



Courier Litho Co. (American, 19th century), *Ringling Bros.*, 1898.
Ink on paper, 27 3/4 x 41 1/4 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred S. Wynan,
1965. SN1547.208.14

John Ringling grew up in a large family in Baraboo, Wisconsin. He and his brothers joined the entertainment industry as performers: some played music, others juggled, and John performed as a clown! Eventually, John and four of his brothers created Ringling Brothers Circus. When they acquired Barnum & Bailey in 1907, it became one of the world's most successful entertainment organizations, the "Greatest Show on Earth."

While managing the circus, each of the five brothers had their own specific roles:

Al Ringling chose acts for the Big Top and sideshow.

Otto Ringling controlled the money spent.

Alf T. Ringling ran the press department.

Charles Ringling was in charge of advertising and was an administrator of the whole crew.

John Ringling managed routing and transportation arrangements.

DID YOU KNOW?

- John Ringling was the second youngest in a family of seven brothers and one sister.
- John's success with the circus and entrepreneurial skills helped to make him, in the Roaring Twenties, one of the richest men in America with an estimated worth of nearly \$200 million.
- In 1948, the Museum's first Director, A. Everett 'Chick' Austin, Jr., used Ringling memorabilia to open the first Circus Museum.

STANDARDS:

LAFS.2.L.1.1

LAFS.3.W.2.4

ACTIVITY

FAMILY BUSINESS

MATERIALS:
A PENCIL

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
SIMPLE



Try it Out!

The Ringling brothers ran their circus together as a family, and each man brought a special skill set to his own job. In this activity, we challenge you to come up with a family business of your own!

If your family was going to start a business, what would it be? Think about things that your family is good at. How could you transform those skills into a company that could make you money?

What would you name your business? The Ringling Brothers Circus had a straightforward name, telling us who ran the company and what it was.

What job in your business would each member of your family do? The Ringling brothers each had a specific job that they took care of for their business. Each brother had a special set of skills that made it a good fit for him. What skills does each member of your family have? How could they bring those skills into your business?

The Strobridge Lithographing Company (American, 1867 - 1960), *Ringling Brothers: Kings Of the Show World*, 1905. Ink on paper, 29 1/4 x 39 3/4 in. Tibbals Circus Collection. ht2001295