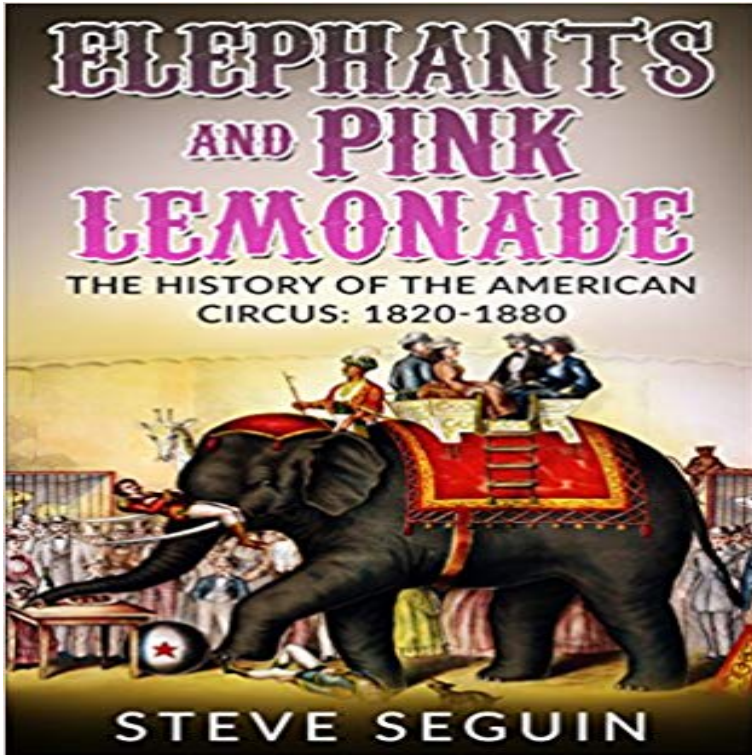


# Elephants and Pink Lemonade: The History of the American Circus, 1820-1880



The circus has been a part of America for almost as long as there has been an America. People have eagerly flocked to the circus to see the wonders of the world, to escape the monotony of rural life, and, more than anything, to be entertained. The American circus, with its unprecedented display of animals, curiosities, and human performers in three rings, is significantly different than its European namesake. Why is the American circus different? What made it become so different? The answers can all be found during the American circus formative years, from the creation of the first American-owned circus in 1820 to the merger between the Barnum and Bailey circuses in 1880. Exhaustively researched and documented over twenty years, *Elephants and Pink Lemonade* sheds new light on the evolution of the circus from small equestrian shows with a handful of clowns to a huge panorama of elaborate performances, wonderful animals, strange curiosities, and breathtaking displays of athletic skill which could only be transported by train. The impact of colorful characters such as Isaac Van Amburgh, Dan Rice, and P.T. Barnum will be documented. Each step of the way, the unique development of the circus is tied to the concrete experiences of American history the religious roots and distrust of amusements, improvements in transportation technology, the rise of competing entertainments, and the growth in urban populations, amongst others. While a multitude of books and articles exist for the post-1870 period of circus history, not nearly enough has been written on these formative years. The impact of the circus on the popular mind can be seen in the absorption of circus phrases, such as jumbo, rain or shine, lets get this show on the road, hold your horses, and jumping on the bandwagon, into everyday language. *Elephants and Pink Lemonade* provides a compelling narrative of how the travelling

horse shows grew into the beloved institution that is the American circus.

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