

stamp is on the underside of the barrel as it is with the .44-40 chambered revolvers.

The "45 CAL" and "45 CAL" style caliber designation was not altered during the 40,000 to 73,000 SNR. Our survey does show however two location changes from the previous rear trigger guard flat stamping of the 30,000 to 40,000 range. In the 45,000 to 50,000 range, the "45 CAL" stampings have been observed on left rear trigger guard bows. From the 50,000 to 73,000 range, all .45 caliber designations surveyed appear on left front trigger guard bows.

An important fact which could have been mentioned earlier in this chapter, but wasn't because of its importance, will now be discussed.

To refresh the reader's memory regarding experimental and early production Single Actions of late 1872 and the first half of 1873, it is again noted that those revolvers were barreled and chambered for either the .44 S & W American or .44 S & W Russian cartridge. (Each cartridge had its own chambering.) Production verification of the .44 caliber SAAs was found in several letters written by Colts' Vice Pres., General Franklin, U.S.A., Ret., and by several Ordnance Officers of the United States Army and Navy. The exact number of first year Single Actions and component parts manufactured for those S & W cartridges is unknown. Unfortunately, Colts' records show no known listings of these .44 caliber revolvers being shipped during 1872 or 1873. Only one of the 1872-73, .44 caliber SAs is known to have survived; it is serial number 4.

An educated "guesstimate" by this collector places original production of .44 S & W American and .44 S & W Russian chambered Single Actions during 1872 and 1873 to have been at least thirty revolvers, and a figure of fifty would probably not be out of line. The manufacture (not a final fitting to frames) of an additional 50 or more .44 caliber barrels is probable. The reader is also reminded of evidence supporting the fact that Colt's rebarreled and recylindereed a number of prior assembled .44 S & W American and S & W Russian Single Actions after the development of the .45 Colt cartridge.

Again it is noted that the first production barrels had seven lands and grooves with a gain twist. Before U. S. Government production had begun, in August of 1873, barrel rifling was changed to a sixteen inch standard twist with six lands and grooves.

What then was the final disposition of the removed and unused early .44 caliber barrels? Colt's thrifty nature again surfaced in late 1877 during assembly of the first .44-40 chambered Single Actions. Three 41,000 SNR, .44-40 caliber revolvers, which were fitted with early seven land, seven groove rifled barrels, have been surveyed.

The low survival rate of 1877-78 Single Actions, and the fact that *three* seven land and groove barreled revolvers are known to exist, leads us to speculate as to just how many of those barrels were originally produced before Colts' development and testing determined the superior performance of six land and groove rifling.

Most collectors of the Colt's Single Action Army consider first and foremost the physical characteristics and condition

of each revolver examined. But for many of us, any documented historical associations of those revolvers also holds great interest.

Many students of history will first consider the historical documentation of an arm over its physical condition. Whatever one's personal preference, the field of collecting Colt Single Actions can fulfill either desire.

For an overall view of the SA's place in history, John E. Parsons' *The Peacemaker and its Rivals*, Chapter IX, "Popularity of the Model "P" ", will give one an insight into this revolver's historical importance.

The 30,000 to 73,000 SNR has its share of historically related Single Actions. From this production period, Colt's SAA has documented associations with the following notable personalities: William Barclay "Bat" Masterson, Wyatt Earp, John P. Clum, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, John Selman, Cole Younger and Frank McLowry.

The first factory inscribed SAs appear in the Colt ledgers of this era. John Parsons makes note of the first recorded order which included Second Lieutenant B. N. Waters' inscribed Single Action.<sup>1</sup> A total of six SAs, nickel with ivory stocks, all in the 43,000 SNR, were included in that July 1878, shipment, in which the names of six U. S. Army Officers were inscribed on the revolver's backstraps. (See photo of B. N. Waters' inscription.)

Another of our photographed name inscriptions, a name which all Western history buffs will instantly recognize, is that of W. B. Masterson. In addition to being the first SA ordered directly from the factory by "Bat" Masterson, it is the only silver plated inscribed Colt known to have been ordered by him. This revolver, #53684, left the factory October 23, 1879. During the 1870 thru 1881 period, it is unusual to find a factory record of direct shipments to individuals such as in the first Masterson order, and the order for the six Army Officers. Nearly all SA purchases went through the then normal sales channels: Colts' large wholesale dealers, to a smaller retail outlet, and then to the buyer who originally placed the order. However, Colt's did allow military officers, law enforcement officers and important business and public officials the courtesy of direct purchases.

Wholesale Single Action orders, during our present 30,000 to 73,000 range, continued to be dominated by Colts' agents collectively known as the Allies. (The firm Schuyler, Hartley and Graham of the Allies had become Hartley and Graham by mid 1880.) However, increased sales were being shipped to Colts' London Agency; Winchester Repeating Arms Co.; Simmons Hardware Co., St. Louis, Mo.; J. P. Lower, Denver, Colorado; Schoverling, Daly and Gales, Chicago; Meyer and Geiger, N. Y.; N. Curry and Bros., San Francisco; and to **Wexel and Degress, New York and Mexico City, Mexico.**

The Mexican Government placed two substantial orders for Single Actions during this period which were handled by **Wexel and Degress.** One order for four hundred .44-40 caliber, nickel plated, Single Action Armies left Colt's on July 22, 1879. Surviving specimens from that shipment are in the 39,000 and 40,000 SNR. A second shipment totalling fifty revolvers, this time in .45 Colt caliber, started for Mexico on March 4, 1881. These revolvers are encompassed within the 64,000 SNR. Hence at least 450 SAs from the 30,000 to 73,000

<sup>1</sup> John E. Parsons, *The Peacemaker and its Rivals*, pp. 89 and 91.