



Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews

Colt First Model Dragoon

The following article has been adapted from a special project report on key artifacts in the Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. This project report was written in 2018 based on extensive research compiled by project intern Tom Andrews.

Colt First Model Dragoon

History of the Colt Dragoon Pistol

The Colt Dragoon was developed to address shortcomings with the Colt Walker Revolver. Introduced in 1848, The Dragoon featured a .44 Caliber 6-shot cylinder and a 7-1/2" part round, part octagonal barrel. Grips were carved in one piece out of walnut. The frame, hammer, and lever were casehardened, and other metal parts blued. The grip straps were commonly made of brass, and civilian models were silver plated, with military examples left unfinished.

The First Model Dragoon was manufactured from 1848 until about 1850, with a total production of roughly 7,000. Serial numbers run from about 1341 through about 8000, continuing the sequence from the Whitneyville Hartford "Transition" Dragoon. The barrels are marked "ADDRESS SAM COLT, NEW-YOR CITY -. COLT'S/PATENT" on the left side of the frame; often accompanied by "U.S." centered beneath. The cylinders feature the Texas Ranger and Indian fight scene roll engraving. The cylinders are also roll-engraved with "COLT'S PATENT" and "MODEL U.S.M.R." There is a scarce variant which is marked "U.S. DRAGOONS" instead of "U.S.M.R."

Distinguishing marks of the First Model are the square-backed trigger guard, the oval cylinder stop slots, and a vertical line formed by the juncture of the grips, grip straps, and frame. Early pistols in the production run sport some features carried over from the Transition model Whitneyville Hartford Dragoons, while later pistols show features which would later become standard on the Second Model Dragoon. A small number of late First Models were cut to fit shoulder stocks.¹ (Footnote: Flayderman's p. 84-85)

Information Specific to this Firearm

This pistol bears the serial number 1653. According to the Colt website, this pistol was manufactured in 1848, the first year of production. The barrel wedge is stuck in place, preventing disassembly of the pistol. The lack of government inspection markings indicates that this was a civilian model Dragoon.



Figure 1: 1261-Colt First Model Dragoon

¹ Flayderman, 84-85.