



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hartford Circus Fire Scrapbook Project Kickoffs at Library
Community-Wide Effort to Honor and Remember City Story

Hartford, Connecticut (July 2, 2013) — On Saturday, July 6, 2013, Hartford Public Library joins The Mark Twain House & Museum in observing the anniversary of the Hartford Circus Fire, one of the most catastrophic civic tragedies in the city's history, and one of the most thoroughly documented disasters in American circus history.

Beginning at the kickoff of the Library's Adult Summer Reading Program on Saturday, July 6, the Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library will begin collecting memorabilia, personal recollections, drawings and other reflections on the fire and its aftermath. Scrapbooking materials will be available for visitors to add their stories, memories, drawings and objects related to the circus fire. The scrapbook memory collection will circulate at library branch locations throughout the city and will serve as a community-wide effort honor and remember this piece of the Hartford story. The final scrapbook will be archived in the Hartford History Center for next year's 70th anniversary of the devastating fire on July 6, 2014.

July 6, 1944, is etched in Hartford's memory not only because 167 people died, but also because this was an intensely and deeply local event – a fire that killed and injured local people, was battled by local firemen and area residents, covered by local newspapers, and whose terrible fatalities were treated in local hospitals. In many ways and in many different places, Hartford people lived this story.

For decades after the fire, survivors and others told stories about that day. And in the perfect storm that was the disaster itself – an audience of vulnerable women and children sitting under a canvas tent that had been waterproofed with gasoline and paraffin – there is a story that belongs to this city and will never end.

"We know that the Hartford Circus Fire holds a deep place in our city's collective history, and we want to honor that," said Brenda Miller, the Library's chief officer for cultural affairs and public programming, as well as the executive director of the Hartford History Center. "We have some very powerful materials on the fire in our collection, and we would like to bring them together with the human dimension and memories that still exist today."

About Hartford Public Library

The Hartford Public Library traces its roots to 1774. It operates 10 locations in the City of Hartford. The Library receives more than 865,000 visits per year. Services include access to a large collection of materials for reading and research, as well as music and video. Programs provide education, information and enrichment to the people of Hartford in such areas as citizenship training, literacy, business skills and cultural awareness. The mission of Hartford Public Library is to provide free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. According to a recent editorial in *The Hartford Courant*, "Indeed, the Library has established itself as the center of the community in Hartford." To learn more about the library, please see www.hplct.org.

About Hartford History Center

Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library, collects, preserves, and makes available three centuries of materials and information relating to the history, literature, and culture of Hartford. Located on the third floor of the Downtown Library, 500 Main Street, the Hartford History Center is open 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, please call the History Center at 860-695-6297 or visit online at <http://hhc.hplct.org/>.

About The Mark Twain House

The Mark Twain House & Museum (www.marktwainhouse.org) has restored the author's Hartford, Connecticut, home, where Samuel L. Clemens and his family lived from 1874 to 1891. In addition to providing tours of Twain's restored home, a National Historic Landmark, the institution offers activities and educational programs that illuminate Twain's literary legacy and provide information about his life and times.