

5 Biggest Myths About Gunfights

PLUS
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FIREARMS OF THE OLD WEST



FACT, FILM
& FANTASY
HOLLYWOOD &
the OLD WEST

GOOD VS. EVIL

GUNS OF CHOICE FOR
LAWMEN, OUTLAWS

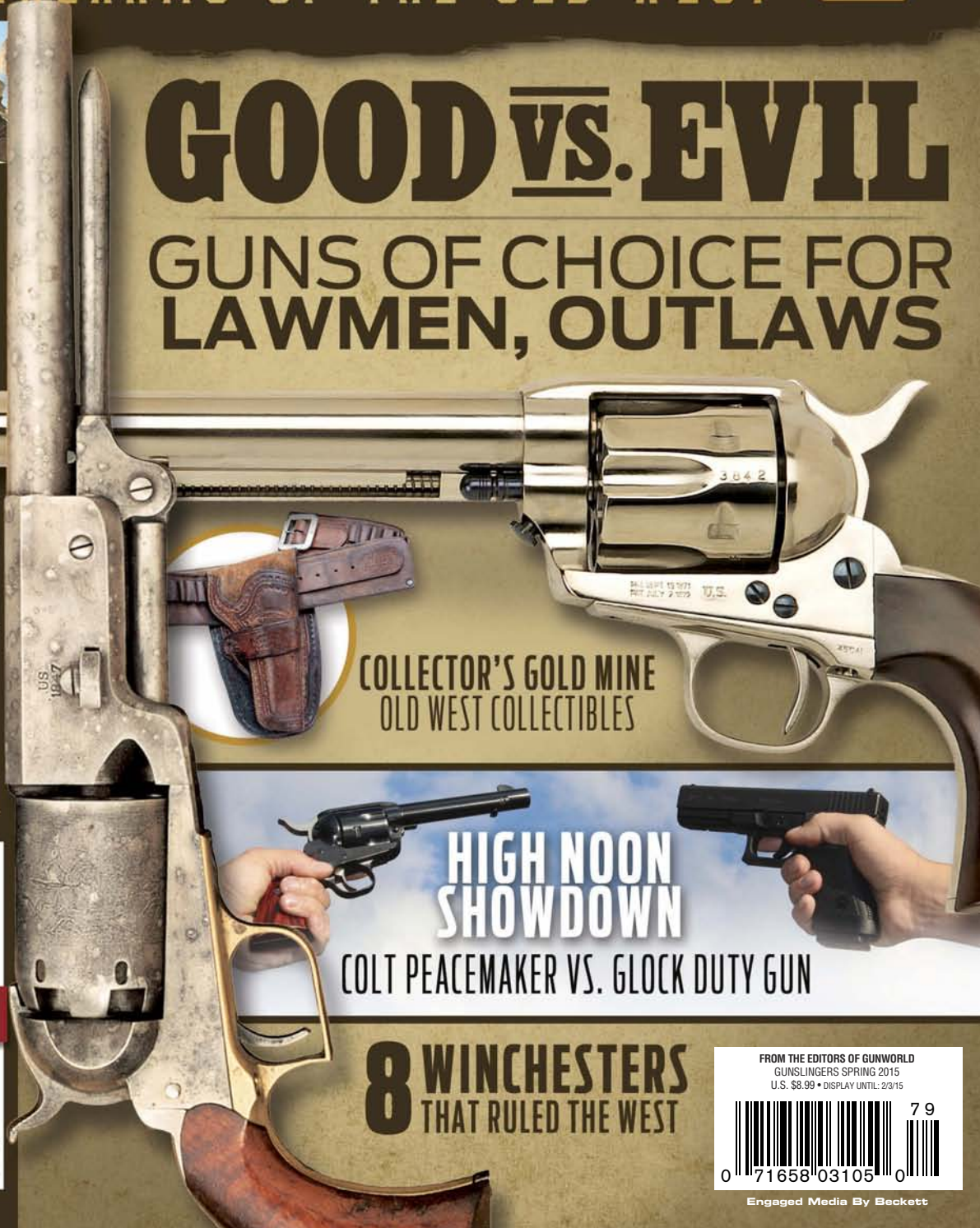


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for BUFFALO
WHY HUNTERS
WERE SUCCESSFUL



FIELD TESTED

• HENRY BIG BOY
IN .44 MAGNUM
• RUGER VAQUERO



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OLD WEST COLLECTIBLES



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SHOWDOWN

COLT PEACEMAKER VS. GLOCK DUTY GUN

8 WINCHESTERS
THAT RULED THE WEST

FROM THE EDITORS OF GUNWORLD
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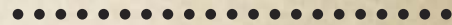
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ON THE COVER:
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EDITORIAL

WE STILL NEED WESTERN HEROES

Our mental images of the Old West are so inseparably intertwined with those from Western movies that it's hard to distinguish fact from fiction. And do you know what? I don't necessarily want the real West all the time. I want the fantasy too.

What's wrong with good guys in white hats triumphing over evil, righting wrongs and staying true to their principles in the face of adversity? What's wrong with courage and self-reliance? What's wrong with being a skilled rider and a crack shot?

It's been a popular thing lately to be critical of some of the legendary lawmen the Old West and to overanalyze their actions in the interests of setting history straight and busting the myths perpetuated by Hollywood.

But you can't judge the actions of these lawmen by today's standards. We admire the Old West cowboy for his self-reliance and yet sometimes he's criticized for that very self-reliance, for

handling things himself when there just wasn't any other way.

In the Old West, you couldn't call 911. We shouldn't deny historical evidence in favor of the Hollywood myth, but history shouldn't judge these men too harshly either.

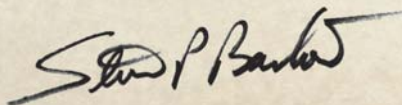
While working on this issue, I also had a chance to take a closer look at some of original firearms of the period and to test some modern guns that are patterned after them.

"We still need our heroes, whether they were real men or Hollywood creations."

Make no mistake: These guns, such as the Henry Big Boy and Ruger Vaquero I tested, may have a connection with guns of the Old West, but they are timeless designs that are just as useful today.

There's plenty of the history on the guns and the men who used them in this issue. As with anything that occurred more than 100 years ago, there are bound to be several versions of what really happened. That doesn't mean I won't still enjoy Hollywood's take. After all, we still need heroes.

Steven Paul Barlow, editor



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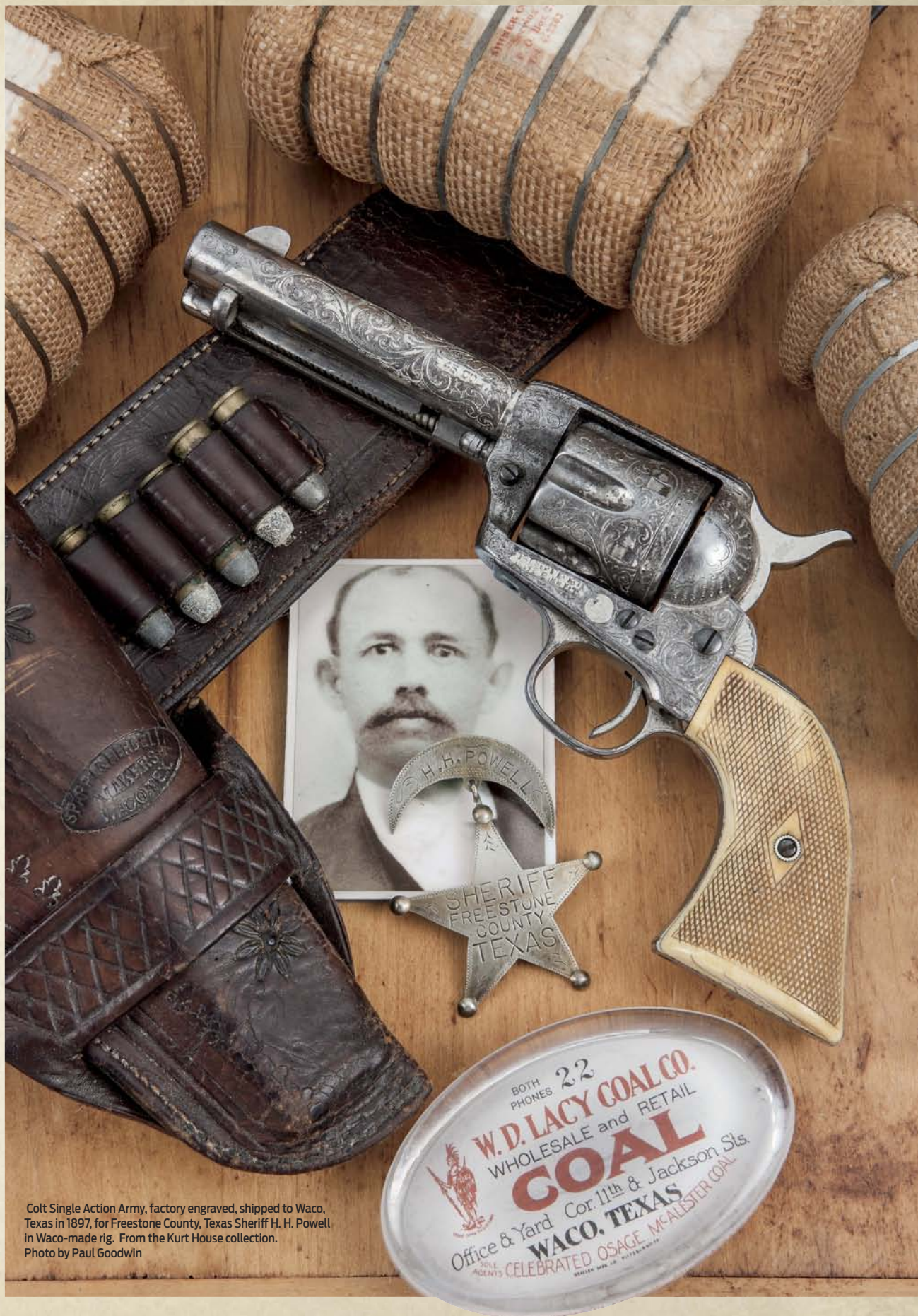
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Colt Single Action Army, factory engraved, shipped to Waco, Texas in 1897, for Freestone County, Texas Sheriff H. H. Powell in Waco-made rig. From the Kurt House collection. Photo by Paul Goodwin



Clint Eastwood, shown here in the film, *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, has played in many memorable Westerns. Photo by Silver Screen Collection/Getty Images

THE BEST OF HOLLYWOOD'S WEST

BY STEVEN PAUL BARLOW

Can You Come Up With Better Lists? You're A Daisy If You Do

Partner, you and I are going to have a disagreement. I am about to list some of the best Western movies ever made.

These lists are based, not on box office receipts, critical acclaim or ground-breaking cinematography, but solely on this purely unscientific basis: they're my favorites.

I'm a big fan of movies from the '30s, '40s and '50s, which was also the heyday of Western movies. But once I started making my lists, I was surprised to find many more recent films making the cut. Even though Hollywood

isn't making as many Western films these days, the ones they are making are pretty good. This was a difficult task. If space was not a consideration, I easily could have listed the top 100.

So here they are, not in any particular order. If you want to debate them with me, go ahead. I'm your huckleberry.

TOP 25 WESTERN MOVIES OF ALL TIME

Tombstone (1993)
Kurt Russell, Sam Elliott, Bill Pax-

ton as the Earps with Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday

The Outlaw Josie Wales (1976)

Clint Eastwood and followers

The Big Country (1958)

Gregory Peck, Charlton Heston, Jean Simmons, Charles Bickford, Chuck Connors and don't miss the performance by Burl Ives

The Far Country (1954)

James Stewart and Walter Brennan look for gold

Dallas (1950)

Gary Cooper as Blayde "Reb" Hollister

Union Pacific (1939)

Joel McCrea and Barbara Stanwyck build a railroad

Western Union (1941)

Robert Young and Randolph Scott

The White Buffalo (1977)

Charles Bronson as Bill Hickok hunting a buffalo

Open Range (2003)

Kevin Costner and Robert Duvall find trouble

Rio Bravo (1959)

John Wayne, Dean Martin, Ricky Nelson, Walter Brennan

Gunfight at the O.K. Corral (1957)

Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas

The Wild Bunch (1969)

William Holden, Ernest Borgnine and the gang

The Professionals (1966)

Lee Marvin, Burt Lancaster

The Searchers (1956)

John Wayne, Jeffrey Hunter search for Natalie Wood

High Noon (1952)

Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)

Paul Newman, Robert Redford

Dodge City (1939)

Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland

Seraphim Falls (2007)

Liam Neeson and believe it or not Pierce Brosnan

Shane (1953)

Alan Ladd, Van Heflin, Jean Arthur and badman Jack Palance

Unforgiven (1992)

Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman, Gene Hackman

Stagecoach (1939)

Look at a young John Wayne
Hondo (1953) I want a hat like
John Wayne wears in this

Two Mules for Sister Sara (1970)

Clint Eastwood, Shirley MacClaine

Guns for San Sebastian (1968)

Anthony Quinn, Charles Bronson

The Magnificent Seven (1960)

Can you name them? Yul Brynner,
Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson,
James Coburn, Robert Vaughn,
Brad Dexter and who was the sev-
enth? Horst Buchholz. All against
badman Eli Wallach

THE BEST WESTERNS THAT WEREN'T WESTERNS

Quigley Down Under (1990)

This takes places in Australia.

Hidalgo (2004)

Most of this takes place in the Mid-
dle East.

THE BEST PRE-WESTERNS

The setting for these is prior to
the traditional Old West period
from the end of the Civil War to the
turn of the century.

Jeremiah Johnson (1972)

Mountain man Robert Redford

Drums Along the Mohawk (1939)

Pioneers Henry Fonda and
Claudette Colbert

Unconquered (1947)

Gary Cooper just after the French
and Indian War

Santa Fe Trail (1940)

Errol Flynn, Ronald Reagan just be-
fore the Civil War. Tremendous
performance by Raymond Massey
as John Brown

THE BEST WESTERN COMEDIES

McLintock! (1963)

John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara

The Paleface (1948)

Bob Hope and Jane Russell

Fancy Pants (1950)

Bob Hope, Lucille Ball

Shanghai Noon (2000)

Jackie Chan, Owen Wilson

Way Out West (1937)

Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy

BEST WESTERN MOVIE MUSIC /THEME SONGS

The Magnificent Seven

Can't help whistling along

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Also the ringtone on my phone

Quigley Down Under

Makes this movie a classic

High Noon

Do not forsake me oh my darling

Rio Bravo

Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson
sing, "Just my rifle, my pony and
me."

Paint Your Wagon

Where else could you see Clint
Eastwood and Lee Marvin try to
sing?

THE BEST LINES SPOKEN

There can be only one top
choice. It's when Kurt Russell as
Wyatt Earp in *Tombstone* says,

"All right, Clanton ... you called
down the thunder, well now you've
got it! You see that? It says United
States Marshal! Take a good look
at him, like ... 'cause that's how
you're gonna end up! The Cow-
boys are finished, you understand?
I see a red sash, I kill the man
wearin' it! So run, you cur, run! Tell
all the other curs the law's comin'!
You tell 'em I'm coming and hell's
coming with me, you hear? Hell's
coming with me!"

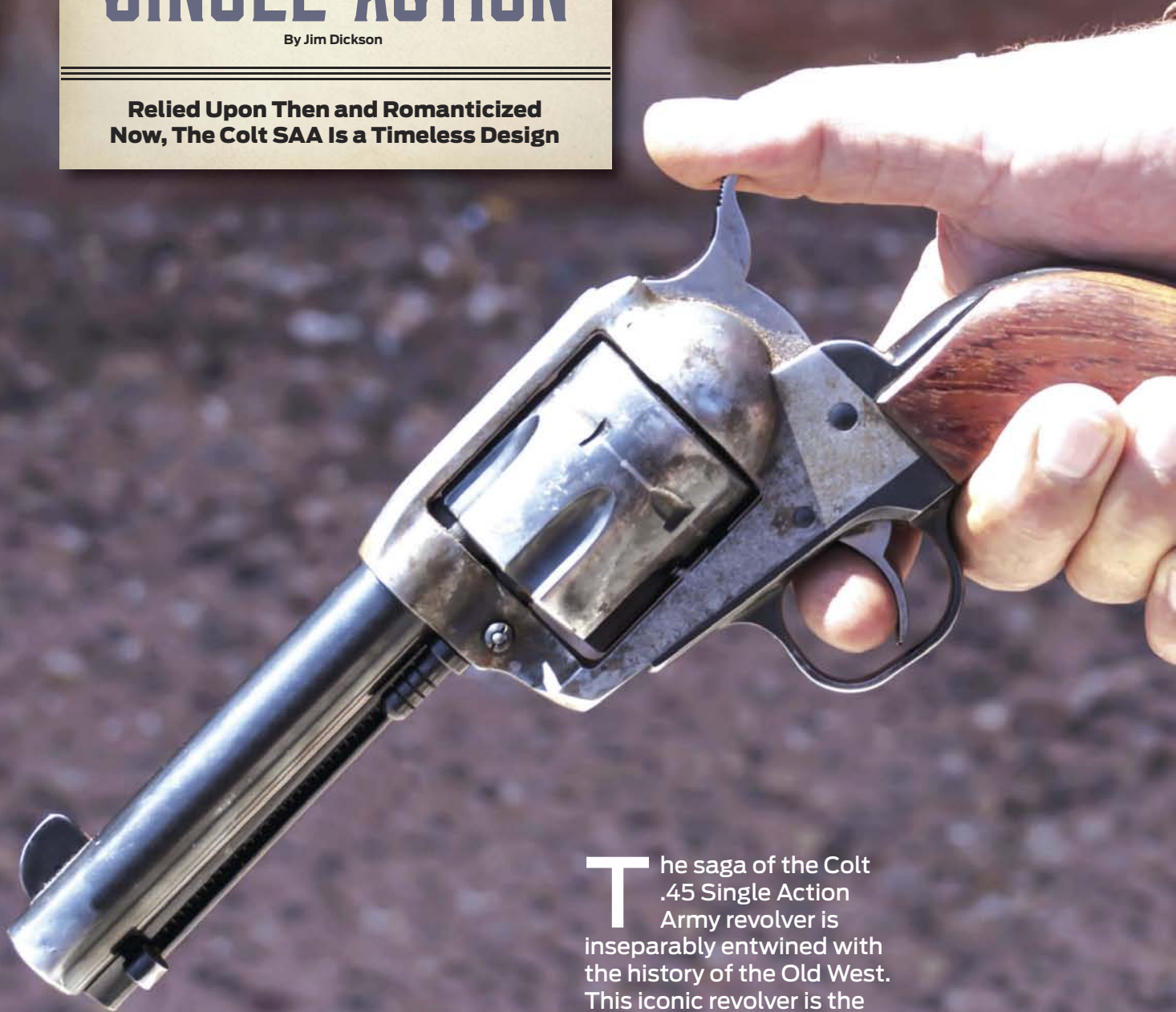


Burt Lancaster (left) and Kirk Douglas pose for a
publicity shot for *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*, one of
many movies depicting Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday.
Photo by Silver Screen Collection/Getty Images

SAGA OF THE SINGLE ACTION

By Jim Dickson

Relied Upon Then and Romanticized Now, The Colt SAA Is a Timeless Design



The saga of the Colt .45 Single Action Army revolver is inseparably entwined with the history of the Old West. This iconic revolver is the most recognized pistol in the world today, thanks to TV and movies.

THINKSTOCK

Aside from the fact that the SAA is as slow to reload as a cap-and-ball revolver with paper cartridges, the fans of the SAA will find that the old gun does a good job living up to its reputation.

Properly gripped, it is a natural pointer, and its .45 Colt cartridge is a proven stopper of man or beast. Unless you are faced with human wave assaults or large wolf or dog packs, the old gun's cylinder full will prove adequate for any civilian or police needs.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAA

The story starts with the Paterson Colt of 1836, as the lock work of all the early Colts is basically the same as are the grips. In fact, the M1873 Colt SAA interchanges grips with the Colt M1851 Navy.

Colt had a good reason for making his revolvers single actions. Nobody was able to hit anything with the double-action pepperboxes of the day. The science and discipline of accurate double-action shooting lay far in the future. Making a gun that people could hit something with was a far better marketing ploy than trying to sell another point blank bullet sprayer.

Colt could not make a breech-loading pistol until Smith & Wesson's 1855 Rollin White patent on bored through cylinders expired in 1869. They attempted to circumvent the patent with the Theur and Richards conversions of the M1851 Navy and the M1860 Army revolvers.

In 1872, Colt brought out its open top Frontier in .44 Rimfire. This short-lived gun bridged the gap between the Theur and

Richards conversions and the M1873 single action. Although made obsolete by the next year's model, it was a fine gun and a fitting companion piece to the M1866 Winchester in the same caliber.

In 1871, Charles B. Richards patented the improvements that became the M1873 SAA. William Mason made small improvements that were patented in 1872 and 1875. The new gun was called the Model P by Colt, but the public quickly fleshed that out to the Peacemaker.

Quickly adopted by the Army, its military nomenclature was the M1873 Colt Single Action Army revolver. Early guns carried the 7 1/2-inch barrel, which was a holdover from the long-barreled cap and ball Colts that came before it.

The 5 1/2-inch barrel and the 4 3/4-inch Gunfighter barrel lengths soon became popular as well. The new gun came with the most powerful cartridge ever put in a revolver up to that time. The .45 Colt was designed to stop a 1,500-pound charging cavalry horse with one shot, a feat it repeatedly proved capable of doing.

Needless to say, it also stopped grizzly bears and men equally well. Among the cavalry and civilians of the day, it was considered great sport to gallop up beside a buffalo and slay it with the powerful new Colt pistol.

It was also accurate. A good pistol man could shoot the new Colt right alongside a M1873 Winchester at all ranges. The .45 Colt had the advantage of having more killing power than the 44-40, so this was a strong incentive to learn

to shoot the pistol.

A lot of people wanted the M1873 Winchester chambered for the more powerful .45 Colt, but this was not possible at the time because the .45 Colt was designed for the punch rod ejector of the SAA and had insufficient rim diameter for use in a lever rifle. The original case had only a .500-inch width at the rim.

Sometime after 1909, this was increased to .512 inch so it would work better in the Colt New Service double-action revolvers. That's why you can get a lever rifle chambered for it today but couldn't back then.

“The contemporary saying about going West was, ‘The cowards never started and the weak died along the way.’”

The original load for the .45 Colt was a 255-grain bullet over 40 grains of blackpowder, which gave 920 fps. This was more powerful than the current smokeless loads. Some people have chronographed this load at over 1,000 fps in 7 1/2-inch barrel Colts, whose longer barrels gave more complete blackpowder combustion.

The term .45 Long Colt came out as a necessity because of the .45 S&W Schofield, which had a shorter case with a 230-grain bullet and a mere 28 grains of powder for 700 fps.

The Schofields could not fire the .45 Colt, but the Colt revolvers



Replicas of the Colt SAA are popular among cowboy action shooters. Here Tom Colaluca, aka Tom Payne, of Monroe, NY competes in the New Hampshire SASS State Championships. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

MAKING THE SAA MORE DURABLE

There is a lot of talk about the more modern lockwork of rival 20th Century single-actions with coil springs being more durable than the 1836 design lockwork of the SAA.

But there is a quick and easy way to make the Colt SAA revolver as durable in hard service as the more modern designs. Simply take the grips off and send the gun off for cryogenic treatment at the firm of 300 Below (300below.com.)

They will cycle it from 300 degrees below zero back to 300 above. This produces wondrous metallurgical changes in the steel. Austenite crystals that did not convert to the stronger martensite crystals during heat treatment complete their transformation while the process precipitates fine alloying carbides that fill the pores of the metal making it glass smooth.

It will clean like glass now also. Stresses are removed from the metal, preventing warpage in service. The results are impressive. Parts wear is reduced by up to 75 percent.

The barrel is more accurate, and the smoother bore will give up to 60 fps more velocity to the bullet than before treatment. It will not walk its shots when heating up in sustained firing.

Leaf springs last as long as coil springs and parts breakage is drastically reduced. The lockwork and trigger pull are suddenly noticeably smoother.

The appearance of the gun is unchanged, and this can be done to improve even the oldest and most valuable collector's pieces without harming the value.

Guns shipped to 300 Below should be boxed so that they could be thrown hard against the wall without damage because that is what the shippers will do to them in transit.

could chamber and fire the Schofield round; thus, the Army adopted the .45 Schofield cartridge in 1875 to simplify logistics, because they were issuing both types of revolvers.

Remington continued to load and sell .45 S&W Schofield cartridges until about 1914, so the term .45 Colt had to become the permanent name.

While the SAA would ultimately be made in 36 different calibers, the .45 Colt was always the most popular and the one most associated with the pistol.

“The .45 Colt was designed to stop a 1,500-pound charging cavalry horse with one shot, a feat it repeatedly proved capable of doing.”

THE COLT SAA AS A MILITARY ARM

The Army used the M1873 as its standard handgun from 1873 to 1892, when the cavalry replaced it with the M1892 Colt double-action revolver. That gun, with its .38-caliber cartridge, proved a failure at stopping Philippine Moros on jihad a few years later. The rest of the Army soldiered on with the SAA.

In 1895 and 1896, the Army began shortening some of the SAA barrels from 7 ½ inches to 5 ½-inches. These were called the “altered revolver,” but since the first shipments went to the artillery, they soon became known as the artillery model.

The failure of the .38 Long Colt double-action revolvers to stop charging Moros brought the spotlight to the .45 Colt's famous stopping power. The SAA revolvers were obviously obsolete with the rest of the world adopting semi-automatic pistols that could offer almost instantaneous reloading and sustained firepower.

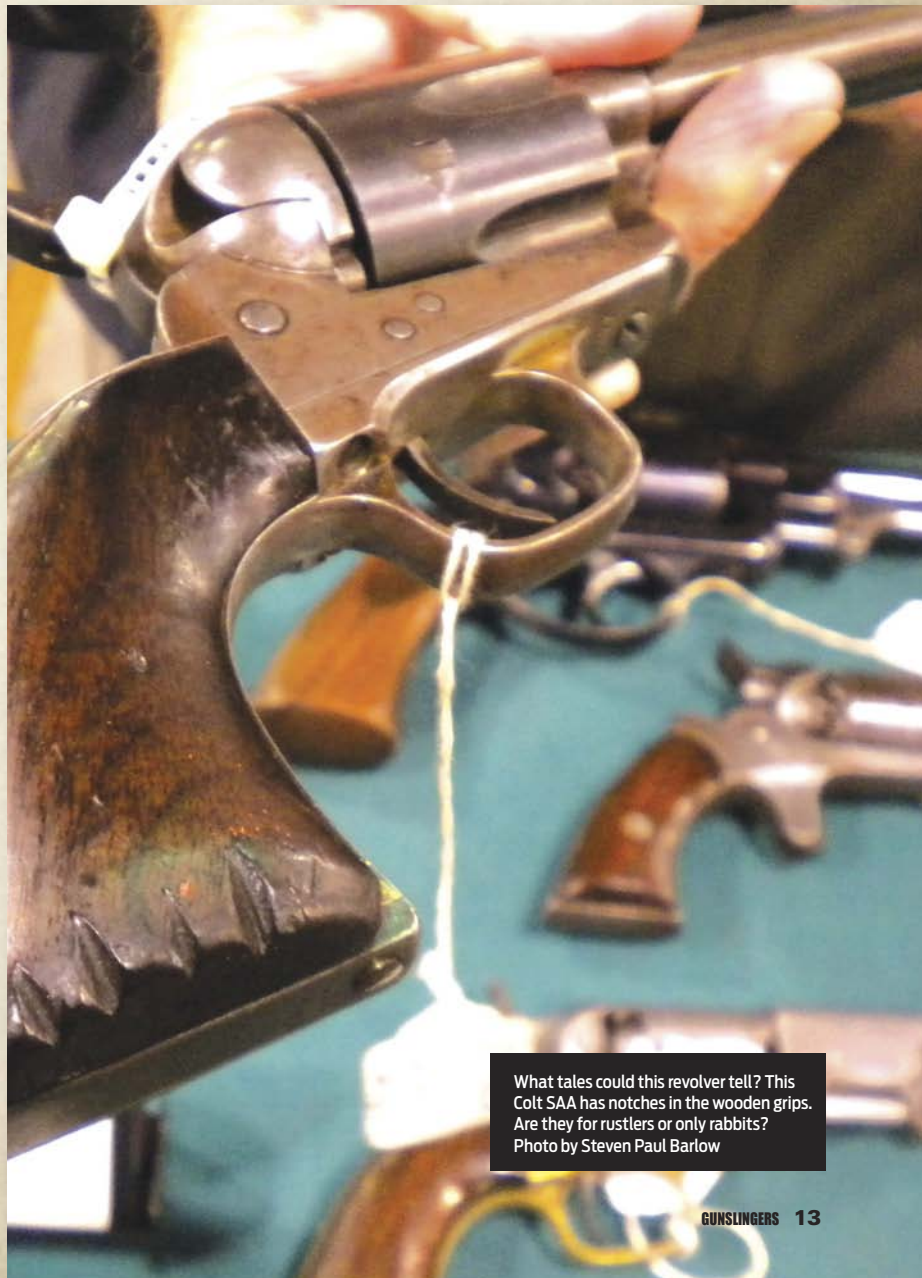
In 1909, the SAA revolvers in the Philippines were supplemented with the M1909 Colt New Service double-action revolver. This gun used .45 Colt ammunition

and had an especially wide rim for reliable ejecting with the new type of extractor on the double-action revolver. These were too wide for the SAA, and you had to leave every other cylinder empty to fire them in a SAA. The commercial .512-inch rim was a compromise between the two sizes in military service that allowed the maximum rim diameter you could fit in the SAA.

It wasn't until the M1911 .45 automatic was adopted that the SAA began to be replaced in the Army.

WWI, with its massed human wave assaults, was no place for a slow reloading gun like the SAA, and the military bought Colt and S&W M1917 double-action revolvers that used the .45ACP round in half moon clips. These were the fastest reloading revolvers of their day.

WW2 saw the SAA play a covert undercover role in the war. The 4500 Colt SAA revolvers that remained in the U.S. Army's inventory were sent to England where the Royal Armouries kept a few for historical samples before turning



What tales could this revolver tell? This Colt SAA has notches in the wooden grips. Are they for rustlers or only rabbits? Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

the rest over to England's wartime spook headquarters, the S.O.E. (Special Operations Executive).

They shipped the guns to France for distribution to the Marquis and other underground organizations. After the war, the surviving guns were kept by the resistance members. Of course, there were individuals in the U.S. Army that carried them in both World Wars. Men such as Generals Wainwright and Patton, as well as some lower ranking officers, had them, but WW2 effectively closed the SAA revolver's career in the U.S. Army.

The Colt .45 Single Action Army was the main weapon of the cavalry during the post-1873 Indian wars, as it had effectively replaced the saber as the number one weapon.

FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE SAA

The civilian career also has highlights, like the first guns being proofed for smokeless powder. This was around 1900. In 1920, larger sights were used. The guns made from 1873 until 1941 are referred to as first-generation single actions. When production resumed in 1956, the guns were called second-generation guns. These guns featured a removable cylinder bushing. In 1976, the third generation started production.

While most first and second generation guns will interchange parts between each other, most third generation parts will not interchange with the earlier production guns. The third generation guns have a floating firing pin, and their barrels are threaded with 24 threads per inch instead of

the 20 threads per inch of the earlier two generations of the Colt.

The cylinder locking bolts are also different on the third generation Colts, and the removable cylinder bushing was no longer used. Now that Colt has started making them with a removable cylinder pin bushing again, it is now called the fourth generation.

When the Colt SAA .45 first appeared on the market, it quickly took over the place previously held by the cap-and-ball Colt revolvers as the primary individual protection weapon.

In the rough and tumble frontier, a man had to be responsible for his own protection and that of his family. Lawmen were often former outlaws who did not completely abandon their old ways.

Many so-called lawmen routinely committed murder and extortion while hiding behind their badge. It's no wonder that communities often preferred to band together for lynch law if faced with outlaws than appoint a petty tyrant to rule over them. The Old West had no timid folks looking to

a town marshal for protection like you see on TV and the movies. The contemporary saying about going West was, "The cowards never started and the weak died along the way."

Among those seeking a new life were those who left the East on a fast horse in the middle of the night to escape the law. Crooks, con men and crazies were driven West while honest men went looking for land and freedom. It was a dangerous mix for an unarmed man. Still, with everyone packing a pistol, it ended up being a safer place with far less crime than our land today.

When men can defend their honor and themselves with no fear of the law afterwards, the society gets safe and respectable real fast.

POINT SHOOTING

The pistol was also the hunting weapon of convenience, as it was on the hip when the rifle was often out of reach when game ran past. It killed every animal in North American reliably and efficiently.

THE GUNFIGHTER'S GRIP

The SAA lives up to its reputation for good pointing only if it is cocked and gripped correctly. Cocking it like a double-action revolver with the thumb longways in line with the hammer throws the grip low on the gun where it wants to move from side to side.

The old-timers learned to cock their cap-and-ball Colts with their vertical hammers by laying the thumb crossways on the hammer, which positions the gun high in the hand where it points better.

The best results came from the gunfighter's secret grip. As the last guardian of this trade secret, I am the only one to reveal it to the public. Cock the Colt with the thumb crossways on the hammer. The hammer spur should be digging into the top of the hand. You will find it very desirable to take the sharp edge on the hammer spur off with a whetrock. The ball of the hand at the base of the trigger finger should be angling down, squeezing one flat Colt logo panel while the thumb is squeezing the other.

The palm of the hand should be behind the backstrap of the gun, not beside it. Place the first joint of the trigger finger over the trigger, and touch the tip of the trigger finger to the tip of the thumb.

Simultaneously squeezing the two logo panels and the trigger will align the sights with whatever you are pointing at while converting the normally disruptive force of pulling the trigger into a steady force.

You can now point shoot this gun up to the accuracy limitations of your ammunition. You won't feel any recoil, and the gun will not roll back in your hand during firing.

Men quickly learned that a good pistol shot could hit anything a man could with a M1873 Winchester. People today don't get the same results because they don't use the gun the same way it was used back then.

In the first place, you point a pistol. The sights are rudimentary in the older pistols because they are only there to help you get a feel for where the new gun is pointing, not for fast deadly shooting. Point shooting, often called instinct shooting today, is much more accurate than using sights and can be learned quickly if you will adopt strict forms in the beginning.

Only later will you be able to hit from any position. Lay out a row of matchsticks or empty .22 cases a foot or more apart. Place them as far away as you can easily see them for targets. Assume the classic duelist stance with the body sideways to the target. This also makes you the smallest target for return fire. Keep the wrist and elbow straight, and lay your chin against your shoulder. Look intently at the target, ignoring the gun and its sights. Fully extend, pointing at the target and fire at each one in turn. If you miss one, keep going to the next one or you will miss again in the same place. You will quickly get the hang of it.

People in the Old West did not shoot themselves in the leg practicing fast draw because they practiced drawing with an empty gun; moreover, the gun was never cocked while still in the holster as in the Hollywood 20th Century fashion. You cocked the hammer when the gun was midway between you and the target, and that

did not slow anything down in the slightest.

They also wore their guns high on the hip in a Slim Jim or Mexican Loop holster. These rigs are still made today by El Paso Saddlery who made them for the old West's deadliest gunfighter John Wesley Hardin.

STILL A TOP CHOICE

Today the Colt SAA remains a top hunting and gun-fighting pistol within its limitation of slow reloading. For all other use, it is first class. Because that covers almost all police and civilian situations, there is no reason not to use it. Just remember that this gun made its reputation with only five out of its six cylinders loaded.

A blow to the hammer can fire the cartridge under it as commonly happened to cowboys when a heavy saddle stirrup

flopped over on it when they were putting a saddle on or off a horse. For safety, you load one chamber, skip one, load four. Now cock and let the hammer down on an empty chamber. The pistol is now as safe as houses.

If you like the Colt SAA, don't let anyone talk you out of carrying it and using it.

Jim Dickson has written for the gun magazines in 12 countries for nearly 30 years.



This replica Colt 1951 Navy revolver by Uberti was a cap-and-ball revolver converted to accept cartridges, much in the same way countless revolvers were converted during the dawn of the cartridge era. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow



A man in a dark cowboy hat and a brown jacket over a white shirt is holding a revolver in his right hand, pointing it towards the camera. He has a serious expression and a goatee. The background is dark and out of focus, showing other people in period clothing.

MYTHS OF THE GUNFIGHT

BY TORREY KIM

The Reality of the Old West
Shootouts

The cool winter wind whipped the dirt across the dusty street as women and children scurried for the nearest buildings. Men carefully positioned themselves just around corners so they could still witness the blood that was about to flow.

Many Old West gunfights were impromptu matters as depicted in this painting by Frederic Remington, "An Incident in the Opening Up of a Cattle Country," 1887. Oil on panel. Autry National Center



In the street, two men silently stood. Peering at each other from beneath their cowboy hats, they reached for their guns ...

When you think of the Old West, you most likely picture two cowboys shooting at one another outside the local saloon in front of a crowd of onlookers, but is it reality? You're about to find out.

1. FACE-TO-FACE SHOOTOUTS WERE UNCOMMON

If you think gunfights were happening outside of every saloon in the West at any given time, you'd be sorely mistaken. In reality, duel-like gunfights were not common in the Old West. In fact, the vast majority of them were unscheduled and many of the participants were cowards.

"Most of the shooting deaths recorded in the Old West were ambushes or at least one-sided," said Scott Dyke, a Wild West researcher and Wyatt Earp expert. "The ambush wasn't always started by law enforcement—it could go either way. But stand-up gunfights were uncommon and that's why the ones you've heard of are so famous."

The Gleeson Gunfight, for example, was one of the last

shootouts of the Old West in 1917 and started after a gang of liquor smugglers ambushed the sheriff of Chochise County, Arizona and his deputy. The lawmen in this situation were ultimately victorious.

2. THE SHOOTOUT AT THE OK CORRAL WAS A MISMATCH

Although Hollywood has traditionally depicted the OK Corral shootout as a well-matched standoff of criminals versus law-

WHAT TYPES OF WEAPONS WERE USED IN THE SHOOTOUTS?

Because pistols were easy to carry, many people in the Old West carried them in favor of the harder to transport shotguns (although shotguns were used, just not as commonly). In addition, the Army issued Colt .45 firearms to soldiers, many of whom continued to carry them after being discharged.

At the OK Corral, the Earp brothers all carried .45s and Doc Holliday had a 12-gauge shotgun that Virgil had gotten from Wells Fargo as a coach gun with a short double barrel. Holliday also carried a nickel-plated .41 caliber Colt Thunderer and Virgil Earp may have had a Smith & Wesson.

McLaury carried a model 73 Colt, while Billy Clanton had a Frontier model 73 in .44-40 with walnut grips made by Colt.

men, the reality is that anyone who knew the participants would have put their money on the law to win.

“When you pit cowboys against the Earps and Doc Holliday you have a fight of professionals versus amateurs,” Dyke said.

“Mostly, the ‘cowboys’ were inexperienced and fueled by alcohol, leading to false courage.”

In addition, the fight didn’t involve anyone saying, “Meet me at high noon,” because shootouts didn’t typically happen via appointment.

“I see the fight as an inevitable unplanned event,” Dyke said.

Tensions had been rising throughout Tombstone, Ariz., angering the town marshal, Virgil Earp, and his team of lawmen, which included his brothers Morgan and Wyatt Earp as well as Doc Holliday.

The Earps decided they’d nearly had enough of Billy Claiborne, Tom and Frank McLaury, and Billy and Ike Clanton, who were part of a loosely-formed group that detested the Earps. On Oct. 25, 1881, Ike Clanton got drunk and started to make threats throughout the town.

“The Earps had just had enough by then, so they picked a fight and said they were going to arrest Ike for the misdemeanor of carrying firearms in town,” Dyke said.

People were supposed to leave their guns at the corral, but the cowboys carried theirs onto Fremont Street, so Virgil was going to arrest them. But Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp were ready to do something more serious about the situation. On Oct.

SALOON GUNFIGHTS WERE RARE, BUT DID HAPPEN

Although most gunfights didn’t actually take place in saloons, that doesn’t mean bar-side shootouts never happened. One of the most famous was the Long Branch Saloon Gunfight in Dodge City, Kansas in 1879.

Nineteen-year-old Frank Loving had a tempestuous relationship with local Levi Richardson, both of whom hung out at the Long Branch Saloon, often trading barbs. On April 5, the two men were engaged in a poker game and Richardson challenged Loving to a fight.

Both men drew their guns and fired shots. Richardson died at the scene and Loving (who was unharmed despite fighting at close range) avoided charges because he was ruled to be fighting in self-defense.

26, the inevitable showdown took place.

“There was really no such thing as trained lawmen in the way we think of them today, but the Earps were used to handling tough guys and crowd control from the Kansas cow towns. Doc Holliday

was a mean S.O.B. and a drunk and they were used to taking care of situations,” Dyke said.

Ike Clanton and Billy Claiborne ran from the fight and thus were uninjured, but Billy Clanton and the McLaury boys were killed in the shootout. All of the lawmen survived.



Low-slung holsters weren't as common as Hollywood movies would have you believe.



The traditional duel seldom occurred in the Old West.

“There has been much discussion through the years whether Tom McLaury was involved in the shootout,” Dyke said. “No arms were found on him after the fight. I believe he was armed and did fire. Claiborne or their friend Billy Allen probably removed his weapon when the dust and smoke cleared.”

3. GUNS WERE IMPRECISE

Firearms of today may be able to hit a target’s bullseye with ease, but in the days of the Old West, it was often a crapshoot as to whether a shooter would hit his mark.

“Guns were imprecise,” Dyke said. “The Colts proved to be the most reliable.”

In addition, even modern-day .45-caliber guns have quite a kick, so anyone shooting a firearm in that category would need to train

extensively before being able to hit a mark. Professionals did work at their trade, however.

“Men like Wild Bill Hickock, Bat Masterson and the Earps were practiced in the art,” Dyke said. They knew the way to aim, shoot, fire, and—most important—keep a cool head during a gunfight.

Ultimately, a person’s ability to win a shootout in the Old West came down to deliberation and not speed, Dyke said. He pointed to the quote by “Little Bill” (played

by Gene Hackman) in the film *Unforgiven* as a true statement about shooting in the Old West:

“Being a good shot and being quick with a pistol ... that don’t do no harm ... but it ain’t much next to being cool. A man who will keep his head and not get rattled under fire ... he will kill you like as not. [Fast draws who fire first] will be hurrying and he will miss. [If he doesn’t miss], then he will kill you. If the sonofabitch is shooting back at you ... well, it’ll unnerve most fellas.”

THE STANDOFF

You may think that every shootout ends when everyone dies or the law starts making arrests, but often an Old West gunfight would end in a standoff, which takes place when one side or both decides that the fight should be over.

Such was the case when the Frisco Shootout took place in 1884. Lawman Elfego Baca had arrested a drunk cowboy who was wildly shooting his gun into the air repeatedly. But the cowboy’s friends had his back and before he knew it, Baca was surrounded by dozens of additional cowboys until the number eventually reached about 80 angry men.

Baca hid out on the dirt floor of a dwelling and the shootout began. Shots were fired by the cowboys into Baca’s dugout and by Baca through the window, until the cowboys ran out of ammo had to retreat after a very long day and a half. When the dust settled, it was clear that four cowboys died, eight were injured, and Baca was unharmed.

4. HOLSTERS WERE UNCOMMON

Although Western movies would have you believe that cowboys were pulling their guns from holsters all day in a quick-draw fashion, that's not at all accurate.

"The image created by Hollywood of the holster hung low, known as the fast-draw Buscadero rig, was an invention of Hollywood," Dyke said.

Instead, shooters who wanted to carry their guns hands-free often needed to get creative and improvise.

"Wyatt Earp had a specially-lined pocket in his overcoat on the cold, blustery day of the OK Corral shootout, giving him ease to get his pistol in action," Dyke explained. "On the day of the gunfight, Virgil had a .45 tucked in his waistband, Morgan had a .45 in his hand and Wyatt had his .45 in that custom pocket."

Therefore, when you see movies in which the lawmen walk through town with their hands on their holsters, ready for action, keep in mind that this isn't completely accurate.

5. THE SHOOTOUT AT THE OK CORRAL DIDN'T HAPPEN THERE

The most famous gunfight of the Old West is named after the place where it happened—or is it? Although the OK Corral wasn't far from where the shootout happened in Tombstone, there was not actually any gunfire in the corral.

"The actual gunfight happened at an empty alley lot on Fremont Street," Dyke said. "I like to call it 'the gunfight across the street from Addie Borland's dress shop.'"

THE OK CORRAL TODAY

The Old Kindersley Corral, more commonly known as the "OK Corral," was an area where people were expected to corral their horses before they visited the town of Tombstone, Ariz., which was known as a silver mining mecca in the late 1800s.

The area is currently part of the Tombstone Historic District, which is part of the National Register of Historic Places and is considered a historic landmark in the U.S.

If you visit the Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park today, you'll get to see an area frozen in time, including the original Cochise County Courthouse built in 1882, which housed the jail, sheriff's office and courtrooms. The town also has a recreation of the gallows where seven men were hanged during the Old West time period.

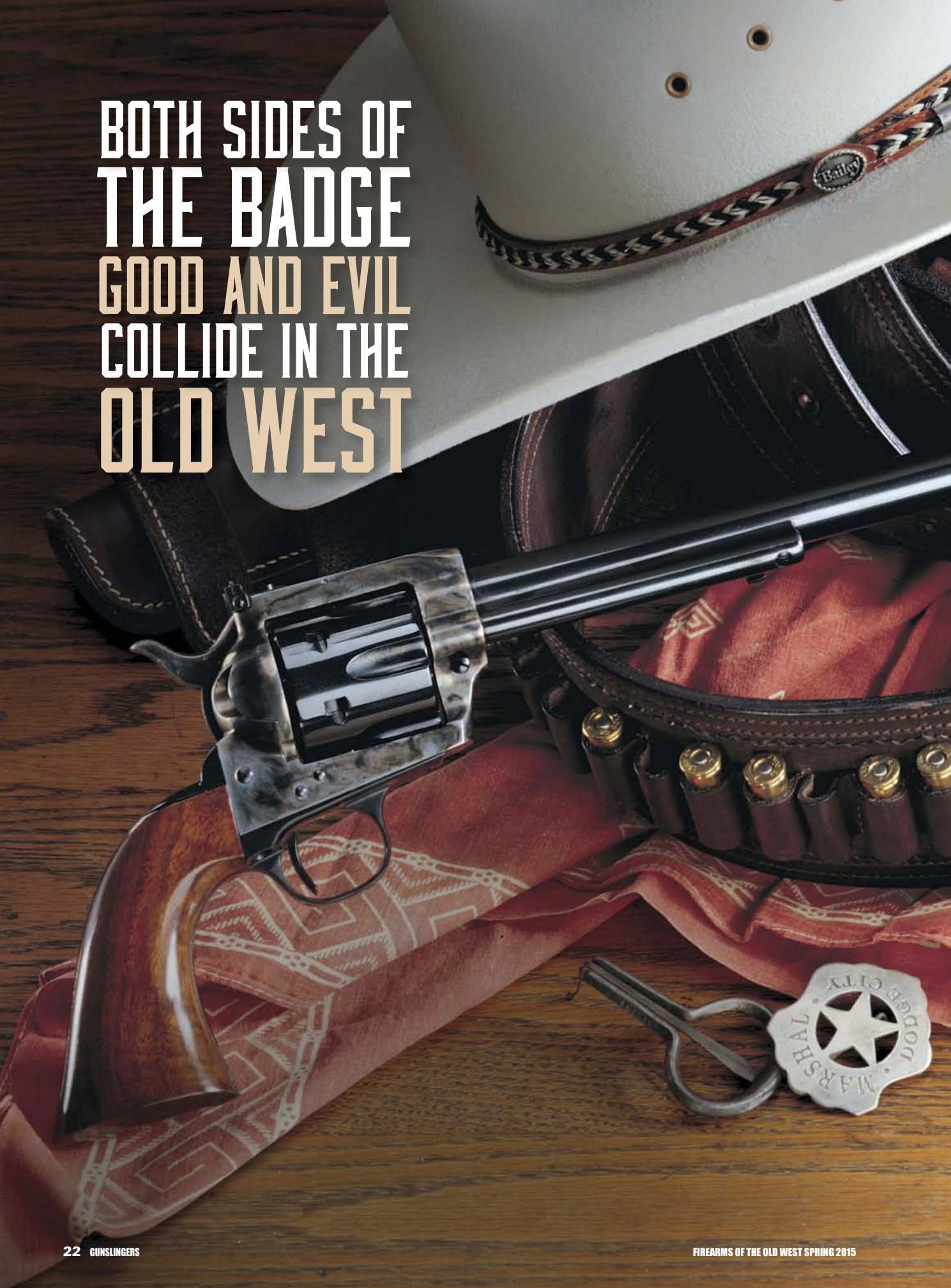
A private company runs daily reenactments of the shootout at the OK Corral throughout the year, and you can also tour the area and review historic photographs from the time period.

Torrey Kim is a North Carolina-based freelance writer who enjoys researching and studying customs of the Old West.



A posse was sometimes used to bring fugitives to justice. It wasn't just a Hollywood invention.

BOTH SIDES OF THE BADGE GOOD AND EVIL COLLIDE IN THE OLD WEST





In the Old West there was a constant struggle between good and evil. Although there were laws, those sworn to uphold them were few and often lawmen had vast territories to cover. Men and women were governed by their consciences more than any authority.

For those with no consciences, the Old West was a land of opportunity to rob banks and trains, to rustle cattle and to steal horses. The lawmen risked their lives to stop those men who crossed the line.

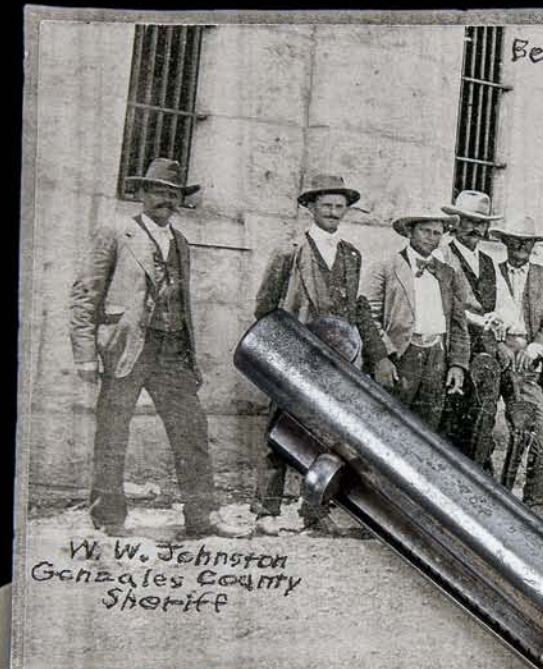
Sometimes those lines were blurred. A lawman in one town sometimes became an outlaw in the next when vengeance or greed proved too overpowering.

On both sides of the law were the guns. The same guns the outlaws used to rob and to kill were used by the lawmen to bring those outlaws to justice. In this special section, we take a look at the guns used by those on both sides of the badge.

THE WILD WEST

Text by Kurt
House/Photos
by Paul Goodwin

**As Did Their Outlaw
Counterparts, Many Old
West Lawmen Lived and
Died By the Gun**





“I found it impossible to get a single white man to assist me ...” reported Corporal Carl Kirchner, Texas Ranger, to the Texas Adjutant General in July of 1893.

Kirchner and four other members of Company D, Frontier Battalion had just witnessed the death of their beloved Captain Frank Jones on Pirate Island, on the outskirts of El Paso, Texas.

For a Texas Ranger captain to be killed in action was rare, even in 1893, but such was the life of lawman in the turbulent Wild West.



SENSATIONAL TEXAS MANHUNT

By
C. L. PATTERSON



Bat Masterson's revolver in the Dick Burdick collection. Masterson attained fame as a lawman in the Old West before returning to the East to live out his life in New York

THE HUNT IS ON

Late in the morning on June 30, Captain Jones and his band of six intrepid lawmen were searching for desperadoes of the Holguin family along the course of the Rio Grande, when they suddenly encountered some of the wanted men.

Giving chase, the Rangers and the outlaws crisscrossed the river

boundary so many times that when the bandits wheeled and entered a house, the Rangers did not know whether they were in Mexico or the United States.

During a serious gunfight, Captain Jones received a slug breaking his thigh and straightening out his leg before him just as another slug tore into his chest mortally wounding him.

“Boys, I am killed ... ” were his last words.

The remaining Rangers soon realized their skirmish was actually on the south side of the Rio Grande, in Mexico and fearing an attack by Mexican soldiers raced back to the United States side, being forced to leave the body of their dead captain in Mexico.

For the next three days, Kirchner tried negotiating with Mexican authorities to regain Capt. Jones’ body and personal effects, including his watch, badge, Winchester rifle, spurs, saddle and horse. His pistol was not recovered.

Amazingly, Jones’ grave is not marked, but efforts are in progress to have Jones commemorated at nearby Concordia Cemetery in El Paso, which in 1895 became the final resting place of both John Wesley Hardin and his killer Constable John Selman.

To give you an idea of the violent lives of these lawmen, Selman himself was killed only nine months later by lawman George Scarborough who in turn was killed by rustlers four years later to the day on April 6, 1900.

These three successive deaths are not surprising when we consider the milieu at the time: saloons provided alcohol, gunpowder, face-powdered women, gambling and usually a lack of law and order.

One study (O’Neal 1979) revealed that 57 percent of gunfighters (both lawmen and outlaws) died of gun shots with an average lifespan of only 35 years.

Although all confrontations between Western lawmen and outlaws did not end as gory as it

did for Captain Jones, many were similar and most of the players are names that the average person would not find familiar.

Try naming an Old West lawman other than Wyatt Earp, Pat Garrett and Bat Masterson; hardly any more achieved such fame. Had it not been for about three minutes on October 26, 1881 in Tombstone, Ariz., the average reader might not know Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and the three other Earp brothers either. But the showdown at the OK Corral ensured the gunslinger's immortality.

One unsung heroic lawman was U.S. Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves (1838-1910), the first African-American to receive such a commission west of the Mississippi River, who like many Indian Territory lawmen operated out of "Hanging Judge" Isaac Parker's court in Ft. Smith, Ark.

Were it not for the fact that Sheriff Pat Garrett killed Billy the Kid, an American outlaw icon, most folks would not recognize his name either. Bat Masterson's claim to fame was the Second Battle of Adobe Walls on the plains of the

Texas Panhandle. But contrary to popular conception, he was no gunslinger, having been verified to have killed only one man before retiring from the law to become a newspaper sports writer in New York City.

A little known fact is that both of Bat's brothers, Ed and Jim, preceded him as lawmen in Dodge City. What is striking about these famous men and many others is that some of them lived well into the 20th Century.

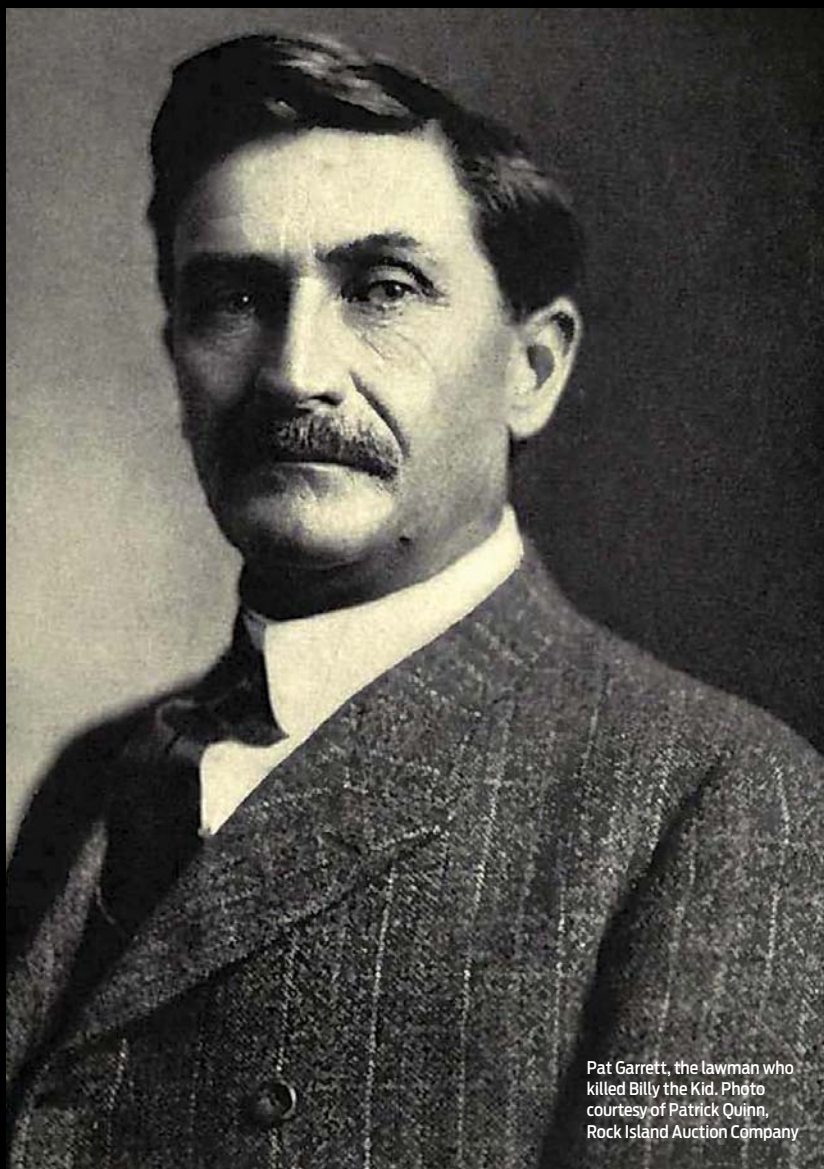
Pat Garrett was assassinated in 1908, Bat Masterson died in 1921 and the old warhorse Wyatt Earp didn't pass away until 1929, at the beginning of the Great Depression.

Another surprising but important fact is that many Old West lawmen straddled the line of law and order. Among them were Wyoming's Bad Bob Meldrum and Tom Horn; Austin, Texas City Marshal Ben Thompson; Uvalde Deputy Sheriff King Fisher; Kansas lawmen Hendry Brown and Ben Wheeler; Johnson County (Wyoming) Invaders like Jeff Mynett and Frank Canton; Henry Plummer; Dee Harkey; Mysterious Dave Mather and several of the Daltons.

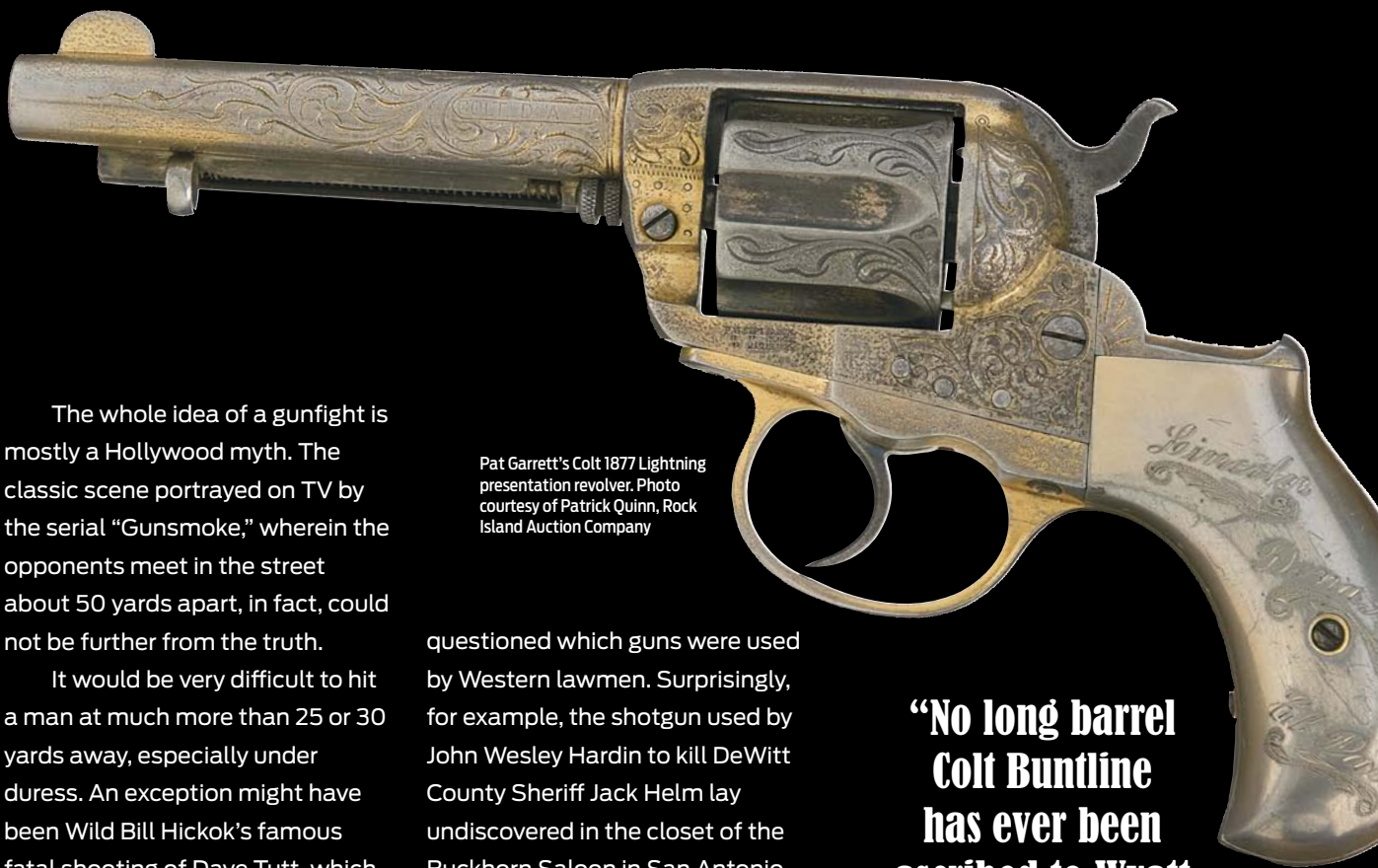
These men blurred the line between law and order at different times in their careers, but some of them, such as Plummer, reached a deadly end by disgusted vigilantes.

GUNFIGHTING MYTHS

Our concepts of the lawmen of the West are based on what we have read, and what we have seen, both in the movies and on that master-maker-of-myths: television.



Pat Garrett, the lawman who killed Billy the Kid. Photo courtesy of Patrick Quinn, Rock Island Auction Company



Pat Garrett's Colt 1877 Lightning presentation revolver. Photo courtesy of Patrick Quinn, Rock Island Auction Company

The whole idea of a gunfight is mostly a Hollywood myth. The classic scene portrayed on TV by the serial "Gunsmoke," wherein the opponents meet in the street about 50 yards apart, in fact, could not be further from the truth.

It would be very difficult to hit a man at much more than 25 or 30 yards away, especially under duress. An exception might have been Wild Bill Hickok's famous fatal shooting of Dave Tutt, which supposedly was across the city square at about that 50-yard distance.

Artist N. C. Wyeth's 1916 depiction of a gunfight is more realistic. The shooters are only a card table distance away from each other. Sometimes the shooters were so close that the muzzle blast set clothes on fire, as it did with Texas Ranger Captain Will Wright in a south Texas saloon.

THE GUNS

After all this myth busting, what kinds of arms did the lawmen of the Old West actually use? First, understand that rifles were used at distances over about 30 yards. Many lawmen relied on the shotgun as a weapon of choice up close. Shotguns were used too by outlaws in ambushes and assassinations.

Only recently have historians

questioned which guns were used by Western lawmen. Surprisingly, for example, the shotgun used by John Wesley Hardin to kill DeWitt County Sheriff Jack Helm lay undiscovered in the closet of the Buckhorn Saloon in San Antonio until 2002.

Strangely, an early 1920's Auto-Ordnance ad illustrated ranch use of a Thompson sub-machine gun on cattle rustlers.

As far as sidearms, until the development by Mormon gunsmith John Browning of the automatic pistol, handguns used during the gunfighter era were usually revolvers of six shots, thus the term "six-shooter."

The arms used changed as firearms technology evolved. Early lawmen used percussion—cap and ball—pistols until self-contained cartridges were perfected.

Those early pistols were not always reliable. It is recorded that when Wild Bill Hickok was marshal of Dodge City, he fired his Colt 1851 Navy percussion pistols daily to insure their dependable use the next day. There was good reason for the admonition in the early

"No long barrel Colt Buntline has ever been ascribed to Wyatt Earp, even though tradition says Ned Buntline presented him one."

days to "keep your powder dry."

By 1873, Colt had produced its .45 caliber Single Action Army revolver, which became "the gun that won the West" along with the Winchester Model 1873. Almost all of the early production was purchased by the U.S. military.

Colt achieved a marketing breakthrough when they added the .44-40 Winchester round to their repertoire of calibers. It allowed use of the same cartridge in either the Winchester or Colt pistol. This was a milestone, not only for carrying or stocking ammunition, but especially when trying to reload during an extended battle.

Colt's Manufacturing Company termed their 1922-1924 catalog, "Colt's: the Arm of Law and Order." There is documented use of Colt pistols by Texas Rangers, Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Pat Garrett, Oklahoma lawmen Heck Thomas, Chris Madsen and Bill Tilghman ("The Three Guardsmen"), Arizona Sheriff Commodore Perry Owens.

The exact Colt single actions of Texas Ranger Captains John R.

Hughes, Rudd, Wright, Jones, Townsend, and Hamer are known, as well as the one used by Constable Selman to kill John Wesley Hardin, who had a S & W #3 on his body at the time of death.

Grant County Deputy Sheriff Johnie Johnson was presented the only known silver plated 3 1/2" factory engraved Colt Single Action Sheriff's Model by a mysterious "Mrs. RLP."

Texas lawmen Phil Shardein,

NOT JUST COLTS

One myth is that all lawmen used Colt pistols. While the Colt Single Action was the most popular sidearm used by lawmen and outlaws of the Old West, other firms manufactured products arguably of equal quality.

American firms such as Remington, Marlin, Smith and Wesson, Merwin & Hulbert, and others also produced high quality firearms which provided a choice for the lawman and outlaw alike.

El Paso City Marshal Dallas Stoudenmire, for instance, used his big S&W American in 1881 as four men died in about the same number of seconds.

Some companies even preceded the Colt firm in developing new technologies, such as the automatic ejection and double-action capability, which greatly facilitated quick firing because it was not necessary to manually cock the hammer with the thumb for each shot.

Remington, in particular, produced the 1875 and the 1890 Models which closely resembled the Colt Single Action. Smith & Wesson owned the rights to the Rollin White bored-through cylinder patent of 1855. When that patent expired, other companies were then allowed to make guns that fired self-contained cartridges.

CAPTAIN RANSOM, TEXAS RANGER

AN AMERICAN HERO
(1874-1918)



PAT GOODRICH

C. E. Horton himself shot by a Ranger, Constable C. F. Schmidt, Oklahoma lawmen Bill Tilghman and Marshal Ed Nix all used short barreled Colt Single Actions.

Produced in three standard barrel lengths (7 1/2, 5 1/2, and 4 3/4 inches), the short barrels were especially preferred by lawmen. In New Mexico in 1874, Chunk Colbert found out the hard way when his long barrel Colt hit the table top when he pulled it from under the table allowing Clay Allison to get him first.

No long barrel Colt Buntline has ever been ascribed to Wyatt Earp, even though tradition says Ned Buntline presented him one.

Ft. Worth, Texas City Marshal, Longhaired Jim Courtright died in 1887 in a gunfight with Luke Short, formerly of the Dodge City Peace

Photo of the published biography of Texas Ranger Captain Henry Ransom (right) next to Texas Ranger Jules Baker. Baker ended up shooting Deputy C.E. Horton in the Houston police station in 1915



Texas Ranger Parker Weston's photo, pistol, a Ranger badge and gal leg spurs

double-action models by the end of the Civil War.

Some lawmen and outlaws were quick to recognize and adopt new technology, which often meant faster firing, upon which one's life might depend.

New Mexico Sheriff Pat Garrett used a Colt 1877 double-action as did his foe Billy the Kid. During his career, John Wesley Hardin progressed rapidly from percussion to cartridge arms, then from single-action to double-action revolvers.

THE END OF AN ERA

As the classic period of the Old West wound to a close by the turn of the century, several innovations made adaptation by lawmen necessary. Automobiles, which became common in the 1920s, supplanted horses as the getaway method.

Also, by 1934 when Bonnie & Clyde were gunned down by a team led by Texas Ranger Frank Hamer, lawmen had adopted newer automatic firearms, both rifles and pistols.

In the decades following the 1930s, advancements in methods of communication enabled law-

Commission when the hammer of his Colt hung on his suspenders. For this reason, before long, both Smith & Wesson, Colt and other makers began making models without external hammers.

DOUBLE ACTIONS INTRODUCED

Colt didn't produce its first double-action revolver until 1877, but following the lead by European makers, some firms like Cooper and Manhattan had introduced

OPEN VS CONCEALED CARRY

Another consideration is how guns were carried by outlaw and lawman alike. It was common after the Civil War for lawmen and outlaws to carry their sidearms openly in external holsters. By the 1880s, however, most of the larger towns, such as Abilene, Kansas, had outlawed the open carrying of firearms in the city limits.

While some lawmen preferred to carry concealed anyway, others, such as Colorado Sheriff Tom Smith, acquired a reputation of not even carrying a gun. Unfortunately, this practice proved fatal for Smith when he was killed with an axe.

The methods of carrying guns evolved, just as the weapons themselves. From original pommel holsters carried by the horse, the military produced external flap holsters. Open pocket holsters developed in the West. Specialized hip pocket, shoulder, and suspender-attached holsters were developed as well.

Arizona lawman Jeff Milton carried a big caliber, short barrel Colt Model 1878 double action in a hip pocket holster. El Paso Saddlery even produced a special wrist holster for a Remington over and under derringer.

It is well known that many lawmen preferred to carry their weapons concealed in a shoulder holster as well as a "back-up" or "belly-gun" which was usually a standard model with the barrel shortened.



Badges of Old West lawmen are highly prized by collectors

men to put an end to the ability of the outlaw to remain at large for a long period of time. Telephones, two-way radios, and other devices contributed to the end of the outlaw era and long chases by lawmen.

In conclusion, when feeling down or bored, take some Old West advice: Take two aspirin, a couple of shots of firewater and go read the history of the gunfighters for facts that are too incredible to fabricate.

Kurt House is the author of numerous guides to Old West collectibles as well as more than 75 articles on the subject. He has been buying, selling and appraising antiques for more than 40 years. He is a life member of the Colt Collectors Association.

GUNS FOR HIRE

By John McQuaid

**Outlaws Opted for Weapons
that Created a
Tactical Advantage ...
or Sent a Nasty Message**

A man in a cowboy hat and plaid shirt is holding a revolver. A newspaper clipping is overlaid on the image, featuring the word "WANTED" in large, bold letters. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a large brown hat visible in the upper left.

WANTED
OR ALIVE

They were romanticized and portrayed as Robin Hoods of their era. In truth, these men were criminals and murderers who robbed stagecoaches, settlers, banks and trains. They were guns for hire, cattle rustlers and some were paid assassins. They chose to live by their own rules and cashed in on the misery of others.

Names such as Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Doc Holliday and Deacon Jim come to mind. Some of these outlaws were lawmen turned criminal, and others came from the ranks of the Confederate Army who were likely bitter at the defeat of the South by Union forces during the Civil War.

The outlaws used a range of different weapons to carry out their criminal activities, each suited for the particular task at hand.



Jesse James used the guerrilla warfare tactics he learned in the Civil War to his advantage as an outlaw.

JESSE JAMES

Jesse Woodson James was born in Missouri on Sept. 5, 1847. Jesse and his brother Frank James were part of a band of Confederate guerrillas known as bushwhackers during the Civil War. The bushwhackers committed acts against Union Soldiers that would be considered war crimes in today's modern era.

One of the most famous was the Centralia Massacre that occurred on Sept. 27, 1864 led by Bloody Bill Anderson. The 80

or so guerrillas blocked the rail line at Centralia, Mo. and stopped a train ferrying passengers and Union Soldiers returning home from the battle of

Atlanta.

Twenty-two Union Soldiers were made to strip off their uniforms and were then shot. Their bodies were then mutilated and scalped.

The train was set on fire and sent to Sturgeon, Mo.

The guerrillas then torched the depot before leaving town. Acts like these may have set the stage for Jesse James' future exploits as an outlaw and murderer.

Jesse James and his brother Frank James went on to become outlaws after the Civil War. They robbed trains, stage coaches and banks. Jesse James' reign of terror ended when he was killed on April 3, 1882 by Robert Ford, a member of his own gang who wanted to collect the heavy bounty placed on his head. As the saying goes, "There's no honor among thieves."

WEAPONS FOR CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

Jesse James' weapons of choice would have likely been Colt revolvers. During the Civil War, he would have likely carried the Colt .36-caliber 1851 Navy revolver. These weapons were six-shot pistols and many of the Confederate guerrillas would carry several of them at one time into battle.

The bushwhackers used ambush tactics and fought close quarters against militia and Union Soldiers. The revolver could be easily concealed and used to devastating effect with the operator being able to get off multiple shots while many of the militiamen had to reload their single shot rifles after every shot.

The .36 caliber round was not as devastating or accurate as a rifle round, but would take an opponent out of the fight where he could later be finished off with a kill shot or sharpened blade.

Think about the disadvantage of having to reload after every shot when you are taking incoming gunfire at close range. The Colt six-shot revolver will have a distinct advantage at close range.

As self-contained cartridges became prevalent, pistols became easier to reload. Jesse James could deal a devastating barrage of firepower with just two Colt .45 Peacemakers. James and members of his gang were also known to use Smith and Wesson Model 3 revolvers. The top-break Smith & Wesson was also a little quicker to reload than the Colts of the time.

Having several men armed with revolvers in an ambush style bank robbery would be hard to fight against, given the few lawmen available to cover the vast western territories.

Revolvers were not the only weapons these outlaws used to murder and commit robberies. They also used 10- and 12-gauge shotguns during holdups. These weapons could be loaded with just about anything from bolts, gravel, lead shot, or nails. The intimidation factor alone would be off the charts if you were a bank manager staring down the business end of a double barrel shotgun.

Jesse James and his gang were also known to use Henry and Winchester repeating rifles during robberies. The longer reach of the Henry and Winchester rifles would be well suited for picking off the "Whip" or stagecoach driver and the man riding shotgun if they offered resistance to Jesse and his gang.

These lever-action rifles would also be well suited for ambushing a posse sent out to capture or kill Jesse and his gang after they committed a bank, train, or stagecoach robbery.

The rifle would also serve as a means to kill deer or other game if Jesse and his band of outlaws were on the run from the law and hiding out in the wilderness.



Billy the Kid postcards on sale. Retailers and movie-makers have made more by capitalizing on outlaws' names than the outlaws themselves ever dreamed of stealing.

BILLY THE KID

Billy the Kid was born as William Henry McCarty Junior on Nov. 3, 1859. He was also known as William Antrim and William Bonney.

He started out his outlaw career by getting arrested for stealing cheese and went on to become a horse thief and a cattle rustler. He was about 18 when he supposedly killed his first man, Frank Cahill, who had been bullying him.

Eventually, he went on to work for John Tunstall, who had a ranch in Lincoln County, N.M. The infamous Lincoln County War erupted when Tunstall was murdered by men who were working for a conglomerate of merchants, ranchers and businessmen known as "The House," run by Lawrence Murphy and James Dolan.

The men who worked for Tunstall, including Billy, were deputized and became known as the Regulators. The Regula-

tors were given arrest warrants to bring in the men responsible for the death of Tunstall.

There were killings on both sides. Eventually, through political maneuvering by The House, the Regulators were labeled as outlaws. Billy returned to cattle rustling and gambling as a way to make a living. In 1880, he killed Joe Grant in a Fort Sumner saloon after adjusting the cylin-

der on Grant's gun so that the hammer would fall on an empty chamber the next time Grant pulled the trigger.

Billy gained notoriety too for breaking out of jail twice. On the second occasion, he killed two of Sheriff Pat Garrett's deputies to make his escape. Garrett ultimately killed Billy on July 14, 1881.

THE KID'S WEAPONS

The firearms that Billy the Kid preferred were Colt revolvers, specifically a single-action in .44-40 and a double-action .41-caliber Thunderer. He may also have used a Colt Lightning in .38. It has been said that his go-to weapon was the Winchester Model 1873 rifle in .44 40.

The lever-action rifle had superior accuracy, distance, and damage potential than a revolver. It had a tubular magazine that could hold 14 rounds of ammunition. That is a lot of firepower even by today's standards.

Billy spent time as a cattle rustler out in the open ranges so having a rifle that could reach out and eliminate a hostile threat would have been preferable to closing the gap and engaging with a .44 caliber revolver.

The rifle would have also been suitable for hunting game or dispatching wild animals in the territories when he was on the run from Pat Garret or a posse sent to capture him.

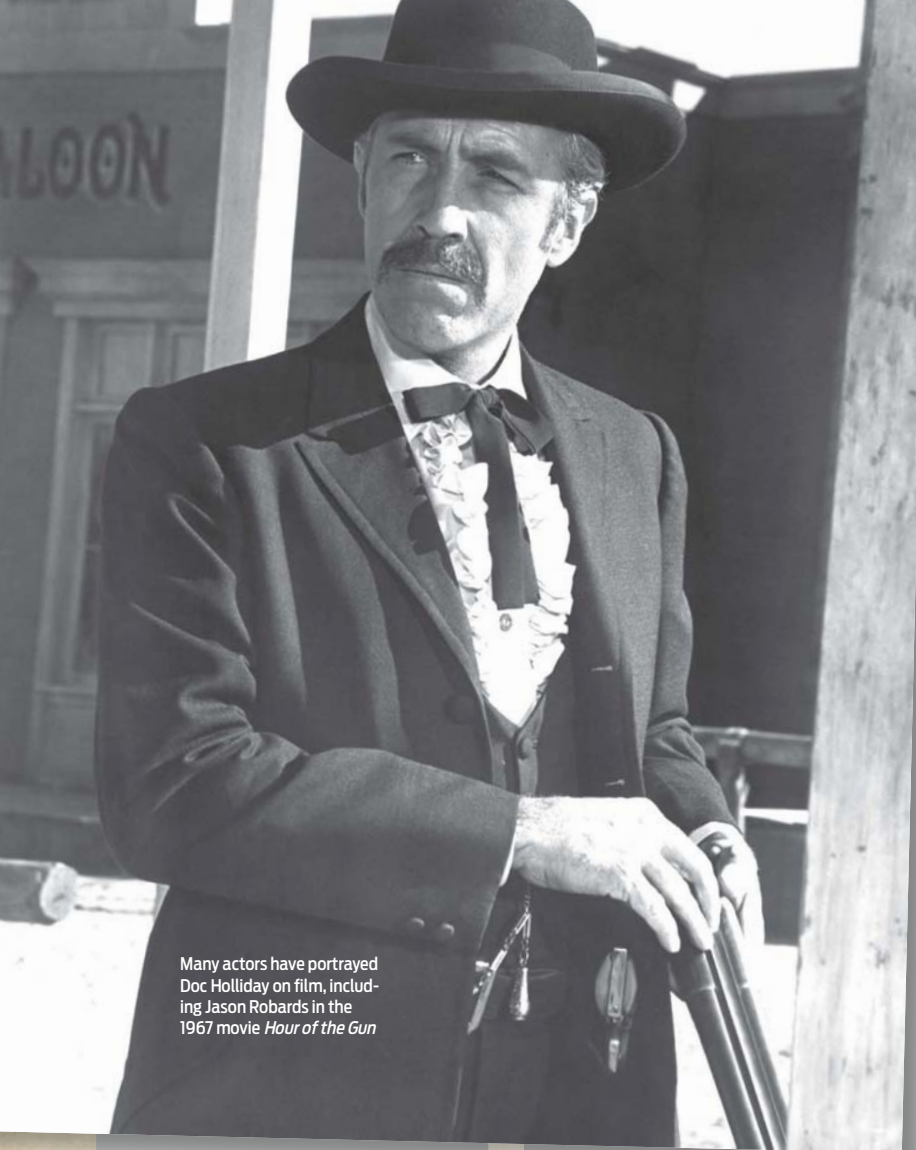
Billy the Kid's choice in revolvers is not surprising either. The bigger bullets of the .41 and .44 caliber Colts usually equaled bigger holes.

Although he was not trained to fight as Jesse James had been, Billy was reported to have spent time practicing with his weapons and spent a lot of his money on cartridges.

One can also appreciate the fact that the .44-40 cartridge could be used in the Winchester model 1873 as well as the Colt .44 Billy carried. It's a lot easier when all you have to worry about is one bullet for both weapons.

Billy the Kid was also an opportunist when it came to using different weapons. He killed Deputy Bob Ollinger with his own double barrel shotgun during his escape from the Lincoln Jail.

Billy the Kid lived by the gun and died by the gun as did other outlaws. I don't see him as being a good man despite the fact that some of his actions were a result of trying to bring Tunstall's killers to justice.



Many actors have portrayed Doc Holliday on film, including Jason Robards in the 1967 movie *Hour of the Gun*

DOC HOLLIDAY

Doc Holliday was one of the most infamous gunfighters of the Old West. He was born in Griffin, Ga. on August 14, 1851 as John Henry Holliday.

After he came down with tuberculosis, he moved west for the drier air, which was believed to be beneficial for his condition. He had to give up his dental practice due to his coughing spells and turned to gambling to support himself.

Doc Holliday was considered a well-dressed, well-mannered Southern Gentleman, but he had a bad temper and was a heavy drinker. The fact that he

knew he was going to die from tuberculosis likely made him more inclined to engage in reckless behavior.

Doc Holliday needed to pro-

“Doc Holliday also carried a long knife that he used. In a close quarters fight, the knife can be just as deadly as a concealed pistol.”

tect himself as gambling disputes often turned deadly in the Wild West. He became quite skilled with the revolver and knife. He fled town after town throughout the West, leaving several dead men in his wake.

He was on the run when he ended up in Fort Griffin, Texas, where he met Wyatt Earp. Doc Holliday lived by the gun, but didn't die from it. He died on November 8, 1887 from tuberculosis in Glenwood Springs, Colo.

DOC'S PRESCRIPTION FOR SETTLING DISPUTES

Doc carried the 1851 Colt Navy revolver early in his western adventures. It was given to him by his uncle. His pistol choices evolved with technology and he traded up for the nickel plated .44-caliber Colt Thunderer and .38-caliber Colt Lightning, both double action pistols, which would offered quick follow-up shots.

He reportedly carried a pistol on a shoulder rig, one on his hip and a blade.

He used a shotgun at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Ariz. Due to his lean build and poor health, however, it isn't likely that he chose the hard recoiling double barrel shotgun at other times.

Being a gambler made it necessary to be armed with concealable weapons. A shoulder holster would allow good concealment and rapid deployment from a seated position when worn with a properly tailored suit coat.

Having that ability in a close quarters environment like a saloon could mean the difference between life and death.

Doc Holliday also carried a long knife that he used. In a close quarters fight, the knife can be just as deadly as a concealed pistol. With a knife, Doc Holliday could deliver several lethal knife blows before his opponent could even get his pistol out of his holster and fire a shot.



Deacon Jim Miller was one of the Old West's most notorious killers for hire. Photo courtesy of Legends of America

DEACON JIM MILLER

James Brown Miller or “Deacon Jim” was born in Van Buren, Ark. on October 10, 1866 and was hung in Ada, Okla. on April 19, 1909.

Deacon Jim was a gun for hire who did contract killings. He didn’t drink, smoke or use foul language. He was known for his pious behavior and regularly attended the Methodist church on Sunday.

Deacon Jim can be credited with killing a dozen men. Other accounts have the body count higher than this.

When his parents died, he went to live with his grandpar-

“Deacon Jim was a paid assassin. He wanted to make sure that the job was done right the first time so what better weapon to use than a double barrel shotgun.”

ents and at the age of eight they were both killed. Jim was implicated in their deaths, but was never convicted of murdering them.

On July 30, 1884, Deacon Jim shot his sleeping brother-in-law in the head with a shotgun. He was sentenced to life in prison, but got off on a technicality.

He teamed with some outlaws and participated in some train and stage coach robberies. It is said that he killed some folks during those robberies.

He spent some time as a deputy sheriff in San Sabo County along the Texas-Mexico border, where he also ran a saloon. He was also a deputy sheriff in Reeves County where he ended up becoming a town marshal. He got a reputation for killing “escaping” Mexicans.

Twice he received multiple gunshot wounds in shootouts with Sheriff Bud Frazer. Each time he survived the gunfight because he was wearing a large steel plate under his clothes.

The feud between the two

DEACON JIM'S WEAPONS OF CHOICE

Deacon Jim is an interesting outlaw in that his choice of weapon seemed to be the double barrel shotgun. He was also ahead of his time by wearing a steel chest plate to protect him from gunfire.

Deacon Jim was a paid assassin. He wanted to make sure that the job was done right the first time so what better weapon to use than a double barrel shotgun. The weapon is devastating at close range and surviving a blast from both barrels at point blank range was highly unlikely.

From a tactical standpoint, Deacon Jim Miller was a methodical killer who waited for the right time to carry out assassinations. He often worked at night while wearing a black frock coat and black hat for ideal concealment. An ambush was a good way to stack the deck in your favor if you are going to make your living killing others.

men ended on Sept. 13, 1896 when Deacon Jim found Bud Frazer gambling in a saloon in Toyah, Texas. Deacon Jim shot Bud Frazer in the head with his shotgun while he was at a table.

A witness at the trial by the name of Joe Earp wound up dead from a shotgun blast three weeks after the trial. It is said that Deacon Jim made threats against Joe prior to his demise.

Surprisingly, Deacon Jim Miller went on to become a Texas Ranger and a paid professional assassin. There are a string of contract killings that Deacon Jim did as a gun for hire.

His days of killing and murdering came to an end when he killed a former deputy U.S. marshal. When Deacon Jim was subsequently hung, he was reported to have said, “Let her rip,” before stepping off the box he was standing on.

THE KILLER'S WEAPONS

These outlaws carried different types of weapons for different types of jobs. Doc Holliday was a gambler—a dangerous occupation in the Old West. His weapons served for more defensive purposes compared to Deacon Jim, who was a cold-blooded contract killer who wore a steel chest protector and carried a double barrel shotgun.

Billy the Kid practiced with his revolver, but often needed his Winchester rifle when hunting down his employer's killers. Jesse James carried weapons

that could be easily concealed and quickly drawn for robbing banks, trains, and stage coaches.

It's interesting how each outlaw fell into carrying certain types of weapons for the criminal lifestyle he chose. It goes without saying that necessity is the mother of invention.

John M. McQuaid is a police officer and a firearms instructor in Upstate, NY with 18 years of experience. He is an avid hunter and has a great deal of experience with a variety of firearms.



Handguns were the preferred weapons of many Old West outlaws because they were handy in close quarters and could be easily concealed

Thomas Coleman "Cole" Younger, leader of the Younger Gang, also rode with the James brothers



Many outlaws in the Old West added to their legends by breaking out of jail



FIREARMS OF THE OLD WEST SPRING 2015



Outlaws used shotguns for ambushes and assassinations or up-close intimidation during robberies

A BEAUTY



AND A BEAST

by Steven Paul Barlow

Henry's Big Boy Lever-Action in .44 Magnum Provides Potent Firepower In an Exquisite Package



I'm not a fashionable guy. My clothes are ordinary and comfortable. You won't find useless knick-knacks on my shelves or incomprehensible modern art on my walls. In short, if it doesn't perform a function, I have no use for it.

But I have to admit to feeling more than a little stylish when I showed up at the range with a Henry Big Boy lever-action rifle in .44 Magnum, and everyone came over to admire this beautiful gun.



The rear buckhorn sight is adjustable for windage and elevation and has a white diamond insert to make fine elevation adjustments

It sported a blued, octagon barrel, brass receiver, butt plate and barrel band, and straight-grip American walnut stock. It seemed to perfectly blend nostalgia, tradition and old-time craftsmanship with today's manufacturing precision and modern chambering for a potent cartridge. So that you don't think I've suddenly started to favor image over substance, let me tell you up front that this gun is a shooter.

MADE IN AMERICA

One of the big appeals of lever-action carbines in the Old West was that you could get a handgun chambered for the same cartridge. This rifle, chambered in the more potent .44 Magnum than those earlier guns, is the perfect



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Henry Repeating Arms Company

Website: HenryRepeating.com

Model: Hoo6 Big Boy

Caliber: .44 Magnum/.44 Special (The rifle is also available in .45 Colt and .357 Magnum/.38 Special)

Overall Length: 38 1/2 inches

Barrel: 20-inch octagonal with 1:38 right hand twist

Weight: 8.68 lbs.

Stock: Straight grip American walnut

Finish: Blued barrel, brass receiver, butt plate and barrel band

Sights: Rear adjustable Marble semi-buckhorn with white diamond insert. Brass bead front sight in dovetail.

MSRP: \$899.95



The Henry proved capable of excellent accuracy when fired from the bench with a scope mounted

carbine to pair with a companion handgun. For the outdoorsman who frequents the backcountry today, with the many revolvers and ammo choices available, there is perhaps no better choice than the .44 for a rifle/handgun combo.

The Henry Repeating Arms Company takes its name from Benjamin Tyler Henry, who received his first rifle patent in 1860 while working for Oliver Winchester. That gun featured a brass receiver and was chambered for a .44 caliber cartridge too, the .44 rimfire. If you want a rifle that's more faithful to the original Henry design, the company makes one in another oldie but goodie chambering: the .44-40.

This Big Boy, however, follows a more updated design. It has a round bolt with a single locking lug in the rear. It is made completely in the United States. Henry RAC has a factory in Bayonne, NJ and Rice Lake, WI. Some parts are sourced from other places, but all come from the U.S. Henry's slogan is fitting: "Made in America or not made at all."

There is no cross-bolt safety or half-cock notch on the Big Boy. The rifle features a transfer safety bar, much like those found on modern revolvers.

Simply put, the rifle will not fire unless the hammer is fully cocked and then the trigger is pulled. The rifle is completely safe to carry with the hammer down on loaded chamber. That's an easy thing to check in the field.

LOADING AND UNLOADING

The Big Boy has a tubular magazine under the barrel that

holds a payload of 10 .44 cartridges. Unlike other centerfire lever guns, however, the Big Boy does not have a loading gate on the receiver.

This rifle loads from a cutout in the magazine as many .22 rimfire guns with tubular magazines do. I like this system. Loading other rifles through a loading gate can be a pain, literally. Unloading such a gun is even worse because the action has to be cycled completely to remove every cartridge that's in the gun. Not so with the Henry.

With the action closed, cartridges are easily loaded through the cutout once the inner tube is moved out of the way. There is no pinching of fingers or jamming of cartridges in a loading gate.

To unload the gun, remove the inner, spring-loaded magazine tube, tip the rifle down and empty the rounds into your hat or other container. While this system wouldn't easily allow me to top off the magazine in a tactical situation, I am confident that 10 rounds of .44 Magnum would get me through most hostile situations.

To be fair, this gun wasn't designed with that in mind. Still, sometimes you have to use what you have at hand, especially in states where most semi-auto rifles are now banned. I appreciate versatility in a firearm. If I had to press this gun into service for defense, I would feel well-armed.

MAINTENANCE MADE EASY

Simple cleaning of the rifle can be accomplished by opening the action and running a patch down the bore. With this type of gun, I'd opt for a bore snake or Otis

ACCURACY RESULTS

Load	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)	
		Smallest	Average
Winchester USA 240-grain JSP	1,665	1.38	1.58
American Eagle 240-grain JHP	1,662	0.25	1.10
PMC 240-grain JHP	1,713	1.25	1.37
Buffalo Bore .44 Special, 255-grain Keith	1,275	1.50	1.83
Handload with 240-grain SWC	1,082	1.13	1.21

Accuracy testing consisted of five three-shot groups at 100 yards from a rest. Chronograph results in feet per second were compiled using a Chrony instrument 14 feet from the muzzle.

Comparison velocities using Ruger Super Blackhawk revolver with 7 3/8" barrel:

Winchester USA 240-grain JSP	1,367
American Eagle 240-grain JHP	1,397
PMC 240-grain JHP	1,394
Buffalo Bore .44 Special	973
Handload with 240-grain SWC	893

cleaning system that would allow me to clean breech to muzzle without disassembling the action.

Disassembling the rifle is an easy task when you want to perform a more detailed maintenance. Remove the screw in the lever, which will allow the lever to be pulled free from the bottom of the receiver. The bolt can then be removed out the back of the receiver. Be careful not to lose the ejector, which sits in a slot along the inner left side of the receiver. This can be plucked out once the bolt is removed.

SIGHTS JUST RIGHT

I love iron sights on a rifle. As a matter of fact, I insist on them. I was hunting the back country one season when I had a scope malfunction. Iron sights saved the hunt for me, so I have them on all my rifles. That's not always an easy proposition these days, as

most rifles don't have them. It's like buying a car without wheels.

The iron sights on this Henry proved to be clear and easy to acquire, even for my aging eyes. Both the semi-buckhorn rear and front sight with brass bead are dove-tailed so adjustments in windage can be made.

The rear sight is adjustable for elevation. Lift the ears of the buckhorn sight slightly while you move the rear sight elevator forward or back. There is also a white-diamond insert in the rear sight held by a set screw that enables you to make very fine elevation adjustments. The rear sight does not fold down, so you have to be mindful to take care if you take the gun in or out of a scabbard. Scabbards aren't used only by those on horseback. I have one that attaches to the outside of my backpack when hunting remote areas.

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT

Shooting the Henry in .44 Magnum is not like shooting a .44 out of a handgun. The weight of the rifle, at over eight pounds, nullified any recoil issues with the pistol cartridge. The rifle has no rubbery recoil pad, and it doesn't need one. However, the rifle will also fire the milder .44 Special cartridges if you are recoil shy.

For accuracy testing, I mounted a Bushnell 3X9 scope with quick-detach rings on a scope base made especially for the Big Boy. All of the Big Boys made since 2011 come with the receiver drilled and tapped for the mount.

Despite the fact that the rear sight does not fold down, it wasn't necessary for me to remove it prior to mounting the scope. This scope fit nicely over the top of it. If I decided to break with tradition and hunt with this gun with a scope mounted, the scope would protect the sight from the torture to which I usually subject my guns.

During accuracy testing, I fired off three rounds of American Eagle 240-grain JHP from a rest at 100 yards. I looked through the scope, but noticed only one hole on the paper. I switched to the more powerful spotting scope, but couldn't tell where the other two shots had landed. I checked the scope attachment to make sure nothing had loosened during recoil. It hadn't. I changed my point of aim slightly and again had hits on paper.

What had happened? I made the long, lonely stroll to the target and discovered a very nice clover-leaf pattern. There were three holes in the target, all so close that

they looked like one hole through the riflescope.

I get to brag about that because normally I'm not that good of a shot from the bench. I'm too impatient. Now, granted, not all of my groups were that tight. The average was more in the 1 ¼- to 1 ½-inch range. Still from a lever gun shooting blunt-tipped pistol bullets, I will take that kind of accuracy any day. Watch out whitetails.

Velocities for standard factory rounds averaged in the upper 1,600s to low 1700s (feet per second) from the Big Boy's 20-inch barrel. That's about a 300 fps increase over most of those same loads fired from my Ruger Super Blackhawk revolver with a 7 3/8-inch barrel.

SHOOTING OFF-HAND

I'm a firm believer in getting away from the bench as soon as

possible to really get to know a firearm. Once this gun was sighted in and the accuracy testing was over, there was no reason to shoot from the bench any longer.

I took off the scope and shot the Big Boy from off-hand, kneeling and standing supported positions. This is a fun gun to shoot. The action cycled smoothly, and I was soon clanging the metal plates 100 yards away.

While I believe this gun would be at home in cowboy action shooting competitions, many of the people I know who have Henry rifles own them for the simple joy of having quality firearms that are fun to shoot while holding on to a little of the romance of the Old West.

The Westerners of the late 1800s loved their lever guns and the ammo compatibility with their sidearms. That's the appeal for me

too in this modern Henry. This rifle, in .44 Magnum, is the perfect companion to my .44 handguns, which have become my favorites for deer hunting in the dense woods of my region. Ultra flat-shooting cartridges are unnecessary here.

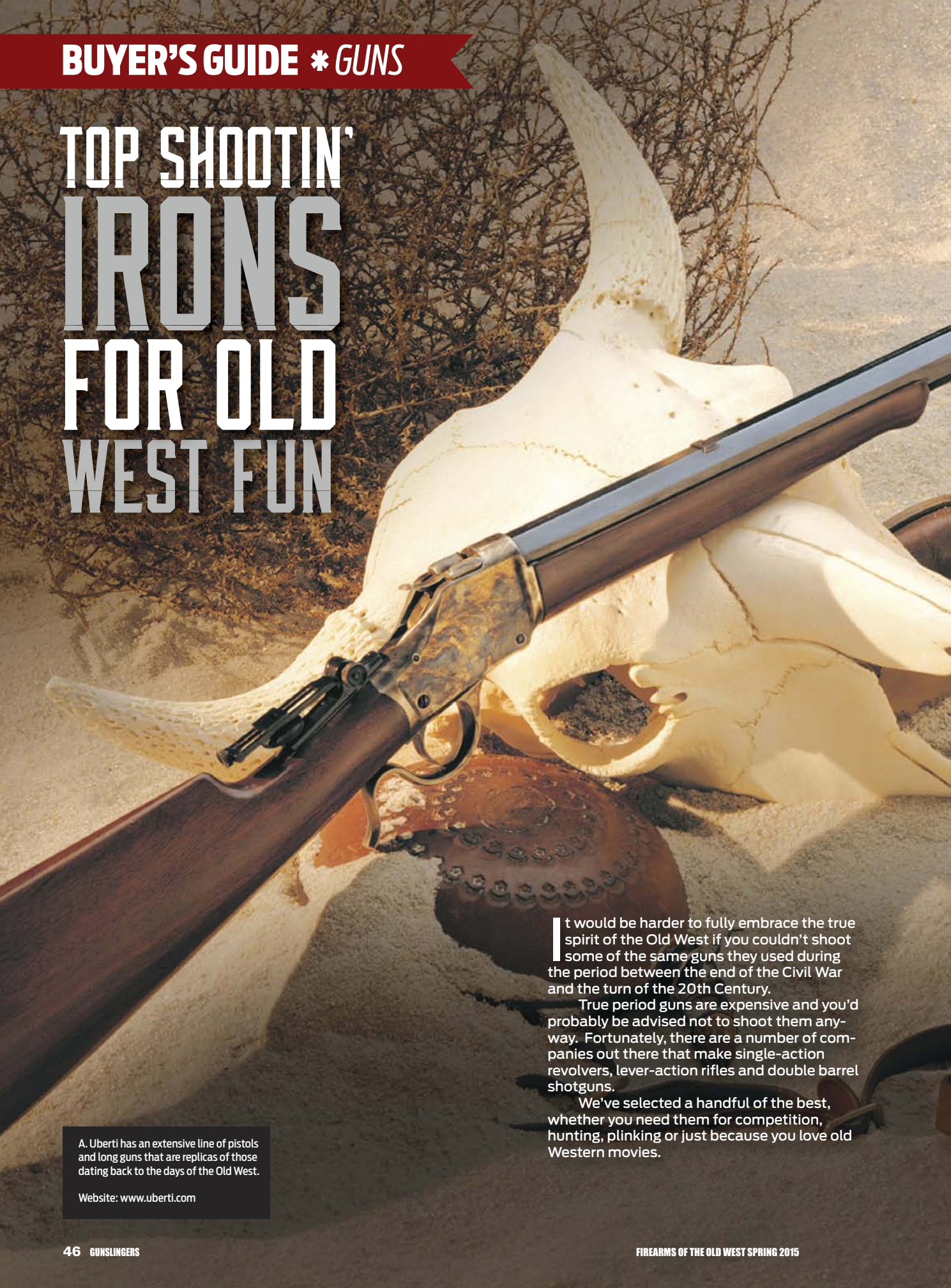
This rifle is beautiful enough to have a place above a fireplace mantle, but it belongs in your hands charging you with anticipation for the coming season. Once afield, you'll have confidence in the knowledge that you have a rifle that will really perform well when you're ready to take the shot.

Steven Paul Barlow is a retired sergeant/station commander and former firearms instructor with the New York State Police. An avid hunter and firearms enthusiast, he has been writing on outdoor topics for more than 30 years.



Removing the inner magazine tube allows for easy unloading without having to cycle the action for each round in the rifle

TOP SHOOTIN' IRONS FOR OLD WEST FUN



It would be harder to fully embrace the true spirit of the Old West if you couldn't shoot some of the same guns they used during the period between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the 20th Century.

True period guns are expensive and you'd probably be advised not to shoot them anyway. Fortunately, there are a number of companies out there that make single-action revolvers, lever-action rifles and double barrel shotguns.

We've selected a handful of the best, whether you need them for competition, hunting, plinking or just because you love old Western movies.

A. Uberti has an extensive line of pistols and long guns that are replicas of those dating back to the days of the Old West.

Website: www.uberti.com



* **1. Company:** Cimmaron Firearms Co.
Website: www.cimmaron-firearms.com
Model: Model Number 3 Russian
Features: blued finish, two-piece walnut grips
Calibers: .44 Russian and 45 Colt
Barrel: 6.5 inches
MSRP: \$1083.25

* **2. Company:** Cimmaron Firearms Co.
Website: www.cimmaron-firearms.com
Model: Bisley
Features: Bisley grip introduced around 1895, two-piece walnut grips
Calibers: .357 Magnum, 44 SPL, 44 WCF, 45 Colt
Barrel: 4 3/4, 5 1/2, 7 1/2 inches
Finish: Case-hardened frame, blued barrel
MSRP: \$614.60

* **3. Company:** Cimmaron Firearms Co.
Website: www.cimmaron-firearms.com
Model: 1878 Coach Gun
Features: External hammers
Gauge: 12
Barrels: 20 inches
Finish: Original, blued or USA finish
MSRP: \$596.70 blued, \$696.70 original, \$853.80 USA

* **4. Company:** Cimmaron Firearms Co.
Website: www.cimmaron-firearms.com
Model: Slotter & Co. Sharps
Features: Maple stock
Caliber: 45/70 Government
Barrel: 30-inch octagon
Finish: Case-hardened steel, plum brown
MSRP: \$2408.86

* **5. Company:** Henry Repeating Arms Co.
Website: www.henryrifles.com
Model: Golden Boy
 Deluxe Engraved II Rifle, H004D2
Features: Intricate engraving on receiver. American walnut stock. Limited to 1000 rifles
Caliber: .22 LR, .22 Short
Barrel: 20 inches
Capacity: 16 rounds .22 LR, 21 rounds .22 Short in tubular magazine
Weight: 6.75 lbs.
Sights: Marbles fully adjustable semi-buckhorn with white diamond insert, brass bead front
MSRP: \$1585

* **6. Company:** Henry Repeating Arms Co.
Website: www.henryrifles.com
Model: Big Boy
Features: Brass receiver. American walnut stock.
Calibers: 44 Magnum/44 SPL (H006), 45 Colt (H006C), .357 Magnum/38 SPL (H006M)
Barrel: 20-inch octagon
Capacity: 10 rounds
Weight: 8.68 lbs.
Sights: Marbles fully adjustable semi-buckhorn with white diamond insert, brass bead front
MSRP: \$899.95

* **7. Company:** Henry Repeating Arms Co.
Website: www.henryrifles.com
Model: Henry Original Rifle, H011
Features: Brass receiver. Fancy American walnut stock with brass buttplate
Caliber: .44-40
Barrel: 24 inches
Capacity: 13+1
Weight: 9 lbs.
Sights: Folding ladder rear, blade front
MSRP: \$2300

* **8. Company:** Navy Arms
Website: www.navyarms.com
Model: Winchester 1873
Features: Winchester-made 1873 rifle with Turnbull color case hardened receiver, square shotgun butt plate, Winchester short-stroke kit installed
Calibers: 45 Colt and .357 Magnum
Barrels: 20 and 24 ¼ inches, full octagon
Stock: Fully checkered American walnut
Sights: Semi-buckhorn rear, gold bead front
MSRP: \$2500





★ **9. Company:** Sturm, Ruger and Co.
Website: www.ruger.com
Model: New Model Blackhawk Convertible
Features: This gun comes with two cylinders so that you can fire two types of cartridges from the same gun. Hard rubber grips.
Calibers: .357 Magnum / 9mm or 45 Colt / 45 ACP
Barrel lengths: 4.62 and 6.5 inches (.357), 4.2 and 5.5 inches (45 Colt)
Finish: Blued
Sights: fully adjustable rear
Weight: 39 to 45 oz.
MSRP: \$679



★ **10. Company:** Sturm, Ruger and Co.
Website: www.ruger.com
Model: New Model Vaquero
Features: Laminated hardwood grips.
Calibers: .357 Magnum / 38 SPL and 45 Colt
Barrel lengths: 4.62 and 5.5 inches
Finish: Blued or High Gloss Stainless
Sights: fixed
Weight: 40-44 oz.
MSRP: \$739



★ **11. Company:** A. Uberti
Website: www.uberti.com
Model: Bird's Head Stallion Old West Defense
Features: Steel backstrap and trigger guard
Caliber: 38 SPL
Barrel: 3.5 inches
Finish: Matte
Grips: 1-piece walnut
Weight: 2 lbs.
MSRP: \$569



★ **12. Company:** A. Uberti
Website: www.uberti.com
Model: New Model Hombre
Features: Brass backstrap and trigger guard
Calibers: .357 Magnum/38 SPL, .44-40, 44 Magnum, 45 Colt
Barrel: 4.75 inches
Finish: Matte
Grips: 1-piece walnut
MSRP: \$459



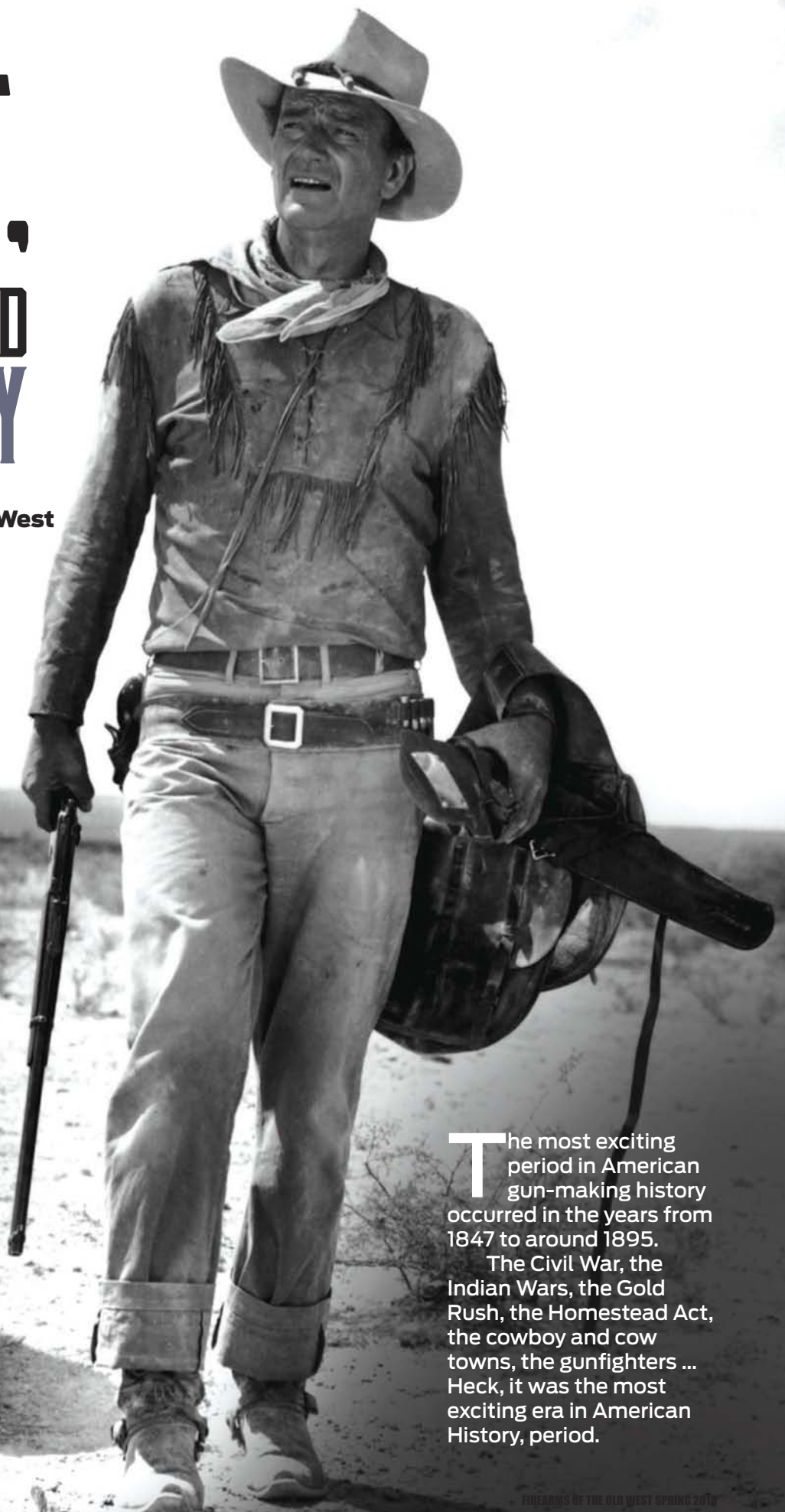
★ **13. Company:** A. Uberti
Website: www.uberti.com
Model: Lightning Rifle
Features: Exact replica of Colt Lightning introduced in 1884, pump action, short contoured forend, top ejection, side-loading gate
Caliber: 45 Colt, .357 Magnum
Barrel: 20 or 24.25 inches, octagon
Finish: Case hardened frame and trigger guard, blued barrel
MSRP: \$1319

★ **14. Company:** Sturm, Ruger and Co.
Website: www.ruger.com
Model: New Model Bearcat
Features: Hardwood grips, unfluted cylinder.
Caliber: .22 LR
Barrel length: 4.62 inches
Finish: Blued or Stainless
Sights: fixed
Weight: 24 oz.
MSRP: \$569

FACT, FILM AND FANTASY

BY JERRY CATANIA

The Guns of the Real West vs. Hollywood



The most exciting period in American gun-making history occurred in the years from 1847 to around 1895.

The Civil War, the Indian Wars, the Gold Rush, the Homestead Act, the cowboy and cow towns, the gunfighters ... Heck, it was the most exciting era in American History, period.

Several problems arise in trying to flesh out the actual history of those days when colorful characters such as Bloody Bill Anderson, Jesse James, Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, etc. are involved.

Dime novels, like today's comic books, glamorized their exploits. Since most historical accounts were actually passed on by word of mouth, it's hard—make that impossible—to always get to what may be the boring truth.

However, some of the actual eyewitness accounts of these 19th Century superheroes are so incredible, that the facts are more amazing than fiction. For this reason, the reason those men, their times, and their guns, have become legendary.

HOLLYWOOD: THE EVOLUTION OF THE WESTERN

As soon as moving pictures were invented, Hollywood produc-

ers began their celluloid accounts of the "Wild West."

As movies evolved into color, sound, and big screen, plots and audiences evolved with them. Men such as John Wayne, Henry Fonda, Gary Cooper, and Jimmy Stewart became huge stars, mostly because of their roles in Western movies.

The guns available in those days (from the 1930s to the 1960s) were real American-made Colts and Winchesters, and so they must have been authentic—or were they?

Well, most of these Hollywood Westerns were supposedly set in the 1880s, yet almost without exception, the rifle seen in every one of these Westerns is the 1892 Winchester.

John Wayne was fond of his Large Loop 1892 Winchester, personally owning more than a couple. Sometimes, as in *True Grit*, he

avored the short Trapper model (16-inch barrel). In others, such as *Hondo*, he used a 20-inch rifle.

TV didn't escape the Model 92 effect either. Lucas McCain (Chuck Connors), in his TV role as *The Rifleman*, (1958-1963) also used a highly-modified 1892, although the time was set in the late 1880s again.

Some movies were more authentic, such as the only movie ever starring a rifle: *Winchester '73* (with a little help from Jimmy Stewart.) A couple of real Winchester 1873 rifles were found and used, but again, when a Henry rifle was required, Hollywood expediency used a cut-up 1892 Winchester (without fore-end). Real Henrys were all in the hands of collectors by then.

The heyday of the American-made Western was coming to an end in the 1950s, for the most part. Colt stopped its Single Action Re-



Eli Wallach (left) and Clint Eastwood in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*

volver production in 1940 and by 1945, Winchester had phased out the iconic 1892 lever-action.

While TV Westerns had their peak after that, by the end of the 60s, they too were gone for the most part. The stars of the early era were aging, and the American viewing public was tired of the same plots used again and again.

ENTER THE ITALIANS

For some reason, Italians were bitten by the American Western bug. As American-made films declined, a new era was beginning—in Italy. Aldo Uberti founded his gun-making company in the

foothills of the Italian Alps in 1959 to recreate the famous firearms of the past. He first made the Colt-designed black powder revolvers and later moved on to Remington and Winchester designs.

Italian filmmaker Sergio Leone visited the Uberti factory in the 1960s to procure replica Civil War and old West revolvers for use in his Western films including *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* and the epic *Once Upon A Time In The West*.

If you are like me, you want to see four things in movies: authentic guns for the era, authentic period costumes, proper dialogue for the era and historical accuracy of events.

Thanks to the Italians, there was no longer a reason to use anything but authentic period

firearms—albeit replicas—but authentic nonetheless. This, coupled with an authentic event, should encourage producers to accurately portray history, but unfortunately, they sometimes don't.

THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Some of the most popular movies happen to be some of the least authentic (putting it nicely.) Take the hit *Tombstone*, for example. When Curly Bill shoots up the town, he fires at least ten more shots than his guns hold and still has one more shot to kill the town marshal.

Marshal Fred White was only 31 years old; not a senior citizen as he was portrayed in the movie.

At the OK Corral, Doc Holliday fires three shots out of his double-barrel shotgun and at least a dozen shots out of each of his two



“... most of these Hollywood Westerns were supposedly set in the 1880s, yet almost without exception, the rifle seen in every one of these Westerns is the 1892 Winchester.”

Clint Eastwood in *For a Few Dollars More*, one of the Italian films that catapulted him to fame





Claire Trevor and John Wayne in the 1939 classic, *Stagecoach*

six-shooters without reloading.

Did Wyatt use his Colt SAA Buntline Special at the OK Corral? Nope. Wyatt Earp probably never even owned a Buntline Special. According to Jeff Quinn, in his definitive book *The Last Gunfight*, Wyatt had just started wearing a special coat with a waxed canvas pocket to carry his S&W No. 3 Schofield revolver concealed. He received the coat the day before the OK gunfight; logically, the S&W is the gun he used at the OK Corral.

Morgan and Virgil Earp were not shot the same night, but four months apart. Johnny Ringo was not

killed in a gunfight with Doc Holliday, he was found in a grove with a bullet through his temple, his feet bound. It was ruled a suicide by a coroner's jury. The list for *Tombstone* goes on.

In *Open Range*, Kevin Costner fires 16 shots out of his sightless Colt six-shooter without reloading. In the excellent remake of *3:10 to Yuma* in 2007, Dan Evans fires three shots from his double shotgun as he and Ben Wade run to the train station. The guns and clothes were very authentic, but the dialogue left a little to be desired.

In the exciting Tom Selleck

film, *Last Stand at Saber River*, Cable (Selleck) has a beautiful custom Colt cartridge conversion years before they were invented. Colt built them after the Civil War, (using left over Cap and Ball revolver parts) while the film takes place before the war ends.

Cable's gunsmith father-in-law states that the conversions are now "a Colt precision-made factory firearm." That was not true until 1872.

The movie *Young Guns*—while silly in parts—was actually authentic in many ways and is quasi-historical. Billy the Kid was not left-handed; this has been proven by historians and was accurately portrayed in the film.

However, a Colt 1917 New Service DA revolver is used in the opening scene when the guns are blazing away. Billy used a (Uberti replica) Colt Thunderer/Lightning DA and a Colt SingleAction Army in the film and in real life.

As amazing as it might seem, Billy really did unload a bragging gunfighter's Colt and shoot him down when he realized "The Kid" was right in front of him; and helplessly tried to fire his now-unloaded gun.

Of course, the list would be endless if we look at the so-called "Spaghetti Westerns." In some of them, every shot whines off in the distance (or so it seems) with the sound of a ricochet.

Eli Wallach fires his black powder Colt Navy after it has been in the bath tub with him, in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. Clint Eastwood's own efforts are a little better, but he is still using a cartridge conversion Walker Colt in



Horst Buchholz (left) and Yul Brynner in *The Magnificent Seven*

The Outlaw Josey Wales, way before its time.

TV Westerns were even worse in some aspects. Josh Randall—in *Wanted Dead or Alive*—carried a sawed-off 1892 Winchester (called the Mare’s Leg) in the 1880s and to make it worse, had .45-70 rifle cartridges in his holster belt. The 1892 was only chambered in pistol cartridges.

In the otherwise excellent series, *Have Gun Will Travel*, Paladin describes his mean-looking pistol as being a “hand-made Hamilton” with a “one-ounce trigger” and “a

unique rifled barrel for superior accuracy...” Huh? It was an all-black Colt Single-Action Army with a 7.5 inch barrel.

THE GOOD

In *Quigley Down Under*, we see Tom Selleck (as Mathew Quigley) shooting men off their horses at 700 or 800 yards with an iron-sighted Sharps rifle. Impossible, right? Not so fast...

The second battle of Adobe Walls was fought on June 27, 1874 between Comanche forces and a group of 28 U.S. bison hunters de-

fending the settlement of Adobe Walls, Texas.

On the third day of the battle, Quanah Parker sat on his horse nearly a mile away. That’s when Billy Dixon, using a Sharps “Big Fifty” shot him off of it. The shot was later authenticated by a team of U.S. Surveyors as taking place at 1,538 yards, or 9/10 of a mile.

The Sharps “Big Fifty” utilized the 2.5 inch case and held a charge of 90, 100, or 110 grains of powder, so could have been the .50-90 (Billy said it was), the .50-100, (what others say) or the .50-110.



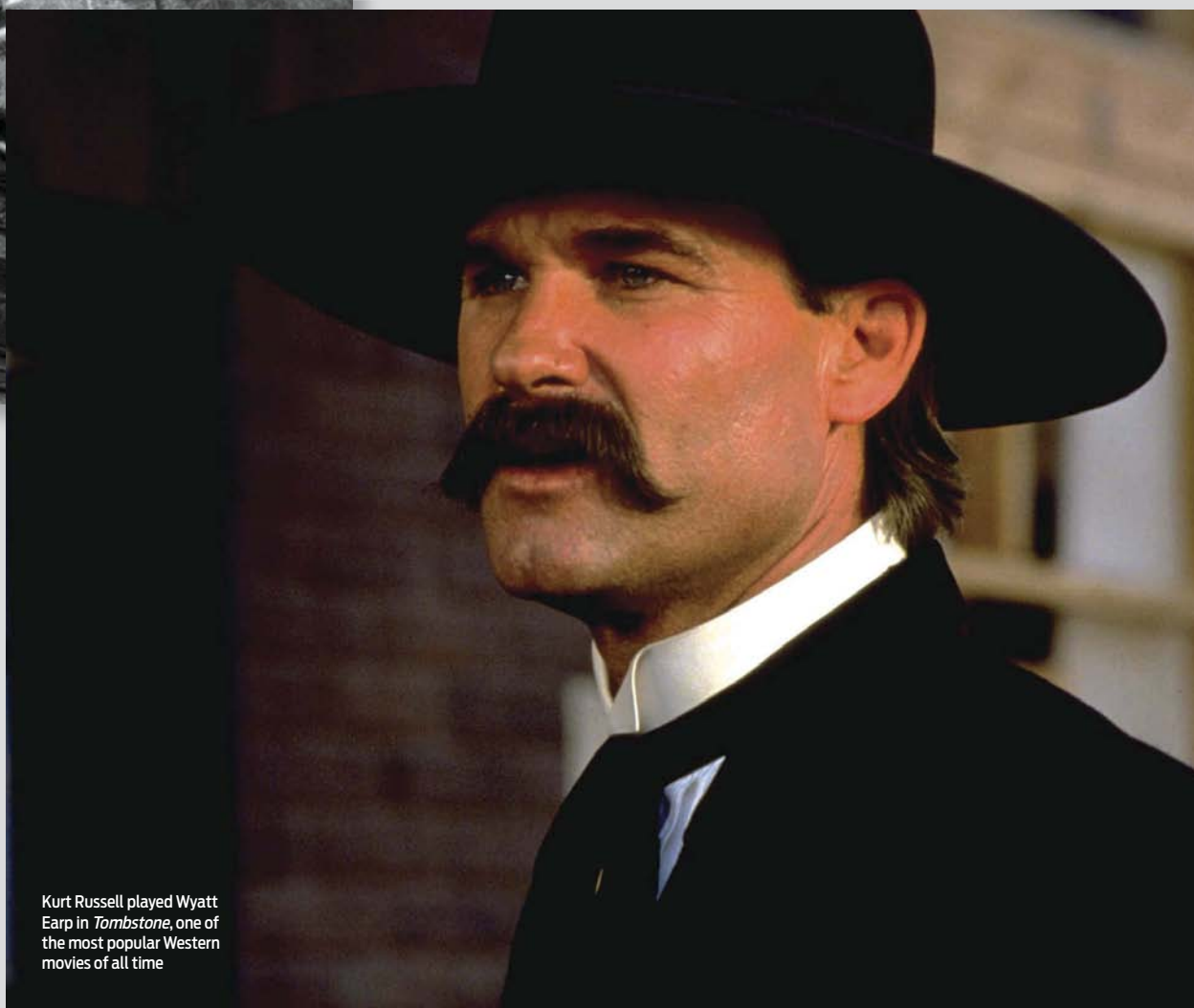
It's interesting that he borrowed the Sharps; his feeling was that his own .45-90 did not have the punch to make the shot. The Indians scattered.

How about the classic gunfight, where two armed men face each other on Main Street and shoot it out? Did it happen? Sometimes it happened fast and close, just like today. An eyewitness account tells of a bad guy named Lou Bass holding a cocked and loaded gun at Arizona Ranger William Webb. Webb was so fast he drew and shot Bass twice before Bass could pull the trigger.

Wild Bill Hickok could shoot

too. He drilled another man through the heart at a witnessed 75 yards, in a classic Western duel on Main Street. The other guy shot first and missed, while Bill took aim and killed him. He could hit a tomato can at 50 yards and all this with a cap and ball revolver. By the way, it was the Colt cap and ball guns that ushered in the era of the gunfighter.

Jerry Catania has been shooting for 50 years, much of that with lever action rifles. While he has an interest in all types of shooting, he has a special passion for late 19th Century firearms.



Kurt Russell played Wyatt Earp in *Tombstone*, one of the most popular Western movies of all time

PEACEMAKERS COLLIDE

Text and Photos By Richard Crays

The Colt Frontier vs. the Glock



If you get yourself set just right and squint a bit back through time, you see a couple of periods where one gun stood out as the choice of the serious gunfighter. Today, we are going to compare what that gun was in 1884 and now, in 2014.

COLT REVOLVERS RULED THE LATE 1800S

From about 1873 to 1920, the Colt Frontier Six-Shooter, the .44-40 version of the Colt Single Action Army, reigned as the gun of choice by lawmen and outlaws throughout the West. It was dubbed the “Peacemaker” by the public, which was heavily influenced by Samuel Colt and a statement he made in 1852.

The Colt Frontier was the weapon that saw frequent modification in the barrel length, the height and width of the front sight and the composition of the grip scales or stocks. What remained a constant was the demand and trust of that revolver by gunfighters on both sides of the badge to get them through to their retirement.

Several things made this weapon the “go-to” gun for so many shooters. First, it was one of the first lightweight handguns.



The Glock, available in several calibers, is the predominant weapon of law enforcement officers today

Prior serious defensive handguns required the use of a pommel holster to get Walkers and Dragoons from home to the battle. It fired six metallic cartridges, could be reloaded more quickly than the old cap-and-ball revolvers in the middle of a fight and finally, was more reliable than most revolvers of the time.

Reading like a list of who’s who from the time period, the people who carried this weapon were

Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill, Theodore Roosevelt, Pat Garrett, Jesse James, Billy the Kid and more recently, George Patton.

Our love for that iconic piece of history, like so many things, gives way to technology and the next new thing. The best gun for the fight went through a period where the Colt 1911 was the choice of pistoleers from 1912 through to the 1930 or so, but some training and reliability issues kept it as a



The Glock takes its turn at downing the bad guys



In many cases, the best weapon to have in a gunfight is not a handgun at all, but a carbine

signer, named Gaston Glock.

Using, we are told, the Walther PPK and the Browning Hi-Power as inspiration, Mr. Glock made 17 attempts to build the perfect gun. On the 17th attempt (hence the model number), he came pretty close to perfection.

While in its fourth generation since 1982, the design retains so many original components that almost all the parts from one made in 1985 can be fixed with the same parts you order today—sort of like a Colt Frontier.

The same things that made the Colt a gunfighter's choice then, make the Glock the tool for the job today. It is light (polymer frame), reliable, quick to reload in a fight and comes in all the barrel lengths necessary to please to masses.

sideline for law enforcement for many years.

The double-action revolvers owned that market until the early 1980s. The Colt Police Positive, the S&W Model 10 giving way to the Colt Python and Diamondback and the S&W Combat Masterpiece show a progression that was needed to accommodate bigger, faster and better ammunition.

GLOCK DOMINATES THE MARKET

By 1985 or so, law enforcement in America had embraced the new semi-automatics. One of those started out as a European market military weapon developed by an engineer, no, not a gun de-



What it looks like from a bandit's perspective as the showdown competitors faced 10 targets on each run

GLOCK VS. COLT 2014 SHOWDOWN

Well, as you might have guessed, in looking at this and discussing the two guns, it came down to the same old argument: which one is better? If John Wesley Hardin, got in a fight with a deputy Sheriff totting a Glock today, who would win?

Texas Ranger James B. Gillett, described the shooting prowess of J. W. Hardin: “The quick draw, the spin, the rolls, pin-wheeling border-shirt, he did them all with magical precision.”

As the saying goes, the first hit in a fight usually determines the victor.

We decided to put the “then versus now” to the test, er, contest. We couldn’t resurrect J.W. Hardin, but I found another fellow, Daniel

Modifications to the Colt
The front sight was probably one of the most common things modified on Colt revolvers. Bat Masterson, by documentable proof, ordered eight Colt Frontiers, with this excerpt from one of those orders placed in July 1885:
“Make it very easy on the trigger and have the front sight a little higher and thicker than the ordinary pistol of this kind.”
In contrast, George Pike—gambler, sporting man and outlaw—preferred no sight and only an inch and a half of the barrel to deal death to his enemies.
Many lawmen cut, then later ordered, short-barreled models to facilitate a quicker clearing of the rig in times where seconds, or nanoseconds, made the difference in life and death.
The upside of today’s guns is that you don’t have cut the barrel off yourself or file down the sights. Modern manufacturing lets you switch out sights in less than 20 minutes and when you order your Glock, like so many cowboys did back then with their Colts, you just tell them what you need to take care of your smoky, noisy business.
And yes, I have modified my grip to accommodate sweaty hands during high-risk warrant services, sort of like putting a pocketknife to the stocks on a Colt by the campfire.

Baily, who is also known as “Beef-cake,” to stand in. I put him up against current Natrona County (WY) Sheriff’s Deputy Mark Bahr. As luck would have it, Bob Baily, aka “Long Shorty,” showed up to go against Converse County (WY) Sheriff’s Deputy Andrew Gaydos. The participants changed but not the game.

To make it fair, I restricted each of them to 10 shots on a band of desperados, one hit per bad guy, a reload for the Glock and fresh gun for the Colt halfway

through the fight at a variety of distances, simulating a mob getting ready to bust a prisoner out of jail to hang him.

All of the combatants frequently train with their handgun of choice and worked out of the rig they would, if pressed, use for a fight. The opponents were given only seconds to review the course of fire before being timed on engagement from the holster on 10 threats.

Remember when Wyatt stood on the steps of the jail and ordered



Natrona County (WY) Sheriff’s Deputy Mark Bahr on a reload.



The wild bunch, sort of, at the end of a morning of serving justice one round at a time, from left: Deputy Andrew Gaydos, Bob Baily aka Long Shorty, Daniel Baily aka Beefcake, Deputy Mark Bahr and Deputy Taylor Courtney

the mob to disperse or he'd shoot the first man to flinch? On that Sunday, the mob flinched. Once the word was out, we had a posse full of contenders for the title, but in the end we could have only one winner.

Well, once the shootin' commenced, it was hard to reign them in. The fight was on and on and on. In the end, Beefcake, a well-known SASS competitor, beat Deputy Mark Bahr by about one second when three fights were averaged.

Changes by Campfire Insight Into Holster Modifications

Modifications or tooling to holsters to better meet the user's needs were often done by the campfire with a pocket knife, but as time went on, many custom leather smiths began adding a low notch to the front, allowing the barrel to clear leather quicker, leg tie-downs to stabilize the rig and as many bullet loops as could be crammed onto the accompanying belt.

By the 1875, we saw styles like the Cheyenne, made by noted saddle makers Gallatin, Meanea and Collins or the California or Slim Jim that saw extensive use throughout California, Montana and Colorado.

Many a seasoned fighter wore their gun in a cross draw-style holster so they could protect it from anyone behind them. Of those noted reverse carrying folks were Bat Masterson and Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves, who wore twin Colts to bring in 3000 living felons and 20 dead ones over a 32-year career.

Like the holsters of yesteryear, the modern equivalent of customization has taken place with the advent of Kevlar sheaths and mechanical locking devices instead of hammer thongs.

Whatever it takes to carry it safely, but clear the "smokewagon" from the barn as quick as is humanly possible is the bottom line.

“From about 1873 to 1920, the Colt Frontier six-shooter reigned as the gun of choice by lawmen and outlaws throughout the West.”

Who Carried the Colt?

- Wyatt Earp
- Buffalo Bill
- Theodore Roosevelt
- Pat Garrett
- Jesse James
- Billy the Kid
- George Patton

Keep your powder dry and happy trails.

Two guns were faster than a reload on a cold, rainy morning in Casper that day.

A GUNSLINGER'S ADVICE

So, regardless of which belt-worn, portable defensive tool you choose, the advice one of the gunslingers offered up was, “If you are betting your life on that gun, you better practice with it like it does.”

I couldn't agree more myself.

A student of the Old West, guns, gunfights and with 39 years of military and law enforcement experience, Richard Crays sits on the Board of Directors for the International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors. He is the senior firearms instructor for a State Law Enforcement Academy and operates Rock Solid Shooting and Survival Training.



Daniel “Beefcake” Baily makes a seamless transition from one gun to the next during the Glock vs. Colt showdown

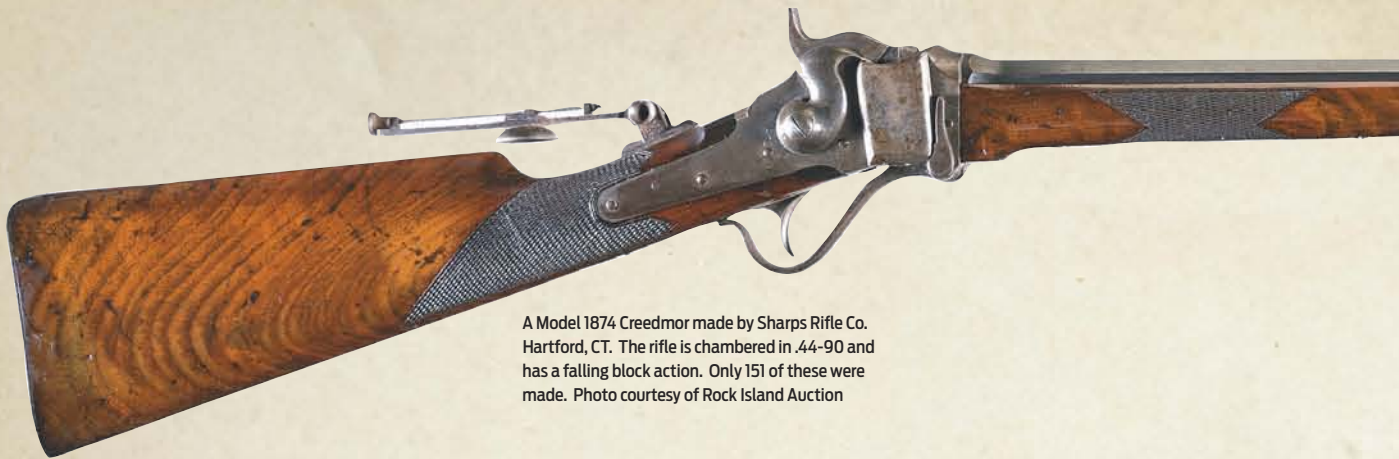


BUFFALO & BALLISTICS

By Abe Elias

The Big Bores of the Old West

Many legends have come out of the history of the American frontier. There are many stories of the Old West from the famed Bowie, Colt revolver, Winchester lever-action rifles and the men that used all of these.



A Model 1874 Creedmor made by Sharps Rifle Co. Hartford, CT. The rifle is chambered in .44-90 and has a falling block action. Only 151 of these were made. Photo courtesy of Rock Island Auction

It is often hard to separate fact from fiction. Over the years, many historians and Old West buffs have done their best to sort things out. One of the areas we still look at today is the cartridges of the Old West. We still see the legacy of such cartridges in rounds such as the .45-70, which is still in use today by many big-game hunters.

Just as legendary as the cartridges themselves are some of the

rifles that used them, so we'll take a brief look at some of the old buffalo hunting cartridges in contrast to newer cartridge design. Along the way we can look at a couple of rifles that made shooting these legendary calibers possible.

MAIN PLAYERS


Most of the big bore cartridges can be grouped into three caliber families: the .44, the .45 and the

.50. Inside these three groups there were a number of variations in powder charges and case lengths.

For example, let's start with the .45-70 Government, a cartridge still in use today. The ".45" tells us the bullet size and the "70" tells us the number of grains of black powder loaded in that cartridge. A number of cartridges were developed around the .45



With their heavy bullets and modest velocities, the old buffalo guns were not flat shooting rifles by today's standards. Yet in the hands of experienced hunters, they were still effective at longer ranges. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow



caliber bullet. So we end up with a series of cartridges such as .45-70, .45-75, .45-90, .45-100 and .45-110.

All of these cartridges were Sharps calibers. Each one of the rounds would have a different case length but were all rimmed, straight-cased rounds. The same thing was done with .50 caliber and .44-caliber bullets.

It is important to note that there were other cartridges that were called by the same name, except that occasionally some had slight differences. Where the .45-70 is concerned, the .45-70 Government is the same as the .45-70 Sharps. The now obsolete .45-70 Van Choate, however, had a case length of 2.25 inches compared to 2.1 inches with the .45-70 Government.

THE "BIG .50" .50-90 SHARPS

There was a call for larger, more potent big-game cartridges, so at the height of buffalo hunting in 1872, Sharps introduced the .50-90. Along with the .50-90 there were the .50-100 and the .50-110, which offered variations of bullet weight and powder charges.

The case length on the .50-90 was 2.5 inches, and it was a straight-walled rimmed case. The bullet weights ranged from 365 to 473 grains. Muzzle velocities were 1,652 fps for the 365-grain lead bullet and 1,350 for the 473-grain lead bullet. Energy for the 365-grain bullet was 2,210 ft-lbs and for the 473 it was 1,920 ft-lbs. I tend to look at cartridges like these as the equivalent to throwing a garbage can down range at your target. The sheer massiveness of such a round gives the cartridge incredible stopping power.

.45-70 GOVERNMENT: THE LEGEND

The .45-70 Government was adopted by the U.S. military in 1873. The main firearm in use chambered for the .45-70 was the Springfield "Trapdoor" rifle. It was actually developed to replace the .50-70 round.

As an antique firearm, the Trapdoor today is highly collectible and can fetch up to \$27,000 at

Contrast and Compare Modern Hunting Cartridges

Modern cartridges in use for big-game hunting are numerous. Popular cartridges are the .30-06 Springfield, .300 Win Mag and .338 Win Mag. Perhaps the most popular of the three is the .30-06, also a former military cartridge.

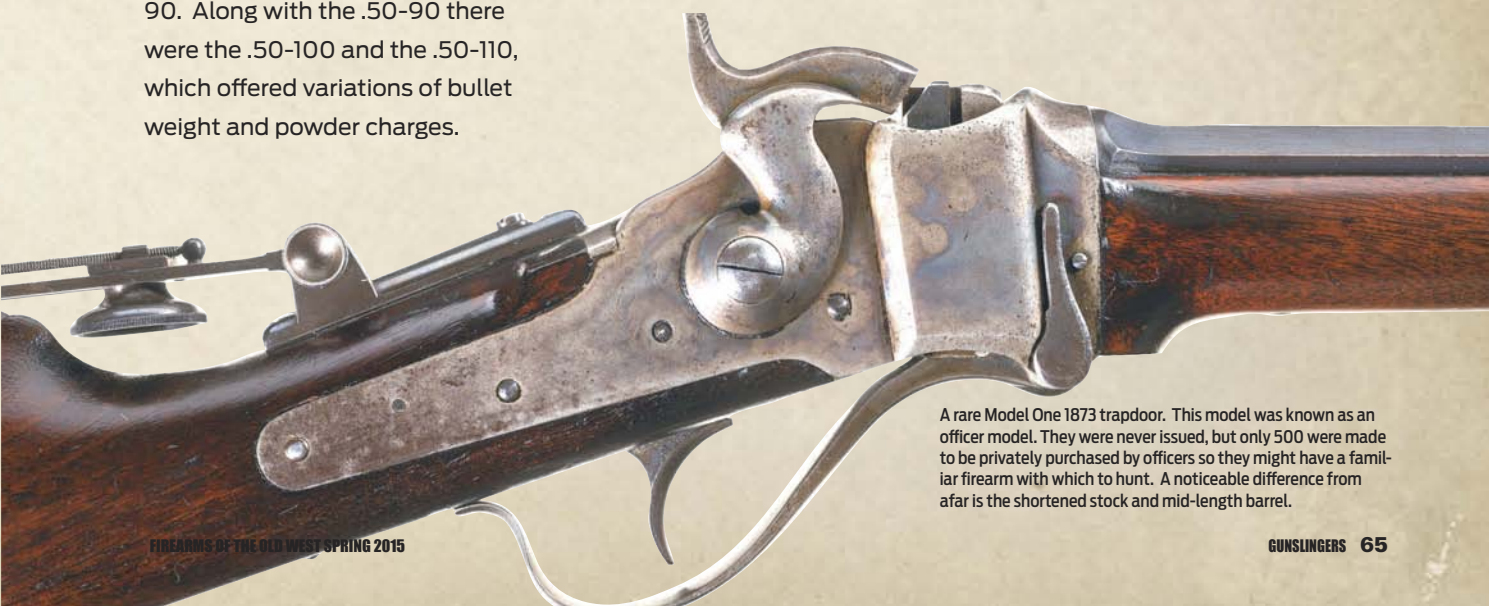
The .30-06 was developed to replace the .30-03 cartridge and served the U.S. military until the 1960s. Bullet weights for jacketed bullets can range from 110 grains to 220 grains, and cast bullets can range from 115 grains to 210 grains.

The wide range of bullet weights is what gives the .30-06 its versatility. Using a 220-grain Round Nose jacketed bullet, for example, loaded with 51 grains of IMR-7828, muzzle velocity is 2,058 fps.

If we look at the energy produced by that load, it is 2,068 ft-lbs. We can look at a group of numbers, but there is also a set of characteristics to cartridges, namely their flight trajectories.

Due to their bullet weights and shape, the early cartridges would often have an extremely sharp arched flight path, making it harder to target out to long distances. Modern cartridges, such as the .30-06 Springfield, deliver a flatter flight trajectory and more energy, but don't necessarily have as much stopping power.

For large game, both the .30-06 and .45-70 are widely used. There are still a number of factory production rifles chambered in .45-70, and I have even heard of some people re-chambering model P17s/P14s and Mosin-Nagants in this cartridge. In the end, which one you pick depends a lot on preference and terrain.



A rare Model One 1873 trapdoor. This model was known as an officer model. They were never issued, but only 500 were made to be privately purchased by officers so they might have a familiar firearm with which to hunt. A noticeable difference from afar is the shortened stock and mid-length barrel.



SASS competitor Scott Dunn, alias Windjammer, displays his Sharps replica Uberti Hartford model in .45-70. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

auction, depending on model and condition. As the official choice of the military, the life span of the cartridge would be until 1892 or 19 years.

Replacing the .45-70 was the .30-40 Krag, although the .45-70 continued to see service among militia and volunteers in the Spanish American wars by those who would continue using the Trapdoor.

Even today, the round is still in use with hunters, giving it a life span of over 141 years. A proven large-game caliber, it is also versa-

The U.S. Military Was “Trapped”

In 1873, the U.S. Military was looking for a solution as to what to do with the large number of muzzle-loading firearms that they had in stock. They had repeating firearms such as the lever-action, but it was thought best to stay with a single-shot rifle for the soldiers.

The solution they found was the modification of the muzzle-loaders into breech-loading rifles to take fixed metal cartridges, resulting in the “Trapdoor” design.

The Trapdoors were chambered in .45-70 Government. A Trapdoor rifle had a side-mounted hammer and an opening breech that would both contain the firing pin and actuate the extractor. The hammer had a two-click tumbler; the first click would set the firearm on safe and allow for loading. A second click would cock the firearm and prepare it for firing.

Although the single-shot breech-loader was not as fast as a lever-action, a soldier could load and shoot up to 20 rounds a minute. Iron sights on the Trapdoor were calibrated out to 1,100 yards.

A second rifle of that age was the falling block rifle. Even today, the falling-block action is still in use on rifles such as Ruger’s No.1. Sharps supplied falling block action rifles through the Civil War, and then they manufactured the action for their buffalo guns.

Early on, the Sharps were percussion rifles, but then some were converted to centerfire cartridge rifles. The falling-block action is very strong and can support large cartridges.

The large hammer, such as the one on the Springfield Trapdoor, also had a two-stage tumbler. A lever, which was also served as the trigger guard, would be operated to lower the breech block and expose the chamber. You would then insert your round and close the lever.

The breech block contained the firing pin. You would then fully cock the hammer and prepare to fire. Falling-block rifles were the long-distance sniper rifles of their time, capable of accuracy out to distances reported as far as 1,500 yards or more.

tile enough to take midsize game. The .45-70 has killed everything from deer to grizzly bear.

“Big bore rifles were tools of the trade for buffalo hunters of the 19th Century.”

The majority of the rifles chambered in the .45-70 today are lever actions from various companies. Loads developed for the 1873 Trapdoor can take bullet weights ranging from 292 grains to 535



Replicas of the Sharps buffalo guns are being manufactured today by such companies as Uberti. Here is an Uberti Hartford model in .45-70

grains using modern smokeless powders.

When working up a load for modern rifles like the Ruger No. 1 and No. 3, weights range from 330 grains to 535 grains using modern smokeless powders. If an animal is shot with a well-placed shot from a .45-70, it isn't moving far. The stopping power of this cartridge is

one of the largest reasons why it is so popular with hunters to this day.

Muzzle velocity on a .45-70 round with a 385-grain bullet loaded with 44 grains of Varget is 1,292 fps. It delivers a punch with 1,426 ft-lbs of energy. The .45-70 bridges the gap between obsolete hunting rounds and the modern rounds of today.

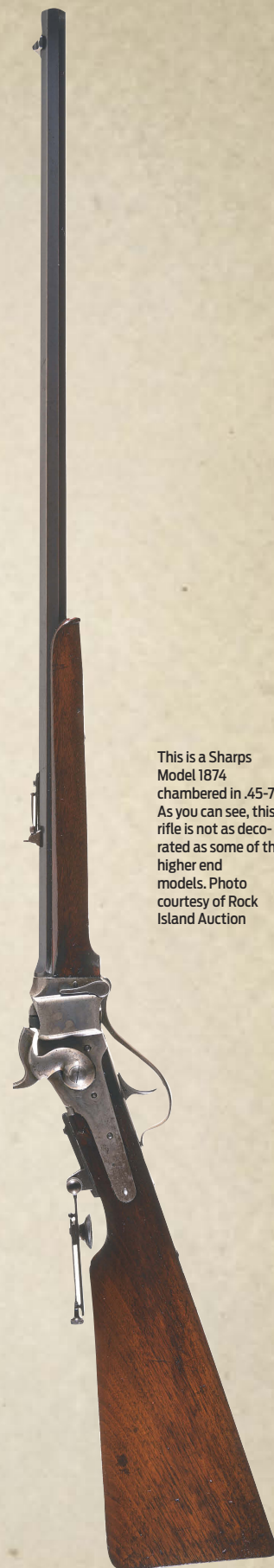
Eventually, as the buffalo perished, the need for large bore rifles did as well. With the advancement of firearm technology, bolt actions chambered in a wide variety of large game calibers became more popular.

Even these days though, there are still a few companies that make reproductions of the big bore rifles that roared across the Old West plains. Plenty of people buy these to feel some connection to a legendary past.

A special note: Information on the cartridges were researched in part by using the *Lyman Reloading Handbook*, 49th edition and *Cartridges of the World*, 12th edition.

We would also like to extend a special thanks to Rock Island Auction for providing photos and letting us research the firearms at their facility.

Abe Elias is an avid hunter, sports shooter and amateur gunsmith. He has been an outdoor writer for more than 10 years. He teaches primitive skills and wilderness survival and is a custom knife maker (Diving Sparrow Knife Works, www.dskw.ca). He has contract knife designs with several top manufacturers.



This is a Sharps Model 1874 chambered in .45-70. As you can see, this rifle is not as decorated as some of their higher end models. Photo courtesy of Rock Island Auction



LOOKING THE PART

Get Authentic Old West Clothes
For Your Next Shoot

You're an Old West buff, I get it. Who isn't? But you don't want to show up at a cowboy shooting competition looking as if you borrowed your kid's Halloween costume.

Thanks to the many manufacturers out there, you can dress for success with quality clothes and leather goods to properly accent your Old West firearms.

We've made our top picks for Old West accessories that will allow you to live the role of your chosen persona.



- ★ **1. Company:** Chisholm's Trail Old West Leather
Website: www.westernleatherholster.com
Products: CH-70 Moran (left) and CH-39B Yank
Features: Yank is a round-toe Slim Jim adaptation of the U.S. military holster found in New Mexico museum. Both made for a 5 1/2-inch Colt SAA or Ruger Vaquero but are available for any gun/barrel length
\$149.95, either, with full tooling



- ★ **2. Company:** Chisholm's Trail Old West Leather
Website: www.westernleatherholster.com
Products: CH-17 Rio Lobo (left) and CH-7 Dodge City
Features: Rio Lobo Sheriff's Model with closed toe, Dodge City was a common style holster in cattle towns. Both holsters shown were made for 4 1/2 -inch Colt SAA or Ruger Vaquero but are available for any gun/barrel length
\$149.95, either, with full tooling

- ★ **3. Company:** Chisholm's Trail Old West Leather
Website: www.westernleatherholster.com
Products: CH-11 Smith & Wesson Schofield (left) and CH-59 Wells Fargo
Features: Wells Fargo holster gets its name because the company bought several hundred used military S&W Schofield pistols in the late 1800's, had the barrels cut down to 5 1/2 inches and issued them to employees. Both holsters shown were made for 5 1/2 Schofield but are available for any gun/barrel length
\$149.95, either, with full tooling



Chisholm's Trail Old West Leather

Owners Alan and Donna Soellner have examined period items in museums and collections across the country so that they can produce authentic cowboy leather gear. Alan is a descendant of Jesse Chisholm, who blazed the cattle trail from Texas to Kansas that bears his name. Today, they make holsters, belts, rifle scabbards, saddlebags and knife sheaths.

Website: www.westernleatherholster.com

* **4. Company:** Durango Boot
Website: www.durangoboots.com
Product: Durango Soft Tan Leather Western Boot (DB922)
Features: cushion insole, leather-lined, flex forepart, Goodyear welt construction, composition outsoles easily replaced, 2-inch cowboy heel
\$149.99

* **5. Company:** Durango Boot
Website: www.durangoboots.com
Product: Gambler by Durango, Men's 12-Inch Jack Western Boot
Features: Full grain leather, debossed and burnished to bring out detail and shine, pull tabs and finger holes, mesh lining, Cushion Flex insole, steel shank, 1 1/2 -inch Walker heel, playing card imprint on outsole
\$184.99

* **6. Company:** The Last Best West
Website: www.thelastbestwest.com
Product: Josie Wales Hat
Features: The same style Clint Eastwood wore in The Outlaw Josie Wales, slight pinch to crown with pecan top, brim with 1/2-inch bound kettle curl, color bone with optional heavy soiling
 5X- \$320, 20X -\$455, 100X-\$640

* **7. Company:** The Last Best West
Website: www.thelastbestwest.com
Product: Byron McElroy Hat
Features: The type of hat worn in the 2007 movie version of 3:10 to Yuma, modified stagecoach crown, brim has bound kettle curl with a hand roll, undyed natural color
 5X-**\$305**, 20X-**\$435**, 100X-**\$650**

* **8. Company:** Tony Lama
Website: www.tonymama.com
Product: 13-inch Walnut Westby Boot (RR4013)
Features: Pointed toe, unit heel, Orthotic insole, rubber outsole
\$191

* **9. Company:** The Last Best West
Website: www.thelastbestwest.com
Product: Col. Yorke Hat
Features: The style worn by John Wayne in the John Ford Cavalry Trilogy: She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Fort Apache and Rio Grande, pinch front, diamond-shaped crown, up-turned front, color shown – silver mist
 5X-**\$310**, 20X-**\$430**, 100X-**\$620**



* **10. Company:** Western Emporium
Website: www.westernemporium.com
Product: Susannah Thatcher, Rancher—complete outfit
Features: Outfit includes the Veil Granny boot (\$119.95), gun belt with holster, two-tone brown (\$109.95), Cordelia Pioneer dress, wine (\$89.95), Silvestri vest, chalk (\$89.95), Planter flat crown hat (\$64.95), Classic cotton bloomers, natural (\$46.95) and Classic cotton camisole, natural (\$34.95)

* **11. Company:** Western Emporium
Website: www.westernemporium.com
Product: Black Bart Underwood, Highwayman—complete outfit
Features: You can buy the items separately or purchase the entire outfit as you see it. Included are the rifle frock coat (\$239.95), Preacher boot (\$189.95), gun belt with holster (\$109.95), O.C. Smith shirt (76.95), pocket watch with gold chain (\$69.95), Black Hills vest, tan (\$69.95), Soft Gambler hat, black (\$64.95), canvas field trousers, brown (\$49.95) and a brothel token (\$2.95).

* **12. Company:** Tony Lama
Website: www.tonymama.com
Product: 16-inch Women's Copper Sunburst BootStyle (RR2010L)
Features: Narrow square toe, unit heel, Orthotic insole, rubber outsole \$228

* **13. Company:** Western Emporium
Website: www.westernemporium.com
Product: Brushed Twill Longhorn Shirt, Hunter Green
Features: Classic bib shirt, fancy lone star metal buttons, made in USA \$74.95

* **14. Company:** Western Emporium
Website: www.westernemporium.com
Product: Dragon Vest
Features: Dragon pattern, two front pockets, metal buttons, polyester with acetate lining \$74.95





SERIOUS SIDEKICKS

By Abe Elias

**Knife Choices Were Determined
by Changes in the Firearms
People Carried**

Nothing conjures more romantic images than simply the mention of the Old West. From wide-brimmed cowboy hats and six-shooters to boots, the Old West has its icons of representation.

PHOTO BY STEVEN PAUL BARLOW

Knives are part in that era and still play a legendary role in American history, although many tend to focus on the firearms. However, if you see an old stag handled Bowie or dirk, the image of a cowboy sitting tall in the saddle still comes to mind.

Knives of the Old West took on many faces. Most important is to note that the changes were aligned with the Western expansion and affected by the changes in the firearms the people carried.

BIRTH OF A LEGEND

The infamous sandbar fight in Mississippi can be considered the dawn of two American icons: the legend of Jim Bowie and the Bowie knife.

On Sept. 19, 1827, the legendary sandbar fight took place outside of Natchez, Miss. If we sort through the clutter of who shot whom and why, we will notice a few main facts that affect our subject.

First, it took place at a duel. Back then black powder single-shot guns were the predominant firearms. If we look at accounts of the story, Jim Bowie was also armed with the legendary Bowie Knife; his adversary, Norris Wright, was armed with a sword cane.

At this point in Western expansion, the sidearm and rifle were not developed enough to stand alone against multiple opponents or sometimes even a lone one. In the "mountain man" era of the early 1800s, trappers and explorers faced with venturing into the wilderness alone often carried large knives as a back-up to their rifles for any dangerous encounter

with man or beast. If a single-shot rifle failed or if there wasn't time to reload, they needed to be ready to fight hand to hand.

As we see with Bowie and Wright, it was not uncommon to carry some kind of edged weapon at all times. Wright arguably was carrying what could be regarded as the more acceptable form of edged defense, a sword cane. Because the weapon was hidden in a symbol of gentlemanly status—a cane—it was easily accessible, yet concealed. On the other hand, carrying a large knife as Bowie did was not the norm. No matter what account you read of the fight, it is clear that it was only after an individual had exhausted his firearms option that he closed ranks and began fighting hand to hand.

It would not be uncommon for such encounters to have been resolved in this manner. Because people were traveling, sometimes through hostile areas or even because there was a lack of law, they needed to be armed and a firearm wasn't enough at those times.

After Bowie's legendary fight, it is often thought that acceptance of carrying a large Bowie was instantaneous. In fact, it was so only in our romanticised image of the time. It would

still take some time for the Bowie to climb to its peak of popularity. When it got there, it would not stay long.

The Bowie would not arrive as a full trend until about the early 1830s, and it declined by the late 1830s to early 1840s. By this point, towns were springing up everywhere, and the need for law and order was being expressed. Some towns were banning the carry of firearms, and the need for protection became more of a concealed carry issue with knives.

Therefore, gunfighters, lawmen and gamblers turned to small, concealable push daggers and dirks from the early 1840s onwards. The Bowie, of course, was too large to be carried and again it had returned to its social stigma of being frowned upon.





Cowboy action shooter Cecil Gibney of Newmarket, NH displays the type of knife carried during a time when firearms weren't as reliable and were slower to reload. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

THE CIVIL WAR

During the turmoil of the Civil War, the large knife experienced resurgence.

Men from both the South and the North would be called upon to go into battle. Whether from the North or the South, the desire to

survive was universal. Many wanted something as a back-up when their firearms were emptied.

This was true even though firearms technology had advanced. Cap-and-ball revolvers were available. The Henry rifle was another notable advancement. It

allowed for the loading of 16 .44 rimfire cartridges and was, as the famous quote goes, "That damn Yankee rifle they can load on Sunday and shoot all week."

Still, the latest firearms were always available. There are numerous accounts of officers reporting a victory over superior forces solely because their outnumbered soldiers possessed repeating arms. Because the repeating firearm had not reached widespread availability and total dependability, large knives were a preferred carry choice of soldiers and travelers alike.

END OF THE NEED

Years of bloody warfare, coupled with the desire to expand west, drove the need to develop faster, more reliable firearms. Repeating cartridge firearms were being more readily manufactured. The cartridge itself had become more dependable, and the need for a large back-up blade had declined.

In fact, the era of making fun of bringing a knife to a gunfight had started. Winchester introduced the 1866, which featured an improved magazine and a loading gate, which made it faster to reload than the Henry.

Shortly afterward, Colt introduced its first offerings in revolvers that fired metallic cartridges. Thus

Special Thanks

We would like to extend a special thanks to Mark Zalesky, a leading expert in Bowie knife history and Western knives, for his knowledge and the photos from his private collection. Mark is also the organizer of the Arkansas Museum exhibit. We would also like to thank Bernard Leveine for his input.

“Gunfighters, lawmen and gamblers turned to small, concealable push daggers and dirks from the early 1840s onwards.”

would end the era of the large knives as we know it. In military ranks, there would still be officers with their swords, but now a charge would be led with pistol in hand first.

As for travelers, they contin-

ued to carry knives; after all, a knife served as a useful tool and not just a weapon. A major difference was that the knives were smaller, and this marked a return to the type easily concealed.

Even though we look at the Bowie knife as being a constant in the Old West and the trusted sidekick of any gun fighter, its use and popularity waxed and waned. In fact, individuals often relied on small cutting tools for protecting their lives. The actual period that the Bowie was the choice of carry was short in relative perspective to the time it took to settle the frontier.

An American Icon

In actuality, the Bowie did not play a large role in the settlement of the West; still, it is an enduring symbol of the American West.

Long after the decline of its actual use, it was still being used as a symbol of the rugged men that settled the frontier, and it would become more of a presentation knife, large and ornate, to show off rather than fight with. A good example of this is William “Buffalo Bill” Cody; he would often wear a presentation-style Bowie while attending and performing in shows.

In the early 1900s, Europeans traveled to this country with the expectations of seeing Bowies everywhere out West. Tours were marketed to Europeans, and the outfits they provided included a Bowie knife.

The image still persists to this day, as they are now referred to as Barbeque sets. Wealthy ranchers and oilmen attend weekend events in full cowboy costume, replete with a matching Bowie, to accompany a custom-engraved six-shooter.

From the age of Jim Bowie until this very day, the Bowie is a symbol of the Old West, a time of rugged adventure and lawlessness, as well as a symbol of something distinctively American. As a knife, it is its own category and easily recognizable by people around the world. Whole schools of makers and collectors have dedicated themselves to the Bowie.

Recently, there was a museum display in Arkansas totally dedicated to this form of knife. The Bowie may not have been the long used knife we thought it was, but it has outlasted that time as a symbol of something uniquely American.



Tiffany & Co. Bowie knife; Style: Bowie-style hunting knife; Maker: Tiffany & Co., New York City. Marked: (T in crest) Tiffany & Co., New York; sheath marked Tiffany and Co. New York; Year: c. 1900



Bowie knives are popular among collectors. These are part of the Old West collection of Kurt House. Photo by Paul Goodwin

“Because the repeating firearm had not reached widespread availability and total dependability, large knives were a preferred carry choice of soldiers and travelers alike.”

Abe Elias is an avid hunter, sports shooter and amateur gunsmith. He has been an outdoor writer for more than 10 years. He teaches primitive skills and wilderness survival and is a custom knife maker (www.dskw.ca). He has contract knife designs with several top manufacturers.

Cutlery As a Cultural Signpost

There are many ways of dating social and political events in history. An archeologist might use pieces of pottery as clues to the timeline of the dig. For me, cutlery has the same effect.

It is hard not to look around and see different cultures in different time periods represented by its cutlery. Most people interested in cutlery would recognize the shape of a Roman sword, the blade of a Celtic Axe, the handle of a Spanish rapier or the gentle curve of a Samurai sword.

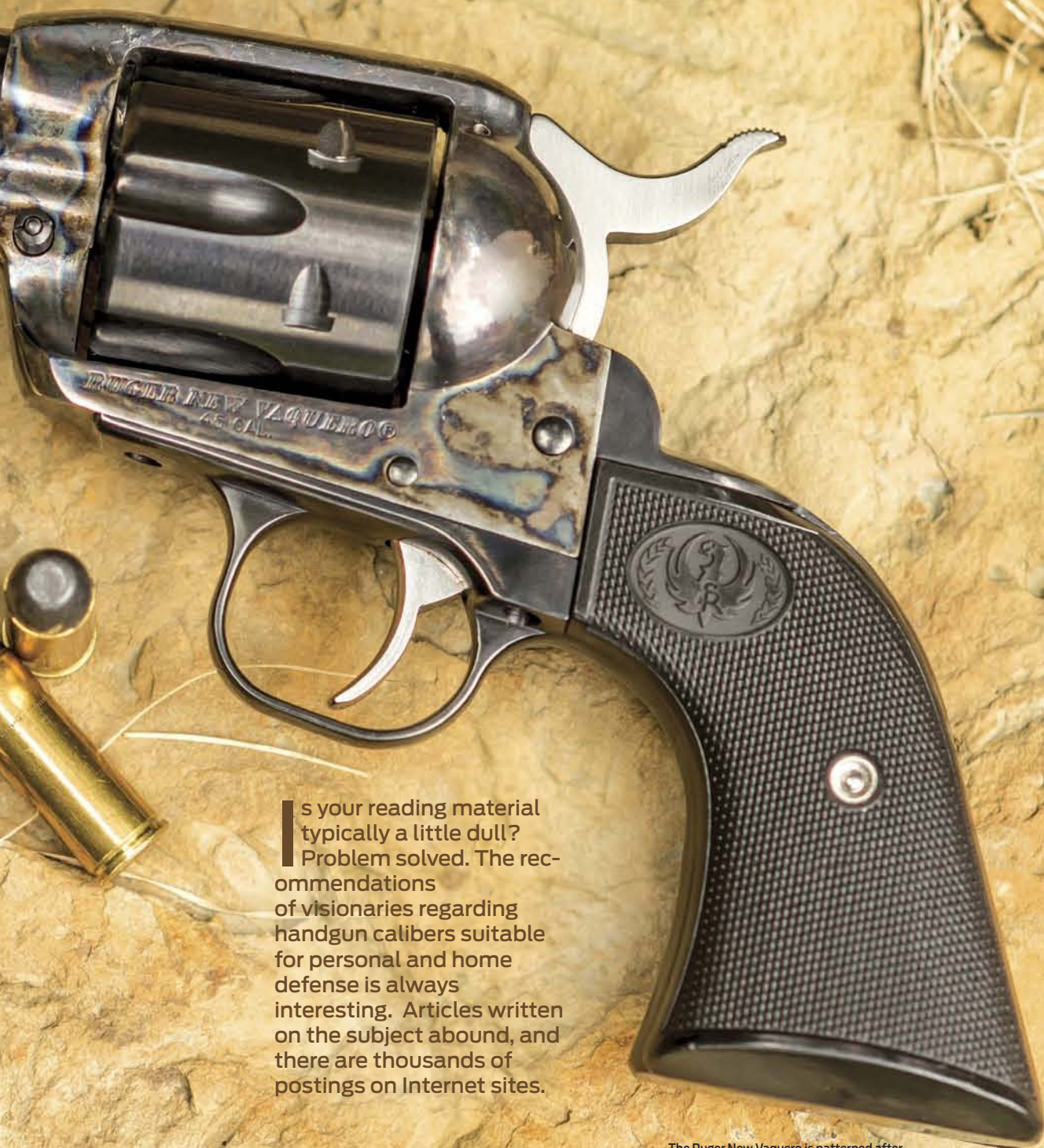
In North America, the fur trade brought many styles of cutlery to these shores. From the different styles we can figure out which areas were predominantly under French trade charters and which ones were under British.



THE GRAND OLD CARTRIDGE

Text and Photos by James E. House

**The .45 Colt Has Been Providing
Personal Defense and Offense Since 1873**



Is your reading material typically a little dull? Problem solved. The recommendations of visionaries regarding handgun calibers suitable for personal and home defense is always interesting. Articles written on the subject abound, and there are thousands of postings on Internet sites.

The Ruger New Vaquero is patterned after the legendary Colt Single Action Army, but features modern safety features. (Keith House photo)



The Ruger Blackhawk shown with Ringler holster and cartridge carrier is an excellent handgun that is suitable for many uses

Repeatedly mentioned in the writings are such old timers as the .45 Auto (1905), .38 Special (1898), and 9mm Luger (1902) and for good reason: they are all suitable for the purpose.

Newer cartridges such as the 10mm Auto, .40 S&W, and .357 Sig also claim a share of the writers' ink, and the .357 Magnum is there in the thick of all the words.

Of course, there is also the debate regarding the use of revolvers vs. autoloaders for defense, but that is a separate issue.

Is it possible for a cartridge that is even older than those mentioned above to be a suitable defense cartridge? Yes,

and the older cartridge, the .45 Colt, is still a superb choice as it has always been.

AN OLDIE BUT A GOODIE

Cowboys beside campfires in lonely places, explorers in uncharted wilderness and sheepherders spending a summer in the mountains have all relied on the .45 Colt. So can you. In most cases where protection is to be provided by a handgun, you will be about as well armed with a .45 Colt as any other caliber.

Colt introduced the legendary .45 Colt cartridge in 1873 along with the Single Action Army or Peacemaker revolver. It was used

as a military cartridge/gun in the late 1800s with a load consisting of a 250-255-grain lead bullet and about 40 grains of black powder.

The velocity was about 850 ft/sec giving it a muzzle energy of approximately 400 ft lbs. That was the highest energy given by a factory handgun until the .357 Magnum was introduced in 1935. It was well known that the big .45 Colt bullet packed a punch.

Over the years, numerous handguns have been chambered for the .45 Colt, so this is not meant to be a complete review of all of them. Most famous have been the single action revolvers produced by Colt, the Ruger Black-

hawk and Vaquero, and the multitude of Colt clones produced in this country and throughout the world.

Moreover, rifles in .45 Colt have been produced over the years, and they are still popular for cowboy action shooting and short-range hunting.

SINGLE ACTIONS FOR DEFENSE?

From the standpoint of use in defense situations, a double-action revolver is preferable to a single-action, but the latter has served in so many situations that it obviously works.

Although a double-action revolver can be fired by simply pulling the trigger, recoil causes the muzzle to rise. It must be brought back down for a subsequent shot on target, which requires another pull on the trigger.

But a single-action is not at much of a disadvantage because as the gun is brought back down the hammer can be cocked so the gun is ready to fire as soon as it returns to firing position. With practice, this can be carried out very effectively.

Reloading is much slower for a single-action revolver because each empty case must be pushed out separately with the ejector rod. One way to circumvent this problem is to carry two single-action revolvers, a practice favored by some old-time shootists.

However, except in combat with multiple adversaries, it is very unlikely that in most defensive situations more than five or six .45 Colt rounds will be required.

NOT ALL GUNS IN .45 COLT ARE SINGLE ACTION

The .45 Colt refuses to succumb to time so double-action revolvers chambered for the .45 Colt are still available. The currently produced Taurus Judge and S&W Governor have long cylinders that accommodate 410 bore shot shells as well as .45 Colt cartridges.

Smith & Wesson also offers a so-called Mountain Gun chambered for the .45 Colt, and the same reasons that make it so good for carrying on the trail also make it a good defense gun for other situations.

5 COLT A GOOD PERFORMER

The original .45 Colt load utilized a lead bullet with a flat area (meplat) on the front of the bullet. In terms of performance, it is not much different from a round-nose lead bullet. Numerous types of ammunition loaded with such bul-



This Smith & Wesson Model 25-5 has all the power and accuracy needed to be a good defense gun.

lets are still available in the form of “cowboy” loads.

For example, Remington offers two loads with lead bullets: the traditional one with a 255-grain lead bullet with a meplat and the other having a 225-grain semi-wadcutter bullet.

These loads and comparable ones from several manufacturers give the .45 Colt performance equal to that a century ago. The heavy, large diameter bullets hit with authority.

However, there are many other styles available that enhance the performance of the grand old .45



Five factory 45 Colt loads are (left to right) the Remington 255-grain round nose and 225-grain semi-wadcutter, 225-grain Winchester Silvertip, 185-grain Hornady Critical Defense, and 225-grain Hornady LEVERevolution



Hogue grips complement this polished stainless steel Ruger Vaquero

Colt cartridge. Like many other calibers, the .45 Colt has benefited from the efforts of engineers to produce bullets that expand reliably, and bullet expansion results in more rapid transfer of energy to the target.

For loosening nuts on bolts an adjustable wrench is not as good as a set of high quality sockets, and multi-tools are popular because they are adequate for many tasks. A .45 Colt revolver may not be the best choice for defensive use. The guns are typically too large for discrete carry, but in camper, cabin, or castle a large revolver is not out of place.

The attractive character of such guns is that they are so versa-

tile. In many areas, a .45 Colt can be used for hunting medium game, but a semi-auto chambered for the 9mm Luger, .40 S&W or .45 Auto cannot. Even with moderate loads, expanding bullets make the .45 Colt an effective defense caliber.

When my wife and I are in settled areas, I usually keep a 9mm Luger close at hand, but when we are in national forest campgrounds in remote areas I am more confident with that big Ruger Blackhawk .45 Colt filled with appropriate loads. It can provide

Modern Loads Keep the .45 Colt Effective

Some of the most successful loads that "modernize" the .45 Colt are the Hornady Critical Defense and LEVERevolution, the Winchester Silvertip and Defender PDX1, the Speer Gold Dot and Cor-Bon Defense.

The bullet weights and velocities vary somewhat, but all are designed to give reliable expansion. My experience testing these loads has been limited primarily to the Hornady Critical Defense and the Winchester Silvertip.

The Hornady Critical Defense features the 185-grain FTX bullet with a polymer insert in the hollow nose. Hornady advertises a bullet velocity of 920 ft/sec from a 3-inch barrel.

From the 4-inch barrel of my S&W Model 25, I got a measured velocity of 992 ft/sec, and from the 5 1/2-inch barrel of my Ruger Vaquero, I got a velocity of 1,110 ft/sec, which corresponds to slightly over 500 ft. lbs. of energy.

Winchester advertises the 225-grain Silvertip to have a muzzle velocity of 920 ft/sec, giving it 423 ft. lbs. of energy. A .45 Colt is a very powerful handgun, and several types of modern ammunition feature bullets that enhance the effectiveness of the old cartridge.

“Cowboys beside campfires in lonely places, explorers in uncharted wilderness and shepherders spending a summer in the mountains have all relied on the .45 Colt.”

effective defense against things that a 9mm Luger or some of the other popular defense handguns cannot.

STAYING STRONG

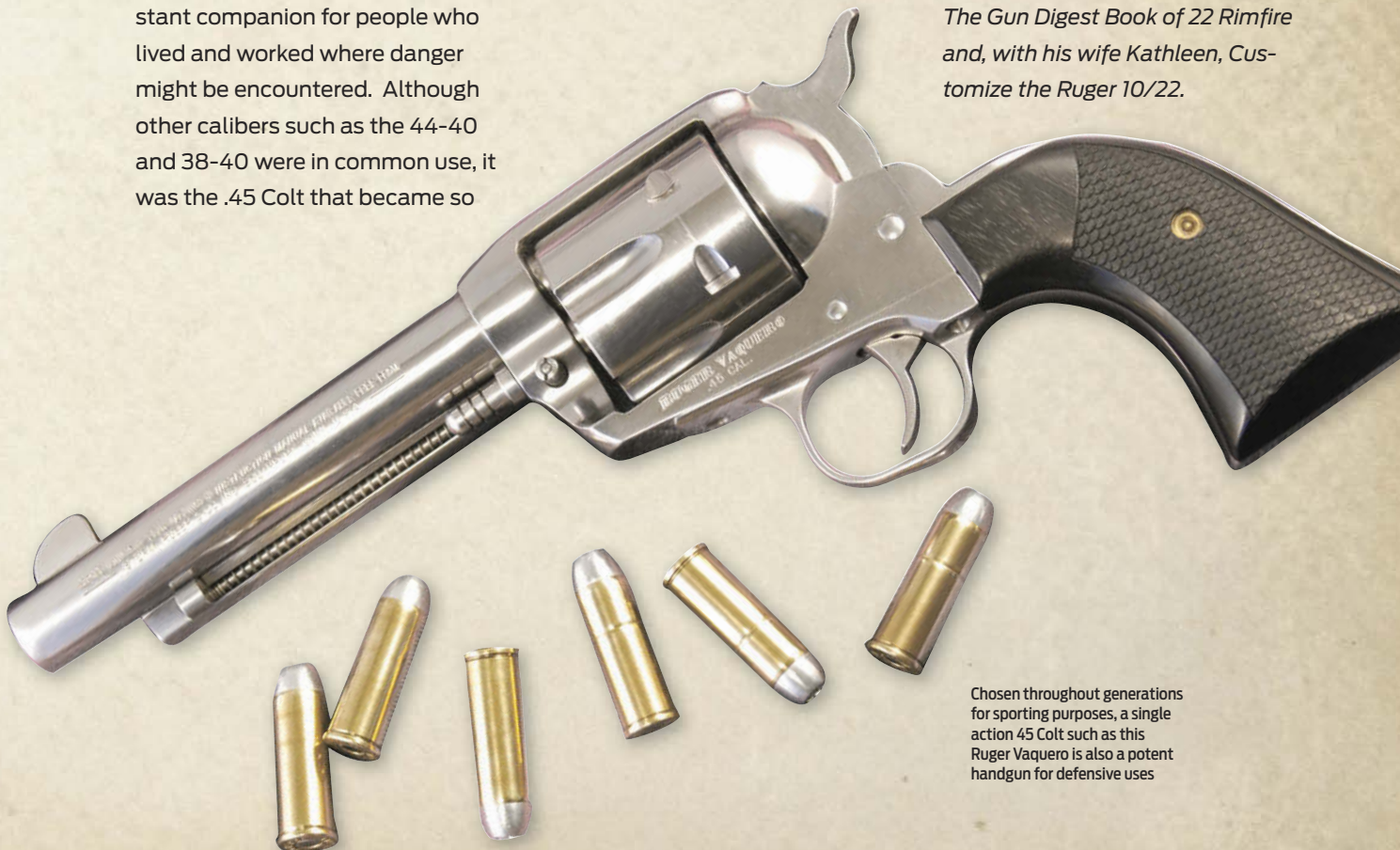
For many years, a single-action six-gun in .45 Colt was a constant companion for people who lived and worked where danger might be encountered. Although other calibers such as the 44-40 and 38-40 were in common use, it was the .45 Colt that became so

1873: A Stellar Year for Firearms
From the standpoint of lasting influence, the year 1873 may well have been the most important year in American firearms history. Introduced that year were the .45 Colt cartridge, the Colt Single Action Army revolver, the Winchester 73 lever action rifle and its .44-40 Winchester cartridge and the legendary .45-70 Government cartridge.
All of these calibers are alive and well. The Colt SAA and numerous copies are currently produced, and even the Winchester 73 is available from Winchester and in the form of reproductions.
The .45 Colt, .44-40 and .45-70 Government performed exceedingly well for their time, and still do for some uses. A handgun chambered for either of the shorter rounds is still a potent tool for sporting and defensive work.
With suitable bullets, a modern rifle chambered for the .45-70 can be used on almost any large game. Although the cartridges are over 140 years old, they are going strong and represent real longevity in shooting sports.

popular that it still lives a healthy life. It is a currently popular handgun caliber for the very simple reason that still works. Many people on the frontier regarded the .45 Colt as a reliable round, and if I had to, I could get along quite well with a .45 Colt for defense and most other handgun uses except concealed carry.

The current craze for autoloading and high capacity magazines has not caused the demise of the .45 Colt and if handguns are still allowed a century from now, I suspect that the cartridge will still be in use.

Jim House has written extensively about shooting sports, which has resulted in the books American Air Rifles, CO2 Pistols and Rifles, The Gun Digest Book of 22 Rimfire and, with his wife Kathleen, Customize the Ruger 10/22.



Chosen throughout generations for sporting purposes, a single action 45 Colt such as this Ruger Vaquero is also a potent handgun for defensive uses



Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

THE 1ST ASSAULT RIFLE

By Jerry Catania

Fast Firing, Accurate and Powerful, Winchester Lever-Actions Dominated the Old West



Twenty-eight rounds per minute. This was unheard of in the 1860s when the average soldier or citizen was using a single shot musket or rifle or even a muzzle-loader.

This is the rate of fire that the 1860 Henry Lever-Action Rifle brought to bear. Nicknamed by the Confederates as “That damn Yankee rifle that you load on Sunday and shoot all week,” the Henry was an immediate success, if not with military brass, at least with individual soldiers and civilians. While the story of the lever-action assault rifle begins with the Henry, thereafter it is the story of Winchester and their rifles.



★ BEGINNINGS

Lever-action rifles got their start in 1848 with the Volition Repeating Rifle, designed by Walter Hunt. This evolved into the Volcanic Repeating Arms Company under the tutelage of partners Horace Smith and Dan B. Wesson, who developed both rifle and pistol using the new “Volcanic cartridge.”

The design was not commercially viable and investor Oliver Winchester took over the insolvent company. These names should be familiar to just about everyone, even today.

All lever-action rifles use the same basic operating procedure: a lever below the stock (enclosing the trigger) is pushed down and forward to eject a fired case and moved back in place to load an unfired cartridge into position. Depending upon dexterity, caliber, and mechanism, this can be very fast indeed.

★ 1860 HENRY

While Smith and Wesson went on to produce revolvers, Winchester hired Benjamin Tyler Henry in 1857 to improve the design of the

Volcanic repeater. He did so by utilizing a then-new type of ammunition: an enclosed rimfire metallic cartridge of .44 caliber, launching a 216-grain lead bullet with 28 grains of black powder. The .44 Rimfire round has a muzzle velocity of approximately 1,125 feet per second, with a muzzle energy of around 568 foot pounds.

Because the enclosed cartridge was necessary for the lever-action to function, the round is nearly as much a part of the Henry design as the rifle itself. On Oct. 16, 1860, Henry was granted a patent for his rifle and both it and the cartridge were named in his honor. Both were a huge success.

The Henry rifle was used in the Civil War, mostly by Union troops, as the Boys in Gray could not readily get ammunition for it. While short of range compared to the big calibers used in the muskets and early single-shot rifles, the Henry was devastating when properly used in fast and close combat, what we call CQC today.

Two Henry-armed Union regiments successfully employed them at the Battle of Franklin. Sioux and Cheyenne Braves used them with deadly effect at the Battle of the Little Big Horn as well. Confederate President Jefferson Davis had his personal bodyguards

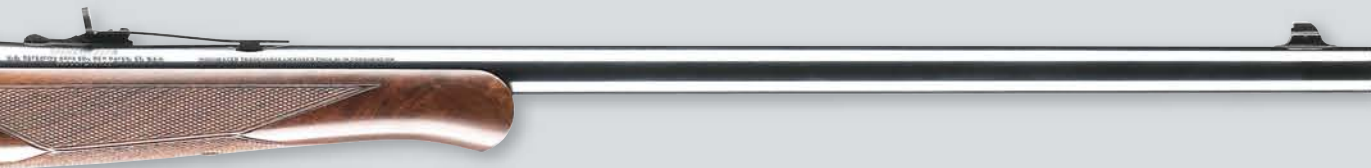
armed with Henry rifles.

The Henry is notable in that it loads in a similar manner to a modern .22 Rimfire rifle by dropping the rounds down the magazine tube, with the loading “gate” moving down the barrel as the gun is fired and rounds cycled; hence there is no wooden fore-end. With its 24-inch barrel, excellent iron sights, and smooth action, the Henry was a formidable weapon indeed.

Today, replicas are made mostly by “American-Cowboy-Loving Italians” (go figure), but no longer fire the .44 Rimfire, which has been out of production for many years. When production of original Henry Rifles ended in 1866, 14,000 units had been made.

In 2013, The Henry Repeating Arms Company announced the production of an honest-to-God American-made Henry Rifle duplicating the original in all respects except the caliber, which was changed to the Centerfire .44-40 cartridge—a marketing necessity.

True to the original design, but made with modern metallurgy, the Henry Rifle—the very first assault rifle—refuses to die. Italian makers like Uberti offer their Italian-made replicas in .44 Winchester Center Fire (also known as .44 WCF or .44-40) and .45 Colt.



The 1895 was the first Winchester to utilize a box magazine, which enabled it to be chambered for cartridges using spitzer bullets.

★ 1866 WINCHESTER

When Oliver Winchester changed the name of his company to the Winchester Repeating Arms Company in 1866, he also introduced an improved version of the Henry.

It featured a side-loading gate (the rifle is never out of action while reloading and can easily be topped off at any time), a bronze/brass alloy receiver (called gunmetal), and a wooden fore-end. With these improvements, the

first Winchester Repeating Rifle was born.

The “YellowBoy”—as it became known—was offered in both rifle and carbine versions; and still in the .44 Henry Rimfire caliber. It became very popular with Native



Original Winchester Model 1866 “Yellowboy” rifles are still available if you’re willing to pay collectors’ prices.

Americans, who decorated the butt stock with matching brass tacks. It was still a fast-shooting “assault rifle.”

These rifles were used in number by the Ottoman Empire in the 1877 Russo-Turkish War, where

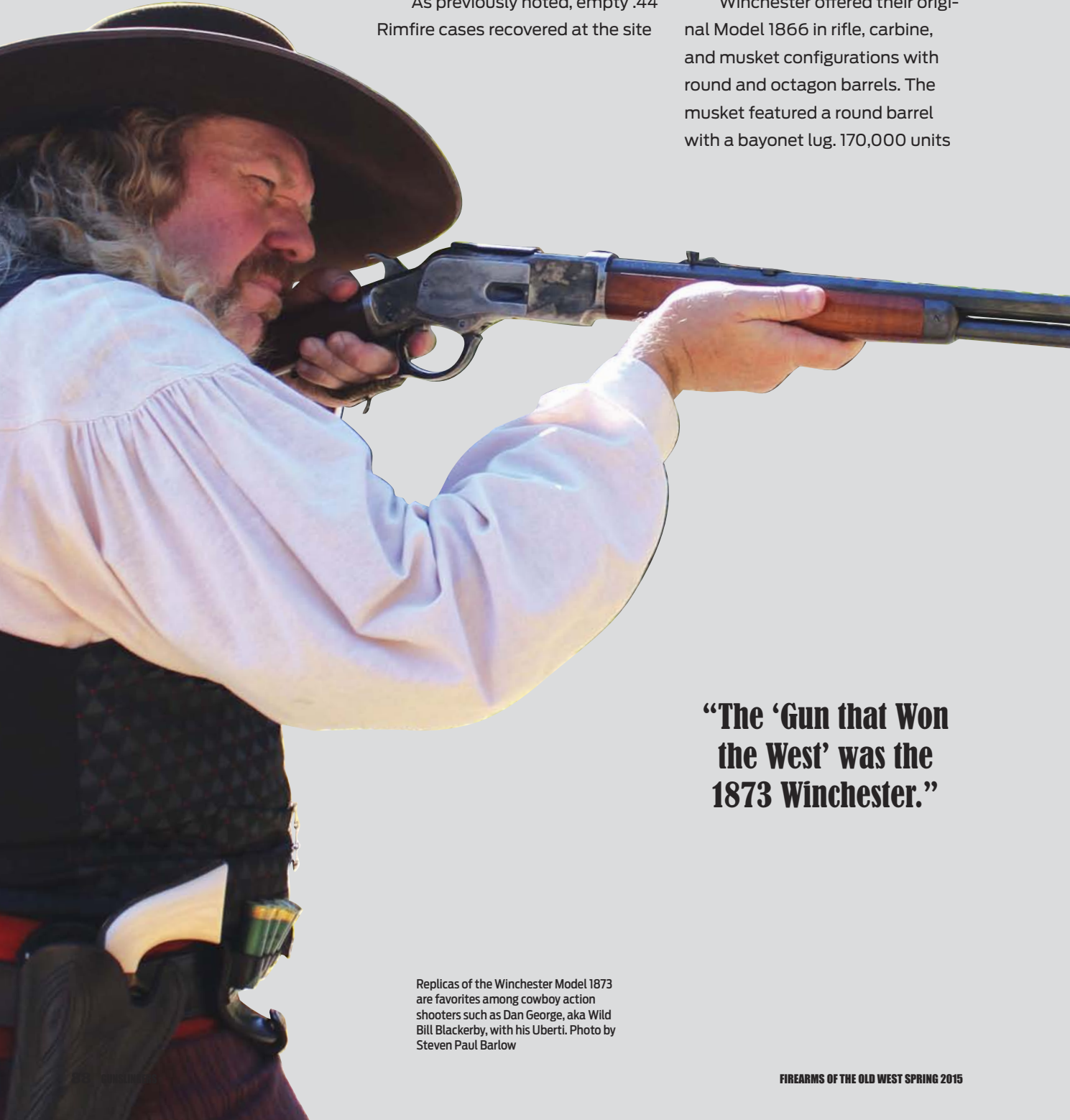
they made quite a name for themselves during the Siege of Plevna.

The battle caused all the major powers to seriously consider adopting repeating rifles, considering the outnumbered Turks inflicted four times as many casualties as the Russians did with their single-shot rifles.

As previously noted, empty .44 Rimfire cases recovered at the site

of the Battle of the Little Big Horn indicates that Sioux and Cheyenne Warriors made good use of lever-action “assault rifles” at close quarters; undoubtedly while utilizing their superior Guerrilla fighting techniques. Pictures have surfaced of Chief Sitting Bull holding his personal Winchester '66.

Winchester offered their original Model 1866 in rifle, carbine, and musket configurations with round and octagon barrels. The musket featured a round barrel with a bayonet lug. 170,000 units



“The ‘Gun that Won the West’ was the 1873 Winchester.”

Replicas of the Winchester Model 1873 are favorites among cowboy action shooters such as Dan George, aka Wild Bill Blackerby, with his Uberti. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

were produced between 1866 and 1898, and all were in .44 Henry Rimfire.

While that caliber must have been effective, it is now obsolete. Today, replicas made by Italian companies such as Uberti chamber the 1866 in .38 Special, .44 WCF, and .45 Colt.

★ 1873 WINCHESTER

The “Gun that Won the West” was the 1873 Winchester. Fast firing, accurate, and available in a new and more powerful caliber: The .44 Winchester Center Fire, also known as the .44-40. Gone was the brass alloy “gunmetal” receiver, replaced with an iron alloy.



(In the 1880's, the receiver was upgraded to steel.)

When Colt brought out their SAA in .44-40 in 1878—calling it the “Frontier” model—the success of both guns was assured. Citizens who were intent on homesteading in the wilderness now only had to purchase one cartridge for both guns.

While the 1873 did not have the success as a military rifle that the Henry and 1866 did, it was involved in plenty of minor wars, skirmishes, and “fights-for-your-life” in the American West.

With a production of 720,000 units, the 1873 was popular indeed. While it was made in carbine, rifle,

and musket models, the musket accounted for less than 5 percent of sales. The most popular was the 19-inch round-barreled saddle carbine, followed by the 24-inch full Octagon rifle. Other configurations were made upon request.

The 1873 is actually a very strong action. In 1903, Winchester began offering a higher performance version of the loading called the W.H.V. (Winchester High Velocity), boasting a velocity of 1,500 ft/s with a 200-grain jacketed bullet from a 24-inch barrel length.

Italian company Uberti makes their 1873 replicas in .38/.357 Magnum, .44-40, .45 Colt, and—get this—.44 Magnum. Uberti has every version from a 16-inch Trapper to a 24-inch Competition model.

★ 1876 WINCHESTER

The “Centennial” was more-or-less based on the 1873 design, but in heavy rifle calibers, to wit: .40-60, .45-60, .45-75, and the mammoth .50-95, the last was the full equal of the Sharps Buffalo guns.

While these cartridges were powerful, they were shorter than the government-issued .45-70, which would not be chambered in a Winchester until 1886.

As an assault rifle, the 1876 was issued to the Texas Rangers, as well as the Canadian Mounties, both, I believe, in .45-75. The Guerilla-Warrior Geronimo had a '76 in his possession when he surrendered in 1886.

Theodore Roosevelt used an 1876 extensively in his early North American hunting adventures.

THE .44 WCF

As a side note, the first centerfire cartridge invented by Winchester—the .44-40—originally fired a 200-grain lead bullet launched by 40 grains of black powder for a muzzle velocity of about 1245 feet per second out of the 1873 Winchester.

Settlers, lawmen and cowboys appreciated the convenience of being able to carry a single caliber of ammunition which they could fire in both pistol and rifle.

In both law enforcement and hunting usage, the .44-40 became the most popular cartridge in the United States and to this day has the reputation of killing more deer than any other cartridge save the 30-30 Winchester.

★ 1886 WINCHESTER: ENTER JOHN MOSES BROWNING

The great John M. went to work for Winchester sometime in 1883. While he is best known for designing the 1911 pistol and the Browning .50 caliber machine gun, he started out designing lever action rifles.

His first rifle, a single shot, used a lever; as did his first shotgun—the 1887. Browning set out to design a super-strong lever action rifle capable of handling the most powerful “express” loads of the day, including the .45-70, .45-90, and even the brutish .50-110.

Thus the 1886 was born. While never used in war (unless you count Indians and rustlers) the design stayed around, eventually evolving into Winchester's M71 in .348 Winchester.

★ 1892 WINCHESTER

When Winchester asked John Browning to develop an improved pistol-caliber lever action, he responded by saying if he could not do it in a month, it would be free.

Two weeks later, a scaled-down 1886 was designed and the Model 1892 was born. While most

were chambered in .44-40, the .38-40 and .32-20 were available as well. In 1895, the .25-20 was added.

The 1892 was carried by Admiral Robert E. Peary on his North Pole expeditions. The carbine was really light at about six pounds and became a favorite of cowboys, Texas Rangers, and just about anyone who needed a light handy rifle that fired eleven rounds (20" barrel) of .44-40 ammo.

Compatibility with the 1873 Colt SA "Frontier" model was another big plus. The cartridge also found its way into the big Colt DA New Service revolver. Not only did that endear it to settlers in the 19th century, but also to Hollywood in the era of the big screen.

The 1892 was produced until 1945, enabling producers to secure traditional lever actions for their Western movies without having to buy expensive antique rifles. A total of 1,007,608 model 92's were produced.

Lawmen, badmen, settlers, cattlemen, homesteaders, Indians (and Indian fighters) appreciated the light, handy, powerful, accurate, high-capacity and fast-firing 1892.

Easily carried in hand or on a saddle, the handy '92 was—and still is—a joy to use. The Browning-designed 1892 was so strong that they were easily converted to .44 Magnum when that cartridge was made available.

It was (is) still one of the fastest-handling rifles made. Replicas are made by Winchester (Japan), Uberti (Italy), Chiappa (Italy), and Rossi (Brazil). In addition to the original .44-40, the

1892 replicas are made in .357 magnum, .44 Magnum, and .45 Colt.

It has been opined that the 1892 in .44-40 has accounted for more big game (mostly deer) than any other rifle/cartridge combo in history save one: the Model 94 Winchester.

★ WINCHESTER 1894

Another classic by the genius JM Browning was the model 1894 Winchester. Originally chambered in the black powder .32-40 and .38-55, the Model 94 was the first rifle to chamber a smokeless powder round, the .30 Winchester Center Fire, which eventually became known as the .30-30.

Though initially it was too expensive for most shooters, the Model 1894 went on to become one of the best-selling hunting rifles of all time—it has the distinction of being the first sporting/hunting rifle to sell over one million units, ultimately selling over seven million before US production was discontinued in 2006.

It is interesting to note that while it is being made now, it is not produced in the US. It is made in Japan, and again, the price is too much for most shooters. In 2006, the American made Model 94 sold for as little as \$374.00 (MSRP), while today, the MSRP is \$1199.99 for the most basic Japanese model.

This is sad indeed, for the M94—like the M92—is one of the best-handling rifles ever made. Thirty-odd years ago, I used to hunt Jack rabbits with a 24-inch barrel 94 on a weekly basis.

On one fine day, I took nine

running Jacks and a running coyote with as many shots. No scope, either; it was all due to the great-handling M94.

“Nicknamed by the Confederates as ‘That damn Yankee rifle that you load on Sunday and shoot all week,’ the Henry was an immediate success ...”

The "Thutty-Thutty" was an early assault rifle as well. The United States government purchased 1,800 commercial Model 1894s with 50,000 .30-30 cartridges during WW I.

These rifles in the 835800 to 852500 serial number range were marked atop the receiver ring with a flaming bomb and "U.S." The rifles were intended for United States Army Signal Corp personnel stationed in the Pacific Northwest to prevent interruption of spruce timber harvesting for aircraft production. The rifles were sold as military surplus after the war.

★ 1895 WINCHESTER

Our story ends with the Browning-designed 1895, the last lever-action he designed, and the one with the strongest action. The 1895 was the first Winchester to lose the tubular magazine and utilize a box magazine. This allowed the 1895 to be chambered in cartridges that used pointed bullets, such as the .30-40 Krag, 7.62x54

Russian, .303 British, and .30-06.

It was actually used by the armies of the United States, Great Britain, and Czarist Russia at one time or another. 300,000 were made for the Russian Military alone. These musket models could be loaded with the same stripper clips that were used in the Mosin-Nagant bolt action rifle. The US ordered 10,000 for the Spanish-American war, but they did not arrive before it ended. A total of 425,881 rifles were produced, counting military models.

★ END OF AN ERA

Lever-action rifles will not die, but they are in less demand than ever. They handle far better without scopes than with, and this has hurt them. The flat sides that made them so easy to carry on a horse do not matter now, as saddles were replaced by car trunks.

As a lever-action die-hard, I always take one out when plinking to let friends use. They invariably like it better than an M4 or AK clone. For hunting—where speed is paramount—lever actions have no equal. For home and camp defense, they can still hold their own.

Cowboy Action shooting, Western movies, and nostalgia keep them alive. I pray they'll always stay with us. They are the very spirit of American guns.

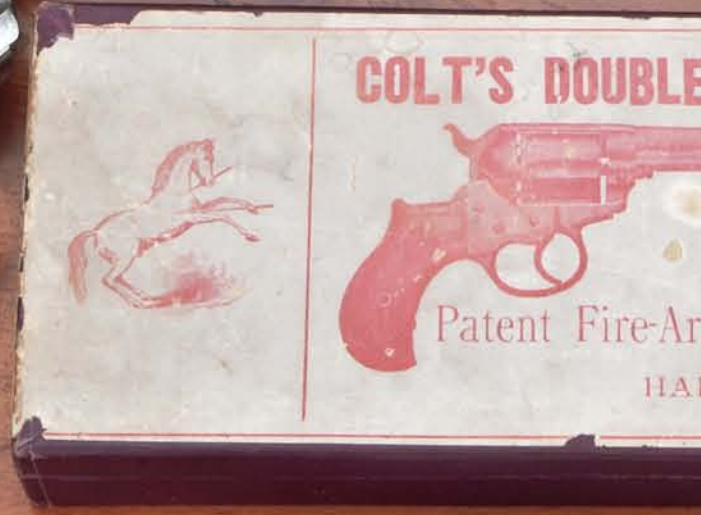
Jerry Catania has been shooting for 50 years, much of that with lever action rifles. While he has an interest in all types of shooting, he has a special passion for late 19th century firearms.



A crate of Winchester 1894's headed for the Old West. These are from the Kurt House collection. Photo by Paul Goodwin



THE WITHIN REVOLVER IS NOT
ADAPTED FOR
SMOKELESS POWDER.



THE RICH PAST

Text by Kurt House, Photos by Paul Goodwin

From Sidearms and Spurs To Photographs, Badges and More, Collecting Western Americana Can Be Fun and Profitable



Think about it. Of all the American folk heroes, the cowboy is really the only enduring myth; others have come and gone, but the cowboy remains elusive, yet desirable.



Composition of items related to Texas Ranger Captain Frank Jones: his badge, watch, photo and Winchester 1873

If you are thinking of getting started in collecting western Americana, here are key principles you need to know.

GETTING STARTED

First, you should have a passion for the era. I don't recommend entering the field of collecting western Americana purely for investment purposes. However, history has shown that if proper investment techniques are applied, collecting western items can be not only a rewarding experience, but profitable as well.

Recent uncertainty in the stock market, the reduction of tax incentives, capital gain rates and other economic trends have combined to make the investment in collectibles a more attractive venue.

To that end, allow me to provide \$100,000 worth of advice in the next five paragraphs:

- 1. Do your own research. As

He remains mysterious but admirable because of his independence, his self-reliance and all his other aspects, whether or not they are myths. There must be something magical about the cowboy hero, for the men on horseback, whether South American gaucho or French Camargue, are all admired in their respective cultures, and revered, as cultural heroes.

In antique collecting terms, collectibles remaining from cowboys are scarce. Of course, one could expand into ranching collectibles, but by far the most desirable items in the collecting market today are those that are tied to that great American hero, the cowboy.



"Diamond Dick" pattern spurs by Kelly Brothers, Dalhart, Texas, circa 1910

with any field, you must arm yourself with knowledge. Unfortunately, the collecting field is not immune to pitfalls. It is fraught with fake merchandise and some unscrupulous dealers, so protect yourself.

2. We have a maxim in the gun collecting business: "If you want to buy a gun, buy the book first." You must build a collector's library; it is mandatory. Study it.

3. Find a mentor that you trust. Seek advice. Before spending big money on an expensive item, run it past your mentor. The Jewish culture has a great proverb: "If you cannot know jewels, then know your jeweler."

4. Buy the best you can afford. Along with this, buy the most rare items first. Yes, this goes against novice collectors' tendencies to start slow and cheap, but the most rare stuff is what is disappearing the fastest, but is increasing in value the most.

5. Provenance not Providence—"provenance" has become more and more important in recent years as the fakes increase. Do not confuse the two terms: provenance means the history of ownership—don't rely on "providence," or the "Big Man Upstairs," to protect you against a bad decision.

ITEMS TO COLLECT

One of the most attractive aspects of collecting western Americana is the variety of items available. Perhaps the most prosperous field is firearms.

A Colt Walker pistol, the heaviest sidearm ever made and an icon of the Mexican War period as well as Texas history, recently sold for

6 Key Facts That Determine Value

As with any collecting field, there are a few rules and these mostly concern value. What are the determinants of value of western collectibles? Actually, they are almost the same as for any field, the most important being:

1. Condition – the easiest to understand
2. Age – mostly, the older the better
3. Rarity – but collectible items must exist in sufficient variety and number
4. Collector Appeal – sometimes logical, sometimes not; size, for example, and trends
5. Quality – often determined by the brand, or maker
6. Special or artistic features – precious metals, jewels, etc.

"Uberti is one of the major players keeping the Single Action Army alive and its Italian craftsmen have more than half a century of experience building these classic wheelguns."

over a million dollars. Compared to art, at least, firearms are still a bargain.

Items related to firearms, such as cartridges and loading accessories, are also now avidly sought by collectors.

Additionally, leather collectibles are hotly collected by aficionados, the most important being gun leather and holsters, saddles, chaps, cuffs and gauntlets, reatas, clothing, etc.

Another big sub-field is gambling paraphernalia and so much the better if it is from recognizable Old West saloons like Tombstone's Bird Cage Theater, El Paso's Gem and Acme saloons, San Antonio's Vaudeville Theater and other gambling dens of the burgeoning boomtowns of the West from Abilene to San Francisco.

Saloon collectibles, such as back bar bottles, etched and reverse painted glass label bottles, liquor advertising, saloon nudes, dice, cards, roulette wheels, faro layouts, Keno goose, slot machines and trade stimulators are all hotly pursued by specialized western collectors.

Bowie knives are popular items these days, some fetching into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Antique Bowie Knife Association recently sponsored an exhaustive study of the American Bowie knife at the Historic Arkansas Museum in Little Rock, Ark. Such expositions are the ideal school for the western collector to attend.

Articles of use by Native Americans have been part of an established field since about World War II, with some Navajo blankets bringing hundreds of thousands of dollars at sites such as the Sante Fe, New Mexico Indian Market held each August. Some auction companies like Skinner and Cowan's specialize in Native American products.

Photography has become one of the hottest fields in western collectibles and the reasons are simple: the items are lightweight, easily transported, of endless variety and are easy to store.

Similar to photography,



The Old West man cave. Here is a collector's gun room after years of accumulating Old West treasures

western documents, presidential signatures, Custer memorabilia, outlaw and lawmen documents, wanted posters, banknotes from western towns, currency, gold coins from the Gold Rush era and Wild West Show items are the specialty of some collectors.

Cowboy spurs and bits, like saddles and other horse gear, are avidly pursued, with the world's record pair of spurs now being in excess of \$100,000. A saddle verified to Pancho Villa fetched over a half million.

Badges from Old West lawmen is a big sub-field of western

collectibles, there being several organizations to benefit the novice collector. Sheriff Pat Garrett's gold badge, presented him by the citizens of Dona Ana County, N.M., is now valued at more than \$100,000.

Clothing and advertising from the Old West period are relatively

new sub-fields. Wild West show posters are in demand also.

The items of Old West express companies, such as Wells Fargo, American Express, the Pony Express and others have their own niche, sought by many collectors, especially on the West Coast. Some firearms are inscribed with these monikers.

How Technology Has Impacted Buying

Methods of buying have changed drastically in the last few years, the most notable change being the Internet. Whereas formerly a collector was forced to travel to western shows, today the western collector need not ever leave his living room armchair to bid in auctions of a fantastic variety.

But there also has been a proliferation of auction companies specializing in western collectibles, especially firearms. There are still several major western collectible shows, the largest being the High Noon show in Mesa, Ariz. each January and Brian Lebel's Old West Show now held in Ft. Worth, Texas.

Hats and sombreros are popular, especially those styles associated with characters in movies and television shows.

Ranching tools, branding irons, fence stretchers, even barbed wire have long been collected and offer the attraction of relatively low price per unit collected.

U.S. military items are the specialty of many collectors and offer a good crossover field from that of firearms and related memorabilia.

Paintings, sculpture and mixed media works offer a substantial field for the investor-collector. Some western paintings by the masters Russell and Remington go for millions of dollars each.

Another new sub-field in western collectibles is that of cowgirl memorabilia. Some experienced collectors, realizing that this was a neglected field, have switched over to it exclusively.

Institutions such as the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in Fort Worth, Texas have sponsored such enthusiasm, including items from legendary women of the West, such as Belle Star, Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley, women performers in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, rodeo queens, and others.

WHAT'S HOT?

Currently, hats may be hot, but the trends in western collecting fluctuate. Sometimes a sub-field will be "on fire" only to wane and give way to another unexpected direction. From 1980 to 2010, for example, cowboy bits and spurs were very popular.

Firearms continue to be a sub-field of hot pursuit, especially arms with history: outlaw and lawmen

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guns, guns used in the gunfight at the OK Corral, those used by the James-Younger gangs, guns used at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, by Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett and other famous personalities of the Old West.

Western collecting is not without its surprises. In 2013, the collecting world was shocked when a student of the West paid \$2.3 million for a two-inch by three-inch piece of tin that happened to bear the only known original image of Billy The Kid.

VALUES AND HOMEWORK

Anything of value from the Old West period is collectible and can be classified as "western Americana." That value is determined by the perception of the collecting public.

The Internet has changed the marketing of items, historical research is more prevalent, education is mandatory and provenance is more important than ever before.

If the history of collecting cowboy items is any indicator of the future, the field is an excellent one to enter with loads of opportunity.

Whatever one decides to collect, rest assured there is an organization devoted to it. Just do your homework and associate with experts.

Collecting Western Americana is the most fun I have ever had in this lifetime. Perhaps the best rewards are the friends you make, the lifetime of fulfillment and education that make you happy.

As Major Wolcott told the fat man in 1892 trying to mount his horse during Wyoming's Johnson County War, "Cinch up or stay behind!"

Kurt House is the author of numerous guides to Old West Collectibles, as well as more than 75 articles on the subject. He has been buying, selling and appraising antiques for more than 40 years. He is a life member of the Colt Collector's Association.

A man with long, curly blonde hair, wearing a brown cowboy hat with a dark band, a white long-sleeved shirt, and a dark, patterned vest. He is holding a handgun in his right hand, pointing it towards the right. He is standing in front of a wooden structure, possibly a fence or a building. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a wooden fence.

GUNS BLAZIN'

Text by Richard Crays
Photos by Steven Paul Barlow

**SASS Competitors Reenact the Spirit
of the West In Legendary Gunfights**



Nothing says cowboy like the sound of a lever-action .30-.30 being worked hard or the silence that follows the hammer of a single-action Colt Peacemaker being cocked at a poker table.

Well, maybe the ringing sound of brass hitting the old wooden planks of the porch in front of the saloon, maybe the yell of a stagecoach driver as he shouts, “Bandits!” and snaps off two shots from his (or her) 12-gauge double at the highwaymen.

I’ll bet you think you can only hear those sounds by watching an old John Wayne classic, right? Wrong. At least, not if you look around a bit and ask your local Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) participants where the smoke will be this weekend.

COWBOYS VS. BANDITS

In these shooting competitions, you’ll have the chance to relive the sounds and smells of the Old West. And who doesn’t love the smell of gunpowder on a Saturday morning?

In Casper, Wyo., situated about halfway between Cheyenne and the Hole in the Wall’s hideout, men and women gather on Saturdays throughout the summer to keep the spirit of the West alive and the sound of gunfights ringing in our ears.

Recently, I spent the day with “Smokewagon” Bill and 12 SASS cowboys as they each fought bandits with two revolvers, a rifle and

a shotgun in more than 10 different gunfights.

There was no dramatic music in the background, but they did have to stop shooting for a few minutes as some antelope had to be shoo’d off the range.

Meanwhile, across the country at the Kinnicum Fish & Game Club in Candia, N.H., an SASS match—The Ghost Riders Revenge— was being held to decide the New



Dan George, aka Wild Bill Blackerby, readies his Colt Navy 1851 cartridge conversion replicas

“As you portray your chosen hero or villain, more time is spent socializing than shooting. But when your slot opens up on a shooting stage, you are there and in the moment, fully.”

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO GET STARTED
So, you think this is for you? Here's what you need.

- 1 For those participating in Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) events, two single-action revolvers, a double-barrel shotgun and a lever-action rifle are the standard firearms used. For Wild Bunch events, you can add a 1911 pistol and a pump shotgun. Replica guns that work like the ones from circa 1888 are made by several manufacturers, but offer improvements in metal-lurgy.
- 2 You'll need to look the part too. In this ever-expanding sport, there are lots of vendors out there who are making period-specific clothing.
- 3 Once you become a member, you'll be able to pin on the star. Oh yes indeed, you get a badge with your SASS member number on it.
- 4 You'll need your own special handle, too. From "Badlands Bob" to "Saloon Singer Sal," everyone has to pick an Old West alias.

Saddle up, ride over to the SASS website at: <http://sassnet.com> and make your mark to join one of the best bunches of wild guys and gals you have seen since Mr. Holden and Mr. Borgnine ran into that unpleasantness down south with their own posse.



Working the action, Jim Shearer, aka Jimmy Reb, gets his shots off quickly during this stage in New Hampshire

safety issues are met.

Each stage is overseen by a safety officer and is timed/scored by a second member and then scribed by a third. Scoring is important because in gunfights there can be only one winner, right? So, not unlike IPSC or PPC matches, it comes down to shots and time ... just like a real gunfight.

Competitors use replica firearms from the time period 1850 to 1900, unless shooting special categories. They wear period attire as close to the persona they assume for the match. Each shooter has a unique alias.

These cowpokes, bankers, deputies, gamblers and 'slingers spend the day going back to that time when a shooting iron didn't have anything to do with the game of golf.

As you portray your chosen hero or villain, more time is spent socializing than shooting. But when your slot opens up on a shooting stage, you are there and in the moment, fully.

Gunfighters come to this from all walks of life, all social/eco-

Hampshire State Championship.

The morning of SASS competitions start with a safety briefing and a match overview, a concession to the 21st Century and a means of keeping all the gunfighters on the same page.

Granted, knowing before-hand

that you were going to be in a gunfight would have been of great benefit to Bill Hickok and John Wesley Hardin, but here it just means you are ready to go and on time.

Courses of fire or stages are developed and approved to ensure



At this SASS competition in New Hampshire, the only horse was made of wood. There is a special branch of SASS, however, that features mounted shooting competitions

conomic backgrounds and professions. In walking among them, there in Casper, I found “J. Short-roped” (yep, in real life, a judge), “Upto Noah Good,” “Banker Bob” (yep, a bonafide banker), “Beef-cake” (put me in the mind of Hoss Cartwright) and “Sodbuster.”

The intensity in which they apply themselves to building this alter-ego varies, but what is consistent is how much they enjoy the sport or hobby or as one shootist said, “For a few hours each month, I am who I always wanted to be when I was 10.”

CHASING HISTORY

Many of these pioneer-minded people will go from range to range all summer long. They’re chasing a few more minutes of being back in a simpler time when cell phones and fiber optics didn’t

exist, a time when a man’s word meant something more than a software package in a shiny electronic box.

The very committed among these folks have clearly designated “kits.” These kits are sets of

COWBOY COMPETITIONS A WORLDWIDE CRAZE

These cowboys in Wyoming and New Hampshire represent just a few of the Old West aficionados worldwide who are itching to strap on a hogleg and send some bandits into the field to push up daisies.

According to the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) headquarters, there are about 700 active, affiliated clubs in the United States with more than 100,000 members.

Heck, there are nine clubs in Australia, another 53 or 54 scattered through Europe running from Denmark and Switzerland all the way down to Italy. And you wouldn’t believe the number of them that are in France alone.

Some of these clubs focus more on the mounted (horseback) competitions and others are more oriented toward Wild Bunch action, using 1911 pistols, lever action rifles and model 1897 pump shotguns.

weapons, a box of parts with springs, hammers and sears and even a back-up pair of boots to make sure they stay in the chase for better time, better hits and better memories.

You can see it in their faces when they turn from the steel or cardboard, smoke rolling from the barrel as they holster their six-guns and their smiles are outdone only by the shine in their eyes.

The camaraderie is apparent all day long. It takes one back to a Sunday Social at the end of a rodeo or the downtown district of a cow town after a "drive" finished and the

drovers went into spend their pay and enjoy something other than dust and the smell of sagebrush.

Frequently heard are such comments as, "I took a bit off the front of the sear," "I oiled the leather last night, so I got you for sure today," "I have Jim working on a new belt for me," "All it'll take to take you is a more solid base for my draw," and, "You see my new lever gun?"

I spent the day watching each gunfight start with a catchy phrase that, instead of "Is the shooter ready?" was steeped in jargon from 1885, such as, "How many

When and Where

Go to SassNet.com/Mounted-What-is-001A.php to find the next mounted match.

graves you want me to dig?" or "If they move, shoot 'em."

All the stages I watched involved shooting two pistols, a rifle and shotgun, which was almost always reloaded once during the fight. As the competitors moved through the fight to the next shooting position, their spurs rang out chimes to accent the hamming footsteps on wood boards suspended in front of a general store.



Never too old. Beverly Petersen, aka Crackshot Bev, is 75 years old and has been competing for 16 years



Shootin' irons. SASS competitors use gun carts such as this to haul their guns and gear to the various shooting stages



Gunfight at the OK Corral. SASS competitors in Casper, Wyo. enjoy a day of shooting and socializing. Photo by Richard Crays



Having a blast. This woman seemed to enjoy shooting her double barrel shotgun

“For a few hours each month, I am who I always wanted to be when I was 10.”

Did you just say you want to do it from horseback? Okay, you may have to travel a bit, but there is a growing number of Mounted Shooting aficionados. The SASS website quotes it as “... one of the

nation's fastest growing equestrian sports and is a direct spin-off of Cowboy Action Shooting.”

INTO THE SUNSET

It was a day well-spent and as I rode off into the sunset, I pondered dusting off my six-guns and coming back in the springtime to see what bandits I could dispatch. If you are thinking the same thing, see the sidebar about where to

start that journey back in time. Happy Trails, Roy.

The author got his first cowboy hat at 4 years old with a matching set of Frontier cap pistols (didn't get the caps for 2 years), shot his first deer with an antique lever gun and has cow and antelope scat on his boots today. He is a veteran of hundreds of campfires, saddle sores and is a cowboy at heart.

COWBOY UP WITH RUGER

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
STEVEN PAUL BARLOW

The Slimmer and Lighter Vaquero
Is Still a Best Buy Among Single-
Action Revolvers

The cowboy of the Old West needed a sturdy, reliable and versatile firearm, whether he was riding the range, defending the ranch or making sure everyone kept his cards on the table.

Today, similarly independent people can appreciate a need for just such a weapon. If you sometimes venture far from your ranch and want to be confident that you can dispatch any varmint, shoot your supper and provide for your own security, then I can recommend a gun for you.

NO DAZZLE, JUST FACTS

The Ruger New Vaquero is not a new gun, so I'm not going to try to dazzle you with any news flash about the latest gun. You won't hear the word polymer anywhere in my description of it.

My goal was to take a gun that harkens back to the days of the Old West—one that has a stellar reputation among the cowboy competitors—and see how it would stand up today as an all-around firearm for the outdoorsman.

I have to confess that every once in a while I get the urge to trade away all of my other handguns and just concentrate on Ruger single-action revolvers. My fondness for them is based on my experience with a couple of Super Blackhawks in .44 Magnum and a Single-Six Convertible in .22 LR / .22 Magnum.

THE VAQUERO DEBUTS IN 1993

Ruger started making single-action revolvers back when television shows were still in black and white and Roy Rogers was a boy's favorite actor. The Vaquero isn't quite as old.

Ruger introduced the original Vaquero in 1993, the same year that Kurt Russell portrayed Wyatt Earp in *Tombstone*. That was a beast of a gun. While many admired it for its rock-solid strength, it was a little heavy for the cowboy action shooters, who wanted something closer to the original Colt Model P.

So, in 2005, two years after Kevin Costner and Robert Duvall rode in *Open Range*, Ruger introduced the New Vaquero, designed to be a little slimmer and lighter. They went back to the XR-3 steel grip frame, the same handy size

used on the original Blackhawks in the late 1950's. The weekend cowboy competitors jumped for joy.


Since the Vaquero debuted, those who fire thousands of rounds in practice and competition every year have appreciated the Vaquero for its rugged reliability and value.

But does the old single-action stack up as a good choice as an all-around sidearm for the outdoorsman? I think so.

SIMPLE AND STURDY WITH KEY UPDATES

First, it's a simple, sturdy design. Outside it looks like a gun from the late 1800's. Inside, it features an up-to-date and bomb-proof coil mainspring.

The original Colts and modern replicas have hammer-mounted firing pins. For more than 140 years, cowboys who carried those six-shooters really carried five-shooters. They were carried with the hammer down on an empty chamber to prevent accidental



Opening the loading gate of the Vaquero frees the cylinder so that it can be rotated for loading. There is no half-cock notch for the hammer as on traditional Colt SAA replicas



The tall blade front sight of the Vaquero can be filed down to regulate the sights for a particular load

discharges from an inadvertent blow to the hammer.

The Vaquero has a frame-mounted firing pin, with transfer bar. The hammer can't contact the firing pin unless the trigger is fully pulled, which moves the transfer bar into place. The result is that the Vaquero can be carried safely fully loaded with the hammer down.

It's not historically accurate and I don't care. I'll take the 20th Century improvements and modern metallurgy. The Vaquero I tested also had other niceties, such as two-piece laminated hardwood grips and a beveled cylinder for easier holstering.

The Vaquero loads a bit differently than the old Colts and modern clones too. In the Old West, you pulled the hammer back to the half-cock position and opened the loading gate. The Vaquero has no half-cock notch; just open the

loading gate, which frees up the cylinder.

Ruger's reverse indexing pall is another modern improvement. With this handy mechanism, as you rotate the cylinder, you'll hear a click. Back it up just a bit until it stops and the chamber is perfectly aligned for punching out a spent casing or loading a live round.

The sights are what you'd expect to find on a traditional cowboy six-shooter. There's a notch and groove in the top strap that acts as your rear sight. It isn't adjustable, but neither is it a delicate part can be broken or knocked out of alignment—another reason it would make a good woods gun. The blade front sight comes high from the factory. If you decided to settle on a particular load, you could file it down to the proper height.

Not a lot of disassembly is required for routine cleaning. Open

the loading gate, depress the basepin latch and remove the basepin. The cylinder then pops out of the right side of the frame.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Sturm, Ruger and Company

Website: www.ruger.com

Model: New Vaquero (model number 5101 tested)

Caliber: .45 Colt (tested) Also available in .357 Magnum/.38 Special

Overall length: 11.12 inches

Barrel: 5.5 inches (tested), 4.62 inches
Twist: 1:16 inches, RH, 6 grooves

Capacity: 6

Weight: 40 oz.

Grips: Laminated hardwood

Finish: Blued Alloy Steel (tested) Also available in high gloss stainless

Sights: Rear groove, front blade, non-adjustable.

MSRP: \$739.00

SUFFICIENTLY POWERFUL

I know some preferred the beefier original Vaquero because it could handle some extremely hot loads. I prefer the New Vaquero. It's a lighter, handier mid-sized gun that's easier to pack over lots of miles. I'll opt for one of my larger, heavier Super Blackhawks if I want to shoot hot loads.

As it is, the New Vaquero is sufficiently powerful to do anything I can imagine I might need it to do. With the right modern factory loads, it can take down a deer or an attacker.

While not the best option for long-range handgun hunting, it will do fine on the deer I encounter many times at around 25 to 30 yards. The Vaquero might not be the gun I reach for as a primary

hunting gun, but it might very well be the gun I carry more often than not when wandering the woods. It's those times when targets of opportunity in the way of game animals most present themselves.

I'd feel well armed carrying the Vaquero for defense as well. So what if I'd have to manually cock the hammer? I think I'd be more likely to fumble my clumsy thumb over the small, snag-free external safeties on some semi-autos than I would be with the Vaquero's long-spur hammer.

Single-action revolvers are slower to reload, but with practice, not as slow as you might think. And the vast majority of confrontations don't require a reload anyway. I'd feel more confident with a .45 caliber revolver that fires

every time I pull the trigger than with one of those .380 pocket pistols with spotty reliability that are so popular today.

It would serve as well in toppling a rabbit for my dinner. It's versatile. Light loads launching semi-wadcutter bullets would be suitable for small game and varmints. Because it's a revolver, I can use a wide range of loads without having to worry if the action will cycle.

ACCURATE ENOUGH FOR ANY DESPERADO

The Vaquero I tested had a blued finish. I liked its 5.5-inch barrel for an all-around woods gun. It gave me enough sight radius and the gun balanced and pointed naturally.



The Vaquero's basepin and cylinder can be removed easily for cleaning and maintenance

ACCURACY RESULTS FOR RUGER VAQUERO, 45 COLT, 5.5" BARREL

Load	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)	
		Smallest	Average
Winchester Super X 250-gr LFN	693	1.25	1.70
Magtech 250-gr LFN	747	1.25	1.85
Federal 225-gr SWCHP	921	1.50	1.80
American Eagle 225-gr JSP	970	0.75	1.55
Winchester 225-gr Silvertip JHP	868	1.38	1.78

Accuracy testing consisted of five three-shot groups at 25 yards from a rest. Chronograph results in feet per second were compiled using a Chrony instrument 14 feet from the muzzle.

It's also available with a 4.62-inch barrel and in high gloss stainless steel. There are some special editions available from distributors such as Talo and Davidson's that have 3.75-inch barrels.

I shot the Vaquero for accuracy using five different loads. I fired three-shot groups from a rest at 25 yards. With each load, it seemed that I had at least one very excellent group that knocked down the averages quite a bit. With the American Eagle load for instance, I had three shots that clustered into a very tight .75 inches.

I wouldn't expect that every time, but groups in the 1.75 to 2.25 range should be the norm. Hey, that's super for a cowboy gun that's apt to be drawn, pointed and fired quickly at close range.

The Vaquero was at its best when I left the bench and shot it offhand at some very threatening plastic jugs and juice bottles. Drawing, pointing, firing, the gun excelled. It was designed to be fired that way. I slowed things down again and tried my luck at steel plates at 100 yards.

I am not involved in

“Because it’s so sturdy, simple and sufficiently powerful, it has the versatility to be a serious tool for anyone who journeys off the beaten path and needs a dependable gun to shoot his dinner or defend his hide.”



The Vaquero was at its best away from the bench where real shooting is more apt to be done. Photo by Dawn Barlow

cowboy action shooting at this time, although I attended a match recently and it looked like loads of fun. Testing this Ruger Vaquero was a joy too. So you might see me pulling on the boots, strapping on a holster and adjusting the wide-brimmed hat next spring.

The Vaquero is not merely for weekend games, however. Because it's so sturdy, simple and sufficiently powerful, it has the versatility to be a serious tool for anyone who journeys off the beaten path and needs a dependable gun to shoot his dinner or defend his hide.

Steven Paul Barlow is a retired sergeant/station commander and former firearms instructor with the New York State Police. An avid hunter and firearms enthusiast, he has been writing on outdoor topics for more than 30 years.



A Western holster for a cowboy gun. This CH70 Moran holster from Chisholm's Trail Old West Leather is available at www.westernleatherholster.com



The Vaquero handled all loads without a hitch, one of the advantages of a single action revolver over some less-reliable semi-autos



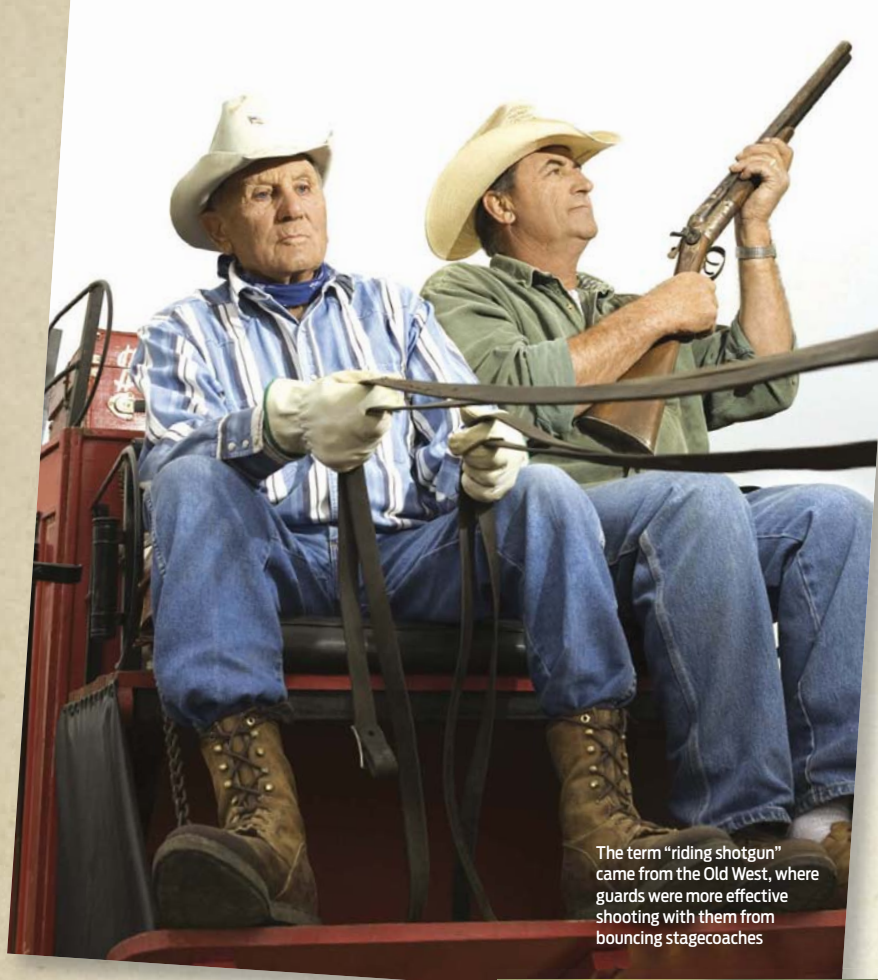
THE GUN THAT FED THE WEST

By Jim Dickson

The Shotgun Played a Vital Role In Hunting On the Frontier

While the Colt and Winchester vie for the title of “The Gun That Won the West,” the shotgun’s place is secure as “The Gun That Fed the West.”

The Old West was a hunter’s paradise with every type of game a shotgunner could desire—from multiple varieties of grouse to pigeons to ducks and geese. Let’s not forget jackrabbits either. They were underfoot everywhere, and a man and his family had to eat.



The term "riding shotgun" came from the Old West, where guards were more effective shooting with them from bouncing stagecoaches

Century, Folsom Arms, AKA Crescent Arms, made the Nitro Hunter brand for the Belknap Hardware stores. They and other makers would put any name on a shotgun desired if that would get an order.

HAMMER GUNS

Most of the guns had outside hammers until the 1880s, which is when the hammerless guns began to become available. While many men were resistant to change, many others welcomed the new hammerless design.

Locking systems included both single- and double-underlug types. There was the Lefauchaux action, whose lever became the forearm, a weaker but still acceptable design; the English Jones under-lever screw grip, which

All this hunting was a job for a shotgun, and you're about to see why every family had at least one.

HARDWARE STORE GUNS

The guns ranged from muzzle-loading muskets to Best Quality doubles from the British Isles. The Birmingham gun trade provided every quality of gun for the American market as did the Belgium gun trade.

The majority were the cheap but rugged guns you got at the local hardware store. Many chains had their own store brands even though someone else made the gun itself. This was continued into the 20th Century when Sears had the J.C. Higgins name put on guns made for them by major American gun makers.

In the 19th and early 20th



never loosened in service; the Greener cross-bolt; and assorted other inventions.

The best of the lot was the square cross-bolt cut at an angle so that it was self-tightening. This was used on the L.C. Smith and Ansley H. Fox shotguns. These were America's finest shotguns.

While some think that the Parker should be included, I cannot forget an old master gunsmith telling me how he loved the Parker shotgun because if you had a few men hunting hard with Parkers, the gunsmith had all the work he could handle.

REPEATING SHOTGUNS

Toward the end of the Old West, the repeating shotgun ap-

Single and Double Barrels

While everyone wanted a double-barrel shotgun, many had to make do with the single-barrel shotgun that is so identified with farmers to this day. Considering how well a single-barrel shotgun can handle in the hands they were not under as much of a handicap as you might suppose.

To this day, if a double-barrel shotgun is not available, a single-barrel shotgun is my second choice. These were not all the break-open type still sold today. The Zulu was a Snider breech on a bored out musket turning it into a single-barrel shotgun. I always liked them. There were also falling block shotguns, including some Sharps made as shotguns.

The Remington rolling block also was made as a shotgun. Of all the types of guns ever made, the single-barrel shotgun is the one most often completely worn out in service. What better testament to their value and utility could there be?

peared and was much beloved by the market hunters. Winchester had a very fine lever-action shotgun and Burgess and Winchester both had excellent pump guns.

They weren't as lively in the hands as a single- or double-barreled gun, but they held a lot of shells and a market hunter wanted to get as many from a flock as he could before they were gone.

SHOTGUNS AS DEFENSIVE ARMS

We often think of the shotgun as a gunfighting weapon, but it has grave limitations as such. Its buckshot does not open up into a wide pattern at close range and at long range the pattern is too big to guarantee a hit in the vitals. It is only at its best at medium ranges.

A Colt .45 or a Winchester 73 had no such problems and far out ranged any shotgun. Unlike the shotgun, they did not have a big spread of shot to hit the farm wife carrying the basket of eggs off to the side of the shootout.

The shotgun still found use because of its intimidation factor and the value of that spread when dealing with a mob. In the old days, the law shot up a mob.

The reason we call a short-barreled '97 Winchester pump shotgun a riot gun was because it was considered the best way to hit

everyone in the front of the mob quickly. Hold the trigger back and keep pumping. Reload and repeat until riot over. That was the old formula for handling riots. There didn't ever seem to be much of a problem with riots as long as that was the accepted solution.

We often think of the guard on a stagecoach "riding shotgun." There was a very good reason to give him a shotgun. Did you ever try to hit anything from the back of a bouncing, bucking stagecoach? At the first sign of trouble the drivers were apt to try to outrun it. That's no place for Camp Perry slow fire matches.

Catching up to a stagecoach that is spewing buckshot is not the sort of race that you want to be in, and the horse isn't going to want to keep going once he gets hit by a pellet. Not being thrown in that situation can be a good trick.

That shotgun also saw even more use against dogs or wolves chasing the horses. Dogs are so bad about doing this that some breeds of dogs were bred as coach dogs to run alongside the coach and fight off curs that would panic or injure the horses.

Some, like the Dalmatian, were specialized for this and others, like the English Setter, did double duty as coach and bird dogs.



Early black powder shotguns of the Old West featured external hammers or "mule ears"



Some cowboy action shooters, such as Doug Reiner, aka Driftwood Johnson, still use handloaded blackpowder shells when competing. Photo by Steven Paul Barlow

Most people today don't know how popular the English Setter once was for this purpose. Coach dogs weren't part of the stage lines budget so a shotgun took care of any four-legged problems that arose.

Doc Holliday was one of the most innovative shotgun users. He carried a sawed off double-barrel shotgun suspended by a cord from his shoulder. Doc always wore a long coat. When he pulled the coat back the shotgun, which had been forced down by the weight of the coat, rocked back on its balance point to a level position so all Doc had to do was grab it and fire.

DEFENDING THE HOMESTEAD

Many instances of gun-fighting with shotguns arose

Damascus Barrels Unfairly Dismissed

Barrels were fluid steel, and the better ones were Damascus steel. All were safe then and now for the shot weight and dram charge intended, regardless of whether it is loaded with black powder or smokeless powder.

The story that Damascus barrels were unsafe to fire was a bald-faced lie told by the gun companies after WWI in order to sell everyone in the country a new shotgun that they didn't need.

The Damascus barrel-making center at Liege was a casualty of the war with most of its labor force drafted and shot up as cannon fodder. Damascus barrels would not be available in quantity for quite a while, and that meant that there would not be makers defending them.

Ignoring the fact that these same gun companies were selling Damascus barrels for smokeless shells up to 1914, the decision to label Damascus barrels was made.

The gun companies bought up all the burst Damascus barrels that they could find but they would not buy a burst steel barrel. A careful look at these advertising showpieces shows that any barrel would have burst in those conditions.

They were caused by four things: A barrel plugged with mud or snow after a stumble or fall; a barrel obstruction in the bore; a 20 gauge shell dropped in ahead of a 12-gauge shell, which was then fired. (A few years back General Franco of Spain blew up a new Purdey that way when his loader made that mistake.)

And finally the most spectacular of all, some numbskull loading the new Infallible Powder, now known as Unique, bulk for bulk with blackpowder. That makes a gun into a dandy hand grenade, regardless of what barrel steel is used.

The truth is found in the proof house records of England and Europe. A Damascus barrel gun has never burst if it was still in proof (not bored out paper thin or rusted out or rechambered to a longer shell) and used with the shot load for which it was proofed.

The same cannot be said for modern fluid steel barrels, which in rare events blow up without warning with factory ammo. I personally know two men with maimed hands who got them this way. One was a shop foreman testing a gun at the factory. The reason for this is a flaw in the fluid steel that passes proof but over time becomes a crack that causes a burst barrel.

Damascus cannot fail in this way because it is a laminar structure in which a crack will stop at the next layer it meets.

Destruction tests of both fluid steel and Damascus barrels by the British proof house proved conclusively that Damascus was the better material when the best Damascus barrel proved three points stronger than the best fluid steel barrel.

Today you can still order a new nitro proofed Best Quality double with Damascus barrels from the Scottish and British gun-makers. Some of these are from barrel blanks made in the old days and some are new production. Grandpa was right about his gun barrels.

because the settler had one on him when trouble arose. Then as now, the poorer farmers might only have a single-barrel shotgun.

When outlaws, renegades or Indians attacked a homestead, every family member who could handle a gun had to fight and anything that would shoot was fired.

The spread of buckshot was a mighty handy thing when firing on a mounted rider galloping about your barnyard. Even if the pattern wasn't tight enough to hit him in the vitals, it could sure discourage him. If one or more pellets hit the horse, he might get thrown off hard, making an easy stationary target for long enough for anyone to hit him.

More common foes were wolves, coyotes, wild dogs, foxes in the hen house, crows in the corn field, rats in the corn crib, and all the other threats and pests to the livestock and the crops.

A neighbor's free ranging pigs needed special attention, as you didn't want to kill them and have trouble with your neighbor. Many a feud was started over this. A 12-gauge shot charge kicking up dirt in front of a hog can make it swap ends and light out for the nearest cane break like nothing you ever saw. These are the primary reasons you often saw a farmer carrying a shotgun as he went about his chores. Dealing with two-legged predators was much rarer, but it was always a consideration.

Back then a rifle or shotgun was always beside the door, and you didn't go out to meet a stranger without it nestled in your arm "just in case." Of course, a rabbit or grouse or any other game en-

countered could end up on the menu that night and that was all the more reason to keep it with you. A steady diet of corn and vegetables gets old fast, and you don't want to kill one of your chickens when there is a nice prairie chicken strutting around free for the taking.

A vital chore was blowing the head off any poisonous snake that was near where the children were playing. Parents then and now have always taken a dim view of rattlesnakes around their small children.

TAMING THE WEST

While not as glamorous as the Colt or the Winchester, the shotgun, like the plow, was an essential tool for taming the West. It was a tool that was sometimes pressed into gunfighting duty, but more often it was the tool that fed the family and protected the livestock and the crops. As such, it was indispensable to the pioneers of the Old West.

Jim Dickson has written for the gun magazines in 12 countries for nearly 30 years.



Although she did lots of shooting with a .22 rifle, she was pretty good with a shotgun too. Newspaper clipping of Annie Oakley, Police Gazette, 1899. Donated by Petra and Greg Martin. Autry National Center, 89.68.1

A NIGHT AT



THE MUSEUM

By Torrey Kim

5 Fascinating Exhibits that Will Transport You to the Old West



Want to see Buffalo Bill's grave, touch an old-school Remington or read an original letter written by Annie Oakley?



The Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum's extremely popular "Pioneer Town" area

You can do all of those things by visiting an Old West museum. When you plan your next trip, consider stopping into one of these five locations, which offer you the opportunity to peruse genuine Old West items that will transport you to your favorite era.

1. Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum

Location: Canyon, Texas

Website: PanHandlePlains.org

With collections that no other museum can claim to own, including artifacts related to Kit Carson and Billy the Kid, a visit to the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum is a must for Old West aficionados.

Spanning 285,000 square feet, the museum has over two million items among its three stories and goes back several eras.

"Our Old West is truly old because we have artifacts from the West that were here during dinosaur times—truly millions of years ago," said Michael Grauer, the museum's curator of art and western heritage.

Among the most popular at-

tractions is the museum's "Pioneer Town" exhibit. It's a replica of an Old West town that includes artifacts, a general store, a hotel, a jail, Texas state historical items, a schoolhouse, a bar and other venues.

It allows the visitor to get a true feel for how things would have been in the early 1900s, according to Stephanie Price, the museum's marketing and communications manager.

The museum also boasts an extensive Old West firearms collection, with more than 1,000 guns, including Springfields, Colt pistols, Winchester repeating rifles and even Charles Goodnight's plains rifle.

In addition to its permanent exhibits, Panhandle-Plains features a variety of special exhibitions.

"We have many artifacts of women who helped settle the American West, and our current Girls of the Golden West exhibit is a collection of photographs," Grauer said.

The stunning collection includes original rodeo photographs

of female trick riders, performers and shootists.

"Most people don't realize in early rodeo women did all the same events that men did until the early 1920s," Grauer said.

2. Autry National Center of the American West

Location: Los Angeles, CA

Website: TheAutry.org

Whether you want to peruse artifacts of the Old West, get a taste of early Native American life or simply pore over the historical documents of the West, the Autry can wet your whistle.

This comprehensive facility houses over half a million pieces of art and items

related to the American West, including two research libraries that make it a cornerstone of early American culture. You can self-guide your way through the Autry or you can stop into some of the most popular exhibits in the museum.

Among our favorites is the "Western Frontiers: Stories of Fact and Fiction" collection, which is

housed in the Gamble Firearms Gallery and features some of the oldest and rarest guns in history. From Remington to Smith & Wesson and beyond, you'll get an in-depth look at the roles that guns have played over time in the West.

The Autry is also home to the famous annual Masters of the American West Fine Art Exhibition, which runs through the first quarter of 2015.

The show "represents the leading figures in contemporary Western Realism, art that reflects a direct relationship to history and academic tradition," said curator Amy Scott. "In this sense, Masters artists are interested in some of the themes that have occupied Western artists for almost two centuries, including native peoples, grand and majestic landscapes,

migration and settlement, and cowboys and range life."

3. National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame

Location: Fort Worth, Texas

Website: CowGirl.net

Old cowgirls never die—they just ride off to the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, which honors the women of the American West.

"We have 215 honorees and they can be inducted in five different categories," said Ashley Henderson, Collections Manager.

The categories are artists/writers, entertainers, stewards of the land and livestock, trailblazers and pioneers, or champions and competitive performers. But the Hall of Fame is just part of

the appeal that lies within the Cowgirl Museum. Visitors can explore exhibits ranging from early settlers, which includes people like the Ingalls family, as well as rodeo performers.

"We have an Into the Arena spotlight gallery that goes from the earliest performers in the Wild West shows all the way through when Bonnie McCarroll died in a rodeo show and women subsequently got pushed out and later developed the Girls Rodeo Association on their own," Henderson said.

Another spotlight gallery showcases the entertainers and writers and discusses how the cowgirl has been portrayed in popular culture.

Among the biggest draws at the Cowgirl Museum are the arti-



Cased presentation Their conversion of Model 1860 Army revolver, serial number 185326 I.E., manufactured by Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company, circa 1869. Owned by Marquis de San Juan and Governor General of Puerto Rico Don Jose Laureano Sanz. The George Gamble Collection, Autry National Center, 2012.2.10



facts and saddles that were used by famous cowgirls like Dale Evans and Tad Lucas. Other visitors are interested in envisioning themselves as cowgirls by hitting the well-known bronc ride.

"Guests can get up on a model of a horse, and it records them riding it back and forth," Henderson said. "The background is an early 1900s rodeo arena, and you can go online and see your bronc ride, which is a really popular part of the museum."

Our favorite part? The personal objects from Annie Oakley, which include her wedding ring and one of her 16-gauge shotguns, as well as several of her original letters.

4. Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum

Location: Cheyenne, Wyoming
Website: OldWestMuseum.org

You can combine your interest in seeing live rodeo along with your love of Old West artifacts with a visit to Cheyenne, Wyoming's Frontier Days Old West Museum.

"We have a lot of things going for us, specifically our dedication to one of the world's oldest and most continuously operating outdoor rodeos in the world," said curator Mike Kassel. "We've been in operation since 1897 and just celebrated our 118th year. We've been recognized as one of the largest outdoor rodeos since that time to the present—we're the daddy of them all."

Many of the rules, regulations and required gear associated with rodeo, such as side open shoot-gates, were invented in Cheyenne.

"It's a tremendous part of modern American Western heritage," he said. "The museum follows the history of this rodeo,

including all—both people and animals. The evolution of various rodeo events that took place here first, such as a rodeo parade we created in 1922 that used old carriages. From 1927 on, that became a regular feature, and we have one of the largest rolling carriage collections in the world that's on display."

The carriages include a Mountain Chuckwagon built by Studebaker Brothers Manufacturers around 1915, an Overland Stagecoach built by Abbot-Downing in 1860 that crossed the Laramie Plains and a Deadwood Stagecoach believed to be made by Abbot-Downing in 1865, which was used on the Cheyenne-Black Hills Stage Line through 1887.

"The Deadwood wagon is designed for six (not including every-one that could hang on to the top)," Kassel said.

“Our Old West is truly old because we have artifacts from the West that were here during dinosaur times—truly millions of years ago.”

— *Michael Grauer, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum*

It may have more miles on it than any other stage coach in current existence, because it rolled weekly over a period of 14 years between Cheyenne, Wyo. and Deadwood, S.D.—a distance of over nearly 300 miles one way. Around 1900, the vehicle was purchased by the Irwin Brothers Wild West Show and was used in mock stage-coach robberies until 1914.

5. Buffalo Bill Museum

Location: Denver, Colorado

Website: BuffaloBill.org

If you've seen Buffalo Bill memorabilia, you were probably intrigued—but if you want to check out his real artifacts, it's time to head down to the Buffalo Bill Museum and get a close look at his actual possessions.

The museum and Buffalo Bill's grave are on the same property, so visitors to his resting place can also see his personal items inside of the building, said Steve Friesen, director of the Buffalo Bill Museum. “We have several of his show outfits, saddles and a nice collection of his guns,” Friesen said. “He preferred Winchesters, so we have four of those as well as a Springfield that was one of the

several rifles that he would have used as a buffalo hunter. In addition, one of his favorite saddles that he was often pictured on is here.”

The museum also serves as home for other Wild West artifacts, including items that belonged to Sitting Bull, a Lakota chief who was a friend of Buffalo Bill's, and personal belongings of Short Bull, a leader of the Ghost Dance movement from the 1890s.

Buffalo Bill personally asked to be buried on Lookout Mountain, where he remains on the site of the museum named in his honor.

“We have about 65 acres, including a gift shop, museum and

the grave, as well as spectacular views of the Rockies to the West and the Great Plains to the East. It's one of the reasons Buffalo Bill liked this spot, because the mountains and plains were both places where he'd spent some of the best times of his life,” Friesen said.

In addition to its Buffalo Bill memorabilia, the museum also has a unique firearms collection related to the Old West that was started by Johnny Baker, Buffalo Bill's foster son.

Torrey Kim is a North Carolina-based freelance writer who enjoys researching and studying customs of the Old West.



This Buffalo Bill photograph dates to 1890. In the picture, he is leaning on a Winchester Model 1873. Photo courtesy of The Buffalo Bill Museum

UBERTI'S .22



CATTLEMAN 1873



BY TIM STETZER

Uberti Brings the Iconic Single Action Army Into the 21st Century Without Losing Any Of Its 19th Century Charm

When Colt first put out the Single Action Army for a military contract in 1873, I doubt anyone in the company realized that they had just made one of the most iconic firearms in history or that it would still be going strong nearly a century and a half later.



Uberti uses attractive one piece walnut grips on the Model 1873. Wood to metal fit and finish are excellent

Uberti is one of the major players keeping the Single Action Army alive and its Italian craftsmen have more than half a century of experience building these classic wheelguns.

In addition to making true replicas of period pieces, they've also come up with variations that the original engineers and designers had never envisioned, such as the 12-shot 1873 Cattleman revolver we're looking at here.

Uberti has been making guns since 1959, starting with replica black powder revolvers and then moving to add cartridge revolvers and rifles to the mix. They're extremely popular on the Cowboy Action Shooting (CAS) circle and with collectors who either can't afford an antique Colt or Winchester or who want to preserve their original pieces and shoot a replica.

UBERTI NO STRANGER TO .22 PISTOLS

In addition to an extremely wide array of .357 Magnum, .44 Magnum and .45 Colt single actions, Uberti also has a good selection of .22 LR rimfire single actions in the Cattleman line as well.

They make a traditional six-shot model with both steel and brass backstraps in various barrel lengths, but the really unique piece is the new 12-shot model.

The Cattleman is built on a beautiful full-sized 1873 steel, case-hardened frame. Its barrel, fluted cylinder and backstrap are deeply blued. Barrel lengths are 4.75, 5.5 or 7.5 inches—all classic single-action barrel lengths. Grips are one piece, oil-finished walnut and complement the case hardening and bluing nicely.

Sights are fixed just like on an

original Single Action Army. When you look at and handle the Cattleman, it looks and feels just like its big bore brethren. The excellent fit and finish on the piece are immediately evident as well.

It isn't until you pull the hammer back to half-cock and flip down the loading gate that you realize that there's something new here. The .22 chambers are close together and as you rotate the cylinder around you soon see that this isn't your pappy's Single Action Army. The Cattleman's sturdy cylinder is bored out to accept 12 rounds of .22 Long Rifle, which should make for a great day on the range or in the field.

My test sample was the handy 4.75-inch model, which is the size revolver I came to appreciate after years of Cowboy Action Shooting. I started with 7.5- and 5.5-inch

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: A. Uberti

Contact: 901 Eighth Street
Pocomoke, MD 21851

Phone: (800) 264-4962

Web: www.uberti.com

Model: 1873 Cattleman 12-Shot .22 LR

Caliber: .22 Long Rifle

Barrel Lengths: 4.75" (tested), 5.5", and 7.5"

Weight: 42.5 ounces

Finish: Case-hardened frame, blued barrel and cylinder

Grip: One-piece, walnut

Capacity: 12 rounds

MSRP: \$569.00

guns, but later settled on the short, handy 4.75-inch models. I found that they cleared leather easily and pointed quickly for me. Uberti certainly still has you covered if you prefer a longer barrel though.

Handling characteristics are very good. If you're used to a big

bore single action, then you'll transition to the Cattleman nicely. The smaller framed .22's can be nice, but sometimes it's better to have the heft and weight of a full-sized pistol, especially if you're using it as an understudy to your larger caliber revolver.

The action and trigger are quite smooth for a factory gun. It may not have the slicked-up action of a race gun, but I don't see any need to do anything with the gun right out of the box. It should be plenty fine for recreational shooting or carrying afield.

PUTTING THE CATTLEMAN TO THE TEST

I spent a cool fall morning at the range with my buddy Ian, who also shot CAS with me for years. We took a variety of Winchester .22 LR with us, along with a load from Remington and my ammo box of mixed, junk .22.

While .22 ammunition is still

very affordable to shoot, most folks realize that prices are up over what they used to be and availability, while improving, can still be a bit sketchy at times.

That being the case, I've been raiding a stash of .22 that I inherited from my dad years ago. It's about 3,000 rounds or so of mixed .22 from loose leftover rounds and random boxes all dumped together in a slurry of various brands, bullet styles and weights. Grab 10 rounds and you'll be lucky if two are the same. It's not the best stuff for accuracy testing or necessarily running through semi-autos, but I figured it'd be great fodder for wheelgun plinking.

We set up on the bench using an MTM pistol rest and initially planned to do our testing at 25 yards. However, we found with the classically styled round front sight and simple groove rear, that our sights pretty much disappeared on the black dots of our targets. So we settled on starting at 15 yards instead. Even at 15 we had some issues getting a consistent sight picture on the 6-inch black dots we were using, so we settled on taking a six o'clock hold to obtain a repeatable sight picture.

Being that we were tending to shoot high and left with the Cattleman, this worked out fairly well. We shot five-shot groups for the accuracy testing portion of our day and our groups typically ran in the two- to three-inch range. At seven yards we pulled things in to the one- to two-inch range.

We'd frequently have four rounds fairly tight and then have a flier open the group up. While certainly not match accuracy at 15



When you pop the cylinder out on the Cattleman you immediately notice the abundance of chambers on this model. Uberti has managed to double the capacity of this .22 LR revolver over conventional versions



The Cattleman in its true element. The high capacity rimfire revolver was right at home on the steel plate range engaging multiple targets

yards, we weren't really too put off, as neither one of us saw the Cattleman as the type of pistol you're going to be spending a lot of time on bullseye shooting.

We shifted to shooting some standing, offhand groups at both 7 and 15 yards with a mix of our quality ammo as well as some of the mixed .22. We found ourselves more comfortable with the less formal shooting position, probably due to years of shooting single-action revolvers at CAS matches.

I did some work with a few cylinders on mixed batch .22 Shorts during this time as well and found that they actually shot pretty well. I like shooting Shorts in revolvers and bolt-action rifles. I've generally had pretty good luck in the accuracy department and the low noise level is a plus, especially with younger shooters who may be more noise and flinch sensitive.

With that out of the way, we

eagerly moved on to more casual shooting. We started on the same 25-yard range where we did our accuracy testing and started picking off fragments of broken clay pigeons out on the back stop.

With a little Kentucky windage, compensating for the pistol hitting high and left, we were able to either shatter the clay bird fragments or at least come close enough to menace them pretty severely.

After that we shifted ranges to my gun club's steel plate range,

which is fantastic for casual plinking or for practicing engaging multiple targets. They have a couple racks of plates that you can shoot from 25 yards on in. It was on this range that the Uberti Cattleman truly came alive.

As mentioned previously, the handling characteristics of this six-gun are quite good. That, coupled with its smooth action and crisp trigger, made it a joy to use when engaging multiple plates.

It was also here that the 12-round cylinder really showed its

ACCURACY RESULTS UBERTI 1873 CATTLEMAN 12-SHOT .22 LR

Load	Group Size	Average Velocity
Winchester M-22, 40gr	17/8"	938fps
Winchester Super X, 40gr	2 15/16"	1,025fps
Winchester Super X, 37gr	2 1/8"	1,004fps
Remington High Velocity, HP	2 1/4"	940fps

All accuracy testing done at 15 yards from MTM pistol rest, 42 degrees, partly cloudy

**“The .22 LR
Uberti 1873
Cattleman is a finely
built revolver that
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Century spin with its
‘high capacity’ 12-shot
cylinder.”**

value. When punching five-round groups from the bench, you didn't really benefit from the extra cylinder capacity. But when you're standing in front of a plate rack and can spend more time shooting than you do loading, you quickly came to appreciate the nifty high capacity plinker.

We used mostly the junk .22 on this range and the Uberti worked like a champ even with this old and grungy ammo. I think we had one misfire that wouldn't go off even with repeated tries and different portions of the rim, and had the cylinder bind once on a high rim.

Considering we had no issues with the new ammo and that this mixed batch was both old and cruddy, I consider that pretty good. I was quite honestly surprised we didn't have more issues. The Uberti chowed down mixed cylinders of decades old ammo with aplomb and provided for an extremely enjoyable range session. All told, we probably ran close to 400 rounds through the Cattleman throughout the morning.

The .22 LR Uberti 1873 Cattleman is a finely built revolver that exemplifies the look and feel of the Old West while providing a 21st Century spin with its “high capac-

ity” 12-shot cylinder. That equates to more time on the firing line and less at the loading table.

For the recreational shooter who wants the Peacemaker appeal without the cost of .45 Colt ammo; the Cowboy Action Shooter looking for a practice piece or even the woodsman looking for a rugged trail companion, the 12-shot cattleman has a lot to offer.

Tim Stetzer also writes for Knives Illustrated and works for a major East Coast-based law enforcement agency. He is a lifelong shooter and has served in both the Army Reserves and Air Force Reserves

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Make sure to pack plenty of ammo when you head to the range. With its 12-shot cylinder capacity it doesn't take long for you to burn through the ammo once you start shooting the Cattleman

IS THE STORY OVER OR IS A NEW ONE JUST BEGINNING?

At the end of the early Western movies especially, the hero rode off into the sunset. The outlaws had been brought to justice and the fair maiden had been rescued. The cowboy's work was done.

Sometimes, however, there is just too much finality in such a scene. The cowboy generation, my generation, that grew up with cowboys as heroes is growing older. I often feel that the sun is setting on a way of life, on an appreciation of freedom and integrity, on the courage to stand up and fight for what is right and on the willingness to take responsibilities upon ourselves, even when the trail ahead is rough.

Those idealistic movie cowboys may have been more Hollywood fancy than historical fact. But their values were true. Maybe we need to look to the heroes deep inside ourselves to keep our traditions alive, not just on the shooting range, but in our everyday lives.

Unfortunately, we have to ride off into the sunset for this issue. But the story isn't coming to an end. We're heading toward our next great adventure just around the bend.

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