

The rise and fall of "The Greatest Show on Earth"

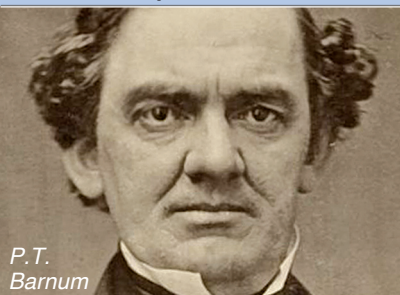
After 146 years entertaining families across the United States, the final curtain is coming down on the iconic **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus** – a victim of financial and animal rights pressures

Flying Caceres trapeze troupe

500 people perform and work on touring shows – most will lose jobs

■ **1808:** **Bailey Circus** founded by **Hachaliah Bailey**, who takes first African elephant to U.S. soil

■ **1860s:** **Cooper and Bailey Circus** founded by **James A. Bailey** (descendant of Hachaliah Bailey) and **James E. Cooper**

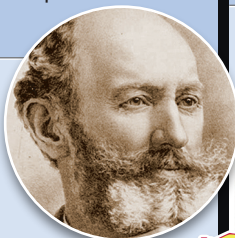


P.T. Barnum

■ **1871:** **P.T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Circus** opens in Brooklyn

■ **1874:** Barnum secures New York Hippodrome – later Madison Square Gardens – as permanent site for **The Greatest Show on Earth**

■ **1881:** Barnum and Bailey (right) merge shows as **Barnum & Bailey Circus** to tour eastern U.S.



■ **1882:** Barnum acquires **Jumbo**, 21-year-old, 6-tonne African elephant, for \$10,000 from London Zoo, to exhibit in New York. Jumbo hit by train and killed in Ontario, Canada, three years later

■ **1884:** **Ringling Brothers Circus** founded in U.S. Midwest

■ **1897-1902:** Barnum & Bailey Circus makes five-year tour of Europe

■ **1897:** Ringlings see opportunity to expand and relocate to east coast, moving show by railroad

■ **1905:** Barnum & Bailey returns to U.S., but facing competition from Ringlings, it moves to west coast

■ **1919:** Circuses merge to form **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus – The Greatest Show on Earth (RBBB)**. They have 1,200 employees and tour using 100 rail cars

■ **1956:** RBBB performs under Big Top for last time, moving to indoor stadium venues

■ **1967:** Longtime concert promoters **Irvin Feld** and brother **Israel** acquire RBBB for \$8m

■ **1969:** Felds split show into two units, **Red** and **Blue**, which tour U.S. independently by train

■ **1984:** **Cirque du Soleil** founded in Montreal by former street performers **Guy Laliberte** and **Daniel Gauthier**. Show incorporates opera, ballet and contortionists, but no animals

■ **1987:** **King Tusk** added to show – largest elephant since Jumbo

■ **1995:** RBBB **Center for Elephant Conservation** established



■ **1944:** Big Top catches fire, killing at least 167 people

■ **1945:** Dwindling crowds and rising costs in post-war America hit circus hard as public tastes migrate towards cinema and television



■ **1999:** **Johnathan Lee Iverson**, first African-American RBBB ringmaster



■ **2000:** RBBB becomes first show to perform nonstop into its third century

■ **2016:** Following years of pressure from animal rights activists, RBBB's Asian elephants perform for last time. Audience numbers drop sharply

■ **2017:** Cirque du Soleil now has seven shows in Las Vegas, three in other U.S. cities and nine touring acts

■ **May 21, 2017:** Final performance of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Uniondale, New York

RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY'S "RED" TRAIN (108 carriages, "Blue" train has 56 carriages)

Twin engines

54 cars

32 coaches

20 flat cars



Over 1.6km long

Red and Blue trains to be decommissioned in Florida after last show

