



HEADQUARTERS

LANCASTER, MO.

by Bob Cline, Circus Performer & Historian

Dear Carol --

I am a Circus Historian living in South Carolina. For two years, I have been researching the life and times of William Preston Hall, who was known as the "Horse King of the World."

I am trying to locate any documentation relating to Mr. Hall's life to create a better understanding of his activities, and plan to publish a comilation of these facts sometime in 2011 or 2012.

Mr. Hall literally bought and sold hundreds to thousands of horses and mules weekly from around 1895 to 1930. He was continuously buying, or having people buy for him, in places such as Bloomfield, Iowa, and Centerville, Iowa, along with many other towns, particularly along the State Line area.

Being a former circus performer myself and following the lives of elephants for many years, I have learned that Wm. P. Hall was one of the largest movers and shakers of circus equipment, railroad cars and animals for over a quarter century. I've documented over 100 different elephants traveling through his barns.

Mr. Hall started out as a horse buyer with a keen eye and paid a fair price at all times. He provided all the horses for the Boer War re-enactment at the 1904 St. Louis Worlds Fair. He sold the British government all the war horses for WWI. He sold mules by the boatload to the South African Diamond mines. In return he accepted some diamonds as payment and became known as "Diamond Billy."

So lucrative was the horse and mule trade that Hall decided to branch out into other lines needing horses, that being the circus and carnival trade. Realizing the huge need for horses in the circus business, he bought two complete circuses, sold one for a

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tidy profit immediately, then took the other one out as his own circus, which lasted for one summer. He subsequently found the contacts for other circus people and he started buying a complete circus here and leasing part of it there. Foreclosures happened readily and he would re-possess, and re-lease a couple times in the same year, therefore making pure profit and costing him nothing.

He provided wagons, tents, seating, lions, tigers, bears, elephants, and of course horses, as well as train cars and supplies to just about every circus that existed.



When Mr. Hall's last surviving daughter donated all the materials that could be found to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, there were almost a thousand letters in the house. Some told of a definite transaction, some were asking a price, some complained, some thanked him.

I've been through those papers three times now.

I am not a collector of circus memorabilia per se', although I do have some, but rather I enjoy collecting the facts. I would be thrilled to locate anyone that has a letter to Mr. Hall or from Mr. Hall, a telegram, a railroad bill of lading, a receipt from a sale barn, a cancelled check, a contract, anything that clearly defines a transaction. All I ask is for a copy of the

artifact. If anyone wanted to give the artifact to me, I would not turn it down, but that's not what I'm trying to collect. I do have one of his letters, and his letterhead appears at the top of this page, illustrating the type of artwork found during period.

I appreciate anything you can do to help spread the word.

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I was fortunate enough to visit Lancaster, last March and saw the Museum with a few of the Wm. P. Hall mementos in what was his house. I went through the courthouse there as well as started reading the newspaper on microfilm. I continue to receive the microfilm on Interlibrary loans.

Again, I am not asking anyone for their originals, just a photo copy for the information in it. I would enjoy locating any contracts, bills of sales, bills of lading, Railroad papers, letters to or from Mr. Hall, telegrams, cancelled checks, receipts from the sale barns, etc.

I have contacted the Iowa Historical Society but they have nothing recorded in their collections.

If you know of anyone that could help, please feel free to pass my contact information on to them.

I always share information with anyone that asks. This compilation of facts won't get published until 2011 at the earliest I believe.

Wm. P. Hall, the "Horse King of the World," sounds like a fascinating historical figure. I look forward to hearing that Bob Cline's documentary is published and ready to read! Can you help him?
- Carol Eilers