

THE PICTURE GALLERY

Ms Mary Baker with Concertina, c. 1857

Notes by PAT SHIPMAN

The PICTURE GALLERY for this issue features a photograph—after a daguerreotype from the London studio of Antoine Claudet, c. 1857—of Ms Mary Baker (d. 1882), nicknamed 'Min', holding an English concertina, probably a Wheatstone (see picture).

Mary was one of seven children born to a well-to-do family of merchants with extensive sugar holdings in Jamaica and Mauritius. In 1855, Mary, still unwed (she eventually married into a family named Cawsten), became the surrogate mother to the children of her widowed brother Samuel White Baker (1821-1893), who, after his wife passed away that year, sought solace in hunting and travel. In fact, Sam Baker became well known as a big-game hunter and explorer, and together with his second wife, Florence Szasz (von Sass), set out to search for the source of the Nile and eventually discovered Lake Albert (named after Prince Albert) in 1864 (for which he was knighted in 1866).¹

What is particularly interesting about the photo of Mary and her concertina is that we may be able to identify the instrument she is holding and when she bought it. As Allan Atlas has suggested, Mary may well be the Miss Baker who purchased Wheatstone no. 6628 for twelve guineas on 31 October 1854, and later treated herself to two more concertinas: on 3 December 1858, when she borrowed Wheatstone 10663, and 27 August 1859, when she paid £2.0.0 for Wheatstone 9981.²

Finally, Mary might not have been the only member of the family who played the concertina, as the Wheatstone sales ledgers also record transactions for a Mrs and Mr Baker, with the latter having purchased his concertina on 23 August 1859, just four days prior to Ms Baker's final transaction.³

NOTES

1. I tell the story of the Bakers' exploration in *To the Heart of the Nile: Lady Florence Baker and the Exploration of Central Africa* (New York: William Morris, 2004).

2. See his 'Ladies in the Wheatstone Ledgers: The Gendered Concertina in Victorian England, 1835-1870', forthcoming in the *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 39 (2006). The three transactions are recorded in the Wheatstone sales ledgers: 31 October 1854 in C1049, p. 29; 3 December 1858 in C1051, p. 54; and 27 August 1859 in C1051, p. 85. The ledgers are housed at the Horniman Museum, London, Wayne Archive, and appear online at www.horniman.info.



Mary 'Min' Baker (d. 1882), as shown in a photograph after a daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet, c. 1857; reproduced courtesy of the Rev. Ian Graham-