

HOW MANY REMEMBER LITTLE SAMMY DRAPER



By Dennis Wilson

For more than sixty years "little" Sammy Draper lived in Lancaster. Even if Sammy was little, only 3' 10" tall, he had a big place in the heart of Lancaster. For sixty years Sammy lived in the same little house across from "Stratton's Greenhouse" (now Ramshaw's Flower Shop) and next to the Methodist parsonage. You would always find Sammy anywhere there was a crowd circus, carnival, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, football games. Especially at the GRANT COUNTY FAIR Sammy was always there greeting everyone as they came. He was always selling trinkets, buttons, and pictures of himself when he was with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus. Sammy never missed the GRANT COUNTY FAIR.

Sometimes he would be dressed in a high Silk (stovepipe) hat and long swallow tail coat. Sammy always liked to go to Church. On a Sunday morning you would always find him attending the Methodist, Episcopal, Catholic or Congregational Churches. All little boys and girls loved Sammy. They thought it was fun to take his hand and walk down the streets with him. Sam was a traveling man. There was nothing he liked better to do than to go places and see and meet new people. Traveling salesmen often took Sammy with them on short trips from one town to another.

As a young man he traveled with the Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus. He was featured in a side show next to the big tent as "The Smallest Man in the World." He was also at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. For twenty-five years Sammy met every train that came into Lancaster. This little "official greeter" of Lancaster met many notables. Such men as William Jennings Bryan, Judge Kenesaw, Mountain Landis and Judge Ben Lindsey shook the hand of little Sammy Draper.

Sammy Draper was born in Ofwell, England. "Colonel" Sam (as he was known then) came to this country with his father, mother, sisters and brothers in 1867 and settled in Lancaster in 1868. He died in the Lancaster General Hospital at the age of 78. Cheerful, Good Natured, Willing "Little" Sammy was missed by all who knew him.