

ELEPHANT TO START 53-MILE HIKE TODAY

**"Old John," Circus Boxer, to
Make Pilgrimage in "Old
Bet's" Memory.**

SOMERS (N. Y.) HIS GOAL

**Namesake of "John L." Will Lay
Wreath on Grave of Pioneer
Sister Performer.**

An old, old elephant will start out this afternoon from Madison Square Garden on a pilgrimage to the grave of the first elephant that ever came to the United States. The thick-hided pilgrim will plod patiently fifty-three miles up-State to the little town of Somers, where a monument to "Old Bet," the predecessor of all circus elephants stands in a little triangular plot of ground in front of the Elephant Tavern.

"Old John" is the elephant who will trudge these many miles, more than he has traveled since the days when he was a trouper and played the small towns of the country. He is named after John L. Sullivan. People now gray may remember how forty years ago "Old John" was famous all over the land as the boxing pachyderm who put on gloves, stood on his hind legs in the ring of the Forepaugh circus and challenged all comers.

He was the elephant wonder of his day, but he got stiff and rheumatic, like all old stage stars. Now he spends his time in the Ringling yards in Bridgeport, leaning his weight against wagons which must be pushed about. Today will be a gala day for "Old John," for he will start out on the road again.

Full Military Honors.

His pilgrimage will be in behalf of all the forty-two elephants who stand in elephant alley in the circus and permit ordinary human beings to gaze and donate peanuts. Perhaps the others don't know that Old Bet's monument is in Somers; it is a safe bet that no Mowgli of the circus ever whispered to them about her. But "Old John" will carry a wreath in their name and lay it on Bet's grave and lift his trunk in salute.

He will leave the Garden at 2 o'clock this afternoon, march up Fifth Avenue to Central Park, through the Park and up Seventh Avenue to 145th Street, and then proceed by Grand Boulevard, Mosholu Parkway, Jerome Avenue, Central Avenue and Yonkers Avenue to Bronxville. The circus people hope that "Old John" will be able to make Bronxville the first night and then go on through the towns of Westchester to Somers, not far north of Katonah. He is being shod for the tramp with special elephant shoes, for when even elephants take to the road they have to have footwear that will stand a long march.

Somers is not only the home of Old Bet but is also the birthplace of the American circus. Hackallah Bailey owned the first circus and Bet was its only attraction. Bailey gave his first exhibition under a tent in 1821 on a farm where a church now stands. Old Bet made the trip to this country in a sailing vessel in 1814. Hackallah's brother, a sea captain, bought the elephant on one of his long cruises. Old Bet was named for the ship. After she had been exhibited at many European ports she was landed at New York and driven to Somers by farm hands over the same route that will be taken by Old John.

"Old Bet" a Tippler.

The trip was made at night. During the day Old Bet was exhibited in barns along the way. As there was not much money in circulation then, the farmers dickered with Bailey for admission, offering jackknives and other trinkets. Some even sold farm implements to see the mammoth wonder. One town could not raise even \$10. Bailey gave admission for apples and farm truck.

One farmer gave Bailey a two-gallon jug of rum to admit himself, his wife and two children. That night the jug was carried in the rear of the cart, behind which Old Bet walked. Old Bet discovered the jug, and tradition has it that she got roaring drunk.

After Bailey had exhibited the animal for several months he sold a half interest in her to a man who took the elephant on tour. When Bailey did not get remittances from his partner, he started out to look for him and found him and Old Bet in New Bedford, Mass. When the money was not forthcoming Bailey got a gun and went out to shoot the animal. He was about to shoot when his partner called out:

"Hey, there! Half of that animal is mine."

"Well, I'm going to shoot my half if you don't settle," retorted Bailey. The partner settled.

Bailey built the old Elephant Hotel in Somers in 1824. It is still standing, although now known as the Elephant Tavern. After a few years of exhibitions Old Bet became troublesome and finally, in 1827, went on a rampage in South Carolina and was shot. Bailey then erected the monument to his old performer. It is a single shaft of granite, fifteen feet high. On top is an image of Old Bet, carved in wood. It was originally gilded, but the winds and rains of many years have worn off the gilt so that it is now a dull gray, although in almost as good condition as when it was erected.

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