

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(U) Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U) A Peek Behind The Scenes: Founding Of The National Cryptologic Museum (Part 3 of 3)

(U) Technically, for many years NSA had a museum, in fact, several. The Research and Engineering organization maintained a small display collection in its spaces. Also, Lambros Callimahos, another pioneer cryptologist, kept a collection in a small room next to his office, where he often took privileged visitors and which was opened for limited hours to the workforce.

(U) None of these efforts had official sanction as a museum, however, nor was there any coherent policy on display of artifacts. From time to time, proposals for a museum surfaced, but died for lack of resources, particularly the problem of suitable space in an increasingly crowded complex.

(U) The origin of the current National Cryptologic Museum, however, is the same as the CCH. At one point during a meeting between the chief historian and the director in December 1988, Admiral Studeman agreed that a museum would be worthwhile, and asked the chief of staff to prepare space requirements for consideration by the proper organization.

(U) In response to this expressed interest, in early January a proposal went through the chain of command asking for 8,000 sq.ft. of space, to be split into classified and unclassified exhibit areas, plus a reading room for NSA's rare book collection. The proposal explained that the room was needed for a younger and less experienced workforce in an organization which "does not have a public history." A cover note from the NSA chief of staff informed the offices involved that the director "enthusiastically" supported the concept of a museum.

(U) Despite the high-level support, no space for a museum could be identified at that time.

(U) Then, fortuitously, an important acquisition occurred.

(U) There once was a small spit of land between Fort Meade/NSA and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway occupied by the Colony 7 Motel, a business in private hands. For many years the Colony 7 restaurant was a popular place for lunches for hungry

cryptologists, and the motel was the subject of numerous speculative jokes about the number of enemy agents renting rooms there.

(U) The Colony 7 complex came on the market and was purchased for NSA in May 1990. For some time, the NSA Senior Facilities Council, which allocated space throughout the cryptologic complex, entertained a number of proposals for use of the Colony 7 facility, which included a single-story office building and five two-story bedroom buildings.

(U) Admiral Studeman then made another key contribution, whether wittingly or accidentally is still the subject of some debate. During a speech to the Baltimore-Washington Corridor Chamber of Commerce on June 29, he made some off-the-cuff remarks about the possibility of using the Colony 7 as a museum. The audience, composed of state and county officials and local business persons, were excited by this idea. The Chamber followed up with a letter to the Admiral pointing out the advantages of a museum and promising support for one.

(U) The public surfacing of the concept at this time obliged NSA staffers also to take it seriously. David Gaddy, chief of the CCH, quick to see the advantages offered by a museum in public spaces, persisted in arguing its importance to NSA. For example, he wrote that the facility would not be simply a display of "ancient history," but one which served the educational needs of the day, not just a monument to the past but "an idea of the challenges for the future."

(U) A consensus emerged at first that a museum might be a desirable use of the facilities, but it "should not be publicized as a tourist trap." The Senior Facilities Council on 4 September accepted a series of goals in regard to a museum at the Colony 7 facility and directed the deputy director for plans and policy to form a working group to decide questions of funding, staffing, access, operation, and parking.

(U) Since the Colony 7 complex would not be secured for storage of classified material, the implication of a museum in the area was clear: the facility had to be unclassified. It was a short step but a large leap of faith from that concept to accepting the idea that the public should be admitted, not just NSA or even government employees only.

(U) The museum curator, Jerry Coates, was joined shortly by an assistant, Jack E. Ingram, a long-time instructor in the National Cryptologic School. They began planning the layout of the museum and designing specific displays for what had been the restaurant area of the original motel. Two artisans from NSA's graphics shop moved their tools into the former kitchen area and began turning Coates' and Ingram's designs into reality.

(U) Since no one at NSA had had experience running a public facility, the museum in its initial configuration opened to NSA personnel only in July 1993, while the public "Ribbon

Cutting" for the museum occurred on 17 December. This gap allowed the CCH and museum staff to adjust exhibits, hone their patter for tours, and train a small cadre of volunteer docents.

(U) At the public opening for what was (and, at this writing, still is) the only free, public museum in the U.S. intelligence community, the deputy director for support services, Mr. James J. Devine, underscored the serious purpose of the museum in teaching the vital role of cryptology in national defense. At the same time, the president of the Baltimore-Washington Corridor Chamber of Commerce caught the joy of the day by noting that shortly before the ceremony he had telephoned his physician "because they always told me that when NSA opened to the public, I'd be dead and gone."

(U) Within weeks of the museum opening, Jerry Coates retired from government service, leaving Jack Ingram to advance to the position of curator. While the first two months were marked by sparse attendance from outside NSA, attendance greatly increased when the museum appeared on 24 January 1994 in a somewhat whimsical newspaper feature. CCH and museum staff had given interviews to the Washington Post for what they thought was going to be a small blurb in the back of the Style section; instead, they found themselves in a front page article entitled "Only Sleuths Can Find this Museum."

(U) Thereafter, despite the headline, about 30,000 nonsleuths a year found their way to the NCM. Ingram in short order found himself presiding over an unprecedented (for NSA, and probably other members of the intelligence community) focus of media attention.

(U) NSA had come out of the intelligence closet, and the National Cryptologic Museum was leading the way.

~~[(U//FOUO)]~~ David A. Hatch, Center for Cryptologic History, 972-2893s, dahatch@nsa]

Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

Content Owner: Feedback

Web POC: Feedback

Last Modified: by nsr
Last Reviewed: May 27, 2003
Next Review: 365 days

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY