

The Beginning.

I finally got my hands on it! Started working on assembly tonight but have to let the paint on the roof piece dry. Since injected molded silver never can come unscuffed. Each box came with a flyer about the history of each circus advertised on the car.

While looking more into this model I learned that the Great Circus Train was used to transport the Great Circus Parade which was a fundraiser for Circus World in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Parades were how the circus advertised. The bigger the parade the better the show. Also in Baraboo is the winter headquarters of Ringling brothers circus.



David Likes a Challenge and the Challenger.

Before anyone tries to tell me a Challenger never pulled a circus train. This is what inspired me to do this current project.



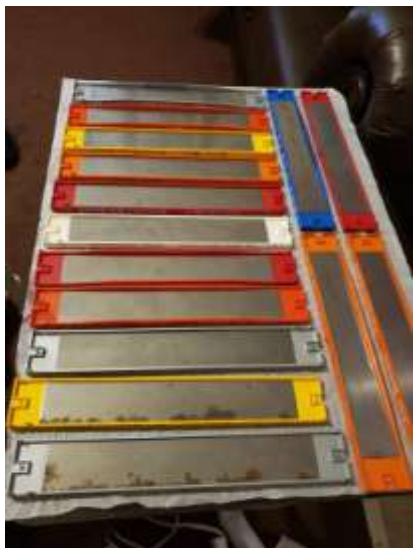
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[UP Challenger 3985 & Ringling Blue Unit Circus Train: 9/28/10](#)

Watch UP Challenger 4-6-6-4 #3985, the largest operational steam locomotive in the world, pull Ringling's Blue Unit to Denver on UP's Greeley Subdivision. Pe...

It Just Keeps Growing.

It's coming together a lot faster than I anticipated.



Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells Bros. Stock Car.

A group of American showmen persuaded German animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck to put together the "Carl Hagenbeck Wild Animal Show" for the 1905 World's Fair. The show was converted to a circus in 1905, but faced competition and Hagenbeck returned to Germany. His son and American partner continued the show until 1906 when they decided to sell. After a deal with the famous Ringling brothers, the partners approached Ben Wallace and in 1907 the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus emerged.

In 1921 the show was purchased by American Circus Corporation which was sold to the Ringling brothers in 1929. The show continued to operate through 1934 and in 1935 was combined with the long-dormant Forepaugh-Sells circus for one season.

In 1872 the Sells brothers began a wagon show from their hometown of Columbus, Ohio. After an encouraging first season, they purchased the Montgomery Queen Railroad Circus and Menagerie equipment to create two shows: Sells brothers and Anderson & Company. In 1888 they combined the shows to Sells Brothers Circus. After the Australian tour and the financial panic of 1893, it left them in poor financial condition. In 1896 the show combined with the Forepaugh show. 10 years later the show was purchased by the Ringling Brothers and revived one last time in 1911.

The stock was part of the 3rd release. The stock car is very similar to the elephant car. Notable differences are the now fully open sides unlike the solid walls of an elephant car. Circuses used two different types of horses baggage stock and ring stock. Baggage stock were the large draft horses and ring stock was the performing horses also known as high school horses. One stock car could carry up to 27 baggage horses or 32 ring horses. They were always loaded into the same stall as the night before. Regardless of what their job was to the show.



An interesting side note of the Hagenbeck - Wallace stock car. The Wallace Circus winter headquarters was in Peru, Indiana. Which is now home to the international circus hall of fame.

The John E. Strates Elephant Car.

John E. Strates immigrated to the United States in 1909 from Greece. Had many odd jobs until he joined a carnival in 1919 as a wrestler taking on any challenger. He acquired the Southern tier shows in 1923 and changed the name to John E. Strates Shows in 1932. He built and managed the carnival up until his death in 1959. His son E. James Strates assumed responsibility of the carnival that still operates today.

This car was the 6th release in The Great Circus train made by Walters. Stock and elephant cars were 72' in length and unloading ramps were carried on the underside of the car. Stock and elephant cars were coupled directly behind the locomotive to minimize jolting and possibly injuring the animals. Elephant cars are very similar to stock cars but were built to accommodate the weight of the elephants. Also, a larger door, solid walls, and smaller windows or ventilators because elephants are susceptible to pneumonia and must be protected from the cold and drafts. One elephant car could carry up to 13 adult elephants or "bulls" in circus slang regardless of gender. A show with a smaller herd would outfit the extra space with bunks for the handlers. 1/4 of early circus trains would be stock cars. As technology advanced, tractors became available, elephant and stock cars became surplus and converted to flat cars.



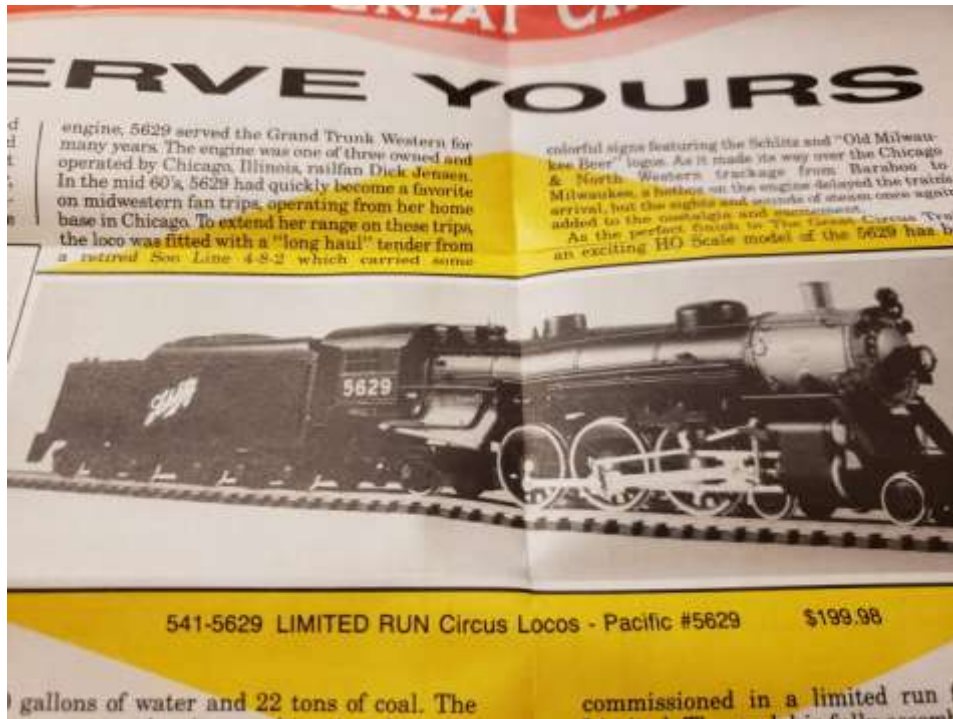
Passenger Cars for the Performers.

Today we are going to bring up the rear! I still have some work to do on the flatcars. Of course, the trains needed passenger cars to carry the performers. At first, the shows rented passenger cars from the railroads. These three cars were painted with significance to circus history. There isn't a commercial model available of the cabooses that was part of the great circus train so I have included a photo of the actual cabooses that was coupled to the observation car.



He Thinks He's Near the End. Little Does He realize It's Only the Beginning.

The train is complete and as I pack it up this was the advertisement for the limited-run brass model from sunset. It's a URSA light 4-6-2 built in 1924. Take note of the price of this brass model.



Mt. Vernon and Warren Flatcars.

Been busy the last few days assembling 15 flat cars! Flatcars designed for circus use are a big part of circus history.

In 1869 William Coup and Dan Castello formed a partnership that would make their mark in the history books. They approached P.T. Barnum about renting his name and various exhibits for his museum in New York. He agreed and the new wagon show was very successful in the eastern United States. During Coup's planning for next season that its earnings could be greater in larger cities but to move a show would be much easier by rail. Something that had never been done and the railroads doubted it would work. Coup didn't take no for an answer and on April 18, 1872, the circus was loaded for the first time aboard flat cars borrowed from the Pennsylvania Railroad. A few days later coaches were rented to transport performers.

The loading process used wheel chocks and ramps only problem with this is no two railroad flatcars were similar. Brake wheels had to be removed each time the show was

moved. It became clear special cars were needed. The shows built their own cars between 50 and 72 feet in length and eventually, 72 feet became the circus standard. For the simple reason; the railroads charged by the number of cars, not the size.

Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing and Warren Tank Car Company were the two firms that emerged that built these special flat cars. Mt. Vernon cars can be identified by its smooth sides and the Warren flats by its smooth sides.

Fast forward to 1964 when the Circus World Museum acquired several of each type and refurbished them for the first circus train. To double their fleet they painted them common colors and lettered each side with a different show.

For this post, I will be sharing information about each show on the photos themselves.



Circus World in Baraboo, WI



Circus World's pride and joy is the largest collection of authentic circus wagons on earth. This colossal congress contains over 260 wagons and vehicles from large, medium, and small shows as well as carnivals. Part of our world-class collection sits on a separate parcel from our main site. It is the home of the National Historic Landmark Ringling Bros train shed. A 600-foot long wooden rail structure with three sidings on the inside that currently houses the bulk of our rail collection. The shed, built in 1909, is where the Ringlings repaired and repainted their 80-plus railroad cars during the winter. The shed is one of eight National Historic Landmark buildings on the site of the former winter quarters of the famed Ringling circus, all owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Today the building houses the historic circus train used to transport wagons to the Great Circus Parades in Milwaukee from 1965 to 2003. Trucks transported the wagons after 2003.

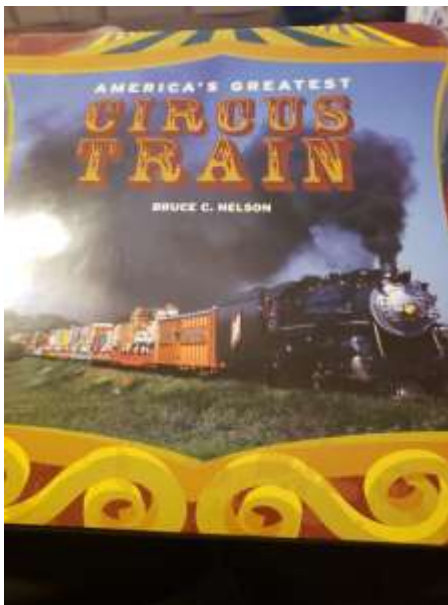
"Completion of the Ringling Bros. Train Shed restoration project will mark a major milestone in the preservation of an important historic building located within a National Historic Landmark property," Wisconsin Historical Society Director Ellsworth Brown said. "All of Wisconsin and Baraboo, in particular, should feel proud to know that such a unique historic structure will be preserved for future generations," Brown said. "The renovated train shed will also enhance Circus World's ability to tell the whole story of the American circus, including the era when circuses traveled from town to town via rail."

As we look to the future, our goal is to be able to make this important piece of American history accessible to our guests.

So what I learned today about parade wagons. Do your base color with an air brush.... I was hoping to have these side panels started tonight but I had to strip them and start again tomorrow.



Thanks to [Gary Babcoke III](#) the little I have flipped through this thr pictures and charts alone are a huge help or should I say Jumbo help...



One down only about 44 more to go...



More to Come