



Coltsville

National Historical Park
Connecticut

Coltsville National Historical Park Winter 2022/2023 Newsletter



Lynn Ferrari speaks with RISD students on tour at COLT. Wesleyan University photo/Jennifer Tucker
Wesleyan University/Jennifer Tucker

Happy New Year!

As we welcome in 2023, we wanted to highlight some of the significant accomplishments and efforts of Coltsville NHP staff and community partners over the past year. We look forward to our continued work with the community to preserve the unique stories and historic features that define Coltsville.

New partnerships expand understanding

Coltsville National Historical Park embraces the role of working with community organizations to create space to explore a wide variety of themes related to Colt. In that spirit, park staff have teamed up with the newly

established [Wesleyan University Center for the Study of Guns and Society \(https://gunsandsocietycenter.com/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery\)](https://gunsandsocietycenter.com/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) (CSGS). With a mission of supporting current academic historical scholarship on guns and gun use, CSGS is the first academic center in the U.S. dedicated to interdisciplinary humanities study and teaching on the social and cultural history of firearms. In October, staff, from Coltsville National Historical Park and Springfield Armory National Historic Site, participated in the inaugural conference, [Current Perspectives on the History of Guns and Society \(https://gunsandsocietycenter.com/2022-conference/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery\)](https://gunsandsocietycenter.com/2022-conference/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery), including speaking on a panel focused on museums and firearms. The partnership represents a strong foundation for supporting current research and student engagement locally, throughout the Precision Valley, nationally and internationally.

Another aspect of the work at Wesleyan with support of a grant from the Mellon Foundation is called the [Carceral Connecticut Project \(https://carceralconnecticut.com/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery\)](https://carceralconnecticut.com/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). Wesleyan University students researching the manufacture, culture, and legal questions around firearms, toured both Coltsville and Springfield Armory marking the beginning of our collaboration. Intern Sophie Mann-Shafir

focused on the political, legislative, and socio-racial events spanning the invention and patenting of Colt firearms developing a timeline of legislation and the manufacturing of firearms.

This collaboration led to another project with Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Professor Francesca Liuni. Professor Liuni and her exhibit design graduate students toured the Coltsville Historic District with Superintendent Kelly Fellner, Jack Hale, senior warden, Church of the Good Shepard, Lynn Ferrari, president of the Coltsville Heritage Partnership, Virginia Seeley, resident and artist, and Jennifer Tucker, founding faculty director, Wesleyan CSGS, as they brainstormed ideas for future exhibits. The project is supported through a grant that links Coltsville with Wesleyan University, RISD, and Brown University culminating with an anticipated exhibit in Colt Park in 2024.



Wesleyan University students in Colt Park
Wesleyan University/Jennifer Tucker



Student presenters at the History of Guns and Society conference. Center for the Study of Guns and Society at Wesleyan University.
Wesleyan University/ Kseniia Guliaeva



RISD students on tour with Jack Hale at COGS.
Wesleyan University/Glenn LaVertu



RISD students on tour at Building 8.
Wesleyan University/Glenn LaVertu



RISD students on tour at the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial Parish Hall.
Wesleyan University/Glenn LaVertu

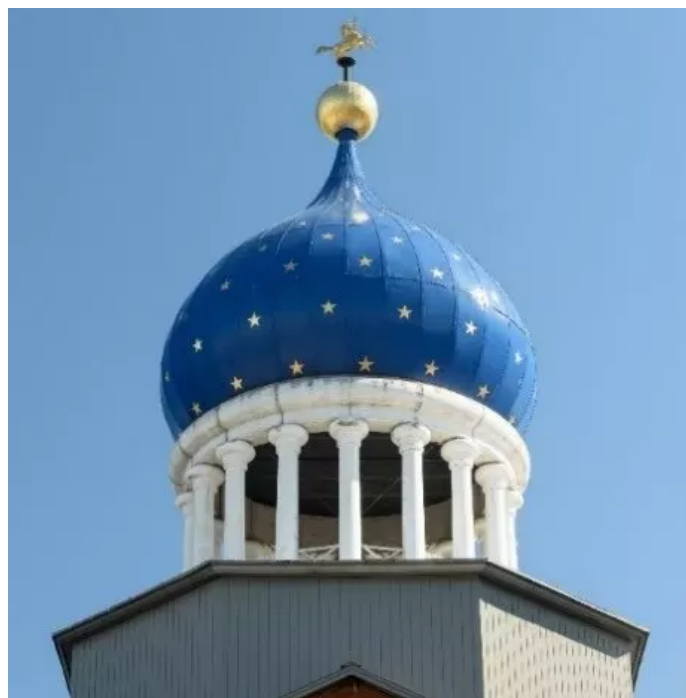
Work towards park establishment

The National Park Service (NPS) and Colt Gateway, LLC continued work throughout 2022 on the legal documents required for the donation of the historic forge and foundry buildings (the Brownstones) and preservation of the East Armory and Brownstones in order to fulfill the enabling legislation and become a fully established national park site.

Coltsville National Historical Park is about much more than the two brownstone buildings the NPS will own. It is about preserving the stories, landscapes, and contributing structures within the National Historic

Landmark District (NHLD). One feature, however, stands out above the rest. The iconic “Blue Onion Dome” that sits atop the East Armory building is a focal point for residents and visitors alike to Hartford, just as Sam Colt intended. The Dome and East Armory are referenced in the 2008 Coltsville Special Resource Study, the 2014 enabling legislation, and NHLD documentation, stating that the NPS will “provide appropriate interpretation and viewing” of the dome and other sites listed in the legislation.

It is often referenced that the NPS is in the “forever business.” The mission of the NPS is to not only consider the current context of the park, but also future generations, to ensure a commitment to the preservation and protection of these important and nationally significant assets. The NPS is taking lessons learned from other parks to follow our due diligence at the outset of starting a new park for future visitors, the Sheldon Chart Oak Neighborhood, and greater Hartford communities as well.



The Blue Onion Dome atop the East Manufacturing building at the historic Colt Firearms Manufacturing Company.
NPS

Forging agreement that meets the needs of both public and private interests is complex. But everyone remains committed to reaching an agreement that allows for the donation of the brownstones and preservation of the Armory complex and planning for the formal establishment of the park.



The Samuel Colt Monument
NPS

Colt Monument restoration funds

The National Park Service (NPS) secured funding (\$80,000) to assist the City in the restoration of the Samuel Colt Monument in Colt Park. As a significant feature of the Coltsville National Historic Landmark District the NPS entered into an agreement with the City of Hartford to begin the project. The project itself has three main parts: 1) the foundation, including the stairs, benches, and surrounding landscape, 2) the granite base that supports the bronze reliefs and the larger Samuel bronze statue, and 3) the

bronze elements themselves. The funding estimate for the project was submitted pre-pandemic, therefore the NPS and City are expecting costs have increased significantly in the current post-pandemic and inflation rich marketplace.

We are hopeful this will be not only be an important historic restoration effort, but also impact the public health and safety around the monument area. We are working together with the City and the community to get updated estimates and exploring ways to fund the expected gaps. Stay tuned.

Volunteers In Parks update

We are excited to share that we will welcome anew Community Volunteer Ambassador in February. The goal for this position is to continue the development of community outreach programs with other agencies, partner and youth organizations in both Hartford and Springfield. We strive to engage youth through stewardship programs designed to address climate justice and develop leadership skills. This involves identifying partners, coordinating opportunities, sharing information, recruiting participants, and promoting the events with internal and external audiences.



Youth Stewards in Colt Park
NPS

This past summer, we hosted two litter cleanups in Colt Park. The youth volunteers toured the site and spent a few hours picking up trash. We are pleased to note we contributed 24 new litter pickers to the Colt Park Foundation. We're looking forward to events next summer including a celebration of Elizabeth Colt and her donation of Colt Park to the residents of the city of Hartford. Check out [@ColtParkFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/coltparkfoundation/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) (https://www.facebook.com/coltparkfoundation/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) on Facebook for more information on upcoming events in Colt Park and how you can get involved.

Church of the Good Shepherd assessment

In partnership with the Church of the Good Shepherd in Hartford, the National Park Service recently contracted with architectural historians and preservationists to conduct a *Conditions Assessment* of the Church of the Good Shepherd and Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial Parish House.

The project began in early November and is slated to last approximately six months. The goal of the effort is to be able to inform the Church of the most immediate needs for stabilization, preservation, and other critical maintenance needs for the buildings. This will enable the Church to focus its larger maintenance efforts toward the highest need.

This is another key partnership example of the commitment of the National Park Service to the local community, our neighbors and the development and preservation of Coltsville NHP. Our hope is to continue to

work together to find ways to fund these important projects in the future.



Samuel Colt Duality in Unplain Sight.
By Artist Heather Heckel
NPS

Art in the Park

Samuel Colt's firearms are utilitarian works of art and the Colts encouraged and supported the arts in many ways that dominate the landscape in Hartford. The NPS contributed to this tradition by supporting two art shows for the Colt Park Foundation art fence exhibits in Colt Park. One exhibit featured New York City based artist Heather Heckel. Heather graciously shared her talents with us as she focused on themes of duality through imagery of win/loss, life/death, and exploitation/profit in Coltsville. You can read Heather's full statement and view her Coltsville artwork and her works from other national park residencies at <https://www.heatherheckel.com> (<https://www.heatherheckel.com>). Her original show, *Duality: In Unplain Sight*, consisting of twelve pieces, was displayed at Real Art Ways in Hartford prior to being reproduced for exhibit in Colt Park.

The second show featured artwork from our collaboration with [Weir Farm National Historical Park](https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/photosmultimedia/groundwork-bridgeport.htm?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) (https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/photosmultimedia/groundwork-bridgeport.htm?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) and Groundwork Connecticut to share stewardship and art in our Connecticut parks. Young people toured Coltsville and Weir Farm, in Wilton, exploring the stories while focusing on urban and rural art influences. Coupled with stewardship projects picking up litter in Colt Park, and tending the trails at Weir Farm, youth attended workshops with impressionist Dmitri Wright and painted the landscapes at each site. Their artwork was displayed along the fence in Colt Park. Link to the online gallery: <https://go.nps.gov/ArtInTheParks> (<https://go.nps.gov/ArtInTheParks>)



Look for more exciting projects coming soon. We've received grant funding to offer paid internships for local students. The future of Coltsville is in the capable hands of our next generation stewards.



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