

Philip Astley

Philip Astley is known as the father of the modern circus. He was born January 8, 1742 in Newcastle-under-Lyme in the West Midlands, England. He died on 20 October 1814. Philip Astley was nine years old when he became apprentice to his father as a cabinet maker, they both shared a love for horses. At seventeen he joined the army where he learnt to ride and train horses.

The Birth of the Circus

After he left the army he started to show off his riding and trick riding skills. This proved popular with people and he was able to open his own riding school in London. He taught riding in the mornings and put on shows in the afternoons. He employed a clown to entertain the audience in between the trick riding acts. This was the start of the circus as we know it today. His shows became more and more popular and he added more and more acts such as musicians, a clown, jugglers, tumblers, tightrope walkers, and dancing dogs. He moved from performing outside in the open air to building amphitheatres to perform his shows.



Circuses today

Nowadays most circuses don't use animals because it is cruel. It is banned in England. Lighting and pyrotechnics are used to add drama to modern acts. There are lots of special effects which were not available in the early days of the circus.

Modern day circus



Old fashion circus

