

RELOADING

A Labor of Love

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #253 –

Old guns and ammunition have always fascinated me; our first centerfire (reloadable) cartridge was the 50/70 Government, introduced in the 1866 Springfield rifle. Next came the 44/40 Winchester, introduced in the 1873 Winchester lever action rifle and the 1873 Colt single action revolver – in 1873. Both cartridges were loaded with black powder and lead bullets, and I’ve enjoyed reloading and shooting a great many of them, through the years.

Near the end of the 19th century, smokeless powder, bottleneck cartridges, jacketed bullets and smaller calibers made the old cartridges and guns obsolete, but much too interesting to throw in the trash. The U.S., British and German militaries played no small part in cartridge development during this period. The Germans developed the 7x57 cartridge for their 1893 Mauser bolt action rifle.

This small lot of cast bullet reloads came to me from Joe Davison’s estate in New Franklin, Missouri, several years ago. The Remington Arms Company and the Union Metallic Cartridge Company (U.M.C.) merged in 1912 and the cartridge headstamp became REM – UMC. These



Notice the difference in diameter of the flash holes. When these cases were produced, over 100 years ago, U.M.C had not yet standardized the flash hole to the current approximately .080 diameter (right) – but were using approximately .060 (left). I drilled them all out to .080.

cartridges pre-dated that merger, which was the reason I kept them. They sat in the cabinet for nearly ten years, as they wouldn’t chamber in the only rifle I had in that caliber.

Recently, I noticed the box in the cabinet and at the same time remembered that we had a Rolling Block rifle, in that caliber, on display in the Order Pickup Area at MidwayUSA. So, I “borrowed” the rifle one day, brought it home and ran my test.



It all started with this loose box of reloaded 7mm Mauser (7x57) ammo – with cast bullets, and a Remington Model 1910 Rolling Block rifle. It was the brand of the brass -- (U.M.C.) that was most interesting. The Model 1910 was one of the last of the Rolling Blocks.

All but three of the old reloads chambered and fired just fine. Game on! Now I had a new reloading project, bring these 100-year-old plus cases back to life.

Removing the primers was step one, with a decapping die; but these cases had

small flash holes, and I had to rig up a decapping rod with a small pin. Next was a serious cleaning; it looked like these

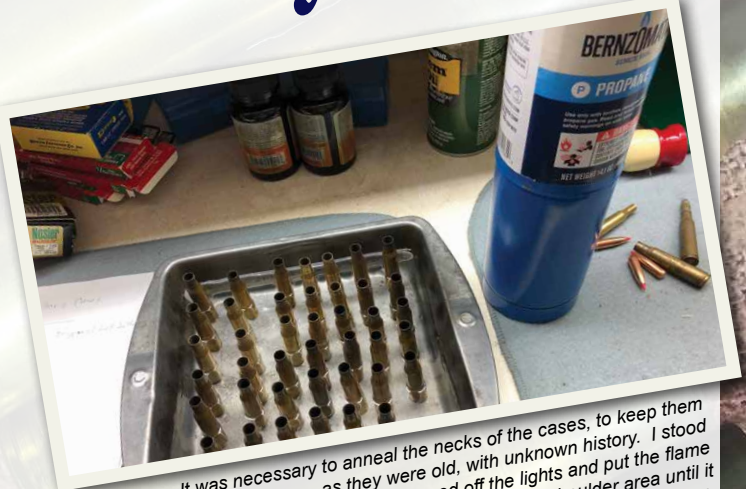
" So, I 'borrowed' the rifle one day..."

cartridges were last loaded before tumblers were invented. Then, drilling out the flash holes, annealing the shoulder and neck, resizing, trimming to length and deburring the mouth. One final inspection and the cases were ready for reloading, with a mild charge – suitable for the Rolling Block. I’ve an informal 100-yard range in the back yard and wasted no time stepping out the back door and firing off the first five rounds – yes, a true labor of love.



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It was necessary to anneal the necks of the cases, to keep them from splitting -- as they were old, with unknown history. I stood them in water, turned off the lights and put the flame on the shoulder area until it glowed orange.