



ViewPoints



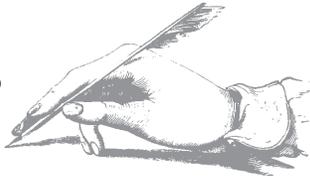
March 2008

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www.ghmchs.org

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS/MARBLE CLIFF HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear Members,

With the snow hopefully fading away, we will soon see the early signs of spring with blooming flowers and tiny leaves on the trees. My favorite rite of spring are lilacs. I have many and love cutting them and filling my house—every room—with a bouquet. Reminds me of days past—my grandmother and my mother did the same thing. I just love to sit and smell them!

We have had very exciting involvement with the schools. Tom DeMaria gave a wonderful presentation to the 4th grade at Edison Intermediate Middle School. I attended and it was impressive how Tom customized the program for them. He focused on “all things Edison”—the building they are in—to attract attention. We distributed timelines, and all the children seemed to enjoy it very much. The 4th Graders are to create a DVD based on Edison history, the story of the building itself, as well as curriculum of early times, and other information. We look forward to seeing their completed projects. Dr. DeMaria has agreed to be “on call,” should they need help.

On February 7 Dr. DeMaria gave a program at Grandview Heights Public Library, entitled “Early Grandview Reminiscences” to standing room only! It was encouraging to see so many residents interested in local history, and supportive of Dr. DeMaria and GH/MCHS efforts. Thanks to board members Jeri Diehl-Cusack, Win Keller, and Ruthanne James for helping with setup and managing the sales table, which was quite successful.

We continue to work with the high school regarding the senior composite photo project. (See page four) Although this project is large and challenging, we hope eventually to see the high school hallways with every class represented in composites.

Dr. Carlson continues to maintain and digitize our collections. Please consider donating to the society. Loans with permission to copy are a way to help without giving up your original materials. Help us record local history for future generations!

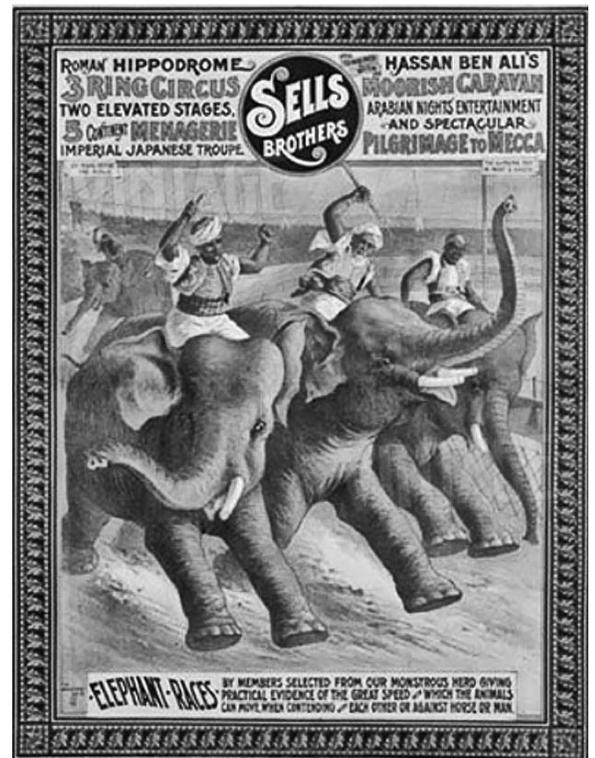
Plans are underway for a very exciting annual meeting in October. We hope to provide a program of interest to the general public, as well as our members. We expect the Patricia Todd Memorial Fund to help us provide a program on a much larger scale. We will keep you posted!

As always, please feel free to address any concerns or comments directly to me at tliberat@wowway.com (614-488-0425)

Sincerely,

Tracy Liberatore, President

Circus Time



The popularity of Sara Gruen's NY Times #1 bestseller *Water for Elephants* brings to mind the recent annual 'elephant parades' from the Grandview Avenue railroad siding via Goodale to Nationwide Arena when the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus comes to Columbus. We are also reminded of the years before 1905 when the occasional elephant wandered loose in the neighborhood west of the Olentangy River.

In 1871 Ephraim, Lewis, Allen, and Peter Sells pooled their entrepreneurial skills and their capital, purchased the act of Cannonball George Richards (“a

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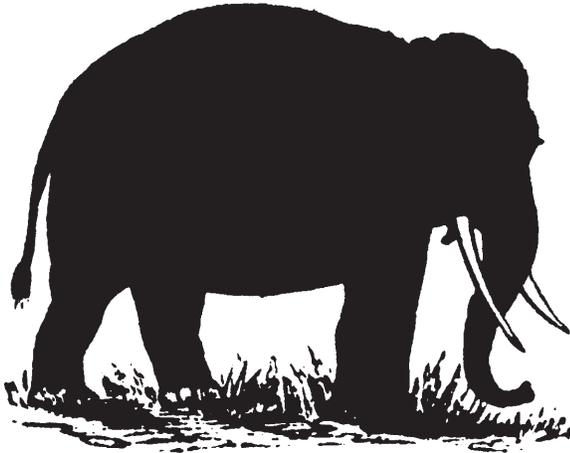
This issue sponsored by

GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL





Tell it Everywhere!



WILL EXHIBIT IN COLUMBUS

Front Street, Rear of Nell House,

Saturday, April 19,

—AND—

Monday, April 21.

SELLS BROTHERS'

Mammoth Quadruple Alliance,

COMBINED WITH

PAUL SILVERBERG'S

**Monster Menagerie, Museum,
Aviary, Roman Hippodrome,
Oriental Caravan and
Trans-Atlantic Circus.**

A STUPENDOUS CONSOLIDATION,

**Augmented and Re-equipped for the
Season of 1873-4.**

A Moving Colossus of the Wonder World!

One-Thousand Men & Horses!

**A City of Tents, A National Natural Kingdom,
A Magnificent Museum of Wonderful Curiosities,
An Aviary of Beautiful and Language Gifted
Birds, A Grand Oriental Caravan of Elephants,
Camels and Dromedaries,**

**An Aquarium of Amphibious and
Marine Monsters,**

AND THE

Great Trans-Atlantic Circus!

A HOME ENTERPRISE,

**Organized in Columbus, and equipped in
your midst, where a Princely Fortune has
been expended among the Mechanics, Merchants
and Farmers of this vicinity.**

PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS,

Columbus, Ohio.

LINE OF ATTACK,

From Maine to Mexico.

FIELD OF TRIUMPH,

The Entire Universe.



Send Word Along the Lines!



Circus Time CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

percussive aerialist”), and a small menagerie, and gave their first performances in downtown Columbus, with one tent and a few sideshow features. The following year the brothers reorganized and expanded the show, and gave performances in Columbus, Circleville, Chillicothe, and Bainbridge. Business did not prosper, and the the brothers attributed their problem to the lack of an elephant and their name, Sells, which the newspapers caricatured.

The 1873 season included the first of many elephants, and was billed as “SELLS BROTHERS’ Mammoth Quadruple Alliance, combined with Paul Silverberg’s Monster Menagerie...” [see advertisement to the left].

By the late 1880s the Sells Circus dominated the American Midwest and West, was the second largest circus in the country, and was famous for the number of elephants in its shows. The show moved by rail in a total of fifty cars. Sells Circus winter quarters were in Columbus, on a tract between what are now West Fifth Avenue and King Avenue, from Doten Avenue east to the Olentangy River. North of Chambers Road were the large Lewis and Peter Sells farms. The shed for the elaborately decorated show wagons and the pony barn were in the area now occupied by Lennox Town Center. The train sheds, wagon sheds, hippo pit, paint sheds, elephant house, monkey and bird barn, cat barn, camel house, cook house, and the huge ‘ring barn’ were on the site now occupied by Meridian

Apartments (formerly the site of Columbus Showcase Company). At its peak, the Sells Circus wintered 18 elephants. A notorious saloon at Gerrard and Fifth Avenues was called the “Pinhook’ after an elephant training tool. Training continued throughout the year, and there is documentation of a trainer killed by one of the bull elephants.

In January 1905, Lewis Sells, the only surviving brother, with no other family members interested in continuing the business, sold the entire circus at auction for \$150,000 to James A. Bailey, who immediately sold a half interest to the Ringling Brothers. Bailey did not hold to his promise to keep the circus winter quarters in Columbus. By 1906 it was history.

Many circus employees maintained their homes and families in the neighborhood. A few traces remain: Sells Avenue in University View, and Chambers Road, named for the son of William “Star Kid’ Chambers, the elephant trainer. The Apple family, former local veterinarians, were descendants of Chris Ackerman, neighborhood and circus blacksmith, who lived at Kenny Road and Chambers. The former cookhouse is the only circus winter quarters building still in existence. Moved to 1138 King Avenue in 1917 and much modified, it is now a private residence. Stories abound of local residents meeting escaped circus animals, including polar bears, monkeys, and once, an elephant in the middle of the old iron Fifth Avenue bridge.

(For a more complete story of the Sells family and the Sells Circus in Columbus, go to: shortnorth.com, find ‘feature stories index’, and click on “Circus Town”)

Elephant Pork

In February, 1883, water overflowed the banks of the Olentangy River, and did much damage in the surrounding country.

The menagerie belonging to the Sells Brothers circus had made its winter quarters on the banks of this river, about two miles from its mouth, for years, and this season the water invaded the animal sheds. The elephants stood more than one entire night knee deep in the cold water.

Two of the African elephants took cold and died. It fell to my lot to skin them for mounting.

On the 21st of February, with three assistants, work was begun on the huge beasts. On the second day of our operations the animal trainers came out, and stated that I should remove the carcasses of the elephants as soon as possible, as the animals inside “smelt blood,” and they had become uncontrollable. It was a bitter cold day and we worked as rapidly as possible. We were compelled to drink something stronger than Olentangy water in order to keep warm.

A farmer standing by said he would haul the carcasses away for \$8.

I gave him the job at once, stating that when he would deliver a note to me from the animal trainer, stating that the

carcasses had been satisfactorily disposed of he would receive his pay. I did not hear anything from the farmer for perhaps five or six days, when he came to my office with the note, and received the amount agreed upon.

Before leaving I asked him what disposition he had made of the carcasses.

“Why,” said he, “I fed them to my hogs.” and, adding, “I’ve enough to feed for eight or ten days longer.” “My friend,” said I, “where do you sell your hogs?”

“Most any place,” he replied.

I told him that the only reason I asked the latter question was that the next time I purchased pork, I should like to locate his hogs, as I wanted make sure what I was getting—elephant pork or the real thing.

Oliver Davie: Odds and Ends, Columbus, 1902. pp. 52-53

[Davie was a Columbus taxidermist, ornithologist, and “Poet of the Olentangy” Author of Methods in the Art of Taxidermy, Columbus, 1894 and Nests and Eggs of North American Birds, Columbus, 1889.]



BECOME A MEMBER

of the Grandview Heights/Marble Cliff Historical Society!

Please complete the information below and send with your check made out to: **GH/MC Historical Society**
Mail or drop off at the **Grandview Heights Library,**
1685 West First Avenue, Columbus, OH 43212

NAME _____

SPOUSE (IF COUPLE MEMBERSHIP) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Please check the appropriate membership box:

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP	LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP
YEARLY DUES (OCT. 1-SEPT. 30)	ONE-TIME PAYMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> Single \$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Single \$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Couple \$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Couple \$150.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$500.00
	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$1000.00



Local History at Stevenson

Students in Mrs. Angela Pharion's third grade Social Studies classes at R.L. Stevenson School have been busy recently researching the history of their homes and neighborhoods. Prompted by Ohio curriculum standards which require local history in third grade, Mrs. Pharion uses a number of techniques to bring Grandview and Marble Cliff history into focus.

One recent Saturday one third grader, armed with 10 questions and a sharp inquisitiveness, hosted a visit from a former resident of her First Avenue home. The visitor had purchased the 1910 brick-and-shingle house in 1957, and raised five children there, with one bathroom and "a creek in the basement." Now much renovated, the home still resounds to falling acorns on its roof in September, and offers cookies and milk to visitors. Several hours and many stories later, the young hostess and her family and the visitor parted, charmed with one another.

Some of Mrs. Pharion's students were delighted to discover that they live in homes found in Society publications, or on our website. Among projects in which students participate are "scavenger hunts" using the GH/MCHS website. As a culmination of their current research of homes and neighborhoods, students will create individual slide shows illustrating their findings.

Kudos to Mrs. Pharion and all Grandview Schools teachers and staff who use local history in their programs!

CAN YOU HELP?

Grandview Heights High School Key club, with teacher assistance, help from the Grandview Alumni Association, and GH/MCHS, wants to re-display all the senior class composite photographs of Grandview Heights High School. Unfortunately, many are missing. If you have—or know of anyone who has—any composite from a missing year, we need your help! We would be happy to copy your composite, or you can donate it. Here the missing years: 1920s—26, 27, 29; 1930s—30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39; 1940s—42, 44, 49; 1950s—53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59; 1960s—61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69; 1970s—73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79; 1980s—81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89; 1990s—91, 92, 93.

IF YOU CAN HELP, PLEASE CONTACT PRESIDENT TRACY LIBERATORE 614-488-0425 (tliberat@wowway.com)

ViewPoints is an occasional publication of the Grandview Heights/Marble Cliff Historical Society.



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Contact Editor Patrick Mooney
 (614-225-0130) for any interesting article
 ideas or to discuss photo contributions.

E-MAIL REQUEST

We are compiling an e-mail directory to improve our communications.

Please include your e-mail on membership renewal form, or e-mail

President Tracy Liberatore at:
 tliberat@columbus.rr.com.

Thanks!

1685 WEST FIRST AVENUE
 COLUMBUS, OHIO 43212

The Grandview
 Heights/Marble Cliff
 Historical Society

