

The Advance Car



A Newsletter of the

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2022

WHOLE #3

\$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)



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.

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



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](#).

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."

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.



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

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.”



This is the heart of Ringlingville on Water Street in Baraboo. This post card 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

Bandwagon

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society Vol. 65 No. 4 2021

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



"Having Dad honored in the Ring of Fame for his life work is very special. He always said if you're great, don't brag about it -- because if you're truly great, others will brag for you and about you."

-- Vicki Edelston

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](#).



A young Willie Edelston (at top) holds a very difficult trick.

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.

After two years on the Blue Unit and living on the train, then a year as "Advance Clown Ambassador," I moved on to be an actor in New York, specializing in Shakespeare. Then came marriage, 2 kids, a PhD (Northwestern University), professor (University of Michigan-Flint). Back in New York, my dissertation led to an award-winning book, *Dan Rice: The Most Famous Man You've Never Heard Of*. My book *Education of a Circus Clown: Mentors, Audiences, Mistakes* won the Circus Historical Society's Thayer Prize. Now I write popular and scholarly articles, teach, give talks, and work on a new book, "Circus & Democracy: The Struggle of American Ideas."

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](#))

Circus History Live! is a series aired monthly that began in February 2021 as an opportunity to get together with those who both love circus history and made it. Over the past year CHS members and guests have gathered every few weeks to meet circus owners, performers, and those who have labored behind the scenes in an intimate virtual setting.

The program was the brainchild of CHS President Bruce Hawley who described how "it brings the rich history of the circus to life again for people around the world." Since its launch, thousands have viewed the live and recorded programs and heard the stories of Dan Rice and Emmett Kelly from historians and family members as well as live participation by the last ringmasters and trainmasters with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.

Last year followers also viewed a rare film of the 1902 Ringling Bros. street parade as circus historian Fred Dahlinger shared his great insight on circus parades of the era, along with details about the wagons and other units that were captured on a film dating from the infancy of the movies.

Circus History Live continues as a regular monthly series and future episodes will be promoted on the CHS Facebook page and by email sent directly to the Society's membership.

To see previous recordings, click [HERE](#).

Checklist of Circus Books Published in 2021

Arrighi, Gillian, and Davis, Jim, eds., *Cambridge companion to the circus*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

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

Bouissac, Paul, *End of the circus: evolutionary semiotics and cultural resilience*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.

Bridge, Peter J., *The Hyland circus*. Carlisle, Western Australia: Hesperian Press, 2021.

Bridge, Peter J. and Kahn, Henry K. and Mulga, *Prairie Dick: American cowboy, Australian soldier: Horseman Richard Brown, and his mates*. Carlisle, Western Australia: Hesperian Press, 2021.

Bush-Bailey, Gilli, and Kate Flaherty, eds., *Touring performance and global exchange 1850-1960: making tracks*. London: Routledge, 2021. -- Chapter 7: Peta Tait, "Risk and Colonial Touring: Female Circus Performers in Aerial and Lion Acts."

Cardell, Kylie, ed., *Essays in life writing*. London: Routledge, 2021. -- Chapter 3: Katerina Bryant, "Speculative Biography and Countering Archival Absences of Women Clowns in the Circus."

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

Cross, Gary S., *Freak show legacies: how the cute, camp and creepy shaped modern popular culture*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.

Cunningham, Bob, *Bob Cunningham remembers the Great Moscow Circus 1965 [-] 2020*. [Gorokan, New South Wales]: Circus Fans of Australasia, 2021.

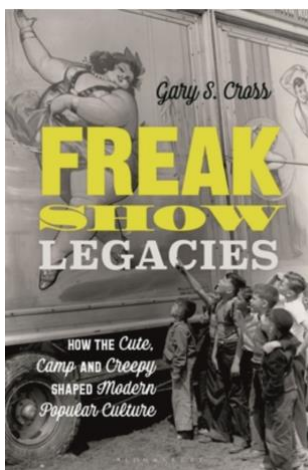
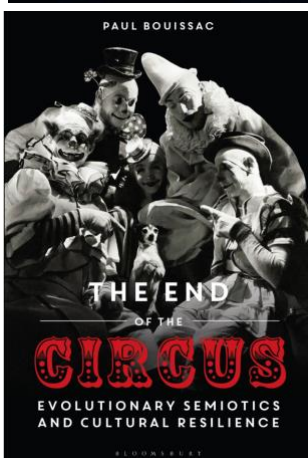
Elefanten in Zoo and Circus [Elephants in Zoo and Circus]. Nuremberg: Elephant protection Europe eV, 2021.

Erdenechimeg-Angelique, *Supple: the art of arch - Mongolian contortion*. Grove City: NEPKO Publishing, 2021.

Fernand Léger: en piste! Musée Fernand Léger-André Mare. Bayeux: Orep éditions, [2021] -- Catalog for an exhibition held at the Musée Fernand Léger-André Mare, Argentan, France, July 6-December 5, 2021.

Fleming, Simon D.I., and Perkins, Martin, eds., *Music by subscription: composers and their networks in the British music-publishing trade, 1676-1820*. London: Routledge, 2021. --John Watlen's Collections of Circus Tunes.

Goldner, Colin, *Robby - der letzte Zirkusschimpanse* [Robby - the last circus chimp]. Aschaffenburg: Alibri Verlag, 2021.



Hill, Natalie, *Aesthetics, danger, domestication. How contemporary are the aspects of wild animal training in traditional circuses?* Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2021.

Hoffmann, Friedrich, *Emil Wacke: ein Leben für den Circus* [Emil Wacker: a life for the circus]. Braunschweig: Dr. Frederick Hoffman, 2021.

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

Koehler, R., *Jetzt rede ich. Ich, Robby, der Ausnahmeschimpanse: Die besondere Geschichte des berühmtesten Circus-Affen der Welt. Ein Urteil rettet sein Leben* [Now I'm talking. Me, Robby, the exceptional chimpanzee: The special story of the most famous circus monkey in the world. A judgment saves his life]. Bremen: Musketier Verlag, 2021.

Kuegler, Ina, *Manege frei!: die Geschichte des Circus Krone 1870 bis heute* [Manege free!: the history of the Circus Krone from 1870 to today]. München: Allitera Verlag, 2021.

Leonhardt, Nic, *Theatre across oceans: mediators of transatlantic exchange, 1890-1925*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. -- on theatrical booking agents.

Montaldo, Graciela R., *Museum of consumption: archives of mass culture in Argentina*. Amherst: Cambria Press, [2021]

Mordini, Shelley and Herrewig, Gwen, *Haunted Baraboo*. Charleston, SC: Haunted America/The History Press, 2021.

Riedler, Reiner, and Lindworsky, Jens, *Russian Circus: Zauber und Zerbrechlichkeit* [Russian Circus: Magic and Fragility]. Vienna: Edition 5Haus, 2021.

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

Standiford, Les, *Battle for the big top: P.T. Barnum, James Bailey, John Ringling and the death-defying saga of the American circus*. New York: PublicAffairs, [2021].

Thurston, Robert W., *The body in the anglosphere, 1880-1920: "well sexed womanhood," "finer natives," and "very white men."* London: Routledge, 2021. -- Chapter 5: "Revealing and Dangerous Acts: The Many Bodies of the Circus"

Trav S.D., *Rose's Royal Midgets and Other Little People in Vaudeville*. Philadelphia: Vaudevisuals Press, 2021.

Ward, Steve, *Artistes of colour: ethnic diversity and representation in the Victorian circus*. Philadelphia: Modern Vaudeville Press, 2021.

Xue, Jingjing, *Shanghai acrobat: a true story of courage, perseverance, and escape from Revolutionary China*. New York: Apollo Publishers, 2021.