



Armsmear - Notice the glass dome conservancy inspired by London's Crystal Palace

Update on Park Establishment

The passage of the Coltsville National Historical Park legislation (in December, 2014) capped an almost 15 year process to create a national park site based on the Colt Armory and associated Coltsville community built by Sam and Elizabeth Colt in Hartford, Connecticut. The legislation that Congress passed and the President signed only “authorized” Coltsville National Historical Park. The authorizing legislation identifies “Conditions for Establishment” necessary for park establishment. Several tasks have already been accomplished but the remaining steps include:

- Agreement with the City of Hartford to ensure that public property, primarily Colt Park, is managed consistently with its new status as a national park and that Hartford historic preservation regulations work to protect historic resources associated with Coltsville.
- Agreement with Colt Gateway LLC (Owners of the historic Colt Armory) to secure the donation

of at least 10,000 square feet of space for a visitor center.

- Transfer of property and buildings to the National Park Service for the visitor center

The two agreements are in an advanced stage of development. It is our expectation that the final agreements will be signed soon. The most difficult step will be the transfer of property and buildings that will become the visitor center. Two 1855 era “Brownstones,” the only remaining part of the original 1850s Colt Armory, have been identified as the space to be donated. Once an agreement is signed between the National Park Service (NPS) and Colt Gateway, staff from the two organizations will work together to effect the transfer. This will include a review of site surveys, an environmental assessment of the grounds, and then a transfer of title. Preliminary work by NPS lands specialists has warned us that the land and title situation is particularly complicated and that we should anticipate several unexpected problems to occur.

Coltsville Heritage Partnership

With Congressional authorization of the Coltsville National Historical Park, a community working committee was assembled to establish a non-profit “friends” group designated the Coltsville Heritage Partnership (CHP). With the guidance of the Connecticut Urban Legal Initiative, the group has developed a mission statement, by-laws and an organizational structure, and an interim Board.

CHP’s mission is to work in partnership with the National Park Service and others in order to support Coltsville.....by helping the NPS provide the richest visitor experience to the widest audience possible and ensuring the protection and interpretation of the cultural and historical heritage of Coltsville and the surrounding communities through philanthropy, advocacy and public awareness, education and research, preservation, and volunteerism.

The interim board members are: **Elliot Ginsberg**, President (President and CEO of CT Center for Advanced Technology); **Ed Russo**, Secretary (Senior Registrar, Wadsworth Atheneum); **Patti Maroney**, Treasurer (Section Director, State of CT Office of Policy Management); **Jane Montanaro** (Director, Preservation Services, CT Trust for Historic Preservation); **Frank Hageman** (Executive Director, Hartford Preservation Alliance); **Sally Whipple** (Executive Director, Old State House); **Lynn Ferrari** (President, Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood); **Bernadine Silvers** (President Emerita, Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood); **Jack Hale** (Senior Warden, Church of the Good Shepherd); **Virginia Seeley** (Artist and Neighborhood Resident); **John Rossi** (Director, Project Management Office, Hartford Healthcare); **Larry Dooley** (Coltsville Managing Partner, Clout Gateway).

Carol Coburn, who previously served as Executive Director of the Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood, is coordinating the process. Carol can be reached at 860-289-2658 or c.m.coburn@hotmail.com

The NPS Urban Parks Agenda

On August 25, 2016 we celebrate the National Park Service’s (NPS) 100th anniversary. As we move forward into our next century, the NPS is embarking on an “Urban Agenda” whose goal is to reconnect urban residents with their national parks and programs. Urban national parks preserve some of our nation’s most iconic sites including the Statue of Liberty, Gettysburg battlefield, the Lincoln Memorial and locally both the Springfield Armory National Historic Site and Coltsville National Historical Park. The NPS Urban Agenda works to make these nationally significant sites more relevant to all Americans. Here are some reasons why this is important:

- More than one-third of all national park sites are located in metro areas
- 36% of all NPS visitation takes place in our urban units
- NPS’s urban park sites alone generate an estimated \$1.8 billion in labor income and \$4.7 billion in economic output
- A people unmoored and ignorant of their past will make unwise decisions in the future

As stated in the Urban Agenda, “Congress has gradually expanded the urban footprint of the National Park Service by authorizing more programs to serve urban communities and establish units of the national park system in 40 of the country’s 50 most populated metropolitan areas. The Urban Agenda challenges National Parks and programs operating in both cities and more distant locations to creatively rethink how we can connect with the 80% of Americans residing in urban areas. It is critical to ensure that all National Parks, both urban and rural, are accessible, relevant, and meaningful to urban audiences.

The Agenda notes that “it is time that the NPS strategically organize its many urban parks and programs towards building relevancy for all Americans, to connect with their lives where they live, rather than only where some may spend their vacation.” To access information about these programs and the NPS Urban Agenda go to: www.nps.gov/urban.

Armsmear

Armsmear “meadow of arms” was constructed in 1856 as a wedding present from Samuel to Elizabeth Colt on the year of their marriage. It was described by a contemporary as “an Italian villa in stone, massive, noble, refined, yet not carrying out any decided principle of architecture”. The Colts occupied Armsmear in 1857 and promptly began to develop its gardens with the assistance of landscape architects Cleveland and Copeland. The unusual, glass-domed conservatories, inspired by London's Crystal Palace were added in 1861-1862. Ultimately the estate contained some 2,600 feet of greenhouses, as well as ponds, fountains, and a deer park.

Samuel Colt lived in Armsmear for approximately 5 years; from 1857 until his death in 1862. He was initially buried on the grounds near the graves of Sam and Elizabeth's young children, amidst weeping willows known as the Grove of Graves. The bodies were eventually moved to Cedar Hill Cemetery. Following her husband's death, Elizabeth Hart Colt and her son Caldwell Hart Colt lived together in the large home for several decades. The Colts entertained lavishly at the estate, holding large parties that were the highlight of Hartford society.

Under terms of her will, Elizabeth Colt left Armsmear to be converted to a home for single Episcopal women. The residential community of 51 units is administrated to this day by the Colt Bequest (trust). Elizabeth Colt also gave 140 acres of Armsmear's grounds to create Colt Park. The residents of Armsmear formed the “Elizabeth Colt Circle” to carry on the legacy of Elizabeth through community support and volunteering.



**Mary Sullivan with
Portrait of Elizabeth Colt**

Spotlight – Mary Sullivan

Mary Sullivan is the Executive Director of Armsmear. She arrived in 2002 with a strong background in nonprofits. Mary tells the story of the first day she came to Armsmear for her job interview, and how “the spirit of the house just hit her”; she has carried that spirit forward in her strong and compassionate leadership.

The 51 apartments currently have 49 residents. Mary indicated the key to Armsmear is family; “You are not alone in Armsmear, there is a real feeling of family”. She is most proud of being able to help the residents, particularly those who do not have a family, other than their Armsmear family.

Mary is also proud of her success in having the residents start vegetable gardens as a community charity in conjunction with “Beat of the Street”.

Upon her pending June retirement, her advice for her successor is to have a good understanding of the issues of ageing residents.



Armsmear Today

Samuel Colt – Underwater Telegraph Cable

Samuel Colt developed a submarine mine that was triggered using an underwater cable. Samuel Morse was very interested in this cable. So the two Samuels conducted a telegraph experiment between the Battery in New York City and Governor's Island. This is considered the first underwater cable successfully laid in the United States. The cable was lead sheathed, with individual copper strands wrapped in cotton yarn impregnated with asphaltum and beeswax. Cable similar to that illustrated below was successfully employed by Colt in the construction of a telegraph line from Manhattan to Coney Island to Fire Island in 1846.



First Submarine Telegraph Cable

Comcast Newsmaker Interview



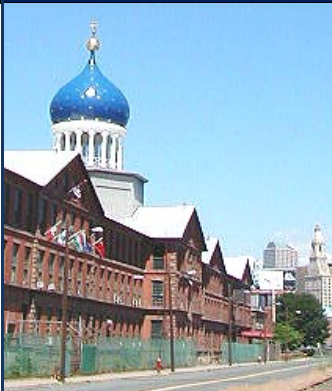
Superintendent Woolsey at Comcast

Coltsville Superintendent James Woolsey was recently interviewed on Comcast Newsmaker. The interview focused on the development of the Coltsville National Historical Park. The video of the interview can be seen at <http://comcastnewsmakers.com/2016/04/11/coltsville-national-historical-park-supt-james-woolsey/>.

NPS Centennial Exhibit

The Springfield Armory National Historic Site special exhibit space will feature “A Century of Service: Celebrating the National Parks”. This exhibit, dedicated to the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service, will highlight the strong connection Springfield Armory has with the other National Park Service sites through the history of firearms and the park's unique museum collection. Join us at the Springfield Armory National Historic Site on May 26th at 6:00pm for the opening reception.

Contact Us



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