1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Barnum Institute of Science and History

Other Name/Site Number: Barnum Museum

Street and Number (if applicable)**:** 820 Main Street

City/Town: Bridgeport **County:** Fairfield **State:** CT

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior, December 11, 2023.

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 2

NHL Criteria Exceptions: N/A

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values
1. educational and intellectual currents
6. popular and traditional culture

Period(s) of Significance: 1893–1934

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2)**:** Barnum, Phineas Taylor (P. T.)

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6)**:** N/A

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: Longstaff, George W.; Hurd, Frank W.

Historic Contexts: XXVII. Education
G. Adjunct Educational Institutions
1. Museums, Archives, and Botanical Gardens
XXXIV. Recreation
B. Spectator Pastimes
4. Circuses
5. Zoos, Aquariums, and Planetariums

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

Estimated Burden Statement. Public reporting burden is 2 hours for an initial inquiry letter and 344 hours for NPS Form 10-934 (per response), including the time it takes to read, gather and maintain data, review instructions and complete the letter/form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate, or any aspects of this form, to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mail Stop 242, Reston, VA 20192. Please do not send your form to this address.

3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

___ Yes

_X_ No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: 0.15

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:
Datum if other than WGS84:
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude: 41.175666 **Longitude:** -73.188142

3. Verbal Boundary Description:

The property boundaries correspond to the legally recorded parcel lines for the Barnum Institute of Science and History building at 820 Main Street, Block 959/Lot 1A on Bridgeport Assessors Map 28.

4. Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses the historic footprint of the Barnum Institute of Science and History building as constructed in 1893.

5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Barnum Institute of Science and History (Barnum Institute or Institute) at 820 Main Street in Bridgeport, Connecticut, meets National Historic Landmark Criterion 2 in the area of Entertainment/Recreation for exceptional merit in American history through its association with nationally renowned, innovative, self-made businessman Phineas T. Barnum (P. T. Barnum) (1810–1891) and as the only surviving building with architectural integrity linked to this American cultural icon (Figure 1). The Institute is associated with the National Historic Landmark theme of Expressing Cultural Values. The period of significance for the property begins with the Barnum Institute's opening in 1893 and extends through 41 years of operation under three organizations as Barnum arranged, ending in 1934 when the City of Bridgeport assumed ownership. P. T. Barnum made outstanding contributions to the shaping and expression of American cultural values throughout his illustrious career. His cultivation of instructional entertainment on a mass scale from the 1830s to the 1880s defined American popular and museum culture in the nineteenth century and influenced its development throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. In his show-business ventures, Barnum presented speculation within a world of curiosity to encourage people to derive their own opinions and truths, explore the irrational, and examine imaginative possibility, but also reinforced racist ideologies and represented people with physical and mental disabilities as abnormal. The Barnum Institute, established at the end of Barnum's career and completed in 1893 after his death, embodies the mature and culminating vision of entertainment and education that Barnum successfully pioneered and developed throughout his remarkable life and work.

The Barnum Institute was the last of several public buildings that Barnum conceived for the purposes of intellectual exchange and public instructional entertainment. He intended it to be a research library, museum, and lecture hall and to serve as an architectural landmark. Between 1886 and 1891 (near the end of his life), Barnum donated the land for the Institute, selected the architect, directed the planning, donated the property to the city's scientific and historical organizations (the Bridgeport Scientific Society, Fairfield County Historical Society, and Bridgeport Medical Society), and assembled key collections. The Institute opened in 1893 and remained under the operation and oversight of its original occupants—the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BSS), the Fairfield County Historical Society (FCHS), and the Bridgeport Medical Association (BMA)—through 1934. At that time, due to financial difficulties, the City of Bridgeport became, and remains today, the owner of the building and collections; the Barnum Museum Foundation established in 1988 maintains stewardship of both as the Barnum Museum. The Barnum Institute expresses P. T. Barnum's enduring national legacy, providing an exceptional place for public enjoyment and education that has continued largely uninterrupted since his death.

PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

Phineas Taylor (P. T.) Barnum

Any discussion of P. T. Barnum is complicated by many factors, not least of which is the shapeshifting nature of the man's own presentation of himself to the public. Barnum constantly reinvented himself, churning out hundreds of newspaper editorials and publishing multiple editions of his autobiography on his "relentless quest to sell his

celebrity."[1] Neil Harris, one of Barnum's many biographers, noted the "self-conscious strategies and elaborate justifications" that marked his subject's career.[2] Another of his biographers, A. H. Saxon, acknowledged that Barnum's words "contributed more than anything else to the legend enveloping its author."[3] Historian Bluford Adams wrote that Barnum created a "series of autobiographical Barnums, personae that were crafted with care, worn for a period, and eventually discarded when their style or politics no longer suited the showman's goals."[4] These Barnums included the "slaveholding Yankee confidence man with working-class sympathies" of the early 1840s, the "respectable spokesman and entertainer of a 'Universal Yankee Nation'" of the mid-1840s through the Civil War, and the paternalistic Republican businessman and "public benefactor" of the late 1860s and 1870s.[5] The continuous thread through each part of his life was his pursuit of opportunities—whether in publishing, entertainment, education, or politics—that placed him in the public eye. Beginning with his earliest enterprises, Barnum commodified other persons to create popular entertainment. By 1880, he recognized that his name and reputation had commercial value and commodified himself as a brand. As scholars seek to understand Barnum within the context of his time and the impact of his legacy on later generations, his newspaper writings and autobiographies provide many clues but often leave researchers with unanswerable questions about his true motivations. Barnum's greatest show was undoubtedly his own life.

Early Life

Born on July 5, 1810, in the village of Bethel, Connecticut (then part of Danbury, 30 miles northeast of Bridgeport), P. T. Barnum was the oldest of Philo and his second wife Irena (Taylor) Barnum's six children. In total, Philo had twelve children, including six with his first wife, Polly Fairchild. P.T.'s wealthy maternal grandfather, Phineas Taylor (after whom P. T. was named), owned a substantial amount of land in Bethel. Famous for his practical jokes and lottery schemes, Taylor had a great influence on Barnum as a child and young adult. Barnum later wrote of his grandfather, "He would go farther, wait longer, work harder, and contrive deeper, to carry out a practical joke, than for anything else under heaven. In this one particular, as well as in many others, I am almost sorry to say I am his counterpart."[6] Barnum's father held various jobs, including keeper of a tavern and livery stable, farmer, tailor, and partner in a country store. When he died in 1826, his estate had to be auctioned to pay off debts, but his widow was left with a house and some property. Barnum, then 16, took a job as a store clerk in the neighboring village of Grassy Plain. Barnum met his first wife, Charity Hallett (1808–1873), in 1827 in Bethel, where Charity, a native of Fairfield, was working as a seamstress. The couple married in New York City on November 8, 1829 and had four daughters over the next 17 years: Caroline (1833–1911), Helen (1840–1915), Frances (1842–1844), and Pauline (1846–1877).[7]

In 1827, Barnum moved to Brooklyn, New York, to work at a grocery store owned by a relative. He attempted several business ventures on his own in New York but returned to Bethel in early May 1828 to take up his grandfather's offer of rent-free commercial/office space. Barnum opened a fruit and confectionery store, and he and Charity had a house built in Bethel in the spring of 1831 on land he purchased from his grandfather. Barnum also worked on commission as a lottery agent and started dealing in real estate, referring to his businesses as his

[1] Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 37.
[2] Neil Harris, *Humbug, The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 292.
[3] A. H. Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 24.
[4] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 4.
[5] Ibid., xiii.
[6] P. T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs: or, the Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself*, ed. George S. Bryan, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), lxvi.
[7] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 26–36, 39–41.

"Temple of Fortune." Preferring the more unpredictable enterprises, he later wrote, "My disposition is, and ever was, of a speculative character, and I am never content to engage in any business unless it is of such a nature that my profits may be greatly enhanced by an increase of energy, perseverance, attention to business, tact, etc."[8] His "attention to business" included judicious advertising with handbills and circulars and in the local press. From 1831 to 1834, Barnum published his own weekly local newspaper called the *Herald of Freedom* and hosted a free reading room known as the Bethel Lyceum at the paper's offices. He used the newspaper not only to promote his businesses but also to voice his political and religious views. Charges of libel by several individuals singled out in Barnum's writings increased subscriptions to the paper and fostered Barnum's reputation as a champion of free speech.[9] The Connecticut state legislature outlawed lotteries in May 1834, prompting Barnum to close his businesses and newspaper and move back to New York City. Earning a living as the proprietor of a small boarding house and partner in a grocery store, he remained constantly alert for more "speculative" opportunities.

Public Entertainment Promoter

Barnum launched his career as a "showman," or agent for public performers, with an arrangement that exploited the social and legal vulnerabilities of an enslaved, elderly, and blind African American woman named Joice Heth.[10] In August 1835, an acquaintance connected him with a man named R. W. Lindsay, who had been unprofitably touring Heth for two months as a 161-year-old former nurse to George Washington. Barnum met Lindsay and Heth in Philadelphia and agreed to pay $1,000 for the possession of Heth and the right to exhibit her for the remaining ten months of Lindsay's contracted term.[11] He arranged for Heth to appear in New York City at the recently opened Broadway theater Niblo's Garden, where he earned over $3,000 in two weeks from ticket sales. Barnum then traveled with Heth throughout New York and New England, publicizing the shows extensively and attracting large crowds. The exhibitions typically consisted of a recitation of Heth's history, scripted questions from Barnum and an assistant, open questions from the audience, and singing of hymns by Heth. Sadly, Heth died only six months later on February 19, 1836.[12]

Barnum further exploited Heth in a public autopsy, which has been examined by many scholars. While many public autopsies occurred during this time, the relationship between Barnum and Heth—enslaver and enslaved—, the vulnerable status of Heth, and Barnum's career focus as a showman instead of medical educator sets this apart from other contemporary examples.[13] After Heth's death on February 19, 1836, Barnum held a public autopsy by a respected surgeon in New York City. The surgeon's conclusion that Heth was no older than 80 when

[8] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 66.
[9] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 41–46; Harris, *Humbug*, 15–16.
[10] On Joice Heth and Barnum, see Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Benjamin Reiss, "P.T. Barnum, Joice Heth and Antebellum Spectacles of Race," *American Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1999): 78-107; James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3–18; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Twentieth anniversary edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 59–60; Jenifer L. Barclay, *The Mark of Slavery: Disability, Race, and Gender in Antebellum America* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 130–133; Douglas A. Jones, *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 88–95; Nathaniel Windon, "Superannuated: Old Age on the Antebellum Plantation," *American Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2019): 774–777.
[11] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 107; Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 23–27.
[12] "Death of Joice Heth," *New York Sun*, February 24, 1836.
[13] James Wright, "How the Public Autopsy of a Slave Joice Heth Launched PT Barnum's Career as the Greatest Showman on Earth," *Clinical Anatomy* 31, no. 7 (2018): 956–965; Michael Sappol, *Dream Anatomy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine, 2006); Danielle Bainbridge, "The Future Perfect, Autopsy, and Enfreakment on the 19th-Century Stage," *TDR: The Drama Review* 64, no. 3 (2020): 112–114; Reiss, "P.T. Barnum," 90–95; Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 126–140. Most of the works cited above (note 10) discuss the autopsy briefly.

she died set off speculation about the nature of Barnum's complicity in the fraud, to which Barnum responded with conjectures and conflicting stories of his own. He later claimed to have been honestly deceived by Lindsay.[14]

Heth's tour, described by the *New York Sun* in 1836 after Heth's death as "one of the most precious humbugs that ever was imposed upon a credulous community," established Barnum's reputation as a trickster.[15] While his knowledge of Heth's true history cannot be confirmed, Barnum's experience managing her appearances convinced him that the suggestion of intrigue or wonder could be lucrative. He succeeded in sparking the public's curiosity about Heth even when they questioned her authenticity, recognizing that controversy was more engaging than credibility.[16] He later proudly declared himself the "Prince of Humbugs" for his skill at "putting on glittering appearances—outside show—novel expedients, by which to suddenly arrest public attention, and attract the public eye and ear."[17] Arguing that "the public appears to be disposed to be amused even when they are conscious of being deceived,"[18] he believed that the humbug only becomes a cheat or imposter if "after attracting crowds of customers by his unique displays, a man foolishly fails to give them a full equivalent for their money."[19]

Barnum used the emerging penny press to aid him in building an audience. Beginning in the 1830s, a proliferation of inexpensive daily newspapers appeared in American cities that relied on advertising and sensational stories to increase circulation rather than traditional subscription models and straightforward political or business news. Familiar with newspaper publicity on a smaller scale from his earlier years in Bethel, Barnum placed numerous advertisements and editorials in New York City's first and largest penny press publications, the *New York Sun* (established 1833) and the *New York Herald* (established 1835). He carefully chose his narratives depending on the audience at which they were aimed. For example, when Heth's tour visited Providence, Rhode Island, Barnum spun the event as an antislavery benefit to defuse any anticipated concerns from abolitionists. His close relationship with the press proved an advantage in his subsequent endeavors.[20]

By the mid-1830s, when Barnum toured Joice Heth, the nascent urban American popular culture and entertainment typically included such forms of public exhibition as blackface minstrel shows and displays of people with unusual talents or physiological features. Encouraged by his success with Heth, Barnum subsequently signed a contract with an Italian juggler who performed under the name Signor Antonio Vivalla. Barnum made several unsuccessful attempts to stage variety shows in New York City, then formed a troupe with Vivalla, a blackface singer and dancer, as well as a group of musicians and a magician and took "Barnum's Grand Scientific and Musical Theatre" on tour through the South and West.[21] In presenting blackface minstrel shows such as Vivalla's, Barnum and others in the entertainment business drew upon and reinforced racist stereotypes that caricatured Black culture and presented Black people as inferior, finding that these performances appealed to his overwhelmingly White audiences.[22]

---

[14] Harris, *Humbug*, 67–73; Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 1–3; *The Herald*, New York, February 27, 1836.
[15] "Death of Joice Heth," *New York Sun*, February 24, 1836, quoted in Eric D. Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P. T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 13.
[16] Harris, *Humbug*, 23.
[17] P. T. Barnum, *The Humbugs of the World* (New York: Carleton, 1866), 20.
[18] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 171.
[19] Barnum, *The Humbugs of the World*, 20.
[20] Janet Lehrman Brown, "Lindomania or the Penny Press Observed: A Study of the 1850 New York Press in Action" (master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1978), 5–19; Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 35–36, 75; Eric J. Fretz, "Performing Selves and the Theatrical Imagination in Antebellum America: The Examples of Anna Cora Mowatt, P. T. Barnum, and Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1995), 117.
[21] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 78–80, 87–88.
[22] Cook, *Arts of Deception*, 3–26; Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 31–33; Barclay, *Mask of Slavery*, 127–133.

Barnum continued to scout for new talent, even as he secured a museum in New York as an exhibition base in 1841 (see *Museum Owner*, below).[23] In late 1842, Barnum discovered his next performer, Charles S. Stratton (1838–1883), a 4-year-old dwarf living in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Enthralled by the tiny and talented Stratton, who could sing, dance, and do impersonations, Barnum "at once determined to secure his services from his parents and to exhibit him in public."[24] He christened his newest museum exhibit "General Tom Thumb, Man in Miniature," increased Stratton's age to 11, and changed the boy's place of birth from Connecticut to England. General Tom Thumb captivated audiences by appealing to their fascination with "marvels of nature" or "human curiosities" as well as their nostalgia for the innocence of childhood. In addition to appearing at Barnum's New York City museum, Stratton toured in other cities including Philadelphia and Baltimore, where Barnum distributed thousands of biographies and lithographs of the boy to attract publicity. In January 1844, Barnum took Stratton and his entourage on an extended tour of Europe beginning in London, where Queen Victoria and the royal family received the group at Buckingham Palace to Barnum's great delight. The tour continued throughout England, France, Germany, and Belgium and reaped considerable profit for both manager and act. Barnum stopped actively touring with Stratton in 1848 but continued as his manager. Stratton's celebrity lasted for 40 years, during which he gave at least 20,000 official shows, visited 24 countries, and toured the United States dozens of times. He remained close with Barnum throughout his life, returning often to work at the American Museum and agreeing to a European engagement in the late 1850s to help Barnum recover from financial difficulties (see *Changing Fortunes* below). In 1862, Barnum negotiated an agreement with two other dwarves, George Washington Morrison Nutt and Lavinia Warren, to join Stratton at the American Museum. When Stratton and Warren got married in February 1863, Barnum paid for the wedding.[25]

Barnum's career as a showman built upon exploitative practices that took advantage of many people whose social status was vulnerable because of their race, gender, physical characteristics, or country of origin. This is especially true with respect to Joice Heth, who, as an enslaved person, had limited opportunity and resources to counter other versions of the events surrounding her contract or to challenge the balance of power in the contract itself.[26] Barnum also exhibited people from other countries, including Maximo and Bartola (two Mexican children billed as "The Last of the Ancient Aztecs") and a diminutive young African woman named Flora. The circumstances under which they left their homes are often difficult to ascertain, and once they were on tour, they could not easily exit their contracts and return home.[27] Scholars have debated the extent to which people who were exhibited for their unusual physical characteristics benefited from or were exploited by showmen such as Barnum and the extent to which they contributed to the content of their presentation. Charles Stratton, for example, became a wealthy and successful performer and celebrity, but his options for a successful and lucrative career were limited. Barnum secured the services of Stratton at a young age; performing in Barnum's shows was the only life he knew. Stratton and others with "extraordinary bodies" often faced social stigma and few employment opportunities outside of the amusement industry.[28]

[23] Saxon, *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 80–82.
[24] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 71.
[25] Fretz, "Performing Selves," 114, 117–119; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 123, 130, 152, 206–209; Harris, *Humbug*, 49–52.
[26] Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 100–101, 177–178, 193.
[27] Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 127–134, 187–189, 198–199.
[28] David A. Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization," in Rosemary Garland Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 51; Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 127-134; Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 100-101. Disability studies scholar Rosemary Garland Thomson uses the term "extraordinary bodies."

When crafting – or inventing – the narratives that accompanied his exhibits of people with unusual talents or physiological characteristics, Barnum tapped into political debates, racist stereotypes, and cultural anxieties among his predominantly White, middle- and working-class audiences. Starting in 1859, he presented William Henry Johnson, a Black man who had an unusually shaped head, as the missing link between apes and humans. The narrative that Barnum constructed around Johnson reinforced racial stereotypes at a time when the United States was on the brink of disunion over the issue of slavery and invited discussion of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, introduced that same year in *The Origin of Species*.[29] Exhibits of people from non-Western cultures magnified – and even fabricated – cultural and physical differences, framing these differences as indicators of an earlier stage in human evolution, a lack of "civilization," and racial inferiority. The narratives surrounding these exhibits echoed those of imperialist and scientific expeditions into Africa, Asia, and South America and reinforced ideologies of White, Western, and Christian superiority that undergirded European and American imperialism and colonialism.[30]

Barnum also revised the narratives that accompanied exhibits in response to social, cultural, and political changes. For instance, as he learned to navigate the public entertainment sphere and exert control over the narratives he presented, he substantially revised the story he told about Heth, removing details from later versions that could have provoked scrutiny and ultimately claiming little responsibility for the act's origins. His public statements reflected the fact that he, like his audience, grappled with issues of race and slavery on many levels. In an 1845 article printed in the *New York Atlas*, he boldly described his own purchase, whipping, and sale of a slave during a trip to Mississippi with no apparent concern that it would taint his reputation. In contrast, the 1869 edition of his autobiography stated, "The least deserving of all my efforts in the show line was the one [Heth] which introduced me to the business," indicating a desire to align himself with the accepted beliefs of post-Civil War society as well as perhaps an evolution in his personal stance toward slavery.[31] As this example suggests, he also reinvented elements of his own background narrative in his various autobiographical publications to suit popular taste and promote his business and entertainment ventures.[32]

Barnum had perfected his promotional techniques by the time he contacted the Swedish concert singer Jenny Lind (1820–1887) about embarking on an American tour after her 1849 retirement from the European stage. Virtually unheard of in the United States, Lind was renowned throughout Europe as the "Swedish Nightingale," celebrated not only for her angelic soprano voice but also for her piety and benevolent philanthropy. Barnum had not personally heard Lind sing but learned of her fame while on tour with Stratton. Although his professional ventures catered to prevailing popular tastes, Barnum enjoyed classical entertainment influenced by European culture, stating, "I myself relished a higher grade of amusement, and I was a frequent attendant at the opera, first-class concerts, lectures, and the like."[33] He recognized that associating with a respected classical performer like Lind could elevate his American theater to a more refined and enlightened level. On January 9, 1850, he signed a contract with Lind through an agent in Europe for a total of 150 concerts over 12 to 18 months. Barnum covered all expenses for the singer and her entourage and assumed all risk, paying Lind $1,000 per concert up front plus a portion of the net profits after 75 shows, which enabled her to establish a musical academy for girls in Stockholm. From February to September, he stoked public interest in the performer through constant newspaper

[29] Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 134–142; James W. Cook, Jr., "Of Men, Missing Links, and Nondescripts: The Strange Career of P. T. Barnum's 'What Is It?' Exhibition," in Thomson, *Freakery*, 139–154; Bernth Lindfors, "P.T. Barnum and Africa," *Studies in Popular Culture* 7 (1984): 20–23; Linda Frost, "The Circassian Beauty and the Circassian Slave: Gender, Imperialism, and American Popular Entertainment," in Thomson, *Freakery*, 248–254; Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 61–70.
[30] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 164–192; Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 197.
[31] Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*, 26, 186, 194; Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs,* 575-588.
[32] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 1–40.
[33] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 122.

coverage, competitive ticket auctions, and a song-writing contest. When Lind arrived by steamship in New York Harbor on September 1, 1850, Barnum arranged for a cheering crowd of thousands to greet her waving banners and follow her to her hotel. Lind gave her first concert on September 11, 1850, to an audience of nearly 6,000 people at Castle Garden in Battery Park, New York City. The overwhelmingly ecstatic response to her performance of a repertoire consisting of opera extracts; sacred music; English, Scottish, and Swedish ballads; and virtuoso novelty pieces exceeded Barnum's highest expectations and launched a sensational demand for her concerts.[34]

Similarly enormous crowds mobbed Lind at her subsequent appearances in 15 cities along the Eastern Seaboard and the Mississippi River, including Boston, Massachusetts; Washington, DC; Havana, Cuba; Memphis, Tennessee; and St. Louis, Missouri. Barnum always booked her at the largest auditorium and typically held highly publicized auctions for the first ticket to the initial concert in each locale to increase demand. "Lindomania" spread throughout the country and created a market for Lind-themed items as varied as chewing tobacco and paper dolls. The frenzied pace of the tour wore on both Barnum and Lind. When the group returned to New York City in early May 1851, after about 75 concerts in 9 months, Lind exercised a termination clause in her contract. She performed for the last time under Barnum's management in Philadelphia but continued to tour the United States on her own for another year, holding her final American concert at Castle Garden on May 24, 1852. The receipts from her tour with Barnum amounted to more than $700,000. Subtracting the penalty she paid for ending the contract early, Lind earned about $177,000, and Barnum profited about the same amount.[35] *Putnam's Magazine* explained the success of Lind's tour in an 1853 piece, writing that Barnum "… understands what our public wants, and how to gratify that want."[36] Barnum recognized that Lind's music and virtues resonated with an American society eager to demonstrate its "capacity of appreciating excellence" and "singular good taste" even as it participated in other, less high-brow, forms of popular culture.[37] Lind's concerts clearly manifested Barnum's conviction that entertainment could serve benevolent and educational purposes and, thus, appealed to a potentially broader audience than Joice Heth or Charles Stratton.

Museum Owner

As he explored various business endeavors in the early 1840s, Barnum discovered an alternative venue to touring for presenting amusement and curiosities to the public that ultimately made his personal fortune and defined the early part of his career as a showman. He negotiated a deal at the end of 1841 to become proprietor of the financially failing Scudder's American Museum in New York City, a collection of scientific and cultural objects housed in the upper four stories of a five-story building at the corner of Ann Street and Broadway with ground-floor retail tenants.

The museum originated in the late eighteenth century as the collections of the Tammany Society on exhibit at City Hall. A succession of private individuals owned the museum after 1795, ending with John Scudder, a

[34] Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 15; Harris, *Humbug*, 117–130; Ruth Hume, "Selling the Swedish Nightingale: Jenny Lind and P. T. Barnum," *American Heritage* 28, no. 6 (1977), http://www.americanheritage.com/content/selling-swedish-nightingale; Karen Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–1860* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 182–187; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 162–167; Kathleen Maher, *P. T. Barnum Presents the Divine Jenny Lind* (Bridgeport, CT: Barnum Museum, 2000).
[35] Maher, *P. T. Barnum Presents the Divine Jenny Lind*; Hume, "Selling the Swedish Nightingale"; Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing*, 15; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 167–170, 181.
[36] *Putnam's Magazine*, quoted in Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, xvi.
[37] *New York Tribune*, quoted in Harris, *Humbug*, 121; Maher, *P. T. Barnum Presents the Divine Jenny Lind*.

taxidermist and natural history enthusiast who ran it from 1810 to his death in 1821. A group of trustees subsequently managed the museum for Scudder's heirs, adding to its collections and moving them to the Broadway building in 1830. The American Museum successfully competed with Rubens Peale's nearby New York Museum of Natural History and Science, established in 1825, and survived the financial crash of 1837, but receipts declined over the years. In 1841, Barnum arranged to purchase the business for only $12,000.[38]

Barnum officially opened the museum as Barnum's American Museum on January 1, 1842, and quickly set out to expand its scope and audience. He invested his early profits in building improvements and publicity efforts designed to extend and advertise the museum's presence within the city. He installed paintings and flags on the exterior and floodlights on the roof, hired musicians to play daily on a lower balcony, and held contests to attract visitors. Barnum nearly tripled the museum's annual income by the end of 1842 and by the 1860s collected about $300,000 a year from the business, which sold almost 38 million tickets during the over two decades it operated.[39] He kept entrance fees low (25 cents) to encourage repeat visits and souvenir purchases. Barnum's promotional ingenuity and business acumen succeeded in turning the American Museum into a profitable establishment that successfully straddled the often fluid dichotomy between high and low culture in the nineteenth century (see *Barnum's American Museum in Context* below).

Barnum experimented briefly with museums in other locations, leasing the Peale museum in Baltimore from 1845 to 1846, purchasing a portion of the Peale Philadelphia Museum's contents for a museum he operated in that city from 1849 to 1851, and operating a museum in Boston from 1862 to 1863. He never duplicated his New York American Museum's success, however.[40] Unfortunately, a July 13, 1865, fire destroyed Barnum's American Museum and its contents. The *New York Tribune* wrote, "The destruction of no building in this city could have caused so much excitement and so much regret as that of Barnum's Museum."[41] Barnum almost immediately announced his decision to reopen and leased three adjacent buildings on the west side of Broadway for the new establishment. His rebuilt American Museum opened on November 13, 1865. Barnum sold almost 4 million tickets to the museum at its second location before another devastating fire in March 1868 ended its operations after less than three years. Barnum opted not to rebuild the business a second time and turned to other pursuits.

Barnum's American Museum in Context

Barnum's reinvention of the American Museum in New York City in the 1840s marked a watershed moment in the evolution of museums as an institution. Earlier museums in the United States typically originated, like Scudder's American Museum had in the late eighteenth century, as private scientific collections. Some owners of these so-called "cabinets of wonder and curiosities" began selling tickets to the public in the late eighteenth century.[42] Two of the country's first science and history museums, Pierre Eugène Du Simitière's American Museum in Philadelphia (open only from 1782 to 1784) and Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum (1786–1845), consisted of personal artifact collections.

After Peale's retirement in 1810, his sons Rembrandt and Rubens managed his museum and added lectures and live performances such as minstrels and impersonators to increase its appeal, thereby broadening the definition of a museum. They also expanded the museum's operations to other cities: Rembrandt opened the Baltimore

[38] Loyd Haberly, "The American Museum from Baker to Barnum," *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (July 1959), http://digitalcollections.nyhistory.org, 286–287.
[39] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 107, 113.
[40] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 97; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 112.
[41] *New York Tribune*, quoted in Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 59.
[42] Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 1.

Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts in 1814, and Rubens established the New York Museum of Natural History and Science in 1825. Within a year of opening his American Museum, Barnum secretly purchased Peale's New York Museum from Rubens' creditors in 1843 but continued to operate it under his rival's name, believing both establishments benefited from the publicity of the competition.[43]

Barnum modeled his new museum after the example set by the Peales, combining an eclectic collection of legitimate scientific and cultural artifacts with performers, lecturers, and living curiosities of a less scholarly nature.[44] He also incorporated many ideas gathered on his numerous travels, such as using wax-figure likenesses of famous personalities similar to those on display at Madame Tussaud's wax museum in London, which had opened in 1835. Inspired by the zoo at Regent's Park in London, he created the "Ocean and River Gardens" exhibit, America's first public aquarium, in 1857.[45]

The objects at the American Museum were arranged informally throughout a maze of interconnecting halls and exhibition rooms. While the general public reacted positively to the presentation, scholarly visitors complained about the inadequate labeling and lack of a systematic display. For example, a single display case might contain the teeth of a sperm whale, a Russian wooden lock, a key from the Paris Bastille, and lace from George Washington's carriage. Barnum's groupings deliberately allowed visitors to interpret the items subjectively, however, rather than according to any prescribed taxonomy.

His methods of encouraging active discussion about the museum's exhibits included inviting visitors to question the authenticity of each object, a technique he had leveraged earlier in his public display of Joice Heth. The Fejee (also spelled as Fiji) Mermaid, one of the most infamous exhibits at Barnum's American Museum, exemplified his use of advertising and controversy.[46] In 1842, Barnum agreed to display the curiosity recently acquired by his friend Moses Kimball (1809–1895), who operated museums of art and natural history in Lowell (established 1840) and Boston (established 1841), Massachusetts.[47] The "mermaid," similar to others displayed in Europe and the United States, was actually constructed from the remains of an orangutan and baboon attached to a fish tail. Barnum seized the opportunity to use the artifact as a marketing tool for his museum and a means of inviting his audiences to evaluate the items on display for themselves. As he later explained, "To modify the general incredulity as to the possibility of the existence of mermaids, and to awaken curiosity to see and examine the specimen, I invoked the potent power of printer's ink."[48] Advertisements and editorials published in newspapers across the country highlighted the Fejee Mermaid, as Barnum called it, and drew crowds to the museum.

The appeal of the Fejee Mermaid intersected with contemporary debates about species evolution, which Barnum encouraged. He also relished the controversies that arose when natural scientists declared the mermaid a fraud and accused him of deliberately deceiving the public. Barnum described his exhibit, regardless of "whether … [it] … is the work of nature or art," as "decidedly the most stupendous curiosity ever submitted to the public for

[43] Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 1–14, 21–22, 24; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 115; Harris, *Humbug*, 38–39, 42.
[44] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 146, 149.
[45] Henry Leslie Harrison, "The Temple and the Forum: The American Museum and Cultural Authority in Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, and Whitman" (Ph.D. diss., Texas A&M University, 2002), 29–32; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 92, 94, 114; Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 110.
[46] In 1939, Robert Ripley's touring museum of oddities, Ripley's Believe it Or Not!, acquired two Fiji Mermaids similar to Barnum's and captioned the exhibit "World's Greatest Fake!" (Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 130).
[47] Barnum and Kimball often engaged in joint business ventures and exchanged performers, exhibits, plays, and scenery (Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 116).
[48] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 130.

inspection."[49] He felt that his audiences paid to view all types of objects and performances and determine their legitimacy independently from any cultural authority.[50] Barnum acknowledged, however, the disingenuous nature of the mermaid exhibit, writing later, "I used my mermaid mainly to advertise the regular business of the Museum, and this effective indirect advertising is the only feature I can commend, in a special show of which, I confess, I am not proud."[51]

Some of the scientists and naturalists who had enjoyed congenial relationships with the proprietors of Scudder's American Museum and Peale's Philadelphia Museum lamented the diminished emphasis on scientific research and lower caliber of the specimen collections in establishments like Barnum's museum.[52] However, Barnum maintained close associations with many of the country's leading scientists, naturalists, animal keepers, and museum curators and kept informed about mid-nineteenth-century shifts in intellectual thought that influenced their work. Although he joked about not knowing much natural history, he developed a reputation among his contemporaries as a zoologist.[53] Barnum corresponded often with Joseph Henry (1797–1878), a scientist who became an advocate and the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, established in 1846. Another of his close friends, the Swiss scholar Louis Agassiz (1807–1873) noted for his study and classification of ecological environments, established the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1859—the same year that Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*. The collections of these newer science and natural history museums were typically organized systematically to demonstrate contemporary scientific theories and research. During these ideological shifts in museum purpose and vision, Barnum continued to offer both recreational amusement and intellectual instruction in his establishment.[54]

The integration of multiple forms of entertainment under one roof and their accessibility to a broad spectrum of society distinguished Barnum's museum from the more specialized and restricted institutions geared toward the educated and upper levels of society. Barnum's establishment catered to all classes of spectator: farmers, tradesmen, apprentices, laborers, scientists, writers, statesmen, religious leaders, and ambassadors. His exhibits appealed to men and women across generations and ethnicities, although Barnum restricted access by African American patrons to certain days and times and on a segregated basis until after the Civil War.[55] Barnum later described his intentions regarding the American Museum: "The one end aimed at was to make men and women think and talk and wonder, and, as a practical result, go to the Museum. This was my constant study and occupation."[56] By combining entertainment with education, he not only endowed his museum with a layer of respectability but also increased ticket sales. In the process, he created an alternative forum for people of all types to learn about the world around them. Exhibitors demonstrated technological inventions such as sewing machines and traditional crafts such as ivory carving and glassblowing. The individuals he employed included giants and giantesses, dwarves, albinos, and the Swiss Bearded Lady displayed for their bodily differences alongside vocalists, phrenologists, fortune-tellers, and people from non-Western cultures. Barnum's American Museum

[49] Quoted in Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 122.
[50] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 116; Harrison, "The Temple and the Forum," 32–33; Jenny Fields Scofield et al., "Barnum Institute of Science and History," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2010), Sec. 8, p. 7.
[51] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 117–118.
[52] William T. Alderson, ed., *Mermaids, Mummies, and Mastodons: The Emergence of the American Museum* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1992), 33–34.
[53] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 95.
[54] Alderson, ed., *Mermaids, Mummies, and Mastodons*, 38; Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*.
[55] Cook, *Arts of Deception*, 24; Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 107–108.
[56] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 125.

represents a key turning point in the history of exhibiting people with unusual physical characteristics and abilities for entertainment. He institutionalized their presentation, and his methods were widely copied in similar venues such dime museums and circus sideshows.[57]

Barnum devoted particular attention to the museum's Lecture Room, where he strove to create a decorous atmosphere for reputable, family-friendly theater that stood in direct contrast to the impropriety associated with most other venues in New York City. Earlier museums typically contained small lecture rooms that hosted natural history talks or scientific demonstrations, but by the mid-nineteenth century urban museums often offered theater as well. Barnum presented theatrical performances and variety acts such as magic-lantern shows, juggling, and ventriloquism in his Lecture Room, which he expanded to accommodate over 3,000 people by 1850. He also modernized the physical space to convey respectability, adding a full balcony, chandelier, gilded architectural ornament, damask upholstery, and a hand-painted drop curtain depicting scenes of the United States Capitol. The resident acting company staged carefully selected plays by well-known authors (including Shakespeare); shows about biblical subjects; spectacles and fantasy type shows; and ballets. The most popular contemporary works such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *The Drunkard*, and *Ten Nights in a Barroom* addressed slavery and temperance themes. Barnum generally adapted the scripts, however, to remove particularly confrontational or tragic scenes that might deter people from attending the shows.[58] He boasted in 1865, "No vulgar word or gesture and not a profane expression was ever allowed on my stage! Even in Shakespeare's plays, I unflinchingly and invariably cut out vulgarity and profanity."[59]

Barnum intentionally cultivated a family-friendly environment at his museum that filled a void in nineteenth-century entertainment. Museums in general gained a reputation as safer, more polite, and less bawdy than many theaters of the period, which were infamous for their in-house bars and admittance of prostitutes. Barnum insisted on the respectability of his enterprise, writing in 1850: "My whole aim and effort is to make my museums [at that time he also operated a museum in Philadelphia] totally unobjectionable to the religious and moral community, and at the same time combine sufficient amusement with instruction to please all proper tastes and to train the mind of youth to reject as repugnant anything inconsistent with moral and refined tastes."[60] His Universalist faith in a "cheerful Christianity" and the salvation of all men and women motivated his pursuit of wholesome amusement and recreation and informed many of his business decisions.[61] Barnum also used his museum to advocate for temperance, a cause he strongly supported after signing a pledge to personally abstain from alcohol in 1847.[62] Liquor and intoxicated visitors were prohibited inside the museum, and Barnum claimed that most of his staff were teetotalers. He hired undercover security staff to manage public safety and escort unruly or intoxicated visitors out of the building. In his many lectures advocating teetotalism, Barnum advertised the success of the museum's performances of *The Drunkard* in converting many visitors to renounce drink.[63]

---

[57] Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 11; Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 58–59; Thomson, *Freakery*, 3–5, 43.
[58] Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 54, 124; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 104–106, 108; Philip B. Kunhardt Jr. et al., *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 105–109. Barnum elected to present playwright H.J. Conway's version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which muted the novel's critique of slavery and included blackface choruses and caricatured depictions of enslaved people, rather than the more well-known version of the play by George Aiken, whose adaptation preserved the anti-slavery tone and sentimentality of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel. In 1856, as antislavery sentiment spread, he replaced Conway's version with Aiken's. (Cook, *Arts of Deception*, 141-142; Cook in Thomson, 149-150; Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 130–139).
[59] Quoted in Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 107.
[60] Quoted in Fretz, "Performing Selves," 140.
[61] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 52.
[62] Barnum published a pamphlet on temperance in 1853 titled *The Liquor Business: Its Effects on the Minds, Morals, and Pockets of Our People* (Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 355).
[63] Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 99; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 62–64.

After his first American Museum burned in 1865, Barnum asked his friend, the author and lecturer Bayard Taylor, to help him persuade every large museum in Europe to contribute artifacts for his new museum, hoping to obtain "a full collection of specimens of natural history in all its departments." He intended the second American Museum to "be of a much higher grade than the other was, although the price must remain thirty cts. for the accommodation of the million."[64] He also considered the idea of establishing a "Free National Museum" adjacent to the new paying one. He wrote to Taylor (referring to himself in the third person): "Astor gave the public a library; Cooper gave them an institute. … Why should not Barnum (who in fact was always more of a philanthropist than a humbug) establish a free museum for the instruction and edification of the Youth of America!"[65] Barnum had begun to embark on some philanthropic endeavors in the early 1860s (see ***Changing Fortunes*** below), but he also sensed a shift beginning to occur in public perceptions of his museums. American newspapers in the 1860s decried the country's lack of respectable public cultural institutions like those in Europe, and Barnum responded by defending his business model as one that appealed to a range of public interests.[66] In an August 1865 letter to the editor of *The Nation* (the successor to the American abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*), Barnum wrote: "I know my Museum was not so refined or classic or scientifically arranged as the foreign governmental institutions; for mine had to support my family… I was obliged to popularize it, and while I still held on to the 'million [*sic*] of curiosities,' millions of persons were only induced to see them because, at the same time, they could see whales, giants, dwarfs, Albinos, dog shows, et cetera."[67]

Barnum's free museum idea was not realized before the destruction of his second American Museum in 1868, and Barnum directed most of his attention and resources to his circus businesses in the 1870s and 1880s. However, for the rest of his life, he donated money and objects to support others' development of public science and natural history museums, including the Smithsonian Institution and the American Museum of Natural History (established by one of Agassiz's former students in 1869). A founding trustee of Tufts College in Medford, Massachusetts, from 1852 to 1857, Barnum contributed $50,000 toward the construction of the Barnum Museum of Natural History at Tufts, which opened on June 18, 1884.[68] He also sent the Tufts museum various natural specimens, such as mounted skins and skeletons from animals who had died in his circus, including Jumbo's hide. His creation of the Barnum Institute of Science and History in his hometown of Bridgeport, Connecticut, in the late 1880s (see **Barnum Institute of Science and History** below) reflected his belief in the cultural value of museums and his commitment to the betterment of American society.[69]

Other urban entrepreneurs tried to capitalize on Barnum's formula for combining entertainment and education in a single place and marketing it to a wider audience using a variety of popular diversions. These establishments, often categorized broadly as "dime museums," ranged in size from small storefront exhibition rooms to ambitious five-story halls like Barnum's with admission ranging from 10 cents (a dime) to 50 cents. After the final demise

[64] Joel J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740–1870* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 226. Barnum had raised the museum entrance fee to 30 cents shortly before the first museum burned.
[65] Quoted in Harrison, "The Temple and the Forum," 37–38; Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 226. Wealthy merchant John Jacob Astor established a free public library in New York City that opened in 1854 and later consolidated with two other organizations to become the New York Public Library. In 1859, wealthy industrialist Peter Cooper established the free college Cooper Union, referred to informally in the nineteenth century as the Cooper Institute.
[66] Orosz, *Curators and Culture*, 232.
[67] P. T. Barnum, "Mr. Barnum on Museums," *Liberator* 25 (August 1865), 136.
[68] Barnum was close friends with Reverend Elmer H. Capen, the third president of Tufts College, which was founded by Universalists in 1852. Barnum's contributions to the school totaled about $100,000, including money allocated in his will for the addition of two wings to the museum building. A 1975 fire severely damaged the building and destroyed the collections (Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 57).
[69] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 55–56, 109–112.

of Barnum's American Museum in 1868, George B. Bunnell opened the New American Museum in 1876 with Barnum as a silent partner. Bunnell's museum imitated Barnum's establishment in name, design, and attractions and operated at various locations in New York City until 1887. Other examples of similar museums in New York City were Worth's Museum (later Huber's Museum, 1888–1910), Worth's Model Museum and Family Theatre (1891), John B. Doris's Eighth and Harlem street museums (1889–1892), and numerous enterprises in the Bowery neighborhood.[70] The Ninth and Arch Museum in Philadelphia (1885–1911), Austin and Stone's Museum in Boston (circa 1885–circa 1905), and the Libby Prison Museum in Chicago (1889–1900) also followed Barnum's model.[71]

In the post-Civil War United States, however, a clear distinction emerged in popular culture between the dime museums at one end of the spectrum, intended to entertain and amuse, and the scholarly museums at the other end, intended to enlighten and educate.[72] Except at some explicitly family-oriented establishments, the dime museums developed a reputation for lower-class amusements, while newly formed public art and natural history museums became the preferred venue for the middle and upper classes. Large public endowed museums like the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1870) in New York City and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1876) in Boston did not compete directly with proprietary museums but, like the Smithsonian, were promoted as more organized, specialized, and scholarly scientific or artistic institutions. A place for Barnum's "middlebrow amusement hall" that combined intellectual pursuits with commercial amusements in ways acceptable to a broader cross-section of Americans no longer seemed to exist.[73]

Changing Fortunes

The success of Barnum's American Museum and the Stratton (Tom Thumb) and Lind tours in the 1840s and 1850s gave Barnum financial stability and enabled him to amass additional wealth. After the birth of his fourth and last daughter in April 1846, he commissioned the construction of an elaborate Oriental-style mansion he called Iranistan on 17 acres he purchased in Fairfield, Connecticut. He also invested in several lucrative business and real estate ventures in Bridgeport in the late 1840s and early 1850s, including the development of the neighborhood of East Bridgeport, the establishment of Mountain Grove Cemetery (where Barnum is buried), and the organization of the Pequonnock Bank. The first edition of Barnum's self-promotional autobiography, published near the end of 1854 and still in print today, fittingly contained a chapter titled "Rules for Success in Business."[74]

Barnum's rise in fortunes halted in the mid-to-late 1850s, however, as the national economy fluctuated and caused his real estate revenues and museum ticket sales to decline.[75] At the beginning of 1856, he filed for bankruptcy, largely as a result of an unwise business deal with a New Haven-based clock company. The previous year, he had transferred the lease on the American Museum building to his wife and sold the museum collections to some New York investors, likely as an attempt to protect those assets during his financial difficulties, although he still managed the museum's operations. On October 20, 1857, Iranistan burned to the ground. While negotiating the settlement of his debts through trustees, Barnum earned money lecturing in London and New York for several years but remained closely involved with the museum, continuing to sign new exhibits and performance acts. The question of when he resolved his financial affairs and became solvent again remains open, but he announced his

[70] Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 45, 56–61.
[71] Ibid., 41–45.
[72] Ibid., 65; Lehman, *Becoming Tom Thumb*, 214.
[73] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 115.
[74] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 150, 154, 192–193.
[75] Harris, *Humbug*, 106.

repurchase of the American Museum collections on March 24, 1860, and began construction that year on a new, less ostentatious house in Fairfield, called Lindencroft.[76]

Perhaps sobered by the bankruptcy, Barnum's public priorities subsequently shifted in a more altruistic direction. Barnum spoke of his bankruptcy as a turning point and a lesson about "discipline" and too much reliance on "the Almighty Dollar."[77] Although he resumed his real estate and showman ventures, he also devoted more time and money to what he called "profitable philanthropy."[78] For example, in 1865, he donated waterfront land to the City of Bridgeport for the creation of Seaside Park. His politics also changed, as he transferred his loyalties to the Republican party in support of Abraham Lincoln and the preservation of the Union. Barnum entered public service with his April 1865 election on the Republican ticket to represent Fairfield in the Connecticut General Assembly. Barnum advocated for the extension of voting rights to African Americans in a passionate speech before the state legislature in May 1865 at the end of the Civil War.[79]

After the fires that claimed his first museum and its replacement in New York City in 1865 and 1868 and an unsuccessful run for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1867, Barnum decided to step away from business and politics for a brief period. He sold Lindencroft and moved in 1869 to a newly built estate called Waldemere on the waterfront adjacent to Seaside Park in Bridgeport. His daughters and their families each had summer cottages on the property, and Barnum opened the estate grounds to the public as an extension of the park.

Barnum returned to public life in the 1870s, serving on various Bridgeport boards and commissions and getting elected as the city's mayor in the spring of 1875. During his single one-year term, Barnum attempted to reform city water and gas light contracts and faithfully promoted the city's assets. Although he did not run again for local office, he represented Bridgeport in 1878 and 1879 in the state legislature, where he led the Temperance Committee and an unsuccessful effort to abolish capital punishment. He continued to invest in real estate, owning at least $1.5 million in property throughout the country by early 1880.[80] He also continued to give paid lectures on temperance and other subjects and traveled widely throughout North America and to Cuba with his British friend (and future father-in-law) John Fish.[81] His first wife, Charity, died on November 18, 1873, and Barnum married John Fish's daughter Nancy Fish (1850–1927) the following year.[82]

Reimagining the Circus

The business venture that ultimately defined the second half of Barnum's career—the circus—began in the fall of 1870, when Barnum agreed to partner with the managers of a small circus and "Egyptian Caravan." He expanded the show to include an extensive menagerie of exotic animals and a museum of curiosities not unlike those previously on display at the American Museum. "P. T. Barnum's Museum, Menagerie and Circus" opened in Brooklyn on April 10, 1871, then traveled throughout New England and New York. Barnum primarily handled the show's publicity and sometimes traveled with it.

For the second season, the managers introduced the innovative approach of transporting the entire circus solely by train for efficiency. The renamed "P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exposition and World's Fair," billed as

[76] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 201–203.
[77] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*, 497–498.
[78] Quoted in Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 252.
[79] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 204–205, 215–224.
[80] Ibid., 263-277.
[81] Ibid., 214–215, 225.
[82] Ibid., 246, 253.

"The Greatest Show on Earth," also included for the first time a second performance ring. In each subsequent season, Barnum further improved the traveling show as he replaced the individual "humbugs" of his earlier career with a flamboyant profusion of endlessly varying spectacle, including dazzling pageants and exotic menageries. He also expanded his promotional efforts, commissioning an advertising coach to precede the circus train tour and plastering large-scale color lithograph posters on the walls of buildings in cities along the tour. Barnum's animals, performers, and other curiosities participated in the traveling show and events staged at the Great Roman Hippodrome, an immense arena he opened in 1874 on several acres of leased land in Manhattan. The Vanderbilt family acquired the property in 1879 and changed the Hippodrome's name to Madison Square Garden. Over 2,500 people on average attended Barnum's circus shows by the late 1870s, and rival managers vied to create bigger and better attractions.[83]

In 1880, Barnum formed a business partnership with James Anthony Bailey (1847–1906), the manager of a competing circus, and Bailey's friend James L. Hutchinson. In an early example of self-branding, the agreement granted the new company formed by the three men exclusive use of the Barnum name for shows, but notably reserved Barnum's right to use the name for any museum he might establish separately.[84] Four years earlier, Barnum had stipulated in the 1876 contract for his museum partnership with Bunnell (see ***Barnum's American Museum in Context*** above) that his name "not be divulged nor used in this enterprise," apparently because his earlier circus partners were insisting they had the rights to it.[85] To clarify this issue, the circus contract dated August 26, 1880, explicitly outlined the terms of use for Barnum's name: "The said Barnum grants to this Company the absolute and exclusive use of his name in all civilized countries for Circus, Menagerie, and Animal Exhibitions and all shows incidental thereto during the existence of this contract, except in the City of New York, where this Company cannot exhibit more than six weeks in any one year, without the consent of said Barnum and of the proprietors of any permanent Museum with which said Barnum may be connected in said City. But nothing herein contained shall prevent said Barnum from using his name in connection with any Museum in the cities of Philadelphia, Pa, Brooklyn NY, and Chicago Ill."[86] Barnum had long realized the value in promoting his own name to generate publicity for his endeavors and now ensured that his business partners also understood that the Barnum brand was a commodity in and of itself.

The two circuses—P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exposition and World's Fair and the Cooper, Bailey & Co.'s Circus—initially operated separately but merged for the 1881 season, and Barnum had a permanent winter's quarters for the combined shows constructed in Bridgeport. The typical season lasted 32 weeks, opening to crowds of 10,000 people at Madison Square Garden in New York City, then touring the northeastern states before heading to cities and towns throughout the Midwest. Weekly admission sales varied, but the show's 1883 season took in

[83] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 231–247; Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 505; Harris, *Humbug*, 244–246, 249; Kunhardt et al., *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman*, 242, 252; Janet M. Davis, "America's Big Circus Spectacular Has a Long and Cherished History," *Smithsonian Magazine* (March 22, 2017); Bluford Adams, "'A Stupendous Mirror of Departed Empires": The Barnum Hippodromes and Circuses, 1874-1891," *American Literary History* 8, no. 1 (1996): 34-56.

[84] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 283. Although self- or personal-branding as it is known today is a relatively new concept that dates to the late 1990s, the seeds of the concept are visible in many of the marketing and advertising strategies pursued by Barnum and other notable nineteenth-century entrepreneurs like Lydia Pinkham with vegetable compound medicines and Samuel Colt with firearms manufacturing, who successfully exploited their name recognition to sell products or experiences.

[85] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 109, 267; Agreement between Bunnell and Barnum, November 2, 1876, P. T. Barnum Research Collection, Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

[86] Salmagundi Ledger Manuscript, 116–119, P. T. Barnum Research Collection, Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

over 1 million dollars.[87] In early 1882, Barnum acquired from the London Zoological Society an African elephant named Jumbo, the circus's star attraction until his death in a train accident in September 1885.[88]

Bailey retired temporarily for health reasons in 1885, and Barnum partnered with other men to handle the circus operations until Bailey returned in 1887 and they formed the new partnership of Barnum & Bailey. With Barnum approaching 80 years of age, he left much of the day-to-day operations to Bailey but spearheaded an effort to bring the circus to London in 1889 and remained involved, maintaining a business office at Madison Square Garden, until his death in 1891. The London *Times* described the elements that drew British crowds to the show, during the three-month tour: "It is precisely in the immensity, the complexity, the kaleidoscopic variety, and to use the word in its strict etymological sense, the incomprehensibility of the show that Mr. Barnum's genius is displayed."[89] Barnum and his fellow circus managers had transformed a European circus tradition into a thoroughly American cultural institution at the end of the nineteenth century that persisted as a popular family-friendly amusement into the twenty-first century.[90]

Bailey became the sole owner of the Barnum & Bailey enterprise in 1894, three years after Barnum's death, and repeated the success of the show's earlier European tour in 1897. Charles and John Ringling, owners of a circus established in Wisconsin in 1884, acquired Barnum & Bailey's Circus after Bailey's death in 1906. The Ringling brothers ran the two circuses separately through 1918, then merged them into the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which operated until May 2017.[91]

Barnum Institute of Science and History

P. T. Barnum conceived the Barnum Institute of Science and History (the Barnum Institute) in his hometown of Bridgeport, Connecticut, as a research library, museum, and lecture hall by 1886. He intended it would serve as a place of exposition and intellectual exchange and as an architectural gem that Bridgeport's citizens would cherish and visitors would admire. He planned the Institute to house primarily the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BSS) and Fairfield County Historical Society (FCHS), with space also allotted for the Bridgeport Medical Association (BMA). Between 1886 and 1891, Barnum donated the land and funds for the construction of the museum, chose the architects and approved the design plans, donated select collections, and devised a plan for its future financial security. Barnum's conception and development of the Institute at the end of his life demonstrated his interest in the promotion of public investment, as well as his efforts to establish institutions of enlightenment that were accessible to all citizens.

The BSS organized in 1877 for the purposes of scientific promotion, investigation, and instruction.[92] The group encouraged citizens to become interested in science and support its advances and held courses and public lecture series. Barnum contributed $100 to the organization in 1888, with a promise of further assistance up to $1,000, and spoke at its November 1888 meeting.[93] The FCHS officially incorporated on February 4, 1881, "for the

[87] Harris, *Humbug*, 254.
[88] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 288, 291–297; Kunhardt et al., *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman*, 342.
[89] London *Times*, quoted in Harris, *Humbug*, 275.
[90] Davis, "America's Big Circus Spectacular Has a Long and Cherished History."
[91] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 329; Sarah Maslin Nir and Nate Schweber, "After 146 Years, Ringling Brothers Circus Takes Its Final Bow," *New York Times* (May 21, 2017).
[92] George Curtis Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport* (Bridgeport, CT: The Standard Association, 1897), 91.
[93] Robert Pelton, "The Barnum Museum: Past, Present, and Future" *Discovery* 21, no. 1 (1988): 45; Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BSS), Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT.

promotion and encouragement of Historical, Antiquarian, and Genealogical Investigation."[94] The FCHS grew to 39 people by 1882 and elected Barnum to its membership on February 13, 1885.[95] Both societies sought space in the 1880s for their expanding memberships, programs, and archival collections. The BMA first organized in 1867 and formally incorporated on May 5, 1893, "for the study and discussion of medical and surgical topics and scientific subjects relative thereto."[96]

Barnum selected the museum site, bought the land, and donated it to the BSS and FCHS in 1886.[97] The property was conveniently located in downtown Bridgeport on a prominent corner lot facing Main Street near the freight platform of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad.[98] The site was previously occupied by one building housing a Chinese laundry, with ample space around it and dwelling houses nearby. Codicil 1, Article 9 of Barnum's will, dated May 4, 1889, states that he donated:

> … Fifty Thousand Dollars, to be expended by said Societies in erecting a building on a lot of land situate [*sic*] 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 ….[99]

Due to his experience with his New York City American Museum, Barnum had the foresight to consider the ability of the BSS and FHCS to maintain the building and operate the organizations by including the concept of a ground floor with storefronts that could be rented to generate income for building maintenance. He also specified that one 14-foot by 18-foot room be designated "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."[100] The other two societies would possess an equal share of the remainder of the building, and Barnum directed them to keep it in good repair.[101]

Recognizing that the building would cost more than he initially allotted, Barnum willed an additional $10,000 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, three weeks before his death.[102] The last entry in his will (Codicil 8, Article 1) completed on March 30, 1891, stipulated payment for the new building:

---

[94] Fairfield County Historical Society (FCHS), *Articles of Association, By-Laws, List of Members, and First Anniversary Meeting, April 14, 1882* (Bridgeport, CT: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1882), 4; Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport*, 91.
[95] FCHS, *Articles of Association*, 8; FCHS, *Annual Report of the Fairfield County Historical Society for 1891–2* (Bridgeport, CT: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1892), 112.
[96] Francis H. Brown, *The Medical Register for New England* (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1895), 114; *Special Acts and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, at the January Session, 1893* (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1893), 412–413.
[97] Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport*, 90.
[98] Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1884).
[99] P. T. Barnum, Wills and Codicils of Phineas Taylor Barnum, 1891 (On file, Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT), 27–28.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 28–29.
[102] Ibid., 52; FCHS, *Annual Report*, 10, 17.

> Whereas I have heretofore provided for the erection of a building on a lot of land … for the FHS [*sic*] and the BSS … Therefore it is my will that … if the same as now contracted for, shall not be finished and paid for by me, during my life-time, then I direct and authorize my Executors to finish and pay for the same out of my estate, and I hereby empower them to do all things necessary and proper to be done in the premises.[103]

Barnum chose and hired the architectural firm Longstaff & Hurd to design the building. 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 had married Barnum's second daughter, Helen, in 1857 and worked as his circus treasurer and assistant manager beginning in the 1870s. Barnum's primary interest was making sure that the Institute building appeared as an attractive, engaging, and curiosity-provoking monument when viewed from the exterior. The *Bridgeport Daily Standard* reported on April 14, 1891, that BSS President Holden spoke with Barnum about one month earlier about the building and that Barnum had related the following:

> I am not at all particular how the interior of the building is arranged. You can fit that to suit yourselves. What I care about is the exterior. You know Mr. Holden that I'm a showman, and I want the outside of that building to make a grand show, a beautiful appearance. I want that building to be such that when I am laid away visitors to the city will not pass it by without an inquiry or a look of curiosity. I want that structure to loom up in grandeur so that people when first their eyes rest upon it will start back in surprise and say 'What building is that?' Then I want the Bridgeporter to be able to say with pride, 'Why that's the building Barnum gave to the Scientific and Historical Societies.' That's the kind of building I want to leave behind me, Mr. Holden, and I have arranged matters so that the plans I have accepted will be carried out to the letter.[104]

A sketch of the proposed building had appeared in the local newspaper after Barnum signed the contract with Longstaff and Hurd (Figure 2). Published on March 21, 1891, while Barnum was still alive, the accompanying article predicted: "As will be seen, it [the Barnum Institute 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."[105] The article thoroughly described the architectural style, material, design and use of the building: "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 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." 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." The elegant planned building and Barnum's generous gift were of sufficient national note that the *New York Times* and *Scientific American* printed articles of admiration and praise in the following weeks.[106]

---

[103] Barnum, Wills and Codicils, 52.
[104] *Bridgeport Daily Standard*, "A Showman to the End," 14 April 1891.
[105] *Bridgeport Daily Standard*, "Pure Romanesque in Style. The New Scientific and Historical Building," 21 March 1891; FCHS, *Annual Report*.
[106] New York Times, "Barnum's Gift to Bridgeport: A Fine Building for the Scientific and Historical Societies." 23 March 1891; Scientific American, "The Barnum Institute of Science and History." 11 April 1891.

The use of the Romanesque motifs for the purpose of a museum and public monument was described as "one that seems to be especially adapted for such a building, affording ample opportunity for artistic ornamentation."[107] Barnum's choice of the Romanesque style aligned with popular aesthetic taste of the period and may also have been influenced by other contemporary museums. The 1884 Barnum Museum of Natural History at Tufts (Barnum's other late-life philanthropic museum project) and the Seventy-Seventh Street wings of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (constructed in the 1890) are masonry Romanesque buildings. The New York building has multiple astronomical observatory towers similar to the one on the roof of the Barnum Institute.

In addition to the monumental quality of the masonry and ornamental carvings, specific design features of the Barnum Institute that catered to museum use included the recessed balconies and dome that contributed to the functionality of the lecture hall, the multiple street entrances, the grand staircase for ease of vertical circulation, the gallery lit by skylights, and sliding doors for space flexibility. The stone carvings on the exterior of the building provided additional exhibition surfaces for depictions of historical figures and events. A stone bust of Barnum was installed on the wall of the main stair landing. The typical use of heavy masonry for Romanesque buildings also satisfied one of Barnum's primary concerns—fireproofing. The Barnum Institute was constructed after Barnum's two New York Museums, the first winter circus quarters in Bridgeport, and his prized Iranistan mansion had been destroyed by fire and after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. New fireproof construction technologies developed in the United States in the 1870s became standard practice through the early twentieth century,[108] and Barnum ensured that the Bridgeport building not only was constructed of fireproof brick, stone, and terra cotta but also had a fireproof stairway and fireproof vaults for artifact storage.[109]

Barnum did not live to see the construction of the Barnum Institute, however. A stroke at the end of 1890 left him in failing health, and he died on April 7, 1891, at the age of 80. On February 18, 1893, the BSS and FCHS held a ceremony to open the building, which ultimately cost about $85,000 to construct.[110] As Barnum intended, it incorporated three entrances: a prominent corner entrance for the first-floor storefronts, the northeast Gilbert Street entrance to the BSS exhibit on the first floor, and the southwest Main Street tower entrance to the grand staircase leading to the FCHS library and museum on the second floor (Figure 3). The first, second and third floors each had a fireproof vault for archival storage in the southeast corner. The BMA room on the second floor faced Main Street. The third floor contained the auditorium with seating for several hundred people and a circular dome ceiling in the northwest corner; this floor also had offices and other conveniences. At the dedication ceremony, a FCHS representative noted that the organization's "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."[111] A BSS representative explained that his organization was formed "for the study of special subjects, such as chemistry, electricity, mineralogy, geology, entomology, etc."[112]

The mission of the Institute reflected and embodied the more mature scholarly approach to museums that Barnum publicly espoused in his later years. From 1893 to 1934, it functioned primarily as originally conceived, i.e., as a collection repository, exhibit space, and resource library for the historical and scientific societies and as a lecture

[107] Ibid.
[108] Sara Wermeil, "The Development of Fireproof Construction in Great Britain and the United States in the Nineteenth Century," *Construction History* 9 (1993):16.
[109] *Bridgeport Daily Standard*, "Pure Romanesque in Style. The New Scientific and Historical Building," 21 March 1891.
[110] Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport*, 90; *New York Times*, "The Barnum Institute Dedicated," 19 February 1893.
[111] FCHS, *Annual Report*, 9.
[112] Ibid., 31.

hall where papers of scientific and historical interest were presented and discussed. Admission prices listed in the program for the 1897–1898 lecture season were 25 cents for a single lecture and $3.00 for the entire course of lectures. Speakers that season included artist John F. Weir, the founding director of Yale's School of Fine Arts; botanist William H. Brewer, the first Chair of Agriculture at Yale's Sheffield Scientific School; ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City; paleontologist Jacob L. Wortman, also at the American Museum of Natural History; Bridgeport medical doctor George L. Porter; and astronomy lecturer Mary Proctor. Lecture titles included "Our Common Birds in Their Haunts," "Some of the More Recent Evidences of Evolution," "From Vera Cruz to Mexico City," and "Water Supply of Cities."[113] Such notable individuals as inventors Thomas Edison and the Wright Brothers were speakers in the early decades, continuing the tradition of intellectual and scientific lectures that Barnum had offered since the 1840s at his American Museum.[114] The Institute's programming also included topics suggested by the public in the spirit of Barnum's encouragement of perpetual curiosity. Unlike Barnum's earlier museums, however, the Institute focused on scientific research and study and avoided the oddities and amusements typically associated with less scholarly dime museums.[115]

The collections and programs of the BSS and FCHS were managed autonomously. The BSS collection consisted 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 (Figure 4). The FCHS collection contained Colonial artifacts, military memorabilia, and other objects representing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American material culture and decorative arts (Figure 5). In addition, Barnum and his second wife, Nancy Fish Barnum, bequeathed or donated a large number of personal documents, papers, and objects to the Institute such as mementos; a bust of singer Jenny Lind; and furniture from Iranistan, the original Bridgeport home of P. T. Barnum and his first wife, Charity Hallett Barnum (Figure 6). The FCHS's second-floor museum space incorporated a Barnum Alcove set apart by draperies for all Barnum-related material.[116] The first section of a collection inventory completed in 1936 titled "P. T. Barnum exhibit" likely represented the alcove and adjacent areas. The inventory included 39 items that had belonged to Barnum, including furniture, two busts, a few garments, small objects like a coffee cup and saucer, a glass inkwell, a locket of hair, a Bible, his address and memo books, and the taxidermied elephant Baby Bridgeport, which Barnum had given to the BSS in 1887.[117]

During its first four years, the Institute had "thousands of visitors from Bridgeport and abroad."[118] The total number of visitors in 1917 was 1,821, which increased to 3,149 in 1921.[119] Awareness of the collections was wide reaching, and most visitors came from outside Bridgeport.[120] In 1922, the *Bridgeport Telegram* reported that "of the four hundred visitors who make a trip to the museum every month, three fourths are from out of town."[121] In 1924, total visitation was reported as 5,000 people "who came from far and wide."[122] Visitors came to see the

[113] Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BSS), Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT.
[114] Scofield et al., "Barnum Institute," Sec. 8, p. 10; Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport*.
[115] Records of the BSS.
[116] FCHS, *Annual Report*, 10.
[117] The majority of these items remain in the collection. Exceptions are the lock of hair, the nightcap, pen cleaner, and a small framed picture of the baby elephant. The lack of descriptions for several small items like the "framed picture of P. T. Barnum" (no. 37), and "small glass case" (no. 11) makes it hard to say definitively if the museum still has those particular items. Some smaller objects may have taken by visitors in the early twentieth century. A *Bridgeport Telegram* news article on April 5, 1922, noted that visitors were stealing exhibit items.
[118] Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport*, 90.
[119] *Bridgeport Telegram*, "Barnum Institute Draws Tourists from Other Cities," 5 April 1922, 15.
[120] *Bridgeport Telegram*, Letter to the Editor, 7 April 1922, 18.
[121] *Bridgeport Telegram*, 5 April 1922, 15.
[122] *Bridgeport Telegram*, "Algonquin Club Held a Barnum Night Smoker," 9 February 1925.

various exhibits and notably the Barnum Collection artifacts such as the Baby Bridgeport elephant at the entrance; an alligator; an Egyptian mummy; a suit of Japanese armor; a miniature reproduction of General Tom Thumb; collections of birds, minerals, and shells; and Barnum's personal belongings all under a glass case. One reporter noted, in true Barnum fashion, that "The museum is well worth visiting if not out of a patriotic feeling, then for the sake of curiosity."[123]

Without Barnum leading the enterprise, however, the private organizations running the Institute found it difficult to implement his concept for commercial use of the first-floor shop fronts to provide financial sustainability for the Institute's educational and entertainment purposes. The BSS and FCHS instead devised a short-term financing plan based on three-year promises of annual pledges valued at a total of $2,500 per year.[124] Nancy Fish Barnum's pledge of $1,500 per year for two years in Barnum's honor helped establish the Institute. Despite these efforts, the societies struggled financially and merged into one organization called the Bridgeport Scientific and Historical Society in 1899.[125] 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.[126]

When the Great Depression threatened the Institute's existence, the City of Bridgeport took title of the Barnum Institute property in 1934 in a friendly tax foreclosure to collect liens and taxes from 1919 to 1933 amounting to $48,000.[127] The City closed the building for two years and reopened it in 1936 with the Institute collections displayed on the third floor and city offices on the first and second floors.[128] The collections remained intact, but the exhibit space was compacted. The City's decision to provide the fiscal resources to preserve the building and museum demonstrated the enduring importance of the Institute and the collections it housed.

Barnum's Legacy

Right up to the end of his life, Barnum attempted to define his public legacy in ways similar to those he had employed throughout the previous decades. He continued to use the power of the press to advertise himself and direct his narrative. In the days of illness before his death on April 7, 1891, newspapers around the world reported on Barnum's long and varied career as "The Great Showman," treating his final moments as a spectacle not unlike those he had produced. The New York *Evening Sun*, in an unusual editorial move as a final favor to Barnum, published his obituary in advance on March 24, with the title, "Great and Only Barnum, He Wanted to Read His Obituary; Here it is."[129]

In the months leading up to his death, Barnum added multiple codicils to his will to orchestrate various charitable bequests. The *Bridgeport Farmer* described the will on April 11, 1891, as "… characteristic of the man, it being voluminous in point of detail and verbiage, and reflecting many changes of mind subsequent to the time he began its construction … without doubt the most lengthy document of its kind ever executed in this city, and one of the longest ever executed in the world." Throughout his life, Barnum spoke about the importance of charity and contributed substantial sums to numerous causes he supported. Organizations in addition to the Barnum Institute that benefited from his generous philanthropy included the Bridgeport First Universalist Society, Bridgeport Public Library, Bridgeport Hospital, Bridgeport Scientific Society, Fairfield County Historical Society, and

[123] *Bridgeport Telegram*, 5 April 1922, 15.
[124] FCHS, *Annual Report*, 15.
[125] Pelton, "The Barnum Museum," 46.
[126] Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1913).
[127] *Bridgeport Telegram*, "20 Years Ago in the Post: From Our Files, September 29, 1934," 29 September 1954.
[128] Scofield et al., "Barnum Institute," Sec. 8, p. 11.
[129] Kunhardt et al., *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman*, 343.

Seaside Park and Mountain Grove Cemetery in Bridgeport; the Connecticut Universalist Convention; the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; and the Universalist Publishing House of Boston.[130]

Barnum's vision of private philanthropy for public benefit had deep connections with social, cultural, and civic realms. His will indicated 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."[131] Barnum took particular care to include instructions in the will for the completion of the Barnum Institute, as described above (see *Barnum Institute of Science and History*).

Barnum's endowment of public institutions echoed his earlier attempts to define his legacy through the ways in which he packaged and sold his life story. The first edition of his autobiography, *The Life of P. T. Barnum,* appeared in the United States and Great Britain in December 1854 at the height of his early career and sold 160,000 copies in the United States.[132] Barnum later stated that he wrote the book "for the purpose, principally, of advancing my interests as proprietor of the American Museum."[133] He revised and expanded the autobiography for a second publication in 1869 as *Struggles and Triumphs*. Barnum continued to supplement and revise the second edition, abridged in 1876, until almost the end of his life, adding annual appendices or new chapters to publicize his activities, in particular the circus he started in 1870. Over 1 million copies of the second edition were printed by 1888.[134] The final edition of the abridged version that was published during Barnum's lifetime is the 1889.

Beginning in the 1880s, Barnum also permitted others to publish his book without obtaining the copyright, resulting in multiple copies released under various titles. New editions were produced after Barnum's death up to the present. The 1927 version, edited by George S. Bryan and published in two volumes as *Struggles and Triumphs*, was essentially a compilation of the 1855, 1869, and 1889 editions and included *The Last Chapter*, an account of Barnum's last days and funeral published separately by Nancy Fish Barnum at her husband's request.[135]

Barnum was a legend in his own time; as one of his many biographers noted, "… more newspaper space had been devoted to his career than to that of any other American not a President of the United States."[136] His persistent self-aggrandizement ensured his notoriety, but his many critics equally ensured his mixed reputation as both brilliant innovator and unscrupulous fraud. The complex legacy of his life and work has continued to evolve into the twenty-first century. The sheer volume of scholarship and popular writing on Barnum reflects an ongoing fascination with his particular abilities to capture the imagination and wallet of the American public. In the over 100 years since Barnum's death, scholars have noted the numerous ways that his ideas about entertainment and education have contributed to the creation of the modern entertainment industry in America. Reserved seating, matinee shows, global celebrity marketing campaigns, venues that attract national and international audiences, mass market advertising, and corporate commercial brands all originated with Barnum's nineteenth-century tours,

[130] Ibid., 58.
[131] Barnum, Wills and Codicils, 7–8.
[132] Fretz, "Performing Selves," 99.
[133] Quoted in ibid., 100.
[134] Ibid., 99.
[135] Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs,* 1927; Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 8–24, 413–418.
[136] Waldo R. Browne, ed., *Barnum's Own Story: The Autobiography of P. T. Barnum…* (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 452.

staged performances, museum exhibits, penny press flyers, and circus extravaganzas.[137] Barnum's philosophies of entertainment influenced his development of the museum and the circus as democratic types of popular culture available to all ages, ethnicities, and classes.[138]

Scholars have also explored the darker aspects of his career, including racism, representations of disability, exploitation of performers, and animal cruelty in his circus shows. In particular, Barnum's exhibition of people from other countries and people with extraordinary bodies or abilities has attracted the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines. Some have explored the ways in which Barnum's exhibits of "human curiosities" drew upon racial stereotypes to appeal to White audiences and reinforced racist ideologies that supported White supremacy. Others have focused on the exhibition of non-Western cultures in his American Museum, traveling circuses, and 1884 Ethnological Congress. By presenting non-Western people as "primitive," "savage," or lacking in intelligence, exhibitions such as these served to justify imperialism and racism. Barnum's use of scientific and medical experts in these and other exhibits not only legitimized the information presented but also lent credibility to their underlying message that White Americans were superior.[139] Scholars have also examined Barnum's pioneering role in the development and popularity of the "freak show." The creation and exhibition of "freaks" by Barnum, his contemporaries, and successors defined certain mental and physical impairments, talents, and physiological characteristics as abnormal or transgressing widely accepted methods of classification (e.g., male/female, human/animal, adult/child) and implied that the people possessing these characteristics did not belong in the general population. This mode of presentation found widespread acceptance and popularity until the 1930s, when a medicalized approach to disability began to take hold in American popular culture.[140]

Barnum is undoubtedly a highly important figure in American history, as described by the *New York Sun* in response to an 1865 speech by Barnum:

> Those who look upon Barnum as a mere charlatan, have really no knowledge of him. It would be easy to demonstrate that the qualities that have placed him in his present position of notoriety and affluence would, in another pursuit, have raised him to far greater eminence. In his breadth of views, his profound knowledge of mankind, his courage under reverses, his indomitable perseverance, his ready eloquence, and his admirable business tact, we recognize the elements that are conducive to success in most other pursuits. More than almost any other living man, Barnum may be said to be a representative type of the American mind.[141]

---

[137] James W. Cook, "The Architect of the Modern Culture Industry," in *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe*, James W. Cook, ed. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 1; Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 19; Edd Applegate, "How P. T. Barnum Helped Change the Course of Advertising," in *Personalities and Products: A Historical Perspective on Advertising in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 60; Frank Presbrey, "Phineas Taylor Barnum," in *The History and Development of Advertising* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929), 215, 224–225.

[138] Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*; Kunhardt et al., *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman*; Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful*, 37.

[139] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*; Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, 126–136; Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 176–183, 187–189, 235–241; Cook, *Arts of Deception*, 120–159; Cook, "Of Men, Missing Links, and Nondescripts," in Thomson, *Freakery*, 139–157; Frost, "The Circassian Beauty," in Thomson, *Freakery*, 248–262; Lindfors, "P.T. Barnum and Africa," 18–27; Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave*.

[140] Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 32–35, 127–142, 144–146; Cook, *Arts of Deception*, 120–126; Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows," in Thomson, *Freakery*, 38–54; Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 58–70, 78–80; Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity," in Thomson, *Freakery*, 1–13.

[141] *New York Sun*, quoted in Barnum, *The Humbugs of the World*, iv.

JUSTIFICATION FOR SELECTION OF BARNUM INSTITUTE

The preceding information about Barnum's life and the Barnum Institute of Science and History demonstrates the importance of P. T. Barnum's influential cultural and business visions and the role of museums as public entertainment and educational venues. The Barnum Institute is the only extant building with architectural integrity directly associated with P. T. Barnum during his approximately 50-year career. Barnum's New York museums and their entire collections succumbed to fires in 1865 and 1868. His four primary residences in the Bridgeport area—Iranistan (1846), Lindencroft (1860), Waldemere (1869), and Marina (1888)—are no longer extant. Iranistan burned in 1857, and Lindencroft was demolished in 1924.[142] Barnum subdivided the Waldemere estate in 1888 and constructed Marina (designed by the Barnum Institute architects Longstaff & Hurd) adjacent to the Waldemere house.[143] A portion of Waldemere was relocated to the neighboring town of Stratford.[144] Barnum's widow, Nancy, lived at Marina for two years after his death before moving back to her native Europe; the University of Bridgeport demolished the house in 1961.[145] The winter quarters for the Barnum & Bailey's Circus remained in Bridgeport until 1927; the buildings were torn down and the circus owners relocated the quarters to Florida.[146]

The Barnum Museum of Natural History (now Barnum Hall) at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, constructed in 1884 and expanded twice using funds donated by Barnum, possesses associations with Barnum similar to those of the Barnum Institute. However, the building, currently housing the school's Department of Biology, does not retain architectural integrity due to the construction of a 1963 addition to the west wing and the rehabilitation of the entire building after an April 14, 1975, fire. The rehabilitation included the replacement of the original mansard roof by a flat roof with penthouses and a complete interior gutting and reconstruction. The original museum collections were lost in the fire, and the building no longer serves its original purpose.[147]

Although the length of association of the Barnum Institute with P. T. Barnum while living was brief, the quality of the connection is profound. The Institute expresses the culmination and final gesture of 50 years of Barnum's groundbreaking public museum and entertainment development. It remained fully intact for 41 years and, with the change to public municipal ownership, has remained a resource held in public trust to honor the P. T. Barnum legacy for Bridgeport citizens and visitors. While existing in a local context, the Barnum Institute captures the national experience of P. T. Barnum's influence on multiple aspects of American society and culture.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Barnum Institute of Science and History is comparable to a small number of NHL-designated science and history museums that have their origins in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philanthropic undertakings. The Barnum Institute is unusual among this group as it is significant under Criterion 2 for its association with a nationally significant individual, Phineas Taylor Barnum, and is not being nominated for its importance in the history of museums (Criterion 1) or on the basis of its architecture (Criterion 4). The Peabody Museum/Essex

[142] University of Connecticut (UConn), Connecticut Digital Archive, http://hdl.handle.net/11134/110002:272.
[143] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 314.
[144] Bridgeport Public Library, Bridgeport History Center, "P. T. Barnum: The Later Years," http://bportlibrary.org/hc/barnum-and-related-items/p-t-barnumthe-later-years/.
[145] UConn, Connecticut Digital Archive, http://hdl.handle.net/11134/60002:14.
[146] Saxon, *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*, 329.
[147] Scofield et al., "Barnum Institute," Sec. 8, p. 11–12.

Institute (1825, Salem, Massachusetts) NHL is designated under Criterion 1 in the area of Education as a purpose-built museum. The Smithsonian Institution (1847–1855, Washington, DC) NHL is designated under Criterion 4 in the area of Architecture and under Criterion 1 in the area of Science. The Wagner Free Institute of Science (1865, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) NHL is designated under Criterion 1 in the areas of Education, Science, and Social History; under Criterion 4 in the area of Architecture; and under Criterion 2 for its association with nineteenth-century biologist Joseph Liedy, a former president of the institute. Finally, the Thomas A. Greene Memorial Museum (1912–1913, Milwaukee, Wisconsin) NHL is designated under Criterion 1 in the area of Science and under Criterion 2 for its association with Thomas Arnold Greene, whose children funded the construction of the building to house their father's fossil collection. Although the Wagner Free Institute of Science and the Thomas A. Greene Memorial Museum are designated under Criterion 2, they do not derive their primary significance through association with Joseph Liedy or Thomas A. Greene, respectively.

The Thomas A. Greene Memorial Museum's Thomas Greene's fossil collection is no longer housed in a building at Lawrence University (formerly Milwaukee-Downer College) endowed by Greene's children, Colonel Howard Green and Mary Greene Upham, after Thomas Greene's death. The collection was moved to another modern building on campus and the original building has been renovated for other uses. The Wagner Free Institute of Science was a private museum created to house William Wagner's personal collection of mineral, shell, fossil, and plant specimens from around the world. In contrast, the Barnum Institute was created by Barnum to be a showpiece for the City of Bridgeport and its visitors and was given to the Bridgeport Scientific Society and Fairfield County Historical Society to provide space for their collections, offices, and meeting and lecture rooms. While the Institute held some of Barnum's personal belongings, it was not established solely to display objects he had collected, nor was it dedicated to any of his commercial undertakings. In fact, most of the collections from Barnum's earlier museums were destroyed in various fires.

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:		Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	X	District:	
Public-State:		Site:	
Public-Federal:		Structure:	
		Object:	

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing		Noncontributing	
Buildings:	1	Buildings:	0
Sites:	0	Sites:	0
Structures:	0	Structures:	0
Objects:	0	Objects:	0
Total:	1	Total:	0

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY
(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

Site and Setting

The Barnum Institute of Science and History (Barnum Institute or Institute, now the Barnum Museum) at 820 Main Street is located in the downtown core of the city of Bridgeport, Connecticut. At the time of its construction, the building sat prominently at the southeast corner of Gilbert and Main streets facing west onto Main Street and was surrounded by two-story residences. Today, as originally, the intact primary street elevations on the north and west continue to convey a bold and expressive street presence, while the secondary, unadorned east and south elevations are partially obscured by adjacent later construction. The east portion of Gilbert Street is no longer extant; a brick and concrete plaza now flanks the building on the north, and a grass area extends across the lot on the south side of the building. The Bridgeport Center, constructed in 1987–1989 as the national corporate headquarters for People's United Bank designed by Richard Meier & Partners, Architects, wraps around the entire east and approximately half of the south elevations of the building.[148] The Barnum Institute property is adjacent to and northeast of an elevated portion of Interstate 95 (I-95) constructed in the 1950s and the Amtrak and Metro-North railroad right-of-way. The surrounding neighborhood is composed of low- and high-rise nineteenth- and twentieth-century commercial buildings.

The Barnum Institute building, completed in 1893, was designed by George W. Longstaff and Frank W. Hurd of the short-lived Bridgeport architectural firm Longstaff & Hurd. The firm designed fifteen buildings during its existence, including Barnum's home (named Marina), on Linden Avenue in Bridgeport (no longer extant) and the Edinburgh Crescent at 431–449 Washington Avenue, also in Bridgeport. The Romanesque Revival-style

[148] This project was a major effort to revitalize downtown Bridgeport. Paul Goldberger, "Architecture View: A Short Skyscraper with a Tall Assignment." *New York Times*, 26 March 1989, http://www.nytimes.com/1989/03/26/arts/architecture-view-a-short-skyscraper-with-a-tall-assignment.html; Pelton, "The Barnum Museum."

Institute building is constructed of red and buff sandstone, brick, and terra cotta walls and trim that are ornamented with elaborate friezes, sculptures, and engaged pilasters. The roughly square building is articulated by a rounded northwest corner, a square tower enclosing the southwest corner, and varied geometric elements rising from the flat roof.

Several repositories, including the Barnum Museum, Bridgeport History Center, and City of Bridgeport Archives and Building Department, were consulted in an unsuccessful attempt to find original construction plans for the building. The architecture firm responsible for the building, Longstaff & Hurd, went bankrupt and dissolved just one year after the completion of the building, and their records have been lost.[149]

Exterior

The Barnum Institute is a Romanesque Revival-style, three story, four-bay-by-four-bay sandstone, brick, and terra cotta building on a granite foundation. The building measures approximately 73 feet north–south and 88 feet east–west (Figures 2 and 3). Original architectural drawings have not been found, but the 1898 Sanborn Map Company map provides contemporary general footprint information (Figure 7). The north (Photographs 1 and 2) and west (Photographs 1 and 3) elevations are highly ornamented. The east elevation has little ornamentation and is attached to the Bridgeport Center, and the south elevation (Photograph 3) (originally a party wall shared with another building on the first and second floors) is a blank brick wall that is partially concealed by, but separated from the Bridgeport Center. The first story is composed of rough-dressed, ashlar sandstone blocks, and the second and third stories are terra cotta with brick details. Variable massing treatments, primarily of the upper levels, at each corner of the roughly square building create visual complexity and interest. A large, circular dome rises above the rounded northwest corner (Photographs 1, 2, 3, and 4); a side-gable roof spans nearly the full length of the east elevation; a round, domed astronomical observatory tower projects from the roof at the southeast corner (Photographs 3 and 5); and a three-story square stair tower topped with a pyramidal roof anchors the southwest corner (Photographs 1 and 3). A polychromatic brick chimney rises from the top center of the south wall between the square tower and the observatory (Photograph 3). All the visible curved and angled roof surfaces, with the exception of the observatory, are clad with terra cotta tile. The flat portion of the roof, behind a raised parapet, is clad with rolled rubber, and the observatory dome is clad with metal.

The first story of the building is accessed by three original entrances at the northeast, northwest, and southwest corners; a fourth, non-historic, entrance into the east side is through the north elevation of the Bridgeport Center. The street level is lit by five large storefront windows arranged across the north and west elevations, three small clerestory windows in the north elevation, and five evenly spaced double-hung sash in the east elevation. A wide band of three courses of rough-dressed ashlar sandstone runs along the top of the first story on the north and west elevations, enframing all the openings. A narrow band of corbeled brick separates the first and second stories on the east elevation.

The building has three entrances. The primary entrance to the building is in the south bay of the west elevation (Photographs 3 and 6) set within a wide terra cotta arch supported by three short, wide columns on concrete bases and accessed by a wide, low, granite step. The entrance is framed by rough-dressed ashlar sandstone applied pilasters with granite bases and topped with terra cotta capitals with bas relief floral motifs. Above the capitals are groups of narrow bas relief columns bound by diagonal ribbons. A cornice of acanthus leaves spans the groups of columns; hemispherical fluted domes sit above the cornice at each pillar. The arch sits on terra cotta cushions decorated with a floral motif with small caricature humanoid faces at the inner corners. The intrados is edged with

[149] Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport*, 194.

rounded terra cotta tiles ornamented with a flower and vine motif; the extrados is edged with rounded terra cotta tiles ornamented with leaves. The spandrels are filled with a bas relief leaf motif surrounding rounded disks spanned by ribbon motifs. A narrow belt course of terra cotta with a repeating floral motif spans the tops of the column capitals and the top of the arch. The entrance contains a pair of modern, ten-light, metal-frame doors with plate glass transom and sidelights.

The northwest corner entrance under the round dome and anchoring the two flanking ornamented street elevations (Photograph 7) consists of a deep, sandstone arch supported by three narrow columns with capitals ornamented with a leaf motif. The intrados is edged with terra cotta in a floral motif. The arch is flanked by slightly projecting spandrels carved with floral motifs surrounding small caricature humanoid faces. The entrance contains a pair of heavy, arched, multi-panel wood doors. The entrance is accessed by a curved granite step that spans the full width of the corner. Above the arched opening is a curved, terra cotta balconet consisting of a base engraved with a shield surrounded by a floral motif that is topped with a terra cotta cornice that spans the north and west elevations between the first and second stories. Small lion-faced gargoyles are at each corner of the balconet sill. The northeast entrance (Photograph 2) consists of a simple sandstone arch with a pair of three-panel wood doors under an arched glass transom.

Windows in the west elevation consist of two individual single-pane storefront windows and one pair of large single-pane storefront windows that are unevenly spaced between the northwest and southwest entrances. The windows are separated by ashlar sandstone pilasters and have metal frames. Openings in the north elevation consist of one large storefront window immediately east of the entrance and three evenly spaced, small, paired rectangular windows. The smaller window openings are flanked by groups of two, three, or four colonnettes that are topped with wide capitals ornamented with floral carvings. The east elevation is lit by evenly spaced rectangular and arched window openings with stone sills. The rectangular openings have rough-dressed stone lintels, and the arched windows are topped with brick arches composed of three courses of header bricks. There are no window openings on the south elevation. All the storefront window openings are infilled with wood covered with large-format graphics that have replaced glass windows that were destroyed by a tornado that damaged the building in 2010. Smaller window openings appear to have their original sash, but with replacement glass.

The second story, clad with terra cotta, is lit by double and triple sets of windows topped by single-light glass transoms set into wood frames spanning the width of the north elevation and north end of the west elevation. The south end of the west elevation is lit by three groups of arched windows separated by narrow columns, and three windows light the southwest tower at the second story. The east elevation is lit by five double-hung sash with stone sill and lintels; small rectangular windows sit above the stone lintels and are also topped with stone lintels. Double and triple sets of narrow, engaged, terra cotta columns topped with capitals ornamented with acanthus leaves separate the windows on the north elevation and north end of the west elevation. Two openings at the east end of the north elevation have buff brick and terra cotta fill between the columns. The square tower is faced with buff brick and has terra cotta window surrounds, one of which is supported by a short, wide, terra cotta column. A terra cotta frieze consisting of a high-relief floral motif spans the entire second story above the windows to the square tower. A narrow balconet, supported by two brick corbels and ornamented with a lion face in the center, surmounts the three arched windows. A terra cotta panel inscribed “Barnum Institute of Science and History” is above the frieze wrapping around the northwest corner. A frieze of buff terra cotta blocks flanks the inscription with sections arranged in a grid pattern with square openings between each block that serve as balcony railings for the third story.

The third story is divided into three main sections: the uppermost portion of the three-story stair tower at the southwest corner; a large, round turret defining the northwest corner; and an end-gable wall at the northeast corner. The round turret is connected to the other two main sections by two short recessed hyphens with balconies, an arcaded cornice, and side-gable roofs. The five sections are described below, beginning at the southwest corner and ending with the northeast corner.

The third story of the square tower projects above the parapet wall and anchors the southwest corner of the building. The west face of the tower is filled with a multi-pane tracery window flanked by groups of three applied pilasters topped with bas relief floral capitals, all composed of terra cotta tile. Wrapping around the north and west faces of the tower, above the tracery window, are evenly spaced, deep-set square windows with terra cotta sills and splayed lintels. An applied arch detail composed of buff brick is above the windows and is ornamented with human faces at the base of each arch. The pyramidal roof of the tower has a corbelled terra cotta cornice and round, buff-brick pilasters with rounded, twisted caps at each corner that project above the cornice line. The roof is sheathed in terra cotta tile and topped by a copper cap. Access to the roof, including the observatory, is through the tower, which is connected to the turret at the northwest corner by a one-story hyphen. The hyphen is set behind a balcony railing and is clad with buff terra cotta tile ornamented with a bas relief floral motif, topped with a blind arcaded terra cotta frieze. A wide, three-part rectangular window/door opening is surrounded by terra cotta tile and divided by two pillars engraved with an angular, zigzag pattern and topped by narrow, floral capitals.

The prominent turret at the northwest corner of the roof is lit by five evenly spaced, arched window openings with paired rectangular windows set below round-arch stained-glass windows. The glazing is in a circular geometric pattern composed of brown, yellow, and cream-colored glass, centered in a grid of square and rounded cream-colored blocks. Thin, rectangular blocks of light and dark brown glass frame the edges of each stained-glass window. The openings have similar ornamentation to the arched openings in the northeast gable end. Above the windows is an elaborate, signed frieze by sculptor Henry Plasschaert (1861–1940) depicting events or time periods in Bridgeport's history interspersed with busts of well-known men. Plasschaert emigrated from Belgium in 1881 and was a highly regarded sculptor who taught modeling at the University of Pennsylvania circa 1892–1897. Other notable works by Plasschaert include the former Colonial Theater in Hagerstown, Maryland, and the German-American Shooting Club on St. Mark's Street in New York City.[150] The historical panels in this section of the building depict colonial activities of the eighteenth century, Bridgeport's prominence as a trading port in the nineteenth century, local troops departing for the Civil War (1861–1865), and Bridgeport manufacturing, including the Howe Sewing Machine works. The busts are of an unnamed American Indian, Christopher Columbus, President George Washington, Elias Howe Jr., President Grover Cleveland, and P. T. Barnum.

Evenly spaced round windows set in eyebrow surrounds pierce the domed roof above the frieze. The convex dome is clad in terra cotta tile and has a conical, copper-clad peak topped with a small, gilded metal eagle with outstretched wings perched on a round finial. A hyphen, topped with a side-gable roof and identical to the one on the south side of the domed turret, except with a two-part window/door accessing a balcony, connects the turret to the northeast corner gable roof.

The northeast corner of the north elevation is topped by the end-gable wall of the east roof, which is clad with buff brick and has flared gable returns supported by twisted, or spiral, pillars with gargoyle capitals. The gable wall is pierced by two window groups set within terra cotta round arches, each composed of two windows separated by a short terra cotta pilaster and topped by flat lintel that is surmounted with a round-arch window. The east pillar is fluted, and the west pillar is a twisted pillar. A group of three small windows, separated by short

[150] Find A Grave, "Henry Francis Plasschaert," Findagrave.com, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122019271.

terra cotta pillars with terra cotta sills and lintels, is in the gable peak below flat, terra cotta tile. Under the gable eaves on the west side, a blind arcaded frieze of terra cotta openings runs west to join the eaves line of the side-gable hyphen.

The third story of the east elevation is lit by five arched windows with stone sills and brick arches above. One window has been infilled with plywood on the exterior, and all the windows have been infilled with gypsum board on the interior. There are no windows in the south elevation.

The observatory on the roof at the southeast corner of the building is a round, brick structure topped with a wood dome clad with sheet metal (Photograph 5). The dome consists of curved wood rafters infilled with drop-board siding; the intended location of the dome slit (i.e., where the dome would open for telescope access) is outlined by rafters that span the full circumference of the dome, but is infilled with wood. Round windows are evenly spaced around the upper portion of the building, set into arched, corbelled recesses with grotesque and fanciful terra cotta faces at the base of the corbels. The arches are composed of angled bricks with pentagonal terra cotta springers. The observatory has a simple wood floor composed of wide boards and is accessed from the flat roof by a modern metal door centered in the west side that is topped with a terra cotta arch and partially infilled arched opening with a modern exit sign in the center. In 1892, during the original construction of the observatory, the walls were lowered by several feet as the uppermost portion of the tower overhung the adjacent land, owned by A. J. Beardsley, by 4.5 inches.[151]

Interior

The interior of the Institute building is accessed via the main entrance in the southwest corner of the building, which leads to a modern entrance in the north end of the entrance vestibule (described below), and the historic entrance in the east wall of the vestibule. A short hallway, east of the central staircase, connects the first story of the main building to the modern exhibit gallery in the Bridgeport Center building. The interior plan and function of the Barnum Institute is divided into three floors of exhibit space, along with a basement and an attic. The interior of the building retains original finishes including doors, crown molding, fireplaces, and the terra cotta-ornamented main staircase, which provides access to the second and third floors and their associated exhibit spaces. Modern floating and partition walls have been added throughout the building to create space for exhibits and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, but the historic fabric is retained underneath.

The entrance vestibule is clad with terra cotta tile and has a mosaic-tile floor (Photograph 8). Angled tile crown molding is ornamented with a simple pattern of alternating cylinders and circles. Evenly spaced square blocks with a floral motif project from the east wall. The modern entrance, in the north wall, consists of a ten-light modern commercial door with a multi-light glass block sidelight to the east. The east wall has two historic entrances, one to the north and one to the south, within terra cotta arches with floral capitals. The north entrance consists of a two-panel wood door set beneath a corbelled wood panel, all under a wide, half-round, stained-glass window. The window glazing consists of yellow glass scrollwork and shell patterns. The south entrance, which is deeply recessed, consists of a pair of half-light, single-panel wood doors under a corbelled wood panel, all under a rectangular stained-glass window with a central floral motif of marbled yellow, gray, and white glass surrounded by square panels. The windows in the doors are protected by sets of five wood posts with simple bases and acanthus leaf capitals. When the building opened to the public in 1893, the south entrance was the main entrance and led to the main staircase, but the entrance was closed off by a false floor laid over the stairs during building renovations in 1987–1989. Currently (2018), the entrance is being restored and 1980 renovations are

[151] *New York Times*, "Barnum Institute of Science: The Trouble which a Small Matter Has Given the Society," 30 December 1892.

being selectively removed to investigate condition, upgrade systems, and reclaim historic elements. Bathrooms will be modernized to accommodate public needs.

The basement was renovated in 1987–1989 and is accessed by a set of stairs, added at that time, in the center of the east side of the first floor. The basement consists of modern restrooms, offices, and storage space. The walls are steel frame with gypsum board; there is a metal-frame drop ceiling with acoustical tiles; and the floor is covered with tile in the bathrooms and modern carpet elsewhere. Modern metal-frame commercial doors will be removed during restoration.

The first floor is divided into five semi-enclosed, rectangular spaces. Primary access to the second and third stories is via the original main staircase, accessible from the center of the galleries via a single-flight modern stair. Historically, the staircase was accessible from the south entrance in the southwest entry vestibule; however, as noted above, access was blocked off by a false floor during renovations. The stairs consist of molded metal steps with terra cotta sidewalls and polished wood banisters (Photographs 9 and 11). The landings between stair runs are covered with square terra cotta tiles. A terra cotta bas relief bust of P. T. Barnum is affixed to the west wall at the landing between the first and second floors. Molded terra cotta tiles with bas relief acanthus leaves cover the exposed upper corner of each north and south sidewall. At the top of the stairs is a terra cotta twisted column topped with a Romanesque-style capital with bas relief leaves and projecting animal faces at the corners. An opaque globe light fixture is affixed to the top of the column. A narrow hallway near the center of the first-floor south wall leads to an irregularly shaped, modern gallery and office space constructed for the use of the Barnum Institute in the first story of the People's United Bank building as part of the Bridgeport Center project in 1987–1989. Modern, fully glazed, metal-frame commercial doors separate the historic building from the addition.

The second floor is divided into five rectangular spaces, some of which retain a portion of their original finishes, including a large fireplace and surround in the center of the south wall (Photograph 10), crown molding, and light fixtures. The second-story fireplace consists of a brick firebox within a wide terra cotta arch with a floral motif along the intrados and a wide terra cotta mantel supported by groups of six pilasters on either side of the arch. The space above the fireplace is wood-paneled in a geometric pattern and enclosed by fluted square columns. The majority of the second floor has modern floating and partition walls dividing the spaces into places for exhibits. The walls and ceiling are constructed of gypsum board, and the floors are covered with modern carpeting. Track lighting mounted on the ceiling provides illumination to gallery spaces.

The third floor consists primarily of one large space, originally a lecture hall, spanning from the northwest tower to the east wall. The third floor is currently (2018) undergoing rehabilitation, as the northwest dome was significantly damaged during the 2010 tornado. Portions of the east wall consist of exposed brick or historic plaster and infilled window openings; the north wall and tower walls are historic plaster (Photograph 12). The ceiling has been removed to expose the wood ceiling joists and metal drop-ceiling framing, and metal columns are evenly spaced under joists to support the ceiling and turret dome. The floors are covered with modern carpet. Floating walls along the south side of the third story enclose small storage and exhibit spaces. Window openings are ornamented with arched wood surrounds composed of convex pilaster casing around and between window openings and projecting molded sills. Windows in the east wall were infilled with gypsum board in 1987–1989. A fireplace and surround, nearly identical to the fireplace on the second story but without the wood paneling above, is in the center of the south wall (Photograph 13).

In the attic, historic support beams are visible and interspersed with modern replacement and additional support beams. In the northwest turret, the ceiling cladding in the dome has been removed, exposing the wood framing

composed of curved rafters. The rafters, constructed of 4 major and 44 minor thin, laminated timber ribs, form the 40-foot-diameter dome. Four-timber-square compression rings provide support at the top and base of the dome. Half the circumference of the dome is supported by the outer brick walls, and the other half is supported by a 6-foot-deep Pratt timber truss that was stabilized, likely in 1987–1989, by steel side plates affixed with through bolts.

When the building originally opened in 1893, the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BSS) occupied the first story; the second floor held the collections of the Fairfield County Historical Society (FCHS), with a room set aside for the Bridgeport Medical Association (BMA); and the third floor was designated as a lecture hall for use by all three organizations.

The main structure was divided laterally west–east into three unequal parts by masonry walls in the basement, first, and second floors; the third floor was open to accommodate lecture seating. One wall divided the building approximately in half, and a second wall divided the south section in half again. The southernmost section contained the fireproof staircase in the southwest corner, which was the only means of vertical circulation through the building, and fireproof storage vaults in the southeast corner of each floor. On the first floor, storefronts intended for the northwest corner and west side of the building were never occupied commercially. The BSS had its room on the east side of the northern half of the floor, which was accessed through the northeast exterior door. The BSS likely used the remainder of the northern section for its exhibit space, with exhibit cases arranged along the north wall (Figure 4). On the second floor, the FCHS had its exhibits on display in the north half of the building and appears to have covered over some of the windows, likely to protect their collections from light damage (Figure 5). The Barnum Alcove was within the FCHS section of the building (Figure 6). The BMA's room on the second floor may have been in the west half of the middle portion.

By 1934, when the City of Bridgeport took ownership of the building, city offices occupied the first two floors, and museum exhibits were on the third floor. In the 1930s, possibly at the time the building was taken over by the City, the building was cleaned and refurbished as a Works Progress Administration project; later, University of Bridgeport student volunteers again cleaned it. In 1966, the exterior of the building was steam cleaned and sand blasted, and the interior was extensively renovated, which included removing partitions used for city offices.[152] As the building was renovated back to a dedicated museum space, interior partition walls likely were added to create exhibit spaces and vertical surfaces for mounting objects.

In 1987–1989, in conjunction with construction of the adjacent Bridgeport Center/People's United Bank, a large-scale interior restoration was undertaken (Figures 8, 9, and 10).[153] Work included replacing missing and damaged architectural details and hardware. Numerous non-masonry interior partitions were removed, and floating walls were added along exterior walls to alter exhibit spaces and create cavities in which HVAC units could be installed. An elevator and secondary staircase were installed in the former vault shaft; it is unknown when the vaults were removed. An entrance was added on the east side to connect to a gallery and entrance in Bridgeport Center.

In 2010, the Barnum Museum was struck by an EF1 tornado, causing extensive damage to the building and collection. The structural integrity of the east wall and the massive signature dome was compromised. Numerous windows on the first floor were replaced or temporarily infilled with plywood; brick walls were repaired and

[152] Susan Babbitt, "Barnum Institute of Science and History," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972).
[153] Richard Meier & Partners, Architects. "The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Construction Drawings." On file, Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT, 1987.

repointed, including the replacement of bricks; and damage from water infiltration was mitigated. The force of the tornado caused the main dome of the building to twist and the east wall to bulge outward. The storefront windows on the first story were broken, and glass, dirt, and water entered the building, damaging interior surfaces and objects in the collection. Glass debris and moisture contaminated the HVAC system rendering it inoperable. In 2011, Hurricane Irene caused additional water infiltration, wind damage, and debris intrusion to the building. Further deterioration of the east wall and dome was evident, and interior surfaces were once again compromised. Lastly, in October 2012, Super Storm Sandy with 115-mile-per-hour winds caused additional water and debris infiltration and contamination of dozens of artifacts. This trifecta of natural disasters causing damage and deterioration to the historic structure has forced architects and engineers to continually assess and reassess cumulative damage.

The Barnum Museum has undertaken a massive restoration and re-envisioning effort to restore the building to full operational capacity. To date, steel girders and columns have been installed to prevent further deflection and the east wall has been reconstructed. The building is now (2018) undergoing repairs with dome stabilization begun in spring 2018 and further roof repairs anticipated through 2019. The full building renovation will include uncovering and restoring historic fabric that was infilled with gypsum board in 1987–1989.

Collections

The Barnum Institute collection began with the individual collections of the BSS, FCHS, and BMA and with items donated by P. T. Barnum before his death in 1891 and by his family. Approximately one-third of the current 60,000 artifacts were donated by Barnum and these organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[154] The Institute has the most comprehensive—and one of, if not the largest—collections of Barnum materials in the world, including the largest collection of Charles Stratton and Lavinia Warren materials. Items include documents, objects, and decorative arts, with the largest collection of pieces, including personal and family items, donated by Mr. Barnum himself. Other Barnum collections—including those at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts; the Ringling Museum of the America Circus in Sarasota, Florida; and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC—were assembled from various sources. The Barnum Institute collection reflects the P. T. Barnum legacy in American history from the key periods of his life. It focuses on Barnum, the man, and how his life significantly affected and influenced nineteenth-century American popular culture and created a legacy that continues today.[155]

Integrity Statement

The Barnum Institute of Science and History building retains a high degree of overall integrity of architectural design, location, workmanship, and materials that evoke an enduring feeling and association with its founder, P. T. Barnum. The building's exterior monumental and engaging street presence most interested Barnum and it retains its original massing and nearly all its historic fabric and intricate architectural ornamentation. The solid block of the square-footprint building, enlivened by a variety of surface treatments and materials and round and rectilinear rooftop projections, continues to create a dynamic design statement expressive of the intellectual and entertainment activities the cultural center was intended to contain. On the interior, primary partitions have been altered as building uses changed, but the essential layout is readable, and architecturally significant finishes are extant, such as the main staircase, two fireplaces, architectural trim, bust of P. T. Barnum on the main stair landing, and numerous doors, including the one in the main entrance. The third-floor lecture hall remains a large open

[154] Scofield et al., "Barnum Institute," Sec. 7, p. 4.
[155] Kathleen Maher, The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT. E-mail to Virginia H. Adams, PAL, November 7, 2017.

space; the large dome vaulted structure is in place; and the enclosure walls remain for fireproof storage vaults (removed at an unknown date) in the southeast corner on all floors.[156]

The building's setting has been altered by changes to the surrounding urban context; some windows were replaced following hurricane and tornado damage; and repairs have been undertaken to the terra cotta frieze above the northwest entrance and brick work on the east elevation. Water damage caused by the hurricanes and tornado is being mitigated. However, the Barnum Institute's nomination for designation as an NHL is not based on its architecture, and the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its association with the nationally significant life and career of P. T. Barnum. The Barnum Institute was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972,[157] and an amendment for national level of significance under Criterion B for association with P. T. Barnum was accepted in 2010.[158]

[156] FCHS, *Annual Report*, 9.
[157] Babbitt, "Barnum Institute."
[158] Scofield et al., "Barnum Institute," Sec. 8, pp. 5–13.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION

Adams, Bluford. *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

——. "'A Stupendous Mirror of Departed Empires": The Barnum Hippodromes and Circuses, 1874-1891." *American Literary History* 8, no. 1 (1996): 34-56.

Alderson, William T., ed. *Mermaids, Mummies, and Mastodons: The Emergence of the American Museum.* Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1992.

Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums.* New York: AltaMira Press, 1996.

Ahlquist, Karen. *Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–1860.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Antczak, Frederick J. *Thought and Character: The Rhetoric of Democratic Education.* Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1985.

Applegate, Edd. "How P. T. Barnum Helped Change the Course of Advertising." In *Personalities and Products: A Historical Perspective on Advertising in America*, 55–73. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.

Babbitt, Susan. "Barnum Institute of Science and History," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972.

Bainbridge, Danielle. "The Future Perfect, Autopsy, and Enfreakment on the 19th-Century Stage." *TDR: The Drama Review* 64, no. 3 (2020): 100-117. muse.jhu.edu/article/763759.

Bank, Rosemarie K. *Theatre Culture in America, 1825–1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Barclay, Jenifer L. *The Mark of Slavery: Disability, Race, and Gender in Antebellum America.* Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021. muse.jhu.edu/book/83121.

Barnum, P. T. "Mr. Barnum in Self-Defense." *The Round Table* 4 (1865): 55.

——. "Mr. Barnum on Museums." *Liberator* 25 (August 1865): 136.

——. *The Humbugs of the World*. New York: Carleton, 1866.

——. *The Art of Money Getting*. Philadelphia: Bell and Co., 1880. Reprint, Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1999.

——. Wills and Codicils of Phineas Taylor Barnum, 1891. On file, Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT.

——. *Struggles and Triumphs: or, the Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself*. Edited by George S. Bryan. 2 vols. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927.

——. *Selected Letters of P. T. Barnum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

Barnum, P. T., Mme. Modjeska, A. M. Palmer, Harrison Grey Fiske, Col. William E. Sinn, Gabriel Harrison, and Charles Fisher. "The Church and the Theater." *Christian Union* 37 (March 1888): 392–394.

Baxter, Terry. *Frederick Douglass's Curious Audiences: Ethos in the Age of the Consumable Subject.* New York: Routledge, 2004.

Beers, J. H. & Co. *Commemorative Biographical Record of Fairfield County, Connecticut*. Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1899.

Bell, Whitfield Jr., Clifford K. Shipton, John C. Ewers, Louis Leonard Tucker, and Wilcomb E. Washburn. *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Five Episodes in the Evolution of American Museums.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967.

Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Blake, David Haven. *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

Bogdan, Robert. *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Bolt, Eugene, and Susan Glassman. "Wagner Free Institute of Science," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990.

Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Bridgeport Daily Standard. "Pure Romanesque in Style. The New Scientific and Historical Building." March 21, 1891.

——. "A Showman to the End." April 14, 1891.

Bridgeport Telegram. "Barnum Institute Draws Tourists from Other Cities." April 5, 1922.

——. Letter to the Editor. April 7, 1922.

——. "Algonquin Club Held a Barnum Night Smoker." February 9, 1925.

——. "20 Years Ago in the Post: From Our Files, September 29, 1934." September 29, 1954.

Brown, Francis H. *The Medical Register for New England*. Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1895.

Brown, Janet Lehrman. "Lindomania or the Penny Press Observed: A Study of the 1850 New York Press in Action." master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1978.

Browne, Waldo R., ed. *Barnum's Own Story: The Autobiography of P. T. Barnum Combined and Condensed from the Various Editions Published during his Lifetime.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1961.

Bruce, Robert V. *The Launching of Modern American Science, 1846–1876*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

Burrows, Edwin G., and Mike Wallace. *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Burt, Nathanial. *Palaces for the People: A Social History of the American Art Museum*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1977.

Bushman, Richard. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Cities, Houses*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Butler, William Allen. *Barnum's Parnassus: Being Confidential Disclosures of the Prize Committee on the Jenny Lind Song.* New York: D. Appleton, 1850.

Carbonell, B. M., ed. *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2012.

Cavicchi, Daniel. *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011.

Cerver, Francisco Asensio. *The Architecture of Museums.* New York: Arco, 1997.

Collier, Christopher. *The Pride of Bridgeport: Men and Machines in the Nineteenth Century.* Bridgeport, CT: The Museum of Art, Science & Industry, 1979.

Conn, Steven. *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2010.

Cook, James W. *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

——. "The Architect of the Modern Culture Industry." In *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe*, edited by James W. Cook, 1–8. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Cremin, Lawrence Arthur. *American Education, the National Experience, 1783–1876*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Danenberg, Elsie Nicholas. *The Story of Bridgeport.* Bridgeport, CT: The Bridgeport Centennial, Inc., 1936.

Davis, Janet M. "America's Big Circus Spectacular Has a Long and Cherished History." *Smithsonian Magazine*. March 22, 2017.

Dennett, Andrea Stulman. *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America*. New York University Press,

1997.
Dillenberg, E. "What, If Anything, is a Museum?" *The Exhibitionist* (Spring 2011):8–13.

DiMaggio, Paul. "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." *Media, Culture, and Society* 4 (1982):33–50.

Donzel, Catherine. *New Museums.* Paris: Telleri, 1999.

Dror, Otniel E. "Dangerous Liaisons: Science, Amusement, and the Civilizing Process." In *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music, and Medicine*, edited by Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills, 223–234. Ashgate, UK: Aldershot Publishing, 2005.

Everard, Lewis Charles, ed. *Handbook of American Museums*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1932.

Fairfield County Historical Society (FCHS). *Fairfield County Historical Society Articles of Association, By-Laws, List of Members, and First Anniversary Meeting*, *April 14, 1882*. Bridgeport, CT: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1882.

——. *Annual Report of the Fairfield County Historical Society for 1891–2*. Bridgeport, CT: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1892.

Find A Grave. "Henry Francis Plasschaert." https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122019271.

Floyd, E. Randall. *The Good, the Bad, and the Mad: Weird People in American History*. Augusta, GA: Harbor House, 1999.

Fretz, Eric J. "Performing Selves and the Theatrical Imagination in Antebellum America: The Examples of Anna Cora Mowatt, P. T. Barnum, and Nathaniel Hawthorne." Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1995.

Goldberger, Paul. "Architecture View: A Short Skyscraper with a Tall Assignment." *New York Times* March 26, 1989.

Grimaldi, Lennie. *Only in Bridgeport: An Illustrated History of the Park City.* Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1986.

Grimstead, David. *American Theater and Culture, 1800–1850*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Haberly, Loyd. "The American Museum from Baker to Barnum." *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (July 1959): 273–87.

Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.

Harris, Neil. *Humbug, The Art of P. T. Barnum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Harrison, Henry Leslie. "The Temple and the Forum: The American Museum and Cultural Authority in Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, and Whitman." Ph.D. diss., Texas A&M University, 2002.

Herald. "Another Hoax." (New-York) February 27, 1836.
____. "The Joice Heth Hoax." February 29, 1836.
____. "The Joice Heth Hoax." March 2, 1836.

Howe, Daniel Walker. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Hudson, Kenneth. *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought.* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975.

Hume, Ruth. "Selling the Swedish Nightingale: Jenny Lind and P. T. Barnum." *American Heritage* 28, no. 6 (1977). http://www.americanheritage.com/content/selling-swedish-nightingale.

Jones, Douglas A. *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014. muse.jhu.edu/book/34757.

Kluessendorf, Dr. Joanne, and Dr. Donald G. Mikulic. "Thomas A. Greene Memorial Museum," National Historic Landmark Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993.

Kunhardt, Philip B. Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt. *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

Lears, Jackson. *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

——. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.

Lehman, Eric D. *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P. T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013.

Leon, Warren, and Roy Rosenzweig. *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Lindfors, Bernth. "P.T. Barnum and Africa." *Studies in Popular Culture* 7 (1984): 18–27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23412959.

Linkon, Sherry Lee. "Reading Lind Mania: Print Culture and the Construction of Nineteenth-Century Audiences." *Book History* 1 (1998): 94–106.

MacDonald, Sharon. *A Companion to Museum Studies.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Maher, Kathleen. Executive Director, The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT. Email to Virginia H. Adams, PAL, November 7, 2017.

——. *P. T. Barnum Presents the Divine Jenny Lind*. Bridgeport, CT: Barnum Museum, 2000.

Mansky Jackie. "PT Barnum is not the Hero the Greatest Showman Would Have You Think," *Smithsonian Magazine* (22 December 2017).

Morton III, W. Brown. "Smithsonian Institution," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971.

New-York Sun. "Death of Joice Heth." *New-York Sun.* February 24, 1836

New York Times. "Barnum's Gift to Bridgeport: A Fine Building for the Scientific and Historical Societies." March 23, 1891.

——. "Barnum Institute of Science: The Trouble which a Small Matter Has Given the Society." December 30, 1892.

——. "The Barnum Institute Dedicated." February 19, 1893.

NHL Boundary Review Project. "Peabody Museum of Salem," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1979.

Nir, Sarah Maslin and Nate Schweberf. "After 146 Years, Ringling Brothers Circus Takes its Final Bow." *New York Times*. May 21, 2017.

Ohmann, Richard. *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*. New York: Verso, 1996.

Orcutt, Rev. Samuel. *A History of the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut*. Bridgeport, CT: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1887.

Orosz, Joel J. *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740–1870*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990.

Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

Pelton, Robert. "The Barnum Museum: Past, Present, and Future." *Discovery* 21, no. 1 (1988): 45–47.

Presbrey, Frank. "Phineas Taylor Barnum." In *The History and Development of Advertising*, 211–226. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929.

Reiss, Benjamin. "P.T. Barnum, Joice Heth and Antebellum Spectacles of Race." *American Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1999): 78-107. doi:10.1353/aq.1999.0013.

———. *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Richard Meier & Partners, Architects. "The Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Construction Drawings." On file, Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT, 1987.

Sanborn Map Company. *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1884.

——. *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1898.

——. *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1913.

——. *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut*. Vol. 1. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1939.

——. *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut*. Vol. 1. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1939 maps updated to 1945.

Sappol, Michael. *Dream Anatomy.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine, 2006.

Saxon, A. H. "P. T. Barnum and the American Museum." *The Wilson Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 130–39.

——. *P. T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Scientific American. "The Barnum Institute of Science and History." April 11, 1891.

Scofield, Jenny Fields, Virginia H. Adams, Melissa Antonelli, and Kathleen Maher. "Barnum Institute of Science and History, Barnum Museum (Amendment)," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2010.

Special Acts and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, at the January Session, 1893. Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1893.

Stephens, Suzanne. *Building the New Museum.* New York: Architectural League of New York, 1986.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Twentieth anniversary edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Thomson, Rosemarie Garland, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Tzortzi, Kali. *Museum Space: Where Architecture Meets Museology.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015.

Waldo, George Curtis. *Standard's History of Bridgeport*. Bridgeport, CT: The Standard Association, 1897.

Waldo, George C. Jr., ed. *History of Bridgeport and Vicinity.* Vol. I. New York: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917.

Wallace, Irving. *The Fabulous Showman: The Life and Times of P. T. Barnum.* New York: Knopf, 1959.

Ware, W. Porter. *P. T. Barnum Presents Jenny Lind: The American Tour of the Swedish Nightingale*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

Wermeil, Sara. "The Development of Fireproof Construction in Great Britain and the United States in the Nineteenth Century." *Construction History* 9 (1993): 3–26.

Werner, M. R. *Barnum*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1923.

Windon, Nathaniel. "Superannuated: Old Age on the Antebellum Plantation." *American Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2019): 767-787. doi:10.1353/aq.2019.0053.

Wittlin, Alma Stephanie. *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970.

Zytane, Maria. "Cabinets of Curiosities and the Organization of Knowledge." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2011): 1–23.

Archival Collections

Barnum Museum. Records of the Barnum Institute of Science and History; P. T. Barnum Collection; Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society.

Bridgeport City Hall. Archives and Buildings Department.

Bridgeport Public Library. Bridgeport History Center.

University of Connecticut. Connecticut Digital Archive.

Columbia University. Avery Library. Department of Drawings & Archives.

Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Phineas Taylor Barnum Papers, 1818–1993.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_X_ Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)
__ Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 72001300
2. Date of listing: November 7, 1972; Amendment May 19, 2010
3. Level of significance: National
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A__ B_X_ C_X_ D__
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__
6. Areas of Significance: Entertainment/Recreation; Education; Architecture

__ Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register: Date of determination:
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark: Date of designation:
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: HAER No.
__ Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey: HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office:
Other State Agency:
Federal Agency:
Local Government:
University:
Other (Specify Repository):
Barnum Museum Archives, Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, CT
Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library, Bridgeport, CT

8. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Virginia H. Adams/Sr. Architectural Historian, Laura Kline/Sr. Architectural Historian, Gretchen Pineo/Architectural Historian with Kathleen Maher/Executive Director, Barnum Museum

Address: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.
26 Main Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860

Telephone: 401-728-8780

E-mail: vadams@palinc.com, lkline@palinc.com

Date: May 2018, revised April 2019 and May 2023

Edited by: Amanda Casper, PhD
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Program
1234 Market Street, 20th FL
Philadelphia, PA 19107

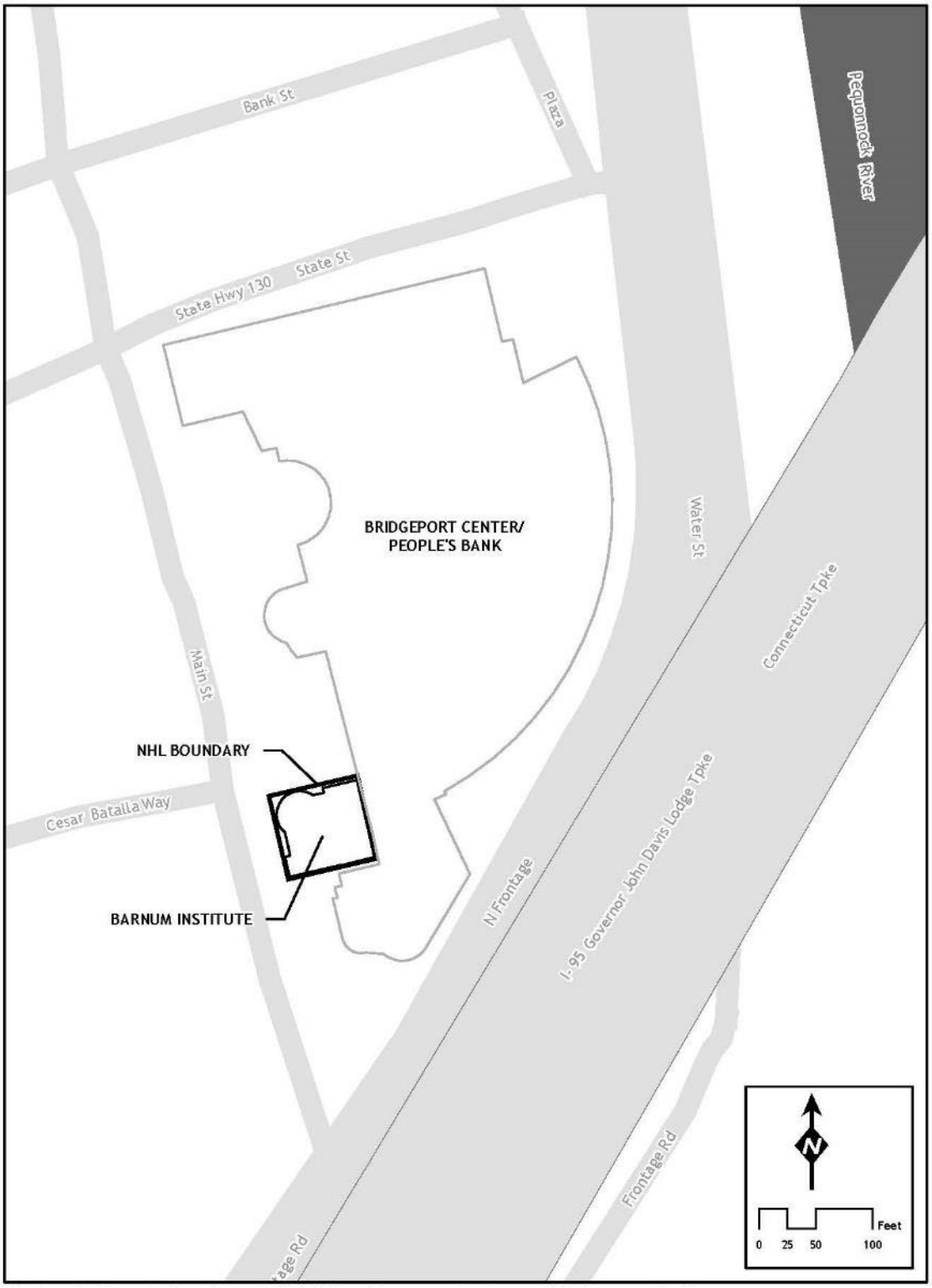
Evelyn Causey, PhD
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Program
1849 C Street, NW, Room 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (215) 597-1655
(202) 354-2179

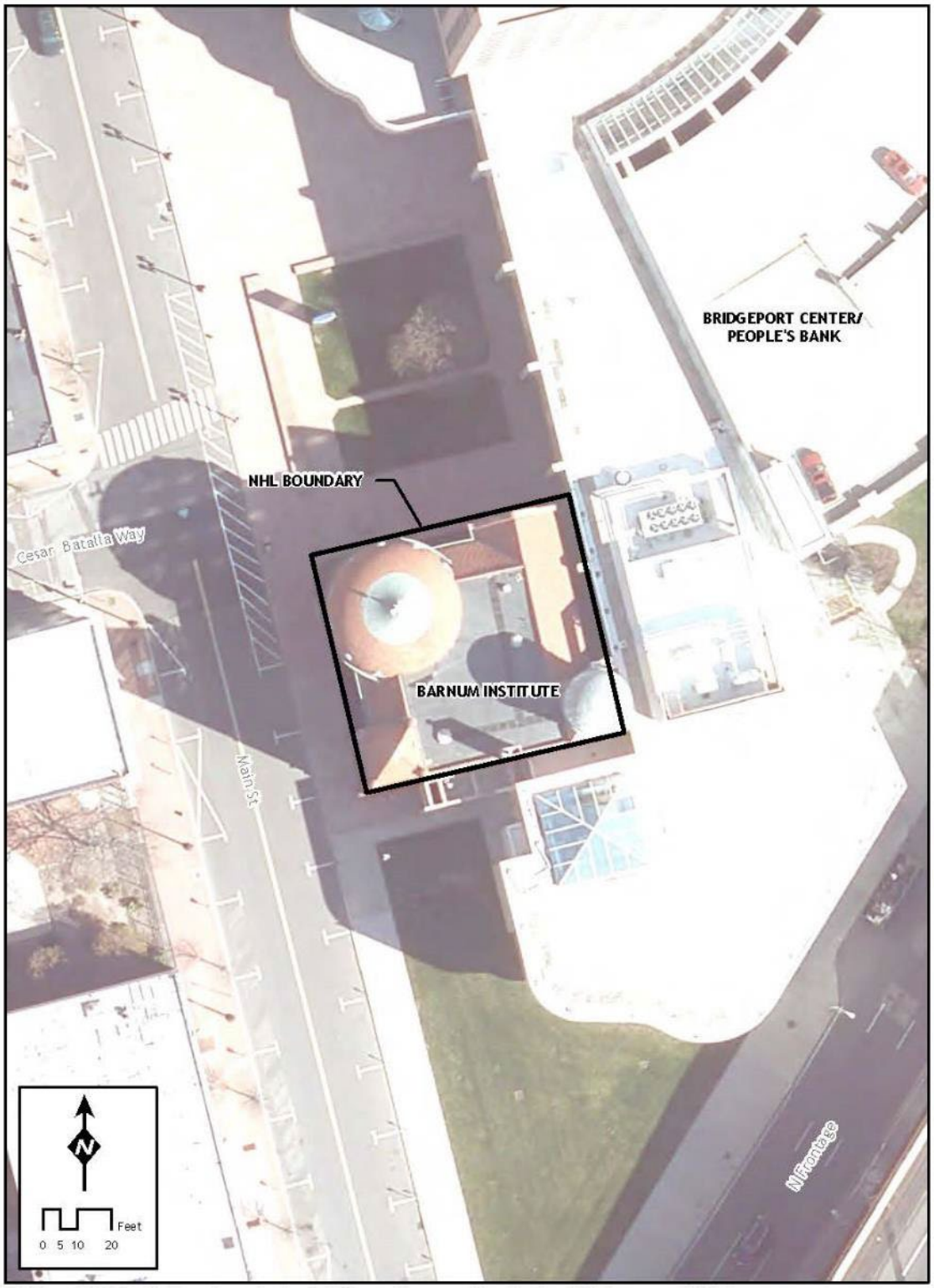
Maps



National Historic Landmark Coordinate Map: Barnum Institute of Science and History.



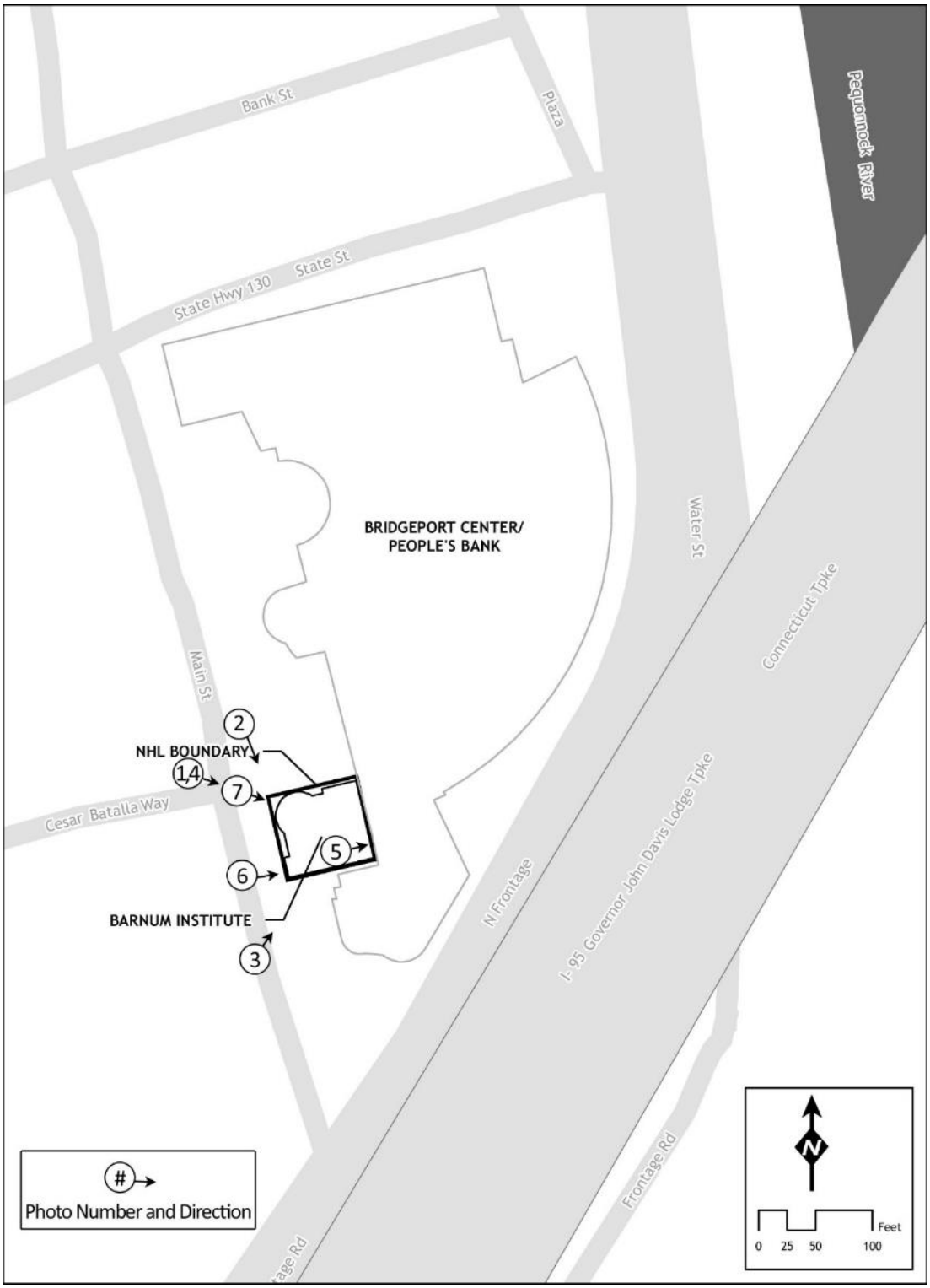
National Historic Landmark Site Map: Barnum Institute of Science and History.



National Historic Landmark Site Map: Barnum Institute of Science and History.

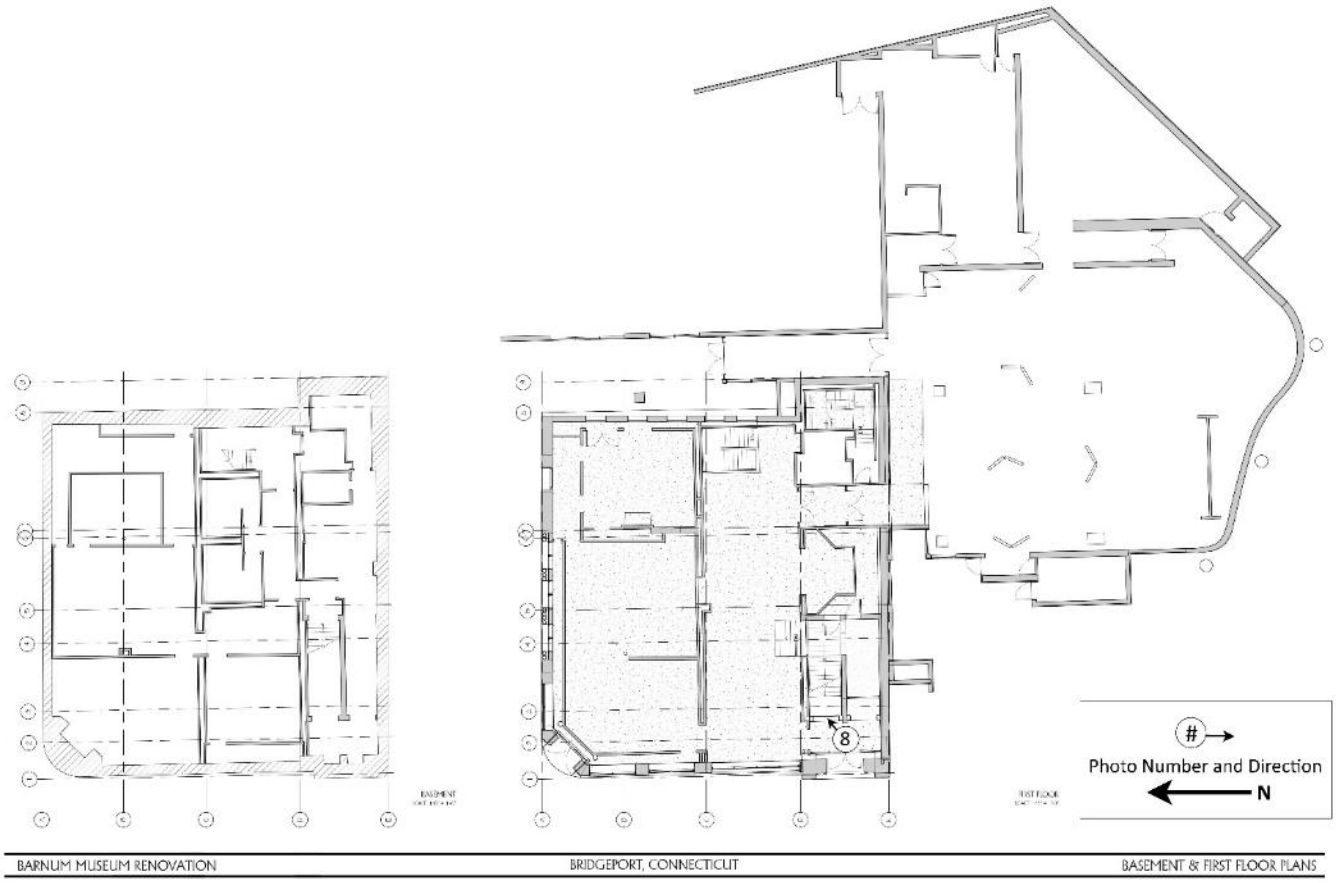
KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Exterior



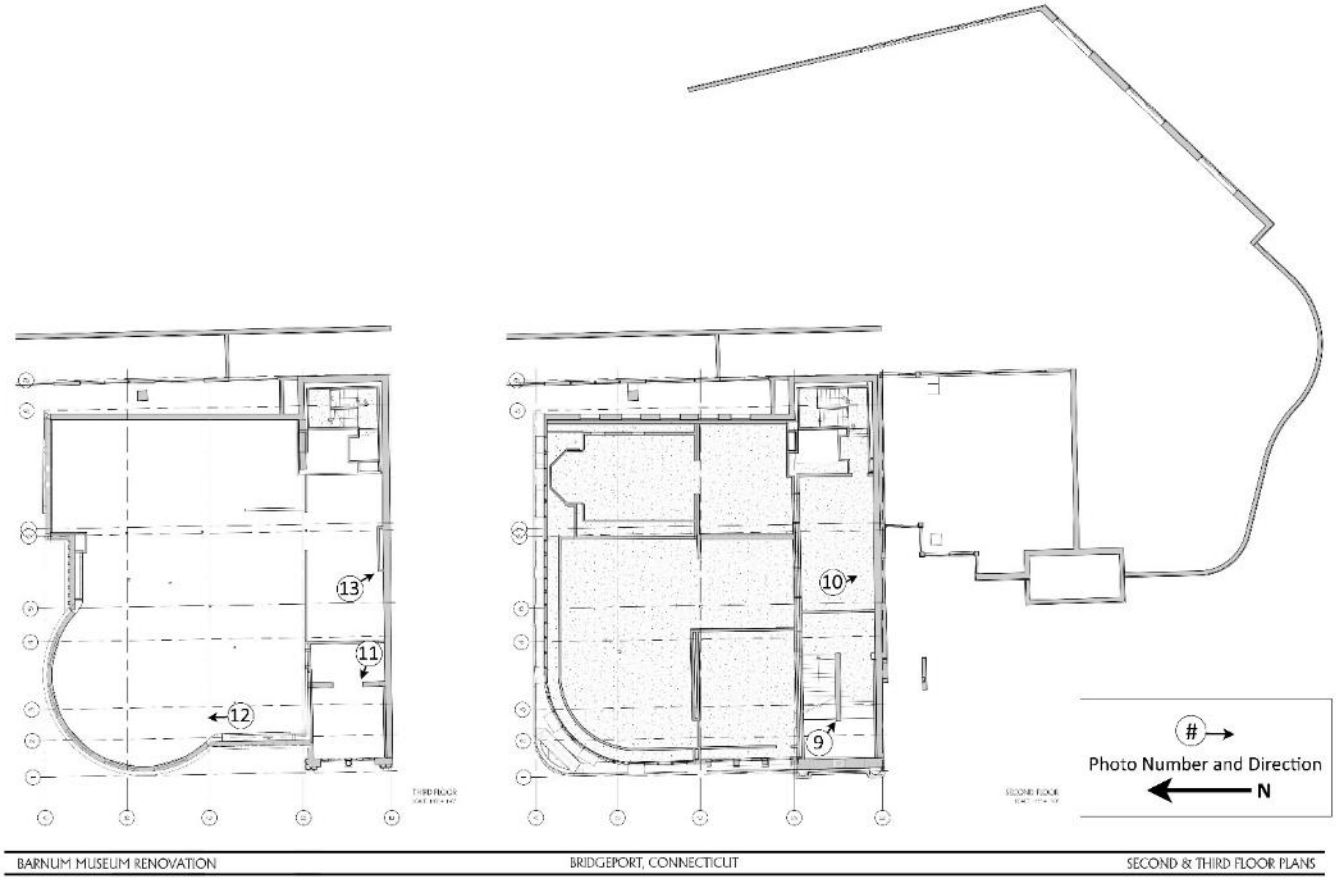
KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Basement and First Floor



KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Second and Third Floors



List of Photographs

All photographs were taken by John Daly (interior and roof) and Gretchen Pineo (exterior) of The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc., 26 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860, August 22 and September 14, 2017. Digital images located at NPS.

Photo 1: Barnum Institute, north and west elevations, looking southeast from Main Street.

Photo 2: Barnum Institute, north elevation, looking southeast.

Photo 3: Barnum Institute, west and south elevations, looking northeast from Main Street; People's Bank building at right.

Photo 4: Northwest tower, looking southeast from Main Street.

Photo 5: Observatory, looking east from roof.

Photo 6: Main entrance in west elevation, looking east from Main Street.

Photo 7: Entrance at northwest corner, looking southeast from sidewalk along Main Street.

Photo 8: Interior of main entrance vestibule, looking northeast; original first-floor interior doors leading to staircase at right.

Photo 9: Original main staircase, looking southeast from landing between second and third floors.

Photo 10: Original fireplace on second floor, looking south.

Photo 11: Original main stairway with bas-relief bust of P. T. Barnum, looking northwest from third-floor landing.

Photo 12: Interior of third-floor northwest turret room, looking north.

Photo 13: Original fireplace on third floor, looking southeast.

Photos



1. Barnum Institute, north and west elevations, looking southeast from Main Street.



2. Barnum Institute, north elevation, looking southeast.



3. Barnum Institute, west and south elevations, looking northeast from Main Street; People's Bank building at right.



4. Northwest tower, looking southeast from Main Street.



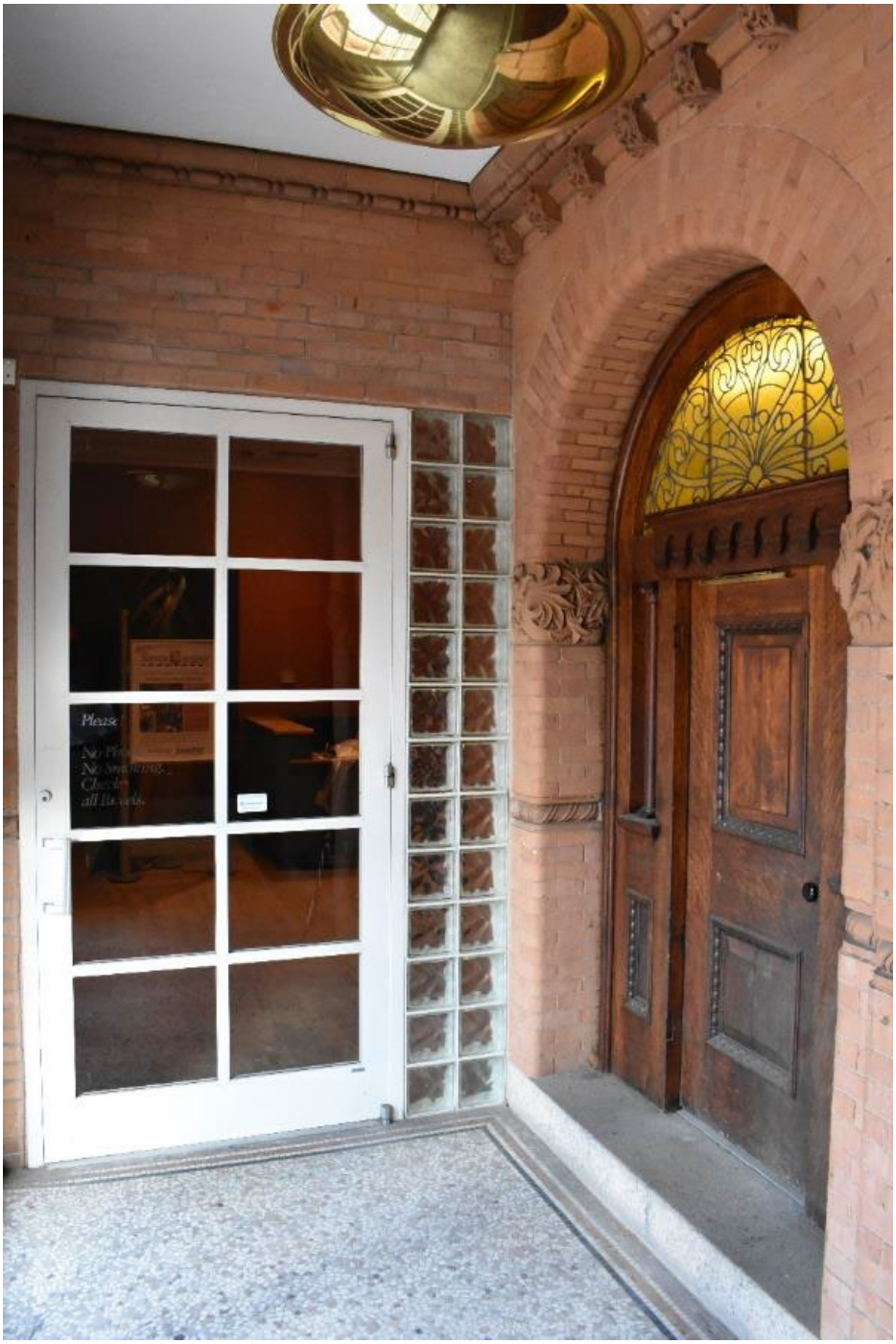
5. Observatory, looking east from roof.



6. Main entrance in west elevation, looking east from Main Street.



7. Entrance at northwest corner, looking southeast from sidewalk along Main Street.



8. Interior of main entrance vestibule, looking northeast; original first-floor interior doors leading to staircase at right.



9. Original main staircase, looking southeast from landing between second and third floors.



10. Original fireplace on second floor, looking south.



11. Original main stairway with bas-relief bust of P. T. Barnum, looking northwest from third-floor landing.



12. Interior of third-floor northwest turret room, looking north.



13. Original fireplace on third floor, looking southeast.

Figures

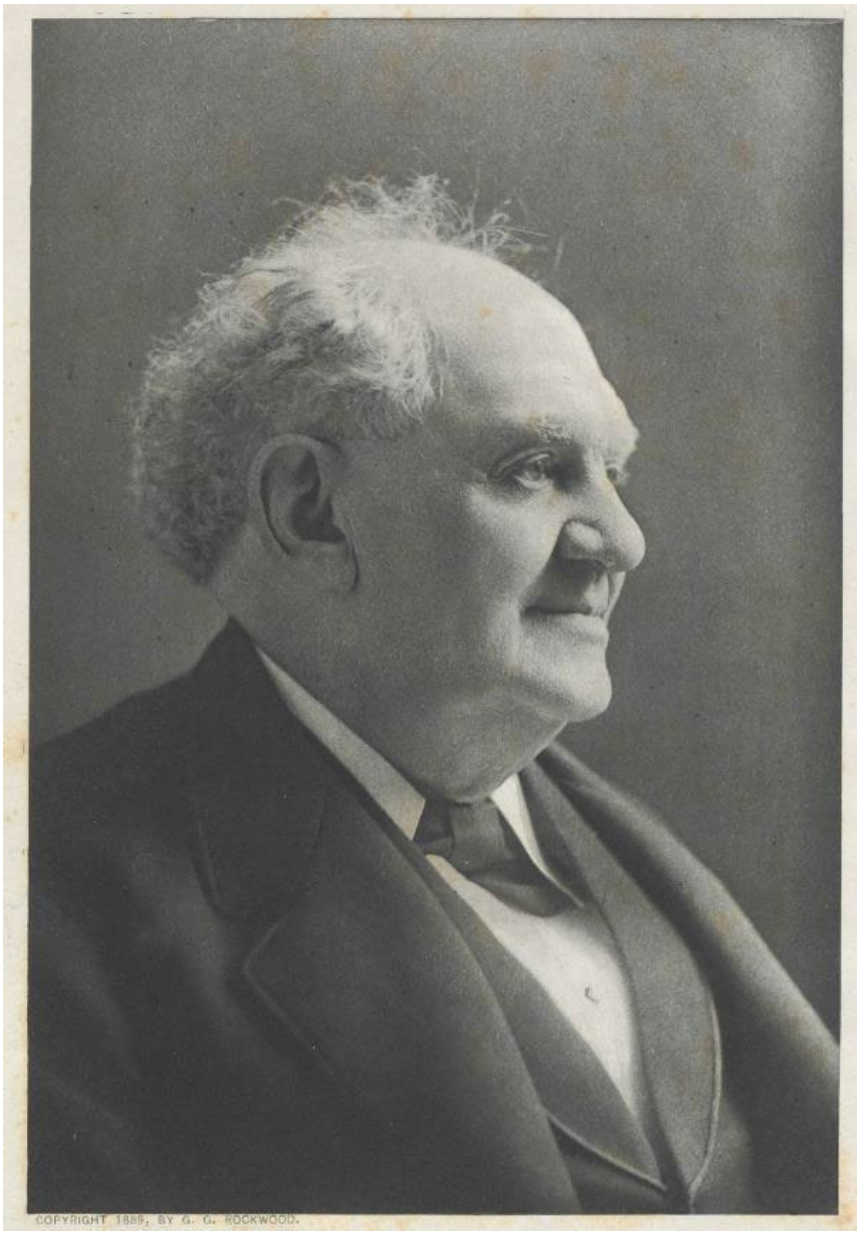
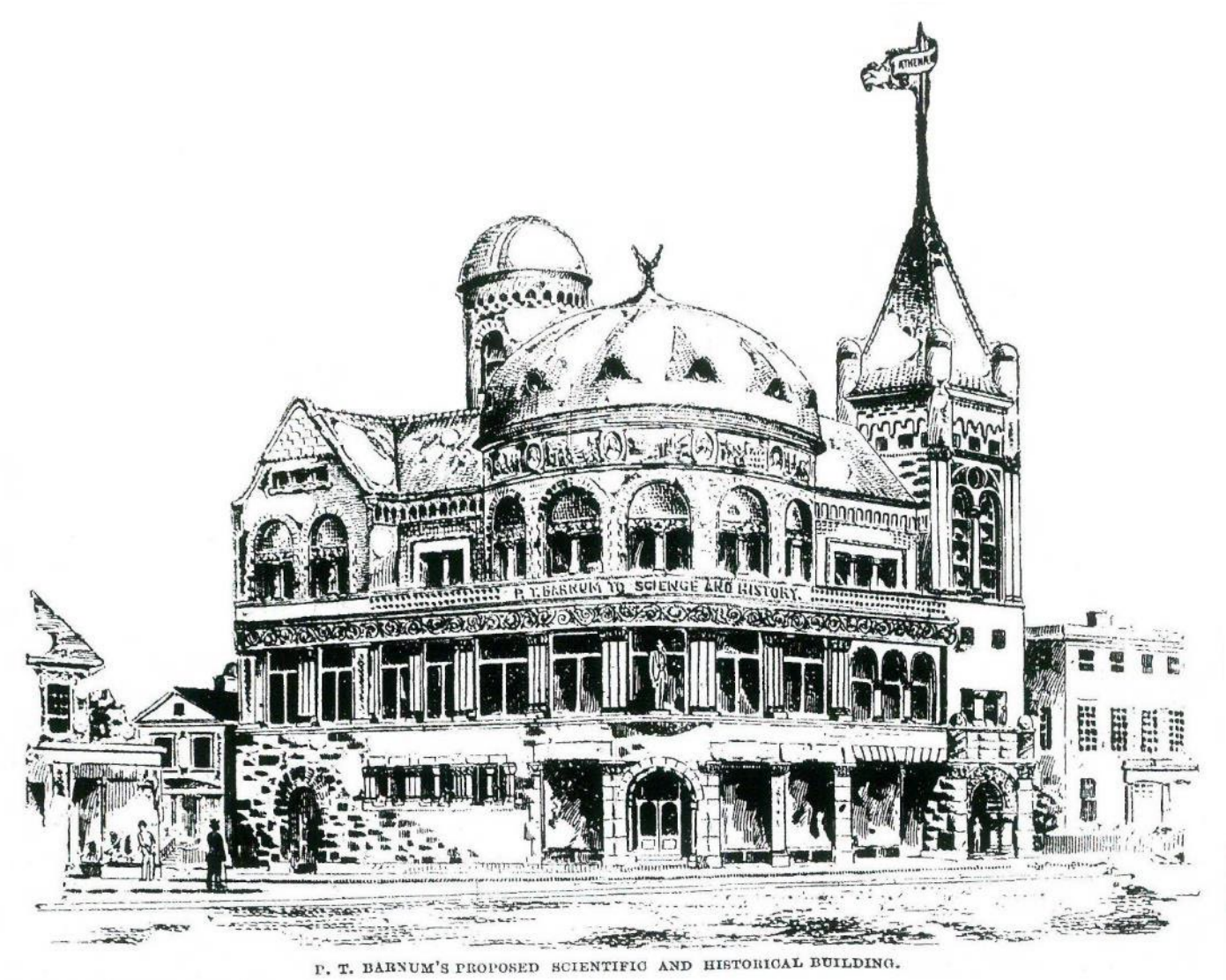


Figure 1. Circa 1889 photograph of P. T. Barnum (University of Connecticut. Connecticut Digital Archive).



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

Figure 2. 1891 sketch of proposed Barnum Institute (*Bridgeport Daily Standard*, March 21, 1891).

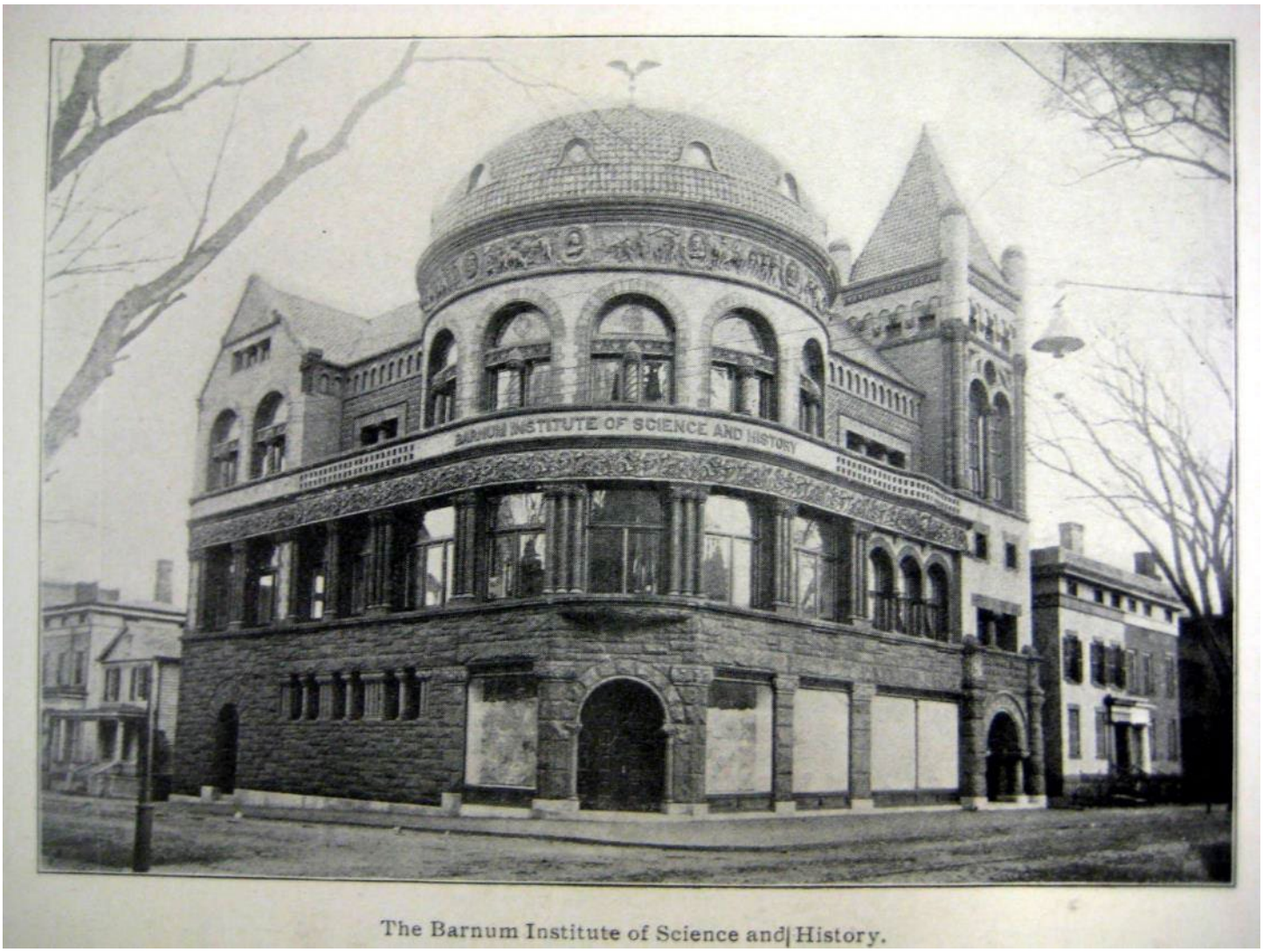


Figure 3. Circa 1897 photograph of Barnum Institute as built; observatory extant but not in view (George Curtis Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport* (1897), 108).

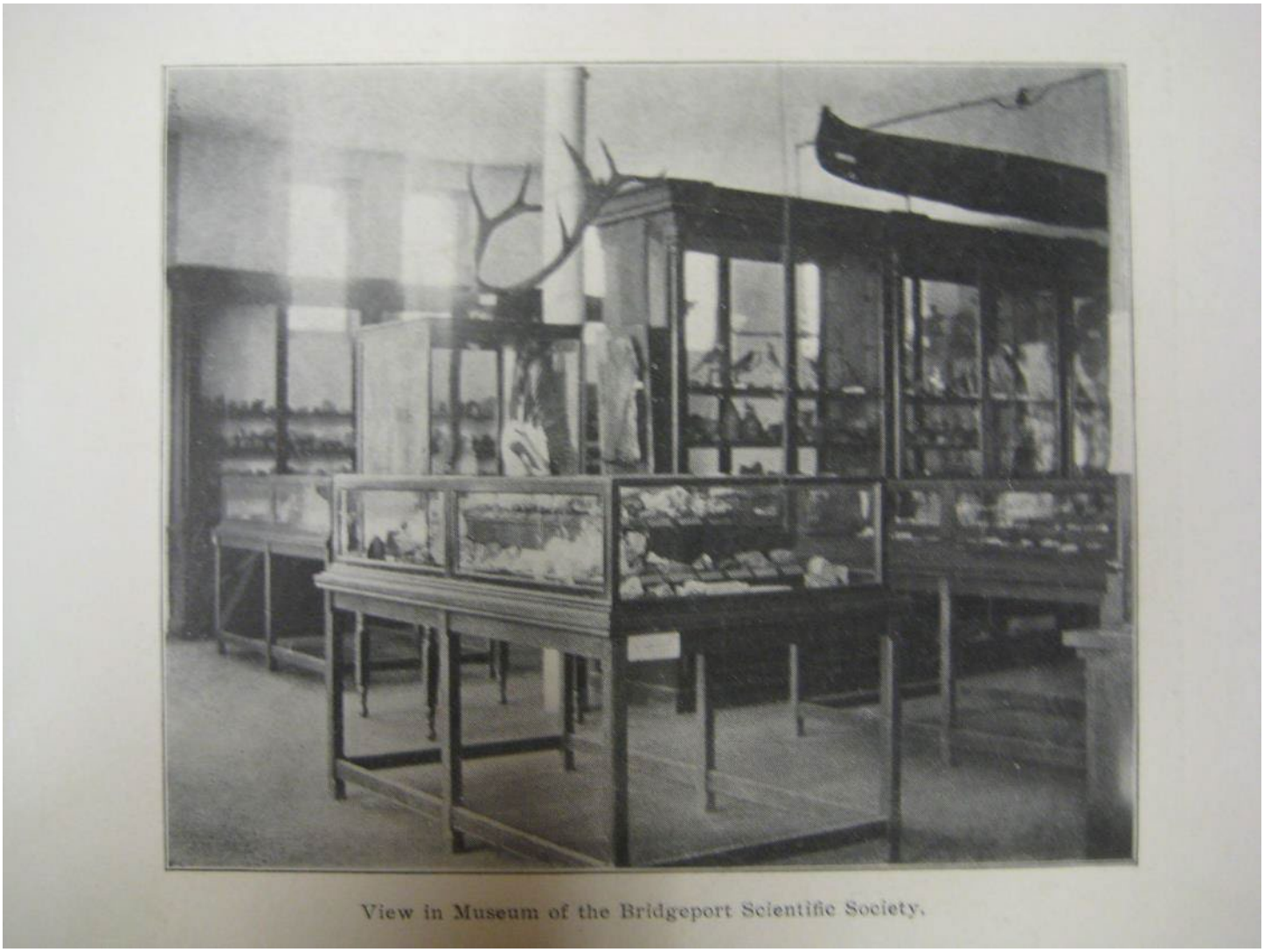


Figure 4. Circa 1897 photograph of Bridgeport Scientific Society room on first floor of Barnum Institute (George Curtis Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport* (1897), 108).



Figure 5. Circa 1897 photograph of Fairfield County Historical Society room on second floor of Barnum Institute (George Curtis Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport* (1897), 109).



Figure 6. Circa 1897 photograph of Barnum Alcove in Fairfield County Historical Society room (George Curtis Waldo, *Standard's History of Bridgeport* (1897), 109).

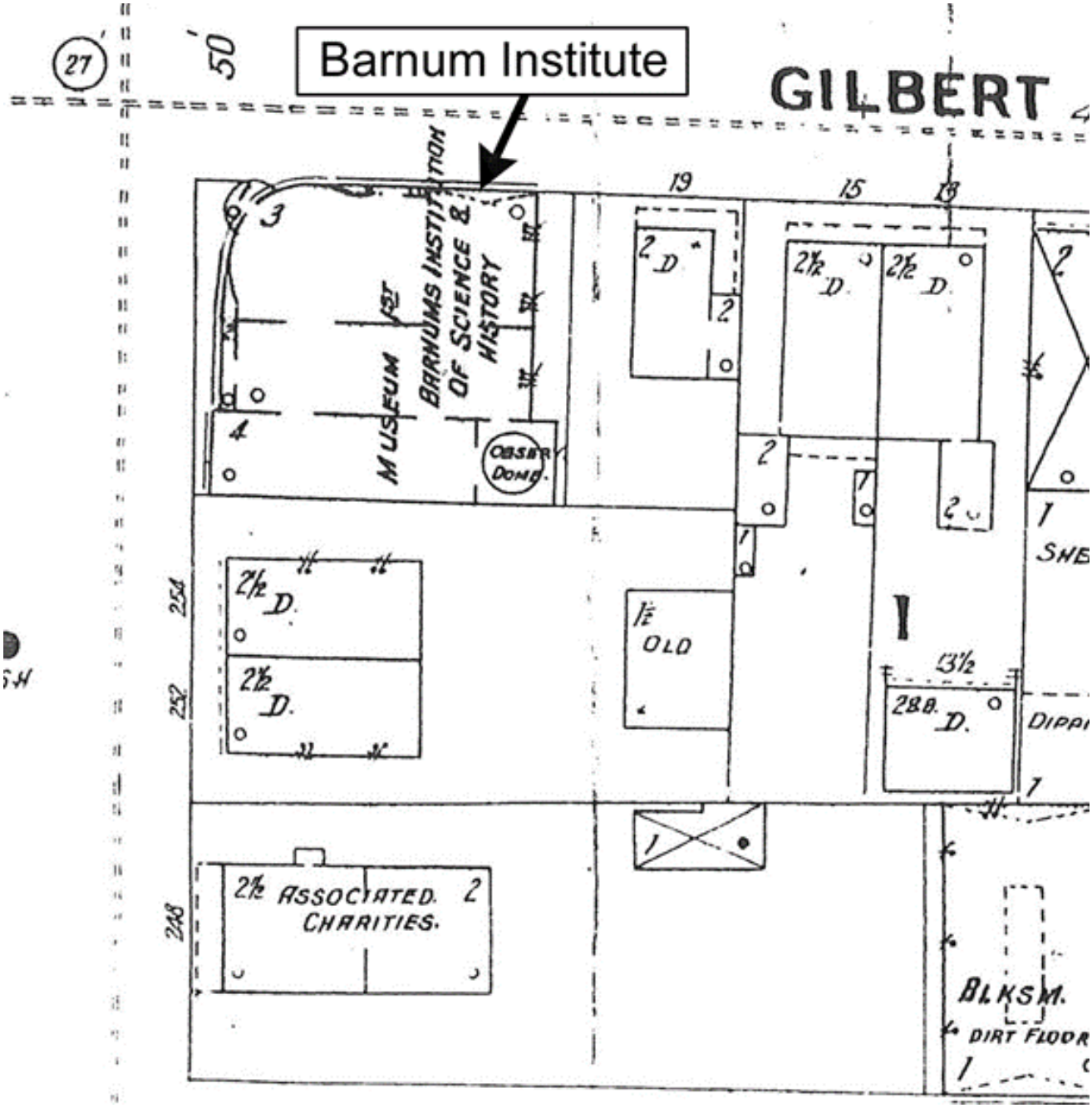


Figure 7. 1898 fire insurance map showing Barnum Institute (Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut*, 1898).

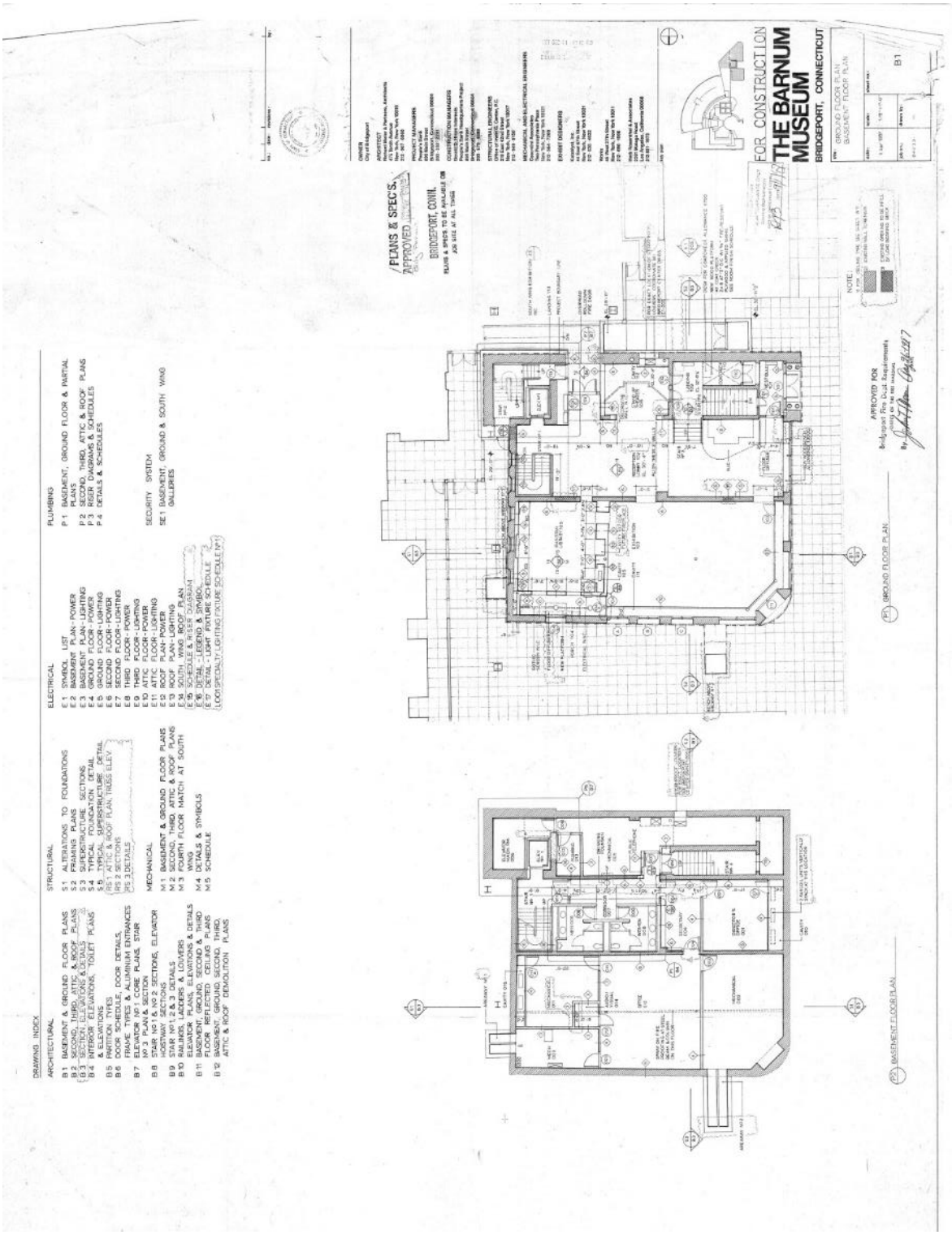


Figure 8. 1987 Ground Floor Plan, Basement Floor Plan of Barnum Institute (Richard Meier & Partners, Architects, 1987).

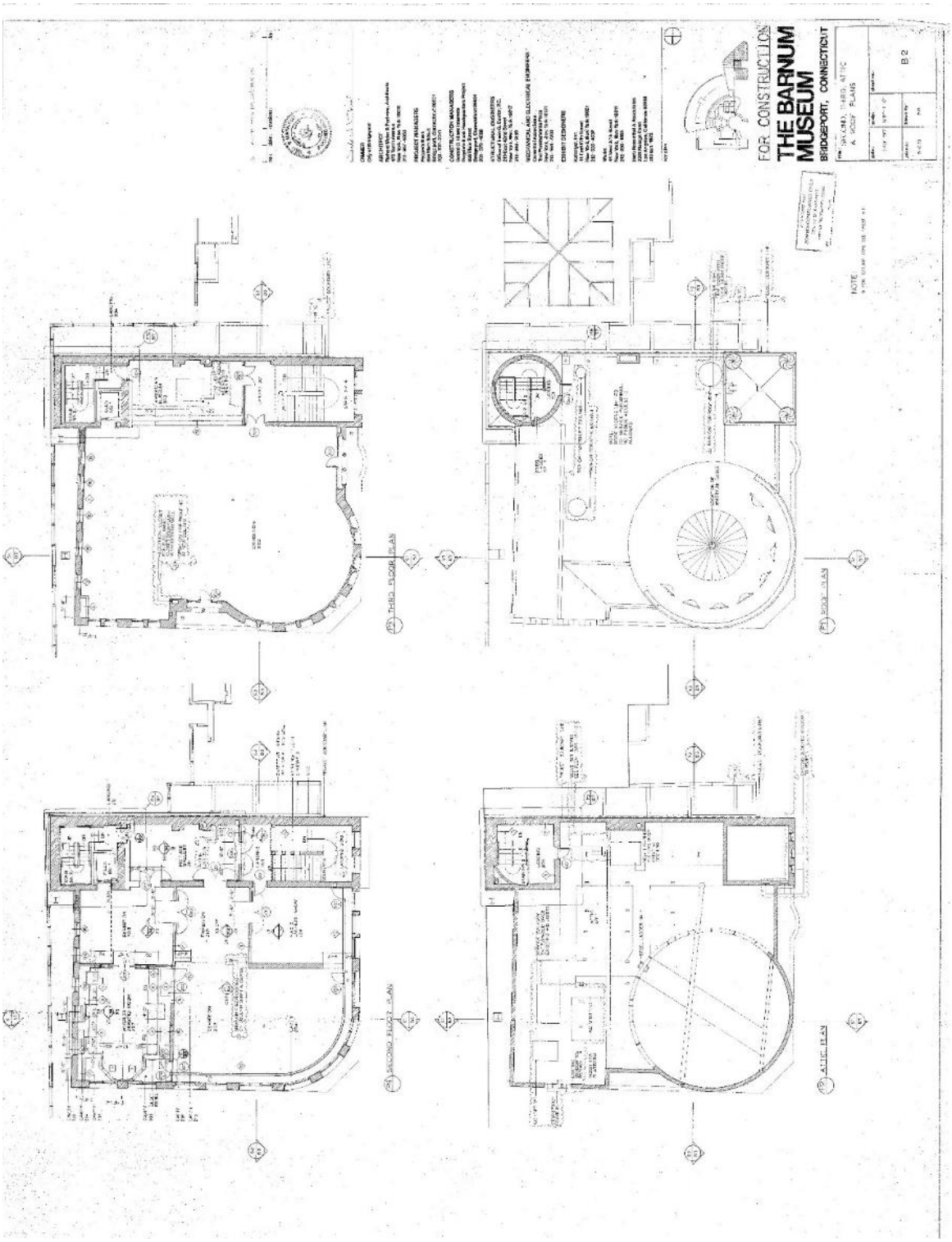


Figure 9. 1987 Second, Third, Attic and Roof Plans of Barnum Institute (Richard Meier & Partners, Architects, 1987).

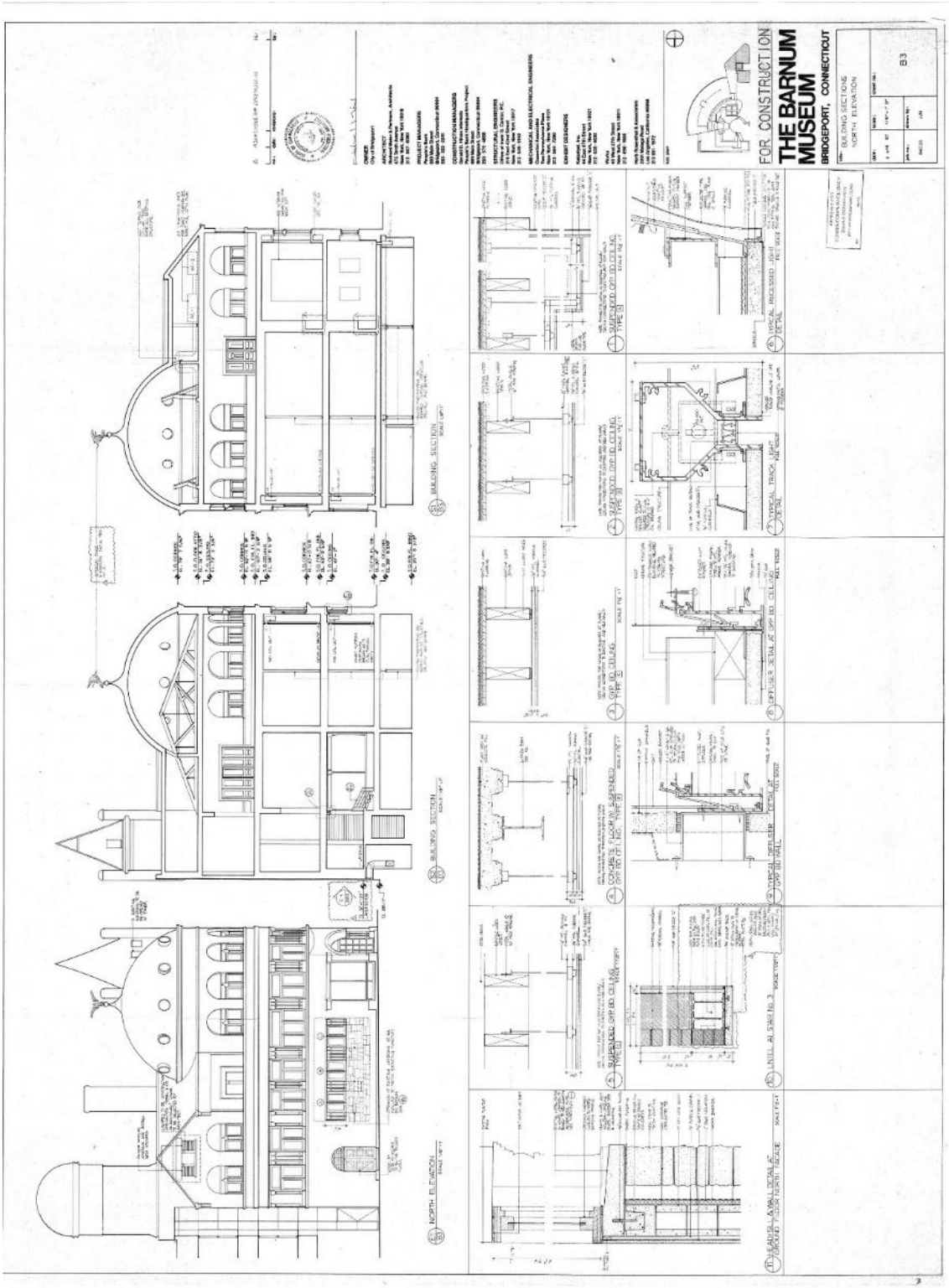


Figure 10. 1987 Building Section and North Elevation drawing of Barnum Institute (Richard Meier & Partners, Architects, 1987).