

OLD SHOTGUNS

New Ammo

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #212 —



My second turkey of the 2018 season, shot at 47 yards.

It's no secret that I like old shotguns, those made mostly prior to World War II, before the gun factories started using aluminum and cast parts and there was still a little or quite a bit of handwork required in the final fitting of the parts. Before the war, the cost of labor allowed for beautifully hand polished and blued receivers and barrels and hand finished and checkered stocks – and kinder trigger pulls. Some of the older guns were abused, but very few have been worn out.

A few of my favorite shotguns are the Winchester Model 12 and Remington Model 31 pumps, the Browning A-5 and Remington Model 11 semi-automatics, the Browning Superposed over/under, the Parker, Fox and L. C. Smith side-by-sides, with double triggers; and of course the single-barrel trap guns made by Ithaca, L. C. Smith and Parker. There are many other fine pre-war shotguns, but these are some of my favorites.



Shot this target at 47 yards, with my Model 12, made in 1938. I count 4-5 killing hits. This with Winchester's newest turkey ammo.

Shotgun choke is important; it was invented in England about 1870. The choke is just a tapered constriction in the front 3" or so of the barrel. Full choke means that the muzzle diameter is reduced about .030 from bore diameter. Choke makes a lot of difference in the size of the pattern and the "range" of the shotgun; most people use too much choke for their hunting or shooting. Although there has been considerable experimentation with choke dimensions for the last 150 years, frankly there haven't been any meaningful improvements in choke – except for interchangeable choke

tubes, which have been installed in many of my old shotguns.

Ammunition however is a different story; today's ammunition is the very best we've ever had. Plastic hulls and sealed primers make the ammo more reliable for feeding and firing.

"...these are some of my favorites."

Plastic wads, harder shot, copper plated shot, shot buffer and improved powders all improve the patterns and killing distance of any choke. These improvements are serious innovations for shotgunners. There's one exception to the improvement of modern ammunition; steel shot is not an improvement over lead shot – for the shotgunner.

So, when I'm turkey hunting with my old Winchester Model 12, the very latest in turkey hunting ammunition is always in the chamber; it kills turkeys at distances that amaze me. For pheasants, improved patterns from modern ammunition in my old L. C. Smith side-by-side or Browning Superposed over/under shotguns simply kill the birds farther and cleaner.

Larry Potterfield

From my Office
MidwayUSA
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This old Parker was made in 1930. These modern Winchester AA Handicap loads are designed for breaking trap or sporting clays targets at the longer ranges, and are much more effective than 1930 ammunition.