

This Day in History... June 10, 1922

Happy Birthday Judy Garland

Judy Garland was born Frances Ethel Gumm on June 10, 1922, in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

Garland's parents were former vaudeville performers who had bought a theater and settled down in Grand Rapids before she was born. At just 2½ years of age, Garland "starred" in her first performance at a Christmas show in her parent's theater on December 26, 1924. She delighted the audience with several verses of "Jingle Bells."

Not long after, Garland joined her two sisters, Susie and Jimmie, who performed song and dance routines as the Gumm Sisters in theaters and social functions around Grand Rapids. Then in 1926, the Gumm family bought a theater in Lancaster, California. There the girls appeared on radio, in theaters, and at nightclubs, and soon had a loyal following. Garland made her film debut in 1929 at the age of seven in a short titled, *The Big Revue*. In 1934, they changed their name to the Garland Sisters, and Frances became known as Judy.



Yip Harburg and Harold Arlen wrote "Over the Rainbow," which became Garland's signature song.

In 1935, Garland was brought in for an audition at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's studio. She sang "Zing! Went the Strings of My Heart" (which would become her signature song) and was immediately signed to a contract. She really wowed studio executives at a birthday party for Clark Gable where she sang "You Made Me Love You (I Didn't Want to Do It)."

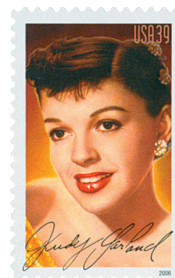
Initially, the studio was unsure what to do with Garland, as she was older than most child stars but too young for adult roles. Soon they began casting her as the "girl next door" and she played opposite Mickey Rooney in a number of movies known as "backyard musicals." They appeared together in *Thoroughbreds Don't Cry*, *Love Finds Andy Hardy*, and *Babes in Arms*, among others.

In 1938, Garland was given the role that would bring her fame: Dorothy Gale. She won the Academy Juvenile Award for starring in *Wizard of Oz* and *Babes in Arms*. Garland became one of MGM's biggest stars throughout the 1940s. She had her first adult role in 1940s *Little Nellie Kelly*. One of her most successful MGM films was *Meet Me in St. Louis* in 1944, in which she introduced "The Trolley Song," "The Boy Next Door," and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." She also starred in *Easter Parade* with Fred Astaire, which was her top-grossing movie at MGM.

Garland left MGM in 1950 and then toured the United Kingdom and played to sold-out crowds in 1951. She returned to her roots and starred in a vaudeville-style show. At the London Palladium, her applause was the loudest the manager had ever heard. Later that year, she performed on Broadway, and the show was described as "One of the greatest personal triumphs in show business history." Garland won a special Tony Award for reviving vaudeville.

Garland brought her talent to television when it became a popular source of entertainment. She performed in the first color broadcast ever on CBS. She was given her own variety show in 1961, which lasted only one season but earned four Emmy nominations. The following year, she became the first woman to win the Grammy for Album of the Year for her live recording, *Judy at Carnegie Hall*.

Having struggled with drugs and alcohol for much of her life (she claimed the people at MGM had fed her drugs to keep her awake long hours while filming), Garland died on June 22, 1969, at just 47 years old. Though Garland's life ended too soon, she is remembered as one of the greatest female stars of all time. Many years after her death, she was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.



The 12th stamp in the Legends of Hollywood Series.



From the 1990 Classic Films issue

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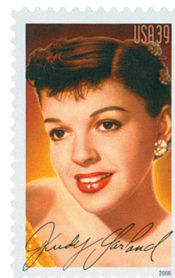
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