

Collection #
SC 3383

**JERRY MUGIVAN
COLLECTION, 1925-2015**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 manuscript folder, 1 color photographs folder
COLLECTION DATES:	1930-2015
PROVENANCE:	eBay purchase, 2017
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus route books (GV1821.H3 O44); Mary Edith Mugivan Postcards (P0842); Indiana Circus Collection (M1512)
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2017.0366
NOTES:	

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jeremiah Joseph [Jerry] Mugivan was born to Irish immigrants near Terre Haute, Indiana on May 17, 1873. Mugivan's father (Jeremiah, Sr.) worked as an unskilled laborer in the Vandalia Railroad car fabrication shop. Young Jerry's path to becoming one of the most successful circus moguls in the country began when he became a railroad "butcher," selling newspapers and fruit on the trains and at railroad depots. This led to his occasional employment selling circus tickets. He spent the 1890s traveling around the Midwest with various hustling schemes, until landing a job managing the privilege car with Great Wallace Shows, a major circus out of Peru, Indiana, owned by Benjamin E. Wallace. In 1907 he was a partner in Wallace's purchase of the Carl Hagenbeck Circus. At the same time, Mugivan and his partner Bert Bowers had started a circus empire of their own, purchasing and managing the Van Amburg Wild Animal Circus (later changing its name to Howe's Great London) and later, the John Robinson Ten Big Shows.

In 1913, a devastating flood in the Midwest caused the aging Wallace to sell his circus to West Baden casino magnate Ed Ballard, and in 1918, another tragedy, this time a horrendous train crash near Hammond, Indiana, motivated Ballard to partner with Mugivan and Bowers. Throughout the 1920s, Mugivan, Bowers, and Ballard managed the Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells-Floto, and John Robinson circuses under the umbrella of the American Circus Corporation, headquartered at Peru and West Baden. This was the largest circus aggregation in the country.

Just months after selling the circus empire he'd assembled to John Ringling, Mugivan died following a routine hernia operation in Detroit on January 22, 1930.

Sources:

"Daddy Had to Stay" *Kansas City Gazette*, March 4, 1895

John Hanners Circus Research Collection, M1346

Adkins, Kreig A. *Peru: Circus Capital of the World* (Arcadia Publishing, 2009)

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists primarily of a typed letter, signed by Jerry Mugivan on Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus stationery, to the managers of the show, which was in Temple, Texas at the time. Attached is an affidavit from legal adjuster W. R. Kellogg, stating that the circus's property had been assessed for taxation in Miami County, Indiana for the year 1925. As Mugivan's letter explains, this documentation was required by officials in Oklahoma before licenses could be obtained.

Also included are a photocopied obituary of Mugivan from the *Peru Daily Tribune*, and a 2010 article about Mugivan from the *Terre Haute Tribune Star* printed from the internet. Additionally, there are eighteen 4"x6" color photographs of Mugivan's gravestone in the Peru Catholic cemetery, his 1929 mansion on East Main Street in Peru, and a model of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus built by Tom Dunwoody at the International Circus Hall of Fame, also in Peru. The photographs were taken in 2015.

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Mugivan letter with Kellogg affidavit, 1925; Mugivan
obituary (photocopy), 1930; 2010 article

Eighteen 4"x6" color photographs, 2015

CONTAINER

Folder 1

Color photographs
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