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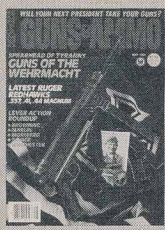
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ON THE COVER: During World War II the German Army employed a wide variety of novel, efficient firearms. For a rundown of this fascinating weaponry turn to page 50. Cover photography by Pat Brollier.



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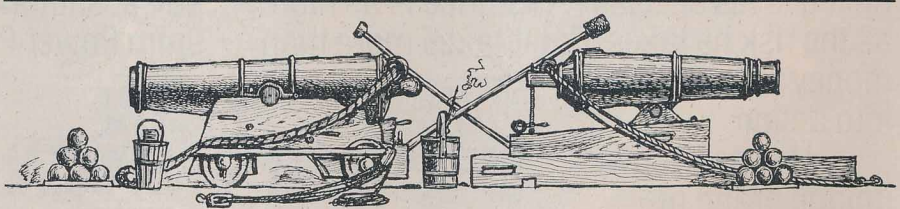
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# DIXIE'S YANKEE RIFLE

*The Model 1863 Springfield may have been the Northern soldier's rifle during the Civil War, but today's muzzle-loaders can look south to Dixie Gun Works for their top quality replica!*

*By Phil Spangenberg*

■ While the American Civil War has often been referred to as the first of our modern wars, it is also often classified as the last of the "old wars." During this bloody conflict modern ideas in weaponry, tactics, communications and many other areas were tried for the first time. Likewise, this war marked the last usage—in large scale—of numerous implements of battle, notably the muzzle-loading rifle.

Interestingly, although breech-loading firearms had proven their worth in countless engagements, the U.S. Government continued to produce and issue a caplock rifle musket to its troops through the end of hostilities. The last standard-issue infantry shoulder arm carried by the boys in

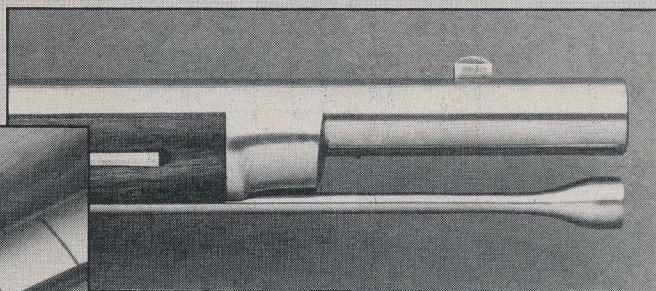
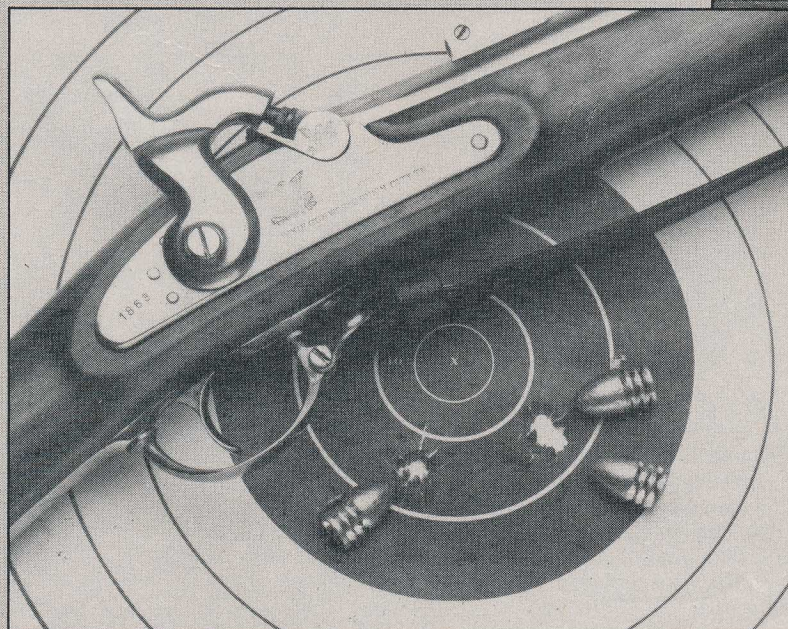
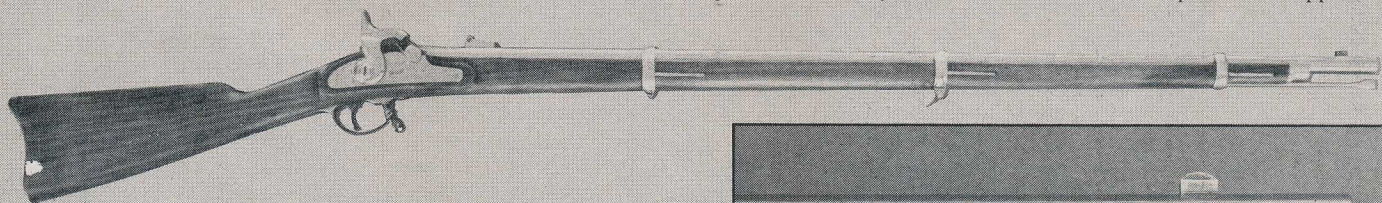
blue during The Great Rebellion was the Model 1863 Rifle Musket, Type II, which was simply a variation of the older 1861 and 1863 rifle muskets produced by Springfield Armory, as well as a host of private contractors. As with many firearms, military or civilian, improvements and modifications often evolve into a "new issue" of the older model. The Model 1863 Rifle Musket, Type II, was just such an arm. It was the culmination of the battle proven features of its predecessors and it remained in service until the advent of the breech-loading metallic cartridge rifle shortly after the war.

A total quantity of 255,040 Type II 1863 rifle muskets were produced solely at

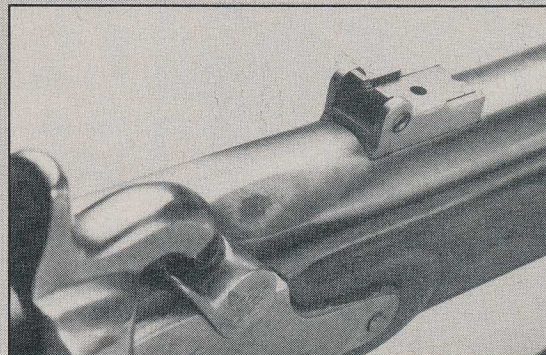
Springfield Armory between January 1, 1864 and December 31, 1865, and like so many other northern-made weapons, captured arms of this model Springfield were favored by Confederates over their own poorly constructed guns.

After the war, this muzzle-loader also saw service on the frontier in the hands of U.S. troops and civilians alike. Purchased at low cost as war surplus, thousands of these powerful and accurate rifles were relied upon by westward-bound immigrants to keep their family larders full.

Of course today, these historic old arms are collectors' items. Original specimens of the 1863 Springfield in sound, shooting condition, command prices that approach



*Dixie's 1863 Springfield replica features authentic details like the bayonet lug-type front sight and the tulip-shaped ramrod head.*



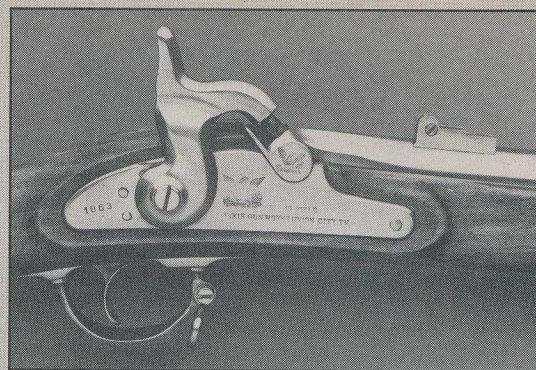
*Another original feature found on the Dixie Gun Works 1863 Springfield reproduction is the single leaf folding rear sight.*

*When loaded with 70 grains of Fg black powder, which approximates the Civil War-era government load, the author was able to shoot a 1½-inch, 3-shot group, benchrested, at 50 yds.*



**This authentic replica rifle musket is ideally suited to Civil War reenactment units and skirmish groups.**

**All metal parts of this arm are finished bright, as were the 1860s-manufactured Springfields. Also, like its predecessor, it has a 6½-pound trigger pull.**



## DIXIE'S YANKEE RIFLE

the thousand-dollar mark, and they are bound to go higher. However, for those who want a faithful reproduction of this famous Civil War shoulder arm, whether it be for a living history unit, a skirmish group, fun shooting or whatever, Dixie Gun Works, Union City, TN 38261, is again importing their version of the 1863 Springfield Rifle Musket, Type II.

For all intents and purposes, this Japanese-made muzzle-loader is a dead ringer for the original '63 Springfield. It features an oil-finished walnut stock, a 40-inch-long round barrel with the regulation three-land and three-groove rifling as found on the originals, a blade front sight and an authentic-type single leaf rear sight. Inciden-

tally, like the 1864-65 vintage arms, the Dixie '63 Springfield's front sight is mounted on a bayonet stud. The 12-pound rifle measures 56 inches overall. All metal parts on this Civil War reproduction are finished bright. For those of you who are used to blued, or browned guns, let me comment that the original 1860s Springfields were issued bright, and the private soldier was required to keep them in this condition in spite of constant exposure to the elements, coupled with the rigors of long campaigning. Even though the reflections caused by this shiny finish would sometimes reveal the position or movement of troops, soldiers would take great pride in polishing the barrels, bands and other metal parts with charred wood from their campfires.

The lockplate too, is finished bright and is stamped "U.S. SPRING FIELD," and "DIXIE GUN WORKS, UNION CITY, TN." At the rear of the lock the date, "1863" is stamped. Actually, the originals were all dated 1864 or 1865; however, this is a minor point and does not detract from the gun's overall appearance. The nipple bolster bears an eagle stamping as well. Also, at the breech end of the barrel, there appears another "DIXIE GUN WORKS, UNION CITY, TN" stamping, along with "JAPAN" and the gun's serial number.

As with the original 1863 Springfield,

this replica is equipped with sling swivels. For photographic purposes in this article, I fitted the Dixie test gun with a replica leather shoulder sling obtained from The Winchester Sutler, Inc., Siler Route, Box 393 E, Winchester, VA 22601.

Handsome as it is, this reproduction is not one of those guns built just for looks. This rifle musket performs as well as its type should—in fact, it shoots every bit as good as any original I've ever fired! It must be kept in mind that these old guns were not capable of minute-of-angle accuracy, however they were a definite improvement over their smoothbore predecessors.

During my testing, I used a charge of 70 grains of Fg black powder, which approximates the Civil War period government load. This was followed up with the prescribed .575 Minié ball, lubed with Gussert Bullet Co.'s Minié Rx Matic, and a Navy Arms "tophat"-style musket cap. With this loading, I was able to get accuracy befitting any 1860s-made rifle musket. At the 50-yard range, several three-shot benchrested groupings averaged out to 3½-inch spreads, with a 1½-inch cluster ranking as my tightest group.

At this range, I used a 6 o'clock hold on the black and all groupings averaged about two inches directly above the point of aim.

*continued on page 79*



**The 1863 Springfield Rifle Musket, Type II, the last standard-issue muzzle loading U.S. infantry shoulder arm, was loaded as follows: (1) With his teeth, the soldier would tear open the tail end of the paper cartridge, exposing the black powder. (2) He would then pour the powder into the gun's muzzle. (3) The Minié ball was then thumb-pressed into the muzzle, and (4) rammed firmly on top of the powder charge. (5) Finally, the .58 caliber rifle was capped.**



## DIXIE'S YANKEE RIFLE

continued from page 42

Several targets were fired at 100 yards, resulting in an average spread of five inches. My best score here was four inches, center to center. I found that a dead-on hold at the bullseye was just what the doctor ordered for the 100-yard paper.

During the paper-punching phase of my test with this replica I swabbed the bore out every three shots, just before starting each new group. I didn't experience any difficulty in loading at any time, but I did want to fire each group from a fresh bore.

My shooting was done at the Angeles Range, near my home in the Los Angeles foothills. At the range there were several metallic silhouette targets placed at different distances, and I just couldn't resist the temptation to try some offhand shooting at them. I found that as long as I did my part, I had no difficulty in "ringing" the 100-yard javelina silhouette with fair consistency. Of course, a ram target set out at 50 yards was as good as a "goner" when I set my sights on him. The '63 Springfield hit him every time with a resounding clang.

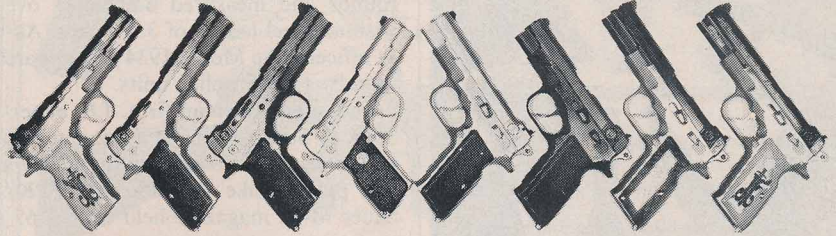
While the original Springfields were made with one-piece stocks, I discovered that the Dixie replica utilizes a two-piece stock, joined together under the rear barrel band. I'm sure the Japanese manufacturers did this as a matter of economics, since one-piece stocks of the size needed for these long guns would run the cost of production up considerably. However, I found that during my shooting, the recoil caused these pieces to work loose. The two-piece stock was quickly repaired by simply unscrewing the barrel band, shoving the forearm back in place, then tightening down the barrel band again. During my firing of around 100 rounds, I had to refit the stock about three times. Of course, an application of epoxy should remedy this problem.

All in all, I was impressed with the performance of this reproduction. Its trigger pull measured 6 to 6½ pounds of pull—about par with an original—and broke crisply without the slightest trace of drag. For someone of average stature, the rifle shoulders well and recoil with the big .58 caliber Miniés is hardly noticeable.

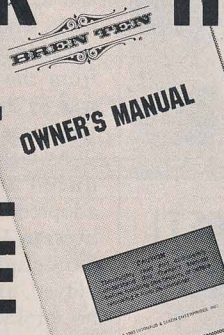
This faithful representation of the primary infantry shoulder arm of the Union soldier is powerful, accurate, and reasonably priced at \$265. If you belong to a Civil War unit, or are interested in infantry arms of this period, Dixie Gun Works' 1863 Springfield is a gun you should definitely consider giving a try. I have to admit, for a Southern outfit, they sell a mighty fine Yankee rifle!

*The author and Guns & Ammo would like to thank the following for their assistance with the photography used in this article: Valerie Wait of Los Encinos State Historical Park, Encino, California, for the location; Jim Elyea of the Edendale Volunteer Militia; and The Winchester Sutler, Winchester, Virginia.*

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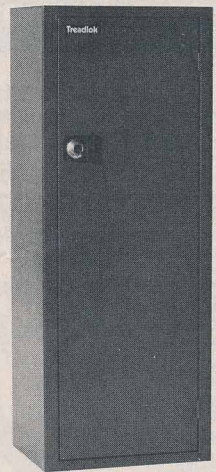
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