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Henry Rifle Serial Number 6262

I have examined this rare rifle, inside and out, and after this careful inspection have determined number 6262 is all original or made by the New Haven Arms Company and is detailed here.

Remaining records show this gun was made in 1864, at the time the Civil War was still being fought.

Because of the very deluxe and special nature of the gun, it is a presentation gun.

An inside inspection has been made, and all inside parts on the rifle are original to this rifle. Every pin, screw and other component is as they left the factory.

The serial number is found on the top rear of the barrel, on the left lower tang under the stocks, on the stocks under the upper tang and on the inside toe of the buttplate.

All of these numbers match and are correct and unaltered.

On the barrel, under the loading sleeve is found the assembly number 348. This number is also found on the rear of the loading sleeve and these numbers are all original and correct.

The front sight, located on the loading sleeve retaining band, is of "German silver" and is original. The rear sight is of the caret style for a rifle in this serial range and has graduations from one to eight.

Barrel markings, including the serial number, are original and unaltered.

These barrel markings are clean and show no use or abuse. Even the magazine spring appears to be the original spring. Henry rifles were sold with an extra magazine spring, according to letters written by Oliver F. Wendt during the period of Henry production. The magazine follower is also original.

Hammer checking is crisp and sharp, showing little use.

Sling loops, as on this gun, are original. Oliver F. Wendt, in his correspondence called rifles such as this with sling loops "defender rifles".

The lever retaining screw as well as the wood screws and stock through-bolt are original.

An unusually high degree of original bluing is seen on the steel and iron parts,

while this rifle has obviously seen use, it is equally obvious it has had a great deal of care when in use and it has been

Henry Rifle Serial Number 6262

properly stored. Because of their use in the Civil War and later, most Henry rifles have no original finish left.

Hammer, levers and some other parts were case hardened and left the factory with the case finish; these parts of the rifle have the aged brown patina formed over the century of this guns life.

Traces of the original silver plating, or "wash", are seen on the bronze parts, and the bronze has developed a pleasing old patina.

All Henry rifles chambered the .44 Henry rimfire cartridge, and this chamber, breech bolt and firing pin remain in the original calibre.

Very dense walnut was used for stocking this gun. A "piano finish" was given to the stock, and most of this special finish remains, with only minor wear and use evident.

The extra care in finishing the walnut is one of the reasons to believe on a Henry; this indicates a very special gun, since most rifles had an oiled, satin finish.

For the stock finish to be in such good original condition, number 6262 had to have unusually good care.

Relatively few of the remaining Henrys have any remaining finish on the wood

Henry Rifle Serial Number 6262

on metal.

All of the edges and contours of the buttplate and receiver are clean and sharp, indicating little use. Bronze used for these parts is relatively soft and use or abuse quickly wore the edges.

On the receiver and buttplate we see the fine engraving of L. D. Nimselle, the leading engraver of his time. Nimselle was located in New York City, and was the engraver for many gun makers, dealers and individuals. His patterns are very distinctive, and the characteristics of his work is unique to him.

Nimselle, because of his great art, was widely copied, even in his own time. He did much of the more elegant presentation engraving during the period when he worked.

As an artist, Nimselle had few equals.

Borders on this rifle are more extensive than usually seen on these rifles, and the scrolls are much smaller and finer than usual.

We see an unusual number of patterns for borders here; there are borders of cross-hatched style, willow leaf, dot punched and oyled cuts. It is very unusual to see this number of border patterns.

On the fine scrolls seen overall on the receiver and buttplate, extra care

is evident in the shading.

Wimacke favored intertwined scrolls, especially for his more elaborate work, and this is seen in many of the engraved panels of number 6262.

Concealed among his magnificent scrolls, ahead of the sideplates on both sides of the receiver we see eagle heads, highly stylized and typical of this great artist.

On the engraved bottom of the elevator is a floral, bordered and star and bar pattern. There is a small silver "oval" overlay in the center of the elevator. This overlay also has original engraving, matching the other engraving.

It is possible this overlay was added when the gun was engraved to cover lettering or initials.

Behind the floral pattern engraved on the elevator is the Confederate flag, of the pattern variously called the "C.S.A. Jack", the "Confederate Navy Jack" or the "Confederate Battle Flag".

It is this writer's opinion the silver overlay on the elevator covers an inscription bearing on the Confederacy, such as "C. S. A."

Very fine scrolls and borders are seen on the lower tang just behind the

trigger, and the upper tang has the same style of scrolls. These fine scrolls are seen on the receiver top ahead of the hammer, and an unusual border pattern follows the top of the receiver.

Outstanding among the magnificent engraving here is the "Stand of Arms" engraved on the left side of the receiver.

The eagle is the central figure of the scene, and the detail of the eagle is a testimony to Nimrod's ability. Each feather is carefully detailed, as are the eagle's eye, head, beak and feet.

On the eagle's beak is a banner with two streamers. On one of the streamers is engraved "E. Pluribus Unum" and on the other streamer is "Constitution". This lettering is in very small characters, and is done in a masterful manner.

There are twenty-eight stars on the border outline of the eagle panel, and this probably signifies the twenty-eight states. According to reference sources, there were seventeen union states and eleven Confederate states.

It is my opinion this rifle has great significance to the United States, and the motto, eagle, and flag indicate a very special pattern, done at the customer's request and engraved to exact specifications. It is

(7)  
Henry Rifle Serial Number 6262

probable this gun was engraved for presentation to a very important person, probably during or just after the Civil War.

A small "rising sun" is in the background of the eagle, and in the background are rays and spears.

Two flags are to the side of the eagle; one is the colonial flag with stars in a circle and the other is the stars and stripes of the Civil War period.

Studing on the scrolls and other decorative motifs is expertly done, and for most studing a single-paint spray was used. Backgrounds are "punctured" with an open-center punch. Numerous stars were punched into many of the engraved designs.

An inscription panel was provided on the right side of the receiver among the scrolls and the elaborate borders.

Now well over a century old, number 6262 is one of the best Henry rifles known, and is the most elaborately engraved of any Henry.

With the unusually fine condition, originality, age and historical importance, this rifle will be the outstanding Henry of any collection or museum.

Henry W. Adams