

International



Rose O'Neill

Club Foundation



An organization working to preserve the memory of Rose O'Neill, inform the public about her life and work, and promote the cultural arts.

www.IROCF.org

Facebook.com/internationalroseoneillclubfoundation



About IROCF

Every April, Rose O'Neill fans and collectors gather in Branson, MO, to celebrate and study the life and works of Rose O'Neill. Founded in 1967 by Pearl Hodges and other enthusiasts, the annual Kewpiesta combines great fun with seminars, workshops, fun contests, and opportunities to buy and sell Rose O'Neill and Rose O'Neill-related items. Please join us to find out how to attend. It is the perfect way to have enjoy springtime in the Ozarks, have a great time, and make new friends who share an admiration of Rose O'Neill and her accomplishments!

When you join the IROCF, you will receive three issues of the official *Kewpiesta Courier* newsletter filled with informative and fun-filled articles. All members are encouraged to submit research, news, articles, and photos that are Kewpie or Rose O'Neill related. Some states, along with Japan, have affiliate chapters that hold regular meetings. You must belong to the IROCF in order to join an affiliate. Please visit the [affiliate tab](#) or [contact us](#) at irocf.org to find out about the group nearest to you.

Each year IROCF awards Pearl Hodges Art Scholarships to senior high school and college students planning to have a career in the fine arts. Details and applications are available online at irocf.org/scholarships.

We hope you will join our organization and experience Kewpiesta in the Ozarks. For more information please visit our website or Facebook Meta pages.



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How to Join I.R.O.C.F

Choose Individual or Family (members of the same family living at the same address including children up to 18 years of age) membership: \$30 for Individual prior to Jan. 1 annually, \$35 after Jan. 1 or \$40 Family prior to Jan. 1 annually, \$45 after Jan. 1. New members join for \$30 (Individual) or \$40 (Family) year-round.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Mail form and payment (payable to IROCF) for your first year's dues to:
I.R.O.C.F.
P.O. Box 668
Branson, Missouri 65616

OR you may go online to www.IROCF.org to pay your dues via PayPal, Visa, or Mastercard. A \$2 service fee will be applied to online payments.

Irocf.org/irocf/join

Rose O'Neill

HER LIFE AND CREATIONS

We would like to welcome you to the creative world of Rose O'Neill. She is known as one of the foremost artists and illustrators at the turn of the 20th century; a women's rights leader working with Eleanor Roosevelt; being the first American woman cartoonist; an author and poet; and the mother of the Kewpie, Scootles and Ho-Ho.

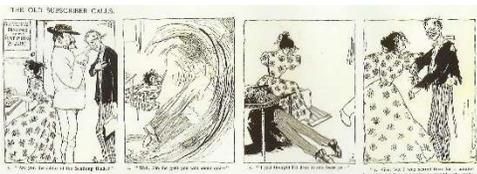
Rose O'Neill was born on June 25, 1874, in Wilkes Barre, PA, the second child of Patrick and Alice Asenath O'Neill. Rose's personality was a blend of her father's impractical nature and her mother's common sense. Rose was already drawing when still a young child and was largely self-taught by studying illustrated art books. Early on, the



O'Neills moved to the outskirts of Omaha, NE. After winning a drawing contest for children under the age of 14 (at left), Rose started receiving commissions from several midwestern publications.

At seventeen, Rose moved to New York City, taking along her first novel and her illustrations for it. The publishers had no use for her novel, but they did find a fresh talent in her drawing style. She was hired as the first full-time woman artist on the staff of *Puck*, a well-known humor magazine.

Numerous illustrations appeared in *The Twentieth Century Home*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Brooklyn Life*. In 1896, *Truth Magazine* featured a cartoon strip she created, making her the first female published cartoonist. (below)



During this time, she signed her name "O'Neill" so her gender could remain unknown. Her work was favorably compared to drawings by Harrison Fisher and C.D. Gibson.

Rose married Gray Latham, but the marriage was marred by his spendthrift ways. They were divorced in 1902. Her second marriage, to novelist-humorist Harry Leon Wilson, was also ruined by incompatibility, with Rose's effervescent personality in direct opposition to Harry's moodiness. They divorced in 1907.

Rose became world famous for creating the "Kewpies." Their first appearance was in the December 1909 *Ladies' Home Journal*. They later were used in many other magazines and publications.



Kewpies believed in "doing good deeds in a funny way." Rose wrote and illustrated all the Kewpie stories. The Kewpies caught on like wildfire with the public, resulting in a stampede of eager manufacturers trying to get exclusive licensing rights. Kewpies appeared on everything from children's garments to box cameras, postcards, and stationery.



The most profitable versions of the Kewpie were created in 1913. Millions of German-made bisque Kewpie dolls and figurines were sold around the world. Rose's Kewpie fortune has been estimated to have been equivalent to today's sum of more than \$200 million. Rose later created the very successful "Scootles" doll.

Rose wrote four novels, a book of poetry, and authored many magazine stories. She was a public icon.

In 1921 and 1922, Rose staged exhibitions of her non-Kewpie artwork. She called these drawings her "Sweet Monsters." They are



amazing images that flashed out of Rose's subconscious and were captured onto paper in weblike strokes of ink and pencil. The drawings often featured half-human, half animal figures representing a long ago, personal Arcadian dream.

A gifted storyteller and bon-vivant, Rose also was an ardent Suffragist working tirelessly for the "Votes for Women" campaigns of the 1910s. Rose also created advertisements for Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Rock Island



Railroads, Colgate (below) and Jell-O Gelatin alone.

At one time, Rose was keeping four households, including a villa on Capri, mansion in Connecticut, and luxury duplex townhouse in New York's Washington Square. Her favorite house was a rambling 14 room hand-built wooden structure named Bonniebrook in the Missouri Ozark hills. It was her heart's true home.

Most of Rose's money was lost due to her supporting the many hangers-on that surrounded her. More was lost in the stock market crash and in the "Great Depression" that followed. Rose



moved back to Bonniebrook after her mother's death in 1937. Her illustration style was very dated, and only a few new assignments were offered to her. Eventually, all new sources of income had disappeared. She also had let most of the Kewpie copyrights, trademarks, and patents lapse. Ill health plagued Rose's later years and she suffered a series of strokes in the early 1940s. She died at age 69 on April 6, 1944, at the Springfield, MO, home of a nephew, and was buried at Bonniebrook.

Bonniebrook itself burned to the ground in 1947. Fortunately, the majority of her precious artworks had been removed from the house just a few days before the fire.