared on stage in Boston and there met a young Russian, Alexander Samoiloff (1902-1977), who was acting as an extra while working on an engineering degree at Harvard University. They married in 1928 and moved into the Murphy home on Highland Avenue. Samoiloff taught acting at Tufts and lectured on theater at colleges and universities. She brought her talents to bear locally, working with the Winchester Community Theater and forming a Children's Theater School in 1956.

Though she visited her brother in California, Samoiloff did not become part of the Hollywood scene. However, she brought some of it to Winchester. Due to her many activities and friendships in the theater, various famous actors such as Sir John Gielgud, Vivian Leigh, and Peter Ustinov were welcomed at the home on Highland Avenue.

BETTE DAVIS (1908-1989)

The leading lady among Hollywood's former Winchester residents is Bette Davis, who lived in Winchester and attended the Wyman School for about six or seven years. The daughter of Harlow and Ruth Davis, Ruth Elizabeth Davis was born on April 5, 1908 in Lowell. Though in her autobiography, *The Lonely Life*, Davis dated her family's move to Winchester before the birth of sister Barbara in Oct. 1909, Winchester records show that the family was in Somerville in April 1911 and moved to Winchester between then and April 1912. She attended kindergarten at the Wyman School.

Davis's recorded memories of Winchester were memories of her childhood. She remembered being a maid of honor in her aunt's wedding at the Davis home, 154 Cambridge Street house when "Japanese lanterns hung from the maple trees transforming our lawn into a fairyland." She

recalled Christmases and “Those biting, cold, white days when Bobby and I would slide down the hill behind the house on our backsides, without our sleds. The swing near the kitchen which I strained to help me touch the sky. It got even by tripping me up and knocking the wind out of me. The kitchen, shiny and busy and expectant with custards and fruit pies. The flowers in the woods nearby and our vegetable garden in the summer. The fresh colors and tastes of that garden! The first Cadillac Daddy brought home. The family outings on Sundays....I was always happiest when I was outdoors and wandering through the woods.”³

Her mother was a member of the Winchester Visiting Nurse Association which founded the hospital in Winchester. Quite naturally when Bette had her tonsils out, it was at Winchester Hospital.

In 1916, the Davises divorced. While Harlow Davis moved briefly to 8 Hancock St., young Bette lived at 22 Lebanon Street where her mother’s sister, Aunt Mildred, and her husband Myron Davis (no relation to Harlow) had a home from 1917 to 1918. Another resident of Lebanon Street recalled, “She was over at our house as often as she was at her uncle's house because we had a house full of boys and even then she loved boys. She was a pretty girl at that time.”⁴

Then all the Davises left town. The story of her adult life and her career in movies need not be retold here. Twice later Davis is known to have had contact with Winchester. In 1937 when the Winchester Theatre opened, she sent a congratulatory telegram.



In November 1943, Davis participated in a special radio broadcast from Winchester that climaxed a drive to aid Greater Boston Community Fund agencies. The broadcast was given from the stage of Town Hall, where several Winchester groups contributed to the show. Davis spoke via a recording made at a studio in Hollywood.

Though her words were not reported after the fact, before the broadcast it was said that she would speak of her years in Winchester, give a special message to the fund workers, and re-enact “her famous ‘Paris Incident.’” This broadcast may have been her last contact with Winchester. Though there have been stories told of her returning to town for visits, none are yet verified.

SONNY TUFTS

On Jan. 1, 1943, under the headline “Former Winchester Boy in Pictures,” townspeople learned that Bowen Tufts III, billed as Sonny Tufts, had broken into movies by landing a lead role in the picture “So Proudly We Hail,” along with Claudette Colbert, Paulette Goddard, and Veronica Lake.

From an old Massachusetts family, Bowen Charleston “Sonny” Tufts III was the son of a banker related to Charles Tufts who made possible the establishment of Tufts College by the endowment of his farm. One of four children, Sonny Tufts was born on July 16, 1912 in Boston. In 1917 his

family moved from West Medford to Winchester, living first at 316 Highland Ave. but moving in 1923 to 7 Stratford Road.

From an early age Tufts wanted to be a singer. He joined a church choir, probably at the Episcopal Parish of the Epiphany where his parents were members. After graduating from Phillips Exeter Academy, he went to Yale, where he formed bands and studied opera, as well as played football (from which he received an injury that kept him out of service during the war). During 1935, tragedy struck the Tufts family. Bowen Tufts II, a popular man around town, a member of the Country Club, Calumet Club, Winchester Art Association, and Winchester Choral Society, died from carbon monoxide poisoning. His death was an alleged suicide though the newspaper reported that he had left a note saying he was driving to the hospital where Sonny had been treated after a skiing injury.

Moving to New York City with an idea of getting into opera, Tufts sang in nightclubs, played in bands, and found roles in Broadway shows, including *Who's Who* and *Sing for Your Supper*. On breaking into moving pictures, Tufts was reported as saying in 1943, "It was the funniest thing. They just signed me. I thought you had to have a high-powered agent with a sales talk. I thought they'd demand some tests. None of that. They just put me in the picture."⁵ But it was war time, and many leading men were simply not available, having joined the services.

The film was premiered locally that October in Medford, with Tufts hailed as "The New Screen Adonis." A showing at the Winchester Theater followed later in the month.



While many of Hollywood's leading men were in the service, the "new Adonis" soared to great (if fleeting) popularity during the war. It was thus quite a thrill when he assisted Winchester's campaign for the United War Fund in 1943. The highlight of this campaign was a radio show, which featured both local and national talent. In Nov. 1943, Town Hall was packed, and others clustered around their radios for a show which included the high school chorus, bell ringers, and others on the stage. Like Better Davis, Tufts participated, speaking via the medium of a "special high fidelity orthacoustic record" made at his studio just for this broadcast.

Though Tufts made a string of movies in the 1940s, his career then went into a slump, with only one film of note, *The Seven Year Itch* with Marilyn Monroe. He made several unsuccessful bids at comebacks in 1960s. He died in 1970.

MARTHA TIBBETTS

Born in 1912 in Melrose, Tibbetts (1912-2008) first starred on the stage of Winchester High School where she took part in school plays and was president of the Dramatic Society in her senior year.



Tibbetts' first love was apparently dancing. She began dancing lessons at the age of seven and while in high school studied dance during the summer at the Perry Mansfield School of Dancing in Colorado. The high school yearbook says her intentions for the next year were to study dancing, and, in fact, after graduating she went to New York City to study dancing under Paul Hakon.⁶

In New York, she danced in three Broadway shows, "Face the Music," "Let 'Em Eat Cake," and "Say When." During the last show, in which she understudied the female star, Linda Watkins, (the male star was Bob Hope), a Warner Brothers talent scout discovered her and signed her to a contract.

Tibbetts worked for a year at the Long Island studios before going to Hollywood. After playing a couple of minor roles for Warner Brothers, her career with them came to an abrupt when either she or Jack Warner tore up her contract during a heated argument.⁷

According to *The Winchester Star*, in February 1936 she "had hoped to come home for a visit after her work with Warner Brothers was finished" but had just signed a contract with Columbia Pictures. She was cast as Pat O'Brien's sweetheart in Howard Hawks' "Ceiling Zero" (starring James Cagney) and had a couple of starring roles in the Westerns, "Unknown Ranger" and "Ranger Courage," starring Robert "Tex" Allen. After the Ranger films, she played bit parts in several other movies. Eventually she left Hollywood and married a man from Marblehead (Russell W. Knight) and returned to Massachusetts.

LOUIS & RICHARD DE ROCHEMONT AND THE MARCH OF TIME

In June 1936, about two dozen Winchester residents took part in an episode of "The March of Time" documentary series, produced by Louis de Rochemont, himself a former Winchester resident.

The feature was about horse racing and was filmed at Suffolk Downs. For the crowd at the race track, he called on a casting agency "to supply the flashy type of race track habitué" and called on a local couple "to assist him in selecting a group which would represent the respectable, well-dressed element which is also seen in large numbers at race tracks." Reportedly, the Winchester extras had "a most enjoyable day."⁸ Of course, they and their friends in Winchester would have had to go somewhere else to see the film since a moving picture theater in Winchester was still in the future.

The brothers Louis and Richard de Rochemont were born in Chelsea, Louis in 1899 and Richard in 1903. The family lived at 21 Foxcroft Road from about 1914 to 1916 and, after moving to Boston for a few years, returned to live at 1 Rangeley Road from 1921 until 1932 when the family moved to Cambridge. Like Bette Davis, the de Rochemonts' father was an attorney and, like Bowen Tufts' father, a member of the Calumet Club.

Reportedly, Louis de Rochemont's "interest in film making dated back to his childhood when, attending public schools in Winchester, Mass., he took 'newsreels' in the streets of neighboring towns and sold them to local neighborhood movie houses." [New York Times, Dec. 25, 1978] It is supposed that Louis De Rochemont produced the little magazine "The Breeze,"⁹ as well as the "Breeze Movies" which were shown in Arlington and Woburn movie houses in 1915.¹⁰ A small notice in the 1915 *Winchester Star* refers also to the Breeze News Service. Some Breeze movies advertised in 1915 were of football games, Principal Wixom, and Gov. Samuel McCall.



During his service with the Navy, Louis continued to have opportunities for filming. In 1922 he was present with his camera for Kemal Ataturk's seizure of Smyrna and for the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen in Egypt. After naval duty, he went to work for International Newsreel and later for Pathé News. In 1934 he originated the *March of Time* news documentary series which he produced until 1943.

As an independent producer, he made films based on actual events, leading to his being called the "father of the docu-drama." For example, he produced *The Fighting Lady* (1944), a Navy epic, and *The House on Ninety-Second Street*, based on case in J. Edgar Hoover's files. Winchester residents could have watched these in their own town, since a movie theatre was finally built in 1938.

Richard de Rochemont, who attended Cambridge Latin School rather than WHS, started his professional life as a reporter. In 1930 he worked for Fox-Movietone News. In 1934 he joined his brother on the *March of Time* series and in 1943 succeeded him as executive producer. He won an Oscar in 1949 for his production of *A Chance to Live* about a Boys Town in Italy. Following the end of the series in 1951, Richard de Rochemont established Vavin Inc. which produced films for such organizations as the State Department and Ford Foundation. Louis died in New Hampshire in 1978 and Richard in New Jersey in 1982.

FRANK FONTAINE

Unlike the Hollywood figures mentioned above who knew Winchester as children, Frank Fontaine achieved success in show business first and moved to Winchester later.

Fontaine, born in Port Washington, N.Y. in 1920, was the son of vaudeville entertainers and grandson of a Ringling Brothers circus strong man. His own career as an entertainer began at a young age, as did his life as a family man. At age seventeen he married his childhood sweetheart, Alma Wakham, and went to work in Boston-area supper clubs as a singer, dancer, and comedian.



During World War II he spent three years in the army, appearing in service shows. He then toured for two years with the Vaughn Monroe band, moved into radio, and appeared in about a dozen movies. During the 1940s through 1960s he also appeared on television variety shows. In 1949 he hosted the first telecast of *Front Row Center*. He was a regular on *The Swift Show* in 1949 and co-starred with Patti Page during the first year (1952) of *Scott Music Hall*. During the late 1950s he was featured on the *Paul Winchell Show*. During the 1960s he particularly gained national fame on the Jackie Gleason show. From 1962 to 1966 he was Gleason's second banana, playing Crazy Guggenheim in the Joe the Bartender sketches.

Before moving to Winchester, Fontaine lived in Medford for about 25 years. In 1953 he purchased 408 Highland Ave. In 1968 he bought 407 Highland Ave. for his family, including his wife and 11 children. Hard times befell Fontaine in the early 1970s. In 1971 the IRS seized his home for nonpayment of delinquent taxes. It was bought at auction by Frank Shilosky, chairman of Friends of Frankie Fontaine (reputedly friends in Hollywood), and put in a trust for the Fontaines who continued to live there until the deaths of Fontaine in 1978 and Alma Fontaine in 1983. The house is now the home of the Winchester Community Music School.

PRISCILLA MORRILL (1927-1994)

Among those who starred on the stage of Winchester High School before turning professional was Priscilla Morrill. A native of Medford, Morrill lived at 1 Priscilla Lane and was president of the Dramatic Society in her senior year (Class of 1945). Morrill made her stage debut with the Brattle Theater Company in Cambridge in *Julius Caesar* with John Carradine and first appeared on Broadway in *The Relapse* with Cyril Ritchard. Morrill appeared numerous times on stage and had guest roles on dozens of television shows from the 1960s through the early 1990s on such shows as *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, *Barnaby Jones*, *Maude*, *All in the Family*, *Mork & Mindy*, *Family Ties*, *Newhart*, *Coach*, and the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* on which she appeared as Lou Grant's wife.



ORSON BEAN (1928-2020)

Vermont native Dallas Frederik Burroughs, known as Orson Bean, also appeared on the Winchester High School stage during the war years while he was living with his uncle Eugene Pollard and working part-time at McCormack's drug store. In 1945, he was not only a hit in the junior-senior class play but also amazed his schoolmates with a feats of prestidigitation and legerdemain at the Red and Black Canteen.¹¹ Moving to Cambridge, he graduated from Boston Latin.



In this 1945 high school yearbook photograph of What a Life, Priscilla Morrill is standing 12th from left and Burroughs is seen far right.

JOHN CAZALE (1936-1978)

In 1941 John and Cecilia Cazale, with their three children, moved from Revere to Prospect Street in Winchester. In 1949 and 1950, their daughter Catherine made the local news while a student with her appearances with professional and student actors at the Wellesley College Theater School. However, it was her brother John who went on to a Hollywood career.

Unlike several other resident actors, Cazale apparently did not try acting in his home town. He attended Oberlin College, Boston University, and the Charles Playhouse School of Acting. He first came to the attention of theatergoers in the title role of Israel Horovitz's 1968 Off-Broadway play, *The Indian Wants the Bronx*, for which he won an Obie. He was awarded another Obie for his performance in Horovitz's *Line*. He was cast in *The Godfather* movies playing Fredo Corleone. Among other film and stage credits, he co-starred with Pacino in the film *Dog Day Afternoon* in 1975 for which he won his Golden Globe award. At the time of Cazale's early death from cancer in 1978 in New York, Joseph Papp was quoted as characterizing him as "an amazing intellect, an extraordinary person and a fine, dedicated artist."¹²

BARRY NEWMAN (b. 1938)

Barry Newman, came to Winchester with his parents, Carl and Sarah, after graduating from Boston Latin School. They lived at 8 Fenwick Road from 1948 to 1980. Newman studied anthropology at Boston University, and during the Korean War years he served two years with the army. He then left for Broadway. His first movies were *Pretty Boy Floyd*, *The Lawyer*, *Vanishing Point*, and *The Salzburg Connection*. He was also a TV star with the series *Petrocelli*. He has been nominated for Golden Globe and Emmy awards. He is known to have revisited the town while his parents continued to live here.

WINCHESTER IN THE MOVIES

Winchester itself has had its moments on both the television and movie screens.

On a Saturday afternoon in Nov. 1920, a company of actors staged “a daring film hold-up” using the outside of the Winchester Co-operative Bank and adjacent buildings as a backdrop. Two “charming young ladies” followed by detectives entered the doorway of the bank, first dropping a handkerchief as a signal to male accomplices. “Nothing more startling happened,” it was reported. The identity of the film is unknown, the only clue being several signs labeled “Nick Carter.”¹³ However, it may have been a stunt related to the theater debate (see below).

In 1975, the Winchester Theatre was transformed into the “Orphean” for the filming of a Jean Shepherd film, co-produced by WGBH’s New Television Workshop and The Television Laboratory at WNET. A twelve-year-old Winchester boy, Adam Goodman, appeared in the film, while several other Winchester residents were used as extras. The scene was set in the 1940s during a “dish night.”

The cast and crew of the television series *Spenser for Hire* came to Winchester during the mid-1980s. Ally Sheedy, Tyne Daly, and the crew of the movie *Autumn Heart* used a section of the maternity unit at Winchester Hospital for three days. Members of the hospital’s nursing staff served as extras. In 2013, the cast of “American Hustle” shot scenes in town. In 2015, the First Congregational Church became a movie set for “Joy.” A year later, the parish of the Epiphany was used for a scene in “Chappaquiddick.” Also in 2017, a team from the Canadian company CMJ Productions set up at the Sanborn House to shoot scenes for a new documentary-drama television series titled “Guilty Rich.”



Cast members of Autumn Heart with members of the Winchester Hospital staff

WINCHESTER AGAINST THE MOVIES

For many years, however, Winchester was not friendly to the movies. In 1917, 1920, 1921, and 1930 advisory votes about granting a motion picture license were defeated.

Whenever the subject came up for a vote, a flurry of letters were written to the paper, pro and con. Each time there was vehement opposition. In 1921, for example, a group of six clergymen, 15 doctors, nine school principals as well as the sisters of St. Mary’s, and the superintendent of schools wrote against a movie house.

“The cry of the mothers is in our ears; the moral and spiritual interests of our town is in our hearts,” wrote the clergymen about the dangers of “oversensationalism” and “immoral suggestiveness.”

Educators warned that the educational progress of children would suffer through the distractions of movies, and doctors judged that movies were “injurious to the health of children,” particularly by replacing outdoor recreation. In addition, impossible traffic jams were predicted. An “unsightly” movie house, some residents warned, would ruin the town’s beautiful civic center.

Finally, in 1935, after an adverse Town Meeting vote, an advisory vote “that the voters of the town recommend to the Selectmen that they issue a permit for a motion picture theatre in the town to be open on weekdays only” passed 2475 to 1717. The Selectmen decided to grant a license.

The first plan for movie house, to be located where the Cambridgeport Bank is now within the Locatelli Block, was withdrawn, but the Winchester Theatre Company, under the aegis of the E. M. Loew chain, succeeded with its plan.

In December 1937 the theatre opened with a gala premier. The first feature films were *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* and *Vogues of 1938*.

In 1976 the theatre closed because of competition from the theaters of nearby towns and from excessive maintenance costs (for example, heating bills of up to \$250 a week).

With or without a movie house, Winchester has maintained a connection with the movies, television, and stage. Here there are fans, sometimes participants, and even occasionally a star emerges. [For more detail, read also “Movie Theater War.”]

¹ This article © 2018 is a revision of earlier articles by the author, Ellen Knight, published in the *Daily Times Chronicle* on Aug 4, 2006, March 30, 2007, and June 6, 2008. This article supersedes all previous articles.

² *Dudley Murphy: Hollywood Wild Card*, University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

³ Bette Davis, *The Lonely Life: An Autobiography*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962, p. 24

⁴ Interview of Richard Monroe Clifton by Randy Bairnsfather, November 1980. “She was over at our house as often as she was at her uncle's house because we had a house full of boys and even then she loved boys. She was a pretty girl at that time.”

⁵ *The Winchester Star*, Jan. 1, 1943.

⁶ “Winchester Girl in Film at University,” *The Winchester Star*, Feb. 21, 1936.

⁷ Hans J. Wollstein, “All Movie Guide,” said Warner tore up the contract. Tibbetts in an interview published in Michael G. Fitzgerald and Boyd Magers, *Ladies of the Western: Interviews with Fifty-One More Actresses from the 1930s to the 1960s*, 1999, said she did not remember whether she or Warner tore up the contract.

⁸ *The Winchester Star*, June 6, 1936.

⁹ His name is written on the cover of a copy held in the Winchester Archival Center of the first (and perhaps the only) issue.

¹⁰ According to Bruce Winchester Stone, *History of Winchester*, Vol II, p. 81, De Rochemont filmed WHS football games in 1915, though not he but only the newspaper uses the name Breeze.

¹¹ *The Winchester Star*, Jan. 19, 1945. He also performed magic tricks at an Elks meeting in December of 1944.

¹² *New York Times*, Mar. 14, 1978.

¹³ *Winchester Star*, Nov. 19, 1920.