

Jenny Lind's visit to Elizabethtown, April 1851

Jenny Lind, the Swedish soprano, entertained the townspeople of Elizabethtown during a tour of the United States in April 1851. She had come to United States in September 1850, under a contract with P.T. Barnum to give 150 concerts for \$1,000 dollars each. Jenny Lind, or the "Swedish nightingale," as she was known benefited from Barnum's skillful publicity that brought excited crowds flocking to her concerts, and Lind's name was eventually tied to every kind of commodity, from songs to gloves, bonnets, chairs, sofas, and even pianos.

Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891), or P.T. Barnum as he was known is one of the most colorful and well known personalities in American history. A consummate showman and entrepreneur, Barnum was famous for bringing both high and low culture to all of America. From the dulcet tones of opera singer Jenny Lind to the bizarre hoax of the Feejee Mermaid, from the clever and quite diminutive General Tom Thumb to Jumbo the Elephant, Barnum's oddities, spectacles, galas, extravaganzas, and events tickled the fancies, hearts, minds and imaginations of Americans of all ages.



Barnum in 1851, just before he went on tour with Jenny Lind.

On April 4, 1851, after giving a concert in Nashville, Ms. Lind embarked by stagecoach on her journey to Louisville. The trip over the Louisville and Nashville Turnpike required three days. During the trip, while horses were being changed and during overnight stops, she graciously entertained the local residents. The night of April 4th was spent at Bell's Tavern (now Park City).



**Jenny Lind
1820 - 1887**

Her entourage arrived in Elizabethtown, late in the day on April 5th. Accommodations were secured at the Eagle House, a local hotel that still stands on the northwest corner of North Main St. and the Public Square. As soon as people in Elizabethtown learned of her arrival, a large crowd gathered, begging to hear her sing. As there was no room at the Eagle House, to accommodate the big group, Miss Lind went a short distance up the street to Hill's Hotel (now the Brown Pusey House). She stood upon the stone steps on front and sang several popular songs of the day.

Jenny Lind left Elizabethtown on the northbound stagecoach on the morning of Sunday, April 6th. Samuel Beal Thomas of Elizabethtown, owner of the stage line, drove the coach himself. It is said that Miss Lind sat upon the driver's seat with Thomas to enable her to better see the springtime beauty of Muldraugh's Hill.

The first concert in Louisville was held on the evening of April 7th. Every seat was filled, and even standing room was at a premium. The second concert, on Thursday evening was as successful as the first. Also appearing on the program with Miss Lind was Signor Beletti and an orchestra. Mr. Barnum has scheduled only two concerts in Louisville. However the people there were so anxious for a third one that a Mr. Raine offered Barnum \$5,000 for a third. This offer was so large that Barnum felt he could not turn it down. Consequently, a third concert was given. Receipts of this were over \$6,500. Thus Raine realized considerable profit on the one nights performance.

Tickets to the various concerts in Louisville sold as high as \$175 dollars each at an auction. More than one thousand were sold at prices ranging from one to nine dollars. Standing room was \$3.00, with hundreds unable to get in. Total receipts for the three concerts amounted to \$19,429.50, which was not an unusual amount for three of her concerts. This was however, a large sum for Louisville, as the 1850 census showed a population of 43,194 for the city.

On Saturday morning, April 12th, Jenny Lind left Louisville with her party aboard the riverboat Ben Franklin. She was scheduled to give a concert in Madison, Indiana that evening, prior to her arrival in Cincinnati.

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<http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/brady/gallery/17gal.html>
<http://www.ptbarnum.org/index2.html>