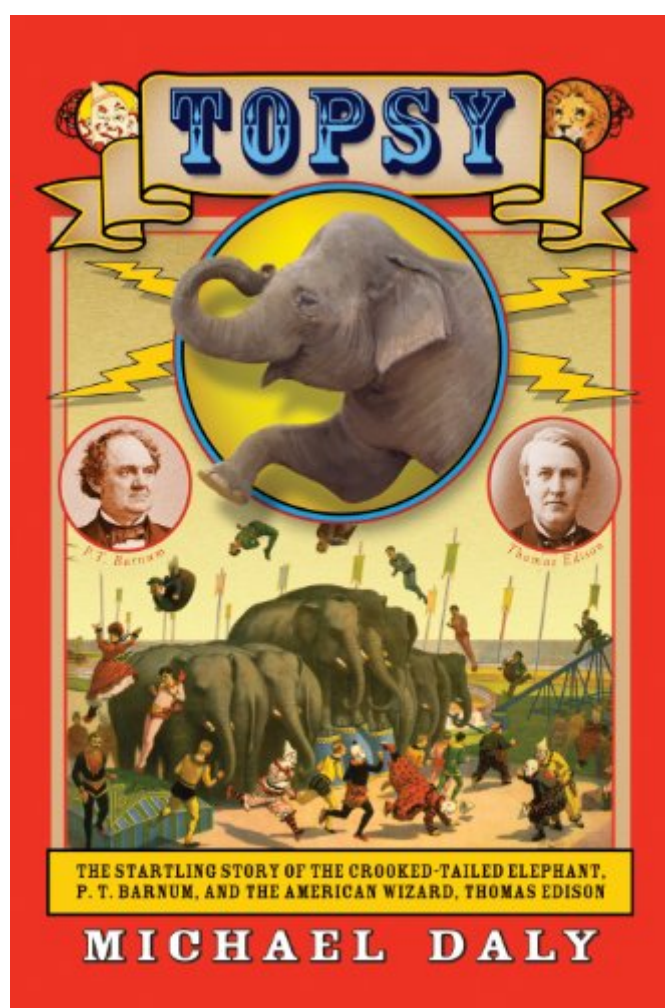


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Topsy: The Startling Story Of The Crooked Tailed Elephant, P.T. Barnum, And The American Wizard, Thomas Edison



Synopsis

In 1903, on Coney Island, an elephant named Topsy was electrocuted, and over the past century, this bizarre, ghoulish execution has reverberated through popular culture with the whiff of urban legend. But it really happened, and many historical forces conspired to bring Topsy, Thomas Edison, and those 6600 volts of alternating current together that day. Tracing them all in *Topsy The Startling Story of the Crooked Tailed Elephant, P.T. Barnum, and the American Wizard, Thomas Edison*, journalist Michael Daly weaves together a fascinating popular history, the first book on this astonishing tale. At the turn of the century, the circus in America was at its apex with the circuses of P.T. Barnum and Adam Forepaugh (or 4-Paw) competing in a War of the Elephants, with declarations of whose pachyderms were younger, bigger, or more "sacred." This brought Topsy to America, fraudulently billed as the first native-born, and caught between the circus disputes and the War of the Currents, in which Edison and George Westinghouse (and Nikola Tesla) battled over alternating versus direct current. Rich in period Americana, and full of circus tidbits and larger than life characters—both human and elephant—Topsy is a touching tale and an entertaining read.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

LOVED this book! The story was told in much detail with a minute look at circus life , as well as the history of elephants in the circus. Sometimes, it was a little hared to read about the horrific acts of cruelty towards the elephants, but important to know. I will never go to a circus again that has an animal "act".

A better title would have been something about how captive elephants have given their all to make the circus what it is, today. The book is not about Topsy, only, so the title was a little misleading for me. The circus, the competition between circus owners to acquire elephants, the general acquiring of elephants, and the story of Topsy make up the full book. The first chapter is a little wanting with page, after page, after page, after page after page . . of the phrase "would have" to describe how Topsy "would have" been born and captured. After Chapter 1, the book is interesting. I finished reading it, but felt the book could have been more aptly titled about circus elephants in general. The story of Topsy is the capper, but there were just as many other interesting stories in the book about other captive elephants. A good read and a book that should be on the list for anyone unaware of the treatment of captive elephants, and also, the chosen methods by circuses to put some of these elephants, not just Topsy, to death, those deemed to have become psychotic due to capture or dangerous amongst humans (becoming so due to the mistreatment of the elephants by their trainers, such as with Topsy). You'll learn more about circus elephants in this book, than you would from Wikipedia.

I Wonder how much more humane we have gotten as human being , towards animals? Interesting, full of detail, sorrowful

Sad yet truly telling of the smarmy undersides of the circus business. I felt so sorry for Topsy and her fellow animals throughout the book. Mesmerizing and tawdry account of Edison and Barnum in financial cahoots with poor Topsy in the middle. Really hardhearted and callous.

Engaging account of the importation and exploitation of the circus elephant in the US, but alarming in its documentation of the extent to which they were subject to routine abuse to 'control' behavior.

Interestingly entwines the plight of circus elephants with the advent of electricity and the competition between Westinghouse and Edison. Sheds a negative light on a brilliant Thomas Edison.

Good writing, excellent research and historically mesmerizing. The evolution of our relationship with these great beasts. Recommended reading for history buffs.

Excellent depiction of the times, the circuses of the day, and the plight of this poor elephant. The writing is excellent, and the book memorable.

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