



BHC-MSS 0033
Guide to the Papers of the Stratton Family
By Meg Rinn
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: The Stratton family

Title: Papers of the Stratton Family

Dates: 1856-1933 [bulk 1850-1890]

Quantity: ½ manuscript box

Abstract: Cynthia and Sherwood Stratton were the parents to Charles S. Stratton, a little person made famous by P.T. Barnum under the stage name of General Tom Thumb. The family was native to Bridgeport, and the papers within offer a glimpse into how the family's most famous son impacted the family's wealth.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical history

Sherwood E. and Cynthia Stratton were Bridgeport natives and parents to Charles S. Stratton, later made famous by P.T. Barnum as General Tom Thumb. They had two daughters, Mary E. and Francis Jane – the former of whom married to first A.S. Bassett and then James H. Osgood. Francis married Royal Bassett, who was the head of the Birmingham Iron Foundry and also a trustee for Francis Jane's mother.

Charles S. Stratton (January 4, 1838- July 15, 1883), known as General Tom Thumb, was an entertainer and Bridgeport Conn. native who got his start with P.T. Barnum in 1842. Stratton's parents signed him with Barnum at age 4, as exhibiting those with dwarfism was lucrative at the time. Stratton took quickly to performing, and he entertained audiences worldwide, including nobility such as Queen Victoria. Stratton married fellow performer M. Lavinia Warren and the two had a happy marriage. Stratton's performances brought him renown as a celebrity, perhaps one of the biggest at the time, and he and Warren were able to live comfortably when not working. On July 15, 1883, Stratton suffered a stroke and passed away. He is buried at Mountain Grove Cemetery in Bridgeport, Connecticut, with his wife beside him.

Scope and Content Note

Mostly within the collection are wills, deeds, financial arrangements, and estate papers. Included are two wills from Charles himself, including one from 1860 *prior* to his celebrated marriage to Lavinia Warren. Also within are legal documents and personal papers from Mary Stratton (later Osgood), one of Charles' siblings.

Arrangement note

Legal papers are placed first and make up the bulk of the collection. The few pieces that are non-legal are placed at the end. There are no formal series, as the material is too brief to warrant it.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Purchased in 1996.

Preferred Citation:

Papers of the Stratton Family (BHC-MSS 0033), Bridgeport History Center.

Names and Subject Tracings

Personal names

Thumb, Tom, 1838-1883

Subject tracings

Bridgeport, Conn.

Dwarfism

Entertainers

People with disabilities

People with disabilities and the performing arts

People with disabilities--United States

Detailed box and folder listing

Box 1

1. Sherwood Stratton, will, April 1856
2. Charles S. Stratton, will, March 1860 and December 1877
3. Mrs. Cynthia Stratton, legal papers, 1858-1800
4. Estate of Mary (Stratton) Osgood, 1887
5. Stratton and Basset families legal agreements, 189-1884
6. Copy of requests to probate court in Plymouth, Charles Stratton, 189[?]
7. Legal papers regarding Charles Stratton's will, 1920-1933
8. Legal papers, 1880-1886
9. Compositions and poetry by Mary (Stratton) Osgood, undated
10. Clippings including obituaries and estate sales, 1850s-1890s