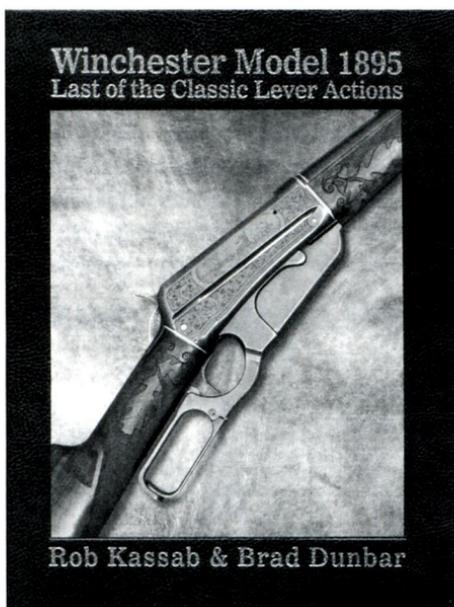


book reviews



Winchester Model 1895: Last of the Classic Lever Actions, by Rob Kassab and Brad Dunbar. Buffalo Cove Publishing, 160 West Camino Real #177, Boca Raton, FL 33432, (561) 750-6988, 1895book.com. ISBN 978-0-578-46655-2. 432 pp.; 8.5"x11"; hundreds of color ill.; hdbnd.; index. \$89.99 plus s/h.

It is surprising that it took so long for a book of this type to be published. Every other important Winchester lever-action model had already been the subject of at least one major study, and while the Model 1895 might not have the cowboy movie star cachet of some earlier types, its place in firearms history would be almost impossible to overstate.

Firing high-powered cartridges, appearing in a wide variety of military and civilian configurations and remaining in production for four decades, the Model 1895 is truly a collecting field unto itself. And like so many John Browning designs, it remained a very functional weapon through to the present day.

Simply put, if you are interested in Winchesters, you really need to buy this book. It will not disappoint. Sure, it's possible to nitpick that some of the photos printed a bit dark in places, but what we have here is a laboriously illustrated study of these rifles that checks all the boxes for being the "go to" reference for decades to come.

The authors chose a good, imaginative design and it shoves a lot of material onto each page while remaining attractive and eye catching throughout. This is incredibly difficult to accomplish. The rifles are shown from every view imaginable, including disassembly, when necessary, and plenty of the kind of side-by-side comparisons that collectors love and find so useful.

The part-by-part analysis is worth the price of entry all by itself. Want to see all the

buttplate variations in a way that makes it easy to tell them apart? It's in there. How about caliber markings, wood grades, barrel types, die stampings...practically any feature you can think of, and all the differences are carefully and exhaustively shown and explained.

I especially enjoyed all of the original documents that were included, often reproduced in heroic size. Original engineering drawings appear right next to the parts that they depict, and factory shipping records are dissected so collectors will understand where the information in their factory letters comes from. The authors must have spent a ridiculous amount of time in the McCracken Research Library at the Cody Firearms Museum. And it pays off by letting the reader feel like he was right alongside them doing all that research.

There is so much in here that will fascinate collectors. The historical photos of rifles being made on the factory floor are a real treat. There are even essays by other prominent scholars like Bruce Canfield, Mike Carrick and Phil Schreier on specialized topics like rifles in U.S. military service, the Russian contract and the M1895 rifles carried around the world by Theodore Roosevelt. Pioneering scholars from the past are not ignored, either, including a touching tribute to George Madis.

In structure, the book proceeds from the development of the Model 1895 to a discussion of manufacture and the resulting factory records that collectors depend upon. All the various components from receivers and magazines to barrels and stocks are then tackled in great detail, including accessories like slings, bayonets, sights, ammunition and loading tools. There is a large section on deluxe arms featuring engraving, special finishes and inlays. Then there is a gallery of examples showing all the distinct configurations that the Model 1895 came in.

Next come chapters on where these rifles fit into history, including the aforementioned essays as well as detailed discussions of their use by lawmen, in Mexico, in period advertising and so much more. There's a lot to discover here. So go get yourself a copy!