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Model 1886 Rifle Serial Number 44219

I have carefully examined this rifle and find it original in all respects.

This Winchester chamber the 45-90 cartridge. An examination of the rifling shows a sharp twist; this indicates that the rifling is of the "Express" type, intended for lighter bullets and higher velocities than the usual 45-70 or 45-90.

A twenty-six inch barrel is provided, and a series 21 front sight with nickel-silver blade insert is seen on the gun. A semi-bubble rear sight is original on the rifle, and this rear sight has an insert.

Most of the original bluing is seen on the steel parts. Parts which were case-hardened are the front tip, buttplate, receiver, lever and hammer. This was the color-core-hardened finish and was done by Winchester, as seen by the colors, staining and overall color finish. Winchester finished core-hardened receivers with a light coat of Japanning and only a small portion of this clear coating is worn from the balance point under the receiver and on some corners. This is a fine collector Winchester original in every way.

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A careful inspection has been made of this rare Winchester, inside and out, and I have determined it is all original as made by Winchester.

This is the second occasion I have examined this rifle; the first was when I was at the home of Clyde "Snooky" Williamson, and my son and son-in-law were hunting deer on Williamson's farm in Mississippi.

At that time we fired the rifle, using Williamson's hard loads. We shot probably a dozen quail at that time.

Williamson's book "The Winchester Lever Legacy" was published in 1988 and I think it is still available.

In April of 1992, at Clyde's home, I again inspected the rifle and wrote a brief description for him. He told me at that time number 44219 had been in the collection of one of the Merck pharmaceutical heirs.

Twenty-six inch round barrels were standard for 1886 rifles, and octagon barrels were much more popular. The barrel here is of standard length.

Straight grain walnut was used for stocking this gun, and Winchester

oiled finish was applied. The walnut remains in excellent condition with all of the finish intact.

Present buttplates and full magazines were standard, and the magazine of this rifle held eight cartridges.

Winchester warehouse records, now in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming list this as a rifle in caliber 45/90 with an octagon barrel and plain trigger. It was received in the warehouse on June 3, 1890 and was shipped out on October 20, 1890 to order number 19806.

Winchester finish for most of the metal parts of rifles was the standard blued finish. For receivers, buttplates and forward tips three finishes may be seen. There are the standard case-hardened finish, which has some insignificant color but is basically grey, almost appearing like old nickel. Another option for the finish was to blue these parts.

On special order, color case-hardening was available. This color finishing had many colors and shades of blue, grey, yellow and sometimes red.

Number 44219 has all of the color hardening on the forward tip, hammer, lever and buttplate. A little wear can be seen on the balance point under the receiver.

Winkler applied a light coat of clean "Japanning" on color hardened parts, and most of this finish remains.

Parts which were blued, such as screws, sights, barrels and magazine tubes had Winkler standard blue, and most of this blue remains with no sign of use or wear.

Parts which were polished bright are now as bright as when the gun was made.

A "Sporting" front sight was provided, and it is the type with an integral nichel-silver sight blade. The "Sporting" style rear sight is of semi-bushhorn style, with the adjustable and reversible insert retained by a screw.

The barrel markings are clean and original, and the caliber marking is also original. In a few cases such as seen here, part of the caliber marking has been hand-cut. The number of "45" in the marking ".45-90" W.E.F. shows the first two numbers may have been filled in from a broken die and were re-cut by Winkler.

On the lower tang near the trigger is the small number "5". This is the mark of the fitter who adjusted the hammer and trigger, one of the more critical jobs on a gun.

The initials "WTS" are neatly stamped

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just behind the lower tang in the stocks. These are probably the initials of a former owner.

On the front of the stocks, inside of the receiver is the letter "W", the mark of the worker who fitted the stocks.

Under the crescent buttplate a shallow hole was bored to reduce weight and improve balance.

This 1886 rifle is in outstanding condition.

With its age of over one hundred years, it is most unusual to find a gun with so much of the original finish. Use, abuse and poor storage usually resulted in loss of most of the original finishes.

Number 44219 is an outstanding Winchester, and with the age, condition and special order case coloring it will be a star in any fine collection or museum.

Henry Jones