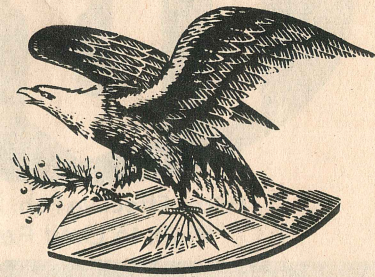


BIG CENTENNIAL

1776-1976



"Remembrances of Days Gone By"

Buchanan Circus Once Located at Granger

The days of the small town circus are gone and only the major ones, such as, the Carson and Barnes and Barnum and Bailey remain active today. At one time, however, dating back to the early 1900's a circus was headquartered southeast of Granger on the Fred Buchanan farm. Today, very little remains of the winter quarters but fond memories.

The quarters were located 16 miles northwest of Des Moines and about two miles southeast of Granger, and an astute observer can still see trades or remembrances of the circus while traveling on Highway 141.

From this large two story white frame home and farm at Granger in 1906, Fred Buchanan launched a rather large wagon circus in the spring of that year using the old title of Yankee Robinson Shows. Earlier, back in the 1890's, Buchanan had put out a small mud circus called Buchanan Bros. for a couple of seasons. The Yank show, as it was then called, was destined to grow, and grow rapidly, in becoming a leader in the medium sized circus field in the Midwest. The show was moved by rails in mid-season of 1908 and was then

on its way to continual enlargement. Before 1908, the circus was pulled by horse and wagon at a cost of \$125 per day plus feed for the horses and drivers.

During the years between 1908-1920, it was a show with good equipment and featured a fine street parade. Two old Barnum & Bailey mirror tableau wagons that had been used in Europe were purchased and converted to bandwagons during these years.

The Yankee Robinson Show always had a large midway and carried a ferris wheel and merry-go-round. At times the show had a reputation of being a red hot grifter. Many stands, however, were played and the show repeated for years under the same title.

Buchanan was a respected person in civic and political circles in Iowa. He was a shrewd showman and tradition has it was a faultless weather prophet and could smell a rain or storm coming quicker than anyone. It is said that if Fred could sense a bad storm or rain coming, he wouldn't even unload the train but would proceed on to the next stand.

For many years, Fred was associated with his

brothers, W. T. and C. W. in the management of the show.

The Buchanan quarters were located in a rural area along the Des Moines and Central Iowa Inter-Urban Railway electric line running from Perry to Des Moines. It was often referred to as the "Buchanan Circus Farm". The buildings were constructed in close proximity to the home which served as the various quarters, storage areas and shops. Many acres of farm land provided feed for the animals and pasture for the horses and ponies.

A December 23, 1916 advertisement appeared on a billboard stating that 20 buildings were used on the farm to house the circus and that the farm was lighted by electric power obtained from the interurban company.

The fall of 1920 brought about the selling of the Yankee Robinson Show to Mugivan and Bowers and they delivered it to the Hall Farm in Lancaster, Mo. For the next two winters, there was no circus activity in Granger, not until 1922 when Buchanan managed the Patterson Four Ring Wild Animal Circus and after the season, went to Granger where he formed a new 15 car circus which he put out in 1923 using the title of World Bros. Circus.

Following the 1923 season, World Brothers went into quarters at the Hall Farm in Lancaster, but in 1924 the

title was changed to Robbins Brothers Circus and following the summer season, it returned to Granger to spend the winter.

Improvements at the headquarters and administration changes took place in the mid 1920's and it was also during this time that the world famous Two Hemisphere Bandwagon was obtained from the old Barnum & Bailey Show. The circus became a four-ring event in 1923 and from that time travelled around the area and Midwest delighting young and old alike. Following the departure from Granger, they located for a time at the State Fair grounds in Des Moines.

The show reached its peak in the 1930's as it carried 30 cars in its caravan procession, but by middle of the decade, things worsened as the depression was beginning to take its toll on the country. The Robbins show never returned to Granger and it closed in September of 1931. It was eventually sold to the Cole Brothers in 1935.

The circus was not without their accidents or mishaps. They suffered from storms that destroyed their tents, workmen hurt on the job and at one time they lost Tom Tom the elephant in quickstannd. The buildings around Granger grew in need of repair during these hard times and eventually fell. The old Buchanan home was burned about 1947 and was replaced by a smaller dwelling.