

A COLLECTOR'S DREAM: WHEN A GUN WANTS TO TALK, HOW WILL WE LISTEN?

by C. B. Wilson

My title is borrowed from an article in *Man at Arms*¹ by Ron Curtis highlighting the Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army as a “Collector’s Dream” due to its rich history because of its timing with the Civil War. I am expanding that concept to include the idea that I gain a great deal of satisfaction from my collection by taking the old statement “*if only this gun could talk, what would it tell*”, and modifying it to “*when a gun wants to talk, how will we listen*”.

Over the years, I have had a number of experiences of a gun in my collection having information that appeared to be significant, but previously unknown. Often, I realized that had I been more proactive at “dreaming” and researching, I could have found that information more quickly. I have adopted a mindset of “listening” by actively becoming more of a detective with respect to my guns and have found this to be very rewarding. Here are some examples drawn from the Model 2 Army. The Model 2 Army was an early model from Smith & Wesson, a logical extension of its First Model, a seven shot .22 caliber rimfire cartridge revolver with the distinction of being the first American revolver to be developed with a bored through cylinder and accepting a self-contained, weatherproof metallic cartridge. This was the first handgun, made in 1857, which exhibited all the elements present in revolvers today and is very significant in firearm history. A few Model 1 arms were used in the Civil War but the just-invented .22 caliber cartridge was woefully inadequate for battle and so the percussion revolver remained the primary handgun type. The Model 2 Army was manufactured in 1861 and designed as a larger version of the Model 1, but in .32 caliber long rim fire and was strong enough to be somewhat lethal. Coming at the beginning of the Civil War, it

was quickly adopted by soldiers as a personal defense weapon. I will try to show the significance of this collectible in exposing U.S. history from the 1860s.

Example 1: Model 2 Army serial number 37274

The last serial number produced in 1864 was 29359², so it is generally considered that a serial above 30000 would not have seen service during the war. But we will see that this gun, with a higher serial number, has a historical relationship to that conflict. This gun (Figure 1) was artfully engraved and we see a unique figure of a wolf in pantaloons holding this model gun shooting over the head of a rabbit at a bird engraved on the barrel (Figure 2). The vignette of the wolf is found in L.D. Nimschke’s engraving book³, where we see two examples. We can see from the position of the pistol in the right-hand image, that this is the rubbing for 37274 and the other example is unknown to me. The backstrap is inscribed “22nd NYSNG Encampment Long Branch Aug 12 1868” (Figure 2, bottom). The 22nd Regiment of New York State National Guard is still active today and a history published by George W. Wingate in 1895⁴ has almost 800 pages of detailed history (available on Google Books online). One takeaway is that a lot of very prominent (and wealthy) men took active steps to organize troops and support the Union cause. This unit was primarily intended to protect New York City, but it provided Federal service at Harper’s Ferry and Gettysburg among other excursions. These troops and officers provided much of their own weapons, uniforms, armories and training. There is far too much material in this regimental history to elaborate in this manuscript, but this gun is just one small contribution by the community leaders to meet the



Figure 1. Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army serial number 37274.

needs of their fellow Americans in a time of need. And they did it by just looking to the need and acting, which makes these artifacts especially meaningful as a window into our past history.

Another theme which comes across strongly in the leaders of the 22nd Regiment was a recognition that marksmanship was practically nonexistent during the Civil War, leading to Wingate and others turning to Europe and Britain in particular for training ideas and methods. The event where this gun was a prize for marksmanship was an early attempt to adopt these methods and Wingate was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the National Rifle Association in 1871 and the Long Branch encampment led to the establishment of the Creedmore facility in 1872, still in use today. The *New York Times* reported the awards for the encampment on August 17, 1868 (Figure 3). We see this was the sixth prize, selected by Pvt. Bonnaffon and provided by Capt. Grant. We see another

gun as the third prize, a “field officer’s rifle”. This turns out to be an 1866 Winchester serial number 19544 (Figure 4) which was also engraved by Nimschke and later obtained by Dr. R.L. Moore, an old-time member of the American Society of Arms Collectors (ASAC). This brings to mind an idea that we might look into several events in pre- National Rifle Association (NRA) and early NRA history with an eye to identifying prizes like this that could turn into a nice theme for an ASAC NRA exhibit.

The sponsor of the Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army serial number 37274 was Capt. Richard Suydam Grant of “H” company whose father, Oliver DeForest Grant, was at that time a banker and President of Grant Locomotive Works in Paterson, New Jersey. The father died the year after this rifle match at Long Branch and Capt. R. Suydam Grant and his slightly older brother, David Beach Grant, took over the family businesses. One of R. Suydam Grant’s



Figure 2. Detail of the engraving on Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army serial number 37274 (top). Close up of the engraving of the wolf holding the pistol (middle left) and L. D. Nimschke’s engraving book showing this pattern³ (middle right). Engraving of “22nd NYSNG Encampment Long Branch Aug 12 1868” on the backstrap (bottom).



positions was as a member of the New York Stock Exchange from December 2, 1865 until his death in December of 1912. He lived at 11 Gramercy Park in Manhattan, a prestigious address still today and less than two miles from the L.D. Nimschke shop at 35 Essex Street. I have no hard facts to support it but I would think it highly likely that Grant, as well as others of the 22nd Regiment, would have known and interacted with Nimschke personally.

We see this artifact as a symbol of how our ancestors “took the bull by the horns” and fully and aggressively met the needs of their citizens and government, how they identified a military need and took action. This gun was there during the formation of the NRA and the dawn of modern cartridge firearms.

A bit more trivial background history is from the Grant family. R. Suydam Grant never married, but his brother David had two daughters and Suydam left his estate to his nieces in 1912. Both daughters were prominent in New York social circles and the oldest, Adele Beach Grant, was a fashion model and one of her fashion shots was painted by John Singer Sargent in 1906. Wikipedia says it is currently on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts – Houston. Adele married the 7th Earl of Essex to become Adele Capell, Countess of Essex. Her sister, Edythe Scott Grant married the brother of the 8th Marquis de Breteuil to become Viscountess de Breteuil. She worked for the war effort in Europe in World War I and was awarded the Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor. So this adds a little color to this lovely gun that took part in the early formation of the National Rifle Association.

Example 2: Model 2 Army serial number 7318

This gun belonged to Friedrich P. Kapplemann, born in Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany, May 12, 1843 (Figure 5). He came to the U.S. in the decade before the Civil War. Some of his letters to his parents have been preserved, showing he was in Chicago in 1856 and New Orleans in 1860 and 1861. He worked in New Orleans for a pharmacy. Upon returning to Chicago he enlisted on August 6, 1862 and mustered in at Camp Butler at Springfield,

Illinois on October 24, 1862, joining Company B, 82nd Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry. In a letter dated October 15, 1862 he described being issued Enfield Rifles but on January 18, 1863

There were ten individual prizes, the member securing the highest number of points obtaining his choice in selection of his prize. Following are the names of the successful competitors, and the prizes selected by them:

First Prize—Stetson medal—Private Gock, F Company.
 Second Prize—Roger's medal—Private Barr, A Company.
 Third Prize—Field officer's rifle—Private Roux, B Company.
 Fourth Prize—Austin medal, Corporal Dunning, E Company.
 Fifth Prize—Gold watch, chain and locket—Private Levy, C Company.
 Sixth Prize—Smith & Weston revolver, from Capt. Grant—Private Bonnaffon, E Company.
 Seventh Prize—Vienna Set Tobacco Drum. Presented by Brigade Quartermaster McLure—Private Dey, H Company.
 Eighth Prize—Meerschaum Pipe. Presented by ex-officers—Sergt. Greenfield, F Company.
 Ninth Prize—Same by same—Corporal Castree, A Company.
 Tenth Prize—Same by Kaldenberg—Private Hendrickson, B Company.

THE PRESENTATION.

The presentation of the prizes was made by Lieut. Gov. STEWART L. WOODFORD, opposite the Stetson House, yesterday afternoon. The successful competitors being drawn up in front, were addressed by Mr. WOODFORD, and each presented with his prize. The result is quite satisfactory—not a murmur of discontent being heard among the men, the shooting arrangements being considered in every respect perfect. D. O'C. T.

Figure 3. The *New York Times* reported the awards for the rifle competition on August 17, 1868. The sixth place prize was the Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army serial Number 37274.



Figure 4. 1866 Winchester serial number 19544 that was the third prize in the shooting competition (listed as “field officer’s rifle” in Figure 3).

Table 1. List of engagements Friedrich P. Kapplemann was involved in the Ambulance Corps during the Civil War.

Engagement	State	Month and Day	Year
Chancellorsville	VA	May 1, 4	1863
Gettysburg	PA	July 1, 3	1863
Wauhatchie	TN	October 27	1863
Lookout Mtn	TN	November 24	1863
Mission Ridge	TN	November 25	1863
Rocky Face	TN	May 5, 9	1864
Resaca	GA	May 13, 16	1864
Cassville	GA	May 19, 22	1864
Dallas	GA	May 25, June 4	1864
Kenesaw Mtn	GA	June 9-30	1864
Peach Tree	GA	July 20	1864
Seige of Atlanta	GA	July 22 – September 2	1864
March to the Sea	GA	November 15 – December 10	1864
Savannah	GA	December 10-21	1864
Aversaboro, NC	NC	March 16	1865
Bentonville	NC	March 19-21	1865

he wrote that he had been assigned to the Ambulance Corps “with six other fine educated men” and that they had to return their rifles and receive in their place “revolvers of ‘navy size’”. He further described his insignia as “a green band around the rim of the cap

and a stripe on each arm”, received a 25-cent raise and more autonomy. The major battles that he participated in are shown in Table 1. His letters describe horrible wounds, which he had to handle first hand due to his job, bad weather, destruction of bridges and railroads and general scorched earth policies. His Model 2 Army serial number 7318 was shipped to B. Kittredge in Cincinnati, Ohio about September 26, 1862. Since most of his engagements were in 1863 and 1864, it is likely this gun was carried most of his active time during the war. At the conclusion of these major battles, he marched to Raleigh, thence to Richmond, Virginia where the troops were reviewed by General Grant. He then marched to the Grand Review in Washington on May 24, 1865. After discharge, he returned to Chicago and lived out his life as a barber and civic leader. While a different type of service than we have seen with R. Suydam Grant, we see a similar “take the bull by the horns” and his intention to make a difference given the challenges in his life.



Figure 5. Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army pistol of Friedrich P. Kapplemann, serial number 7318.



Figure 6. Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army pistols of Byron Weston, serial numbers 8141 and 8201.



Figure 7. Byron Weston.

Example 3: Model 2 Army serial numbers 8141 and 8201

These two guns (Figure 6) were each gifts during the Civil War to Byron Weston (Figure 7) who was third generation of an early Massachusetts family. He answered the call from Lincoln for troops following the second Bull Run by recruiting a company for the 49th Massachusetts Regiment and was elected Captain. The regiment found itself a part of the Banks expedition to the Depart-

ment of the Gulf. It took a significant part in the famous forty-seven days siege of Port Hudson and in other several battles. One of the guns was inscribed "To Byron Weston from friends at Lee" and the other "Maj Frank Weston to Capt Byron Weston". (Figure 8, bottom). Frank Weston was an officer in the Massachusetts State Militia and Byron Weston's uncle. Once again, we see prominent citizens take charge personally and address the civic needs of their time. Meanwhile, the Byron Weston paper mill was a substantial business. (Figure 9). Eventually, the Byron Weston paper company was sold to Crane and Company which became the principal company making U.S. currency. One of the trivia facts for the Weston family is that Byron Weston's granddaughter was Julia Child, the "French Chef".

Example 4: Model 2 Army serial numbers 62 and 66

This pair of Model 2 Army revolvers was presented on July 16, 1861 to Capt. H. C. Lombard by Springfield Mayor Stephen C. Bemis, ex-Lieutenant Governor Eliphalet Trask and other dignitaries on the formation of Company F, Tenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Figure 10). Lombard (1832 – 1895) descended from settlers of the William Pynchon colony in 1636, which became Springfield, Massachusetts. He learned the machinist trade at Bemis and Call Hardware and Tool Co. from 1849 to 1857. Later he went into business for himself, with A.S. Warner and Lyman King, under the name H. C. Lombard & Co. making pistols and cartridges. Only serial number 66 was initially known until 2009 when serial number 62 was reported to Ron Curtis' website, *Model-2Project.com*. It was determined that serial number 62 was still in the hands of a Lombard family relative and the two were reunited a few years later. Lombard had joined the Springfield City Guard in 1853 and when the call came for volunteer units, the Springfield Guard became Co. F, Tenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, with Lombard as its Captain. Other positions held by Capt. Lombard

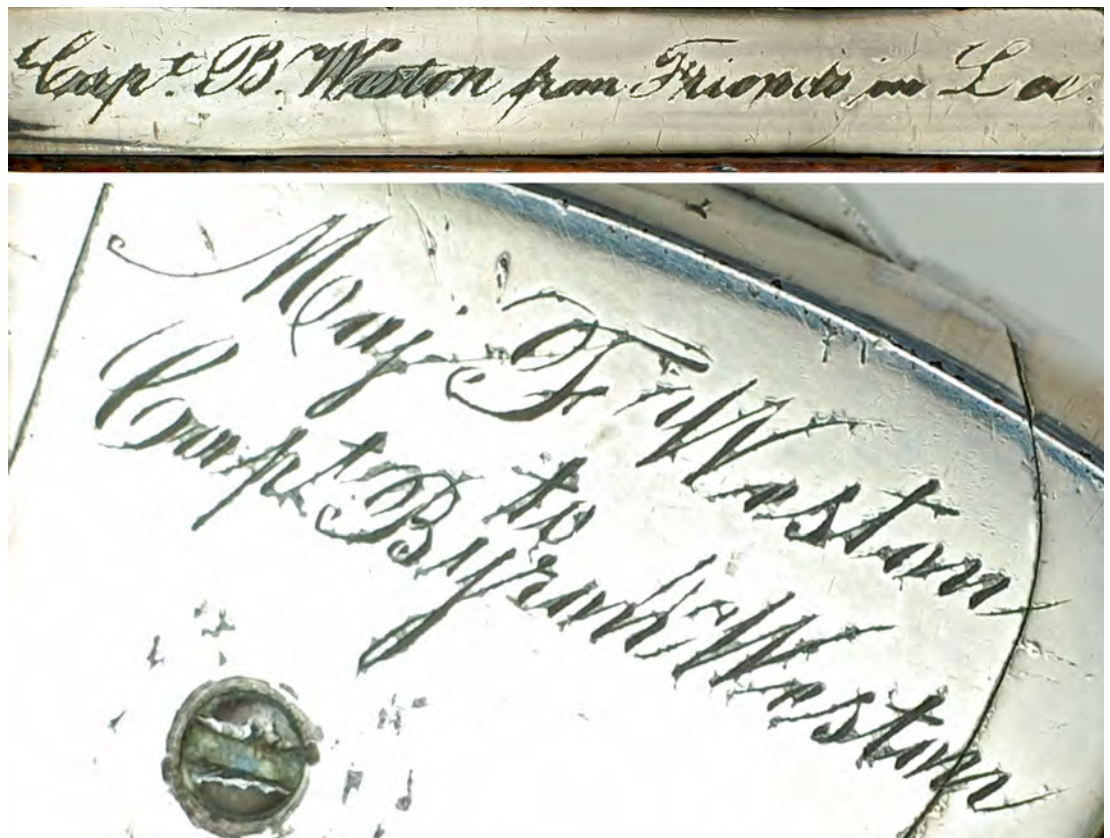


Figure 8. Engraving on the backstrap "To Byron Weston from friends at Lee" (top) and engraving on the frame "Maj Frank Weston to Capt Byron Weston" (bottom).

in Springfield include:

- Inspector at Smith & Wesson
- Chief Engineer – Springfield Fire Department in 1872
- Captain of Police – June 1874 for four years
- Assistant Marshal – 1879

- State District Policeman one year
- City Councilman
- Deputy Sheriff and Special Sheriff of Hampden County for 15 years

In 1861, his unit guarded Washington D.C. at Camp Bright-



Figure 9. Advertisement for Bryon Weston's paper mill.



Figure 10. Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army pistols of Capt. H. C. Lombard, serial numbers 62 and 66.

wood. (Figure 11). Another detailed history of the Tenth Regiment has been provided by the Civil War letters of Lt. Charles Harvey Brewster, "When this Cruel War is Over", edited with an introduction by David W. Blight, Historic Northampton, 1992. Particularly noteworthy in the letters of Brewster is discussion of dealing with the policy of returning slaves who came into Federal camps to their owners or being charged with harboring contraband. Officers who harbored slaves could be imprisoned in the Dry Tortugas. Engraving of the owner's name on the backstrap (Figure 12).

Overall, these example guns give a lot of insight into the rise of technology at the time of a significant advance from percussion firearms. The personal commitment of these men from a wide range of backgrounds and faced with stressful conditions, was significant. I find a lot more satisfaction with collecting these artifacts when they take the opportunity to "speak" to the details of their lives and explain what made these citizens a "great generation".

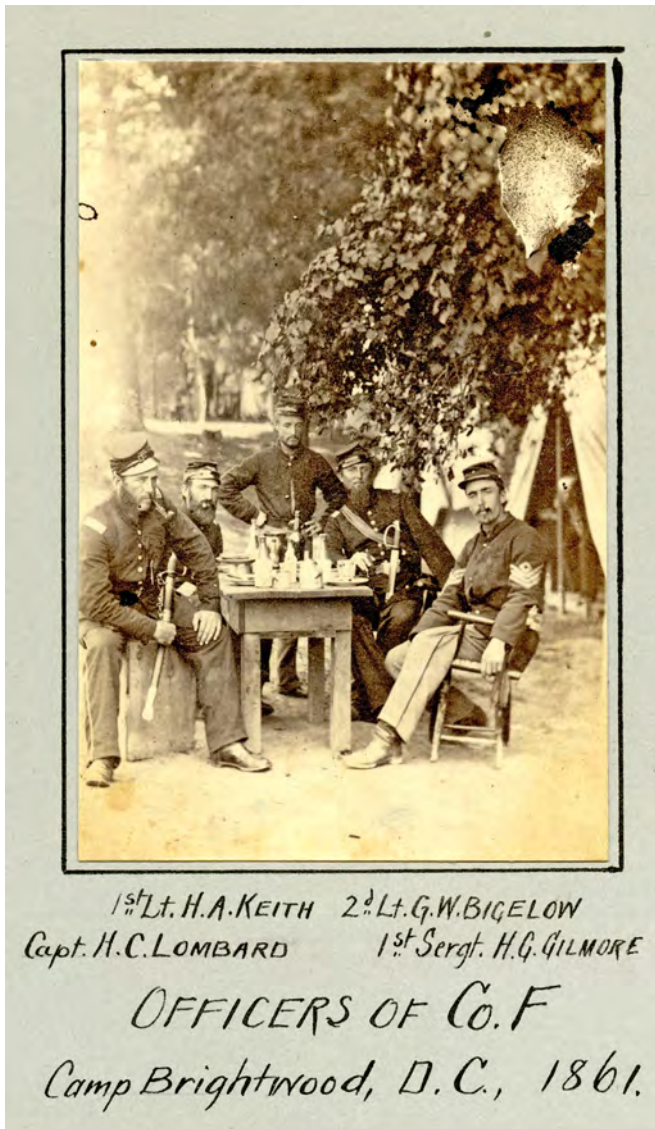


Figure 11. Capt. H. C. Lombard's unit guarded Washington D.C. at Camp Brightwood (Lombard is seated front, left).



Figure 12. Engraved backstrap of Smith & Wesson Model 2 Army pistols of Capt. H. C. Lombard, serial numbers 62 and 66.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Curtis, Ron. "The Smith & Wesson Model Number Two Army, A Collector's Dream", *Man At Arms*, October 2009, 14-21.
- ² Supica, Jim and Nahas, Richard, *Standard Catalog of Smith & Wesson, Gun Digest Books*, 2016, p 81.
- ³ Wilson, R.L. L.D. *Nimschke: Firearms Engraver*. 1965, J.J. Malloy, Teaneck, New Jersey.
- ⁴ General George W. Wingate. *History of the Twenty-Second Regiment of the National Guard from it's Organization to 1895*. 1896, Edwin W. Dayton, New York.

