

*The best single and double trapeze acts.* Eddie and Ira Millette, whose double head balance on a swaying trapeze stands alone. This father-and-son spectacle was one of the most dangerous turns ever developed, being performed seventy feet aloft under roof, fifty-five feet up under canvas, without safety net. Eddie originated the turn in 1897, and taught it to his twelve-year-old son in 1910. In 1916 they made it a double feature, and for the next thirteen years it was supreme among tent-top hazards. The pair worked on a single trapeze with three ropes supporting it instead of two; on this rig they did in unison many stunts while standing on their heads on the wide-arching trapeze bar. While upside down, they drank water, smoked cigarettes, and did other "impossible" routines. At first their finale was a tremendous and harrowing swing: Eddie stood on the bar without holding on to the ropes, while Ira stood on his head on Eddie's head. This stunt, called a head-to-head balance, has never been done on a trapeze by anyone else. In 1919 they evolved an even more thrilling climax. They employed a trapeze which had a large ball mounted inside the ropes at each end. The trapeze then was wound up tightly, like a child's playground swing. Father and son stood on their heads on the balls and the trapeze was allowed to unravel, swinging rapidly round and round while each ball revolved *in the reverse direction*. The Millettes were probably the first trapeze artists to discard the familiar leotard costume for the now standard flannel slacks and silk shirts.

THE BIG TOP

Fred Bradna

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