

CIRCUS WAGONS

ROLLING ON

Circus wagon wheels had to be strong enough to carry large wagons for miles during circus parades. Yet many of these sunburst wheels were painted and decorated with beautiful colors and patterns surrounding their 16 spokes that would make the wagons appear to roll on vivid swirls of color.

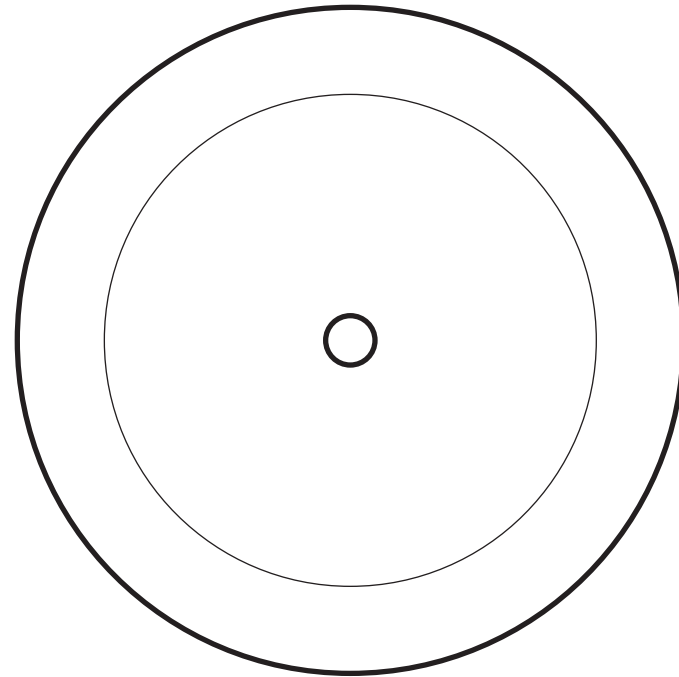
Can you find which wagons these wheels belong to?



DRAW YOUR OWN WAGON WHEEL

Think about the colors and patterns you would choose. How would they look when the wheel was in motion?

Draw your wagon wheel here.



LOOKING FOR MORE FROM RINGLING EDUCATION?

Explore more of what The Ringling has to offer in the Children's Welcome Center and at ringling.org.

Children's Welcome Center: Explore free printed educational resources, activities, and guides for families! Located in the Visitors Pavilion, the Children's Welcome Center can be your family's home base for the day as you explore all the wonders of The Ringling!

Free Family Programs: Join us for free weekly family programs and hands-on learning opportunities, all including free Museum Admission.

School and Teacher Programs: Make The Ringling your classroom for the day with free field trips, educator workshops, educator resources, and more!

Outreach Programs: Bring The Ringling to you with engaging hands-on art experiences through The Ringling Outreach Programs!

Adult Programs: Learn with us! Explore the exciting range of lectures, gallery talks, and workshops offered throughout the year.

THE CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, large exciting circus parades (some stretching up to two miles!) were held in towns across America. Almost the entire town watched as floats filled with costumed performers and brightly painted bandwagons with musicians led the way to the big top. The wagons were drawn by hundreds of horses and sometimes other animals such as zebras and camels helped out. These parades were a great way to advertise circus performances.

There were many types of wagons in the parade, including:

- Display
- Music
- Animal

Wagons were also used for baggage, tickets, and concessions but they did not join in the circus parade. Examples of all of these types of wagons can be seen in the Circus Museum.



Hagenbeck-Wallace Lion Tableau #67, 1904-5
Bode Wagon Works, Cincinnati, Ohio

TABLEAU WAGON

Tableau wagons were designed to drive through town with costumed circus performers atop them. This wagon was built during the winter of 1904-5 for the Carl Hagenbeck Trained Animal Company, a well-known exhibitor of performing wild animals.

- What do you think the performers were wearing while they were riding on top of this wagon?
- Imagine you were on top of this wagon. What would you be doing?

Use your detective skills to discover how each wagon was used! Remember to look top to bottom and side to side.

How are the wagons decorated? Do the decorations give you any clues on how they might have been used?

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BANDWAGON

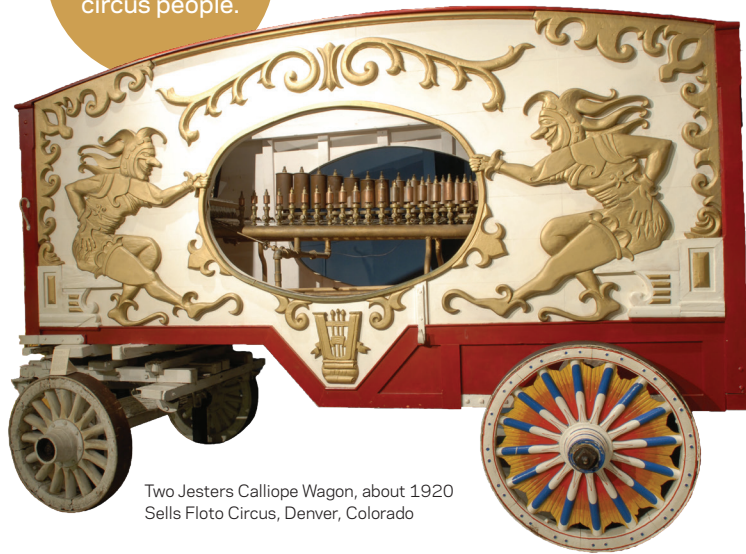
The circus parade always began with the number one bandwagon. This wagon was drawn by 40 horses and had a band playing on top!

- Why do you think the bandwagon was the first wagon in the parade?
- What type of instruments do you think the band played?
- This wagon was called the Five Graces because of the 5 women carved on it, representing Columbia and the four seasons. What other decorations do you see on the wagon?



Five Graces Bandwagon, 1878. Fielding Bros., New York

Calliope is pronounced "cally-ope" by circus people.



Two Jesters Calliope Wagon, about 1920
Sells Floto Circus, Denver, Colorado

CALLIOPE

A **calliope** is a large musical instrument with steam driven whistles played with a keyboard (like an organ). The valves are moved by steam from a boiler on the wagon. The unsteadiness of the steam creates the wailing sound of the calliope. Calliope wagons were frequently used in circus parades and were the last in the parade.

- Do you play any musical instruments? Which ones? Do you think they are easier or harder to play than a calliope?
- What type of music do you think they played using the calliope?
- Can you find another calliope wagon in the Circus Museum?

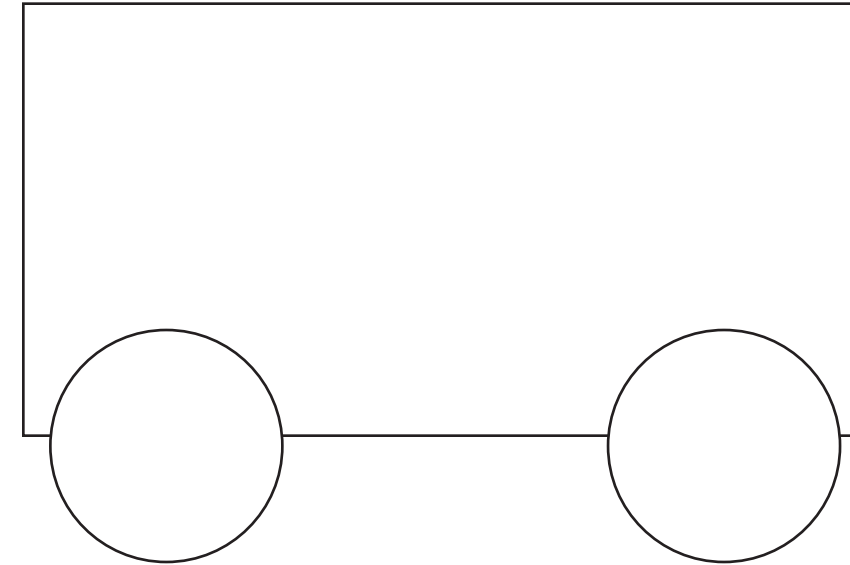
ANIMAL WAGON

Circuses brought new and exotic animals to people across America. Animal wagons were developed to help transport them from city to city. This wagon was for seals and pygmy hippos. It has a sunken tank in the middle that allowed the animals access to water.

- What is your favorite animal?
- If you were designing a wagon to move it, what would the wagon look like? Design your wagon here.



Seal Wagon #93



DID YOU KNOW...

you can see circus wagons in parades even today?
There was a circus wagon in the 2007 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade!

WAGON DECORATION

Many of the parade wagons were richly decorated with carved wood, bright paint, gold leaf, and mirrors. The wood decorations are great examples of American folk art and were mostly carved in the late 1800s and early 1900s. There was no specific style to circus decoration. The figures were carved to gain attention and impress the crowd as they quickly drove by as part of the whole parade.

Figures were carved in two ways:

1. **Relief** - not carved completely around but attached to a background
 2. **In the round** - completely carved all the way around
- How long do you think it took to create the carvings for each wagon?
 - Visit the wood carvers workshop to see some of the tools artists use to carve wood. On select days, you can even see volunteer woodcarvers working on a project for the Museum!



Follow us to the Tibbals Learning Center to see the world's largest model circus.

How many model circus wagons can you find?

Circus band members are called Windjammers.



There are 152 model circus wagons in the Tibbals model.