

# Heublein Highlights

FRIENDS OF HEUBLEIN TOWER

SPRING 2010

## DID YOU KNOW?

- There are 120 steps leading to the Tower observation room.
- Eisenhower was asked to run for President at the Heublein Tower (then known as the Times Tower)
- Three towns are connected on Tower grounds—Avon, Bloomfield and Simsbury

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## TWO FRIENDS OF THE TOWER: Mark Twain and Joe Twichell

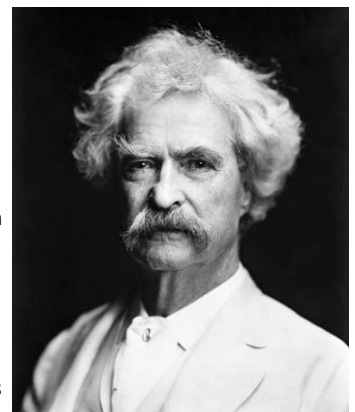
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**By Steve Courtney**

A few hundred yards south of Heublein Tower, near the entrance to the old picnic pavilion that commands what 19<sup>th</sup> century travelers called “The Royal View” of the Farmington Valley, an iron bolt with a nut permanently rusted onto it protrudes from a rock. The old bolt, scarcely noticed by hikers today, has been the witness to events of literary history.

That bolt was affixed there in 1867 by Matthew H. Bartlett and Charles A. Kellogg, local citizens intent on capitalizing on the Royal View and the habit folk from Hartford and the Farmington Valley had of walking to the top of the mountain to gaze upon the landscape, usually in the fall when the fields and forest were decked out in red and golden splendor. It was one of several such bolts that firmly grounded a sixty-foot wooden tower to the rock – Bartlett’s Tower. Like Heublein Tower (which didn’t show up till 1913) it had a staircase with windowed landings for observers to rest in; unlike Heublein, it had an open-air outlook at the top.

Up the wooden stairs any autumn or spring weekend in the 1870s you might have seen two walkers toiling after their eight-mile trek from the Nook Farm neighborhood of Hartford – both in tweed jackets, ties and plus-fours, one a man of medium height, his head capped by a mop of russet hair, with a flyaway mustache and keen, piercing eyes, perhaps huffing and puffing a little. The other, a slightly taller man, mounted the stairs energetically, his back straight as a soldier’s – also mustached, he had jet-black hair, tending toward grey. It is almost certain that the wooden walls of the tower would have echoed with their talk, even after the long walk from the city.



(continued on page 3)

# Governor Rell visits the Tower



Governor Rell is presented the framed architect print of the Tower by board members

On Friday, May 14th, Governor Rell and several Connecticut DEP officials visited the Heublein Tower. This was Governor Rell's first visit to the Tower. She was visiting the Talcott Mountain State Park as part of her campaign to encourage visitors to Connecticut's state park system. Carol and Frank Burnham, Janet Carville, Steve Read, Jay Willerup and Barbara

Ruppert were on hand to give the Governor Jodi Rell the grand tour.

She viewed the newly finished, restored living room painted its original creamy ochre color. The foyer was recently arranged to be more inviting and representative of the original living spaces in the Tower.

After enjoying some light refreshments, the Friends

presented Governor Rell with a framed architect's print of the original rendering of the Tower.

Governor Rell is a strong proponent of the Connecticut Trails system as well as the bounty of state parks throughout the state. She has shown her support by encouraging Connecticut citizens to enjoy the variety of programs that each state park offers.

## 2009 Tower Toot

*"Save the date for Tower Toot 2010: October 16th and 17th Two days of foliage and fun!"*

The Friends of Heublein Tower held our annual fund-raiser, The Tower Toot, a lively day of fun and entertainment in October.

Hamburgers, hotdogs and delicious clam chowder and authentic bratwurst was served by Friends volunteers.

Music was provided by Ron Kwas & Freddi Meier of "Scha Musi." Kids enjoyed face painting. Many visitors checked out the t-shirts and other gifts from the Tower Gift Shop. Avon High School's Uberbots robotics team gave a demonstration that delighted kids and adults.

Thousands of visi-

tors hiked up the Talcott Mountain State Park trail and enjoyed the spectacular autumn foliage in the Farmington River Valley and Connecticut River Valley from the newly restored Heublein Tower observation room.

This year, the weather did not cooperate as much as we would have liked since we had to move the date of the Tower Toot—but once the weather cleared up, everyone had a great time.

Save the date for Tower Toot 2010— October 16 and 17th !!



**Gift Shop is Open**

**Below: Scha Musi entertains**

Heublein Tower, Talcott Mountain



## TWO FRIENDS OF THE TOWER (continued from page 1)

“Took a long walk with M.T. in the P.M.,” was the way the taller man, the Rev. Joseph Hopkins Twichell of Hartford, described such walks in his journal. They were taken with the russet-haired author Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Twain, whom Twichell always addressed as “Mark.” By the 1870s these walks to the Tower had become the subject of newspaper remark. “It has long been the custom of these two gentlemen to take walks of about ten miles in the vicinity of Hartford for the purpose of enjoying a social chat and exchanging views on nothing in particular and everything in general,” a Boston newspaper reported, as intrigued as newspapers are today by the doings of celebrity.

I came across the fact that they took these walks in the mid-1990s, and wrote a story about them for *Northeast* magazine. Maybe it was my own memories of long walks with college friends, or the way my family would head out to some woody trail on the weekends, but the idea of a friendship based on the placing of one foot in front of the other was deeply appealing. “The true charm of pedestrianism does not lie in the walking, or the scenery, but in the talking,” Clemens wrote. As I delved deeper into the Twain-Twichell friendship – Mark Twain and a clergyman? – I learned what an intricate mix of affection, fury, jealousy, comradeship, family feeling and consolation the two men provided each other. One member of this odd couple was, of course, the colossally productive writer, chronicler of childhood, slavery, love and loyalty; of the Mississippi Valley, medieval London, the Nevada silver fields, King Arthur’s court -- and yes, Connecticut. Clemens’ work still resounds today, though for him this is the century after next. The other walker was the less-known, deeply loved and highly regarded pastor of a major church. Twichell was a force in Hartford: Yale graduate, Civil War veteran, follower of liberal theologian Horace Bushnell, encourager of schemes ranging from the education of Chinese youth to the easing of the lives of the poor in Hartford’s East Side, and loving head of a large family (he and Harmony Twichell had nine children).

Twichell and Clemens looked forward to these walks to the Tower, where they could not only take in the view but partake of a meal (wreathed in cigar smoke) with Mr. Bartlett in the upstairs private room of the restaurant nearby. Clemens inscribed a book: “To Matthew Bartlett, who has robbed the historical command ‘Away with him to the Tower!’ of all its terrors – this, with the grateful acknowledgments of Mark Twain, Hartford, Oct. 1877.” To get to the Tower, they followed Asylum Hill’s outlying semi-rural city streets, then old country roads that led up Talcott Mountain, and then forest paths. They often rested in one particular clearing, the only place for miles around where the fringed gentian grew -- a hard-to-find small, dark-blue flower with a characteristic feathery edge. And the talk was endless. Speaking of one similar walk, Clemens wrote, “We discussed everything we knew, during the first fifteen to twenty minutes, that morning, then branched out into the glad, free boundless realm of the things we were not certain about.”

Clemens and his family left Hartford in 1891, and the two men had to rely on correspondence and occasional visits to stay in touch. In 1903, when he was 66 and on his way to preside at a funeral in Bloomfield, Twichell found he was crossing the path that the two men had taken to Talcott Mountain thirty years before. He wrote his friend Clemens: “And again I saw those two young fellows plodding merrily along, swapping stories, exchanging no end of lively talk, full of their manifold themes of common interest, feeling the years before them. My! My! What good times they had.”

# Icicles, anyone?



Although the winter weather requires us to close the Tower for the season, some Board members are actively pursuing more restoration at the Tower.

Roof heating is on our minds - how to stem the continued breakage of

roof tiles. The Friends donated over \$100,000 to the State of Connecticut to repair broken roof tiles, using appropriate materials for the Tower's construction. However, because the Tower upper floors are unheated, icicles continue to form on the overhangs and when fall—tiles continue to get destroyed. We are looking at an alternative—heating the attic! The Friends met with state DEP engineers to offer suggestions to a roof repair. We experimented with a temperature controlled heater to

avoid ice build-up. However, Mother Nature thwarted our efforts because immediately after the installation of the heater, the weather turned warm and stayed that way!

Next winter we will begin our exploration again.

Watch for more information on the outcome of this experiment.

*“Our collaborative work with the DEP helps make the park experience positive for all”*

## “Friends” groups gather in Hartford

On Wednesday, March 10th, the many Friends organizations around the state joined together at the state legislative office building to meet our legislators and share what we do and how we help the DEP keep our state parks a welcome place to go for state residents. More than 24 groups across Connecticut joined in an impressive display of solidarity.

Friends organizations assist the state parks in many ways, both in volunteer time and monetarily. For example, volunteers at the Tower re-graded the trails and spread new aggregate to make them easier and safer for our many hikers. In 2009, we had more than 50 volunteers help out in many ways, including Gift Shop support, planting, pruning and painting.

Our collaborative work with the DEP helps make the park experience positive for all.

Recently, the state legislature voted to repeal the increase in the state park fees and licenses. What a great outcome for those who volunteer countless hours to make our parks a safe and interesting place to visit every year.

## Canopy Lights are ready

In 2008, the Friends re-created the copper-topped canopy light for the stone pier by the driveway gate entrance. Virtually all of the material was donated by local businesses, dedicated to the restoration of the Tower to its original grandeur. The light took more than 80 hours by two board members, Steve Read and Jay Willerup.

This year, Jay was joined by Kent Robbins and have worked diligently on the second light. Lessons learned from the first light's construction helped the process along, however, many hours were still needed to make the new light. Then, the third and fourth light were constructed immediately after the second one. Now the piers will need to be electrified before they

can be installed. That work is happening over this summer.

“We hope to install all four lights at the Tower this year,” said Kent Robbins, Board Member and Jay Willerup, Co-President.

“These lights will be an impressive sight for our visitors and give everyone an idea of the grandeur of the historic times of the Tower.”



Canopy light

# Winter restoration progress



Window protection installed in the observation room.

Braving high winds at the Tower, three members of the Board of Directors installed opaque window coverings in the observation room to protect the

parquet floor from the winter sun.

In December, Jay Willerup (co-

president), Kent Robbins (director) and Steve Read (director) installed custom-designed covers for each of the windows in the observation room.

These shades will protect and avoid damage to the carefully re-created parquet floor from the harsh winter sun's ultraviolet rays.

While they were installing the shades, Jay, Kent and Steve felt the swaying of the Tower due to the strong gusts of wind.

"I'm reminded again how well-constructed the Tower is when I experience a windy day here!" said Jay. As you can see by the photograph, the wind was strong enough to create a natural suction to keep the coverings close to the glass.

A big "Thank You" to Jay, Kent and Steve for your continued efforts for the Tower!

*Technology can help us uncover the past .*

## A fresh coat of paint

Visitors will notice a big difference in the Tower upon their first step into the building.

Immediately you will notice that entry foyer has a fresh coat of paint and the front desk is now gone!

The desk has been replaced with an inviting set of chairs and a lovely antique oak table. The paint on the walls is a creamy ochre shade. A glance

into the living room shows the same rich shade on the walls and a freshly tinted ceiling completes the effect.

The DEP had volunteers ready to wield their paintbrushes to update the walls in both rooms. Many hours were spent scraping and sanding the walls to get ready for the army of painters. During the preparation work, we send samples

of the scrapings to a laboratory for a full analysis to find the proper color for our renovation. Lo and behold, we found the first layer of paint and matched it to today's historic colors. Now we have a better picture of what the Heublein family enjoyed during their stays at the Tower. Good detective work paid off with this discovery.

## Sun Porch doors

In 2008, new doors were installed in the sun porch. Now, the sun porch will be protected from any further weather damage.

Early in the Tower's history, the sun porch was completely open, but windows were installed at a

later time. In the early 1900's, sleeping in the open air was considered to be good for one's health.

In 2010, the Friends putting protective finishes on the inside of the doors and are installing period-authentic locks for safety to complete

the restoration.

As visitors tour through the Tower, the sun porch reminds everyone of the Heublein family's daily life, when fresh air and relaxation on the porch was part of their daily routine.

Sun porch door installation

November 2008





Box 991 , Avon, Connecticut 06001

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The Friends of Heublein Tower, Inc., a non-profit preservation society, was established in 1984, for the purpose of restoring for public use the state-owned Heublein Tower landmark to its original and authentic 1914 splendor.

**The Friends' mission is to restore for public use the Connecticut state-owned Heublein Tower landmark to its original and authentic 1914 splendor. By providing time, talent and financial assistance, the Friends of Heublein Tower supplements the state of Connecticut's efforts in restoring, improving and interpreting the Heublein Tower and its surrounding grounds. The restored Tower serves as a museum and a place of learning for the educational benefit of the public**

## United Way Day of Caring 2009

In September, over 25 Northeast Utility volunteers showed up at the Tower in their work clothes to make a difference and show their United Way spirit.

Louise Jacques, Director, Friends of Heublein Tower Board of Directors, Steve Read, Director and Kathryn Hoidge, Co-President were present to help guide the volunteers.

"My co-workers enjoy working at the Tower each year," said Jacques. "There is so much to be done and we know we are making a difference here."

Many corporations throughout Connecticut encourage their employees to give back to the community in United Way's Day of Caring across the state. The Friends are lucky to have such a dedicated group of volun-

teers to work on the grounds and the building.

"This group has been volunteering for several years and we are truly grateful for their support and help," noted Hoidge. "No job is too small or too large for this group. At the end of the day, we look around and marvel at what was accomplished in such a short time."

The Northeast Utilities volunteers have already scheduled their 2010 Day of Caring for September 3.

The Board of the Friends of Heublein Tower and the state of Connecticut DEP park employees are looking forward to the additional projects that will be completed during this coming year's volunteer day.



**NU volunteers at United Way's Day of Caring September 2009**