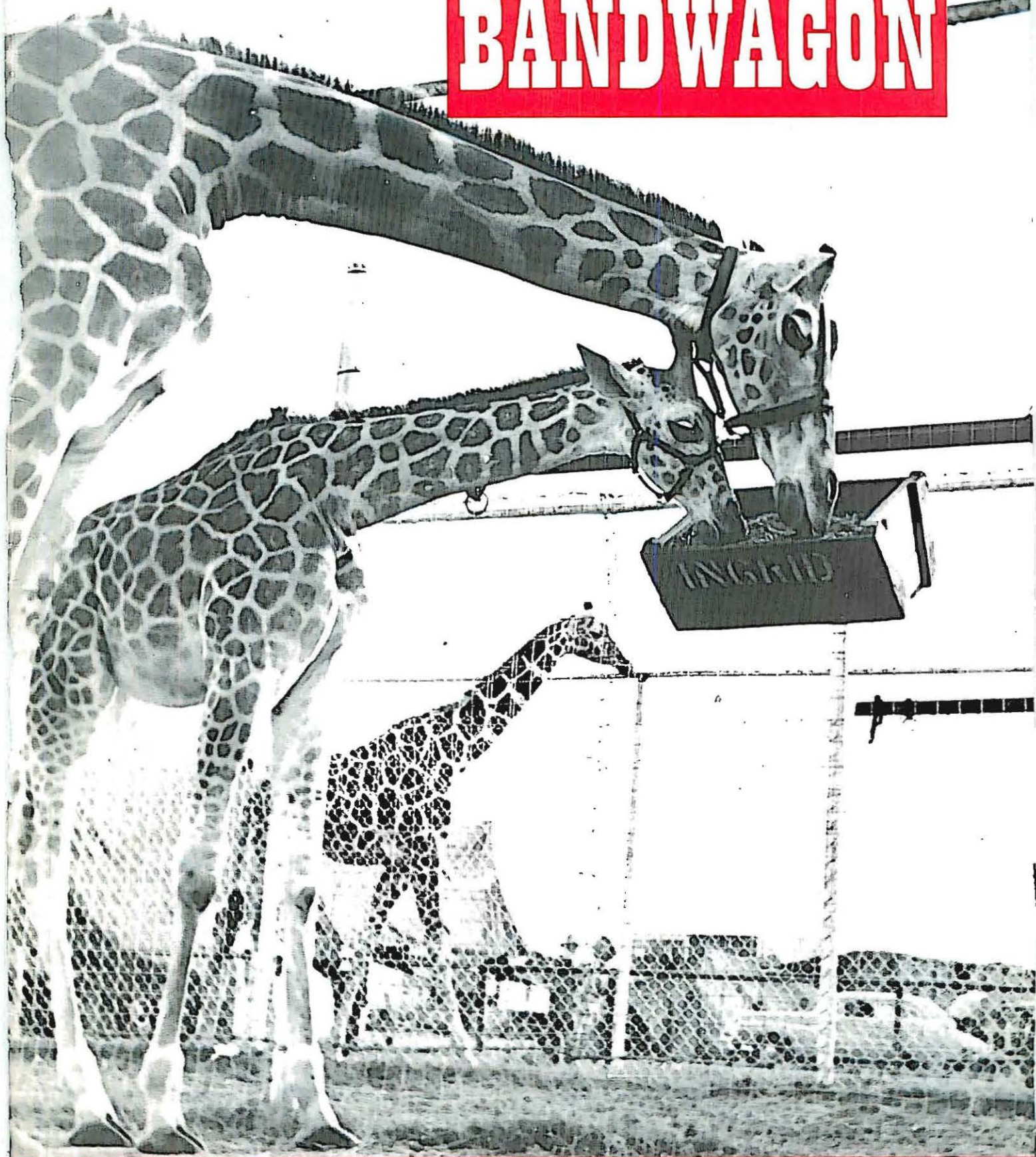


BANDWAGON



MARCH-APRIL 1987



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor and Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Giraffes have been part of the American circus scene almost continuously since Rufus Welch imported the first group of them in 1838. The photo on this month's cover was taken by Dick Miller, the official Ringling-Barnum photographer, during the winter of 1951-1952 at the Sarasota winter quarters. The adult giraffe in the foreground is Edith, a Nubian female acquired by Ringling-Barnum in 1936, and the baby is her calf, a female named Gloria who was born at Boston Garden on May 10, 1951. In the background is Ingrid who was in a different corral than the one with her name on the feeding trough.

Edith was a good animal, popular with everyone on the show. She was broken to lead and appeared in the 1938, 1939, and 1948 specs. She was originally known as Soudana, but around 1944 she picked up the name Edith, no doubt taking it from Edith Conway Ringling, wife of Robert Ringling.

gling. She was a good breeder and produced two other calves, Henrietta in 1940, and Boston in 1946. She died at the Sarasota quarters over the winter of 1954-1955.

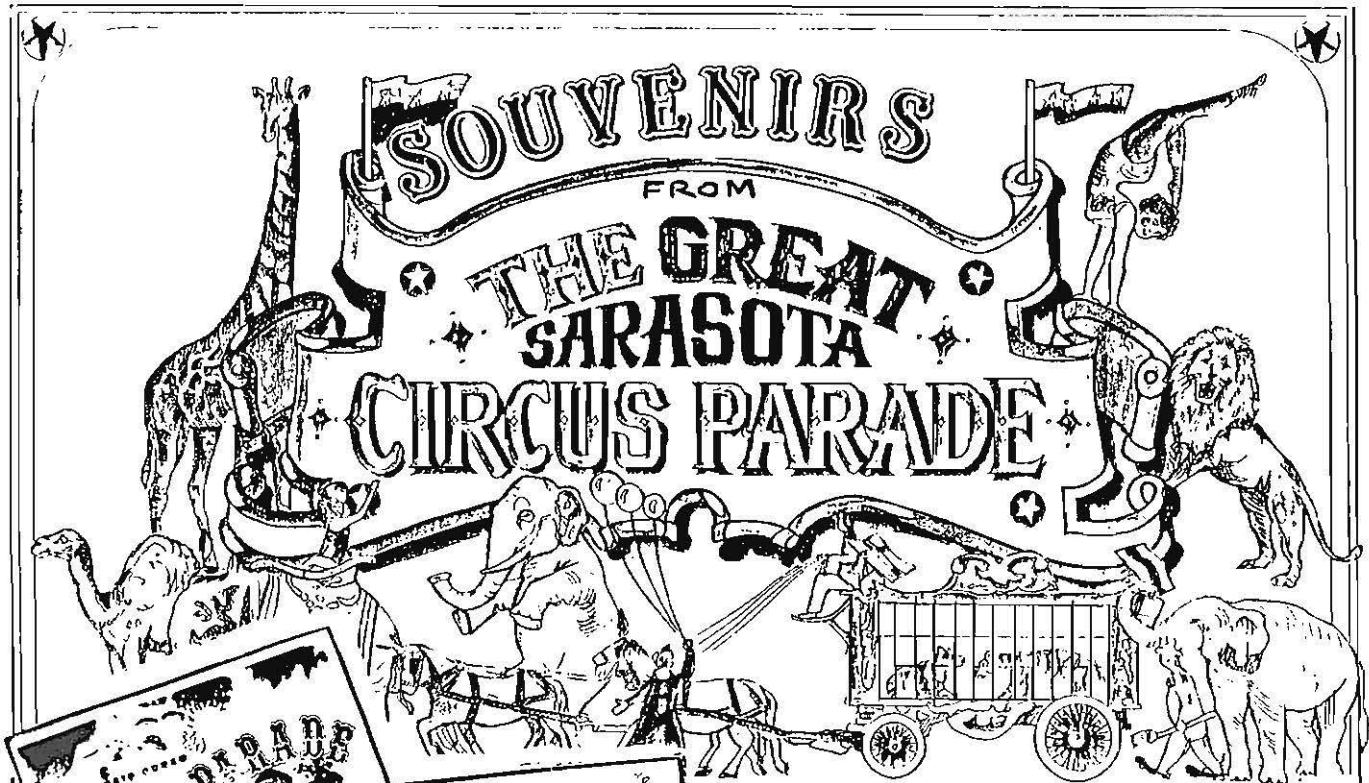
Ingrid was a reticulated giraffe. Reticulateds have very dark, large, squarish looking spots separated by thin, bright white, thread-like lines. By contrast, the Nubian giraffe has smaller spots that do not stand out as sharply against the background and have something of a hazy appearance. Prior to World War II most giraffes in this country were Nubians. Today the situation is the opposite with reticulateds being more common.

Ingrid was one of a pair purchased by the show in 1950. She was mated with Boston, a union which produced calves in 1954, 1956, and 1958. These offspring were hybrids, half reticulated and half Nubian. This is not uncommon as the various races or sub-species of giraffe breed freely with one another. Thanks to animal expert Richard J. Re-

ynolds III for the biographical information on these animals. Photo from Pfening archives.

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THE 60 PAGE FULL COLOR PROGRAM CONTAINS OVER A DOZEN FULL COLOR POSTER REPRODUCTIONS PLUS MANY FULL COLOR PHOTOS OF ANTIQUE CIRCUS PARADE WAGONS, PLUS STORIES, PHOTOS, ETC.

THE GIANT FULL COLOR SOUVENIR POSTER CELEBRATING SARASOTA'S GREAT CIRCUS PARADE WAS CREATED BY HERBIE ROSE, THE DISTINGUISHED ARTIST FROM JAMAICA. ROSE'S WORK HAS BEEN EXHIBITED IN MANY PROMINENT GALLERIES. HE HAS CAPTURED ON CANVAS THE PARADE'S COLORFUL ELEMENTS WITH GREAT SKILL AND AUTHENTICITY.

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The Stowe Bros. Circus - A Real Family Tradition

Part Three

By John F. Polacsek

The activities of the Stowe family of circus performers and proprietors between 1860 and 1882 have been chronicled in two previous articles. This part covers the second generations' circus activities from the mid-1880s to the turn of the century. James Buchanan Stowe, the son of Elikiam Stowe; and his cousin John Frederick Stowe, the son of John Stowe, are the individuals who came to the forefront during this period.

James B. Stowe was a noted equestrian performer on the Adam Forepaugh Circus who later advanced into a management position on the Sells Bros. Circus. James joined the Sells show in 1882 as a performer, held the position of equestrian director the next year, and in 1884 was both equestrian director and ticket taker at the main entrance. It was his responsibility to see that the big top was ready before the public was allowed to come in. It was also his responsibility to settle disputes at the front door and among performers. If this was not enough, he also performed a four horse act in the center ring at the closing of every show.

The 1884 Sells route book noted that "under the able direction of Mr. Stowe, the arenic performance has been presented to the public in an artistic and satisfactory manner. All objectionable features have been very carefully avoided, and nothing that could possibly give the slightest offense has been permitted to enter the 'Magic Circle.' The entertainment has been of a high order and fully acceptable to a discriminating public.

Portrait of John F. Stowe, circus and Tom show manager. John F. Stowe collection.



Mr. Stowe has filled the position with credit to himself and profit to his employers."

Stowe mediated the petty disputes which arose during the season. At Furgus Falls, Minnesota on June 14 he was approached by Professor Stirk who, while holding his hand to his mouth, complained that someone had hit him "on the bloody kisser" with a paper ball. Stowe told the Professor simply to get even with James Robinson, the ringleader of the affair. Practical jokes were not uncommon among performers or the staff on the Sells show. At Topeka, Kansas Allen Sells instructed Stowe to get him some loaded cigars. The next day Sells went out to his farm near Topeka to transact some business. Seating himself on the top rail of a fence to view his property, Sells lit a cigar. An explosion followed after which Sells found himself on the ground. He had forgotten that his cigars were loaded.¹

James Stowe stayed with Sells Brothers for the next two years. In 1886 while he was equestrian manager on the Sells second unit—the United States Circus—he was joined by his cousin Burt Stowe. Burt was in charge of the concert and his wife, who was one of the Betram sisters, was one of its features according to the *New York Clipper*.²

James also performed while acting as equestrian manager and had a small diamond brokerage business on the side where he sold diamond pins to performers on time.³ This second income could be useful considering his occupational hazards. While performing in the ring at Niles, Ohio on May 21, he was thrown from his horse and slightly injured.⁴ James decided at the end of the season that it was time to move on.

Columbus, Ohio was a center of circus activity in the 1880s and James Stowe joined the Miller and Freeman Circus which was based there. This ten cent circus started in 1886 as the Miller, Okey & Freeman New United Monster Railroad Show. Doctor W. W. Freeman had some experience with circuses while Charles Miller and Thevor Okey were Columbus theater managers. Okey dropped out of the firm after one year.

Charles H. Day noted in mid-March that when Dr. Freeman had been in New York on business the show was already titled Miller, Stowe & Freeman. The show was to be greatly enlarged in all areas except the price of admission which was to remain a dime.⁵

Day wrote a story about Dr. Freeman who was actually a druggist in Columbus. One day a man stopped in his store and for fifteen minutes stated all of his symptoms to Freeman. He then concluded by

saying "Doctor, what do you think I need? I am feeling powerful bad." At that point Doc's mind had wandered off to his circus interests and he answered: "Six lengths of reserved seats with cushions and backs, ten rows of seat plank, uprights and jacks, one ring carpet, two Kidd's lights, one door marquee and two center-

The spring of 1888 was a circus fan's dream in Columbus, Ohio as Sells Bros., Barnum and Bailey, and Miller & Freeman all were in town within a two week period. James Stowe was manager of the annex on the latter show that season. From *Columbus Dispatch* April 25, 1888. John F. Polacsek collection.

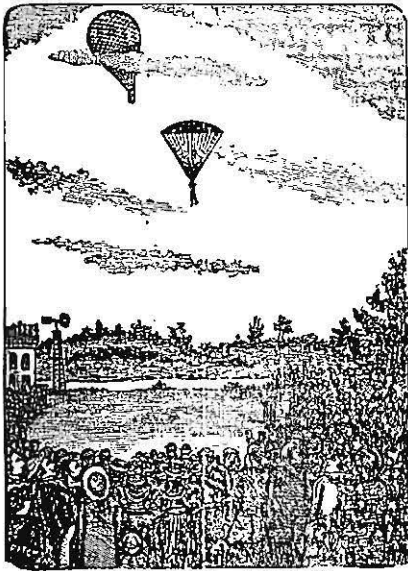
MILLER & FREEMAN'S
NEW UNITED
Monster Railroad Shows!
WILL EXHIBIT AT
COLUMBUS, ONE WEEK, commencing April 23,
Cor. Long and 6th Sts.
COMBINING THE LARGEST AND BEST CIRCUS
With the most Stupendous Menagerie on the Road.
Combined at Prices within the reach of all. Adults \$20, Child \$10 and under 9, 10c.
SPECIAL NOTICE—Prof. W. W. FREEMAN will make one of his terrific Parachute Descents in full view of the great people of Columbus, Ohio on the 23rd inst. at 12 o'clock. He will descend from the top of the Columbus Dispatch Building, at one o'clock on Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The most thrilling and daring exhibition of the kind.
Shows open at one o'clock, afternoon and seven o'clock, evening. Performances an hour later.
Tickets will be gratis on Saturday, the 23rd, at Freeman Bros.' Drug Store, 124 N. High, and at L. C. Collins' News Office.

Paine's Celery Compound
WEAK NERVES
GREAT LAYERS
MUSCUM!!
90 NORTH HIGH STREET,
NOW OPEN.
FAREWELL APPEARANCE
Sells Brothers' ENORMOUS United Shows!
At Columbus, Cor. of Long and 12th Streets,
Friday, May 11th.
BARNUM - BAILEY IS NEW UNITED SHOWS!!

Great London Circus
P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth
FOREVER UNITED TO THE
Great London Circus
Paris Olympic Hypodrome and Greater World's Fair.
THE GREATLY ENLARGED SHOWS COMBINED
JUMBO CAPT. PAUL DOTY, the Aquatic Marvel
P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth
FOREVER UNITED TO THE
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STOWE & LONG'S CIRCUS!

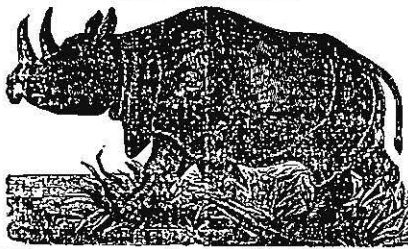
Menagerie, Wild West and Balloon Show



WILL EXHIBIT AT LEBANON,

Friday, May 10, 1889.

The only show of aerial ascension in this country since the late Prof. ...



Remember the Date.

**Grand Free Street Parade Daily.
ONE TICKET ADMITS TO ALL.**

Ad for Stowe & Long Circus from *Lebanon (Ohio) Gazette* of May 2, 1889 featuring a balloon ascension. The title at the start of the season was Stowe, Long and Gumble. John F. Polacek collection.

poles." The sick man was astonished and immediately left the store.⁶

The Miller, Stowe and Freeman Big 10 Cent Circus and Menagerie opened in Columbus on May 2, 1887 and spent the first week of the season there. A familiar face among the performers was James Robinson who was the show's star attraction. A great expense was supposedly incurred with Robinson's hiring, but the show advertised that they were "truly a dollar exhibition for a dime."⁷

The show pleased audiences as Frank Andress and his military band opened the performance with a beautiful overture followed by a fine grand entree. Next came a song by Dick Baker whose rich voice completely filled the canvas. Leaping by a corps of acrobats and equestrians

followed. James Stowe performed a hurdle act and a four-horse riding act. Lottie Miranda and the Whiting brothers then did their aerial acts.⁸ The final act consisted of an exhibition of graceful and fearless equestrianism by the acknowledged "King of the Ring" James Robinson. At the conclusion of his act on the second night he was presented with an elegant floral horseshoe which was over four feet in height.⁹

In 1888 James Stowe moved from part owner of the circus to manager of the annex. This fifteen car railroad show had 178 people and was titled Miller & Freeman's New United Shows. Charles Miller and W. W. Freeman were listed as owners with the management of the show being made up of the following people: Frank Miller, assistant manager; Alex Jacques, press agent; James Murray, equestrian director; Frank Andress, musical director; Gus Hill, manager of concert; Tom Berriman, superintendent of tickets; Abe Gumble, manager of refreshments; and John Lewis, side show orator. Frank Stowe, the brother of James Stowe, was leader of the side show band and played cornet.

The show opened in Columbus, Ohio on April 23 and spent its first week there. Over the next twenty-two weeks the circus traveled through eight states and two provinces, averaging 36 miles daily with the longest run being 178 miles. One of the main features of the show was a balloon ascension and parachute jump. This attraction went well for the first four days of the new season. On April 27, however, Professor Gillock, the aeronaut, had some problem inflating the balloon. It finally went straight up with the Professor sitting on a trapeze which was suspended from a closed parachute. When it was time to perform Gillock pulled the cord which was to loosen him from the balloon and open the chute—but nothing happened.

While he was busy trying to work the parachute free, the balloon began to de-

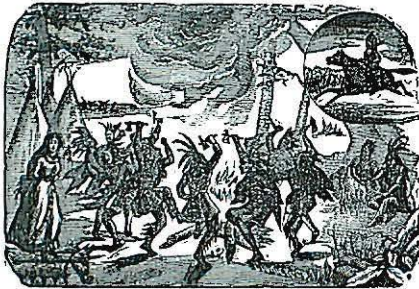
scend. Suddenly the chute billowed out with a balloon above and the Professor below. He swung down and hung from the trapeze by his hands when he was about 100 feet from the ground, getting ready to light on his feet. He finally dropped on a porch roof, only to have the balloon take off again and come down a short distance away.¹⁰ The next day Professor Colby, another aeronaut with the show, made a beautiful ascension from the circus grounds without any problems.¹¹ Later in the season Professor Hathaway, the show's third aeronaut, had the misfortune of coming down too close to a house, striking a chimney and injuring himself.¹²

Not all the show's problems occurred in the air. While the train was enroute near Mikanna Station, Ohio on the Chicago and Pittsburgh Railroad, it ran into a landslide. The passenger coaches and stock were not damaged, but the flats containing the wagons were completely wrecked. The damage was \$3000 and a cook on the show was killed.¹³ On June 3 Miller & Freeman sustained another wreck near Springfield, Massachusetts. The flat carrying the canvas wagon struck a switch in such a manner as to cause its derailment and that of the car following. Both cars were thrown down an embankment, injuring five men. To top it all off, at that time Doctor Freeman was not on the show as several days previous he went to Boston where he was confined to bed with inflammatory rheumatism. Miller was also away, having to leave the show for Columbus two weeks prior on account of illness.¹⁴

On June 21 while the circus was performing at Marlborough, Massachusetts, Professor Charles Colby, the balloon ascensionist, met with a very painful accident. While trying to land his parachute in a safe area he struck a two story house, causing a compound fracture of his left

Letterhead for the Stowe Bros. Circus of 1890. John F. Stowe collection.

Coming in All Its Splendor!
STOWE BROS.
 New Colossal R. R. Shows
 —AND—
 Historical Wild West Exhibition.



Realistic Scenes of Wild Prairie Life in the Far West.

EVERYTHING BRIGHT & NEW.
 —THE GRANDEST, FINEST, LARGEST AND—
BEST SHOW IN THE WORLD
 —EXHIBITING AT—
POPULAR PRICES
 Finest Acrobats, Eldors and General Performers with this
 aggregation that has ever visited your City.

4—VERY, VERY FUNNY JESTERS—4

Real Indians, Cowboys, Scouts, Sharp Shooters and Backing Bronchos.
 In fact everything pertaining to constitute a genuine Wild West Show.

TRAINED ANIMALS OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS.
 Grand Street Parade at 10 a. m.
FREE, FREE, FREE PARACHUTE EXHIBITION

(On the grounds before the doors open.)
 Remember we never disappoint. The date is fixed and cannot be changed and
 will positively exhibit at

Findlay, Saturday, May 10th.
 RAIN OR SHINE.

Two Performances, 1 and 7 p. m.

Ad for Stowe Bros. Circus from *Findlay (Ohio) Courier* of April 26, 1890. This show was owned by John F. and Burt Stowe. John F. Polacsek collection.

leg. He afterwards fell to the ground and suffered other injuries to his head and body.¹⁵

The tents were blown down during a gale on June 23 at Leominster, Massachusetts, as hundreds of spectators became panic stricken. Many injuries resulted and the showmen suffered a loss of several thousand dollars that day.¹⁶

Considering the events of the year it is not hard to understand why the Miller & Freeman equipment was offered for sale in a December 1888 *Clipper*. The inventory included a train of railroad cars, 25 head of baggage stock, 5 head of ring stock, 13 baggage wagons, eight cages, a bandwagon, a ticket wagon, a chandelier wagon, 46 lengths of seats which were twelve high, 10 lengths of reserve seats which were eight high, a big top consisting of a 120 foot round top with two 50 foot middles, and an 80 foot menagerie top.¹⁷ Apparently there were not many takers as in February 1889 the show was

advertised for sale at auction. It was reported then that Walter L. Main acquired some of the equipment, but the disposition of the remainder can only be speculated upon.¹⁸

There is a possibility that a newly organized Columbus wagon show—titled Stowe, Long and Gumble Circus, Menagerie and Balloon Shows—purchased the rest of the equipment. This ten cent circus opened on April 25, 1889 at Hawks Station or Vinton, Ohio. It was operated by James Stowe, Harry Long who had a dog act, and Abe Gumble who ran a clothing store in Columbus and managed the concessions on the 1888 Miller & Freeman Circus. The troupe played a few days around Columbus, then played the town for a week beginning April 29. A balloon ascension drew people to the show grounds for the one ring performance.¹⁹

The roster included the following: Stowe, Long and Gumble, owners and managers; Matt Smith, press agent; Prof. Ned Houston and a band of twelve pieces; Harry Long, treasurer; Robert Whittaker, equestrian director; Prof. White and his dog and pony circus; three Martinetti brothers, acrobats; James Stowe, J. Preeson and Robert Whittaker, equestrians. Other performers were Miss Downie, Sam Rheinhardt, Downie & Melville, J. Booker, Ben Downie, the Braham brothers, Ko-Ko-Ana, Frank Sparks, Frank Gillett, Edwin Martinetti, Mille. Lorretto, Miss Barretto, and Leon Kimmell. The concert performers were Duet and Fortenbeaugh, Ainsley & Downie, Nellie Rivers, Kitty Mead, Montana Frank and Buckeye George. Prof. Jewell, Prof. H. Gruber, Charles Richmond and William Borchers were connected with the balloon ascension. The sideshow included Max Zimmerman, manager; Lew Zimmerman, assistant manager; John Lewis, talker; Capt. Lovavovetish; Jasper, Zulu; Millie Jasper; Baldwin Allen, half horse and half man; Lew Smith; and Jack Smith's black band of ten musicians.²⁰ Jake Posey, the last of the forty horse drivers, started in show business on this circus by driving a six horse bill wagon on the advance.

The show proceeded west through Ohio with performances at Springfield on May 6 and Dayton on May 7. They added the words "Wild West" and the announcement of a street parade to their advertising at this time.²¹ A new addition to the show was four cubs from one of the lions, an indication that the show carried a menagerie.²²

Circus day brought a great number of people into town and although the parachute drop, the riding and the acrobatics were good, the show had some unsavory followers attached to it. There was a crowd of gamblers and fakirs who accompanied the troupe and one local editor complained that gambling devices were being worked on all sides and pickpockets were numerous. It was also pointed out that the show managed to work off a great deal of counterfeit money in Franklin and Waynesville, but in Lebanon the

people were prepared and very little was put into circulation.²³

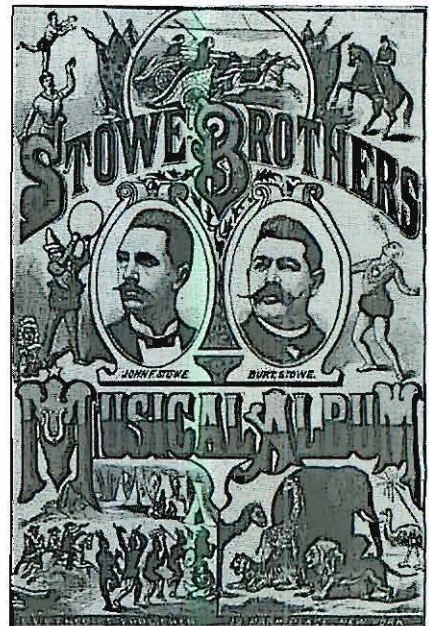
When the Stowe, Long and Gumble Circus rolled into Wilmington, Ohio for a May 17 performance, the editor only noted that it was a small show with two or three good acts, possibly because the show failed to take a newspaper ad. He objected to the "Hangerson" who worked swindling games on the show grounds.²⁴ From here the show headed south-east for an exhibition in Maysville, Kentucky on May 19 and at Owensburg, Kentucky on June 15.

The show carried a lot of grift and its epitaph was best written by Max Zimmerman in the *Billboard* some years later: "I do remember the Stowe, Long & Gumble Show (Go Slow and Stumble). It was the first circus I traveled with. I opened with the show at Hawks Station, Ohio and stuck to it until the sheriff took away the last stake down on the Green River in Kentucky. I ran the kid show, while Gus Norton and Ed Cross had the privileges. I was present at Maysville, Kentucky when Ed Cross was shot to death. We had a big show—several hundred heads of stock (nearly all mortgaged), and several hundred people."²⁵

With the loss of his show, James Stowe was out of the circus business for the next year. In 1891 he was equestrian director on the William Sells Circus and in 1892 held the same position on the Adam Forepaugh show. He joined the Walter L. Main Circus in 1893, again as equestrian director.

In 1896 the Stowe Brothers Circus title was again on the road, this time under the command of the two Stowe brothers--

The Stowe Bros. Circus used this songster in the early 1890s. Ringling Museum of the Circus collection.



Frank and James. For the previous decade Frank had been active in the circus field. In 1886 he and Andy Showers operated a flat boat show in the South with the entertainment drifting from town to town.²⁶ Frank played in the annex band on the 1888 Miller & Freeman Circus, and the following year went on the ill fated Stowe, Long & Gumble Circus. In 1892 the Frank Stowe and Co. Circus opened at New Albany, Indiana on February 26, played Paducah, Kentucky for four days, then transferred to new cars. The show then chartered the paddlewheel steamer *John Fowler* at Jeffersonville, Indiana and became a nautical circus. The 147 foot long steamer carried the entire show, and they played the ports of the Ohio River and its tributaries.²⁷

The Stowe Brothers Circus of 1896 opened at Vinton, Ohio, the same city where Stowe, Long and Gumble started their 1889 tour. Not much is known of the show other than that Frank Stowe was on the advance and that they traveled by railroad for a portion of the season. After a number of June and July dates in West Virginia and Kentucky, the show's route is hard to trace and it may have closed.²⁸ With the end of this circus, Frank Stowe's activities become difficult to follow, but his brother left a clear trail.

From 1900 until 1907 James Stowe was the 24 hour man on Forepaugh-Sells, and from 1908 until 1910 he held the same job on Barnum and Bailey. He died of heart failure on November 1, 1910 while his passenger coach was coming into Greenwood, Mississippi. He was 52. When the Barnum show learned of his death the next day at Yazoo City, Mississippi all of the flags were floated at half mast in his honor.²⁹

The second Stowe to rise to prominence during this time was John Frederick Stowe, the son of John Stowe of Berrien Springs, Michigan. The Burr Robbins Circus of 1884 and 1885 listed an acrobat by the name of John T. Stowe. Late in 1885, John Stowe was attached to the King, Burke & Co.'s Allied Show which was performing at Signor Faranta's Iron Theater in New Orleans. This indoor circus opened on October 19 and had among its performers John F. Stowe who was listed as a quick-change artist.³⁰ It is believed that Stowe stayed with King & Burke for the next two years. In August 1887 the *Clipper* stated that Stowe would go with the Scribner & Clements Circus where he would act as the amusement director of their 60 horse wagon show.³¹

Stowe was obviously in demand. While Scribner & Clements claimed to have hired him for the 1888 season, the King and Franklin Circus advertised that they had "Jolly Johnnie Stowe" who was "acknowledged by all to be the funniest clown in America." It was further noted in their heralds that he was the only clown of the day who could wear the mantle of the great clown Grimaldi. When the King & Franklin show opened on

STOWE & CO'S
INCOMPARABLE
UNCLE TOM'S CABIN CO.

LARGEST, GRANDEST & BEST IN THE WORLD.

35-PEOPLE-35
BAND AND ORCHESTRA
SPECIAL SCENERY.

En-Route

Letterhead for John F. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin Co. from the late 1890s. Pfening archives.

April 24 at Roanoke, Virginia, however, John Stowe was not among the company.

Early in April 1888 an ad in the *Clipper* noted that the John Stowe Circus desired musicians, two strong altos to double on first and second violins, and a strong solo B flat cornet player. The applicants were to address W. F. Kemp's Hall, Athens, Tennessee as the season was to start April 21.³² The show actually opened the first week of May in Cincinnati and spent five weeks in the Queen City. At the close of this run they added Prof. Morris's equine paradox and went on the road as the Stowe Brothers Circus, owned by John F. and his brother Burt making it a circus actually owned by brothers.³³

This troupe traveled through Ohio in June and July.³⁴ News from the show in the *Clipper* noted that the clown Sam Dickey had been sick for a few weeks and that Charles H. King the banjoist was in charge of the concert and laying out the people in the hotels.³⁵ After dates in Ohio and West Virginia the show chartered the 122 foot long paddlewheel steamer *General Dawes* to transport the show, eventually carrying it up the Little Kanawha River in Kentucky.³⁶ The show wintered in Cincinnati where in December Mrs. Stowe presented John with a baby girl.³⁷

The 1889 season found two Stowes advertising for people in the *Clipper*. James Stowe was organizing the Stowe, Long and Gumble Circus in Columbus, while John Stowe was putting together his show at Louisville. The Stowe Brothers Colossal Show of 1889 opened in Cincinnati for four weeks starting on April 22, then traveled by rail, performing at least in Ohio and Indiana. The staff included: Stowe brothers, proprietors and managers; John F. Stowe, manager; Burt Stowe, business manager; Harry Seymour, treasurer; I. J. Westwood, secretary; T. J. Tremaine, press agent; J. Falkner, railroad contractor; I. L. Lockwood, master of transportation; George Jennier, equestrian director; Fred Leavens, and 15 assistants made up the advance.

The performers were: George Jennier, the Ashton brothers, John Shields, Master Hennier, George Gun, Marx & Alonzo, Master Shields, D. L. Nichols, Alex. Scfar, Maggie & George Day, N. S. Wood, Harry Bluften, D. T. Cameron, and J. Hollywood. The wild west performers were Chief Running Deer, John Deer, Man-No-Qua-Ta, Kis-Ko, Os-Qui-Li-To, Red Beaver, Split Bark, Rolling Thunder, Kentucky Frank, Buckeye George, Yellowstone Vic, Texas John, Rattlesnake Dave, and Wild Horse Harry.

The concert included: Signor Del Fuego, W. H. Hickey, Clark & Gilmore, George Day, M. J. Foley, Minnie Allen, James Ryan, Alice Fuego, Nina Jennier, Tillie Deer and Clarence Arnold's band of ten pieces. The rest of the show's staff included P. McNerey, boss canvasman with 25 men under him; Ed Smith, property boss with 5 assistants; Harry Nash, wardrobe; Ed Kearney, boss hostler. There were 43 horses on the roster, and 10 railroad cars. The performance was presented under a 125 foot round top with three 40 foot middle pieces.³⁸

The season was not without problems. On August 13 while at Vincennes, Indiana, John Deer (aka Split Bark) was shot by an off-duty policeman who was drunk. The policeman reportedly abused Deer and struck him with a mace. They then fought, after which the cop fired five shots, one of which hit Deer in the thigh. The show also advertised for a boss canvasman stating that "none but sober and responsible men write." The show also needed a reliable agent, a good knockabout and singing clown, a good hostler to handle cars, and a chandelier man. The applicants were to write the show at East St. Louis, Illinois.³⁹

The staff changed drastically by late September. While the Stowe brothers and George Jennier still had their same positions, new faces included Fred Leavens, general agent; John Hays, master of transportation; A. S. Koland, contracting agent; H. S. Haley, master of canvas; Harry Shamlaw, master of stock; and C. A. Donaldson, manager of privileges.⁴⁰ The show proceeded south with performances in Arkansas and Alabama in September through November.

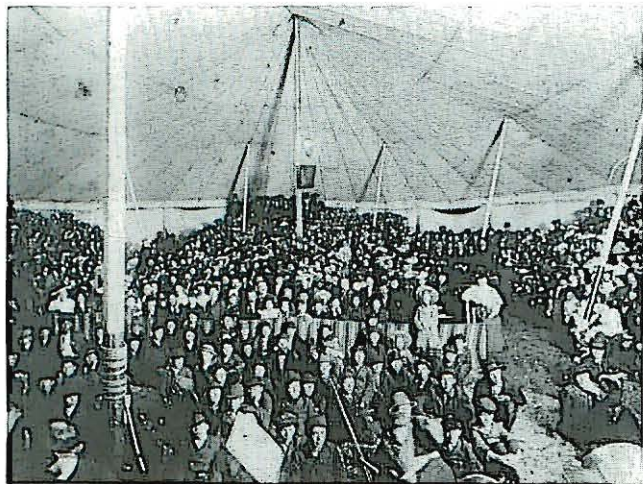
When the circus came into Mobile on November 16 it found that the contracting agent Fred Leavens had died three days prior after a severe attack of dysentery. Burt and John Stowe assumed charge of the arrangements and being unaware of any relatives decided to bury him in Mobile. The Stowes insisted on paying for the entire expense as they considered it their duty to one who had been a most faithful and valuable employee. The funeral of the 43 year old agent was attended by the entire company.⁴¹

The show continued in the South with performances in Alabama and Georgia through January of the new year. Cold weather persisted for a stand at Atlanta on January 17 and 18, but some 2000 people came out for each performance. The big draw of the show was the wild west, reported to be the first wild west ever exhibited under canvas in the South. Chief Running Bear, the famous warrior and chief of the Comanche Indians, along with other Indians and long haired westerners gave an exhibition of frontier life that was "intensely realistic and thoroughly sensational."⁴²

Notes from the show claimed that business was very good throughout the South. As the long season neared its end the employees presented John F. Stowe with a pure white solitaire diamond on his birthday. The Stowes were making plans for the spring season when several new railroad cars were to be added as was a new big top--a 140 foot round with three 50 foot middle. The larger big top would allow for new wild west hippodrome races on a 30 foot track.⁴³ The season of 36 weeks closed at Birmingham, Alabama on January 30 and the show was shipped back to winter quarters in Cincinnati.

The 1890 letterhead and heralds of the show claimed that they had been established in 1840 and this was their 50th annual tour. The circus opened in Cincinnati in April with the following staff: gener-

Interior of Stowe's Tom Show tent. This photo was taken from the stage, perhaps by John Stowe himself. John F. Stowe collection.



al managers, John F. and Burt Stowe; general advance agent, T. B. Long; contracting agent, Charles Ellis; assistant agent, A. O. Cass; boss billposter, Fred Gilbert and ten assistants; equestrian manager, Fred H. Leslie; treasurer, George L. Behrans; assistant treasurer, John Keenan; masters of canvas, M. T. Haley and Ed Kennedy and thirty men; master of stock, R. Rual and ten men; manager of side show, C. A. Donaldson; superintendent of wild west, Oregon Kit; and Prof. F. Long's military band of fourteen pieces.⁴⁴

The show headed north with performances in Ohio in May. At Findlay bad luck was with the show as the first wagon unloaded from the cars had both springs broken, and another heavy wagon had a wheel taken off when it was caught in the street car tracks.⁴⁵ To add insult to injury a tremendous shower in the afternoon cut short the performance, and at night the river rose so high that the grounds were flooded and no performance was attempted. It was decided to remain in Findlay until Monday, May 12 and give an afternoon performance.⁴⁶

The show turned west with performances in Indiana and Michigan in May, June and early July. Their route is sketchy for that year but they also played New York, Ohio and Indiana in September and October. The show again went into winter quarters in Cincinnati.

The early part of April of 1891 found John F. Stowe in Cairo, Illinois. An ad in the *Clipper* stated that he wanted performers and musicians to strengthen the show for the summer season and also needed performing dogs, ponies, goats, and monkeys.⁴⁷ By May Stowe was back in Cincinnati and advertising that he still needed musicians, a bar team, double trapeze and lady aerial artists.⁴⁸ When the show opened in the suburbs of Cincinnati late in May, the weather was bad which spoiled business, but they made up for it at the next two stands just outside Cincinnati.⁴⁹ Over forty years later Harry Lakola wrote the *Billboard* with his recollections of trouping with the John F. Stowe show that year. "John F. Stowe,

Covington, Kentucky, organized a small circus that spring," wrote Lakola. "I joined to do my specialty and clown on bars. It was a small affair, a 60 foot round top and two 40 foot middle pieces. But brand new from centerpole to stakes. Carried a German band of eight pieces.

John F. Stowe was proprietor and general manager; Mrs. Mamie Stowe, treasurer and ticket seller; Burt Stowe, front door; and Ed Sloman, advance agent. Performers in the big show were Frank Morris and his dog and pony troupe featuring a midget horse; Elliot family, Tom, Jams, Polly and Annie, bicycle and unicycle riders, using the high-wheel velocipedes of that time; Will Irwin, head balancer on swinging trapeze; Mlle. Irwin, iron jaw; Bell Brothrs, acrobats; Ashton Brothers, horizontal bars; D. L. Nichols, wire act; Chauncey Powell, contortionist and monkey act on swinging perch; Bill Gibbs and Tom McInerney, Roman Gladiator and statue act; Sam Dicky, Al Devaney and Sam Boydeell, clowns.

"In the concert were John F. Stowe in his lightning-change act; Mamie Stowe, seriocomic; Burt Stowe, old Negro character, singing *I Love to Think of the Days When I Was Young*; Devaney and Ray, sketch team; Gibbs and McInerney, boxing and wrestling, meeting all comers; closing with the old reliable afterpiece, *Mr. and Mrs. Brown*.

"Here is a record I think is hard to beat. Along the Ohio and the Big Kana-wha rivers we traveled by steamboat, along the C. H. & D. Canal by canal boat and overland by rail or wagon. At start of the season we played all the suburbs around Cincinnati, six weeks in all, three-day stands. As we all stopped in hotels, we were allowed street-car fare to reach the show lot. There were cable cars then; motors and airplanes had not made an appearance or no doubt we would have used those. The show made money. The following season, much enlarged, it trav-

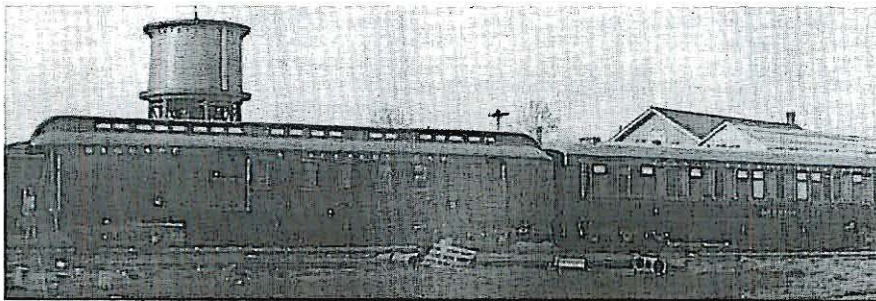
Tom shows often paraded, and Stowe's troupe was no exception as shown here around 1900. John F. Stowe collection.



eled south and, while playing Florida, united with the Pubillones [sic] show and went to Cuba. I missed that treat, as I had gone west."⁵⁰

There are some inaccuracies in Lakola's account, but it notes that the show decided to get off rail and become a water circus for part of the season. Once they left the river systems they headed overland and south with performances in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida in December and January. After closing at Key West on January 17, the show sailed to Havana where they performed in connection with the Pubillones Circus.

The show did not go into winter quarters that year, but appeared in Cuba until late April of 1892. After four months the show returned to the United States but found that the Southern ports had been quarantined which forced the show to land in New York City on May 14. Immediately ads for musicians and trained animals were placed in the trade press with the note "consider one week's silence a negative."⁵¹ Exactly when the show reopened is unknown, but the route included dates in Maryland in July, and Pennsylvania dates in September.



In its early years John Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin show traveled by railroad. The car on the left is lettered "baggage and scenery car," while the one on the

ager of the Walter L. Main Circus in 1897. He still wanted to have his own circus and he struck a bargain with Main. At the end of the regular season Main leased nine cars to Stowe who then framed the Stowe Brothers International Shows and Hagenbeck's Trained Animal Exhibition.

Fortunately a transcript of the account books of the Walter L. Main Circus have survived. They give not only the route, but also some financial details of the Stowe and Hagenbeck Circus which lasted from November 9 to December 22 1897:

Date	Town	Profit/(Loss)
November 9	Rolla, Missouri	\$215.90
November 10	Marshfield, Missouri	(76.46)
November 11	Seligman, Missouri	97.17
November 12	Fayetteville, Arkansas	89.15
November 13	Fort Smith, Arkansas	218.76
November 14	Sunday	
November 15	Paris, Texas	128.09
November 16	Honey Grove, Texas	125.89
November 17	Wolfe City, Texas	195.90
November 18	Fort Worth, Texas	81.84
November 19	Meridian, Texas	(116.69)
November 20	McGregor, Texas	(96.50)
November 21	Sunday	
November 22	Cameron, Texas	(210.49)

right is lettered "John F. Stowe's Private Car." It was named the Erma, presumably after his wife. John F. Stowe collection.

November 23	Rogers, Texas	(27.10)
November 24	Goldwaithe, Texas	46.02
November 25	Lampasas, Texas	(83.68)
November 26	Coleman, Texas	160.68
November 27	Bollinger, Texas	(229.35)
November 28	San Angelo, Texas	296.65
November 29	Sunday	
November 30	Brownwood, Texas	216.85
December 1	Temple, Texas	106.95
December 2	Navasota, Texas	2.88
December 3	Calvert, Texas	(223.00)
December 4	Bryan, Texas	(133.77)
December 5	Sunday	
December 6	Hempstead, Texas	(388.67)
December 7	Elgin, Texas	158.84
December 8	Austin, Texas	533.37
December 9	Georgetown, Texas	81.88
December 10	Taylor, Texas	(54.80)
December 11	San Marcus, Texas	60.06
December 12	Sunday	
December 13	San Antonio, Texas	123.87
December 14	San Antonio, Texas	(434.29)
December 15	Luling, Texas	(147.29)
December 16	Columbus, Texas	(28.97)
December 17-18	Enroute	
December 19	New Orleans, La.	228.70
December 20	New Orleans, La.	(135.20)

December 21 New Orleans, La. 22.70
December 22 New Orleans, La. (131.81)

The Main account books recorded the history of the show and its demise: "9 cars, Main leased to John Stowe, called Stowe Bros. Show. 40 or 50 horses, two elephants, six or seven cages. The prettiest outfit any show ever had. It was a terrible frost. Main lost \$3500.00 going and getting the show home etc. The printers lost heavily. Moreland did not get paid for feeding the people for two or three days. Performers and working men did not get anything the last two or three weeks and the last night Stowe walked away and hid. Danney Fitzgerald, Batey, Berris, St. John, Crandel, Rice, Bernard, John Kelly, Christie, and Doc Miller and the band stayed until the finish. The rest including Bickel and Watson, Stowe, Gilbertson, Tyebells, Jim West, Steve Miaco and all performers showed the yellow feather. Main and Fitzgerald stayed up all night to get the train out of town without attachments. The reasons for failure were bill car only one week ahead, paper not half strong enough, Stowe forgot to order his second edition, had to give all his attention to his lady friend. Walker [show print] shipped second addition too late and COD. Show could not move it. Weather was terrible bad. Snow in some towns. Performance was extra fine but management rotten. Performers weakened the night before closing in New Orleans and Stowe gave back about \$100.00 to the audience which was about \$10.00 more than he took in when he could have given the show with the trained animals, Crandel and St. John. Wallace show followed in New Orleans on another lot and done [sic] nothing and had a losing season. Sells Bros. also a big loser, season 1897, especially in Texas. Show was 8 cars back, one ahead and was bad size and took special service."⁵⁴ Thus ended the 1897 Stowe Brothes Cicus.

With this bad experience behind him, John F. Stowe concentraed his efforts on his Uncle Tom's Cabin Company. He took the show out for the 1898 season from his headquarters in Portland, Maine, planning to open under a canvas tent. For many years the show was successful, but he always had a longing to have a circus.

He once again ran away with the circus in 1912 when he became the manager of the Downie and Wheeler Circus which opened on March 9 at Valdosta, Georgia. The show was on thirteen cars with one ahead. A leaping the gap bicycle act was the free attraction.⁵⁵ As far as can be determined this was the last time John F. Stowe was in the circus business.

At the end of the 1912 season Stowe returned to Niles, Michigan and continued to improve his Tom show. By 1920 it had 50 people and carried the equipment behind a dozen automobiles and trucks. The performance was given under a tent which sat 2000 which was illuminated by a Delco electric lighting system.⁵⁶

The 1892 season was a turning point in John F. Stowe's life. While he was disposing of some surplus stock in Philadelphia he met William H. Donaldson who was shortly to found the *Billboard*. Donaldson suggested that Stowe bring to the public "Stowe's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' Company" and leave the circus business. What better than John F. Stowe to exhibit on stage the great work of Harriett Beecher Stowe.⁵² The idea appealed to Stowe who formed a new show at the end of the season that performed in opera houses. By March 1893 he was on the road with Tom show performances in Ontario.

The Tom show was a success and by August of 1893 a new dramatization of was offered by Stowe and Co.⁵³ The stage show played opera houses from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon and John Stowe opened the 1897 season in New York City where he introduced the cake walk. It is doubtful that he stayed the entire season in New York as there was still sawdust in his veins.

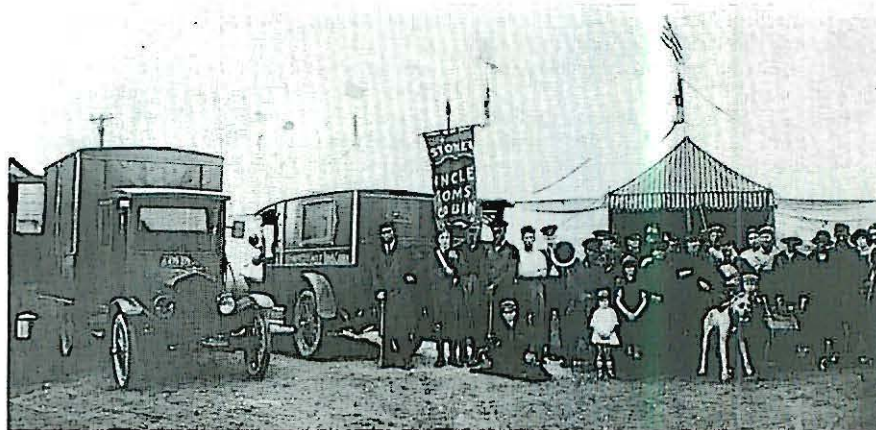
While the Tom show was on stage, John F. Stowe went out as assistant man-

As the Tom show popularity faded, he took out the temperance play "Ten Nights in a Barroom" in 1928. This new venture was not successful. The show itself made money, but with the loss of five cars in six weeks, the loss of the electric light plant, and the tent going up in flames it was a rough season. Unfortunately, the show was considered political in nature. Stowe related: "At Martinsville, Indiana I sat on the hotel veranda beside a man there for treatments at the health springs when our show calliope went by. 'There, look at that,' said the stranger, 'Republican stuff, to my certain knowledge there are 12 of those shows touring Indiana now for the Republicans.'"⁵⁷ Whether a political motive existed or not, the show was packed away at the end of the year and John F. Stowe retired.

The Stowe saga ended on May 19, 1939 when John F. Stowe died at his home in Niles, Michigan. He was the last of the long standing Stowe family in the outdoor show business. Thanks to those who helped with this project: Ted Bowman, Bob Brisendine, Albert Conover, John F. Stowe, and Fred Dahlinger.

FOOTNOTES

1. Townsend Walsh Scrapbook, Hertzberg, Circus Collection, San Antonio Public Library.
2. *New York Clipper*, May 29, 1886.
3. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1886.
4. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1886.
5. *Sporting & Theatrical Journal*, March 19, 1887.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Columbus Daily Times*, Columbus, Ohio, May 1, 1887.
8. *Ibid.*, May 3, 1887.
9. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1887.
10. *Columbus Dispatch*, Columbus, Ohio April 27, 1888.
11. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1888.



In later years Stowe's Tom show traveled by trucks. John F. Stowe collection.

12. *Clipper*, May 5, 1888.
13. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1888.
14. *Dispatch*, June 4, 1888.
15. *Clipper*, June 30, 1888.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1888.
18. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1889.
19. *Columbus Post*, Columbus, Ohio, May 2, 1889.
20. *Clipper*, May 18, 1889.
21. *Lebanon Gazette*, Lebanon, Ohio, May 2, 1889.
22. *Ibid.*, May 9, 1889.
23. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1889.
24. *Wilmington Journal*, Wilmington, Ohio, May 22, 1889.
25. *Billboard*, November 21, 1914.
26. *Clipper*, April 17, 1886.
27. *Ibid.*, May 28, 1892.
28. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1896.
29. *Billboard*, November 12, 1910.
30. *New Orleans Picayune*, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 19, 1885.
31. *Clipper*, August 6, 1887.
32. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1888.
33. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1888.

34. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1888.
35. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1888.
36. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1888.
37. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1888.
38. *Ibid.*, August 10, 1889.
39. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1889.
40. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1889.
41. *Ibid.*, November 30, 1889.
42. *Atlanta Constitution*, Atlanta, Georgia, January 18, 1890.
43. *Clipper*, January 25, 1890.
44. *Ibid.*, May 3, 1890.
45. *Findlay Courter*, Findlay, Ohio, May 10, 1890.
46. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1890.
47. *Clipper*, April 11, 1891.
48. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1891.
49. *Ibid.*, June 20, 1891.
50. *Billboard*, December 28, 1895.
51. *Clipper*, May 21, 1892.
52. *Billboard*, October 29, 1921.
53. *Clipper*, August 12, 1893.
54. Walter L. Main Account Books, Albert Conover Collection, Xenia, Ohio.
55. *Billboard*, May 11, 1912.
56. *Paulding Democrat*, Paulding, Ohio, August 5, 1920.
57. *Niles Daily Star*, Niles Michigan, October 11, 1928.

BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS

TOM ATKINSON, MGR.

ETHEL ATKINSON, TREAS.



Tom Atkinson toured the Howe Bros. Circus in 1937. He had been associated with other truck shows of the 1930s including Barney Bros. The title of this colorful letterhead is red outlined in black. The lion is in full color. Atkinson's name is in blue. The letterhead was designed and printed by the U.S. Printing & Engraving Co. of Kansas City, Mo.