

RANDOM NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY AMERICAN CIRCUS

BY R. W. G. VAIL

FOREWORD

It would take many years to write a history of the American circus. The present study, compiled during the spare time of a few months, is merely the bringing together in something like a sequence of a very few of the materials for such a history. Many performers and many whole shows have been omitted and only the briefest accounts included of a few of the earlier circuses and menageries. About the only morals of the tale are that people like a good time and that old newspaper files are of the greatest value to the historian.

That there is still a great interest in the circus is shown by the existence of the enthusiastic and active Circus Fans Association, a national organization with its own periodical, "The White Tops." To a number of its members, particularly its historian, the writer is greatly indebted. He has also found of the greatest use Mr. George C. D. Odell's "Annals of the New York Stage," Mr. Isaac J. Greenwood's "The Circus," Mr. Leonidas Westervelt's "The Circus in Literature," and Mr. E. C. May's "The Circus from Rome to Ringling."

Most of the material used, however, has been found under the roof of our own library which is very rich in early circus history. The great circus collections are, however, still in private hands and it is to be hoped that they may some day gravitate to some one institution, ours preferred, of course, where they may be made available to the historian who will eventually write an adequate history of the outdoor show business in America.

THE Romans knew it as the "Circus Maximus" and Barnum called it "The Greatest Show on Earth," but whatever its name, the small boys of the world have always loved the circus. Many elements went to make up the circus as we know it. As we look across the centuries, we see strollers of many kinds

making their toilsome way through mud and rain from town to town over the well-nigh impassable roads of the middle ages. Clowns and mountebanks, jugglers and performers on the tight rope were among them. In sunny Provence the gay troubadour with his lute slung over his back trudged through the dust, bringing his welcome songs and jokes and the gossip of the region to isolated chateaux. In Scotland and Ireland the harper did a like service as he climbed the weary miles from one castle or stronghold to another. In the fifteenth century, a strolling company of morality players might be found performing its crude religious plays on a stage made of planks placed across a half dozen barrels in the yard of the Boar's Head Tavern in Whitechapel, where they entertained the quality in the balcony and frightened the groundlings with their representations of a fiery hereafter, with a very lively Devil to trouble their guilty dreams for weeks to come. In recent years we have applauded the tragic songs of the famous clown, Pagliacci, and the adventures of the mountebank, Scaramouch, and have watched with awe the feats of Blondin making his precarious way along a rope stretched across the gorge below Niagara Falls.

All of these elements eventually came together to form the circus of today which, in spite of a thousand other entertainments and distractions, still thrills twenty million American children of all ages each year.

We have seen the circus grow from a single ring with a half dozen performers, through the days when W. C. Coup first introduced the two-ring circus and, with the help of Barnum and Ringling, transformed it from a wagon show to a great establishment travelling in its own special railroad train of ninety double-length cars, with hundreds of animals and performers and seven rings or oblong stages. Lighted at first with pine knots, then with candles, or whale oil lamps, and later with gasoline torches, the circus now carries its own electric light plant, and takes in at a single performance more money than all the thirty circuses of the 1830's hoped to see in an entire year. In the thirties Van Amburgh,

"The Lion King," thrilled his audience by entering a cage with a living lion, while today Clyde Beatty puts forty highly trained lions and tigers through their paces in a single arena. It is interesting that the thirty lesser circuses still touring the country have deserted the railroad and have gone back to the highways—but now they travel over concrete roads in fleets of motor trucks. Gone are the precarious days of the old show with its adventures with prairie fires and cyclones, runaway trains in the Pennsylvania mountains, and its many battles with the local toughs of our frontier towns, in which more than one sturdy clown or ringmaster ended his exciting and checkered career as he helped his circus fight its way out of hostile territory.

We cannot hope, in this brief paper, to tell the whole story of the American circus, but will content ourselves with showing something of its beginnings. We shall try to show how the exhibition of individual animals led to the formation of menageries; how single trick riders developed into the modern circus equestrians; and how strolling clowns and gymnasts finally found their way under the big top. We shall show how the wild animals were finally tamed and trained, and how individually exhibited freaks finally came to be a part of the circus side shows. Only a few of the more famous of all the hundreds of entertainers can be introduced to you and be made to step from their old time posters and hand-bills to tell you of their marvelous feats and adventures. To a later historian we shall leave the fascinating task of rescuing from oblivion the complete story of the heroes of the ring and the tan bark.

ANIMALS

For the beginnings of wild animal exhibition in America, we must go back to pioneer days when an occasional hunter brought down from the hills a tame bear which he exhibited at frontier taverns or on the village commons, and then passed the hat in order to

buy enough food and drink to last him until he reached the next village. It is probable that an occasional sailor drifted inland after a voyage to the Orient, and showed a pet monkey to the loungers in the pioneer barrooms of the day. Later on these animals were taught a few simple tricks to delight the New England villagers before the days of the Revolution.

But it was the shrewd and speculative Yankee ship captain who was responsible for the introduction of the wild animals of foreign lands to America. These he sold at a good profit to individual exhibitors, who then took them through the country, showing them in hotel barns or in canvas sided enclosures, open to the sky.

It is appropriate that the king of beasts should lead the procession which was eventually to find its way to the menagerie and the circus. His first appearance in this country is described as follows in the "Boston Gazette" of September 26, 1720:

The lyon being the King of Beasts, and the only one of his kind in America is removed from Capt. Arthur Savages, to Mrs. Martha Adams's at the South End of Boston, where attendance will be constantly given, (while he remains in this country,) to any person or persons who has the curiosity to see the same.

This advertisement appeared from time to time until July 3, 1721, when a new announcement appeared as follows:

At the South End of Boston, at the house of Mrs. Adam's is to be seen the Lyon, where on a sign is writ these words, The Lion King of Beasts is to be seen here. He is not only the largest and most noble, but the tamest and most beautiful creature of his kind, that has been seen, he grows daily, and is the wonder of all that see him: Constant attendance is given to all persons who desire to satisfy themselves with the sight of him.

He continued to be advertised in the "Gazette" until March 4, 1723. We catch another glimpse of him in the "Boston News-Letter" of December 22, 1726. where we learn that:

The Lyon which was to be seen at Mrs. Adams's at the South End, Boston, is now ship'd on board the sloop Phaenix, in

order to be sent off to the West Indies, &c. And he is now to be seen on board said sloop at the north side of the Long Wharff, Boston, till the time of sailing, which is intended to morrow or the next day, at 6 d. each person.

After his voyage to the West Indies we find him, for we assume that it is the same lion, visiting the City of Brotherly Love. The "American Weekly Mercury" of August 31, 1727 tells us that "The Lyon King of Beasts is design'd to be carried from this place the 20th of September next, and is to be seen at Abraham Bickly's new store in Water-Street, till that time, for one shilling each person." In the issue of September 14th we are told that he is to leave Philadelphia "on Wednesday next," after which we lose sight of him for a time.

In the "New York Gazette" of May 6, 1728 he reappears in an announcement of the forthcoming Jamaica fair to be opened on May 7th. This notice concludes with the laconic but thrilling statement: "It is expected that the Lyon will be there to be seen." This was probably America's first lion, still touring the country as "*the Lyon*" after eight years of successful exhibition.

We catch a last glimpse of him in the fall of the same year, ignominiously riding into New Lodon in an ox cart after spending the autumn in a leisurely trip from New York to Albany.¹ He was lodged in Madame Winthrop's stable during his brief stay there, but where he went after leaving New London or what his later adventures may have been, history has not yet revealed. Indeed we must wait a long time before we have an opportunity to see another lion advertised in the newspapers, though it is probable that others toured the country unheralded by the press.

A "tractable and docile" African lion was shown in New York, however, on July 21, 1791, according to the "Daily Gazette" of that date, and another (or perhaps the same one) appeared in Boston in 1794. This "beautiful African lion" is to be seen "every night

¹"Harper's Monthly," December 1879, p. 67.

this week . . . at Mr. Wild's Green Dragon near the market." According to the advertisement in the "American Apollo" for October 2, 1794, it was four and a half years old, and had been caught in Africa when a whelp and brought from thence to New York. It apparently was very popular with the people of Boston, for it was still being advertised in the "Apollo" as late as November 13th. In 1795 the lion was to be seen at Salem at "9d. per visiter," and by August 1796, a beautiful lion, "as tame as any domestic animal," was exhibited in New York. Its portrait, veraciously engraved in wood, appears in the "Minerva" of August 31st. He had moved to the Fly Market by February 1797, when the "Gazette" also printed his portrait. Still another lion appeared at the United States Garden, New York, on August 9, 1808, according to the "Commercial Advertiser"; and another at the Fly Market on February 7, 1815. But the one shown at Nassau Street on February 29, 1815 was indeed wonderful, as we find him described in the "Post": "The form of the lion is strikingly majestic, his figure is respectable, his looks are determined, his gait is stately, and his voice tremendous."

It is curious that the Emperor of Morocco presented President Andrew Jackson with a lion and two Arabian horses in 1834. In his message to Congress in January 1835 he asked that august body what he was to do with his pets. Following their advice, the animals were sold at auction in Washington, the lion being purchased for \$3350 by an agent of a menagerie in Boston, and the proceeds given to three local orphan asylums. (Worner: "Old Lancaster," 1927, p. 184.)

By 1815 we find that most of the individual animals had joined the menageries, and so we shall leave the lion as a star performer and turn back to 1721 when we find the camel second in the procession of foreign animals to come to these shores to fill our ancestors with awe and wonder. In the "Boston Gazette" of October 2, 9, and 23 we find the following announcement:

Just arrived from Africa, a very large Camel being above seven foot high, and twelve foot long, and is the first of his kind that ever was brought into America, to be seen at the bottom of Cold Lane, where daily attendance is given.

Perhaps the same camel appeared in New York some eighteen years later. It is heralded in the "New York Gazette," November 19, 1739 as follows:

Notice is hereby given to all persons, that there is come to town, a very wonderful and surprizing creature to all persons in these parts of the world; and it is in Scripture the very same creature which is there called a Cammel. It is impossible to describe the creature; and therefore all persons of ingenious curiosity have an opportunity of satisfying themselves.

The creature was brought with great difficulty from the deserts of Arabia in that quarter of the world which is called Asia, to New England; a curiosity which never was in this country, and very likely never will be again.

Constant attendance will be given to all persons desirous of seeing said creature at the Sign of the Cart and Horse.

Price one shilling for men, and six pence for children.

This camel was shown in Philadelphia in 1740, according to Scharf and Westcott's History, Vol. 2, p. 864.

We must wait a generation for our next camels, but we find two of them, a male and a female, at Stevens's Livery Stable, Wall Street, New York, on September 7, 1787, where they continued to draw curious crowds until December. This was no doubt the same pair that we find touring New England two years later.

Salem, being an important seaport town, seems to have been especially favored with exhibits of wild animals. We learn from the "Mercury" of August 4, 1789 that there are to be seen, for one night only, at Mr. Benjamin Daland's, near the town pump, two camels, male and female, imported from Arabia. A contemporary handbill, preserved at Essex Institute, shows a woodcut of one of these wonderful animals, and says: "They have a large high bunch on their backs, and another under their breasts, in the form of a pedestal, on which they support themselves when lying down . . . Price of admittance for a gentleman or lady nine-pence each." Our own library owns a

similar handbill advertising their appearance in Boston at Major Leavenworth's stable, opposite Mr. Lothrop's, State Street. They also could be seen at Mr. Brown's Stage House, New Haven, during the first week of July, according to the "Connecticut Journal"; and the unpublished diary of N. W. Hodges, probably of Salem, which is in our library, records on October 6, 1789 that: "This day (by subscription) was led about town, two cammels, male and female." "A male camel from the desert of Arabia" was shown at J. Stofft's tavern in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on February 11, 1793, according to the "Lancaster Zeitung" of February 6th, and it was still being patronized by the Dutchmen as late as the 13th. This was probably the survivor of the pair shown earlier at Salem, for the text of the advertisement, though translated into German, is almost identical with that of the Salem handbill and the same woodcut portrait of the beast is still in use. He appears again at York, Pennsylvania, according to an advertisement in the "York Gazette" of June 10, 1796.

By 1802 camels had become actors, for we find in an announcement of the play, "Alexander the Great," at William Dunlap's Theatre in New York, May 10, 1802, that, in the procession in Act II, two living camels, "just arrived from the coast of Africa," were to take an important part.

Following the lion and camel to America came "Ursa Major, or the great white bear." Though New York did not get a glimpse of him, the "New York Gazette" of April 16, 1733 announced that "a ferocious Greenland bear" was on view in Boston. When, however, we turn to the bear's own account of his visit to New England, we find him a very pleasant young fellow indeed. Here is his story of his travels as it appeared in the "Boston Weekly News-Letter" of April 19, 1733:

Whereas I the Subscriber, being of a very curious nature both as to my mind, as well as body, and having had too great an inclination in my native country (as many other fond youths

have) to travel into foreign parts and observe their religion, customs and manners; ship'd myself on board a vessel bound for this place; and now having satisfied my curiosity with remarkables, I have proposed a voyage to another part of the world; and I thought I could not do less (in point of honour) than acknowledge the many civilities I have received by the visits of many good people of this and the neighboring towns; and, to the credit of New-England be it spoken, I never was in more perfect health and better case in my own country; my cloaths that I brought with me, I have outgrown, and have now a clean white suit that fits me to a hair. I design to sail for Europe in the first ship, so that I desire all persons with whom I have accounts open, to bring them in and settle by next week, and all those from whom I have received favours, I should be glad to shake a paw with, and take my leave of at my lodgings nigh Mr. Clark's wharff.

Dated from my Den,
Boston, April 19, 1733

Ursa Major, or
the great White Bear.

Ursa Major's advent into Boston precedes by nearly a hundred years the regular exhibition of polar bears in the menageries and caravans, and his exhibitor certainly was something of a Barnum, if we may judge by the clever advertisement we have just quoted. Old Dr. Bentley tells us in his diary that while in Boston on April 9, 1798, he "saw the young Greenland Bear in a Savage State." This is the second polar bear we have discovered.

A rather meek young panther turned up at Salem on July 15, 1793, and the Doctor says of it:

Viewed a catamount exhibited here at 4 1/2 d. described to be eight feet long, two & 1/2 high from nose to tail . . . was taken helpless from its dam, & is about eighteen months old. He has lost much of his savage temper by his situation. Is of a mouse color, very indolent. . . . I could make no enquiries [about him] in a crowd, which was around him.

The following November 29th the panther played a return engagement to Salem. The Doctor remarks:

The catamount was shewn again in Town, and to draw custom there was a Wolf shewn by the same person. My curiosity was strong to see the Wolf. . . . I could get no better information than just the sight.

And now we come to the most important of all circus animals, the ponderous pachyderm. Though the

curiosity of our forefathers had been whetted by crude woodcuts and descriptions in our early geographies, natural histories, and almanacs (George's Almanack for 1781. Newburyport [1780]), this curiosity was not satisfied until Captain Jacob Crowninshield of Salem, on a voyage from Bengal in the ship "America," arrived at New York on April 13, 1796 with a two year old female elephant. This animal was bought in India as a speculation, and it proved a remarkably good investment, for the canny captain invested only \$450.00 in the venture, and sold her in New York for \$10,000.00, a huge price in those days, but still a profitable purchase for her new owner, judging by her later popularity. Her arrival is fittingly recorded in Greenleaf's "New York Journal," April 13, 1796.

The elephant was exhibited in New York at the corner of Beaver Street and Broadway on April 23, 1796, according to the "Argus" of that date. She was sold to a Welshman named Owen, from Philadelphia, to which place she was shortly taken for exhibition. The Philadelphia "Aurora" of July 26, 1796 mentions the price paid, and says that the elephant "possesses the adroitness of the beaver, the intelligence of the ape, and the fidelity of the dog. He is the largest of quadrupeds; the earth trembles under his feet. He has the power of tearing up the largest trees and yet is tractable to those who use him well."

This is a rather glowing account of the little two year old who was then but six feet, four inches high. The elephant is advertised in the "Aurora," August 12, 1796 as being on the way to Baltimore and Charleston. She could be seen on High Street for half a dollar. On September 17, 1796, the commissioners of the City of Baltimore granted permission to a John Carrier to exhibit an elephant, and the municipal records of York, Pennsylvania show that some time in 1796 a fine of one pound ten shillings was received "from persons showing elephant." (Worner: "Old Lancaster," 1927, p. 134.) The English traveller, John Davis, met her with her owner, Mr. Owen, and a monkey, at the cross-

roads hamlet of Asheepo, North Carolina, sometime in 1796 and left us an interesting account of the adventure in his published travels. On November 7th, having returned from the south, she could again be seen from eight in the morning until sundown at Market Street, Philadelphia, this time for a quarter of a dollar "that every citizen may see him." She continued to be shown in Philadelphia through the winter, but had returned to New York "on the way to Boston" by April 25, 1797. The "Gazette" tells us that she had "grown considerably" since her arrival.

By June 27 the elephant had reached Providence, and we learn from a hand bill with a vicious woodcut portrait of her at its head, that she was quite a toper. "Some days he has drank 30 bottles of porter, drawing the corks with his trunk . . ." Also that "he appeared on the stage at the New Theatre in Philadelphia, to the great satisfaction of a respectable audience. . . . A place is fitted up for him in a store back of the Coffee House where he will remain till the 8th of July only, as he is to be at Cambridge at the approaching commencement." [Broadside at R1HS, JCB, BU.]

The "Columbian Centinel" of Boston announced on July 26, 1797 that "The elephant is just arrived in town and may be seen at Mr. Valentine's, Market Square . . . The greatest natural curiosity ever presented to the public. He so far surpasses all description that has ever been given of him that we shall not attempt it here. Admittance half a dollar."

Apparently the price did not suit the people of Boston, for we read in the "Centinel" of August 5th that: "By the desire of the proprietor in Philadelphia, the elephant is now to be seen for a quarter of a dollar." This move proved efficacious, for the elephant stayed on for most of the month. On the 26th the "Centinel" warned the populace that "Its stay in town will be but a few days, as he has a long journey to go before winter."

According to a local handbill still preserved at Essex Institute, the elephant reached Salem on

August 29th, and on the following day, Reverend William Bentley paid her a visit. In his diary he tells us that he:

Went to the Market House to see the Elephant. The crowd of spectators forbade me any but a general & superficial view of him. He was six feet four inches high. Of large Volume, his skin black, as tho' lately oiled. A short hair was on every part, but not sufficient for a covering. His tail hung one third of his height, but without any long hairs at the end of it. His legs were still at command at the joints, but he could not be persuaded to lie down. The Keeper repeatedly mounted him but he persisted in shaking him off. Bread & Hay were given him and he took bread out of the pockets of the Spectators. He also drank porter & drew the cork, conveying the liquor from his trunk into his throat. His Tusks were just to be seen beyond the flesh, & it was said had been broken. We say *his* because [of] the common language. It is a female & teats appeared just behind the fore-legs.

The consistent advertising of the elephant as "he" apparently did not fool the worthy Doctor!

The elephant stayed at Salem for several days, then went to Marblehead and Newburyport, and other nearby towns. She was taken south for the winter and returned to Philadelphia by boat in April 1798. The "Deutsche Porcupein" of September 19, 1798, announces her arrival at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and her exhibition for several days at Mr. Gross's tavern on King Street. She apparently went south every winter, for we find her in Charleston again on December 27, 1798, according to the "City Gazette." She was shown again in Boston, June 25, 1804 by E. Savage, an early showman, and on July 3rd was again at Salem, this time at the Sun Tavern. She was in Philadelphia on April 12, 1806 (Poulson's Advertiser).

She was advertised in New York, in July 1808 (Post, July 25) as being the only elephant in America, and on June 1st the Park Theatre announced that "Blue Beard" would be given with "Abomelique mounted on a living elephant." She appeared again in Baltimore and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in 1811, and on June 8, 1812, and for two nights following, she appeared in "the procession of the caravan" in the play "Forty Thieves"

at the Park Theatre in New York. She worked hard, this elephant, for during the day she could be seen at 324 Broadway until June 13th, when she joined Cayetano, Codet, Menial and Redon's New York Circus at Broadway and White Street. She appeared in Brooklyn on March 30-31, 1818, on April 3-4 in Flatbush and Jamaica, and at York, Pennsylvania on July 24-25.

History fails to record the later life of the first American elephant, especially as she had no Christian or pagan name to distinguish her from the others of her race soon to find their way to this country; but in her early days she needed no name, for she was *the* elephant. There is, however, a very good chance that she may be the one known as the Learned Elephant, Little Bet, killed in 1822. The advertisements of both elephants are similar, though ages, measurements, and weights vary most confusingly. Even different descriptions of the same elephant are inconsistent. For example, the age of this animal does not change in the handbills over a period of years, where there is no more than a rough and variable guess as to her size.

Old Bet was the second elephant to come to America, but her life here was short and her end tragic, though a grateful owner erected a monument which still stands to her memory and as a reminder of the entry of his famous family into the show business. (See note 1, p.185.)

Hackaliah Bailey of Stephentown, later known as Somers, New York had a brother who was a sea captain. The latter was in London in 1815 and picked up a female African elephant at auction for \$20.00. On arriving at New York, he sold the animal to Hackaliah for \$1000.00, pocketed his profits, and saw the animal on board a sloop bound up river for Sing Sing, the nearest river town to his brother's home. Bailey was shortly showing his elephant in barns and tavern yards in Westchester County and Connecticut with surprisingly good results. Encouraged by his liberal patrons, he added other animals to his show, and soon leased the enterprise to "Uncle Nate"

Howes of South East, later Sodom, Putnam County, New York, who took the show on tour as far as the wilds of the State of Maine. They always travelled at night in order to keep the farmers' horses from running away and their owners from getting a free look. On January 9, 1816 Dr. Bentley speaks in his diary of his nephew visiting "the Elephant kept in Boston," probably Old Bet on her New England tour. On May 29 the Doctor tells us: "I went this morning to see the elephant now on a visit to this town. . . . The Elephant is 13 feet round the body."

With this simple beginning two great shows were born, the Howes and the Barnum and Bailey circuses. But Old Bet was a martyr to the cause, for she was shot to death while travelling from town to town, and Bailey's first venture and his famous elephant were no more. In his diary for July 29, 1816, Dr. Bentley indignantly records the fate of Old Bet:

We learn that the Elephant exhibited as a curiosity in this town lately, was shot in open day by a villain at Alfred, Maine. We have such wretches in our country who have all the lawlessness of our Savages and a full share of them in Maine. It is said the pretence was that money should not be raised in that way in that neighborhood. . . . We believe our manners very correct generally, but we have Savages still.

On August 6th he adds: "The poor Elephant was destroyed in Maine, because he took money from those who could not afford to spend it." However, her thrifty owner saved her bones and hide as we learn from later advertisements in the New York papers. The skeleton of "that unfortunate elephant shot last July 26th in the District of Maine, so well known to the public" will be exhibited after April 5, 1817 at 301 Broadway.

The "New York Evening Post" of November 26, 1821 further announced that the American Museum now has the whole hide of poor old Bet, who "was wantonly shot in the town of Berwick, in 1815 [sic. 1816], as she with her keepers was passing from Boston to Maine. The animal was known by the name of Bet.

She was considered one of the most docile and tractable of her race, but she fell by the hand of a ruffian. She is now put up in as good a style as it is possible to expect considering her immense size."

Hackaliah Bailey, not ungrateful for the start she had given him in the show business, erected in front of his Elephant Hotel in Somers, a tall shaft surmounted by a wooden effigy of Old Bet which may still be seen by the enthusiastic circus fan.

A new elephant appeared in New York in 1818 and was shown at 296 Broadway between March 3rd and April 1st. This was doubtless the male elephant "Columbus" who, according to the "Massachusetts Spy" of July 15, 1818, was to be seen on July 20 and 21 at Mr. Hathaway's Inn at Worcester. He was advertised as the only male elephant in America, seven years old and seven feet high. He could be seen from 8 A. M. to 7. P. M. by those having twenty-five cents, and would journey on to Sutton on the 22nd. By November 18th he was back in New York and on view at the Fly Market and with him a pair of camels and a pair of antelopes. As late as 1847 we hear of Columbus again and by this time he had become a rogue elephant. He was then in Philadelphia, according to Watson's "Annals," which tells us of the strenuous means taken by the City of Brotherly Love to handle the situation. From the "Annals" we learn that he assaulted William Kelly, a keeper, on December 24, 1847 and that the unfortunate man died a few days later. "It being feared that the elephant would break out of the building the mayor provided a piece of cannon, which was planted in front of the doors; but the animal did not come out."

"A living female elephant" was to be seen at Mr. Davenport's stable" in Newburyport on September 18-19, 1821, according to a handbill containing her woodcut portrait, still at Essex Institute. By the following summer she had been taught some simple tricks and was exhibited at Chepachet, Rhode Island, as we learn from another handbill preserved in the

Shepley Library in Providence, which tells us further:

The learned elephant, which for sagacity and docility, exceeds any one ever imported into this country . . . a female twelve years old [and is] seven feet six inches high. . . . [She will] kneel to the company, balance her body alternately on each pair of legs, present her right foot to enable her keeper or any other person to mount her trunk, carry them about the room and safely replace them, draw a cork from a filled bottle and drink the contents and then present the empty bottle and cork to her keeper. She will lie down, sit up and rise at command, bows and whistles at request, answers to the call of her keeper, besides many other marks of sagacity.

This was the Learned Elephant, Little Bet, owned by Titus, Crane and Company. It is a pity that such a clever animal should, like Old Bet, have had a tragic end. But it seems that her keeper had boasted at the performance at Chepachet that her hide was so thick that no bullet could pierce it. Five small boys of the neighborhood decided to test the truth of this statement and so, when she was leaving town, on July 31, 1822, after the performance, they fired at her from behind an elm tree, the bullet struck her in the eye and she fell dead in her tracks, thus giving her keeper the lie at a cost of \$1500.00, which the fathers of the boys were compelled to pay to her irate owners. We know that they paid in full, for the final receipt for the amount is still owned in Providence. Her hide was removed and, it is said, was later sold to a Buffalo museum. It is by no means impossible that this was America's first elephant mentioned earlier in this chapter. (See articles in "Providence Sunday Journal," June 18, 1922; "Circus Scrapbook," Oct., 1931; and brochure published in 1932 by The Old Stone Bank of Providence.)

Another famous elephant, Horatio by name, and "the largest elephant ever seen" spent December and January 1819-20 at Washington Street, New York, and Van Amburgh imported Hannibal in 1824, but after this date the menageries swallowed up the elephants as they had the lions and camels.

Tigers were a little late in coming to America, or at least in getting themselves into print. A "tame tiger"

was included in "A collection of natural curiosities from Africa and the coast of Brazil" which was announced in the New York "Daily Advertiser" for May 16, 1789. As the tiger is a native of neither of the countries mentioned, this specimen may have been one of the so-called "royal Brazilian tigers," a pair of which was exhibited at Lewis Storm's Livery Stable, Pearl Street, New York, February 29, 1815.

Dr. Bentley's diary for July 7, 1806, tells us of seeing "Two Tigers from Surat," India, "about one year old" which were exhibited at Crombie's Tavern, Salem. "They have all the character of the Great Tyger . . . [and] measure already between 6 and 7 feet in length and about 2 feet in height. It is said they were sold for the purpose of exhibiting them at 2,500 dollars."

Two royal "tygers," male and female, probably those shown earlier at Salem, could be seen by the curious at Mr. Brevoort's, 26 Chatham Street, New York, on and after November 19, 1806, according to the "Post." The same paper on July 1, 1808 announced that "the Royal Tyger Nero" would be "let loose in the area of the [Corlaer's Hook] circus to a large Wild Bull, and immediately after to a large Wild Bear." The timorous public was assured, however, that the "tyger will be well secured by a chain from the center of the circus, with length only sufficient to go around the circle of the building." Of course this was all right as long as the chain held!

A royal tiger reached Salem in April, 1816 and Isaiah Thomas in his diary for April 28, 1817 speaks of having seen one exhibited at Worcester.

Rev. William Bentley records the following buffaloes as visiting Salem:

Feb. 22, 1792. Went to the Eagle Tavern, Bacon's, to see a Buffalo. It was of the female kind, two years old and larger than an ox.

April 1, 1795. A Bison in town. . . . In the afternoon it was carried through the town, and such persons gave as pleased to compensate the man for his trouble.

Nov. 29, 1797. A Bison in Town. It is larger than any I have seen but I did not measure. The keeper tells me that he came from far, but he had not his bill of sale with him.

Perhaps this was the same animal mentioned by Felt's "Annals of Salem" as a "bison from Arabia" shown at Mr. Taunzan's Hotel in Church street in 1797. Salem also saw "a buffalo of great size" in January 1820 and an ibex in 1839.

The first Orang-outang or "man of the woods" of which we find a record appeared in New York on May 16, 1789 along with the "tame tiger" just mentioned, and a few other animals. Another appeared at the American Museum in New York in March, 1828. Not until 1831, however, did animal-loving Salem get a look at this strange beast, and Boston seems to have been compelled to wait till about 1836, when one was advertised according to a handbill in our collection.

Ostriches appeared fairly early on the American scene, a pair having been shown at "Woart's Tavern, near Dr. Thatcher's Meeting House" in Boston on November 20, 1794. These specimens were six feet high and four months old, and could be seen at nine pence per person. They were popular with the people of Boston until December 4th when they left for South Carolina.

A live seal was shown at the "Menage," corner of Pearl Street, fronting the Battery, in New York, on April 21, 1796, but they were seldom seen in the early days, no other appearing until one was exhibited at St. John's Hall, New York in 1821. They were still too familiar along the coast to be classed as curiosities.

A male moose was shown in New York in December 1798, according to the "Commercial Advertiser," and there is a record of one at the first agricultural show at Worcester in 1819. Another, or perhaps the same one shown in New York, was in Salem on November 17, 1800, and is thus recorded in Dr. Bentley's diary: "A moose exhibited as a natural curiosity for 9d. Brought from the province of Maine. An ape was exhibited at the same place in the full dress of a Sailor."

A curious advertisement in the "New York Post" of May 8, 1806 announces the exhibition of two dromedaries from Arabia and a Nyl Ghau from the Cape of Good Hope. The latter is "of a middle nature" between a cow and a deer. "It has one horn over the left eye projecting downward."

Dr. Bentley tells us that, on January 11, 1809, "I visited in company the Leopard now exhibiting in Salem. I found him about 4 feet long and about 2 feet high. He appeared in perfect health and playful but he struck with his claws in sport so as to be in earnest upon human flesh. . . . It was said he was from India and about 8 months old. He was confined in a wooden cage with rounds about 6 feet by 3 feet."

And on March 28, 1817, he says: "I visited the Jaguar from Brazil brought into this town. He agrees well enough with the description and is in good care."

"The unicorn, or one-horned rhinoceros," steps with ponderous tread upon the stage at Peale's Museum in New York on October 16, 1826. It reappears at 350 Broadway during June and July 1829. Another rhino, also advertised as the first to be shown in America was exhibited at the Washington Gardens, Tremont Street, Boston, on May 14, 1830, and was on the road with the American National Caravan in 1831 and in 1835 with the Association's Menagerie.

The hippopotamus or "blood-sweating Behemoth of Holy Writ" arrived upon the scene long after the period covered by this narrative. He was first imported by George F. Bailey in the 1850's, and the second specimen by Barnum and Coup in 1873. Adam Forepaugh's circus, showing at Worcester in July 1879, advertised the "\$41,000 behemoth of Holy Writ, who actually sweats blood from every pore."

"The Egyptian giraffe, or camoleopard," was a late comer. Three specimens of this exceedingly delicate species were finally secured in Capetown, South Africa, by General Rufus Welch and brought to this country in 1837 and formed the leading attraction in his show for several years. In 1842 June, Titus and Angevine's Menagerie advertised "the only one now living on the American continent." This was perhaps

the sole survivor of the General's original trio. Peale's Museum in New York proudly announced on March 4, 1839 that they had just secured the only full grown specimen in America. Perhaps this was the one shown at Roche's Garden, New York, in the following month, and in Salem the same summer.

There was considerable rivalry during the 1820's between the two great New York museums. Though they specialized in wax works, freaks, curiosities, and mounted animals, with an occasional concert thrown in, they also had a few live animals and birds, and so form a legitimate part of our chronicle. On November 8, 1826 the American Museum, which was to win far greater fame in later years under Barnum's management, proudly announced that it had secured an enormous anaconda, 15 feet, 7 inches long and 18 inches around the body. Not to be outdone by its rival, Peale's Museum promptly got a larger one and also some rattlesnakes and an alligator and, to make their supremacy certain, announced in May 1827 that they had a calf with two heads, six legs, two tails, two distinct hearts and backbones, but that it was "other-wise perfectly formed."

Snakes were already familiar to the people of New York, however, for on July 27, 1821 we find a rather gruesome exhibition at Washington Hall, New York, in which a diamond rattlesnake is advertised to strike, poison and swallow a rat. The same show included a chicken snake, water "mockassin" and other reptiles. About this time one of the museums advertised to pay a bounty of six cents each for one hundred rats with which to feed its snakes.

We shall close our chapter on the exhibition of individual animals with the mention of one which would have been dear to the heart of Barnum. The "New York Mercury" of February 16, 1761 calls it the Gormagunt and says that "This monster is larger than an elephant, is of a very uncommon shape and has three heads and eight legs." It was supposed to have been caught in Canada, near the St. Lawrence

River. I am sure that the New Yorkers who saw this wonder got the full worth of their money, unless they got too close to it and discovered how it was made.

TRAINED ANIMALS

Many years before the advent of Van Amburgh, Herr Driesbach, Bostock, and Hagenbeck, individual trained animals were being put through their paces in the city museums and country taverns of America. Dancing bears and trained monkeys led the procession.

Pool, the first native American equestrian, had an open air exhibition in New York in 1786 at which could be seen one of our first trick horses. This "very extraordinary horse" would, "at the word of command, lay himself down and groan, apparently through extreme sickness and pain; after which he will rise and sit up like a lady's lap-dog, then rise to his feet and make his manners to the ladies and gentlemen."

Ricketts' circus, which opened in New York on March 16, 1797, also had a trick horse, named "Cornplanter," who would "at the word of command, un-girth his saddle, and take it off his back. He will also pick up a handkerchief, gloves, etc. This horse was purchased in New York three years ago, and only cost one hundred dollars. Mr. Ricketts is conscious of his being the best trained horse in America." Modest Mr. Ricketts!

In 1808-9 Pepin & Breschard's circus exhibited the trained horse, "Conqueror," "unrivalled for docility, sagacity and instruction. [He] will bring when ordered a handkerchief, gun, basket, chair, etc., and will partake of a collation with his master." He was still with this circus as late as 1813.

The trick horse "Napoleon" was with the Lafayette Circus in New York in 1825.

Major Jack Downing, otherwise known as "Dandy Jack," trained and exhibited the trick horse, "Black Hawk." They appeared with the Association's Menagerie in 1835 in an act similar to that performed

during the Civil War period by Dan Rice's famous educated horse, "Excelsior."

Trained birds appeared on the scene as early as 1788, for we find one Willman, from Augsburg, who had performed in various European courts, holding forth at Mr. Van de Waters in New York, according to the "New York Journal" of September 11. He seems to have used canary birds for the most part and, among other wonderful feats which he describes is this: "A living bird is placed upon the carriage of a cannon, the Artist sets fire to the piece, without the bird flying away, which is contrary to the nature of a living bird." He also "performs with little dogs, dressed in uniform."

The second trained canine in our category was exhibited by Mr. Gabriel Salenka at the Assembly Room, 5 Cortlandt Street, New York, in February and March 1796. The dog performed card tricks, and "if asked, can tell the day of the month, the hour of the day, the minute of the hour . . . the number of persons in the room, with the difference of sex." From Felt's "Annals of Salem," we learn that the people of that town were privileged to see "the sapient dog" in 1807.

Again we find the rivalry between the two New York museums in evidence, for, in May 1827, the American Museum was exhibiting the trained dog, "Apollo," who played cards and amazed the crowd with his skill in arithmetic. But by July 7th Peale was one jump ahead of his rival, for he had two dogs. "Toby" "will tell any card . . . answer questions in astronomy, geography and arithmetic." "Minetto" "will leap through hoops, balloons, walk on his front feet and climb a perpendicular ladder." By January 1828, "Apollo" at the American Museum had learned some new accomplishments, for he could now play both dominoes and chess, as well as cards. Peale's Museum countered later in the month with "the very learned dog Romeo" who answered question on *any* subject, scientific, political, etc., and also played cards. But Peale soon put an end to this rivalry, for we find that by August he had added the rival "Apollo" to his own show.

We must now return in our chronology to March 12, 1798 and read over Dr. Bentley's shoulder as he writes in his diary:

"I went to Boston. . . . Upon my arrival and for a moment's amusement I visited the Learned Pig and the exhibition greatly exceeded my expectations. It was taught to discover the cards, to assort the letters of words, and to bring numbers for any purpose."

Two months later the Learned Pig visited Salem, but the Doctor remarks that:

"The learned Pig does not find great encouragement to stay in town."

It may be that most of the other curious Salemites had, like the Doctor, already journeyed to Boston to see this wonder.

Perhaps the first performing monkey to be seen in New York was, according to the "Post-Boy" of February 25, 1751:

To be seen, at the house of Mr. Edward Willet, at White-Hall. It was "A creature, called a Japanese, of about 2 feet high, his body resembling a human body in all parts except the feet and tail. He walks upright, and performs various actions to admiration; such as walking upon a line, hanging and swinging under it, exercising the firelock, dances to any tune, and sundry other things too tedious to mention. The sense and agility of this creature, renders him worthy the observation of the curious.

The "Daily Advertiser" of October 20, 1794 advertised among the other attractions at Thomas Swann's "Circus near the Battery" the exhibition of the dancing monkeys "Jacco" and "Gibonne."

General Jacco, the tight rope dancer, surpasses everything of the kind ever seen before. Gibonne, his associate, plays the part of both footman and waiters to its master, discovers a card taken by any person, by picking it out from the rest of the pack; on any gentlemen giving the initials [sic] of his name, Gibonne will immediately print it on a piece of paper, in a very curious mineature press, with the dexterity of a regular bred typographer.

We find "Jacco" (rechristened "Coco") and his partner "Gibonne" with Citizen Cressin's show at a

theatre in Ann Street, New York, on April 16, 1795 and for the rest of the month, after which they disappear from the picture of metropolitan entertainments.

In the reminiscences of the old Albany circus acrobat, George Stone, we find our first mention of the trained monkey, "Dandy Jack." He says, "Thirty-five years ago [1825] a sort of menagerie opened in the stable opposite Bowlsby's Hotel in North Market street . . . Dandy Jack, a gloomy looking monkey, was the star."

In 1831 we find "Dandy Jack," and also another trained monkey, "Captain Dick," exhibited with the American National Caravan in its tour through the eastern states and lower Canada. They were described as the "semi-equestrians," and if we may believe the woodcuts in the large poster of the show, they rode around the ring standing erect on the back of a shetland pony. At least one of them was dressed in uniform and waved an American flag from his precarious perch, greatly to the delight of the small boys in his audience. These monkeys were doubtless owned at the time by Titus, June and Angevine's aggregation and, with the other animals, were leased to various summer caravans. We catch glimpses of them with various shows as late as 1836, and they were probably popular for some years later. "Dandy Jack" was also known as "Major Jack Downing," and under this name appeared with a circus at 53 Bowery, New York, in 1834. This monkey seems to have been named for the famous contemporary trainer of trick horses, Major Jack Downing, who was also advertised under the name of "Dandy Jack," according to the veteran showman, Charles Bernard.

THE MENAGERIE

With the exception of an occasional hanging, our robust colonial ancestors had very little in the way of entertainment until the arrival of the menagerie and the equestrian show. It is curious that these two should have travelled side by side about the country for over half a century before they united to form the modern circus.

As we have seen, individual animals gradually found their way into menageries and museums, so that by the 1820's very few were still at large. The menagerie had had a small beginning, however, some years earlier, though there was very little of entertainment in the land until the end of the Revolution.

Curiously enough our first "animal act" harks back in spirit to the days of our Elizabethan forefathers, for it was a bull-baiting and we find it quaintly advertised in the "New York Royal Gazette" of August 29, 1781 as to take place the following day.

The subscriber having procured a stout Bull, proposes bating him to morrow at four o'clock in the afternoon, at his house, the sign of his present Majesty, near the fresh Water Pump. The Bull is active, and very vicious, therefore hopes the spectators will have a satisfactory diversion.

Thos. McMullan.

We have little doubt that the bull's hopes for the amusement of the crowd were fully realized, especially as the town was full of redcoats at the time.

The beginnings of a menagerie appeared in New York on December 26th of the same year. It was advertised with becoming restraint as an "Exhibition of the most beautiful, curious and extraordinary productions of nature, ever exposed to view in America" and consisted of "birds, reptiles, snakes and quadrupeds," but the pioneer publicity man was too canny to disclose further details except to those willing to come forward with the necessary half dollar.

A surprisingly complete aggregation of animals appeared in New York on May 16, 1789, however, and was to be seen at 28 Wall Street,

fronting the Coffee House." It included "A male and female of the surprising species of the Ourang-Outang, or, the Man of the Woods; the sloth, which from its sluggish disposition, will grow poor in travelling from one tree to another; the Baboon of different species, and of a most singular disposition; Monkey, Porcupine, Ant Bear, Crocodile, Lizard, and Sword Fish; Snakes (of various kinds and very extraordinary); Tame Tiger, and Buffalo; also a great variety of Birds, of different sizes, colour and species.

We shall pass hastily over Mr. Bowen's mere half-dozen live animals, exhibited in New York in 1793 along with his stuffed animals and wax works; and pause for a moment to view the "Living curiosities at the Menage, at the corner of Pearl street, fronting the Battery," our first serious attempt at a permanent exhibition of live animals. This collection, shown in April 1796, included the first seal ever exhibited, "a most beautiful sea gannet, a bird as large as a goose," and about twenty living animals. By May 6, 1797 the collection had added a pair of wolves, some monkeys, an opossum, and other small American animals.

Dr. William Bentley tells us in his diary of March 12, 1798 that he dropped in on a Boston museum to see the Learned Pig, mentioned elsewhere in this paper. While there he also recorded his impressions of the museum's small and mangy menagerie, as follows:

In the menagerie was a bear sleeping and slumbering with an insolent contempt of every visitor. A Babboon, more fond of entertaining his guests, an affronted porcupine, and two owls who gave us no share of their notice.

Though a man of peace, it is evident that the Reverend Doctor liked his wild animals wild.

On July 12, 1816, Dr. Bentley visited a menagerie at Salem. We seldom find a contemporary account of one of these early exhibitions other than in an advertisement, and so it is particularly interesting to hear what the famous old clergyman with the inquiring mind had to say:

This day I amused myself with the sight of the Animals exhibited at the Sun [Tavern]. The Tyger is a Lordly Animal and was in perfection. The Buffaloe has not the beauty of our Ox. The Guanicus [guanaco] between the Camel and the Deer families, may have fleetness but no uncommon interest. The Six Monkeys seemed to make themselves much sport together, and the Dogs danced, but this had little spirit in it. The Monkey seemed to care nothing for liberty or for a home. He was supplied and it was enough. I love to see such things in the style of nature and asked for no pranks. The Ant Bear sat quietly alone in a posture which discovered he thought he could chuse a place which might suit him better.

Though numerous single animals were exhibited in the meantime, we find no other group of them until the opening of the Theatre of Natural Curiosity at Warren Street, near Broadway, New York, on September 1, 1817. Here we might see two live camels, and a number of other animals, together with a troupe of gymnasts and slack wire artists. Scudder's American Museum, which had specialized since 1811 in preserved and mounted natural history found a rival in Jacques Perdiguier who, with the aid of his sister, had spent eighteen years in making a similar though smaller collection which he opened in New York on September 8, 1819, as the Grand Museum of Natural History. His chief interest for us is the fact that he also had on view a few living creatures including a "taucan with a bill as big as the body," (reminiscent of the famous limerick of the pelican) five parroquets, a pawise, etc.

But we have stayed over long in the metropolis and must now push on to a small county town in central Massachusetts and visit its first cattle show and fair through the eyes of a French traveller. J. Milbert had been sent to America by his government to secure natural history specimens, both live and prepared, for the museums and zoological gardens of Paris. On a certain Summer day of 1819 he found himself in Worcester on his way to Boston and, finding the fair in full swing, he decided to stop and take it in. After spending the morning in inspecting the various domestic animals and native products, he found himself in the afternoon drawn towards the side shows. From his travels, published in Paris in 1829, we make the following translation:

My attention was soon attracted by the pompous announcements and the gigantic posters in the midst of which the proprietors of several travelling menageries strove to attract the crowd. These pictures, similar in all respects to those we see employed in our fairs and annual fetes, [in France] represented animals devouring women and children, or fighting among the savages, etc. I noticed that the crowd drifted particularly towards the lion, an animal which has for the Americans the merit of a distant origin. As for me, I preferred to investigate

the native animals and I made a visit to one of the handsomest quadrupeds which lives in North America, and of which I had previously seen but a single pair. It bears among the Americans the name of Moose.

Our old friend Felt, in his "Annals of Salem" records briefly that his fellow citizens had an opportunity, in July 1820, of seeing a caravan which included a lion, a lama, an ocelot, an ichneumon, etc.

The old showman George Stone tells us an interesting story of how an elephant saved the life of Joe Martin, whose menagerie was well known in the 1820's, when he remembers its having visited Albany. "Tippo Sultan, the great elephant was the star, being the second elephant ever seen in America [which he was not]. Tippo saved Joe's life in the Bowery, New York, in 1822, under the following circumstances: Two tigers had got loose from their cages in the absence of the keepers. Martin came into the caravan at this moment. One of the tigers had torn the lama to pieces and was feeding on it. The other tiger had attacked the lion [in its cage], the lion holding the tiger in chancery [with one paw through the bars]. The tiger that was feeding upon the lama then made at Joe. He had a cane in his hand and kept him at bay till he got to the elephant who, quick as thought, with his trunk placed Joe in safety on his own back. Tippo threw the tiger with great violence to the roof of the building. The alarm was given and the animals secured. It was a most miraculous escape for Joe." This exciting episode is graphically pictured in a rare lithograph published in 1826 with the title: "Magnanimity of the elephant displayed in the preservation of his keeper, J Martin, in the Bowery Menagerie in New York." In this print the episode is dated December, 1826, but as it was copyrighted in 1825, the former date is obviously an error and Stone's statement that the rescue took place in 1822 is probably correct.

Stone also recalls having seen a menagerie in Albany in 1825 which exhibited in a stable opposite Bowsby's Hotel in North Market Street. This show, in addition

to the trick monkey, Dandy Jack, previously mentioned, boasted of two bear cubs, a two headed calf and "A monster that was thrown upon the beach at Staten Island." This monster was twenty feet long, had a tail like a whale, a black body and a square head with two sunken eyes. Dr. Latham, who later became a wild beast collector in the jungles of South America, was the manager. He has cautiously described this curious what-is-it as a whale or "very like a whale." The show folks besmeared it through the day with a very rancid kind of oil, the odor having the effect of keeping the meddling audience at a distance, as close examination would be fatal.

A prying, meddlesome Yankee lawyer, while the company was showing in Waterloo, New York, felt extremely anxious to ascertain the exact thickness of the whale's hide. So he cut a large hole in the whale with his knife and found that it was made of sole leather, the tail being the only simon-pure part of the leviathan, which was used as a trunk for the wardrobe of the company. Suffice it to say, as soon as the trick was discovered, the mob harpooned the entire show. Dandy Jack, however, as we have already learned, survived the catastrophe.

The year 1828 brings us back to New York and we find that on November 26th a Menagerie of Living Animals opened at No. 15 Bowery. This was a small but respectable establishment, for the advertisement tells us that it included a tiger from Asia, a polar bear, an African lion and an "Asiatic ditto," a leopard, a Brazilian tiger, a cougar and a jaguar.

And now we come to the most important firm in the wild animal business prior to the Civil War: June, Titus and Angevine's Menageries. John J. June, Lewis B. Titus, Caleb Sutton Angevine, and Jeremiah Crane, all of the town of North Salem, New York, were inspired by the success of their neighbor, Hackaliah Bailey, and his elephant Old Bet, to go into the show business for themselves. And so, some time previous to 1820, they pooled their slender capital and started a

road show with the high-sounding title *The Zoological Institute*. The notorious Wall Street plunger, Daniel Drew, who was later to be the partner of Jim Fiske, another old menagerie man, was at one time the clown of this new menagerie. Their show prospered and about 1820 or 1821 they became permanently settled in their own building at 37 Bowery, New York, where they exhibited their animals in the winter and leased them out to travelling caravans or else took part of them on the road themselves in the summer. They began by buying an occasional animal from a sea captain, but later sent their own expeditions to Asia and Africa to supply the growing demand. The Institute, with occasional changes in the firm, was in existence for a quarter of a century and was the first to make a business of supplying wild animals for exhibition in America. Their own travelling show sometimes went under the name of *The Association's Menagerie and Aviary*, and others using their animals included the *Animal Caravan*, *Burgess' Menagerie*, *Raymond & Waring*, *I. A. Van Amburgh*, and the *American National Caravan*.

In the early days of the circus and menagerie a single advance agent with a few crudely printed posters in his saddlebags rode on horseback through the country a few days in advance of the show and tacked up his alluring announcements on barroom walls, fences and barns, gave the gaping villagers a glowing verbal account of the approaching entertainment and rode rapidly on to the next show town. The original posters used in the early days are all but unknown today for they were too large to lay away in the family Bible along with the facsimile of the "*Ulster County Gazette*," the reward of merit and the valentine. So far as known not a single large poster of a circus or menagerie which was on the road before 1850 was known to exist until our society was fortunate enough to secure three of them last year.

The earliest of these posters advertised the famous *American National Caravan* and appeared in 1831. It

measured approximately three by six feet and was adorned with a variety of more or less realistic woodcuts of some two dozen animals. The poster featured "The unicorn, or one horned rhinoceros" which it describes as the first living rhino ever brought to America, though the same or another specimen had been exhibited in New York five years earlier. This rhino had been bought in Calcutta and landed in Boston on May 9, 1830, according to the poster.

The poster also describes a pair of mocos, "animals not treated of in natural history, nor ever before seen in this country" and a "Royal tiger of Asia." We are told that "The beautiful regularity of his stripes excites the admiration of the beholder." Then there is the ichneuman, the jaguar from the banks of the Amazon, a camel with two humps from Bactriana, the African leopard and a lama.

For the amusement of the children the Caravan advertised a race around the ring by two trained monkeys, "Captain Dick" and "Dandy Jack," "the semi equestrians," each mounted on a shetland pony. "Good music" was supplied and the poster ends with the statement that "The above splendid menagerie will be exhibited at Mr. [C. W. Abeel's Recess (?)] in [Easton] on [Thursday] the [8th] day of [Septr] 1831, for [one] day only."

Our second oldest poster celebrates the glories of "The Association's Celebrated and Extensive Menagerie and Aviary from their Zoological Institute in the City of New York, embracing all the subjects of natural history, as exhibited at that popular & fashionable resort during the winter of 1834-5." This is the largest early poster we have been able to locate and it measures 6½ by 9½ feet in size. A large woodcut of a rhinoceros in a cage on wheels being hauled by a six-horse team heads the procession of animal portraits which makes the poster so quaint and attractive. This menagerie was far larger than that advertised in the earlier poster for it included tigers, lions, leopards, panthers, a zebra, buffalo, alpacha, dromedary, quagga,

gnu, kangaroos, polar bear, a "Bactrian campbell," and a cage of monkeys besides many other smaller animals and birds.

One of the main features of the show was an elephant which the more intrepid spectators could ride, and another very real attraction was the feeding of the animals "in the presence of the audience at 4 o'clock P. M." The poster further tells us that the menagerie "Will be exhibited in [Clinton on Friday the 12th day of June 1835]," admittance 25 cents, children under ten years of age half price, and the hours of exhibition from one until four in the afternoon.

It is interesting that this large poster was printed in two strips joined together vertically in the center and it has the imprint: "Printed by Jared W. Bell, Franklin Hall, 17 Ann Street, New-York. On his improved Napier cylinder press, the largest in the world."

This large poster is accompanied by a smaller one advertising the same show, which measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ by 7 feet. Though it has fewer woodcuts, its text is more interesting and gives us a much better idea of the typical large travelling menagerie of this early period.

From the smaller poster we learn that the menagerie: is transported on 47 carriages & wagons, drawn by 120 select grey horses attached to which are 14 musicians and a company of sixty men. The whole will be exhibited under three spacious pavilions of sufficient capacity to contain 10,000 persons. Portable seats will be erected for the accomodation of 1000 persons, ladies & children always having the preference.

As we read farther we learn that "The great male elephant" on which the spectators are invited to ride is decidedly the finest elephant in America. . . . The proprietors would most respectfully inform the public, that they have constructed a splendid saddle, trimmed and decorated after the Eastern style, similar to the print on the large bill. . . . The elephant will be introduced in the circle with his saddle on, during the hours of performance, thereby offering an opportunity for those who have a desire, to participate in a ride upon this majestic animal.

The unicorn, or rhinoceros, mentioned in Scripture, . . . now offered for exhibition is seven years old, and is the first ever brought to America. . . . Its present weight is about 4200

pounds. The growth of its horn is much retarded as it continually thumps its head against the bars of its cage.

The gnu, or horned horse. So extraordinary is the structure of this animal, that some persons have doubted the reality of its existence, and have supposed it to be a creature merely of the artist's imagination. . . . In the shape of its body it evidently partakes of the horse, the ox, the stag, and the antelope. It is fierce and vicious, and apparently untameable.

And now we come to the more interesting part of the announcement, that which tells of the beginnings of the union of the menagerie with the circus. We find that "Major Jack Downing will conduct the sports of the ring, assisted by Black Hawk." The latter was a famous trick horse and the former the well known trainer and ring master. At any rate, there were the beginnings of a ring show and the introduction of horses and riders into the menagerie program. We have to wait many years, however, for the complete union of the menagerie and the circus with its bareback riders, ground and lofty tumblers, high wire artists, clowns and freaks.

But we do have in this poster one of the early accounts of the first and greatest of the pioneer wild animal trainers, Isaac A. Van Amburgh, who had been an animal keeper since 1821. During the season of 1834, at the Zoological Institute in New York, he had, probably for the first time, dared to enter the cages of the various jungle beasts which he had in his care. This intrepid feat, as the poster tells us, he was now prepared to repeat for the entertainment of his patrons. "The keeper will enter the four following cages at 3 1/2 o'clock P. M. Viz: To the lion, lioness, leopard & leopardess, all in one cage. To the black maned cape lion, lioness and royal tigress, in same cage. To royal tiger & tigress. And to the lion, leopard, and panther in same cage."

There was no attempt as yet to teach the animals to perform but the crowds were sufficiently thrilled that any man should have the hardihood so much as to step through the bars and stay even for a few moments in the same cage with these ferocious beasts. The bally-

hoo of this old time poster gives us a vivid picture of the scene:

The inmates of these cages form a most gigantic and imposing spectacle. This group of the most formidable and unconquerable of all the natives of the forest, furnishes to the mind of the spectator, an insuperable barrier to the belief, that the art of man could subjugate to his will and control these wild and ferocious animals. Yet his credulity [sic] must at once be dissipated, when he beholds the keeper in their cage, playing and frolicking with them, and all enjoying their wild pranks with as much seeming delight and innocence, as children do their holiday gambols.

The success which has attended all the attempts of Mr. Vanamberg to obtain the perfect obedience and command of the various wild beasts in this Institute, is perhaps without parallel in any country. The perfect security with which he approaches them, with as much familiarity and freedom as others would the Newfoundland dog, is a matter of great astonishment, especially when we take into account the fact, that in all countries of which these animals are natives, and where they are found in great abundance, there is no instance, where the inhabitants ever effected or even attempted the taming of one of them; notwithstanding the facilities of their obtaining them when young.

Mr. Van Amberg, the manager of the animals in the Institute, with an unerring judgment, having first familiarized himself with the leopards and lions, and so far reduced their ferocity as to visit them in their respective cages, conceived the project of uniting them.

Upon the first introduction of the lions to the cage with the leopards, the right of premises was pertinaciously disputed by the former, when a warm and desperate contest ensued; in the midst of which, Mr. Van Amberg, with an inflexible intrepidity, rushed into their cage, and in almost an instant quelled the conflict of these belligerents.

Subsequently they have occasionally waged war with each other with much sanguinary earnestness, but would immediately desist from their hostile operations upon the approach of Mr. V. whom they each appeared to look upon as their exclusive friend and protector, and evidently exhibit a conscious security from an attack upon each other when he is present.

Mr. Van Amberg enters this cage [containing a lion, leopard and panther], also, with the same security as the others, where the different species are united; plays and fondles with the inmates, alternately, and demonstrates the perfect subjugation of the whole groupe to his unparalleled and apparently magic powers.

It was Van Amburgh who inspired the greatest of all circus songs, "The Menagerie," by C. T. Miller of Providence, of which the following lines are the most familiar:

He sticks his head in the lion's mouth,
And holds it there a while,
And when he takes it out again,
He greets you with a smile.

Oh, the elephant, he goes round,
The band begins to play,
And the boys around the monkey's cage
Had better keep away.

Perhaps the second most famous circus song, and one sometimes still heard over the radio, is "The flying trapeze," by Gaston Lyle, with music by George Leybourne, which has the familiar refrain:

He flew through the air, with the greatest of ease,
This daring young man on the flying trapeze;
His movements so graceful, all girls he could please
And my love he purloined away.

But these two songs came somewhat later than the period of which we are writing, the first having appeared in its original form in "Carmina Collegensia." Boston, 1876, and the second as a separate piece of sheet music in New York in 1868.

The first menagerie in Philadelphia was conducted for several years by Raymond and Waring and occupied a building which they had erected for the purpose on Walnut Street above Eighth, later known as the Continental Theatre. They eventually sold out to Welch and Lent and the zoological collection finally became the property of "General" Rufus Welch on his own account. The "General," originally from New Berlin, N. Y., and a chairmaker by trade, was at one time a partner of Titus, June and Angevine but later became their principal rival in the importation and exhibition of wild animals. As early as 1829 or 1830 he was busy building up his zoological collection and for a time had Van Amburgh and his caged cats under his management, travelling with his Welch and

Bartlett show and also in Macomber, Welch & Co.'s Mammoth Zoological Exhibition, which visited Salem on November 11-13, 1834, according to the "Essex Register" of Oct. 30, 1834. It is interesting that by this time the menagerie which originally had only daylight performances, was advertising three shows per day, at 10 to 1, 2 to 4, and 7 to 9. This organization had 100 animals, 75 horses, 50 men and a military band, and advertised that the keeper would enter the cage of the lion and lioness and also the cage of the spotted hyena at three o'clock.

Van Amburgh was back in New York at the Zoological Institute or Van Amburgh's Menagerie, as it was also called, at 37 Bowery in the winter of 1834, where he advertised "The most extensive collection of beasts and birds in the known world." Here at four and again at 8 he would "enter the cage with the lion, lioness and tiger, all three confined in one cage and living in a state of harmony together." (N. Y. "Commercial," Dec. 1, 1834.)

During this season the Institute had a rival menagerie showing at 53 Bowery which advertised the largest lion ever exhibited in America and also our old friend the trained monkey "Major Jack Downing." (N. Y. "Post," Nov. 8, 1834.)

A versatile performer was Isaac Van Amburgh, for we find him playing the part of Constantius, a Greek, in a piece called "The Lion Lord," at the American Theatre, Bowery, on April 3, 1837, the season at the Zoological Institute having just closed at that time. He was again on the stage with his animals in "Blue Beard" at Wallack's National Theatre in New York in June and the early part of July 1838. Here we see the beginning of the trek from the tan bark to the vaudeville stage by the circus performers between regular circus seasons.

The management of the Zoological Institute frequently changed, for in 1837-8 we find it operated by Angevine and Company but when the following season opened it was under the firm name of Titus, Angevine

& Co. with its name changed to The Bowery Amphitheatre. With this change of management its character changed almost completely for Van Amburgh was no longer with the company, and it had riders and a clown with comic songs and pantomime. In November 1839 it reopened under the firm name of June, Titus and Angevine, with the features of the previous season and with trained elephants added to the act. The menagerie, though still featured, was no longer the chief attraction, for the riders and tumblers now overshadowed the animal show and the circus as we know it today had emerged. Even the staid "Knickerbocker Magazine" had a good word to say for the performance in its issues of November 1839 and February 1840:

Bowery Amphitheatre. We have but a word for this excellent establishment. It is quiet, orderly, and admirably arranged; and the amusements are of the best description of circus entertainments. The noble menagerie, adjoining the amphitheatre, is another important and valuable attraction! . . . This establishment continues, as it deserves, to draw crowded houses. We do not remember ever to have seen a complete circus so well conducted. The entertainments are good, and the horses and their riders second to none in their class. Good order is uniformly preserved; and private boxes, handsomely fitted up for select parties, or private families, may always be commanded. The "Amphitheatre" is, in short, a very attractive resort, and well repays the liberal patronage of the town.

Now that the menagerie has joined the circus we must leave it and all of the small road shows, which lack of space will not permit us to mention, and retrace our steps in order to follow the early adventures of the acrobats.

ACROBATS

It is probable that strolling acrobats and clowns travelled through the colonies at a very early period, or at least through all of them except New England where their presence was without doubt discouraged by parson and beadle. A troupe reached Philadelphia as early as 1724, however, and their advertisement in the "American Weekly Mercury" of May 7th gives us

a good picture of them and their show. As we read the announcement we realize how little this type of performance has changed from Elizabethan times to the present and it is particularly interesting that the spectators were allowed to sit on the stage, just as in the days of Shakespeare. If we could have strolled out to see the performance at Society Hill in 1724 we would have found Philadelphia's first theatre, The Booth, outside the city limits, and this is what we would have seen:

This is to give Notice to all Gentlemen, Ladies and others, That there is newly arrived to this place the famous Performance of Roap-Dancing, which is performed to the Admiration of all the Beholders,

1st, By a little Boy of seven Years old, who Dances and Capers upon the strait Roap, to the Wonder of all Spectators.

2dly, By a Womam, [sic] who Dances a Corant and a Jigg upon the Roap, which she performs as well as any Dancing Master does it on the Ground.

3dly, She Dances with Baskets upon her Feet, and Iron Fetters upon her Legs.

4thly, She walks upon the Roap with a Wheel-Barrow before her.

5thly, You will see various Performances upon the Slack Roap.

6thly, You are entertained with the Comical Humour of your Old Friend Pickle Herring.

The whole Concluded with a Woman turning round in a swift Motion with seven or eight Swords Points at her Eys, Mouth and Breast, for a Quarter of an Hour together, to the Admiration of all that behold the Performance.

There will likewise be several other diverting Performances on the Stage, too large here to mention.

The above Performances are to be seen at the New Booth on Society Hill, To begin on Thursday next, being the last day of April, and to continue Acting, the Term of Twenty Days and no longer.

The Price upon the Stage is Three Shillings, in the Pit Two Shillings, and in the Gallery One Shilling and Six Pence.

To begin exactly at Seven a Clock in the Evening.

An even more wonderful performance greeted the curious of New York on August 20, 1753, according to the "Mercury" of that date, for on that evening, in a new house erected for that purpose in Mr. Adam Van Denberg's garden, one might see "the celebrated

Anthony Joseph Dugee, (Late an Apprentice to the Grand Turk Mahomet Caratha)," a slack wire artist of distinction, if we may believe his advertisement:

I. He raises the wire to a swing, then rises on his feet, walking forwards and backwards in full swing; and turns himself, and swings to admiration on one foot. II. He will balance seven pipes on his nose. III. He balances a straw on the head of a drinking glass. IV. He plays with four balls at once, in a surprizing manner. V. In particular, he will balance a pyramid of glasses, full of wine, on his chin, walking the wire at the same time. VI. He stands on his head on the wire at full swing. Also, several new exercises on the stiff-rope, by Dr. Dugee, the Indian, and young Negro boy. In particular, Mr. Dugee will dance the rope with boots and spurs. . . .

On September 3d he advertised to perform several new feats including that of wheeling "a whell-barrow [sic] with his Negro boy in it on the wire," and "eating his supper standing on his head at the same time, on the nob of a chair." By the 17th he had added his wife to the performance, under the name of The Female Sampson, which title she richly earned for:

She lies with her body extended between two chairs, and bears an anvil of 300 lb. on her breast, and will suffer two men to strike on it with sledge-hammers. II. She will bear six men to stand on her breast, lying in the same position. III. She will lift the above anvil by the hair of her head. IV. She will suffer a stone of 700 lb. to lye on her breast, and throw it off six feet from her. V. She bear [sic] a bar of iron to be broken on her breast.

New Yorkers evidently found their visit to a mountebank show in 1771 somewhat precarious as we learn from the "Massachusetts Spy" of September 5 of that year:

We hear from New-York, that about 120 men, women and children, who had been to Long Island to see a mountebank exhibit, on their return, the boat they were in run on a rock and would soon have sunk, had not several other boats come speedily to their assistance.

New York had to wait until 1773 for its second advertised juggler, but in the "Mercury" of November 8 of that year, we learn of the feats of balance and precision of one Benjamin Abram who performed at

the house of Mr. Robert Hull in the Broadway. To his various feats of balancing he added an exhibition of "dexterity of hand, in a manner altogether new, being never as yet exhibited in any part of America,"—perhaps our first magician.

The next slack wire artist to appear in New York was an Irishman named John Brenon, "from Dublin," who appeared with a partner, one Johnston, according to the "Gazetteer" of March 3, 1774, and alone in 1787, when he had a run of nearly three months, according to the "Advertiser" of July 18th and following issues. In 1788 and again in 1790 he appeared in Salem, with legerdemain added to his repertoire and a wife to assist him.¹ By way of advertising, he sent up a hot air balloon before the performance.

An Italian company appeared at Concert Hall, Salem, from July 22 to 29, 1789, according to the "Salem Mercury" of the 21st and 28th, which announced that "The celebrated Italian balance master Donegani" and his company "will perform the most curious and surprising attitudes on the slack rope, and a great number of tumbling feats, [as well as] the most extraordinary balancing and walking on the wire." The performance was to begin at eight and the tickets cost one shilling, six pence. His feats are further eulogized in a contemporary handbill still preserved at the Essex Institute. Rev. William Bentley's diary for February 19, 1789 mentions a wire dancer and tumbler named Murray who was in Salem on that date; and on January 8, 1790 he says: "Last evening one Bennet pretending to be the first American wire dancer appeared and exhibited in this town."

We find Donegani and his troupe still performing their "genteel entertainment of activity" at Corre's Hotel in New York on January 8, 1791, according to the "Advertiser."² They included in their repertoire tumbling, leaping, jumping, dancing, balancing and walking on the wire and rope, with a boy Hercules as a

¹J. B. Felt: "Annals of Salem," 1849, Vol. 2, p. 84. William Bentley: "Diary," Jan. 5, 1788; Nov. 22, 1790.

²They were in Philadelphia Nov. 1791-1792.

feature. This troupe lost one of its stars when Peter Clores, according to the "Advertiser" of May 18, 1792, opened a show of his own with a variety of wire work and tumbling. By the end of the summer he had gathered about him a considerable company of performers including a clown, Mr. Clumsey, and a pair of very limber young English tumblers, Masters Manly and Hearn. We find these "Two surprising youths, lately from Sadler's Wells, London, one 11 years old and the other 10," mentioned again in the "American Apollo," August 9, 23 and 30, 1793, when they were putting on their own show at Mr. Bryant's Hotel in Boston.

Peter Cloris, who had in the meantime become "Don Pedro Cloris," turned up at Newburyport in 1791 where he performed his "Surprising feats of activity" at Union-Hall on August 17, according to a handbill in the New York Public Library. From this bill we learn that he "has performed in Paris, Lyons, and several other large cities in France." As late as January 1, 1801, we find him still performing on the slack wire at Washington Hall in Salem, according to a handbill at Essex Institute, and with him "Mr. Maginnis with automoton figures and a wonderful ballard of babes in the wood."

The good people of Boston were slow to allow play-houses and entertainers among them, but on August 10, 1792, the "New Exhibition Room, Board Alley," for so they styled their first theatre, was opened, and on the evening of the 16th they were privileged to see for the first time "dancing on the tight rope, by Monsieurs Placide and Martine. Mons. Placide will dance a hornpipe on a tight rope, play the violin in various attitudes and jump over a cane, backwards and forwards." There were also "feats of tumbling and on the slack rope," and both Mons. and Madame Placide gave exhibitions of dancing.

Though slow to allow a theatre to open, Boston was quick to appreciate it once it was available, and we find Placide's company frequently advertised, along

with a great variety of other entertainment, all through the autumn of 1792. But plays as such were still under a cloud, so the clever manager of the "Exhibition Room" announced them as "Moral lectures," thereby fooling nobody but the pious who did not attend. So we find the "American Apollo" of October 5 announcing the moral lecture of the "Tragical History of George Barnwell," with Mr. Roberts performing feats on the slack rope as an added attraction. Again, on the 12th, was presented a moral lecture, "Venice Preserved," with "Dancing on the tight rope by Monsieurs Placide & Martine" and "Various feats on the slack rope by Mr. Robert" between the acts. Four days later we find Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew" masquerading as "A favorite moral lecture called . . . Catharine & Petruchio" and again Monsieurs Placide and Martine held forth while the company changed their meagre scenery and costumes.

By December 7th Madame Placide had ventured to make her second appearance on the rope and Monsieur Trunche had been added to the troupe. January 25th found the company still as popular as ever with new features to attract the populace, including "Equilibriums on the slack wire by Mr. Harrington" and a song: "Whether my love," by Madame Placide, this being her second attempt to sing in English. Placide's troupe was in Salem during the week of December 21, 1792, when Rev. William Bentley mentions them in his diary:

"The third time this week M. Placide has exhibited on the rope and with all the variety of his minuets, songs, &c. There was disturbance last Wednesday within [the hall] from the licentious behaviour of some bucks of the town. From 100 to 200 persons attended on these occasions. His company consisted of seven persons, two females included."

According to Dr. Bentley's entry for December 25, the Placide troupe was still in town. It is amusing to read in his diary for July 31, 1792 of the baleful effect of travelling acrobats on the youth of New England.

"The effect from the rope flyers, who visited N. England, after whose feats the children of seven were sliding down the fences and wounding themselves in every quarter."

An unusually versatile gentleman was "the elder Rannie" who appeared in New York in December, 1801, according to the "Commercial Advertiser." To begin with, he gave a "much admired exhibition of ventriloquism, or, speaking as it were from the belly." He would also mimic the whistling of birds and was something of a magician. He also exhibited "Perpendicular, triangular and horizontal whirligig feats of balancing." In April 1804, having just returned from the West Indies, he began a long run in New York and apparently performed very acceptably on the slack wire and did many other wonderful feats of balancing, if we may judge from the curious woodcuts in the "Chronicle" and "Post" of that period.

One of the most famous acrobatic troupes in the early days was Mr. Vilallave's company which appeared in New York on June 30, 1814. Though advertised as the New York Circus, this organization was made up entirely of acrobats, both male and female, young and old, who exhibited rope dancing, tumbling, pyramiding, and other feats of dexterity. Some of them also sang songs and they presented the famous pantomime, "Harlequin Doctor," with Gorgues playing the clown.

This company appeared at Worcester on August 14-17, 1818 as we learn from two interesting handbills in our library. They advertised "Tight rope, and grand posturing feats, by Messrs. Vilallave, Menial, Begodes [the clown], the Young Roman, the Young Spaniolet, Mrs. Vilallave, and the Little Chinese." They were on their way to Albany and held their show at Hathaway's Hall and tickets could be had at Mr. Hathaway's Bar at fifty cents each, the performance to begin at eight in the evening. Besides the performance on the tight rope there would be ground and lofty tumbling and Mr. Vilallave would "dance on the rope a grotesque

dance, with a basket tied to his feet, and his hands and feet chained," as was most graphically depicted in an accompanying woodcut. "There will likewise be exhibited, the dance of the double rope, by three persons," also shown in the woodcut. It is interesting that this is the same feat which the Wallendas are still doing in Ringling's circus, except that they have improved it by introducing a fourth performer who stands on the shoulders of the third, who, in turn, is balanced on a rod suspended between the other two performers, mounted on bicycles on a tight wire.

Vilallave and his company were popular for many years and we hear of them here and there throughout the east and south as we turn the pages of the old newspapers. We catch a glimpse of them in Savannah, Georgia, in January 1828, according to the Savannah "Republican" and at Saratoga, New York on July 7, 1829, as we learn from the "Sentinel."

The first woman performer on the wire to astonish the natives of Boston was Mrs. Mestayer, who gave a performance there in 1815. (W. W. Clapp: "A record of the Boston stage," 1853, p. 142-4.)

By 1809 the acrobats had begun to join the circus, though many troupes were still exhibiting on their own. That summer, however, we find a rope dancer among the attractions of Pepin and Breschard's circus in New York, and from this time onward the acrobats formed a regular attraction in all self-respecting circuses.

FREAKS

When we mention freaks we always think of Barnum, Tom Thumb, and the Siamese Twins, but that curious twist of human nature which demands that showmen produce the weird and wonderful, the outlandish and the grotesque, had brought to light the freak as an object of exhibition some generations before Barnum was born. There were doubtless many freaks being shown about the country from one tavern to another before the Revolution and a careful combing of old

diaries and newspapers would probably bring a number of them to light.

As early as August 21, 1771 Boston had an opportunity to see an unusually tiny dwarf. We find her described as follows in the "Massachusetts Spy" of August 22 and 29, 1771:

There is arrived in town this day, and to be seen at the house of the widow Bignall, the next door to the King's Head Tavern, a little above Mr. Hancock's wharf, a Maiden Dwarf, who is fifty-three years old, and of but twenty-two inches in stature. It was by the counsel of some Gentlemen, that she came to pay a visit to this place; and she is willing to exhibit herself as a shew to such Gentlemen and Ladies as are desirous to gratify their curiosity, for one shilling lawful money for each person.

It is curious that one of the earliest dwarfs to win fame in America was, like Barnum's famous protege, nicknamed Tom Thumb. A handbill announcing his appearance in Newburyport in 1797, a copy of which is preserved at the New York Public Library, tells us about him.

To the curious and benevolent. A dwarf child. Mr. Bryant respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of Newburyport, that the dwarf child will be exhibited on this day, August 3, from 9 o'clock A. M. till 1, and from 2 to 5 P. M. at Union Hall. Positively for the last time. This child has lately been exhibited at Mr. Bowen's Assembly-Hall Boston, where he was allowed to be the greatest natural curiosity even seen. He has there assumed the name of Tom Thumb, Jun. as he is the smallest boy of his age ever known. He is six years old, 26 inches high, and weighs only 12 pounds. He is very handsome, and well proportioned, and very active and manly. This surprising little genius was born in Bridgewater [Maine] where his parents now live; they being in low circumstances, wish to make a collection for the maintenance and education of their child. Admittance, 1s, 6d; half price for children.

About a week earlier Dr. William Bentley saw him at Salem, as we learn from his diary. "July 26, 1797. I had the great pleasure of seeing Calvin, a dwarf child . . . It is carried about by its relatives who are unacquainted with any arts, and who plead the poverty of its parents. They have taught it only the childish amusements . . ."

We see Tom Thumb Jun. a year later in New York at the stage house of William Treadwell, 5 Cortlandt Street, and learn from the "Daily Advertiser" of November 24, 1798 that his real name is Calvin Phillips and that, though he is a year older, he has not increased in size or stature. He continued to draw a crowd until the middle of December, and we do not see him again until December 16, 1801, when he returned for a few days, still under the management of Mr. Bryant.

Earlier in 1798 New York had an opportunity to see quite a different freak of nature. A seven-year-old girl with "beautiful features" but "without any limbs . . . Although she is thus conditioned, she can help herself with the greatest ease and facility to food of all kinds, can take a glass and convey it to her mouth and help herself to drink, can work various kinds of needlework and any kind of plain sewing to the astonishment of all who see her." She could be seen, according to the "Advertiser," at the Museum of Gardner Baker on April 2, 1798 and as much longer as her popularity lasted. This, in all probability, was Martha Ann Honeywell, who visited Salem in 1809 and was, of course, seen and described by the ever inquisitive Dr. Bentley. In his diary for Jan. 27, 1809 we find this entry:

I visited Miss Hunnewell who is exhibited in this town as an example of uncommon attainments in her imperfect form. She has only the first joints of both arms and one foot with three toes and in my presence wrought at embroidery, entering the needle with her toes and receiving it by the mouth, and putting the thread into her needle by her mouth and toes. She cut papers into various fancy forms, using her scissors with her mouth and the short stump of her arm and she wrote a good letter with her toes. Some pious verse she composed were exhibited in needle work wrought by herself. She is about 17 years of age and is attended by her mother from New York. Her head is well formed, her look intelligent, and her understanding clear, and her conversation and accent very pleasing and inspiring respect.

Miss Honeywell created quite a stir in New York and Philadelphia in the twenties and thirties. We find

her first at Peale's Museum in New York on August 11, 1828, where she began a long run which lasted into 1830. The following October found her established as a silhouettist in Philadelphia. An editorial in the "Saturday Courier" of October 1, 1831 describes her accomplishments:

Miss M. A. Honeywell, a young lady whose misfortune it is to have been born without arms, has recently arrived in this city, and, as we learn, intends exhibiting specimens of her ingenuity, at No. 215 Chesnut street, where she herself may likewise be seen. Miss Honeywell is remarkably skilful in the use of the scissors; holding which instrument in her mouth, she is able to cut paper into the most beautiful and striking shapes, including resemblances of the human countenance. Her performances in all places she has hitherto visited have excited great admiration, and we have no doubt that she will receive from our citizens a liberal share of encouragement.

We learn further from an advertisement in the same paper that:

Miss Honeywell's splendid gallery of cuttings and needle work, is now open. . . . She cuts the likenesses of distinguished Americans and Europeans; together with a variety of others, such as watch papers, flowers, landscapes, and even the Lord's Prayer, perfectly legible. . . . She writes, draws, and does all kinds of needlework, with the utmost facility and ease. She has travelled through Europe, where her work has been universally admired. . . . All her elegant works are for sale. She can be seen at her various occupations . . . Admittance, including a profile likeness, (cut in a few seconds, without hands, by Miss Honeywell) 25 cents; children half price.

The "Post" tells us of another young lady whom we find in April 1808 at the Museum of E. Savage in New York, where she remained for several weeks. Sally Rogers was her name and though she was "deprived of the use of hands and feet," still she could cut paper, write, paint and do other surprising feats. "with her mouth alone." Our last early armless wonder of any celebrity was Master Sanders K. G. Nellis, of Johnstown, New York, who was born without arms. He was at Peale's Museum on September 23, 1830 and could be seen there and elsewhere for many years thereafter. He was thirteen years of age and "a fine healthy boy."

He could write, draw, cut paper, shoot with a bow and arrow, open and wind a watch, all with his toes. He could dance and sing "with cheerfulness and taste" and was "agreeable in manners and not in the least disagreeable in his appearance."

A still greater thrill was in store for the curious New Yorkers, however, for a sword swallower came to town. His name was Sena Sama and his sword was 22 inches long, as anyone might learn by visiting the Social Garden Room in Brooklyn on December 27, 1817. This "wonder of the world" was an "East Indian from Madrass and late from London." With his gastronomic activities he combined feats of dexterity and strength and was probably highly diverting to the good people of the City of Churches.

The East Indian was completely outdone a few years later, however, by the hazardous abilities of one Charles who, at Tammany Hall on October 20, 1821, would swallow three swords, "each 24 inches long, all three at the same time, and permit any gentleman . . . to draw them from his stomach." We hesitate to go any farther with this sword swallowing business for fear of an accident, but truth compels us to mention one more exponent of the art. Signor Sciarra "swallows a sword 33 inches long, scabbard and all" and draws "the sword while the scabbard remains in his throat." He also performed on stilts and on the slack rope at Richmond Hill Theatre and Circus, January 24, 1835, but since he accompanied a regular circus, we must leave him and his successors.

An albino came to New York town, perhaps for the first time, on May 19, 1818 and, according to the "Post," "has taken rooms at the Washington Hotel, where he will be happy to receive . . . visits." Another albino, Jeremiah Daly, from Ireland and twenty-nine years old, was at the Franklin Museum in New York, along with a collection of wax figures, in January 1824. Albinos certainly were not common in those days, but we find two of them of American birth at the Concert Hall on Broadway in April 1839, according to the "Herald."

A "Mammoth child from Ireland" was at the Globe Tavern, New York, through August and September 1818 and a rival, Joseph Redley, "the American Lambert," who was fifteen months old, weighed upwards of seventy pounds and could be seen at the American Museum on and after September 28th of that year. He was still going strong in 1820 and, according to the "Columbian" of January 5th (adorned with a woodcut portrait), he was now two and a half years old and as "large as a common man." He measured three feet, seven inches around the belly, was three feet, one inch high, weighed 125 pounds, and was born in Prospect, Maine on June 29, 1817.

Fat children seem to have been popular before the advent of the fully grown "fat lady" and we find two of them at Peale's Museum, New York, in the summer of 1829. They were Deborah and Susan Tripp, age three years and five years, ten months. They tipped the scales at 124 and 205 pounds, respectively. We hate to think what they must have looked like when they got their full growth. Deborah, at least, survived until 1831 and was advertised as "the giant infant, born at Poughkeepsie." She was now five years old, four feet long and 200 pounds heavy. She was again at Peale's in 1833, still apparently as huge and popular as ever.

And now for a few more little people. The Clarke dwarfs were at the City Hotel in May and at Scudder's Museum, New York, in June 1819. Caroline was twenty years old and only 36 inches tall, was "of perfect symmetry and beauty, possessed of first-rate accomplishments, easy in conversation, agreeable and pleasant in her manners and a fine voice." Her brother Edward was sixteen years old and had the same height and accomplishments. Dr. Bentley saw them at Boston on November 19, 1819. They were accompanied by their mother, "Mrs. Clarke from Philadelphia." He tells us that they had "infantile minds and bodies." The following season they appeared at Scudder's as the Lilliputian Songsters. After a tour in the south, we

find them back at Scudder's in September 1820, in which year Scudder died and we see the Songsters no more.

There were other dwarfs, however, including the three sisters, Hannah, Rebecca and Abigail Hatch, born at Falmouth, Massachusetts, ranging in age from twenty-five to forty years and in height from 36 to 42 inches. They could be seen at 9 Murray Street, New York in November 1823. The following year the American dwarf, Joseph M. Stevens, was exhibited at Washington Hall and later at the Park Theatre, New York. This "wonder of the age" was billed as Tom Thumb and was twenty-one years old and only 37 inches high. Major Stevens, who was but 40 inches high and weighed only fifty pounds, though thirty-one years of age, was at Peale's on October 20, 1834; and the Canadian dwarfs, Emily and Margaret Martin, both over twenty-two years of age, measured 30 and 32 inches in height, respectively, and were at the American Museum on August 11, 1835.

From dwarfs we naturally come to giants, late comers on the stage as metropolitan attractions. The "Post" tells us, however, that Patrick Magee was at the Park Exchange in New York in October, 1825. He was "not more remarkable for his extraordinary height [which, strangely enough, is not given] than for the elegant symmetry of his form, his surprising activity and matchless strength." The Canadian "giant," Monsieur M. Malliot, was at Concert Hall in Boston on June 15, 1829, according to a handbill in our library. "This man, (the largest in the world,) cannot fail of being considered a great curiosity. His height is six feet, four and a half inches. He measures seven feet around his body—Three feet ten inches around the thigh, and three feet four & a half inches round the calf of his leg." "He intends soon to visit Europe." We find him at Peale's Museum in New York on May 2, 1831, but his name is now spelled Mailhiot. Though a worthy rival of the ponderous Lambert, he was a mere pigmy when compared with Chang-Yu-

Sing the eight-foot Chinese giant who toured America in 1881.

“Mons. Bihin, the great Belgian giant was at Concert Hall, Boston, in 1840, as we learn from a handbill in our library. He was born in Spa, Belgium, in 1807, appeared first in public in Paris, then in London in 1839 and in the Bowery Theatre, New York in the same year, when he played the lead in “The Giant of Palestine.” He was seven feet, eight inches tall and strong in proportion to his size.

No side show would be complete without a living skeleton, but the earliest of these curious unfortunates to win fame travelled by himself and so finds a place in our record. His name was Calvin Edson and he was shown at Tammany Hall on May 5, 1829, according to the “Post,” and toured the country as well, as we learn from an 1831 handbill in our own collection, which tells us that:

This wonderful curiosity has returned from Europe, where he has been visited by . . . most of the medical men, nobility and gentry of London; and has also been introduced to the College of Surgeons and Physicians in Paris, and all pronounced him the most extraordinary man the world ever beheld. He has a wife and three children. Mr. Edson was born in Stafford, Connecticut, is 44 years of age, and weighs but 58 lbs. [Two years earlier he weighed 60 pounds and was five feet two inches high]. His former weight was 135 lbs. His former height was 5 feet 6 inches and he is now but 5 feet 3 inches. He can ride on horseback, and lift 100 lbs. Eats, drinks and sleeps as well as any man. He attributes the cause of his wasting to his having slept on the damp ground the night after the battle of Plattsburgh, at which time he was serving in the American Army. . . . From that moment he began to waste away, until he became the extraordinary memento he is at present. There is nothing in his dress or appearance to alarm the most delicate.

His full length portrait on the hand bill bears out this statement.

From 1829 to 1831 we catch occasional glimpses of the rival salamanders, Hudson and Millis. The former was the more popular and might be seen at the New York Museum. Thus simply do we introduce the still

popular race of fire eaters, so dear to the sideshowmen of the later circuses.

The old time museum certainly was no place for a nervous or squeamish person, for we find that in 1824 the American Museum had on exhibition the arm of the notorious pirate Tom Trouble. The Academy of Arts (of all places!) could also show you, on December 27th of that year, the head of Ohibo, a New Zealand chief; and the American Museum, not to be outdone by any rival, announced on January 3rd that it had on view the heads of the celebrated New Zealand warriors Ohonta and Lahema, notable for their elegant tattooing and the skill with which they had been preserved!

We first catch sight of the famous Siamese Twins, then known as the "Siamese Double Boys" at the Masonic Hall in New York on September 16, 1829, according to the "Post." They soon moved to the Park Theatre and were fairly launched on their interesting career, but this was long before they had met Mr. Barnum and his superior powers of advertising.

The story of Joice Heth and the beginning of Barnum's career in the show business is so well told in Mr. Harvey W. Root's "The unknown Barnum" that it does not need repeating in detail here. Back in 1835, Barnum then trying to make a precarious living as a storekeeper, heard of a remarkable Negro woman being exhibited in Philadelphia. His interest was immediately aroused, he shortly bought all rights to her for a thousand dollars and exhibited her in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Albany, and in many minor towns until, before the year was out, she died and he had her decently buried in his home town, Bethel, Connecticut. From this time onward he was a showman and the greatest before the Ringlings.

Joice Heth was supposed to be 161 years old, and was advertised as the identical nurse who had helped bring George Washington into the world. She was shown at Niblo's Garden for two weeks in August 1835, where ten thousand people came to visit her, and appeared at Concert Hall, Boston shortly thereafter,

as we learn from the very rare handbill announcing her Boston engagement, still preserved in our library. Here is the way Barnum announced her:

Joice Heth, nurse to Gen. George Washington, (The father of our country,) who has arrived at the astonishing age of 161 years! will be seen at Concert Hall, corner of Court and Hanover Streets, Boston, for a short time only, as she is to fill other engagements very soon.

Joice Heth is unquestionably the most astonishing and interesting curiosity in the world! She was the slave of Augustine Washington, (the father of Gen. Washington,) and was the first person who put clothes on the unconscious infant who in after days led our heroic fathers on to glory, to victory and to freedom. . . . She retains her faculties in an unparalleled degree, converses freely, sings numerous hymns, relates many interesting anecdotes of Gen. Washington, the red coats, &c. and often laughs heartily at her own remarks, or those of the spectators.

It appears, however, that those spectators and perhaps Barnum himself had been somewhat deceived as to the real age of the old negress, for, on her death, an autopsy showed that she was probably not half as old as advertised and consequently probably never even saw the Father of His Country. No wonder she often laughed heartily at the spectators! But she served her turn and started Barnum on his way.

We cannot trace the history of the many wonderful freaks of later days, but must leave the more recent and still more remarkable dwarfs and giants, two-headed girls and dog-faced boys, the Aztec children, tattooed men and bearded ladies for a less hurried chronicler.

INDIANS

Ever since Columbus brought back to Queen Isabella some of the natives from the new world he had discovered, ever since John Rolfe returned to England with Pocahontas as his bride, ever since Queen Anne received at court the Iroquois chiefs whom they called "The Four Kings of Canada," and ever since Romney painted Chief Joseph Brant for one of the British

nobility, there has been a keen and curious interest in the American Indian.

Indians were no curiosities to the American colonists however, and no novelties to the Revolutionary frontiersmen, so we must needs wait another generation before we find them regularly on our show bills.

A delegation of Cherokee chiefs and warriors were entertained at the John Street Theatre in New York on April 4, 1768, "by command of His Excellency the General" with a presentation of "The Constant Couple." In return for this courtesy, according to the "Journal" of April 7th, they gave on the stage of the theatre a war dance, the public being warned to preserve a proper decorum on that occasion, since the performers were "of rank and consequence in their own country." This may well have been the first public appearance of American Indians as entertainers in the American colonies.

As early as March 7, 1795 the famous Ricketts circus in New York advertised that it had added to its attractions: "The Indian Chiefs, lately arrived, [who] will with Mr. Ricketts, perform on horseback, drest in the character of warriors," thereby anticipating the much later successes of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

In the latter part of February 1796, the "Minerva" tells us that "an Indian dance by four Indians now in the city" might be seen along with Salenka's trick dog, at the Assembly Room, 5 Cortlandt Street, New York. A troupe of Osage chiefs performed their war dances at Vauxhall Gardens, New York, on August 13, 1804, and other visiting delegations of Indians performed in February 1806 and March 1808. Though there were doubtless others in the interim, we find seven American Indians performing their native dances in full costume at Washington Hall, New York, on November 25, 1817; and a "deputation" of Indians was added to the bill at the American Museum on and after December 13, 1821.

Castle Garden, once a fortress but now an aquicultural club for fishes, had been open as a place of amuse-

ment for about a year and Lafayette had just been given his famous welcome there when, on December 11, 1824, a troupe of Western Indians, in full paint and war bonnet, went through their dances and sang their native songs on its ample stage.

October 30 of the year 1827 found a company of Iroquois Indians performing at the National Hotel in New York and later at Peale's Museum. Here is how the "Post" describes their show:

Grand War Dance. . . . The company of Iroquois Indians, who have just arrived in this city, respectfully informs the public that they will perform six different dances. . . .

1st. The Lion boasting of his courage and address before an assemblage of Chiefs.

2d. They will shew the manner in which they skulk and lay[sic] in ambush and the manner of scalping an enemy.

3d. Ceremonies used on the return of the victorious warriors, and presenting spoils taken in war, to the head Chiefs of the Tribe; grand war dance, the war-whoop will be given as they rush on an enemy.

4th. Grand dance after the overthrow of their enemies, and the manner of celebrating peace.

5th. Ceremonies used on the celebrating of a marriage.

6th. The Marriage Dance.

The following April 5th the famous Seneca chief, Red Jacket, delivered an address through the medium of an interpreter at Masonic Hall while others of his tribe danced and sang. Indians were now all the rage and we can mention only a few of their recorded performances in the eighteen twenties. We find them among the performers at the Broadway Circus which opened in the summer of 1828. There were also some Sandusky Indians at Peale's in January 1829 and Red Jacket and his troupe were there early in March of that year. After a short run in Boston they returned to Peale's on March 27th and later went to the American Museum. Red Jacket appeared "in his full dress as the Chief of the Six Nations [which he was not!], wearing the silver medal that was presented to him by General Washington at the treaty of 1792, in Philadelphia." The medal, at least, was authentic and if you

happen to visit the Buffalo Historical Society you may have a look at it. But do not be surprised if your historian friends never heard of Red Jacket as a vaudeville artist,—it isn't very generally known.

Shortly after this Red Jacket died and the other performing Indians joined the regular circuses. They were never prominently featured again, however, until the inauguration of Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Pawnee Bill's Congress of Indians and Cowboys, and the modern rodeo.

EQUESTRIANS

From the earliest times, in the middle and southern states at least, our ancestors have loved a good horse and have watched with enthusiasm his performance in ring or racetrack, along the country roads or over fields and hedges. As early as September 10, 1674 we find in the court records of York County, Virginia, this quaint entry:

James Bullocke, a Taylor, haveing made a race for his mare to runn with a horse belonging to Mr. Mathew Slader for twoe thousand pounds of tobacco and caske, it being contrary to Law for a Labourer to make a race, being a sport only for Gentlemen, is fined for the same one hundred pounds of tobacco and caske.

Whereas Mr. Mathew Slader & James Bullocke, by condition under the hand and seale of the said Slader, that his horse should runn out of the way that Bullock's mare might win, w'ch is an apparent cheate, is ord'ed to be putt in the stocks & there sitt the space of one houre.

Somewhat later the Philadelphia "American Weekly Mercury," March 2, 1721, records this news item, dated from New York on February 12th:

This Day was a famous Horse-Race, run for the Sum of Sixty Pounds, between the Inhabitants of Queens County on the Island of Nassau [Long Island], and Samuel Byard of the City of New-York, Merchant, where the latter gained but little.

So far as we have been able to discover, the first professional equestrian to exhibit in America was an Englishman named John Sharp. Though he had been

for some time in Boston, the cautious papers of that town, perhaps fearing the censure of their neighbors, apparently did not care to publish his advertisements. We must turn, therefore, for our only mention of him to the "Essex Gazette" of November 19, 1771.

Horsemanship. John Sharp, high-rider and performer in horsemanship, late from England, but last from Boston, where he has been performing for some time past, intends to ride, for the entertainment of the people in Salem, &c. in the street by the Upper Burying Ground, near the Almshouse, this day, if the weather will permit; if not, he will perform to-morrow. He rides two horses, standing upon the tops of the saddles, with one foot upon each, in full speed: Also three horses, standing with one foot on each of the outside ones, and in full speed: Likewise one horse, and dismounts and mounts many times when in full speed. To begin precisely at three o'clock, afternoon.

New York's first equestrian exhibition seems to have been held on December 16, 1771 "near the Windmill, above the Slaughter House, in the Bowery," according to advertisements in the "New York Gazette" and the "Mercury" of that date. A Mr. Foulks was the performer and his abilities were very similar to those of John Sharp, except that he played on the French horn while in full career, standing on the back of a running horse. He exhibited within an enclosure which was open to the sky and his popularity lasted until the middle of January. (See note 2, p. 185.)

The second exponent of the art of horsemanship to be seen in New York was Jacob Bates whose announcement appeared in the "Mercury" of May 24 and in the "Gazette" of May 31, 1773. He was at the Bull's Head in the Bowery on May 28th and had one feature not known to his predecessors: "A burlesque on horsemanship; or The Taylor riding to Brentford," a sure-fire laugh provoker which was the stock in trade of many of the early circuses, both English and American.

Exhibitions of this sort, together with plays and "other expensive diversions and entertainments" were forbidden by act of Congress in 1774, and so we must wait till after the Revolution for our first real circus.

"The Pennsylvania Packet" of August 15, 1785 announced that Mr. Pool, the first American equestrian, would open at Philadelphia on the 20th, near the Centre House, "where he has erected a Menage, at a very considerable expense." He had acclimated "The Taylor Riding to Brentford" and called him "The Taylor Humorously Riding to New York." A clown was part of the show on the 27th, perhaps the second clown on record, the first having appeared in New York along with the trick horse German Hans as announced in the "Gazette" of June 4, 1739: "There will also appear a comical Trooper."

Late in August, Poole was injured during one of his performances and temporarily had to abandon his exhibitions. We see him again, however, in Boston, where the records of the selectmen show that he was licensed on June 26, 1786. His first performance took place on July 8th and by the middle of the month he had also opened a riding academy. He was back in New York, at his Menage "on the Hill near the Jews' Burial Ground," together with his clown and trick horse, from September 21 to November 6, 1786, according to the "Daily Advertiser."

THE CIRCUS

Many of the early equestrians and acrobats to visit America were graduates of Astley's famous London circus or they "performed in the same style as at Astley's." In fact, Astley was the father of the modern circus. He was also famous for his riding school, and there was even an American edition of his "The modern riding-master . . ." Philadelphia; Robert Aitken, 1776. Perhaps this rare little pamphlet helped the cavalry of our Revolutionary army to keep its collective seat in the saddle. The three known copies are in the New York Public Library, Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach's collection, and in ours.

John Bill Ricketts came from England in 1792 and built a riding school at the corner of Twelfth and

Market Streets, Philadelphia, where he also conducted our first real circus—that is, a show with riders, leapers, tight rope dancers, and a clown, but without an animal show. That was not to come for another generation.

George Washington, himself a great horseman, visited Ricketts' circus on April 22, 1793 (Greenwood, 1908, p. 78) and again on January 24, 1797 at his newer and larger "Pantheon," corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets. In his diary for the latter date, Washington briefly recorded his visit: "Went to the Pantheon in the evening." It is interesting that, two days later, Washington sold Ricketts a white horse named Jack for \$150.00. In the "New York Gazette" for April 29, 1797, we read that "The celebrated horse Jack, who was in the American War with General Washington, and presented [sic!] to Mr. Ricketts, will make his first appearance in the circus this evening. This horse is now in his twenty-eighth year." Probably Washington thought he was a pretty good horse trader when he sold such an old horse for so much money, but the clever showman realized the publicity value of his "gift horse" and was content.

Ricketts was the greatest rider of his day, and his success in Philadelphia led to his erecting another building for his circus, this time in New York. "The Daily Advertiser" for August 2, 1793 announced that his new circus at the North River would be ready for its first performance on the seventh. At this time his company consisted of himself and his son, Mr. Strock, and Mr. McDonald, the latter a clown.

Ricketts soon outgrew this building and moved to a larger one on Broadway, where the "Advertiser" announced his opening on November 19, 1794. In March, 1795 he had added mounted Indian chiefs in full costume to his performance. He ran through April to packed houses and reopened in September with a troupe of tumblers added to the bill. By May, 1796 he had several riders, a clown, a tight rope dancer, ground and lofty tumblers, with a dramatic entertainment thrown in. 1797 saw Rickett's circus installed in the "New Amphitheatre in Greenwich street," the opening day

being March 16 ("Gazette," March 9th). He now had as an added attraction the famous trained horse "Cornplanter," besides singers, dancers, comedians, and pantomime artists, and a coffee house adjoining the circus. During August and September the house was dark, but he opened again in October, and on the twenty-first President Adams visited the circus, according to the bill in the Harvard Theatrical Collection. At this time the circus and a dramatic company used the building on alternate nights.

Ricketts' circus ran through the 1798 season at the New York stand with performances in his Philadelphia Pantheon from 1795 to 1799. On May 14, 1795 he also had a circus in "Ricketts' New Amphitheatre," Boston, according to contemporary newspapers and a handbill preserved in our library in photostat; and in August the "Connecticut Courant" announced his showing at Hartford on August 16-20.

The successful career of Ricketts' circus was cut suddenly short when, on December 17, 1799 his Philadelphia circus was burned to the ground. Though the New York "Daily Advertiser" of February 15, 1800 announced that he was collecting a new company in Philadelphia and the Southward "for the purpose of opening his circus in this city in the spring," this was not accomplished and he never recovered financially from the ruin of this disastrous fire. After being burned out in Philadelphia, Ricketts sailed for England, but his ship was lost at sea. (Reminiscences of George Stone, veteran circus acrobat, in "Albany Morning Express," 1860, in Joel Munsell scrapbook in our library.)

The history of the American circus prior to 1835 has been so well covered by Mr. Isaac J. Greenwood and Mr. Leonidas Westervelt and the story of its later adventures by Mr. Earl Chapin May¹ that it is hardly necessary to more than mention a few famous names from this point onward.

¹Isaac J. Greenwood: "The circus." New York, 1909.

Leonidas Westervelt: "The circus in literature." New York, 1931.

Earl Chapin May: "The circus from Rome to Ringling." New York, 1933.

Ricketts had plenty of competition in New York. Thomas Swann's Circus was more a riding academy than a real circus, but there were two men and a woman rider, trick monkeys, fireworks and a band of music during its three months' run in 1794. The great rival of Ricketts, however, was Philip Lailson's or, as it was also called, Lailson and Jaymond's Circus, and they were his rivals in misfortune as well as in performance. Lailson brought to America an excellent company of French riders and acrobats and, after visiting Boston, settled in Philadelphia where he built a splendid new amphitheatre at the corner of Fifth and Prune Street, which he opened on April 8, 1797. His performance was especially notable for the skill of its riders and the excellence of its pantomime. His success was immediate and the end of the year found him following Ricketts to New York where, on December 8th he opened a new amphitheatre on Greenwich Street. ("Daily Advertiser," December 1, 1797.) Here he had the usual exhibition of horsemanship, a clever clown and a pantomime ballet. He featured Miss Venice whom he advertised as the first woman rider in the country, who would "ride standing on a single horse, with all the gracefulness of her sex."

Lailson's Circus, in spite of its excellence, was a financial failure and was offered for sale in the "Commercial Advertiser" of July 18, 1798 and again in the issue of February 19, 1799. It was temporarily revived with the same performers as the New Circus on February 26th and ran till the middle of March, after which the company "embarked for the West Indies and was never heard of afterwards." (Reminiscences of George Stone.)

Though there were occasional exhibitions of the skill of individual equestrians, there appears to have been no new circus in New York or elsewhere in the country until the English equestrian, Thomas Franklin, and his company appeared at Vauxhall Garden in New York in September, 1802. This show was under the management of a Mr. Robertson who had distinguished

himself as an acrobat in Boston, New York and Philadelphia during the two previous years. This company also included a Mr. Stewart who, with his wife, gave the first circus performance ever seen at Albany. (Reminiscences of George Stone.) Robertson appeared both as acrobat and clown and apparently was one of the first to take his company on an extensive tour. He exhibited in Salem in 1808 and eventually died of a broken neck in the South.

Pepin and Breschard's Circus, which had already won a name for itself in Europe, arrived at Boston late in 1807. It had just been on tour in Spain and came to America, according to Greenwood, at the invitation of the Spanish minister, Don Louis de Onis. Since such performances were not allowed within the city limits of Boston, the circus was compelled to set up in Charlestown, but though outside of the city, it had a very great popularity and remained for six months, after which it went to New York and thence to Philadelphia.

Most of the company, including John Breschard, were native Frenchmen, but Victor "Pepin was born in Albany, at the corner of North Market Street and the Colony. His parents were French [Acadians]. They left Albany for Paris when Pepin was two years of age. I received the above account of [i.e., from] him at New Orelans." (Reminiscences of George Stone.) Greenwood says that Pepin was born in Philadelphia, but it is probable that Stone's first hand account is correct. Pepin had been an officer in the French cavalry, as Astley had of the British, an excellent school for a professional equestrian.

Pepin and Breschard's Circus was the first to visit Boston. W. W. Clapp's "Record of the Boston Stage" states incorrectly that they opened in 1809. It is probably true that they did not have a covered amphitheatre until that year, but their advertisement in the New York "Commercial Advertiser" of June 1, 1808 states that for six months they had "received the most unbounded applause and approbation of the inhabi-

tants of Boston" and that they had "within six months arrived from Spain."

Pepin and Breschard's New York premier took place on June 2, 1808 and they were advertised as: "First professors of the art of riding and agility on horseback." At this early period their company included only half a dozen people, including Mrs. Breschard, and Pepin doubled as the clown. Their first location on Anthony Street was an open enclosure as we learn from a handbill preserved in the Harvard Dramatic Collection, announcing their performance of June 9th: "Should the weather prove unfavorable, the performance will be postponed until the first fair afternoon."

Having succeeded in New York, Pepin and Breschard decided to try their luck in Philadelphia, where they opened in their own new building at the corner of Ninth and Walnut Streets, on February 2, 1809, with their usual success. (Watson's "Annals of Philadelphia.")

Their second season in New York opened July 1, 1809, by which time they had added rope dancers, the trick horse "Conqueror," pantomime and fireworks to their attractions. They were back in Charlestown, just outside of Boston, on September 26, 1809 (original bill in Harvard Dramatic Collection) and were featuring "for the first time the Battle and Death of General Malbrook," a spectacular pantomime, "performed on foot and horseback," its cast including Mr. Pepin, Mr. and Mrs. Breschard, Mr. Cayetano, Mr. Codet, Mr. Menial, and Mr. Grain. They were here again on December 29, 1809 (original bill in Robert Gould Shaw collection). The circus was back in New York on June 21, 1810 and in June, 1811.

This well patronized circus was split in two about 1810, and a new company made up of its principal performers set up first on Haymarket Place in Boston and later at Broadway and White Street, New York, on June 13th, 1812 as Cayetano, Codet, Menial and Redon's Circus. They had a real circus with no drama on the program, and they had a great attraction in the

one and only live elephant of the time. She reappears on the bill (original in N. Y. Historical Society) on June 25, 1812.

On May 3, 1810 they showed at Newburyport, Massachusetts, the first circus to visit that town, and June 1st found them at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where they gave a benefit performance for the relief of the citizens of Newburyport where a devastating fire had just destroyed a considerable portion of the town. A lively account of their show at Newburyport is contained in Mrs. S. A. Emery's "Reminiscences of a nonagenarian." There were but six riders in the company at that time, so they induced two skilful local horsemen to join them for their Newburyport performances. The regular performers included the acrobats Master Tatnal, Master Duffee, a limber negro lad, and "the young Falcon," Messrs. Codet and Cayetano, the equestrians, and Mr. Menial, the clown. They also featured the trained horse "Ocelet" and the trick donkey "Zebra."

In the meantime another segment of the old circus had begun operations in Anthony Street, New York, in May as Dwyer and Breschard's Circus. Later in the season it had become Twaits and Breschard's Circus, under which name it finished the season to the end of September. A reconciliation took place, however, and we find the original circus opening the season in July 1813 under the firm name of Pepin, Breschard and Cayetano. But the War of 1812 proved too strong a diversion and they only ran through August. After the war we again hear of Pepin in June 1818 when a new building was opened for the old show under the name of Pepin's Broadway Circus. They were once more successful and on May 17, 1819 we find them in an enlarged and better ventilated building with a strong man added to the troupe.

The next successful circus was one managed by an Englishman named James West who had won fame in the Royal Circus, London, about 1805. His show was notable for its very fine trained horses and riders and,

after a run in Boston, he won immediate success in Philadelphia in the winter of 1816. The summer of 1817 found him on tour in New England, and on July 3rd while showing at Charlestown, he was honored by a visit from President James Monroe who happened to be in Boston at the time. On July 24th West's Circus appeared at Worcester, the first circus to visit this town. It was located on a lot between Front and Mechanic Streets, near the South Meeting House, opposite Eaton's Tavern, east of the present Salem Street. The "Worcester Spy," which had advertised its arrival in the issues of July 16 and 23, had this to say of the performance of the 30th:

Mr. West's company of equestrians are now performing in this town, and do not disappoint the high expectations they had excited. We suspect they did not often perform before a fuller house in Charlestown than that on Monday evening.

Isaiah Thomas took a lively interest in the circus, as we learn from his diary. On April 28, 1817, being on a visit to Boston, he tells us that he: "Went to the Circus, Charlestown in the Even^g. Walked over and back with my son." Again on July 23rd he records that the "Circus opened [i. e., arrived at Worcester]—the Riders arrived." On the following day a small menagerie also came to town, probably trailing West and profiting by his success. Thomas says: "A Lyon, Tyger and other wild animals Exhibited in Worcester." On the 28th he informs us that he:

Went to the Circus—Most of the Ladies & Gentlemen were present—as was my grand daughter Mary Rebecca—It was West's Company—the performance was very good.

The original handbill for this circus is in our library. It tells us that the show was in Worcester for a little over a week. Its performers included the equestrians Master Dyer, "a native of America," Mr. Blackmore, Mrs. Williams, and Master Yeaman. Then there were Mr. Williams on the tight rope and his wife on the slack wire, and Mr. Parker, the clown, in "The Hunted Tailor." Mr. Campbell also appeared as a clown in the tight rope act. Then there was a "Grand

equestrian entrée, with all those beautiful horses" and a trick pony, as well as still vaulting by a "troop of flying phenomena." Boxes were a dollar and the pit cost fifty cents, children half price; and the performances were all in the evening.

From Worcester, West's company went to Hartford for a few nights and then on to New York where they opened on August 21st in a large open building just erected for their use, called the New Circus. They added a few performers and many new acts, in addition to carrying on a riding school on the side. Their popularity continued and their performance became more elaborate. By 1822 they were doing ballet pantomimes and putting on elaborate spectacles in addition to their equestrian and acrobatic show. On June 18th they revived the play "Zembuca," with "the elephant and the camel" in the cast and with a wonderful leap by Williams the clown, "over the living elephant and camel." Later he performed a still more wonderful leap over a stage wagon and six horses. Horses were used in many stage presentations. In July they performed "The Forty Thieves" with forty real horses—one for each thief! And so, at last, we find the animals of the menagerie joining the circus and from this point on, the two types of entertainment which had run as separate shows for so many years, were finally brought together to form the circus as we know it today.

In the summer of 1823 Price and Simpson bought out West's Circus and, after a time, the latter retired to England, one of the few early circus men to become wealthy. According to George Stone's reminiscences, West was still living in Yorkshire in 1860.

Price and Simpson's Broadway Circus had three or four years of popularity, adding elaborate spectacles and melodrama to their circus acts. Their equestrian star was the Englishman, Mr. Hunter, the first bare-back rider to appear in the country, his predecessors having used a saddle or pad. He made his third appearance with them June 12, 1823 (original bill in Harvard Dramatic Collection), and was still with them in 1824

and 1825, though he went for a short time in the latter year with the short lived Lafayette Circus on Laurens Street where Lafayette visited them on July 12th. By the following year their show had closed and their building was taken over by a theatrical company and was known thereafter as the Lafayette Theatre. The original Lafayette Circus company was reorganized as the Mount Pitt Circus which opened in a new building on Grand Street on November 8, 1826. They were still showing in 1839 and probably later.

Price and Simpson continued through 1825 with Hunter as the star and with considerable additional tumbling and wire work added to the program. The following year the show began to go down hill and probably closed in 1827 or 1828. George Stone's reminiscences tell us of their final extinction:

The animals all perished in a gale of five days duration on board the ship Orbit, from Baltimore to Charleston. The only horse saved out of their entire stud was the beautiful animal Fanny Moore.

Hunter, the great bareback rider, had left Price and Simpson before their final disintegration and joined Parsons' Pearl Street Circus at Albany.¹ Henry D. Stone tells us in an article in the "Albany Morning Express" in 1860 (Joel Munsell scrapbook in A. A. S.) that:

He [Hunter] left the States in 1829 for England and became dissipated. He *innocently* took Ben. Stickney's coat one night from the dressing room of the Royal Amphitheatre, Liverpool. Ben, to frighten him, had him arrested, and was obliged to appear against Hunter. John Bull's law being equal to "Jersey," poor Hunter was transported to Van Dieman's Land in 1839. It is said he had a wife and son residing in Philadelphia, very respectably connected.

Early in the 1820's the American circus was beginning to go on tour and it has been estimated that there were over thirty on the road at that time. The old

¹An excellent account of this circus, which lasted from about 1825 to 1830 and was one of the largest in the country in its day, appears in the reminiscences of George Stone, previously cited.

shows in their permanent buildings had been too costly and only those, like West's, which went on the road made any money. Permanent amphitheatres were too expensive and canvas sided enclosures too unsatisfactory because of the constant threat of inclement weather. So it was but natural that Howes and Turner's Circus should have, in 1826, embarked on a long and successful career under a full top canvas and with this innovation began the history of the modern circus.

From the earliest times the circus has had to fight against prejudice. At one time it was quite generally thought that circuses, like gypsies, recruited their ranks by stealing children, and the clergy generally opposed them at every turn. An early attack, which incidentally mentions one of the first circuses to venture into the pioneer west, appeared in the Chillicothe, Ohio "Weekly Recorder" for August 2, 1815:

The lovers of pleasure and amusement, for several days past, have had a favourable opportunity of gratifying their passions by attending to the extraordinary feats of the Circus. Several printed notifications in succession have been circulated generally through town, announcing "A grand display of horsemanship, vaulting, agility, and admired scenes," and particularizing the various parts of the "Brilliant performance," such as, Master Duffee performing the Lion's Leap through a hoop, and over two swords—Mr. La Conta acting the part of a clown and of a buffoon & dancing a hornpipe standing on his head—Mr. Duffee riding on his head with his feet in the air, &c. &c.!!! The exhibitions of the Circus have also been invariably announced by a trumpeter; in an uncouth, fantastical dress, passing through the streets on a small spotted horse with cropped ears and as whimsically dressed as his rider, summoning the citizens by reiterated blasts of his trumpet to attend and witness the wonderful performances of the evening!

The principal object pursued by the conductors of the Circus is to enrich themselves at the expense of others. How far they have succeeded in their design in this place—what number of citizens have honoured them with their presence, and favoured them with their support, we have not been particularly informed. Believing that these men are prosecuting an unlawful calling—one that cannot be defended on Scriptural ground, or on principles of sound reason and good policy, we presume that the good sense of the citizens in general would lead them to

treat their exhibitions with that unqualified neglect and contempt which they so justly deserve. . . .

The situation of our country demands the consideration of all good citizens. It is infested with dishonest, unprincipled men of various descriptions—swindlers, counterfeiters, stage-players, show men, etc. . . .

One might suspect from the above extract that Rev. John Andrews, the editor of the "Recorder," was overlooked when the complimentary tickets for this particular circus were distributed.

Something of the same attitude still existed in Worcester as late as May 16, 1832 when the leading editorial in the "Massachusetts Spy" read as follows:

It was with no little surprise and regret that the good people of our quiet village learnt, a few days since, that the Selectmen had licensed a company of strolling actors, calling themselves Circus Riders, to exhibit their fooleries here. We presume that in giving their consent the Selectmen had no idea of encouraging vice and dissipation, or of acting in opposition to the known wishes of a majority of their constituents; but we have no doubt a very large majority of our citizens are very decidedly opposed to exhibitions of the kind in question. "Who does not know that no one gets any good" by attending such exhibitions?—"that by going there he encourages idleness, cruelty and vice?" Some of our inhabitants residing in the vicinity of the Circus have been loud in their complaints of the noise and revelry for a few nights past. It is hoped that this is the last time we shall be troubled with such unwelcome visitors, and that our Selectmen will in future be careful not to lend their aid in encouraging them to come among us.

It would be a temptation to tell of the "Flying Horse Establishment" erected by John Sears and opened in New York in 1825 as the forerunner of our modern merry-go-round and to "point with pride" to that most useful and entertaining Worcester invention, the steam calliope, which was perfected by Joshua C. Stoddard in 1855 and first used on the Boston & Maine Railroad on an excursion from Worcester to Fitchburg to attend a Fremont political meeting in 1856. But space will not permit any further investigations into the history of the circus and its various adjuncts. Perhaps these scattering notes of a few of

the many shows and their performers will be useful to the future historian of the circus who will, in a number of bulky volumes, be able to tell the whole story of this most picturesque, interesting, and truly American form of entertainment.

Note 1, page 128.

What is perhaps a newly discovered elephant has just been reported by Miss C. Eleanor Hall. Unless this should merely prove to be our first elephant touring the frontier towns of Canada and northern New York, it is possible that he (or she) will displace the record of Old Bet as the second elephant to come to America. At any rate, D. C. Hurd's "History of Clinton and Franklin Counties, New York," 1880, p. 47, prints a curious entry from the old custom house record book of cargo manifests kept at Cumberland Head (now Plattsburgh), the port of entry for the Lake Champlain district of northern New York. Under date of August 19, 1805, the cargo of a Federal packet from St. John's, Walter Beckwith, master, consisted of one horse valued at \$33., an elephant valued at \$110., one bale of dry-goods and 3456 pounds of salt; the total duty on the entry being \$44.15. Unfortunately this early elephant was swallowed up in the oblivion of the Lake Champlain wilderness and we may never know whether it was a new arrival or merely our old friend the Crowninshield elephant on tour.

Note 2, page 172.

After this article was in type an advertisement was discovered in the Pennsylvania Gazette, September 26, 1771, showing that Mr. Foulks (or Faulks) appeared in Philadelphia some time before his first appearance in New York. It may even be that he preceded John Sharp who has generally been considered the first equestrian in America. Sharp appeared in Salem on November 19, 1771 after having spent some time in Boston, while Faulks was showing in Philadelphia at least as early as September 26th. Faulks' advertisement is as follows:

Mr. Faulks Intends performing his Feats in Horsemanship, for the Benefit of the Prisoners confined in the Goal of this City, To-morrow, at 3 o'Clock in the Afternoon, on the Commons. He also proposes performing at the following Places, viz. at Newtown, Bucks County, on Tuesday, the 1st of October; at Trenton, on Thursday, the 3d; at Princetown, the 5th; at Bordentown, on Monday, the 7th; and at Burlington, on Wednesday, the 9th; to begin at 3 o'Clock each Day.

First. He mounts a single Horse, standing upon the Saddle, and rides him, playing on the French Horn.

Second. He mounts two Horses, with one Foot in each Horse's Stirrup, putting them into full Speed, and mounts out of them to the Tops of the Saddle at the same Pace.

Third. He mounts two Horses upon the Saddles, and will, in full Speed, throw himself upon his Back, managing them in the same Manner as though he had the Advantage of the common Seat, and rises again, all on the same Speed.

Fourth. He mounts three Horses upon the Saddles, and rides them in full Speed, vaulting from one to the other.

Fifth. He concludes his Performance by riding a single Horse in full Speed, dismounting and mounting many Times, and will on that Stretch dismount fairly, with both Feet on the Ground, vault clear over the Horse, back again, and mount on the near Side.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.