

An Editorial

Frank M. Sellers

You have by now received your copy of my new book *Baby Hammerless Revolvers*, printed jointly by the American Society of Arms Collectors and myself. They were handed out at the business meeting earlier. The test will be later this afternoon.

I would like to apologize to the two people who came here this morning actually wanting to hear a talk on Baby Hammerless revolvers. Most of you have little or no interest in these and similar arms which you consider to be “beneath the dignity” of this organization. I define “these” as anything that comes under the purview of the Federal Firearms Regulations. Many of you feel that these are not collectable and that is the subject of this talk.

The American Society of Arms Collectors is considered to be the apex or very top of arms collector groups in America, and in many minds the whole world. I have heard less complimentary terms used, but by the time a collector has advanced far enough in his collecting area to merit the honor (or gain the recognition of their peers) of membership, they will have also advanced in years. There is nothing wrong with advancing in years. In fact, it has much to recommend it over the alternative. We have discussed at past meetings the need to encourage some younger collectors. After all, if we don't bring the younger collectors along, there will be no one to buy our prized collectibles when we are finished with our stewardship.

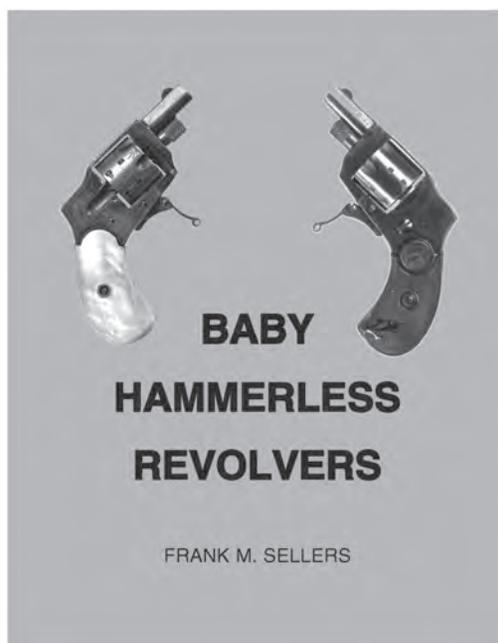
But what do the younger collectors collect? Almost by definition, the younger collector has less money to spend on his hobby than the older collector. With a smaller budget, the collector is forced to collect less expensive items. A young collector trying to balance house payments, car payments, children, etc., has little money to spend on expensive collectibles. The Kentucky rifles, U.S. Martial pistols and Colt revolvers, which have long been considered the pinnacle of arms collecting are well beyond the means of



today's beginning collectors. Even Winchester, Smith & Wesson, Sharps and Civil War guns, which forty years ago were looked down on as less desirable, are now bringing prices that would blanch an old-time advanced collector.

So what is left for the person who would like to collect today? You will notice that I used the word “person” instead of “man”, as most of us would have used forty years ago. Some of the new collectors are women. We actually have members who are of the female persuasion. Harry and Henry are undoubtedly spinning in their graves.

There are many areas of economical arms collectibles. Bayonets, small rifles, flare guns and many handguns come to mind immediately. The last category would include the Baby Hammerless revolvers here today. Like the others mentioned, and many others which will come to mind if you give it some thought, the Baby Hammerless revolvers were made in sizable quantities, so they are not rare in an of themselves. They were made in sufficient variety that a “whole” collection cannot be put together over night. You have to work for it! I have been collecting them seriously for more than forty years and there is still



one which I have not been able to find. (Our new member Jim Supica has one, but he also collects Baby Hammerless revolvers.)

The Baby Hammerless revolvers present a “problem” for many of you. Over half of the production was made after 1898, and thus a “firearm” under Federal Regulations. There is no reason for this to be a problem unless you live in one of those states (and some cities) which virtually outlaw the possession of *any* handgun. For the rest of you, it should not be a problem but from conversations at the meetings you think it is a problem. The problem is, I think, one of perception. Just because you are not interested in something, does not mean that others are not.

The American Society of Arms Collectors is a small society. It was designed to be a small society and we like it that way. There are many collectible fields represented within the society including most of the major antique fields. A comparison of the older Society directories with the most recent shows a more diverse group than it is now. We have not had a member interested in horology in many years, but that does not mean that we should shun a prospective member because he or she does not collect what we do.

There are many collector organizations in existence today that did not exist when our society was formed. Some of the largest organizations are for collectors of items that are either not represented or not well represented here. For that to come to mind immediately are the National Automatic Pistol Collectors Association, which does have some members here, the Ruger Collectors Association, the High Standard Collectors Association, and the Browning Collectors Association. All of these organizations have larger memberships than some of the “mainstream” collectors clubs representing the older collectibles.

Why should these organizations have larger memberships than the older ones? For the same reasons mentioned above: they are plentiful, they are interesting and **THEY ARE AFFORDABLE**. You don't have to be rich to collect them (although some might argue that point in regards to the Brownings). A younger person can afford to collect them. If there are that many people interested in them, I don't think we, as an association, should look down our noses at them. While I personally would not want to collect any of them, I do not think that is a reason to deny membership to a collector in one of these fields membership in our club if he or she was otherwise qualified for membership under the bylaws and rules. Another thing to consider is that collectors change their minds occasionally. A collector of Rugers today might become the Kentucky collector of tomorrow.

There have been many changes in the American Society of Arms Collectors in the twenty-nine years that I have been a member. Happily, most of them have been for the better. I think it is time for another change. It is time we gave some consideration to the modern collectors. We do not need to have a massive recruiting drive to get a large influx of collectors of modern, but we need to think about it and some of us may need a fresh look at what is going on in the collecting world. Too many members think that the only show that is a gun show is Baltimore, and would not think of going to something like (HORRORS) the Tulsa show which has more attendees for each show than Baltimore has in ten years. The number of displays of some of the groups mentioned above sometimes outnumber the total tables of some of the antique only shows.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!