

# THE VICTORIAN SIDESHOW





# **THERE ARE 2 TYPES OF SIDESHOWS**

## **SINGLE-0**

- ❖ Single performer or object

## **TEN-IN-ONE**

- ❖ Ten acts for the price of one





## **P.T BARNUM**

When his American Museum was destroyed by fire for a second time in the late 1860s, Barnum decided to take his show on the road. He went on tour with his circus. The problem was that the circus at this time was considered a low form of entertainment...In order to distance himself from being associated with all this, Barnum featured not only a circus, but also large tents that housed many other kinds of "enlightening" entertainment. These included a menagerie, a hall of freaks and even a collection of ancient statues! As time went on, the concept was streamlined down to just the freak show and menagerie touring with the circus. Barnum's show set a high water mark that other showmen worked to emulate.

--Todd Browning,  
historian and sideshow performer

5/9/06 Jarr



B.N.K.

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# **JUGGLERS AND FIRE-EATERS**

- ❖ Feats of dexterity, and in the sideshow world, danger
- ❖ Often done outside the venue, to attract attention
- ❖ Robert Powell, one of the most famous fire eaters of all time, not only swallowed fire but also red-hot coals, melted sealing wax and brimstone

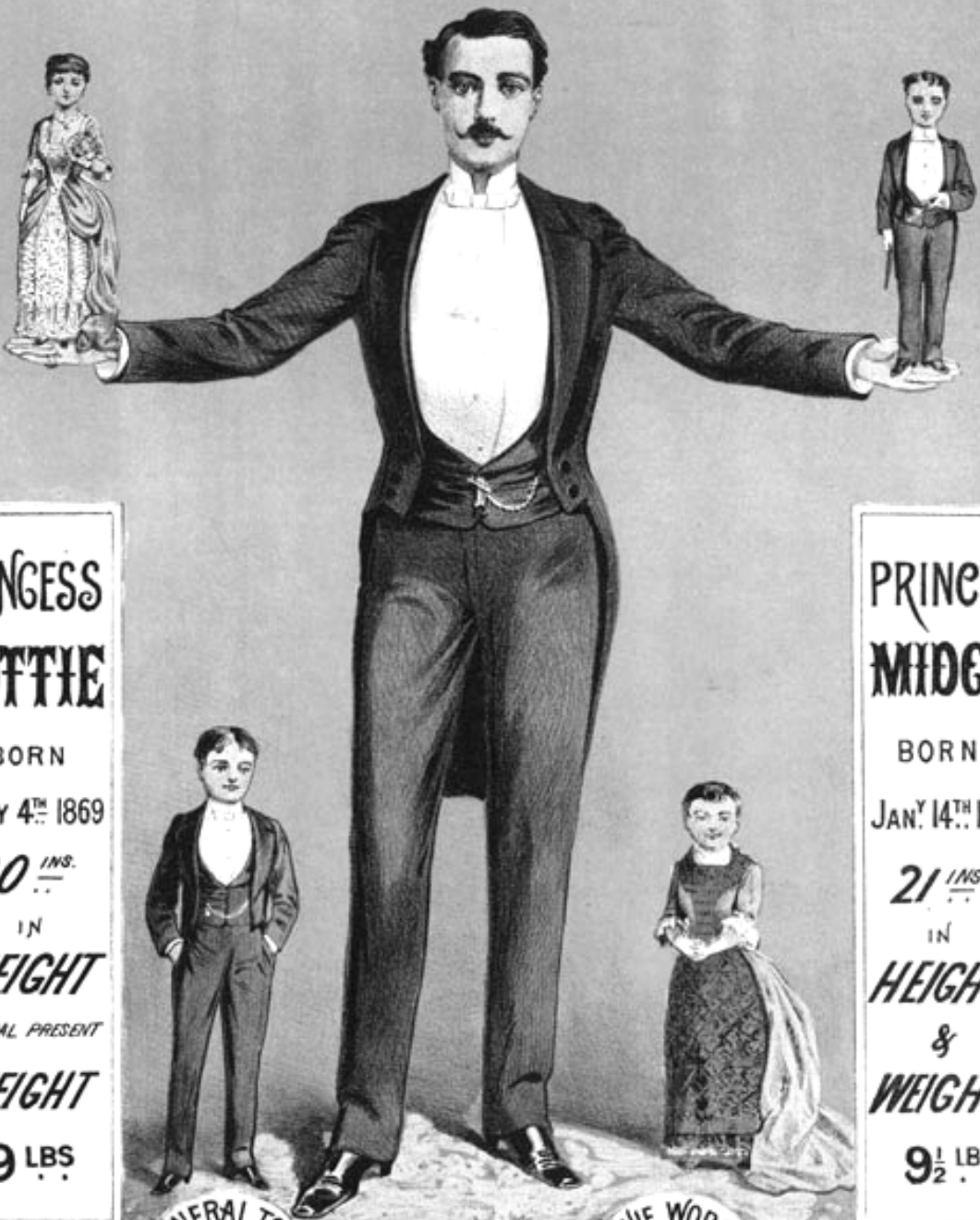
# PICCADILLY HALL.

# HARVEY'S MIDGES

## THE SMALLEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

AFTERNOON FROM 2 TILL 5. EVENING FROM 7 TILL 9.

ADMISSION 1/- CHILDREN HALF - PRICE.



**PRINCESS  
LOTTIE**  
BORN  
JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> 1869  
**20** INS.  
IN  
**HEIGHT**  
ACTUAL PRESENT  
**WEIGHT**  
**9** LBS.

**PRINCE  
MIDGE**  
BORN  
JAN. 14<sup>TH</sup> 1868  
**21** INS.  
IN  
**HEIGHT**  
&  
**WEIGHT**  
**9**<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> LBS.

GENERAL TOT  
31 INS.  
IN HEIGHT  
18½ YEARS  
OF AGE  
ILLUPTIAN VOCALIST.

JENIE Worgen  
25 INS.  
IN HEIGHT  
19 YEARS OF AGE  
THE  
MIDGES HOUSEWIFE

C. & J. COLLIFORD & SONS  
24, FIELD COURT, GRAYS INN, LONDON W.C.  
February 1895



# **LITTLE PEOPLE**

- ❖ Dwarf performers were a common sideshow element
- ❖ Charles Sherwood Stratton, known as General Tom Thumb was P.T. Barunum's star performer
- ❖ One of the smallest was Jeffrey Hudson, 'Lord Minimus' at 18 inches tall



# **ESCAPE ARTISTS AND MAGICIANS**

- ❖ Slight of hand tricks and escape art was usually positioned between more extreme sideshow attractions
- ❖ Harry Houdini (pictured left) became the most renowned escape artist in the world, but started his career doing card tricks in sideshows
- ❖ The Davenport Brothers used their escapology skill to convince their audiences they had magical abilities

FIRST TOUR IN GREAT BRITAIN.

DURING THE FAIR.

**£1,000**

CHALLENGE TO THE WORLD!  
TO PRODUCE the EQUAL OF LALLOO, the GREATEST LIVING  
**WONDER IN THE WORLD!**

A Native of Lucknow, Central India,

**LALLOO**



A very Intelligent, Strange, and most Remarkable  
**INDIAN BOY!**  
Seventeen Years of Age. He Stands Five Feet in Height.

Lalloo has Two Perfect Bodies  
Lalloo has Four Perfect Arms  
Lalloo has Four Perfect Hands  
Lalloo has Four Perfect Legs  
Lalloo has Four Perfect Feet  
BUT LALLOO HAS ONLY GOT

**ONE PERFECT HEAD**

IN FACT, IT IS SIMPLY

A BOY and GIRL Joined together

And if LALLOO is not really

**ALIVE**

**£100**

WILL BE GIVEN TO ANY CHARITABLE INSTITUTION.

NOTE!—This is really the most Marvellous Freak of Nature Living, that has ever been made a Public Exhibition of in this, or any other Country, and is a Novelty that every Father and Mother ought to see.

**REMARKS.**

Of the Medical Scientific Papers, and certain Learned Societies and others, about the Boy LALLOO, as follows:—"He is nothing less than a Marvel, compared to which the Two-Headed Nightingale, and the Siamese Twins were as nothing."

"Without a parallel in the World's History."—Dr. Thomas GREGSON, M.B. Surgeon

A Clergyman says:—"There are Fourteen Thousand Millions of People in this World, but he is the only one of his kind that has been alive."

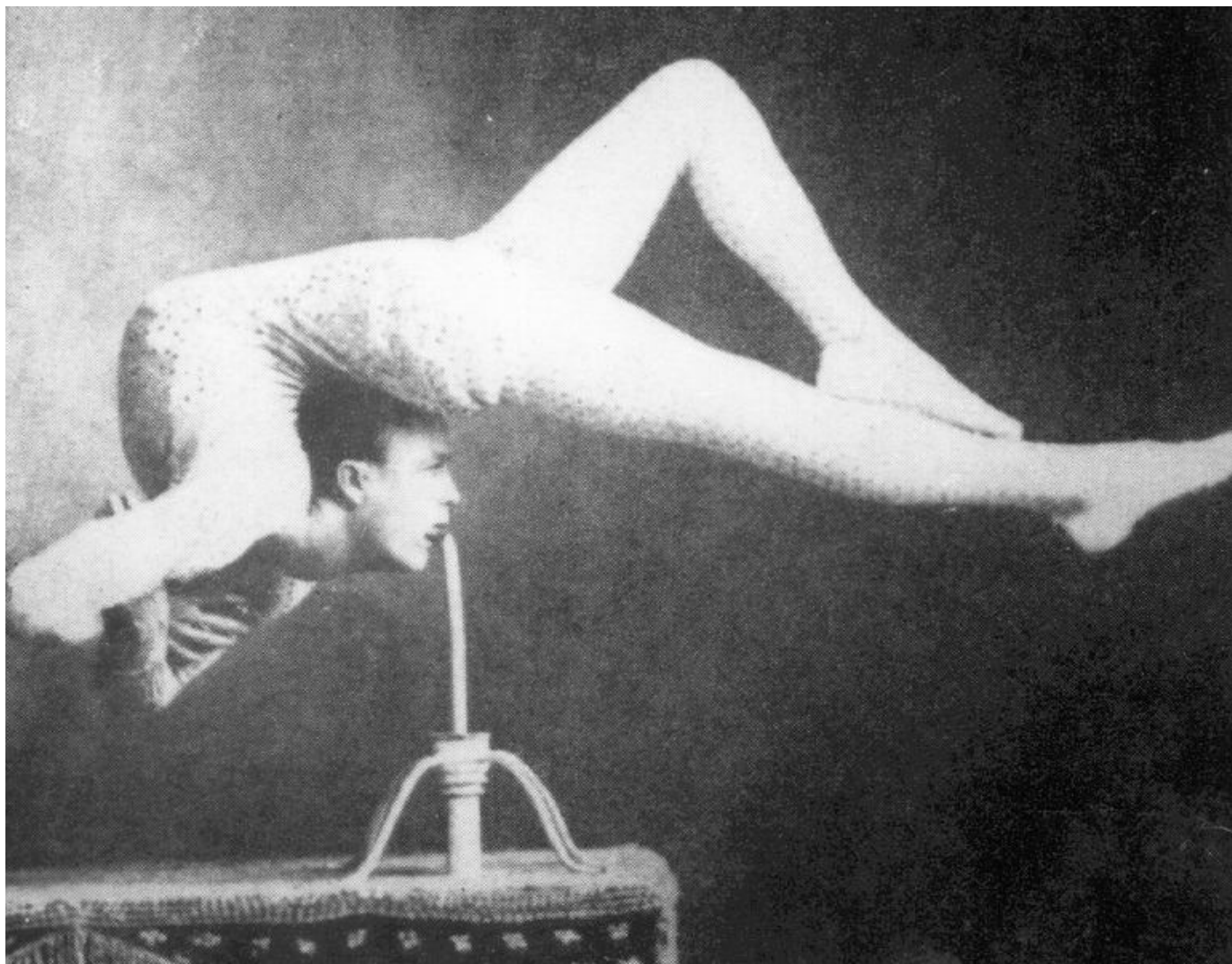
He has been Exhibited in the Portland Hall, Langham Place, London, at the Admission of One Shilling Each.

JAMES NORMAN and M. D. FRANCIS, Proprietors.

# **HUMAN ODDITIES**

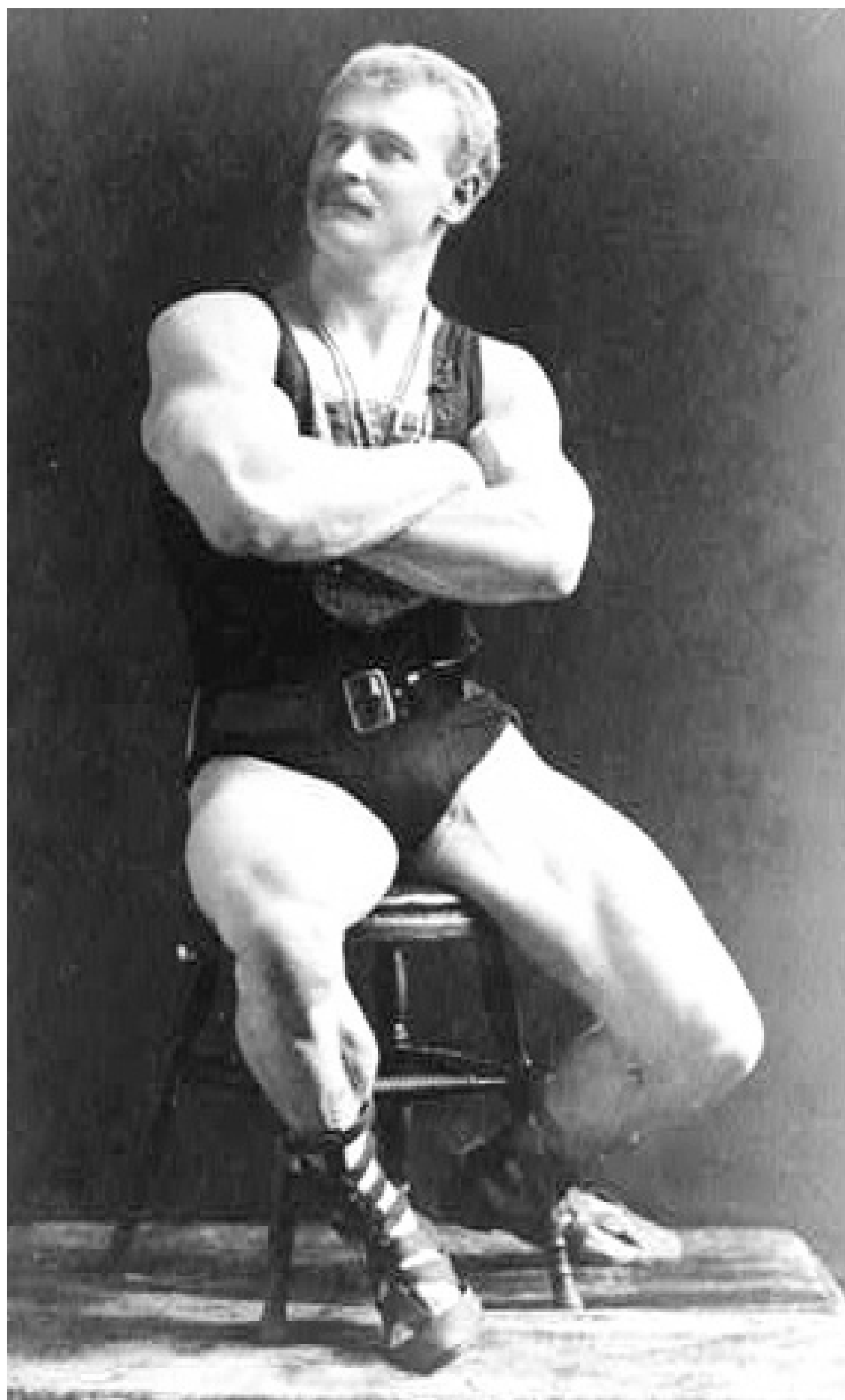
- ❖ People with birth defects,  
or disfigured by disease
- ❖ The most famous of these performers  
was Joseph Carey Merrick,  
the Elephant Man
- ❖ Often, these performers would  
take on other talents, such as  
juggling, dancing, or singing





# **CONTORTION AND ACROBATICS**

- ❖ Athletic performers who pushed their bodies to extremes
- ❖ In the 1800s, male contortionists were the most common
- ❖ Contortion was often performed by Indians, in addition to fakir stunts



# **STRONG MEN AND WOMEN**

- ❖ Performers would show off their physique, lift impressive barbells
- ❖ Eugen Sandow (pictured left) is known as the father of modern bodybuilding and could break a chain locked around his chest
- ❖ Josephine Blatt, who performed under the name “Minerva” lifted 3,564 lbs in a hip-and-harness lift in 1895 and was named the strongest woman in the world





# **HAIKY MEN AND WOMEN**

- ❖ Men and women who had a large quantity of hair, from dog-faced boys to bearded ladies to women who merely possessed incredibly long locks
- ❖ Fedor Jeftichew, also known as Jojo, the dogfaced boy (pictured left), suffered from Hypertrichosis, as did his father
- ❖ Annie Jones (also pictured left) acted as a spokesperson for PT Barnum's "Freaks", and tried to abolish the word from the business



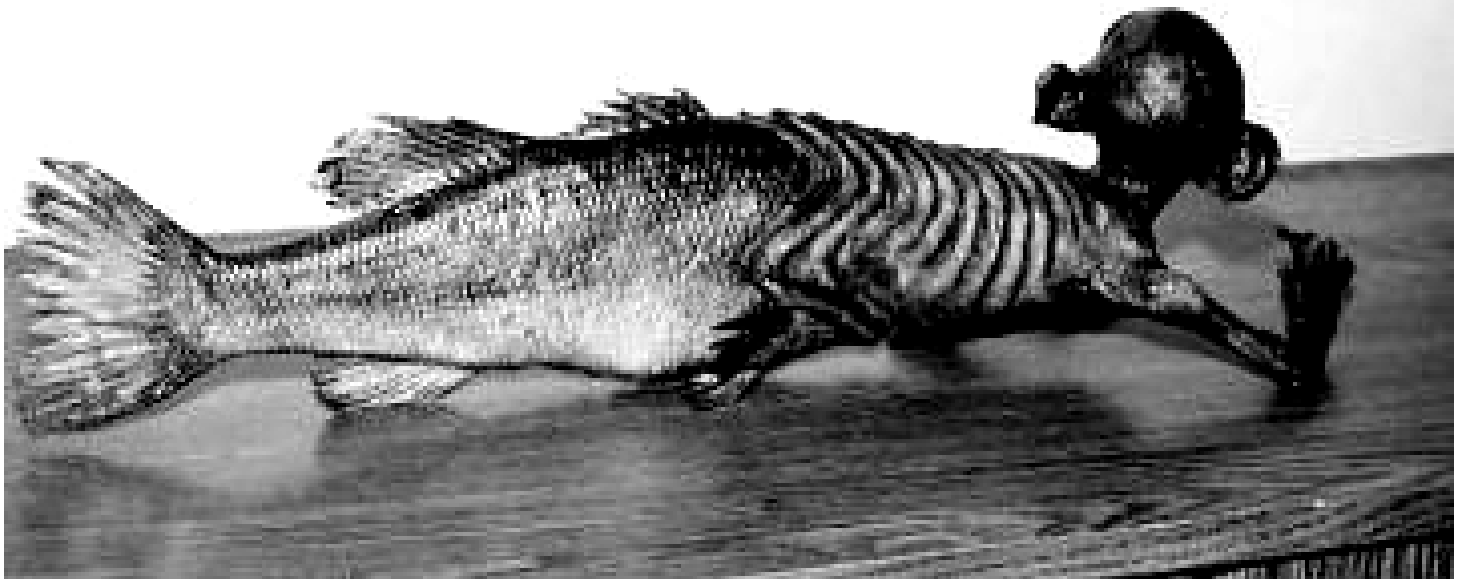
PHOTOGRAPH BY J. H. HARRIS & CO. NEW YORK

## CAPTAIN COSTENTENUS THE GREEK ALBANIAN

*He has killed three hundred and thirty-seven rebels, captured the King's Palace, and taken the city of Athens.*

# **TATTOOED DEVILS**

- ❖ Men and women with extensive body art and peircings
- ❖ Captain Constentenus (pictured left) was the most heavily tattooed man of the 1800's
- ❖ Performers of this type were wildly popular. Captain Constentenus commanded a \$1000 weekly salary.



# **STRANGE BEASTS**

- ❖ Unusual animals, usually taxidermied hoaxes
- ❖ P.T. Barnum's first hoax was the Fiji Mermaid (pictured left)
- ❖ Shetland ponies were often shown as “the world's smallest horse,” and the beaver-like nutria as “the world's largest rat”





# **FAKIRS**

- ❖ Fakir stunts involved overcoming immense pain, such as the human pincushion, or the bed of nails.
- ❖ Traditionally, a fakir is a Sufi, and the stunts are part of their religious practice. Most performers of the era were not actual Sufis.
- ❖ Dutch Fakir Mirin Dajo (pictured left) allowed an assistant to plunge a fencing foil right through his body. The foil appeared to have pierced several vital organs and yet, the fakir remained relatively unharmed.



# **PICKLED PUNKS**

- ❖ Human fetuses and other oddities, sealed in formaldehyde jars
- ❖ Often, the specimens in the jars were faked using wax or rubber
- ❖ This was a “blowoff” act, presented at the end of the 10-in-1 to get extra money out of the audience.

**BUT THAT'S  
NOT ALL!**



Jo-Jo  
Russian Dog-Faced Man



ALFONSO  
The Human Outditch



JOHN W. COFFEY  
59 lbs.

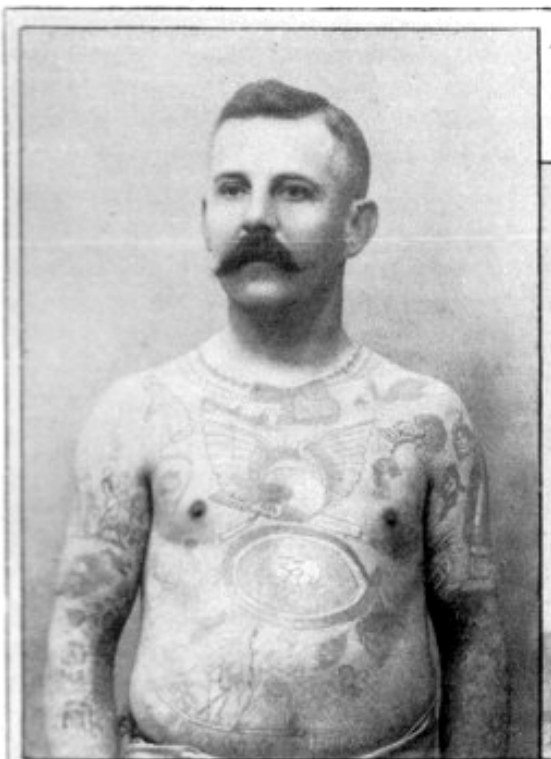
JOHN Mc DONALD  
458 lbs.



BILLY WELLS  
Iron Skull Man



ROB ROY  
Albino Dislocationist



FRANK HOWARD  
AMERICAN TATOOED ARTIST



MISS IVY HOWARD  
CORNET SOLOIST



ANNIE HOWARD  
BARNUM & BAILEY'S ORIGINAL TATOOED LADY



MISS ZOLINO  
Magnetic Wonder



MISS CLIFFORD  
Sword Swallower



CHARLES B. TRIPP  
Armless Phenomenon



SIG. TOMASSO  
Human Pin Cushion



JAMES MORRIS  
Elastic Skin Man



ANNIE JONES  
Bearded Lady



MABLE MILTON  
Long Haired Lady

**JARED AXELROD** has been a student of circus culture and perform of sideshow stunts since he founded the Industrial Strength Freakshow in 2001. He has performed with the Lulu Tech Circus, The Zoo Crew Freak Show and his solo shows "Follow The Destructions" and "Bloody Sunset." He has willingly stapled paper to his forehead, been tied to and escaped from a variety of furniture, stabbed needles into his arms and face, eaten a mouthful of live crickets, juggled a bizarre array of objects, and been shocked by a two-foot bolt of lightning. He swears he will never swallow live crickets again, though.

**J.R. BLACKWELL** has been a circus performer since 2001 under the stage name "the Plastic Elastic Kitty", where she was a founding member of the Industrial Strength Freak Show. She specializes in contortion, bed of nails and fire-eating. She has performed with The Zoo Crew Freak Show and her solo show "Freak Show" was featured in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. She is currently performing with the Hellcat Girls Burlesque.