

NARRATOR'S NOTES: Circus Without Tents

Throughout the years as "CIRCUS" earned its spot as an integral part of American Heritage just about every imaginable aspect of Human Endeavor joined the Evolution. From the early days of Equestrian events to the multi-stage Shows incorporating square-miles of terra firma and canvas as well as fixed locations the central theme changed from watch-and-marvel entertainment to look-and-learn formats.

Though P.T. Barnum is not remembered primarily as a Circus-Promoter, it was his vision that CIRCUS could be "museum on wheels". His partnership with James Bailey marked what was perhaps the genesis of Big-Top as Theme-centered Extravagance rather than mere collections of Animals, Acrobats and Clowns. As such, CIRCUS assumed Educational-status.

An outstanding example of this Transition was The WILD WEST SHOW. Prior to the advent of Cinema this was the sole source of information about America west of the Mississippi River for countless Americans. Traditional Circuses brought glimpses of Life in faraway corners of the world to communities everywhere while WILD WEST SHOWS exposed these same communities to aspects of the American Experience unavailable to citizens rooted in EAST Coast culture.

The way was paved by the Dime Novels of Ned

Buntline who wrote about Life on the Western Plains. He then expanded this exposee by persuading real-life plainsmen like Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack to perform in person in theaters throughout Eastern America thus giving substance to what had previously been considered Myth.

The theme "wild west" did not originate with William F. Cody. Circus-Promoters had been incorporating vestiges of Old West America into their Shows since Civil War Years. These ventures consisted primarily of Cowboy- and Native American-Equestrians. With the advent of Wild Bill however these "vestiges" were transformed into real-life adventures. The fact that "wild west" and "Bill Cody" quickly became synonymous is not surprising given that the Promoter of these Shows was already a tried-and-true American icon!

Scene 1:

NATE SALISBURY was a Civil War veteran who had experienced the rigors of Armed Conflict including survival as an Inmate of the ignominious Confederate POW compound at Andersonville, Georgia. Following the war he teamed up with BILL CODY to produce a traveling wild west show. As a master of logistics he was able to facilitate movement of scores of people and animals by Rail throughout the