Smith & Wesson Military & Police Revolver

By James M. Triggs

During the Spanish-American War, Smith & Wesson, Springfield, Mass., was tendered a government contract for 3000 .38 double-action revolvers, of which 2000 were for the Navy and 1000 for the Army. The war ended before delivery of a single gun had been made, but the contract was not canceled, and first deliveries were eventually made early in 1899. Designated the .38 Hand Ejector, Military & Police Model, this revolver was the first .38 side-swing model to be made by Smith & Wesson. It was chambered for the .38 Colt long cartridge. The military version was made with 6½" barrel and walnut grips. The commercial model had hard rubber grips and 4" barrel.

The improved Model 1902 M&P introduced in that year was chambered for the new cal. .38 S&W Special cartridge, and also featured a front lock for the extractor rod.

The Model 1905 which superseded the Model 1902 also incorporated significant improvements. By 1942 over 1,000,000 M&Ps had been manufactured. Under pressure of wartime need, Smith & Wesson in April 1942 began production of the Victory Model M&P with gray sandblast finish. Serial numbers were prefixed by the letter "V" and a new numbering series was begun. In December 1944 an improved hammer block was instituted and serial numbers were prefixed by the letters "VS to indicate incorporation of this feature in the lock mechanism. With the coming of peace and cancellation of government contracts, Smith & Wesson resumed production of commercial models.
M&P's but continued the serial number sequence began in 1942. Serial numbers were preceded by the letter 'S'.

On Oct. 21, 1947, with gun No. 8924-878, the manufacturer instituted an improved short action, and external shape of the hammer was modified for easier cocking.

Production of the 'S' series continued until March 1948 when the present 'C' series was started. It is significant that over 1,000,000 M&P's, including the Victory Model, were manufactured from April 1942 through March 1948.

As of this date Smith & Wesson has produced well over 500,000 M&P revolvers in the 'C' series.

DESENSITIZATION PROCEDURE.

Swell out cylinder and check to make sure that revolver is unloaded. Cylinder and frame assembly are removed by lowering forward end of side screw (21) and drawing entire assembly in front and out of frame (27). Further disassembly of cylinder, lock, or return spring is not recommended and should be undertaken only by a qualified gunsmith. Remove stock screw (19) and stocks (18).

Remove side plate screws (21, 22, 25, 27A). Slide is loosened by tapping opposite surface of frame sharply with a wood or rubber hammer until it can be removed from frame. Attempt to pry out side plate with uniform force until all side plate screws are removed.

Mainframe may be easily removed by loosening two side screws (27). All interior parts of lock mechanism are now easily removed for cleaning or replacement. However, for normal cleaning purposes, it is seldom necessary to disassemble beyond removal of mainframe. The accompanying drawings illustrate some methods for further disassembly.

Examine mainframe of lock mechanism to replace all parts in proper relationship.

HENRY DERINGER

He gave his name to a whole class of firearms

Born—Easton, Pa., 1786
Died—Philadelphia, Pa., 1868

T he son of an immigrant German gunsmith, Henry Deringer was destined to follow in his father's footsteps. At an early age he was apprenticed to a gunsmith in New York, and made rifles and other firearms there until he was ready to set up business for himself in Philadelphia in 1806. In 1808 he succeeded in obtaining his first government contract, and thereafter he continued to manufacture rifles, muskets, and pistols for the United States until 1845.

Although it was these government contracts which firmly established Deringer, his civilan arms, particularly during the days of the gold rush, really brought prosperity. His rifles and dueling pistols were very well received, and above all there was the short, single-shot percussion pistol that bore the Deringer name famous. According to his own account, Deringer first began the manufacture of this pistol in 1825. In so doing, he was one of the first gunsmiths in the United States to adopt the percussion system of ignition, and he steadfastly clung to that system, resisting the very end to consider the manufacture of breech-loading cartridge arms.

Deringer's contribution lay in the structural design of his pistol. It was compact, sturdy, and lethal. It suited exactly the mood and needs of the times when a man never knew at what moment he might need to defend his life and property and thus was thankful for an easily carried and silhouetted, and effective weapon. Deringer held no patents on his pistol, and so had many imitators, but the name of his design and craftsmanship spread so quickly that all of them were forced to do homage by trying to associate their products in some way with his name. Thus, the origin of deringer, with 2's,—HAROLD L. PETERSON