

# Bandwagon

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THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JULY-AUGUST 1993

**JUST RETURNED FROM AUSTRALIA**

ROMAN HIPPODROME  
**3 RING CIRCUS**  
TWO ELEVATED STAGES,  
**5** CONTINENT **MENAGERIE**  
IMPERIAL JAPANESE TROUPE

20 YEARS BEFORE  
THE PUBLIC.

**SELLS**  
BROTHERS

COMBINED WITH **HASSAN BEN ALI'S**  
**MOORISH CARAVAN**  
ARABIAN NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENT  
AND SPECTACULAR  
**PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA**

THE SUPREME TEST  
OF MERIT IS SUCCESS.



DEPARTURE OF SELLS BROTHERS' ENORMOUS UNITED SHOWS FOR AUSTRALIA  
OCTOBER 17 1891 ON STEAM-SHIP MONOWAI, THE LARGEST OF THE UNION S.S. CO'S MAGNIFICENT FLEET.  
THE MOST REMARKABLE AND SUCCESSFUL TOUR ON RECORD.— TRAVELING OVER TWENTY THOUSAND MILES BY SEA AND  
FIFTEEN THOUSAND MILES BY LAND EXHIBITING IN OVER ONE HUNDRED OF THE LEADING CITIES AND TOWNS IN AUSTRALIA.



**T**hough by far the largest of their genre, there is a paucity of detailed, in depth writing about individual editions of the Barnum, Ringling, and their combined circuses during this century's first three decades. Hence, Fred Pfening Jr. is due much applause for his splendid account of the 1913 Ringling show in the March-April *Bandwagon*.

Several matters pertaining to wagons, however, require correction and clarification, to wit:

#### Rhino Cages

Contrary to what is stated in the caption beneath the rhino cage photo (p. 13), that wagon was not used to send Indian rhino "Bill" from Ringling to Barnum in 1913. If a circus wagon was used, it would have been the one shown here in photo No. 1 taken on the Forepaugh-Sells circus in 1910. I reach this conclusion based on a rationalization of the facts as known with a sprinkling of surmise (hopefully informed) which I hope to here explore in the best tradition of the circus wagonophile.

Note that the side boards of the 1910 Forepaugh-Sells cage (photo No. 1) read "Only Living Armored Rhinoceros In Captivity." The word "Armored" (may not show clearly here but definitely on the upper right side board) is critical to these observations because it is a proper adjective to describe the skin of the Great Indian one-horned rhinoceros. And, "Bill" was the only one of that species on a circus in America this century. (See photo No. 2). We figure he went out with Forepaugh-Sells again in 1911, riding in the

# RINGLING BROS. 1913 SOME OBSERVATIONS AND CORRECTIONS

By Richard J. Reynolds III

same wagon as the year before. After that circus was shelved forever in Baraboo at the end of 1911, "Bill" and this same cage went to Ringling for 1912. Its parade order for that year listed, "Forepaugh Rhino Den No. 27;" an obvious reference to its usage during the two preceding seasons. The same was true in 1913.

In addition to "Bill" in Forepaugh No. 27, the 1912 and 1913 Ringling shows had a second rhino (a two-horned African black) that rode in cage No. 66. It is shown here in photo No. 3. Documents and photographs clearly establish that this unique wagon was built for the Ringlings in early 1903 and was with their namesake circus for most of the time through 1918. In the mid-1920s it could be found at the Bridgeport winter quarters sadly deteriorated and obviously destined for oblivion.

But, let us return to Forepaugh-Sells No. 27. Its origin was with Barnum. We know this with certainty and can place it there as early as 1893. Taking it back before that is a tougher proposition. A Bar-

Photo No. 1. Rhino den No. 27 (left) on Forepaugh-Sells in 1910. It was on Barnum & Bailey in 1909 and earlier. Dunn-Tibbals collection.

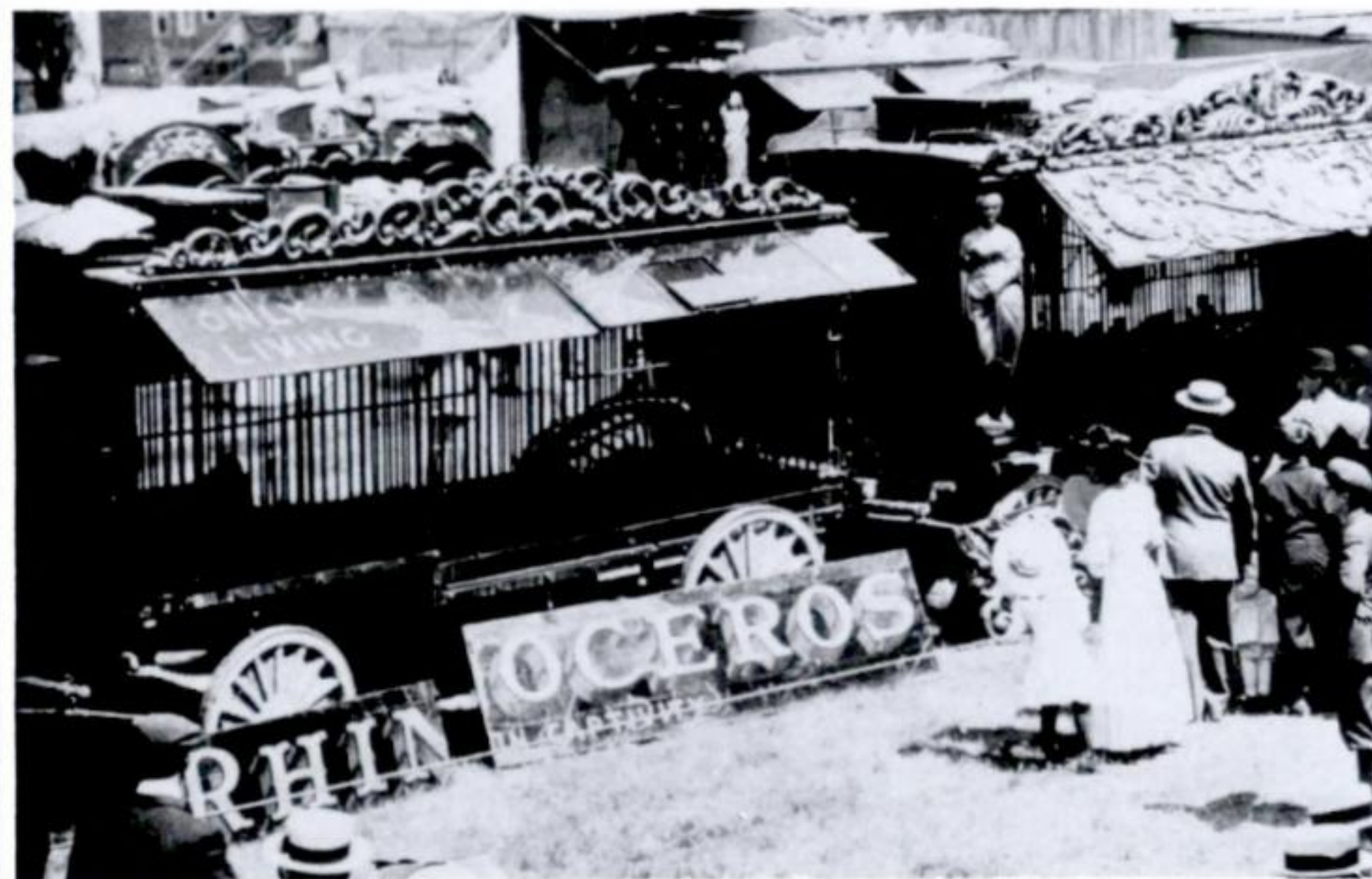
num & Bailey open menagerie photograph, obtained by your writer from the late Ralph Miller and dated by him as 1893, shows, in its background, four of the plain Barnum cages, so-called for their downright dowdiness in comparison to the elegant Fielding tableau dens on that circus. The late Richard Conover was of the view that our subject wagon

was one of the plain cages shown in the 1893 picture, and I agree. Though its number cannot be seen, it had the same physical characteristics that we will explore momentarily.

In his paper, *The Fielding Cages Of 1883, Bandwagon*, March-April, 1986, Stuart Thayer said that the plain cages dated back on Barnum as far as 1873 and that during the 1880s and 1890s were numbered in the fifties. Sure enough, the 1886 Barnum & London route book identified a No. 57 as one of two rhino cages on the circus that year. The other was No. 73, but we can eliminate it as a candidate for our subject wagon, for it was an ornately carved Fielding tableau-den featuring corner statues of men holding snakes. While in England, in connection with the public sale of shares in his circus, James A. Bailey had an inventory prepared of all his circus properties. Dated February 4, 1899 (copy in Pfening archives), it listed all the cages by number but without designating which animals rode in each. Among them was a number 57, presumably the same as rhino cage No. 57 of 1886.

Later in 1899 or in 1900, Barnum & Bailey renumbered all its cages. In his Fielding paper, Thayer said the old plain cages got new numerals in the seventies. And, he has a 1900 Barnum and Bailey list with No. 75 shown as the rhino wagon. Better yet is a photograph from the Conover collection of a side walled Barnum menagerie. Conover said it was taken sometime before 1908 but after the show returned to America. Though of rather poor quality, it shows our subject wagon; and on its rear can be read the number 75.

We turn now to a series of five rhino photographs taken on Barnum & Bailey, one for sure in 1905 and the others either then or within a few years thereafter. At least two of the cameramen were F. W. Glasier and Charles Andress. The latter's photo was published in *Billboard* for October 13, 1906, p. 28. These five photos, plus the 1893 shot and the one from ca. 1903-07 in the Conover collection, show a wagon with a drop deck floor. All reveal the same iron bar door, an unusual swing out or in affair, set among the regular vertical bars about halfway along the left







side with the horizontal reinforcing bar interrupting its wagon length course to form a frame around the door. And, those very same features can be seen in No. 27 (photo No. 1). Hence, this writer concludes that No. 27 was the same as post-1900 Barnum No. 75 and that it went back at least to 1893. A more tenuous assertion is that it was No. 57 on the 1886-1899 editions of the Barnum circus. We know only that such numeral would have fit the plain cage numbering scheme of those years and that a No. 57 did carry a rhino in 1886, a coincidence which lends at least a scintilla of credence to the assertion.

Before leaving the subject of No. 27's origin, we should touch upon one more possibility, albeit a remote one in my judgment, namely that it came from the 1907 and earlier Forepaugh-Sells circus. That would mean that it was not one of the old plain Barnum cages. Fuel for that idea is to be found in a letter Otto Ringling wrote to his brother Charles on November 7, 1907 (Braathen collection). The Baraboo showmen had just purchased Barnum & Bailey and were temporarily shelving Forepaugh-Sells. (They recreated it in 1910). Otto had gone to the Bridgeport winter quarters to examine the Barnum properties. This letter was one of two that reported his findings. In it he disdainfully referred to the group of cages that included No. 75 as "these bum plain cages. . . [which we should] . . . throw out." He recommended replacing them with the best from Forepaugh.

It is generally held that Otto Ringling's recommendation was carried out. That is not to say, however, that every single one of the plain cages was junked for 1908. Based on the evidence detailed above, I must conclude that at least one of them sur-

Photo No. 2. Ringling's Hindu rhino cage No. 66 built for the 1903 season and shown here ca. 1909. Author's collection.

vived the purge and wound up as No. 27 on the 1910-11 Forepaugh-Sells and 1912-13 Ringling circuses. Photo No. 1 shows that it had a carved skyboard in 1910. That adornment may well have been taken from 1907 Forepaugh-Sells equipment because the skyboard of the same wagon on Barnum in 1893 was a plain wooden one with painted scroll.

Photo No. 3. Great Indian rhino "Bill" as he looked on RBBB in the early 1920s. Atwell photo from author's collection.



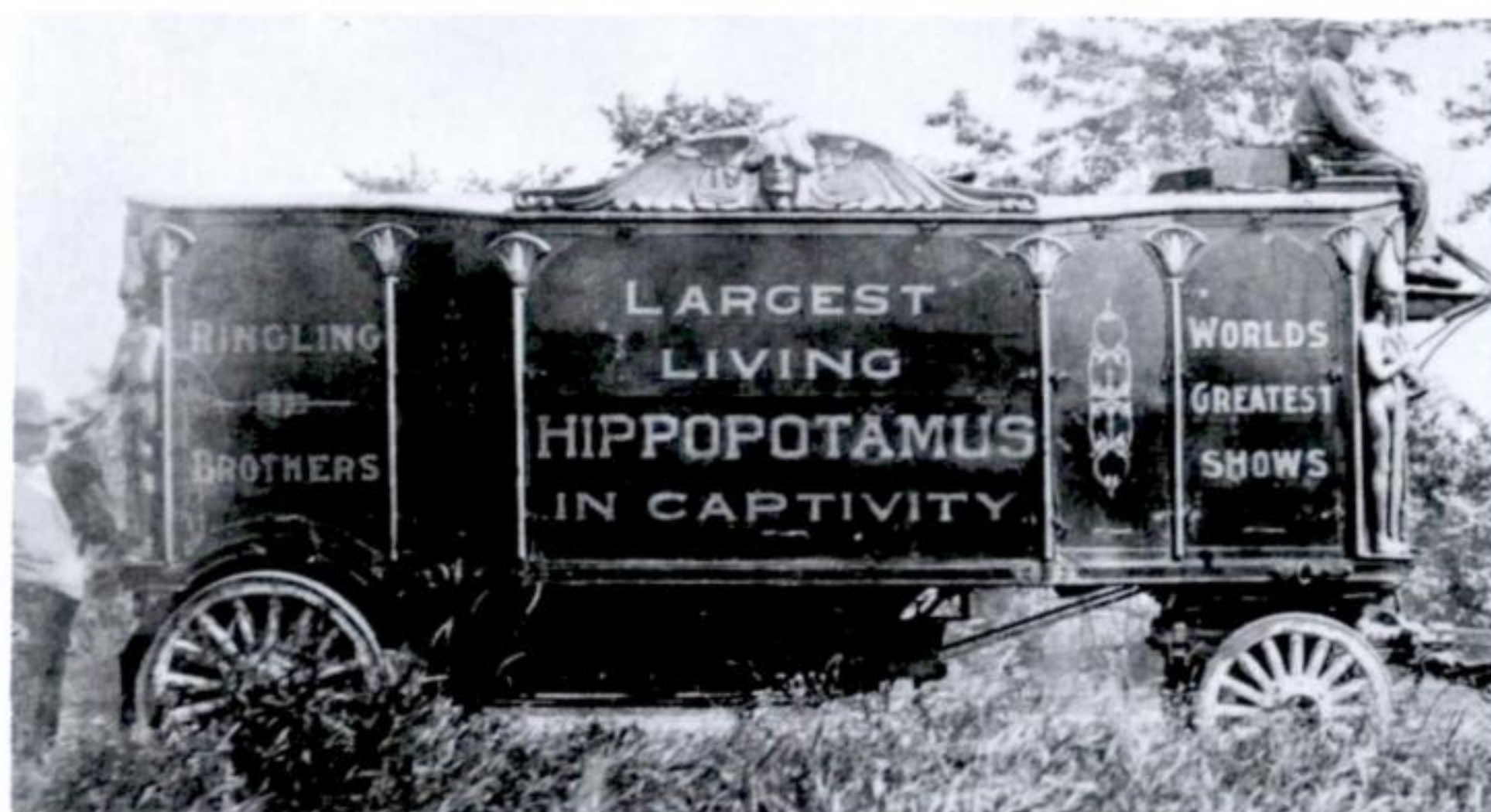
Barnum and Bailey played Battle Creek, Michigan on August 4, 1909, and a photo was taken in a topless menagerie. In the background, though partially obscured, can be seen a cage wagon whose side boards had the very same painting of natives fighting a rhino that we see in Photo No. 1 taken the next year on Forepaugh-Sells. Also, the ventilation window in the upper right side panel was the same in both the 1909 and 1910 photographs. Where the word "Armored" appeared on the 1910 Forepaugh-Sells side board, the 1909 Barnum and Bailey lettering read, "Two, . . . (second word obscured) . . .," but obviously "Two Horned" for the African black rhino which the Barnum circus most definitely carried in 1909. Hence, we know with certitude that the 1909 Barnum rhino den was shipped to Baraboo where Forepaugh-Sells was being recreated during the winter of 1909-1910. When it arrived, all the paint shop had to do to fix it up for Indian rhino "Bill" was to remove the second horn from the portrait of the rhino and print "Armored" in place of "Two Horned."

With Barnum & Bailey's 1909 rhino den having thus gone west to Baraboo to become No. 27 on the 1910 Forepaugh-Sells aggregation, what did the former do for a rhino cage? Largely based on the process of elimination, it is my opinion that they got a new one; and I believe it to have been that shown on page 13 of the Pfening article. It was a wider, heavier, and more modern looking wagon than either of the older ones pictured here. Un-

fortunately, we have never seen a photograph of it on the Barnum show to support this premise. The picture used in Pfening's article is thought to have been taken around 1920 on Ringling-Barnum where it became the combined show's vehicle for hauling Indian rhino "Bill." It was destroyed in a February, 1924 Bridgeport fire; and "Bill" made his last three tours in a new cage wagon, No. 78, which saw service on Ringling-Barnum as late as 1948.

As Pfening correctly noted in his paper, "Bill" was sent from the Ringling to the Barnum show on July 5, 1913. We know that from a Ringling document stating that "a rhino" was shipped on that date. We know that it went to Barnum & Bailey because they needed to replace theirs which had just died, and Ringling had an extra one. We figure it was "Bill" because both Joe Heiser and Col. Bill Woodcock remembered that he was a Barnum animal in the later teens. What we do not know is how he was transported from Ringling to its sister circus. Because No. 27 (photo No. 1)





started the 1913 Ringling season per the parade order but is not listed in the later loading order, the most logical conclusion is that he went to Barnum riding in No. 27 as Pfening suggested. What then happened to that cage? Did it continue to transport "Bill" (a simple solution)? Or, was he switched from No. 27 into Barnum's bigger and newer rhino wagon which had been made empty by the death of its two-horned occupant the month before?

Regardless of how and where No. 27 spent the remainder of the 1913 season, we must point out that a cage No. 27 (presumably that in photo No. 1) was back on Ringling in 1914. It was listed in their parade line-up for that season whereas No. 66, their usual, and presumably preferred, rhino cage was not. Whether No. 66 was carried but not paraded, we cannot say. However, it was definitely with the circus in 1915-1918. We have no trace of No. 27 after 1914.

For an overall review of the cage wagons employed by Forepaugh-Sells in 1910-1911, readers are directed to Fred D. Pfening III's fine article, *The Grand Parade of 1910 and 1911, Forepaugh Sells Circus, Bandwagon*, May-June, 1968, p. 16. There, the author discussed rhino cage No. 27. He expressed uncertainty over its origin and suggested a pre-1910 Ringling connection. However, that was written before we discovered persuasive evidence of its coming from Barnum & Bailey. For assistance in that regard, special thanks are due Stuart Thayer and the doyen of the wagonphiles, the late Richard E. Conover.

#### Hippo Cage No. 42

In the 1913 Ringling parade order as presented by Pfening (page 10), hippo wagon No. 42 is said to have come from Forepaugh Sells. That is incorrect. No. 42 (shown here in photo No. 4) was the one that hauled the hippo in 1913, and it was always a Ringling cage—never Fore-

Photo No. 4. Ringling hippo den No. 42 as it was configured ca. 1913 with bay window. Tibbals collection.

paugh-Sells. Records from the Baraboo winter quarters, preserved in the Kasiska collection, prove it was built for the Baraboo brothers' 1903 campaign. The Moeller wagon repair records, on file at the Circus World Museum, tell us for \$282.50 that it got an entirely new body during the winter immediately preceding the 1917 season. Photographs show that the new one was wider and had no bay window like that shown in photo No. 4, being of uniform breadth throughout. Fortunately, the attractive Egyptian flavored sky board and corner statues were installed on the new edition. Thus configured, it saw regular "river horse" service on the post-1918 combined show. Alas, like the ex-Barnum 1910 vintage rhino den shown on page 13 (March-April issue), this attractive hippo wagon also burned up in the 1924 fire at the Bridgeport winter quarters.

#### Giraffe Wagon No. 78

Pfening stated (page 15) that giraffe wagon No. 78 did not arrive until after the loading order was compiled and was not listed therein. That was an error because No. 78 was listed—with "two little giraffes" (See: 1st section, Flat #39, page 14 of Pfening article).

The two small giraffes were the ones described by Charles Ringling in his letter of July 15, 1913 (quoted by Pfening, page 15), as having "arrived Saturday." We must figure the showman meant Saturday, July 12, 1913 when the circus played Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The Moeller wagon records suggest that two different giraffe wagons were used in 1913 in connection with the young giraffes. From the Pfening article (page 4), we see that No. 78, one of the two listed on the loading order, was re-

paired for the show before the beginning of the season. This should mean that it was on the train, albeit empty, when the show left Baraboo or was shipped to it while it was in the East where the giraffes were to land. However, if two giraffes were expected per the Ringlings' order to Hagenbeck in December, 1912 (document in the Kasiska collection), why carry only one extra giraffe wagon, No. 78? The answer must find its denouement in considerations of cost savings and operating efficiencies.

Back in those days giraffes were notorious for dying in transit, and the two Ringling bound animals still had a risky ocean voyage ahead of them when the time came for the circus to hit the road. Aware of the perils at sea and having lost many giraffes themselves, the brothers probably decided to have on hand only one extra, empty wagon in case only one, or neither, of the cameleopards made it. When both landed safely and went into the required period of quarantine around the end of May, it is this writer's belief that the Ringlings promptly directed the Moellers back in Baraboo to build a new giraffe wagon and ship it to the circus pronto. That would explain the Moellers' July 22, 1913 invoice for "... [making] ... giraffe wagon, and new body and gear ... [and shipping it] ... to Great Bend, Kansas." Pfening referred to the document (page 15) but erroneously called the wagon No. 78. That one was already aboard the train. We do not know the number of the new wagon shipped by the Moellers. Despite what the invoice called for, it apparently could not make the connection for Great Bend because a Ringling journal entry (Kasiska collection) recorded the payment of an express bill for delivering a giraffe wagon from Baraboo to Denver on July 29th, three days after Great Bend.

What all of this tells us, I think, is that the two small giraffes were both transported in No. 78 from the time of their arrival at Fort Wayne (July 12th) until the new wagon arrived in Denver (July 29th). Since the loading order listed only two giraffe wagons, No. 82 for a "big giraffe" (1st section, flat #40) and No. 78 for the "two little giraffes" (1st section, flat #39), and having ever in mind that No. 78 had been repaired in Baraboo before the season began, I am compelled to the view that the loading order was prepared between Ft. Wayne and Denver before the new giraffe wagon arrived. Thereafter, the three giraffes each had a separate wagon.

In conclusion, your writer wishes to thank Fred Dahlinger, Jr., Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Fred D. Pfening III, Stuart Thayer, and Howard C. Tibbals for their help with sundry matters pertaining to the circus wagons discussed herein.