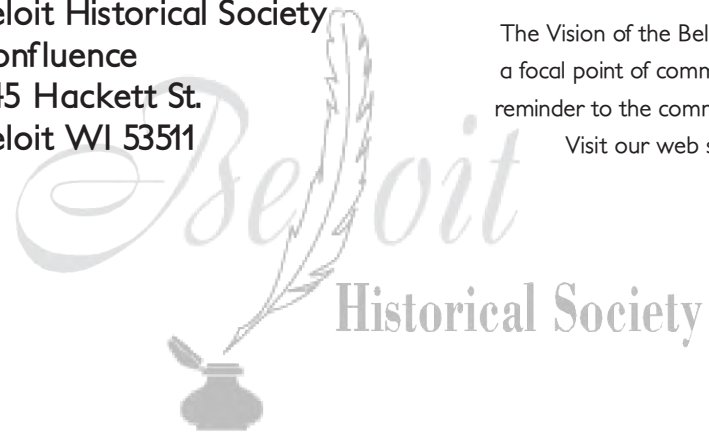



Beloit Historical Society
Confluence
845 Hackett St.
Beloit WI 53511



The Vision of the Beloit Historical Society is to make history
a focal point of community pride and to serve as a constant
reminder to the community of its great and diverse heritage.
Visit our web site at beloithistoricalsociety.com

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Confluence

Volume 20, Issue 2 - May 2013

Charlie Kitto under the hippodrome

By Paul Kerr

One morning a kid of four years old awoke in time to see wagons heading through the old Cornish town of Mineral Point toward the fairgrounds. He followed to watch the people and animals put up tents and set up camp. The kid was fascinated. The year was 1909 and the kid, Charles Stacey Kitto, was hooked on circuses from this time onward.

Christopher, in Beloit and from that time worked for him in the printing business. The business at that time was called Kitto and Company-Printers, located at the 300 block of East Grand Ave. By 1919 the business moved to 420 Pleasant Street and was renamed Kitto the Printer. It is by this name that many Beloiters of today remember the business.



Parade of the Past - This picture of the *Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows* was taken from the upstairs of the Goodwin Block, an office building at the corner of East Grand Avenue and State Street, Beloit on June 13, 1906.

Charlie lived with his grandparents in Mineral Point until 1917. He left that year to join his father,

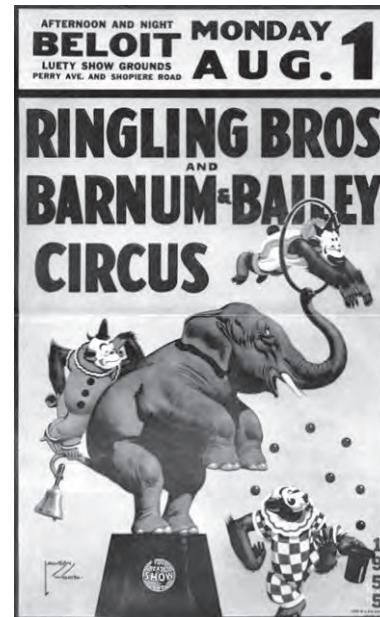
In the beginning, at the age of twelve, Charlie would take his red wagon filled with printing ma-

terials and deliver them around town. Many years later, on 1 April 1947, Christopher formed a partnership with his sons Charles and William. It was a partnership that would last until 1970 when both brothers agreed to dissolve it and sell the enterprise to their loyal employee of twenty four years, Arnold Johnson.

One partnership never dissolved, however, one retirement Charlie Kitto could never make, was from the world of the circus. From that moment in 1909 when the Gollmar Brothers Circus rolled into Mineral point, to the Ringling Brothers and Clyde Beaty-Coles Brothers Circuses rolled into Beloit, Charles Kitto was there. He loved the nomadic life, loved how everyone pitched in to put up the tents, how efficient the use of labor. Once he commented on how there seemed "to be a place for everything and everything in its place." His favorite acts at the circus were the trapeze and elephants.

In 1973 on an August morning a circus set up on the grounds at Prairie Avenue and Post Road in Beloit. There were two performances. Charles and his wife Helen (Charles married Helen Trostle 26 June 1935) were there to watch. It was a usual occurrence for husband and wife to awaken early in the morning when circuses came to town and to go and watch the performers erect the huge tents, in the old

days referred to as hippodromes. In years past because of Charlie's love of the circus, his connections with them and with the town fathers, he was able to get major shows to come to Beloit: he arranged for the Barnum and Bailey Circus to come in 1946, 1952 and 1956. We don't know if he had any direct hand in the circus coming in 1973. We just know it was the last time a big circus came to town.



The big railroad circuses of the early 1900s were not only gone from Beloit, but from the overall community scene nationwide. It became too expensive to haul such freight, to feed the animals and to pay 40 to 50 people everyday. Sometimes costs reached \$7,000 a day. With public appeal dwindling, World War II and the post war setting it was all but over for the circus by the mid to late 20th century. Circuses

Continued inside

BHS Lincoln Center hours are noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and by appointment on Saturday. Call 608-365-7835.

Beloit Historical Society
Founded 1910

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Newsletter Contributors: Paul Kerr, Dwight Alton, and Nancy Wallace; layout by Jen Scott.

Board meetings are the third Thursday of every month at 4:15 p.m. and are held at Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett Street.

The Newsletter, *Confluence*, is published quarterly for the membership of the Beloit Historical Society to inform readers of Society activities as well as educate them on the history of Beloit. The Beloit Historical Society manages two sites, Lincoln Center Museum with main offices at 845 Hackett St. and Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, 2149 St. Lawrence Ave. For further information please call (608) 365-7835 or e-mail us at Pkerr@beloithistoricalsociety.com. Or see our web site at beloithistoricalsociety.com.

Louis Phelan: And Here's What He Had To Say...

From the ages of 17 to 20, I worked for and with other inventors in building machines for manufacturing paper cartons; oil burners for automobiles, annealing furnaces, and locomotives; and a machine for automatically spacing and punching structural steel.

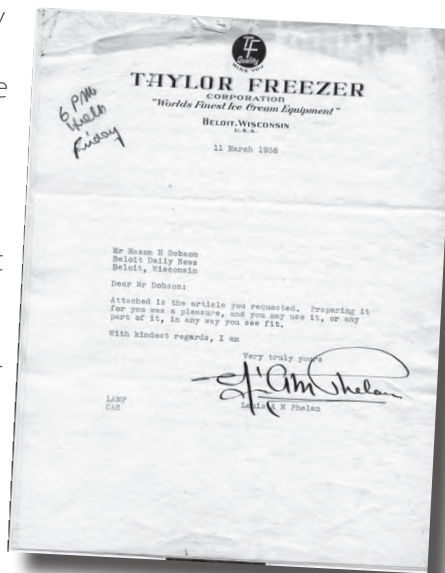
Between the ages of 20 and 30, I developed several automatic electric time switches, also a switch for flashing signs. At this particular time a better electrical switching medium was imperative; and, as necessity is the mother of invention, the mercury contractor resulted, after about 8 years of effort. To be correct, not all of the 8 years was expended, but that portion of it which the inventor could spare aside from earning a living.

Today the Mercury Contactor is used in all parts of the world and has wide application in many industries and with many devices. A great number of patent applications have resulted by combining the mercury contactor with mechanical means for its operation, which has resulted in considerable industrial profit.

Persistency seems to be of more use to the inventor than brilliancy. As Edison put it, "Invention is two percent inspiration, and 98 percent perspiration"; and still, our most eminent inventors are those who have found ways of avoiding work.

Invention resolves itself into the simple and logical way rather than the complex and illogical way. The successful inventor uses subtraction and division rather than addition and multiplication. The art of invention is to make two sticks perform as four, or two wheels do the work of six. In other words, worthwhile invention is practical. In all phases of life, simplicity and truth are synonymous. Invention is not an exception. It may be said that good inventors are too dumb to be complex.

Edison wisely said, "Though an experiment is a failure, still it is a success, because you know that's one darn thing that won't work anyway." The true inventor never grows tired of trying. Accomplishment - not time - is his yardstick; and money has value only insofar as it enables him to experiment further. Worthwhile results are his purpose - his life.



The successful inventor uses subtraction and division rather than addition and multiplication.

Other inventions of credit are safety applications for calender and mill lines throughout the rubber industry, means for equalization of static or dirigibles, ice cream freezers, and improvements in X-ray tubes.



***** ANTIQUE APPRAISAL

The Beloit Historical Society hosted a "What's It Worth – Antiques & Appraisals Roadshow" on Saturday, March 2, 2013 from 10 am – 2 pm. Approximately 60 people



Rich Ranft, United Country Beloit Auction, appraises a painting at the event.

brought items to be appraised by three professional appraisers. We are very grateful to Rich Ranft from United Country Beloit Auction & Realty, Peter Dast of Bookworks in Evansville, and Shirley Bauman from Madison for donating their time and skills for this event. They saw some very interesting items come through; from an old dice gambling set worth about \$2,000, to an antique violin, statues and paintings. The historical society offered free popcorn and opened the exhibit gallery for tours. We raised \$600, which will go toward the summer kitchen remodel at the Hanchett-Bartlett House.

Tour Guides Wanted

If you enjoy Beloit history, working with children, and telling stories, we need you! The Society is need of Hanchett-Bartlett tour guides (docents) for daytime tours. If this sounds like fun to you, please call us at 365-7835!

Helping Hands at Hanchett-Bartlett

Members of the Hanchett-Bartlett committee have been working on small repairs in the beautiful old house. The roof was replaced over the summer kitchen in late fall and they hope to raise enough money to build an up-to-date kitchen and meeting room in the summer kitchen area. If you would like to volunteer to help at the homestead please call the historical society at 365-7835. Once the house is fixed up the Beloit Historical Society will be hosting many community events throughout the year at the house and grounds.



Greg Kaiser scrapes and patches peeling paint high above the beautiful staircase.

Mike King, chairperson of the Hanchett-Bartlett committee, works on patching the windowsill in the upstairs bedroom.



Ron Klein watches as John Sabaka explains the inner workings of the old wood burning stove in the original kitchen.

would, toward the end of the era, set up in county seats such as Janesville and Rockford bypassing the smaller cities like Beloit. Gone were the old words such as *hippodrome* and *velocipede* to be replaced by the less romantic words *tents* and *bicycles*. Not gone, though, were the memories Charles Kitto had of the circus. And he had not just memories but one grand collection, of international renown, of circus memorabilia.

scrapbooks of circus information, artifacts including rare posters and circus magazines such as *The Billboard* and the *White Top*. He and Helen were members of the Circus Historical Society and the Circus Fan Association. Husband and wife were invited on numerous occasions to ride on the huge circus wagon in the Old Milwaukee Days 4th of July Parade. Charles was well respected and his influence was felt throughout the world of circus life.

Charlie was one of the country's great authorities on the history of circuses and was consulted often for his expertise. When

asked to be the first secretary. He said "no." But he did serve as consultant and aided with exhibits. Over the years he was

his collection were prominent in the article.

Charles Kitto was born in 1905 and died in 1982. He was a

Beloit College graduate, class of 1928.

He double majored in history and English. He was a coporator of the Beloit Savings Bank for twenty seven years. He was a member of many organizations such as the Optimist Club, the Beloit Historical Society as well as the

Rock County Historical Society and a prominent member of the Second Congregational Church. He made many contributions to Beloit.

It's pleasant to think that perhaps in his imagination he lived the circus life he was so interested in, helping the performers, nomads, working under the hippodrome, getting it ready for the next circus in town.



interviewed many times. He and Helen opened their home to Minnie Mills Enking January of 1980, two years before Charles died. Minnie worked for the Beloit Daily News and was editor of Family Life Series which emphasized the home and home life of the occupants. In the article were tid bits of information about the five level home into which the Kittos moved at 2632 East Hill Road in 1970. But it was difficult not to discuss the vast materials Charles had acquired and assembled in the two basement levels dedicated to his circus collection. Photographs of parts of



Charles began collecting seriously when he was twenty years old in 1925. He accumulated over 75

the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin opened up in the late 1950s Charles was



Share your memories of the circus on the Beloit Historical Society Facebook Page!

Invite a Friend Know someone interested in Beloit History?

Give them a **free one-year membership** to the Beloit Historical Society. Email or call us (membership@beloithistoricalsociety.com, 608-365-7835) with your name and the names and addresses of people you are recommending. We will get in touch and let them know about the many benefits the Society has to offer. We look forward to seeing you and the new members you recommend!

Welcome to our newest members!

Member's Corner

Dee Dee Spahos, Gloria Mathews, Alan & Mary R. Wilson, Joan & Karl Salzberg, Ron Fisher, James Audrey

Thank you for your support by joining us as members of the Beloit Historical Society. Your support helps with the Society's on-going mission to preserve the history and to inform the public about the rich heritage of the Greater Beloit area. It means a lot to us.

Join us for the Beloit Historical Society Annual Meeting and Dinner.

May 17, 2013 | 6 p.m.

Dr. Scott Emmert, associate professor of English at University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, will give a presentation for Beloit Historical Society's annual dinner meeting on May 17.

The title of his talk is "Midwestern Writers Remember the First World War." He plans to focus on authors including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Edna Ferber alongside lesser-known authors publishing in *The Midland* magazine, a highly regarded literary journal headquartered in Iowa.



The event will begin with wine, beer and appetizers at 6 p.m. in the Society's Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett St., Beloit. A buffet meal will be provided, featuring roasted beef, baked chicken, and dessert. Cost is \$35 for members and \$40 for non members. Reservations with payment are due by May 14.

Emmert claims that "memories of WWI in the two decades following the war featured a range of reactions from anti-war to patriotic expressions of homefront sacrifice."

Emmert and a colleague, Steven Trout, are editing an anthology of these stories which is expected to be published by Kent State University Press in spring 2014. It will be titled "World War I in American Fiction: An Anthology of Stories."



I'd like to attend the Annual Dinner

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City, ST zip _____

Payment is included for:

Qty: _____ tickets at \$35 per member = \$ _____

Qty: _____ tickets at \$40 per non-member = \$ _____

Add lines together for total = \$ _____

Please list names and addresses of any non-members.
Use additional paper if more space is required.

*Mail this form with payment to Beloit Historical Society
Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett St., Beloit, WI 53511 by Friday,
May 14. For those who wish to drop their reservations off,
the Center is open 12-4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.*