

## Great Wallace Running Lion and Rhino Tableaus,

Richard E. Conover. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jan-Feb), 1966, pp. 12-14.

Note: not all photographs accompanying this article are included.

During the last half of the 1890 decade, the Great Wallace Show obviously underwent a big expansion. This expansion also contributed to the hometown economy because Sullivan & Eagle, a firm in the Wallace winter quarters city of Peru, Ind., supplied at least 13 new parade wagons in this buildup. For the most part, these wagons were works of major proportions, distinctive for their line carvings in heavy relief, with four of the cages, in particular, having exceptionally massive corner posts. Besides these four, there were four other fine cages, including a hippopotamus den, a very fancy ticket wagon with clown-head carvings on its corners, a small parade chariot with carved eagles forward, and the two tableaus which are our subject.

It is convenient and proper to consider these two tableaus together, because certain common characteristics in the artistry of their carvings almost assure that the same woodcarver did both of them, and because, for a span of years, they had a parallel history. From a camera angle, the origin of the Rhino Tableau was almost left out of the picture; the only one so far discovered of it while it was actually with Great Wallace reveals just one end of it in the fringes of a faraway lot scene and, as such, it is good for documentary purposes only. On the other hand, we have three good pictures of the Running Lioness Tableau on Great Wallace, the earliest taken in Neenah, Wisc., when the show played there on May 31, 1898. This Neenah picture (Photo No. 1) is an important contribution to this note, because it is the only one that shows the rear end. Likewise, and for the same purpose, Photo No. 2 has been chosen because it best shows the front end.

Shortly after the Great Wallace and the Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows were combined into Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1907, these two tableaus were sold to the Sells Floto Circus. We have good photographs (Nos. 3 and 4) of each of them with the Floto show, the one of the Rhino being, incidentally, the earliest satisfactory one of it.



**Photo No. 6 - The Sells Floto Buffalo Tableau. Author's Collection.**

In 1915 the Running Lioness Tableau was rebuilt and part of its carvings transferred to the rebuilt version which was as shown in Photo No. 5. This same year, a Buffalo Tableau appeared on Sells Floto (Photo No. 6). The

year for both these actions can be exactly determined because, on the one hand, the Buffalo Tableau was photographed in the wreck of the Floto show at Holden, Kan. on Sept. 14, 1915 while, on the other hand, these same buffalo carvings were

being used to obscure an insignificant vehicle (Photo No. 7) in 1914. Even without knowing the latter, it took only a glance at any of the surviving photographs of it to convince even the least artistic of us that the Buffalo Tableau was a hybrid. This yarn began to unravel with the acquisition of the Neenah photograph a few years ago which revealed that the carvings in its vertical front panels were off either side of the rear doors of the Lioness Tableau, and the principal scrolls at the top rear, above the buffalo, came from the front end of the Lioness, while other portions off the rear doors are scattered around elsewhere. The very recent acquisition of the Terre Haute picture has prompted the completion of this note which should erase one more of those fictional scribblings that somehow get entered on the back of pictures. This one had the Buffalo Tableau built for Buffalo Bill Wild West in the 1890's, sojourned with Barnum & Bailey in 1908-09 which was followed by a period with the Two Bills Show before it landed on Sells Floto in 1914.



**Photo  
No. 10 -  
Buffalo  
Tableau  
in Sells  
Floto  
wreck of**

**September 14, 1915. Author's Collection.**

While it is certain that both the Running Lioness and the Buffalo Tableaus stayed with Sells Floto until they were junked, the whereabouts of the Rhino Tableau from the time that it disappeared from Sells Floto until it reappeared on the Al G. Barnes Circus in the 1920's, is filled with conjecture. Joe Bradbury, in his article on the "Al G. Barnes Circus. Season of 1924" (*White Tops*, Nov.-Dec. 1963), has this to say on page 5, column 3: "By some unknown route, it got to Tom Wiederman, who used it on his Barton & Bailey Circus out of the Hall Farm in 1915. In 1916 and 1917 the wagon was on the Coop & Lent Railroad Circus, which was purchased by the Horne Zoological Garden Co. after that show went broke in mid-season 1917. Barnes added the Rhino wagon from Horne while his show was playing Kansas City in 1920." In some recent correspondence with Bradbury it turns out that he and the late Bill Woodcock agreed that the Rhino Tableau was on Barton & Bailey in 1915 and based their conclusion solely on a

photograph, which could have been taken anywhere and anytime, on which someone had written "Barton & Bailey." Since there is no way of correlating this picture with any others that are presently available, it is best not to accept this lone picture as conclusive evidence.



**Photo No. 8 - The Rhino Tableau on Al. G. Barnes in the 1920s. From the Walker Morris Collection.**

If it was on Barton & Bailey, it is probable that it was already at the Hall Farm before that short-lived show was framed there in 1915; and, whether

the foregoing is true or not, it is quite reasonable for it to have been on the Coop & Lent Railroad Circus of 1916-17, because some of the equipment from that one which was not put on truck chassis for the 1918 motorized edition of Coop & Lent ended up in the possession of Horne. It is generally agreed that Barnes acquired the Rhino Tableau from Horne; in fact, one of the better pictures (Photo No. 8) that we have of it was made while it was with Barnes. The final accounting for its missing years should, however, be withheld pending the finding of more Barton & Bailey, Coop & Lent, or other photographs.

The Rhino was the last to be junked of the group that Sullivan & Eagle built for Great Wallace. This occurred in 1952 after it had sat around for over 20 years on a lot in Los Angeles that specialized in renting circus props to movie studios. If this one was ever used for that purpose, it evidently ended up on the cutting room floor.

Besides the photo credits given under the pictures, both Ricky Pfening and Joe Bradbury contributed to this article. *Researcher note: it is not true that "it evidently ended up on the cutting room floor." See "O'Shaughnessy's Boy," 1935 film starring Wallace Berry and Jackie Cooper.*