

Archives
*Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen Circus
Photographs and Printed Materials, 1915 - 1985*

Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen Circus
Photographs and Printed Materials, 1915 – 1985, bulk dates 1930-1961

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Overview

Repository	Archives The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art 5401 Bay Shore Road Sarasota, FL 34243 archives@ringling.org
Creator	Otto Rice
Title	Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen Circus Photographs and Printed Materials
Dates	1915 – 1985, bulk dates 1930-1961
Language	English
Physical description	34" (l) x 15" (w) x 13" (h)
Arrangement	The collection is arranged by material type in each box (printed materials and photographs are in separate boxes). Within printed material boxes, items are arranged by format then chronologically and alphabetically, respectively. Within photograph boxes, items are arranged by subject (Professional: female performers, male performers, group acts and portraits, animal acts, staff/backyard, set up and train, midway/Big top, winter

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quarters, community/group: Sara Circo Club & Boat Club,
 Personal: circus related, cats, backlot, and family and
 friends, respectively), then chronologically.

Summary

The Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen Circus Photographs and Printed Materials contains a variety of printed materials and photographs relating to the personal lives of Robert “Bob” F. Reynolds, his wife Anna H. Reynolds, and Leif Osmundsen. Among the items included are Christmas cards, circus programs, personal and circus related photographs, various circus related printed material and ephemera, and business correspondence. The collection was donated by Otto C. Rice in 2006, though the connection of the donor to Bob, Anna, and Leif is unknown. The collection also contains a fairly large amount of promotional photographs and performer headshots with inscriptions made out to “Ann” and “Bob,” both singularly and together (Anna H. Reynolds and Robert F. Reynolds). These three individuals are known to be related to, or have worked with both the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows and the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. circus for a number of years.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The earliest items in the collection appear to belong to the Reynolds in the form of collected circus publicity photographs, signed images of performers, and personal family photographs. Leif Osmundsen was Reynold’s circus administrative co-worker on both the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows and the Clyde

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Beatty-Cole Bros. circus. He was also the Executor of Estate of Robert F. Reynolds upon Reynold's death in 1970. It is unknown how Otto Rice acquired the items in the collection that were donated to the archives of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in 2006.

Information about access	The <i>Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen Circus Photographs and Printed Materials</i> (1915 – 1985, bulk dates 1930-1961) may be viewed by appointment. Use of certain materials is restricted by statute, by the office of origin, or by the donor. For the protection of its collections, the Archives also reserves the right to restrict access to records which are not arranged, are being processed, or are exceptionally valuable or fragile. In some cases, copies may be substituted for the originals.
Ownership and Copyright	Copyright is held by Florida State University. It is provided here for scholarship, research, and private study. For use regarding commercial and non-commercial publication, or copying outside of Fair Use, contact lib-specialcollections@fsu.edu .
Cite As	Credit must be given for any use of materials. The credit line should read: The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Florida State University, collection title [<i>Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen Circus Photographs and Printed Materials</i> 1915 – 1985, bulk dates 1930-1961] and should include the box and folder listing.

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Processing Note

Collection processed by Emma Driggers and Mathilde Pateau in 2021; finding aid created by Emma Driggers and Mathilde Pateau in September-November 2021, and digitized September-November 2021 by Emma Driggers and Mathilde Pateau. Undated items were arranged last within each material section.

Biographical Note

Robert “Bob” F. Reynolds was born on February 18, 1897 and died on November 1, 1970. He was born in Maryland and moved to Sarasota from New York City in 1927. He was employed by Ringling Bros. B&B for forty five years in a variety of administrative positions, eventually as Superintendent of Property. He worked for the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus for ten years, and at the time of his death he was General Superintendent. His obituary in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* from November 2, 1970 states that he was a member of the Exhibition Employees Union of New York, Showfolks of Sarasota, and Union City, N. J., Elks Lodge 1357. Many of the photographs and printed materials (e.g. postcards) are addressed to “Bob” and/or “Bob and “Anna” that indicate a personal connection to the circus community.

Anna H. Reynolds was born Anna H. Rebeu January 28 1895 and died September 11, 1961. Ann worked in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1914 until 1938. This is verified by her obituary in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* from September, 1961 and from her appearances in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus route books from 1936 and 1937. Her personal and professional association with the circus explains the amount of photographs addressed to her, for example: “To our own Ann, the nicest person we know, Bonnie and Gloria Hunt.” Anna was an active citizen and a charter member of the Sara-Circo Women’s Club (as pictured in accession#), and often held meetings in her own home. One of the personal photographs depicts Anna with her trained pet monkey (accession #).

Leif O. Osmundsen was born December 5, 1907 and died on December 2, 1982. He immigrated to the United States in 1921 at the age of 14 and became a citizen in

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1942 and served in World War II. He was the primary tent maker beginning in 1934 and was also Superintendent of Manufacturing for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows from approximately 1932 until 1956. Following his time working for Ringling Bros. B&B, he founded Leaf Tent and Sail Company in 1957 working under contract with the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus, the Hoxie Bros. Circus., Circus Vargas, and many others. The company was sold to William W. Winkler in 1977. Leaf Tent and Sail Co. was an award-winning Sarasota based company. Upon Robert Reynold's death in 1970, the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* from December 14, 1970 cites Leif as Robert's Executor of Estate. Based on this evidence, it is presumed that Leif acquired the bulk of this collection at the time of Robert's death. The collection also includes Leif's personal and professional circus and Leaf Tent and Sail papers, programs, and photographs.

Otto C. Rice, born December 17, 1934 and died March 7, 2012 was a highly honored U.S. Navy Lieutenant from 1952- 1963. Outside of military mentions and announcements in local Sarasota newspapers, little is known about his connection to the circus, Robert, Anna, Leif, and how he acquired the collection.

Historical Note

Robert, Anna, and Leif all were all associated with the circus during the peak of the Big Top era. Following the decision to transition to arena-based circuses in the 1950s, Robert and Leif left Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and began employment at Clyde-Beatty Cole Bros. Circus in the mid-1950s. This coincides with the infamous Frank McClosky employee walk-out of Ringling in 1955 and is further supported by the fact that Robert and Frank McClosky were friends. McClosky was a manager at Ringling in 1944 and became General Manager in 1952. After a dispute with John Ringling North in 1954, he resigned his position and purchased the Clyde Beatty circus along with his associates and combined the title Clyde Beatty and Cole Bros.

The collection items span a wide scope of circus history, but some of the photographs highlight specific circus subjects including six photographs of the Berlo Divers troupe (the most of any one subject in the collection), M' Toto photos, equestrian and aerialist candid and studio photos ranging from the 1930s through the 1960s, and

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group and couple studio photos with personalized inscriptions primarily addressed to Anna.

Scope and Content Note

The *Otto C. Rice Collection of Robert and Anna Reynolds and Leif Osmundsen's Circus Photographs and Printed Materials* appears to be an informal assembly gathered over the lifetime of the circus affiliated couple Robert (Bob) and Anna Reynolds, which was added on to after a post-mortem transfer of property to fellow circus tent-maker affiliate Leif Osmundsen. The items collected show the construction/deconstruction of the RB.B&B Circus, performers, and acts associated with the show in a number of significant locations including the Sarasota Winter Quarters and Madison Square Garden. The collection is divided mostly evenly by printed materials or photographs. Otherwise, the collection also is divided among Robert and Anna's (1915-1970) items and Leif's (1970-1982) items added following Robert and Anna's deaths.

More specifically, items in the collection cover a variety of printed materials including circus serials, circus and souvenir programs, a Clyde Beatty Cole 1960 Route Book, two mail correspondences between Leif Osmundsen and Fred Pfenning Sr., circus museum folded sheets, tent exposition materials and promotional photographs, a RBB&B dining car menu, business cards, a miniature scrapbook cover, and Christmas cards addressed to Bob and Anna. The other half of the collection consists of a variety of circus photographs of professional and personal subject matter mostly relating to Robert and/or Anna life and work with a few tent-related photos relating to Leif's. The photos include personal family photos, personal circus photos of backyard and performance shots, publicity and promotional studio shots addressed to "Bob and/or Ann"; M' Toto and Gargantua photos and ephemera, Berlo Divers troupe photos, Sarasota Winter Quarters photos, Sarasota boating club photos, and Sara-Circo Women's Club photos. The collection also includes a costume hat.

Subject Headings

Circus

Circus performers

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Contents of the Collection

Box No. Folder No. Folder Title

- 1 Printed Materials
- 1 Business card, Charlie S. Howell
- 2 Business card, Mid-Island Sanitation (Frank)
- 3 Business card, Wen Hai
- 4 Business card, Walter C. Yongue
- 5 Postcard, 4 Bell Hops "Acrobatic Novelty" Pantages Circuit Season 1920-1921
- 6 Postcard, "A Merry Xmas, Jack Gibson" addressed to Miss Anna Rebeu,
Casino Theatre, Brooklyn, N.Y. 1925
- 7 Photocopy of Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circus Golden Jubilee 50
Years 1854-1933 postcard
- 8 Postcard, "The Big Spring at Silver Springs, FLA" with printed silhouette on
rear 1939
- 9 Postcard, Apollo Trio
- 10 Postcards (2), Uyenos
- 11 Postcards (5), Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus Winter
Quarters, Sarasota, FL
- 12 Postcard, "Feeding Fish from Glass Bottom Boat at Silver Springs, Fla." with
printed silhouette on rear, 1939
- 13 Postcard, "Sunset at Silver Springs, Fla." with printed silhouette on rear, 1939
- 14 Postcard, "'Hooked but Gamely Fighting,' Sarasota, Florida—42 to Hook a
Tarpon is the Thrill of a Lifetime," 1942(?)
- 15 Postcard, "America's Most Unique Hotel, Walterboro, South Carolina, Lady
Lafayette Tourist Cottages"
- 16 Postcard, Performer and elephant from Clyde Beatty's Jungleland in North
Miami Beach, Florida
- 17 Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus 1960 Route Book
- 18 Correspondence from Fred Pfening, Jr. to Leif Osmondsen for 1960 Clyde
Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus Route Book September 22, 1960

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- 19 Envelope from Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus to Leif Osmundsen
September 9, 1960
- 20 Correspondence from Fred Pfening, Jr. to Leif Osmundsen for 1960 Clyde
Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus Route Book September 9, 1960
- 21 Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus Advertisement Contract for 1960 Route Book
- 22 Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus 1960 Route Book envelope
- 23 Circus Days Calendar with Tear-off Postcards, 1968
- 24 Circus World Museum Library folded sheet, 1973
- 25 Walt Disney World folded sheet, 1974
- 26 Circus City folded sheet, July 1975
- 27 Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin folded sheet and bumper sticker
- 28 Scrapbook
- 29 Yacopi's Leading Acrobats of the World Promotional Book
- 30 Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows Dining Car 88
Menu
- 31 Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows Inc. Blank Letterhead
- 2 Printed Materials
- 1 Souvenir Booklet, *The Strange Story of Gargantua* by J. Bryan III, 1940
- 2 Promotional Booklet, "Introducing the World's Largest Tent" TVW
Enterprises Limited, Tuart Hill, Western Australia, 1976
- 3 Circus Serials (3), *The Circus Report*, March 15, 1983, *The White Tops*,
March-April 1975, *The White Tops*, May-June 1975
- 4 *The Unlikely Legacy: John Ringling, The Circus, and Sarasota* Book by
Kenneth Matthews and Robert McDevitt, 1979
- 5 Animalland U.S.A. elephant train Exhibition Contract, 1958
- 6 Photocopy of 1958 Cristiani Brothers Circus Advertisement Route Book, 1958
- 7 Program, AL G. Barnes and Sells-Floto Combined Circus, 1938
- 8 Programs (2), Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus program magazine, 1963
- 9 Program, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus, 1972
- 10 Program, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus, 1980
- 11 Program and coloring book, Hoxie Bros. Circus, 1972

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- 12 Program, Hoxie Bros. Circus, 1974
- 13 Programs (2), Hoxie Bros. Circus, 1975
- 14 Program, Hoxie Bros. Circus, 1976
- 15 Programs (2), The Horse Fantasy Revue, c. 1960
- 16 Program, Polack Bros. Circus 1961 Lane County Fairgrounds Eugene Shrine Benefit
- 17 Program, Circus World Museum Annual Report, 1975
- 18 Program, Moscow Circus 1979 tour
- 19 Showfolks of Sarasota Yearbook, 1975 (2)
- 20 Showfolks of Sarasota Officers booklet, 1976
- 21 Showfolks of Sarasota Yearbook, 1976
- 22 Showfolks of Sarasota Yearbook, 1978
- 3 Printed Materials (Oversized)
 - 1 Christmas cards with envelopes (5), 1930-1931, 1932-33, Christmas card calendar (Uyeno troupe) 1942
 - 2 Christmas cards (2), Christmas card of Illustration of Tattooed Man with Circus Names and Pictures by Bly the Penman signed from Bill + Roberta, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows Christmas Card
 - 3 Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Christmas card with envelope
 - 4 Programs (2), King Bros. Circus program and coloring book, 1975
 - 5 Programs (2), Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus program magazine belonging to Leif Osmundsen, 1980-1981
 - 6 Life Magazine "Circus Family" July 28, 1941
 - 7 Exposition Program Magazine, The Tent Soft Shell Structures at Expo '70 Japan, 1970
 - 8 Announcements (2), Clown College announcement with envelope, signed Bill Ballantine, 1975
 - 9 Clown College Gala (3), Bill Ballantine illustrate folder, invitation to Clown College graduation Gala, ticket to Gala performance, Nov. 15, 1975
 - 10 Serials, *Tropic* "Little Circus Under the Big Top" *The Miami Herald*, April 1, 1973

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11 Serials (3), *Sarasota Herald Tribune* Nov. 17, 1940, *Boston Sunday Post*

April 24, 1932, *Sarasota Herald Tribune* Nov. 9, 1972

4 Photographs

1 Berlo Diving Girls (6), 2 group shots, 4 single shots (1 of Lillian R. Berlo)

2 Picture of "The Bimini Kid," addressed "To Anna from Josephine," 1920

3 Take a Look Co. portraits from Alice and (Dot?) (2) both addressed to Anna, 1924-1925

4 Portrait of Desiree (Ray) Luecke, 1925-1926

5 Ella Bradna Equestrian troupe pictured with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, 1928

6 Loyal Repenski, c. 1935-

7 Ernestine Clarke, equestrian jumping up from Appaloosa horse

8 Eunice and Agnes Coleman, pageant showgirls in Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey 1931 Circus, addressed "To Little Ann with all good wishes + Luck, Eunice + Agnes Coleman, 1931"

9 Woman in Circus Pageant Costume with assistant possibly at Ringling Winter quarters (unidentified)

10 Pageant or Equestrian Costumed with horse, unidentified

11 4 posed acrobats/aerialists on ladder in front of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus wagon, 1938

12 Portrait of Hunt Twins (Bonnie and Gloria Hunt), addressed "To our own Ann, the nicest person we know, Hunt Twins"

13 Lalage, aerialist

14 Portrait of unidentified female aerialist, copyrighted stamp to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey on rear

15 2 High-wire balancing act performers, unidentified, with Orientalized theme props and costumes (2)

16 Head balancing act performers & view of platform rigging for high wire (3)

17 Picture of Beatrice Leonard (?) with a variety of written inscriptions

18 Portrait of female performer washing a garment using her bucket

19 Picture of Con Colleano addressed "Sincerely Yours Con Colleano"

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20 Picture of Phil Escalante addressed "To Ann Reynolds, Wishing you Lots of Happiness always, Phil"

21 Picture of Tim McCoy, 1935

22 Male Acrobat Equestrian jumping from one horse to another through a loop (Loyal Repenski)

23 Picture of Tom Mix on horse

24 Picture of J. Warren Kerrigan, addressed on back "a new portrait of J. Warren Kerrigan"

25 Picture of Jack Joyce, equestrian director of Clyde Beatty Circus, c. 1937-1946

26 Picture of Jack Buck, 6-7-1938, addressed "Best Jro (?) Nelson from Jack Buck 6/7/1938"

27 Picture of Emmett Kelly as clown in Police Patrolwagon, c. 1940s-1950s

28 Posed photograph of costumed woman on elephant beside Felix Adler in fat clown costume

29 2 trapeze performers (1 male catcher on swing, 1 female flyer twisting in air)

30 Flying Potters on trapeze, H.A. Atwell photograph

31 Picture of Fannie and Jack (James?) addressed "To our friends Bob + Ann, Fannie + Jack 2/20/35," Feb. 20, 1935

32 Picture of the Alzanas, high wire bicycle act, addressed "From your favorite high wire act, all our good wishes to Bob, from the Alzanas. Polack 1954 Season"

33 Picture of The 4 Antaleks, addressed to Anna (inscription in Russian),

34 Picture of the Alzanas, addressed "To Bob from the Limeies (sic). All good wishes."

35 The Doll Family (3), 1 of Jack Earl atop African Elephant, 1 group shot, 1 of Jack Earl and Harry Doll

36 Portrait of Ed and Jennie, addressed "To Ann with our love Ed + Jennie"

37 Portrait of May and Yomo, addressed "With best wishes to Bob + Ann from May + Yomo"

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- 38 Portrait of Gargantua, c. 1938
 - 39 M'Toto (3), 1 on swing, 1 with cat, 1 with handle José Tomas
 - 40 Picture of giraffe displayed in elevated platform from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, 1941
 - 41 Picture of showgirl in Howdah atop elephant
 - 42 Ballet of the elephants from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden
 - 43 Performing elephant and costume performers and crowds for DurBar Dehli Show, c. 1930s
 - 44 Mixed Cats (3), 1 Picture of Leopard Lady, 1 shot of Leopard act, 1 shot of trainer Alfred Court with leopard in outdoor cage
 - 45 Portrait of George Smith, General Manager of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, 1939
 - 46 Picture of John Ringling North reviewing costume designs for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus with 4 others
 - 47 Picture of Robert Reynolds (?), Superintendent of Property of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus
 - 48 Tent Dinner Party (3), 1 of Ernie Bluch and Albert White in drag posing with a man with a woman behind, 2 others featuring Eddie Mader, Flo Begin, Bobby Peck, and Gracie and Tuffy Genders
 - 49 Picture of Patrolman Nelson, addressed on back "To Patrolman Nelson with best regards, Joe Steimetz 321 Commercial Court"
 - 50 Picture of 2 concession workers selling Coca-Cola and food on boardwalk
 - 51 Backlot worker with rolled wire rope and wagon for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus
 - 52 Canvas rope maker in shop, possibly roping a tent
- 5 Photos
- 1 Interior view of pulling canvas of Big Top, 1938
 - 2 Interior view of pulling canvas of menagerie tent with stars Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, c. 1939-1941

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- 3 Exterior view of pulling canvas from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus route book (2), of 6 pole Big Top tent: "Spreading white canvas—19 tons of it were used in making the huge 1943 Big Top."
 - 4 View of pulling canvas of Big Top
 - 5 Tent interior of 2 pole tent and canvas seams, addressed "Return to Leif Osmundsen Ringling Bros Sarasota, Fla." on back
 - 6 Picture of Madison Square Garden Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus riggings with letter to Bob from Director of publicity, Edward Knoblauch enclosed initially attached with paper clip
 - 7 Interior view of empty folding chairs and stringers inside Big Top tent
 - 8 Interior view of staged performance set up and light rigging of "World's largest tent interior," c. 1976
 - 9 Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus train unloading, c. 1920s/1930s
 - 10 View of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus unloading livestock off train, 1942
 - 11 Clyde Beatty Cole Combined Circus midway and menageries pre-show view
 - 12 "Greatest Show on Earth Main Entrance" Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus midway shot with crowds
 - 13 Eye-level view of Big Top
 - 14 Birds eye view of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Big Top, menagerie, side-show, etc. in Baltimore, 1955
 - 15 Birds eye view of green and purple striped two pole tent, c. 1960s/1970s
 - 16 Various shots of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Winter Quarters (4), 3 aerial, 1 eye-level, 1955
 - 17 Bobby Jones Golf course aerial shots (3), 1 with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Winter Quarters in background, inscriptions on back of each, c. early 1950s
 - 18 Group Picture of Cora Davis, Ann Reynolds, and Wanda House reading *Billboard* at Sara-Circo Club meeting, 1947

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19 Group Picture of Sara-Circo Club at Sarasota airport clubhouse, including Ann Reynolds as labeled on back, 1948

20 National Motorboat Show pictures (3), 3 of various winners with trophy, January 1950

6 Photos (personal)

1 Various circus group shots (6), assorted circus personnel, 1 photo postcard, some with inscriptions on back

2 Various backlot and animal cages with cats and trainer Terrell Jacobs at Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 9, 1941 (inscribed on rear of most of the photos)

3 Assorted Circus backlot personal and personnel photos (14), most featuring Robert Reynolds

4 Circus backlot assorted (10)

5 Picture of unidentified house

6 Personal assorted photographs featuring Robert Reynolds and same female child (9), some in circus backlot and some with Anna Reynolds

7 Personal assorted photographs featuring Robert and Anna Reynolds, some on vacation, some in backlot (11)

8 Personal assorted photographs (20), mostly domestic (inside and outside of house) of friends and family featuring Robert and Anna Reynolds

7 Hat

Related Materials