



### *Founders Fact Sheet*

#### **John Nicholas Ringling**

- John Nicholas Ringling was born May 31, 1866, in McGregor, Iowa, and died December 2, 1936.
- He was the son of a German immigrant harness maker, the second youngest boy in a family of seven brothers and one sister.
- In 1882, when John was 16 years old, the Ringling family moved to Baraboo, Wisconsin.
- In 1884, five brothers (including John) joined with an experienced circus showman to create “Yankee Robinson and Ringling Bros. Double Show.”
- In 1885, the Ringling brothers became the sole proprietors of the “Yankee Robinson and Ringling Bros. Double Show.”
- John was the “advance man;” he scheduled, contracted, and arranged circus bookings.
- In addition to the circus, John Ringling invested in railroads, oil wells, real estate, and theaters. In his heyday, his estimated worth was \$200 million in capital assets.

#### **Mable Burton Ringling**

- Mable Burton Ringling was born March 4, 1875 in Moons, Ohio, and died on June 8, 1929.
- Little is known about Mable during her youth.
- On December 29, 1905, John and Mable were married in Hoboken, New Jersey. She was 30, and he was 39.

#### **The Sarasota Years**

- In 1911, the Ringlings purchased 20 acres of waterfront property in Sarasota, Florida. This included a house built by one of Ringling’s circus managers, Charles Thompson.
- The Ringlings began spending winters in Sarasota in 1912. They became involved in the community, bought real estate, and at one time, owned approximately 25 percent of Sarasota’s total area.
- In 1927 John Ringling moved the winter quarters of the circus from Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Sarasota.
- John Ringling intended to build a Ritz-Carlton on Longboat Key. During his travels to Europe, he began collecting stone, columns, fountains, bronze copies of antique and Renaissance statuary, and barrel roof tiles for the hotel. His plan never succeeded and many of these elements appear today on the Museum complex and *Cà d’Zan*.
- An art dealer from München named Julius Böhler often accompanied the Ringlings in their travels. He became John Ringling’s consultant in buying art (later to be housed in The Ringling Museum of Art).

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