UNDER ONE BIG TENT: AMERICAN INDIANS, AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE CIRCUS WORLD OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

By

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ABSTRACT

UNDER ONE BIG TENT: AMERICAN INDIANS, AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE CIRCUS WORLD OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

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My dissertation, "Under One Big Tent: American Indians, African Americans and the Circus World of Nineteenth-Century America," rewrites the history of the Old Northwest and argues that diversity was crucial to community development in this region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This dissertation recovers the story of a different past that has been repeatedly ignored where Indians and blacks not only lived in the Midwest, but also were prominent founders of communities. I contend that both Native and African Americans were as pioneering as the white farmers that encircled them, and that their early and sustained presence encouraged two of the nation's largest circuses to locate in the Midwest. The Sells Brothers Circus and the Great Wallace Circus located in Ohio and Indiana because of a ready pool of low-wage labor and available lands on which its employees could create and sustain communities and raise their families. While this dissertation focuses on reestablishing this forgotten past, my work argues that the circus provided the means for persistence for both Indians and African Americans and provided them the social and economic means to create and sustain robust communities in the nation's heartland.

My research reveals that race and ethnicity in America were not monolithic historical factors shaping community formation. Instead, my research shows how the elites and lower classes of African American and American Indian societies had disparate views about the value of circus labor. African American elites were uncomfortable with circus work, but often viewed

the industry as an avenue of uplift. In contrast, leaders of the Society of American Indians viewed such labor as perpetuating primitive images of Native Americans. While both Native and African American entertainers understood the demeaning depictions of race that they performed in the Wild West and minstrel shows of the circus, both groups relied on the higher wages of the industry to sustain their households. But Indians and African Americans differed in their long-term goals. African Americans used circus employment to create educational opportunities for young ragtime and jazz performers which enhanced their mobility, while Indians used access to wage labor to sustain their communities and insure that they remained on or adjacent to their homelands in the Midwest.

I use eighteenth-century missionary and church records, community and oral histories, and treaty negotiations to place Miami, Wyandot, and African American people in the Old Northwest and to show ways that they built and maintained communities. I use nineteenth and twentieth-century Native American and African American newspapers to show the scope of traveling musicians, the challenges they overcame to create spaces for themselves, and how they moved beyond the circus industry to other national and international opportunities. I use circus archives, industry journals, and route books to reconstruct circus towns and life in traveling circus communities.

For Mason

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My semesters as assistant in the CIC American Indian Studies Consortium office were my best at MSU. This is due, in part, to my friends and colleagues, Dr. Joe Genetin-Pilawa who

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Introduction

James and Ernest Bucktooth were in trouble. Early in March in 1914, circus managers recruited them and thirteen other men and women from their Onondaga reservation near Syracuse, New York. The job was a nine-month European tour in a circus Wild West act. The Bucktooth brothers and the others were offered a salary of a dollar per day, food, and all travel expenses. The group traveled with the circus to England, Germany, and Austria. The tour went smoothly until war broke out that summer and the circus went out of business. The Onondaga men and women were stranded in Germany. In later interviews, James Bucktooth recounted stories of evading military in train stations, feeding their show horses to their lions, being chased by police for attempting to start a parade in a village square, and being temporarily jailed on suspicion of espionage.[1] When they finally returned home with the help of Society of American Indian members and United States ambassadors in Europe, the Bucktooth brothers had to face another kind of peril—the disapproval of Native American leaders who aimed to ban Indians from joining circuses and similar exhibitions.

According to some Native American leaders, the Bucktooth brothers were prime targets—and perfect examples—of everything that was wrong with American Indian people who joined circuses and Wild West shows. The laundry list of complaints that Arthur C. Parker, the editor of the Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal, held against them included degrading tribal habits and customs, fooling everyone into thinking that all Indians dressed in the Sioux war bonnet, leaving good fields unplowed, succumbing to savagery and encouraging naked war dances for the enjoyment of white Christians. On a more personally offensive note, though it

[1] "Onondaga Indians Were Stranded in Germany," *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 3 (July-September, 1914): 239-241.

was "a matter of secondary importance," Parker wrote that he was not the only victim of "the stranded show Indian" who called on wealthier Native Americans for help buying tickets home from far off places.[2] This clash between Native American elite leaders and the men and women who joined traveling entertainment communities began much earlier in the nineteenth century when Wild West Shows and circuses were beginning to explode in popularity.

The Bucktooth brothers represented a number of American Indian people—artists, performers, animal trainers, and manual laborers—who chose to join traveling circus companies. Studying people like the Bucktooths draws attention to a number of important historical themes. First, they point to the presence of American Indians in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century circuses. American Indians, while widely known to have participated in Wild West and similar equestrian shows, have been largely ignored in the circus industry. Second, the Bucktooths point to a serious tension between educated middle class American Indian spokespeople and those, often uneducated, men and women who chose circus life. Popular forms of entertainment such as the circus were irksome for African American leaders, as well. They shunned the racist images in minstrel shows and voiced concern at the growing numbers of black people joining this offensive entertainment industry.

Finally, the Bucktooths and people like them point back to larger communities where many American Indians may have participated in the circus or a circus-related industry. American Indian participation in circuses may be interesting for many reasons, however, in a very practical way, a circus family or community points to a specific root or location. In nineteenth and early twentieth-century United States history, the disappearance of Indian communities and the absence of African American communities are often taken for granted. Looking at the lives of

[2] Arthur C. Parker, "Editorial Comment," *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 3 (July-September, 1914): 174-176.

American Indian and African American circus performers, then, is a way to find black and Indian communities and to explore the ways that they remained in these locations over the nineteenth century.

This dissertation seeks to accomplish three goals. The first is to locate African Americans and American Indians that have not been considered part of nineteenth-and early twentieth-century midwestern history. Despite their invisibility in the historical record, sometimes aided by their own efforts to be unnoticed, these African and Native Americans helped build communities in the Midwest. Second, this dissertation seeks to show how access to labor was a critical element in the survival of black and Indian communities amid the violence directed at them in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In this case, traveling circuses and related industries provided means to thriving communities just before the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, this dissertation seeks to examine some of the intra-racial class tensions and debates surrounding labor, racial uplift, and citizenship. Educated middle-class African Americans and American Indians found participation in circuses to be highly problematic and often spoke out against this kind of employment. However, class, education and race were not monolithic determinants of how one viewed the circus and similar popular entertainments. Both self-taught and formally educated artists performed in circuses for a myriad of reasons, and had their own ideas about racial betterment, citizenship, and individual success. This dissertation argues, then, that African and Native Americans built communities in the Midwest throughout the nineteenth century and by the end of the century relied heavily on new labor opportunities, such as in the traveling circus, to support their communities. Despite many black and Indian leaders' discomfort with such entertainment, artists often saw the circus as an avenue to economic and social improvement for individuals and communities.

The circus provided the social and economic means to sustain robust communities in both Indiana and Ohio. The Sells Brothers Circus and the Great Wallace Circus located in Ohio and Indiana because of a ready pool of low-wage labor and available lands on which its employees could create and sustain communities and raise their families. Locations with established American Indian and African American communities were prime targets for recruiting personnel for the circus. African Americans and American Indians considered the jobs good, stable work that would shield them from economic downturns and utilized the benefits of an established company town. Once established, those circuses provided economic and social stability that enabled the communities to persist after other African and Native Americans around them were pushed to other regions. Black and Indian people initially filled positions as laborers, farmers and animal keepers. However, as the circuses grew and evolved, African and Native American people created spaces for themselves in performance and management roles in these circuses.

Despite racist policies that severely limited their ability to gain education, stable employment, and professional careers, African and Native Americans persisted in the region. I primarily focus on the communities in Miami County, Indiana and Sellsville, a section of Clinton Township, Ohio from the 1870s through the 1910s to show how the availability of labor catalyzed growth and how the loss of labor changed the communities in dramatic ways. In Miami County, Indiana and Clinton Township, Ohio, African Americans and American Indians built communities over the nineteenth century, provided the necessary start up labor for large circus communities, and used circus opportunities to their individual and mutual advantages. By looking at nontraditional African American and American Indian employment sources such as the circus, the nineteenth century may be reconstructed and understood as a whole, instead of broken into antebellum and post-bellum eras. In the cases of the Sells Brothers and Hagenbeck-

Wallace circuses, employment opportunities for black and Native people declined after the turn of the twentieth century. The black community of the Sells Brothers circus responded to outside pressures by relocating. The Miami community of the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus endured financial hardships and continued to lose land. In this way, the challenges of the first decades of the twentieth century may also be understood as the repercussions of the loss of labor at the end of the nineteenth century.

Many histories that consider African American and American Indian participation in circuses draw conclusions about why the circuses existed and how they served the means of the larger societies. This dissertation will not attempt to draw conclusions about the large-scale societal impacts of these circuses on individuals. Rather, this chapter will explore perspectives and daily lives of African Americans and American Indians in circuses to show how these people brought different meanings to circus employment. From that vantage point, a very different picture of the impact of circus employment on society may emerge. Circus history has paid little attention to African American and American Indian laborers and performers' daily lives or how they articulated their experiences within the industry.[3]

The Golden Age of the circus that historians place as lasting from the 1880s to the 1920s, coincided with the Nadir of African American history, from 1878 to 1924. These years also coincided with some of the most damning policies against American Indians, namely the 1887 Dawes General Allotment Act and horrific boarding school policies that removed children from their families well into the twentieth century. However, this was also a time of great leadership among African American and American Indian peoples and growing presence of black and

[3] A few African American newspapers ran regular columns that featured black entertainment news. The most prominent were *The Chicago Defender, The Eureka Herald,* and the *Indianapolis Freeman.* Additionally, *The Billboard*, established in 1894 also chronicled traveling entertainment troupes such as circuses and minstrel shows.

Indian people in circus employment greatly disturbed educated middle class leaders in the African American and Native American communities. Leaders protested the ways that popular forms of entertainment relied on deeply racist imagery. On moral and religious grounds, the circus was questionable in respect to the African American uplift ideal as well as gaining citizenship for American Indians. Additionally, the itinerant lifestyle that many circus jobs required was anathema to the stable, Christian, middle class family ideal. Although differing in language and tactics, educated middle class African American and American leaders efforts were similar in many ways. Black leaders aimed to uplift the lower classes through education, hygiene and economic practicality. American Indian leaders aimed to promote citizenship through education and middle class values as well.

This dissertation will show how black and Indian circus employees enlisted their own ideas about economic freedom that contradicted middle class values of citizenship and uplift. Scholars of Native American Studies explored tensions in ideologies and class sentiments over Indian peoples' participation Wild West shows. Political theorist and American Indian Studies pioneer Vine Deloria argued that performance employment might have saved some Indians from undue pressures of farming and harsh treatment that many others faced. Many Indians used traveling entertainment to gain higher levels of freedom, to learn more about the rest of the nation and the world, and as a transnational educational device.[4] While many of these roles were based on racial stereotypes, American Studies scholar Philip Deloria argued that American Indian performers used racial "expectations to gain entrée into positions in which they were able

[4] Vine Deloria, Jr. "The Indians," in *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West,* eds. David H. Katzive et al. (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1981), 56-58.

to participate in shaping the particular form of the modern."[5] Wild West historian, Joy Kasson, argued that Sitting Bull, who performed frequently in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows, would not have chosen the show over the hunting life. However, given the circumstances and the choice between entertainment and farming, Sitting Bull chose the former. This life afforded him opportunities that were not available to him elsewhere.[6] Within the circus and other limiting spaces, black and Indian artists created and recreated roles for themselves. In doing so, they subverted racial hierarchies and opened doors that were closed to people of color in other professions.

African American circus employees saw their employment as economic and perhaps even social uplift, as it enabled some black men and women more economic freedom as well as travel opportunities. Dance-band work, for instance, was particularly attractive to working-class black men, who might otherwise have had to push a broom somewhere at a much lower wage, given the economic constraints imposed by racism.[7] Ragtime historians have asserted that turn-of-the-century African American traveling acts were havens for various kinds of performers from musicians and magicians, to aerialists and jugglers.[8]

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[5] Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 14.

[6] Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 171.

[7] Lawrence Schenbeck, "Music, Gender, and 'Uplift' in the Chicago Defender, 1927-1937," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 348.

[8] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged But Right: Black Traveling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 158.

Sources

This dissertation draws on a variety of primary sources such as personal and business correspondences, circus yearbooks and route books, trade journals, church records and interviews. These were obtained from the Newberry Library in Chicago, The Indiana Historical Society, the Ohio Historical Society, the Marble Cliffs/Grandville Heights Historical Society, the Circus World Museum Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center in Baraboo, Wisconsin, the Miami County Historical Society in Peru, Indiana, The Ohio Metropolitan Library, and the Indiana State Library. These records detail how African Americans and American Indians were employed and, coupled with census records and community histories, establish the demographic impact the circuses had on Miami County and the Sellsville area. Trade papers, memoirs, autobiographies and circus records provide a window into the social networks that African American and American Indian performers created to facilitate travel and perhaps, even survival.

I also use eighteenth-century missionary and church records, community and oral histories, and treaty negotiations to place a large number of Miami, Wyandot, and African American people in the Northwest and to show ways that they built and maintained communities. I use census community histories to explore demographic shifts as a result of the circus. Both Indian and Black people established schools, churches and other organizations to structure their communities and relied on access to land to structure their communities. I use church records to show ways that people built community.

This dissertation relied heavily on three types of primary sources. First, circus route books and yearbooks gave in depth personnel lists, travel itineraries, and anecdotes of events on the road with the traveling shows. Route books also described individual acts and provided a clear picture of when an individual or troupe joined or left a particular circus company. Some of

the route books even described African American and American Indian audiences, vendors, and circus day activities.

Next, African American and American Indian newspapers and journals pointed to the kinds of entertainment employment opportunities were available to blacks and Indians as well as their thoughts and feelings on the evolving industry. These papers also provided editorial commentary on the actions of black and Indian performers. In African American papers, such as the *Kansas Herald* and the *Indianapolis Freeman,* an additional wealth of open letters from circus artists to the readers or the editors gave important perspectives on the industry. An examination of letters and industry journals, race papers, and memoirs shows how middle-class media portrayed African American and American Indian performers and how those performers understood their roles in popular entertainment and racial uplift. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century Native American and African American newspapers show the scope of traveling musicians, the challenges they overcame to create spaces for themselves, and how they moved beyond the circus industry to other national and international opportunities. These sources also reveal tensions between educated middle-class spokespeople and black and Indian who chose to perform in circuses.

Finally, historian Stewart Raffert's interviews with LaMoine Marks, a Miami man and former Hagenbeck-Wallace employee, were invaluable. Raffert conducted these interviews in the 1980s and 1990s and Marks recalled life in and around the circus quarters as early as 1912. He described circus employment, racial dynamics, and local people's relationships with the nearby town of Peru, the Miami County seat. Marks joined the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in his teens as a refreshment stand manager. Later, when the circus was incorporated, he worked in the

equestrian show and with famous circus and television personalities such as Tom Mix and Clyde Beatty.

Chapter descriptions

The first chapter, "Founding Fathers: Native Americans and African Americans in the Old Northwest," examines the conditions that Native Americans and African Americans endured in the Northwest at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This chapter focuses on two adjoining states, Indiana and Ohio, and on two distinct areas, Miami County and Franklin County. The chapter analyzes the social, economic, and political obstacles that Native and African American people faced during the early nineteenth century. This chapter examine the survival tools that they evolved to create community organizations that later led to multiracial circus communities. Furthermore, the chapter examines how Indians were able to remain in Indiana and Ohio despite vigorous removal efforts and how black communities developed despite harsh black laws.

Chapter Two, "The Godfroys and the Great Wallace Shows: Life in the Miami County Circus Quarters," examines the small but organized Miami communities that persisted in Indiana, despite the devastating removal that other Native villages faced across the Old Northwest. Miami people's legal victories and the treaty provisions that leading families such as the Slocums, Richardvilles and Godfroys, shrewdly negotiated insured their continued presence in the late nineteenth-century Midwest. In 1891, Miami leader Gabriel Godfroy decided to sell a 220-acre farm to circus proprietor and local businessman, Benjamin Wallace. This sale enabled Godfroy to pay off personal debts and brought a variety of jobs to the Miami community. The Great Wallace Circus, later renamed the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, maintained quarters there among the Miami community until 1913. It is my contention that open, expansive Native

communities enabled African Americans to settle and create lasting institutions adjacent to Native space. This chapter focuses on the circus community that coalesced around the Wallace circus from 1884 to 1913 to show how American Indians and African Americans used circus employment in their neighborhoods to create a broader range of economic and cultural opportunities.

The third chapter is entitled, "Sellsville, Ohio." This chapter examines a largely African American and racially diverse neighborhood in Clinton Township, an unincorporated area outside of Columbus, where the Sells Brothers Circus located their winter quarters. The quarters mixed with the surrounding neighborhood and became a fully functioning town. African Americans, though, had lived in the region for some time before the circus. According to the maps of Helen Hornbeck Tanner, much of the black population before Ohio statehood lived in the Upper Sandusky, where there were villages of Wyandot, Delaware, and Shawnee Indians about 70 miles north of the future site of Sellsville.[9] From the 1850s through the 1890s, the state reformed some of its black codes, and made Ohio a more attractive destination for African Americans than previously.[10] African American sociologist, J. S. Himes argued that nearby Columbus was a stop on the Underground Railroad.[11] Similar to the Miami County community, Clinton Township had neighboring American Indian residents who had evaded removal efforts in the early and middle part of the nineteenth century. In the last three decades of the nineteenth

[9] Tanner, 97.

[10] Phillip R. Shriver and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. eds., *Documentary Heritage of Ohio* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2000), 63-64, 212, 271.

[11] J. S. Himes, "Forty Years of Negro Life in Columbus, Ohio," *The Journal of Negro History* 27 no. 2 (April 1942): 134.

century when racial discrimination and violence were on the rise in Ohio, the circus provided the existing community in Clinton Township employment opportunities that enabled them to strive from 1872 to 1906. At its peak, the Sells Brothers Circus employed hundreds of laborers, main show performers, and sideshow performers.

The fourth chapter, "The Show on the Road," examines how circuses created both national and international opportunities for African Americans and American Indians. This chapter explores the touring circus as a traveling company town, the experiences of blacks and American Indian employees on the road, and employees' perceptions about mobility and opportunity. Employees used the circus as a springboard to create other opportunities. For blacks, this often meant careers as ragtime artists, entertainment producers, and entrepreneurs. American Indians often branched out into Wild West and equestrian shows, Medicine Shows, a variety of private and community-based entrepreneurial endeavors, and the burgeoning film industry.

Chapter Five, "Race, Respectability and Class: Circus Performers Confront Middle Class Values and Respectability Politics," argues that while African and Native American circus artists challenged discrimination and federal Indian policy, they also confronted certain middle-class values within black and Indian leadership. Circus work put artists in a precarious relationship with many of the middle class values associated with racial uplift and Indian citizenship agendas. Few of the educated African Americans and American Indians who performed in circuses reflected middle class values. The flamboyant nature of their professions openly challenged the ideals of hard work and upright behaviors that many leaders advocated.[12] Ultimately, these

[12] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Garrett, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1-20.

performers challenged reformist attitudes that portrayed religious morality and hard work as the only pathway to stability and middle class respectability. With this working class orientation, African Americans and American Indians used the circus as a means by which to gain access to national and international opportunities outside the circus.

As the African American and American Indian middle classes grew in the decades following the Civil War, class differences began to separate both the Native American and African American leadership from the lower classes of each race. Conflicting ideas about uplift and citizenship—primarily concerning the lower class people's education, employment and conformity to middle class Victorian values—caused some intra-racial conflict among lower and working class blacks and Indians. Contemporary African and Native American papers, often called race papers at the time, revealed stark differences in attitudes surrounding the possibilities inside the circus and traveling show industry. Both Native and African American papers agreed that the ways the circus displayed people of color and the work that was most often available to them reflected racist stereotyping and that was counterproductive to the goals of uplift and assimilation that most writers of the papers supported. Both black and Indian papers published articles that voiced anger and frustration about white racism and the black and Indian people involved in such displays. However, African American papers were far more likely to allow a wider diversity of opinions on the topic of circuses and the possibilities, problematic as they were. Ultimately, the lower classes pursued menial positions in the circus. However, as the twentieth century world of popular culture, music, art, and culture began, there were new avenues of opportunity for these lower class Native Americans and African Americans in the arts and entertainment.

This research reveals that race and ethnicity in America were not monolithic historical factors that shaped community formation, but that the elites of African American and Indian societies shared disparate views about the value of circus labor. In some cases, African American elites viewed circus labor as an avenue of uplift, while the leaders of the Society of American Indians most often viewed such labor as perpetuating an unacceptable, primitive image of Indians. While both Native and African Americans understood the demeaning depictions of race that they performed in the Wild West and minstrel shows of the circus, both groups relied on the higher wages of the circus to sustain their households. Indians and African Americans also differed in their long-term goals. African Americans used circus employment to create educational opportunities for young ragtime and jazz performers which enhanced their mobility, while Indians used the access to wage labor to sustain the persistence of their communities and insure that they remained on or adjacent to their homelands in the Midwest.

Chapter One

Literature of Comparative African and Native American History, Nineteenth-Century Company Towns and the American Circus

In its broadest sense, "Under One Big Tent" is a critique of United States historiography that persistently overlooks the perhaps small but significant communities of African American and American Indian peoples who lived throughout the Midwest during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These communities, often adjacent and sometimes shared, spot the map of the nineteenth century America, but have received little attention from historians. This is an important topic in United States history because by locating communities and studying the lives of African American and American Indian peoples in the Midwest, a fully different picture of the century arises. Through black and Indian experiences, this history shows a century of migration, community building, prejudice and discrimination, and most importantly, the survival and continuity of a black and Indian presence in the Midwest. First, this view reveals that discrimination and slavery were factors in the lives of these people and that their efforts over the long century met various outcomes. This view reveals people working as individuals and together in communities against economic, social, and political odds to remain on their homelands, find economic freedom, and support families and communities. This view also shows how communities may flourish with viable employment opportunities, but may wither due to discriminative legislation.

These sometimes intentionally hidden communities are not always apparent on maps or in county histories. In order to place a large number of African Americans and American Indians in the Midwest in the nineteenth century, "One Big Tent" looks at the phenomenon of the circus winter quarters, also known as circus towns. The two towns in this dissertation were

established in the second half of the nineteenth century, but point backward to preexisting American Indian and African American communities. The field of African American and American Indian comparative nineteenth-century history, while it has grown incredibly in recent decades, has focused primarily on communities in the South, in the West, and in Indian Territory. Northern and Midwestern comparative history is much less considered. Also, the circus town, as a fully functioning company town, has gotten little attention in histories of company towns and labor geographies. Finally, the participation of African Americans and American Indians in circuses has been studied primarily through black and Indian people's involvement in minstrel shows and equestrian shows. Much of the literature examines how these shows fit into broader implications of federal Indian policy, racial discrimination, or popular culture and American expansionism. "Under One Big Tent" expands on this literature by taking the view of the black and Indian artists and performers, themselves, who chose to join these shows. In choosing this industry as their livelihood, these people were in conflict with nineteenth-century racial politics as well as contemporary black and Indian leaders who often shunned such displays as racist and derogatory.

Comparative African American and American Indian History

In 1920, Carter G. Woodson wrote that the interrelated history of African Americans and Americans Indians was one of the "longest unwritten chapters of the history of the United States."[1] Since then, the comparative and interrelated histories of African Americans and American Indians have fallen in and out of historians' study. Despite a great deal of scholarly

[1] Carter G. Woodson, "The Relations of Negroes and Indians in Massachusetts," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 1 (January 1920): 47.

work in recent decades on African American and American Indian shared histories, the Afro-Indian experience in the nineteenth-century Midwest has had little attention compared to other regions. Existing literature considers encounter between blacks and Indians on several fronts including education, land legislation, identity, and Native removal. Other literature considers slavery in Indian country and black freedmen's battles for citizenship there. Finally, the latest literature considers family, community, and cultural interactions between and among the groups.

In 1891, the anthropologist and folklorist Alexander Chamberlain called for, but did not begin, an exploration of influences that African American and Native American folklore had on each other. Scholars of African American history brought attention to this field in the 1920s and 1930s. This early literature explored some of the adjacent and shared communities in the eastern and southern states. Outside of the field of history, some folklorists and anthropologists had given passing mention of interactions between blacks and Indians. Notably, Newbell Niles Puckett, in describing the folklore and folk remedies of Southern blacks, made reference to the influence of Native American and European American on African American traditions.

In 1971, the NAACP published "An Even Chance: A Report on Federal Funds for Indian Children in Public School Districts," and filed a lawsuit against the federal government for the rights of Indian children to education the public school system.[2] Art historian Ellwood Parry's

[2] "An Even Chance: A Report on Federal Funds for Indian Children in Public School Districts," NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, INC, Washington, D.C., (January 1971). This document reported on a study of Federal financial assistance programs to schools with concentrations of American Indian children. The study involved collecting data by interviewing state and local officials in sixty school districts in eight states. Interviews were also conducted with Bureau of Indian Affairs and Office of Education officials in Washington. In addition, twenty-nine community surveyors interviewed 445 Indian parents whose advice and active participation were essential to the study. The study gave statistical data and discussed instances wherein school districts were alleged to have misused federal monies allocated for use in educating American Indian children. The study considers federal programs specifically designed to aid public schools in educating American Indian children under funds from Impact

The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art 1590-1900 was one of the first studies of its kind to compare images of African Americans and Native Americans.[3] Parry argued that images of blacks and Indians in each time period reveal that period's basic racial prejudices and misconceptions. Parry also showed how the juxtaposition of these types of images show evolving attitudes about race in American history. Another groundbreaker, however isolated, Fairfax Davis Downey, wrote, *The Buffalo Soldiers in the Indian Wars*.[4] This work chronicled the four regiments of black soldiers established in 1866 that helped the United States government fight its campaign of Indian wars. This piece was a significant contribution to the still burgeoning field of African American history, though is also a piece that broke early ground in the shared history of blacks and Indians in America. In *The Cherokee Freedmen: From Emancipation to American Citizenship,* historian Daniel Littlefield chronicled black Cherokee freedmen's struggle between 1863, when African Americans were emancipated, and 1907 when the Cherokee nation was dissolved.[5] Using federal and tribal records, newspapers, and office of Indian affairs records, Littlefield emphasized the freedmen's efforts to establish their rights to Cherokee citizenship, property, and funds. Like the Choctaw and Chickasaw, the Cherokee freedmen struggled for forty years to affect their rights and assert their cultural

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Aid Laws P. L. 874 and P. L. 815, the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

[3] Ellwood Parry, *The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art 1590-1900* (New York: Braziller Press), 1974.

[4] Fairfax Davis Downey, *The Buffalo Soldiers in the Indian Wars* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969).

[5] Daniel Littlefield Jr., *The Cherokee Freedmen: From Emancipation to American Citizenship*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978).

heritage. As land politics became increasingly entangled in U.S. westward expansion, black citizens won decisive victories at the expense of Cherokee sovereignty. The result, Littlefield argued, was a dismantled Cherokee nation. "With the allotment of lands and the destruction of their nation's protection," Littlefield wrote, black Cherokees "…were thrust into the Anglo-dominated society at a time when racial hatred was at one of the highest points in America's history."[6] In *Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation*, Littlefield explored the relationships of slaveholding Seminole Indians to their black slaves and later neighbors.[7]

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, historians considered interaction between Native Americans and African Americans in educational institutions such as the Hampton Institute. Particularly, Wilma King's "Multiracial Education at Hampton Institute: The Shawnees: A Case Study" and Donal Lindsey's *Indians at the Hampton Institute* explored life from the perspective of the students and teachers at the school.[8] From 1878 to 1923 the Hampton Institute opened its doors to Native Americans and aimed to uplift both blacks and Indians through academics, industrial trades, and Christian education. Wilma King argued that the Institute's success in multicultural education might be measured by studying a group of students known as the Shawnees, several black students designated as American Indian.[9] King's article

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[6] Littlefield, 256.

[7] Daniel Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles form Removal to Emancipation* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977).

[8] Wilma King, "Multiracial Education at Hampton Institute: The Shawnees: A Case Study, 1900-1923," The Journal of Negro Education 57 no 4 (Autumn 1988): 524-535; Donal Lindsey, *Indians at the Hampton Institute: 1877-1923*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

[9] King, "Multiracial Education," 532.

followed the story of eight children, all siblings, who attended the Hampton Institute from 1900 to 1916 as the nation struggled with how to draw the line between black and Indian. This was such a contentious time that four of the six children attended as Indian, while the youngest self-identified as black.[10] King put these students' lives in the context of the nation's burgeoning Indian policy, much of which focused on securing money to educate or "civilize" Indians at Hampton and elsewhere. "There were constant struggles to get the bill passed each year. Hampton Institute became a microcosm of matters related to the social, educational, economic, and religious welfare of American Indians."[11] Behind the decisions and the policies were a plethora of ideas about how Indians fit into American society ranging from outright racist, to paternalistic, to charitable. The institute's founder, Samuel Armstrong, for example, was a major force behind securing funds for Indian education. He wrote, that Indians and blacks are "the same thing aren't they?"[12] Another administrator questioned giving blacks and Indians similar education, as Blacks were more durable than the fragile Indians. In addition to the attitudes of political leaders, on a local level, King asserted that each race felt superior to the other.[13] By 1912, the federal government had ended appropriations for Indians at the institute, Senator

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[10] Ibid., 525.

[11] Ibid., 528.

[12] Ibid., 532.

[13] King, "Multiracial Education," 532.

Stephens reflected the prevalent sentiment of Washington at the time. He wrote, "Why humiliate the Indian boys and girls…by educating them in the same school with Negro children?"[14]

In "An Experiment Aborted: Returned Indian Students in the Indian School Service, 1881-1908," Wilbert H. Ahern explored the experiences of the first generation Hampton Institute alumni employees of the Indian School Service.[15] Ahern's sources showed that by 1899, 45% of those employed by the Indian School Service were Indian.[16] This brought Indians in the agency most responsible for transforming their cultures. Ahern contended that their employment showed an official commitment to the idea that Indians would be responsible for changes in orientation of their peoples. Furthermore, Indian graduates' employment demonstrated their willingness to work for the schooling system. However, Ahern concluded that, "if turn of the century federal Indian policy was largely of their (whites') making, its implementation assumed a different form. In Indian employment, as in education and land in severalty, reform enthusiasm waned and programs floundered when they threatened entrenched white interests."[17] While many have written on the so-called friends of the Indians, especially reformers such as Pratt and Armstrong, there is an absence of literature on the way Indians approached assimilationist legislation or their roles in assimilating their communities.

Ahern's analysis and questions for subsequent studies are refreshingly multi-layered. After administrators decided to use alumni in the school system, Indians had several reasons for

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Wilbert H. Ahern, "An Experiment Aborted: Returned Indian Students in the Indian School Service, 1881-1908," *Ethnohistory* (Spring 1997): 236-304.

[16] Ibid., 291.

[17] Ibid.

returning ranging from materialistic to altruistic. Few, if any, abandoned their tribal affiliations completely. Many found a source of income advocated by their training difficult to secure. The easiest and most logical was to work for the school service. Ahern used alumni letters to school officials, such as Dr. Armstrong, to illustrate that available work for Indians on the reservations was scarce. Others became missionaries who aimed to take Christian religions and capitalistic ideals to their peoples. Still others saw themselves as adapting to the times. In the new world in which they lived, they recognized literacy as a tool of power. This was a short-lived period, however, as growing racialism and resistance to Indian employees from whites reduced the responsiveness of the Office of Indian Affairs and thus decreased the interest of returning students. This, in turn, diminished Indians' opportunities. Ahern concluded that assimilationist policies contradicted goals for community welfare, "thus to the extent that their employment empowered them, it threatened white interest and resulted in an erosion of returned students' power."[18]

In *Indians at the Hampton Institute: 1877-1923,* Donal Lindsey also explored the shared experiences of blacks and Indians at the Hampton Institute.[19] There, African Americans and students representing sixty-five Indian tribes lived and learned together.[20] Lindsey argued that Hampton's influence on Indian policy, education, and racial relations was disproportionately large considering only 1,388 American Indian students actually attended the school. Lindsey

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Donal Lindsey, *Indians at the Hampton Institute: 1877-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

[20] Ibid., xi.

surveyed federal Indian policy between the 1890s and 1920s at Hampton because it offered a "unique opportunity to examine, within a single institutional setting over an extended period of time, the attitudes of prominent white reformers toward the two racial minorities whose experiences most defined the shape of American history."[21] Lindsey extensively compared the black and the Indian experiences as the major means of analysis. Archives, voluminous publications, and strong ties to major organizations concerned with both minority groups aided in his comparisons and analysis. Some of the Hampton sources were problematic because its accomodationist philosophy discouraged Indians and blacks from voicing any dissent or criticism. Lindsey contended that in looking at black or American Indian history, the study of one is incomplete without the study of the other, especially at the Hampton Institute.[22] Lindsey organized the chapters thematically. The first chapters gave the biography of the institute's founder Samuel Chapman Armstrong, explored the ideological beginnings of the institute and described various opponents of the program. Chapters four through seven focused on comparative issues ranging from legislation and the impact of Armstrong's ideals on race relations among the students themselves. Segregation on campus, Lindsey contended was a misunderstood element, which should be interrogated as a practical rather than racial issue. This is a very different view from King's explanation of segregation being solely racially motivated. Lindsey looked at the personal relations between black and Indian students, frictions among them as well as external pressures. He asked whether the friction originated from internal or external causes. As an extension of this chapter, Lindsey compared the school's stated policy of

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 44.

studying and preserving its students' respective cultures with the school's social studies curriculum that contradicted that stated goal. The last chapters charted the Indian program's eventual demise due to change in leadership, internal, and external pressures.

Other works also explored shared experiences in the southern states. The essays in *After Removal* explored various aspects of Choctaw life in Mississippi after removal.[23] In *African Americans and Native Americans in the Creek and Cherokee Nations*, Katja May aimed to "retrieve the experiences and voices of African Americans and Native Americans who lived in the autonomous Muskogee and Cherokee Nations from the 1830s to the 1920s."[24] May focused specifically on the 1880s and 1890s when those Indian nations incorporated African Americans seeking to escape white racism after the Civil War. May relied heavily on the statistical analysis of random population samples from the 1900 and 1920 Cherokee and Creek Nation Censuses. Additionally, she used federal censuses, African and Native American newspapers, Works Progress Administration, Indian-Pioneer History Interviews, and a wide variety of secondary sources. She also framed her work in the context of the race theories of Eric Wolf, arguing that "racial designations were the outcome of the subjugation of populations in the course of European mercantile expansion."[25] Racial terms, then, mirrored the political processes by which populations were tuned into providers of coerced surplus labor. In this way, racial terms are exclusionary and delegate people to the lower ranks of society.

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[23] Samuel J. Wells and Roseana Tubby, eds., *After Removal: The Choctaw in Mississippi* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1986).

[24] Katja May, *African Americans and Native Americans in the Creek and Cherokee Nations, 1830s to 1920s* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Company, 1996), 7.

[25] Ibid., 5.

Since 2000, historians have explored identity politics, land and legislation issues, and the Indian slave trade. Recently, historians have turned their attentions to ideas of how politics and economics have shaped what all American believe about race and class. This literature continues to confront stereotypes of Indians and African Americans, while implicating the American federal government in the creation of racial and class animosities. The essays in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* contributed several articles that explored a variety of themes and time periods of African/Native American history. Barbara Krauthamer and David Chang explored Native Americans and their interactions with the United States, each other, and African Americans in the nineteenth century. For forty years after their emancipation in 1866, freed people of the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations struggled to advance their ideals of citizenship and nationhood in Indian Territory, a region quickly adopting the racist legislation of the Jim Crow South.[26] Freed people in other nations who had lived, labored and shared in Native American traditions for generations attempted to maintain their cultural heritage and membership. The most recent studies in the field show how Indian and black people of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee Nations struggled with notions of land allotment, nation, race, and class after the emancipation of black slaves.[27] They discussed impositions of the federal government and reactions to those impositions, resistance among the Indian and black inhabitants of Indian Territory, and the lasting effects of that era's political and

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[26] David A. Y. O. Chang, "From Indian Territory to White Man's Country: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Land Ownership in Eastern Oklahoma, 1889-1940" (Ph. D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2002), 1.

[27] David A. Y. O. Chang, "Where Will the Nation Be at Home? Race, Nationalisms, and Emigration Movements," in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country,* eds. Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 81.

economic struggles on race and class. These works broke with traditional narratives of Indians and blacks in American history as they reveal stories uncommonly told on slavery and resistance. Furthermore, these pieces comment on American identity, itself, bringing into question the very idea of race, based not on biology, rather on politics, economics, and land allotment after the Civil War.

Throughout the work, Chang argued that the "struggle over land ownership in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries left a lasting mark on the politics of American racial identities and ideologies."[28] Ideas of what it meant to be Native American, African American, or white "evolved in complex relation with class loyalties and notions of national identity and citizenship."[29] Politics of the era saw class and nation sometimes standing as proxies for, alternatives to, and constituent parts of race. In this sense, Chang argues that the political contests over land tenure in Indian Territory formed pivotal moments in American racial and class construction. Through tracing a family tree, for instance, Chang revealed how the attitudes, legislation, and struggles after emancipation could impact both a Creek family's livelihood and their racial identification. He argued, "By disrupting the expected narratives of the American past, the history of eastern Oklahoma can help us to understand how Americans of all races have lived the abstractions we call race, nation, and class."[30]

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[28] Ibid., 96.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

Barbara Krauthamer's article chronicled the freed people's efforts among the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations.[31] Krauthamer's work interrogated "the political valences of freed people's articulations of their identity and history in the Indian nations."[32] She argued that freed people in the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations sought to become full citizens due to their shared culture, shared struggles, and roots in those nations. Krauthamer examined freed blacks' efforts at fitting into the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations that had formerly enslaved them. This article revealed how freed people invoked Indian treaties with the United States, but also how they invoked their shared heritage—rituals, clothing, and images—to prove their citizenship in the Indian nations. "Freedmen and women thus called for an expansion of the category 'citizen' to accommodate their cultural identification with the Choctaws, but also to cement the rights that lay at the heart of their conceptions of freedom."[33] Krauthamer utilized WPA records, treaties between the United States government and the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, letters, Choctaw national council, Indian Pioneer Papers, and Supreme Court documents to provide her article's overview of Reconstruction in Indian Territory.

Monographs, too, addressed identity, citizenship and race. Circe Sturm's *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma,* examined how Cherokee identity was politically constructed through federal legislation and socially constructed through attitudes about color, blood, and race.[34] Sturm tackled ideas of blood, color, and race in the

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[31] Krauthamer, "In Their Native Country," 103.

[32] Krauthamer, "In Their Native Country," 103.

[33] Ibid., 101.

[34] Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation*

United States and paid particular attention to individuals of multiracial heritage. She aimed to "explain how racial ideologies are constructed and then filter from the national level to the local level, where they are simultaneously internalized, reproduced, manipulated, and resisted in different ways in various Cherokee communities."[35] Sturm's holistic view of the very complicated ways that people identify with or reject others enabled her to look at color politics and local experiences, topics that other authors could not explore within limited discussions of only white, Indian, or black. Sturm asked, "…what markers of Native-American identity outweigh the dominant tendency to classify according to phenotype?"[36] She contended that these "issues need to be addressed since the legitimacy of racially hybrid Native Americans is questioned more than that of other ethnic groups." For instance, university affirmative action programs for Native Americans require documents to prove tribal affiliation. Other minority groups do not need to show such verification. Sturm argues that this is not only an indication of the federal government's recognition of sovereign Indian nations, but also a reaction against the "diverse and increasingly multiracial Native-American population that falls outside of society's and social science's enduring cultural and racial boundaries."[37]

In *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma 1865-1907,* Murray Wicket explored the inter-relations of whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Indian and Oklahoma Territories from the end of the Civil War to Oklahoma

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(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[35] Sturm, 2.

[36] Ibid., 3.

[37] Ibid.

statehood in 1907 within the economic, political, and social spheres.[38] By the end of the nineteenth century, Indian and Oklahoma Territories were unique places on the American landscape. First, it was the only place where African American, American Indian, and European American cultures co-existed in significant numbers. Second, because the federal government controlled the territories, federal reformers had the opportunity to implement racial policies there. Wickett argued that these "…unique circumstances of the territories allow the historian to distinguish the differences in racial politics aimed at Native Americans and African Americans."[39] Furthermore, those unique characteristics "demonstrate clearly that white policy-makers in Washington had very different views of the appropriate roles of Native Americans and African Americans in shaping the destiny of the nations."[40] This period, in which white America was divided over the issue of slavery but virtually unanimous on the issue of black inferiority, saw a change in how whites viewed Indians. White Americans began to abandon Thomas Jefferson's concept of the noble savage for the idea that Indians had no potential to be civilized. However, Wickett argued that another change happened: "In return for their support of white supremacy, Native Americans were granted honorary membership as 'whites' in a society that increasingly only recognized whites and blacks."[41] To do this, Wickett oscillated between white, black, and Indian perspectives, complicating even the differences in each group. For instance, Wickett explored how mixed-bloods often eagerly accepted Anglo-American

[38] Murray R. Wickett, *Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma, 1865-1907* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), xi.

[39] Wicket, xii.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

culture as opposed to full-bloods and relocated Plains people. Interaction between full-blood Five Tribes members and Plains Indians led to a Pan-Indian sentiment that had not previously existed among those groups. Blacks held varying opinions, too. Many freemen possessed Indian blood. They and many former slaves were often proud of their Indian heritage and emphasized their tribal affiliations. Others related to Indians as fellow oppressed peoples. Still other blacks resented that they were segregated while Indians were invited to assimilate into American society.

The first chapters begin after the Trail of Tears and discussed federal legislation and motivations behind Indian removal policies. They also discussed each of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes' relations with their slaves and subsequent freedmen. Chapter Two, "The One-Drop Rule: Racial Prejudice and Stereotypes" showed how that legislation profoundly affected each groups relations with the other groups.[42] Of particular interest is how Wickett explored the rise of racial hostilities: Whites, hungry for land, Indians, bitter over the defeat of the Confederacy, and blacks fighting for their rights in Indian Territory. Wickett further complicated the narrative by showing how mixed-blood Indians were more likely to oppose legislation that gave freedmen citizenship and equal rights. He argued that the one-drop rule that excluded everyone with any black blood and allowed Indians to assimilate was at the root of the race problems and one-on-one hostility between people. In subsequent chapters, Wickett addressed how evolving race relations affected the loss of Indian sovereignty in the territories, education and Indian boarding schools, ideas about labor and agriculture, ideas about societal law and order, and ultimately segregation, disenfranchisement, and statehood.

[42] Ibid., 17.

Since 2000 historians have explored Native and African American family and community life between 1830 and 1920 in greater detail. As varied as they may have been, all of these relationships developed in the shadow of U.S. expansion into the West. The Anglo-American drive to dominate and divide resources, land, and people would profoundly affect each person and each community. Indeed, "the colonial incentive to keep the two peoples apart found continuity in separate historiographical traditions well into the twentieth century."[43] While debates over racial identity, nation building, and control of resources raged, black and Native families imagined, defined, and redefined themselves in response to both internal and external pressures on their very survival. Works since 2000 brought together black and Native historiography more than ever before. Historians are not only documenting facts on where and when blacks and Natives came together, but also what these encounters meant in the context of American imperialism, racial identity, and the intimate spaces of the American family.

Tiya Miles explored the life of Doll Shoeboots, a woman whose Indian-ness was continually questioned. In *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*, Miles eloquently weaved the story of a black slave woman's family into the larger narratives of Indian history, slavery, and colonial expansion. While Doll Shoeboots left no written record of her own thoughts, the Miles creatively utilized sources to piece together the life of this woman, emphasizing that "the historian makes histories, rather than just finding ready made stories or mere collection of objective fact."[44] Though "constructing a story line for the history of an

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[43] James F. Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln and London: University of Alaska Press, 2002), 5.

[44] Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 5.

Afro-Cherokee family in the contexts of colonialism, slavery, and nation-building was a special challenge," Miles was able to reveal many aspects of the life of a woman once silenced by history.[45]

Miles organized the book geographically and chronologically into two sections. The first section covers the period in the Shoeboots' lives in Mississippi before removal and the second chronicles the events after removal in Oklahoma Indian Territory. The first chapters explored the meanings and implications of intermarriage between Indians and non-Indians, the development of African slavery among the Cherokees, and Doll's first years in the Shoeboots household. Miles discussed how new ideas of property, Christianity, the gold rush, and nationhood were negotiated on Cherokee land between the elites and smaller farmers. Later chapters showed how political, economic, and social changes interfered with and created different relationships among black, white, and Cherokees.

Part two followed the Shoeboots family through the Trail of Tears into Indian Territory. These chapters explored the material and spiritual ill effects of Indian removal. Miles also explored the continued threats to black Indians coming from both outside and within Indian Territory. Members of the Shoeboots family were abused, captured, and sold into slavery. However, as a testament to family ties, the Indian community and the Shoeboots Indian family aided Doll and her black Indian children in regaining their freedom and coming back to their land in the territory.

Scholar of American Indian history, Claudio Saunt, unveiled a hidden history of one family in *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family.*[46] This is

[45] Ibid., 5.

an intergenerational biography of one family, started by a Scottish immigrant and a Creek woman in the 1780s. It is also a comment on colonialism, racism, American identity, and familial relations. Saunt preceded each chapter with a note on current issues often centered on his hardships in researching for the book. He also included insightful essay on sources and historiography. To compile the history of one family spanning from the 1780s to the 1920s, he relied on primarily on federal documents. Additionally, the author utilized George Washington Grayson's autobiography, *A Creek Warrior for the Confederacy: The Autobiography of Chief G. W. Grayson.* There were various sections missing from the autobiography, mostly those concerning Grayson's black heritage. His aim was to fill in the pieces edited out of the biography with Creek censuses, payrolls probate records, Civil War claims, BIA individual Indian files, and Dawes commission records. Saunt placed himself amid several overlapping lineages of historiography that include discourses on Americans' racial formations, Indians and slavery, the Five Tribes, and removal and post-removal Indian societies.

In his introduction to the collection of essays in *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian Black Experience in America,* James F. Brooks related his meeting of Euterpe Cloud Taylor, a Ute woman whose father was a black man and whose mother was Ute. Taylor's father, John Taylor, had been born into slavery, fought in the Civil War, married an Indian woman, was accepted into the community, and known as a good farmer. This story is a departure from the strained acrimonious relations related thus far by other authors in this essay. Taylor related her African, or black, background as a heritage and spoke of her Native background as her Ute culture. The distinction between a heritage, or birthright, and a culture, something learned and malleable, was Taylor's way to understand her mixed background. Brooks noted that Taylor

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[46] Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

never synthesized or mixed the two, rather spoke of two distinct streams that created her family. On the other hand, Taylor did not mention her Hispanic or white background. Brooks saw this as a significant omission, as whites outnumbered blacks in the family. Taylor's selective multiculturalism reflects how, in varied ways, people negotiate their diverse backgrounds.[47] Brooks hinted at acrimony among people of varied background, though he used Taylor's story to reveal the collection's major theme: how people understand and negotiate their mixed backgrounds. Recovering the complexity beyond the discovery and analyses of 'biracial' or 'tri-ethnic' communities, to engage carefully with the cross-cutting tensions and ambiguities of dynamic cultural hybridity and to do so as much as possible from the standpoint of these mixed- and multiple-descended peoples themselves—to confound the color line (or color lines) in ways as yet beyond imagination.[48]

The collection is organized around overlapping chronological themes that include "Forging Relations," "The Legacy of Slavery," and "Complicating Identities." Among the authors who addressed issues immediate to the family and community was Dedra S. McDonald who argued that the "Spanish system of racial stratification and coerced labor placed Africans and Indians in a context of deep cultural contact…."[49] McDonald showed how these contacts ranged from sexual liaisons and intermarriage to the formation of small marginal communities of mulattos and zambohijos, from criminal alliances to occasional anti-Spanish collaboration,

[47] Brooks, 6.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 7.

especially before 1750.[50] In his essay on Africans among the Creek and Seminole people, Claudio Saunt argued that Creeks anxiously watched the emergence of African slavery in South Carolina and quickly became divided over how to respond. This division eventually led to a Creek civil war as some Creeks chose to enslave Africans and convert to the Anglo-farming style and others rejected the these practices in part or in whole. Other essays explore the creation of mixed communities, shared spiritual and cultural traditions, and African and Indian responses to Westward expansion and racism. Taken as a whole, the collection is successful in its aim to "confound the color line" as it simultaneously recalled events passed and asked new questions for subsequent generations of historians to explore.

The literature of comparative histories regarding the slave trade approach the topic from regional perspectives. European slave traders sold captive American Indians far away form their homes. They prohibited mixing among Indian slaves and black slaves for fear of revolt and maroonage. Europeans' Indian allies collected their enemies so that they were not directly making enemies of indigenous people and so that they would also maintain the Indian custom of enslaving enemies. Unlike indigenous models of slavery, Europeans enslaved the allies of their allies; this broke traditional rules. Another way that Europeans broke pre-existing slave trade rules already established on the continent was that they began to trade Indian slaves, often weakened form exposure to European diseases, for black slaves from Barbados and other Caribbean islands. In this way, European colonists began to increase their numbers of black slaves and also began to make the capital necessary for the large-scale black slavery system that was emerging on the continent. Alan Gallay's *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of English Empire in the American South 1670-1717* explored the rise of the Indian slave trade, detailed

[50] Ibid., 8.

accounts of prices and exchange rates between blacks and Indians and the wars that the English incited in order to extend their territorial domain and secure Indian slaves. Gallay explained that "South Carolinian elites ruthlessly pursued the exploitation of fellow human beings in ways that differed from other mainland colonies, and they created a narcissistic culture that reacted passionately and violently to attempts to limit their individual sovereignty over their perceived social inferiors."[51] Adding gender to the analysis of Indian slavery and the landscape of the Illinois Territory, Carl Eckberg's *Stealing Indian Women* explored how gender is very important in studying Indian slavery. Indian slaves were most often Indian women because men that were captured often fought to the death, were killed, or more likely to escape.[52]

James F. Brooks' edited volume, *Confounding the Color Line* includes several essays on the legacy of slavery.[53] In "Uncle Tom was an Indian: Tracing the Red in Black Slavery," Tiya Miles argued for a comparative study of African American and Native American history, side-by-side rather than in isolation.[54] By doing this, "we will see the edges where those histories meet and begin to comprehend a fuller and more fascinating picture."[55] Miles wrote that at

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[51] Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of English Empire in the American South 1670-1717* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

[52] Almon Wheeler Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times Within the Present Limits of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), 127.

[53] James F. Brooks, ed., *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

[54] Tiya Miles, "Uncle Tom was an Indian: Tracing the Red in Black Slavery," in *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America,* ed. James Brooks, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 137.

[55] Ibid., 139.

"…the intersections of Black and Native experiences, we gain greater understanding of both groups."[56] She argued that racial categorization began in the seventeenth century as a product of European empire building. The same "single-minded vision of empire as a way of life did not discriminate between Black and Red people. Both groups, representing multiple nations and tribes, were seen as ripe for the picking."[57] Poor whites also provided a cheap labor force often as indentured servants. As poor whites increasingly opted out of indentured servitude, white-ness became synonymous with freedom. Meanwhile, black-ness and brown-ness became synonymous with servitude and slavery. "Indians and Negroes were henceforth lumped together in Virginian legislation, and white Virginians treated black, red, and intermediate shades of brown as interchangeable…."[58] Blacks and Indians, in this early context, resembled each other more than either resembled whites.[59] However, because of the risks involved in keeping Indian slaves due to escape and disease, planters began to prefer African slaves who were less familiar with American geography and less susceptible to disease. Soon black-ness became synonymous with slavery. Miles was also interested in the experiences of Black Indian women's lives, their experiences of motherhood, and degrees of social cohesion within Indian tribes. She cited that by 1928, 25% of African Americans claimed Native ancestry.[60] The Works Progress

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 140.

[58] Ibid., 141.

[59] Ibid., 142.

[60] Ibid., 144.

Administration interviews with Black Indian former slaves suggested bi-racial identification and Miles wondered how this affected the possibilities of inclusion or exclusion from tribal life. Like many other works, this piece is a springboard from which future studies may be launched.

In *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida*, *the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas*, Kevin Mulroy argued that black Seminole Maroons developed a separate ethnic identity from the Seminole Indians. This group negotiated with Indians, governments of the United States, Spain, England, and Mexico and fought for their liberty and self-determination for generations. This is a wide study ranging from communities in 1513, when Juan Ponce de Leon first landed on what would become American soil, to communities in the present day composed of descendants of the Seminole Maroons. The narrative showed the very complicated nature of the interactions among blacks, whites, and Indians. The author effectively shows how the relationship between two groups of people can, in the matter of a few generations, devolve into war and bloodshed. Before removal legislation, maroons lived among Indians, sometimes intermarrying, though mostly in their own autonomous communities. The Seminoles also practiced a form of slavery, though one very different from that of the Europeans. When Africans came to the region, Mulroy argued, they adopted a form of slavery that resembled tributary tax more than that of capitalist accumulation that English and Spanish practiced.[61] Later, the Seminole Wars and removal legislation soured black and Indian relations. Due to inconsistencies of the federal government and broken treaties, blacks and Indians came to have divergent interests. In search of freedom and self-determination, black Seminoles moved from

[61] Mulroy, 17-18.

Florida to Indian Territory, from to Texas to Mexico, and back to the United States.[62] After the Civil War, black Seminoles served as scouts in the U.S. Army, tracking Indians and aiding the United States' colonization of the West. As allies at a distance, the Seminole Maroons developed their own ethnic identity distinct from the Seminole Indians. Mulroy argued that the Seminole Maroons became a distinct ethnicity after the Seminole Wars. Their culture integrated African, English, Indian, Catholic, Baptist, and other traditions. For example, Seminole Maroons' polygamous family structure was similar to West African structures, though they were more likely to have developed independently within the Seminole society and Southeast Indian communities.[63] While religious practices were sometimes difficult to trace, the author showed how communities maintained the African tradition of baby naming by days of the week and months of the year.[64] He also alluded to the influence of English and other European Americans by the abundance of Christian names in the communities. This was a stark contrast to Seminole Indians who maintained their traditional naming practices.

Company Towns in Nineteenth-Century America

The literature of labor and culture in nineteenth-century company towns is also relevant to this dissertation. Scholars in the fields of history, architecture and geography have studied this phenomenon which, at the beginning of the century saw the creation of Lowell, Massachusetts, a textile manufacturing town that largely employed women, and near the end of the century saw

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 21.

[64] Ibid., 22.

the creation of Pullman, Illinois, the Pullman Palace Car Company town that became notorious for the 1893 strike violence and subsequent deaths of several employees. The phenomenon of the company town in the United States—also called model town, model village, or model city—has been around since the early nineteenth century. Small mill villages appeared in New England at the beginning of the 1800s when textile operators recruited workers and their families to small manufacturing properties. By the 1820s, as new textile mills were constructed in larger towns and cities, the owners began staffing their facilities with young, single women from New England. Mill owners provided a range of services in these towns, including boarding houses, literary groups, church services and mandatory Bible reading classes. Understanding these towns and the often monolithic power structures that created, governed, and policed them sheds light onto life in the circus towns of the Sells Brothers and the Hagenbeck-Wallace shows.

Recent literature considers geography, labor and social structure. For instance, most of the helpful services that the company provided were part of what historian Margaret Crawford called a "total organization of production" that subjected the female employees to "complete industrial discipline."[65] Lowell, Massachusetts was founded in 1812 and became one of the best-known company towns. However, several other towns existed at Hopedale and Ludlow, Massachusetts, South Manchester, Connecticut, Peace Dale, Rhode Island, and Fairbanks Village, Vermont. Relatively few manufacturing towns developed outside of New England before the Civil War, but the economy became more industrialized after the war and numerous towns were established all over the country. Unlike the uniform New England mill towns, the model towns in the second half of the nineteenth century each established its own standards for

[65] Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: the Design of American Company Towns* (London: Verso, 1995), 26.

working conditions and community life that shaped a characteristic physical and social order.[66] Throughout this period, the paternalistic practices of the employers could be either onerous or benevolent, and workers and their families at best were provided with adequate, low-cost housing and medical services and at worst were subjected to strict discipline and arbitrary rules.[67]

One branch of nineteenth-century company town literature considers landscape geography and makes several relevant points in understanding company towns and by extension, the circus quarters. Arnold Robert Alanen, professor of architecture and geography, described the unique attributes of company towns as innovated physical designs that utilized the talents of professional architects, landscape architects, planners, and engineers, and social programs that provided benefits for workers and their families.[68] The intention of these services was not necessarily altruistic, Alanen argued, rather every attribute of the company town was intended to attract dependable workers who would be contented, efficient, and less likely to engage in strikes and labor disorder. In the case of the two circus towns, this dissertation will attempt to show that owners wanted dependable and inexpensive labor, thus locating outside of Peru and Columbus was beneficial to business. Company towns were typically managed in a highly paternalistic manner, which meant the sponsoring industrialists or corporations sought to control employee behavior, both in the workplace and the home. Lowell, Massachusetts at the beginning of the century and Pullman, Illinois at the end of the century, stand out as two of the most famous and

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[66] Ibid., 30.

[67] Arnold Robert Alanen, *Morgan Park: Duluth, U. S. Steel, and the Forging of a Company Town* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 3.

[68] Ibid.

infamous examples of nineteenth century paternalistic company towns. According to Alanen, the overwhelming trend of nineteenth-century company towns was a type of paternalism that often led to excessive and malevolent treatment of employees. Doreen Massey outlined how the social division of labor generates particular spatial divisions of labor, with various economic activities often conducted in different places, depending on their requirements.[69]

Professor of Geography and Labor, Andrew Herod, argued that company towns are an attempt at "spatial engineering."[70] These spaces are the product of their designers' hope that shaping the built environment in particular ways will allow them to further their political, economic, and cultural goals, whether these be exerting control over their labor force, ensuring the development of particular types of industrial relations, or providing workers with better housing that they might otherwise be able to secure.[71] Herod theorized on the relationship between space and power in company towns in a number of ways that are relevant to circus winter quarters. The concept of spatial engineering provides an entry point to theorizing more broadly on how landscapes within company towns, or in this case a circus winter quarters, both shapes and is shaped by the workers themselves. The approach to thinking about how workers

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[69] Doreen B. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

[70] Andrew Herod, "Social Engineering Through Spatial Engineering: Company Towns and the Geographical Imagination," in *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working Class Communities,* eds. Oliver J. Dinius, Angela Vergara, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

[71] Ibid., 21.

shape and are shaped by spatial context has been called "labor geography."[72] Labor geography argues that landscapes are not only geographical stages upon which social life unfolds; rather they are reflective of and constitutive of such life.[73] Social landscapes affect the types of interactions in which they are likely to engage and the life experiences they are liable to have. Landscape also can be subject to significant political contestation. The landscape's physical form is the outcome of conflicts between different social actors, some of whom have more power to impose their vision on it than others do. For example, unions and employers may struggle over where work is located, with the outcome of such a struggle determining whether a particular region remains a landscape of employment or one of unemployment. Herod argued that capitalism, and any other social system, has a certain spatial structure to it—it relies on capitalists' ability to construct a particular set of spatial arrangements if they are to generate and realize profits. However, workers also have a vested interest in ensuring that the economic landscape and geography of capitalism are structured in particular ways. Herod explained that:

> …social actors are spatially embedded, but such actors have varying capacities to cross space and to shape the geography of capitalism. This fact can influence their outlook and political praxis. Through their social actions workers, capitalists, and others thus struggle to produce the landscape and broader geography of capitalism in particular ways, which has an impact upon how the social relations within which they live and struggle unfold.[74]

According to Herod, spatial structures are thus not only the outcome of power relations but can also facilitate the exercise of power. However, he explains that social actors are not always completely free to engage in such praxis as they please. In other words, people make their own

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Herod, 28.

geographies but not under the conditions of their own choosing. Workers' abilities to manipulate the landscape and broader geography of capitalism are shaped "by the social relations within which they find themselves, such that they do not have complete free will."[75]

Nineteenth-Century Circuses in American Popular Culture

Popular forms of traveling entertainment in the early nineteenth century—minstrel shows, equestrian shows, vaudeville, burlesque and circuses—gained larger followings after the Civil War with the aid of the railroad. Of these, the circus was a central form of nineteenth-century popular culture as it brought together the most successful components of traveling popular entertainment.[76] In the nineteenth century, literature on the circus in America was limited to primarily autobiographies, memoirs, and travel narratives. This literature was primarily written by white men, sometimes white women, and glorified the individual as rugged, creative, or fascinating, and always entrepreneurial. P. T. Barnum's autobiography, which he published in 1859, may have been the most widely read book of the nineteenth century after the Bible.[77] Barnum capitalized on his readers' curiosities about his many hoaxes and fabulous showpieces, including people in his so-called human menagerie. Barnum's exploitive display of Joice Heth, an elderly African American woman whom he claimed to have been George Washington's nurse maid, was just one of the topics about which audiences hoped he would

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[75] Herod, 29.

[76] Gregory Renoff, *The Big Tent: The Traveling Circus in Georgia, 1820-1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 2-3.

[77] Carl Bode, in his introduction to P. T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs, or, Forty Years' Recollections of P. T. Barnum,* ed. Carl Bode (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 23.

divulge secrets. However, Barnum revealed few secrets in his autobiography. Like the rest of his business ventures, the book was mostly meant to entertain audiences and to make him more money. Others attempted to capitalize on Barnum's success. In 1891, the year Barnum died, Joel Benton published *The Life of Phineas T. Barnum.*[78] However, this biography was, for the most part a retelling of Barnum's own autobiographies, with the singular first person narrative changed to third person. Other literature, such as William Coup's *Sawdust and Spangles* and Sarah Anna Emery's *Reminiscences of a Nonagenarian,* included personal narratives of employees and owners of various circuses, often highlighting how the individual ran away with the circus, braved attacks by hostile American Indians out west, and built careers lion taming, elephant training, or doing whatever they could to live the free life of the big top.[79] While many of these works were undocumented, they revealed a nineteenth-century fascination with circus life and travel. By the turn of the century, several publications chronicled the rise to stardom and entrepreneurial spirits of several circus owners.[80] *On the Road with a Circus* was a short chronicle of the season W. C. Thompson, a journalist, spent with the Sells-Forepaugh Circus.[81]

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[78] Joel Benton, *Life of Phineas T. Barnum* (New York: Edgewood Publishing Company, 1891).

[79] See William Coup, *Sawdust and Spangles* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone and Company, 1895, and 1901) and Sarah Anna Emery, *Reminiscences of a Nonagenarian,* (William H. Huse and Company, 1879).

[80] See Maria Ward Brown, *The Life of Dan Rice* (Long Branch, NJ: by the author, 1901); O. J. Ferguson, *Biographical Sketch of I. A. Van Ambugh* (Samuel Booth Publishers, ca. 1910); W. C. Thompson, *On the Road with a Circus* (New York: New Amsterdam Book Company, 1905); Isaac F. Marcosson, *Autobiography of a Clown (Jules Turnour) as Told to the Author* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1910).

[81] W. C. Thompson, *On the Road with a Circus* (New York: New Amsterdam Book Company, 1905).

In the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, aided by the burgeoning motion picture industry, there was a resurgence of circus literature that focused on the narrative of the fearless male, taming wild animals, and wooing audiences with heroic feats.[82] Again, these were largely autobiographical and each generally focused on an individual's determination and struggles on the way to circus stardom. Thematically, these works maintained the narrative set forth by Barnum in which a person of humble beginnings aided by self-determination and sometimes luck, made a name for himself or herself in the industry.

In 1939, the Circus Historical Society was established as a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to recording the history of the American circus from 1793 to the present.[83] The membership of the society includes professional and amateur historians and circus enthusiasts. This organization was important to the circus histories from the 1940s and onward because of its collection, now digital, of American circus publications, news, and conventions. The society's website currently has a digital archive of reference materials, rare publications, periodicals, films, and circus route books. Since members may add scanned material to the website, the collection is constantly growing. The archive indexed all of the major circus and traveling show trade publications and many of the yearbooks and route books going as far bask as the middle of the nineteenth century. Some of the periodicals include *The Bandwagon*, *The Billboard, The New York Clipper, Circus Report, and White Tops.* All of these

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[82] See Clyde Beatty and Edward Anthony, *The Big Cage* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, Inc., 1933); W. Quinett Hendricks, *Stranger Than Fiction* (Published by the author, 1928); Dave Robeson, *Al G. Barnes, Master Showman* (Caldwell: The Caxton Printers Ltd., 1935); and Gil Robinson, *Old Wagon Show Days* (Cincinnati: Brockwell Publishing Company, 1925).

[83] The Circus Historical Society, http://www.circushistory.org/about.htm, accessed January 12, 2012.

magazines, papers and journals were critical to the industry and to men and women looking for employment in the industry. While individual names may be found on the site, the website falls short of fully representing African American and American Indian presence in circuses.

In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s publications looking at the circus industry, itself, began to appear in larger numbers.[84] Notably, women published more memoirs of the circus during this period than in the previous one.[85] Their narratives followed similar up-by-the-bootstraps thread. In *Hold That Tiger,* Mabel Stark narrated her story in which she was orphaned as a young child, neglected by her extended family, trained as a nurse, and finally found her calling in the circus where she trained lions and other wild animals.[86]

In 1959, George L. Chindahl's *A History of the Circus in America* established itself as the first monograph to attempt to create a comprehensive history of the circus in North America. Chindahl included in his explanation of circuses a variety of performances that included those in permanent buildings, in tents, and outdoors. Traveling and local troupes, including menageries, minstrel shows, equestrian shows, dog and pony shows, and medicine shows, were all in a sense

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[84] See Clyde Beatty and Earl Wilson, *Jungle Performers* (New York: Robert M. McBride Company, 1941); John Durant and Allice Durant, *Pictoral history of the American Circus* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1957); Fred D. Pfening, Jr., *Colonel Tim McCoy's Real Wild West and Rough Riders of the World* (Columbus: Pfening and Snyder, 1955); Roman Proske, *Lions, Tigers and Me* (New York: Hemry holt and Company, 1956); Dave Robeson and Louis Roth, *Forty Years with Jungle Killers* (Caldwell: The Caxton Press, Ltd., 1941).

[85] Olga Bailey, *Molly Bailey, the Circus Queen of the Southwest* (Dallas: Harben-Spotts Co., Inc., 1943); Josephine DeMott Robinson, *The Circus Lady* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1925); Mabel Stark and Gertrude Orr, *Hold That Tiger* (Caldwell: The Caxton Press, Ltd., 1940); and Lucia Zora, *Sawdust and Spangles* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1938).

[86] Stark, *Hold That Tiger*.

some form of the circus. By exploring them together, Chindahl drew connections between each form, pointed out that many of the performers crossed in and out of the different forms, and traced how the circus came to embrace all of these individual forms. This dissertation utilizes this view of the circus to understand African American and American Indian performers. Perhaps even more so than white performers, black and Indian artists relied on a variety of venues—including minstrel shows, menageries, traditional circuses, and others—to maintain a livelihood in an entertainment industry full of discriminatory practices.

In the 1970s and 1980s some important reference materials emerged as more and more sources became available.[87] However, there was a significant increase in circus literature in history, literary criticism and American Studies in the 1990s and the first decades of 2000. More reference materials were produced, such as William L. Slout's 1998 biographical dictionary of the nineteenth-century circus.[88] This book and online reference tool became an instant classic for circus historians and genealogists. In 1997, Bluford Adams' *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great*

[87] Anthony Hippisley Coxe, *A Seat at the Circus* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1980); Don B. Wilmeth, *American and English Popular Entertainment: A Guide to Information Sources* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1980); George Speaight, *A History of the Circus* (London: Tantivy, 1980); Mark St. Leon, *Spangles and Sawdust: The Circus in Australia* (Melbourne: Greenshouse Publications, 1983); and Stuart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus, 1830-1847* (Seattle: Peanut Butter Publishing, 1986).

[88] William Slout, *Olympians of the Sawdust Circle* (Borgo Press, 1998). See also, Helene Wickham Koon, *Gold Rush Performers*: *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Singers, Dancers, Musicians, Circus Performers and Minstrel Players in America's Far West* (McFarland & Company,1994); Tom Ogden, *Two Hundred Years of the American Circus: From Aba-Daba to the Zoppe Zavatta Troupe* (1993); Allston T. Brown, *Amphitheatres and Circuses: A History from Their Earliest Date to 1861.*

Showman and the Making of U. S. Popular Culture was a turning point in circus studies.[89] This work explored the circus from a cultural studies perspective and links P. T. Barnum's career to the emergence of a new American society concerned with debates over slavery, immigration, and capitalism. Adams argued that Barnum's career was a critical moment in American culture, politics and entertainment. In 2001, professor of English, Benjamin Reiss' *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* looked at a very specific event in Barnum's career, his purchase of the slave woman, Joice Heth, and his promotion and exploitation of her as George Washington's nurse maid. Diversity is a characteristic that scholars have long attributed to the circus and other carnivalesque events. As P. T. Barnum put it, Americans understood the circus as "a human menagerie." This spectacle consisted of racial diversity, gender difference, bodily variety, animalized human beings, and humanized animals that audiences were unlikely to see anywhere else.

Scholarly work on the circus in these decades used philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's theories to argue that circuses and similar types of community ceremonies enabled participants to mock authority figures and social hierarchies while celebrating the grotesque and deviant.[90] When it is most popular, the circus was denigrated as a low form of entertainment, associated with backward societies and contradictory of progress.[91] This vantage point has influenced many scholars of the American circus. While Bakhtin wrote in the context of mostly

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[89] Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of United States Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[90] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1968), 34.

[91] Paul Bouissac, *Circus and Culture: A Semiotic Approach* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 3.

a primarily homogenous populace in the face of a powered elite, Gregory Renoff considered the circus in the context of race in the post-Civil War American South.[92] Renoff showed how the turn of the twentieth century American circus, like Bakhtin's pre-modern carnival, blurred the lines between performer and spectator and produced a "second world" of existence that stood apart from the normal happenings of everyday life. Renoff centered on the dynamics that took place outside of the tent before, during, and after the circus came to town for what they may reveal about a community's social cultural, and economic life. He showed that interaction occurred across racial and class lines that may not have happened otherwise, and that the circus gave communities the chance to challenge the New South's strictures of race class, and religious beliefs. This, he argued, helped to spur social, cultural and economic transformation between 1865 and 1930.[93]

Other recent historians have complicated Bakhtin's near-utopian view of the value of the circus in attempts to look at broader historical transformations that America experienced during this period. They have argued that the carnival theory does not consider that it is the elites who actually sanction the circus as a "contained popular blow-off" that reinforces social order.[94] These scholars point to the diversifying effect of the circus and its ability to promote national power and identity while ordinary Americans desperately search for order within rapidly changing society. Alan Trachtenberg, professor of English and American Studies, argued that

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[92] Gregory Renoff, *The Big Tent: The Traveling Circus in Georgia, 1820-1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[93] Ibid., 20 and 69.

[94] Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso, 1981), 148.

the pervasiveness of the American railroad circus transformed diversity and history into a spectacle and helped to consolidate the nation's identity as a modern industrial society and world power.[95] Along these lines, historian and American studies scholar, Janet Davis argued that the turn-of-the-century railroad circus was a powerful cosmopolitan cultural icon of the new, modern nation-state, which was the product of the vast economic and social changes of the era.[96] The railroad circus, then, represented a human menagerie of racial diversity, gender difference, bodily variety, animalized human beings, and humanized animals. Audiences across the country crowded under circus tents because it was unlikely to see this type of variety anywhere else.[97]

[95] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 123.

[96] Janet Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 10.

[97] Ibid., 10.

Chapter Two

Founding Fathers: Native Americans and African Americans in the Old Northwest

The story of the Midwest has been repeatedly told in terms of a narrative that describes the march of New England farmers westward, an extension of "middling" farmers into America's heartland. Traditional narratives do not envision this region as ethnically diverse, neither Native Americans nor African Americans have been credited with crucial roles in its creation. This chapter contradicts this traditional scenario and suggests that diversity in the Midwest was important to social and economic development. This chapter contends that Native Americans and African Americans living in the Midwest were as pioneering as the white farmers that encircled them. Despite race-based discrimination, large numbers of Indians and black people lived in the Midwest. They founded communities, developed important tools for survival, and employed a spectrum of strategies that ranged from escaping slavery and evading removal, to negotiating with white people and government authorities.

This chapter aims to describe two of these communities and to describe some of the conditions by which Native American and African American people persisted amid growing white hostility and encroachment. First, this chapter describes legal challenges to African Americans and American Indians in the Northwest Territory, Indian removal and black codes in Indiana, and African and Native communities in Miami County, Indiana. Next, this chapter will explore challenges to Native and African American livelihood in Ohio and black and Indian people's community development in Franklin County. In both of these locations, Native Americans and African Americans built communities that later facilitated the development of large circus towns.

This chapter pays particular attention to the social, economic, and political obstacles Native American and African American people faced, and how these diverse communities remained in Indiana and Ohio despite vigorous removal efforts and harsh black laws. This work utilizes state and county court materials, including birth, death and marriage records, to reconstitute these communities and identify residents. Newspapers, especially African American papers that were called "race papers" at the time identified social obstacles black people faced, and church and land records to show the institution-building tactics people employed.

The Northwest Territory

In the tradition of a uniquely American irony, the roots of Indian and black people's struggles in this region in the nineteenth century begin with the passage of the Northwest Ordinance, a document that championed the ideals of liberty and justice and the principles of the American Revolution. It governed the area north and west of the Ohio River and set forth the path to the creation of new territories that would become the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. While the Northwest Ordinance proclaimed liberty for all human beings, it restricted citizenship to a limited group of people. The ordinance was conveniently ambiguous regarding Americans' relationship to Indian peoples:

> The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall from time to time be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them; and for preserving peace and friendship with them.[1]

[1] The Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

However benign sounding on paper, the implementation of the territorial system and the creation of new states in the West fueled white American demands for Indian land and calls for Indian removal. The debate over Indian policy shifted from how to acquire Indian land to how soon Americans would take over the land. Illegal possession squatting became a problem for Indians who chose to remain on their lands.[2]

Article VI of the ordinance set the stage for race-based ambiguities, this time at the expense of African Americans, "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."[3] The ordinance prohibited slavery and appeared to create an environment of communities open to African American citizens of the new republic. However, many white lawmakers had other ideas about the character of the newly opened Northwest Territory. In fact, slavery persisted for decades after its prohibition. First, lawmakers interpreted the prohibition on slavery as a preventive measure. As such, the law did not free adults or their children who were enslaved prior to 1787. Then, as new states held their constitutional conventions, they legalized long-term indentured servitude. This trend made the prohibition on slavery virtually meaningless and set the stage for segregation and black codes that would require generations of activism to defeat.[4] The Northwest Territory, as white lawmakers saw it, would be a land of

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[2] Robert Berkhofer, Jr., "Americans Versus Indians: The Northwest Ordinance, Territory Making, and Native Americans," *Indiana Magazine of History* 84, no. 1 The Northwest Ordinance (March 1988): 97.

[3] The Northwest Ordinance.

[4] Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 7; see also Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

liberty and opportunity for white people secured by pushing Native inhabitants out and insuring the exclusion of free blacks.

American Indians In Indiana and Miami County

Whites in Indiana were aggressive in their efforts to acquire Native people's land and to remove the Native population. The Battle of Tippecanoe, the War of 1812 and the defeat of Black Hawk's forces in 1832 weakened Native resistance strategies. In the New Purchase Treaty of 1818, several Indian tribes ceded the central portion of Indiana, and the Delawares agreed to remove west of the Mississippi. The last federal troops were withdrawn from Fort Wayne in 1819, and local militias became more important for social and political purposes than defense.[5]

By the 1820s, the Miamis and the Potawatomis were the last tribes in northern Indiana. In 1826, in return for large quantities of food, alcohol, gifts and the promise of enlarged annuity payments, the Miamis and Potawatomis ceded land that allowed construction of the Michigan Road and the Wabash and Erie Canal. In treaties of attrition in the late 1820s and 1830s the tribes surrendered tract after tract of land.[6] Then in 1830, the *Federal Indian Removal Act* gave President Jackson authority to forcibly remove Indians to the West. The Potawatomis, led by Leopold Pokagon, claimed that they had signed treaties ceding their lands and did not agree to removal and resisted. Senator Tipton and trader George Ewing organized an armed militia company that rounded up and imprisoned Pokagon's people and then forced eight hundred

[5] James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 122 and 124.

[6] Ibid., 124-125.

Potawatomi people to walk to Kansas under armed guard.[7] Already in poor physical condition, the community faced horribly inhumane conditions. Typhoid fever, dysentery, diarrhea and malnutrition plagued the travelers. The sick were loaded onto wagons and covered with tarps. Women, desperate to feed their children, prostituted themselves for food. In what became known as the "Trail of Death," forty-two people, mostly children, died of starvation and disease.[8]

Miami removal was not as straight forward, though American officials were successful in shrinking the Miami population and land holdings in Indiana. In 1830, 5000-6000 Miami lived on 3.9 million acres. From 1834 to 1840, Miami landholdings shrank to around 800 people holding 30,000 acres. Though it would shrink more in the coming decades, generations of Miami-white relations impeded total removal of Indian people and culture. Since the eighteenth century, missionaries and government officials obsessed with racial hierarchies had expressed difficulty ascertaining the lineage of members of the Miami villages of north-central Indiana. Some asserted that the entire tribe consisted of people of mixed ancestry.[9] Since the 1660s, intermarriage was common among all American Indians that lived along the Ohio River Valley. In the multicultural landscape of the nineteenth century, interracial relationships were necessary

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[7] See also James Joseph Buss, *Winning the West with Words: Language and the Conquest of the Lower Great Lakes* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

[8] Madison, 125; see also Irvin McKee, *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941). This work contains Father Petits' description of the event. Father Petit, himself, eventually succumbed to dysentery.

[9] Bradley J. Birzer, "Jean Baptiste Richardville: Miami Metis," in *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest,* ed. R. David Edmunds (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 94-95.

for survival. Miami people fluidly combined traditional tribal values, European ideas and shrewd decision-making skills to remain on their lands.[10] The Miami had effectively created not two, distinct worlds, rather one drawing from tribal and European ideologies and lifestyles.

A long history of interracial interaction and adaptability enabled the Miami to devise resistance strategies to remain in the county long after official government removal. One persistence strategy was to rely on white people or those who appeared to be white to speak for them at treaty negotiations. This tactic proved successful but it also resulted in the obscuring of Indians in official records.[11] Rather than relocating with others of their tribe, a small group of Miami of mixed heritage asserted their whiteness, gained leverage and succeeded in gaining exemption.[12] Among these groups were the families of Frances Slocum, Jean Baptiste Richardville, and Francis Godfroy. Chief Jean Baptiste Richardville was exempted from removal in 1838 and left his lands (over 2,400 acres in Allen and Huntington Counties) to his son-in-law Francis Lafontaine. In 1840, Francis Godfroy and Metocina won exemption for their families. In 1845, Frances Slocum, the white captive famous for her decision to remain with the Miami after her white family pleaded for her return, was successful in her petition to Congress to allow her family to remain in Miami County. The leaders of these principal families and a few

[10] Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Resistance to Removal: The 'White Indian,' Frances Slocum," in *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest,* ed. R. David Edmunds, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 109-110; James J. Buss, "'They Found and Left Her an Indian' Gender, Race, and the Whitening of Young Bear," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 29, no. 2 & 3(2008): 6.

[11] See Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

[12] Sleeper-Smith, "Resistance to Removal," 113; Stewart Rafert, *Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 77-114.

others negotiated to secure personal land allotments, knowing that the majority of their tribe would be removed to Kansas Territory in 1846. Indian rolls, however, reveal that they not only insured their own families' places in Miami County, but also took in dozens of families who returned from Kansas after removal.[13]

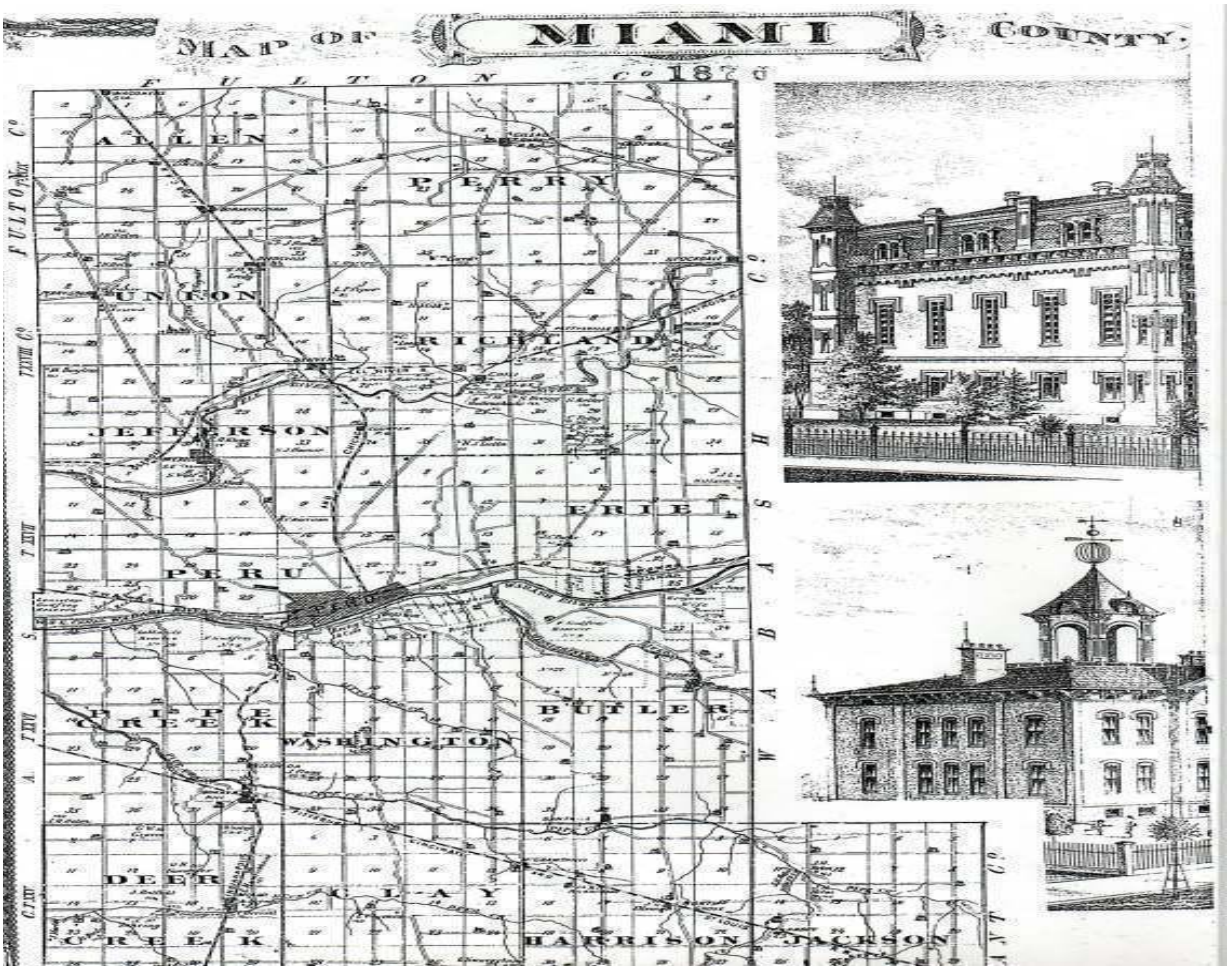

Figure 1: Miami County Map, circa 1877. (Miami County Historical Society)

[13] Ibid.

Figure 2: The Godfroys, from left: Miami Chief Francis Godfroy in 1827. (Indiana Historical Society) Right: Chief Francis Gofroy's son, Gabriel Godfroy with his son in 1916. (Miami County Historical Society). For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

As far as the federal government was concerned, the remaining 148 people would meld into white American society and true Miami leadership now resided in Oklahoma. However, the remaining families, continued to govern themselves through the Mississinewa Council, a body representative of all of the Miami groups and which traced its roots back to late eighteenth-century leaders. The remaining heads of family acted as village chiefs representing the people on their private reserves. In the generation after removal, the Indiana Miami had unified around this group of village leaders and met as a tribal council.

Remaining Miami families formed a cluster of individual reserves between the Wabash and Mississinewa Rivers east of Peru, the Miami County seat. These reserves were in walking distance of each other along old paths and were also located along river ways for easy boat access.[14] Reserve holders used their lands as sanctuaries, and enabled Miami families and neighbors to remain or return to the county. By 1850, the remaining Miami population combined with returning families was over two hundred fifty.[15]

The Godfroy family was one of the most prominent and influential families in Miami County. Francis Godfroy's land formed one of the major private Miami reserves in Butler Township just outside the Peru, the county seat. Godfroy's farm was located at the confluence of the Wabash and Mississinewa Rivers near the markets of Peru. The lands surrounding his village, Nan-Matches-Sin-A-Wa, became his personal reservation that he titled in his Christian name to ensure legal protection for its inhabitants. Godfroy's reserve near Peru gathered the largest collection of refugees. He built cabins around his former trading house to accommodate nearly sixty people who had returned from Kansas.[16] Because of the addition of returning families from Kansas, the Godfroy group represented about half of the remaining tribe. Meanwhile, the Richardville group declined as more members went to Kansas.

At his death, Francis Godfroy bequeathed his land to his son Gabriel, who, by the mid-1850s, began to assert himself as the family leader. In 1855, he won a lawsuit to have a white squatter evicted from his family land. Later, he would win restitution of 185 acres of land from a

[14] Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 97.

[15] Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women*, 139.

[16] Ibid., 120.

prominent local white family due to a fraudulent sale contract. Chief Gabriel Godfroy encouraged Indian men on his land to farm, and encouraged women to do more traditionally Euro-American women's work. He hired Miami and white farm laborers to cultivate his land and by 1870, was one of the most important farming teachers and advocates in the community.[17] Gabriel Godfroy would later sell a large portion of this land to circus owner, Benjamin Wallace. This sale led to a new dynamic among all the people of the county.

However, the Indiana Miami people's victory over removal came at a price. In constructing white facades and masking their Indian identities to thwart removal, they consigned successive generations to hide in plain view.[18] Invisibility led to persistence, but ultimately led to the federal government administratively terminating its recognition of the Indiana Miamis in 1897. The United States no longer considered the Indiana Miami "Indians."[19] The Indian schedules of 1900 and 1910 recorded that all except one Miami family in the Peru-Butler area were farmers or farm laborers, some women were homemakers and servants. These families often worked other jobs in the circus or other sectors. By the 1920 census, many of the families documented as Miami on the 1900 and 1910 census, were identified as white.[20] That year, only 125 people identified as Indian on the federal census. The practice of hiding in plain view would become a recurring motif in the lives of Indians and blacks in the Midwest, especially those who traveled with the circus. While the Miami hid in plain view in order to remain on their

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[17] Rafert, 162.

[18] Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women,* 116.

[19] Sleeper-Smith, "Resistance to Removal," 109 and 120.

[20] Rafert, 190.

homelands, other Indians and blacks learned to negotiate ideas of race in order to make life in the traveling circus more bearable in the race-obsessed climate at the turn of the twentieth century.

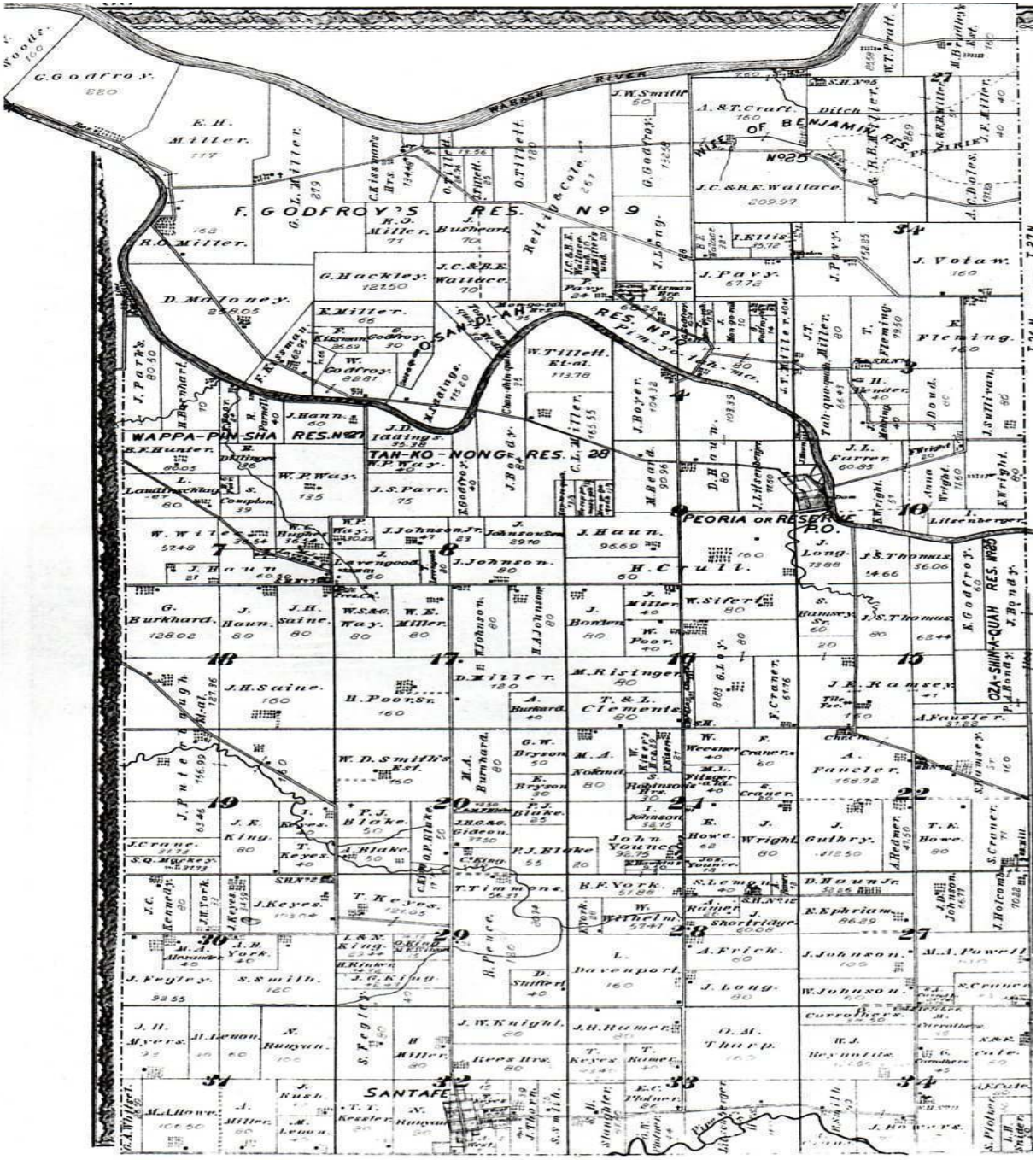

Figure 3: Butler Township, Indiana and private Miami reserves. The Great Wallace Circus would situate itself in the middle of several small Miami villages. (Indiana State Library)

African Americans in Indiana

Lawmakers in Indiana Territory imposed strict racial divisions and unequal laws.[21] When Indiana Territory was organized in 1800, suffrage was reserved for white men. Black men between the ages of twenty and fifty-five were subject to a special poll tax of $3 per year. An 1803 law prohibited blacks, mulattoes and Indians from testifying against whites in court.[22] As the territory's population rapidly increased, many immigrants came from southern slave states. Some southerners came north to get away from the slave system, while others brought slaves with them and did not intend to free them.

The proslavery lobby never succeeded in repealing the ban on slavery, but lawmakers attacked Article VI in other ways. In 1803, the governor and judges of Indiana territory adopted an act from the Virginia Code, which compelled blacks and mulattoes who were brought into the Territory "under contract to serve another in any trade or occupation to perform such contract specifically during the term thereof."[23] This system enforced an indentured servitude that differed little from slavery. In 1805, "An Act Concerning the Introduction of Negroes and Mulattoes into this Territory" stated that any person owning or purchasing slaves outside the Territory might bring them into Indiana and bid them to service. If the slaves were over fifteen years of age "the owner or possessor" could make a contract for service with them for any term of years. The indenture was to be recorded with the county clerk within thirty days after the arrival of the slave into the Territory. If the slave refused the terms offered him, the owner could have him taken out of the territory within sixty days without losing his title. This meant that the

[21] Ibid., 20.

[22] Ibid., 22. Mulattoes were defined as people having one fourth or more "Negro blood."

[23] Thornbrough, 8.

owner could hold a slave for a period of sixty days in Indiana Territory. At the end of the sixty-day period, the owner had the option to send her or him out of the territory for sale. Slaves under fifteen were required to serve until the age of thirty-five if they were male and thirty-two if they were female. Children born to slaves after they were brought to the territory were to serve the master of the parent until they reached the age of thirty for males or twenty-eight for females. This system persisted and in 1810, 237 blacks were registered as slaves and many others were indentured servants.[24]

From 1803 to 1816, when Indiana gained statehood, leaders put laws into place that aimed to curtail the freedoms of indentured servants and slaves. An indenture law of 1803 provided that lazy or disorderly servants might be punished by a whipping by a justice of the peace. An 1806 act stated that servants or slaves who were found ten miles or more from the home of their master were subject to a public whipping. Similar punishments awaited participants in riots, unlawful assemblies, trespasses, and seditious speeches. An 1807 act prohibited the sale of liquor to slaves and servants. In 1808, it became unlawful for anyone to permit three or more slaves or servants to congregate on their property "for the purpose of dancing or reveling, either by night or by day."[25] Despite these increasingly harsh laws, the free black population increased as the result of manumissions and expired indentures. There were also more persons born free or emancipated in other states or territories who migrated. Some

[24] Ibid., 9.

[25] Thornbrough, 16. See also Francis S. Philbrick, ed., *Laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1930).

slave owners from other states moved to Indiana to free their slaves without the burden of southern laws that required manumission fees or bonds.[26]

As they increased efforts to push out the state's Native population, lawmakers in Indiana also attempted to keep blacks from moving into the state. Lawmakers realized that the 1816 constitution's ban on slavery would attract free blacks and fugitive slaves, so they made the state as unattractive to African Americans as possible.[27] In fact, the constitution passed laws permitting indentured servitude.[28] After 1831, incoming blacks were required to register with county authorities and to provide bond as a guarantee of good behavior and against their becoming public charges. The state constitution of 1851 prohibited blacks from settling in the state. Blacks could not vote, serve in the militia, or testify against whites in court. Their children were banned from public schools. White lawmakers hoped that these types of measures would help persuade African Americans to leave the state and go to Liberia.[29]

Despite these measures, blacks still migrated to Indiana. From 1820 to 1840, the black population increased from 1,420 to 7,168. By 1860, there were 11,428 African Americans in the

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[26] Ibid.

[27] The bill of rights of the 1816 Indiana Constitution stated that "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in this State, otherwise than for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, nor shall any indenture of any negro or mulatto hereafter made and executed out of the bounds of this State be of any validity within the State." See Thornbrough, *1900*, 23.

[28] The 1820 Census reported 190 slaves. In 1821 some court decisions favored blacks ending indentured servitude. However, involuntary servitude went on for many more years. In Vincennes the 1830 Census recorded thirty-two slaves, though the United States Census recorded only three in the same area. See Thornbrough, 25 and 28-29.

[29] Thornbrough, 31.

state. The black population of Indiana increased 800% from 1820 to 1860.[30] Most came from the upper south and settled along the rural southern border of the state.[31] Counties with large Quaker populations also had nearby black communities. Those who settled in urban areas chose towns along the Ohio River; they worked on riverboats. After emancipation, Indiana's black population doubled. Although the state constitution prohibited blacks from moving into the state, lawmakers considered this law unenforceable, and the Supreme Court declared it null and void in 1866. Between 1860 and 1870, the black population more than doubled, going from 11,428 to 24,560. In 1880, 1890 and 1900, the population grew from 39,228, to 45,215 to 57,505. In 1900, the population was five times the pre-war number. The post-bellum period saw black movement from primarily rural to overwhelmingly urban areas. By 1900, 73.5% of blacks lived in urban areas, and by 1910, 80.3% were urban dwellers and moved, increasingly, to northern river towns.[32]

African Americans who moved into Indiana faced growing racial prejudice and anti-black policies. Some communities banned black people from overnight stays and carried out campaigns of intimidation with lynch mob violence. Indiana courts ruled that neither the Civil

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[30] The U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population, 1790-1915* p 44-45 gives these population statistics: 1,420 blacks in 1820; 3,632 blacks in 1830; 7,168 blacks in 1840; 11, 262 blacks in 1850; and 11, 428 blacks in 1860. This was an 800% increase in the black population from 1820.

[31] Thornbrough, 32 and 46-50.

[32] The U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Negroes in the United States," Bulletin 8, 1904, 102.60,320 African Americans, or 80.3%, were urban dwellers. See Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 2 and Thornbrough, *1900*, 206-207.

Rights Act of 1866 nor the 14th Amendment invalidated the Indiana law against mixed marriages. Black newspapers reported a rise in racism in central and northern Indiana. One paper claimed,

> Up to within the last two or three years it had been the pride and boast of every colored man who had his home in Indianapolis, that he was a resident to the freest and most advanced city in the North in the municipal recognition extended that Negro and the rights and privileges freely and cheerfully given him in a civil way… Either the Negro of this city must bestir himself, keep his eye open or he'll wake up some morning to find himself reduced in the matter of civil privileges in the city of Indianapolis to the level of his brethren in many Southern cities, who are subjected to all sorts of humiliation without recourse of relief.[33]

Despite the intense racial environment and daily challenges to their livelihood, blacks created political, religious and educational organizations. One such supportive practice was the race convention, a forum in which African American leaders from a wide geographic area met to discuss and debate solutions to the black community's political and social problems and to considered how to gain political power in the face of the hostile majority.[34] Topics ranged from education to labor and tactics ranged from self-help to inter-racial agitation or cooperation. Indiana's first race convention was in Terre Haute in 1842. Convention leaders after the Civil War wrote, "We pledge ourselves to do all in our limited power to secure that intellectual and moral worth necessary to sustain a Republican form of Government; and for the encouragement of our race we will petition the Legislature of this State, at its next session to grant us access to the public school fund."[35] That year, the Indiana Convention adopted a resolution asking that African American youths be taught trades in order that they might become useful members of society.

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[33] *The Indianapolis Freeman,* 5 May 1894.

[34] Thornbrough, *1900*, 145.

[35] *Indianapolis Daily Journal,* 25 October 1865.

Education and religion were crucial components of African American community development. As was custom in many northern states, separate churches developed in denominations where blacks were numerous. The African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Baptist Church became religiously and socially important. For most of the nineteenth century, Indiana law denied black children access to public education. When the state did provide African Americans education, black students had inferior facilities and underpaid teachers. Blacks petitioned to go to white schools or to receive district funds in the 1840s but were denied. Lawmakers replied that black children were "unfit associates" of white children.[36] Before the Civil War, black families desiring a better education for their kids and who could afford it, resorted to private or home schooling.[37] The black community came together to create its own schools and train its own intellectuals in the post-bellum and Reconstruction era. Self-help organizations and intellectual societies also gave blacks leadership and cultural experiences. The Union Literary Institute, founded by Samuel Smothers, established the *Students' Repository*, a periodical that aimed to "cultivate the moral, intellectual and religious character of the colored people and to afford scope for their rapidly rising talents and aspirations."[38] Additionally,

[36] Transcript of proceedings in case of James Lewis v. John Henley, John Boren, Nathan Thomas, Trustees, in Supreme Court Papers, No. 547, Box 193, Archives division, Indiana State Library; again laws in 1852 and 1855 upheld ban on Negro and Mulatto children from public schools.

[37] The 1860 Census recorded 1,122 African American persons enrolled in some sort of school, representing less than one fourth of those in the state between the ages of 5 and 20.

[38] Ibid., 149.

African Americans also worked with white Quakers to build schools and other needed services.[39]

One way that race convention leaders took action in their communities was to establish African American newspapers, or race papers. Race papers educated, entertained, and created a sense of solidarity among African Americans. They disseminated the information that leaders discussed at race conventions, and raised issues of local and national importance that ranged from anti-black violence, to education, to views on United States foreign policy. According to I. Garland Penn's 1891 publication, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*, there were ten race papers across the country in 1870. By 1880, there were thirty black newspapers, including the *Indianapolis Leader* and *The Colored World.* By 1890, there were one hundred fifty-four.[40] In 1888, Edward E. Cooper, formerly of *the Colored World,* created *The Freeman*. Cooper, the only black graduate of Indianapolis High School in 1865, claimed that his paper was the "first and only illustrated journal of the Afro-American race."[41] *The Freeman* had wide distribution and grew to have correspondents in several cities across the country. Cooper aimed to appeal to blacks everywhere on matters of current interest and to report news from places which would have otherwise had no public voice. Garland Penn praised *The Freeman* saying,

[39] Ibid., 151, 157, and 159.

[40] I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield: Willey & Company, 1891). The first African American paper is generally credited to *Freedom's Journal,* established in 1827 in New York City.

[41] Ibid.

> Success with it has been simply phenomenal…. As a literary paper it keeps pace with the educational and literary progress of the race. As an illustrated paper it portrays the Afro-American as he is, and not as so often represented by many of the white journals.[42]

Other contemporary writers called *The Freeman* "the Harpers' Weekly of the colored Race."[43] In addition to bringing black news to readers across the country, *The Freeman* became famous as "central headquarters" for anything and everything related to professional black entertainment—from operatic and classical musicians to circus sideshow and minstrel performers. By 1891, African American showmen called *The Freeman* "the Colored *New York Clipper,*" the black alternative to the most popular weekly mainstream entertainment trade paper of the era.[44]

Career choices for blacks in Indiana were limited. The most common profession for black men in the census was barbering, while laborer was the most common occupation. Other jobs that black men held included teamsters, waiters, porters, and janitors. In river towns such as Peru, some worked on boats and docks. Most women were in domestic service, as cooks, maids or laundresses. The refusal of unions to admit black members resulted in an absence of blacks from some occupations. *The Indianapolis World* commented on the situation:

> The greatest enemy of the Negro is the trade unionism of the North. The door of every factory in every state, city and town is closed against your boy because he is black. The doors of business houses, with few exceptions, are closed against your daughters, educated, pure and refined though they be, because they are black.[45]

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[42] Penn, 336.

[43] *The National Leader,* quoted in Penn, *Afro-American Press,* 336-337.

[44] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music 1889*-1895 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), xii.

[45] *Indianapolis World,* 14 July 1894.

The trade unions' ban on black labor effectively cut African Americans out of skilled labor positions and most of jobs in the burgeoning industrial industries. A study made after the 1890 census showed only 2,287 black men out of total black population of over forty-five thousand engaged in trades which could in some way be classified as skilled. Six hundred ninety-nine black men in that census were barbers and represented the largest profession. The other professions, in order of greatest to least were miners, quarry men, iron and steel workers, engineers and firemen, carpenters and joiners, brick masters, railroad employees, and planting mill men. There were just over a dozen each of machinists and printers.[46]

African Americans in Miami County

The first African Americans to live in Miami County lived outside of Peru among the Miami villages before Removal. In the 1830s, Wesley Cosey was a fugitive black slave who lived in Deaf Man's Village and worked for Frances Slocum. He spoke the Miami language fluently, translated for villagers, and led runaways to Michigan and Canada. Cosey married a Miami woman and lived in a cabin on Slocum's land.[47] Later in the 1870s, plat maps of Butler Township indicated that Gabriel Godfroy had designed quarters for blacks on his land.[48] By the

[46] A study made after the 1890 census showed only 2,287 black men out of total black population of over forty-five thousand engaged in trades which could in some way be classified as skilled. Six hundred ninety-nine were barbers, followed by miners, quarry men, iron and steel workers 162, engineers and firemen, carpenters and joiners, brick masters, railroad employees, and planting mill men. There were just over a dozen each of machinists and printers.

[47] See Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women,* 139 and "Pioneer Negro Citizens of Miami County," 418; See also George Winter Manuscript Collection, Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Lafayette, Indiana.

[48] Kingman Brothers, *Combination Atlas Map of Miami County, Indiana* (Chicago: The Kingman Brothers, 1877), 35.

turn of the twentieth century, blacks residing inside the Peru city limits congregated around South Broadway and Hood Street, Third Street and Tippecanoe, and West Second Street and Lafayette Street. These blocks housed the African Methodist Episcopal Church, barbershops and homes.[49]

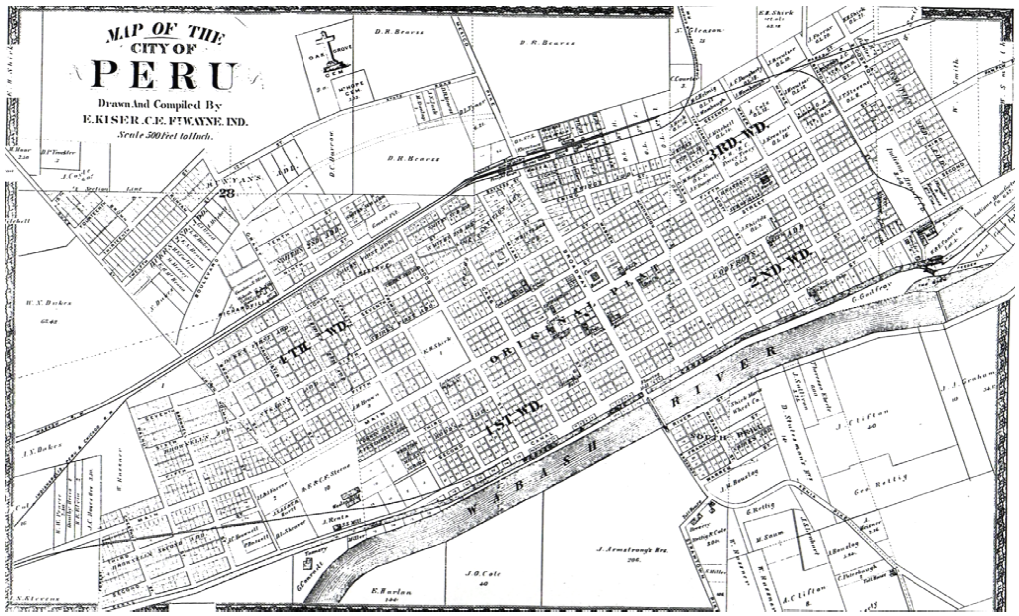

Figure 4: Peru Neighborhoods. African American Neighborhoods near the Wallace winter quarters were in the city's second and fourth wards and south of the Wabash River. From: Kingman Brothers, *Combination Atlas Map of Miami County, Indiana,* (Chicago: The Kingman Brothers, 1877).

The development of three key industries opened job opportunities to African Americans in Miami County—the Chesapeake and Ohio, Nickel Plate, and Wabash Railroads, the Great Wallace Circus, and The Peru Steel Works. Before those industries were established, African Americans found employment in low-skilled jobs that were typical of the era: coach and stable men, barbers, porters, cooks, farm hands and baggage men for hotels. However, with the Peru

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[49] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negro Citizens of Peru, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 417-427 and John H. Stephens, *History of Miami County,* (1896), 351.

Steel Works Plant and the railroad, new job opportunities opened to black men in plant, construction, maintenance, and clerical positions. The Peru Steel Casting Company was built on the former county fairgrounds in 1899.[50] The steel company imported southern white and black laborers, including over 150 men and their families. The Steel Works also hired a few blacks to help manage in some sectors. Poorer employees, white and black, lived in discarded boxcars that were set up on blocks of cement between the Wabash River and the old Erie Canal on the steel mill property. This area became known as Boxcar Town. The company provided a combination school and church for its black residents. After a devastating fire, the steel plant moved to Lima, Ohio. Most of its workers followed the plant to its new home.[51]

With the establishment of the circus in 1884, a number of positions in labor and performance were available to black people in Miami County. Some were native to the Peru area, while others were drawn to the county to join the circus. Sarah Green Byrd, daughter of a prominent black family in Peru, was a singer and became the understudy of noted African American soprano Black Patti.[52] Byrd travelled to Europe and received a decoration in London

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[50] The American Iron and Steel Association, *Directory to the Iron and Steel Works of The United States. Embracing a Full Description of the Blast Furnaces, Rolling Mills, Steel Works, Tinplate and Terne Plate Works, and Forges and Bloomaries in the United States; Also Classified Lists of the Wire Rod Mills, the Structural Mills, Plate, Sheet, and Skelp Mills, Black Plate Mills, Rail Mills, Steel Casting Works, Besssemer Steel Works, Open Hearth Steel Works, and Crucible Steel Works,* (Philadelphia: The American Iron and Steel Association, 1904), 335.

[51] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Miami County, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 426.

[52] See Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895,* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002). Black Patti, stage name for Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones, was an African American soprano. Born in Virginia in 1868, Jones moved to Rhode Island with her family where she attended the Providence Academy of Music. She debuted in New York City and enjoyed a successful career, including being the first African American to sing at New York's Music Hall. She performed with

for her performances. Several Peru-based singers and performers worked with the famous comedian and minstrel manager, Ernest Hogan. The Wallace Shows eventually brought many blacks to the county. Many unskilled workers were needed to pack the circus away for the winter. After the work was finished, some of the men would find work and remain until the shows were loaded onto railcars in the spring.[53]

Church was an important organization in black communities in Miami County and both clergy and laypeople took leadership roles. African Americans organized the Peru African Methodist Episcopal Church in the early 1870s. The congregation temporarily held services in a donated engine house.[54] In 1874, a small brick church was erected at the corner of Third and Tippecanoe streets with Reverend Robert Jeffries as pastor. In 1893, Reverend Zachariah Roberts became pastor of the less than a dozen members. The pastor of another church, Beulah Mission, Reverend B. T. Harvey was a graduate of Tuskegee College and held regular services as well as classes for children. The manager of the casting company and both white and black ministers from across the city attended the dedication ceremony of the church.[55] These churches

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classical composer Antonin Dvorak and toured South America, India, Australia, Western Europe, and Africa.

[53] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Miami County, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 423.

[54] John H. Stephens, *History of Miami County,* (1896), 351-352.

[55] Ibid.

in the area served blacks that worked in nearby mines, railroad, mills and members of the circus community.[56]

African American church leaders, including Mr. and Mrs. Moses Payton, Henry Johnson, Katie Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Butler, and Mrs. Watkins, helped with annual camp meetings held at the fairgrounds until the steel works bought the site.[57] Charles Mayberry, an African American who worked privately for circus owner B.E. Wallace, used business connections through his close association with Wallace to help fund-raise for the A. M. E. Church. Mayberry was a successful fundraiser and his donors were mainly Peru's wealthy whites.[58] A traveling black choir also raised money to support the church.[59]

The Lincoln Club was one of Peru's major black self-help organizations. African American residents, Bill Pitts and Bill Payton established it to provide social functions, raise money for charity, and to provide a space for African Americans to feel welcomed. Both men worked for The Miller's Transportation Company by day, carrying luggage and transporting visitors to and from the railway station. The men used Pitts' apartment as a gym, a studio for the club band, and a headquarters for the Lincoln Club officers. The club sponsored family reunions

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[56] Stephens, 352. *Peru Tribune*, "Wayman A. M. E. Church is Observing 100th Anniversary this Sunday," (June 18, 1971).

[57] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Miami County, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 424.

[58] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Miami County, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 424. Wallace bequeathed him a house.

[59] See *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Miami County, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 425; Members included Nell Payton, Eva Shultz, Ceallie Glover, Anna Brown, Blache and Rilla Butler, Sarah Green, Boc Byers, George Blancs, Neil Green and Herb Glover.

and other festive occasions. It held a cake-walk concert and dance to raise money for those in need.

African Americans in Miami County used self-help organizations as well as cross-racial relationships to attain education. Blacks in Peru, like many of their small town counterparts across the state, were excluded from public education and had to find alternative ways to educate their children through the nineteenth century. Three schools served African Americans in the area. The Amboy Quaker School was established for blacks and non-local Indians within five miles of Peru.[60] The second was a private school that met at the residence of R. A. Edwards. Edwards was a white banker at the Peru Bank who allowed anyone of any race to pay tuition and attend.[61] Jane Moss, an African American graduate of Oberlin College and a Peru hairdresser, taught in the Edwards multi-racial school.[62] Her husband, Alex Moss, eventually convinced the state legislature that the taxpaying blacks of Peru should be able to attend the public schools there. Nearby, a combination school and church served the black community in the steel company quarters' Boxcar Town.[63] Blacks sought out and took advantage of educational opportunities in addition to those offered by these schools. For instance, George Jackson, a

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Arthur Lawrence Bodurtha, *History of Miami County, Indiana: A Narrative account of its Historical Progress, Its People and Its Principal Interests* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1914), 564; *"Pioneer Negroes of Peru, Indiana,"* 427.

[62] Bodurtha, 563-565; *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Peru, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 427.

[63] Ibid., 424.

coachman, studied law at night with the help of white lawyers in Peru, Nott Antrim and Judge Mitchell. Jackson passed the Indiana bar and found a career in public service.[64]

Native Americans in Ohio

Early Ohio shared segregationist tendencies with its neighbor, Indiana. However, Ohio in general and the community around the future circus site, in particular, differed from Indiana in several key ways. First, Ohio's Mingo, Shawnee, Seneca, and Wyandot populations maintained similar patterns of mixed-heritage marriages and multicultural exchange as the Miami in Northern Indiana. Second, Ohio lawmakers began to incorporate integration into their laws earlier than Indiana. Ohio had a larger black population with several prominent black leaders and institutions. Third, the Ohio circus community was located outside of a much larger urban area of Columbus. In the Columbus area, there were more black people who achieved middle class status, owned land, were political figures, and were more often literate.

In the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, American Indians ceded their claims to the southern two-thirds of Ohio territory. Simultaneously, the military presence also declined drastically when Fort Washington, a key regional installment at present-day Cincinnati, was abandoned.[65] The federal government used the Ohio Territory to grant Revolutionary War veterans land warrants and provided the Society of United Brethren with land to establish a Christian mission among the

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[64] *Encyclopedia of Miami County*, "Pioneer Negroes of Peru, Indiana," (Indiana State Library), 417-427.

[65] Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002), 21.

Native American population.[66] In the Treaty of Fort Meigs on September 29, 1817, the Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee, Potawatomie, Ottawa and Chippewa ceded all their remaining land in the Ohio Valley to the United States. By 1821, federal land offices in Ohio sold two-thirds of all available federal lands and between 1831 and 1833, United States commissioners signed removal treaties with Ottawa, Seneca, and Shawnee living in Ohio.[67] The white population, exploded during this period. Many whites immigrated to the state from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Germany and Ireland. Ohio's population grew from 45,365 in 1800 to 581,434 in 1820. By 1850, Ohio was the third largest state in the Union with a population of 1,980,329.[68]

Nineteenth-century Indian policies were brutal, but resistance strategies, stable Indian farming communities, and a history of cultural exchange slowed the processes of removal and enabled Wyandot communities to remain in Ohio. Like the Miami in northern Indiana and Native Americans throughout the Great Lakes region, Wyandot people had a long history of cross-cultural interaction and negotiations. In particular, the Upper Sandusky Wyandot community had African Americans and whites living among them. The mixing of cultures was a routine part of life for people in Ohio, and Wyandots used the region's diversity to their

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[66] Francis P. Weisenburger, *The History of the State of Ohio: The Passing of the Frontier, 1825-1850, Volume Three* (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1941), 34-35.

[67] Cayton, 10. The Wyandot at Big Spring gave up their reservation in 1832 and moved to a reserve at Upper Sandusky. The Wyandot Treaty of 1842 provided for the removal of the Ohio Indians to 148,000 acres west of the Mississippi River. The federal government paid them an annuity of $17,500, $10,000 for their new settlements, and $23,860 to cover their debts. Nearly seven hundred people left on July 12, 1842 traveling south through Cincinnati and westward on the Ohio River.

[68] Cayton, 15.

advantage. From the second half of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, a small Delaware community bordered the Wyandot villages on the south, there was a Seneca reservation to the north that included more than three hundred Iroquois people, and two hundred Shawnee also lived relatively close at Wapakoneta.[69] All along the Sandusky and Maumee Rivers were European and African American villages.

Adding to the diversity, Wyandot incorporated white and black captives into their community. John Pointer was a former slave living in the Wyandot community in Upper Sandusky. As a child, Pointer was captured by the Wyandot and as an adult, he remained in the Wyandot village and served the community as an interpreter.[70] Negrotown was a community adjacent to the Wyandot Crane-town. Negrotown was the venue for meetings between Wyandot leaders and missionaries.

In 1816, John Stewart, an African American Methodist Episcopal missionary began the first Methodist mission among the Wyandot and was joined in 1821 by the Reverend James B. Finley. Both Stewart and Finley wrote about their experiences in Upper Sandusky. Finley's *History of the Wyandott Mission at Upper Sandusky, Ohio* provides detailed accounts of his interactions with Wyandot leaders and their political structure. His lengthy account, supplemented by letters to and from other missionaries, politicians, and Indian agents, reveals a vivid picture of Wyandot culture in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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[69] Tanner, 136.

[70] James Bradley Finley, *History of the Wayndott Mission at Upper Sandusky Under the Direction of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Cincinnati: J. F. Wright and L. Swormstedt, 1840), 78. Pointer served as Stewart's first interpreter. This was commonplace for the Upper Sandusky communities, as many neighboring whites also spoke the Wyandot language fluently; Finley, 105.

Figure 5: Native American Villages. The Wyandot village of Crane in the Lower Sandusky area was adjacent to Negrotown where leaders held important negotiations. From: Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 99.

Finley's work describes a community with a strong leadership structure that allowed for cross-cultural collaboration, but protected its own culture and interests. His first pivotal meeting with the community was held in 1820 in Negrotown when twelve male and five female leaders considered the church's desire to build a mission school in their village. When the community gave the church permission to build the school in August of 1821, they agreed to send "scholars of our own nation…" and "…children of our white friends who live amongst us." While the church built the structure, it was Wyandot people who outlined conditions for building the school. They chose the site and required that the school not interfere with "former improvements made by our people." The church could expect more students, the leaders went on, if the children were boarded and clothed, and if the teacher was an agreeable preacher who would take the place of a

traveling missionary in the Wyandot community.[71] Wyandot leaders later permitted a permanent stone church to built, which missionaries completed in 1824.[72] The mission claimed to convert around 250 people, which was just over half of the estimated population.[73]

Wyandot leaders in Upper Sandusky invested heavily in developing agriculture and, like the Godfroy's Miami village, urged their people to do the same. The community urged the Methodist mission to build northeastern Ohio's first gristmill and saw mill. The Wyandot also maintained sugar groves and several cranberry swamps that were valuable sources of tribal income.[74] Sugar camps provided seasonal spring-time work, from the first of February to the first of April, where women made the sugar while men trapped raccoon.[75] In 1823, agent for Indian affairs, John Johnston wrote that the Wyandot community

> farm is under excellent fence, and in fine order; comprising about 140 acres in pasture, corn, and vegetables. There are about 50 acres in corn, which from present appearances will yield three thousand bushels. It is by much the finest crop I have seen this year and is clear of grass and weeds. There are twelve acres of potatoes, cabbages, turneps (sic), and garden.… Many of the Indians are now settling on farms, and have comfortable houses and large fields.

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[71] Finley, 193-194. This statement was signed by chiefs, De-Un-Quot, Between-the-logs, John Hicks, Mononcue, An-dau-you-ah, De-an-dough-so, and Ta-hu-waugh-ta-ro-de in the presence of U.S. Interpreter William Walker and Senior Missionary, Moses Henkle. Later Indian agent John Johnston reported that sixty children attended the school, fifty-one of which were Indians. These children were boarded and lodged at the mission house.

[72] Finley, 109; see Martin W. Walsh, "The 'Heathen Party': Methodist Observation of the Ohio Wyandot," American Indian Quarterly (Spring 1992): 189-211.

[73] Welsh, 190.

[74] Finley, 219 and Welsh, 190.

[75] Finley, 124 and 219. According to Finley, nearly all Indians participated in this seasonal event; see also Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women,* 128.

> A spirit of order, industry, and improvement appears to prevail with that part of the nation which has embraced Christianity, and this constitutes a full half of the whole population.[76]

Wyandot raised stock and provided beef for their own communities as well as emerging nearby towns. The success of Wyandot farmlands and branded stock became the envy of nearby white residents.[77] At Bucyrus, whites took over a Wyandot sugar grove and established their own town there. In 1830, the combined reservation population of Wyandot, Shawnee and Seneca was around 1,600, including 527 Wyandot farmers.

From this stable, well-organized farming community at Upper Sandusky, a band of twelve of Wyandot families packed their belongings and headed south into central Ohio rather than go to Kansas Territory.[78] The small band took up residence just north of Columbus between the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers where there had been a Wyandot village before white settlements pushed Native people out.[79] Some of the families had worked in local Wyandot sugar encampments between the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers. Other families were merely returning to land from which they had been evicted due to previous conflicts and treaties. Like the Indiana Miami, these families formed an all but invisible community. They were known to their immediate neighbors in the towns of Worthington and Dublin, but adapted, intermarried and remained in Ohio. When the Sells Brothers established their circus winter quarters in Dublin,

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[76] Finley, 193-194.

[77] Tanner, 136.

[78] *The Daily Times* (Beaver, Pennsylvania), 14 May 1926.

[79] *Worthington News* (Worthington, Ohio), 1912.

and later moved to nearby Clinton Township, they employed some of the children of those families who traveled down to the Columbus area.[80]

African Americans in Ohio

African Americans in Ohio organized political and social institutions to fight challenges to their civil rights in the new state. A group of black community leaders sent a petition to the state's 1802 constitutional convention asking that the "privileges which are the absolute right of all men be secured to them" although no African Americans were elected delegates.[81] White lawmakers had other designs. Like their Indiana counterparts would later do, Ohio legislatures banned slavery *per se* but wrote indentured servitude into law. Just as in Indiana, indentured servitude made it possible for whites to hold large numbers of African Americans in virtual slavery for several decades after slavery was outlawed in the region. The constitution was ratified in 1803 and Ohio became the first free state to develop a black code after the Revolution.[82] Subsequent bills made clear lawmaker's intentions to make Ohio white by imposing harsh restrictions on blacks and mulattoes. In 1804, an "Act to Regulate Black and Mulatto Persons" imposed legal barriers on black migration and supported the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. The black code was revisited in 1807. This code offered new guidelines for the capture of runaway slaves, made it more difficult for blacks to immigrate to Ohio by requiring that they "enter into bond with two or more property holders in the sum of five hundred

[80] Ibid.; see also Dale Herschler, "Highlander Staff Reporter Interviews 'Indian Bill,'" in *The Highlander 1930* (Columbus: Grandview Heights High School, 1930), 58-59.

[81] Middleton, 32, 34.

[82] Ibid., 59.

dollars to guarantee their good behavior and welfare."[83] The 1807 Black Law officially established the rule of evidence for Ohio courts. It stipulated that a white person could offer testimony against a black person. However, a black person could do so only in a matter that involved a member of her or his same race. This shielded whites from prosecution based solely on black testimony.[84]

By 1849, attitudes towards the African American population began to change. The 1849 constitutional convention began a legislative trend toward civil rights for blacks in Ohio and repealed some of the harshest black laws. New laws secured the rights of blacks to submit testimony on equal footing with whites, regardless of race. It lifted the requirement that blacks register with their home counties and that incoming blacks enter into bond and surety with a freeholder.[85] The 1849 school law opened public education to blacks by creating a segregated school system for African American students. Segregation and other restrictions on African Americans were repealed within two decades after the Civil War. Blacks gained the right to vote and to integrated public education. The Ohio Civil Rights Law of 1884 made it a misdemeanor to refuse to grant "to all citizens…regardless of race the full enjoyment of accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges."[86] In 1896, the Ohio General Assembly passed the Smith Law, which allowed survivors or relatives of victims of mob violence to sue the county for five

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid., 52.

[85] Middleton, 153.

[86] Cayton, 727.

hundred to a thousand dollars for victims and up to five thousand dollars for their kin. It was called the most progressive anti-lynching law in the United States.

However, a white supremacist backlash challenged post-war social and political advances. When Ohio's black population expanded during the 1890s, African Americans faced increasing threats to their livelihoods in Ohio.[87] In practice, civil rights legislation was only sporadically enforced and local custom generally dictated race relations.[88] Blacks had to fight in courts to win even small advances. Jobs were scarce, and southern black emigrants faced hostility from whites and the established black population. Segregation was commonplace and lynch-mob violence persisted. At least six black men were lynched in Ohio in the 1890s. Only one year after the progressive anti-lynching legislation was passed, another victim was pulled from his jail cell and lynched.[89]

Black leaders in Ohio worked through churches, race conventions, print media, and a variety of social clubs and self-help organizations to fight for equal rights for their communities. Since the early nineteenth century, the African Methodist Episcopal and the Baptist churches had a strong presence in black Ohio.[90] The church was an important venue for countless conventions, protest meetings, civic gatherings, debating and literary societies and social affairs.[91] Black men

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[87] Ibid., 283.

[88] Cayton, 273.

[89] Catton, 271-272.

[90] Himes, 139.

[91] Ibid.

called public meetings, wrote petitions, published articles and held conventions every year starting in the late 1840s.[92] In 1849 the State Convention of Colored Men pressed the legislature to repeal racial codes and when the legislature came out with revised and more equal laws the Colored Convention counted it a victory, if only a stepping stone. Similar meetings were held across the state as blacks committed to do the work to secure their civil rights.[93] They appealed to white logic and humanity to secure help in their struggles toward equality.

Black education before the Civil War in Ohio differed from Indiana in a few key ways. The push for public education occurred much earlier in Ohio, than in Indiana. In 1821, the General Assembly permitted local districts to raise taxes for the maintenance of schools. By 1849, the Ohio School Law provided for a modern system of grades, local grade schools, and eventually a central high school. Voters elected local school boards.[94] Black children were banned from public schools until 1849 when the general assembly created a separate system. Black schools were created wherever there were more than twenty African American children and were supported by African American families. According to the law, if there were fewer than twenty black students, those children would attend the closest white school, if there were no objection from the local community.[95] Black schools at this time were substandard in structure and teaching resources and attracted few students. Ohio lawmakers, like their Indiana counterparts,

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[92] Cayton, 109.

[93] Middleton, 153.

[94] Cayton, 57; 1850 estimate was 500,000 students in 11,661 schools and 15,000 in private schools.

[95] Middleton, 55.

understood that free, integrated education would attract more blacks to the state. In response to the poor condition of schools available to black children, Ohio's black communities organized their own schools across the state.[96] Blacks also took advantage of opportunities to obtain higher education degrees. Institutions such as Oberlin, Antioch, Ohio University and Wilberforce taught black students as well as helped to energize black leaders and intellectuals.[97]

By the 1830s, Ohio's urban centers and river towns had a growing black presence although there were limited in career options. The most common occupations for black men were barbers, hack drivers, delivery men, and draymen, hotel waiters, bar tenders, hostlers and yardmen. The most common unskilled positions were in brickyards, foundries and lumber mills.[98] In the 1850s and 1860s employment as clerks for railroad lines gave some black men higher degrees of social status.

Franklin County and the Columbus area, in particular, had several prominent African American leaders in city politics, education, and church life. St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1823. Within a year, three of the seven founding members of the city's first Baptist Church were of African-American descent. By 1834, sixteen black members petitioned the church to create a separate mission for the city's African American

[96] Cayton, 62; among other places, schools were organized in the 1830s in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Springfield. By the 1840s Cleveland government began subsidizing black schools and by 1843 that city's government abolished segregation in schools altogether. Cincinnati, on the other hand, opposed integration. The state commissioner of common schools made the same point in his 1860 report: "[I]s it not better that their [African Americans] children should be so taught that they will be intelligent, respectable and useful, rather than be left to grow up in ignorance, and become degraded and dangerous members of society?"

[97] Middleton, 84.

[98] Richard Clyde Minor, "Negroes in Columbus" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1936); 40 in Himes, 137.

inhabitants. The church honored this request and Reverend Ezekiel Fields became the first pastor of the new church, now called the Second Baptist Church. By 1900, there were eight African American churches in the city, all but two came from either St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal or the Second Baptist church**.** Until his retirement from public life in 1898, Reverend Poindexter, a city barber and pastor of the Second Baptist Church, was a prominent leader in the Columbus community and in Franklin County African American politics. Five African American men were elected to Columbus City Council between 1881 and 1912. Reverend Poindexter was the first. Poindexter was also one of two elected black members of the Board of Education. Concentration of the city's black population and the election of these officials by wards made this possible. Other African Americans who served on the Columbus City Council between 1881 and 1912 included I.D. Ross, Edward Triplett, J.J. Lee and Wilbur E. King.[99] With representation in Columbus city politics, blacks won victories such as integrated school districts before the turn of the century. From around 1880 to 1912, black students attended integrated schools, black teachers taught at predominantly black schools, and black leaders served their constituents on the board of education. This integration ended with a re-segregation of schools, black only schools were erected in 1909 and revisions of the city charter in 1912 prevented blacks from winning at large board races.[100]

Just north of Columbus, the community of Clinton Township was settled in 1800, about four miles outside of the Columbus city center. It was there that the Sells Brothers created their second and largest winter quarters and company town. While Columbus had several clusters of

[99] Himes, 137; five African Americans served on Columbus City Council and two African Americans served on the board of education between 1881 and 1912.

[100] Minor in Himes, 152.

black businesses and residences, Clinton Township had a more integrated diverse population reminiscent of the Upper Sandusky and Miami County communities. When the Sells Brothers Circus set up quarters in Clinton Township, the population was already diverse. In 1870, two years before they established the quarters the population of the township was 1,800.[101] The woods between King and West Fifth Avenues were occupied by a group of so-called gypsies who divided their time between the area and Dayton, Ohio.[102] After the construction of the Columbus Hocking Valley Railroad in 1869, men traveling looking for seasonal work created hobo towns along the railroad line between King Avenue and Fifth Avenue. Later, after the winter quarters were established, these hobo jungles located to a space adjacent to a string of camp cars for circus construction workers.[103] A black shanty-town also developed in close proximity at Blackberry Village.[104]

In the midst of all of its diversity, Clinton Township had a strong black leadership. Some of its African American families had resided in the area since the early nineteenth century. Joshua

[101] In 1870 the population was 1,800; in 1880 the population was 1,700; in 1890 the population was 2,179; and in 1900 the population was 9,132.

[102] Carl H. Weisheimer, "Sellsville, ca 1900: The Headquarters of the Sells Brothers Circus," (1971), p. 61, Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

[103] *The Short North* (Columbus), April 1999*;* Weisheimer*,* 35; The Mineral Railroad was first established in 1866 and changed its name in 1867 to the Columbus Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad. Later it was called the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad.

[104] Blackberry Village, probably deriving its name from a derogatory term for African Americans, was later developed and became one of the first federal housing development sites. The project was named after Reverend James Poindexter.

Ellsworth Fields was a United States mail clerk and the grandson of Reverend Ezekiel Fields.[105] The Fields home was south of the Ohio state fair grounds.[106] The Benjamin and Katherine Bowen family had a mixed heritage that had roots in the area for over 100 years. They owned a transfer business, built and sold wagons, farmed, and later hauled produce for the circus and rented land and rooms to circus laborers.[107]

Other black families, like the Dickinson family, had escaped slavery. A young George William Dickinson escaped slavery in the 1860s, came to the area through Cincinnati, and lived with a family until an African American man, Giles Scurry, adopted him.[108] James Williams also escaped slavery in Mississippi and established his family home in Clinton Township. There, he found employment as a janitor.[109] Yet another family, the Halls, was established in Clinton Township when the matron of the family successfully relocated there. Her son became a successful blacksmith in the neighborhood.[110] These families found employment as farmhands, janitors, at the local flourmill, and as domestic workers.

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[105] Weisheimer, 59.

[106] Ibid., 59-60. Fields Avenue is named for Reverend Ezekiel Fields.

[107] Ibid., 63.

[108] Ibid., 53.

[109] Ibid., 45.

[110] Ibid., 65.

Figure 6: Sellsville Residents. Bottom: Sarah Hall escaped slavery and settled in Clinton Township. Top: Her son James opened a successful blacksmith shop that served the Sells Brothers Circus. (Ohio Historical Society)

Conclusion

Over the span of the tumultuous and increasingly hostile nineteenth century, small American Indian and African American communities survived in Indiana and Ohio. The language in the Ordinance was ambiguous regarding Native American peoples' rights. In fact, the territorial system fueled white hostility toward the indigenous population and white Americans' demands for Native lands. American Indians faced growing pressure to move west

and white squatters and illegal possession of their lands exacerbated hostilities. African Americans, too, struggled to live under the legal contradictions within the Northwest Ordinance. While the Territory touted anti-slavery aims, its actual allowance of forced labor helped to create a culture of anti-black racism that encouraged racial discrimination at Ohio and Indiana's constitutional conventions.

Despite social, economic, and political obstacles in the new states of Indiana and Ohio, African Americans and American Indians survived, built communities and influenced political culture. Indian removal efforts lasted several decades, but Native Americans developed strategies to remain on or in close proximity to their homelands. In Indiana, Miami people used a variety of tactics that included hiding in plain view, mixing with local whites, legal challenges to white encroachment, and invoking their mixed ancestry to remain on their lands. In Ohio, Wyandot families relocated to familiar southern Ohio rural communities rather than move west. In Ohio, African Americans strove to created stable communities. In Columbus and other urban areas, they lived in segregated enclaves, organized conventions for black leaders, newspapers, and won seats on city councils and school boards. In the rural areas outside of the cities, some black communities employed different tactics. In Clinton Township, just north of Columbus, blacks lived in integrated neighborhoods, farmed, and used their access to land to maintain stable communities. In Indiana, small black communities coalesced around work opportunities and developed adjacent to Native American villages.

Transportation advancements and the establishment of two large circus quarters further intensified Indiana and Ohio's heterogeneity in the second half of the nineteenth century. American Indian and African American people in Indiana and Ohio played crucial roles in the development of these circuses. In Indiana, the Great Wallace Show would build winter quarters

in the middle of private Miami reserves due to the decision of Gabriel Godfroy to sell a large portion of land to the circus proprietor, Benjamin Wallace. In Ohio, the Sells brothers would scout much of the state in search for land—and a surrounding community—that would be conducive to their circus quarters. They found that area in the multiracial community of Dublin, and finally Clinton Township. In both locations, Native and African American people would adapt their lifestyles and, more importantly, guide their communities and the circus industry itself through new avenues of possibility and opportunity.

Chapter Three

The Godfroys and the Great Wallace Shows:

Life in the Miami County Circus Quarters

Late nineteenth-century circus men, like their gilded-age capitalist contemporaries, often enjoyed larger-than-life media depictions, audience admiration for their inherent pioneering, up-by-their-bootstrap spirits, and reputations for magnanimous support of their home communities.[1] The legendary Benjamin Wallace, founder of the Great Wallace Show and the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, is no exception. Circus and local histories alike laud his capitalist skill, shrewd instincts and "magnetic individuality."[2] One writer explained that Wallace made new acquaintances with "a frank, hearty greeting, all the while sizing you up."[3] Wallace's individuality coupled with "his extraordinarily good business ability" made him both a power in the world and a man loved and respected by all in his hometown.[4] Mrs. Wallace, too, enjoyed distinctive treatment in the press, since no social function in the city was "ever complete without

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[1] See Bluford Adams, *E. Pluribus Barnum: The Greatest Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); George L. Chindahl, *A History of the Circus in America* (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1959); A. H. Saxon, *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). For a fictional account of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, see Cathy Day, *The Circus in Winter* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004).

[2] A. D. Beasley, *Twentieth Century Peru* (Chicago, 1905), [Reprint, Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc., 1977], 47-51. See also *The Billboard Theatrical Weekly,* May 20, 1905.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

he and his queenly mistress."[5] Indeed, Benjamin Wallace was "one of the valued and progressive citizens of Peru" that brought Miami County in general and Peru City in particular a much appreciated flow of circus-industry related businesses.[6] While several circuses and similar traveling shows wintered in Indiana throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, none were as popular or successful at the time as Benjamin Wallace's circuses. Of all the traveling entertainment based in Indiana, no company dominated the railroad circus business or employed as many performers and laborers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the Great Wallace Shows.[7] By the time of his death, Wallace owned nearly 2,700 acres of land in Miami County, Indiana, most of it concentrated in the fertile region at the confluence of the Wabash and Mississenewa rivers.[8]

However, behind the success of this magnificent circus and its archetypal creator was the man who decided to allow it all to happen. Miami leader Gabriel Godfroy's decision to sell a portion of his family land to Wallace enabled the circus show to expand and evolve into a mammoth, self-sufficient operation. Godfroy, like his father and other leaders of his community before him, was determined to find or create ways to enable Miami people to remain on

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[5] Ibid.

[6] *Biographical and Genealogical History of Cass, Miami, Howard and Tipton Counties, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1898), [Reprint, Evansville, Unigraphic, Inc., 1974], 445-446.

[7] Frederick H. Graham, *Wait for the Muncie Boys: Indiana's Early Circuses* (Indianapolis: Guild Press of Indiana, 1995), 135-136.

[8] "Widely Known Showman Died at Rochester, Minn.," *The Peru Republican,* 16 April 1921.

Figure 7: Benjamin Wallace. Founder of the Great Wallace Circus and the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. (Circus World Museum and Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Figure 8: A Hagenbeck-Wallace street parade in Peru, IN in 1907. (Circus World Museum and Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

their Indiana homelands and to find employment opportunities. This chapter argues that the decision of Miami leader Gabriel Godfroy to allow Wallace to build his winter quarters in the middle of former Miami lands drew a diverse population and opened opportunities for adjacent African American communities. First, this chapter will consider the roles both men—Gabriel Godfroy and Benjamin Wallace—played in their respective communities and describe the decisions that led to Wallace's purchase of Godfroy's land. Godfroy, like hundreds of other Miami people in Miami County's Butler Township, either evaded removal through legislation or had left their communities and then returned. Next, this chapter will describe how the circus opened job opportunities to local Miami people. Finally, this chapter will describe how the circus attracted an ethnically and racially diverse labor pool, especially African Americans. This chapter will show how Miami, other Indian people, and African Americans relied on the circus industry to establish communities with a broad range of economic and cultural opportunities. This chapter utilizes census, county court records and community histories to explore these demographic shifts that occurred when the circus relocated to Butler Township. Circus yearbooks, company personnel lists, Miami oral histories and African American newspapers establish the availability of meaningful minority employment from 1884 to the first decade of the twentieth century.

Gabriel Godfroy

In November 1840 the Miami signed a treaty that ceded the last of their lands in Indiana and called for the removal of tribal government to Kansas. The treaty included several exemptions for select Miami families; however, these lands were to be individually rather than tribally owned. One of the exemptions allowed the children and two wives of Francis Godfroy,

who had died in May of that year, to remain on their land in Indiana.[9] Recognized as official tribal land or not, the area in Butler Township that Miami men and women owned became a haven for remaining and returning Miami people. Miami villages remained in Butler Township, and prominent men held leadership roles. In 1889 Francis Godfroy's son, Gabriel, became one of the leaders of the Indiana Miami.[10]

Like his father before him, Gabriel Godfroy made decisions that would enable his family and other Miami people to remain in Indiana. Gabriel Godfroy was born on January 1, 1834 in Blackford County, Indiana.[11] Like his father, Gabriel built a reputation among local Miami and nearby whites in Peru as a strong, dedicated and generous leader.[12] One *Peru Republican* obituary said that he "…was sober and industrious, and twenty years ago he possessed money and farm lands valued at $50, 000.[13] The younger Godfroy "devoted his time, energies and money to the interests of his people."[14] He had an older brother that may have taken the lead, but Gabriel was motivated to lead. Gabriel was more "willing to oversee the tribe than was his

[9] See Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1996).

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Son of Last War Chief Francis Godfroy Was Seventy-Five," *The Peru Republican,* 15 August 1910.

[12] For a biographical account of a white family's impressions of the Godfroys, see William Hundley, *Squawtown: My Boyhood Among the Last Miami Indians* (Madison: The Caxton Printers, 1939).

[13] Ibid.

[14] "Son of Last War Chief Francis Godfroy Was Seventy-Five," *The Peru Republican,* 15 August 1910.

brother and he soon won the confidence and esteem of the Indians, also the white people of this community." [15] Godfroy was married three times and was the father of nineteen children.[16]

Figure 9: Gabriel Godfroy with some of his children and grandchildren. (Miami County Historical Society, Peru, Indiana.)

Indeed, the Godfroys in general were known for always lending a helping hand in their community. One resident of the Godfroy village remembered that, "They always said that they don't turn nobody away from their home. They'd (visitors) come there—a good time to get there would be in the evening because you're going to get fed night and morning and stay all night."[17] Like his father, Gabriel provided for several Miami people. Many had returned from Oklahoma

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 July 1989, interview 4 transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 10.

and lived in cabins that the Godfroys had built on their property for that very reason.[18] Charlie Underwood, a black man and ex-slave also lived in Godfroy's village in one of the Godfroy cabins.[19] Godfroy worked to maintain the Miami people's ability to remain together and continued his father's legacy of urging Miami people to farm, learn new agricultural skills, and look for a diverse range of jobs that would enable them to remain economically stable in Miami County.

Benjamin Wallace

Benjamin Wallace was born in 1847 in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. His grandfather, John C. Wallace, had been a soldier in the War of 1812 under General William Henry Harrison.[20] His father, Ephraim Wallace, was born in Indiana County, Pennsylvania in 1819. The elder Wallace married Rebecca Elliot in 1847, and in 1863 had Benjamin, one of eleven children. Also in 1863, the family relocated to a Washington Township farm in Miami County, Indiana.[21]

After the Civil War, Wallace returned to his home in Butler Township, around seven miles southeast of Peru.[22] There, he began purchasing farmland for his growing livery business.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Wabash Valley Bank, Benjamin E. Wallace" in *Biographical and Genealogical History of Cass, Miami, Howard and Tipton Counties, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1898), 445.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Widely Known Showman Died at Rochester, Minn.," *The Peru Republican* 16 April 1921.

In 1880, Wallace began to make his livery business available as a stopover for traveling circuses, and by 1881 was advertising the "largest livery stable in Indiana."[23] In addition to his livery business, Wallace was president of the *Wabash Valley Trust Company* of Peru.[24] In 1883, the traveling *J. E. Warner Show* stayed at the Wallace livery but could not pay its bills. Wallace foreclosed on the failing act and acquired all of its assets. Later that year, Wallace bought the animals of *Nathans and Company Circus,* which also closed. Over the following year, Wallace bought animals and equipment from circuses that were downsizing or going out of business.[25]

The Wallace and Company's Great World's Menagerie and International Circus opened on the last Saturday in April of 1884.[26] The show toured by wagon through Virginia and Kentucky. Wallace managed the company with his business partner, James Anderson, and producer, Al G. Fields.[27] The show was a phenomenal success in the first seasons. In 1885,

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[23] Warren Arthur Reeder, *No Performances Today, June 22, 1918, Ivanhoe, Indiana* (Hammond: North State Press, 1972), 10.

[24] Arthur Lawrence Bodurtha, *History of Miami County, Indiana: A Narrative Account of its Historical Progress, Its People and Its Principal Interests, Vol. 2* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1914), [Reprint: Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc., 1973], 787.

[25] Frederick H. Graham, *Wait for the Muncie Boys: Indiana's Early Circuses* (Indianapolis: Guild Press of Indiana, 1995), 20. In addition to banking and his burgeoning circus business, Wallace also invested in real estate, built the Wallace Theatre Building and Colonial Apartments in downtown Peru, and held one third interest in the Senger Dry Goods Company, which he helped to organize in 1906.

[26] *Graham,* 20.

[27] Beasley, 49; *Graham,* 20*;* See also *The Billboard Theatrical Weekly,* 20 May 1905, 49. Al G. Fields was a singing clown and later managed widely successful minstrel shows.

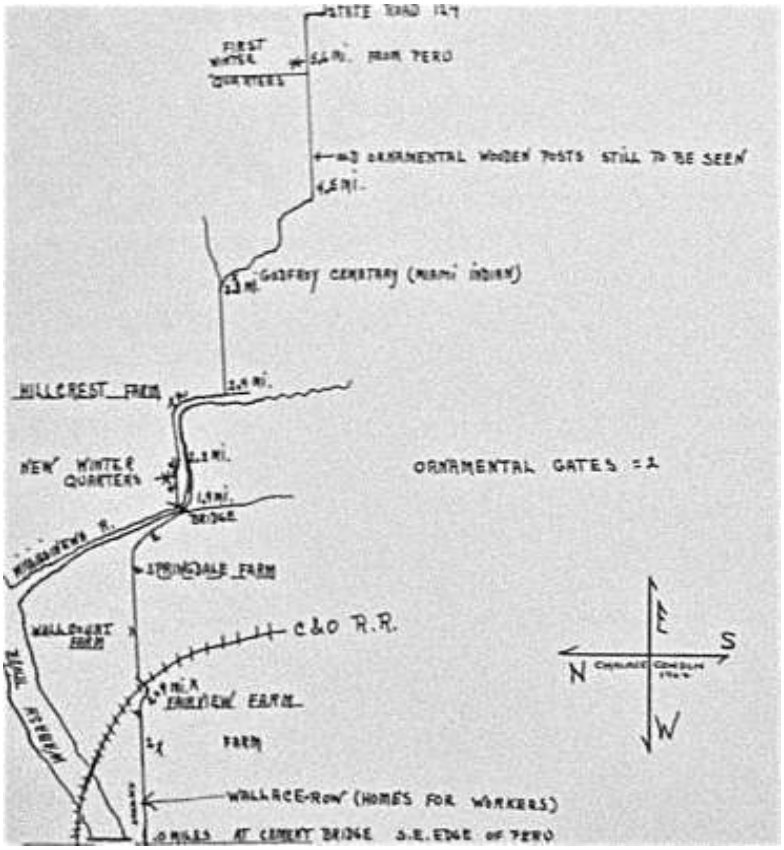

Figure 10: The Wallace Winter Quarters, circa 1890. The Wallace winter quarters as it appeared in the 1890s, at the confluence of the Mississinewa and Wabash Rivers. Some homes for workers were located at the very bottom of the map. (Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Wallace added steamer travel to the wagon show, began in Pittsburg, and exhibited in towns along the Ohio River and its tributaries. He closed the season at New Orleans where he shipped the exhibition home by rail. In 1886, after two seasons of wagons, Wallace and Anderson

transferred the show to travel by railroad.[28] The circus grew steadily after the transition to rail. In 1890 Wallace bought his partner out and became the sole owner and manager of the show.[29]

Wallace's 1891 purchase of Godfroy's 220-acre farm was big news in the neighboring town of Peru and in the circus world. Local papers boasted about how Peru's own "noted showman," Benjamin Wallace, had had his eye on the property for a number of years.[30] One community historian claimed that it was "perhaps one of the most beautifully situated farms in the state."[31] Another paper wrote, "The location is, naturally, one of the prettiest in all the country. There is no reason why it should not be, but every reason in the world why it should be. The original owner of the land, Francis Godfroy, when he was chief of the great Miami tribe, had the pick and choice of ten miles square of the very garden spot of America."[32] The land was situated at the confluence of the Mississinewa River and the Wabash River about two and a half miles from Peru. In 1907, Wallace formed a partnership with Jerry Mugivan and John Talbott to purchased the liquidated *Carl Hagenbeck Trained Wild Animal Show.* This merger established

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[28] *Biographical and Genealogical History of Cass, Miami, Howard and Tipton Counties, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1898), [Reprint, Evansville, Unigraphic, Inc., 1974], 445-446.

[29] Beasley, 49; See also *The Billboard Theatrical Weekly,* May 20, 1905.

[30] "Ben Wallace Buys Godfroy Farm on the Mississinewa Banks," *The Peru Republican,* 27 November 1891.

[31] Beasley, 49.

[32] *The Miami County Sentinel,* 6 April 1893.

Wallace's circus as not only one of the most well known traveling shows, it also became one of the largest, taking up forty-five or more rail cars.[33]

Figure 11: An 1898 poster for The Great Wallace Shows Poster. (Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Gabriel Godfroy's decision to sell his two hundred and twenty acre farm was both for personal reasons and for the wellbeing of the surrounding Miami communities.[34] Godfroy's sale,

[33] Graham, 23; Hagenbeck was a German animal trainer who had met success in the United States. When he decided to return to Germany he hired liquidators to sell his animals and equipment. The American partners sold the menagerie to Wallace, but Hagenbeck sued to take back the rights to using his name—he said that he never agreed to selling his name. Wallace won the case and opened the 1907 season as the *Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus* or *The Carl Hagenbeck and Great Wallace Circus.*

[34] See Rafert, 166.

however, was not only the result of one white man's business savvy. By shifting perspective from Wallace's purchase to Godfroy's sale, it is possible to understand how Godfroy, himself, may have viewed decision. Godfroy used his land for two very specific purposes of his own. First, Godfroy used the money from the sale, about $20,000, to pay legal expenses. These included bills he had accrued while defending Miami land from taxation. He then moved his household to his father's old trading house a half-mile away. The sale enabled Godfroy to lead and to act as a generous civil chief of the Miami.[35] The outcome of the sale, and perhaps Godfroy's second purpose for selling, was to ensure jobs and agricultural training for the surrounding Miami community. The circus's ability to provide a variety of jobs, some leading to careers, and the possibility of economic growth in the Miami community, reflected the aims of both Chief Francis Godfroy and Gabriel Godfroy. This outcome could not have been a surprise to Godfroy. Since the 1860s when the *Chesapeake and Ohio*, *Nickel Plate*, and *Wabash* railroad lines were built through the town, a variety of traveling circuses, menageries, dog and pony shows and other traveling entertainment had come to Miami County. Many of the shows stopped in Peru to rest and resupply.[36] Godfroy must have been somewhat familiar with job opportunities as well as the labor and skill needs of these types of traveling companies.

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[35] Rafert, 166.

[36] Several advertisements for such shows may be found in Peru and other Miami County newspapers. Also see Rafert, 165.

Figure 12: The Hagenbeck-Wallace Quarters. The Great Wallace Circus and later the Hagenbeck Wallace Show Winter Quarters in Butler Township, just south of Peru, Indiana, circa 1920. (Circus World Museum, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

In the twenty-nine year span that Wallace owned and ran the circus town in Miami County, the circus became a major industry, critical to the life of the county and its seat, Peru. During the touring season from April to October, *The Great Wallace Show* employed around six hundred people.[37] The "off-season," too, was a major industry for the county and extended many circus-related jobs throughout the year. The winter quarters included nineteen functioning farms in Miami County, encompassing an area of more than two thousand acres. The quarters' commissary and livestock ration departments placed continuing demands upon the agricultural resources of the county.

In addition, the circus helped create and support an emerging industrial economy. One Peruvian contemporary boasted that, "the mere quartering of his extensive shows in the county has had distinctive value in the supporting and furthering of various industrial and commercial

[37] Bodurtha, 787; this number is from the year 1903, but the circus maintained approximately this number from the time of the Hagenbeck merger until 1913.

enterprises, and thus in fostering the civic prosperity of the community."[38] He went on to say that, "from the time the show comes into winter quarters in the fall, until it leaves again in the spring, all Peru is busy getting ready for the spring opening. This one reason why every citizen in Peru, boasts of his city as the home of the 'Wallace Shows."[39] The circus relied on a wide range of industries to keep it going. Wallace employed Miami County's wagon builders, upholsterers, seamstresses, painters, carpet makers, printers, carpenters, and many other skilled laborers to get the circus ready each season. Wallace gained the favor of Peru's industries by keeping as much work inside the city and county as possible. Another contemporary wrote that out at the circus farm, "one finds thousands of dollars invested in the large buildings, which taken collectively would almost make a good sized village by themselves."[40]

Eventually, Wallace's circus gained Miami County the reputation of Indiana's circus center. Peru eventually surpassed several other Indiana-based show towns, and others such as Macon, Georgia and Sarasota, Florida to hold the industry title of "America's Circus City."[41] Later in the twentieth century, Peru continued to attract other circuses to winter on the old Wallace quarters.[42] The Wallace winter quarters under the ownership of Wallace, his successors,

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[38] Bodurtha, 787.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Beasley, 49.

[41] Adkins, Kreig A., *Peru: Circus Capital of the World* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 127.

[42] Graham, 25 and 27.

the *American Circus Corporation,* and finally the *Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey* was home supplier, workshop, and store for many circuses throughout the twentieth century.[43]

Figure 13: Buildings in the Great Wallace Show winter quarters circa 1890. (Circus World Museum, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Local Job Opportunities

Native Americans in Miami County took advantage of circus employment to survive during otherwise hard economic times especially in the 1880s through a period of lowered agricultural prices.[44] Circus employment was consistent, even if some positions were only seasonal. Around one hundred to one hundred and fifty people worked on the quarters, year-

[43] Graham, 25.

[44] Rafert, 164. This is compared to both previous periods in Miami County and to neighboring Native communities during the same period.

round, worked on the circus farms, fed and handled animals, and performed in pre-show concerts, equestrian shows, Wild West shows and more.[45]

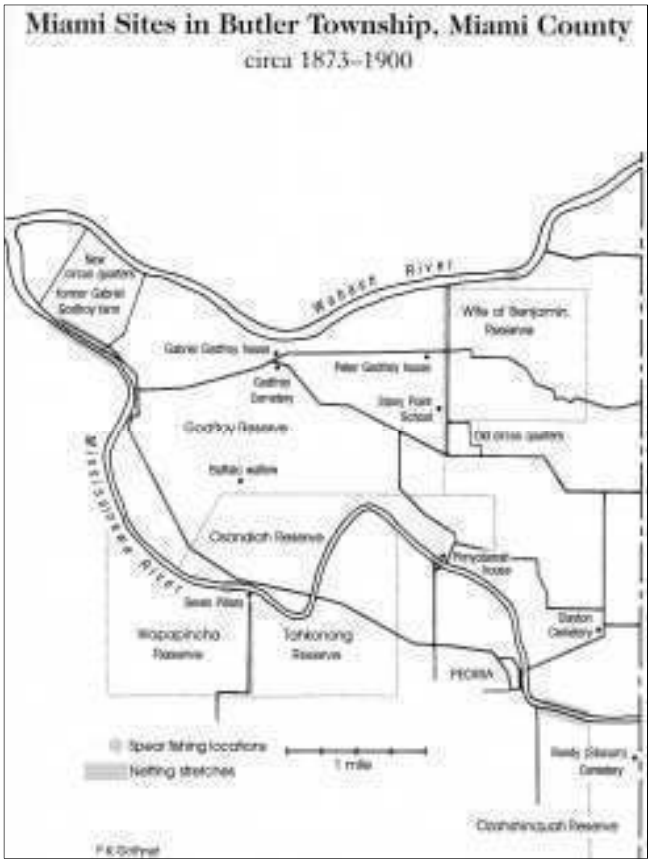

Figure 14: Miami Sites in Butler Township. The Butler Township private Miami Reserves, the Wallace winter quarters, and the Stony Point School. From: Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994,* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1996).

The Wallace Show and later the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus would lay over in Butler Township from November to April, before going on the road each season. For Miami people, circus work was often a family affair. Men who worked as animal feeders and farm hands brought their sons to work with them. Charles Marks, a Miami man in the Godfroy village,

[45] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

worked on the Hagenbeck-Wallace farm and brought his children to work with him to cut corn.[46] Marks' son, LaMoine, worked for the circus and related industries for most of his life. The younger Marks was born in 1907 and witnessed the devastating 1913 flood that killed many animals and led Wallace to sell his company.[47] As a teenager, LaMoine's first independent job with the circus was working a concession stand. He, like other young men of his generation, sold hot dogs, candy, cotton candy, and ice cream. He helped to build and take down concession stands before and after shows. Marks went on to "candy butchering," managing his own concession stand, and had two African American teens working for him in the stand.[48]

The circus had many labor needs including teamsters, wild animal trainers and other skilled labor positions. Teamsters, or horse drivers, were in high demand.[49] It appears that working with animals was of particular interest to Miami people. Many Miami farmers, like the Bruell family, kept horses and were skilled in riding, driving and caring for them.[50] The Bruell

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[46] Rafert, 45. Charles Marks was born in 1870 and died in 1946; LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 12 May 1993, "Hunting, Boxing," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[47] Social Security Death Index, number 306-26-3905, Indiana State, http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&gsfn=LaMoineMarks, [1 November 2010].

[48] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 May 1993, "Circus," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis and LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 12 May 1993, "Hunting, Boxing," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[49] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[50] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 1 July 1986, "Animal Stories," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

family, members of which joined labor and farm crews for the circus, also had members drive horses as circus teamsters.[51] Miami man, Alex Ralston, was also a driver who worked with teamster Andy Bruell.[52] Other Miami families chose circus professions as well. Men and women of the Tucker family trained and performed with elephants. Gabe Tucker was another Miami man who trained elephants. Very particular about the tools he used, Tucker began a business making bull hooks, an instrument used in training elephants. His sister, Mary Tucker rode elephants during the summer touring season, and was a schoolteacher in the winter.[53] Gabe Tucker moved away and ran a business in Warsaw, Indiana for several years. When he came back to Miami County after several years, his brother-in-law, Cheerful Gardner, elephant manager at the time, gave him a position as an elephant trainer.[54] Cheerful Gardner was famous in the circus world for being the first person to swing like a pendulum with his head in an elephant's mouth while the elephant walked around the ring. Mary, Gabe's sister who married

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[51] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 4 November 1980, "Hunting, Fishing, Taxidermy," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Pete Bruell also worked on the Wabash Railroad line.

[52] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, "Circus," transcript, 11 May 1993, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[53] The 1910 Federal Census recorded Mary as Indian and born circa 1904. Her mother and siblings were also Indian and her father was white on the 1910 census. See Census Place: *Butler, Miami, Indiana*; Roll: *T624_370*; Page: *4A*; Enumeration District: 0112; Image: 937; FHL Number: 1374383. Their residence in 1910 was in Butler Township. On the 1920 census, Mary's father, Daniel, had died and the family was in Erie, Indiana. All household members were recorded as white on the 1920 census. See Census Place: *Erie, Miami, Indiana*; Roll: *T625_441*; Page: *2B*; Enumeration District: *138*; Image: *31*. She married Cheerful Gardner, a man 22 years her senior, and worked with him in his elaborate elephant acts.

[54] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, "Circus," transcript, 11 May 1993, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. See also Cheerful Gardner's obituary in *Bandwagon* 7, no. 3 (March 1952): 8.

Gardner, joined the elephant act as her husband's assistant.[55] At this time, Miami people were circus performers. Sarah Tucker Weisenberger sewed outfits for performers and Susie Tucker Mellinger worked as a cook.[56] Many of these families became involved in the Miami Maconaquah festival, an educational and cultural celebration that began in 1924.[57] Later in life, LaMoine Marks, as well as other Miami men, learned taxidermy and obtained lucrative jobs from the circus and men who hunted for the circus in Africa and other locations around the world.[58]

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[55] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, "Circus," transcript, 11 May 1993, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. See also *Bandwagon* 7, no. 3 (March, 1952): 8.

[56] Sarah Tucker married George Weisenberger. See Miami County, Index to Marriage Record 1850-1920, Book: C-11, page: 421. The 1900 Federal census recorded Sarah as Indian, while later records classify her as white. Her sister Susie married James Mellinger. Susie is recorded as Indian in the 1910 Federal Census and white in later records. See *Miami County*, *Index to Marriage Record 1850-1920 Inclusive Volume*, *Original Record Located County Clerks Office, Peru*; Book: *C-22*, Page *571*.

[57] See Rafert, 212; in 1924 the Indiana Miami created the Maconaquah Pageant, a traveling show displaying Indian culture and history. This new institution educated non-Indians about Miami history and culture and contradicted the "dying Indian" myth. It also helped to unify the Miami community as it gained publicity and income for the tribe's lawyers and lobbyists in Washington, D. C. The pageant was a celebration of song, dance and storytelling. Maconaquah was the Miami name for Frances Slocum. As a child, Slocum was kidnapped by Delaware people and was adopted and married into the Miami tribe. It showcased some of the tribe's oldest storytellers, teachers, and leaders in the shows. Leaders such as Clarence Godfroy, John and Ross Bundy, and Anna Marks taught Miami children Miami language, history and culture while performing.

[58] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, "Animal Stories," transcript, 1 July 1986, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

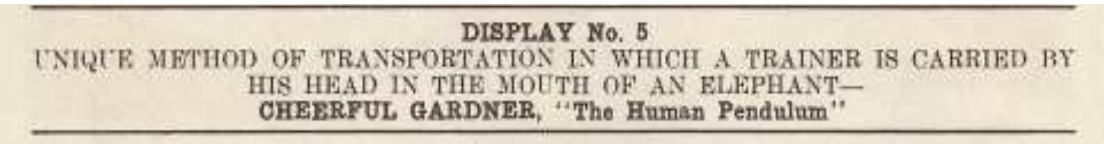
DISPLAY No. 5
UNIQUE METHOD OF TRANSPORTATION IN WHICH A TRAINER IS CARRIED BY HIS HEAD IN THE MOUTH OF AN ELEPHANT—
CHEERFUL GARDNER, "The Human Pendulum"

Figure 15: Route book listing. Mary Tucker's husband, Cheerful Gardner, held a prominent position as elephant trainer and toured with Wallace for several decades. This is an ad for his show from the 1932 route book. (Author's collection)

Miami people realized that there were more than menial labor opportunities in the circus and created avenues to move on to performance-oriented roles, travel, and networking with a cosmopolitan mixture of people from across the country and around the world. Many of these opportunities through the circus may have otherwise been unavailable to them.[59] Miamis who initially had found jobs driving and caring for horses, for instance, joined equestrian shows.[60] Other local Miami who kept horses benefitted from the flow of exotic animals in the area and traded animals from a variety of places.[61] Charles Marks, LaMoine's father, had worked in *Mike Yorks' Dog and Pony Show* in which he started as part of the grounds crew and then began to act as an "Indian villain." He rode in the shows until around 1890.[62] As a young boy, LaMoine Marks learned horse tricks from his father and from the Godfroys. This later helped

[59] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[60] LaMoine Marks (1993).

[61] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 4 November 1980, "Hunting, Fishing, Taxidermy," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. The Bundys had 20-30 horses and the Godfroys had 40-50 horses.

[62] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 4 November 1980, "Hunting, Fishing, Taxidermy," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

him to get into circus shows. Marks also stated that he learned trick roping in the quarters from other performers in the circus.[63] He later performed in the Western Concert, a pre-circus equestrian showcase.[64] Marks eventually worked with the famous Western-genre movie star, Tom Mix.[65] Marks remembered the circus as a positive part of his community, just after the turn of the century. He said, "They were good to them. They were a good thing for a town."[66]

Members of the Marks' family found a variety of job opportunities through the circus. His brother-in-law trained elephants in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus before the 1913 flood. Then, when the American Circus Corporation took over management, he continued his professional elephant-training career.[67] The Marks family ran refreshment stands for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show and continued to do this for the American Circus Corporation shows and for the Maconaquah Pageant in the 1920s. These types of small business ventures were very common among the Miami and among the blacks who traveled with the circus show or accompanied it on their own. In some cases, the circus hired them to sell their wares within the circus proper. In other instances, African Americans and American Indians set up shop just outside the circus entrance.

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[63] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

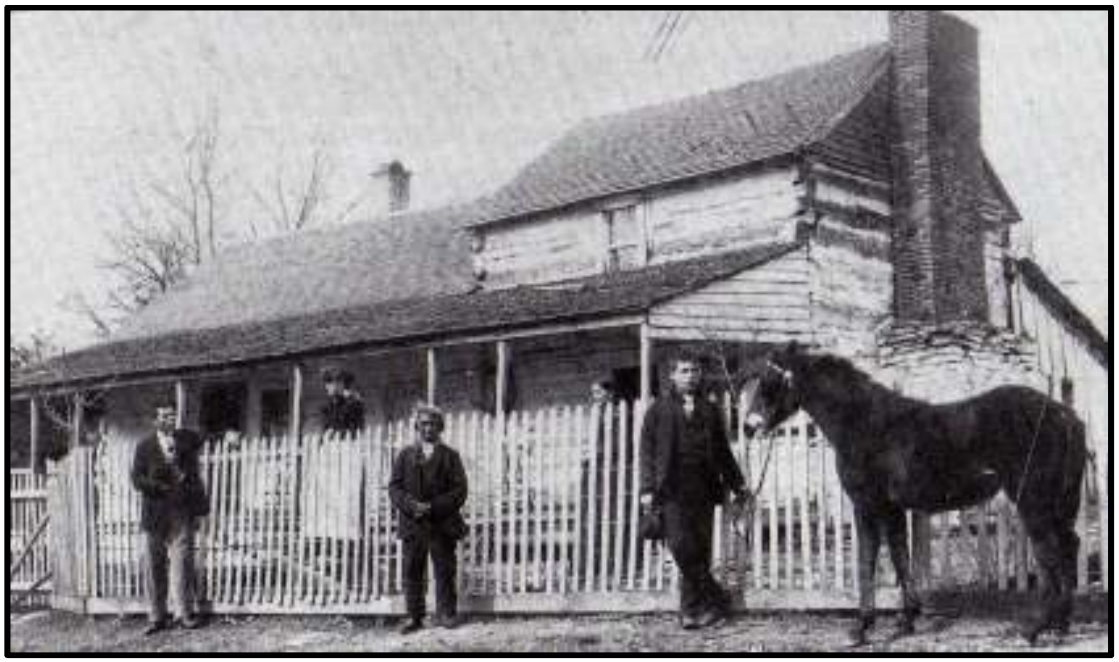

Figure 16: Home of Miami leader and minister, Pimyotamah. This was also the meeting place for the Indian Baptist Church in 1891. John Roberts (on the far left) and Eclistia Mongosa (second from the left) worked for the Wallace circus. From: Stewart Rafert, *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People, 1654-1994,* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1996).

By 1881 the tribal population had shown rapid growth, and by 1895 the circus had dramatically impacted the Indiana Miami community. The population increased from 318 to 440, or 38% in fourteen years. The median age of children fell from nineteen on the 1881 roll, to fifteen on the 1895 roll. This suggests that family formation increased, along with the birth rate. Families became larger, with thirteen of seventy families having five or more children compared to only ten families having four or more children on the 1881 census. The proportion of men to women was 47% to 53%, an almost equal ratio. The increase in the population suggests that a

majority of Miami people experienced better circumstances after 1880 and that some who had previously moved to Kansas or Oklahoma returned.[68]

Despite lower agricultural prices and a drop in local land base from 2,200 acres in 1880 to about 1,800 acres in 1890, the Miami in Butler Township fared relatively well due to the jobs in Wallace's circus.[69] Circus work paid relatively well and employed an ethnically mixed collection of outsiders, some of whom began to marry into the Miami community. The circus also provided opportunities for intertribal interactions, as Indians from across the country passed through the transportation hub of Peru, and more Miami people ventured out from Indiana to perform across the country.

Life in the Circus Quarters

The labor forces of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus grew to an estimated one hundred fifty laborers and performers in the quarters and traveling show and consistently employed an estimated six hundred people from the surrounding community.[70] This number did not reflect the employees' non-working family members or the many local people who lived outside of the quarters and commuted to work. Around one hundred employees at any given time were roustabouts, pole men, canvasback men farmhands, and ground maintenance workers. Many went on the road with the show. Others stayed back, were laid off, or found work in other states

[68] Rafert, 166. According to the Tenth and Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1880 and 1910, Miami County's overall population increased from 24,083 in 1880 29,350 in 1910, or a 21.8% increase.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Bodurtha, 787.

and returned in the spring.[71] The mix of people working in and around the circus included Germans, Irish, African American, Miami, Cherokee, Delaware, Dutch and Sioux.[72] Miami children grew up with ethnic and national diversity, exotic animals, artistic diversity, and circus culture in their backyards.[73]

There was a constant flow of people from a variety of places around the country and the world who socialized outside of the quarters in the town of Peru. LaMoine Marks remembered, "You could walk down the street on a Saturday night in Peru, because it was a Saturday night town, and you could hear French language, Italian, Greek, German, and many others. They even had a Russian group, Cossack riders…"[74] Miami who worked with the area circuses also occasionally worked with some of America's top entertainers. Marks, for example, worked with famed lion tamer, Clyde Beatty and cowboy, Tom Mix.[75] Sioux performers from Montana made seasonal trips to Miami County to participate in the circuses' equestrian shows.[76] African

[71] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 22.

[74] Ibid., 13.

[75] Rafert, 211 and LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[76] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Americans and other Southerners came for seasonal employment to the circuses.[77] European circus laborers and performers stopped in Peru for extended stays, allowing those Miami who worked in the circus further opportunities to meet and connect to more and more people and cultures from around the world.[78] Miami people also spent a great deal of time with African American laborers and performers.

The circus was socially stratified by job category. Marks remembered a very intentional way of separating laborers, performers and management which he described this way:

> The circus was made up of people who were your group, and you didn't mix with the other groups…. Now if you were a performer, you never mixed with a worker… they had a divided tent. The cook tent was divided right in the middle. On the right side, the one that we ate in, was, it started off the lowest class in there, the sideshow people and the ushers, and our group, which was the commissary, "candy butchers" was what the called them. And they had the performers in an area of their own, all close to each other. Now you speak and talk to any of them people, that was all right, but you didn't mix with the workers on the other side. But the workers, bosses ate on their side.[79]

Other circuses of the era reflected this sort of job-based segregation as well.[80]

Miami performers and laborers built family businesses and cultivated family opportunities within the circus. The cosmopolitan mix of circus employees impacted Miami families in several ways. Indian people from other tribes, such as Sioux performers, came through Miami County as they journeyed across the nation, occasionally stopping in Peru and

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 22.

[80] For an account of life in the traveling show, see "Behind the Scenes: The Life of a Circus Employee as Seen by a Herald Reporter," *The Carroll Herald,* 15 July 1885.

Butler and several of these travellers married into Miami families.[81] Local Miami children who grew up fascinated by the circus began their careers in circus employment and were able to move up to better positions.[82] Marks' first job experience as a teenager was in a concession stand. His first managerial experience, also as a teenager, was with black teens whom he paid, but also provided them leftover food as these young men were often barred from restaurants in the segregated South.[83]

Circus segregation was based on occupation but it appears that most blacks were initially confined to jobs such as stake drivers, cooks, porters, canvass men, and farm hands.[84] Even in these less prestigious roles, African Americans acquired respect. The majority of waiters, including the head waiter, were African American. LaMoine Marks recalled that being friendly with the waiters in the dining tent was very important. If, by chance, a diner did not tip well, waiters neglected to set that person's table with glasses, flatware and flowers.[85] For those who

[81] Rafert, 116 and LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[82] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; Rafert, 168.

[83] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 20.

[84] Ibid.

[85] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

tipped well, however, the waiters provided a pleasant dining experience with balanced meals, fresh fruit, and other desirable items.[86]

Like local Miami people, some blacks in the circus carved out economically prosperous opportunities for themselves. Circus route books and yearbooks indicate that Wallace hired black sideshow musicians beginning in 1890. During the 1891-1892 season**,** Wallace hired his show's first all-black sideshow band.[87] From that season forward, Wallace maintained a black band and added other African American acts, such as comedians, minstrels, clowns, and vocalists. Many of these acts followed the Wallace circuses for several seasons and enjoyed stable employment, national publicity, and relatively safe passage throughout the United States. *The Black Hussar Band*, for example, toured with Wallace from 1892 to 1897 and intermittently from 1897 to 1913.[88] As the sideshow acts increased in popularity and size, Wallace turned their supervision over to black managers and bandleaders. These managers and bandleaders

[86] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

[87] "Notes from the Great Wallace Show," *New York Clipper,* 11 March 1893; This short entry documented that the Wallace Show sideshow included, "C. W. Jones' colored band, ten pieces; Prince Mungo, Morean chieftain; Princess Julia, snake charmer; Zamora, triple jointed wonder…" among other sideshow acts that season.

[88] Henry Sampson, *The Ghost Walks: A Chronological History of Blacks in Show Business, 1865-1910,* (Metuchen, N. J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1988), 127.

Figure 17: Jones' Black Hussar Band, 1896, in The Great Wallace Show Route Book. (Circus World Museum and Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin.)

then became responsible for advertising new positions for blacks and educating and training them in the skills of running a successful sideshow business. They placed ads continuously in national black newspapers, including the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Kansas Herald*. Additionally, managers used race papers as a forum for reporting on their successes and failures, critiquing their circus employers, and even detailed the drama of day-to-day life on the road.[89]

Of the African Americans who rose in the circus industry, the name that stands out among many is P. G. Lowery, distinguished bandleader, renowned variety show owner, and eminent professor of ragtime music. Lowery's lengthy career, in many ways, exemplified

[89] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged But Right: Black Traveling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz,* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), 14.

African American ingenuity and perseverance inside the circus industry. He both collaborated with circus managers and fought against their unfair policies. He built several successful and highly popular traveling, circus annex and side shows. Most notably, he educated hundreds of black musicians while he kept multi-racial audiences in awe of his expertise. His life offers insight into the black entertainers' experiences in the circus during this period. For several years Lowery divided his time between his own companies, the Sells Brothers Circus and the Great Wallace Shows.

Figure 18: P. G. Lowery's Bandwagon in 1912. (Circus World Museum and Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

His fame spanned the nation. In 1910, the *Indianapolis Freeman* declared, "The branch of colored show business known as circus minstrels and vaudeville had its beginnings with P. G. Lowery, the renowned cornetist and bandmaster…in 1899." [90] The Great Wallace Show P. G.

[90] "P. G. Lowery, Originator," *The Indianapolis Freeman,* 9 July 1910.

Lowery Band consisted of nearly two-dozen members and sometimes grew to several dozen for important engagements. They toured with Wallace from 1905 through 1913. Lowery was pleased with this arrangement, saying of the collaboration, "good people, good treatment, and great show." In fact, Lowery tended to speak very highly of the industry. In his early career he praised the circus life and the opportunities made available to African American entertainers. Lowery asserted, "It is generally understood by the public at large that circus people have a tough time. I deny the assertion and will say for good treatment, equal justice and sure salary, give me the circus."[91] Lowery's band sometimes lived in Peru, and his popularity brought many guest performers to the region. These visitors included blacks from across the country and from varied entertainment fields such as vaudeville, minstrel shows, and even classical ensembles. Many were musicians that Lowery had previously worked with on the vaudeville circuit or during his schooling at the New England Conservatory where he had been classically trained.[92]

By the 1913 season, Lowery was listed on the first page of the Hagenbeck-Wallace yearbook, alongside individual "Head of Departments" as "director of the sideshow tent." Other members of the "Executive" and "Business" staff included the equestrian director, the musical director, the general press agent, and representative, and the official announcer.[93] The black sideshow band, accompanied by a comedy or variety act, was a staple in the Wallace shows. The

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[91] Clifford Watkins, *Showman: The Life and Music of Perry George Lowery* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003), 59-60; *Indianapolis Freeman,* 10 June 1905; *Indianapolis Freeman,* 9 November 1901.

[92] Lowery was the first African American to graduate from this institution.

[93] *Hagenbeck-Wallace Official Route Book, 1913* [1913]: 28, *Hagenbeck Wallace Combined Show* file, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Lowery Band was advertised on a larger than life canvas at the main entrance and advertisements for other acts such as the equestrian show.

Figure 19: The Carl Hagenbeck and Great Wallace Combined Circus Banner in Toledo, Ohio in 1912. P. G. Lowery's band is depicted to the right of the center banner. (Circus World Museum and Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Lowery kept a minstrel show and band from 1904 to 1917, with a brief interruption during some seasons.[94] P.G. Lowery became a national celebrity and local papers celebrated his return whenever his tour brought him back to his hometown. One of his hometown papers bragged,

> A Greenwood boy is the leader of the band with the great Hagenbeck-Wallace show which will be here next week…. He speaks a good word for the show and says he has an excellent band. Lowery is well known in Eureka and his musical ability is nowhere more

[94] "A Sketch of P. G. Lowery's Life in His Own Words," P. G. Lowery file, Circus World Museum Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

> appreciated than here. He has had the reputation of being the finest cornet soloist in the U. S. and when he had visited at Eureka he has never failed to draw a large audience.[95]

On another occasion, the local paper wrote, "Lowery now with Wallace circus writes that he expects to spend Sunday September 20 with his mother at Reece… He will be glad to see old friends. He has charge of a company known as the Dixie Minstrels and says it is a first class company with a good band."[96] Throughout his career papers followed his tours, both with the circus and subsequent shows.

While Miami neighborhoods in the Butler Township were economically strengthened, African American neighborhoods were established and increased in population in at least three parts of Miami County. Census data is unreliable in this area because many circus employees traveled with other entertainment troupes during the off-season and led nomadic lifestyles that were hard for census takers to document.[97] However, circus yearbooks, community histories, and personal recollections fill in some gaps the census takers leave blank. By 1913, black residential, business, and institutional enclaves were on Gabriel Godfroy's land in Butler Township, in Peru City, and in a neighborhood called Boxcar Town, which was just outside Peru city limits. Housing patterns were checkered, and most of the schools and churches were segregated—some being for Indians and whites only and others for blacks only. Blacks who lived on Gabriel Godfroy's land lived close to both the Miami villages and the circus quarters. Blacks inside the Peru city limits congregated around South Broadway and Hood Street, Third

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[95] *Eureka Herald,* 22 August 1912.

[96] *Eureka Herald,* 17 September 1914.

[97] Davis, 74.

Street and Tippecanoe, West Second Street and Lafayette Street. These blocks housed the African Methodist Episcopal Church, barbershops, residences, and other black businesses.[98]

Boxcartown was originally an offspring of the Peru Steel Casting works. The company placed its plant a mile west of the corporate limits on the original Wallace Circus quarters. It brought black and white laborers from the South. The company purchased boxcars from the Lake Erie & Western railroad and had them renovated for workers to rent. Other whites and blacks lived in discarded cars that were set on blocks between the Wabash River and the towpath of the Wabash and Erie Canal. At its opening in 1898, it imported a southern black workforce,

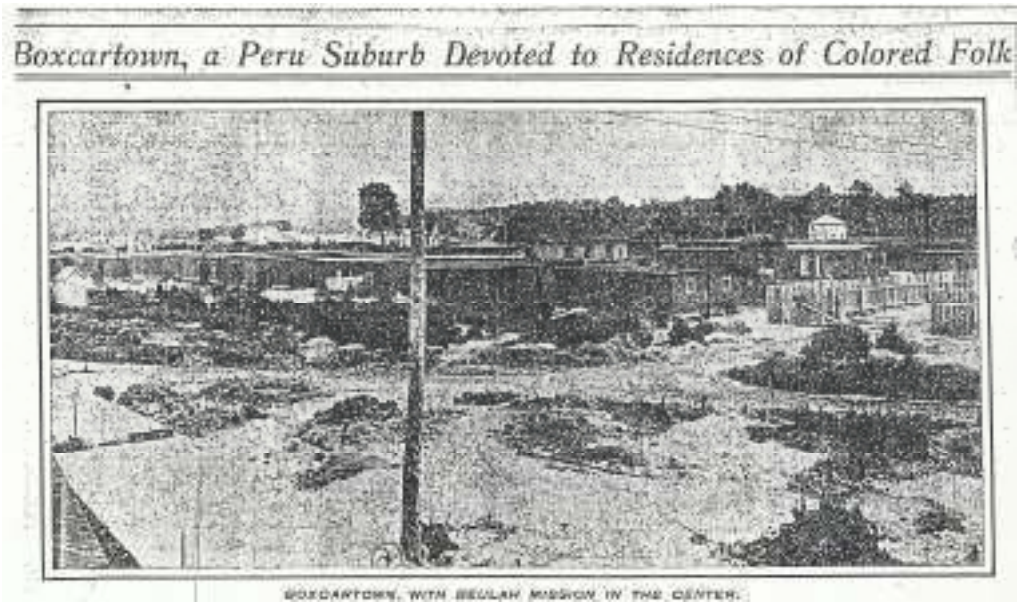

Figure 20: A Peru newspaper photograph of Boxcartown. Initially, the residents worked at the local steel casting mill. After a fire destroyed the mill, many of the residents went to work on the Wallace winter quarters. (Miami County Historical Society, Peru, Indiana)

[98] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negro Citizens of Peru, Indiana," 417-427 and John H. Stephens, *History of Miami County,* (1896), 351.

including over 150 men and their families. Individuals from Boxcartown also worked for the circus. These people commuted to and from the circus quarters on a bus that Wallace hired to transport workers between Peru City and the circus quarters.[99]

Three schools served African Americans in the area. Quakers had established a school for blacks and non-local Indians within five miles of Peru.[100] R. A. Edwards, a white Peru banker established a school at his residence that admitted black students.[101] Jane Moss, an African American graduate of Oberlin College and a Peru hairdresser, taught in the Edwards multi-racial school.[102] Nearby, a combination school and church served the black community in the county's steel mill workers' community, Boxcar Town.[103]

Peru blacks organized the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the early 1870s and temporarily held services led by Elder Patterson in a donated engine house.[104] In 1874, a small brick church was erected at the corner of Third and Tippecanoe streets with Rev. Robert Jeffries as pastor. In 1893, the church had a new pastor, Reverend Zachariah Roberts, and drew some of

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[99] Rafert, 27; *Pioneer Negro Citizens of Peru, Indiana,* Genealogy Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, 424.

[100] Rafert, 186.

[101] Arthur Lawrence Bodurtha, *History of Miami County, Indiana: A Narrative account of its Historical Progress, Its People and Its Principal Interests,*(Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1914), 564; *Pioneer Negroes of Peru, Indiana,* 427.

[102] Bodurtha, 563-565; "Pioneer Negroes of Peru, Indiana," 427. Jane Moss' husband, Alex Moss, eventually convinced the state legislature that the taxpaying blacks of Peru should be able to attend the public schools there.

[103] Ibid., 424.

[104] John H. Stephens, *History of Miami County,* (1896), 351-352.

its congregation from the circus winter quarters as well as other communities.[105] Other churches in the area served blacks that worked in nearby mines, railroad, and mills.[106] The pastor of Beulah Mission Church, Reverend B. T. Harvey, was a graduate of Tuskegee College and held regular services as well as classes for children. The manager of the casting company and both white and black ministers from across the city attended the dedication ceremony of the church.[107]

Conclusion

On January 10, 2011, Indiana State Senator, Randy Head, introduced Senate Bill 0311, an attempt to provide state recognition to the Miami Nation of Indiana. The Miami Nation of Indians of Indiana published a press release that commended this bill as a "great step towards facilitating further cooperation and communication between the Miami Nation of Indiana and the State of Indiana." Furthermore, it would also facilitate the inclusion of tribal perspectives in the state process and provide a "multicultural understanding among public officials and the citizenry."[108] Though state recognition is a separate status from federal recognition, the change would provide the Miami of Indiana with protection under the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of

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[105] *Peru Tribune*, "Wayman A. M. E. Church is Observing 100th anniversary this Sunday," 18 June 1971.

[106] Stephens, 352.

[107] Ibid.

[108] "Indiana Bill to Provide State Recognition to Miami Nation of Indians of Indiana," Peru, Indiana, March 3. 2011: Senate Bill 0311.

1990 and the Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act of 1993.[109] The new bill would also allow the Miami to apply for a limited number of federal programs that fall outside of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Services. Some of these programs include education, job training and housing assistance. On January 4, 2012, the bill passed the Indiana Senate and effective July 1, 2012, the Miami Nation of Indian will have state recognition.[110] For Miami people in Indiana, this is a hopeful sign that federal recognition is on the way.[111]

Miami County was by no means a utopic community free of the racism that plagued the rest of the nation. On the circus quarters, Wallace employed a large mixture of people, but they remained largely segregated on several levels. The Wallace circus maintained a hierarchical structure that included race and occupation-based segregation. Management segregated laborers into black and white work teams. Miami men often worked together or with either whites or blacks. African American porters and tent raisers, for example, had black foremen who worked with white managers.[112] Class status based on a person's occupation also divided circus employees. Laborers, management, and performers kept strict divisions and did not mix with each other. In the dining hall, for example, laborers, of any race, did not eat with employees of

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[109] These laws allow tribal members to proclaim their Indian status of the artwork and provides them with the freedom to practice their religion and ceremonies which, according to the press release, had been challenged.

[110] Indiana Senate Bill 2, January 4, 2012, Indiana Government website, http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2012/IN/IN0002.1.html.

[111] "Indiana Bill to Provide State Recognition to Miami Nation of Indians of Indiana." *Cry of the Crane Tribal Newsletter* (March 2011), http://www.miamiindians.org/?page_id=312, accessed 18 January 2012.

[112] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 May 1993, "Circus," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 25.

higher status in management or performance roles. In some cases racially mixed groups of laborers came together in social situations. They held card games and amateur boxing tournaments in Peru and shared a gymnasium facility.[113]

Despite these hierarchies, Miami leader Gabriel Godfroy's decision to sell his land to the circus resulted in jobs for Miami people. Godfroy had already seen the kinds of work that would be available to the people of his village and surrounding communities because several traveling circuses had stopped in the area. From menial labor to animal care and farming, and finally to acting and performance, Godfroy's decision opened a wide variety of job opportunities in the middle of his economically struggling Miami community. The availability of work also enabled African Americans to build stable communities adjacent to Miami and white neighborhoods.

After a devastating flood in 1913, Benjamin Wallace's circus came under ownership of Jerry Mugivan, Ed Ballard and Bert Bowers. They formed the American Circus Corporation in 1921 in Peru. Between 1921 and 1929, the American Circus Corporation owned and managed several circuses including Hagenbeck-Wallace, Howes Great London Shows, Robinson's Famous Shows, Sells-Floto, Sparks Circus, and the Al G. Barnes Circus. By the 1929 season, the American Circus Corporation sent out five circuses on 145 rail cars. Their major competitor, the combined Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey show, sent out ninety rail cars. In about one generation, the circus industry changed from several companies with varying management styles to basically two large outfits that dominated the industry. Through all of those changes, Miami County remained the center of much circus industry and activity.

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[113] Ibid., 24; and LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 10 October 1991, "LaMoine Marks," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, 76.

Circus employment opportunities lasted from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Generations of Miami people took advantage of stable local employment. After Wallace sold his company, the American Circus Corporation employed Miami people into the twentieth century, through the Great Depression, and into the 1940s and 1950s. Unlike the residents of Sellsville in neighboring Ohio, the people of Miami County kept their jobs in circus-related industries and maintained their community.

Chapter Four

Columbus, Ohio and the Sellsville Winter Quarters

Like Mr. Wallace in Peru, the Sells brothers—Peter, Ephraim, William Allen, and Lewis—enjoyed a reputation that admirers characterized as practical, honest, resourceful, and most importantly, up-by-their-bootstraps hard working.[1] Al G. Field, one of the era's most famous (or infamous) minstrel show managers, and a colleague of the Sells brothers, said that in addition to having the finest menagerie in the country, the Sells brothers were great men.[2] Field remembered that Ephraim Sells was a good businessman who would advise his employees to secure their own homes and invest in real estate. He said, "You will never accumulate anything with out a home." Field wrote that Peter Sells was a "great man with a noble disposition and honorable conduct.[3] The Sells were Columbus businessmen who had interests in newspapers, real estate, transportation, and several other ventures. Like Wallace in Miami County, the Sells brothers located their winter quarters, Sellsville, in an already ethnically and culturally diverse region outside of a city.[4] Clinton Township, where Sellsville would be established, was

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[1] George L. Chindahl, *A History of the Circus in America* (Caldwell: The Caxton Printers, 1959), 106; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon* 8, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1964): 1. The brothers were Ephraim (1834-1898), William "Ad" Allen (1836-1894), Lewis (1841-1907) and Peter (1845-1904).

[2] See Al G. Field, *Watch Yourself Go By* (Columbus, 1912) and *The New York Clipper,* 7 February 1885. Al G. Field worked in circus administration and as a professional clown with both the *Sells Brothers* and *The Great Wallace* shows. He later went on to create his own minstrel show.

[3] Field, 443.

[4] African Americans were approximately 4% of the Clinton Township population. Black and white homes were highly integrated in a few neighborhoods sharing the same post office in

immediately north of Columbus and had a history of cultural diversity dating back to early in the nineteenth century. Once situated there, the day-to-day operations of the winter quarters provided provisional employment for local blacks and attracted American Indians from neighboring towns. Native Americans in the area descended from long established communities, African Americans had lived in the area since the 1790s**.**

Field's praises of the Sells Brothers reflected his attitudes about the dominance of the middle class—the Sells embodied all the traits of middle class people who wished to capitalize their own profits and impose certain values on lower class people. Though Ephraim Sells spoke of the value of owning one's own home, the wages of the laborers in the circus could not come close to buying one home, let alone investing in real estate. The circus, like other big business aimed to make money through ticket prices and the cheapest labor it could find. Buying land in the ethnically diverse and relatively distant unincorporated district of Clinton Township—home to blacks, runaway slaves, gypsies, and other people on the margins of middle class Columbus society—was another means to the goal of building a lucrative entertainment empire. However, once the circus located in Clinton Township, local people took advantage of the availability of labor positions and opportunities to create new, high demand positions.

This chapter argues that for black families in Clinton Township, economic development was at the heart of community building—not social or religious uplift. African Americans in Sellsville built necessary community institutions and created a self-supporting community once they had access to employment. First, this chapter considers the Sells family's relationship to the Columbus community and the formation of their winter quarters in two neighboring small towns, Dublin and Clinton Township. Second, this research shows how their decision subsequently

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Dublin, OH; see the 1870 U.S. census, population schedules; *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Ancestry.com, accessed 10 March 2011.

fostered local and traveling communities, which initially offered low wage labor to racially and ethnically diverse employees. Third, this chapter explores the ways that local black families responded to the presence of the Sells Brothers Circus and how they formed diverse social institutions, such as churches and schools. Finally, as circus opportunities in Clinton Township decreased and eventually ended, the African American community was no longer able to stand up to outside pressures, institutionalized racism, and growing poverty. Without circus jobs—ranging from menial labor to skilled labor and performance—the African American community lost its structure and many residents relocated or were forced to move into segregated, low-income housing.

The Midwest is generally understood as a region that white settlers developed and shaped, without black or Indian people. The aim of this chapter is to refute that generalization by showing how a small community of African Americans and American Indians helped to build and shape the area surrounding one of the largest circus communities in the Midwest. At its peak, the Sells Brothers Circus employed hundreds of laborers, main show performers, and sideshow performers. Circus records detailed how African Americans and American Indians were employed and, coupled with census records and community histories, establish the demographic impact the circus had on this area. Both county court and institutional records, especially those of the schools and churches, suggest that opportunities became available in Sellsville that were not available elsewhere. The remarkable integration of the community and the opportunities provided for these and other African Americans by the circus set Sellsville apart from most other Midwestern towns and circuses at the turn of the century.[5] The Sells Brothers recruited and

[5] Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Leslie

hired blacks and Indians as performers, professional animal trainers, managers, skilled artisans, musicians and bandleaders. The Sells Brothers were the first to incorporate an all-black, black-managed sideshow. When it combined with the Forepaugh Show, the Sells show included a Wild West Show with American Indian actors, to hire black equestrian managers, and maintain a black–managed elephant training crew.

The Sells Family in Columbus, Ohio

The Sells were an influential family long before the four brothers established their circus in the 1870s. The Sells located in Franklin County in the late eighteenth century and used their money and status to exert considerable influence over the shape and development of the region.[6] Local newspapers and historians approved of this sort of hegemonic control of leading families. Ludwig Sells, the circus men's grandfather, was a founding member of the Dublin community in Franklin County, Ohio at the turn of the nineteenth century. Dublin was one of the first lasting white settlements north of the burgeoning capital city of Franklinton, later to be renamed as Columbus, and was the location of Wyandot and Delaware villages. The Sells family established themselves in Dublin and the wider Columbus area. Ludwig Sells commissioned a surveyor to create a plat map for the village of Dublin in 1818 and many Sells family members

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Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[6] Talylor, William Alexander, *Centennial History of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio,* vol. 1, (Chicago and Columbus: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1909), 225.

were among the first justices of the peace and township officers.[7] Ludwig Sells' son, Peter, remained in Franklin County and raised his family on his farm in Columbus.[8]

Peter Sells, a Methodist minister, was the father of the four brothers who established what became one of the leading railroad circuses touring the Midwest.[9] All of the brothers involved in the circus business were born in Columbus and all played some role in the 35-year life span of this business.[10] In the winter of 1867, the Sells family operated a small auction store in Burlington, Iowa and made a short-lived and unsuccessful attempt at running a small hippodrome, or indoor circus. They returned to Columbus to run a livery stable and another auction house.[11] Auctioneering had been a family business and the brothers found that Columbus remained a more suitable home base.[12]

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[7] Taylor, 441; Historical Records Survey, *Inventory of the County Archives of Ohio, Issue 25 of Inventory of the County Archives of Ohio, Historical Records Survey* (Historical Records Survey Project, 1942).

[8] Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington, D.C., Original data: 1870 U.S. census, population schedules, Ancestry.com accessed 10 March 2011.

[9] Chindahl, 107.

[10] Mark St. Leon, *The Circus in Australia: the American Century, 1851-1950* (Limited Edition Publication: Mark St. Leon: Penshurst, Australia, 2006), 271. For more information on the Sells family see William Alexander Taylor, *The Pioneer History of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio,* vol.1, (Chicago: Clarke Publishing Company, 1909).

[11] Ancestry.com. *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], accessed 10 March 2011.

[12] Peter Sells, *Bandwagon* (7 Dec 1901): 4; and Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], accessed 10 March 2011.

To boost sales in their Columbus business, Lewis, Ephraim and William Allen decided to take their auction on the road. At one point along the way, they found themselves in the same town as *Hemmings, Cooper and Whitby's Circus.* Like many traveling sales people, the brothers found that following the circus was very good for business. They followed the show for several months. They initially had to contend with the show's owners, but eventually came to an agreement. The brothers paid the circus a monthly stipend to follow the show from town to town. During this time, they saved money and learned about the circus business.[13]

In 1871, two brothers, Lewis and William Allen, and George Richards, a cannon ball performer and friend, bought circus equipment and animals. The fourth brother, Peter, was working for the *Ohio State Journal* in Columbus. He joined the effort and together, they invested about $6,500 to create the *Sells Brothers' Circus* and based it in Linworth, Ohio. This show consisted of one tent and a few sideshow features, and it traveled by wagons. After the initial success of this small-scale menagerie, the Sells decided to expand the show. As their operation grew, they invested about $35, 000 into the business and moved their quarters to East Main Street between Washington and Grant Avenue in Columbus to prepare for an even grander opening in the next season.[14] On Friday March 8, 1872, the brothers announced in the *Ohio State Journal* that they had:

> …determined to go into other business and wish to return thanks to their many patrons who have favored them during the last three years, and feel assured that they have the good wishes of their friends in the new enterprise in which they are about to embark…. In answer to many inquiries, we will state that our concern will be known as Sells

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Carl H. Weisheimer, "Sellsville, Circa 1900," (1971), p. 85-86 and 109, Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon 8, no. 1* (Jan-Feb 1964): 2.

> Brothers' Quadruple Alliance, Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Circus, which will take the road about April 20th, giving its first performance in this city….[15]

The *Ohio State Journal* gave a warm welcome to the Sells Brothers' endeavor. In the early spring of 1872, it read that, "The Sells Brothers' Quadruple Combination is a home institution which will without doubt be creditable to Columbus enterprise. Much money and time has been spent in perfecting the circus organization and collecting animals for the menagerie department, and they ought to have an encouraging start on their travels when they pitch their tent in this city on Saturday next."[16] On April 26, 1872 the *Ohio State Journal* editors wrote, "We look for a decided sensation… on the inauguration of the Sells Brothers' QA (Quadruple Alliance) in this city to-morrow. [The] Sells are well known in Columbus as industrious and energetic in whatever they undertake. …"[17] The first full-page ad for the Sells Brothers Circus was on Friday April 26, 1872.[18]

At the beginning of the first season, paper editors wasted no time in building suspense for the opening day of the show. In "Eccentricities in a Menagerie," *Ohio State Journal* readers learned of the dangers performers and professional trainers faced, and that, "danger that may lurk at any moment."[19] When Mr. Ellwood and Mlle. Arnelia entered the lion's den to be photographed with the animal, one of the lions attacked her. The article described that the lion

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[15] *Ohio State Journal* (Columbus), 8 March 1872.

[16] "The City," *Ohio State Journal* (Columbus), 25 April 1872.

[17] Ibid.

[18] "Sells Brothers Circus," *Ohio State Journal* (Columbus), 26 April 1872.

[19] *Ohio State Journal* (Columbus), 20 April 1872.

"seized her by the arm and lacerated that member so much that the wound is quite painful."[20] Arnelia was able to subjugate the animal, however, and the paper promised that she would "put him on his good behavior in a public exhibition in this city on Saturday next."[21] Over the years, the Columbus-based *Ohio State Journal* followed the comings and goings of what it often referred as a homegrown industry.[22] The paper focused on the additions or deaths of exotic circus animals such as tigers and elephants, featured stories on injured acrobats and mauled lion trainers, highlighted the reception of audiences across the country, and chronicled the opening and closing of each season.

During the first five seasons, the Sells maintained their auction business during the winter, the off-season for their circus. During these five years, they toured the show under various names, sometimes changing their name depending on the place they were showing.[23] Two of the names that they used variations of included "The Paul Silverburg Mammoth Quadruple Alliance, Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Circus" and "The Sells Brothers Mammoth Quadruple Alliance, Combined with Paul Silverburg's Monster Menagerie, Museum, Aviary, Roman Hippodrome, Oriental Caravan and Trans Atlantic Circus."[24] In the fourth season, the

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] *Ohio State Journal* (Columbus), 25 April 1872.

[23] Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon 8, no. 1* (Jan-Feb 1964): 3.

[24] No official route for the 1872 season, Orrin L. Hollis, a bareback rider, kept a hand written route for the 1872 season. The show toured in Ohio and Kentucky, closing on August 30 in Guthrie, Kentucky.

Sells added "zoological" to their show titles. From 1874 to 1878, the show met great success and grew each season. In the 1878 season, the Sells brothers purchased a large part of the Montgomery Queen Railroad Circus and Menagerie. This enabled them to make two major moves in the expansion of their business. They went to rails using the Queen equipment, calling the show "Sells Brothers Great European Seven Elephant Show on 32 cars."[25] The second major advancement in their enterprise was the addition of a second a wagon show, probably using the old Sells equipment, called "Anderson and Co.'s Great World's Circus and Menagerie."[26] The Sells left management of the new show to James P. Anderson who had been with the show as a contracting agent.[27]

Around the third season in 1874 or 1875, the Sells moved their company from Linworth to Clinton Township, another community adjacent to Dublin where they believed the show would have room to expand.[28] The Sells Brothers placed their winter quarters in what is now the

[25] The Barnum and the Cooper and Bailey Show, the Sells noted, had only six elephants each.

[26] In 1880 the Anderson show was renamed "The New Pacific Circus and Menagerie." The title, Welsh and Sands, was also used on some dates. In 1882 the second show was placed on rails and the name was changed to "S. H. Barrett's Circus and Menagerie." Barrett was the brother-in-law of the Sells and was the general agent, new rail equipment was purchased for the Sells show and the old equipment was used for Barrett's show.

[27] Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon 8, no. 1* (Jan-Feb 1964): 3.

[28] During its first two to three seasons, the Sells Brothers Circus wintered in Linworth (near Dublin) Ohio where they had a large barn. They also stored supplies and equipment on Main Street in Columbus.

University View area on the Township's west side.[29] Residents described the boundaries of Sellsville as west of the Olentangy River and east of Virginia (or Queen) Avenue, running south from Flennekin Pike (or William Chambers Road) through King Avenue to West Fifth Avenue. The river bounded the neighborhood on the east and the Neil Woods on the west. Large farms and woodlands were on the north. Officially, Sellsville was in Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio.[30] Clinton residents that lived in the surrounding farmland often claimed residence in Sellsville, rather than in Clinton Township.[31] The Sells divided the business and management among themselves and kept it in the family for almost the entire duration of the show's existence. Allen "Ad" William was the manager, Lewis was assistant manager and superintendent, Ephraim was the treasurer and superintendent of tickets, and Peter was the router, advertiser and later the railroad contractor.[32] In 1882, William Allen left the circus business to run a hotel in Topeka Kansas. His adopted son Willie Sells remained with the show as a rider and eventually started his own show.[33] By 1896, they came to own over 1000 acres where employees and their

[29] "About Clinton Township," http://www.clintontwp-columbus.org/about.htm, accessed October 28, 2009.

[30] The section of Clinton Township that became Sellsville was part of quarter Township three, Township one, and Range eighteen of the United States Military Lands.

[31] Weisheimer, 6. Several army draft cards turn up with Sellsville as the soldiers' hometown, when crosschecked in the United States census, the soldiers' addresses are found in Clinton Township.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 4.

families, animals, and equipment lived both seasonally and permanently.[34] Other businesses emerged to support the circus workers and many circus-related families and businesses remained in the neighborhood year round.[35] In 1896, the quarters doubled in size as a result of a new merger that created *The Adam Forepaugh-Sells Brothers Circus*.

Figure 21: The Sellsville Winter Quarters in the1880s. From "How the Sell Brothers Started Big Circus," *The Columbus Dispatch* 1907.

Historians have shown that a show's decision to locate its winter quarters in a certain area could result in a significant boost to the local economy.[36] During the fall and winter seasons, Peter Sells kept a close watch on the quarters and managed all of its industries from his office in Sellsville.[37] The office held space for the four brothers, managers and agents for various departments, and bookkeepers. Additionally, the office held space for secretaries and a general press agent whose winter duty was to prepare the advertising material and engagements for the

[34] Pfening, 7.

[35] Ibid., 2.

[36] Renoff, 83.

[37] "Sells-Forepaugh Shows," *The Billboard 12 no. 33; and* 15 December 1900: 20.

upcoming season.[38] The Sells family provided yearlong employment to many of its laborers, both skilled and unskilled. Other employees that traveled with the circus during the summer found local employment during the winter months.[39] Still others found work in other shows or in other cities across the country. Employees that stayed in the quarters during the summer months raised food for the returning employees and animals for the coming winter season. In the fall and winter seasons, the circus employed dozens of on-site skilled laborers as well as local artisans to run workshops including carpentry, harness makers, blacksmith shops, and painters.

In 1902, a reporter from the *Billboard* visited the quarters and wrote, "A visit out to Sellsville, the winter quarters of the Sells and Forepaugh Show near Columbus, Ohio, will find a small army of men."[40] One contemporary writer claimed that before the Sells village was established, "a poor farmer was barely able to keep body and soul together. Today there is a village of several hundred inhabitants…for employment is found in the various shows of the Sells Brothers and in the different mills and stores…."[41] The Sells supported several industries including blacksmiths, rail car builders, carpenters, farmers, animal caretakers, costume makers

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[38] Whiting Allen, "The Organization of the Modern Circus," *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 1902: 377.

[39] *Ohio State Journal* (Columbus), 13 January 1872; *The Ohio State Journal* ran ads directed to seasonally unemployed circus workers such as: "*Important to Showmen*: Showmen passing through Columbus can obtain at the State Journal Job Office: Date lines, gutter snipes, programmers, descriptive bills, three sheet posters, dodgers, streamers, etc, etc, etc…Comly and Smith, Columbus."

[40] A. Gilder, "Circus at Home: A Visit to the Winter Quarters of the Sells-Forepaugh Show," *The Billboard*, 25 January 1902.

[41] "Sells-Forepaugh Shows," *The Billboard 12 no. 33,* 15 December 1900: 20.

and seamstresses.[42] The Columbus Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad cut through the eastern end of Sellsville and small service shops and mid-sized manufacturing firms were located along the railroad. Farming and truck gardening was a livelihood for many Sellsville residents, as well as slaughter houses, saloons, blacksmith shops, greenhouses, flour mills.[43] Many of the nearby residents were farmers. The Sells often bought produce from local farmers and gardeners for livestock feed. A spur off the railroad provided space for their cars. Car repair and painting was done on site. Touring members of the show not employed during the fall and winter worked at Ohio State University, the Excelsior Seat Company, the Weisheimer Brothers Flour Mill, or were small-time entrepreneurs.[44] The non-local performers came a few weeks before the season's opening and stayed both in Sellsville and at Columbus hotels.[45]

The Sells Brothers were successful in building one of the most popular circuses during the 1870s and 1880s, but faced considerable challenges in the 1890s. In 1891, the railroad circus industry was full of tension. A *New York Times* article illustrated the particularly nasty competition between the Sells and the Baileys as the Sells attempted to extend routes west to California. The article claimed, "The contest is well on." As the two circuses fought for territory in the far West, the Sells turned personal attacks on Bailey's character and business ethics. *The New York Times* article said that the Sells' comments about the Baileys were, "biting with sarcasm, full of gall and bitterness…[They] are displayed conspicuously at all the leading

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Weisheimer, 7.

[44] "Sells-Forepaugh Shows," *The Billboard 12 no. 33,* 15 December 1900: 20.

[45] Pfening, 9.

towns west of the Rocky Mountains…."[46] Open hostility and industry tensions belied Al Fields' descriptions of the noble Sells characters and led to excitement as western audiences anticipated lower ticket prices due to the turf war.[47] The show closed in San Francisco that year and, in a maneuver to extend their dominance overseas, the Sells set sail to tour Honolulu, New Zealand and Australia.[48] The Sells became the third large American circus to tour Australia and New Zealand.

Unfortunately, the Australia tour encountered many problems. Upon arriving in Australia, Sells' animals were quarantined for sixty days due to an illness in some of the stock. By the time the horses were returned to the show, the Sells had already lost a large amount of money on the tour. Then the circus train was involved in a devastating train wreck in which an African American porter, Archie Banks, was killed and others were seriously injured. Australian authorities charged the conductor of the train with manslaughter. Later, the Sells gained more negative publicity when Australian papers reported that Archie Banks had been wanted by police for assault.[49] The show returned to San Francisco on June 9, 1892, opened the season there and then toured eastward, heading back to Ohio. They had traveled 41,145 miles in the 1891-1892 season, but never regained their pre-Australia success or popularity.

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[46] *The New York Times*, 28 June 1891.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon 8, no. 1* (Jan-Feb 1964): 6. Travel records can be found Ancestry.com. *New South Wales, Australia, Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1826-1922* [database on-line].

[49] *Queensland Times*, 28 Apr 1892.

The magnitude of their financial troubles from the failed Australian tour led the Sells family to reach an agreement with rival show owner, J. A. Bailey. The Sells had returned to the states to find that the Ringling Circus was now a growing threat to their business in the Midwest. They continued to lose ground to the Ringlings during the 1894-1895 season and now found help in their former rival, James A. Bailey. In 1895-1896 season, James A. Bailey acquired one-third interest in the show. With much excitement, *The New York Times* reported:

> … J. A. Bailey, sole owner of the "Great Forepaugh Shows" and the Barnum and Bailey circus, has just concluded arrangements with Messrs. Ephraim Lewis and Peter Sells by which the … "Sells Brothers' Enormous Railroad Shows" is consolidated with the Forepaugh enterprise. The Sells brothers are reported to be among the wealthiest showmen of the country, owning quantities of real estate in California and Kansas, and also in Columbus, Ohio. Their circus has traveled for over twenty-five years past in all parts of the West and south and three years ago they transported it to Australia and New Zealand. Their "Great Adam Forepaugh Show" was founded nearly half a century ago and purchased by Mr. Bailey on the death of its owner in 1890. It was famous for its menageries. These, together with the cages, cars, horses, and all the material of the Forepaugh Show, will now be added to the already big show of the Sells Brothers.[50]

The Sells, in exchange, gained financial assistance and merged with Bailey's very popular show, *The Adam Forepaugh Circus.* The combined show opened in 1896 on fifty cars that carried both the Sells and Forepaugh equipment.[51]

Clinton Township Responds to the Circus

Clinton Township was an ethnically and racially diverse area before the Sells Brothers established winter quarters there. This may not have been a coincidence. The land was on the

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[50] "United with the Forepaugh Shows: J. A. Bailey Has Acquired the Property of the Sells Brothers," *The New York Times,* 26 November 1895; "Forepaugh-Sells Shows," *The Billboard* (June 1905).

[51] Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon 8, no. 1* (Jan-Feb 1964): 6.

outskirts of the city, accessible by rail, and relatively inexpensive. Ethnic and racial diversity in the area may have provided a space that city planners considered undesirable for development at the time the circus established its quarters. In addition to Irish, German, Italian, and other white ethnic groups who founded Clinton, American Indians and African Americans were also among the earliest farmers and laborers of this community.[52] Wyandot and Delaware families refused removal to the west during the 1830s through 1850s, persisted in Ohio, and often intermarried with whites and blacks.[53] In the late 1830s, a band of twelve Wyandot families took up residence in the small towns of Dublin and Linworth, just north of Columbus and adjacent to Clinton Township, between the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers. This area was a long established Wyandot village and sugar encampment. Wyandot people settled in communities in the countryside of Columbus in small towns and villages like Dublin and Linworth.[54] Itinerant communities of laborers and other men, or hobo jungles, were common along the railroad between King and Fifth Avenues.[55] A community that other residents characterized as "Gypsies" lived on the outskirts of the Clinton Township and remained in nearby woods while

[52] Weisheimer, 7.

[53] Ibid.

[54] There are no statistics on race in the census for Clinton Township at this time. Since Native Americans in the area were evading authorities, many of them may have also evaded census takers or claimed another racial background rather than American Indian, as seen in Miami County records. I have not found Indian rolls or annuities or other ways to document for the community in this area, much of the statistics on American Indians relies on newspapers, local histories, and circus literature including route books, correspondences, and employee lists.

[55] Weisheimer, 35.

the circus wintered in Sellsville.[56] Sellsville residents' recollections of this itinerant community were generally negative in nature. One black resident of Sellsville, Spec Ross, recalled an incident in which "Gypsies" harassed two young black men until other Sellsville residents came to his rescue.[57] Another resident recalls that her brother would make sport of throwing rocks at the "gypsies who lived in the woods" near Sellsville.[58]

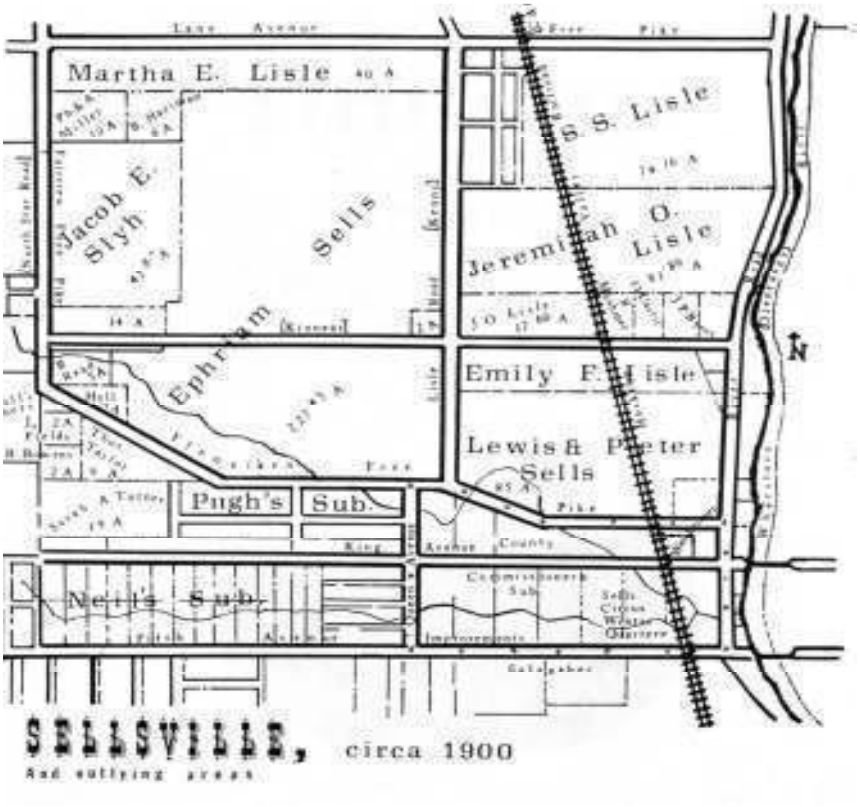

Figure 22: Map of Sellsville and the surrounding area. This map shows the winter quarters in the bottom right, and several local businesses including the Weisheimer Mill adjacent to the quarters and Hall's Corners Blacksmith on middle left. From: Carl Weisheimer, "Sellsville ca. 1900 [1971]," Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

[56] Weisheimer, 60-61.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

Finally, several African American families who had been prominent in Clinton Township before the arrival of the circus continued to hold important positions and be visible in the community after the arrival of the circus. African Americans, both free people and escaped slaves, were primary founders of Clinton Township. By the time the Sells brothers established their winter quarters in Clinton Township, the Bowen family, free people of color, had lived there for nearly a century.[59] Census records reveal that members of the Bowen household included people identified as white, black, and mulatto.[60] In the late nineteenth century, Benjamin Bowen, whose mother was white and father was black, lived with his wife Katie, an African-American woman, and their four children: Minni, Della, Lottie, and Leslie. The family primarily farmed and leased land. In 1900, they ran a successful hauling business for the circus. Throughout the circus generation and beyond, members of the Bowen family were active members of the community, involved in church, school and community leadership.

Other African Americans in Clinton Township established homes there in the middle part of the nineteenth century. James Scurry, for instance, was a United States mail carrier and graduate of the Ohio State University.[61] Like others in this township, he was involved in the Underground Railroad. Scurry adopted George William Dickenson, an escaped slave who came to town through the Underground Railroad in the 1860s from Cincinnati. Initially Dickenson

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 63.

[61] Ibid., 40.

lived with the Goods, a white family.[62] He later went to Oberlin College, married and took up small-scale farming and teaching.

By the end of the 1870s, families such as these worked with each other to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by the new local industry. The Sells brothers, for their part, seemed supportive of this growth. In this already diverse mixture of people, the Sells constructed a racially integrated winter quarters. Within the Sellsville neighborhood of 1900, blacks and whites lived next door to each other, intermarried, and created families and institutions. Of the sixty-nine households in the immediate neighborhood, twenty-three were African American, two were multifamily homes shared by blacks and whites, three were American Indian (nation not specified in the census) and two were multifamily homes shared by blacks and whites.[63] The remaining forty-one households were Euro-American families. These homes were dispersed throughout the neighborhood among the homes and small businesses

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 4.

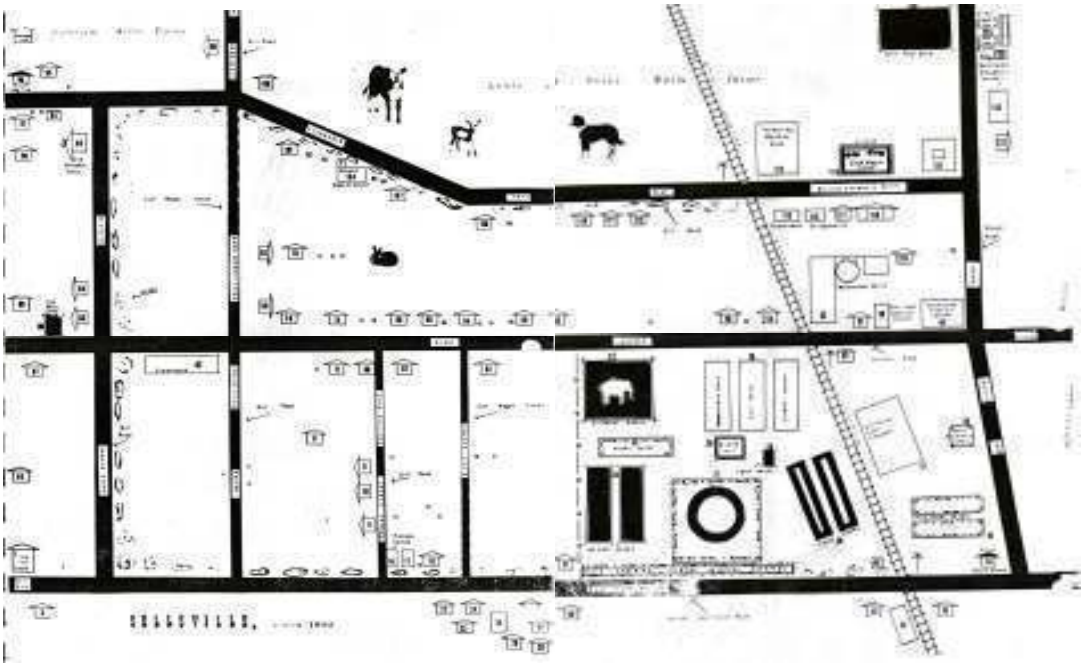

Figure 23: The Sellsville Winter Quarters Map. The Sellsville Winter Quarters as it appeared in 1900. This illustration includes circus buildings, workshops, private homes, the Antioch Baptist Church in the upper middle section, and the Polkadot School in the upper left. From: Carl Weisheimer, "Sellsville ca. 1900 [1971]," Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

owned by both blacks and whites. By 1900, many African Americans and whites had immigrated to the area surrounding Sellsville, chiefly from North Carolina.[64] Based on census records of the neighborhood in 1880, 1900, and 1910, the neighborhood appeared to be fully racially integrated. Integration also went beyond home placement in some instances. Local members of the circus' all-black sideshow band often played at integrated community and holiday events and at the local white-owned grocery store.[65]

[64] Himes, 134.

[65] *The Official Route Book of the Sells Brothers Circus*, 1900, Sells Brothers Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin; and Weisheimer, 53.

Figure 24: Benjamin and Katherine Bowen's family lived in the region for several generations. Individuals in this family self identified at different times as white, mulatto, black, and Indian. From: Carl Weisheimer, "Sellsville ca. 1900 [1971]," Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

The Sells family supported some institutions in the quarters. The greatest example of this is their aid in establishing a church inside of Sellsville. The Antioch Baptist Church was the only church inside of Sellsville.[66] From 1888 to 1893, Clinton Township Christians held Sunday school meetings in various locations around the neighborhood, including the neighborhood school.[67] On May 18, 1893, members of the group officially organized the Antioch Baptist

[66] A fire destroyed the original history of the Antioch Baptist Church in 1968. (Weisheimer, 68) The church was rebuilt in 1969. Church historians since the fire have gathered information from Ms. Minnie Hughes who attended organizational Council Meetings in the 1890s with her parents. Carl Weisheimer's account places Minnie Hughes at the meetings with her parents when she is nine years old. Weisheimer, 68. Weisheimer interviewed his neighbors who were members during the circus era was Mrs. John (Minnie) Bowen Hughes. The church bulletin also mentions Nettie Lewis, Della Bowen, Descrette Lenear and other parishioners with first hand knowledge of the founding years also provided information contained in the current church history. Today, and it remains the only predominantly African American church in its area of Columbus.

[67] "Antioch Baptist Church History 1893-2001 [2001]," Antioch Baptist Church records, (Columbus), 8; Weisheimer, 68.

Church. Officials from four Columbus-area churches (Bethany Baptist, Second Baptist, Shiloh Baptist and Union Grove Baptist) met with the eight founders of the Antioch Baptist Church. Reverend Ovie O. Jones of London, Ohio served as the group moderator.[68] The new church's founding members were Eli Harris, Isaac Howell, Doc Stewart, Lewis Hearns, Cornelius Gilman, Lucy Reed, Clara Thornton, and Pricilla Anderson.[69] They formed a deacon board and a trustees' board and welcomed their first pastor, an African American named Reverend I. A. Thornton. The first year members held camp meetings in the nearby Neil Woods. They raised money to purchase two lots for a building site inside of Sellsville. The church was built under Pastor Cochran who laid the cornerstone on October 14, 1894 with Deacon Hezikiah Brandon and Trustee Benjamin Bowen. The Sells family assisted the congregation by loaning tents and seats for the early meetings. Ephraim Sells donated furniture to the congregation.[70] The Sells also aided the congregation by renting out the circus cookhouse during the summer while the circus was on tour. This enabled the Pastor George Walker and his wife, Laura Brown Walker, to live near the church while the parsonage was being built.[71]

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Weisheimer, 46; Antioch Baptist Church History, 9.

The Clinton Township School was located in the residential section of Sellsville.[72] Local residents nicknamed the school The Polkadot School because its population was almost always equally white and black during the years of the circus winter quarters.[73] In 1900, its two teachers, Katie Martin and Mary Drury, taught black and white children side by side.[74] Of the fifty-seven children attending the school in 1900, twenty-five were recorded as Negro or mulatto.[75] Benjamin Bowen donated horse-drawn wagons. Two men, mixed-ancestry African American Harley Hughes and Euro-American Richard Cradic, used the wagons to take school children from around the neighborhood to and from school.[76]

There are other instances of institution building by African Americans that were likely catalyzed by the circus' presence in Clinton Township. Local members of P.G. Lowery's sideshow band formed a neighborhood band called the *Sellsville Clippers*. *The Clippers* practiced in the local white-owned Neiderlander Grocery Store in the 1880s. The Neiderlanders hosted holiday parties at which the sideshow band regularly played during the off-season. Les Bowen was a member of the band and another black Sellsville neighborhood group, *The*

[72] Though no records indicating when the school was built could be found, some evidence suggests that it may have been built in the late 1870s or early 1880s. See Wayne Carlson, "History of the Schools in Grandview Heights and Marble Cliff," Grandview Heights and Marble Cliff Historical Society, 2001.

[73] Weisheimer, 50.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

Sellsville Sluggers.[77] *The Sellsville Sluggers,* was an all-black baseball team that formed just as the circus was coming under new management and leaving Clinton. The *Sluggers* formed in 1909 and several Sellsville men joined the team.[78]

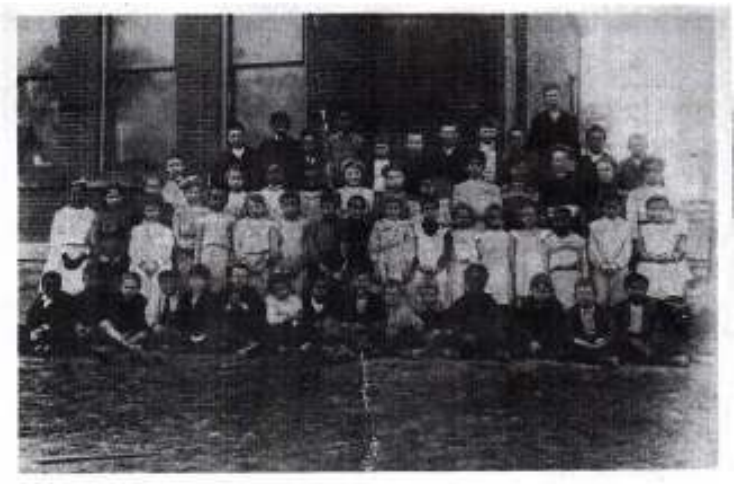

Figure 25: The Clinton Township Polkadot School, circa 1900. From: Carl Weisheimer, "Sellsville ca. 1900 [1971]," Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

Economic Opportunities Include a Wide Range of Positions

Both the winter quarters and the Sells show on the road were massive operations. A successful season demanded a vast number of employees to keep everything from people, to animals, to equipment in good shape for months at a time. In 1884, the fourteenth season, *The Sells Brothers' Fifty Cage Menagerie and Four-Ring Circus* opened in Columbus in April and closed in New Orleans in December. That season the show covered a total of 11, 537 miles by

[77] Weisheimer, 52. Several members of the sideshow band lived in Sellsville in the off-season when they were not employed in other musical troupes or minstrel shows. They also found work in and around Columbus, an added benefit of living in a circus town in close proximity to a large urban area.

[78] Spec Ross gave the team's opening line up Weisheimer, 61.

rail, as compared to the 1872 wagon season's 1,741 miles.[79] That season, the Sells Brothers employed sixty-eight advance men and around four hundred other employees.[80] Between forty-five and fifty rail cars carried employees, two hundred fifty-three horses and mules, ten elephants, fifty-one cages of animals and four tents.[81]

One result of both the Sells' management style and local peoples' decisions surrounding social and economic institutions was an increased availability of work for African Americans and, to a lesser extent, Native Americans in Clinton Township. These opportunities were unique because they were not limited to menial, unskilled labor, as was the norm in most industries of the era. Instead, the circus and the surrounding community provided a range of employment opportunities that included skilled and unskilled labor, management, and performance careers.

As the circus expanded its winter quarters in its first years at Sellsville in the mid-1870s, local black families seized the opportunity to expand their businesses as well. Before the Sells established their quarters, most African Americans either farmed on their own land or labored on other peoples' farms. For example, in 1900 the Bowens hauled produce for the circus and rented rooms and land to circus employees and tenant farmers. This was a marked expansion of their family farm of the generation before the circus.[82] James Reynolds Hall grew up in the community and by 1900 his business, *Hall's Corners*, was one of Sellsville's blacksmith

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[79] Ibid., 4.

[80] *The Official Route Book of the Sells Brothers Circus*, 1884, Sells Brothers Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[81] St. Leon, 273.

[82] Weisheimer, 68.

shops.[83] The son of a former slave, Hall began shoeing horses for the Sells Brothers' Circus.[84] The expansion of local businesses attracted both skilled and unskilled labor in a range of occupations from the local flourmill to bus drivers for the growing local school.[85] The Weisheimer flourmill provided grain for the circus town and the greater Columbus area for generations. The Weisheimer Company also employed many circus men and their families during the off-season of the circus.[86]

Sellsville enjoyed an emerging professional class that reflected larger trends in the greater Columbus area. African Americans like Reverend George Walker, Laura Walker, and Edward Zimmerman became ministers, teachers, and clerical workers. African Americans also found work with the United States Postal Service.[87] Black families in Sellsville were entrepreneurial and were brick masons, farmers, porters, railroad clerks, teamsters, seamstresses, and cooks.

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[83] Ibid., 61.

[84] Weisheimer, 64.

[85] Ibid., 53.

[86] The Weisheimer Flour Mill building is the last standing building from the era of Sellsville.

[87] Weisheimer, 53. The postal clerks in 1900 were Joshua Ellsworth Fields and James Scurry.

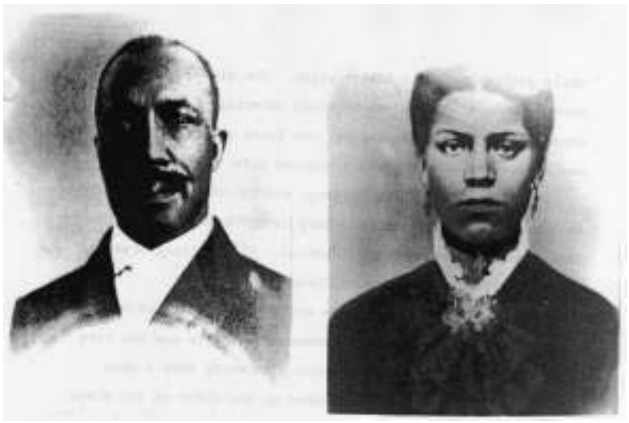

Figure 26: Reverend George Walker was the fourth pastor of Antioch Baptist Church. He and his wife Laura remained in Sellsville year round to serve the community.
From: Carl Weisheimer, "Sellsville ca. 1900 [1971]," Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

The Sells also maintained African American leadership in their sideshow and "black" tents, including black managers, treasurers, ticket collectors, and bandleaders.[88] The Sells employed one of the most famous elephant trainers, Eph Thompson, and his all-black crew when the company merged with the Forepaugh Circus.[89] In 1891, the Sells also hired Sol White and his all-black band for the sideshow tent.[90] The African American sideshows and band were permanent acts in the Sells show. Eventually, the Sells hired one of the most famous black sideshow bandleaders, P. G. Lowery.

[88] *The Official Route Book of the Sells Brothers Circus*, 1900, Sells Brothers Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin; see also Weisheimer, 132.

[89] Sources are unclear about this point. He may have left for Europe just before the merger.

[90] *Indianapolis Freeman*, 9 May 1891.

Figure 27: P. G. Lowery's Sells Brothers Side Show Band, circa 1890s. From: Carl Weisheimer, "Sellsville ca. 1900 [1971]," Special Collections, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.

Native Americans

Jobs open to Native Americans in the *Sells Brothers Circus*, like those open to African Americans, were diverse and depended upon an individual's experience and skills. Unlike African Americans, Native American performers were not limited to work in the sideshow tent. Native Americans worked under the big tent, as laborers, teamsters, and a variety of other roles. Some Native Americans who worked in circuses, such as Benjamin Dudley, were not advertised as "Indian Acts." Rather, Dudley's circus advertised him for what he did—gymnastics, trapeze and tightrope walking.[91] The Sells maintained a small-scale "Indian" village and act for most of their touring seasons. Whether or not the performers were actually Native American may have

[91] *Ferndale Enterprise,* 7 April 1882, Indian File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin. Dudley performed with Sherman's Educated Horses and Select Family Circus.

sometimes come into question. However, most seasons they advertised that they employed Ute Indians, "warriors and braves," from various tribes who performed in equestrian concerts and the main show tent.[92]

Bill Kihue Moose was a Wyandot man who had relocated to Dublin as a child in the 1840s and worked in the circus and other shows as "Indian Bill." Moose remained in the region and worked for the Sells Brothers Circus for several years. Moose spent his childhood in Dublin, Ohio. As a young man, he helped recent emigrants clear land and frequently attended school. In 1878, he began working for the Sells Brothers Circus, both as an equestrian rider and selling goods.[93] In interviews he gave later in life, Moose spoke of traveling with the circus and other shows throughout the United States and Canada. While at the Chicago exposition, Bill met Buffalo Bill Cody and became friends with Apache riders. Cody also introduced him to Rain-in-the-Face, the famous Apache warrior. In 1886, he went with the show to Australia.[94] When his employment with the circus ended around 1888, Moose, somewhat of a local celebrity, supported himself by selling art, post cards, photographs of himself, teaching crafts, making bow and arrows, and telling tales about his life and about life in the circus.

Evidence points to other mixed families and Native American involvement in the Sells Brothers circus as well. Gus Abney, a teamster, was American Indian and his wife, Ella, was

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[92] *The Official Route Book of the Sells Brothers Circus*, 1881, Sells Brothers Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[93] *The Official Route Book of the Sells Brothers Circus*, 1878, Sells Brothers Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[94] Bill Moose, interview by Leonard Insley (Worthington, Ohio News, 1912).

African American.[95] The Sells Bothers attempted to incorporate a Native American–cast Wild West Show. Ironically, their attempts to hire large numbers of Native Americans failed until the Sells merger with Bailey's Forepaugh Show. This is the same merger that began the exclusion of black people in many of the show's departments. The federal government and assimilationist reformers took great measures to stop Indians from performing in Wild West and other similar circus-based shows in the 1880s and 1890s. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs threatened reservation dwellers that ignored his disapproval of the industry and warned that show Indians "must not look to this Office for favor or assistance."[96] This created a significant barrier for people living on reservations looking for employment in the circus industry. Show managers viewed this interference as a nearly insurmountable obstacle to continuing their operations.[97] Despite these obstacles, some American Indian artists and performers were able to retain their careers in circus and Wild West shows. For instance, Native American employees in the *Adam Forepaugh Show*, the first circus to include an almost all-Indian Wild West show, held their positions. Other American Indians intent on breaking into the industry attempted to bypass this barrier.

In 1886, several American Indians attempted to join the *Sells Brothers Circus* to create a Wild West Show. The Sells paid producer William Gordon Lillie, known on stage as Pawnee Bill, an advance for the transportation of the Native Americans, a group of cowboys, and

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[95] The 1870 Census recorded the 14 year old Guss as white, 1880 as a mulatto blacksmith; the 1900 census recorded him as black; born in Jefferson, Brown Ohio; born 1856; 1930 as Negro.

[96] Kasson, 184-185.

[97] *The Billboard*, February 1900.

equipment to Ohio. The Sells advertised the show and anticipated great interest in it for the upcoming season. The deal failed, however, when an Indian agent discovered their plans and challenged Lillie's ability to employ the Native American men and women.[98] The Indian Commissioner claimed that he was "opposed to Indians being taken from the reservation for any but educational purposes."[99] Government agents detained Pawnee Bill for several days; during which time many of the American Indian performers found work in a traveling medicine show. To make up for the loss, the Sells went on with the show, hiring white cowboys, and employing African Americans and Mexicans to fill in for American Indian parts. Even this venture ended tragically, as during a gun fight, one of the supposed blank cartridges fired real bullets. Three people were injured and one person, a teen-aged boy, was killed.[100]

The Decline of Circus Opportunity in Sellsville

For almost four decades, from the mid-1870s to 1904, the Sells Brothers Circus winter quarters provided an economic heartbeat for the residents of Clinton Township. In Sellsville, African American, American Indian and European American men and women lived in an integrated neighborhood—a unique occurrence in Columbus at the turn of the twentieth century. While the neighborhood was highly integrated, circus work crews and performance teams were segregated. Though much of the work available to African Americans and American Indians

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[98] Weisheimer, 96.

[99] *The Billboard*, February 1900.

[100] "Shot at a Circus: Spectators Struck by Bullets Used in a Sham Battle," *The New York Times,* 21 July 1887; see also Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon 8, no. 1* (Jan-Feb 1964): 5.

involved manual labor, some black and Indian people carved out other spaces to work in skilled labor and performance roles. With access to relatively stable employment, people of Sellsville built a self-supporting community, established schools, founded churches, and created a variety of social institutions. The residents of Sellsville, including many former slaves and southerners, built these institutions in large part without the aid of middle class missionaries, educators or social workers.

Despite its lasting impact on the people and the landscape of Ohio, Sellsville has never shown up on any map of Columbus or Franklin County. Instead of residing on Columbus maps, Sellsville lives in the memories of former residents and their descendants and on pages of turn-of-the-century circus trade magazines, such as *The Bandwagon* and *The Billboard.* Occasionally, Sellsville will spark the interest of modern circus fans or local history buffs.[101] The most vivid illustrations of Sellsville reside in the work of two former residents of the town. The first is an oral history project, *Sellsville, ca. 1900.* This is a history collected and written in 1974 by a white man named Carl Weisheimer of the Clinton Township-based Weisheimer Flour Mill family. Weisheimer's accounts, along with local histories and newspapers, help to illustrate what life was like around the turn of the century in Sellsville. Weisheimer and his informants described Sellsville and the community that remained for a short time after the circus left Columbus as a racially and culturally diverse place. Their accounts claimed that Clinton Township was racially integrated when other sections of the city were not open to interracial interactions. Weisheimer painted a picture of Sellsville that was almost utopic. He wrote, "Sellsville was an integrated neighborhood with its residents living side by side on the friendliest

[101] Draft cards of WWI and as late as WWII soldiers record their hometown as Sellsville.

Figure 26: Aminah Robinson, *Life in Sellsville 1871-1900 and Life in the Blackberry Patch 1900-1930* in the Columbus Metropolitan Library shows the artist's interpretation of African American people's experience of moving from the circus quarters to a low-income neighborhood that would later become a federal housing project.
http://www.aminahsworld.org/share/responses.php, accessed 3 November 2011.

of terms. Many of the circus performers chose to live in Sellsville during the winter season, boarding in the various neighborhood homes."[102]

The second vividly personal illustration of Sellsville is the art of African American septuagenarian artist, Aminah Robinson. Her pieces, such as, *Life in Sellsville (1871-1900)*, recall her family's experiences in the former circus town and their subsequent move to the black community known as Blackberry Village. Her work witnesses to the stories Sellsville residents passed down to her about life in and around the circus. In her artwork, she mixes those stories with her own memories of later incarnations of the Sells Circus (at that time under management of the American Circus Corporation and based in Peru, Indiana). "As a young child," she wrote in a reflection on a Sellsville piece, "I would see the Sells Circus unload from the train…we would get out of school to help them unload."[103] Robinson's art points to both pride and joy in the African American residents that lived there. However, Robinson also conveys the hardships they faced in later years, especially after the circus came under new management and former employees were forced to find other work and other living situations.

Just before the turn of the twentieth century, circus work opportunities began to decline dramatically. One of the first great blows to black employment was a ban on African Americans in tent-raising teams. The ban was a result of the merger of the Sells Circus with James Bailey's circuses in 1896. One canvas man, Bill 'Cap' Curtis, recalled that when James Bailey joined Sells management, Bailey ended the Sells Brothers' practice of hiring black canvas men to raised

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[102] Weisheimer, 7.

[103] Aminah Robinson, "Aminah's World," http://www.aminahsworld.org/share/responses.php, accessed 1 May 2011.

tents.[104] George Bowles, a press agent for *The Barnum and Bailey Circus*, explained that in 1903 the circus hired African American canvas men to work in a segregated area only in response to a shortage of white workers. He said:

> Times were so prosperous that any man with a good pair of biceps could not only get a job, but would have people bidding for his services, and many employers who wanted husky boys overbid the circus…. These desertions were so frequent that the circus for about six weeks was constantly in more or less trouble. We sent everywhere for men…. The problem was solved only when, for the first time in the history of the circus, Mr. Bailey imported a large force of Virginia Negroes, who were greatly pleased with all the excitement and novelty of circus life. He tried to avoid this move, but there was too much doing for white men, to leave any other recourse.[105]

Bailey's policy toward African American employees was more characteristic of circus owners at the turn of the century than the Sells Brothers. Unfortunately for later generations of African Americans interested in the circus, the industry only became more racist. After the death of Peter Sells in 1904, Lewis Sells began the process of liquidating the family business until his own death in 1907. Over the subsequent two decades, the circus changed ownership and location from Bailey, to the Ringlings, and finally to the American Circus Corporation based in Peru. By 1959 a prominent circus historian wrote that there was no color line in the circus, except for the burgeoning barrier to African Americans. The challenge to African American performers and laborers began to develop in the early decades of the twentieth century, even as racist imagery of Dutch, Irish, and Jewish people declined.[106]

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[104] Bill "Cap" Curtis to George Chindahl, Oct 10, 1950, George Chindahl Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin in Davis, 70.

[105] "Too Much Prosperity Hurts the Big Circus," *Washington Times,* 8 November 1903, Barnum and Bailey Press Clippings Books, Circus Collection, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota Florida 1903-4, in Davis, 70.

[106] Chindahl, 194.

The closing of the Clinton Township Polkadot School was another blow to the African American community. This once multiracial school closed just after the turn of the century and was demolished in 1913, around the time of municipal redistricting.[107] The Sellsville Polkadot School stands out among Columbus schools, which were plagued with anti-black policies throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At stake, according to white Columbians, was not that blacks could not be educated, rather, they just did not believe it appropriate for white children to be forced to mix with them. The majority of white Columbians favored separate schools for black children. However, most schools for black children were becoming or were already so desperately inferior to white schools that many blacks chose private or home schooling.

In 1905, James Bailey told the Columbus Evening Dispatch that he would keep the winter quarters in Sellsville, enlarge it, and allow the former employees in their current jobs.[108] In 1905, Bailey created a winter zoo for Columbus citizens to visit circus animals.[109] Bailey immediately sold half the show to the Ringling family and then died in 1906. The circus left Sellsville for the last time for tour in the 1906-1907 season. On April 20, 1907, the Sells-Forepaugh Circus permanently closed. The residents of Sellsville had grown to depend on heavily on circus employment and related industries became a low-income neighborhood full of unemployed African Americans, unskilled laborers, and itinerant and unwanted people considered Gypsies and hobos. African American former employees faced pressures from the

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[107] Himes, 130.

[108] *Columbus Evening Dispatch,* 10 January 1905.

[109] *Columbus Evening Dispatch,* 7 April 1905.

white community and the black middle class. President J. S. Himes of the Columbus Urban League wrote that southern black emigrants were anathema to established, middle class black residents of Columbus, often receiving a chilly welcome. Himes described the African Americans there as "stranded" with no employment and no prospects for future stability.[110]

On April 21, the *Ohio State Journal* wrote that Lewis Sells, owner of the grounds, planned to immediately begin the process of "cleaning up and beautifying the land. All buildings and everything used in connection with wintering the shows are to be taken away." The area was up for immediate platting for building lots. "The removal of the winter quarters will take away from one of the most beautiful parts of Columbus that which has always been an objection and detriment to the real estate there. In order to open up the locality better there is a movement on foot to have constructed a street car line past what was the show grounds and on the Scioto river storage dam."[111] Ephraim Sells had already begun the process of suburban development in the area. In 1905 he purchased about 100 acres for development.[112] On May 12, 1907, the *Ohio State Journal* announced that all buildings in Sellsville, except one, would be demolished by June 1, at which time lots would be sold and houses erected.

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[110] J. S. Himes, "Forty Years of Negro History," *The Journal of Negro History,* Vol. 27, no. 2, (April 1942), 149; Aminah Robinson's family were initially residents of Sellsville, then her parents moved to Poindexter Village, what many local people still called the Blackberry Patch, in 1940. Poindexter Village was one of the first federally funded housing projects. She alternated living with her grandparents in the former Sellsville and with her parents in Poindexter Village. Poindexter Village was named after the late Reverend James Poindexter, prominent religious and political leader for black Columbians.

[111] *Ohio State Journal* 21 April 1907.

[112] *The Columbus Dispatch* 8 October 1905.

With the demolition of Sellsville, black residents scattered. Those that were able had already moved into more affluent neighborhoods of Columbus. Musicians, for instance, had a valuable skill. They played in bands and taught music lessons to Columbus' black middle class children. Other African American residents, like artist Aminah Robinson's family, moved to the Black Berry Patch neighborhood.[113] From about 1900 to the late 1930s, the Blackberry patch was a working poor African American community. Then in 1939 it was demolished to create Poindexter Village. Poindexter Village was one of the first federally funded housing projects. President Franklin Roosevelt showed his support for the project with visits at the groundbreaking ceremony in 1939 and the dedication ceremony on Columbus Day in 1940.[114]

From the viewpoint of city officials, the evacuation of former circus employees and other undesirable people from the old Sellsville quarters enabled a large land development project that turned thousands of acres of Clinton Township into a new, and respectable, predominantly white suburb. In 1940, a developer obtained a government loan to erect the University View subdivision, housing for defense workers on the former site of Sellsville. The subdivision consisted of about 250 single-family homes. For the first five years, the homes were rental units, and were later sold to many of the original renters. In 1948, the University View Residents association formed and planned recreation for area children. A 1957 Columbus Citizen article

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[113] J. S. Himes, "Forty Years of Negro History," *The Journal of Negro History,* Vol. 27, no. 2, (April 1942), 149; Aminah Robinson's family were initially residents of Sellsville, then her parents moved to Poindexter Village, what many local people still called the Blackberry Patch, in 1940. Poindexter Village was one of the first federally funded housing projects. She alternated living with her grandparents in the former Sellsville and with her parents in Poindexter Village. Poindexter Village was named after the late Reverend James Poindexter, prominent religious and political leader for black Columbians.

[114] Ibid.

described it as a pleasant "community of families with two cars, two children and two dogs" in the southwest corner of Clinton Township.[115]

Conclusion

During the span of his circus career, Peter Sells and his brothers helped to usher in the Golden Age of the Circus. During that time, between the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, the American circus industry reached it highest number of touring companies, boasted the largest number and variety of acts, and made the industry's most significant number of advancements in technology and management.[116] The Sells saw their company grow from a relatively small-scale wagon company to one of the largest railroad circuses in the country.[117] The Sells Brothers broke the overwhelming trend in the circus industry of excluding all but Euro-American males to senior workmen positions by employing scores of African Americans in the 1880s.[118] The Sells hired more black laborers and performers than contemporary white-owned traveling shows, but they still limited opportunities for black men and women compared to opportunities open to white employees.

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[115] *Columbus Citizen,* 24 March 1957.

[116] Chindahl, 118.

[117] Peter Sells, *The Bandwagon,* 30 November 1901: 4. They advanced in other areas as well. In the advertising department, the Sells grew from using wood-block printing, the typical nineteenth-century mas production method, to lithographs, a method that enabled detailed artwork drawn by chosen artist, then produced en masse. This printing innovation, as well as others in animal training, architecture, and transportation, caused great excitement in the industry and in the general public throughout the era.

[118] Davis, 70.

However, like other American circuses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Sells Brothers reinforced many of the worst racial stereotypes of the times through black-face minstrel shows, Wild West shows, and numerous other exhibitions that demeaned Jews, Asians, and white immigrants.[119] The Sells were businessmen with an eye for profit and the morality of contemporary capitalists. They located their company town in an area that was already populated by a racially mixed group of farmers and low-skilled laborers. What was unique about the Sells Brothers Circus was its winter quarters and what the people who lived there were able to do in an era of violent racial hostility and decreasing civil rights. However, the Sells provided low-skill, steady employment for local African Americans and American Indians. Once they obtained stable employment, black and Native Americans built churches, invested in education, and created new economic opportunities. With stable employment, not social uplift programs or civilizing efforts, residents of Sellsville created their own self-supporting community for three decades.

Poindexter residents were eligible to receive several forms of aid and community services. By 2009, these included GED training, literacy programs, home-buyer education programs, Head Start and several others to aid the working poor and unemployed.[120] However, in 2009, the

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[119] See Janet Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002)*;* Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Gregory J. Renoff, *The Big Tent: The Traveling Circus in Georgia, 1820-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[120] *U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Public and Indian Housing: PHA Plans, 5 Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2009-2013 and Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2009, Appendix E: Resident Advisory Board Comments,* Appendix F: Community Service and Self Sufficiency Programs, http://www.cmhanet.com/pdf/oh001v01.pdf, accessed 12 January 2012.

Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority cited high crime and homicide rates combined with the physical decay of the structures as reasons to demolish Poindexter Village. Community activists decried the city's plan to demolish what they believed was an important part of Columbus' African American history. Residents organized festivals, created blogs and attempted to organize support to the village improvement rather than demolition.[121] Despite the outcry, the Columbus Housing Authority went ahead with plans, claiming that they would be sure to include community leaders, churches and other groups in their plans to raze and rebuild the project.[122] The demolition of the community is scheduled to take place sometime in 2012. The artist, Aminah Robinson, captured feelings of loss of history and community in her 2010 piece, "The Razing and Demolition of Historic Poindexter Village Would Empty Between Sept 2011 and 2013." It pictures a displaced family on a crowded boat in a river, off the coast of a tangled landscape. Robinson, whose grandparents were pushed from Sellsville and whose parents were pushed from the Blackberry Patch, now prepares to witness the current community at Poindexter Village pushed from their homes. After almost one hundred years, the descendants of African American Sellsville are still under-employed and fight the struggles of the working poor. As they face homelessness or relocation, they continue the struggle of their grandparents and great-grandparents—the search for stable employment.

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[121] See *Justice for Poindexter Village*, http://housingjustice.wordpress.com/save-poindexter-village/; *The Poindexter Village Community History Festival*, http://yournewscolumbus.com/Poindexter_village_festival_showcases_history.htm

[122] *U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Public and Indian Housing: PHA Plans, 5 Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2009-2013 and Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2009, Appendix E: Resident Advisory Board Comments,* http://www.cmhanet.com/pdf/oh001v01.pdf, accessed 12 January 2012.

Chapter Five

The Show on the Road

This chapter argues that successful African Americans and Native Americans in the circus industry achieved high status through access to education and the development of professional networks, their ability and willingness to shift racial identification, and their willingness to maintain largely itinerant lifestyles. Circus employment led to a variety of social and economic opportunities. Some African Americans and Native Americans became cultural icons due to the status they acquired as circus performers while others were the front-runners of the ragtime and jazz age. Still others acquired the experience to become self-employed, became labor activists, or chose to live in exile in Europe, Australia, and Africa. Education and participation in professional networks allowed both African Americans and American Indians to achieve middle class status in the turn of the twentieth century American circus.

Indeed, many educated musicians and artists in the circus came from middle class families and some attended musical conservatories. However, these men and women diverged from norms of middle class employment in order to build their careers in the circus. Native American men and women who had music education in boarding schools joined circus and Wild West show bands and theatre troupes. They used their musical training to gain employment, travel, and broaden their educational and career choices.[1] African American musicians, both self-taught and classically trained in the United States and in Europe, also found employment in American circuses. Although these African and Native Americans were not usually associated

[1] See John W. Troutman, *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2009).

with racial uplift or spreading the ideals of the pan-African or pan-Indian movements, these men and women challenged racial hierarchies and federal Indian policies.

Native and African Americans of this era created the groundwork for later social and political movements, such as the Pan-Indian and Pan-African Movements, the Harlem Renaissance, and eventually, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black and Red Power Movements.[2] Historians most often look to churches, community and political leaders, women's clubs, and academics, to better understand racial progress of the era. Historians have not fully explored the ways that the non-elite individuals in the popular entertainment industry influenced labor, or the ability of black and Indian people to travel and create professional networks. Circus employees did all of these things. Though they were leaders in their own right, Native and African American circus employees do not generally show up in histories concerning Indian and black leadership of this era.

Turmoil, Transformation and The Golden Age of the Circus

The golden age of the circus at the turn of the twentieth century coincided with decades of great turmoil and transformation for African Americans and Native Americans. Circus historians describe the golden age of the circus as the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century when the circus attained its highest numbers

[2] See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett, eds., *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2007); Barbara McCaskill and Caroline Gebhard, eds., *Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem: African American Literature and Culture, 1877-1919* (New York University Press: New York and London, 2006); and Joy Porter, *To Be Indian: The Life of Iroquois-Seneca Arthur Caswell Parker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

and diversity of acts.[3] During this period, African Americans suffered from rampant anti-black violence and political disenfranchisement, and American Indians suffered from policies that devastated their families and took enormous portions of their lands. By the 1880s, white Americans largely believed that the days of the so-called Indian threat was over.[4] Many reformers, Congressmen, and Office of Indian Affairs officials agreed that Native Americans would either disappear from the face of the earth or allow themselves to be culturally transformed into proper Americans: Anglo-Christian, Protestant United States citizens.[5] The Dawes Act of 1887 was a devastating blow to Native American communities and authorized the federal government to survey Indian tribal lands and to divide the land into individual allotments for individual Indian people. Each Indian received fifty acres and was forced to farm. After it assigned individual allotments, the federal government sold millions of acres of tribal lands to non-Indians. The Dawes Act decreased tribally owned land from around 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934.[6]

Reformers believed that citizenship would become a reward for those American Indians who adopted the cultural and political attitudes of hard-working Christians and became

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[3] George L. Chindahl, *A History of the Circus in America* (Caldwell: The Caxton Press, 1959), 149.

[4] See Francis Paul Prucha, "The Peace Policy," *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

[5] See Troutman, 6.

[6] See also Francis Paul Prucha, *Great Father*; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); and Tom Holm, *Great Confusion in Indian Affairs: Native Americans and Whites in the Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

productive, English-speaking farmers.[7] From the 1860s to the 1930s, these ideals guided federal policy toward Indians as the government continued to break treaties, withhold treaty rights, and instituted severe measures to bring Native peoples under the umbrella of U.S. citizenship. Starting in 1879 with the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and religious organizations established boarding schools across the country to transform American Indians into Protestant English-speaking Americans. Children were taken from their parents at the age of five, immersed in European-American culture, forbidden from speaking their native language, and required to abandon their Native identities. Additionally, emotional and physical abuses were commonplace. Most spent their summers and holidays at the boarding schools. During the summer months, children worked on white-owned farms, did manual labor, and provided domestic services for white families.[8] Most children were not able to return to their families until they were in their late teens or early adulthood.

Despite the hostility boarding schools exhibited toward Indian cultures, in the early twentieth century, several school administrators expressed sympathy for the so-called dying Indian and began to allow "safe" expressions of Indian culture.[9] Boarding schools began to teach what they considered to be safe Indian songs and music. Carlisle, for example, had its student band perform classical pieces with Indianist themes, like "Song of the Ghost Dance," that

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[7] Troutman, 112.

[8] Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 82.

[9] "Unsafe" cultural expressions, as Lomawaima and McCarty argued, were instruction on the functioning of tribal governments and treaty rights. See Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain an Indian,* 68.

white composers had written for Indian musicians to perform.[10] A growing trend was for schools to hire white ethnographers and Indianist composers to teach Indianness to Native school children.[11]

This was a repressive period for American Indians and proved equally repressive for African Americans. The years from 1878 to 1923 are referred to as the African American Nadir.[12] This era was characterized by reactionary white supremacy, a sharp increase in anti-black violence, and the repeal of the political and legal rights accorded blacks during Reconstruction. White-on-black lynch mob violence rose from seventy-four incidents in 1886 to 3,417 in 1944.[13] No longer valued as slaves, historians have argued that black life became worthless in mainstream America and anti-black violence, itself, was an integral part of southern white culture.[14] African American leaders of this era such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and Booker T. Washington grappled with how to best confront white terrorism and how best to

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[10] Troutman, 172.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Chindahl, 149.

[13] Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America,* 2002, 3.

[14] See Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America,* 2002; Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Climbing Up to Glory: A Short History of African Americans During the Civil War and* Reconstruction (Wilmington: SR Books, 2002); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

combat the day to day challenges that African Americans faced due to underemployment, segregation, and poverty.[15]

The employment options open to Native Americans and African Americans across the country was largely limited to unskilled labor and the most menial and undesirable occupations.[16] African Americans and American Indians in the Midwest, like others across the country, struggled against poverty, illiteracy, and white control over industrial and skilled work sites.[17] In the Midwest as in other parts of the country, African American men and women found employment primarily in low-skilled labor positions. Women obtained positions in domestic service, and black children were more likely to work than white children. Even highly educated African and Native Americans discovered that doctoral degrees or upper class association did not guarantee careers befitting their education. African Americans who found professional employment were strikingly low, around 4% in many Midwestern cities.[18] In its laws and everywhere in society, America reinforced its hatred of and unwillingness to promote African Americans to full citizenship, with equal protection and access to the American dream.

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[15] See Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Southern Horrors and other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997).

[16] Chapters one, two and three go into greater detail concerning black and Indian labor in the Midwest and in Sellsville, OH and Miami County, IN.

[17] Leslie A. Schwalm. *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2009), 10.

[18] Historians have widely written about the limitations on black career choices, despite many African Americans' passion for higher education, relegated to poorly paid day labor and domestic service. Schwalm, 142: "Whether skilled or unskilled, black men felt the impact of Midwestern racism in terms of limited intergenerational social mobility; even their better-educated sons could not hope for better opportunities."

America maintained its will to keep black people as second-class citizens, and remained unchanged in its resolve toward the possibility of change in its relationships to black people.

Despite these social and political obstacles, this was also an era of great excitement and one in which the African and Native American educated middle classes grew exponentially.[19] One historian of the era wrote, "If lynching, historically, is emblematic of what is worst about America—racism, intolerance, cruel and sadistic forms of violence—their fight (against it) may stand for what is best: the love of justice and fairness, and the conviction that one individual's sense of right can suffice to defy the gravest of wrongs."[20] In addition to dealing with the problems of racism, black leaders also debated how to continue the increasingly positive trends of education and self-help organizations. Blacks took several avenues to combat job inequalities that plagued their communities and the nation. Some African American reformers established trade schools that preached racial uplift and taught practical skills aimed at broadening the job opportunities available.[21] Other African Americans sought economic salvation in entrepreneurial endeavors and some created successful national and international businesses. Still others sought higher education, becoming lawyers, doctors and other types of professionals and teachers. While most African American women worked in agriculture or domestic service, upper economic class women were able to receive education and joined feminized professions of the day, mostly as teachers, nurses, social workers, librarians, and clerical workers. By 1890,

[19] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: They Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) and Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the RE-Construction of American History* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1994).

[20] Dray, xii.

[21] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: They Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) and Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the RE-Construction of American History* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1994).

thirty black women held college degrees. Female-led uplift organizations, clubs and auxiliary groups grew up all over the country and emphasized education, the need for black people to rely on themselves, and mutual aid as means to participate in the American dream. These women advocated that African Americans of means should "lift as we climb."[22]

An educated Native American elite began to expand in the late nineteenth century. While some Native Americans, like Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai), resented the meddling of the Indian Bureau, others like Angel DeCora (Ho-Chunk) seized the opportunity inside of boarding schools to reintroduce Native forms of art to young people. DeCora had been educated at the Hampton Institute, a school for both African Americans and Native Americans. After graduation, she opened an arts and crafts program at Carlisle Indian school in which she encouraged her students to express their talent and pride through Native art traditions.[23] The classically trained Native musicians and other artists that were trained in these types of programs often found employment in the art and entertainment industries in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[24]

All of these trends corresponded with and were tied to the golden age of the circus and were accompanied by the massive migration of African American people from southern rural areas to urban areas, especially in the Midwest, Northeast, and West. Though the First Great Migration began around 1910 through 1930, the decades leading up to it were also characterized by movement and adjustment for African Americans. They moved to look for work and to

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[22] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 195-196.

[23] Troutman, 179.

[24] Ibid.

escape racism and sexual violence.[25] African Americans in traveling circuses preceded the First Great Migration by a generation, but their choices may have foreshadowed many of the aspirations of those people that came later.

Travel was a mandatory aspect of circus life. Circuses generally toured from April to September. With ambitious managers and agreeable weather, the season sometimes extended as late as October or November. Circuses fought for market dominance in certain territories or regions. A circus' territory was the primary region through which it traveled. In his memoir of his days as a bareback rider for the Sells Brothers, Orin L. Hollis wrote that in the 1873 season the company traveled by wagon and limited its tour to Ohio and Kentucky. That season, the show covered 1,741 miles.[26] With the transformation to rail travel in 1878, the Sells Brothers expanded their territory in the Midwest, and sometimes ventured farther south and east. During the 1884 season, for example, the show covered 11, 537 miles by rail from Columbus to New Orleans. Expanding overseas in 1891, the Sells took their company to western states, then to Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia. During that season, the company covered 41,145 miles over land and sea.[27]

Traveling circus life was difficult, but it posed special challenges for American Indian and African American performers and laborers. Circuses were sometimes notorious for the

[25] Higginbotham, 190.

[26] See Sells Brothers Route Books, 1872 to 1877, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[27] Sells Brothers Route Book, 1891.

public unrest that they incited, and people of color were especially vulnerable to violence.[28] Violence toward black and Indian people came from both outside and inside of the circus company. The most infamous case of racial mob violence occurred in Duluth, Minnesota, in the summer of 1920. There, a white mob brutally beat, burned, shot and hanged four black employees of the *John Robinson Circus*.[29]

Violence from within the circus itself may have been harder to document due to the private nature of most circus companies. Many general laborers were excluded from unions, often victims of unfair labor practices, and were vulnerable to managerial violence.[30] They were also the least likely to file a legal complaint or go to authorities of whatever town they found themselves in at the time of the offense. Occasionally, *The Billboard* reported on a lovers' feud that ended in murder or suicide. The trade paper also occasionally reported on drunken brawls or other disturbances. Circus managers had a vested interest in keeping up a family-friendly image and reporting violence when they were visiting a town was not to their advantage. *The Billboard* occasionally reported on such cases. The paper also reported on events of racially-charged brawls between Native Americans and cowboys in circuses and Wild West shows. During one such fight in Peoria, Illinois a Cherokee employee of Pawnee Bill's traveling equestrian show

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[28] Brawls between circus workers and local citizens were common occurrences. They were often fodder for local newspapers to write anti-circus diatribes that accused the shows of introducing immorality to otherwise peaceful, God-fearing small-town audiences. The *Billboard Magazine* ran a weekly column entitled, "Prudes on the Prowl" that chronicled, in a condescending and somewhat comical way, the fears and anti-circus sentiment found in local newspapers across small-town America.

[29] *The Billboard* (Cincinnati), July 1920.

[30] Davis, 79.

named Seyenose was badly wounded and hospitalized. Twenty Native men of varying backgrounds searched Peoria for Seyenose's attacker, though the cowboy apparently escaped.[31]

A Saskatchewan paper reported on another instance of racially charged violence in the Al G. Barnes Circus. It also alluded to what were perhaps common challenges authorities faced when dealing with a circus crime.[32] In this case, a quarrel between a black man named William Butler and a white man escalated until gunshots were fired. Witnesses claimed that a mob began to viciously beat Butler after they heard gunshots. A local white bystander intervened, but the mob of circus, employees, beat him for his intrusion. Police arrived before the mob was able carry out its plan to hang Butler in one of the circus rail cars. Police Chief Graham, accompanied by a Dr. Sullivan who gave Butler medical attention, ordered the white crowd to disperse and free the man. When the crowd obliged, Chief Graham stopped the circus train from leaving town so that he could conduct a proper investigation of the crime. White employees who had taken part in the riot were questioned and claimed that Butler had fired a gun at an unsuspecting white man. Others said that the white man had fired first. Still others alleged that Butler had made indecent overtures and "improper advances" toward some white women in town, apparently trying to stir the blood of the local people and get them to side with the rioters. The mob gave a false name for the white man and Saskatchewan authorities were never able to locate the culprits of the assault. They closed the case and allowed the circus to move on. Al Barnes, the owner, claimed that this was just a typical kind of employee quarrel that just went

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[31] *The Billboard* (Cincinnati), August 1900.

[32] "Intervention of Police Saves Negro's Life in Circs Employees' Riot: William Butler, Colored, With Al G. Barnes Circus, Severely Mauled by Enraged White Men of 'The Lot' at Melville," *The Leader* (Saskatchewan), 18 June ca. 1895-1929; the exact year on this article is unknown, however the Al G. Barnes Circus toured from 1895 to 1929.

too far and was "a little more serious this time." Barnes promised to deport any troublemakers back to the States at the first sign of agitation for the remainder of their Canadian tour and took his company on to the rest of its season.[33]

Common themes, actors, and experiences connected circuses, Wild West shows, equestrian and dog and pony shows, and medicine shows. Before the age of television and radio, traveling entertainment was the primary way that American popular culture spread and the minstrel show was one of the first widely popular forms of traveling entertainment. Many other forms of popular entertainment were influenced by the minstrel show in varying degrees and grew to incorporate aspects of the minstrels show. The actors, themselves, often traveled with more than one kind of troupe, as many troupes traveled seasonally. There was a wide percentage of crossover between the circus and vaudeville, radio, and film.

After the Civil War the most popular forms of entertainment were minstrel shows and circus performances.[34] Both types of shows first traveled by wagon and then by rail, from city to city across the country, and eventually, the world. Before the Civil War, white men in blackface minstrel makeup performed caricatures of African American people that persisted into the twenty-first century and claimed to give America a glimpse of life on the slave plantation. After the Civil War, African American men and women increasingly performed in minstrel shows and in circuses. For white audiences, this added a sense of authenticity to the demeaning art form. For many African American artist and musicians, however, this was an opportunity to take advantage of in an industry that could be transformed.

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Davis, 14.

Developments after the Civil War gave Native and African American entertainers a boost in the touring show industry. First, the popularity of equestrian shows and Indian Medicine Shows, as well as the popularity of Indian music, arts and crafts gave Native American entertainers an advantage in the industry. Several types of traveling entertainment were popular during the middle of the nineteenth century and the biggest and most successful circuses brought together as many of these popular forms of entertainment as possible. The Equestrian show circus began in London in the 1700s and was popularized in America in the 1770s. These shows featured riders and trainers performing tricks and seemingly impossible feats on horseback.[35]

Medicine shows flourished in the 1880s and 1890s after the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company and Hamlin's Wizard Oil Company established factories on the east coast. They sent out up to thirty troupes each to sell their products and entertain small-town America. Medicine shows ranged in size, from two-person shows to productions containing several tents of musicians, dancers, actors, minstrels and comedians. They followed generally the same format. The show began with a ballyhoo, or call to begin. This might have included a parade or a concert. The show went on to feature a comedian or a comical play. Next, the so-called doctor would appear and give a lecture on the pills, tonics and other recipes he was peddling. Finally, the troupe gave the sales pitch wherein they sold as many items to the townspeople as possible.[36] In all of these forms of traveling entertainment, owners and managers hired racial and ethnic minorities in order to help them create the most exotic and unique show for audiences. Native

[35] Chindahl, 5-6.

[36] Mary Calhoun, *Medicine Show: Conning People and Making Them Like it* (Harper and Row: New York, 1976), 3.

Americans and African Americans were often hired as ballyhoo men, those who called attention to the start of the show through songs, jokes, and instrumental music.

Another development after the Civil War that boosted Native and African American entertainers' careers was the popularity of sympathetic race plays. Circus proprietors toured productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during the winter months, the off-season for the circus.[37] Many of the casts of these shows included black and Native American actors and laborers. Additionally, elaborate dramatic parades, fantastical performances ranging from mythological theatrics to quasi-historical reenactments were widely popular in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. These productions often included African American and Native American performers or roustabouts who fit the part.[38]

Increasingly, black-managed acts performed in circus dramatic companies, often performing within the context of minstrel shows, burlesque, and vaudeville theatres. These included stunt bicycling and unicycling, aerial and acrobatic artists, tightrope walkers, magicians, comedians, dancers, musicians, jugglers, dog and pony trainers, and medicine shows. During this period, blackface singing, dancing, and comedy became a common part of the circus performance. The sideshow and the concert, or after-circus show, evolved as black and Indian artists carved out their spaces in the circus and were rarely part of the main show tents. Black minstrels became a customary part of the sideshow personnel and Indians actors often performed in the concert show.[39]

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[37] LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough, *Step Right Up: The Adventure of Circus in America* (White Hall: Betterway Publications, 1990), 69.

[38] Chindahl, 193-195.

[39] Ibid., 193.

For years, black minstrel shows included aerial acts, animal acts, magicians, jugglers, wirewalkers, and musicians.[40] When circus managers hired them for the sideshow tent, they initially performed alongside so-called human oddities and sideshow staples, such as fat ladies, human skeletons, and conjoined twins. Times did change. Black sideshow acts became anticipated components of major circuses. By 1910, one *Indianapolis Freeman* reporter wrote, "Have you noticed that nearly every circus on the road has a colored aggregation taking care of the side show? Dear colored performer, please take care of the opportunity given you and don't squabble yourself out of a job."[41] Black sideshow work became extremely competitive, and for some a very lucrative business.

The number of black and Indian entertainers grew exponentially in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. While there were definitely black people involved in the industry before the Civil War, there were few and tracking them is difficult.[42] The federal census did not publish reliable information on non-white occupations until the turn of the century, and it recorded no blacks in entertainment before 1890.[43] Contemporary newspaper accounts show that the census is inaccurate. Many African Americans who worked in circuses and side shows got their start in black minstrel and vaudeville companies just after the Civil War. Vaudeville

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[40] Abbott and Seroff, 158.

[41] "The Parrot in the Theater Loft," *Indianapolis Freeman* 14 May 1910.

[42] Henry T. Sampson, *The Ghost Walks: A Chronological History of Blacks in Show Business, 1865-1910* (Metuchen and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1988), 1 and 4-5.

[43] Sampson, 38.

and minstrel companies such as *The Smart Set, Littlejohn's,* and the *Russell Brothers* employed hundreds of black artists and were the forerunners to black entertainment companies.

The circus industry created a plethora of jobs. There were jobs directly related to the circus that included performers, laborers or roustabouts, horse drivers, porters, animal trainers, calliope drivers, and musicians. There were also jobs that supported the circus. These ranged from carpentry, blacksmithing, farming, costume designers, tent making, to food production, animal breeding and capture, and printing. In addition, the biggest circuses maintained their own rail cars, rail yards and rail operators. The largest circuses relied on a wide variety of industries, employed hundreds of people, and influenced local economies as they passed through towns and cities across the country.

Native and African Americans faced many of the same race, color, and culture-based challenges in the circus industry as they did in other industries around the country. The circus also reinforced many of the ugliest racial stereotypes of the times.[44] As one reporter put it, there were "grades in circus life as in everything else."[45] In fact, though circuses featured ethnic and race acts in sideshow tents, also called "kid" tents, major shows did not allow black artists to perform under the main tent until the 1920s.[46] Some circuses even had policies that barred

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[44] See Janet Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Gregory J. Renoff, *The Big Tent: The Traveling Circus in Georgia, 1820-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[45] *The Carroll Herald* (Iowa) 15 July 1885.

[46] While blacks were initially barred from performing under the main show tent, Arabic, Greek, Chinese, and Japanese performers were common. See Davis, 197-198. P.G. Lowery broke this race barrier, however, very few blacks were able to follow his lead due to circus managers' segregationist tendencies that prevailed throughout the twentieth century.

foremen from hiring any African American laborers. Employees of color faced demeaning racial depictions on a daily basis that were performed in front of them or in which they participated.[47] In addition, American Indians and blacks had to navigate around legal and industry-imposed barriers and face the threat of racial and mob violence as they traveled with their companies. Despite industry discrimination, American Indians and African Americans participated in a variety of occupations both directly and indirectly associated with the industry. For those traveling to the circus, nearby African Americans provided makeshift hotels, or bed and breakfast accommodations to traveling black circus patron. Another very common way for American Indian and African Americans to benefit economically from the circus, without actually being employed by the circus itself was to create food, liquor and snack stands in close proximity to the circus lot. Just as the location of the circus winter quarters could boost a local economy, the traveling circus also boosted the local economy of the many towns and cities it stopped in from day to day. White entrepreneurs, like the Sells brothers, also followed circuses to pedal antiques and many Native and African American people took advantage of the thousands of people a show could draw.[48] For African American and American Indian entrepreneurs, circus day was a special opportunity to provide services to people that traveled with and to the circus.

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[47] Scholars of circus history have largely perpetuated this injustice by omitting serious discussions on the contributions of people of color in the industry. See Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged But Right: Black Traveling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007).

[48] Peter Sells, *Bandwagon* (Columbus), 7 Dec 1901.

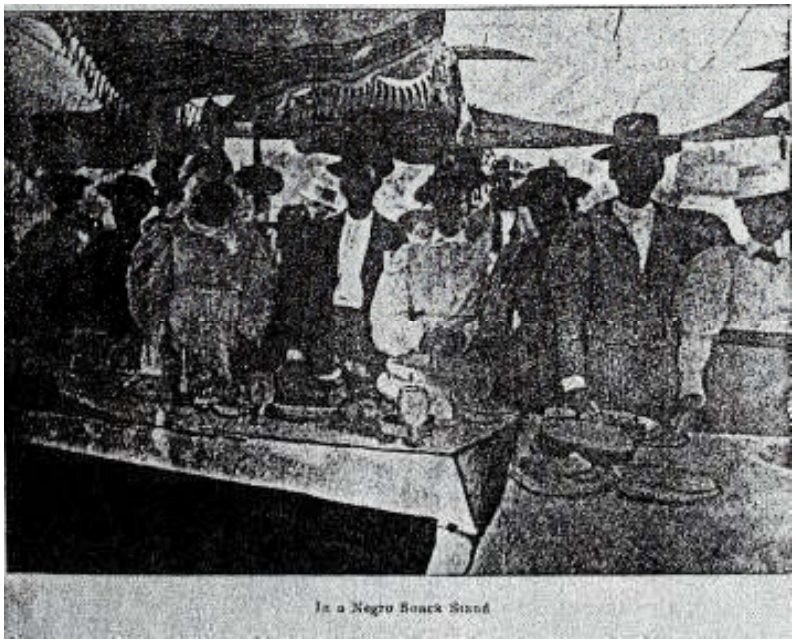

Figure 29: African American snack stand. Photos from the article, "The Plantation Darkey at the Circus: How He Enjoys It, Getting to Town, Incidents on the Lot, The Snack Stands," Ringling Brothers Route Book, 1895-1896. (African Americans in the Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

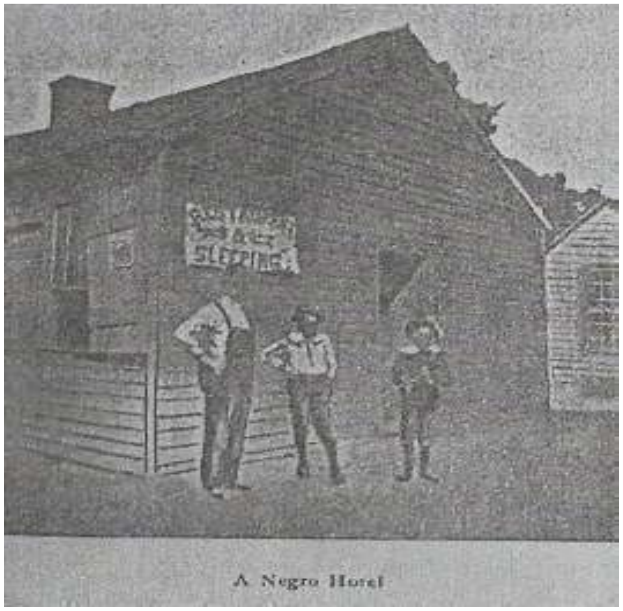

Figure 30: African American hotel. Photos from the article, "The Plantation Darkey at the Circus: How He Enjoys It, Getting to Town, Incidents on the Lot, The Snack Stands," Ringling Brothers Route Book, 1895-1896. (African Americans in the Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

On the boundaries of the circus lot, African Americans and Native Americans sometimes set up scores of itinerant stands to sell a variety of foods, drinks, liquor, games, jewelry, clothing, and provide a host of other goods and services.[49] Native American people gathered around the circus outside lots to pedal goods and demonstrate and sell hand-made crafts and art.[50] Native people engaged in a variety of activities that ranged from selling produce and trading, to signing postcards for non-Indian people fascinated by seeing a "real Indian up close."[51] This "outside show" was often as spectacular an event and as socially interactive in small towns as the circus itself.[52] African American snack stands ranged from simple cloth-covered tables to elaborate wooden-framed booths with canvas awnings. Whiskey stands, popular among white, black and Native consumers, sold liquor from a table where customers purchased drinks by the cup.[53]

Sometimes, especially in the South, the stands numbered in the hundreds. The number and popularity of the black-run snack stands impressed circus proprietors and managers. In the

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[49] See Stuart Thayer, *American Circus Anthology: Essays of the Early Years,* ed. by William L. Slout, 2005; see also "The Plantation Darkey at the Circus: How he Enjoys it, Getting to Town, Incidents on the Lot, The Snack Stands," *Ringling Brothers Route Book,* 1895-1896, 110-114, African Americans in the Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin; Renoff, 98-100; see also *On the Road with a Circus,* 50.

[50] LaMoine Marks, Indiana Historical Society.

[51] Indian Bill file, Columbus Metropolitan Library.

[52] Stuart Thayer, *American Circus Anthology: Essays of the Early Years,* ed. By William L. Slout, 2005.

[53] Ibid.

1895-1896 season, the Ringling Brothers Circus dedicated several pages of its route book to descriptions of black patrons and their circus stands in various towns across the country.[54] Several accounts by white circus goers described the sights, sounds and tastes of the black snack stands testify to the racial mixing that occurred.[55] The stands sold a variety of food for travelers including fried chicken, fish, wieners and hot coffee. This area, like the circus itself, was filled with the sounds of proprietors yelling out their wares, calling to people to buy their products. Ringling reported that this was good business; in some towns in the South the black majority could not buy from the white stands.[56] Circus proprietor John Robinson noted that the visiting, or social interaction, done at snack stands by African Americans was just as important to the black population as the circus itself. The outside area around these stands also functioned as a social space for black people. This social space also enabled the more pious members of the black community who disapproved of the circus to join the festivities without actually attending the show.[57]

Outside spaces were an important source of revenue but inside the circus grounds there were also employment possibilities for both African American and Native Americans, both groups were integral to the pool of cheap labor. Circus companies that employed blacks and American Indians often gave them the most labor-intensive positions, called *roustabouts, canvas*

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Renoff, 99.

[56] "The Plantation Darkey at the Circus: How he Enjoys it, Getting to Town, Incidents on the Lot, The Snack Stands," Ringling Brothers Route Book, 1895-1896, 113-114, African Americans in the Circus File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[57] Renoff, 99.

men, hostlers and *razerbacks.*[58] These employees helped to raise and lower tents, cleaned and fed animals, and performed the manual labor required by the company. They were expendable, easily exploitable, and had a very high turnover rate, many deserted while others were terminated mid-season.[59] These employees were usually the last to eat and often responsible for their own sleeping arrangements. Some slept with the animals whose cars they cleaned, others slept under the open sky or sometimes under cars to escape inclement weather.[60] Labor crews often hired black men. For example, one year the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows employed fifty-nine black men and twenty white men on the company's Big Top crew of roustabouts, canvas men and razerbacks.[61] Other than positions as roustabouts, the most common jobs for African American men were service and labor oriented. They were cooks, waiters, porters, barbers, and carpenters. Other than roustabouts and cooks, waiters and porters, Native and African Americans worked in a wide variety of positions in the circus industry. They were also carriage drivers, Calliope drivers, and animal caretakers.

African and Native American Circus Performers

Seasonal peddling and unskilled labor accounted for a majority of black and Indian labor in the circus around the turn of the century, but there were also hundreds of black and Indian

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[58] Roustabouts were general laborers, while razerbacks and canvas men were specifically responsible for loading wagons and cages onto the rail cars. See Davis, 49.

[59] *On the Road with a Circus,* 51.

[60] "Behind the Scenes: The Life of a Circus Employee as seen by a Herald Reporter," *The Carroll* (Iowa) Herald, 15 July 1885.

[61] George Werner Papers file and Blacks in Shows file, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

performers who devoted their careers to the circus. Circuses drew African American and Native American talent from a variety of local independent shows and larger scale productions. Route books, race papers, and show bills describe a growing number of black and Indian performers, though the census rarely reflected or counted these people. In 1870, two years before the Sells Brothers established their circus, for example, there were no African Americans that worked in show business listed on the census. However, Charles B. Hicks organized the Georgia Minstrels in 1865. His career probably started in circuses and white minstrel companies before the end of the Civil War. Often identified as white because of his fair complexion, Hicks is generally credited with being the first to introduce blacks into the mainstream of American show business.[62] There were other early traveling black performers including the Hyers Sisters from California, the Luca Family, who toured the northern states before the end of the Civil War, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group established in 1871 that popularized African American Spiritual music. Both circuses and Wild West Shows drew from this growing pool of black talent to develop black sideshow acts. In the first decade of their show, the Sells Brothers carried a sideshow that featured a growing black band with minstrel and Jubilee-style shows.

In 1880, four years before Benjamin Wallace established his circus, the census failed to record blacks in show business. The 1880s, however, was a decade of heightened popularity for black minstrels and there was a dramatic increase in the size, number, and quality of these black companies. There were better educational opportunities for African Americans and minstrel companies were able to hire better-trained musicians who could read and write music. Almost all of the companies carried a band and an orchestra. Black companies also shifted their focus in the 1880s from depictions of plantation life to a wide variety of entertainment that included

[62] Sampson, 39.

dramatic actors for one-act sketches, comedians, wire-walkers, acrobats, magicians, ventriloquists, hoop-rollers, jugglers, trick skaters and bicyclists. This new industry focus created demand for a wide variety of black performance artists. The increasing emphasis on the one-act sketch gave increasing opportunities to black actors to develop their abilities of writing, scoring, and staging, all of which would be required to produce the first black musical comedies that appeared at the end of the 1870s.[63] Through these developments, several black showmen emerged as national stars, achieved great monetary success, and began touring Europe, the Pacific, and Africa. Charles B. Hicks, for example, toured his company in Australia, where he eventually relocated.[64]

Circuses took their cues from other successful traveling shows, hired their own minstrel acts, Jubilee singers and Wild West shows. In addition to the six-member black sideshow band, the 1881 and 1882 Sells Brothers route books advertised an act called the Georgia Minstrels and Jubilee Singers and a one-man act called E. Duprey, the "White Moor."[65] That year, the Sells also included a Ute Indian equestrian show under the main show tent.[66] The 1883 and 1884

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Sampson, 40.

[65] Sells Brothers 1881 and 1882 Route Books, Sells Brothers File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin; the band leaders for 1881-1882 were R. N. Thompson and conductor T.S. Roadman.

[66] Sells Brothers 1883 Route Book, Sells Brothers File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

seasons featured a nine-member Jubilee troupe and a ten-member sideshow band.[67] The Sells show maintained around ten members in the sideshow band through the 1891 and 1892 seasons and toured with an eight-piece band in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii. By the 1896 season, the Sells Brothers rail show hired 332 laborers, sixty-four performers, and nineteen musicians in the big show band and in addition there was a sideshow band and other performers.[68] In 1896 the sideshow featured G. A. Shields and his wife, show giants who made $35 per week, a snake charmer who earned $15 a week and much less expensive tattooed people whose weekly wages were just $2.00. The black-managed minstrel show carried ten performers, including a six-piece band with leader Solomon White. The sideshow band was paid a total of $80 per week and each performer averaged $8 per week. In contrast, musicians in the white band of the big show tent earned $10 per week. By 1904, P.G. Lowery led an eighteen-piece band in the Sells Brothers sideshow.[69]

By 1894, the Wallace sideshow carried a six-piece black band and a few black sideshow "curiosity" acts.[70] The 1895 season featured sideshow acts including an African American man named Oskazuma. Oskazuma worked for several circus companies as a Zulu prince, worked with and managed Native American performance troupes, and performed with a show called

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[67] "Sells Brothers' Route for the Season of 1884: Places, Distance, Events, Etc.," (Houston Texas: Franklin Publishing House, November 1884), Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[68] Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Sells Brothers," *Bandwagon* 8, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1964): 7.

[69] P. G. Lowery File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[70] Wallace Route Book 1892, Wallace Shows File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Sweeney and Royer, a "Negro Knockabout" act. The 1896 season carried a slightly larger ten-piece black sideshow band, a second seven-piece black band called the Black Hussar Band, and other smaller black acts. In 1897 Jones' Black Hussar Band had eight members and two years later there was another eight-piece black sideshow band. By 1900 there was a 10-piece black sideshow band that performed black concert show acts.[71]

During each season, Wallace's black sideshow added band members, comedians, dancers, and skill or human oddity acts. By 1902, there was a sixteen-piece concert troupe that included minstrels, cakewalkers, and a sideshow band.[72] Throughout each season, the company carried several ethnically identified acts, that included Japanese, Creole, Arabian, and nine to fifteen piece concert ensembles that carried minstrel acts, cake-walkers, acrobats, comedians, singers, dancers, a French Octaroon act, and other sideshow acts such as the ever-popular Prince Mungo the Zulu.[73] In 1908, the circus had an 18-piece band with dancers and by 1912, P. G. Lowery led a twenty-piece band. By 1913, P. G. Lowery appeared on the first page of the route book in the "head of departments" section.[74]

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[71] Wallace Route Book 1900, The Great Wallace Show File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

[72] African American slaves originated the cakewalk dance, which mimicked the aristocratic European dances that whites performed on southern plantations. The cakewalk was a staple of blackface minstrel shows before the Civil War. After the war, blacks performed a cakewalk dance that imitated whites minstrels. By the 1890s, the cakewalk was a popular dance and shows performed it on a variety of stages. See Nathan Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance,* updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 273-274.

[73] In several seasons, including 1899, 1898, and 1897.

[74] Hagenbeck-Wallace Show 1913 Route Book, Hagenbeck-Wallace file, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

During the decades following Reconstruction the black sideshow evolved as a staple part of the circus. The band generally performed on a high platform directly behind the sideshow tent entrance, so that only a thin canvas separated it from the outside public. Circus managers did this to entice visitors inside. With the addition of the black sideshow band, the Wild West Exhibition, and the concert, or after circus show, it was now the music of the black bands that encouraged people to pay the higher entrance fee to attend the circus.[75] Ticket sellers were generally positioned in close proximity to the band on the other side of the canvas. The band stage was also used for the minstrel and vaudeville acts which, along with the band performed continuously throughout the day and night. The sideshow, also called the annex company, rotated band performances with stand-up comedians, jugglers and other performance art to keep a continual cycle of onlookers entertained.[76]

The Sells Brothers and Benjamin Wallace stand out for their willingness to hire black and Indian employees, for the relatively higher wages, and relatively better work conditions. However, the Sells and Wallace also established some racial hierarchies and neither of the companies showed black acts under their main show tents.[77] On the other hand, both companies employed Native Americans for equestrian and Wild West type shows inside the main tent. Changes in ownership during the first two decades of the twentieth century provided even more

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[75] See also Davis, 50. Circus goers often paid an extra fee, around twenty-five cents, to attend the after-show, or concert performance. The concert included the black sideshow band, an equestrian show, and provided an opportunity to watch as canvas men took down and packed away tents.

[76] W. C. Thompson, *On the Road with a Circus,* 1903.

[77] "Behind the Scenes: The Life of a Circus Employee as seen by a Herald Reporter," *The Carroll Herald* (Iowa), 15 July 1885.

challenges and drastically impacted the employees of the Forepaugh-Sells and the Hagenbeck-Wallace circuses.[78] For African American employees, old attitudes of racial discrimination were reestablished.[79] Changes in working conditions, pay cuts, bans on holding certain positions, and decreased job security became serious issues for black employees when the company came under management of Barnum and Bailey. In 1905, when the last Sells brother involved in the circus company died, Barnum and Bailey bought out the Forepaugh-Sells Show, and fired every black man in a leadership position.[80]

During this same period, middle class reformers and the Indian Bureau took measures to stop Native Americans from performing in Wild West and circus-based shows in the 1880s and 1890s. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs warned Indian performers that lived on reservations that they "must not look to this Office for favor or assistance."[81] They barred Indians from looking for employment in the circus industry. This prohibition undermined the continued employment of Native people by the circus show managers.[82]

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[78] See Helen Stoddart, *Rings of Desire: Circus History and Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); *Variety*, 26 January 1907; *Billboard*, 11 April 1942.

[79] In contrast, these changes had more positive effects on people in Miami County, Indiana. The American Circus Corporation based its headquarters in Miami County—in Peru, Indiana, neighboring city to the Godfroy reserve.

[80] Davis, 70.

[81] Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang: 2000), 184-185.

[82] *The Billboard,* February 1900.

Some American Indian performers were able to retain their careers in circus and Wild West shows. For instance, Native American employees in the *Adam Forepaugh Show*, the first circus to include an almost all-Indian cast equestrian show, retained their positions. In 1886, when several American Indians attempted to join the *Sells Brothers Circus* to create a Wild West Show, the Sells Brothers paid show producer Pawnee Bill an advance for their transportation. The operation failed when an Indian agent discovered and stalled the agents.[83] The Indian Commissioner claimed that he was "opposed to Indians being taken from the reservation for any but educational purposes."[84] The Sells eventually bought Adam Forepaugh's show and with it the Indian-cast Wild West show.

Despite all the challenges inside and out of the industry, Native American and African American men and women were offered a wider variety of jobs and career opportunities within the circus than in most other industries. Burgeoning professions included a growing number of self-made trainers, artists, and musicians who used the circus to either launch careers or to boost economic opportunities while not engaged in vaudeville, minstrelsy, and equestrian shows. Though they undoubtedly had their bottom line in mind, opportunities provided by circus owners to African American and American Indian employees opened doorways to many people of color. Those who decided to take the path of the circus life forged new economic paths, created beneficial social networks, and even devised ways to shift boundaries of race both inside and outside of the circus. Black managers and bandleaders advertised new positions for blacks and educated and trained them in the skills of running a sideshow business. It was these men that placed ads in national black newspapers, including the *Indianapolis Freeman*, the *Chicago*

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[83] Weisheimer, 96.

[84] *The Billboard,* February 1900.

Defender, and the *Kansas Herald*. Additionally, managers used these race papers as a forum for reporting on their successes, failures, and the dramas of day-to-day life on the road.[85]

Artists, Educators, Networkers and Entrepreneurs in the Circus

At the best times in their careers, these performers had the support of their employers. Employer support meant job security, relatively safe passage through otherwise dangerous territories, and a degree of creative and economic autonomy. While there may have been several cases of violence that went undocumented, there is evidence that some circus companies took measures to protect black and Native employees. The circus managers' willingness and ability to protect black and Indian performers and laborers was a crucial component of workers' success. The Great Wallace Show took measures to avoid incidents of racial violence such as the infamous Duluth lynching that claimed the lives of several black circus employees of the John Robinson Circus, but could not completely shield its employees. During the 1885 season the company scheduled single, morning shows in southern states and claimed that this was a measure taken to avoid the violence against employees typical of evening shows.[86] This strategy helped Wallace avoid a mob of sixteen armed men who aimed to harass circus employees at one southern venue.[87] In 1903, the Great Wallace Show encountered a race riot in Evansville, Indiana, and was not allowed to perform there. The citizens of Linton, Indiana, the next venue, announced that they would not allow the circus if it employed blacks. Wallace left

[85] Abbott and Seroff, 14.

[86] Condon, 4.

[87] Ibid.

all of his black employees in a nearby city and secretly brought them back just before the trains left that town.[88]

Several African American and American Indian circus performers exemplified the spirit of artistry, entrepreneurship, education and mentorship, while practicing their own interpretations of racial uplift and assimilation. Their backgrounds were diverse, but they shared many of the same characteristics and had the benefits of education and training. Native Americans in traveling entertainment industries also had a significant role in the growth of ragtime, jazz and other popular music.[89] Because audiences expected black sideshow bands at prominent circuses and Wild West shows, the industry created an expanding market for employment of minority performers and opportunities for musical education.

A second characteristic the most successful performers shared was their creation of or access to professional networks. Due to their experiences in the Sells Brothers and the Wallace circuses, performers created national and international networks, boosted their individual careers and served as safety nets for each other in difficult times. As they traveled, Native and African American performers recruited artists for their shows across the country and created networks that spanned the United States and even crossed overseas. They networked for purposes of education, professional advancement, and in some established mutual aide societies. Though their employers may have taken some measures to protect them against racial violence on the road, employees took their own measures to ensure safer and more comfortable travel. They created valuable networks along circus routes that made the traveling life throughout racist America more tolerable and used the circus to springboard careers. Some blacks and American

[88] Ibid.

[89] See Troutman.

Indians used their experiences in white-owned companies to raise capital for their own shows, launch new companies and act as safety nets for each other in difficult times. In 1906, Ernest Hogan said, "Salvation of the Negro race lies in the arts."[90] Hogan was a black ragtime artist who had recruited performers from Miami County. When Peru members of Hogan's troupe Bill Wilkins, Anna Brown, and Hummer Butler ran into financial difficulties in Europe in 1900, Peru people helped to raise the money to bring them home.[91]

A third characteristic that many successful African American and American Indian performers shared was the ability and willingness to rely on racial stereotypes to further their careers and enhance their economic well-being. Performers shifted their racial identification to create new acts or reinvented themselves as Indians to make their acts seem more exotic. On June 17, 1905, the *Michigan Daily* reported that the best tenors in vaudeville were "Brown and Brown," two "Indian boys from Butler Indian School."[92] Interestingly, the "Brown Brothers" were neither related, nor American Indian. Like other performers of the day, Brown and Brown chose to conceal that they were African American and performed as Native Americans. Five years later, Harry Brown, one of the "Indian" tenors, commented on professional race-shifting in the black news paper, *The Indianapolis Freeman:* "There are lots of acts that …are daily changing their nationality—those that can…. Seven years ago I put Indian before or after my

[90] *Indianapolis Freeman*, 7 November 1906.

[91] *Encyclopedia of Miami County,* "Pioneer Negroes of Peru, Indiana," Indiana State Library, 421.

[92] *The Michigan Daily*, 17 June 1905.

name, and it has been a savior for me."[93] Perhaps surprising now, The Brown Brothers' story may have been representative of many turn-of-the-century entertainers of color on traveling entertainment circuits. As The Brown Brothers story and the Harry Brown's own ambivalence toward his professional decisions illustrate, performing race was a troubled, though large part of the entertainment industry for African Americans. This era's ragtime and circus industries provided the first real opportunities for a wide range of black performers. However, deep roots of racism marred every new vista for performers of color.[94] White managers and show owners appeased white audiences by creating spaces for them to look in on black and Indian people without the dangers of moving beyond racial hierarchies or colonial rhetoric. Indiana's Miami people also found race an ambiguous category that allowed them to depict themselves as black, Pacific Islanders, or as American Indians from the other tribes. Countless African Americans and American Indians were hired to play Indians, African tribesmen, and other races in Wild West shows, Bible dramas, and other tragedies and comedies devised by circus managers.[95] This issue was not simply a matter of exploiter and exploited, or of the willingness to accept racist imagery. Performers of color sometimes used limited industry opportunities and race as a way to gain entrance into the industry.[96]

Circus performers learned to use white expectations about race in order to succeed across a broader variety of employment than were typically available to them. Minority performers

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[93] *Indianapolis Freeman,* 1 October 1910.

[94] Abbott and Seroff, 3.

[95] Kasson, 213-217.

[96] Philip Deloria, 14.

understood what they were doing and played upon the fears and expectations of white audiences to meet their aims and shape what they saw as theirs to manipulate. Performers even formed unofficial alliances by protecting the racial identities of their coworkers who performed race.[97] They maintained certain illusions on and off the stage to advance their careers. Al Wells, black performer and manager of a trapeze act said, "Colored novelty acts have never had the chance that our white brothers have had, nor do they get the salary." Wells failed to find work for his black trapeze troupe until he changed the title to *Los Cubanos, The Three Garcia Brothers*. White audiences, it seemed were fascinated by the opportunity to see "real" Cubans, and Wells' troupe worked steadily following the name change.[98]

P. G. Lowery, Ephraim Williams, Prince Oskazuma, Nabor Feliz Netzahualt, and Joe Davis were African American and American Indian men who joined circuses and used the industry as a vehicle for economic and social advancement. All of these men worked across the country. Some of them spent considerable time in the Midwest with either the Sells Brothers or the Great Wallace shows. Some of them worked for both circuses. Because of their successes, their careers were chronicled in circus industry journals and race papers. Their careers shared many common themes of black and Indian performers—the cooperation of management, formal or self education, networking skills, and the willingness to invoke race as a tool in their careers.

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[97] See Henry T. Sampson, *The Ghost Walks: A Chronological History of Blacks in Show Business, 1865-1910,* Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1988), chapter eight.

[98] Sampson, 531-532; Al Wells, "Negro Novelty Acts," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 26 August 1916.

P. G. Lowery

P. G. Lowery's lengthy career, in many ways, exemplified African American ingenuity and perseverance inside of the circus industry. He was born in Topeka Kansas in 1869 into a middle class and musically educated family and received his first instrument as a young child.[99] In adulthood, he both collaborated with circus managers and fought against their unfair policies. He built several successful and highly popular traveling, circus annex and side shows. Most notably, he educated hundreds of black musicians while he kept multi-racial audiences in awe of his expertise on the cornet and as a band director. An examination of his life offers insight into the experiences of black performers in the circus from the 1880s to the 1920s. For several years Lowery divided his time between his own companies, the Sells Brothers Circus, and the Great Wallace Shows. Circus managers valued Lowery and took special steps to ensure the safety of his sideshow performers by providing him with his own rail cars.[100] His fame spanned the nation. In 1910, the *Freeman* declared:

> Since Lowery's initiative…. no less than fourteen white tents are giving employment to big colored companies…. Something like three hundred people—performers and musicians—are employed in this phase of the show business. The number promises to increase.[101]

In addition to training generations of circus band and ragtime musicians, Lowery also played cornet with several of the era's famous musicians.[102]

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[99] Watkins, 7.

[100] Ibid., 92.

[101] "P. G. Lowery, Originator," *The Freeman* (Indianapolis), 9 July 1910.

[102] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged But Right,* 206-207.

Figure 31: Lowery Band. Members of the P. G. Lowery Side Show Band, circa 1913. (P. G. Lowery File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

The P. G. Lowery Band consisted of nearly two-dozen members and sometimes grew to dozens for important engagements. They toured with Wallace from 1905 through 1913. Lowery was pleased with this arrangement, saying of the collaboration, "good people, good treatment, and great show."[103] In fact, Lowery tended to speak very highly of the industry. In his early career he praised the circus life and the opportunities that it made available to African American entertainers. Lowery asserted, "It is generally understood by the public at large that circus people have a tough time. I deny the assertion and will say for good treatment, equal justice and sure salary, give me the circus."[104] While Lowery's band lived in Peru much of the time, his celebrity brought many guest performers to the region. These guests represented blacks from across the country and from varied entertainment fields such as vaudeville, minstrel shows, and even classical ensembles. Many were musicians that Lowery had previously worked with on the

[103] *Indianapolis Freeman,* 10 June 1905.

[104] *Indianapolis Freeman,* 9 November 1901.

vaudeville circuit or during his schooling at the New England Conservatory, where he was classically trained.

Figure 32: Job Postings. Job ads in the *Indianapolis Freeman* for circus musicians. From: Clifford Edward Watkins, *Showman: the Life and Music of Perry George Lowery,* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003).

By the 1913 season, Lowery was listed on the first page of the Hagenbeck-Wallace yearbook, alongside individual "Head of Departments" as "director of the sideshow tent." Other members of the "Executive" and "Business" staff included the equestrian director, the musical director, the general press agent, and representative, and the official announcer.[105] Eventually, the black side show band, accompanied by a comedy or variety act, was a staple in the Wallace shows. The Lowery Band was advertised on a larger than life canvas alongside the main entrance and advertisements for other 'essential' acts, such as the equestrian show.

As black sideshow acts increased, so did Lowery's popularity. In 1913, a *Freeman* correspondent noted, "P.G. always freely shares his schooling, which he paid very dearly for in

[105] *Hagenbeck-Wallace Official Route Book 1913 [1913]*: 28, Hagenbeck Wallace Combined Show file, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Boston."[106] Lowery's traveling circus sideshow band solidified its reputation as a traveling conservatory for black and white circus performers. One correspondent in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania wrote, "The Barnum and Bailey show, also the 101 Ranch were in our city with colored companies…but as soon as Lowery's band played their first number one could see a vast difference in Lowery's band and the bands with other companies…. When hearing Lowery's band, one can easily tell they are from the Lowery school."[107] In 1916, *The Indianapolis Freeman* asserted that, "P. G. Lowery's band is known as the 'School of Music.' The best musicians in the profession are from the Lowery School."[108]

P. G. Lowery was a skillful networker, having had experience in many types of show businesses across the country. Just as he had done in Columbus, Lowery aided African American residents of Miami County in the Wallace circuses. One such aspiring musician was local Miami County resident, Sarah Byrd.[109] Lowery helped her to successfully audition for internationally touring musical companies. Byrd toured Europe with *Black Patti*, one of the most famous contemporary women in black Ragtime entertainment.[110]

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[106] "Lowery's Band, Orchestra, Minstrel Show and Other Attractions with The Wallace and Hagenbeck Show," *Indianapolis Freeman*, 14 June 1913.

[107] "Harrisburg, Pa., Lowery's Minstrels, the Best Under Canvas," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 31 May 1913.

[108] "Stage," *Indianapolis Freeman*, 25 March 1916.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Black Patti was the stage name for soprano soloist, Matilda Sissieretta Joyner Jones. Black Patti had launched her international career on a six-month tour in the West Indies with J. R. Smith's Tennessee Jubilee Singers. The musicians returned in February 1889, and *The Indianapolis Freeman* published a series of interviews that chronicled the tour in June 15, 1889. See also Bernard L. Peterson, Jr., *A Century of Musicals in Black and White: An Encyclopedia*

Lowery also used the circus to create better working conditions for black circus employees. He protested the demeaning messages of the minstrel show with his own touring show called, "This is not a Minstrel Show." He strengthened black management by training young leaders. Lowery also formed a labor union with some of the foremost black show managers who sought to protect African Americans "by demanding first-class accommodations and keeping the salaries up to standard."[111] When Hagenbeck-Wallace management cut wages and benefits for its black workers, Lowery led a strike of black performers in the 1915 season. Lowery took his sideshow troupe to a smaller show called Richard and Pringles' Georgia Minstrels. *The Freeman* provided an explanation: "He refused the engagement because the manager requested his men to double canvas. P.G. informed the manager he would leave… and the same was heartily endorsed by his band and every band director in the circus business…"[112] The black performers' strike cut deep into the season's profits. At the end of the 1915 season, Hagenbeck-Wallace gave in and asked Lowery back under better conditions.[113] A writer in *The Freeman* exclaimed, "I am proud to know that the Hagenbeck-Wallace management are forced

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of Musical Stage Works by, About, or Involving African Americans (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

[111] *Indianapolis Freeman*, 28 December 1907.

[112] "P. G. Lowery Returns to the Circus Field," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 25 March 1916. Doubling canvas meant that in addition to their regular duties in the sideshow tent, and on parade, Lowery's men would have doubled as roustabouts, driving and pulling stakes, getting white tops up and in order, if Hagenbeck-Wallace, now owned by the American Circus corporation, not Benjamin Wallace himself, had convinced Lowery's prestigious organization to double canvas, many other circuses may have followed suit. See Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged But Right,* 199.

[113] Watkins, 99.

to seek Prof. P. G. Lowery's services to regain the patronage of old that they have failed to get this season without him and his classy company of musicians and singers."[114] In 1920, P. G.

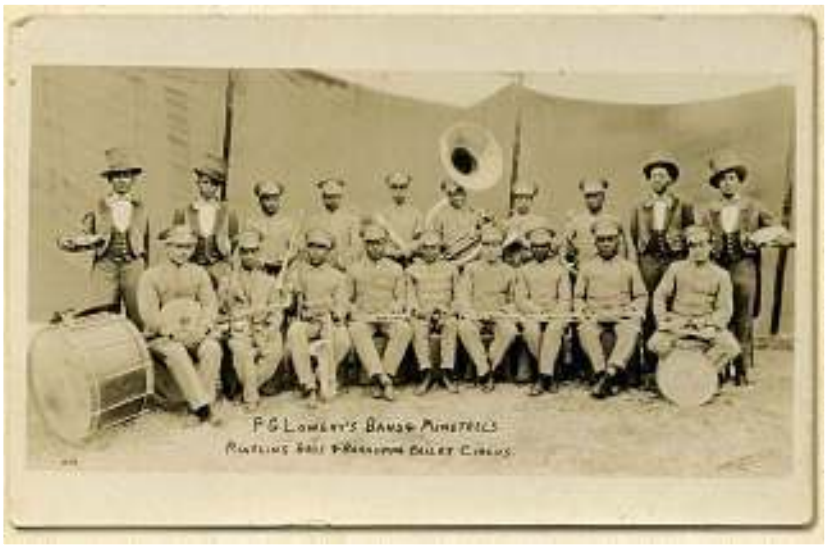

Figure 33: Lowery Band: P. G. Lowery's band in 1920 in The Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey. (P. G. Lowery File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Lowery's sideshow band broke the big tent race barrier and became the first African American band to play under the main show tent in the Ringling Brothers Circus. Ringling had banned black performers up to that point.[115] In 1924, Lowery and his employees created the Lowery Brothers' Circus in Cleveland, Ohio to benefit the Cuyahoga Lodge #95, an African American chapter of the fraternal order of Elks.[116]

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[114] "Notes from R. Roy Pope's Band, Ringling Brothers Band, Ringling Brothers Circus," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 4 September 1915.

[115] *The Indianapolis Freeman,* 17 April 1920; See also Clifford E. Watkins, *The Showman and The Slave: The Life and Music of Perry George Lowery,* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 114.

[116] Watkins, 114 and 116.

Ephraim Williams

Ephraim Williams, an African American from Wisconsin, owned several circuses from 1888 to 1902. He may have been the first black circus owner in the United States.[117] As a young man, Williams shined shoes in Milwaukee.[118] Several circuses and equestrian shows performed and wintered in Milwaukee, and Williams sought out opportunities with these shows. He became an accomplished horse trainer and magician at a young age. Working for various shows, he saved enough money to invest in his own production in 1885, the Ferguson and Williams Monster Show, which he based in Appleton, Wisconsin. Williams later partnered with a German trapeze artists and sword swallower named Frank Skerbeck. With the Skerbeck family, Williams opened Professor Williams' Consolidated American and German Railroad Shows in 1893. He based the show in Medford, Wisconsin and used fifteen railroad cars during the touring season. The Medford newspaper wrote, "It is beyond question that with the company selected for this year, Prof. Williams need not turn out of the road for any show going… His skin is dark, but he will come out on top yet, or know the reason why."[119] By 1898, he owned 100 Arabian horses and had twenty-six employees.

At the turn of the century, Williams experienced financial difficulties and from about 1901 to 1907 he worked for his former partner, Skerbeck, and for other shows until he was again able to reestablish his own company. By 1910, Williams found enough investors to raise the capital to return to the circuit. He called his new company Professor Eph Williams' Famous

[117] *The Freeman*, May 23, 1908; Abbott and Seroff, 309-310.

[118] Hoh and Rough, 68.

[119] Ibid.

Troubadours. He also toured an all-black tent show called "Silas Green From New Orleans," which played one-night stands throughout the South. The Silas Green show became one of the longest lasting tent shows in American show business history. Williams continued touring his equestrian show and performed with legends such as the blues singer Bessie Smith. Eph illiams died in 1930 in Florida.

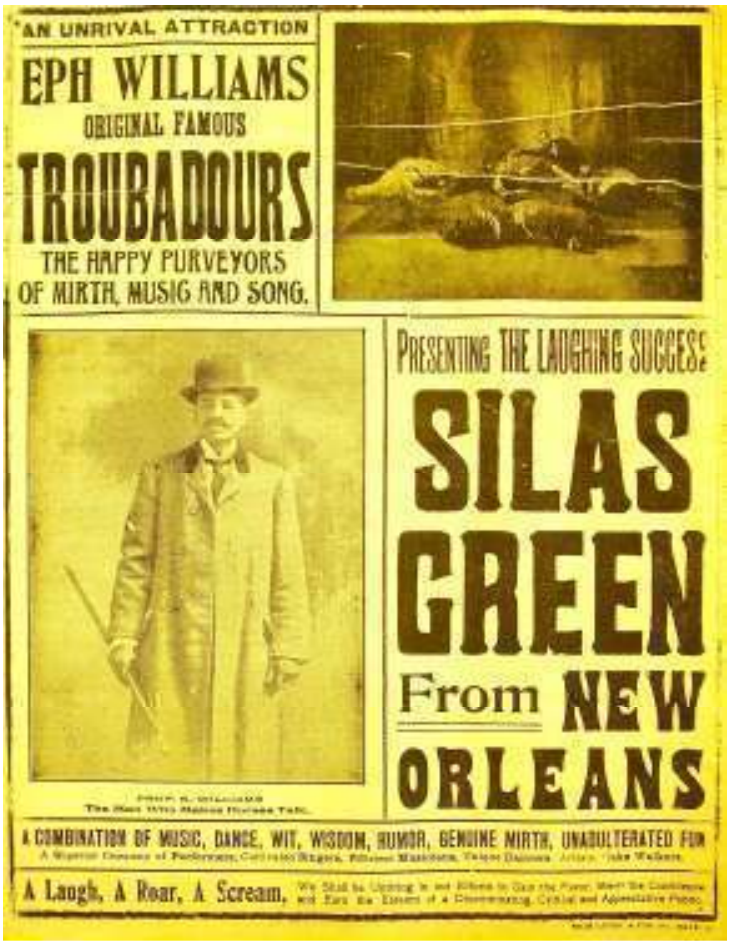

Figure 34: Eph Williams poster. (Blacks in Shows File, Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center Circus World Museum Baraboo, Wisconsin)

Prince Oskazuma

Prince Oskazuma was another of the circus sideshow era's Renaissance men. Born in 1865, he began his public career in the 1890s. Oskazumza toured as a lecturer on African

customs, claimed to be a native of South Africa and educated in Great Britain.[120] By 1894, Prince Oskazuma, "African Warrior, Lecturer, Mimic, Fire Friend" was touring with the Sells and Renfrow Circus.[121] During the 1901 season he toured with the Buffalo Bill Wild West show and then spent many years touring with various circuses and Wild West Shows. One paper said of him, "The famous black scout, Prince Askajuma (sic), is a wonder in the side show. He holds his audience spellbound. As an announcer and ballyhoo man he cannot be beat."[122] Oskazuma developed a special relationship with the Native Americans on the Wild West tours and used the names Hawk, Cherokee Charlie, and the Black Scout.[123] During the 1917 season, Oskazuma signed an agreement with Indian agent, Francis Nelson to manage a troupe of Sioux performers. The agreement charged,

> Hawk [sic] to book and handle all Sioux Indians and make contracts for them, with medicine shows, vaudeville houses, parks, fairs, expositions, Wild West, circus and carnivals and any outdoor engagements. Francis Nelson is Indian agent and superintendent of the Indians with the Big Jess Willard and Buffalo Bill Show. Mr. Nelson is a nephew of Frank C. Goings, mayor and chief of police of Pine Ridge Agency, S.D., and the Sioux Indians are particular friends of the Black Scout and have adopted him in the tribe.[124]

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[120] *The Billboard,* 21 February 1925, announced that Oskazuma would celebrate his sixtieth birthday on March 5, 1925; Ancestry.com also confirms his birth on March 5, 1865. New York Passenger list 1820-1857 from ancestry.com: Year: *1913*; Microfilm Serial: *T715*; Microfilm Roll: *T715_2013*; Line: *1*; Page Number: *79*. Name: Prince Oskazuma Birth: 5 Mar 1865 – Ohio Departure: Havana, Cuba Arrival: 15 Feb 1913 - New York, New York.

[121] *The Billboard,* 21 February 1925.

[122] Prince Askazuma [sic], Black Scout, "Fine Performances Of Superior Shows Attract Large Crowds," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 18 August 1917.

[123] Abbott and Seroff, 190.

[124] "Prince Azkazuma Visits the Buffalo Bill Show," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 28 July 1917.

Oskazuma was involved in a diverse range of activities from promoting boxing matches to philanthropic activities.[125] He helped to organize fundraisers and benefits for the American Indian Brotherhood, a retirement home for black actors, and an orphanage band.[126] In 1914, he was the minstrel show manager and assistant managing director of Young Buffalo's Wild West Shows, the first African American to hold that position in the show.[127] Later in the 1920s, he toured a troupe of Native American performers.[128]

Nabor Feliz Netzahualt

Nabor Feliz Netzahualt, a Pueblo sculptor, bead worker, historian, interpreter and storyteller, was born on August 22, 1877 in Utah of parents who were born in New Mexico, and died in December 1972.[129] Feliz worked in several traveling shows ranging from human oddity

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[125] "Minstrel and Tent Show Talk," *Billboard,* 26 January 1924.

[126] "J. A. Jackson's Page," *Billboard,* 21 April 1923; "J. A. Jackson's Page," *Billboard,* 15 November 1924.

[127] "William H. Reed's [sic] Band," *Indianapolis Freeman*, 27 Sept 1913 and "Seeing Young Buffalo Bill's Show," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 25 July 1914.

[128] "Here and there Among the Folks," *Billboard,* 6 December 1924.

[129] See the Social Security Death Index, Number: *528-10 3916*;Issue State: *Utah*; Issue Date: *Before 1951*; Year: 1920; Census Place: Orlando, Orange, Florida; Roll: T625_228; Page: 14A; Enumeration District: 116; Image: 773. Census records conflict on Feliz's birth. A California Passenger and Crew list gives his birth in Aztec, New Mexico on March 22, 1882. (See Ancestry.com. California Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1957 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008-2011.) Other census references give an approximate date of birth in 1887 and 1877 in Utah, but reference that his parents were born in New Mexico.

tents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He performed alongside the Hilton Siamese twins, armless man Barney Nelson, and elastic skin man Nels Nelson at the Mississippi Valley Fair in 1923.

Figure 35: *Lightening Sculptor*, Nabor Feliz Netzahualt. (http://www.quasi-modo.net/Nabor_Feliz accessed 15 August 2011)

Feliz worked for the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey sideshow from 1940 to 1942.[130] He is listed in the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey route book as "Nabor Feliz,

[130] Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Route, Personnel and Statistics for the Season of 1942, Sarasota, FL, J. C. Johnson, 1942.

Pueblo Indian Sculptor."[131] He also worked for the Clyde Beatty and Cole Brothers Circus sideshow that were based in Peru, Indiana after the incorporation of the Hagenbeck Wallace Circus into the American Circus Corporation. He traveled with circuses most of his life. He had been traveling with a show the year he died in1972.[132] Feliz's sideshow act was to sculpt while telling stories. He used sculptures to illustrate his stories, and earned the name "Lightening Sculptor" for the speed with which changed one figure into another. Between shows, he made silver and turquois jewelry.[133]

Storytelling, sculpting and selling jewelry for the circus was not Netzahualt's only occupation. From around 1919 through the 1950s, he maintained relationships with several museums and art societies. In 1919, Netzahualt contacted the Carnegie Institute and donated several pieces of clay sculptures, which he requested be placed in the institute's Pueblo exhibit to demonstrate "that one of his race can, though self-instructed, attain to the standards of modern art." [134] The Carnegie record went on to say, "The model of the grazing buffalo and the eagle are particularly fine."[135] A later report from the Carnegie Institute recorded that Netzahualt had

[131] Ibid.

[132] The Circus in America Fox and Parkinson.

[133] Erny Karoly, circushistory.org, accessed 20 September 2011.

[134] The Carnegie Institute Annual Reports of the Officers, Committees, and Departments for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1919, Vol 22-26 (Pittsburgh, PA, 1919).

[135] Ibid.

donated several other sculptures that were based on his series that he had created for the American Red Cross. This series was designed as gifts for volunteers at donation centers.[136]

Joe Davis

Joe Davis was born around 1880 in Genoa, Nebraska and lived in Oklahoma and Texas for much of his life. He traveled with Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill in the 101 Ranch shows. In his thirties, he traveled "the states for the interest of our people—the redskins."[137] He gave lectures on Native American tribal traditions, and aimed to raise awareness in the American public of the cultural and historical differences among Native Americans. In a letter to Carlos Montezuma's publication, *WASSAJA* he wrote:

> If they ask me what I represent I generally tell them, personally of my race, and that I am here to explain about the Indians, and let them know that we Indians are not sleeping, but that we are really at work, so that we can take care of our ownselves (sic) and interests. We believe in justice, sticking together and living like brothers and sisters. Our blood is not going to pass out very soon. We have many of our boys in the service, and a few Indian girls are with the Red Cross in France. We are doing our bit. We are willing to fight in defense of the flag, which our forefathers understood, years ago—the Red, White and Blue.[138]

When his career on the 101 Ranch ended, Davis included in his travels visits to Indian schools such as the Hampton Institute. On one visit in 1915, the Hampton's publication, the *Southern*

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[136] Ibid.

[137] *WASSAJA* 3, no. 5 (August 1918).

[138] Ibid.

Workman wrote that Davis gave a show and spent several hours "at the Wigwam" inspiring Indian boys and making cheerful and philosophical remarks.[139]

Outcomes of a Successful Circus Career

The most successful Native and African American circus performers often went on to become leaders within their communities. Their knowledge of the circus led them to describe those experiences with their home communities or with the residents of towns that they visited. Black and Native American entertainers were often hired to play racially demeaning or stereotypical roles, but this employment also gave them opportunities to cement cultural ties among themselves.[140] Native American performers often met with Native people in the audience after performances. It was common for Native Americans to arrive from nearby areas to attend circuses and related activities. In 1896 in Ashland, Wisconsin, Cody's Wild West show presented an opportunity for peacemaking between some historic enemies, Lakota circus employees and the 500 Ojibwa that attended the production. Cody helped arrange a meeting between the Ojibwa and Lakota at which the two communities held a powwow and smoked the peace pipe. The route book observed that it was the first time in almost forty years that "these two old enemies have met on friendly terms."[141] On another occasion, an *Indianapolis Freeman*

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[139] *Southern Workman* 44 no. 7, (January 1915): 59.

[140] Davis, 184.

[141] Ibid.

article reported that in Chamberlain, South Dakota, Indians created a large encampment for two days while they waited for the circus to arrive.[142]

African Americans, too, found the circus and Wild West show to be places in which to affirm cultural traditions.[143] In 1891, *The Freeman* reported that in Columbus, "The past week has been one of enjoyment among the colored people of this city. The first thing occurring was one of the most successful concerts we have attended for quite a while. Those taking part in the concert were… a band organized for the purpose of traveling with Sells' Brothers circus…."[144] The Sells band and its accompanying classical ensembles included a star line up of African American musicians from Columbus and around the country. The black sideshow was crucial in the development and dissemination of early ragtime, blues and jazz music. By 1910, every major touring circus company had a black sideshow band.[145] By 1920, the term jazz band was synonymous with the circus sideshow band and newspapers claimed that circus audiences were "jazz crazy."[146]

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[142] "Notes of the J. H. Harris Band and Minstrel Company with Gollmer Brothers Shows," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 6 June 1914.

[143] See L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933,* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); and Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right,* 207.

[144] *Indianapolis Freeman,* 9 May 1891.

[145] Abbott and Seroff, 158.

[146] See "Al G. Barnes' Greatest Wild Animal Circus," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 13 March 1920; "Walter L. Main's Shows," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 31 July 1920; "Circus Friends Meet," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 17 July 1920.

As circuses increasingly traveled abroad, some Native American and African American performers chose to extend their European and Australian tours. Some even relocated permanently overseas. In 1889, P. T. Barnum took his show to London, England and included several black acts, including, "Charley and Oscar, Zulus" and "Butler's Troupe of Twenty-three Jubilee Singers." When Barnum returned in 1890, the *Clipper* reported that some of the jubilee singers remained to fill special engagements.[147] Eph Thompson, the African American elephant trainer from the Forepaugh Circus, relocated to London, established his own show, and employed African American aerialists and other performers.[148] Thompson made extensive tours of Europe and northern Africa before he died in England.

Conclusion

Scholars of African American History study the Harlem Renaissance in the twentieth century, but rarely study the individuals and groups who were that movement's cultural and entrepreneurial predecessors, the entertainers who travelled vaudeville, minstrel, Wild West and circus show circuits. Even less-often mentioned in the context of the circus are the Native Americans who performed and labored under circus tents across the country. Like their vaudevillian and film industry counterparts, African American and Native American circus performers were part of the of the music and entertainment industries, creating uniquely American forms of art that influenced American culture. Their journey into the circus industry,

[147] "Under White Tents," *New York Clipper,* 19 October 1889; 25 January 1890; 11 March 1890.

[148] Davis, 71.

as entertainers and laborers, is a lesser-understood component of American history that echoes many of the challenges and triumphs of American Indians and African Americans of the era.[149]

Entertainers and laborers in the circus industry have been widely overlooked for their ability to travel, though many circus entertainers' careers heavily overlap both the music and sports industries. Both Native and African Americans took advantage of traveling with circuses, Wild West shows, and musical ensembles. Though Native and African Americans in the circus encountered racism and unfair treatment, they were able to travel much more often than their contemporaries because travel was required for employment and in some cases their circus companies took measures to protect black and Native American employees. This enabled them to explore the continent, connect with other people of Native and African ancestry, and travel the world. They seized opportunities to travel, expanded their careers, economic prospects, and challenged racial mores of the day.

Travel opportunities for Native American and African American circus employees increased from the Civil War through the early decades of the twentieth century due to the increasing popularity of circuses and the skill of many of these unusual but highly talented performers. As circuses expanded their routes, employees gained access to wider travel opportunities. Travel also exposed employees to a wide range of peoples and cultures across the country with diverse audiences that included a wide cross section of American society.[150] The

[149] See Abbot and Seroff, *Out of Sight.*

[150] "The Circus Enthusiasts: Redmen Unrivaled in Their Love for the Show, Mexicans, Negroes, and Chinese Little less Eager in their Admiration, Says an Old Employee," *New York Times,* 28 April 1901.

sheer variety of people on a circus or Wild West show lot, for many, provided a special occurrence, itself.[151]

[151] Sylvester Russell, "Chicago Weekly Review," *Indianapolis Freeman,* 22 July 1911.

Chapter Six

Race, Respectability and Class:

Circus Performers Confront Media and Middle-Class Values

This chapter argues that while African American and Native American circus artists challenged discrimination and federal Indian policy, they also confronted certain middle-class values within black and Indian leadership. Circus work put artists in a precarious relationship with many of the middle class values associated with racial uplift and Indian citizenship agendas. Few of the educated African Americans and American Indians who performed in circuses reflected middle class values. The flamboyant nature of their professions openly challenged the ideals of hard work and upright behaviors that many leaders advocated.[1] Ultimately, these performers challenged reformist attitudes that portrayed religious morality and hard work as the only pathway to stability and middle class respectability. This chapter examines conflicts between African American and American Indian leaders' perspectives on racial uplift and citizenship and performers' perspectives on economic opportunities with traveling popular entertainment.

First, this chapter will explore diverse approaches to African American racial uplift ideology and some of the tensions that arose around black artists' involvement in popular entertainment. Some aspects of uplift ideology created tension between black upper and lower classes. The discourse in African American newspapers regarding black people's involvement in circuses illustrates some aspects of these tensions. Music, according to black proponents of

[1] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Garrett, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1-20.

racial uplift, should be used to show class, education, and refinement. Black people involved in circuses and minstrel shows often played popular dance music, ragtime, and blues—all lower and working class expressions of music that the black middle class sometimes denigrated in favor of classical forms of music. While African American newspapers revealed this tension, they also revealed a variety of attitudes toward circus minstrelsy and its relationship to racial uplift.

Next, this chapter will explore various perspectives of Native American leaders who engaged in debates on how to best bring about American Indian citizenship and respond to federal Indian policy. Debates surrounding citizenship among American Indian people at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century had several implications for class, education and respectable work. Both Native American leaders and government Indian agents criticized circus work and the American Indians who pursued it. American Indian newspapers and journals often spoke out against circus participation and urged Indians not to join what they believed to be counterproductive and demeaning displays of anti-Indian propaganda. Still, many American Indians performed a wide variety of circus acts including equestrian shows and musical entertainment. Among American Indian artists, music reflected a variety of attitudes within Native communities and challenged federal Indian policies. Both the *Journal for the Society of American Indians* and Indian boarding school journals illustrated these tensions, both from Indian people and white reformers' perspectives.

Finally, this chapter will examine some of the personal perspectives of circus performers and will attempt to evaluate the impact of how assimilation values affected Native American performers and how racial uplift affected African American performers. Circus and other traveling show performers built careers and businesses that spanned the globe, broke race

barriers directly and indirectly, and inspired race pride among black and Indian audiences. Many nineteenth-century leaders believed that racial equality was best proven through the adoption of prevailing middle class moral standards and through hard work. Native American and African Americans involved in the circus industry strove toward social and economic equality through hard work and artistic and musical achievement, but were less concerned with certain middle class respectability.

Uplift and Music at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

After Emancipation, African Americans enthusiastically pursued education, full citizenship and economic independence as part of efforts to bring about racial uplift for all African Americans. However, with the withdrawal of federal troops from the South in 1877 and the 1896 Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, white supremacy and Jim Crow segregation laws dominated social relations in the South. Between 1890 and 1906 Southern constitutions also eliminated blacks from the political arena by denying them the right to vote, which had been guaranteed to them under the Fifteenth Amendment. Disfranchisement became commonplace and the widespread use of violence terrorized black people and thwarted political activism. Northern states also limited black people's livelihoods through a culture of *de facto* racial segregation. Across the country, racial discrimination severely limited economic opportunities for African Americans to agricultural and unskilled labor.

In the decades leading up to the twentieth century, African American leaders discussed and debated the best ways to bring social and economic equality to black people across the country. Through the work of racial uplift—an ideology that promoted education, land ownership and self-help—many black leaders believed that African American people could

come to enjoy full American citizenship. However, there was a great diversity among black leaders and their responses to racial violence ranged from protest and agitation, to accommodation. The most pressing question was how to educate the masses of black people. Some African American leaders favored industrial education, arguing that black people at that time were best suited for manual labor. Other leaders supported higher education to aid in the formation of an African American professional class.

Proponents of uplift were compelled to help lower class people. One way they did this was to expel the stereotypes whites directed at all blacks, especially women, regardless of class affiliation. In her 1904 presidential address to the National Association of Colored Women, Mary Church Terrell admonished her peers, insisting that the Black elite were not living up to their calling to uplift the less educated, lower class members of the race:

> It has been suggested, and very appropriately, I think, that this Association should take as its motto—*Lift as we climb.* In no way could we live up to such a sentiment better than by coming into closer touch with the masses of our women, by whom, whether we will or not, the world will always judge the womanhood of the race. Even though we wish to shun them, and hold ourselves entirely aloof from them, we cannot escape the consequences of their acts. So, that, if the call of duty were disregarded altogether, policy and self-preservation would demand that we go down among the lowly, the illiterate, and even the vicious to whom we are bound by the ties of race and sex, and put forth every possible effort to uplift and reclaim them.[2]

Uplift ideology even extended overseas as African American Christian missionaries sought to convert and civilize African communities and to instill acceptable attitudes about religion, sexuality, gender, and other cultural practices.[3]

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[2] Mary Church Terrell, "The Duty of the National Association of Colored Women," in Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, ed., *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 206-207.

[3] Thomas O. Beidelman, review of *Black Baptists and African Missions: The Origins of a Movement, 1880-1915,* by Sandy Martin, *Ethnohistory* (Summer 1991): 350.

Debates over black people's education and place in American society divided African American leadership and also created tensions between upper and lower classes. Whatever their position on education, black leaders often countered anti-black stereotypes by emphasizing class differences among African Americans and encouraged conformity to middle class values among the lower classes.[4] Uplift was a top-down social movement in which educated blacks felt that they carried the burden of leading the black lower classes into a modern way of life and full citizenship.[5] Some black leaders envisioned themselves as intermediaries between white and black America.[6] For example, black churchwomen engaged in service projects that encouraged respectability and middle-class behavior among urban blacks who retained rural, or lower-class habits of speech, dress, worship, and other distinct cultural patterns.[7]

The values that fueled African American uplift ideology, however, had some conflicting intra-racial outcomes. By affirming their own respectability through the moralistic rhetoric of "uplifting the race," and advocating the moral guidance of the black masses, African American middle-class leaders supported racial stereotyping of lower and working class blacks. Historian Kevin Gaines argued:

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[4] Gaines, 67.

[5] Sarah Schmalenberger, "Shaping Uplift though Music," *Black Music Research Journal,* vol. 28, no. 2 (Fall, 2008): 59.

[6] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 195-196.

[7] Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Women in the Middle West: The Michigan Experience," in *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Reconstruction of American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 60.

> While this ideology of a representative, civilized, better class of blacks challenged dehumanizing stereotypes, it also exploited them, could never fully escape them, and thus endorsed the developmental theories of racial differences that made black disenfranchisement, peonage, and more violent forms of repression seem justifiable to so many. Imploring the majority culture to see past color and to recognize class differences among blacks, black elites sought to rise rhetorically on the backs of those 'primitive masses' presumably awaiting the uplifting benevolence of their supposed superiors.[8]

Intra-racial politics of class and respectability, then, became another layer of discrimination that further encumbered black lower classes.

African American media reflected a variety of views on cultural expression and uplift, especially in the realm of music and performance. For many educated African Americans, music played a critical role in facilitating a respectable black culture and racial uplift. Classical music embodied the middle class ideal of gentility and challenged white cultural supremacy by showing that blacks, too, appreciated respectable music.[9] Black musical clubs supported black ensembles and orchestras and encouraged African Americans to attend music conservatories in Europe. Others, like Harriet Gibbs Marshall, received classical training and went on to found conservatories for black musicians.[10]

Popular music of the day, however, was not as respectable and usually did not meet the aims of uplift ideology. Of the era's most popular musical forms were ragtime and blues. All of these genres found large audiences under circus tents and in vaudeville and minstrel shows. Embedded in many of these venues, also, was a language and tradition of denigrating African American culture and portraying black people as childlike, backward, and unsophisticated.

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[8] Kevin Gaines, "Assimilationist Minstrelsy as Racial Uplift Ideology: James D. Corrother's Literary Quest for Black Leadership," *American Quarterly* (September 1993): 346.

[9] Schmalenberger, 59.

[10] Ibid., 57.

During the antebellum era, African American papers decried circuses and similar traveling exhibitions for their racist portrayals of black people. These shows primarily involved minstrel shows in which white men blackened their faces and portrayed and mocked aspects of African American life on Southern plantations**.** Black writers unanimously spoke out against such portrayals. Frederick Douglass wrote that, blackface imitators were "the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens."[11]

In the decades following Reconstruction, African American papers included entertainment news and encouraged readers to attend ballets, operas and symphonic orchestra performances as markers of middle class status and tools for educating children. The nationally distributed *Chicago Defender*, an influential anti-racist weekly black newspaper established in 1905, reflected some assimilationist aims in promoting African Americans to excel at European art forms. Cultivation of European classical music was an ideal vehicle for practicing genteel behaviors. It showed that the listener and performer were members of an elite group and instructed the less fortunate in proper values and conduct.[12]

As African American participation in popular entertainment grew, their presence in popular traveling entertainment posed a problem for middle class black leaders and advocates of racial uplift. Black papers in this period reveal these tensions between uplift ideals and black entertainers. Despite these tensions, post-bellum, pre-Harlem black media reactions to traveling

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[11] Frederick Douglass, *The North Star,* 27 October 1848, in Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 15.

[12] Lawrence Schenbeck, "Music, Gender, and "Uplift" in the Chicago Defender, 1927-1937," *The Musical Quarterly* (Autumn 1997), 344.

popular entertainment grew to range from passionate disapproval of the stereotypes the industry upheld to eager admiration of the fame and genuine artistic accomplishments of African American artists in the national and international spotlight.

An uneasy consensus emerged among national black papers in the decades before the turn of the century. Popular entertainment, though representative of lower classes and often understood as antithetical to middle class values, could be used as a vehicle of economic uplift.[13] Classically trained African American musicians often found work in minstrel shows, though, as they sometimes lamented in papers, they preferred to find work in orchestras. They published open letters that described ways they negotiated race during their performances, passing as white, Indian, and Hispanic in order to find work. When they did, and especially when they became successful or famous, editorial and entertainment writers applauded their fellow African Americans for overcoming obstacles and in some cases beating the racist system. Black papers exuded a genuine excitement and joyfulness when African American people became famous or successful. Writers respected musicians and performing artists—whether it was on the opera stage or in a circus sideshow stand. When an individual overcame adversity and racism, black papers lauded them and held them up as examples of race pride. The *Chicago Defender* came to reason that to support black artists in their endeavors was, in fact, a matter of racial uplift.

American Indian Citizenship and the Politics of Music

The Dawes Act of 1887 attempted to force assimilation onto Native American people. The act dissolved reservations, granted individual land allotments, and sold millions of acres of surplus land that had not been allotted to Indians to white farmers. Simultaneously, the Bureau

[13] *The Southern Workman* on the other hand, did not mention black participation in circuses.

of Indian Affairs ruled that Indian children would be removed from their families and sent to distant boarding schools. Reformers reasoned that if American Indians were to survive into the twentieth century, they had to shun their tribal identities and become Christian Americans with middle class values. The end goal of the Dawes Act and boarding schools was to take away tribal communally-owned lands, transform Native American men into farmers, transform Native American women into house wives, and end Native American ways of life.[14]

Like middle class black spokespeople, many American Indian leaders pushed for Indians to assimilate to middle-class Christian values. Leaders spoke out for Indian equality and spoke out against the loss of tribal lands, the kidnapping of children, and the appalling practices in boarding schools. Many Indian leaders pushed for citizenship because they thought this would give Indians people better control over their daily lives. American citizenship would be the most productive and logical way to fit into American society. One of the first forums for Native American citizenship was the Society of American Indians. Fifty Native American men and women from various tribal affiliations established the SAI in Columbus, Ohio in 1911. They aimed "to encourage Indian leadership, promote self-help, and foster the assimilation of Indians while encouraging them to exhibit pride in their race."[15] To these ends, the SAI addressed various problems facing Native Americas from health care and education to civil rights and issues with the federal Indian policy. The SAI advocated for the individual absorption of Indian people into American society as patriotic citizens, while it also placed value on and pride in

[14] Troutman, 6.

[15] David Eugene Wilkins, *American Indian Politics and the American Political System* (Lantham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 190.

Indian heritage.[16] In other words, education should not "make the Indian a white man, but simply a man normal in his environment."[17] Through conferences, a quarterly journal, and other sponsored events, the SAI put forth a message based on hard work and education.

While all of the SAI leaders advocated for Native American citizenship, there was great diversity among the leaders regarding how they would best achieve citizenship and other goals. Dr. Charles Eastman, for example, was a relatively moderate physician, lecturer and writer who helped to found several Young Men's Christian Associations chapters and the Boy Scouts of America, and advocated for education. Another SAI leader, Henry Roe Cloud, was a Presbyterian minister and another relative moderate who made education and the opposition of the peyote faith among Indian peoples his main issues. Carlos Montezuma, another physician and writer, became one of the SAI's most vociferous internal critics who many considered radical. Montezuma called for the immediate abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and instant assimilation of American Indian people as the most effective way to insure American Indian citizenship, education and civil rights.[18]

Of the founding members, Arthur Parker set the tone of the SAI journal. Parker, a Seneca anthropologist and vocal editor of the SAI journal, was one of the era's leading American

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[16] Joy Porter, *To Be Indian: The Life of Arthur Caswell Parker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 92.

[17] Arthur C. Parker, *Journal for the Society of American Indians* 1, no. 2 (1916): 2.

[18] Ibid., 95.

Indian leaders and advocates for Indian citizenship.[19] He believed that each race or ethnicity lived within a different cultural context, and therefore each had a different pathway to American citizenship. He wrote:

> In the struggle for better things and for a true adjustment, the Indian must be allowed to feel that he has the principal part. If we would give Indians civilization, we must first awaken his moral energy and provide a clear incentive. It is then for the Indian himself to respond and to reach out for the valuable prizes that belong by right to the man who works and produces by mind and muscle more than he consumes. All this means that race inertia must be overcome. The dormant motor energy again must be applied.[20]

Parker wrote that race assimilation was "of vital importance to the nation."[21] The struggle for American Indians was an especially hard one due to the combination of a troubled history between whites and Indians and contemporary American Indians' lack of effort to assimilate. In Parker's view, American Indians were capable of assimilating and becoming American, however, they would achieve this end in different ways than European or Asian immigrants or African Americans.

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[19] Hazel Whitman Hertzberg, "Nationality, Anthropology, and Pan-Indianism in the Life of Arthur C. Parker (Seneca)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 123, no. 1 (20 February 1979): 47-72 (47). Parker was the great-nephew of Ely S. Parker, Seneca chief.

[20] Arthur Parker, "Problems of Race Assimilation in America with special Reference to the American Indian," *Quarterly Journal for the Society of American Indians* 4, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1916): 285-304.

[21] Ibid., 285.

Figure 36: The Haskell Marching Band. The Haskell Indian School Band greeted the Society of American Indians for their annual conference in 1915. *The Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 3, no.4 (October-December 1915).

Contemporary American Indian publications and boarding school journals illustrated how music, music education, and musical entertainment had broad implications for discussions of citizenship, assimilation and education. On the one hand, Indian education was a critical component of Indian policy and music education was a component of the assimilationist agendas of some of the larger boarding schools. In 1915, Evelyn R. Twoguns wrote that, "In all Indian schools there is a brass band, mandolin and guitar clubs, and it is noticeable that the students learn to play on these instruments very quickly."[22] At Carlisle School, children sang in choirs, participated in bugle corps for the raising of the flag, formed small string and brass ensembles, and joined orchestras. Visiting ensembles, and the occasional field trip to attend recitals and

[22]Evelyn R. Twoguns, "The Indian Fondness for Music," *The Quarterly Journal of The Society of American Indians* 3 no. 2 (June 1915).

other concerts also became a component of music education.[23] American Indian students were exposed to classical music and were encouraged to join classical ensembles and patriotic brass bands.[24]

The Pine Ridge *Oglala Light,* Chilocco's *Indian School Journal* and the Phoenix *Native American* were monthly school and community publications. They published several student and faculty articles that described student performances in band concerts, music-related field trips, and opportunities for musical children to see both Native and white musicians perform in classical and brass band concerts.[25] In articles like, "Good Music is a Character Builder," "Music Education in America," and "Native Indian Art" Native artists encouraged Indian parents to support the arts and for their children to work hard at their musical studies:

Good music seems to give us a touch of the divine, and to put us in constact [sic]

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[23] *Carlisle School News* 1, no. 1 (June 1880); *Carlisle School News* 1, no. 2 (July 1880); *Carlisle School News* 1 no. 4 (September 1880); *Carlisle School News* 1 no. 5 (October 1880); *Carlisle School News* 2, no. 6 (November 1881); "About our School: The Band," *Carlisle School News* 2, no. 7 (December 1881).

[24] Brass bands, extremely popular for patriotic militaristic music enjoyed popularity from the end of the Civil war through the advent of ragtime music. Brass bands were made even more accessible and popular by the recordings of John Phillip Sousa from 1892 to 1931. During this period, community and neighborhood brass bands were widely popular and both African American and American Indian brass bands formed as a matter of race pride and community togetherness.

[25] *The Indian School Journal* issued monthly from the Indian Print Shop Chilocco, OK *The Indian School Journal* 7, no. 9 (Sept 1907); "Christmas Concert," *The Native American of Phoenix Indian School* 1, no. 1; "Students Visit the Opera," *The Native American* 5, no. 8 (Feb 1904); "Our Visit to Sacaton by Albert M. Rivera, Pueblo, Sixth Grade," *The Native American* 12, no. 18 (May 6, 1911): 1; *The Native American* 5, no. 26 (17 June 1915): 360, 361; "Band Boys Play at St. John's Mission at Gila Crossing: by Johnson McAfee, Pima, Seventh Grade," *The Native American* 5, no. 26 (17 June 1915).

> with divinity. It drives out evil thoughts, making us ashamed of them. It lifts us above petty annoyances and little worries of life, and gives us a glimpse of the ideal which the actual is constantly obscuring.[26]

Music was an important component of education and writers encouraged its study as a tool for personal growth and enlightenment. The *Oglala Light* featured articles on the student orchestra and on Indian art by vocal leaders such as Charles Eastman, Princess Tsianina, and Wakefield.

In addition, *The Oglala Light* also published letters from the Superintendent Brennan of Indian Affairs of the Pine Ridge community. In "Letters by Superintendent John R. Brennan to Farmers," the Indian agent instructed and warned Indian farmers not to be involved in Wild West Shows, dances, or improper concerts on the Pine Ridge Reservation. On one occasion, the superintendent called attention to a problem that "the better class of Indians from all districts are making complaints" that Indians were holding disruptive dances in private house for the purposes such as, "to raise money for round-up, Fourth of July, to send delegates to Washington, for fairs or almost any old thing and that they might dance all night."[27] On another occasion, Superintendent Brennan warned:

> You are herby [sic] instructed to notify the Indians of your district that the Indian office is opposed to Indians joining Wild West shows for exhibition purposes. Also notify them that any of them who my hereafter engage their services to show people will do so at their own risk and responsibility, and that this office will refuse to sign contracts or secure bonds to insure payment of salaries for them unless ordered to do so by the Indian Office.[28]

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[26] "Good Music is a Character Builder," *The Indian School Journal* (Chilocco) 7 no. 9 (September 1907).

[27] Superintendent John R. Brennen, *The Oglala Light* (Pine Ridge South Dakota), 5 March 1917.

[28] Superintendent John R. Brennen, *The Oglala Light* (Pine Ridge South Dakota), 8 March 1917.

In an "editor's comment," Wild West Shows were again condemned and community members warned not to participate. The commenter wrote:

> These shows are not doing justice to the Indian. They represent the Indians as being in the same savage state that they were in when this continent was discovered. They make no pretense of showing the present condition of the Indian or the progress that he has made toward civilization. They injure the morals of the participants, they contaminate their physical being and they bring economic ruin. No good has ever come or ever can come to those who take part in such savage display. The racial reputation of the Indian is being greatly injured through this means, for people… judge the whole race by the specimens they see in the trappings of savagery and the Indian is accordingly judge to be incapable of progress…. No groupe [sic] of people can progress faster than the individual elements that make it up…. Let us hope that the time has come when this bar to progress will be effectively removed.[29]

Like African American newspapers, American Indian publications revealed some tensions between the educated middle class and Indians of lower classes. It was often American Indians from lower classes, not the educated middle class, who participated in popular traveling entertainment such as circuses. On one occasion, Parker noted these tensions and reflected on his possible alienation from his tribe in a personal letter:

> In working for Indian betterment I expect no profit from it. I can only incur criticism, suspicion and unjust remarks. The Senecas of a certain class will think that I am working to make citizens of them and this they have protested for 60 years. They wish to remain as they are, and today the percentage of adult illiteracy in New York among the Indians is greater than in Oklahoma. In a movement of this kind, I am injuring myself in a field which must be my life's work. Someone must sacrifice however before any good can ever be done.[30]

However, unlike black papers, Indian papers throughout this period generally agreed that involvement in circuses was counterproductive and hurt their chances of full citizenship. Native

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[29] *Oglala Light* (Pine Ridge South Dakota), March 1917.

[30] Porter, 103.

American writers often referred to those who participated in traveling shows as "circus Indians" or "show Indians." Circuses, they argued, endangered the progress of Indian people toward civilization and denied them a higher social, economic and political standing in the larger society. The language of civilizing and social Darwinism prevailed in many publications put out many Indian agents and other publications at the end of the nineteenth century. Many white reformers saw Indians as stuck in a savage state. Performance in Wild West shows, in the view of many middle-class, educated American Indian leaders, fortified the savage Indian stereotype.

The journal for the Society of American Indians voiced a vehement hatred of Wild West Shows and circus employees. Chauncey Yellow Robe, a Sioux contributor, wrote multiple articles to call attention "to the evil and degrading influence of commercializing the Indian before the world."[31] SAI secretary and editor, Arthur Parker, took several opportunities in the publication to air his disapproval of Indians in the circus industry. On one occasion, after listing the ways that white circus owners took advantage of uneducated Indians, Parker stated that Indians who would work for circuses should be blamed as much for their inappropriate behavior as white circus owners. He wrote:

> And there is something the Indians themselves must consider. There would be no such degenerate antics if the public opinion of the Indians themselves was against it. When white showmen are assailed for recruiting actors "at a dollar a day and feed" the class of Indians who misrepresent their people should likewise be criticized. A bad Indian is no better than a bad white man ordinarily, but an Indian who misrepresents or cheats his people is worse, indeed. The show Indian is not the real Indian any more than the circus white man is the real white man. But just as the ordinary show Indian gets to believing that the circus followers are the best in civilization, so the public gets to thinking that the painted pseudo-Indian of the tan-bark is the typical red-man.[32]

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[31] Chauncey Yellow Robe, "The Menace of the Wild West Show," *Quarterly Journal for the Society of American Indians* 2, no. 3 (July-September, 1914).

[32] *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 4, no. 4 (October-December 1916); Parker *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 3 (July-September 1914): 174-176.

Parker argued for closer intervention of the United States government in the lives of American Indians on this matter. His solution was to have the federal government to intervene and stop American Indians from participating in such occupations. He wrote:

> If, then, the circus goers could see the untilled farms, the unhappy wives, the hungry children in the tumble down houses of the Indians who follow shows they would realize who pays the price for traveling around the country. We ask the United State Government to hold back its permission that Indians may be taken from reservations and allowed to travel with shows. It is not a dignified thing for the guardian Government to turn its wards over to circus men. Nor is it conductive of good training on the part of the Indian ward. Away with injurious fakery![33]

Parker was so firm in his belief that he excluded any discussion on the topic. Only those who agreed with Parker's view of circuses were able to write on the subject for the journal. The frequency of articles bemoaning circus Indians, as well as the charges SAI writers laid against them suggests that this was a contested issue among Indian people and that there were alternative opinions on the matter, however repressed by journal editors.

Opponents of Indian involvement in circuses also voiced a dislike for what they saw as a growing trend among Indians who were "duped" into running away with a show. Chauncey Yellow Robe warned:

> The smooth tempter and corrupter arrives on the reservation at the most opportune season—early spring, when, after the long and dull winter months have passed, the blood in the Indian begins to move, for pleasure, excitement, or work, like sap in the maple,--and falls a ready victim to the briber. The Indian youth is then robbed of the spring and fall months at school, and the adult is taken from his farm or trade at the very time he should be in his field or at his bench in the shop.[34]

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[33] *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 3 (July-September 1914): 174-176.

[34] Chauncey Yellow Robe, "The Indian and the Wild West Show," *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 1 (January-March 1914): 39-40; Chauncey Yellow Robe, "The

The consequences, they believed, were disastrous on the community. The SAI claimed that joining circuses prevented farmers from planting crops and children from going to school.[35] Many, they claimed, were being stranded—either due to the season ending with no way home or because of being fired, or simply a show going out of business—and those stranded employees calling relatives for money to help them back home.[36] Parker implored his readers not to, under any circumstances, have pity on those Indian men and women who were selfish and irresponsible enough to run off with a circus.

Figure 37: *Wassaja* cover. Carlos Montezuma's *Wassaja* Journal cover. (Newberry Library Ayer Collection)

Divisions regarding Native American involvement in the circus world were not completely limited to class affiliation. Carlos Montezuma, physician and SAI founding member,

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Menace of the Wild West Show," *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 3 (July-September 1914): 224-225.

[35] Ibid.

[36] E. H. Gohl, "The Effect of Wild Westing, *Society of American Indians Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 3 (July-September 1914): 174-176.

provided a more nuanced representation of American Indians in circuses and Wild West Shows. Montezuma disagreed with other SAI members on a number of issues, especially, the relevance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In his view, the BIA was another organization that continued to oppress American Indians and should be dismantled. Montezuma's emphatic assertions of his views resulted in his split from the SAI journal and the creation of his own journal, *Wassaja*. Regarding Native American involvement in the circus world, Montezuma's opinion that popular entertainment had a hurtful and disparaging character is clear. In one article, Montezuma compared Indian Bureau officials to conniving, self-interested circus masters. Montezuma wrote, "If the head of the Indian Department is liken unto P. T. Barnum or Buffalo Bill, what can you expect from those under him?...Using the Indians to hold their jobs is the grand aim and object of the Indian Bureau."[37] His words echo the attitude that SAI writers took toward circuses and similar exhibitions.

As American audiences became more interested in ethnographic, pseudoscientific and didactic popular entertainment, displays at fairs and ethnographic exhibitions sentimentally looked at the conquered, vanishing Indian and primitive Africans as races from another era. One Indian woman claimed, "I have had plenty of engagements offered me to appear before the public, in behalf of my race, in Indian regalia, but I won't do it."[38] Carlos Montezuma, too, was asked to "be present at a gathering with his Indian paraphernalia" but refused because he could not see "where such an appearance is going to help the Indians. Amusement is well enough in its

[37] "Indian Bureau is going in a wrong direction with the Indians," *Wassaja* 3, no.9 (December 1918): 4.

[38] *Wassaja* 1, no. 12 (March 1917): 3.

place, but when one speaks of higher, nobler and more serious thoughts, amusement is out of place."[39]

However, in an obituary for Wild West showman, Buffalo Bill Cody, Montezuma's opinion of the possibilities of the popular entertainment veered from his colleagues at the SAI. Montezuma wrote:

> Col. Wm F. Cody—"Buffalo Bill"—is dead, --wild life of the West is hushed! He was a friend of the Indians, and again in a higher sense, he was not; just as there are friends and friends of the Indians, so was "Buffalo Bill" one of them.
> He has been a great character. As a man he acted well as a representative of the real "Buffalo Bill." He won fame. Mr. Cody and WASSAJA started out from Chicago with "Texas Jack" and Ned Bunton in the winter of 1872. So you see we are old friends, but WASSAJA never approved his friend's method of showing off the Indian race, off-setting the progress the Indians have made and implanting the wrong idea in the minds of the public—that an Indian was a savage and that was all. As an old friend, WASSAJA mourns and extends sympathy to the bereaved.[40]

Montezuma was guarded about the affection he revealed for Bill Cody and stressed their disagreements, but he admitted that he and Buffalo Bill were actually personal friends and that Cody was a "friend of the Indian."[41]

Montezuma also displayed a more nuanced attitude toward circus involvement and the show industry. Though the SAI often printed articles that disparaged circus employment, it did not give voice to any performer who actually traveled with circuses. *Wassaja*'s publication of the following article was unique for an educated middle-class American Indian publication:

> A Letter From Indian Joe Davis": My Indian Friends: Probably some of you have heard about me. I am a Pawnee, born in Genoa, Nebraska, over thirty years ago…. I used to be one of the best riders and ropers in the United States; also I used to travel with Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill in their 101 Ranch shows. At present I am personally working the

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[39] *Wassaja* 1, no. 12 (March 1917): 3-4.

[40] "Buffalo Bill is Dead," *Wassaja* 1, no. 10 (January 1917): 4.

[41] Ibid.

> states for the interest of our people—the redskins. I heard a few days ago that they had an uprising in the state of Oklahoma, of the Creek Indians, but I hope the people won't blame all the Indians for what those few have done. As I go through the country the people keep me busy explaining about the different tribes, for they do not seem to know much about them.[42]

Wassaja published Davis' contact information following his letter for anyone interested in writing to him or inviting him to a function. Though Montezuma, no doubt, saw circus and equestrian shows as problematic, he gave voice to this performer in his publication.

Subverting Race Roles

In a time when Native and African American leaders fought racial discrimination and searched for venues through which to assert their voices, black and Indian traveling entertainers broke racial barriers as they built careers that spanned the country and globe. Before the Civil War, white performers dominated blackface minstrelsy entertainment. After the Civil War, African Americans exploded onto post-bellum era stages with minstrel shows in circuses and other traveling tented performances. African Americans in the post-bellum, pre-Harlem generation dispensed ragtime, blues and band music culture and formed a bridge from the era of white-written 'coon' songs about blacks to the era of 'race records' which paved the pathway for African American vaudeville, Broadway and film employment.[43] Chude-Sokei asserted that:

> …the notion of minstrelsy and its discourses of authenticity were so formalized and institutionalized that the very notion that a black performer could *outperform* a white performer in a white form such as minstrelsy was unimaginable. Yes, the idea that a *Negro could play a Negro better than a white man* was both ludicrous and heretical.[44]

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[42] "A Letter From Indian Joe Davis," *Wassaja* 3, no. 5 (August 1918): 2.

[43] Chude-Sokei, 2.

[44] Ibid., 6.

The first African American blackface minstrels overwhelmed and overcame a white-dominated field within just three decades, a relatively short period. The idea that blackface performers could benefit African Americans seems contradictory on many levels. However, when viewed in terms of a labor market, African Americans emerged as victors in an industry that at one time both demeaned them and excluded them from performance roles. The appearance of African American blackface minstrels signified a shift in popular entertainment. Black artistic communities coalesced and recreated popular entertainment by infusing ragtime and blues music. This led to the dissemination of African American culture across the United States and abroad, and also the strengthening of black business enterprise.

In forging new industries and creating new black and Indian businesses, traveling entertainers were a source of pride for black and Indians in audiences who attended their performances and read news updates about them. Musicians and traveling performers with circuses and Wild West shows were important in shaping the coming renaissance in African American and American Indian culture. Indian and black traveling performers of this era made some of the earliest sound recordings decades before the explosion of the 'race records' associated with the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro Movement. Bert Williams, an African American minstrel performer, was one of the first black artists on record and was the only recorded black voice regularly and consistently available before the Harlem Renaissance.

Tented minstrel shows such as circus performances were dispensers of ragtime and blues and gave black and Indian audiences a chance to see their own people in the spotlight.[45] Wild West Shows connected performers of different tribal affiliations, but also intrigued, excited and instilled pride in Native American audiences who paid to see the shows and often hoped to meet

[45] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right,* 227.

the actors and musicians. In this way, popular forms of entertainment provided an accessible, working class version of unification through entertainment. Black minstrel performers featured representations of non-American blacks in exotic cultural spaces, usually Africa or the Caribbean. The presence of black-on-black cross-culturality in minstrel shows slightly predates W. E. B. Du Bois' pan-African conferences and Marcus Garvey's pan-African movement in Harlem. These African American performers impersonated African and Caribbean peoples and reimagined Africa as a creation of black popular culture without white Americans' associations of backwardness, primitiveness, and superstition.[46]

It is impossible to know what was going through the minds of every circus minstrel or Wild West show performer, however contemporary race papers provide insight into their performances. One theme that emerged is that they were not merely naïve victims of Euro-American cultural imperialism. There is significant evidence that many performers considered the impact of their work on mixed audiences and they took advantage of white curiosity. They played on themes concerning black physiology and the so-called disappearing Indian in order to create a following and open doors in the entertainment industry that were otherwise shut.[47] The earliest black companies packed audiences with Northern whites curious to see former slaves sing and dance. Native American performers varied their attire at shows depending on if their audiences would pay more to see "real Indians" or if they were simply playing a classical concert. Playing to the stereotypes that white audiences expected helped to build them a following, gain access to larger venues, and eventually move on to career paths that better suited them. For

[46] Chude-Sokei, 8.

[47] See Sampson and Deloria.

instance, Nabor Feliz used his fame as an "Indian Sculptor" to have his work placed in museums, raise awareness for his own art, and advocate for Native American artistic ability. Even Indian school journals published articles such as, "Exhibits Indicate Indians are Progressing." Men such as Joe Davis and Bill Moose added "Indian" to their names as a way to sell their crafts and to travel.

Another theme that emerged through the literature was that some African and Native American circus performers viewed their work as a form of activism that carried the potential to lead to opportunities of dissention. Later in the nineteenth century when blacks began to apply burnt cork in minstrel shows, they did so conscious of their actions. Chude-Sokei wrote of black minstrel stars who, "knew that 'the Negro' being performed and constructed via white blackface minstrelsy was an explicitly racist and politically unnatural fiction and so they engaged the form primarily to erase that fiction *from within."*[48] The implementation of music served the Office of Indian Affairs, but Indian peoples had diverse relationships with music, the entertainment industry, and performance. Just as African American leaders used music as a tool for uplift, American Indian leaders and educators saw similar opportunities.[49] For some professionals, it was a way to "strategically deploy their newfound citizenship" by reinforcing their tribal identities in the face of OIA officials who sought to dismantle their tribal existence.[50] Musicians had access to public forums—the stage, wax cylinders, 78-rpm records, and the radio. Some

[48] Chude-Sokei, 6.

[49] Troutman, 5.

[50] Ibid.

used this access to question and challenge the propriety of the federal government to assume control over Native lands, resources, and education.

For some, it was apparent that ideals of uplift and citizenship—such as education in a trade, economic success, social achievement, and artistic and cultural notoriety—were all available within the traveling entertainment industry to hard-working artists. As a popular form of entertainment, black artists found that minstrel shows in or out of the circus could be very lucrative.[51] Black performers like P. G. Lowery received considerable mention in black papers with each success and business venture, especially when that venture involved the creating of more black business or the hiring of more black performing artists. Some writers in black papers also lauded the opportunities for traveling show professionals to teach and inspire young musicians and other artists. Like classical artists—from musicians and dancers to architects and sculptors—black traveling show artists set aside time for local musicians, providing lessons on both the business and artistic side of the industry. In the classical music world, these sessions would be referred to as "master classes." Classically trained black musicians would have been familiar with this tradition and local papers advertised these events with pride and excitement.

International forms of employment were another type of transformative experience for African Americans and inspired pride and excitement when black artists were known to achieve overseas success. Robin Kelley argued that expressions of Black Nationalism do not always come from Africa, Pan-Africanism, or other kinds of black-isms, rather there are other ways to

[51] Chude-Sokei, 122.

look for sources of race pride.[52] While he cited international movements such as socialism or religion, individual achievements of entertainers like circus people also created race pride. Black circus artists inspired racial pride through their national fame and international connections. Performers provided access to blacks and Indians across the country that otherwise would not have had access to the wider black and Indian populations of the United States.

Black performers who worked and relocated to Europe, Africa, and the Pacific experienced a pride and sense of identity that were not available to them in America. They became part of independent communities of African Americans who felt that they had greater choice in determining the direction of their careers and their lives. Newspapers included letters from performers on tour in Europe, Africa and Australia and whenever possible added reviews and eyewitness accounts of audience reactions to African American shows. In 1890, Charles Hicks, an African American minstrel show manager wrote of his troupe's arrival in New Zealand: "The Big Black Boom has struck 'Maori Land'…Our march to the hotel was a perfect ovation…. Everybody is well pleased with trip so far."[53] Charles Pope, one of the performers in Hicks' troupe wrote to the *Indianapolis Freeman* in 1902 to share his preference to remain in New Zealand:

> I am yet in Antipodes, doing nicely and were it not for business reasons, I would remain in this country a few years longer. There are so many advantages to be considered that I am convinced that the progressive Negro performer makes no mistake in choosing a field where his talent is appreciated and in demand…. The Negro performer is welcomed and appreciated in foreign countries and it is to this fact I base my conclusion. I am touring New Zealand with Dix's Gaiety Co. and at the conclusion of

[52] Robin D. G. Kelley's "How the West Was One: The African American Diaspora and the Re-Mapping of U. S. History" from *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 137.

[53] Sampson, 72.

> my present twelve month's contract I propose to come to America for the purpose of settling up my affairs, and as a matter of fact will come back to fill a new contract of fifty-two weeks…."[54]

Other performers favored living and performing environments in Western Europe. In 1905, African American performer Billy McClain wrote to the *Freeman* that he was on his way to Paris from England and was having the "biggest joy" he had ever had in his life.[55] He went on to say that France was "bounding with colored acts at the present and all going well. I had the pleasure of seeing Harry Brown and Tom Brown…." McClain also expressed a fondness for life abroad, but longed for the right conditions to return to America. He wrote:

> I would come back to America tomorrow and fight for my people if they would only stick together. I have everything I want, motor car, big fine house, servants, valet, etc., but I am not satisfied. I have a home in America as well. But above it all I have a mission on earth to perform. I want to be teaching my own people. I hope the day will come…."[56]

Several other African American performer found temporary or permanent lives and careers abroad and wrote back to notify the *Freeman* of their decisions. In each instance, performers expressed race pride at black people's accomplishments abroad mixed with the regret of not finding that ideal in America.

Conclusion

In the decades following the Civil War and leading up to the turn of the twentieth century, African American working class men and women struggled to create their own identities and

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[54] *Indianapolis Freeman,* 21 June 1902.

[55] *Indianapolis Freeman,* 27 October 1905.

[56] Ibid.

new spaces in which they could enjoy their newly found freedom.[57] The traveling circus, a popular form of entertainment that attracted African Americans and American Indians during the antebellum period, became increasingly more open to black and Indian artists in the decades leading up to the twentieth century. While those openings paid lower salaries, and invoked racially demeaning humor or stereotypes, both African American and American Indian performance artists were persistent and creative in their pursuit of careers. African Americans were largely excluded from music education at university conservatories. For American Indians, boarding schools used musical instruction to help mold children into a government ideal. However, African Americans found ways to self-educate and some attended classical conservatories in Europe or broke racial barriers in the United States. American Indians used opportunities to travel, promote their own art, and voice political or social critique.

In pursuing circus careers, these performers also confronted class and respectability issues within their own races and communities. Both black and Indian educated middle class leaders were largely appalled by racial stereotypes in circuses. Middle class leaders advocated for traditional education, hard work and a kind of respectability that musicians, dancers, and tightrope walkers did not generally reflect from their points of view. But performers saw things differently. They did not necessarily see racial improvement through a lens of traditional middle-class Christian values. Rather, they saw opportunities for uplift through secular lens that valued work and performance, artistic ability, economic independence, and geographic and professional mobility as high priorities. Rather than resist racism, or intra-racial politics of class and respectability in an openly confrontational way, black circus performers found alternative

[57] See Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom.*

ways to resist hegemonic power on a variety of cultural, economic and socio-political levels.[58]

Artists intent on performing took what they had and created a new world of possibilities that, a generation later, would explode into a cultural renaissance. In fact, many of the famous artists of the Harlem Renaissance took advantage of white ideas about race for the benefit of their performance, status in the industry, or employment opportunities. Josephine Baker, became famous for her Jungle Dance routines and was sometimes known to walk a cheetah through the streets of Paris.[59] Duke Ellington and his band sometimes wore dark makeup to appear "blacker" than they really were to appease white audiences who wanted to see authentic African Americans.[60] U.B. Blake, a contemporary African American bandleader, said that he trained his band to memorize music to support his wealthy white patrons' idea that black musicians were naturally inclined to music, but could not read.[61]

This kind of creativity, perseverance, and business savvy resulted in racial pride, more economic independence and a voice that was neither a reflection of racial nor class discrimination. Rather, it was one of the movements that would seed the burgeoning ragtime, blues, and jazz industry as well as the early film industry. In this way, they reflected ideals that were congruent to those of the Pan-Africanism and Pan-Indianism of the 1910s, 1920s and beyond—communication between communities, galvanization of resources, and social critique.

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[58] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, New Haven: 1985), 29.

[59] Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47.

[60] A. H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World,* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 137.

[61] Karen Sotiropoulous, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 212.

Those ideals foreshadowed and fueled movements like the New Negro Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, which themselves foreshadowed the early Civil Right Movement. Indeed, circus performers, in their own ways, were at the vanguard of all of these movements. Many of their business and artistic strategies resulted in more economic freedom, travel, a bringing together of black and Indian cultures, and racial pride that escaped the gaze or understanding of racist white audiences. In ways that elite race leaders could not identify with, traveling show entertainers emboldened ordinary people to take seriously the idea that black and Indian humanity would prevail in the face of the horrors present at the turn of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

Though sometimes out of view of the larger society or absent on state maps, the Sellsville and Miami County communities represented an important part of American Indian History, African American History, and their shared histories. This dissertation has attempted to explore the presence and perseverance of African American and American Indian communities in the Midwest throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Toward this aim, this dissertation considered labor and community as a means to locate black and Indian peoples in this region. The nineteenth-century circus is one such venue that one may locate a variety African American and American Indian peoples. By looking at circuses and circus towns, a different image of the Midwest emerges that contradicts the traditional narrative that privileges white farmers as the most important inhabitants. By tracking the late nineteenth-century circus and by tracking the circus community backward into the middle and early nineteenth century, historians may discover that American Indian peoples and African American people lived in the region.

The circus was not a utopic setting. Black and American Indian people faced considerable challenges and threats to their livelihoods from within and from the outside of the circus community. Indeed, the circus seems to have provided a short window, beginning around 1870 and ending around 1915, for blacks in the entertainment industry to take advantage of opportunities. After that, anti-black discrimination became the norm. However, the circus represented several things that were important to African Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As Darlene Clark Hine has argued, mobility was one of the most important

dimensions of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century black life.[1] Circus employment, with all its problems, not only offered mobility under the auspices of a large company, it also offered stable employment and often a stable midwestern community in which to raise a family.

In 1920, circus proprietor Jerry Mugivan and his colleagues formed the American Circus Corporation and on October 27, 1921, bought the estate of Benjamin E. Wallace. Six hundred acres, including the old winter quarters, circus-related buildings, workshops and farm plots came under new management for a new generation of circus owners, laborers and performers. The corporation bought a fleet of new rail cars and managers hoped the American Circus Corporation would become The Ringling Brother's Circus' leading contender. Around one hundred and fifty people worked on the quarters, year-round, and among them, Miami people ran concession stands, worked on the circus farms, fed and handled animals, and performed in pre-show concerts, equestrian shows, and elephant shows.[2]

Today, the community that was Sellsville looks completely different: the area is a predominantly white suburb with coffee shops, used bookstores and bed and breakfasts. The only hints that there was ever a circus in the area comes from local historical society markers. The only obvious clue that there used to be a thriving African American community in the area is the presence of the Antioch Baptist Church, the church established during the era of the Sells Circus. Currently, most members drive in from other parts of town every Sunday for worship. Their church history boasts of its founding in the nineteenth century and of its relationship to the

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[1] Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 87.

[2] LaMoine Marks, interview by Stewart Rafert, 11 October 1991, "Circus/Elephants," transcript, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN.

circus. Though the church survived, the local community could not weather the loss of employment and the pressures of the greater Columbus community that wished to create a peaceful suburb on the former circus grounds. The present communities are strikingly different. In Miami County, Miami people remained on their lands and found employment in various aspects of the circus. In Sellsville, the circus left and with it went most hopes of lasting a community.

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