

# THE WONDER OF THE MIRACLE WORKER



Helen Keller at age 7.

Helen Keller was born June 27, 1880 with the ability to see and hear. At 19 months old, she contracted an illness that left her both deaf and blind. Referred by Alexander Graham Bell in 1886 to the Perkins Institute for the Blind in south Boston, the Kellers first met Anne Sullivan, Helen's "Miracle Worker."



Anne Sullivan (right) and Helen in 1897.

Anne Sullivan came to Tuscumbia to be Helen's teacher on March 3, 1887. Later Keller would call this day her "soul's birthday." Anne fingerspelled the names of familiar objects into her student's hand. Keller didn't understand until the famous moment when Sullivan spelled "w-a-t-e-r" while pumping water over her hand.



Helen Keller (left), Miss Sullivan and Mark Twain.

Her admirer, author Mark Twain, met Keller when she was 14, and remained friends until Twain died 16 years later. Twain, in fact, was the first to call Sullivan a "miracle worker" for bringing Keller out of the darkness. Twain, had introduced Keller to Standard Oil magnate Henry Huttleston Rogers, who paid for her education.



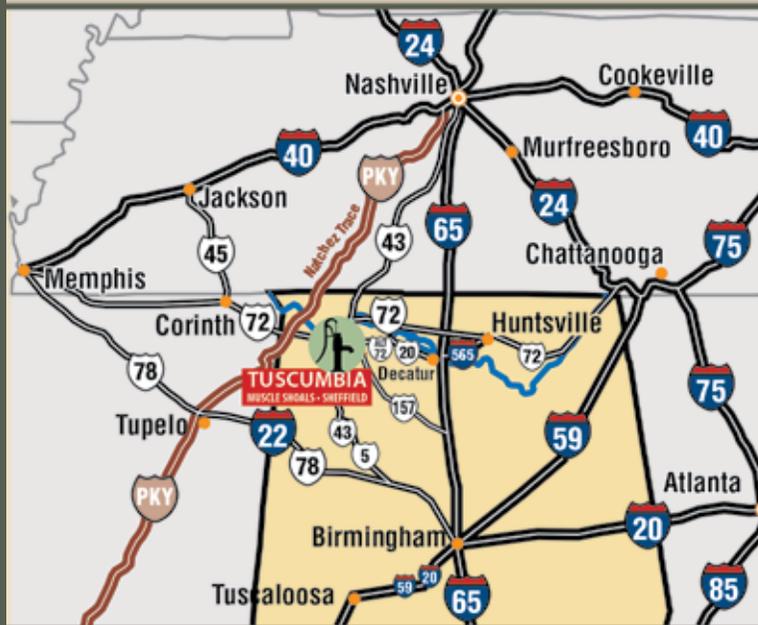
Photo of Anne Bancroft as Annie Sullivan and Patty Duke as Helen Keller in the Broadway play *The Miracle Worker*.

The *Miracle Worker* Play, derived from Helen Keller's autobiography and written by William Gibson was a 1957 Playhouse 90 broadcast. In 1959, Gibson adapted this teleplay for a Broadway production with actress Anne Bancroft as Annie Sullivan and Patty Duke as a young Helen Keller. The first movie, also starring these two actresses, was released in 1962. Made for television movies were released in 1979 and 2000. The 1979 film starred Patty Duke as Sullivan and Melissa Gilbert as Helen Keller. The outdoor drama at the Helen Keller Home in Tuscumbia is based on Gibson's Broadway production.

# THE MIRACLE WORKER

OFFICIAL OUTDOOR DRAMA  
OF THE STATE OF ALABAMA

PERFORMED AT THE OUTDOOR THEATRE OF THE  
HISTORIC HELEN KELLER HOME  
Weekends each June through Mid-July  
Tuscumbia, Alabama



Every summer, for more than 50 years, the Helen Keller Birthplace Foundation has presented the outdoor performances of playwright William Gibson's *The Miracle Worker*. The foundation is a private, not-for-profit organization. The *Miracle Worker* was designated as Alabama's Official Outdoor Drama by the Alabama Legislature on April 23, 1991.



## THE MIRACLE WORKER

FRI & SAT EVENINGS EACH WEEKEND JUNE THROUGH MID-JULY.

GATES OPEN AT 6:30 PM FOR A FREE TOUR OF THE HELEN KELLER HOME.

PERFORMANCE BEGINS AT 8 PM.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR CURRENT PLAY DATES, ADMISSION AND GROUP RATES.

[www.HelenKellerBirthplace.org](http://www.HelenKellerBirthplace.org)

Helen Keller Birthplace

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HELEN KELLER HOME  
Tuscumbia, Alabama

# THE MIRACLE WORKER

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*You don't just watch the play. You experience it.*



"*The Miracle Worker*" has been a movie. It's been a stage play, from Broadway to community theater, and it's been performed by actors who are household names.

But it's performed nowhere like this, on the grounds of Ivy Green, where Helen Keller was born and raised, where this beautiful and timeless saga unfolded.

There is a certain goose-bump quality, especially to realize as a pivotal scene unfolds around the Keller family's well pump, where on April 5, 1887 water spewed onto Helen's hands and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, had the miracle breakthrough in teaching language to the young girl left deaf and blind after a childhood illness.

It's an evening that will touch your heart and soul.

"Now is the time. And bring a friend. You will leave emotionally changed. You don't just watch the play. You experience it," says director Darren Butler.

It's an exceptional cast under the direction of Butler, who has been with the play since 1994, becoming director in 1999. He forged a friendship with the late William Gibson, "*The Miracle Worker*" playwright, even visiting with him at his Massachusetts home. He also befriended Arthur Penn, who directed the movie version.

Butler would videotape performances of the Tuscumbia show and send to Gibson for critiques.

Gibson had a charge for Butler.

"You have people who come there because they want to experience Helen Keller. They're making an effort to travel to find this. They genuinely want to be there. This show has to be better than anywhere in the world," Gibson would tell him.

There is something almost mystical about the cast. They're not merely putting on a performance. They're telling a story, a story that is at the core of Tuscumbia and which is dramatic and inspirational. They have an emotional equity in the play. It's inspired and appropriate casting.

Article By Mark McCarter, AL.com

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