

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	New York
COUNTY:	New York
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE:	

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Founder's Hall, The Rockefeller University**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**66th Street and York Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**New York**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: **New York**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_      COUNTY: **New York**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____	

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**The Rockefeller University, c/o Dr. Frederick Seitz, President**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**64th Street and York Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**New York**

STATE:  
**New York**

CODE:  
**10021**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**New York County Courthouse, Register of Deeds**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**60 Centre Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**New York**

STATE:  
**New York**

CODE:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**None.**

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

STATE:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research was chosen in October 1902. John D. Rockefeller purchased the Schermerhorn estate, situated between Avenue A (now York Avenue) and the East River, and extending from 64th Street to a line north of 67th Street. A laboratory building, animal house, and power house were erected in 1905-06, from plans drawn by the Boston firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge.

The first laboratory building of the Institute, or Founder's Hall as it is now known, is a fireproof structure with a steel frame, constructed of yellowish-grey brick and limestone. Its simple facade shows five full stories, and the basement is partially above ground. On the front, two Ionic columns support a rather rudimentary portico. Ivy now almost entirely covers the facade.

Much of the interior remains unaltered, though a modern lobby and reception area has been installed on the first floor. On the exterior, Welch Hall (now the Institute library) was added to the rear of Founder's Hall in 1927, and doorways were cut through to connect the two buildings. In addition, an elevated, enclosed walkway was built to connect the laboratory building to the isolation pavillion and hospital (both constructed in 1910 and currently serving as a nurses' residence and clinical research center, respectively), and to Flexner Hall, another laboratory facility. Founder's Hall continues to serve its original function.

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**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1906-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                         |                                                 |                                                         |                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |                                                         |                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |                                                 |                                                         |                                                |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

John D. Rockefeller faced the problem of what to do with his mounting fortunes when he retired in 1897. By 1901 the wholesale philanthropy that he had been practicing was inadequate to dispose of an accumulation totaling not tens but hundreds of millions. Some new, more effective method was needed for the organization and conduct of what Rockefeller called "this business of benevolence." The answer was plain. "Let us erect a foundation, a trust," Rockefeller said, "and engage directors who will make it a life work to manage, with our personal cooperation, this business of benevolence properly and effectively."<sup>1</sup> Rockefeller, Carnegie, and other donors proved, in the next decade, that philanthropy could be made a successful venture. They established a series of foundations, and in Robert Bremner's words,

"... their number, and even the size of their capital assets, was less significant than the boldness of the enterprise to which they were committed. Most earlier charitable trusts had been established for some narrowly defined purpose.... The major trusts founded by Carnegie and Rockefeller, however, were limited only to the advancement of knowledge and human welfare. Relieving the needy was not their objective. They would attack misery at its source through the weapon of research."<sup>2</sup>

Founded in 1901, The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research was the first of the great philanthropic foundations. Its objective was "to conduct, assist and encourage investigations in the sciences and arts of hygiene, medicine and surgery, and allied subjects, in the nature and causes of disease and the methods of its prevention and treatment...."<sup>3</sup> In 1903, Rockefeller purchased a site for the first laboratory, a rocky plateau overlooking the East River at 66th Street in New York City. There a modest five-story brick and stone building was opened on

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Robert H. Bremner, American Philanthropy, The Chicago History of American Civilization, ed. by Daniel J. Boorstin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>John Kobler, The Rockefeller University Story (New York: The Rockefeller University Press, 1970), pp. 5-6.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Brenner, Robert H. American Philanthropy. The Chicago History of American Civilization, Edited by Daniel J. Boorstin. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Gates, Frederick T. "The Memoirs of Frederick T. Gates." American Heritage. VI (April, 1955).

Kobler, John. The Rockefeller University Story. New York: The Rockefeller University Press, 1970.

Continued

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		40°	45'	47"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		73°	57'	18"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Carol Ann Poh, Survey Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of Historic and Architectural Surveys,  
National Park Service** DATE: **12/11/73**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1100 L Street NW**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE:

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Significance (page 1) Founder's Hall, The Rockefeller University

May 11, 1906. Since that date the explorations of the Institute's scientists have yielded numerous discoveries--discoveries that have placed America in the front ranks of medical progress.

HISTORY

More than one historian has suggested that John D. Rockefeller's philanthropy was to some extent prompted by muckraker Ida Tarbell who, coincidentally, had begun interviewing his associates for a series of articles on the Standard Oil Company. The advent of many of the early foundations coincided--perhaps too closely--with the era of muckraking, trustbusting, growing militancy in labor, and a general fear of bigness. Nevertheless, it cannot be refuted that, in the words of Allan Nevins, Rockefeller "led in organizing the most effective use of private funds for broad betterment that the world had yet known."<sup>4</sup>

Frederick T. Gates, the Baptist minister chosen by Rockefeller in 1891 to act as his adviser in philanthropy, concluded that medical science in the United States was in need of energetic stimulation and development. It seemed that, of the hundreds of diseases then recognized, the medical profession did not know any certain cure for more than a handful. Gates was convinced that the advancement of medicine depended upon the provision for advanced experimentation, permanently established, and carried on by groups of experts with ample salaries and resources for uninterrupted investigation. Thus, with an initial grant of \$200,000, seven leading figures in American medical science were drawn together as a group interested in using Rockefeller's benevolence to the best purpose. The seven, Drs. Emmett Holt, Christian A. Herter, T. Mitchell Prudden, Hermann M. Biggs, William H. Welch, Theobald Smith, and Simon Flexner, supported the idea that it would be best, at least for a time, to employ the scientists and laboratories already available. Consequently, in the first years, grants-in-aid were given to the directors of laboratories in the leading medical colleges.

Gates, meanwhile, was discontent with this cautious, exploratory program. The new institute he sought was without a model. European predecessors--notably the Pasteur, Koch, and Lister institutes--had clung to explorations of pathology and bacteriology; the American organizers wished the freedom

<sup>4</sup>John D. Rockefeller, a one-volume abridgement by William Greenleaf of Study in Power (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 280-81.

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8. Significance (page 2) Founder's Hall, The Rockefeller University

to investigate any problem whatever in the biological sciences which might bear upon medicine. Many doubts attended the early work, and observers often expressed uncertainty whether an able research group could be established in an American center.

The phase of cautious exploration soon ended, however. The directors determined to build up a staff under an expert head and, ascertaining Rockefeller's willingness to support a research center, they formulated a proposal. In June 1902, John D. Rockefeller promised \$1 million to build, equip, and operate temporarily a research laboratory in New York. Dr. Simon Flexner was chosen as head of the laboratory, and in Nevin's estimate, "[n]o other single step did so much to assure the success of the Institute."<sup>5</sup> On October 15, 1904, a small staff began work in a rented and modestly equipped building at 127 East 50th Street.

Early in 1903, Rockefeller had purchased a site for the Institute on the brow of a rocky plateau overlooking the East River at 66th Street. Here a five-story brick and stone laboratory building was opened on May 11, 1906. It furnished excellent facilities for the work already undertaken in pathology, physiology, pharmacology, and biological chemistry, to which experimental surgery and biology were later added. In 1907 Rockefeller, assured that the Institute was a success, gave more than \$2-1/2 million as a permanent endowment. A corporation, consisting of both a board of trustees and a board of scientific directors, was formed in 1910 to administer the fund. The research staff of the Institute was given absolute control of their own expenditures, and Rockefeller scrupulously followed a hands-off policy--in fact, he visited the Institute only once, when he and his son happened to be in the neighborhood.

Beginning in 1908, a series of Rockefeller gifts provided for a 60-bed hospital and a 9-bed isolation pavillion, which were opened in 1910 under the direction of Dr. Rufus Cole. Only patients whose diseases were being studied by members of the Institute staff were admitted, and they were treated entirely without charge. As the Institute grew, more buildings were constructed. By 1952, 11 major buildings stood on the Institute grounds bounded by York Avenue, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive, and 63rd and 68th Streets.

The first landmark discovery at the Rockefeller Institute was Dr. Simon Flexner's serum for the successful treatment of epidemic meningitis, a deadly disease that raged in New York in 1905 and later spread throughout the country. Hideyo Noguchi became one of the most gifted research

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

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8. Significance (page 3) Founder's Hall, The Rockefeller University

pathologists of his time, and lost his life in the investigation of yellow fever. In 1919, a drug called tryparsamide was developed by Louise Pearce and three of her fellow chemists to combat the sleeping sickness which had been devastating the Belgian Congo. Alexis Carrel's contributions to arterial surgery opened new fields of operational and experimental surgery, and won for him the Nobel prize. And in 1937, René Dubos discovered the potent antibiotic gramicidin.

In 1954, The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research assumed the status of a graduate University. The first class was graduated in 1959, and in 1965 the name was changed to The Rockefeller University. Intensive scientific investigation continues, under the continuing generosity of the Rockefeller trust. "Don't be in a hurry to produce anything practical," Rockefeller once said. "If you don't, the next fellow will. You, here, explore and dream."<sup>6</sup> From the explorations and dreams of research scientists have emerged very practical benefits--benefits which have placed the United States in the forefront of medical progress.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Kobler, Rockefeller University Story, p. 13.

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9. Bibliography (page 1) Founder's Hall, The Rockefeller University

Nevins, Allan. John D. Rockefeller. One-volume abridgement by William Greenleaf of Study in Power. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959.