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1911

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**BIG GREEN IN THE
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100 Years and Still Going

IS THERE REALLY A DEBATE?

How many other products can you name that maintain devoted following for 100 years? Think of it, a century of service with no sign of slowing down. That alone speaks volumes for the 1911 pistol. But the idea that shooters keep buying pistols of this design is nothing short of amazing.

One Good Idea

The 1911 pistol sprang from several earlier models, all of which showed promise but came up short one way or another. As John Moses Browning tweaked and changed this part or that the final version came to life, won the pistol trials and was named the primary sidearm of the U.S. military. This all happened when the cavalry charge was still an accepted military tactic.

From that one good idea rose an entire industry designed to wring the maximum performance from a pistol design that by all reports has its shortcomings. Still, the idea that no one has ever set a 1911 pistol on a table and said, "There! It's done." is a testament to those who love the gun and continue to refine the inner workings and even the outer profile.

The Test of Time

It has now been 100 years since the design was formalized and presented to

the shooting public. Oddly there are more makers of 1911 pistols than in anytime during the previous 99 years. Many of those makers are facing production backlogs because demand continues to outpace supply. A good pistol from a good maker is a hot commodity and no one seems to mind that the basic design is 100 years old. It still works. And whether you want a fight-stopper or a tack-driving target pistol, the 1911 delivers.

One Little Piece

We can't hope to capture all that the 1911 is on these pages. Entire books have been written about the pistol, this company publishes several of them, and the world has more opinions on the 1911 pistol than any other firearm. But we can pause for a while to take a look at what many people consider the greatest pistol ever produced. And the more we look, the more we see.

Good Shooting,



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GUN DIGEST PRESENTS THE 1911 / 3



SPRINGFIELD'S 4-INCH 1911 IS A SHOOTER

The positive attributes of the 1911 Government Model are well known. They include: A low bore axis that limits muzzle flip; a grip that fits most hands well; a slide lock safety that falls readily under the thumb, straight to the rear trigger compression and excellent reliability.

The 1911 is my handgun, but I realize the 1911 is not perfect. The most valid criticism is weight. A number of pistols have been introduced with lightweight frames and shortened slides. But there are problems in achieving reliability with short-slide pistols. With less mass in the slide, slide velocity is increased during recoil. Slide velocity may outstrip the ability of the magazine to feed properly. The barrel must tilt at a greater angle. Recoil spring rate is a serious con-

cern. All these elements impact reliability and must be accounted for. So, who makes a solid 4-inch. 1911?

Springfield Armory, of course.

The Springfield Champion is among the most successful of the short .45s. The Champion relies upon technology originally developed by US Army gunsmiths in perfecting the Officer's Model, a pistol specifically designed for issue to field grade officers.

The removal of one locking lug allows the Champion to recoil more to the rear than the Government Model, and the use of a bushingless lockup allows the barrel to tilt proportionately. The result is a reliable short-slide 1911. The Champion also features a ramped barrel, eliminating the two-piece feed ramp of the 1911.

CHAMPION



Offered in several styles and finishes, Springfield Armory's Champion series...

... offers shooters all the benefits of the 1911 platform in a compact size with Springfield Armory's legendary quality...

...if you want a 4-inch 1911 this is the place to look.

The Champion features Novak low-mount sights. Our test pistol included Tritium inserts. The Champion also features a speed safety and a beavertail grip safety. Trigger compression is a smooth and creep-free 5 pounds. The ejection port is scalloped to allow greater ease in administrative handling and in clearing a malfunction. The pistol is supplied with a single magazine. There is a choice of a matte blue finish or stainless construction..

There are a number of necessary elements in evaluating a handgun. Bench rest accuracy is the least important. Practically any handgun will place every round in a single hole at 7 yards. The Champion is not as accurate as most 5-inch barrel 1911 handguns, but it is a fast-into-action 4-inch pistol that gets on target quickly and offers excellent hit probability. Speed into action and a first-shot hit are important. Reliability is a million times more important than anything else. The Springfield exhibits good workmanship, attention to detail and thus reliability.

Test and Evaluation

I have tested handguns more often with handloads during the current ammunition shortage. Ammunition prices seem to have reached the point that the ammunition locker is more valuable than our 401K.

Loading supplies were also in short supply to some extent, with primers particularly difficult to find. Just the same, I was able to put together and fire over 1,000 rounds of handloaded ammunition and an additional 500 rounds of factory ammunition over a period of seven months. Part of the motivation was to evaluate the Champion as a personal handgun to replace my long-serving Commander .45.

I used two primary loads. The Oregon Trail 230-grain RNL bullet is quite easy to handle and load and produces good accuracy along with excellent feed reliability. The Oregon Trail 200-grain SWC offers excellent accuracy. Both were loaded in the 790 to 850 fps range at various times during the program. I also used factory loads that I will discuss at length. The majority of the jacketed factory loads were obtained from Black Hills Ammunition. These included the reliable and inexpensive 230-grain FMJ loading.

I have deployed the Champion in several holsters but at this date I am carrying the pistol in a K and D Holsters Thunderbird, inside the waistband rig. This is a well designed holster, well boned for the Champion and well fitted and finished. After an initial break in period the Thunderbird demonstrated good speed. This is as comfortable a design as possible with the IWB, and one that deserves your attention.

The initial evaluation period included drawing and firing at 7 yards as quickly as possible. The Champion is fast and the short sight radius allows quickly lining up on target. The pistol clears leather more quickly than a 5- inch pistol and to most of the testers, seemed to get on target more quickly. At 7 yards, the pistol would eat out the X ring on demand. As a test of control, I fired five shots at 10 yards as quickly as I could realign the sights. The cadence of fire is not set by how quickly we are able to press the trigger but by how quickly we are able to align the sights after each trigger press. Oddly I fired the best group with +P ammunition. I believe that subconsciously I knew I had to bear down and get it right with the harder kicking loads and took the gorilla-grip option.

As we passed the 1000-round mark and continued, my respect for the Champion grew. The Champion never failed to

The initial evaluation period included drawing and firing at 7 yards as quickly as possible. The Champion is fast and the short sight radius allows quickly lining up on target. The pistol clears leather more quickly than a 5-inch pistol and to most of the testers, seemed to get on target more quickly.

feed, chamber, fire or eject with a variety of ammunition. Speed work was good. However, I realized that while the pistol is accurate enough for personal defense and service use it is not among the most accurate Springfield pistols. A service pistol needs more accuracy than a concealed carry pistols. My Springfield TRP will group a number of quality loads into 2 inches at 25 yards, while the Champion's average is closer to the 4-inch mark. But then the TRP costs twice what the Champion does. The Champion is faster into action. The shorter sight radius simply makes slight movement in the front sight less perceptible. Toward the end of the 1,500-round evaluation we fired the following groups at 75 feet.

There is some concern that a short-barrel .45's loss of velocity may reduce the threshold for reliable bullet expansion. We feel that since the .45 relies primarily upon bullet mass and frontal area, this is less of

a concern that it would be with other calibers. As an example a 230-grain JHP rated at 850 fps from a 5-inch barrel will exhibit 780 to 800 fps from the 4-inch Champion. This is acceptable. For personal defense use a low-penetration loading such as the Cor Bon PowRBall is acceptable. This loading demonstrates excellent expansion per our test program. For police duty a 230-grain JHP with a balance of penetration and expansion favoring expansion would be superior.

We used a variety of magazines during the evaluation including Metalform magazines in both seven- and eight-round configuration with good reliability. We detected a tendency of the speed safety on the Champion to contact the sweat guard on certain types of holsters. When wearing the Champion in these holsters the safety sometimes wiped off. This needs to be changed! At the very least carefully evaluate your holster and gun combination. With our chosen leather, there was no problem, with others, there was a serious problem. I also added a 10-8 Performance flat-face trigger. I did not perform a trigger job but left the contact surfaces as issued. This addition did not change the trigger action but gave the impression of a lighter trigger press. Control was enhanced.

The Champion is a reliable no nonsense pistol with much to recommend. Performance at realistic combat ranges is good. The pistol has good features and nothing extraneous. In short, the Champion is a viable 1911 that will serve well.

Magazine capacity -7 or 8 depending upon magazine
 Caliber .45 Automatic Colt Pistol
 Weight 34 ounces
 Overall length 7.5 ounces

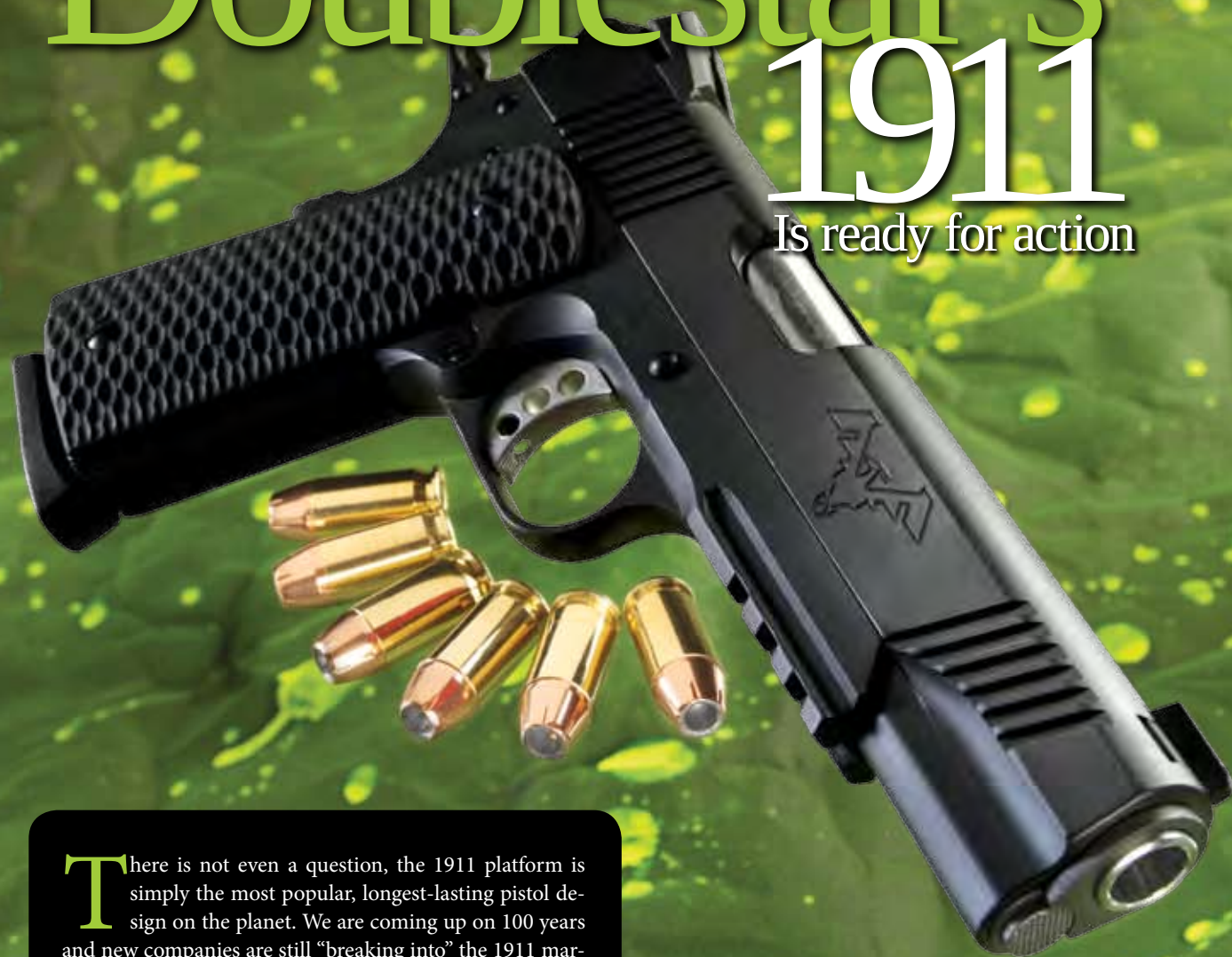
A lightweight version is available with aluminum frame- at 28 ounces.



Results,10-yard firing test, five rounds		25 yard bench rest—	
Ammunition	Group in inches		
230 grain Oregon Trail RNL/790 fps	3.8	Black Hills 185 gr. JHP	3.75 inches
230 grain Zero JHP factory load	3.9	Black Hills 230 gr. JHP	3.8 inches
Hornady 230 grain Flat Point	4.0	Cor Bon 165 gr. PowRBall	4.25 inches
Hornady 230 grain XTP +P	3.6	Cor Bon 230 grain	
		Performance Match	3.5 inches

» BY KEVIN MICHALOWSKI

Worth the Wait Doublestar's 1911 Is ready for action



There is not even a question, the 1911 platform is simply the most popular, longest-lasting pistol design on the planet. We are coming up on 100 years and new companies are still "breaking into" the 1911 market. The reality is that business people do things to make a profit and the 1911 pistol still offers profit potential.

So that's why it should come as no surprise that DoubleStar Corporation of Winchester, KY, got into the 1911 game a couple years back. After many years of making great AR-15-style rifles, it was only logical for them to move to produce an outstanding handgun.



8 + 1 round 45 ACP with forged 4140 steel frame and slide. Beveled magazine well. Grieder match trigger. Novak white dot sights. Strieder grips. Ed Brown memory groove beavertail grip safety. Ed Brown extended thumb safety. Grieder extended magazine catch. Flat checkered mainspring housing. 5-inch barrel.



This 1911 is DoubleStar's first handgun of any type. It starts with a forged frame and includes some of the best parts available. The National Match barrel is built to exacting standards and the Ed Brown beavertail grip safety is a perfect fit for a fighting handgun. Another great touch are the grip sacs; practical but still very good-looking and offer an outstanding non-slip grip. The panels are heavily-textured, but not abrasive to the hand, providing a very secure, positive grip. The front of the grip frame and the mainspring housing are finely checkered, which looks great and provides great purchase. The trigger is lightened aluminum with an adjustable trigger stop providing an excellent pull capable of fine practical accuracy at the target

range or on the street. The trigger broke at just over 4 pounds with only a very little creep.

The ejection port is lowered and flared and the slide has serrations at the front and rear; pretty much standard these days. The dust cover is a one-piece, heavy-duty accessory rail, giving you a lighting or laser option, but preventing you from using a standard holster. Still, there are many good holsters on the market now for a 1911 with a rail. Finding one should be no problem. The pistol sports a matte black finish, and uses my favorite, the three-dot Novak sights. They are rugged and easy to see.

We tested the DoubleStar 1911 using everything from mil-spec ball and high performance hollowpoints.

Functioning was flawless, with no failures to feed, fire, or eject. Working on the assumption that reliability is mandatory and accuracy is secondary, it was nice to see that accuracy varied from very good to outstanding. Hornady TAP 200-grain bullets would provide five-shot groups at about one inch at twenty-five yards. The Wolf 230-grain FMJ were creating about 3-inch groups at the same distance.

The pistol comes in a very nice padded nylon 5.11 Tactical soft case with separate compartments for the pistol and magazines. It is supplied with an eight-round magazine, and will accept any brand of single-stack full-size 1911 magazine.

The DoubleStar 1911 is not a cheap gun. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$1100 to \$1500, but it is a worth the price. Also they can be a bit hard to find, so contact your dealer early. Oddly if you are looking for information about the pistol. You won't find it at the DoubleStar's website www.star15.com. That seems reserved for information about their AR-15s.

Read more! *The Gun Digest Book of Combat Handgunnery* is available at www.gundigeststore.com.



SPECIFICATIONS:
Mfg Item Num: 1911
Category: FIREARMS - HANDGUNS
Type: Pistol
Action: Single Action Only
Caliber: 45 ACP
Barrel Length: 5"
Capacity: 8 + 1
Safety: Thumb and Grip Safety
Grips: Strieder
Sights: Novak White Dot
Weight: 36 oz
Finish: Black

» BY L.P. BREZNY

Where and when allowed
a good gun for the job.
In this case off duty or
heavy carry.

DAN WESSON/CZ USA POINTMAN SEVEN

MODEL 1911
GOVERNMENT
45 ACP

As the old saying goes everything always seems to come full circle. If one firearm in production today exemplifies that phrase it has to be the Model 1911 Government 45 ACP. In terms of how good the old gun's design is? Well, time does tell. In this case, the 1911 has a solid track record both in the military and civilian market covering two world wars and a bunch of other gunfights. The 1911 has absolutely nothing to prove to anyone.



(above) Pointman field stripped for complete cleaning. This handgun is a complete John Browning 1911 design.



(above) Right side CZ Pointman.

(right) Tang Safety. Custom, clean lines, and works well.



With the steady comeback of this grand old autoloader there has evolved a manufacturer's race of sorts, in that everyone that is anyone in the industry is introducing a version of the 1911 45 ACP. Not to be out done, Dan Wesson teamed up with CZ USA has introduced a pair of Model 1911 pattern autos that chamber both the 45 ACP and heavy hitting 10mm. The new guns are dubbed Pointman Seven, and the details covering this new direction by Dan Wesson / CZ USA are nothing but fascinating.



(top) Metal fit is to perfection.

(middle) The CZ Pointman is a Dan Wesson cooperative effort and it shows. This is one finely built 1911 45 Government.

(bottom) Custom style trigger is included in the package.



**Accuracy Table:
Pointman Seven 45 ACP**

Load	10 Yds: Group Inches	20 Yds: Group Inches
Magtech 165 Gr SChP	1.130	4.239
Remington Golden Saber 185 Gr BJH	2.179	2.67
Winchester Personal Protection SXT	1.120	3.666
Winchester USA 185 Gr FMJ	0.980	2.122

Off Hand Shooting / Practical Combat Range

Load	10 Yds: Group Inches	20 Yds: Group Inches
Winchester USA 185 Gr FMJ	2.720	5.037

Featuring a stainless steel frame and slide, this handgun makes use of a blasted finish on the lower frame and rounded areas. Dan Wesson designers also bring hand-polished stainless onto the flat areas of the slab-sided gun. The slide on the model I tested retained a round-top design with Bo-Mar style adjustable target sights, forward and rear cocking serrations, and a lowered and flared ejection port. Many of the parts contained in this handgun have been selected from custom manufactures. An Ed Brown slide stop and memory groove safety, Tactical extended thumb safety, and a one-piece full-length stainless steel guide rod are also main frame additions on this high-end 1911.

With a set of cocobolo stocks, a flat all-steel 20-lines-per-inch checkered

mainspring housing, and Commander-style match hammer behind its 5-inch barrel, this new autoloader is nothing but striking in the good looks department. Now, add an aluminum trigger with a stainless steel bow, extended serrated magazine catch, and a hand tuned and machined internal extractor, and the Pointman Seven really turns into a custom house special, but without the huge price tag. Priced at a reasonable \$1096 suggested retail, this is a whole lot of gun for the money.

I immediately moved the handgun directly into my personal carry mode. With the start of the big game season in South Dakota I also tied the big 38-ounce gun to a government style shoulder holster rig for carry in the field. Carrying the big gun allowed me to become better acquainted with the weapon, and as such learn of any faults it may have developed during its general use. What I did find was that the Pointman Seven is quite accurate, easy to use in terms of controls, and operates like a Swiss watch. Trigger pull is a smooth 4 pounds, and there is no backlash or creep in the trigger's actuating system.

Accuracy

Selecting four different 45 ACP rounds I first put the Pointman Seven to paper at both 10 and 20 yards. These were standard issue training ranges for lawmen when I was in the business, and after training street cops for a good share of my years in the department I wanted to mentally match the new hand cannon against what I knew of other combat and defense handguns being fielded in the past and today.

Shooting Birchwood Casey Big Burst and Shoot-N-C targets, and working from a portable field bench rest I first shot each of the four test loads from a rest at the 10-yard line. The table included here

gives a complete review of those results as well as shooting at both the 10- and 20-yard ranges. I wanted to take some of the human error out of the accuracy test, and the sand bag bench rest was a functional answer to my way of thanking.

The gun proved accurate and functional for every test. After 100 years, there really isn't a lot more to say about the 1911 design. All the controls are in same places they have always been and look and feel is so familiar some people call it perfect.

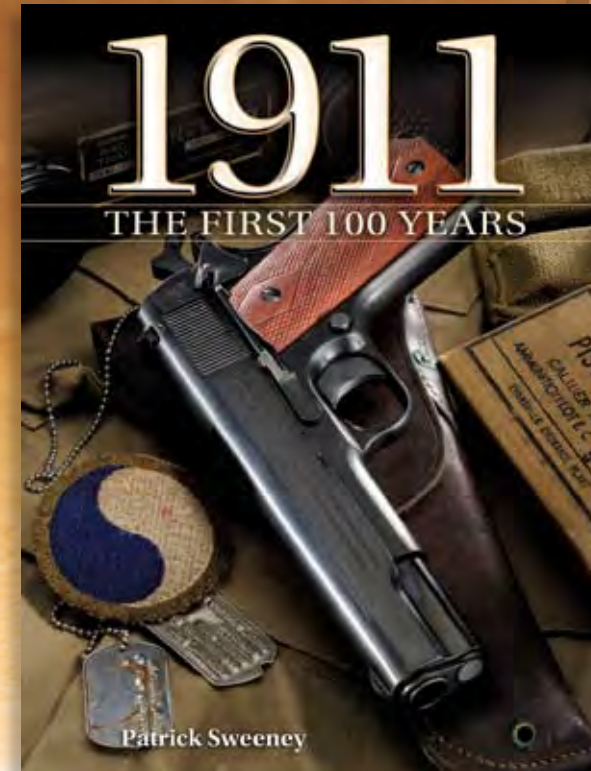
What can be judged on the 1911 are the attention to detail and the fit and finish of the parts that are installed to give life to the frame. It is in this area that the Dan Wesson Pointman really shines. CZUSA has taken great care to insure that every element works together as it should. John Browning painted the big picture, it is now up to modern gunmakers to enhance the details. In the form of the Dan Wesson Pointman Seven, CZUSA has done just that. If you can lay hands on one of these guns, don't hesitate to strap it on your hip and carry it into harm's way.

GunDigest

Dan Wesson / CZ Pointman Seven

Caliber: 45 ACP
Barrel: 5"
Style: 1911
Stainless steel construction
Bo-Mar adjustable sights
Hand polished flat surface
Tactical extended thumb safety
Commander style match hammer
38 ounces unloaded
Wolff springs used exclusively
Match grade sear
Retail list: \$1.096

Recommended Reading for More Intriguing Firearms History



1911 The First 100 Years

by Patrick Sweeney

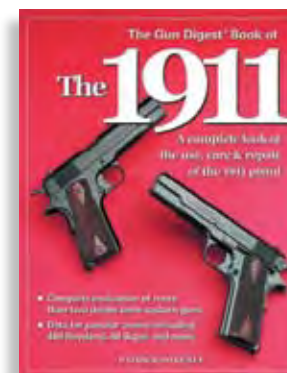
For the beginning handgunner, the advanced shooter, the collector and the firearms historian, there is no finer photographic history of America's favorite handgun than 1911 The First 100 Years. From the predecessors of the 1911 and its contemporaries to the best of today's semi- and full-custom models, you'll find it all here in this fitting centennial tribute to a pistol that is today more popular than ever.

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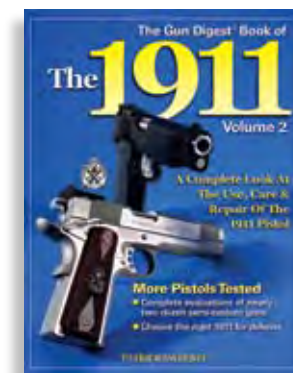
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by Patrick Sweeney

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The Gun Digest Book of the 1911, Volume 2

by Patrick Sweeney

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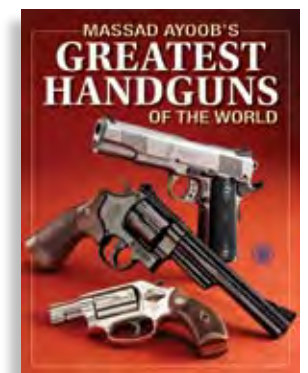
Gun Digest Big Fat Book of the .45 ACP

by Patrick Sweeney

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by Massad Ayoob

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» BY BOB CAMPBELL



Sig's Tactical 1911

Sig Sauer gets into the 1911 market with an emphasis on craftsmanship, performance, and quality parts

When Sig Sauer first began making noises about building a 1911, a friend remarked, "There have been European 1911s before, but no good ones."

I'm sure he was referencing Spanish ironmongery. Norwegian license-built 1911s and the Peters Stahl handguns were well made of good material. But perhaps my friend missed the point. The Sig 1911 isn't European but a product of the gun-wise Yankees in Exeter, New Hampshire. Its pistol, called the GSR or Granite (for the Granite State) Series Rail, has an impeccable pedigree.

What it takes to make the GSR

The goal in Exeter was to produce an American-made 1911 with a touch of Sig flair. Sig understands the advantages of the 1911 platform, namely marketability, and they would only change the template slightly. The 1911's straight-to-the-rear trigger compression, low bore axis, well placed controls, and overall excellent human engineering would not be changed.

After outlining its goals, Sig chose parts for the GSR carefully. The Sig custom shop assembles the pistol from high-quality parts — it compiled a wish list of top-end parts from respected vendors to finish the GSR in house. This is the norm for modern 1911 pistols.



SIG SAUER ACADEMY

Founded in 1990, the Sig Sauer Academy is situated on 130 acres in Epping, New Hampshire, about five miles from Sig's manufacturing plant.

The academy features indoor and outdoor tactical ranges and services both armed professionals and private citizens with a suite of offerings from foundational skills through advanced tactics, instructor development, and armorer certifications.

The academy staff has conducted training in all 50 states and in 36 countries. Every course can be customized and taught at the Epping facility or anywhere.

For details, visit www.sigsaueracademy.com or call 603-679-2003.

I've examined other factory parts guns that did not make the grade. Some of the internal parts seemed so rough they may have been hammered out on a rock. A rather expensive factory pistol suffered the loss of a magazine release during the first outing. Sig avoided these problems.

While the pistol is comparable to custom handguns, you save considerably in the long run with a production pistol such as the GSR. Caspian supplies the frame and slide and the internal parts are from Wilson Combat, Evolution Gun Works, Performance Engineering, and Greider Precision. As someone who has built quite a few 1911 pistols, I know it's less expensive to purchase a complete build kit from a single maker. Sig went the preferred route of shopping for the best parts for the GSR.

The fitting and attention to detail are remarkably consistent. The stocks are from Herretts, a respected maker of custom grips. The trigger guard resembles the European Sigs. Sig chose a Storm

Trigger compression is set at 4 pounds with no creep or backlash. The GSR features Novak sights; the front sight is not only dovetailed, but also pinned in place. These sights are adjustable, but in normal use won't go anywhere.

In the final formula, the GSR made a concession to European Sigs with a redesigned slide that gives the pistol a unique look. The slide is narrowed to resemble the P series Sig, but it's all 1911 in operation.

Engineers also included a light rail on the frame. (There is a slick-frame option available.) A light rail isn't uniquely Sig, but the pistol is intended for hard-use situations. And those who make a living with a pistol sometimes want a light hanging on the frame. Despite the frame rail, the pistol weighs 39 ounces — just like the standard government model.

Far from a conglomeration of mismatched parts, the confluence of quality results in a great performer. The Sig GSR is meant to sell and Sig shooters and 1911 folks are a different market. Each has shown considerable interest in the GSR.

Shooting the GSR

A generation ago it was considered standard operating procedure for a 1911 to require a break-in period of 50 to 200 rounds to set in the link and get rid of burrs. I've noted a tendency of 1911s from houses of good repute to avoid this break-in period. The Sig came out of the box running. Like all quality handguns, the Sig

Lake barrel with a 1-in-16 twist, and the fit is impressive. When you rack the slide, it's obvious someone who knows the 1911 has worked on this pistol.



Lee Berry works the GSR on steel plates. Note the spent case just leaving the chamber.

prefers some types of ammunition over others for accuracy but always feeds, fires, and ejects regardless of the type of ammo.

For this report, I tested the gun on two levels. First, I fired offhand at 10 yards for combat accuracy, firing as quickly as I could pull the front sights back into the rear notch. I then fired for absolute accuracy off the benchrest.

While combat accuracy is more important, absolute accuracy is an indication of the quality of manufacture. Either test is a chore with some handguns, but with a first-rate 1911 the firing tests are enjoyable. This steel-framed 1911 simply hung on the target during firing tests and more often than not the X-ring disappeared under the hammering of .45 ACP hardball.

During the test period I relied heavily upon affordable practice ammunition. Fiocchi 230-grain ball gave excellent results. I used the 200-grain XTP load from the same maker to conduct the five-shot, 10-yard test program, often firing 2-inch groups — excellent by any standard.

The GSR is well regulated for 230-grain ball with the six o'clock hold. A dead-on hold is suitable for the 200-grain loads. At the 25-yard-line, I benchrested several potential defense loads with excellent results. The Fiocchi 200-grain XTP load proved accurate, with five shots grouping into less than 2 inches. Inexpensive ball ammunition ran from 3 to 4 inches, SOP for practice ammunition.

Not surprisingly the new Cor Bon Performance Match loads gave a good show, generating the finest five-shot 25-yard group of the test at 1.25 inches, with an average of 1.5 inches for four groups. Cor Bon's Thunder Ranch 185-grain DPX load is comparable to the Performance Match load in practical terms, averaging 2 inches or so for five shots at 25 yards.

I fired a number of drills with a combat light, the Surefire X-300, attached. Results were excellent. I fired a considerable number of +P loads during the test and, despite the pounding of +P loads, the light never wavered. This is a good kit.



The author's custom Caspian base is fitted with many of the same parts used in the Sig Granite Series Rail.

I practiced barricade fire and found my groups comparable to earlier efforts at the benchrest. I like to test a handgun with lead bullet handloads for economy, ball ammunition for function, and service loads for reliability. I also run a few +P loads through the piece; +P loads are similar to running the family sedan at 100 mph over a bumpy road, but they serve a purpose. I fired Cor Bon +P rounds in 185-, 200- and 230-grain loads. The 200-grain Cor Bon has always been my first choice as this is an accuracy champ with a good balance of expansion and penetration. I was able to fire a 25-yard barricade group of less than 3 inches with this load. Function was good, and the GSR is among the most comfortable of all 1911s when using +P ammo. There are no sharp edges on the tang or grip safety, and in all cases the controls were tight and crisp.

Carrying the GSR

Since rail gun holsters are a little difficult to find, I relied upon the Saguaro Gunleather belt slide for range work. This is a simple holster that gives fine results. I drew quickly from this holster and practiced transitions

between targets at 7 to 10 yards. Again, the GSR simply hung on the target.

Toward the end of the test period, I obtained an IWB holster from Secret Squirrel Leather specifically designed for a 1911 rail gun. The holster is adjustable for cant and fits the GSR well. Since the handgun will be carried concealed, I replaced the checkered grips with a set of smooth grips from Paladin Grips. Perhaps this was not completely necessary, but the GSR is now truly snag free. There is no penalty in control and the pistol conceals as well as any steel-framed 1911.

These days, most of my work against bad guys is carried out with a computer. Just the same, I do not like being "naked." I most often carry some type of aluminum-framed 1911. When the likelihood of contact with our ex-con criminal class is higher, I often don a steel-framed 1911 and back-up the piece with several Metalform magazines.

I cannot imagine a better 1911 to depend upon than the Sig GSR. The pistol has met or exceeded every expectation. This is a fine handgun well worth your consideration.

BACK IN THE GAME!



The new Model 1911 R1 is truly the finest blend of exacting craftsmanship and out-of-box performance available today.

Remington® Returns to the 1911 with the R1

» BY L.P. BREZNY

During World War II Remington Arms Company built nearly 28,000 Model 1911 .45 automatic pistols as a contribution to the war effort. After that run in manufacturing the company dropped the hard-hitting from its line for some six decades. It's back!

The new Remington 1911 R1 .45 Government has moved from a marketing idea to reality and it is slowly getting into the hands shooters.

With a basic design taken right from the original 1911 playbook, Remington has stayed with the shallow main spring, military controls, and all-steel construction. Remington has also emblazoned the new R1 with the big "R" along the side of the ubiquitous 1911 slide.

It took lots of sweet talking and a strict promise to return the test gun as soon as possible, I was lucky enough to get Chris Ellis, and Todd Sigmund of the Remington promotions department to turn a sample loose for some proper field evaluation work. Don't misunderstand me here. If I had my way that gun would never leave my gun vault, but thanks to the very limited production of the weapon at the time of the review, finished guns were going to buyers instead of gun writers. I got lucky.

The 1911 and I go back to just after the end of WW II. In those days the

guns came back to U.S. arsenals as surplus products, and as such the DCM program though the NRA would allow members to pick these guns up for just a few dollars each. I have owned Colts, Singer Sewing Machine, and Remington Rand variants of the big handgun over the years and am still a fan of the pistol today. In that I am most assuredly not alone.

The Remington 1911 R1

The new Remington 1911 R1, is "old school" in terms of about 90 percent of the weapon; so much so that it fits the mold when SASS shooters turn to Wild Bunch shooting competition with the .45 Government versus a six gun. Save for the sights and a few bright metal areas at the muzzle and trigger, the gun is a dead ring-



R-1 field carry. Black Hills SD

er for that first Government Model 1911 Doughboys carried to World War I. Just handling the gun was like coming home again for an old-time .45 shooter like me. I have not shot any pay targets, or dropped a bad guy with one as a police officer, but I have sent one pile of ammo at paper, snakes and even a few irate raccoons or coyotes on night hunts in the past. There was a short period of time, when I was a police officer, that I was lobbying for the gun as a duty weapon as street gangs were out gunning most of us any day of the week. My idea just didn't fly because most police chiefs are great politicians and not really all that gun savvy.

Coated in a dull blue/black The R1 is not a showboat handgun. On the other hand, the gun is nicely appointed with a quality working finish, well-made con-

trols, and a very smooth function from the slide to the hammer and trigger. With a slide and frame of solid steel the gun is the weight of the real 1911s of old, and when you're out of ammo it can serve well as a club if necessary. With correct walnut stocks of the time period John Browning introduced the gun to the world, the R1 only lacks the smaller front and rear sight found on the old Army, and Cavalry models; but no one misses those. The lanyard ring has also been eliminated from the frame. Save for those small details the Remington R1 is a great duplicate of the first guns the company produced way back when.

All controls of the gun are correct and what you would expect for a 1911. The grip safety is genuine, with a full cocked-and-locked lever. Nothing has been

omitted on the gun in terms of the John Browning/Colt design. I like the fact that "Remington" is stamped on the magazines, slide and frame.

Test Shooting

Testing the new Remington R1 included shooting three different brands of 45 ACP ammo. I selected several because I wanted to be sure the loads that Remington shipped were not about to be the only thing the gun tended to digest. First up on the sand bag static test bench was the CCI Blazer brass load with a 230-grain FMJ bullet. Seven rounds at 20 yards produced some solid accuracy with a 5 1/2-inch vertical string and under 3-inch across. Most rounds fell into the 3-inch cluster making for a very acceptable basic workhorse, stock and standard model 1911.

Moving to Remington's own UMC brand also with a 230-grain FMJ bullet the group opened a bit, but on the other had I was not totally up to snuff either. In effect, I think much of the accuracy loss was the shooter in this case. With 14 rounds down range at 20 yards, five of them hit the dead center mark and almost fell atop one another, with the rest as flyers out to about the 6-inch ring. Again, everything I sent out of the gun was well within center mass in terms of a combat scenario. Shooting was topped off with a run of Magtech 230-grain FMJ ammo and like the others these loads dropped inside the 6-inch ring

and stacked well within the 4-inch circle. The three white dot sights being a partridge style allowed some better sighting control even in low light.

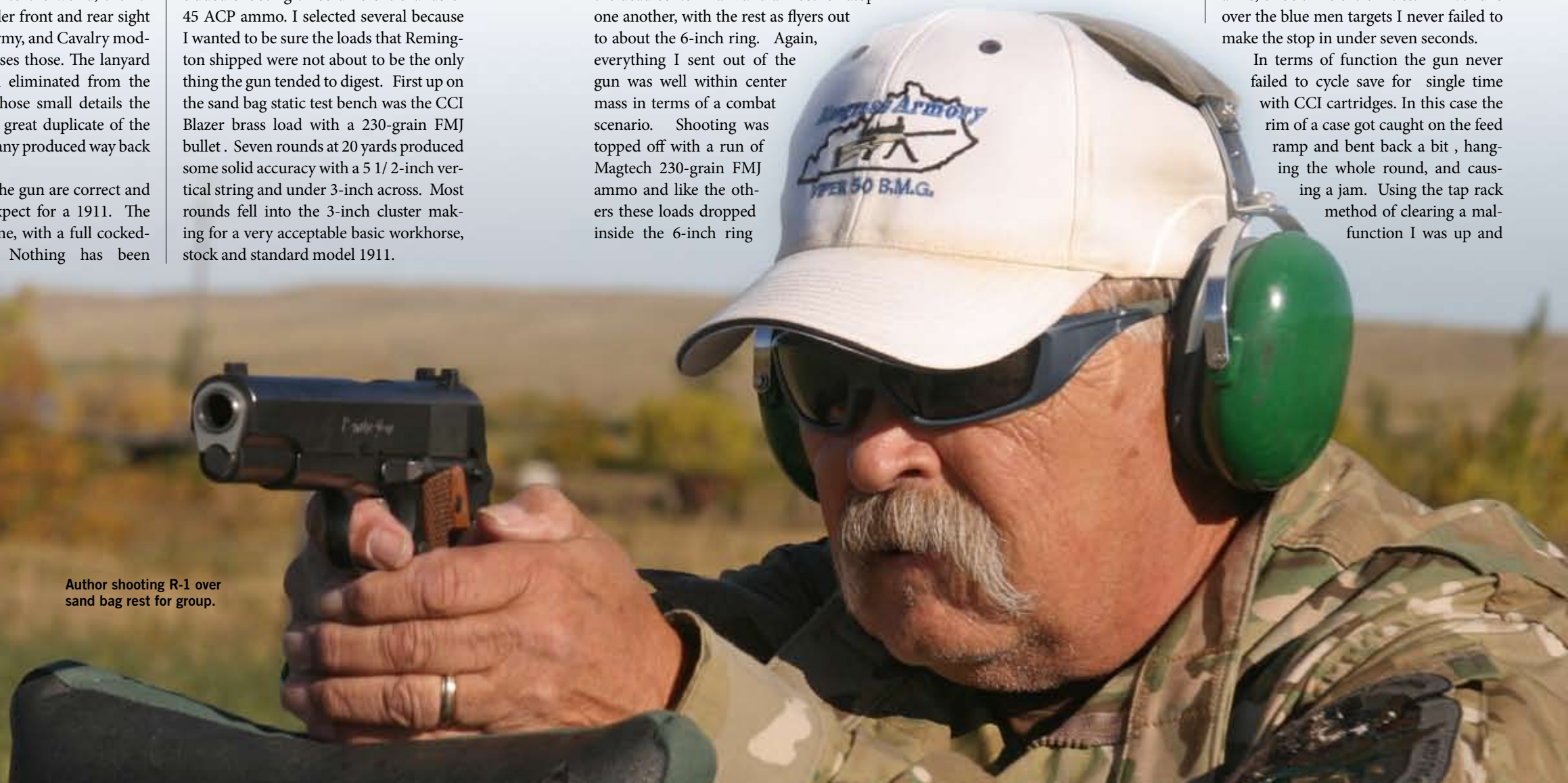
Turning back to the Remington fodder I proceeded to shoot Birchwood Casey tactical targets (blue men) in sets of two with

a 10-yard spacing, and at a distance from the muzzle of 15 yards. Shooting seven-round strings with three double taps and a final single round down range the gun never failed once to produce two rounds in the dead sure vitals, with all others making target contact between the lower ribs, arms, or belt line extremities. In five runs over the blue men targets I never failed to make the stop in under seven seconds.

In terms of function the gun never failed to cycle save for single time with CCI cartridges. In this case the rim of a case got caught on the feed ramp and bent back a bit, hanging the whole round, and causing a jam. Using the tap rack method of clearing a malfunction I was up and



Author shooting R-1 over sand bag rest for group.



Above: The accuracy and reliability that have made the 1911 an American icon now shine brighter than ever. Here is the R-1 & 20 yd group results.

Left to Right:

Flared and lowered ejection port and machined slide.

G1 grip safety and slide release. Flat mainspring housing and walnut double diamond grips.

Match grade stainless steel barrel and bushing.

Dovetailed two-dot rear sights and narrow checkered spur hammer.





running again in seconds. For a total of 147 test rounds, that was the only incident that could be regarding as a function problem.

Because this gun is just about hand-made and at a mass production price (\$600) I believe a number of possible problems have been pushed aside with the final product. When being built the R1 is set out on a line of assembly workers each of have a single task as the individual gun moves along toward completion.

When the gun is completely assembled it is reviewed by the last individual on the line then sent to the test tunnel for a function and accuracy review. The gun is tested with live ammo and if it fails to meet specs it is returned to the line once again for further adjustment. On the negative side this is one reason why it takes so darn long to get one of these old school Remington Arms hand cannons into a guy's gun safe.

Future?

While it seems a bit crazy to talk about

Above: In 1919 the U.S. Army comissioned Remington Arms to produce the 1911 auto-loading pistol. Remington produced over 21,000 for our fighting men of World War I. Now, 91 years later due to popular demand Remington introduces the 1911R1.

Left: Solid aluminum trigger with a 3-1/2 to 5 lb pull.

the future of the R1 when you currently can't get one by hook or crook, the gun will catch up in production and as such be ready for an upgrade sooner or later. The 1911 45 Government, as we all know, is an open canvas for a gun-building artist. Remington will add different configurations to this product line as time goes by. Race guns, combat specials, and related target models will be sure to surface along the road to future development. Everything new and advanced will be based on the basic Model 1911 R 1, but the guts of the grand master in auto-loading handguns will still be that hard-pounding John Browning-designed frame and slide doing all the real work.

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SWEEPSTAKES ENDS DEC. 31, 2010
www.GunDigest.com

TACOMA PD CHOOSES



The KIMBER PRO CARRY II

» BY MARK KAKKURI

In 2002 the Tacoma, Wash., police department began offering Kimber Pro Carry II and Pro Carry HD II pistols to its officers. Some 1911 fans rejoiced as if to say “Finally, a police department that gets it.” Others, such as Jim Shepherd, publisher/editor of *The Shooting Wire*, had a different response: “I really don’t see what the big deal is,” he says. “The 1911 has proven since early in the twentieth century that in the hands of a qualified operator, it is more than capable of ending a fight.”

According to Dwight Van Brunt, vice president for sales and marketing at Yonkers, New York-based Kimber Manufacturing, however, the real story behind the Tacoma police department’s selection of the Kimber Pro Carry 1911 is that “there isn’t much to tell.”

Van Brunt relays this account: “Kimber simply sent some pistols to Tacoma PD for testing. The department did what they did and found the pistols to be the most dependable firearm they had ever tested – and their records went back over 20 years. They thought the test pistols might have been ringers, so they went to a local Kimber dealer and purchased some of the same model off the shelf – then repeated the testing with the same results.”

Gun Digest talked to Sgt. Edward Wade, range sergeant for the Tacoma, Wash. Police Department, about its use of the Kimber Pro Carry 1911 over the last eight years.

GD: When did Tacoma PD officially offer/allow use of the Kimber 1911 and what has been the overall experience since then?

SGT. WADE: Tacoma PD began offering the Kimber Pro Carry II and Kimber Pro Carry HD II in 2002 as part of a department-wide transition from the Beretta 96D .40 pistol to the Kimber 1911 pistol and Glock pistols. The overall experience has been good. The 1911 requires more maintenance than the Glock pistol and officers

in several units (such as Traffic and Marine Services) must take extra care due to the weather conditions we experience in this region.

GD: Will the Kimber 1911 remain an option for Tacoma PD officers?

SGT. WADE: The Kimber will remain an option until at least 2013 when all Department pistols are due to rotate out (we are currently looking at rotating pistols at 10-year inter-

vals). If the pistol selection committee in 2012 selects the Kimber, more than likely it will be available for officers to select as a service pistol.

GD: How often does Tacoma PD evaluate its duty pistols? What other pistols does Tacoma PD allow its officers to carry?

SGT. WADE: The Tacoma Police Department evaluates its pistols about every 10 years. Although this time-



line has been compressed due to pistol issues encountered in the past, we are still projecting a 10-year cycle. The Tacoma Police Department offers its officers five (5) different pistols to choose from: The Kimber Pro Carry II, the Kimber Pro Carry HD II, the Glock Model 21, Model 22, and Model 23. Each Kimber has five Wilson Combat magazines issued and each Glock has three high-capacity magazines issued.

GD: What's the policy for what pistols can be carried on duty and off duty?

SGT. WADE: Officers are allowed to carry off duty (on a voluntary basis only) as long it meets our department, state, and federal guidelines. All officers are given the opportunity to shoot all the pistols that the department offers and make their choice. They then receive a three-day (30-hour) pistol transition training. Only department-issued pistols may be carried on duty. Personally-owned pistols may be used for back up guns and for off-duty carry.

GD: What percentage of officers choose the Kimber for duty or off duty?

SGT. WADE: Over one-third (38%) of the officers picked the Kimber during the department's initial pistol transition. Since then, due to attrition, new officers are only picking the Kimber 11% of the time. This may be attributed to newer officers having little or no pistol experience, the name recognition of Glock, more manipulation skill required for the Kimber, or the intimidation of the external safeties.

GD: What are the advantages of the 1911 over the other designs?

SGT. WADE: As far as advantages, it comes down to personal preferences. Most officers comment that the trigger press is better, it feels better in their hands, and the potency of the .45 as a deciding factor.

GD: How have the Tacoma PD Kimbers performed in actual "street use"?



SGT. WADE: Kimbers and Glocks have been involved in officer-involved shootings. There have been no issues with the Kimbers. They function just as reliably as the Glock pistols.

GD: What firearms training/qualification requirements does Tacoma PD have for its officers? Of these, what are unique to the 1911?

SGT. WADE: All officers are required to attend a pistol transition course consisting of three days (30 hours). All new hire officers are required to attend a three-day (30 hours) pre-academy pistol course and a four-day (40 hour) post-academy pistol course (lateral hires complete the post-academy training as part of their pistol selection). Tacoma police officers must attend two pistol qualifications each year as well as two pistol training sessions each year as part of scheduled quarterly training. The pistol qualification is comprised of two parts: one

tests marksmanship, malfunction clearances, and magazine changes from the 3- to 25-yard line with a total of 61 rounds fired. The second test is a speed qualification that requires the officer to draw and fire 10 rounds on the silhouette while conducting a speed reload and clearing a primary or Type 1 malfunction.

GD: What should other police departments know about Tacoma's use of the 1911 for duty?

SGT. WADE: The maintenance required for the 1911 pistol is more demanding than Glocks and other similar pistols. This includes not only regular cleaning but detailed breakdowns by department armorers and replacing the recoil spring on a consistent basis. Other 1911 pistols that were tested in 2001 were finicky about what type of ammunition that would feed reliably. Also, some duty bullets would expand reliably out of a 4.5-inch Glock barrel but not a 4-inch Kimber barrel so ammunition testing is vital.

Also, the range staff must reserve the authority to overrule pistol selections made by its officers. An example is officers that are poor manipulators of pistols in general. The 1911 may feel better in their hands especially if they have had experience with large, double-stacked pistols. Their poor manipulation skills will have to be worked on during the transition course or they will continue to experience issues in the future. Range staff must be honest with officers that the 1911 requires more care and better manipulation skills.

GD: What do the officers appreciate about being able to carry a Kimber 1911 on duty or, if applicable, off duty?

SGT. WADE: One officer commented that due to his small hand size, the Kimber 1911 allowed him to pick a .45 pistol that he could grip. He would not be able to pick a pistol with a double-stack magazine like the Glock.

Another commented that the trigger press is smoother and has a more positive feel than most high-capacity pistols.

Several officers commented that the external safeties and hammer back were at first very intimidating. But when the range staff explained how the safeties worked and that the trigger press was about 5.5 pounds (same as many other pistols) they tried the pistol out and found they liked it.

For those who love and trust the 1911 pistol, and there are plenty out there. Tacoma Pd's choice of the Kimber comes as not surprise. John Caradimas, owner of the M1911.org forum which recently has tallied over 30 million visits a month, agrees: "There is an undeniable truth that we need to take into consideration: The 1911 pistol is the finest fighting handgun ever produced. Why? Because of its design. The pistol was designed to be instantly available, it has the best ergonomics and it shoots a powerful cartridge. Those in the know-how choose the 1911 as their self-defense pistol, for exactly these reasons."

Mark Kakkuri is a freelance writer in Oxford, Mich.

GunDigest

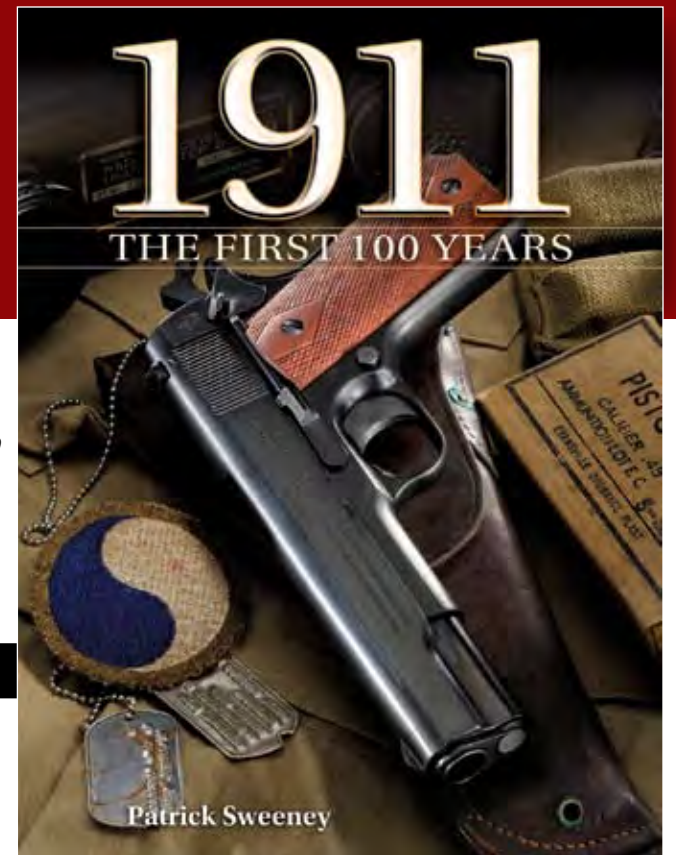


THE MOMENTOUS YEAR OF

1911

This excerpt was taken from *1911 The First 100 Years* by Patrick Sweeney. For more information or to purchase this book [CLICK HERE](#).

» BY PATRICK SWEENEY



March 29, 1911, was not just the beginning of a new century. It was the beginning of a new world. We like to think of ourselves as “modern” and living in a time of breathtaking advances, but the first decade of the 20th century was not just the start of a new century, it was the start of The Modern Age. In the first ten years of the 20th century, so many things changed, and changed fundamentally, that afterwards nothing was the same. I’ll admit that a big aspect of that change was The Great War itself, but the war accelerated things that were already going on. Before 1900, the world was pretty much as it had been before. Oh, there were things such as electricity and flush toilets, repeating rifles and medical anesthetics that hadn’t existed during the time of the Caesars, but they were not common. Afterwards, almost everything was overturned.

Some might ask “Why the big to-do over a pistol?” To understand just what a leap forward it was, you have to have a grasp of what things were like when it was adopted. While in 1911 the United States Army adopted a new pistol, a number of other significant events happened in that year.

At the start of 1911, the President of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Charles Ebbets, announced that he had purchased the property to build a new, concrete and steel stadium, to seat 30,000 fans. Existing stadiums were for most teams simply a ring of bleachers around the playing field.

Hank Greenberg, the Detroit Tigers first Baseman, was born on January 1st, and as far as I can tell, never plays a single game in Ebbets Field. Of course, after 1959, no one played baseball in Ebbets Field either, as the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles and the old, small, out-of-date stadium was torn down.

If you’re a fan of the movie *Bad Day at Black Rock* (and you should be), its director, John Sturges, was born on January 3 of the momentous year of 1911.

College football, while quite popular, was not yet the national obsession it had become by the 1920s. As a result, teams played in much smaller venues that we can relate to. The Michigan Wolverines, for instance, played their 1911 season in Ferry Field, not Michigan Stadium. Ferry Field seated only 18,000 people, about what a basketball arena holds today. It wasn’t until 1926 that Fielding Yost built Michigan

2011
Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
			1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27	28	29	30	31			

March



A plain M1905 pistol, which Colt made for a short while as they worked out the details on which the Army insisted and which preceded the final test in 1911.

Stadium with its then-record 72,000 seats. On the other side of the country, UCLA didn't even have a football team in 1911, not forming one until 1919.

On that same month of January 1911, Roald Amundsen anchored his ship the

FRAM, in Walvis Bay, Antarctica. It would take him until December 14 to reach 90° south. Despite his less than happy life, Amundsen fared better than Robert Scott. Scott also struck out for the Pole in that same season but reached it a month later than Amundsen. Scott and his expedition also perished on the return to the coast. At the time, Scott was the better-known adventurer, and his tragic expedition received a great deal more notice due to having an official photographer, Herbert Ponting, on staff. The newspapers and magazines of the time were eager to publish the photographs. Ponting had taken them at great personal effort, as the cameras he elected to use (glass-plate view cameras, using glass plates the size of a sheet of typing paper) and tripods, developing gear, etc., weighed 200 pounds.

Imagine his disappointment, upon returning from the ill-fated expedition, to discover that the late Scott, eager to finance the trip, had pre-sold the image

Not only did the early Colts lack a thumb safety, they didn't even have grip safeties or magazine disconnectors.

rights to all the photographs taken!

Also in 1911, the US Navy achieved the first landing of an aircraft on a ship when the Curtis Pusher piloted by Lt. Eugene Ely, USN, landed on a specially-constructed deck on the cruiser *USS Pennsylvania*, in San Francisco Bay.

In February 1911 Gustave Mahler conducted his last concert. On March 7, the United States sent 20,000 troops to the Mexican border, just to keep things on the up-and-up.

Movies in 1911 were short: one reel of about 10 minutes' duration. On March 3, a little girl was born in Kansas City, Kansas, and was christened Harlean Carpenter. She would later change her name and ignite the screen as Jean Harlow. Aside from Harlow, a whole host of actors was born in 1911: Jim Bannon (who played Red Ryder); Lee J. Cobb; Broderick Crawford; Hume Cronyn; Ann Doran; Leif Ericson; Douglas Fowley (Doc Holliday in TV's *Wyatt Earp*); James Gregory (Inspector Luger in *Barney Miller*); Butterfly ("I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' no babies") McQueen; Maureen O'Sullivan; Merle Oberon; Vincent Price; Ginger Rogers; Roy Rogers; Will Rogers, Jr.; Phil Silvers; and Terry-Thomas.

One other actor is deserving of mention because his career went on after his acting: on February 6, 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan was born in Tampica, Illinois.

On March 13, L. Ron Hubbard was born. For those who have known only of Dianetics, he was quite prolific as a science fiction author prior to his self-help work. He also founded Scientology.

On March 25, 1911, Jack Ruby was born. He would lead an otherwise undistinguished life until November 24, 1963, when he was immortalized on camera as the killer of Lee Harvey Oswald. On March 26, playwright Tennessee Williams was born, for which theatregoers for decades after would be thankful.

On March 16, 1911, the Ottawa Senators defeated Port Arthur to retain the Stanley Cup. On March 11, the town of Tamarack, California, reported 451 inches of snow on the ground, a record that stands today. In fact, it stands 37.58 feet high!

On March 24, Joseph Barbera was born, he and his partner William Hanna being the creators of the Flintstones and countless other cartoon characters.

March of 1911 was not entirely a good month. Nazi war criminal Joseph

Mengele was born on March 16. On March 24, there was a history-making fire in New York's Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in which 146 people were killed. The doors of the factory were locked shut during working hours, leading to the doomed workers' inability to escape. As a result, fire codes across the nation were created or updated.

The Cadillac Motor Car Company was hard at work developing one of the truly great innovations of the industry: the electric starter. A Ford Model T Open Runabout, unequipped, listed for \$600, and fully-equipped listed for \$680. In 1911 Ford would make and sell 34,500 of these 20-horsepower beauties at its brand-new state-of-the-art facility in Highland Park, Michigan. At the average weekly wage of nine dollars, that was a lot of money for a car, but they were almost unbreakable due to Ford's use of vanadium-alloy steel.

Speaking of automobiles, the world land speed record was set on April 23, 1911 by an American: Bob Burman. He drove a Benz on Daytona Beach and reached the speed of 141.732 mph. Also, the first Indianapolis 500 was held in 1911, won by Ray Harroun with an average speed of 74.602 mph. That's six hours

and 42 minutes of racing in an open-cockpit car. Ray's car sported an innovation: a rear-view mirror.

Of course, not everyone drove a car; as a result, the major cities of the world were awash in horse manure. Everything that moved, moved by either horsepower, manpower or steam. Trolley cars moved via horses, and a horse worked a four-hour shift. Every delivery cart, cab private carriage and messenger required a horse or horses, and each of them required lots of food and water – which, in processed form, was promptly deposited on the streets. Futurists predicted that by the middle of the century Manhattan would be covered in horse manure to the third-story windows. Thankfully, such a dire predicament did not come to pass.

By 1911 Thomas Edison had pretty much lost his "current war" with George Westinghouse and alternating current (AC) became the American domestic

In a century, we went from khakis and campaign hats to digital camouflage, body armor, and a pistol like this Hilton Yam 10-8 consulting tactical. But the base gun is still a 1911. Not much changed from when John Moses Browning and Colt perfected it for the Army.



standard. (To give you an idea of the state of electrical “standardization” of the time, you might visit Rockcliff Mansion, in Hannibal, Missouri. Built by a lumber baron in 1900, it is 13,000 square feet of *belle époque* state-of-the-art house. The electric plugs on the lamps and other utilities are the size of a pack of cigarettes, with copper contacts on the narrow sides. The sockets are gaps in the walls big enough to take those plugs, with matching copper plates. Imagine a kid sticking a penny in an outlet and getting a shock. Now imagine a hole in the wall big enough for a kid to stick a fist into. Ouch.)

In August of 1911, Public Act 62-5 was passed, fixing the House of Representatives at 435 people. (The law did not go into effect until 1913.) On August 22, the staff of the Louvre discovered the Mona Lisa had been stolen. It would remain lost until 1913.

Nostalgia be damned, you would not want to live in the first decade of the 20th century. In America, the housing situation would by today’s standards have most of us living in poverty. How about these stats: a quarter of homes had running water. One in eight had flush toilets, and fewer than that had electric lighting. A grand total of five percent of homes had telephones. One in five had a refrigerator, and five percent of American homes had a washing machine. You’ve heard the term “scullery maid”? She (there were no male maids) was the lowest-ranked domestic servant and did all the cleaning, which included producing vats of boiling water for scouring, mopping, and clothes cleaning.

It was not unusual for scullery maids to be scarred or die from accidents with vats of boiling water, trying to keep up with the laundry.

In 1911 the average life expectancy in America was 51.5 years, with men at 49.9 and women at 53.2. Kinda makes retirement at 65 take on a whole new meaning, doesn’t it?

Music in 1911 meant only a few things. Mostly, live music. People who wanted music either learned to play or went to the theatre. Low-class folks went to music halls. Well-off folks bought an Edison cylinder player. For the most part, music sales meant sales of sheet music. Edwardian-era techno-geeks were in a tizzy. Would piano-players be replaced by pianolas? The older piano-player was a machine you rolled up to your piano and loaded with music, and it played the piano. Pianolas had the machinery built-in.

The Justice Department brought a lawsuit against US Steel in 1911, on monopoly charges. American steel production in 1911 was 23,676,106 tons, of which US Steel produced more than half. America produced more steel than any other country at the time. America made the bulk of that steel for one good reason: railroads. In 1911, America had twice as many miles of railway as all of the European countries combined, including Russia.

In 1911, the female ideal was the Gibson Girl, as drawn by Charles Dana Gibson. Tall, shapely, with a wasp waist, hair pulled up in a bun, and lacking the bustles, frills and other fashion accoutrements of the earlier Victorian age, the

fashion lasted from the 1890s up through WWI.

In 1911 America was not the arsenal of democracy. The British Army at that time consisted of 247,000 men, and that included those stationed in the colonies. They would land in France in 1914 with six divisions of Infantry, and five brigades of cavalry: fewer than 100,000 men. Germany had a standing army of 870,000 men in 50 active divisions, plus 48 reserve divisions. All German adult males served a short stint in training, and then went into their reserve units. The French had 47 divisions: 770,000 men in active-duty unit and 46,000 colonial troops, and a similar reserve system as that of the Germans. Italy had 300,000 men in their army but had severe shortages of trained officers and NCOs. The real heavyweight was Russia with 1,432,000 men in active duty with another 1.5 million in reserves. Yes, the Russian Army was heavy in lightly-equipped infantry units with not much more than the rifles and bayonets they were carrying, but that’s a lot of men.

In 1911, the US Army consisted of 190,000 men, and what combat-experienced troops they had had seen the Boxer Rebellion and the Philippine Insurrection. The US Army was mostly a frontier-patrolling force, and had no officer experienced in troop movements and combat with anything larger than a company-sized operation.

The hull of the Titanic was launched May 31, 1911, outfitted by March of 1912, and sailed on her maiden voyage April 10, 1912. After that, it was a short ride to the iceberg.

As a final example of just how different things were in 1911, consider this: a democratically-elected American President was a rarity in heads of state. A list of who was in charge of which countries that year would include the following:

- King George V, King of England and the British Dominions, Emperor of India.
- Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary.
- Albert I, King of the Belgians.
- Frederick VIII, King of Denmark.
- Wilhelm II, German Emperor, King of Prussia.



- Otto, King of Bavaria.
- Frederick Augustus III, King of Saxony.
- Wilhelm II, King of Wurttemberg.
- Vittorio Emanuele, King of Italy.
- Guillaume IV, Grand Duke of Luxembourg.
- Willhelmina, Queen of the Netherlands.
- Haakon VII, King of Norway.
- Mehmed V, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.
- Alphonso XIII, King of Spain.
- Gustaf V, King of Sweden.
- Menelik II, Emperor of Ethiopia.
- Xuantong, Emperor of China.
- Mutsuhito, 122nd Emperor of Japan.
- Faisal Bin Turki, Sultan of Oman.

Obviously, the idea of democratic selection of governments had a long way to go.

To handgunners the world over, 1911 will always stand out as the year in which the world’s greatest semi-automatic pistol was finalized. In fact, this may be the most enduring event of that event-filled year. The 1911 pistol is an amazing machine. It disposes of more power than any other commonly-manufactured military sidearm and was among the top rank in

power for a long time. It is durable not because of its super-secret alloy, or heat-treatment, but by its basic design.

You can find no other item designed in the first decade of the 20th century, still in common use, and still essentially unchanged from the original. If you do scour the museums and history books, and find something made then that I’ve overlooked, my trump card is this: is that object still commonly believed to be the best tool for the job? The 1911 is.

To illustrate how fortunate we are to have the 1911 pistol, consider for a moment what likely would have happened had John M. Browning turned the spotlight of his genius in another direction. What if, in the early 1890s, someone had recognized the mechanical genius of John Moses Browning and lured him away? What if Henry Ford had said, “John, we know that Winchester is paying you five and ten thousand dollars a design for guns, but have you ever looked at automobiles? Here’s a gasoline engine. Think you can improve on it?”

What if Browning had been lured away to design typewriters? Automobile engines, transmissions, suspensions and chassis? When the Wright brothers took off on that windy December day in 1903 they used an engine with many aluminum components. In developing that engine,

they had asked engine manufacturers for a powerplant that weighed less than 200 pounds and produced at least eight horsepower. The Wright Flyer engine produced twelve horsepower. I can’t imagine it being more than a day’s work for Browning, once he’d gotten a handle on internal combustion engines, to produce a design for a 200-pound engine with much more horsepower than twelve.

Or what if, when faced with the lawsuit from Mauser over patent infringements on the Springfield M-1903, the US Army had told Browning, “We need a rifle, and we need one right now.” Bolt gun? Sure, he could have designed one for them, but I can’t imagine that he would have stopped there. Considering how quickly he designed the BAR, how much trouble would it have been to make a prototype self-loading rifle?

None of this happened, of course, and we have the 1911 pistol to show for it. If the 1911 were introduced for the first time today, it would unquestionably be welcomed for its simplicity and well-thought-out design. As remarkable as it was a century ago, the 1911 is even more remarkable today.

Readers, we present the MODEL 1911 U.S. ARMY PISTOL, .45.



SHOOTER'S

EYE VIEW: ONE MAN'S STORY

» BY MASSAD AYOOB

The 1911 is a controversial pistol, a “cult gun” if you will. There are other cult guns, and their true believers like to bash competing “ballistic belief systems.” When such a topic is under discussion, the reader has a right to know where the speaker is coming from.

As a little boy, I was already fascinated with guns in general and handguns in particular. Many if not most of the adults in my life were WWII vets, many survivors of WWI were still alive, and many of the young men were freshly back from Korea. I grew up on stories of the 1911's recoil practically wrenching the shooter's arm off, and its bullet ripping the arm com-

pletely off the enemy soldier, not to mention accuracy that might not suffice to hit a washtub at 25 paces. (Yes, there were still washtubs then.)

In the late 1950s, Jeff Cooper began his famous series on the 1911 in *Guns & Ammo* magazine, and I pored over each segment with far more attention than I paid to my elementary school textbooks. Cooper put forth a promise of 19 one-shot stops out of 20 shots with 230-grain .45 ACP hardball. He explained the controllability of the single-action trigger, the ease of flipping off the safety between holster and target, and the speed of reloading. I already knew that accurized .45s ruled the pistol matches of the time, and Cooper explained how the same platform had come to dominate the simulated gunfighting competitions he had organized in California. The lucid logic of his argument was compelling.

It was as if a messiah had risen in the West.

I begged my dad for a Colt .45 automatic. My twelfth Christmas loomed, and that November my father took me to his favorite firearms emporium, Sprague's Gun Shop. Dad was uncertain that a boy my age could handle the mighty .45. Stan, with a knowing smile, liberated a surplus WWI-vintage 1911 from the used pistol shelf, stuffed a few lead bullet round-nose handloads into its magazine, and took us out behind the shop. (You could do that then, too.) Bracing myself for the sprained arm I was sure would follow, I held the heavy Colt at the end of my right arm (back then they were handguns, not handsguns), and squeezed the trigger carefully, determined

not to flinch in front of my father or Mr. Sprague.

I felt a gentle bump, and watched the muzzle come up a little and to the left. I settled the 1911 back on target and kept it downrange as I turned my head and said, “I like it, Dad...”

That Christmas it was under the tree, an early (1918 production) surplus Colt 1911 with flat housing, long trigger, short tang, and very worn double diamond grips. It was an ensemble present. My mother had bought me a tanker's chest holster to go with it from the local Army/Navy store, and my Uncle Whitney had purchased a yellow box of Winchester 230-grain hardball (easy to wrap, too). That afternoon, my dad drove us out in the country to a snowy field where I put 50 rounds of beige-box GI surplus hardball (five bucks a box back then; pricier Winchester would be saved for special occasions) without a hitch. That evening I set about learning to field strip it, and was soon doing so blindfolded.

Another 1911 shooter was born.

In my teen years, I experimented with various accessories. New hammer and grip safety to prevent a bitten web of hand. Bigger sights. A re-blue for its tired finish. A trigger job. A new barrel, since corrosive ammo had apparently gotten to this specimen before I did. It never occurred to me that I was ruining the collector value of a WWI artifact. They were dirt-cheap then. My father had bought this one for \$37.50.

Life went on. I was a senior in college when I bought my second Colt .45 auto, a pristine 1957-series National Match that had been accurized and fitted with BoMar “hardball” sights by the USAF Marksman-

ship Training Unit for the ex-airman I bought it from for \$100 when he got sick of bulls-eye shooting. For many years, it would be my all-purpose 1911: it went with me in concealed carry and in police uniform, and to bulls-eye and PPC matches, Second Chance, and Bianchi Cup. In 1979 or so, I used it to tie the national record on bowling pins, 3.9 seconds for five pins, established by young Johnny Robbins and soon tied by Bill Wilson. That record quickly fell to Jerry Miculek and others.

Over the years, I accumulated a lot of 1911s. Some – the Vega, the Crown City – were unmitigated junk and didn't stay with me long. (The latter reminded me of the old “washtub” accuracy stories. It threw a group from a Ransom Rest too large to measure with a foot ruler, once you got it working well enough to send bullets downrange in the first place.)

There were comp guns and widebodies, .45 ACP and .45 Super. There were .38 Super, 9mm Luger, .40 S&W, .41 Avenger, .41 Action Express, 10mm Auto, 9mm Steyr, 9X23, .357 SIG, and more. (I had looked for a 7.65mm Luger barrel to put in a 1911 to bring to a South American country that would give a visitor a permit to carry, but allowed nothing larger than .32 caliber. From Colt to Bar-Sto, no such barrels were in stock, and I ended up with a Browning Hi-Power in that chambering.)

The years gave me the opportunity to own and shoot other fine 1911s besides the defining Colt: Arminex, Les Baer, Ed Brown, Jim Clark, Ithaca, Kimber, Dave Lauck, Remington-Rand, Rock River, SIG, Smith & Wesson, Springfield Armory (both Massachusetts and Illinois

pedigrees), Taurus, and Wilson Combat, among others. And the custom guns of the finest master pistolsmiths: Baer, Austin Behlert, Jim Boland, Brown, Bob Chow, Ned Christensen, Jim Clark, Dick Crawford, Al Dinan, Jim Garthwaite, Al Greco, Dick Heinie, Jim Hoag, Lauck, Bill Laughridge, John Lawson, Paul Liebenberg, Ed Masaki, D.R. Middlebrooks, Mark Morris, Wayne Novak, John Nowlin, Frank Pachmayr, Mike Plaxco, Nolan Santy, Armand Swenson, Wilson, and more.

The 1911 remains one of my favorite pistols. I shoot it better than anything else.

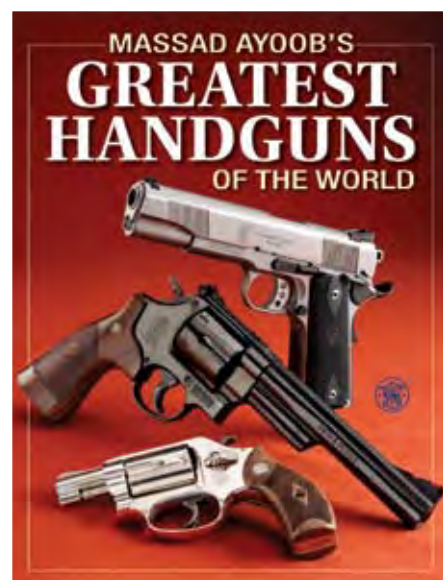
My current working battery includes 9mm (match grade Springfield, for Enhanced Service Pistol division of IDPA), .38 Special wadcutter (a flawless Jim Clark longslide acquired for bulls-eye and PPC, and kept “just because”), 10mm (an exquisite Mark Morris five-inch Colt Delta that almost recoils downward thanks to its efficient carry-comp design), .40 S&W (a Para P16 acquired for IPSC), and a slew of .45 ACPs.

I do not have a WWJMBD? tattoo, and I do not consider the 1911 the be-all and end-all of handgun designs. I do recognize it as a mature design that has been intelligently optimized for a number of specific purposes and that performs a remarkably wide range of purposes well. If and when I ever retire and settle on just one personal

Right: Though many have tried to improve on it, John Browning's original barrel bushing system with short recoil spring guide is hard to beat in author's opinion.

handgun to carry, I suspect it will be a minimally customized lightweight Commander .45, cocked and locked and ready to do what it has spent a century, from drawing board to battlefield to tournament range, doing amazingly well.

GunDigest



This excerpt was taken from *Massad Ayoob's Greatest Handguns* by Massad Ayoob. For more information or to purchase this book [CLICK HERE](#).



The 1911 neither began nor fossilized in its eponymous year. The history of the 1911 pistol goes back to well before that year, as surely as it continues today. Let's look at some landmarks in its development.

- 1896:** Seeing the future, Colt's Patent Firearms signs John Browning to a contract to do developmental work on automatic pistols for them. (Semi-automatic will not become the common parlance for such designs until later.)
- 1899:** The first Browning-designed autoloaders take form in steel, chambered for a proprietary .38 caliber round.
- 1902:** Colt .38 automatics, in both sporting and military trim, appear on the market. Despite smooth actions and excellent workmanship, they are rickety things that resemble T-squares with triggers.
- 1903:** Initial concept work begins on the cartridge that will be known as the .45 ACP. This same year, Colt introduces their famous Pocket Model .32 auto.
- 1904:** The .45 Automatic Colt Pistol cartridge is born.
- 1905:** The US Army has become insistent on a .45 caliber handgun in the wake of the Philippine Insurrection, and is somewhat open to the newfangled autoloading pistol concept, though all tested in the last five years (including early Colt .38s) have failed to prove totally adequate. Colt quietly begins production of their first .45 automatic, though the Model 1905 will not hit the market until early 1906. Like all its predecessors but the Pocket Model, it retains a nearly 90-degree grip to barrel angle. It will not please the Army for a number of reasons.
- 1907:** An Ordnance test determines that no currently produced automatic pistol is satisfactory for US military needs but that Colt comes closest.
- 1908:** A grip safety is developed for Colt's .45 pistol, still a work in progress.
- 1909:** Colt's classic is now beginning to take shape. It is the first Colt to get the push button magazine release, located behind the trigger guard on the left. Its slide lock lever is a rather crude picture of what the 1911s will be. The ugly square front of the earlier guns has given way to a shorter dust cover portion of the frame, and the gracefully narrowed lower front of the slide, seen in the 1903 Pocket .32 (and the identical-in-appearance 1908 Pocket .380), as adopted on this iteration of Colt's .45 auto.

- 1910:** The shape of John Browning's masterpiece is almost complete, but the 1910 variation lacks a thumb safety. This will be added at the insistence of the Army, which has determined it unsafe to attempt to manually decock a chamber-loaded auto pistol in the heat of battle, one-handed.
- 1911:** The vision is complete. With long trigger and short grip tang, by today's standards, the 1911 has a safety readily accessible to a right thumb and a flat-back mainspring housing. In the climax of a long series of military handgun tests, the Colt trounces the only other remaining finalist, the Savage. In March of 1911, the United States Government officially adopts Colt Pistol, Model of 1911, as the standard sidearm of the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. It will remain so until the mid-1980s.
- 1912:** For the first of many, many times in its long history, production of the 1911 pistol is outsourced from Colt's. In addition to Colt's own production, the pistol is now being manufactured at the Springfield Armory in Springfield, Massachusetts. This same year, the National Rifle Association offers its members NRA-marked 1911s acquired from the Ordnance Department.
- 1914:** Norway adopts the 1911 Colt .45 auto as its standard military sidearm. It is granted the right to produce the guns there in the following year.
- 1916:** Argentina adopts the 1911 .45 as its standard service pistol and will soon be licensed to produce them there. Mexico will adopt the 1911 shortly after WWI.
- 1917:** With America's entry into WWI, demand so far outstrips production that Remington becomes another licensed 1911 manufacturer, and both Colt (on their separate revolver line) and Smith & Wesson mass produce revolvers that will fire the .45 ACP cartridge with half-moon clips.
- 1923:** A post-WWI study of small arms effectiveness determines that the 1911 needs a longer, more protective grip tang to prevent hand bite; an arched magazine housing to cure a tendency to shoot low; more visible sights; and a shorter, more easily reached trigger. These modifications combine to form the Model 1911A1, a designation that does not become official until three years later.
- 1929:** The Colt .38 Super makes its official debut, in a Government Model format identical to the

- .45. It fires a 130-grain bullet at 1300 feet per second.
- 1931:** Colt attempts to market a blowback 1911 in .22 Long Rifle. Called the Ace model, it will prove unreliable.
- 1932:** The National Match version is introduced. Produced in .45 and .38 Super, this handcrafted beauty will be declared by many purists to be the finest Colt automatic ever manufactured.
- 1935:** Marsh "Carbine" Williams invents a floating chamber device that allows the 1911 to function more reliably with a .22 Long Rifle cartridge. The Colt Service Model Ace .22 pistol and the Colt .22/45 conversion unit are born.
- 1937:** William Swartz's firing pin safety is patented. Colt buys the rights and assembles a quantity of .45s and Supers with it, eventually abandoning the concept as too difficult to machine.
- 1941:** The outbreak of WWII creates a vast demand for 1911A1 pistols. In addition to Colt, they will be manufactured in greater or lesser quantities by such firms as Remington-Rand, Ithaca, and the Singer Sewing Machine Company.
- 1950:** The first shortened (and the first lightened) Colt 1911, the Commander, is introduced. With aluminum alloy frame instead of steel, shortened dust cover, and barrel stubbed from the conventional 5 inches to 4.25 inches with proportional slide, it is offered in calibers .45 ACP, .38 Super, and 9mm Luger.
- 1957:** The National Match concept is resurrected. The new pistol will be offered primarily in .45 ACP but later, briefly, in .38 Special wadcutter, and will be better known as the Gold Cup.
- 1970:** Colt introduces their Series '70 with collet-type barrel bushing intended to improve accuracy. The collets will prove to be fragile, and this design will soon be abandoned.
- 1972:** The United States Army officially adopts the General Officers' Pistol, a 1911 .45 shortened at muzzle and butt for issue to those with sufficient stars on their shoulders. A concept created earlier by military armorers, it has already been offered to the public as a custom Bobcat .45 by Armand Swenson and George Sheldon, separately and simultaneously, creating a new cottage industry for custom gunsmiths.

- 1973:** Louis Seecamp offers a double action conversion of the 1911 pistol. It will later be incorporated into a short-lived, double action 1911 pistol, the ODI Viking.
- 1974:** The Reese family founds a new gun-manufacturing firm that resurrects an old name: Springfield Armory. This firm will be the first to compete seriously with Colt in production of commercial (as opposed to military contract) 1911s, beginning in 1985.
- 1983:** Colt introduces the Series '80/Mark IV family of 1911s, with the first passive, internal firing pin safety since the short-lived Swartz design. It is activated via trigger pull.
- 1985:** The first commercially successful stainless 1911 is introduced by Colt in the '80 series. In the same year, Colt introduces the subcompact Officers ACP, effectively wiping out the mini-1911 market among custom gunsmiths.
- 1988:** ParaOrdnance introduces a wide-body 1911 frame that accepts a double stack magazine, originally designed to hold 13 rounds of .45 ACP. The wide-body hi-cap platform will soon be copied by several other makers, and Para will begin producing complete 1911 pistols two years later.
- 1990:** Colt introduces its first double action 1911, the Double Eagle, a design somewhat derivative of the Seecamp concept. It is not greeted with enthusiasm and will be discontinued in 1997.
- 1991:** Colt introduces its first flat-finish "economy" 1911 for the commercial market, the 1991A1.
- 1996:** Kimber introduces their aptly named Classic, a moderately priced Government Model size pistol with all the usually-custom bells and whistles. It will soon become the nation's best selling 1911.
- 2000:** ParaOrdnance introduces the LDA, the first double action only 1911.
- 2003:** Smith & Wesson introduces their long-awaited version, the SW1911. After a brief callback due to mismatched grip safety components, the SW1911 earns an excellent reputation.
- 2006:** A surprisingly good, \$600 1911 from Taurus hits the market. By and large, the PT1911 earns rave reviews. They sell so fast that gun dealers can't keep them in stock.
- 2011:** John Browning's classic fighting handgun will officially celebrate its one hundredth birthday.