

The Advance Car

The Official Newsletter of the Circus Historical Society

December 2024

Season's greetings from the Circus Historical Society!

As 2024 ends, we would like to take this opportunity to bring you up to date you about recent activities at the CHS and to give you a heads-up about what we have planned for 2025.

Since our last edition of *The Advance Car*, we have published another highly acclaimed issue of our *Bandwagon* journal. We also produced two more *Circus History Live!* programs. One showcased circus artist, author, and speaker Dave "Letterfly" Knoderer, and the other session featured two 1990s-era Ringling Red Unit alumni: clown Nicole Portwood and publicist Rom Portwood. Recordings of these programs plus six new *Circus History Spotlight* interviews are now available on the [CHS YouTube Channel](#).

We also posted over sixty new circus history items on the [CHS Facebook Page](#) and hosted over eleven hundred posts in the [CHS Facebook Group](#). Thanks to your participation, our extremely active CHS Facebook Group has now grown to over thirteen thousand five hundred members!

During the same period, five CHS members shared their knowledge of circus history on the radio and in academic and filmmaking settings. Next month, about twenty members from four countries will travel to Monte-Carlo to participate in the activities of the Federation Mondiale du Cirque, of which the Circus Historical Society is an associate member. And, in November 2025, many more of our members will gather in Las Vegas for our exciting annual convention.

All these activities are the result of the collective efforts of our officers, trustees, and members who generously volunteer their time, talents, and treasure to help us preserve circus history. If you would like to volunteer as well, see the Volunteers Wanted section below for new opportunities.

We distribute *The Advance Car* to not only CHS members but also to non-members who have expressed an interest in the Circus Historical Society. If you are not a CHS member and want to receive our *Bandwagon* journal

and have access to all our other membership benefits, please [join today](#).

Thank you for helping us preserve circus history. Best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Bruce Hawley
President
Circus Historical Society

CHS Member Spotlight

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



Devin Jernigan

CHS member Devin Jernigan received the *Peterson Prize for Measured Drawings* for his architectural drawings of an historic circus concessions tent. Devin is a PhD candidate at Yale University School of Architecture. [See Drawings](#).



Betsy Golden Kellem

CHS Trustee Betsy Golden Kellem was interviewed in connection with the filming of a new Australian documentary about legendary tightrope walker Con Colleano and his family titled *The Colleano Heart: Reigniting the Legacy*.



Jan Biggerstaff & Danise Payne

CHS member Jan Biggerstaff taught an OLLI class at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas titled *Women of the Ringling Circus* that featured CHS member Danise Payne and Bernice Collins, Peggy King, Donna Shad, and Alice Lynn.



Bruce Hawley

CHS President Bruce Hawley was interviewed in September by PRX World about the history of human cannonballs for a National Public Radio story titled *Human Cannonballs losing popularity across Europe*. [Listen here.](#)

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



Volunteers Wanted!

Website Update: We will be updating our main website in 2025 to better serve the circus history research needs of our members. Our Website Committee is looking for volunteers with experience in website design and/or database entry to serve on their committee.

Circus History Book Club: To encourage group study of circus history, we may be forming member-only book clubs that will meet periodically on Zoom to discuss circus history books. At this point, we are seeking volunteers with Zoom experience who would like to lead our book club groups.

Bandwagon Articles: For over 80 years, CHS members have been accurately preserving circus history by authoring scholarly well-researched articles for publication in our *Bandwagon* journal. For further information about writing for *Bandwagon*, see [Write for Bandwagon](#) on our website.

Members who are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities should send an email to Bruce Hawley at president@circushistory.org.



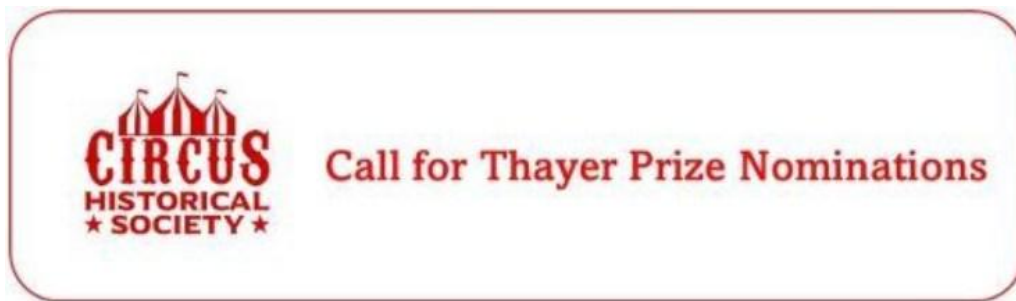
Digital-Only *Bandwagon* Option

Based on feedback from members, *Bandwagon* is now available in both printed and digital-only formats.

Print - This is the default option for those who prefer receiving a printed copy of *Bandwagon* via mail. Members who receive a print copy also have access to digital copies from the previous three years via the members only Back Yard website. Members who want to keep receiving a printed copy of *Bandwagon* by mail do not need to take any action.

Digital-Only - This is the option for members who have expressed interest in no longer receiving a printed copy of *Bandwagon* via mail, preferring to read it online via their computer or mobile device. With this option, you will not receive a paper copy of *Bandwagon*, but will be notified via email when the new issue is available each quarter on the members only Back Yard website as a PDF.

Members who want to switch to digital-only can log on to their Profile on the [CHS Back Yard website](#) with their email address and password, click the *Edit Profile* button, and select the *Digital Bandwagon Only* field.



The CHS Thayer Prize Committee is now accepting nominations for the 2025 Thayer Prize. Only Circus Historical Society members in good standing are eligible to make nominations. Members may nominate one or more works, including their own. [Click here for additional information.](#)

Only non-fictional works published, issued, or released during 2023 and 2024 are eligible for nomination for the 2025 prize. Members must submit nominations on either the *official online form* or the *official mail-in form*. Full eligibility criteria and nomination forms are available on the Thayer Prize page on the members-only CHS Back Yard site. Members can log on to the [CHS Back Yard site](#) with their email address and password.

The deadline for submission is March 31, 2025.



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JOIN CHS TODAY!

Members have access
to publications, events,
a bookstore, and more!

Become a member at
circushistory.org

If you are not already a member, please join us today! For only \$60 a year, you will receive our scholarly quarterly journal *Bandwagon* and enjoy all the other benefits of a CHS membership. For additional information about the CHS, click [here](#).

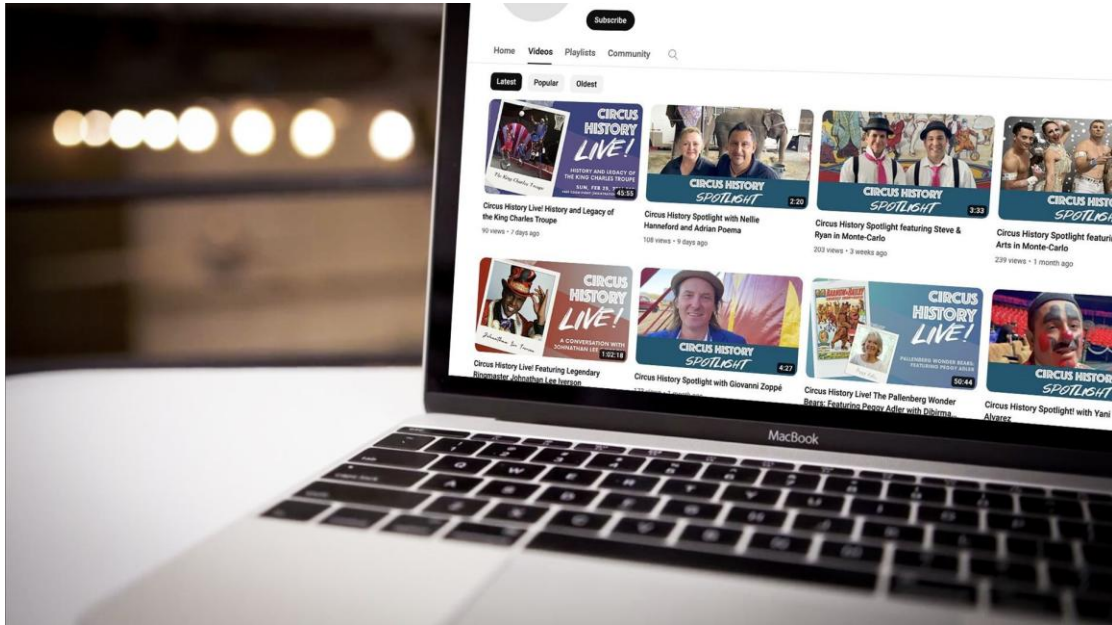


2024 Donations

CHS relies on both dues and donations to support production of *Bandwagon* and to cover our other operating expenses.

As of today, we have raised \$9,605 or 96% of our donation 2024 goal of \$10,000. Please click [donate](#) today to help us achieve our goal by year's end. Thank you for your continued support!

Want more circus history? Visit the Circus Historical Society YouTube Channel and watch the recordings of our *Circus History Live!* and *Circus Spotlight* interviews! Click [here](#).



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