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Scranton " Biloxi
Biloxi " Bay St. Louis
Bay St. Louis " Gulfport
Gulfport " Mobile
Mobile 12 Gulfport Island, MS
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Novelty Performer


Sheboygan, Wisconsin; February 13, 1914. 215 by 220mm (8 1/2 by 8 3/4 inches). Letterhead with image of Bischoff on top left. Previously folded; ink fading.

Bischoff (1893-1973) writes to Kelly Bros. Circus that he accepted another engagement, but:

“P.S. I do two acts, assist in concert and clown numbers. For future remembrance.”

Per Billboard magazine in 1912 Bischoff worked for George W. Hall’s Trained Wild Animal Show at Evansville, Wisconsin; he performed in 1915 with Seibel Bros. and Gollmar Bros; and, in 1917 he placed a classified advertisement selling nickel plated hoops “fine for frog-snake act”.

$125
A02
Meta-Letterhead

Douglas, Herbert A. & Kasiska, William H.

Three Letters from Circusiana Collectors.

Two double-sided neat handwritten letters 215 by 280mm (8 1/2 by 11 inches) on Herbert A. Douglas' letterhead; dated December 28, 1944 and March 9, 1949. One single-sided typed letter 165 by 230mm (6 1/2 by 9 inches) on William H. Kasiska letterhead; dated November 25, 1935. Kasiska letter unsigned; trimmed; and previously glued into scrapbook; glue residue to text - not ideal. Two Douglas letters with fold markings.

Let's get Meta: A circus collection is incomplete without collecting the collectors of circusiana writing to yet other collectors addressing the ongoings of the great American circus. Kasiska prints on his letterhead that he is a “collector of circus letterheads”.

Contains detailed banter between the circus obsessed. Douglas’ 1944 letter is to W.H. Woodcock. Woodcock’s family owned the Orton Railroad Circus, and Woodcock made his living buying and selling elephants to traveling shows.

In the 1949 letter Douglas writes regarding a circusiana dealer: “I recently saw a list of his that mentioned some dandy Welsh Bros of 1902 that made my mouth fairly water...” I can only hope for similar Pavlovian responses.

Sold as a set (three items): $165

Tom Mix (1880-1940) was Hollywood’s first western star, appearing in 291 movies. He helped define the Western genre and marketed his circus with movies and vice versa.

Although Mix was the star, Floyd King was king of the American circus. Long-term manager for Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell (Cole Bros. and Clyde Beatty’s), he was also an owner, operator, and manager of his own shows. In this letter he writes to the assistant manager of Tom Mix Circus, “[Y]ou boys gave the Barnes Circus plenty of headaches... [T]he name Tom Mix is Magic.” Perhaps King had an eye towards expanding the Adkins/Terrell empire with the famous Tom Mix show, as Mix suffered financial challenges in the early 1930’s.

Sold as a set (seven items): $295
William Frederic "Buffalo Bill" Cody (1846-1917) founded his traveling show in 1872. The story of Buffalo Bill spring-boarding his reputation as icon of the American west into a show-star is a defining part of circus history.

The man who made Buffalo Bill was General Manager Louis E. Cooke (1850-1923). Cooke managed circuses for over 40 years and was known for creating the amicable working relationship between Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey. In this letter, Cooke discusses the show's route with local agent R.M. Harvey.

See Michelle Delaney: Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Chapter 2 "Cody and Cooke".

Sold as a set (three items): $295
A05

Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey

America’s most famous circus.

In this collection are letters and signatures from:

Henry Ringling North (1909-1993), president and chairman of the circus founded by his uncles. He ran and modernized the circus from 1936 to 1967. Friend of Earnest Hemingway and John Steinbeck, and a World War II spy.

Joseph Mayer, advertising executive and business partner of Buffalo Bill was described in Show World (Sept. 14, 1907 Vol 1. No. 12): “One of the best-known circus men in the country is Joseph Mayer, who publishes the official program for the Barnum & Bailey and Buffalo Bill shows.”

F.A. Cook, attorney for Barnum & Bailey (per Bridgeport Times October 25, 1918). It seems likely that he worked on the monumental 1919 merger with Ringling Brothers.

Sold as a set (12 items): $695
Clown Posters.

Newport, Kentucky: Donaldson Litho. Co., [ca. 1940-1960]. Color lithograph; identified as No. 7004 and 7005; two blank posters intended for printing show dates on top. 356 by 560mm (14 by 22 inches). Mild to medium creasing; light soiling; very good.

Donaldson Litho. Co. found its niche printing generic posters that buyers could customize by adding names and dates. Their posters advertised circus and other traveling performance acts.

The company was founded in 1863 and at its height employed 300 people. Donaldson printed show posters until 1981.

An integral part of the success of the American circus was advertising. Posters used to be plastered on walls and barns and this was the primary mode of letting the public know that the show was in town.

Sold as a set (two items): $695
Letterhead Collection

44 Circus Letterheads and 13 Circus Envelopes.

A century of circus letterhead and envelopes. Mostly 1920s-1930s, but spanning early 1900s through the 1980s. Mostly American, some from Great Britain. All standard sizing 215 by 280mm (8 1/2 by 11 inches) and 240 by 100mm (9 1/2 by 4 inches). A few with repair tape or glue remnants on back; some with year stamp on back; almost all blank.

A cornucopia of graphic design and a study in print advertising at its finest. Circus letterheads spawned their own legion of collectors and fans (see A02), and now you can join their ranks.

Sold as a set (57 items): $1,350
A08

Circus History

Isenberg, Arthur V. My Town and the Big Top.


In the 1950’s Reverend Isenberg (1904-1974) was Chaplain of the Circus Historical Society and Director of the Circus Clown Club. A circus fanatic, he self-published this detailed history of the American circus covering 1760 through 1957 (concentrating on Tennessee). Chapters on dozens of acts and personalities covering the well-known (Buffalo Bill’s, Cole Bros., Ringling Bros.) to the obscure. A treasure trove of detail – listing what acts traveled with which troupe; how many animals and what kind; dates of performances; history of the owners; and tall tales from performers.

A virtual American Circus encyclopedia and thus a wonderful resource for the serious circusiana collector.

OCLC locates 5 records worldwide with all copies in the south or midwest.

SOLD
Doorlay’s Revue

Doorlays-Non-Stop-Revue. Tropical Express. The famous Wonder-Show from the 4 corners of the World.

[Place of publication not identified]; [publisher not identified], [ca. 1938]. 310 by 250mm (12 1/2 by 9 3/4 inches). Photographic brochure; [16] pp. Two punch-outs to cover. Souvenir book of William Doorlay’s touring show. Text in English, German and French. Copiously illustrated; includes music score. Minor tears to front and back cover; light staple rust; light foxing; very good.

Foreign performing artists in Nazi Germany.

The motto of Doorlays was: [Why travel? Let us bring the world to you.] The international scope of Doorlays raised eyebrows during 1930’s Germany. See Prof. C.W. Doorlay, “Auslandsarten rühmen Deutschland”, Die Deutsche Artistik, 2/42 (October 18, 1936).

The study of show business (and the circus) should address head-on its history of racism. How and why could such an international cast perform during Nazi Germany?

Worldwide only at Harvard. A similar (or miscatalogued) book of Doorlay’s, the “Famous American-Revue in 120 scenes” is only at the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. Not otherwise in OCLC or KVK.

Subject of an academic article; see Susann Lewerenz: The Tropical Express in Nazi Germany (2014).
DOORLAYS NON-STOP REVUE
"TROPICAL EXPRESS"

The famous wonder show from the 4 corners of the World

Travels round the world and has met with tremendous success in America,
Spain, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden, England,
Holland, Switzerland, Russia, Portugal, Sweden, England,

DOORLAYS

Revue Mirakle

est la revue
plus sensationelle et
mysterieuse de ce
siècle, et vous

La revue en ROME

Der Tropen-Expreh

entert Ihnen
eine Weltraumreise, denn
Sie sehen in den
120 Bildern
alles Interessante,
was es in der Welt

La revue en CARD

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La revue en CARD
64 Photographs of Berlin Film, Theater, and Revue.

1924-1936. Formats 70 by 60mm (3 1/4 by 2 1/4 inches) to 150 by 230mm (6 by 9 inches); primarily 85 by 13mm (5 1/4 by 3 1/4 inches). Collection of 64 original silver gelatin photographs and photo postcards of mostly Berlin film, theater, and revue. Rubbed; postcards mostly not run; some with signature or dedication to colleagues and reference to location (Babelsberg, Adlershof, Haller Revue, Schiller Theater, etcetera).

Images vividly capture the individual’s rejection of Germany’s square and narrow-minded societal norms of the time. Well defined by the German word “Spießbürgerlichkeit”.

SOLD
Terms of Sale

Please call or email to reserve an item. By placing an order, you agree to these terms.

All items subject to prior sale and remain our property until payment has been received in full.

All items are guaranteed as described and may be returned within five days of receipt only if packed, shipped, and insured as received. We kindly ask for advance notification of any returns.

Shipping and insurance are additional and depend on value, weight, and destination.

California State residents not holding a resale license are subject to additional state and local taxes.

Payment can be made by checks drawn in USD, wire or ACH transfer to our US account, and via MasterCard, Visa, American Express, or PayPal. Arrangements may be made to pay in Euros.

Payment is due upon receipt of the item(s) unless otherwise agreed. References or advance payment may be required of anyone ordering for the first time. ILAB dealers and dealers known to us may deduct their reciprocal discount, provided the account is paid in full within 30 days; thereafter the price is net.

Institutions may receive deferred billing to suit their needs.