



Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews

Colt Third Model Dragoon with shoulder stock

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.

Colt Third Model Dragoon with shoulder stock

History of the Colt Dragoon Pistol

The Colt Dragoon was developed to replace the Colt Walker. Introduced in 1848, the Dragoon featured a .44 Caliber 6-shot cylinder and a 7-1/2" part round, part octagonal barrel. Grips were carved in one piece out of walnut. The frame, hammer, and lever were casehardened, and other metal parts blued. The grip straps were commonly made of brass, and civilian models were silver plated, with military examples left unfinished.

The Third Model Dragoon was manufactured from 1851 to 1861, with total production estimated at 10,500 pistols. Serial numbers run from 10,200 (overlapping somewhat with the Second Model Dragoons) and continue to about 19,600. Barrel markings are two small variations of the classic: "ADDRESS SAM COLT NEW-YORK CITY" This and "COLT'S/PATENT" were stamped on the left side of the frame. Government issued revolvers have "U.S." centered beneath the patent marking. Cylinders continued to feature the Texas Ranger and Indian fight scene scroll engraving. The most common cylinder markings were "U.S.M.R." with a much rarer few featuring "U.S. DRAGOONS."

The distinguishing physical features of the Third Model are rectangular cylinder stop slots and a rounded trigger guard. Pistols fitted for shoulder stocks, of which there were an estimated 1,200 to 1,500 produced, have three variations in attachment points. The first type attaches to the revolver via two prongs which engage with two slots in the back strap. The second type attaches by one prong slotting into the back strap and a hook which clamps onto the butt of the pistol. The third type features extensions to the yoke of the stock which fit into cutouts on each side of the revolver's recoil shield and has a hook that clamps onto the butt. All stocks are either plain or feature canteen inserts, the presence of which would add considerable value.¹

Information Specific to this Firearm

The pistol bears the cylinder marking "U.S.M.R." and the serial number 17011. This and the style of stock attachment identifies this as a third type pistol, the most common of the Dragoons which were fitted for shoulder stocks. The pistol was manufactured in 1858 according to Colt records. The shoulder stock bears the serial numbers 17281 and 17282, indicating it was originally issued to a different set of pistols and was likely acquired later by a collector.



Figure 1: 1233a&b-Colt Third Model Dragoon with shoulder stock

¹ Flayderman, 86–96.