

Circus Wagons

An Educational project of the Circus Historical Society, Inc.

Rhinoceros Tableau

by Richard Conover

During the last half of the 1890 decade, the Great Wallace Show obviously underwent a big expansion. This expansion also contributed to the hometown economy because Sullivan & Eagle, a firm in the Wallace winter quarters city of Peru, Ind., supplied at least 13 new parade wagons in this buildup. For the most part, these wagons were works of major proportions, distinctive for their line carvings in heavy relief, with four of the cages, in particular, having exceptionally massive corner posts. Besides these four, there were four other fine cages, including a hippopotamus den, a very fancy ticket wagon with clown-head carvings on its corners, a small parade chariot with carved eagles forward, and the two tableaus which are our subject.

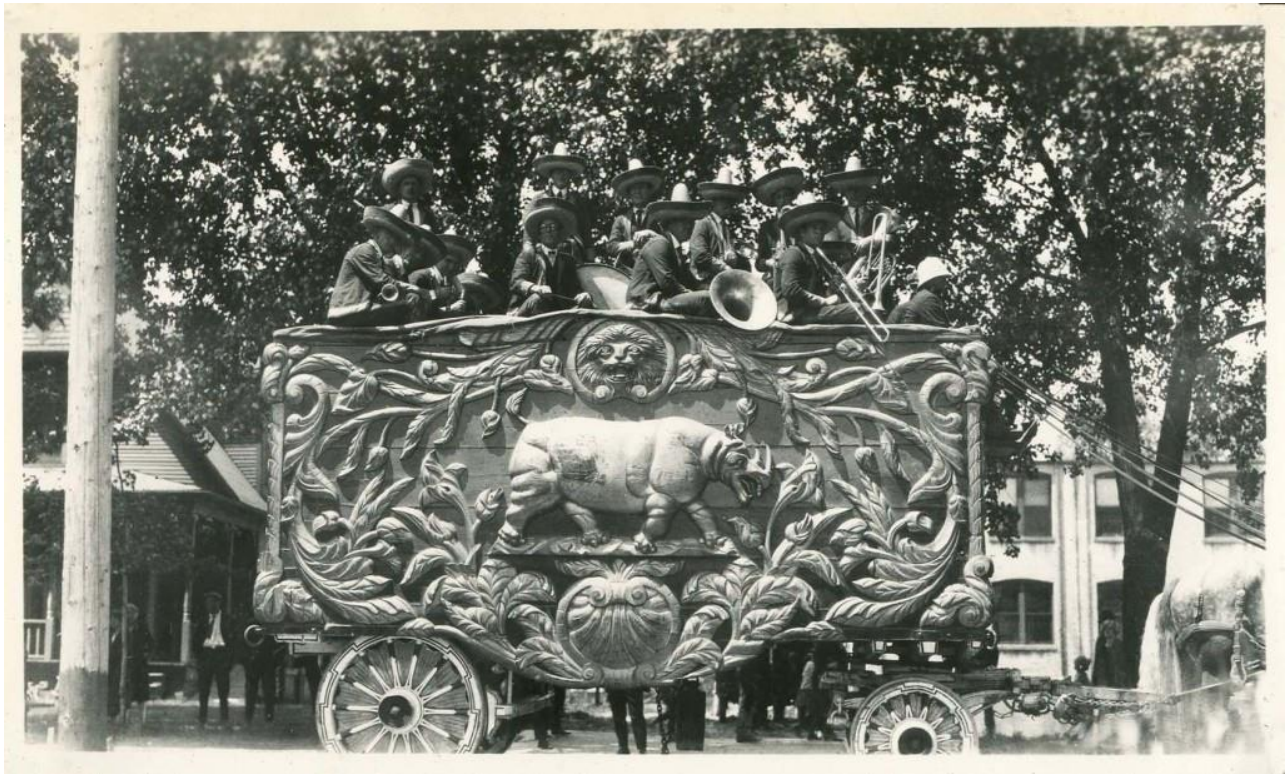


(Undated – Conover Set # 2040 – photo # 1)

It is convenient and proper to consider these two tableaus together, because certain common characteristics in the artistry of their carvings almost assure that the same woodcarver did both of them, and because, for a span of years, they had a parallel history. From a camera angle, the origin of the Rhino Tableau was almost left out of the picture; the only one so far discovered of it while it

was actually with Great Wallace reveals just one end of it in the fringes of a faraway lot scene and, as such, it is good for documentary purposes only. On the other hand, we have three good pictures of the Running Lioness Tableau on Great Wallace, the earliest taken in Neenah, Wisc., when the show played there on May 31, 1898. This Neenah picture is an important contribution to this note, because it is the only one that shows the rear end.

Shortly after the Great Wallace and the Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows were combined into Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1907, these two tableaus were sold to the Sells Floto Circus.



(1924 – Joseph Bradbury Album # 20 – photo # 85A – Al G. Barnes)

While the exact knowledge of the transactions that occurred are unknown, The Sells-Floto Circus sold this wagon. It is presumed that a couple ownership hands had this wagon. Historians have generally agreed that the Horne Zoological Garden Co. had it before it was on the Al G. Barnes Circus. After the years on the Al G. Barnes Circus, the wagon was acquired by Jimmy Woods in the Los Angeles area who provided props to film studios. Photographic evidence shows this wagon still at the Jimmy Woods compound in 1951. In 1955, the Walt Disney Studios bought nine of these wagons from the Jimmy Woods compound. There has been no evidence found to say this ever went to Disney. It is presumed to have wasted away on the Woods property.



(1951 – Joseph Bradbury Album # 15 – photo # 35A – at Jimmy Woods compound in Venice, CA.)

(1) Excerpts from the Bandwagon, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jan-Feb), 1966, pp. 12-14