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Overview

Repository	Archives The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art 5401 Bay Shore Road Sarasota, FL 34243 archives@ringling.org
Creator	Charles Josef Ringling, 1937-2012
Title	Charles Josef Ringling Family and Circus Collection
Dates	1897-2002, bulk 1920-1968
Extent	6 linear feet (16 boxes)
Language	English
Arrangement	Format, chronological
Summary	This collection was assembled by Charles Josef Ringling (1937-2012), also known as Charles II. The bulk of the material relates to both him and his father, Robert Ringling (1897-1950), and their families. Collection includes photographs, correspondence, newspaper articles, programs, business records, letterhead, an accounting ledger, advertisements, printed material and negatives. Material relates to Robert's opera career, Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey Circus (RBBB), and family life. The collection holds papers on the Ca'd'Zan assembled by Alice Lancaster, wife of Charles Lancaster.

Administrative Information

Provenance	Collection donated by Charles Ringling II, accession A2015.0003
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Cite as

Credit must be given for any use of materials. The credit line should read: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Florida State University, Charles Josef Ringling Family and Circus Collection, and should include box and folder listing.

Processing Note

Processed by Sarah Lewis, 2024. Artifacts and posters held in this collection are managed by The Ringling's Collection Department. Two photos were removed from frames during processing. Frames are housed separately.

Biographical Note

Robert Ringling was the son of Edith Conway (1869-1953) and Charles Ringling (1863-1926), one of the original Ringling brothers of the Ringling Brothers Circus. He was born in 1897 in Baraboo, Wisconsin, and lived in both Wisconsin and Evanston, Illinois as a child and youth.

Robert's father died in 1926. Until her death in 1953, Edith remained involved in the circus, filling leadership roles, including Chairman of the Board.

Robert had one sibling, Hester Ringling (1893-1965). Hester married several times. In 1919 she married Louis Gladstone Lancaster (1894-1986) and had two sons, Charles Ringling Lancaster (1917-1999) and Stuart Lancaster (1920-2000).

Robert was a prominent opera baritone. In the 1920s, he performed 104 operatic roles. He married Virginia Sullivan in Chicago, Illinois in 1920. Virginia and Charles' first son, James Conway Ringling (1925-2004), was born in Germany while his father was studying there. Charles Josef Ringling (1937-2012) was born in Illinois. Virginia died in 1939. Robert married Irene Bauernfeind (1911-1991) in 1940.

Robert eventually settled with his family in Sarasota. By 1939, he was employed by RBBB as Senior Vice President. Until his death in 1950 he remained with RBBB in various roles. Robert's widow, Irene, married Robert Bonseigneur. She continued to hold a leadership role with the circus into the 1960s. Irene was instrumental in establishing New College of Florida in the 1960s, by offering financial and volunteer support.

Charles Josef Ringling grew up in Sarasota. He graduated from the University of Miami. He married Mary Ann Carter in 1964. In 1966,

Maryann and Charles Joseph had a son, Charles Joseph II, and a daughter, Deborah Ringling. Charles divorced Maryann in 1972. He married Sarah L. White (1937-2013) that same year.

James Ringling, brother of Charles II, started as a ticket office clerk at the circus, and worked his way up to Vice President in charge of scheduling dates. In 1967, when the circus was sold to Feld Entertainment, both brothers are listed as Assistant Secretary.

Charles II's hobby was racing cars. He raced in Daytona and Cuba. He traveled widely and settled in Texas, where he died in 2012.

Scope and Content Note

The Charles Josef Ringling Family and Circus Collection holds photography, correspondence, newspaper articles, circus publications, printed materials, and related ephemera.

The Family series documents Robert's opera career, with fan letters, wardrobe photography, newspaper articles, programs, and advertisements. Photographs capture several generations of the Charles Ringling family. There are formal portraits, family vacation photographs, and a small number of negatives. Additional materials include correspondence, newspaper articles, a press kit for The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art's 50th anniversary celebration, and a personal narrative related to the Ca'd'Zan's restoration in 2002 written by Alice Lancaster.

Materials related to RBBB consist of photography, correspondence, business records, letterhead, programs, an accounting ledger, serials, and printed material. Notable is a series of photographs showing how a circus seat wagon unfolds. There are several correspondences exchanged between Robert Ringling and Pat Valdo, Director of Performer Personnel, and letters to Charles Ringling II regarding a Ringling family inheritance dispute.

Subject Headings

Ringling Family

Circus

Circus owners

Advertising--Circus

Circus--United States--History

Opera

Baritones (Singers)

Fan mail

Ringling, Charles, 1868-1926

Ringling, Edith Conway, 1869-1953

Ringling Museums

Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows

Contents of the Collection

Series 1: Family

Box 1: Card Photographs

1. Unidentified women standing amid trees on a creek bank, circa 1900.
2. Woman and two children, standing on creek bank amid trees, circa 1900.
3. Woman and two children, standing on creek bank amid trees, faded copy, circa 1900.
4. Girl standing by a chair indoors, circa 1900.
5. Portrait of baby in white gown. Photographer, Mould, 518 Oak Street, Baraboo, Wis., circa 1900.
6. Portrait of baby in white gown. Photographer, Mould, Baraboo, Wis., circa 1900.

Box 2: Card and Print Photographs

1. Unidentified woman and two children picnicking, circa 1900.
2. Woman standing amid trees by creek bank, circa 1900.
3. River with tree lined bank, date not researched.
4. Edith Ringling, Hester Ringling, Robert Ringling and another man, in a car with mountain in the background, circa 1920.
5. Joy Conway. Photographer: Sim Mould, Baraboo, Wis., date not researched.

Box 3: Photographs

Folders:

1. Heinrich & Marie Ringling Family, recto "print from copy neg.," circa 1895.
2. 18 small photo prints capturing scenery, homes, and unidentified people, circa 1900.
3. Hester Ringling, circa 1920.
4. Robert Ringling portrait, circa 1920.
5. Robert Ringling, opera wardrobe (6), circa 1928.
6. Robert Ringling, opera wardrobe (7), circa 1928.
7. Robert Ringling, opera wardrobe (4), circa 1928.
8. Edith and James Ringling, circa 1928.
9. Edith Conway Ringling with her grandchildren: Charles Lancaster, Stuart Lancaster, Edith Ringling, James Ringling, circa 1928.
10. Brick home in winter scene, 1929.
11. Ringling home, interior staircase photo, 1929.
12. Virginia Ringling (2), circa 1930.

13. Unidentified woman, circa 1930.
14. Men and women in horse drawn buggy in front of the John Ringling Hotel and Bickel House, Sarasota, Florida, circa 1940.
15. Edith Conway Ringling (7), circa 1940.
16. Charles Ringling II, portrait with unidentified woman. Recto, "I think this was taken in 1940 and why was it taken? When I met you, your hair was long and this was taken of your first haircut," 1940.
17. Charles Lancaster, Stuart Lancaster, James Ringling, Charlies Ringling, circa 1940.
18. Charles Ringling mansion (2), 1951.
19. Mary-Ann Carter Ringling (wife of Charles Josef Ringling Jr.), portraits and wedding photos (4), circa 1964.
20. Irene Bauernfeind Ringling, on a dock holding two large fish, date not researched.
21. Unidentified man in a wheelchair, circa 1980.
22. Boats (8), date not researched.
23. Negatives (21), not researched.
24. Group riding in the back of horse drawn buggy, not researched.

Box 4: Frames and Plaque

1. Frame, Virginia Ringling religious certificate, 1939.
2. Frame, James Ringing photo, 1934.
3. Charles J. Ringling wooden diploma plaque, University of Miami, 1963.

Box 5: Vacation Photography

Folder:

1. Vacation photography, (60) 4x6 prints, not researched, circa 1980.
2. Vacation photography, (54) 4x6 prints, not researched circa 1980.
3. Vacation photography, (44) 4x6, including White's City, New Mexico, and (12) 3x5 prints, circa 1980.

Box 6: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

Folders:

1. Booklet, Ringling Museum of Circus, 1963.
2. Booklet, The House John and Mable Ringling Built, circa 1960
3. Booklet, Ca'd'Zan: Ringling Residence, **date not researched**.
4. Ringling Museum's 50th anniversary press kit, press releases, 1980.
5. Ringling Museum's 50th anniversary press kit, press releases, 1980.
6. Ringling Museum's 50th anniversary press kit, press photos (5), 1980.
7. Newspaper clippings regarding museum artifacts (2), 1980.
8. Alice Lancaster Ca'd'Zan file, restoration newspaper clippings (7), 2002.
9. Alice Lancaster Ca'd'Zan file, personal narrative (15 pages), 2002.

Box 7: Oversized Photography

Folder:

1. Robert Ringling, standing on balcony, circa 1910.
2. Robert Ringling seated portrait, circa 1925.
3. Robert Ringling (2), circa 1925.
4. Robert Ringling in opera wardrobe, circa 1925.
5. Robert, Virginia and James Ringling (2), photographer: Matzene, Chicago, Circa 1926.
6. James Ringling and Virginia Ringling, 1934.
7. Virginia Ringling, circa 1934.
8. James Ringling, mounted photographs (3), 1934.
9. Charles Ringling II, circa 1937.
10. James Ringling, photographer: Toloff Studios, Illinois, circa 1937.
11. Robert Ringling with sons Robert and James Ringling. Photographer, Toloff Studios, Illinois, circa 1937.
12. Robert Ringling with sons Robert and James Ringling. Photographer, Toloff Studios, Illinois, circa 1937.
13. Charles Ringling II, seated portrait, circa 1940.
14. Charles Ringling II, circa 1940.
15. Edith Conway Ringling (2), mounted photograph, circa 1945.
16. Charles Ringling II (2), mounted photographs, circa 1945.
17. Charles Ringling II and James Ringling, mounted photograph, circa 1945.
18. Robert Ringling seated at desk, photographer: Conway Studios, NY, circa 1945.
19. Boat in water with passengers, date not researched.
20. Irene Bauernfeind Ringling mounted color portrait, Seawell Photography, Los Angeles, circa 1960.

Box 8: Oversized Opera Advertisements

Folder:

1. The Musical Leader, Chicago, 1927 November.
2. Musical America, Chicago Civic Opera (14 copies), 1927 December.

Box 9: Incoming Correspondence and Printed Material

Opera fan letters and incoming correspondence

1. (1), 1926 August.
2. (11), 1926 November.
3. (10), 1926 November.
4. (11), circa 1926.
5. (7), 1928.
6. (4), 1929 January; 1930 January.
7. Robert Ringling from Harry A. Miller regarding boat purchase (1), 1928 May.
8. Virginia Ringling (1), circa 1930.
9. Robert Ringling (38), get well cards and letters, circa 1947.
10. Irene Bauernfeind Ringling (2), 1950; 1951.

11. Charles Ringling II, letters (2), 1956; 1957.
12. Charles Ringling II, greeting cards and letters (8), circa 1967.

Printed Material:

13. Robert Ringling, handwritten school examination about Cesar, 1913 June.
14. Opera advertisement, Musical Courier, 1923 September.
15. Opera recital program, (15 copies), circa 1925.
16. Opera score, L'Oracolo (The Oracle), circa 1925.
17. Postcard, "Al Heon and His Symphonic Band," circa 1925.
18. Opera newspaper clippings (12), 1922-1928.
19. Opera advertisement, The Music News, 1927.
20. Opera newspaper clippings, Cincinnati Free Press, German newspaper (2), 1926, 1928.
21. Opera advertisement, The All American Grand Opera Company, Lohengrin, 1928.
22. Opera program, The Philadelphia Civic Opera Company, Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg, 1928.
23. Opera advertisement, The Music News, Chicago, Ill., 1928 October.
24. Opera tour schedule, Chicago Civic Opera Company, 1931.
25. Opera program, Chicago Civic Opera Company, Der Rosenkavalier (4 copies), 1929-1930.
26. Article, "Through the Ages," National Association of Marble Dealers publication featuring Charles Ringling mansion, 1930 August.
27. Religious certificate, Virginia Ringling, "Perpetual Member of the Propagation of the Faith," 1939 November.
28. Marriage certificate (copy), Robert Ringling and Irene Bauernfeind, 1940.
29. Clipping, "Condensed Genealogical Tree of the Richelin – Rungeling-Ringling family," source unidentified.
30. Newspaper articles, car racing (2), 1956; 1958.
31. Newspaper articles (2), birth of Charles Josef Ringling, 1966.
32. Newspaper article, Ringling family feud, Miami Herald, 1989 September.
33. Business card, Ringling Collectibles, Charles Ringling II, circa 1990.

Oversized Drawer : **Recital** poster, Josephine Lucchese, soprano; Robert Ringling, baritone, Margaret Carlisle, pianist; tour under the direction of Dexter W. Fellows. Dimensions: 19x31.

Series 2: Circus

Box 10: Ringling Accounting ledger, 1902-1917.

Box 11: Photography

Folder:

1. Advertising photograph featuring the five Ringling brothers, circa 1900.
2. Circus seat wagon, 1-4 , 1947.
3. Circus seat wagon, 5-8 , 1947.
4. Circus seat wagon, 9-12, 1947.
5. Henry Ringling North press photo, circa 1960.
6. Circus performers and performance (5), circa 1960.

7. Contact sheets (8), picnic and circus performance, circa 1964.
8. Contact sheets (5), circus performance, circa 1964.

Box 12: Oversized RBBB Business Records and Advertising

Folder:

1. Annotated road program, blank program forms (2 copies), 1964.
2. Advertisement mailer, Kansas City, Ararat Shrine, 1964.
3. Seat diagram, Madison Square Garden (2 copies), one is annotated, circa 1965.
4. Box office statements (8), Madison Square Garden, 1965 April.
5. Total attendance and sales form, Madison Square Garden, blank, circa 1965.
6. Advertisement mailer (5 copies), Madison Square Garden, circa 1967.
7. Advertisement mailer, Chicago International Amphitheater, 1967.
8. Book cover and book order form, Those Amazing Ringlings and Their Circus by Gene Plowden, 1967.

Box 13: RBBB Advertising, Business Records and Printed Material.

Folder

1. 50th anniversary souvenir order form, 1933.
2. Christmas cards from Charles Josef Ringling (25 copies), blank, date not researched.
3. Small day book with business contacts and notes on revenue, source unknown circa 1960.
4. Letterhead (2 copies), Madison Square Garden, date not researched.
5. Letterhead, Winter Quarters, Venice, Mae Lyons Press Representative, circa 1960.
6. Envelopes (4 copies), Winter Quarters, Venice, circa 1960.
7. Letterhead (5 copies), Winter Quarters, Venice, circa 1960.
8. Letterhead (38 copies), Winter Quarters, Venice, circa 1960.
9. Advertising, coloring contest with Hook Drug Store, circa 1964.
10. Notes on ticket sales revenue, box office statements, musicians contract, 1964;1965.
11. Ticket statements, Madison Square Garden, 1964; 1965.
12. Blank employee expense forms, circa 1965.
13. Benefit subscription mailer, Friends of New College RBBB premiere, circa 1965.
14. Route, sheet, number 2, 1965.
15. Ticket mail order forms, 1965; 1967; 1968.
16. Program and print photo of Charly Baumann (which program cover is based on), 1966.
17. Advertising mailer with first day of issue circus stamp, 1966.
18. Route sheet, number 1 (2 copies), 1966.
19. Route sheet, number 1 (10 copies), 1967.
20. Route sheet, number 2 (3 copies), 1967.
21. Route sheet, number 4 (17 copies), 1967.
22. Program, 1967.
23. Calendar of events booklet, Piedmont Triad It's Circus Time Again, Greensboro, 1967.
24. Program and envelope, Expo '67 World Festival, RBBB, circa 1967.
25. Event ephemera, Expo '67 World Festival.
26. Ticket sales notes, display list, box office statement, 1967.

27. Seating diagram, Pittsburgh's New Civic Arena (2, one is annotated), circa 1967.
28. Report, accounting meeting, Seidman & Seidman Accountants with Irvin Feld, Irving Cohen, Sam Siskind and JSS, 1967.
29. Concert program saluting RBBB with Merle Evans, Miami, Florida, 1967.
30. News article, Miami Beach Auditorium & Convention Hall, 1968.
31. Souvenir Magazine & Program, 1969.
32. Program pull-out with annotations, 1969.
33. Ticket, Convention Hall, Miami Beach, printed in Spanish, 1969.
34. Souvenir patches and magnet (6), circa 1990-2000.

Oversized Drawer : RBBB Poster, Miami Beach Convention Center, 1967, January. Dimensions: 14 x 22.

Box 14: Correspondence

Folder

1. Robert Ringling from A. Pam Blumenthal, Gunrod Pictures, 1943 November.
2. Robert Ringling and Pat Valdo (12), 1943.
3. Robert Ringling from Pat Valdo (11), 1944 November-December.
4. Robert Ringling from Pat Valdo (6), 1945.
5. Robert Ringling and Pat Valdo (4), 1946.
6. Robert Ringling and Pat Valdo, undated (3), circa 1943-1946.
7. Charles Ringling from Thomas Flanner Law Offices (7), 1956-1958.
8. Incoming to Charles Ringling (7) 1964; 1965; 1967.
9. Charles Ringling from Don Henlin (1), enclosures: circus tickets and photos, 1967 May.

Box 15: Newspaper Articles

1. 16, preservation photocopies, Romeike Press Clipping Bureau, 1943 April-July.
2. 24, preservation photocopies, Romeike Press Clipping Bureau, 1943 July.
3. 20, preservation photocopies, Romeike Press Clipping Bureau, 1943 July.
4. 21, preservation photocopies, Romeike Press Clipping Bureau, 1943 July-September.
5. "Ticket Agency Plan Hikes Advance Sales" By Herman J. Penn, *Arena, Auditorium & Stadium Guide*, 1961.
6. 6, preservation photocopies, 1964.
7. 2, preservation photocopies, 1965, 1966.
8. 11, preservation photocopies, 1967.
9. 3, preservation photocopies, 1968-1969.
10. Interview with Henry Ringling North, preservation photocopies, circa 1974.
11. 35th anniversary of 1944 circus fire, preservation photocopies, 1979.

Box 16: Serials and printed material

Folder

1. Posters (4 copies) and brochure, Circus World, Baraboo, Wisconsin, circa 1960.
2. Program, Schlitz Circus Parade, Old Milwaukee Days, Fourth of July, 1966.

3. Bandwagon, 1966 July-Aug.
4. Buyer's Guide and Directory, Mahi, Shrine Circus, Orange Bowl, Miami, Florida, 1967.
5. ECHO: Professional Circus and Variety Journal, 1967 November.
6. ECHO: Professional Circus and Variety Journal, 1967 December.
7. ECHO: Professional Circus and Variety Journal, 1968 November.
8. The White Tops, 1967 Nov-Dec.
9. Circus Magazine and Program, Clyde Beatty – Cole Bros., 1967.
10. Program, Moscow Circus, 1967-1968.
11. The King Pole Bulletin, Circus Fans Association of Great Britain, 1968.

Personal Library Collection

May, Earl Chapin. The Circus From Rome to Ringling. With an introduction by Leonard V. Farley; Original copyright 1932, Duffield & Green; 1963, Dover Publications, Inc.

Harlow, Alvin F. The Ringlings: Wizards of the Circus. Illustrated with photographs. Original copyright 1951, Julian Messner; eight printing, 1968.

Apps, Jerry. Tents, Tigers and the Ringling Brothers. Badger Biographies Series, Copyright 2007, Wisconsin Historical Society Press.

Apps, Jerry. Ringlingville, USA: The Stupendous Story of Seven Siblings and Their Stunning Circus Success. Foreword by Fred Dahlinger, Jr. Copyright 2005, Wisconsin Historical Society Press.

Fox, Charles Philip. A Ticket to the Circus: A Pictorial History of the Incredible Ringlings. 1959, Bramhall House.

Related Collections