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# **CIRCUS FOLK**

## **SECRETS BEHIND THE BIG TOP**

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### History of the Hertzberg Circus Collection

San Antonio lawyer, civic leader and State Senator Harry Hertzberg was an avid circus fan and a prolific collector. As president of the Circus Fans of America, Hertzberg became a close friend of many circus performers and owners.

Hertzberg considered the circus an integral part of American culture and began collecting circus material in the 1920s. He amassed a collection of approximately 20,000 posters, photographs, costumes, archives and artifacts.

Hertzberg left his circus collection to the City of San Antonio upon his death in 1940. In 1942 the San Antonio Public Library opened the Hertzberg Circus Room on the second floor of the public library. When a new library opened in 1968, the Hertzberg Collection took over the old building and became known as the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum. While the museum was in operation, the collection doubled to more than 40,000 items.

In 2001 the City of San Antonio closed the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum. In his will Harry Hertzberg indicated that the Witte Museum would receive the collection should the City of San Antonio be unable to retain the collection. The collection was transferred to the Witte Museum in 2003.

The Hertzberg Circus Collection is now one of the largest and most impressive collections of circus art and artifacts in the world.