



Springfield Mass

March 15, 2007

The revolver you inquired about in your recent letter is a Model 3 American. This model was the first of Smith & Wesson's .44 caliber revolvers. It was introduced in the summer of 1870 and manufactured until 1874 with a total production of 32,800 revolvers.

In general, the collector recognizes two major model variations during the four year production span of the Model 3 American. These variations are called the First and Second Models.

The Second Model variation was manufactured in December 1871 at approximately serial number 6800 and continued in production until 1874. The basic difference between the First and Second Model is the barrel catch and hammer which interlocks when the hammer is in the rest position, and a frame which incorporate a boss to accommodate a larger trigger pin.

The Model 3 American was manufactured in two calibers; the standard caliber of .44 Smith & Wesson American and the .44 Henry Rim Fire. The guns could be ordered in blue or nickel with a standard 8" barrel length.

We have researched your Smith & Wesson Model 3 American First Model, United States Government Contract, caliber .44 S&W American, in company records which indicate that your handgun, with serial number 2065, was sold in March 16, 1871 and shipped to United States Government, National Armory, Springfield, MA. The records indicate that this handgun was shipped with a 8 inch barrel, nickel finish, smooth walnut grips.

Sincerely,
SMITH & WESSON

Roy G. Jinks
Roy G. Jinks
Historian



SMITH & WESSON

**SMITH & WESSON MODEL 3
AMERICAN FIRST MODEL U.S.
GOVERNMENT CONTRACT**

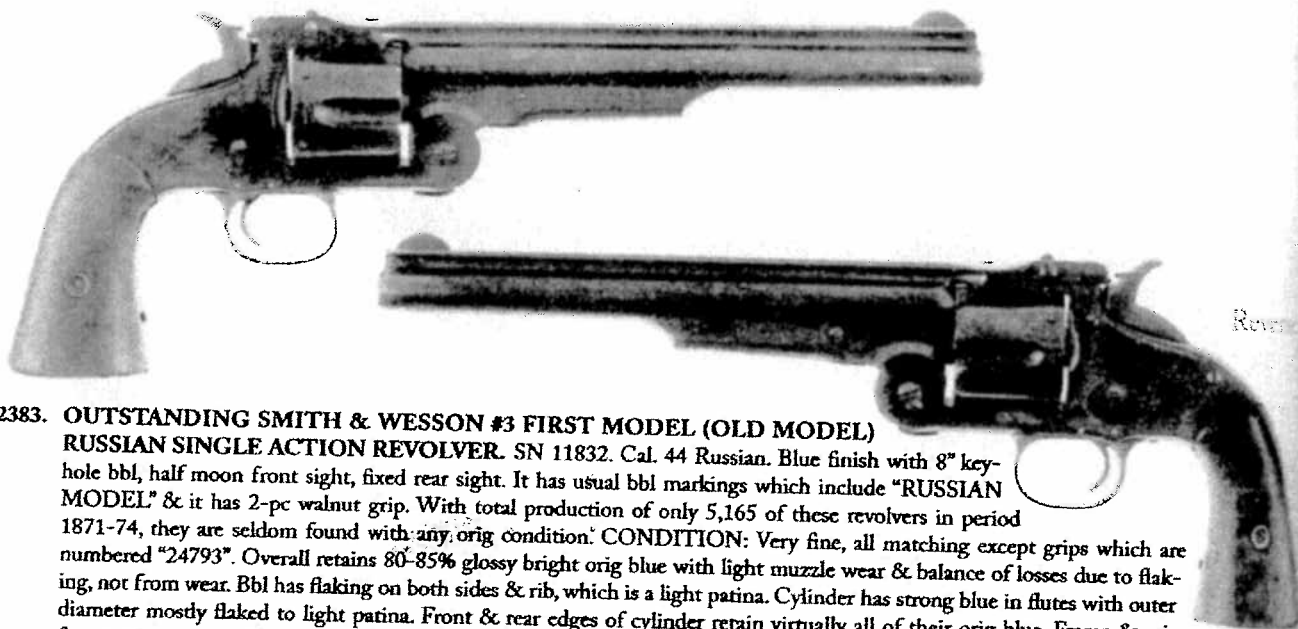
SERIAL # 2065

MANUFACTURED 1871

**FROM: JAMES JULIA
(PREVIOUSLY IN ROBT.
HOWARD COLLECTION)**

**VERY RARE: (ONLY 200
NICKLE-PLATED MADE)**



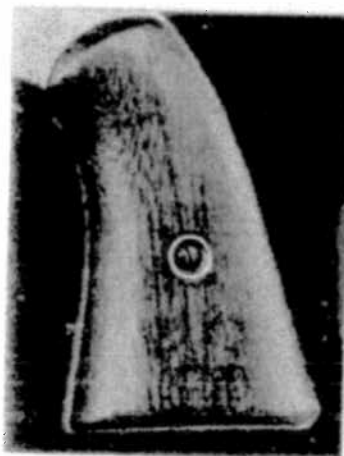


2383. **OUTSTANDING SMITH & WESSON #3 FIRST MODEL (OLD MODEL) RUSSIAN SINGLE ACTION REVOLVER.** SN 11832. Cal. 44 Russian. Blue finish with 8" keyhole bbl, half moon front sight, fixed rear sight. It has usual bbl markings which include "RUSSIAN MODEL" & it has 2-pc walnut grip. With total production of only 5,165 of these revolvers in period 1871-74, they are seldom found with any orig condition. **CONDITION:** Very fine, all matching except grips which are numbered "24793". Overall retains 80-85% glossy bright orig blue with light muzzle wear & balance of losses due to flaking, not from wear. Bbl has flaking on both sides & rib, which is a light patina. Cylinder has strong blue in flutes with outer diameter mostly flaked to light patina. Front & rear edges of cylinder retain virtually all of their orig blue. Frame & grip retain most of their orig glossy bright blue with some very fine edge wear, a few scratches on back strap & a line of fine etching side of frame. Grips show moderate to heavy wear with rounded edges & traces of orig varnish. Mechanics are crisp, brilliant shiny. It appears to be an unfired revolver. 8-87551 JJ106 (15,000-25,000)

9-K



2384. **VERY RARE MARTIALLY MARKED SMITH & WESSON NO. 3 FIRST MODEL AMERICAN SINGLE ACTION REVOLVER.** SN 2065. Cal. 44 American. Rare nickel finish with 8" keyhole shape bbl, half moon front sight with usual Smith & Wesson address & patent markings on top of rib along with a small "US". It has 2-pc walnut grips with outline & partially legible cartouche on left side and are numbered to this revolver. Right heel of frame, under the grip, is stamped with assembly number "08" which number is also found on back of cylinder, on bbl latch & inside top strap cuts. According to *Playderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms* only 200 of these revolvers in nickel finish were ever made. The standard was blue finish. Accompanied by a Smith & Wesson factory fully identifying this revolver as found. It indicates it was sold & shipped March 16, 1871 to the Armory, Springfield, Mass. **CONDITION:** Very fine. Overall retains 80-85% strong orig nickel showing holster wear on right edge of muzzle with some nickel losses in that area, around forcing cone and face of der. Those areas are a light metal color, hardly noticeable. Hammer retains strong case colors, moderately. Mechanics are fine, strong bright bore with fine pitting. 4-31228 JR185 (20,000-30,000)



© SMITH & WESSON SPRINGFIELD MASS U.S.A. PAT. JULY 10. 66. JAN 17. FEB 17. JULY 21. 88 & AUG. 24. 88

SMITH & WESSON U.S. AMERICAN (1871)

Serial #2065 is an extremely rare and valuable gun as it is 1 of 1000 that Smith & Wesson made for the U.S. Army in 1871, only 200 of which, like #2065, were nickel plated.

#2065 is in very fine condition with perhaps 80 percent or more of its original nickel finish remaining. It is absolutely correct with 2 small "A's" on the left hand side of the frame above and below the center of the cylinder. The "A's" reflect that this gun was inspected for the government by an inspector named Oliver W. Ainsworth. His initials "OWA" also faintly appear as a cartouche on the lower part of the left hand grip. I cannot find the small "A" that should have been placed on the bottom of the grip and it has probably worn away with time. Interestingly, Ainsworth was also the government inspector whose "A" appears on several places on my Colt U.S. Richards serial #468.

| #2065 is likely one of the very best remaining nickel plated U.S. Americans. As noted below, it was for many years in the collection of Robert Howard, a

now 91 year old Texas banker, who sold his collection in 2006 which may at the time have been the largest and finest antique gun collection in private hands.

Nickel plating was a new process in 1870 and the Army was experimenting to see if nickel guns would rust less and last longer than blued guns. Many of the nickel U.S. Americans were issued to officers and some collectors refer to them as officers' guns. Apparently, the Army concluded that nickel was not worth the extra expense and I believe these were the last nickel guns ordered by the Army.

The U.S. American was the first cartridge revolver purchased by the U.S. Army. Prior to 1871 some soldiers had their own small caliber Smith & Wesson revolvers that utilized small underpowered .22 and .32 caliber cartridges, but it wasn't until the U.S. American that Smith & Wesson offered a large bore .44 caliber handgun. During the Civil War many U.S. Army rifles utilized metallic cartridges, however, it was not until the issuance of the U.S. American in 1871 that the Army began to convert from percussion to metallic cartridge pistols. The Smith & Wesson U.S. American was closely followed by issuance of 1200 Colt U.S. Richards conversions of Colt's 1860 percussion revolver. The U.S. American and U.S. Richards were in use until they began to be phased out and replaced by the Colt Single Action Army in 1874-75.

History: According to Chicoine's book, Smith & Wesson Sixguns of the Old West, at least one nickel U.S. American, serial #2123, was used by Lt. James E. Porter at the Battle of The Little Bighorn in 1876. (p. 383) Chicoine goes on to state that another nickel U.S. American, serial 2102, may well have been at the Little Bighorn and that gun is pictured on the cover of Chicoine's book along with an interesting chapter regarding its history.

Contradicting Chicoine, Charles Pate's book, Smith & Wesson American Model, states that although #2102 did belong to Lt. Porter (killed at the Little Bighorn), he had left the gun behind with his wife and it was not then at the Little Big Horn but is now on display at the museum at the Little Bighorn Battlefield. Almost certainly, Pate is correct and while the U.S. American was at the Little Big Horn, it was in the hands of Indians. Copies of pertinent pages from Chicoine and Pate are attached. Pate notes that by 1876 and the Battle of The Little Bighorn, the 7th Cavalry was no longer armed with U.S. Americans (having replaced them with Colt Single Action Armies), but that archeologists have found shell casings which establish that at least 2 S&W Americans were present at the battle, probably as Indian arms.

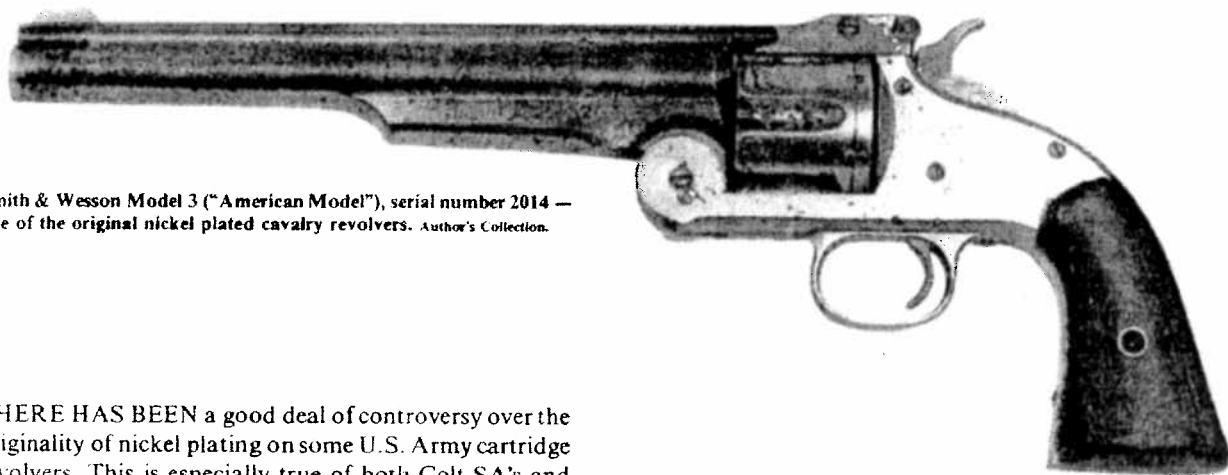
Insofar as I can determine, very few U.S. Americans can be identified by serial number to any particular soldier or cavalry unit. According to Pate's book, it is clear from

old military records that the 200 nickel U.S. Americans were issued as follows: 50 to the Leavenworth Arsenal for the Dept. of the Missouri; 50 to the Benecia Arsenal for the Dept. of the Pacific ; 50 to the Omaha Depot for the Dept. of the Platte ; 20 to the Augusta Arsenal for the Dept. of the South; and 30 to the Wheeler U.S. Geological Surey of the 100th Meridian. Where #2065 went is unknown to me and probably unknowable.

The Original Nickel Plated Cavalry Revolver— The S & W Model 3

by Major Charles W. Pate

Smith & Wesson Model 3 ("American Model"), serial number 2014 — one of the original nickel plated cavalry revolvers. Author's Collection.



(Photo by Jerry Owen)

THERE HAS BEEN a good deal of controversy over the originality of nickel plating on some U.S. Army cartridge revolvers. This is especially true of both Colt SA's and Schofield S&W's. Many examples of both revolvers are known to exist in such a state as to indicate the guns were in new condition when plated. This can possibly be explained by the fact that many of these guns were put on the commercial market in new condition after having been plated by dealers in order to enhance their appeal. In fact, the state of Virginia sold some new Colt revolvers to such dealers immediately after they were issued to the state under provisions of the Militia Act.¹ Other states may have done the same.

While official correspondence shows that some few revolvers were plated by or for Springfield Armory specifically for sale to army officers, it is clear that this small quantity would not account for the number of plated revolvers now in existence. Some dealers and collectors point to photographs from the period as proof that nickel plated revolvers were in use, especially by Indian Police or scouts. Others counter this by pointing out that most metal in such photographs has a nickeled appearance due to the photographic process used. In addition to all this, the only finish specified in any official Indian War period, army documents that this author has seen or heard about was blue. It appears that not all, revolvers bought by the army during the period were blue in finish — all, that is, except for the subject of this article, the nickel plated S&W Model 3.

We are indeed fortunate to have considerable documentation regarding this interesting and historically important firearm. The general background story of the U.S. martial S&W Model 3 ("American Model") is a very interesting one but has been told quite well in previous publications and will not be repeated in detail here. The fine book by John B. Parsons² is recommended to any reader who wishes to study this subject in greater depth. Briefly, a contract was offered to S&W on 28 December 1870 to provide 1,000 .44 caliber revolvers to the army for field testing. The army was anxious to adopt a modern breechloading revolver at this time, and the contract resulted from a small arms board of officers convened in St. Louis to select such weapons for further testing. The price for each pistol was to be \$14.25, including one cleaning rod, one punch, and two screwdrivers. On 30 December, S&W forwarded two sample pistols as models for the inspection. The Ordnance Department approved these sample pistols and so notified S&W on 5 January 1871. The following day S&W formally accepted the contract. Nowhere in any of this correspondence is the finish of these revolvers specified nor is there any mention of nickel plating. It is clear, however, that the standard finish was to be blue.

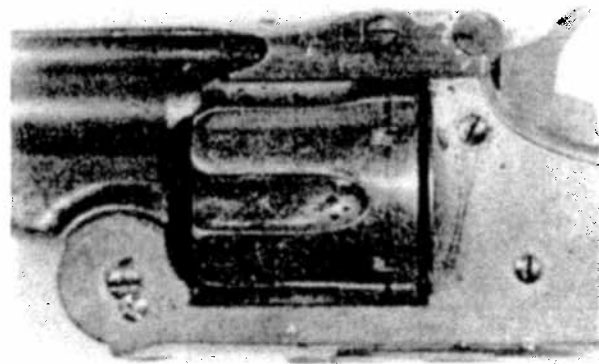
Feb 14th 1871

Sir

Yours of the 13th is received. I send 25 Revolvers back to S&W today plated and shall forward others as fast as done. These revolvers are not finished near as well as S&W has sent these [sic] to our Gun Smiths. I thought I would mention this fact to you in confidence.

The revolvers are not up to the mark as compared to those we have done for other parties but still [not legible]. Some parts do not look quite as well as I would like to see them.

Yours Truly
Geo. D. Allen



(Photo by Jerry Owen)

Detail of the subinspector markings on serial number 2014. O.W. Ainsworth is well known as the subinspector of the first Colt SA contract — the "Custer Colts."

During the early 1870's the army was experimenting with nickel plating of arms, accoutrements, and horse gear. Considerable correspondence from this period exists relating to these experiments. The earliest documentation found relative to the nickel plated S&W American Model is in the Chief of Ordnance endorsement to the report of the small arms board which originally recommended purchase of the revolvers. In the 8 July 1870 endorsement, General Dyer concurred with the board's recommendation and stated that measures were being taken to plate some arms with nickel and try them in service.

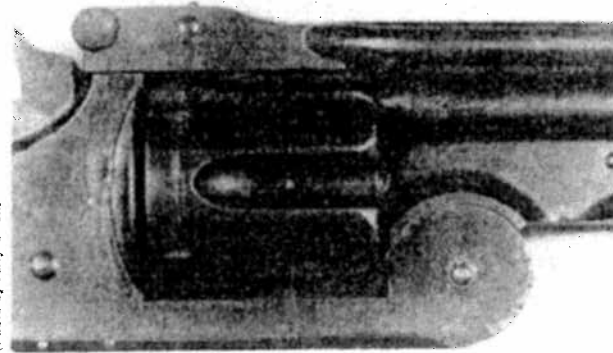
The following correspondence clearly shows that 200 of the 1,000 S&W revolvers were plated prior to final acceptance by the army, probably on the decision of General Dyer. In addition, the letters present an interesting aside to the story of these weapons. All are from George D. Allen, Treasurer of Boston Nickel Plating Co., No. 14, Province St., to Major J.G. Benton, U.S. Armory, Springfield.

Feb 11 1871

Sir

Your returned favors of the 9th & 10th now received in due course two weeks since I had the honor of meeting General Dyer in Washington. I named to him \$1.00 each as the cost of plating the revolvers you speak of. The first 25 are received and are being plated. I shall endeavor to do them in the very best manner. Please inform me if I shall return them to Messrs. Smith & Wesson or to you at the Armory. The price named above is not our regular price please not name it [sic] to outsiders and oblig.

The letter indicated that the guns were sent directly from S&W to Boston for plating and not from the army. No mention was made of having S&W plate the revolvers. It may be that S&W declined to do so, or possibly that they didn't have the facilities available to do the work. The nickel plating was the original finish in all probability, and the following letters develop this point more thoroughly while adding a great deal more to our story.



(Photo by Jerry Owen)

Detail of the right side of a blued U.S. American Model. The tiny "P" stands for "proved." The "P" was stamped just behind the blast shield and on the extractor housing above the hinge, both in line with the stamp in the cylinder flute.

Feb 20th 1871

Sir

Yours of the 17th is received. Contracts noted and in reply will say that any revolver recd. from Smith & Wesson and not well plated or in the least injured by us we will pay full price for the same and may be returned to me. I wrote you some days since in reference to the finish of these revolvers. I have seen too much of this class of work not to know when an article is well made. These revolvers (I will repeat) are not finished so well as are those which we have sent us from our Gun Smiths here — and in the same size *and same manufacturer*. In the boxes in which these revolvers are sent us there is some 4 inches of room not filled up with anything — Consequently they are loose and must shake about in the boxes and if injured at all are injured in transportation. If suspending these parts in our solution nicks them or mars them they may lay the injury to us. But I assure you that our plating the revolvers do not come in contact with each other or with *any hard substance whatever*.

And I know they are returned in as good condition as received.

If you desire and will telegraph me tomorrow morning I will send you by express at my own

expense some of this [illegible] as I take it from the boxes before it is plated. You can then see for yourself whether or not my statements are correct. I plate watch movements and the finest material and mathematical instruments which are made. Again let me say we do nothing which can mar or injure in the least work in metal.

Most Respty Yours
Obt. Sevnt
Geor. D. Allen

This was either a legitimate complaint or an underhanded attempt to put the blame for some poor workmanship onto someone else. In a long letter dated 20 Feb 1871, Mr. Allen forwards a bill of \$205.75 for plating 200 revolvers plus shipping charges. He also states that the last case of revolvers was sent on the 8th of March.

Next in chronological order appears a document simply entitled "Report" which is dated 16 March and is signed by Mr. O.W. Ainsworth, the principal sub-inspector for this contract.

Report

on 16 nickel plated guards which were rejected at Smith & Wesson Armory in the inspection of one 1000 Army pistols. The work was inspected and packed by me before being sent to Boston and was in perfect order.

When it came back 16 of the guards were in a bad condition being polished out of shape and left with file marks. Those I rejected and gave Mr. King orders to furnish others in place of them and replate 19 barrel catches which were badly plated.

In addition to giving us more insight regarding the background of Mr. Allen's letters, this document is more revealing than most non-S&W collectors will realize. This is the first documentary proof that the barrel catches and trigger guards of these 200 revolvers were originally plated. Normally, plated S&W single actions of this type have blued barrel catches and color case hardened trigger guards. Another interesting point about this document is Mr. Ainsworth's comment that he had inspected the revolvers before sending them to Boston for plating. Apparently he had done all save the final inspection. All blued U.S. American Models so far seen or reported to the author have the "A" subinspector initial stamped on the left side of the revolver as shown in the accompanying photograph. However, they also have the capital letter "P" stamped in three places on the right side of the pistol — on the frame behind the blast shield, in a cylinder flute, and on the barrel extractor housing. No nickel plated U.S. American model yet reported has these "P" proof marks present. Perhaps the break in the normal inspection procedure accounts for the lack of these markings on the plated pistols. In the procedures used for the First Model Schofield only four years later,⁶ the

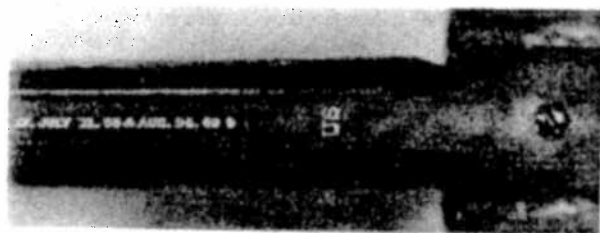
subinspector initial was applied while the parts were in the machined state. The "P" wasn't stamped until after the parts had been proved and before final inspection. The subinspector's full initials were stamped on the left grip to signify passage of final acceptance and receipt by the army. Mr. Ainsworth's initials, O.W.A., appear in a cartouche on the left grip on all these S&W revolvers, both blued and nicked. To the author's knowledge, no explanation has ever been given regarding these missing proof marks. Perhaps the additional time required for shipment to and from Boston and the finishing by someone other than S&W disrupted the inspection somewhat, but it is doubtful that the revolvers were accepted without proof firing.

To conclude the matter of the Boston Nickel Plating Co., Mr. Allen again wrote to Major Benton on 31 March 1871 as follows:

A few days since I recd. a letter from Mssrs. Smith & Wesson with bill for Guards spoiled, and Barrel Catches replated amounting to \$11.40. I wrote them to send me the guards that I might see them before I paid for them. This bill called for 19 and they sent me only 16. They charge me 50¢ each for 19 and \$1.90 for replating 19 Barrel Catches — and say the Govt inspector rejected the Guards — but took away 3 of them so they can send me only 16 of the 19 which are mentioned in their bill. Now I write you upon this matter and desire only to say — first I do not care about the payment of the \$11.40. But the guards were rough and badly finished. I had them finished over by one of the best steel polishers in this country so they might be well plated and smooth. They are in much better condition than when I first received them. I send them to you by express to day that you may see the work which is said by S&W I have *Spoiled*.

After examination by you please return to me by express and at my expense — and further if it is with your approval or by your request that I am asked to pay for these articles by them S&W. [sic]

Most Respectfully
Your Obt Servt
Geo. D. Allen



The "U.S." was stamped on the top of the barrel rib, a rather unlikely place and one which is often subject to wear. It is unclear as to who applied this marking — S&W or the government. In the first Colt SA contract, the Colt factory initially stamped the guns. However, we know that in later contracts for both the Colt SA and the Schofield government personnel stamped the weapons. (Photo by Jerry Owen)

Serial numbers of the nickel plated martial S&W American Models. Asterisks indicate duplicated numbers (see text).

1722	1970	2020	2078	0125	0447	0554	0699	0798	0907	1083	1256	1320	1376	1432	1485	1541	1599	1675	1821
1729	1972	2021	2079	0164	0448	0555	0700	0801	0908	1086	1258	1321	1377	1433	1486	1542	1600	1676	1825
1863	1973	2022	2080	0192	0451	0556	0702	0802	0911	1089	1259	1324	1378	1434	1487	1543	1601	1677	1826
1868	1974	2023	2081	0211	0452	0557	0705	0803	0914	1090	1261	1325	1379	1435	1488	1544	1602	1678	1829
1884	1975	2023*	2083	0225	0457	0564	0707	0804	0926	1091	1262	1326	1380	1436	1489	1545	1604	1679	1830
1895	1976	2024	2085	0242	0458	0570	0708	0806	0929	1092	1266	1328	1381	1437	1490	1546	1605	1681	1831
1900	1976*	2025	2086	0249	0459	0571	0711	0808	0939	1093	1267	1329	1383	1439	1491	1547	1606	1682	1832
1901	1978	2026	2087	0257	0462	0575	0712	0810	0939*	1095	1268	1330	1384	1440	1493	1548	1607	1685	1833
1902	1979	2027	2089	0277	0462*	0576	0713	0811	0956	1097	1268*	1331	1387	1440*	1494	1549	1608	1686	1834
1903	1981	2028	2090	0282	0464	0577	0714	0812	0958	1098	1269	1332	1388	1441	1495	1550	1609	1688	1835
1904	1981*	2029	2091	0292	0465	0580	0715	0814	0962	1099	1270	1333	1389	1442	1496	1551	1611	1689	1836
1905	1982	2030	2092	0293	0466	0581	0716	0822	0985	1102	1271	1334	1390	1443	1497	1552	1612	1692	1837
1906	1983	2031	2093	0308	0467	0585	0718	0823	0991	1108	1272	1335	1391	1443*	1499	1553	1613	1693	1838
1907	1984	2032	2094	0330	0469	0586	0723	0824	0994	1122	1273	1336	1392	1444	1500	1554	1615	1694	1839
1908	1985	2035	2095	0331	0471	0587	0724	0825	1000	1123	1274	1337	1393	1445	1501	1555	1616	1695	1842
1909	1989	2034	2096	0334	0474	0588	0725	0828	1003	1124	1275	1338	1394	1446	1502	1556	1618	1696	1843
1910	1990	2035	2098	0340	0475	0590	0728	0829	1005	1125	1277	1340	1395	1447	1504	1557	1619	1697	1844
1911	1991	2036	2099	0352	0483	0596	0729	0830	1010	1128	1278	1341	1396	1448	1505	1559	1620	1698	1846
1912	1992	2037	2100	0355	0484	0599	0730	0835	1014	1132	1279	1342	1397	1449	1506	1560	1621	1699	1847
1914	1993	2038	2101	0358	0486	0601	0732	0837	1017	1137	1280	1343	1400	1450	1507	1561	1622	1720	1848
1915	1944	2039	2102	0362	0487	0602	0734	0839	1018	1144	1282	1344	1401	1451	1508	1562	1623	1721	1849
1916	1995	2040	2103	0364	0488	0605	0739	0840	1021	1146	1283	1345	1402	1452	1509	1563	1624	1732	1851
1918	1996	2041	2104	0365	0490	0607	0740	0841	1022	1146*	1284	1346	1404	1453	1510	1566	1625	1733	1852
1920	1997	2042	2105	0367	0491	0609	0744	0844	1024	1149	1285	1347	1405	1454	1511	1567	1626	1735	1857
1921	1999	2043	2106	0370	0492	0610	0749	0845	1025	1155	1287	1348	1406	1455	1512	1568	1627	1737	1859
1920	2000	2044	2107	0371	0493	0611	0750	0846	1026	1157	1288	1350	1407	1456	1513	1569	1628	1738	1867
1923	2001	2045	2109	0375	0495	0615	0753	0847	1029	1165	1289	1351	1408	1457	1514	1570	1629	1742	1870
1924	2001*	2048	2110	0382	0496	0616	0754	0848	1030	1170	1290	1352	1409	1458	1515	1571	1630	1745	1871
1925	2002	2049	2111	0385	0498	0619	0756	0849	1031	1171	1292	1353	1410	1460	1516	1572	1634	1759	1872
1926	2002*	2050	2112	0386	0508	0625	0757	0853	1036	1175	1292*	1354	1411	1461	1517	1573	1635	1761	1874
1927	2003	2051	2114	0388	0513	0628	0758	0855	1038	1184	1293	1355	1412	1462	1518	1575	1637	1767	1875
1928	2004	2052	2115	0390	0516	0630	0760	0856	1040	1187	1295	1356	1413	1463	1519	1576	1638	1768	1877
1930	2004*	2054	2116	0393	0519	0631	0761	0856*	1042	1189	1296	1357	1414	1465	1520	1577	1641	1770	1880
1931	2005	2055	2118	0397	0521	0633	0762	0857	1044	1192	1297	1358	1415	1467	1521	1578	1643	1775	1882
1935	2006	2057	2121	0406	0522	0636	0763	0858	1046	1193	1300	1359	1416	1468	1522	1579	1649	1778	1885
1936	2007	2058	2120	0408	0523	0637	0764	0861	1047	1196	1301	1360	1417	1469	1523	1580	1651	1781	1886
1937	2007*	2059	2124	0412	0524	0641	0769	0864	1050	1197	1303	1361	1418	1470	1524	1581	1654	1782	1887
1938	2008	2060	2126	0413	0527	0642	0770	0865	1051	1198	1304	1362	1419	1471	1525	1583	1644	1784	1888
1939	2008*	2062	2128	0415	0529	0643	0771	0870	1056	1199	1306	1363	1420	1472	1527	1584	1656	1787	1890
1941	2009	2063	2130	0418	0531	0646	0774	0873	1059	1212	1308	1364	1421	1473	1528	1586	1657	1788	1891
1943	2010	2064	2139	0419	0533	0654	0776	0876	1061	1224	1309	1365	1422	1474	1529	1587	1658	1790	1893
1944	2011	2065	2152	0420	0536	0660	0777	0881	1062	1227	1311	1366	1422*	1475	1530	1588	1660	1791	1951
1945	2012	2069	2153	0423	0539	0664	0779	0882	1067	1227*	1312	1367	1424	1476	1531	1589	1661	1795	1958
1947	2013	2070	2154	0423*	0542	0665	0780	0883	1068	1230	1313	1368	1425	1477	1532	1590	1662	1798	1967
1949	2014	2071	2169	0425	0544	0666	0783	0891	1069	1231	1314	1369	1426	1478	1533	1591	1664	1802	1998
1950	2015	2072	2170	0427	0545	0667	0784	0892	1070	1232	1315	1370	1427	1479	1534	1593	1665	1803	2053
1955	2016	2073	2176	0428	0548*	0671	0785	0894	1071	1234	1316	1371	1428	1480	1535	1594	1667	1807	
1956	2017	2074	2177	0431	0548*	0676	0791	0896	1077	1248	1317	1372	1429	1482	1536	1596	1671	1814	
1961	2018	2076	2192	0436	0549	0683	0796	0899	1079	1249	1318	1374	1430	1483	1538	1597	1673	1816	
1962	2019	2077	2199	0439	0550	0696	0797	0906	1082	1252	1319	1375	1431	1484	1539	1598	1674	1820	

Serial numbers of the 796 blued martial S&W American Models in numerical sequence. Asterisks indicated duplicated numbers.

The last correspondence regarding this matter is a letter from S&W to Major Benton dated 1 April 1871, which stated a corrected bill would be sent to the Boston Nickel Plating Co. deducting the three guards. So, in summary, it appears that the army, based on Mr. Ainsworth's statement, supported S&W's position on the damage done to the revolvers.

Several years ago LTC. R.C. Kuhn located a list of serial numbers for the U.S. American Model while doing research in the National Archives. This list was published in the previously referenced book by John B. Parson. A copy of the original page listing these nickel plated revolvers is included here. There are two controversies concerning this data, neither of which has been resolved. The first is the fact that this list contains only 996 serial numbers. There is no doubt that the army contracted for 1,000 pistols and, in the author's opinion, they received exactly 1,000 pistols. The list in question gives the

numbers of the packing boxes being shipped to the Springfield Armory and the serial numbers of the pistols in each box. The last box of blued revolvers, number 40, contained only 16 revolvers. It is possible that the four missing revolvers had previously been provided to the army, perhaps as models for the inspection. Two of these could have been the two revolvers previously referenced in the 30 December 1870 letter.

The other matter is more perplexing. There are 20 numbers in the list of 996 which are duplicated. For the convenience of the reader, the lists of plated and black revolver serial numbers have been sorted by number and lists in sequence are provided. Eight of the duplicated numbers are nickel plated revolvers: 1976, 1981, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, and 2023. Note that no number was duplicated in the same shipping box. To date, research has failed to turn up any of these revolvers which actually have the same serial numbers. On the contrary,

Numbers of Serials contained in each Box

Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box
796	1857	1124	1291	1286	1348	1891	576	1798	1991
1018	1560	1738	1285	1230	1154	1886	1393	1532	1874
1377	1853	1606	587	1278	1086	1826	1460	1654	1759
1573	1835	1496	711	706	1364	1888	492	1518	1651
1577	1871	1830	881	616	1429	1619	225	1820	1882
1814	1581	1672	888	1381	419	1347	630	1686	1128
1614	1444	1462	1118	1149	1413	1097	633	1112	1388
1814	1785	1848	1226	756	420	1489	1547	1869	1811
821	1801	1784	849	667	828	1371	1365	1898	1837
1354	1607	1686	1316	586	1370	625	1244	1249	1878
1650	1671	1875	1173	1266	636	1479	1292	1638	1293
1768	1872	1570	1380	760	1523	1767	1146	1446	447
1836	1611	1778	1342	1295	1618	1846	601	1414	812
1376	1684	1867	847	1344	1444	1877	762	782	1579
1916	1604	1890	1354	1198	576	1958	747	1844	1384
1530	1675	1808	671	1871	1321	1121	1017	1408	621
1575	1482	1782	847	1311	1376	1809	1252	1409	631
1677	1967	1628	858	1374	431	1847	1227	1353	1450
1630	1831	1849	846	646	282	1843	801	1499	448
1676	1859	1829	939	707	570	1887	1369	1761	1781

Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box
1346	841	1790	811	1784	1517	423	1844	822	1601
550	718	454	1418	469	1281	1527	1436	1870	412
292	1029	1413	753	1403	1284	1616	1184	1335	164
354	1328	780	1721	192	1140	1435	1899	1390	315
844	496	1372	1605	830	1567	545	1197	779	696
1042	462	367	718	1456	1374	1095	728	555	1494
527	406	732	1189	1498	864	1308	1831	814	1502
1566	1177	761	1026	798	1870	1886	1196	548	777
929	1447	521	1421	1542	1091	1508	1325	531	926
1132	1432	876	8749	1546	452	397	1232	804	1509
1689	1422	605	1660	590	1834	830	1850	899	1067
1406	1030	1448	1025	754	1807	1532	1061	756	1313
1451	1604	1637	1473	1505	1886	1795	370	823	1083
1268	1389	1490	789	1539	1641	774	1871	840	1485
475	1175	1170	829	1588	487	1366	1487	1890	1280
1338	1187	1259	1688	498	1737	873	1080	729	1059
1140	390	458	1544	611	935	929	1616	1272	124
257	1345	1528	1664	1468	1842	1341	1661	1877	1442
413	1395	464	1308	1040	1738	1518	1824	1402	1681
1378	1870	1381	352	1275	1820	1329	1243	580	589

The original packing lists for the Model 3 S&W's. Note that the blued revolvers were packed in cases 1-40, while the nickel plated ones were packed separately in cases 41-50. Serial number information is extremely rare, and the survival of this information was a stroke of luck for the modern day researcher and collector. The source is National Archives, Record Group 156. The lines in the pages are caused by tears in the original where it was folded.

Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box
1445	415	1360	700	1568	1338	1375	1421	1629	1269
664	1361	587	1212	1439	1541	1534	1597	1068	1214
882	1530	835	1791	549	382	914	619	1577	529
425	516	994	610	676	1146	1599	797	1005	1262
1377	1309	870	1407	1488	211	785	1548	548	1370
436	536	488	856	642	725	664	1598	1457	1394
433	896	848	1682	1410	1506	1782	277	907	1288
1317	1415	713	888	572	1474	1261	1427	1608	1171
788	1649	1044	1430	1146	825	1280	708	1501	840
712	1742	1628	1667	770	1514	1047	418	1856	1284
1533	1542	1268	571	1090	776	544	564	542	1274
1536	1074	1232	665	762	1298	813	1609	1578	1721
1561	1493	1304	1497	892	1391	908	824	791	1675
1665	466	856	1431	724	1368	1443	362	428	1531
1480	1470	1571	498	1594	1049	1458	1434	615	354
1386	465	331	1559	1535	1047	1522	1462	1052	784
578	371	1362	1422	1417	1697	125	1292	1199	1279
1457	1392	1397	1618	802	1425	1448	1379	423	1521
1698	783	1641	1824	518	491	1699	837	490	1440
763	660	1401	1411	769	1427	1360	607	384	1340

Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box	Box
764	556	418	1657	1745	1306	1598	816	1271	1585
1192	1227	1287	715	1454	1510	1343	1424	714	1821
911	609	1770	891	744	654	1674	1698	1678	1686
1022	1318	1525	734	1602	246	1458	1519	1312	1890
581	1404	293	1802	1571	1357	1577	1471	1628	1888
467	1438	1679	1324	585	865	991	1426	1449	1581
1444	1404	699	688	495	1757	1478	1419	1315	1508
1520	488	524	641	398	1572	874	1380	845	526
1465	1424	523	1156	771	358	958	1880	1888	1620
1416	562	1587	1387	459	1503	858	1803	1695	1467
723	1447	1488	1473	588	1638	1518	740	643	1280
1122	1208	1496	417	1634	1468	414	1831	249	365
1477	845	451	811	1428	1469	703	1454	1867	1319
1117	637	1484	439	1662	579	1621	1289	462	1297
375	585	1258	1369	1309	1476	602	1363	1356	1384
1440	1463	1471	1469	1270	716	1092	519	1137	1901
1301	1441	1472	1889	1165	1612	1267	666	1833	
1770	1529	1400	805	308	1584	1307	742	1128	
1388	1412	486	1436	471	1447	1062	1671	1360	
1461	1636	1625	1277	1433	427	1648	474	1545	

Plated

<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>	<u>Rev</u>
1729	1938	1916	2018	2018	2091	2104	2192	2086	2139
1993	1989	1914	2067	2081	2179	2048	2012	2111	2091
1976	1906	1894	2048	2083	2027	2177	2199	2017	2044
1959	1978	1868	2026	2090	2104	2057	2150	2110	2121
2089	1956	1962	1984	2108	2040	2091	2176	2081	2029
1981	1909	1922	1976	2099	2076	2125	2064	2139	2122
1747	1974	1954	1955	2081	1981	2047	2092	2112	2082
1901	1984	1987	2015	1912	1985	2040	2178	2158	2070
2019	1920	1922	1902	2018	1940	2101	2057	2103	2056
1930	2001	1945	2083	2034	2020	2059	2025	2152	2149
1990	1921	1915	2021	2010	2077	2062	1968	2002	2116
1920	1970	1927	1992	2078	2009	2001	2016	2177	2124
1912	1911	1995	1936	2071	2042	2013	2063	2100	2080
1979	1972	1973	1908	2040	2008	2196	2128	2107	2087
1974	1941	1975	1931	2004	1982	1999	2111	2115	1954
1996	1961	2004	1949	2007	1980	1944	2110	2126	2014
2090	1997	1983	1918	2024	2074	2116	2043	2114	2070
2036	1908	1924	1981	2001	2060	1923	2052	2102	2109
2002	1910	1943	1926	2031	2028	2041	2171	2006	2118
2094	1928	1907	1905	2093	2044	2062	2104	2080	2011

several guns (all blue in finish, so far) have been reported with martial markings but which are not on the list. It appears that most, if not all, the duplicate numbers can be attributed to clerical error. However, the collector contemplating the purchase of a martially marked American Model which does not have its serial number included in the inspector's list should be very cautious. A money back guarantee would also be in order. The author would welcome information on both listed and unlisted specimens from other collectors and dealers. Perhaps, after more information is collected, we can answer this question.

Shortly after acceptance of the revolvers by the army, their issue to the troops began. The Chief of Ordnance Annual Report for 1872 shows the issue of 377 blued and "99 Smith & Wesson revolvers, nickel plated, caliber .44" between 1 July 1871 and 30 June 1872. The report for the following year shows the issue of only 12 revolvers without stating the finish. None were shown issued in the 1874 report, however the 1875 report indicates 7 were issued in that year, again without mention of finish. No information is given on those revolvers turned in for repair or because other types of pistols were issued. As a matter of interest, the 1876 report shows the issue of only one S&W American, and that to a militia unit (the state was not specified in the report but other records indicate it was Maine).

The S&W revolvers were issued to troops of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Cavalries. In most cases the nickel plated pistols were tested side-by-side with blued revolvers. Mr. Charles Worman generously provided the author with data from research he has done in the quarterly inventories of arms in the hands of the troops (National Archives Record Group 156). This information is, unfortunately, incomplete but does show a peak in S&W revolvers on hand in the units during the 4th calendar quarter of 1871. During that quarter, 698 blued and 121 nickel plated revolvers were in the field. This number quickly diminished over the years as they were replaced by the Colt SA and S&W Schofield. In the 1st quarter of 1876 only 12 were shown as on hand.

Because of its complexity and lack of ruggedness (compared to the Colt SA), the American Model did not meet with much favor in the army and no more were purchased. The navy was interested in purchasing nickel plated American Models but did not have the funds to do so.¹ Documentary results of the nickel plating experiments have not yet been found, however we can readily surmise what the findings were since future contracts were for blued revolvers.

Recent research indicates that the Army did not dispose of the American Model revolvers until the turn of the century. In a sale at the Springfield Armory on 25-26 April 1900, Mr. M. Berstein bought five nickel plated .44 S&W's in "unservicable" condition for \$5 each. Mr. J. Miller bought four blued Americans for \$4.75, and Mr. H.L. Hauris bought one for \$2.05. It is clear that the term "unservicable" was not really descriptive of the condition of the guns. The more modern Schofield S&W was selling at the same time for prices ranging from \$1.05 to \$3.70. In another sale in 1901, Keitland Bros. & Co. of New York bought fifty-four Americans in "new" condition for \$3.65 each.

To date the author has only scratched the surface of this area of research. If the reader has any information about when these pistols (both American and Schofield Models) were sold by the surplus dealers, I would greatly appreciate hearing of it.

SOURCES

¹Ron Graham, John A. Kopec, C. Kenneth, *A Study of the Colt Single Action Army Revolver*, Dallas, Texas, 1978.

²John E. Parsons, *Smith and Wesson Revolvers*, Privately printed, New York, 1957.

³James Brooks, "A Third Model American," in *The Gun Report*, May, 1966.

⁴Roy Double, *Variations of the Smith & Wesson American 1870-1874*, privately printed, Inverness, FL, 1971.

⁵LTC R.C. Kuhn, "Smith and Wesson Martials," in *The Gun Report*, April, 1956.

⁶U.S. Ordnance, "Rules for the Inspection of Army Revolvers and Gatling Guns," 1875.