

You also asked if RBBB had rhinos. Yes,altogether from 1919 to the show's end in 2017 they had 9. These included three species

First off there was Big Bill (or Old Bill). He was a male Great Indian armored rhino who turned up around 1906 on Forepaugh- Sells . He came to RBBB from Barnum & Bailey in 1919. From that year to 1923 he was the only example of his species in USA. He died in 1926 in Fort Worth, TX- -no doubt one of he rarest animals ever on RBBB or any circus for that matter. Here he is around 1920 - -



He wore down his horn rubbing it on the inside of his cage. A lot of male Indians do that - - in zoos too.

And his wagon ca. 1920



After Bill's death, RBBB had three African black rhinos - -(1) Bill (male named for his predecessor) 1929-1935 (2) Lil, female, 1930-1933, (3) Mary, female 1935. Mary was purchased by RBBB from MGM where she had been used in the Tarzan movies. She was to be a replacement for Lil. Alas, a disgruntled employee killed her early in the '35 season.

From 1935 to 1945 RBBB had a rhino drought - - not a single one on exhibit. Then for 1945 they bought Bobby of Brookfield. He was a young male African black rhino who had been born in that zoo - -only the 2nd rhino ever born in USA. He was the first rhino I ever saw. He was named for Robert Ringling. He was on the show until his death in Baltimore in 1953.



For 1955 RBBB bought and imported a pair of young African blacks. They too were given the names Bill and Lil. Both of them rode in same cage wagon, no 82. Here they are early in the '55 the season as photographed by John Cutler.



These rhinos were back on the show for the short lived '56 season, riding in the same wagon together. The male went to the Pawtucket Zoo after the 1958 Gardens dates - when the show decided to farm out its menagerie animals to nearby locations. Bill died in Pawtucket in late '58

The female Lil was sold to the Memphis zoo in 1958 where she lived until 1966.

The Blue Unit arena show had two white rhinos.

There was a small calf that traveled with the Blue show in 1988. He was handled like lead stock and rode in a pen in a stock car with the zebras and camels. A chap named Bohannon was supposed to train him for the ring but that never materialized.

Flavio Togni's white rhino Thor appeared in the ring in 1990-91. A black leopard rode on his back in the big cage presentation. . He rode in a wagon on a flat car - certainly the last such.

Hope you enjoy this.

[RICHARD J. REYNOLDS III in an email DATED 2 DECEMBER 2019 ]

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