



A set of Bisley and Single Action revolvers engraved by Glahn to match, late in the 1930's. Bisley number 263480 was first shipped from the factory in 1905; Single Action number 344554 left c. 1923. Blued and case hardened finishes; factory refinish marks, * and &, on triggerguards. These pistols form the only set of an engraved Bisley and Single Action known from the Glahn period. Formerly in the William M. Locke Collection. *(David S. Woloch Collection)*



Serial number 350804 Single Action; listed as grade No. 2 engraving. Comparing the pattern with number 348726 and with other specimens shows that Glahn often varied details from one job to the next, to avoid repetition and boredom. Colt ledgers list: .45, 5½", blue (and case hardened), ivory with carved steerhead, engraved grade No. 2, sold and shipped to Powell & Clement Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, January 1929. Though not illustrated, the gun is complete with the original factory carton. Note the new type rampant colt grip medallions, no longer the deep set style with crisp detail and sharp relief. *(David S. Woloch Collection)*



Chapter XII

WILBUR A. GLAHN

c. 1919 – c. 1950

Of the several families who excelled in firearms engraving in America, one of the largest was the Glahns. Their geneology is rather complex, but a number of basic facts have been determined through family records. The first engraving Glahn came to America from the Black Forest area of Germany, in 1828. The emigrant craftsman was George Glahn, and he became an employee of the American Bank Note Company. Family sources suggest that he was also a gun engraver.

Various of George's sons, grandsons, and great grandsons became engravers. Among them was another George, who is believed to have been chief engraver at the Syracuse Arms Company factory; little is known of his career, unfortunately.

Jacob Glahn, who died in 1902, first worked for the American Bank Note Company, and at later dates engraved for several other firms, including Colt's. Background data on his career was located in a letter now in the Colt Collection of the Connecticut State Library. Jacob was writing to Colt's factory about work for them; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are his:

Syracuse Sept 27 1878

Gentlemen

Dear Sir,

Yours of the 20th came duly to hand, and am happy to see you pleased with my work. Part of contents of your letter I laid before our Superintendent for my endorsement. He said that he would write to you as soon as time permitted. In my twenty five years experience in my Buseness, this is the first time that my respectibility is questioned. This seems rather strange. But Gentlemen, I will submit cheerfully such names of Firms in your vicinity, and I hope you will Thoroughly Investigate regarding to my "respectibility". I will name the New Britain Bank Lock Co., American Sterling Co. of Naubuc. Sharps Rifle Co. and Winchester Repeating arms Co. I also wish you would write to Mr Elexander Bergen, President of the Defunct

National Arms Co. of Brooklyn, N.Y. I had the Engraving contract under this firm for Six years. It pains me and I don't suppose it is your request to produce pedegree, but am proud to say that to prove respectibility that my Ancesters were of the Oldest of Dutch Nobility (Von Glahns) who were all Honorable and Brave Solders. Who Fought under the Hugonot King untill his Disasterous End. My Relations in New York City are well to do Merchants, and those in South Carolina, all Independent planters. should you find me trustworthy I would be happy to receive your Guns, and I think I can satisfy you, or the most critical Judge of this kind of work.

I remain yours, very Respect

Jacob Glahn

26 Kenneday St

Syracuse N.Y.

At the same time a letter of recommendation was sent Colt by Joseph W. Livingston of the Nichols & Lefever gun company, Syracuse; the unedited note follows:

Gentlemen

Mr Jacob Glahn, at present employed in the factory of Messrs Nichols & Lefever, he having charge of the engraving department informs me that you desire vouches for his personal integrity, and he requests me to furnish you any testimony I may. I will here say that I have known Mr Glahn many years, and for the past Several years have seen him almost daily, he having been like myself connected with Parker Bros. Gun Works, West Meriden Conn. for the past year he has been Connected with the factory as far as my personal knowledge, he acted honorably and left them. So, if you desire to furnish him Sample guns to engrave, you can rest assured that Mr. Glahn will return them Safe, and I doubt not Satisfactory, for I consider him one of the most Compleet

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artizens that is to be found to day, on his Speciality, Gun Engraving. Reasons over which I have no Controll warrents Mr. Glahn to look out for further Employment that is to say, he is rather fearful that I cannot give him Constant employment. Should you desire, and engage Mr. Glahn you will find him a very desirable hand. I doubt not Mr. Glahn Can furnish you with other Testimonials. As he has furnished Samples of his handy work to most of the gun houses of this County. I dont know that I can say more then personally I would trust Mr. Glahn with any work I had to do. . . .

A page in one of the Colt factory ledgers lists a group of shotgun parts shipped to Jacob in Syracuse, in 1879. The company obviously decided to send him work, finally accepting his "respectibility". Serial numbers of these pieces, all from Model 1878 Hammer shotguns, included: 250, 255, 256, 279, 280, 282, 284, 302, 309, 349, 385, and 394. In getting the Model 1878 shotgun program underway, Colt was in need of all the engraving help it could muster.

Still another reference to Jacob is on page 95 of *L. D. Nimschke Firearms Engraver*; the illustrated piece is a Moore revolver. Theodore Glahn (born c. 1857; died c. 1937) was an engraver for Parker Brothers, Fulton Arms, and Syracuse Arms. While at Syracuse he was assigned the decoration of a deluxe gun for Theodore Roosevelt.

Gus Glahn died prior to World War II; he is known to have engraved for the Buffalo Arms Company and for Syracuse Arms.

The member of the family of greatest interest in the present volume is Wilbur A. Glahn, born March 4, 1888; married 1906, died February 6, 1951. He learned the trade from his father, George, and was a general engraver, specializing in firearms. He is known to have worked for the Fulton Arms Company, for Remington Arms (c. 1905-19), and for Colt. Wilbur also had a number of private clients, and occasionally took in projects for other arms companies, among them High Standard. Besides metal engraving, he did carving, enameling, and inlaying on pearl and ivory grips.

Wilbur came to Hartford in 1919 and was hired by Colt's factory. He worked at the plant through 1923; leaving in that year and taking up engraving at his home workshop, but continuing to do the bulk of Colt's work. In November of 1923 Wilbur set up a shop at 11 Central Row, Hartford, and worked there through c. 1926. He shared the studio with E. R. Houghton, a jewelry engraver; the company was known as Houghton & Glahn.

Wilbur's next move was to 71 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, c. 1926. He adopted the name of the

had been established c. 1890). Besides general engraving, he worked in pearl and ivory, and sometimes handled this type assignment from R. J. Kornbrath. Wilbur was not a die cutter, but could work in that field if need be.

From his arrival in Hartford in 1919, Wilbur continued to do the bulk of the Colt company's engraving through the spring of 1950. He became ill at that time, and entered the hospital; passing away February 6, 1951.

Until c. 1933, 90% of his work was on firearms. He then entered into industrial engraving. Before long, guns settled into the background and the firm's largest customer was the Pratt & Whitney company. During this period he turned down work from the Remington and Ithaca companies but occasionally took on gun jobs from individual clients or from High Standard. Remington and Ithaca had been asking him to help with their engraving requirements ever since Wilbur first came to Hartford, in 1919.

The bulk of his assignments from Colt was on grade A, B, and C handguns. Nevertheless, the list of special guns done for the firm is impressive. Some of these custom arms, and a few for other companies, were:

- A Thompson submachine gun for Obergon of Mexico, including profuse gold inlays, the Mexican seal, Obergon's name, and elaborate engraved coverage. This was a presentation from Colt's factory, producers of the Thompson, c. 1921.

- A pair of deluxe handguns for the King and Queen of Siam (Thailand), prior to World War II.

- A handgun for the Prince of Wales.

- Several guns for show business personalities, among them Tom Mix and stripper Sally Rand. Several Texas Rangers and other law enforcement officials bought or were presented arms engraved by Wilbur.

- He engraved a pair of .45 Automatic pistols for Douglas MacArthur, and said that the general held up the invasion of the Philippines until he had received these guns! Serial number 135631 of the Model 1908 Hammerless .380 Automatic pistol was profusely engraved and gold inlaid for General George C. Marshall. The general's signature was gold inlaid on the left side of the slide.

- Serial number 471890 of the Model 1903 Hammerless .32 Automatic pistol was elaborately engraved for presentation to Connecticut Governor John Trumbull, in May of 1926, by Colt's factory; the ivory grips bear a gold inlaid and engraved facsimile of the state's coat of arms.

R. L. Wilson

HADLYME, CONNECTICUT 06439

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Pre-1900 Single Action Army
Deluxe Engraved by Wilbur Glahn
c. the 1930s
No. 187737

Among the most rare of all Colt engraved arms are those made in one period at the factory, and then returned at a later period for embellishment. Serial No. 187737 was originally produced c. 1899, and was eventually returned to Colt at the period when Wilbur Glahn was chief factory engraver (see COLT ENGRAVING and THE BOOK OF COLT ENGRAVING, chapter XII).

Only one other specimen from the Glahn shop is known to the writer, and in that instance the revolver was built c. 1905, and returned c. 1923 for embellishment. That item, Bisley No. 263480, is pictured in THE BOOK OF COLT ENGRAVING, page 305. The piece had been in the William M. Locke collection.

Single Action No. 187737 (as on Bisley 263480) bears factory rework markings. The ampersand (&) is on the right rear bow of the triggerguard, and 736N is on the left side of the triggerguard strap and backstrap. The Glahn scrollwork is of a pattern almost identical to a revolver pictured on page 301 of THE BOOK OF COLT ENGRAVING. Interestingly, no attempt was made by Glahn to work in an earlier style (such as that of Helfricht). The type engraving is of the factory Glahn style known as grade No. 2.

The carved pearl grips with No. 187737 are rather unusual, since only a relatively few of the Glahn Single Actions had pearl stocks, and far fewer of these were carved in relief (or with inlaid eyes of cut red stones as also on #187737).

The revolver's condition is excellent, the factory nickel finish is of fine quality, and No. 187737 is an important example of engraved and deluxe gripped Single Action Army Colt by Wilbur A. Glahn. It should be pointed out as well that this was a piece once in the collection of a very prominent figure from the Middle East, whose name cannot be revealed due to his request for anonymity as an arms collector,

R. L. Wilson