

Swedish Soprano Inspires Voice and Piano Lessons to Smith Family of Monroe County

By Jeannette Holland Austin



Jenny Lind

When the famous Swedish opera singer, Jenny Lind was brought to America by P. T. Barnum in 1850, she presented 93 large-scale concerts on tour, earning more than \$350,000, most of which was donated to charities. She was affectionately known as the "Swedish Nightingale," Lind became famous after her performance in *Der Freischutz* in Sweden in 1838. However, thereafter suffered vocal damage, but the singing teacher Manuel Garcia saved her voice. She was in great demand in opera roles throughout Sweden and northern Europe during the 1840s, and was closely associated with Felix Mendelssohn. Lind was in Charleston, South Carolina when Colonel Davis Smith of Monroe County took his wife, Elizabeth, to hear the soprano. Colonel Smith came to Monroe County from Laurens County and built his plantation in Brent, Georgia in 1824.

Elizabeth was a talented pianist, and during the couple's visit to Charleston, purchased a piano and brought it back to Brent. For the longest while, this instrument was known as the first piano in Monroe County! Elizabeth's daughter, Jennie Smith, was sent to study music at Wesleyan Female College in Macon, the first college of its sort in Georgia for women. More information on Wesleyan Female College