

The story of BILL, the rhinoceros of Ringling Bros. 1906-1910

I am Richard Reynolds, and I live in Brookhaven, GA a suburb of Atlanta. I might be called a "Rhinocerotologist."

About the Indian rhino "Bill."

Here is another photo of the animal taken on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus (RBBB) in the early 1920s.



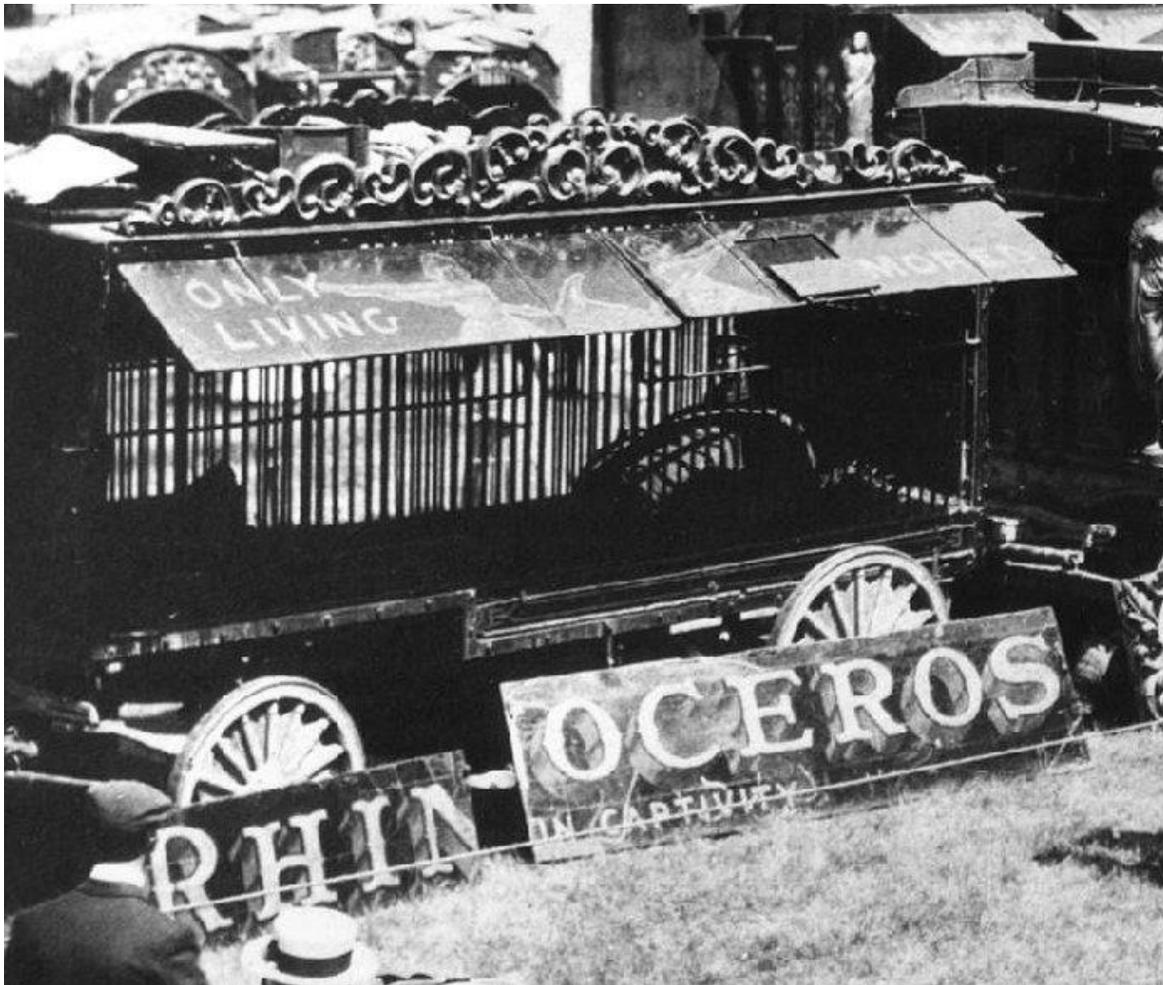
In this photo he is facing the open loading door at the rear of his cage wagon ("Beast Wagon" in European circuses). This is the same cage wagon as shown in the photo in "Elephanten."

Bill was also known variously as "Big Bill" and "Old Bill."

Tracing his origin has been daunting. As best I have been able to ascertain, he was acquired for the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros Circus (F-S) in 1906. It was then controlled by the Ringling Brothers, and they bought a number of major animals for the F-S' menagerie.

F-S made a tour of California in 1906 and advertisements there claim an Indian rhino. F-S was taken to the Ringling winter quarters in Baraboo, WI at the end of 1907. It did not tour in 1908-09.

Then in 1910-11 F-S was again on the road. There is a photo of the "Armored" rhino cage wagon on F-S in 1910. That has to be Bill and is the first photo evidence we have of him to wit - -



Note the word "Armored" on the right upper panel.

1911 - -Bill was again with F-S which closed forever at the end of that season.

1912 - -Bill was added to the menagerie of the Ringling Circus.

1913 - -Again with Ringling but only until mid-1913 when he was shipped to the Barnum & Bailey circus which the Ringlings owned by that time. Why? because B&B had lost its black rhino earlier that season.

1913-18 - -With Barnum & Bailey Circus which was operated separately by the Ringlings.

1919-26 - - With RBBB Combined Circus. From 1919 to 1923 Bill was the only Indian rhino in America.

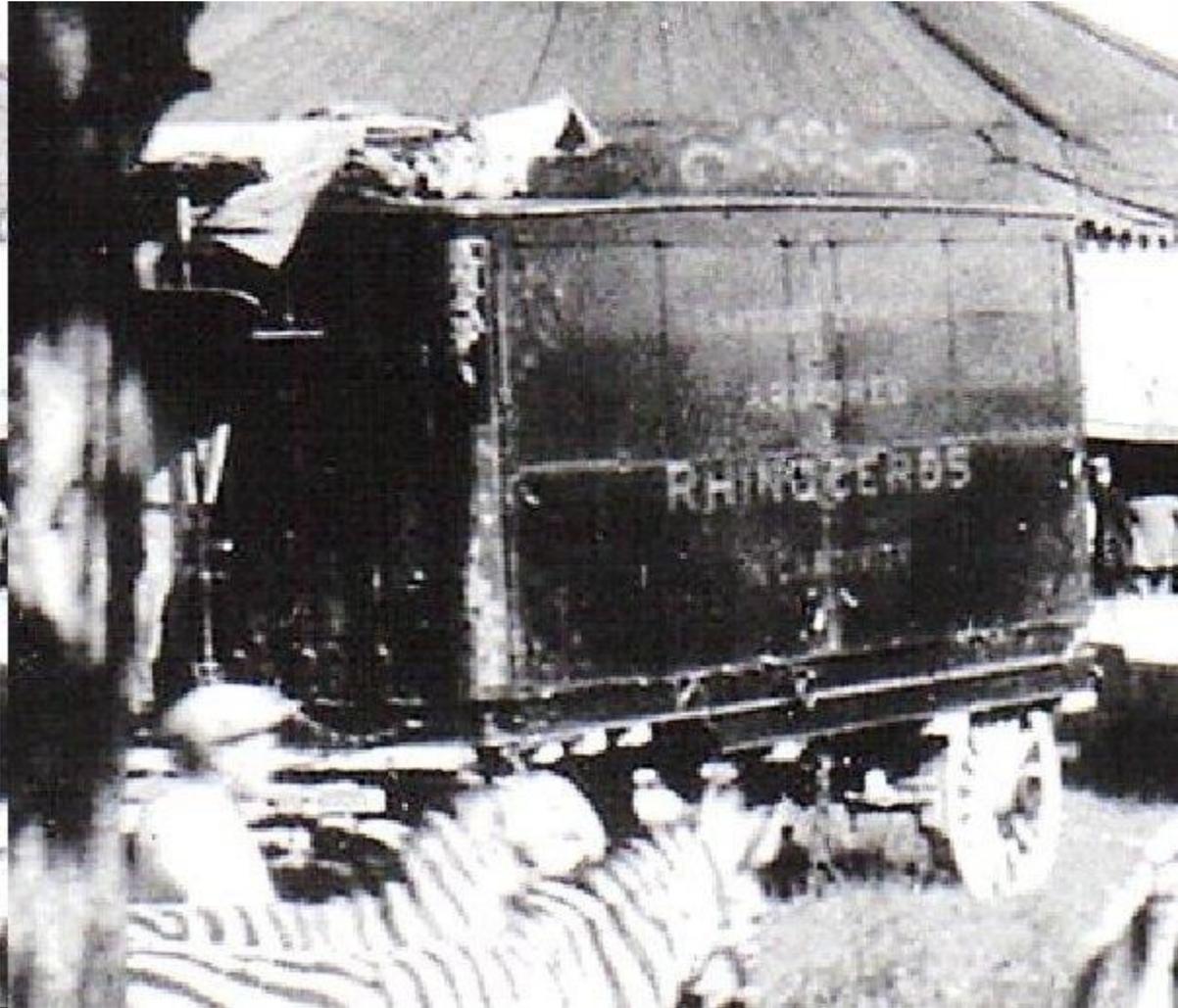
Sept 28, 1926 - - Died with RBBB at Ft. Worth , TX.

Here's another photo of bill on RBBB.



This cage wagon was destroyed by a fire at RBBB winter quarters in early 1924.

Thereafter it was replaced by this wagon (below), shown in Milwaukee, WI on June 28, 1925. It was numbered 78.



Note the words on the sideboards " Largest Living Armored Rhinoceros In Captivity."

And that is the story of Bill.

I hope this is helpful.

Sincerely,

Richard Reynolds
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