1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Elephant Hotel

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 335 Route 202 Not for publication:

City/Town: Somers Vicinity:

State: New York County: Westchester Code: 119 Zip Code: 10589

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	___	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	X	District:	___
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	__	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	___ buildings
___	___ sites
___	___ structures
1	___ objects
2	___ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _x__ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property __x_ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property __x_ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: Hotel

Current: Government Sub: City Hall

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Early Republic: Federal

MATERIALS:
Foundation: marble
Walls: brick
Roof: asphalt
Other: wood

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Elephant Hotel is located on a 1.67-acre parcel at the intersection of U.S. Route 202 and N.Y. Route 100 in the hamlet of Somers, Westchester County, New York. It occupies the southern road frontage of the L-shaped property. The Old Bet Statue is sited south of the building and closer to the road within a triangular plaza that was originally separated as an island in the intersection. The roadway once effecting this separation has been closed and converted to a brick-paved walkway. A flagpole is sited near the historic statue. A paved parking lot east of the building is largely on a separate parcel that is excluded from this nomination. Areas south and west of the building are maintained as lawn. A brick path bordered by a low box hedge connects the south entrance to the hotel with the main walkway and the Old Bet Statue. A row of mature deciduous trees has been allowed to grow up along a field stone wall on the west side of the lot. The rear (northern) portion of the property is wooded.

I. Hachaliah Bailey Era (c. 1820 to 1837)

The exact date, design source and builder are not known, but sometime between 1820 and 1825 Hachaliah Bailey constructed the Elephant Hotel and made it his residence, a public lodging place, and the headquarters of his menagerie business. The three-story brick edifice is a rare, distinctive example of Federal Period domestic architecture with noteworthy interior decoration in a remarkable state of preservation. Of national significance for its association with the formative history of the American circus, the Elephant Hotel is also a distinguished specimen of a rural turnpike hotel designed in the Federal style.

The rectangular building is just under three full stories tall; the windows of the top-most level are compressed under the thin, flat wood cornice. It presents a five-bay facade to the street (south) with precise symmetry in both the horizontal and vertical arrangement of its fenestration. The central, entrance axis is emphasized over the others with a broad doorway on the ground level framed with sidelights and transom and embellished with a stone stoop and flat-roof porch supported by pairs of stylized Doric columns. A tripartite window fills the wide central bay on the second story, and a semi-circular light illuminates the third story. However, the horizontal arrangement of the facade is also quite pronounced with an elevated marble basement, marble water table, three courses of windows, a wood cornice (once detailed with modillions), and a balustrade along the ridge of the hipped roof.

In 1962 architect Edgar I. Williams gave a lecture on the architecture of the building to the Somers Historical Society, and as an exercise applied a number of proportional rules specified in Asher Benjamin's Country Builders' Assistant (1797). He was delighted to find that in the width of the door and window trim, the relationship of cornices to room size, and the dimension of window panes it was evident that the master builder of the Elephant Hotel had indeed employed the architectural principles conveyed in pattern books of the day.[1] Further, the design of the building is consistent with the period architecture of western New England, which had influenced the building tradition of eastern New York for generations. Thus, the hotel is authentic to its place and time. Its grand scale and profuse decoration set it apart as the object of its owner's wealth and taste.

[1] In *The Elephant Hotel: Its Architecture and History* (Somers, NY: Somers Historical Society, 1962), 3-7.

With its restrained exterior ornamentation, the distinction of the Elephant Hotel is apparent in the quality of its materials and the craftsmanship of its construction. White marble quarried in nearby Tuckahoe or Sing Sing was employed to create the ashlar basement and window sills and lintels.[2] The marble veneer faced the above-ground portion of the building's stone foundation on all sides of the main building and its rear kitchen wing. The upper walls were constructed of a molded red brick laid in thin off-white mortar joints with grapevine profiles. The surface retains traces of a red stain applied during construction. The brick on the south, west and east sides of the main section and the west wall of the kitchen wing have been laid in a Flemish bond. North walls of both the main section and the kitchen wing and the east façade of the wing were constructed with a common bond. A clear indication of front and back is evident in the selection of bond patterns, as well as the curious distinction of the west façade, which was originally the portion of the hotel first viewed by travelers approaching the crossroads from the northwest.

Marble window features further reflect the hierarchy of facades. Windows on the south (front) and west facades contain both marble sills and lintels, including the west wall of the kitchen wing. These were intended to be the principal facades since windows on the east and north facades have marble sills only. The headers of door and window openings on these walls were formed with segmental brick arches. The fenestration of the south and west facades was arranged in precise symmetry. The west wall of the main building was divided into four bays spaced around the two wide chimneys on that side. The center two bays contained window openings filled with wood sash; the windows were blank in the outer bays, meant to be filled with louvered blinds to maintain symmetry when interior space did not require a window. Even the west wall of the kitchen wing was neatly divided into two, two-story window bays. Later alterations have obscured this original symmetry somewhat. One ground-story bay in the kitchen wing was later converted to a door. A two-story addition was made to the north side of this façade in 1943 using the blank window spaces for connections to the building.

The east side of the building was clearly a secondary facade with three window bays with plainer brick headers in the main section, and two skewed bays in the kitchen wing. In the latter case, this configuration can only be seen in elevation drawings made in 1934 for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), as this view is blocked by an addition to the building constructed in 1959. This side of the building was less important architecturally since it was not directly visible from the intersection the hotel faced. It is also likely that the view of this side was obscured by a two-story wood frame building sited relatively close to the hotel and, later, was actually attached to it as an annex by the construction of a connector in c. 1836 (more below). The round-arch windows in the center of this façade were designed to light and ornament the stair case within the hotel, hence their incongruous shape and relationship to the exterior fenestration. The round window on the ground floor is a replacement that was installed when the connection to the annex was demolished in 1907 and the doorway linking to it was removed. It is not historically accurate. There was likely a door in this location in the original design; the present door on the south end of the façade was added when the Farmers and Drovers Bank opened in the southeastern corner of the building in 1839.

The two-story kitchen wing abuts the rear or north façade of the main building. The east wall of the wing is aligned roughly on center of the rear wall, and the west wall is inset from the northwest corner of the main section leaving sufficient space for a single bay of windows. Three window bays are squeezed in the eastern half of the rear wall. At ground level there is a doorway that enters the back of the center hall. This doorway was retained when the one-story addition was constructed in 1959; however, the other two ground floor

[2] Tuckahoe is a well-known source of marble in the region. Yet, Hachaliah Bailey maintained a sloop in Sing Sing and would have been familiar with the quarries there, at least one of them was worked by inmates at the state penitentiary there.

openings in the rear wall and those in the east wall of the kitchen wing were in-filled and walled over.[3] The north wall of the kitchen wing is blank with a chimney protruding above the roof ridge and a brick and stone bump-out for baking ovens within.

The hotel is capped by a hipped roof that rises to a flat platform within a wood balustrade. This is an original feature of the building, although the balustrade, after having been absent for many years, was reconstructed in 1966 based on the conjectural designs of Edgar I. Williams. The design of the first railing is unknown. The roof was constructed with wood shingles that are still visible on the underside of the roof in the attic. A standing-seam metal roof was applied c. 1900. That was removed in 1958, and the surface has been covered with asphalt shingles ever since. The gable roof of the kitchen wing has the same history. A plain wood cornice distinguishes the intersection of the roof and the walls. Historic photographs indicate that an elegant modillioned cornice and paneled frieze were features of the original design. These notable elements were replaced by the current plain cornice in 1907. Pairs of tall chimneys in the west and east walls, together with the roof-top balustrade accentuate the verticality of the principal facades.

The front entrance porch on the south facade has a solid platform and steps constructed of cut gray limestone. This heavy structure is supported by a foundation and sheltered by a flat, hipped wood roof attached to the brick wall of the façade. The roof is supported by paired wood columns in the front. Iron railings attached to these columns are located on the sides of the steps and along the sides of the platform. Although it has been refurbished many number of times, the porch is an original feature in dimension and design. It provides a fitting ornament for the principal entrance to the hotel. There was also an open porch across the first story of the east façade of the kitchen wing. It abutted the north wall of the main section and was supported by three evenly spaced posts out to the northeast corner of the ell. It sheltered both a doorway into the rear of the main hall of the hotel and a doorway into the kitchen. Stone steps are depicted in the center porch bay on the HABS drawings, and there was a wood railing along the edge of the floor. This feature was removed when the addition was made in 1959. Historic photographs depict louvered wood blinds on windows on the south and west facades. Solid wood shutters, installed c. 1994, now frame the windows on the front façade. The west façade has no shutters even in the blind window spaces that were designed to contain them.

The plans of the two principal floors of the hotel are similar and intact. Both are organized around a center hall that traverses the entire plan on the main floor and has small rooms enclosed at the north and south ends on the second. Midway through the passage a second corridor bisects the east side of the plan. This corridor contains a staircase that rises up from the cellar to the third story. On the main floor this intersection is distinguished by a groined vault enclosed by two archways in the hall and one opening into the stair corridor. The arches are flattened, faced with wide wood frames with paneled key blocks. They spring from wide, fluted pilasters with simple capitals that are engaged directly to the side walls providing the widest opening possible. While the opening into the stair corridor is narrower nearly by half, the arch is flattened in the same proportion. A round plaster medallion is centered in the vault from which a non-historic electric chandelier is hung. The ceilings to the front and rear of the vault are trimmed with plaster cornices. The entrance dominates the south end of the hall. Wood trim frames the feature and divides the six-panel door from the sidelights and transom. Narrow pilasters with deeply scooped profiles rise from tall base blocks and terminate at a shallow entablature that

[3] Here, the HABS drawings and photographs are at odds with one another. The measured drawing of the north elevation delineates two windows on the ground floor on the east side of the façade. However, a photograph taken essentially at the same time indicates that there was a door in the easternmost bay and a half window in the next bay west. In whatever form they actually took, these openings in the wall were later obliterated when an addition was built here in 1959.

supports the transom. Sidelights fill two-thirds of the spaces flanking the door with paneling in the lower section. The transom has its own wood frame and extends across the tops of the door and sidelights. The glass of the sidelights and transom are set in lead in a rectilinear pattern. Other interior doorways are embellished in a similar fashion, and there are tall baseboards with molded top edges. The door to the southeast room is a reproduction while all others are original. Floors here and throughout the first two stories are constructed with pine boards of uniform width (approx, 6 in.). In the center halls they run north/south; in the rooms east/west. They are presently covered with carpeting.

Two squarish rooms occupy the west side of the plan. The dividing partitions on both levels have wide openings closed with pairs of wood pocket doors. The rooms on the main floor are the most elaborate with complex plaster cornices and ceiling ornament and marble fireplace mantels. (These mantels have been painted.) Window trim in these rooms is the most articulated of any in the building. Moldings extend to the baseboard with wood panels beneath the windows. These were the best rooms of the hotel and served the primary public functions until the annex ballroom was built. They communicated closely with the kitchen and were used for dining. On the second floor the rooms have the same dimension, but the trim is simpler. Ceilings have smaller plaster cornices, window surrounds are less elaborate, and fireplaces have marble mantels. These rooms have served as private sitting rooms for hotel guests. Although all four rooms have functioned as offices since 1927, they are remarkably intact, including their original doors and window sash. In each room on both floors, the upper sash in the single window on the west side of the building has been removed and replaced with a wood panel supporting an air conditioning unit. Fluorescent lighting has been attached to the ceilings.

Smaller rooms flank the stair corridor on the east side of the hall on both levels. Each was designed with a fireplace and wood mantel on the east wall and three windows. They were plainer rooms without plaster ceiling moldings, elaborate window trim or marble fireplace mantels. The original function of the front room on the main floor is unclear since it was converted to a banking room as early as 1839. For this use two steel safes were installed in the room. The safe in the northeast corner remains in place; the one in the southwest corner was removed and replaced with a closet after the 1934 HABS project. This closet was removed in 2003 and the doorway into the hall restored. As part of the early bank alterations, the window on the east wall was converted into a doorway with a transom. This feature also remains intact. The rear east room on the main floor has been identified as a taproom for the hotel. It had a doorway and a half-window on the north wall that were walled over for the 1959 addition. A photograph for the HABS documentation indicates that these features were present in 1934. The window was reduced in size when the room was converted to a kitchen in c. 1905. The doorway also may have been a window, as falsely indicated in the HABS drawings. The window on the east wall had been converted to a doorway when the hotel was connected to the annex in c. 1836 or later. The window was restored when the annex was disconnected in 1907. Rooms on the second story are similar to those on the first except they are entered from the stair corridor rather than the center hall. They were obviously used as bed chambers. In both rooms fireplaces contain historic cast iron stoves that are believed to be original to the hotel but not to these particular spaces. They were reputedly moved from the ground floor rooms directly below.

The stair corridor originates in the cellar where brick partitions outline the same room plan and support brick interior partitions up through the second story. This was an early attempt at fireproof construction. (The brick walls of the stair corridor actually extend through the third story and to the roof.) On the main floor, the basement stairs were enclosed within a paneled wall, which was removed when renovations were made to the basement in 1979. A solid rail with a gate now encloses the space. The wood stairs are open for the rest of their three-story route. A simple wood balustrade with square spindles wraps around the floor openings and

terminates in a spiral at the main floor. The underside of the stairs is plastered. On the main floor the corridor is illuminated by an oculus in the east exterior wall. This feature was added after 1907 when the portion of the wood frame annex linking the buildings was demolished. During the period of the connection (c. 1836 to 1907), there was a doorway in this space, and it may have been so always, which would have provided communication between the two buildings whether or not there was a physical connection. In any event, there was no particular precedent for the present round window. There was also a doorway connection between the stair corridor and the annex on the second story. The arched window installed there in 1907 is probably an authentic replica of the original since it matches the intact window on the third story of the corridor.

The second floor plan diverges from that of the ground floor with the presence of small, square rooms in the front and rear of the center hall. These are original partitions leaving a reduced passage area to the stair corridor and the central portion of the hall, which would have been illuminated from the windows in the east wall of the stair corridor. When the second story window was converted to a door into the annex, natural light would have been available only from the third story window. The small rooms in the front and rear of the second story hall captured the light from the central windows on the north and south facades. Each had a doorway into the hall. The space they occupied forced the entries into the two parlors on the west side of the hall to the center of the hall and against their common partition wall. The front (south) hall chamber is intact, although a new doorway now connects it to the abutting office to the east. The north hall chamber was renovated into the building's first bathroom in 1914. The town has further altered this space as detailed below.

On the third floor seven bed chambers are arranged around the stair corridor and central hall similar to that on the second floor. A seventh room was added by dividing the large space on the west side of the building into three rooms rather than two. Fenestration is similar, although the center room on the south side has the dramatic benefit of the large arched window prominent on the front façade. This story is not as tall as the others and ceiling height is limited. There are fireplaces in the eastern two rooms; the rooms in the western corners have mantels and were likely heated with stoves. Wood door and window trim is simple but intact. The HABS drawings indicate that there was a steep stair to the attic enclosed on the north side of the hall. This feature was removed and replaced with a drop-down attic ladder during renovations converting the space to a museum in 1969 (see below).

The kitchen wing was an appendage with restricted access to the main portion of the hotel. Originally, it communicated only at the cellar and main levels. Certain accounts suspect that it predates the hotel, but in spite of differences in materials and finishes that reflect its dependency status, it was clearly planned with the hotel as an integral functional and design component. The continuity of brick and stone work on the exterior and plan relationships on the interior are convincing evidence for this wing having been conceived with the hotel.[4] Its cellar connection to store rooms under the main part of the building is an important feature. There was a separate set of stairs on the south side of the wing that connected the main floor kitchen with cellar storage and staff rooms in the upper half-story. The main floor kitchen connected appropriately to the rear of the center hall, but the second-story rooms did not connect to the main building at all. (The present connection was made by the town much later.) The kitchen space was undivided with a large cooking hearth and bake ovens constructed into the north wall. It was illuminated by two windows on the west wall and one on the east wall where there was also a door. The present door connecting the wing to the main hall is the original passageway between the two sections of the building. The HABS drawing of the first floor plan indicates that there was a

[4] Speculation that portions of the wood frame annex represent Thomas Leggett's tavern that was present when Hachaliah Bailey bought the property in 1807, is more credible.

service pass-through under the stairs and in the north wall of the northwest room, or dining room. This makes sense, although how the pass-through navigated through the staircase is not delineated. A door was cut through the southern window on the west wall, and the openings on the east wall were in-filled and blocked by a 1959 addition to the east side of the wing. The fireplace was bricked in and restored in phases described below, and a bathroom was constructed on the south wall when the stairs were removed in c. 1970. The second story was documented by HABS as having been divided into three chambers and a closet. During renovations made in c. 1970, some of the partitions were removed to create two offices. A doorway was cut into the common wall to connect these offices with the main section.

The Annex. The Annex was a two-story, wood frame building of which the center portion is presumed to have been the inn functioning on the property when Thomas Leggett sold it to Hachaliah Bailey in 1807. Historic photographs indicate that it had a gable roof section with a six bay façade and a three-bay cross-gable addition at its eastern end. The entire south façade was spanned by a one-story porch, the western portion of which was enclosed. According to tradition, the narrow space between the brick hotel and the annex was bridged with a two-story connector that is said to have been made by 1836.[5] On the ground floor the hotel was connected to the annex by two door openings in the east wall. One was located at the east end of the stair corridor, which may have already been a doorway. It led to a billiard room in the annex. The second doorway exited the room in the northeast corner and led to a barroom. A store was located in the far eastern end of the building. On the second story a doorway was created in the east wall of the hotel's stair corridor that connected with a hallway in the annex. There were bed chambers along the north side of the hallway, and at the east end, in the cross-gable section, there was a ballroom above the store.[6] All of these doorways were restored or converted to windows when the annex connection was demolished in 1907.

II. Horace Bailey Era (1837 to 1868)

Hachaliah Bailey conveyed ownership of the Elephant Hotel to fellow showman and neighbor Gerard Crane in 1836 before retiring to his menagerie's winter quarters in Virginia. Within the next year Crane sold the brick building and its wood frame annex to Horace Bailey (1790-1874), a cousin of Hachaliah, who apparently moved into the building with his family and operated the hotel. Horace was a founding director of the Farmers and Drovers Bank, whose assets came largely from accounts with circus people. A business office was opened in the front, southeast corner of the ground floor, and it later expanded into the wood frame annex. The front room still contains the bank vault installed at that time. A window in the east wall was converted into a doorway to provide a separate entrance into the bank. This door, its limestone stoop and steps remain in place. Iron shutters were installed on the inside of the remaining two windows. They have been removed and lost. In 1865 the Farmers and Drovers Bank became a national bank. Horace Bailey had conveyed his title to the property to his son William (1817-1889) in time for him to have sold the hotel property to his store tenant William Marshall in 1868.

[5] Elizabeth Macaulay, "In Celebration of Somers Grand Old Elephant Hotel," *Somers, Its People and Places* (Somers, NY: Somers Historical Society, 1988), 141.
[6] This description is based on sketch plans made by James B. Crane, Somers Town Tax Assessor in 1934 at the request of Thomas W. Hotchkiss, writer of the HABS data sheets, dated April 15, 1934. Copy in the Somers Historical Society Archives.

III. William Bailey Era (1868 to 1927)

Few, if any, changes had been made to the building at the point of this transaction, and no improvements or alterations can be directly attributed to Marshall, who died six years later. The contents of the hotel were auctioned; an inventory identifies principal rooms as Parlor, Library, Dining Room, Bank, Barroom and Bedrooms.[7] Elizabeth Marshall, the widow and executrix, sold the hotel back to William Bailey in 1874. Bailey likely leased the hotel to independent proprietors, although that record has not been determined. By this time, he was residing in a large, new Second Empire-style mansion across the street.

Somers historian Charles E. Culver provided a description of the building in an account he wrote about the town for J. Thomas Scharf's *History of Westchester County, New York* in 1886.

> It is made of brick which [was] manufactured on the farm, a few rods from the site of the hotel. The building is about sixty feet square, three stories in height, with a brick two-story addition in the rear used as a kitchen, and the second story as sleeping rooms.[8] It has an entrance on the south, consisting of stone, iron-railed steps, and a stone-floored portico, leading into a broad, high-ceilinged hall, which extends the full length of the building. To the right of the main hall is a short side hall, leading to a frame addition on the east side of the building, which contains … twenty-six rooms and is connected by a hallway on the second floor with a fine ball-room which has held social gatherings for several generations. The inside partition walls are of brick, being carried up with the building. The whole is covered with a deck roof, the top of which is a level space, railed with an ornamental wooden railing, from which a fine view of the surrounding country can be obtained.[9]

Culver also described how the Old Bet statue looked in 1886. Having lost its original gilt finish, the diminutive replica elephant presented "a more natural appearance, being covered with a coat of mouse-colored paint."[10]

The earliest known photographs of the building reveal that the building retained its original wood shingle roof into the 1890s, although the roof balustrade had been removed by this time.[11] These photographs also indicate that this wood shingle roof was covered with a standing seam metal roof by 1900. This wood roof remains in place and is still visible in the attic of the building. No other changes are discernable in these photographs. The original wood modillioned cornice with paneled frieze is documented as extant. Subtle changes were occurring in the interior, however.

William Bailey died in 1889, and his widow continued to rent the building to inn keepers. The Farmers and Drovers Bank closed in 1905 and that function ceased in the hotel.[12] In 1907 the western portion of the wood frame annex, which reputedly housed offices for the bank on the ground floor, was demolished after it was reportedly struck by lightening.[13] For some time afterwards the exterior brick wall of the hotel formerly

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[7] "A true and perfect inventory of all the goods, chattels and credits of William Marshall, late of the Town of Somers…," 22 January, 1874. Estate Papers, Westchester County Archives.
[8] The dimensions cited here are incorrect. The main building measures roughly 40 ft. x 46 ft., and the kitchen wing measures roughly 20 ft. x 17 ft. The kitchen wing does not appear to have been an addition.
[9] J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Westchester County, New York* (Philadelphia: L. E. Preston & Co., 1886), 490.
[10] Ibid., 480.
[11] All historic photographs referenced in this section are in the collections of the Somers Historical Society.
[12] Macaulay, "In Celebration of Somers Grand Old Elephant Hotel," 141.
[13] In another account, cited above, it was recalled that there were tap and billiard rooms here. See footnote no. 6.

encased in the extension retained the plaster finish of the room it was once a part. Photographs documenting these conditions also show that initially the ground-floor door was retained and the second-story doorway was in-filled with a window retaining an arched transom that had extended above the roof line of the annex. The modillioned cornice on the hotel had been replaced with a plain wood soffit and fascia by the time the connection to the annex was removed.

During this time the hotel was leased to Robert and Elizabeth Shackleton, who published an account of the repairs they made in a memoir. They converted the old tap room in the northeast corner of the ground floor to a kitchen by removing the wood bar (storing it in the basement), adapting bottle racks into cupboards, re-using shelving for a table, infilling the fireplace with brick, and exchanging one of the "ancient Franklins" with a contemporary cooking range. They also apparently altered the north wall of the building converting a window into a door and elevating the sill of the other to counter level.[14] The rear kitchen was converted into a sitting room removing cupboards, a "decrepit sink" and the old range, and in-filling the fireplace with brick. Stovepipe holes in the ceilings and walls were filled and smoothed over, and broken and mismatched door hardware replaced with salvaged brass knobs. Several spindles in the stair rail were replaced, and the third story was walled off at the top of the stairs. Wall coverings and paint finishes were changed.[15] The Shackeltons must have also incorporated the old banking room in the southeast corner of the ground floor into their renovations, but it is not specifically mentioned.

For all the effort, the Shackletons' tenure was brief; they were gone from Somers by 1908 when the Baileys leased the building to Alice E. Scott and her family. Scott opened a tearoom. She later recalled that indoor plumbing had yet to be introduced into the hotel. Water was brought by pail from a hand-dug well west of the building, and there was a two-hole privy in a hollow a few yards northwest. Other features of the property included a "deep, large ice house," carriage house, stables, and a tennis court. There was also an orchard at the rear of the lot.[16] By 1914 there was another tenant: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tilney who operated an inn for a few years. They reputedly installed the hotel's first indoor bathroom in the rear chamber of the second story hall.[17]

Mrs. William Bailey died in 1918, and her two sons, James Bailey (1873-1928) and William Bailey, Jr. (1879-1957) became joint owners of the hotel. Tenants came and went regularly. The building continued to be preserved by virtue of its low commercial potential. The hotel was old and picturesque enough in 1924 to attract filmmaker D. W. Griffith to use it as the setting for scenes in his epic America. In addition to using the hotel and the surrounding countryside for Revolutionary War segments, members of the cast and crew lodged in the hotel.[18]

During this time the wood sculpture of Old Bet began to show signs of severe deterioration from rot. The Bailey brothers refreshed the monument with a new wood elephant.[19] William Bailey, Jr. sold his interest in the property to his brother, James, in 1927. The same year the Town of Somers purchased the Elephant Hotel and the remaining portions of the wood frame annex from James Bailey and relocated its offices there from a cramped meeting room it maintained in nearby Lincolndale.

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[14] This has been deduced from a 1934 HABS photograph.
[15] Robert and Elizabeth Shackleton, *The Quest of the Colonial Revival* (NY: The Century Co., 1913) 67-78 *passim.*
[16] Alice E. Scott, "Glimpses of Somers Village, 1908-1958," typescript, c. 1958, 1-3. In collections of Somers Historical Society.
[17] Ibid., 3.
[18] Ibid., 15.
[19] Ibid., 4.

IV. Town House Era Renovations and Additions (1927 to present)

Initially, the town only occupied the ground floor of the hotel, although office space was gradually introduced into the second story spaces. Few alterations were made during the first decade of town occupancy. Documentary drawings and photographs of the building made in 1934 for the Historic American Buildings Survey indicate no significant changes or intrusions. What remained of the eastern annex was demolished by the town in 1939.

Records Storage Annex
A two-story addition was constructed against the blind north bays of the hotel's west façade in 1943. It was designed by architect Harold Baldwin with the intended function of records storage.[20] Built to replicate the historic building, the addition has a poured concrete basement wall, cast with a projecting water table and scored on the exterior to imitate the existing marble ashlar. A variegated red brick was employed in the upper two stories set in a Flemish bond. Window openings, one per floor on the south and west facades contained cast stone sills and lintels; a marble lintel and sill salvaged from one of the false windows encased by the addition was reused in the ground floor window opening on the west side of the addition. Wood frame, 8-over-8, double-hung sash fill the above-ground window openings. Iron bars protect the basement window. Exterior-mounted retractable steel shutters were installed on the south windows either during construction of the addition or later. A hipped roof with asphalt shingles surmounts the addition. A plain fascia and cornice ornament the roof edge.

The addition was linked to the main building via new doorways cut through what were formerly blank windows. The door openings are unembellished and contain steel doors for security and fire protection.

Roof Repairs
Major repairs were made to the main roof of the building in 1958. As specified by local architect LeRoy Frederick Van Lent, the work included strengthening existing rafters, adding new rafters to double their number, replacing the sheathing and applying a 20-year asphalt roof with copper flashing. Chimneys were repaired, re-pointed and capped with blue stone slabs. As part of the roof work, new copper crickets were constructed to protect the chimneys. The wood cornice was repaired and box gutters relined. Original design features, such as a paneled frieze and modillioned cornice were not restored. Repairs were also made to the masonry, notably the replacement of some marble window sills and lintels. The brick walls were also re-pointed at this time.[21]

Meeting and Court Room Addition
Van Lent was also planning for an addition to the north side of the hotel for which ground was broken in the following year (1959). This addition contains a large room serving both town meeting and court room functions. Even though this one-story addition was not to result in the demolition of any more than a 6 ft. by 25 ft. wood porch, it obscured the entire east façade of the kitchen wing and a portion of the north façade of the main building. Constructed on a concrete slab, the variegated red brick exterior is laid in a Flemish bond echoing the pattern in the historic building. Its flat roof abuts the existing building below second story windows

[20] Frank E. Sanchis, *American Architecture: Westchester County, New York* (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: North River Press, 1977), 367.
[21] LeRoy Frederick Van Lent, "Statement for Patent Trader," typescript, n.d. in collections of Somers Historical Society.

in the main building and wing, but a solid wood balustrade above the cornice blocks them from view. Three tall window openings with 12-over-12 wood sash and a recessed entrance with a trabeated wood architrave are proportionally spaced across the addition's east façade. The addition is substantially longer than the old kitchen with two windows at the north end of the west side. The north façade is windowless with two large metal ventilator housings.

The only historic opening remaining intact following the addition is a doorway connection with the rear of the center hall. This originally communicated with the kitchen porch removed during construction. Two additional openings on the north façade of the main building, and a window and a door in the east façade of the wing, were walled over on both sides. Built essentially at grade, the floor level of the addition is two to three feet lower than the historic building. Stairs were constructed in the addition to reach the existing doorway, and an elevator has been recently installed to provide handicapped access. Apparently, a window on the south side of the west wall in the kitchen wing was converted to a door at this time to provide another means of egress from the building.

Roof Balustrade Restoration
Following a 1961 lecture made on the architecture of the Elephant Hotel, architect Edgar I. Williams urged the members of the Somers Historical Society and town officials to restore the historic modillioned cornice and roof balustrade to the building.[22] The balustrade was reconstructed in 1966 following conjectural designs provided by Williams. The cornice awaits restoration.

Somers Historical Society Headquarters and Museum of the American Circus
After it was chartered by the New York State Department of Education in 1956, the Somers Historical Society occupied a room in the southeast corner of the second floor. The town's bookkeeper had used it for an office prior to this time. In the tea house period (1908-1914) it had become popularly known as the Washington Irving Bedroom. Then, in 1969 the town granted the Society use of the third floor of the building, and they adapted the rooms there for offices and historical displays about the town's history and its role as "The Cradle of the American Circus."

Exterior Restoration and Interior Repairs
A major restoration project occurred in 1979. Exterior brickwork was partially re-pointed as were rubble stone components of the basement. Wall ties were introduced into the northeast corner to correct settlement and stress cracks.[23] Wood components of the building were repaired and repainted. LeRoy Frederick Van Lent was the architect in charge of the work, which was funded by a Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service Grant obtained through the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation. Interior repairs were also made at this time using Federal Revenue Sharing Funds. Steel beams and columns were added to reinforce the first floor framing system, which was needed due to increasing amounts of file storage in town offices. The basement boiler room was also made fireproof. In 1981 the "Elephant Hotel" lettering on the front façade of the building was repainted. In recent years, a number of windows on the west side of the building have had wood panels inserted in the top sash sections to support window air-conditioning units in a relatively permanent installation.

Bathroom Renovations
A staircase in the southwest corner of the kitchen wing was removed sometime after a caretaker's apartment on

[22] See *The Elephant Hotel: Its Architecture and History* (Somers, NY: Somers Historical Society, 1962). Edgar I. Williams had been president of the National Academy of Design, the Architectural League and the Municipal Art Society in New York.
[23] Planned repair or replacement of cracked marble lintels of certain basement windows does not appear to have been executed.

the second floor of the wing was renovated into offices in the late 1970s. It was probably at this time that the existing bathroom was enclosed in the stair's location. In order to provide access to the second floor of the wing without the stairs, a doorway was cut through the rear (north) brick wall of the northwest office. These spaces were renovated in 1987 as part of a redecoration of the interior directed by LeRoy Frederick Van Lent. The old kitchen area and the added bathroom were upgraded. A passageway was created for the exit, and a lounge was made in the old kitchen. The fireplace was restored based on a c. 1903 photograph. The fireplace in the old tap room that was in-filled during the Shackleton's 1907 kitchen renovation was also re-opened about this time.

The bathroom on the second floor had been located in the chamber in the rear (north end) of the hall since around 1915. In 1988 the configuration of the space was altered. A passage was created along the west wall to accommodate file storage with the floor being reinforced for this purpose. Two toilet rooms were enclosed in the remaining eastern section of the room. A new doorway was made for the passage with the existing doorway used to gain access to one of the bathrooms. A new door was installed in the passage in 2003 to provide more privacy, with the old door being preserved in place.

No other major alterations or restoration work has taken place since these recorded actions. An Existing Conditions Survey was conducted in 1995 by historic preservation specialist Wesley Haynes of Argyle, New York. His report provided a series of recommendations that the town is preparing to address.

OLD BET STATUE

The Old Bet Statue was erected in 1827. It is mounted on a tapered square granite shaft approximately fifteen feet in height measuring sixteen inches square at the bottom and about twelve inches at the top. The shaft is supported by a double base of squared granite blocks. At the top a flat granite cap supports wrought iron scrollwork about three feet high upon which the small, carved wood facsimile of an elephant is mounted. The carving is approximately three feet tall and four feet long. The original carved elephant was gilded, and when that surface deteriorated it was painted gray. The existing elephant is a replacement sculpted in the 1920s after the original had weathered and rotted. The trunk of this earlier effigy is displayed in the Elephant Hotel's third-floor museum.

The statue was originally situated on a grassy island separated from the hotel by a public road. This section of the road has been abandoned and a brick plaza with plantings now connects the two features. A flagpole appears with the monument in early historic photographs, and one remains in this general site. A large conifer is located west of the monument near the present intersection. It was likely an ornamental tree that has become overgrown.

HISTORIC INTEGRITY

The Elephant Hotel and the Old Bet Statue are in an extraordinary state of preservation, and even though their immediate setting and relationship to the road have been compromised by twentieth-century highway improvements, they remain as prominent landmarks to both their period of design and significant historic associations. The exterior of the hotel has acquired non-historic additions on its east and west sides, but the essential architectural form and design are basically unaltered. Distinctive stone and brick materials, fenestration, and the imposing entrance and porch are in their original condition. From its marble basement to the restored roof-top balustrade, the appearance of the building is virtually unchanged from the 1820s. The loss

of a modillioned cornice and wood shingle roof are the only visible changes. Even the painted sign on the façade has been meticulously maintained.

The Town of Somers, which has used the hotel for municipal offices since 1927, has consistently avoided making irreversible alterations to significant interior spaces. Office furniture and lighting has been fitted around historic wood and plaster work. Additional offices and bathroom facilities have been constructed in secondary locations. Two additions were made to add needed functions that could not be appropriately accommodated within the confines of the historic rooms. These were made at a time before historic preservation standards were promulgated. Any visitor entering the building today sees the authentic historic fabric of the hotel, with displays of the building's unique association with the early American circus visible on every floor – including a museum on the top. Its historic significance is plainly evident.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B X C X D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A _ B _ C _ D _ E _ F _ G
NHL Criteria:	1
NHL Theme(s):	III. Expressing Cultural Values 6. Popular and traditional culture
Areas of Significance:	Entertainment/Recreation Architecture
Period(s) of Significance:	c. 1820 - 1837
Significant Dates:	c. 1820, 1827, 1835
Significant Person(s):	N/A
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	Unknown
Historic Contexts:	XXXIV. Recreation B. Spectator Pastimes 4. Circuses

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

The Elephant Hotel is nationally significant for its association with American circus history. It was built by Hachaliah Bailey, who was the first American to tour exotic animals for public entertainment. Beginning with an African elephant, named Old Bet, that he purchased in 1805 (the second elephant known to have been brought to America) Bailey soon added other wild animals to his collection and effectively introduced the traveling "menagerie" as an important attraction in the northeastern United States. The Elephant Hotel became the meeting place and symbolic center of menagerie promoters. Later menageries associated through the Elephant Hotel merged with circus performers (the circus was introduced in Philadelphia in 1796) to create the American circus that is still popular today.

Hachaliah Bailey (1774-1845) built the three-story brick building between 1820 and 1825 at the height of menageries' appeal. Neighbors and relatives joined him in his menagerie enterprise, sometimes as partners, sometimes as competitors. The excitement spread to North Salem, Carmel, Brewster, and other adjoining towns. The words ELEPHANT HOTEL were painted across the building to commemorate Bailey's renowned elephant, Old Bet. In 1827 a gilt wood replica of Old Bet was mounted on a granite shaft in front of the hotel.[24] In 1835 the Zoological Institute, a monopoly of menagerie and circus owners, was incorporated at the Elephant Hotel.

Situated at the intersection of the Croton and the Peekskill turnpikes, the hotel became the economic and social center of Somers and the surrounding area. Not only was it the meeting place for the menagerie owners, it was also a stagecoach stop for travelers between New York City and points north and east. In addition, the hotel was a stopping place for drovers as they herded their cattle, sheep and hogs to the New York City markets. In 1839 the Farmers and Drovers Bank of Somers was organized and housed in the hotel. Numerous balls, soirees, dancing schools and other social functions took place there.

The Elephant Hotel was purchased by the Town of Somers from the Bailey family in 1927. The building was adapted for use as a town hall without significant alteration. Historic features remain intact including the entrance portico, interior hall, room arrangements, original window and door surrounds, and fireplaces in each room. The Somers Historical Society and Museum of the Early American Circus occupy the third floor of the historic building.

Origins of the American Circus

The modern circus originated in Europe, growing out of the tradition of the country fair and traveling performance. In the late eighteenth century English trick rider Philip Astley staged equestrian exhibitions that included clowns and rope walkers, and he has become known as the father of the modern circus.[25] The first circus performance with multiple exhibits in America was produced by John Bill Ricketts, an English equestrian, on April 3, 1793, in a newly built amphitheatre in Philadelphia. He performed in a circular building with a central ring surrounded by a solid wooden fence, which separated the audience seated in the pit and the

[24] The monument remains today, although the original statue had to be replaced because of its decaying condition. The trunk of the original statue is on exhibit in a museum in the hotel.
[25] Marion Murray, *Circus! From Rome to Ringling* (NY: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1956), 79.

more expensive box seating at the rear. The building was termed the "circus." It is not until 1824, with Bancker's New York Circus, that the term was used to refer to the performing company, rather than the physical venue. In addition to performing daring stunts on horseback, Mr. Ricketts presented a rope-walker and a clown. Ricketts opened a circus amphitheatre briefly in New York City on Lower Broadway, then continued to travel through the eastern seaboard, and to the West Indies. His daring stunts quickly inspired imitators, though after his death in a shipwreck en route to England in 1800, the form declined. In 1807, Victor Pepin, born in Albany, New York, and raised in France, and Jean Breshard, a Frenchman, returned to America and sparked a revitalization of circus performance, engendering many traveling troupes.[26]

At the same time, menageries of exotic animals developed as a separate form of popular entertainment. Beginning with Hachaliah Bailey, numerous individuals prospered in the earliest forays into this enterprise, which evolved alongside and later merged with the traveling circus acts. Somers became a central place for these itinerant companies. Coming from a background as cattle drovers and animal handlers, these menagerie proprietors came to dominate this early field. These men were resourceful, innovative and hardy entrepreneurs whose innovations directed the course of this form of popular entertainment in America.

Hachaliah Bailey and the Origins of the Menagerie in America

Hachaliah Bailey (1774-1845) is the central figure in this tale of enterprise. He was raised on a farm that his father had purchased in the year he was born located just south of the hamlet of Somers and the site of the Elephant Hotel. Hachaliah married Mary Purdy, and they had eight children. He was a farmer and, like many local men, also raised cattle, driving them south to stockyards in New York City. Bailey became one of the directors of the Croton Turnpike Company, which completed a toll road through the town in 1807 that became a major drover's route to the Hudson River. He was also part-owner of a sloop that he used to transport cattle by water from the southern terminus of the turnpike in Ossining to the city of New York.[27]

The New York City stockyards were located at the Bowery, and drovers frequented an establishment there known as the Bull's Head Tavern. In one account, Hachaliah Bailey was the proprietor of the Tavern.[28] It was most likely here that Bailey was enticed to purchase an African elephant. The creature was the second brought to America, arriving into Boston harbor in 1804 and exhibited by artist Edward Savage in New England and the northeast. The first elephant had been imported to America in 1796 by Jacob Crowninshield, and was still being exhibited along the eastern seaboard. Hachaliah purchased this second elephant as early as 1805 for a reputed sum of $1000. She had been exhibited in the Hudson Valley in 1805 and in New York City in 1806, which was possibly when Hachaliah acquired her.[29] She came to be called Old Bet, perhaps in contrast to "young" Bet, his daughter Elizabeth, was born in 1805.[30]

It has been said that Bailey intended to use the elephant as a draft animal, like P. T. Barnum later did at his Bridgeport, Connecticut estate, Iranistan, as a publicity stunt. However, subsequent history suggests that he developed grander ambitions for the elephant. Bailey took Old Bet on the road and quickly profited from her as a public attraction. They traveled by night, stopping in barnyards and tavern courtyards to show by day,

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[26] Stuart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus, 1793-1829*, Vol. I (1976, Reprint, Seattle, WA: Dauven & Thayer, 1993), 32.
[27] J. Thomas Scharf, ed. *History of Westchester County, New York*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: L. E. Preston & Co., 1886), 331.
[28] Murray, *The Circus!*, 126.
[29] Stuart Thayer, "The Elephant in America before 1840," *Bandwagon* 31, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1987), 20.
[30] Genealogy records, Somers Historical Society.

charging twenty-five cents admission.[31] From his frequent trips to the cattle markets of New York City, Bailey was familiar with the tavern yard exhibition of animals. Realizing the public fascination in viewing exotic animals, he cashed in on their willingness to pay for the experience. Bailey first toured with Old Bet through Westchester, Putnam and Duchess Counties in New York, gradually widening his territory. By 1808 his coffers were expanded to a point that he took on two partners, Benjamin Lent and Andrew Brunn, each paying $1200 for a one/third interest in "The Elephant." In 1809 Hachaliah sold half of his elephant to his brother-in-law, Isaac Purdy.[32]

Undoubtedly, Old Bet was a phenomenon in this new country. The sight of her was unparalleled. Rich and poor flocked to see the exotic creature, willing to pay for the privilege. On June 25, 1812, Old Bet became the first elephant to appear with a circus troupe in America. In a performance by Pepin and Breschard, the troupe "contrived a platform that fit on her back and upon which [the acrobats] performed some pyramids and other gymnastic displays."[33] Yet her renown was brief. Tragically, while on tour near Alfred, Maine on July 24, 1816, Old Bet was shot and killed by Daniel Davis, who was apparently aggrieved that poor farmers were spending hard-earned cash to see a wicked beast.[34] Old Bet's skeleton was recovered, mounted and exhibited in New York City in April of 1817. Later her hide was preserved and exhibited at the American Museum, near present City Hall in New York, in 1821.[35] It was this same Museum that P. T. Barnum acquired in the next decade.

Hachaliah Bailey, undeterred, proceeded to import two more elephants. In 1817 he and two partners, George Brunn and Isaac Purdy, purchased an eleven-year-old female who came to be called Betty, or Little Bet. She was leased, in 1823, to Edward Finch of Somers who successfully traveled the country with her. While leased to Gerard Crane of Somers and his partner John June of North Salem in 1826, Little Bet was shot in Chepachet, Rhode Island by a group of young men from good families.[36] Also in 1817, Hachaliah and his two partners paid $8000 for a six-year-old male elephant, named Columbus for the ship on which he was transported. Columbus later was sold or leased to other traveling shows, including J. R. and William Howe of North Salem, and James Raymond of Carmel, both New York towns near Somers. Columbus lived until 1851, when he fell through a bridge in North Adams, Massachusetts.[37]

After the success of Hachaliah Bailey in exhibiting Old Bet, many local individuals sought to become involved in importing and exhibiting exotic animals. The resulting success of these efforts led to a thriving "menagerie" business for many of the farming and drover's families in Somers. Another 1809 contract in the Somers Historical Society collections records the sale of the royal tiger, Nero and cage to Benjamin Lent, a partner of Hachaliah Bailey, for $1000. Gerard and Thaddeus Crane, Benjamin and Lewis Lent, and members of the Brown, Purdy, Wright, Finch, and Ganung families were all involved with aspects of the profitable menagerie business. "Intrigued neighbors rapidly turned Somers into a Mecca for entrepreneurs and wild animals. When they weren't on the road, the animals were hidden away in local farmers' barns, some of which are still standing." [38]

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[31] Gil Robinson, *Old Wagon Show Days* (Cincinnati, OH: Brockwell Co., 1925), 33.
[32] These contracts, as well as a wooden trunk, belt buckle and "tusk ring" used in connection with Old Bet are in the collections of the Somers Historical Society located on the third floor of the Elephant Hotel.
[33] Thayer, *Annals*, I, 55.
[34] Thayer, "The Elephant in America before 1840," 21.
[35] Advertisements, collection of the Somers Historical Society.
[36] Stuart Thayer, *Traveling Showmen, The American Circus Before the Civil War* (Detroit, MI: Astley & Ricketts, 1997), 7.
[37] Thayer, "The Elephant in America before 1840," 22.
[38] LaVon G. Hoh & William H. Rough, *Step Right Up! The Adventure of Circus in America* (Crozet, VT: Betterway Pub., 1990), 56.

Hachaliah Bailey served as a role model to a young P. T. Barnum, who wrote of meeting him when Hachaliah visited Barnum's store in Bethel, Connecticut. Barnum was surely aware of Hachaliah's reputation as a successful menagerie owner, and apparently admired Bailey's entrepreneurial spirit. Barnum recounts a tale extolling Hachaliah's method of settling accounts with an unscrupulous partner who was exhibiting his elephant.[39] Barnum later became involved with traveling "exhibitions," introducing human curiosities and extraordinary people like Joice Heth, Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind. Although renowned as a showman and successful entrepreneur from the 1830s, P. T. Barnum never partnered with Hachaliah, as is sometimes misconstrued. Barnum did not get involved in the formal circus until 1871, and not until 1888 did he lend his name to a partnership with James Bailey, an adopted son of a distant relative of Hachaliah's in Chicago, to form the circus which continues to bear his name.[40]

The Elephant Hotel

As a memorial to his elephants Hachaliah Bailey built the Elephant Hotel on a piece of land he had purchased from Thomas Leggett in 1807 for $1250.[41] A wooden building stood on the site when Bailey broke ground for a brick stagecoach inn sometime between 1820 and 1825. Across the facade of the building were emblazoned the letters "ELEPHANT HOTEL." In front of the building he erected a tall granite shaft with a small gilt carved wood elephant atop it. The Elephant Hotel, fortuitously located at the intersection of the Croton and Danbury turnpikes, became an important stagecoach stop for the Eagle and Red Bird Lines from Westchester and Danbury. The building served as a travelers' inn, as well as a meeting place for the menagerie and circus folk that populated Somers and surrounding towns. It was known as the "best hostelry between New York and Albany in stagecoach days."[42]

Perhaps the greatest impetus to the domination of the outdoor exhibition business in the northeast by the local menagerie men was the fact that they were known to one another, almost all of the men were residents of Westchester and Putnam Counties.[43] On January 14, 1835, at Somers, the menagerie men gathered at the Elephant Hotel to form a capital stock company called the Zoological Institute. Its stated purpose was "to more generally diffuse and promote the knowledge of natural history and gratify rational curiosity." One hundred and thirty-five signatures are on the articles of incorporation.[44] The list contained virtually all of the active menagerie owners and managers in the northeast, as well as individuals whose businesses relied on the shows, such as Richard Hoe, a New York City printer who made colorful posters for circuses and menageries.[45] The organizers set routes and performance schedules, monopolizing the business in the East. With more than one hundred investors, the appraised value of the animals, equipment and real estate was $329,325. They purchased a performance space in New York at 37 Bowery, which served as winter quarters. The equipment and animals were organized into twelve companies, five of which included circuses. The Association exercised a virtual monopoly on the animal show business. They were known as "The Flatfoots" by those who challenged their

[39] P. T. Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum* (NY: Redfield, 1855), 114.
[40] Elizabeth Macauley, "In Celebration of Somers' Grand Old Elephant Hotel," *Somers, Its People and Places* (Somers, NY: Somers Historical Society, 1988), 128.
[41] Ibid., 134.
[42] John Culhane, *An Illustrated History of the American Circus* (NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1996), 16.
[43] Stuart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus, 1830-1847*, vol. II (Seattle, WA: Peanut Butter Publishing, 1986), 38.
[44] Articles of Incorporation of the Zoological Institute," 1835, collections of the Westchester County Historical Society, copy in Somers Historical Society.
[45] Neil C. Cockerline, "Ethical Considerations for the Conservation of Circus Posters," *Bandwagon* 46, no. 6 (Nov. – Dec. 2002), 6.

leadership "because they put their foot down flat against any competitor bringing a show into the eastern territory."[46] The company disbanded after the financial panic of 1837, and its property was sold at an auction that took place at the Elephant Hotel on August 22 and 23, 1837.[47] The name Zoological Institute was used for a number of years thereafter by exhibiting companies.

These menagerie owners played a significant role in shaping the American circus into its traditional form. According to Stuart Thayer:

> They imported the rare animals, hired lion tamers who soared to fame, combined the circus and menagerie elements which formed the basis of the American circus. They introduced the posters and couriers of modern advertising and with them the effusive language that is still part of the entertainment business. It was their wagon shows that created the circus season, and in their visits to the towns and hamlets they educated an audience for the circus that still exists today. [48]

Hachaliah Bailey served two terms in the New York State Legislature, then sold the Elephant Hotel in 1836 to Gerard Crane, another Somers menagerie owner, and moved his family to a place that became known as Bailey's Crossroads in Virginia. Members of Hachaliah's family continued in the circus tradition. His son Lewis often performed as a clown, and Lewis 'wife Maria as an equestrian. In the 1830s sons Joseph Todd Bailey and James Purdy Bailey toured the country as J. T. & J. P. Bailey & Co.

In 1839, profits from the menagerie business being plentiful, the second banking institution in Westchester County was formed. Given the prosaic title of the Farmers and Drovers Bank, it opened at the Elephant Hotel, with a list of officers that made up a who's who of the menagerie business. The 2000 pound safe from the bank, painted with lovely pastoral scenes, is still in the ground floor office, presently occupied by the Somers Town Clerk. The bank went national in 1865, and closed in 1905. Horace Bailey, Hachaliah's first cousin, served as the president of the bank. Horace purchased the hotel from Gerard Crane in 1837, and except for a brief period between 1868 and 1874, his family retained ownership of the property until it was sold to the Town of Somers in 1927.

Hachaliah Bailey returned to Somers where he died in 1845 and is buried in Ivandell Cemetery in the hamlet. On his monument are written these words: "Enterprise, Perseverance, Integrity;" fitting words for the spirit of all the early menagerie men. Bailey was the impetus for the menagerie fever which spread through the eastern United States. As the menageries later accompanied and finally became an integral part in the circus, he was acclaimed as the innovator in beginning the menagerie tradition. No less a showman than P. T. Barnum paid him homage in his first of a series of autobiographies in 1855. Stuart Thayer calls him the "father" of the menagerie business in America.[49] Thayer also declared that "If one was to choose a symbol of the menagerie business in America it would have to be the Elephant Hotel in Somers, NY." [50]

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[46] *The History of the Elephant Hotel* (Somers, NY: 1958).
[47] Broadside in collections of the Somers Historical Society.
[48] Traveling Showmen, 41.
[49] Ibid., 135.
[50] *Annals*, II, 38.

Other Notable Circus Men

Numerous other townsmen became involved in importing exotic animals, managing traveling units, and performing in the exhibitions. They attained wealth and status in the milieu of the menagerie men, and later, in the world of the circus. Some of the more prominent, innovative individuals who followed in the tradition of Hachaliah Bailey, and with their new ideas shaped the course of popular American entertainment in the next decades, are described below. Many of these men were connected with the Elephant Hotel through their association with Hachaliah Bailey and/or the Zoological Institute.

The Brown Family
The first and most notable member of the Brown circus family was J. Purdy Brown (1802-1834) who was born in Somers in a small house still standing near the Elephant Hotel. He introduced the canvas tent in his 1825 traveling shows, and he is considered to have been the first to combine a traveling menagerie with a circus in his 1828 season.[51] Both of these innovations were momentous in changing the nature of public entertainment.

Since its introduction in 1793 in Philadelphia, the circus, originally equestrian and acrobatic exhibitions, was performed in a closed circular arena of wood construction. Companies would play out their run in a large population center, then tear down the structure and move on. Early menageries consisted of small troupes of animals, traveling in crude wagons across rutted roads, stopping in taverns and barnyards to exhibit in a controlled location where admission could be charged.

In his 1825 season J. Purdy Brown, with his partner Lewis Bailey (son of Hachaliah), introduced one of the greatest innovations to the traveling show, a “round top” or circular canvas tent 90 ft. in diameter. Using a portable tent Brown could set up in small places between his major shows in metropolitan areas, stay as long as business warranted, and then pack up his troupe and move on. The tent allowed him to perform continuously and avoid down time between larger venues.[52] The innovation of the tent brought the entertainment to small towns. The combination of this pattern of movement, and the later merging of the circus and menagerie elements, formed the uniquely American circus.

J. Purdy Brown was a great innovator in moving his troupe around and advertising their appearances in advance. A large part of the public’s circus experience was in the anticipation and arrival of the event. Menageries had traditionally paraded their animals into towns, either tethered or in cages on wagons that became increasingly ornamented. Circus proprietors had had little need for wagons prior to the introduction of the tent, but once they had something to haul from town to town, the example of the menagerie showmen was before them, and they joined the parade.[53]

The brothers Benjamin, Christopher and Herschel Brown, cousins to J. Purdy Brown, were involved with the menagerie business in the early 1820s. Benjamin Brown (1799-1881) worked for Hachaliah Bailey in the exhibition of Little Bet in 1823. He was employed by J. Purdy Brown and Lewis Bailey in 1825, the season that the first canvas tent was introduced. In 1826 Benjamin and Hershel operated the Royal Pavilion Circus. “Pavilion” was the euphemism of the time for the canvas tent. Benjamin and brothers Christopher and Hershel

[51] Ibid., 100.
[52] Ibid., 1.
[53] Richard W. Flint, “Entrepreneurial and Cultural Aspects of Early Nineteenth-Century Menagerie Business,” *Itinerancy in New England and New York* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1984), 132.

formed a circus for their cousin, J. Purdy, in 1828. They were in South Carolina performing when Charles Wright, another Somers native famed as a lion tamer, came into town with his menagerie troupe. The two companies appeared together, and as it seemed to be successful, they performed the rest of the season together becoming the first traveling combination of a menagerie and circus.

At this time, circuses consisted of trick riders, clowns and rope walkers and were perceived as crude and, often, morally offensive. Menageries were considered educational and harmless, and added respectability to the combination. The combination formed the basis of the American circus, with this fortuitous beginning involving two Somers companies.

Benjamin Brown and many others traveled extensively exhibiting their animals, ranging as far as the West Indies and South America. Benjamin also traveled as an animal buyer for June, Titus & Angevine, another local troupe originating in nearby North Salem and the largest menagerie company of the period. In 1838 Benjamin traveled to the Great Kalahari Desert in Africa with Stebbins June, to purchase giraffes. June left a written account of traveling with the animals, and his resulting illness from being bitten by a lion. Brown also wrote of his various illnesses contracted while traveling in the desert. They returned to America with five giraffes, which were exhibited in New York in the summer of 1840.[54]

In the fall of 1840 Brown took the giraffes to England with the Van Amburgh Menagerie where he met and married Mary Cops, the daughter of the Keeper of the Royal Menagerie at the Tower of London. He resided with the Cops family in the Tower until 1844, the only American known to have done so. After returning from Europe, Ben Brown traveled one last season with Van Amburgh & Co., then sold his portion of the menagerie to Gerard Crane. Benjamin Brown was interviewed by the New York Sun in his 79th year, and was dubbed "The Oldest of Showmen" having spent the majority of his life in the business.[55]

The Wright Brothers

Daniel, James and Charles Wright represent another Somers family that was part of the "peculiar calling" of the menagerie business.[56] Daniel Wright (1790-1864) toured the Midwest and settled in Ohio. James Wright (1799-1864) traveled extensively in the south, eventually settling in Alabama. Charles Wright (1792-1862) gained renown as the first "Keeper of the Lions" in America. He entered the business in 1822 as an employee of Finch & Bailey in the exhibition of Little Bet. In 1826 he worked with the "Grand Caravan of Living Animals" later known as Carley, Purdy & Wright, when Wright became one of the proprietors. Their menagerie was a large collection for the time, listing two camels, a leopard, two panthers (pumas), a Brazilian tiger (jaguar), two llamas, a hyena, an African lion, a kangaroo, a zebra, a wolf and some smaller animals. On November 21, 1829, an advertisement appearing in the Pensacola, Florida Gazette stated "the Keeper will enter the respective cages of the lion and lioness." Referring to Charles Wright, this was the first recorded notice in the United States of man entering a lion's den, predating the more famous Isaac Van Amburgh, of Fishkill, New York, by four years.[57]

As noted above, Wright, with the Browns, is also credited in 1828 with the first recorded instance of a circus and menagerie traveling and exhibiting together. Wright's caravan was one of the first shows, circus or

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[54] The letters documenting this trip are in the collections of the Somers Historical Society.
[55] Stuart Thayer, *The Oldest of Showmen: The Career of Benjamin F. Brown* (by the author, 2000), 1.
[56] Charles Culver, "Somers," in J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Westchester County, New York* (Philadelphia: L. E. Preston & Co., 1886), 481-482.
[57] Thayer, *Annals*, II, 18.

menagerie, to advertise seating in 1830 and the first sizable show to visit many small towns due to improved roads and the use of the canvas tent, introduced by his townsman, J. Purdy Brown.

In 1828 Charles Wright married Elizabeth Maria Smith, of North Castle. They first resided on a farm in Goldens Bridge, where their ten children were born. It appears Charles retired from performance, but retained part ownership in the menagerie. In 1845 Charles purchased the farm in Somers once occupied by Hachaliah Bailey's family. Charles became a prominent member of the community. He was a director of the Farmers & Drovers Bank of Somers, served in the New York State Assembly and was a vestryman for St. Luke's Church.

Gerard Crane

Gerard Crane (1791-1872) was a pioneer animal exhibitor. In 1818 he traveled the countryside with a lion and lioness, enough to constitute an exhibition in those early days. In 1826 he and Lewis B. Titus leased Little Bet, the second elephant owned by Hachaliah Bailey. They sub-leased to Crane, June & Co., and during this arrangement the elephant was shot in Chepachet, Rhode Island. In 1833 Crane and Spencer Gregory formed the menagerie Gregory, Crane & Co., which later featured a keeper (lion tamer), a female elephant named Flora, and a seven-hundred-pound polar bear. The principals parted company in October 1834.[58] Crane formed a combined circus and menagerie with Edward Eldred, and was part of the Zoological Institute in 1835, using the title "Zoological Exhibition and American Circus United." Their company traveled through the small towns of New Jersey and Long Island, and carried a museum, probably the first circus to actually call the assemblage of curiosities and natural history items a museum.[59]

Gerard Crane returned to Somers, where he became Town Supervisor from 1833-37, and served on the board of directors of the Croton Turnpike Company and the Farmers & Drovers Bank.[60] He purchased the Elephant Hotel from Hachaliah Bailey in 1837 but sold it the following year to Hachaliah's first cousin, Horace Bailey, who was the bank's first president. Gerard Crane and his brother Thaddeus became associated with June Titus and Angevine sometime after 1837; they were the monopolistic producers who became known as the "Flatfoots." In 1838 Crane, with June Titus & Angevine, acquired Van Amburgh & Co., starring the world-famous lion tamer Isaac Van Amburgh. The partners sold the menagerie prior to the 1851 season and retired.

In 1849 Gerard Crane built the Stone House described by Charles Culver as "a fine large mansion of cut stone by the side of the turnpike, one mile north of the village…The building is finished in the best possible manner and presents an imposing appearance...Near the house is a long hipped roofed building, that is now a barn, but was built for and used as an animal house during the winter seasons. Mr. Crane was for many years one of the principal proprietors of a large menagerie."[61] The house, a mile north of the Elephant Hotel, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Behind the house runs a small stream known as Rhinoceros Creek. Though there is no documentation for it, Crane is reputed to have kept a rhinoceros in the barns, which local lore claims to have occasionally escaped and trotted through town. Portraits of Gerard Crane and his wife Roxanna, attributed to itinerant portrait painter Ammi Phillips, hang in the Somers Historical Society museum in the Elephant Hotel.

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[58] Ibid., 33.
[59] Ibid., 54.
[60] Culver, "Somers," 488-489.
[61] Ibid., 481.

Lewis Lent

Of the next generation of Somers showmen, Lewis Lent (1813-1887) was born and schooled in the town, his father Benjamin having been a partner of Hachaliah Bailey's. Lewis grew up around menagerie animals and at age 13 he was already employed in the family business. His early shows featured many animals, including the first troupe of camels in America. He is first mentioned as working for June Titus and Angevine. In 1834 he invested in J. R. & W. Howe, Jr., & Co.'s menagerie (of North Salem). Using his money, the firm purchased a half interest in June Titus & Angevine's rhinoceros, polar bear, leopard & their cages. In 1835, at the age of 22, he joined Brown & Co. circus, with Oscar Brown, brother of and successor to J. Purdy Brown. He became partner in Brown & Co. in 1836, most likely with funds from father Benjamin. Lent was a partner to Richard Sands, an English equestrian, in 1846, and managed Barnum's traveling menagerie in 1853-1854.[62] Lent is one of the early menagerie participants who crossed over to the circus business. Thayer describes Lent as:

> A jovial man and a huge one (over 300 pounds at his death) Lent insisted on being in charge of his business operations, almost a sure sign of a successful man. An acquaintance credits him with laying out every employee's tasks and discouraging deviation from those designs. "He dictated the space to be occupied in the newspapers, ordered every sheet of printing, and fixed the weight of paper for his programs. His agents acted under written orders: they had just so much to do, no more, no less… [He was] a well-read man, a practical advertiser, and one particularly capable of judging an attraction…he spared neither expense nor pains. Lent was a strong adherent, in his later years, of the one-ring circus (the change to two rings occurred in 1872) and was never a devotee of "cat shows" [which] he termed menageries.[63]

Lent partnered with Rufus Welch, a great circus entrepreneur from upstate New York in 1856. He operated a successful railroad circus from 1866-1874 and was the proprietor of L. B. Lent's New York Circus in 1871, quartered on 14th Street in New York City. P. T. Barnum bought out his circus on 14th Street in 1872, but it burned to the ground in the first season. Lent went on to produce his New York Circus, Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Zoological Garden at the site of Madison Square Garden on 26th Street, also predating Barnum at that site. He died in New York City in 1887, and is buried in Ivandell Cemetery in Somers.

> The close knit fraternity of circus and menagerie families in Westchester and Putnam Counties, New York used the circus as their forebears did the sea, as a place for young men to get experience of the world. Those with ambition eventually became managers, be they performers or administrative help. Lewis B. Lent once said, 'The young men (of Somers, New York) took to the road naturally, like a duck takes to water.'[64]

<u>The Symbolic Value of the Elephant Hotel</u>

In 1849 the Elephant Hotel was once again the scene of a huge gathering of menagerie and circus proprietors. A large ball to celebrate the anniversary of George Washington's birthday was held at the building, which was then attached to a wood frame annex that housed a ballroom. Hundreds of people attended from the surrounding areas and as far away as New York City. Elegant young ladies looking for eligible bachelors reputedly flocked there to meet the wealthy circus showmen. The event was chronicled in the New York papers

[62] Thayer, *Annals*, II, 27.
[63] Thayer, *Traveling Showmen*, 7.
[64] Ibid.

as a spectacular social event where 300 couples are said to have dined and danced in shifts throughout the night.

> Westchester, which may be truly styled the empire county, has been agitated to its very center for more than a fortnight past, in consequence of the stupendous arrangements for the annual celebration of Washington's Natal day, at the Elephant Tavern…The principal masculine personages who figured at the ball were the proprietors of menageries and circus companies with their immediate dependents and associates, most of whom... are hopeless bachelors of the deplorable age of forty-five and upwards who although rich as grand Turks set more value upon a trained horse or elephant than the attractions of lovely women."[65]

For all of these individuals, the Elephant Hotel undoubtedly served as Mecca, a destination when one returned to the home village, a familiar place to gather with others who understood the way of life to which they were accustomed. The menagerie business faded after the mid-nineteenth century, being absorbed as one element of the new monster shows that Seth Howes, William Coup, William Cole, Adam Forepaugh, the Sells Brothers, James Bailey, P. T. Barnum and others were putting together. The advent of the railroad introduced large circuses specially designed to move by rail, sometimes "requiring sixty to seventy freight cars, six passenger cars and three engines."[66] There was fierce rivalry between the traveling circuses, each striving to outdo the other with rhetoric and an onslaught of mudslinging advertisements, called "rat-bills."[67]

P. T. Barnum dominated the circus field in the 1870s and 1880s with his Greatest Show on Earth, which he eventually combined with James Bailey's show in 1888. The Ringling Brothers, five brothers from Baraboo, Wisconsin who began touring a small show in 1884, came to rival and finally bought out their greatest competitor, the Barnum and Bailey circus. In 1919 they combined the names, which has carried on to the present day.[68] Historians consider this to be the heyday of the American circus extending roughly for a period of forty years beginning in the 1880s with the formation of the great railroad shows and ending shortly after the First World War "when the street parade began to fade out."[69]

By the mid-nineteenth century, several towns emerged as hubs for the vast number of circuses traveling the country and needing summer or winter headquarters. Delavan, Wisconsin, was established by the Mabie brothers of Patterson, New York in 1847 as the first permanent winter quarters in the west attracting many companies.[70] Thayer has concluded that "the most important aspect of the Mabie purchases is that they established the circus as a national institution. It took its place with railroad and shipping lines, with publishing and horse-racing as quantities known to everyone. It took the circus out of the hands of the men of Westchester and Putnam Counties and made of it a universal enterprise."[71]

The Elephant Hotel remained a central icon in the Somers community, even as the menagerie and excitement of the circus years faded and the business generally fell into disrepute becoming a topic unfit for discussion in polite company. The old brick building remained in the Bailey family but was leased to numerous short-term tenants for various uses. It became a renewed community focal point in 1927 when it was purchased by the

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[65] Macaulay, *The Circus!*, 142-143.
[66] Culhane, *American Circus*, 103.
[67] Rupert Croft-Cooke & Peter Cotes, *Circus: A World History* (NY: Macmillan, 1976), 64.
[68] John & Alice Durant, *Pictorial History of the American Circus* (NY: A. S. Barnes & Co, 1957), 145.
[69] Ibid., 78.
[70] Thayer, *Annals*, II, 126.
[71] Ibid., 137.

Town of Somers to become the Town Hall, or Town House as municipal headquarters are known in Westchester County.

Today the State Historical Society of Wisconsin has collections relating to this phase of circus history. Baraboo, Wisconsin, home of the Ringling Brothers, has a great memorial to its history in Circus World Museum, which opened in 1959. Some of the structures associated with the Circus World Museum were designated an NHL in 1969 (Ringling Brothers Circus Winter Headquarters). In addition, the Wallace Circus Winter Headquarters in Peru, Indiana, was designated an NHL in 1987. This farm was established in the 1880s by Ben Wallace, proprietor of Wallace's Great World Menagerie and his successors, the American Circus Corporation and the Ringlings. These two NHLs reflect the later history of the circus when it was in its heyday of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. John North Ringling built a fabulous home near the family circus's winter quarters in Sarasota, Florida that has become part of the Ringling Museum of Art and Museum of the Circus. All of these sites were established well after the years that the early menagerie and circus owners met at the Elephant Hotel. Baraboo and Delavan are major repositories for circus memorabilia, as is the Hertzberg collection at the San Antonio Public Library. In 1956 the Somers Historical Society was incorporated and soon after opened a museum on the third floor of the Elephant Hotel. The Somers Historical Society's collection of circus and menagerie memorabilia rivals other major circus collections, if not in size, then in rarity and vintage. Along with descendants of many of the early circus families in Somers, Dr. Hugh Grant Rowell, circus scholar, and collector, bequeathed his collections to the Somers Historical Society. These materials are now housed and displayed in the Society's Museum of the Early American Circus at the Elephant Hotel. Elements of the rich menagerie and circus history imbue the building. It has become the repository for the documents and artifacts that tell the tales of Hachaliah Bailey and the Somers menagerie men who had seminal roles in the creation of the American circus. With its name boldly painted on its facade and Old Bet perched on her high pedestal, this landmark is a constant reminder for those who know about those early days of the circus and a curiosity that lures the uninitiated visitor inside to discover Somers's unique and remarkable place in American history.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # NY-4-101
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Somers Historical Society, Somers NY

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 1.67 acres

UTM References:

Zone	Easting	Northing
18	609950	4575820

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Elephant Hotel and Old Bet Statue are situated on a 1.67-acre parcel at the intersection of U.S. Route 202 and N.Y. Route 100 in the hamlet of Somers, Westchester County, New York. It occupies the southern road frontage of the L-shaped property. A paved parking lot east of the building is largely on a separate parcel that

is excluded from this nomination. See Town of Somers tax parcel no. 17.11-1-20 on attached tax parcel map for an official description.

Boundary Justification:

The present boundary contains the building and object that have historically been known as the Elephant Hotel and that maintain historic integrity. The original parcel was larger and encompassed most of what is now a separate lot abutting the property on the east. This parcel now contains a parking lot, which justifies excluding it from the nomination. The nominated property also retains its historic relationship to the roads and intersection that predicated its location.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Neil Larson, Principal Historian
Neil Larson & Associates

Address: P.O. Box 1394
Woodstock NY 12498

Telephone: 845-679-5054

Date:

Edited by: Patty Henry
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Survey
1849 C St., N.W. (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2216

DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
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