



BHC-MSS 0017|

Guide to the Records of the Barnum Museum during the tenure of Elizabeth
Seeley

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Elizabeth Seeley

Title: Records of the Barnum Museum during the tenure of Elizabeth Seeley

Dates: 1950s-1960s

Quantity: 1 manuscript box

Abstract: The Barnum Museum building has gone through various incarnations since it was first opened in 1893. In the 1950s and 1960s, the museum collections were managed by Elizabeth Seeley (a Barnum descendent). Her organizational files represent a window into the museum's inner workings during that time period, just as it was turning into a recognizable version of the contemporary Barnum Museum.

Collection Number: BHC-MSS 0017

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. Membership dues and subscriptions were not enough to pay for upkeep and the societies ceded ownership of the building and their collections to the City of Bridgeport.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the museum element of these organizations was revived. Acting as curator, Elizabeth Seeley directed the museum and managed its collections.

Scope and Content Note

The contents of this collection are primarily research files maintained by Seeley. They have not been altered from the inventory conducted on the collection 1993. It is unknown if this is the original order.

Arrangement Note

Material has been arranged alphabetically. Due to small size, there have been no additional series added.

Provenance

Donation of Elizabeth Seeley, 1974. Originally accession number 1974.09, came in with material that now makes up MSS 0016 and MSS 0018.

Related Materials

The Barnum Museum holds a small collection of documents similar to the material present in the Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society (BM-MSS 001). See also local collection BHC-MSS 0006.

Name and Subject Tracings

Personal Names

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

Corporate names

Barnum Institute of Science and History

Barnum Museum

Bridgeport Scientific Society

Fairfield County Historical Society

Administrative Information

Preferred citation

Records of the Barnum Museum during the tenure of Elizabeth Seeley, (BHC-MSS 0017), Bridgeport History Center.

Box and folder listing

1. Addresses, undated
2. American Association of Museums, 1962
3. Architecture, undated
4. Barnum Festival, 1950s
5. Inventories of clothing, etc. c. 1950s
6. Gifts, loans and exhibits, c. 1950s
7. Museum bird collection, 1935
8. Books for sale, lists and catalogues, 1950s
9. Biographical information about E. S. Seeley regarding the Barnum Museum, 1950s-1960s
10. Additional papers, c. 1950s
11. Barnum genealogy, undated
12. P.T. Barnum houses and furnishings, undated
13. P.T. Barnum, biography, undated
14. P.T. Barnum, East Bridgeport, undated
15. P.T. Barnum, copies of Barnum's letters, undated

16. "Another Side of Barnum's Life" by C.L. Pancoast, 1926