

Wisconsin Historical Society: Circus World unveils future vision for the guest experience

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Baraboo, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society’s Circus World is sharing a multi-year vision to reimagine the Circus World grounds and guest experience, underscoring their continued commitment to celebrating and showcasing the American circus art form past and present. The first phase of Circus World’s future kicked off in spring of 2022 when Isthmus Architects completed a full Historic Structures Report on each of the seven National Historic Landmark buildings known as Ringlingville.

“We are excited to share a vision for the future of Circus World that includes the restoration of the historic Ringlingville buildings and invites guests to immerse themselves in the origins of America’s circus history,” said Scott O’Donnell, Circus World Site Director.

The restoration work is currently underway and is being funded in part by two \$500,000 “Save America’s Treasures” grants awarded to Circus World through the National Park Service’s Historic Preservation Fund. The first building to be restored is the 1901 Ringling office where each of the five Ringling brothers worked.

The future vision for the site also includes the addition of a year-round performance center that can host more than 100,000 guests annually, a state-of-the-art circus wagon center, a dynamic circus school, and the return of the equine program that has roots in early circus history.

Circus World’s beloved elephants will be retiring following the 2023 season, and plans are underway to honor and celebrate their legacy throughout the summer and

long into the future.

“We are excited to expand the ways in which we can honor circus history, make history in the present, and amplify the art form into the future.” continued O’Donnell. “As the nation’s top circus arts destination, we are poised for continued growth and are eager to bring the full potential of the site to life.”

Fundraising is underway for future phases and the full vision is expected to come to life over the next ten years.

“The future has never been brighter at Circus World,” said Christian Overland, Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Wisconsin Historical Society. “America’s circus history is rooted in Baraboo, Wis., and we are committed to preserving and sharing the celebrated circus art form in ways that will resonate with generations to come.”

Circus World is the nation’s premier circus history destination and home to the world’s largest collection of circus wagons, posters, archival manuscripts, film, photographs and sound recordings. Located in Baraboo, Wis., on the site of the original winter quarters of the Ringling Bros. Circus, the site offers vibrant circus performances, programs and exhibits that interpret the colorful stories of the American circus and celebrate the extraordinary art form.

For more information and to learn more about Circus World, visit circusworldbaraboo.org.

About Circus World

The circus arrived in America from England in 1792 and was immediately embraced by George Washington and the general population. From the early 1870s through the late 1920s, the circus reigned supreme as the most popular form of entertainment in the country. Circus World is located at the site of the Ringling Bros. Circus Winter Quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin. At its founding in 1959, the site was comprised of less than an acre of land and a collection of six circus wagons, but has grown into an internationally recognized and respected institution encompassing 64 acres, 30 permanent structures, and 260 historic circus wagons. For more information, visit circusworldbaraboo.org.

About Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs and services. For more information, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org.

The Wisconsin Historical Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, receives grants and private contributions benefitting the Wisconsin Historical Society and administers the membership program.