

3076 E. Circus Lane

Peru, Indiana

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## Indiana Landmarks

In May of 2019, the Indiana Landmarks named the circus barns at the International Circus Hall of Fame on their top 10 endangered historic structures in Indiana. Their story from their website is re-posted below.

The self-proclaimed Circus Capital of the World, Peru became so synonymous with the traveling performing groups in the 1920s that it appeared on many maps as “Circus City.” Some of America’s most famous circuses wintered at a farm outside the city, a complex that once contained more than 30 buildings, including horse stables, training facilities, wagon building and repair shops, a hospital, commissary, restaurant, bunkhouses, and barns to house the menagerie. Today, only two barns and a small collection of outbuildings still stand at the former Wallace Circus and American Circus Corporation Winter Quarters, a National Historic Landmark.

Built to house elephants and cats and to store the circus’s tents and ornately carved wagons, the barns date to the 1920s, when American Circus Corporation established its winter quarters on the former Ben Wallace Circus property three miles east of Peru. Today, the farm is owned by the International Circus Hall of Fame.

Leaky roofs endanger both barns and the invaluable collection of circus artifacts they house, including vintage circus posters, photos,

costumes, circus wagons, and a miniature replica of the 1934 Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The Hall of Fame has started raising money to repair the barns, but the necessary work comes with a hefty \$1 million price tag, a challenging fundraising goal for the nonprofit organization. With the impending demolition of the nearby Terrell Jacobs Winter Quarters along US 31, the need to save this last tangible piece of Peru’s circus heritage becomes even more urgent.



A Go Fund Me Re-roofing project has been started to raise the needed \$40,000.00 to match an Indiana Department of Transportation grant for \$ 35,000.00 to re-roof the Barn seen above. This houses the Museum’s artifact collection. [https://www.gofundme.com/reroofing-the-north-barn?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=fb\\_dn\\_postdonate\\_r&fbclid=IwAR2Srn82Yy3lb1IV-xCwUDI0RRIIR9TgvH-3DSetE3m0E2m-2aW-AV1mH1Q](https://www.gofundme.com/reroofing-the-north-barn?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=fb_dn_postdonate_r&fbclid=IwAR2Srn82Yy3lb1IV-xCwUDI0RRIIR9TgvH-3DSetE3m0E2m-2aW-AV1mH1Q)

# Acquisitions

The last red flag to fly atop the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Big Top when it folded under canvas in Pittsburgh, PA. on July 16, 1956, was donated to the Circus Hall of Fame last summer. During work week this past May, a show case was changed out and the flag was hung, covering the entire back wall of the showcase.



( Regine Brindle photo )

# Work Week

The Circus Hall of Fame holds an annual work week in the spring to try to make some repairs, improvements and changes. This year people from around North America arrived to work from May 19<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. Board members and Volunteers arrived from British Columbia, New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, Illinois, South Carolina, Wisconsin and Michigan.

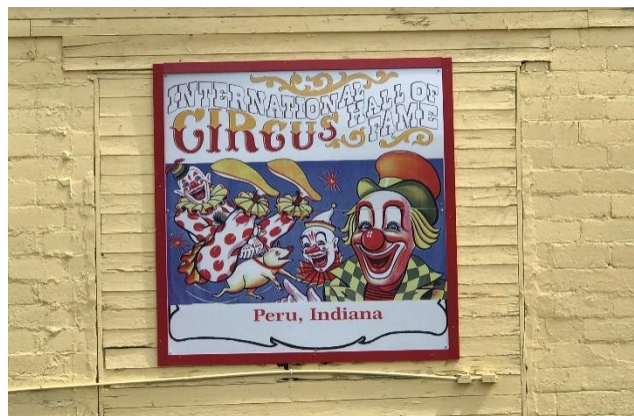
Many different tasks were on the list of hopeful accomplishments. The winds and the rains prevented a lot of the outside things to be done that we wanted but we made some progress. First and foremost was the painting of the buildings again. Our Go Fund Me for Restoration was also bolstered by donations sent directly to the Office. This enabled us to buy the primer and paint to cover the barns and Office. While the workers did get to scrape and pressure wash the barns, the rain wouldn't hold off long

enough for the wood to dry during work week. Fortunately, two volunteers stayed another week and were able to get some painting done.



( Regine Brindle Photo )

The south end of the Wagon Barn where the Museum collection is housed, the south end of the Elephant Barn, and three sides of the American Circus Corporation Office Building were primed and two coats of paint applied. A colorful sign was then added to the south end of the elephant Barn to brighten up the view from the road. Abner and Sons of Peru made the sign for us.



( John Wright photo )

Several of the Show cases inside the Museum were cleaned out and either freshened up or had new displays placed in them. Volunteers were steady painting the frames, decorating inside the cases and placing new displays for the viewers pleasure this summer. We were so blessed to have volunteers come up

from Indianapolis, French Lick, Baraboo, Wisconsin, Cincinnati, Ohio and Albany, New York.



( Regine Brindle Photo )



This amazing cabinet was actually made in Peru, Indiana in the late 1800s. There are two windows on each end that raised and lowered on an old pulley system. One of those windows had to have the glass replaced. It took three men and a man lift. Peru Glass replaced the glass for us.

One of the projects that actually started back in 2009 was adding the jungle panels to one of the ammo cages. Dominic Yodice had started making the panels in 2009, then the painting began. While a year would pass without getting to work on it, he might get started again, only to be interrupted with another project. Finally this spring, with the terrific help of Allen Kirk form New York, they mounted the panels to recreate the menagerie cage fronts of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & bailey Circus in the 1950s.



( Dominic Yodice Photos )

Peter Gorman owns two more ammo cages that are on loan to the Circus Hall of Fame. The discussion has now started as to how great it would be to see all three lined up with the panels in place. Dom has remarked on several occasions that they had so much trouble trying to mount the panels, the cage opening wasn't square anymore. This was overcome with a shaved edge here and a shim there. The final product was well worth the efforts and dedication to doing this.



# Fundraiser Dinner

The Circus Hall of Fame had a fundraising Dinner and Auction on Thursday July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in the Old Fire House Community Center in downtown Peru.

The Circus Hall of Fame needs to raise about \$ 40,000.00 to go with a matching grant that will be offered by the Indiana Dept. of Transportation later this year. This is to Help with the re-roofing of the North barn where the major part of the Museum collection is located.

Not only did we have a great meal and good fellowship, the Night belonged to veteran circus clown and Peru native, Pat Kelly. Pat has a distinguished career in the sawdust ring and has served as the Face of the Circus Hall of Fame for over 23 years.



( Regine Brindle photos )

After dinner and Honoring pat, the evening was turned over to Auctioneer, Mark Bisch of Blue Skies Auctions. The Circus Hall of Fame had 100 different items that were donated for the

Fundraising auction. Nothing came from the Circus Hall of Fame Collection.



The items ranged from small to very large, and inexpensive to Thank you very much. There were many opportunities to own some of Peru's very own history with Hagenbeck-Wallace Programs, tickets and office papers being offered. Three Cole Bros. Pulleys were made available as well as two tickets to the Brickyard 400 in September.

## Repairs

Back near January, the winter winds ripped the west end of the wagon shed apart. It took a month of getting an insurance claim in the works and then starting the work of getting estimates for the repairs.



The Schweetsa Construction Company of Macy, Indiana had the weather cooperate by the end of May to get in there without sinking to fix the shed.

# Can You Help Preserve Indiana History?



( 1972 photo by Albert Conover )

We are trying to raise \$35,000.00 to re-roof this barn at the International Circus Hall of Fame. It was built by the American Circus Corporation in 1922. The bottom level is where all the circus wagons were built and repaired. The upstairs is where all the canvas from the many tents were patched up and kept in good repair each winter. Today, this important building houses the main part of our Museum collection. Because the Indiana Dept. of

Transportation bought the old Terrell Jacobs farm on the west side of Peru for an intersection, they will give us \$ 35,000.00 as part of a matching grant to help preserve a remaining circus barn in Indiana. We have already had architectural drawings done as a structural assessment. We had one Fundraiser, are seeking a grant and possibly another fundraiser. IF you can help, please donate today. Remember, we are a 501c3 non-profit organization so your donation should be tax deductible.

Please mark your donation as "Roof." Please help spread the word. Feel free to forward this Newsletter to your friends, neighbors, companies, CEOs.

Thank You!

International Circus Hall of Fame  
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