

# The GUN COLLECTOR

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #213 —



An early Parker side-by-side hammer gun, called the "lifter model," made in 1874. It's opened by using the index finger to lift up the button in front of the trigger guard. Parker had not yet begun using the top lever, which was patented in England in 1865.

Yes, I'm a gun collector – a pretty serious one. I enjoy talking about and buying old guns, then studying each one and the company that produced it – all in the context of when it was made and how it was used. It's interesting to think about the previous owners and exploits; if only guns could talk. You might say that I collect old guns for the knowledge that can be learned, rather than just the joy of ownership.

Now, there's an old adage that goes like this: "hunters" don't shoot, "shooters" don't hunt and "collectors" neither shoot nor hunt. In my experience, there's a lot of truth to it; each of those three hobbies takes



This Sharps 1874 is a target rifle, chambered in 40-70 Sharps Bottleneck. It was made about 1876, a few years after the buffalo were gone. Possibly its owner bought it to participate in National Rifle Association competitions. (The NRA was formed in 1871.)

a lot of time, if done right – leaving little time for the other two. But, somehow, I have had the great fortune of living my life at the overlap of those three hobbies; I'm a hunter, a shooter and a collector – and you can throw in "amateur" gunsmith. This combination of interests has provided most of my overall perspective of guns.

But, let me make it clear, there's a lot about guns that I don't know and a great many guns that I know little or nothing about. My interest has been mostly with U.S. cartridge guns, which began to show up as early as the Smith and Wesson #1, .22 short – in 1858. Also, my interest has always been focused more on rifles and shotguns, than handguns. To be fair though, for a period of

time I collected Smith and Wesson revolvers and at another time Colt Single Actions.

Winchester lever action rifles are something I've collected from the beginning, though never having many at any one time. Winchester rifles are so well-designed and well made that you have to love them. They were well-documented by the factory, generally produced in large numbers, and so much written about and so

highly-respected by my collector friends that it's only natural for me to collect them.

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"...if only guns could talk."

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One of my favorite collecting eras is the second half of the 19th century. This was a time of great innovation in both design and production. It gave us the Sharps 1874, the Remington Rolling Blocks and the Winchester Single Shot rifles. It also framed the nearly complete development of the side-by-side shotgun from the hinge pin to the locking bolt to automatic ejectors and single triggers. I love gun collecting!

**USA**  
**Midway**

Larry Potterfield

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The nicest handling of all the rolling blocks is the 1-1/2 model, though it's only a small game rifle. This one was converted from 32 rimfire smoothbore to 38 Special/357 magnum rifled centerfire – a real pleasure to carry and shoot.