

The Advance Car

The Official Newsletter of the Circus Historical Society

June 2024

Dear Bruce,

Welcome to summer! School's out, the circus is in session, and it won't be long before we gather in Atlanta for our fabulous annual convention!

The Circus Historical Society has been a beehive of activity since the last issue of *The Advance Car*. The Fédération Mondiale du Cirque in Monte-Carlo recognized our organization for our work in preserving circus history, and several of our members participated in major circus history related events during the past few months. We are sending the next issue of our *Bandwagon* journal to the printer this week, and putting the finishing touches on what's shaping up to be another spectacular convention.

All these activities are the results of the efforts of our trustees and members who volunteer vast amounts of their time, talents, and treasure to help us preserve circus history. If you would like to help, email me at president@circushistory.org. If you are not already member of the CHS, [join today](#).

I look forward to catching up with you in person at our convention in Atlanta.

See you down the road!

Bruce Hawley
President
Circus Historical Society



Come One, Come All – Atlanta’s Calling!

The red carpet is being prepped for roll-out in Atlanta as CHS prepares for our annual convention, August 4 through 7. Whether you’re a first-of-May or a seasoned trouper, we’ve got programs that will captivate everyone.

That includes a special presentation by circus superstar and all-around fun friend, Bello Nock, (who we hope will let us in on his hair-styling secrets!) You’ll get a special look at circus’s connection to Atlanta’s own Coca-Cola Company, a peek behind the family-life curtains of sad clown Emmett Kelly, Sr., by his daughters, presentations by over twenty other speakers, an opportunity to visit the circus history research collection at the Rose Library at Emory University, our first ever circus history trivia contest, an auction filled with stand-out items, and of course, the fellowship of friends old and new who love circus as much as you.

Please don’t delay – get your registration knocked off your to-do list today!

[Click here for the Convention Schedule and Registration Information](#)



CHS Selected for Prestigious Membership in the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque!

The Fédération Mondiale du Cirque in Monte-Carlo recently honored the Circus Historical Society with an Associate Membership in the Fédération because of our work in preserving the rich history of the circus! Under the honorary presidency of H.S.H. Princess Stephanie of Monaco, the Fédération is known worldwide for its efforts in the preservation and promotion of the circus arts through World Circus Day, the Global Alliance of Circus Schools, and especially through the annual International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo.

CHS members can now participate in the Fédération's General Assembly held each year in January during the International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo. They are also eligible to receive two free tickets to two of the festival's competition performances. The limited number of free tickets will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Travel and meals are at your own expense.

CHS members who are interested in using these new member benefits in connection with the 2025 International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo, should send an email to President Bruce Hawley at president@circushistory.org before September 1, 2024. If you are not already a CHS member, [join the CHS today](#).



Photo courtesy of Bruce Hawley

World Circus Day Celebration in Somers, NY

CHS member Grace Zimmerman and CHS President Bruce Hawley spoke at the unveiling ceremony for the new “Old Bet” elephant statue at the historic Elephant Hotel in Somers, New York during the Somers Historical Society World Circus Day celebration on April 20. Grace Zimmerman is co-chair of the Old Bet Committee of the Somers Historical Society. A recording of the ceremony is on the [Somers Historical Society YouTube Channel](#).



Photo courtesy of Bruce Hawley

Remembering the Hartford Circus Fire

CHS members Ken and Jan Sopelak, Heidi Herriott, and Bruce Hawley represented the CHS at *Remembering the Hartford Circus Fire*, a presentation at the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History in Hartford Connecticut on June 6.

The featured speakers were author Don Massey and retired Hartford Fire Chief Charles Teale. Massey coauthored *A Matter of Degree: The Hartford Circus Fire and the Mystery of Little Miss 1565*, which documents arson investigator Rick Davey's nine-year investigation that led to the discovery of arson and the identification of one of the fire's unclaimed victims, Eleanor Emily Cook. Chief Teale co-chairs the Hartford Circus Fire Memorial Foundation which created a memorial to the victims on the site of the fire on Barbour Street. Photographs and extensive information about the fire can be found on the [Hartford Circus Fire Memorial website](#). Other speakers included survivors who shared their memories of the fire. The Hartford circus fire occurred 80 years ago on July 6, 1944. This photo shows Don Massey with one of the folding grandstand chairs from the fire.



CIRCUS HISTORY LIVE!

FEATURING LISA B. LEWIS OF OMNIUM CIRCUS

SUN, JUNE 16, 7PM EDT
FREE ZOOM EVENT (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)

Omnium's Lisa B. Lewis on *Circus History Live!*

If you weren't able to join us for the most recent *Circus History Live!* with Lisa B. Lewis on June 16, you can view it now on the [CHS YouTube Channel](#).

Circus Historical Society Vice President Chris Berry interviewed the ebullient Omnium Circus Founder and Executive Director Lisa B. Lewis. Lisa highlighted her early days at Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's Clown College, then shared her varied experiences as a performer and behind-the-scenes manager at Big Apple Circus and other shows. It's one you don't want to miss, so check it out soon!



Photo of the Barnum & London Circus Cinderella pony float courtesy of Chris Berry

Baraboo's Summer Circus Celebrations

Circus History came alive in Baraboo Wisconsin on June 8 as windjammers from Professor Gerald Stich's "Big Top Band" played atop the United States Bandwagon as part of the city's annual circus parade. [Click here to see the United States Bandwagon on parade.](#) A number of CHS members were on hand for the parade, which was held this year in conjunction with the Circus Fans Association of America's annual convention and the Fifth Annual Midwest Circus Soiree.



Photo courtesy of the Circus Ring of Fame

Circus Ring of Fame Ceremony Hits YouTube

The Circus Ring of Fame has released an outstanding 50-minute video of the 2024 induction ceremony. In addition to covering the induction of CHS trustee Wayne McCary and the other 2024 honorees, this video celebrates the art of the circus. [Click here to see this beautiful video.](#)

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

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