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## P. T. Barnum Never Did Say "There's a Sucker Born Every Minute"

By R. J. Brown  
Editor-in-Chief

P. T. Barnum is most often associated with the circus sideshow and the display of freaks. While this is true, he is also the founding force behind one of America's most famous circuses: Barnum & Bailey Circus. Barnum is also affiliated with the famous quote "There's a sucker born every minute." History, unfortunately, has misdirected this quotation. Barnum never did say it. Actually, it was said by his competitor. Here's the incredible story.

From 1866 until 1868 Mr. George Hull, of Binghamton, New York studied archeology and paleontology. Over this period of time Hull contemplated how to pull off a hoax. It seems that many an evangelist at the time had been preaching that there were giants in the earth. In June of 1868 Hull traveled back to Fort Dodge, Iowa where there was a gypsum quarry he had recalled seeing two years earlier. Even then, he had noticed that the dark blue streaks running through the soft lime rock resembled human veins. Realizing this its appearance was tailor-made for his hoax and it was easy to carve, Hull hired a group of quarry workers to cut off a slab measuring twelve feet long, four feet wide and two feet thick.

In November, Hull had his gypsum wrapped in canvas and hoisted onto a wagon. Since the nearest railroad was forty miles away, it proved to be a long, difficult job. He then had the slab of gypsum shipped by rail to Chicago where he had hired a stone cutter named Edward Burghardt to carve a giant. Burghardt and his two assistants, were sworn to secrecy and agreed to work on the piece in a secluded barn during their off hours and Sundays. The instructions were to carve the giant as if it had died in great pain, and the final result was an eerie figure, slightly twisted in apparent agony, with his right hand clutching his stomach. All of

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the details were there; toenails, fingernails, nostrils, sex organs and so forth. Even a needlepoint mallet was used to add authentic-looking skin pores. When the carving was done, sulfuric acid and ink were used to make the figure look aged.

The giant finished, Hull then had the figure shipped by rail to the farm of William Newell, his cousin, located near the town of Cardiff, New York. In the dead of night, Hull, Newell and his oldest son buried the giant between the barn and house. They were instructed to say nothing about it and that Hull would let them know in about a year of what the next stage was.

Luckily, about six months later, on another farm near the Newell's, some million year-old fossil bones were dug up. Newspapers around the country reported the finding. Hull was filled with glee in reading the accounts.

True to his word, one year after burying the giant, Hull sent word to his cousin on October 15, 1869, to start the next stage of the hoax. Newell hired two laborers to dig a new well near his home. Newell directed them to the exact spot he wanted the well dug and went back into the house to wait -- anxiously. Sure enough, well into the day, the two laborers rushed up to the house to announce their discovery: a giant turned to stone! The laborers and both Newells carefully excavated the area surrounding the giant.

News of this amazing discovery spread throughout the valley and soon wagon loads of neighbors streamed into Newell's farm to see the giant. By mid-afternoon, Newell erected a tent around the "grave" and started charging 25 cent admission. Two days later, the Syracuse Journal (New York) printed an article about the discovery. Being greedy, Newell raised the price to 50 cents, and a stage coach company made four round trips a day from Syracuse to the Newell farm. Thousands came every day. Among the visitors were clergymen, college professors and distinguished scientists. Before long, the expert's opinions split into two theories; one side claimed it was a true fossilized human giant and the other side pronounced it an authentic ancient statue. No one asserted that it was a fake!

About ten days after the discovery, and about the time the Cardiff Giant, as the papers had named it, started receiving national attention, Hull sold two-thirds interest in the giant for \$30,000 to a five-man syndicate in Syracuse, the head of which was a banker named David Hannum. The syndicate moved the giant to an exhibition hall in Syracuse and raised the admission price to a dollar a head. Unknown to them, P. T. Barnum sent an agent to see the giant and make an assessment. The particular Sunday the representative saw the giant, the crowds were abnormally large -- about 3,000 people. The agent wired the news back to Barnum and Barnum instructed him to make an offer of \$50,000 to buy it. Hannum turned his offer down.

The Cardiff Giant was the most talked about exhibit in the nation. Barnum wanted the giant to display himself while the attraction was still a hot topic of the day. Rather than upping his offer, Barnum hired a crew of workers to carve a giant of his own.

Within a short time, Barnum unveiled HIS giant and proclaimed that Hannum had sold Barnum the original giant and that Hannum was now displaying a fake! Thousands of people flocked to see Barnum's giant. Many newspapers carried the version that Barnum had given them; that is, Hannum's giant was a fake and Barnum's was authentic. It is at this point that Hannum -- NOT BARNUM -- was quoted as saying "There's a sucker born every minute." Hannum, still under the impression that HIS giant was authentic, was referring to the thousands of "fools" that paid money to see Barnum's fake and not his authentic one.

Hannum brought a lawsuit against Barnum for calling his giant a fake. When it came to trial, Hull stepped forward and confessed that the Cardiff Giant was a hoax and the entire story. The judge ruled that Barnum could not be sued for calling Hannum's giant a fake since it was a fake after all. Thereafter, Hannum's name was lost to history while Barnum was left with the misplaced stigma of being the one to say "There's a sucker born every minute."