

Thomas K. Bacon — The Arms and The Man

Lowell J. Wagner

BACON MANUFACTURING COMPANY PRODUCTION

Bacon Manufacturing Company's first production model appears to have been the "Excelsior" percussion revolver. This octagon barrel, removable side plate revolver was nearly identical to the Manhattan percussion revolver. Gruler and Rebetey were involved with Bacon's production of a percussion revolver similar to the Manhattan revolver. In 1859, they attempted to patent the removable side plate feature of the Manhattan revolver, but this attempt was rejected by the patent office. Therefore, Thomas Bacon and his new company was free to produce the Excelsior model, which was made between 1859 and 1862 or 1863. Total production appears to have been less than 1000 guns.

The Excelsior model can be found with four different barrel markings, which include the large and small one line address, the very small two line Bacon Mfg. Co. address, and the "Bacon Mfg. Co. Norwich Conn. Depot 297 New York" address. "Depot 297" refers to the address of B.J. Hart and Bro., well-known sporting goods and gun dealers located at 297 Broadway in New York. All "Depot 297" guns known have serial numbers under 200. A very few Excelsior model guns will be found without any markings.

Most, but not all, Excelsior model revolvers were ornamented with the standard rose vine style of engraving. Engraving variations include a few guns with a minimal amount of barrel engraving and a few special order guns that evidently were engraved after leaving the Bacon Mfg. Co. factory.

The most common barrel length of the Excelsior model is four inches, with a few of five-inch length. No six-inch Excelsior models have been noted.

Around 1862 or 1863, Bacon changed to production of the second model, which had a round barrel and semi-fluted cylinder. total production of the second model is difficult to determine but probably was less than 3,000. I have found several serial number duplications of second model revolvers. I believe that Bacon Mfg. Co. started over numbering their various models



after exceeding the four-digit serial numbers. This could have been for ease of numbering internal parts of guns in manufacture.

Most of the early second model revolvers have the standard rose vine engraving. A very few have rose vine engraving with a stippled background covering most of the frame; this special engraving will also be found on occasion on other models manufactured by Bacon Mfg. Co. Several examples of the second model percussion revolver have been noted without any engraving. We can assume either that these guns were sold for a slightly lower price or that they were examples of cost-cutting in later production.

The second model percussion revolver is most often found with the one-line large Bacon address marking, with many examples bearing the name of dealers, or trade names. Guns numbered under 100 and between 400 and 600 are stamped with the "B.J. Hart & Bro. N.Y." marks; other guns of this model are marked "Tomes, Son & Melvaine, N.Y." We noted earlier that these two firms were stockholders in the Bacon Mfg. Co. Other trade names include "Western Arms Co. N.Y.," "Union Arms Co. N.Y.," and "Fitch and Waldo, N.Y." They were so marked at the request of these New York dealers.

A third model percussion revolver, produced in limited numbers late in the existence of Bacon Mfg. Co., was to become the first produced by Hopkins and Allen when they purchased the assets of Bacon Mfg. Co. In this model, we find the round barrel-round cylinder combination, and also note the first usage of a

(The first three parts of Mr. Wagner's talk appeared in Bulletin 47 after his presentation at Williamsburg. It is concluded here.)



Bacon Mfg. Co. "Excelsior" First Model revolvers.



Second Model percussion revolvers, engraved.



Excelsior Model with special engraving (bottom).

three-piece loading lever, similar to the Whitney lever: a link was added between the lever and plunger for ease of operation. The hooked-style hand spring is mounted in the removable side plate rather than on the hand itself in this model. Except for the barrel markings, it would be virtually impossible to determine if a particular gun was a third model percussion revolver of Bacon Mfg. Co. or the round barrel Hopkins and Allen model. Most third model percussion revolvers have the rolled cylinder scene but no engraving; this is again indicative of the cost-cutting procedures involved with later Bacon Mfg. Co. production. I believe substantially less than 1,000 third model percussion revolvers were produced.

The style of the roll die marking on the cylinder of Bacon Mfg. Co. percussion revolvers, as well as Manhattan revolvers and Hopkins and Allen percussion re-



Top, Excelsior; center, 2nd Model; bottom, 3rd Model.



Second Models, not engraved.



Third Model percussion revolvers.



Top, 2nd Model; bottom, 3rd Model.

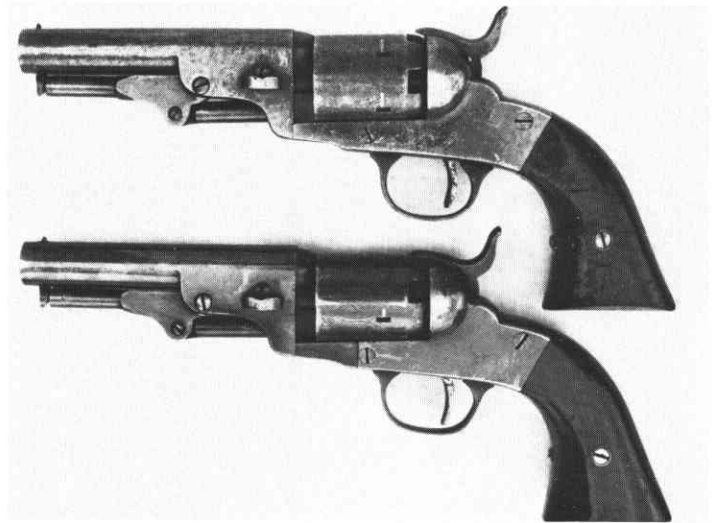
volvers is interesting: they all have the same cylinder scene! Either the roll die was designed and owned by Thomas Bacon or one taken by him when he left Manhattan, or the scene was rolled on a custom basis outside of the plant. In any event, all three companies used the very same cylinder scene.

Bacon apparently also produced an inexpensive single shot percussion pistol. A Bacon Mfg. Co. advertisement in the 1861 *Stedman Norwich Directory* showed all models being produced or contemplated by them: one model was the inexpensive single shot percussion pistol. These spur trigger pistols apparently were not marked and were produced in small numbers.

The Rollin White patent was not to expire until 1867. Evidently the management and owners of Bacon Mfg. Co. were not concerned about this patent. We find that the advertisement placed in the 1861 Norwich Directory shows Bacon Mfg. Co. was producing a full line of cartridge revolvers with their Excelsior model percussion revolver and the single shot percussion pistol. Some models shown in the advertisement probably were not produced: it shows a .32 and a .22 tip up frame model similar to the early Smith and Wesson models. No examples of these guns have been found.

We know that Bacon produced the large .38 Navy cartridge revolver, with a .32 pocket revolver, a .25 cartridge revolver and the .22 revolvers. While each of these guns were of similar shape and mechanism, I consider each caliber to be a separate and distinct model.

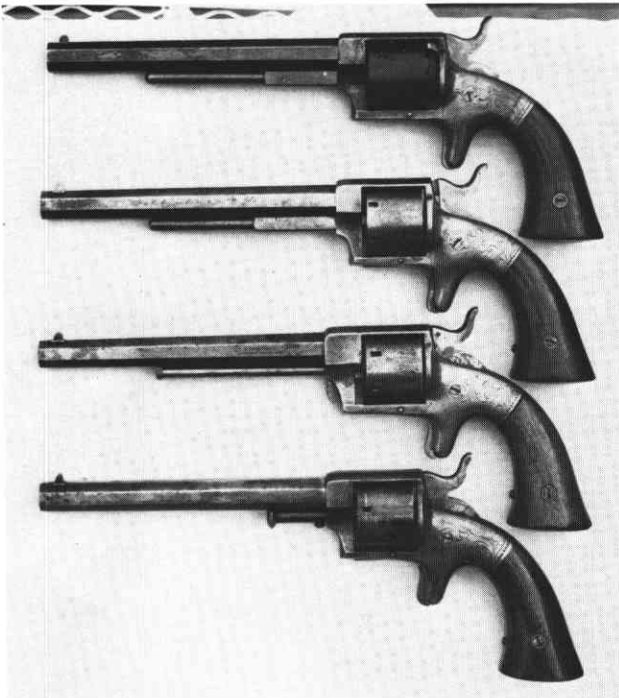
The 1861 advertisement pictured the first model .38 Navy revolver. This is the model with the folding cylinder pin and the removable cartridge retaining ring at the rear of the cylinder. This model required a



Hopkins & Allen and 3rd Model Bacon revolvers.



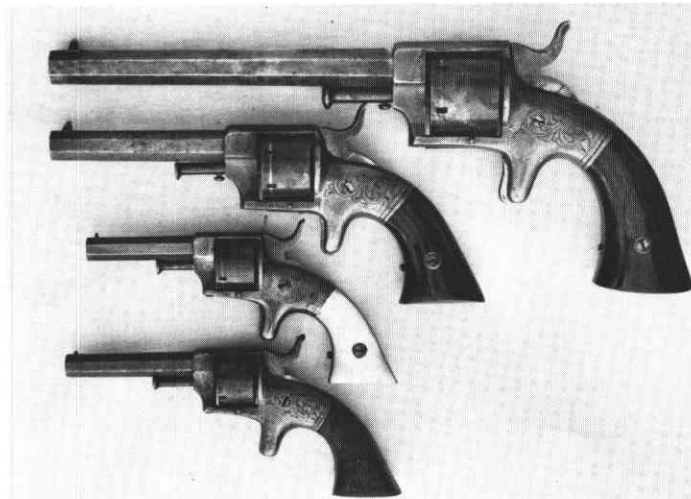
Possible Bacon Mfg. Co. single shot percussion pistol.



Top to bottom: 1st Model, Pin Model (2nd Model), Hopkins Patent (3rd Model), 4th Model.



Hopkins Patent .38, .32, and .22.



Top to bottom: .38 Navy, .32 Pocket, .25 Pocket, .22 Pocket.

spanner wrench to remove the plate for loading the cylinder. Evidently this system did not prove practical. We find instructions by Bacon Mfg. Co. stating that the removable plate must be fastened finger tight, otherwise the plate could jam when the cartridges were fired.

The typical first model Navy revolver was engraved with the rose vine engraving and was stamped with either the small or the large one-line Bacon Mfg. Co. address. Approximately 125 of these first model Navy revolvers were produced.

The second model Navy revolver to be produced by Bacon Mfg. Co. was called the "Pin Model" by the company. This is the more common Navy revolver with folding cylinder pin and standard cartridge cylinder. Standard barrel length in this model, as well as other Navy models, is 7½ inches. The frame is engraved with the rose vine engraving and the barrel is marked with the large one-line address. Approximately 400 pin model revolvers were produced.

The third model Navy revolver produced by Bacon Mfg. Co. was under C.W. Hopkins' patent #35419 of May 27, 1862. It was called the "Patent Model" by officers of Bacon Mfg. Co.; the patent was for a swing-out cylinder. A 7½ inch barrel stamped with the large one-line address was standard for this model. About half of the Hopkins Patent Navy revolvers will be found with the rose vine engraving, while the balance will represent the cost-cutting elimination of the engraving. Some will be found engraved with the standard rose vine pattern embellished with the stipple background found on other Bacon Mfg. Co. firearms.

With proper promotion and production by Bacon Mfg. Co., this model could have been very successful and produced in large numbers, as it was the first successful swing-out cylinder patented; the advantages of this mechanism are obvious. Other basic systems were patented in Britain by S. Moore and by B.F. Joslyn in 1862 and 1863. Nonetheless Bacon Mfg. Co. appears to have produced only approximately 325 .38 Hopkins Patent Navy revolvers.

A fourth model .38 cartridge revolver was produced, evidently very late in the existence of Bacon Mfg. Co. This model is very similar to the Pin Model but has a more standard cylinder pin with a push-button release integrated into the pin itself. This release mechanism was common in Bacon Mfg. Co. pocket model cartridge revolvers. Very few examples of this model exist; of the two I own, one is plated and bears absolutely no marking. It probably was produced at the time of or just after the Smith and Wesson lawsuit. The second example is marked with the small one-line

address and has the Rollin White patent date stamped on the cylinder. This gun was probably made sometime between January of 1864 and 1866. I estimate that less than fifty of these fourth model Navy revolvers were produced.

It appears that the removable trigger guard model was the first Pocket Model cartridge revolver produced by Bacon Mfg. Co. By turning the trigger guard, which was connected to a screw, the barrel could be removed from the frame, releasing the cylinder for loading. Approximately 300 were produced. This model was produced in the short frame variation with a cylinder chambered for the .32 short cartridge; later a large frame version was manufactured which had a cylinder chambered for the .32 long cartridge. The small frame model was usually engraved with the standard Bacon Mfg. Co. rose vine pattern. The large frame models will be found either engraved or nonengraved.

I have received reports that a .22 removable trigger guard cartridge revolver was produced: I have never seen such a model. If the model does exist, it would be an extreme rarity.

Bacon Mfg. Co. also produced the standard old model .32 pocket revolver. Evidently this proved to be very successful, with approximately 3,000 produced, more than any other individual model of the company.

With the exception of the many guns of this model having the longer cylinder to chamber the .32 long cartridge, most standard old model pocket revolvers were virtually identical. The rose vine engraving was standard in early production of this model; a few will be found with the more fancy stippled background. Virtually all early production old model pocket revolvers included the hunting scene on the cylinder. Later models will be found without engraving and without the cylinder scene. Guns manufactured after the settlement with Smith and Wesson will include the Rollin White patent date on the cylinder. The four-inch barrel length is the most common, with many in the five-inch length.

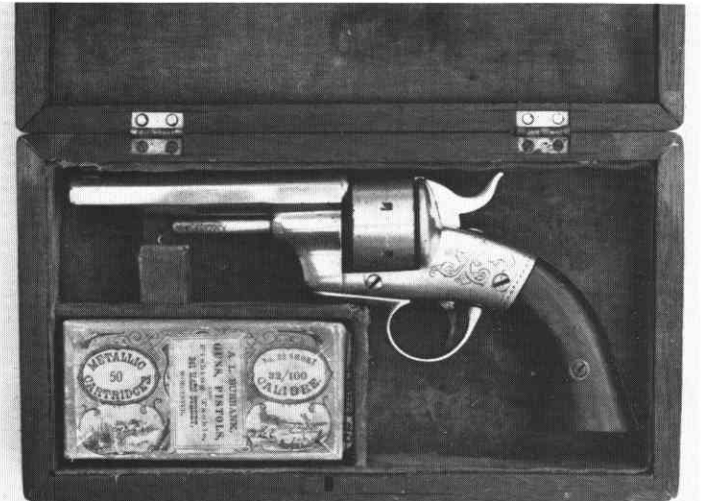
Standard model pocket revolvers will be marked with various barrel stampings; the most common is the large one-line Bacon address. Other stamps include the small one-line address, "Western Arms Co., N.Y." and "Union Arms Co. N.Y."

Bacon Mfg. Co. also produced revolvers of the same basic configuration in the .25 and .22 short calibers. I consider each of these guns to be separate models.

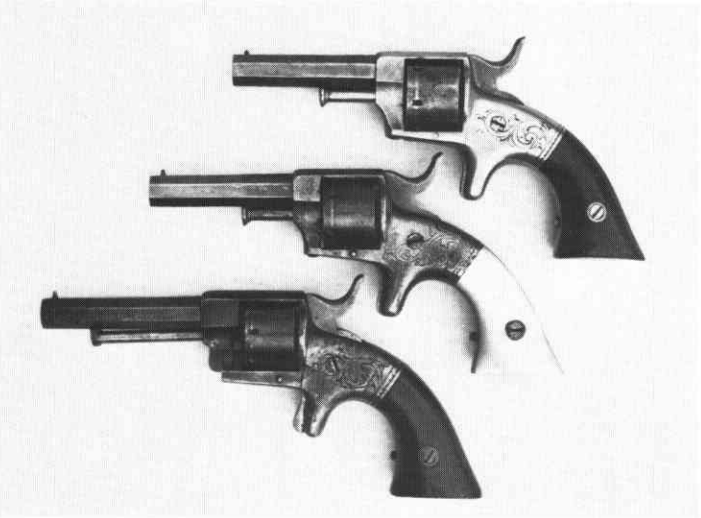
The .25 caliber revolver was produced in very small numbers. Existing specimens show that the gun had the rose vine frame engraving, was usually marked



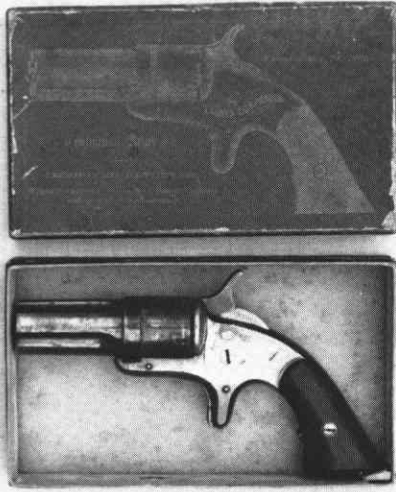
Large and small frame removable trigger guard models.



Cased small frame removable trigger guard model.



Two .25 Pocket Models and one Hopkins Patent .22.



Boxed Bacon Mfg. Co. Continental Arms Co. "Ladies Companion" .22 Pepperbox.

with the Bacon address and was usually blued; variations include nickel plating. While it is difficult to determine exact production of this model, I would estimate that less than 125 .25 pocket revolvers were manufactured. Very few other guns were chambered for the .25 cartridge. Many ads for cartridges of the era list the .25 rimfire cartridge as the ".25 Bacon and Bliss" cartridge.

I consider the .22 Bacon Mfg. Co. revolver to be a definite rarity. While records appear to show a production of over 1100 guns, I have only seen a very few .22 pocket models in collections and at gun shows. The highest serial number I have seen is 204, but until further verification, I must respect the records available and estimate production at 1200. The revolver will be found with either a Bacon Mfg. Co. address or the "Union Arms Co. N.Y." barrel stamping.

After obtaining the Hopkins patent, Bacon Mfg. Co. produced, along with the .38 Navy revolver, a .32 and .22 Hopkins Patent revolver. The .32 revolver usually will be found without engraving. The barrel will most often be stamped on the top barrel flat with the one-line large Bacon address. The left hand barrel flat will be marked C.W. Hopkins Patented May 27, 1862. Late production Hopkins Patent pocket revolvers will also carry the Rollin White patent date on their cylinders. Company records show a production of approximately 750 .32 Hopkins patented pocket revolvers.

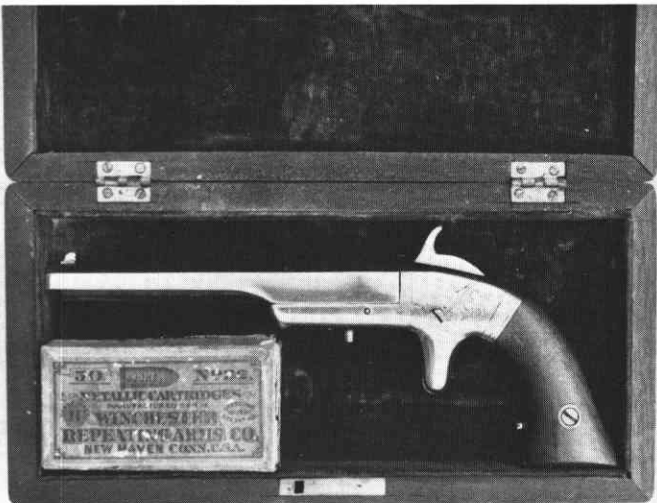
The survival rate of .22 Hopkins Patent pocket revolvers must again be very minimal and I consider them rarities. Records show production on this model in excess of 400 guns. Except for size, caliber and number of shots, the .22 Hopkins Patent revolver has similar specifications to the .32 Hopkins Patent model.

Rollin White's patent did not preclude the manufacture of pepperbox firearms; the pepperbox was a group of barrels and not a separate bored-through cylinder. Therefore, Bacon Mfg. Co. determined that a small .22 pepperbox could be manufactured and sold without the worry of the patent infringement.

The pepperbox was being developed by the Bacon Mfg. Co. early in 1866, at the same time that Bacon Arms Company was developing their .22 caliber pepperbox. Examining the correspondence in the patent files, it becomes obvious that the Patent Office was confused and believed the two patent applications were from the same company, confusing a .22 pepperbox application from Bacon Mfg. Co. with Bacon Arms Company, both from Norwich. The patent office required certain changes on each of these patents and on August 28, 1866, patent number 57,622 was issued to

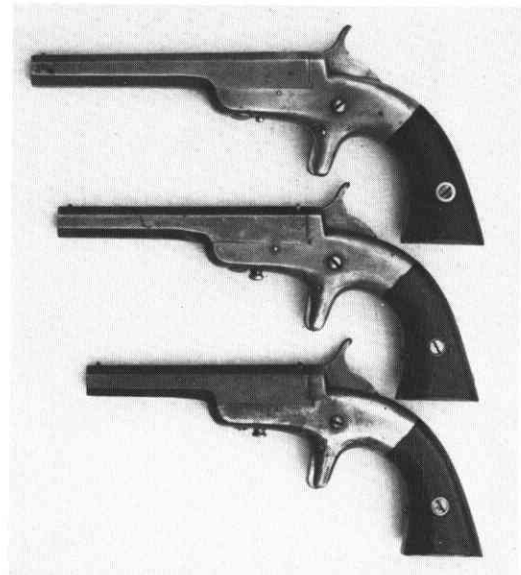


Small frame Bacon Mfg. Co. single shot pistols; bottom 2, brass frame.



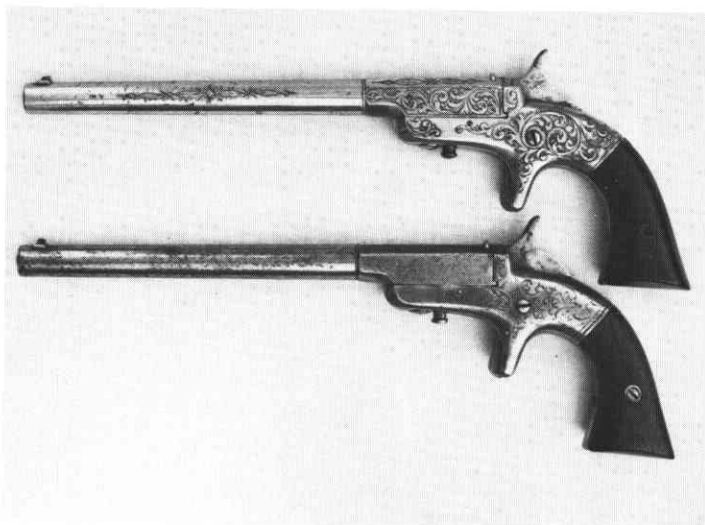
Cased small frame cartridge pistol.

Charles A. Converse and Samuel S. Hopkins. This patent was then assigned to the Bacon Mfg. Co. The gun was to be called the "Lady's Companion." Bacon Mfg. Co. was well aware of the development and marketing of the Bacon Arms Company's .22 pepperbox. Rather than have two .22 pepperboxes coming on the market at virtually the same time, each carrying a Bacon name, Bacon Mfg. Co. decided to market their pepperbox under the name of Continental Arms Company. This was a fictitious name and was used by Bacon Mfg. Co. to avoid the confusion with Bacon Arms Co. The typical .22 Lady's Companion pepperbox was manufactured with a blued barrel group, silver plated frame and rosewood grips. I would estimate that less than 1,000 Lady's Companion pepperboxes were manufactured.



Large frame cartridge pistols, 4, 4½, and 5" barrels.

Bacon Mfg. Co. also manufactured single shot cartridge pistols. These were shown in very early Bacon ads. Two separate single shot cartridge pistol models were manufactured, the first being the small frame single shot chambered for the .32 short cartridge, with barrel lengths in four, five and six inches. The typical small frame model has rose vine frame engraving, and was marked with the small one-line address. Most small frame pistols were blued, with very few nickel plated. Approximately 800 small frame pistols were manufactured.



Special order large frame cartridge pistols.

Bacon Mfg. Co. manufactured a brass frame small frame pistol. The dimensions and specifications for this model are virtually identical to the small frame pistol. I have observed only the four-inch barrel length in the brass frame model. Most brass frame pistols carried the small one-line Bacon Mfg. Co. stamp. Since the frame was of brass, these pistols were not engraved.

One variation in both the small frame pistol and the brass frame pistol is that of the configuration of the breech and breech block at the frame. The standard small frame pistol had a straight barrel breech and a straight breechblock. Variations included a projection on the barrel breech fitting into a like-sized notch in the face of the breechblock, and the notched breechblock variation with a straight breech.

The last pistol manufactured by Bacon Mfg. Co. was the large frame single shot chambered for the .32 long cartridge. To accommodate the additional power of the .32 long cartridge, the frame had to be strengthened and enlarged. The standard large frame pistol was blued, made in four, four and one-half and five inch barrel lengths and was not engraved. I believe that less than 1600 large frame pistols were produced.

A few cased Bacon Mfg. Co. guns have been



Cased 2nd Model percussion revolver.



Marked only "cast Steel"; made from left-over 2nd and 3rd Model parts.



2nd Model Bacon with matched Manhattan cylinder.



Experimental cup-fire revolver from 2nd Model percussion parts.

found. It appears that most casings were done on special order and were cased by the dealer after the gun left the factory. Certain exceptions to this rule will be found in special casings made up by Bacon Mfg. Co. for samples and show pieces. We find Bacon Mfg. Co. exhibiting in the Annual New London County Agricultural Fair in 1860 and 1861. A listing in the Norwich Weekly Courier stated that Bacon Mfg. Co. won a premium prize of \$5.00 in 1860 and \$3.00 in 1861 for "1 case pistols." At least these guns were cased at the direction of the company. There appears to be no way of authenticating a cased set; however, any specially engraved and appointed gun in a casing *could be* a Bacon Mfg. Co. set.

BACON ARMS COMPANY

Thomas Bacon was forced out of Bacon Mfg. Co. late in 1863. Bacon was not one to quit: it appears that he may have been planning a new company even while still the Superintendent and General Agent for Bacon Mfg. Co.

We find the joint stock company opening report on Bacon Arms Company filed on February 13, 1864. The actual formation of the company probably took place in 1863. Bacon Arms Company was formed with Bacon, Cobb, John Vickers and ten other stockholders. The company was capitalized at \$20,000. Bacon obtained 80 of the 800 shares of the company. On March 14, 1864, Bacon Arms Company purchased their factory building for \$15,000 from Jedediah Spalding. The purchase was for a building and water rights located on Franklin at the corner of Mill Pond Lane. This building, which still stands today is used as an auto dealership, served as the foundry and manufacturing plant for Bacon Arms Company. It appears that they may have had their offices in another building about a block from the factory. The building on Franklin at Pond was also the home for the Norwich Lock Company and at least one other small manufacturing company.

A news item in the December 5, 1865, edition of the *Norwich Morning Bulletin* reports: "T.K. Bacon, having disposed of his interest and resigned the agency of the Bacon Arms Company, the business hereafter will be conducted by A.E. Cobb, agent, and John Vickers, foreman." Was Bacon of failing health, or was he replaced because of his lack of ability to manage a company, or did he sell his acquired stock at a profit to help his declining financial condition? We may never know the real reason for his removal from Bacon Arms Company so soon after it was formed.

Bacon Arms Company was destined to continue in

business for some 24 years, the longest of any of Bacon's companies; while they continued to operate until 1888, the company never was very successful. It appears that they may have produced other foundry work along with the production of firearms.

According to census reports of 1870, Bacon Arms Company had a capital stock of \$20,000, was powered by a 14 horsepower, 3 foot x 28 foot water wheel, operating 18 lathes, 4 milling machines, 4 index machines, one planer and 3 drills. Twenty-five hands over age 16 were employed with annual wages of \$15,000. An estimate of 5,000 pistols were produced, valued at \$25,000.

The 1880 census shows that a 10 horsepower steam boiler and engine had been added. Capital was increased to \$40,000, with the number of hands increased to 36 over 16 years of age and 14 children. The wages for a skilled mechanic were \$3.00 for a ten-hour day. Value of product (including jobbing and repairing) was \$42,200.

Amos Cobb again enters prominently into the formation and operation of this new company. Cobb was not only an original stockholder, but went on to become Secretary and, later, General manager of the Bacon Arms Company.

Bacon Arms Company produced many inexpensive spur trigger revolvers. This production continued until the very end of their existence, at which time they produced a side hammer single shot 12 gauge shotgun. This gun was under production in 1888 when George Cilley purchased the remaining assets and real estate of Bacon Arms Company, as well as the equipment and work in progress. Cilley completed the outstanding contracts for production of the shotguns with one or more dealers or distributors, then went on to form the Crescent Firearms Company and to continue operation from the old Bacon Arms Company plant on Franklin and Pond.

BACON ARMS COMPANY PRODUCTION

Bacon Arms Company was conceived during the time that Bacon Mfg. Co. was involved with the Smith and Wesson lawsuit. By the time Bacon Arms Company was actually formed, Bacon Mfg. Co. was negotiating a settlement with Smith and Wesson. Since early Bacon Arms Company production appears to have been the percussion revolver and the .22 caliber pepperbox, Bacon Arms probably did not obtain a license from Smith and Wesson to produce cartridge revolvers.

Bacon Arms Company immediately began producing a solid frame percussion revolver. Schuyler, Hartley and Graham advertised this revolver in their

RESIST FIRE OF ALL THE FACTORY. FURNISH WARRANTS TO THE SAMPLES, ENCLOSE STAMP FOR FULL PARTICULARS. W. A. HAYWARD (Manufacturing Jeweler), 208 Broadway.



A New Cartridge Revolver,
Carrying Six Balls (80 to the pound). Any one wanting a superior Pocket or Belt Arm will find this to be the best in the market. Send for circular.
MERWIN & BRAY, Agents, 245 Broadway, N. Y.,
Or MERWIN & CO., 354 Pennsylvania Avenue, U. S. STAIRS, Washington, D. C.

"Something New for All."
GEN. GEO. B. McCLELLAN and our New Union Prize Gift Packages are to be wondered at. Seventy-five cents worth of indispensable articles for 25 cents. Agents are making from \$5 to \$10 per day. Agents wanted, male and female, everywhere. Address, with stamp for circular, RICKARDS & CO., 102 Nassau Street, New York.

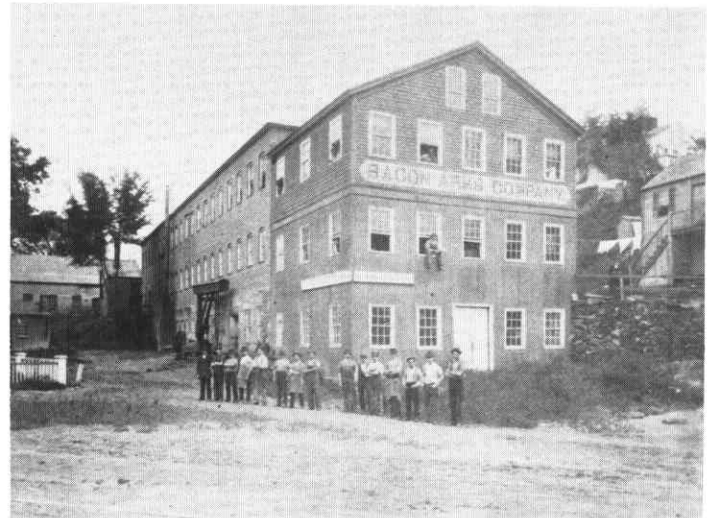
Boston Office, 293 N
Philadelphia Office,

**Grand
Cloaks!**

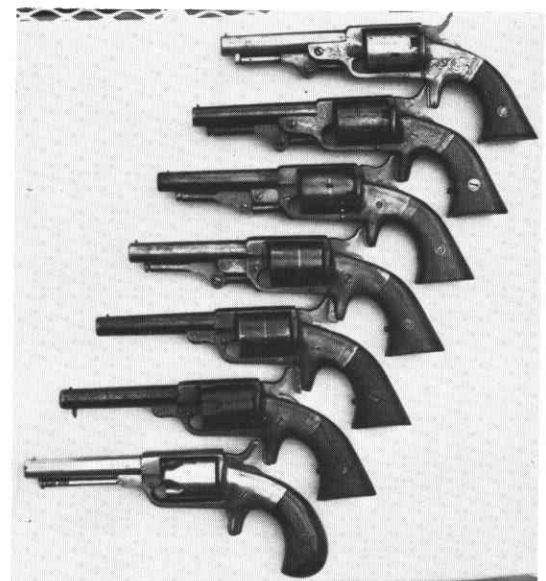
**For the
BRO
OLD S
300 Can
at
His Palace**

**Under the 5th
Cor. of 2**

Advertisement from *Harpers* for the removable trigger guard model.



The Bacon Arms Co. factory in 1876.



Transition: Bacon Arms Co. .31 calibre percussion to the .32 Pocket Model.



Boxed Bacon Arms Co. .22 pepperbox.



Pepperbox variations.



Pepperbox and "DEAD SHOT" conversion.

1864 catalog. The standard first model revolver included a barrel lug projecting under the barrel as part of the frame. The gun was engraved and was not marked with the Bacon Arms Company address. The gun also used a sliding pushbutton cylinder pin release similar to the Freeman patent mechanism. I have found no reference to the assignment or licensing of Bacon Arms Company to use the Freeman patent. Perhaps this was a reason for Bacon Arms Company not marking the first model with their name. Approximately 1,000 first model revolvers were manufactured. Whether Bacon Arms Company redesigned this model due to a patent infringement problem with the cylinder pin release or due to modernization is not known.

The second model percussion revolver was marked with the Bacon Arms Company stamp. The gun was manufactured less expensively, since it had no engraving and the old barrel lug was replaced with a large head on the cylinder pin. The loading lever was then attached to the cylinder pin head and the entire assembly held in place by a screw in the side of the frame. Approximately 600 second model guns were produced.

The transition from the first model to second model created a "transition model." This transition model used the old frames with the barrel lug, but did not include the Freeman type cylinder pin release. In these very rare variations, the cylinder pin was held in place by the loading lever; this made it sometimes difficult to remove the cylinder pin.

At the expiration of the Rollin White patent, Bacon Arms began the transition from percussion revolvers to what was to become their first full-production cartridge revolver. The first conversions to leave the factory were standard second model revolvers with the loading levers intact, only the cylinder being replaced with a bored-through round cylinder. The second step in the evolution was removal of the loading lever assembly and its replacement with an extractor pin, with the cylinder remaining round. Step 3 introduced the semi-fluted cylinder. The final step was the changing of the grips from a square butt to the bird's head shape; the final step also included nickel plating. Production of the .32 caliber bird's head grip revolver became standard, with only minor variations in barrel markings. Approximately 1,000 of these .32 caliber revolvers were produced.

Before the expiration of Rollin White's patent, Bacon Arms Company developed their version of the .22 pepperbox. Patent Number 57,448 was granted to John H. Vickers on August 21, 1866. This was seven

days before issuance of Bacon Mfg. Co.'s pepperbox patent. Bacon Arms' version of the cartridge pepperbox was a .22 caliber solid frame gun. The actual production model pepperbox did not include the hinged, swing-down barrel group shown on the patent. The production model had a solid frame extension continuing under the barrel group and projecting up in front of the barrel. This system was anticipated by Wm. H. Elliot in his Patent Number 28,461 of May 2, 1860. A few .22 Bacon Arms Co. pepperboxes are marked with this patent date. The original patent drawing for the Elliot patent is marked in pencil "B.A. Co. April 14th, 1863." Was this an unrecorded assignment to Bacon Arms Co.? If so, the assignment was conceived while Thomas Bacon was still with Bacon Mfg. Co.! Approximately 1,000 .22 pepperboxes were manufactured.

It appears that there were no mechanical variations in the manufacture of this pepperbox; the only variations noted have been in marking and finish. We find the markings of Bacon Arms Company on many of the guns, but not all of them. We also find the Elliot patent date on a few guns.

As the 1869 expiration date of White's patent approached, Bacon Arms Company found themselves with unsold pepperboxes and pepperbox parts in their inventory. Their first small caliber cartridge revolver was manufactured from those parts. The solid frame under the barrel group was cut off and a new combination barrel and top strap was pinned to the old frame. To this was added a new cylinder. The gun was marked DEAD SHOT. Total production of this particular model was probably less than 1,000.

The expiration of Rollin White's patent ushered in the era of the inexpensive spur trigger revolver; Bacon Arms Company was to be a major manufacturer of these guns.

Many companies manufactured inexpensive spur trigger revolvers and marked them with trade names. Because of this, it is sometimes difficult to determine what company actually produced a certain model or version of these revolvers. We must attempt to determine the origin of manufacture by researching patents, advertisements of the era, specifications, etc. The same is true in an attempt to determine the production of Bacon Arms Company.

It appears that the first spur trigger revolver produced after the Dead Shot conversion was a revolver marked GOVERNOR. The configuration of the side plate, frame and internal parts are nearly identical to that of the .22 pepperbox. While this is not absolute evidence, I am sure Bacon Arms Company produced

THE
"BONANZA,"
 THE NEATEST AND LIGHTEST REVOLVER OUT.



.22 CARTRIDGE.

NEW 7 SHOT REVOLVER.

WEIGHT ONLY 6 OUNCES.

Price, Half Plated, \$3.50. Full Plated, \$4.00.

New York, March 1st, 1876.

SIR: I take pleasure in handing you the above cut—full size—of the new and improved Pocket Revolver the **"BONANZA,"** seven shot, for .22 cartridge, which I have selected after careful examination as the best and most reliable Revolver in the market for Pocket use.

This Revolver combines, by reason of its superior and careful construction, as nearly as possible, all the qualities requisite for accuracy of shooting, rapidity of firing, ease and simplicity of loading, etc. No clogging, no misfire, no turning by hand of the cylinder like the *Buffalo Bill* and *Petrel*; in fact, none of the various objections incident to most other Revolvers of this nature. When once loaded, this Revolver may be laid aside for any length of time without injury to the arm or the cartridge. Its weight—only 6 ounces—makes it peculiarly adapted for the pocket. It is fully warranted.

My terms are C. O. D., and collection fees by Express, or by mail postpaid if money accompanies the order. Cartridges cannot be sent by mail.

Respectfully,
A. C. KUOK,
 51 Nassau Street, New York.

P. O. Box 4288.

REFER BY PERMISSION TO

Messrs. Wallace & Sons, 89 Chambers Street.
 Messrs. E. Miller & Co., 4 Warren Street.
 Bridgeport Brass Co., 69 John Street.
 Bristol Brass & Clock Co., 122 Chambers Street.

N. B.—Catalogues and Price-Lists of other Pistols and Revolvers free on application.

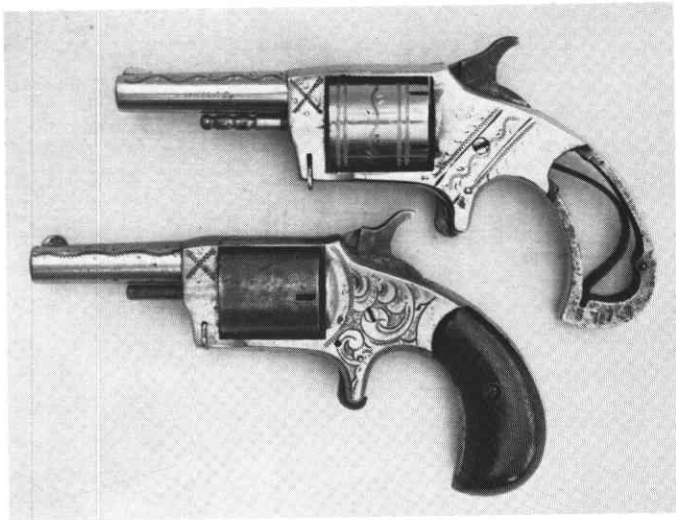
BONANZA advertisement. Price: \$3.50.



THE GEM.

Exact Size. Weight 3 1/4 Ounces. 7 Shot. 22 Calibre. Ivory Decorated Stock. Engraved. Nickel Plated. Gift Cylinder. \$5.50 each; with Pearl Stock, \$5.50.

Bacon's GEM revolver and an advertisement for it. As shown, \$5.50!



Big BONANZA.



CONQUERORs.



RELIABLEs.

these guns. The Governor revolver was produced in .22S, .22L, and .30S calibers. The cylinder pin on early models had a projection or pin that fit into a slot on the side of the frame. Later cylinder pin releases were a spring loaded push lever at the front of the frame. There are many variations other than caliber: some include barrel length, cylinder shape, cylinder pin release, grip material and finish.

On December 10, 1878, Alonzo Sweet, an employee of Bacon Arms Company, invented (patent no. 210,725) a method of locking the cylinder with a spring loaded arm attached to the trigger. Guns produced after this date by Bacon Arms Company were usually marked with the December 10, 1878 patent date. All of those guns include the double "pincher" pull-down type cylinder pin release. With the possible exception of guns marked "U.S. Arms Company," all guns which I have examined with the double pincher type cylinder pin release were manufactured by Bacon Arms Company. These guns came in various calibers and several variations.

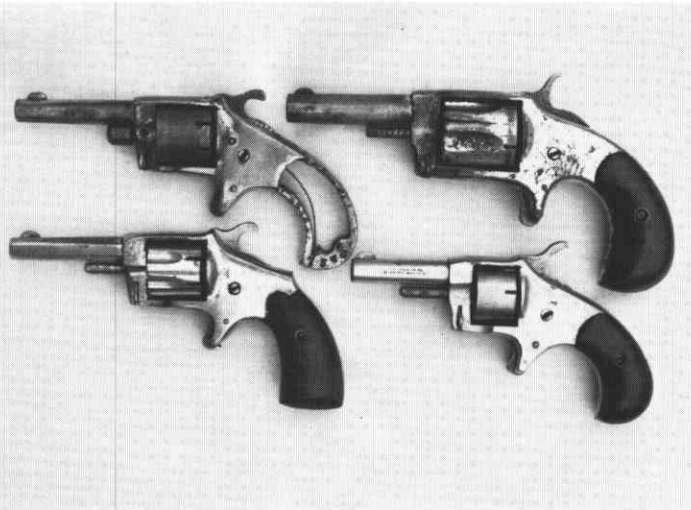
While the .22 short was the most popular caliber in Bacon Arms Company spur trigger revolvers, we also find examples in calibers .22 long, .30 short, .32 short, .38 short and .41 short. These guns were manufactured over several years, and there are many variations other than caliber; these include engraving, marking, grip shape, location and shape of cylinder stop notches, barrel length, barrel shape, cylinder shape, cylinder pin release, grip material, finish, sights and rifling.

Some of the trade names used on these revolvers include Bonanza, Big Bonanza, Conqueror, Daisy, Express, Guardian, Little Giant, Kentucky, Penetrator, Reliable, Rip Rap and Gem.

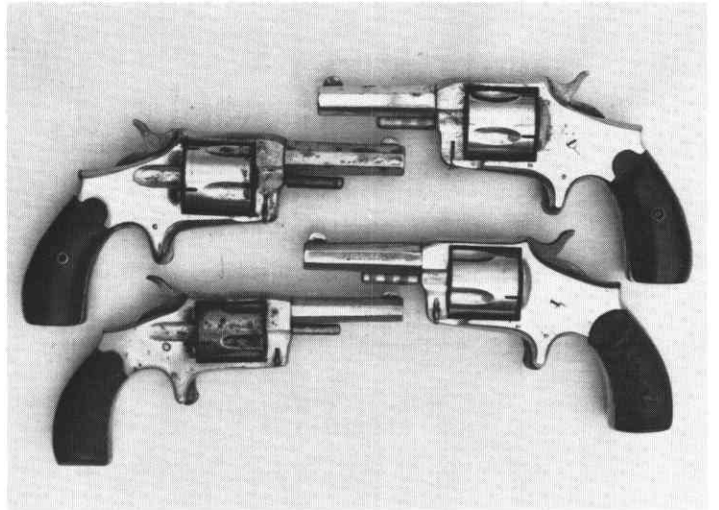
The Gem was a separate model and probably was the smallest .22 caliber revolver produced during the Bacon Arms Company era. The Gem usually had ivory grips, was nickel plated, and oftentimes had a gold plated cylinder. Total production of the Gem revolver was probably less than 600.

This still leaves production of the 1869-1878 period. We can only assume that Bacon produced spur trigger revolvers with similar names as the post-1878 production. We have found guns with the Bonanza, Big Bonanza, Conqueror, Prairie King, and Rip Rap names which had configurations very similar to the later Bacon production guns but had a push button cylinder pin release located on the left side of the lower front frame. I believe these guns were manufactured by Bacon Arms Company.

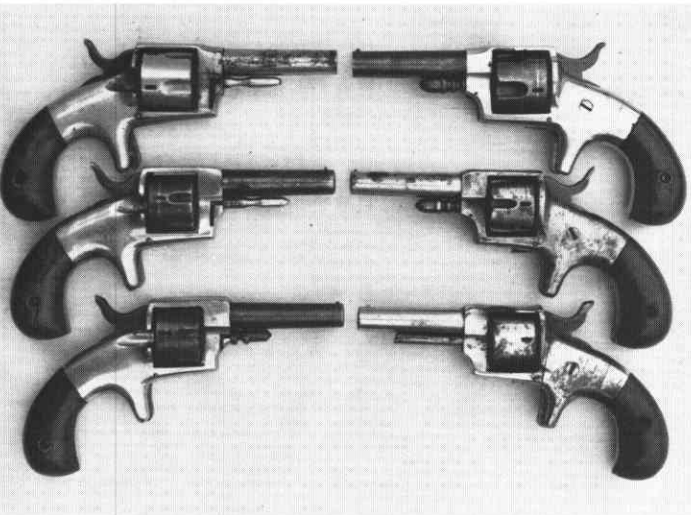
Production numbers of these spur trigger revolvers



PENETRATOR — KENTUCKY — DAISY — LITTLE GIANT.



EXPRESS variations.



GOVERNOR variations.



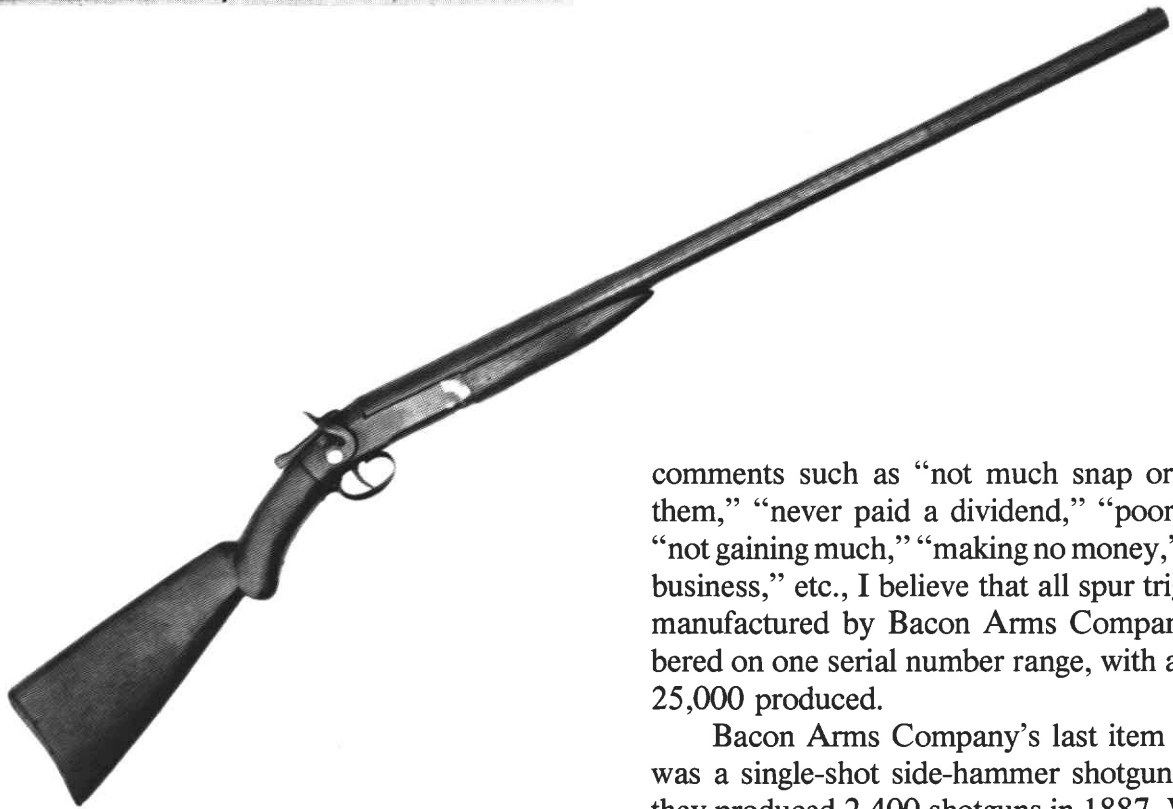
CONQUEROR variations.



BONANZA variations.



From ca. 1885 to 1930, H & D Folsom were the largest shotgun wholesalers in the U.S.; this early business card shows they were agents for Bacon Arms Co. — and others — in 1882.



The last Bacon Arms Co. gun: a single barrel, side hammer shotgun.

comments such as “not much snap or enterprise to them,” “never paid a dividend,” “poorly managed,” “not gaining much,” “making no money,” “do not push business,” etc., I believe that all spur trigger revolvers manufactured by Bacon Arms Company were numbered on one serial number range, with approximately 25,000 produced.

Bacon Arms Company’s last item of production was a single-shot side-hammer shotgun: we find that they produced 2,400 shotguns in 1887. When George Cilley purchased the assets and inventory of Bacon Arms Company, he completed the outstanding orders for single-shot shotguns; when he formed the Crescent Arms Company, the first gun to be produced was the old Bacon Arms Company single-shot side-hammer shotgun.

ENVOY

Thomas K. Bacon, while not an astute business person, was instrumental in forming three companies which produced firearms during the industrialization of America, lasting over a span of 41 years. While none obtained the prominence or size of Colt and Remington, they did produce many handguns which were useful during the days of the Gold Rush, the Civil War, and the settlement of the Western Frontier. Thomas K. Bacon will be remembered for the production of the guns that bear his name.

are extremely difficult to determine. One clue lies in the Census Reports of 1870 and 1880, which were reviewed earlier. The 1870 report shows Bacon Arms Company produced 5,000 pistols in 1870. Serial numbers may have been started for each named gun or may have been numbered regardless of the trade name used. Bonanza serial numbers have been noted over 22,000, Conqueror over 8,000, Express over 9,000, Guardian over 5,500, Kentucky over 4,900, Little Giant over 9,500, Penetrator over 7,500, Reliable over 4,400, and Rip Rap over 2,500. Based on Dunn credit reports, which always reported Bacon Arms Company with