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Two 1858 New Model Remington Revolvers. The top gun is factory engraved with ivory grips and twenty-three notches. The bottom gun is stamped as property of the Republic of Mexico. (Author's collection)

Guns of the Texas Rangers:

The Remington New Model Army

In 1799, seven-year-old Eliphalet Remington II moved from Suffield, Connecticut, to the small town of Litchfield in upper New York State. There he helped his father farm and operated a forge on the side. According to legend, "Lite," as he was called, needed a new rifle and decided to forge the barrel himself. He then carved a stock. The result of this timely task was a beautiful weapon that shot so accurately at shooting matches, fellow hunters

requested that he build more for them.

By 1822, Remington's barrels were being seen throughout upper New York. In 1828, he devoted his forge to the making of gun barrels and produced 300 a year without scarf icing quality. His work was so impressive that he was awarded a government contract for 5,000 rifles in 1845. Business greatly increased and the father brought his sons Philo, Samuel, and Eliphalet Jr. into the trade. E. Remington & Sons at Illion, New York, opened for business in 1856.

Remington secured the services of Fordyce Beals. He created the first Remington revolver in 1857. That first Remington handgun was a five-shot, single-action of .31 caliber that sported a three-inch octagon barrel and carried the name of Remington-Beals Pocket Revolver. Approximately 2,500 first models were produced during 1857 and 1858. After modification, 1,200 second models and 1,500 third models were made.



Close-up of typical factory engraving on special-order Remington New Models.

As the pocket revolvers found their way into civilian hands, Remington & Sons immediately began designing a larger revolver for the military. The result was the powerful .44 caliber known as the Remington-

Beals Army Revolver. Although 2,500 of them were produced from 1860 to 1862, collectors refer to them as the 1858 Army because of the patent date.

E. Remington & Sons did not overlook the popular .36 caliber. Eight thousand of them were made during the two years of the Remington-Beals' production. Meanwhile, 5,000 improved Navies, known as the 1861, were manufactured in 1862. As the models rolled off the line, the producers looked to improve both. The result was the creation of their best sellers.



New Model Remington in the Slim Jim style of the post-Civil War frontier. Originals were military holsters with the covering flap cut off.

The Remington New Model Army was manufactured from 1863 to 1875. At first glance, it is identical to the older model. However, it was designed to eliminate the problems of its predecessor with a notched frame retaining the cylinder pin, safety notches between the nipples of the cylinder, iron front sights rather than German silver, and frame modification to accept larger grips.

This Remington New Model Army fired six shots of .44 caliber through its eight-inch octagon barrel that bore the top stamp, PATENTED SEPT. 14, 1858/ E, REMINGTON & SONS ILLION, N.Y., U.S.A. /, NEW MODEL.

The enhanced weapon continued such familiar features as the brass trigger guard, wooden grips, blued steel, and an improved loading lever. The handgun was so well received that 132,000 were produced between 1863 and 1875, along with 32,000 New Navies. These cap-and-ball, black-powder revolvers provided the stiffest competition for Sam Colt.

The government eventually purchased some 110,00 Army and Navy revolvers under contracts that reached \$29,196,820.01 before the war ended.

The Remington New Model Army proved extremely popular with both Union and Confederate soldiers because of its solid frame construction. During Reconstruction, lawmen, outlaws, and Texas Rangers continued using the battle-proven handguns.

Eliphalet II died in 1861, and the company was taken over by Philo. It was reorganized as a corporation in 1865 under the same name as before and continued making first-class weapons during the metallic carriage period. Despite the best of efforts, however, the 1875 Remington Single-Action Armies were unable to compete with the Colt Peacemakers and Frontiers. In 1888, the renamed Remington Arms Company was taken over by the New York firm of Hartley and Graham.



Detail of personalization sometimes found on antique weapons. Ivory grip has twenty-three notches while the wooden grip has *Jose Policarpo Garcia* engraved on it.

As with other collectables, it is interesting to learn the



Very rare, special-order, one-piece, oval grip-retaining plate that screws onto the bottom of the butt to hold the two-piece grips in place rather than the standard method (right). Note plate engraving. Only one of this type is known.

price of these historical weapons when they were in production. A Remington ad during the Civil War listed the price of an Improved Navy at \$12, and full-coverage engraving cost an additional \$1.50. Ivory grips could be had for an additional \$5.50, while pearl ones cost \$27. A customer could go first class and receive an engraved New Model Navy with ivory grips for \$26 or the same with pearl for \$35.

However small the prices might appear, the annual wage of a blue-collar worker in 1864 was \$300. A U.S. second lieutenant, who was required to purchase his weapons and uniforms, was paid \$45 a month.

In 1975, E. Dixon Larson provided collectors an extremely fine book and listed the current values for all of the models that Remington produced. The New Model Army's value was estimated to be from \$150 to \$450, and the New Model Navy listed at \$350 to \$550. R. L. Wilson's guide for collectors, published in 1998, listed the price of a New Model Army from \$700 to \$2,500 and the cost of a New Navy between \$600 and \$1,500.

Engraved models are much more valuable, and historical association generally doubles the value at the bare minimum. Therefore, collectors are cautioned to beware of fakes and

purchase from reputable dealers.



Oval plate holding the two-piece ivory grips in place next to the standard butt strap found on the majority of New Models.

For further information:

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