



BHC-MSS 0006

Guide to the Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Bridgeport Scientific Society

Title: Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society

Dates: 1878-1916 [bulk 1888-1902]

Quantity: 4.5 manuscript boxes, 2 oversize boxes

Abstract: The records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society represent an overview of the activities of the first tenants of the Barnum Institute of Science and History, today housing the Barnum Museum. It contains administrative information in the form of society minutes, documentation of collection acquisitions, and extensive documentation of the lectures hosted by the group.

Collection Number: BHC-MSS 0006

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical Information or Administrative History

The building that now houses the Barnum Museum originally was constructed for the sake of the Bridgeport Scientific Society, Bridgeport Medical Society, and the Fairfield County Historical Society. It was completed in 1893, having been constructed by the firm of Longstaff and Hurd. (Longstaff and Hurd also constructed P.T. Barnum's last home *Marina*.) Both organizations existed before the building was built, with the Fairfield County Historical Society being founded in 1881 and the Bridgeport Scientific Society being founded in the year 1878.

The Scientific and Historical societies, along with the Bridgeport Medical Society, made use of the building until 1933. During that time they collected a number of items that survive in the collection of the current Barnum Museum. They hosted lectures from a number of scientific and technological luminaries and provided a place for the public to be educated. Eventually, the societies collapsed, as membership dues and subscriptions were not enough to pay for upkeep. At that time they ceded ownership of the building and the collections to the City of Bridgeport.

Scope and Content Note

The contents of the Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society primarily offer an overview of the day-to-day function of the society. This is due to the heavy presence of meeting minutes and

correspondence, and the fact that there is much less information regarding the specimen collections or research sponsored by the society. However, the extensive amount of lecture programs offer insight into the educational outreach the society conducted and what members believed would capture public attention to bring in attendees to these events. This series, series VI, runs from 1881-1907 with very few gaps. It is complimented by the scrapbooks in series VIII which contain newspaper clippings that offer summaries of the events.

Arrangement Note

The arrangement of the Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society is primarily chronological, and broken into the following series: minutes and executive documents (series I), correspondence, (series II), financial documents (series III), curatorial documentation (series IV), general activity (series V), lectures and programs (series VI), record books (series VII), and scrapbooks (series VIII.) The record books and scrapbooks are oversized, and due to their delicate nature, cannot be housed in manuscript boxes with the rest of the collection.

See individual series for further details.

Provenance

Collection was likely transferred from the Bridgeport Scientific Society when it ceased to function in the 1930s. No deed of gift has been located.

Related Materials

The Barnum Museum holds a small collection of documents similar to the material present in the Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society. That collection, Records of the Barnum Institute of Science and History (BM-MSS 0001), contains additional documentation related to separate entities that were the Bridgeport Scientific Society and the Fairfield County Historical Society prior to their move into the Barnum building. Also present in that collection is more extensive documentation of the opening day exercises of the building itself, biographical information of the personnel in the building, and most importantly, a catalog of material housed on site.

Name and Subject Tracings

Personal Names

Barnum, P. T. (Phineas Taylor), 1810-1891

Secor, David Pell, 1824-1909

Corporate names

Barnum Institute of Science and History

Barnum Museum

Bridgeport Scientific Society

Fairfield County Historical Society

Subject terms

Historical societies

Natural history museums
Scientific societies

Administrative Information

Preferred citation

Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society, (BHC-MSS 0006), Bridgeport History Center.

Box and folder listing

Box 1

Arrangement: Arranged by genre format and rank of creator within organization.

Summary: This series begins with a summary of the history of the society and Barnum building for researchers to use. Minutes and laws are given priority, and then reports are listed based on officer rank. Additional material based on rank is listed, followed by reports.

Series I, Minutes and executive documents

1. History of the Bridgeport Scientific Society
2. Executive committee meetings, correspondence, and reports, 1881-1899
3. General meeting minutes of the Bridgeport Scientific Society, 1882-1802; undated
4. By-laws, articles association, and charter of Bridgeport Scientific Society, 1878; 1899; undated
5. Charter, Rules, and Bylaws of the Bridgeport Scientific and Historical Society, August 8, 1899
6. Additional resolutions and notes, 1889; undated
7. Treasurer's reports, 1880s-1890s
8. Secretary's reports, 1882-1883
9. Presidency acceptance, 1889
10. Vice president decline, 1886
11. Report of the Joint Committee for the Division of Space in the Barnum Institute, October 3, 1892

Series II, Correspondence

Arrangement: Chronological

Summary: Correspondence with various individuals.

Correspondence, 1877-1878

Correspondence, 1879

Correspondence, 1879

Correspondence, 1880

Correspondence, 1881

Correspondence, 1882-1884

Correspondence, 1885-1889

Correspondence, 1890

Correspondence, 1891

Correspondence, 1892-1893

Correspondence, 1894

Correspondence, 1895-1899
Correspondence, 1900
Correspondence, 1901-1909
Correspondence, 1910-1916; undated

Box 2

Series III, Financial documents

Arrangement: Bills are arranged chronologically, membership information is arranged by lifecycle.

Summary: Bills relate to building maintenance and to other expenses. The membership portion is placed in financial documents due to the presence of subscription lists and due books. This material is arranged by lifecycle of membership from application to resignation.

1. Bills, 1877-1884
2. Bills 1882-1892
3. Membership applications, 1880s
4. Membership applications, 1890s
5. Membership lists, 1887-1892; undated
6. Subscription lists, 1882-1888
7. Due books, 1880; 1882; undated
8. Membership resignations, 1878-1889
9. Membership resignations, 1890-1905; undated

Box 3

Series IV, Curatorial documentation

Arrangement: Bound manuscript material containing records of donations is prioritized, followed by other manuscript material, then print material.

Summary: The material present represents information on the collecting practices of the society.

1. Records of donations to the Bridgeport Scientific Society, 1890-1891
2. Record of print donations to the Bridgeport Scientific and Historical Society, 1907--
3. Curator and librarian reports and correspondence, 1880-1892; undated
4. Appeal for help of Bridgeport citizens to be involved with donating to collection, 1899

Series V, General activity

Arrangement: Chronological

Summary: Material represents a small amount of paper that could not be fit into other series.

5. Invitation to Dedication of Barnum Institute Building, February 18, 1893
6. Reports of science projects sponsored by society, 1882-1892
7. Observatory plans, undated
8. Additional material, 1893; 1897; undated
9. Seal of Fairfield County Historical Society, undated

Box 4

Series VI, Lectures and programs

Arrangement: Chronological

Summary: These printed materials represent the general outreach and education the society engaged in. The lecture programs reveal a season's worth of speakers and the annual address is given by the president of the society. As the material begins in 1881, it also demonstrates the pre-Barnum building era.

1. Lecture program, 1881-1882
2. Annual address before the Bridgeport Scientific Society, October 24, 1881
3. Lecture program, 1882-1883
4. Annual address before the Bridgeport Scientific Society, October 23, 1882
5. Lecture program, 1883-1884
6. Annual address before the Bridgeport Scientific Society, October 22, 1883
7. Lecture program, 1884-1885
8. Lecture program, 1885-1886
9. Annual address before the Bridgeport Scientific Society, November 3, 1885
10. Lecture program, 1886-1887
11. Annual address before the Bridgeport Scientific Society, November 2, 1886

Box 5

1. Science and the spiritual, February 7, 1887
2. Lecture program, 1887-1888
3. Lecture program, 1889-1890
4. Science applied to economic questions, lecture by Charles M. Du Puy, January 14, 1889
5. Lecture program, 1890-1891
6. Lecture program, 1891-1892
7. List of birds found in the vicinity of Bridgeport, Connecticut, January, 1892
8. Lecture programs, 1892-1893
9. Lecture programs, 1896-1897
10. Lecture programs, 1897-1898
11. Lecture ticket, 1898-1899
12. Lecture program, 1899-1900
13. Historical exercises for the Bridgeport centennial, 1900
14. Lecture program, 1901
15. Lecture program, 1902
16. Lecture program, 1906
17. Lecture program, 1907
18. Programs for lectures, bound together, 1881-1892
19. Correspondence about arranging lectures, 1880-1900
20. Printed material advertising lectures and topics, 1880s-1900s

Box 6

Series VII, Record books

Arrangement: Chronological

Summary: See individual books

1. Record book for 1877-1886, pre-Barnum building. Includes constitution, member list, and meeting summaries
2. Record book for 1877-1906, pre- and Barnum building era. Member list only.
3. Record book for 1899-1916, Barnum building era. Includes meeting summaries, and budgets, both handwritten and typed-then-pasted-in.
4. Record book for Executive Committee, record of meetings October 10, 1881-May 22, 1899, pre- and Barnum building era. Includes meeting minutes, both handwritten and typed-then-pasted-in

Box 7

Series VIII, Scrapbooks

Arrangement: Chronological

Summary: See individual books

1. Clippings scrapbook, 1887-1883. Clippings focus on the lectures and include summaries of them.
2. Clippings scrapbook, 1882-1892. Clippings focus on the lectures and include summaries of them.
3. Clippings scrapbook, 1891-192. Labeled Curator and Librarian records. Clippings focus on the lectures and include summaries of them.
4. Clippings scrapbook, 1896-1897. Clippings focus on the lectures and include summaries of them.