

REMINGTON WOODS VIDEO

Remington Woods in Bridgeport and Stratford is a unique and precious survival—422 acres of old-growth oak forest and wildlife habitat in the midst of one of America's most densely developed metropolitan areas. Set aside in 1906, this private preserve includes a sizeable lake, rock outcrops, streams, and wetlands that remain as nature created them. No city in the Northeast retains a wild open space of this magnitude and quality anywhere near the population center. And, quite possibly, no city in North America is more in need of the preservation in perpetuity of so magnificent a resource.

Bridgeport's air quality is regularly rated near the bottom in the rankings of America's cities. Its proportion of population with respiratory illness, correspondingly, is alarmingly high. Without the "green lungs" of this last vestige of natural forest cover, pollution could reach levels associated with old industrial centers in the Czech Republic, Polish Silesia, and the containment zones of Romania. Remington Woods' quarter-million trees filter 50 tons of toxic particulates from the air per day and remove 3500 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere every year. They also cool the air of surrounding neighborhoods by several degrees during hot summer months. To replace this mature forest with new saplings would cost \$50 million and require more than a century of growth. Clearly, this resource is one in need of nurturing and protection for our own sake and that of ensuing generations as the need for open space grows more acute.

Almost incomprehensibly, a plan is in the works to remove this forest and develop it as an industrial park. This undertaking would require the expenditure of at least \$200 million of public funds to construct an express highway through residential neighborhoods down to Interstate 95—a road that proponents envision as similar to Lordship Boulevard. The increase in truck traffic and pollution through our communities, and the loss of our region's last forest and major wildlife habitat, are seen as necessary sacrifices for the sake of jobs and tax revenue.

A group called the Friends of Remington Woods has formed to examine the current proposal and explore possible development alternatives that might have less of an adverse impact on our city's quality of life. Far from being anti-business or obstructionist in mindset, the organization feels strongly that a project can be crafted that would be the catalyst for a resounding turnaround in Bridgeport's economic development prospects and would create a national model for the rejuvenation of moribund historic industrial centers. This is the story of our vision.

Imagine an extensive campus of monumental red-brick structures rising around a chain of sparkling lakes, pleasingly landscaped and an integral part of a greenway extending from the shores of Long Island Sound to a wilderness preserve back in the forested hinterlands. This city-within-a-city would integrate office and manufacturing space with a permanent festival marketplace with a unique and remarkable combination of retailers, all interconnected by period light-rail transport. A symbolic structure for the city, along the lines of an Eiffel Tower or Gateway Arch, would serve as a focal point and trademark and would be visible for miles. This imaginative business complex would be overlooked by cutting-edge residential enclaves—one on the shorefront resembling Mystic Seaport; another on a steep hillside redolent of Beacon Hill or Philadelphia; yet a third replicating an early American village-scape along winding drives.

The vision is bold; the project immense in scope. Totalling over 1.5 million square feet in the business park alone, it would be certain to gain America's attention and make the name Bridgeport synonymous with creative innovation and dramatic renewal. And the beauty of this is that all the component structures have already been built—they merely need to be recognized for their potential, dusted off, and readied for the aspirations of a new generation. And not a tree or animal would have to be destroyed, no granite ledge blasted to oblivion, and no million tons of debris added to the alp of refuse at Seaside Park.

Our proposal involves the reclamation of the derelict Remington Arms and General Electric plants and the restoration of the lakes, shorefront, and historic neighborhoods that adjoin. But before we explore the specific components that would make up this grand undertaking, let us examine what has been done in another New England factory city with a lot of similarity to Bridgeport.

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Lowell, Massachusetts was developed in the first half of the 19th century as the nation's center of textile manufacturing. Dozens of brick and granite mills were erected along the banks of the Merrimack River and connecting canals, and workers were housed in adjoining neighborhoods. The city set an early precedent for the development of America's industrial centers. The local economy, however, began to go sour in the 1920s when the industry moved South to be close to the source of raw cotton and for cheap labor. The Merrimack Valley thus became one of the earliest rustbelt regions of the United States, and a long, painful decline set in. This decline was stemmed only when preservationists stepped in with a vision for restoring the city's heart and soul: the historic mills.

Today central Lowell has undergone a stunning transformation. With the economy booming, downtown office and commercial space are at a premium. National and state urban parks attract over one million tourists a year to experience the city's heritage, and hotels and restaurants have been built to accommodate the influx. The Merrimack River and the canals have been dredged and cleaned and have become the delight of recreational boaters as well as tour operators. Neighborhoods have been rejuvenated and the middle class have been drawn back to the city. And, central to this all, each of the historic mills has been magnificently restored, and today they house museum space, manufacturing, educational facilities, offices, and residences.

What can Bridgeport learn from this experience? Like Lowell, historic factory structures are part and parcel of our city's identity. In our case, the industry that made the name Bridgeport famous throughout the world and made the city what it is today was armaments manufacture. During World War I, over 60 percent of munitions utilized by Allied forces were made in our town, and employment at Remington Arms reached 36,500. The New York Times Magazine in 1917 breathlessly described Bridgeport "enlarging herself tremendously:" "Bridgeport, Connecticut, population in 1914, 115,000; population in 1916, 175,000. Increase of 60,000 in two years. In these figures is the gist of the most remarkable story of a city's growth in the history of America, probably in the history of the world." The article went on to describe the innovative housing villages - Seaside, Gateway, Lakeview, and the rest—that put Bridgeport in the forefront of American city planning practice and made it the talk of educated circles both in Europe and the rest of America. Clearly, the Remington Arms facility and the World War I years are the watershed of our modern developmental history.

But let us return to still earlier times to trace the story of this site, which is long and fascinating.

Before the advent of urbanization, the body of water we know as Yellow Mill Pond extended north of the present railroad tracks and drained an extensive salt marsh that went north as far as Boston Avenue. The shores of this salt creek were apparently of spiritual significance to Native Americans, as it was the location of a great medicine wheel—a veritable American Stonehenge -- built along its banks. This ceremonial center consisted of rounded granite posts a foot in diameter and about seven feet in height, arranged in concentric circles. It remained intact until 1846, when the New York and New Haven Railroad plotted their trackline exactly through where the Indian megalith stood. "We dug out loads and loads of these posts and threw them into the mill pond with brush and limbs and heaped dirt upon them," recalled one of the construction laborers in Orcutt's 1884 *History of Stratford*. A Mr. Tuttle of Stratford Center heard about the mysterious relics being disposed of and had one of the posts hauled to his front yard and set up as a curiosity. It remains there to this day, its origin unknown to all but a few, in front of 753 Stratford Avenue.

In the Algonkian language the word "pan" denotes a waterfall. At a place where the fresh waters of Stillman's Brook rushed over a precipice to the salt estuary below lived into historic times a band of Indians known as the Pan tribe, the "people of the waterfall." This spot, at 2 1/2 miles distance the closest water power to the colonial village of Stratford, was coveted soon after settlement as a gristmill location. And so by 1650 a mill here was grinding the town's corn and other grain, and the "Pan Brook" recorded in early deeds was soon anglicized to Pembroke. This was the "old mill" the Green was named for.

A village began to coalesce in this vicinity by the onset of the 18th century. Remarkably, a shipyard

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making ocean-going vessels was located halfway up Boston Avenue hill (near Bell Street) at the time of the Revolutionary War, when General George Washington himself was given a tour. The boats were skidded down to Old Mill Creek on winter snows, and when ice broke in the early spring they were maneuvered out to the harbor.

By the beginning of the 19th century the Puritan view of the world was being supplanted by the romantic, and the beauty of this locality was being realized by artists and writers. "There is not in the state a prettier village than the borough of Bridgeport," wrote Rev. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College, in his *Travels in New England* of 1821. "The situation of this village is very handsome, particularly on the eastern side of the river. A more beautiful and elegant piece of ground can scarcely be imagined than the point which stretches between the Pequonnock and Old Mill Brook, and the prospects presented by the harbors at the mouths of these streams, the Sound, and the surrounding country are, in fine season, gay and brilliant and, perhaps, without parallel."

Thirty years later one Bridgeport citizen decided there was room for improvement in this rural idyll. P.T. Barnum had purchased a half-interest in a 220-acre tract in 1850 on which he set out to develop the new community of East Bridgeport. Radiating out from its focal point at Washington Park, this residential and industrial community became within a dozen years the world center of sewing machine manufacturing. Barnum described our site in his autobiography:

The eastern line of East Bridgeport, when I first purchased so large a portion of the property, was bounded by a long, narrow swale or valley of salt meadow, through which a small stream passed, and which was flooded with salt water at every tide. At considerable expense, I erected a dam at the foot of this meadow, and thus converted this heretofore filthy, repulsive mosquito-inhabited and malaria-breeding marsh into a charming sheet of water, which is now known as Pembroke Lake. If this improvement had not been made, in all probability the eastern portion of my property would never have been devoted to dwelling houses; as it is, Barnum (Avenue) has been extended by means of a bridge across the lake, and the eastern shore is already studded with houses.

Barnum was never a man to rest on his laurels, and he had to find a way to get more than an aesthetic return on his new lake. In short order he hit upon a revolutionary idea—a winter resort. One local couple, William and Martha Mills, were famous throughout the region, for the clam bakes they prepared on what is today known as Pleasure Beach during the summer months. It was Barnum's genius to make use of their estimable talents during the cold season. An article in the Bridgeport Standard in late November, 1862, announced the opening of the new Pembroke Lake House:

Those of our readers who have enjoyed the clam bakes at Long Beach, and especially the bread, cakes, coffee and pastry, for which the landlady, Mrs. Mills, is so famous, will be glad to see, by advertisement, that herself and husband have leased the new Lake House. Mr. Barnum erected this hotel for the special accommodation of skaters and social parties in winter... The building is placed near the edge of the lake, and a canal brings water to the very door of the room set apart for skaters. Altogether, it is a delightful place, and we bespeak for Mr. and Mrs. Mills the patronage which, we are sure, they will strive to merit.

The advertisement follows:

LAKE HOUSE, Pembroke Lake, East Bridgeport - -

The subscribers, grateful to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Bridgeport for the liberal patronage bestowed upon them at the Summer House, at Long Beach, beg to announce that they have leased the above new and commodious Hotel. The house is newly furnished, and possess superior accommodations for parties desiring Oyster Suppers or other Refreshments of any description at all reasonable hours, day or evening. We have also leased Pembroke Lake and made arrangements for having it flooded when necessary, so that skaters (for a small fee) will enjoy this healthful sport on an ice surface ten times larger than that in the famed Central Park. The large saloon, with a cloak room attached in the basement, will be kept warm for skaters to adjust their skates, and they can step from the door directly on the ice. Call and see how beautifully

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everything is arranged.

MR. and MRS. WILLIAM MILLS

Barnum spoke of the eastern shore of the lake being "already studded with houses" when he penned his autobiography in 1869. A news item from June, 1865, described the nucleus of this settlement along today's Seaview Avenue:

LAKE VILLAGE -- This is the name given to a little gathering of houses that have recently been put up just across Pembroke Lake in the town of Stratford. There is a street laid out from Peacock Lane (today's Central Avenue) down to the Lake which connects with Barnum Street on this side, running east and west. There will probably be a bridge built across the lake in one or two years. There are at present some ten or twelve houses: the last one was put up this last spring expect to see in a few years quite a large village there. Mechanics who think of purchasing would do well to take a look at the lots.

Just to the south of Lake Village, Francis O'Come began offering lots for sale at a place known as Deacon's Point in March of 1866:

FOR SALE - Twenty of the most desirable building lots ever offered in this vicinity, situated a short distance from Yellow Mill Bridge in plain view of the Sound and Bridgeport Harbor. These lots are all one acre each, of light, dry, and early gardening land, and the price is less than the seven by nine city lots, where one cannot stretch without trespass. To see plans and get particulars call on STAPLES, 12 State Street.

The villages were built up with simple Victorian cottages of picturesque Italianate or Gothic design. They were constructed usually with wrap-around verandas to take advantage of lake or bay views and cooling breezes during summer months in days before air conditioning was dreamed of. Every home was equipped with a small barn for the family horse and cow, and a chicken house kept the family supplied with fresh eggs and meat. The lots were commodious enough so that fruit orchards and vegetable gardens provided a measure of self-sufficiency.

The celebrated beauty of Pembroke Lake attracted the parishioners of St. Augustine's Church, Fairfield County's first Roman Catholic congregation, to acquire land there for a cemetery in 1864. Here, overlooking the verdant banks, monuments were erected to the progenitors of Bridgeport's oldest Irish families. In 1878 Pembroke Cemetery -- today known as Lakeview—was established overlooking Stillman's Pond. "It has the most desirable grounds for burial purposes in the State," proclaimed a contemporary advertisement; indeed, with views that looked across a pristine lake to the wooded heights beyond it must have seemed like a glimpse of the paradise to come. Poignantly, and certainly by design, neighbors who shared lives together in the old communities of Lake Village and Deacon's Point are often buried in close proximity to one another amid the groves of Lakeview.

The year 1867 marked the small beginning of a great transformation in the tranquil nature of the Pembroke Valley. In that year the Union Metallic Cartridge Company opened its works at the lower end of the lake, sandwiched between Barnum Avenue and the railroad tracks. For many years it was to coexist with the resort-like atmosphere of the lakeshore, and for almost forty years Pembroke Grove, located just to the north, remained one of the city's primary destinations for family and group picnics. But Union Metallic Cartridge provided a product that was in demand throughout America, in good times and bad, and through continual innovation it far surpassed any competition in the marketplace. The seeds were thus sown for the subjugation of a beauty spot so that an industry and a city could progress.

Union Metallic Cartridge was from the onset a wholly owned subsidiary of the Remington Arms Company, headquartered in Ilion, New York. The company produced a unique product—as the name explains, their gun cartridges were made of metal rather than the paper that had been universal with the competition. UMC, as it came to be known, captured the lion's share of the world market and two-thirds of American production due to product superiority.

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There was a down side to the presence of this plant in Bridgeport, however. The nature of its work was inherently quite dangerous. The book *Remington Arms in American History* describes the scene at the beginning of the last century: "As the plant coasted along, the workers, following the ruts of routine, grew too familiar with the deadly materials they handled, and custom led to carelessness." A series of explosions rocked the plant, and descriptions that appeared in the local press seem to have anticipated Hiroshima: "A cyclonic cloud with a long tail arose in the air. This funnel-shaped cloud kept its form for several minutes and was watched by thousands."

The situation reached a culmination on May 14, 1906, when 16 tons of gunpowder exploded at the company's unprotected powder magazine at Success Hill. Nearly every other window in Bridgeport was blown out and damage was reported as far away as Long Island; people in Old Saybrook at first thought they had been hit by an earthquake. Incredibly, there was no loss of life. The newspapers screamed for someone's head. In a front-page editorial entitled "Draw the Death Line," the Sunday Herald spelled out the prevailing sentiment:

The greatest problem Bridgeport has on her hands today is relative to the danger to which the citizens are exposed by the Union Metallic Cartridge Company. The explosion of the four powder magazines last Monday has brought every person in the city face-to-face with an element of danger that is likely to create chronic nervousness. The rather frequent intervals at which these explosions occur gives rise to apprehension that a great loss of life may result eventually.

Management proceeded at once effecting changes, that must have made the heads of those old complacent workers spin. Four hundred acres were secured to the north of Stillman's Pond to create the "Powder Park" following the Herald's admonishment: "The only thing to do now is to prevent loss of life and property by placing the danger zone as remote from the city of Bridgeport as possible." A new state-of-the-art plant on the north side of Barnum Avenue was commenced, and the aging overseers of the plant were replaced with young blood trained in cutting-edge scientific technique.

As the plant was being revamped a situation developed around the procurement of gunshot. The operations required up to one hundred tons per day, but due to corporate mergers the sole source of supply in Illinois was able to escalate costs to unconscionable levels. The head plant engineer, Harry H. Pinney, approached company president Marcellus Hartley Dodge with the proposal that UMC build its own shot tower and make its own shot. The Remington Arms Company history records the unfolding of events:

That seemed like a sensible way to save (money), but shot towers are expensive and there were objections to obligating the company for what might prove a costly experiment. However, Dodge, was convinced that Pinney was right, and he dared to go ahead on his own, putting up the money from his personal fortune. The shot tower was begun in July, 1908, and completed seven months later, in February, 1909. Ten stories high, one hundred ninety feet to the top of the flagpole, it dominated the Bridgeport skyline. Realizing that it might be either as beautiful as a campanile or as obnoxious as a gasometer, Dodge insisted that no expense be spared to give it that campanile look and make it an ornament to the city.

And what an ornament it was! The tower, tallest building in Connecticut for many years, was the most prominent and remarkable structure in town and became a favorite subject for picture postcard makers. The building is "of red brick construction with trimmings of concrete made by a secret process," said the Herald. "This concrete cannot be told from real granite. The concrete trimming were manufactured in Bridgeport after a process invented by John H. Flood. The tower can be seen for miles in any direction. It can be seen by mariners for miles on the Sound and by people many miles inland." The shot tower functioned by dropping molten lead from a height of 133 feet into vats of cold water six feet deep. The result was perfectly spherical, uniform shot. The Remington Arms history concluded their description of the shot making process by stating, "The people at Remington's Bridgeport plant are as fascinated by the shot tower as a small boy by an electric train."

More remarkable progress came within a few years. The year 1914, when president Marcy Dodge was a

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mere 34 years of age, saw the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo that was to plunge Europe into the abyss of World War I. Orders for armaments flooded the company from overseas, and a huge expansion was underway almost immediately. Seven four-story brick buildings were added first adjoining the original factory, and then a row of one-story structures farther up Helen Street for the manufacture of Bayonets. The book, *"The Story of Bridgeport"*, describes the scene at plant headquarters:

All day long a line of men stood outside the Remington Arms Company waiting to be hired and it was said of the firm that one new man joined the force every 20 minutes. Suffice to say that 1400— 1600 men were taken on every month for nearly a year. In November, 1915, 3000 were employed. By April 1, 1916 the number had jumped to 16,000, and 20,000 more were expected.

The plant was supplying the bulk of armaments needed by both French and British government armies. But then an overwhelming order was received from the Russian government of Czar Nicholas II: 1 million rifles and 400 million rounds of ammunition. This would certainly call for an increase in production facilities! Under unimaginable pressure, UMC/Remington worked for five months, from March 16 to August 16, 1915, constructing the immense Russian Rifle plant, largest factory that had ever been built in the United States all at one time. Its 13 parallel components—separated so that an explosion would not be able to start a chain reaction and take the whole plant -- contained 80 acres of floor space. Construction was closely guarded by the National Guard against possible sabotage by anarchists and Bolsheviks. For a time, this spot, overlooking old Stillman's Pond, was one of the most important and protected places on the planet.

The flood of new workers and their families put a great strain on the city, which tried desperately to keep up with the need for school space and social services. The most acute need, however, was for housing. Despite the construction by private individuals of hundreds of multifamily dwellings on Old Mill Hill and the upper East Side, Elsie Dannenberg wrote:

New workers coming into the city often had to sleep in the railroad station for two or three nights before a room could be found for them. Boarding houses became so crowded that beds were shared by two and sometimes three workers, one using the four poster at night, a second in the morning, when he came off the night shift, and a third, in the afternoon.

When the situation deteriorated to the point where new workers were no longer coming to the city knowing there would be no place to sleep, Remington/UMC, with characteristic decisiveness, established a real estate department. On the hillside overlooking the Russian Rifle plant they undertook the creation of "Remington City" for their workers, a planned community that was to one day house more than 100,000 people with a four-lane boulevard leading from somewhere out in Stratford to the very gates of the factory. Despite the pressures and shortages of wartime they created a remarkable community of outstanding architecture, with 42 four-family houses of Greek Revival style reminiscent of old New York City townhouses; 63 row houses identical to those in northeast Philadelphia, replete with back alleys; and four dormitories for single women, indistinguishable for the most urbane and fashionable apartment houses.

The government in Washington took careful note of this achievement and decided to make Bridgeport a national model for progressive urban development. In August, 1916, the Bridgeport Housing Corporation was chartered with the goal of constructing 1,000 units of "wartime emergency housing." The government used its special powers to draft America's finest planners and architects and to requisition quality building materials to show the world what our country could do. The result was nine urban villages -- six in Bridgeport itself, two in Fairfield, and one in Stratford -- that were the first flowering of the "garden city" concept on this side of the Atlantic. These brilliant creations are still influencing and inspiring architects to this day. One example, Lakeview Village, is located a short distance west of the plant and is the fanciful recreation of a colonial New England village with evocative names (Standish, Plymouth, Carver) for its streets.

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While all of this was taking place, arguably Bridgeport's finest hour, all was not well at the plant. The specifications for the rifles to be made arrived from Russia, and proved to be totally unsuited to 20th-century mass production methods. Furthermore, the Czar sent over 1500 uniformed military inspectors to ensure that specifications were followed to the letter. These inspectors, whose uniforms included fur hats and dress swords, slowed production to a crawl and the plant fell far behind in its production schedule. As a final insult, when 750,000 of the guns were somehow completed and ready for shipment, Nicholas II was deposed. The new Kerensky government refused to honor the Czar's agreement

Ah, the anguish that must have been felt in Bridgeport as those heady days came to a sudden and crashing halt. Esoteric questions of how best to shepherd Bridgeport into an urban planner's conceptual dream with a population of a half million were replaced with the more prosaic and frightening question of how to pay off the crushing company debt. No, Remington City would not extend over hill and dale to Stratford, home to scores of thousands; it would remain an interesting anomaly, a vision of one-time urbanist aspirations. The grand arterial boulevard would run for three city blocks only and stop dead for all time.

Relief of sorts came after six long months of managerial nail-biting when America entered the war. Uncle Sam agreed to purchase 600,000 of the 750,000 Russian rifles, and ammunition needed for the Allied cause kept the plant humming. The enormous relief at the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, brought out the biggest street parade Bridgeport ever saw. The next day, layoff notices began circulating.

Remington Arms retracted into peacetime production after the war with a heavy emphasis on supplying goods for sportsmen. The huge Russian rifle plant, one-time pride of the American can-do spirit, was handed over to the General Electric Company in May of 1920. Together the plants were a mainstay of the Bridgeport employment scene over the next six decades.

The 1970's and '80s were a time of alarming change in Bridgeport. Like dominoes it seemed that all the sprawling factories that had provided the city's income and identity were closing, and the local economy went into a tailspin. One after another, ideas were brought out to reinvent the town—a jai alai fronton, Harborpointe, the Renaissance Center, racetracks, and an entertaining series of proposals for the development of Pleasure Beach. Nothing seemed to fit. Perhaps *Historic Preservation* magazine put it best: "The working-class city that for more than a century provided middle-class America with many of its trappings deserves better."

Let us re-examine the long-standing plans for the Seaview Avenue corridor and utilization of Remington Woods for industrial purposes. A highway that would cost at least \$200 million would be plowed through residential communities of the East End. Truck traffic with its attendant noise and pollution would be an unfortunate fact of life for hundreds of families living along the route. The Remington Arms and General Electric plants would remain as empty shells for the time being, deteriorating, until such time that they would almost certainly be demolished. No attention would be paid to reclaiming the lost opportunities of Pembroke Lake or Yellow Mill Pond. The historic areas located along the route—Deacon's Point, Lake Village, and Remington City -- would be certain to deteriorate rapidly with the oppressive presence of the "Industrial Highway." Finally, Remington Woods itself was depicted as a depressing sprawl with a circular roadway, nondescript buildings and parking lots, somewhat resembling the recent development of nearby Cogswell Street.

It is a most unfortunate fact that most Bridgeporters have never been in Remington Woods and cannot know what an extraordinary loss its decimation would be. The land has been left pretty much alone since the retreat of the glaciers 14,000 years ago, and its diverse forest cover is punctuated by cliffs, rocky gorges, and a sublimely beautiful lake. "Remington Park is one of the beauty spots of Bridgeport," proclaimed the Sunday Post in a lengthy feature story in 1922. "There are many winding roads and bits of beautiful scenery through the park that would be a delight if they could be thrown open to the general public." Remington Arms Company catalogs from the 1920's to the 1960's were photographed in the

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Park to be emblematic of the beauties of the nation's wild spaces.

As far back as the early days of World War I, when respected city planners converged on Bridgeport, a crying need was felt for additional parklands in the city. "City Should Purchase More Property for Parks Immediately, Declares City Planning Expert," read one Sunday Post headline. That article read in part:

Parks have everywhere shown themselves invaluable. In preserving the beauty spots of a city as field and forest, hill and dale, the pleasures to be derived from health-giving contact with trees and flowers are forever assured to present generations and to posterity. And what an inheritance parks are. They mean a free and ever ready relief for rich and poor alike from the artificiality of city life with its strain and strivings. And what a boon they are to the poorer classes in the heat of the summer...The value of parks is immeasurable, not only aesthetically but ethically, hygienically, and sociologically as well.

It should be noted that this was written at a time when nearby places like Stratford, Trumbull, Fairfield, and even the northerly reaches of Bridgeport itself, consisted mainly of farms and woodland, and open space was far more available to Bridgeporters than in our present congested state.

The argument that Bridgeport must spend \$200 million on a highway and develop pristine forest land or it will have to give up the ghost can not be sustained. The city has hundreds upon hundreds of acres of industrially zoned land in disuse or underutilized, some of it -- as with much of State Street and the Bridgeport Brass facility -- in large tracts with ready highway access in place. What is needed is some creativity in inventing a vision for reuse. Let us look again at Remington Woods, the plant it was invented to serve, and the valley of Pembroke Lake and contrast an alternative vision with the existing plans.

We have learned what once made this a place of beauty and pleasure, with Barnurn's lake, the picturesque semi-rural villages, and the life-filled waters of Yellow Mill Pond stretching south to their confluence with the Harbor. We have seen how men of vision and ability created one of America's stupendous industrial complexes, awesome today even in disrepair and a state of near-abandonment. And we have witnessed the re-birth of another New England city that now basks in the reflected glory of its manufacturing heritage.

Let us restore our city to its halcyon days, making the area once again a focal point of civic pride and business activity: Dredge out Pembroke Lake so that we may skate there once again; highlight its banks at strategic points with weeping willow trees and gaily flowered umbrellas floating atop tables spotted here and there for cocktails and cuisine; fill its waters with the golden carp for which it was once famed, and let swans grace its reclaimed waters. Let us take the storied Remington plant and clean its red brick walls, tearing out the aluminum windows of the 1960's and putting back the multi-pane sash it once knew. Here we can make a mercantile emporium, with a public market reflecting our city's ethnic diversity with foods unattainable from supermarkets - an emporium market in which Martha Stewart or any Bridgeport housewife could spend hours making unexpected discoveries.

The five floors of the building's courtyards could be bordered with wrought-iron balconies affording outdoor dining at upper-level view-filled restaurants and providing a natural home for baskets of cascading flowers.

The definitive Connecticut fish market would no longer be yet to exist, and branch stores of beloved-but-far-flung establishments could find the area, with its convenient Bridgeport/Port Jefferson ferry for Long Island shoppers, a spot for market expansion.

Too, a program could be put in place to help people start up the very businesses we need to create just the right exciting mix.

Would South Street Seaport part with one brick of any of these buildings?

Above all, literally as well as figuratively, consider the shot tower. It's machinery remains intact, and it is

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one of the most intriguing buildings in Connecticut. Its ground floor could house a museum celebrating the city, and its upper stories with their huge windows and magnificent views could be Bridgeport's signature hotel for tourists from far and wide, drawn to any or all facets of this unique package. Floodlit at night with a great American flag flying from the top, once again, Remington Towers would become a world-reknown symbol of our city.

To augment this atmosphere, the trolley tracks could be restored through the plant that were in use until not so long ago, historic rolling stock placed upon them. A loop could be made down one side of Yellow Mill Pond and up the other, extending along Stratford Avenue to the Bridgeport train station and thus helping to alleviate our snarled traffic.

The unity of this mammoth complex could be further enhanced by extending the trolleys to the General Electric plant. Here cavernous spaces and huge clearances lend themselves to one industry at which America still excels—filmmaking. "The conversion of low-rent factory space to comparatively high-rent creative space is a phenomenon of the last five years," states *The New York Times* real estate section. "Creative firms like unique buildings and the more character the better." A West Los Angeles leasing agent added "Former warehouses and factories are some of the hottest real estate in the otherwise slack market of West Los Angeles. Tenants are almost crawling over each other to get in." Fairfield County and nearby Litchfield County are full of producers, directors and acting talent who often must commute to the West Coast, far from their homes and families. Bridgeport could offer an alternative with a plethora of fresh and diverse backdrop locales.

In this highly vital and creative environment, space within these complexes could also be leased for rehearsal purposes to out-of town try-outs for Broadway of The Street's big splashy musicals. Health-giving activities such as jogging and horseback riding in the Woods, along with a state-of-the-art fitness complex in Remington Arms would send the theatrical troupes off to New York in fine shape.

In conjunction, our historic districts that surround the project area could be restored to their original beauty. As part of our plan, facade easements could be purchased, bringing the old houses back (utilizing state and federal tax credits) in the way that Washington Park is being done, with hauntingly beautiful paint schemes, bluestone sidewalks and all the amenities. The utilities could be buried, gas lights installed, the streets paved with Belgian block—restoring neighborhood pride and creating a background setting for period motion pictures.

And, as an integral component of the project, Remington Woods, in a new and permanent life as DuPont Park, could be forever treasured in its natural state, drawing scientists, naturalists and tourists to its preservation while simultaneously affording all the delights of the Emporium. And vice versa.

The reclamation of the area, its banks landscaped as dreams would suggest, could be the ultimate partner for DuPont Park, the two as one making of Bridgeport's other random empty real estate the sought-after nests of a town with the courage and imagination for history's gauntlet.