

# THE SHOOTER'S CORNER

CONDUCTED BY PETE KUHLOFF

## *The S. & W. Triple Lock and Its Descendants*

**M**OST all ex-servicemen are more or less familiar with the Smith & Wesson .45 ACP caliber service revolver, or the Colt revolver chambered for the same service cartridge—each known as the Model 1917.

During the late war a great many M.P.'s and members of the Shore Patrol were seen on duty with these revolvers strapped on their hip. Both are fine weapons—but today let's examine the S. & W. product.

In 1919 at the beginning of the First World War our Army was in desperate need of sidearms. The regular service sidearm was (and with slight modification, still is) the Colt .45 Government Model of 1911 and production of this model could not be expanded to fill the requirements. This is, as you no doubt know, a semi-automatic pistol chambered for the rimless .45 Automatic Colt Pistol cartridge. As it would be impractical to have more than one caliber sidearm cartridge in use in the armed forces, the outlook for much-needed handguns was bleak.

Some bright person (I don't know who—but come to think of it I'll make it a point to find out) up at Smith & Wesson designed a half-moon clip that would hold three .45 ACP cartridges as a unit, to be loaded in a revolver chambered for this cartridge. In other words, instead of having to load six separate cartridges into a revolver, two units of three cartridges each could be loaded in the time ordinarily used in loading but two cartridges.

To handle this combination, the S. & W. people modified their famous New Century model—which is the gun I wanted to talk about in the first place!

Now this New Century model revolver (official name, Model .44 Hand Ejector) generally known as the Gold Seal Model or

the Triple Lock is one of the finest (in my estimation) guns ever designed by Smith & Wesson.

It was first introduced in 1907 and was manufactured until around 1915. It seems that altogether around 20,000 were produced, approximately 14,000 in .44 Special caliber.

Normally S. & W. revolvers (having swing-out cylinder) are locked at the rear of the cylinder when closed ready for firing, and are also locked at the front end of the ejector rod under the barrel. In case of the New Century there is another lock which operates between the barrel lug and a hardened insert in the face of the yoke or crane. Thus this model is popularly known as the S. & W. Triple Lock. Pushing the thumb catch forward will release all three of the locks.

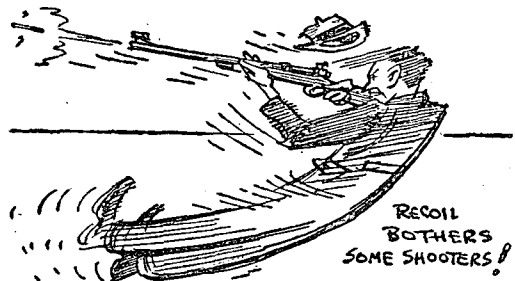
After the First World War the yoke lock was eliminated (to the disgust of many shooters) due to its expense. On the other hand, there were other reasons for leaving off the third lock—military authorities maintained that the yoke lock was a liability when the weapon was hard used in the field as dirt in the yoke lock might put the gun out of commission due to necessary close manufacturing tolerances. Also it was the opinion of many experts that the third lock was unnecessary, even in a heavy handgun, as it is a fact that a great many revolvers with the swing-out cylinder are locked in only one place.

At the present time the Triple Lock is practically a collector's item and it is getting more and more difficult to find a specimen in fine condition. It is a good accurate shooting revolver although very heavy hand loads should not be used in it as the cylinders on this particular line of S. & W. revolvers were not heat treated until late in 1921 after the Hand Ejector Second Model had been in production for over six years.

**T**HIS second model was the New Century with the following changes—yoke lock and large barrel lug eliminated, cylinder and cylinder cut in the frame slightly enlarged.

The second model was also a mighty fine and very reliable heavy-caliber handgun. It was produced from 1915 until 1937 in .44 S. & W. Special, .44-40 Winchester and .45 Colt calibers.

The Hand Ejector 1926 Third Model was next of the lineal descendants of the Triple Lock. It differs from the Second Model in many small details including the installation of a hammer block and bringing back the heavy barrel lug as on its grandpappy, the Triple Lock.



The Third Model revolvers were chambered for the .44 S. & W. Special cartridge—although a few have been made on special order in .44-40 Winchester caliber. Production began on December 27, 1926.

It is interesting to note that this model was made up on special request for Wolf & Klar of Fort Worth, Texas, who took the first 3,500 and had exclusive sales rights at that time.

This Third or 1926 Model in target grade is also made in .44 S. & W. Special caliber only, and is one of the finest and most beautiful of the heavy handguns. It weighs just under 40 ounces, has a total length of 11¾ inches with a 6½ inch barrel. It may be had with 1/10 or 1/8-inch Patridge (square) type front (many experienced shooters prefer the 1/8-inch size) and a square notch rear sight, adjustable for windage and elevation.

Deliveries of this excellent revolver are

expected to be made to retail stores by the time this is in print or soon thereafter.

I can hardly wait to get my hands on one of these new guns as the .44 Special cartridge has long been a favorite of mine, and this gun should be great for long-range shooting at 300 or 400 yards.

These distances are really not practical ranges but great fun, nevertheless, and it is surprising the number of hits that can be made with practice. I once saw a shooter break four 8-inch plates at 220 yards with eight shots, this not from a sitting or rest position, but from the orthodox standing position using one hand!

The .44 Special is our best heavy-caliber cartridge, being especially designed for use with smokeless powder, unlike many of our revolver cartridges which were originally designed for black powder. It is really the outgrowth of the .44 S. & W. Russian cartridge which is one of the outstanding revolver cartridges of all time. Originally designed in black powder days, it is today loaded with smokeless and remains one of our most accurate revolver cartridges.

Incidentally, the Russian cartridge may be fired in the .44 S. & W. Special revolver.

Except for length the .44 S. & W. Special cartridge has the same measurements as the .44 S. & W. Russian, and strange as it may seem, the ammo factories load these two cartridges to the same muzzle velocity. But, the .44 Special may be hand loaded to higher speeds with corresponding higher striking energy.

I have seen the .44 Special cartridge loaded so heavily that when fired (by remote control) in a fine revolver flame seemed to fly from all parts of the gun. Of course, this practice is not to be recommended. As a matter of fact, it is a good idea to load so that pressures will not go much over 15,000 pounds to the square inch. When using revolvers in new or excellent condition some shooters go quite a bit over this figure, but the results in added speed ordinarily are not worth the risk to be taken.



I

**I**T WAS a shabby, rotten scheme from the beginning. It showed how low Jim Wiley had fallen. As to myself—well, I was only making a dollar.

Besides, you can't give too much of a damn about your own or anybody else's morals after you've spent twenty years pushing a rusty, wheezing river boat back and forth over the same stinking stretch of African river.

I was running a boat for hire, and if a skunk like Jim Wiley wanted to pay good money in advance for my services, then the rest of the business was none of my concern. It was up to that skinny little sucker

By  
**JOSEPH W. MUSGRAVE**