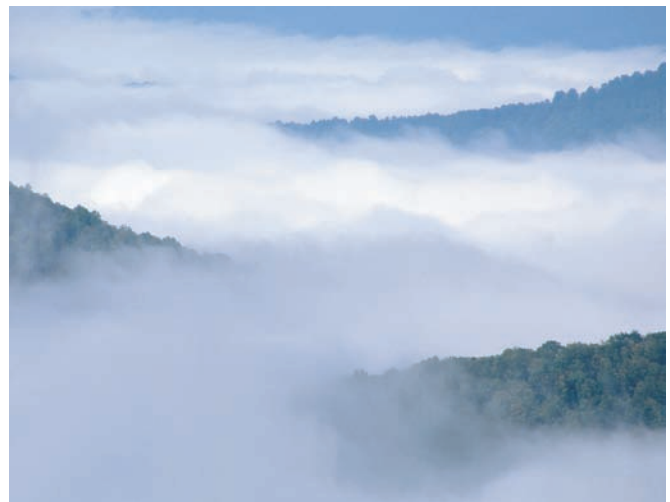


# Riding High

*Skyline Drive Soars to New Heights as National Historic Landmark*

**Skyline Drive, recently designated a national historic landmark,** courses for 105 miles along the spine of the Appalachians, looking down from a heavenly perspective on some of the most stunning landscapes in the United States. Built between 1930 and 1942, it is not only the centerpiece of Virginia's Shenandoah National Park, but a portal on the nation's past framed in a pastoral setting.

In the 1920s, a young National Park Service was working toward attracting the public to its growing collection of wild American landscapes. The agency embraced the automobile, and by the 1930s was heavily invested in a system of roadways that opened previously inaccessible places to the public. Skyline Drive played a pivotal role not only in the evolution of park roads but in the development of federal policies toward recreation and conservation. Skyline Drive also stands as a legacy of the New Deal era, with out-of-work Americans employed building lodges, trails, roadways, and cabins.



**FROM THE HIGH POINTS, ONE CAN SEE THE FARMS OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY; REMINDERS OF WESTWARD EXPANSION AND THE CIVIL WAR ARE EVER-PRESENT.**

**In 1924, the Department of the Interior proposed the idea to** the state of Virginia, which enthusiastically supported the road and was instrumental in its creation. It was “designed as the backbone of Shenandoah National Park,” according to National Park Service documents of the time, today a stellar example of the rustic design then popular in the parks. Similar roads through Glacier in Montana, Yellowstone in Wyoming, and Zion in Utah were experiments in harmonizing with nature, attempts to build highways that lay lightly on the land. Skyline Drive demonstrates how the approach was adapted for the Appalachians, with parking overlooks at frequent intervals providing scenic valley and ridgetop vistas linking motorists with trails to waterfalls, outcroppings, springs, and virgin stands of trees. As was the practice in the western parks, alterations to the topography were shaped to resemble the surrounding landscape. Native

species were planted along the winding course to blend into the largely deciduous forest. The road was completed in segments, with the construction contracted out to private companies. Landscape architect Harvey Benson oversaw the project.

**Skyline Drive was a showcase of the Civilian Conservation** Corps, which not only cleared and planted along the route, but also built guard walls, made signs, and shaped overlooks and road banks, their handiwork apparent in rustic cabins, lodges, gas stations, and dining facilities. Initially, local farmers and apple-pickers, then suffering through a drought, were brought in as laborers by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. President Roosevelt, accompanied by reporters and newsreel cameramen, toured the road during the construction to promote confidence in his public works programs.

Every year thousands of visitors follow the drive's rising and falling course. From the high points, one can see the farms of the Shenandoah Valley; reminders of westward expansion and the Civil War are ever-present. As an expression of one of the nation's most enlightened ideas—paying homage to its natural places and preserving them for all—Skyline Drive is a landmark.

**ABOVE:** *Clouds rest in the folds of mountains in this view from Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park.* **RIGHT:** *Moon rising over Moormans River from a parapet on Skyline Drive.*

**contact points** **web** NHL Nomination [www.nps.gov/nhl/designations/samples/va/SkylineDrive.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/nhl/designations/samples/va/SkylineDrive.pdf) Skyline Drive [www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/driving-skyline-drive.htm](http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/driving-skyline-drive.htm)





# Temples for the People

*Largess for Learning at Philadelphia's Carnegie Libraries*

"An enterprise without parallel in the history of American philanthropy" is how the *Architectural Record* described Andrew Carnegie's plan to give away millions for the construction of libraries across the nation. The self-made Carnegie, who rose meteorically to the highest ranks of American industrialists, believed that everyone should have access to knowledge. The libraries would be free—a new concept in the 1880s—open to anyone with a desire to learn. Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who worked his way from messenger boy to steel mogul, never forgot the benefactor who allowed him access to his private library, and how that privilege opened up the world.

Between 1886 and 1917, Carnegie donated \$40 million to build 1,679 libraries, his largess evident across the country. Philadelphia saw one of his most ambitious campaigns, second only to New York City, and today retains one of the nation's largest collection of Carnegie libraries.

To heighten awareness of this legacy, the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia joined with the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Park Service in an extensive documentation project. The structures resemble museums, places whose function transcends the daily business of the city. It was not only the buildings themselves HABS intended to capture, but the birth of an

At the turn of the century, public libraries were a relatively new concept. Private subscription libraries, where members paid dues, had been around since the 18th century. In 1891, Philadelphia became one of the first cities to provide free libraries, but they were housed in "old mansions, storefronts, or the back rooms of commercial buildings," says the HABS history. At the time, some philanthropists were funding the construction of public libraries, but it was not common and no one had done it on the scale that Andrew Carnegie would. Libraries, "the people's university," would help immigrants assimilate, he believed; those who did not enjoy the privilege of wealth or social standing could, through motivation and ready access to knowledge, improve their lives.

For his endowment, Carnegie applied the acumen that served



**THESE WERE THE FIRST LIBRARIES WHERE PATRONS COULD ROAM FREELY AMONG THE BOOKS, UNTIL THEN KEPT BEHIND THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK AND RETRIEVED ONLY ON REQUEST.**

American institution: the public library. Says HABS chief Catherine Lavoie, "In part we were documenting the Free Library of Philadelphia, one of the first public library systems in the country, which is significant in its own right." The system's headquarters, the Central Library, was a clear expression of the city's commitment to public enlightenment. While not built under the Carnegie endowment, it was a symbolic center: a grand edifice inspired by the architecture of Place de la Concorde in Paris and surpassed only by the likes of the New York Public Library and the British Museum.

Of Philadelphia's original 25 Carnegie libraries, 20 are still intact, 16 used for their original purpose. The HABS documentation encompassed large format photography, measured drawings, and comprehensive written histories. The city was preparing to close nearly a dozen libraries and four were Carnegie buildings, which added urgency to the project. Says Lavoie, "They were basically an unprotected resource. Who's going to buy a library in north Philadelphia?"

**ABOVE:** Lion heads in the main stairway at Philadelphia's Central Library, the system's flagship. **RIGHT:** The library's second story main hall.

**contact points** **web** Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia [www.preservationalliance.com](http://www.preservationalliance.com) HABS Collection at the Library of Congress [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs\\_haer/index.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/index.html)

him well as a CEO. Any municipality that wanted grant money had to provide a building site and an annual maintenance budget. The community also had to supply the books, a measure intended to make sure the selection accommodated the needs and preferences of the people. In this way, Carnegie got local communities to invest in the project. The result—according to Lavoie, who wrote the HABS history of the system with colleague Lisa Davidson—was that he "took libraries from the arena of private philanthropy to that of civic responsibility."

A city or town that met the conditions was eligible for a construction grant. Initially it was left to recipients to choose their design and method of construction. At that time, popular taste in public architecture leaned toward the Beaux Arts. The style, borrowing details from ancient Greece and Rome, had achieved prominence at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. The "White City," as it was called, captured the public imagination and profoundly influenced American architecture.

The Carnegie libraries embraced the regional vernacular too—such as the randomly shaped gray stone used in Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill library—but the Beaux Arts was evident nearly everywhere. As more municipalities got Carnegie funding, Beaux Arts and libraries became practically synonymous. Clients frequently would accept nothing



ALL PHOTOS JOSEPH E. ELLIOTT FOR HABS



**AS MORE MUNICIPALITIES GOT CARNEGIE FUNDING, BEAUX ARTS AND LIBRARIES BECAME PRACTICALLY SYNONYMOUS. CLIENTS FREQUENTLY WOULD ACCEPT NOTHING ELSE, ARCHITECTS FOUND.**

else, architects found. The HABS history quotes the notes of a 1903 meeting of the Illinois Library Association: “Let an architect suggest Romanesque or Gothic or Early French Renaissance or Byzantine, and he is, especially in the smaller cities, met with a stony smile, plainly saying, ‘You think because I don’t live in Chicago I don’t know anything about architecture, but you may as well understand that I am quite up to date and know what is the proper thing in library styles.’”

**The early years saw some ornate central libraries built in the well-to-do neighborhoods.** That ended when Carnegie refused to fund any more of these. “He was interested in the smaller branch libraries because they were accessible to the people he was trying to target,” says Lavoie. For the most part, city officials and librarians could influence design, but Carnegie’s assistant James Bertram, who monitored the program, eventually stepped in to impose control.

Historian Abigail Van Slyck writes, “Bertram campaigned aggressively against the full-blown temple front, castigating ‘pillars and Greek temple features, costing much money and giving no return . . .’” To counter the desire for decoration, Bertram simply gave out smaller grants.

Even as Beaux Arts libraries became one of the most numerous building types in America, the Carnegie grants spurred the advancement of library science.

The American Library Association was developing new ideas on design and function, which Carnegie supported. These ideas found their way into recommendations compiled by Bertram and Carnegie on what made the ideal library. *Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings* was an attempt to discourage extravagant, poorly planned structures, putting practicality over appearance.

**Philadelphia’s Carnegie libraries were designed by “a who’s who of local architects,”** says Lavoie. Hired by a committee overseeing the grants, they generally followed the recommendations on how the buildings should be laid out. Most included an ell at the rear, intended to expand the space, and a lecture hall for cultural and educational

**ABOVE:** *The Tacony branch.* **RIGHT:** *The front entrance of the Chestnut Hill branch, the city’s eighth Carnegie library, with motifs including classical entablature and a turned limestone balustrade.*













events. These were the first libraries where patrons could roam freely among the books, until then kept behind the librarian's desk and retrieved only on request. Skylights and windows let in plenty of light, though the wall space was carefully apportioned to accommodate shelves. Bertram's *Notes* offered several different plans as suggestions. They all featured a wide-open space with the librarian occupying a central position from which patrons could be observed (planners apparently were not yet entirely comfortable with open access). Holdings were divided into adult, children's, and reference.

Philadelphia's Carnegie Fund Committee, dominated by librarians, did not include a single architect. This was in sharp contrast to its counterpart in New York, composed of nationally recognized architects who went on to design more than half of the city's libraries. Bertram felt librarians knew best how the building should function, which is why so many of Philadelphia's follow the same basic layout.

**The branches were intentionally toned down to be more inviting** for the working class neighborhoods where they were often located. Still, most employed "the Classical vocabulary of the Beaux Arts," in the words of the HABS report. They featured an ornamental façade, a somewhat grand entrance, decorative windows, friezes, and cornice work, but otherwise were rectangular and functional. The Lehigh branch, one of the first, was not only the largest but among the more extravagant, designed before guidelines were introduced in 1908. Its layout is in keeping with the Carnegie ideal—in fact it is called "quintessential" in the report—but its terra cotta façade and richly decorative features set it apart from the others. It was built to accommodate a burgeoning immigrant population that had settled in that part of Philadelphia at the time.

The Manayunk branch, on the northern edge of the city, was also one of the earliest and most ornate, a classic example of the T-shaped form that took hold nationwide. Today, it sits atop a small knoll in a gentrifying neighborhood, awaiting reincarnation as condominiums.

**THE BRANCHES WERE INTENTIONALLY TONED DOWN TO BE MORE INVITING FOR THE WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS . . . STILL, MOST EMPLOYED THE CLASSICAL VOCABULARY OF THE BEAUX ARTS . . .**

**Philadelphia's building campaign originally planned for 30** branches at an estimated \$50,000 apiece, tapping a 1903 grant of \$1.5 million to build a city-wide system. By 1916, with war raging in Europe and the United States supplying England and France, labor and materials costs skyrocketed. With a number of branches already built or underway, Philadelphia scaled back the plan to 25 and cut expenses so each would come in at about \$60,000. But, given the war, that ballooned, too. Bids for the Logan branch came in at \$75,000. The Kinsessing branch, which opened in 1919, was \$82,000. Cobbs Creek, built in 1924-25, needed contributions from the city and private donors. Cost cutting altered its form, the "concrete construction and banded windows [a] modernist interpretation of the old Beaux Arts prototype," says the HABS report. The Wyoming branch, opened in 1930 after the city had to borrow \$120,000 to build it, was not only the last of Philadelphia's Carnegie libraries, but the last built in the country.

**A National Trust presentation helped John Gallery, executive** director of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, fully comprehend the importance of the system. "I've always seen these libraries—such strong landmarks that were architecturally well designed—in working class sections of the city [but] I never could understand why they were there." The city's plan to shut down four of them brought out people in opposition. "The communities responded very angrily," he says. "They had a strong appreciation for the architectural character of these buildings as landmarks within their neighborhoods, which they didn't want to lose. That is what pushed us." The buildings did not enjoy official historic status. Had the city closed them down, they would have become surplus prop-



erty, potentially torn down or altered to the point where they would be, for all practical purposes, destroyed (which has already happened to some of them).

Using the HABS documentation, the alliance nominated the four threatened libraries to the city's register of historic places; last summer they were designated. The alliance is working on six more and may nominate the entire system—as a collection of related resources—to the National Register of Historic Places. "It's a way to get at the larger story," says Lavoie.

**LEFT:** Entrance pavilion of the Grecian-style Lillian Marrero branch, formerly the LeHigh Avenue branch. **ABOVE:** Cornice of the Manayunk branch's southeast entrance. The Beaux-Arts building is one of four Carnegie branches no longer used as a library.



# Six Gun City

## Future Uncertain at Hartford's Historic Colt Armory Complex

**The Colt Armory, whose firearms were virtually synonymous** with the Old West, transformed Hartford, Connecticut, with a vision of progress that embraced not only technology but its workers as well. It created a city within a city—Coltville—a hotbed of innovation in the heart of the Connecticut River Valley of the 1850s, “what California’s Silicon Valley is today, the vanguard of an internationally significant, technology-based transformation that changed the world of work,” writes William Hosley in *Colt: The Making of an American Legend*. Today, despite the company’s departure, the legend lives on in a sprawling

with its own unique identity, all of which is related to Colt’s impact nationally.” The dome has long been a local landmark, visible from a distance. The state and the city are eyeing the complex as a key to revitalizing the Connecticut River waterfront.

In a companion book to the PBS series *They Made America* Harold Evans writes of Samuel Colt, “Whether his revolver defended or retarded civilization is endlessly arguable . . .” What is indisputable is his contribution to manufacturing. Colt’s enterprise saw the dawn of precision, mass-produced, interchangeable components. The New

England firearms industry was a rich source of innovation, with the federal armory in Springfield, Massachusetts—today also an NHL—just 25 miles to the north. According to the landmark nomination, the Colt armory had the “essential ingredients of the American manufacturing system: an innovative product, advanced manufacturing techniques, thorough mechanization, large-quantity production, successful marketing, . . . and adept use of patents.”

**Samuel Colt was born in Hartford** in 1814, the son of a textile manufacturer. He had an inquisitive bent, an engineer’s mind, and early exposure to tools and the process of making



**WESTWARD EXPANSION FOSTERED EXPLOSIVE GROWTH AT THE COMPANY. “A WEAPON THAT ENABLED A HORSEMAN TO FIRE SIX SHOTS WITHOUT RELOADING HAD REVOLUTIONARY IMPLICATIONS,” WRITES HISTORIAN ROBERT UTLEY.**

260-acre downtown site marked by an iconic dome, the subject of a congressionally mandated study that ponders its preservation as part of the National Park System. Largely abandoned since 1993, the armory was designated a national historic landmark in 2008.

**The Coltville Historic District was the center of Samuel Colt’s** industrial empire with a forge shop, foundry, machine shop, offices, warehouse, garage, and worker housing. Says Karen Senich, the Connecticut state historic preservation officer, “It’s an entire area

**ABOVE:** The Colt Armory today. **RIGHT:** Colt revolver from the collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

**contact points** **web** NPS Study [www.coltvillestudy.org](http://www.coltvillestudy.org) National Historic Landmark Nomination [www.nps.gov/history/nhl/Fallo7Nominations/Coltville%20Historic%20District.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/Fallo7Nominations/Coltville%20Historic%20District.pdf)

things. He took a job as a seaman in 1832 and it is said that he got the idea for the revolver while watching the workings of a ship’s wheel.

He returned from sea to work for his father, who financed his first attempts at making the weapon, which were unsuccessful. At that time, firearms were still being made—at least partly—by hand. Colt believed that all parts could be machined, producing a flawless product. With hundreds of machines doing a large part of the work, Colt advanced the concept of interchangeable parts and standardized mass production. His fortunes changed when the Army ordered thousands of his revolvers with the outbreak of the Mexican-American war in 1846. Soon there was an order for another thousand, and Colt eventually broke ground for the armory. Westward expansion fostered explosive growth at the company. “A weapon that enabled a horseman to fire six











shots without reloading had revolutionary implications,” writes historian Robert Utley. “Colt” became a catch-all term for revolver.

**Soon after the armory was completed in 1855, Colt built a series** of worker homes to attract machinists, toolmakers, and other specialists. In the 1880s, they graduated to more upscale housing as unskilled laborers moved into the homes they left behind. Coltsville sponsored lectures, classes, dances, and intramural sports. Unlike other industrial colonies of the era, there was no attempt to exert control over the workers’ private lives, since most lived off the grounds.

Colt was a marketing genius ahead of his time, cultivating a close relationship with the military. He sent engraved models to heads of state

In 1947, some of the buildings were demolished. Colt was bought out by a conglomerate in 1955 and the main plant moved to West Hartford. The machine shop remained open, producing the M-16 rifle for the Vietnam War, but the armory closed its doors for good in 1993.

**The National Park Service study concludes that Coltsville could** be an appropriate addition to the National Park System if “ownership issues are resolved, development plans crystallized, and partnerships better established.” For now, at least, circumstances are too uncertain to make it feasible. In 2003, a developer began rehabilitating the industrial buildings, aided by preservation tax credits, but went bankrupt with the economic downturn. With a new

### **THE LEGEND LIVES ON IN A SPRAWLING 260-ACRE DOWNTOWN SITE MARKED BY AN ICONIC DOME, THE SUBJECT OF A CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED STUDY THAT PONDERES ITS PRESERVATION . . .**

and convinced the famous to provide testimonials. His methods had a ripple effect on industry. Up-and-coming weapons inventors all came to Colt for the machining, testing, and production of their designs.

Samuel Colt died in 1862, at the height of Civil War production. His wife Elizabeth ran the company for another 39 years, an anomaly in the male ranks of American industrialists, becoming a local patron of the arts.

World War I spurred extraordinary growth, the workforce skyrocketing to 10,000. The Army was short on the weapon that would define the conflict—the machine gun—and the armory was one of only two in the nation to produce it. In World War II, Colt was a linchpin of the “arsenal of democracy” with patents on the .30 and .50 caliber Browning machine guns—which the Army adopted as standard weaponry—and sole source of the .37-millimeter anti-aircraft gun. By 1944, with 16,000 workers, the company had to establish satellite facilities around the city. The Army purchased the patent for Colt’s famous .45 semi-automatic, along with those for a number of other weapons.

But the company’s insistence on precision was increasingly at odds with a new ethos that stressed speed and efficiency. In the heady year of 1943, with the machinery turning out more weapons than ever, Colt lost money. The company’s role as worker benefactor became anachronistic in a time when labor was asserting its rights as never before. After the war, the workforce shrunk to 1,000.



developer in place, the project has begun to move forward. In an ideal world, says the study, the armory would be an “inviting and walkable” site, with thousands of square feet of exhibit space and direct access to nearby attractions, costs shared among federal, state, local, and private partners. While the economy has hampered revitalization, the city remains optimistic about this vision.

**LEFT:** Revolver from the collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Colt’s metalworking advances altered other industries. **ABOVE:** The company dome, an iconic beacon on the skyline.