A STORY OF SUNSHINE AND SHADOW:

ELIZABETH H. COLT

AND THE CRAFTING OF THE COLT LEGACY IN HARTFORD

by

David W. Granston III

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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ABSTRACT

Elizabeth H. Colt's life and legacy has been largely overshadowed by that of her husband, Colonel Samuel Colt. Although recent scholarship has retrieved her name from obscurity, the full extent of her legacy has not been fully considered. This thesis aims to further understanding of Elizabeth Colt who, following the tragic losses of her husband and children, used material objects to memorialize their lives. Working with some of the most talented artists and architects of her time, Mrs. Colt crafted a material legacy in Hartford ensuring that the memory of her deceased family members would live on indefinitely. Using primary sources such as personal correspondence, journals, and architectural renderings, and drawing from period newspaper articles, the meaning and symbolism behind these memorials themselves becomes far more evident. Examination of the art and architectural works she commissioned provides a more comprehensive understanding of Elizabeth Colt's desires, emotions, and personal life. Situating her within the context of nineteenth-century mourning culture, it is clear that Elizabeth Colt was at once the every woman in her strong sentimentality and desire to to memorialize her loved ones but, with seemingly unlimited financial resources, was completely unique in the memorial objects she crafted. The buildings and works of art that Elizabeth commissioned remain integral to the Colt legacy in Hartford today, and preserve the names of her husband and children. By understanding their design, and the events that led to their creation, however, these objects also speak volumes about the life and legacy of Elizabeth Colt.

Chapter 1

THE RELIC OF SAMUEL COLT

The completion of a five-year, forty-three-million-dollar renovation and rejuvenation of Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum, which culminated in the reopening of the museum's beautifully restored and rehung Morgan Memorial Building, was just cause for celebration. In the weeks and months after the September 2015 event, dozens of articles, magazines, newspapers, and online blogs lauded the museum's dedication to its infrastructure and collections, while also sparking a renewed interest in the historic institution. In his article for *American Fine Art Magazine*, Jay Cantor discussed the history of America's oldest continually operating public art museum:

> Art museums tended to mirror the tastes and interests of their patrons who sometimes became the amateur custodians of the collections… At the Atheneum, the founding collection was donated and bequeathed by [Daniel] Wadsworth, and significantly supplemented by the bequests of the widow of Samuel Colt and of J.P. Morgan (a Hartford native), each housed in memorial additions to the original museum building…[1]

True, these individuals gave some of the largest and most impressive pieces of fine and decorative art to the Hartford institution, but why, in 2015, is it still acceptable to name male donors, while masking female donors behind their husbands? Following her death in 1905, nearly one thousand objects from Elizabeth Colt's collection of fine

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[1] Jay E. Cantor, "Radical Chick & Taylor Made," *American Fine Art Magazine* 24 (Nov./Dec. 2015): 45. This use of Sam Colt's name may also reflect an editorial decision, but it still masks Elizabeth's identity behind that of her husband.

and decorative arts were donated to the Wadsworth Atheneum. Ranging from Hudson River School paintings to sculptures, from furniture to guns, Elizabeth Colt was adamant in her will that the collection "… shall be kept separate and apart and [*sic*] [in] designation and known as 'The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection…'"[2]

Today considered an integral part of the museum's holdings, objects from the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection are displayed at the Wadsworth and are also loaned to exhibitions nationwide. As Cantor's article demonstrates, however, Elizabeth Colt's personal legacy has not endured the same success as that of her "larger than life" husband.[3] After all, Sam Colt's biography is one of failure, drama, guns, incredible fortune, and sudden death, events that create a compelling story. While it has not garnered the same attention as her husband's, Elizabeth Colt's life was far from boring.

Though Samuel Colt's reputation sometimes overshadowed that of his wife at her own request, at other times Elizabeth's legacy fell victim to the interests or prejudices of writers. Upon closer examination of period archives, however, it appears that Elizabeth's role as a major contributor to the well-being and benefit of Hartford citizens was widely acknowledged during her lifetime (Figure 1.1). Commenting in 1898 on the recently published book *Hartford in History*, one newspaper wrote:

> In a book whose purpose is so commendable, and upon the whole so well carried out, we note with surprise as well as regret some strange omissions. The name of Colonel Samuel Colt… occurs frequently, but

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[2] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, accessible through Ancestry.com, 14.

[3] Herbert G. Houze, *Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Innovation* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Wadsworth Atheneum 2006) 1.

> no mention is made to the munificent contributions to Hartford's adornment and moral improvement which have been made by the lady who bears and honors his name. The omission seems strange, for surely Hartford has no resident more loved, more honored, [or] more popular with all classes than Mrs. Samuel Colt…"[4]

Following the death of her husband, Elizabeth Colt's name was widely known and often associated with Hartford's religious scene, its charitable organizations, and its physical landscape. While there are far more period references to the life and legacy of Samuel Colt, many of which focus on what Colt historian William Hosley has called his "mythological success," nineteenth-century newspapers spread the story of his wife, Elizabeth, far and wide.[5] *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph* devoted an entire article to "…the handsome and well-preserved relict [*sic*] of Samuel Colt." Under the title of "The Richest Widow in America," the newspaper described Mrs. Colt's beautiful estate, with its greenhouses, ponds, and statuary, her immense fortune, estimated by the writer to be five million dollars, and her gifts to the city of Hartford, which memorialized her deceased family members.[6] Other articles were more far-fetched than accurate. Chicago's *Sunday Times* wrote that "The shah of Persia wants Mrs. Samuel Colt to come over there and start a revolver factory, and has agreed to marry her daughter as an inducement."[7] While it presents a good story, the article is immediately debased by the simple fact that Mrs. Colt had no surviving daughters.

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[4] "Hartford in History," *New Haven Evening Register*, February 2, 1899.

[5] William Hosley, *Colt: The Making of an American Legend* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, in association with the Wadsworth Atheneum 1996) 13.

[6] "The Richest Widow in America," *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, August 1, 1871.

[7] "Waifs for the Ladies," *The Sunday Times*, March 29, 1874.

The existence of these articles, and many others like them, demonstrates a widespread fascination with Elizabeth Colt. Although these stories embellished facts to pique the curiosity of their readers, one must wonder where the truth behind them is found. Who was this "relict of Samuel Colt?" This thesis contributes to scholarship that aims to reestablish Elizabeth Colt's primacy in shaping the Colt legacy over the course of the nineteenth century, and into today.

Mrs. Colt's munificence and generosity in Hartford is well documented in the period press, but primary source material sheds additional light on the meanings and implications of her patronage. It is clear that she specifically commissioned works of art and architecture to preserve the memory of her loved ones and ensure that their legacies would endure the test of time. Elizabeth Colt created and surrounded herself with a landscape of memory, something that, though not unique in the nineteenth century, was certainly above and beyond the reaches of the stereotypical "New England wife."[8]

Although this thesis focuses on Elizabeth Colt, one must not overlook the fact that her efforts at memorialization align with broader trends in the second half of the nineteenth century. Mrs. Colt lived in a culture fraught with death and mourning. As Drew Gilpin Faust writes in the introduction to her 2008 book, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, "In the middle of the nineteenth century, the United States embarked on a new relationship with death, entering a civil

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[8] *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph* referred to Mrs. Colt as a "New England wife" in their August 1, 1871 issue, as is noted later in this thesis.

war that proved bloodier than any other conflict in American history…"[9] Hundreds of thousands of individuals died over the course of the American Civil War, yielding to a sense of mourning and loss on an unprecedented scale. But the war was not limited to the battlefield. Families lost sons and countless wives suddenly became widows. Writers like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow alluded to the far-reaching impact of Civil War bullets in poems such as "Killed at the Ford" (1866), drawing attention to those metaphorically killed far from the battlefield: "That fatal bullet went speeding forth/ Till it reached a town in the distant North/ Till it reached a house in a sunny street/ Till it reached a heart that ceased to beat…"[10] Despite her distance from the battlefields, Elizabeth was not removed from the Civil War. Both of her brothers were drafted, though they paid commutations to avoid service, and her husband's gun-making business fulfilled enormous government contracts.[11] She was intimately involved with charitable organizations such as the Soldier's Aid Society and with the Union for Home Work, both of which had their roots in the losses of the Civil War.[12]

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[9] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2008) xi.

[10] Included in Faust 143.

[11] In a letter to her nephew Elizabeth Colt urged him to obtain a substitute in order to avoid going to war, writing, "Both my brothers have sent substitutes, + I hope you will do the same." Aunt Lizzie [Elizabeth Colt] to "My dear Sam" [Samuel C. Colt], August 9, 1863. Private Collection. It is widely surmised that Samuel C. Colt was actually a child of Sam Colt's from prior to his marriage to Elizabeth.

[12] For more on Elizabeth Colt's charitable activities see William Hosley's final chapter, "First Lady of Connecticut," particularly 211-213.

Farther afield, the deaths of the Duke of Wellington in 1852, and of Prince Albert in 1861, received extensive press coverage, raising awareness of *le grand deuil* through funeral ceremonies that were consciously planned to "mark the sense of the people's reverence for the memory of the illustrious deceased…"[13] Just less than a month after the death of Prince Albert, Samuel Colt died in his Hartford home, at age forty-seven. "I never saw so imposing a funeral," Lydia Sigourney wrote to Elizabeth Colt, "where there was such deep sorrow on the face of every attendant. That of a prince might have had more pageantry, but here the tears of the sons of toil, attested to the heart's grief for the loss of their friend and benefactor, which was touching to every beholder."[14] Between 1857 and her own death in 1905, Elizabeth Colt suffered the loss of her husband and four children, leading her to search for means by which she could keep their memories close at hand. Just as Queen Victoria erected public monuments such as Royal Albert Hall, and like the Civil War dead who were remembered in public memorials, so too were Elizabeth's loved ones. The fear that Elizabeth and others of her era faced was, Patricia Loughridge and Edward Campbell assert, "… of having 'lived undesired and died unlamented': it was important that nineteenth-century mourners go to great lengths to demonstrate their open love and

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[13] Robert Davey, *A History of Mourning* (London: McCorquodale & Co. Limited 1890) 81.

[14] L[ydia] H. Sigourney to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Colt. February 15, 1862. Box 5, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

affection for the deceased."[15] It was exactly this sort of open affection that Elizabeth Colt displayed through her actions. She joined the ranks of widows and mourning mothers nationwide, yet her seemingly endless financial resources allowed her to erect grand buildings and commission remarkable artwork from preeminent artists to ensure that the memories of her dearest family members would never be forgotten.

Interest in the Colt story dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, when lengthy articles about Samuel Colt and his vast gun factory appeared in magazines and newspapers around the globe. Following his death in 1862, Elizabeth Colt engaged Henry Barnard to write a memoir and biography of her husband. Drawing from the name of the Colt estate in Hartford, the book, published in 1866, was called *Armsmear: The Home, the Arm, and the Armory of Samuel Colt. A Memorial.* In this text, the "family-approved" story was disseminated, largely by Elizabeth herself, as the books were privately printed and given only as gifts.[16] After the death of her son in 1894, Elizabeth Colt engaged her cousin, the Reverend Samuel Hart, to write *In Memoriam: Samuel Colt and Caldwell Hart Colt*, which examined her son's life as well as the buildings Mrs. Colt constructed in memory of her loved ones.

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[15] Patricia R. Loughridge and Edward D.C. Campbell, Jr., *Women in Mourning. Exhibition catalog of the Museum of the Confederacy 1984-1986* (Richmond: Museum of the Confederacy 1985) 8.

[16] Writing to his nephew in Ohio, Elizabeth's father William Jarvis was very impressed upon seeing this new book: "Before long I shall send you the most splendid Book that you ever saw, or that was ever printed in this country, as is universally acknowledged. A copy of it is to go to the Paris Exhibition at the request of the Printer. Mrs. Colt ordered 500 copies for private distribution - none are to be sold. The Book is named "Armsmear," containing a life of the Col., a description of the Armory, of the mansion and grounds + c." William Jarvis to William Jarvis, February 21, 1867. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

Following Elizabeth's death in 1905, the majority of interest in the Colt legacy has centered around Colt guns. Books such as Jack Rohan's *Yankee Arms Maker: The Story of Sam Colt and his Six-Shot Peacemaker* (1935), and William R. Edwards' *The Story of Colt's Revolver: The Biography of Col. Samuel Colt* (1953) focused on Samuel Colt and the arms made by his factory, but gave little attention to Elizabeth. Later in the twentieth century, several books by Ellsworth Grant and R.L. Wilson added to the body of Colt literature, but again focused far more on Sam than on his wife. In addition to these are the countless texts written for gun collectors, many of which lack citations and feature embellished tales that add to the mystique of Colt, his guns, and his family, but blur the line between fact and fiction.

It was not until the 1990s that scholars and museum professionals began reinvestigating the Colt story. Chief among them, William Hosley, then Richard Koopman curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Atheneum, mounted the monumental exhibit, "Sam and Elizabeth: Legend and Legacy of Colt's Empire." Featuring hundreds of objects, this show was accompanied by the first scholarly analysis of the Colt story, a 252-page book called *Colt: The Making of an American Legend.* In the midst of this exhibit, Hosley authored an article for the December 1996 issue of *The Magazine Antiques*, which discussed Elizabeth Colt's architectural patronage, but focused particularly on the creation of the collection that ultimately came to the Wadsworth Atheneum. Ten years later Herbert Houze and Elizabeth Kornhauser mounted "Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Invention," also at the Wadsworth Atheneum. Accompanied by an exhibition catalogue, the show focused primarily on

the Colt gun collection, but also considered some of the objects and paintings owned by Samuel Colt.[17]

The role of Elizabeth Colt as the primary author of her family's legacy has only received a fraction of the attention afforded other elements of the Colt story, however. In the chapters "Meet Sam and Elizabeth," "Building Memorials," and "First Lady of Connecticut," William Hosley establishes Elizabeth Colt as a woman who, despite serious losses, persevered to become a prominent figure in Hartford society. Yet, spreading her story among other parts of the text precludes a deep analysis of her role in crafting the Colt legacy. Most recently, Cynthia Wolfe Boynton devoted an entire chapter to Elizabeth Colt in her 2014 book, *Remarkable Women of Hartford*, but draws her analysis primarily from Hosley's text and Elizabeth's *Hartford Courant* obituary. Nevertheless, this book places her in context with other prominent Hartford females of her time such as Harrier Beecher Stowe and Lydia Sigourney, establishing the milieu by which Mrs. Colt was surrounded.

While these important works have re-established Elizabeth Colt's name within the history of the Colt family legend, she remains somewhat elusive. While some of this may be due to her own desire for privacy and the emphasis she placed on the legacies of her husband and son, it may also be due to the widely held rumor that

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[17] These two books have both proven invaluable, particularly in understanding Samuel Colt's life and factory, neither of which are the subject of this thesis, but both of which are crucial elements to Elizabeth's story. For more see William Hosley, *Colt: The Making of an American Legend*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, in association with the Wadsworth Atheneum 1996) and Herbert G. Houze, *Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Innovation* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Wadsworth Atheneum 2006).

Elizabeth Colt destroyed, or had destroyed, all of her personal papers.[18] While some papers were certainly destroyed by Charles E. Gross, Elizabeth's lawyer, by no means is her paper trail nonexistent.[19] In reexamining the Colt papers held by many libraries, museums, and private collections, over 130 letters written *by* Elizabeth, and at least that many again written *to* her have come to light. In addition to these letters, five travel logs, until recently held by members of her family, detail an extended trip to Europe in the early 1880s. Additionally, over 250 letters survive, largely written by Elizabeth Colt's father, William, to her cousin in Ohio. This correspondence provides firsthand accounts of Hartford events, and frequently chronicles the comings and goings of Mrs. Colt, granting an intimate view into her daily life.

The recent acquisition of thirty-five boxes related to the Jarvis and Robinson families by the Beinecke Library preserves thousands previously inaccessible primary documents and has ensured their accessibility to scholars. Within these boxes are hundreds of letters, calendars, receipts, photographs, and journals related to Elizabeth and her family. These, when combined with the previously available materials,

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[18] Hosley 10.

[19] Writing to Elizabeth Colt's niece in 1911, Gross noted, "I took a large mass of papers to my house and at odd hours extending over two or three years I went very carefully though them and selected those which seemed to have any interest for the family or value whatever. The rest I destroyed. All papers related to your mother and father I sent to you. Papers relating to the Cornfield Point property I sent to Mrs. Beach. Some papers relating to the FitzGerald family I sent to them. Some papers relating to Dr. Hart's family I sent to him. Nearly all the remaining papers I destroyed, as I believed it my duty so to do. They were of a private nature, and as Mrs. Colt left no children it seemed to me properly that these papers should be destroyed." Charles E. Gross to Mrs. Charles L.F. Robinson December 11, 1911. Box 4, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

provide a far more thorough depiction of Elizabeth Colt, her family, and the world in which she lived. Additionally, the recent discovery of twenty-four privately held letters between Elizabeth Colt and her nephew Sam provide source material which further enhances and enriches the understanding of Elizabeth's personal life.[20] In addition to these sources, scholars also benefit from writings by Elizabeth's friends and family, who took a deep interest in her as well as her feelings and emotions. Gathering these disparate materials and reestablishing their original chronology has allowed me to form a more complete archive from which a much clearer understanding of Elizabeth Colt, her life, and her efforts to memorialize her family members could be obtained.

As a material culture historian, I have also looked to objects themselves to inform my understanding of Elizabeth Colt and the legacy she crafted. As I have found time and time again, "actions speak louder than words," and visits to the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, and Armsmear have proven highly beneficial. To read about a site or building provides one set of information, but visiting and truly experiencing it yields an entirely different outlook. Likewise, spending time at the Wadsworth Atheneum with paintings that once hung in her house, examining objects that she herself once held, and contemplating how these seemingly unrelated items coalesced in Elizabeth's creation of a family identity has been invaluable. Drawing from archival research and supported by the objects

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[20] These privately-held letters are primarily written between Elizabeth Colt and Samuel C. Colt, the nephew of Sam Colt. The true paternity of Samuel C. Colt has long been disputed, and it is widely suspected that Samuel Colt fathered Samuel C. Colt prior to his marriage to Elizabeth.

themselves, one can establish that Elizabeth Colt used two major campaigns, one in the 1860s and a second in the final decade of her life, to forge a Colt legacy that would forever remain in Hartford.

Between the death of her first son on December 24, 1857, and her own death on August 23, 1905, Elizabeth Colt was almost constantly engaged in acts of memorialization. In the late 1850s and 1860s her efforts centered around the memory of her children and husband. The 1870s saw the death of her father and aunt who, along with her mother, were the subjects of memorialization efforts in the 1880s. Elizabeth's efforts continued following the untimely death of her son Caldwell in 1894, and lasted through the final decade of her life. Over the course of nearly fifty years, Elizabeth Colt crafted a family legacy that honored her loved ones, reflected their accomplishments, and ensured that they would always be remembered in Hartford. Period sources and previous scholarship draw attention to the wealth that enabled these memorials; however, this approach overlooks Elizabeth Colt's ability to harness some of the most talented artists and architects of her time, who helped her to shape a family legacy. Recognizing the abilities of individuals such as Frederic Church, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Withers, Edward Tuckerman Potter, Charles Loring Elliott, Lydia Sigourney, and others, Elizabeth Colt drew from their talents in her efforts to preserve the memories of her husband and children.

This thesis provides fresh insight into the Colt legacy, a consciously crafted and highly meaningful creation upon which Elizabeth worked for the majority of her life. Drawing particular attention to a series of artworks, buildings, and sculptures, I will combine previously unpublished newspaper references and little-known letters and documents to provide a deeper understanding of Elizabeth Colt's overwhelming

desire to memorialize and secure the legacy of her family. Situating her within the context of the mourning mother and grieving widow, common tropes within nineteenth-century America, I hope to use Elizabeth Colt's patronage of the arts and architecture to illustrate her active participation in the creation of the Colt story that remains today.

As is the case with all research projects, there are more questions and objects than I could ever possibly address in this thesis. Many important topics had to be put aside, and in their absence from this work it is my hope that they will catch the attention of future scholars. At the top of this list would be Henry Barnard's aforementioned biography, *Armsmear: The Home, the Arm, and the Armory of Samuel Colt. A Memorial*, written and published at Elizabeth Colt's expense, and disseminated expressly by her. Hundreds of copies of this book were published and given as gifts to friends and acquaintances of the Colts. With the Colt coat of arms on the cover, and extensively illustrated within, it is truly a work of art as an object, and is an informative document that deserves to be analyzed by both historians and literary scholars alike. Likewise, the 1898 book, *In Memoriam: Samuel Colt and Caldwell Hart Colt*, deserves similar scholarly attention. I have drawn from it liberally, but formal consideration of its content and materiality are needed. From Elizabeth's personal life, the remarkable cabinets that now sit in the library at Armsmear, carved with representations of the continents, famous Americans, and religious figures, are well worth examination by furniture scholars. Finally, I have focused on Elizabeth Colt's work in Hartford to preserve her family's story, but newspaper articles and letters record her involvement with charitable causes and churches far from her home. Mrs. Colt gave donations to her father's former church in Portland, Connecticut,

presented a memorial window to the church at Saybrook, Connecticut, and was responsible for the erection and decoration of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Punta Gorda, Florida.[21] One must wonder what other elements of her life may be uncovered through careful consideration of her patronage in these, and perhaps other, locations.

This thesis is not a biography or a chronology; it is an exploration of Elizabeth's efforts to ensure the Colt legacy in Hartford through selected case studies. Elizabeth Colt had a strong desire to preserve and tell the Colt story, through both the written word and extensive patronage of the arts and architecture. Though many of the items and themes in this book have been touched upon in previous scholarship, by interrogating the objects themselves, I hope to provide a deeper contextual background and a greater understanding of Elizabeth Colt. Building upon the strong foundations laid by William Hosley and Herbert Houze, I hope that this thesis will yield additional scaffolding for further scholarly inquiry.

Starting with the death of her first son in 1857, followed by those of two additional children and her husband, Samuel Colt, this thesis begins with an analysis of two monumentally scaled portraits by Charles Loring Elliott. Ensuring a permanent link between Elizabeth and her husband, these paintings also include objects which reference specific elements in the life of Samuel Colt. Chief among these is the Armory, Sam Colt's famous gun factory, around which the third chapter is structured, particularly focusing on its destruction by fire and subsequent rebuilding. Elizabeth's

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[21] Additional research is desperately needed to help shed light upon Elizabeth Colt's life in Florida, where she appears to have spent a great deal of time, and her role in the creation of a church there.

major patronage of the 1860s, the Church of the Good Shepherd and the *Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica*, painted by Frederic E. Church, is the focus of chapter four, drawing attention to objects that, while seemingly disparate, both centered on the loss of her husband and young children. The death of Caldwell Colt, Elizabeth's one child to reach maturity, spurred a renewed interested in architectural patronage, which manifested itself in the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House. But it also led to the creation of a floating memorial, Caldwell's beloved schooner *Dauntless*, memorials that both feature heavily in chapter five. The last chapter of this thesis looks at Elizabeth Colt's final efforts to preserve her family's legacy in Hartford, considering not only that of her husband and children, but also her own.

In 1896, at the dedication of the memorial house erected in memory of her son Caldwell, whose sudden death at age thirty-five left her reeling, Elizabeth Colt said that the new building told a "… story of sunshine and shadow, of life and love and death, and of eternal hope…"[22] In this statement, Elizabeth unknowingly described her own story, a compelling history of a remarkable woman who, in the face of adversity, persevered in the name of her family and their legacy. Through this thesis I hope to explain how Elizabeth Colt used objects to articulate the story of life, love, and death, while also promising hope for the future.

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[22] "The Colt Memorial: Handsome Building Erected by Mrs. Samuel Colt," *The Hartford Courant*, September 11, 1896.

A Wail Within the Palace

Born in Saybrook, Connecticut on October 5, 1826, Elizabeth Hart Jarvis was the oldest child of the Reverend William Jarvis and his wife, Elizabeth Miller (Hart) Jarvis. An Episcopal priest, Reverend Jarvis ministered to the congregation of Trinity Church in Portland, Connecticut, just across the river from Middletown. It was here, in an immense Greek Revival home overlooking the Connecticut River, that Elizabeth grew up.[23] As evidenced in the grandeur of her childhood home, Elizabeth's parents were far from destitute. Her mother's family, the Harts, were successful in eighteenth-century maritime trade and land speculation, and amassed a considerable fortune and reputation in Connecticut.[24] Yet familial wealth did not preclude the Jarvis family from loss, and there were often occasions to test the belief that death was "God's call to "Come home."[25]

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[23] George A. Jarvis, George Murray Jarvis, William Jarvis Wetmore, and Alfred Harding, *The Jarvis Family; or, the Descendants of the First Settlers of the Name in Massachusetts and Long Island, and Those Who Have More Recently Settled in Other Parts of the United States and British America* (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company 1879) 56. Elizabeth Colt's childhood home has been threatened with demolition in recent years, as the current owner has proposed a redevelopment of the site. Jeff Mill, "Developer's vision for Old Elmcrest Parcel Worries Some," *The Middletown Press*, February 7, 2016.

[24] For more on the Hart family in Connecticut see Marion Hepburn Grant's *Hart Dynasty of Saybrook* (West Hartford: Fenwick Productions for the Saybrook Historical Society 1981).

[25] Henry Ward Beecher as quoted in Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2001) 52.

Elizabeth was one of nine children born to William and Elizabeth Jarvis, and one of only four who lived past the age of thirty. William Jarvis and his contemporaries often wrote of being forced to accept the loss of their children with "Christian resignation;" it was, after all, God's will.[26] Of these losses William Hosley writes, "While her [Elizabeth's] religious faith no doubt owed much to the influence of a family steeped in the practice of Christianity, the tragic loss of half her siblings… must have tested her convictions severely."[27] In their youth Elizabeth and her younger sister Hetty spent much of their time together. In his letters William Jarvis recorded his daughters' travels, especially with their aunt, Hetty B. Hart, with whom they lived in Hartford while attending school.[28] With their aunt the Jarvis girls traveled to Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Washington D.C., where they attended the inaugurations of both James K. Polk and Franklin Pierce.[29] Of her youth in Hartford, little has been uncovered, but it is clear that, like her father, young Elizabeth was devoted to her faith. A set of communion silver, given in 1842 to St. John's Episcopal Church in Hartford, bears the inscription of its donors, Hetty B. Hart and Elizabeth Hart Jarvis, then age sixteen.[30]

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[26] Jarvis et al. 55.

[27] Hosley 28.

[28] Hetty Hart Jarvis was born in February 1828, making her roughly a year and a half younger than Elizabeth. Hosley 29.

[29] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, March 1, 1848; January 17, 1852; February 8, 1853. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[30] This communion silver is still used by the church. I am grateful to Jean Mitchell, a resident at Armsmear and a parishioner at St. John's, for bringing it to my attention.

From letters and newspaper references it is clear that Elizabeth and her family spent their summers at Newport, Rhode Island, where her mother held strong ancestral roots. At Newport the Jarvis children attended fancy dress balls, including one held at the Ocean House on September 4, 1850, attended not only by Elizabeth and Hetty, but also by their brother Richard.[31] According to a printed description of the event, Elizabeth, then twenty-four years old and noted for her "reputation for beauty," wore an outfit styled after "Namouna, the Enchantress." Also in attendance that night was Samuel Colt, then age thirty-six, wearing a "Turkish uniform, of the Engineer Department."[32] To what extent Sam Colt and Elizabeth Jarvis were previously acquainted cannot be ascertained, but it is likely that they were at least aware of one another, through either Hartford or Newport connections. Sam Colt knew Elizabeth's brother John, perhaps as a business acquaintance or employee, as early as 1849, and thus it seems likely that Elizabeth and her future husband met some time in the late 1840s or very early 1850s.[33]

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[31] Younger than both Elizabeth and Hetty, Richard W.H. Jarvis was born in November 1829.

[32] "Grand Fancy and Dress Ball, at the Ocean House, Newport, on Wednesday Night, Sept, 4, 1850," *The Boston Daily Bee*, September 5, 1850. A copy of this is found in Box 17, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It should also be noted that a Turkish costume once belonging to Sam Colt is now in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum, having been donated by Elizabeth Colt upon her death (accession number 1905.1585). Whether this is the same Turkish outfit is unclear, but it does not seem unlikely.

[33] William Jarvis notes the upcoming nuptials of his son, John Jarvis, in a letter to his nephew. In this letter he writes, "The Col. thinks every thing of him, and, I doubt not, will promote his advancement, and his interest in every proper and reasonable way." Whether this is Colonel Sam Colt or not is unclear and has been debated. The title of Colonel was not bestowed onto Colt until the following year, but John Jarvis and Sam

By 1850 Sam Colt had a storied background. After establishing his first gun manufacturing company in 1836, using money borrowed from friends and neighbors, it was forced to close and its assets liquidated only six years later. Undeterred, Colt moved to New York, where he devised a technique by which explosives could be detonated underwater, leading to an elaborately planned public display of his invention on the Potomac River in 1844. With the outbreak of the Mexican War, Colt returned to guns, filling a government order using subcontracted labor, and the following year he returned to his native Hartford, where he opened a gun manufactory in 1847. Before long the reputation of his guns was widely acknowledged and, as William Hosley writes, "… big ideas and bigger talk began to pay off."[34] With the expertise of Elisha K. Root, who perfected the factory's gun making processes, the first arms bearing the Colt name made their way to European markets. Having persuaded Governor Thomas Seymour to appoint him a Lieutenant Colonel and aid-de-camp in the Connecticut State Militia, Sam immediately restyled himself as Colonel Colt, using this title extensively to advance his marketing. With an extensive display at London's Crystal Palace, Sam Colt's place among the great nineteenth-century industrialists seemed secured.[35]

Colt had a very close relationship based on intense trust and mutual respect. In 1858, only two years after marrying Elizabeth, Colt chose his brother-in-law to travel on his behalf to Russia for business dealings. William Jarvis to William Jarvis, September 19, 1849. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[34] Hosley 19-25. The early years of Colt's gun making efforts are far more extensively covered in Hosley's text.

[35] Houze 79.

Details of the courtship between Elizabeth Jarvis and Samuel Colt have proven elusive, but by February 1856, plans for their marriage were established. Writing to Colonel Colt (Figure 1.2), Lydia Sigourney, Hartford's acclaimed poet, offered her congratulations. Sigourney assured him that he had "…won to the green-house of your life, a most precious Heart Flower, whose spirit of love can never fade."[36] That May Sigourney penned a note to Elizabeth (Figure 1.3), writing:

> I am only too happy to indulge myself in saying how much I think of you, and your noble life's companion, and how earnestly I pray for the happiness of both... One week from this very hour you will be uttering at the Altar the hallowed vows of the sacred union which Death alone can sever.[37]

Accounts of the wedding, which took place on June 6, 1856, were carried in many East Coast newspapers. Held in Middletown, where Elizabeth's parents moved after leaving Portland, the event was described as a "Gala Day."[38] Festivities began in front of the Colt Armory, as the steamer *Washington Irving* left for Middletown. Having been chartered by Colt for the occasion, "… the steamer was gaily decorated with flags, and as she swung out into the stream, a grand salute of rifles was fired from the

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[36] L[ydia] H. Sigourney to Colonel [Samuel] Colt, February 23, 1856. Box 5, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Surviving letters reveal a very close friendship between Colt and Sigourney, likely due to Sigourney having had Colt's sisters as students.

[37] L[ydia]. H. Sigourney to "My sweet friend" [Elizabeth H. Jarvis], May 29, 1856. Box 5, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[38] "Marriage of Col. Sam Colt - A Gala Day among his Friends," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, June 7, 1856.

cupola of the Armory…"[39] The wedding, which took place at the Episcopal Church, was followed by a party at the home of the bride's parents, after which the newlyweds left for New York City. Following a party in New York the day after the wedding, the Colts, as well as Elizabeth's sister and brother, sailed for an extended trip to Europe, going as far as Russia for the coronation of the Czar.[40]

Over a year before his marriage, however, Colt began preparing for family life, and started construction on a spectacular home. Located on Wethersfield Avenue, overlooking his immense Armory complex, the scale, design, and grandeur of Colt's residence attracted the attention of area newspapers long before it was completed. With construction underway, a reporter for *The Hartford Daily Courant* went to the office of Octavius Jordan, a Scottish-born architect in Hartford, where he saw plans and elevations for the new Colt residence. As he reported, "The mansions erecting by Colonel Colt, begin to loom up. We saw, on Saturday, drawings of these structures and were more than ever struck with the reach of the Colonel's schemes."[41] Jordan's drawings depicted an impressive programme: a gatehouse, to which an elaborate domed conservatory some sixty feet long was attached, with the main dwelling at the southern end. This structure, a grand Italianate house, was surmounted by a tall belvedere from which Colt could survey his extensive grounds. "If the Colonel carries out these ideas with the same energy and success that has hitherto characterized his

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid. Preparations for the Russian trip are extensively covered in letters found in the Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers, which also preserves several souvenirs from this trip, which could undoubtedly yield a fascinating research project.

[41] "Wethersfield Avenue," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, July 16, 1855.

operations," the reporter wrote, "we shall see something quite Napoleonic in our vicinity."[42] Although they moved into their new house, called Armsmear, in 1857, furnishing and decoration continued into the following year.[43] As Elizabeth's brother Richard Jarvis commented, "I am very glad it is to her liking and I hope she will enjoy it many pleasant days. And who better deserves to do so?"[44]

Seen from the street, Armsmear presented an imposing façade. With projecting bays, a varied roofline, windows in myriad shapes and sizes, and a five-story belvedere, the Colts' new home competed only with P.T. Barnum's "Iranistan" for the title of Connecticut's most exotic residence.[45] Describing it in *The Art Journal*, one author exclaimed:

> Beautiful and romantic Armsmear!... A long, grand, impressive, contradicting, beautiful, strange thing – such is the first feeling on beholding Armsmear. An Italian villa in stone, massive, noble, refined, yet not carrying out any decided principles of architecture…[46]

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[42] Ibid.

[43] In his preface Henry Barnard notes, "To the whole [of the property] is applied the designation of Armsmear - by which the Colt estate, and especially the homestead, is known - on account of the change wrought by his Arm in the *mear,* by which, in our old Saxon speech, this meadow would be designated." Henry Barnard, *Armsmear: The Home, The Arm, and the Armory of Samuel Colt. A Memorial.* (New York: Alford 1866). Receipts and bills for furnishing Armsmear by Ringuet-Le Prince-Marcotte are found in the Samuel Colt papers at Connecticut Historical Society and cover the date range of May 20, 1856 to May 8, 1858.

[44] Richard W.H. Jarvis to Elizabeth Miller Jarvis, January 22, 1857. Box 6, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[45] Hosley 141.

[46] M.E.W.S. "The Homes of America – VII: Armsmear," *The Art Journal* 2 (1876): 321.

Surrounding the house, elaborate picturesque gardens designed by the Boston firm of Copeland and Cleveland featured ponds, follies, and statues. Further away were orchards, vast greenhouses, and a deer park. Samuel Colt succeeded in creating Hartford's most impressive private estate, filling it with remarkable decorative arts and surrounding it with beauty (Figure 1.4).[47]

Shortly after moving in, on February 24, 1857, Elizabeth gave birth to her first son, Samuel Jarvis Colt. Born prematurely, Elizabeth's father placed doubts on the baby's survival, but within a matter of weeks, with the child's health restored, William Jarvis wrote, "The Colonel is one of the happiest men living… [and] Elizabeth has everything a heart could wish for."[48] That April Samuel Jarvis Colt received a unique present from Isaac Stuart. A close friend of Colonel Colt's, Stuart presented the infant boy with "… a cradle made under my own eye, from the genuine wood of the Monarch Tree, which once, in the olden time, so remarkably saved the liberties of Connecticut."[49] Elaborately decorated with eight colt heads and suspended between a pair of vertical posts, from which two rampant colts reared, the cradle held meaning in

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[47] Robert Morris Copeland, introduction by William H. Tishler, *Country Life: A Handbook of Agriculture, Horticulture, and Landscape* Gardening. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, in association with Library of American Landscape History 2009) xxiv.

[48] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, March 19, 1857; March 28, 1857. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[49] I.W. Stuart to Mrs. Samuel Colt, April 25, 1857. Colt Papers, Registrar's Office, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford.

its design, but most notably in its material: the wood of Connecticut's iconic Charter Oak (Figure 1.5).[50]

According to lore, it was in this tree that, Joseph Wadsworth hid Connecticut's Royal Charter from Governor Edmund Andros in 1687. Andros, who arrived in Hartford with an order from James II to destroy Connecticut's independent government, was thus thwarted in completing his duty. The Charter, granted by Charles II twenty-five years prior, assured Connecticut's liberty and independence, and the tree that protected it from destruction became "a Hartford institution."[51] Interest in the tree grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century, particularly through the efforts of Isaac Stuart, who owned the land on which the oak stood. As Robert F. Trent has noted in his study of the tree and the relics made of its wood, Stuart:

> …stimulated the appetite for Charter Oak relics by carefully regulating the distribution of branches and twigs that fell from the tree…. [and] Soon every leaf, twig, acorn, and branch that fell… was scooped up by passers-by, who felt no qualms about leaping over the white picket fence in front of the Stuart residence.[52]

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[50] In his interpretation of the Charter Oak Cradle William Hosley asserts that "In a community still dominated by Congregationalists of the old puritan stripe, this was the most egregious and self-aggrandizing display of ego that had ever graced the threshold of this once-insular and proper New England town." Hosley 131. Hosley also places the Charter Oak Cradle within a constellation of similar objects in the Colt household including a lamp shade, book covers, a chair, and several other pieces made from the wood of the fabled tree. For more see "Sam Colt and the Charter Oak: The Heart of the Colt Empire," in Hosley, 126-137.

[51] "The Charter Oak is Prostrate!" *The Hartford Daily Courant*, August 22, 1856. A clipping of this article was saved by a member of the Colt family, and is now in Box 5, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[52] Robert F. Trent, "The Charter Oak Artifacts," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 127.

The tree's location was included on maps of Hartford and artists such as Thomas Cole and Frederic Church painted its gnarled portrait. Captivated by its allure, Sam Colt used its name for the large building he erected for the benefit of his workers. Through Charter Oak Hall Colt asserted his personal connection with the "glory of a patriotic history" embodied by Hartford's famous "Monarch Tree."[53] Only a few months after the dedication of Charter Oak Hall, however, the famous tree fell in a storm. The following day, beneath an illustration of the tree, *The Hartford Daily Courant* relayed the grievous news: "The Charter Oak is Prostrate!"

The entire Hartford community mourned the loss of the famous tree. The Colt's Armory Band was dispatched to the location and there, overlooking the tree, they played the "Dead March" from Saul, "Home Sweet Home," and "Hail Columbia." "No tree in the country has such legendary associations," *The Hartford Daily Courant* claimed.[54] That night bells across the city tolled, "… a token of the universal feeling, that one of the most sacred links that bind these modern days to the irrevocable past, had been suddenly parted."[55] In the days that followed, news of the Charter Oak's toppling spread far and wide. Having long-been celebrated by Hartford residents, the great tree was, as Gayle Samuels argues, a "storehouse for national memory."[56] After it fell, interest in the tree skyrocketed. Photographers and artists

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[53] J. Deane Alden, ed., *Proceedings at the Dedication of Charter Oak Hall Upon the South Meadow Grounds of Col. Samuel Colt* (Hartford: Case, Tiffany and Company 1856) 32.

[54] "The Charter Oak is Prostrate!" *The Hartford Daily Courant*, August 22, 1856.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Gayle Bardnow Samuels, "The Charter Oak," *Arnoldia* 59, no. 4 (1999-2000): 6.

recorded the sad occasion and, as the tree was cut up, Hartford residents sought relics by which they could preserve the oak's memory, not unlike the actions following the loss of Philadelphia's Penn Treaty Elm decades before. While many saved small pieces of the Charter Oak, others obtained large sections of the fabled tree. From the wood of the Charter Oak craftsman made, among other things, chairs, pianos, picture frames, jewelry, and the cradle for Samuel Jarvis Colt.[57]

The wood saved from the toppled Charter Oak was revered as a sacred relic of Connecticut's Colonial history and values. In his letter to Elizabeth Colt, Isaac Stuart asserted that the wood used for her son's new cradle, "…speaks out, with an imposing historic tongue, the lofty lesson of Republican Liberty."[58] In addition to his note to Mrs. Colt, Stuart wrote a letter to Samuel Jarvis Colt, in which he explained the history and meaning of the Charter Oak to the infant boy. The cradle, Stuart wrote:

> … should teach you always to remember that hero who hid the Charter so well, and make you follow his example in defending your country whenever it is in danger… This cradle too should teach you to be wise, and virtuous, and honorable, and industrious, just as those good men were who lived when the Oak was made so famous.[59]

Stuart had high hopes for the Colt baby and the role Charter Oak Cradle would have in shaping his life. But on December 24, 1857, Samuel Jarvis Colt died, at only ten

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[57] Trent 130. Upon her death three enormous pieces of the Charter Oak were given the Wadsworth Atheneum by Elizabeth Colt's estate, having been obtained and saved by her husband, though they were never cut into lumber for use. Trent illustrates many relics made from the illustrious tree in his article.

[58] I.W. Stuart to Mrs. Samuel Colt, April 25, 1857. Colt Papers, Registrar's Office, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford.

[59] Included in Barnard 34.

months old. "He was buried on Sunday," William Jarvis wrote the following week, "on his father's grounds, and near his residence… It is a dreadful blow to all of us; but I hope and trust that we shall bear it with Christian firmness and resignation. It was God's will, and therefore it was right, and designed for our spiritual good."[60]

News of the young Colt heir's death quickly spread throughout Hartford. As they mourned the death of their infant child, notes of sympathy reminded Sam and Elizabeth that their grief was understood by others, many of whom also suffered the loss of at least one child, and perhaps more. Infantile illness killed many children in nineteenth-century America, as Elizabeth knew all too well, having lost several of her siblings. In addition to letters of sympathy came poems that commemorated the infant boy's life. One, by Hartford's noted poet Lydia Sigourney, reminded mourners that the child was now in the care of his Savior, while another, by Lilly Waters, marked the radical change that the child's death brought to his family: "A wail within the palace,/ Hath hushed the Christmas Hymn;/ The halls so lately brilliant,/Are now with twilight dim."[61]

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[60] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, December 30, 1857. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[61] "Samuel Jarvis Colt, Died Dec. 24th, aged 10 Months," poem by Lilly Waters. "Samuel Jarvis Colt." by L[ydia] H. S[igourney]. The Waters poem is found in Box 29 and the Sigourney poem in Box 30 of the Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Though her name is not well known today, Lydia Sigourney was a prominent and highly acclaimed poet. She was, according to her biographer Gary Kelley, "… the most popular American woman poet on both sides of the Atlantic in the first half of the nineteenth century." Many of her poems have been gathered in Gary Kelley, ed., *Lydia Sigourney: Selected Poetry and Prose* (Ontario: Broadview Press 2008).

Reprinted by the Colts and, in the case of the Sigourney poem, surrounded by the thick black border found on period mourning stationery, these poems were intended as tangible mementoes of the young boy.[62] Sent to friends and family, they provided, as Gillian D. Sternberg has written of mourning poems, "an additional concrete object… that memorializes, recreates, and makes tangible the dead."[63] Reading the contemplative verses, mourners were reminded not only of the child's death, but also of his resurrection with God. Despite their morbid subject matter, these elegies were not uncommon in mid-nineteenth-century America. Poets like Waters and Sigourney were "muses of memory" and, through their poems, Max Cavitch argues, readers could be forever reminded of their lost loved ones.[64]

For Elizabeth and Samuel Colt, these poems were apparently insufficient in ensuring the permanent legacy of their little boy. A February 8, 1858 poem, entitled

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[62] Mourning stationery was commercially available and clearly standardized in design in the mid to late nineteenth century. Featuring thick black borders on both the envelopes and paper itself, the stationery could be customized with a monogram or family crest. Surviving examples show that Elizabeth Colt had several different sets which used both a figure of a rampant colt and an upper case C. Similar examples, including a custom monogramed piece belonging to Caroline Astor may be seen in Martha V. Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong, *A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America* (Stony Brook: The Museums at Stony Brook 1980) 171.

[63] Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds., *Women and the Material Culture of Death* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited 2013) 115. It should be noted that several of the mourning poems saved by members of the Colt family also preserve their original envelopes, including one, for Elizabeth Jarvis Colt (the daughter of Sam and Elizabeth Colt), which was sent to Hetty H. Jarvis and is found in Box 30, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[64] Max Cavitch, *American Elegy: The Poetry of Mourning from the Puritans to Whitman* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press 2007) 147.

"Lines on Viewing a Picture," written by Lilly Waters, refers again to the deceased infant but, more importantly, to a picture that memorialized Samuel Jarvis Colt. Drawing only from the first two stanzas of the five stanza poem, it is immediately clear that the author refers to a specific view, one that depicts not only the child, but also his mourning mother: "Serenely she is bending/ Above the cradle bed;/ A holy hush had fallen,/ A little spirit fled!/ Too still the baby lieth!/ Those laughing eyes so bright/ Are veiled in deeper shadow/ Than ever fell the night!"[65]

Laying in the Charter Oak Cradle, with his face turned toward the viewer, the picture alluded to in the poem portrays Samuel Jarvis Colt as though he is sleeping, with his mother watching over him. But, as the poem makes clear, this view depicts a child from whom life has disappeared (Figure 1.6). Surrounded by a wide gold frame, it appears, at first glance, to be a painting, its layers of paint readily visible in raking light. But its execution on a stiff paper substrate and the existence of a second, identical view with very similar coloring, suggests that this may be a photographic depiction, enhanced with paint.[66] Adding color to the picture, the image is rendered more realistic, and follows techniques seen in other mourning photography.[67] With

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[65] "Lines on Viewing a Picture" February 8, 1858, by Lilly Waters. Box 29, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[66] Scientific analysis of these two views, both of which belong to the Wadsworth Atheneum, has not yet been undertaken, but visual clues suggest these are both photographs. Analysis under raking light highlights areas which reflect heavily, while others do not reflect at all, suggesting an interaction between the painted surface and the photograph itself.

[67] A similarly painted mourning picture is included in Stanley B. Burns, *Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America* (Pasadena: Twelvetree Press 1990) 54.

the relative ease involved in creating a photograph, one must wonder whether these two depictions, with very similar gold frames, represent one that was intended for the mourning father, and another for the mourning mother.

With elaborate frames, it is evident that these pictures of Samuel Jarvis Colt were likely hung at Armsmear, creating conduits of memory which embodied almost shrine-like characteristics. As Elizabeth Edwards writes of memorial photographs, "The focus on the image is created through framing or matting, concentrating the eye on that image, lending it gravitas."[68] In addition to the gold frame around the picture itself, both Elizabeth Colt and her infant son are further framed by the tall vertical components of the Charter Oak Cradle. Flanked not only by pieces of the famed Charter Oak, but also by overt symbols of the Colt family, the rampant colts, Elizabeth and her son are firmly placed not only within the context of their family, but are drawn into the broader story of Connecticut history.

Using portraits to preserve the memory of deceased family members was an established custom for those able to afford such objects. Perhaps most famously seen in Charles Willson Peale's painting *Rachel Weeping*, which depicts the mourning mother crying over the body of her deceased daughter, paintings and depictions of deceased children were common in nineteenth-century America. While some depicted the deceased as though her or she was still living, such as Ralph Earl's 1833 portrait of Sarah Louisa Spence, others included clear allusions to death such as a broken rose or a clock, objects that are seen in Shepard Alonzo Mount's *Portrait of Camille*.[69]. This

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[68] Edwards 339.

[69] These examples are both illustrated in the chapter "In Memoriam" in Pike and Armstrong.

mid-nineteenth century penchant for mourning art also corresponded with photo technology, which enabled more rapid and accurate depictions of the dead. With the advances of photography, parents could obtain pictures of their deceased loved ones in a variety of styles and sizes. While these are frequently found today in museums, such at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which included several in their 2014 exhibit "Death Becomes Her," the personal associations of these mourning photographs are more accurately reflected in settings such as Clayton, the Pittsburgh home of Henry Clay Frick. Here photographs of the Frick's deceased daughter Martha still hang in her mother's bedroom.[70] As intensely personal objects, Elizabeth Edwards argues that "…photographs express a desire for memory, and the act of keeping a photograph is, like other souvenirs, an act of faith for the future. They are made to hold the fleeting, to still time, to create memory."[71] Immortalized in a photographic view, grieving parents such as the Fricks, the Colts, and countless others, could rest assured that the memory of their lost children would never fade away.

In the years that followed the death of Samuel Jarvis Colt, Elizabeth gave birth to three additional children, Caldwell Hart Colt (born in 1858), Elizabeth Jarvis Colt (born in 1860), and Henrietta Selden Colt (born in 1861). Death visited Armsmear again, however, and Elizabeth Jarvis Colt died on October 17, 1860, just shy of eight months old. Using poetic verse Lydia Sigourney eulogized the Colt child, comparing

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[70] I am grateful to my advisor, Professor Catharine Dann Roeber, for making me aware of the mourning photographs at Clayton. In addition to matted photographs, a pair of pictures with painted embellishments also hang in the house, one in Mr. Frick's room and the other in Mrs. Frick's room.

[71] Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs as Objects of Memory," in *The Object Reader,* Fiona Candlin and Riaford Guins, eds., (London and New York: Routledge 2009) 332.

Elizabeth's short life to that of a migratory bird. In pleasant weather the bird lived 'neath the palace eaves," yet with the coming of fall and winter, it flew off toward "some more genial clime."[72] Not surprisingly, the loss of two children took a toll on Sam and Elizabeth Colt. Not long after the death of Elizabeth Jarvis Colt, William Jarvis noted that "The Colonel has been very ill since the death of his child."[73]

Colonel Colt's health was constantly pushed to its limits, the result of an extreme work ethic and the constant attention necessary to maintain his busy arms factory. Since at least the late 1850s, reports of Sam's poor health were printed by newspapers including, in one case, a false account of his death in 1858.[74] The added agony of losing two children, however, severely impacted Colt's already tenuous condition. Writing to his nephew a month after the death of his granddaughter, William Jarvis wrote, "The Col. is still feeble, and mends very slowly… He must stop over tasking his brain before he can be well and this the Doctor will insist upon."[75] In his letters Colt's father-in-law made many references to the Colonel's frequent bouts with inflammatory rheumatism and efforts to hasten his recuperation through trips to

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[72] This poem and its associated envelope are found in Box 30, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[73] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, November 6, 1860. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[74] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, November 22, 1858. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. The rumor of Colt's death was refuted in an article in *The Hartford Daily Courant*, November 13, 1858.

[75] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, December 29, 1860. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

warmer climes and mineral springs. But, with the impending war and increasing business, Colt devoted additional time to his Armory, and started construction on a large addition to the building. William Jarvis could do little to hinder his son-in-law's devotion to his work. "I am sorry for it," he wrote to his nephew "as it will only be increasing his [Colt's] labors, which are now ten times greater than any man ought to perform. But work, he will, with all his might, so long as the breath of life is in him."[76]

After several months of failing health, exacerbated by the burdens of his work and the losses of his children, Colonel Samuel Colt died on January 10, 1862. "A great, and good man has indeed fallen," wrote William Jarvis, "and we shall never look on his like again - and what poor, dear stricken Lizzie will do without her best friend and strong protector, I do not know…"[77] At age thirty-five Elizabeth Colt, then pregnant, and with two small children, was a widow. But the death of Colonel Colt was not the only harsh blow that January. Just ten days after the death of her husband, Elizabeth bore the loss of her daughter, Henrietta Selden Colt, only seven months and twenty-seven days old. Thrust into unimaginable grief, and faced with two tremendous losses without any time to grieve, William Jarvis noted there was little Elizabeth could do but rely on faith, "God only can sustain, strengthen, and comfort her bereaved heart…"[78] Unfortunately few letters provide any insight into Elizabeth

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[76] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, April 27, 1861. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[77] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, January 21, 1862. William Jarvis letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[78] Ibid.

Colt's immediate reaction in what were undoubtedly some of her darkest days. Writing to Hetty Hart, Elizabeth's aunt, upon receiving the news of Henrietta's death, Lydia Sigourney, whose words helped memorialize Mrs. Colt's children and husband, was speechless: "I am utterly shocked. I know not what to say… I can think of nothing but dear Mrs. Colt. May the God of her fathers uphold her smitten spirit."[79]

As she had before, Sigourney again put pen to paper, and commemorated the life of Henrietta Colt. Like those of her siblings and father, this poem was printed on heavy stock, surrounded by a thick black border, and with the rampant colt and letter C at the top of the page (Figure 1.7). In composing her poem, however, Lydia Sigourney relied on the first person, placing the reader's attention not only on Henrietta, but also on the mother she left behind: "A tomb for thee, my babe!/ Dove of my bosom, can it be?/ But yesterday in all thy charms,/ Laughing and leaping in my arms,/ A tomb and shroud for thee!"[80] Located just below the details of Henrietta's life, in thick black Gothic lettering, the phrase "The Mourning Mother" reminded the

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[79] L[ydia] H. Sigourney to My Beloved Friend [Hetty B. Hart], January 20, 1862. Box 5, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[80] "Henrietta Selden Colt, Died January 20, 1862, Aged 7 Months and 27 Days. The Mourning Mother." Poem by L[ydia]. H. S[igourney], Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. In addition to Sigourney's poem is a second poem, by E.P.R. (likely Emily P. Rogers), entitled "Lines written on the death of Henrietta Selden Colt, Who died Jan. 20th, 1862, a few days after her dear father. Aged 7 Months and 27 Days." In this poem Rogers alludes to the loss of the father and his daughter within a short period of time, comparing it to the destruction of a noble oak and the lovely flower below, who died without the oak's protection, a carefully chosen analogy that drew from Colt's admiration for the Charter Oak.

reader that, after Samuel Colt's death just ten days before, only Elizabeth remained to mourn the loss of her daughter.

Until his death, Elizabeth Colt figured into the shadow of her husband's name and had been involved with the creation of a material world in Hartford as the life-partner of Samuel Colt. But with her husband gone, Elizabeth suddenly found herself in the position of head of household. Elizabeth was, with Caldwell, then three-and-a-half years old, all that remained of the family she and Sam created. Despite the immense losses she suffered over the course of only a few years, with the support of family and friends, Elizabeth Colt endeavored to move on. As documentary and material evidence suggests, she embraced her role as the creator of a new Colt legacy, one that would rely on material objects to memorialize her loved ones. Just as the Charter Oak Cradle evoked the memory of Hartford's famous tree, the buildings and works of art Elizabeth envisioned would publically render the memory of her three children and husband in physical form.

Figure 1.1 – Elizabeth H. Colt, Alman & Co., New York, circa 1900. Photograph. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., Archives.

Figure 1.2 - Colonel Samuel Colt, unknown artist, circa 1860. Oil on panel, 12 x 15 in. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

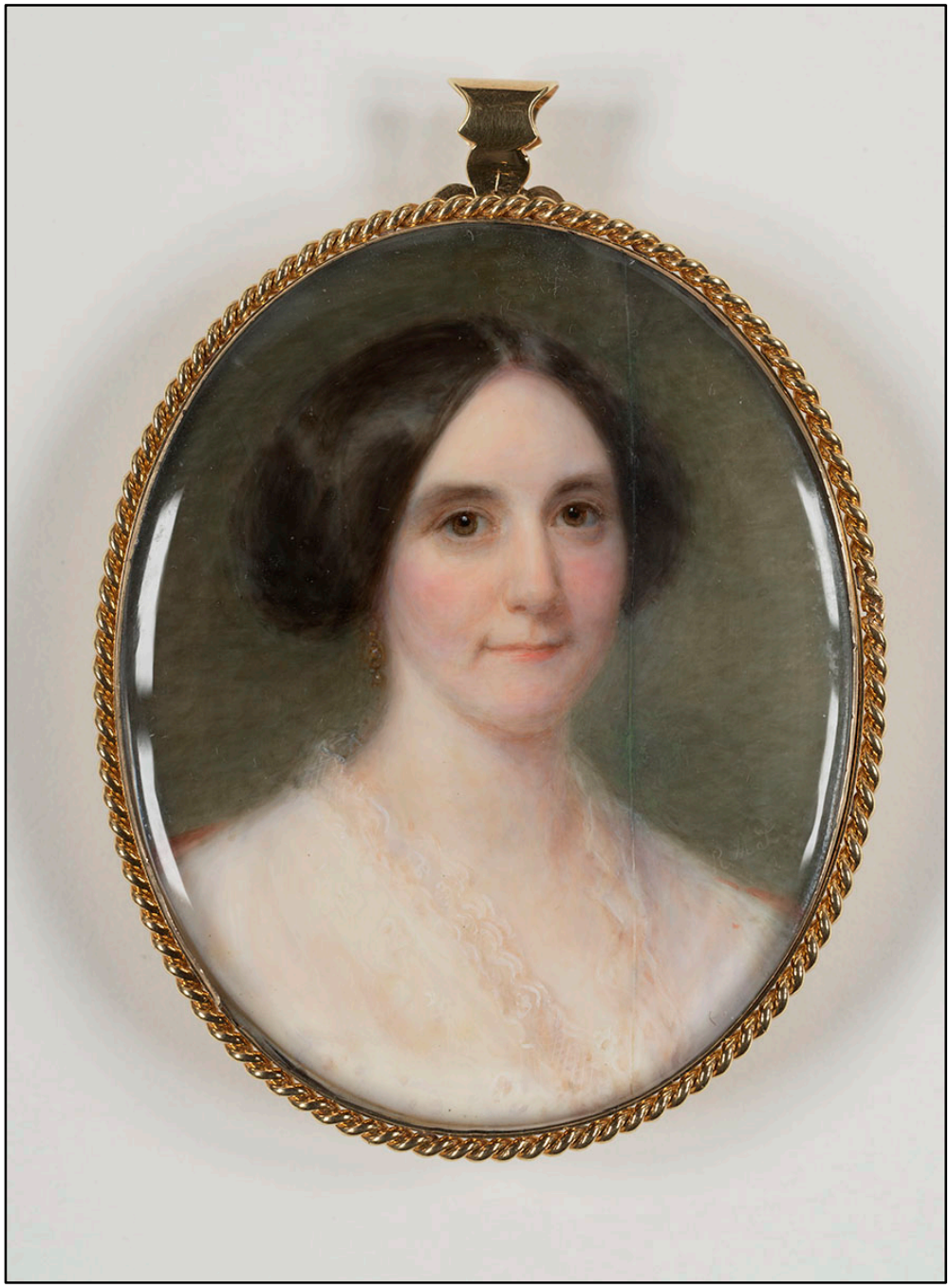
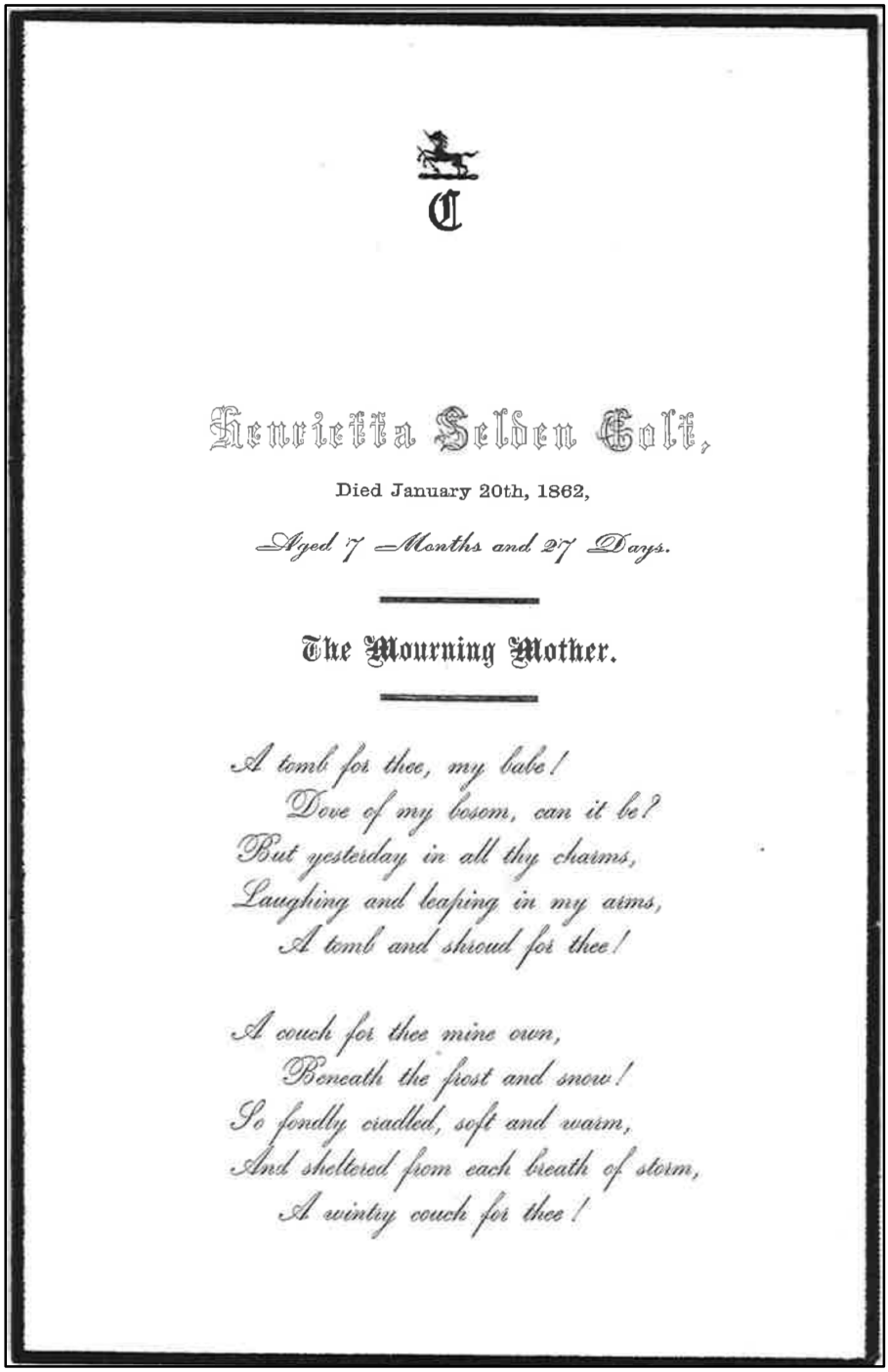


Figure 1.3 – Portrait of Elizabeth Hart Jarvis, Richard Morrell Staig (American 1817-1881), 1856. Watercolor on ivory, 2 5/8 x 2 1/4 in. Likely executed just prior to her marriage. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.65.

Figure 1.4 – Armsmear, Hartford, 1855-1858. Octavius Jordan, architect, Hartford. Photograph by R.S. De Lamater, Hartford, before 1864. Viewed from the southeast. Photograph. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford Conn., Archives.

Figure 1.5 – Colt Family Cradle, designed by Isaac W. Stuart (active c. 1844-1857), made by John H. Most (active c. 1855-1876), Hartford, 1858. White oak, fabric (modern), and rhinestones (modern). Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.1580.

Figure 1.6 – Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt standing over Samuel Jarvis Colt in the Charter Oak Cradle, unknown artist, circa 1858. Oil on panel, 11 x 9 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., Gift of Lisa Utley Shoemaker, 2012.X.3.1.



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Henrietta Selden Colt,

Died January 20th, 1862,

Aged 7 Months and 27 Days.

The Mourning Mother.

A tomb for thee, my babe!
Dove of my bosom, can it be?
But yesterday in all thy charms,
Laughing and leaping in my arms,
A tomb and shroud for thee!

A couch for thee mine own,
Beneath the frost and snow!
So fondly cradled, soft and warm,
And sheltered from each breath of storm,
A wintry couch for thee!

Figure 1.7 – First page of mourning poem for Henrietta Selden Colt, by Lydia H. Sigourney, 1862. Ink on paper, 7 x 4 ½ in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., Gift of Elizabeth Putnam, 1997.8.5.

Chapter 2

THE GRIEVING WIDOW

The loss of her husband and daughter in January 1862 led to a great outpouring of support from friends and acquaintances in Hartford and afar. Many sent Elizabeth notes, dozens of which she saved, filled with memories of her loved ones. Despite her losses Elizabeth remained strong. As her father noted "…Elizabeth bears her dread[ed] afflictions with wonderful composure and resignation."[81] In the months following the deaths of Colonel Colt and Henrietta, Elizabeth's health was not especially strong. Her father wrote frequently of violent pains in her legs, and continued discomfort which, at times, relegated her to a rolling chair.[82] Elizabeth's stress, grief, and ill health were not conducive to her pregnancy, however, and in late June 1862, she gave birth to a stillborn daughter, the third and final blow in a series of horrific events. Now left with only her son Caldwell, Elizabeth turned to material objects by which she could preserve the memories of her lost loved ones.[83]

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[81] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, February 10, 1862. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[82] In late June 1862, William Jarvis wrote to his nephew: "Mrs. Colt's chief trouble now is from the swelling of one of her legs, which prevents her walking without some difficulty. But she has a chair on wheels, and I gave her a good ride in it today on the balcony, which runs round the house. She enjoyed it greatly as she likes to be in the open air and to take a great deal of exercise." William Jarvis to William Jarvis, June 30, 1862. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. This chair is likely one that had previously been used by her husband during his ailments.

[83] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, June 10, 17, 21, and 30, 1862. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

Within a month of Henrietta's death in January, Elizabeth engaged Matthew Wilson, who had previously executed pastel portraits of several members of her family, to render a likeness of Henrietta. Looking at the finished portrait, which focused on the cherubic face of his granddaughter, William Jarvis wrote "…[it] is a great comfort to all of us to have it."[84] In fact, Wilson completed portraits of each of the Colt children who died as infants and, surrounded by their likenesses, Elizabeth could look back on happier days before their deaths. Unlike the picture of Samuel Jarvis Colt in the Charter Oak Cradle, these pastel portraits focused solely on the faces of the Colt children and, with their large scale and deep frames, it is clear that they held places of importance at Armsmear.

Although Wilson executed a pastel portrait of Colonel Colt three years before his death, Elizabeth decided a more monumental image was necessary. She desired a depiction that would pay homage not only to the man who was her husband, but also celebrate the triumphs of his life. To achieve these means, Elizabeth engaged Charles Loring Elliott, then considered among America's finest artists, to paint a likeness of Samuel Colt. Having recently painted Matthew Vassar, Samuel Avery, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Elliott had an established reputation as a painter of America's prominent men.[85]

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[84] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, February 10, 1862. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. Three pastels by Wilson, of the three deceased Colt children, are now in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum. While Jarvis references Wilson "painting" the portraits, these likenesses were actually rendered in pastel and, with their delicate colors, are moving depictions of the children.

[85] Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery 1997) 174. Born in Scipio, New York, Charles Loring Elliott studied with John Trumbull and John Quidor in the early 1830s, and spent ten years working as an itinerant artist in upstate New

With the help of her friend, Hartford native Frederic E. Church, Elizabeth Colt made contact with Elliott, who quoted a price in early December1863. Discussing her plans with Church, Elizabeth admitted that "The price does seem a large one for a portrait to be sure," but she conceded, "…if he will only execute such a picture of my husband as there should be of him, it is all I ask & he can make his own terms…"[86] Later reported to have cost 3,000 dollars, Elizabeth made clear her desire to obtain a fitting portrait of her late husband.[87] Although painted posthumous portraits were quickly being supplanted by photographic views, the penchant for grand painted portraits was not entirely forgotten. Americans had long been fascinated with depictions of their fallen heroes such as George Washington, whose portraits were copied long after his death. In England, Queen Victoria engaged Franz Xaver Winterhalter and other artists to execute portraits of the Prince Consort following his death in 1861.[88]

York before returning to New York City. Beginning in 1845 he exhibited at the National Academy of Design and soon became known as America's finest portrait artist. So great was Elliott's reputation upon his death that an eight-page biography of his life was published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in December 1868.

[86] Mrs. Samuel Colt to Frederic E. Church, December 18, 1863. Collection Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, OL.1998.1.121.1.

[87] The cost of $3,000 is noted in two separate locations: William Jarvis to William Jarvis, March 10, 1865. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society, and "Portrait of Colonel Colt," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, March 13, 1865. Inflation calculators suggest that this price relates to over $71,000 in 2016.

[88] Many portraits of Prince Albert in the Royal Collection date from the years immediately after his death, and Winterhalter returned to England to execute additional portraits of the deceased Prince Consort in the 1860s. One of these posthumous portraits is now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, and is almost the same size as the Elliott portrait of Samuel Colt.

Exactly when Elliott started on the portrait of Sam Colt is unclear, as a June 1864 letter between Charlotte Church and her artist brother conveys Mrs. Colt's disappointment with the artist's delay. While he planned to be in Hartford around April 1, Elliott was unexpectedly called to Albany to paint Erastus Corning, a prominent New York politician and businessman, and had not yet arrived in Hartford. By February 1865, however, work on Colonel Colt's portrait was underway, and William Jarvis noted that Elliott was using "the several pictures, photographs, and busts, taken from him [Sam Colt] in his life time," to ensure an accurate likeness.[89]

Unfortunately William Jarvis' letter makes no reference to exactly which depictions Elliott used, but several portraits of Colonel Colt and at least one marble bust executed from life provided the artist with ample source material. In her analysis of the painting, Elizabeth Kornhauser has suggested that Elliott's portrayal of Colt's face may have been copied from a miniature by Gerald S. Hayward, but perhaps more likely, is a photograph taken by Mathew Brady.[90] It was Brady's photograph of Colt that Elizabeth chose to have engraved as a frontispiece for the privately printed biography of her husband, suggesting this as a depiction of her late husband that she preferred. In addition to his client's affinity for the Brady image, Elliott was widely

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[89] Charlotte Church to Frederic E. Church, June 18, 1864. Collection Olana State Historic Site, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, OL.1998.1.33.1, and William Jarvis to William Jarvis, February 16, 1865. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[90]Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, *American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Vol. 1* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum and Yale University Press 1996) 354.

acknowledged as an artist who relied on photographs for his portraits, and frequently used those taken by his friend, Mathew Brady.[91]

Sam Colt's portrait began attracting attention even before it was finished, and more than one thousand people came to view the unfinished painting at Armsmear in March 1865, at the invitation of Mrs. Colt. By late April the Colonel's portrait was completed, and after seeing it William Jarvis wrote to his nephew, "Such a portrait I never saw before."[92] Over seven feet tall and more than five feet wide, the painting presented a full-length depiction of Samuel Colt, dressed in an elegant dark suit, his face picked out against the shadowed background (Figure 2.1). Around the canvas an elaborately carved frame, completely gilded, featured Colt's coat of arms and was surmounted by the iconic rampant colt, the same motif that appeared above the dome of the Colt Armory.

While this painting focused on Samuel Colt, it is clear that Elizabeth choose particular objects to be included along with her husband, creating a more comprehensive portrait that represented him within the landscape of his life and achievements. Perhaps most conspicuous among these is the large marble-topped sideboard upon which Samuel Colt's left hand rests, with its carved details highlighted in the reflecting light. Although this sideboard does not appear in the bills and

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[91] Elliott used photographs by Brady to paint portraits of James Fennimore Cooper, Henry Inman, and himself, demonstrating that a Brady photograph would not be an unlikely source for the Colt portrait as well. When eulogizing Elliott, Thomas B. Thorpe noted that artist "…never saw a picture made by the [photographic] process that did not have something about it to admire." Panzer 78-80.

[92] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, March 10, 1865 and April 26, 1865. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

receipts between Samuel Colt and Ringuet-Le Prince-Marcotte, it is almost undoubtedly a piece of furniture located at Armsmear at the time of his death.[93] Owing to the fact that the decorating firm's letters and receipts make no reference to the ballroom, billiard room, or office, spaces that were completed and furnished at the time of Colt's death, this sideboard was likely commissioned for one of these rooms. Planned, built, and furnished between 1855 and 1858, Armsmear was integrally associated with the tastes and lifestyle of Samuel Colt. Seen as emblematic of the Colonel's dedication to his family, Henry Barnard wrote that Colt:

> …began, though a bachelor, to build him[self] a house, and improve his grounds. When he became a family-man, and children were born to him, his cares for domestic surroundings increased tenfold. Indeed, he was never so active at adorning the paradise of his home as when surprised by death.[94]

By including the large sideboard, Elizabeth Colt not only referenced her husband's refined taste in quality furniture, but also his desire to provide for his family, creating and furnishing his "palace house."[95]

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[93] A significant collection of drawings, letters, bills, and receipts between Leon Marcotte and Samuel Colt survive in the Samuel Colt Papers at the Connecticut Historical Society, detailing the completion and furnishing of Armsmear. For more on this see Philip M. Johnston, "Dialogues between Designer and Client: Furnishings Proposed by Leon Marcotte to Samuel Colt in the 1850s," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 257-275.

[94] Barnard 71.

[95] L[ydia] H. Sigourney to My dear Friend [Elizabeth H. Colt], June 14, 1862. Letters to Mrs. Colt, 1862-1885, Connecticut Historical Society. Carved on both sides, this sideboard was not likely placed against a wall, and was perhaps located between the billiard room's two billiard tables. A "side board" worth $25 is noted in this room in Colt's probate inventory. Probate Inventory of Col. Samuel Colt, Accepted June 2, 1862. Hartford County Probate Book Vol. 68, page 487. Accessed through Ancestry.com. The sideboard in the Elliott portrait is now in the collection of the

In his right hand Colt holds his certificate of membership from the London Institute of Civil Engineers. Visible to those close to the canvas, the "4th day of May 1852" records the day that Colt was elected as an associate member of the institution, the first American to receive such an honor.[96] Just beyond his left hand, on top of the sideboard, is a two-tiered golden vase, a gift to Colt from the Second King of Siam. In 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry visited Siam (now Japan), a kingdom then governed by two kings, and presented the Second King with a Colt revolver. Learning of the monarch's enjoyment from the gun, Colt sent examples of his arms to each king, hoping to spark a commercial dialogue. Among the many gifts he received from the monarchs in return was the impressive vase included in the portrait.[97] Exactly why this vase was chosen over other objects is unclear but, as William Hosley writes, the vase is "emblematic of Sam Colt's success in marketing his firearms worldwide," and this, combined with the precious materials of its composition and visual appeal seem convincing reasons for its inclusion.[98]

Wadsworth Atheneum (accession number 2013.20.1), having descended from Elizabeth Colt to relatives in the Beach family.

[96] Houze 80, 243.

[97] The vase was apparently sent to Colt along with "weapons of war" sometime before May 1859, when the Second King sent Colt a letter inquiring about its whereabouts. Colt replied in October, saying that the gifts had not arrived, sparking a dialogue with the Consulate of the United States in Bangkok. For more on this relationship see the Colt letters in the Registrar's Office at the Wadsworth Atheneum and letters housed in Box 1, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[98] Hosley 172. The vase, which has also been called stacking cup and bowl set, was donated as part of the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection to the Wadsworth Atheneum, where it remains today (accession number 1905.1543 A, B), along with the

Sam Colt received many elaborate and valuable gifts during his lifetime, and his probate inventory records a "Cabinet of Presents" in Armsmear's first floor music room. It was here, surrounded by Colt's other prized possessions, that the "metallic urn" presented by the Second King of Siam was located.[99] By the time of the Elliott portrait, however, this urn, and the other objects in the Cabinet of Presents, had been moved to the second floor of Armsmear, where it is shown in the portrait. As Henry Barnard wrote in 1866, Colt's ballroom "has been since his death converted to a picture gallery and repository of arms, family portraits, memoranda, and scrapbooks of personal history."[100] Here, secured behind plate glass, the renamed "Cabinet of Presents and Memorials" contained many of the Colonel's prized possessions, including the "gifts from far Siam," which were displayed on their own shelf.[101]

Describing this display further, Barnard notes flanking side cabinets containing sixty-eight different firearms including revolvers, blunderbusses, and pistols, exactly the types of objects visible in the cabinet behind Colt's left shoulder.[102] From Barnard's description it is clear that Colt is depicted at Armsmear in the portrait by Charles Elliott, in a room that was integrally associated with memory. Though

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other items sent from the kings of Siam. For more on Colt's interests in opening dialogues with foreign heads of state see Hosley 94.

[99] Probate Inventory of Samuel Colt, 485.

[100] Barnard 115.

[101] Barnard 127-128. The gifts from the Kings of Siam were also illustrated in Barnard's text.

[102] Herbert Houze postulates that these guns, and those collected by Elizabeth Colt upon her husband's death, reflect "… the desire on Mrs. Colt's part to demonstrate her husband's posthumous contributions to the northern war effort." Houze 157.

Barnard writes that it was Elizabeth Colt who repurposed this space after her husband's death, Sam Colt's probate inventory records the placement of the Charter Oak Cradle in this room, suggesting that the space was used to memorialize family members through relics while he was alive as well. In moving objects to this room from the ground floor after her husband's death, Elizabeth Colt added additional layers of memory and meaning, creating a space that paid homage not only to her first son, but to other members of her family as well.

Located behind Colt in his portrait, the glass-fronted cabinet of guns is shrouded in shadow, ensuring the viewer's attention is directed to Colt's well-illuminated face, the vase, and the Colt Armory seen through the open window. Immediately identifiable with its blue onion dome and gilded rampant colt, the Armory is placed behind a tall leafy tree, suggested by Elizabeth Kornhauser to be a descendant of the Charter Oak. Ensuring the placement of this tree, a direct link to Connecticut's Colonial past, in front of Colt's gun-making factory, the portrait reminded viewers of Sam Colt's fondness for the storied oak, while also placing the family name and business in conversation with Connecticut's extensive Colonial history.[103]

Interestingly, however, Elliott depicts a building that was no longer standing by the time he started work on Colt's portrait. The Colt Armory was destroyed by fire

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[103] Kornhauser, *American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Vol. 1*, 354. The Charter Oak held great significance to the Colts, who maintained that a tree transplanted to the lawn of Armsmear in the late 1850s grew from an acorn of the storied tree and became known as the "Charter Oak Junior." For more on this tree, and the debate surrounding its legitimacy, see "Is Colt Tree Son of Charter Oak?" *The Hartford Courant*, November 2, 1907.

on the morning of February 5, 1864, meaning that the artist likely used images of the factory to depict it realistically, just as he did with Colt himself. Luckily, depictions of the Armory, including a color lithograph by B.E. and E.C. Kellogg, were widely available in Hartford (Figure 2.2). One must assume that Elliott used this or a similar view to render the Armory, which would account for his painting the building's eastern façade, which faced the river, rather than its western façade, which faced Colt's house.[104]

Including actual objects from Colt's life in his portrait, such as furnishings from Armsmear, items that he owned, and his beloved Armory, Elizabeth crafted a more holistic portrait of her husband. Her choice to depict these specific objects, souvenirs of Colt's life, rendered the portrait more realistic and, as Susan Stewart argues, leads to a more authentic experience for the viewer. "We might say," Stewart writes of souvenirs and other objects of desire, "that this capacity of objects to serve as traces of authentic experience is, in fact, exemplified by the souvenir…we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us…"[105] The objects included in the Elliott portrait were those by which Sam Colt had been surrounded during his life, and which still figured into the daily experience of his widow. While he was gone, souvenirs remained, and by including them so prominently in her husband's portrait, Elizabeth Colt authenticated her own

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[104] William Hosley has astutely noted the similarities between Colt's portrait by Elliott and the same artist's portrait of Matthew Vassar, which depicts Vassar College through the opening in a similar way that the Colt portrait depicts the Armory. Hosley 172.

[105] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 1993) 134-135.

experience with these objects, turning them into tangible and permanent connections between her and her husband.

As soon as Sam Colt's portrait was finished, Elliott began a pendant portrait of Elizabeth and her one surviving son, Caldwell Hart Colt (Figure 2.3). Again incorporating elements from the Colt house, such as the yellow tufted sofa from one of the primary living spaces, personal objects provided additional insight into the painting's subjects. In her left hand Elizabeth Colt holds a book upon which a cross is immediately visible, reflecting her strong religious convictions. Caldwell, who leans in toward his mother, holds the string of a toy cannon, made using mountings of muskets taken at Chapultepec during the Mexican War, and which had been part of his father's collection. While some art historians have argued the inclusion of military toys is a device commonly found in depictions of nineteenth-century boys in an effort to assert their dominance, this small object is a tangible connection between father and son.[106]

An object with direct associations with Sam Colt, this cannon evokes his memory within the context of Caldwell, his one surviving child. It was a souvenir by which Caldwell could recall his father, who not only owned the small cannon, but whose life as a gun manufacturer is alluded to in its form. As Susan Stewart asserts in her book, the souvenir "… is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia."[107] Caldwell's small cannon, easily classified as a seemingly

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[106] David L. Simon, "Eastman Johnson's Lunchtime," *Colby Quarterly* 39, no. 4 [December 2003]: 414. This cannon, mentioned on page 12 of Elizabeth Colt's will is now part of the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection at the Wadsworth (accession number 1905.1074A).

[107] Stewart 135.

inconsequential toy, is clearly a souvenir that establishes a direct connection between Samuel Colt and his surviving family members, and is thus an element that seeks to fulfill those nostalgic demands.

Perhaps most apparent in Elizabeth Colt's portrait, however, is her voluminous white dress, which stands in stark contrast to the dark clothing in which she chose to have her husband depicted. With short sleeves and a low neckline, paired with a deep v-shaped bodice that sits relatively high on her waist, Elizabeth's dress follows contemporary fashion designs of the 1860s. Made of a plain white silk satin weave, and with deep lace trimmings on both the bodice and sleeves, the dress reflects Elizabeth's social status and wealth.[108] Through her pose, however, the viewer's eye is drawn to a white shoe, conspicuously placed upon a colorful footrest, and to a very long lace veil, which Elizabeth holds in her right hand. While no contemporary accounts have been uncovered describing her marriage attire, these elements likely suggest that Elizabeth Colt wears her wedding dress, which has been altered to conform to a fashionable mid-1860s cut.[109] While veils were not uncommon for high society ball gowns, those of the length depicted in Elizabeth's portrait appear almost uniquely in bridal fashion plates.[110] Drawing attention to her veil, Elizabeth evokes

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[108] Similar dresses are found in Stella Blum, *Victorian Fashions & Costumes from Harper's Bazar: 1867-1898* (New York: Dover Publications Inc. 1974) and Stella Blum, *Fashions and Costumes from Godey's Lady Book* (New York: Dover Publications Inc. 1985).

[109] I am indebted to Lynne Bassett, textile historian, and Linda Eaton, the John L. & Marjorie P. McGraw Director of Collections & Senior Curator of Textiles at the Winterthur Museum for their assistance in deciphering Elizabeth Colt's dress. Both were enormously generous with their time and expertise.

[110] See Blum *Victorian Fashions & Costumes from Harper's Bazar: 1867-1898* and *Fashions and Costumes from Godey's Lady Book.*

the well-known 1842 Winterhalter portrait of Queen Victoria in her wedding dress, replete with elaborate trimmings, and in which she holds her wedding veil.[111] Elizabeth's emulation of Queen Victoria is not surprising. As Cynthia Amnéus writes, "Unquestionably, both the style and color of her [Queen Victoria's] gown were emulated just as gowns of royalty and celebrities are today..."[112] Given her vast financial resources, Elizabeth Colt, like Queen Victoria, could afford the most fashionable of dresses at the time of her wedding and for her portrait. But by including elements from her wedding ensemble in her portrait, Elizabeth displayed a decided effort to reference the day in 1856 when she and Sam Colt were united by marriage.[113]

This theme is further reinforced in the frame of Elizabeth's portrait which, like that of her husband, is elaborately carved and gilded. While Sam's portrait is

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[111] Cynthia Amnéus, *Wedded Perfection: Two Centuries of Wedding Gowns* (London: D. Giles Limited for the Cincinnati Art Museum 2010) 34. This connection to Queen Victoria is reinforced by readings of this painting by Elizabeth Kornhauser, who argues that Elizabeth Colt's portrait shares much in common with John Calcott Horsley's portrait group of Queen Victoria with her children. Like Elizabeth Colt, Queen Victoria spent vast sums of money memorializing her deceased husband through patronage of the arts and architecture. Kornhauser, *American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Vol. 1*, 354.

[112] Amnéus 36.

[113] Elizabeth Colt saved her wedding veil and flounces, gifting them upon her death to her great-niece, Elizabeth Robinson. They descended in her family until 2010, when Elizabeth C. Titus gave Elizabeth's wedding veil and shoes, as well as many other objects related to the Jarvis family, to the Connecticut Historical Society. The veil is accession number 2010.423.1 and the shoes are 2010.423.11.a, b. Elizabeth H. Colt to "My dearly beloved niece [Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Robinson], July 15, 1905. Box 4, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

surmounted by the Colt coat of arms and the rampant colt, the escutcheon at the top of Elizabeth's frame is split down the center. On the left side it depicts a highly constricted Colt coat of arms, while the right side features the six ostrich feathers of the Jarvis family crest.[114] Brought together above Elizabeth's portrait, and placed immediately beneath the rampant colt, these symbols emphasized the unification of Elizabeth and Sam in life, and also in death.

At Armsmear the Elliott portraits were prominently placed in the picture gallery, the space created by Elizabeth Colt in the home's former ballroom, and the room in which her husband is depicted in his portrait. In order create the picture gallery, Elizabeth Colt was obligated to carry out extensive work, closing the windows through which the Armory had been visible, and opening skylights in the ceiling, ensuring that "Light, hence falling direct from heaven, will set every object in the best point of view."[115] Illuminated by the light of the Divine, this room, which was fraught with memory and family associations, was thus placed within sight of, and overseen by, God. The daughter of an Episcopal priest, Elizabeth was clearly conscious of the role of the Almighty in her home.

As they had during their creation, the portraits of Colonel and Mrs. Colt attracted much attention upon their completion. Their grand scale and subject choice attracted area newspapers, and before long descriptions of these paintings spread

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[114] An engraved view of the Jarvis coat of arms, with the six ostrich feathers, is seen on the title page of George A. Jarvis et al., *The Jarvis Family; or The Descendants of the First Settlers of the Name in Massachusetts….* One is also reminded of Queen Victoria, whose portraits were often surmounted by her coat of arms or royal cypher.

[115] Barnard 115.

nationwide.[116] Of Samuel Colt's portrait one journalist wrote, "[it is a] marvel of accuracy and finish… The accessories of the painting are elaborated with wonderful skill, and illustrate the various triumphs achieved by Col. Colt in carrying forward the great work of his life."[117] Including elements of her husband's private and public life, Elizabeth Colt paid tribute to the man she knew at home, but also to Samuel Colt the great gun manufacturer, whose reputation was widely acclaimed. Just as William Jarvis wrote of the great comfort the family felt by having the Wilson portrait of Henrietta, the portrait of Samuel Colt symbolically restored the family that had been disrupted by his death.

Not long after the Elliott portraits were completed, Elizabeth's sister Hetty married C. Nichols Beach in Armsmear's picture gallery. With its long, narrow arrangement, the space was well-suited for a ceremony typically associated with a church. Descriptions of the wedding and reception were carried by newspapers in Hartford and afar, and almost all referenced the arrangement of the room that day: "A portion of the gallery immediately in front of the magnificent full length portrait of the late Col. Colt was fitted up as an altar for the purpose, and around this the bridal party

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[116] "The handsomest residence in the United States…" *The Daily Picayune*, October 28, 1869.

[117] "Portrait of Colonel Colt," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, March 13, 1865. This same article notes that Elliott has also recently finished a bust (portrait) of Joseph Church, the father of Frederic E. Church, suggesting that while he was in Hartford painting the Colt portraits, Elliott was also engaged by Joseph Church. Additionally, Frederic E. Church commissioned Charles Elliott to paint his portrait in 1866, demonstrating his respect for Elliott's talents. The Elliott portraits of both Churches are now in the collection of Olana. Gerald L. Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: Catalogue Raisonné of Works at Olana Station Historic Site, Vol. I* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1994) 11.

stood."[118] Here Episcopal Bishop John Williams married Hetty and Nick in front of Sam Colt's portrait, which hung on the wall like the reredos above a church altar. Despite his death, Samuel Colt was able to attend the wedding vicariously through his portrait, and the arrangement of the space that day ensured that the Colonel's presence would not go unnoticed. Visions of this scene were especially memorable and, describing the wedding nearly ten years later, one writer recorded:

> at the wedding of his sister-in-law, she caused a species of altar to be constructed before this portrait, [so] that, while taking the solemn oaths of marriage, he [Colt] might still seem to assist – to "give her away," as he would have done, fondly and proudly; for he loved her with a father's and brother's love.[119]

From this and other references it is clear that Samuel Colt's portrait became his proxy at important family events. Like the picture of Samuel Jarvis Colt, Colonel Colt's, portrait with its immense gilded frame, created a shrine-like image at the wedding, which clearly held immense meaning to his family.

Despite its size, the Colonel's portrait was not confined only to Armsmear. At her annual Christmas Party for the children of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Sam Colt's presence was again elicited through his portrait. Describing the scene of what was likely the 1868 party, one reporter took note of the large illuminated Christmas tree, the elaborate decorations, the singing, and the gifts. In addition to the expected Christmas decorations the journalist noted, "At the opposite end of the room [from the

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[118] "A Grand Wedding," *The Chicago Times*, December 29, 1867. The article printed by *The Chicago Times* was a serialized version of one originally printed in *The New York Home Journal* which spread through many newspapers in the week after the wedding.

[119] M.E.W.S. "The Homes of America – VII: Armsmear," 322.

Christmas tree] was a magnificent life-like portrait of the late Colonel Colt, its rich gilt frame surrounded by evergreens, and surmounted by a large cross of white camelias [*sic*] and other choice flowers…"[120] Just as he had been included as a guest at the wedding of his sister-in-law, Samuel Colt was also in attendance at the Christmas festivities of the Church of the Good Shepherd.[121]

Among the first efforts of the grieving widow to memorialize her late husband, the Charles Loring Elliott portraits became important objects for Elizabeth and her family. Depicting Colt within his house, surrounded by some of his prized possessions, and overlooking his beloved Armory, Elliott's portrait ensured that Sam Colt's memory would endure over time. Including objects from his collection, the Elliott portrait allowed viewers to connect not only with the portrait's subject, but also with the souvenirs that surrounded him, and which were placed nearby. From the northern wall of Armsmear's picture gallery Colt looked directly at the pendant portrait of his wife and son, effectively reuniting the father with his family. As she did with the painting of her husband, Elizabeth used specific objects in her own portrait as souvenirs by which Sam Colt's memory would be evoked. Though easily overlooked

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[120] "Christmas Festivities," unknown newspaper clipping likely related to the 1868 Christmas party of the Church of the Good Shepherd, found in Box 17, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. A separate, but very similar, article is also found in this box, and an abridged version was included in January 9, 1869 edition of New Haven's *Columbian Register*.

[121] Exactly which portrait of Colt was used at this party cannot be ascertained from these articles but, from the description of a "magnificent life-like portrait" and a "rich gilt frame," the reporter almost unquestionably describes the Elliott portrait, suggesting that Elizabeth chose this depiction of her husband to evoke his memory and participation in her holiday festivities.

as conventions of a wealthy woman and a young boy, her dress and Caldwell's small cannon were both carefully calculated objects which invoked the legacy of Sam Colt in her portrait as well.

While previous readings of these paintings have focused particularly on the scale and composition, deeper reading of the objects included in these paintings provides a far more nuanced understanding of their meaning. Including pieces of furniture at Armsmear, such as the sideboard, and establishing Sam Colt's placement in the house through the cabinet of guns, Elizabeth ensured the connection between her husband and Armsmear, the home in which she still lived. In her own portrait, Elizabeth evoked the memory of her wedding day by showcasing her immense veil and wedding shoes, suggesting that these paintings are far more than simply grand signs of wealth, and are instead markers of family history first and foremost. Furthermore, by including Colt's portrait at family events, the painting garnered a sense of agency, just as if it was the true embodiment of her husband. Flat items created of paint and canvas, the portraits by Charles Loring Elliott were objects with a meaning that extended far beyond their immediately apparent subject.

Figure 2.1 – Colonel Samuel Colt, Charles Loring Elliott (American, 1812–1868), 1865. Oil on canvas, 84 x 64 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.8.

Figure 2.2 – "Armory of Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company," B.E. & E.C. Kellogg, Hartford, circa 1856. Color lithograph on paper, 9 3/16 x 17 ¼ in. Included in *Proceedings at the Dedication of Charter Oak Hall, Upon the South Meadow Grounds of Colonel Colt*. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection.

Figure 2.3 – Mrs. Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt and Son Caldwell, Charles Loring Elliott (American, 1812–1868), 1865. Oil on canvas, 84 x 66 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.9.

Chapter 3

LIKE BURYING HIM AGAIN

While waiting for Charles Elliott to arrive in Hartford to begin the Colt portraits, Elizabeth Colt suffered another tremendous loss. Her husband's "pride and pet," the Colt Armory, was destroyed by fire on February 5, 1864. In addition to demolishing Colt's beloved Armory building, the fire destroyed much of the specialty machinery within, and put a reported nine-hundred men out of work.[122] It was a loss that shocked the entire city of Hartford, and the story was carried by newspapers and journals worldwide. As one writer lamented:

> This is the most disastrous fire that ever took place in the State. The destruction of the large buildings, the stock on hand, finished and in process of manufacture, and the costly machinery and patterns estimated by some to have been worth nearly a half million of dollars, foot up a startling aggregate of loss.[123]

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[122] Writing to her daughter Hetty on the day of the fire, Elizabeth Miller Jarvis (Elizabeth Colt's mother) wrote, "This has been a very sad morning to us – the Armory – the pride, and pet of our dear Col. has been consumed by fire – and the office where so many years, he sat, and labored." Letter from Elizabeth Miller Jarvis to Hettie [*sic*] Jarvis, February 5, 1864. Box 9, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Hetty's name was spelled seemingly interchangeably as both Hettie and Hetty in period letters. For the sake of this thesis I have chosen to use Hetty, as it is engraved on her tombstone.

[123] "The Burning of the Colt Pistol Factory," *New Haven Daily Palladium*, February 6, 1864.

Reporters described the scene of the fire, the great loss to the city of Hartford, and the integral association between the Armory building, and its specialized machinery, with the legacy of the late Colonel Colt.[124] The destroyed building was, one article noted:

> …the part chiefly identified with the name and life of Col. Colt. It stood, the monument to his extraordinary genius; the witness to what can be achieved by the strong will, earnest purpose, clear judgement, and persevering decision of a single man. And no man had ever a more remarkable monument… But the memory of his name, identified so largely with the prosperity of Hartford is, literally, "ære perrenius." It must survive.[125]

Completed in 1855, the Armory was the first building specifically constructed to house Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company, and figured extensively in the marketing of the Colt brand. Its importance as a symbol of Colt's genius was widely understood, and the smoldering ruins pained those who knew the Armory's importance to Sam Colt.

After his initial difficulties starting a gun manufactory, Sam Colt returned to his native Hartford and opened a factory in a rented building in 1849. With increasing demand for his products, he began accumulating land in Hartford's South Meadows, located just outside the city's center, along the Connecticut River. In the summer of 1855 Colt moved his gun-making operations into a monumental three-story Armory building, likely designed by Octavius Jordan. Constructed of brownstone and surmounted with an onion dome upon which was placed a gilded rampant colt, it was,

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[124] "Great Fire at Colt's Armory!" *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 6, 1864.

[125] "The Burning of the Colt Armory," undated newspaper clipping likely cut and preserved by Elizabeth Colt. Box 17, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

as Colt-historian William Hosley writes, "… the greatest of Colt's show stops… the centerpiece of a self-contained industrial compound known as Coltsville."[126] The Armory's size, elaborate design, and remarkable machinery were all widely discussed in newspaper and magazine articles. These, combined with engraved and lithographed views of the building, spread not only the name of Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company, but also the persona of its founder. Perhaps most impressive was a twenty-nine-page article included in the March 1857 issue of *The United States Magazine*. Featuring twenty-eight engraved plates depicting guns, the Armory, the specialized machinery, Armsmear, and Samuel Colt himself, the article noted that "Colonel Samuel Colt has stamped his character, in peculiar unfading colors, upon his age… and is a living epoch."[127].

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[126] Hosley 61, 238. Hosley notes that between December 1854 and March 1855 Colt paid Octavius Jordan for drawings of the gable ends of the armory, designs for the dome, framing plans, and a small barn. Some of these drawings survive in the Connecticut State Library. Much more can be learned about the Colt Armory buildings from Hosley, Houze, and Barnard.

[127] "Repeating Fire-Arms. A Day at the Armory of 'Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company," *United States Magazine* IV, no. 3 (March 1857): 248. Of this article William Hosley writes that Colt "bought himself one of the most expansive 'news' stories written about an American industrial concern before the Civil War." Using Colt's cash books Hosley notes that Colt paid the publishers of the magazine $1,200 (roughly $33,000 in 2016) for copies of the magazine. Hosley 85. Copies of this, and many other printed references to the factory and Colt himself were saved and preserved in family scrapbooks. Box 17, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. A very thorough account of the construction of the Colt Armory and Colonel Colt's efforts at self-promotion may be found in William Hosley's *Colt: The Making of an Empire*, specifically the "Practically Perfect" and "Coltsville" chapters.

Despite its size, the Colt Armory was insufficient for the demands of business by the early 1860s.[128] In fact, in the months immediately preceding his death, despite tenuous health, Colt set out to increase the size of his Armory complex, building a second enormous Armory parallel to the earlier structure. Just less than three years after Sam Colt began construction to enlarge the Armory, however, the original building and adjacent office lay in ruins. Having already suffered the loss of her husband and children, the fire severed yet another link between Elizabeth Colt and her husband. Describing the scene to her sister the following day, Elizabeth wrote:

> I was up + dressed when I heard the gong + knew at once something was wrong + running to the window saw an immense cloud of smoke that almost enveloped the main Armory in its dark folds… I waited a few minutes + then put on my things + went down to the nearest point it was safe to go, and watched the roof + floor after floor, wall after wall fall into the fire[y] pit, covering thousand upon thousand of dollars worth of the superb machinery, the living representations of my dear husband's great mind + genius + to be powerless to help save one thing from general ruin was so hard to bear. The great dome fell with a thundering crash. The great gong, rung only by the hand of the fateful fire, moaned until almost the last, like a sad dying wail for the dear old Armory the Col. loved + was so proud of - a dirge for its departing glory. It seems as if another link between him + us was broken.[129]

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[128] The *United States Magazine* article describes the Armory as being shaped like an H, with a five-hundred-foot-long, sixty-foot-wide, three-story building facing the river, and a similar, one-story, structure set back from the river measuring five hundred feet long and forty feet wide. Connecting the two buildings was a building one hundred and fifty feet long and sixty feet wide. "Repeating Fire-Arms. A Day at the Armory of 'Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company,'" 227. Set back behind this one-story structure was Colt's 1861 addition.

[129] Elizabeth Colt to My Dear Sister [Hetty Jarvis], February 6, 1864. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

The Armory fire destroyed another link between the living wife and her deceased husband. From Armsmear Elizabeth's view over the factory buildings reminded her not only of her husband, but also of the countless men who worked for him and with him. But on the morning of February 5, it was from this vantage point that Elizabeth first saw the Armory ablaze. Several members of her family wrote of the event, describing their sentiments and recording the omnipresent feeling of loss felt throughout Hartford. Elizabeth's aunt Hetty Hart described the scene that day, and the final moments of the great onion dome:

> … when the beautiful dome fell she [Elizabeth] burst into tears, and those that witnessed her grief said it was sad indeed to see her - it [the dome] hung in the air sometime, and with its glittering stars on a blue ground it was like a huge Balloon suspended in the air, and finally it fell with a crash…[130]

Hordes of Hartford residents came to watch the destruction of the Colt Armory, demonstrating by their presence the gravity of the occasion. Hetty Hart noted in her letter that more than 20,000 people witnessed the fire, a number that while perhaps exaggerated, bears witness to the disastrous event.[131] As much as this was a loss for Mrs. Colt, it was a blow to the entire city; "…all mourn as if for a personal loss," Elizabeth wrote to her sister.[132] The fire displaced hundreds workers, and the view over the charred rubble reminded spectators of the loss previously felt upon the

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[130] H[etty]. B. Hart to William Jarvis, February 12, 1864. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid; Elizabeth Colt to My dear Sister [Hetty Jarvis], February 9, 1864. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

death of Colonel Colt just two years before. "To think that magnificent, noble structure is in ruins," wrote Elizabeth's aunt Hetty, "it seems so identified with the Col., it seemed like burying him again."[133]

With its oil-saturated floors and vast open spaces, the Armory burned quickly, destroying not only the building, but the machinery within. Connected to the Armory by a suspended bridge, the office building next door quickly caught fire and, though not entirely destroyed, was heavily damaged. The massive Colt complex was quickly reduced, leaving behind only the annex buildings constructed just prior to Colt's death. Adding to the drama of the event, arson was immediately suggested as a cause for the fire's origin. Elizabeth's mother mentioned it her letter on the day of the fire, and Elizabeth noted the following day that "rebels" threatened to burn the building three years ago, "+ I believe they have accomplished it."[134] Newspapers carried reports of the Armory fire to readers far from Hartford, often including assertions that it owed its origins to an incendiary. From these articles it is evident that the Colt Armory was widely seen as a victim of the Confederates, connecting its demise to that of thousands of Civil War dead whose stories filled the press at the time.

Writing the day after the fire, *The New Haven Palladium* enumerated other incendiary events carried out by southern sympathizers:

> …the repeated firing of government vessels in process of construction in Boston, and other well known cases of incendiarism, leave no room

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[133] H[etty]. B. Hart to William Jarvis, February 12, 1864. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[134] Elizabeth Colt to "My dear Sister" [Hetty Jarvis], February 6, 1864. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

> for doubt that the rebels have their spies and burners all over the north. And there is not a building in the States that they would be more likely to burn, if they had a chance, than the Colt's Armory.[135]

With the fire, the trauma of the Civil War arrived in Hartford. The smoldering ruins were a tangible link to the underlying anxiety and loss that pervaded the nation. As historian Drew Faust argues in her analysis of the Civil War and the national suffering that followed, "Civil War engagements respected no rigid delineation between home and battlefront…" and with the burning of the Colt Armory, the war was closer to Elizabeth's home than ever before.[136]

Photographers quickly sought to capitalize on the sensation of the fire and produced dramatic images of the ruined factory, its mangled machinery clearly visible below the destroyed walls. In addition to taking photographs of the ruins themselves, some, such as R.S. De Lamater, reproduced sketches drawn during the fire, memorializing not just the results of the blaze, but recalling the event itself (Figure 3.1). In one of these views the Armory building is shown, almost entirely destroyed, while a large crowd gathers in front of the office building, from which smoke bellows, depicting the scene described in several letters by Elizabeth and her family. In the foreground, steam-powered pumpers send water from the river to the burning building through hoses strewn across the ground, and men use speaking trumpets to shout

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[135] Elsewhere the same article asserted that "Nothing is certainly known of the origin of the fire, but we do not doubt it was kindled by an incendiary… The factory has had in its employ disloyal men, open rebel sympathizers. We believe that such a man, if not a rebel sent to the Armory for the purpose, an emissary of Jeff. Davis, did the deed." "The Burning of the Colt Pistol Fire," *The New Haven Palladium*, February 6, 1864. Writing in 1866, Henry Barnard provided a more impartial view, noting that while arson was a possibility, so too were many other accidental causes. Barnard 255.

[136] Faust 137.

orders while onlookers survey the scene. Photographed and disseminated as a *carte de visite* by De Lamater, the sketch made its way into at least two periodicals. Capturing the drama of the Armory's destruction, these engraved views blurred the lines between accuracy and embellishment, using artistic license to heighten the drama of the event.[137] Within a matter of weeks these and other views of the fire were serialized, providing those who may never have seen the Colt Armory with depictions of the destruction rendered by the alleged arson.

Having illustrated the conflagration in the February 20, 1864 issue, *Harper's Weekly* devoted an entire page in their February 27, 1864 issue to two views of the burned factory created from images taken by Hartford photographers N.A. and R.A. Moore. Of these views the magazine noted "Our admiration is especially excited as we glance at the confused *débris* of what was once the most magnificent and elaborate machinery in the country… The crumbling mass of ruins reminds one very forcibly of the remains left of the stupendous buildings of antiquity."[138] Sam Colt's gun

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[137] On February 20, 1864, *Harper's Weekly Magazine* published a woodcut entitled "Destruction by fire of the Colt's Armory at Hartford, Connecticut. -From a sketch by J.B. Russell, Jr." on page 125. This view shares some similarities to the sketch reproduced by De Lamater, but views the Armory from the southeast, and is heavily embellished by flames and smoke. A week later, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* also published a view very similar to that published by De Lamater entitled "The Destruction of the Factory of Colt's American Arms Company, at Hartford, Conn., Feb. 5. –From a sketch by J.B. Russell, Jr." (page 356). While this is also somewhat embellished by smoke and flames, its viewpoint, and depiction of crowds and fire engines is notably similar to the sketch on the De Lamater *carte de visite*.

[138] "Fire in Colt's Armory," *Harper's Weekly* VIII, no. 374 (February 27, 1864): 134. Across the Atlantic in England, the *Illustrated London News* also published woodcut depictions of the destroyed building, created using similar photographs taken by R.S. De Lamater. "Ruins of Colt's Patent Firearms Factory at Hartford, United States" *The Illustrated London* News 44, no. 1253, (April 16, 1864): 359-360. Compared to the

manufactory had been elevated in architectural standing, placed among the ruined temples of ancient civilizations.

These views of the burned Armory building carried with them great meaning and power, and followed in a long line of similar depictions. Views by William Strickland of the burned White House relayed the image of defeat in the days following its destruction at the hands of British troops in 1814. Embodying within the image itself a feeling of immense loss, Strickland's depiction led to a nationalistic pride and desire to rebuild, ensuring the building's prestige and prominence would be restored in the process.[139] The Armory views captured by Hartford photographers and reprinted in periodicals around the globe evoked similar responses. While all reports noted the immense sense of loss, they also stirred a pride in the Colt Armory, which could only be restored through reconstruction.

Despite the trauma of watching the factory burn and although she could see the shell of the destroyed Armory and office building from her home, Elizabeth returned to the site two days after the fire, describing the scene in a letter to her sister:

> "I have [not] been in the Col's office since I went there to see him - but Sunday when I went down to see the ruin, I felt if it were possible for me to get there, I would like to go once more – We went up the charred + broken staircase + such a scene of ruin you can hardly imagine… the east wall of the Col's room is still standing + pretty strong, but the

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ruins of Ancient Rome and Greece, these views also share much in common with photos taken of the destruction of the Civil War by photographers like Mathew Brady. A search of the Brady archive, now owned by the Library of Congress, yields dozens of photographs of burned out buildings, recording similar views of loss and destruction wrought by the Civil War.

[139] Frank Freidel and William Pencak, eds., *The White House: The First Two Hundred Years* (Boston: Northeastern University Press 1994) 24.

> south one is all gone + a portion of the floor, while what remains is covered to a depth of two feet, I judge, with ashes + other debris of the fire – the view from that room is grand + sublime - + sad as grand."[140]

The sublime was, Megan Kate Nelson argues, a commonly understood term in the nineteenth century. It "…communicated a vastness and grandeur that left the viewer awestruck and slightly afraid…"[141] Frequently found in the context of art or the ruins of ancient civilizations, the view over the burned-out Armory undoubtedly left Elizabeth both shocked, and somewhat scared.

Having not stepped foot in her husband's office since his death almost two years before, Elizabeth's choice to revisit the space conveys the deep connection she felt between this room and Sam Colt. Looking out over the river and factory, Colt's office situated him at the center of the Armory's operations. With the barrier between the office and Armory now destroyed, Elizabeth's view that day was somewhat different from what her husband knew (Figure 3.2). Toppled walls and mangled machinery bore witness to the effects of the fire, creating a scene that at once shocked and overwhelmed Elizabeth. Yet her desire to revisit the office allowed Elizabeth to enter once more the room in which she recalled her husband's memory. Revisiting the space provided her not only with a sense of closure, but an opportunity to say goodbye to that room and with it, a part of her husband as well.

As she notes earlier in her letter, workers were already starting to demolish the remnants of the factory's walls to provide safe access to "the remains of that glorious

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[140] Lizzie [Elizabeth Colt] to My dear Sister [Hetty Jarvis], February 9, 1864. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[141] Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press 2012) 5.

machinery" for which the Colt Armory was so famous.[142] Using personification, Elizabeth conveys her personal attachment to these metal elements, suggesting that, like the Armory and office, the machinery held a meaning far beyond its apparent role in making guns. This personal attachment is further reinforced in objects saved by Elizabeth Colt as the company prepared to demolish and rebuild the factory. From the rubble workers pulled relics, amorphous objects fused in the midst of the calamitous fire from melted and deformed gun parts, bullet molds, and other objects in the Armory that day (Figure 3.3). Though disfigured and not immediately identifiable, they were among the last items made with Sam Colt's "superb machinery." Elizabeth placed these objects in the Cabinets of Presents and Memorials, alongside examples of Colt's guns, seemingly bestowing upon them the moniker of holy relics from the day on which "perished the whole original erection of Colt, the chief basis of his fortune and fame."[143]

Collecting relics was common in nineteenth-century America, particularly in the years following the Civil War when individuals sought objects to remind them of battles, and those whose lives were lost for the sake of their nation. Just as pieces of the fallen Charter Oak were saved in the 1850s, Elizabeth's preservation of relics from the Armory fire alludes to a significant sentimentality with which she viewed these

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[142] Ibid. Colt was very proud of the machinery in his factories, even going so far as to purchase photographic equipment and have pictures taken of the machines themselves. The equipment was included in Colt's probate inventory and the negatives taken of the Colt machinery have since been acquired by the Connecticut State Library. For more on the Colt Armory machinery, see Houze 171-182.

[143] Barnard 251. In his text, with which Elizabeth Colt was directly involved, Barnard describes the fused gun pieces as "…relics of the fire, which on the fifth of February 1864, consumed half of the Arms-factory." Barnard 130.

objects. As she has argued in her book, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth Century America*, Teresa Barnett asserts that, "While the relic as a sentimental memento thus promoted a heighted investment in its users' collective past, it also implicitly circumscribed the circle of those who could lay claim to that past."[144] Saving these objects, Elizabeth Colt preserved the memory of her husband's genius, which created the massive Armory and the specialized machinery within. To Elizabeth these melted and fused guns were, as Barnett writes, "… a means of renewing the memory of those who preceded them and confirming their commitment to the project those earlier generations had begun."[145]

Like her husband, Elizabeth was devoted to the Armory and, despite the catastrophic losses, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company missed only two work days as a result of the fire. Although the main Armory was destroyed, workers battling the flames were able to save the buildings erected by Colt just before his death. Recounting the "herculean efforts of the armorers themselves" to save the newer Armory building, Henry Barnard wrote that they labored "… with the might that only affection can give; they loved their chief, who had gone from them forever, and they willed that their hands should save his monument from destruction."[146] Through their efforts the company was able to continue filling their government contracts only days after the fire, despite lacking a significant portion of the factory.

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[144] Teresa Barnett, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2013) 75.

[145] Ibid. 74.

[146] Barnard 251. A very thorough description of the Colt fire and the effects thereof is included in Barnard's section "Destruction of the Armory by Fire," 249-256.

Almost immediately, the decision was made to rebuild the destroyed Armory, taking advantage of the fire insurance purchased after the death of Samuel Colt. Newspapers carrying accounts of the fire also included detailed descriptions of the insurance policies, noting that Sam Colt never carried insurance on his Armory, and that it had only been added after his death.[147] Reports suggested that between 600,000 and 750,000 dollars' worth of insurance was held on the factory, though Elizabeth privately wrote her sister that she expected the company would only receive about $300,000.[148] Having lost her husband, several of her children, and now the Armory, Elizabeth's decision to support rebuilding was a brave one, illustrating not only her confidence in the factory, but also her dedication to the workers employed there, her desire to uphold the reputation of the Colt name, and her devotion to her husband and his legacy.

Nearly a month after the fire, Hetty Hart wrote of the family's desire that the now-destroyed Armory was to serve as a memento to Sam Colt's one surviving son, Caldwell: "We had hoped, it might have been a Monument for his little son (if his life is spared) of his Father's proud Genius and Energy…"[149] A tangible part of Sam Colt's legacy, the Armory complex was viewed as something that would hopefully inspire Caldwell, who was five-and-a-half years old at the time of the fire. In order to

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[147] "Great Fire at Colt's Armory!" *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 6, 1864.

[148] Elizabeth Colt to My dear Sister [Hetty Jarvis], February 9, 1864. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[149] H[etty] B. Hart to William Jarvis, March 1, 1864. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

serve as an inspiration for Colt's son and as a monument to his legacy, the Armory had to be rebuilt. In a poem commemorating the fire, Lydia Sigourney looked forward to the building's reconstruction, and the reestablishment of Sam Colt's living monument. Comparing the Colt Armory to a phoenix, which was to be reborn from the ashes, Sigourney concluded her poem with optimism: "The fame on Phoenix wing shall soar,/ Your lofty fame arise once more,/ And gathering to its shrine be seen/ The sons of toil with hopeful mien,/ Repeating still through future days/ Their cherished benefactor's praise."[150]

By December 1865, plans for rebuilding were underway, and construction continued until 1867.[151] In form, the new Armory was nearly identical to its predecessor. Following roughly the same floor plan, the building was constructed of brick instead the brownstone used originally, and featured an additional floor. Although it was larger, the new building followed the original Armory's design almost exactly.[152] Atop the reconstructed Armory, a blue onion dome, upon which a rampant

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[150] "On the burning of the Armory Erected by the late Colonel Colt," poem by Lydia Sigourney, February 5, 1864. Sigourney's handwritten copy of this poem, likely given to Elizabeth Colt, is preserved in the Colt papers in the Registrar's Office of the Wadsworth Atheneum, but is also printed in Barnard 256.

[151] William Jarvis noted that arrangements for the Armory's reconstruction were being made in his letter of December 18, 1865. By October 14, 1866 Jarvis noted construction was progressing slower than expected due to problems sourcing fireproof materials such as iron pillars and rafters, and the building was still not fully enclosed by December 24, 1866. In his January 18, 1867 letter Jarvis noted that the iron roof plates have been delayed in arriving. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[152] Reference to the construction and design of the West Armory, constructed by Colt in 1861, is included in "The Fire at Colt's Armory," *Daily National Intelligencer*, February 8, 1864.

colt reared on its hind legs, recalled the most identifiable element of the original building (Figure 3.4). As one newspaper reported, the reconstructed Armory, "the design of Mrs. Colt and the directors… [was] not only an unsurpassed workshop, but a monument to the memory of the late Colonel Colt."[153]

Although the Armory building itself was demolished in the fire, the adjacent office building was only partially destroyed, as Elizabeth Colt noted in her letter (Figure 3.5). Visibly gutted, and missing many windows and much of its roof, photographic views show that the façade and northern wall of the structure, including the decorative front porch, survived the fire. Instead of completely starting from scratch, the office building was saved in the reconstruction, its destroyed walls rebuilt, and its interior spaces restored. Forced to completely rebuild the main Armory, it is not surprising that the company looked for ways to save resources and money, salvaging what they could of the office building's structure. One must wonder, however, to what extent the associations held by Elizabeth Colt, the company's primary stockholder, between this building and her husband figured into this decision (Figure 3.6). Only a few years after the fire, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company was again operating at full capacity and Hartford rejoiced at the company's rise from the ashes and return to the city's industrial scene. As Samuel Clemens wrote following his visit to the the Armory in January 1868, "…the Colt's revolver manufactory is a Hartford institution..."[154]

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[153] *Hartford Daily Courant*, January 10, 1868, quoted in Hosley 199.

[154] "Mark Twain in Hartford," *The Pittsfield Sun*, May 21, 1868. Twain's comments were soon serialized and reprinted, having been first sent to San Francisco's *Alta California.*

Elizabeth remained intensely devoted to the Colt Armory throughout her life, despite having no official role aside from being the majority stockholder. It was her brother, Richard W.H. Jarvis, who took an interest in the Armory, assuming the position of president following the death of Elisha K. Root in 1865.[155] As the primary shareholder, Elizabeth had an interest in the factory financially but she also held onto her deep personal associations between the factory and her husband. One newspaper reported that "Mrs. Samuel Colt, of Hartford, takes a walk through her revolver factory twice a week," which, though unsubstantiated, suggests a public awareness of Elizabeth's interest in her late husband's Armory.[156]

Elizabeth Colt's personal connection to the Armory is perhaps most evident in three letters written toward the end of her life. Acknowledging the precarious state of her brother's health and with no family member to take over as the company's president, Mrs. Colt admitted that perhaps she should accept the offer presented by a group of investors interested in buying the factory. "I could in no sense say I wished to sell," Elizabeth wrote to her niece, but she admitted that if a sale could be made that would preserve the name and reputation of the Armory, she would consider it.[157] Looking out over the complex from her house, Mrs. Colt was reminded daily of her husband and the affinity he held for the immense gun-making operation. It was not an easy decision to make, and Elizabeth struggled to accept the outcome:

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[155] Houze 127.

[156] "State Correspondence," *Columbian Register*, January 10, 1874.

[157] Elizabeth Colt to Lizzie (Elizabeth Robinson), undated letter circa 1901. Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

> O! if there had only been some one to take the business belonging to the family, who could have looked after my interests, I should not have had to part with what I have been so proud of. I was at the office yesterday morning + it was very hard to think that in a few days I should have no right there – and it was like bidding a last good bye to a dear friend. Memory brought back so vividly scenes + loved ones all gone now.[158]

Despite the forty years since Sam Colt's death, and over thirty-five since the almost complete destruction of his factory complex, Elizabeth still held strong associations between the Colt Armory and her husband. An object constructed of brick and stone, and filled with metal machinery, it was, in her mind, a tangible connection with her husband, through which his memory lived on decades after his death. Writing about Sam Colt for a book on Jarvis family history, Elizabeth noted, "Though he was thus early called to rest from his labors, he lives on in the great work, the monument which his own faith and energy built, and in the true hearts that mourn so sadly for the breaking of the strong shaft of the beautiful rod."[159] From her words it is clear that Elizabeth not only interpreted the rebuilt Armory as a monument to her husband, but also saw it as a means by which Colt lived on, not just in her "true heart" but for all that saw the building.

Unable to resurrect her husband, Elizabeth's strong will following the Armory fire ensured Colt's memory would be preserved in the reconstructed factory. Visible to everybody in Hartford, the building preserved his memory and maintained his legacy in his native city. With the Elliott portrait in her picture gallery and the

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[158] Elizabeth H. Colt to Lizzie (Elizabeth Robinson), June 6, 1901 and June 13, 1901. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[159] Jarvis et al. 96-97.

reconstructed Armory visible from her house, Elizabeth Colt was firmly situated within a landscape of memory. Looking out over her gardens and orchards, she could see the Armory which, with its blue onion dome and gilded rampant colt, was so similar to that which her husband cherished. The rebuilding of Colonel Colt's "pride and pet" provided Elizabeth with a tangible object that embodied memories of her husband as a gun manufacturer and ensured that, with each new gun, his legacy lived on.

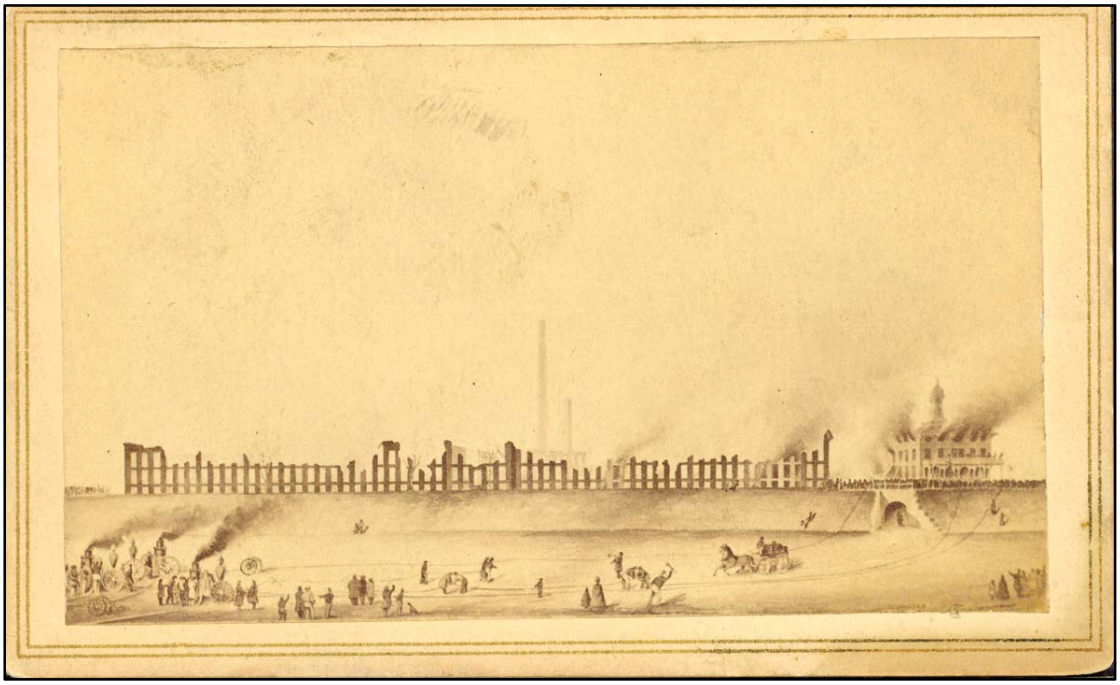

Figure 3.1 – Sketch of the Colt Armory fire, likely by J.B. Russell, Jr., reproduced by R.S. De Lamater, Hartford, 1864. Carte de visite, 2 x 3 ½ in. PG 460, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company Collection, State Archives, Connecticut State Library.

Figure 3.2 – View from the Colt Office Building looking south into the Armory after the Fire of February 5, 1864, R.S. De Lamater, Hartford, 1864. Photograph, 8 x 10 in. PG 460, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company Collection, State Archives, Connecticut State Library.

Figure 3.3 – Melted and fused revolver parts, recovered after the destruction by fire of the Colt Armory, February 5, 1864. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.X.10.

Figure 3.4 – "Bird's Eye View, Colt Armory" following its reconstruction, circa 1869, H.D. Udell, Hartford. Stereo view. From the New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Figure 3.4 – Detail.

Figure 3.5 – Colt Office Building and Armory following the fire of February 5, 1864. Albumen print, 6 5/8 x 9 3/8 in. PG 460, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company Collection, State Archives, Connecticut State Library.

Figure 3.6 – Colt Employees in front of the reconstructed Colt Office Building and Armory, 1876. Albumen print, 10 1/8 x 13 3/8 in. PG 460, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company Collection, State Archives, Connecticut State Library.

Chapter 4

IN MEMORY OF A HUSBAND AND CHILDREN DECEASED

A month after the Armory fire, Elizabeth Colt took steps toward her next major project: the creation of a church between the grounds of her estate and the factory. Elizabeth and her family worshipped at St. John's Episcopal Church on Main Street, located next door to the Wadsworth Atheneum, and it was through a combined effort between Mrs. Colt and Vestry of St. John's that the new parish took shape.[160] Agreeing to pay the eight-hundred dollar salary of the Reverend Henry Nelson, Elizabeth Colt demonstrated her ardent wish to create a church, as well as her devotion to the employees of the Colt Armory, who would benefit from its construction. Elizabeth's desire to bring religion to the South Meadows was not a new idea. In fact, in the 1850s the Reverend E.A. Washburn, then the rector at St. John's, began a Sunday School in the South Meadows with the help of Dr. Samuel Eliot, a professor at nearby Trinity College.[161]

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[160] At a March 1864 meeting of the Vestry of St. John's Episcopal Church, a resolution was passed: "That the Vestry accept as a Mission of St. John's Parish, the Mission work organized by the Rector in the Meadows, under the generous support of Mrs. Col. Colt." Copy of Resolutions of Vestry Meeting of Parish of St. John's Episcopal Church, Hartford, March 21, 1864, sent to Mrs. Col. Colt by John. S. Robinson, Clerk. Box 30, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[161] "Connecticut," unidentified clipping likely from *The Churchman*, September 1867. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

That Elizabeth Colt was interested in bringing religion, and especially the Episcopal Church, to the workers of the Colt Armory should come as no surprise. But what is a surprise, however, is the church she constructed. Built in the Gothic Revival style, the Church of the Good Shepherd was an impressive memorial to her husband and children. In addition to the expected religious symbols, the new church, designed by Edward Tuckerman Potter, featured overt references to the nearby Armory. Furthermore, in its decoration and furnishing, Elizabeth ensured that her loved ones would be remembered by anybody who came to worship. In the Church of the Good Shepherd Elizabeth created an object that honored the memory of her family members, using symbols and its materiality to evoke not only their legacy, but their active involvement in church services as well.

Descended from a long line of Episcopal priests, Elizabeth's devotion to her faith is well documented in her letters and in her portrait by Charles Elliott, where she holds a book with a cross conspicuously placed on its cover. Her father William Jarvis was a nephew of Abraham Jarvis who, in the 1780s, convened with nine other priests to establish the Episcopal Church in America. In addition to his role in establishing the Episcopal Church, Abraham Jarvis became its second bishop in 1797.[162] It was while staying with Bishop Jarvis' son, the Reverend Doctor Samuel Farmar Jarvis, that William decided to "…devote himself, as soon as his studies were completed, to the ministry of the Church." In November 1823, William Jarvis was ordained as an Episcopal priest by Bishop Thomas Brownell, and in this capacity he served parishes in East Haddam, Hebron, and Portland, Connecticut. Unfortunately a severe bronchitis caused permanent damage to his vocal chords, and forced an early

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[162] Jarvis et al. 22.

retirement.[163] Despite leaving the pulpit, William Jarvis remained devoted to his faith, and passed his strong religious convictions on to his daughter Elizabeth.[164]

Upon receiving permission from St. John's to establish her own parish, Elizabeth appropriated a room in Charter Oak Hall, a large building constructed by her husband in the 1850s, for religious services. With a priest and temporary space secured, Elizabeth began looking at recently constructed churches to serve as models for the building she envisioned.[165] In late June and early July 1865, Elizabeth visited churches in New Jersey and Greenwich, Connecticut, and by March 1866, the New York firm of Vaux, Withers & Co. had completed a set of floor plans and elevation drawings for Elizabeth's new church, then called the Church of the Holy Innocents (Figure 4.1).[166] Between March and June 1866, the firm completed forty-nine ink and watercolor drawings, detailing all aspects of the proposed building. With seating capacity for 397 people, and including a sizable Sunday School room, Elizabeth Colt clearly held grand visions for her new church.[167]

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[163] Ibid. 56.

[164] As previously mentioned, a communion set donated to St. John's Episcopal Church in 1842 by Hetty B. Hart and Elizabeth Hart Jarvis, then age sixteen, attests to Elizabeth's strong religious beliefs.

[165] Harriet Evans Thurston, "Recollections of My Childhood and the Good Shepherd Church," unpublished personal memoir. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[166] Unfortunately, exactly which churches Mrs. Colt visited is not recorded by her father. William Jarvis to William Jarvis, June 27, 1865 and July 13, 1865. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[167] These drawings are owned by the Trustees of the Colt Bequest and I am grateful to their generosity in allowing me to examine them. Exactly how Colt came to choose Vaux, Withers & Co. is not clear, but they were likely suggested by Frederic E.

Frederick Clarke Withers, who seems to have been the primary architect of the proposed church, had an established reputation designing ecclesiastical buildings. In addition to several highly acclaimed religious structures, his 1858 article "A Few Hints on Church Building," secured his position as "an apostle of High Church philosophy," making him a logical choice for Elizabeth Colt.[168] Describing the Church of the Holy Innocents in 1873, Withers wrote:

> This building was designed to be erected in an eastern city, as a memorial church, the north transept being set apart especially for that purpose, the tower occupying the center of it, with a private entrance from the west, and a small chapel on the east, in which it was intended to place the monument to the deceased.[169]

Withers' description goes on to note the use of an ornamental iron grille to ensure the separation between the church and the more sacred north transept, a design element that is also reflected in the March 20, 1866 floorplan (Figure 4.2). Marked as a chapel in this drawing, Withers' 1873 book *Church Architecture*, in which he republished the design with minimal alterations, notes the placement of a tomb directly beneath the two windows on the eastern wall, suggesting that Elizabeth Colt may have intended on placing her husband's tomb in this location.[170]

Church, whose friendship with Calvert Vaux is well established, and who used the firm in the early planning stages of his home, Olana.

[168] Kowsky 40.

[169] Frederick Clarke Withers, *Church Architecture* (New York: A.J. Bicknell & Co. 1873) description of design 12.

[170] Ibid.

Constructed of Connecticut brownstone, trimmed with light Ohio sandstone, and laid out in a cruciform shape, the proposed church featured a polychrome slate roof, and a tall tower and spire combination, which drew elements from some of the firm's earlier commissions. With arched windows set in groups of two and three, buttresses, pinnacles, and an abundance of crosses, the church harkened back to the British Ecclesiological Movement, with which Withers was familiar from his youth and training in England.[171] Despite having chosen one of America's established specialists of church architecture, and engaging his firm to complete a full set of plans and detail drawings, Elizabeth Colt was not satisfied. Though she purchased and saved the drawings for the Church of the Holy Innocents, Elizabeth ultimately rejected the proposed plan.

To date nothing has been located to account for this change in mind, but it seems that perhaps the church's somewhat pedestrian design failed to captivate Elizabeth's interest. Despite some attractive elements and Gothic formality, the church was described by the *The Ecclesiologist* as resembling "…an average specimen of an English church of fifteen years ago."[172] It certainly did not reflect the remarkable changes taking place in American architecture at the time. Instead, it shared more in common with Hartford's existing churches like St. John's Episcopal

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[171] Francis R. Kowsky, *The Architecture of Frederick Clarke Withers and the Progress of the Gothic Revival in America after 1850* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1980) 20.

[172] "New Churches: The Church of the Holy Innocents," *The Ecclesiologist* CLXXX (June 1867): 185. Available through Google Books.

Church, which was designed by Henry Austin in 1841.[173] With pinnacles, crenellations, and arched windows, Austin's design stood out from Hartford's traditional Congregational meetinghouses when it was completed, but tastes had changed in twenty-five years. Hartford and the surrounding areas boasted many Gothic Revival churches, primarily used by Roman Catholic and Episcopal congregations, and Elizabeth had to make sure that her new church stood out as unique.[174]

Instead, it was a design by New York architect Edward Tuckerman Potter that Elizabeth Colt finally accepted. Unlike Withers, who was English by birth, Potter was an American, a graduate of Union College, and honed his skills in the office of Richard Upjohn.[175] Potter seems have learned much about church architecture from his mentor, who designed Trinity Church in New York City, the Bowdoin College Chapel, and many other churches across America. By the time he was engaged by Colt in 1866, Potter's own architectural oeuvre included nearly twenty different ecclesiastical commissions.[176]

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[173] James F. O'Gorman, *Henry Austin: In Every Variety of Architectural Style* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 2008) 80.

[174] The major exception to this was Patrick Keely's remarkable Gothic Revival design for the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, completed in 1866. Daniel Sterner, *A Guide to Historic Hartford, Connecticut* (Charleston and London: The History Press 2012) 136. For more on Hartford buildings and architecture see the three-volume set, *Hartford Architecture*, published by the Hartford Architecture Conservancy.

[175] Sarah Bradford Landau, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American Victorian Architects* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1979) 86.

[176] For a catalogue of Potter's architectural commissions see Landau 448-464.

How Potter came to be chosen by Colt is open to conjecture. In his analysis William Hosley proposes that the architect may have been suggested by the Reverend William Croswell Doane, Elizabeth's priest at St. John's. Having recently designed an Episcopal church in East Hartford, Potter's work was undoubtedly familiar to Doane.[177] Perhaps more likely, however, was the longstanding friendship between the Potter and Jarvis families, which probably brought Elizabeth Colt and Edward Tuckerman Potter into contact through social events.[178] Elizabeth's father, William Jarvis, and Potter's father, Alonzo Potter, were classmates at Union College, and both became Episcopal priests.[179]

Edward Tuckerman Potter had a reputation as an architect who was not afraid to experiment in his designs. Several of his earlier buildings made use of interesting symbolic features, to which references were found in architectural journals of the time and in publications issued by the architect himself. One such example was his design for the First Dutch Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York, built between 1862

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[177] Hosley 252. Hosley also mentions that Elizabeth's father and Edward Potter's father knew one another, but to date is no conclusive evidence has been found to explain how the architect and his patron met.

[178] Later in life Edward Tuckerman Potter had a strong friendship with Elizabeth Colt's niece, Elizabeth Robinson, who lived at Newport, where Potter also had a house. Several letters in the Potter archive at the Avery Library refer to social engagements with both Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Colt, suggesting the architect maintained a very close friendship with members of the Jarvis family. These letters are found in the Edward Tuckerman Potter papers, 1864-1965. Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[179] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, February 24, 1871. William Jarvis letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. Potter ultimately became the third Bishop of Pennsylvania.

and 1863. With many types of stone used in its construction, the church's exterior was particularly colorful. Inside, a set of twelve capitals were carved to represent the twelve months of the year, and captured the attention of many visitors. So proud was he of these capitals that Potter published an illustrated book featuring commentary on them and their meaning in the church.[180] It should therefore be of little surprise that Potter inserted Colt-specific symbolism in his final design, ensuring that Elizabeth's church was completely unique.

Few construction documents survive to provide insight into the design process, but is clear that Elizabeth Colt was integrally involved in planning the new church.[181] She made trips to New York to consult with Potter, and an 1867 letter asserts William Jarvis' belief that his daughter's recent cold stemmed from time spent in inclement weather determining the site for her new church.[182] In the fall of 1867 the cornerstone

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[180] Landau 114, 126. Published in 1864, the book is called *The Capitals of the Banker Screen* and includes photographs by George G. Rockwood and text by William Gillespie.

[181] Potter's "List of Drawings Sent" enumerates at least seventeen drawings for the Church of the Good Shepherd, though a much smaller number seem to survive. These are now owned by the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, and I am grateful to their willingness in allowing me to examine them for this thesis. Edward Tuckerman Potter, *List of Drawings Sent Book*, 7. Edward Tuckerman Potter papers, 1864-1965. Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[182] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, May 9, 1867. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. Jarvis mentions Elizabeth Colt being in New York for matters pertaining to her church in his letter of August 5, 1868.

was laid, and construction continued until the building's dedication in January 1869.[183]

In July 1866, likely around the time she engaged Potter as her architect, Elizabeth Colt's parish officially became known as the Church of the Good Shepherd.[184] While the reason behind this name change remains elusive, moving from the Church of the Holy Innocents, as seen on the Vaux, Withers & Co. plans, to the Church of the Good Shepherd reflected a significant change in meaning. In the Church of the Holy Innocents, the choice of name referenced the thousands of boys killed by King Herod in Bethlehem, mentioned in Matthew 2:16-18. Conversely, the Good Shepherd, mentioned in John 10:11-18, referred directly to Jesus, who laid down his life for his flock. Instead of placing the church within the context of thousands of murdered boys, Elizabeth Colt chose to focus on Jesus' careful watch over His flock of faithful worshipers. The name also had a personal meaning to Elizabeth Colt, who had long-been reminded of the loving care of the Good Shepherd. Following the death of her first child, Samuel Jarvis Colt, one sympathizer wrote, "But the Good Shepherd

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[183] Over the course of this time period Edward Tuckerman Potter notes two payments by Mrs. Colt, each for $1000: one in September 1867 and the other one year later. These payments reflect only the services of the architect, and not the cost of construction. Edward Tuckerman Potter Day Book, 3. Edward Tuckerman Potter papers, 1864-1965. Department of Drawings & Archives. Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. "Laying of a Corner Stone" *The Hartford Daily Courant,* September 5, 1867.

[184] Undated clipping from *The Churchman*, likely fall 1867. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

has taken your little lamb to his fold - you have a child in Heaven…"[185] In the completed church, Elizabeth also connected her husband, who took care of, and watched over, his flock of workers, with the identity of the Good Shepherd, suggesting that in her choice of name Elizabeth not only evoked the memory of her children, but that of her husband as well.

Prominent periodicals such as *The Churchman* and *American Architect and Building News*, as well as many newspapers across the country, carried extensive accounts detailing the construction of the Church of the Good Shepherd. These articles frequently contained descriptions of the new edifice, commenting on its elaborate details and fine design, and often made reference to the new building's construction as being funded solely by Mrs. Colt. Constructed, as one article noted, to "…the glory of the Blessed and Undivided Trinity, and in memory of a husband and children deceased," Elizabeth Colt's dedication and drive to build this new church was made abundantly clear to all who read of its construction.[186] Lines such as "Mrs. Samuel Colt erects this church entirely at her own expense" became almost ubiquitous in articles related to the church.[187] In another description of Elizabeth's new church,

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[185] E[lizabeth]. L[ord]. Dixon to Mrs. Colt, December 28, 1857. Colt Papers, Registrar's Office, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Harford.

[186] Undated clipping from *The Churchman*, likely fall 1867. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[187] "Laying of a Corner Stone," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, September 5, 1867. Reports of this type were carried in newspapers nationwide with almost identical lines being found as far away as Cincinnati. Perhaps the most incredible evidence supporting this fact is a three-page document entitled "Mrs. Samuel Colt Pay Roll and Sundry Payments for May 1867." Included in this document are the names of 120 individuals in the employ of Elizabeth Colt in her house, on her estate, and building

the writer noted, "It has been reserved for a New England wife to give a tangible proof of her esteem and veneration for her dead husband by building a meeting-house to his memory. And a right noble mausoleum it is, too."[188] Reports of cost varied; one article suggested the finished building would cost $150,000, while others asserted the total expenditure would be closer to $200,000. [189] While they were inconceivable sums to the casual reader, one Georgia newspaper quipped, "[it] is a mere bagatelle to a wealthy widow who set out to show the world, in stone and mortar, how much she respects the worth of her departed liege."[190]

From these articles it is clear that much interest was placed on the "New England wife" responsible for financing the construction of Hartford's new church. The term "New England wife" had a widely accepted meaning in the nineteenth century. Period texts extolled her virtues as one who helped her husband, who bore many children, and who remained a steadfast companion. In his frequently republished short story, "National Characteristics," George W. Bethune wrote,

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the new church. Among those listed as working on the church are James A. Brown, Foreman on the Church ($75.00 for 1/2 month's work), John McEntee, Foreman of Laborers on Church, individuals working as gas fitters, plumbers, pattern makers and blacksmiths, as well as many laborers cutting stone and driving piles for the church's foundation. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[188] "The Richest Widow in the World" *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, August 1, 1871.

[189] "Church of the Good Shepherd," unidentified clipping in, Box 17, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. "Mrs. Samuel Colt," *Lowell Daily Citizen and News*, February 5, 1869.

[190] "The Richest Widow in America" *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, August 1, 1871.

"…happy is the household over which a New England wife presides! blessed the child whose cradle is rocked by the hand, whose slumber is hallowed by the prayers of a New England mother!"[191] In the very public act of constructing a church, Elizabeth Colt broke out of these traditional boundaries. Additionally, while breaking out of the role of a traditional wife, Elizabeth also broke out of traditional church origins as well. While memorial churches were not unheard of in America, they were not widespread by the 1860s.[192] Within New England there were very few, including the Church of the Good Shepherd in Hartford, and one being built in Georgetown, Massachusetts by Elizabeth's friend George Peabody in memory of his mother at the same time.[193] Although both buildings had ostensibly similar goals, to serve as both memorials and functioning churches, Peabody asserted the memorializing elements of his church only in its name, while Elizabeth made certain that her church, in its very construction and design, memorialized her loved ones.

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[191] Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopædia of American Literature* (New York: Charles Scribner 1856) 405.

[192] Searches show that the term memorial church was used in England in the 1840s, and Baltimore's Gillis Memorial Church traces its roots to the 1860s, but it appears that the term was not widespread in America until the 1870s and 1880s. While additional research is needed to understand the trend of memorial churches in the United States, it appears that Elizabeth Colt was leading instead of following an existing trend.

[193] George Peabody and Samuel Colt had an established friendship, and Peabody underwrote the costs of Colt's display at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851. John D. Bennett, *The London Confederates: The Officials, Clergy, Businessmen and Journalists Who Backed the American South During the Civil War* (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company Inc. 2008) 6. For more on the Peabody Memorial Church see *The Peabody Memorial Church in Georgetown: Its Origin, the Exercises Connected with the Laying of the Corner-Stone, the Dedication, and the Ordination of its Pastor* (Georgetown: Privately Printed 1869).

On January 28, 1869, the Church of the Good Shepherd was officially dedicated.[194] Decades later, those in attendance retained vivid memories of that day, particularly of Elizabeth Colt's pride. Relaying a story from his sister-in-law, Henry C. Nelson, the church's first priest wrote, "She says 'I can see now Mrs. Colt's glowing face at the Consecration when the Sunday School children, duly drilled, took up their verse in the anthem… She turned half about, with a beautiful happy look…"[195] Like its construction, accounts of the building's completion and consecration were carried by journals far and wide, and engraved plates of the new structure were found in many architectural and religious periodicals.[196] As black and white views of the church spread across the country, those in Hartford saw that the Gothic Revival building had a colorful exterior, its walls constructed out of many types of stone, and featured a polychrome slate roof (Figure 4.3). On top of this, gold and blue cresting continued the bright decoration, visually connecting the church with the blue dome and gilded rampant colt of the nearby Armory. Abundantly decorated with religious symbols, the church's iconography was considered so complex that

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[194] Attendance at the dedication was by invitation only. A copy of the dedicatory service leaflet is found in Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[195] Henry W. Nelson to unknown (incomplete letter), November 17, 1916. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[196] So extensive was the coverage of this church that Elizabeth Colt was inundated with requests to help other parishes. So extensive were the inquiries for financial aid that she printed a form letter explaining that her own "plans for church purposes" rendered her unable to assist in other church work for the time being. Form letter from Elizabeth H. Colt, March 18, 1869. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Reverend Nelson penned a thirty-one page booklet to help visitors decode the building.[197]

In the construction of the new church, Elizabeth Colt endeavored not only to celebrate and memorialize her husband and children, but also to reference the Armory, an established symbol of Colonel Colt's legacy, located just a short distance away. In the time between the initial planning of the church and its dedication, much had transpired: the portraits by Charles Elliott were completed and the original Colt Armory rebuilt. Just as those efforts celebrated both Samuel Colt and his work, so too did the new church. As *The Churchman* noted in one article, "Very significantly have the stones of the former Armoury [*sic*] that was destroyed by fire been worked into the walls of this church; for so the lively stones of God's Temple are daily transferred and glorified…"[198] Just as she preserved fused guns from the Armory fire in cabinets in her house, Elizabeth Colt inserted stones from her husband's destroyed gun factory in her new church, establishing a material connection between the Church of the Good Shepherd and the nearby Armory. Relics and mementoes were part of the nineteenth century culture, argues Teresa Barnett, and thus the reuse of these stones fit into a broader constellation of efforts to preserve memory. They were "… objects specifically selected for their personal histories and meanings and … were one of the

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[197] H[enry] W. N[elson], *Church of the Good Shepherd: Hartford, Conn.: A Brief Description of the Edifice with a Short Explanation of its Emblems and Symbols* (Hartford: Brown & Gross 1869). Publication of the booklet was noted in "Church of the Good Shepherd," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, March 5, 1869.

[198] "Hartford - Church of the Good Shepherd," *The Churchman,* February 6, 1869. This article was clipped and saved, likely by Elizabeth Colt, and is now in Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

primary means through which sentimental values were transmitted in daily life."[199] By incorporating these stones in the construction of the new church, Elizabeth Colt invoked their individual history. They had been objects used by Samuel Colt in the creation of his gun making empire and thus, in their new role, yielded a church that reflected his passions in its materiality. Involved in the catastrophic 1864 Armory fire, these otherwise ordinary pieces of brownstone became objects of intense meaning due to their direct connection with her husband's memory. A stereopticon view published toward the end of the construction on the Church of the Good Shepherd depicts the new building behind several piles of cut stone (Figure 4.4). While some is clearly the lighter Ohio sandstone used for the trim, several pieces strewn to the right appear to be larger blocks of a darker stone, likely extra pieces of brownstone saved from the destroyed Armory and unused in the church's construction.

Perhaps the most surprising reference to the Sam Colt's legacy, however, is the conspicuous inclusion of guns and gun-making equipment on the building's exterior, something that is almost undoubtedly unique to the Church of the Good Shepherd. Placed around the entrance facing the Colt Armory and nearby workers' housing, the aptly-named Armorer's Porch referenced the products made in the nearby factory. Here, disassembled guns, bullet molds, revolver barrels, and gun-making tools were "carved among sacred symbols" of the church's decoration (Figure 4.5).[200] Found on the columns flanking the door, downward-turned pistols augmented the expected flora of the capitals (Figure 4.6). Directed toward the ground, these guns evoked the idea of

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[199] Barnett 58.

[200] Rev. Samuel Hart, D.D., *In Memoriam: Samuel Colt and Caldwell Hart Colt* (Springfield: under the supervision of Clifton Johnson 1898) 15.

holstered arms, peacefully stored, and with their barrels covered. Likewise, the gun parts above the door are entirely separated from one another, suggesting the artistry of each part instead of the deadly weapons in which they figure. Intermingled with these, a quote from I Corinthians 10:31 reminded all entering the church of its religious nature. As a writer for the *Scientific American* noted of this carving: "'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;' words which are, for those who placed them there, or those who read [them], at once an admonition and a prayer."[201] The Armorer's Porch provided an additional connection between the church and the nearby factory, the "living legacy" of Samuel Colt. Drawing objects made by Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company into the church's decoration, Potter's design referenced not only those who worked in the factory, but its founder as well.[202]

Inside the church efforts of memorializing continued. Here worshippers encountered an elaborately painted space, with elegantly carved woodwork, colorful

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[201] "Church of the Good Shepherd,' Armsmear, Conn., A Beautiful Monument," *Scientific American* Vol XXI, no. 4, (July 24, 1869): 52. An engraved view of the Armorer's Porch was used as the cover of a work of music printed sometime before December 1868. Called "A Morning Service in D, Consisting of Te Deum and Jubilate," and composed by Henry Wilson, the organist of Christ Church, Hartford, the work was "inscribed with much esteem to Mrs. Samuel Colt." A copy was given to Elizabeth Colt's aunt, Hetty B. Hart on December 2, 1868 by the author, and is now in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society, Folio 1868 W748m.

[202] It should be noted that guns and bullets had previously been used as decorative motifs by Samuel Colt on a suite of furniture at Armsmear. This may be the suite recorded in his home office at the time of his death, and surviving pieces at Armsmear make extensive use of tacks in the shape of bullets. Comprised of a sofa, a number of chairs, a table, several stands, a bookcase, and a clock, these pieces all reflect the decorative elements of the gun making process. Perhaps most interesting on the bookcase and clock is the placement of tacks in the shape of a revolver barrel, not unlike that seen above the door of the Armorer's Porch.

Minton tiles, and remarkable stained glass windows (Figure 4.7). On the western wall an especially large opening housed the Memorial Window, which honored not only Samuel Colt, but also the three Colt children who died as infants (Figure 4.8). Describing it, one writer noted:

> The window is of stone, filled in with magnificent stained glass. It is divided into two compartments, in one of which is represented Joseph dispensing corn [*n.b*. Joseph is actually shown with wheat] to his brethren, and in the other Christ as the Good Shepherd, surrounded by sheep. In the arched top is the figure of an angel holding a babe and followed by two children, the whole typical of the three children, two of which died before Col. Colt, and one, the infant, a few days after…[203]

Placed directly opposite the altar, the Memorial Window was a definite effort on behalf of Elizabeth Colt to celebrate the memory of her husband and children. With panels in the lower sections of these windows naming these individuals, the references to Samuel Colt and the infant children were unmistakable. Representing Jesus with three sheep, Elizabeth could be assured that her beloved children, Samuel, Elizabeth, and Henrietta, were with the Good Shepherd. Likewise, the depiction of Joseph, placed above the words "And God blessed him and made all that he did to prosper," paid homage to her husband, who watched over his employees, frequently giving them food from his garden, and whose God-granted prosperity financed the church's construction.[204]

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[203] "Church of the Good Shepherd: A Full Description of the Finest Church in America - The Consecration Thursday," unidentified newspaper clipping. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[204] William Hosley notes that the form of the angel at the top of this window is drawn from a bas relief by Ernst Rietschel and that the window itself was executed by Henry E. Sharp. Hosley 205. Hosley has also suggested in several lectures that the figure of

The church's baptismal font, a gift of Elizabeth's sister and brother-in-law, also paid homage to the deceased children. Carved by John M. Moffitt, the marble font depicted the three infants holding a large shell, their names recorded on the pedestal below (Figure 4.9).[205] The memory of the Colt children was further evoked in the church's communion silver, executed by New York silversmith Francis W. Cooper (Figure 4.10). Engraved on the bottom of each piece an inscription reads, "In memory of the precious ones whom the Good Shepherd has folded in His blessed arms," recalling the role of the Good Shepherd in caring for Elizabeth's deceased children. Despite this inscription, however, the memorial meaning of these objects is conveyed in their material. Though finances allowed Elizabeth Colt to purchase top quality objects for the Church of the Good Shepherd, she decided to take a different route when it came to the silver. Instead of purchasing silver from Cooper, Mrs. Colt instead chose to repurpose the silver baby toys that had been gifted to her children. Melting it down to create the church's communion set, Elizabeth ensured that the

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Joseph shares many facial similarities with Sam Colt himself, providing an additional layer of meaning to this window.

[205] This font was completed shortly after the church's dedication and a receipt written on April 14, 1869 to C.N. Beach by John M. Moffitt, the sculptor, notes that the first payment was $800. Box 30, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The article in *The Scientific American* notes that the font's design was suggested by Elizabeth herself. "Church of the Good Shepherd,' Armsmear, Conn., A Beautiful Monument," 52. Interestingly the first baptism at which this font was used was that of Elizabeth Colt's niece, Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Beach in December 1869. Reverend William Jarvis to William Jarvis, December 31, 1869. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

memory of her children would be evoked at all services, and their legacy would be integrally involved in the most holy of church rites: the Eucharist.[206]

For Elizabeth Colt the Church of the Good Shepherd was truly a family space. Here she and her family worshipped, surrounded by friends, employees of the Colt Armory, and the memories of her loved ones. Within its walls, constructed of stone from Colt's 1855 Armory building, Elizabeth surrounded herself with the memory of her husband. She took communion from a chalice made from silver once held by her children, and light streamed through windows that paid homage to her lost family members. Elizabeth Colt expanded the concept of church memorials, from a singular plaque or furnishing, and instead created an entire building which, in its name honored Jesus, but in its execution and decoration paid tribute to her loved ones.[207]

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[206] Hart 22.

[207] Elizabeth Colt continued to add memorials to the Church of the Good Shepherd for the rest of her life ensuring that, as family members passed away, their memory would live on in the church. During her extended trip to Europe in 1882-1883, Elizabeth's travel journals make extensive references to her communications with Hart, Son, Peard & Co., a Birmingham manufactory whose metalwork was extensively used in religious settings. In addition to purchasing a brass corona and altar rail from the firm in July 1882, Elizabeth spent a significant amount of time over the course of her trip working on the design and finalizing the plans for the brasses in memory of her father, mother, and aunt. In May 1883 the first set was destroyed in the fire of the steamer *Granite State*, and replacement plaques, mounted on polished black marble, were installed in the Church of the Good Shepherd in November 1883. Additional memorial elements were added later in the nineteenth century and after Elizabeth Colt's death, including a processional cross, and additional stained glass windows, primarily donated by members of her family. Elizabeth H. Colt Travel Logs, July 13, August 23, August 25, August 26, 1882. Boxes 13 and 18, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. "Memorial Tablets at Good Shepherd," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, November 29, 1883.

Photographers quickly flocked to the new church, creating several series of stereopticon views that documented not only the exterior architecture, but also the memorial elements within the building itself. To anybody looking at these images, Elizabeth Colt's dedication to the memory of her husband, children, and family was abundantly clear. Her name was frequently placed on these stereopticon views, ensuring that her agency as the person responsible for this extraordinary family memorial was widely known (Figure 4.11).[208]

Concurrent with the construction of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Elizabeth was at work creating the picture gallery at Armsmear. Centered around the pair of Elliott portraits, Elizabeth aimed to create a room that would serve not only to memorialize her husband but, though her choice of art, pay homage to her children as well. Drawing from several of her artistic connections, especially Charles Loring Elliott and Frederic E. Church, and having considered the opinions of architects such as Richard Morris Hunt, Mrs. Colt envisioned a space that would be, as Frederic Church wrote, "the most charming Gallery in the country."[209] Not long after

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[208] Photographic views of the church were mailed to family members in Ohio, and Elizabeth Colt brought photos of the church with her when she traveled, providing them as gifts to clergymen she met abroad. Elizabeth H. Colt Travel Logs, August 28, 1882. Box 18, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. William Jarvis to William Jarvis, June 7, 1869. William Jarvis letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[209] Frederic E. Church to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Colt, September 7, 1866. Letter owned by the Wadsworth Atheneum. Reference to the opinion of Richard Morris Hunt is found in a letter to Church from Colt in which Colt refers to Hunt's suggestion of Frink's Reflectors to illuminate her gallery similar to those in Mr. Avery's gallery. E[lizabeth]. H. Colt to Mr. [Frederic] Church, May 15, 1866. Olana State Historic Site, OL.1998.1.141.1. Hunt likely came the suggestion of Church, who used the architect to design his first house "Cosy Cottage." At the time of Hunt's consultation

receiving the Elliott portraits, the anchor pieces for her new gallery, Elizabeth commissioned her next work of art, a painting by her friend Frederic E. Church. Ostensibly a landscape scene, Church's completed work of art held a far deeper meaning for both the artist and his client.

Through familial connections Church and Colt were well-acquainted, but they also shared in the tragic experience of losing children to death. Writing to his nephew in March 1865, William Jarvis noted that "Mr. Church, the great Landscape painter, whose father lives next door to Aunt Hetty, has lost his only two children within a week… They were lovely children, a son and a daughter."[210] The Church children, Herbert, age two, and Emma, age five months, were both victims of diphtheria, the same illness that claimed the life of Henrietta Colt in January 1862.[211] Grief-stricken, the Churches sailed for Jamaica, where they stayed for five months. Here Frederic Church explored the landscape and painted fastidiously. As one of his travel companions wrote, "He [Frederic Church] works away as if for dear life - & seems to forget his trouble by keeping himself always occupied."[212] Church's sketches from

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for Elizabeth Colt, he was working on the earliest proposals for Church's Olana. James Anthony Ryan, *Frederic Church's Olana: Architecture and Landscape as Art* (Hensonville: Black Dome Press Corp. 2011) 24.

[210] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, March 29, 1865. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[211] Kornhauser, *American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Vol. 1*, 107. Burial record of Henrietta Selden Colt, obtained from Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford, Connecticut.

[212] Kornhauser, *American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Vol. 1*, 107.

his time in Jamaica depicted the topography, the weather, the plants, and paid particular attention to the effects of light during sunrises and sunsets.

Having already painted several large landscape paintings such as *Heart of the Andes*, Church prepared to execute another almost monumentally-scaled canvas, which would hold a central location in Elizabeth Colt's picture gallery.[213] Exactly when Colt commissioned the painting is unclear, though in September 1866 the artist wrote his client, thanking her for her check of $2,190.[214] At the same time Church took the opportunity to describe the painting, which was then in his studio:

> I have made considerable progress with your picture since I last wrote- the development of which is most satisfactory- although one part is going to give me a terrible fight. There is a complicated effect in the sky. The larger portion presents a pure etherial [*sic*] blue delicately broken by cirri or delicate mottled clouds athwart which an occasional ragged black fragment of rain cloud passes - at the left of the picture is a passing shower of tropical character, through this the setting sun is struggling and illuminating such part of the landscape as comes under its immediate influence with a rich glow in its warmth vigorously contrasting with the cool open sky and the portion of landscape which is lighted by it - as the sun is subdued by the veil of mist and rain the principle light appears in the clear open sky which, in its close proximity to the sun is brilliantly illuminated with its clear unobscured rays that it shines (or I wish it to) with almost the dazzling light of the

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[213] Elizabeth Colt undoubtedly saw *Heart of the Andes* the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair where she hosted the Hartford table. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser and Katherine E. Manthorne, *Fern Hunting among These Picturesque Mountains* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press for the Olana Partnership 2010) 30.

[214] William Hosley's research uncovered a newspaper article that reported the final cost of this painting to be $15,000. While likely an exaggerated figure, the payment of $2,190 demonstrates Elizabeth Colt's dedication to obtaining the work of art at any cost, not dissimilar to her drive to engage Charles Elliott several years before.

> sun itself….as the sky will be the soul of the picture, I wish to make up my landscape to give the greatest possible effect to it.[215]

Just over a month later, Frederic Church instructed his New York florist Isaac Buchanan to send Mrs. Colt a "treefern from Jamaica," relaying in the same letter the exciting news of the birth of a baby boy.[216] Thanking Church for the fern, Elizabeth Colt congratulated the artist and his wife on their new child, but took a moment to insert personal insight amongst her congratulatory remarks:

> May he be spared to bless your life & comfort you both in old age - I know, by a like experience, that nothing can comfort hearts mourning for their children, like another one - not indeed taking the place of those who are blessed forever, but helping us to feel more of a peaceful resignation - & giving an earthly object for that yearning love, which fills every Mother's heart.[217]

Having suffered the loss of three infants, and after giving birth to a stillborn daughter, Elizabeth Colt was well-acquainted with child mortality. Yet she, like the Churches, also understood the grieving process following the death of children, and knew that

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[215] Frederic E. Church to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Colt, September 13, 1866. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. It should be noted that Church's *Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica* has traditionally been interpreted as depicting a sunrise, and understood to present the promise of a new day. That interpretation must now be readdressed with the discovery of this letter.

[216] Frederic E. Church to Mrs. [Elizabeth] Colt, October 20, 1866. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. In his letter to Colt, Church only mentions Buchanan by his last name, though searches of city directories suggest Isaac Buchanan's florist was the business patronized by Church.

[217] E[lizabeth]. H. Colt to Frederic E. Church, October 26, 1866, Olana State Historic Site, OL.1998.1.144.1.

coming to terms with such a tragedy relied upon peaceful resignation, a theme which manifested itself in Church's painting for Colt.

In the spring of 1870 Elizabeth Colt's completed painting was exhibited at the Goupil Art Gallery before being shipped to Hartford. While some reporters were pleased with the final work, *The New York Times* chastised the painting as being little more "than is to be found in the efforts of ordinary painters."[218] Elizabeth Colt, however, was clearly pleased with the work, placing it prominently on the center of one of the long walls in her gallery, directly opposite Hugues Merle's *The Angel's Offering*, which she purchased in 1866.[219] As Church wrote in his description of the painting, it was indeed the sky that became the soul of the finished work (Figure 4.12). Depicting the lush Jamaican landscape, with palms, ferns, and other tropical vegetation, all overlooking a river, Church's rendering of the sky conveyed the painting's intense meaning. On the left side of the canvas the blue sky is almost entirely concealed by dark rain clouds. The pink glow of the setting sun emerges near the horizon, its light skewed by the vertical bands of rain. In the center of the painting, the sky is clear and cloudless, the storm having passed this portion of the landscape, and its bright colors contrast with the dark area nearby. At the right, night approaches, and the cloudless sky promises a clear morning. As Elizabeth Kornhauser

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[218] "Fine Arts," *The New York Times* April 10, 1870. Elizabeth Kornhauser et al., *Hudson River School Masterworks from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2003) 60.

[219] Colt wrote to Church to urge him to go see the Merle painting at the Goupil Gallery, praising the rendering of the Madonna and the infant, whom she called "beautiful beyond expression." E[lizabeth]. H. Colt to Frederic E. Church, October 26, 1866, Olana State Historic Site, OL.1998.1.144.1.

noted of this painting, "… Church took care in imbuing his tropical landscape with a deeply spiritual meaning. He chose to depict the moment just after a storm, when the landscape glows in a lush, steamy atmosphere."[220] As the sunshine struggles to make itself visible through the last of the passing storm, the clear skies to the right promise more peaceful weather to come.

Created following the loss of his two children, *The Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica* articulates an artistic expression of parental grieving, a process with which Elizabeth Colt was intimately familiar. The storm's rain falls like tears, obscuring the light and sense of hope. Yet, with peaceful resignation, as Elizabeth Colt knew, the storm slowly passes, the skies clear, and night falls, promising a better day to come.[221] Aware of his client's devout religious beliefs, and of the church being constructed at the same time he was working on the painting in his studio, Church included the small parish church of St. Thomas in the Vale at the center of the canvas, hinting at the role of religion in weathering the storm of grief. Centered on the eastern wall of Elizabeth Colt's picture gallery, Frederic Church's *Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica* embodied the struggle experienced both by the artist and his client as parents who suffered the loss of their children (Figure 4.13). Yet, they both knew that with time, the storm would pass, just as the storm in Church's painting.

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[220] Kornhauser, *American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Atheneum Vol. 1,* 116.

[221] A similar theme was used in Sanford Gifford's 1866 painting *A Passing Storm in the Adirondacks* which, placed next to the Merle, was directly across from Church's *Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica.* Interestingly, art historians have included Gifford's painting as part of a larger group executed between 1859 and 1868 which have been interpreted as reflecting the the "storm" of the Civil War; however, one must wonder how Elizabeth Colt interpreted this painted storm. Kornhauser et al, *Hudson River School Masterworks from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,* 115.

With *The Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica* in her house, placed halfway between the Elliott portraits of Elizabeth and Samuel Colt, the art in Armsmear's picture gallery preserved the memory and legacy of Elizabeth's husband and children. Church's painting paid homage to the struggle following the death of beloved children, both his own, and his client's, but it looked to the future, promising brighter days ahead. Religion provided Elizabeth with a similar promise, and helped her in the days and months following the losses of her children and husband. In the creation of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Elizabeth used materiality and symbolism to evoke memories of her loved ones, ensuring that they would be with her whenever she came to worship, just as Sam and the children were with her in Armsmear's picture gallery. Through this patronage of art for her house and the new church located on her grounds, Elizabeth Colt surrounded herself within a landscape that preserved the memory of her loved ones through its objects.

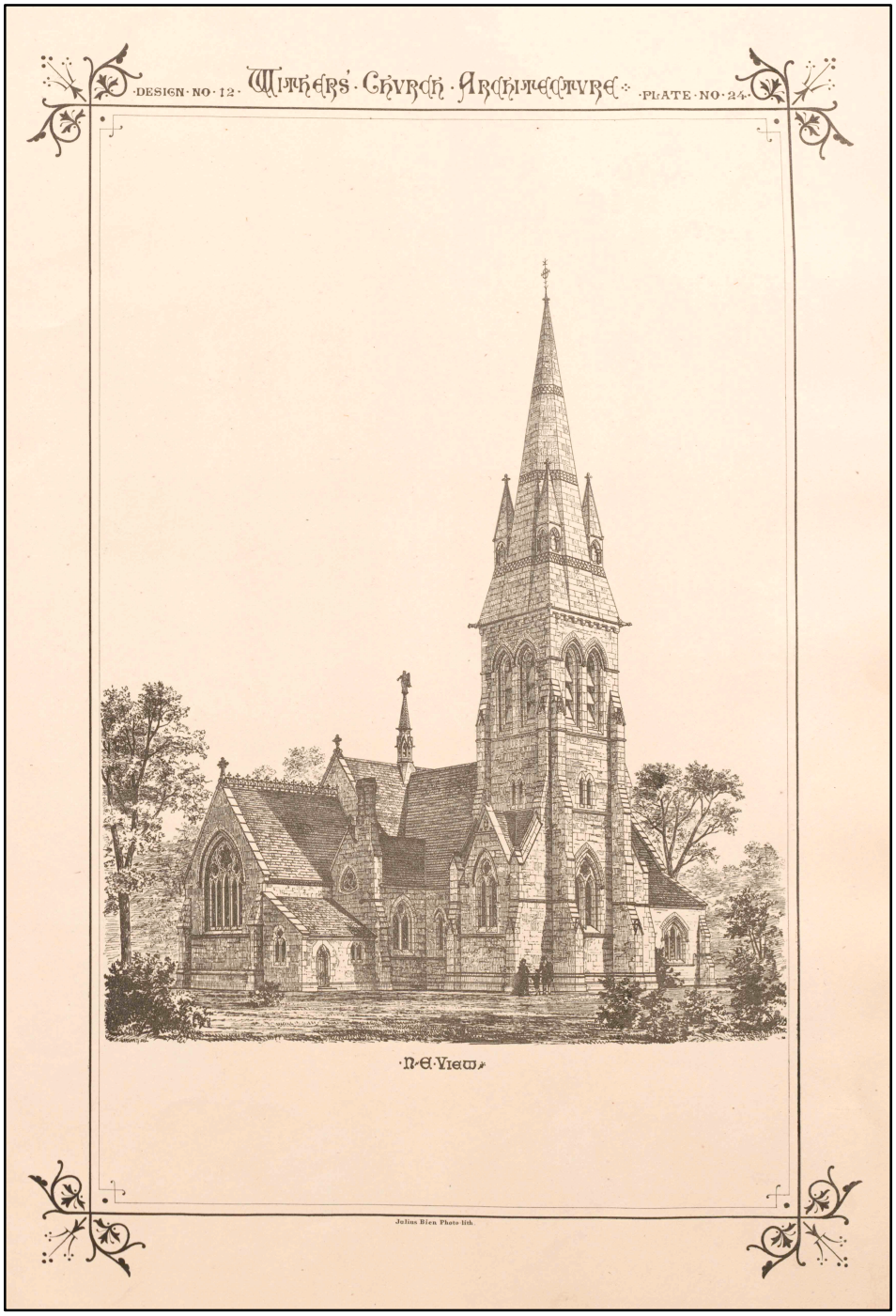


Figure 4.1 – Perspective view of the Church of the Holy Innocents, Vaux, Withers & Co., architects, New York City, 1866. Included in *Church Architecture*, by Frederick Clarke Withers, 1873. Courtesy of Morris Library, University of Delaware.

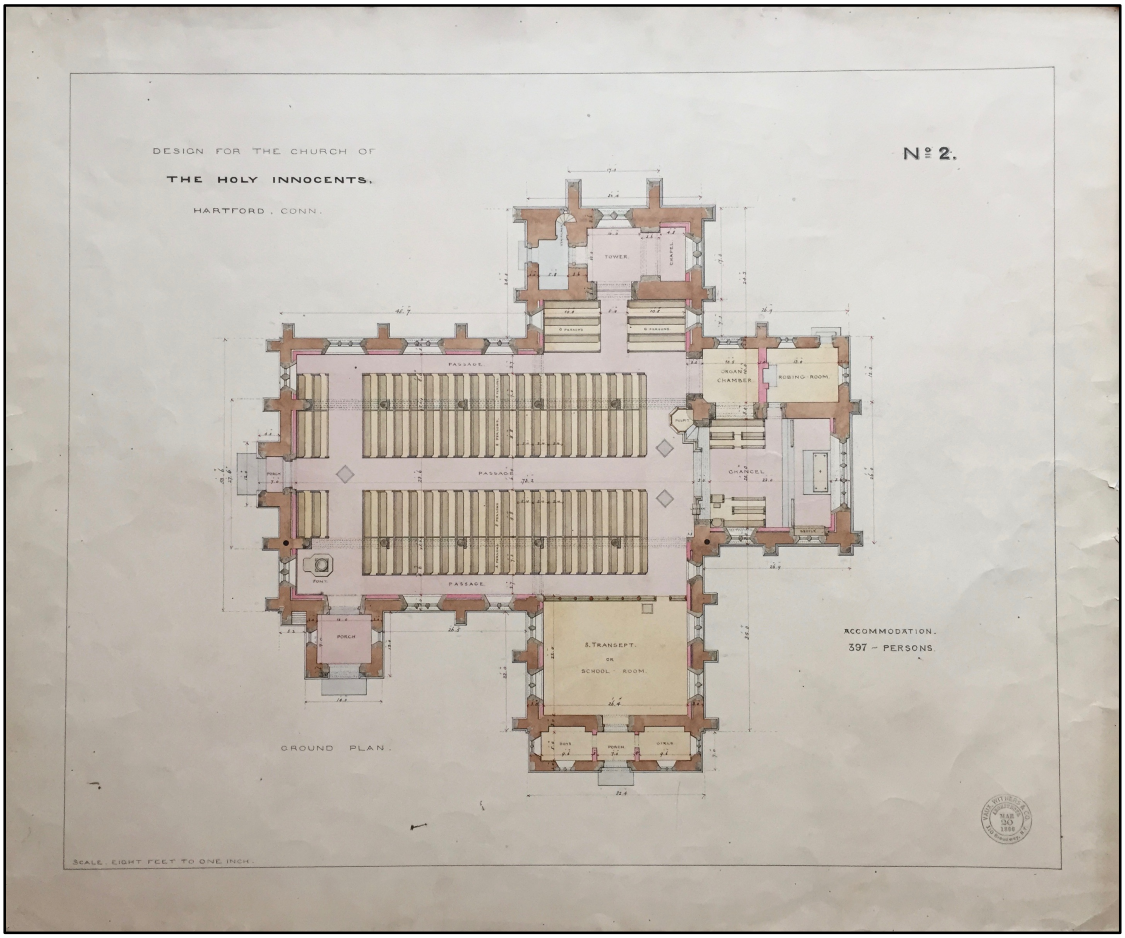


Figure 4.2 – Floor plan of the Church of the Holy Innocents, Vaux, Withers & Co., architects, New York City, March 20, 1866. Ink and watercolor on paper. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Figure 4.3 – Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford, 1866-1869. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. Viewed from the northwest. Photograph by the author.

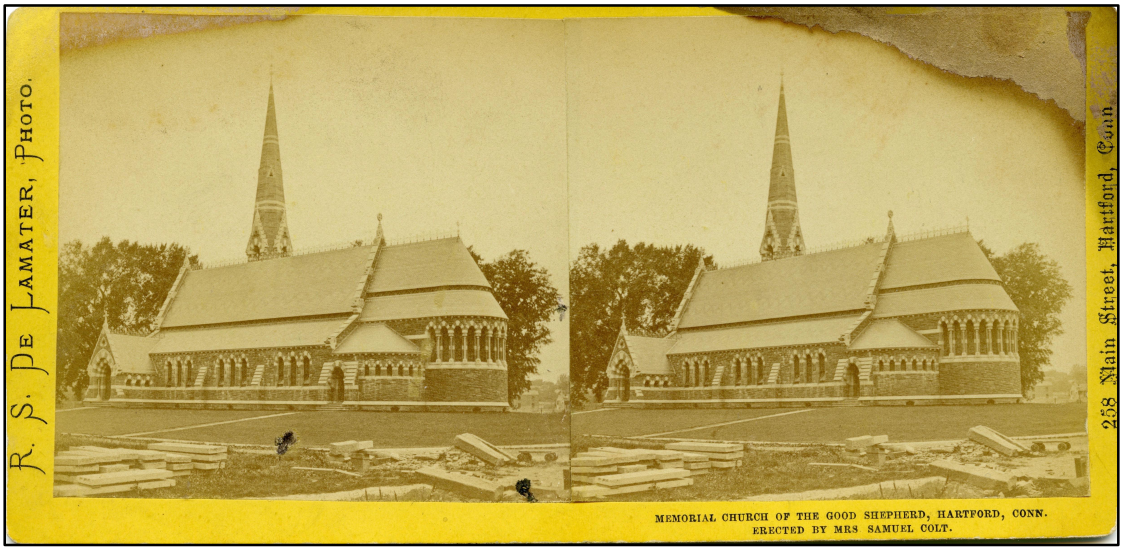


Figure 4.4 – "Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford, Conn. Erected by Mrs. Samuel Colt," from the southeast, R.S. De Lamater, Hartford. Stereo view, 3 ¼ x 6 7/8 in. Collection of the author.

Figure 4.4 – Detail. Note the piles of unused stone in the foreground.

Figure 4.5 – Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford, 1866-1869. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. Architectural ornament on the Armorer's Porch depicting revolver chambers, bullet molds, gun parts, and gun manufacturing tools. Photograph by the author.

Figure 4.6 – Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford, 1866-1869. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. Armorer's Porch column capital with vegetal and gun ornament. Photograph by the author.

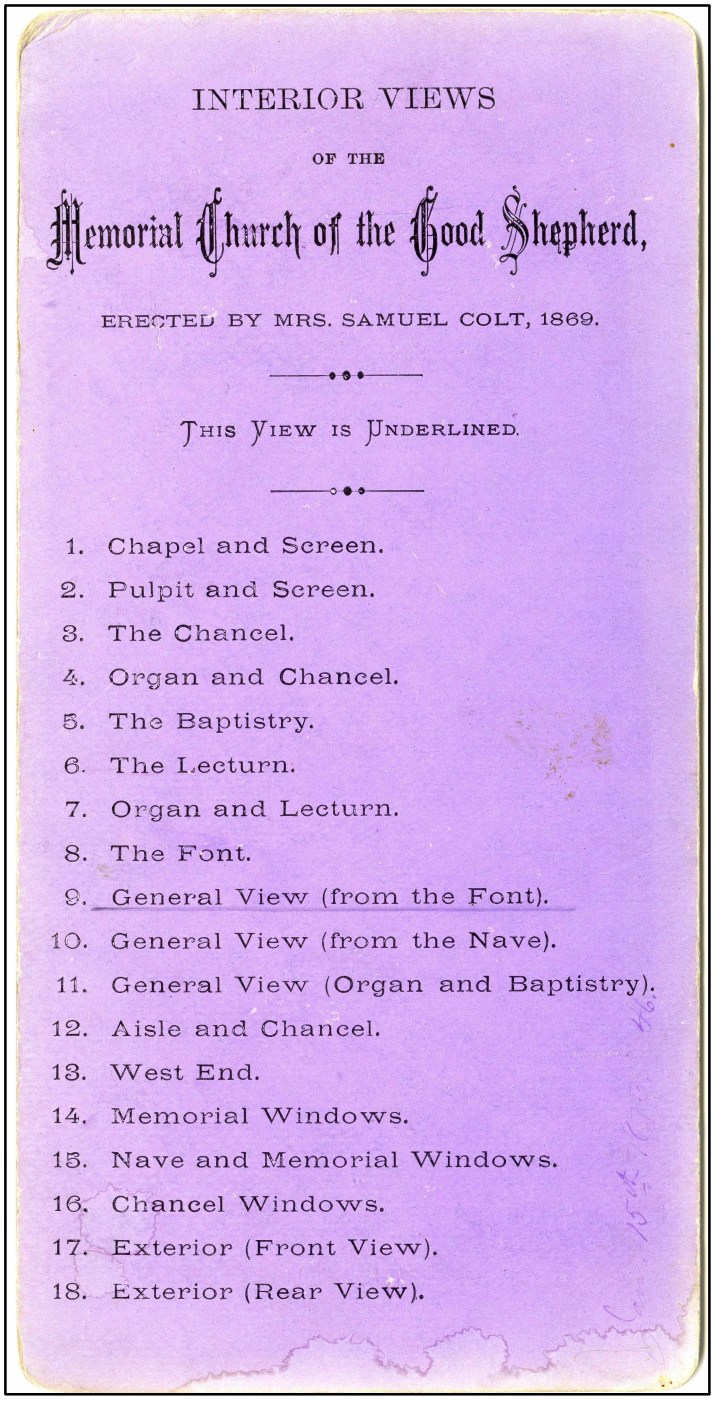
Figure 4.7 – Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford, 1866-1869. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. View toward the altar. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Figure 4.8 – "Church of the Good Shepherd. Interior," Memorial Windows. H.D. Udell, Hartford, January 15, 1873. Stereo view, 3 3/8 x 7 in. Collection of the author.

Figure 4.8 – Detail.

Figure 4.9 – Church of the Good Shepherd Baptismal Font, John M. Moffitt, New York, 1869. Given by Hetty Hart Beach and C. Nichols Beach. Carved marble. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Figure 4.10 – Church of the Good Shepherd Communion Silver, F.W. Cooper, New York City, 1869. Raised, chased, and engraved silver. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.



INTERIOR VIEWS

OF THE

Memorial Church of the Good Shepherd,

ERECTED BY MRS. SAMUEL COLT, 1869.

THIS VIEW IS UNDERLINED.

1. Chapel and Screen.
2. Pulpit and Screen.
3. The Chancel.
4. Organ and Chancel.
5. The Baptistry.
6. The Lecturn.
7. Organ and Lecturn.
8. The Font.
9. General View (from the Font).
10. General View (from the Nave).
11. General View (Organ and Baptistry).
12. Aisle and Chancel.
13. West End.
14. Memorial Windows.
15. Nave and Memorial Windows.
16. Chancel Windows.
17. Exterior (Front View).
18. Exterior (Rear View).

Figure 4.11 – Typical back of stereo view from series of views of the Church of the Good Shepherd. Note the line "Erected by Mrs. Samuel Colt, 1869." H.D. Udell, Hartford. Stereo view, 3 7/16 x 6 7/8 in. Collection of the author.

Figure 4.12 – *Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica*, Frederic Edwin Church (American, 1826-1900), 1867. Oil on canvas, 48 5/16 x 84 5/8 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.21. Photograph by the author.

Figure 4.13 – South View of Elizabeth Colt's Picture Gallery on the Second Floor at Armsmear, likely R.S. De Lamater, Hartford, circa 1895. Photograph. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., Archives.

Chapter 5

THE LAST OF MY LITTLE BAND

Writing not long after Elizabeth's 1862 miscarriage, Lydia Sigourney offered her friend words of encouragement. The birth of a stillborn daughter six months after the back-to-back deaths of her husband and infant daughter marked the third in a series of traumatic events. Sigourney expressed her heartfelt hope that Elizabeth would find consolation in the wisdom of the "Divine Disposer." But the acclaimed Hartford poet also knew that Mrs. Colt had one last link to her departed husband, her son Caldwell Hart Colt, born in 1858 (Figure 5.1). "Dear little Collie will now be doubly + unspeakably precious," wrote Sigourney, "The Angel of the Covenant watch over him and bless him. His continual development and improvement will soothe and comfort you."[222] As the last tangible connection between the widow and her husband, Elizabeth hoped her son would be a constant comfort for the rest of her life.

As he grew up, Caldwell and his mother forged a very close bond. They lived together, traveled together, and Elizabeth made every effort to ensure that Caldwell enjoyed his life to the fullest, enabling him to follow his passions of hunting and sailing instead of working in the Armory. But Caldwell's life was cut short, and the Colt heir died in 1894 at age thirty-five, eleven years before his mother. Elizabeth was

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[222] L[ydia] H[untley] S[igourney] to My dearly loved Friend [Elizabeth Colt], August 1, 1862. Box 5, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

devastated. Writing to her friend, the Reverend Francis Goodwin, she wrote of her immense loss:

> Oh! dear Mr. Goodwin, can you think what it is to lose the last of my little band, and the strong, brave man on whom I leaned, and who I fondly hoped would be with me to the end - and who in time would tire of the sea and come to his Father's home to live and carry on our work. I know that it is all right, but the poor human heart must cry out in its agony. I want to bear it bravely, but I must have a little time to adjust my remaining days of life to the changed conditions, and this I feel will be given me by our Merciful Saviour- for I remember all my mercies.[223]

As she had following the death of her husband and infant children in the 1860s, Elizabeth Colt turned to memorializing, using objects to ensure that her son's memory would remain close at hand. Within only a few months of his funeral at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Elizabeth decided upon plans to ensure Caldwell's life would be celebrated through stone and mortar, creating a building that in its design and decoration told of his life and passions, and ensured his story and legacy would live on indefinitely. Furthermore, Elizabeth took objects from Caldwell's life and turned them into relics which, by interacting with them, allowed her to remain close to her son and think back upon their time together. As she demonstrated decades before, Elizabeth placed immense meaning in objects, following nineteenth-century beliefs that they had the power to preserve the memory of those who were absent.[224]

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[223] Elizabeth H. Colt to Francis Goodwin, February 11, 1894. Francis Goodwin Family Papers, 1848-1923, Connecticut Historical Society.

[224] This concept is integral to Teresa Barnett's book, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth Century America*. From this text it is clear that Elizabeth Colt was not alone in holding strong associative qualities between objects and people but, as this chapter will demonstrate, Elizabeth Colt's idea of a relic was far more than the small battlefield memorials or locks of hair often cited in Barnett's book.

In his weekly letters, Elizabeth's father recorded Caldwell's youth. Clearly a childhood of leisure, Caldwell's days were spent catching fish and frogs in the ponds at Armsmear, skating in the winter, setting off fireworks on the fourth of July, and traveling extensively with his mother.[225] Pampered, and with easy access to extensive financial resources, Caldwell occasionally found himself getting into mischief with his friends. Writing in November 1858, just before his grandson's tenth birthday, William Jarvis noted:

> Collie has been rusticating at Saybrook… His associations here with a set of boys, who were quite lawless, it was important to break up, and there seemed to be no way of doing it but by sending him out of the place [Hartford] for a time. It has already been of great benefit to him, both as respects his deportment and his attention to his studies. His mother has let him have a double barrelled [*sic*] shot gun, which has delighted him very much, though I doubt whether it is a very safe article to entrust with a boy not yet ten years old. But perhaps the sooner he learns how to use it, the better.[226]

Caldwell attended St. Paul's School, in Concord, New Hampshire, where his mother was a frequent visitor, and where he developed a close connection with one of his teachers, the Reverend John Hargate, who traveled to the Midwest with Caldwell and Elizabeth Colt during the summer of 1873.[227] In 1875 Elizabeth hired the

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[225] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, October 14, 1862, July 13, 1865, and July 3, 1873. William Jarvis Papers, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society

[226] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, November 10, 1868. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[227] William Jarvis to William Jarvis, July 7, 1873, August 18, 1873, September 6, 1873. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. Caldwell was apparently very fond of his teacher, going so far as to give him a 41 caliber trigger revolver in a rosewood presentation box. On the back strap of the gun was engraved "Rev. John Hargate from Caldwell H. Colt." This gun was lot 1154 in the Fall 2004 Firearms Sale of James D. Julia, Inc.

Reverend Leverett Bradley, a recent graduate of the Hartford Theological Seminary, to serve as Caldwell's private tutor, inviting him to live at Armsmear. Bradley became part of the Colt family, earning the appellation of "Misher Brad" from Elizabeth's niece, Lizzie Beach, who also lived at Armsmear at the time.[228] Like Hargate, Bradley became a true companion to Caldwell, and undoubtedly served as his primary male role model as well. Together the pair traveled to the Rockies and Pacific coast to hunt, to Canada, and to Europe. Yet, despite private tutors, St. Paul's School, and time spent at the Sheffield Scientific School, a school associated with Yale, Bradley was forced to admit that Caldwell "was not a lover of books."[229] Nevertheless, his mother overlooked his flaws, correcting his correspondence before it was sent and acting on behalf of her son in business matters, in order to ensure that his life was as carefree as

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[228] "Misher Brad's" name appears in several letters to and from Elizabeth Beach, suggesting this was what Lizzie, then five years old, called her cousin's tutor. In one letter to Lizzie, Elizabeth Colt notes that "'Misher Brad' comes back next Monday + then Mr. Boo has to go study again," suggesting Mr. Boo was Lizzie's name for her cousin Caldwell. E[lizabeth].H. Colt to "Precious Little Lizzie" [Elizabeth Beach], December 29, 1876. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[229] An extensive group of letters between Caldwell and his mother, and between Bradley and Mrs. Colt, survive in the Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers at the Beinecke Library. It was on the return trip from Europe that Bradley met the Reverend Phillips Brooks, one of America's most prominent Episcopal priests, who had worked with Henry Hobson Richardson in the creation of Trinity Church, Boston. As his biography records, "His [Bradley's] love and reverence for Mrs. Colt grew very strong and it was she who first drew his attention to the Episcopal Church…" Within a year Bradley was the Assistant Rector, under Brooks, at Trinity Church. Susan Hinckley Bradley, ed., *Leverett Bradley: A Soldier-Boy's Letters, 1862-1865, A Man's Work in the Ministry* (Boston: Privately Printed 1905) 66-67. Hart 79.

possible. He was the last connection she had with her husband, and Elizabeth made sure that Caldwell's life was an enjoyable one.[230]

In November 1879, at age twenty-one, Caldwell Hart Colt came into his inheritance. To celebrate the event Elizabeth hosted a party to which more than one thousand invitations were issued. "His Mother is happy and proud of him I think, as he is of her," wrote Caldwell's uncle, Richard Jarvis in the days before the event.[231] Descriptions of the Colt heir referenced his good looks and pleasant demeanor, and Elizabeth undoubtedly saw in her son the best of his father. Elizabeth's devotion to Caldwell was well-known among her friends, who frequently referenced the comforting companionship Caldwell gave his mother. Congratulating Mrs. Colt on her son's upcoming birthday festivities, Bishop Cleveland Cox of New York expressed his feelings: "May the 'only son of his mother + she a widow' - be spared to comfort your future life."[232] Having reached adulthood, it seemed that Caldwell's future was secured. Unlike his siblings, stable health blessed him in his youth, and as

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[230] Caldwell does not appear to have been an avid letter writer based on documentary evidence. The letters that do survive display an uneasy hand and several include areas that have been crossed out and rewritten by his mother. Several are preserved in the Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[231] Richard W.H. Jarvis to William Jarvis, November 20, 1879. William Jarvis Papers, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society.

[232] A. Cleveland Cox to Elizabeth Colt, November 24, 1879. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Adapting a Bible quote, Bishop Cox references a scene from Luke 7, in which Jesus approaches the city gates at Nain in time to see a deceased man being carried out, the only son of his widow mother. Reassuring the mother, Jesus resurrects the son from his bier.

an adult Caldwell was an active and avid outdoorsman. Describing the twenty-one year old, *The New York Times* wrote, "He likes hunting and good dogs, and is favorably disposed to an attractive team, and enjoys out-of-door sports generally, and particularly the Yale-Harvard contests in boating."[233] In fact, despite his obvious financial interests in the Colt Armory, Caldwell showed little interest in the family business. He was, his uncle wrote, "… quite gentlemanly and unassuming and quite disposed (I may say too much so) to leave the management of his affairs to his mother and myself."[234] Instead of business, Caldwell's interests revolved around hunting, fishing, and yachting.[235]

Articles chronicled Caldwell's tendency of placing bets on sporting events, and a cockfighting pit in one of Armsmear's outbuildings bears witness to his betting passions. His travels aboard the schooner *Dauntless* and penchant for sailing featured frequently in newspapers, and Caldwell quickly rose in rank in the yachting community, becoming the Vice Commodore of the New York Yacht Club in 1888,

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[233] "Col. Samuel Colt's Estate. His Only Son About to Take Possession of his Share of the Property," *The New York Times,* November 24, 1879.

[234] Richard W.H. Jarvis to William Jarvis, January 3, 1880. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. Caldwell was named Vice-President of Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company in 1888, but never developed a deep interest in the factory. Hosley 161.

[235] Richard Jarvis notes that the family's 1880 Thanksgiving table was supplied with canvasback ducks, shot by Caldwell en route to Florida. Richard W.H. Jarvis to William Jarvis, November 30, 1880. William Jarvis Letters, 1838-1889, Connecticut Historical Society. Within the notes detailing the movement of items from Armsmear to the Wadsworth Atheneum following Elizabeth Colt's death are several lists which chronicle a menagerie of stuffed animals, likely shot or caught by Caldwell. These included tarpon, bison, deer, and at least one pelican. Colt Papers, Registrar's Office, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford.

and Commodore of the Larchmont Yacht Club in 1892. As William Hosley has noted, Caldwell was truly a *bon vivant*, a "stereotypical icon of foppish indulgence, whose fame was earned by his courage, audacity, and heroism at sports and what today might be called 'attitude.'"[236] Yet even with his reportedly playboy lifestyle, Caldwell remained as devoted to his mother as she was of him.

Despite his reputation for strength and virility, Caldwell Hart Colt died suddenly at age thirty-five, while wintering in Punta Gorda, Florida.[237] His mother, who was then in the midst of preparing for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Church of the Good Shepherd, lost her last living child and the final direct connection between her and her husband.[238] As they had following the death of Samuel Colt thirty-two years before, newspapers carried news of Caldwell's death nationwide, and Elizabeth received many heartfelt condolences, particularly from friends of her son. While many admitted they were unacquainted with Mrs. Colt, Caldwell's friends were compelled to convey their deep sympathy, almost all taking a moment to pay tribute to

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[236] Hosley 161. A photograph of Caldwell's cockfighting pit, located on the second floor of an abandoned Armsmear carriage house, now owned by the Hartford Parks Department, was published in Tom Vanderbilt's article "Can Coltsville Give Hartford Another Shot?" *Historic Preservation*, 50, no. 1 (1998): 58.

[237] Reports of Caldwell's death have been aggrandized to unimaginable proportions. While some texts claim he drowned while sailing, others assert he was shot by the husband of a jealous lover. His official burial certificate from Cedar Hill Cemetery lists his cause of death as heart disease, while newspapers at the time attributed his death to tonsillitis (Hosley 206). Caldwell Hart Colt, burial record obtained from Cedar Hill Cemetery.

[238] In a letter dated January 19, 1894, Elizabeth Colt wrote excitedly about the upcoming festivities and her hope that the Reverend Francis Goodwin would be able to attend and participate. Elizabeth H. Colt to Francis Goodwin, January 19, 1894. Francis Goodwin Family Papers, 1848-1923, Connecticut Historical Society.

the mother to whom Caldwell was intensely devoted. "The saddest thought to me," wrote Pastor Mahlon H. Outland of the Punta Gorda Methodist Church, who conducted a funeral service in Florida before Caldwell's body was sent to Hartford, "is that his Dear Mother could not be with him, and speak to him in his last moments."[239] Writing from Paris, author Samuel Clemens conveyed a similar sentiment: "…we of Hartford all knew him best through two of his most conspicuous qualities - his devotion to his mother and his splendid masculinity; qualities which are greatness in themselves, + both persuade homage + compel it."[240] For Elizabeth, Caldwell's death was a crushing blow. The son she hoped would carry on the family name, maintain the Colt presence in Hartford, and be with her until the end was now dead. As she had following her earlier losses, Elizabeth turned first to her faith.

Five days after his death, Caldwell's funeral took place at the Church of the Good Shepherd.[241] Distributed to mourners that day, a prayer printed on paper surrounded with a thick black border recalled the mourning poems printed for Caldwell's siblings decades before. With the date and ARMSMEAR written in bold letters at the top, the prayer, likely composed by the Reverend Samuel Hart, Elizabeth's cousin, acknowledged the need to obey God's will. "Humble the pride of our hearts and keep us from all discontent with Thine appointments," the prayer

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[239] Mahlon H. Outland, to Mrs. Samuel Colts [*sic*], February 1, 1894. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[240] S[amuel] L. Clemens to Elizabeth Colt, February 15, 1894. Letter held in the archives of the Mark Twain House & Museum, Hartford, Connecticut.

[241] "Commodore Colt's Funeral. Services in the Church His Mother Built - Many New-Yorkers Present," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1894.

instructed, "And inasmuch as Thou brings good out of evil, and light out of darkness… dispose us to a meek and thankful use of all Thy dealings with us, even those which are darkest to our mortal sight."[242] As the prayer made clear, there was little to be done but accept the will of God, something Elizabeth had been forced to do so many times before.

As demonstrated by her actions in the 1860s, Elizabeth Colt placed great importance on tangible memorials to her deceased family members. With these she could reflect upon their lives, both in her home at Armsmear, and on the grounds of her estate, which extended all the way to the Armory complex. Embodying in their material and design direct references to those they commemorated, the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Colt Armory were well-known markers of her family's legacy in Hartford, but they were built at a time when Caldwell was still alive. Following his death, Elizabeth felt the need to preserve her son's memory as she had for his siblings and father decades before.

On May 29, 1894, *The New York Times* reported that "Mrs. Elizabeth H. Colt has accepted plans drawn by Architect Edward T. Potter of New-York for a memorial building to her son, Commodore Caldwell Hart Colt."[243] After nearly two decades in retirement, Elizabeth Colt convinced Potter to design a building that would celebrate

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[242] "Armsmear, January 26, 1894," Prayer printed following the death of Caldwell Colt. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This prayer appears to combine a number of shorter prayers, including several found in *The Clergyman's Companion* (New York: Thomas Whittaker Co. 1885).

[243] "Memorial to Commodore Colt," *The New York Times*, May 29, 1894.

her son's life and ensure his legacy in his native city.[244] Accepting the plans only four months after Caldwell's death, it is clear that both Elizabeth Colt and Edward Tuckerman Potter understood exactly what was necessary to make this memorial building resonant. Having worked with Colt on the design of the Church of the Good Shepherd almost three decades before, Potter understood his client, and his plan presented a memorial that marked the great passions of Caldwell's life. Placed next door to the Church of the Good Shepherd, Potter designed a building that would harmonize with the Gothic Revival church, but he made sure that the new Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House was unique and contained distinct references to its namesake.[245]

Elizabeth was conscious of the architectural dialogue that would take place between the church and the new memorial hall; both buildings were fraught with symbolism and motifs that celebrated and memorialized members of her family. They were exceptional examples of *l'architecture parlante*, the phrase used by the French to describe buildings whose meaning was reflected in their design and detailing. To

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[244] Elizabeth Colt's relationship with Potter continued after the completion of the Church of the Good Shepherd in 1869. In the early 1870s she engaged him to decorate a room in her house that later became known as the library. In this space Potter placed an elaborate mantel and fireplace surround, and remarkably carved cabinets that featured busts of Sam Colt, Ben Franklin, James Madison, Biblical figures, and the Continents, among others. A receipt between Potter and Elizabeth Colt's brother-in-law, C. Nichols Beach, acknowledging a $550 payment for "professional services to date," further underlines the connection between Elizabeth's family and Potter. The receipt between C.N. Beach and Edward T. Potter is found in the Edward Tuckerman Potter papers, 1864-1965. Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

[245] Landau 170.

ensure that the two structures complemented one another, Elizabeth engaged the nation's foremost landscape architects. Having just completed their work for the Columbian World Exposition, Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot was well suited for the job, and worked with Potter to ensure that the placement of the new memorial house did not compete with, or detract from, the earlier church building.

Three site plans survive, conveying an interesting progression of landscape design. While two bear the name of Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, the other sheet appears to be the work of Edward Tuckerman Potter and was perhaps executed before the professional landscape architects were engaged in 1895.[246] In this drawing, a formal parterre garden appears behind the memorial house, which is framed by trees. Beyond this, some distance from the building itself, a series of interconnected lines initially seem incomprehensible and confusing. Hastily scrawled above them, the word "Maze" suggests that these lines actually represent a playful landscape feature set back from the building. Upon tracing these lines and analyzing them closely, it is clear they are not haphazard. In fact, they are arranged to read CHColt, creating a maze out of Caldwell's name. While this design would have been imperceptible to those in the maze itself, its meaning would have been abundantly clear to viewers looking down from the the upper stories of the memorial building (Figure 5.2). While

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[246] Unfortunately, this sheet is not signed, but the handwriting appears to match that on the surviving drawings of the Church of the Good Shepherd. This was previously suggested by Potter-historian Sarah Landau in 1979. Landau 173. I am grateful to the Trustees of the Colt Bequest for allowing me to examine these drawings, which are in their care.

it was apparently never realized, this plan suggests that, at least for a brief moment, Elizabeth Colt considered imparting her son's name onto the landscape itself.[247]

Accounts of the building's cost varied. Early reports suggested the completed structure would cost somewhere in the vicinity of $100,000, but as construction got underway estimates doubled, and in his analysis William Hosley asserts that "All told, the building cost Elizabeth at least $300,000…"[248] At three o'clock on September 10, 1896, the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House was officially dedicated, an event to which Elizabeth mailed elegant invitations printed by Tiffany & Company. Devoting an entire page to the dedication ceremony, *The Hartford Courant* provided a history of the building, a biography of its namesake, and referenced the devotion of its donor, Elizabeth Colt.[249] Speaking at the ceremony Elizabeth described the new structure

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[247] Olmsted, Olmsted, & Eliot's role in the landscape of the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial Hall has been largely uninvestigated, and while finding aids denote the existence of documentation in the Olmsted archives, it is not clear what else stands to be ascertained in terms of this commission. An Italian garden is referenced in early articles about the building project, but it is not clear if this was ever executed. "Diocesan News," *The Churchman*, vol. 70 (October 13, 1894): 431.

[248] "Memorial to Commodore Colt," *The New York Times*, May 29, 1894; "In Memory of Commodore Colt: Handsome Structure to be Built in Hartford by His Mother," *The New York Times*, July 28, 1895; Hosley 209.

[249] Several of these elegant Tiffany invitations have been uncovered in area archives, including one Elizabeth sent to her niece, which is found in Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This same box contains a copy of the dedication service booklet. It should also be noted that in January 1896, Elizabeth Colt and her sister Hetty attended the consecration of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Punta Gorda, which Mrs. Colt helped fund as a memorial to her son. While her involvement in the founding of this church has been acknowledged, it has not been fully investigated, and warrants further attention. Some information on this may be found in Chester Baum and Marguerite Albro, *Church of the Good Shepherd, Punta Gorda, Florida: The First Hundred Years* (Charlotte Harbor: Tabby House 1996).

and its very personal meaning, saying "… the stones tell the story of sunshine and shadow, of life and love and death, and of eternal hope…"[250]

Like the Church of the Good Shepherd, the new Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House was thoroughly imbued with symbolism. As Elizabeth said, its stones told a story. Its column capitals referenced Caldwell's love for hunting and fishing, and included depictions of many of the animals Caldwell shot, which hung on the walls at Armsmear. Carved in stone were yacht club burgees, flora, fauna, family crests, and several depictions of Caldwell's beloved schooner *Dauntless*.[251] Not unlike her efforts following the consecration of the Church of the Good Shepherd in 1869, Elizabeth underwrote the costs of a book to help visitors understand the meaning of the new building, engaging her cousin, the Reverend Samuel Hart to write the text.[252] Describing the decorative elements of the new memorial house and their connection to Caldwell, Hart wrote "…every part of the edifice tells of the active life and trained eye

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[250] "The Colt Memorial: Handsome Building Erected by Mrs. Samuel Colt," *The Hartford Courant*, September 11, 1896. Elizabeth Colt's full speech, as well as others given at the dedicatory ceremonies, was reprinted in Hart's *In Memoriam*.

[251] The symbolic elements of this building are thoroughly described and analyzed in Samuel Hart's *In Memoriam* and in Sarah B. Landau's work on Potter, and thus will not be fully considered in this thesis. With its remarkable incorporation of masonry and iron frame construction, and Potter's efforts to push toward a more modern interpretation of architecture, this building is one that deserves particular attention and additional study in the context of architecture and building in the late nineteenth century. Potter describes his efforts to achieve this more modern architecture in "The Colt Memorial Buildings, Hartford," *The American Architect and Building News* LXXVII, no. 1386 (July 19, 1902): 23. Available on Google Books.

[252] Called *In Memoriam: Samuel Colt and Caldwell Hart Colt*, the book discusses the history of the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, the Church of the Good Shepherd, and Armsmear, as well as the individuals whose memories were integrally associated with these structures.

and hand of one who knew all parts of the world and all manner of creatures that live upon it, but whose special delight, as it has been said, was to be moving about on the great and restless deep."[253]

But the stones told more than just the story of Caldwell Hart Colt. Elizabeth made sure the new memorial house told of a mother's love as well. On the four massive lintels placed above the main entrances, letters nearly three feet high reminded visitors of the loss that led to the building's construction: "Erected A.D. MDCCCXCV - In Memory of - Caldwell Hart Colt - by his mother." Just as they had been integrally associated with one another in life, these architectural elements ensured that they would be associated after Caldwell's death. Elizabeth's assertion of her own agency in this project was a first in terms of her memorializing efforts. While newspapers in the 1860s recounted her role in the construction of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Elizabeth chose to include her participation in the creation of her son's memorial directly over the front door. It was a bold gesture for the woman who, thirty years before, was called a "New England wife."

The new Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House was an architectural tour de force (Figure 5.3). Built primarily of brownstone and with Ohio sandstone used for the trim, the building's materials matched those of the adjacent church. Additionally, Potter used dozens of additional stones in an array of colors and hues to enhance the building's visual interest. Measuring 120 feet long and 60 feet wide, the building was topped by a tall flèche, bringing its total height to 110 feet. Elizabeth Colt's memorial to her son was an impressive structure, and rivaled the church next door (Figure

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[253] Hart 34.

5.4).[254] Built for the use of the parishioners of the Church of the Good Shepherd, many of whom were Colt employees and lived nearby, the basement of the new building contained a bowling alley, billiard tables, and rooms furnished with exercise equipment. On the primary floor reception rooms, meeting spaces, and a library encouraged a more relaxed atmosphere. A grand staircase brought visitors to an immense second-floor hall, 68 feet long and 36 feet wide. Capable of accommodating 300 people, this space featured a stage and minstrel's gallery, making it ideal for social gatherings and theatrical entertainments (Figure 5.5).[255]

In addition to subtler references, such as the carved elements that reflected the interests of her son, Elizabeth Colt also used overt references, ensuring that all visitors would understand the true meaning behind the building's construction. In addition to the stage and minstrel's gallery in the second floor hall, off the southern wall of the room was an apse-like platform, called a "tribunal" in Samuel Hart's description of the space. Raised above the main floor the room, the tribunal housed a full-length portrait Caldwell Colt, reminding all who entered of the building's namesake (Figure 5.6). Painted by Eastman Johnson and costing a reported $5,000, the portrait depicts Caldwell in a double-breasted jacket, and wearing a yachtsman's hat. Standing in the cockpit of his beloved *Dauntless*, the schooner's name visible on the binnacle, he looks confidently off into the distance. With his telescope laid on an upholstered

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[254] "The Colt Memorial: Handsome Building Erected by Mrs. Samuel Colt," *The Hartford Courant*, September 11, 1896.

[255] Like the church before it, press coverage of the new memorial house spread nationwide, and extensive articles, heavily drawn from those printed in *The Hartford Courant*, have been found in newspapers as far away as Illinois' *Sterling Daily Gazette*, which discussed in the new Colt Memorial in their October 17, 1896 issue.

bench behind him, Caldwell appears in complete control of his vessel, prepared to give an order to the crewman who stands at the helm. Embodying what Barbara Dyer Gallati has termed "psychological insight," using "an iconography that intimates intellectual prowess," Caldwell's portrait suggests a man of distinction and refinement, with a mastery and control over his vessel and the seas.[256]

Similar to her choice of Charles Loring Elliott to carry out the posthumous portrait of her husband, Elizabeth called upon another one of America's prominent artists to render her son's likeness. While Elliott came at the suggestion of Frederic Church, Johnson's name likely came from the building's architect, whose brother, the Right Reverend Henry Codman Potter, had been painted by the artist several years before.[257] Having recently executed portraits for men such as John D. Rockefeller, Presidents Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison, and William H. Vanderbilt, Eastman Johnson, like Elliott thirty years before, was widely acknowledged as a portrait painter of prominent and wealthy American men. Although he is today celebrated for his genre paintings of life in America, Johnson was a talented and widely acclaimed portrait artist. According to his biographer, Patricia Hill, Johnson "… combined portraiture and genre, placing the people he was representing in their own milieu."[258]

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[256] Barbara Dayer Gallati, *Beauty's Legacy: Gilded Age Portraits in America* (London: D. Giles Limited for the New York Historical Society 2013) 38.

[257] Gallati 132. A life-sized portrait of Colt, "now being painted in New-York" is mentioned in "In Memory of Commodore Colt: Handsome Structure to be Built in Hartford by His Mother," *The New York Times*, July 18, 1895. The Eastman Johnson portrait of Bishop Potter is now in the collection of the New York Historical Society.

[258] Patricia Hill, *Eastman* Johnson (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. in association with the Whitney Museum 1972) 104.

Drawing from two different photographs, one in which Caldwell is shown standing in the cockpit of the *Dauntless*, and a studio shot focusing on his face, Johnson's portrait not only provided an accurate depiction of Caldwell Colt, but also ensured his identity as a yachtsman, an identity of which his mother was very proud.[259] As she wrote the year before Caldwell's death, "He is a real sailor, and loves the water better than land or business, but he knows a sailor's calling thoroughly."[260] Just as the Armory in Samuel Colt's portrait referred to his life's avocation in the gun industry, Johnson's portrait paid homage to Caldwell's calling as well. With the sails set and a crewman at the wheel, Johnson's portrait conveys the skills and knowledge of the *Dauntless'* owner.

Caldwell's life as a yachtsman aboard the *Dauntless* was infamous. It was with his beloved schooner that Caldwell challenged Rufus T. Bush's brand new yacht *Coronet* to a transatlantic race in 1887. With $10,000 on the line, Caldwell ultimately lost the race, but its widespread newspaper coverage ensured his legacy as a

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[259] Elizabeth endeavored to memorialize her son as an accomplished yachtsman and commissioned at least two copies of the Johnson portrait. Painted by Hartford artist Charles Noël Flagg, these paintings feature Caldwell in his yachting attire, but omit the background seen in the Johnson portrait. One of these Elizabeth Colt kept at Armsmear and the other she gave to the Larchmont Yacht Club, where it "… hung over the fireplace on the first floor, a few yards only from the piazza facing the harbor, where his yacht *Dauntless* was so often seen at anchor." "The Larchmonts [*sic*] in Commission," *The New York Herald*, May 26, 1895. Elizabeth Colt's copy was given to the Wadsworth Atheneum upon her death (accession number 1905.7). The photographs from which the Johnson portrait was painted are now in the collection of the Mystic Seaport Museum (accessions 1969.196.A.13 and 1969.196.A.21).

[260] Elizabeth Colt to P.H. Woodward, June 25, 1893, Woodward Family Papers, 1778-1948, Connecticut Historical Society.

yachtsman unafraid of challenges.[261] While Caldwell's love of yacht racing was widely known, it was likely the less famous trips aboard the *Dauntless* that were most meaningful to his mother. In August 1882, a month after purchasing the 130-foot schooner from John R. Waller, the *Dauntless* sailed for Europe (Figure 5.7). [262] Here Caldwell sailed the yacht in the waters of the Mediterranean, and along the coasts of France, Spain, and England, often meeting up in port towns with his mother, who was abroad at the same time.[263] The *Dauntless* appears frequently in Elizabeth Colt's travel journals. While several entries record mishaps including a snapped mast and the loss of the ship's figurehead, the majority of Elizabeth's references to the yacht refer to time spent aboard the vessel with her son, and to the *Dauntless'* responsibility to ensure Caldwell's safety on the seas.[264]. After watching the schooner depart from

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[261] "The Ocean Race: The *Dauntless* and *Coronet* to Start on March 5," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1887. The *Dauntless* ultimately lost to the *Coronet*, a defeat that received front page coverage in the March 27, 1887 issue of *The New York Times.* Elizabeth Colt commemorated the event in a model donated to the New York Yacht Club, where it is still located today in the model room of their Manhattan clubhouse.

[262] The *Dauntless* was not Caldwell's only yacht, but it was the one with which he was mostly closely associated and the only one kept by his mother upon his death. Prior to Waller the *Dauntless* was owned by James Gordon Bennett. The Bills of Sale between James Gordon Bennett and John R. Waller, and between John R. Waller and Caldwell H. Colt are in Box 29, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[263] The ship's log for the *Dauntless*, which chronicles this trip, is located at the Connecticut Historical Society, and Elizabeth Colt's travel logs, which make frequent reference to the schooner's appearance at various ports, with Caldwell and several of his friends, are located in Boxes 13 and 18, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[264] Elizabeth Colt's travel logs record the loss of the figurehead in her entry of November 22, 1882, and the twenty feet snapped off the top of the mast on December

Nice on April 5, 1883, Elizabeth Colt's journal entry noted that she, "Saw the *Dauntless* once more- the sails were set, + she was ready to be towed out. God grant that she may carry my darling safely."[265]

In addition to including the yacht in his portrait, Elizabeth placed several relics from the *Dauntless* in the large second floor room of her son's memorial house. Three of the yacht's six signal cannons were placed on the minstrel's gallery where, beneath the schooner's bell, they were immediately visible to all below.[266] Tangible connections to her son's yachting career, these objects evoked Caldwell's memory not unlike the fused gun relics Elizabeth preserved in the cabinets at Armsmear. Discussing the role of souvenirs and mementos, Susan Stewart argues that "Because of its connection to biography and its place in constituting the notion of the individual life, the memento becomes emblematic of the worth of that life."[267] It was his life as a yachtsman that Elizabeth cherished as she reflected upon her son, and thus these objects, which harkened directly to Caldwell's seafaring adventures, were items that told an important part of his biography. In addition to the bell and three cannons placed at the memorial house, Elizabeth presented the schooner's three remaining cannons to the Larchmont Yacht Club, the Hartford Yacht Club, and the Second

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1, 1882. Box 18, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[265] Elizabeth Colt Travel Log, April 5, 1883. Box 18, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[266] Sarah Landau notes that the bell was originally intended to be placed high in the flèche of the new memorial house, but was ultimately hung above the cannons on the minstrel's gallery. Landau 172.

[267] Stewart 139.

Division of the Connecticut Naval Battalion.[268] By gifting these relics from her son's yacht to clubs and organizations with which Caldwell was personally connected, Elizabeth ensured that he would continue to play an active role in these groups and would not be forgotten by his peers. As she wrote in her letter to the Larchmont Yacht Club:

> Year after year, from the deck of the brave old Dauntless, it [the cannon] has spoken many a cordial welcome to his brother yachtsman, and voiced his hearty congratulations for victories achieved. May it sometimes speak to the members of the club of the loyal and unfaltering devotion which he [Caldwell] gave it to the end, and also of the interest and kind esteem of his affected mother.[269]

Following Caldwell's death, Elizabeth Colt sold her son's ketch *Oriole* but, despite having never displayed an interest in yachting, kept the *Dauntless*.[270] The schooner was taken to Essex, Connecticut, where it was moored in North Cove and became, as one article noted, a "Floating Memorial... no longer in use, just as others [other mothers] lay away in a drawer the toys of dead children…"[271] While some journalists poked fun at the mother who stored her son's treasured play thing upon his

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[268] "Gun from *Dauntless*: Mrs. Samuel Colt's Gift to Hartford Yacht Club," *The Hartford Courant* June 22, 1900.

[269] "Club Flags Now Flying," *The New York Herald*, May 20, 1894.

[270] In a letter sent to Elizabeth Colt on January 29, 1894, just more than a week after Caldwell's death, Herbert Hansen, one of the crewmembers on the *Oriole*, wrote to say that a George B. Magoun had approached him with an interest in buying the *Oriole* and by April, Magoun was reported as the new owner of the *Oriole*. Herbert Hansen to Elizabeth Colt, January 29, 1894. Box 10, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. "Doings at St. Augustine," *The New York Tribune*, April 1, 1894.

[271] "Famous Yacht's Fate: Commodore Colt's *Dauntless* is Now a Floating Memorial," *The Macon Telegraph*, November 23, 1896.

death, Elizabeth's attachment to the yacht reflected its status as a tangible link between her and Caldwell.

As Dianne Sachko Macleod asserts in her analysis of female collectors, they "…often turn to objects to resolve anxiety."[272] Prominent female collectors such as Mary Morgan were widely known to interact with objects in their possession, using them, Macleod asserts, as comforting devices. While she could not hold the *Dauntless* as Mary Morgan held her beloved objects, Elizabeth made extensive use of the vessel. Erecting large awning on the boat's deck, the moored schooner became a waterfront living space where Mrs. Colt entertained friends and reminisced about earlier times with her son (Figure 5.8).[273] Aboard the *Dauntless* she could to recall voyages abroad, such as the evenings she spent on the schooner's deck overlooking the lights of Venice, or sailing with her son along the Eastern seaboard. Despite years of summering at Newport and other prominent watering holes, Elizabeth instead began to spend time on the yacht, despite its location not far from an active shipyard. Declining an invitation to stay with her niece at Newport, Elizabeth wrote: "You are very kind to ask me for all summer, but you know I must be at home some times + then I must visit

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[272] Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture 1800-1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2008) 48.

[273] At least two newspaper articles were published referencing trips in which Elizabeth Colt brought friends to spend time on the *Dauntless*. "Outing Aboard the *Dauntless*," *The Hartford Courant*, September 27, 1900 and "Essex," *The Hartford Courant*, July 21, 1902.

my dear old *Dauntless*."[274] The boat, which once meant so much to her son, was now an object of intense meaning to his mother.

As she prepared for her own demise, Elizabeth assured her niece that "The dear *Dauntless* has been arranged so it can be used for the good of others. Sometimes, you will I hope take to the children to see it."[275] Exactly what Elizabeth meant by "arranged for the good of others" is unclear, but it may be a reference to a structure that she built on the deck of the yacht to provide additional covered space. Without doubt, however, her notation of "the children" referred particularly to one who carried on her son's name: Caldwell Colt Robinson. In her will Elizabeth stipulated that the *Dauntless*, "which my beloved son loved so well" was to be cared for by her estate until a final disposition could be made.[276] Elizabeth made sure that her son's schooner, aboard which she enjoyed many happy days, was preserved for her family, but whether Elizabeth Robinson ever spent time aboard the moored *Dauntless* is not recorded. During the summer following her aunt's death she removed some items from the boat, perhaps preparing it to be leased by Henry Seers, who remodeled the famous yacht into a house boat, removing the spars and building a deck structure some

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[274] Elizabeth Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth] Robinson, April 22, 1904. Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers, Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[275] E[lizabeth] H. C[olt] to "My dearly beloved niece" [Elizabeth Robinson], July 15, 1905. Box 4, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[276] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 4.

sixty feet long. In February 1915, the *Dauntless* sank amid the ice of the Essex River, earning an obituary-like article in *The Hartford Courant*.[277]

In preserving the storied schooner during the remainder of her life, Elizabeth displayed her devotion to her son. An emblem of his career as a yachtsman, the vessel was every bit as evocative of his legacy as the Armory was of her husband's. Just as she inserted guns into Church of the Good Shepherd, Elizabeth made sure that references to Caldwell's career on the sea were clearly visible in the memorial building which bore his name. In her efforts to preserve the schooner and in constructing the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, Elizabeth publically demonstrated her devotion to her family, and the deep meanings she afforded objects. While she preserved the schooner at Essex, some forty miles from Armsmear, Elizabeth brought relics from the yacht to Hartford, placing them in the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House. As she had following the death of her husband and children in the 1860s, Elizabeth Colt used art, architecture, and objects to preserve and keep the memory of her son, Caldwell Hart Colt, close at hand.

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[277] "Noted *Dauntless* Yields to Storm," *The Harford Courant*, February 7, 1915. It should be noted that several of the furnishings from the *Dauntless* have since been given to the Wadsworth Atheneum, and interior photographs of both the stateroom and salon, as well as photographs that document the schooner's sinking are found in the collection of the Mystic Seaport Museum, which also has a gig purportedly from the *Dauntless*.

Figure 5.1 – Elizabeth and Caldwell Colt, R.S. De Lamater, Hartford, circa 1863. Photograph, 2 ½ x 3 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., Archives.

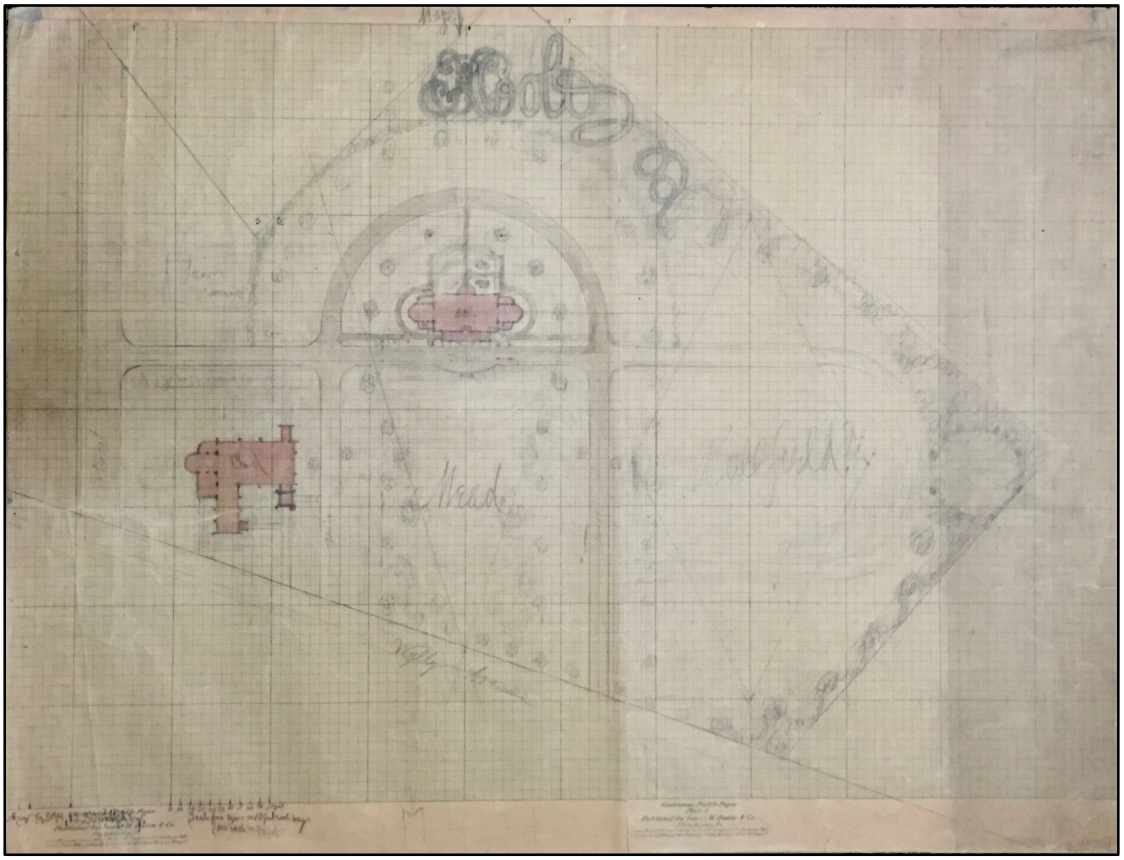

Figure 5.2 – Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House site plan, perhaps by Edward Tuckerman Potter, circa 1894. Graphite, colored pencil, and ink on graph paper. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

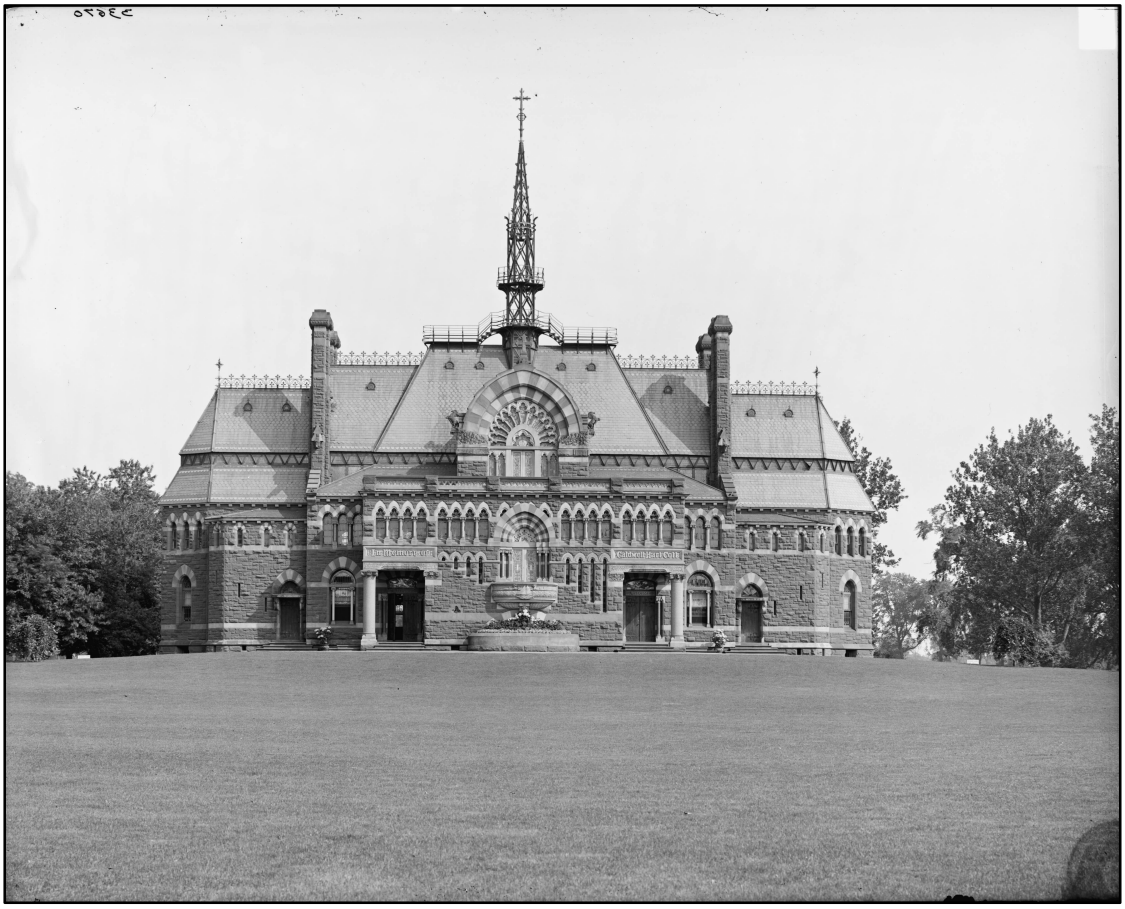

Figure 5.3 – Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, Hartford, 1894-1896. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. Photograph circa 1905. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-DIG-det-4a17502.

Figure 5.4 – The Church of the Good Shepherd and Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, 1866-1896, Hartford. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. Photograph by the author.

Figure 5.5 – Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, Hartford, 1894-1896. Edward Tuckerman Potter, architect, New York City. Second floor hall looking east toward minstrel's gallery. Note the cannons and bell from the *Dauntless* visible on the minstrel's gallery. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Figure 5.6 – Caldwell Hart Colt aboard the *Dauntless*, Eastman Johnson, 1894. Oil on canvas. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Figure 5.7 – Schooner *Dauntless* under sail. Caldwell Colt's private ensign is visible above the main mast. Photograph by Henry G. Peabody before 1894. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-DIG-det-4a15463.

Figure 5.8 – Schooner *Dauntless* moored in North Cove, Essex, Connecticut, 1895. Photograph. Courtesy of Essex Historical Society.

Chapter 6

IN FAITHFUL AFFECTION

As she wrote in her letter to Francis Goodwin, Caldwell's unexpected death radically altered Elizabeth's world. Instead of enjoying time with her son she was again ensconced in efforts of memorialization. Despite her losses, however, Elizabeth Colt maintained an active schedule, going to Florida, Newport, New York, and elsewhere. At home in Hartford she remained occupied with charity work and, increasingly, with the Connecticut Society of the Colonial Dames of America, hosting the group's first meetings at Armsmear and serving as its first president. While she remained very active, Elizabeth realized that her own demise would eventually come.[278]

Although the press chronicled her movements and continued involvement with Hartford organizations such as the Union for Home Work, the Woman's Auxiliary Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church, and Trinity College, Elizabeth made it

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[278] In 1900 Elizabeth Colt was elected vice-president of the National Society of Colonial Dames and made several trips to Washington on their behalf. She was in attendance at the unveiling of the Memorial to the Soldiers and Sailors of the Spanish American War, and at the Biennial Meeting in 1904. *In Memoriam: Mrs. Samuel Colt (Elizabeth Hart Jarvis)*, privately printed booklet likely issued by the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames, 1905, 6. Box 28, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. E[lizabeth] H. Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth Robinson], April 22, 1904. Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

clear that she envisioned a less active life in her old age.[279] Responding to an invitation to attend an event hosted by the Ruth Wyllys Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Elizabeth wrote, "Sorrows have come to me so crushingly in the past few years, that I have had little heart for anything of a public character…" Despite her hesitance, she acquiesced, "but if you really wish me with you on that day, I must lay aside all thought of self, and do all in my power to prove my admiring appreciation of your ability and perseverance."[280]

Elizabeth's favorite niece, "Little Lizzie," to whom she had once been known as "Mama Colt," gave birth to children of her own, Caldwell Colt Robinson, Elizabeth Alden Robinson, and Francis Robinson, all of whom were coddled by their great aunt.[281] Despite the joys of having young children in her life, Elizabeth Colt was aware of her own mortality. At Armsmear she cleaned out bureau drawers and packed away items she no longer felt she needed, a process that brought back many memories. "I have been living a good deal in the past this week - looking over old letters + papers of my dear husband's," she wrote to her niece. "How they brought back all those

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[279] "Union for Home Work," *The Hartford Courant*, January 4, 1899; "Woman's Auxiliary Board," *The Hartford Courant*, November 11, 1898; "Junior Prom," *The Hartford Courant,* February 14, 1903.

[280] Elizabeth H. Colt to Mrs. [Emily] Holcombe, June 9, 1899. Letters to Emily Holcombe, 1899, Connecticut Historical Society.

[281] In April 1903 Elizabeth Colt sent Elizabeth and Caldwell Robinson a phaeton, so they would be able to take drives together in Newport and "have such a good time." Elizabeth and Francis Robinson also spent time staying at her great-aunt's house in the spring of 1904. Elizabeth H. Colt to Caldwell and Elizabeth Robinson, April 29, 1903 and E[lizabeth] H. Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth Robinson], April 22, 1904. Both letters are in Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

happy days + the sad ones too…"[282] Through her remarkable patronage of the arts and architecture, Elizabeth Colt successfully ensured that the legacy of her husband and her children remained tangible, but as she read these letters memories came rushing back. She began identifying objects to be sent to members of her family, such as the portrait of her sister Hetty, which Elizabeth sent to her niece in Newport, as well as pieces of furniture, and clothing, which she packed into trunks. Elizabeth was clearly doing more than just preventing items from "gathering dust," as she claimed.[283]

Despite traveling, often on behalf of the Colonial Dames, Mrs. Colt always looked forward to returning to coming home. Writing from New York after a trip in the southern states, Elizabeth anxiously awaited her return to Armsmear: "I begin to be impatient to be home again, now I am so near - though there is no one to welcome me, but it is so full of association, and memories of my dear ones, that I do not feel lonely there."[284] Having spent four decades surrounding herself with the memories of

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[282] Elizabeth H. Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth Robinson], fragment of letter circa 1902. Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[283] Elizabeth H. Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth Robinson], undated letter circa 1901. Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. E[lizabeth] H. Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth Robinson], June 10, 1899. Box 30, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. A portrait believed to be that of Hetty Jarvis has since been identified in the collection of the Webb-Deane Stevens Museum in Wethersfield, Connecticut.

[284] Elizabeth H. Colt to Lizzie [Elizabeth Robinson], April 16, 1905. Box 11, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

her family, it was at Armsmear, surrounded by relics of their lives and art that depicted their likenesses, that Elizabeth felt surrounded by her loved ones (Figure 6.1). From her house she could see the Armory, the Church of the Good Shepherd, and the towering flèche of the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, all monuments whose construction she oversaw in an effort to surround herself with the presence of her deceased family members, and ensure their permanent legacy in Hartford. In her second floor picture gallery, Elizabeth could contemplate Church's *Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica*, or the Elliott portraits, all reminders of an earlier time and people whose memories she cherished.

In July 1905 Elizabeth sat down to write a letter to her niece, providing in it detailed instructions for the final disposition of specific items not listed in her will. Over the course of twelve typed pages, she named over fifty individuals, comprised of family, friends, and household staff, and specified gifts and objects she hoped they would take upon her death.[285] Describing these items, Elizabeth often provided a full provenance, noting previous owners, and connecting the objects not only to her past, but the next owner as well. Pieces like the "large silver cake basket" which once belonged to William and Esther Hart, and "which held the water at the christening of your little Elizabeth Alden and of my own little darlings," contained not only associations to family heritage, were also connected to Elizabeth's immediate past,

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[285] Letter to "my dearly beloved niece" [Elizabeth Robinson] from Elizabeth H. Colt, July 15, 1905. Box 4, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This letter was typed by her lawyer, Charles E. Gross, who kept the original in his office until the Colt estate was entirely settled.

and to the new owner, her niece.[286] As she prepared to bequeath her belongings to the next generation of owners, Elizabeth Colt made sure that their full meaning, both personal and historical, came with them.

On August 23, 1905, at seventy-eight years old, Elizabeth Colt died at Heartsease, the Newport home of her niece Elizabeth Robinson, several days after suffering a stroke.[287] *The Hartford Courant* devoted valuable front page space to Mrs. Colt's obituary, illustrating her prominence in the city. Tracing her genealogy, her dedication to her husband, and her munificence in Hartford, the obituary was broken down into subsections and included eight tributes written by her friends. But it was in the final section, under the heading of "First Lady in the State," that Elizabeth Colt's life and legacy was truly summarized:

> Mrs. Colt was democratic and dignified. She had a strong social nature and she liked to be surrounded by friends. To her was accorded the honor of being the first lady in the state. For many years she was the leader of society in this city… What stood out most prominent in the life of Mrs. Colt was the affection with which she treasured the memories of her husband and her son.[288]

In the final paragraphs of her obituary, the newspaper alluded to the visible markers of Elizabeth's efforts to preserve the memories of her loved ones. The Church of the Good Shepherd, the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, the *Dauntless*, and

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[286] Ibid.

[287] At the time of her death the press noted that Elizabeth Colt died of "paralysis," a more colloquial term for a stroke. Her burial records confirm this, noting cerebral hemorrhage as the cause of death. Burial Record for Elizabeth H.J. Colt, obtained from Cedar Hill Cemetery.

[288] "Mrs. Colt Dies of Paralysis," *The Hartford Courant*, August 24, 1905.

Armsmear, with its cabinets full of Colonel Colt's presents and memorials, were all widely acknowledged as tangible elements of the Colt legacy in Hartford.[289]

Despite her death, however, Elizabeth Colt was not done providing for the city she loved. Within a week, her will was made public and *The Hartford Courant* informed residents that Mrs. Colt's munificence would live on in gifts to the Wadsworth Atheneum, the creation of a park, the preservation of Armsmear, and the completion of a statue of her husband then underway.[290] Almost immediately, elements of Elizabeth Colt's will were carried out as articles of fine and decorative art were trucked to the Wadsworth Atheneum, to whom she bequeathed many of the items in her house. In her will Elizabeth named over 125 specific objects and works of art that she intended to go to the city's art museum. Ranging from the Elliott portraits, to ceramics, miniatures, and furniture, nearly one thousand items ultimately went from Armsmear to the Wadsworth Atheneum. Included among these were objects imbued with intense personal meaning such as "one cradle made of Charter Oak and given to my little son Samuel Jarvis Colt by Mr. Stuart." While seen as a remarkable piece of craftsmanship and a relic of the Charter Oak, the cradle held a far deeper meaning for Mrs. Colt, as discussed earlier in this thesis.

These objects, the will stipulated, "shall be kept separate and apart and [*sic*] [in] designation and known as 'The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection,' and the 'Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery.'"[291] Having amassed a vast quantity of fine and

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[289] Ibid.

[290] "Colt Property for a City Park," *The Hartford Courant*, August 31, 1905.

[291] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 14.

decorative arts, as well as souvenirs from her travels abroad, Elizabeth was adamant that her collections were to be kept separate from those already at the Atheneum. As William Hosley has noted of this donation, "Make no mistake about it, the collection may have featured Sam Colt's guns and legacy, but it was Elizabeth Colt's name over the door, and it was her life and vision on display…"[292] For a woman who spent decades memorializing others, Elizabeth's will made it clear that these objects, which she acquired over the course of many years and enjoyed at Armsmear, were part of her identity and thus warranted a building that bore her name. Toward this effort Mrs. Colt accompanied her gift with a donation of $50,000, with which the museum was to erect a specific building to house her collection.[293] William Hosley writes that "Following considerable negotiations that almost ended in default over issues of the collection's sovereignty and permanence, a deal was completed…"[294] In November 1905, invitations were sent for the first public viewing of the "Paintings and Other Works of Art Given by the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt," in the Atheneum's Annex Gallery.[295] The objects that held such intense personal meaning to Mrs. Colt were now on public display.

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[292] Hosley 225.

[293] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 10-15.

[294] Hosley 224.

[295] Invitation to the first opening of the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection found in Box 27, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Despite their initial hesitance to accept the gift, Elizabeth Colt had allies in powerful positions at the Wadsworth Atheneum who undoubtedly advocated for the museum's acceptance of the Colt gift. The Atheneum's president, Francis Goodwin, was a close friend and once the priest at the

Her bequest came to the Wadsworth Atheneum at a time of great institutional growth. Not only did Mrs. Colt make an enormous gift to the museum, but so too did J.P. Morgan, in memory of his father, Junius Spencer Morgan. Compared to the $50,000 bequeathed by Elizabeth Colt, the $660,000 given by J.P. Morgan ensured that his building would be significantly larger and more impressive. In their commentary on the imminent enlargement of the Atheneum, *The Hartford Courant* asserted that "The Morgan Memorial Gallery is to form the most important individual unit…"[296] Perhaps aware that her bequest may one day be overshadowed by others, Elizabeth Colt stipulated that the building erected using her funds "shall have its own distinctive features…," ensuring that her gift would forever be visibly demarcated to all passing by.[297]

Designed by Benjamin Wistar Morris, the architect also responsible for the Morgan Memorial, the new Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery was envisioned as a "necessary transition in style and material" from the castellated Gothic Wadsworth Atheneum building, completed in 1844, to the Beaux Arts Morgan Memorial. Describing the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery, *The Hartford Courant* wrote:

> The rough granite of the Atheneum will be recalled both in material and color in the principal wall surfaces of the Colt building, while the smooth marble of which the Morgan building is to be constructed, will

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Church of the Good Shepherd, and Charles Gross and Samuel Hart, who shared the position of vice president, were her lawyer and cousin, respectively. Financial Statement for the year 1910, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford Connecticut. Francis Goodwin Family Papers, 1848-1923, Connecticut Historical Society.

[296] "Work Begins on Morgan Memorial," *The Hartford Courant*, June 29, 1907.

[297] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 18.

> be used in the cut stone moulding and trim of the Colt Gallery. The materials of execution will thus be harmoniously blended, while a corresponding harmony of architectural style will be obtained by adopting for the Colt building a later period of Gothic architecture, the Tudor, forming a gradual transition to the English Renaissance of the Morgan building.[298]

Over the course of the following three years, the new Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery was constructed. In its interior, rooms utilized architectural elements from Armsmear such as the elaborately detailed fireplace surround from the home's library, with its carved coat of arms. On the exterior, a centrally-placed panel featured guns and armor, referring to the objects contained within the building, while the rampant colt, the Colt coat of arms, and a prominently placed C made direct references to the donor (Figure 6.2).[299]

In August 1909 the Annex Gallery, in which Elizabeth Colt's collection had been displayed since 1905, closed. Preparations were made to move the objects and cases into the new Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery, and on Wednesday, November 16, 1910, the space was officially dedicated, an event heralded by the local press.[300] Describing the dedicatory exercises, a writer for *The Hartford Courant* noted the reaction of those present upon the "sight of the many things which had once been a part of the Colt mansion on Wethersfield avenue, which called up many memories."[301]

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[298] "Work Begins on the Morgan Memorial," *The Hartford Courant*, June 29, 1907.

[299] I am grateful to Ann Brandwein, assistant archivist at the Wadsworth Atheneum, for locating many references to the construction of the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery in the records of the Wadsworth Atheneum. Ann Brandwein, e-mail message to the author, May 1, 2014.

[300] "Colt Art Collection to be Closed Today," *The Hartford Courant*, August 7, 1909.

[301] "Colt Memorial is Dedicated," *The Hartford Courant*, November 17, 1910.

In their new location many of Mrs. Colt's prized possessions continued to evoke the memories of her children and husband but, assembled in the new space, the collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum paid homage to her memory as well.

In her will Elizabeth gave over one hundred acres of land to the City of Hartford. Including ponds, statues, garden follies, greenhouses, coach houses, and a deer park, this property separated Armsmear from the industrial complex around the Armory. The aptly-named Colt Park completed the "chain of parks" for which the Hartford Park Commission had been campaigning since the 1890s.[302] Although one city alderman called the gift "a magnanimous act on behalf of Mrs. Colt," not everyone was so enthused, and several refused to make any public comment. It was park commissioner Charles E. Gross who offered the most extensive commentary in favor of the park, perhaps because he was Mrs. Colt's lawyer and undoubtedly helped ensure that the Colt lands would be given to the city.[303] Two months after Elizabeth's death, Charles Gross invited the mayor and some thirty city leaders to inspect the proposed gift, pointing out the property boundaries, and explaining the potential uses for the land.[304] On October 23, the gift was officially tendered to the City of Hartford,

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[302] An 1894 report entitled "Report of the Committee on the Creation of an Enlarged Park System to the Board of Trade of the City of Hartford with Proposed Amendment to the Charter Creating a Park Commission," written by Francis Goodwin, Henry C. Robinson, and Charles E. Gross, emphasized the opportunities for the City of Hartford to create a circle of parks, united by parkways, for the enjoyment of its residents. A copy of this report is held in the Francis Goodwin Family Papers, 1848-1923, Connecticut Historical Society.

[303] "Park Board's Views on Mrs. Colt's Gift," *The Hartford Courant*, August 31, 1905.

[304] "City Fathers at Armsmear Park," *The Hartford Courant*, October 20, 1905.

eliciting public speculation over why the process had been so prolonged. Although the park was ultimately accepted by the city, one writer vehemently denounced the delay, which he interpreted as an insult to the memories of both Samuel and Elizabeth Colt:

> Modern Hartford dates from the time when Colonel Sam Colt established his factory here. The intimation that the object of the gift could be anything but truly philanthropic could only come from those who uncharitably judged one whom they did not know and whose whole nature was charitable.[305]

In accepting Colt Park, however, the Commissioners were also obligated to accept Mrs. Colt's final project: an unfinished statue of her husband. In 1902, Elizabeth engaged the New York sculptor J. Massey Rhind to help her in the creation of a final memorial to Samuel Colt. Rhind, who was then working on the Corning Memorial Fountain in Hartford's Bushnell Park, had been involved in several prominent projects including the Astor Memorial Doors at Trinity Church in New York City. His talents were well known to Elizabeth, and to her friends, particularly Charles E. Gross, to whom William Hosley gives the credit for suggesting the sculptor.[306]

In late May 1905, *The Hartford Courant* published an article about the new memorial statue, including a photograph of a model depicting the entire monument as it was envisioned. Placed high on a pedestal, raised off the ground by six steps, and flanked by an exedra, the nine-foot statue, the *Courant* wrote, "…represents Colonel

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[305] "Mrs. Colt's Gift," *The Hartford Courant*, October 24, 1905.

[306] Hosley 223. The maquettes for these statues, which date to 1902, are now in the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum.

Colt as he looked in the prime of his life… wearing a fur cloak which his old friends remember and which is still preserved…" One either side of this statue, bas reliefs represented two monumental events in Colt's life, his demonstration in front of the House of Commons in London, and his presentation before Czar Nicholas II of Russia. Placed at the front of the monument, a smaller statue featured a young sailor boy, sitting cross-legged, whittling a wooden revolver. Anybody who knew about Sam Colt's life would have recognized the scene immediately. Recorded in almost all articles about Colt and his revolver, the statue referenced a story dating to 1830, in which the teenage Colt, on a sailing vessel en route to Calcutta, whittled his first model of a revolver cylinder out of a ribbon block.[307]

Unfortunately, Elizabeth did not live to see the completion of the new memorial statue, but she made arrangements to ensure it would be finished. Setting aside some $60,000 in her will, more than the amount allocated for her building at the Atheneum, Elizabeth's dedication to her husband's memory was clear.[308] Following her wishes, work on the new memorial continued after her death, and in October 1905 *The Hartford Courant* noted that, "Robust as he appeared in middle life, with head uncovered, and clad so old Hartford friends remember him… Colonel Samuel Colt, the inventor of world-wide fame, returned to Armsmear."[309] Cast by the Gorham

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[307] "Memorial Statue to Colonel Colt," *The Hartford Courant*, May 31, 1905; "Figure of Colonel Colt on Memorial at Armsmere [*sic*]," *The Hartford Courant*, June 5, 1905. This story was relayed in Barnard 195, and the wooden model itself is now part of the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum.

[308] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 18.

[309] "Colonel Colt's Statue in Place," *The Hartford Courant*, October 26, 1905.

Manufacturing Company, the arrival and subsequent placement of Colt's statue marked his return to Armsmear in more than one way. Not only did he return to the grounds of his estate, but due to the statue's specific placement, Colonel Colt returned to the exact location where he rested from his death in 1862 until his body was moved to Cedar Hill Cemetery, along with those of his children, in 1894.[310] As Elizabeth noted in her will, the statue of her husband was to be erected "at or near the spot which which is so sacred to me, where he was formerly buried," an important element that was not missed in newspaper articles about the new monument.[311]

For many years Elizabeth Colt had been able to look at her husband's grave from her house. Placed on a rise, his tomb, surrounded by those of his children, was marked by a simple white marble slab, upon which was written, "Kindest Husband, Father, and Friend, Adieu" (Figure 6.3).[312] Here, in the "Grove of Graves," Henry Barnard noted that Samuel Colt was "Interred in the midst of the garden his riches and taste created, and overlooking the industrial palaces his genius evoked…"[313] Having been moved to Cedar Hill Cemetery following Caldwell's death, this location was a fitting spot for a lasting monument to her husband, returning him to the place where he laid for thirty-two years. Overlooking the grounds of his estate, with the Armory in the distance, Colt's statue ensured not only the the preservation of this sacred ground, but also that his presence in Hartford would endure indefinitely (Figure 6.4).

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[310] Colt Family Burial Records obtained from Cedar Hill Cemetery

[311] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 18.

[312] "The Funeral of Col. Colt," *The Hartford Daily Courant*, January 15, 1862.

[313] Barnard 114.

As completed, the statue to Samuel Colt evoked any number of late-nineteenth-century monuments to Civil War dead, and others to great men in American history, such as General William Sherman, for whom Rhind executed a memorial statue in Muskegon, Michigan.[314] While Colt's statue shared many similarities with these other monuments, it was, at its roots, a final gesture on behalf of a widow to preserve the memory of her husband. Beneath the nine-foot statue, Elizabeth chose a simple inscription: "On the grounds which/ his taste beautified/ by the home he loved/ this memorial stands/ to speak of his genius[,]/ his enterprise[,] and his/ success[,] and of his/ great and loyal heart." Yet, despite being ostensibly complete, the final part of the inscription was carved on the back of the monument: "His wife in faithful affection dedicates this memorial" (Figure 6.5).

Although she was no longer alive, the active tense used in the inscription reflects Elizabeth's continued efforts to honor her husband's memory, work she engaged in for forty-three years as a widow, and which carried on after her death. Like her inscription on the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, Elizabeth established her role as the creator of her husband's statue, but took care to ensure that her name was not the center of attention. In an effort to ensure the focus remained on her husband's memory, Elizabeth relegated any reference to her own role in the statue's creation to its back side. A few years after her death, her close friend and lawyer Charles Gross noted that this placement emphasized and embodied Elizabeth Colt's humility. She was a woman who, in his estimation, "… blew no trumpet and

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[314] "Colonel Colt's Statue in Place," *The Hartford Courant*, October 26, 1905. Furthermore, the similarities between Colt's statue and the Albert Memorial in London, which was widely published in America, cannot be overlooked.

studiously avoided publicity."[315] It may be true that she shunned overt public attention, but Mrs. Colt was not opposed to being recognized for her role in memorializing her husband and children. She included direct references to her involvement on both the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House and the new statue, and her name was integrally associated with the Church of the Good Shepherd. In fact, over emphasizing her distaste for excessive accolades negates the credit due Mrs. Colt for her remarkable contributions in crafting her family's legacy in Hartford.

Perhaps the most charitably minded of Elizabeth Colt's bequests, however, centered around the disposition of her house, Armsmear. Integrally associated with her husband's memory, Elizabeth made sure it would be preserved. Setting aside the immense sum of $800,000, Mrs. Colt entrusted a group of trustees with overseeing the most meaningful public elements of the Colt legacy in Hartford. In addition to maintaining the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, Elizabeth charged this group with the creation of a "Home" for "as many widows and or orphans of deceased clergymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church… [and] as many impoverished but refined and educated gentlewomen" as resources would allow.[316] Long the residence of one of Connecticut's most charitably minded Episcopal women, Elizabeth ensured that Armsmear would forever be used to shelter and house like-minded ladies. Yet, despite having been her home for more than four decades, Elizabeth's associations between Armsmear and her husband remained steadfast. In the naming of the "Home," Elizabeth stipulated that Colt name, "shall

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[315] "Colt Memorial is Dedicated," *The Hartford Courant*, November 17, 1910.

[316] "Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth H. Colt, Late of Hartford, Deceased," Sworn to and accepted October 31, 1905, 7.

not be used unless it is also coupled, in part at least, with that of my beloved husband, whose munificent bequests to myself and my son have made said charity possible."[317] While it would remain a tangible monument to the Colt legacy, Elizabeth made sure that Armsmear which, as William Hosley has written, was "an autobiographical shrine" to Colonel Colt, would forever honor his memory.

Calling themselves the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, the men chosen by Elizabeth soon met to discuss the charge presented in her will.[318] By November 1907, Benjamin Wistar Morris, the architect responsible for the enlargements at the Wadsworth Atheneum, was chosen to oversee the work of transforming Elizabeth's former residence. Among his first tasks was to determine whether the house, then fifty years old, could be renovated, or if it would be easier to raze the existing structure and build something new.[319] Ultimately, however, Morris decided to preserve Colt's "palace house," whose Wethersfield Avenue façade was a celebrated landmark in the city. This undoubtedly pleased Mrs. Colt's friends and relatives, who understood her great affinity for Armsmear.[320]

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[317] Ibid. 8.

[318] At least two meetings took place before April 26, 1906, when the Trustees held their first meeting at Armsmear. Minutes of November April 26, 1906 Meeting of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest. Minute Book of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear, Hartford, 6.

[319] Minutes of November 24, 1907 Meeting of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest. Minute Book of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear, Hartford, 22.

[320] Elizabeth's niece, Elizabeth Robinson, was clearly worried about the proposed renovations to Armsmear. She wrote to Samuel Hart, one of the original trustees, expressing her fears that Armsmear would be destroyed or rendered unrecognizable. In his response Hart wrote, "As Mark Twain said about the report of his death, what you have heard as to Armsmear is certainly premature… It is evident, however, that a

Morris presented his final plans for the renovation in March 1909, and at their meeting that July, the Trustees approved the expenditure of up to $100,000 to renovate the existing building and construct a two-story addition on its southern façade.[321] When completed, *The Hartford Courant* reported, Armsmear would contain sixteen apartments, based on those at Hampton Court Palace, where many "grace and favor" residences housed former staff members and devoted subjects of the monarchy.[322] After many delays in construction, the "Home" opened to residents in May 1911. Maintaining the name Armsmear, eleven of the sixteen apartments were occupied at the time of its opening, with the remaining residents expected any day (Figure 6.6). Inside, much of Elizabeth Colt's furniture, which dated from Armsmear's completion in the late 1850s, remained, following the guidelines established in Mrs. Colt's will. As a writer for *The Hartford Courant* recorded, the "old Colt chairs, now occupying places of honor in the trustee's room," formed a marked contrast with the "modernness" of the renovated building's interior.[323] But these objects, themselves

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great deal of change will be necessary, as the house is getting to be an old one and cellar, walls, and roof must be thoroughly overhauled and new plumbing and heating and lighting plans introduced. Doubtless some one has said that it would be like building a new house, as indeed it will; but that does not mean demolition or changing the appearance externally to any considerable extent…" Samuel Hart to Elizabeth Robinson, December 6, 1907. Box 16, Jarvis-Robinson Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[321] Minutes of March 9, 1909 and July 2, 1909 Meetings of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest. Minute Book of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear, Hartford, 33-34.

[322] "To Make Changes at Armsmear," *The Hartford Courant*, August 25, 1909.

[323] "New Armsmear is Opened," *The Hartford Courant*, May 27, 1911.

relics of the family occupancy and use of the house, were afforded places of honor, and formed a direct tie between Armsmear's new life as a home for impoverished women and the Colt legacy. With the opening of Armsmear in 1911, the final clause of Elizabeth Colt's will had been fulfilled, ensuring her house, and the Colt name, would live on in perpetuity in Hartford.

Epilogue

In the time since Elizabeth Colt's death in 1905, much has changed in Hartford and to the gifts provided by her will. Less than a year after her gardens became a city park, the marble statues that ornamented the grounds were disfigured by vandals.[324] Though they remained in the park for some time thereafter, gradual changes altered the picturesque gardens that Sam and Elizabeth Colt knew and enjoyed. In addition to filling the ponds, the city created a swimming pool, vegetable gardens for area children, and erected a small zoo. Although these new uses were seen as ways to use the land for the public good, they almost entirely obliterated the Colt story associated with the property.[325] By the 1960s, Hartford children went to Colt Park in the winter, where they slid down the hill behind the statue of Samuel Colt. While they enjoyed the area they called "Dead Man's Hill," the true meaning of the place, as the sacred spot in which Colt and his children were once interred, was lost to the next generation of Hartford's citizens.[326]

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[324] "Fingers, Ears Gone on Marble Statues," *The Hartford Courant*, February 8, 1906.

[325] Many of these changes are documented in a scrapbook created by the residents at Armsmear in the 1930s and now housed in the Archives of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest. I am grateful to the Trustees of the Colt Bequest for allowing me to access this scrapbook which so thoroughly depicts the changes to Elizabeth's landscape.

[326] Mary Sullivan (Executive Director of Armsmear), March 31, 2016. Mary was one of many children of her generation who slid down "Dead Man's Hill."

At the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Colt legacy was eclipsed by the larger gifts of the Morgan family from the start. Despite being the first museum wing in America to bear the name of a woman, and containing a remarkable collection of fine and decorative arts, the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, its gallery, and its donor were continually overshadowed by men.[327] At its dedication, Francis Goodwin, a close friend of Mrs. Colt's and then the president of the Atheneum, only made cursory references to Elizabeth Colt, primarily assuring those present that the completed building followed the stipulations of her will. Of Elizabeth's gift itself Goodwin said:

> It is a fitting memorial of a great Inventor and of that noble and gracious woman who was his wife. Both of them, while living, in their different fields of service did much for the benefit of this community, and it is peculiarly [*sic*] appropriate that their most lasting monument should be here, where it will not only preserve through all time their names in honored remembrance, but will contribute so largely to the dignity of the city and to the improvement and enjoyment of our people.[328]

Despite being a separate building with a unique architecture, the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery was set back from both the original Wadsworth Atheneum and the new Morgan Memorial, visually reducing its presence to passersby (Figure 6.7). In fact, some postcards of the enlarged Atheneum building and featuring the entire Main Street façade, were printed with the caption: "Wadsworth Atheneum and Morgan Memorial," completely ignoring the Colt building in between.[329] During the 1960s, in

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[327] Hosley 225.

[328] Reverend Goodwin's speech is tipped into his copy of the booklet created for the dedication ceremonies of the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery. Francis Goodwin Papers, 1848-1923, Connecticut Historical Society.

[329] The author has come across several of these postcards in private collections, including some that, in the composition of the image, manage to completely obscure

the midst of crazed opposition to Victoriana, the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection was taken off view and placed into storage, the victim of being, as one curator later called it, "memorabilia… of marginal interest," consisting of objects which rarely "rise above run-of-the mill Victorian taste."[330] While the Colt gun story fascinated collectors through the twentieth century, it was not until the 1996 exhibition "Sam & Elizabeth: Legend and Legacy of Colt's Empire," that many of the objects in the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection were rediscovered, reconsidered, and presented to the Atheneum's visitors. William Hosley, then Richard Koopman curator of American Decorative Arts, worked to re-situate Elizabeth Colt as a major nineteenth-century collector and a leading patron of the Wadsworth Atheneum.

It is perhaps the Trustees of the Colt Bequest who have been most successful in maintaining Elizabeth's legacy in Hartford. Bolstered by sufficient funds and with a well-defined purpose, the Trustees have maintained Armsmear, and have helped to preserve the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House which, after a century of use, faced growing challenges.[331] At Armsmear, Elizabeth Colt's memory is still celebrated by the women who inhabit her house, surrounded by many pieces of furniture originally commissioned by Sam and

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the Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery between the Wadsworth building and the Morgan Memorial Building.

[330] Hosley 6.

[331] The diversion of Hartford's Park River altered the water table in the South Meadows, ultimately leading to rot in the foundation piles of the church, which necessitated an extensive, and very expensive, renovation to prevent the toppling of the tower. This was largely underwritten by the Trustees of the Colt Bequest. References to this work are found in the Archives of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Elizabeth Colt in the 1850s. High above Wethersfield Avenue, in Armsmear's belvedere, some of the home's original decorative painting remains, untouched during the renovations of the early twentieth century, serving as a reminder of Sam Colt, by whom this space was used, and of Elizabeth, who preserved it in the decades after her husband's death (Figure 6.8).

As I write this conclusion from Armsmear's library, sitting in Samuel Colt's chair and in front of his desk, both of which were part of Armsmear's original furnishings, there is a renewed interested throughout Hartford in the Colt story. Not far from Armsmear, the Armory, whose onion dome Elizabeth could see from her bedroom and in which she held such strong associations with her husband, is being restored and repurposed as offices, school spaces, and apartments after many years of vacancy. The December 2014 news of Congressional approval for a new national park in Coltsville has reinvigorated the camaraderie between the Hartford sites that embody and preserve the Colt name and legacy.[332] Included in the proposed historic district is the Colt Armory, the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House, Colt Park, and Armsmear, all objects in which Elizabeth placed intense meaning. After working on her story since the spring of 2014, it is clear to me, and to quote from esteemed Colt historian William Hosley, "interest in Elizabeth Colt continues and hopefully I will be far from the last word on her."[333]

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[332] Gregory B. Hladky, "Coltsville National Historical Park Wins Final Approval," *The Hartford Courant*, December 14, 2014.

[333] William Hosley, e-mail message to Elizabeth Putnam, cc: Willie Granston, April 22, 2014.

Elizabeth Colt is not a name that has been lost to history, although she still competes with her husband for her share of the limelight. Building upon the research of William Hosley and Herbert Houze, and considering the objects that meant so much to her, it is my hope that this thesis, which examines only a snapshot of Elizabeth's life, will add to the future understanding and interpretation of the broader Colt legacy in Hartford. While there remains immense work to be done in order to fully comprehend her story, it is clear to me that Elizabeth had a vested interest in crafting a family legacy that would endure long after her death. Through her patronage of the arts and architecture, Elizabeth created objects that benefitted the city she loved, but also celebrated the lives of those whose deaths affected her greatly. To her, the rebuilt Colt Armory was much more than simply a gun factory, and the Church of the Good Shepherd had meaning far beyond that of a typical church. Together these and other objects of memorialization worked to create and preserve the Colt legacy which still endures today. Together they represent the efforts of a devoted wife and mother, who spent the majority of her life using objects tell her family's story of sunshine and shadow.

Figure 6.1 – "Residence of Mrs. Samuel Colt, Hartford, Conn," circa 1905. Photograph. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-DIG-det-4a13778.

Figure 6.2 – Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery, Hartford, 1907-1910. Benjamin Wistar Morris, architect, New York City. Photograph by the author.

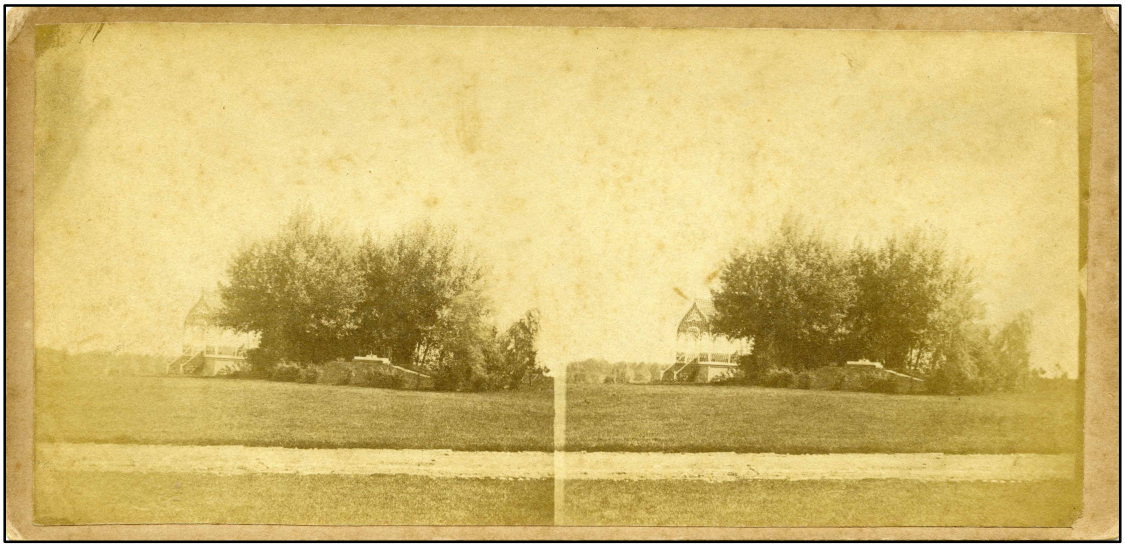

Figure 6.3 – Tomb of Colonel Samuel Colt, likely R.S. De Lamater, Hartford, circa 1865. Stereo view, 3 3/16 x 6 5/8 in. Collection of the author.

Figure 6.3 – Detail with tomb visible on the hill.

Figure 6.4 – "Samuel Colt Memorial, Hartford, Conn." J. Massey Rhind, sculptor, 1902-1906. Granite, bronze. Photograph circa 1907. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-DIG-det-4a13779.

Figure 6.5 – Inscription on back of Colonel Samuel Colt Memorial Statue.
Photograph by the author.

Figure 6.6 – Armsmear, with additions by Benjamin Wistar Morris, 1907-1910. Photograph circa 1930. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Colt Bequest, Armsmear.

Figure 6.7 – Wadsworth Atheneum, Main Street façade, Hartford. Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Gallery at center. Photograph by the author.

Figure 6.8 – Ceiling of belvedere at Armsmear, circa 1858, as preserved by Elizabeth Colt and the Trustees of the Colt Bequest. Painted plaster. Photograph by the author.

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mjosefiak@essexhistory.org Mar 31

to me

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The back of the original image reads " 'Dauntless' 1895".

As with all publications, the image carries the credit line, "Courtesy of Essex Historical Society."

Please let us know how we can help you further and good luck with your project!
Best wishes,
Melissa Josefiak, EHS

April 12, 2016

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Photograph of floorplan for The Church of the Holy Innocents, sheet 2

Site plan for the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial House

Photograph of Silver of the Church of the Good Shepherd

Photograph of Eastman Johnson Portrait of Caldwell Hart Colt, 1894

Sincerely,

Gillian Howell

Gillian R. Howell
President
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- Charles Loring Elliott (American, 1812–1868), *Colonel Samuel Colt*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 84 x 64 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.8.
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- *Melted and fused revolver parts recovered after the destruction by fire of the Colt Armory, February 5, 1864*, c. 1864. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection,1905.X.9.
- *Melted and fused revolver parts recovered after the destruction by fire of the Colt Armory, February 5, 1864*, c. 1864. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn.,The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection,1905.X.10.

2

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- Frederic Edwin Church (American, 1826–1900), Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica, 1867. Oil on canvas, 48 5/16 x 84 5/8 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.21. *personal photograh

- Richard Morrell Staigg (American, 1817–1881), *Portrait of Elizabeth Hart Jarvis*, 1856. Watercolor on ivory, 2 5/8 x 2 1/4 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.65.

- *Colt Family Cradle*, 1857. American, Hartford, Connecticut. Designed by Isaac W. Stuart (active c. 1844–1857), Made by John H. Most (active c. 1855–1876). White oak, fabric (modern), and rhinestones (modern). Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., The Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt Collection, 1905.1580.

- Unidentified artist, *Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt standing over an infant (Samuel Jarvis Colt) in the Charter Oak Cradle*, 1858. Oil on panel, 11 x 9 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Conn., Gift of Lisa Utley Shoemaker, 2012.X.3.1.

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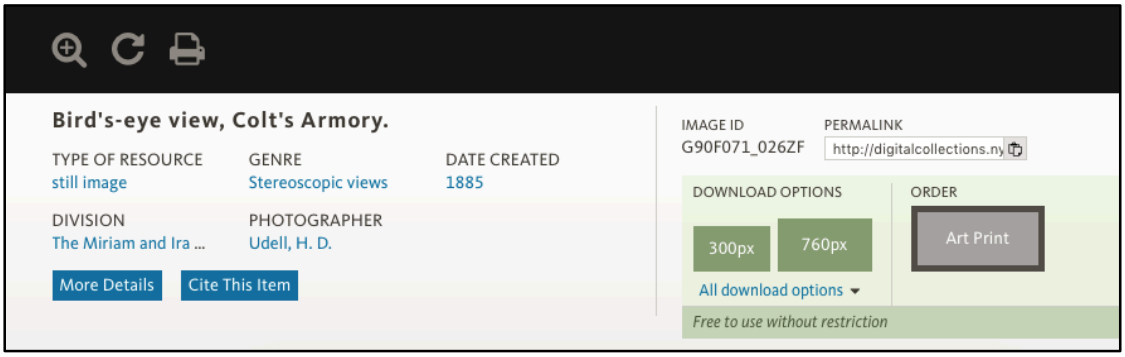
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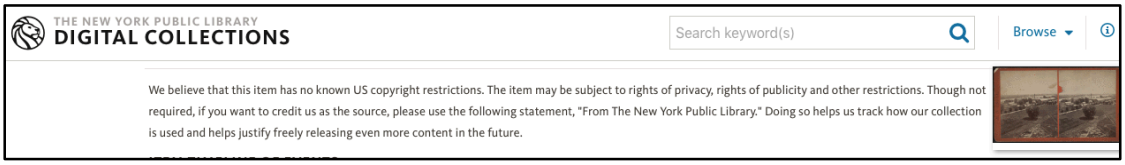
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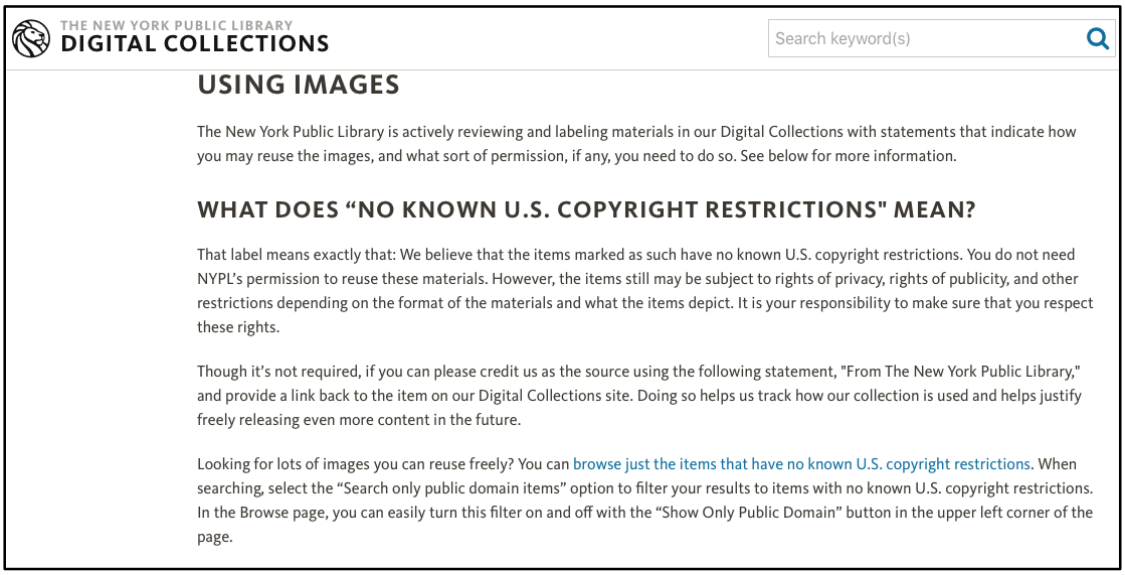
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