



# THE VIGILANTE



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## The Quarterly Chronicle of the Robbers Roost Vigilantes

### From the President

We made it through another year. Was this the second or third year of Covid? They are starting to run together on me. I have lost friends and family to this damn thing, most recently my nephew Keith in Prescott Valley, Arizona. He, his wife, and his mother (my sister) all got it. Sis is recovering physically, but Keith's wife is still in the hospital, though I'm happy to say, not on a respirator. Time will tell.

We had a great year on the range. We did 19 cowboy matches, 10 trail walks, and 2 BAMM/cowboy three rifle matches. That's a lot of lead down range. And, thanks to M.C. Ryder, the results from every one of those shoots are on our website.

All of that shooting was topped off, of course, by our big holiday match and feast. Cowboy Earl said we should pull out all the stops on Stage One, and we did, using the flying pig, a knockdown/clay pigeon, and the running target. A third pistol was needed for the running target. We could have used the Texas Star, but that would have required a second rifle. Maybe next year. 😊 It took a while to shoot that stage, but we knew it would, and just about everybody pitched in on the re-setting. And thanks to Jayne Cobb, you can see it here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD\\_D3Y2lxZ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD_D3Y2lxZ8).

There were two ticket shots on that stage, and six total for the match, plus the one you got for signing up. Lots of tickets went into the can for the prize drawing, and lots of folks donated lots of nice stuff to the prize table.

And, as usual, the feast was a real feast. Mitch cooked tri-tip, and we had too many sides and desserts to count. I think everybody went home happy. I know I did.

I say this every year, but next year, I hope we can get in more BAMM matches. I mean, after all, I just bought an Italian Vetterli Model 1870/87/15. What the heck else am I going to do with this thing?

*Continued on page 2*

### Winchester Lever-Actions Go to War

By  
Anthony Vanderlinden

Even to the most disinterested, the Winchester lever-action's very profile is recognizable, making it a true icon of the American West. What is not generally known is that Winchester lever-actions were, in their day, cutting-edge military rifles. And they proved effective combat arms from the American Civil War through World War I, despite the fact that they were never awarded a large U.S. military contract.

The earlier Winchester lever-actions (the Models 1866, 1873 and 1876) shared the Henry rifle's toggle bolt system but offered Nelson King's patented loading gate on the receiver's right. Although durable and dependable, the toggle bolt could not handle loads more powerful than handgun cartridges. That became a limiting factor as cartridges, particularly military rifle cartridges, became more powerful during the 1870s. Ultimately, Winchester would turn to arms designer John M. Browning to overcome that shortcoming.

The first lever-action to bear the Winchester name, the Model 1866, was an improved version of the Henry rifle. The Model 1860 Henry was state-of-the-art technology—possessing rapid fire capability and generous magazine capacity—when used by Union soldiers during the American Civil War.

Often, warfare was observed and evaluated by officers from non-combatant nations who would then take note of the strategies and equipment used. The Civil War was observed by most European nations, but France and the Ottoman Empire took particular note of the Henry, and its successor, the Winchester Model 1866.

France was so impressed that its navy considered adopting the Winchester Model 1866. Rifle trials were conducted on the French frigate *Semiramis* in 1868.

*continued on page 2*

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

- |                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1 From the President    | 3 Business Cards |
| 1 Winchesters go to War | 3 Match Schedule |

*From the President Continued from page 1*



Back in high school, the girls used to say Ringo was so ugly he was cute. Well, I think my Vetterli is so ugly, it's cool.

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*Winchester Lever-Actions continued from page 1*

A report praised the Model 1866's ability to fire quickly. The French navy planned to take advantage of the guns' capabilities by placing them with sailors in crow's nests (Babies dans les hunes) so as to lay rapid fire down on the decks of enemy ships. In February 1870, recommendations were made to adopt the Model 1866, designated by the French as the "Carabine Henry – Winchester." The Franco-Prussian War (July 1870 to May 1871) interrupted its possible adoption, but the need for rifles created an opportunity for Winchester.

Although France did not officially adopt the Winchester Model 1866, several thousand were purchased during the Franco-Prussian War in a mad scramble to gather arms. France purchased 3,000 Model 1866 rifles with 16-round-capacity magazines and 3,000 with 13-round magazines; included with the purchase were 4.5 million rounds of .44 Henry ammunition. These were distributed to various units, including combat troops, and were the only foreign rifles to be retained for an extended period of time after the war. The Model 1866 became the standard rifle for the 630 gendarmes of the Corsican 17th Legion.

The Model 1866 was also purchased by the Ottoman Empire and used against the Imperial Russian Army in the Russo-Turkish War (1877 to 1878). The Ottomans purchased 45,000 muskets and 5,000 carbines in 1870 and 1871. A portion of those was used in 1877, during the Siege of Plevna. The Russian army suffered tremendous losses when it attacked the Ottomans, in part due to the use of the Winchester rifles.

Imperial Russia took note and began a search for a repeating rifle, which resulted in the development and adoption of the Mosin-Nagant years later. Still, the repeating firepower of the Winchester lever-action did not spur large military purchases, as Winchester lever-actions were more

*Continued below*

costly than single shot and bolt action rifles.

With the advent of smokeless powder, Winchester offered the Browning-designed Models 1894 and 1895. The stronger receivers could handle the higher chamber pressures of smokeless powder. The Model 1895 was specifically designed with martial applications in mind. The receiver was made to handle military cartridges, and a box magazine was incorporated instead of the traditional tubular magazine. During WWI, Great Britain ordered a combined total of 25,000 Model 92s and 94s, and France ordered 15,000 Model 94s. But it was the Model 95 and Imperial Russia that put the Winchester lever action on the map as a battle rifle.

Imperial Russia helped Winchester realize its largest military sales since the introduction of the lever-action rifle. A total of 300,000 Model 1895 rifles were ordered in two contracts, one in 1914 and another in 1915. Known as the "Russian Musket," the Model 1895 variant was adapted to fire the Russian rimmed 7.62x54 mm Model 1908 cartridge. The contracts required the addition of a bayonet lug and stripper-clip guides mounted on the receiver. The rifle had to accept the standard Russian Mosin-Nagant stripper clip and the rear sight needed to be graduated in Russian arshins. Those features made the Model 1895 the equal of any rifle on the battlefield. It saw the most use with frontline fighting units, and was issued to units formed in Russia's western provinces of Finland, Poland and Latvia. Period photographs

*Continued on page 3*

## Business Cards



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## How to Join the Robbers Roost Vigilantes...

Come out to a RRV match, held the third (and sometimes first) Saturday of every month, or call Nasty Newt at 760-375-7618, or MC Ryder at 760-384-2321, or mail it in. Our membership application is here [RRV Membership Application](#) Annual membership dues for the RRV are: single membership \$25, member and spouse \$30, family membership (including children under 18 living at home) \$35. First time shooters will be able to take their FIRST (1) NEW SHOOTERS CLASS for \$10, any subsequent new shooters class or RRV match shoot will be \$10 members, \$15 nonmembers. Donations for shooting regular monthly RRV matches will be \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Memberships run from September 1 - August 31. New memberships purchased after September will be prorated depending on the number of months remaining and the type of membership. **RRV members are encouraged to become Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) members.** Please call SASS at 877-411-SASS. SASS membership information can be found here:

<http://www.sassnet.com/Membership-Main-001A.php>

SASS membership is not required for membership in RRV, or participation in RRV regular monthly matches. **RRV encourages all shooters to join and support the NRA and the NRA Foundation, and Ridgecrest Gun Range Association.** For further information visit our website at [www.robbersroostvigilantes.com](http://www.robbersroostvigilantes.com).



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### Schedule of Monthly Matches

Matches are announced on the web site and via email to all club members. **Cowboy matches are first and third Saturday. Usually, Trail Walks are second Saturday, and BAMM and Cowboy Rifle are fourth Saturday, when scheduled.**

**Winter Hours: Sign up starting ~ 8:00, Safety Meeting ~ 8:45.**

*Winchester Lever Actions continued from page 2*



show large military formations of Imperial soldiers holding Model 1895 Russian Muskets. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and consequent arms embargo gave Joseph Stalin the opportunity to sell tons of arms, including obsolete rifles, in exchange for Spanish gold. The Model 1895 rifles were sold for many times over their original purchase price.

*Russian-contract Model 1895s feature special stripper clip loading guides and a bayonet lug. Seen here is a rifle with the clip inserted, ready to be loaded.*