

Collection #
SC 3625

**GREAT WALLACE SHOWS
CIRCUS CONTRACT, 1905**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

**VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:** 1 folder

**COLLECTION
DATES:** July 25, 1905

PROVENANCE: eBay purchase, 2020

RESTRICTIONS: None

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**ALTERNATE
FORMATS:**

**RELATED
HOLDINGS:** Peru, Indiana Negative Collection, P0248

**ACCESSION
NUMBER:** 2020.0097

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Great Wallace Shows circus was established in 1883 by Peru, Indiana livery stable owner Benjamin E. Wallace (1847-1921) and his partner James Anderson. At that time it traveled overland by wagon, touring Kentucky and Virginia. By 1886 Wallace had put his circus on rails, and the show grew year by year. In late 1906 Wallace successfully purchased the equipment and name of famous German animal trainer Carl Hagenbeck's circus. The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus out of Peru, Indiana became a major rival to the Ringling Brothers Circus from Baraboo, Wisconsin, also established in 1883. Hagenbeck-Wallace would remain one of the largest and most popular circuses in the country for a further thirty years.

Contortionists and equilibrists Thomas Genaro and Marie Theol were well-known on the American vaudeville circuit during the early 20th century. In 1900, they toured the B.F. Keith circuit along the East Coast. They also appeared on stages across the Midwest and Canada. In some publications Genaro is described as a clown or acrobat, while Theol ("The Flexible Venus") was always depicted as a talented contortionist. The act toured with the Ringling Brothers Circus during the 1902, 1903, and 1904 seasons, until signing with Wallace in the middle of the 1905 season.

Sources:

"Benjamin E. Wallace" in *Biographical and Genealogical History of Cass, Miami, Howard, and Tipton Counties, Indiana: Vol. I.* (Lewis, 1898)

"Circus War Has Begun" *Peru Republican* April 17, 1903. [Processor's Collection]

Genaro & Theol's whereabouts gleaned from dates on numerous notices from newspapers.com

New York Clipper (New York, NY), Dec. 29, 1883. <http://idnc.library.illinois.edu>.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of one two-sided contract dated July 28, 1905. Signatures of B. E. Wallace and "Genaro and Theol per TDG" are present. Terms of the contract are given on the front, along with detailed annotations. Rules of the expected conduct while employed by Great Wallace Shows appear on verso, again with amendments and annotations. Genaro & Theol were excused from appearing in the parade and from the usual requirement of "general usefulness." This suggests that they were a feature act. The contract was originally folded into a 3.5" x 8.5" booklet.

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CONTENTS

Great Wallace Shows performer's contract, Genaro & Theol

CONTAINER

Folder 1