



# **Winchester Lever Action Repeating Firearms : The Models of 1866, 1873 & 1876 (For Collectors Only)**

*Arthur Pirkle*

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The lever action repeating rifles produced by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company are easily the most famous and recognizable firearms in American history. For nearly 140 years, they have been intimately connected with American hunters, first in the opening of the West, and after the close of the frontier, have continued to hold the position of America's most popular hunting rifle.

The story of the Winchester rifle begins with the Model 1866 and its famous predecessor, the Model 1873. They were the first practical repeating long arms that did not require the strength of a weight-lifter to carry them about. A long tube under the barrel held the cartridges which were admitted to the breech by moving a lever down and up. This both pushed the cartridge into the chamber and cocked the hammer. The shooter then aimed and pulled the trigger. Working the lever again ejected the spent case and placed another cartridge in the chamber for a fast follow-up shot.

As with any other mechanical contrivance manufactured over long periods, changes and improvements were made to the Winchester rifles in the form of new parts. A M1873 rifle made in 1878 was not the same as a M1873 made in 1888 although to the untrained eye they may look the same. A collector of Winchester lever action repeating rifles and carbines wants to be assured that his Model 1873 is absolutely correct as the day it was manufactured. These are valuable artifacts of American history and are eagerly sought. Enough wrong parts can reduce the value of a particular Winchester by fifty percent or more.

Arthur Pirkle's book provides collectors with the information needed to examine their Model 1866, 1873 or 1876 rifles and carbines and determine if each part is correct. The book also tells how to determine if the firearm has been refinished (reblued) which can also drastically reduce its value. Each part is described fully including markings and dimensions, any changes to that part are also described and everything is related to serial number ranges. Special appendixes describe special and valuable variations of the three rifles including those manufactured for the Canadian Northwest Mounted Police and special light and heavyweight hunting rifles. Assembly/Disassembly and cleaning information is given as is information on the "do's and don't's" of restoration. Updated and correct serial number lists are included. Special line drawings (for clarity) show all major and most minor parts including the wide variety of front and rear sights.

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