



American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers

Marc Hartzman

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A fascinating look into the history of the American sideshow and its performers. Learn what's real, what's fake, and what's just downright bizarre.

You've probably heard of Tom Thumb. The Elephant Man. Chang and Eng, the original Siamese twins. But what about Eli Bowen, the legless acrobat? Myrtle Corbin, the four-legged woman? Or Prince Randian, the human torso? All these and more were stars during the heyday of the American sideshow, from 1840 to 1950. *American Sideshow* chronicles the lives of truly amazing performers, examining these brave and extraordinary curiosities, not just as sideshow attractions, but as people, delving into the lives they led and how they were able to triumph over their abnormalities.

American Sideshow discusses the rise and fall of the original sideshows and their subsequent replacement by today's self-made freaks. With the progress of modern medicine, the physical abnormalities are disappearing, either through treatment or prevention; and, ironically, those same technological advancements now make it possible to change our bodies at will. It's amazing how easy it is to have your tongue forked, horns surgically implanted, or your earlobes removed. There are also modern-day giants, fire-eaters, fire-breathers, sword-swallowers, glass-eaters, human blockheads, and, oh, so much more.

These fascinating personalities are celebrated through intimate biographies paired with stunning photographs. Approximately 200 performers from the past 160 years are featured, giving readers a comprehensive and sometimes astonishing view of the history of the American sideshow.

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