

The Gun Report Magazine
Attention: Kandy Liggett Harrison, Editor
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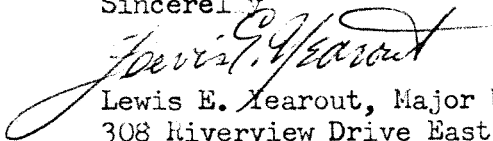
February 17, 1996.

Dear Editor:

Enclosed is a manuscript entitled, "A Pope-Winchester Left Hand Target Rifle".
Submitted by the undersigned for publication in your magazine, "The Gun Report"
Payment to be at your rates: The article is fully documented, including
references and photographs with captions.

If, the article as submitted, does not meet with your requirements, would you
please return the same at your earliest convenience. To do so, a self addressed
envelope, including return postage is included for such use.

Sincerely,



Lewis E. Hearout, Major USAFR, Retired.
308 Riverview Drive East
Great Falls, Montana, 59404
Phone: 406-761-0859

Enclosures: Manuscript-consisting of 8 pages and
Ten Photographs, each with individual caption.
If you use a credit line for photographs: use the following:

"Photograph by: RAY OZMAN, GREAT FALLS, MONTANA."

A WPOPE-WINCHESTER" LEFT HAND TARGET RIFLE

By: LEWIS E. YEAROUT, MAJOR
USAFR. RET.

The name "Harry Melville Pope" is well known to both the shooting and gun collecting fraternity. Born in Walpole New Hampshire August 15, 1861. He passed away at the age of 89 years in New Jersey October 11, 1950. In his mid-twenties, he graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in Engineering. There he had acquired the knowledge that enabled him to become the world's best known, and most highly skilled fabricator of accurate rifle barrels. Thereafter his primary mission in life, was to produce a rifle barrel in such a finished state, as to enable a "riflesman" the satisfaction of owning a gun that could be depended on, to be the ultimate in accuracy.

This is the known history of just one of those products. Yet it is also, one of the finest to survive, in its original "as made" conformity.

It originated during the later years of his life. 1927,-1928-1929, to be exact. The Serial number is 722. A small bore Target rifle chambered in .22 Long Rifle caliber. A Custom designed and built "left hand" rifle, Possibly, the only such item he ever produced. Constructed with a Winchester Model 1885 Single Shot "Hiwall" Action, with the original Winchester serial number removed.

This rifle came into the possession of the Author, back on March 17, 1961. With its purchase, came the complete and Notarized "Life History," or "Provenance" as compiled by its owner a Mr Dane Durbin of 1307 Howard Avenue, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The following data is from that Notarized Certificate.

In 1952, Mr Durbin, then residing in Omaha, Nebraska, with a friend Mr Harold Buis, decided to look at some guns which were soon to be sold in the settlement of an Estate. The Estate being settled was in behalf of a Mrs W.W.Hixon, a widow of W.W.Hixon, who had recently met his death in an automobile accident in Oklahoma. On arrival at the Hixon residence, they found that the entire basement of the home, was literally filled, wall to wall, with all types of new and unused sporting equipment. Fishing rods, Fishing gear and equipment of every imaginable type and form. Outdoor clothing and footgear, intended for use from

the tropics to the arctic temperatures. Camping equipment, tentage, wilderness pack equipment, sleeping bags, and related items too numerous to list. On their arrival several customers were helping themselves, with Mrs Hixon accepting any price they wished to pay. Mr Durbin^{and} Mr Buis, (an attorney by profession) quickly decided Mrs Hixon could use some assistance, as she was actually almost giving new items away at a fraction of their relative value. After a brief consultation with Mrs Hixon, she ushered the remainder of the "would be buyers" out of the house and locked the doors.

That same evening, Mr Durbin and Mr Buis, made an agreement with Mrs Hixon. They would starting the coming week-end, inventory, list, and price all items. Handle all sales, so she would receive at least a fair market price for every item. Their services would be free, and anything they desired to purchase, during the sale would also be at the pre-inventoried pricing.

Mr W.W.Hixon had been a very dedicated business man. As President of a large paper Manufacturing Company, he spent most of his time traveling in behalf of his Company. He was also a "Dreamer", in many aspects of his life. Seldom having the time to take a normal vacation, yet he had visions of future fishing, camping and hunting trips to remote Wilderness areas throughout North America. Small Bore rifle matches were also a part of those "intended dreams". But he was always too busy to realize those "dreams". Locating and purchasing the finest equipment money could buy, to realize those dreams during his business trips, was readily reflected by the quality and quantity and completeness of the items which filled the basement in an overflowing status. The gun cabinets contained 76 of the finest custom sporting rifles and shotguns, all in a near new condition. The "Pope-Winchester" Serial number 722 was one of those 76 guns. The gun cabinets were all upstairs on the main floor of the residence. There was no room for them in the basement.

During the sale, the "Pope rifle" was priced at \$ 350.00. Being priced relatively "high", it did not sell. Probably this "no Sale" status resulted from the expressed comment, "neither one of us tried very hard to sell the Pope.—We both wanted to buy it, but our established price, put it beyond our financial capabilities."

According to Mrs Hixon, her late husband had desired to own the finest rifle available for use in the small bore matches then being held at the Sea Girt Range in New Jersey. He desired a rifle that only the noted barrel maker, "H.M.Pope" was worthy of building. They drove by auto to Mr Popes shop in New Jersey. They had many such trips, with many half day sessions on the building of this special rifle. Mrs Hixon spent those half day sessions sitting in the car, as the Pope gun shop, was too "cluttered" to even have a chair for her to sit on. She stated, Mr Pope did not want to build a .22 rim fire rifle, for anyone. Primarily his first love was the making of barrels in the larger, more accurate calibers, such as the .38-55, .32-40 etc. He remarked, "that up to this time, he had built only seven such rifles in the .22 rim fire caliber. If he did this one, this would be his eighth, and also the last". He did not favor the .22 rim fire cartridges, "as no ammunition company can produce a consistantly accurate and dependable cartridge that was befitting the barrel he could produce."

After all the numerous trips, and hours of persuasion, Mr Pope finally agreed to make the rifle. A delivery date was never a part of the agreement. "He would do it,-do it right,-and do it as he had the time."

The rifle barrel and action work was completed to Popes satisfaction on the date of September 21, 1928, as he stamped on the underneath portion of the barrel. He then forwarded the barrel and action, to the well known firm of " Griffin and Howe" in New York, where it was "stocked" and completed according to the instructions of Mr Hixon.

Griffin and Howe completed the rifle, and returned it to Mr Pope. Their work is proofed by the hand engraving of their firm, as it appears on the bottom portion of the trigger guard. Mr Hixon received the completed rifle from Mr Pope at his New Jersey Shop in January 1929.

As memory served Mrs Hixon, her husband, sighted the rifle shortly after receiving it. He took it to the Sea Birt small bore matches but once, before he died from the automobile accident.

Mr Durbin came into possession of the rifle in 1953, after all of the other guns and sporting goods equipment was sold. Mrs Hixon, ask him not to make any further effort to sell "the Pope Rifle". As it was the last item, she decided to give it to him personally, as a gift, for the valuable services received at no charge.

Mr Durbin fired the rifle, but only on a few occasions. He found the left hand stock with its extreme dimensions, to be a detriment, as he was a right handed shooter. He seriously considered, not once, but several times, to remove the left hand stock, and restock the rifle to fit his physical needs. His last comments were, " I believe it is safe to say this is undoubtedly the most accurate small bore rifle, I have ever had in my hands. And that is over a period of 27 years of tournament shooting. Using Super Match grade ammunition, I fired 47 consecutive "X's" on the 100 yard small bore range from a bench position. I believe this target still hangs in the shop of Mr Viago Miller a noted gunsmith of Omaha, Nebraska. After firing that undisputable score, the rifle was placed in my gun cabinet, where it has remained till this date when it has been sold to a well known Winchester Gun Collector in Great Falls, Montana. I did not, nor could I ever bear to see it restocked, and it is sold with that stipulation. It is to remain "As Is". An original, highly collectable reminder of the noted Mr H.M. Pope.

As noted, earlier, Mr Hixon, the original owner of this rifle, was a left handed person. The rifle as constructed is entirely for the use and convenience of a left handed shooter. Physically Mr Hixon, was also a large man, well over 6 ft. in height, with long arms and large hands. The walnut stock has an exceptionally large and thick cheek piece on the left side. The checked pistol grip is also extremely long and large in shape. With a "length of pull" measuring 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, with an adjustable target type butt plate. (Length of pull being the measurement in inches, from the trigger to the edge surface of the buttplate. The walnut forearm of a special design, as pictured is not only extra large in conformity, also a lengthy 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Both the forearm and pistol grip stock are checked. The diamond checking pattern being very fine, perfectly formed, and run 21 lines to the inch.

The left side of the Winchester High Wall action is cut down five eighths of an inch, to

a level, with the action open, to enable a left handed shooter to easily place the .22 long rifle cartridge into the open chamber. The hammer frame is skelontinized or lightened, by the drilling of two holes, one small and one large. Both the frame cut and the lightened hammer are known " Pope" trademarks. According to Pope records, the lightened hammer system diminished the lock time one tenth of a second. It enhanced barrel accuracy. The coil spring action parts together with the single adjustable trigger, have been hand honed with the hammer fly removed. All reworked to the smoothness of clockwork. The stamping of "H.M.POPE" appears on three locations. Once on the flat of the above noted action cut out. Twice on the barrel. The stock and forearm work, as also the metal lever extension with the hand engraving on the bottom of the trigger guard, and also the overall blue finish of the barrel and action, is definately the expert workmanship performed by the Griffin and Howe firm. Mr Pope was noted for his excellent barrel boring work, yet he never gave a second thought to the final exterior finish of that product. It had no bearing on barrel accuracy.

Overall length of the rifle is $40\frac{1}{4}$ inches, with a weight of 12 pounds and 2 ounces. The heavy 30 inch round barrel is non-tapered, with measurements of $\frac{7}{8}$ inches at both muzzle and breech. It is not identified as a Winchester "barrel Blank". It could well be, and if so, would compare , or be the number $3\frac{1}{2}$ weight. (The Winchester firm did sell new barrels and receivers as well as any part needed for their Single Shot Model 1885 (some catalogs of this era refer to the S.S. as Model 87) A New Action and a new barrel blank in the late 1920's era would have been sold to Mr Pope, for a little less than a twenty dollar bill). The barrel was never slotted for either front or rear sights. Two scope mounting blocks installed using screws, and with 11 inch centers. The rear barrel block exactly one inch above the frame of the action. One of the "H.M.POPE" stampings is located midway on the top surface of the barrel. Second stamping of the "H.M.POPE" appears on the bottom of the barrel under the wood forearm. Note the pictured stamping, including the barrel completion date of September 21, 1928. The barrel is circled with a flat $\frac{5}{8}$ th inch steel band, centered 15 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the muzzle. This band is locked in place by a single screw which is the front metal screw of the attached sling loop base in the forearm wood. As

may be noted in the picture of the rifle, there was never any provision for a rear sling loop or base for one.

The use of a round barrel on this rifle, could well have originated with Mr Pope, or it could well been the original request of Mr Hixon. According to a note from the late Gerald Kelter of Colorado, " octagon barrels originated prior to the development of machinery for turning round barrels. Mr Pope favored a round barrel, as it provides equal distribution of metal around the "bore"Giving equal expansion-the full length of the barrel. Providing more uniform accuracy than the octagon or half octagon type barrel will normally provide."

As noted earlier, this specific rifle with the serial number of 722, and the date of completion as September 21, 1928, reflects as a total of 622 barrels that Mr Pope would have produced up to that date, as pertains to his last shop located in New Jersey. He established this last shop in the " old Colgate Toothpaste building" located at 52 Hudson Street, Jersey City, New Jersey. With a mailing address of 18 Morris Street. This would have been in the year of 1908. In this shop, the first barrel produced was assigned serial no. of 100. No record could be located as to the total production of barrels from this shop. Using the known production as designated by the serial number of 722, it would appear that he made a total of 622 barrels from 1908 thru 1928. This roughly figures he averaged around 31 barrels per any given year. He lived another 22 years, passing away Oct. 11, 1950.

Those last years were not as productive as his earlier or "prime of life" period. He was afflicted with many physical ailments, including the complete loss of one eye, as he grew older. One arm became almost useless, but even with such handicaps, he never quit.

A possible figure of production for this, his last shop, could be a reasonable total figure of 1150 barrels. It can only be an "estimate" at the best. To try and assemble a total life time production of barrels produced by Pope requires a brief look backward into his earlier years. Yet there is not too much information available for his early years.

His first production of barrels, would be best termed as those produced in Hartford, Connecticut. The highest serial number located is 373. This specific rifle, located back in 1960's was a

Ballard action, with a Pope barrel in .33-40 Caliber. When located it belonged to William Fuller, the noted gunsmith in Coopers Landing, Alaska.

The period of 1901 into 1908 is the most traceable period of his lifetime. He accepted an employment contract with the "J.Stevens Arms and Tool Company" of Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. His salary of \$ 4800.00 a year was for a five year Contract. His first barrel produced under this contract was assigned the serial number of 400. His last barrel known under the contract is serial number 1223. This would reflect a total production of 823 barrels placed on "J.Stevens Arms". Each of those barrels should carry his proof stamping of a " P" symbol. As a highly dedicated perfectionist, and one who did not readily accept too much supervision, especially when it concerned his capability to produce an accurate rifled barrel, that would carry his name, as a " Sales Aid", production problems surfaced. The Stevens Company executives became concerned with his production quantity. Their primary concern was to speed up that production, increase sales and increase profits. They needed more "finished products" in a shorter time period. Mr Pope had only one dedication that he lived by. That concern was to produce every rifled barrel in such a finished state, as to give every purchaser , the satisfaction of owning a gun that could be depended upon to be the "ultimate in accuracy". He did not want his name attached to any barrel, that was not finished to his standards. He terminated his contract prior to the full five year term. After leaving the Stevens Arms Company, he moved his shop to San Francisco, California. At that time in our history, the State of California contained more "riflemen" and "target shooters", than any other State in the nation. He intended to capitalize on that fact. But it was not to be.- The disasterous earthquake and related fires of April 17, 1906 put him out of business, before he ever had his first customer. April 17th was the day he was to open his new California Shop. The earthquake destroyed his shop and all of the newly procured equipment. He lost everything. There is no trace of a single barrel ever produced in the State of California.

Broke and practically destitute, he departed California and returned to the east coast. By 1908, he was able to open his last shop in Jersey City, New Jersey.

In conclusion, Mr Pope could have completed the following quantity of barrels during his lifetime:

373 -A known quantity referred to as " Early Hartford, Conn."period.

823 -A known quantity during his J.Stevens Arms Co. Contract.

0 - There is no known product from the State of California Shop

622 -A known quantity from the Jersey City Shop (from its first opening in 1908 to the date of Sept. 21, 1928.

528- An estimated quantity from the Jersey City Shop(from Sept.21, 1928 till his death Oct. 11, 1950.

2346 - Total barrel production.

The total figure of 2,346 is the best that one can arrive at today. It is also impossible at this date, to even guess or estimate how many of his barrels still survive.

The rifle of this story, bearing serial number 722 is without doubt- one of the finest "POPE" rifles that does survive today. It is still in existence in the same conformity as it originally left the hands of the finest barrel maker, the United States has ever produced.

REFERENCES for the above Article: "A POPE-WINCHESTER LEFT HAND TARGET RIFLE."

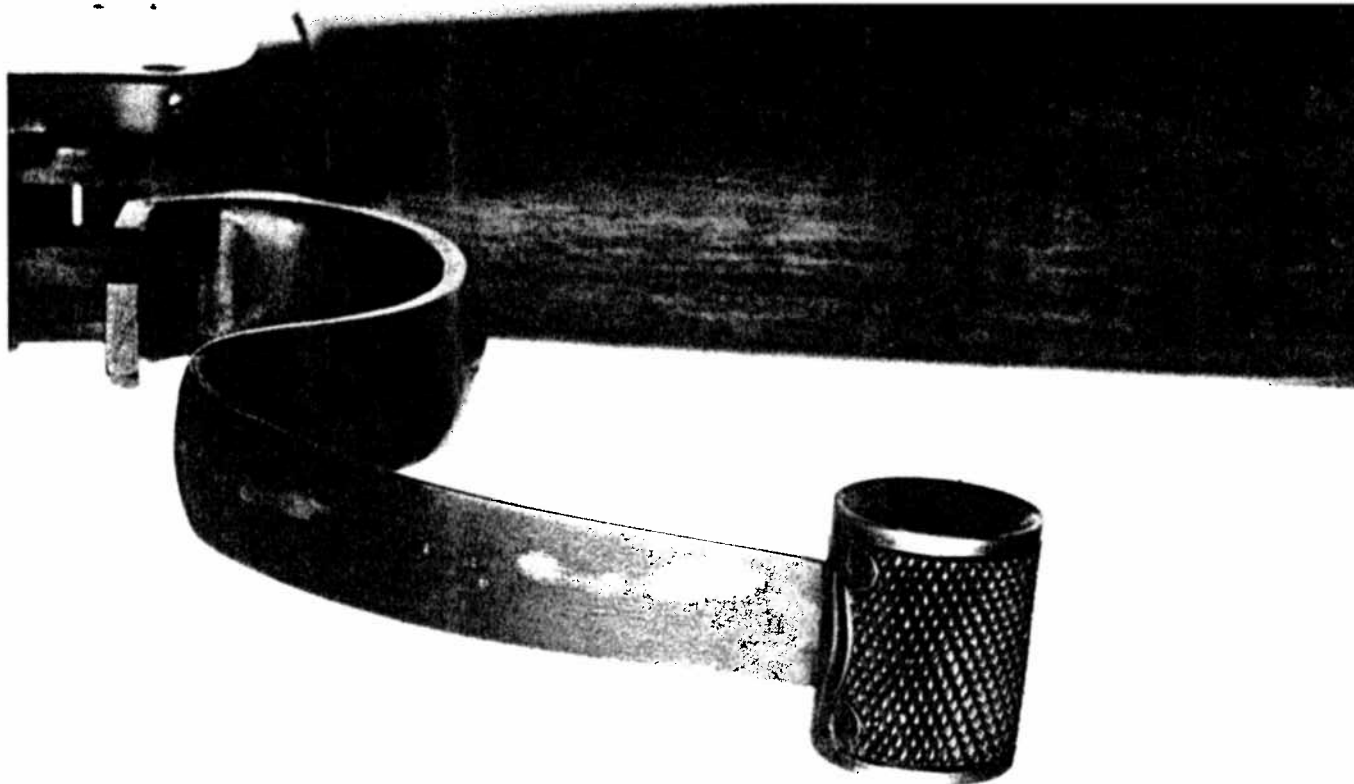
A.-CORRESPONDENCE -Fuller Gun Shop, Coopers Landing Alaska.

B.-CORRESPONDENCE -Robert Lord Gun Shop,-Homer, Alaska.

C.-CORRESPONDENCE -Gerald O.Kelver,Brighton, Colorado.

D.-The book entitled," The Story of Pope's Barrels" by Ray M. Smith
Published 1960.

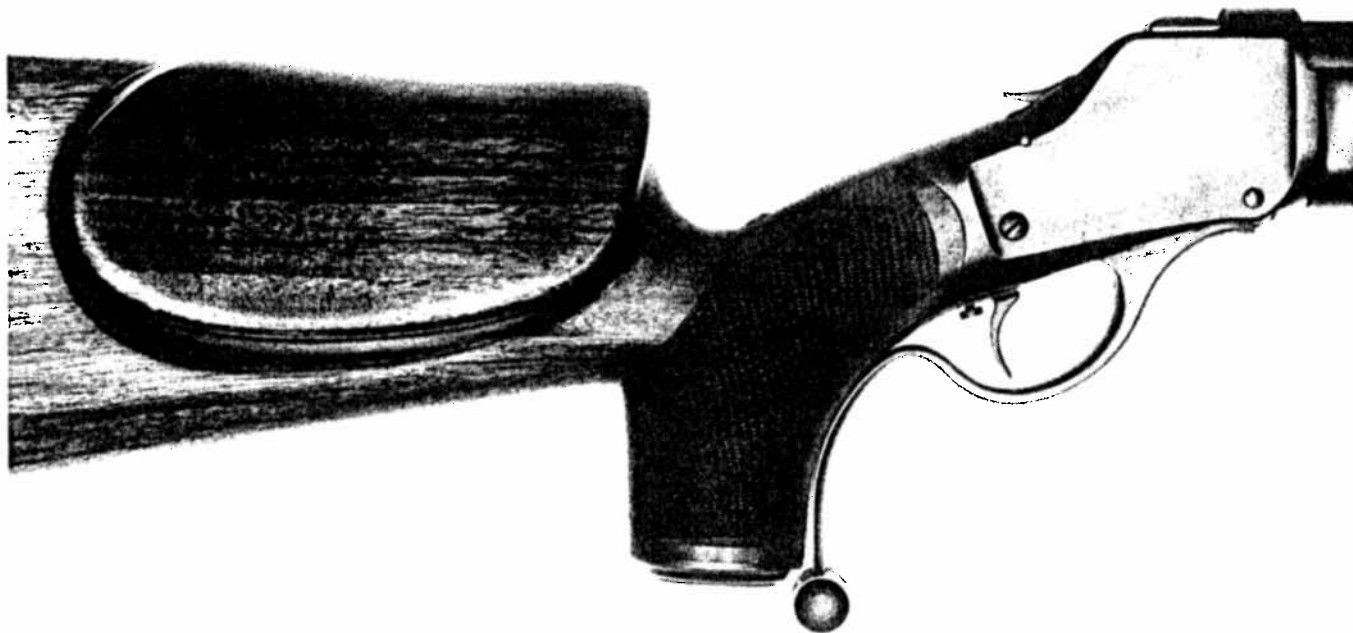
E.-Personal Files- H.M.Pope Rifle Serial no. 722- Lewis E. Yearout.



The solid metal knob on the end of the long lever extension as hand engraved by "The Griffin and Howe" firm.



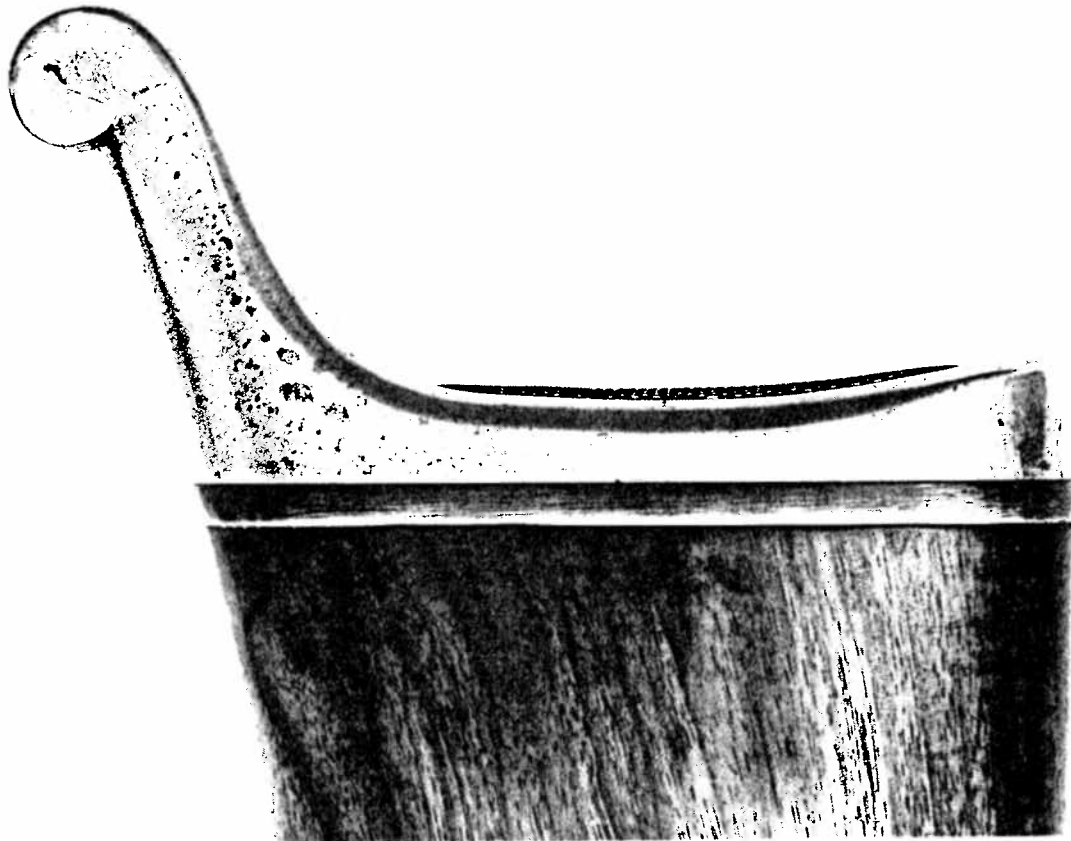
The engraving "Stocked by Griffin & Howe, Inc. New York" as it appears on the bottom portion of the trigger guard.



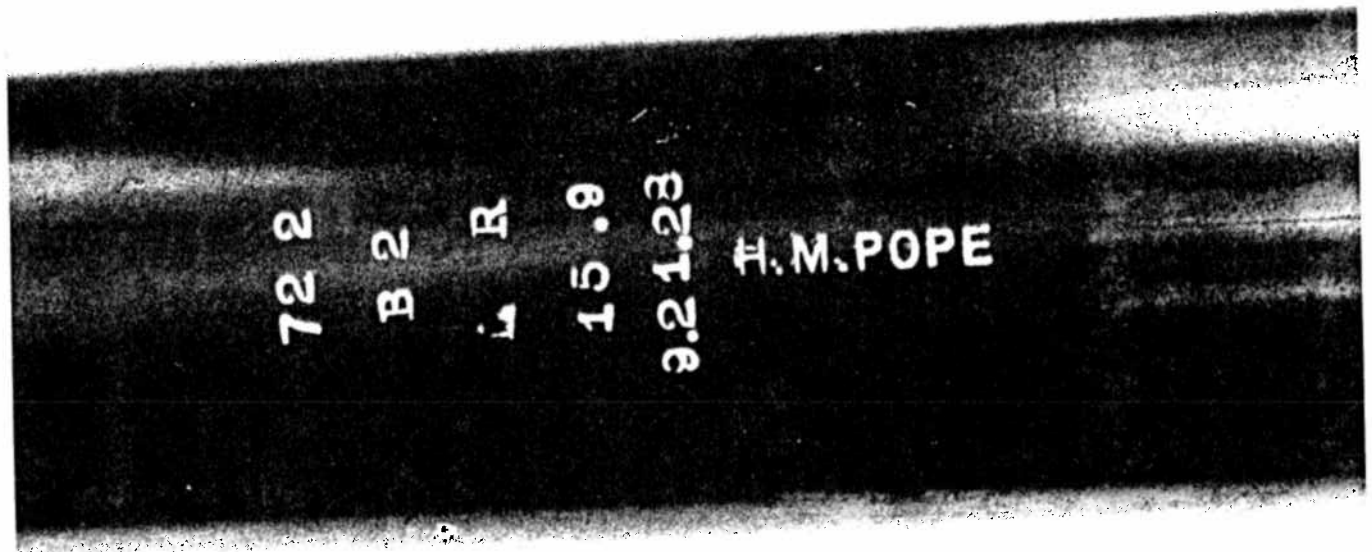
The custom designed "extra large cheek piece and the extra large"checked pistol grip, with metal grip cap. Note also the curvature of the extra long lever extension with its "hand engraved" solid metal knob"for easy finger or thumb"opening of the lever. An excellent designed left hand stock for bench shooting.



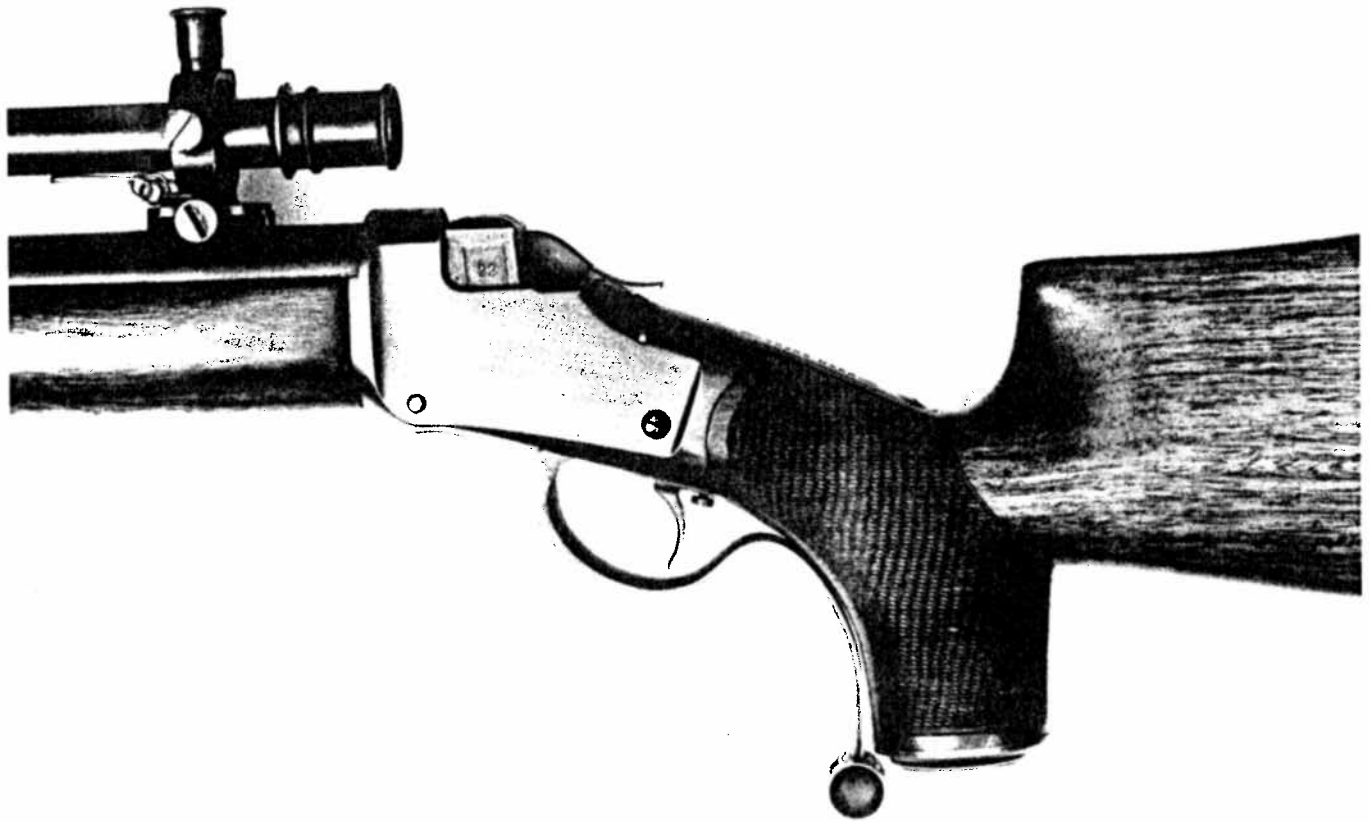
The metal pistol grip cap. Asjustable single trigger, and the extra long lever extension with its "hand engraved" solid metal knob.



The solid metal adjustable buttplate with one shoulder prong.
The stock was never equipped with a sling loop.



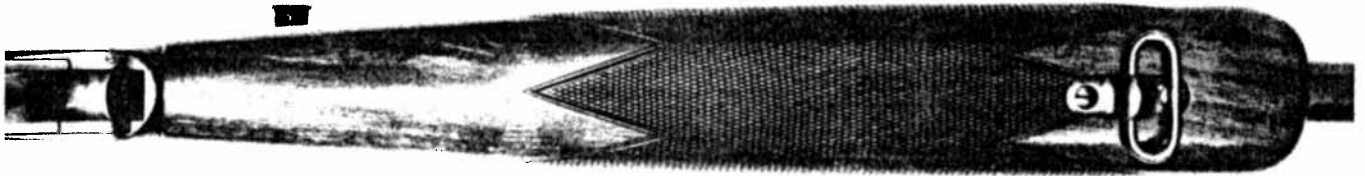
The serial no. 722, B2, L.R., 15.9 and the date of September 21, 1928 with the "H.M. Pope" barrel signature. All stampings are located on the bottom portion of the barrel with the forearm removed. The stamping signatures of "H.M. Pope" appear on the gun in three locations. On top of the barrel. In the cartridge cut, and under the forearm as noted above, on the bottom of the barrel.



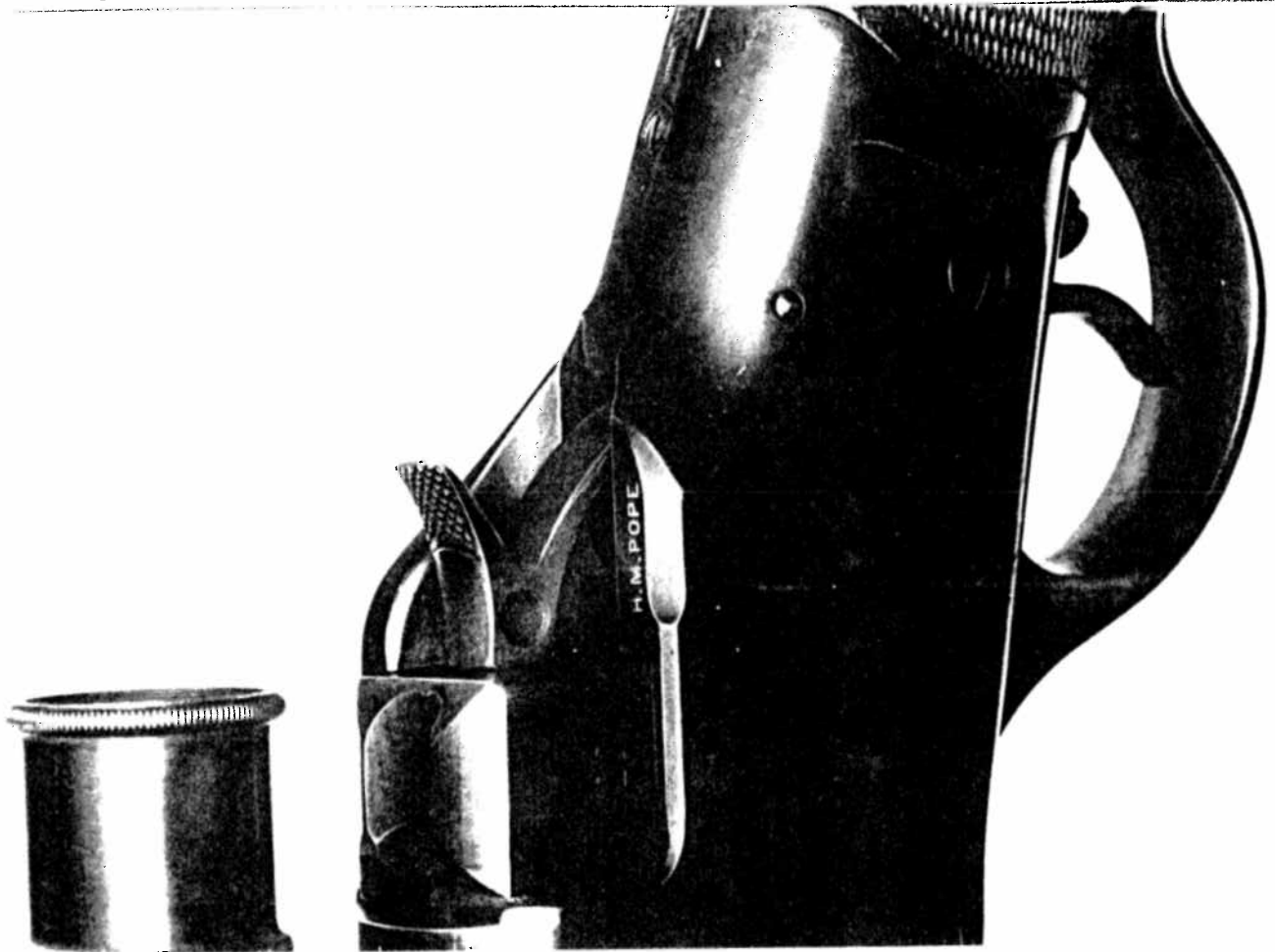
The left side depicting the "Pope" cut to allow "easy loading of the cartridge into the action". The caliber designation of "22" appears on the block



Serial no. 722 with Winchester A-5 Scope. Overall length of 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Stock extra long stock and pistol grip. With a "length of pull of 14 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches". Note the extra long forearm of 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.



The "extra long and shaped forearm of 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches length! Checking of the wood is a fine 21 lines per inch. The rear screw of the sling loop base also serves to secure the metal barrel band.



The "H.M.Pope" signature on the cartridge loading cut. With the "Pope" hammer depicting the two holes to lighten the hammer.

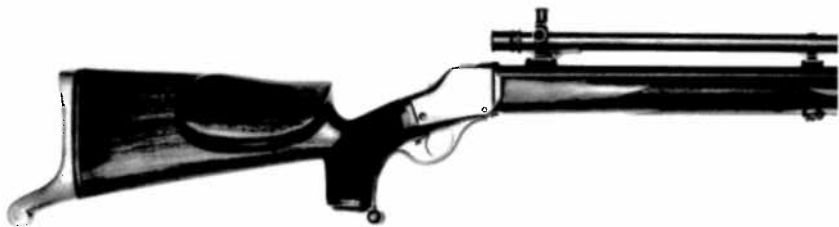
277.

Series/#	None
	72

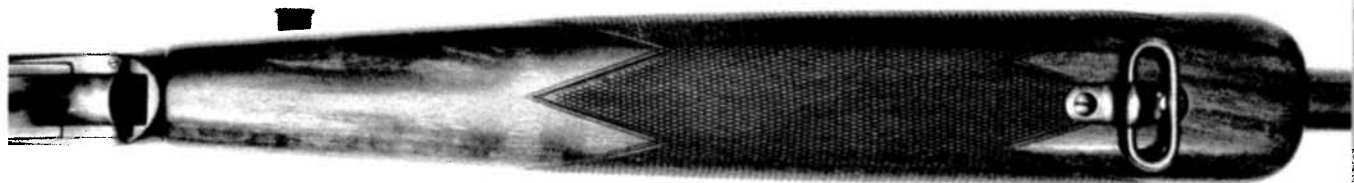
Price 200.⁰⁰

Griffin & Howie - Gun Digest 1974

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The custom designed "extra large cheek piece and the extra large"checked pistol grip, with metal grip cap. Note also the curvature of the extra long lever extension with its "hand engraved" solid metal knob"for easy finger or thumb"opening of the lever. An excellent designed left hand stock for bench shooting.





The engraving "Stocked by Griffin & Howe, Inc. New York" as it appears on the bottom portion of the trigger guard.

722

B2

L R

15.9

9.21.23

H.M. POPE



