

NARRATOR'S NOTES: Dan Rice - Almost A Clown

Dan Rice is one of those persons who fits into the category "Greatest Americans no one ever heard of".

Though having made a significant impact on AMERICAN CULTURE, unlike P.T. Barnum and The Ringling Brothers of North American Circus Lore, Mister Rice has been ignored by successive waves of Textbook manufactures and purveyors. His only living legacy remains a small-town museum in the Western Pennsylvania community of Girard where his animals were often boarded for the winter.

while being an ideal model of "the self-made man", Rice as a prolific entertainer and successful artiste was doomed to obscurity by his own Creativity.

Dan - "the man"- made a career out of obfuscating the truth about himself. Among his arsenal of skills, the most outstanding was his penchant for manufacturing TRUTH. As an unrivaled storyteller he was able to alter facts at will and convince interested parties that each version was more real than the previous one.

His real name may have been "Daniel McLaren" but without birth records there is no way of ascertaining this tidbit of information.

Some would-be Biographers have theorized that he may have adopted the name "Rice" during his "Black-face days" as a means of becoming associated with a

famous and highly successful contemporary entertainer - T.D. Rice.

Such a story gains credibility from his habit of claiming association with popular people.

According to one story he liked to tell he had become an intimate of the British writer, Charles Dickens, during the latter's North American tour in 1842.

Be it so or not, Dan and Dickens did share at least one common feature. Neither man never received much formal education yet each had developed a passion for the words of William Shakespeare and used this wisdom as springboards from which to launch their own careers.

Additionally, Dickens, though known best for his writing, was, like Dan Rice, a consummate stage entertainer! Each man was capable of holding an audience enthralled with words "not uttered by ordinary mortals".

It may have been Dickens' background as a Newspaper Reporter that steered him to committing his notions to writing while Rice was more likely to be "the subject" of Newspaper stories.

Dan Rice was a living American folk-hero. His multitude of talents made him "bigger than Life"!

He was in all ways a lover, a fighter and "a ringtail howler". His physical and mental strengths were incomparable. He embodied the assertion by Avon's Bard that "all the world's a

stage..." by being ever "...a player upon it".

Scene 1:

The "Real Dan Rice" allegedly commenced Life in New York City with the name Daniel McLaren. Questions arise about that particular appellation due to the identity of his biological progenitor. Whether or not he should be credited with his Mother's first- or second-husband as a Father is as nebulous as his seventy-seven year career on Planet Earth beginning on or about January 23, 1823.

As a teenager Dan was a fine specimen of humankind physically as well as mentally. Though not particularly "big" he was amply muscled and adroit. Brawling was his favorite "sport" while handling horses was his particular skill. His superior strength suited him well for becoming a "Drayman" when at Age 17, he made his way to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

His skill in handling horses, especially when persuading recalcitrant equines to haul heavy loads on flatbed wagons was due in part to his uncanny ability to communicate with animals. Prior to entering the world of Circus this "Doctor Doolittle" had picked up pocket-change by exhibiting a Pig he had trained.