

THE

FIELDING

BANDCHARIOTS

by RICHARD E. CONOVER



REFLECTIONS ON THE  
GOLDEN AGE BETWEEN  
ROME AND RINGLING

# THE FIELDING BANDCHARIOTS

*and the Fielding built:*

**FIVE GRACES BANDWAGON**

**BARNUM, BAILEY &  
HUTCHINSON TABLEAU-DENS**

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Best Wishes to  
Bernard J. Fleck  
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Cover photograph:  
John Robinson's Fielding  
Bandchariot, c. 1902

## INTRODUCTION

The Fielding Brothers were the second important New York City builders of circus parade wagons. Before them the big name was John Stephenson, who supplied bandchariots to the Flatfoot shows in the 1840's. Stephenson, however, is better remembered as a pioneer omnibus and horse-car manufacturer; and by the 1850's he faded out of the circus picture. When the Fieldings began to lose their impetus in the early 1880's, the Sebastian Manufacturing Company was on its way up and, thus, became the third and last major New York firm in the business. A chronology of the Fielding organization and activity is tabulated in the back of this pamphlet. From it, and from equally pertinent information on Sebastian, it would appear that there is nothing to the often-voiced tradition that Fielding was bought out by, merged with, or even diffused into Sebastian.

The bread and butter for the wagon builders centered around transfer wagons, brewery wagons, omnibuses, and coaches. Although there is ample evidence that many of them enjoyed flurries of activity in the circus business, it is doubtful if any of them could have stayed open long with no other customers. Still, without their circus work, who, of us, would care about them?

The primary motivation to produce this pamphlet was to tell the story of the elegant Fielding bandchariots. With this accomplished, I felt that I owed it to the historical fraternity to again update my story on another Fielding product — the Five Graces Bandwagon. This, it will be remembered, was first published in my 1956 pamphlet, *The Telescoping Tableaus*, and was revised a bit in 1959 in *The Great Forepaugh Show*. Having gone that far, I decided that a reasonably interesting chapter on the twelve tableau-dens built for the Barnum show about 1883 could be legitimately included under the pamphlet's title. That brought me, or rather forced me, to a stopping point, because I have not come up with any determination, or even a reasonable conjecture for that matter, on just which of the many other wagons that we know much about can be attributed to Fielding. I know this publication has been eagerly awaited by a few, and I trust it will be appreciated by very many more, even though there are still many unresolved voids. In any continuing research effort, this will always be so. That makes it excusable to pause now and then to describe the view from the near side of the stone wall.

Richard E. Conover  
Xenia, Ohio  
31 March 1969

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIELDING BANDCHARIOTS

**B**EGINNING ABOUT 1866 and continuing into the very early 1870's, the Fielding firm built an indeterminable number of elegant shell-style bandwagons. Seven of these can be identified by existing photographs. These photographs, together with the data that have been accumulated, bring us to a point where much of the story of the seven can be written even though, as will be seen, there are still serious voids in the historical continuity of all of them. Nevertheless, even those who are the most versed and interested in the subject have long awaited much of that which is set down in the next five chapters.

One has only to look at the upwards of sixty photographs available of shell bandwagons built by other manufacturers to quickly come to the conclusion that these Fielding products were far and away those with the outstanding craftsmanship. They are readily identifiable by a combination of details, specifically: their full-relief, front-end, carvings that flanked complete openings beneath the drivers' seats; their round medallions amidside; their circular, upsweeping, rear sections with their sides and backs literally covered with the finest carvings; and the fanciest of canopies to top everything. That they were quality products it attested by the fact that some of them were in use for well over fifty years. As sturdy as their construction might have been, it is more likely that their longevity can be attributed to their irreplaceable artistic value which sparked the incentive to continually refurbish and keep them rolling. To have a Fielding chariot on your show was to be "in," as was evidenced by the general use of pirated cuts in every class of advertising media. This practice has complicated today's historical reconstruction problem, because showmen who could not possibly have had one of the seven did not hesitate to use a misleading illustration. We can only regret that the need for them did not continue for ten or more years longer or until the museum activity began; for, by now, it is extremely unlikely that one will turn up anywhere around the country.

To differentiate from bandwagons in general, a shell bandwagon (more often than not termed "bandchariot" herein) can be defined as one in which the bandsmen rode inside, with part of them, at least, having had their feet on the floor of the wagon bed. This is in contrast to the "tableau baggage" type of bandwagon in which category the musicians rode on the roof. The latter type became more prevalent after the turn of the century, because they could double more efficiently as load carriers and therefore could haul more property when the show moved.

Of these seven, the construction date for two can be established from notes in the *New York Clipper*. The dates for two others can be closely approximated by their first appearance in advertising matter. The dates of origin for the other three have not been established, but it may be significant that the two which are thought to be the oldest— Van Amburgh/Sells, 1866 (Chapter 2), and the J. M. French, 1867 (Chapter 3) — did not carry eagle carvings above their medallions. This observation is my reason for setting 1866 as the beginning of this style chariot, or at least for these seven.

## CHAPTER II

### THE VAN AMBURGH BANDCHARIOTS

**T**WO OF THESE Fielding chariots are traceable back to the Van Amburgh Menagerie. As we have heretofore known them, they are:

- (1) Van Amburgh's Great Golden Chariot, as it was christened in the fairly familiar pre-1870, Union Square lithograph. This one was last used on Rhoda Royal in 1922.
- (2) The Sells Brothers Chariot, last used on the Wortham Carnival in the 1920's. Three months after my article on this one appeared in the May-June 1966 *Bandwagon*, the lithograph reproduced in the lead picture of this chapter crossed my path. This discovery blew apart most of my conjectures about the early days of this chariot as well as realigned some matters about (1) above.

By drawing on some new primary source material that has come my way, I have chosen to expand this chapter a bit to include more about Isaac Van Amburgh and the menagerie that was named after him. While much of this would not actually be required to discuss these two chariots, this seems to be the best opportunity that its likely to be forthcoming to present it.

The Van Amburgh Circus, or, more properly, the Van Amburgh Menagerie, that spawned these two bandchariots was only loosely associated with Isaac Van Amburgh, the wild animal trainer. Both, however, were linked with the Zoological Institute, that association of showmen colloquially known as the Flatfoots, based in Westchester and Putman Counties, New York. For a quarter of a century, beginning about 1820, the Flatfoots were a dominant factor in the traveling show business and, at times, fielded as many as ten shows in a season.

VAN AMBURGH & CO'S GREAT GOLDEN MENAGERIE.

FITZWILLIAM, JUNE 2



**COLOSSAL GOLDEN CHARIOT.**

WEIGHS SIX THOUSAND POUNDS COST SEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS.

HYATT FROST, DIRECTOR.

H. BARNUM, MANAGER.

The lithograph used by Van Amburgh & Co. to herald their first, 1866, version, Fielding, Golden Chariot. This the bandchariot that was later with the Sells Brothers Circus. This lithograph is the property of the Harvard Theatre Collection.

Isaac A. Van Amburgh, the wild animal trainer (1812-1865), worked for the Zoological Institute for most of his professional career; evidently, being the first American to present wild animals before the public. He was billed as the modern Daniel and, like his biblical antecedent, did little more than enter the lion's den and lie down with his charges. But in the 1830's that, in itself, was daring enough to draw crowds and get money. For the next sixty years, all wild animal acts followed the same pattern and were worked in the same dens that served as their cages. The prop men of today would, indeed, appreciate that, but their kind has been toiling since 1891 when the first steel arena performance was introduced with Col. Edgar Boone and his wife (Mlle. Carlotta) working a group of five animals on the Adam Forepaugh Circus. This must have been a terrific act with the cats riding tricycles, manipulating seesaws, and being driven in harness to a chariot<sup>1</sup>.

1. As pictured in a Forepaugh 1891 herald, largely substantiated by a review appearing in the 6 May 1891 issue of the *Zanesville (Ohio) Sentinel*.

As near as the picture can be reconstructed, it appears as if Van Amburgh was employed continually by the Flatfoots from about 1830 until 1850, including the six or seven years after 1839 that he spent in England. There, according to the publicity used later after he returned to the States, he created quite a sensation at London's famous old landmark, the Drury Lane Theatre, where he gave a command performance for Queen Victoria whose curiosity took her backstage after the show to meet both the man and his cats. Bills exist to confirm that he visited most of the principal cities of the British Isles. This tour was managed by Lewis B. Titus, one of the directors of the Zoological Institute, who with John June and Caleb S. Angevine framed the 1846 edition of the Van Amburgh Menagerie after the return from England. L. B. Lent, soon to be a formidable figure in the outdoor show business, was the manager. This was the show that featured the elegant bandchariot commemorated by a still-surviving colored lithograph titled "Van Amburgh & Co.'s Triumphant Car passing the Astor House on April 20th, 1846." This is neither of the chariots in this chapter, nor is it likely to be one of those which was replaced by either of our immediate subjects. After 1850, June, Titus, and Angevine relinquished whatever claim they may have had on Isaac Van Amburgh; and this unit of their property, including the bandchariot of the Astor House litho, continued on with a different title, very possibly "G. C. Quick & Co.'s Mammoth Menagerie" with one Thomas Brooks working the cast.

At Somers, New York, in 1835, about ten or so individuals (the old-line Flatfoots who, up until then, had perhaps been only tied together informally) promoted the organization of a stock company and called themselves "The Association of the Zoological Institute." Beside John June, Lewis B. Titus, and Caleb S. Angevine, other prominent men in this singled-out group must include Noel E. Waring, James R. Raymond, Rufus Welch, Avery Smith, the two Crane brothers, and about four of the Howes brothers. Others, perhaps, should be included; but it is difficult to decide just who, since it soon becomes evident to anyone attempting to resolve Flatfoot affairs that show titles are somewhat meaningless because not all the prominents were prone to display their name where their money was. Altogether, there were 132 holders of the approximately 3,300, \$100.00 par value shares<sup>2</sup>. This corporation was short lived because the year, chalked up in the country's financial records by the Panic of

2. The original 1835 document of this Association is the property of the Westchester County Historical Society, White Plains, New York. A photostatic copy of it is also on file at the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

1837, was also a bad one for show business. This adversity finished off the stock company which, in its first reality, did little more than freeze out the minority stockholders; because the old-line Flatfoots were around to bid in the assets at the sales which were held for the purpose of dissolving the corporation. Notably more important were the withdrawals about this time of Rufus Welch, Noel Warner, and James Raymond. It is not clear what prompted them to leave. It might have been that they felt that if all of the Association's units traveling in 1837 had been as efficiently managed as the ones for which they had been responsible, the losses would have been much less. It might also have been that by now they knew the ropes and no longer needed the pipeline of their former associates to the sources of wild animals. Welch, at least, imported some giraffes on his own in 1838, coincident with another importation from a different part of Africa by June, Titus, and Angevine. This was the first year that any of these animals were brought to America. For whatever the reason, the switching of men of this caliber from associates to competitors ended the monopoly of the menagerie business in Westchester and Putman counties.

Messrs. James R. Raymond and Noel E. Waring (the former, one of the Directors of the Association in 1835, and the latter, one of the stockholders) became joint proprietors of two traveling units after the splintering of the Association in 1837. With no better documentation than is now available, compiled by the contribution of many individuals<sup>3</sup> who have searched their local newspaper files, it can be established that each of these two men managed units of the Zoological Institute as far back as 1830 and continued to do so for themselves, although their names as proprietors were sometimes obscured in the titles, until shortly before they both died in 1854. The year 1847, in particular, is an optimum one on which to anchor this paragraph, because this is a year in which there is definite, conclusive, evidence that there was both an Eastern and a Western unit under the Raymond & Waring title. The Western unit had Herr Driesbach working its lions, while in the other unit, a Mr. Pierce presented them, both trainers being contemporaries of Isaac Van Amburgh who had long since relinquished his monopoly to imitators. This was also the year of the new Chrysarma Bandchariot, or perhaps a pair of them, as both units used the same newspaper cuts to kindle the curiosity

3. For this collection of data, I acknowledge direct contributions from Gordon Carver of Ocean City, New Jersey; Robert Brisendine of Atlanta, Georgia; Fred D. (Ricky) Pfening, III, of Columbus, Ohio; Harold Gorsuch of Dayton, Ohio; Donald Hensey of Kenosha, Wisconsin; Richard Flint of Longmeadow, Massachusetts; the late M. W. Organ of Wilmington, Ohio; as well as the published articles authored by Walter Scholl, Sverre Braathen, Col. C. G. Sturtevant, Dr. H. H. Conley, and undoubtedly, a host of others.

of the populace to make them turn out for the parade<sup>4</sup>.

In 1851, one of the Raymond & Waring units became the Raymond & Van Amburgh Menagerie, and the other, the Raymond & Driesbach Menagerie, with one noted trainer on each unit. While various ramifications of these titles will be found, these are the basic alignments. After Raymond's death in 1854, we find his name no more; and it can be presumed that this was about the time that the shows were taken over by a group of partners, notably: James E. Kelley, a Brewster, New York, banker; Hyatt Frost, a young man at the time who had joined out in 1846 under the Raymond & Waring proprietorship and who was destined to guide the course of the Van Amburgh Golden Menagerie for 39 years; O. J. Ferguson, generally associated with the advance; and Henry Barnum (no relation to P. T. Barnum) who managed the second unit when there was one. There were other partners on record, but they play no important part in this cursory historical background.

In 1857, Driesbach retired following an injury in a railroad accident. Several years before that Van Amburgh turned his whip and chair over to a younger man but continued with the show, as his health permitted, to lend a "meet the founder" atmosphere until shortly before he passed away in 1865. The new owners operated both units under the Van Amburgh title through 1860. From then until through 1869, they managed only one of their properties but utilized the second unit in deals, either in partnership with or by lease to, other owner-managers. For the years 1861, 1862, and 1863, it is obscure just what, if any, use was made of it. In 1864-1865 the second unit was used in combination with the Thayer & Noyes title, although Frost and associates seemed to have held a fairly tight reign on this operation<sup>5</sup>. In 1866, the title and property were com-

4. An 1847 colored lithograph, perhaps the earliest known example of circus colored lithography, illustrating the Chrysarma, is on display at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The artist's representation in this piece agrees with that used in the Raymond & Waring newspaper ads for that year, although the latter shows it at a different angle. Also published that year was a 12-page, non-illustrated pamphlet (author's collection) that used up 2000 words to say nothing or at least nothing that helps correlate this so-called "Triumphal Car of the Caesars," with any of the illustrative examples. The most informative thing in this pamphlet is the title page and the identification of John Stephenson of New York as the builder.

5. Evident from a series of five letters written by Hyatt Frost to W. W. Thomas between 7 March 1865 and 7 May 1865. These preserved letters are five of the approximately 35 that Frost wrote to Thomas between 1858 and 1872. Unfortunately, since this Thomas was an agent looking after Frost's real estate and personal business in Connersville, Indiana, 90 per cent of their subject matter has nothing to do with show business. However, as will be noted from time to time, they do help to establish some important events in the Van Amburgh story. Credit for digging these letters out of obscurity belongs to Chalmer Condon of Logansport, Indiana, who bought them from a descendant of Mr. Thomas. Most of them are now in the author's collection.

bined with Gardner & Hemmings under terms that, at this time, are still obscure. In 1867, there was an arrangement with James M. Nixon and Egbert Howes that resulted in combining the Van Amburgh Menagerie with the Dan Castello Circus for part of the season. For a lesser time, P. T. Barnum's name also appeared in the title. The show opened early in the South and was routed to Louisville, Kentucky, where the Van Amburgh animals joined on 22 April. They must have been withdrawn before the show folded in Galveston, Texas, on 22 April 1868, because, as will be seen later, other plans were afoot. This is a convenient point to suspend discussion of the second unit.

By 1866, one of those fancy, Raymond & Waring, Stephenson-built<sup>6</sup> bandchariots, vintage of 1847, must have worn out; so we can now get around to our first subject. It can be introduced by the following item from the 24 March 1866 *Clipper*:

“Fielding Brothers, at the corner of Third Avenue and 41st Street, this city, have nearly completed a magnificent band chariot for the Van Amburgh & Co.’s Menagerie, which is one of the finest affairs of its kind ever built in America. It is modeled much in the style of the ancient Roman triumphal chariots, and is almost entirely covered by elaborate carvings, richly gilded, relieved by several swell panels, and decorated with exquisitely executed paintings. Lions, tigers, lynxes, wolves and other animals figure among the ornamental carved work, and the effect of the whole when fully completed and put on the road, behind a team of ten superb horses, will be brilliant and imposing in the extreme.”

Until the lithograph illustrated in the photograph heading this chapter came to my notice in August 1966, or for that matter to the notice of anyone else who would have realized the significance of it, we wagon historians jumped to the conclusion that the foregoing *Clipper* item referred to the so-called “Great Golden Chariot” illustrated in the long-familiar Union Square lithograph. This came about because there was not enough data and because of our reliance on experts on New York’s Union Square history who stated that the period represented by the pair of lithographs picturing New York City locations actually represented a period before 1870, which they do. The fact that we could not find “Lions, tigers, lynxes, wolves, and other animals” in combination may have worried us a bit but not too much because we have become accustomed to loosely worded descriptions. Even now, without previous acquaintance with the chariot, we have heretofore aligned with Sells Brothers; this lithograph would have been just another piece of paper. The significant

6. There is a herald at the Connecticut Historical Society (Hartford) that identifies the chariot as being used by Van Amburgh in 1860 as a Stephenson product.

things about it are that the artist, who certainly drew atrocious lions, had the "Sells" chariot at hand when he designed the lithograph and that this was done before the show played Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, on 22 June 1868. This predates Forepaugh's use of a sketch of the same chariot in 1874, the reference I used before to point out that the chariot antedated its use by the Sells Brothers<sup>7</sup>. To further align this chariot, time-wise, with the *Clipper* item, there are other representations of it in Van Amburgh ads which appear in the Columbus, Ohio *Gazette* for 13 April 1866, and in a Lancaster, Ohio, paper in 1867<sup>8</sup>.

Their new bandchariot, which for the time being we will label as the Van Amburgh/Sells, was shipped to the show in Connersville where it replaced one that was still there in 1868 when the local Republican club solicited it as a gift<sup>9</sup>. This Connersville winterquarters was probably the farm that was the subject of most of the correspondence between Frost and this W. W. Thomas. Hyatt Frost was a native of Amenia, New York, and he moved to Connersville with his parents when he was still in his minority. About 1867, he re-established his home and, a few years later, an alternate winterquarters in Amenia. The show returned to Connersville after both the 1866 and 1867 tours, but in November 1867 it was shipped to New York where the animals were to be exhibited through the winter at Barnum's Museum<sup>10</sup>. Plans were also afoot to revive the second unit within their own immediate management; and up until January 1868, \$130,000 had been invested in it<sup>11</sup>. This brought up the requirement for their second bandchariot and resulted in the construction of the one we have previously and erroneously associated with the 1866 *Clipper* item. This second chariot is the one represented in one of the pair of New York City locale lithographs. Other data that fixes 1868 as the correct year for it are: a writeup about the projected new features of that year's show in the 28 March 1868 *Clipper*, which drew special attention to the Great Golden Bandchariot and the Golden Car of Egypt: two 1868 heralds which also illustrate it now at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts<sup>8</sup>; and the fact that "Hyatt Frost, manager" appears on the Union Square lithograph. This, as will shortly be seen, would rule out 1869.

7. "The Sells Brothers Bandchariot and Their 50-Cage Menagerie," by Richard E. Conover, *The Bandwagon*, May-June 1966.
8. All of these were found by Fred D. (Ricky) Pfening, III, and communicated to me in his letters of 27 March 1967 and 17 August 1967.
9. Letter, dated 7 September 1868, Hyatt Frost to W. W. Thomas.
10. In the interim between 5 November (marked by an account in the 16 November *Clipper*, relating to the subjugation of their elephant, Tippo Saib) and Frost's letter of 18 November 1867 to Thomas.
11. Letter dated 8 January 1868 from Frost to Thomas .



**PASSING UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK.**  
WEIGHT 6000 LBS. — COST \$7000.00.

**VAN AMBURGH & CO.'S GREAT GOLDEN CAR OF EGYPT.**

**LIVING LION LOOSE IN THE STREET.**



**PASSING CITY HALL, NEW YORK.**  
WEIGHT 3000 LBS. — COST \$5000.00.

The pair of New York City locale lithographs that have a bearing on the second, 1868, version, Van Amburgh & Co.'s Great Golden Chariot. Photos by The Old Print Shop, Lexington Avenue, New York.

The year 1868 was not an auspicious one for the Van Amburgh Great Golden Menagerie. The well-advanced plans for the second unit were suddenly scuttled on the night of 3 March 1868 when a sizable portion of their animals was lost in a fire at Barnum's Museum. At this point, they were left with about one and one-half shows, too late in the spring to recover and field two units. Hyatt Frost withdrew from the firm on 23 June<sup>12</sup>, the profits were below expectations<sup>13</sup>, and things in general were bad enough to cause Henry Barnum to close out his personal record of the route with the notation, "So ends the trials and tribulations of the season of 1868," the only entry of any kind, other than the route, in his entire book<sup>14</sup>.

As said before, Frost withdrew from the firm in mid-season 1868 and went fishing. The next year he managed Campbell's Zoological and Equestrian Institute for John O'Brien, but 1870 saw him back holding the reigns again with Van Amburgh; and, at last, the company got its second unit off the shelf. One of these 1870 units, with Frost as the manager, went out of Connersville; the other under Henry Barnum opened in Brewster, New York. The latter unit (H. Barnum) wintered in Connersville in 1870 and returned there after the 1871 tour. The Frost-managed unit closed in Carthage, Illinois, in 1870, then wintered and reopened there in 1871. At the end of that season, it wintered in Amenia, New York. At this point, there was a permanent division of the firm. In the deal, Hyatt Frost, O. J. Ferguson, and others got the unit then in Connersville and the exclusive rights to the Van Amburgh title. James E. Kelley and Henry Barnum assumed ownership of the unit then in Amenia, which they toured in 1872 as the Central Park Menagerie<sup>15</sup>.

Now, where were the two bandchariots? We know that the one built in 1868 (Union Square lithograph) was with the unit that ended up in Amenia before the partition of the property late in 1871, because it is easy to trace from the Barnum & Kelley property through 1902. There is no specific data to place the 1866 chariot (Sells) with the other unit, although it would had to have been there unless it was sold off in 1868 or 1869. Actually, from this point until its reappearance on Sells Brothers at

12. Letter, dated 15 July 1968, from Frost to Thomas.

13. Letter, dated 25 October 1868, from Frost to Thomas.

14. This personal route book, now in the Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota, Florida, is a record of Henry Barnum's circus travels between 1857 and 1876. It therefore has in it the complete routes of one unit of the Van Amburgh Menagerie. Without it, much of that which has been set down here could not have been resolved.

15. Explicitly detailed in Frost's letter to Thomas dated 29 December 1871. See also "Old Overland Circus Days," by Ken Hubbard, *Saturday Evening Post*, 8 December 1923, for a somewhat mixed-up account.

some indefinite date, there is a void of information about it. It could hardly be the one that the 28 March 1869 *Clipper* listed with the Van Amburgh assets which were supposedly leased to James M. Nixon and Egbert Howes for their Dan Castello Circus. This show will be remembered as the first one to cross the continent on the Union Pacific; but, after the season, the partnership was dissolved and the assets apparently were disposed of in California. While they did carry a bandchariot<sup>16</sup>, it could just as well have been the one that was with the Castello show in 1868, possibly another unidentified Fielding product. Until more information is forthcoming, we can only assume that Frost got the future Sells chariot in the 1871 partition and disposed of it before he got a new one out of Cincinnati in 1877<sup>17</sup>.

A new circus, Howes Great London, appeared on the roster of American circuses in 1871. According to tradition, it was Seth B. Howes' second importation from England, the first being Howes European in 1864. To parade-wagon historians, both represent very significant milestones in parade-wagon art; but it is not necessary at this point, nor is it the most opportune time, to dwell on the details<sup>18</sup>. As to the ownership of the two Howes shows, the 1864 importation was owned by the old-line Flatfoots, of which Seth B. Howes was one. He apparently had even less of a stake in the Howes Great London of 1871, because James E. Kelley emerged as the principal owner, if not at the beginning of the year, then certainly before it was over<sup>19</sup>. Fortunately, for the parade-wagon historians, this show's advertising used remarkably accurate drawings of its equipment. These correlate well with actual photographs of those components which survived long enough for one to have been snapped. Kelley, therefore, had an interest in three shows in 1871 — the two Van Amburgh units and the Howes Great London. In 1872 and 1873, he and Henry Barnum continued the Central Park Menagerie; but for 1874, the equipment from it

16. Described as a "magnificent affair" in a parade review appearing in *The Rocky Mountain News* (Salt Lake City), 5 June 1869.

17. *Clipper*, 10 November 1877.

18. See "The European Influence on the American Circus Parade," by Richard E. Conover, *The Bandwagon*, July-August 1961, for what perhaps is still the best reference on the subject, even though by now it could stand considerable revision.

19. Letter dated 15 October 1871, Frost to Thomas, in which he says, "Mr. Kelley's London Show will be here (Amelia) October 31." Also, letter dated 3 February 1887 from Seth B. Howes to Elbert Sands, in which he says, "I have been out of the circus business now for about 16 years . . ." (1887 minus 16=1871.) This letter is the property of the Milner Library, Illinois State Normal University, Bloomington. It may even have been that the only "Howes" ever affiliated with Howes Great London was Egbert Howes, a nephew of Seth B. Anyway, it is recorded in the 28 February 1874 *Clipper* that Egbert had recently sold his minority interest to Kelley.

was combined with Howes Great London, and Henry Barnum went along to assume the management. After this, we find cuts of the ex-Van Amburgh chariot in the Great London ads. These cuts, for historical purposes, are only incidental and would mean almost nothing if it were not possible to trace this chariot further by other data.

The Howes Great London Circus ran into financial trouble in January 1877 and was "sold" by the sheriff at Augusta, Georgia. The situation attendant to this sale and the subsequent litigation can be quite well summed up from the excellent coverage given it by the *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*<sup>20</sup>. Barnum & Co., a partnership between Kelley and Henry Barnum, owned the show with Barnum having a minority interest, perhaps on the order of 10 per cent. Kelley also had diversified interests elsewhere which, seemingly, were not doing any better than was his circus. However, to keep them propped up, he listed his circus interest as collateral.

When the show arrived in Augusta in mid-January, it was running behind; but the immediate action was precipitated by the United States Rolling Stock Company's intent to slap an injunction on it to collect a \$9,777 bill for car rental. Other principal creditors were James Reilly of New York for a past-due paper account for lithos, etc., of approximately \$30,000, and another \$16,000 for arrears in salaries. Of the last amount, a large chunk must have been owed to Richard H. Dockrill and his wife, Elsie, the featured equestrienne. Anyway, when the car company went to file its lien, it found two very recently recorded mortgages — a first one to Reilly for \$31,000, and a second, to Dockrill for \$18,200. However, between the two of them, enough money was found to square up the car rental and to pay off the employees.

From the immediately following events, it is quite obvious that the sale was rigged by Reilly, Dockrill, Henry Barnum, and one John Parks who had had the concessions around the show since 1871, with full cooperation of the local courts and sheriff. This obviousness stems from a number of factors. First, they got the court's permission to classify the property as perishable so that the sale was done and over before it could be nationally advertised. The only quasi-circus party present was a representative from the St. Louis zoo who did cause a couple of items to be bid up. Otherwise, except for a little spirited bidding for the baggage stock, there was no competition. Second, in spite of the absence of competitive bidding, this John Parks, who evidently had been selected as the front for the new ownership, paid much more than was necessary for

20. The credit for discovering the Augusta newspaper accounts is due to Robert H. Brisendine of Atlanta, Georgia.



The Van Amburgh, 1868, Chariot in parade on Barnum & Bailey in the 1890's.

the property; in fact, he paid just about the right amount to cover the two mortgages plus the sale expenses. Third, one of Kelley's creditors sought to have the sale stopped and the property included with Kelley's assets in a bankruptcy petition (filed almost concurrently in New York). However, their injunction obtained in the New York United States District Court was ignored in Georgia. We can at this point understand and sympathize with Henry Barnum's part in the conspiracy; because if he could make a deal to have the show sold for enough to cover its liabilities, there was no point in his taking a deficiency judgment rap because of Kelley's other obligation. Besides, the new ownership gave him a staff position.

After Kelley's New York creditor did not succeed in stopping the sale, he re-applied to the Augusta court to have the action set aside. He evidently was not successful, because the show toured for two more years under the ostentatious ownership of John J. Parks and Richard H. Dockrill. After that time, Reilly, the silent owner, decided that he might just as well sell it on long credit to Cooper & Bailey who had just returned to these shores from a non-profitable international tour<sup>21</sup>. So at this juncture,

21. The foregoing paragraphs about the Howes Great London Circus supersedes (in fact, I wish they could obliterate) that which I set down eleven years ago on pages 2 and 3 of my pamphlet, *The Affairs of James A. Bailey*. The only other apology I have to make, after this length of time, about this entire work is the mis-identification of the bandwagon identified with this same show. This error is prominently displayed on the back cover.

James A. Bailey became the owner of the Van Amburgh's glorious band-chariot which perhaps was, by now, not quite so glorious as when it first rolled through Union Square.

After touring in 1879 and 1880 as Cooper & Bailey's Great Allied Shows combined with The Great London Circus, Bailey bought out his partner and, together with James A. Hutchinson, formed a partnership with P. T. Barnum. This partnership eventually evolved into the Barnum & Bailey Circus, and this chariot remained with the property during all of these transitions. At least six not-so-good, but documentary, photographs exist to place it on Barnum & London and on Barnum & Bailey through 1902, the last year of their European tour. To get good photographs of it, including one that can be tied to the 1868 Union Squire lithograph, we have to use a pair that were taken by one H. J. Hollowell, of Lancaster, Missouri, when it was at the Hall Farm in Lancaster near the end of its days. Unfortunately, its artistic original canopy had by then been replaced with a pair of crude ones.

Between 1902 and 1918, when a photograph of it showed up in a two-page ad of the H. W. Campbell United Shows in *The Billboard* for 24 August, nothing much is known about it; in fact, none of the conjectures that have been advanced so far have withstood much scrutiny. We do not even know if the pictures taken by Hollowell in Lancaster were made before or after its use on the Campbell carnival, although it is quite possible that William P. Hall had it off and on for several years before he sold it to the Rhoda Royal in 1920. Earlier, it was reasonable to assume that it was left abroad for use in the Buffalo Bill parades, because it was the only one of the bandwagons that was with Barnum & Bailey in Europe which was not used in the 1903-1904 parades after the show returned to the States. This is the show that Jim Bailey sent over to utilize the physical plant that Barnum & Bailey, Ltd., still had in Europe. Even this possibility has been virtually shot down by the testimony of two men who were with it<sup>22</sup>, both of whom agree that in England the band was on horseback while on the Continent, following the experience learning shortly before with Barnum & Bailey, it was more profitable not to parade.

This chariot slips permanently into oblivion after its two-year tenure on the Rhoda Royal Circus in 1920 and 1921<sup>23</sup>.

22. Letter, dated 18 June 1962 from Jake Posey to the author. Also, the author's interview in 1947 with Charles Toops (deceased), a Wilmington, Ohio, musician who was with the Bill Show in Europe from 1903 to 1905.

23. For information on this show, see "The Rhoda Royal Circus, 1919-1922," by Joseph T. Bradbury in the May-June 1961 *The Bandwagon*.



A pair of photographs taken by H. J. Hollowell of Lancaster, Missouri, about 1918 when the old Van Amburgh chariot was around the Hall Farm. Although there are several earlier photographs of it when it was with Barnum & Bailey, none of these show the correlation with the 1868 Union Square Lithograph quite as well as these two. Note that the front figures on the opposite side are different.



Van Amburgh's (Sells) chariot on Forepaugh Sells going by St. Patrick Cemetery, Lowell, Massachusetts (1902-1907). A Glasier photograph, negative owned by the Ringling Circus Museum, Sarasota.

If we go back now and pick up the story of the "Sells" chariot, we find that after it arrived on the Sells Brothers Circus at some indefinite time, the rest of its itinerary to the graveyard can be traced with reasonable precision. It was with Sells through that show's last year of independent operation in 1895. Immediately following and well after 1900, it was with Forepaugh Sells, that combined show which was launched in 1896 when James A. Bailey bolstered up the tottering Sells enterprise with his cash and the Forepaugh title. By 1907, Forepaugh Sells was Ringling property, and they took it off the road in order to put enough equipment together to make Barnum & Bailey presentable<sup>24</sup>. Some of that which was not needed for this purpose was sold off. This included this bandchariot.

In 1910, a new wild west show titled Young Buffalo Wild West, owned by Vernon C. Seaver, a Peoria, Illinois, theatre owner, made its debut. There is a photograph of the lot layout in the 15 October 1910 *Billboard* that places this bandchariot on that 14-car show. Insofar as it known, this is the first utilization of it after it was off Forepaugh Sells in or shortly before 1907. The big years for Young Buffalo were 1912 and 1913 when

24. See "Notes on the Barnum & Bailey Show," by Richard E. Conover, *The Bandwagon*, March-April 1959.



Van Amburgh's (Sells) chariot with the Young Buffalo Wild West cowboy combo, Monroe, Wisconsin, 6 September 1910. Ben Kubly Collection.

the name attractions were the "past her prime" Annie Oakley, another oldtime marksman Capt. A. A. Bogardus, and Frederick T. Cummins, who had been the man with the goatee and the big western hat on his own show in 1906. This 1906 show was a failure, and Walter L. Main, one of the promoters of it, was still seeking redress from Cummins in 1913. This harassment, for valid reasons or not, dogged Young Buffalo most of the season and convinced Seaver that it was time to get out of show business. Therefore, the 1914 edition was managed by another party with the equipment leased from Seaver. However, the grifters had a stranglehold on the new manager and virtually ran the show; and, after an unsuccessful season, Seaver claimed his property and sold it to William P. Hall late in 1914.

In 1916, R. Z. Orton stored his wagon show and decided to have a go at a rail operation, framed from 15 cars on equipment leased from William P. Hall. After part of a season, he decided that a railroad show was not for him, turned the property back to Hall, and finished the year out with his wagons. Since I wrote the article referenced in footnote 7, an all-important picture of this chariot when it was on the Orton show has turned up, making it unnecessary to repeat the logic I had used then to prove that it was with Orton. In that article, I drew on the eyewitness



A triumph of beast over matter — the day Van Amburgh's old chariot (Sells) was toppled off the flat by the Orton show's berserk elephant. Circus World Museum Collection.



One last glimpse of Van Amburgh's old chariot (Sells) at the C. A. Wortham Carnival quarters, San Antonio, in 1928. Photograph by Tom Scaperlanda.

account of an incident that Mrs. W. H. (Babe) Woodcock, youngest daughter of R. Z. Orton, remembered of the Orton bandwagon being dumped off the train and lying alongside it upside down in the mud. I then went on to prove by the process of elimination that it had to be the old Sells

chariot. Now we have the picture of Mrs. Woodcock's recollection which definitely shows the front end of the Sells chariot projecting out from under the tarpaulin. In a more recent letter, Mrs. Woodcock says the chariot was overturned when their elephant, Hero, went on a rampage in Elkton, South Dakota.

This bandchariot, like many other old circus wagons, ended its days with a carnival. We are fortunate that Tom Scaperlanda made a record of this at the C. A. Wortham quarters in San Antonio about 1928. Insofar as is known, there was no interim usage between the Orton show and its acquisition by the carnival.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE O'BRIEN BANDCHARIOTS

**T**WO OF THE Fielding bandchariots in our picture gallery can be associated with the John O'Brien shows of the 1870's. These are, as we have heretofore known them:

- (1) The one built for the James M. French's Oriental Circus and Egyptian Caravan in 1867.
- (2) The one that was on Sells & Rentfrow's Great Syndicate Circus in the 1890's and later on Campbell Brothers.

John (Pogey) O'Brien cut quite a swath on the circus scene in the Seventies when he was at the height of his career<sup>1</sup>. Most chroniclers of his activities, justifiably or not, tend to leave us with the impression that legitimate showmanship was only his secondary love and what he really enjoyed was fleecing the public and his associates.

It can be sure that if, as has been inferred, he was the originator of high-level grift, he certainly was not the perpetuator of it. In the 1870's, the period over which these bandchariots figure, he usually had an interest in more than one show. A chronological resumé for these years would be:

1870 — Two shows:

- (1) O'Brien's Menagerie.
- (2) Campbell's Menagerie, James DeMott, manager. This was the show managed for O'Brien by Hyatt Frost in 1869. See Chapter 2.

1. George Conklin, the lion trainer, on pages 23 to 34 of his book, *The Ways of the Circus*, (Harper & Brothers, 1921), has set down what is seemingly the best and most unbiased story on O'Brien. Conklin, who was personally acquainted with his subject, has loaded his narrative with interesting anecdotes.

1871 — Four shows:

- (1) Sheldenbarger's European Menagerie and Grecian Circus, James DeMott, manager.
- (2) Handenbarger's Museum & Circus.
- (3) John O'Brien's Caravan, Monster Menagerie, & National Kingdom, supposedly the largest of the four.
- (4) J. E. Warner's Circus & Menagerie.

1872 — Two shows:

- (1) John O'Brien's Consolidated Shows.
- (2) J. E. Warner's Great Pacific Circus. O'Brien had a one-third interest. At the end of the season, O'Brien bought out Warner and another associate. The subsequent editions of Warner's circuses did not involve O'Brien.

1873 — One show:

- (1) John O'Brien's Great World's Fair. To create the illusion of immensity, he used six canvasses — one for the performance and five for his menagerie.

1874 — Two shows:

- (1) P. T. Barnum's World's Fair. The title was leased from Barnum, and the show traveled overland on wagons. The advertising, of course, was pitched to lead the public to believe that this was the main Barnum show, the W. C. Coup-managed P. T. Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome.
- (2) Maginley & Co.'s Circus and Menagerie. O'Brien had an interest in this with G. R. Spaulding and Ben Maginley.

1875 — Two shows:

- (1) P. T. Barnum's World's Fair. At the end of the season, the arrangement with Barnum was terminated as was the partnership between Barnum and Coup, the cause of the latter dissolution being largely attributable to the fact that Barnum's association with O'Brien was formed in the first place.
- (2) A. B. Rothchilds & Co.

1876 — One show:

- (1) John O'Brien's Six Shows Consolidated, sometimes titled John O'Brien's Circus & Menagerie.
- ( ) There was a show out this year under the Rothchilds title, but O'Brien does not appear to have been associated with it.

1877 — One show:

- (1) John O'Brien's Six Consolidated Shows. Apparently an unsuccessful season.



Parade of Burr Robbins property leased to French & Co. 1890.

J. M. French's Fielding chariot of 1867 on the Burr Robbins-owned French & Co. Circus of 1890. Joe Bradbury Collection.

1878 — One show:

- (1) Campbell's New York and Philadelphia Zoological & Equestrian Institute. O'Brien's first railroad show which evidently was owned by Adam Forepaugh, as it was he who sold it to George Batcheller and John B. Doris in February 1879. Both Batcheller and Doris had been privileged men around the O'Brien shows for several years. They now embarked as circus owners.

The first of the two bandchariots mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter was originally with James M. French's Grand Oriental Circus and Egyptian Caravan in 1867. This date can be conclusively established from a note in the *Clipper* for 16 March 1867 which mentioned the bandchariot's completion by Fielding for French, coupled with the first appearance that same year in the French ads of a chariot that agrees with the one shown in the only photograph that has so far turned up on it.

John O'Brien came into possession of it when the J. M. French show was sold at auction at Trenton, New Jersey, on 3 November 1870, one of the few circus auctions that was not overseen by a sheriff. On just which one of his four shows O'Brien used it in 1871 is not known, and neither is it clear just when or under what circumstances it slipped out of his



O'Brien's old chariot on Sells & Rentfrow's Great Syndicate, c. 1894. Author's Collection, possession.

Our picture was supposedly taken on the Burr Robbins-owned French & Co. Circus in 1890. Like so many showmen, Robbins found out that he just could not retire as he intended to when he sold his circus to Thomas Grenier in 1887<sup>2</sup>. So, in 1890, we find him back in business; and we find this chariot back on a circus with a French title. But this was not a James M. French show, because, to confuse the public, as well as us latter-day historians, Robbins used the name of his general manager, one Lee French, to alibi the title<sup>3</sup>. This show was short lived because most of the property was burned up at quarters in Chicago on 12 January 1891. This may explain why there are no other photographs of this chariot in circulation. Without knowing the circumstances responsible for identifying this photograph as French & Co., 1890, the author really considers that its principal value is to establish the authenticity of the pictorials in the James M. French 1867 newspaper ads.

The Great Syndicate/Campbell Brothers chariot can also be traced back to O'Brien. To begin with, John O'Brien ended up his 1875 association with P. T. Barnum with a \$14,000 judgment against him in favor of Barnum. It appears also that in the fall of 1877, Adam Forepaugh, either because of money owed him by O'Brien or as a favor to his old friend and associate to protect him from Barnum's legal maneuvering, ended

2. For a resumé on the original Burr Robbins Circus, see page 36, *The Circus, Wisconsin's Unique Heritage*, by Richard E. Conover published by the Circus World Museum, 1967.
3. The identification of this Lee French, see pages 52-55, *Stranger Than Fiction*, by W. Quinette Hendricks ("Pop" Quinett), privately printed, 1928.





John O'Brien's Fielding chariot in a Batcheller & Doris parade, c. 1884. Armstrong Collection at the Circus World Museum.

Sam McFlinn obtained the chariot for a bid of \$700.00<sup>4</sup>. He used it on his Sam McFlinn's World's Wonderland Exposition<sup>5</sup> in 1888 and probably on the Hall & McFlinn's United Shows, in a partnership arrangement with George W. (Popcorn George) Hall of Evansville, Wisconsin, for 1889-1891. At any rate, he inserted an ad in the *Clipper* offering a Fielding chariot for sale coincident with the time that the partnership was dissolved early in 1892.

Almost coincident with the McFlinn, 1892, *Clipper* ad was another run by J. N. Rentfrow in the 26 March 1892 issue seeking to buy a first-class bandchariot. We know from the available photographs that this was the one that Rentfrow ended up with. The Sells & Rentfrow show, with Willie Sells, made its debut that spring; and, with a couple of title changes, first to The Great Syndicate and later to James M. Rentfrow's Great Syndicate, it ran until about 1896. At that point, Rentfrow was

4. Also sold to Henry Barnum, as agent for Barnum & Bailey, at this auction was the familiar Barnum & Bailey calliope. The pictorial confirmation of this transfer, mentioned in the 3 March 1888 *Clipper* account of the Doris & Colvin auction, lies with some photos recently acquired by the Circus World Museum.
5. Title from a herald, author's collection.



Campbell Bros. Circus - Season 1899 - Pratt. Kan  
 O'Brien's former chariot, now minus its canopy, on Campbell Brothers in 1899. Circus World Museum Collection.

seemingly squeezed out and the property was largely in the control of one John F. Hummel. He operated it until the close of the 1898 season, at which time this eleven-car show was advertised for sale. A bandchariot was listed with the property.

In 1898 Campbell Brothers, a bona fide family show with some real brothers, went on rails after being a wagon show off and on since about 1889. That was a successful season, so they enlarged it for 1899 with part of this Hummel property. This bandwagon was included in their purchases, so we find it on Campbell Brothers in the early 1900's; but by the time the familiar Campbell 1908 panorama photograph was taken, the chariot had either worn out or had been sold off to an unknown destination.

## THE L. B. LENT BANDCHARIOT



L. B. Lent's Fielding chariot on Barnum & Bailey made ready for the 1903 parade. This is the earliest (and only) good photo of this 1870 creation. From the Princeton Theatre Collection.

**T**HIS CHARIOT, one of the longest shell type ever built, appeared on L. B. Lent's New York Circus in 1870, replacing an obscure one that was sold off in 1869<sup>1</sup>. According to some dimensional data found in the McCaddon Papers at Princeton University, the new one was twenty-two feet long, nine and one-half feet high, and just over six feet wide. Its twenty-four horse, four-abreast, hitch, together with the splendid uniforms of the bandsmen, attracted attention and received favorable press comment at almost every stand where the local scribes bother to write anything at all about Lent's New York Circus.

The first illustrative use of it by Lent in his newspaper advertising and the copyright date on the lithograph now on display in the Hertzberg Collection of the San Antonio Public Library pretty well fix 1870 as the year of its introduction, even though C. H. Day, in his article, "Making

1. Ad, inserted by Lent, to sell a bandchariot in the 18 December 1869 *Clipper*.



L. B. Lent lithograph, copyrighted in 1870, showing his new chariot in front of the Hippodrome, his winter circus building in New York. This lithograph is on display in the Hertzberg Circus Collection in the San Antonio Library.

Much of Music" (*The Billboard*, 11 May 1901), places its acquisition from Fielding following the wreck of Lent's circus train. There was, as he said, a fairly disastrous wreck when the show was coming out of Middletown, New York; and in it "The Golden Chariot was severed in the middle . . ."2. This, however, occurred on 28 September 1870, just two days before their scheduled closing at Newark, New Jersey. No doubt Fielding Brothers had a considerable restoration project during that winter; but, judging from the similarity exhibited by the 1870 lithograph and later pictures of the chariot, they did not have to do it all over. This is one of seven cases, now enumerated, in which it has been observed that parade wagons have been involved in what has been described as fairly serious railroad wrecks and have survived to roll again in, essentially, their original configuration.

Lewis B. Lent (1813-1887) began his career in 1834 as an agent for June, Titus, & Angevine, one of the Flatfoot shows. The following year he was a partner in Brown & Lent, and for the next forty years his name was up on the title of most of the shows with which he was connected. Shortly after the close of the Civil War, he opened an indoor circus at the Hippodrome on 14th Street in New York. From there he based a yearly summer tour by rail of a first-class circus generally titled L. B. Lent's

2. As detailed in the *Orange County Press*, Middletown, New York, 30 September 1870.

New York Circus. In 1874, The New York Circus had a poor season which upset Lent's finances. The following spring his show was ostensibly under the control of Joe Cushing, Frank Howes, and Andrew Cullin who toured it as Howes & Cushing with Lent hired on as General Agent, a capacity for which he was much in demand until his retirement in 1882.

Our bandchariot, of course, went to Howes & Cushing in 1875, along with the rest of the former New York Circus. In 1876, Howes & Cushing got into trouble in mid-season; and when it collapsed in Fall River, Massachusetts, on 15 July, it was revealed that Avery Smith and John J. Nathans were the actual owners. Both Smith and Nathans were two of the principals of the second-generation association of Flatfoots. The same year, they and another partner, George F. Bailey, were experiencing their first season in partnership with P. T. Barnum as operators of The Greatest Show on Earth. So these associations provide the most logical route for the big ex-Lent, bandchariot to have gotten to the Barnum show.

After the 1880 season, Barnum bought out George F. Bailey and associates and formed a new partnership with James A. Bailey and James L. Hutchinson. In this ensuing partnership, Barnum held 50 per cent of the stock with James A. Bailey and Hutchinson each having 25 per cent. The capital assets carried a valuation on the books of \$200,000. In the formation, Barnum contributed his name and his show property. Bailey and Hutchinson contributed the assets of Cooper & Bailey & Co.'s International Allied Shows Combined with the Great London Circus, and \$7,500 to even up the value of the two properties. With the Cooper & Bailey/Great London property came the ex-Van Amburgh 1868 bandchariot, one of the subjects of Chapter 2. Beside these two, Barnum & London had still another shell-style chariot which we might speculate was formerly a part of the Barnum & Coup show of 1871-1875. Outside of vague references to it in newspaper reviews, our only record of it is one of those far-down-the-street parade pictures, this particular one being of Barnum & London in 1886 at Janesville, Wisconsin<sup>3</sup>. Until a better photograph of it shows up, about all that can be said about it is that it appears to be another Felding product and that its front carvings were swans.

In much of the Barnum show advertising, this Lent Chariot was referred to as the "Euterpe," after the old Romans' Muse of the Flute. It remained their No. 1 Bandwagon until the Five Graces was brought on in 1897; and it, the Graces, and the 1868 Van Amburgh were the bandwagons with the show in Europe (1898-1902). The best picture, in fact

3. All three chariots show in this set of highly documentary stereoscopic photographs which were added to my collection in February 1967 through the generous and most appreciated gift of Dr. H. H. Conley of Oak Park, Illinois.

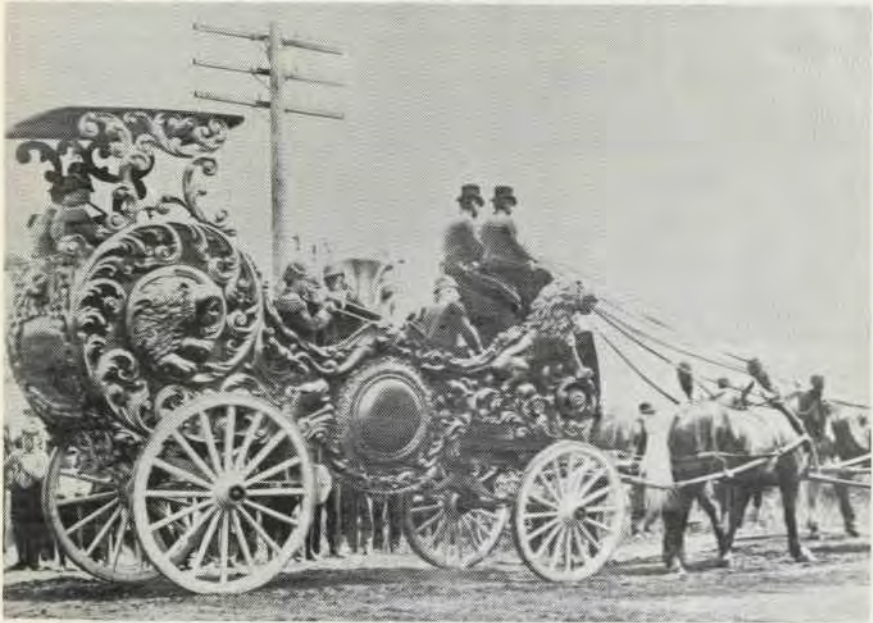
the only good picture, we have of it was made in Bridgeport as it was being readied for the 1903 parade as their No. 3 Bandwagon. That year they used four bandwagons — the new Two Hemispheres, the Graces, this one, and the Forepaugh Lion. At this point, we must, at least for a time, close out the story of the L. B. Lent Bandchariot because nothing has turned up on it after the Barnum show suspended its parades in 1905.

There is a potential complication that makes it necessary to close this chapter with an addendum. It stems from an item in the 2 May 1863 *Clipper*, as follows:

“Thayer & Noyes Bandwagon, said to surpass the Van Amburgh, — 28' long and 10' high. Each side large figure of fiery rampant steed in bold relief. Each side panel bears a representation of the U. S. coat of arms, American eagle painted in the center standing upon a shield in the attitude of defiance with arrows and olive branches in his talons. To the right and left of the eagle carved in bold relief with exceeding naturalness are the symbols of industry and plenty — the cornucopian sheaves of wheat, stocks of corn, cotton bales, and instruments of husbandry. Flanking these are some neat patches of landscape surmounted by a large carved gilt eagle with an American flag on its back. On the rear panel is a painted circus ring.”

A few newspaper reviews have been found throughout 1863 to substantiate the fact that this chariot was with Thayer & Noyes; but for every year thereafter, there is nothing but complete silence. As word descriptions generally go, this one could fit the pictorials of the Lent chariot. The fiery rampant steeds are there, the eagles are there, and with the judicious use of a little paint, the girl pirouetting on the horse in the rear panel, could be converted into a circus ring. However, there is nothing to match up with the carved symbols of industry; and, in general, there is too much incidental carving on the Lent chariot to allow room for all of the other painted art work mentioned in the 1863 description. While we cannot completely rule out that this Thayer & Noyes chariot was not hid around somewhere until 1870 to be picked up on Lent's circus, this does not, at the moment, seem probable.

## THE FOREPAUGH LION BANDCHARIOT



Forepaugh Lion Bandchariot on Barnum & Bailey, Racine, Wisconsin, 1904. Circus World Museum Collection.

**T**HE LION BANDCHARIOT, which insofar as is known, originated on the Adam Forepaugh Circus, saw service on more shows and had more owners than any other circus wagon for which we have records. Although there are photographs and other documents that keep track of it over a span of forty-five years, there is nothing to say how long it was on Forepaugh before it showed up in the earliest of these records — a not-too-good photograph that places it in Lansing, Michigan, in 1887. However, since it is of a style and craftsmanship that matches the rest of those in the 1866-1870 era, it is virtually certain that it was around somewhere long before 1887.

In 1890, the control of the Forepaugh show passed to James A. Bailey and associates<sup>1</sup>. Following its close for the last time in 1894, much of the

1. Chapter on "Perpetuating Forepaugh," in *The Affairs of James A. Bailey*, by Richard E. Conover, privately printed, 1957; now out of print.



Forepaugh Lion Bandchariot on the Ringling re-issued Forepaugh Sells of 1910-11. Fred Pfening Collection.

equipment went over to the Buffalo Bill Wild West in accordance with the agreement between James A. Bailey and the partnership of Cody and Salsbury<sup>2</sup>. A fleeting glimpse of the bandchariot in parade can be seen in the Blackhawk film No. 810-223, "Buffalo Bill and His Wild West Show," an 8mm release that was put together from film clips of the 1895-1902 period.

The bandchariots on the 1898-1902 European tour of Barnum & Bailey were the Five Graces, the 1868 Van Amburgh, and the L. B. Lent. When they brought the show back home in 1903, the Two Hemispheres were added, and the Van Amburgh was replaced by the Forepaugh Lion. Altogether, we have four photographs of it in 1903 and 1904, one of which shows a different paint job and thus fixes it on Barnum & Bailey in both those years. In 1907, the show was sold to the Ringlings, and they put the parade back on in 1908. However, the reframed Barnum & Bailey included considerable Forepaugh Sells equipment, because, for the time, the Ringlings suspended their Forepaugh Sells circus and combined the property with that of the Barnum show. In the process of this combination, the Lion Bandchariot was relegated to the inventory of surplus property. Several parcels of this accumulation were sold to various shows.

2. Chapter on "The Mobilization of the Wild West," also in *The Affairs of James A. Bailey*.

One parcel, which included this chariot, two old Barnum & Bailey tableaus (No.'s 50 and 51, illustrated herein for identification), and old Barnum & Bailey tableau-den No. 74 (one of the 1883 corner-statue series built by Fielding), was sold to J. H. Garrett in January 1909 who was in St. Louis making his first attempt to frame "Rice Brothers Colossal Railroad Shows." Garrett's second try, made in 1913, was slightly more successful. In the 1909 deal, he made a down payment of just under \$6,000 on a little more than \$10,000 purchase from the Ringling surplus property in Bridgeport, this bandchariot being itemized at \$600, and the two tableaus at \$250 each. Garrett then found himself in need of additional cash to get the show out and mortgaged this unpaid-for property to a third party. While the ensuing legal maneuvering was complicated, it is sufficient for our purposes to state that the Ringlings did get most of their property back by the end of June; and, of course, Rice Brothers Colossal did not go out. Not recovered were two elephants and the tableaus 50 and 51. William P. Hall somehow got possession of the elephants and possibly the tableaus, because they show up on Fred Buchanan's Yankee Robinson Circus in 1910<sup>3</sup>.

The Ringlings decided to revive Forepaugh Sells for 1910 and, having sold off quite a bit of property in the previous two years, found it necessary to make up about 50 per cent of the requirements with new equipment. They gave their wagon-building cousins in Baraboo, the Moeller Brothers, a contract to build eighteen new wagons and to repair about twenty others. In the invoice for repairs<sup>3</sup> was an item: "Bandwagon retrieved from Rice Brothers - \$36.10." In the same invoice are similar amounts for the No. 74 former Barnum & Bailey cage and the "Barnum & Bailey Bandwagon - \$28.05." It should be mentioned here that it also took photographs of the 1910-1911 Forepaugh Sells Circus to definitely resolve which bandwagons were referred to in the above items. In all the Moeller records, the various units were tagged as they knew them, which certainly never went back further, historically, than the immediate past; and, while I had enough familiarity with what was in the Ringling holdings to virtually resolve that the chariot retrieved from Rice Brothers was the Forepaugh Lion and that the Barnum & Bailey Bandwagon was the Five Graces, I had to be patient for several years before the all-important, confirming, pictures began to show up.

After operating Forepaugh Sells for two years, the Ringlings decided once more to discontinue it. Consequently, they had to dispose of quite

3. The documentation for this entire Garrett deal, as well as other documents important to this chapter, are in the collection of Sverre O. Braathen of Madison, Wisconsin, who kindly made them available to the author.



Barnum & Bailey Tableaus No.'s 50 and 51. These were sold to J. H. Garrett along with the Forepaugh Lion Bandwagon in 1909 and the next year showed up on Fred Buchanan's Yankee Robinson Circus (see text). It appears likely that these were Fielding-built and might properly be included with the tableau-den production covered in Chapter 8.

a lot of surplus property; and it was for that purpose that they published for distribution a catalog on 10 January 1912<sup>3</sup>. In it can be identified many of the new wagons built by Moeller in 1910, as well as some more or less ancient ones; but the item of immediate interest is this band-



Ex-Forepaugh Lion Bandchariot on Fred Buchanan's Yankee Robinson Circus, c. 1915. This chariot was on this show from about 1912 through 1918. At the right is the Parker Carousel. Photo by the late Moxie Hanley.

chariot, priced at \$350.00.

It has been known for some time that Fred Buchanan bought some cages out of this catalog almost immediately for his Yankee Robinson Circus. It has also been known that this Lion Bandchariot was on Yankee Robinson in the 1915-1919 period as shown in the picture with the merry-go-round<sup>4</sup> which I have used. Rather recently, a new photograph has turned up that places the chariot on Yankee Robinson in Velda, North Dakota, on 27 June 1914<sup>5</sup>. This makes it virtually certain that Buchanan procured it shortly after the Ringlings offered it for sale. In 1920, William P. Hall, either by purchase or foreclosure, acquired the title and property of Buchanan's show and took it to his Lancaster, Missouri, circus farm<sup>6</sup>. Over the same winter, Mugivan and Bowers put into Hall's place with their 15-car Howes Great London. The two properties were, in part, com-

4. This carousel was with Yankee Robinson from 1915 through 1919. It was built, owned, and operated as an independent concession by the C. W. Parker Company of Leavenworth, Kansas. Whatever they may have lost financially was chargeable to advertising, because it was quite impressive to demonstrate to their potential carnie customers that they had a machine that could be moved readily in keeping with the daily travels of a circus. Parker had another machine with Sells Floto at the same time.
5. Fred Pfening, Jr., collection.
6. For a comprehensive article on William P. Hall and his circus farm, see the one by Fred D. Pfening, III, in *The Bandwagon*, November-December 1966, reprinted with some updating in the Spring, 1968, *Missouri Historical Review*, a publication of the State Historical Society of Missouri.



Forepaugh's Lion Bandchariot on Fred Buchanan's World Brothers Circus in 1923. This is a companion photo to the Ponca, Nebraska, calliope picture.

bined with the Great London, emerging on 25 cars in the spring and with the surplus residue from both shows left in Lancaster.

Buchanan was out of circulation as a circus owner until 1923 when he reframed the show at his Granger, Iowa, quarters as World Brothers. This is the title that can be seen spanning the medallion to match the same emblem displayed in a companion Ponca, Nebraska, picture of their calliope<sup>7</sup>. It seems more than likely that the chariot was taken off Yankee Robinson before that property passed to Hall in 1920<sup>8</sup>, and, therefore, was in Granger until World Brothers was put together in 1923. After wintering at the Hall farm, Buchanan's show went out somewhat enlarged as Robbins Brothers in 1924, the title that was used until it was closed by the depression. About 1925, something must have happened to their calliope body, because it is evident that the sides of the old Forepaugh Lion Bandchariot ended its useful days on Buchanan's calliope. By comparing such details as the wheels and chassis in all available photographs, it is apparent that it was the chariot sides, and not the calliope components, that were transferred.

7. Not much of the prior history of the calliope is known, only that it was with Vernon Seaver's Young Buffalo Wild West, which was out from 1910 until 1914.
8. A letter dated 6 September 1963 from William Woodcock, Sr., to the author, states that it definitely was not on Yankee Robinson in 1919.



The Fred Buchanan calliope of the above photo after its original sides had been replaced by those cannibalized from the old Forepaugh Lion Bandchariot. Woodcock Collection.



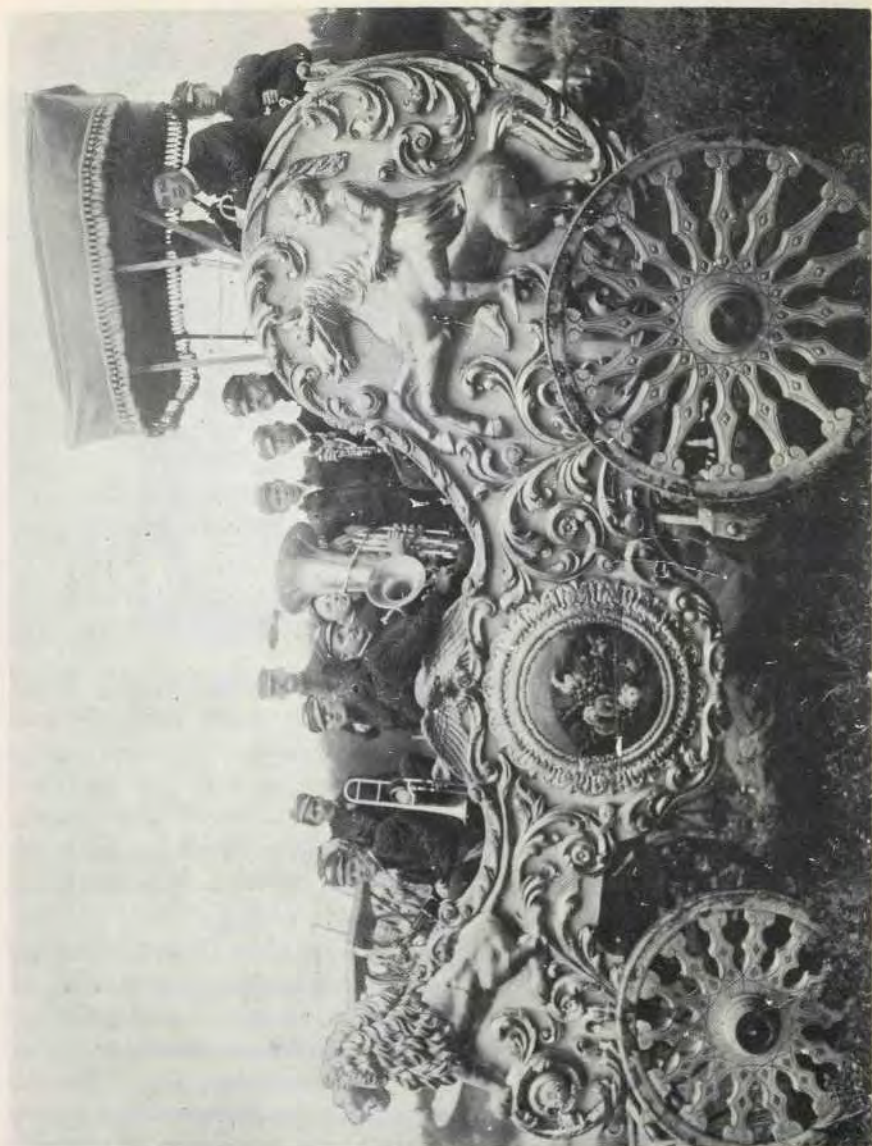
The end of the line for Forepaugh's Lion Bandchariot after about 60 years of almost continuous service. Photo made at Buchanan's Granger quarters about 1934, from the Pfening Collection.

In 1927, after Buchanan acquired a different calliope in with his purchases from Bridgeport, the old "Lion" calliope was stored in the Buchanan barnyard in Granger, to be joined by the Two Hemispheres in mid-season 1930 when the size of the show was cut in the last desperate effort to keep going during the depression. But no one came forth to rescue this most shuffled about of all parade wagons. Those who saved the Hemispheres in 1934 could only do so much; and, justifiably to them, it was the bigger prize.

CHAPTER VI  
THE JOHN ROBINSON BANDCHARIOT



**A**DMITTEDLY, I can only associate this one with Fielding by its appearance. Furthermore, it is the singular example about which I know the least. The fact that it was on the Robinson show in 1896, under the John Robinson & Franklin Brothers title, and that it was still with the show when the property was sold to Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers in March 1916, was covered in my 1965 publication, *Give 'em a John Robinson*. Aside from two excellent photographs, nothing further has turned up about it. One of these new photo finds is excellent for detailing the superior Fielding craftsmanship.



John Robinson's Fielding Chariot, after 1902. Note that the original canopy supports have been replaced. An excellent photograph to show the fine Fielding craftsmanship. Author's Collection.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIVE GRACES BANDWAGON

*Foreword.* This is my second revision of this subject since 1956. That was the date of publication of my pamphlet, *The Telescoping Tableaus*, in which I set down my conclusion that the Five Graces was once a high wagon of the "telescoping" type. My first revision appeared in a similar pamphlet, *The Great Forepaugh Show*, published in 1959. In both of these, references will be found that I was mystified about the unsatisfactory "telescoping mechanism" of the Five Graces in its original configuration and that I was suspicious that there was still some unsolved factor. This factor is no longer unsolved, and I consider the solution of enough importance to justify a rewrite.

**W**HILE THE FIVE GRACES BANDWAGON, now in the Ringling Circus Museum in Sarasota, Florida<sup>1</sup>, is acclaimed to be our oldest parade wagon, it has about the same percentage of original material in it as is left in that venerable old warship, the *U.S.S. Constitution*. The following news item quoted from the 2 March 1878 issue of the *New York Clipper* dates its origin, identifies its builder, and, in a measure, defines the form of its original configuration:

"Fielding Brothers are building a fine chariot for Adam Forepaugh somewhat similar to the one brought from abroad by the Howes London Circus."

Except for one important mechanical feature which we will get to later, the similarity between the Graces and the Howes Globe Tableau is so confusingly close, even though the two wagons were made on opposite sides of the Atlantic, and one built seven years later than the other, that only by illustrating them side by side will the differences be apparent to the careless comparator. The major perceptible differences are in the shape of the large irregular mirrors and in the features of the five ladies that grace the side panels.

While the all-important photograph has yet to be discovered of the Five Graces as it appeared at the time the above note from the *Clipper* was written, there has been more than ample descriptive material found in the newspapers around the country to verify that the Graces was once topmounted by a globe superstructure which was a close copy of the one pictured on the Howes Globe Tableau. In fact, the globe-lion group shown here on its own running gear is the identical one that came off the

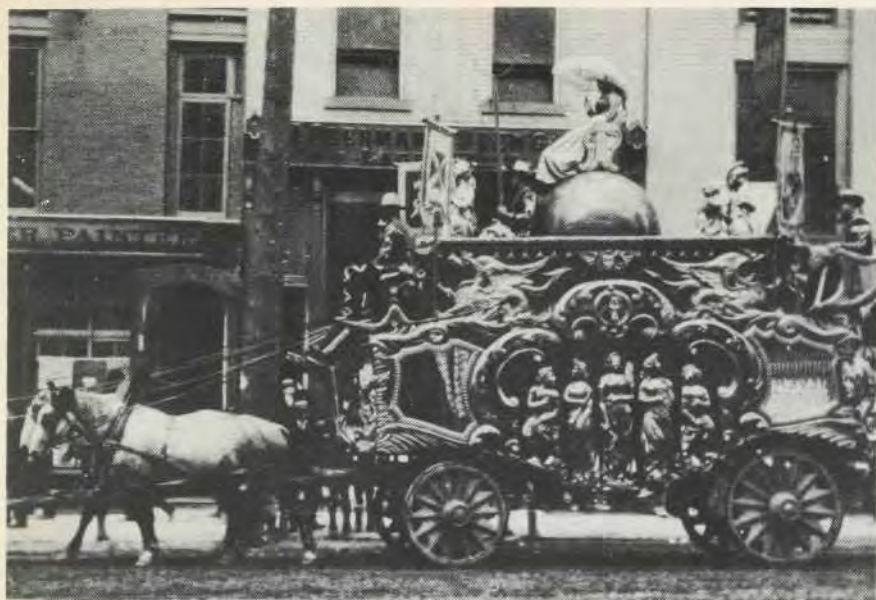
1. By the time this is published, it is possible that this wagon will no longer be in the Ringling Museum. For a number of years, it has been on loan there from the Ringling Circus corporation; and with the sale of the circus late in 1967, this and the other parade wagons there have new owners. These new owners also appear to be somewhat museum minded, and it can logically be expected that they will yank their property for display elsewhere.



Section of a Forepaugh 1878 lithograph featuring their new triumphal car which had not yet been named "The Five Graces." From the Hertzberg Circus Collection in the San Antonio Library.

Five Graces. Since the proof of this requires the logical consideration of many bits of data, and is probably of interest to only a very few, it is best handled in an appendix where it will not interrupt the main course of this narrative.

The Howes Globe Tableau had a companion that carried a large carved elephant as its topmount. Both of these were of a distinctive class known as telescoping tableaus because their featured displays of carved figures were mounted on elevators which were raised up while on parade to a height of some twenty-odd feet. The elevators were lowered before the wagons were loaded on the train for the move to the next town so that the wagons would clear the tunnels and other low obstructions on the railroad. They served strictly for flash as there was very little spare room in them to carry baggage after the figures were nested inside. The idea originated in England where quite a number of telescopers were built prior to 1871 when these two were constructed and shipped to the United States for the Howes show.



The ex-Howes Great London Globe Tableau as it appeared on Barnum & Bailey in Milwaukee in 1890. This was a true telescoper, built in England for 1871, seven years before Forepaugh had Fielding copy its general features and produce the so-called Five Graces. An Edwin L. Smith photograph; see Appendix to this chapter.

The Five Graces was shipped from the Fielding shop in New York City to Hayward, California, where the Forepaugh Circus was wintering in 1877-1878. Shortly after the season opened, its elegance impressed a Los Angeles reporter who commented, in part, in the *Evening Examiner* of 3 April 1878:

“The bandwagon in itself, most elaborate in design and finish, is fairly eclipsed by the triumphal car, which for massive elegance rules the world in circus display.”

This is not a particularly identifying description, but it does serve to establish that there was only one impressive display (the “triumphal car”) in the Forepaugh parade at that early date. This is essential only in that it isolates the possibility that Forepaugh’s other big tableau, the “St. George and the Dragon,” was on the show that early. This St. George was another telescoper similar in size to the Howes wagons. Thus, we have had four towering tableaus on the American circus scene—the Globe and Elephant tableaus originating with Howes Great London and later with Barnum & London, and the St. George and the Dragon and the Five Graces with the Adam Forepaugh Circus. The latter two probably should never have been built; because, almost from the start, they



The Five Graces Bandwagon after its topmount, illustrated above on a separate gear, was removed. Before that, it looked very much like the Howe's Globe Tableau on the opposite page. These two photos were taken at the Forepaugh quarters in Philadelphia in 1888-89. Original prints are in the Author's Collection.

were in competition with the rapidly expanding telephone industry that was erecting overhead lines everywhere. These were frequently too low to allow passage of high vehicles down the street; in fact, such pictures as we have of all these tableaux do not show their figures extended to their full elevation. By the early 1890's, all four of them had lost their battles with the science of communication; but each continued to roll after being converted to conventional tableau-baggage or bandwagons.

It is not until 1881 that we have a word description sufficiently detailed to confirm the logic assembled in the appendix that, in itself, establishes the Five Graces in this group. Several newspaper ads of that year, notably, one appearing in the *Evening Star* which heralded Forepaugh's Washington, D.C., date for 3 April, in plugging the forthcoming parade, extolled as one of the features:

"The Gem Bossed Car of Freedom, illustrating *Religion, Education, Law, Victory, and Peace*, surmounted by the allegorical representation of the Goddess of Liberty."

The Goddess was none other than the show girl who rode the chair on the top of the globe. In italics are the names of the five wooden maidens who later became immortal as the Five Graces, to the puzzlement of our mythologists who insist that there have never been more than three graces in their books. Undoubtedly true, unless you happen to have five women to satisfy, and, over the years, who hasn't? Inappropriate as it may be, Five Graces has been its traditional name for as far back as anyone now or recently living can remember, even for the late Jake Posey (1863-1962) who was around it for the first time on Forepaugh in 1890 and who, in 1899 and 1900, drove the forty-horse hitch that pulled it in the European parades of Barnum & Bailey.

Three newspaper accounts have been discovered within the period between 1879 and 1882 which report that "the wagon with the big globe" or "the chariot carrying the Goddess of Liberty" had trouble getting down the street through the maze of telephone wires<sup>2</sup>. In all but the earliest of these, the St. George and the Dragon telescoping tableau was also with the Forepaugh Circus; and these same accounts never mentioned any difficulty with it. This would tend to indicate that, very probably, there were some mechanical differences between the Graces and the St. George. My long search to resolve this difference was rewarded a few years back by the discovery in the *Worcester (Massachusetts) Gazette* of 24 July 1879 of the following note, written by a reporter who in describing the

2. *Bridgeport (Connecticut) Evening Times*, 17 July 1879.  
*Toledo (Ohio) Blade*, 2 August 1880.  
*Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*, 17 July 1882.

Forepaugh train was particularly impressed by one special car:

“the car which carries the big chariot, (was) deeply grooved on either side for the wheels of the chariot to accommodate its great height.”

So, in the strict interpretation of our definition, the Five Graces was not a telescoper; but it towered just the same. As such, it had no means of retracting its superstructure and, therefore, could not clear the lowest of the overhead wires; and its railroad transportation problem was handled by loading it onto what was essentially a drop-center car.

Since there was no way to adjust its height, as was the case for the St. George and the Dragon, its contemporary on the Forepaugh Circus, and for the two Howes Great London examples, it is a mystery that they left it that way as long as they did. It was, however, the first of the towering tableaux to be decapitated, hastened probably by its involvement in a big railroad wreck which the show suffered near Downingtown, Pennsylvania, when it was enroute to its Philadelphia winter-quarters after the close of the 1885 season. In reporting on this wreck, the *Clipper* for 31 October stated, “the chariot on which the Goddess of Liberty sat will be seen no more,” definitely inferring that it was, at least, extensively damaged. But in this, as well as in many other instances parade wagons have a way of ignoring newspaper chatter and survive to roll again<sup>3</sup>.

From 1886 through 1894, the Five Graces was the No. 1 Bandwagon in the Forepaugh parade. After 1890, the Forepaugh show was owned by James A. Bailey and associates, with all of the “and associates” dropped by 1894 when he became the sole owner of both the Forepaugh and the Barnum & Bailey circuses. Hard times made it advisable to close the Forepaugh show after the 1894 season, and the Five Graces was not used again until 1897 when it led the parade on Barnum & Bailey pulled by the famous forty-horse hitch. That fall, the show went to England and this bandwagon, flashed up by the forty, led the parade of 1898 and 1899 in Britain. In 1900, the show was transferred to the Continent, spending most of the year in Germany. After experimenting for most of the season on the reaction of the Germans, it was finally decided that the parade was hurting business. Apparently, the large crowds that turned out for the free display were satisfied that they had seen enough and stayed

3. Other known instances where parade wagons have reappeared after having been reported completely destroyed are: L. B. Lent's Bandchariot, Middletown, New York, 1870; Forepaugh's Cleopatra's Barge, and this same Five Graces' globe top, Scarsboro, Iowa, 1889; Walter L. Main's bandchariot and his tableau with the four oval mirrors, Tyrone, Pennsylvania, 1893; Forepaugh Sells' calliope and Cinderella pony float, Rochester, New York, 1897; and John Robinson's Horn Calliope, Eldorado, Arkansas, 1905.

away from the ticket wagon. Accordingly, the last parade in Europe, except for one special occasion in connection with a French holiday in March 1902, was given in Frankfort on 8 October 1900.

When the show returned to the States in 1903, the new Two Hemispheres Bandwagon was added and the Graces relegated to a secondary position until the parades were discontinued in 1905. It does not appear to have ever been used again until the Ringlings, who had acquired it when they bought the Barnum & Bailey show in 1907, brought it to Baraboo when they were reframing Forepaugh Sells in 1910. After two years with Forepaugh Sells, it was transferred to the Ringling Brothers World Greatest Shows where it displaced the much-newer Swan Bandwagon, built by Moeller Brothers of Baraboo in 1905, as the No. 1 Bandwagon<sup>4</sup>. However, over the winter of 1911-1912, it was completely rebuilt by Moeller at a cost of \$319.83. This included a whole new body, new running gears, and considerable repairs to the carvings. An idea of the scope of this renovation can be estimated by considering that two years earlier the Moellers built three brand new box-style tableaus for the Forepaugh Sells show at a cost of \$300.00 each. When a firm can bill their customers for labor at the rate of thirty cents per hour, it doesn't take many dollars by today's standards to accomplish a lot. So, as the Five Graces sits in Sarasota today, after whatever was done to recover from the wreck of 1885, and after the rework of 1912, there certainly cannot be much vintage of 1878 material left in it. Even the name is not the same, but we can concede that the "Spirit of '78" still remains.

The rest of this chapter will contain no more surprises for anyone who is at all familiar with the subject. Fourteen years after the parades were discontinued on Ringling-Barnum in 1920, the Graces was shipped to Peru, Indiana, to appear in the big Hagenbeck Wallace parade being set for 1934. This lasted for only one year. Again in 1937, it was briefly on Hagenbeck Wallace, this time under lease to Howard Y. Bary. Jake Posey was also there as boss hostler and, as he related it, Bary was ambitious to revive the forty-horse hitch; in fact, Bary wanted to do it one better and add four more horses. Somehow, enough leather was gathered up to put it together, but one tug was enough to tear it apart. So ended the first and only forty-four-horse hitch ever assembled, and the Graces was returned to the Peru quarters.

After that episode, the Graces remained in Peru until 9 April 1944,

4. After the Swan Bandwagon was taken off the Ringling show in 1912, it sat around the Baraboo quarters until George Christy picked it up in May 1927. He used it for about three seasons which, when added to the seven years it was with Ringling, makes for a relatively short utilization for so old a relic.



After the return from Europe, the Graces at the Barnum & Bailey quarters in Bridgeport. Princeton Theatre Collection.

when it and five other, by then, historic old parade wagons (the residue that had survived destruction in the wartime scrap iron drive of 1941) were shipped to the Sarasota quarters of Ringling-Barnum. Three of them, including the Five Graces, appeared in the 1945 spec. Finally, as of the date that this is being written, the last utilization of the Graces was in a television show produced in Sarasota in 1956. Most of the time since 1945, it has been on display at the Ringling Circus Museum in Sarasota.

#### APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 7

**B**EFORE I ARRIVED at my own conclusions on this subject prior to the publication of *The Telescoping Tableaus* in 1956, I had heard from many sources that the controversial globe-lion group of carvings, that should properly have been associated with the Five Graces, was the one off of the Howes Great London Globe Tableau. Evidently, that was the traditional story, as I had never heard any other. When I first aligned it properly in 1956, I had to dwell at some length on the history of the St. George and the Dragon Tableau up until the time that the Ringlings bought it in the fall of 1890. Now, with better dating of some of the pertinent photographs, it is no longer necessary to bring the St. George



The Five Graces after the removal of its globe. One of the three 1887 Lansing, Michigan, photos referenced in the appendix of this chapter. The other two are on the opposite page.

into the argument to prove that the controversial group of carvings could not possibly have come off the Howes Globe Tableau. However, the former, more lengthy, logic still confirms this shortcut.

The issue can be settled by comparing the date for an individual photograph against the date for another group. The individual one is that of the Howes Globe Tableau when it was with Barnum & Bailey, displayed near the beginning of this chapter. By the testimony of the late Edwin L. Smith, this photograph could not have been taken before 1890. In some 1955 correspondence between Mr. Smith and the author, Smith said that the picture was snapped in Milwaukee by his father who had just recently bought one of the earliest models of Eastman roll-film cameras. On this camera, which was still in the family, was inscribed "Patented, September 4, 1888," a date too late for the camera to have been manufactured and distributed before the Barnum show played Milwaukee in 1888. Therefore, this photo cannot be dated earlier than 1890.

Compare this with what shows in a group of Lansing, Michigan, Forepaugh parade pictures, dated as 1887 by a lithograph that appears in a window. Altogether, there are eight pictures in this set; and the lithograph does not show up well in most of them. The three reproduced herein show:



The globe from the Graces.



The St. George and the Dragon Tableau.

1. The Five Graces without its globe.
2. The globe that was removed from it on an earlier, more or less improvised, set of running gears than were on it in a later picture, displayed earlier in the chapter.
3. The only picture extant of the St. George and the Dragon Telescoping Tableau. Actually, this photograph has no bearing on the logic to prove the immediate point. It does more or less complete the picture by showing that Forepaugh pulled the top off the Graces before he distributed the St. George.

Now, with the globe-lion group of carvings in photo 2, above, dated in 1887, it could not possibly be the one still on the ex-Howes Globe Tableau in 1890. So, therefore, it has to be the one from the Graces, unless we are unwilling, in the absence of an actual photograph, to concede that the Graces ever had a top. Personally, I believe that enough has already been revealed by the printed word in our newspapers to enable us to classify this elusive picture as highly desirable but not mandatory.

#### CHAPTER VIII

### THE VINTAGE OF 1883 BARNUM, BAILEY & HUTCHINSON TABLEAU-DENS

**T**HE EMPLOYMENT OF statuary figures to augment the ornamentation of the end corners, and sometimes the center niches on the more expensive tableau wagons and cages, was prevalent over the quarter of a century during which most of our parade wagons were built. The earliest, illustrative, example of this practice, which we can definitely date, was the famed Orchestmelochor, an artistic rolling masterpiece that carried a steam engine-driven reed organ, built by an unknown manufacturer for the Barnum show in 1876. The last series of wagons to use such embellishments was evidently a group of four cages built by George Schmidt of Cincinnati for Forepaugh Sells in 1902. We can probably find photographs of fifty or so "statuary" wagons that were built over this interim. But, of all of these, the twelve built for Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson make up just about the only group that we can align with a definite manufacturer.

Three interrelated references have been found that shed light on the circumstances surrounding the building of these cages. The first of these references is an item in the *Clipper* for 2 December 1882 crediting Fielding Brothers with having five tableau-dens under construction for Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson. The second reference is a news item appear-



All twelve of the vintage-of-1883 tableau-dens lined up in the menagerie, about 1904. From the Charley Andress album, Circus World Museum Collection.

ing in *Truth* (New York), 24 February 1883, under the heading "Scenes from Winter Quarters":

"This year none of the old cages will be used for animals but will serve for the baggage. The new wagons are as handsome as ordinary chariots with all of the necessary scroll work, mythological figures in gold and shining paint."

The last reference is a generalized article on "Wood Carving" which appeared in the 6 January 1883 issue of *Harpers Weekly*. In this article, the shop which made the carvings for this lot of cages is identified<sup>1</sup>. Collectively, these three articles affix 1883 as the year for the introduction of at least a part of this group of twelve. It is to be regretted that there are no good pictures of some of them. There was, however, sufficient photographic evidence to fix the number at twelve even before the picture appeared on my horizon of all of them lined up in the menagerie top.

Nothing much out of the ordinary happened to these cages for almost a decade. Then came 1892, the Columbian Year, so-called because

1. More on this will appear in Frederick Fried's soon-to-be-published book, *Artists in Wood*. Mr. Fried is the author of *Carousel*, Barnes & Co., 1964, and is a top authority on folk art wood carving. It has been my privilege to collaborate with Mr. Fried in resolving some of his parade-wagon problems for his forthcoming book.



Wherein the Forty Thieves have taken over and the riders are a bit more relaxed than the artist had planned. The only actual photograph known to the author which shows one of these cages as they were covered in the 1892-93 parade. Gift from Roy Arnold.

it marked the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The country was in the midst of a severe economic setback; but business men shedding a ray of optimism, were hopeful that there might be enough magic in the number 400 to lift the country out of the doldrums. There was to be a big World's Fair in Chicago to stimulate business in that area. James A. Bailey evidently subscribed to the auspicious omens and refurbished his expensive Nero Spectacle of the preceding two years under the new title, "Columbus and the Discovery of America." He also dressed up his street parade with fourteen living tableaux, i.e., costumed personnel surrounded by special scenery and props. Five of these tableaux depicted major events in American history, and the other nine portrayed familiar fairy tales and nursery rhymes. For the latter, nine of these twelve tableau-dens were fitted out with painted scenery that covered the beautiful scroll work between the corner statues. Each motif was completed by props and costumed personnel on top of the deck.

After many years of searching, a photograph of one of the units finally came my way<sup>2</sup>. Before that, I had to rely principally on the original

2. Through the courtesy of Roy Arnold, West Springfield, Massachusetts, May 1967.



The highly touted 1892 parade as illustrated by a Barnum & Bailey courier.

watercolor art work for the designs of these transformations that are on file in the McCaddon Collection in the library at Princeton University, to adjudicate the authenticity of what appeared on the back of the show's



On these pages are displayed three out of this series of twelve tableau-dens that were evidently gone by 1925. The photograph above was taken in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1904. The two on the opposite page, from the J. W. Beggs Collection, were made shortly after 1908.

1892 courier. With one unit so validated, we can be assured that the courier closely matches the actual displays. These decorations were carried over into 1893 — or one could say, “misused again in 1893,” because one of the unanswered historical riddles is why these attractive cages were chosen to be covered over when there were so many other exceedingly plain ones (little more than boxes with bars on wheels) with the show at the time that could have benefitted very well from any amount of flashing up.

All these cages made the 1898-1902 European tour of Barnum & Bailey and remained with the show until it was sold to the Ringlings in 1907. By that time, some of them were beginning to show their age; and about four of them were dropped in favor of the better cages that the Ringlings removed from their Forepaugh Sells property when they temporarily retired that title in 1908. By 1925, attrition had further reduced their number to about five; at least, that was the approximate number still around after the Bridgeport winterquarters fire of 2 February 1924. On 31 December 1925, the five cages tabulated below were



included in a purchase of 21 wagons by George Christy from the inventory of parade equipment that the Big Show no longer needed after they discontinued parading in 1921.

As I was the first to publish in my monograph, "The Early Ringling Railer" (*The Bandwagon*, March-April 1967), which, in part, concerned another of the 21 wagons included in this Ringling-Christy transaction,



The sixteen-foot, four-compartment, Cage No. 70 that carried the corner figures of girls posed as about to toss a handball.

Christy shipped out of the Bridgeport quarters to his show only the wagons generally known as Asia, America, Columbia, Palm Tree, and three of the five tableau-dens of our immediate subject. He held the others in reserve around Bridgeport against future requirements. These requirements never materialized because the depression of the Thirties closed his show; and, after that, he suspended paying the storage charges. The owner of the storage lot peddled two of the wagons to museums and the remainder more or less rotted down. There were, fortunately, quite a few of the statuary pieces saved. These left a trail for the historian to follow, without which only about 50 per cent of the items on George Christy's purchase document could be identified, since a considerable amount of the nomenclature thereon is unfamiliar and incomplete. This trail runs directly through William Warren of Litchfield, Connecticut, who about 1938 purchased most of the statues that got past the aforementioned storage lot. Mr. Warren, who still holds some of his purchases, has been of the utmost assistance to the author in resolving the substance of the Christy documents.

From various sources of data, including the Princeton watercolors and the Christy documents, this chapter can be closed out with a few notes about these five cages.

*Cage No. 70.* This was a 16-foot, four-compartment cage and was therefore the longest of the series, the others averaging about 13½ feet. The corner figures represented girls playing handball and who are posed with their forearms raised to a horizontal position over their heads. In



The "Monkey" Cage, No. 81, on Barnum & Bailey in Germany. From a set of post-cards printed in Germany.

the 1892 parade, this one carried the "William Penn's Treaty with the Indians" tableau, one of the historical series. None of the five in this series was provided with painted panel overlays. Christy did not move this one out of Bridgeport; and two of the corner figures, now armless, are in the Warren Collection.

*Cage No. 81.* This was the one with the monkey statues. In the 1892 parade, it was decorated as "The Beauty and the Beast." Christy also left this one in Bridgeport and Mr. Warren still has two of the monkey figures.

*Cage No. 84.* This is the so-called Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson cage, because that title still appears on the small medallion on the lower side panel. Christy moved this one to his South Houston quarters but never used it on his show, which is probably why the title on the medallion was never removed. It sat around the South Houston quarters until 1959 when Christy gave it to the Circus World Museum, where it became the first of the many excellent restoration projects that the Museum has accomplished. Sometime after 1950, while it was still in South Houston, two of the corner figures were removed and found their way to the Shelburne Museum in Vermont; so two of the figures now on it are copies. Otherwise, it is the only one of the original twelve that is virtually intact.

*Cage No. 89.* This is the so-called "Whiskers" cage, a nom de plume which, according to tradition, it acquired because this seemed to be as good or as descriptive a term as any by which to list it on the invoice



Old No. 84 Cage after its restoration by the Circus World Museum in 1960.

which was made out when Christy sold it to Ken Maynard in 1936. This Maynard show was very short lived, and his former property was passed around to several Los Angeles locations before Disneyland acquired it in 1954. There, four of the items, including this cage, were completely rebuilt<sup>3</sup>. With no more than the original iron in it, we cannot, honestly, give it quite the badge of originality that we can award to No. 84 above. After using them for a few years around Disneyland and in the cinema, "Toby Tyler," released in 1960, Walt Disney presented the entire lot of ex-Christy/Maynard wagons to the Circus World Museum. A few years later, Disney sent on all that was left of the original carvings, and this settled once and for all the completeness of this Disney restoration.

*Cage No. 2.* This is the one that was later on Cole Brothers where it was used alternately as an air calliope and a small tableau. Jess Adkins, one of the owners of Cole Brothers, also had it as a tableau with his Robbins Brothers in 1938. The wagon was lost in the February 1940 fire at the Cole winterquarters. On the Christy document, it is listed as "Cage, 13'6", sides like an air calliope, two images missing." This explains why the two rear figures shown on it in Cole and Robbins pictures are non-conforming strangers, quite obviously not the work of the same artist who did all of the originals.

3. The other three complete restorations were on the Swan Bandwagon, the so-called Beauty Tableau, and the J. H. Eschman Tableau with the big leaf carving.



The old Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson Cage No. 84 at the Christy Quarters in South Houston, Texas, in 1950. Photos by Albert Conover.

The numbers on these cages were first changed about the time that Barnum & Bailey was in Europe. The numbers they still carried when Christy bought what was left of them were assigned in 1908 at the time they were intermingled with those pulled off Forepaugh Sells.



The "Whiskers" cage, No. 89, on Barnum & Bailey after 1908, as it appeared before any of its carvings had been deleted. Author's Collection.



Cole Brothers' Air Calliope (1936), a conversion from one of this series of tableau-dens. Photo by the late Wm. Koford (A. Conover Collection).

## COMPOSITE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIELDING FIRM

- 1843 George Fielding, coachmaker, 25th Street near 4th Avenue.
- 1847 Brother Charles joined the firm.
- 1855 Brother Robert, Jr., joined the firm, moved to 130 East 41st Street.
- 1856 Date of a bill of the Lee & Bennett's Circus, San Francisco, that places a combination band and advertising wagon on this show which was manufactured by Fielding Brothers – reproduced in the *Clipper* for 10 October 1874.
- 1859 Established as Fielding Brothers.  
Ad for Nixon & Co.'s Circus for Wakefield, Rhode Island, for 11 May mentions that they have a Fielding Bandchariot pulled by a 40-horse hitch.
- 1863 First mention in Draggett's New York Directory that they were building for the circus trade.  
Possibly built the long chariot for Thayer & Noyes. See Chapter 4.
- 1865 Alexander Robinson (brother of John) had a new Fielding chariot for his show. *Clipper*, 1 April.
- 1866 Built the Van Amburgh/Sells Brothers chariot. See Chapter 2.  
Built a chariot for Thompson, Smith & Howes. Ad for Augusta, Maine, 14 September.
- 1867 Built the J. M. French bandchariot. See Chapter 3.  
Building a new \$2,000 performing den for Adam Forepaugh. *Clipper*, 1 June.
- 1868 Built the second chariot for Van Amburgh. See Chapter 2.
- 1870 Built the long bandchariot for Lewis B. Lent. See Chapter 4.
- 1872 Building 16 (?) cages for John O'Brien. *Clipper*, 24 February.
- 1873 Building eight cages for Adam Forepaugh. *Clipper*, 25 January.  
New Fielding bandchariot on Montgomery Queen (?). Item inserted in pre-season writeup in 19 April *Clipper* supplement.
- 1878 Built Gem Bossed Car of Freedom (Five Graces) for Forepaugh. See Chapter 7.
- 1882 Built at least five of the Barnum & Bailey Tableau-Dens. See Chapter 8.
- 1883 Reorganization. Fielding and (George) Schuchman. Still at 130 East 41st.
- 1886 George W. Fielding moved to Broadway and 35th Street and later that year discontinued business.

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Once again, I am indebted to my daughter, Sally Weitlauf, for interfacing my circus vernacular with the Queen's English.

#### MAJOR WORKS BY THE AUTHOR

*Give 'Em a John Robinson*. Since its publication in 1965, the following significant facts on this subject have turned up. I will take this opportunity to pass these on.

Page 14, Note 9. One of the specific Flatfoot shows that Old John Robinson was with as a performer was Crane & Eldred in 1834.

Page 17. There is a printed program for Robinson & Eldred, dated 1847, in the Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota.

Page 33. The calliope that the Ringlings bought from Robinson was replaced by, not modified into, Ringling's second one in either 1901 or 1902.

Copies of this 96-page, hardback, are still available from the author for \$4.30, postpaid.

*The Telescoping Tableaus* (1956), a 16-page pamphlet, now out of print.

*The Affairs of James A. Bailey* (1957), a 16-page pamphlet, also out of print.

*The Great Forepaugh Show* (1959), also 16 pages and still available at \$1.00 postpaid.

*The Circus, Wisconsin's Unique Heritage* (1968), a 48-page, paperback, published by the Circus World Museum, Barboo, Wisconsin.

Listed below are the significant monographs the author has written for the *Bandwagon*, the official publication of the Circus Historical Society:

*Notes on the Barnum & Bailey Show*, March-April, 1959.

*The Allegorical Pony-Drawn Parade Floats*, September-October, 1960.

*The European Influence on the American Circus Parade*, July-August, 1961.

*The Early Ringling Railer*, March-April, 1967.

*The Ringling Cages of 1893*, (Co-authorship with Stuart Thayer) May-June, 1969.