

R.L. Wilson

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Historical Consultant
Colt's Manufacturing Co., Hartford
and to
'The Art of American Arms'
and
'Buffalo Bill's Wild West'
Museum Loan Exhibitions
'Son of a Gun' - BBC-TV
'Colt Firearms Legends' - SONY
'The Guns That Tamed the West' - A & E
'The Story of the Gun' - A & E
'Tales of the Gun' - The History Channel
'The Gun Industry in America' - BBC-TV/Open University
'Annie Oakley' - Riva Productions
Chairman, Antique Arms Committee
U.S. Society of Arms and Armour/America Remembers

Samuel Colt Presents
The Arms Collection of Colonel Colt
L.D. Nimschke Firearms Engraver
The Evolution of the Colt
The Rampant Colt
Colt Commemorative Firearms
Theodore Roosevelt Outdoorsman
The Book of Colt Firearms
The Book of Winchester Engraving
Antique Arms Annual
Colt Pistols (with R.E. Hable)
Paterson Colt Pistol Variations (with P.R. Phillips)
The Colt Heritage
The "Russian" Colts
Colt Engraving
Rare and Historic Firearms (Christie's)
Winchester 1 of 1000
Colt's Dates of Manufacture
The Deringer in America, 2 Volumes (with L.D. Eberhart)
Colt An American Legend
Rare Firearms - A Benefit Auction (Christie's)
Winchester An American Legend
The Peacemakers
Steel Canvas
Ruger & His Guns
The Colt Engraving Book
The Official Price Guide to Gun Collecting
The World of Beretta (2000)
Buffalo Bill's Wild West

**THE DELUXE COLT FACTORY ENGRAVED
AND
IVORY-GRIPPED MODEL 1851 NAVY REVOLVER**

Serial No. 91858/'

**The Colt Factory Casing of
Varnished Mahogany, Lined in Burgundy Velvet
With Complete Accessories
Rare Serpent Motif Engraved on the Left Side of the Barrel Lug
Scarce Hartford Barrel Address Markings
One-Piece Ivory Grips with Slim Contour
Dovetailed Front Sights
One of the Finest Engraved Colt Model 1851 Navy Revolvers
Attributed to the Master Gustave Young
To Be Featured in
*The Colt Engraving Book (2000 Edition)***

The extreme rarity of a serpent motif on Model 1851 Navy revolvers is evident by an examination of some of the author's

various Colt books. Those titles in particular which should be consulted are *Samuel Colt Presents, The Book of Colt Engraving, Colt Engraving, The Colt Heritage, Colt An American Legend, Fine Colts The Dr. Joseph A. Murphy Collection* and *The Book of Colt Firearms*. Studying *Colt Engraving*, the thickest of the two Colt Engraving texts (published 1982): no serpent motif Navies are to be found whatsoever, except for gold inlaid examples, in Chapter IV.

Furthermore, the scroll decoration on the barrel lug is a special arabesque style, which too is extremely rare. For a similar décor, see *Colt Engraving*, page 88, Navy number 93223, also with ivory grips.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

The date of manufacture of No. **91858/**', according to information in the author's *COLT An American Legend* book, was late in 1859 (93000 was the serial range at the beginning of 1860), thus placing the set as just prior to the Civil War.

The embellishments are of the quality and style of the master Gustave Young himself. This is evident in the American scroll and border engraving, with the degree of coverage known then as No. 2: on the frame, hammer, barrel, loading lever, gripstraps and wedge. Several floral motifs are on the frame and barrel lug, the hammer has a wolf head in profile on each side, and the hammer spur has a finely executed cross-hatched motif. No. **91858/**' bears the hyphen stamping by the buttstrap, triggerguard strap, frame and barrel lug serial number, denoting fancy factory engraving accompanied by ivory grips.

The finish is a rich, dark and brightly polished blue, with case-hardened hammer, frame and loading lever, and silver-plated brass gripstraps.

The one-piece ivory grips not only have an elegant slim contour, but a rich mellow color.

Desirable technical features include the Hartford barrel address, blade style front sight dovetailed into position (rather than

the much more common pin front sight), and hand-engraved marking on the left side of the frame, within an engraved cartouche:

*COLTS
PATENT*

The quality of workmanship throughout is indicative of the extraordinary talent and ingenuity of Colonel Colt's workmen.

CONCLUSION

There are several factors of importance to recognize in the Colt Model 1851 Navy set, No. **91858/**' :

The engraved decoration is of outstanding quality, attributed to the Master Gustave Young himself. Coverage and style are excellent.

The serpent motif and other decorative details, as noted above, add the desirability of No. **91858/**'.

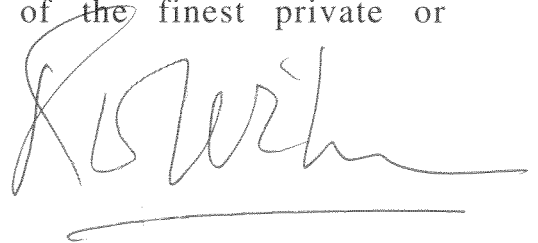
The varnished mahogany casing, with accessories, is one of the most desirable of boxes for percussion Colt firearms.

The case, revolver and accessories are in an excellent state of preservation.

A presentation Model 1851 Navy to financier and famous early American millionaire, William H. Vanderbilt (bearing No. 92286/.) is extremely close to No. **91858/**', and likely came from the same engraved batch.

Due to its importance, quality and rarity, No. **91858/**' will be featured in color in *The Colt Engraving Book*.

With its numerous special qualities, the Deluxe Model 1851 Navy set, revolver No. **91858/**', ranks among the most desirable of percussion Colt Navy revolvers, worthy of the finest private or museum collection of Colt firearms.



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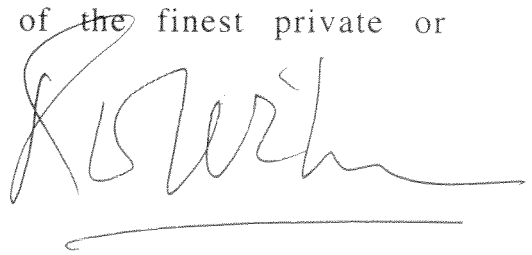
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R. L. Wilson

P O BOX 430

HADLYME CONN 06439 USA

TO

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Serial No. 91858/1

Varnished Mahogany Factory Casing

Rare Serpent Motif Engraved on Left Barrel Lug

Scarce Hartford Barrel Address Marking

One-Piece Ivory Grips

Doevetailed Front Sight

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