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# CIRCUS FOLK

## SECRETS BEHIND THE BIG TOP

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### Exploring the Circus Village

From promoters to performers to roustabouts, *Circus Folk: Secrets Behind the Big Top* unravels the secrets from behind the Big Top. They came from every corner of the world—some were born into it, others ran away to join it—but no matter the reason, they became circus folk, a family creating magic in a traveling tent show. It is a life lived dangerously, humorously, but most importantly, together.

#### Four Thematic Sections

- **Life in a Traveling Village**

Circus Folk live their lives for the next performance on the tour, and traveled as a group by train, truck and motor home—creating a mobile village complete with places to eat, sleep and work.

- **The Circus Family**

The circus family is like no other. Delve into the special ties that are a complex blend of business, love and family relationships.

- **Getting Physical**

The circus village is a physical place. Learn that athleticism and strength are required in all areas of the circus—from a roustabout using an elephant to put up tents to clowns filling the arena with physical antics.

- **Rules of the Ring**

Circus Folk have rules, customs and beliefs—in and out of the ring. Everyone has a place and knows the rules of their position, making the circus village function smoothly.

#### Clown Alley: A place to think, imagine and interact

- I have a Secret (self-directed)
- Performance Stage (scheduled performances)
- Step Right Up! (scheduled activities)
- Clown Photo Opportunity (self-directed)
- If I could be...(self-directed)
- Behind the Makeup (self-directed)

#### Harry Leska Thomas Model of the Circus Village (Exploration Guide Provided)

- This model, a historical artifact, is an important part of the Hertzberg Circus Collection because it is an accurate representation of a railroad circus of the 1920s and 1930s.
- It was built by Harry Leska Thomas who devoted 13 years to its completion. Harry Hertzberg purchased the miniature circus along with several other artifacts from Thomas. It was a key artifact when the Hertzberg Circus rooms opened at the library in 1942, two years after Harry Hertzberg's death
- In 1968 the City of San Antonio opened a new Main Library and the Hertzberg Circus Collection was housed in the old library building on Market St. The model was moved to give it more prominence in the expanded museum. During the move, new figures were added to the ones assembled by Harry Leska Thomas. This is why the figures vary in scale.
- Former circus folk volunteered at the Hertzberg Museum and taught other volunteers how to assemble the tents and how to tie the ropes. Mr. Smith, a former roustabout, taught Witte volunteer, Sallie Thomas, how to tie the knots, and she in turn has taught Witte staff and volunteers. She assisted with the assembly of the miniature circus in 2004 and 2009.