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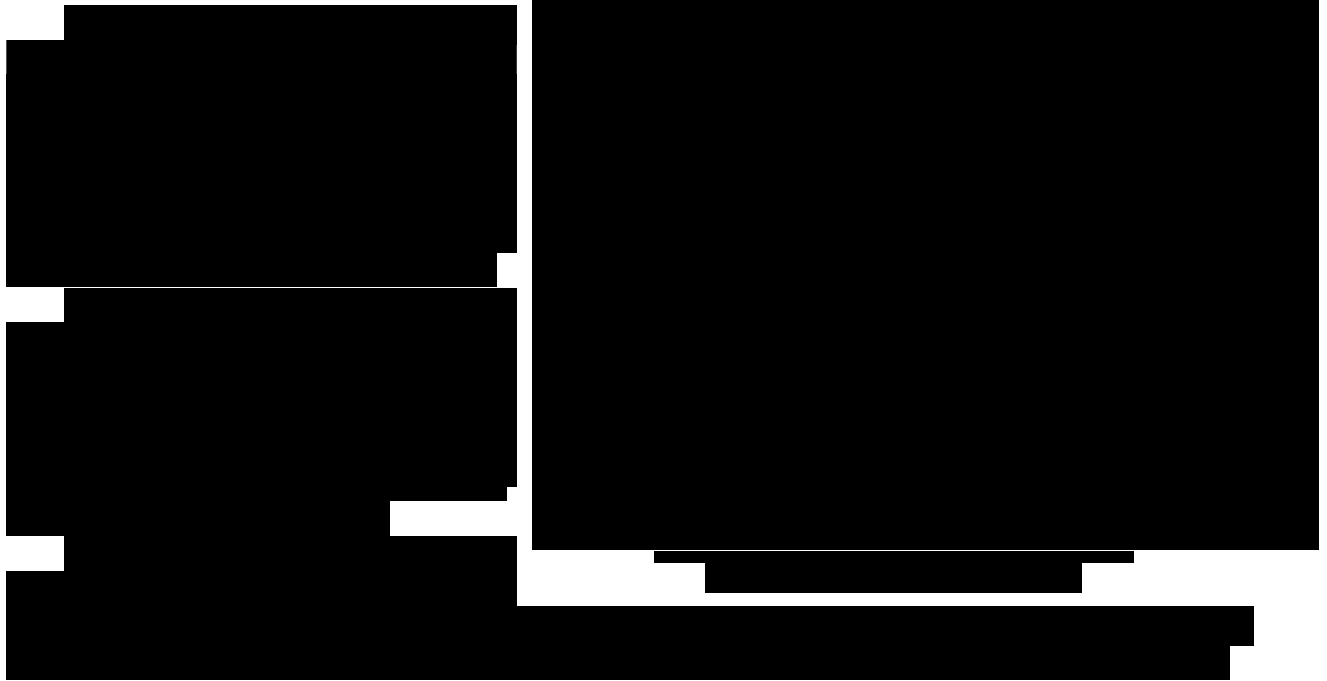
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1 *The Snyder Dailey News*. March 29, 1953, 12.



**Sheriff Frank Brownfield's pistol and handcuffs hang proudly in grandson Richard Sweaney's office.**

## The Colt Army Special

**by David V. Stroud**

The revolver of Captain Sweaney's grandfather is a Colt Army Special with a serial number that places the date of manufacture sometime during 1920.<sup>1</sup> Colt Firearms introduced this weapon to the gun-purchasing public in 1908 as the successor to the double-action New Army and Navy models with swing-out cylinder, which had begun in 1889.<sup>2</sup>

1 R.L. Wilson, *Colt's Dates of Manufacture* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1985, 21.

2 R.L. Wilson, *Colt: an American Legend* (NY: Abberville Press, 1985), 204, 207. The New Army and New Navy Models replaced were 1892, 94-95-96-1901.

The Army Special cylinders rotate clockwise, as opposed to the counter-clockwise movement of the older ones. The Special retains the side plate and has a blue- or nickel-plated finish with serial numbers skipping from 291,000 to 300,000 (first models) and continuing through 540,000.<sup>3</sup> The left side of the barrel is roll-marked COLT ARMY SPECIAL, followed by the caliber: .38 Special, .38 Colt, 32-20 WCF, or .41 Colt. The barrels are 4", 4¼", 4½", 5", and 6".<sup>4</sup> The Army Special had several "new features" to offer:

- a "removable plate" on the frame's right side
- a "modernized frame profile" with a rounded thumb latch on the left side to release the cylinder with its stop-slots simplified in one row instead of two
- a "positive lock system" on which a majority had hard-runner grips with a "stylized C around the stock screw and a fleur-de-lis and checkered pattern."<sup>5</sup>

Beginning in 1905, the Verified proof VP triangle stamp was applied on all Colt revolvers ahead of the trigger guard on the frame's left side, including the Army Special.<sup>6</sup>

The Army Special proved popular with the Army, Navy, and law enforcement departments. Colt received large orders from their respective procuring agents, usually requesting the .38 Special or .41 Colt.<sup>7</sup> Because the procured weapons were issued, many variations of ownership were inscribed on the back strap, often with initials indicating the New Jersey State Prison, New Orleans Police Department, and Wells Fargo Express Company.<sup>8</sup> Collectors should be aware that many of the inscriptions found today are fakes.

If Captain Sweaney ever carries his grandfather's old Colt again, he will be armed with one in a long line of historical revolvers that began their history during the Roaring Twenties. They can still hold their own today.



3 Burns, Zane Sr. "Some Secrets of Collection Colt Double Action Models," *The Rampant Colt*, Spring 2007, 10; Wilson, *Colt: American Legend*, 204; Wilson, *Colt's Dates of Manufacture*, 21.

4 Ibid "Colt Single Action Army," Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colt\\_Single\\_Action\\_Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colt_Single_Action_Army).

5 Wilson, *Colt: An American Legend*, 208.

6 Wilson, *Colt: An American Legend*, 209.

7 Wilson, *Colt: An American Legend*, 209. (Wikipedia states that no US military orders were received.)

8 Wilson, *Colt: an American Legend*, 209; *Collector's Firearms*.