



## The "Other" Model 1895: The Lee-Navy



**GUN:** WINCHESTER-LEE MODEL OF 1895  
**CONDITION:** 50 TO 60 PERCENT ORIGINAL FINISH (NRA FAIR)  
**VALUE:** \$1,000 TO \$1,500

Regular readers of this magazine may recall my affection for the lever-action Winchester Model 1895 made famous by the patronage of President Theodore Roosevelt. There is, however, a lesser known and just as curious "other" Winchester Model of 1895, called the Lee-Straight Pull, Winchester-Lee or Lee-Navy rifle. Designed by James Paris Lee, whose invention of the Lee-Enfield rifle forever linked his name to British military history, the U.S. Navy Model of 1895 is a straight-pull rifle chambered in the bottle-necked .236-cal. "6 mm USN" cartridge.

A total of 20,000 were produced by the Winchester Repeating Arms Co. in two models; the military musket with a 28" barrel and the civilian sporter with a 24" barrel. Only 5,000 of the sporter were manufactured, leaving the bulk of the production to fall under one of two military contracts. The first 10,000 contract rifles are identified by the presence of the initials "N.C.T." on the receiver

ring, which stand for Navy inspector Ensign Nathan C. Twinning. Rifles from the second contract of 5,000, bear the initials "J.N.J." for inspector Lt. John J. Jordan. The inspector's marks are found on the receiver forward of the action port below "U.S.N.", an anchor and the serial number.

Lee-Navys were used extensively by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps during the Spanish-American War of 1898, and manufacture continued up until 1902. Likely the most famous combat usage of the 1895 Lee-Navy was in the hands of U.S. Marines involved in the relief of Peking during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, an episode of history that was the basis for the movie "55 Days At Peking" starring former NRA President Charlton Heston.

Known as "the straight-pull" Lee, the bolt of the rifle is locked and unlocked by a push-pull movement that finishes with the bolt angled up and slightly elevated from the breech. It was the first U.S. military rifle to employ the "stripper clip" or charger method of loading that became standard with the adop-

tion of the Model 1903 Springfield rifle. The stripper clip itself is unique as it had a small wire catch that runs down the spine of the five-round steel holder. The holder has bent tips, that when rotated via a latch in the middle of the clip, prevented individual rounds from falling loose.

The rifle is unique in many ways. It was the first and only standard-issue U.S. military rifle in 6 mm, the first and only straight-pull U.S. military action and one of a handful of rifles adopted by the Navy and Marine Corps, but not the Army.

The 28th edition of S.P. Fjestad's *Blue Book of Gun Values* lists a first-contract military rifle in the condition illustrated (60 percent) at \$1,000. I tend to believe that the rarity of the gun in any condition warrants a bit more than the published price. Fifty-four rifles were recovered from the *U.S.S. Maine* by Francis Bannerman and, if a specimen matches any of the recorded serial numbers, the value could quadruple. ★

—PHILIP SCHREIER, SENIOR CURATOR,  
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