



BHC-MSS 0012

Guide to the Raymond Fletcher Collection of Ringling Brothers Barnum and  
Bailey Circus Programs

By Meghan Rinn

2018

**Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Raymond Fletcher

**Title:** Raymond Fletcher Collection of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus Programs

**Dates:** 1941-1975 [bulk 1970-1975]

**Quantity:** 1 manuscript box

**Abstract:** Raymond W. Fletcher is perhaps best known as a local Bridgeport artist, self-taught and extremely prolific. His deep connection to Bridgeport also meant that from an early age, Fletcher was surrounded by the circus. Since Bridgeport was the home of Barnum and Bailey's winter quarters, as well as the adopted city of P.T. Barnum himself, it was impossible not to be. As a result, Fletcher maintained a healthy interest in the circus all his life. In addition to being a member of the Bridgeport Barnum Festival and the Circus Model Builders, he collected circus material. This includes the material that makes up this collection.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

**Biographical History:**

Raymond W. Fletcher is perhaps best known as a local Bridgeport artist, self-taught and extremely prolific. Born June 23, 1900, Fletcher's father died when Fletcher was just four, and at the age of fourteen, he dropped out of school in order to help support his family.

However, dropping out of school did not conclude Fletcher's education. In his own writings, Mr. Fletcher expressed his deep appreciation for the Bridgeport Public Library system, as he relied on the former library located at Main and John Streets to further his own education. This deep gratitude is what led him to donate both his homemade circus wagons and many of his paintings to the Bridgeport Public Library. His series of paintings of Bridgeport landmarks that no longer stand, like P.T. Barnum's Iranistan and the Harral-Wheeler House, remain on display in the Bridgeport History Center. According to Fletcher, he began painting in 1935.

His deep connection to Bridgeport also meant that from an early age, Fletcher was surrounded by the circus. Since Bridgeport was the home of Barnum and Bailey's winter quarters, as well as the adopted city of P.T. Barnum himself, it was impossible not to be. As a result, Fletcher maintained a healthy interest in the circus all his life. In addition to being a member of the Bridgeport Barnum Festival and the Circus Model Builders, he collected circus material. This includes the material that makes up this collection.

Fletcher was a Navy veteran of World War II, and was employed by both the Underwood Company and City Lumber Company until he retired in 1969. His wife was named Gertrude, and he had a step-daughter named Beatrice.

Fletcher died August 17, 1985.

**Scope and Content Note:**

The content of this collection reflects the circuses produced by the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus in the 1940s and the 1970s, with a few additional years as well. Additional material reflects other elements of circus fandom at the time.

**Arrangement note:**

Programs from Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus are grouped together and arranged chronologically. Additional material is placed behind the programs and then arranged chronologically.

**Administrative information:**

**Preferred Citation:**

Raymond Fletcher Collection of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus Programs (BHC-MSS 0012), Bridgeport History Center.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

Corporate Names

Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus

Subject tracings

Circus animals--Pictorial works.

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

Circus performers--1940-1950.

Circus performers--1970-1980.

Circus performers--United States.

Connecticut--Bridgeport.

**Detailed box and folder listing**

Box 1

1. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1941
2. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1942
3. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1951
4. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1952
5. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1956
6. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1970
7. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1973
8. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1974
9. Program, Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, 1975
10. Circus Monthly Illustrated, 1<sup>st</sup> issue, September 1, 1961
11. W.B. Brinely's Miniature Circus official magazine, 1963
12. "The American Circus, Published on the Occasion of the Issuance of the 5 cent American Circus Commemorative Stamp" May 2, 1966
13. "When the Circus Came to Town" by Dean M. Aungst, 1970
14. Barnum and Bailey Two Hemispheres Bandwagon, undated