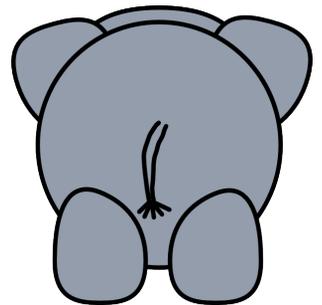
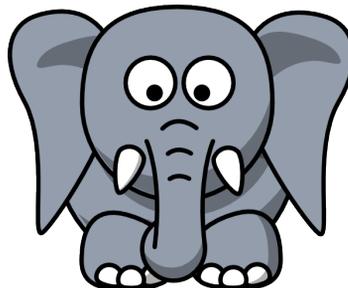
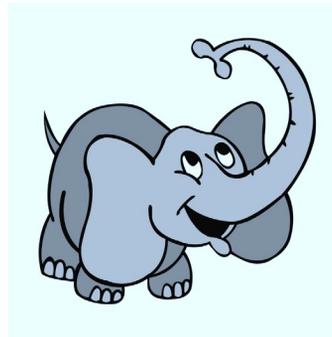
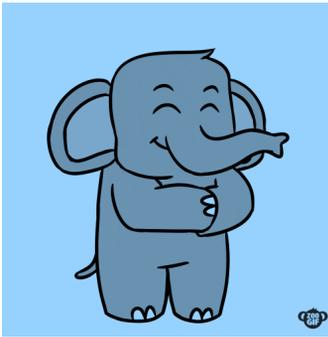


Elephants Cheerily, Swim in Lake Erie



History Kids
Conneaut Railroad Museum
Conneaut Area Historical Society

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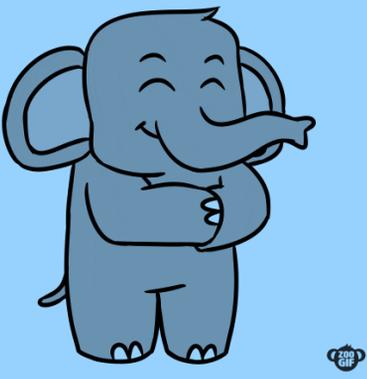


This fictional story is based on a circus reminiscence by Bob Blickensdefer)

The elephant trumpeted and Ben sat up in bed. Elephants didn't usually trumpet on Mill Street in Conneaut. In fact, he had never heard them trumpet on Mill Street.

“Wake up Ben. There are elephants on Mill Street.” Ben's sister Carrie stood in the doorway of his room.

Ben didn't even yell at her like he usually did if she came into his room without knocking. “I saw two lions and three tigers from my bedroom window,” she said





Ben struggled into his overalls and a tee shirt. He pulled on his shoes and hurried downstairs. Carrie sat at the kitchen table shoving oatmeal into her mouth. She ate so fast that she dropped a spoonful of oatmeal on her tee shirt. When she grabbed a napkin and tried to wipe it off, it slid down and landed on the pocket of her overalls. Ma handed her a piece of toast with one hand and handed her a damp washcloth with the other. Carrie dabbed at her tee shirt and overalls. Then she jumped up. “Let’s go Ben.”





“Ben, you have to eat some breakfast.”

“I’m not hungry, Ma. Come on Carrie, the elephants will need water.” Ben pulled open the kitchen door and he and Carrie hurried out into the front yard before Ma could say anything. Carrie felt her watching them from the window as Ben grabbed the tin watering can that she used to water her garden and Carrie turned the spigot on the faucet. The watering can filled up so quickly that water splashed on Carrie’s feet.





Ma's tall shadow shimmered over the wooden steps. She held out Carrie's shoes. "Put these on," she ordered.

Carrie let go of the watering can, took the sandals from Ma's hand, and slid her feet into them.

"We must take this water to the elephants, Ma. Then we'll be back to do chores," Carrie told Ma.

Ben picked up the watering can. "We promise, Ma."

Ma smiled. "Don't ride any wild elephants."



Carrie and Ben didn't ride the wild elephants. They walked across Mill Street, and instead of riding them, they made friends with the wild elephants. They gave the elephants human names.

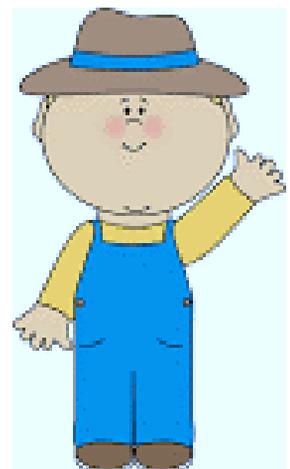
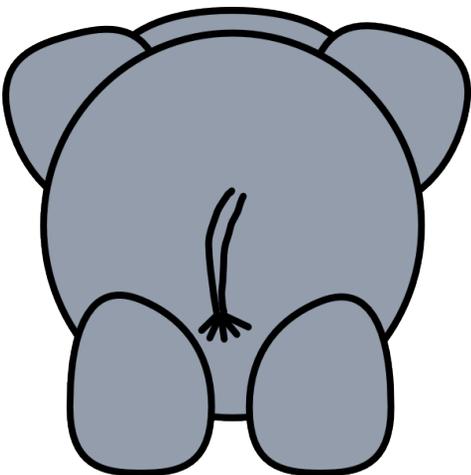
The elephants' human names were Emma, Edmund, Elvira, Eugene, Esther, and Engelbert and all of them were thirsty. The circus train had stopped alongside the depot and the roustabouts (circus workers) unloaded the elephants and the lions, tigers, camels, monkeys and the rest of the animals and gave them food and water.





But Emma, Edmund, Elvira, Eugene, Esther, and Engelbert wanted to do more than drink water. They wanted to suck up water in their long trunks and splash it over their ears and legs and backs. They were determined to find enough water to squirt at each other. They were determined to find enough water to splash in, to swim in, to cover their entire elephant bodies, including their trunks.

The elephants agreed that they would not do any kind of circus work until they found a pond or a river with enough water to cover all of them at once. Emma would not balance on a footstool and dance to music. Edmund would not haul heavy tent poles. Elvira would not pull the water wagon. Eugene would not hold tightly to Esther's tail in their chain acrobat trick. Esther would keep walking a few steps ahead of Eugene, and Englebert would not turn around until he felt water roll down his back. They told Roustabout Ron about their decision





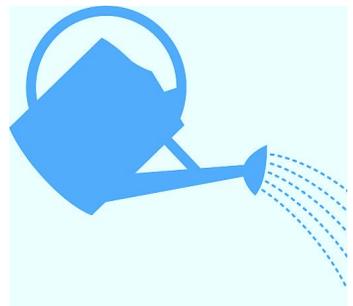
Carrie and Ben had hurried across Mill Street and onto the circus grounds. Ben hurried so fast that water from the watering can he carried sloshed over the top and splashed on Carrie.

Carrie grabbed the watering can from Ben. “Let me carry it. You’re spilling the water,” she said.

Ben shouted something at Carrie, but the calliope made so much noise that she couldn’t hear what he said.

“Turn that calliope down!” Ben grabbed the bucket from Carrie and helped turn down the calliope.

“This bucket is heavy,” Ben complained,



“I want to know why the elephants are noisy,” Carrie said.



“I didn’t get the whole story, but from what I heard, they want to find a pond and go swimming,” Roustabout Ron explained.

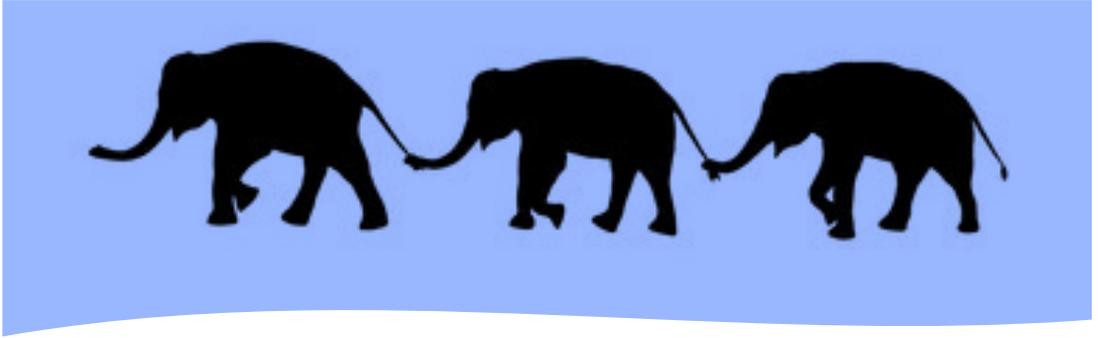
“I don’t think there is a pond big enough around here,” Ben said.

“There have been at least five Lake Eries before this one and there were probably were lots of ponds before the glaciers came and froze them. Then when the ponds thawed out, they melted together to make another lake,” Carrie said.

“Yeah, right, that’s the way it happened,” Ben said.

“Better hurry and get done arguing,” Roustabout Ron said. “Those elephants are getting mighty impatient.

“IMPATIENT!” Emma trumpeted.



VERY IMPATIENT,” Edmund, Elvira, Eugene, and Esther trumpeted.

Englebert stretched his trunk around and pulled his tail.

“Follow me. I’ll show you where the lake is,” Carrie said. She grabbed her watering can.

The five elegant elephants got in line behind Carrie. Ben stood beside Englebert to keep him in line, and Roustabout Ron brought up the rear, carrying a mop.

Carrie raised her hands and pumped her feet and sang:

“Marching, marching, straight and cheery,
Marching, marching to Lake Erie!”



Carrie pumped her legs to the beat of the song. Everyone but Engelbert marched and sang along with her. Ben pushed Engelbert so he had to run to keep up with them, but Engelbert didn't sing. Instead, he waved his trunk over his head. Ben couldn't see around him, so he had to follow the marching feet.

Both human and marching feet marched down Mill Street, past brown and white and young and old houses. Men and women waved at them from porches and yards, and children ran out to meet them.

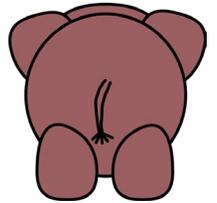


They looked straight ahead. They marched straight ahead. They marched straight ahead and then to the left at the Y where Mill and Grove Streets came together. By that time the sun stood noon high in the sky and the elephants, except for Engelbert were holding out their trunks for water. Engelbert found himself a button sized mud puddle alongside the road and sat in it. He sucked up the muddy water in his trunk and sprayed it at Ben. Muddy water tears ran down Ben's face.

Right there at the Mill and Grove Street Y, Carrie sat down the watering can.

Roustabout Ron picked it up and dribbled water over his mop. Then he ran his damp mop over the backs of all of the Elegant Elephants except Englebert. Englebert stood back to nose with Roustabout Ron and wouldn't move so Roustabout Ron could reach his back.

“Pstt! Ben!” Carrie whispered while Roustabout Ron and Englebert were standing back to nose. “Put some water on Englebert’s back.” Ben crept around and flicked two drops of muddy water on Englebert’s back.



Englebert bellowed and burped and bellowed. He reared up on his front, not his back legs. He bellowed again,” Eewww! That’s muddy water. I need to take bath, quick!”

“Lake Erie is the best place for a quick bath!” Carrie said. “All we have to do is march down Grove Street to Lake Road, cross Lake Road, and we’ll be at Township Park. Lake Erie waves sometimes snuggle against, and other times smack the shore at Township Park. You can take a bath all of the way to Canada and back if that’s how much room you need!”



Ben pushed Englebert's back to get him marching again, but this time Englebert didn't march, this time he ran! It is true, he ran backwards down Grove Street but he ran. He ran so fast that Emma, Edmund, Elvira, Eugene, and Esther stopped marching and ran like a Lake Erie wild wave trying to catch up with them. The speeding Elegant Elephants left Ben, Carrie, and Roustabout Ron standing at the end of Grove Street with their hair blowing in the winds their running created. "After them!" Carrie shouted.





“Why?” Ben asked her. “They will run straight into Lake Erie.”

“They have to cross Lake Road, first,” Ben said. “Can you imagine what some of those drivers of those newfangled cars will do if they see elephants crossing Lake Road?”

Carrie imagined and ran faster, with Roustabout Ron running beside her, but she did not imagine fast enough. The Elegant Elephants following close behind him ran down Grove Street, scattering cats, dogs, people, and even mice.



“I am not afraid of a runty little mouse!” Englebert shouted as he ran by a mouse peeking out of the cat door of a blue and white house.

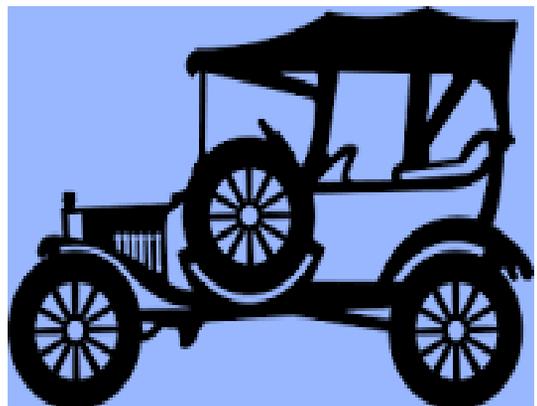
They blew down Grove Street in pinwheels of people, elephants, and wind all of the way to Lake Road.

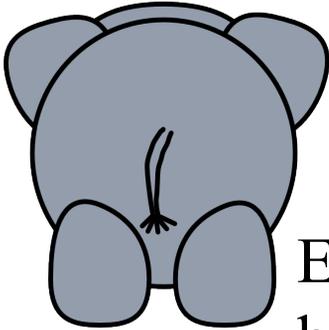
“Stop!” Roustabout Ron shouted.

“You elephants, stop! There is a car coming down the road.”

Carrie, Ben, and Roustabout Ron stopped by the side of Lake Road.

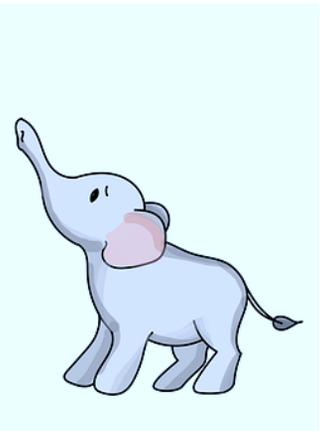
Carrie and Ben and Roustabout Ron and looked down Lake Road and sure enough, a Model T Ford clattered down the road towards them.





Englebert started running, his trunk and ears flapping in the wind. He ran so fast he rolled with the wind, around and around like a hoop.

Englebert crossed Lake Road and rolled down the hill to Lake Erie. Emma, Edmund, Elvira, Eugene, and Esther stood by the side of Lake Road, watching Englebert down the hill.





When the driver of the Model T Ford saw the five elephants standing beside the road, he jumped onto the running board of the car shouting, “Get those elephants out of the road right now! They are blocking traffic!”

Roustabout Ron looked up and down Lake Road. “All I can see is your car,” he said. “Since you are stopped, we are going to cross the road, and then you can go on your way.”

Roustabout Ron, Ben, and Carrie led the Elegant Elephants onto Lake Road. They had almost reached the other side of the road when Ben and Elvira, who were the last in line, suddenly stopped.

The Model T Ford driver, now back behind the wheel ready to resume his journey, also suddenly stopped but not in time to keep from bumping Elvira. Elvira jumped, shoving the car off the road. It rolled and rolled down the hill until it splashed into Lake Erie.





“I do not plan on going swimming,” the Model T Ford driver shouted as he disappeared down the hill.

“We do plan on going swimming!” Carrie shouted after him.

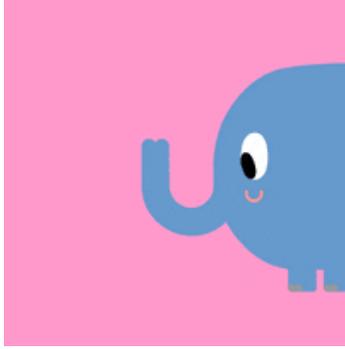
Carrie, Ben, and Roustabout Ron and the Elegant Elephants rolled down the hill after the Model T Ford driver. They all rolled into Lake Erie together. Carrie saw Englebert swimming far out into the lake shooting waterspouts and making rain showers with his ears.

Englebert saw them through his homemade rain showers and shouted, “Come on in, the water’s fine.”

“We are already in the water,” the Model T Ford driver spluttered. Carrie found out later that his name was Bruno.

“Since we’re already here, let the elephants play in the water,” Ben said.





“They will play all afternoon.
They love the water,”
Roustabout Ron said.

The elephants played in Lake Erie all of that afternoon. Carrie, Ben, and Roustabout Ron lay on the beach enjoying the warm sun and letting gentle breezes dry their clothes. Bruno and his Model T Ford sat behind them, drying out. Bruno and his clothes dried out to sizzling, but the Model T. Ford was still dripping water when the setting sun signaled that it was time to go home.

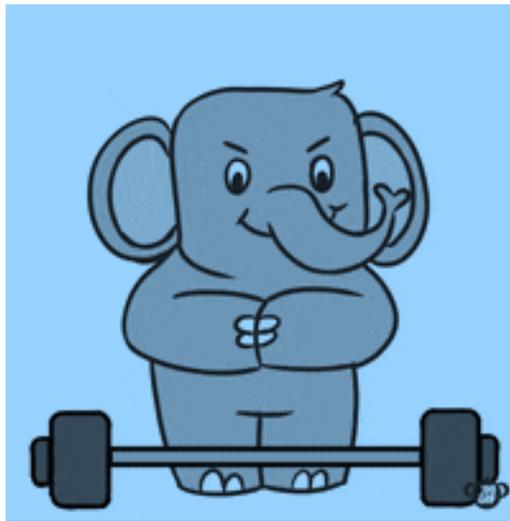




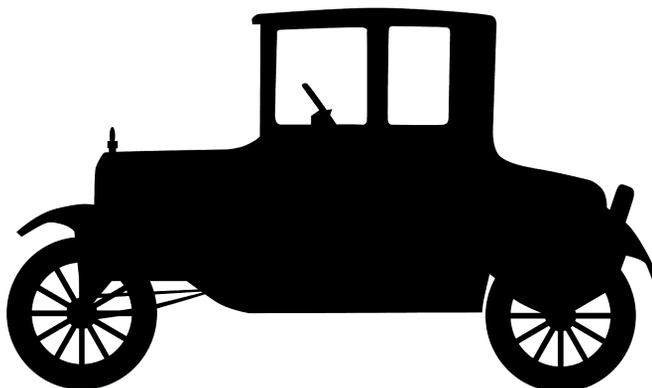
“Tell you what,” Roustabout Ron told Bruno. “We’ll all help you push your car up the hill. Then you can see if she will start.”

Roustabout Ron, Carrie, Ben, and the Elegant Elephants and Englebert pushed the Model T Ford up the hill. Bruno tried to start the Model T. Ford, but it just made coughing noises and would not move.

“We can make it move, “ Ben said. “Come on Englebert, come on Elegant Elephants, we can push the Model T until it starts, and then Bruno can give us a ride home.”



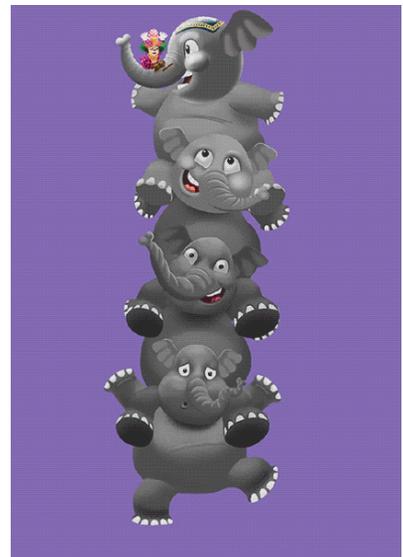
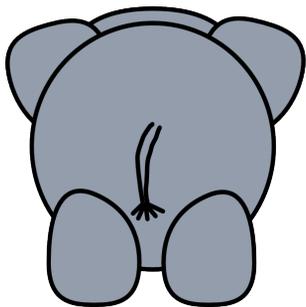
Carrie and Ben got into the backseat of the Model T. Ford and Roustabout Ron and the elephants pushed the car up the Township Park Hill, across Lake Road to Grove Street, turned at the Grove Street and Mill Street Y divide, and slowly made its way down Mill Street.



When they had almost reached Carrie and Ben's house, the Model T Ford made a rattling noise like it was clearing its throat and it lurched forward, leaving Roustabout Ron and the elephants behind.



Bruno stopped in front of Carrie and Ben's house, and they hurried inside to tell Ma about their adventure and do their chores like they had promised. By that time, Roustabout Ron and the elephants had caught up with the Model T Ford and he and Bruno and the Elegant Elephants said goodbye. Englebert, said goodbye the same way he had said hello to everyone and then they headed back across Mill Street to the circus grounds and the waiting barnful of water, hay, and an apple each for good behavior.





YAY!

