

# The Harvey Girls

Marilyn Warsofsky



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Readers Theatre: *Legendary Ladies and their Gents* by Marilyn Warsofsky is a collection of five plays based on historical women characters. For ten years, she toured the shows throughout her community. Actors and audiences loved the combination of rich history with solid theatre. We think you will too! The book includes:

[\*Molly Brown She Was Unsinkable.\*](#) Full of spirit, this is Molly Brown's tale of rags to riches and her courage when the *Titanic* was sinking.

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[\*The Harvey Girls: They Tamed the West.\*](#) In the Old West when your train stopped at the depot, you ate in Fred Harvey's restaurants which were famous for good food, friendly service, and the famous Harvey Girls who won the hearts of travelers.

[\*Pauline Cushman: The Union Spy.\*](#) This true, but little-known story, is the tale of a brave woman who helped the Union Army win the Civil War. She was a legend!

You can order plays from *Readers Theatre: Legendary Ladies and their Gents* as individual e-scripts or get all of them in a hard copy book.

THE HARVEY GIRLS–THEY TAMED THE WEST

by

Marilyn Warsofsky

CAST

BURLINGTON RAILROAD BOSS: Not interested in Fred Harvey's ideas, insults a Harvey Girl.

MAYETTA: Pushy, excited.

RUBY: Shy, scared, hesitant.

THALIA: Adventurous, eager.

HISTORIAN: Recounts Fred Harvey's exploits and development.

BIG COWBOY: A haughty traveler.

NASTY PERSON: Insults a Harvey Girl. Can be male or female.

BURLY PERSON: A hungry traveler. Can be male or female.

HOUSE MOTHER: Strictly enforces the rules, is friendly, and proud of her girls.

Production Notes:

Since several parts have only a few lines, actors can take double roles as necessary. Or, if desired, longer roles can be divided among more actors. All actors in the cast can ad lib responses at the director's discretion.

Place

The Southwest.

Time

1880's.

HISTORIAN: Who tamed the West? The Harvey Girls! In the 1880s, Fred Harvey found a bad situation in the railroad depots of the West.

FRED HARVEY: I have never seen such despicable conditions in the dining rooms in the train stations. They're dirty, the food is inedible, and the prices are outrageous.

HISTORIAN: Fred Harvey was about to make his mark in Western History.

FRED HARVEY: Because I worked for the Burlington Railroad, I went to them first with my suggestion.

BURLINGTON RAILROAD MAN: Mr. Harvey, we have no intentions in changing our policy. If you want to travel by train you have to expect some inconveniences.

FRED HARVEY: What I suggest will help you build your train clientele. They deserve decent food and courteous service.

BURLINGTON RAILROAD MAN: It's out of the question. Not on our routes.

FRED HARVEY: But...But...

BURLINGTON RAILROAD MAN: Take your ideas somewhere else.

FRED HARVEY: I know it will work.

BURLINGTON RAILROAD MAN: Why don't you go to the Atchison Topeka and the Santa Fe Railroad? Maybe they will like your hair-brained ideas.

FRED HARVEY: I will. No thanks to you.

BURLINGTON RAILROAD MAN: Oh, and by the way, you're fired!

HISTORIAN: In 1886, Fred Harvey took over the restaurant at the Santa Fe Depot in Topeka, Kansas, with the blessings and support of the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe Railroad. He amazed both customers and the railroad.

FRED HARVEY: I offered them linen tablecloths, napkins, and silverware.

CAST: Unheard of!

FRED HARVEY: I gave them excellent food and affordable prices, \$.75 a meal, including a non-alcoholic beverage.

CAST: Unheard of!

FRED HARVEY: You know something didn't seem right. My male staff didn't really make the customers feel comfortable.

HISTORIAN: He knew just what might make a difference.

THALIA: Look at this ad in the paper. Mr. Fred Harvey is looking for female servers in his station restaurants.

HISTORIAN: That young lady was Thalia. She was delighted at the opportunity to work at the train depot in Winslow, Arizona.

THALIA: Ruby, Mayetta...let's apply.

RUBY: I don't know. I never did this before.

MAYETTA: Oh, this could be a real adventure.

RUBY: My parents might not let me.

MAYETTA: Ah, come on. We're old enough to make up our own minds.

HISTORIAN: Fred Harvey's ads had been placed in newspapers across the country.

THALIA: Listen to this. Mr. Harvey wants young women, 18 to 30 years of age, of good character, attractive, and intelligent.

MAYETTA: That's us.

RUBY: What will people think of us?

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