



BHC-MSS 0097

Guide to the Records of the Fairfield County Historical Society

By Meg Rinn

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Fairfield County Historical Society

Title: Records of the Fairfield County Historical Society

Dates: 1852-1895

Quantity: 4 manuscript boxes

Abstract: Within the records of the Fairfield County Historical Society are annual reports and minutes that help to provide an overview of the group's activities both before it moved into the building gifted to the organization by P.T. Barnum and afterwards. In addition to correspondence and some preserved research that members generated, the materials provide an overall sense of how the group operated and their interests up into the mid-1890s.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Administrative History:

Founded in 1881, the Fairfield County Historical Society (not to be confused with the *Fairfield Historical Society* which focuses on the town of Fairfield) was a primarily male dominated organization that sought to preserve and research the history of Fairfield County. It was based in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and membership included major Bridgeport figures like P.T. Barnum and the Rev. Samuel Orcutt, the latter of whom would go on to publish one of the most important histories of the City of Bridgeport.

The historical society moved into the building that now houses the Barnum Museum along with the Bridgeport Scientific Society, and Bridgeport Medical Society. The building 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.)

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 of the building. At that time they ceded ownership of the building and the collections therein to the City of Bridgeport.

Scope and Content note:

The bulk of the records of the Fairfield County Historical Society are dominated by organization minutes and annual reports. As such, it is possible to have an overview of the society's activities prior to its move into the Barnum Institute building (the present day Barnum Museum) as well as after. However, there are scant membership lists or applications when compared to the sister collection, the records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society.

Correspondence is also plentiful within the collection, including some personal correspondence by George Waldo. The research contained in Series VII reflects the active nature of the society to generate content and share their work as historians, with a distinct emphasis on genealogy.

Arrangement Note:

The arrangement of this collection mirrors the arrangement of BHC-MSS 0006, the Records of the Bridgeport Scientific Society. Series I consists of minutes, and is followed by series II which consists of the annual reports. Note that they only run up into 1898.

The third series consists of governance related information, mostly in the form of meeting reports. Series IV consists of correspondence with membership, and is followed by series V which focuses on financial documents. Series VI relates to collections, although the information within is scant in comparison to the material in the Bridgeport Scientific Society's collection.

The final series is VII, research and papers. As the Fairfield Historical Society focused on history, research papers and notes were retained by members. The focus relates to genealogy, and the material may be in relation to Samuel Orcutt's Bridgeport history book. As his papers (held by the Bridgeport History Center) have similar research and it is known he was a member of the society, it is an educated guess.

Administrative information:

Provenance: Found in collections.

See also

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

Preferred Citation:

Records of the Fairfield County Historical Society (BHC-MSS 0097) Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

Names and Subject Tracings

Personal names

Orcutt, Samuel

Barnum, P.T. (1810-1891)

Corporate names

Fairfield County Historical Society

Bridgeport Scientific Society

Barnum Museum

Subject tracings

Historical societies

Detailed box and folder listing

Series I -- Minutes

Box 1

1. Minutes, 1881-1888
2. Minutes, 1886-1895
3. Minutes, 1892-1899
4. Minutes, December 11, 1891

Series II – Annual reports

Box 2 -- Published annual reports, 1882, 1885-1889, 1891-1892

Box 3 -- Published annual reports, 1893-1897

Series III– Governance

Box 4

1. Articles of association, February 1881
2. Annual meeting reports, 1882, 1892, and undated
3. Reports, 1886
4. Officer's reports, 1892

Series IV -- Correspondence

5. Correspondence, 1856-1879 and undated (some Waldo personal and business)
6. Correspondence, 1880-1885
7. Correspondence, 1885-1889
8. Correspondence, 1890-1894
9. Correspondence, 1895-1899
10. Correspondence, 1900
11. Correspondence, undated

Series V – Financial documents

12. Treasurer's reports and list of dues owed, 1882-1890
13. Bills and accounts, 1879-1891
14. Comstock deed, Barnum will, 1891
15. Membership – folder empty

Series VI -- Collections

16. Book purchases, undated
17. Labels and gifts of accessions, undated
18. Collections, undated
19. Documents as gifts, undated

Series VII – Research and papers

20. Paper, "The Fatal Silver Bullet" by Edward R. Ives(?), 1852
21. Paper, "An account of the ? f Andre by David Williams" by Mrs. Marsha Fitzgerald, 1881
22. Research notes, 1884-1886, undated
23. Genealogy notes, Burton family, 1895
24. Genealogy notes, Albert S. Comstock, undated
25. Genealogy notes, Curtis family, 1895
26. Genealogy notes, Hawley family, 1895
27. Genealogy notes, Hooker family, undated

28. Genealogy notes, Seeley family, 1894

29. Tomlinson family, undated