



COLORADO GUN COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

From the President:

I have tried to make the best of this summer as I hope you have. I attended the CGCA show and the WACA show this summer. I also visited the special museums for the 250th Anniversary of our country at the Reagan Library as well as the Cody Firearms museum. I also visited the private collections of two advanced collectors. They had some fantastic examples in their collections.

One Collection had beautiful muzzle-loading rifles at one end of the gun room, progressing through beautiful, cased sets of engraved cap and ball pistols, Henry Derringer pistols, fine General officers' swords and other civil war arms. Even the entire ceiling was put to good use in displaying the collection. There were display cases packed with firearms and artifacts with a good story for many of them. There were Colts and Winchesters, Springfields and Sharps. It seemed like there was at least one example of the major arms from the last 175 years. Merwin and Hulbert, check. Trantor and Star revolvers, check. All of this flowed to the other end of the room through uniforms from the 19th and 20th century with many examples of military firearms. Did I mention the gatling gun and 3" rifled cannon from Gettysburg, on their carriages?

This collector obviously grew up in the hey day of collecting and had the foresight to collect the stories and provenance along with the artifacts. In this day and age, I worry about what will happen to collections like this with all of the information that these collectors possess. Obviously, some collectors will write books and articles, but some information will be lost. I wish these collections could be put into museums, but that just isn't feasible. The good news is that there are a number of good auction companies that write good descriptions, and these items will someday be entering the market for us to acquire! We must pass the baton!

It is up to us to continue the advance of knowledge and promote the study and care of these artifacts from the past. We need to defend the importance of our hobby to the younger generation. Not everyone will care but some will, as history has demonstrated, and you and I attest to. Share your interest and knowledge with others when you get the chance.

This is the 250th anniversary year of the founding of this great nation, and the most important experiment in governance the world has ever seen. The more I study and learn about the people that founded this country, the more I am impressed with how brilliant they were. They even struggled with the concept of slavery when they wrote the Constitution, but in order to have it ratified by all of the colonies, they had to leave the issue of slavery for another day. One thing that they did do, without argument, was to include the Second Amendment.

They had suffered under kings and tyranny, and they proposed that if the common people were guaranteed the right to own firearms for their personal defense, tyranny would be kept at bay. As you all know, the Second Amendment states "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed. They tried to be as crystal clear as they could be as evidenced by other writings at the time, such as in the Federalist Papers, by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay.

On June 14, 1788, during the Virginia Ratification Convention, George Mason said "To disarm the people is the best and most effectual way to enslave them...". Benjamin Franklin once said, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither Liberty nor safety." When I see all of the misguided gun control legislation being proposed that quote always comes to mind.

In the Book 'On Crimes and Punishments' by Cesare di Beccaria published in 1764, he says "The laws that forbid the carrying of arms...disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. Can it be supposed that those who have the courage to violate the most sacred laws of humanity, the most important of the code, will respect the less important and arbitrary ones, which can be violated with ease and impunity, and which if strictly obeyed would put an end to personal liberty..."

What these men said 250 years ago, are as true today as ever! In this anniversary of our country, let us continue the fight for the 2nd Amendment that protects all of the other Amendments. Let us all endeavor to educate the populace when they are ignorant.

Rick Wilson

Our next meeting will be August 18, 2026, at the American Legion Post 1; 7:00 PM.
Our program will be "Luger Collecting 101." By Aarron Davis.



Please visit our website at www.CGCA.com for club news and updates.

New pictures are on our website.

If you have questions, please contact:

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Over the Top: Rifles of the Great War

By Tyler Brownell

The First World War, also known as the Great War and the War to End All Wars, is remembered for many new advancements in military technology. Machine guns, barbed wire, flamethrowers, grenades, poison gas, long-range artillery, tanks, aircraft, and submarines all made their first widespread appearances in this conflict, contributing to a death toll of approximately 20 million worldwide and marking the first time in history in which weapons of war caused more deaths than disease. Yet for all of the new advancements, the most basic implement of the conflict remained the humble infantryman's rifle.

Beginning in the 1880s, advancements in small arms technology sparked an arms race around the globe as the era of black powder finally gave way to the revolution of smokeless ammunition. The leader of this revolution was France, who in 1886 adopted the world's first mass-produced bolt action rifle with a smokeless cartridge, the Fusil Mle 1886/M93, known as the "Lebel" after its designer. Chambered in 8mm, the rifle could hold eight cartridges in a shotgun-like tube magazine under the barrel and a ninth in the "elevator". With over three million produced, the Lebel was the primary service rifle of the French army not only throughout the First World War, but well into the Second World War as well, with some remaining in service around the world long after. Thousands were also sold and gifted to Serbia and Romania during the war, helping bolster their ranks in the fight against the Central Powers.

Also commonly seen in French service during the war was the Berthier family of carbines and rifles. Originally designed as cavalry carbines, a lengthened version was adopted in 1907 by French African troops from Senegal. When a lack of available Lebel rifles plagued the French army, production was stepped up on a modified version of the Berthier, dubbed the Mle. 1907/15, which was much simpler and cheaper to produce. The rifle used the same ammunition as the Lebel, albeit loaded via a three-shot en-bloc clip. This was extended in 1916 to five shots thanks to a magazine extension fitted under the rifle. Over two million were produced, being the second most used rifle in French service and also seeing action with the Italian, Greek, Serbian, and Romanian armies, as well as with African American units like the famous Harlem Hellfighters.

After France, Germany was next to enter the arms race with the help of the revered Mauser brothers. In 1888, a rifle developed by the German Army Rifle Testing Commission was adopted as the Gewehr 88, a five-shot en-bloc loaded rifle with an 8mm rimless cartridge. This was itself promptly supplanted by the Gewehr 98, developed a decade later, which incorporated a number of modernizations to the bolt, action, and barrel. Both designs were updated in 1903 to fire a new 7.92x57mm spitzer round, and virtually all were rechambered over the subsequent years. Although adopted to replace the Gewehr 88, the Gewehr 98 did not become the most numerous German rifle until 1915 when the former began to be pushed to reserve units. Many also were sent to German allies, especially the Ottoman Empire, who used as many as a quarter million Gewehr 88s during the war. Gewehr 98s likewise saw service with the Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Ottoman armies throughout the war and long after as well.

Germany's closest ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was next to join the growing arms race with a design by Ferdinand Ritter von Mannlicher. Developed from a model first introduced in 1886, Mannlicher's rifle was the first straight-pull rifle adopted by any country, and also featured the world's first en-bloc loading system. The culmination of the design was the M1895, chambered in 8x50mm. Due to its unique action, the Austrians nicknamed the rifle "Ruck-zuck", essentially translating to "Back-and-forth". With over 3.5 million built, it became the primary service weapon of the Austro-Hungarian army, as well as one of the most prominent weapons of the allied Bulgarian army.

Across Austria's most contentious frontier, in Italy, designer Salvatore Carcano created the Fucile Modello 1891, commonly known as the "Carcano" in his honor. Using the en-bloc action of the Mannlicher, this was very similar to the Austro-Hungarian rifle, though it used a traditional bolt action and was chambered for six smaller 6.5x52mm rounds. When Italy joined the war in 1915, it sparked one of the most inhospitable fronts of any war in history, where much of the fighting occurred in the rocky passes and frozen mountaintops of the Alps. Under these conditions, where soldiers had to scale sheer cliff faces just to reach the frontline, carbines became highly sought-after weapons by mountain troops on both sides. The Mannlicher M1895 was adapted into two shortened versions, the "Stutzen" and the cavalry carbine. The Carcano likewise had two shortened variants, the "carbine for special troops" and the cavalry carbine. All four variants saw extensive use in the Alps alongside their rifle counterparts, with men on both sides frequently making use of captured examples where possible.

The British Empire entered the war with its iconic Lee-Enfield rifle, specifically the Short Magazine Lee Enfield Mk.III*. The sixth iteration of the rifle, the Mk.III* was a simplified version of the recognizable design which featured a detachable ten-round magazine for its .303 cartridge. To make it easier to produce under wartime conditions, the Mk.III* modification eliminated the volley sights and windage adjustment of the original model, unnecessary parts for trench warfare. Used by every member of the British Commonwealth and Empire during the war, it was one of the most widespread rifles to see service. Another British rifle used frequently was the Pattern 1914 Enfield which, although not as well received in Britain, found a new lease on life in the United States as the M1917 Enfield. Rechambered to .30-06, this became the most numerous service weapon for the US Army, followed closely by the iconic domestic M1903 rifle, designed by Springfield. Together, these two rifles equipped an American army which grew from under a million men in 1916 to over 6 million strong by 1918.

In Russia, after getting a late start to the game, a competition was held for a new service rifle to arm their forces. A contest between Sergei Ivanovich Mosin and Leon Nagant, this resulted in a compromise which became known as the 3-line Infantry Rifle M1891. A patent dispute subsequently sent Nagant home to his native Belgium temporarily, but while there he went to work marketing the design as the Mosin-Nagant, ensuring his name remained attached to the rifle which in fact bore comparatively few of his own designs. It goes without saying that this would ultimately become the most produced bolt action rifle in history, with its later iterations continuing in service in places even to this day.

There were, of course, other designs in use during the war, especially by the other, less frequently discussed, belligerents. These include numerous Mauser derivatives in use with Portugal, Belgium, Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, the Model 30 and Model 38 Infantry Rifle (often called "Type 30" and "Type 38") of the Japanese Empire, used by Japan, Russia, and even Britain, and the highly collectible Mannlicher Schoenauer, the Austrian-designed rifle with a very unique rotary magazine which was the main service weapon of Greece during the war.

Often overshadowed by its larger, bloodier, and more famous sequel, the First World War was a pivotal moment in world history. For all of its famous, or perhaps infamous, developments which have come to define the conflict though, for tens of millions of men and women in the trenches around the world it was the simple rifle which remained the most important piece of equipment. This fact, common to all countries during the war from the trenches of France to the deserts of Mesopotamia, is what sets these pieces of history apart for any collector willing to see them.



