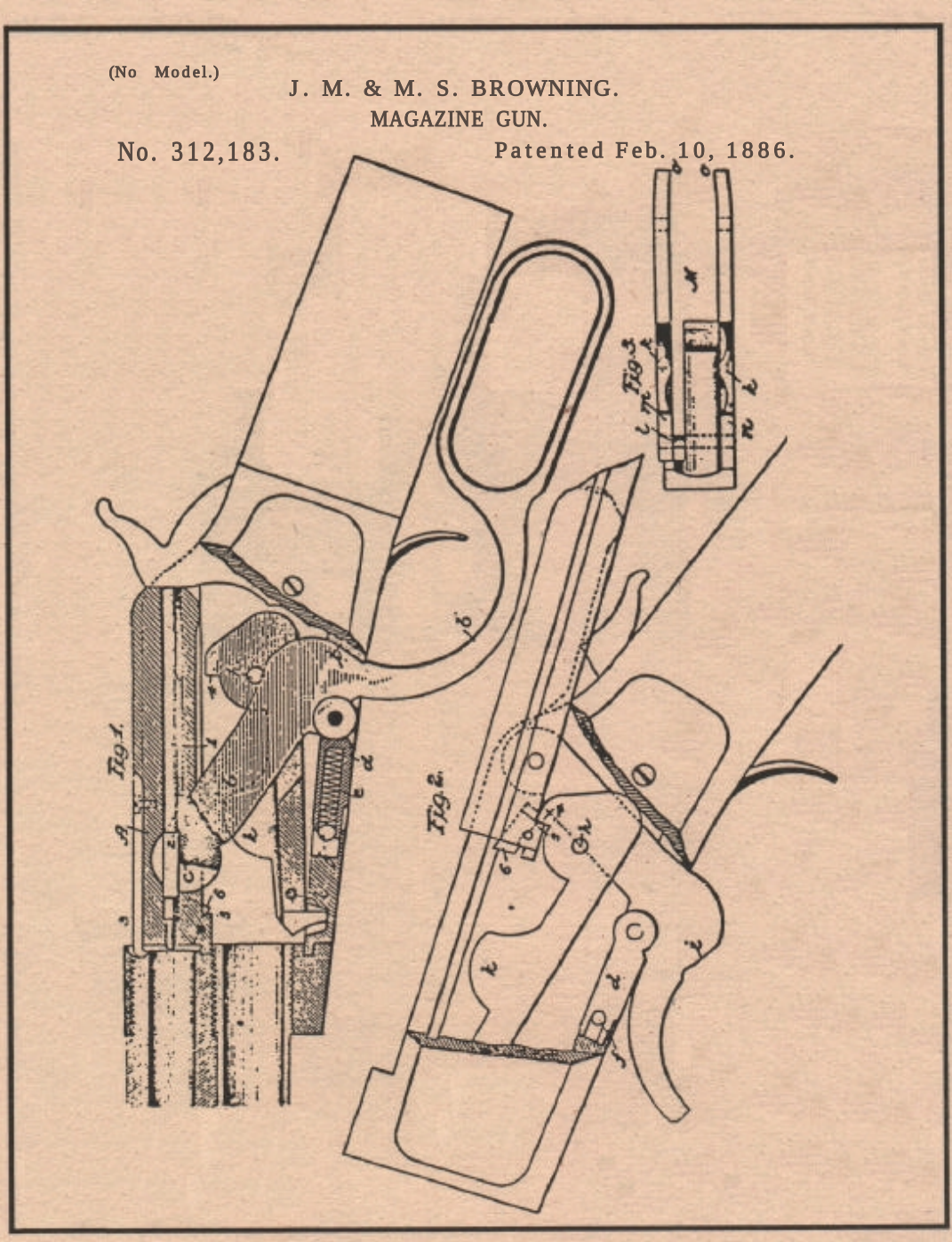


BROWNING FIREARMS COLLECTION

UNION STATION • OGDEN, UTAH

National Mechanical Engineering Heritage Collection

November 18, 1989

The American Society of Mechanical Engineers

Browning Firearms Collection
DESCRIPTION

The Browning Firearms Collection, displayed at the Ogden Museum, is an historic assembly of guns invented by John Browning, his son Val, and his father, Jonathan. John Browning had an unusual talent for inventing guns at a time when our country was moving west and there was a need for better weapons to supply food and offer protection from the challenges to this movement both from other men and from wild animals.

John Browning held 128 patents covering eighty separate and distinct firearms. Forty four of these firearms were sold to Winchester. Many of these guns are on display at the museum. Some of the cases show the original gun made by Browning, together with the subsequent production models.

The cases are unusual in that they are open on all four sides offering a complete view of the guns. Included are the prototypes of the very first effort to develop a gas operated automatic gun.

Examples of all of the hand held firearms developed by Mr. Browning are in the collection. There are rifles of various calibers; shotguns, of all gauges and varying from single shot, to semi-automatic, gas-operated sporting guns; and pistols.

In Cody, Wyoming there is a large gun collection sponsored by Winchester Arms. This is mentioned because they give reference to Mr. Browning and his influence upon the different types of guns displayed there. It is referred to as the Browning Connection.

The firearms in this collection are over 100 in number. The firearms on exhibit show the workmanship exercised in their production. The engravings made on the very fine sporting models are excellent examples of this craft.

"The Union Station collection of inventor's and production models of the Browning weapons is without peer and one of Utah's treasures". . .
(Senator Orrin G. Hatch)

PROGRAM

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1989 5:00 TO 7:00 P.M.

Welcome and Introductions:	Milton A. Buffington, ASME Ivan Rudd, *President* *Union Station Development Corporation*
History of Collection:	Robert A. Hunter, *Ogden City Manager*
ASME Landmarks Program:	Joseph P. VanOverveen, *P.E.*
Presentation of Plaque:	Dr. Richard G. Folsom, *P.E.*, *Past President, ASME*
Acceptance of Plaque:	Ivan Rudd, *President* *Union Station Development Corporation*
Closing Remarks:	Orrin G. Hatch, *United States Senator*
Tour of Collection	

NATIONAL MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
HERITAGE COLLECTION

BROWNING FIREARMS COLLECTION

OGDEN UTAH
1878-1926

THE BROWNING FIREARMS MUSEUM IS A COLLECTION OF FIREARMS INVENTED BY MR. JOHN BROWNING AND HIS FATHER JONATHAN. OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS BEGINNING ABOUT 1878 THRU 1926, JOHN BROWNING INVENTED A WIDE RANGE OF OUTSTANDING FIREARMS, SOME OF WHICH ARE STILL IN PRODUCTION. HIS MECHANICAL GENIUS HELPED OUR COUNTRY TO SETTLE THE WEST. HIS WORK CONTRIBUTED TO OUR COUNTRY'S SUCCESS IN TWO WORLD WARS. THIS COLLECTION CONTAINS SOME 90 EXAMPLES OF HIS DESIGNS.

OGDEN CITY OWNS AND OPERATES THE MUSEUM.

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS - 1989

HISTORY

The Browning Firearms Collection located at Union Station in Ogden, Utah could just as well be called the John Moses Browning Collection. For it was his genius that turned a small town gunshop into a world renowned center of development for many types of guns. From his first invention - the 1878 Single Shot Lever Action Rifle, to his last - the Superposed "Over-under" Shotgun, over 100 inventor's and production models are on permanent display.

John's father Jonathan was, in his own right, an accomplished gunsmith. It was in his shop in Ogden that John Moses Browning learned the fundamentals of guns. As a boy of ten, John built his first gun from parts salvaged from his father's junkpile. Thus began a distinguished career productive of firearms known for their simplicity, accuracy and reliability.

Ogden was the focal point of John's work and the location for four different workshops although eventually over 30 million of his rifles, shotguns, pistols and other firearms would be fabricated in many other areas of the United States and the world. Included in the collection are three rifles designed by John's father Jonathan and several shotguns designed by his son, Val A. Browning.

During John's nineteen year association with Winchester Arms, the company purchased 44 of his guns but manufactured only ten of them. For 20 years, Winchester did not sell an arm designed by one of their own engineers. An argument over Winchester's refusal to manufacture the semi-automatic shotgun and to pay Browning royalties ended this relationship.

By 1900, over 75% of the repeating sporting arms on the United States market, both lever and pump, were of John's invention. Among the models on display are his 1886 Lever Action Repeating Rifle, said by Philip B. Sharpe in his book "The Rifle in America" - "probably the smoothest job ever developed in a lever action gun" and the Model 1894 - produced as the Winchester .30/30 (or "Thutty-Thutty") which startled the gun world by using smokeless powder for a significant increase in pressure. The Model 1894 is still in production 95 years later.

Browning's inventions and designs continued to be built by Winchester for many years. These included single shot designs, pump action designs and lever action models. He also invented the famous Colt .45 automatic pistol, the official sidearm of the U.S. military from about 1911 to 1987. Colt automatic pistols have been based on Browning designs since 1896. John M. Browning's military arms were all introduced by and initially produced by Colt. Colt produced Browning's first automatic machine gun in 1895, called the "Model 95" or "Colt Peacemaker"

John M. Browning's relationship with Fabrique Nationale of Liege, Belgium began with its contract to produce a .32 caliber semi-automatic pistol which they had fired 500 times without malfunction during a test. They produced one million of these pistols by 1914. Fabrique Nationale named the pistol a

"Browning", which word became used as a common noun for the guns throughout Europe and made Browning better known there than in the United States. After the break with Winchester, John M. Browning signed a contract in 1902 with Fabrique Nationale to manufacture his semi-automatic shotgun and production began there in 1903. No sporting gun ever made a more sensational entry into the market and few guns have equalled it in popularity. John considered this gun his most difficult design and most satisfying accomplishment. Forty-four years would pass before a semi-automatic shotgun not designed by Browning would be accepted in the marketplace.

So reliable were Browning designs that not a single invention ever failed to perform or to become the most effective and reliable in its class or type. Many are still in production, including the Model 1885 Single Shot Rifle; Model 94 Lever Action Rifle; Auto-5 Semi-automatic shotgun; 22 caliber Semi-automatic rifle; the Superposed "Over-under" Shotgun and a Pump Shotgun. All of his shotgun models currently produced are popular for upland game and waterfowl hunting as well as for target sports such as trap and skeet.

The inventor's and production models displayed include 35 pistols; 33 rifles; 33 shotguns and nine military automatic types as testimony to John Moses Browning's status as the world's most prolific and significant designer of firearms. He held over 128 patents covering 80 separate and distinct firearms produced by Winchester; Remington; Colt; Fabrique Nationale; Savage Arms, Ithaca and others including General Motors which produced his 50 caliber automatic machine gun among other military designs during periods of national emergency.

Whether observed from the standpoint of invention, craftsmanship or performance, the firearms of John Moses Browning as displayed reflect the talent and industry of a man born on the frontier who was the epitome of American genius in designing guns for both sport and military use. When there was a need, he concentrated on the military designs, but he began and ended his career inventing models for the sportsman - his last being the famous Superposed "Over-under" Shotgun - shortly before he laid down his tools for the last time in 1926.

John M. Browning's Workshop.

SIGNIFICANT MECHANICAL DEVELOPMENTS

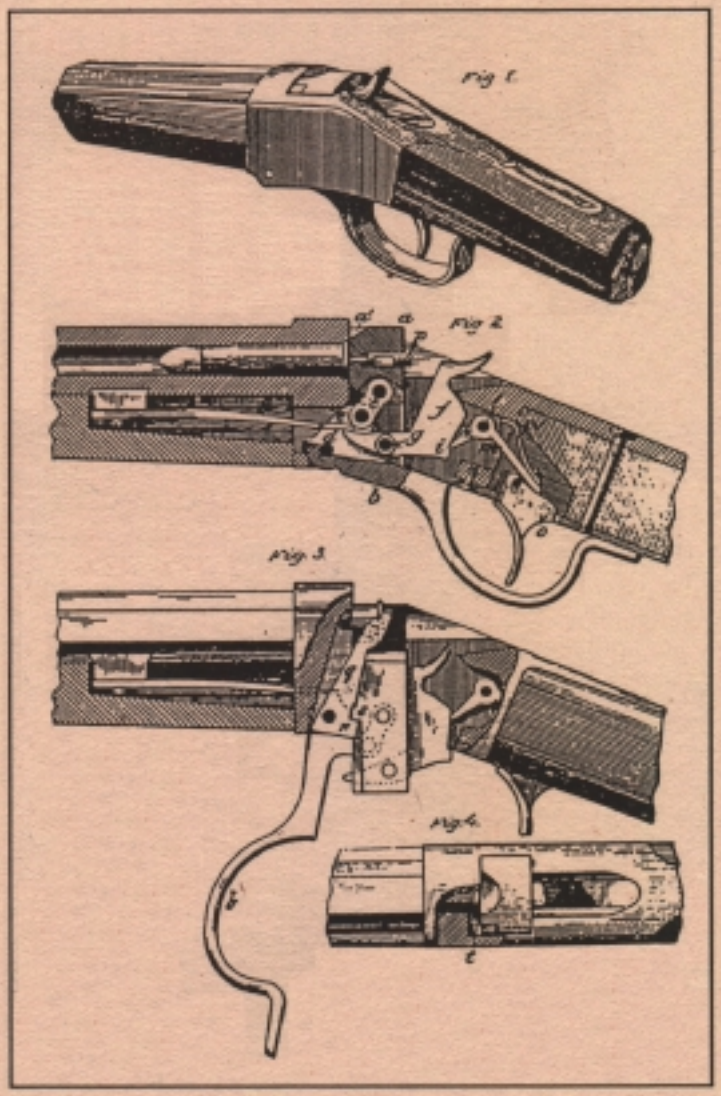
The importance of the inventions of Mr. John Browning to the field of Mechanical Engineering and to the history of our country are many. Listed following are a few felt to be of major importance. An example of each of these is on display in the collection.

1. Single-Shot Rifle: The first invention patented by Mr. Browning was this single shot rifle. A copy of the drawing of this gun is attached. The special design of this firearm was the sliding block or dropping block.

2. Gas Operated Automatic Firearms: The development of the gas-operated automatic firearms was a major break-through in the progress of firearms in the 19th century. A small amount of the expanding gases, resulting from the burning of the powder in the cartridge, is used to eject the spent shell and to move a new cartridge into the firing chamber.

The gas-operated automatic firearms contributed to the security of our country in no less than three major conflicts. Today the concept is used in sporting guns as rifles, shotguns, and pistols. The Browning Model B-80 shotgun was in production until 1988 and is a popular sporting shotgun to this day, as well as the previous Model B-2000. The semi-automatic rifle known as the BAR is still produced today and is a popular sporting gun. It is produced in a number of different calibers.

3. Recoil Operated Semi-Automatic Firearms: The Browning Model Automatic 5 Shotgun is still in production today. In this firearm, the recoil of the projectile leaving the barrel of the gun is utilized to reload it. This principle is used in both shotguns, rifles, and pistols.



John Browning's first patented arms design for the single-shot rifle.

4. Lever Action Repeating Firearms: Beginning with the Model 1886 and improved in five subsequent Models, the lever action rifle has been widely used in the West. This principal utilized the action of the lever behind the trigger to remove the spent shell and to load a new shell into the chamber of the rifle. The design used a sliding block to seal the chamber when the gun was fired. Each of the designs modified the sliding block principle to some degree.

ASME History and Heritage Program

Through its History and Heritage Programs, ASME endeavors to educate the general public as well as engineers about the world's rich technological heritage. The oral history, heritage sites, heritage collections, and the landmarks programs provide an excellent panorama of these developments. Steam engines and iron works take us back to the nineteenth century, just as computers and automated production point out the relevance of mechanical engineering in our lives today.

The Mechanical Engineering Heritage Site designation serves to note that some event; machine, development, building, or complex of significance occurred or was once present at a particular locale.

The Mechanical Engineering Heritage Collection designation goes to major museum or other collections that include a number of objects of special significance to the historical development of mechanical engineering.

Landmarks according to ASME's program, are existing artifacts that represent progressive steps in the evolution of mechanical engineering history, which have contributed to the development of humanity in general.

Like the landmarks program, the site and collection designations are defined by the scope of influence of the item. Regional designations are of significance to a particular geographical area within the United States. National designations represent an advance within their field of technology that is significant to the United states as a whole. International designations, found both in the United States and around the world, recognize contributions that have a broad influence in many countries.

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