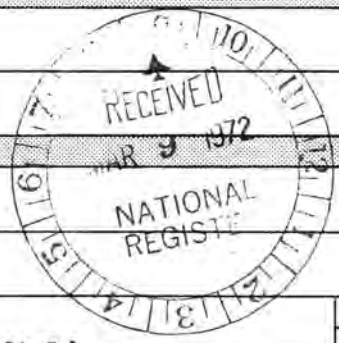


PH0020842

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Connecticut	
COUNTY: Fairfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	NOV 7 1972



1. NAME

COMMON:  
Barnum Museum

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Barnum Institute of Science and History

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
805 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Bridgeport

STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09 COUNTY: Fairfield CODE: 001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
City of Bridgeport

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Bridgeport STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
45 Lyon Terrace

CITY OR TOWN: Bridgeport STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Connecticut Historic Structures and Landmarks Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1966  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
54 Pratt Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:	Connecticut
COUNTY:	Fairfield
ENTRY NUMBER	NOV 7 1972
DATE	

FOR NPS USE ONLY



7. DESCRIPTION

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" 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

This is a highly individual structure that would be difficult to match anywhere. The first floor facade is of rough sandstone with squared window openings and arched entryways with squat columns. At the second floor level is a set of three arched windows, while the rest are squared with three columns separating each large window. Above this is a frieze of terra cotta in high relief foliage design, and above this a parapet with the inscription "Barnum Institute of Science and History" in low relief. At the front corner is a large circular tower, again with arched windows and decoration. The frieze of the tower has niches holding busts of notable personages, including P.T. Barnum himself, with panels between in very high relief showing figures engaged in various pursuits—farming, shipping, transportation, military.

At one end of the building is a square tower with a steep pointed roof in Romanesque style, with near-gargoyle faces above the small toomost windows. Beneath these, at the front, is a suggestion of a tracery window. The section at the second-story level has a very plain facade; there are recessed square windows with irregular framing in stone, and a large window, also recessed, beneath with a stone lintel and a single column in the center. The ground floor is similar to the rest of the facade at this level. The very heavy segmental arch has squat columns and the stone work is smooth here.

At the other end of the building is another tower, this one extending only to a gable roof. Here too are arched windows with center columns and smaller, square windows above. Flanking the round center tower on each side are identical sections with a row of arches at the top and a long recessed window with two squat columns. The facade here is of designs in moulded terra cotta.

The roofs of all the sections are moulded tile in the Spanish mode. In the round center tower are round windows protruding from the roof like the eyes of a bug. A very small finial tops its center.

The interior of the Museum is somewhat less spectacular. The large arched windows with their stained glass ornament provide ample light for the exhibits. These exhibits are as unique as Barnum himself. The first floor features the P.T. Barnum room which contains memorabilia and photographs of his colorful life. His American Museum, his birthplace in Bethel, his famous home, Iranistan, and his political and civic career are all portrayed in photographs and paintings and sculpture. The Barnum Circus room is also on the ground floor. Its main attraction is the stuffed hide of "Baby Bridgeport", the second elephant born in captivity in this country. Also on display here are some personal effects of Tom Thumb, color transparencies of circus performers, and a miniature replica of a complete circus made by William R. Brinley of Meriden, Connecticut.

The second floor houses a historical museum, organized in periods—Colonial, Revolutionary War, Civil War, War of 1812, and early Bridgeport. Old household utensils, Connecticut Indian arrowheads, and weapons are

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Connecticut	
COUNTY Fairfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
NOV 7	1972

(Number all entries)

#7 Description

among the more mundane exhibits. Some are quite bizarre—a piece of the cravat worn by President Lincoln the night he was shot, and pieces of the wallpaper and lace curtains from his theater box are carefully protected in a glass case. A 2500-year old mummy is one of the main attractions for young visitors. The museum exhibits are interesting for their diversity but also for much more. They offer a marvelous view into the life of one of the most interesting men of the era—P.T. Barnum.



**6. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) ca. 1891-2

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Science             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input 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            |   |  |  |

Urban Planning  
 Other (Specify)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Barnum Museum derives its primary significance from Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891), its benefactor. Born in Bethel, Connecticut, 30 miles northeast of Bridgeport, he was successively a store clerk, newspaper editor, village storekeeper, and exhibitor of Joice Heth, the alleged nurse of George Washington; it was this act which began his career as a showman.<sup>1</sup> Around 1840, P.T. Barnum opened the American Museum of Curios in New York City. He brought Jenny Lind for a concert tour of the United States in 1850-52. By 1871 he had a troop large enough for him to establish "The Greatest Show on Earth", which had its winter quarters in Bridgeport, his adopted home. Included in the show were the famous midget, Tom Thumb, actually Charles S. Stratton (1832-1883), a Bridgeport native who was only about twenty-five inches tall, and Jumbo, a huge African elephant bought from the Royal Zoological Society in London. In 1881 Barnum merged with the Bailey Circus, whose owner was James Anthony Bailey (1849-1906) from Detroit. They created the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus, which, after Bailey's death, was taken over by Ringling Brothers in 1907.

Barnum was a man with a social and civic conscience. He was once mayor of Bridgeport. Later, he gave to the city a large tract of land for Seaside Park, now covering an area of 180 acres, with a water-side drive of three and a half miles. He laid out numerous street plans and built blocks of houses to sell on the installment plan to mechanics. He built four beautiful homes in Bridgeport; Iranistan, his first home, is pictured in many histories of the City and was designed to resemble a Persian palace. It burned many years ago. Perhaps the most enduring contribution was the Barnum Institute of Science and History. Just before his death in April, 1891, he bequeathed \$100,000 to the Bridgeport Scientific Society and the Fairfield Historical Society for a building. His widow added \$50,000. The building was formally opened in February, 1893, with the first floor housing the museum and collections of the scientific society, the second floor, the collections of the historical society and the Bridgeport Medical Society, and the third floor an auditorium for the use of the three organizations. However, problems arose for there were no funds for maintenance. By October, 1934, the City had taken over the building for municipal offices and the museum was relegated to the third floor. Some space was rented; the Hydraulic Company was there for some time.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bridgeport Sunday Post, February 18, 1968.

"Connecticut Circle", November-December, 1969.

Crofut, F.S.M. Guide to the History and the Historic Sites of Connecticut.  
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937.

**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	0	'	"	0	'	"	41°	10'	32"
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"	73°	11'	18"
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"			
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one 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



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Susan Babbitt, Administrative Trainee

ORGANIZATION: Connecticut Historical Commission DATE: February 1, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: 54 Pratt Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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: *Susan Babbitt*

Title: State Liaison Officer

Date: February 17, 1972

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

*Robert M. Hiley*  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 11/7/72

ATTEST:  
*William S. Brantley*  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 11.1.72

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Connecticut	
COUNTY Fairfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
NOV 7	1972

(Number all entries)

#8 Significance

The magnificent building was cleaned and refurbished as a WPA project and again much later by student volunteers from the University of Bridgeport. Each time, hopes were raised for a "comeback" for the museum, and each time nothing came of it. When, in 1966, new City Hall made available ample office space for the museum's inhabitants, the rehabilitation of the building was again undertaken. A complete exterior steam-cleaning and sand-blasting was done along with extensive interior renovation, such as removing the partitions used by the city offices. The Institute was officially reopened as the Barnum Museum on February 19, 1967, just 75 74 years after its first opening on February 18, 1893. The building is now under management by the city. It is alleged that the Museum has recently been endangered. In the commercial district of Bridgeport, less than a block from the Connecticut Turnpike, its site is highly valued for a modern business establishment. The present building, however, is a great asset, if something of an anachronism, in "brand new Bridgeport", currently consisting primarily of razed tenement houses, hence vacant lots, and handicapped by a lack of both funds and the ability to plan for rebuilding.

1Crofut, p. 87.



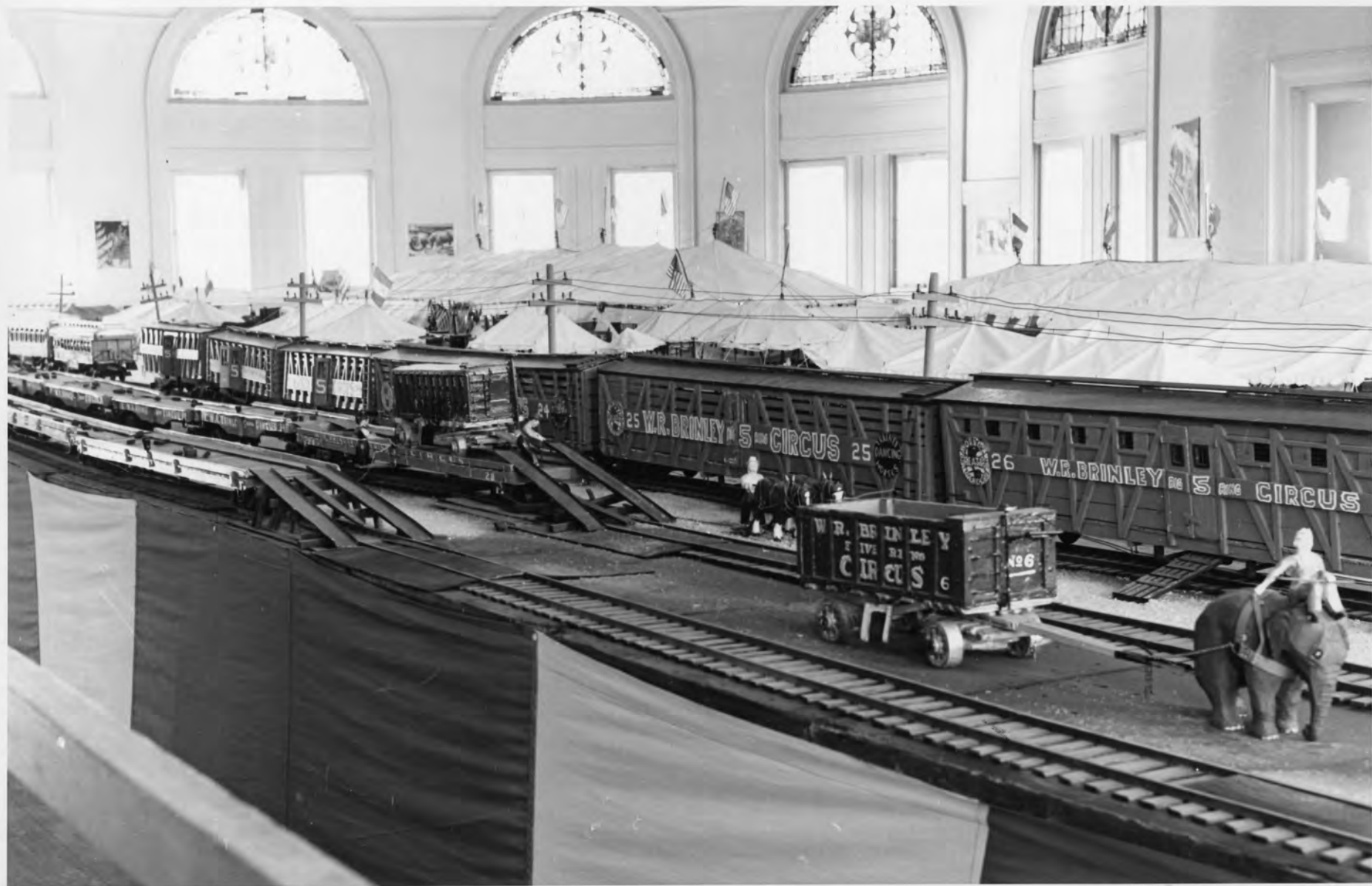


















RECEIVED  
WAR 9 1912  
NATIONAL REGISTER



Bridgeport

# National Register of Historic Places

## Note to the record

Additional Documentation: 2010



72001300

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Barnum Institute of Science and History  
other names/site number Barnum Museum (Amendment)

### 2. Location

street & number 820 Main Street  not for publication  
city or town Bridgeport  vicinity  
state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001 zip code 06604

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

[Signature] SHPO 6.16.10  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
ECT / SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

[Signature] 5/5/2010  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action



**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: Research Facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Museum

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Museum

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: TERRA COTTA

other: STONE: Sandstone

---

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Barnum Institute of Science and History (Barnum Museum) is a massive, Romanesque Revival style masonry building designed and constructed by Longstaff and Hurd of Bridgeport in 1893 at the bequest of the nationally renowned entertainment entrepreneur, Phineas Taylor Barnum. The building is prominently located in downtown Bridgeport, Connecticut and remains a visual landmark in the city, despite the surrounding development of Interstate 95 and highrise infill. Its three-story, rectangular volume is visually divided through the use of horizontal bands of ornamentation, a rusticated piano nobile, and substantial domes and towers that rise above the roof line. The Barnum Museum property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 7, 1972 for its associations with P.T. Barnum and for its value as an example of the Romanesque architectural style. At this time, the level of the property's significance was not defined. The purpose of this amendment to the original National Register documentation is to support a recommendation that the property be considered nationally significant under Criterion B.

---

**Narrative Description**

This narrative description consists of amendments and changes to the 1972 Barnum Museum National Register Nomination.

**Setting**

The Barnum Museum is located in the downtown core of the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Highrise and commercial buildings comprise the surrounding neighborhood. The museum faces west toward Main Street and is sited against the sidewalk with no setback. The property is adjacent to an elevated portion of Interstate 95 (I-95) constructed in the 1950s and the Amtrak and Metro-North railroad right-of-way to the southeast. Since the 1972 nomination, "Bridgeport Center," a corporate headquarters for People's Bank, designed by architect Richard Meier, was constructed in the late 1980s and wraps around the east and part of the south elevations of the Barnum Museum (Pelton 1988). The portion of the bank building abutting the museum is of compatible height. The highrise portion of the complex is more than 100 feet away and does not cast shadows on the museum. The Barnum Museum still stands out as a visual landmark in the city due to its ornate and monumental qualities as well as the visibility of the dome from the surrounding neighborhoods and I-95.

**Exterior**

The primary (north and west) elevations of the building are intact and have not undergone any significant alterations since the 1972 nomination. The east (rear) utilitarian elevation is no longer accessible from the exterior due to the construction of the bank alongside it. The bank building is located three feet from the east elevation, but is only attached at its south end. The bank connects to approximately two-thirds of the south elevation and consists of a 7,000 square foot exhibition gallery and classroom for the Barnum Museum. The south elevation was originally a blank brick wall designed to face adjacent buildings and thus the use of this elevation has not changed.

**Interior**

The interior plan has remained largely intact since the 1972 nomination. Some interior walls have been altered and modern carpet has been laid throughout. A large-scale restoration took place between 1986 and 1989 during which missing and damaged architectural details and hardware were replaced. An HVAC unit was installed during the renovation project. The 7,000 square foot exhibition and classroom wing addition can be accessed from a former entrance on the east elevation or through the main lobby, which was remodeled as part of the People's Bank project. The

basement remains intact on the west side, retaining the original coal chute and vaulted ceiling. The east side contains finished office space for museum staff, constructed in 1989.

### **Collections**

Artifact collections acquired by the original occupants of the Barnum Museum and collections donated by P.T. Barnum to those societies for display in the building contribute valuable information about the historical use of the property. Barnum planned the construction of the building to house the meeting space, research archives, and collections of the Bridgeport Scientific, Bridgeport Medical, and Fairfield County Historical societies, in an effort to promote the advancement of public knowledge. The majorities of these collections are located on site and consist of a variety of scientific and historical objects acquired for public educational purposes. These objects include biological specimens; ancient relics; Native American artifacts; seventeenth- through nineteenth-century items related to American material culture, fine arts, and decorative arts; and memorabilia associated with Barnum's entertainment enterprises. The Barnum Museum presently (2010) exhibits mid-nineteenth century furniture from Barnum's Bridgeport home "Iranistan," donated by him to the Fairfield Historical Society in 1888 and a 4,000 year-old Egyptian mummy donated by his wife, Nancy Barnum in 1892. The Museum also retains Native American artifacts acquired by the Bridgeport Scientific Society in 1889. Some items, such as the Bridgeport Historical Society's mineral collection and other mummies were deaccessioned to the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History after this period, but may be repatriated in the future.

The Barnum Museum has continued to expand its collections through the present day and now owns more than 60,000 artifacts. Approximately one-third of the Barnum Museum's current holdings were donated by P.T. Barnum or his family or acquired by the Bridgeport Scientific, Bridgeport Medical, and Fairfield County Historical societies during the late-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries.

### **Integrity**

The Barnum Museum has occupied its downtown Bridgeport site for nearly 120 years and stands as a testament to the late-nineteenth-century era that is visible throughout the immediate neighborhood. Despite the intrusions of I-95 and the People's Bank highrise complex within its historic setting, the Barnum Museum retains its monumental quality. Although the People's Bank complex wraps behind the rear side of the building, the exterior of the Barnum Museum is essentially intact. The locations where the bank complex abuts or attaches to the Barnum Museum are historically blank, unornamented, service elevations. Views of the building from the primary public ways are strikingly identical to its proposed and as-built historic appearance. The building retains its entire masonry structural system, distinct architectural elements such as its balconies, domes, and towers, and its surface ornamentation. All of the exterior materials are intact and the majority of the original interior finishes are intact in the primary spaces. The historic plan of the building reflects its feeling as a late-nineteenth-century institution and the division of spaces into various exhibit halls, offices, and lecture facilities are intact as Barnum intended them.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1893-1960

**Significant Dates**

1893: Building completed, museum opened

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Barnum, Phineas Taylor

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Longstaff, George W. and

Hurd, Frank W. of

Longstaff & Hurd (architect/building firm)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance of the Barnum Museum begins in 1893, when the building was completed and extends to 1960, the National Register age criteria cutoff date. This timeframe includes the use of the whole building by its original occupants from its opening in 1893 through 1934, and the management of the building by the City of Bridgeport beginning in 1934. Despite the downsizing of the museum after 1934, scientific and historical collections have been retained and displayed in the building for more than a century.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The information provided in this amendment supplements the historical context included in the 1972 National Register nomination form for the Barnum Museum property. The Barnum Museum meets National Register Criterion B at the national level for its associations with the late career of Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891), a progressive, self-made businessman who reshaped American concepts regarding family entertainment during the nineteenth century. Barnum's numerous public museums and traveling exhibitions encouraged national audiences to engage in free thought. His positive promotion of the museum as a wholesome venue for family entertainment and enlightenment challenged the preexisting notion that participation in public amusements reflected poor moral values. The Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut was the last public building conceived by Barnum for the purpose of intellectual exchange and he donated the land, selected the architect, and assembled key collections for the museum. Barnum approved the plans for its construction three weeks before his death on April 7, 1891. The museum, which opened in 1893, is the only extant building directly associated with P.T. Barnum that retains architectural integrity. The Barnum Museum additionally meets National Register Criterion C at the local level for its significance as the paramount work of the Bridgeport design/build firm Longstaff and Hurd, and as monumental example of the Romanesque Revival architectural style.

---

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Areas of Significance: Criterion B, Phineas Taylor Barnum  
Entertainment/Recreation, Education**

**Phineas Taylor Barnum and the Establishment of Family Entertainment**

Although P.T. Barnum commissioned the construction of Bridgeport's Barnum Museum at the end of his lifelong career, it stands as a unique physical testament to his achievements as a nineteenth-century visionary. Barnum opened his first museum in 1842, at a time when the societal goals of the newly developing country waivered between democratic quests for individual learning and efforts to quell cultural insecurities through adoption of rationalist philosophies and social reserve. Barnum devised a profitable solution to this conflicting American identity by presenting exhibitions of curiosities and biological specimens in a sensory manner that attracted the general public while providing opportunities for intellectual interpretation. During the first half of his career, Barnum skillfully employed colorful amusements as a marketing strategy to generate admissions sales and promote his businesses to the level of international recognition. As he gained public popularity, Barnum simultaneously associated himself with prominent writers, businessmen, scientists, and political figures. He used his broad reaching influence to disseminate his ideas on self-advancement, temperance, efficient financial planning, and the notion that entertainment could also be educational and morally appropriate. In the post-bellum years, a wiser, accomplished Barnum took on an increasingly paternalistic role in American society (Adams 1997:xiv). He became a champion of the natural sciences, sought to establish a free national museum, and supported several public improvement projects, including the creation of the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport. Barnum's pioneering work in the entertainment business revolutionized American ideologies and his more benevolent activities in the late-nineteenth-century ensured long-term change.

***Museums in the Nineteenth Century***

Most museums of the early-nineteenth-century originated as either "circus theaters" targeted at the working class and created by uneducated businessmen as a means for quick profit; or as simple presentations of scientific collections intended for the elite or the academic (Alderson 1992:21). The circus theaters (or "dime museums"), which contained fictional and exotic curiosities, operated for the sole purpose of pleasure. These businesses, often located near taverns and tenements, represented cheap, inappropriate amusement to some members of society. Conversely, the scientific museums

served primarily as a scholarly record of known facts, with artifacts displayed in an unenticing manner that eliminated any individual speculation. Skeletal remains of biological specimens, for instance, were displayed as isolated objects outside of their environmental contexts, despite scientists' growing awareness of ecological relationships (Asma 2001:42). Neither type of institution captured the Jacksonian inspired American interest in self-instruction and anti-establishment thirst for analysis.

P.T. Barnum and his predecessor, Charles Willson Peale, initiated the democratic development of the American museum as a venue for the educational display of objects in an entertaining manner, which could attract a diverse audience (Alderson 1992:19). Peale (1741-1827), a prominent portrait painter and naturalist opened his *Philadelphia Museum* in 1786 with these goals. He sought to instruct patrons in the subjects of natural science, art and history, while providing 'rational amusement' to attract the general public. Peale planned for the financial stability of the museum by charging 25 cent admission fees. Peale's sons Rembrandt and Rubens managed the museum after his retirement in 1810. They expanded their collections through Rembrandt's establishment of *Peale's Baltimore Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts* in Baltimore in 1814 (now a National Historic Landmark) and Ruben's creation of a museum in New York City in 1825, renamed the *New York Museum of Natural History and Science* (1840). Barnum emerged as the leading figure in the profession in the 1840s after the Peale museums suffered from financial failure.

P.T. Barnum opened his *American Museum* on lower Broadway (at Ann Street) in New York City on January 1, 1842 and it soon became a shrine for advancing the public knowledge of fine arts, music, literature and the marvels of nature, showcasing natural curiosities alongside artistic and historic exhibitions. Barnum had purchased collections to start the museum for 15,000 dollars from John Scudder in 1841, who previously operated *Scudder's American Museum* on the site (Browne 1961 [1929]:91). Barnum competed with Ruben Peale for about a year, until 1843, when he purchased the entire holdings of Peale's New York museum. From 1845 to 1846, Barnum leased Rembrandt Peale's Baltimore museum and in 1850 Barnum split a portion of the original Peale Museum's collections with Boston showman and colleague, Moses Kimball (1809-1895) (Alderson 1992:19, 33; Saxon 1983:xxvii).

Kimball purchased a portion of the *New England Museum* in 1838 and established the *Lowell Museum* in 1840, before opening the *Boston Museum* the following year. Barnum and Kimball, whose professional lives shared many parallels, met in 1842 when Barnum agreed to display the 'Fejee Mermaid,' that Kimball recently acquired. The artifact consisted of a fake mermaid constructed out the remains of an orangutan and baboon attached to a fish tail. Barnum seized the opportunity to use the artifact as a marketing tool and method of inviting his audiences to evaluate items in his museum for themselves. He noted that "How to modify general incredulity in the existence of mermaids, so far as to awaken curiosity to see and examine the specimen, was now the all-important question (Browne 1961 [1929]:110)." Barnum's professional relationship with Kimball initiated his practice of sharing artifacts with other institutions to engage a larger audience.

*Barnum's American Museum* quickly became the cultural hub of New York, claiming its place as the city's most popular attraction for 23 years. From 1842 until 1865, the museum grew into an enormous enterprise, and was advertised as having 850,000 exhibits and curiosities throughout the saloons. It occupied four conjoined buildings where workshops and laboratories were arranged to prepare exhibits. A wax-figure department to produce likenesses of notable personalities of the day, a taxidermy department and aquarium were in operation, and an elaborate set-design department satisfied the demand for an active public theater. Amidst the performers, lecturers, and living curiosities were a host of exhibitors, demonstrating various skills and crafts, as well as new technological devices.

Throughout his adult life Barnum presented controversial material to the American public through writing, theatrical shows, and collections of exhibits. He used the museum's lecture rooms to dramatize relevant societal issues such as class and gender conflicts, temperance sentiment, and antislavery (Adams 1997: 129). After his first museum burned in 1865, Barnum used newsprint to respond to foreign critics regarding the morality of his intentions.

I know my Museum was not so refined or classic or scientifically arranged as the foreign governmental institutions; for mine had to support a family . . . Hence, to make it self-supporting, I was obliged to popularize it, and while I still held on to the ‘million of curiosities,’ millions of persons were *only* induced to see them because, at the same time they could see [other artifacts] . . . it is a great error to state that I ever permitted ‘vulgar sensation dramas’ . . . It is equally incorrect that ‘respectable citizens did not take their wives and daughters’ ‘to see a play on that stage’” (*Liberator* 1865).

In an effort to maintain his museum as a family-friendly environment, Barnum did not permit consumption of alcohol or admission of intoxicated people in the building and employed undercover security staff to manage public safety. It was through the success of the *American Museum* that Barnum realized that conventional ideals could be transformed through ingenuity and innovation. The museum embodied all that American society sought as they struggled to legitimize a new democratic frontier, and celebrate a newly found personal authority. Whether fact or fiction, the conclusion was less relevant than the experience or opportunity. Barnum was ingenious in presenting speculation within a world of curiosity. He offered a chance to explore the irrational, examine imaginative possibilities, and derive opinions and truths.

Barnum maintained close associations with many of the leading scientists and curators in the country when a strong middle class and new evolutionary ideas developed in the mid-nineteenth century. During these ideological shifts, Barnum continued to offer both recreational amusement and intellectual instruction in his establishments. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution released in 1859 altered the goals of natural history museums from simply inventorying nature to classifying groups of items and displaying more speculative ‘evidence’ of evolution (Asma 2001:43-44). The same year, Swiss scholar Louis Agassiz established the *Museum of Comparative Zoology* at Harvard for the purposes of studying and classifying ecological environments. Agassiz, who became a close friend of Barnum’s taught several notable American naturalists who entered the museum world. James Cutting, an associate of Agassiz’s managed the *Boston Aquarial and Zoological Gardens* when it opened in a specially designed building in 1860.<sup>i</sup> Barnum’s influence on American entertainment culture was evident in the programming of the museum, which offered scientific lectures, spectacles, curiosities, and theater shows in addition to exhibits. Barnum subsequently purchased the institution in 1862 and merged it with his New York museum. Seven years later, in 1869, a former student of Agassiz established the *American Museum of Natural History* in New York City. The museum relocated into its current (2010) building on Central Park West in 1877.<sup>ii</sup> The building is the same architectural style as the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport.

Barnum also frequently corresponded with Joseph Henry (1797-1878), a scientist who became an advocate and the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution (established in 1846). In April, 1890 Barnum noted that “Long before my New York museum was burned, I was personally acquainted with Prof. Henry and we were good friends. Whenever I could be of service to the Smithsonian, I gladly did so. Prof. Henry appreciated this and said he recognized my museum as a *public institution*, entitled to receive--& I should receive cast of everything that other public institutions recd. from the Smithsonian . . .” (Saxon 1983:323).

### ***Barnum’s National Appeal***

Barnum’s success as an astute businessman and popular entertainer is illustrating by his reconstruction of a second museum in September 1865, only two months first museum was destroyed by fire. He operated the new museum until March, 1869 when it burned again. Barnum diversified in the 1870s and 1880s by operating a series of traveling museums and circuses with other business partners. His circus ventures upheld his standards of family recreation and Barnum advertised his “Greatest Show on Earth” amusement with partner James Bailey as “truthful, moral, [and] instructive” (Knopf 1995:339).

<sup>i</sup> The museum operated for about 18 months (1858) before opening in the new building.

<sup>ii</sup> The American Museum of Natural History in New York was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, along with the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in 1975, Natural History Museum in California in 1975, and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1986.

By the late nineteenth-century, Barnum had achieved celebrity status, a flexible work schedule that allowed time for benevolent interests and personal wealth that enabled him to invest in his charitable projects. He had become friends with such notable American icons as writers Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) and Horace Greeley (editor of the New York Tribune). Biographies and discussions of Barnum frequently appeared in periodicals across the country, including the New York Times, Ladies Home Journal, Scientific American, and Life among others. More than 82 million people visited Barnum's museums, circuses, and traveling shows during his lifetime (Morris 1988:43) and after his death reportedly ". . . more newspaper space had been devoted to his career than to that of any other American not a President of the United States. In his will Barnum disposed of an estate accounting to more than four million dollars (Browne 1961 [1927]:452)." An 1889 biographical article of Barnum described him as "proprietor of the great moral show," and a "household word," as well as an orator, statesman, and showman (Life 1889).

### **The Barnum Institute of Science and History**

Barnum's cultivation of the Barnum Museum demonstrates his interest in the promotion of public investment, as well his efforts to establish institutions of enlightenment that were accessible to the common citizen. In his will, Barnum noted his particular fondness for his home city. "I love the pleasant city of my adoption, (Bridgeport), and ardently hope for its moral and material improvement; a large share of my income, during my residence here of nearly forty years, has been devoted to its public and private charities, and to improving and developing its parks, avenues and its waste places, erecting houses, factories, &c. (Barnum 1891:7-8)." Barnum conceived the museum, initially known as the Barnum Institute of Science and History, as a research library, museum, and lecture hall that would serve as a place of intellectual exchange and as an architectural gem in the city that Bridgeport's citizens would cherish. Barnum planned the museum to house the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BSS), Fairfield County Historical Society (FCHS) and the Bridgeport Medical Society (BMS). Between 1886 and 1891, Barnum donated the land and funds for the construction of the museum, chose its architects and approved the design plans, donated select collections, and devised a plan for its future financial security.

The Fairfield County Historical Society officially incorporated on February 4, 1881 "for the promotion and encouragement of Historical, Antiquarian, and Genealogical Investigation (FCHS 1882:4; Waldo 1897:91)." The FCHS grew to 39 people by 1882 and elected Barnum to their membership on February 13, 1885 (FCHS 1882:8; 1892:112). The Bridgeport Scientific Society organized in 1877 for the purposes of scientific promotion, investigation and instruction (Waldo 1897:91). The group encouraged citizens to take interest in science and support its advances and held courses of public lecture series each year as part of their efforts to achieve these goals. Barnum spoke as a lecturer in their November 1888 meeting (Pelton 1988:45). In the 1880s, both societies sought space for their expanding memberships, programs, and archival collections.

In 1886, Barnum ". . . deeded to the joint societies a valuable lot situated on the corner of Main and Gilbert streets, Bridgeport, and anticipating the hope which had been felt, he supplemented this gift with a notable provision for the erections of a suitable building for the uses of the two societies (FCHS 1892:112-113)." The property was conveniently located in downtown Bridgeport on a corner lot facing Main Street that was in close proximity to the freight platform of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad (Sanborn 1884). The site was previously occupied by one building housing a Chinese laundry, with ample space around it dwelling houses nearby. Barnum made provisions for the construction of the museum building in Codicil 1, Article 9 of his will, dated May 4, 1889 that specified the use of the building. Barnum's will notes that he donated:

. . . 50,000, to be expanded by said societies in erecting a building on a lot of land situate in said Bridgeport on the southeast corner of Gilbert and Main streets, and recently conveyed by me to said societies for the purposes hereinafter provided for . . . Said building is to be duly marked and forever known as Barnum Institute and used for promoting and carrying out the purposes respectively of said societies, and it shall be constructed so as to furnish suitable rooms for each of said societies with one large room or hall for meetings and lectures which may be used in common . . . (Barnum 1891:27-29).

Barnum conceived the building with ground floor that could be rented to generate income for building maintenance, and one 14 foot by 18 foot room "for the sole use of the Bridgeport Medical Association for its meetings, its collection of



pathological specimens, and all other necessary and useful purposes of said association (Barnum 1891:27-29). He also specified that the other two societies possess equal share of the remainder of the building and directed them to keep it in good repair.

Foreseeing that the building would cost more than he initially allotted, Barnum willed an additional 10,000 dollars to the societies on November 25, 1890. He "accepted plans and made contracts for the erection of such a building on said lot . . . to be known as "The Barnum Institute of Science and History"" on March 16, 1891 (Barnum 1891:52; FCHS 1892:10, 17). The last entry in his will (Codicil 8) completed on March 30, 1891, established his involvement in the planning of the museum and directed his executors to complete and pay for the building out of his estate (Barnum 1891:52). A sketch of the proposed building appeared in the local papers after Barnum signed the contract with the architects/builders, Longstaff and Hurd. George W. Longstaff and Frank W. Hurd were established Bridgeport businessmen, but Barnum likely knew Hurd as the second cousin of his son-in-law Samuel Henry Hurd (1840-1898). Samuel Hurd married Barnum's second daughter, Helen in 1857 and worked as his circus treasurer and assistant manager beginning in the 1870s.

The article, published on March 21, 1891 while Barnum was still alive, predicted that "As will be seen, it [the Barnum Museum building] is a triumph of architectural taste and skill, and will be a building that can always be pointed to by the citizens of Bridgeport with pride (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1891a; FCHS 1892)." It also thoroughly described the architectural style, material, design and program of the building, which "With the exception of a room reserved for the Medical Society and a somewhat larger room for business purposes, the entire floor space will be [was] devoted to the exhibits of the two societies, the dividing line being an open screen of columns and arches allowing the public free access to any part of the floor (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1891a)." Barnum chose the Romanesque style building, which was planned with red sandstone and terra cotta, friezes depicting Bridgeport history and portraits of historical figures, a copper clad steel dome with a gold leafed dome cage, and an observatory; along with necessities such as a fireproof stairway, steam heat, fireproof storage vaults for archival materials, and ample toilet and lavatory facilities. Barnum assigned space in the building for an exhibit room and for a gallery in third floor hallway. As the article notes, "the great dome" capped an auditorium "for lecture purposes" of which the size could be "immensely increased by a series of sliding doors which when thrown open will give the public direct view of the speaker either from the main hall or the eastern exhibition room, practically using the entire floor when needed for special occasions (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1891a)."

The Institute (Barnum Museum) ultimately cost about 85,000 dollars to construct and opened on February 18, 1893 (Waldo 1897:90). The building was completed as Barnum intended. It incorporated three entrances that provided access to the BSS exhibit on the first floor (corner entrance), FCHS library and museum on the second floor (Main Street tower entrance), and the primary Main Street entrance that opened to a main stairway accessing the whole building. Each floor from the first through third had a fireproof vault for archival storage in southeast corner of the building, under a fourth floor observatory. The FCHS's second floor museum incorporated a 'Barnum Room' filled with items donated by him such as furniture from his Bridgeport 'Iranistan' home, various mementoes, and the bust of singer Jenny Lind, who had toured with him (FCHS 1892:10). The Medical Society room on the second floor faced Main Street. The third floor contained the auditorium, which sat several hundred, as well as offices and other conveniences.

At the opening services, the FCHS noted that their "great need" was met for ". . . a suitable building for the safe deposit of the valuable books, documents, pictures and relics donated, and waiting to be donated . . . where they could be properly arranged for exhibition, study, and preservation (FCHS 1892:9)." The BSS explained their formation "for the study of special subjects, such as chemistry, electricity, mineralogy, geology, entomology, etc (FCHS 1892:31)." The Institute functioned primarily as originally conceived, as a collection repository and resource library for the historical and scientific societies and as a lecture hall where papers of scientific and historical interest were presented and discussed. Notable speakers such as Thomas Edison and the Wright brothers were engaged as speakers. By 1897, the Institute had received "thousands of visitors from Bridgeport and abroad (Waldo 1897:90)."

The collections and programs of the BSS and FCHS were managed autonomously. The collection of the BSS was comprised of ethnographic, biologic, and ancient relics, including Indian artifacts from the United States, Mexico and Peru, various mounted specimens, and antiquities from Egypt and Rome. The collection from the FCHS consisted of

Colonial artifacts, military memorabilia, and objects representing eighteenth and nineteenth century American material culture and decorative arts. In addition, a large number of historic documents, papers, and objects were bequeathed or donated by P.T. Barnum and his second wife, Nancy Fish Barnum, including unique decorative objects from his legendary Bridgeport mansion, Iranistan (and remain prominent examples in the collection today). The collection has grown to include objects reflective of P.T. Barnum's life and times and his genre in American History.

Barnum had the foresight to consider the societies' ability to maintain the building and operated their organizations. He conceptualized ground floor Main Street-facing storefronts that could be rented for income, should the societies find it necessary. While the building was constructed with the storefronts, the societies never filled them. They devised a short-term financing plan based on three-year promises of annual pledges valued at a total of 2,500 dollars per year (FCHS 1892:15). Barnum's wife, Nancy Fish Barnum made a pledge of 1,500 dollars per year, which helped establish the Institute. Despite these efforts, the societies struggled financially and merged into one organization in 1899 (Pelton 1988:46). Membership waned in the early twentieth century and by 1913 the city was using part or all of the first floor as an office for the water department (Sanborn 1913).

Succumbing to the Great Depression, the societies ceded ownership of the building to the City of Bridgeport on September 14, 1934. The city reserved their collections on the third floor and assigned a curator to care for the 'Barnum Museum,' which reopened to the public on October 27, 1936. The city used the rest of the building for offices. The museum remained open through the twentieth century and during the 1960s a group of concerned citizens and city officials restored the building and expanded the museum to its full three floors. The building was repaired, and interior spaces were remodeled to accommodate a wide range of exhibits focusing on the history of Bridgeport and the history of P.T. Barnum.

### **Properties Associated with P.T. Barnum**

The Barnum Museum in Bridgeport is the only known well-preserved building currently extant that is directly associated with P.T. Barnum during his approximately 50-year career. Both of Barnum's New York museums succumbed to fires in 1865 and 1868, along with their entire collections. Barnum commissioned the construction of four mansions for his family in the City of Bridgeport: Iranistan (1846), Lindencroft (1860), Waldemere (1869), and Marina (1888). Out of these residences, only a small portion of Waldemere is left and is has been relocated to the neighboring town of Stratford.

The most closely related building to the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport is Barnum Hall (1884), at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. Barnum, who was an avid Universalist, served as a founding trustee of Tufts College, which opened in 1854 as a private Universalist institution. Barnum funded the construction of a natural history museum on the campus.

Another incident . . . by which the year 1884 was marked as a bright spot in my calendar, was the opening of the Natural History Museum of Tuft's College, near Boston, of which admirable educational institution I was trustee at its foundation. The want of a natural history museum had long been felt, and some time ago my friend, President E.H. Capen, made an appeal to me to supply the need. To this appeal I responded; and the outcome has been the erection of a fine collection of natural history specimens and other curiosities interesting and useful to students. The building was completed in spring 1884 . . . (Browne 1961:439).

Barnum gave the college 55,000 dollars for the construction of the building (now Barnum Hall) in 1883, which was designed by Phillip Rinn and completed in 1884, in part to house animal specimens donated by Barnum (Tufts 1898; 2004; 2008). Barnum enhanced his initial gift through the donation of Jumbo's (one of his famous elephants) hide in 1889 and allotment of 30,000 dollars to build two additional wings in his will of 1891(Barnum 1891:25). The university constructed as west wing on the building in 1894 that added a new biological laboratory, classrooms, and library, and completed an east wing in 1935 for labs and offices (Tufts 2004). The third addition (Dana Laboratory) was constructed on the west wing in 1963. The interior and roof of the building burned during a fire on April 14, 1975 and the building was completely rebuilt by Kubitz and Pepi architects of Medford, Massachusetts within its original shell. The original

mansard roof was replaced by a flat roof and has penthouse structures on top. Although the building still serves as Tufts' Department of Biology the 1963 addition, complete interior gutting and reconstruction, and roof replacement after the fire have caused a substantial loss of architectural integrity.

### Areas of Significance: Criterion C

#### Architecture

The Barnum Museum is a local representation of a Romanesque Revival style institutional building designed and erected by the Longstaff and Hurd of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The museum is the key work of the local design-build firm that completed several residential, commercial, and institutional buildings in Connecticut between 1887 and 1894. The firm was comprised of George W. Longstaff, a builder and designer, and Frank W. Hurd, a lumber dealer with social and political connections (Clouette 1989). In July, 1887, the pair "had just opened a new and elegantly appointed architect's office in the Sturdevant Building, corner of Bank and Main streets, where they propose to conduct a first class architectural business, and to furnish plans and designs for every description of public buildings or private dwellings (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1887b)."

The firm, which was noted at the time for their "pleasing and economical designs," offered a full array of contracting services consisting of architectural design, provision of building materials, construction, and custom mill work and furnishings. Only seven months before they opened their architectural office, Longstaff and Hurd had established a new millwork factory on Railroad Avenue in Bridgeport that employed a staff of 53 (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1887a). Their products included specialty wood interiors from their own designs or from patterns; cabinet furniture, wainscoting, doors, staircases, trim, and stained glass and mosaics; more than 50 different designs for furnishings. The firm additionally had ". . . a large stock of hard wood lumber, and . . . special facilities for drying and seasoning the same (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1887a)."

In August 1887, Longstaff and Hurd completed designs for several residences such as the Taylor House (Park Place), a house in East Hampton, New York, and a villa in Ridgefield Connecticut (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1887c). By the end of their partnership in 1894, the firm was noted as one of the most prosperous in Bridgeport and had designed many new "first class" buildings in the city (*Bridgeport Post* 1894). Their portfolio of Bridgeport buildings included the West End School (1888), which was published in *American Architect and Building News*; Maplewood School (1893) (listed in the *National Register* in 1990); Wheeler School (about 1893); the five-story Barnum Block on State and Court streets; the Henry Sanford office building on Main and Cannon streets; the Sanford block at Main and Golden Hill; the Seaside Club; and the Banks House on Clinton and Maplewood Avenues (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1887b). The Barnum Block was constructed around May, 1891 after a portion of Barnum's estate was transferred to James Staples. The firm designed their buildings according to a variety of late-nineteenth-century popular architectural styles, including the Shingle, Renaissance Revival and Romanesque Revival styles. The Barnum Museum building appears to have been their most prestigious commission and ornamental work. Longstaff and Hurd also received such notable commissions as the Wadsworth Athenaeum building addition in Hartford, Connecticut (1892-1893, contract 1891), carpentry work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (contract 1891), and cabinet cases for the Museum of Natural History in New York (contract 1891) (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1887c).

The firm of Longstaff and Hurd dissolved as a result of bankruptcy and related "differences in business management" in 1894 (*Atlantic Reporter* 1896; *Bridgeport Post* 1894). Longstaff and Hurd could not agree on the treatment of their shared property after their financial failure and a court decision of June 22, 1895 settled their affairs. Longstaff moved on by incorporating the George W. Longstaff & Company, Contractors and Builders based at 269-271 Railroad Avenue in 1895 (Waldo 1897:195). He rehired Peter Frederickson and Daniel Campbell who worked as secretary and superintendent for Longstaff and Hurd's joint millwork company. Longstaff continued to design churches, the Hanover Insurance building in New York City, and the Barnum monument in Bridgeport's Seaside Park.

Frank W. Hurd (b. 1857) was the member of a prominent Bridgeport family and began his career as a bookkeeper at the Wheeler and Wilson Sewing Machine Manufacturing Company on Main Street in Bridgeport, where his father, Frederick Hurd worked as a treasurer and superintendent. Frederick Hurd (1832-1904) and Nathaniel Wheeler, one of the founders

of the Wheeler and Wilson Company, served on the Bridgeport School Board together at about the time when the City hired Longstaff and Hurd to design several new school buildings (Clouette 1989; Waldo 1892:80). "F. Hurd," (presumably Frederick) also served as a director of the Bridgeport Horse Railroad Company, alongside fellow director P.T. Barnum (Waldo 1892:42). Frank Hurd also had connections to Barnum through his second cousin Samuel Henry Hurd (1840-1898), who married Barnum's daughter Helen (b. 1840).

Barnum's choice of the Romanesque style for the Barnum Museum building is aligned with popular aesthetic taste of the period, but it may have been influenced by the prior use of this style for other significant museums known to him. The Museum of Natural History in New York City designed by Vaux and Mold was completed in 1877 as a four-story masonry building with multiple observation towers. The Barnum Hall at Tufts, for which Barnum approved the plans of, was completed in 1884 as a three-story, stone Romanesque building with the roofline accentuated by a high mansard roof and mansard dormers, rather than domes or towers. An 1891 description of the proposed Barnum Museum building praised the use of the style for the purpose of a museum and public monument: "The architectural style of the building is pure Romanesque, and one that seems to be especially adapted for such as building, affording ample opportunity for artistic ornamentation (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1891; FCHS 1892)." Besides the monumental aesthetic quality of the masonry and ornamental carvings, specific design features that catered to museum use included the recessed balconies and dome that contributed to the functionality of the lecture hall, the multiple street accessed entrances, the ground floor storefronts for financial stability, the gallery lit by skylights, and sliding doors for space flexibility. The stone carvings on gave the exterior of the building a grand aesthetic, but also provided additional surfaces used for exhibition, in the form of historical figures and events that were depicted on its walls. The typical use of heavy masonry for Romanesque buildings also satisfied one of Barnum's primary concerns—fireproofing. The Barnum Museum was constructed after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and after the destruction of Barnum's New York Museums, winter circus quarters, and prized 'Iranistan' mansion. Barnum ensured that his Barnum Museum in Bridgeport had a fireproof stairway and fireproof vault for artifact storage (*Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1891a).

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#### **Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

##### **Barnum Museum in the Twentieth Century**

The Barnum Museum Foundation, established in 1986, represents a public-private partnership between City officials, civic, cultural, and commercial leaders, joining in a community-wide effort to sustain The Barnum Museum. In June of 1989 the Museum reopened with a defined mission, new exhibits, and professional staff. The City of Bridgeport, with support from the State of Connecticut, a major corporate friend, the People's Bank, and corporate and private donors, provided the resources to construct a new gallery for educational and community programs, and to refurbish the historic structure.

The Barnum Museum is currently owned by the City of Bridgeport and operates as a 501(c)3 organization. The Barnum Museum Foundation, Inc. operates the museum as a relevant institution of learning that is committed to intellectual exchange, community engagement, and is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of P.T. Barnum's legacy and his genre in American history. The museum receives more than 23,500 visitors per year and plays an active role for lifelong learners as well as students in various grade levels and degree programs.

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Barnum Museum (Amendment)  
Name of Property

Fairfield, Connecticut  
County and State

Waldo, George C. Jr. (editor)  
1917 *History of Bridgeport and Vicinity*. Vol. 1. S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, New York, NY.

*Yankee Doodle*  
1847 View of the Barnum Property. *Yankee Doodle* 2:168.

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.15

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 0651954 4559600  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property boundaries encompass the legally recorded lines of Block 959, Lot 1A, shown on Map 28, containing 0.15 acres. The boundaries presently (2010) include a portion of the 'Bridgeport Center' People's Bank complex that was constructed during the late 1980s and encroaches on the historic limits of the Barnum Museum parcel. This section of the People's Bank complex contains an additional exhibition and classroom wing for the museum and the edge of a parking garage.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the museum and full extent of the property that contributes to its historic setting and appearance.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP/Architectural Historian; Virginia H. Adams/Sr. Architectural Historian; & Melissa Antonelli/Asst. Arch. Historian; with Kathleen Maher/Executive Director, Barnum Museum

organization PAL, Inc. date May 2010

street & number 210 Lonsdale Avenue telephone 401.728.8780

city or town Pawtucket state RI zip code 02860

e-mail jscofield@palinc.com; vadams@palinc.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Barnum Museum

**City or Vicinity:** Bridgeport

**County:** Fairfield **State:** Connecticut

**Photographer:** Jenny Fields Scofield, PAL, 210 Lonsdale Ave, Pawtucket, RI 02860.

**Date Photographed:** April 30, 2010

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

- 1 of 8. View looking southeast from Main Street at the north and west elevations.
- 2 of 8. View looking east from Main Street at the upper floors of the west elevation.
- 3 of 8. View looking west on the roof at the observatory (elevated highway in background).
- 4 of 8. View looking southeast from the sidewalk along Main Street at the northwest entrance.
- 5 of 8. View looking east in the main entrance at original first floor interior entry doors leading to stairway.
- 6 of 8. View looking southeast at original, main stairway from the landing between the second and third floors.
- 7 of 8. View looking south at original fireplace on the second floor.
- 8 of 8. View of the interior of the observatory tower.

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Bridgeport

street & number 45 Lyon Terrace telephone 203-576-1311

city or town Bridgeport state CT zip code 06604

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

---

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Barnum Museum

**City or Vicinity:** Bridgeport

**County:** Fairfield **State:** Connecticut

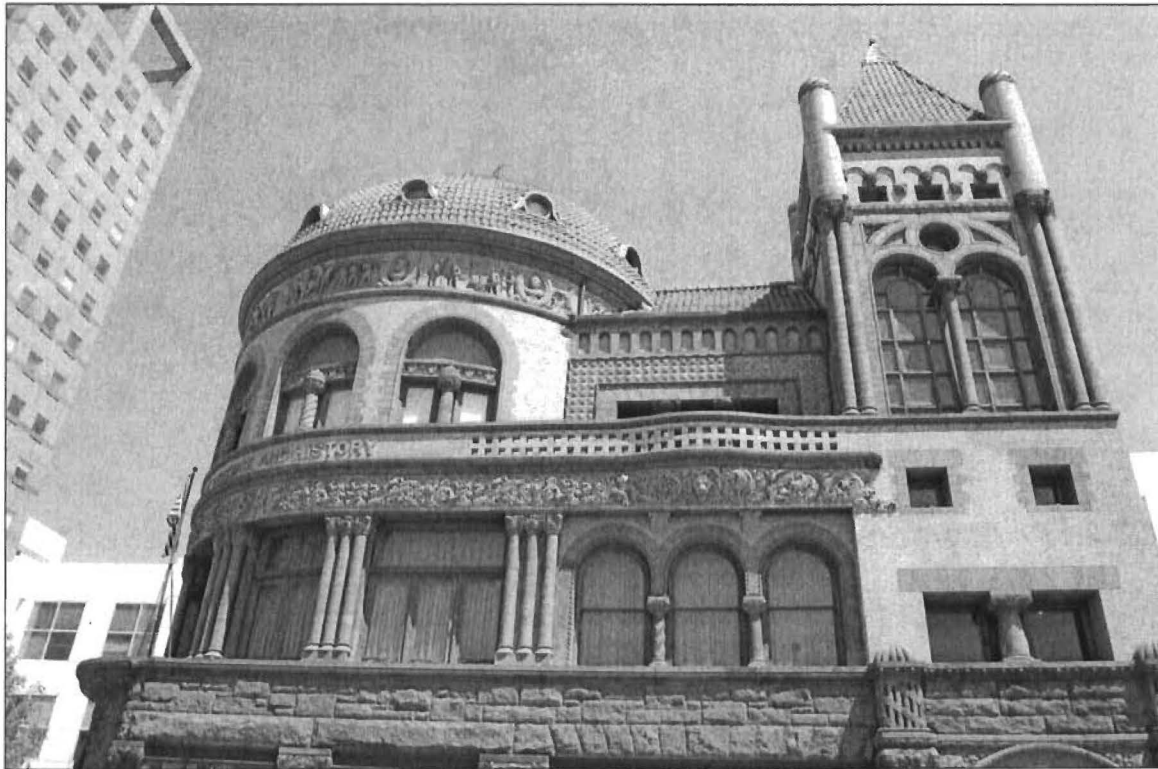
**Photographer:** Jenny Fields Scofield, PAL, 210 Lonsdale Ave, Pawtucket, RI 02860.

**Date Photographed:** April 30, 2010

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**



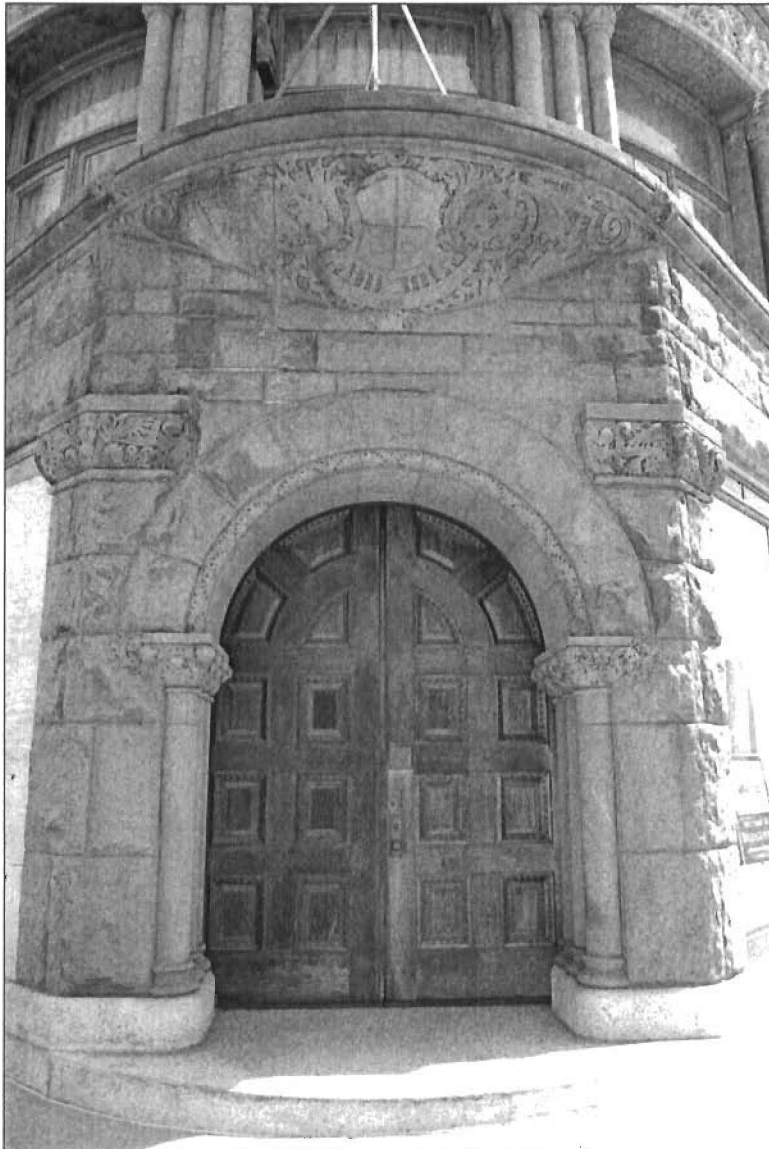
1 of 8. View looking southeast from Main Street at the north and west elevations.



2 of 8. View looking east from Main Street at the upper floors of the west elevation.



3 of 8. View looking west on the roof at the observatory (elevated highway in background).



4 of 8. View looking southeast from the sidewalk along Main Street at the northwest entrance.





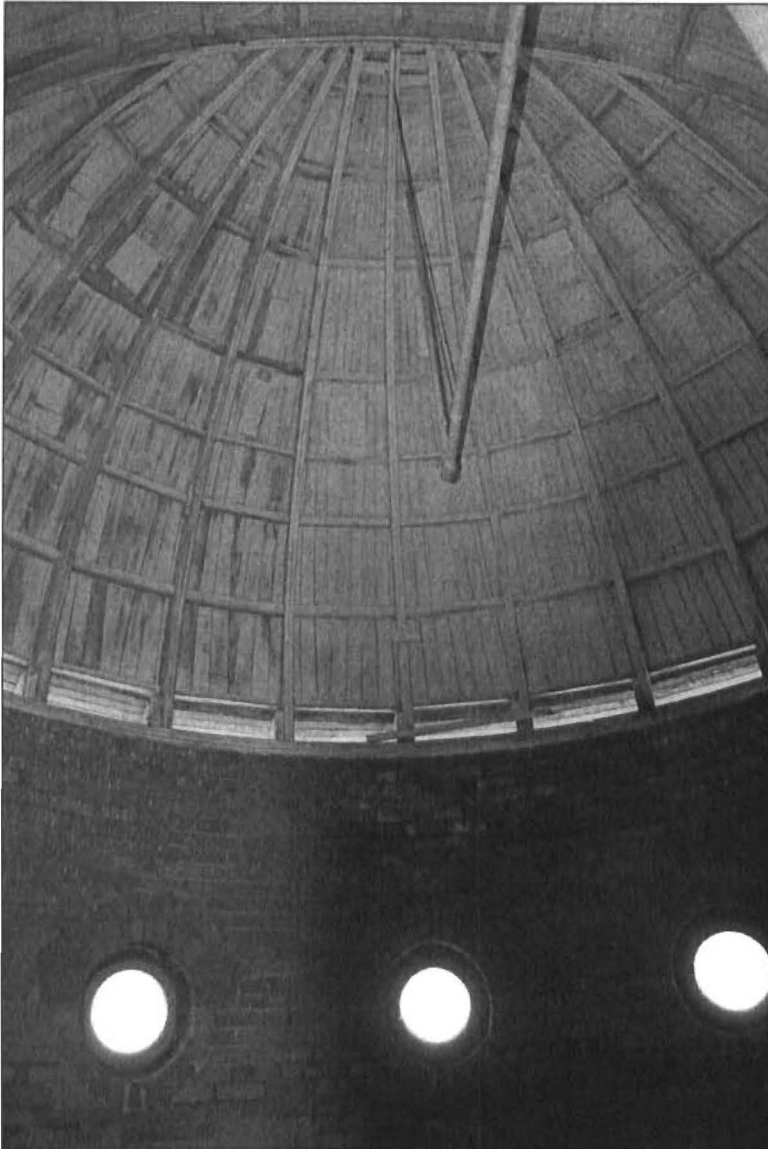
5 of 8. View looking east in the main entrance at original first floor interior entry doors leading to stairway.



6 of 8. View looking southeast at original, main stairway from the landing between the second and third floors.



7 of 8. View looking south at original fireplace on the second floor.



8 of 8. View of the interior of the observatory tower.

---

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

---

name City of Bridgeport  
street & number 45 Lyon Terrace telephone 203-576-1311  
city or town Bridgeport state CT zip code 06604

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

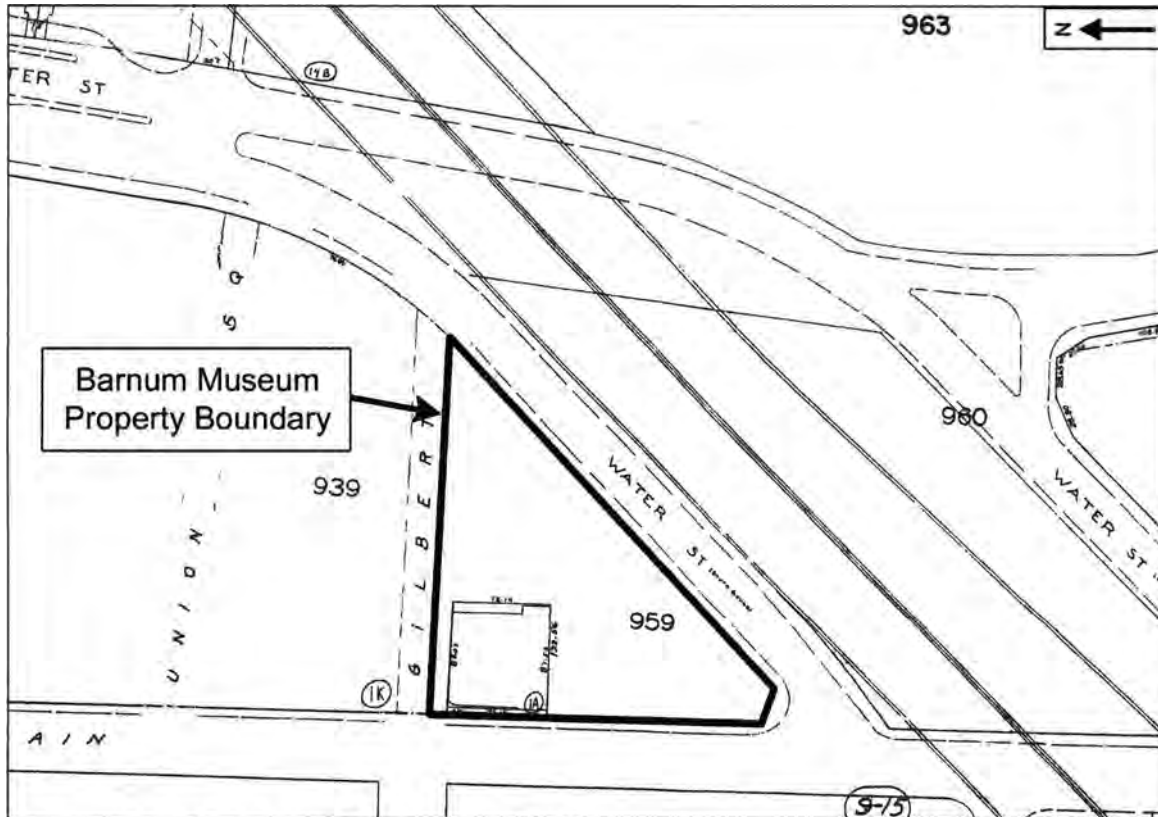
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Barnum Museum

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Name of Multiple Property Listing (N/A)

City of Bridgeport Assessor's Map Number 28



(Source: City of Bridgeport Tax Assessor, 2010)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

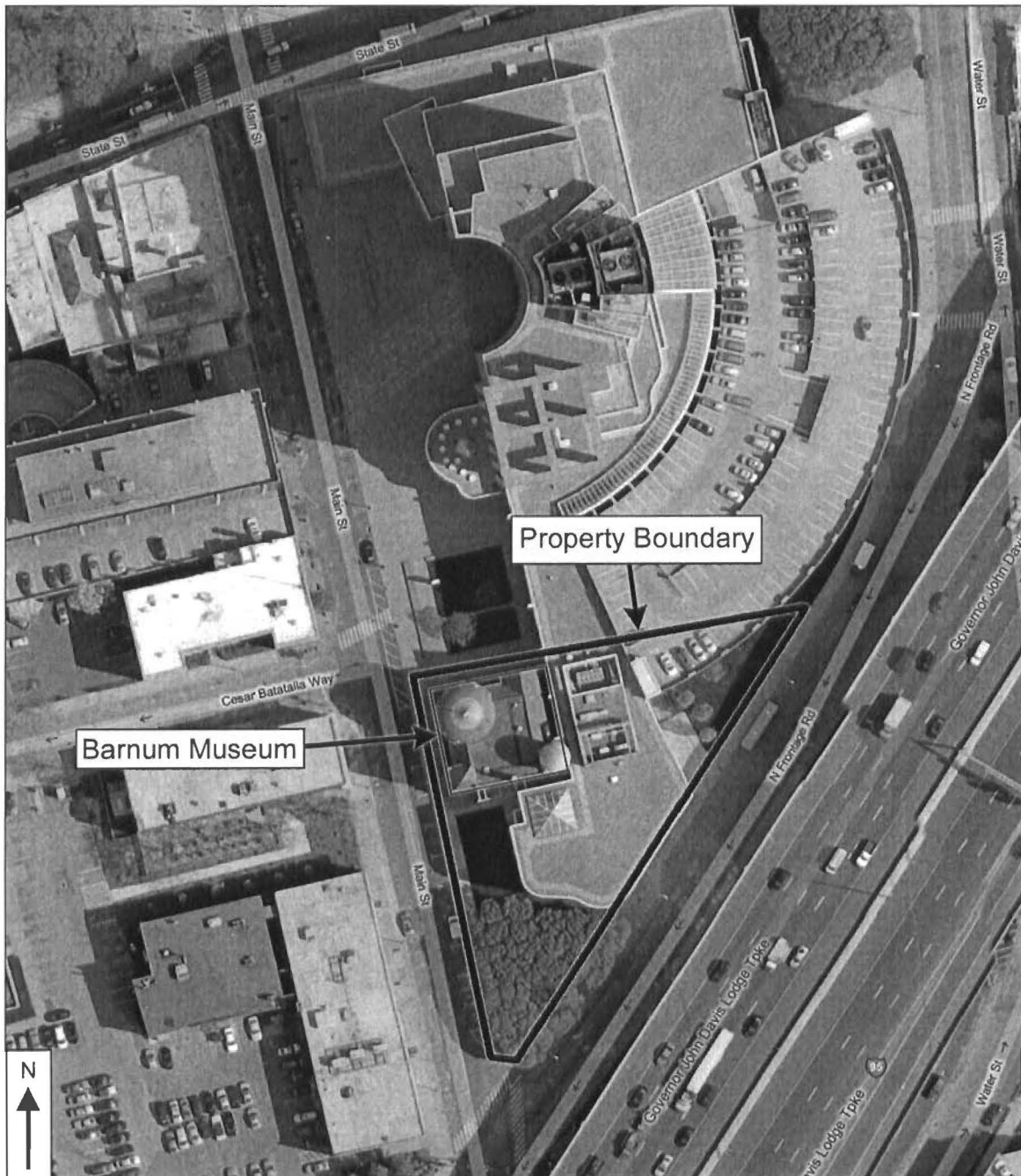
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Barnum Museum

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Name of Multiple Property Listing (N/A)

Site Plan of the Barnum Museum Property



(Base map source: [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com). Accessed May 2010).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

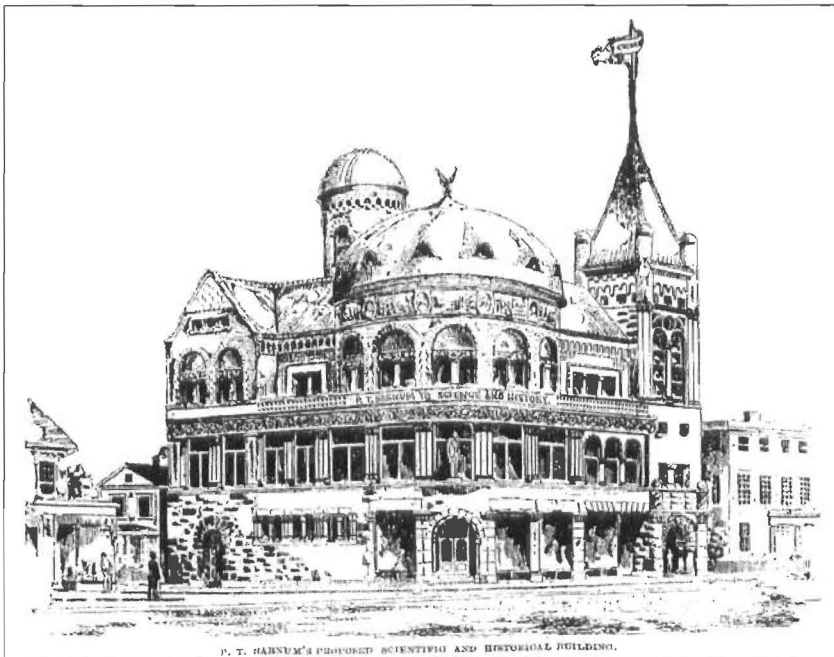
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Barnum Museum

Fairfield County, Connecticut

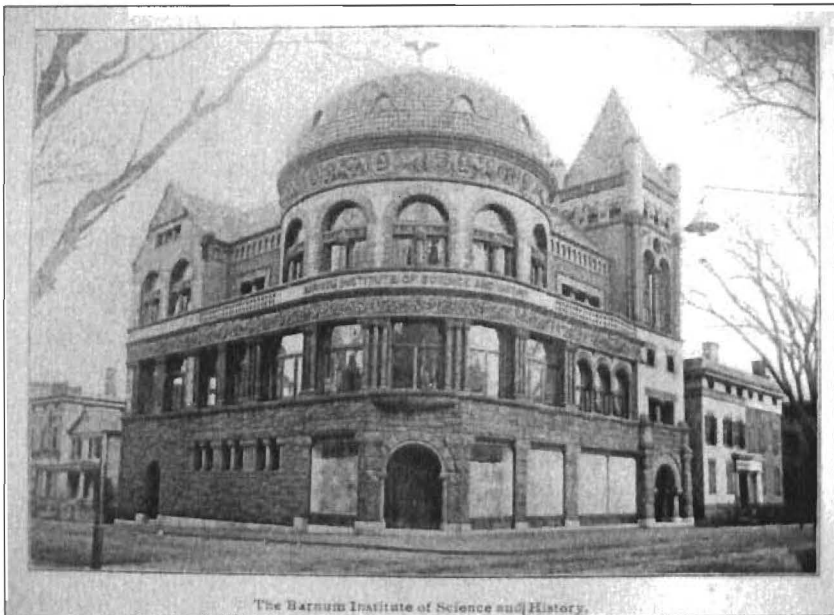
Name of Multiple Property Listing (N/A)

Historic Graphics



P. T. BARNUM'S PROPOSED SCIENTIFIC AND HISTORICAL BUILDING.

1891 Sketch of Barnum Museum Building (source: *Bridgeport Daily Standard* 1891a)



The Barnum Institute of Science and History.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

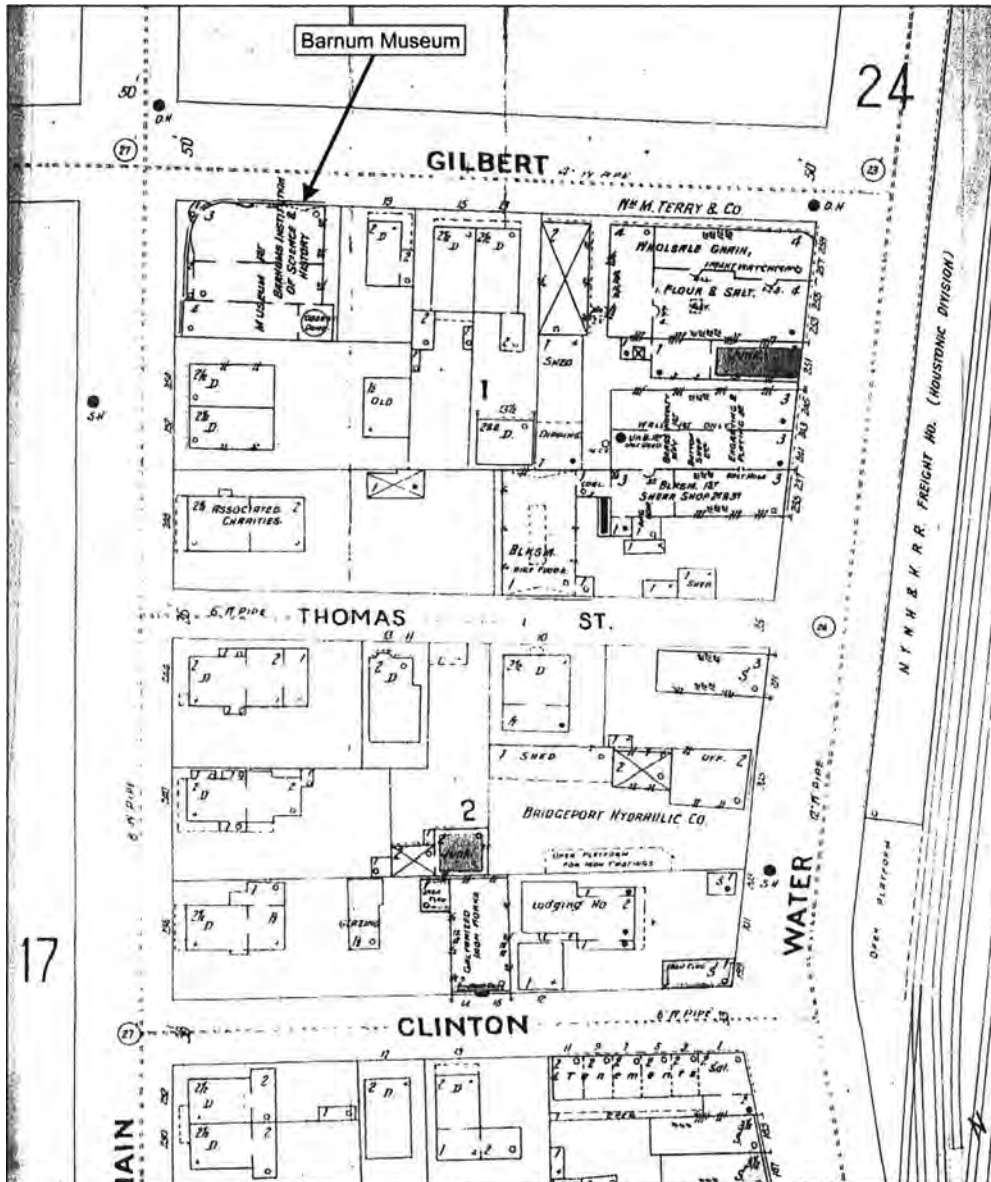
Barnum Museum

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Name of Multiple Property Listing (N/A)

Ca. 1897 Photograph of Barnum Museum Building as built; observatory extant but not in view  
(source: Waldo 1897)

Historic Maps



1898 Sanborn Map showing Barnum Museum Building (source: Sanborn 1898)



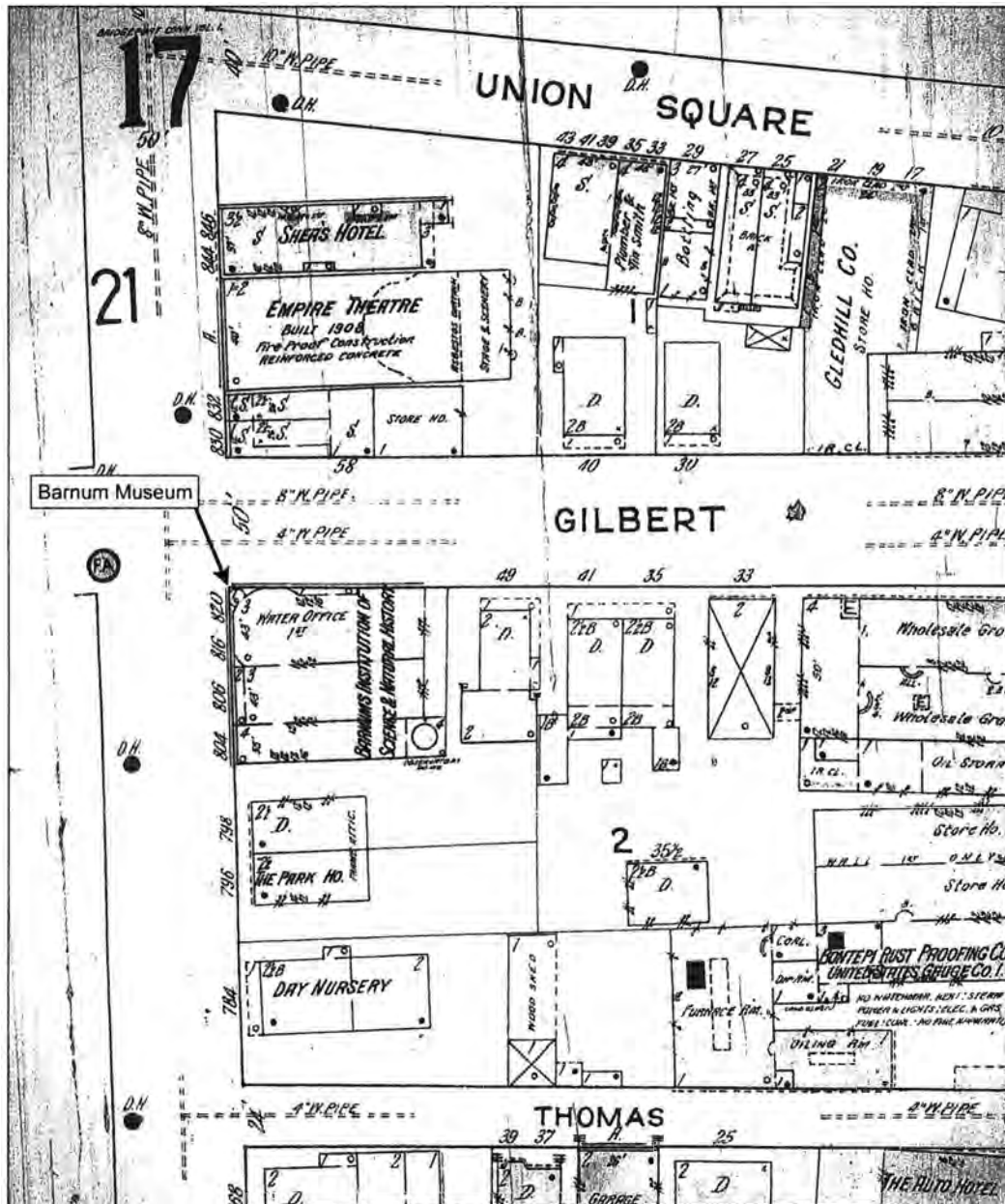
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Barnum Museum

Fairfield County, Connecticut

Name of Multiple Property Listing (N/A)



1913 Sanborn Map showing Barnum Museum Building (source: Sanborn 1913)



BARNUM INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY



Advertisement sign on a street lamp.





CARNegie LIBRARY











Recent  
Acquisition







ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE CONNECTICUT

Date Entered NOV 7 1972

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Barnum Museum	Bridgeport Fairfield County
Avon Congregational Church	Avon Hartford County
Hollister (John) House	Glastonbury Hartford County
Pratt (Humphrey) Tavern	Old Saybrook Middlesex County

Also Notified

Hon. Abraham A. Ribicoff  
Hon. Lowell P. Weicker, Jr.  
Hon. Stewart B. McKinney  
Hon. William R. Cotter  
Hon. Robert H. Steele

State Liaison Officer  
Mr. Eric Hatch  
Chairman, Connecticut Historical  
Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Director, Northeast Region

PHR

NRowland:mm 11/7/72

DATE OF RECEIPT 3-9-72

YES NO

NUMBER REGISTER:

NOV 7 1972

DATA PAGE

PHOTO (S) \_\_\_\_\_

PHOTO DESCRIPTION (S) \_\_\_\_\_

MAP (S) \_\_\_\_\_

MAP DESCRIPTION (S) \_\_\_\_\_

LOGGED \_\_\_\_\_

ACKNOWLEDGE 3-13-72 \_\_\_\_\_

6  
2



RESUBMIT \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEW	
HISTORIAN	<i>Oliver S. ...</i>
ARCHEOLOGIST	
ARCHITECT	<i>Great! OK Chambers 10-2-72</i>
ASST. KEEPER	<i>OK R. ... 10/1/72</i>
KEEPER	
WRITER/EDITOR	<i>OK Rowland 9-27-72</i>
DIRECTOR, OAHP	
EDITORIAL PROCESSING, EDITOR	

Federal Registry Entry 12-5-72 Annual Edition Entry \_\_\_\_\_

Logged NOV 7 1972 Card NOV 7 1972

COMMENTS: WORKING NUMBER 3-9-72-326

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

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## State Historic Preservation Office Commission on Arts, Tourism, Culture, History and Film

April 22, 2004



Ms. Carol Schull  
Keeper of the National Register  
National Park Service  
1201 I Street, NW  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Barnum Museum, 820 Main Street, Bridgeport, CT

Dear Ms. Schull:

The Barnum Museum, one of Connecticut's most important historic architectural resources, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 1972. Acknowledged as the last surviving public building associated with Phineas T. Barnum, the internationally acclaimed impresario, this well-preserved museum is a repository of significant Barnum memorabilia and an archival resource for the academic community. New core exhibitions at the museum have received American Association of State and Local History and Connecticut League of History Organization awards for academic achievement and presentation.

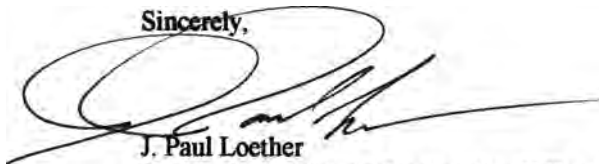
Why the Barnum legend endures and still resonates in the American experience has become the subject of in-depth scholarly research. Several recent biographers have begun to analyze this complex American folk hero—to move beyond Barnum's legendary persona as a master of self promotion and explore his highly significant role in the creation of American popular culture in the nineteenth century.

The present Barnum biography ranges from the *The Art of P.T. Barnum* by Professor Neil Harris (The University of Chicago Press, 1973) to the meticulously researched *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* by A. H. Saxon (Columbia University Press, 1989). The most recent work, *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), was published in conjunction with a four-part television documentary on the History Channel.

With the benefit of this recent scholarship as a guide, the nationally significant contributions of P. T. Barnum can now be fully recognized. To this end, the City of Bridgeport, a Certified Local Government, has sponsored the preparation of a National Landmark study, and the Barnum Museum has hired an experienced consultant. Please be assured that Connecticut's State Historic Preservation Office fully supports this effort and stands ready to assist the National Park Service, the City of Bridgeport and the Barnum Museum in this endeavor.

If you have any questions in this regard, please contact me at 860-566-3005, ext. 326 or at [paul.loether@po.state.ct.us](mailto:paul.loether@po.state.ct.us).

Sincerely,



J. Paul Loether  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

c: Jennifer Aniskovich, Executive Director

59 SOUTH PROSPECT STREET HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1901  
Telephone: 860-566-3005 Facsimile: 860-566-5078

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Roger Reed/WASO/NPS  
05/18/2010 11:33 AM

To Hampton Tucker/WASO/NPS@NPS  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Barnum Institute

Hampton,

We have received additional information regarding the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport Connecticut. At the time of the original nomination in 1972 there was no level of significance required. The additional information establishes that the building is nationally significant. We are in the process of amending the nomination file accordingly.

Roger

Roger G. Reed  
Historian  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street  
Eighth Floor  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-354-2278

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY Barnum Museum  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, Fairfield

DATE RECEIVED: 5/19/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/03/10  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 72001300

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Nomination revised for level of significance. The revised  
nomination establishes that the property is nationally significant.*

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER *[Signature]* DISCIPLINE Historic  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 5/19/10

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Arts  
Tourism  
Film  
History

One Constitution Plaza  
Second Floor  
Hartford, Connecticut  
06103

860.256.2800  
860.256.2811 (f)

MEMORANDUM



**TO:** Roger Reed  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** Stacey Vairo, National Register Coordinator

**DATE:** June 25, 2010

**SUBJECT:** National Register Nomination, Barnum Museum

The following materials are submitted for nomination of the Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Fairfield County Connecticut

to the National Register of Historic Places:

- National Register of Historic Places Supplemental Material
- Multiple Property Nomination form
- Photographs
- Original USGS maps
- Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
- Pieces of correspondence
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMENTS:**

- Please review
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objections do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONNECT**

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Barnum Museum (Barnum Institute of Science and History)

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, Fairfield

DATE RECEIVED: 07/12/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16<sup>th</sup> DAY: DATE OF 45<sup>th</sup> DAY: 08/19/10

REFERENCE NUMBER: 72001300

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 8-19-10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional Documentation Approved

RECOM./CRITEREA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attsched comments Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.