



Casual Affairs: The Life and Fiction of Sally Benson

Maryellen V. Keefe

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Follows the life and career of Sally Benson, acclaimed writer of New Yorker fiction and Hollywood screenplays.

In *Casual Affairs*, Maryellen V. Keefe vividly follows the life and career of Sally Benson, the *New Yorker* writer remembered by generations of moviegoers for *Meet Me in St. Louis*, the film that brought her family to life. Keefe traces Benson's life from her childhood in St. Louis to marriage and motherhood to her award-winning fiction career and her success as a Hollywood screenwriter. Through the Jazz Age and into the 1930s and '40s, Benson negotiated the transition from domesticity to the marketplace, becoming a full-fledged career woman while juggling her responsibilities as a wife and mother and indulging in several "quiet little affairs." She succeeded early in a profession dominated by men, forging her way in a largely male world and winning the support and friendship of colleagues and editors. Benson established herself as a writer known for brutally honest portraits of middle-class women much like herself.

"Impeccably researched and highly entertaining, this long-awaited biography of Sally Benson will find an important place in the history of American theater, film, and *belles lettres*." — Donald Spoto, biographer of Alfred Hitchcock, Tennessee Williams, Laurence Olivier, and others

"Finally a biographer capable of bringing the brilliant and outrageous Sally Benson to life! And what a life it was for a woman, who began a long career writing for the *New Yorker* in 1929 and Hollywood in the forties. Keefe's vivid account, which draws on family papers as it traces Benson's personal and professional ups and downs, is also the story of a generation of young women eager to balance work and family. Readers who know Benson primarily from the film *Meet Me in St. Louis* will come to know her as a stylist every bit as talented as Dorothy Parker and with the same wonderful flair." — Susan Goodman, author of *Republic of Words: The Atlantic Monthly and Its Writers, 1857–1925*

Maryellen V. Keefe is Associate Professor of English at SUNY Maritime College and the author of *St. Angela Merici: Leading People to God*.

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