

TIBBALS CIRCUS COLLECTION OF SONGSTERS

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Overview

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| Repository | Archives The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art 5401 Bay Shore Road Sarasota, FL 34243 archives@ringling.org |
| Creator | Tibbals, Howard C., 1936 – 2022 |
| Title | Tibbals Circus Collection of Songsters |
| Dates | 1810-1948, bulk 1867-1894 |
| Extent | 7 linear feet |
| Language | English |
| Arrangement | First, arranged by subject: circus, clown and non-circus. Second, by date. If there is no date and the circus is known, the date is derived from the circus operation dates according to Robert Parkinson's "Directory of American Circuses, 1793-2000," or from WorldCat. Third, alphabetically by the title of the songster according to the title page and up to the first period. If there is no title page, the title is taken from the cover. Oversized booklets are arranged in the same manner. |

Summary The songster collection is series 008 in the Tibbals Circus Collection. The songster collection includes over 170 booklets from circuses, clowns and non-circuses in the early 1800s to late 1900s of varying sizes. 140 booklets are from circuses, with some duplication, 30 are from non-circuses and eight are clown songsters from 1867-1971, including ones with no date.

Administrative Information

Provenance Collected by Howard Tibbals, from the acquisition of collections of other individuals and purchases.

Information about Access The Tibbals Circus Collection of Songsters may be viewed by appointment. Use of certain materials is restricted by statute, by the office of origin, or by the donor. For the protection of its collections, the Archives also reserves the right to restrict access to records which are not arranged, are being processed, or are exceptionally valuable or fragile. In some cases, copies may be substituted for the originals.

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Cite As Credit must be given for any use of materials. The credit line should read: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Florida State University, Tibbals Circus Collection of Songsters, and should include the box and folder listing.

Historical Note

According to the “Encyclopedia of Ephemera,” the pocket songster or song-book originated from the 17th century “garland,” an early form of mass produced popular literature. The songster was typically a small, pocket-sized booklet of 16-32 pages containing a miscellany of ballads, stage and comedy routines, dancing, and traditional and minstrel songs. They were sold by performers (usually clowns) or as concession items at medicine shows and circuses. In the 19th century the term songster applied to the song that was performed rather than the performer or singer. Later, the pocket songster evolved into the vaudeville and music hall song-sheet and the illustrated music sheet. According to scholars, circus, clown and related songsters were usually sold as souvenir booklets.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains songsters from different circuses, clowns and non-circuses in the 19th and 20th centuries. Many are from the Adam Forepaugh Circus; Barnum’s Circuses (including Barnum and Bailey); and the Walter L. Main Circus. The earliest songster in the collection is a non-circus songster, Sadlers’s Wells Harmonist, 1810 (ht9100175). The latest songster, 1943-1947, is from the Sells Bros. Circus (ht9100089). Sizes range from 6 cm. to 37 cm. in height. In some instances, the title printed on the title page may differ from the title on the cover. The date may be found in varying places within the booklet. If there is no date, the operation dates of the circus are used to determine the date of the booklet. Content found in the songsters includes biographic sketches, annotated histories, advertisements, anecdotes, songs including lyrics and music; routines; jokes and other entertainment acts. In the collection, eight of the late 20th century circus songsters contain the circus program (ht9100153 – ht9100156, ht9100158, ht9100159, ht9100173, ht9100174). The condition of the songsters is reflected by their age and handling by individuals, with some being very fragile.

A few circus songsters were performed by specific clowns that include Benjamin “Ben” Maginley; Billy Porter; Billy Sheppard; Charley Madden; Ernest the famous English clown; Eva Bennett; Flynn & O’Brien; George Hartzell; George M. Clarks; Harry Rogers; Helen Smith; Jim Wambold; Joel Davidson; John Foster; Johnny Patterson; Sam Long; T. B. McIntyre; Tom Barry; Whimsical Whitfield; Will H. Stowe and William Ethelbert Burke. The above clowns performed with a particular circus which is noted on the songster or in the text of songster. If no circus is associated with the songster, it is classified as a clown songster. These include clowns Billy Burk or Billy Burke (William Ethelbert Burke); Billy Raynore; Chas. Lee; George Christy; Gus Lee; Gus Williams; John Foster and John M. Burke. The non-circus songsters, ones not associated with a circus or a clown, include ones published by Merchant’s Gargling Oil; Hamlin’s Wizard Oil and others created by individuals.

Attribution of the songsters is difficult to determine. In some instances, songsters were compiled and arranged anonymously, with credit going to the printer. Or, the circus may have contracted to have its name on the booklet that was arranged and compiled by a printer. Songsters may have been commissioned internally for sales or by contact with a clown/performer who would receive a percentage of the sales. High profile clowns would have authored their own songsters. In most instances the printer is generally known.

Additional, data about the songsters may be found in the online collections at <http://emuseum.ringling.org/emuseum/collections>.

Related Materials

Sabia Circus Papers, Songsters Collection, The Ringling Archives

Robert L. Parkinson Library & Research Center, Circus World Museum

Circus Songster Collection, 1890-1918, Milner Library, Illinois State University

Subject Headings

Songsters

Circus

Clowns

Contents of the Collection

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| | | 2 | Adam Forepaugh Circus, Billy Burke's Songster, 1881, ht9100002 |
| | | 3 | Adam Forepaugh Circus, Forepaugh's Songster, ca. 1883, ht9100003 |
| | | 4 | Adam Forepaugh Circus, Forepaugh's Songster, ca. 1883, ht9100004 |
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| | | 6 | Adam Forepaugh Circus, Adam Forepaugh Shows Funny Clown Songster, ca. 1894, ht9100006 |
| | | 7 | Adam Forepaugh Circus, Adam Forepaugh Shows Funny Clown Songster, ca. 1894, ht9100007 |
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| | | 9 | Adam Forepaugh Shows, Adam Forepaugh Shows Funny Clown Songster, ca. 1894, ht9100009 |
| | | 10 | Forepaugh's Great Aggregation, Sam Long's Comic Song Book, ca. 1867-1894, ht9100010 |

- 11 Forepaugh's Great Aggregation, H. B. Williams' Song Book and Joke Book, ca. 1867-1894, ht9100011
- 12 Forepaugh's Great Circus, Forepaugh's Great Circus Songster, ca. 1867-1894, ht9100012
- 13 Forepaugh's Great Shows, Forepaugh's Great Shows Songster, 1888, ht9100013
- 14 Forepaugh's Great Shows, Forepaugh's Great Shows Songster, 1888, ht9100014
- 15 Great Forepaugh Show, The Great Forepaugh Show Songster, ca. 1867-1889, ht9100015
- 16 Great Forepaugh Show, The Great Forepaugh Show Songster, ca. 1867-1889, ht9100016
- 17 Anderson & Co. Circus and Menagerie, Clown's Comic Songster, 1879, ht9100017
- 18 Bailey and Co.'s Circus and Menagerie, Comic Song Book, ca. 1869-1871, ht9100018
- 19 Barnum & Bailey Circus, Barnum and Bailey's the Great Clown Songster, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100019
- 20 Barnum & Bailey Circus, Barnum and Bailey's Concert Songster and Joker, ca. 1889, ht9100020
- 21 Barnum & Bailey Circus, Song Book, ca. 1890, ht9100021
- 22 Barnum & Bailey Circus, Song Book, ca. 1890, ht9100022

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- 1 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth Songster, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100023
- 2 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth Songster, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100024

- 3 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth Songster, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100025
- 4 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, Clown Song Book, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100026
- 5 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, Clown Song Book, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100027
- 6 Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, Clown Song Book, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100028
- 7 Barnum & London Shows, Billy Burke's Barnum & Great London Circus Songster, ca. 1881-1888, ht9100029
- 8 Barnum & London Shows, Billy Burke's Barnum & Great London Circus Songster, ca. 1881-1888, ht9100030
- 9 Barnum & London Shows, Billy Burke's Barnum & Great London Circus Songster, ca. 1881-1888, ht9100031
- 10 Barnum & London Shows, Billy Burke's Barnum & Great London Circus Songster (cover), ca. 1881-1888, ht9100032
- 11 Barnum & London Shows, Barnum and London Circus Clown and Concert Song and Joke Book, Containing all the Phunny Jokes and Popular Songs as produced by our leading clowns and variety entertainers., ca. 1881-1888, ht9100033
- 12 Barnum & London Shows, Barnum and London Circus Clown and Concert Song and Joke Book, Containing all the Phunny Jokes and Popular Songs as produced by our leading clowns and variety entertainers., ca. 1881-1888, ht9100034
- 13 Barnum & London Shows, Bonnie Runnell' Great Barnum and London Circus Dutch Burlesque Clown Songster, ca. 1881-1888, ht9100035

- 14 Barnum & London Shows, Bonnie Runnell's Great Barnum and London Circus Dutch Burlesque Clown Songster, ca. 1881-1888, ht9100036
- 15 Barnum & London Shows, John Foster's Barnum and London Great Circus Songster, ca. 1881-1888, ht9100037
- 16 P. T. Barnum Circus, Barnum's Circus Clown & Concert Songster, ca. 1871-1880, ht9100038
- 17 P. T. Barnum's Circus, Clowns Songster, ca. 1871-1880, ht9100039
- 18 P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, Clowns Songster, ca. 1876-1880, ht9100040
- 19 P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, Clowns Songster, ca. 1876-1880, ht9100041
- 20 P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, Geo. M. Clark's Centennial Song Book, ca. 1876-1880, ht9100042
- 21 P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, Geo. M. Clark's Centennial Song Book, ca. 1876-1880, ht9100043
- 22 Barnum's Great Show, George Madden's Clown Songster, ca. 1876-1880, ht9100044
- 23 P. T. Barnum's World's Fair, The Old Clown's Song Book, ca. 1875, ht9100045

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- 1 Batcheller & Doris, The Clown's Comic Song Book, ca. 1879-1882, ht9100046
- 2 Batcheller & Doris' Great Inter-Ocean Show, Johnny Patterson's Irish Clown Songster, ca. 1879-1882, ht9100047
- 3 Batcheller & Doris' The Great Inter-Ocean Railway Show, The Old Clown Songster, ca. 1879-1882, ht9100048
- 4 Bob Hunting's Circus, Bob Hunting's Great New York Cirque Curriculum Songster, ca. 1888-1898, ht9100049

- 5 Bob Hunting's Circus, Bob Hunting's New Railroad Shows Musical Album, ca. 1888-1898, ht9100050
- 6 Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Wild West Song Book, ca. 1883-1913, 1971, 1977-1980, 1983, ht9100051
- 7 Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Wild West Song Book, ca. 1883-1913, 1971, 1977-1980, 1983, ht9100052
- 8 Burr Robbins Circus, Burr Robbins' Old Clown Songster, c, 1871-1881, 1883-1887, ht9100053
- 9 Chas. Lee's Great London Shows, Chas Lee's Great London Shows The Clown Songster, ca. 1886-1896, 1898-1902, ht9100054
- 10 W. W. Cole's Circus, W. W. Cole's Equestrian Songster, containing a Choice Selection from the Best Songs Ever Published, Sentimental and Humorous, ca. 1871-1886, ht9100055
- 11 W. W. Cole's Circus, W. W. Cole's Equestrian Songster, containing a Choice Selection from the Best Songs Ever Published, Sentimental and Humorous, ca. 1871-1886, ht9100056
- 12 W. W. Cole's Circus, W. W. Cole's New York and New Orleans Equestrian Songster, containing a Choice Selection from the Best Songs Ever Published, Sentimental and Humorous, 1879, ht9100057
- 13 W. W. Cole's Circus, W. W. Cole's Circus Songster, containing All the Songs of the Three Animitable Clowns connected with the Great World's Show, 1880, ht9100058
- 14 Cole's Circus, Cole's Circus, Museum, Trained Animal Exposition The Modern Songster, 1895, ht9100059
- 15 W. CA. Coup's Great Shows, W. CA. Coup's Monster Clown Songster, 1881, ht9100060

- 16 Davies's Circus, Davies's Circus Song Book, no date, ht9100061
- 17 J. B. Doris' Great Inter-Ocean Circus and Menagerie, J. B. Doris' Great Inter-Ocean Circus and Menagerie Songster, ca. 1879-1882, ht9100062
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- 6 John H. Murray's Circus, Clown's Songster, ca. 1872-1882, ht9100073

- 7 John H. Murray's Circus, Clown's Songster, ca. 1872-1883, ht9100074
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- 11 New York Circus, G. B. Bunnell's Museum and Central Park Menagerie, John Foster's Great New York Circus Songster, ca. 1882, ht9100078
- 12 New York Circus, G. B. Bunnell's Museum and Central Park Menagerie, John Foster's Great New York Circus Songster, 1883, ht9100079
- 13 New York Circus, G. B. Bunnell's Museum and Central Park Menagerie, John Foster's Great New York Circus Songster, 1883, ht9100080
- 14 O'Brien, Handenberger & Astley Great Shows, O'Brien, Handenberger & Astley's 6 Great Shows Songster, 1884, ht9100081
- 15 Orton Circus, Charley Madden's Great Mastodon Musical Album, ca. 1885, ht9100082
- 16 Pawnee Bill's Wild West, Pawnee Bill's Wild West Songster, ca. 1888-1908, ht9100083
- 17 Ringling Bros. Circus, Ringling Brothers Musical Album, ca. 1884-1918, ht9100084

- 18 Robbins & Co.'s Museum, Circus and Menagerie, Will H. Stowe's Clown Comic Songster, ca. 1871-1881, 1883-1887, ht9100085
- 19 Rosston, Springer & Henderson's Museum, Circus and Menagerie, Billy Porter's Comic and Sentimental Song Book, 1872, ht9100086
- 20 Scribner & Smith Circus, Scribner & Smith's All New Enormous United Shows Old Clown's Song Book, ca. 1892-1896, ht9100087
- 21 Scribner & Smith Circus, Scribner & Smith's All New Enormous United Shows Old Clown's Song Book, ca. 1892-1896, ht9100088

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- 1 Sells Bros. Circus, Sells Brothers. Great Clown Songster, ca. 1943-1947, ht9100089
- 2 Sig Sautelle's Circus, Sig. Sautelle's Clown Songster, ca. 1882-1886, 1889-1904, 1911-1914, 1919, 1926, ht9100090
- 3 Sparks Circus, John H. Sparks Big Shows Song Album Words and Music, ca. 1889, 1894-1931, 1946-1947, ht91000921
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 - 10 Walter L. Main & Van Amburgh, Walter L. Main & Van Amburgh's Circus Songster, 1890, ht9100098
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 - 12 Walter L. Main & Van Amburgh, Walter L. Main & Van Amburgh's Circus Songster, 1890, ht9100100
 - 13 Walter L. Main Circus, Walter L. Main's Great Circus Songster, ca. 1886-1899, 1901-1904, 1918-1928, 1930-1933, 1935-1937, 1939, 1944, 1948, ht9100101
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 - 15 Walter L. Main Circus, Walter L. Main's Great Circus Songster, ca. 1886-1899, 1901-1904, 1918-1928, 1930-1933, 1935-1937, 1939, 1944, 1948, ht9100103
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- 20 Walter L. Main Circus, All the Popular Songs of the Day
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- 21 Walter L. Main Circus, Walter L. Main's All New Walter
L. Main's All New Shows Monster-r-r Shows Popular
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- 6 Merchant's Gargling Oil Songster, 1886, ht9100136
- 7 Merchant's Gargling Oil Songster, 1888, ht9100137
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- 13 The Up In A Balloon Songster, ca. 1869 or ca. 1889, ht9100143
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- 3 Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Barnum & Bailey Songster Greatest Show on Earth, ca. 1896-1907, 1910-1911, ht9100149
- 4 Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Barnum & Bailey Songster Greatest Show on Earth, ca. 1896-1907, 1910-1911, ht9100150
- 5 Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Barnum & Bailey Songster Greatest Show on Earth, ca. 1896-1907, 1910-1911, ht9100151
- 6 Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth Songster, ca. 1888-1918, ht9100152
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- 11 Great Wallace Shows, The Great Wallace Shows Colossal 3 Ring Circus, 2 Elevated Stages, ca. 1895-1906, ht9100157
- 12 Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, ca. 1904-1935, 1937-1938, ht9100158
- 13 Howe's Great London, Howe's Great London Circus, 1920, ht9100159
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- 15 Jones Bros. Circus, Jones Bros. Big Shows, ca. 1900-1904, 1910-1915, 1935, ht9100161
- 16 LaTena's Circus, La Tena's Big 3-Ring Wild Animal Circus, Big Shows, ca. 1914-1917, ht9100162
- 17 Leon W. Washburn's Circus, Leon W. Washburn's Old Clown Song Book Containing all the Latest Songs with Music, ca. 1881-1883, 1892-1904, 1907-1908, ht9100163
- 18 Miller Bros. and Arlington, Special Song Album Miller Bros. and Arlington 101-Ranch Wild West Show Special Song Album, ca. 1907-1916, 1925-1931, 1933-1934, 1945-1946, ht9100164
- 19 Orr Bros. Circus, Orr Brother's Wild Animal Circus The Victory Song Book For Worlds Democracy, ca. 1918, ht9100165
- 20 Pawnee Bill's Wild West, Songster of the Pawnee Bill Wild West Show, ca. 1888-1908, ht9100166
- 21 Sells & Downs Circus, Sells & Downs Great Songster, ca. 1902-1905, ht9100167

- 22 Sig. Sautelle, Sig Sautelle's New Big Railroad Shows Songster, ca. 1882-1886, 1889-1904, 1911-1914, 1919, 1926, ht9100168
- 23 Walter L. Main Circus, Walter L. Main Circus The Premier Amusement Enterprise of America, ca. 1886-1889, 1901-1904, 1918-1928, 1930-1933, 1935-1937, 1939, 1944, 1948, ht9100169
- 24 Walter L. Main Circus, Walter L. Main Circus The Premier Amusement Enterprise of America, ca. 1886-1889, 1901-1904, 1918-1928, 1930-1933, 1935-1937, 1939, 1944, 1948, ht9100170
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- 27 New York Hippodrome Souvenir Book, 1906, ht9100173
- 28 New York Hippodrome Souvenir Book, 1908, ht9100174
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Songsters

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