



Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews

Remington Model 8F presented to Frank Hamer

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.

Remington Model 8F presented to Frank Hamer

Provenance

Original records state that the rifle was given to Frank Hamer by the Remington Arms Co. in 1922. The company presented the rifle to Hamer after an agent for the company witnessed his sharp shooting skills at the end of the Mexia occupation in which the Rangers shut down a gambling and bootlegging syndicate. Remington sent the rifle to Petmecky's Sporting Goods Store in Austin. The rifle is said to have become Hamer's favorite deer hunting rifle.

While there are numerous claims in various media that this is the Remington Model 8 rifle Hamer carried during the Bonnie and Clyde ambush, the details conflict greatly. In *From the Guns of Frank Hamer*, it is claimed that Hamer owned an engraved Model 8, which must have been this one, he purchased another Model 8 in .35 Remington from an Austin sporting goods store. He also contacted another company to acquire a 20 round capacity magazine for it. This description matches another weapon in the Museum collection, but it is a Model 81, the successor to the Model 8. While he may well have purchased it from Patmecky's in Austin, he could not have done so in preparation for the 1934 ambush, because it wasn't manufactured until at least 1936.

Furthermore, the Model 81 Woodmaster was not modified by Peace Officer's Equipment Company as the accounts claim, but the extended magazine was added in house by Remington some time around 1940. Importantly, there is confirmation that this rifle is the one in Larry Buchanan's 1968 interview of Frank Hamer Jr, which throws out the possibility that he was holding another Model 8 rifle. It is therefore likely that the story was muddled through retelling and Hamer Jr. was simply incorrect about what his father carried during the ambush.¹

Another account, *Who Was Frank Hamer?*, claims that it was after a shooting demonstration in Dallas, in which he broke one hundred rifle targets, that a representative of the Remington Arms Company had a special Model 8F made for him, with his name in gold on the receiver and the Texas Ranger emblem in gold inlaid in the stock. This rifle is said to be in .30 Caliber and was fitted with a 20 round magazine which he later used in the Bonnie and Clyde shootout. While the description of the rifle's features is a match, the 20 round magazine is erroneous, as the Model 8F in the Museum's collection has the standard five round magazine.

Additionally, the caliber of rifle Hamer acquired varies depending on the account, indicating that firm records may not exist. Further complicating matters is a 1968 documentary in which Hamer's son shows the interviewer the Model 81 rifle and claims that it is the one bought for use in the shootout. It has become clear that the truth has been muddled over the years, and exactly which gun was in Frank Hamer's hands at the time of the ambush may be impossible to determine.

Further complicating matters, when Hamer was interviewed by Walter Prescott Webb for his book, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense*, he claimed that he wielded a shotgun, rather than a rifle. "Jordan and I had automatic shotguns, three had Winchesters, one a machine gun, and all carried revolvers or automatic pistols." (Footnote: Webb 542) By

¹ Cameron Woodall, "RE: Frank Hamer's Firearm," February 3, 2012.

automatic shotgun, it can be assumed that Hamer meant he carried a Browning Auto-5 or one of the similar variants.

Lastly, it would appear that the provenance documents for the entirety of the Hamer collection on loan from A&M were lost some time prior to 1989, as evidenced by a letter to then curator Gaines DeGraffenried inquiring as to their whereabouts. It is unknown if he replied or if the documents were ever located.²

In conclusion, the myriad of conflicting details makes it impossible to say if this rifle is the one Hamer carried in the Bonnie and Clyde ambush.

Frank Hamer Biographical Information

Early Life

Francis Augustus “Frank” Hamer was born on March 17, 1884 in Fairview, Texas to parents Frank and Lou Emma Hamer. He grew up on the Welch Ranch in San Saba County. In 1894, the family moved to Oxford, Llano County, where he worked in his father’s blacksmith shop. In 1901, he along with his brother were hired as wranglers on the Pecos County ranch of Berry Ketchum. In 1905, he was working as a cowboy on the Carr Ranch when he captured a horse thief and was recommended for a position in the Texas Rangers by the county sheriff.³

First Ranger Service

On April 21, 1906, Frank Hamer became a Texas Ranger in C Company under Captain John W. Rogers. He worked primarily on the Southern border of the state. In 1908, he resigned to become a marshal in Navasota County.⁴

Between Ranger Services

On April 21, 1911, Hamer became a special officer in Harris County, where he remained until 1915, when he rejoined the Texas Rangers.⁵

Second Ranger Service

On March 29, 1915, Hamer became a Texas Ranger for the second time in Del Rio. He patrolled the area between Big Bend and Brownsville, mainly contending against arms smuggling, bootlegging, and banditry. On May 12, 1917, he was married to Gladys Johnson, who had two children from a previous relationship, and they had two more children together. In 1920, he became a prohibition officer. In 1921, Hamer was transferred to Austin, where he made a permanent home for his family. He participated in numerous raids to restore law and order in oil boom towns such as Mexia and Gander Slu in 1922 and Berger in 1927. In 1928, he was credited with exposing a “bank reward ring” when he determined that criminals were framing others and killing them to claim the standing \$5,000 bounty on dead bank robbers offered by the Texas Bankers Association. He retired from active duty in 1932.⁶

The Hunt for Bonnie and Clyde

On February 1, 1934, Marshall Lee Simmons, head of the Texas prison system, asked Hamer to accept the post of special investigator with the task of hunting down the notorious

² James H. Earle, “Letter to Gaines de Graffenreid,” June 15, 1989.

³ John H. Jenkins, “Hamer, Francis Augustus,” Texas State History Association, n.d., <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fha32>.

⁴ Jenkins.

⁵ Jenkins.

⁶ Jenkins.

outlaws Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. After a three month long search, he tracked them down and laid an ambush on the road outside of Gibsland, Louisiana. Along with other law enforcement officers, he shot and killed the duo on May 23, 1934. He was awarded with a special citation from Congress for bringing the duo's reign of terror to an end.⁷

Final Retirement and Later Life

In 1948, Hamer was briefly recalled to active Ranger duty by Governor Coke Stevenson to accompany him in Jim Wells and Duvall counties to check election results in the hotly contested congressional race of that year. He then retired once and for all from the Rangers and returned to Austin. He died peacefully in his sleep on July 10, 1955 at the age of 71.⁸

History of the Remington Model 8F Rifle

The Remington Model 8 Rifle was created by famed gun designer John Moses Browning while designing the Auto-5 shotgun, who was awarded the patent for its design on October 16, 1900. He sold the patent to Remington for US manufacture, and Fabrique National for European manufacture. The FN version of the rifle was sold as the FN 1900. It was first introduced by Remington as the Remington Autoloading Rifle in 1906. In 1911, the name was changed to the Model 8. Remington produced over 80,000 model 8 rifles before switching production to the Model 81 in 1936 as a cost saving measure.⁹

The Model 8 is a long recoil operated, rotating bolt gun. It featured a five shot fixed magazine initially, although some were modified to accept twenty round detachable magazines, as seen with the Model 81 owned by Frank Hamer in the museum's collection. It could be loaded with the use of stripper clips, as with popular military rifles of the era. It also featured a 22 inch jacketed barrel. The rifle was primarily used for hunting and other shooting sports, although a limited number saw service with the French military.¹⁰

The Model 8 was offered in four proprietary rimless cartridges which had been developed to ensure smooth operation in a semiautomatic rifle. The four options were .25 Remington, .30 Remington, .32 Remington, and .35 Remington. (Footnote: Great Model 8)

In 1907, Remington introduced various grades of refinement, running from A-F, with A being the basic option, and F being the "Premier" finest option. The factory specifications for the 8F are as follows: "stock and fore-arm of the finest Circassian walnut inlaid with gold name plate and finished with delicate but elaborate checkering. The engraving on this rifle is equal to that on the 'Premier' grade Auto shotgun (A5), and is all that could be desired by the most exacting sportsman. Owner's initials engraved on name plate if so desired."¹¹

⁷ Jenkins.

⁸ Jenkins.

⁹ "The Great Model 8," Remington Society, January 31, 2009, http://thegreatmodel8.remingtonsociety.com/?page_id=8.

¹⁰ "The Great Model 8."

¹¹ "The Grades of the Remington Model 8 & 81," Remington Society, September 20, 2011, http://thegreatmodel8.remingtonsociety.com/?page_id=1051.

Information Specific to this Firearm

The rifle is engraved with gold inlay and the inscription: "Capt Frank Hamer of the Texas Rangers" Below the inscription there is an image of a man on horseback holding a gun at three bandits. On the right side of the stock there is a five pointed star with an oak and olive branches surrounding it. It features a number of special modifications, including a cheek rest on the stock and checkering on both the pistol grip and fore grip. The serial number is G49643
Draw Me Without Cause, Nor Shield Me With Dishonor."