

Old Bill a/k/a Big Bill or Bill

by Richard J. Reynolds III

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Male Indian Rhino - -Shown by Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros in 1906-07 and again in 1910-11, Ringling Brothers 1912-13, Barnum & Bailey 1913-18- and RBBB 1919-26.



This and the photos below were taken on RBBB in the early 1920s.



From 1918 to 1923 Bill was the only Indian rhino in America. The elephant shoving the wagon is Old John, a tuskless male who spotted the cages in the menagerie for years. Note the protective pad on his trunk.

John had a long career, dating back to the Adam Forepaugh circus of the 1880s. He later became a member of the Ringling herd. He died in RBBB's Sarasota winter quarters in late 1931.

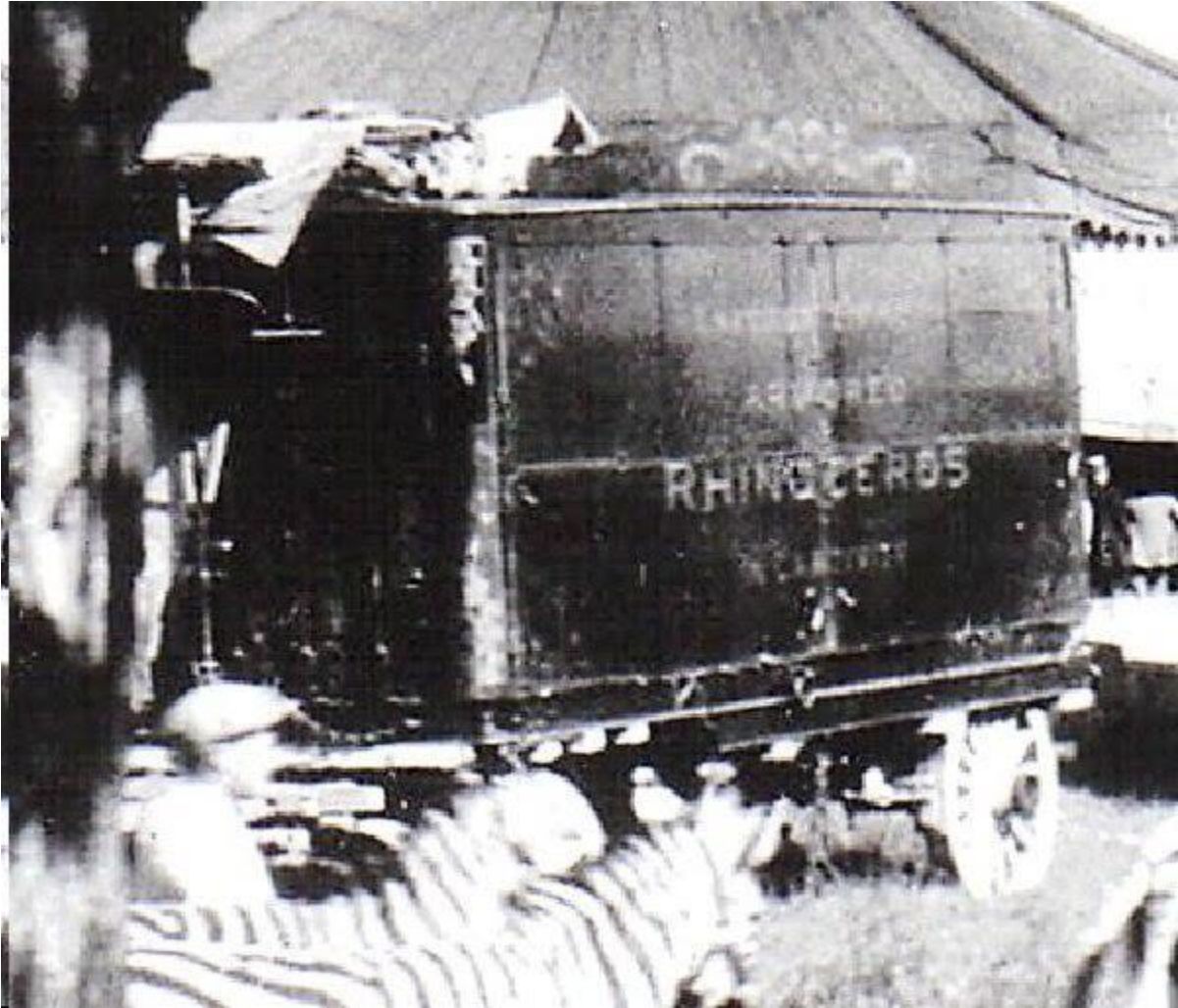


This is Bill's rhino wagon. The sign hanging along the bottom of the cage reads "Rhinoceros - - India."

This wagon was originally built for Barnum & Bailey for its 1910 tour when it then had a black rhino - -thus the carving in the sky-board of a two-horned rhino. This wagon was destroyed by a fire in RBBB's Bridgeport, CT winter quarters in early 1924.

No 78 Rhino den - -RBBB

Shown in Milwaukee, WI on June 28, 1925. Updegrove photo



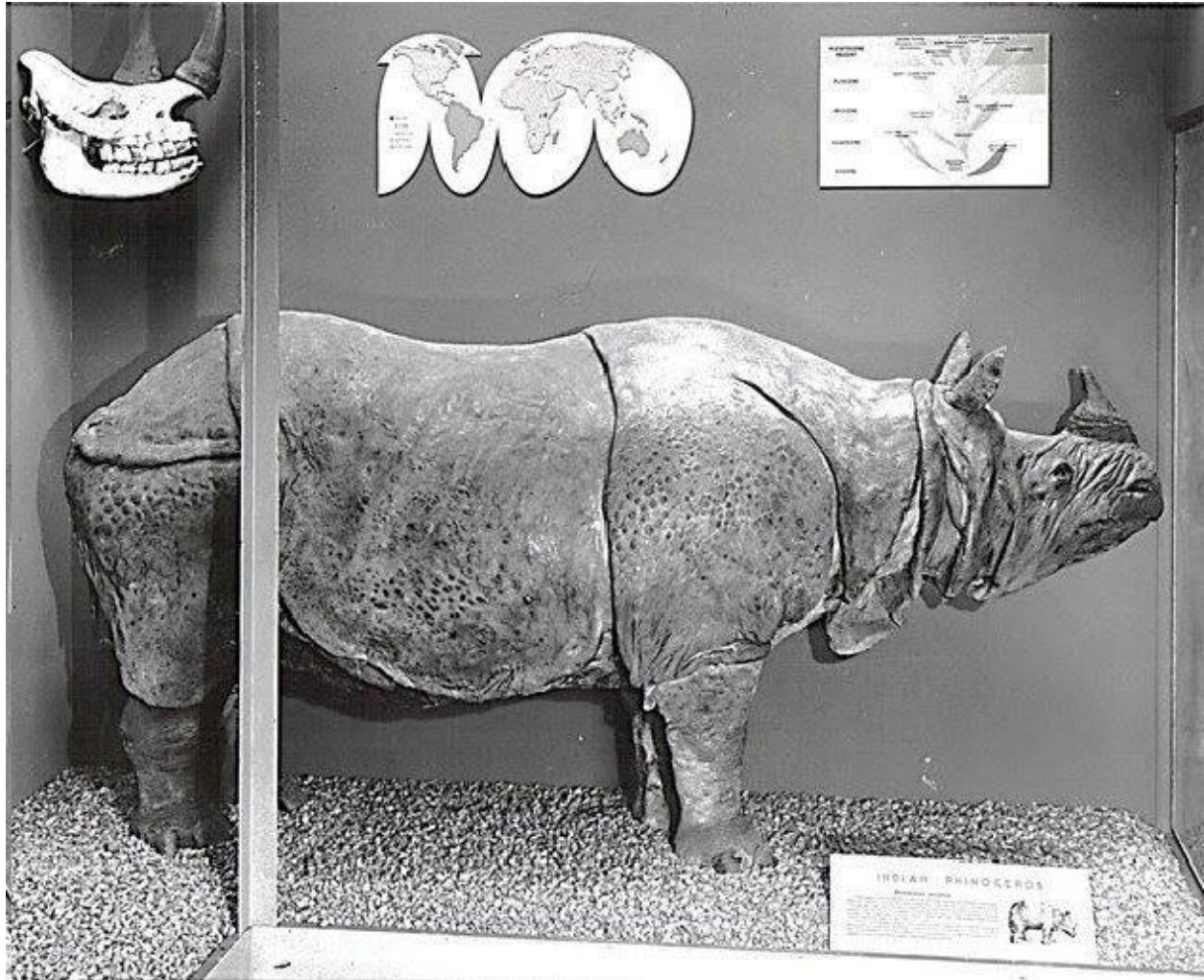
Note the words on the sideboards " Largest Living Armored Rhinoceros In Captivity." That would be Bill. No 78 was built new in 1924 to replace the previous rhino den (shown above) which was destroyed in the WQ fire in Bridgeport in early 1924.

Old Bill died in Ft Worth, TX on Sept. 28,1926 while on tour with RBBB..

This cage no. 78 was last used in 1948 to transport the male African rhino Bobby.

Old Bill's mounted skin may be seen today at Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History, New Haven, CT. That's more than can be said for the cage-wagons which hauled him around the country. None of them survive.

Old Bill as mounted at Peabody - - -



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