

FREEDOM'S

From Plymouth Colony to the sandy plains of Kuwait, firearms in the hands of free Americans have purchased, maintained and preserved our freedom, liberty and unique way of life. NRA's new National Firearms Museum will illustrate that proud heritage.

BY PHILIP SCHREIER

THE muskets the "Minutemen" used at Lexington Green and Concord Bridge fired the first shots that eventually obtained liberty for 13 former colonies of the English Crown. In the 222 years since America declared independence, our nation's servicemen have gone to war 10 times and served in every corner of the globe, protecting America, American lives and preserving our birthright of liberty for the generations to come.

The powder chargers below were used with early firearms and are among the oldest artifacts in the NFM collection.

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Mayflower Wheellock owned by John Alden (1)



U.S. Model 1875 "Trapdoor" Springfield

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Revolutionary War "Committee of Safety Musket" (2)



Confederate-issue Richmond .58-Cal. Percussion Rifle Musket (3)



U.S. "Rough Rider" Model 1873 Colt Single Action Army .45 Colt (6)



U.S. Remington New Model Army .44-Cal. Revolver (5)



"John Brown" Sharps Model 1853 "Slant-Breech" .54-Cal. Carbine (4)



The Last Inspection (l.), *Breech-loaders and Greencoats* (below) and two other Civil War paintings by Dale Gallon were commissioned to commemorate NRA's 125th Anniversary. Some of the limited-edition prints are still available. For details, call (717) 334-0430.



Officers Model Springfield, .45-80 Cal. (7)

The National Firearms Museum will have 13 Permanent Galleries and one Temporary Gallery. The new state-of-the-art facility will open in June 1998. Gallery sponsors, museum donors and volunteers are still needed. For information, write: Director, NFM, Dept. AR, 11250 Waples Mill Rd., Fairfax, VA 22030-9400.



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George Washington once said that “the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.” One of the picket posts in the watch over our liberty is NRA’s new National Firearms Museum. This institution will illustrate for the public the history and heritage that firearms have had in our national development. From Jamestown and Plymouth Colony in the 1600s to the sandy plains of Kuwait in our own decade, firearms have purchased, maintained and preserved our democratic ideals and unique way of life, so that the next generation of young Americans who come along and are asked to serve won’t question why; they, too, will know the story and heed the call of duty to follow those who have served before.



National Archives

Throughout the 13 permanent exhibit galleries, more than 2,000 firearms (of the NFM’s 3,400) will be exhibited that tell a fascinating tale of our national history and of a promise kept to George Washington, as we endeavor to remain ever vigilant.

The arms pictured and described here are but just 16 of the thousands of arms that will be on public exhibit throughout the museum’s galleries, each with a unique history and story about how and why America became and remains the greatest country on earth.

Mayflower Wheelock (1): Of all the firearms in the museum, one gun comes close to being the epitome of America’s frontier spirit. That is the European wheelock that John Alden, a

passenger on the good ship *Mayflower*, brought with him to Plymouth Colony in 1620. Alden, a signatory of the Mayflower Compact, evidently had the firearm restocked on this side of the Atlantic sometime after his arrival in the New World.

Revolutionary War “Committee of Safety Musket” (2): When the colonists felt that they had had enough of the tyranny of King George III, numerous “Committees of Safety” were formed throughout New England to train, arm and equip men who could respond to an armed threat from the British within minutes of being called. On April 19, 1775, at Lexington Green in Massachusetts, these “Minutemen”—who were among our country’s first patriots—became the first to give their lives for independence. This “Committee of Safety” musket, was present for the first fights that earned our freedom.

Richmond .58 Cal. C.S. Rifle Musket (3): The U.S. witnessed its greatest trial during the years 1861-1865 when 11 Southern states seceded from the Union and war broke out. Confederates defended their freedom and liberty as they saw it with a variety of firearms both imported and domestically manufactured. Using captured machinery from the Harpers Ferry Armory—which was raided by John Brown in 1859—Southerners began production of rifled muskets, such as this one, in a new armory built along the James River in Richmond, Virginia. This .58-cal. rifle was used by James Rosser of the Seventh Virginia Infantry during the four year struggle that killed more than 600,000 Americans, blue and grey.

“John Brown” Sharps Model 1853 “Slant-Breech” Carbine (4): The abolition movement of the 1850s prompted William Ward Beecher, a New England minister and the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe—the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*—to arm the anti-slavery forces in Kansas. He shipped Sharps Model 1853 slant-breech carbines in crates marked “Beecher’s Bibles” to Brown. In 1859, Brown brought his carbines and revolution to Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), and seized the U.S. Armory there. Future Confederate Generals Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stewart, along with a detachment of U.S. Marines, ended the siege and stopped Brown. This breechloading Sharps Model 1853 carbine’s serial number falls within those known to have been shipped to Brown and later recovered at Harpers Ferry after the failed raid.

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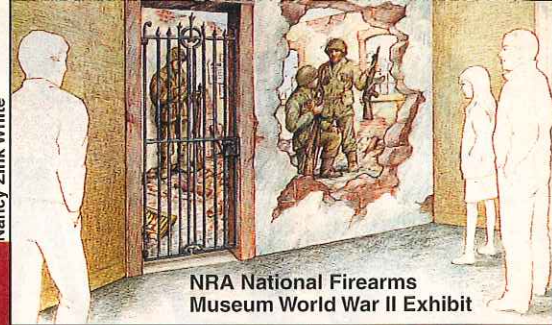


U.S. M1A1 Thompson Submachine Gun .45 ACP (13)



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Nancy Zink White



NRA National Firearms Museum World War II Exhibit



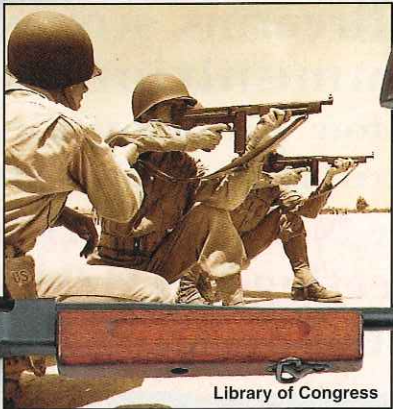
U.S. Model 1896 "Buffalo Soldier" Krag Carbine, .30-40 Cal. (8)

U.S. Model 1903 "Springfield" with Warner & Swazey Scope .30-'06 Cal. (9)

U.S. Model 1917 Revolver, Colt Mfg. .45 ACP (11)

U.S. Model 1911 Pistol, Colt Mfg. .45 ACP (10)

U.S. S&W "Victory Model" .38 Spl. Revolver (12)



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U.S. M1 Carbine, Winchester Repeating Arms, .30 Carbine (14)

U.S. M1 Garand Rifle, Springfield Armory, 30-'06 (15)

U.S. M16 5.56x45 mm, The "Black Rifle" (16)



S. Army Photo

Photo by Talmadge G. Rutledge

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U.S.-issue Remington New Model Army Revolver (5): The Remington Arms Co. of Ilion, New York, is the country's oldest arms maker, having commenced the manufacture of longarms in 1816. The Remington New Model Army revolver was made between 1863 and 1875. More than 130,000 of these .44-cal. revolvers were made, the majority during the Civil War years (1861-1865). This revolver and the Colt Model 1860 were popular sidearms among Union officers.

"Rough Rider" U.S. Model 1873 Colt (6): On the morning of July 1, 1898, the U.S. entered the world stage near Santiago, Cuba, along San Juan Ridge and the adjoining Kettle Hill. In the mid-afternoon, a collection of cowboys, store clerks and college students stormed the heights and carried the Spanish trenches, making their way into the history books. One of the troopers of Theodore Roosevelt's "Rough Riders" was Louis Bishop, a member of "G" Troop. Bishop carried a refurbished Colt Single Action Army revolver with a 5½" barrel. Today it is a proud highlight of the museum's collection.


U.S. Model 1875 Officers Model "Trapdoor" Springfield (7): As national interest in target and sport shooting grew in the late 1800s, the Springfield

Armory modified the 1873 Carbine and offered officers the opportunity to purchase these exquisite 1875 Officers Model Springfield "Trapdoors." This example in .45-80 was the property of NRA co-founder and president, General George Wingate. General George Armstrong Custer also had an early model of this rifle.

"Buffalo Soldier" U.S. Model 1896 Krag Carbine (8): Once Roosevelt's First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry captured Kettle Hill it became evident that the troops engaged in taking the adjacent San Juan Hill were having difficulty reaching their objective. Under a hail of rifle fire, the men of the all black 10th U.S. Cavalry—troopers known as "Buffalo Soldiers"—began their ascent of the hill and the entrenched Spanish position. In one gallant rush they and their lieutenant, John "Black Jack" Pershing, carried the heights. This carbine is in the serial number range known to have been issued to the 10th.

Arming the "Doughboys" (9, 10 and 12): In April 1917, the Great War became a World War when the U.S. entered to stem the tide of German aggression. The American "Doughboy" had at his disposal the very best in firearms, such as the Model 1903 Springfield (9) in .30-'06—shown here with a Warner & Swazey 5.2X scope—as well as the Colt Model 1911 semi-automatic pistol (12) and Colt Model 1917 Revolver (10), both chambered in .45 ACP. S&W also made an M1917 revolver.

The "Arsenal of Democracy" (11, 13, 14 & 15): When war again broke out in Europe in 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt assured the free world then fighting fascism that America was the "arsenal of democracy." The S&W Victory Model (11), marked "U.S. Property," was one of the guns sent overseas as part of "lend-lease." After America entered the war following the unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor, the Victory Model was changed to .38 S&W Spl. cal. and served in all theaters of the war. The Thompson submachine gun (13), too, served around the globe with our troops and quickly became a G.I. favorite. The M1 Carbine (14) and M1 Garand (15) could well take part of the credit for helping turn the tide of war in our favor. The U.S. was the only nation to issue its troops a semi-automatic firearm as a standard infantry service rifle, and General George S. Patton called the M1 Garand "the finest battle implement ever devised."

U.S. M16 "The Black Rifle" 5.56 mm (16): The AR-15—later adopted as the U.S. M16 rifle—was designed by Eugene Stoner and entered U.S. Army inventory in 1963. Today, some 35 years after its adoption, the M16 holds the record for serving the longest as our nation's standard service rifle. From Vietnam to Desert Storm, this selective-fire rifle has remained on watch as part of our foremost defense against oppressors. 

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