

MODEL SURVEY TRIVIA

By Jesi Bennett

Long time Cody Firearms Museum volunteer John Hawk and I have been steadily doing records surveys of a number of Winchester models for the past year. To date, we have completed the research on nine models and are nearing the end of another. Not all of the surveys have been tabulated yet, but we continue to work on them.

Did you know that . . .

- according to the records, only one 1866 (s.n.124995–170101) is recorded with a heavy octagon barrel and 239 had silver trims?
- according to the records, only one Model 1887/1901 (s.n.1–72999) left the factory with a 25-inch barrel and one with a “slightly modified” choke?
- according to the records so far, twenty “24 inch twist” barrels are recorded for the Model 1890 (s.n.1–329999) and 134 were “Stingers”?
- the Model 1903 records (s.n.1–39999) list five cheek pieces and three telescopes? ■

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BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER

Cody Firearms Museum
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www.bbhc.org

THE RECORDS OFFICE WILL BE OPEN THE FOLLOWING WEEKENDS IN 2009–2010

Saturdays—all day. Sundays—mornings only. Call for hours.

2009

October 10 WACA Annual Eastern Show, Springfield, MA

November 14–15 Wanenmacher’s Tulsa Arms Show,
Tulsa, OK

November 14–15 WACA Annual West Coast Show/Big
Reno Show, Reno, NV

December 12 National Gun Day, Louisville, KY

2010

January 16 Las Vegas Antique Arms Show, Las Vegas, NV

February 20 National Gun Day, Louisville, KY

April 10 Wanenmacher’s Tulsa Arms Show, Tulsa, OK

May 15–16 CGCA Annual Gun Show, Denver, CO*

June Winchester Club of America Show in Cody, WY*

June Winchester Arms Collectors Assoc. Show, Cody, WY*

July Missouri Valley Arms Collector’s Assoc. Annual Show,
Kansas City, MO

**CFM will have a table at this show*

ANYONE calling from these shows will receive free serial number searches and \$25 discounts on memberships (new or renew).

Contact Dr. Charles Preston, Interim Curator, at 307.578.4078 or chuckp@bbhc.org if you would like to help the CFM Records Office staff attend one of these shows

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CODY FIREARMS RECORD

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CURATORIAL REVIEW

By Dr. Charles R. Preston

When Buffalo Bill Historical Center Executive Director, Bruce Eldredge, asked me to step in as Interim Curator of the Cody Firearms Museum the first of May, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I have been an avid hunter and firearms enthusiast from a very early age, but my knowledge of firearms does not approach that of a bona fide firearms curator. My education and thirty-five years of government, university, and museum experience are in the fields of zoology and wildlife ecology. Also, my position as Senior Curator of the Draper Museum of Natural History here at the Center keeps me quite busy—especially with fieldwork during summer months.

Nonetheless, I agreed to take on the responsibilities of interim curator, and I’m so glad I did! My role has been to help provide overarching coordination and guidance for the day-to-day operations of the CFM and to provide support for several key projects in progress. The firearms staff, including Warren Newman, Bob White, Jessica Bennett, and Connie Miller, has been enormously supportive, hard-working, and productive. These folks have made my work with CFM far easier and more enjoyable than I could have imagined. Collectively, they bring extraordinary expertise and dedication to each work day.

The search for the next Cody Firearms Museum Curator has begun, and we are blessed with several highly-qualified candidates. After all the applications have been vetted and top candidates have been interviewed, we expect to announce the new curator by late September. In the meantime, we will continue moving ahead on a number of exciting projects.

One of the projects that we’ve been able to complete since May is the reinstallation of our Embellished Arms Gallery. This is a favorite gallery among our visitors, appealing to both firearms and art enthusiasts. We hope that you’ll make time to enjoy this newly reinstalled exhibition on your next visit.

Another project that is keeping us busy these days is the planning and installation of an experimental rolling rack display in the Study Gallery. Thanks to generous financial support from the Gretchen Swanson Family

Foundation, we are creating this display as a pilot project to provide better viewing of firearms in our Study Gallery collection. The initial installation will be completed in September, and we will assess its effectiveness with our visitors. If this innovation proves successful, we will move ahead with additional installations, perhaps providing a new model for other firearms museums across the country and beyond our shores. Our goal is to set the standards for firearms display and interpretation that serve the most ardent firearms collector and enthusiast while also attracting and engaging the casual visitor.

Museums of all types and in all settings have felt the economic pinch during the last year as investments tumbled, donors became more cautious, and visitors tightened their purse-strings by holding back on travel and nonessential spending. I’m happy to report that, after a slow spring, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center is enjoying an increase in visitation during mid and late-summer, and the Cody Firearms Museum remains one of our top attractions. One of the things I’ve been most impressed by in my tenure as interim CFM curator, is the loyalty and enthusiasm of the firearms community. We are grateful for your continued visitation and support. Although I will turn over the reins to the new curator this fall, I will always feel a kinship for the CFM and will provide assistance and support to its staff wherever possible. ■

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To View the Online Digital Collections please visit www.bbhc.org/hmrl/collection.cfm

If you have any questions please contact Sean Campbell at photosales@bbhc.org or at 307.587.2107.

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

By Jesi Bennett

As we spend time in the Winchester, Marlin and L.C. Smith records everyday, we occasionally come across entries that we rarely, if ever, see. Sometimes an entry completely stymies us. I'd like to throw a few of these out there to see whether any of you have seen or heard of these things or can shed some light onto what they might be.

Here are a few Winchester Model 1873 items:

1. Serial number range 250000 "Moorish Model" on a number of Muskets.
2. Serial number range 2000 & 21000, "Oat F.S." and "Oat F. Sight"
3. Serial number range 35000 & 192000, "Centennial Gold & Nickel" finish "Centennial Finish"
4. Serial number range 127000, "Witchhazel stock"

Email me or write me a letter if you have anything to say about one of the items on this list or if you have something on a letter or serial number search that you've never seen before and would like me to include it in future "What in the World?" columns. You can find my contact information on the back page of this CFM Record. ■

GUN SHOW SUPPORT

By Jesi Bennett

Hopefully, you all know that we make an effort to have the records office open one Saturday a month (and an occasional Sunday). I work to coincide these weekend hours with gun shows all over the country. Years ago, the firearms staff conducted a small survey of active members to find out which shows we should support. A schedule of these shows and Saturday hours is included in this newsletter.

We would love to be able to attend each show, but, unfortunately, budget constraints just do not allow for much travel out of this office. It is a given that we will be on site at the two Cody shows, and we are usually able to make the drive to Denver for the Colorado Gun Collectors Association annual show in May. When we can, we travel to one or two other shows in a year. Show organizers are typically excited to have us come and have been generous in helping us get tables, but we have to find ways to cover the travel and lodging expenses.

For the shows that we cannot attend, I contact show organizers to let them know what we are doing and ask

Cody Firearms Museum Records Office Fee Schedule

(effective October 1, 2009)

Winchester Lever Action and Marlin letters
CFM members \$35 CORR members \$50
Non-Members \$60

Model 21 and L.C. Smith letters
CFM members \$50 CORR members \$65
Non-Members \$75

Model 21 letter with Order Sheet Information
CFM members \$75 CORR members \$90
Non-Members \$100

CFM/CORR Member Model 21 Order Sheet Info
\$25 each (not included in SN searches)

CFM/CORR Member Extended Research
\$50/hour (one hour minimum, call Jesi for scheduling)

CFM Member 5-Letter package: \$150
Order Sheet information an additional \$25 per letter unless information was previously purchased by same customer

CFM Member 10-Letter package: \$250
Order Sheet information an additional \$25 per letter unless information was previously purchased by same customer

Christmas is coming!! Letter packages and memberships make great holiday gifts!!!

if they can distribute flyers and make announcements. I also try to locate two or three Cody Firearms Museum members who are willing to display our flyers and help spread the word. These member/helpers earn a free factory letter in exchange for the help. We certainly appreciate any word-of-mouth members can give us.

During the weekend hours we provide free serial number searches for anyone calling from the show of the month. This is for members or non-members, and the offer expires on the Saturday afternoon of the show. We always have non-members who take home a flyer and call us a few days later wanting free information. Then, we have to reiterate the information about show hours, factory letters, and letter prices.

I am also authorized to offer \$25 in discounts on Cody Firearms Museum membership for anyone joining or renewing as a result of attending one of the shows.

I guess the point behind all of this information is to explain, spread the word about this special service we provide, and to drum up helpers and support. If you would like to assist us in any way, let me know. ■

A MEMBERSHIP MINUTE

By Jan Jones

In the last issue of the *Record*, I shared results from the Cody Firearms Museum (CFM) membership survey we conducted in the fall of 2008. Some results were quite predictable such as the value placed on the free serial numbers searches benefit. Other results were somewhat surprising—for one, usage of the Internet. When I became Membership Director in 2004, most CFM members only used cyberspace for shooting buckshot. Now, 70 percent of our "gun guys" embrace the Information Superhighway, using it for communication, research, and perhaps even shopping for firearms!?

A few of you who completed the survey asked questions and had comments to make regarding our membership program. This is a great forum to answer those questions and address those concerns.

What exactly is the difference between a serial number search and a factory letter? This question is often shared by many new CFM members. A factory letter is an official report on the information contained in the original production records which the Historical Center holds. Letters are on official letterhead and bear the seal of the Cody Firearms Museum. A factory letter can be an important tool in establishing the provenance and originality of a gun. The letters are on quality letterhead and would look good framed in a gun room. Normally, it takes between three to four weeks to receive your letter.

A serial number search has the same information as a factory letter, but it is given verbally, e-mailed, or faxed. A factory letter can be requested by members and non-CFM members alike; however, non-members pay more for this service. Serial numbers searches are available only to CFM members and generally take three to four hours to get the information.

The level of detail on letters is very limited. I would pay twice the price for better information. The content of the letter varies with each gun but typically includes the manufacture/warehousing and shipping dates, as well as information on the configuration of the gun when it was produced. Ownership and usage information are rarely available since shipping and sales records no longer exist. The exception to this would be information on late Model 1873 and 1886 Winchesters, and the Winchester Model 21 shotgun. Return and repair information is included in the serial number searches and factory letters when available.

In the next issue of *The Record* I will address several more questions asked in the survey. Thanks again, to

all of you who took the time to complete our survey last year. It's important to me to create a sound membership program that is beneficial to you. With your valuable input; we can learn our shortcomings and make the necessary adjustments when possible.

In parting, I'd like to thank each of you for being a part of the Historical Center's membership program. Our goal is to strive to remain one of the finest western museums in the world; your support helps us accomplish that goal. ■

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

BLANK RECORDS IN THE WINCHESTER LEDGERS

By Jesi Bennett

It is frustrating when a serial number search returns with "Blank Record." These records are found with every Winchester and Marlin model. There are fewer in the L.C. Smith records, but there are some.

The Winchester factory records held by the Cody Firearms Museum of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center were gifted to the Center in the mid 1970s. Our staff has been conducting all Winchester serial number research and producing Factory Letters since. The Winchester ledgers are the original warehouse records and contain the date on which each firearm was checked into the warehouse, the original configuration including any special order features, the date and order number by which the firearm was shipped, and any returns or repairs noted.

Blank records do not necessarily indicate that a firearm was never made, or that there is something wrong with the firearm. We cannot know exactly why there are blank entries, but there are a number of theories. Factory direct sales and internal acquisitions are among the most logical theories. The bottom line is that a blank entry in the Winchester records simply means that particular firearm was not checked into the warehouse. It was removed, sold, or shipped directly from the factory.

Since very few internal records from within the factory survived, and those that did offer no configuration data, there is no way of confirming the original configuration of the "Record Blank" firearms. One must rely on personal physical expertise to determine the degree of originality with these firearms. ■