

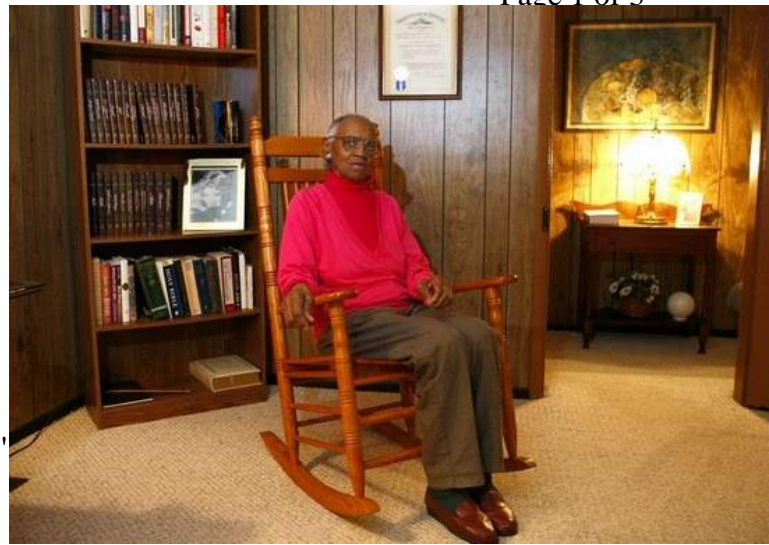


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## Maysville rolls out red carpet

### Town gets all spiffed up for a 'Clooney tsunami'

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*"The picturesque old Ohio River town took on a carnival air. Streets were freshly washed down and manicured for the occasion. Lights and flags were strung across streets. Stores offered 'Rosemary Clooney Day' bargains. Every business and house had a 'welcome home' sign in the window."*

- The Louisville Courier-Journal, Jan. 29, 1953

**MAYSVILLE** - The muddy and swift-flowing Ohio River inched higher near this historic town Thursday morning as landscapers spruced up two planters and a flower bed outside the Washington Opera House with pansies and a fresh layer of mulch.

- [http://news.nky.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=AB&Dato=20080321&Kategori=NEWS0103&Lopenr=803210810&Ref=PH";](http://news.nky.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=AB&Dato=20080321&Kategori=NEWS0103&Lopenr=803210810&Ref=PH)  
target="popup" onClick="window.open('','popup','width=740,height=575,status=no,toolbar=no,location=no,scrollbars=no,resizable=no')">Photos: Town prepares for premiere
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City officials met later near the renovated Second Street building to go over plans for Monday's Hollywood-style premiere of Academy Award winner George Clooney's romantic comedy about small-town pro football in the 1920s.

The red-carpet gala has the town buzzing and many of its almost 9,000 residents clamoring for a ticket as city officials scramble to prepare for the crush of fans and media expected downtown.

"It's just been an absolute madhouse," Maysville Mayor David Cartmell said. "I did a (radio) show in L.A. They're all about George. We are too, baby. This is the Clooney tsunami."

The overwhelming demand for tickets prompted Universal Pictures to schedule a second screening Monday evening and to set up a lottery system for passes.

"We had theater and performance in Maysville and Limestone before Cincinnati had it, before New Orleans had it, before St. Louis," said Mike Thomas, executive director of the Washington Opera House, which opened in 1850. "Theaters happened here first. It's got a remarkable legacy, and this premiere is just another extension of that."

Clooney and co-star Renee Zellweger are scheduled to attend the 8 p.m. Monday premiere of their "Leatherheads" movie.

Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear and his wife, Jane, are also planning to attend.

Sixteen seniors representing Mason County, St. Patrick, Augusta (where Clooney graduated) and Bracken County high schools were provided a ticket so they could share their experience with future generations, Cartmell said.

Nick Clooney and his wife, Nina, will attend their son's premiere along with Blanche Chambers, who befriended

Nick's famous sister, Rosemary Clooney, while growing up in Maysville.

A few blocks away from the busy Washington Opera House, Chambers sat in her rocking chair Thursday, reading the Bible, when Cartmell knocked on the door. A signed photograph of Rosemary Clooney, who became a well-known singer and actor before her death in 2002, is displayed on a bookshelf inside her house.

"George was always a cutup, but such a nice person," Chambers said. "He has a heart for people. Of course he would have because all those Clooneys have a heart for people. They really do.

"George is nice. He doesn't let you know that he's a movie star. He's just plain George. He's such a nice person, and everybody seems to like George because he reaches out to people."

Chambers' house on Lee Street is not far from the Russell Theatre.

The theater is closed and awaiting renovation, but on Jan. 28, 1953, it was where Rosemary Clooney premiered her movie "The Stars are Singing." Tickets cost \$3, and as many as 20,000 people lined the streets for the "Rosemary Clooney Day" celebration.

"She was doing something the whole entire day," Chambers said. "Oh my goodness, she was so happy to be back. It was a wonderful day, and everybody was so happy. The movie was wonderful and, oh my gosh, she just absolutely sat there in amazement. The theater was packed."

The Washington Opera House seats about 300 people, but the first screening Monday is limited to 275 people.

Tickets were split among the Clooney family, government officials and Washington Opera House donors.

"We've had all kinds of bribe offers," Thomas said.

The movie will be shown on a 30-foot-square screen brought in for the event.

During a midmorning break Thursday, Kelly French and co-worker Heather Harding watched from the sidewalk as workers scurried in and out of the opera house.

"I think it's exciting. It really is," Harding said. "You have a small town that's being put on the map yet again."

The co-workers did not have tickets to the premiere, but they do have front-row seating reserved for the red-carpet arrivals starting one hour earlier.

A tug on the storefront window blinds at Power Drive, where French and Harding work, could provide them an optimal view of the opera house.

"It's a big deal," French said. "This is a small town. We've had a few stars come out of here. Heather French, who is kin to my husband and was Miss America 2000. George, of course, and Nick, his dad.

"But, yeah, it is a big deal to Maysville. Anything that happens here is kind of a big deal."

## Additional Facts

How to get a ticket

A second screening has been added to Monday's Maysville premiere of "Leatherheads," the new romantic comedy starring George Clooney, Renée Zellweger and John Krasinski. One hundred winners will receive a pair of passes to attend. Lottery tickets will be distributed between 6 and 7 p.m. Monday from a tent at the intersection of Second and Sutton streets.

Celebrity arrivals will begin at 7 p.m. at the Washington Opera House at 116 W. Second St. Clooney and Zellweger are scheduled to appear at the 8 p.m. premiere screening.

At 8:30 p.m., 100 names will be drawn at random in front of the Opera House. Winners will receive a pair of passes for the 10:30 p.m. showing.

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