

**Barnum Museum receives \$15,000 grant
from Fairfield County Community Foundation
to present a new exhibition, “Barnum’s World of Wonders”**

July 13, 2017 – A brand-new exhibition, "**Barnum's World of Wonders!**", is being prepared in the museum’s gallery, thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the Fairfield County Community Foundation.

Scheduled to open to the public in mid-October, “**Barnum's World of Wonders!**” will provide the Museum with the opportunity to re-engage with the community and provide enriching educational events, activities and programs. Barnum's World of Wonders will feature many of the extraordinary items in the Barnum Museum's collection pertaining to P. T. Barnum and his associates, especially Bridgeport native Tom Thumb. Key artifacts such as carriages, Tom Thumb's miniature furniture, a centaur skeleton, and a FEJEE mermaid replica will be on continuous display. Most of the gallery space will be devoted to showcasing artifacts that help tell Barnum's story. "Most of our visitors come in knowing only about his circus enterprises, which he did later in his life. But there is so much more to tell in addition to the circus", says Curator Adrienne Saint-Pierre. She added, "We are so fortunate to have many one-of-a-kind, personal items that belonged to General Tom Thumb because these artifacts give people a realistic sense of him as a person, much more than pictures can. We even have items that were given by Barnum himself in the late 1800s, as well as fabulous items that we have recently acquired". Saint-Pierre noted that many items are fragile and cannot be on permanent display, so to see these up close will be a something you won't want to miss.

Museum Executive Director Kathleen Maher said, “I am so appreciative of and thankful for the Foundation’s kind support and enthusiasm for the Barnum Museum’s **Barnum’s World of Wonders!** exhibition and programming”. “The contribution will greatly assist the Museum in creating a new main floor exhibition and expand our programming while we continue the Museum’s major re-envisioning”, she added. Maher said, “This project will expand our capacity to connect with audiences while we continue to restore the historic building”.

Another area of the gallery will showcase a portion of William “Bill” Brinley's miniature circus, which was exhibited for many years in the Museum's historic building and was a favorite of visitors. The circus was created by Brinley beginning in the 1930s, when he was a teen. It grew to contain about 3500 pieces, all hand-crafted, and replicates a 1930s circus. Since the entire circus model is enormous, portions of the circus model, such as the Menagerie, Side Show, Work Tents, etc., will be featured and then rotated out. Circus historian Gary Payne, who worked closely with Bill Brinley will be working with the Museum on this new installation.

The exhibit will also give visitors a hint of what the future, renovated Museum exhibitions will be like. Maher notes, "The museum is planning a mysterious "warehouse" of items like Barnum would have had to constantly refresh his exhibitions in the American Museum that he operated in New York City". She added, "Barnum was always changing things up, acquiring unusual artifacts and animals from all over the world. People flocked to his museum to see what intriguing new things he had discovered, and we want to evoke the same sense of curiosity Barnum inspired in his audience."

Watch for notices of the exhibit's opening, including on Barnum Museum's social media pages.

ABOUT FAIRFIELD COUNTY'S COMMUNITY FOUNDATION:

Fairfield County's Community Foundation promotes philanthropy as a means to create change in Fairfield County, focusing on innovative and collaborative solutions to critical issues impacting the community. Individuals, families, corporations and organizations can establish charitable funds or contribute to existing funds. The Community Foundation is in compliance with the Council on Foundation's national standards, and has awarded \$180 (M) Million in grants to non-profits in Fairfield County and beyond. For more information, visit www.fccfoundation.org

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. And now open Saturdays from 11am-3pm through Labor Day weekend. There is no admission charge but donations are welcome.