

# Pepin and Breschard's Circus in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

**I**N Vol. XXXII, p. 134-5, of the Proceedings of the Lancaster County Historical Society, published in December, 1928, appears a description of Ricketts' circus held in Lancaster in the summer of 1797. After its final performance, on Saturday, September 2nd, of that year, Lancaster apparently existed without the thrill of a circus until the summer of 1809, when Pepin and Breschard came with their famous show. One is unable to account for the twelve-year interval of inactivity along this line between the departure of Ricketts in 1797 and the arrival of Pepin and Breschard in 1809.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, June 2nd, 1809, contained the following announcement, which, doubtless, was eagerly read by our circus-loving people of that period:

## HORSEMANSHIP.

The managers of the New Circus at Philadelphia, respectfully inform the ladies and gentlemen of Lancaster and its vicinity that they intend to commence, on the 14th of June, at Lancaster, the exhibition of their unparalleled feats of horsemanship and activity, and will use their best endeavors to merit the public patronage.

They will continue in Lancaster but a few days.

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The circus arrived in Lancaster sooner than was stated in this advertisement, for the opening performance took place in South Queen street, a few doors below Robert Wilson's tavern, on Saturday, June 10th, 1809. The tavern stood in the third block of South Queen street, on the west side, on the third lot south of Farnum street, numbered 560 on the Hamilton plan. The lot measured 64 feet, 4½ inches, on South Queen street, and extended 252 feet to an alley 14 feet wide.

The Lancaster Journal of Friday, June 9th, 1809, contained the following announcement:

## NEW CIRCUS

In South Queen street, a few doors below  
Robert Wilson's tavern.

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 1809,

A GRAND

and

EXTRAORDINARY REPRESENTATION,

By

MESSRS. PEPIN & BRESCHARD,

And all the Company.

New and Surprising Feats of

HORSEMANSHIP.

During which, Messrs. Pepin & Breschard and their pupils will distinguish themselves by a variety of exercise and feats of agility and address, which cannot but greatly astonish and please the beholder; to commence with

A GRAND  
MILITARY MANOEUVRE

of Eight Persons Well Mounted.

Mr. Codet will distinguish himself by difficult feats of address, and terminate by leaping over his horse in full speed without touching him in any way.

Master Diego will astonish the beholders by his feats of agility, for a youth of twelve years only.

Mr. Cayetano will execute many comic and extraordinary exercises of vaulting, and singular tricks with a glove, hat, etc.

The famous horse Conqueror, (unrivalled for his sagacity) trained by Mr. Breschard, will bring, when ordered, a handkerchief, basket, chair, etc.

The performance will be varied by the comic scene of

MADAME ANGOLD,

Executed by Mr. Cayetano.

Mr. Pepin will exert his utmost endeavors to contribute to the gratification of the beholders. He will, after several feats of address, execute the wonderful leap over four boards.

Mr. Breschard will perform various difficult feats on two horses, in full speed.

The performance will conclude with  
THE PYRAMIDS OF VENICE,

On three horses, by the whole company.

The doors to be opened at half after three, and the performance to commence at half past four, precisely.

Boxes, 1 dollar — Pit, 50 cents.

Children half price.

Tickets to be had at the Circus.

Should the weather prove unfavorable, the performance will be postponed until the next fair day.

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It is certain that Pepin and Breschard did not have a tent. Such a luxury was unheard of in those days. They may have had the exhibition ground enclosed with canvas, but, undoubtedly, there was no such thing as a covering. This explains why performances were given "weather permitting".

The final exhibition of Pepin and Breschard's circus in Lancaster was on Saturday, June 17th, 1809. The Lancaster Journal of Friday, June 16th, contained the following advertisement:

NEW CIRCUS  
GRAND AND EXTRAORDINARY  
PERFORMANCE

MESSRS. PEPIN AND BRESCHARD,  
Professors of the art of horsemanship  
and agility, having within a year arrived  
from Spain, have had the honor of performing  
before the principal courts of  
Europe, beg leave to inform the public  
that their fifth performance will be

ON FRIDAY EVENING,  
JUNE 16TH, 1809.

Will be performed a grand and extraordinary  
exhibition, during which Messrs.

Pepin and Breschard, their pupils and  
performers will distinguish themselves  
by a variety of new and extraordinary  
exercises.

Mr. Codet will perform on horseback  
several astonishing feats of activity,  
which he will conclude with vaulting  
over his horse without touching him in  
any way.

Master Diego, pupil to Messrs. Pepin and Breschard,  
will perform feats with hoops, in a  
surprising manner, for a youth of 11  
years old.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cayetano, in the character of a  
clown, will execute several comic and  
extraordinary exercises of vaulting and  
several singular tricks with a glove, hat, etc.

FOR THE SECOND TIME,

Mr. Breschard will perform on two  
horses, and throw oranges, apples, etc.  
three at a time in the air, and receive  
them with forks and bottles. He will perform  
astonishing exercises with hoops,  
single, double and treble handed, and do  
it with one and two hands, and will terminate  
with the leap of the ribband.

THE FAMOUS HORSE CONQUEROR,  
unrivalled for docility, sagacity, and instruction,  
will bring, when ordered, a  
basket, chair, etc. and will  
partake of a collation with his master.

Mr. Pepin will signalize himself by  
astonishing feats of  
HORSEMANSHIP AND DIFFICULT  
ATTITUDES;

ALSO, LEAP OVER FOUR BOARDS.

Mr. Cayetano will perform the amusing scene of  
MADAME ANGOLD.

THE FAMOUS HORSE NOBLE,  
celebrated for his sagacity, and unrivalled  
by none in Europe or America,  
will leap over another horse, and afterwards

<sup>1</sup> In the advertisement of June 9th his age was stated "twelve years."

through a hoghead placed on a horse's back.

The performance will be varied by the  
comic scene of

### THE BROTHER MILLERS.

The whole to conclude with the  
COMBUSTIBLE HORSE,

Garnished with brilliant Fire works.

Messrs. Pepin and Breschard inform  
the public, that the Circus will positively  
close to-morrow.

Doors to be opened at half past four,  
and the performance to commence  
precisely at half past five o'clock.

On July 1st, 1809, Pepin and Breschard opened their circus in New York city, where they continued until August 26th, of that year. The performance on the last night was given for the benefit of the poor.

Two years later, Pepin and Breschard brought their circus to Lancaster again and exhibited at the same place,—on the lot south of Robert Wilson's tavern. The first performance was given on the evening of Friday, May 24th, 1811. The Lancaster Journal states:

## CIRCUS

### MESSRS. PEPIN & BRESCHARD

The performance will be commenced  
by Master Charles, a child of eight years  
old, who will please the spectators by  
many feats, surprising for a boy of his age.

Master Felix will dance on his horse,  
and terminate by vaulting to the right  
and left, his horse in full speed.

Mr. Laconta will dance a hornpipe on  
his horse, and terminate by throwing a  
lofty summerset from his horse, when in  
full speed.

### THE HANDSOME SCENE OF THE DOMESTIC.

Will be executed by the elegant horse  
Monarch, who will bring at the command  
of his master a handkerchief, hat, basket, &c.

Mr. Seigne will perform many feats of  
horsemanship, and likewise

### GREAT VAULTING.

Mr. Bell the great tumbler, will  
perform, in the character of clown, many  
astonishing feats. He will ride on  
his head in full speed; and terminate  
by a somerset.

Master Diego after a variety of  
feats will jump over two ribbons.

### THE LAUGHABLE SCENE OF MADAM ANGOLD,

will be executed by Master Seigne.

Mr. Pepin will signalize himself by many feats. He will sit on a chair, jump over the hoop, through a hat and terminate by the great leap through a hog's head. The whole to conclude by the farcical scene of

### THE BROTHER MILLERS.

How long the circus exhibited in the borough, or how many performances were given, is not definitely known. The Lancaster Journal of Friday, June 7th, contains a short advertisement of the circus. A fair was held in Lancaster about this time. Messrs. Pepin and Breschard informed the public that during the fair they would perform their astonishing feats of horsemanship twice a day, beginning at 11 o'clock in the morning and 5 in the evening.

June 18th, 1811, Pepin and Breschard returned to New York city with their circus.

In a work entitled, "The Circus, Its Origin and Growth Prior to 1835," by Isaac J. Greenwood, on page 87, it is stated that "John Breschard was a native Frenchman, but Victor Pepin, though descended from a French neutral of Acadia, was born in Philadelphia."

Greenwood quotes from Clapp's "Records of the Boston Stage" as follows:

"The number and splendor and training of their stud, were a perpetual source of admiration and wonder; and as to their leader, Pepin, whether on foot or on horseback, he showed the part of a king. No Pepin of France that ever rode in Paris with his doughty Austrasians, could have claimed greater homage than our martial equestrian as he brought up the rear of his glittering troop, he himself in the costume of a Gallic field-marshal."

## A Great Political Meeting in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

ON Tuesday, October 14th, 1800, the citizens of Lancaster who enjoyed the right of suffrage, assembled at the polls and voted for a President and a Vice-President of the United States. Owing to the primitive methods of communication, the results of the general election were not definitely known until late in December of that year.

The Intelligencer & Weekly Advertiser of Wednesday, January 7th, 1801, contains the following:

"On New Year's day, the Democratic Republicans of this state at the seat of government [Lancaster] celebrated the success