

PH0352390

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

MAR 29 1976

DATE ENTERED

JUN 8 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ****** Colt Industrial District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 101-143 Huyshope, 60-78 Van Block, 13-45 Curcombe Avenues;
Colt Park; Colt buildings on Van Dyke Avenue (Hartford
Property 311381) *located at intersection of W. Avenue, W. Hartford*

CITY, TOWN Hartford CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1st - William R. Cotter

STATE Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY Hartford CODE 003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple Ownership

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN _____ STATE _____
VICINITY OF _____

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Hartford City Clerk
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER 550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE New England: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and
Industrial Sites, Historic American Engineering Record

DATE _____
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR Library of Congress
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

DETERIORATED

RUINS

UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED

ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE

MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Colt Industrial District, in the south end of Hartford, Conn., contains the factory, single and multiple family workers' housing and a 114 acre public park. These were components of the manufactory established in 1848 by Col. Samuel Colt, inventor of the automatic revolving pistol. Approximately 87% of the Colt Industrial District is open parkland. Beyond the eastern end of the long rectangular park is a tight gridiron of streets on which the workers' housing and factory are situated.

The district is surrounded by mixed land uses. On the north, Kinsella Primary School and a long housing development on Stonington Street face the park. Commercial and industrial buildings cluster around the multiple family workers' housing and Colt factory in the district's northeast corner. The eastern extent of the district receives decisive visual punctuation by the raised segment of Interstate 91 which parallels Van Dyke Avenue and the long side of the factory. In the south, "Potsdam", a group of nine single family houses for Colt employees lines Curcombe Street facing Colt Park. The "Potsdam" houses are surrounded by low 20th century brick apartments to the southeast and open land to the southwest. The district's western boundary is contiguous with the western border of Colt Park. Between the park and Wethersfield Avenue is a narrow strip of land lined with commercial and residential buildings. Among this group and immediately adjacent to the proposed district are Armsmear (NHL), Col. Colt's Italianate home, and the James Colt House (built for his brother), which are already on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Colt Armory has long been a Hartford landmark. The original armory (1855) was destroyed in 1864 by a fire suspected to have been set by Confederate sympathizers. The new armory, completed in 1865, was built as a facsimile of the original. This building is still in use.

The imposing $3\frac{1}{2}$ story Palladian structure is built of brick with rusticated brownstone sills and quoins. The long gable roof is crossed by five pedimented bays, which are embellished by oxe eye and arched windows under elaborate corbelled cornices. Above the crossing of the projecting central bay and roof is a large blue onion-shaped dome set into a ring supported by white columns. Prancing on the dome's peak is a statue of the "rampant Colt", the insignia of the firearms company derived from Col. Colt's coat-of-arms. The dome originally had gold stars painted on the deep-blue background.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	PAGE
Colt Industrial District	6	one

Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources
1975 - State
Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The armory was designed by Colt, his nephew, architect H. A. G. Pomeroy, and Elisha K. Root, inventor, manager and later president of the company. The armory was exceptional in its time for the amount of light and ventilation provided by the large, many-paned windows. This natural system was supplemented by gas lights and piped-in air. A 250 horsepower engine with two 30' boilers and a flywheel 30' in diameter supplied power for the entire building through a system of noiseless belts and shafts.

The old armory is surrounded by numerous 19th and 20th century additions. One, behind the armory on Sequassen Street, is a long single story shed constructed entirely in rusticated brownstone blocks. This is possibly a surviving section of the 1855 building.

Directly behind the factory Colt constructed multiple family houses for his workers after the completion of the original factory in 1855. Only ten of the estimated 50 original dwellings survive. These buildings, considered commodious in Colt's time, are now unoccupied and threatened with demolition. Constructed in brick with brownstone sills, the buildings have been painted white. The blocky, austere structures are aligned in two rows of five houses each on Van Block and Huyshope Avenues. Both types of housing are surrounded by considerable open space, and are entered through the facades between buildings, rather than through the facade facing the street.

The houses on Van Block Avenue have 4 bays, flat roofs, and are $3\frac{1}{2}$ stories high. The first three stories have large double-hung windows with eyebrow windows in the half-story cap. The buildings are entered through attached exterior stairwells of wood with board and batten siding. These buildings probably housed six families each.

The houses on Huyshope Avenue, which probably housed four families each, are more detailed. The three story houses have gable roofs with jigsaw cut cornice moldings. Bricks are laid in stepped-fret headings above most of the double-hung windows. The main facade is in three bays. The central bay contains the entrance, protected by a projecting pedimented roof with turned pendants. These houses have a back extension with a shed roof and wooden entry porch.

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The nine single-family "Potsdam" houses on Curcombe Street were built by Colt before 1860 for the willow ware workers he imported as a group from Potsdam, Germany. Colt wished to capitalize upon roots of the willow trees he had planted to secure the dike along the Connecticut River. The German workers would come only if Colt provided them with a lifestyle and surroundings similar to what they were accustomed to. Colt complied by providing a hall and equipment for a band, and built these chalet-like houses. Not all these homes retain their original appearance of brick and painted-on half-timbered ground floor with board and batten siding on the second floor. In its original form, the gable ends, which face the street, had projecting roofs outlined by bargeboard moldings cut in spade-shaped patterns with three lancet-like drops marking the roof's peak and ends. The windows were framed by similar ornamental wood trim.

Colt Park -- given to Hartford by Colt's family -- contains playgrounds, ballfields, a skating rink and Dillon Stadium. At the west entrance to the park is a monument to Colt. It has two statues of Colt; one as the young inventor, the other as the mature, successful industrialist. The park was once Col. Colt's personal "pleasure-grounds" and contained artificial ponds for fish and fowl, a deer park, orchards and fields, pastures for livestock, gazebos, statuary, a private cemetery, a carriage drive and a greenhouse over 1/2 mile long that supplied Colt with cotton, rice, wine grapes, fruits and vegetables all year around.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1855 - built

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The blue onion dome of the Colt Patent Fire Arms Factory has long been the most distinctive component of Hartford's skyline. More than just a landmark, the Colt complex is a significant part of Hartford's heritage. The Colt Company was one of the largest manufacturers during the period of the city's industrialization and was moreover, influential in distributing technological and managerial expertise to other Hartford firms. In a city in which there are few reminders of 19th century industrialization the Colt district is an important historic artifact because it preserves not only the site of manufacturing but also several related structures. Samuel Colt (1814 -1862) tried to bring the mill village into the urban environment: the mill, the two types of workers' housing, the "manor" which became Colt Park and the adjoining Colt mansions together constitute a valuable resource, providing insight into the ideals and limitations of paternalistic capitalism and its relationship to industrial architecture.

Of course, Colt's significance reaches beyond Hartford. He and his successors pioneered the development of the handgun with the Colt 45, an important part of American western life, and later, the Colt Automatic, the standard military sidearm since World War I. Colt was also a forerunner in applying techniques of mass production, specialization and mechanization to manufacturing. Finally, these buildings are symbolic of the beginnings of the modern arms industry, an important part of the American economy. Many of the present day features of this industry, including international arms sales, an unquestioning attitude toward complicity with violence, and the indiscriminate sale of arms to belligerents, were all present in Samuel Colt's fire arms business.

In the second half of the 19th century Hartford's manufacturing sector shifted from a small shop, craft economy to mechanized production. Colt's was one of the first and largest of these industries, employing, in 1857, 600 workers who finished 250 pistols

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"A Day at the Armory of Colt's Patent Fire Arms Company"
United States Magazine. IV no. 3. March 1857

Barnard, Henry, ed. Armswear; the home, the arm, the armory of Samuel Colt: A Memorial. New York, 1866

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 130

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	69,43,7,0	4,62,52,6,0	B	18	69,45,1,0	4,62,45,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	18	69,33,6,0	4,62,43,6,0	D	18	69,32,5,0	4,62,50,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Colt Park determines the westerly boundaries of the Colt Industrial District. The park's borders are roughly marked by Wawarme Avenue, south; Wethersfield Avenue, west; and Stonington Street and the Kinsella School, north.

The eastern end of the sidtrict extends beyond Colt Park northeast to encompass the factory and ten multiple family houses (101-143 Huyshope Ave., and 60-78 Van Block Ave.) and southeast to include
 LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Consultant, and Carole Anstress Paine

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE February 23, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford

STATE Connecticut

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

John W. Shuman
 SHPO

TITLE

DATE Mar. 26, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

DATE 6/8/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:
Charles W. ...
 SUPERVISOR OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 5-12-76

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

per day. Colt also built a factory to make willow ware furniture, a by-product of the willows planted to sustain his dike along the Connecticut River, but this industry declined in the 1870's. The fire-arms factory was a kind of school for Hartford industrial engineers: many such as Pratt and Whitney, took the lesson of Colt's mechanization, division of processes into small steps and large-scale operations -- and applied them to other industries. After Colt's death in 1862, the company continued under his innovative Superintendent, E. K. Root. Although handguns have been the mainstay of the industry, Gatling guns and Browning machine guns were also made at Colt's.

When Samuel Colt bought and developed the Southmeadows area of Hartford it was outside the built up area of the city and subject to flooding from the river. Colt built a substantial 2 mile long dike and began his manufacturing village. Colt provided not only housing for his workers, considered quite commodious at the time, but also a recreation hall and organized activities such as a band. Working conditions were good, with adequate lighting, partly by gas lights, steam heat and powered blowers for ventilation. There were limits to Colt's paternalism, however. His system of minute division of labor and reliance on mechanization made work more repetitive and uncreative, replacing the skill and judgment of the gunsmith with machine-tending. One reason Colt came to Hartford was that his plant in Paterson, New Jersey failed in part due to worker resistance to the assembly line. The contrast between the Potsdam houses, which Colt built to house skilled willow ware makers from Germany, and the relatively drab, more crowded houses for the semi-skilled, suggests that economic considerations also limited Colt's concern for his workers. Both types of housing, of course, are overshadowed by the greater elegance and large scale of the Colt mansions and the mill itself. Today these buildings still express the ideas inherent in Colt's vision of industrial society -- faith in material prosperity, acceptance of inequality, and the responsibility for one's workers -- shared by many of America's early industrialists.

Colt's major technical innovation was to make the revolving chamber on the pistol automatically advance to the next shot.

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Through variations and improvements on his design, Colt's 45 caliber revolver became the standard for Westerners, as well as a military weapon. Colt's revolvers were such an important part of western culture that there was a common saying: "God didn't make men equal--Col. Colt did."

Colt is important in the history of American technology because of his methods of manufacture. Eli Whitney who produced Colt's gun before he was able to open his own factory had brought the concept of interchangeability of parts to gunmaking. Colt's contribution was to manufacture the parts by machine. It is estimated that by 1857 80% of the process was done by machine alone. Moreover, Colt used steam power to drive numbers of large identical machines so that he achieved an unusual scale of operations. Colt broke the construction of pistols into a large number of small steps, in order to automate the process. Physically, the factory was laid out in an H-form with smaller ells off the center. Each component of the process, such as forgings, were located in its own section and fed its product into an assembly line. Each section also had a great deal of managerial independence, with quotas to meet. In this way authority and incentives were localized.

Colt's was the largest private armory in the world, and Colt may be properly considered one of the founders of the munitions or defense industry. Colt traveled to Europe and Asia to personally solicit orders for weapons from foreign rulers. He exhibited in international expositions. He used contacts within the American military to win contracts. Colt supplied guns to subversives as well as to governments, and had orders from Irish Fenians and radical abolitionists. He was adept at supplying both sides in such conflicts as the Crimean and American Civil Wars. Colt was never criticized for his involvement in violence, despite the fact that Hartford was a very moralistic society, supporting temperance, abolition, Sabbath observance, and missionary work in the west. The Colt Industrial District is a significant physical reminder of the present day reassessments of the place of firearms and the international arms industry in American history.

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CONTINUATION SHEET References ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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1940

Kihn, Phyllis "Colt in Hartford" Bulletin , Connecticut Historical
Society. Vol. 24, no. 3. July 1959

Jarvis, William, letters to his nephew, archives, Connecticut Historical
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Ulrich, Arthur I. A Century of Achievement 1836-1936. Hartford, 1937.

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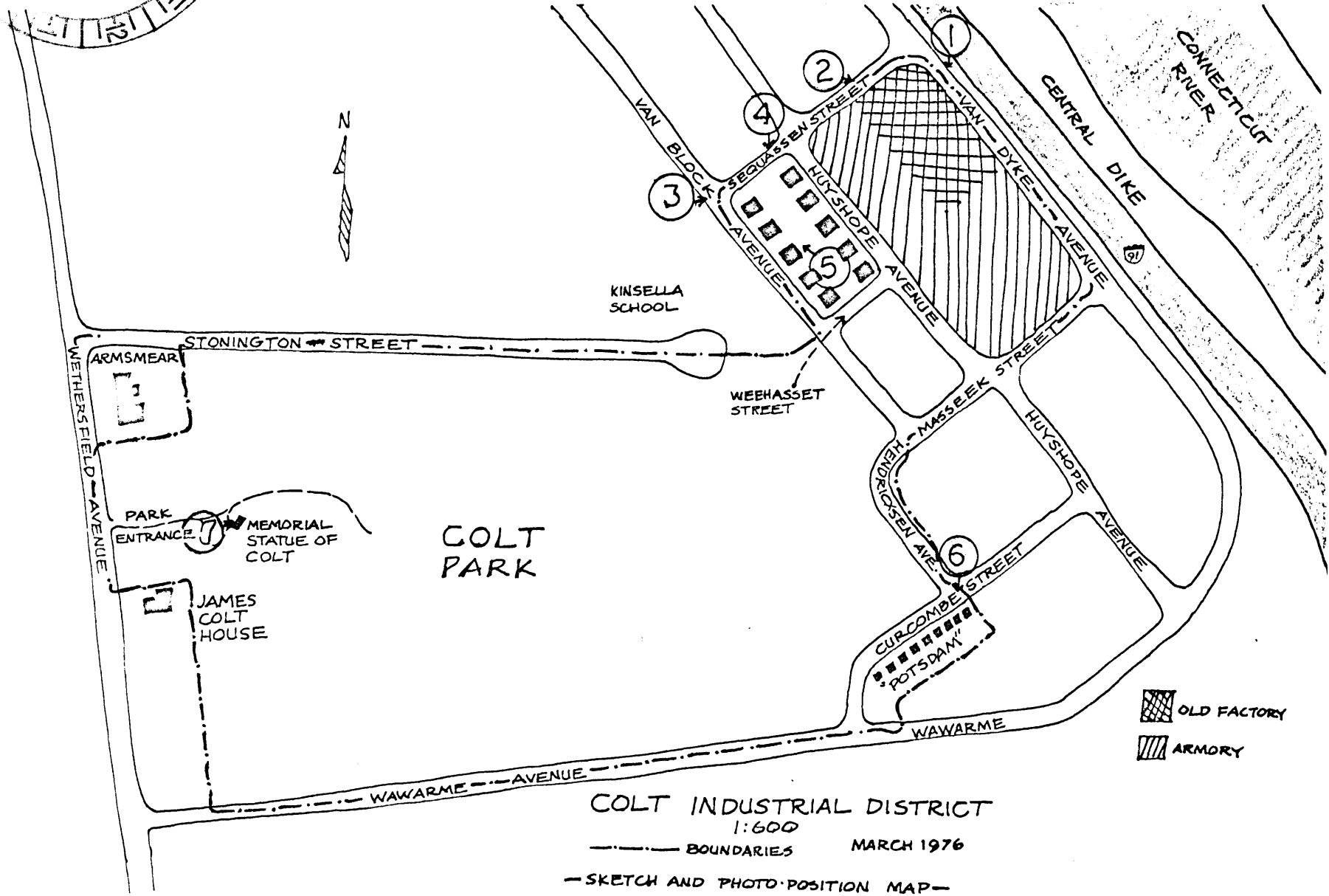
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CONTINUATION SHEET Geographical ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

nine "Potsdam" houses at 15-45 Curcombe Street. This end of the district is bounded by (moving clockwise from Kinsella School) Van Block Avenue to Sequassen Street, to Van Dyke Avenue, to Masseek Street, to Hendricksen Avenue. At the intersection of Curcombe Street and Hendricksen Street, the boundary line drops south along the back lot lines of the Potsdam houses, and then rejoins the border of Colt Park.

NATIONAL REGISTER
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APR 30 1976



COLT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

1:600

--- BOUNDARIES MARCH 1976

— SKETCH AND PHOTO-POSITION MAP —