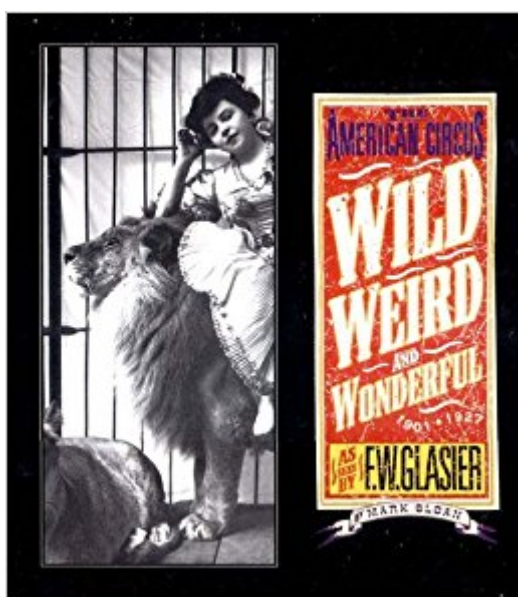


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Wild, Weird, And Wonderful: The American Circus 1901-1927 As Seen By F. W. Glasier, Photographer



Synopsis

Here, in both glory and grit, is the American circus during the most vibrant period in its history. These photographs, not seen for almost a century, show it all, from the pre-performance parades and tent raisings to the magical events under the "Big Top" and the train leaving town. We see performers hanging by their teeth and hanging out the laundry, and much in between. These truly remarkable images capture both the intensity of the routines and the spirit of camaraderie of the performers. Glasier's work was unique in many ways, not the least of which was the off-hand elegance he allowed his subjects, even the wonderful animals. This was the era of the big tents, and in these beautiful prints they appear as seductive, gossamer backdrops to the performers. Mark Sloan's discovery of Glasier's work is a true gift to circus lovers and all of us who care about our past. 75 duotone images.

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Customer Reviews

Dispensing entirely with circus clichés, Sloan (Hoaxes, Humbugs, and Spectacles) presents the photographs of Glasier (1865-1950), a commercial photographer in Brockton, Mass., who shot promotional photos of the various circuses that repeatedly came through town over the years. His photos, printed fully rather than as they were cropped for ads, reveal a subculture presenting itself unapologetically (even defiantly)-and fascinatingly. Sloan writes: "As a sustained document of circus life at this time, there is no known equivalent": "The Illeson Sisters, Acrobats" finds two child performers perched on large balls, hoisting the smallest (in a near perfect split) between them, with

their prideful looks questioning the assumption of total exploitation; in "Sparks Circus, 1923," a clown, via barely perceptible wires, tows a skeleton behind him that seems to float as it mimics his movements; a group shot of a circus wedding party (the ceremony itself often "held in the center ring in front of the spectators during intermission") shows the participants extolling a solemnity-within-spectacle that also displays their intelligence and deliberate self-fashioning. An introduction by essayist Timothy Tegge ("born and raised performing as a clown in his family's one-ring circus," the press chat notes) vividly traces circus history back to Rome. Anyone interested in American cultural history will find that these 62 b&w photos reveal a great deal about how performers-often from a great diversity of backgrounds-comport themselves toward their art. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A form of entertainment that claims to be the greatest show on earth had better deliver. That the circus does is confirmed by the photos F. W. Glasier made during the traveling spectacle's heyday--even more unequivocally than Edward J. Kelty's group portraits of circus personnel (see Miles Barth and others' *Step Right This Way* [BKL N 15 02]). For while Glasier also made portraits, he liked to get relatively candid shots, which the cumbersomeness of Kelty's huge "banquet" camera didn't allow. So here in this 10-by-11-inch album, we see people milling before the sideshow tent, already marveling at one of the "freaks" playing a violin; elephants lining up after unloading from the circus train; roustabouts driving tent stakes; and an eight-horse team pulling an ornately carved wagon in a small-town parade. Most astonishing is an image worthy of modern sports photography: Alexander Patty of the Ringling Brothers Circus caught between stairs as he does his stuff--hopping downstairs on his head! Hur-ry, hur-ry, and don't be ashamed to gawk. Ray Olson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Professional portrait photographer Fred Whitman Glasier maintained a studio in Brockton, Massachusetts. Glasier never traveled with a circus, but he did document every show that came through his neck of the woods during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Glasier became acquainted with many famous showmen, and provided promotional photographs for both the circuses and individual performers. Glasier's work evokes a relaxed elegance missing from the work of many previous photographers, and for that reason he is now considered among the finest circus photographers of all time. Glasier's original glass plate negatives have been beautifully reprinted in this volume, allowing one to see the scope of his circus work, and occasionally gain an insight into his working methods when notes and cropping marks have been preserved. As a document of the

traveling circus at a particular point in time, this book is unrivaled. Circus historian Timothy Teppe provides a brief foreword discussing the origins of the American circus. Author Mark Sloan provides background information on the people and places depicted in Glasier's beautiful photographs.

This is a great throwback on the circus life. Very helpful in some research I am working on in the genre. Book is beautifully designed as well.

Full of beautiful full page vintage photos

Simply wonderful photographs helping the mind to call up mental pictures of a colorful and exciting era in our history.

This is a nice book. I gave two as gifts and am pleased with mine (as are my two gift recipients).

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