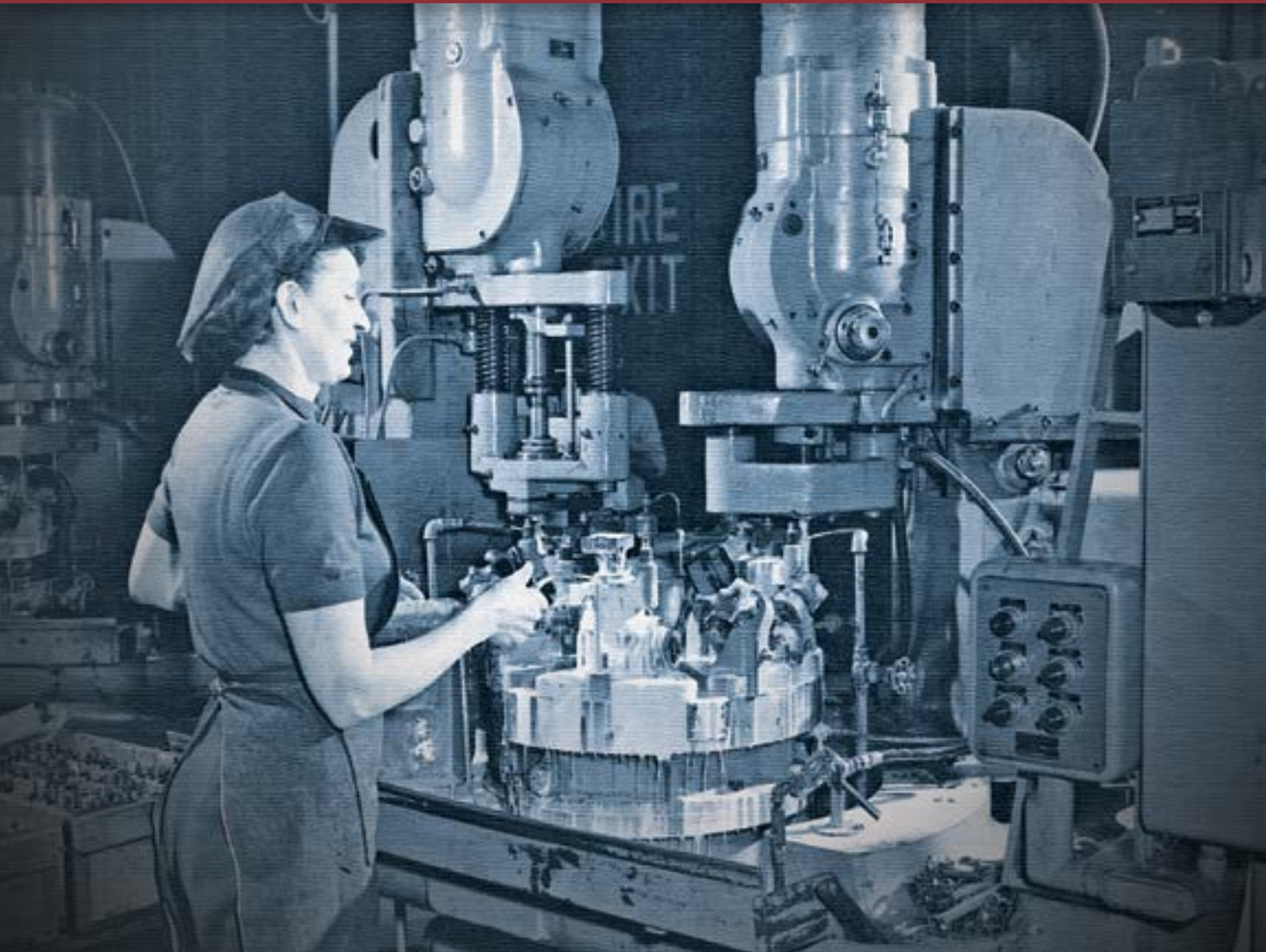




Foundation Document Overview

Springfield Armory National Historic Site

Massachusetts



Contact Information

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Purpose



Built in the mid-19th century for storage and maintenance of weapons, this building holds the visitor center, museum, collection, and staff offices.

THE PURPOSE OF SPRINGFIELD ARMORY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IS:

- *To preserve and interpret for the education, inspiration, and benefit of present and future generations the nationally significant sites, landscapes, structures, archives, and collections associated with Springfield Armory, as well as its important role in developing small arms and modern manufacturing techniques*
- *To cooperate with national, state, and local entities, particularly the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to protect the integrity, character, and historic values of nationally significant sites, landscapes, and structures within the boundaries of the national historic site under nonfederal ownership*
- *To ensure the integrity and availability for research of the arms collection in cooperation with the Department of the Army*

Significance

Significance statements express why Springfield Armory National Historic Site (NHS) resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

The following significance statements have been identified for Springfield Armory National Historic Site. (Please note that the sequence of the statements do not reflect the level of significance.)

1. During the American Revolution, Springfield Arsenal played a critical role in the winning of independence by manufacturing military ammunition, repairing weapons, and storing supplies for the Continental Army. Immediately following the war, it was established as the first national artillery foundry.
2. The implications of the 1787 clash at Springfield Arsenal during Shays' Rebellion fueled support for a strong central government and the adoption of the United States Constitution.
3. Springfield Armory was a military facility that researched, developed, and manufactured high-quality, dependable small arms for the U. S. Army between 1794 and 1968; consequently it was the longest continuously operating industrial facility in the country.
4. Springfield Armory produced precision manufactured weapons that pioneered modern industrial methods such as mass production and interchangeability of parts, transforming American industry.
5. Research and production of small arms by skilled workers at the Springfield Armory spun off private industry, shaping Springfield and the Connecticut River Valley into a national hub of technological innovation in precision manufacturing.



The exhibits of the museum and visitor center.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

Though the entirety of Springfield Armory National Historic Site comprises 55 acres that are owned by different entities, the identification of fundamental and other important or related resources and values should not be interpreted as meaning that some park resources are not as important as others. This evaluation is made to separate those resources or values that are covered by NPS mandates and policies from those that have important considerations to be addressed in other planning processes.

The following fundamental resources and values have been identified for Springfield Armory National Historic Site:

- Historic Springfield Armory Buildings and Structures Managed by the National Park Service
- Springfield Armory Grounds and Cultural Landscapes
- Springfield Armory NHS Collections
- Springfield Armory NHS Archeological Resources
- Springfield Armory Buildings and Structures Managed by Springfield Technical Community College (Commonwealth of Massachusetts)



Advanced weapons were tested at the Quabbin Reservoir during the 1950s and 1960s.

Springfield Armory NHS may contain related resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

Springfield Armory National Historic Site has several related resources:

- Federal Square
- Water Shops
- Mill River
- Historic Neighborhoods Surrounding Springfield Armory
- Railhead
- Quabbin Range
- Wait Monument

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

The following interpretive themes have been identified for Springfield Armory National Historic Site:

- **Military Preparedness.** Beginning in 1777 as an arsenal and, in 1794 as the first national armory, Springfield Armory's fundamental role was to develop and manufacture military arms for national security, with complex consequences worldwide.
- **The Grand National Armory.** Conceived as the “Grand National Armory” expressing the dignity, strength, and permanence of the federal government, its design remains visible in the landscape and grandeur of its buildings to the present day.
- **Technological Innovation.** Springfield Armory played an essential role in the development of mechanized production of interchangeable parts, mass production, and quality control, spurring precision manufacturing and the modern industrial age.
- **A Collection of Enduring Value.** Springfield Armory's world-renowned military small arms collection and archives illustrate the evolution of firearms technology and continues to support the study and understanding of military weapons.
- **Emerging Regional Influence.** Springfield Armory's leadership and skilled workforce helped make Springfield a prosperous community and contributed to the rise of a nationally significant precision manufacturing zone extending from Connecticut into Vermont.



A ranger describes the details of a Revolutionary War era weapon to visitors.

Description

Springfield Armory National Historic Site commemorates the critical role Springfield Armory played in the nation's military and industrial history. First created as a military storage depot by the fledgling U.S. Army in 1777, Springfield Armory was authorized by Congress and President George Washington in 1794 to manufacture small arms for the nation's defense. The armory was the federal center for the development and manufacture of U.S. military small arms from 1794 until its deactivation in 1968. The Springfield Armory was designated a national historic landmark in 1960 and was administratively listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. The park was authorized in 1974 by P.L. 93-486 and became established as an NPS unit in 1978.

From the time the first muskets were hand-crafted until the high-precision machinery was powered down for the last time in 1968, Springfield Armory profoundly affected the lives of soldiers and civilians alike. Armory weapons influenced battlefield tactics and wartime strategy from the War of 1812 through the Vietnam Conflict. Some Springfield Armory small arms are still carried by our soldiers today in testament to their superior design and workmanship. Armory inventions and industrial processes, brought into the private sector in the 19th and 20th centuries, revolutionized the manufacture of consumer products and provided one of the catalysts for American industrialization. Springfield Armory's reputation attracted highly skilled workers and was a major reason for the rapid growth of the City of Springfield and the surrounding area. So many advanced technology industries were founded in the region around the armory that the area was dubbed "The Precision Corridor."

Today, the National Park Service manages a 20-acre portion of the 55-acre national historic site. The remaining 35-acre portion is owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and functions as Springfield Technical Community College (STCC). The National Park Service and Springfield Technical Community College work together as legislated partners to manage the site as a whole. The partnership between a federal NPS unit and a state college makes for a very dynamic and bustling urban park and is one of the great strengths of the site. The site is home to the Benton Small Arms Collection, one of the world's largest historic firearm collections. This collection, along with historic structures and landscapes, form the core of the cultural and natural resources preserved and interpreted for public benefit.

