

JAMES P. WOLFSCALE

WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE January 2020

Circus Sideshow Bandleader James P. Wolfscale was born in 1868 and died in 1921 in Chicago. In 1889 he was performing in Zephyr, Kansas. As leader of the side show band, in 1892-1894 he was with Sells & Rentfro, and also W.S. Brown's Punch & Magic Show. Next he was with the Sells Bros. Circus. That was followed by a series of other moves: Sells & Gray (1900-1901), Sells & Downs (1902-1905), Cole Brothers (1906-1907 & 1909), Jones Bros. Buffalo Ranch (1910-1911) and then from 1912 through 1918, he was with Barnum & Bailey Circus, leading side show bands ranging from 11 in 1912 to to 35 in 1914 to 20 in 1918, prior to the show being combined with Ringling Bros. Circus the next year.

In his big sideshow band of 1914, three of Wolfscale's sons were playing: Roy (age 24) on cornet, and Troy (26) and Ray (22) on alto horns. In 1917, Ray was listed on mellophone and Troy on drums. After the Barnum-Ringling merger, P.G. Lowery had responsibility for the side show band. Thus, Wolfscale moved to the John Robinson Circus in 1919 and was also with Leon's Southern Minstrels that year. Along with Lowery, Wolfscale was certainly considered one of the top side show bandmasters.