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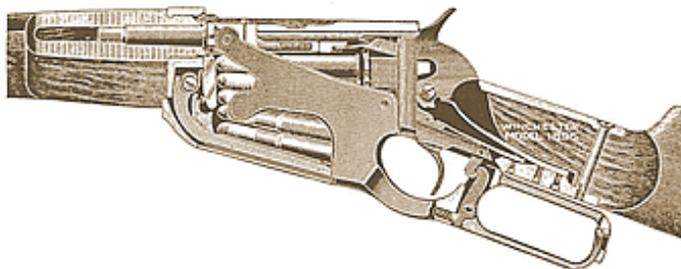
Texas Ranger Kiowa Jones and his Model 1895 Winchester. Gift of Mrs. Sansel Dent Nelson. ©2006, TRHF.

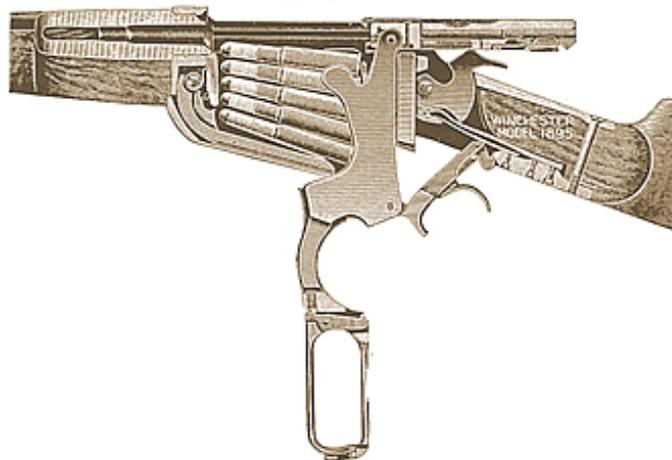
The Winchester Model 1895: The Gun That Shoots Two Miles*

By David Stroud

A few weeks ago, I received an email asking when I was going to do an article on the Winchester '95. As there is no time like the present, I replied that that model would be my next subject. Besides, I had not had a clue as to what I was going to write about anyway.

Because the Rangers carried and used a wide variety of weapons, many saved their money and purchased the best of the best from the best: Colt, Smith & Wesson, and Winchester.[1] Therefore, in discussing guns of the Texas Rangers, it is necessary to revisit those famous manufacturers because of the multitude of models they produced, even though many are no longer manufactured.





Model 1895 with Box Magazine Closed and Open

The Model 1895 Winchester rightly deserves special attention as one of the most popular repeating rifles ever used by the Texas Rangers.[2] In 1895, the U.S. Army was considering a new rifle that would accommodate the 30-40 Krag cartridge. In order to secure the contract, Winchester wanted to produce a weapon that would fire the pointed bullets.[3] To do so would require his company to make a radical departure from the tubular magazine that had become a recognizable feature of its famous lever actions.

John Browning accepted the challenge and, with the assistance of an unknown number of Winchester designers, fabricated the Model 1895 as the first Winchester to utilize a box magazine. Browning was awarded patent number 549,345 on November 5. As a result of the lateness of the year, only one '95 was produced, and it was given serial number 1.[4]

The '95 Winchester was a single-shot loader capable of "firing 25 times per minute from the shoulder. . . . as a repeater, at the rate of two to three shots per second." It retailed for thirty and thirty-two dollars, depending on whether it was a rifle, musket, or carbine and whether it had other features such as "take down." [5] Because the '95 was produced on two assembly lines, the letters A and B beside serial numbers denoted which line assembled that particular rifle in case replaced parts were ordered and what basic changes were in the magazine springs and firing pin retractors.[6]

The early '95s are marked on the rear part of the trigger link:

PAT. NOV. 5. 1895
-NOV. 12. 1895-

Barrels and sides of carbines and muskets usually marked:

MANUFACTURED BY THE-
-WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS CO. NEW HAVEN. CONN. U.S.A.-

The sides of early barrels, especially those in 30-40 caliber, often have:

-NICKEL STEEL BARREL-
ESPECIALLY FOR SMOKELESS POWDER

These markings are found on most '95s in calibers .30, .35, and .405 with serial numbers over 48,000. With the second model, Receivers began being marked with:

MANUFACTURED BY THE WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS CO.

NEW HAVEN. CONN. U.S.A. PAT NOV. 5. 95 NOV 12. 95. AUG 17. 97.

Added between serial numbers 22,400 and 45,000 were two additional dates: Jan. 25. 98 and Aug. 23. 98. After that, Aug. 6. 1907 was added.

The earliest upper tangs were marked:

WINCHESTER

MODEL 1895

With serial number 50,000, the tang marking changed to:

MODEL 1895
-WINCHESTER-
TRADE MARK

Shortly after the serial number 50,000, the following marking appeared and became standard after 62,000:

MODEL 1895
-WINCHESTER-
TRADE MARK REG. IN U.S. PAT. OFF.



Trigger Tang Markings.

Between serial numbers 45,000 and 60,000, the caliber markings were changed from the top of the barrel to the side. Winchester proof marks are seldom found below numbers in the 28,000 range, but when nearing 32,000, few '95s are found without them.

The original '95s were chambered only for the 30-40 Army, .38-72 W.C.F, and .40-72 W.C.F. cartridges? As production continued, chambers were altered to receive 303 British (1898), .35 W.C.F (1895), .405 W.C.F. (1904), .30-03 (1895), .30-06 (1908), and .30-03 (1905). The .30-03 was available only as a special order.



Smokeless Powder, Pointed Full Patch Bullet.



Smokeless Powder, Soft Point Bullet.



Smokeless Powder, Pointed Soft Point Bullet.

Common Cartridges.

The .38-72 and .40-72 black powder cartridges were discontinued, and the standard became smokeless powder rounds standard.[7] The stocks were oil-finished, select, straight-grain walnut, and carbines and muskets were available with modified shotgun-style butt plates with trapdoors. The original levers were one piece, with two-piece levers on Second Models.[8]

Winchester received a minor government contract for 10,000 '95s. These 28"-barreled muskets, unlike those for civilians, had U.S. stamped on the top of receiver rings along with a number of government inspector's marks placed in various locations. Also, they were outfitted with sling loops, a hand guard, and a bayonet stud. The Army used the '95s for a short while and then sold them as surplus. Only a few have survived.[9]

As with all Winchesters, extra-priced special orders were available, such as shorter or longer barrels than the standard 22" carbine and 28" musket. Part-round or heavier barrels were also obtainable, as were special inscriptions and engraving. [10]



Adjustable Rear Sight

Perhaps the most famous gun enthusiast to order a '95 was Theodore Roosevelt, who wanted a .405 Winchester with a 24" round barrel, a flattop sporting rear, a Lyman gold-bead front sight, sling swivels, and a checkered, fancy-grain stock. Winchester obliged, and T.R. received the beautiful '95, serial number 63,736.[11]



Theodore Roosevelt Hunting in Africa with his Model 1895 Winchester.



Notes and References

*Paraphrase of a Sears, Roebuck & Co. 1902 catalogue ad.

1. Regardless of knowledgeable debate, these were the best and most famous, proven by the number of models they produced over the widest span of years. In the nineteenth century, Remington would have been included but, after their last attempt to compete with the Colt Single Action Army, Remington went into receivership in 1888.

2. Byron Johnson, Director, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame.

3. George Madis, *The Winchester Handbook* (Brownsboro, Texas: Art & Reference House, 1981), 153.

4. George Madis, *The Winchester Book, 1 of 1000*, (Brownsboro, Texas: Art & Reference House, 1985), 451. Between 1895 and 1932, when the '95 was discontinued, minor improvements were made, but this did not alter the basic model's appearance.

5. Winchester Repeating Arms Co., 1916 catalog, 49-51. The Takedown was only available as a rifle.

6. Madis, *The Winchester Book*, 451.

7. Madis, *The Winchester Handbook*, 156.

8. *Ibid.*, 158.

9. *Ibid.*, 152, 156. As with any rare collectable, buyers should use extreme caution when considering adding a military-purchased '95 to their collection.

10. Because of the receiver panels and the high price of engraving, only twenty-seven were located by Winchester expert and author George Madis. Therefore, use extreme caution if considering one.

11. Madis, *The Winchester Book*, p. 477. The Rough Rider president was exceptionally fond of the '95 and ordered a num

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