



The Poleless Tent of Mr. and Mrs. Gargantua. Designed by Norman Bet Geddes for the "Greatest Show on Earth". A 1940 photo from the Hugh Burleigh Collection.

The futuristic tent that Norman Bel Geddes designed for Mr. and Mrs. Gargantua the Great. It is Poleless and suspended by cables looping from four towering, steel pylons. In it the two, huge, white air-conditioned cages of Gargantua and M'Toto are connected, end to end. Three levels of one-way ramps insure slowly moving crowds a really satisfactory view of the world's most publicized gorilla couple. The Poleless tent of the Gargantuas was a small scale model of the circus big top. Planned for the 1942 edition of the Greatest Show on Earth, read the 1941 R.B.B.B. program. The rest is now history, and known to all is the fact that this was the one and only Poleless top ever used on the Greatest Show on Earth.

### -Constructing Our Model -

In order to add this type of tent to your layout, you must follow a little different procedure than you would with any other type of circus tent. The first step that you should take, is to construct a form of your top from cardboard so you have a way to shape it while you fasten the suspension cables to the top. After you have done this, you should make your top to fit this form, using 1/4" twill tape along all lines where the support cables are attached to the top of the tent. This tent is made in three sections, top and sides are all one section with the front and back being the same size and shape, sewn to the rectangular piece of the top and sides. I found it easier to put all of the vertical support lines on your top before you place it on the form. Now

make your four (4) poles, rig these and erect so you can string the horizontal cables between them.

It is not necessary to make this rigging complete all at once, but do it in steps, starting with the two cables that form an "X" over the center of the top. Starting at point "A", then "B", "C", etc., attaching all four vertical cables at each point as shown, making sure all (4) at each cable is the same length so you have a uniform arc from point "A" to top

of each pole. When you have completed this, it is time to do the sides, starting at the center and working in both directions from 1, then 2 right, 2 left, 3 right, 3 left, etc., and so on, across each side maintaining the same arc. To hold the top down on the sides, it has to be staked through loops of rope.

These drawings are not drawn to any scale, they are merely to help you visualize what the finished model should look like. When in doubt, refer to photos with this article. The canvas used was a deep blue, but you can use the color of your choice. Happy Building.

|                                  |          |                                |                                |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>RBBB</b>                      |          |                                |                                |
| <b>Gargantua - Poleless Tent</b> |          |                                |                                |
| DATE: 1940                       | No Scale | SCANNED & REVISED:<br>01/23/03 | Pg 1 of 4                      |
| <b>Circus Model Builders</b>     |          |                                |                                |
| Drawn By<br>Hugh Burleigh        |          |                                | DRAWING NUMBER<br><b>#0220</b> |

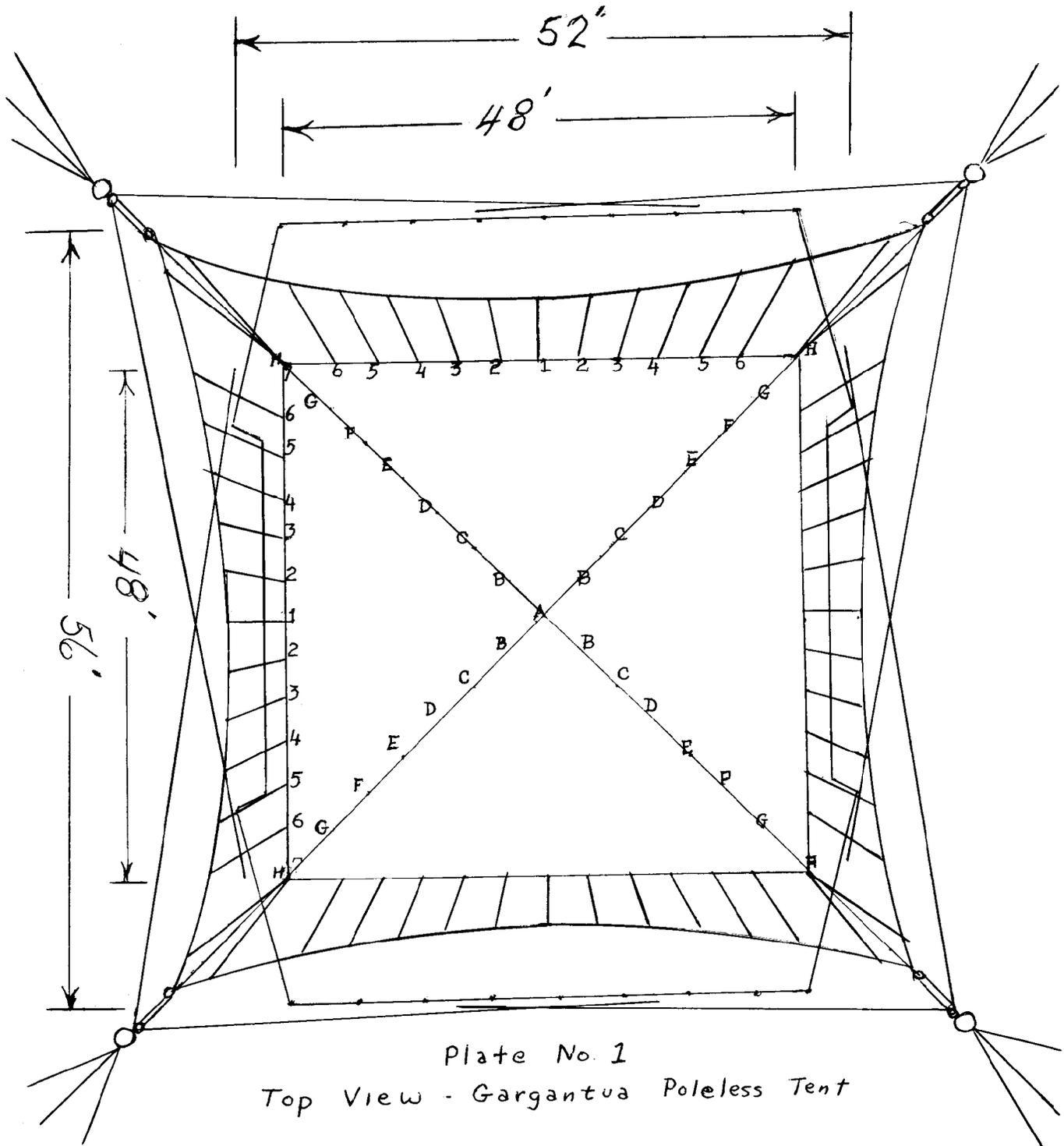


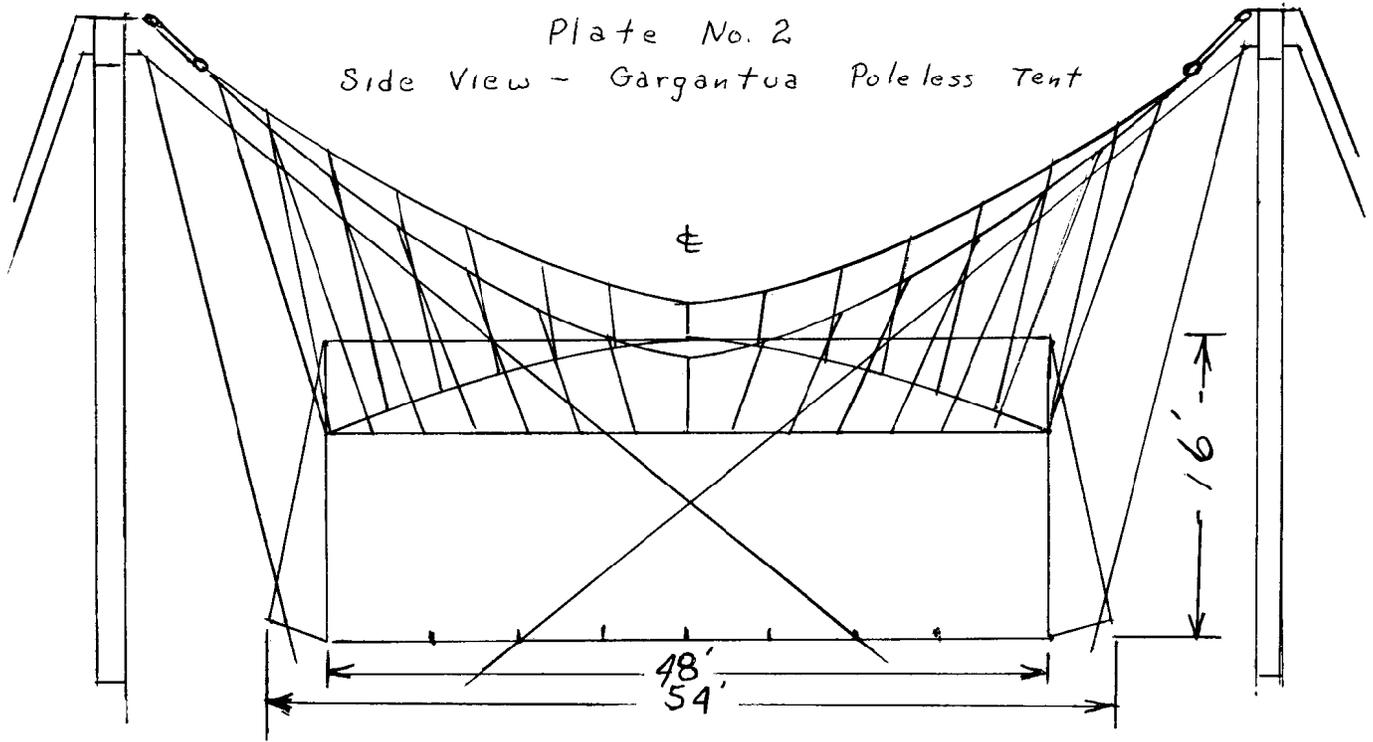
Plate No. 1  
 Top View - Gargantua Poleless Tent

**A NOTE OF INTEREST ON THE GARGANTUA CAGE BY ED LESTER OF ROYAL AMERICAN SHOWS**

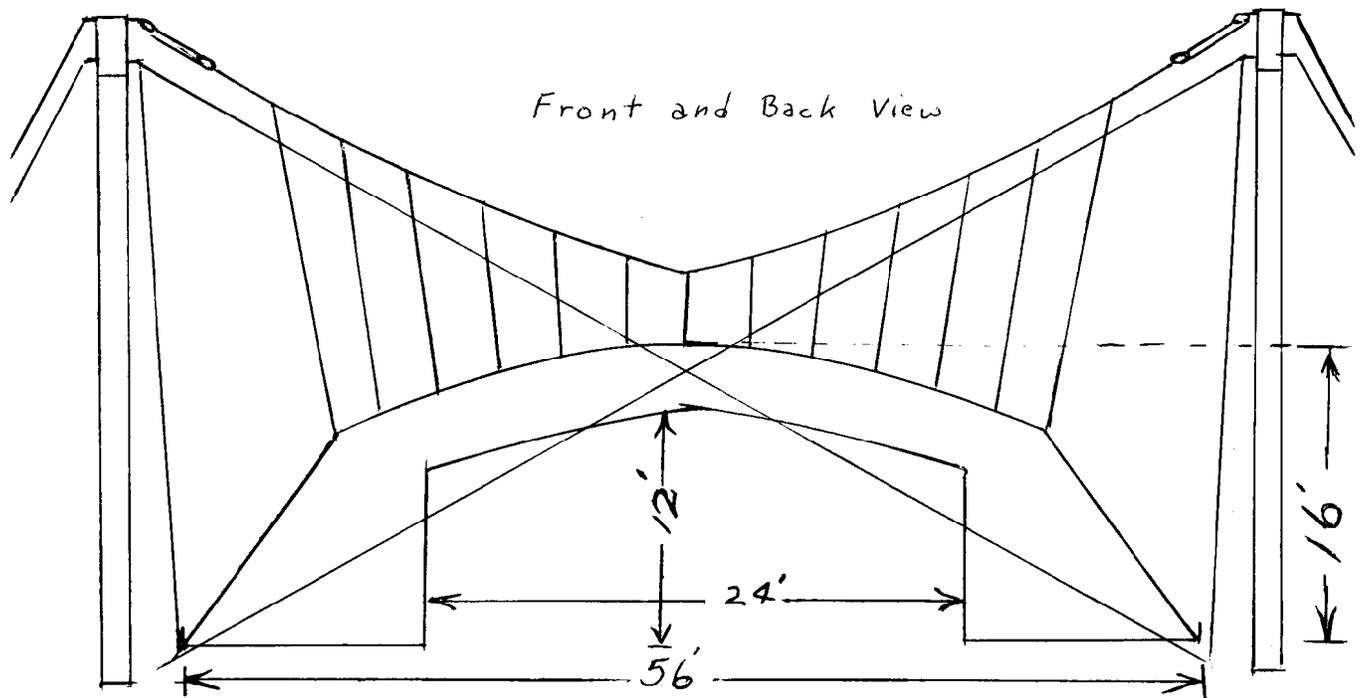
The R.B.B.&B. Gorilla Cage was on the R.A.S. for the 1958 and 1959 seasons. It carried "GARGANTUA II" and the wagon had number 97 (although it should have a number ending in "8" as it was a 28' wagon). It had the R.B.B.&B. dark green paint job with the yellow bamboo tree motif. Thank you Ed, we appreciate your interest in our article.

|                                  |          |                                |                                |
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| <b>RBBB</b>                      |          |                                |                                |
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Plate No. 2  
Side View - Gargantua Poleless Tent



Front and Back View



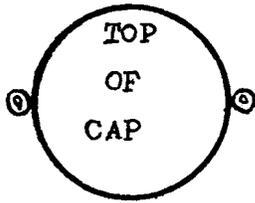
**RBBB**  
**Gargantua - Poleless Tent**

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No Scale

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4 EYES (2 EACH SIDE ) TOP and BOTTOM

(4) POLES REQUIRED

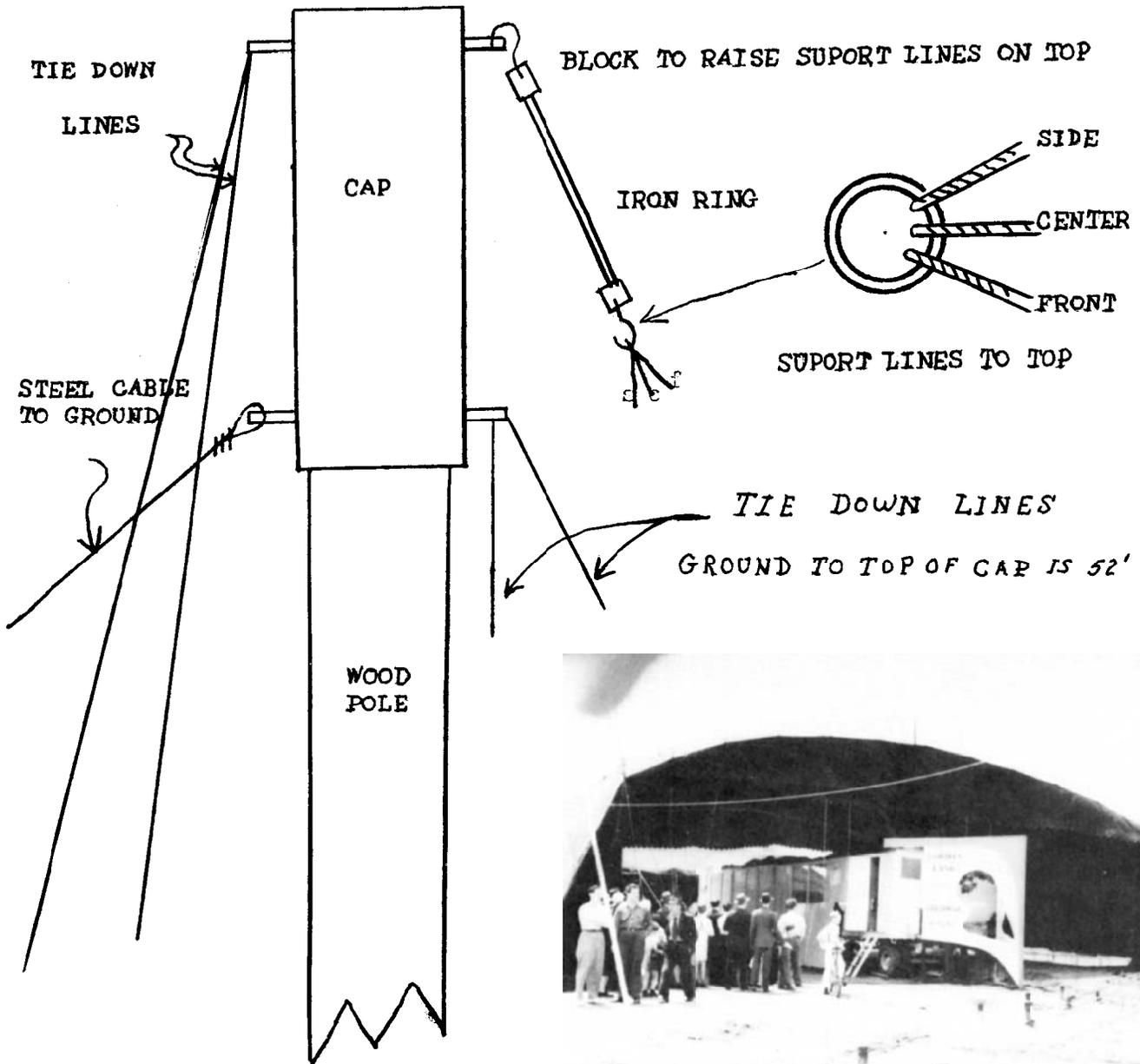


PLATE NO. 3  
MAST - GARGANTUA POLELESS  
TENT

RBBB Gargantua poleless top and wagons, seen here on the lot in Washington, D. C. during the 1940 season.[Heist Photo Collection]

|                                  |          |                                |                                |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>RBBB</b>                      |          |                                |                                |
| <b>Gargantua - Poleless Tent</b> |          |                                |                                |
| Pg 4 of 4                        | No Scale | SCANNED & REVISED:<br>01/23/03 | DRAWING NUMBER<br><b>#0220</b> |