

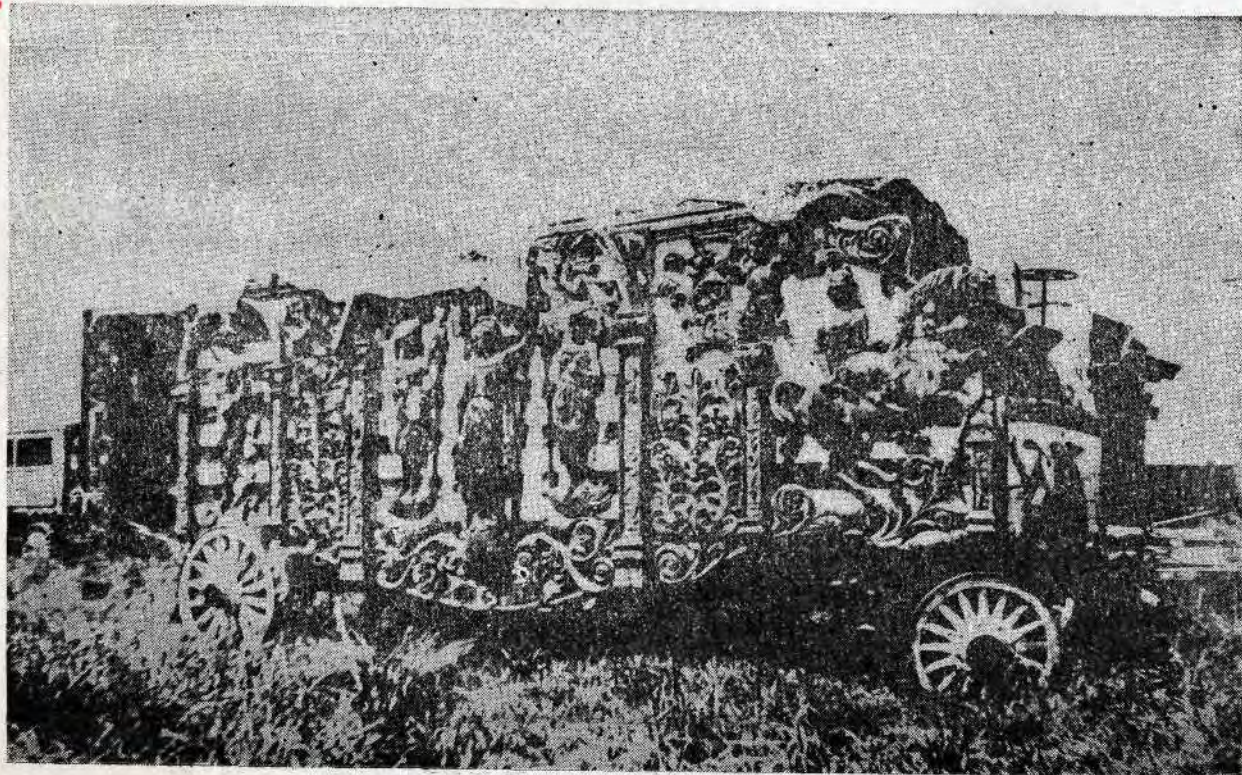
CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July

1946

25c

# The BANDWAGON



A Tour With The SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS 26 Years Ago  
C.E.DUBLE

The 15th Annual Tour of the Sells-Floto Circus was the season of 1920. The Circus opened the season at the Coliseum, Chicago, Ill. Sat. Apr. 3, this being the first time the opening had taken place there. The business was very satisfactory the entire 3 wks. and the fine program of high class circus acts presented met with the approval of all. The first stand under canvas was St. Louis, Mo. for 4 days, the lot being at Vandeventer and LeClede streets an ideal location right in the city. The entire spread of canvas was new and the show presented a fine appearance on the lot. Beautiful weather prevailed the entire engagement. The parade the first day attracted thousands and whet the appetite of the onlookers to see the big show. A 4 pole Big Top was used with 2 rings and center stage. A 30 car Circus.

I recall from memory only some of the staff as follows: H.B. GENTRY was general manager 1917 to 1920. Harvey Bruner who was with Gentry Bros. many years as treasurer filled the same position with Sells-Floto. Bill Curtiss was sup't. and the inventor of the big spool mounted in heavy gear. The middle pieces of the Big Top were rolled up on this spool, and to my knowledge Sells-Floto was the only Circus ever to use this. Chaw. Luckey was boss property man and with show many years and now with Col. Bros. C.L. Brown was bandmaster of the Sells-Floto Concert Band of 22, and was with show 1917 to 1920. Wm. Wells was equestrian director another veteran of the Gentry Bros. Show. Doc Palmer was manager of the Museum or Side Show with the usual line up of side show features, including the Honduras Twins, 2 girls joined together at the side. George Meyers was big show announcer and in charge of the after show concert which was The Big Musical Extravaganza with 24 ballet girls, singers, and dancers. Also taking part in this was Arthur Borella playing his saxophone solo Carnival of Venice. After show concert was given on the center stage with a regular theatre back drop.

One special feature, a lady performer, Dainty Marie was engaged for the Chicago and St. Louis engagements only and appeared in an aerial display similar to the act performed by Lillian Lietzel with the Ringling Bros. Circus. No Wild West acts were with show. Georges Carpentier champion boxer was with show after the St. Louis engagement but remained only for a few wks. Did a boxing bout with a partner in the concert. John Del Vecchio played the steam calliope in parade and sold concert tickets.

I have no official program of the season however I recall these acts from memory and regret if I have overlooked any performers that made up the well balanced program. Wm. Wells equestrian director presented some well trained horses. The performance opened with the regular grand entree. The Hobsons and the Hodgins were the riding troupes appearing in their equestrian feats of horsemanship with beautiful horses in the 2 rings. The Le Grohs one lady and 2 gents in an amazing display of unparalleled contortions to the strains of an old circus favorite The Coconut Dance. The writer met this troupe a few yrs. later on the Pantages Vaudeville circuit. There were 2 aerial bar acts one the Bert Delno trio. Paul Brechard hand balancer and contortion act on pedestal. Slats Beeson on the tight wire in girl make up was one of the big features. Ethel Marine and Stella Rowland iron jaw and trapeze performers, Sweeney and Newton in a novel iron jaw act also did a double trapeze act. Leo Hamilton performed ponies and dogs. Ida Delno was an aerial performer and hand balancer. The Rink-Wright Duo equilibristic feats and excellent ladder balancing. Red Sells, Jack Harris, Earl Shipley were clowns and th

## SELLS-FLOTO CONTINUED

last named was official mail man. There was an Arab troupe of 9 men in whirlwind tumbling and pyramid act. Some nice menage horses were featured in the 2 rings and hippodrome track. Blanche Wells was one of the riders and also performed the largest of the elephants SNYDER. This animal went on a rampage at Salina, Kan. on Sept. 13 just before doors opened for the afternoon show and caused quite a lot of excitement. After sometime trying to quiet the beast it was found useless and on orders of H.B. Gentry "SNYDER" was shot. The elephant at that time was in the care of a man named Boucher.

The 24 ballet girls presented revolving statuary in the rings and on stage, costumed in white tights and wigs. The big aerial return act was the 4 Flying Nelsons. Performance closed with the Hobson and the Hodgini troupes in both rings in Indian costumes in an exciting display of horsemanship with sleigh bells on horses and red fire burning while the band played real Indian war dances.

A nice menagerie display was carried with some elegant dens and cages richly carved, some with mirrors and ornamental sunburst wheels. All went in parade. The bandwagon with show for yrs. known as the Elephant Tab. is still to be seen at the Peru quarters or was there during the past few yrs. Elegant lithos and lavish billboard displays of special paper were used by Sells-Floto and plenty of attractive advertising put out in advance.

Following St. Louis we played Terre Haute and Indianapolis, Ind. then into Ohio and Pa. Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Md. were 2 day stands. On Sat. May 22 we were at Albany, N.Y. and from there a 230 mile jump made to Montreal, Canada for Mon. and Tues. Fine business both days an elegant lot and fine weather. Following date was Sherbrooke, Quebec and thousands of French Canadians were dissatisfied as previous rains had made the lot too soft for exhibition purposes. Only the cook tent and horse tents were erected and train left about dark for Berlin, N.H. Lewiston and Portland, Maine followed. Boston, Mass. was a wk. stand starting May 31 and good business here but Sat. night show lost as a terrific rain flooded the lot on Huntington Ave. Points in N.H., Mass., N.Y., and N.J. were played up to JUNE 24 show then swung back thru the middle west and was at Kansas City, Mo. July 18, 19. Great business and hot weather. Denver, Colo. was a 2 day stand July 26, 27, the home city of the show and the crowds came. Many visitors on hand including Otto Floto the sports editor of the Denver Post. Newspapers devoted plenty of space to the Denver Circus. Kansas City, Kan. was the Aug. 15-16 stand and very hot weather and good business. Labor Day found the show at Council Bluffs, Iowa. A veteran circus man Chas. Andress was on hand at Great Bend, Kan. and Lincoln, Neb. was a 4 day stand during the State Fair. The show was in 5 cities in Tex. at Baton Rouge, La. Oct. 1 and in New Orleans Oct. 2-3. Two more wks. in the south then into Kent. and Ill. The closing stand of the 1920 tour was East St. Louis, Ill. Sun. Oct. 17. The entire company of the Neil O'Brien Greater Minstrels came over from St. Louis and attended the afternoon show.

28 states were visited during the tour and 1 province of Canada. Total number of show days 179. In Dec. 1920 the Sells-Floto Circus with Tammen and Bonfils owners was sold to Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard, the show finally passing into the hands of John Ringling Sept. 6, 1929 along with 4 other circuses and properties. At the close of 1932 tour the Sells-Floto Circus was retired for good. Another great tented amusement institution gone but not forgotten.

REMINISCES OF JAKE POSEY  
by Jake Posey

While in Europe I had one accident, Kings Lynn, England, Aug. 1, 1899. I was making a turn into a very narrow street, when the team entered this street, they were crowding, and pushed me over far enough, for my right hub, to catch in the door of a saloon, and, before I could stop they had pulled the side out of the frame building. No one was injured, and the damage settled for 37 shilling.

While showing in Paris, France, they held a mi-carne parade, similar to the Mardi-Gras, held in New Orleans, on Shrove Tues. They prevailed upon Mr. Bailey, to be represented in the parade. Mr. Bailey, instructed me to get a team assembled, and go out in the parade, Mar. 6, 1902. I had not made parade since Oct. 8, 1900. Consequently, had to put a new team together. I had a French band on the wagon, and, when they struck up, their squeaky music, the team struck out. I piled them up, and stopped them. Mr. Bailey, came running up, told me to take the team back to the barn. I had been taken over the parade route before and knew there was a hill 4 miles long a short distance ahead. I informed Mr. Bailey of the fact, and told him when I arrived at the top of the hill, I would have them under complete control. He consented for me to go on, which turned out as I said. I left the building at 1 P.M. and arrived back at 9 P.M. had the lines out of my hands once during that time. When I was called in the mayors office, where there was a lot of talk in French which I did not understand, at that time. But, before the show ended its engagement in Paris, I was called to the center stage, and presented with a medal, on which was inscribed, in French:-

PRESENTED TO JACOB POSEY, BARNUM & BAILEY GREATEST SHOW  
ON EARTH, 40 HORSE CHAMPION DRIVER OF THE WORLD. MAR. 6, 1902.

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WAGONS on SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS 1929 (CHALMER CONDON)

#25	Cage	16 ft.	#29	Cage	16 ft.
#28	Cage	16 ft.	#23	Cage	16ft.
#30	Cage	16 ft.	#21	Cage	16 ft.
#22	Cage	16 ft.	#23	Cage	16 ft.
#24	Cage	17 ft.	#27	Cage	14 ft.
#26	Cage	13 ft.	#31	Cage	20 ft. (Hippo)
#19	Cage	15 ft.	#20	Cage	15 ft.
#32	Cage	17 ft. (Seal den)	#34	Cage	13 ft. (Birds)
#33	Cage		#93	Steam	15 ft.
#79	Cook House	16 ft.	#61	Stable	16 ft.
#90	Cook House	14 ft.	#91	Big Top	14 ft. (S & C)
#1	Cook House	12 ft. (Water)	#101	Big Top	15 ft. (Canvas)
#3	Stake Driver	13 ft.	#102	Big Top	15 ft. (Canvas)
#82	Side Show	22 ft.	#84	Big Top	16 ft. (Rigging)
#67	Menagerie	15 ft.	#2	Water wagon	10 ft.
#97	Stringer	30 ft.	#60	Rigging	14 ft.
#81	Dressing room	14 ft.	#88	Plank wagon	14 ft.
	Beauty cart	8 ft.	#85	Candy wagon	14 ft.
#54	Elephant wagon	14 ft.	#87	Stringer	28 ft.
#36	Side Show Tab.	17 ft.	#5	Meck tractor	16 ft.
#6	Knox tractor	16 ft.		Meck tractor	16 ft.
#14	Light dep't	16 ft.	#18	Light dep't	15 ft.
#16	Light dep't	16 ft.	#99	Pole wagon	38 ft.

## Sells-Floto Wagons(Continued)

#103	Chair Wagon	14 ft.	#104	Chair Wagon	14 ft.
#65	Grand Stand	14 ft.	#72	Reserved seat wagon	14 ft.
#71	Reserved seat	14 ft.	#83	Trunk wagon	16 ft.
#48	Trapping wagon	16 ft.	#45	Wardrobe wagon	14 ft.
#4	Ticket wagon	14 ft.		Funny Ford	10 ft.
#43	Air calliope	14 ft.	#77	Trunk wagon	14 ft.
#66	Seat wagon	14 ft.	#50	Ring curb wagon	14 ft.
#33	Trunk wagon	17 ft.	#11	Dog wagon	13 ft.
#109	Prop wagon	14 ft.	#106	Plank wagon	14 ft.
#108	Stage wagon	16 ft.	#105	Chair wagon	14 ft.
	Prop wagon	17 ft.	#89	Wardrobe(ushers)	16 ft.
#10	T.Mix Barrell	18 ft.		Tom Mix Automobile	21 ft.
#3	Green ticket	15 ft.		Quarterpole wagon	41 ft.
	Menagerie pole	26 ft.		Side show canvas	14 ft.
	Stringer	35 ft.			
				TOTAL OF 72 PIECES	

SCWEIZER NATIONAL CIRCUS GEBRUDER KNIE  
CIRQUE NATIONAL SUISSE DES FRERES KNIE

Owned and operated by Eugen Knie(administrative dep't)Fredy Knie(artistic dep't)and Rolf Knie(technical dep't)Winter quarters in small town near Zurich.

Approximately 47 vehicles including 2 big show ticket wagons,1 menagerie ticket wagon,4 cages,2 tractors,at least 17 living and office wagons,1 generator wagon,1 pole and stringer wagon,and one rest room wagon.Show moved by rail using the small European type flats and stock cars.No sleepers were used.The show did not own its own train.

Animals included 11 elephants,1 hippo,1 lion,1 panther,1 black panther,1 puma,1 polar bear,1 black bear,1 grizzly bear,1 yak,1 zebu,1 water buffalo,3 camels,2 zebras,2 donkeys,3 llamas,14 monkeys,14 ponies,17 horses,plus some birds and dogs.

Tents included one 4 pole round top 100 ft.in diameter,a lead stock tent 20x60,a stable tent 20x60,a cage tent 20x60,elephant tent 30x50.

Wagons were white with blue lettering and no scroll work or other decorations.They were wooden,had very small wheels,and were fitted for use with tractors.There was no draft stock.

The interior of the Big Top was of standard European design with a single ring,orchestra stand over the back door,semi permanent seats all with padded back rests,progressively better seats climaxed by boxes with theater type seats.Prices ranged from 1 franc 40 centimes(35¢)to 6 franc 50 centimes(\$1.65)Admission to the menagerie was separate,similar to American side shows,and cost 1 franc 10 centimes(28¢)All prices cut to half for children and soldiers.The ticket prices included a tax.

The menagerie was open from 10 A.M.until 8 P.M.daily.Circus performance was given daily at 8:15.Matinees were given at 3 P.M. on Sat. and Sun. There was a down town ticket agency at a local shop and tickets were also available in advance at the grounds and by phone direct to the circus office wagon.Stand at Geneva was from Sept.7 to Sept.17.

Features were Les 4 Gripp,French jugglers;The Skating Jewels(6);Duo Cavallini,clowns;menage,liberty,and other horse acts by Fredy Knie;The Leon Smiths horse acts(25 yrs. with show)Elephants by R.Knie and hippo. During the performance there was an intermission at which time patrons were invited to visit the buffet which was a first class juice joint.

SCHWEIZER NATIONAL (CONTINUED)

Entrance to the Big Top was reminiscent of carnival show fronts in construction, however it included a portable picket fence, potted evergreen trees. The menagerie had a similar but not so elaborate front. The show uses both French and German title because both languages are used in Switzerland. Couriers are printed in both French and German editions. Programs are printed in the language used in each town.

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The article you have just read was sent in by Tom Parkinson, and he saw the show at Geneva, Switzerland, Sept. 14, 1945.

FOR C.H.S. MEMBERS  
WHO ARE PHILATELISTS  
SMITHSONIAN FIRST DAY COVERS

Singles 15¢				Blocks 25¢
BEAUTIFUL	NEW	COVERS	BY	ARTMASTER
Singles 20¢				Blocks 30¢
S.A. RICE			3633 N. 21st St.	
	Phila.	40	Pa.	

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R.B.B.B.

Photos For Sale

Send 10¢ for sample photo and descriptive photo list, all orders filled with in a week, photos returnable if not fully satisfied.  
HARRY HEATH 2109 W. Pacific Phila. Pa.

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Kelly-Miller Circus now has 6 elephants, the last three of the Russell bulls came off the Orrin Devenport show and they have built a new trailer to haul them in and this new trailer is sure the last word.

Bum and Marie Henry have left the Buck Owens Circus to fulfill dates of Tom Packs which opens in Tenn.

Kelly-Miller and Stevens had a real paper WAR out in western Kansas and Stevens made long jumps over to Nebraska.

Reported by PAUL VAN POOL

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The Landauer Troupe in an act of posing was one of the advertised features of the Ringling Bros. Worlds Greatest Shows when it played thru Wis. in the summer of 1895. They were advertised for Green Bay on Fri. Aug. 16. Some press agent wrote of this act, their posing will present a series of reproductions embracing classic and modern statuary and lofty human pyramids. It is an act which delights all lovers of the beautiful in art and nature and where ever it has been seen it has provoked unbounded admiration. The performance to be given in Green Bay will be on long to be remembered.

Circus Day is Coming and only a little while to wait for the Ringling Bros. Big Circus. The rapid approach of Ringling Day in this city has created wide spread interest and it is safe to predict that the great amusement enterprise known as Ringling Bros. Worlds Greatest Shows will receive a big welcome when it shows here Fri. Aug. 16, 1895.

Ringling Bros. show is larger, grander and more comprehensive this year than ever. Press of other cities pronounce it the greatest enterprise of its kind in the world. In a point of novelty or number of great features no other show can approach it. The concert of the LIBERATI band alone is great entertainment. The menagerie with the giant giraffe and many more rare beasts along with the triple ring performance defies description.

Notes from a press sheet (Bob Taber)

HUNTING'S NEW YORK CIRCUS 1888 OFFICIAL ROUTE  
from J.J.CROWLEY'S COLLECTION

Apr. 26-28	Corning, N.Y.	Aug. 13-14	Steelton, Pa.
30-5	Elmira, N.Y.	15-18	Harrisburg, Pa.
May 7 -9	Waverly, N.Y.	20-22	Pottsville, Pa.
10-12	Owego, N.Y.	23-24	Tamaqua, Pa.
14-19	Binghamton, N.Y.	25-	Catawissa, Pa.
21-22	Susquehanna, Pa.	27-28	Danville, Pa.
23-24	Carbondale, Pa.	29-1	Williamsport, Pa.
25-26	Archbald, Pa.	Sep. 3 -4	Lock Haven, Pa.
28-2	Scranton, Pa.	5 -6	Renovo, Pa.
Jun. 4 -6	Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	7 -8	Emporium, Pa.
7 -9	Pittston, Pa.	10-11	Olean, N.Y.
11-12	Honesdale, Pa.	12-13	Bradford, Pa.
13-14	Hawley, Pa.	14-15	Salemance, N.Y.
15-16	Port Jervis, N.Y.	17-18	Jamestown, N.Y.
18-19	Middletown, N.Y.	19-20	Corry, Pa.
20-21	Goshen, N.Y.	21-22	Union City, Pa.
22-23	Passaic, N.J.	24-25	Oil City, Pa.
25-30	Jersey City, N.J.	26-27	Greenville, Pa.
Jul. 2 -7	Newark, N.J.	28-29	Sharon, Pa.
9 -11	Elizabeth, N.J.	Oct. 1 -2	Youngstown, Ohio
12-14	Plainfield, N.J.	3 -4	Beaver Falls, Pa.
16-18	Easton, Pa.	5 -6	New Castle, Pa.
19-21	Bethlehem, Pa.	Show closed and went into winter quarters at New Castle, Pa. During the tour the show played 51 cities in 4 states. Show was a 4 car railroad show with Bob Hunting the sole owner and manager.	
23-24	Catasauque, Pa.		
25-28	Allentown, Pa.		
30-1	Reading, Pa.		
Aug. 2 -4	Lancaster, Pa.		
6 -8	Columbia, Pa.		
9 -11	Lebanon, Pa.		

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CIRCUS LIFE

by TOMIE MADDEN (OLDEST LIVING RINGLING BROS. SINGING CLOWN)

I made my opening splurge in 1883 with RINGLING BROS. wagon show on Apr. 15. It was a small frame up, with 15 on the pay roll and one man ahead billing the show. There were 5 Ringling Bros. all good musicians, with us as our band. Their father was a harness and wagon maker, who wanted the boys to learn a trade, but the boys wanted to be showmen, so that was the end of the trade. We opened in Baraboo, Wis. It was a wet cold spring and our business was light and the bank roll got lighter, so we folded up. We had to return to Baraboo the best way we could. I rode plenty of side door sleepers and did some hitch hiking. There was an old time Circus man in Baraboo, who liked the boys and staked them to a bunch of change, so we opened again and did good business. I was lined out as a flunkey, better known as a waiter, in the dining tent. My salary was very light, \$2.50 per wk. plus cakes and hearing the band play. I next became a real singing and talking clown, and was advertised as America's best and I would not have traded with the President of the U.S. at that time. This was the start of the Biggest, Grandest Show On Earth, the one and only RINGLING BROS.

My next move was on to a southern wagon show called the TUTH BROS. A very small outfit on the order of a Ginsey party. When they made some money they would close shop and all get drunk, have a big time and when the bank roll was gone, they would open the show.

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21-22	Susquehanna, Pa.	27-28	Danville, Pa.
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## CIRCUS LIFE (CONTINUED)

way from it. Our parade had left the lot and when it returned, the tough French and Indians started cutting the guy lines and canvas. Shortly I heard a shot, so I knew the battle was on. This was the end of my R.R. shows and decided I would try a water outfit, so I joined ANDREW DOWNIE BOAT SHOW at Medine, N.Y. We played Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse, all week stands. We went all over N.Y. canals, rivers and lakes. It was very nice, out 25 weeks and really got some money. We had one Hey Rube in a little mining town on the Erie canal, at a place called Pheonix, N.Y. Two men were shot and died at Syracuse, N.Y. Andrew Downie was a good all-around showman. He would fight as quick as a monkey could take off his hat. During the Hey Rube he broke the mayors arm and threw him in the canal. (This great story has come to you thru the efforts of J. Tracy, one of our most dependable and consistent story writers. He has time and again sent in and dug up interesting stories of the Circus, past and present. How he finds all these old timers is beyond me, but lets hope he keeps up the good work, as we sure appreciate his efforts. The story was in T. Madden's own hand writing and style of expressing himself, nothing was left out, changed or put in, and your Editor is still trying to figure out what is a GRUNCUS. It sure proves that the early wagon shows had quite a time of it and even the best of them had to start over once in awhile. It should tend for us to look at R.B.B.B. with pride and awe, who came all the way from that little start and thru all kinds of competition to what they are to-day, THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

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## VICE PRESIDENT ELECTION

The following people were nominated for Vice President of the CHS. Please vote for one and send your vote to H. SYMONS 59 CARBONDALE ST. WAYMART, PA. All votes must be in by the 16th of AUG. In case the person that is elected cannot take the job the person receiving the second highest amount of votes will be notified etc.

J. B. LYON	BET LEONARD	ROBERT GOOD
J. HASSAN	M. ALLAIRE	P. R. HEMPHILL
E. RUPPERT	C. COWEN	T. PARKINSON
B. KASISKA	BILL KOFORD	J. TRACY

## RETURN ON THE VOTING FOR THE RAISING OF DUES IS AS FOLLOWS:-

36 voted, 28 of these voted for the dues to remain the same.

7 of these voted for the dues to be raised

1 of these voted for the dues to be split.

RESULT- THE DUES OF THE CHS WILL REMAIN THE SAME AS THEY ARE.

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TRACY writes that R.B.B.B. did not get in to Buffalo, N.Y. till 9-A.M. Center poles were raised at 11-A.M. Stringer and plank wagons unloaded at 2-P.M. Afternoon doors opened at 5-P.M. Last act of afternoon show started at 7:45 P.M. Many went home after waiting around in the hot sun. Bill Koford and his wife were seen on the lot all morning taking photos. Ches. Gerlach, J. DelVeche paid a visit to Merle Evens. Ed Doneworth and A. Dodge were also seen on the lot.

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## NEW MEMBERS OF CHS

W. WOODS	Demens Drive and Karleton Place, St. Petersburg, Fla.
W. GOMES	141 Lerch Road, Cambridge, Mass.
R. HELVIE	P.O. BOX 70 PERU, IND.
W. L. MAIN	Main St. Geneva, Ohio (HONORARY)
G. GRAF	220 W. 3rd PERU, Ind. (HONORARY)