



Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews

Henry 1860 Rifle with Civil War engraving

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.

Henry 1860 Rifle with Civil War engraving

History of the Henry 1860 Rifle

In 1858, B. Taylor Henry began experimenting with a more powerful rifle cartridge, spurred by the unsatisfactory power of the Volcanic Cartridge. That same year, he created the .44 Rimfire cartridge and a rifle that could fire it. Thus the Henry 1860 Rifle was born. After a setup period, the rifles were first offered to the public starting in 1862, with rifles produced that year numbering between sn 301 and sn 1300. Some number of rifles were returned to the factory to have half-cock hammers or lever latches added. It is also common to find sight dovetails cut into the receivers of rifles numbered below sn 3000. Factory assembly numbers were often placed on the forward part of the barrel under the rotating loading sleeve as well as on the sleeve itself and the retaining band which holds the front sight mount.

The early brass frame rifles are characterized by their brass frame and butt plates, changed from iron construction on the earliest rifles. These rifles were sold with a four-piece wooden cleaning rod often made from hickory and stored in the butt stock. Interestingly, this style of cleaning rod would not fit into the butt stock of a later brass frame rifle, which were paired with iron cleaning rods fitted with brass tips.¹

Information specific to this firearm

This rifle bears the serial number 5112 and is an Early Brass Frame Model manufactured in 1864 according to Winchester factory records. It is engraved "Maj. Horace Gray. 4th Mich. Cav" on the left side plate and "Union" on the right side plate. It has sling attachments and the cleaning rod is absent.

¹ Madis, *The Winchester Book*, 27–51.