

# Armsmear

## Samuel Colt Home

[U.S. National Historic Landmark District](#)  
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## Armsmear

**Location** 80 Wethersfield  
Avenue, [Hartford,](#)  
[Connecticut](#)

**Built** 1855

**Architectural style** Italianate

**Part of** [Coltsville Historic](#)  
[District](#)  
(#66000802)  
[South Green](#)  
[Historic District](#)  
(#02001453)

## Significant dates

<b>Added to NRHP</b>	November 13, 1966 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Designated NHLDCP</b>	November 13, 1966 <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Designated CP</b>	November 17, 1977

**Armsmear** ("meadow of arms"), also known as the **Samuel Colt Home**, is a historic house located at 80 Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford, Connecticut. It was the family home of firearm manufacturer Samuel Colt. Armsmear was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1976; this designation was expanded in 2008 to form the Coltsville Historic District, a National Historic Landmark District.

## History

Armsmear was planned for Colt's 1856 marriage to Elizabeth Hart Jarvis, and constructed in 1856 to designs by an unknown architect, possibly local architect Octavius Jordan or factory engineer H. A. G. Pomeroy, on grounds overlooking the recently completed Colt Armory. It was described by a contemporary thus: "an Italian villa in stone, massive, noble, refined, yet not carrying out any decided principle of architecture, it is like its originator, bold and unusual in its combinations." It features a low-pitched roof, heavy bracketed cornice, round-arched doors and windows, iron balconies, Italianate tower and details, and Turkish domes and pinnacles.

The Colts occupied Armsmear in 1857 and promptly began to develop its gardens. Landscape architects Cleveland and Copeland provided the plans. Unusual, glass-domed conservatories, inspired by London's Crystal Palace, were added in 1861-1862. Ultimately the estate contained some 2,600 feet (790 m) of greenhouses, as well as ponds, fountains, and a deer park.

The house and manicured grounds were the primary residence of Samuel Colt and his family. Samuel Colt lived in Armsmear for approximately 5 years from 1857 until his death in 1862. He was buried on the grounds of Armsmear near the graves of Sam and Elizabeth's young children, amidst a copse of weeping willows known as the 'Grove of Graves.'<sup>[3]</sup> Following her husband's death, Elizabeth Hart Colt and her son Caldwell Hart Colt lived together in the large home for several decades. The Colts entertained lavishly at the estate, holding large parties that were the highlight of the Hartford society season.

After Elizabeth Colt died in 1905, the house was converted to a home for Episcopal women (in 1911) under the terms of her will. The residential community to this day is administrated by the Colt Trust. She also gave 140 acres (57 ha) of Armsmear's grounds to create Hartford's Colt Park. The city has subsequently replaced the greenhouse, garden, and ponds with ball fields and a skating rink.

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## Armsmear (1857)



<img  
src='https://i2.wp.com/historicbuildingsct.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/armsmear.JPG?w=750'  
alt='armsmear.JPG' data-recalc-dims="1" />

Built in 1857 on Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford for Samuel Colt, Armsmear has been called “the grandest residence in the Hartford of its day.” Often attributed to the architect Octavius Jordan, it is an elaborate Italian Villa. It has been much altered from its original opulence, having lost such features as an ornate dome with an ogee shape, similar to that on the Colt Armory in Hartford. Also lost are the glass-domed conservatories, added in 1861-2 and inspired by London’s Crystal Palace. The mansion still features three towers, and Bill Hosley describes, in the [Hog River Journal](#), convincing the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum to approve an exhibition on *Colt’s Empire* by showing him the view of Coltsville from the Armsmear’s main tower. Hosley describes the tower as “one of the most alluring historic spaces in Connecticut.”

After the death of Elizabeth Colt, the house was altered, according to her will, by Benjamin Wistar Morris to become a residence for the widows of Episcopalian ministers. 140 acres of the Colt estate were also given to the city of Hartford to create Colt Park. Today Armsmear is described as a “51 unit apartment complex for retired single women.”