

THE HENRY RIFLE



From the collection of Earl Borton

Some Henry rifles were made with shorter than standard barrels, some were shortened at the factory, and others were shortened outside of the New Haven plant. Any of these guns may be found in all serial ranges. One of the comparatively few faults of the Henry was the weight. Number 6,850 has a 19 inch barrel and buckhorn sight. In judging the originality of such a gun, observe the finish of all parts to be sure the finish matches. On a few shorter guns, the assembly number will be found under the rotating loading sleeve on the barrel. Oliver F. Winchester assured some customers as early as 1862 that they were "working on a Henry Carbine".



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In certain serial ranges, we find one pattern of engraving predominant, while other patterns and styles will be found in greater numbers in other ranges. Number 8202, shown here, has engraving very similar to number 7009. All Henry rifles are now expensive, and are destined to become more expensive. Any special contemporary feature adds interest and helps increase the value of the rifle. Original slings, as on this rifle, are exceedingly rare; very few have survived.

Under adverse conditions, the loading sleeve could rust or become dirty and become difficult to rotate for loading. If the sleeve lock at the front of the magazine tube was not operating properly, the loading sleeve could open by accident or otherwise, cutting the magazine spring. The magazine tube also contributed to the weight of the rifle.

Experiments on the Henry rifle were carried out during its entire period of manufacture; while rare, a few arms will be found which have variations from the standard rifle. A minor change in the firing pin was made, some experimental guns left the factory, and special sights as well as a few other extras were ordered. In 1864, some experiments were made with a detachable magazine tube. At this point it may be of interest to note that in 1865 the "New Haven Arms Co." name was changed. In the early 1920's, a new company, organized in New Haven, used this name for automatic arms; later they moved to Hartford. There was no connection between this company and the old New Haven Arms Co., nor with Winchester.

On a few guns the last digits of the serial number were applied to screws and other parts instead of assembly numbers.

These objections to the Henry rifle led to various experiments both in and out of the factory in loading devices and attempts to lighten the weight by shortening the barrel. King's improvement was the answer to the faults of the Henry, and was the first of the long line of successful Winchester repeaters.

In preparing this table of Henry rifle serial number production, it has been necessary to use many sources of information. Letters from O. F. Winchester in the Winchester Archives, inscribed arms, ordnance records and excise tax returns have been used to establish these dates. In some cases, particularly with special guns, the date may be off as much as one year. In 1866, some models 1866 appeared in the same serial series as the Henry.

Serial Ranges		
1860	1	270
1861	271	300
1862	301	1300
1863	1301	4000
1864	4001	8000
1865	8001	12000
1866	12001	14000