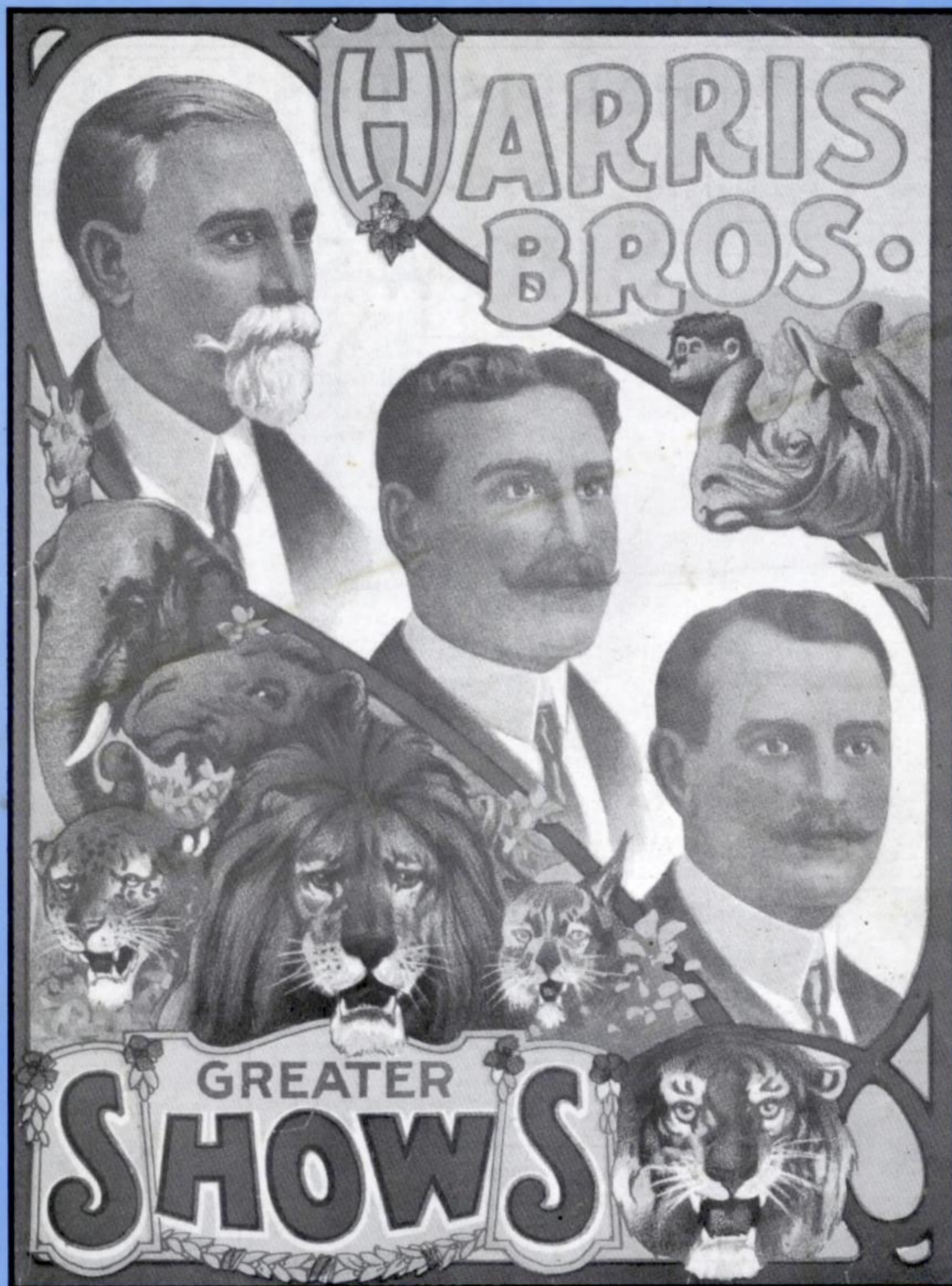


**CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**MAY-JUNE 1966**





Vol. 10, No. 3

May-June 1966

Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

Fred D. Pfening, III, Associate Editor

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#### THIS MONTH'S COVER

In 1924 Floyd and Howard King used the Harris Bros. title on their baggage car circus. As outlined in the Tom Parkinson article in this issue, the Kings used titles available from lithograph firms, but the Harris title was their own creation.

The Harris title was used only in 1924, and did not appear again until 1938, when Ray Marsh Brydon used it on his truck show.

The original is printed in full color and is very striking. Pfening Collection.

Freddie Daw's All-Circus Catalog, 3-hole punched for adding new pages when printed. Subscribers will receive 3-Ring Letters when published and all new pages FREE OF CHARGE. Send only \$2.00 to the address below for your subscription. Great for 1/4 scale model builders.

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245 Catalonia Avenue  
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In April you received a green envelope—notice that the 1966 membership dues and subscription fees were payable.

If you have not forwarded the \$5 payment in this return self-addressed envelope this is the last issue of the BANDWAGON you will receive. The July-August issue will not be sent to those who are not paid in full.

In order not to miss a single issue you are urged to forward payment to the Treasurer at once, if you have not already done so.

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- No. 23 Gordon M. Potter  
3717 Washington Ave.  
St. Joseph, Mich. 49085





Photo No. 8 — Two cross cages from the Sells 50-Cage Menagerie. (McClintock reproduction)

from the fact that they were loaded cross-wise on the flat cars.

The logistics for transporting a 50-cage menagerie with a preponderance of cross

cages on vintage of 1880 rail cars can be closely estimated from an ad that appeared in the *Clipper* of 20 November 1886 in which the W. W. Cole New Colossal Shows was offered for sale. From this detailed, explanatory, ad of this contemporary circus, it can be determined that in the 1880's, just as in the 1930's, the nominal cross cage body dimensions were nine feet long, six feet high, and five feet wide; that the 50-foot flats then available would carry nine cross cages; and also that the 50-foot stocks would load about 22 horses. Therefore, to transport the Sells 50-Cage Menagerie, roughly five flats to carry the cages and four stocks to carry the two-horse teams that pulled them would be required. This assumes, as indicated in the lithograph of Photo No. 7 that the show's ten elephants and camel herd were pressed into service pulling parade wagons. The *Columbus Dispatch* for 16 April 1884 chronicled that the parade was made with all the dens closed and

that the elephants and camels were the only wild animals visible. Besides the cages, there were only two bandwagons, a single tableau-car and the calliope in the parade.

In 1887, their publicity switched from the 50-Cage Menagerie to the Five Continent Menagerie, a meaningless appellation insofar as numbers are concerned. The reduction apparently started in 1886, signaled by an ad that appeared in the *Clipper* offering 35 cages and five 48-foot flats for sale. The fact that they once had a big menagerie was not soon forgotten. The backwash of the wake of publicity was still around in 1910 when my father, who had less interest in circuses than almost anybody, told me about it. It's for sure he never saw it, and would have been too young to remember if he had.

The writer is indebted to Ricky Pfening whose sharp eyes noted that the sketch in the 1874 *Forepaugh Courier* was mighty similar to the photographs of the Sells bandwagon.

## READERS COMMENTS.....

### RINGLING-BARNUM HIPPO CAGES 1938 - 1965

Readers Gordon Potter, Don Carson and Bob Sams have provided some interesting comments about hippo cages used by Ringling-Barnum.

Commenting on Richard Reynolds' article about hippos in the Christmas issue, Gordon Potter explains that cage No. 78 was not simply renumbered as suggested by Mr. Reynolds. He says that the show did in fact install hippo bathing tanks in two different cages, i.e., No. 78 in 1939 and No. 73 in 1943. Mr. Potter explains that No. 78 and No. 73 were definitely different cages, and has provided some interesting commentary on these wagons.

No. 78 was built in the spring of 1924 to replace the rhino cage that burned in a fire at Bridgeport around January 1924. The old rhino cage that burned is pictured in *Bandwagon*, March-April, 1960, Vol. 4, No. 2, page 3. The 1924 fire also destroyed the show's hippo den, a good picture of which appears on page 18 of the Christmas issue. A new hippo cage was also built in 1924; this was No. 88 pictured in Mr. Reynolds' article. (Note: The losses in the 1924 Bridgeport fire are described in a letter from Ringling-Barnum to Henry Moeller dated February 9, 1924 and reproduced on page 56 of C. P. Fox's book, *A Ticket To The Circus* (1959).

However, getting back to No. 78, it was 16 feet long, 7½ feet wide, and had round corners that were painted with scroll. For the years 1924-1926 it housed the famous Great Indian "armored" rhino Bill. During this time it was painted red and on its sideboards in gold, block style lettering was painted the title "Largest

Living Armored Rhinoceros In Captivity." Bill died in Fort Worth, Texas on September 28, 1926. After this there was never another "armored" rhino to travel in No. 78. However, it was used to house one of the African black rhinos which Ringling-Barnum carried during the early 1930s. In 1939 it was remodeled to accommodate the young hippo "Chester." In order to do this the floor was raised, and a tank was inserted in the forward part of the wagon. This was unusual as most hippo cages had their tanks built in the rear part of the wagon. The Reynolds article indicates No. 78 was not on the show in 1940. True, it was not in the menagerie, but it was carried and housed alligators and props. It traveled on the third section of the train (See Ringling-Barnum 1940 loading order by Gordon Potter, *Bandwagon*, July-August, 1963, Vol. 7 No. 4, page 15), and was spotted in the backyard. The raised floor and tank in the front part of the wagon are clearly shown in the accompanying photo taken by Mr. Potter in 1940. Bob Sams of Birmingham, Alabama, who bought this negative from Mr. Potter, says that No. 78 in 1940 housed the alligators and props for Tanit Ikaio, Hindu Mystic, who was the last concert attraction ever used by Ringling-Barnum.

In 1941 and 1942 No. 78 housed the pigmy hippo as stated by Mr. Reynolds. Mr. Potter does not mention No. 78 after 1942, which was apparently the last time it housed a hippo. However, Don Carson writes that No. 78 was again used in 1948 to house the male African black rhino "Robert." That year it was painted blue with silver scroll.

Turning now to cage No. 73, Mr. Potter says it was built for Ringling Bros.

some time prior to 1919. It was, therefore, a much older wagon than No. 78. No. 73 was 16 feet long, 6 feet wide, and had quarter round corners. A distinctive feature was the scroll on the corners. Instead of mere painted scroll, No. 73 had bas-relief carved scroll. There was an "R" carved in a square on the left-front corner and another in the scroll on the right-rear corner. The letter "B" appeared in the scroll on the right-front and left-rear corners. No. 73 was the last Ringling-Barnum cage with quarter round corners to have carved scrolls on the corners. As far as Mr. Potter knows, No. 73 was generally used for lions up until



1942. It was one of the cages that was severely burned in the menagerie fire in Cleveland in 1942. After the fire it was shipped to Sarasota where it was repaired; the gargoyle-like carved splash board and hippo tank were added; and it went out in 1943 as the pigmy hippo cage.

While Mr. Reynolds' article indicates that No. 73 was still used as a pigmy hippo den in 1948, this cannot be verified by the detailed notes taken by Don Carson in 1948. His notes do not show that No. 73 was carried that year.