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The Remington Model 710 is outfitted with a 3-9x Bushnell Banner scope. The Savage package Model 16 rifle features the patented AccuTrigger and Simmons 3-9x 40mm scope. Photo by Stan Trzoniec.

Winchester
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I was officially introduced to the Winchester Model 92 in the fall of 1958. I’d gone over to the French Creek Ranch to help with the chores and ran into Clyde Gardner, the hired hand, just at daybreak as he walked up the gravel road toward his home a couple hundred yards up the creek from the main ranch house. We were going over the list of chores when Clyde abruptly cut the conversation off, saying he “had to go kill a deer.”

Clyde went through the gate, and I went out to the barn to turn the horses out. I was cleaning stalls when I heard a shot from the apple orchard up-stream from Clyde’s place. I went out to the water trough in the main corral and scaled the fence. Looking into the long, dark shadows in the creek bottom, I could see Clyde dragging a deer out of the orchard.

I jumped into the jeep and drove over to help, arriving just as Clyde approached his yard. He was dragging a young blacktail and carrying what I immediately recognized as a Model 92 Winchester carbine.

I’d never seen the real “deal,” but the 92 was recognizable from any one of a dozen TV westerns and John Wayne movies that often played during the matinee in town.

We made quick work of the buck and hung it in the garage. On my way to the jeep, I edged over to the house where the little carbine was leaning against the porch. “That’s a Model 92 Winchester carbine,” Clyde offered, but a quick look at the end of the barrel suggested it wasn’t a .44 or .38. I leaned over to get a better look at the graying receiver as he remarked, “It’s a .32-20, best deer cartridge I ever owned.” Clyde was never one to talk much, so it took the better part of the next four years to wrangle the story of the Model 92 carbine out of him.

Phil Strader homesteaded the place in 1927 and hired Clyde soon thereafter. Clyde bought the carbine in Roseburg with money from his share – Phil didn’t have “cash on hand” – of the cattle sold at auction. It was wild country back then, and Clyde used the carbine to kill bobcats, cougars, bear, turkeys and deer, not to mention mauling hawks and eagles that preyed on newborn lambs.

The ranch was crawling with the little Columbian whitetail and blacktail deer. Phil gave Clyde a quarter of beef now and then for his growing family, but Clyde managed fairly well on venison. After the apple orchard matured, he shot most of the deer from his yard and continued to do so when I met him in 1958.

One day while we were gathering cattle on the old Reams place (Phil won the deed in a card game) at the base of Mount Scott in heavy timber, I pressed Clyde about how many deer he killed. (At the time, it might have been considered an inappropriate question since a lot of folks just shot the game they needed to feed their families, hang the game laws.) After a minute or so, he said “maybe 100,” then said “no, more like 120 or so, and Phil used it to take a few.” We split up to bring in some pairs and met

Left to right, these Model 92 rifles include a .25-20 WCF refinished by Doug Turnbull, an untouched .44 WCF and a refurbished .38 WCF.
nearly an hour later. Clyde picked up the conversation as if we’d never separated: “We shoot ‘em right behind the eye, just below the ear,” as he pointed toward his temple, “saves venison and they drop.” Later Clyde remarked that he’d been shooting out of the same box of 50 shells since 1950 or 51 and “might have to drive over to Lone Rock to buy another box one day.” (That was in 1960, as I recall.)

Clyde said he used the Winchester “High Velocity” shells that were made for the Model 92 and would “wreck an old Winchester.” I didn’t know it then, but there was a difference in loads for the Models 92 and 73 and Colt revolvers. Clyde used blackpowder loads at one time, but finished the last of a box on turkeys and hawks, then switched over to high-velocity loads “before the war.”

***

I didn’t see another Model 92, except in gun shows, for a number of years. Then, one day my friend Doug Burke and I were out driving around on remote logging roads west of Klamath Falls, Oregon, when he pointed off in the brush and told how that spot, right next to a big ponderosa pine, was where he shot a deer, 12 times with the .38 WCF carbine and pretty much swore off it for anything bigger than a rabbit.

Upon hearing Doug’s story about the deer “episode” with the Model 92 .38 WCF carbine, I pretty much forgot about ever owning one, and it was nearly a dozen years later that I found a refurbished Winchester Model 92 .38 WCF rifle at a gun show. The price was right, so I bought it, and several others over the years.

As most folks are aware, the Model 92 Winchester was the brain child of John Browning. As the story goes, Browning was challenged to produced a small-frame rifle, similar to the Model
86, that would chamber the cartridges that were, at the time, only available in the Winchester Model 73 and Marlin Models 88 and 89.

Apparently, T.C. Bennett, vice president of Winchester, was willing to pay a bonus if Browning could deliver the rifle in 60 days. Browning countered with 30 days and double the bonus. Browning won.

Mechanically, the Model 92 was shorter and stronger than the Model 73 and was chambered from the outset for the same cartridges, the .44, .38 and .32 WCFs.

The .25-20 was added to the lineup in 1895, and the .218 Bee showed up in a redesign of the 92, the Model 65, in 1939.

The standard rifle featured a 24-inch round barrel, but the octagonal barrel was more popular. Carbines came out with 19-inch barrels but were changed to 20 inches after a quarter-million had been shipped. Records show 1,004,675 Model 92s were produced by 1941, 600,000 of which were chambered for the .44 WCF.

The original .44 WCF load featured a 200-grain lead flatnose bullet at 1,295 fps from a 24-inch barrel. Winchester also made ammunition with a 217-grain jacketed softnose. Another 217-grain load is listed for the .44 Colt Lightning Magazine Rifle (CLMR). When smokeless powder became available in factory loads, the “Winchester High Velocity” load boasted a 200-grain jacketed softnose at 1,595 fps.

The standard .38 WCF load featured a 180-grain lead flatnose bullet over 40 grains of black powder for little more than 1,300 fps. Ultimately the High Velocity load pushed a 180-grain jacketed softnose 1,800 fps and a 130-grain pill around 2,000 fps. In 1938, a 145-grain load reached 2,000 fps.

The original .32 WCF black-powder load my old friend Clyde Gardner used on the French Creek Ranch used 20 grains of black powder to boost a 100-grain lead bullet to around 1,300 fps. A similar load used 18.5 grains of black powder with a 105-grain hollow-point, and the Winchester High Velocity load upped the bullet weight to 115 grains at 1,640 fps.

While the .25-20 WCF was introduced as a smokeless powder cartridge that prodded an 86 grainer to 1,800 fps and a 60-grain bullet to 2,100 fps, it was loaded with 17 grains of black powder under an 86-grain lead bullet from 1895 to 1938. Collectors also recognize a “Super Speed .25-20 W.H.V.” headstamp introduced in 1938.

As with the .44 WCF, similar loads were manufactured for Marlin and Colt in .38-40, .32-20
and .25-20, and older cartridge boxes clearly stated the ammunition was made with Winchester components. It is appropriate to note that Winchester always used the WCF moniker; Marlin, Colt and Remington used the second set of digits to denote the original black-powder charge, e.g., .44-40,.32-20, etc.

To distinguish the high-velocity load from standard loads, Winchester started labeling the boxes “.25-20 M-’92 Special W.H.V.” in 1903 with cartridge headstamps marked accordingly. The same distinction is made for the .44 and .38 WCFs. At that, some folks either couldn’t read (quite possible) or didn’t pay attention and apparently managed to lay waste to a number of Model 73 Winchesters. As a result, high-stepping smokeless loads were phased out by 1941. After World War II, ammunition returned with standard bullet weights and velocities, mostly around 1,300 fps in 24-inch rifle barrels.

The Remington factory loads that Doug Burke used in the “infamous” deer episode probably didn’t break 1,100 fps in the 20-inch carbine barrel, which is not to ignore the relatively frangible 180-grain jacketed softnose Remington used.

A variation of the Model 92, the Model 53 with a short magazine tube was introduced in 1924 and continued until 1941 or shortly into 1942. The Model 65, another variation of the 92 hit the streets in 1933 and was gone—officially—by 1943.

As with most Winchester/Browning ventures, the Model 92 was offered in a variety of configurations, ranging from 24-inch octagonal, round or half-round/octagonal barrels, carbines, baby carbines, muskets and takedown models. Color casehardened receivers were an option until 1901. Thereafter, standard blued barrels, magazine tubes and receivers were offset with color case hammers, buttplates and forends.

Overall the Model 92 was quite a success with something over one million to come off the assembly line in less than 50 years, not counting the Models 53 and 65. Considering that the Models 92 and 73 ran concurrently in the 30-odd years that production overlapped, that’s quite an accomplishment, especially since Model 73 production totaled upwards of 720,000 units from 1873 until 1921.

One of the interesting observations regarding the original Win-
chester .44 WCF Model 92 is that the barrel diameters varied, averaging around .427 inch (some varied up to .431 inch), while Winchester bullets were recorded at .425 inch, ±.0005 inch with jacketed bullets and .426 inch for lead bullets.

As a rule the .32 WCF uses bullets sized to .312 inch, although I’ve seen rifle barrels that measured up to .314 that shot fine with relatively soft (BHN 10) bullets sized .312 to .314 inch.

The .38 WCF is actually a .40 caliber, and most barrels I’ve encountered are close to .401 inch, give or take .0005 inch or so. Winchester jacketed bullets are standard at .3995 inch. As a compromise for older barrels that have seen some use, I size cast bullets from .401 to .402 inch, depending on the alloy.

Of the cartridges chambered for the Model 92, the .38 WCF is the misfit. It is the only cartridge I’m aware of that is loaded in one configuration and changes shape, shortening the neck and subsequently lengthening the case body by .10 inch when fired. To compound matters, most reloading dies do not restore the case to its original, unfired shape, and the vast majority of cast and jacketed .40-caliber bullets do not have a cannelure to crimp the case mouth into - save for the jacketed softnose in Winchester factory loads that are not available to handloaders.

To fix the case sizing problem, I asked RCBS to make up special dies to restore the case to its original shape. RCBS also made up a special cast bullet mould with a crimping groove, labeled .403-185 in my records. I also use a Corbin canneluring tool to install a crimping groove/cannelure on .40-caliber jacketed pistol bullets used in the .38 WCF. With properly dimensioned dies and the RCBS cast bullet design my
.38 WCF rifles and sixguns are capable of fine performance.

Some years back I read a report in a popular gun magazine advocating high-stepping loads for the .38 and .44 WCF Model 92 rifles and carbines. I won’t repeat the loads since they are guaranteed to bust cases, most on the first shot. As a rule, I see no sense in going past 20 to 21 grains of 2400 or 21 to 22 grains of IMR-4227 with 180- and 200-grain bullets at 1,600 fps or so in the .38 and .44 WCF, respectively. More often than not, 16.5 to 17.0 grains of 2400 will do to duplicate original factory loads at around 1,320 fps in 24-inch barrels.

Obviously, it’s possible to reduce the bullet weight a bit and increase velocity potential with prudent loads, but since the Model 92 utilizes iron sights, which usually run out of adjustment if the bullet weight/velocity varies much from the standard, experimental loads might require the addition of an after-market tang or receiver sight. Tang sights extend the sight radius by up to a foot, but some folks don’t like the idea of having the aperture so close to the face and eyes, so a receiver sight might be the best all-around choice.

In modern terms, the Model 92 could be considered the original short action. With a lever throw of little more than 4 inches, it’s fast and light. In the early 1900s, when folks engaged in ravenous debates over the superiority of the bolt over the lever, and vice versa, reports suggest a good man – Ashley Haines – with a Model 92 .44 WCF could fire five well-aimed shots in less than three seconds. Some claimed similar performance with bolts of the period. Either way, the lever actions held up against some of the best bolt advocates.

I’ve run across reports from time to time that suggest the .44, .38, .32 and .25 WCF’s are obselete, past their time. In short, no pun intended, when compared to the power and accuracy potential of modern cartridges, the Model 92 and its ilk are not only underpowered but also lack accuracy potential. Viewed in that context, the claims are difficult to ignore. On the other hand, as a trail or knockabout companion loaded to accommodate a variety of game, including deer, varmints, coyotes, badgers, javelina, feral hogs and small game like squirrels and rabbits, the Model 92 has

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- **Catalog # 545** . . . . . . . . . . **$12.50**
A Premium .17 Mach 2 Rimfire

Cooper Firearms of Montana manufactures one such line of these quality rimfires. Based on Cooper's bolt-action Model 57-M action, the Classic, Custom Classic, Western Classic, Light Varmint and the new Jackson Squirrel Rifle are beautiful rifles with figured and checkered walnut stocks, guaranteed to shoot ¼-inch groups at 50 yards.

Dan Cooper, the president of Cooper Arms, named the Jackson Squirrel Rifle for a friend during a squirrel hunt in Arkansas when they discussed the stock features that would make the perfect squirrel rifle. The rifle is based on the Cooper Model 57-M action, which is a five-shot repeater with a rear-locking, three-lug bolt. The Model 57 was introduced in 1999 and upgraded to the 57-M in 2001 with features from the Winchester Model 52, Kimber of Oregon Model 82 and Anschutz Model 54. The rifle is chambered in .17 Mach 2, .22 Long Rifle, .17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire and .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire.

The Squirrel Rifle I borrowed was chambered in .17 Mach 2. I mounted a Leupold VX-III 4.5-14x 40mm scope and started banging away. I shot it three days at the range, and my son shot it two days. The rifle never missed a beat.

The Squirrel Rifle's action, trigger guard/floorplate and grip cap are finished in matte black, which contrasts nicely with its gray stainless steel barrel. The rifle is fairly heavy for a rimfire at 6 pounds, 10...
safety is at the back rear of the receiver, and depressing it to the rear blocks the trigger. The bolt will open with the safety on. Rotating the safety button forward allows the rifle to be fired. The trigger on the Squirrel Rifle tripped with 2 pounds of pressure, every time, with no creep or overtravel to ruin a steady aim. The trigger is also fully adjustable down to 1½ pounds.

The Cooper Jackson Squirrel Rifle is based on the Model 57-M action.
Cooper Arms

The bolt face contains two hooked extractors opposite each other that pull cases out of the chamber. When the bolt is pulled to the rear, a blade at the bottom rear of the receiver runs through a cut in the underside of the bolt and ejects the case out of the rifle. A slow pull on the bolt barely kicks an empty case clear of the receiver. With a smart pull on the bolt, a case flies out like a mad hornet. Options for metalwork on the Squirrel Rifle include a checkered bolt knob, fluted barrel and metal case color.

The stock is certainly the heart of a rifle because it gives the rifle style and distinction. A stock is also the link between the rifle and you and dictates how well you can hold and shoot the rifle. The standard Squirrel Rifle stock is made with California Claro walnut. Depending on how deep your pocket is, you can upgrade to Claro with fancier grain or to French walnut. Stock options include a skeleton grip cap, inletted sling swivels and a custom length of pull.

Both sides of the Squirrel Rifle’s grip are covered with a panel of point-pattern checkering that just touches at the top of the grip. The diamond-shaped lines of checkering are spaced 20 per inch. Those size diamonds look sufficiently fine, yet stand up well to wear. A nice touch is a feather of checkering at the bottom rear of the panels.

Cooper Arms states the Squirrel Rifle’s “... grip is slightly swelled and a little larger than our standard shape.” The grip is a bit slab-sided and measures 5 inches in circumference at the center of the grip. Deep flutes at the head of the comb provide a cradle for the thick of the thumb. “For awhile there it seemed every gun maker was in a race to see who could make the thinnest grip on a rifle stock,” says Rob Behr of Cooper Arms. “And everyone ended up with grips splitting and cracking with any hard use. Now we’re going back the other way, just a bit.”

Leroy Barry, Cooper Arms’ stockmaker, made the grip’s angle and shape just right, be-
cause the rifle fit and pointed well while shot offhand, kneeling and off a bench.

The rifle's forearm is fluted along the top of its 8 inch length to provide a tight grip for your fingers. The forearm fit along the barrel is close and looks tight. However, there is just enough of a gap to allow a thick piece of paper to freely slip between the barrel and the length of the barrel channel to about one inch ahead of the receiver. The forearm is stiff enough, too, that the pull of a tight sling on the swivel stud will not shift bullet impact. The wood surface on the stock inletting is nearly as smooth and finished as the outside of the
with the rifle and the 17-grain bullets from the .17 Mach 2 cartridges. The rifle held easily and steadily, and I regularly hit right where I aimed from 50 to 100 yards, even though I am in serious need of offhand shooting practice.

The temperature dropped below zero, and a nasty wind blew out of the north the last two days I shot the rifle. That’s when I shot groups. Looking over the groups fired with .17 Mach 2 ammunition and the Squirrel Rifle, I noted two strings of three-shot groups fired at 50 yards with Hornady 17-grain V-MAX bullets measured .19, .31 and .70 inch and .24, .55 and .42 inch. The overall average was .40 inch for those six groups. That’s darn close to the .25-inch group Cooper Arms guarantees for a three-shot group at 50 yards.

Perhaps the wind died down when I shot the rifle at 100 yards from the bench, because a string of three, three-shot groups at that distance measured .40, .20 and .47 inch, for an average of .35.

Group size did open up somewhat at 50 and 100 yards when I fired five-shot groups. Still, the rifle shot well, considering my cold, shaking fingers and dripping nose.

James Colburn, the accuracy tester for Cooper Arms, says he likes the .17 Mach 2. From his extensive shooting, Colburn thinks the Mach 2 is a more accurate cartridge than the .22 Long Rifle. “The reason is the Mach 2 uses the V-MAX bullet,” he said, “which is a real bullet with a real copper jacket compared to the .22 Long Rifle that uses a swaged piece of lead.”

All American ammunition for the .17 Mach 2 cartridge is manufactured at the CCI factory in Lewiston, Idaho, and loaded with

James Colburn, Cooper’s accuracy tester, shoots rifles before they leave the factory.
Hornady 17-grain V-MAX bullets. CCI, Federal, Hornady and Remington brands have bullets that wear different colored plastic tips, but they are all the same load. Rob Behr says the cartridge is becoming fairly popular, and Cooper Arms has been making quite a few rifles chambered for it. The Jackson Squirrel Rifle sells for $1,498, but it will more than pay for itself in all the use it will receive.

For more information contact Cooper Firearms of Montana, Post Office Box 114, Stevensville MT 59870; send an e-mail to Cooper@bigsky.net; or you can visit them online at: Cooperfirearms.com.
Today’s synthetic stocks can present a problem. Smooth composite surfaces don’t provide a really positive grip, particularly when uncheckered. Some stocks with impressed checkering are equally hard to hang onto, particularly in wet, freezing weather.

One of my favorite firearms is a Model Seven AWR (Alaskan Wilderness Rifle) from the Remington Custom Shop. This featherweight wonder is extremely accurate, and the .300 Short Action Ultra Mag round it digests doesn’t seem to kick much harder than my .308s.

I like this rifle a lot, but its plain-jane stock lacks both beauty and checkering. I corrected the appearance problem by sending the stock off to Exotic Synthetics (Block 5 So. Broadway, Lima MT 59739). It was returned with a durable, attractive wood-grain finish. This hard, plasticlike finish was even slicker in my hands. Then I remembered a product Pachmayr offered.

The Pac-Skin kit UPS delivered included a precut pistol grip and forend covering of finely textured neoprene with a “peel-n-stick” adhesive backing. Installing the rubber coverings was simple, requiring only a couple of minutes. Once the neoprene was smoothed into place, it provided an exceptionally firm gripping surface. The material is water resistant, so rain or snow is no problem.

While the Pac-Skin kit I had was precut to fit most rifles, the material is also available in solid sheets or strips that can easily be cut to shape with a sharp knife. Now that I’ve tried this stuff, I plan to apply it to a couple of goose and duck guns I own. Pachmayr notes that the material also works great for adding a no-slip surface to handguns, the inside of rifle slings, bow grips, knife handles and a variety of hand- or power-operated carpentry and household tools. Versatile stuff!

One caveat: The company notes that, “The only time we’ve had problems with Pac-Skin not ad-
The solution? Pachmayr recommends cleaning the surface with a clean, dry cloth with Simple Green or a similar cleanser before installing Pac-Skin.

While Pac-Skin doesn't appear in the 2005 Lyman catalog I have, the company still offers this handy material. Each Pac-Skin kit sells for $9.98.

For more information, contact Pachmayr, Division of Lyman Products, Dept. RI, 475 Smith Street, Middletown CT 06457; telephone toll-free: 1-800-225-9626; or you can visit the websites at: www.pachmayr.com or www.lymanproducts.com.

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**Child Guard™ Model CS100 Keeps Kids Safe**

There are dozens of inexpensive gun locks on the market, including those packaged free when new firearms are shipped from the manufacturer. While many of these meet minimum local requirements, they might not prevent a determined youngster from freeing the gun from its restraining device.

The Child Guard™ CS100 is a tough, highly robust child safety device featuring new, patented technology. How tough is it? I used pliers and a large screwdriver, then pounded – hard! – on the lock with a hammer trying to break it loose. The lock remained intact. The only way to open it was with the key provided. Designed by a firearms expert, the extremely tamper-resistant lock delivers a high level of safety at a reasonable $29.95 price.

According to Child Guard, the CS100 was the first firearms safety device to pass the most stringent laboratory testing required in the United States. It met the requirements of the California Penal Code and has passed all the state's subsequent testing requirements. It was the only lock tested to successfully resist attack from a bi-metal hacksaw blade.

The Child Guard's patented design features interlocking dual locking bars, multiple posts that can be inserted to match a particular firearm's trigger and trigger guard configuration, along with a...
Several years ago Browning started offering a Model 92 chambered for the .357 and .44 Magnums that was made in Mikuro, Japan. Some objected to the Japanese name on the barrel, but they were well made. A few years later, the Model 92 debuted with the Winchester label, although still made in Japan.

In due course, I had a chance to test a few of the Model 92 rifles chambered for the .45 Colt and .44 WCF. While I objected to the "make do" sights that were fine for knocking around, I ultimately bought a couple of rifles and re-worked the sights to offer a "defined" sight picture using a U-shaped rear notch and flat top front blade – all finished dark blue or black with no bead.

By then I had a selection of original Winchesters that were used on a fairly regular basis, and although it pains me somewhat to admit it, the Japanese rifles were/are better rifles. That applies to accuracy, fit and finish.

Moreover, the Japanese "Winchesters" were chambered quite well. That is, SAAMI cartridge and chamber drawings were a close match to the 92 chambers. That might sound a bit odd, to expect the cartridge and chambers to match, but original Winchesters are sometimes, well... a bit sloppy, which allows the fired cases to expand somewhat beyond normal tolerances. When those cases were resized, they were a bit overworked. By the time a Remington or Winchester case was reloaded three or four

**Spotting Scope**

(Continued from page 14)

few peers, and even fewer of those are as much fun.

'S93-'96 MAUSER

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times, they were ready for the trash. This is also why it is a bit silly to load these originals (smokeless rifles with nickel steel barrels) up with a caseful of 2400 or IMR-4227 and expect the fired case to come out of the chamber in one piece.

Nowadays, however, I find it is possible to load a standard 200-grain bullet in modern Starline .44 WCF brass to around 1,800 fps in a 24-inch barrel, using up to 24 grains of 2400 and 25 to 26 grains of IMR-4227, and get good accuracy out to 175 yards or so, although that is stretching things a bit with issue iron sights.

I also have a rebarreled Winchester Model 92 .38 WCF rifle that will shoot the same 240-grain bullets over 20.5 grains of 2400 in Starline cases for about 1,750 fps. For comparison, that pretty much makes it a standoff between the .44 WCF, .38 WCF and the original 160-grain bullet that generated 1,960 fps in the .30 WCF. (If these loads seem a bit puny, try boosting representative bullet weights from the .44 WCF or .38 WCF to similar velocities in a .44 Magnum sixgun.)

Several years ago I received word that a firearm collector had an unusual Model 92 carbine for sale. As the story went, it was once owned by Ernie Lind, the Winchester exhibition shooter who followed Ad Topperwine. I had a book written by Lind, The Compete Book of Trick & Fancy Shooting with a photo on page 23 of a carbine with non-standard sights, so it would be easy to verify if the carbine matched the photo in the book.

The sights were from the 32 series (ramp front sight and rear rifle sight) introduced on the Models 65 and 64 in 1932-33. Since Model 92 production ceased in 1941-42, rifles and carbines put together after 1945 were made up from parts left over prior to the war, including standard rifle and carbine sights. The fact that the 20-inch barrel was made for a carbine, not the Model 65 rifle, indicated it was a particularly rare configuration available only on replacement barrels sometime after 1945, when the Model 92 was “officially” discontinued.

I contacted the collector and made a deal. The serial number indicates the receiver was made in 1919 but was rebarreled sometime after World War II, as testified by the Winchester proof and the 32 series sights. Letters from Lind’s widow and other records show the carbine did indeed belong to Lind and was used regularly in his exhibitions.
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