$1/2 Million Restoration Grants Each to Baraboo & Bridgeport Museums

Progress is being made in Baraboo, WI, and Bridgeport, CT, where grant funding has been awarded to circus museums in both locations. Circus World and the Barnum Museum each received $500,000 for restoration projects through federal Save America’s Treasures (SAT) funding, which is designed to “protect America’s threatened cultural treasures.”

In Bridgeport, architectural drawings are in final approval with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office and bidding will begin soon for window restoration and other storm-damaged parts of the Barnum building. This is a multi-million-dollar exterior restoration and repair project supported by the SAT grant and a Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development grant-in-aid. (continued on page 2)

Ringling Office Restoration Evokes Administrative Hub
Described in 1905 Billboard

“Ringling Brothers have remodeled their office quarters at Baraboo, Wis., so that they are now as attractive in fixtures, convenience, and decoration as the most important bank in any good sized city. On the first floor there is a tastily decorated reception room for visitors, with a uniformed attendant, and a commodious room in the rear of this for the use of the accountants, stenographers and auditors; separated from this is a private apartment which is utilized by Messrs. Otto and Al Ringling. In the second room two large vaults have been built into the wall for the safe keeping of manuscripts, photographs, financial documents and other important circus data. Mr. Al Ringling makes a practice of keeping every letter received from artists from all over the world, and one of these safes is the archives of the Ringling Brothers’ shows, containing the stepping stones to what may be considered one of the most remarkable amusement developments of the century. On the second floor are offices for Mr. Chas., Alf. T., and A. G. Ringling, James Jay Brady, general press representative, and a consultation room. There are also desks for the convenience of artists, show printers and business friends who have occasion to visit Baraboo during the winter season. The offices are heated with steam, lighted by electricity; in every way fitted up in an impressive manner, and are in charge of Mr. Thos. Buckley, general auditor of the Ringling Brothers Shows.”

2022 CHS Convention Set For Near Bridgeport, July 24-26
The CHS convention is set for the Trumbull, CT, Marriott near Bridgeport, home of the Barnum Museum. For details and registration visit the 2022 Convention webpage HERE.

The Barnum Institute of Science and History was built in 1893 with money donated by the showman. Now undergoing restoration, it will host some 2022 CHS convention events.
$1/2 Million Restoration (continued from page 1)

The grant to the Barnum Museum will address the devastation caused by an F-1 tornado (with wind speeds of 73 to 112 mph) that struck without warning on June 24, 2010. Barnum Museum Curator Adrienne Saint Pierre recalled how “artifacts in the first floor gallery, which is where the windows were blown out, took the brunt of the impact as they were subject to both hydroscopic shock (sudden high humidity) and windborne debris. Everything was covered in the tornado debris of dirt and tiny particles of glass. On the upper floors, humidity quickly became a problem, as the tornado damaged the HVAC system (it sucked in the tornado debris), so there was no air conditioning to mitigate the humidity, and mold became a huge issue” as with Tom Thumb’s tiny coaches.

Circus World’s grant is part of a larger project the museum initiated last year with the start of a Historic Structures Report that will inform the revitalization of the entire historic Ringling winter quarters. Seven of the surviving National Landmark buildings are on Circus World grounds. Each are significant but the unassuming office is perhaps the most important and in most need of restoration efforts. It was here that the Ringlings planned and managed their business empire.

The grant provides funding for urgently needed repairs to the building. When completed the building will be restored to its 1915 appearance before it is unveiled to the public for the first time in Circus World’s 63-year history. Circus World Director Scott O’Donnell explained how “It’s an exciting first step for what we hope to be a complete restoration of Ringlingville in the years ahead.”

Mitigation efforts are seen in this photograph taken soon after the destruction caused by the devastating tornado that directly hit the Barnum Museum.

This is the heart of Ringlingville on Water Street in Baraboo. This postcard view shows the winter quarters buildings, now part of Circus World. The two-story white house in the center of the image is the Ringling office building, the first building to be restored as part of a larger master plan. – Richard Flint collection

Now at the printer and soon in the mail, issue one of 2022 includes another installment of Chris Berry’s series of “There Used to Be a Circus Here” covering the history of tented shows in Philadelphia. Greg Parkinson reveals the magic of the young and fledgling Harry Houdini’s tours with Welsh Bros. circus in 1895 and 1898. Julie Parkinson presents the story of Lee and Judy Stevens and their long career with baboons, sea lions, and ponies. Lane Talburt will have another installment covering John Pugh’s adventurous years between 1965 and 1970 as manager of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. Issue two of 2022 is expected to feature flying-return act posters, an article about training sea lions in the 1910s and 1920s, and a photo essay on a major circus winter quarters as well as other articles now in process.

The first step for restoration is the preparation of a Historic Structures Report that, when completed later this spring, will provide documentary, graphic, and physical information about the building’s history and existing condition. The report, which was funded early last year by a lead gift from Circus World Museum Inc., and supported by Renee and Tom Boldt, Fred D. Pfening III, and the Les & Judy Smout Foundation, is written by trained professionals and involves engineers, architects, and historians utilizing historical records and on site assessments. The report will guide all future restoration projects and interpretive uses of the office building.

The restoration project will address all elements from structural analysis, restoration of interior and exterior elements, historic elements such as windows, siding and chimney restored to their original condition and configuration. Wiring and HVAC will be upgraded to modern day code while retaining historic appearances. Office spaces inside will be reinstalled and forensic interior design will take place. Local topography and landscaping will be addressed and an interpretive plan created for guest experiences.

Possible supply chain delays of construction material remain a challenge for both the Circus World Museum and the Barnum Museum.

To learn more about the grants’ intended projects, you can watch Circus History Live! HERE.
Circus Ring of Fame Inducts Class of 2021

The Circus Sarasota big top was brimming with glamor, lights, luminaries, and excitement on February 5 at the 26th annual Circus Ring of Fame induction ceremony. Chairperson William Powell welcomed attendees to the gala event, which for the first time took place under the Circus Sarasota big top instead of at St. Armand’s Circle, where Ring of Fame members are honored with stone markers. A seamless two-hour production featured video tributes, live performances, and acceptance speeches from inductees or their representatives.

The six people honored that evening represented various aspects of the circus community, including performers and behind the scenes professionals without whom the shows would not go on. The 2021 inductees to the Circus Ring of Fame are:

- **George Carden**: A Missouri-based circus producer who has raised millions of dollars for charitable causes through his circus and sponsoring organizations.
- **Willie Edelston**: A trapeze artist who performed with RBB&B and several other shows. As a Sarasota resident, he also volunteered for more than 50 years with the Sailor Circus youth program.

- **The Richter/Casselly Families**: Among Europe’s top circus families, best known for their animal acts and acrobatic productions.
- **Nik Wallenda**: Great-grandson of legendary performer Karl Wallenda, Nik has earned accolades for daring high wire walks including over Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, Times Square, and an active Central American volcano.
- **Tina Winn**: A seventh generation performer known as Galaxy Girl, who began her circus training as a child and has entertained audiences for decades.
- **The advance professionals**: The industry’s promoters who execute marketing, advertising, sales, sponsorships and public relations functions were honored for the first time in the Circus Ring of Fame’s history.

For more information about the Circus Ring of Fame, its 34-year history, and its honorees, visit [HERE](#).

---

**Illinois State Now Offering $1500 Fellowships for Circus Research**

Milner Library at Illinois State University, Normal, is accepting applications for their 2022 Circus & Allied Arts Collection Fellowship. This $1,500 award is available to scholars external to Illinois State who are interested in researching any topic that requires the onsite use of the collection housed in Milner Library’s Special Collections. The Fellowship is intended to support costs associated with the selected scholars’ proposed research project including costs of travel, room and board, digital scans, and other expenses at the Milner.

The Fellowship is open to graduate students enrolled in an institution of higher education pursuing a at a master’s level or higher, faculty members employed at an institution of higher education, or researchers or scholars who hold a master’s degree or higher and are currently employed in a cultural heritage institution (e.g., gallery, library, archives, or museum).

The next deadline to apply for the twice-yearly award is May 6, 2022, for onsite visits planned for fall 2022. For more information, contact Associate Dean for Information Assets Rachel Scott at (309) 438-7215 or email her at rescot2@ilstu.edu

---

**1959 Feld Window Card Auctioned For $125,000**

After the Ringling circus ceased under canvas operation in 1956, circus ownership did not leave the family until 1967. During the intervening decade, the circus used three outside promoters to market most of their engagements. Among them were Irvin and Israel Feld, two brothers who also promoted ice shows and rock-and-roll concerts. Primary among their many events produced under various “Super Show” names for more than a decade were a series of twice-annual R&B shows or “Dance Party” concerts. On February 3, 1959, American rock and roll musicians Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and “The Big Bopper” (J. P. Richardson) were killed in plane crash shortly after performing at an Iowa Dance Party concert. The long journeys between venues on board the cold, uncomfortable tour buses adversely affected the performers with cases of flu and even frostbite. Holly decided to charter a plane to reach their next engagement. The ill-fated event later became known as “The Day the Music Died” after Don McLean referred to it as such in his 1971 song *American Pie*.

Holly was an American singer-songwriter who was a central and pioneering figure of mid-1950s rock-and-roll with hits such as *That’ll Be the Day* and *Peggy Sue*. Holly was in the first class inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. Perhaps the high auction price, though close to the accident date, reflects in part how culture compares the influence of R&B and the circus! (see the $125,000 window card [HERE](#))
Dave Carlyon, New CHS Treasurer, Writes Here Of His Dual Life As Clown and Academic

Dave Carlyon, shown here, explored reasons for how circus clowning has changed from the 19th century to the 21st century, for the CHS webinar Circus History Live! on May 15, 2021, in a session titled Clowns Across 3 Centuries: Contrary, Cliché, Confusion!

**CHS Trustee and longtime member Dave Carlyon recently became the new Treasurer of the Circus Historical Society. Many readers may be acquainted with his two books but we've asked him to reflect more about just how circus shaped his life given the two diverse worlds he has inhabited—as a published PhD in history and as a Ringling clown.**

Circus snuck up on me. I hadn't been a fan. I only saw one circus as a kid, and didn't remember the performance. So I applied to Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus Clown College mostly because it seemed a cool thing to do. When I got a contract, I saw myself as a free spirit, spreading joy. But clowning is a job, not clichés. Sunshine & rainbows didn't help as I felt overwhelmed. Then slowly, awkwardly, I started learning to do the work, helped by the example of amazing, dedicated veterans, by mistakes that taught me lots, and by figuring out how to connect with audiences.

Life experience helped. Moving eight times as a kid prepared me for nomadic life. I needed discipline for college (University of Michigan) and working a dozen jobs to pay my way, including fighting forest fires in the West. Being a Military Policeman in the Army gave me daily lessons in dealing with the public. Even law school (California-Berkeley) helped, improving my focus.


I was asked for my thoughts on working as a historian: “history” combines many things. Old-timers reminiscing is history. Stuff found online can be history (though just because it’s old info doesn’t make it accurate). Footnoted articles featuring facts, names, and dates: that’s history. So are essays exploring how those facts fit their historical context. And all, feeding each other, can be found in CHS’s journal, *Bandwagon*.

Circus proved a pivot in my life, a culmination of all I’d done before, and a wellspring of what I’ve done since. In a CHS Circus History Live! video of Black circus legends, they reached a consensus that applies here too: circus found me. I’ll always be grateful.

(Watch Carlyon’s Circus History Live! interview [HERE](#))
Checklist of Circus Books Published in 2021


Benvenuti, Anne, Kindred spirits: one animal family. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, [2021].


Cirque & Saltimbanques. La collection J.-Y. et G. Borg. — Catalog for major exhibits held at four museums in Rouen, France.


Holmes, Kate (Catherine Jane), Female aerialists in the 1920s and early 1930s: femininity, celebrity and glamour. London: Routledge, 2021.


Siegrist, Andrew, We imagined it was rain. Spartanburg, SC: Hub City Press, [2021].


