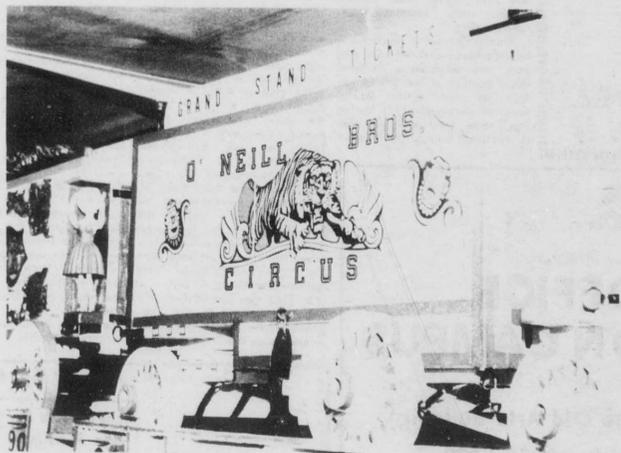
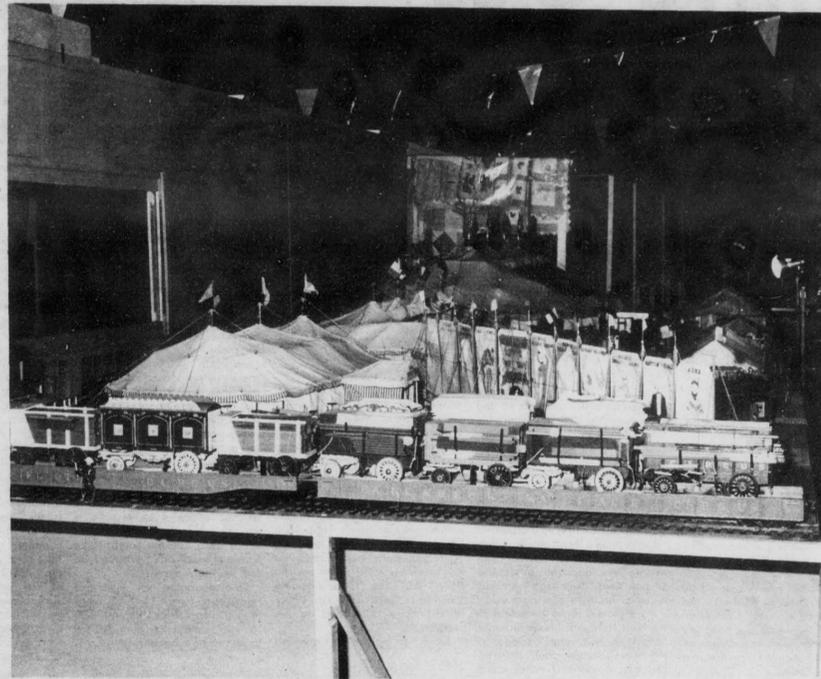
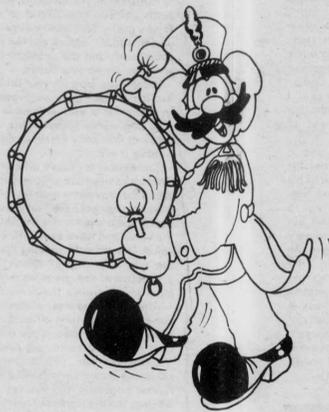
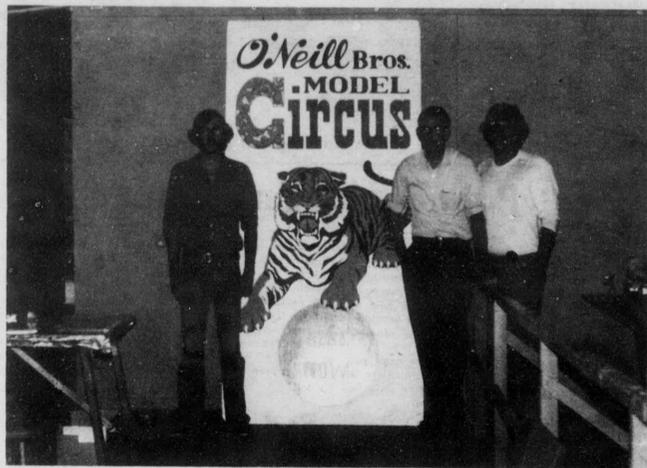


COME!

to the
CIRCUS!



"It's as good as a circus!" In fact, it is a circus, if you wish to apply the age-old simile to the famous O'Neil Bros. miniature, appearing at the National Exhibition Centre, Queen Street, from October 1st - 22nd.

"Considered as craftsmanship, O'Neil Bros. Circus is a masterpiece beyond compare," says Keith Ingersoll, director of the Centre. "To build a faithful replica of an old-fashioned 20-car railroad show is a miracle of fret saws, glue pots, paint brushes and just sheer patience on the part of Jim O'Neil. The same must be said of his wife, Gilberte, who could turn out a complete set of canvas tents on a sewing machine."

Begun as a family hobby in 1955, O'Neil Bros. Circus is the undertaking of Jim O'Neil, Fredericton's deputy fire chief, his wife Gilberte, and their two sons, Hugh and John. Using plywood, masonite, balsa wood, wire, etc., all the wagons, rail equipment, and other articles were made by the family, excepting some of the animals and human figures which were purchased from circus supply centres.

The setting-up of the show often takes four to six days, giving some indication of both the immensity and the intricacy of the project.

O'Neil Bros. is equally valuable as a visible expression of the folkways of our country. American circuses were touring the Maritimes as early as the 1830's, first

as humble wagon shows, then, from the 1870's, as railroad shows and finally, by mid-century, came the gas-and-rubber caravans. From the earliest times, the circus meant welcome respite from labour to the pioneers of a harsh country.

"Half a century ago, 'circus' was the magic word calculated to fire the blood," remarks Jim. "In their very cadences were the rumble of iron tires on dew-moist pavement, the roar of lions, the trumpeting of elephants, and at night, the music of the band filtering from the lacings of the big top right up to the ball rings. These are the phantoms of memory lane."

Many people today refer to a carnival as a circus. "This is very wrong," corrects Jim. "The circus was a one-day stand; a show of wild animals, trapeze, horseback riding, aerial acts, etc. But a carnival usually stays for a week and is a collection of mechanical thrill rides, some shows and games of chance. A very different operation!"

All the wagons in the O'Neil Bros. Circus are models of circus equipment that actually existed on the old shows such as Sparks, Al. G. Barnes, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Cole Bros. and Robbins Bros. These circuses toured Canada and the U.S. and most came to Fredericton at some point during that era. For the young people of today, O'Neil Bros. provides an exciting glimpse of an entertainment form that has simply (and sadly) vanished in time.

