



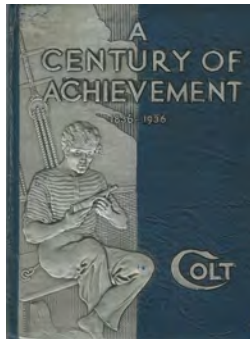
2nd and 3rd Generation Blackpowder Revolvers - 1971-2002

by J.C.

See this article as a DISPLAY at the OCTOBER 2016 UGCA show!

Colt collectors have marveled at the sight of the early Colt blackpowder revolvers for decades. In the beginning they were just tools to be used and admired for their efficiency, beauty and grace. Many of the early writings about them were inaccurate and incomplete leading to confusion among collectors. In 1937 Colt published "*A Century of Achievement 1836-1936*" which contains a brief history of the Colt Company and its firearms.

One of the early "modern" researched publications on the history of Colt and his revolvers was "*The History of the Colt Revolver*" by Charles T. Haven and Frank A. Belden, originally published in 1940. William B. Edwards wrote "*The Story of Colt's Revolver*" in 1950. In 1950 John E. Parsons published "*The Peacemaker and it Rivals*" which also addressed the growing interest in Colt firearms. As early as 1940, James E. Serven was conducting research and publishing papers on his findings. His book "*Colt Firearms 1836-1960*" is directly responsible for my interest in Colt revolvers.



In the early 1950's there was a new generation of men who had just survived two wars and now had a little time to become interested in the old Colts. There were the collectors who had become interested from reading about them in books. There were those who wanted to shoot them for fun and there were those who wanted their Colts for a new hobby of recreating Civil War battles. And, the old blackpowder guns were becoming members of some TV Westerns. Quickly, there became the reality that there just weren't enough old Colts to go around.

One of those men who became very aware of the problem and was a prominent student in the history of the Colt blackpowder revolvers was Val Forgett. Val, an engineer and collector of firearms who graduated from Clemson in 1956, worked in his father's welding

plant by day and ran a mail order firearms business at night. In the fall of 1957 he took a trip to Europe with a group of students of firearms history. He found himself in the Gardone Valley of Italy where he met another young man, Aldo Uberti. In 1958 they signed a contract to manufacture 6,000 revolvers. Their first revolvers were the 1851 Navy followed by the "Confederate" brass framed Griswold & Grier revolver. And, that was the beginning of *Navy Arms*.



THE COLT "C" SERIES- STAGE ONE

In 1971 Colt Industries decided to revive the 1851 Navy. They went to Val Forgett for help. Through his connections, he arranged for the production of the cast and machined parts in Italy, which were completed by Colt in the Hartford factory. All of the early 1851 Navy models produced in 1971-1973, were delivered through Forgett. They were finished in a lustrous "Royal Blue." The frames, hammers and loading levers were finished in the Colt tradition of case hardening with the use of heat and bone meal for carbon. The back straps and trigger guards were silver-plated.



FIRST 1,000 BLACK BOX

The first 1,000 1851 Navy revolvers were shipped in a black box similar to the box used in the earlier second generation Single Action Army revolvers.



REMAINDER THRU 1973

After the first 1,000 revolvers were produced the box was changed to a brown box with a line drawing of the 1851 Navy and "COLT'S 1851 NAVY" in large letters on the box top. That was the box in use for the remainder of production through 1973

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ROBERT E LEE



ULYSSES S. GRANT

two-gun set with both Generals. The individual sets were available with "matching" serial numbers on the two guns. For example, the Grant revolver would be serial numbered 123USG while the Lee revolver was numbered 123REL.



GRANT-LEE

The two-gun sets were in their own series of "matching" serial numbers; for example 123GLP and 123LGP. Total production of Lee and Grant revolvers was 4,750 while the total production of the two-gun sets was 250. Total production of the standard 1851 Navy revolvers was 25,150.

And, that was the end of the first "stage" of the Colt Second Generation Blackpowder "C" series.

THE COLT "C" SERIES- STAGE TWO

The second "stage" of the "C" Series began in early 1974 when Colt changed suppliers to Lou Imperato who was Colt's largest distributor. He became the supplier of component parts for their percussion revolvers. Finishing and assembly of the revolvers remained in the Colt facilities.



SILVER PLATED

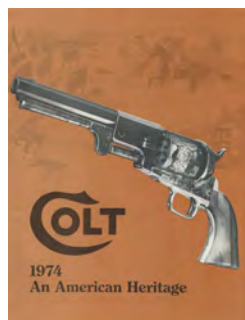
With the change in manufacturers to Lou Imperato in 1974, the boxes were changed to a brown wood grain Styrofoam lined box. The major part of production of the 1851 Navy was with a silver-plated back strap and trigger guard.



SHOOTER'S MODEL BRASS

An important part of the Val Forgett story included an issue of 1851 Navy Colts dedicated to the Civil War memory of Robert E. Lee and U. S. Grant. Production included individual cased sets for each of the Generals and a combined

Production also contained 500 1851 Navy revolvers with the back strap and trigger guard remaining as polished brass. Those models are referred to as "Shooter's Models".



1974 An American Heritage

In 1974 it was announced that the series was expanding to include a 3rd Model Dragoon. The 3rd Model Dragoon was on the cover of the 1974 Colt catalog; however, labor problems delayed the actual production until 1975.



1975 An American Heritage

Problems delayed the actual production until 1975.



3rd DRAGOON BRASS

Assembly and finish of the 3rd Model Dragoon was similar to the 1851 Navy models but with a brass back strap and trigger guard.

With major components and final finishing accomplished in the United States there are no proof marks. Total serial number range for the 1851 Navy from 1971-1976 was 4021-25099. Collectors refer to both the Forgett and Imperato production as the "C" series. The last of the "C" series were produced in 1976.

THE COLT "F" SERIES - Also Known as "The Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series"

As soon as the "C" Series was completed Lou Imperato, who owned Iver Johnson Arms, approached Colt with the idea of producing all of their blackpowder revolvers again as "The Authentic Colt Black Powder Series".

On a subcontract basis with Colt, Lou Imperato had the barrels, cylinders and backstraps cast in Italy and the frames, center pins, nipples and screws made by Iver Johnson in New Jersey. The same process of hand fitting and finishing the revolvers to Colt's specifications continued throughout the entire "F" Series. The revolvers were finished with a durable dark "Colt Blue." Eleven different models were produced with many variations in presentation and accessories. The "F" Series was terminated in 1982.

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SECOND GENERATION "F" SERIES

The boxes for this series were black, slightly oversized and lined in gray/black foam.



"Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series"

The first of the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" was the continuation of the 1851 Navy (above right), followed closely by the continuation of the 3rd Model Dragoon (above).



U.S. Cavalry 200th Anniversary Set

Two Model 1860 Army revolvers with shoulder stock in a handsome walnut case.



1851 Navy Smooth Cylinder

In addition, the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" also produced 300 1851 Navy revolvers with blank cylinders (no roll-engraved battle scene) and 490 with a stainless steel finish.

Colt introduced the 1860 Army to the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" in November 1978. Production continued until November 1982. An additional lot of the 1860 Army with a fully fluted cylinder was produced from July 1980 to October 1981. A special cased limited edition of 500 guns was offered in 1979.

U.S. Cavalry 200th Anniversary

The most collectable cased sets are the U.S. Cavalry 200th Anniversary double pistol sets with a shoulder stock and accessories.

These were produced in 1977 and only 3,001 were made, shown at left

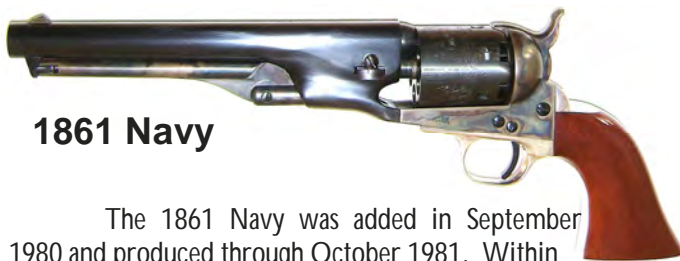
The 1862 Colt Pocket Navy and the 1862 Pocket Police were scaled down versions of the 1851 Navy and the 1860 Army, and the last percussion models introduced by Colt prior to the 1873 Single Action Army.



1862 Pocket & Navy 1862 Pocket Police

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(Continued from page 6) In December 1979 and January 1980 the 1862 Colt Pocket Navy and the 1862 Pocket Police were added to the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series". The Pocket Navy was produced through November 1981 and the Pocket Police through September 1981. In addition, both pocket pistols were produced in a limited edition of five hundred each in a French fitted presentation box with bullet mold, pewter powder flask, percussion cap tin and combination tool. The hard wood presentation boxes were enhanced with a brass medallion in the lid featuring a cast bust of Samuel Colt and the legend "AuthenticColt Blackpowder Series". Additionally, another limited edition of twenty-five Pocket Navy and Pocket Police revolvers were produced with a nickel finish and ivory grips in 1984. These are the rarest of the 2nd Generation Pocket Pistols.



1861 Navy

The 1861 Navy was added in September 1980 and produced through October 1981. Within

the 2nd Generation, the 1861 Navy series is one of the rarest models produced, six stainless guns manufactured in 1982. All six guns are in the hands of private collectors.

The 2nd Generation 1847 Walker was first issued in June 1980 as the "Colt Heritage," a limited, cased model complete with a special leather bound and gilt-edge edition of R L Wilson's book *The Colt Heritage*. A total of 1,853 were produced through June 1981. At the same time, the Walker was also made available without the additional case and book. Production of it, and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Model Dragoons ran from 1980 to 1982.

The Dragoons were a scaled down version of the 1847 Walker. The barrels were shortened from 9 inches to 7 ½ inches and the cylinder length was also reduced cutting their weight by nearly half a pound. The distinguishing characteristics between the three Dragoon models are minor; however, they can be easily spotted. The 1st Model can be identified by its square back trigger guard and oval cylinder stop slots. The 2nd Model has rectangular stop slots, and the 3rd Model Dragoons have rectangular stop slots and a rounded trigger guard. All three versions share a roll engraved Texas Ranger and Indian fight scene on the cylinder.

The last model to be introduced was the 1848Baby Dragoon chambered in .31 caliber, with five shots, a 4 inch barrel and no loading lever. The cylinder pin functioned as a loading ramrod. The first Baby Dragoon was introduced in 1979 as a limited edition of five hundred presentation models each in a French fitted case with powder flask, bullet mold, percussion cap tin and combination tool. Between February and April 1982 another 1,352 Baby Dragoons were produced for general sales.

The "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" production ended in 1992.

THIRD GENERATION "SIGNATURE SERIES"

In 1993 Lou Imperato and his son Anthony established the *Colt Blackpowder Arms Company of Brooklyn New York* to manufacture the "Third Generation Signature Series." Under a licensing agreement with Colt, they were responsible for quality control, inspection, marketing advertising, sales, shipping and distribution of the 3rd Generation Blackpowder revolvers. With this agreement, unlike the Second Generation revolvers that were finished and shipped from Colt, Colt did not process these guns through their facility although they did have a connection through the Colt web site for marketing. Acquiring a "Colt Letter" is; therefore, problematic. The first of the series the 1851 Navy began production in 1994. The final production ended the series ended in 2002.



(Top to bottom)
**1847
"Walker";
1st, 2nd
and 3rd
Model
Dragoon
pistols.**



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The "Signature Series" revolvers were packaged in a blue-gray box with a plastic liner formed to the shape of the gun and covered by a couple of thin sheets of black foam. The box was shipped in a white cardboard over-pack.

The primary differences between the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" and the "Signature Series" were in the finish quality. While the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" were given a high quality finish, the "Signature Series" were highly polished with dark, rich blue on the cylinders, barrels and other parts. The frames, hammers and loading levers were case hardened in brilliant colors. Many of the trigger guards and back straps were silver-plated. The signature of Sam Colt was roll engraved in each back strap.

The 3rd Generation Colt Blackpowder "Signature Series" was represented by all the same models as the Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series" with a few additional models, which were not in the "Authentic Colt Blackpowder Series."



**Whitneyville-Hartford
Dagoon**

The Whitneyville-Hartford Dagoon model was introduced in 1996 as a reproduction of the first model manufactured by Colt in Hartford Connecticut in the fall of 1847. Production of the original Whitneyville-Hartford Dagoon revolvers was limited to 240 guns before production turned to the First Model Dagoon.



**3rd Model
"Military" Dagoon**

Two additional Third Dagoon Models unique to the "Signature Series" were introduced in 1996. One was the "military" model with circular areas cut from the recoil shield on both sides of the frame to allow a shoulder stock to be attached. The back strap was also changed from brass to steel;

however,

3rd Model Dagoon with fluted Cylinder



no shoulder stock was produced and the additional screws were not placed in both sides of the frame to secure the shoulder stock. The other Third Dagoon Model had a fluted cylinder much like an experimental version produced by Colt with the intention of reducing the over-all weight of the revolver. After twelve revolvers were produced, the idea was abandoned in favor of what became the 1860 Army.



The 1849 Pocket was added to the "Signature Series" in 1995. It was originally produced from 1850 to 1873. During that time 325,000 of the little .31 caliber revolvers were manufactured. It was usually carried as a personal protection weapon.

**1849
Pocket**

1862 "Trapper" with loading rod.



In 1995 the 1862 Trapper was added to the inventory of "Signature Series" revolvers. The Trapper was a Colt modification of their 1862 Pocket Police Model. The barrel was shortened to 3.5 inches and the loading lever was removed. A brass "ramrod" was provided to assist in loading. The original model apparently proved to be impractical since Colt only produced approximately fifty Trapper revolvers.

Accessories

Accessory packages have been available to collectors from the beginning of the Colt 2nd Generation production of fine Colt Blackpowder revolvers.

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**Navy
Model
with
accessories**

Accessories packages included a walnut case with a fitted internal lining specific to the revolver model. Additional components included a powder flask, bullet mold, cap box and nipple wrench.

Some people may argue that these beautiful revolvers aren't "real" Colts because some of the parts originated in Italy. With that logic, is a Ford not a "real" Ford because some of the parts are made in Canada? All of the blackpowder series were marketed through Colt and are considered to be "Colts" all the way.

Anthony Imperato (Son Lou) is currently manufacturing *Henry Repeating Arms* rifles at a Bayonne New Jersey facility.



Signature Series Accessory Kits— Walker and Navy Models

With the introduction of the "Signature Series" specific accessory packages were provided for various models. The packages included a powder flask, cap box, nipple wrench and a highly polished and blued bullet mold with the Sam Colt signature on it.



Signature Series Bullet Mold



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