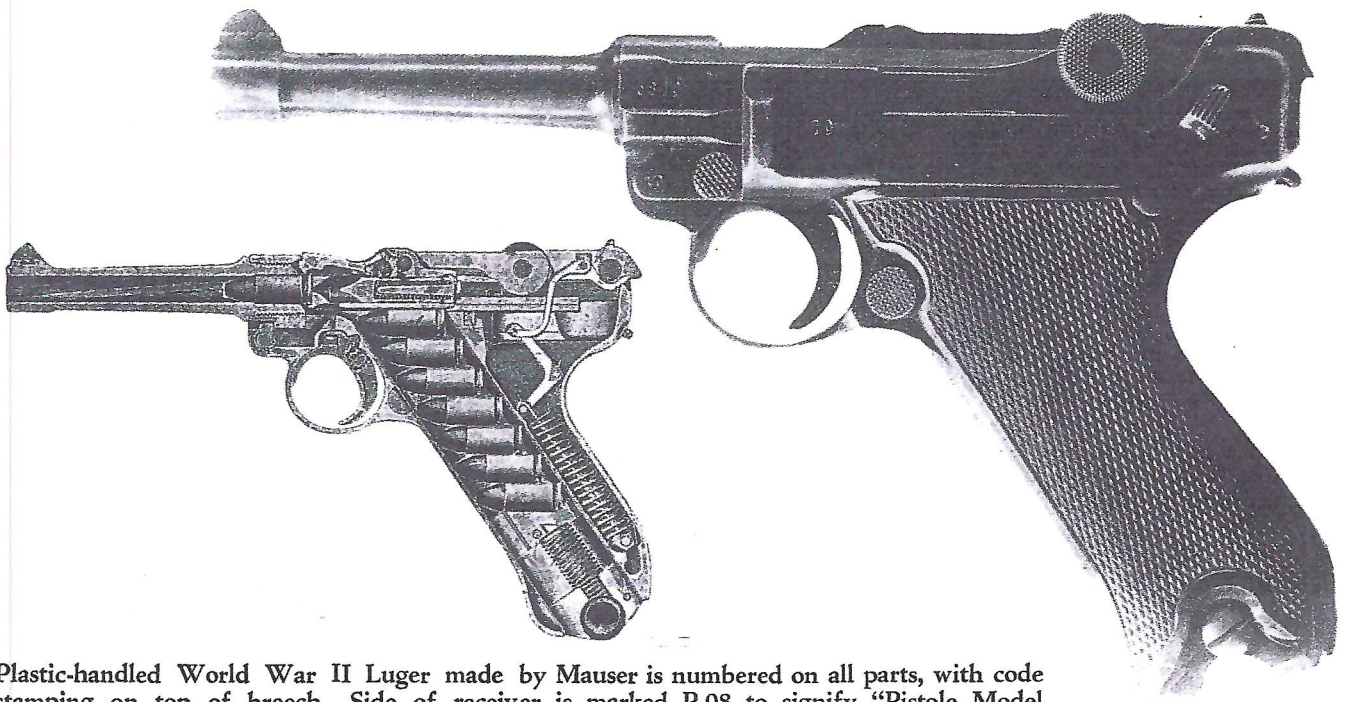


WORLD'S



German recruits at prewar pistol practice assume straight-front position, fire Lugers while wearing leather gloves.



Plastic-handled World War II Luger made by Mauser is numbered on all parts, with code stamping on top of breech. Side of receiver is marked P.08 to signify "Pistole Model 1908." Coil main spring and improved toggle assembly of P.08 are shown in drawing.

MOST POPULAR HANDGUN

SOUVENIR OF TWO WORLD WARS, MADE IN MILLIONS IN A HUNDRED VARIATIONS, LUGER PISTOL IS STANDARD PISTOL IN MANY NATIONS

By FRED A. DATIG

FOR THREE GENERATIONS Luger has ranked foremost in the automatic pistol field in every country in the world. The story behind its phenomenal success often reads more like a novel than a technical history.

There are few people who know the strange details behind that souvenir pistol that Dad commandeered from a Nazi officer or that grandfather "removed" from the Prussian artilleryman at Verdun while serving with the A.E.F. For instance, few gun collectors realize that the Luger produced by Mauser or Krieghoff as late as 1942 remained virtually unchanged from the first models adopted by the Swiss Government in 1901. Or that in various forms and calibers it was tested on three occasions by the United States Army and came within a hair's breadth of becoming our official military sidearm on at least one of those occasions. Today the 9m/m Luger cartridge is by far the best-known and most-widely produced handgun load in the world and may soon become the standard U.S. pistol cartridge. Strangest of all, the Luger can trace its lineage right back to Bridgeport, Connecticut, U.S.A.

Most experts agree that the Luger is a modern, up-to-date pistol, although first put on the market more than half a century ago. Its "stopping power" may not be as great as that of some other pistols but its many advantages easily overshadow this and any of its other shortcomings. It has the best natural instinctive pointing of any pistol known. To illustrate this, take a Luger in hand, choose a target and with your eyes shut, aim the Luger at the target. Then open your eyes and see how nearly "on target" you are. Now repeat the same test with any other automatic pistol. The results should speak for themselves.

The Luger's assembly and disassembly are extremely simple requiring no tools. The only screws to be found merely hold the grips to the frame.

I have never seen nor heard of a single instance of a Luger "blowing up" under normal conditions and any proper cartridge, commercial or military, may be fired with absolute safety from any mechanically-checked Luger. Its overall shape, general appearance and wonderful "feel" will easily stand up in comparison with any of the latest of modern automatics.

These features are outstanding today and yet they are the same selling points which the Luger boasted when first offered on the commercial market well over 50 years ago. The last Luger to leave the assembly line at the close of World War II had not undergone the slightest change in over 35 years of manufacture! It was made without change longer than any other pistol.

Its "years ahead" design and universal popularity is shown even more clearly by the fact that it has been manufactured not only in Germany but also in England and



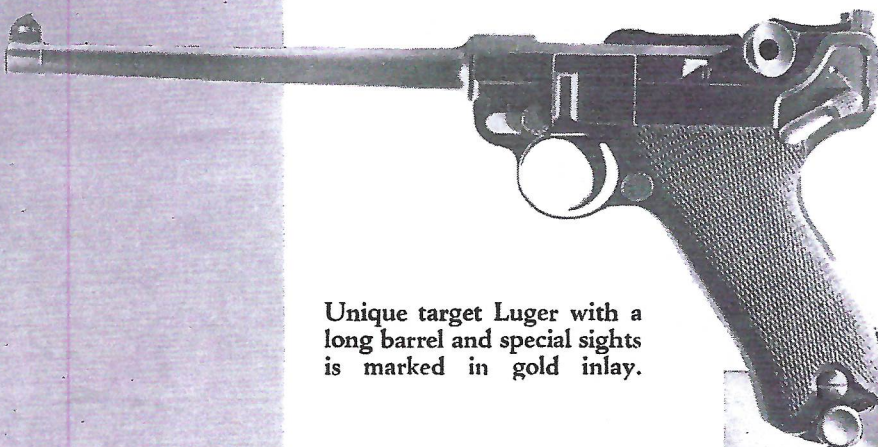
Gun designer Georg Luger received orders and decorations from many rulers for his one big contribution to arms design, the modified Borchardt which bears his name.



Borchardt pistol of 1893 was first successful automatic but was not very well styled.



Slanted grip, magazine and toggle link changes by Luger produced Model 1900 pistol.



Unique target Luger with a long barrel and special sights is marked in gold inlay.

Switzerland. The latter country even "improved" on the German version with their model of 1929.

The United States seriously considered its adoption at one time. A quantity was purchased and issued to troops in the field along with a special, government-made, .45 Colt automatic-type holster. It has been produced in at least three of the most popular military calibers, 7.65m/m Luger, 9m/m Luger and .45 A.C.P. (11.35m/m). There have been conversions of 4m/m caliber and .22 Long Rifle.

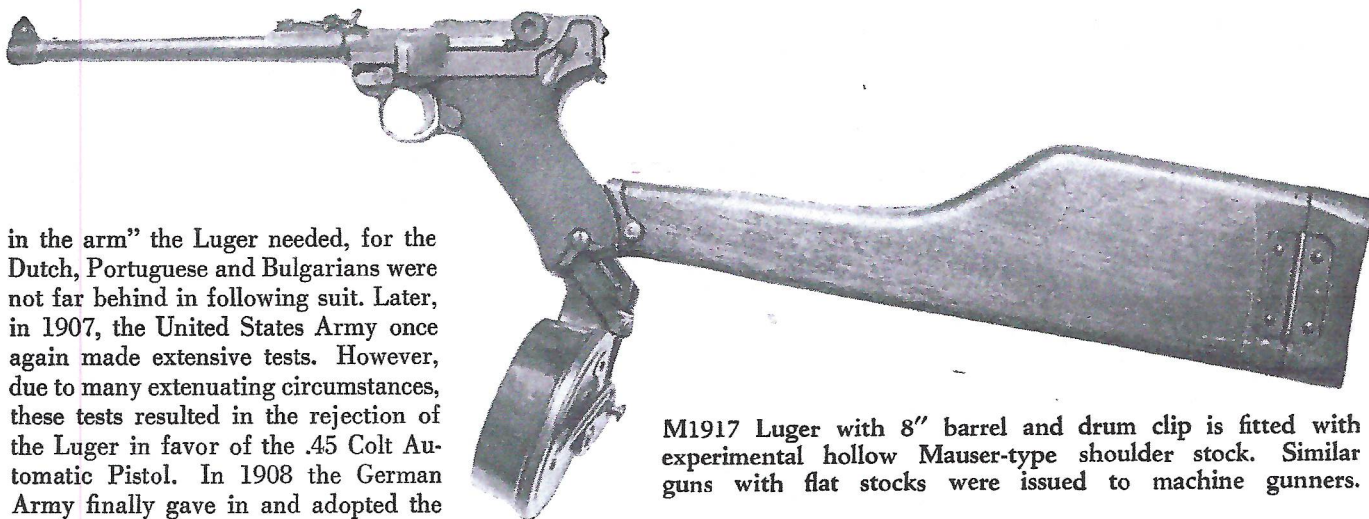
The Swiss, "the nation of riflemen," who regard the Luger very highly, have even converted a limited quantity to caliber .22 Long Rifle for both military training and commercial purpose.

From all of this one would gather that on its inception in 1901 the Luger must have created somewhat of a sensation which it did to a point—commercially. As a military arm, acceptance was not so instant. Although the Swiss were quick to adopt it as their official military sidearm (a position it held in Switzerland for over 40 years, longer than any other country including Germany), the rest of the world assumed the "wait and watch" attitude. It was offered to the Prussian Military Ordnance Board five times before the German Army considered it to be worthy of official adoption.

The German Navy on the other hand rejected it on only two occasions. They finally accepted it in a special naval version in 1904. This move by the German Navy seemed to be the "shot

Erma sub-caliber unit changes Luger to .22 by placing new unit in barrel.





M1917 Luger with 8" barrel and drum clip is fitted with experimental hollow Mauser-type shoulder stock. Similar guns with flat stocks were issued to machine gunners.

in the arm" the Luger needed, for the Dutch, Portuguese and Bulgarians were not far behind in following suit. Later, in 1907, the United States Army once again made extensive tests. However, due to many extenuating circumstances, these tests resulted in the rejection of the Luger in favor of the .45 Colt Automatic Pistol. In 1908 the German Army finally gave in and adopted the Luger as the "Pistole '08" and the 9mm cartridge as the "Patronen '08."

It is difficult to credit the invention of the Luger to any one man. At least two persons were directly responsible and a third may well be considered indirectly responsible. It would be a simple matter to go into a long dissertation about Georg Luger, his life and times. It could be carried even further by relating the early days of New Englander Hugo Borchardt, who was responsible for putting the ideas into the head of Georg Luger in the first place. In that case, however, it might become necessary to include a discourse on Sir Hiram Maxim who, in turn, gave his recoil-operated gun ideas to the world in general and Hugo Borchardt in particular when referring to the toggle-action principle Sir Hiram first employed in his machine gun. But was Sir Hiram the first? There was the Gardner crank-operated gun before that, mechanically similar. And so on. . . .

Suffice to say that Hugo Borchardt, a naturalized American citizen, was basically responsible for the invention of the Luger in an indirect and possibly even in a direct manner. Borchardt was a mechanical genius of some note as he not only became an inventor at an early age but also developed many different types of mechanical devices.

The earliest record of Hugo Borchardt in the weapons field is taken from a letter written in his own hand to E. G. Westcott, president and treasurer of the Sharps Rifle Co. of Hartford, Connecticut dated March 18, 1875. Borchardt was applying for the position of superintendent of that company:

"I took the superintendency of a shop in the worst condition at Trenton, N. J., designed the tools and finished a contract for 5,000 guns to the entire satisfaction of (Continued on page 55)



Luger barrels and types are (left to right) post-WWI .30 commercial, 9mm dated military, .30 M1900 commercial, Navy 6" model 1904, target model with special .30 barrel, and regular M1917 for stock with 8" 9mm barrel.

WORLD'S MOST POPULAR HANDGUN

(Continued from page 21)

the company. Mr. Meecham, who was treasurer of the Pioneer Breechloading Arms Co., hesitated at first in placing confidence in me, owing very likely to my age. I was 24 years old. There were about 60 hands employed. I afterwards had a foremanship in Singer (Sewing Machine Co.?) and several other places."

His first patent for a bullet grooving machine was issued on July 21, 1874 and this was followed by many other innovations in the firearms field.

Borchardt was versatile indeed, but it appears that his many patents added few coins to his coffers for he was constantly changing jobs and addresses. His part in the Sharps-Borchardt rifle production was his greatest achievement before forsaking his adopted country for Germany where he remained for the rest of his life. He did not, however, give up his American citizenship.

The Borchardt pistol was first produced in Germany in strictly limited numbers as early as 1893. An ungainly weapon, with the toggle and spring housing extending far to the rear, and an awkward pistol cartridge paved the way for later developments in automatic ammunition design, and is still used today in almost unchanged form as the powerful .30 Mauser pistol cartridge. The gun itself was the first commercial self-loading pistol which functioned regularly and effectively. For this reason it managed to struggle along for several years until Georg Luger took it in hand.

It has been rumored that Borchardt and Luger first met during the latter's trip to the U.S. where Luger offered a rifle for government testing. Before both Army and Navy boards early in the 1890's, Luger demonstrated a "rotating bolt, central under-receiver magazine rifle." This rifle, in lieu of evidence to the contrary, was most likely the early Mauser 1889-92 model put out by Loewe as they controlled the Mauser firm. Luger's later association with the Loewe firm suggests that he appeared in America as a

representative of that company. In 1894, the first definite link between Luger and Borchardt was documented. Luger exhibited a Borchardt pistol, before the U.S. Naval Ordnance Board as a representative of Loewe. The Navy did not approve the gun.

In late 1896 Ludwig Loewe reorganized under the name of the Deutsche Waffen und Munitions Fabriken (DWM), absorbing the ammunition firm of Deutsche Metallpatronen-fabrik of Karlsruhe (DMK). From that time onward the new firm took over the production of the Borchardt pistol, stamping them with the new interlaced cypher of the initials DWM.

Luger was employed by the new firm. Within six years he achieved the distinction of having his name attached to the Borchardt pistol, through a series of modifications by him to cartridge and pistol design. Although it might be assumed that he held the position of chief engineer, a German source dating from an obituary of Luger in 1923 gives a slightly different credit at the time of Borchardt's association with the cartel. Borchardt at the time of the "Luger pistol" is definitely characterized as "Oberingenieur" or chief engineer, and Luger as being "in erster Linie Konstrukteur war," which indicates he was employed as a designer. There

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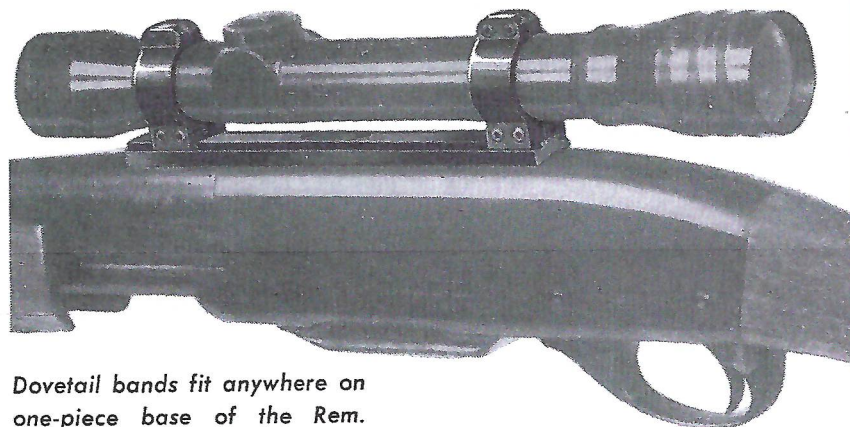
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is no question that Luger was subordinate to Borchardt for a time, although later they might have shared the high office of chief engineer.

Early patents in the name of Luger show a design transition from the clumsy pistol of Hugo Borchardt to the sleek, well-balanced and natural-pointing weapon which bears the title of Luger. Briefly, the modifications of Luger took on three stages. First, the Borchardt handle and magazine was altered to a more acute pitch giving better balance. Then the Borchardt toggle and spring were rearranged and modified for compactness. Finally Borchardt's flat strip "clock spring" was abandoned and a superior coil spring used by Luger. Since Luger for some years was only a designer, the improved pistol was called by the chief engineer's name first: "Borchardt-Luger."

In the latter part of 1898, a series of pistol trials were held by the Swiss at Bern. The pistols entered were: Mauser with 10-shot magazine; Mauser with 6-shot magazine; Bergmann with 10-shot magazine; Borchardt-Luger with 8-shot magazine; Roth with 10-shot magazine; and Mannlicher with 7-shot magazine.

Explanation, assembly and the firing of 50 rounds, in two series followed; then timing per firing of each weapon; target shooting, two frames each at 50 meters; endurance of 400 rounds without cleaning or cooling.

The Borchardt-Luger was noted as the only weapon in the endurance tests to perform satisfactorily. Then followed dust and water tests, the firing of 20 rounds each weapon, wherein the Borchardt-Luger was again the only weapon without malfunctions. Next the penetration into 8m/m iron plates at 10 meters was tested to determine velocities with the various powder charges. Finally occurred a discussion of performances without evaluation.

Of course the point of the greatest interest is the fact that the pistol is referred to as the "Borchardt-Luger." Its powder charge of .42 gram of Walsrode powder giving a muzzle velocity of 418 meters per second (1379 feet per second) would indicate that the pistol in question could have been either a Borchardt or possibly a transition piece chambered for the Borchardt cartridge. To further indicate that it could have been a true Borchardt pistol, the barrel is described as being "longer" than that of the Mauser entered in the same tests, which would jibe with the barrel length of 7½" which is longer than the common Luger barrels.

A second series of tests were conducted in Switzerland the following year at Thun. The Mauser, Bergmann, Roth and Mannlicher pistols of the previous trial were re-tested. New models of the Mauser, Hauff and Browning were listed, as were a new Mannlicher and a new Borchardt-Luger, having been modified according to the wishes of the board. The 1899 tests were conducted like those of the previous year.

The Borchardt-Luger of the second tests was described as "made lighter in weight and fitted with a new safety." It is more than likely that this was the transition piece shown in Luger's patent drawings. This patent was applied for in the United States on April 29, 1899, two days before the second Swiss tests. The same patent was applied for in Great Britain on the same date.

The powder charge listed for the newer pistol was .31 gram, with a velocity given as being 323 meters per second (1066 feet per second). From these figures we may assume that the later pistol was chambered for the 7.65 mm Luger cartridge or its experimental counterpart. These tests led to the eventual adoption by the Swiss government of the Model 1900 Luger in April of 1901.

The relationship between Borchardt and Luger (according to an observer who knew them both) was not at all a friendly one. It is reported that they visited the DWM plant in Berlin as late as 1918 but were not on speaking terms. This must have been an uncomfortable situation indeed as they lived for many years within a few blocks of one another. Exactly what caused the trouble between them is not definitely known. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that Borchardt's name appeared on none of the patents taken out by Georg Luger on the Luger pistol. Some of the features patented in the Luger bore striking resemblances to certain parts found in the Borchardt pistol.

Borchardt, after the inception of the Luger Pistol, continued to work with toggle action principles spending many years attempting to perfect a toggle action semi-automatic rifle which he hoped to sell to the German government. His last patent (U.S.#1,184,065-1916), granted a few years before his death, was a final attempt at perfection of this rifle. Borchardt probably held some stock in DWM. If not, it seems strange that he would have remained in Germany and merely puttered with many various inventions.

The Luger pistol, having outlived its patrons, moved ahead with continuous success and was one reason why DWM became one of the world's foremost small arms producers.

DWM was taken over by a large holding company after the First World War (1922) and for some years thereafter Luger pistols were distributed under the firm name of the Berlin-Karlsruhe Industrie Werke (B.K.I.W.). Between the years 1922 to 1932 Simson & Co. of Suhl, Germany supplied all of the Luger pistols used by the Reichswehr. On May 1, 1930, however, all Luger machinery was transported from DWM in Berlin to the Mauser factory at Oberndorf and from 1934 until production was halted in 1942 Mauser supplied the majority of Lugers produced. The mass migration included about 800 machines and as many technicians.

Other firms produced Lugers under license from the parent corporation. Among these were the Royal German Arsenal at Erfurt, which turned out large quantities of Lugers supplied to the German army during World War I. Simson & Co. and Heinrich Krieghoff, both of Suhl, made Lugers for police and naval use. Waffenfabrik Bern and Schweizerische Industrie Gesellschaft (S.I.G. or Neuhausen) both in Switzerland turned out complete pistols and parts, amounting to about 50,000 Lugers for military and commercial use in that country. Vickers Ltd. of London made pistols for the Netherlands government about 1927, turned out on machinery borrowed from the Mauser factory which was not able to undertake the contract because of restrictions of the Versailles treaty.

These are only a few of the facts to be

unfolded in tracing the history of this fabulous pistol which has probably been produced in greater quantity than any other pistol since automatics first came into use in the latter part of the 19th century.

No fewer than 2½ million Lugers were produced between 1900 and 1942. Over 95 per cent of that number went into the military service of Germany. The remainder were of either commercial manufacture or "contract" pieces made especially for the armies and navies of countries outside of Germany. At least 15 nations may be included in this latter category, among them the United States.

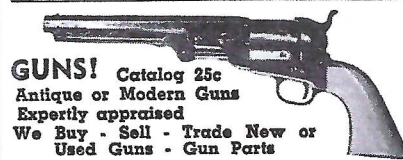
After exactly 30 years of military service in Germany, progress finally caught up with the Luger when in the 1930's other tests were held. Included were the latest products of such renowned arms manufacturers as Walther, who submitted the soon-to-become-

famous "Heeres Pistole" (better known as the P38), Sauer with their HP and Mauser with the streamlined HSV to mention a few. The results of these tests were the beginning of the end for the Luger. It was decided that it should be replaced by the P38. Switzerland, which since 1924 had produced its own, was quick to follow suit when in 1948 the Neuhausen, based on Browning designs, replaced the Luger in that country.

In the 42 years of its manufacture no less than 160 variations of over 20 different models were produced. Luger production throughout the world is now at a standstill. Quite possibly it may never again be resumed. Should this prove to be true, all Lugers, especially the rarer ones, will increase in value and the demand will grow. No matter which course the armies of the world pursue, the Luger is now and shall always remain one of the greatest handguns in history.

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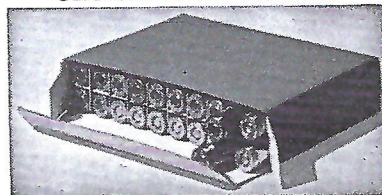
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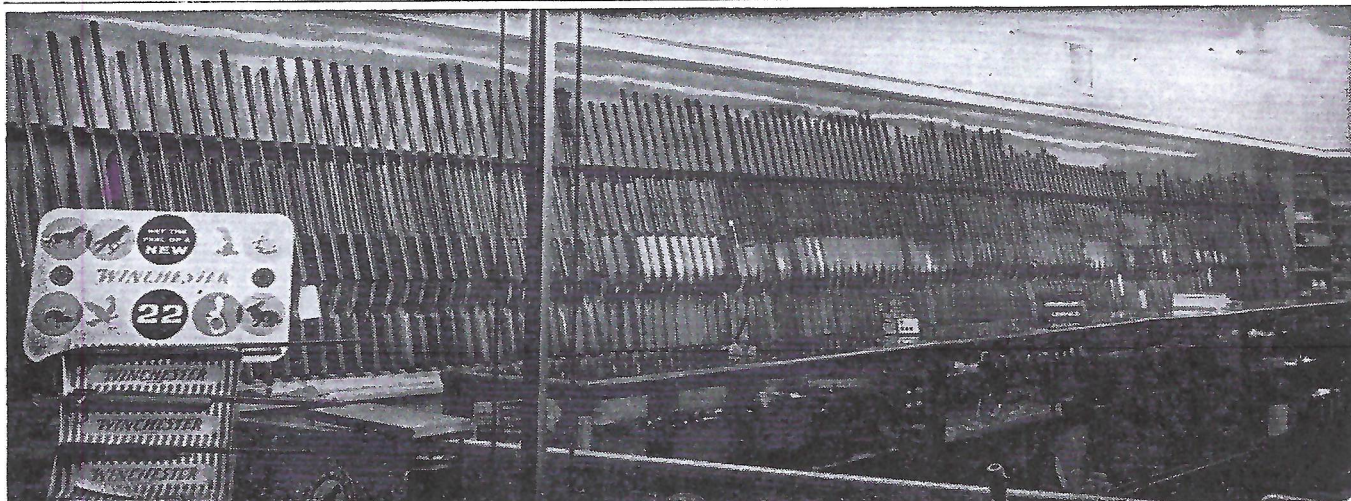
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