



BHC-MSS 0093

Guide to the Records of Editor A.H. Saxon for the Autobiography
of Mrs. Tom Thumb

By Meg Rinn

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: A.H. Saxon

Title: Records of editor A.H. Saxon for the Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb

Dates: 1978

Quantity: ½ manuscript box

Abstract: Contains the typescript and page proofs for the Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb by A.H. Saxon. Mrs. Tom Thumb is also known as Lavinia Warren, a little person who gained fame and fortune through her work with P.T. Barnum.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History:

Lavinia Warren

Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump, later Mercy Lavinia Warren Stratton, and then Mercy Lavinia Magri, (31 October, 1842-25 November, 1919) was an entertainer who worked for P.T. Barnum, managed her own theatre, and wed fellow Barnum performer Charles S. Stratton - known as General Tom Thumb.

Warren was born into the Bump family in Middleborough Massachusetts. Her family was prominent in the area, and capable of tracing their roots back to the Mayflower. She had seven other siblings, but only Warren and her sister Huldah Pierce Warren Bump (later known as Minnie Warren), had dwarfism.

Warren taught school for a time in Massachusetts, before entering show business at age sixteen. Her first foray into being an entertainer saw her under the employ of a cousin who owned a showboat in Mississippi. Barnum came to hear of her in 1862, meeting Warren when she was twenty one years old, and signed on to work for him for \$10 a week plus expenses. It was there that she met Charles Stratton, known as General Tom Thumb and a fellow little person in Barnum's employ and the two began to date.

Eventually, Warren and Stratton married in an event orchestrated by Barnum known as the Fairy Wedding, Held on February 10th, 1863, at Grace Episcopal Church in New York City, the marriage became the social event of the year, as did the reception afterwards. The two were even received at the White House by President Abraham Lincoln.

Later on, Warren and her husband toured with her sister, Minnie Warren, and fellow performer George Washington Morris Nutt. The tour covered the United States and Canada, before heading to Europe. From there, they split their time between Stratton's home in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and

Warren's in Middleborough, Massachusetts, when they weren't touring and entertaining the public. The marriage between the two was generally considered strong, and they remained close throughout their lives.

Warren was also extremely close with her sister, Minnie, who wed a fellow Barnum performer named Major Edward Newell in July, 1877. Unlike her sister, Minnie and her husband did attempt to have children. Unfortunately the child was stillborn, and Minnie herself died after the delivery. Warren was devastated by the loss, and it took a while for her to come to terms with life without her sister's company.

Charles Stratton died on the 15th of July, 1883, leaving Warren a widow. She remarried two years later to Primo Magri, an Italian entertainer of a similar stature to Warren, on 6 April, 1885. They performed both at their own roadside stand in Middleborough, Massachusetts, and toured together along with Magri's brother, Ernesto. The couple even appeared in the silent film, *The Lilliputian's Courtship*, in 1915.

Warren died on November 25th, 1919, and is buried besides Charles S. Stratton at Mountain Grove Cemetery in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

A.H. Saxon

A.H. Saxon is a major P.T. Barnum scholar who has produced a number of books on P.T. Barnum including a biography, published select correspondence, reader guides to primary sources, and other works. He lives in Fairfield, Connecticut.

Scope and Content note:

Lavinia Warren's autobiography was originally published from September to October 1906 in the *New York Tribune Sunday Magazine*. It contains intimate details of her personal life including her upbringing, her married life with Charles Stratton, her deep affection for her sisters, and her world tour which included a very recently opened to the west Japan.

Serving as editor, Saxon produced a new edition of the autobiography, keeping most of the work as is and summarizing long sections of the travel descriptions Lavinia wrote. This collection includes both the typescript and the proof pages.

Arrangement Note:

Typescript is placed before page proofs.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Gift of A.H. Saxon, accession #1979.14

Preferred Citation:

Records of Editor A.H. Saxon for the Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb (BHC-MSS 0093)
Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

Names and Subject Tracings

Personal names

Barnum, P. T. (Phineas Taylor), 1810-1891.

Magri, M. Lavinia (Mercy Lavinia), 1841-1919

Saxon, A.H.

Thumb, Tom, 1838-1883

Subject tracings

Dwarfism

Entertainers--1840-1890

Entertainers--1890-1900

Entertainers--1900-1920

People with disabilities and the performing arts

People with disabilities--United States

Women entertainers

Detailed box and folder listing

Series 1

Box 1

1. Typescript, pages 1-154, 1978
2. Typescript, pages 155-242 and index, 1978
3. Page proofs, 1978