

Robert Montgomery (actor)

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Robert Montgomery (May 21, 1904 – September 27, 1981) was an American actor and director.^[1]

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Early life


Montgomery was born **Henry Montgomery Jr.** in Beacon, New York, then known as "Fishkill Landing", the son of Mary Weed (née Barney) and Henry Montgomery, Sr.^[2] His early childhood was one of privilege, since his father was president of the New York Rubber Company. When his father committed suicide in 1922 by jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge,^[3] the family's fortune was gone.

Career

Montgomery went to New York City to try his hand at writing and acting. He established a stage career, and became popular enough to turn down an offer to appear opposite Vilma Bánky in the film *This Is Heaven*.^[4] Sharing a stage with George Cukor gave him an in to Hollywood, where, in 1929, he debuted in *So This Is College*. Montgomery entered the moving picture industry during the revolution of the talkies, which made it more difficult to impress the studio.^[4] One writer claimed that Montgomery was able to establish himself because he "proceeded with confidence, agreeable with everyone, eager and willing to take suggestions."^[4] During the production of *So This Is College*, he learned from and questioned crew members from several departments, including sound crew, electricians, set designers, camera crew and film editors.^[4] In a later interview, he confessed that "it showed [him] that making a motion picture is a great co-operative project."^[4]

So This Is College gained him attention as Hollywood's latest newcomer, and he was put in one production after another, with his popularity growing steadily.^[4] He initially played exclusively in comedy roles, but portrayed a character in his first drama film in *The Big House* (1930). The studio was initially reluctant to assign him in such a role, until "his earnestness, and his convincing arguments, with demonstrations of how he would play the character" won him the assignment.^[4] From *The Big House* on, he was in constant demand.^[4] Appearing as Greta Garbo's romantic interest in *Inspiration* (1930) started him toward stardom with a rush.^[4]

Robert Montgomery



From the trailer for *Night Must Fall* (1937)

Born	Henry Montgomery Jr. May 21, 1904 Beacon, New York, U.S.
Died	September 27, 1981 (aged 77) New York City, New York, U.S.
Occupation	Actor, director
Years active	1929–60
Spouse	Elizabeth Bryan Allen (1928–1950) (divorced) Elizabeth "Buffy" Grant Harkness (1950–1981) (his death)

Norma Shearer chose him to star opposite her in *The Divorcee* (1930), *Strangers May Kiss* (1931), and *Private Lives* (1931), which led to stardom on a high rank.^[4] During this time, Montgomery appeared in the first filmed version of *When Ladies Meet* (1933).

In 1935, Montgomery became President of the Screen Actors Guild, and was elected again in 1946. In 1937, he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor as a psychopath in the chiller *Night Must Fall*. After this, he returned to playing light comedy roles, even though he continued his search for dramatic roles.^[4] Montgomery was nominated again for an Oscar in 1942 for *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*. During World War II, he joined the Navy, rising to the rank of lieutenant commander.

In 1945, he returned to Hollywood, making his uncredited directing debut with *They Were Expendable*, where he directed some of the PT Boat scenes when director John Ford was unable to work for health reasons. His first credited film as director was *Lady in the Lake* (1947), in which he also starred, and which brought him mixed reviews.

Active in Republican politics and concerned about communist influence in the entertainment industry, Montgomery was a friendly witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947.

The next year, 1948, Montgomery hosted the Academy Awards. He hosted an Emmy Award-winning television series, *Robert Montgomery Presents*, in the 1950s. *The Gallant Hours*, a 1960 film Montgomery directed and co-produced with its star, his friend James Cagney, was the last film or television production he was connected with in any capacity, as actor, director or producer.

In 1954, Montgomery took an unpaid position as consultant and coach to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, advising him on how to look his best in his television appearances before the nation.^[5] A pioneering media consultant, Montgomery had an office in the White House during this time.

Montgomery has two stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, one for movies at 6440 Hollywood Boulevard, and another for television at 1631 Vine Street. He was a longtime summer resident of North Haven, Maine.

Death

Montgomery died of cancer at age 77 in New York City. His daughter, actress Elizabeth Montgomery (1933–1995), and son, Robert Montgomery, Jr. (1936–2000) both died of cancer as well.

Filmography

Film			
Year ▾▾	Title ▾▾	Role ▾▾	Notes
1929	<i>The Single Standard</i>	Extra	Uncredited
1929	<i>Three Live Ghosts</i>	William Foster	
1929	<i>So This Is College</i>	Biff	
1929	<i>Untamed</i>	Andy McAllister	
1929	<i>Their Own Desire</i>	John Douglas Cheever	
1930	<i>Free and Easy</i>	Larry	
1930	<i>The Divorcee</i>	Don	

1930	<i>The Big House</i>	Kent Marlowe	
1930	<i>The Sins of the Children</i>	Nick Higginson	
1930	<i>Our Blushing Brides</i>	Tony Jardine	
1930	<i>Love in the Rough</i>	Jack Kelly	
1930	<i>War Nurse</i>	Lt. Wally O'Brien	
1931	<i>Inspiration</i>	André Montell	
1931	<i>The Easiest Way</i>	Jack 'Johnny' Madison	
1931	<i>Strangers May Kiss</i>	Steve	
1931	<i>Shipmates</i>	John Paul Jones	
1931	<i>The Man in Possession</i>	Raymond Dabney	
1931	<i>Private Lives</i>	Elyot Chase	
1932	<i>Lovers Courageous</i>	Willie Smith	
1932	<i>But the Flesh Is Weak</i>	Max Clement	
1932	<i>Letty Lynton</i>	Hale Darrow	
1932	<i>Blondie of the Follies</i>	Larry Belmont	
1932	<i>Faithless</i>	William 'Bill' Wade	
1933	<i>Hell Below</i>	Lieut. Thomas Knowlton, USN	
1933	<i>Made on Broadway</i>	Jeff Bidwell	
1933	<i>When Ladies Meet</i>	Jimmie Lee	
1933	<i>Another Language</i>	Victor Hallam	
1933	<i>Night Flight</i>	Auguste Pellerin	
1934	<i>Fugitive Lovers</i>	Paul Porter, aka Stephen Blaine	
1934	<i>The Mystery of Mr. X</i>	Nicholas Revel	
1934	<i>Riptide</i>	Tommie Trent	
1934	<i>Hide-Out</i>	Jonathan 'Lucky' Wilson	
1934	<i>Forsaking All Others</i>	Dillon 'Dill'/'Dilly' Todd	
1935	<i>Biography of a Bachelor Girl</i>	Richard 'Dickie' Kurt	
1935	<i>Vanessa: Her Love Story</i>	Benjamin Herries	
1935	<i>No More Ladies</i>	Sheridan Warren	
1936	<i>Petticoat Fever</i>	Dascom Dinsmore	
1936	<i>Trouble for Two</i>	Prince Florizel	Alternative title: <i>The Suicide Club</i>
1936	<i>Piccadilly Jim</i>	James 'Piccadilly Jim' Crocker, Jr.	
1937	<i>The Last of Mrs. Cheyney</i>	Lord Arthur Dilling	
1937	<i>Night Must Fall</i>	Denny	Nominated—Academy Award for Best

1937	<i>Night Must Fall</i>	Danny	Actor
1937	<i>Ever Since Eve</i>	Freddie Matthews	
1937	<i>Live, Love and Learn</i>	Bob Graham	
1938	<i>The First Hundred Years</i>	David Conway	
1938	<i>Yellow Jack</i>	John O'Hara	
1938	<i>Three Loves Has Nancy</i>	Malcolm 'Mal' Niles	
1939	<i>Fast and Loose</i>	Joel Sloane	
1940	<i>The Earl of Chicago</i>	Robert Kilmount	
1940	<i>Busman's Honeymoon</i>	Lord Peter Wimsey	Alternative title: <i>Haunted Honeymoon</i>
1940	<i>The Door with Seven Locks</i>	Craig the butler	Alternative title: <i>Chamber of Horrors</i>
1941	<i>Mr. & Mrs. Smith</i>	David Smith	
1941	<i>Rage in Heaven</i>	Philip Monrell	
1941	<i>Here Comes Mr. Jordan</i>	Joe Pendleton	Nominated–Academy Award for Best Actor
1941	<i>Unfinished Business</i>	Tommy Duncan	
1945	<i>They Were Expendable</i>	Lt. John Brickley	
1947	<i>Lady in the Lake</i>	Phillip Marlowe	
1947	<i>Ride the Pink Horse</i>	Lucky Gagin	
1948	<i>The Saxon Charm</i>	Matt Saxon	
1948	<i>June Bride</i>	Carey Jackson	
1949	<i>Poet's Pub</i>	Dancer	Uncredited
1949	<i>Once More, My Darling</i>	Collier 'Collie' Laing	
1950	<i>Your Witness</i>	Adam Heyward	
1960	<i>The Gallant Hours</i>	Narrator	

Television			
Year ▢ ▢	Title ▢ ▢	Role ▢ ▢	Notes
1950–57	<i>Robert Montgomery Presents</i>	Host	
1958	<i>Navy Log</i>	Host	Episode: "The Butchers of Kapsan"

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Obituary

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External links

- Robert Montgomery (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0599910/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- Robert Montgomery (<http://www.ibdb.com/person.asp?ID=53470>) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Robert Montgomery (http://www.lortel.org/LLA_archive/index.cfm?search_by=people&keyword=name&first=Robert&last=Montgomery&middle=) at Internet Off-Broadway Database
- Robert Montgomery images (<http://film.virtual-history.com/person.php?personid=642>)
- Robert Montgomery (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=2958>) at Find a Grave
- Donald Phelps: The Rich Boy – The Reticent Artistry of Robert Montgomery (<http://www.rouge.com.au/1/montgomery.html>)

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