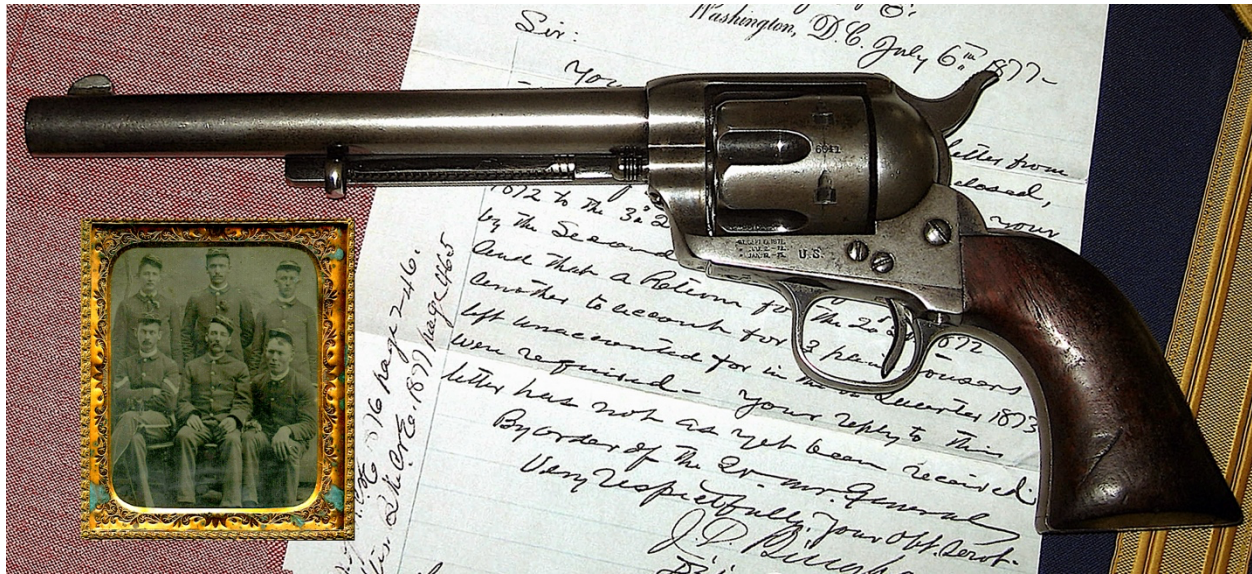


COLT "BUY-BACK" U.S. CAVALRY REVOLVER

Serial Number 96041

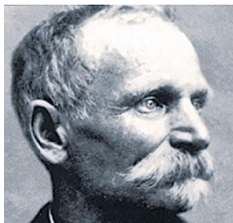


Colt firearms expert John Kopec examined this Colt Single Action Army (SAA) cavalry revolver on June 25, 2019. He certified its legitimacy and awarded it his Silver Seal Letter of Authenticity; meaning he considered it *"an extra-nice example of a Colt SAA revolver, worthy of any collection."*

The Colt facility in Hartford, Connecticut, manufactured this cavalry revolver in 1883, while under contract with the federal government. This revolver was inspected by Ordnance Department inspector Captain John E. Greer and sub-inspector David F. Clark (DFC). Their job was to examine every component to ensure they met strict U.S. Government production and functionality standards. Clark's initials appear on the gun's frame, barrel, and cylinder.



Colt Assembly Line



*Charles E. Bolls
"Black Bart"*

Before we discuss the revolver's history, let's look at some of the things that happened in America during 1883: 1) Notorious bandit "Black Bart" conducted his last stagecoach robbery. 2) Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show debuted in Omaha, Nebraska. 3) The Brooklyn Bridge in NY City was opened to horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians. 4) Congress approved the Navy's request to build warships made of steel. 5) Thomas Edison built the first municipal electric lighting system utilizing overhead wires.



Members of the state militia.

Colt delivered this revolver to the U.S. Government on August 10, 1883. Fifteen days later, the Ordnance Department shipped it to West Virginia for use by their state militia. According to the “*Colt Peacemaker Collector Handbook & Guide*” by Keith Cockran, it was one of only 44 such revolvers supplied to West Virginia by the federal government between 1875 and 1889.

The Militia Act of 1808 authorized the federal government to send arms and equipment to the states to help them maintain their militia units. The federal government considered this a loan, not a permanent transfer of ownership.

In 1887, Congress amended the Act after the Commonwealth of Virginia deviated from the law’s intended purpose by selling 2,307 recently issued cavalry revolvers on the commercial market. With this change, states were required to return surplus arms and equipment to the U.S. Government.



It appears the West Virginia Militia rarely used this revolver. Most of the time, it probably remained in storage. At the end of 1887, state officials declared it “surplus” and took steps to sell it back to Colt. This transaction was completed on December 28, 1887. The sale appears to have violated the amended Militia Act. One must also consider that the Indian Wars were still ongoing in 1887; and it’s reasonable to assume the Ordnance Department wanted it back so it could be reissued to an Army Regiment, or to another state militia.

We don’t know how much Colt paid West Virginia to “buy-back” this cavalry revolver. The government paid Colt \$12.50 for it when it was made in 1883. Colt probably paid West Virginia quite a bit less because it was now a used gun. In 1887, a new civilian model Colt SAA revolver cost \$20. This was about two thirds of what the average person earned during an entire

month. “Buy-Back” revolvers were a profitable business for Colt and other firearm merchants. They were able to acquire nearly new military handguns at a decent price and then sell them on the commercial market for a healthy profit.

Colt and other firearm outlets often nickel-plated “buy-back” revolvers prior to resale. In some cases, they also removed the “U.S.” acceptance mark on the frames. These measures were meant to distinguish these revolvers from government-owned firearms. Fortunately, this revolver received neither treatment. The Colt plant did stamp “45 CAL” on the side of the trigger guard, which was a normal practice for guns sold on the commercial market.

On December 28, 1887, Colt shipped #96041 to Liddle & Kaeding, 538 Washington Street, San Francisco, California. At the time, Liddle & Kaeding’s “Sportsmen’s Emporium” was the largest retail firearms outlet in San Francisco.

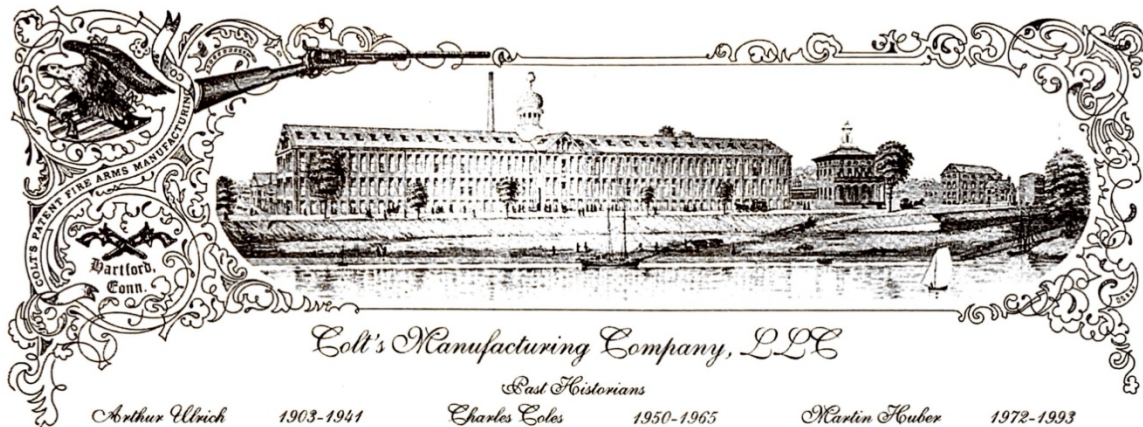


Period advertisement for the Sportsmen's Emporium.

We don’t know who purchased this revolver from Liddle & Kaeding. The company’s sales records no longer exist. We suspect there were many people who owned this gun during the past 135 years. Fortunately, they made few changes to it. At some point, someone soldered a small brass insert to the top of the front sight and widened the rear sight. Other than that, cavalry revolver #96041 remains in its original configuration.

Rusty Edwards

Colt Collector & Historian



Arthur Ulrich	1903-1941	Charles Colos	1950-1965	Martin Huber	1972-1993
Harold Hart	1942-1945	Ben Wagner	1957-1972	Kathleen Hoyt	1988-2009

September 4, 2018

Dear Colt Collector:

Colt, by the means of this letter, is proud to authenticate the manufacture of the Colt firearm with the following serial number:

COLT SINGLE ACTION ARMY REVOLVER

Serial Number:	96041
Caliber:	.45/c
Barrel Length:	Not Listed
Finish:	Blue
Type of Stocks:	Not Listed
Sold To:	United States Government
Delivered To:	U.S. Government Inspector
Address:	located at the Colt plant
Date of Shipment:	August 10, 1883
Number of Same Type	
Guns in Shipment:	150

Remarks: As noted above, the records do not provide information with regard to the barrel length of subject revolver or the type of stocks. However, this is usually an indication of a 7 1/2" barrel length and walnut stocks as these were considered standard issue for that time period.

The records also contain a second listing for this serial number that indicates it was a .45 caliber with a 7 1/2" barrel and a blue finish. The stocks were not listed. This revolver was included in a shipment of 3 guns to Liddle & Kaeding in San Francisco, California on December 28, 1887.

We trust you will find the historical information, retrieved from the original Colt shipping records, to be of interest.

Sincerely,

Beverly Jean Haynes
Beverly Jean Haynes
Historian

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Office of the Historian, Colt Archive Properties LLC P.O. Box 1868, Hartford, CT 06144

