Starke County 20

"Tidbits of Starke County History".....

In a radio program this week, commentators on WKVI (www.WKVI.com) talked about Che Mah, the smallest man in the world, who lived in Knox during the early 1900s and was buried in Crown Hill Cemetery. Born in China, Che Mah was discovered by P. T. Barnum and traveled all over the world with the circus. He retired in Starke County, bought a couple of farms, and lived in Knox the rest of his life. To read more about this amazing small man (at 28 inches tall), click on our website - http://www.starkehistory.com/index files/Page1263.htm

Another small person who was born in Starke County and toured with the circus was Rebecca Ann Myers. Rebecca was the granddaughter of George and Ann Osborn, who were the first persons buried in the Osborn/Wash Twp Cemetery. This is the cemetery on which the Starke County Historical Society placed an historical marker last year.

Here's a short biography of Rebecca Ann Myers –

Born April 4, 1853, North Bend Twp, Starke County, IN

Married March 7, 1880, Rochester, NY to Col. Reuben Steere (44" tall)

Died April 4, 1927, Ober, Starke County, IN while visiting her brother Alfred Turnbull.

Rebecca was 41" tall and weighed 39 lbs.

Reuben and Rebecca were members of the famous **Lilliputian Opera Company** during the 1880s and 1890s. Upon retiring, the couple had a poultry farm in NY. Reuben also served as a truant officer, and Rebecca ran a restaurant in Chepachet, NY.

An interesting story of her marriage to Col. Reuben Steere is **attached**.

Jim Shilling Starke County Historical Society

http://www.starkehistory.com http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/

(If you do not wish to receive "Tidbits of Starke County History" in the future, please let me know.)

Starke County's Smallest Bride

(Editor's note: While growing up, I was acquainted with a 'little person.' His name was ''Little Art,'' he rode a tricycle and went roller skating every weekend with a group of us normal-sized teenagers in our town. We loved him and were fascinated by him.

nim.

Recently, I came across an article about some other "little people" and would like to share it with others who may be fascinated by them, too.)

Rebacca Ann Myers was

Rebecca Ann Myers was born in North Bend Township, Starke County, on April 4, 1863. She weighed 8½ lbs. Her father William Turnbull was 5'8" tall and her mother, Eliza Osborn Turnbull, was 5'4". Rebecca was their first child.

child.

When she was three weeks cld, her father died. Her mother was later married to Thornton Myers, who died when Rebecca was eight years of age. She grew slowly until 10 years of age, then seemed to grow on more. At age 20 her weight was 39 lbs. and she was 41" tall.

According to a biography.

Steere, whom Rebecca married on March 7, 1880, Miss Myers was offered employment with a museum in the spring of 1873. It was connected with G.G. Grady's Circus and Miss Myers accepted it, although she was broken hearted at bidding the home circle and friends farewell. The traveling was done entirely by carriage and took her from Penneytvania to Kansas. The same vania to Kansas. The sea-son was long and successful ending the last of October. Col. Steere stated that she

then remained home through the winter, enter-taining family and friends with her adventures and with her adventures and traveling experiences. In the spring she traveled through Canada, with Cole's Dominion Circus, but the season was not so prosperous. Her next engagement was made in May of 1876 and lasted 10 months, this time traveling by wagon through Chic, Pennsylvania, the Virginias and Southern and Coastal

and Southern and Coastal states to Louisiana. The museum met with financial difficulty and closed in Coffeeville, Miss., with the manager owing Rebecca \$100. She was 1,000 miles

from home with a few dollars in her pocket. Nothing daunted, how-ever, she took the first western train for home, meeting with kindness from all conductors and railroad officials. She traveled free nearly the whole distance, and through their cauches,

nearry the whole distance, and through their courtesy, arrived home safely.

In November 1878 she joined the Lilliputian Opera Company and remained with them to its close.

Nearly all of the salary, she earned during her pre-vious travels was willingly given to her mother to help their circumstances so they could be self-supporting until the younger children reached an age to support

themselves.

Cot Steere wrote, "Although easily affected by the sufferings and misfortunes of others, and with heart overflowing with sympathy, she yet posses-ses the nerve and will to endure, and do for others, what many of larger phy-sical proportions would shrink from."

Miss Myers went East to join the Lilliputian Opera Co. She met Col. Reuben A. Steere at Schenectady, N.Y. He had been associheart overflowing with

PAGE 6, The Shopping News, October 19, 1977

Smallest Bride Cont.

riage which I did. Now although the little rogue had doubtless settled the matter in her own mind weeks before, she was tantaizing enough to me to make me wait two weeks for an answer. I suppose only those of my readers who have been through a similar experience on symilar experience on symilar.

pathize with me. But I survived, and received a favorable answer.

favorable answer.

A few weeks later the company was to appear in Mansfield, Mass., when I took the opportunity to spend the day in Providence R.I., and present my bethrothed to my aged mother living there. It came

Formerly World's Smallest Couple



Col. Reuben A. Steere and bride Rebecca Ann Myers in 1853 at Rochester, N.Y.

ated with the company for 10 months at that time. In Steere's biography he wrote, "As pleasant as our two year correspondence had been before we ever met, I found a closer acquisintance even more so. After we had traveled to-

Cont. On Page 6

to the ears of reporters of the Press and Star who 'gave it away' through their columns in the following

igase it away 'through their columns in the following notions:

'Col. R.A. Steere, one of the mest diminutive members of the farmous Lilliputian. Opera Company, arrived in Providence yester-dey: upon a flying visit to his relatives, all of whom reside in this city. The visit is noteworthy from the fact that he is accompanied by Miss Myers, second soprano, who next to Miss Jennie Quigley, is the smallest woman in the United States. Rumor has it that a wedding of Little People will be in order at no distant day, that will assemble together all of the prominent dwarfs of America possessing musical and drammatical talent. The little couple returned to Mansfield upon the evening train, where the company performed last night.' The wedding took place at Whitcomb House in Rochester, NY. on March 7, 1880. The newspapers all over the country chronicled the event. Such an event had only been witnessed once before, that being the marriage of Gen. Tom the supplement and the marriage of Gen. Tom the supplement and the supplemen

sed once before, that being the marriage of Gen. Tom

The New York Sun carried the following article:
Col. Reuben Allen Steere and Rebecca Ann Myers, whose combined height is only five feet and a half,

were married in Rochester on March 7 (1880). They belong to the Lilliputian Opera Company and two couples of small people from the company stood up with the pair. The bridgeroom was faultiessly attired, exceedingly dignified and wore a rather fierce mustache. The bride was dad in pale blue silk and pink satin and she blushed in captivating style. The ceremony was witnessed by as many guests as a hotel

as many guests as a hotel parlor would hold. The Steere's returned to Rhode Island and accepted

The Steere's returned to Rhode Island and accepted other engagements to perform until 1886 at which time they retired to raise poultry and farm.

Cal Steere died in 1915 at age 77 in Rhode Island. Rebecca died on her 74th birthday, April 4, 1927 while visiting her brother, Alfred P. Turnbull near Ober in Starke County. In part her obtivary read: "She was at all times mindful of the welfare of her mother and as the Lord prospered her, she provided her mother and as the Lord prospered her, she provided horne. Mrs. Steere had a kind and loving disposition and had an unusual personality, quick to understand, and was a good judge of human nature. Her grandparents moved to Starke County in 1–400," at which time there were only five white families in the county, and she was always proud of the progress

les in the county, and she was always proud of the progress that Starke County had made since her childhoods to years since she died, but the past can teach us lessons. Abnormalities still exist, Just because you don't resemble the majority of humans around you in looks or sature, doesn't mean you can't be a very intelligent, and unique individual with much to offer your fellow man.