

THE LEGACY

OF

DU PONT

FAMILY

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Final thoughts

My name is Velitchka Kafkaki. Everybody calls me Vicky (usually people can't pronounce my name so I got stuck with my short name). I grow up in a small town in Bulgaria where my family had big garden and I had the chance to explore the beauty of nature. I also live couple years in one Greek island where when I arrived, I thought I was in the paradise - beautiful blue sea, unique flowers with such a bright colors and many trees (olive, orange and lemon). So, when I came to live in Bel Air, I was looking for places where I can walk and enjoy nature. It wasn't difficult to find the Longwood Garden and Winterthur. Everybody that lives in the area knows about them.

I start visiting these places and I couldn't get enough - they had different flowers every season and decorations according to the holidays (Christmas, Halloween, Easter, 4th of July). Every time I was discovering something new, something that I missed in the previous visits. But what impressed me that all this was a result of the hard work of one family - The Du Pont family.

I always see on the signs the name Du Pont and hear some stories about it but I never took the time to learn more. Now, after two weeks of research, I have to admit that I am amazed of what one person, coming to this country with his family and brother 200 years ago, has achieved.

And they were emigrants just like me and many more - coming to this country with big dreams and hoping to have better life. Their life story is very inspirational to all of us.

The Du Pont family today owns many beautiful Estates open to the public and one of the most successful company in the world. He and his family went through so many obstacles but never give up and when they were making profit, they always were trying to contribute to the local society (schools, hospitals...)

Can you imagine if we have more people like the Du Pont family!
We would have much better world!

Coming to America

Everything begun in 1800 when Eleuthere Irenee du Pont (1771-1834), decided to immigrate from France to America so his family can escape political persecution. He arrived at Newport, Rhode island on January 1, 1800 with his father and his brother's family. His father, Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours (1739-1817) was a French-American writer, economist, publisher and government official. He had his own publishing house in Paris. Interesting fact that I found about with my research is that one of the reasons for the French Revolution was the American Revolution in which France in 1778 took the side of the colonists and that converted the essentially been a civil war into an international conflict. The final outcome was that with the French help British surrender but that caused many problem in France.

Shortly after his arrival, Irenee went to hunting trip in Delaware. He discover that the American refining process was poor and inefficient compared with the techniques he had learned in France. So, he went to France in the beginning of 1801 to get the necessary financing and equipment.

That was the beginning of one of the largest and most successful American corporations. No other family has dominated a single state longer than the Ponts in Delaware. Over the time the company grew into the largest black powder manufacturing firm in the world. The family DuPont remained in control of the company up through the 1960s and family trusts still own a substantial amount of the company's stock.

The family play important role in the political life in the area. They assisted in negotiations for the Treaty of Paris and the Louisiana Purchase. Also Henry A. du Pont with T. Coleman served as U.S. senators, and Pierre S. du Pont, IV served as Governor of Delaware.



The Company DuPont

By the mid-19th century, the company DuPont was the largest supplier of gunpowder to the U.S. military, and supplied as much as 40 percent of the powder used by the Union Army forces during the Civil War.

After the death of E.I. Du Pont in 1834, his sons, Alfred, Henry, and Alexis, took over as partners. They continue the legacy and expand the business. They took advantage of opportunities like the California Gold Rush, the construction of Western railroads, the Crimean War, and the American Civil War.

There were many obstacles that the company had to overcome during the 220 years. In 1854 on the main street of Wilmington, the wagon that was carrying the powder exploded on their way to the Du Pont pier. Three drivers, two men who happened to be near by, and twelve horses were instantly killed. The newspapers were writing very bad stuff about the company. Soon after this accident, was passed a law prohibiting the carrying of powder through cities. In 1857, Alexis du Pont was injured very bad in an explosion. From 1861 to 1865 there were seven explosions in which thirty nine people lost their lives and many of the products were destroyed.

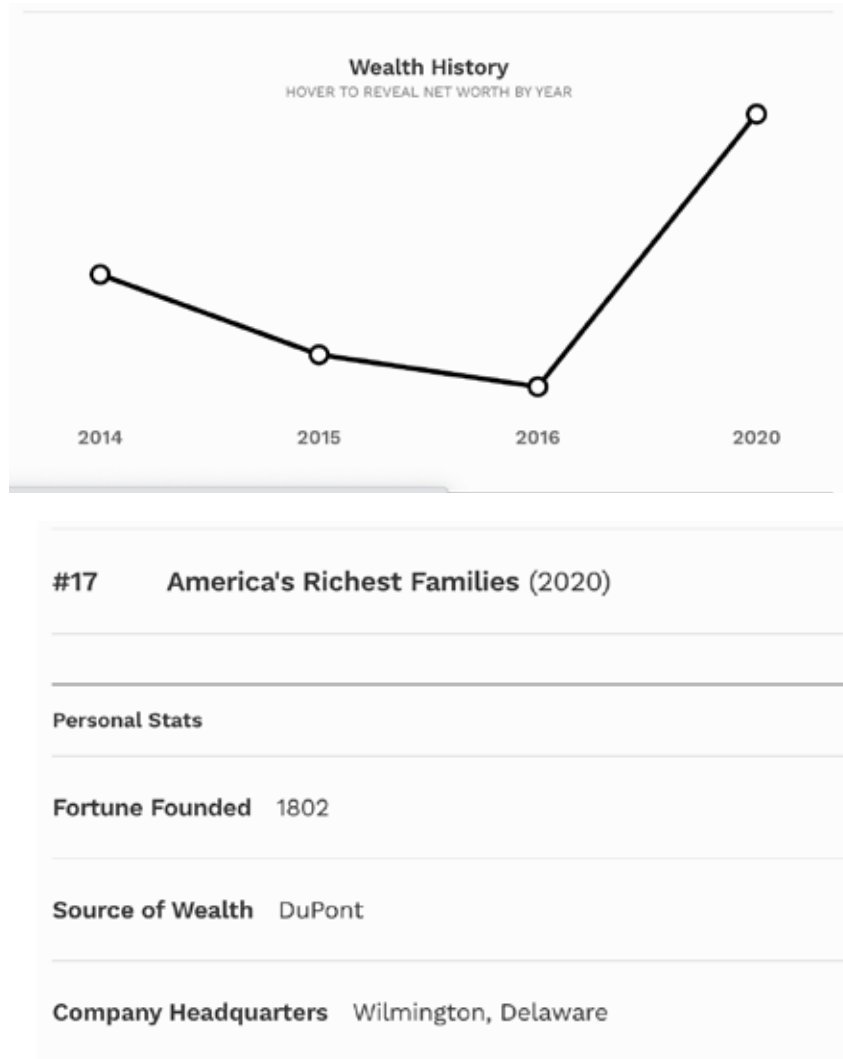
His grandson Lamont was a good chemist and understood that the dynamite production has big future. He created his own company "Repauno Chemical Company" but after 4 years he died in an accidental factory explosion. "DuPont acquired Repauno and incorporated their relative's vision into their own production line.

DuPont chemists made their mark on the world by developing revolutionary substances like the following:

- Freon (1930) a substance for refrigeration
- Neoprene (1931) a synthetic rubber
- Lucite (1936) a clear, acrylic resin used for home furniture
- Nylon (1937) a synthetic material used to replace silk stockings and in World War II parachute production
- Teflon (1938) a lubricant and non-stick material
- Mylar (1952) a synthetic film
- Dacron (1953) a washable polyester batting and fabric
- Lycra (1958) a synthetic fiber used in athletic clothes due to high elasticity
- Kevlar (1973) a high-tensile strength fiber with heat resistant properties"

DuPont's rising power also came from various mergers and acquisitions of other companies and become global power in the chemical innovation.

In 2017, DuPont merged with competitor Dow Chemical, then split into three companies -- DuPont, Dow and Corteva -- in 2019.



I am sure that if today Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours could see how much the company has grown, he would be very happy.

Winterthur

In 1837 Eleuthere Irenee du Pont daughter Evelina married Jacques Antoine Bidermann and the couple purchased 450 acres from the fathers estate. The home that they build was names Winterthur -in honor of Antoine's ancestral home in Switzerland. Over the years they planted many flowers, fruits and vegetables

In 1867, their son James, sold Winterthur to Evelina's brother Henry du Pont, which in 1874 gifted the property to his son Colonel Henry Algernon (1838 -1926) when he got married to Pauline Foster. They continued the farming and gardening traditions and also increased the size of the house.

His son Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969) was born at Winterthur and, in his words, “always loved everything connected with it.”

In his later years, H.F. du Pont wrote:

“I sincerely hope that the Museum will be a continuing source of inspiration and education for all time, and that the gardens and grounds will of themselves be a country place museum where visitors may enjoy as I have, not only the flowers, trees and shrubs, but also the sunlit meadows, shady wood paths, and the peace and great calm of a country place which has been loved and taken care of for three generations.”

He took full responsibility for the place in 1906 and after that he developed and improved the garden area. Before the world war II he was traveling often to Europe where he was studying the great gardens. By 1925 the property exceeded 2,500 acres with 250 workers. It had a post office, a railroad station, a sawmill, greenhouses, vegetable and flower gardens, dairy farms and many animals (turkey, chicken, sheep, caw, hog...)

In 1929 H.F. du Pont planned a big enlargement of the house and hires the landscape architect Marian Coffin, to design his garden. Like many designers of that time, Coffin was inspired by the symmetry, proportions and architectural features of Italian Renaissance gardens. The reflecting pool on the back yard was a reflection of that trend. The twin bath houses was another example. They provided space for family members and weekend guests to change before and after swimming. Behind the circular grillwork in the stone wall that connects the two houses was a stereo system. It broadcasted music for the people in the pool and around.

As a young boy, H.F. du Pont gathered flowers and other natural objects in the fields and woods of Winterthur for their beauty and form.

For fifty-eight years, between 1908 and 1968, du Pont recorded the flowers and containers used on the dining room table. Working with his butler, he coordinated the china, glass, and custom-made linens to complement the floral arrangements. The visitors could experience different place setting for each meal. I saw some of those arguments and I am amazed how so many years ago he had such an amazing taste and ability to make perfect combinations of plates, linens and flowers.

Du Pont was changing seasonally the curtains and chairs, bed and sofa covers, so they can reflect the colors in the garden and the mood of the season. "One can look at the colors and objects chosen for the rooms and discover that the outside and inside blend into a complementary and singular aesthetic."

Winterthur Museum opened in 1951.

The museum has collection of more than 90,000 objects -it is a space where visitors can admire beauty and history. The home reflects H.F du Pontt passion for collecting unique pieces of art and gardening.

In 1961 he was invited by Jacqueline Kennedy to oversee restoration of the White House. Henry lived there with his wife, Ruth, and two daughters. He had a passion for collecting historic American furniture, art, and decorative objects. When you walk trough the rooms in the museum today, you feel like you are getting transformed to different times and different places -there are so many old objects from all around the world.

Henry had a great sence of proportion, composition, and color. He mentioned that "I have always loved flowers and had a garden as a child, ...and if you have grown up with flowers and really seen them you can't help to have unconsciously absorbed an appreciation of proportion, color, detail, and material."

Today the museum, garden, graduate study programs, and a library that is recognized as a research center for material culture, are a legacy that provides constant beauty and insights into America past and present."

Henry du Pont also established graduate programs for the study of material culture and art conservation at the Delaware University.

"Winterthur, in partnership with the University of Delaware, sponsors two graduate programs, the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture (WPAMC, est. 1952) and the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC, est.1974), that train leaders creating lasting impact in the fields of material culture and conservation."

WINTERTHUR



South side of the house, ca. 1932

Longwood Gardens

Pierre Samuel du Pont was a remarkable man. He was head on two of America's most prosperous corporations - DuPont Company and General Motors. Pierre was the eldest son of Lamont du Pont, he was born in 1870.

At an age of 14, his father died in a chemical explosion and he took role of father to his brother and sisters. At age of 20 he graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at age of 23 he had been issued a patent as co-inventor of smokeless gunpowder.

When he discover that Peirce's Park is about to be destroyed, decide to purchase the land. And I know a lot of wealthy people today but it seems too me that most of them care about keeping the wealth or giving it to their kids but not contributing to the society or nature (unless is something they do for tax deduction purposes). So, what Pierree did was innovative and inspiring. So, to save the trees, on July 20th, 1906, Pierre bought Peirce's Park, soon to be known as Longwood Gardens.

The purchase included 202 acres, a house, and farm buildings, for \$15,500.

In 1907, he laid out Longwood's first flower garden, the 600 foot long Flower Garden Walk. 1915 the married Alice Belin. They began an ambitious program of improvements and expansions, building the massive Conservatory, numerous greenhouses, and tenant housing and recreational facilities or their expanding staff.

Over the years, he added thousands of trees and created many projects that reflected his childhood fascination with water.

He build spectacular water displays and in 1925 he began the Italian Water Garden, inspired by a garden that he had seen near Florence, Italy.

In 1926, he build the Open Air Theatre and made each show a one-of-a-kind experience. Each Christmas he held a party in the Conservatory to the staff and their families, personally handing out the presents. I think a lot of business owners today can learn a lot of his appreciation to the people that work for him.

Each summer, Longwood would be home to their many nieces and nephews

He also managed to find time to help support the local community.

Pierree financed construction of local hospitals, and although he had no children of his own, he gave millions of his personal fortune to the local school systems.

In April 2, 1954 Pierre was recognized for his lifetime of accomplishments, receiving a Legion of Honor from the French government but three days later, Pierre Samuel du Pont died.

The estate features seasonal floral displays, water fountains, sculptures, music, library, restaurants and coffee shops.



Nemours Mansion and Gardens

It was built in 1910 by Alfred I. du Pont, great-grandson of E.I. du Pont and first-cousin to Pierre. The estate feature 102 Louis XVI style chateau rooms, many antiques, french furniture, rare carpets and 100 acre gardens. Unfortunately is temporarily closed for the public and I couldn't visited it.

The wife of Alfred - Alicia was Francophile and filled the rooms of Nemours with antiques from France.

Alfred saved the company in 1902, when the family was about to lose the buisness. He got together the cousins Pierre and Coleman, and they joined forces and manage to save the company.

Doing my research I found our that next to the Nemours estate is a Hospital for children, financed by the Neumos Foundation, which is actually the nation's premier provider of health care for chiildren.

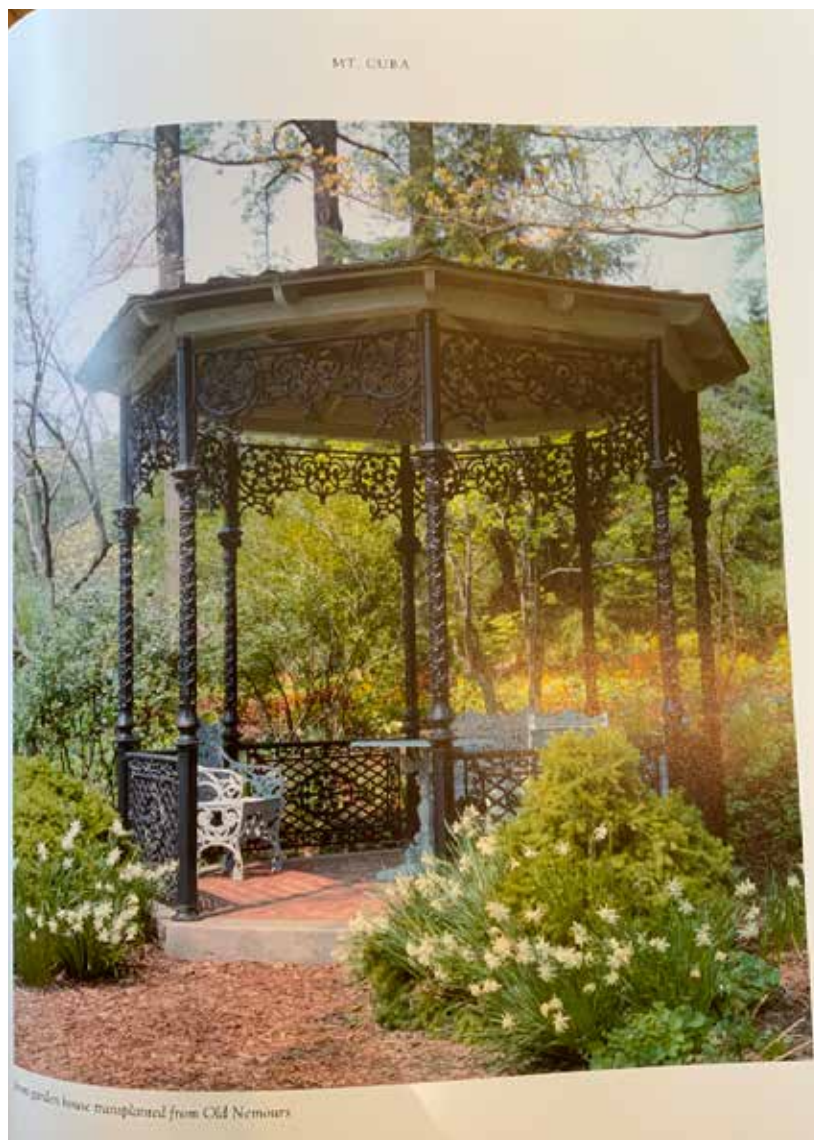


The Copeland Estate 'Mt. Cuba'

This is former estate of Lammot du Pont Copeland, nephew of Longwood's Pierre.

His wife was Pamela Cunningham from Connecticut.

The house was very modern -it had elevator, an incinerator, and walk-in cold storage in the kitchen and basement. The second floor had ten bathrooms. The first floor had a wide center hall filled with antiques, mostly Chippendale.



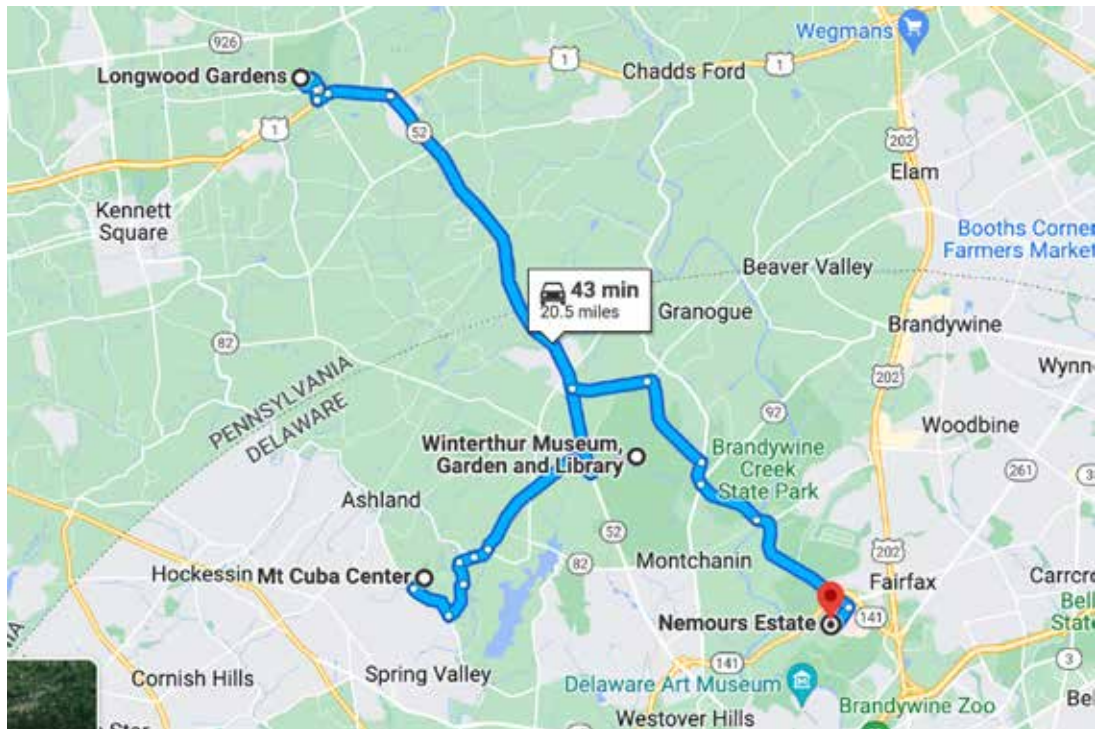
The property has 50 acres of gardens and 500 acres of natural areas and all this was open to public 10 years ago. The place is helping the education of the public about native plants and protecting the natural environment. It closes winter times so, I could visit it but is going to open again on April 1. They offer many classes - for gardening, yoga, health. When I was reading the program first time



I saw the word 'Ornithotherapy' - in this class they teach people to make connections with the birds in the back yard.

This is fun and boosts overall good health and well-being. I have many birds coming in my back yard (probably because of my big garden) so, I have to try this kind of therapy.

All the estates that I was writing about are very close to each other -most of the family managed to live not far from one another.



(From google maps)

Final thoughts

Eleuthere Irene du Pont came from France to America and in 1802 and founded a gunpowder company in Delaware. The company expanded far beyond gunpowder and today is one of the most successful companies in the world. There are approximately 4,000 heirs of the Du Pont family. According to Forbes, they are the 17th richest family In America. Their wealth is estimates around 16 billions.

We are all trying to accomplish something in our lives that can last much longer after we are not here anymore, and is hard to achieve that but looking at the life of people like him, gives a hope and courage that things are possible -we just need two try harder and take advantage of opportunities in life.

We have to remember that nothing comes easy in life -I read about the obstacles that they were going trough establishing the company and delivering the powder (many of the ships sinked and everything was lost) and it amazes me how they didn't give up.



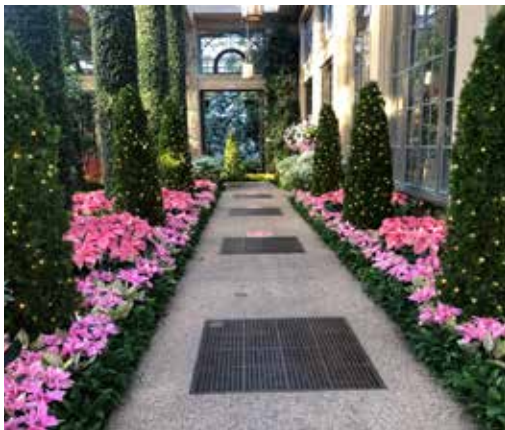














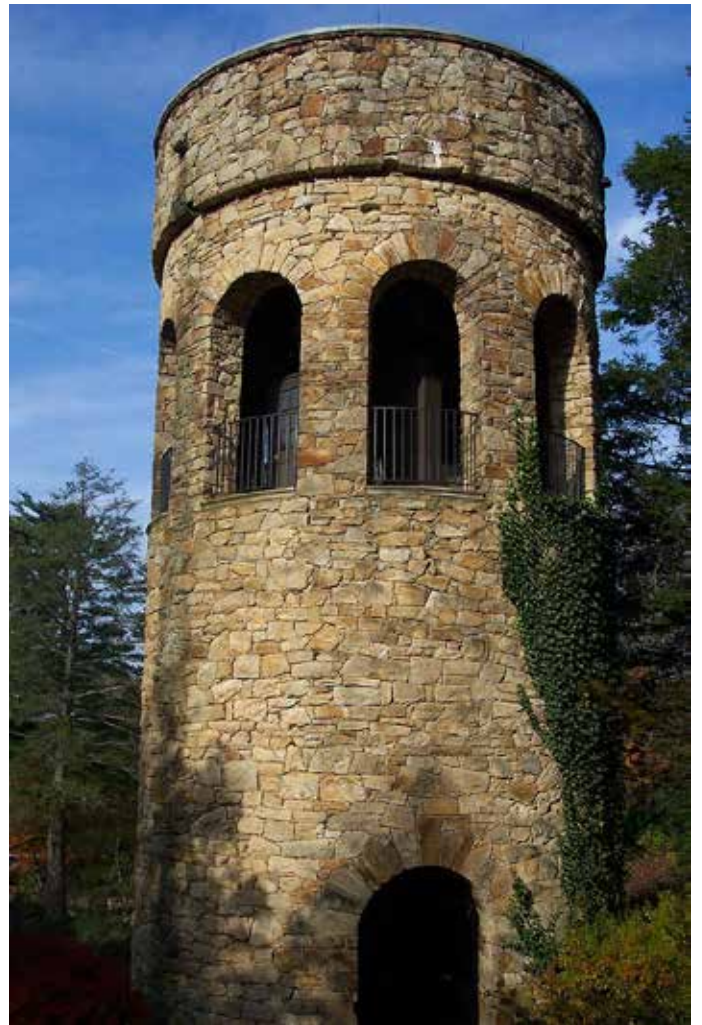
























Resources:

- 1 - Forbes - <https://www.forbes.com/profile/du-pont/?sh=6eb05374253b>
- 2 - <https://mtcubacenter.org/event/ornitherapy-for-your-mind-body-soul/>
- 3 - <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/news/news-stories/2018/april/machine-learning-french-revolution.html>
- 4 - <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history>
- 5 - <https://www.winterthur.org/research-and-scholars/fellowship-and-graduate-programs/>

