

BARNUM MUSEUM RECEIVES GRANT TO ASSIST WITH THE CREATION OF THE P.T. BARNUM DIGITAL COLLECTION

June 2016 – The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has announced a grant of close to \$190,000 which will enable the Barnum Museum-to create the P. T. Barnum Digital Collection, drawing from its own collections as well as those of the Bridgeport History Center at the Bridgeport Public Library. The grant project is designed to conserve, catalog, and digitize artifacts and documents to make them available online. In awarding the grant, the NEH noted that it will allow the Museum and Library to “realize their objectives of preserving and creating access to the significant collections of artifacts, photographs, posters, and manuscripts pertaining to P. T. Barnum and many of his associates, as well as items donated by Barnum and his family”.

“The Barnum Museum is the only one in the State of Connecticut who received the coveted grant in the HCRR category (Humanities Collections References and Resources)”, noted Museum Executive Director Kathy Maher. “It is recognition that the Barnum’s remarkable collection is worthy of a national platform”, she noted, adding, “It will allow us to conserve and digitize close to a 1,000 items, create catalog records in electronic databases, and continue our efforts to preserve these irreplaceable documents and objects for the future”. Maher said, “It provides critical support to the Museum and Library in meeting the increasing demand for information contained in the unique Barnum collections at both institutions”. Maher noted that, “Users such as educators, students, scholars, history buffs, popular culture and entertainment enthusiasts, filmmakers, documentary producers, authors, artists and graphic designers have been limited to on-site research at the Museum and Bridgeport History Center”.

This grant will assist in creating the P. T. Barnum Digital Collection which will reside in the University of Connecticut’s Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA), a preservation repository with free public access. Providing global access via the Internet to these primary resources will provide rich new research material for articles and books, documentaries, film productions, and new forms of media, as well as extensive educational resources for teachers and their students.

“NEH grants bring the humanities to life for Americans by helping preserve valuable cultural resources, advancing research, and supporting films and exhibitions that communicate the lessons of history and culture to new audiences,” said NEH Chairman William D. Adams. “We are pleased to announce our support this year for 248 exceptional research, educational, preservation, and public programs in the humanities.”

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ABOUT THE BARNUM MUSEUM:

Bridgeport’s Barnum Museum is one of P. T. Barnum’s many philanthropic gifts. Completed in 1893, the architecturally significant building boasts a unique combination of styles and terra cotta ornamentation, and is listed on the National Register. Today the museum proudly shares the history and legacy of the world-famous entrepreneur, showman, and museum proprietor, who was also a state legislator, mayor, real estate developer, and philanthropist. The museum is home to thousands of artifacts, many pertaining

to Bridgeport native Tom Thumb and his wife, as well as the P. T. Barnum Family, and Nathaniel Wheeler Family. Their furniture, carriages, artwork and other items are currently displayed, along with a centaur and mermaid. Since 2010, the historic building has been undergoing repair and restoration due to a series of weather events that compromised the structure. The Museum is currently open for visitors in the People's United Bank Gallery located behind the historic building, open for viewing and tours from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m on Thursdays and Fridays year round. There is no admission charge but donations are welcome.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. The Endowment awards grants to top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers. NEH grants typically go to cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television, and radio stations, and to individual scholars. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.