

# Springfield Armory

Springfield Armory  
National Historic Site  
Massachusetts

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



The park visitor center and museum in the Armory building (the historic Main Arsenal) houses archives, industrial exhibits, and the world's largest collection of historic American military firearms.

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Garvey Hall, Springfield Technical Community College's administration building, occupies the Armory's original administrative building.

ABOVE AND RIGHT: SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE



©JIM LANGONE

The "Organ of Muskets," made famous by Henry W. Longfellow's 1843 poem.



Quarters 1, built in 1847, was home to Armory commanding officers and their families through 1967.



The museum highlights many of the best examples of U.S. military shoulder arms, pistols, edged weapons, and production machinery.



About 1870



1931

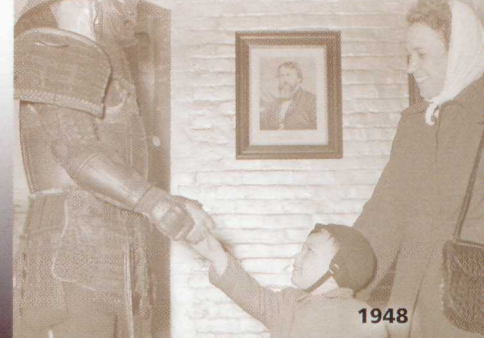


About 1950

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



About 1932



1948



Reenactors posing during an event

**SPECIAL EVENTS** Springfield Armory hosts many special events each year, including ceremonies honoring the nation's military, past and present, on Armed Forces Day in May. Check at the front desk for current events.

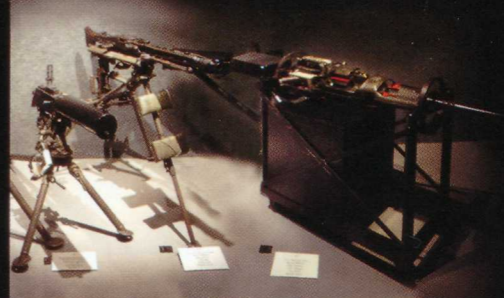
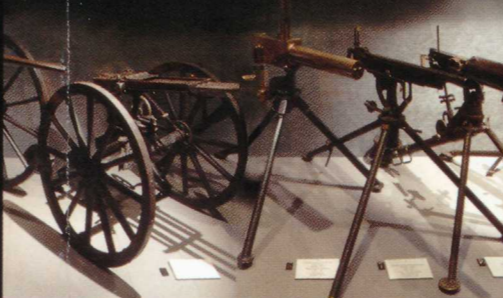
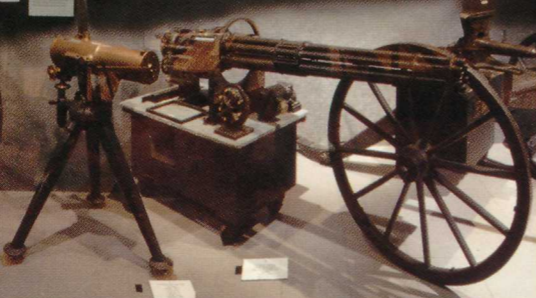
**SCHOOL GROUPS** Embracing the "Parks As Classrooms" idea, Springfield Armory has designed programs to provide upper elementary, middle, and high school students hands-on experience in learning the Armory's history.

**EXHIBITS TOUR** Rangers introduce visitors to exhibits like the "Organ of Muskets," the Blanchard Lathe, the unusual Lyle Life Saving Cannon, and the Wall of Machine Guns reflecting a century of development.

**VISIT THE GROUNDS** You may explore the historic buildings and grounds on your own or join a park ranger-guided outdoor interpretive tour that highlights little-known aspects of Springfield Armory's rich 174-year history.



Summer concert on the historic grounds



WALL OF MACHINE GUNS

©JIM LANGONE



Spiral staircase in the Armory tower

©JIM LANGONE

## WELCOME TO THE ARMORY

From its position at the crest of a hill overlooking the Connecticut River, Springfield Armory exerted a profound influence over the city of Springfield and the nation. It carried out the manufacturing, storage, repair, testing and development functions assigned by the United States Army. In doing so it stimulated technological innovation, encouraged improved manufacturing processes, and fostered increased use of laborsaving machines. All of this had a lasting impact on American industry.

Walk these historic grounds known to Americans from George Washington to John F. Kennedy and to legions of men and women who, with their hands and inventive genius, worked to help shape America's destiny. Here, beginning in 1794, President Washington authorized the manufacture of flintlock muskets and other military weaponry. From these roots, Springfield Armory became the epicenter of United States military small arms research, development, and production until it closed in 1968.

Springfield citizens worked diligently at this "Arsenal of Freedom" for 174 years to provide our military with the best infantry weapons necessary to safeguard the nation and its interests. This fostered an era of mechanical innovation at Springfield Armory that influenced the direction of American industry for decades. In recognition of this long history of production and invention, part of the Armory was designated a national historic landmark in 1960, and in 1974 Congress passed an act creating Springfield Armory National Historic Site.

The historic Main Arsenal building, the current Armory museum, was used to store the finished firearms. It is distinguished by its large tower topped by a flagpole and contains the park visitor center. A tour of the museum offers selections from the world's largest collection of American military firearms, a variety of historic and important industrial machinery, and several examples of Springfield Armory's significant contributions to the City of Springfield, the region, the country, and the world.

Today Springfield Armory National Historic Site is maintained through a partnership between the National Park Service, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Springfield Technical Community College, and the City of Springfield. On approximately 55 acres, the historic buildings, fence, and landscape remain to show visitors Springfield Armory's original grandeur and beauty. Much remains as it has for two centuries, offering a rare glimpse into the site's long and fascinating past.

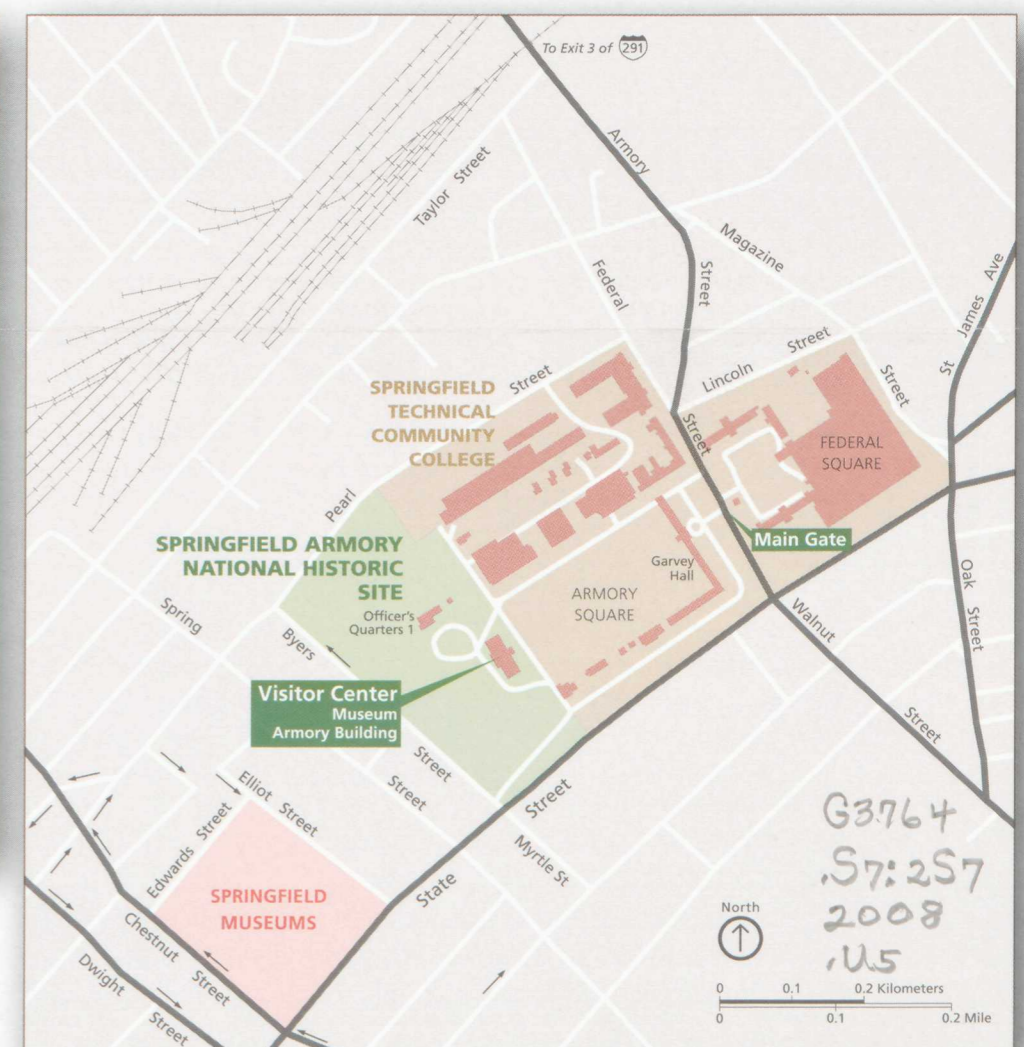
### More Information

Springfield Armory National Historic Site  
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Springfield Armory is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. Visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs.



## OUR PARTNERS

### SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The entrance to Springfield Armory National Historic Site is through the main gate of Springfield Technical Community College (STCC), founded in 1967. STCC is a two-year community college established on the former Armory site. It uses many former Armory buildings for classrooms and offices.

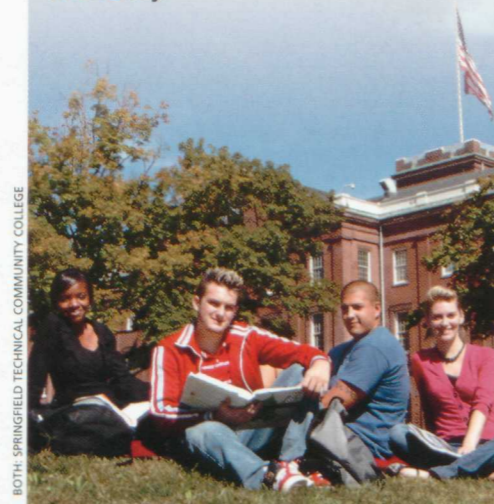
acre site remained in National Park Service hands for historic preservation. The remainder went to the college.

The college carries on the Armory's technological tradition, teaching engineering technology, including mechanical engineering.

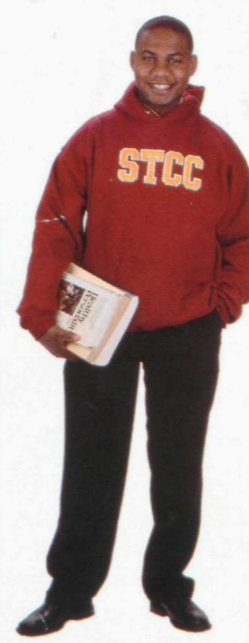
The college moved in here in 1968, the year the Armory closed. Twenty acres of the 55-

[www.stcc.edu](http://www.stcc.edu)  
413-781-7822

STCC is a vibrant campus rich in diversity.



BOTH: SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE



### SPRINGFIELD MUSEUMS

Just blocks from the Springfield Armory National Historic Site you'll find the Springfield Museums, a unique complex of five outstanding museums filled with art, science, and history, plus the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden. Travel back to the time of the dinosaurs, view art from around the world, and learn about the region's history. One admission ticket provides entry to all museums—and parking is free!  
[www.springfieldmuseums.org](http://www.springfieldmuseums.org)

Dr. Seuss Sculpture Garden



DR. SEUSS NATIONAL MEMORIAL

George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum



SPRINGFIELD MUSEUMS

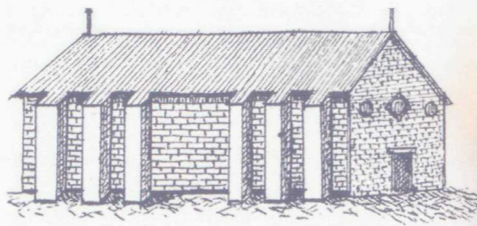
# Highlights of Springfield Armory History

## 1700s



COURTESY DON TROIANI

### CONTINENTAL ARSENAL



Battle at Lexington Green (left); George Washington (right); and the Wait Monument (below), the only surviving artifact from Shays' attack on the arsenal.



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

*If we are to secure peace one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity it must be known that we are at all times ready for war.*

GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1793



### SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

1794 The new federal government decides to manufacture its own muskets so that the nation would not be dependent on foreign arms. President George Washington selects Springfield as the site of one of two federal armories. The second national armory is built in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and operated until the beginning of the Civil War, when it is destroyed by the North to weaken the industrial capabilities of the southern states.

### REVOLUTION

1777 A major arsenal is established here after early battles of the war in the northern states showed the need for a place to store weapons and ammunition within reach of American troops and out of British hands.



SHAYS'

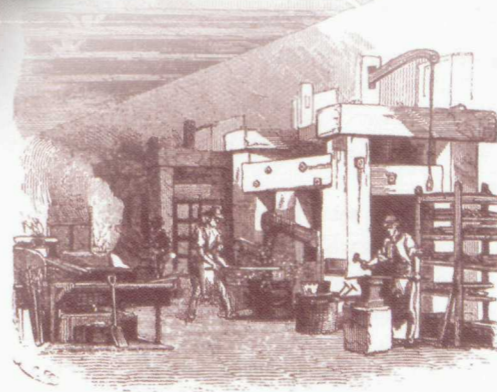


REBELLION

1787 Led by Capt. Daniel Shays (pictured left with Job Shattuck), an army of distressed citizens try to storm and occupy Springfield Arsenal following a series of mob actions blocking state courts from seizing their property for debt. The rebels are repulsed by artillery and later scattered by militia. Shays' Rebellion, as it became known, brings reforms from the Massachusetts government and helps convince states to adopt the new U.S. Constitution.



U.S. Flintlock Musket, Model 1795



FORGING ROOM



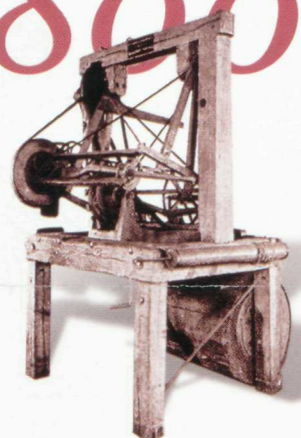
1795 U.S. FLAG

1795 Springfield Armory begins weapon production. In one of the earliest known illustrations of the forging room interior (left), the large 19th-century trip-hammers contrast with the hand-work that characterized the earliest years at the Armory.



MUSKET ASSEMBLY

## 1800s



### BLANCHARD LATHE

1819 Armory employee Thomas Blanchard develops a special lathe for the consistent mass production of rifle stocks.

The lathe (above) enables an unskilled workman to turn out identical irregular shapes quickly and easily.



Fires were common until brick replaced wooden buildings. This 1824 print shows the destruction of the Armory stocking shops caused by sparks from forges where iron is shaped and welded.

1843 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (right) visits the Armory and later writes his anti-war poem "The Arsenal at Springfield."

*This is the Arsenal. From floor to ceiling, Like a huge organ, rise the burnished arms; But from their silent pipes no anthem pealing Startles the villages with strange alarms.*

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW 1843



LONGFELLOW NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



U.S. Percussion Musket, Model 1842



ORGAN OF MUSKETS

### CITY OF SPRINGFIELD

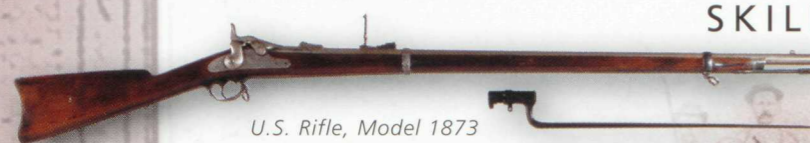
1852 Springfield, established as a town in 1636, is incorporated as a city. The city recognizes the Armory's importance by including an image of the Main Arsenal at the top of the municipal seal.



U.S. Rifle-Musket, Model 1861

### CIVIL WAR 1861-1865

1860s The destruction of the Harper's Ferry Armory during the Civil War leaves Springfield Armory the only federal manufacturing point for small arms until the 1900s. It also attracts skilled workers of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds.

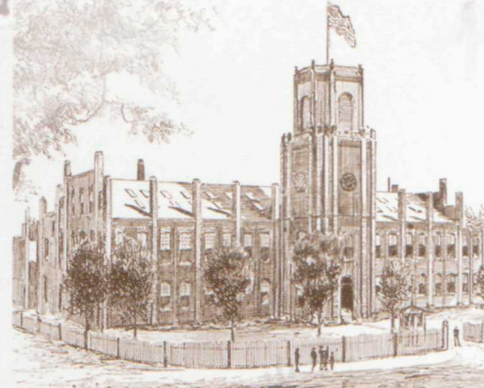


U.S. Rifle, Model 1873

### SKILLED CRAFTSMEN

1884 Here on the Mill River, about a mile south of the Armory's Hill Shops, much of the heavy manufacturing operations of creating rifle stocks and barrels are performed with the help of water power beginning early in the 1800s.

### WATER POWER



This 1886 group portrait shows Stocking Shop workers at the Hill Shops. Each man is dressed in his work outfit and holding the tools and gauges that signify his particular role in producing rifle stocks in a "Division of Labor."

1886 Apache leader Geronimo surrenders to the U.S. Army, ending the Apache Wars. One of Geronimo's favorite weapons was the Model 1873 "Trapdoor" Springfield, produced at the Armory and widely used by

the U.S. Army from the Indian wars era to the Battle of San Juan Hill in 1898. Gen. George Armstrong Custer's troopers carried them into battle against the Lakota and Northern Cheyenne at the Little Bighorn in June 1876.

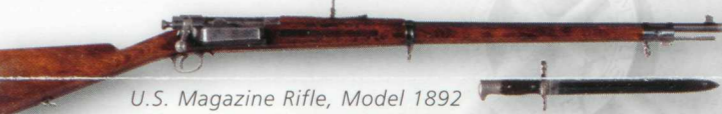
### INDIAN WARS



GERONIMO (FAR RIGHT) WITH 1873 "TRAPDOOR" ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### ARMS LABORATORY

1891 The Experimental Department is established at Springfield Armory, officially creating a division responsible for the design and testing of various small arms. This new department would examine and develop all subsequent U.S. rifle designs.



U.S. Magazine Rifle, Model 1892

BY 1895 the bicycle is very popular for people of all ages, and Springfield holds annual bicycle tournaments. "Springfield is truly a town of cyclists," says the *New York Times* about the 1895 rally, "and women and children are as common on the spidery vehicle as pedestrians on the Brooklyn Bridge."



## 1900s

### CITY OF HOMES

The Armory's comparably higher wages for workers help Springfield become known as the "City of Homes" in the late 1800s. The nickname arose because of the city's many Victorian mansions, as well as multitudes of workers' single-family homes.



1905 James Stowe is the first African American hired by the Armory. Employed at the Water Shops, he is seen here operating one of the Armory's electric delivery trucks.



WORKERS' HOMES

WWI The Armory produces over 265,000 bolt-action Model 1903 rifles for American troops. It is still considered one of the most accurate weapons ever made.

U.S. Magazine Rifle, Model 1903

### JOHN GARAND



1936 Armory begins mass production of first successful semi-automatic rifle to be put into active military service, the M1 Rifle, designed by John Garand.

1943 The workforce at the Armory totals 13,500 employees, of which 43 percent are Women Ordnance Workers (WOWs).



ADOLPH TREIDLER



U.S. Rifle, Cal. .30, M1

### TWO WORLD WARS

WWII The installation of mass-production machinery in the early 1930s allows for the manufacture of 3.5 million M1 rifles through 1945. Used by U.S. troops around the world, it is deemed by Gen. George S. Patton "the greatest battle implement ever devised."



### A NEW CENTURY

1957 The M14 rifle is the last shoulder weapon produced at Springfield Armory. Phased out as a standard infantry weapon in 1966, it was the basis for the M21 Sniper Weapon System (SWS), which was standard-issue to military sniper teams until 1988, though it is still available to military sharpshooters today.



U.S. Rifle, 7.62mm, M14



Operation Iraqi Freedom: The soldier on the left holds an M14-based M21 SWS, and the other holds an M4 Carbine.

JOSEPH HIGGINS

For almost two centuries the hilltop overlooking the Connecticut River was an important place for the development and manufacture of arms for the American soldier.

Springfield Armory evolved from a place where skilled craftsmen built, piece by piece, one musket at a time, into a center pioneering in mass-production techniques, and finally into an institute famous for its research and development.

In 1964 the Defense Department decided that private suppliers could provide the necessary weapons. In 1968 the Armory was closed.

Although designated a national historic landmark in 1960, it was not until 1974 that the Armory became a national historic site and part of the National Park System preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.