



Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews

Pair of Colt 1911A1 pistols owned by M.T. Gonzallas

The following article has been adapted from a special project report on key artifacts in the Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. This project report was written in 2018 based on extensive research compiled by project intern Tom Andrews.

Pair of Colt 1911A1 pistols owned by M.T. Gonzauillas

Provenance

The provenance for these pistols is very good. The Colt factory letter confirms their features as shipped by the factory and their shipment to a retailer in Fort Worth during a time that we know Gonzauillas lived in that area. Additionally, the cutaway trigger guards, trigger and hammer extensions, and initials on the grips are all defining characteristics of firearms known to have been in his possession. Additionally, his monogram is cut into the back of each grip panel on both pistols, fitting with his well-known penchant for labelling his possessions.

M.T. Gonzauillas Biographical Information

Early Life

Manuel Trazazas “Lone Wolf” Gonzauillas was born on July 4, 1891 in Cadiz, Spain to a Spanish father and Canadian mother, both naturalized American citizens on vacation. He served in the Mexican Army, earning the rank of major at 20 years old. He then spent five years with the U.S. Treasury Department before joining the Texas Rangers in 1920.

Ranger Service

He was first assigned to the oil fields of Wichita County, where he earned the nickname “El Lobo Solo” or “Lonewolf.” His preference for operating alone spawned the nickname. He quickly gained a reputation as an efficient enforcer of the law, on one occasion stockading prisoners in an abandoned church in a town without a large enough jail to hold them.

He along with the majority of his fellow Rangers were fired by Governor Miriam Ferguson after she took office in 1933 because the Rangers had supported her political rival. When the Rangers were integrated into the new Department of Public Safety in 1935, he was made superintendent of their Bureau of Intelligence, where he created one of the most advanced crime labs in the country. In 1940, he resigned his position at the Bureau to rejoin Ranger Company B in Dallas as a Captain. He served with them until his retirement on May 3, 1951.

Retirement and Later Life

After his time with the Rangers, Gonzauillas became a technical consultant for Hollywood films and television. He was best known for his work on *Tales of the Texas Rangers*, and his experiences during the hunt for the “Phantom Killer” were made into the film, *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*. He was also a cofounder of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in 1968. He died in Dallas at the age of 86 in 1977.

History of the Colt 1911 Pistol

The Model 1911 Automatic Pistol, Civilian Series, is distinguished from government model pistols primarily by the letter “C” prefix in the serial numbers. The 1911 Pistol came standard in 45 ACP, 5” barrel length, and with 7 shot magazines. Serial numbers began with C1 and ran through C336169 at the end of the original serial range in 1970.

Information Specific to these Firearm

The pistols are Colt Standard 1911A1 Government Model, Commercial Conversion. They are exquisitely engraved with gold inlay throughout. They feature bone grips with a bull's head on the outside and the initials "MTG" on the inside grips. They feature custom hammers with mirrored extensions. The "left" gun, (2920.2) features an ambidextrous safety lever, a rare modification for the time period. Both pistols feature cutaway trigger guards, which is said to have been a signature feature of Gonzauillas' guns, and custom wide triggers. The grip safeties are also locked in the firing position. The inside of each grip panel features Gonzauillas' monogram. Additionally, each pistol bears an inscription above the trigger on the underside of the frame, "Never Draw Me Without Cause, Nor Shield Me With Dishonor."