

The Advance Car

The Official Newsletter of the Circus Historical Society

February 2026

We are pleased to bring you another edition of *The Advance Car*, the e-newsletter of the Circus Historical Society.

For almost ninety years, hundreds of CHS members have been preserving circus history by authoring *Bandwagon* articles and circus history books, speaking at CHS conventions, producing content for our websites and other online and social media programs, teaching circus history classes, and working in the collections of the major circus history museums and libraries. This issue features recent member activities and other CHS news.

CHS is a volunteer-run organization with a working-style Board of Officers and Trustees. We recently held elections for Trustee seats up for re-election and Trustees also re-elected Officers at the recent meeting. [Visit the CHS website](#) to meet our Board and read more.

We distribute *The Advance Car* to both members and non-members. If you are not already a member and want to help preserve the ever-evolving history and cultural significance of circus and receive *Bandwagon* journal quarterly, [click here](#) to learn more about the benefits of a CHS membership. Dues are still only \$60 per year.

I hope to see you at CHS Convention 2026 in Baraboo in June!

Bruce Hawley
President
Circus Historical Society

CHS Member Spotlight

Recognizing our members and their dedication to the preservation of circus history

Amelia Osterud publishes new circus history book!



Congratulations to CHS Secretary Amelia Osterud who attracted a straw house at Boswell Books in Milwaukee on February 13 for a talk about her latest circus history book: *The 388 Tattoos of Captain George & The 388 Tales of How He Got Them!*

Amelia's new book tells the story of Captain George Costentenus, the "Tattooed Greek." He became internationally famous in the 1870s and set the standard for the tattooed performers who followed him. Costentenus worked for PT Barnum in Barnum's formative years as a circus owner, and alongside other 19th century circus luminaries. For more information about this new circus history book, [click here](#).

Photo courtesy of Amelia Osterud.



Bruce Hawley addresses the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque

CHS President Bruce Hawley gave a presentation to global circus professionals gathered at the general assembly of the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque (FMC) in Monte-Carlo, of which CHS is an associate member. Twenty other CHS members from 4 countries attended FMC meetings and the International Monte-Carlo Circus Festival.

Photo courtesy of Wayne McCary

Jessica Hentoff named Circus Ambassador 2026!



Please join us in congratulating CHS member Jessica Hentoff! Jessica was named *Circus Ambassador 2026* by the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque in Monte-Carlo for her outstanding contributions to the preservation, development, and promotion of the circus arts.

Photo courtesy of Jessica Hentoff.

If you're a CHS member who has recently promoted circus history through publication, presentations, media appearances, or community talks, let us know! We try to highlight as much as possible in each issue.

Email CHSmktgpr@gmail.com

CHS News & Updates



Registration is now open for CHS Convention 2026!

Join us in Baraboo, Wisconsin this June for the action-packed Circus Historical Society Convention! This year, the convention will take place right across the street from Circus World, inside a historic building dating back to 1909 that once served the Ringling brothers as a circus wagon and costume shop.

Registration: [Click here](#) for additional convention information, details on travel and hotel availability, and to register. Rates are available for members, non-members, academics, students, virtual, and one-day participants.

Call for Papers: We are still accepting proposals for presentations on circus history topics. We invite proposals for single speakers and groups. Click the button below to learn more and submit your proposal through the online form no later than March 31, 2026.

Student Prize: The best paper submitted by a student currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program at a college or university during the 2026 Convention will receive a prize. Click the button below for more information about the Student Prize. The submission deadline is March 31, 2026.

Auction Donations: Auction donations help cover expenses for our *Bandwagon* journal and other programs. If you would like to donate circus posters, photo albums, wardrobe, and other circus-related memorabilia for sale at our convention auction, please send an email to Bruce Hawley at president@circushistory.org.

[Click here for Convention 2026 details](#)



Coming Soon! 2025 Circus Season in Review Article

Back by popular demand, the next issue of *Bandwagon* will include an extensive review of the 2025 circus season! Authored by CHS member Don Kowell, "A Banner Year for Circus in America: A Retrospective for 2025" will document the activities of travelling and stationary circuses, as well as circus schools and festivals.

Don's article will join the long list of *Bandwagon* circus year-in-review articles. These articles are a great resource for circus historians. Digital copies of back issues of *Bandwagon* are available for research in the fully-searchable [Bandwagon Collection](#) on the Internet Archive.

CHS members can expect to receive the upcoming *Bandwagon* by mail around the middle of March. If you want to read Don's article and are not already a member, [click here](#) to join the CHS. Dues are only \$60 per year.



2026 Circus International Film Festival

Consistent with our mission to "preserve, promote, and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and *allied arts*, past and present," we wanted to make our members aware of a film festival that previously recognized a circus film created by CHS member and Emmy Award-winning actress Britt Lower.

The Circus International Film Festival (CIFF) is a global virtual film competition dedicated to celebrating and honoring the art of circus through film. The festival highlights filmmakers who explore creativity, risk, and artistry across diverse storytelling forms, from narrative to experimental film. With over three-hundred submissions across forty countries, CIFF has solidified its place as an international hub of creativity and innovation. This season's submission deadline is March 1st, 2026, with the festival taking place from April 18-May 3. [Click here](#) for details.



Group by Circus Historical Society

Circus Historical Society

Private group · 13.6K members

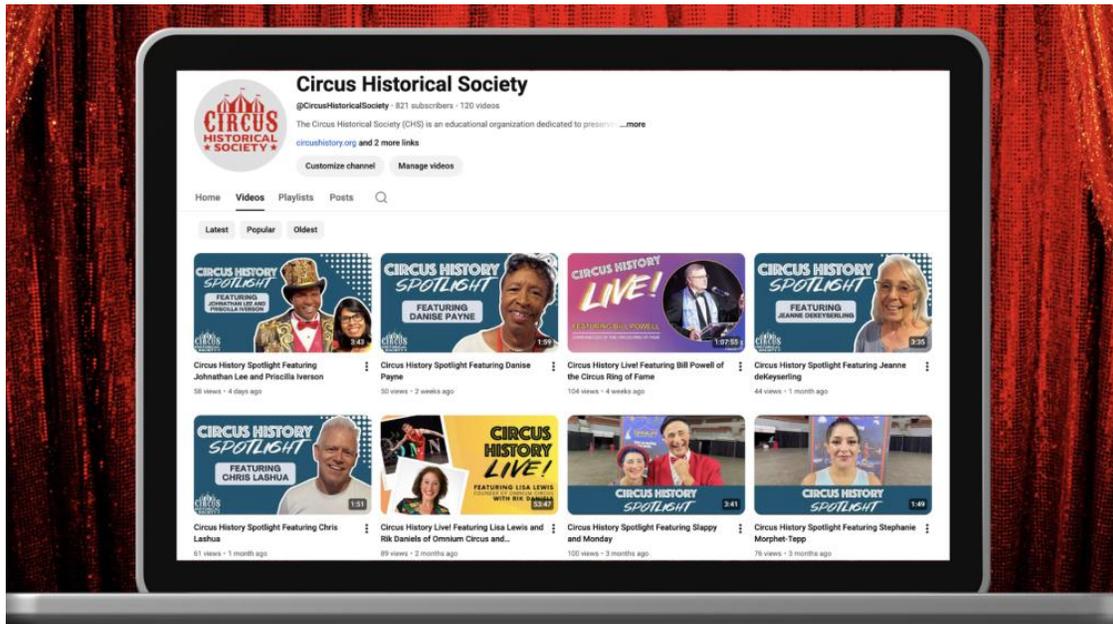
New rule regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) content on CHS Facebook Group

Did you know CHS manages one of the largest circus history community Groups on Facebook? With nearly 14,000 members, the Group is a leading space for discussions about all aspects of circus history. In recent months, there has been a noticeable increase of Artificial Intelligence (AI) content across Facebook, prompting us to create a new rule in our Group:

If AI was used to create or significantly assist your new or shared post (text, image, video, audio, etc.) you must clearly state this in the post text (if you created it) or in the text caption (when sharing from another source). Disclosure of AI cannot be buried in the video, photo, or comments. If you are unsure whether a shared post is AI-generated, please say so in your caption. When in doubt, disclose, just as we do in this Group for unknown dates, sources, etc. Undisclosed or misleading AI content, even that shared in good faith, may be removed at moderator discretion.

Our new rule is not anti-AI. It is pro-transparency and pro-accuracy, which is consistent with our mission and commitment as an organization. As a history-focused organization, we prioritize accuracy, transparency, and the educational value of all circus content shared on our social media channels. We are not here to judge the use of AI tools, but a substantial increase in AI-generated content across Facebook requires our thoughtful response.

If you aren't already a member of the CHS Facebook Group, [send your request to join today](#).



CHS YouTube channel surpasses 68,000 views!

Thank you for your continued support of our channel and both Circus History Live! and Circus History Spotlight. We love bringing this content to you and sharing circus history. Click the button below to visit our channel, and don't forget to subscribe!

Visit YouTube and start watching



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