

FOREWORD BY DONALD MARGULIES

Thornton Wilder

WINNER
of the
PULITZER
PRIZE

Our Town

A Play in Three Acts

HARPER PERENNIAL

MODERN CLASSICS



Act I

No curtain.

No scenery.

The audience, arriving, sees an empty stage in half-light.

Presently the STAGE MANAGER, hat on and pipe in mouth, enters and begins placing a table and three chairs downstage left, and a table and three chairs downstage right.

He also places a low bench at the corner of what will be the Webb house, left.

"Left" and "right" are from the point of view of the actor facing the audience. "Up" is toward the back wall.

As the house lights go down he has finished setting the stage and leaning against the right proscenium pillar watches the late arrivals in the audience.

When the auditorium is in complete darkness he speaks:

STAGE MANAGER:

This play is called "Our Town." It was written by Thornton Wilder; produced and directed by A. . . . (or: produced by A. . . . ; directed by B. . . .). In it you will see Miss C. . . . ; Miss D. . . . ;

Miss E. . . .; and Mr. F. . . .; Mr. G. . . .; Mr. H. . . .; and many others. The name of the town is Grover's Corners, New Hampshire—just across the Massachusetts line: latitude 42 degrees 40 minutes; longitude 70 degrees 37 minutes. The First Act shows a day in our town. The day is May 7, 1901. The time is just before dawn.

A rooster crows.

The sky is beginning to show some streaks of light over in the East there, behind our mount'in.

The morning star always gets wonderful bright the minute before it has to go,—doesn't it?

He stares at it for a moment, then goes onstage.

Well, I'd better show you how our town lies. Up here—

That is: parallel with the back wall,

is Main Street. Way back there is the railway station; tracks go that way. Polish Town's across the tracks, and some Canuck families.

Toward the left.

Over there is the Congregational Church; across the street's the Presbyterian.

Methodist and Unitarian are over there.

Baptist is down in the holla' by the river.

Catholic Church is over beyond the tracks.

Here's the Town Hall and Post Office combined; jail's in the basement.

Bryan once made a speech from these very steps here.

Along here's a row of stores. Hitching posts and horse blocks in front of them. First automobile's going to come along in about five years—belonged to Banker Cartwright, our richest citizen . . . lives in the big white house up on the hill.

Here's the grocery store and here's Mr. Morgan's drugstore. Most everybody in town manages to look into those two stores once a day.

Public School's over yonder. High School's still farther over. Quarter of nine mornings, noontimes, and three o'clock afternoons, the hull town can hear the yelling and screaming from those schoolyards.

He approaches the table and chairs downstage right.

This is our doctor's house,—Doc Gibbs'. This is the back door.

Two arched trellises, covered with vines and flowers, are pushed out, one by each proscenium pillar.

There's some scenery for those who think they have to have scenery.

This is Mrs. Gibbs' garden. Corn . . . peas . . . beans . . . hollyhocks . . . heliotrope . . . and a lot of burdock.

Crosses the stage.

In those days our newspaper come out twice a week—the Grover's Corners *Sentinel*—and this is Editor Webb's house.

And this is Mrs. Webb's garden.

Just like Mrs. Gibbs', only it's got a lot of sunflowers, too.

This beautiful new edition features an eye-opening Afterword written by Tappan Wilder that includes Thornton Wilder's unpublished notes and other illuminating photographs and documentary material.

Our Town was first produced and published in 1938 to wide acclaim. This Pulitzer Prize-winning drama of life in the small village of Grover's Corners, an allegorical representation of all life, has become a classic. It is Thornton Wilder's most renowned and most frequently performed play.

"That an American of the present day can create with such delicacy and detachment touches the soul like a miracle. Here is quiet originality that comes from within."—Albert Einstein, in a letter to Thornton Wilder

"You are holding in your hands a great American play. Possibly the great American play."—Donald Margulies, from his Foreword

"Wilder's unfashionable insistence on embracing wonders as well as woe is both gallant and exhilarating. . . . [*Our Town*] leaves us with a sense of blessing, and the unspoken but palpable command to achieve gratitude in what remains of our days on earth."

—John Lahr, *The New Yorker*

www.thorntonwilderbooks.com



THORNTON WILDER (1897–1975) is an accomplished novelist and playwright whose works explore the connection between the commonplace and the cosmic dimensions of human experience. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1928 for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, the second of his seven novels, and received the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for *Our Town* in 1938 and *The Skin of Our Teeth* in 1943. Wilder's hit play *The Matchmaker* was adapted as the musical *Hello, Dolly!* His work is widely read and produced around the world to this day, and his screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) remains a classic psycho-thriller. Wilder's many honors include the Gold Medal for Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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Drama

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