

Ohio has more circus fans than any other state. Over 10% of the members of the Circus Historical Society are Buckeyes. Ohio was also the home of two of the country's best known circuses: John Robinson's of Cincinnati had the oldest name in circusdom, and Sells Brothers of Columbus was among the largest.

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. of Columbus, the writer of the accompanying article, is president of the Circus Historical Society, proprietor of *Circusiana*, a mail order concern dealing in circus fan materials, and author or editor of several circus route books and periodicals. When he is not enjoying his avocation of circuses he is hard at work in his vocation of manufacturing bakers' machinery. His business trips for Fred D. Pfening Co., of which he is president, have taken him around the world.

These People Write Circus History

by FRED D. PFENING, JR.

THERE HAVE BEEN "circus fans" as long as there have been circuses. They have been the children of all ages who have been thrilled, year after year, while viewing the sawdust and spangles of the American circus.

In the year 1939 a small group of people whose interest extended beyond the enjoyment of viewing a circus banded together and formed an organization of collectors of *circusiana* (programs, posters and pictures). Don F. Smith of Detroit, Michigan, was the founder and first president of the group. They called themselves the Circus Historical Society. The ten founding members considered themselves a select group; as the group has grown it has remained selective in accepting members, limiting membership to collectors and historians. Today the group has a membership of over 500.

The society publishes a bi-monthly magazine *THE BANDWAGON*. It is the only magazine in the United States de-

voted entirely to articles and photos of the circus of yesterday and today. The Circus Historical Society has inspired the growth of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, and the Museum of the American Circus in Sarasota, Florida. Many members have contributed displays to these institutions.

Have Written Books

Members of the CHS have provided information and historical data to the authors of many circus magazine articles and books. Two CHS members have written three books each on the circus and its Vice President has written four books, and others will be published this year.

What kind of people devote their spare time to the research of digging out little-known facts about this interesting phase of Americana? Some are laboring people, some are corporation presidents, some are active or retired circus people.

An elephant trainer in Oklahoma knows more circus history than any historian in America. He provides photos and facts to others writing histories of various shows of the past. An Air Force

[An article by Mr. Pfening about the Robinson and Sells Circuses appears in the Library's 1962 Engagement Calendar Year Book "Ohio in the Entertainment World."]

The *Bandwagon* is the bi-monthly publication of the Circus Historical Society.



engineer in Ohio has concentrated on circuses of the 1800s and has published books on the circus wagons and circus owners of that period. A young man in Georgia has made a specialty of compiling the background of the fancy parade wagons of yesteryear. He has a card file listing the history of nearly every known wagon. A superintendent of schools in an Indiana city likes letterheads. He has many rare ones that are clean and unused. The walk of life they come from is completely forgotten when they meet in one another's home or perhaps at the national convention when as many as 150 members may come from nearly all of the 50 states to exchange information, look at circus pictures and, on occasion, visit a circus in a group.

Errors Corrected

Nearly every issue of the *BANDWAGON* contains a comprehensive article by a CHS member covering full details of a circus that may have toured the United States 15 to 75 years ago. Many hours of study go into the preparation of such an article. Each detail of information is checked and verified before publi-

cation. If another member, by chance, finds a slight error, it is corrected in a later issue.

Early this year the Circus Historical Society began a program of expanding its activities to circle the globe with a single circus organization. THE CHS INTERNATIONAL was formed in London, England. From the initial group in Great Britain it is expanding, taking members first from Europe and then from other parts of the world. Members of the CHS INTERNATIONAL receive the *BANDWAGON* and also contribute to it.

Each summer the Circus Historical Society holds its national convention, when specially prepared talks are given on different phases of circus history. Usually the Society meets in connection with the showing of a present-day circus and attends the show as a group.

The Society will continue to record the history of the circus—a great phase of Americana for the children of today and tomorrow.