

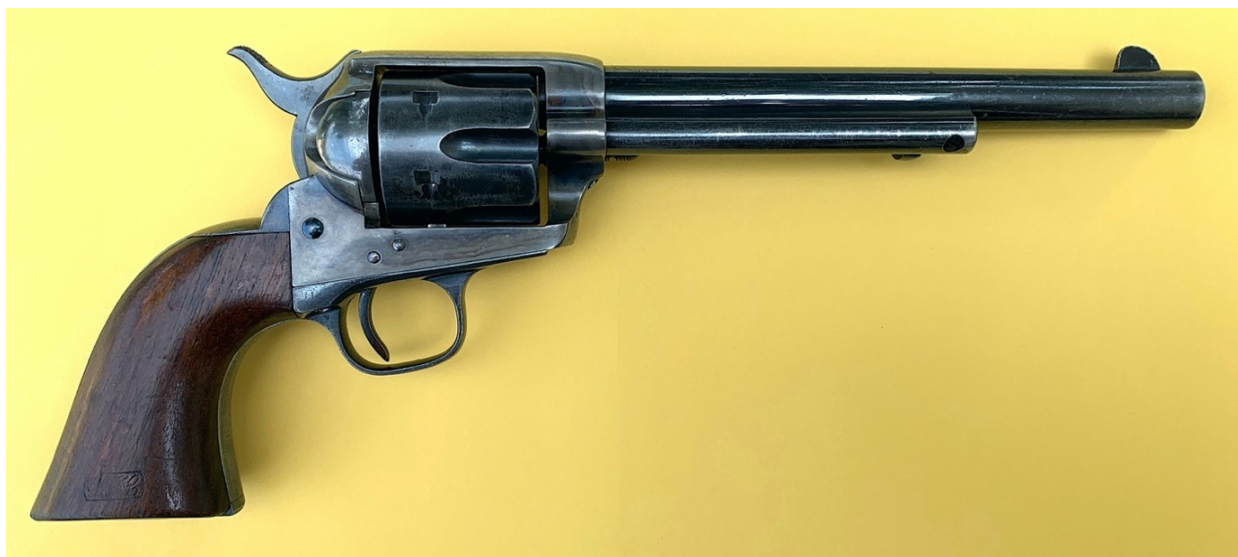
Colt Single Action Army Cavalry Revolver

Serial Number 115394

By Rusty Edwards



Colt delivered this Single Action Army Cavalry revolver, serial number 115394, to the U.S. Government on September 30, 1885. It was inspected by Ordnance Department representative Captain Frank Heath, and sub-inspected by David F. Clark. Heath's cartouche is on the lower left grip panel, while Clark's cartouche can be seen on the lower right grip panel. Clark's initials "D.F.C." can also be found stamped on the frame, barrel, cylinder, and bottom of the right grip panel.



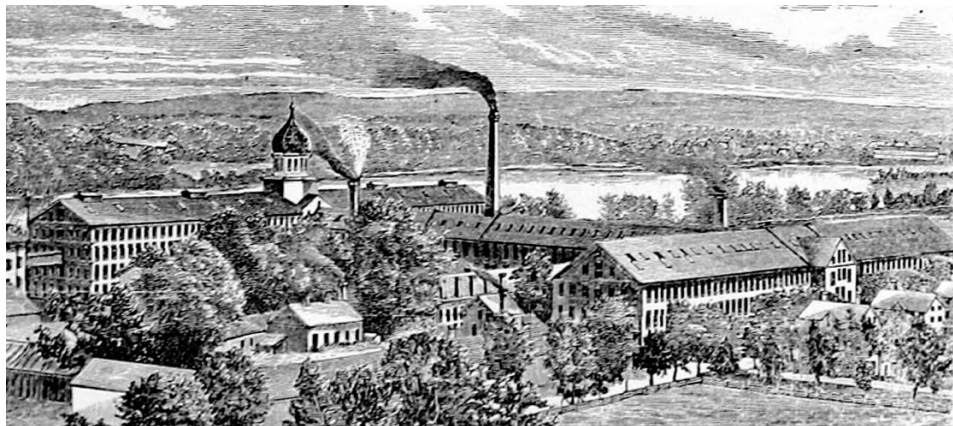
This fine handgun is cited on page 79 of the book "Colt Cavalry & Artillery Revolvers...a Continuing Study" by Kopec & Fenn. It's in a group 126 cavalry revolvers inspected by Frank Heath. The authors noted that most of these guns have never been located.

John Kopec, author and respected expert on Colt cavalry revolvers, said there is no way to know which military unit used this revolver during the Indian Wars. He noted, however, that two other cavalry revolvers within the same serial number range, #115112 and #115572, belonged to the 2nd U.S. Cavalry and 8th U.S. Cavalry, respectively.



U.S. cavalry officers in 1890.

In 1893, the U.S. Ordnance Department recalled most cavalry revolvers issued to the Regular Army and placed them in storage at the Springfield Armory. Two years later, cavalry revolver #115394 and 1,196 others were sent to Colt for refurbishment. During this process, each firearm was thoroughly inspected, worn parts were replaced, exteriors were redone with Colt's commercial charcoal-blue finish, and new case-colors were applied to the frames.



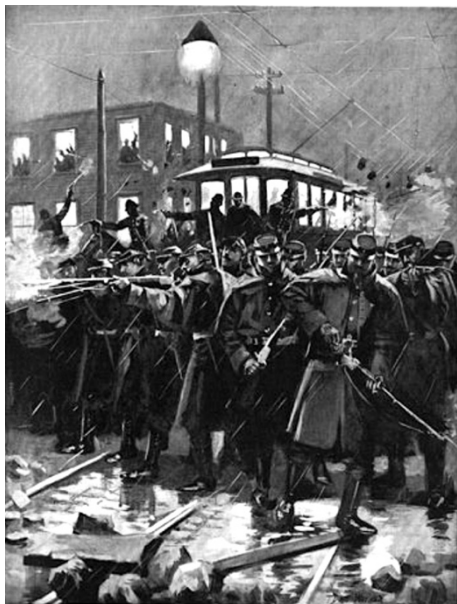
Colt factory during the late 1890s.

The first 800 of these overhauled Cavalry revolvers were earmarked for the NY State Militia. This gun was shipped to this military unit on October 18, 1895. Unit armorers subsequently stamped "C 124" on the butt strap. This shows it was assigned to slot #124 of the Troop C, NY State Militia, handgun storage rack.



NY State Militia, circa 1895.

We weren't at war, so why did the militia need Colt SAA Cavalry revolvers? During this period, the NY State Militia was responsible for defending state property and critical infrastructure during labor strikes and civil unrest. This was a turbulent time. An example is the "Great Trolley Car Strike of 1895." The *Historic Greenpoint Internet Blog* provides this account of the militia's role during this violent event.



Militiamen confront an angry crowd.

"On the first day of the strike, a few thousand edgy militiamen were deployed on the Brooklyn streets to defend the train depots and protect the few trolleys still operating. The militia was able to control the strikers and their sympathizers without the use of force, though tensions remained high. For instance, on the first day the militiamen were stationed in the city, a large crowd had assembled in East New York. They spent the day cutting trolley wires, obstructing tracks, and even bribed a few of the new motormen to leave their posts and relinquish their cars to the mob. The police were once again unable to manage any semblance of order, and the militia had to be sent to the nearby train depot. The crowds mocked the troops, calling them as "scabs" and "toy soldiers." At some point, a man tried to snatch a rifle from one of the militiamen, and the colonel in charge, fearing for the safety of his men, gave the order to charge the crowd with their bayonets drawn.

It was amazing that there was not more bloodshed. A painter on his way home from work was bayoneted, but there was no further bloodshed. Word of the bayonetting soon spread, and a crowd at the East New York depot swelled to 2,000 people. The same scene played out again, with the crowd arguing with the militia, and reports of someone attempting to disarm one of the

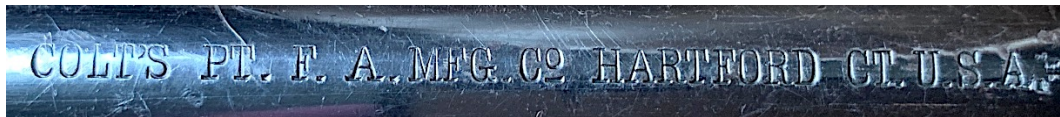
militiamen. The troops charged again, this time bayonetting two more men, before the crowd finally dispersed. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported the following day, 'The scenes in East New York after nightfall were more turbulent than ever known in the history of the city.'"

The Ordnance Department issued NY State newer double-action revolvers after the Spanish-American War. On November 9, 1903, the state returned this gun to the Springfield Arsenal. A few months later, the U.S. Government designated these older handguns as "surplus" and sold them to civilian arms dealers, like Francis Bannerman. At this point, they were advertised in mail-order catalogs and sold to people across the country.



Bannerman Catalog Advertisement

Close-up Images of #115394



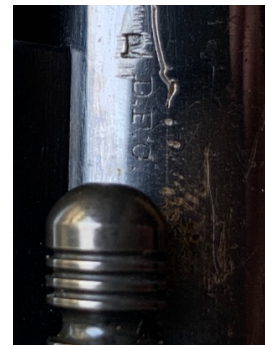
Colt Barrel Address



Serial Numbers on Frame & Trigger Guard



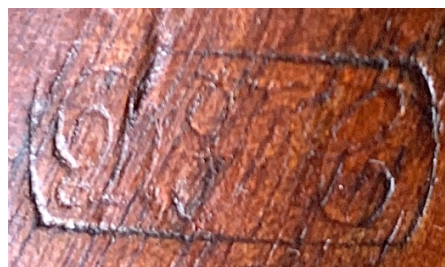
U.S. Acceptance Mark & Frame Case Colors



Barrel Proof & Sub-Inspector Marks



Frank Heath 1885 Cartouche, Left Grip



David F. Clark Cartouche, Right Grip



Butt Strap with Rack Number

Most Colt cavalry revolvers from this period are heavily worn due to prolonged service and minimal maintenance. Today, it's extremely rare to find a 138-year-old Colt SAA revolver in such condition! I've enjoyed telling you about this exceptional firearm and sharing its history. Here's a letter from the Colt Historian that substantiates much of the information in this article.



Colt archives letter regarding this revolver.