

News

500 tons of history returns to Coatesville (video)

Lukens-made steel trees from World Trade Center return to Coatesville

Thursday, April 15, 2010

By DANIELLE LYNCH, Staff Writer

COATESVILLE — A 28-truck convoy transported five hundred tons of Lukens steel — which supported the World Trade Center for more than three decades — back home on Wednesday afternoon.

"These pieces are coming home," said Scott Huston, president of The Graystone Society, the nonprofit organization that helps preserve Coatesville's historic architecture, during a ceremony. "These pieces are quite amazing, no doubt."

Huston was referring to the 10 50-ton steel structural shapes, known as "trees," that framed the first nine floors of the North and South Towers until the Sept. 11, 2001, tragedy.

In 1969, the last trainload carrying the structural shapes pulled out of Lukens Steel headquarters in Coatesville destined for New York City to become part of the two tallest buildings in the world. The steel, which now represents relics of a terrorist attack that resulted in the deaths of 3,000 people, will become the centerpiece of the proposed The National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum to be built in the Lukens Historic District on South First Avenue in Coatesville.

The "trees" were donated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, said Huston, a direct descendent of Rebecca Lukens, the first female industrialist in the United States. The donation is part of the two-state agency's disposition program to

give steel salvaged from the World Trade Center to nonprofits that would use the steel in memorials.

Ed Frey, general manager of ArcelorMittal Coatesville, said everyone remembers where they were during the terrorist attacks.

"That unfortunate event brought (the steel) home," he said.

Interim City Manager Ted Reed said the steel represents the resiliency of the American way of life "because we're still standing and we will continue to stand."

Reed said the steel homecoming also symbolizes rebirth for the city.

"Now is the time for this city and community to also rise from the ashes," said City Council President Ed Simpson.

Council Vice President Karl Marking said the return of the "trees" is part of the foundation to rebuild the city.

South Coatesville Mayor James Kennedy, a former employee at Lukens Steel, said the homecoming was a historic occasion that occurred after a tragic event.

In addition to local officials, county and state politicians attended the ceremony. They each recalled where they were during the 9/11 attacks.

"The steel represents the strength and power of the people," said Chester County Commissioner Carol Aichele.

A committee is now being formed by The Graystone Society to oversee the design and construction of a memorial incorporating these "trees" into the landscape of the Lukens National Historic District. This summer will mark the 200-year anniversary of Lukens Steel.

For more discussion on this topic, check out <http://coatesvillroundtable.blogspot.com/>.

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