



# ROOP COUNTY SHOOTERS ASSOCIATION

Fernley, Nevada

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Howdy all,

We had a wild weather weekend, but managed to bring the trailer out on Friday afternoon. Saturday was the best weather day of the weekend and brought a wild bunch match with 8 intrepid souls come out to join in on the fun. Wild Bill Berry brought out the targets he has been working on and he and I did our best to get the bigger knockdown plate rack mounted in the ground. We

have some Boy Scouts coming out next month and I'll bet I can convince them to dig a hole!! Sunday brought our world famous Red Shirt Gunfighter match. We had 23 people, with 7 people shooting clean, join us for the festivities with a bunch of red shirts and just a few gunfighters. Thanks to Reno Slim for supplying the stages. The weather cooperated for the most of the day, but the wind came up big time on the last stage for our posse. I ended up taking the timer and pushing the posse through as fast as I could. The drive home with the trailer was fairly simple with BeeBads cat wanting to know why I had two hands on the wheel and no ability to give her kitty pets!! All in all, it was a great weekend.

Russian River Ranger's Boy Scout troop will be joining us on the range for the weekend of our April match. They are planning on coming out on Friday, April 8th to camp out and work on their shooting and shotgun merit badges. Russian River Ranger is looking for NRA certified instructors to help out. If you happen to be an instructor let me know and I'll pass along the info to him. We don't have anything planned for Saturday so it looks like beach chair 22's might be in order. If you want to come out and shoot wild bunch or practice cowboy, please join us!! On Sunday we will have Irish Ike Josey

Wales match. Load up some single shot ammo and dust off your seldom used belly gun and come on out!! We'll get a round count out to you before the match.

HPD's April Match is Washoe & Ruby's Easter Extravaganza, which is not to be missed. They always have a great match planned for us!!

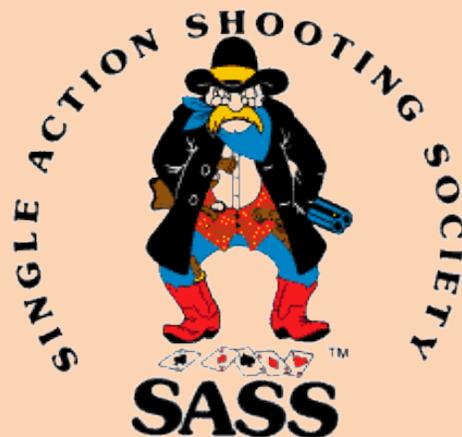
We have been told that the property that the great High Sierra Shootout is held on is up for sale. The Clubs contract is such that the Memorial Day match will be held this year, but future matches are up in the air. BeeBad and I haven't been in a couple of years, but we are definitely-making plans for going this year. This is the second annual match that BeeBad, Woody and I ever attended (The first was Deadeye Dicks eighth annual Trailhead shoot in Cotati, CA).

If you haven't signed up for SASS Calif. State annual match shot at Diamond Dick's Cowboy Town, there is still time to do so. Sutter Lawman and company put on a great match and it's just a couple of hours away.

We haven't done anything about our annual match and its time to get started on it!! I would like to have a short meeting after our April match to discuss the 20th annual Roop County Days. All are welcome to join us in the fun. Remember, this is your club and many hands make for light work. We had a couple of folks join us for the first time last year and I do believe they had a great time!

Enough of my babbling for now, I'm off killin' squirrels for a couple of weeks, See you on the range,

Jasper



RED SHIRT GUNFIGHTERS



# ROOP March Match



# The 1851 Navy Revolver Ushered In The Era Of The Gunfighter

by Jim Wilson

Among the many guns that were used on the western frontier, none was more popular in its day than the Colt percussion revolver designated the 1851 Navy.

By Sheriff Jim Wilson, ,Handgun Editor



The Colt 1851 Navy had more to do with the advent of the frontier gunfighter than any other handgun.

This single-action, cap-and-ball revolver came standard with a 7½-inch barrel and weighed some 42 ounces. Most authorities agree that production on the 1851 Navy was actually begun in 1850, and from then until it was discontinued in 1873, more than 200,000 guns were manufactured.

The Colt 1851 Navy actually had more to do with the advent of the frontier gunfighter than any other handgun. Prior to the Navy's introduction, hand gunners had to make do with the Colt Walker and Dragoon revolvers, both of which weighed over four pounds. These big guns were best suited for carry in pommel holsters on the saddle. The

Colt Navy was the first popular single-action revolver that could be worn comfortably on the belt.

It is also the handgun, out of the entire Colt arsenal, that was most closely copied when the Single Action Army was designed. Colt engineers learned that hand gunners liked the shape of the Navy's grip frame and the general size of the revolver. Examining a Colt Navy and Peacemaker side by side, one can easily see the influence the Navy had on the company's first successful cartridge revolver.

### **Men Who Used The 1851 Navy**

Prior to the beginning of the Civil War, the state of Missouri was a hotbed of trouble that often broke out in shooting fights. Bill Anderson, the James's, and the Youngers all cut their teeth on this border trouble and were ready to go when leaders like William Quantrill enlisted them in his guerilla band during the war. The boys from Missouri became quite proficient with their six-guns and generally carried a brace of Drgoons on their saddle pommels and a brace of Navies on their hip.

Besides being quick and handy, the Colt Navy, and other percussion revolvers, began the frontier tradition of the two-gun man. By their very nature, percussion revolvers are slow to reload. You can imagine the difficulty of separately seating powder, ball, and percussion cap from the back of a running horse. Some hand gunners tried to solve this problem by having extra loaded cylinders stashed in their pockets. Still, changing out cylinders can turn into quite a juggling act in the middle of a gunfight. The old-timers actually carried two handguns so that when they shot one of them dry they could just go for the other gun and keep right on shooting.

Bill Jordan once told me that packing two guns was the fastest reload that he knew of. I've since heard modern law enforcement officers refer to carrying that second gun as a "New York Reload." Old ways die hard.

The most famous frontiersman to use the Colt Navy was James Butler “Wild Bill” Hickok (1837-1876). Most historians agree that he was using a .44 Dragoon on July 21, 1865, when he faced and killed Dave Tutt in Springfield, Missouri. However, by the late 1860s, when Hickok began his law enforcement career on the Kansas plains, he was packing the Colt 1851 Navy.

In fact, Hickok had a very nice pair of Colt Navy revolvers that were presented to him by a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts named Henry Wilson, who Hickok guided on a successful hunting trip. This pair of Colt Navy revolvers were silver plated and had carved ivory grips. They are the guns that are most closely associated with Wild Bill Hickok and are undoubtedly the guns that are seen in the famous photo of Hickok, resplendent in his buckskins, with the Colts butt-forward in his belt.

The Colt Navy was a .36 caliber and generally drove an 80-grain bullet at some 900 to 1,000 fps. Compare this to the modern .38 Special revolvers that delivers a 125-grain load at some 950 fps or the 115-grain 9mm that generates over 1,000 fps and you begin to see the power level of the Colt Navy. Actually, the Colt Navy’s payload was probably more comparable to the modern .380 Automatic cartridge, which delivers a 95-grain bullet at about 950 fps. That’s a long way from the old .45 Colt blackpowder load that drove a 255-grain lead bullet at about 950 fps.

Now, I am admittedly a fan of big-bore revolvers. I think anything you carry into a fight ought to at least start with the number “4” (as in .41, .44, and .45). And I’ve never known a gunfight survivor who voluntarily went to a smaller caliber gun. Still, you can’t deny the fact that Hickok used his .36-caliber guns to kill upwards of five men in little more than two years.

### **An Accurate, Dependable Gun**

Like the rest of Colt’s percussion revolvers, the Navy had a small front sight that was almost a brass bead. And lacking a top strap on the

revolver's frame, the rear sight was merely a notch cut in the top of the hammer.

In his book *Fast and Fancy Revolver Shooting*, Ed McGivern praised the 1851 Navy as being one of the most dependable and accurate guns of its day. He also indicated that his extensive tests showed that the 1851 Navy was a good choice for slip shooting.

Slip shooting was an old frontier technique that was quite a bit more popular than fanning ever was. Throughout the shooting move, the shooter grips the trigger, with his trigger finger, and holds it to the rear of the trigger guard. The shooting thumb cycles the hammer and causes the cylinder to rotate. With the trigger held back, the trigger doesn't engage the hammer sear and the hammer is never locked in at fullcock. Instead, the thumb pulls the hammer back, and the hammer slips from under the thumb and fires the revolver. Some of the early shootists even took a piece of rawhide and tied the trigger in the back position. Others filed the serrations off of the hammer spur so that the hammer would slip more smoothly from under the shooting thumb.

These and many other frontier shooting techniques were actually perfected while using the Colt 1851 Navy. By the time the Single Action Army arrived on the scene in 1873, most of the gun fighting techniques of the frontier were already in place and being shared by savvy shooters.

The Colt Navy ushered in the era of the gunfighter that would culminate with the famous Colt Peacemaker. The Navy was popular from the Kansas plains to the Rio Grande, and all the way west to the California gold fields. But its fame went even farther than that. When Sir Richard Burton began to gather his expedition to go in search of the source of Africa's Nile River, he made it a point to acquire a pair of Colt 1851 Navy revolvers for his personal sidearm.

It was truly one of the great guns of the frontier era.