

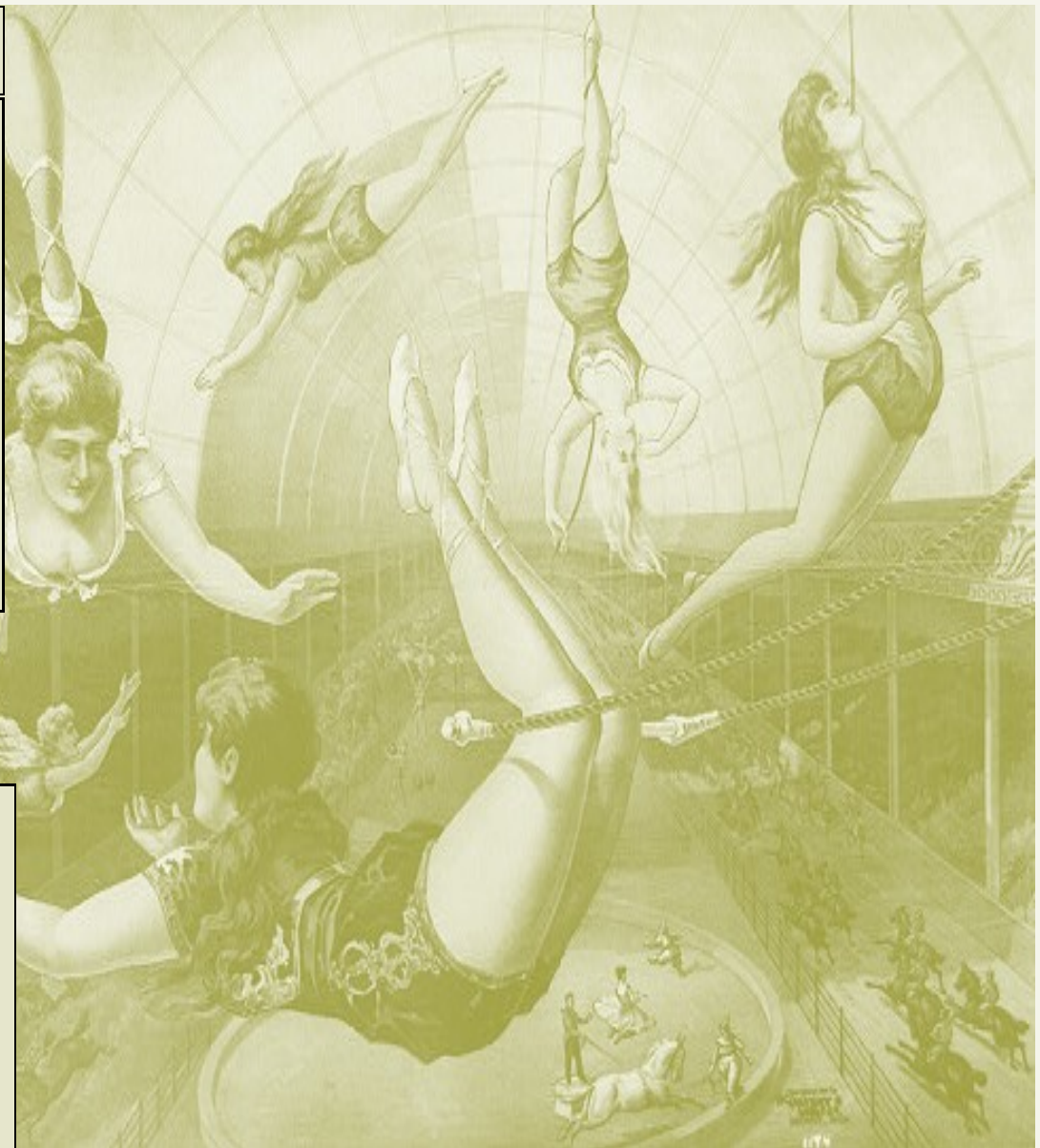
Central Illinois Teaching with Primary Sources Newsletter

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
EDWARDSVILLE

UNDER THE BIG TOP: THE CIRCUS

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THE BARNUM & BAILEY UNDER THE BIG TOP GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Welcome to the **Central Illinois Teaching with Primary Sources Newsletter**. Our goal is to bring you topics that connect to the Illinois Learning Standards as well as introduce you to amazing items from the Library of Congress. The circus is not mentioned specifically within ISBE materials but entertainers are found in the following Illinois Learning Standards (found within goal, standard, benchmark or performance descriptors). 27-Understand the role of the arts in civilization, past and present.

Almost every child and some adults have dreamed of running away with the circus. Images of the big top, graceful acrobats, the thrill of the tight rope and suspense of watching the flying trapeze can draw each of us into the magical world of the circus. When the tent comes down you find a community. Many of these performers are multi-generational following in their families footsteps. They travel nearly year round, never calling one place home. They practice their craft for many hours until they reach perfection. Their children are educated on the road, some never attend a public school. Each person brings their own culture and often they blend into a family.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were over 100 circuses traveling across America.

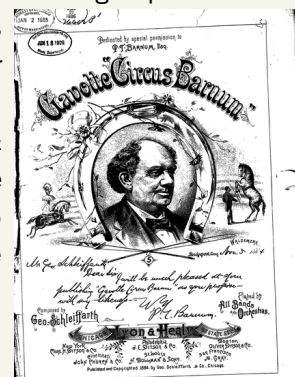
America's love for the circus has lasted for over 200 years. With no television, movies or video games to compete with, the circus was a primary form of entertainment in the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were over 100 circuses traveling across America performing for up to 12,000 spectators per show.

Phineas Taylor Barnum was 60 years old when "P.T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Circus" debuted. Barnum said "we ought to have a big show", and it was, Barnum grossed \$400,000 dollars in its first year. The circus season of 1872, was the first year a train carried a circus completely designed for rail travel. With the ability to transport more, Barnum added a second ring to his show. He partnered with James Bailey and in 1888, they introduced "Barnum and Bailey

Greatest Show on Earth". Following Barnum's death, Bailey continued to increase the popularity of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. The circus now traveled in 85 railcars, employed over 1,000 people and consisted of a never before heard of five rings and stages.

During the end of the nineteenth century, another name emerged to compete with Barnum and Bailey. The Ringling brothers began their circus in 1844 and it wasn't long before they were known as "Kings of the Circus World". The Ringling Brother's Circus continued to grow and in 1907, they purchased their largest competitor, the Barnum and Bailey Circus, for a mere \$410,000 dollars. Combining both shows during World War I, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth became legendary. In 1929, Ringling purchased the America Circus Corporation for \$1.7 million. Acquiring five major shows in this acquisition was Ringlings greatest feat yet and made them the major player in the circus world.

Times would change and the circus was left behind. July 16, 1956, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus gave its last performance under a big top tent. In financial despair, the circus couldn't continue. On November 11, 1967, Irvin Feld purchased Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. He moved the circus out of the tent and into arenas allowing 46 consecutive weeks of performances. This and other changes made by Feld helped revive the American circus so that every child can continue to dream about running away with the circus.



Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus <http://www.ringling.com> Accessed 11.12.10

PBS, Circus, <http://www.pbs.org/opb/circus> Accessed 11.12.10

History magazine <http://www.history-magazine.com/circuses.html> Accessed 11.12.10

THE BARNUM & BAILEY CONNECTING TO ILLINOIS GREATEST EARTH

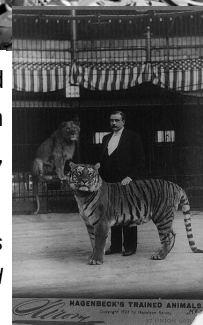
For most performers, the circus runs in their blood. They are one of many generations to perform under the big top. For those who want the circus experience, there are two collegiate circuses in the United States, Florida State University and Illinois State University, the oldest collegiate circus in America. It seems a natural fit for ISU to offer a circus for students as the Bloomington area was the winter home for famous trapeze acts such as the flying Wards and the Conciellos. These acts would return to Illinois each winter to create new performances for the next circus season. The Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State University was founded in 1929 by Clifford Horton. It didn't begin as a circus but as a fraternity dedicated to physical education, fitness and gymnastics. By 1938, females began to perform with the troupe and the circus



began to focus on performing arts instead of the Greek social organization. Today, the circus performs acts of juggling, tight wire, trapeze, Russian bar and much more. The Milner Library at ISU hosts "A Passion for Circus" images by Sverre "Bex" Braathen. These photos show the life of the circus both in and out of the ring.

The history of the circus has not always been happy under the big top. There are also dark memories for the circus. Just before four o'clock the morning of June 22, 1918, outside of Hammond, Indiana, the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus train was waiting to switch tracks. The train was not clear of the main Michigan-Central Railroad line and coming up fast behind was an empty troop train. The engineer of the troop train had fallen asleep at the throttle. Within minutes the troop train plowed full steam into the circus train. Kerosene lanterns were used on the circus train and immediately the train was engulfed in

flames. The Pullman cars of the circus train were constructed of wood which only helped fuel the fire. In the end, 86 of 400 performers and roustabouts were killed and 127 injured. Most of those killed were buried at Showmen's Rest in Woodlawn Cemetery at Forest Park, Illinois.



Illinois State University Gamma Phi Circus
<http://gammaphicircus.ilstu.edu> Accessed 11.12.10

Florida State University, Flying High Circus <http://circus.fsu.edu> Accessed 11.12.10

Hammond Indiana.com History/Circus
<http://hammondindiana.com/history/circus.htm> Accessed 11.12.10

Showman's League, Showman's Rest
<http://www.showmensleague.org/showmens-rest> Accessed 11.12.10

Illinois State University Milner Library
<http://tempest.lib.ilstu.edu/braathen.php> Accessed 11.12.10

Close to Home—Heartland Highways

Each month we share a link to a relative episode of **Heartland Highways** that provides additional information featuring people and places right here in central Illinois. Heartland Highways is a production of WEIU and episodes are available to view online at <http://www.weiu.net/hh> (select the season on the right side of the page and then the episode).

Season 8, episode 813 closes out with Lori and Kate taking a swing on the trapeze when they visit the Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State University in Normal.



This circus has a history as long as their list of different acts.

LEARN MORE WITH AMERICAN MEMORY COLLECTIONS

American Variety Stage: Vaudeville and Popular Entertainment, 1870-1920

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vshtml/vshome.html>

The idea for the American Variety Stage collection came about through the advocacy of an ad hoc group of dedicated Library of Congress employees who shared a big secret: the Library is home to significant, and in some cases unique, resources for the study of American popular entertainment; materials that have been largely unknown and underutilized. The collection has been shaped in whole or in part by the Library's unique role as the copyright deposit institution for the United States. Many of the items submitted for copyright registration were certainly published and distributed while other items were never published or seen by the American public. This collection holds a minimal amount of items pertaining to the circus. You will be able to find images of Houdini and his connection to the circus, also you will find film clips of Jumbo the elephant and animal acts.

Library of Congress, American Memory, Accessed 11.16.10

variety of topics but most share the same geographical location, Chicago, Illinois or the surrounding area. Probably only twenty percent of the images in this collection actually were published in the newspaper. Both Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey circuses are represented in this collection. Images of circus elephants, performers and the Hagenbeck-Wallace train wreck are found in this collection.

Library of Congress, American Memory, Accessed 11.17.10

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project , 1936-1940

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html>

It took over 300 writers from 24 states to document 2,900 oral histories. Writers contributed to this project through an employment program of the Works Progress Administration. The writers chronicled interviews with Americans asked to recall significant events in their lives. The result, a collection offering a rich exposition of everyday life in rural and urban United States, from the end of the Civil War through the Great Depression. Each document relates the compelling story of a human life. The popularity of the circus during this time is expressed in numerous interviews. This collection holds memories of circus life, running away with the circus or just the childhood delight in attending a circus performance.

Library of Congress, Collection Connection, Accessed 11.17.10

America from the Great Depression to World War II: Black and White Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fahome.html>

The photographs from the Farm Security Administration—Office of War Information contain over 71,000 photographs that comprise an extensive pictorial record of American social life during the turbulent decade between 1935-1945. The collection also demonstrates the rise of documentary



Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/ichihtml/cdnhome.html>



This online collection consists of images of urban life captured on glass plate negatives between 1902-1933 by photographers employed by the *Chicago Daily News*. The approximately 55,000 images relate to an enormous



LEARN MORE WITH AMERICAN MEMORY COLLECTIONS



photography as a medium for investigating and communicating about social issues. Advertisements for Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus are found in signboards along the highways and posters hung in windows or pasted to the side

of a wall from Illinois to Nebraska. Another form of advertising for the circus were the circus wagons. Painted with elaborate images, these wagons were often seen in a circus parade headed through town to entice the young and old to the circus.



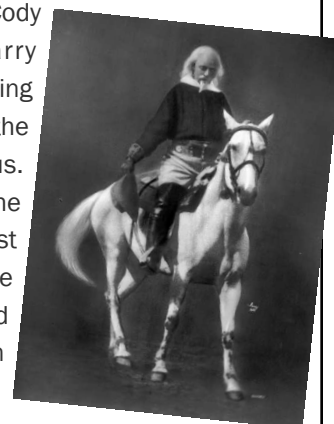
Library of Congress, Collection Connection, Accessed 11.17.10

History of the American West, 1860-1920: Photographs from the Collection of the Denver Public Library
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/codhtml/hawphome.html>

The 30,000 images in this collection help to tell the history of the American west. Photographs include formal portraits of Indian chiefs and images of their daily lives, images documenting the place of mining history in Colorado and boom towns such as Telluride and Cripple Creek. Circus parades and performers are highlighted in this collection. William F. Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill created the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The show gained great popularity with bronco riding, sharp shooters and roping skills. In 1913, the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show had come upon hard times.



To keep the show afloat, Cody borrowed money from Harry Tammen. Cody fell behind repaying the loan and was forced to join the Tammen's Sells Floto Circus. Eventually he was able to leave the circus but Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was never able to be revived. Images of Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show are found in this collection.



Library of Congress, American Memory, Accessed 11.17.10

Buffalo Bill Museum & Grave, Accessed 11.17.10

<http://www.buffalobill.org/index.html>

American Woman

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhtml/index.html>

In the American Woman collection there is a selected holding of circus posters. There are 600 posters dating from 1840 to the present. These posters depict stars and acts from this specialized entertainment arena. They feature such notables as Barnum and Bailey stars Isabella Butler and Rose Meers. One poster proclaims Meers to be the "Greatest Living Lady Rider—Entirely original in dress, style and action, engaged at a salary of \$100.00 per day.

Library of Congress, American Memory, Accessed 11.17.10



IN THE CLASSROOM: LESSON PLANS, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

In this section you will find items pertaining to the current theme that can be used in your classroom. This is a small sample of items available through the Library, conduct your own search for circuses to find more.

Webcasts

<http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/index.php>

Paolo Ventura: Winter Stories

http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=5057

Today in History

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today>

July 5, 1810: P.T. Barnum

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/jul05.html>

American Folklife Center

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/index.html>

Materials Related to Circus

http://www.loc.gov/folklife/teachers/subject_list.php?subjectID=251&subject=Circus

Prints and Photographs

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures>

Posters: Performing Arts Posters

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/var/>

Miscellaneous Items in High Demand

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/cph/>

Farm Security Administration /Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsa/>



America's Story

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov>

Explore the States

Wisconsin: The Circus Parade

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/es/wi/es_wi_circus_1.html

Amazing Americans

The Circus or the Marine Corps?

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/sousa/aa_sousa_circus_1.html

Jump Back in Time

July 5, 1810: Phineas Taylor Barnum was born

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/nation/jb_nation_barnum_1.html

Exhibitions

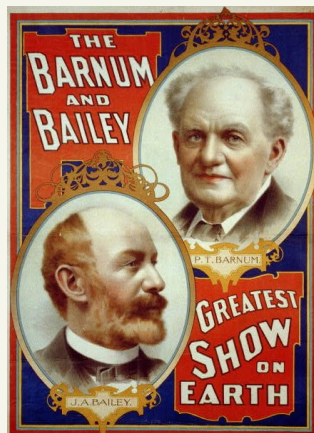
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/>

John Bull and Uncle Sam Popular Culture: From Baseball to Rock and Roll

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/british/brit-7.html>

American Treasures of the Library of Congress: Imagination The Greatest Show on Earth

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/tri168.html>



Teacher's Page

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/>

Presentations and Activities

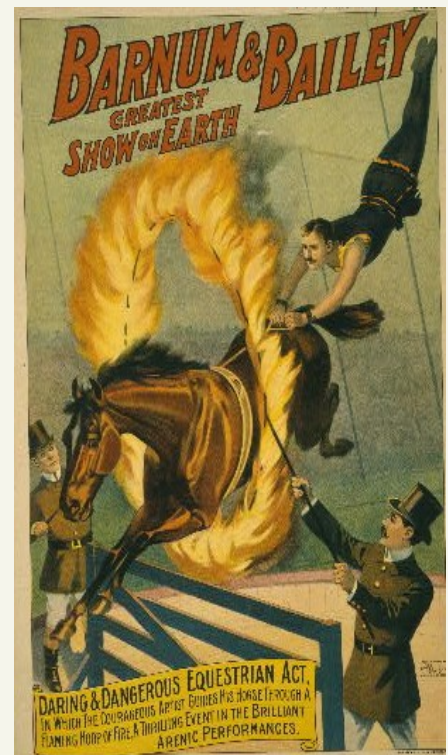
American Memory Timeline Circus Days and Ways

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/riseind/work/circus.html>

Collection Connections

The New Deal Stage: Selections from the Federal Theatre Project, 1935- 1939

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/new-deal-stage/history.html>





Circus Lingo: Match the term with the definition. Answers are found at <http://www.pbs.org/opb/circus/circus-life/talking-circus/#glossary>

Annie Oakley	A vendor who sells candy, soda, popcorn and other food items.
Bally	A ragged, downtrodden traveling show in need of physical repair.
Ballyhoo	A showman who entices the crowd before the show with a verbal pitch.
Calliope	Horses who perform circus acts without human riders.
Candy Butchers	A complimentary ticket or free pass.
Clown Alley	The prepared speech delivered from the bally. Hype used to advertise the show.
Charivari	A traveling circus that earns a reputation for swindling patrons.
Cherry Pie	A nickname for a clown.
Donikers	High wire-walker.
Fireball	Traveling shows that move from one town to another every few days.
Flea Bag	A horse who has learned fancy steps as part of a performance.
First of May	An old-fashioned musical instruments similar to an organ.
Funambulist	Bathroom facilities for circus patrons.
Grinder	A rookie circus performer trying to learn the ropes.
High School Horse	The area just outside of the big top where the clowns wait to perform.
Iron Jaw	A circus laborer.
Itchy Feet	The children of circus performers and workers who grow up under the big top.
Jackpots	A humorous, energetic acrobatic exhibition performed by clowns or acrobats.
Joey	Tall tales about life under the big top.
Liberty Act	A performer or crew member's desire to return to circus life and the road after they have been away from the big top for a while.
Lot Lice	A platform at the entrance to a circus where a circus "talker" delivers a prepared spiel to attract a crowd.
Mud Circuses	
Roustabout	Work performed for extra money.
	An aerial act in which an acrobat swings and does tricks while hanging from a suspended mouth piece.

THE BARNUM & BAILEY IMAGE SOURCES GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



Library of Congress
Klamath Falls, Oregon. Sideshow barker at the circus.
American Memory
America from the Great Depression to World War II: Black-and-White Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945



Library of Congress
Circus Poster, Alabama
American Memory
America from the Great Depression to World War II: Black-and-White Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945



Library of Congress
The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth. [Portraits of P.T. Barnum [and] J.A. Bailey
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
The Barnum & Bailey greatest show on earth. Wonderful performing geese, roosters and musical donkey.
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
William F. Cody, on horseback, supposedly his last appearance, full length
American Memory
History of the American West, 1860-1920: Photographs from the Collection of the Denver Library



Library of Congress
Female acrobats on trapezes at circus
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
Zack A. Miller, Sr., with Jack Jr. who is wearing a cowboy costume and holding a lasso.
American Memory
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933



Library of Congress
Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
A circus scene/ H.S. Poley, photographer, Colorado Springs, Colo.
American Memory
History of the American West,. 1860-1920: Photographs from the Collection of the Denver Library

THE BARNUM & BAILEY IMAGE SOURCES GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



Library of Congress
A circus girl.
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth. Miss Rose Meers, the Greatest living lady rider
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
Jumbo, the trained elephant/(Commonwealth Pictures Corporation; Hans A. Spanuth, producer)
American Memory
The American Variety Stage: Vaudeville, and Popular Entertainment, 1870– 1920



Library of Congress
Sneaking under the circus tent. Roswell, New Mexico.
American Memory
America to the Great Depression: Black-and-White Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945



Library of Congress
Part of a circus stranded since 1925 near Urbana, Illinois
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
Hagenbeck's trained animals
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
Hagenbeck-Wallace circus train accident
American Memory
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933



Library of Congress
Barnum & Bailey greatest show on earth.
Prints and Photographs



Library of Congress
Gavotte "Circus Barnum" / by Geo. Schleiffarth.
American Memory
Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music

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