

Collection #
SC 3142

**TERRELL JACOBS
CIRCUS LETTER
JANUARY 30, 1955**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION
DATES: January 30, 1955

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NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Peru, Indiana, located in Miami County on the banks of the Wabash River in north-central Indiana, was commonly referred to as "circus city." In 1884 Peru native Benjamin E. Wallace (1847–1921), a livery stable owner, opened a circus, the Wallace and Company's Great World's Menagerie and International Circus. The success of Wallace and Peru's central location made it a popular stop for traveling circuses to stay for the winter during off-peak season. In 1921 the American Circus Corporation (ACC) was formed and employed as many as 4,500 people, making Peru the "circus capital of the world." The ACC was purchased in 1929 by Ringling Brothers for close to two million dollars. The Great Depression had a lasting negative impact on the circus, and when Ringling Brothers closed its Peru winter quarters in 1941, the city's circus industry declined. The International Circus Hall of Fame and Museum is located on the former grounds of the circus winter headquarters.

Terrell M. Jacobs (1903–1958), known as "the Lion King," was an animal trainer from Peru who performed with other circuses during his career. In 1938 and 1939, Jacobs performed with Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth, said to be the largest quantity of big cats in a circus act at one time. He was the proprietor of his own circus, Terrell Jacobs Wild Animal Circus, from the 1940s to the mid 1950s. Jacobs was inducted into the International Circus Hall of Fame in 1978.

William H. Woodcock (1904–1963) was an elephant trainer from Tennessee whose career began in the 1920s when he joined the Rhoda Royal Circus. Throughout his lifetime, Woodcock worked with multiple circuses including Ringling Brothers, Lee Brother's Circus, and Cooper Brothers. He eventually formed a partnership with D.R. Miller (1916–1999) to create the Miller & Woodcock's Performing Elephants. His son, William "Buckles" Woodcock (1935–), took over the family business and both men were inducted into the International Circus Hall of Fame in 1986 (Sr.) and 2003 (Jr.). Woodcock Sr. was also known for his encyclopedic knowledge of circus history and his son created an extensive online blog, "Buckles Blog," which discusses circus history throughout the world.

Sources:

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

"Terrell M. Jacobs Dies At Home in Indiana." *Circus Bandwagon*, 2 no. 1 (Jan-Feb), 1958: 10.

Parkinson, Tom. "The King of Circus Historians." *The Bandwagon Magazine*, 8 no.1 (Jan-Feb), 1964: 16-19.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains 1 typewritten letter, dated January 30, 1955, from Terrell Jacobs on "Terrell Jacobs Wild Animal Circus" letterhead, to William H. Woodcock. The - letter contains names of others in the circus industry including Floyd Smith, Si Rubens, Hank Carlisle, Charlie Allen, Art Miller, and Howard Schultz.

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Letter from Terrell Jacobs to William H. Woodcock,
Jan. 30, 1955

CONTAINER

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