

Model 1873 Special Order Rifle Serial Number 7043

I have carefully examined this rare rifle, inside and out, and have determined it is all original and authentic as detailed here.

Records show this rifle was received in the Winchester warehouse on August 18, 1875 and it was shipped out the next day.

Inside markings seen on the gun include the number "1", stamped on the bottom of the barrel, on the receiver under the forend and double stamped on the left lower tang, under the stock. This number was made with the exact same stamp in all three locations.

In addition to the numeral "1" stamped on the receiver under the forend, the letter "T" is seen in this location. Letters in this location would be the mark of the fitter or assembler who worked on the fit of the barrel to the receiver.

On the left side of the lower tang under the stock is found "XXX". This marking was used to alert the various Winchester workmen that special care was to be given to the fit and finish of all components of the rifle.

When stocking a Winchester, "XXX" meant to select the fanciest wood, with the best grain flow as well as to give special care in fitting and polishing the various parts.

"WRA" is marked on the bottom of the barrel, under the forend. This mark shows the barrel was installed by Winchester and was fitted to this gun.

One other Winchester, a Model 1873 One of One Thousand, has been

observed with this "WRA" marking, and that rifle also had special rifling as seen on number 7043 Model 1873.

In the factory records, under the "special notes" column, is written "Remington Twist bbl."

Remington barrels were considered by many to be the best barrels made. This was due to their quality; Remington barrels had an excellent reputation for almost one hundred years before this 1873 was made. In the world championship rifle matches, shot the year before this gun was made, Remington barrels were used by the Champion American Team. This championship match was very widely publicized and was probably the reason the original owner ordered this gun with a Remington twist barrel.

Remington made many grades of barrels, and the twist barrel was considered the highest grade.

The very special octagon barrel of this rifle is twenty-seven inches in length, quite unusual on a Winchester, and it is of heavy weight, measuring seven-eighths of an inch across the flats of the muzzle.

Grooves are deeper than those of other rifles in this serial range.

Special rifling in any Winchester is of the utmost rarity.

On top of the barrel is stamped "H. H. SCHULTE PITTSBURGH". Schulte was a well known gunsmith and gunmaker and was probably the stock maker who also make the special sights.

In the Winchester records, the sights column notes "none". Instead of factory installed sights, this rifle has special custom made sights. This

would indicate a very particular shooter; the front sight is of silver, now having a smooth even patina. The rear sight is of semi-flat top style, and the elevator is original to this sight. Both of these sights are clearly of Pennsylvania or "Kentucky" rifle style.

The name, beautifully engraved in script on the inscription plate, was probably the original owner. Research continues on this person.

Nickel plating by Winchester is seen on the receiver and forend tip.

This plating is an unusual feature and is rare, especially on early 1873 models.

Nickel plating had been developed only shortly before the 1873 began production.

On the left side of the barrel is seen "TWISTED" and "REMINGTON". The word "REMINGTON" is partly obscured, and when the Remington barrel blank was fitted to the receiver the first few characters of the word were lost.

Twist barrels were usually browned, as seen on this barrel, and the twist pattern is plainly visible.

All of the markings on the gun are clear, correct and unaltered.

A special order set trigger was factory fitted to the rifle, and the magazine is of full length, standard for the 1873.

The magazine retaining band is original, as is the dust cover and all other parts. Every pin, screw and component is old and original to the gun.

Magazine bands of 1873 rifles have a circular dovetail for retaining the band, and this is seen on number 7043. The milling pattern of the band

dovetail in the barrel is Winchester work.

Number 7043 chambers the .44 W.C.F. cartridge, most popularly called the ".44-40". At the time this rifle was made, this was the only caliber available for the 1873 model.

"None" was written in the stock column of number 7043. As with the sights, the shooter who ordered this rifle wanted a very special stock and forend, made by his own stockmaker.

Very fancy grain walnut was used for stocking this gun. The color is of rich deep walnut color, and much of the original finish remains on the wood. The checkering of the stock is expertly done, and is of the style and pattern often found on the earlier arms commonly called "Kentucky rifles".

The buttplate of this rifle is also of Kentucky rifle style, as is the inlay in the forend. A patchbox is inlaid in the right side of the stock and a name plate is inlaid in the Kentucky style cheekpiece on the left side.

Nickel-silver was used for the buttplate, inscription plate, inlay of the forend and the patchbox. All are beautifully engraved with scrolls and by a master's hand.

A high degree of the original plating is seen on the plated parts, and much of the original color case hardening is seen on the hammer and lever.

The original blue on the magazine tube and other blued parts is all intact.

It is obvious this Winchester has seen little use and no abuse and has been properly stored.

A search of early 1873 records shows no other twist barrels recorded.

One of a kind arms such as this are in great demand by collectors,

especially with the age of well over a century.

With the outstanding condition and great rarity of special stocks, sights, barrel and nickel silver trim, number 7043 will be the outstanding Winchester in any collection or museum.

This is a unique Model 1873.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George W. Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the main text block.

George Madis
Brownsboro, Texas 75756

Additional Notes on 1873 Number 7043

Among the vast of collectors arms are those with special and deluxe features.

With the very rare special barrel, set trigger, nickel trim and custom stocking with beautiful inlays, it is obvious the shooter who ordered this gun was very particular.

According to family tradition, Joel Switz was one of the shooters on the American team for the world rifle championships of 1874.

The Americans won the match against the British team, using Remington barrels, which would account for the rare barrel on this rifle.

Number 7043 is the most elegant of 1873 models. No other 1873 can match the decorations seen on this rifle.

With the age of well over a century, outstanding condition, very rare features and historical importance, this is an outstanding Winchester.

George Madis