

One of These is Not Like the Others... Walt Kuleck

John Browning wasn't a man who thought out of the box; he was a man who threw away the box. A perfect example is found in the first picture. We have here the C96 Mauser, the DWM Luger, and the Browning Patent FN Model 1900. What does the Browning have that no other contemporary pistol has? A "sliding breechbolt carrier," shortened to "slide" in Browning's patent #580,926. That's right, Browning invented the pistol slide.

In the second picture we can see Browning's first pistol design idea. It was a gas operated lever affair, essentially an inverted "potato digger" mechanism. Browning abandoned that approach in favor of the straight blowback seen in the FN 1900 and the short-recoil lock found in the Colt Model 1900. Both of the latter incorporated his pistol slide innovation.

The slide carries the mass required of the breechblock forward, over the barrel, shortening and simplifying the pistol. Compare the C96 and Luger to the FN 1900, or really any pre-Browning design to the Brownings that follow. Note the overhang behind the grip, or indeed the need to put the magazine in front of the trigger instead of in the grip, in the "pre-Brownings."

Today the pistol slide seems unremarkably ubiquitous. Just remember that Browning thought of it first.



