

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 002139 DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 1 1975
DATE ENTERED APR 14 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

* 1 NAME

HISTORIC Colt, James B. House

AND/OR COMMON
Colt, James B. House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
154 Wethersfield Avenue

CITY, TOWN Hartford VICINITY OF 1st-William R. Cotter

STATE Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY Hartford CODE 003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Veronica Sperber

STREET & NUMBER
2471 Sunrise Drive, S.E.

CITY, TOWN St. Petersburg VICINITY OF STATE Florida

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Town Clerk, City of Hartford

STREET & NUMBER
550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE
January, 1975 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Hartford, STATE CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The James B. Colt House sits on a half-acre parcel, fronting on Wethersfield Avenue and bounded north and east by Colt Park, the original estate of Samuel Colt, inventor and manufacturer of the Colt 45 and first president of Colt's Patent Firearms Company. The site was originally part of the spacious Colt estate, and it commands a magnificent view from its ridge-top location over the Park and the Connecticut River valley to the east. Directly north, flanking the north side of the main entrance to Colt Park, is Armsmear, Sam Colt's opulent Victorian mansion, the architectural "big sister" to the James B. Colt House. Across Wethersfield Avenue from the Colt mansions is a unique, but deteriorating grouping of Victorian mansions originally occupied by wealthy professionals and businessmen, some of whom were officers of Colt's Firearms. South of the James B. Colt House along Wethersfield Avenue for several blocks is a fine collection of large Queen Anne style homes which add a complementary grace to the neighborhood.

The building is a fine example of the Italian Villa architectural style, popular in the mid-1800's, and once prolific in the Colt Park neighborhood. The front (west facade) is imposing, yet gracious, rising three full stories, tastefully flanked on either side by unenclosed porches. This facade duplicates nearly all the architectural details found in the front (west) facade of its sister Armsmear; Italianate arched windows, large overhanging eaves supported with brackets, stucco finish. The north side porch wraps around the front of the house to the front door, its three wooden columns and modestly carved wooden arched setting a comfortable rhythm. The northwest corner of the house is capped with a peaked roof, approximately eighteen feet square and five feet high. The south portion of the front facade extends slightly forward of the front door, emphasized on the first floor by a "bay" with floor to ceiling windows.

The north facade, facing out on the adjacent Colt Park, reveals the full sixty-five foot depth of the house, the generosity of which is hidden from the front view by dense landscaping. Here the northwest corner tower with peaked roof is fully apparent dominating the otherwise flat roofline. Full floor-to-ceiling arched windows rise one atop another for the three floors, centrally located in the corner tower. At the ground floor the porch, wrapping around front and side of the tower, reveals through dense planting three semi-circular arches in porch woodwork, with ornamental brackets carrying a flat roof. To the rear of the tower is a jog in the building line of the house, accounted for by a three foot deep indentation twelve feet long, breaking what would otherwise be a rather massive facade. Toward the rear a chimney is visible on the roof line, betraying the presence of fireplaces now hidden by successive layers of modernization.

The rear of the house, too, faces out on Colt Park affording fine vistas. Immediately apparent is the lack of stucco finish, revealing the true brick wall material. From the rear access is gained from

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massive ornamental cast iron stairs into the back of the building where an interior stairwell serves the three floors. The full rear profile reveals the large protruding three-story bay on the south facade of the house.

The south facade, too, is broken into two masses, offering pleasant relief in the depth of the building. Toward the front, windows on all three floors are positioned above each other, offering more regularity than on the north side. At ground level a comfortable veranda, graced with an intricately designed wooden railing stretches from the building front, half-way down the south facade. To the rear of the veranda, the facade is broken by a substantial three-story bay. At the roofline a chimney is visible in the middle of the facade, indicating the presence of four fireplaces inside the house. An iron fire escape has been added recently.

All facades remain as originally designed and built. The south facade has been visually disturbed by the iron fire escape, which can easily be removed. Certain brownstone carved details have eroded or chipped away, and the stucco exterior finish needs repair. Woodwork in the verandas and eaves requires repair, but overall the exterior of the building, set on a massive stone foundation, is structurally sound and architecturally intact. The interior of the building has been "modernized" with dropped ceilings and wood paneling. However, above the dropped ceilings in several rooms, the original highly decorative plaster ceiling moldings remain. Several fireplaces with original massive Victorian wood mantles and bevelled glass mirrors have escaped damage. Much original door and floor molding remains undisturbed. A fire in 1973 ended occupancy in the house. Damage was restricted to about ten percent of the house, primarily in the rear stairwell and halls. The little structural damage resulting from the fire can be repaired.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1855-1857

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James B. Colt House has been the residence of a variety of influential Hartford families. The house was built either for or by James B. Colt, brother of Samuel Colt, on land of the Colt family estate between 1855 and 1857. James Colt, then Treasurer of Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company and a distinguished United States Senator, lived in the house until 1859. After two succeeding owners, the house was conveyed in 1865 back to Samuel Colt's widow, Elizabeth Colt. The house was occupied then for some years by William Buel Franklin, a retired Union Army general, who served as Vice President and General Manager of Colt Firearms until 1888. In 1895, the house was conveyed to George H. Day, a civic leader and captain of industry around the turn of the century. Day served the public as Hartford's Parks Commissioner in the early 1900's, while successively directing the affairs of several Hartford industries as President or Vice President (Weed Sewing Machine Company - 1888, Pope Manufacturing Company - 1895, Electric Vehicle and Columbia Company - 1900). In 1905 the house was conveyed to Elmira Terry and has since changed hands about six times.

The Italian Villa style was particularly popular among the wealthier families along Wethersfield Avenue where several houses, including the Day-Taylor House at 81 Wethersfield remain as outstanding examples. The architect is not yet known, but the James Colt House and Armsmear exhibit great similarity in massing finish and interior and exterior detailing. The massive structural underpinnings and bearing walls of the house remain sound throughout. The 8700 gross square feet has been somewhat subdivided through recent conversion to apartments. However, nearly all the original dividing walls remain, and conversion to larger apartments, condominium units or office space is easily possible.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Barnard, Henry, Armsnear: The Home, The Arms and The Armory of Samuel Colt: A Memorial, N.Y., 1866.

Commemorative Biographical Record of Hartford County, Connecticut, Chicago, 1901
 Hartford Town Records (Deeds), Town Clerk's Office, Hartford, CT, Vols. 306, 424, 632, 873, 1038, 1069, 1161, Rohan, Jack, Yankee Arms Maker: The Story of Sam Colt and His Six-Sh Peacemaker, N.Y., 1935, 1948.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1
 UTM REFERENCES

A

13	619,313,75	46,245,95
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
 Clark J. Strickland, Historic Sites Researcher

ORGANIZATION
 Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET & NUMBER
 59 South Prospect Street

CITY OR TOWN
 Hartford

DATE

TELEPHONE
 566-3005

STATE
 CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE
John W. Strickland

DATE MARCH 27, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST: *[Signature]*

DATE 4/14/75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE APR 9 1975