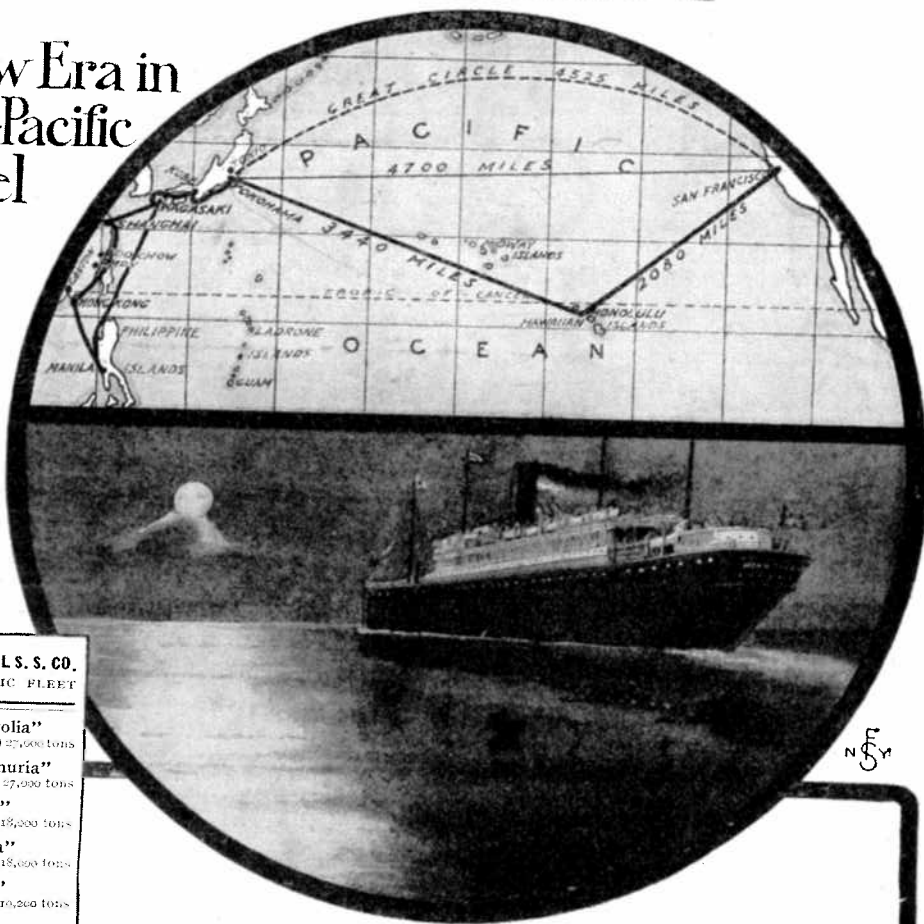


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The immense size, great speed, and exceptionally luxurious appointments of the new steamships of the Pacific Mail make possible the most delightful of all ocean voyages.

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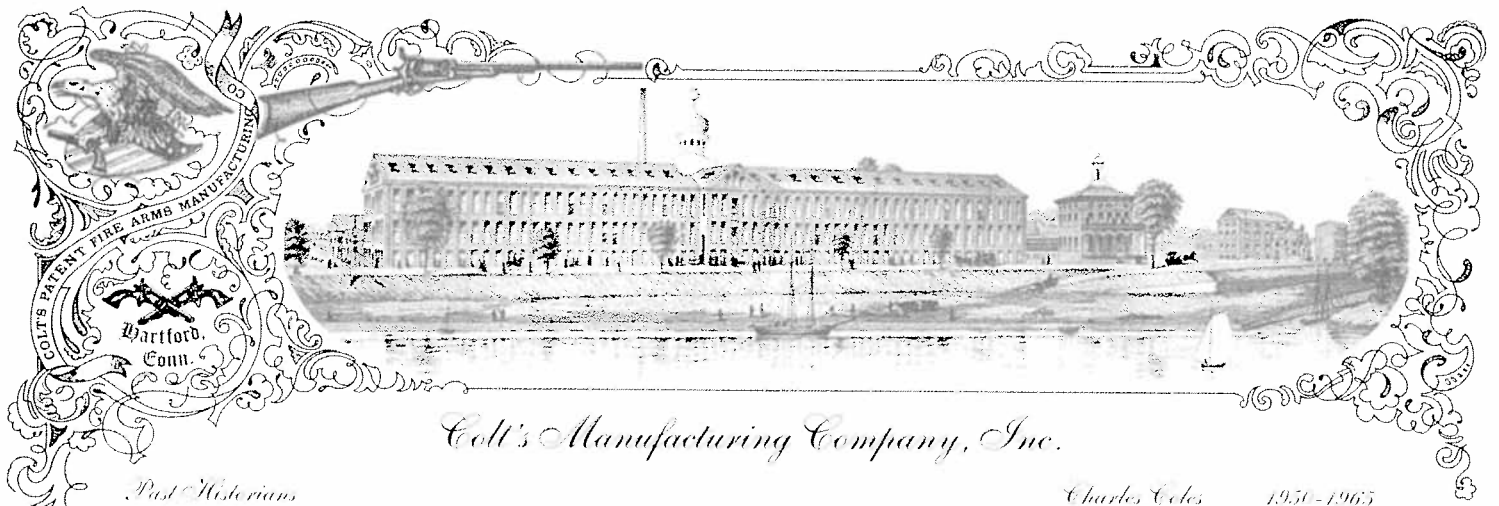
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*Colt's Manufacturing Company, Inc.*

*Past Historians*  
*Arthur Ulrich 1903-1944*

*Charles Cotes 1950-1965*  
*Ren Wagner 1957-1972*  
*Martin Huber 1972-1993*

*Colt, by the means of this letter, is proud to authenticate the manufacture of the Colt firearm with the following serial number:*

**COLT SINGLE ACTION ARMY REVOLVER**

<i>Serial Number:</i>	<i>175937</i>
<i>Caliber:</i>	<i>.45/c</i>
<i>Barrel Length:</i>	<i>7½"</i>
<i>Finish:</i>	<i>Blue</i>
<i>Type of Stocks:</i>	<i>Rubber</i>
<i>Shipped To:</i>	<i>Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Mfg. Company</i>
	<i>San Francisco Agency</i>
<i>Address:</i>	<i>San Francisco, California</i>
<i>Date of Shipment:</i>	<i>February 05, 1898</i>
<i>Number of Same Type</i>	
<i>Guns in Shipment:</i>	<i>25</i>

*We trust you will find the historical information, retrieved from the original Colt shipping records, to be of interest.*

*Sincerely,*

*Kathleen J. Hoyt*  
*Kathleen J. Hoyt*  
*Historian*

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# COLTS

From Texas and  
The Old West



Jerry R. Hemphill



Collection of Gary Helin

Serial No. 67897. 7 1/2" Colt .45, carved UTAH 1882 in right grip: This pistol was found in the desert in the early 40's buried in the sands of time.



Collection of Gary Helin

Serial No. 175937. 7 1/2" Colt .45, blue finish: Only known single action stamped P.M.S.S. Co. on left side of barrel.

## STEAMERS TO THE ISTHMUS

*Steamboat Bill* - Summer 1991

Journal of The Steamship Historical Society of America

(Courtesy of Ted Bailey, CHS '68)



Click for larger image

Photo Courtesy of Dan Gomez

The Panama Railroad Company was incorporated in New York on April 7, 1849, to construct and operate a railway across the Isthmus of Panama. Work began in May 1850 and service commenced on January 28, 1855.

Essential to the railway link between the two oceans was a connecting ship route from New York to Aspinwall (now Colon) which began with sailing ships in 1855, as did a steamship service between Panama and Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Salvador and Guatemala. Steam replaced sail between New York and Aspinwall four years later by the North Atlantic Steamship Company, a joint venture of Panama Railroad and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. The 3,000 grt ADRIATIC, ATLANTIC, and BALTIC were acquired from Collins Line in 1859, but proved too large and were withdrawn in 1863. In 1865 Pacific Mail Steamship Company assumed the operations, providing service to both the Atlantic and Pacific terminals of the railroad. In 1881, the French canal company, obtained control of the Panama Railroad, but left its management in the hands of its U.S. operators.

On February 1, 1893, the agreement with Pacific Mail ended. The Panama Railroad then formed its own shipping company, the Colombian Line, which provided service between New York and Colon utilizing chartered tonnage. Re-named Panama Railroad Steamship Line on January 1, 1896, the line passed on May 4, 1904, to the U.S. government after it assumed the canal project. Operated by a Board of Directors appointed by the Secretary of War, the line played a critical role in the canal construction.

Operations began with the 2,600 grt screw-steamers FINANCE and ADVANCE built in 1883 and 1882 for the United States & Brazil Mail Steamship Company and ALLIANCA (b. 1886/3,905 grt). In 1905, Ward Line's HAVANA and MEXICO were chartered and renamed PANAMA and COLON. The FINANCE sank off Sandy Hook on November 26, 1908, after a collision with the White Star liner GEORGIC.

Two vessels which would long prove the mainstay of the service were purchased in 1908: TREMONT and SHAWMUT (9,606 grt), built in 1902 for the Boston Steamship Company. Their first sailings as CRISTOBAL and ANCON were on June 25 and July 22, 1909 respectively. Fittingly, the line's ships inaugurated the Panama Canal in 1914 with ALLIANCA the first to pass through Gatun Locks on June 8, CRISTOBAL the first to make a test passage through the Canal and ANCON the first to make an official transit on August 15. To supply U.S. Marines stationed there, calls at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, began in 1917.

The CRISTOBAL and ANCON were refitted in 1919-20, which included oil firing and new accommodation for 150 passengers. These 12.5-knot vessels maintained fortnightly, eight-day sailings to Cristobal. The Lake-class freighters LAKE FLATTERY and LAKE FANQUIER were purchased from the U.S. Shipping Board in 1923 and 1925, and as BUENVENTURA and GUAYAQUIL maintained the cargo service.

After Congress overruled President Hoover's desire to disband the line in 1932, plans for new tonnage began, but came under attack from privately-owned companies opposed to a government-owned line diverting commercial trade.

## CONTRACT & CONSTRUCTION

As America began to strengthen defenses of the Panama Canal, new building plans were revived in late 1936. This coincided with legislation to revive the U.S. Merchant Marine, and led to the creation of the Federal Maritime Commission which subsidized vessel construction and operation. After the Merchant Marine Act of 1936 had reaffirmed government encouragement of private steamship companies, upgrading a government-owned line prompted opposition; to which Panama Railroad responded by citing a Supreme Court decision of October 1935.

"We attach no importance to the fact that the railway company has utilized both its ships and railroad to carry private freight and passengers. The record shows that this is done to a limited extent compared; and that it is only incidental to the government operations."

Plans were finalized for three vessels designed by the noted naval architect George G. Sharp, to offer 52 passenger sailings a year versus the then present 26. They were wholly financed from profits, reserves and depreciation funds accrued over the years by Panama Railroad under the shrewd management of T.H. Rossbottom.

Bids were received on April 16, 1937, from Bethlehem Steel Co. (\$4,040,000 per ship), New York Shipbuilding Corp. (\$4,076,000 per ship), Federal Shipbuilding and Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock. On May 20, Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring announced a contract with Bethlehem Shipbuilding for "three modern fast fireproof combination passenger-cargo liners" of 10,000 grit, carrying 200 passengers and 100,000 cubic feet of cargo with a speed of 16.5 knots from steam turbines. Alternative specifications for diesel propulsion had been given, but no such bids were received. The ships were to be built at the Fore River Shipyard, Quincy, Massachusetts and delivered in 18, 20 and 22 months respectively.

Assigned yard numbers 1467, 1468 and 1469, the keels of the first two were laid down on October 25 and the third on November 15, 1937. Yard No. 1467 was christened PANAMA on September 24, 1938, by Mrs. Raquel de la Guardia de Boyd, wife of Dr. Don Augusto S. Boyd, Panama's ambassador to the United States. The 6,000-ton hull was 98 per cent complete with 90 per cent of the machinery also in place. On December 10, Mrs. Harry Woodring launched No. 1468 as ANCON. No. 1469 took to the water as CRISTOBAL on March 4, 1939, sponsored by Mrs. Clarence S. Ridley, wife of the Governor of the Panama Canal Zone, Brig. General Clarence S. Ridley.

The maiden voyages were announced on January 8, 1939; PANAMA on March 30, ANCON on June 8 and CRISTOBAL on August 18. On February 18, PANAMA's trials were set: first pierside machinery tests on the 21st, builder's trials on the 28th and acceptance trials on March 7. Evidently something proved amiss, for on March 25 her maiden voyage was set back to April 27. Early on April 6 PANAMA left Quincy for Rockland, Maine, where she anchored at 11:00p.m. The next day she ran the Navy's measured mile course and averaged 18.76 knots at 9,138 shp and 98.28 rpm. The service speed of 16.20 knots was achieved at 5,420 shp and 83.88rpm. The very day PANAMA ran her trials, Panama Railroad observed its 90th anniversary; and a government-owned enterprise that was both profitable and essential.

## MAIDEN VOYAGES

# U. S. Mail Steamship Co. } Connecting with the } Pacific Mail Steamship Co.

ONLY THROUGH U. S. MAIL LINE FOR

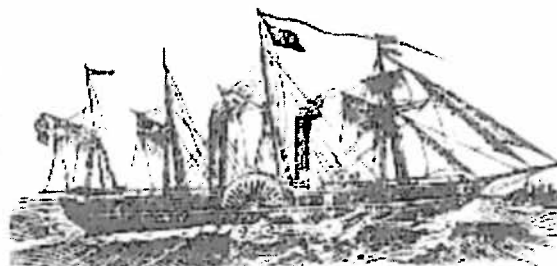
## CALIFORNIA AND OREGON, VIA ASPINWALL AND PANAMA.

By order of the Postmaster General, the United States Mail Steamers, with the great CALIFORNIA AND OREGON MAILS, are to be dispatched on the 5th and 20th of each month, from NEW-YORK direct for ASPINWALL; and from NEW-ORLEANS direct for ASPINWALL, on the 7th and 22d. When these dates occur on Sunday, the sailing to be postponed until the Monday following. The Pacific Mail Steamers are to be in readiness for immediate dispatch on arrival of the Mails at Panama.

### UNITED STATES MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY.

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF THE STEAMSHIPS BELONGING TO THIS COMPANY:

GEORGIA, ..... 3000 Tons  
OHIO, ..... 3000 Tons  
ILLINOIS, ..... 2500 Tons  
EMPIRE CITY, ..... 2000 Tons  
CRESCENT CITY, ..... 1500 Tons



CHEROKEE, ..... 1300 Tons  
PHILADELPHIA, ..... 1100 Tons  
EL DORADO, ..... 1300 Tons  
FALCON, ..... 1000 Tons

Leaving NEW-YORK for ASPINWALL, on the 5th and 20th of each Month.

The New Steamship EL DORADO and the FALCON will form a direct line between NEW-ORLEANS and ASPINWALL, leaving on the 7th and 22d of each month, and forming with the Pacific Steamships a Through Line to and from NEW-ORLEANS and Ports in MEXICO, CALIFORNIA and OREGON. Passage from New-Orleans can be secured from ARMSTRONG, HARRIS & CO., or JAS. R. JENNINGS, Agents, at that place.

THE RATES FROM NEW-YORK TO ASPINWALL WILL BE

For Ladies' Saloon State Rooms, - - - \$65, | Second Cabin Staterooms, - - - \$45.  
Lower Aft & Forward Saloon State Rooms, 55, | And Steerage, - - - 35.

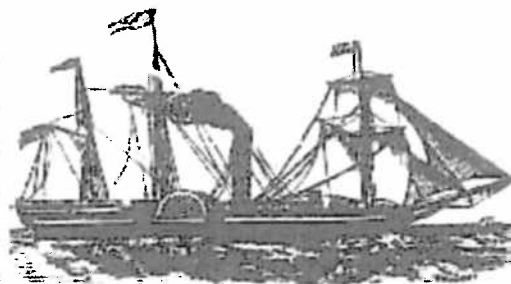


Passengers are landed at the Railroad Depot, Aspinwall, free of expense. The Railroad being in operation, and Cars running over half the distance from Aspinwall to Panama, the transit of the Isthmus may be performed in from eighteen to twenty-four hours—the expense, which varies from \$10 to \$25, to be borne by the passengers.

### PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY.

The following Steam Packets, belonging to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, are now on the Pacific, one of which will be always in port at each end of the route:

GOLDEN GATE, ... 2500 Tons  
TENNESSEE, .... 1300 Tons  
NORTHERNER, ... 1200 Tons  
REPUBLIC, ..... 1300 Tons  
OREGON, ..... 1099 Tons  
PANAMA, ..... 1087 Tons  
CALIFORNIA, .... 1030 Tons



COLUMBIA, ..... 800 Tons  
CAROLINA, ..... 600 Tons  
COLUMBUS, ..... 600 Tons  
ISTHMUS, ..... 600 Tons  
UNICORN, ..... 600 Tons  
FREMONT, ..... 600 Tons

The public are informed that, under the new arrangement of this Company, Steamers inspected and approved by the Navy Department, and carrying the U. S. Mails, will hereafter leave PANAMA, immediately on arrival of the Atlantic Mails, and SAN FRANCISCO on the 1st and 15th days of each month, and will touch at ASpinwall.

A reserve boat will be kept at each end of the route to cover accidents.

The new steamship COLUMBIA will ply between San Francisco and Ports in Oregon, awaiting at the former Port the arrival of the Mails and Passengers to Panama, and returning without delay with the Mails and Passengers for the Steamers from San Francisco. Persons securing Through passage by the United States Mail Steamers from New-York, have preference of accommodation on board the Pacific Mail Steamers.

For Rates of Fare from Panama to San Francisco on the most Favorable Terms, &c.

An experienced Surgeon is permanently attached to each Steamer in these Lines. Each Passenger is allowed 250 lbs. Personal Baggage free, not exceeding in measurement 10 cubic feet. Freight will be taken to Charges at 75 cents per foot, and from Panama to San Francisco at the rate of \$100 per ton.

For Freight or Passage, APPLY TO

**CHARLES A. WHITNEY,**



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## Pacific Coast Steamship Company

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2/8/2004

# STEAMSHIP CHRONOLOGY

STEAMER TRUNK  
MERCHANTS



BOOK AVAILABLE  
BELOW



**1822** England's S.S. Aaron Manby is the world's first iron steamship. She undergoes trials on the Thames and then goes into service across the Channel, arriving at Paris June 10 with a cargo of linseed oil and iron.

**1829** New York sailing captain Cornelius van Derbilt, 33, begins building steamboats.

**1840** The wooden steamship Britannia arrives at Boston on the first voyage of the government-subsidized Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. established the year before by Nova Scotia-born shipper Samuel Cunard, 43, in association with George and James Burns of Glasgow and David M'Iver of Liverpool.

**1843** The S.S. Great Britain launched July 19 by I. K. Brunel is the first of the large iron-hulled screw-propeller steamships that will dominate the transatlantic trade. The six-masted, single-screw, 3,270-ton vessel is 322 feet in length overall and carries a crew of 130 including 30 stewards, her dining room seats 360, she is the first propeller-driven ship (and first iron ship) to cross the Atlantic.

**1848** Samuel Cunard's 9-year-old Royal Mail Steamship Line makes New York its base for transatlantic operations.

**1849** The first gold-seekers from the East arrive at San Francisco February 29 aboard the S.S. California, a 1,050-ton vessel in the service of the new Pacific Mail Steamship Co. Equipped to accommodate 60 saloon passengers and 150 in steerage, the sidewheeler leaves New York four months earlier almost empty for lack of business, but picks up South American gold-seekers along the way.

**1850** Cornelius van Derbilt establishes a shipping line to California via Nicaragua and cuts the prices charged by competitors.

The S.S. Atlantic goes into service for the Collins Line (U.S. Mail Steamship Co.) in competition with Samuel Cunard's Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. The 2,856-ton 200-passenger paddle-wheeler leaves New York April 27, damages her side-wheels on ice off Sandy Hook, but breaks the Royal Mail's speed record on her return voyage, crossing in 10 days, 16 hours.

**1852** The S.S. Pacific goes into transatlantic service for the Collins Line (United States Mail Steamship Co.). A sister ship to the S.S. Atlantic that began service in 1850, the 2,856-ton Pacific is the first ship to cross from New York to Liverpool in less than 10 days.

**1854** The side-wheeler S.S. Arctic sinks September 27 off Cape Race, Newfoundland, after colliding with the 250-ton French iron propeller ship S.S. Vesta. A sister-ship to the S.S. Pacific that went into service in 1852, the 3,000-ton S.S. Arctic has been the largest and most splendid of the Collins Line steamships, her casualties include 92 of her 153 officers and men, and all her women and children are lost including the wife, the only daughter, and the youngest son of E. K. Collins.

**1858** "Commodore" van Derbilt sells his New York-to-California shipping line to rivals who will operate via Panama rather than Nicaragua. Van Derbilt takes the \$20 million he has gained in the shipping trade and begins buying up shares in the Harlem Railroad running out of New York City and the Hudson River Railroad running north to East Albany.

**1864** The French Line paddle-wheeler Washington arrives at New York in June to begin 110 years of service between New York and the Channel ports by the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique.

**1867** The Pacific Mail Steamship Company begins regular service between San Francisco and Hong Kong. }

**1881** The S. S. Servia goes into service for Britain's Cunard Line. It is the world's first steel ocean liner.

**1891** The S.S. Empress of India, S.S. Empress of Japan, and S.S. Empress of China begin service out of Vancouver as the Canadian Pacific Railway moves into shipping.

**1899** Minor Keith sees an opportunity for passenger traffic on the Fruit Company's banana boats and charts four new ships built originally for the U.S. Navy. The Great White Fleet he establishes includes the S.S. Farragut, S.S. Admiral Dewey, S.S. Admiral Schley, and S.S. Admiral Sampson, each able to carry 53 passengers and 35,000 bunches of bananas.

**1904** The British passenger liner S.S. Baltic goes into service to begin a 29-year career. The largest passenger ship yet built, the 23,884-ton vessel is 726 feet in length overall.

The S.S. Kaiser Wilhelm II, built in 1902 for the North German Lloyd line, sets a new transatlantic record in June by steaming from Sandy Hook to Eddystone, off Plymouth, in 5 days, 12 hours.

**1907** The S.S. Lusitania launched by Britain's Cunard Line makes her maiden voyage. The 31,550-ton Lusitania is 790 feet in length overall with four screws, can carry 2,000 passengers and a crew of 600, and is by far the largest liner afloat.

The S.S. Mauretania launched by Cunard Line will remain in service until 1935. Slightly smaller than her sister ship Lusitania, the four-screw liner burns 1,000 tons of coal per day and requires a "black squad" of 324 firemen and trimmers to feed her.

**1912** The S.S. Titanic of the White Star Line scrapes an iceberg in the North Atlantic on her maiden voyage, sustains a 300-foot slash, and sinks in 2½ hours on the night of April 15. The three-screw passenger liner of 46,328 tons, 882 feet in length overall, is the world's largest passenger liner, she has been called "unsinkable," but only 711 of the 2,224 aboard survive, and the 1,513 lost include such prominent millionaires as John Jacob Astor IV, 47; R. H. Macy's Isidor Straus, 67; copper heir Benjamin Guggenheim, 47, and traction heir Harry Elkins Widener, 27.

**1915** Torpedoes from the German submarine U-20 hit the Cunard Line passenger ship S.S. Lusitania at 2:10 p.m. May 7 off the coast of Ireland, and the huge vessel sinks in 18 minutes killing 1,198 who include 128 U.S. citizens, among them railroad magnate Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, 38, and New York theatrical magnate Charles Frohman, 75. It will turn out that the 8-year-old Lusitania carried 173 tons of rifle ammunition, shrapnel casings, fuses, and contraband food from the United States but had no escort and remained on course despite recent U-boat sightings in the area.

**1933** The S. S. Europa of the North German-Lloyd line crosses from Cherbourg to New York in 4 days, 16 hours, 48 minutes, breaking the transatlantic speed record set by her sister ship the S. S. Bremen in 1929.

The Italian line's S. S. Rex sets a new transatlantic speed record by crossing from Cherbourg to New York in 4 days, 13 hours, 58 minutes.

**1934** The Cunard Line that began in 1839 as the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. becomes the Cunard-White Star Line by merging with the White Star Line, which it acquired in 1927.

The Queen Mary is launched on September 26<sup>th</sup>.

The S.S. Morro Castle catches fire off Asbury Park, N.J., September 8; 125 lives are lost.

**1935** The French Line passenger ship S.S. Normandie goes into service on the North Atlantic, arriving at New York June 3 after crossing from Southampton in a record 4 days, 11 hours, 42 minutes. The 79,280-ton luxury liner with four screws is 1,029 feet in length overall and has an 80-foot swimming pool, 23 elevators, and a dining room modeled after the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

**1940** Britain completes the world's largest passenger liner and puts her to use as a troop transport. Powered by steam turbines that develop 168,000 horsepower and give her a normal sea speed of 28.5 knots (32.8 miles per hour), the 83,673-ton ship, 1,031 feet in length overall, will go into commercial service for the Cunard Line after the war as the S.S. Queen Elizabeth.

**1943** As a troop ship, the Queen Mary carries the largest number of persons ever on a single voyage from July 25-30, 1943 – a total of 16,683 persons.

**1952** The United States Lines passenger ship S.S. United States leaves New York July 3 on her first transatlantic voyage and sets a new record. Built with immense 240,000-horsepower steam turbines that can push her at 50 miles per hour and convertible to a troopship that can transport 14,000 men, the \$79 million 53,000-ton vessel is 990 feet in length overall, can carry 1,750 passengers, and makes the crossing of 2,949 nautical miles in 3 days, 10 hours, 40 minutes, averaging 35.59 knots per hour (more than 40 mph).

**1959** The S.S. Rotterdam, launched by Holland-American Line, is a 38,645-ton luxury liner.

**1961** The S.S. Canberra, launched for the Cunard Line, is a 44,807-ton passenger liner 818.5 feet in length.

The S.S. France launched by the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique is the longest and last of the great transatlantic passenger liners. Measuring 1,035.2 feet in overall length, the \$81.3 million 66,348-ton French Line ship will make her maiden voyage from Le Havre to New York beginning February 3 of next year.



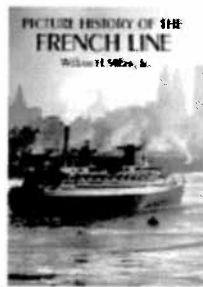





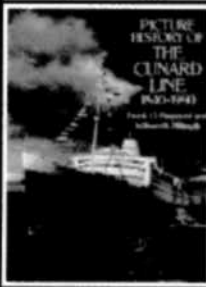
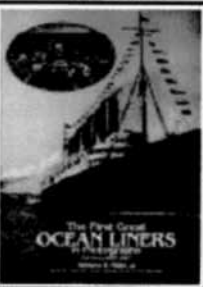
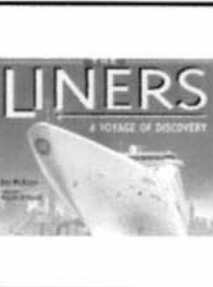


**1965** The S.S. Michelangelo and the S.S. Raffaello go into service for the Italian line. The 45,911-ton sister ships are each 904 feet in length overall.

**1967** The Queen Mary departs Southampton on its final voyage to Long Beach, California, where it becomes a museum and hotel.

**1968** The S.S. QE 2 launched by the Cunard line replaces the 83,673-ton Queen Elizabeth launched in 1940. The new 66,850-ton passenger liner is 963 feet in length overall, carries nearly 3,000 people including crew, and has four swimming pools, 13 decks, 24 elevators, and a 531-seat theater.

**1969** The United States Lines retires its passenger ship S.S. United States after 17 years as competition from transatlantic air carriers and foreign flag liners makes U.S. passenger vessels unprofitable.

<b>OCEAN LINER READING</b>	
CLICK IMAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION	
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A Night to Remember	The Fabulous Interiors of the Great Ocean Liners	Picture History of the French Line	Great Cruise Ships and Ocean Liners
			
The Great Luxury Liners	Pictorial Encyclopedia of Ocean Liners 1860-1994	The American Line	Picture History of the Normandie
			
Picture History of the Cunard Line	The First Great Ocean Liners	The Liners: A Voyage of Discovery	
 <div> <h3>OCEAN LINER VIDEO COLLECTION</h3> <p>"Floating Palaces", a four video cassette box set, includes stories about the great luxury trans-Atlantic liners of the past, including the Titanic.</p> </div>			

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JUNE 23-04

DEAR TERRY

Got your LETTER to DAY. I'm  
ENCLOSING with THE Colt S.N. 175937  
A. FLYER FROM PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP Co. (DATE 1874 DARIL)  
B. BILL OF SALE FROM ME, to you.  
C. THE AFFIDAVIT FROM DARREL ANGLES  
D. Copys FROM KEITH COCHRAN BOOK  
E. A copy of ARMS GAZETTE A STORY ABOUT  
THE PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP Co.  
F. A complete copy of LARRY R. HEMPHILL'S  
BOOK "COLTS FROM TEXAS AND THE OLD WEST"  
THIS BOOK IS FROM ME to you AS A GIFT  
IF you KEEP THE GUN • PICTURED ON PAGE 3:  
IF you USE THE GUN IN A DISPLAY A BOOK - HELPS  
ALot  
That About All I HAVE ON THE GUN I  
got it FROM PINEY GOODMAN FROM MO.  
I'm GUESSING 15 YEARS AGO IN DENVER  
J. GALE PINEY 6500<sup>00</sup> FOR THE GUN  
BACK THEN. IVE HAD Lot TALK ABOUT  
it AT 7500 But I SOLD it AT 6500<sup>00</sup>  
to A FRIEND IN WY.

337-474-3249

Thanks

C. D. Terry

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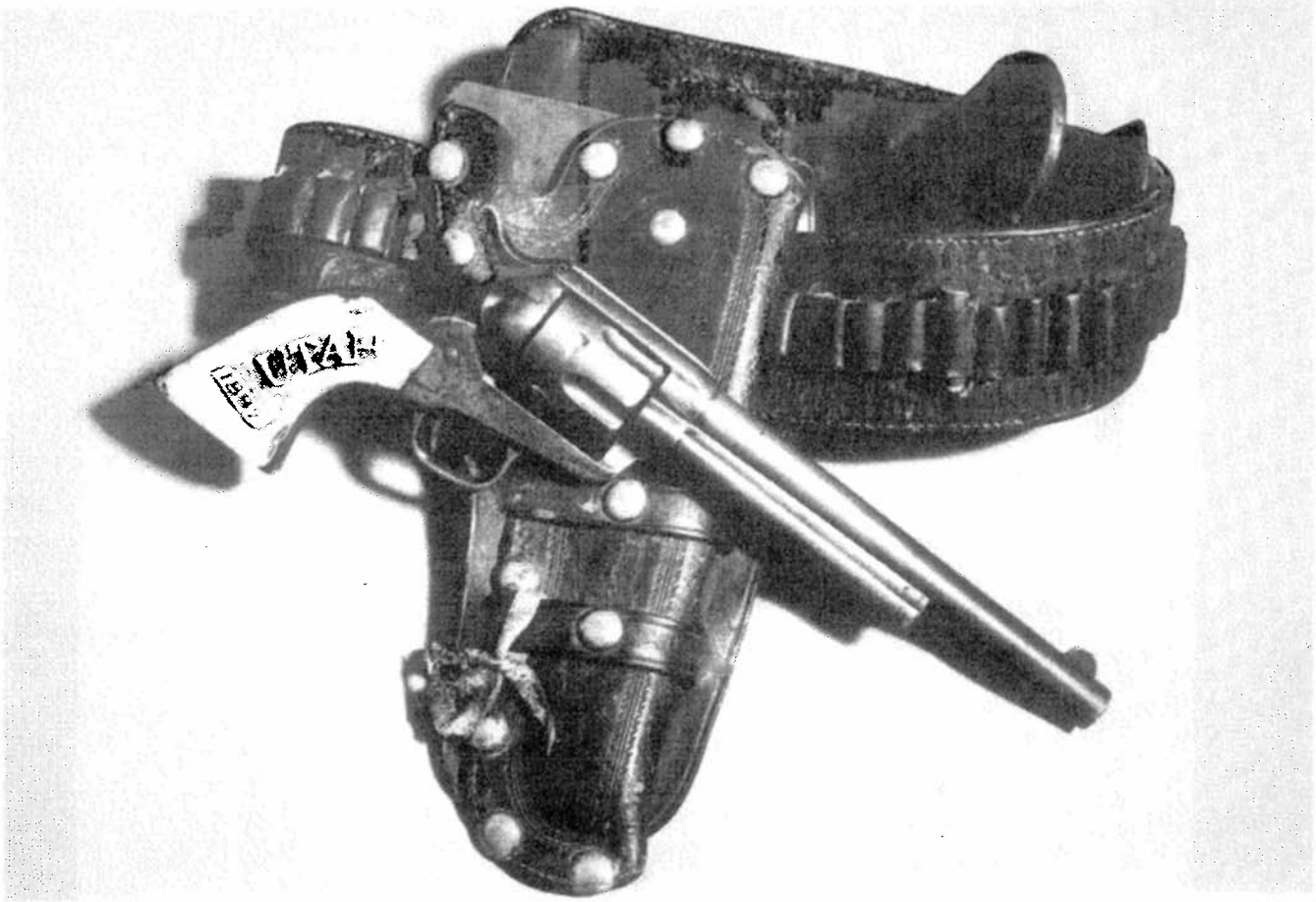
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Serial No. 67897. 7 1/2" Colt .45, carved UTAH 1882 in right grip: This pistol was found in the desert in the early 40's buried in the sands of time.



Collection of Gary Helin

Serial No. 175937. 7 1/2" Colt .45, blue finish: Only known single action stamped P.M.S.S. Co. on left side of barrel.

AFFIDAVIT

To Whom It May Concern:

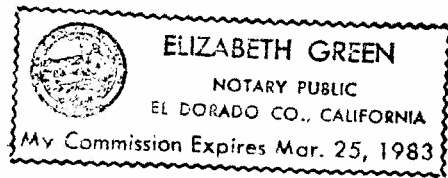
This is to certify that on March 8, 1981, I, Darrel Angles, residing at 6762 Juniper Lane, Placerville, California, did sell to Robert V. Bell, of Creek Park Ranch, Garden Valley, California, one Colt Single Action Army revolver - Serial Number 175937. Said revolver is chambered for the .45 Colt cartridge, and has a seven and one half inch (7½") barrel marked by engraving with the inscription P M S S C, signifying PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY.

This revolver was carried by my father, Mr. Elleck Lonnie Angles, deceased, during his duties as Mail Room Guard on various vessels operated by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. To the best of my recollection, my father was so employed by this company during the years 1907 through 1915. The revolver was given to me by my father in 1954. - - - - -

- - - - - Signed *Darrel Angles*

Sworn to before me May 8, 1981 1981 *Elizabeth Green*

My commission expires 3-25-83



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# The MacNaughton Hammerless Action

by D.J. Baker

In the last half of the nineteenth century, about three hundred patents were obtained in Great Britain for hammerless sporting gun actions. This number can be loosely but usefully divided into three broad groups. At one extreme, we have the large pro-

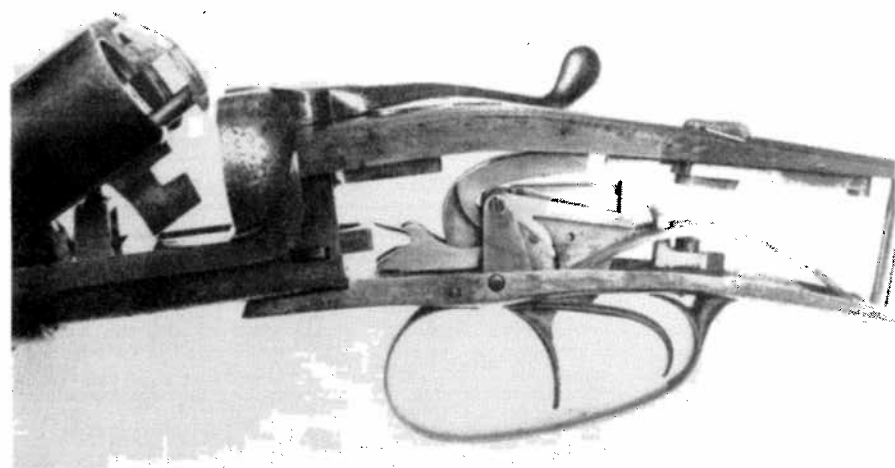
portion that are today known mainly from their patents. Probably most of these guns were made as prototypes or in very limited numbers and are, therefore, very rare. Just how rare their owners do not in general realize, due to the lack of research devoted to this aspect of arms development.

The second group consists of those which enjoyed wide use. They

were relatively few, and examples are found with a range of retailers' names on them. Some of this group were actually made by more than one maker, whereas others were made in large numbers by one wholesale maker and sold from many outlets.

Those which remain were peculiar to one gunmaker. Some of these were produced in relatively large quantities and were not necessarily entirely built by the vendor's firm, because that is the way the British gun trade organized itself. No matter who actually made them, these guns, each having the distinctive "lines" of the "house" that retailed it, contributed much to the rich variety that is a feature of nineteenth century British gunmaking.

The gun which James MacNaughton of Edinburgh patented on July 12, 1879 in Great Britain as Number 2848 is from this final group and is noteworthy because it combines an interesting mechanism with a particularly elegant exterior. Opinions of this sort are inevitably subjective, but in an age that produced elegant guns as a matter of course, the MacNaughton is an out-

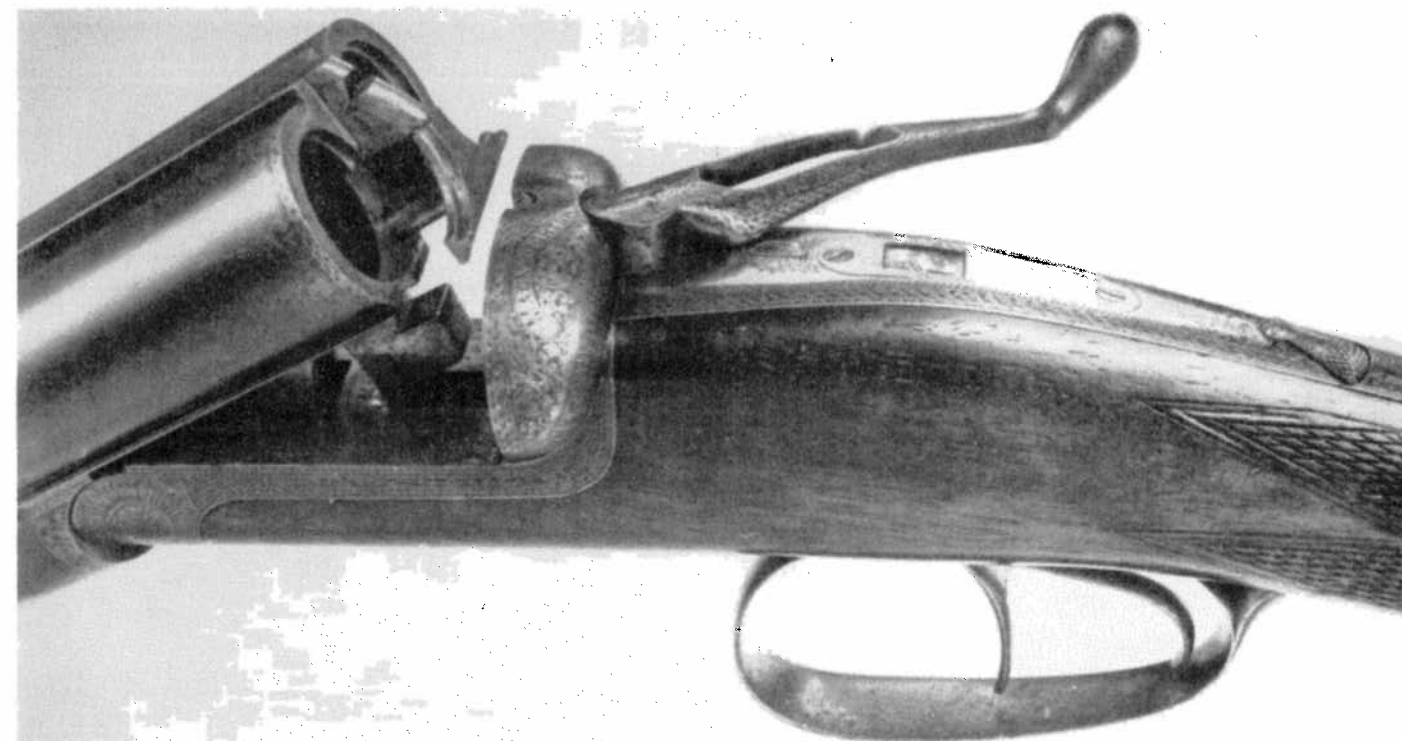


The lockwork of the Edinburgh model.

*If I write with affection for the MacNaughton it is because one of these, in fact the 12 gauge gun illustrated, has a rather special place in my affections. I had been writing to an elderly Scots gentleman, who told me that he was giving up shooting and wished to sell his gun. His price was beyond my purse, but I mentioned this to a very good friend in the United States, and he bought it. When I took up this friend's long-standing invitation to visit him, I had a chance to use it in the field. So it was with this gun one golden fall day in Virginia that I bagged my first bob white quail and so became a "quail hunter."*



The 12 gauge MacNaughton gun with which the author bagged his first bob white.



Detail of the Edinburgh model. Note the window in the top strap, the opening in the top lever and the bar in the wood stocking.

standing example.

Because in large part it made possible the gun's exterior, the layout of the internal mechanism will be considered first.

The MacNaughton belongs to that class of hammerless shotguns called lever cockers, that is, the lockwork is brought to full cock by working a lever rather than by the motion of the barrels opening and closing. These latter are barrel cockers, but the barrels act as the lever in these cases.

The gun under consideration bears a conventional turning top lever, which also opens the gun, but the clue to its dual role lies in its slightly greater length when compared to the majority of examples. This added length, by giving additional leverage, makes the mechanism easier to operate.

The working of this action is perhaps best understood by noting the photograph of the action minus the stock. Moving the top lever to the right turns a spindle with a lever on its bottom, which withdraws the barrel locking bolts in the conventional way. Pivoted on the tumblers are two pushers which engage with the barrel bolt and thrust back the tumblers to full cock, assuming of course that the gun has been fired. As the tumblers reach full cock they are caught and

held by the sears. Note that these are placed on the top of the rear of the tumbler and so have to be lifted out to fire the lock. In a sense, this is a conventional lock upside down.

MacNaughton built this mechanism as a trigger plate action; that is, a central upward projection from the trigger plate is used as a common lock plate for both locks which are hung one on each side of it.

All the mechanism is thus contained in the head of the stock, and the action bar is left solid just like an external hammer gun. The looks of the MacNaughton are derived from the exploitation of this feature. With such an action bar, the gun is perfectly strong if left slim like a hammer gun. The head of the stock carries on this line, and the result is an incredibly slim and beautiful firearm. Unfortunately the accompanying photographs do not illustrate this point as well as would visual inspection.

MacNaughton, however, evolved the appearance of this gun an important stage further. These developments were incorporated in what was called the Edinburgh Model, which is a bar-in-the-wood hammerless gun. The inspiration for the bar-in-the-wood style goes right back to the muzzle loader, but it was used to an extent on high quality hammer guns, especially

by Purdey's and Westley Richards. Of course there is still a metal action bar, but it is sheathed in wood, which is why the term wood bar, which is sometimes applied to this idea, is a complete misnomer. The visual effect of carrying the stock wood forward in this fashion is that the distracting vertical line which results from the junction of action and stock is removed. The hiding of this joint results in more flowing lines, which is why the more difficult exercise of stocking a gun of this type was undertaken. The Edinburgh is not unique as a hammerless bar-in-the-wood, but it is certainly the most common, even though it is only rarely seen.

A feature of the earlier models of this gun is a window made in the top strap so that a user could actually look into the works of his gun to check if the tumblers were cocked. This was primarily incorporated as a safety feature, because when the hammerless gun was first introduced, much concern was expressed that the shooter could no longer check the state of his locks as he had been used to doing with a hammer gun. So that the user could see into this little window, a slot was formed in the top lever. This hole continued to be used as a feature of the MacNaughton top lever even after the window ceased to be made. □

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