

M·W·C·A

Minnesota Weapons Collectors Association Official Publication

VOLUME NO. 28

ISSUE NO. 1

JANUARY 2015



Cover illustration done by Samuel M. Chamberlain who was a teenager in the American Cavalry during the Mexican War. He is the soldier on the left.

“Dueling In The United States Army”

See page 9 for the story.

M • W • C • A News

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Official Publication of the Minnesota Weapons Collectors Association

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Staff.....Dale Peterson, Stan Nelson, Mike Foster

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GUESS THE GUN!

This is not a gun but it is a related item from the War to End All Wars - WWI that showed up at the Buffalo Gun Show. It is approximately 1/4" in diameter and about 1" long, made of aluminum with two copper bands.



Win a FREE business card size ad (\$25 value).

First five correct entries win!

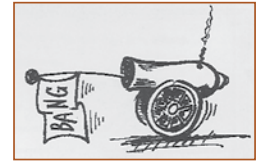
Call Dale at 763-753-1663

Last issue's "Guess the Gun," was a "Suicide Special" manufactured by Otis A. Smith Co., Rockfall, Connecticut, circa 1870-1890. See page 19 for a detailed explanation.



Good luck on this issue's Guess the Gun and remember the first 5 winners will receive a FREE business card ad in the next bulletin.

The President's Shot



2015 President's Shot

What is best for the Association?

The Minnesota Weapons Collectors Association (MWCA) is made up of three main components: the members, the vendors, and the show attendees - without any one of these entities this association would not exist.

This year the Board of Directors will build on the excellent foundation that has been presented to us as the result of sixty years of MWCA leadership asking the question "What is best for the Association?"

As we move through 2015 we will strive to maintain high quality shows that will in turn allow us to continue to provide significant contributions to the NRA and numerous youth shooting groups, as these are our future. We will also continue to address our political challenges by participating in the process. This will require all of us to become involved to protect our freedoms by sending emails, postcards, and letters and making phone calls and donations to politicians who have demonstrated that they are willing to fight for our rights.

Some initiatives we will be looking at this year include increasing our electronic presence in the areas of advertising, communication, notifications and show business. Also on the table is the creation of an education scholarship fund for our members, which we hope to have available by 2016.

It is my honor to serve as your 2015 MWCA President. I hope that you all will continue with the question "What is best for the Association?" I will.

Larry Rogers
2015 MWCA President



2015 Show Dates

Minnesota Weapons Collectors Association

Celebrating 61 Years!

January 10 - 11 Rochester Mayo Civic Center

February 7 - 8 St. Paul RiverCentre

March 14 - 15 MN State Fair Coliseum Building

April 18 - 19 MN State Fair Education Building

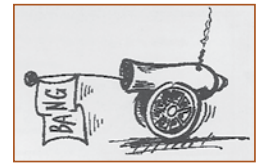
October 3 - 4 MN State Fair Education Building

Annual Trophy Show — Plan Your Display Now!

October 31 - November 1 MN State Fair Coliseum Building

December 12 - 13 St. Paul RiverCentre

The President's Shot



Parting President's Shot

Legislative Efforts

Thank you to all of you that got out and voted during the recent mid-term election. Please remember to keep in contact with your new or incumbent legislators at least three times per year. Continue to support legislators and/or candidates that are pro Second Amendment either financially through contributions or by donating your time and talents to their next election campaign. Try to attend at least three events per year where your legislator will be in attendance. Make sure to thank them for supporting us.

Lobbying

MWCA has retained Mr. Tim Spreck to represent our organization during the 2015 legislative session. Mr. Spreck most recently served as president of the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance or MOHA. MOHA is a consortium of 70 pro-gun, hunting, trapping and fishing organizations throughout Minnesota. MWCA will have a seat on the Executive Council of MOHA starting this year.

Advertising

In response to advertising concerns brought up during September's membership meeting, your board of directors consulted with Miron Communications. The initial consultation included an overview of additional advertising and marketing initiatives our organization might want to consider moving forward. MWCA board members will be using some of these recommendations to promote MWCA throughout 2015 and beyond.

Timely Correspondence

In an effort to keep you informed of time sensitive information and/or issues, please consider registering your email address with our Executive Director. Your contact information is strictly confidential and we will only contact you when we deem it absolutely necessary.

Membership

Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the families of MWCA members that passed away this last year. They will be remembered through memorial donations to the NRA/ILA. As mentioned in earlier mailings, our membership is down slightly from one year ago. Please take the time to invite a family member, friend, business associate or members of other related groups to join the MWCA. Remember, there is strength in numbers.

Status of the August Gun Show

You probably noticed late this fall the August gun show date was listed as: "To Be Determined". Your board of directors voted in November to cancel the 2015 August gun show. The advertising costs for this particular show had risen dramatically and the show posted a loss. I think there are numerous reasons for the decline of this particular show including - but not limited to - competing events, weather, end of summer family trips, limited funds, etc. Your thoughts and comments regarding any future August shows would be greatly appreciated. Please visit our website at www.mwca.org and forward your email correspondence to: "Question for a MWCA Board of Directors Member." You can also drop a comment card in the Suggestion Box located at the front desk at each show or send us a letter. Our goal is to provide our members, show attendees, vendors and affiliates with the best possible gun show experience in Minnesota.

Passing the Gavel

As I leave the office of MWCA President, I want to thank each of you for supporting me this past year – as well as - supporting MWCA as a whole. Without each of you, MWCA would not be the organization it is today. I hope each of you have a happy, productive and safe year!

Mark Reese
2014 MWCA President

MWCA 2014 Trophy Show

Another successful Trophy Show was held at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. We had a beautiful fall day with the temp in the low 60s. Even with the hunting season in full swing we still had over 3,000 in attendance and 18 interesting displays including a couple of first time displayers.

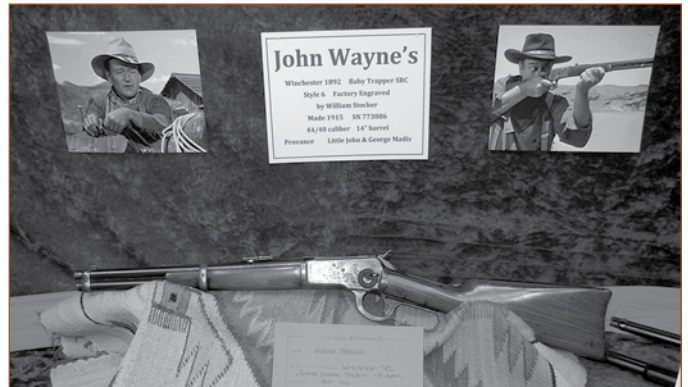
Here are the gentlemen who spent the extra time to make our Trophy Show a success. Thanks guys for all the work.



In the Antique Firearms category, Vern Berning's "Winchester Saddle Ring Carbines" received 1st place.

Vern also got the "Best Gun" award for his John Wayne Trapper Carbine.

When you see those PURPLE drapes come out you know Vern is there with some pretty nice stuff.



Jim Moores received 2nd place for his "Colt Lightning Rifles" in the Antique Firearms category.



Third place in the Antique Firearms category went to Charles Vesely's "Don't Tread On Me" display.



First place in the Modern Long Guns was presented to Alvin Olson's display, "Winchester Try Gun"



Modern Long Guns 2nd place went to Rex Brown's "Winchester 22" display.

MWCA 2014 Trophy Show, continued



The “Engraved Ruger Single Action” display took 1st place for Mike Splittergerber in the Modern Hand Guns category.



Dennis Larson got 2nd place in Modern Hand guns for his “Smith & Wesson 22” display.



Robert Rolander received two awards, 3rd in Modern Hand Guns, Colt Woodsman and 3rd in the Related Items category with his Heiser Holsters



Fred Vandersnick's colorful “Winchester Plaid” took 2nd place in the Related Items category. Boy, this brought back memories of the 1960s.



1st place in the Related Items went to Ron Lough's display of “Winchester Jr. Trap Shooting” entry.

MWCA 2014 Trophy Show, continued



First time displayer Dave Mattson won 1st place for his "Great War Weapons" in the Military category.



First time displayer Rick Simonson was the big winner taking both the "Best of Show" and the "O.K. Judges" award for his "Guns of Jess Sweeten, Texas Lawman."



"Carcano Carbines" got 2nd place for Rob Pfeffer's display in the Military Long Gun category.



Charlie Mossefin with his "Indian Trade Knives 1800s" display.



Ingvar Alm had a nice display of early Crossman Air Rifles.

MWCA 2014 Trophy Show, continued



John Park, Sr. with his display of rare folding knives.



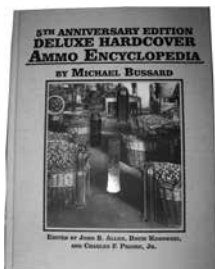
Rex Brown must have taught his Bride how to make a Bullwhip as she sure knows how to use it.

Guess the Guns

We had a “Guess the Guns” contest at the Trophy Show this year. 37 individuals entered the contest and we had 21 correct answers. Two names were drawn and they received either a 2014 “Blue Book of Gun Values” or the “5th Anniversary Edition Ammo Encyclopedia.”



Blue Book of Gun Values



5th Anniversary Edition Ammo Encyclopedia

Both were special hard bound editions signed by the publisher, Steve Fjestad and the MWCA president, Mark Reese. “Thank You” Steve for those very educational books.

Two guns seemed to stump quite a few of the contestants. They were two Smith & Wesson revolvers: the Schofield and the No. 3 American. The Schofield was a U.S. Military weapon and it has a cartouche on the grip.



Smith & Wesson Schofield



Smith & Wesson No. 3 American



Dale Peterson manning the “Guess The Guns” contest display.



Charles Vesely with his winning entry and the book he selected. Brandon Grant was our other winner who received the Blue Book of Gun Values.

Dueling In The United States Army

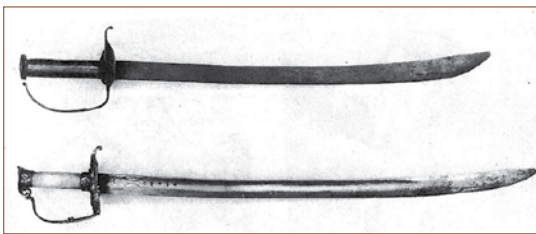
By Stan Nelson

Back in 1961, I subscribed to THE AMERICAN GUN, a promising new quarterly publication aimed at American gun collectors. Probably because it was more literary than technical it only lasted through four issues. But in Issue #2 an article entitled "The Death of Gentlemen" stirred my interest. Commenting on dueling in the U.S. author Aaron Norman states on page 53 "All told, between 1780 and 1860 probably more U.S. Army and Navy Officers were killed in private affairs of honor than fell on battlefields and ship decks in service of their country." That sounded unlikely to me at the time and I started taking notes from my own reading on the subject, which form the basis for this essay on United States Army duelists.

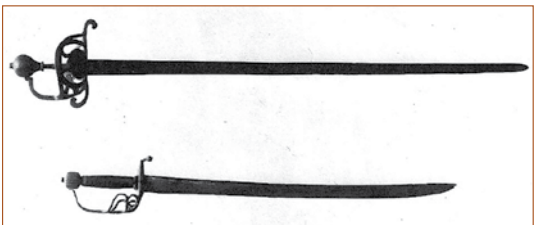
Dueling (individual combat) probably originated with Neanderthal rock throwing and, through the ages, has persisted in one form or another to the present where the duel has been replaced by the less lethal lawsuit. Along with their other customs the formal duel was brought to these shores by the Spanish, French, and of special interest here, the English. We find no mention of dueling in the early colonial records. There were duelists among the gentlemen of the 1607 Virginia Colony, including Capt. John Smith, but their main interest was in just staying alive, while the Pilgrim Fathers of the later Massachusetts Bay Colony abhorred dueling as the influence of Satan. But they were human beings, and in PISTOLS AT TEN PACES, Boston, 1940, author Win. B. Stevens writes of a few "grudge fights." On page 10, "In 1619 Mr. Epes slew Mr. Stallings, a fellow Virginian in a private quarrel." And also in Virginia, "Capt. Richard Stephens killed George Harrison in 1624 in an argument over a game of cards." In Boston in 1621 two commoners, Ed Doty and Ed Lester "fought with swords over a discarded pair of boots," neither suffering serious injury. Swords are the only weapons mentioned in these personal encounters, being the universal sidearm of the time.



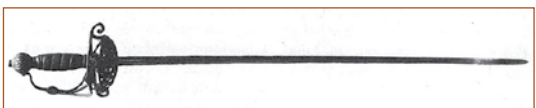
Dueling with swords in England, circa 1630.



Short cutting swords from New England, 1630-1670. Mass. Hist. Soc.



Top, Gov. Carver's double edged broadsword, bottom, Elder Brewster's short cutlass. Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth.



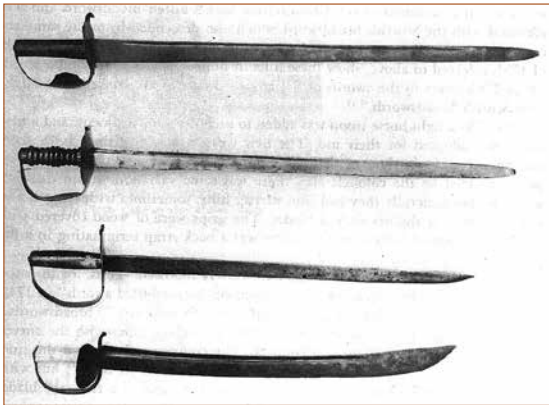
Miles Standish's English rapier. Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth.

We do not know the kinds of swords carried by the individuals involved in these impromptu affairs or in the later formal duels, but we can make some educated guesses. During the early Colonial period probably every type of sword used in contemporary Europe found its way to America. All able bodied men were members of the Colonial Militia and were issued a standard type of short sword, some with minor changes suggested by a company's Colonel. Officers (the potential duelists) carried their customized personal swords, usually variations of a basic pattern. Harold L. Peterson's ARMS and ARMOR in COLONIAL AMERICA, 1526 - 1783 Stackpole, 1956 is a good source of information; see chapters 3 and 7 for edged weapons. Archaeological digs around Jamestown have turned up a number of identifiable colonial relics and the personal weapons of George Washington, Miles Standish and other members of the ruling class are occasionally on display in New England museums.

As noted previously, the formal duel was seldom resorted to in the New England Colonies. This is verified in THE DIARY OF SAMUEL SEWELL 1674 - 1729, 2 vols. Ed by M. H. Thomas, Boston, 1973. Mr. Sewell mentions 4 duels, 3 of which involved officers. No weapons identified but the only fatality seems to have

Duelling In The United States Army, continued

been caused by a sword. In vol. 1, page 67, Sewell says that Lt. James Alexander was “run through the belly” by Lt. James Douglas and later died. A century or so later Timothy Dwight, President of Yale University commended the morality of the people of New England in his 4 volume TRAVELS IN NEW ENGLAND AND NEW YORK - 1796 - 1815, reprint, Boston, 1968. In vol. 1, page 123, he writes “not more than five duels have been fought here since the landing of the Plymouth Colony.” But he says nothing about the incidence of dueling in the Southern Colonies before, during, and after the War for Independence, of which he had to have known Dwight was an ardent anti-duelist activist.

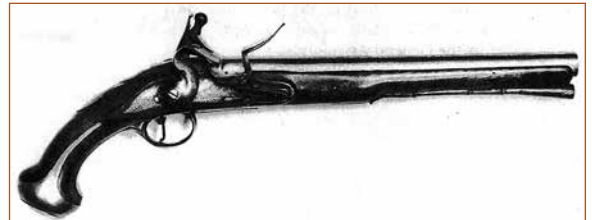


American cutlasses, early 1700s. Chicago Hist. Soc.

Things were different down South by the mid 18th Century and the Officers of the British/American Army units stationed there had played some major roles in the change. Georgia, southernmost of the 13 colonies, saw its share of formal duels involving military personal. In Thomas Gamble's SAVANNAH DUELS AND DUELISTS - 1733 - 1877, reprint 1977, we read in Chapter 1, page 1 “On June 12, 1740, Ensign Tolson killed Army surgeon Eyles,” and a few days later, “Army cadet Shenton killed cadet Peter Grant, a former Navy ensign.” There is an eyewitness account of another sword fight between Capt. Richard Norbury and Capt. Albert Desbrisay which took place May 10, 1741 at the Army camp on St. Simon's Island off the Georgia Coast. This was

a fight to the finish. Page 3: “Capt. Norbury received three wounds, one in his belly and two in his arms; he died on the spot. Capt. Desbrisay received three wounds, one in each thigh and in his left hand.” Capt. Norbury was an Aide to Col. Oglethorpe who apparently was not bothered by these duels. On page 4 he is quoted as saying “Undoubtedly a man has a right to defend his honor.” There is no record of Oglethorpe himself ever fighting a duel.

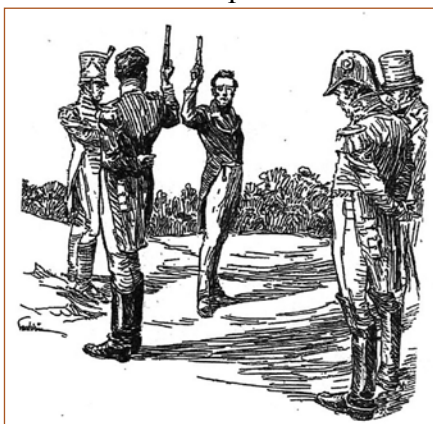
This “official” attitude would persist through the American War for Independence where some high ranking Officers allowed the settling of a personal issue to interfere with their fight against the British. The British Officers were doing the same thing however, as Gamble notes on page 9, “from a Georgia newspaper of Jan. 24, 1776 we are informed that on Thursday morning last a duel was fought with pistols, on the Island of Cockspur, between the Capt. of Marines on board the Syren and Mr. Pennington, 1st Lt. of said ship, when the latter was killed.” Pistols were also the weapons of choice for two important American Officers when they met near



Early model English military pistol



Later model English military pistol. (1770s).



A duel at 4 paces (12 feet), see text.

Savannah on May 16, 1777, at an agreed upon distance of 4 paces (12 ft.). This sounds almost suicidal and it was for

one of them. Button Gwinnett, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Commander in Chief of Georgia, and Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh both fell at the exchange of shots, and Gwinnett died 3 days later while McIntosh took some time to recover; see Gamble, page 15. Savannah was the scene of another pistol duel in March, 1780, when Continental Major James Jackson, though seriously wounded himself, shot and killed Georgia's Lt. Governor George Wells, page 40. Jackson was later elected Governor of Georgia and fought other duels, proving dueling to be no obstacle to success

Duelling In The United States Army, continued

in Southern politics. The universality of Duelling during the Revolution is shown by French General Lafayette's challenges to the English Earl of Carlisle, and American General John Sullivan for some unkind words about the French military. Largely because of Commander in Chief George Washington's mediation, Lafayette, though not happy, was pacified.



A fine American pistol by Philip Creamer, for those who could afford it.



One of a pair of fine officer's pistols, from England 1790. WI. Hist. Soc.

The end of the American Revolution did not bring an end to dueling in the United States Army. In *THE OLD ARMY*, Oxford, 1986, author Edward M. Coffman says on page 32, "Dueling, a result of the French influence during the Revolutionary War, remained the dangerous recourse too many officers took to resolve their differences." Years later William Henry Harrison recalled, "There were more duels in the Northwestern Army between 1791 and 1795 than ever took place in the same length of time amongst so small body of men." Another old officer remembered 15 duels resulting in 3 deaths among the younger officers during 1793. Unofficially condoned by Generals Anthony Wayne and James Wilkinson, dueling continued to flourish and by the early 1800s it had become an accepted characteristic of the Officer Class. This is quite apparent in a letter quoted in Coffman on page 32, "In 1807 Lt. John Cleves Symmes Jr. wrote to a friend about his duel at Ft. Adams, 'I was involved in a single combat and with a hole through my wrist left my opponent to be carried off the field. We are both recovered - such scenes here is

no uncommon thing...'" Even Winfield Scott was among those who dueled; only a Captain at the time (1810) Scott suffered a scalp wound and missed his opponent. In *GENERAL Wm. S. HARNEY*, U. of Neb., 2001, author George R. Adams says, page 52, "At least 13 officers died in duels between 1815 and 1826."

As is obvious in the foregoing accounts, by the 19th Century the flintlock pistol had replaced the sword as the duelist's choice of weapon, especially in the U.S. where swordsmanship was never a fine art; pulling a trigger is easier than learning the parry and riposte. See chapter seven in *HISTORY OF MARKSMANSHIP*, Chicago, 1972, by Charles C. Trench. Whether or not the pistol led to an increase in dueling is a moot point.

Reasons existed for some of these personal conflicts which were not resolved until the Civil War. Many citizens viewed a standing Army as a threat to the Republic and elected officials were therefore reluctant to allot funding for better pay and a larger force. Also the Army had no retirement program so many officers stayed on the payroll until they died. For instance, 4th Art. Col. John D. Walbach, commissioned in 1799, was on active duty when he died in 1857 at age 93. See Coffman, page 99. Not until 1861, with Civil War looming, did an act of Congress clear the way for younger officers by providing retirement for incapacitated officers or those with 40 years service. Therefore, prior to 1861 the only chance for promotion in the U.S. Army was the death or retirement of a superior officer. And, between 1815 and 1861, except for the Mexican War when thousands of short term volunteers swelled the ranks, the Army seldom reached its authorized strength. As Coffman notes on page 66, "In this small group where rank, pay, and routine were known to all, some men closely watched and interpreted to their own interests anything, no matter how trivial, that could affect their careers." These officers were ambitious men (not an extinct species) who regarded their peers as rivals in an unending competition for better positions and awards. A keenly honed sense of honor or self importance could trigger the demand for a duel on the basis of an imagined slight.

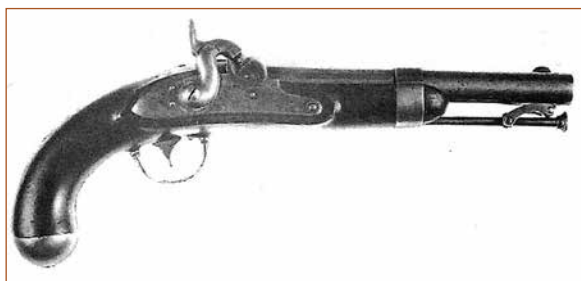


Model 1836, last U.S. issue flintlock pistol, many used in Mexican War.

Duelling In The United States Army, continued

Of course, the personality traits of these individuals could have caused trouble in any time or place, but circumstances in this period created an atmosphere conducive to fostering disputes. There existed at this time strong Civil Laws against dueling, especially in New England, but these laws were largely overlooked if certain formalities were observed which ensured a “fair fight.” A challenge, an acceptance, second’s choice of weapons, agreed upon time and place, etc., distinguished a duel from a random murder. The argument in favor of this position was that the law provided no protection from personal insult or injury to one’s personal or family reputation and therefore a gentleman had a duty to defend his honor. Particularly in the South, a duel was viewed as strictly a private affair and, as Graham often found, unless a death occurred it seldom received newspaper notice. I found a parallel to this in my research on dueling in the United States Army.

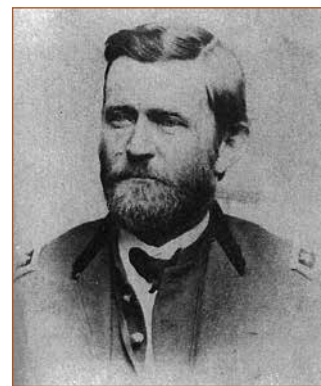
Specific information on encounters involving Army Officers was hard to come by, as Wm. O. Stevens describes in his *PISTOLS AT TEN PACES*, on page 51, “Pistols of the military and naval men banged away through sixty years, but no courts-martial were ever called on participants in a duel.” Which is exactly what



Model 1836 converted to percussion in 1850s.

I found. When a duel was fought nothing was said about it unless, of course, someone was killed, when family or other outsiders had to be notified. Francis B. Heitman’s two volume *HISTORICAL REGISTER and DICTIONARY of the UNITED STATES ARMY*, was published by the Government printing office, by order of Congress, in 1903. Vol. 1 contains the service records of over 9,000 officers commissioned between 1789 and 1903 and I’m not the only one who has read them all. The only duels recorded are those involving the 34 officers whose

death is laconically listed as ‘Killed in duel,’ and in only ten of these is the other officer (the killer) identified. Considering the many non-fatal duels fought by Army officers that we know of from other published sources, including memoirs, diaries, journals, etc., but are not found in these officer’s service records, we must assume these omissions to be intentional. Maybe this is an inhouse recognition that a duel on one’s record could be an impediment to promotion; not all high ranking officers favored the duel. In *PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF U. S. GRANT*, Webster Co., 1865, Grant voices his opinion at the subject in vol. 1, page 59, “I do not believe I would ever have the courage to fight a duel. If any man should wrong me to the extent of being willing to kill him, I would not be willing to give him the choice of weapons with which it should be done, and of the time, place, and distance separating us, when I executed him. If I should do another such a wrong as to justify him in killing me, I would make any reasonable atonement in my power if convinced of the wrong done. No doubt a majority of the duels fought have been for the want of moral courage on the part of the engaged to decline.”



Gen. U.S. Grant did not think he could ever fight a duel.



The end of an honorable affair.

Laxity in enforcing existing laws against dueling had led to its longevity in civil life as well as in the Army; tradition has power in thought as well as in action. And it was not statutes that brought about the end to dueling in America but changing public opinion. By the 1860s a duel in the North was treated as a criminal offense and a conviction could mean prison time. But in the South the notion of honor, however defined, was still causing duels between thin skinned slave owners, many of them leaders in their community. These people did not take kindly to criticism, nonetheless the death of a respected young man, often at the hands of a friend, was being seen by many as something less than an honorable affair. Army Officers were acutely aware of social attitudes, and duels in the military had become less frequent.

Duelling In The United States Army, continued

By 1843 General Winfield Scott was able to state in his annual report that he had not heard of a duel between officers in several years; Coffman, page 70. Military action, however, often results in disputes and the Mexican War proved no exception. We read in Heitman of fatal duels taking place not long after hostilities in the War had ceased. Listed chronologically these are: Capt. J.W. Collett, killed in duel, Jan. 21, 1848; Lt. Edw. McPherson, killed in duel, March 16, 1848; Capt. H.C. Pope, killed in duel, May, 1848. As usual Heitman does not identify the adversaries in those affairs, and it's hard to believe that there were no non-fatal (unreported) duels fought at that time. After this spate of formal dueling the Regular Army, shed of its volunteers, was ordered back to its widely scattered Frontier posts. Here their duties



Gen. Winfield Scott was no stranger to dueling.



Colt first model dragoon, in service late 1848, a heavy .44 revolver.

consisted primarily of guarding the overland trails and pacifying resentful Indians. When not on patrol, the major problem on some of the more isolated posts was boredom. No duels now, but we read of occasional altercations involving officers, whiskey, and Colt revolvers. Some perhaps more fortunate officers were kept busy with survey crews and road building, others with the troubles in Kansas/Missouri or the Mormons in Utah. But change was in store soon for everyone.

The Civil War brought most of the Regular Army (minus desertions to the Confederacy) back East where an expanding army promised rapid promotions. As might be expected, these circumstances led to disagreements and some challenges but few duels, two of which resulted in fatalities to Union Officers and are listed in Heitman. On Sept. 29, 1862, Major General William Nelson was killed in an affray by Brig. General Jefferson C. Davis. (Most writers call this "affray" a duel.) Davis was returned to duty and did well, making Bvt. Major General by War's end. On April 12, 1863 Lt. Col. Edgar Kimball was killed in a duel by Brig. General Michael Corcoran. Corcoran was returned to duty and killed accidentally Dec. 22, 1863. There were, incidentally, many more officers "killed accidentally" than were "killed in duel" among the over 9,000 plus officer's records in Heitman, and though these records are complete through 1903 no duel is mentioned after 1863, which perhaps indicates that Army protocol was finally being observed at all levels of authority. All of which, again, does not rule out the possibility of unreported duels in isolated areas.



Colt 1851 Navy .36 revolver, some of these were issued to U.S. Cavalry.



Colt 1860 Army .44, as issued throughout the Civil War.



Colt 1873 Army .45 helped turn the Missouri duel into a gunfight.

The reports of violence in the Post-War border states had nothing to do with dueling, and the lynchings and ambush killings were not the work of gentlemen, but some ex-officers remembered the rules. As Dick Steward writes in DUELS and the ROOTS of VIOLENCE in MISSOURI, U.MO 2000, ex-union Maj. H. Keith challenged ex-Confederate Capt. L.F. Van to a duel or an apology for some remark Van had made. Van accepted the challenge and, surprisingly, chose cavalry sabers for weapons. The duel took place near St. Louis on July 13, 1870, and both men had seconds. In this short but violent affair Major Keith suffered cuts on his head, but Capt. Van sustained a wound that put out his eye. See page 198. There is little evidence of rules of conduct in a few other encounters involving ex-officers which are described in Steward's

Duelling In The United States Army, continued

interesting book. And I disagree with the premise he puts into words on page 192, "In brief the Missouri Duel, despite the destruction wrought by the Civil War and reconstruction displayed remarkable resiliency. And it continued to prove resistant to social change well into the onset of modernity." I fail to see any remnant of the formal duel in a spontaneous gunfight, whether it takes place in Missouri or Minnesota. Perhaps some notions of honor and chivalry remained alive in parts of the South after the debacle of reconstruction, but the formal duel did not. I give the last word to an old South Carolina gentleman who regretfully wrote, "But now the silver-mounted smooth-bore dueling pistols have given way to revolvers, and quick snap shooting on the street has superseded the old fashioned ten paces." See page 21 in *RICE PLANTER and SPORTSMAN: RECOLLECTIONS* of J. MOTTE ALSTON, 1821 - 1907, S.C. press, 1953.

In this brief account of dueling in the American Army, little has been said about the firearms used in these personal conflicts. And that is because the contemporary sources, both civil and military, do not specifically identify them. Therefore the historical literature on the subject of dueling has relied on the generic term "pistol" also. This has been a large and contentious field among arms collectors; how does one properly identify a "Duelling" pistol? Fortunately, this article is concerned primarily with Army personnel and most of the illustrations are of issue weapons available and probably used at the time of the various encounters described in the text.

Sources not listed in the text:

Flayderman, Norman, *GUIDE to ANTIQUE AMERICAN FIREARMS*, 9th ed., 2007.

Knowles, Horace, ed., *GENTLEMEN, SCHOLARS, & SCOUNDRELS*, Harpers, 1959.

Reilly, Rob't. M., *UNITED STATES MILITARY FLINTLOCKS*, Mowbray Inc., 1997.

Wooster, Rob't, *AMERICAN MILITARY FRONTIERS, 1793 - 1900*, UN. New Mexico, 2009.



26th Annual

Heritage Arms Society's Antique Arms Collectors Show

Saturday, March 28, 2015 • 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Public Welcome — Admission \$5.00

Free Parking all day

Friday, March 27, 2015 • 12:00 - 6:00 PM
(members & exhibitors only)

This is Minnesota's longest-running show dedicated exclusively to antique sporting arms, accouterments, ammunition, edged weapons and militaria produced from pre-Colonial days through WW 2.

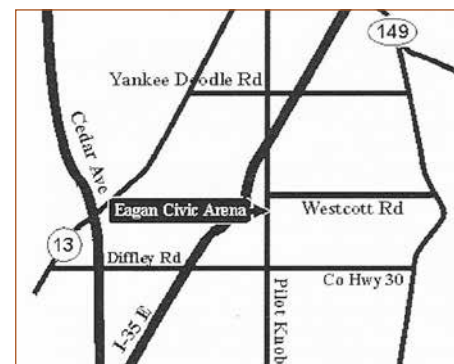
This vetted quality arms show is sponsored and attended by leading collectors who offer and display historical, antique & collectable arms & related items.

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For table reservations call evenings 651-260-4532.

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Gun Leather on the Frontier

By R. H. "Chip" Childs

The Mexican Loop Holster

With the emergence of copper and then brass cartridges becoming the norm in the late 1860s many frontiersmen were eager to get their hands on one of these new cartridge firing pistols or were having their percussion revolvers converted to take these new bullets.

Initially cartridge belts were simply the standard civilian or military pistol belt with bullet loops sewn on, but the California style holsters with their narrow, tight belt loops didn't adapt well to this innovation. As the popularity of carrying one's cartridges on one's belt spread it was just a matter of time before someone developed new belts that were usually wider and a bit bulkier than their predecessors being 2-1/2 to 3 inches in width. This in turn meant that a holster with a wider, fuller belt loop large enough for the bulky cartridge belt to pass through was needed.



Richards Conversion of the Colt 1860 Army Revolver using the 44 Colt center fire cartridges.

Enter the Mexican Loop Holster. Some historians believe that the earliest form of the Mexican Loop holster evolved from south of the border, hence the name Mexican Loop.

Others believe that it evolved from converting the military flap holster that was readily available at the time. I believe it was a combination of the two.

Many Civil war veterans, North and South, who headed West carried their side arm in the military holster issued to them during the conflict. And with the end of hostilities, the U.S. Government, hoping to recoup some of the millions spent to equip its soldiers, dumped tons of surplus military equipment on the civilian market. One such item being the flap pistol holster. A man could pick up one of these holsters very cheaply.

Some enterprising mustered out soldier realized that if he folded the flap back behind the holster it created a skirt that was also a fairly large loop through which a wide belt could pass through. Taking his knife or shears and culling two parallel slots upon it he could then force the pistol pouch through thus creating a holster that allowed easy access to the pistol as well as having a loop large enough to handle any of the bulky cartridge belts of the time. Many also cut the throat down some to expose the trigger which allowed for a faster draw.

This early style holster kept the pistol in its butt forward military configuration. Which might have been fine with some gun toters but it wasn't long before someone skilled with knife, needles and thread unstitched his holster and turned it inside out and restitched it thus making it into the more traditional strong side rig.

During the War the military's demand and consumption of pork made it increasingly harder for folks in the North and East to put it on their dinner plates. Beef became the new staple, but by 1865 it too was becoming scarce in those regions. Sirloin steaks were being sold in New York City for the exorbitantly high price of .35 cents a pound. The demand for beef was simply greater than the supply.

The high prices cattle were bringing in the North wasn't long in reaching the ears of many disenfranchised and destitute Texans. With the ranges of Southern Texas and the Rio Grande Valley almost awash in wild steers, cattle became big business. Many ex-Confederates decided to make their fortune working cattle and they knew that the folks with the most experience in that department were Mexican. Well, it wasn't long before vaqueros were brush popping and branding steers right along with their Gringo counterparts and its a sure bet they picked up on this new style of holster.

The Mexican Loop Holster, continued

In the three centuries since the Conquistadors had introduced leather working to the New World the Mexicans had developed leather crafting to an art form. Being both practical and artistic, they saw the converted military holsters as an object that they could make easily and artistically. Under their skilled hands they made the Mexican loop holster a practical and artistically pleasing piece of leather gear.

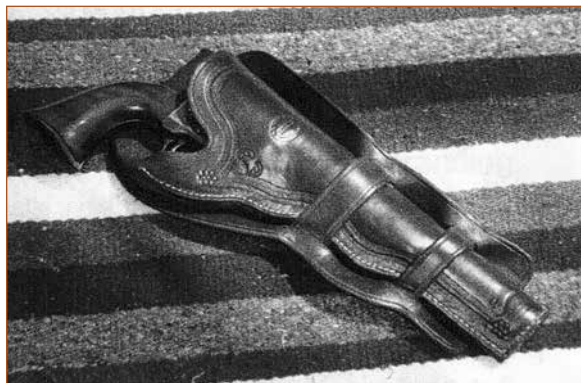
Early Mexican loop holsters had the distinctive close contours of the California holster with the rounded sewn toe. They also had the half skirt and single loop that was a common feature of their military predecessor. This could be flared at the base or rounded depending the whim of the maker. A simple rosette or floral design was either stamped or carved onto the upper portion of the pouch. During the late 1880s through the 1890s more Texas holsters began to be sewn through the toe rather than having the toe plug sewn in.

As the cattle trails were forced farther west from Abilene they also moved farther north. By the mid to late 1870s Texas drovers realized the vast prairies of Western Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana were ideal for raising cattle. Many of these Texans relocated to the virgin grasslands of these Northern plains bringing their families customs and gear with them.

On these northern plains the Texas Mexican loop holster would undergo further refinements. The California influence was still prevalent in the slim contours of the pouch and sewn toe plug, but the recurve of the pouch tended to be less severe and the skirts tended to be longer with two loops holding the pouch instead of just one.



Early Mexican Loop Holster.



Cheyenne style holster.

By the 1880s a distinct style known as the 'Cheyenne' had developed. This distinctive holster differed from its Southern counterpart in having a swell in the main stem between the loops. This kept the pouch from sliding up as the pistol was being drawn. This holster also incorporated a tear drop shaped toe plug to protect the barrel tip from snow and other debris which could plug it when the wearer sat down.

By the mid-1880s fully carved and stamped Cheyenne holsters were becoming the norm and worn from one end of the Northern plains to the other. Many of these holsters were true works of art and today are highly prized by collectors.

During the 1880s and into the 1890s shorter barreled pistols were becoming more popular and leather crafters began to produce shorter holsters to meet this need. This time frame also saw the introduction of nickel plated brass spots of various sizes and shapes as a decorative ornament being offered, either by the various saddle makers or through mail order catalogs.

The Mexican Loop remained the dominant holster well into the twentieth century. From the 1920s through the 1960s western moviegoers saw it on the hip of virtually every western actor, both hero and villain. Many becoming icons in their own right. It is the iconic leather symbol of the American West and on the hips of many of today's living historians and re-enactors it is still 'packing iron'.

Gun Leather on the Frontier

By R. H. "Chip" Childs

The California Slim Jim Holster

There are a number of tales as to how the California Slim Jim or The California Holster, as it was also called, came into being. Some down right colorful, but all accounts agree that it came about as a result of the California Gold Rush of 1849.

When gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in that auspicious year it wasn't long before the area was overrun by a human tidal wave of undreamed of proportions. The hills and streams became a sprawling savage arena of combat fueled by greed.

Many of the prospectors arrived already armed and carried their side arms in holsters manufactured back East. These pistol pouches were often built from light weight leather. They were usually structured to accept several styles of pistol and well-nigh always had a flap.



California Slim Jim Holster.

So when life or death for a 49er depended on how fast he could fill his hand, the type of holster in which he carried his pistol was of considerable importance. Obviously, he didn't want to waste time fiddling with the flap even though it kept the caps and powder dry and kept the sidearm in the holster itself. The light weight leather didn't stand up very well to the rigors of daily life in the mining camps and wore out fairly quickly and the soft leather often clung to the weapon making it difficult to pull quickly.



California Slim Jim Holster.

The holster developed by the California leathersmiths to solve this dilemma was just what these folks needed. The leather used was of medium weight, usually eight or nine oz. This heavier, thicker leather stood up much better to the wear and abuse encountered in the camps and allowed the pistol to slide free when being pulled.

Although some of the early California holsters were made with a flap in the military style, they were few and far between.

This new flap-less holster was uniquely original. To retain the weapon in the pouch, the holster was closely contoured to the silhouette of a specific model and barrel length. If the purchaser owned a 1858 Remington with a barrel length of 8 inches or the much more common Colt 1851 Navy with a barrel length of 7 1/2 inches, he bought a holster for that specific weapon. It fit snug.

To keep the caps and powder dry, a major concern before the advent of the totally enclosed, cartridge, the holster extended up above the cylinder and cap nipples. While the throat was cut to allow quick and free access to the butt of the pistol.

Next, this cut or curve, as most folks came to call it then, took on a recurve that extended the edge of the pouch down to allow instant access to the trigger. The finished contours looked very much like the letter S in a horizontal position. Most California Slim Jim holsters had this S cut on the face and back of the pouch. In many cases the top of this S cut continued down a bit allowing access to the hammer. If necessary the pistol could be cocked while still in the pouch.

Many of these early California holsters were decorated with an incised pattern worked by very skilled craftsman. These decorative themes ranged from depictions of a specific person, animal, to long flowing floral motifs and patriotic themes. By the 1860s the floral pattern became the norm with the makers using metal

The California Slim Jim Holster, continued

stamps and rollers to decorate the borders and produce the rosettes that had become popular with the folks. It was quick, easy and allowed the makers to keep the price down as well as meet the demand for this new pistol rig.

The Slim Jim was the dominant civilian holster of the West well into the 1870s. Although its popularity continued till the end of the 19th Century changes were in the wind. The introduction of the brass cartridge and its gradual but widespread use dictated a change in the way side arms would be carried.

As brassed cased ammunition replaced the cap and ball, the cartridge belt became the universal method of carrying this new type of ammunition. This new belt was practical, allowing easy access to the cartridges while protecting them from the elements. It also allowed one to carry a large number of cartridges as bullet loops could be stitched along the entire length of the belt. However the new ammunition was also heavier and to ease the stress on the leather as well as the wearer the belts became wider. With the slim contours of the California the width of the belt loop was also limited and thus a new style of holster, better suited to the wider, bulkier belt was needed. And one would soon appear.



California Slim Jim Holster.

Just as the demands of the sprawling gold fields and the towns that sprang up to service them brought about the birth of a new holster and brought it to prominence, it also brought about its demise. The Slim Jim just wasn't suited for the new, wider cartridge belts.

Worn on the hips of such distinguished personages as Wild Bill Hickok, John Wesley Hardin, Billy Dixon and the countless others, good and bad, the California Slim Jim was at the forefront of the glory days of the Old West.

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Support The MWCA!

Visit www.mwca.org for show, membership and other important info.



We need articles for these MWCA Publications.

We had 18 displays at the last Trophy Show. How about those of you that displayed, and others, sharing some of your knowledge about your personnel collections? That was the original intent of the MWCA founders. Don't worry about correct spelling and grammar as we have people to correct the articles submitted. If we didn't you would not be able to read some of the stuff I put together. Contact me, Dale Peterson, at 763-753-1663 or any of the MWCA board members.

Just in case you find any mistakes in this MWCA publication, please remember that they were put there for a purpose. We try to offer something for everyone. Some people are always looking for mistakes and we didn't want to disappoint you!

Guess the Gun Explained

By Dale H Peterson

I guess I out guessed myself on the last *Guess the Gun*. I thought I had reference material on this little “Suicide Special” but I was “WRONG.” I considered this revolver too well made to be classified as a Suicide Special, which was a term used for many cheap revolvers made in the 1870s.

Most Suicide Specials were small pocket revolvers ranging in calibers from the 22 through 41, rim fire and center fire. Generally, they had a “Birds Head” grip, were single action, solid frame and a spur trigger. They had all sorts of names to make them sound more dangerous than they were, such as AMERICAN BOY, BRUTUS, DEAD SHOT, EARTHQUAKE, HERO, SWAMP ANGEL, TRAMP TERROR and the list goes on. As stated in Flayderman’s Guide, Donald Webster in his pioneer work, *Suicide Specials*, quite succinctly sums it up: “These arms are unique in that they have almost no historical significance!”

I believe this particular revolver was made by Otis A. Smith Co., Rockfall, Connecticut; circa 1870 - 1890. I could find no direct connection of this revolver to Smith but as stated in the Flayderman’s Guide he manufactured and marketed a variety under various names.



Patent Date

This piece is a better grade than the average Suicide Special because of the inscription on the top of the frame, “Smith Patent April 15, 1873.” He may have taken a little more pride in this revolver than the average because of the fancy engraving, Rose wood grips and a “Star Burst” engraved on the back strap which was often thought of as the trade mark of the engraver “L. D. Nimschke.” Other interesting aspects of the engraving are the oval panel with the bearded Civil War soldier and on the left side of the frame there is an arrow which may have some personal significance. It almost looks like a presentation piece to a friend or some individual of notoriety.

Charter Member of the MWCA Stan Nelson says this was definitely made by Otis A. Smith Co. He noted also that they made a large frame single action revolver in the combination 44 Rimfire and 44 Centerfire caliber that sold under the trade name of United States Arms Co. See Flayderman’s Guide under “Cartridge Handguns” United States Arms Co.



Star Burst



Engraved Oval Panel

NOTE: It was suggested by a MWCA Board Member that I try to select something a little more modern to be used in this column ... so I guess that is the course I will follow in a future bulletin.

Reference: Flayderman’s Guide to Antique American Firearms 8th Edition.



Arrow on the frame



“Guess the Gun,” January 2014 MWCA News.

MWCA Contributes



Thank You **for your support of the Minnesota Weapons Collectors Association!** ***MWCA Contributed*** ***\$27,000*** during 2014.

We are pleased to have contributed to a wide variety of local youth-oriented firearms safety and skill development organizations and the National Rifle Association:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • National Rifle Association Museum Fund | • Key Cities Conservation Club Youth Program |
| • National Rifle Association Foundation | • South Metro Friends of NRA |
| • American Legion Richfield Post 435 Gun Club | • Cretin-Derham Hall High School Clay Target League |
| • Minnesota Volunteer Safety Instructors Assn. | • Northwestern Youth Gun Club - Duluth |
| • Red Arrow Camp Youth Shooting Program | • Andover High School Trap and Skeet Team |
| • Minnetonka Game and Fish Club | • Coon Rapids High School Trap Team |
| • Anoka High School Clay Target Club | • Richfield High School/Holy Angels Trap Shooting Program |
| • Minnesota State High School Clay Target League | • Special Youth Challenge, Dodge Center MN |
| • Buffalo Minnesota Youth Shooting Sports | • Boy Scouts Venture Group |
| • Owatonna Gun Club Youth Programs | • Wishes and More - Special hunt for a young lady |
| • Scott County Youth Firearms Safety | • In memory of our members who have passed in 2014, memorials in their honor to the NRA |
| • Northern Star Council, Boy Scouts of America | |

For 2015: All requests for contributions must be submitted in writing to the MWCA Board of Directors by October 1, 2015 to be considered in the MWCA 2015 budget. **In addition,** you must agree to have a representative attend the December 2015 show to receive that contribution.

MWCA Contributes, continued

MWCA Contribution Recipients



Recipients of MWCA contributions in 2014 were invited to our December show to receive their checks and to be recognized for their work. Several are pictured here.



“Women On Target”

MWCA’s contribution to the Minnetonka Game & Fish Club helps ladies attending the annual “Women on Target” get acquainted with a variety of firearms.



Minnesota Military Museum



Steve Osman, MWCA member, dressed as a Civil War cavalry soldier, shows “History After Hours” visitors some of the weapons and accoutrements used by cavalry troops of that era.

Go to www.mnmilitarymuseum.org for more information. Located at Camp Ripley, 15000 Highway 115, Little Falls, MN 56345

Still Shooting!



MWCA member Len Bjerke before his televised “quick draw” demonstration at the April 1955 show, pictured in the MWCA News September 1955 issue.



Len attending the October 2014 Trophy Show at the MN State Fair Coliseum.

Meet Your 2015 Board Of Directors

Larry Rogers is the new President, Mark Reese is Vice President, Brian VanKleek is Secretary and Alvin Olson is Treasurer. If you have any question and/or suggestion about MWCA policies, show rules etc., they will be glad to answer them.



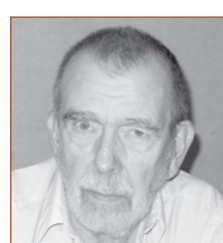
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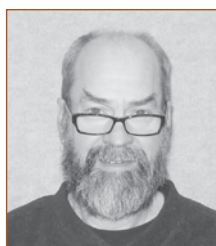
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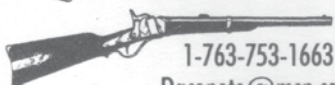
2014 Minnesota Carry Day and Safety Education Expo

To promote the MWCA, Larry Rogers manned our table at the October 18th St. Paul Harley-Davidson Minnesota Carry Day and Safety Education Expo.

A lot of information, membership applications and MWCA show schedules were given to interested attendees.

Wanted: Old Guns, Ammo, Military Items, Knives,
Civil War Items, Photographs, and General Antiques.

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In Memoriam



Wilbur (Bill) Nemitz

Bill started his association with the MWCA in the late 1950s and served as President of the organization in the 1978. A resident of Nisswa MN, he was a true collector of edged weapons and, as he stated in an article he wrote for the 30th Anniversary MWCA Bulletin, "I have always had an affection for the cold steel." Theater knives were one of his favorites; these were civilian-made knives that were given to the GIs of World War II. Bill was a grand gentleman and was always ready to share his knowledge of edged weapons. He will be missed by his many friends and collectors.

Bob Michels

Bob was a MWCA member and attended all MWCA shows. He loved life and loved helping all others enjoy life too.



David Licht

David served on the MWCA Board of Directors and was President in 1993. He was a Colt collector among other interests.



Jan Menth

Always smiling, Jan attended all MWCA shows with her husband Ken.

Fred Walker

Fred was a MWCA member a frequent exhibitor at shows.

Ed Garriss

Ed was a member of the MWCA and a exhibitor at the Rochester MN shows.

Consider becoming a member of the Minnesota Weapons Collectors Association!

- **Responsible firearms ownership.**
- **The enjoyment of collecting.**
- **Firearms safety.**
- **Hunting and shooting sports.**

Without involvement of our current members and the encouragement of new members of all ages to join the MWCA, the enjoyment of firearms and interest in ownership that brings you to our shows will not continue to grow.

Help us to promote safe and rewarding firearms use and to contribute funds to other organizations that share and teach the same values.

As you can see from reading this publication, there are many reasons to become a MWCA member.

Visit our membership table at a show for more information about the benefits of joining the MWCA!

MWCA is the largest and oldest weapons collectors group in the state of Minnesota.