



# GUN MUSEUM

275 WINCHESTER AVENUE, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06504

**WINCHESTER<sup>®</sup>**

April 15, 1968

Mr. Jack W. Dexter, Sr.  
Box 24765 Hickory Drive, Rt. 1  
Colgate, Wisconsin 53017

Dear Mr. Dexter:

The Winchester Model 1873a you inquired about are listed as follows in the serial number records.

The Winchester Model 1873 serial number records list number 1617 as a rifle, 24" octagon barrel, set trigger. It was shipped from the factory on August 3, 1874, no other information exists.

Sincerely yours,

T. E. Hall, Curator

TEH/s

George Madis  
P. O. Box 545  
Brownsboro, Texas 75756

Model 1873 First Model Rifle Number 1617

A careful inspection has been made of this rare Winchester, and it has been determined it is all original or made by Winchester.

This inspection includes all of the inside components and workings as well as the outside of the rifle.

According to remaining records, ~~this~~ rifle was shipped from the Winchester warehouse on August 3, 1874. On earlier 1873 models, serial numbers were assigned in large lots and after were made and shipped out of their serial sequence, as with this gun.

The barrel address marking as well as the upper tang marking are original and clear.

Serial numbers were stamped in script numerals on the lower tang, and in this serial series are in smaller characters than on later guns.

Twenty-four inch barrels were considered standard for rifles in this model; octagon barrels, as on this rifle, were more popular and are seen more often, although round barrels were standard.

No caliber markings are found on earlier 1873 models; caliber markings were

not considered necessary since only one caliber was offered, the famous .44 W.C.F., most popularly called the "44-40".

Upper tangs are marked "Model 1873", and this marking is correct and original.

Full magazines as seen here were standard and held fifteen cartridges.

Gun or early on this have the magazine caps threaded into the magazine tube.

Special sights are a rarity on the earlier Winchester; the front sight here is an early "Becker" style, and it has the earliest patent marks and on ivory head, now well worn.

The rear barrel mounted sight is of standard early "Spurwing" style, and has been decorated and trimmed at the front, probably for appearance. This is obviously old work, done when the rifle was in use. The sighting blade of this sight has been narrowed, and is of the approximate style noted in some Winchester records as a "Stubbs" sight, named after the famous maharajah Captain Stubbs.

A Winchester series "62 B" tang sight was added at some time in the past; this sight shows use and was added when the rifle was in use. This was sight for the patent marking of 1881.

An original set trigger was provided;



in a count made in 1933 when all of the records were intact. it was found only one of each twenty-six rifles had set triggers.

Early 1873 models such as this have dust covers with a raised thumb hold,

This is a rare variation, and very few of these early chest covers have survived.

On the left side of the lower tang, under the studs is seen "A" and "102". The letter here was the mark of the storkmaker who fitted the studs and found and the number is an assembly number, provided to insure the correct components were fitted to the correct gun after the fitting, working and bluing. Assembly number "102" is also found in the upper tang inlet of the studs and on the inside toe of the buttplate. All of these assembly numbers are correct and original.

7 Straight grain walnut was used for stockwing this rifle and it remains in excellent condition, showing some use but no abuse.

the the studs compartment under the  
top door is an early original four piece  
clevering rod with brass tip.

The Core-hardened finish of the butt tips and forward tips are the standard coiled finish and are bright.

Winters bluebird first was given to the

Smith Model 1873 Number 1617

at the steel and iron parts, and on unusually high degree of the blue remains, with the smooth, even brown patina of age now forming.

Hammer and levers were case-hardened in color, and traces of this finish are seen on these parts.

It is very rare to find any of the original finish on Smith Model 1873 Winchester; due to age, use and storage many have had abuse and replaced parts.

The lever latch, pins, screws and every component now on this rifle is original to the gun.

This is an outstanding Smith Model '73. With the original finish as well as rarity and age, number 1617 is a prize for any collector of rare arms or museum.

George W. White

George Madis  
P. O. Box 545  
Brownsboro, Texas 75756

Hi Scott:

Here is the letter from Win.  
on your outstanding '73 number -  
1617.

It is unusual to still find  
old letters, especially as early as  
1968. Most collectors back then didn't  
get letters - usually, if a gun looked  
"right" it was right.

Congrats. on this '73; dtd a  
pleasure to see one 100% original, and  
so many now have been altered or  
have had replacements -

All my best.

George

Most of the "letters" from many back  
were post-cards. actual letters are  
rarely seen.