

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

Wallace Circus Winter Quarters (1892-1913); American Circus Corporation Winter
historic Quarters (1921-29)

and or common Peru Circus Farm; Valley Farms

2. Location

street & number 2.5 miles southeast of city center not for publication

city, town X vicinity of Peru

state Indiana code county Miami code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Valley Farms, Inc. c/o Mr. Lyman Bond

street & number 13555 114th Street

city, town Noblesville vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Courthouse

street & number

city, town peru state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary

The principal "Circus Farm" of Peru is that used sequentially by Benjamin Wallace, the American Circus Corporation, and the Ringlings between 1892 and 1938. The structures remaining on it from the circus era date, in their present configurations, from the 1920s, an era of great prosperity in the business; some incorporate earlier Wallace quarters structures. Although these buildings, which now serve a prosperous working farm, do not display conspicuous evidence of their glamorous past on their exteriors, close examination reveals relations to their former use. And, though a number of the structures in the circus quarters complex are gone, the principal buildings that constituted its core are relatively well preserved from the circus-era.

The principal surviving structures include the Godfroy (Godefroy) House, the only building on the property that clearly antedates Wallace's arrival there in 1892; the Wagon Shop and the Elephant, Hippo, and Cat Barn, both outside wooden barns with ample second-story spaces; and the concrete Tiger, Lion, and Bear Barn, linked to the Elephant, Hippo, and Cat Barn. The former Office structure of the quarters also survives, as does the outline of the Sells-Floto Pony Stables' training ring.

Other structures in the quarters area have been destroyed over time. Several of them fell prey to fire, a persistent foe of circus structures that limits severely the possibilities for the preservation of structures associated with the industry. Others have been pulled down over time to accommodate farm needs. The demolished structures include the Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck Horse Stables (burned 1946); the Paint Shop (down by 1941); a series of corrals and pony stables to the northwest of the major barns; the 425'-long Wagon and Baggage Shed; the Sells-Floto Pony Stables, or Ring Barn (torn down in 1958), between the barns and the house; a wagon storage barn (to the southeast of the house); the John Robinson Stable (east of the house); and bunkhouses and other small structures (also to the rear, or east, of the house). A residence, adjacent to the Godfroy House, was used by the Ringlings. It stood where the present swimming pool now rests.

Godfroy House

The Godfroy House, the front block of which is a substantial 2-story, 5-bay brick structure of unknown construction date, was the centerpiece of a prosperous farm long before Wallace acquired it in 1891 and is of more than passing interest as the home built, probably in the 1850s, for Gabriel Godfroy; Gabriel's father Francis, a chief of the Miami Indians, received confirmation of his title to the land on which it rests from the U.S. Government in 1826. Enlarged substantially during the circus years, it served as a dining hall for workmen, or "roustabouts," who resided in bunkhouses behind it.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social/
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
				Recreation
Specific dates	1892-1938	Builder Architect	Unknown	(circus quarters)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The Peru, Indiana, circus winter quarters used by Benjamin ("Ben") E. Wallace and his successors contains several of the few remaining structures associated with the heyday of the American circus. Only the somewhat earlier Ringling structures at Baraboo, Wisconsin, which have already been recognized as a National Historic Landmark, compare with them.

Between the Civil War and the Great Depression, the traveling American circus flourished in a manner never known before or since. The essential completion of the American rail system made it possible to bring great circuses to all major communities. Local sideshows blossomed into enterprises of great dimensions.

Preeminent among the circus impresarios in this "golden era" were Barnum and Bailey and the Ringlings. Other important figures who belong in any pantheon of great circus showmen are Benjamin Wallace of Peru, Indiana, and his successors in the American Circus Corporation (Jerry Mugivan, Edward M. Ballard, and Bert Bowers). Wallace started in the business the same year as the Ringlings and, with them, gave the more established Barnum and Bailey a run for their money. Wallace, like his competitors, insisted, with some merit, that he had the "greatest show on earth." The American Circus Corporation laid claim to similar distinction before selling out to the Ringlings in September 1929.

History

Peru's renown as "Circus City" began with "Ben" Wallace, a Civil War veteran who operated a livery stable business that had grown into one of the largest in the State by the early 1880s.¹ Beginning in that period, Wallace, initially with a partner, acquired the remains of several circuses at auctions, and, in the spring of 1884, set out of Peru with "Wallace and Co.'s Great World Menagerie, Grand International Mardi Gras, Highway Holiday Hidalgo, and Alliance of Novelties." This grandiosely named but relatively small 1-ring show toured Virginia and Kentucky and enjoyed an excellent season. He had nine "cars" the next year.

Over the next two decades, Wallace plowed much of his profits back into the business, progressively lengthening his tours and enlarging his shows. He took to the rails with 15 cars in 1886, 4 years in advance of the Ringlings. By

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 9

Quadrangle name Peru

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	1 6	5 8 2 8 8 0	4 5 1 1 8 5 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 6	5 8 2 8 1 0	4 5 1 1 6 5 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 6	5 8 2 6 3 0	4 5 1 1 7 3 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D	1 6	5 8 2 7 0 0	4 5 1 1 9 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date April 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

_____ date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

_____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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During this use several frame additions were made to the rear and the south side; the latter has been removed. The principal facade at one time featured a 1-story porch spanning its length; this has been removed and replaced by a simple enclosed portico that serves as the main entrance to the house. The large rear addition, now clad with wood siding, remains intact.

The Godfroy House has apparently been remodeled several times on the interior. The principal block appears to have started out on a center hall plan with paired rooms to both sides on the two levels. This portion of the structure retains its high ceilings and thick walls. The present arrangement of rooms reflects some adaptations made by the present owners. The exact character of changes that may have been made to the house's earlier configuration during its service as a dining hall for the circus are unknown.

The Circus Barns

The Wagon Shop (1922) and the Elephant, Hippo, and Cat Barn (1923) are oversize wooden structures of nearly identical size (150' long, 72' wide, and 40' high) with gambrel roofs; they have ranges of 1-story concrete block wings to both sides that contain stalls designed, respectively, for wagons and repair machinery and for the circus animals; elephants were tethered in the center of the floor in the latter. Although minor features of both structures have been modified on their interiors, no fundamental changes have occurred in either exterior or interior appearance.

The concrete Tiger, Lion, and Bear Barn, linked to the Elephant, Hippo, and Cat Barn, is a 2-story structure of concrete that incorporates, at its ends, structures built for Wallace early during his use of the farm. Its small high windows, high on the walls, give it a forbidding prison-like appearance, but this placement of the windows was dictated by the need to keep the animals safely confined.

Other Structures and Features

The former "Circus Farm Office," adjacent to the road past the quarters, is extant. It is a simple 1-story frame cottage with a smaller addition to the rear. The addition has been put up since the circus era.

The present owners have kept in place the large carved stone posts that stand at the sides of the entrance to the former main driveway, to the right, or south, of the front facade of the house. They are one of the more noticeable circus-era decorative features that remain in place on the farm.

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Other Peru—Area Circus Structures

Other Peru—area structures, none of which are included in this nomination, were also associated with Wallace and his successors. His first quarters, which he used until 1892, was on his brother John's farm several miles farther from Peru. Only the farmhouse and a single barn survive. Housing that Wallace constructed for his circus workers (Wallace Row) survives just south of Peru en route from the town to the winter quarters. The in-town railroad yard and its structures, on a 5-acre tract where the circus massed for its road trips, have been obliterated by fire. Extensive landholdings that Wallace acquired with his circus earnings can be identified; while some may have been used for circus purposes, none were as intimately associated with it as the "Circus Farm."

Footnote

¹This description is derived from historic descriptions published in Chalmer Condon, "Benjamin E. Wallace's Winterquarters," Bandwagon (July-August 1964), pp. 7-10, and Charles Wirth, "The New Circus 'Home' at Peru," Billboard (August 1, 1923), as reprinted in Bandwagon (July-August 1964), pp. 13-18. Both contain sketch maps. Wirth's article reproduces a map done by the Indiana Inspection Bureau in 1929, a copy of which appears with this nomination. This map was especially helpful in determining the dates and uses of structures and the extent of modifications to them, a task performed during an onsite visit by the author of this form in December 1984.

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1893, he had doubled the show's size again. Even in the 1890s, his traveling menagerie was relatively extensive: for example, in 1895 he

carried ... 5 elephants, 5 camels, 2 yak, 2 llamas, 4 ostriches, 1 sacred ox, 3 zebra and 20 cages. The big top was a 180 ft. with 4-50 ft. middle pieces. The menagerie top was an 80 with 5-40's. The dressing tent was 70 ft. with 1-40. 40 trunks were on the gentlemen's side and 26 on the ladies. There were 6-8 horse drivers; 9-6 horse drivers and 7-four horse drivers.²

Wallace's shows grew bigger and bigger. This was partially because he acquired other circuses and merged them into his, including the La Pearl, 1899; Carl Hagenbeck, 1907; and part of the Norris & Rowe, 1910. After the 1907 merger, the combination was dubbed the Hagenbeck-Wallace, including the "Carl Hagenbeck Animal Show" and the "Great Wallace Show of Human Performers," although Hagenbeck was effectively shut out of the circus he had started, with Wallace's principal partner being John C. Talbot of Denver.³ At that point, only the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey, formed by similar merger the same year, was an effective competitor.

In 1913, Wallace, giving into his age and his desire to retire from the hurly-burly of life on the road, sold his circus interests, except for the farm near Peru on which since 1892 he had been wintering the circus.⁴ The circus itself was acquired by a syndicate, dubbed the Carl Hagenbeck and Great Wallace Shows Company, which was owned by Talbot, Wallace's erstwhile partner; Edward M. ("Ed") Ballard, a hotel and casino operator from West Baden Springs, Indiana; and C. E. Corey, Wallace's nephew.⁵ Ballard was the main power in the firm and he gave reign to his desire to house the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus at W. Baden Springs, moving it to newly constructed quarters there after the 1914 season.

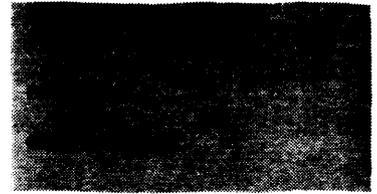
The syndicate had rented the Peru quarters for Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1913-14. In the next few years, other circuses under other owners rented them from Wallace: the Howe's Great London, Robinson's Famous Shows, John Robinson, and Sells-Floto. Finally, in 1921, on Wallace's death, his estate sold the quarters to the American Circus Corporation, a holding company that controlled all of the circuses named in this paragraph. Ballard was a key figure in the new corporation, along with Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers.

This great circus conglomerate enhanced and expanded the Peru Quarters, adding many new buildings, mostly in 1922-23. They also operated the quarters as a type of "zoo" ("Circus City Zoological Gardens") during the off seasons. Tom Mix and Clyde Beatty were human attractions who complemented the animal collection, which at one point featured:

6 giraffes, 3 hippopotami, 30 camels, 40 elephants, 125 lions and tigers, 500 blooded horses, 200 dogs and ponies. Llamas, zebras, monkeys, pumas, black panthers, polar bears, Russian bears, Himalayan bears, ostriches, [and] Many other species of wild animals all imported from the foreign jungles.⁶

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The Corporation continued to winter the John Robinson at the Peru Quarters through the 1923-24 winter, and had Sells-Floto there also. In 1924-25 Ballard welcomed John Robinson to his W. Baden Springs quarters, and sent Hagenbeck-Wallace back to Peru. During the rest of the 1920s, Hagenbeck-Wallace remained at Peru, joined by Sells-Floto beginning in 1925, and John Robinson at the close of the 1928 road season, when Ballard closed down the W. Baden Springs quarters.* In 1929, the American Circus Corporation acquired still two more smaller circuses, the Sparks and Al G. Barnes.

The same year, "Ed" Ballard, in Midwestern parlance, "euchred" the Ringlings out of a valued Madison Square Garden billing. John Ringling then determined to buy Ballard out. With luck or foresight, or both, Ballard decided to sell. He cleared a reported \$2 million on the deal, concluded in September 1929. Ringling became the undisputed master of the circus industry -- and the owner of the Peru circus quarters.

Initially, Ringling kept all three circuses in Peru. The worsening Depression led him to shelve John Robinson in 1931 and Sells-Floto in 1933; they combined elements of these shows with the Hagenbeck-Wallace, which toured even in 1933 and 1934. Further retrenching, Ringling combined Hagenbeck-Wallace with another of their circuses, the Forepaugh-Sells, for 1935, and did not put the show on the road at all in 1936. Under lease in 1937, the combined shows enjoyed a good season, but finally perished in the recession of 1938, when they took to the road, but never came back from California. Much of their equipment was dispersed from there.

In the distressed state of the circus industry, the quarters complex was an impediment. Beginning in 1938, distinctive circus equipment was sold off or destroyed. In 1941, when the Ringlings decided to sell the quarters, a great wagon burning reduced to ashes many of the highly decorated vehicles that had graced the circuses. By 1944, when Emil Shram, former president of the New York Stock Exchange, purchased the property, most of the circus equipment and moveable trappings had been removed or disposed of.

Since 1944, the great "Circus Farm" has been an active, prosperous, and more traditional farm. Emil Shram and members of his family continue active in its operation.

*The W. Baden Springs quarters were demolished in the 1940s. Only Ballard's residence ("Beechwood") and the W. Baden Springs Hotel, in the atrium of which the circus occasionally performed, recall the circus history of that community. (The W. Baden Springs Hotel is being studied for possible National Historic Landmark designation as a part of this study.)

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Footnotes

1

Chalmer Condon, "B.E. Wallace," Bandwagon (July-August 1964), pp. 3-6, is the main basis of the following summary of Wallace's career.

2

Ibid., p. 5.

3

Fred D. Pfenig, Jr., "How Wallace Bought Hagenbeck," Bandwagon (July-August 1964), p. 12.

4

Chalmer Condon, op. cit., p. 6.

5

The account of Ballard's career and the later days of the circus at Peru is derived from Joseph T. Bradbury, "Circus Activity at Peru, 1913-1944," Bandwagon (July-August 1964), pp. 19-27, and the following chapters in C.E. Ballard, The Ballards in Indiana (Peru, Ind.: C.E. Ballard Literary Trust, 1984): "The Circuses in West Baden, Indiana," pp. 81-89; "The Circus in Peru, Indiana," pp. 91-104; and "The Circus Farm," pp. 123-127.

Bibliography

Ballard, C.E. The Ballards in Indiana. Peru, Ind.: C.E. Ballard Literary Trust, 1984.

Bandwagon (July-August 1964). Publication of the Circus Historical Society. 25th Anniversary Special Edition -- "80 Years of Circus in Peru." See Bradbury, Condon, Pfenig, and Wirth entries in this bibliography.

Bradbury, Joseph T. "Circus Activity at Peru, 1913-1944," Bandwagon (July-August 1964), pp. 19-27.

Chindahl, George L. A History of the Circus in America. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1959.

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Fishback, Debbie R. Our Circus Heritage: History of the Circus in Peru, Indiana. Undated manuscript in the Miami County Historical Society collections, Peru, Ind.

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Hartisch, Karl. "Barn on circus quarters made of seats, tent posts." Daily Tribune (Peru, Ind.), Saturday, December 15, 1984, pp. 1, 6.

Pfenig, Fred D., Jr. "How Wallace Bought Hagenbeck," Bandwagon (July-August 1964), pp. 11-12.

Wirth, Charles. "The New Circus 'Home' at Peru," Billboard (August 11, 1923). (Reprinted in Bandwagon [July-August 1964], pp. 13-18.)

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Verbal Boundary

A roughly rectangular tract bounded by a line drawn northwest 800' along Indiana 124 from the easternmost of the two stone entrance gates to the Godfroy House, then running on a line 30 degrees east of north 700', then on a line 30 degrees south of east 800', and returning via a line drawn 30 degrees west of south some 700' to the point of beginning, said tract including all the extant circus-related structures inventoried in this study.