

# My Favorite OLD .22 RIFLE

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #280 —

The word “old” always needs some clarification, as it means something different to each of us. For me, an “old” .22 rifle is a 19th century single shot, produced before the introduction of the repeaters and bolt actions of the 1890s. The Stevens Tip-Up of 1871, the Remington #2 Rolling Block of 1872, the Marlin Ballard #3 of 1875 and the Winchester Low Wall of 1885 are the best examples. Of these four guns, I've never had a Stevens, but have owned and shot several of the others, in various calibers.

The Remington Rolling Block action was invented during the American Civil War (1861-1865). It's called “Rolling Block” because the breech block rolls back, rather than falling, dropping, or swinging out—to allow access to the chamber. The hammer also rolls back (first),

to allow the breech block to open, and then holds the breech block closed, as it rolls forward to fire. It's a simple action and very easy to operate—  
with one hand.

In the beginning, there were only large frame #1 military and sporting rifles. However, in 1872, Remington introduced a lighter weight “Sporting Rifle” version of the rolling block, called the #2; most had octagon barrels and were chambered for the smaller rimfire cartridges. The .32 rimfire was the most popular cartridge of the day and most of the #2's that I've seen have been so chambered. However, quite a few were made in .22 rimfire (the .22 Long cartridge was introduced in 1871).



*I'm fortunate to live in the country and be able to safely shoot off the deck into the back yard.*

Once in a long while an old .22 rifle comes along that looks great; that is, it has most of the original aged colors and patina on the metal and the wood, and it's been well cared for—inside and out. Also, it feels good, with a weight and a balance that please in every respect. Of course, it must shoot right; a

rifle, especially, is always on trial—in this respect. Finally, it must be priced right. Certainly, I

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can afford to pay a bit more for a gun today than when I was younger; but I never want to think I've overpaid.

Eight-inch steel targets offhand at 50 yards, from the back deck, is most of my shooting; the weight, balance, and one-hand operation all contribute to the joy of shooting this gun and making this Remington Rolling Block #2 Sporting Rifle my favorite old .22 rifle.



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*My favorite plinking with .22s is shooting off hand at an 8" metal target, 50 yards out. My hold is six o'clock, so I can see the entire target on top of the front sight.*



*This Remington #2 Sporting Rifle was made about 1880, originally chambered in .22 Long. Weighing just under six pounds, it is easy to hold on target for offhand plinking, and a pleasure to shoot.*