



Frederick H. Miller

1910 – 1991

by Roy G. Jinks

Frederick Miller was one of the most unique men I have had the privilege to meet in the firearms industry. I met Fred Miller in 1957 on my first trip to Smith & Wesson. He provided me with a great deal of information about the company and helped spur my interest in the long research process into the company's history. Little did I realize at that time, that in 16 years I would be sitting in his place at Smith & Wesson.

Fred H. Miller was born in Springfield, MA on September 20, 1910. He attended school in the Springfield area and developed an interest in shooting sports, enjoyed hunting and was a member of the Springfield Revolver Club and the Agway Pistol Club. His first love, however, was motorcycles, and in the 1930's he was hired by the Indian Motor Cycle Co of Springfield, MA to represent them at the Eastern States Exhibition in a ride where the rider moves up a circular wall to defy gravity. He was a well known in the Springfield area for his trick riding.

In 1937, Mr. Miller was hired by Smith & Wesson and was placed in charge of the Service Department. While employed by Smith & Wesson Fred Miller shot competitively for the company and for several of the local pistol clubs.

He trained his daughter by his first wife who became one of the leading women shooters in the Eastern United States. Fred and his daughter Jacquelyn competed in handgun matches from Boston to Tampa and finally at Camp Perry at the National Matches. Mr. Miller was the Smith & Wesson Representative at the major matches that showed the S&W Product Line.

Mr. Miller remained with Smith & Wesson as Service Manager until 1947 when he was appointed as Assistant Sales Manager to Mr. Harold Austin. At some time during the 1940's, Fred Miller was injured in a shooting accident with a shotgun and he lost the use of his right arm. He never provided any details of the accident except to say that he leaned the shotgun against a tree and that as it fell it discharged and he was shot through his right shoulder. With indomitable spirit, Fred learned to do all his tasks left-handed, teaching himself to write and shoot with his left hand. As a left-handed shooter he became serious competitor and was ranked as one of the top fifty shooters in the United States Revolver Association. In 1950 both he and his second wife were shooting on the Agwam No. 1 pistol team. He had an average of 206.8 for the year in the single shot match while shooting a Smith & Wesson .22 Perfected Single Shot. After the shooting accident, Mr. Miller could always be seen wearing a sport jacket with his right hand placed inside the right pocket.

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In 1960 Mr. Harold Austin retired, and Fred was named Sales Manager, a position he held until his retirement in 1973. His responsibilities at Smith & Wesson included the direction of all sales, forecasting the product line, writing copy for advertisements and the catalog. There is no question that he was one of the key factors that helped Smith & Wesson gain dominance in the handgun market.

After his retirement, Mr. Miller moved to Bradenton, Florida with his second wife, Mina L. Miller. He passed away on July 17, 1991 at the age of 80 years.

Ray H. Miller



Springfield Mass

July 8, 2004

Dear Mr.

We acknowledge receipt of your recent letter asking for information on a Smith & Wesson revolver.

The technical name for this revolver is the .45 Hand Ejector Model of 1917. It was introduced in 1917 at the request of the United States Government and was designed to fire the .45 ACP cartridge using a half moon clip, or the .45 Auto Rim cartridge.

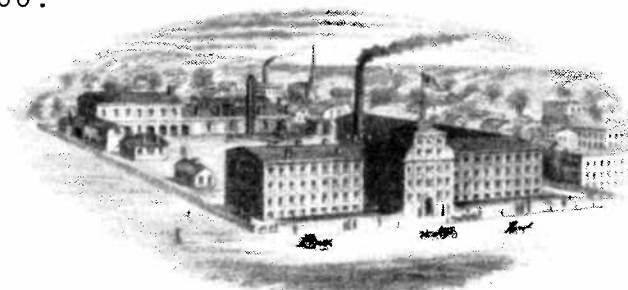
This revolver was popular during World War I and II, and was utilized by both the United States and Allied Forces. Between 1917 and 1919, approximately 175,000 units were delivered to the United States Government for their use and distribution. These guns were stamped on the frame: "U. S. ARMY MODEL 1917" and under the barrel: "UNITED STATES PROPERTY". The bottom of the barrel and the rear of the cylinder were stamped "S" for Colonel Gilbert H. Stewart, Inspector.

A contract was signed by the Brazilian government in 1937 calling for 25,000 revolvers. These were stamped on the side plate with the Brazilian seal and 1937 contract date, and purchased with Brazilian funds.

The popularity of this revolver continued after World War I. It was manufactured until 1948; production consisted of 210,866 units. In October of 1947 the factory added the new style hammer block to this model. Handguns that incorporated this feature were marked with an S preceding the serial number. The S prefix was added at approximately serial number 210,321.

The serial numbers of the guns sent to Brazil are mixed ranging from 1 to 210,000.

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SMITH & WESSON



.45 Hand Ejector Model of 1917
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We have researched your Smith & Wesson .45 Hand Ejector Model of 1917, Special Production Revolver, caliber .45 Colt, revolver in company records which indicate that your handgun, with serial number 169335, no exact date was listed for shipment, but probably built in the mid-1950's, and delivered to Mr. Fred H. Miller, Assistant Sales Manager, Smith & Wesson, Springfield, MA. The records indicate that this handgun was shipped with a 5.5 inch barrel, blue finish, and smooth walnut grips. This rare revolver was specially built for Mr. Miller who could have any special he wanted assembled by the company. This is certainly one of the rarest variations of the .45 Hand Ejector Model of 1917 known.

We trust that the information furnished will be helpful and of interest.

Sincerely,

SMITH & WESSON

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Roy G. Jinks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roy G. Jinks
Historian