



BHC-MSS 0010
Guide to the Gordy Collection of Circus Photographs
By Meghan Rinn
2018

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Unknown

Title: Gordy Collection of Circus Photographs

Dates: 1870s-1940s [bulk 1900-1940]

Quantity: 10 manuscript boxes

Abstract: The Gordy Collection of Circus Photographs featured a wide array of images from mostly the 1900s to the 1940s, documenting circus life. It focuses primarily on the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, and shows not only animal and human performers, but features behind the scenes images that give a greater view into what life was like for those who traveled with the group every year.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History:

At present, the Bridgeport History Center does not know who “Gordy” refers to and can offer no biographical information on this name.

Scope and Content Note:

The Gordy Collection of Circus Photographs featured a wide array of images from mostly the 1900s to the 1940s, documenting circus life. It focuses primarily on the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, and shows not only animal and human performers, but features behind the scenes images that give a greater view into what was life for those who traveled with the group every year.

Most photographs contain no additional contextual information on the back. However, this is not always the case and it is possible to determine a rough date range for the overall collection.

Prominent are photographs of circus animals, with the elephants taking up the most space. See arrangement note for additional details.

Arrangement note:

Upon arrival, the Gordy Collection of Circus Photographs was divided into two groups. The first, which comprises series I, featured a category based organizational system for photographs based on the image subject. This has been entirely kept intact.

The second group was labeled as “circus miscellaneous.” While some materials was grouped together and labeled, such as a photo group of calliopes, most were not. Material which was placed in a folder together has been kept together, and material that is recognizable by format, such as cartes de visite, has been kept together. Otherwise these photographs remain in original order, pending review and additional context provided.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Unknown

Preferred Citation:

Gordy Collection of Circus Photographs (BHC-MSS 0010), Bridgeport History Center.

Names and Subject Tracings*Corporate Names*

Barnum & London Circus

Barnum and Bailey

Barnum and Bailey--History.

Barnum and Bailey--People--1890-1900.

Barnum and Bailey--People--1900-1910.

Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus

Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows--1920-1930.

Subject headings

Circus animals--1870-1880.

Circus animals--Pictorial works.

Circus animals--United States--History--19th century.

Circus animals--United States--History--20th century.

Circus owners.

Circus performers--1870-1880.

Circus performers--1880-1890.

Circus performers--1890-1900.

Circus performers--1900-1910.

Circus performers--1910-1920.

Circus performers--1920-1930.

Circus performers--United States.

Entertainers--1840-1890.

Entertainers--1890-1900.

Entertainers--1900-1920.

Elephant trainers

Women circus performers

Genres

Photographs.

Detailed box and folder listing

Series I: Collected under subjects

Box 1

1. Acrobats 1 of 3
2. Acrobats 2 of 3
3. Acrobats 3 of 3
4. Animals
5. Bears

Box 2

1. Behind the scenes 1 of 2
2. Behind the scenes 2 of 2
3. Camels
4. Clowns
5. Dogs

Box 3

1. Elephants 1 of 9
2. Elephants 2 of 9
3. Elephants 3 of 9

Box 4

1. Elephants 4 of 9
2. Elephants 5 of 9
3. Elephants 6 of 9
4. Elephants 7 of 9

Box 5

1. Elephants 8 of 9
2. Elephants 9 of 9
3. Giraffes 1 of 2
4. Giraffes 2 of 2
5. Gorillas 1 of 4
6. Gorillas 2 of 4

Box 6

1. Gorillas 3 of 4
2. Gorillas 4 of 4
3. Horses 1 of 3
4. Horses 2 of 3

Box 7

1. Horses 3 of 3
2. Leopards
3. Lions
4. Monkeys
5. Parades
6. Personalities

Box 8

1. Railroad 1 of 2
2. Railroad 2 of 2
3. Sick benefit
4. Tent

Box 9

1. Tigers
2. Zebras

3. Cabinet cards

Series II: Collected under "circus misc."

4. Calliopes
5. Cartes de visite
6. Circus scene
7. Forepaugh and Sellers, 1870s
8. Paul Jones
9. Fred and Will Hanley
10. Kelly Emmett
11. Positives
12. Additional small portraits
13. Circus misc., set of boxed negatives
14. Circus misc, enlargement
15. Circus misc.

Box 10

1. Circus misc.
2. Circus misc.
3. Circus misc.
4. Circus misc.
5. Circus misc.
6. Circus misc.
7. Circus misc.
8. Circus misc.
9. Circus misc.
10. Glass plate negatives