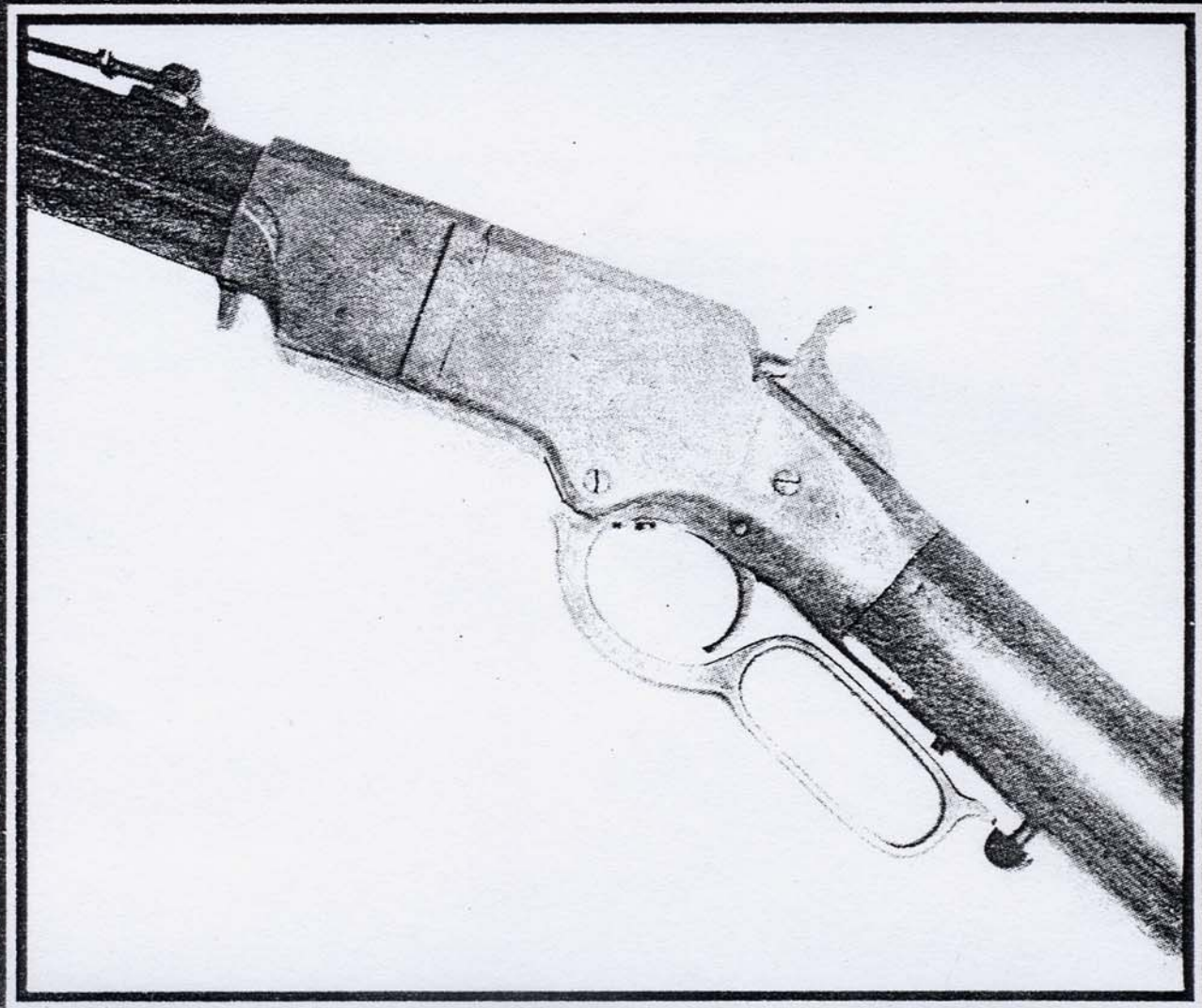


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A EUROPEAN-MADE .44 HENRY RIFLE

by Grant Sherriff

Our cover illustration this month is a European Military copy of the .44 Henry Rifle. Little is known of these German-made rifles, they are extremely rare, and only five or six examples are known to exist today.

It was difficult to find much factual information on this rifle. In 1864 Winchester sold some .44 Henry rifles to Prussia, and from these examples it must have been thought the design had some military potential.

During the early 1870s, Spangenberg & Sauer, Suhl, Thuringen, manufactured a small quantity of similar rifles to be submitted for Bavarian Army tests. The rifles could not have created much interest with the Bavarian army as only the trial run, probably not exceeding 400 in total, were manufactured. The sample rifle illustrated here is from this trial run.

Mechanically these rifles are identical to the Winchester made Henry, except for the magazine loading system and external fittings.

To load this rifle, the follower is pushed to the front of the magazine tube and turned into a locking slot. This movement pushes back a sliding cover to expose a cartridge profile cut out in the tube through which the cartridges are placed. It would seem quite an improvement on the Henry system where the front of the magazine was turned sideways, and the cartridges dropped into the tube.

Other differences from the Henry are that the sling fittings are on the right hand side, and a full length cleaning rod fitted to the left hand side.

Workmanship on the sample rifle is of a high standard. It is chambered for the .44 Henry Rimfire cartridge, and has a brass receiver. The firing pin has double strikers as in the Henry, the barrel is 27 1/2 inches in length, rifled with 6 grooves and lands of equal width, and having a left hand twist. There are no manufacturers markings, but the barrel and receiver bear numerous proof marks of the Royal Bavarian Armoury.

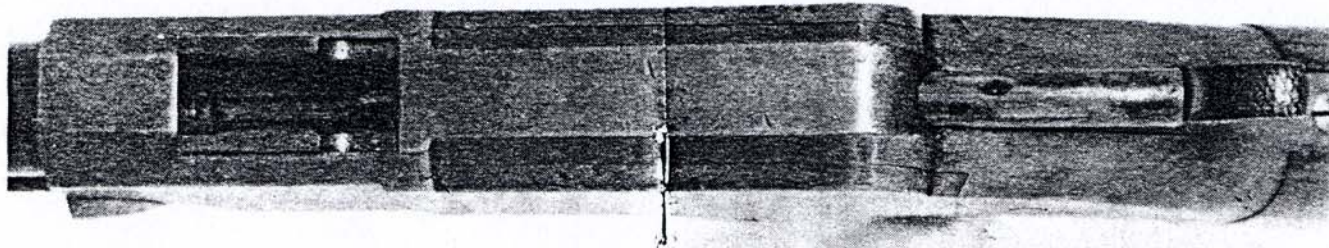
The serial number is 300, with no alphabetical prefix. As in normal European practise all the parts are so numbered. Numbers all match except the cleaning rod, which is numbered 324. The rifle has not seen great use, and the hammer still has traces of case hardening. The screws under the action, in the butt etc. are all undisturbed, and all face 'North South' as expected in a quality German firearm. The rifle is from the collection in the Dunedin Settlers Museum, and was donated in the 1930s.

What is interesting is the donors description 'Rumanian Military rifle'. The donor was obviously aware it came from Europe and had a military provenance. Most people would have assumed it was just another Winchester sporting rifle.

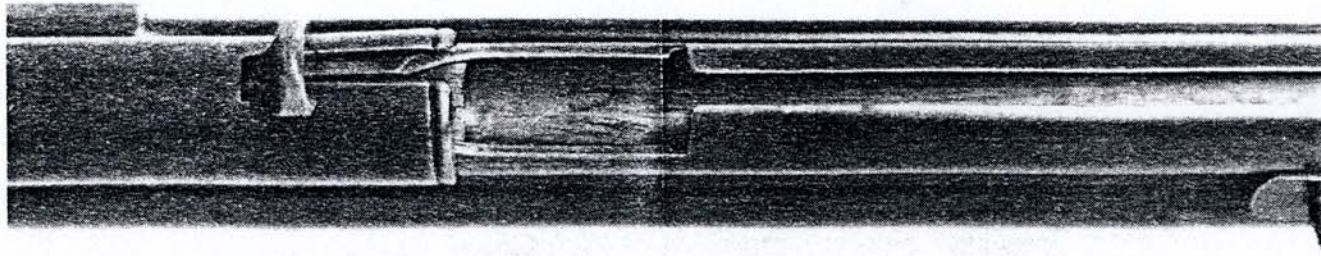
What continues to amaze the writer is the great variety of firearms which are to be found in New Zealand. It seems at least one example of every firearm design ever made can be found here somewhere.

We remind readers that when next in Dunedin to call and visit the Settlers Museum. While not many firearms are on display, they have one of the best collections of early European settlement artifacts in this country.

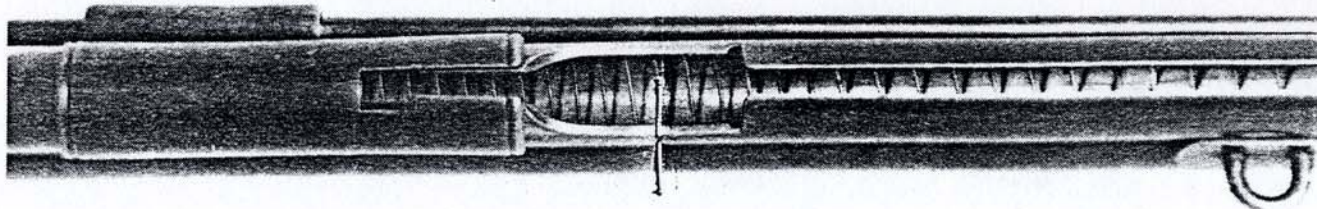
*References: Waffen Archiv. Lockhoven
The First Winchester, Parsons*



Top view Bavarian-made Henry copy.



Ready for loading, follower locked back.



Loading slot in magazine tube.



Note cleaning rod fit side of barrel.