



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Century Flashlight Photographers circus photographs**

1924-1938

\*T-Vim 2018-001

## Summary

**Creator:** Kelty, Edward J., 1888-1967

**Title:** Century Flashlight Photographers circus photographs

**Date:** 1924-1938

**Size:** 61 items, 61 photographs : gelatin silver, b&w ; 30.5 x 51 cm. and smaller

**Source:** Gift, Harold Dunn

**Abstract:** After World War I, Edward J. Kelty made his main living taking traditional banquet and party photographs for his Century Flashlight Photographers Company, based in New York City. During the summer months, Kelty used a custom-made large-format camera and portable darkroom and followed circus troupes around the East Coast and Midwest, taking some of the most vivid photographs known to circus historians. However, lingering injuries from his Navy service in World War I, other personal struggles, and the hardships of the Depression led to Kelty closing his business and selling his camera and negatives by the early 1940s. Kelty died in Chicago, Illinois, in 1967. Large-format black and white photographs primarily by the Edward Kelty's Century Flashlight Photographers company document 22 circus troupes and one rodeo performing in the Midwest, East Coast, and Montreal, Canada. Images depict group portraits and exterior and interior tent views. Manuscript annotations, likely by collector and donor Harold Dunn, are present on the verso of a few images. Some photographs may be later reprints by Dunn from Kelty's original negatives. All photographs are credited to Kelty, except for a photograph of the Sparks Circus and a photograph of the Worldwide Rodeo Championship, both by Knickerbocker Photographers.

**Preferred citation:** Century Flashlight Photographers circus photographs, \*T-Vim 2018-001. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Previously catalogued as MWEZ+++ n.c. 19347

## Creator History

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## Scope and Content Note

Large-format black and white photographs primarily by the Edward Kelty's Century Flashlight Photographers company document 22 circus troupes and one rodeo performing in the Midwest, East Coast, and Montreal, Canada. Images depict group portraits and exterior and interior tent views. Manuscript annotations, likely by collector and donor Harold Dunn, are present on the verso of a few images. Some photographs may be later reprints by Dunn from Kelty's original negatives. All photographs are credited to Kelty, except for a photograph of the Sparks Circus and a photograph of the Worldwide Rodeo Championship, both by Knickerbocker Photographers.

**Arrangement:** Photographs by the Century Flashlight Photography Company are arranged alphabetically by the name of the circus company or group depicted and therein chronologically by date. Two circus photographs by other photographers are listed last.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

Circus -- United States -- Pictorial works  
Circus animals -- United States -- Pictorial works  
Circus performers -- United States -- Portraits  
Clowns -- Portraits  
Freak shows -- United States -- Pictorial works  
Indian cowboys -- West (U.S.) -- History -- Pictorial works  
Sideshows -- United States -- Pictorial works  
Wild west shows -- United States -- Pictorial works

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographic prints

### Names

Dunn, Harold. collector  
Kelty, Edward J., 1888-1967  
McCoy, Tim -- Portraits.  
Mix, Tom, 1880-1940 -- Portraits.  
Muse, George, 1890-1971 -- Portraits.  
Muse, Willie, 1893-2001 -- Portraits.  
Zacchini, Hugo -- Portraits.  
Century Flashlight Photographers (New York, N.Y.)  
Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus -- Portraits.  
Downie Bros. Circus -- Portraits.  
Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus -- Portraits.  
Hunt Bros. Circus -- Portraits.  
John Robinson's Circus -- Portraits.

Knickerbocker Photographers (New York. N.Y.)  
Miller Bros. & Arlington 101 Ranch Real Wild West (Organization) -- Portraits.  
Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows -- Portraits.  
Seils Sterling Circus -- Portraits.  
Sells-Floto Circus -- Portraits.  
Sparks Circus -- Portraits.  
Walter L. Main Circus -- Portraits.

## Container List

- Al G. Barnes Big 5 Ring Wild Animal Circus
- b. 1 f. 1 Montreal, Canada 1934 July 21
- Barnett Bros. Circus
- b. 1 f. 2 South River, New Jersey 1929 August 13
- Barry Brothers Circus
- b. 1 f. 3 Rockville Center, New York 1932 May 20
- Bostock's Wild Animal Circus and Bill Cody Ranch Wild West
- b. 1 f. 4 Yonkers, New York 1932 June 28
- Christy Brothers Circus
- b. 1 f. 5 Everette James and his Band, unidentified location 1927
- b. 1 f. 5 The Wonder Show, Hempstead, New York 1929
- Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus
- b. 1 f. 6 Marietta, Ohio 1935 July 29
- b. 1 f. 6 New York Hippodrome, New York, New York 1937
- b. 1 f. 6 Combined Side Show Congress of Human Oddities, Waterloo, Iowa 1937 July 21
- Downie Bros. Circus
- b. 1 f. 7 Newburg, New York 1937 June 1
- b. 1 f. 7 Parade, Englewood, New Jersey 1931 August 14
- b. 1 f. 7 Wild Animal Circus, Bay Shore, New York 1928 May 28
- Eldridge & Bentum Great European Circus, Iceland
- b. 1 f. 8 Unidentified location 1928
- Haag Bros. Circus
- b. 1 f. 9 Galion, Ohio 1937 July 27
- Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus
- b. 1 f. 10 Featuring Cheyenne Bill's Wild West, unidentified location 1927
- b. 1 f. 10 Brooklyn, New York 1931 June 12
- b. 1 f. 10 Brooklyn, New York 1932 June 10
- b. 1 f. 10 Cheerful Gardner and his Bulls, Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York 1933 June 22
- b. 1 f. 10 Side Show, unidentified location 1933
- b. 1 f. 10 Peoria, Illinois 1934 May 17
- b. 1 f. 10 Opening spectacle "Persia," Terre Haute, Indiana 1934 May
- b. 1 f. 10 St. Louis, Missouri 1934 May (Century stamp on verso.)
- b. 1 f. 10 St. Louis, Missouri 1934 May (No Century stamp on verso.)
- b. 1 f. 10 Geisha Spectacle, unidentified location undated (Century stamp on verso.)
- Hunt's Three Ring Circus
- b. 1 f. 11 Unidentified location 1928 (Century stamp on verso.)
- John Robinson's Circus
- b. 1 f. 12 Trenton, New Jersey 1929 October 5 (Century stamp on verso.)

John Robinson's Circus (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 12     Clowns, Schenectady, New York 1928 (Century stamp on verso)  
Lewis Bros. Circus
- b. 1 f. 13     Unidentified location undated (No Century stamp on verso)  
Miller Bros. 101 Ranch
- b. 1 f. 14     Portraits, unidentified location 1928 (Century stamp on verso)  
Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows
- b. 1 f. 15     Clowns, Madison Square Garden, New York, New York 1924 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Congress of Freaks, unidentified location 1924 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Concert Band, Madison Square Garden, New York, New York 1926 (No Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Coliseum, Bronx, New York 1929 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Hugo Zacchini, human projectile, Brooklyn, New York 1933 May 19 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Hugo Zacchini, human projectile, Brooklyn, New York 1933 May 19 (No Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Golden Jubilee, Newark, New Jersey 1933 June 6 (No Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Durbar Spectacle, Madison Square Garden, New York, New York 1933 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Irvington, New Jersey 1934 May 28 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 15     Side Shows, Springfield, Massachusetts 1934 June 23 (No Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 16     Brooklyn, New York 1935 May 18 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 16     Utica, New York 1935 July 10 (Century stamp on verso)
- b. 1 f. 16     Brooklyn, New York 1936 May 16
- b. 1 f. 16     Col. Tim McCoy and his Wild West Line up - Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Combined Circus, Chicago, Illinois 1936 July 30
- b. 1 f. 16     Red Finn and his Baggage Stock Dept, Chicago, Illinois 1936 August 1
- b. 1 f. 16     Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1936 August 9
- b. 1 f. 16     Bangor, Maine 1937 June 23
- b. 1 f. 16     Side Show Band, Brooklyn, New York 1938 May 11
- b. 1 f. 16     Riding Christiany Family, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1938 May 24
- b. 1 f. 16     Blacksmith Shop Dept., Reading, Pennsylvania 1938 June 3
- b. 1 f. 16     Scranton, Pennsylvania 1938 June 22-27
- b. 1 f. 17     Sam B. Dill's Circus, Mineola, New York 1933 June 19
- b. 1 f. 18     Seils-Sterling Four Ring Circus, Ripon, Wisconsin 1936 August 23  
Sells-Floto Circus
- b. 1 f. 19     With Tom Mix, Middletown, NY 1929 July 11
- b. 1 f. 19     Unidentified location 1927
- b. 1 f. 19     Waterbury, Connecticut 1928 May 16
- b. 1 f. 20     Silvan-Drew Motorized Circus, Mamaroneck, New York 1929 August 23
- b. 1 f. 21     Sparks Circus, unidentified location circa 1920s  
Knickerbocker Photographers (New York. N.Y.)
- b. 1 f. 22     Tom Mix Circus, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1937 August 11  
Walter L. Main Circus

Walter L. Main Circus (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 23 47th annual tour, unidentified location 1926
- b. 1 f. 23 Unidentified location 1927
- b. 1 f. 24 World's Championship Rodeo, Madison Square Garden, New York, New York  
1938 October 7  
Knickerbocker Photographers (New York. N.Y.)