

# The Loveliest Woman in America: The Tragic Story of Lillian Russell



**The Loveliest Woman in America: A Tragic Actress, Her Lost Diaries, and Her Granddaughter's Search for**

**Home** by Bibi Gaston

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 2750 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 354 pages
Paperback	: 56 pages
Item Weight	: 4.2 ounces



Lillian Russell was one of the most famous and beautiful women in America during the late 19th and early 20th century. She was a Broadway star, a successful businesswoman, and a philanthropist who worked tirelessly to help the less fortunate. However, her personal life was often filled with tragedy and heartbreak.

## Early Life

Lillian Russell was born Helen Louise Leonard in Clinton, Iowa, on December 4, 1861. Her parents were Charles and Cynthia Leonard, and she had two older sisters, Jennie and Carrie. Lillian's father was a successful businessman, and the family lived in a large Victorian home.

Lillian was a precocious child, and she began singing and dancing at a young age. When she was just 12 years old, she made her stage debut in a local production of "The Black Crook." alt="Image of Lillian Russell as a young woman">

In 1879, Lillian's family moved to New York City, where she began her professional career as a chorus girl. She quickly rose through the ranks, and within a few years, she was one of the most popular actresses on Broadway. In 1883, she married Harry Braham, a wealthy businessman. The couple had two children, a son named Harry Jr. and a daughter named Lillian Jr. alt="Image of Lillian Russell with her husband, Harry Braham">

## **Broadway Star**

Lillian Russell's Broadway career spanned more than three decades. She starred in dozens of productions, including "The Princess of Trebizonde," "Giroflé-Girofla," "The Mikado," and "The Belle of New York." She was known for her beauty, her charm, and her comedic timing. She was also a gifted singer, and her renditions of songs such as "Come Back to Erin" and "After the Ball" became instant classics. alt="Image of Lillian Russell on stage">

In addition to her work on Broadway, Lillian Russell also appeared in several films, including "The Widow Jones" (1918) and "The Woman in the Window" (1922). She also toured extensively throughout the United States and Europe. She was one of the first American actresses to achieve international fame.

## **Businesswoman and Philanthropist**

In addition to her acting career, Lillian Russell was also a successful businesswoman. She invested her earnings wisely, and she became one of the wealthiest women in America. She was also a generous philanthropist, and she donated large sums of money to charities such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. She was also a strong supporter of the women's suffrage movement. alt="Image of Lillian Russell with President Theodore Roosevelt">

## **Personal Life**

Lillian Russell's personal life was often filled with tragedy and heartbreak. Her first marriage to Harry Braham ended in divorce in 1890. In 1894, she married Edward Solomon, a wealthy banker. The couple had one child, a daughter named Dorothy. However, Solomon died suddenly in 1902, and Lillian was left a widow for the second time. alt="Image of Lillian Russell with her second husband, Edward Solomon">

In 1908, Lillian Russell married Alexander Pollock Moore, a wealthy railroad executive. The couple had a happy marriage, but it was cut short when Moore died in 1910. Lillian was once again left a widow, and she never remarried. alt="Image of Lillian Russell with her third husband, Alexander Pollock Moore">

## **Later Years and Death**

After Moore's death, Lillian Russell continued to work as an actress and a philanthropist. However, she began to slow down her pace in the 1920s. She died in her sleep on June 6, 1922, at the age of 60. She was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York City. alt="Image of Lillian Russell's grave">

## Legacy

Lillian Russell was one of the most famous and beautiful women in America during the late 19th and early 20th century. She was a Broadway star, a successful businesswoman, and a philanthropist who worked tirelessly to help the less fortunate. However, her personal life was often filled with tragedy and heartbreak. Despite these challenges, she never lost her courage or her sense of humor. She was a true pioneer, and she inspired millions of people around the world.



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