

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1344

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Fairbanks Museum

other name/site number: Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium

## 2. Location

street & number: 1302 Main Street

not for publication: n/a

city/town: St. Johnsbury

vicinity: n/a

state: Vermont

code: VT

county: Caledonia

code: 005

zip code: 05819-2224

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

*Suzanne C. Jamelo, National Register Specialist 11-21-07*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Vermont State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register  
     see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
     see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
     see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register  
     see continuation sheet
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

*Patrick Andrews*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action

*1/2/2008*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property: private

**Number of Resources within Property**

Category of Property: building

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

\_\_\_ buildings

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

\_\_\_

\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_

\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_

\_\_\_ objects

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

1

\_\_\_ Total

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions: Recreation and Culture / Museum

Current Functions: Recreation and Culture / Museum

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

Late Victorian/Romanesque

foundation: Stone

walls: Stone

roof: Stone

other:

**Narrative Description**  
(see continuation sheet)

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

Areas of Significance: **Education; Architecture**

- Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): **n/a**

Period(s) of Significance: **1875-1899; 1900 - 1924**

Significant Dates: **1890-91; 1894**

Significant Person(s): **n/a**

Architect/Builder: **Packard, Lambert**

Cultural Affiliation: **n/a**

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(see continuation sheet)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

(see continuation sheet)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register St. Johnsbury Main Street Historical District  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
 Specify Repository: Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium Archives

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: .89 acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	18	737214	4922628

Legal Location (Township, Range &amp; Section(s)):

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: **Charles Browne, Executive Director**  
 organization: **Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium** date: **July 13, 2007**  
 street & number: **1302 Main Street** telephone: **802 748-2372**  
 city or town: **St. Johnsbury** state: **VT** zip code: **05819-2224**

**Property Owner**

name/title: **Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium Board of Trustees**  
 street & number: **1302 Main Street** telephone: **802 748-2372**  
 city or town: **St. Johnsbury** state: **VT** zip code: **05819-2224**

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Description of Resources

The Fairbanks Museum, built in 1890-91, is a 25,000 square foot, one-and-a-half story, U-shaped Richardsonian Romanesque style museum building in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, constructed of reddish brown Longmeadow sandstone. The remarkably high level of historical integrity of its location, setting, form, massing, scale, and materials, as well as of its exterior and interior details, features, fixtures and finishes, all contribute to the distinctive character and significance of this landmark. Located near the middle of the St. Johnsbury Main Street National Register Historic District, the imposing presence of the Fairbanks Museum indelibly punctuates the streetscape on the east side of Main Street. It faces a string of noteworthy historic institutional buildings, including the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum (a National Historic Landmark), the colonnaded St. Johnsbury House and the North Congregational Church. Surrounding the museum are also multistory brick commercial buildings on the south and a historic residential neighborhood of large late-nineteenth-century houses with broad lawns to the north. This setting around the Fairbanks Museum survives with an extraordinarily degree of historic integrity.

Surrounded by a raised, granite-curbed lawn, the lot around the Fairbanks Museum is landscaped with deciduous and coniferous trees, shrubs, flowerbeds, a flagpole, a sign and walkways. A broad concrete walkway, edged with rounded granite curbstones, connects the sidewalk with the building's main entrance. Two granite steps mark the intersection of the entry walk and the sidewalk. These are flanked by bronze life-sized lion sculptures with shaggy manes set on chest-high granite pedestal blocks. The lion on the left faces directly forward with bared teeth, appearing ready to rise on his extended front paws in concerned defiance, while the lion on the right reclines on one elbow in a casual feline attitude of feigned disinterest. Simple steel pipe railings provide security assistance at each side of the steps. The lawn edges are defined by round-topped granite curbing rising about a foot-and-a-half above the sidewalks of Main Street on the front, Prospect Street on the south side and Charles Street on the north side. The rear yard has a paved service drive, a parking lot and a lawn shaded with deciduous trees.

Designed in 1889 by St. Johnsbury architect, Lambert Packard, and constructed between 1890 and 1891, the original L-shaped plan of the Fairbanks Museum was modified in 1895 with the addition of a wing on the south end of the main block to form a U-shape. The design vocabulary and finishes strongly reflect the Richardsonian Romanesque style of the period. Packard's design for the Fairbanks Museum shares many similarities with the Henry Hobson Richardson-designed, Billings Library at the University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont, completed in 1885.

The exterior walls of the Fairbanks Museum are constructed of reddish-brown sandstone from the Kibby quarry at Longmeadow, Massachusetts, with rough-faced ashlar laid in reddish-brown mortar in a random coursed pattern. The foundation is expressed by three courses of progressively heavier rough-faced ashlar of matching sandstone. All exterior trim, mullions, chimneys, towers and parapets are made from the same stone. The exterior sandstone walls are in very good condition and retain an unusually high level of historical integrity and evidence of workmanship. Masonry conservation work completed in 1991 took special care to maintain the building's century-old patina through gently cleaning the stones without damaging their surfaces and by closely matching the original range of the mortar color variations and tooling profiles when re-pointing.

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The roof of the museum is covered with a mixture of grey-green and purple Vermont slate shingles. This slate roofing was installed in 1979 to replace the original black Pennsylvania slate that had deteriorated due to its high carbon content. The substitution of the more durable slate roofing has had minimal impact on the historic appearance or integrity of the building, as this replacement slate is a type that also was used in Vermont on important institutional buildings during the 1890s.

The main gable-roofed block of one-and-a-half story building that houses the museum's main exhibition hall runs parallel to Main Street with parapeted gables at each end. A large ell with a parapeted gable projects west to the front, facing Main Street. Along the south side of this ell is a three-bay arcade that forms an entry loggia connecting to the main entrance walkway. At the northwest corner of the ell is a large cornerstone, engraved "1890," that was laid on July 10 that year.

The front gable elevation of the ell features one centered bay of windows. The first story window has three large rectangular openings with three square openings above, all separated by rough-faced sandstone mullions. The three openings of this tripartite window are unified by a common sandstone lintel with a smooth surface finish, capped by a label molding that terminates in foliated cornerstones. The lower openings are fitted with original one-over-one, double-hung wooden sash with clear plate glass panes. The upper first story openings have fixed wooden sashes filled with intricate patterns of colored leaded glass.

The second story on the front gable is marked by a tripartite window that matches the width and alignment of the first-story window. Each of openings is filled with double-hung, one-over-one wooden sash with clear plate glass panes. The mullions separating the openings are trimmed by narrow Gothic columns with acanthus-leafed capitals, smooth tapered shafts and bulbous bases set on square plinths.

Above the rough-faced lintel of the second-story tripartite window is an elliptical tympanum with a nine-foot wide high relief carving in Indiana limestone. Installed in 1892 to the design of artist F. Muller of Quincy, Massachusetts, this allegorical depiction of "Science" features a seated robed and helmeted female figure of the Roman goddess Minerva, flanked by two standing boys, her students. To the left of one boy is an alligator and a stork with water reeds behind. On the right of the other boy is a lion with palm trees behind.<sup>1</sup> The elliptical sandstone arch of seventeen tapered stones above the tympanum is ornamented with a carved oak-leaf enrichment. The arch is surrounded by the random coursed ashlar sandstone, but midway between the top of the arch and the peak of the gable is a wide course of stone carved with a zigzag motif. This zigzag course extends to the raking capstones at the top of the wall that extends as a low parapet above the gable roof planes.

Four sandstone steps lead from the main walkway to the front entrance loggia. This loggia entrance is framed by a Romanesque Syrian arch supported by engaged colonnettes, clustered five wide and two deep on each side. This arch is part of a small parapeted gable wall that projects about two feet forward of the end wall of the west ell to form the corner of the loggia. The gabled wall of this protecting end of the loggia has a parapet that terminates with winged gargoyles at the eaves and a finial at the peak. The quarry-faced ashlar sandstone blocks of this wall are interspersed with carved stones. Three square stones with carved rosettes are set in an open triangle at the top of the gable. Centered between the gargoyles is a broad carved stone panel with vines and leaves surrounding a lion's face. Beneath the foliate panel is an inscription carved in relief in a sans-serif font that reads, "Museum of Natural Science."

<sup>1</sup> "A Beautiful Work of Art," *Saint Johnsbury Republican*, August 18, 1892, and "A Handsome Group," *Saint Johnsbury Caledonian*, August 11, 1892. (Clippings in file at Fairbanks Museum)

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The thirteen-foot wide loggia leads to the main entrance door that opens into a vestibule. The floor of the loggia is laid with large sandstone slabs, each measuring four feet by thirteen feet. The south side of the loggia is formed by a three-bay arcade with arches that match the proportions and detailing of the front entrance arch. Sandstone balustrades connect the three open bays. The spandrels above the first three sets of Gothic colonnettes are ornamented with projecting sandstone carvings of the heads of the noted nineteenth-century naturalists: John James Audubon (1785-1851), the Haiti-born Franco-American ornithologist and painter; Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), the Swiss zoologist and geologist; and Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), the Prussian world explorer.<sup>2</sup> A copper-trimmed slate roof of the loggia connects at the same plane as the south side of the front ell roof. Near the middle of this roof is an eyebrow dormer.

A two-and-a-half story sandstone tower rises at the inside corner of the loggia and the main block of the building. The octagonal lower story and a half is filled with a stairway that provides access from the entry vestibule down to the basement and up to the second floor. Light is provided to the basement stairway by a four-by-three-holed grid opening, located just above the three-coursed base on the southwest face of the tower. The first story and a half of the tower is without fenestration, however above, the octagonal shaft of the tower terminates with two bands of windows, separated by carved entwined foliate-enriched sandstone panels with simple horizontal moldings. The lower band of deeply recessed square windows is set above an enriched horizontal cyma recta molding. These windows have pebbled glass panes in the sashes on each of the eight sides. An upper band of semicircular windows align directly above the square windows. Above the voussoirs of the upper windows is a ring of shallow-pitched gablets terminated by gargoyles in the valleys and finials at the peaks. The tower width reduces to form a cylindrical upper stage above these shallow gablets. Surrounding this stage are twelve rectangular windows and above a horizontal molding are twelve shallow-arched openings with an intersecting band of voussoirs. The upper edge of this stage is trimmed with a foliate-enriched cornice molding. The tower then tapers to a cone in stepped sandstone courses. It is capped with a sandstone quatrefoil finial.

The main body of the museum runs south of the front ell, parallel to Main Street. Its walls of random-coursed ashlar sandstone are set on three to four heavier courses at the base, matching the design and materials of the other elevations. Fenestration consists of three paired sets of window openings that originally had one-over-one double-hung sash, but now are filled with grey slate panels. Each window of the pairs is separated by a single colonnette. Between the paired sets of windows are spandrels of six engaged colonnettes that match those that flank the arched openings of the loggia. Two small, narrow lancet windows with double-hung sash are located at south. The top of the wall has a foliate-enriched cornice. The copper-trimmed slate roof above matches the other roofs. Near the middle of this roof plane is a low eyebrow dormer.

A one-and-a-half-story engaged stair tower rises at the south end of the west wall. The base and shaft of the cylindrical tower, which is smaller in scale than the main stair tower near the loggia mentioned above, has stonework that matches the adjoining wall. A foliate-enriched cornice of the west wall extends around the tower to form a protruding molding. Above this molding, the south tower takes an octagonal form with arched window openings near the top of each face. Above the voussoirs of these windows, the walls of the tower terminate with a foliate-enriched cornice, which is surmounted by a tapered octagonal sandstone roof with a quatrefoil finial at its peak.

Originally, this tower defined the southwest corner of the building, however four years after the initial plan was completed, the main exhibition hall was extended south and a gable-roofed wing was added to the southwest corner. The materials and general detailing of this south wing match the original parts of building. Its gable end is parapeted with sandstone capstones laid to follow the pitch of the roof, as they are on all the other gables on the building. The peak has a

<sup>2</sup> "Noble Benefaction," *Saint Johnsbury Republican*, December 17, 1891 (Clipping in file at Fairbanks Museum)

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simple sandstone finial. Three lancet windows mark the attic story of the front gable. The main story has three arch-topped windows with double-hung sashes. The voussoirs of these arches intersect and spandrels of engaged colonnettes fill the spaces between the window openings. Two small one-over-one, double-hung windows provide light into the basement at the base of the west wall of the south wing. The north and south sides of the wing have sets of three windows in a row, separated by spandrels of colonnettes that generally match the design of those on the west side of the main block, except these openings still have double-hung one-over-one sash with clear plate glass panes. Those on the south side have been covered with hinged painted metal panels.

The south eaves wall of the wing is set back about a foot behind the plane of the gable end wall of the main hall. The walls are separated from Prospect Street's sidewalk by a narrow lawn. An engaged rectangular sandstone chimney rises near the corner of the wing and the hall. About three feet above the roof cornice, this chimney is capped by a cluster of engaged colonnettes—three deep by five wide—that flare out to form capitals at the top.

The south gable of the main hall has three small lancet windows marking the attic story. Beneath is a large tripartite window that straddles the main floor and the balcony in one arch. The upper three sashes are set with yellow and clear pebbled glass in lead cames. The side quarter-round sashes and center arc-topped sash are fixed. The three lower windows are rectangular, also with stained glass set in lead cames. Their bottom sashes pivot out for ventilation. These stained glass windows are designed with circles of cames that intersect at the four cardinal points. The centers of the circles are filled with clear pebbled glass and the spaces between the intersecting arcs are of yellow pebbled glass. Two double-hung, one-over-one windows are located near the center of the wall spaces on each side of the tripartite window. The west window is covered with a hinged metal panel and the east window has red paint covering the entire sash and panes. A row of four small one-over-one, double-hung windows, protected by steel bars, is centered at the base of this wall to light the basement.

The rear of the Fairbanks Museum has less elaborate detailing than the other more public elevations. A minor variation in color of the stones on the south side of a vertical mortar joint marks the edge of the 1895 addition. Fenestration consists of fourteen windows set in pairs high on the wall. Two pairs are located on the addition and five pairs line the main hall wall. These are all fitted with metal-covered panels. To the north of the second pair of windows is the base of an originally engaged sandstone chimney. Since it projects only a few inches from the wall plane, it rises only to the top of the cornice and is covered by the copper eaves flashing that runs along the lower edge of the slate roof. The south side of this chimney is corbelled at an angle midway up to narrow its width.

A second sandstone chimney rises near the center of the northeast wall. This chimney also projects a few inches from the wall plane. About three feet above the roof pane, the finish of its stones changes from rusticated ashlar to a three-foot band of engaged colonnettes, three deep by four wide. The chimney continues with a narrow band of rustication, then another three-foot band of engaged colonnettes and a narrow rusticated band. Finally, it is topped by a narrow band of engaged colonnettes.

A small gable-roofed basement entry was added just to the south of the original chimney. Set on a concrete foundation, this addition has buff brick walls and a painted corrugated steel roof. It is fitted with a modern flush door with three horizontal windowpanes. The gable above the door has painted vertical wooden boards, each finished with a scallop at the bottom. The design suggests that the basement entry may date from the 1960s.

On the north side of the rear elevation is a discreet wheelchair access ramp covered by a shallow hipped roof. Painted brown, this 1992 addition is supported by square wooden posts with board railings that follow the pitch of the ramp. The



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switch-backed ramp is of wood, with lattice beneath. On the north side, the addition is enclosed with painted clapboards. A recessed hinged door opens to a short flight of basement stairs at the end. A standing-seam metal roof on the addition extends up to just below the sills of the windows described above.

The north elevation of the Fairbanks Museum nearly matches the south elevation, except that the gable end wall of the main exhibition hall and the eaves wall of the front ell form one unified plane. A large stained glass tripartite window matches the one on the south gable. A second story window opening on the west side of this tripartite window was modified, however, to become a doorway for a painted steel fire escape in 1961. The fenestration on the front ell differs from that on the south ell, with three bays of large windows lighting the first floor rooms. Near the center is a one-over-one double-hung window. On the west side of this are two paired windows that have a design similar to the first story window of the west elevation of the front ell. Between these paired windows is a low gable-roofed basement exit enclosure. Its roof is covered with standing-seam metal. Its walls are sheathed with clapboards, painted brown. An engaged chimney rises from near the center of the north elevation. Its design matches that of the full chimney on the rear elevation described above.

The north roof of the front ell has a shallow eyebrow window that matches the others. A steel ventilator surmounts the ridge near the intersection of the ell and the main hall roofs. Set on a square base, its main cylindrical shaft is surrounded by a large cylindrical shield that is topped by a shallow cone, embellished with a finial.

The historic exterior design of the Fairbanks Museum survives with a remarkably high degree of integrity. The only changes include the minor additions discussed above. These unobtrusive additions are visually receding and are easily distinguished from the original design and materials of the historic building.

The interior of the Fairbanks Museum survives with very few alterations to the significant public spaces. On entering the building through the front entry loggia, visitors first step into a vestibule that serves as the circulation hub of the building. From this vestibule, one can pass straight through a wide doorway on the east directly into the main exhibition hall that dominates the interior plan. This main exhibition hall, with a thirty-foot high barrel-vaulted ceiling, is ringed by an open balcony (described as a gallery in the original published building descriptions). The exhibition hall extends in an L-shape into the south wing addition. On the north on the entry vestibule, a doorway opens to the original curator's office that now serves as gift shop. This room connects to a lecture room that fills north ell next to the loggia. The main stair tower rises on the south side of the vestibule, where a winding stairway provides access to the second story. Another winding stairway beneath connects down to the basement. The floor plan of the second story matches that of the first, except for the large balcony opening in the main exhibition hall and in the south wing. Around the balcony of the main exhibition hall are alcoves for exhibits. The space on the second story above the office/gift shop serves as a hallway that leads to a darkened planetarium built into a classroom in the north ell. The basement, which was originally used for heating and mechanical equipment, a laboratory and a taxidermy space, has been reconfigured to provide offices for the museum staff, restrooms, a classroom, utilities space and a weather station with broadcasting studios. These interior spaces are described in more detail below.

The one hundred four foot long main exhibition hall on the first floor is finished with varnished oak paneling on the walls and vaulted ceiling. This ceiling is divided into nine bays. These bays are defined by large bent oak ribs. Each bay is subdivided by seven smaller bent oak ribs. Beneath each of the major ceiling ribs are square oak paneled posts that divide the balcony and define the side alcoves on the second story. Close examination reveals that the two southernmost bays were skillfully added when the building was expanded in 1895.

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Built-in exhibit cases holding mounted ornithological and zoological specimens line the four perimeter walls of the main exhibition hall and along the walls of the 1895 south ell. These cases, which are original to the building, are constructed with glass panes set in hinged cherry doors. They extend nearly from the floor to the ceiling and are about two feet deep. Those in the main exhibition hall were originally lit by natural light passing through thick glass in the floor of the balconies above. The cases are now illuminated by fluorescent lamps. Although painted Homosote panels now cover the wooden backs of the cases, their historic character and integrity has been maintained.

Deep cases for large dioramas line the north and south ends of the main exhibition hall. The north case is now used as temporary exhibit space, constructed of full-height plate glass panels without the wooden stile separations that characterize the original large exhibit case at the south end. The doors and frames of this case can be temporarily removed to meet the needs of certain large exhibitions and then replaced afterwards. The central floor area of the main exhibition hall is also filled with a variety of glass and wood cases for specimens, giving the entire space a character and appearance virtually unaltered since the 1890s. A reception desk is located on the central floor near the main entrance.

Throughout the main exhibition spaces of the museum, dark varnished tongue-and-groove wooden flooring responds to footsteps with faintly audible sounds that reinforce the feeling of historic authenticity on a near subliminal level. Most of this hard pine or fir flooring is original, although a few areas may have been carefully replaced to match.

The main exhibition hall continues in an ell shape at the south end, flowing into the south wing addition of 1895. This part of the hall has flat perimeter walls for hanging exhibits instead of glass cases, however it, too, is ringed by balcony that connects to the balcony surrounding the main hall. These balconies have opening wooden balustrades with turned balusters and molded railings. Completely surrounding the railing of the balcony in the main exhibition hall are waist-high exhibit cases, constructed of varnished cherry with glass panes set in wooden frames on the tops and the sides. These original shallow cases hold historic mineral specimens, various curiosities and other objects in the collection. A wooden balustrade without cases surrounds the south wing balcony. The flat outside walls of the south wing at the balcony level are used for hanging exhibits. The east and west sides of the balcony level of the main exhibition hall, however are divided into recessed alcoves, each housing separate exhibits.

One minor change that has had little noticeable impact on the character of the museum was the closing of the windows at the balcony level to create more exhibit space on east and west sides of the main exhibition hall and on the north and south sides of the south wings. From the inside, this change is virtually unnoticed as exhibits now cover the wall areas. Natural light does still enter the main exhibition hall at the north and south ends, however, through the magnificent leaded glass windows at the balcony level described above. Large rectangular slabs of frosted glass in the wooden floor beneath these windows provide illumination through the balcony to the exhibit cases below on the main level.

Spiral staircases with ornate gilt-finished cast iron risers and varnished hardwood treads wind up from the main level to the balcony at the northeast corner of the main exhibition hall and on the west side at the corner where the main hall meets the south wing. A wooden staircase with turned balusters also winds up to the balcony at the southeast corner.

In the main exhibition hall, several original brass gas and electric lighting fixtures and cast iron radiators further reinforce the historic nineteenth century character of the museum's most significant interior space.

The curator's office, located on the main floor on the north side of the entry vestibule, now serves as a retail gift shop with contemporary display cases, dark track lighting suspended from the ceiling and wall-to-wall carpeting. These fixtures and furnishings are compatible, but clearly distinguishable from the historic architectural features of this room. The historic

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interior architectural features, which are virtually unaltered from the 1890s, include plastered walls and a large fireplace at the northwest corner with a carved sandstone lintel is inscribed, "In wisdom hast thou made them all." The varnished oak ceiling is of beaded hardwood paneling supported by boxed beams. The window and door casings and other trim in the office are of varnished oak. Doorways with pivoting transom sash above connect the curator's office to the main exhibition hall, the entry vestibule and the lecture room. The doorway opening to the front lecture room is double width. This lecture room, which also serves as a classroom, measures twenty-six feet by thirty feet. It is finished with oak paneled wainscoting, ceiling and beams and plastered walls. An ell-shaped set of varnished oak storage cabinets is in the southeast corner. A slate blackboard is mounted on the north wall between two paired double-hung windows with fixed stained glass sash above. A tripartite window illuminates the room on the west. A painted set of low kitchen cabinets with a counter and sink are on the east wall are legible as more recent furnishings that do not reduce the character of the original historic architectural features of this room.

The main staircase that greets visitors in the entry vestibule is of varnished hardwood with tapered treads. Its outer walls that take the octagonal form of the tower in which it is housed, are plastered above beaded hardwood wainscoting. Rising from a massive varnished newel post, the inner staircase railing rises in a spiral with short balusters above curved wainscoting. The final run of the stairway is straight before it reaches the second floor. Above, the octagonal form of the plastered space extends up another story into the tower with square and semicircular windows lighting five of the faces. The ceiling of the stair tower is paneled with varnished beaded oak.

At the top of the stairs on the second floor is a doorway that leads to a hallway that provides access to a lecture room that according to newspaper accounts, was originally intended to provide seating for nearly three hundred people.<sup>3</sup> The space was used for exhibits of historical artifacts, however, until 1961 when a planetarium was installed here. Although the original architectural features of this room are preserved, they are obscured in the darkened planetarium. A doorway off the east side of second floor hallway leads to a short straight staircase that connects down to the balcony level of the main exhibition hall.

The basement level can be reached by a winding staircase beneath the main stairs in the entry vestibule. Although some original building materials remain, the basement is generally finished with painted gypsum board and flush doors with spaces converted to a variety of new uses. These including visitors' restrooms the foot of the stairs, a classroom on the west beneath the lecture room, a weather center with glass-walled broadcasting studios at the northeast corner, utility rooms on the east, and a long hallway that leads to a complex of offices for the museum staff at the south end of the basement. By concentrating the new uses into the basement, the museum has been able to minimize alterations to the visible spaces above.

With so much of the historic exterior and interior features, fixtures and finishes of the Fairbanks Museum surviving in the public spaces, including the built-in 1890s display cases and many original objects in the collection, the over-all character of this museum maintains a remarkably high degree of historic integrity and authenticity. Regular maintenance, discreetly designed code-required alterations, and building conservation projects that were carefully planned following national preservation standards, have insured that this extraordinary historic resource retains its feeling and status as a

<sup>3</sup> "Fairbanks's Gift," *Boston Journal*, December 16, 1891. (Clipping in file at Fairbanks Museum)

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virtually unaltered survivor from the nineteenth century. As such, the Fairbanks Museum represents an extremely rare and intact example of a nineteenth century natural science museum of national significance.

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## Statement of Significance

The Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, stands as an outstanding reminder of museum practice, the pursuit of scientific knowledge, and the creation of civic and educational institutions in the complex period of late Victorian and Progressive Era America. It is also virtually unique among American natural history museums in having a close and continuous relationship with local environmental knowledge and conservation in a particular local bio-region—Vermont's "Northeast Kingdom"—for more than a century. The significance of the Fairbanks Museum lies not only in the ways that it exemplifies the social and intellectual history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America, but also in the exceptional continuity of its philosophy, programming, and exhibitry over more than a century.

The Museum stands near the center of the St. Johnsbury Main Street Historic District and, like the architectural character of that district, its historic fabric remains remarkably intact since its construction in 1890-1891 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The remarkably high level of historical integrity of its location, setting, form, massing, scale, and materials, as well as of its exterior and interior details, features, fixtures and finishes, all contribute to the distinctive character and significance of this landmark. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of prominent, monumental public buildings of the Richardsonian Romanesque style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: massive stonework; Gothic coronettes, engaged stair towers, elegantly crafted details such as ornately carved sandstone, sculptural frieze work, eyebrow windows, and leaded colored glass windows; a grand barrel-vaulted main gallery; burnished oak and cherry interior finishes, and spiral staircases.

With so much of the historic exterior and interior features, fixtures and finishes of the Fairbanks Museum surviving in the public spaces, including the built-in 1890s display cases and many original objects in the collection, the overall character of this museum maintains a remarkably high degree of historic integrity and authenticity. Regular maintenance, discreetly designed code-required alterations, and building conservation projects that were carefully planned following national preservation standards, have insured that this extraordinary historic resource retains its feeling and status as a virtually unaltered survivor from the nineteenth century. As such, the Fairbanks Museum represents an extremely rare and intact example of a nineteenth century natural science museum and is nationally significant.

The Museum's architectural significance, described more fully in section 7, goes hand-in-hand with its significance as an important locus for the emergence and flowering of some of the important trends in American education, museology, and environmental stewardship. Born of the period in which "cabinets of curiosity" defined the interpretive character of natural history museums, the Fairbanks Museum alone in Vermont retains important examples of that style of display: eclectic and provocative juxtapositions that transcend academic disciplines while stimulating holistic curiosity and wonder. The Museum's original exhibit cases are filled with taxidermied mounts; fossils, gems, and minerals; 19<sup>th</sup> century historical and cultural artifacts; decorative arts and crafts; botanical material; and archaeological curiosities. Though a few other natural history museums in America retain examples of this style of interpretation, only the Wagner Free Institute in Philadelphia and a few smaller institutions such as the Pember Museum in Granville, NY, and the L. C. Bates Museum in Hinckley, ME, match the Fairbanks Museum's preservation of the "cabinet of curiosities" as the dominant interpretive methodology.

Natural history museum practice shifted dramatically in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the presentation of naturalistic assemblages of taxidermied specimens in habitat groupings. The Fairbanks Museum possesses and continues to display some of the finest extant examples of this exhibition method to be found in the United States. These works by Lunenburg, VT, taxidermist and naturalist William E. Balch command a prominent place in the Museum's main gallery to this day.

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The Museum also holds a prominent place in the emergence of the "teaching museum" in America. The original oak-paneled lecture room, decorated with leaded glass windows, trophy heads, and oak herbarium cabinets, has remained in continuous use for this purpose, hosting a range of school programs, lectures, workshops, films, and public events for 116 years. The "flower table," featuring live, blooming plants in season arrayed in elegant cut glass vases, has been on continuous display since 1903, helping curious amateur naturalists to identify the diversity of wild plants encountered in Vermont. Innovations in the practice of nature study, published early in the Museum's history by Director Delia Griffin (1903-1913), are echoed in the curricular offerings, teacher training programs, and public activities offered by the Museum today, which reflect an enduring, close connection between the Museum, its programs, and its immediate natural environment.

Delia Griffin also emerged as a national leader in the development of the children's museum movement in America and of museums as loci for the application of progressive education philosophy. The Fairbanks Museum was her proving ground for applying her "Outline Course in Nature-Study" as a curriculum guide for teachers and an effective way of encouraging direct engagement with the surrounding natural world.

## Historical Background and Significance

Opened in 1891, the museum was founded by St. Johnsbury industrialist Franklin Fairbanks. It preserves intact many features of the nineteenth-century "cabinet" style of museum display as well as outstanding early examples of the more naturalistic exhibits that came into popularity as the focus of natural history museums shifted from scientific research to public learning. Despite its remote location and small size, the Fairbanks Museum was very much involved with developments in the professionalizing American museum field in the early twentieth century. It helped to point the way toward the contemporary conception of museums as open, inclusive, public educational institutions and contributed substantially to the development of children's museums in the U.S. and beyond.

In recent decades, scholars have devoted considerable study to the social and intellectual functions of museums in modern societies.<sup>4</sup> Museums are now understood as important sites where knowledge is produced and identities created

<sup>4</sup> For examples of this extensive literature, see Edward P. Alexander, *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence* (Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983) and *The Museum in America: Innovators and Pioneers* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1997), Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), Susan Crane, ed., *Museums and Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), J.J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1773-1870* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1990), and George Stocking, *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

On science museums in particular, see Tony Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004), Victor Danilov, *Science and Technology Centers* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982), Tracey Dye, "American Museum/American Science: The Museum Laboratory and Its Intersubjective Production of Truth" (*Museum Anthropology* 26:1, pp. 21-35), Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936" (in *Primate*

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on national, civic, and other levels. Other museums have been designated as National Historic Landmarks because of their importance in preserving the history of museum display and activity in the U.S.—for example, the Salem Museum and Peabody Institute in Salem, Massachusetts and the Wagner Free Institute in Philadelphia (probably the closest museum in the U.S. to the specific style found in the Fairbanks Museum). However, the Fairbanks Museum is unique in capturing the changes and tensions that were found in Gilded Age industrialism and philanthropy, progressive era educational philosophy, and the early period of environmentalist consciousness in the U.S. Along with its sister institution, the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum (itself a National Historic Landmark) and other local cultural institutions created during the period of St. Johnsbury's greatest industrial prosperity, the museum represents a particular American vision of knowledge and education as vehicles for the scientific, social, and moral progress of humankind, and a unique expression of how this vision was enacted within a specific local landscape.

### The Fairbanks Family and St. Johnsbury

The first context for understanding the creation of the Fairbanks Museum is that of nineteenth century American industrial development and the philanthropic activity that was often linked with industrial fortunes. The museum was the brainchild of Franklin Fairbanks (1828-1895), a member of St. Johnsbury's most prominent family. The family's fortune derived from the invention and manufacturing of a platform scale that proved immensely useful in a growing industrial economy that demanded greater standardization in measurements of all kinds.<sup>5</sup> By the late nineteenth century, the company was shipping up to 2,000 scales per week from a 12-acre facility which employed 600 workers.<sup>6</sup> Although there were other industries in the town—maple sugar eventually became a major export—nineteenth century St. Johnsbury was, to a very large extent, a “company town” for the E. & T. Fairbanks Company, and the place prospered along with the Fairbanks family. A village of fewer than 700 at the turn of the century, its population tripled in the four decades after the founding of the scale company, reaching almost 6,000 by 1880.<sup>7</sup>

St. Johnsbury's story mirrors that of countless places in the industrializing U.S.: tremendous new wealth created by industrial innovation, the rapid growth of urban centers, changing demographic profiles as immigrant populations swelled the ranks of industrial workers, and a growing concern among many Americans about the social and environmental changes that came along with industrialization. Within these developments, families like the Fairbanks' played a paradoxical role. On the one hand, they were in the vanguard of change, prompting it with their inventions and capital. On the other, industrialists were often among those who most vocally bemoaned the changes that resulted.<sup>8</sup>

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*Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, London: Verso, 1992), Sharon Macdonald, ed., *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), and Sophia Vackimes, “Of Science in Museums” (*Museum Anthropology* 26:1, pp. 3-10).

<sup>5</sup> Edward T. Fairbanks, *The Town of St. Johnsbury: A Review of One Hundred Twenty-Five Years to the Anniversary Pageant of 1912* (St. Johnsbury: The Cowles Press, 1914), pp. 411-25,

<sup>6</sup> Edwin A. Start, “A Model New England Village” in *New England Magazine*, February 1891, p. 717.

<sup>7</sup> Fairbanks, *Town of St. Johnsbury*, pp. 573-74, 703; Charles T. Morrissey, *Vermont: A Bicentennial History* (NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1981), p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Speaking of industrial philanthropists' efforts to engineer the reform of rural and farm life in the progressive era, Judith Sealander has written that these were “men who had engineered revolutions in industrial productivity but remained oddly blind to the fact that these very innovations had blurred the clear distinctions they continued to see between farm and factory” (*Private Wealth and Public Life*:

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St. Johnsbury, with its small and relatively homogeneous population of white Protestant New Englanders, experienced much less labor, ethnic, or class conflict than many industrializing places. "Those who looked hard could probably find grumblings," Seymour Bassett notes, "but no overt opposition to Fairbanks control of the village."<sup>9</sup> Even in this remote corner of Vermont, however, the tensions of the new industrial order made themselves felt. Community leaders and reformers were concerned about the erosion of "traditional" American values, including those linked with rural and agrarian life. At the same time, they worried that rural life itself could produce a certain mental and cultural "backwardness" which needed to be offset by vigorous efforts at educating and encouraging innovation among rural populations. Education and civic participation were similarly seen as important tools for absorbing and assimilating the country's many new immigrants into mainstream American culture. In St. Johnsbury, French Canadians were the largest immigrant group, and as in many parts of New England, they were regarded as intractable by many native-born Americans. They were "a difficult people to Americanize," one writer noted of St. Johnsbury in 1891, echoing a Massachusetts report of a decade earlier that infamously declared French Canadians to be "the Chinese of the Eastern States" because of their resistance to assimilation.<sup>10</sup>

Museums, academies, libraries, symphony orchestras, art galleries, and other cultural institutions were key strategies by which U.S. philanthropists pursued their visions of the ideal American society in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The first major piece of Fairbanks philanthropy in St. Johnsbury was the founding of the St. Johnsbury Academy in 1842. Still in operation, this well-regarded private high school is part of a historic district that stretches along St. Johnsbury's main street and encompasses the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum (a library given to the town in 1871 by Franklin's brother Horace, and now a National Historic Landmark) as well as the Fairbanks Museum. Together, these institutions constitute a cohesive philanthropic landscape that reflects their donors' belief in the importance of education in creating good citizens. This is the same faith that was being enacted on a grander scale at places like New York's American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, whose influential director Henry Fairfield Osborn hoped to foster a fascination with nature that would bolster "rural and old-time American values against immigration and urbanization."<sup>12</sup> In the Fairbanks Museum, we see this strand of scientific and industrial philanthropy refracted through the lens of a small New England manufacturing town.

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*Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997], p. 36).

<sup>9</sup> T.D. Seymour Bassett, *The Growing Edge: Vermont Villages, 1840-1880* (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Historical Society, 1992), p. 218. Bassett paraphrases a *New York Evening Express* article from 1875 which noted the "healthy, erect, well-dressed, intelligent appearance of the St. Johnsbury scale mechanics. They stayed with Fairbanks their whole lives. Some had money invested. Many owned neat, comfortable, gleaming white homes, stocked with well-bound, well-read classics, a piano—the happy homes of free men who attributed the guiding Fairbanks family's success to the 'best material, best wages, best management, best credit and best markets'" (pp. 216-17).

<sup>10</sup> Start, "Model New England Village," p. 711; Gerard J. Brault, *The French Canadian Heritage in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), pp. 67-68.

<sup>11</sup> For explorations of this process, see Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston, Part I: The creation of an organizational base for high culture in America," *Media, Culture and Society* (U.K.) 4, 1 (Winter) and "Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston, Part II: The classification and framing of American art," *Media, Culture and Society* (U.K.) 4, 4 (Autumn); Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), and Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> Alexander, *The Museum in America*, p. 28.



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Franklin Fairbanks received his own education at various area schools, including the one his family had founded. Rather than pursuing a college degree, he began working at the E. & T. Fairbanks Company in 1845 at the age of seventeen. Endowed with "a natural instinct for mechanics," he became a partner in the firm at the age of 27, and eventually spent half a century there in a period when the size of the business grew more than tenfold.<sup>13</sup> Like many young men in Victorian America, he was fascinated by the workings of the physical world. He began to collect natural objects, he later noted, "when I was a little barefoot boy, running over those hills."<sup>14</sup> He contributed various improvements to the firm's products over the years and shared his knowledge with others at the company, lecturing, for example, on steam power "in the new scale shop in the evening to the men" in 1850.<sup>15</sup> He kept detailed local weather data starting in the 1850s, establishing the foundation for the Fairbanks Museum's very long and continuing connection with meteorology in Vermont. Like many wealthy collectors, he saw himself as enlarging the sum of knowledge available to others rather than simply indulging a private passion. After he and his wife constructed a 27-room mansion called Underclyffe in 1872, Fairbanks welcomed interested visitors on a regular basis to the 32 by 40 foot space on the third floor which housed his acquisitions. By that point, his natural history collection had grown to include some 450 stuffed birds, countless rocks and minerals, shells, bones, plant specimens, and artifacts from around the world that had been acquired by Franklin or other travelers. As the collection continued to expand, he consulted the Fairbanks Company's architect, Lambert Packard, about ways that Underclyffe could be renovated to accommodate greater public access. When this proved unrealistic, Packard was directed to design a museum *per se* for St. Johnsbury.

The Fairbanks Museum was constructed at an estimated cost of \$200,000 (including the value of its collection) during 1890 and 1891, and opened to the public on December 15, 1891.<sup>16</sup> At the opening, the chairman of the museum's board of trustees, Rev. C. M. Lamson, clearly articulated the vision of the role that the institution was expected to play in enhancing the natural virtues of small-town and rural life and overcoming its shortcomings:

The advantages of life in a country town are evident and numerous. The great disadvantage is the narrowness, the lack of touch with the art and action of the world—a certain provincial quality. Give a village cosmopolitan advantages and you have made it a place for residence and growth. To give to country life opportunities for study, for a large and intelligent interest in what makes life, for the refinements of education, is to do much to conserve the health and power of the future of the country. The passion *for* the city, and the passion *from* the city, the oppressive congestion of population in great centers, are making sound life almost impossible. Village improvement is one of the wisest forms of public charity. Why are all these things, art galleries, libraries, museums, in the country town? We answer, because it is the place for them. They make life at the fountain worth living and influential. This Museum is a proclamation to our students and men of business—have faith in your town as a place worthy of all your thought or wealth can do or give. True village life is the highest good, and nothing can be too good for the village.<sup>17</sup>

"Common life," Lamson concluded, "needs to be touched by the holy spirit of education." This ambitious vision is reflected in the design and materials of the museum. Although it is constructed on a relatively intimate scale, the building—particularly its barrel-vaulted main gallery—conveys a sense of the nobility, even grandeur that its creators saw in the enterprises of education and scientific discovery.

<sup>13</sup> "A Noble Life Ended." Obituary of Col. Franklin Fairbanks. 1895. (Newspaper not attributed. Fairbanks Museum archive, Franklin Fairbanks's papers, Folder 1:1:1)

<sup>14</sup> St. Johnsbury *Republican*, July 10, 1890.

<sup>15</sup> "Steam," Folder 1:4:18, Fairbanks Museum archives; "A Noble Life Ended."

<sup>16</sup> "The Fairbanks Museum: Laying the Cornerstone of a new Public Building at St. Johnsbury, Vt." New York Tribune, July 5, 1890.

<sup>17</sup> *Caledonian-Record*, Dec. 7, 1891.

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### The Fairbanks Museum and Victorian Natural History "Cabinets"

A second key context for understanding the significance of the Fairbanks Museum is the development of scientific thought, collecting, and display in the later nineteenth century. As with industrial growth (with which it was inextricably linked), scientific thought and museum practice of this period were infused by a spirit of exploration and systematization, and animated by an optimistic belief in order and progress.

The modern museum has its roots in the "cabinets of curiosities"—eclectic, unsystematic collections of rare and extraordinary objects of all kinds—sembled by wealthy private collectors in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe.<sup>18</sup> With the advent of the new scientific taxonomies of Linnaeus (1707-1778) and Cuvier (1769-1832), more specialized natural history museums began to emerge and scientists embarked on a collecting spree that continued through most of the nineteenth century, in an attempt to acquire and catalog specimens of all existing animal, plant, and mineral forms. Because each species was understood to be unique, it was seen as crucial to obtain and study examples of each.<sup>19</sup> These examples were typically collected during field expeditions and were ordered in glass cases so that they could be studied and observed using the techniques of what has been characterized as "naked-eye science." The Fairbanks Museum still contains examples of this type of display in its bird collections, with rows of individual birds mounted in long glass-fronted cases along the walls of the main gallery.

Gentleman naturalists, scholars, sportsmen, and others joined together in natural history societies such as the American Academy of Natural Sciences, formed in Philadelphia in 1812, and frequently corresponded or met with one another to enlarge their collections and knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Naked-eye science did not require highly specialized equipment, laboratories, or knowledge beyond what a curious and reasonably well-educated individual might acquire, and so natural history museums developed on the assumption that amateurs and professionals, academics and lay enthusiasts alike were engaged in the same overall task of collecting and documenting the observable physical world. A collection was not valuable in and of itself, but as a means of understanding the world and humanity's place in it—in the 1888 words of George Brown Goode, the influential assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, as "a nursery of living thoughts" rather than "a cemetery of bric-a-brac."<sup>21</sup> The lines among research, education, and entertainment were often blurred in such museums, although the element of entertainment—inherited from the old cabinets of curiosities and connected in many ways with the new phenomenon of world's fairs and expositions—was relegated more and more to the sidelines as the century went on.<sup>22</sup> At the laying of the cornerstone of the Fairbanks Museum on July 4, 1890, state senator Henry C. Ide reflected the museal shift from entertainment to public edification when he noted,

A 'museum' is sometimes a collection of monstrosities, 'the fattest woman on earth,' the 'living skeleton,' the 'wild man of Borneo,' the 'two headed calf,' the multitudinous other attractions of that character, which it is worth at least a dime to see. This is not the character of our museum. Ours is to be free, open to all, for the common benefit of

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander, *Museum Masters*, p. 3, Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinets of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*, pp. 32-73.

<sup>21</sup> Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Willson Peale's private museum in Philadelphia, opened in 1786 and generally seen as the progenitor of American museums, retained many elements of the museum-as-spectacle. By the time the American Museum of Natural History was established in 1869, the more earnest educational mission of museums had come more to the foreground. See Alexander, *Museum Masters*, pp. 5, 19.

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every one, rich and poor, the prosperous and the most lowly, as free as the air we breathe, much more free than the water we drink, a magnificent free gift to all our posterity.<sup>23</sup>

This was the milieu which shaped Franklin Fairbanks as a collector and an amateur naturalist, and which he in turn helped to shape with the creation of the Fairbanks Museum. The Fairbanks Museum expressed its connection to the modern world of scientific learning and discovery in its very architecture, with the faces of naturalists John James Audubon, Louis Agassiz, and Alexander von Humboldt carved into the stone over the arches of the museum's loggia. The connection was also expressed in the ongoing communication between the museum's founder and staff with other museums and scientific organizations throughout the U.S.

Franklin Fairbanks and the museum's first curator, Martha Tyler, carried on an extensive correspondence in the early 1890s, for example, with the Smithsonian Institution's Department of Birds, exchanging information about the habits of different species and making mutual requests for "skins" (bird carcasses appropriate for mounting). St. Johnsbury was no mere country outpost of learning in these exchanges, but an active field station with access to vital and unique information of value to the larger scientific project.

Franklin Fairbanks also gathered his collections and created his museum in a time when it was still possible for scientists to see their work as entirely compatible with traditional Christian faith. Paleontologist Henry Osborn wanted the American Museum of Natural History to be "the means of teaching our youth to appreciate the wonderful works of our Creator,"<sup>24</sup> and the president of the University of Vermont, M.H. Buckham, said in his speech at the opening of the Fairbanks Museum in 1891,

When I read that the Creator looked upon his work and behold, it was very good, I love to fancy the joy he had in making things of beauty, antelopes, pheasants, shells and coral; in spending creative power not only upon palms and cedars, but upon ferns and mosses; and even disporting, as it were, in such grotesque creations as orchids and cactuses, lizards and monkeys.<sup>25</sup>

Franklin Fairbanks was himself a sincere and devout Christian who served as his church's Sunday School superintendent for more than three decades. He referred to the Bible as "the best general text book on all branches of natural science," and his notes in the museum archives include a systematic listing of references in the Bible to entomology ("They compassed me about like bees," Psalm 118), ornithology ("I have been like to a pelican of the wilderness, I have been as an owl of the dry places," Psalm 102), geology, astronomy, chemistry, and other scientific fields. Much of Fairbanks's interest in the creation of a museum and the education of young people was linked with his sense of Christian mission and his belief that the study of science was a way to discover God's workings in the world.

As the nineteenth century went on, particularly after the advent in the 1860s of Darwinian theory about natural selection and the evolution of species, this task became more complex. A number of rifts began to develop within the natural sciences, although it took several decades before they became widely problematic. The study of change on a cellular level undermined naked-eye science and necessitated the use of microscopes and other specialized tools and methods to see nature at work. The focus of scientific research shifted from cataloging life's variety to delving into its hidden processes—a type of study much less compatible with museum display and amateur participation. Gradually, pure research began to

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<sup>23</sup> St. Johnsbury *Republican*, July 10, 1890.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn, *The American Museum of Natural History: Its Origin, Its History, the Growth of Its Departments to December 31, 1909* (NY: Irving Press, 1911), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Caledonian-Record*, December 17, 1891.

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be the province of universities, while museums devoted themselves more to explaining scientific discovery than participating directly in it.<sup>26</sup>

Eventually, science and religion also came to an uneasy parting of the ways. However, the Fairbanks Museum represents a moment of transition when it seemed very possible to reconcile cutting-edge scientific theory with Christian belief. Central to this alliance was the notion of *progress*, and the idea that God's will expressed itself in nature not merely through the creation of a rich profusion of forms, but, as Harvard president Charles Eliot Norton put it in his speech at the opening of the new American Museum of Natural History in 1878, through "the development of the universe [as] a progress from good to better."<sup>27</sup> This view conveniently supported the kind of economic competition and hierarchy that had emerged with industrialization, and provided a rationale for the social dominance of families like the Fairbanks and other philanthropic capitalists. If change was inevitable, it was also understood to be orderly, and its products the ordained working out of a divine plan. Humans played their role in this plan, with scientific discovery, economic expansion, and social philanthropy among the most important of tools for doing God's will. Henry Ide echoed this view at the laying of the cornerstone for the Fairbanks Museum in 1890. "Knowledge gives the mind of man control over the forces of nature, and how much these things contribute to happiness as well as strength," Ide noted. "Each generation improves upon former ones. Men are becoming better fed, better clothed, better housed, and have more leisure and refinement."<sup>28</sup> In this hopeful vision, an institution like the Fairbanks Museum could confidently see itself as a force for moral and social as well as intellectual progress in its community.

## From "Cabinet" to Habitat Group and Diorama

If the Fairbanks Museum was typical of its larger social and intellectual settings in many ways, it was somewhat ahead of its time in others. Its emphasis on enhancing the connection between local people and their specific natural environment put it in the vanguard of educational and conservationist thinking about how to use scientific knowledge to support land stewardship and place-attachment. The museum also responded very early to the shift in museum practice away from exhibiting rows of specimens in glass cases to presenting them in more lifelike dioramas or "habitat groups," a change which reflected newer evolutionary ideas about the natural world as well as emerging experiential approaches to museum learning and display.

Although he collected objects from around the world, Franklin Fairbanks believed that local environments were the most practical as well as the most valuable for people—especially children—to study. In a lecture given around 1890, he told his audience,

The common objects of Nature, which lie before our vision, are those which few of us observe and regarding which we acknowledge our ignorance. And yet there is nothing which affords more real enjoyment than a close study of these things which are so accessible. We need stimulating in this direction, and have only to open our eyes and our ears to enter this field which has no limit...<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*, p. 72.

<sup>27</sup> Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*, p. 42. On Victorian conceptions of progress, see also Peter Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969).

<sup>28</sup> St. Johnsbury Republican, July 10, 1890.

<sup>29</sup> Franklin Fairbanks, "Lecture on Birds." (Undated. Fairbanks Museum archive, "Franklin Fairbanks' papers," Folder 1:4:6)

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From its inception, the Fairbanks Museum was intended to bring knowledge about the wider world to northeastern Vermont, but also to represent northeastern Vermont to itself—that is, to provide a window into the flora, fauna, geology, and weather of the area as a way to encourage people to become more curious and more caring about it.

An important contributor to this work at the museum was William E. Balch (1854-1919), a self-taught taxidermist and photographer who lived in nearby Lunenburg, Vermont. Like Franklin Fairbanks, Balch had been an avid collector and amateur naturalist from childhood, who maintained a private collection in his home that he shared with interested visitors. As a state legislator during a period of increasingly conservationist sentiment, he worked to pass bills protecting birds and other wildlife in Vermont. His photographs of native orchids and other natural subjects were highly regarded by his fellow naturalists, and he was widely admired for the “habitat groups” that he created for the Fairbanks Museum, the University of Vermont Museum, and other institutions.<sup>30</sup> At his death in 1919, his memorial service was held at the museum, and his obituary noted that “His close identification with the Fairbanks Museum, St. Johnsbury, which he has made what it is—the finest in the country in point of workmanship—has made him many friends not only among St. Johnsbury people but among the great body of museum workers of the country.”<sup>31</sup>

The habitat group had appeared in American museums as early as the late eighteenth century, when Charles Willson Peale included groups of birds and small animals in naturalistic settings with painted backdrops.<sup>32</sup> But the form did not come into widespread use until after 1880, when the Society of American Taxidermists promoted it at their national meeting.<sup>33</sup> The American Museum of Natural History added a bird group in 1887 and a bison group the following year, and the Fairbanks Museum was among the first museums to follow the new trend. “Mounting birds to show their habitat is fast growing in favor in the large museums, and is far more interesting and instructive than the old fashion,” noted one of St. Johnsbury’s newspapers in August 1892.<sup>34</sup> In that year, Balch created his first grouping, a scene with seven flamingoes. He followed this with a spectacular setting of twenty-seven birds of paradise in 1894, of which a local reporter noted, “It is doubtful if another museum in the country contains any such collection as this.”<sup>35</sup> Balch then turned his attention to more local fauna, including a group of muskrats in 1895 and opossums in 1897. In 1898, he added an enormous moose which he had shot himself; this was in response to a particular wish of Franklin Fairbanks, who had died in 1895, to have a majestic stuffed moose—in many ways an emblem of the wild places of the Northeast Kingdom—as a centerpiece of the museum.

The habitat groups at the Fairbanks Museum are outstanding artifacts in themselves, high-quality representatives of a form that sought to blend art and science. Fairbanks Museum director Alice Wilcox described Balch in 1917 as the museum’s “faithful nature-artist,” and noted that he combined “the skills of three: the naturalist, the artist and the technician.”<sup>36</sup> His groupings convey a lively sense of life and even personality. Like the American Museum of Natural History’s Carl Akeley and other eminent practitioners of the form, Balch worked to achieve what one diorama painter

<sup>30</sup> *Caledonian-Record*, “Museum Notes,” May 16, 1917; obituary of William E. Balch, Aug. 6, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> Balch obituary.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander, *The Museum in America*, p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in the Museum of Natural History* (Dissertation, Upsala University, Sweden, 1993), p. 119. For more on the development of natural history groups and dioramas, see Alexandra Parsons Wolfe, “Preserving Interpretation: Habitat Dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History” (M.A. thesis, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> *St. Johnsbury Republican*, August 2, 1892.

<sup>35</sup> *St. Johnsbury Republican*, January 18, 1894.

<sup>36</sup> “Museum Notes,” *Caledonian-Record*, May 16, 1917.

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referred to as *ars celare artem*, or art that concealed its own artifice.<sup>37</sup> As a medium of display, the habitat group and the even more naturalistic "diorama" style that developed from it responded to the growing desire among naturalists and museum audiences for ever more realistic depictions of the natural world.

These types of display, in the words of Stephen Christopher Quinn, "introduced museum goes to the earliest form of 'virtual reality.'"<sup>38</sup> This naturalistic turn in museum display can be traced, in part, to a widespread concern that modern people were becoming too disconnected from their natural surroundings. Museum exhibits that conveyed a sense of really "being there" were one way to foster greater care among visitors for what happened in the natural world; public and private conservation efforts, the creation of natural parks and preserves, and the emergence of new professions like forestry were other expressions of this same concern. The yearning for realism is also linked to the advances in photography that had made it possible for people to have vicarious experiences of far-off places and forms of life.<sup>39</sup> Once people could see images or exotic or iconic scenes, they wanted the kind of closer encounter that habitat groups and dioramas could provide. This is an overall trend that has continued in museum display, with still more realistic "interactive" exhibitry based on moving images and computer technology eventually supplanting the diorama by the middle of the twentieth century. The older exhibits often retain a compelling quality for museum visitors, however. They give a sense of providing an unmediated, close-up encounter with familiar or exotic forms of life that helps to situate human viewers in the larger context of the natural life of the planet.<sup>40</sup> Balch's habitat groups, which were extensively photographed and documented when they were created and which remain in their original settings in the museum, are an unparalleled record of a particular moment in American museums and intellectual life, as seen through the lens of a specific regional environment and ethos.

### The Fairbanks Museum and the Children's Museum Movement

If the Fairbanks Museum was somewhat ahead of its time in espousing local environmental consciousness, it also prefigured—and contributed to—the children's museum movement in important ways. From the outset, Franklin Fairbanks placed a special emphasis on children's learning and the links between the museum and public education in the St. Johnsbury area. "I want you to understand from this time on, that this building is to be yours, and that you are to guard its interests," he told the children present at the museum's dedication in 1891, and continued,

It is my expectation that studies in the natural sciences will be introduced into our public, common schools in all grades, from the primary to the senior, and that arrangements may be made between the prudential committees of the schools, the faculty of the Academy and the trustees and managers of the Museum for classes to be held in the class room of the Museum at such times as are best... In this way, the Museum will truly become factor in the education of our children and young people.<sup>41</sup>

Inez Addie Howe, the museum's educator around 1920, noted in an undated paper that,

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Christopher Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History* (New York: Abrams, 2006), p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Quinn, *Windows on Nature*, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> For more on the camera's role in shaping conventions of museum display, see Bella Dicks, *Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visitability* (Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press, 2003), pp. 19-20.

<sup>40</sup> Quinn, *Windows on Nature*, p. 21-23.

<sup>41</sup> Franklin Fairbanks, speech at the opening of the Fairbanks Museum, December 15, 1891.

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back in 1891...for a science museum to awaken to any future except as a repository for specimens, was quite unthinkable. From the beginning, inspired by the wishes of the founder and aided by the wise counsel of Mr. W. E. Balch, the taxidermist and natural scientist... one worker after another has evolved plans for the education and betterment of the children.<sup>42</sup>

Children were not originally the intended users for most of the libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions that proliferated during this expansive moment of American philanthropy. Indeed, younger patrons were often seen as a nuisance rather than an audience to be cultivated. Delia Griffin, director of the Fairbanks Museum between 1903 and 1913, related the "almost haphazard" beginnings of the children's museum movement in the U.S.:

It was in 1899 when the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Science fell heir to a dwelling house on the edge of a public park. It also had a more or less miscellaneous collection of minerals, birds, shells, botanical models and ethnological materials which it did not desire to display. Another factor in this situation was the persistence of boys and girls who in their eager search for information visited the Institution often and somewhat disturbed both curators and visitors. So finally a wise director suggested, "Put these extra exhibits in that house and find someone like a teacher to explain them. Then we can send the children over there."

It was done. The "someone like a teacher" was found in the person of Miss Anna Billings Gallup who is still the presiding genius of this first Children's Museum and has developed it until the attendance in the two buildings it now occupies is almost overwhelming. Her institution is the model upon which others have been founded...<sup>43</sup>

While the Brooklyn Children's Museum is known as the first children's museum in the world, the Fairbanks Museum was already doing much of what became standard practice there and elsewhere. A spacious classroom, located adjacent to the main entrance, was—and remains—a prominent feature of the St. Johnsbury museum. Franklin Fairbanks forged close links with the curricula of schools in the area, including the St. Johnsbury Academy. Responsive to the local reality of many small schools in dispersed rural towns, the Fairbanks Museum also began the practice of sending staff out to the schools themselves, complete with portable display cases and objects from the museum's collections. For all intents and purposes, the Fairbanks functioned as a children's museum before there were any institutions by that name *per se*.

The emergence of museums and libraries specifically for children was part of a shift in the Progressive Era away from "top-down" and "rote" learning and toward more "child-centered" pedagogies that sought to engage the whole child. These developments were not limited to school classrooms; many educators in museums, settlement houses, folklife programs, pageant organizations, and other Progressive Era movements embraced the newer, more holistic approach to pedagogy.<sup>44</sup> In the words of Delia Griffin,

This approach worked by satisfying the child's inborn curiosity as to all that he sees in the new strange world about him. It encourages this impulse until it becomes a strong part of his character leading him on to a lifetime's joy in discovering things for himself... The schools too often teach children to memorize, the museum puts all its emphasis on teaching the child to think. Rewards come not for examinations and recitations but for the actual work of collecting, classifying and exhibiting. Everything is done for its own sake. It is all "want" and no "must."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Paper by Inez Addie Howe. (Undated. Fairbanks Museum archive, Folder 7:2:5, "Educational programs at the museum.")

<sup>43</sup> Delia Griffin, "Organization and Work of Children's Museums." Speech to the British Museums Association, 1933. (Hartford Children's Museum archives.)

<sup>44</sup> Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel, *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders during the Progressive Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> "Science Seeks a Home in Hartford." *Hartford Courant*, August 21, 1927.

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The best-known figure associated with progressive educational philosophy was Vermont native John Dewey, but many progressive educators, particularly in the museum field, were women. While the prevalence of women running children's museums reflected a belief that women were best suited to educating younger children, many of these women were skilled intellectual and cultural advocates who found ways to challenge paternalistic thinking and to reshape aspects of civic life through their work. Anna Gallup was among the first women to graduate with a science degree from MIT, while Laura Bragg, a New Englander who became director of the natural history museum in Charleston, South Carolina, spoke of her institution as being "in the van of progressive education" and saw it as "an engine of social change, an opportunity to do good for ordinary people on a massive scale."<sup>46</sup>

The Fairbanks Museum employed women as its curators, directors, and educators exclusively through the 1940s. Delia Griffin (c. 1869-1949) was one of the earliest and by far the most influential of these. Born in Maine, Griffin came from a long-settled family of New Englanders. Her mother, an enthusiastic botanist, would sometimes wake her daughter before dawn to go on nature walks, raising the child to be "just as familiar with the birds as with the neighbors."<sup>47</sup> As a young woman, Griffin pursued science studies at colleges in Boston and worked for four years supervising nature study in the public schools of Newton, Massachusetts before being hired as the director of the Fairbanks Museum in 1903.

Delia Griffin took over the operation of the Fairbanks Museum at a moment of great organization and professionalization in the American museum world. In 1906, the first meeting of the American Association of Museums (AAM) was held in New York City, as part of the effort of museum workers to define and promote their work. While representatives of more than 70 American museums of all types were present, science and natural history museums were the most prominent and numerous.<sup>48</sup> The AAM did not establish an official Children's Section until 1937, but Griffin, Gallup, and other women engaged in science museums and education were active in the organization and its regional affiliates from the outset. Griffin spoke at the 1907 AAM meeting in Pittsburgh, presenting a paper on "The Educational Work of a Small Museum" in which she pointed to the opportunities for personal and environmental connections that could be fostered at a small rural museum like the Fairbanks.<sup>49</sup> Anna Gallup sent a copy of this paper to A. B. Meyer, eminent director of the Museum of Zoology in Dresden, Germany, who responded that he found Griffin's account of her work in St. Johnsbury "quite touching. I admire your work thoroughly. We have nothing the like in Germany, not even a beginning of it, and I congratulate you on what you are performing. It is quite an ideal thing."<sup>50</sup>

In her work at the Fairbanks Museum, Griffin energetically built on the foundation that Franklin Fairbanks had created. She expanded the museum's educational program considerably, increasing the number of visits by school classes and the trips by museum staff to area schools. In 1904, she created an "Outline Course in Nature-Study" as a curriculum guide for teachers, as well as launching a teacher-training initiative at the museum. The following year, she helped to establish an annual bird identification contest that was a popular event among St. Johnsbury's students well into the 1930s, along with a birdhouse-building contest for boys. Another simple yet extremely popular activity was the "flower table," on which were displayed specimens of local plants blooming at various times of the year. The flower table, a tradition which

<sup>46</sup> Sadovnik and Semel, *Founding Mothers*, p. 135, 188.

<sup>47</sup> "Miss Griffin Funeral Set for Saturday." Obituary of Delia I. Griffin. *Hartford Courant*, February 11, 1949. Hartford Children's Museum archives.

<sup>48</sup> Ellen Hirzy, "The AAM after 72 Years." (*Museum News*, May/June 1978). Accessed online at <http://www.aam-us.org/aboutaam/aamafter72years.cfm>.

<sup>49</sup> Delia I Griffin, "The Educational Work of a Small Museum." (Paper presented at the American Association of Museums conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1907). Accessed online at <http://www.carnegiemnh.org/anthro/AAM/html/griffinpaper.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> *Caledonian-Record*, Nov. 17, 1908.



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continues today, was an effective way of encouraging direct engagement with the surrounding natural world.<sup>51</sup> Griffin was also involved with many regional and national natural history organizations. When the Audubon Society of Vermont appeared on the verge of folding in 1905, she and Rev. Edward T. Fairbanks, Franklin's cousin and a trustee of the museum, stepped to revitalize it, using the Fairbanks Museum as the base for its activities and organizational structure.<sup>52</sup>

Griffin left the museum in 1913 when she was hired to create and direct the Boston Children's Museum. She worked in that position for 13 years, then moved to Hartford, Connecticut to establish a children's museum there, remaining until her retirement in 1946. Wherever she worked, she remained in close contact with others in the museum field, particularly those at children's and science museums. She returned to St. Johnsbury in 1922 when the New England Conference of the American Association of Museums met at the Fairbanks Museum. In 1933, she was invited to speak about children's museums at a conference of the British Museums Association in London, the only woman and only American on the program. At the conclusion of her talk, she asked,

What is a Children's Museum? It is not a school, although young people who frequent it have an opportunity for gaining knowledge. It is not a settlement house, although its followers have the opportunities for organized play and craft work.

It is a grand club-house which the young people feel belongs to them. It is a happy and gallant spirit which gives our boys and girls today a vital understanding of the world around them, of other peoples and of the fundamental sciences of life, so that they may go out and find the happiness that can be found in knowledge and adjustment.<sup>53</sup>

Griffin's work in children's museums served as a model for many people seeking to establish children's museums. The files of the Hartford Children's Museum record visits by delegations from Australia, Japan, England, South Africa, and many American cities. Throughout her long career, Griffin continued the museum practices that she had inherited or developed during her experiences at the Fairbanks Museum: encouraging collections of local flora, bird identification contests, nature walks for children in local parks, and close association with the public school system.

The Fairbanks, then, was an important model for later children's museums in the U.S. and beyond. In the early twentieth century, its practices also came to reflect progressive educational values and philosophies, which built upon earlier patrician visions of change as an orderly advancement into a better world.

## Continuities at the Fairbanks Museum

The significance of the Fairbanks Museum lies not only in the ways that it exemplifies the social and intellectual history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America, but also in the exceptional continuity of its philosophy, programming, and exhibitry over more than a century. During the mid-twentieth century, financial and other pressures led to a period of near-dormancy for the institution, but it entered another vibrant stage starting in 1948 with the hiring of Fred Mold as its director. Mold, an enthusiastic naturalist and educator, revived many of the museum's earlier projects, including keeping local weather records and offering educational programming, which had been suspended in 1945 due

<sup>51</sup>Inez Addie Howe, Griffin's successor as the Fairbanks Museum's educator, reported in 1920 that 803 species of plants had been displayed on the table throughout the year, most of them gathered within a five-mile radius of the museum. Inez Addie Howe, "The Fairbanks Museum of Natural Science" (*The Vermonter: The State Magazine*. 26:2[1921], pp. 43-45), p. 44.

<sup>52</sup>Howard Reed, "Delia I. Griffin." *The Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium Newsletter*, Vol. X, No. 2[1989]:3-4.

<sup>53</sup>Griffin, "Organization and Work of Children's Museums."

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to lack of funds. The focus on weather, which dates to Franklin Fairbanks's own record-keeping from the 1850s, continues in the form of the Northern New England Weather Center housed in the museum, from which forecasts are provided to radio stations and newspapers throughout northern New England. The museum's ties with local schools are once again strong. Museum staff visit area classrooms, while students—often arriving via the museum's own van—regularly participate in programs at the museum itself. The museum's ethos of environmental stewardship continues to contribute to civic dialogue about conservation, development, and climate change in the region. The bird identification and birdhouse building contests are long gone, but the flower table remains, with seasonal displays of local plants still collected by amateur volunteer botanists exhibited in the main gallery. Meanwhile, the original exhibits of natural and human-made objects have been a beloved part of local memory and experience for generations of people in St. Johnsbury as well as seasonal visitors to the area.

It is this enduring link with the local community and ecosystem that makes the Fairbanks Museum such an extraordinary site. The museum has been an active agent in fostering an awareness and sense of stewardship among local residents for their natural surroundings, precisely as Franklin Fairbanks envisioned when he donated the institution to the town. Around 1920, the museum's educator Inez Addie Howe reported that "So great is the voluntary interest in birds among the children, as well as among their parents, many of whom were children in the early days of the Museum, that St. Johnsbury is really almost a bird sanctuary."<sup>54</sup> In 1933, a study of how effective American museums were in serving their audiences rated the Fairbanks at 100%, which put it in a two-way tie for first place with Chicago's enormous Field Museum.<sup>55</sup> In 1968, when the Army Corps of Engineers proposed to dam the Moose River and flood an area known as Victory Bog, Fairbanks director Fred Mold led a successful campaign against the project, helping to preserve a unique regional ecosystem and continuing the museum's long tradition of active involvement in cultivating local environmental consciousness.

Combining preservation of its own and its community's heritage with a continued exploration of the changes in the natural world, the Fairbanks Museum not only represents a particular moment in the American past but is also a vital and living institution that encapsulates much of what is best about America's intellectual and cultural life.

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<sup>54</sup>Inez Addie Howe, Report. (Undated. Fairbanks Museum archives, Folder 7:2:5, "Educational programs at the museum.")

<sup>55</sup>Reed, Howard. 1990. "Great Directors, Part III." (*The Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium Newsletter*, Vol. XI No. 2:2-4), p. 4.

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## Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described on the St. Johnsbury tax maps as Map 23, Block 5, Lot 45. The Fairbanks Museum occupies the 0.89 acre site at 1302 Main Street and is bordered on the south side by Prospect Street and on the north side by Charles Street.

## Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the building and the landscaped area of the 0.89 acre parcel of land on which the Fairbanks Museum is located. The site has been historically known as the Fairbanks Museum and maintains historic integrity.

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All photographs (7) were taken by Peggy Pearl on April 20, 2007 and the original negatives are filed at Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

1. From Main Street, looking at the front of the Fairbanks Museum- East
2. From Main Street , looking at the North and West sides of the Fairbanks Museum- SE
3. Front loggia leading to the entrance of the Fairbanks Museum- NE
4. From Main Street, looking at the entrance with the bronze lion to the north showing - East
5. From Main Street, in the west gable, a panel of statuary carved from Indiana limestone. The central figure of the group represents Minerva. The panel was carved by F. Muer of Quincy, Mass. - East
6. One of two gargoyles on either side of the entrance, head of Audubon over the arches of the loggia - NE
7. Interior of Fairbanks Museum, looking down the barrel vaulted ceiling from the balcony - South

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

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Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

**NRIS Reference Number:** 07001344

**Date Listed:** 1-2-08

**Property Name:** Fairbanks Museum

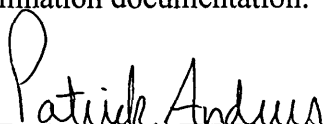
**County:** Caledonia

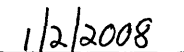
**State:** Vermont

**Multiple Name:**

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusion, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Keeper**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of Action**

#### **Amended Items in Nomination**

##### Section 5. Classification

Number of Resources within Property: add 2 contributing objects

The "bronze life-size lion sculptures with shaggy manes set on chest-high granite pedestal blocks," which are located on either side of the entry walk, contribute to the significance of the museum and, thus, are counted as two contributing objects.

#### **Notification and Distribution**

The Vermont State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

This notice was distributed to the following:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority, without nomination attachment