

George Madis
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Model 1886 Carbine Serial Number 67660
I have carefully inspected this rare
Winchester, inside and out, and have determined
it is all original or made by Winchester
and is detailed here.

Records show this serial number was
assigned to the 1886 model in 1892.

On the factory records, now at the
Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming,
number 67660 is listed as a carbine in .40-82,
and it was received in the Winchester warehouse
on June 13, 1892. It was shipped out to order
number 16160 on March 21, 1893.

All of the markings are original and
correct for a gun in this serial range. Patent
markings are found on the lower tang, as seen
here. The upper tang marking is the early
style, correct for this carbine.

On the top of the barrel, just ahead
of the receiver is the caliber marking. Models
1886 or early as this do not have the
Winchester proof marks.

On the left side of the lower tang,
under the studs is seen "47" and "C". The
number 47 is the assembly number, and
this number is also found on the studs
inlet under the upper tang and on the inside
toe of the buttplate. The letter C in this

location would be the marks of the fitter and assembler who fitted the studs and forward.

While all W. Winchester had interchangeable parts, some fitting was done to insure a smoother operating action.

Just ahead of the lever on the receiver is an illegible mark, probably the letter "S". This would be the mark of the fitter who worked on the hammer and trigger, one of the most critical fitting jobs on a gun.

Number 67660 Chambers the .40-82 W.C.F. cartridge. The this model longer boxes were most popular and guns in this caliber are not often seen, especially in carbines.

Under the barrel are seen numerous markings; these are ".40-82", the caliber, and "VP", meaning "v. rimmed - proofed". This marking meant the gun had been proof-fired, visually inspected and gauged. Other markings under the barrel are "1", "3" and "...", all the stamps of various inspectors and craftsmen who worked on this gun.

On the receiver under the forward is the letter "P". This letter meant the gun had passed an overall inspection, and is often seen on early W. Winchester.

Carbines in the 1886 model have the front sight base, or stud, forged on the barrel, with a small steel sight blade pinned to the base.

The new sight is the earliest carbine style, with graduations from two to ten, and it is marked "1886", which was the model of this sight.

Twenty-two inch barrels were standard for the 1886 Carbine, as seen here. The full length magazine as on this Carbine held seven cartridges.

Because of the additional weight and length of Carbine in this model, carbines were rare in the 1886. On a count made at the plant, it was determined that only one of each two hundred guns in the 1886 were carbines.

Select straight grain walnut was used for stocking this Carbine, and Winchester double ailed finish is still visible on the stocks and forward.

Under the buttplate is a shallow hole, bored to reduce weight and improve balance.

The saddle ring and its retaining stud are original; because of the sound produced by the ring against the receiver, many of the saddle rings have been removed.

Winchester special order color case-hardening was given to the receiver, buttplate and some other parts. Good traces of the color finish remain on these parts.

Barrel, magazine tube and other parts were blued, and much of this finish

Model 1886 Carbine Serial Number 67660⁴

remains.

This carbine shows use but it is evident it received good care and it does not show signs of abuse or neglect.

Carbines often show much use and abuse, and are rarely found in the excellent of this Winchester.

With its age of over a century, rarity and condition, number 67660 merits a prominent place in any fine collection or museum.

Gray Wolf

By George, we've got it!

By G. Scott Soles

A Legacy Relived

On December 22, 2003, I was vacationing in Hawaii with my family when Rob Kassab called and said, "Scott, we lost a good friend today; George died." He was 72 years young. I remember the scene very vividly, staring out the window of the hotel at the majestic Pacific.

Over a decade has passed since our beloved friend, Winchester expert and author, George Madis, passed away. He was doing what he loved at the time...riding his tractor. He died exactly the way he wanted to.

George was a fellow collector and close friend to many of our currently active collectors. Considering that over 11 years has gone by since George left planet earth, many newer collectors are not as lucky to have a personal relationship with George. But, they have the benefit of his legacy and reading his popular *The Winchester Book*. Others knew George simply as *The Winchester Consultant*, or a person they could call and talk to about life and guns.

Going back 60 years and more, our "forefather collectors," many of whom departed before George, had an even longer history of knowing George as a very close friend and running buddy. The stories we hear today about the lives and times of the good old days put us to shame and make me wish today was more like back then. The modern remote collector is really missing out on the chance for great times hanging out at shows and drinking a cold beer at dinner.

By writing this article, we give people who did not know George a better chance at knowing him as a person, as well as resurrecting memories about George for those who did know him.

It might be fitting to have a regular column or editorial to share educational comments made by George in his gun letters, good stories, accolades and anecdotes about anything related to George. If you have a good story, send it in.

Life, Religion and Those "Kiddles"

One of my favorite memories of George comes from our periodic telephone conversations we had when I lived in Alaska. It was an interesting time for me, personally, since I was far away, living in an interesting place at a great time in my family life. I appreciate those days now more than I did then, which is probably normal, unfortunately. It was also a time when my more advanced collecting interests began to pique and my communication with George escalated from rarely to frequently.

George Madis
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Friends in Alaska.
This is the only letter
on the outboard 66 cub,
with this.
Also 11 photos
of the letter on the gun
73 L.O. Yippee and
cubie - M. Dorey

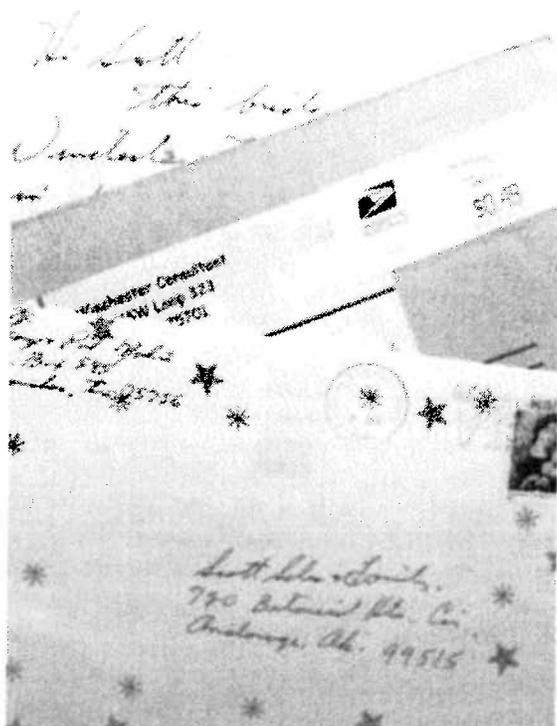
From the late 1990s until the time George passed away, I always worked in rock pile positions, with a young family and a lot of travel. With all these commitments and long distances to travel, it was difficult to go anywhere. No time and place was more memorable in the context of my relationship with George than when I lived in Alaska,

since we formed a strong connection via regular telephone conversations. Had I not lived so far away, we might not have improved our mutual relationship in this manner.

What sticks the most is my recollection that George always had time to talk. It was quite surprising to me how much time he would make to speak with people. He was never rushed and was exceptionally kind and generous with his time.

Of the many things we discussed, probably 99% of the conversation got into matters of common friendships, life, death, religion and children; not guns. He always talked about children, including those in his family and mine, whom he affectionately referred to as "the kiddles." He would close conversations with comments like, "make sure you give those kiddles a hug."

It was during these many conversations that we got into matters like life, death and religion. One of the things he always told me was he hoped to die on his tractor, while working on his land. This is exactly what he did. He was not concerned about death because he believed that in some way he would always be with us and return to earth. "Reincarnation" was a term that often came up, but the word was incidental. The bottom line is that George had a tremendous spiritual side, regardless of how that manifested itself with words or religious practices.



A Fee Argument, a Knife and a Red Brick

As a matter of standard practice, George would levy a nominal fee to examine a gun and write what we often refer to as, "George Letters." Considering the amount of work involved, this was cheap. He was methodical in his examinations of guns, and then hand wrote his letters. They are a thing of beauty!

George was not greedy, particularly about money. He would often decline to charge people for the time he took to write a letter. This was not unique to me. He did this indiscriminately.

On one occasion, I recall having a humorous interaction with George, where I insisted he accept a fee. He would not take it, so I sent him a gift from Alaska. In return, George sent me a Winchester knife. The padded envelope is dated February 12, 2003. I am recalling those times as I write this article. It was 10 months away from his death. I am glad we shared these simple and often humorous exchanges. Neither my gifts to him nor his gifts to me have real monetary value. However, prominently on display in places of esteem are a few sentimental items from an old friend. In addition to this knife, I kept the padded envelope used by George to mail it to me.

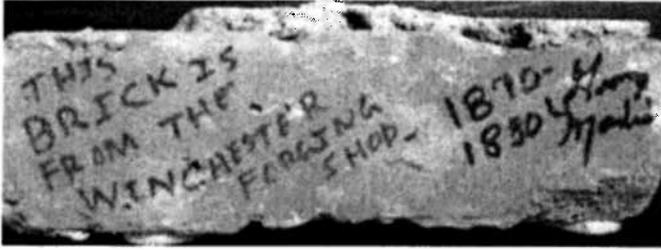
This kind of mutual exchange became a habit. Much to my surprise, in a separate package at a different time from the knife, I received this unexpected box from George, which weighed about five pounds. When I first picked it up, I remember telling my wife, "This feels like a brick!" It was a brick. Contained inside was this nice note and a black Sharpie-inscribed red brick with old dried mortar, signed by George. On the note, George wrote:

Hi Scott:

This brick is from the Winchester Forging shop built in 1870 & 1880 - torn down about 20 years ago - could be a good door stop, toe stabber, plaything to do damage by kids -

as always,

George



George Letters

To this day, guns will be found with an accompanying letter written by George Madis. These letters, much like the classic works of artists, are not being made anymore. They can only become rarer with time and increase the value of a gun. This, of course, is provided the letter is "clean." George tended to be polite and understated with his demerits, such as "...the serial number may have been re-cut at one time in the past...." You'll have to read his letters carefully.

George would generally write his original letters by hand, in blue ink, and difficult to read handwriting at times. Most letters were not dated, although I have owned one gun with a dated letter and seen a couple others. George mentioned to me once that he did not date anything for a couple reasons. One reason was he lettered so many guns from different dates that he would often miswrite the date, like "1898," instead of "1998," so he stopped doing it.

Much in the same manner that George wrote his book, he did not like to repeat information. If you read *The Winchester Book*, you must read every caption, subtitle and word of every chapter, in order to say you read his book. That is because his motto was never to repeat information. If he commented on a feature in one place, he would not comment on it again. If you have a Model 53 with a jappaned barrel, you will find George's comments about Model 53s with jappaned barrels only at the end of the Model 1892 chapter, but not in the Model 53 comments.

One good thing about George Letters is you will often find trivia that is not available in any other place. For example, I have a Model 64 Deluxe in .219 Zipper. In the Model 64 section of *The Winchester Book*, George states at the top of the first page this is, "One of this writer's favorite shootin' guns...."

Perhaps due to his love for the Zipper, George wrote one the most informative letters he ever wrote for me, when he

prepared a five-page letter on this gun. He makes a couple very interesting comments about this gun, which was assembled around 1950, but has a barrel dated 1937. One such comment is,

...In the late 1940s, after World War two, thousands of barrels were on hand for models which had been discontinued. These surplus barrels were sold as scrap metal.

Art Peckingham, the foreman of the barrel shop, told me they had barrels for nearly every model produced by Winchester.

Art was told to select a stock of barrels from this lot, and he kept some barrels for every model. This stock of barrels would be used to assemble special orders as well as to use for replacements for customer orders.

A study and count made by George Watrous for Winchester showed that only 361 Models 64 in the Zipper caliber were sold from 1937 to 1941, the period of manufacture for these special rifles.

After the war, it was decided to discontinue the Zipper due to slow sales.

Barrels remained on hand for this caliber, and if a special customer wanted a 64 in the Zipper, the gun could be made.

George had many years of developed insights, documents and personal relationships that cannot be appreciated only by reading his book today.

The following image is copied from a New Haven, Connecticut city directory from 1941, which shows Arthur G. Peckingham as a Barrel Worker at Winchester Repeating Arms Company. At the end of the war, in 1948, Art was listed as an Inspector. This all ties out and brings credibility to the stories George would tell. George had many good resources available to him that modern researchers cannot resurrect. This is why it is a mistake to hastily rewrite history that is already documented, "By George."

—Edna M wid John H h (14) 10 4th av WH
 —George A (Etta L) paint and wall paper 887 Dixwell av H h do
 —Richard H (Elizabeth J) gasoline 119 Orange av WH h 48 Smith WH
 —Robert I died Jan 12 1941 age 68
 Peckingham Arthur G (Pauline E) barrelwkr WRACo r 122 Front
 —Francis S (Margaret R) clk ticket office Union Station h 361 Center WH
 —Myrtle E Mrs mach opr 1717 Dixwell av H r Mix av H

NEW HAVEN REG

His Last Letters

As noted earlier, I was on the beach in Hawaii when George passed away. When we returned from Hawaii to our home in Alaska, among the mail we had waiting to open was a Christmas card from George. For whatever reason, I decided at that time to put his card away for a rainy day. I have never opened it to this day.

Along with other George Letters and documentation related to Winchesters, I still have this unopened Christmas card from George, postmarked December 17, 2003. About the only thing I have done is tried holding it up to the light to see what it says inside. It is NIB.

While George's Christmas card is the last postmarked letter I received from George, I have one of his last official George Letters on a Winchester.

In my possession today is a raised thumbprint Model 1873, for which one of the last documented George Letters was written. Along with the George Letter on this raised thumbprint '73, George also wrote a letter on an accompanying factory letter. To restate this another way, this particular raised thumbprint rifle was acquired with an old "Gun Museum" letter from New Haven, Connecticut, dated April 15, 1968. It is interesting and rare, in that it is on the old Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation stationary with the Winchester Gun Museum letterhead.

I thought it would be fun to have a letter on a letter, so I sent this Gun Museum letter to George for him to read. In my possession today is this raised thumbprint rifle, the shipping box with its FedEx label from George, and his letters on both the gun and the Gun Museum letter. The envelope for this George Letter is postmarked December 10, 2003. The letter says:

Hi Scott:

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

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

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

All my best,

George

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

My Pardner

George's love for people and Winchesters was unsurpassed. This is evident from the simplest of things, including his closing prayer or poem, My Pardner, which is the last page in The Winchester Book. My own personal stories could go on, but let's save some for later and look forward to others, as we close with some of George's favorite stylized comments:

It's a really choice gun - you've got rarity, age and condition, just like me!

The Cube Root of "8" Equals "2"

Why Numbers are Important to Gun Nuts

by Scott Soles

Those who know me will immediately dismiss, if not disregard, the audacity to submit an article about numbers for our Collector magazine. That's because they are already predisposed to think I only care about numbers because I am a CPA--Certified Public Accountant, or more affectionately known in the trade as a Constant Pain in the you-know-what-word starting with an "A"! Worse yet, I am a recovering Mathematics major. However, my concern for numbers has nothing to do with either of those two plagues.

In my day job, I view numbers as incidental. Numbers are merely the result of everything that happened. They are puzzles on another day. Results drive numbers and numbers reflect results. They can change daily and my decisions are not swayed, nor do I prefer any particular number.

Gun-related numbers, on the other hand, are different. I care; a lot. The important numbers are fixed, with the exception of the ever important pricing number. The numbers are given. There are critical numbers etched indelibly in history. Gun people lose their heads over numbers, often beyond reason. In Winchester collecting, the number determines results and values. Numbers have the exact opposite role in Winchester collecting than they do in Math or science. Feeling the numbers passion yet?

Winchester collectors may not admit it, but we are compulsive numbers fanatics. Why? Because gun guys have an honest to goodness reason to care about numbers, that's why! This article is a written testimony of merely a few of the various reasons why we care about numbers.

We start with this perfect example: My good friend, Rob Kassab, informed me one day that he had just bought an early Model 1873, serial number "17." At that time, number "17" was the earliest known Model 1873 extant.

This is significant. When Rob told me he just bought "17", I immediately broke the news to Rob that it was impossible for him to have number "17," since I already owned "16" and "17." Silence. But, it was true. I own Model 1873 serial number sixteen-seventeen ("1617"). The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about the finer points of that assertion made a significant difference, as you can well imagine. The emotion over that difference shows that numbers must not only be accurate, but properly explained and put in context, much like any mathematical equation or report with numbers. Was the numbering distinction between "16", "17" and "16-17" important? Absolutely!

As we probe the hallows of numbers and the gun nut's mind in this article, there will be those of us who seek answers to the question of what's in our minds, but don't go there. Suffice it to say, gun nuts are venerable geniuses and have great memories when it comes to numbers. Oh, not in the same way that Einstein would; or at the same level as a studious MIT graduate; but, in our own gun nut sort of way.

Once we get past the denial, it is clear that most gun guys need an intervention...for lots of reasons, including many not covered in this article. Why do we try to memorize serial numbers, dates and years when a gun was produced, or obsess over a number like "1". It's all about the numbers.

Don't we love the data masterfully depicted in the array of tables in Gordon's book on Model 1873s? This book is virtually one-of-a-kind. What a masterpiece of numbers presentation. Thank you, Jim Gordon, for finally showing us the way!

Gun girls and boys love numbers. We owe it to collecting that we have all improved our minds and math



skills. The general public at large indeed should love guns, since guns help make people smarter in math and science...at least directionally. Without guns, many minds would lack the critical stimulation required to keep society moving forward. We owe this all to guns.

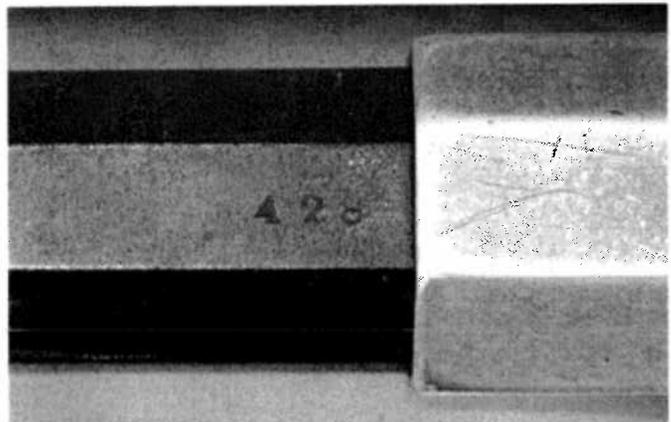
Numbers are curious things, especially amongst a bunch of guys and gals who can't count to ten on an average show-day at Cody, or make proper change for your hard earned purchase. Maybe that's why we all like low serial numbers. Maybe we can't count very high. Perhaps the desirability of earlier serial number guns is a total fabrication to hide our shortcomings with big numbers. It all figures.

Here are a few more general observations regarding numbers and why they are important to collectors:

- Some gun numbers are cooler than others. Ask a proud collector who has a gun with a serial number like "123456." A number like "123456" sparks more interest than a number like "251483." It's amazing how much discussion can be generated by a number like that. The person with that gun will walk around and show it to everyone. "See this number?" "Hey, check out this number." And...etc.
- A number like serial number "428" is for the more cerebral collector. "428" is a nice low number, but forget that. What's really, really important is that 4-2-8 can be broken down scientifically. This is important, so pay attention. Number "428" can also be reflected as "2" to the second power, followed by "2" to the first power, and then by "2" to the third power; or "2" squared, "2" and "2" cubed. "428" is also 4 times 2 equals 8, or 8 divided by 2 equals 4, done backwards. The most innovative and creative collectors can extract value from a number like "428." Here's one way: Remember the Chinese love the number "8." It is considered good luck in their culture. That's why the Olympics were held in China on 8/8/8. Numbers that can be combined or derived from "8" are good. So, a gun like serial number "428" could possibly be more appreciated in China. If guns with 8s become scarce, this theory gives us a good lead as to why. And so on. You see the various applications for numbers?
- Without numbers we lose bragging rights. There would be no source for a good story, like "I used to own serial number "22" at one time." Or, I have owned "50 of those in my life." If numbers for guns didn't exist, then such stories could never be told.
- Numbers help us to remember how stupid we are. Look at the frequency of which numbers appear in the following phrase: "I passed on buying that gun '3

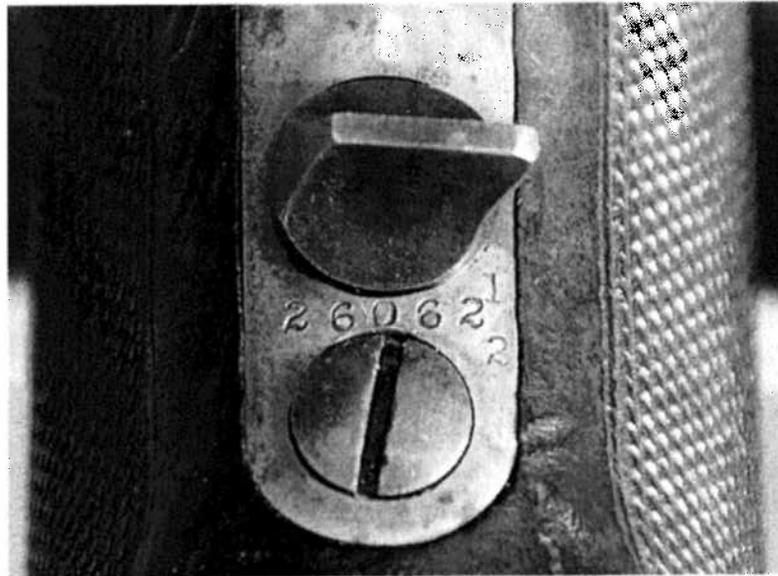
times.' The '1st time" I passed, the gun sold for '\$10,000,' and each subsequent time I passed it sold for '2 times' the price of each prior sale." Now, write the equation for the last sales price! Here's a simpler one: "I sold that gun to him for \$775, 15 years ago, and now the damn thing is worth \$35,000." Numbers clearly provide the measure of how stupid we are, even when we cannot form the expression scientifically.

- Numbers help us or hurt us with our relationship building. They give us a good reason to bond, commiserate or argue. "That SOB ripped me off for the '2nd' time, and this time it was for '\$1,000.'" Without such numbers, we could never measure the greatness of our relationships.
- A gun without a number just becomes another gun without an identity. Like the story above, if "22" wasn't on the gun, then the story goes, "I used to own one of those," not "I used to own number 22." You see, the number matters, just like a person's name. It is the unique identity of the gun. Many of us feel the serial number is the heart of the gun and is a prime candidate for alteration by fraudsters in order to deceive a buyer. The serial number is sacred.
- Serial number "1" of any desirable collector firearm is going to command a monstrous premium. And the rule generally holds true that as numbers trend toward earlier serial numbers of a particular model and like configuration, the value will trend upward, all else being equal. But, then there are those that assert the very last guns produced are important. In such cases, the numbers are the focal point for determining value. The number is important whether it is an early number or a late number. Without the number "1", gun number "blank" would be worth the same amount as the next equal gun with the number "blank."
- We all like to confirm the characteristics of our guns with the Cody Museum, such as the caliber, or the



number produced, or the number with particular features. Numbers and counts help us determine rarity and better appreciate what we have. Without the number, there would be no value differences.

- And what about those George Letters! George would often share trivia from his personal archives that cannot be found anywhere else. I have a significant, five-page letter from George, which I will share with all of you now. The letter is for a Model 64 Deluxe, .219 Zipper. As noted in *The Winchester Book*, this is one of George's "...favorite shootin' guns." In that letter, George writes, "...in a study conducted...for Winchester...only '861'...Zipper caliber were sold from 1937 to 1941." Lots of other good information is in that letter. Who knew the answer to Zipper production numbers, or even thought to ask. I asked, and so now everyone who reads this article knows that single, important number, which may not be retrievable anywhere else. If you are glad to know this number, stand up and shout "hallelujah!"
- Numbers are used to express important information in Cody Letters. The Letter says this gun was specifically made to hold "5" rounds, not "4" or "6," but "5"! It's in the Letter. The number "5" might be rare, so it is important. And if the gun doesn't match the number stated in the Letter, that is a concern. If you test it, and it looks like "5.25" rounds actually fit inside the mag tube, then maybe you should call Rob Kassab to see if the Letter is inaccurate. Really!?! The Letter says the barrel is "24" inches, not "26" inches. They only made "3" of those guns. Etcetera. Cody Letters are all about the numbers.
- The lack of a number gives us the opportunity to do a good deed, or tell white lies for the greater benefit of society. The first shotgun I ever shot was my dad's Model 37 he had since youth, using some old Winchester high brass killer rounds. Like Teddy's .405, it killed on both ends. The gun is way too light and the old Winchester high brass rounds way too powerful...and no butt pad. That Model 37 was later stolen from my father. When I replaced it and gave



Winchester 1876 with a fractional serial number

my dad another one, I could have easily said I found his stolen gun, since it looked identical and there is no serial number. In that case, it was good there was no number, so we could hold the line on that story. In this case, it was all about the "no number." It is important to note that I did not lie, although I did joke about it. Surprise, right?

- Numbers become real important whenever two or more like models with the same serial number suddenly appear. God help us when this happens, especially with a special gun. Unfortunately, someone is going to lose that game. We were at the Tulsa show one time back around 2002 and a guy had a pretty nice looking 1 of 100 Model 1873, with what seemed to be a nicely heat treated and altered serial number; in

other words, a replica? Turned out that gun was previously known for many years by George Madis to be a well done copy of a legitimate 1 of 100. Wow!

- When something like this happens, you will look twice, three times and four times under a magnifying glass, and then ask 20 of your friends to the

same thing before believing two numbers are alike. And all this fuss and fascination over what? The-num-ber!

Now that this article establishes a mind-opening pattern of Winchester numbers theory, the topic of numbers may be expanded upon and go into many directions of your choosing. But, with this article we can all conclude two things: First, gun toting Winchester collectors are all smart people when it comes to numbers; and, second, numbers are important.

Whether you are out there at the shows flipping guns, or just sitting in the chair at home enamoring over wood and metal, remember to think twice about that seldom pondered over number. Whatever it pertains to, it determines the value of your treasures.