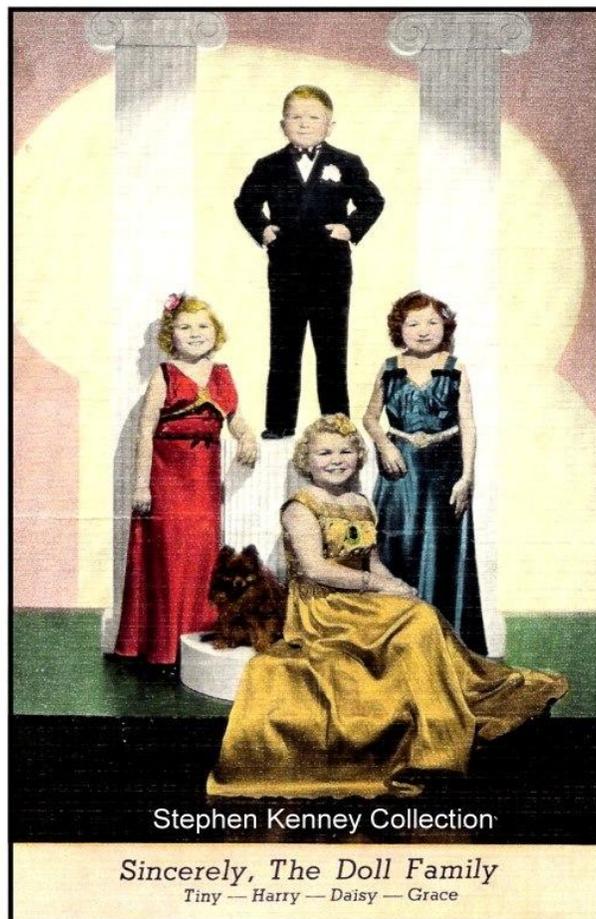




WEBFOOTER EXTRA

JUNE 2017

Remembering the Doll Family and Dolletta



- ◆ The Doll Family and Dolletta: the World's Smallest Mother – see page 2.

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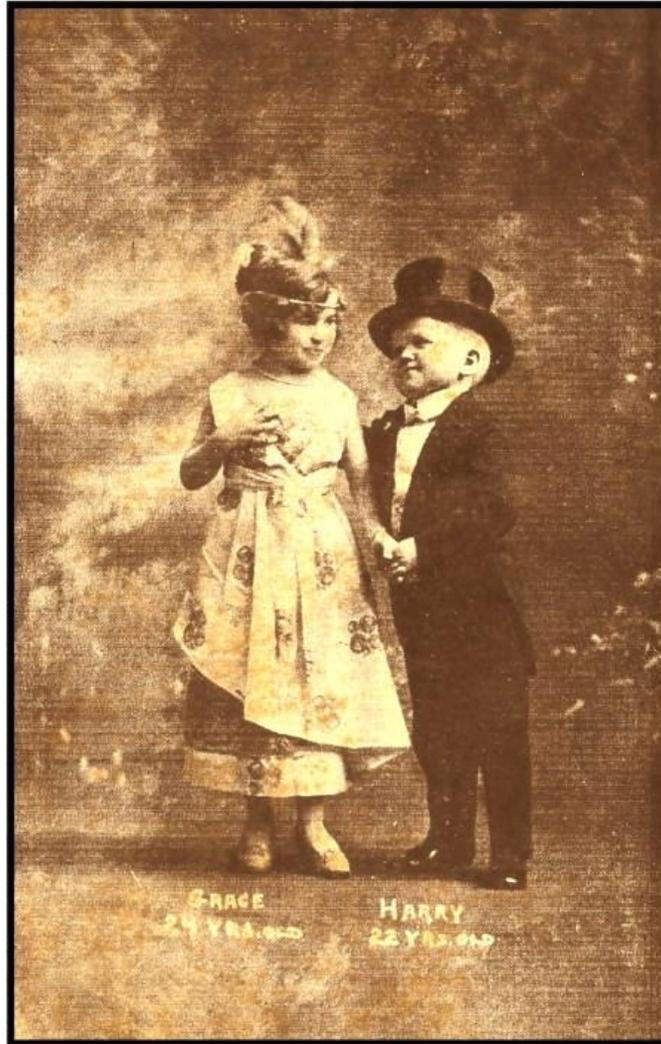
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Harry Doll and The Doll Family



Harry Doll (1902-1985) was billed as the World's Smallest Man.

The Doll Family, also billed as The Dancing Dolls as well as the Earles Family, were a quartet of four American dwarf siblings born in Germany who were popular performers in circuses and sideshows in the United States from about 1914 until their retirement in the mid-1950s. They also appeared briefly in films.



Grace and Harry Doll, who performed together on stage are shown in about 1924.

The Dolls were four of seven children born to Emma and Gustav Schneider in Stolpen, Germany (the other three were average-sized). Freida (Grace Doll) Schneider was born March 12, 1899 and Harry was born Kurt Schneider on April 3, 1902. Harry and Grace were the first of the quartet to perform in sideshows, as "Hansel and Gretel".

In 1914, American entrepreneur Bert W. Earles saw them and brought them to the United States to tour with the 101 Ranch Wild West Show. The siblings lived in Pasadena, California, with the Earles family. Earles also brought Daisy and Tiny to the United States (in 1922 and 1926, respectively), where they joined Harry and Grace in their act.

At this time, the Dolls began touring with Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, where they sang, danced, and rode horses and wagons for the next 30 years. Daisy soon earned the nickname "Midget Mae West" and was often billed as such. By this time, the entire family had adopted the Earles' surname; after Earles died in the 1930s, they chose to be called the Dolls.

Harry was the first to begin a film career, with director Tod Browning for the Lon Chaney vehicle *The Unholy Three* (1925) as the ruthless midget Tweedledee. He reprised the role for the 1930 sound remake, again with Chaney, but this time directed by Jack Conway. The family also began appearing in films together, almost always as circus performers, and acted in some comedies with Laurel and Hardy. Harry and Daisy were cast in major roles in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's 1932 film *Freaks*, while Tiny had a bit part. In fact, Harry himself brought to Browning's attention the Tod Robbins story "Spurs" on which the film was based. All four siblings played Munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz*; Harry played a minor featured part as a member of the Lollipop Guild who welcomes Dorothy upon her arrival in Oz. The Dolls dubbed themselves "The Moving Picture Midgets" because of their numerous film credits.

The Dolls were a close-knit family who always lived, ate, and worked together—with the exception of Daisy's brief marriage in 1942 to an average-sized man, Louis E. Runyan, which ended in divorce less than a year later. The family's opportunities as film actors had always been limited, and they stopped appearing in films, although Daisy played a small part in *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952). They returned to the travelling sideshows. The Dolls toured with the Christiani Circus after the Ringling Circus was sold in 1956. They retired two years later.

Their decades with the circus had provided them with a good living, and they bought a house in Sarasota, Florida, in which all four lived. The house, which was often featured in magazines, was furnished with custom-built reduced-size furniture. On the grounds of the house was a "Doll's House", which the family opened to the public. Each of the four remained living in the house until their deaths. Tiny was the last survivor; she died in 2004 after a long illness and many years living alone after Harry's death in 1985.

Dolletta – The World's Smallest Mother



The World's Smallest Mother, Dolletta Dodd from Quincy, Illinois with her two caesarian babies: Charles J. Boykin, seven years of age and Lucia E. Boykin, 13 years of age. Dolletta was 38 years old when this photo was taken. She was 28 inches tall and weighed 37 pounds.

There have been many "World's Smallest Mothers", but perhaps the smallest of all was little Dolletta Dodd, a 28"-tall dwarf from Quincy, Illinois. Dolletta was born October 14, 1881, to the wife of B.F. Dodd, a civil engineer.

The third of ten children, Dolletta was said to be so small at birth that she fit in the palm of her 5'9"-tall father's hand and could be completely covered with the other hand. She was precocious, however, and could walk and talk by the age of 11 months. By the time she was 18 months old, she weighed but four pounds and was nine inches tall, less than half the weight and length of her newborn baby brother.



Another view of the World's Smallest Mother, Dolletta Dodd and her two caesarian babies: Charles J. Boykin, seven years of age and Luecia E. Boykin, 13 years of age.

Dolletta's parents insisted that she receive a normal college education despite her diminutive size. She attended school in Fremont, Nebraska, and taught school there for three years after her graduation. Around 1900 she left her teaching job to become a lecturer with a circus sideshow. As a performer, she was quite successful. She rode a miniature chariot drawn by Shetland ponies, trained dogs, and played the harmonica and piano. In her spare time she wrote and recited poetry. Her sideshow resume included Greater Alamo Shows, H.W. Campbell's Shows and Frank Taylor Circus.

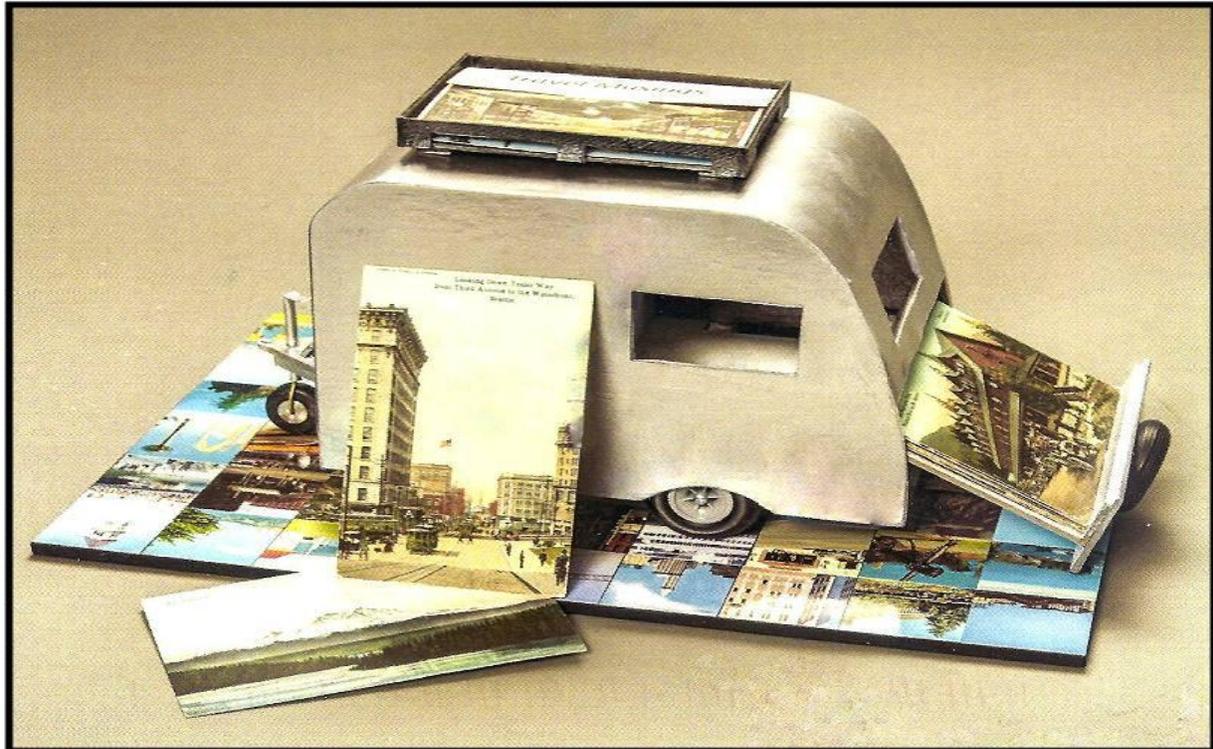
Dolletta married Major James A. Boykin, a 42" tall dwarf, around 1904. Their first daughter, Luecia, was born January 16, 1906 by Caesarian section. A son, Charles, followed on February 12, 1912. Dolletta and her "two Caesarian babies" travelled together as an enormously popular sideshow attraction and were featured in Robert Ripley's *Believe it or Not?! comic strip*.



Charles J. Boykin, Luecia E. Boykin and their mother Dolletta Dodd, the World's Smallest Mother.

After Major Boykin died, Dolletta remarried to 6'-tall circus trick roper C.H. Buck, who carried his wife in his arms like a small child. Buck, it seemed, liked unusual women, for he had previously been married to Hungarian bearded lady Sidonia de Barcsy. Dolletta underwent a third and final Caesarian section at Rochester, Minnesota's, prestigious Mayo Clinic on August 8, 1924. Her baby daughter was named Dottella Mayo Buck in honor of the clinic. All three of Dolletta's children later married and chose to remain in show business.

Dolletta retired in 1939 to Joplin, Missouri, after her vision began to fail. She was active in the Joplin Service Club for the Blind and a member of the South Joplin Christian Church, and she got around using a custom-built wheelchair. Although she strove to "remain active" in her declining years, a stroke in December 1947 left her bedridden. After living for seven years in a nursing-home room custom furnished to her size, she died in her miniature bed on January 10, 1948. She is buried in the Ozark Memorial Park Cemetary. A beloved mother, wife and entertainer, Dolletta claimed she could do anything an average-sized person could do – her only regret was that she couldn't drive a car.



Any of our members and friends going to the Seattle/Tacoma area over the next couple months will want to visit the Puget Sound Book Artists "Northwest Musings" 7th Annual Members' Exhibition June 1 - July 28, 2017 at the Collins Memorial Library at the University of Puget Sound, 1500 N Warner St #1021 in Tacoma, WA 98416.

For hours: pugetsound.edu/libraryhours