

best work he could with the materials he had. I have not seen any data that suggest any “funny” numbers produced by Winchester.

Claiming that my staff and I are attempting to smear the reputation of the key Winchester researcher of our age or “throw the collecting community into turmoil” is simply name-calling. If someone comes across documentary evidence of errors with our research or of contradictory evidence, please bring it to our attention. The most accurate information will produce the best results for the collector community.

It sounds trite, but the members of the CFM really have made us what we are. The staff may come and go, but the membership is the driving force behind what we are and what we do. With that said, I want to thank all of you for your continuing support of our activities. Without you,

we would not have the resources we have and the increased business. We add new members almost daily, much of them from word-of-mouth as they hear your comments about us.

I want to thank those folks here at the BBHC who keep the Records Office rolling and helped to get the CFM Record newsletter off the ground. These people (in no particular order) are Jesi Bennett and Connie Schuster in the Records Office, Mary Robinson, Heidi Kennedy, Linda Clark, and Megan Peacock in the MRL, Kimber Swenson and Tiffany Swain Olson in graphics, and Lee Haines and Marguerite House in public relations.

I also want to acknowledge Rick Wilson for the suggestion of the name CFM Record for the newsletter. For this, he will receive two free Factory Letters and our thanks.

Again, we appreciate your support! ■

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CODY FIREARMS RECORD

Volume: 1

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GREETINGS FROM CODY!

By David Kennedy

What you are holding in your hand is the first issue of the Cody Firearms Museum Record (CFM Record), a newsletter for the members of the Cody Firearms Museum (CFM). In the pages of this publication, we hope to keep you apprised of the happenings in the Records Office, the CFM, and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC) as they affect you, CFM members.

In this issue and others to come, you will hear about the history and future of the records office and our membership program, the process of performing our records checks and Factory Letter production, and new procedures regarding research by you at the McCracken Research Library (MRL). While the staff of the Records Office and the BBHC will provide the content, we will rely on the members to keep us on track and focused on the needs of the collecting community. If you find yourself wondering why we do something or what is coming up in the future, please let us know. You will likely not be the only person with that question.

With that, I will attempt to answer one question that continues to be asked. As mentioned in a couple of articles (not to mention on the Internet forum of the Winchester Arms Collectors Association Web page), there has been some confusion regarding the discrepancies between the production dates cited by George Madis and the shipping dates cited by the CFM. I have heard several theories—some rather conspiratorial, some claiming Winchester pursued questionable accounting practices, and some that the CFM staff (myself, in particular) has a vendetta of some sort against the memory of George Madis. The truth is rather somewhat less exciting and definitely less malevolent.

As some of you may know, I (as the primary researcher into this matter) have been probing a collection of notebooks, referred to here and elsewhere as the Polishing Room Books. This collection, held by the MRL, came to us from the archives of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company. There are several notebooks later purchased for addition to this collection from the late collector, Russell Dutcher.

These notebooks contain the record of work in the Polishing Room. This was the section of the Winchester

Factory in which the receivers for all models were stamped with the serial numbers as part of the manufacturing process. Each entry consists of a date and the last serial number applied for that model within that particular lot of guns.

When compared to the shipping records, the dates in the Polishing Room Books generally predate the date into the warehouse by two weeks to two months. No records have been found yet that show a flip-flop in the dates with the shipping records predating the Polishing Room Books. With this said, the two record sets appear to corroborate each other.

At this point, we reach the source of the recent confusion. While these two record groups—both consisting of original documents with a clear chain of ownership—appear to agree with each other, they disagree with some of the conclusions reached by George Madis. Why this is the case, I do not know. The CFM staff will be publishing our conclusions regarding production dates as we go through the process of researching the materials.

I can state with a high level of certainty that most of what I have heard as to causes of the differences is complete fabrication and guess work. I have seen nothing to back up any claims that George Madis did anything other than the

See Greetings (continued on page 4)

Factory Letter Pricelist Changes

On January 1, 2008, the Records Office will be enacting a new pricelist. Current CFM members may carry-over a maximum of twenty letters from 2007 (*must be purchased before December 20, 2007*).

LETTERS

Winchester Lever Action and Marlin \$60

Members \$35

Model 21 and L.C. Smith \$75

Members \$50

Model 21 (with build sheet information) \$100

Members \$75

LETTER PACKAGES

Member 5-Letter package \$150

Member 10-Letter package \$250

Additional research \$50/hour (*one hour minimum*)

CFM MEMBERSHIP HISTORY

By Jan Jones

Membership in the Cody Firearms Museum (CFM) at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC) is undoubtedly the only membership program of its kind. The unique benefits offered to these specific patrons are what set this membership apart from all other museum memberships.

In 1975, the BBHC hit the bulls-eye when the Winchester Group of Olin Corporation in New Haven, Connecticut, gave us the Winchester Arms Collection on permanent loan. Included in this most generous offering, was a collection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century engineering and design drawings, advertising materials, production records, and factory records. This important research collection was shipped to the BBHC shortly after the arrival of four semi trucks filled with firearms. Eventually, it was the factory records that became the foundation of the CFM Membership program at the BBHC.

The factory records were given to the Historical Center on the condition they would always be made available to the general public. Hence, the CFM Records Office of the BBHC opened for business around 1978, providing information to gun aficionados from around the country.

Originally, two volunteers provided most of the firearms records services, and the cost of a factory letter was around \$15. Currently, CFM Members purchase factory letters for just \$30 each (non-members pay \$55). Factory letter discount packages, as well as many addi-

tional benefits, are also available to CFM Members.

Larry Means, Development Director for the BBHC in the 1980s, is credited for crafting the CFM Membership program. Means questioned, "Why not create a specific membership which would enable firearms enthusiasts to receive special benefits and discounts when requesting firearms information?" And so it was, CFM Membership was born.

Records show CFM Membership has grown, both in dollars and number of members, every year since its inception. Today the program boasts almost 1,200 members. Compare that number to the 183 CFM members on the roster in 1991 when the Winchester Collection moved into a newly constructed wing of the BBHC and was renamed the Cody Firearms Museum.

When the Winchester Arms Company announced closure of its firearms factory in New Haven, the announcement created quite a flurry of interest in the CFM Membership program. Since the Winchester announcement in January 2006, the number of CFM members has grown by 30 percent. As a result, income last year from CFM Membership reached an all time high with nearly \$195,000 received by the end of the year.

Without a doubt, that generous donation from the Winchester Group over 30 years ago most certainly caused the Buffalo Bill Historical Center to hit the bulls-eye...dead center!

For questions or information on membership at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, please contact Jan Jones, Membership Director at 307.578.4032 or janj@bbhc.org. ■

reader, and find the correct image. While we love our new system, we are still working out a few minor kinks. We are also identifying images which were microfilmed poorly which we can now re-scan in order to improve our searches.

The digitization of the records also opens up the possibility of using a heretofore unworkable L.C. Smith shipping ledger for serial number searches and factory letters. This ledger has not been used to this point because it is not organized serially; it seems to be organized by configuration. The Records Office has not had the staff or time to create an index of this ledger using the microfiche or the original ledger.

Having the images available digitally simplifies the indexing process. Our early survey of the first 56 pages of this 87 page ledger has revealed information on approximately 931 shotguns. This entire project will be at least a year in the works, but we look forward to being able to share more information on this small set of records. ■

FROM JESI'S DESK...

Greetings! I want to welcome you all to the new *Cody Firearms Record*. We enjoy chatting with you by email and on the phone. It was good to meet so many of you in Cody in June. I was glad to put some faces with all these names and voices. I hope to meet more of you in the months to come.

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce the Records Office staff to you.

I moved to Cody from western Montana in September 2006 to take the job of Records Specialist. I came to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC) with a Master's degree in Public History and six years of business management. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself so far. I cannot believe how much I have learned in the time I have been here.

Connie Miller-Schuster, Assistant Records Specialist, is the voice on the phone that everyone recognizes. Connie has been at the BBHC since 1985. She has been helping in the Records Office for five years—full time for just over a year.

I don't know what we would do without John Hawk. John has been our stand-up volunteer for over 21 years. He has been an integral part of the daily work of the office as well as helping with numerous research projects.

MORE L.C. SMITH INSPECTOR LISTS FOUND

By Jesi Bennett

Many of you have received factory record information on your 1890–1912 L.C. Smith shotguns from the Cody Firearms Museum (CFM) Records Office. This information often has the inspector's mark. We have been reporting the names of inspectors in factory letters and serial number searches based on a photocopy of a list written in one of the assembly room ledgers.

In a recent foray into the L.C. Smith ledger books located in the McCracken Research Library (MRL), I found the inspector list. Upon close examination, David Kennedy and I discovered that due to the poor image quality of the earlier photocopied ledger page, the CFM Records Office has been mistakenly misreporting some inspectors' names.

We put the word out in June and started using the "new" list on July 1. However, some of you may have noticed that I have not included inspector names in the most recent

Sherry Hedding has volunteered in the Records Office for many years. She keeps all the envelopes labeled, and keeps and maintains the counts of every serial number search and factory letter. She also makes the best cookies and candy at Christmastime!

Robert Connolly volunteers his time to help with searches whenever he is in the Cody area. Bob has been coming in for over ten years. We truly appreciate his help.

Other folks at the BBHC play a vital part in what we do here. David Kennedy, CFM Curator, heads up the whole operation. He lends a hand whenever needed as well as taking care of his curatorial duties. Jan Jones, Membership Director, tracks memberships and helps spread the word about the CFM. Warren Newman and Bob White are CFM Curatorial Assistants. These guys are great to go to when I'm stuck on a technical firearms question.

Stop by the office the next time you are in town. We would love to have you meet our staff—and show off our new computer. ■

THE RECORDS OFFICE WILL BE OPEN THE FOLLOWING SATURDAYS

2007

December 1 WACA 19th Annual West Coast Show *Reno, Nevada*
CFM will have a table at this show

2008

January 19 Las Vegas Antique Arms Show *Las Vegas, Nevada*
March 15 Baltimore Antique Arms Show *Baltimore, Maryland*
April 5 Wannemacher's Tulsa Arms Show *Tulsa, Oklahoma*
May 17 Colorado Gun Collector's Assoc. Annual Gun Show
Denver, Colorado
June The WCA and WACA shows in Cody, Wyoming (TBD)
July Missouri Valley Arms Collector's Association Annual Show
Kansas City, Missouri (TBD)

L.C. Smith letters. The reason for this is that we feel that further investigation is needed into the inspector lists since I recently discovered two additional lists. It seems the list we have been using is dated 1899–1902. A second, slightly different list is dated 1902–1903, and a list dated 1906 has only four names on it.

I am conducting more research into these lists and will study all the L.C. Smith ledgers in order to determine if these are the only lists in existence. We here in the CFM are now discussing how to use this new information and whether to include the inspector names at all.

With the publication of John Houchin's book, *L.C. Smith: The Legend Lives On*, we feel it is important to pass along this information to collectors as additional data to aid in research. We will be keeping the collectors informed in the Web forum and other means, as we reach a decision as to the use of these lists. Please call if you have any questions or comments. ■

A Fancy New Toy!

We are excited about our new records retrieval system which was installed in April 2007. The microfilm and microfiche records which we have been using for 30 years have all been digitized. We are now able to view the same hand written records on a 30-inch computer monitor. The digital images are superior to the microfilm and microfiche in that they are much clearer; we now have the ability to zoom the image to a greater magnification; and we are able to adjust the brightness and contrast of the images. We are able to pull out details of the records which were simply unreadable on the microfilm and microfiche.

The new system has considerably cut our time spent accessing records. We no longer have to locate the correct roll of microfilm or piece of microfiche, load it into the