



*“Armory of the Colt’s Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company in Hartford from across the Connecticut River.” – United States Magazine 1857*

### **Friends Group Convention in Hartford**

Over 50 people attended the October Friends Convention in Hartford. Staff of the National Park Service (NPS) and members of Friends groups across the northeast enthusiastically shared stories, goals and ways to come together to support national parks. Dynamic speakers challenged the participants to embrace collaborations with community allies. Common themes emerged - the need for strategic planning with measurable goals and the importance of cooperation and communication as the key to successfully complete park projects.

The culmination of the weekend was the bus tour through Coltsville. Participants were introduced to the visionaries Sam and Elizabeth Colt and expressed delight to see the Onion Dome. As snowflakes landed on jackets, the architecture revealed embedded firearm pieces, ships and shells in the sandstone of the Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd and Parish House.

### **Knox Foundation Grant**

Congratulations Knox! In October, the Knox Foundation received a NPS grant from the Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). Over the course of the next 18 months, leaders at Knox, RTCA and the NPS will collaborate to create a plan to beautify a walking path around the perimeter of the Coltsville footprint. Preliminary meetings have laid down roles and responsibilities for all partners. The design and environmental expertise of RTCA and training of local youth through Knox will produce a pathway rich in flowers, shrubs, designated areas for benches and waysides. Knox noted “the project will provide workforce development and life skills training for youth.” Upcoming events include:

- “Neighborhood Training: Learn to Read the Sidewalks & Streets” Tuesday, December 15, 6pm to 8:30pm.
- “Neighborhood Workshop: Let’s Make Coltsville More Pedestrian Friendly” Saturday, January 23, 9:30am to noon.



*Samuel Colt*

### **Samuel Colt – Marketing Genius**

In *The Invention of the Revolver*, Author Jack Kelly wrote that Samuel Colt “was charming and abrasive, self-made and overbearing ... as imaginative as he was mercenary, an opportunist, a liar, and a genius.” Colt was also a marketing genius who pioneered product placement and celebrity endorsement

He created a national network of sales reps, ran ads in newspapers, and even paid *United States Magazine* to run a 29-page illustrated spread profiling his factory. He personally commissioned artist George Catlin to incorporate Colt revolvers into a dozen paintings, six of which were reproduced as mass-market lithographic prints. In one painting, Catlin even depicted himself on horseback wielding one of Colt’s “revolving pistols” to gun down buffaloes on the Plains. Colt also hired authors to pen stories about his revolvers for magazine features. He wrote the book on political lobbying, running up gigantic liquor tabs entertaining politicians and military officers. Colt encouraged celebrity endorsements from Captain

Sam Walker of the Texas Rangers, General Sam Houston and Brigham Young.

Colt traveled the world to present heads of state with lavishly engraved, gilded pistols. He bestowed complementary arms on world leaders from Czar Nicholas of Russia to the king of Siam, to King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy, to Hungarian freedom fighter Lajos Kossu. After Colt presented an Ottoman sultan a custom-engraved and gold-inlaid revolver, the Turks ordered 5,000 of his pistols. Colt even coined the expression “new and improved.” By the start of the U.S. Civil War in 1861, Colonel Colt’s revolvers were perhaps the best-known firearm in the world



*Gold Inlaid revolver presented to Sultan*

### **Rural Space in an Urban Setting**

On September 24, 2015, Springfield Armory National Historical Park Chief of Interpretation, Joanne Gangi-Wellman and Coltsville Assistant, Ernie Graziano led a presentation and tour for 20 municipal planners attending the annual Southern New England American Planning Association conference. Craig Minor, town planner of Newington organized the event. The focus was on the design and locations of the complex known as Coltsville. A highlight for the planners was the tour of the Onion Dome. Hartford Planner Caitlin Palmer provided a fact sheet showing the many steps taken to ensure that the legacy of Colt becomes a National Park.



*Colt Park early 1900's*

### **Update on Park Establishment**

In December, 2014 Congress passed legislation authorizing Coltsville National Historical Park, with three “conditions for establishment.”

1. The Secretary has acquired by donation sufficient land or interest in land to constitute a “manageable unit”.
2. A written agreement donating 10,000 square feet of space for a visitor center in “East Armory”.
3. A written agreement with appropriate entities to ensure all public lands are managed consistent with the legislation.

To meet the legal conditions for establishing the park the following work is underway:

- NPS staff and a significant number of partners agree that the two historic 1855 brownstones located in the Colt Armory complex are best suited to serve visitor and administrative needs. The buildings are the oldest structures on the site and the only two left that Sam Colt would have known. Each is about 9,000 square feet and would make a perfect visitor center. The Colt Gateway, LLC is willing to donate these two buildings to NPS. This donation would meet the first criteria for establishment, which is the donation of a sufficient amount of land to constitute a manageable park unit.
- Because the NPS and partners believe the two brownstones are the best resources for a visitor center, a change to the law creating the park is needed. The second condition requires a donation of 10,000 square feet specifically in the “East Armory” for park administration and visitor services. The brownstones are part of the

Colt Armory complex but not in the “East Armory” building. Congressman Larson is working to draft the needed legislative fix that would recognize that the donation of 10,000 square feet anywhere in the Colt Armory complex fulfills the second condition. Meanwhile the National Park Service is working on the agreement with Colt Gateway, LLC to secure the donation.

- The National Park Service is also working on two agreements that would fulfill the third condition for establishing the park, which deals with how the park will be managed. The agreements are:
  1. With the City of Hartford to ensure that public property, primarily Colt Park, is managed for preservation and use as a national park; and
  2. With the Episcopal Church of Connecticut to secure a preservation easement for the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Caldwell Colt Parish House.

### **CT-N Conversations at Noon**

On September 22, 2015, Springfield Armory National Historic Site Chief of Interpretation, Joanne Gangi-Wellman participated as a panelist on the popular public television CT-N show, “Conversations at Noon” at the Old State House. The event featured John Alexopoulos, a University of Connecticut associate professor of landscape architecture who introduced Bushnell Park as the first publically financed park in the United States. Following his talk, he joined panelists Ms. Gangi-Wellman and Ms. Amanda Roy, from the Greater Hartford Arts Council to discuss the Coltsville National Historical Park and how the power of nature to enrich the people’s lives. It was exciting to discuss the efforts of the Colts to create a beautiful rural feeling space in Hartford, as part of the larger parks movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From August 1894 to November 1895, during what has been called the “Rain of Parks”,

large open spaces, waterways, groves of trees and stunning flowers, as part of that initiative to create open spaces in what was becoming an increasingly industrialized landscape.

