



THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

References

H.G. Wells: Famed British science fiction writer and essayist. On Halloween of 1938, Orson Welles made his notorious radio broadcast of Wells' *War of the Worlds*. In 1934, Wells stood by his prediction that there would be a Second World War by 1940.

Felix Frankfurter: Appointed to the Supreme Court as associate justice in 1939 by FDR. Profoundly liberal, he helped found the ACLU.

Dr. Dafoe: The miracle man who safely delivered the world famous Dionne quintuplets in Ontario in 1934.

Mt. Wilson Observatory: Planetarium near Pasadena, California; completed in 1905. Telescope completed in 1918.

Goodbye, Mr. Chips: a 1934 bestseller by James Hilton; a sentimental account of a British public school teacher, it was made into a film with Robert Donat in 1938, for which he won an Oscar. Woollcott was influential in promoting an earlier Hilton novel, *Lost Horizon*, on the radio.

Samuel J. Liebowitz: The defense attorney for the Scottsboro boys (nine black youths who were accused, in 1937, of raping two Southern white women in a freight train and then subjected to unconstitutional incarceration). He was hired by the Communist International Labor Defense Fund, to which the prosecuting attorney said, in his summation, "Alabama justice cannot be bought with Jew money from New York." The most prominent criminal defense lawyer on the East Coast.

Jascha Heifetz: Pre-eminent Russian violinist, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in October of 1917.

Dr. Alexis Carrel: French cardiologist: wins the 1912 Nobel Prize in Medicine for grafting blood vessels. In 1935, he invents an artificial heart with Charles Lindbergh.

Haile Selassie: Named "King of Kings" or Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, he was deposed by Mussolini in 1935 and lived in exile in England until 1940.

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" Arthur Conan Doyle's 1902 Sherlock Holmes novel, which takes place in a creepy mansion in Dartmoor, with a pair of equally creepy houseservants (named Barrymore, incidentally). Its most famous screen adaptation starred Basil Rathbone in 1939.

Katharine Cornell: Considered to be the most charming and adept actress of her day (along with Helen Hayes and Lynn Fontanne, called the "First Lady of the American Theater"). She made her NYC debut with the Washington Square Players in 1916 and went on to such high-minded and sentimental triumphs as *Romeo and Juliet* in 1934, *Saint Joan* (1936), and *No Time for Comedy* (1939) with Olivier. She made only one screen appearance: five minutes in *Stage Door Canteen*, where she performs Juliet.



Elsa Schiaparelli: Italian fashion designer based in Paris; by far the most *outré* designer of her time, she pioneered extravagant designs in hats, dress patterns, and exaggerated shoulders. She collaborated with artists Jean Cocteau and Salvador Dali. When France fell in 1939, she came to NYC.

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne: Married in 1922, they were the grandest stage couple of their time. Over their career, the British-born actress and the American-born actor played in 26 shows together; highlights include *The Guardsman* (1926) for the Theatre Guild, which they almost single-handedly kept afloat; *Taming of the Shrew* (1935), *Idiot's Delight* (1936), and *The Seagull* (1938). They only made two screen appearances: *The Guardsman* and a cameo in *Stage Door Canteen*.

Mahatma Gandhi: In 1932, Gandhi began the first of his "hunger strikes." In 1939, he had just re-entered Indian politics after a five-year retirement, because of the impending federation of the Indian states.

Jude the Obscure and **Tess of the D'Urbervilles** by Thomas Hardy. Two of his most famous Wessex novels (1886 and 1891), involving murder of family members and/or lovers.

Arturo Toscanini: World-famous conductor, makes his farewell appearance as conductor of New York Philharmonic in 1936. The next year, he is made conductor of the NBC Radio Orchestra, a post he holds until 1954.

Lawrence Tibbett: American baritone, famous for Italian roles; i.e., Verdi

Elisabeth Rethberg: German soprano: Met debut, 1922

Giovanni Martinelli: Italian baritone, famous for *Otello* at Met in 1937-38

Kirsten Flagstad: Norwegian opera singer, famous for Wagner at the Met

Ethel Barrymore: The classiest actress of her time, and the in-between sister of Lionel and John Barrymore. Kaufman had already satirized her in *The Royal Family* and, by 1939, she was splitting her time between stage and film.

Milt Gross: comic writer and cartoonist of the 1920s. His "Nize Baby" and "Screwloose from Toolose" had wacky characters, often in a caricatured Yiddish dialect.

Louella Parsons: along with Hedda Hopper, the most powerful gossip columnist in Hollywood.

Tillie the Toiler: Tillie Jones, a popular comic strip character of the 1920s: a ditzy, gold-digging secretary with her eye on the boss. A 1927 film starred Marion Davies.

Sam Goldwyn: Born Samuel Goldfish, he was the epitome of the rags to riches Hollywood producer. Relentlessly independent, he was famous for his malapropisms, such as "A verbal agreement isn't worth the paper it's printed on" and "I can tell you in two words: Im-Possible." (Kaufman had worked for him on 1936's *Roman Scandals*.)



Salvador Dali: Leading artist of the Spanish surrealist school. By 1934, he had exhibited in New York City and even went to Hollywood in 1945 to design sequences for Hitchcock's *Spellbound*.

Sultan of Zanzibar--Zanzibar, off the coast of Africa, was a British protectorate at the time of the play--unlikely there was a Sultan.

Ginger Rogers: Famous as Fred Astaire's dancing partner, by 1939, she had made a name for herself also a dramatic and comic actress in *Stage Door* (1937, also by Kaufman) and *Kitty Foyle* (AA, 1939).

Oscar Wilde: British author, wit, dramatist, and aesthete. Admired in 1939, but not as idolized (or as well-known) as today.

William Allen White: The "Sage of Emporia" edited and owned the *Emporia Gazette* (Kansas) and made it one of the most notable small papers in the U.S. Won a 1923 Pulitzer for his editorials and authored many books. He travelled all over the world, but always made Emporia his domain.

Snyder-Gray Case: In 1928, Ruth Snyder and his lover Judd Gray murdered her husband Albert. Given the electric chair at Sing-Sing, she was the first American woman to be electrocuted. Famously, a *Daily News* photographer snuck in a camera attached to his leg and caught her getting fried. (Also the basis for the play *Machinal*.) Woollcott covered this case in some detail.

Maude Adams: One of America's most beloved turn-of-the-century actresses. She played Peter Pan in 1905 to panegyrics of acclaim, but by 1939 was teaching drama in a small college in Missouri.

Irving Berlin: In 1911, his "Alexander's Ragtime Band" became an international sensation, and his first full musical, *Watch Your Step* in 1914 was Broadway's first ragtime score. Woollcott had written a biography of him in 1934.

Elsie Dinsmore: Exceedingly virtuous little girl who was the main character in 28 of over 100 novels written by Martha Finley under the pseudonym of Martha Farquharson from 1867 to 1905. The stories relate Elsie's journey into adulthood and marriage. They were incredibly popular, but even by 1900, she was referred to as a "nauseous little prig."

Lillian Russell: (1861-1922) Hourglass-figured "American Beauty" who was the greatest female performer in vaudeville and music hall at the turn of the century. Her voice, looks, and romance with Diamond Jim Brady were the stuff of New York City legend.

William Beebe: (1877-1962) Director of tropical research at the New York Zoological Society. Rode in a spherical steel diving chamber exhibited at the Chicago's Century of Progress in 1934, the same year he descended 3,028 feet into the ocean off the coast of Bermuda.



Chauncey Depew: (1834-1928) Leading figure in the New York State Republican Party for almost half a century. From 1885 to 1928, the chairman of the New York Central Railroad and Republican Senator from 1899 to 1911.

Edgar Allen Poe: American writer of horror and suspense fiction and poetry.

Booth Tarkington: (1869-1946) Fantastically popular novelist of the early 20th Century. Wrote *Seventeen*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, and *Alice Adams* (1921), about an ambitious girl prone to romantic self-deception. Katharine Hepburn stars in a 1935 film version.

True Story Magazine: Described as taking part in promoting "consumerism" during the Depression, it proved many confessional stories of celebrities and ordinary people.

Joan Crawford: Hollywood actress who made her career performing in "shopgirl" fantasies, like *Grand Hotel*, of girls from the other side of the tracks who marry above them.

Big Lord Fauntleroy: A reference to Frances Hogsdon Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), about a pampered and sissified American boy who becomes heir to an English estate. In films, he was played by, among others, Mary Pickford, and is usually depicted sporting curls and velvet knickers.

William Lyon Phelps: (1865-1943) American educator and journalist. An English professor at Yale who popularized the arts through his lectures and essays.

W. Somerset Maugham: (1878-1962) British writer of short stories, novels, and plays. Characterized by his use of irony, his often brutal depictions of hypocrisy in the upper reaches of British society, and a malicious wit (that was often on a par with Sheridan Whiteside's). Among his memorable quotes: "I made up my mind long ago that life was too short to do anything for myself that I could pay others to do for me."

Ethel Waters: (1900-1977) African American singer who worked her way from abject poverty to become one of the most popular and soulful singers of her time. The star of many Broadway revues, she introduced, among other songs, "Heat Wave" and "Supper Time" in 1933's *As Thousands Cheer*.

Billy Rose: (1899 - 1966) Estimable and energetic showman and producer. Equally adept at revues, musicals, and nightclub entertainments, he produced *Jumbo* in 1935, a Rodgers and Hart circus musical by renovating the defunct Hippodrome as a circus tent (and convincing Equity that his actors were circus performers and therefore were not entitled to the same rights). His 1939 *Acquacade for the World's Fair* made national headlines.

Horace Greeley (1811-72) The most principled and admired journalist of his day. He was an abolitionist, pro-Labor, and in favor of Western expansion, thus coining the phrase "Go west, young man." A crusader of populist rights as editor and founder of the *New York Tribune* (which ultimately became the *Herald-Tribune*, Woolcott's paper), he has two statues of him in NYC.



Klondike Harry: A character in Robert W. Service's Yukon-based poem "The Spell of the Yukon" (1906). Typical of hard-bitten gold-mining types from Alaska.

Madame Butterfly; Puccini's 1904 opera, and the first one of his to be broadcast on the radio in November of 1939.

Admiral Richard E. Byrd: Polar explorer who first charted the North Pole, than became the first man to fly over Antarctica in 1929. Following a huge Broadway parade in his honor, he went back to the South Pole for several expeditions in the 1930s and 1940s.

Margaret Bourke White: Intrepid globe-trotting woman photographer. Famous for her 1936 photo essays of Gandhi and subsequent spreads for *Life* magazine.

Elwell Case: Joseph Elwell was a bridge expert, card shark, and ladies' man. When he was found shot in 1920, it was assumed it was a jealous lover who pulled the trigger: no one was ever charged.

John L. Lewis: Aggressive and pugnacious president of the C.I.O. Founded and ran the United Mine Workers in 1920 and led it until 1960; his power to organize sit-down strikes on behalf of his miners brought him into conflict with F.D.R., while successfully raising the standards for his union members.

Wagner Act: Also known as the National Labor Relations Act, this was passed by Congress in July of 1935. It guaranteed the rights to Americans to join unions and labor organizations and authorized a board to investigate unfair employment practices. Mr. Stanley cannot fire Sandy for joining a union under this law.

Lana Turner: Sexy Hollywood actress who made the tight-fitting sweater her trademark. The legend is that she was discovered by an agent while at the Hollywood drugstore/soda fountain Schwab's. *These Glamour Girls* was her 1939 entry.

Fantasia: Disney's animated concert film was only a big hit with the critics on its 1940 release. This small scene was a substitution during the show's run--previously it was a phone call between Whiteside and Gertrude Stein, which was eliminated when the Nazis entered Paris in June of 1940.

Hamilton Fish: (1888-1947) Republican Congressman from upstate New York from 1919 to 1945. A virulent anti-Roosevelt crusader, he was an isolationist and frequently called for the deportation of American Communists.

Dorothy di Frasso: Dorothy Taylor became the Countess di Frasso when she married into the Italian aristocracy. A Hollywood socialite of the first water, she had affairs with, among others, Gary Cooper and later Bugsy Siegel.

Sybil Cartwright:--fictional

Hattie Carnegie: (1886-1956) Fashion designer and entrepreneur. Born in Vienna, she changed her name from Konngeser to Carnegie, after the financier. Her establishment at



East 49th Street at one point employed over 1,000 people. She was the most fashionable American dress designer in the 1930s and 1940s.

Ciro's: famed Hollywood watering hole; opened in 1940.

Blossom Time: was a 1921 operetta by Sigmund Romberg, ostensibly about Schubert. Kaufman, reviewing the show when he was at the NY Times drama desk, found it insufferably sentimental.

Anthony Eden: Foreign minister of the British government from 1935-39. In 1939, he resigns over prime minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policies with Hitler, but rejoins in 1940 under Churchill's government.

Normandie: Transatlantic ocean line that, in June of 1935, set the speed record back from France (29.7 knots). The most stylist of the bunch, it brought back a full passenger load of Americans in 1939, who were rushing home in fear of war.

Jock Whitney: John Hay Whitney was a polo-playing millionaire who was prevailed upon by his wife, Grace Vanderbilt Whitney, to endow the Whitney Museum. Owner of a vast estate in Long Island and a great deal of money.

Sir Harry Montross-- fictional

Beatrice Lillie: The toast of two continents, Beatrice Lillie was a gamine, if not bizarre, British musical comedienne. Among her shows in New York were Noel Coward's *Words and Music* and Schwartz and Dietz *At Home Abroad* (1935). Coward cast her often--although she drove him nuts--and Woolcott frequently raved about her.

Polly Adler's: New York madame of a high-class brothel; Kaufman was claimed to be a client.

Norma Shearer: Elegant, if slightly long-suffering, MGM film actress. Notable for noble roles such as Juliet, in the film opposite Leslie Howard, Marie Antoinette, and *The Women* (1938). Married to film producer and Kaufman chum Irving Thalberg.

Claudette Colbert: Sophisticated and elfin film actress, also with MGM. She starred famously opposite Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night* (1934) and also in *The Palm Beach Story* in 1942.

Aldous Huxley: (1894-1963) British novelist, essayist and poet. Like Maugham, but far more modern in his outlook, he satirized British morals and manners in the 1920s with books like *Point Counter Point*; later, he wrote *Brave New World*.

Darryl F. Zanuck: (1902-1979): Head of 20th Century Fox, Zanuck was a megalomaniacal, but intelligent and tasteful film producer.

Charley Ross: One of NY's more bizarre stories; a little boy was kidnapped in New Jersey in 1875 and, although there was a ransom note, he was never found. A *cause celebre* that



stayed in the papers for decades, grown men kept turning up claiming to be Charley Ross as late as 1933. Ironically, Lucky Luciano used "Charles Ross" as his alias while staying at the Waldorf Astoria in the 1930s and 40s.

Chislewick: Fictitious, but clearly a nod to Coward's own estate in Surrey, Goldenhurst.

Elizabeth Arden: Cosmetics entrepreneur who ran a multi-million dollar empire out of her salon at 691 Fifth Avenue. Marketed cosmetics, mascara, lipsticks, and facials to wealthy women across America, by 1939 Arden sold 108 products in 595 shapes and sizes at twenty-nine salons bearing her name across the U.S. (in the finest neighborhoods, of course).

Lady Astor: American-born , Nancy Langhorne married the Viscount Astor in 1911. A great hostess in London society, the Viscountess Astor was also the first woman elected to Parliament. Long a proponent of social causes, in the 1930s, she was a fervent anti-Communist.

Lord Beaverbrook: British press baron, born in Canada. As owner of the *Daily Express*, the *London Sunday Express*, and the *Evening Standard*, he wielded tremendous power and was also a Cabinet member under Churchill, beginning in 1940.

Lord and Lady Cunard: Sir Bache Cunard was the grandson and heir to the wealthy Cunard shipping line. He married Maud Burke, from San Francisco, who became Lady Cunard. His millions sponsored her in society, until she left him for the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham. She was known for her yellow hair, her grace, and her wit. When Somerset Maugham tried to leave early from one of her soirees, he remarked, "I must hold on to my youth." "Why didn't you bring him with you?" she replied.

Philo Vance: A debonair and effete NY millionaire detective in a series of immensely popular books by S.S. Van Dyne. Played by, among others, William Powell in movies through the early 1940s. (Woolcott was a huge murder mystery fan.)

Hedy Lamarr: Born Hedy Keisler, this Hungarian film actress made a sensation in her nude scenes in the European film, *Ekstase*. In Hollywood from 1938, when she made the sensuous film, *Algiers*.

Howard Hughes: President of Hughes Tool Co., the young multi-millionaire used his funds to support his hobbies in aviation and Hollywood film producing. In 1938, he set an around-the-world flying record of three days, 19 hours, and 17 seconds. In 1939, he bought TWA.

J. Edgar Hoover: Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations from 1924 to 1975 (!). Particularly intent on foiling gangster racketeering in the early 1930s.

Petrushka: A 1911 ballet written by Igor Stravinsky for Diaghilev, based on Russian folk themes.

Khedive of Egypt: (rhymes with "relieve") A viceroy of Egypt appointed by the British government to rule in its interests. (But by 1936, Farouk was the empowered king of Egypt.)



Zasu Pitts (1900-63): American film comedienne in over 100 films and short subjects from 1917 until her death. She had a dithering distracted quality, like Gracie Allen on grass. (and she played Miss Preen on a 1954 TV version of the play.)