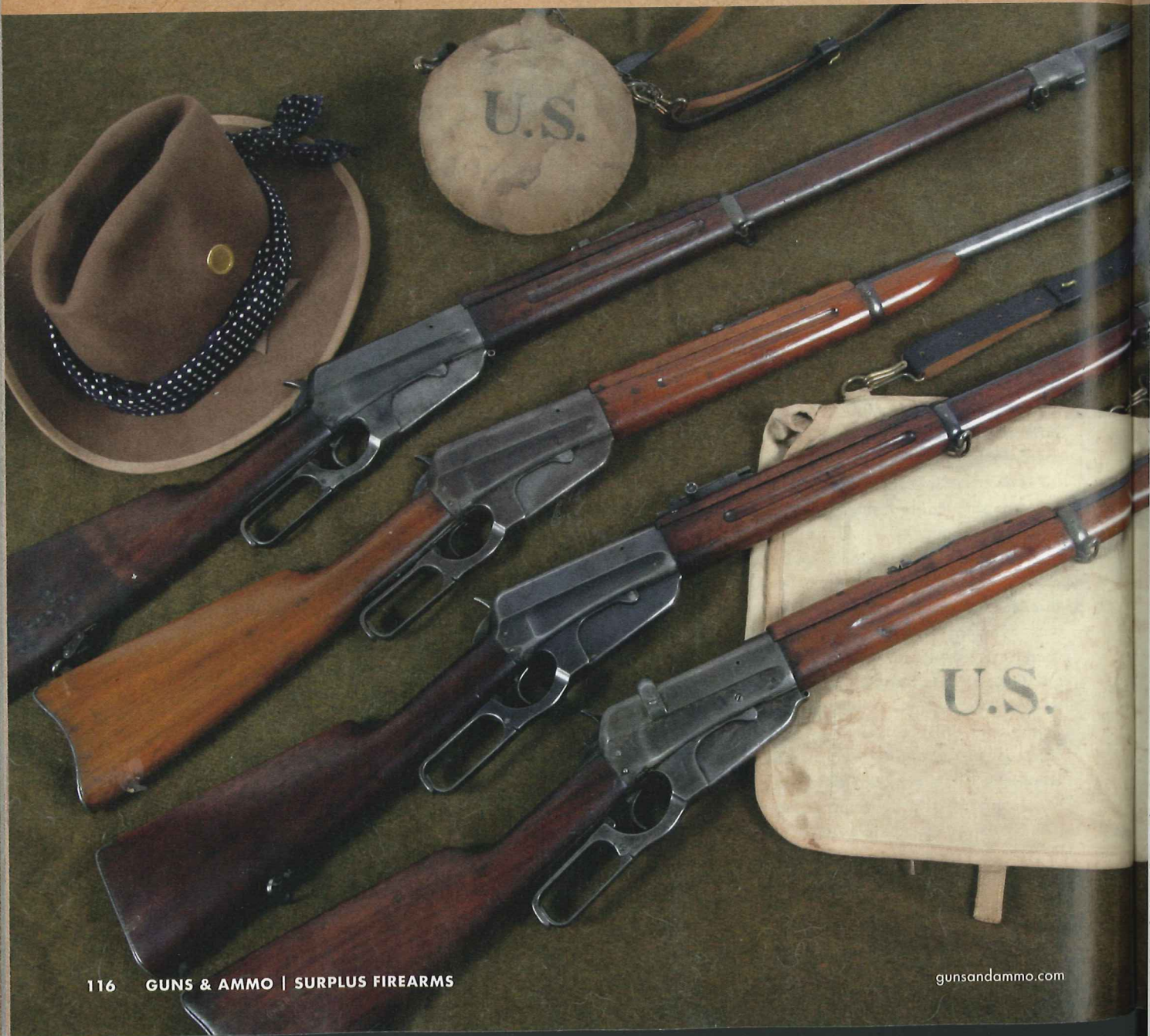


THE 1895 WINCHESTER

BY PHILIP SCHREIER



This lever action sporter was a military favorite.

The advent of smokeless powder in the 1880s changed the entire world of firearms, revolutionizing design and technology. The new smokeless powder burned cleaner and reached greater chamber pressures than the centuries-old black powder that it soon replaced. It was the same as going from horse and buggy to the internal combustion engine. This development sent firearms designers rushing back to the drawing boards to incorporate the new propellant into actions and calibers that could make the best use of this advancement in technology.

The higher-pressure, slower-burning powder enabled the introduction of calibers that were smaller in diameter and had greater range, and with that came greater accuracy. The aerodynamic spitzer, or pointed-nose bullet, became the choice of the new line of high-powered cartridges. The military forces of the world are normally on the cutting edge of new developments and were the first to adopt the new rounds for use in standard-issue rifles. One of the first military uses of the high-powered cartridge came when the French army introduced the 8mm Lebel cartridge for the 1886 Lebel rifle. Mindful of the fact that spitzer rounds stacked in a tubular magazine could trigger magazine explosions when the pointed nose of one cartridge touched off the primer of the round stacked in front of it, the French were quick to develop a primer cup that diverted the points of the bullets away from the primers.

John Browning was quick to realize that the spitzer round in line with other rounds in a tubular magazine was a recipe for disaster. In November 1895 he took out a patent for a lever-action rifle that had a straight (stacked) box magazine that eliminated the risk of high-powered cartridges touching each other off. The Winchester quickly licensed Brownings patent and began producing its first lever-action high-power rifle.

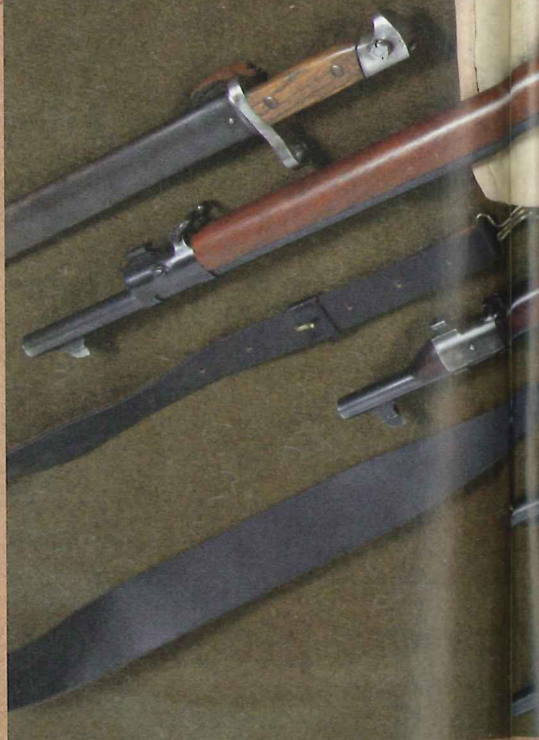
The new rifle design would first appear in the June 1896 Winchester Arms catalog. As one of two rifles that Winchester named Model of 1895 (the other was the 1895 straight-pull Lee-Navy rifle), it was one of the first American sporting and military rifles developed for the new high-



Tang markings on Winchester 1895 Saddle Ring Carbine (SRC). Late-production models bore the inscription "Model 95."

The name "Winchester" is as common in the world of firearms as any trademark in modern history. A venerable firm that has continued to produce quality arms for more than a century, Winchester has taken its place not only in the development of arms but in the pages of popular culture and the history of the country as well. Had it not been for the inventive genius of John Moses Browning, the practicality of Winchester rifles may well have passed long ago. The Winchester Model of 1895 is but one of more than 120 patents and one of dozens of military firearms models that John Browning produced during his distinguished and prolific career.

Winchester rifles first made themselves known on the fields of military valor when their predecessor, the Henry Repeating rifle, became known as "that damn Yankee gun you load on Sunday and shoot all week" during the Civil War. War Department bean counters were afraid that fielding a firearm that fired ammo at a rate of 20 times the standard rate would make the cost of equipping an army exponentially expensive, and they were hesitant to purchase them for wide use. During the tumultuous post-war years, most soldiers on the western plains were armed and equipped with the standard single-shot Model of 1873 U.S. Springfield Trapdoor rifle, while many fortunate hostiles were armed with the best in repeating longarms manufactured by Winchester in New Haven, CT.



Top to Bottom: 1. A U.S. military musket, one of 10,000 made. One-hundred were field tested by the Army in 1899 and rejected. 2. A favorite of Texas and Arizona Rangers, the Saddle Ring Carbine (SRC) was never adopted by the U.S. Army, save one surviving example used by Theodore Roosevelt in Cuba. 3. The NRA musket was made in 30- and 24-inch barrels for competition in the National Matches. 4. Nearly 300,000 Russian muskets of 1915-1916 were produced for use by the Imperial Russian troops in World War I, accounting for 75 percent of all Model 1895s made.