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224468 is shown here with Pop's
Colt, another Finley engraved SAA.



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COLT SAA .45

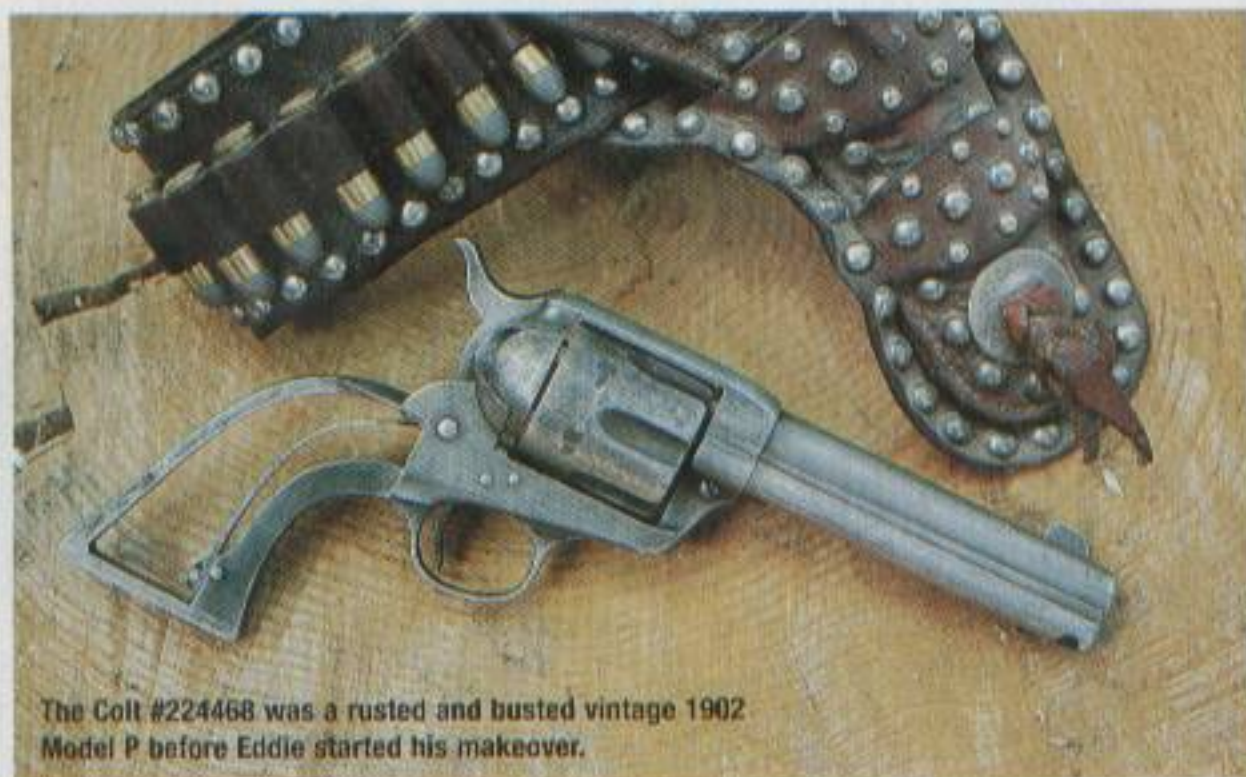
**Peacemaker
Specialists gives
new life to 100-
year-old sixgun!**

The year was 1902. Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States and nobody won the World Series because it wasn't held that year. By the end of 1902, Colt had produced 238,000 of its 1873 Single Action Armies and it was during this year that SAA serial #224468 was produced. It is unknown where and to whom # 224468 went, but from the looks of it, the first time I saw it, it had led a hard, hard life. Were it only able to talk, I'd sure like to know what the two notches crudely filed across its front strap meant. Its original finish had long since disappeared and its once smooth surfaces now showed the rigors of hard use. Its screw heads were buggered, an indication of many disassemblies for replacing worn or broken internals, or just the retightening of them from extensive use. Upon initial examination, it looked like its 4.75-inch barrel may have been cut down at some point from a longer length, but its two-line barrel address confirmed that it was its original length. Its front sight had the obvious signs that one of its former owners had attempted to dial it in for a certain long-since forgot-



J.C. LEACOCK





The Colt #224468 was a rusted and busted vintage 1902 Model P before Eddie started his makeover.

ten load. The left side of the barrel at its muzzle was flattened; due, I'm sure, to the many times it was drawn from and returned to its holster. There were telltale signs that somewhere in its 100+ years of existence someone had attempted to "pretty it up" by polishing its surfaces with a Brillo pad or other such implement. It bore a plethora of dings and scrapes attesting to its obviously arduous life.

A countless number of .45 slugs, propelled, no doubt, by both smokeless as well

Eddie for possible purchase. As Eddie recalled, the seller had said he had inherited it from a great uncle. Eddie bought the relic with eventual restoration in mind. It had sat in the shop at Peacemaker Specialists for the last few years waiting for Eddie to find the time to work on it. Well, Eddie finally found the time.

I met with Eddie back in May 2002, and we discussed Eddie's plans for the tired old pistol. It was then we decided to chronicle its restoration, which intended to showcase

"Eddie's revamp of 224468 was to take place in three phases, and it was his intent to return 224468 to its original configuration, only with some period cosmetic enhancements."



as black powder, coupled most likely with too often ignored cleanings, had reduced its once pristine bore to that more akin to a sewer pipe with just a visible hint left of what were once lands and grooves.

Everything on this tired old relic, however, appeared original. Its numbers matched where they should have and all its parts appeared consistent with the rest of the pistol. The only parts that looked like they might not have left the Colt factory in 1902 were its cylinder pin and bushing, which appeared newer than the rest of it. It wore no grips, having lost them somewhere along its way.

Serial #224468 came into the possession of Eddie Janis, proprietor of Peacemaker Specialists, about four and a half years ago, when a customer sent it to

a number of the services available through Eddie's shop. Peacemaker Specialists is just that, a business devoted entirely to the Colt Model P. From parts for all three generations of pistols, to custom grips and caliber changes, to refinishing and restorations, whatever your Colt Peacemaker needs are, Eddie can help.

Eddie's revamp of 224468 was to take place in three phases, and it was his intent to return 224468 to its original configuration, only with some period cosmetic enhancements.

Phase I

In the "Accuracy Phase" of 224468's restoration, Eddie said he'll fabricate a new/old 4.75-inch barrel by using a new 7.5-inch 2nd Generation barrel, cutting it back to 4.75 inches then installing an originally configured 1st Generation type front sight blade that will be made from scratch. The barrel will then be polished and remarked with Colt's two-line barrel markings and .45 Colt designation. When fitted to its frame, Eddie will set the barrel/cylinder gap at .002 to .003 of an inch and cut its forcing cone with an 11-degree cutter.

Because the original cylinder from 224468 was rusted, dinged, and pitted both inside and out, Eddie said he'll fabricate a new cylinder for it using a 2nd Generation .357 Magnum cylinder, re-drilling and re-chambering it to .45 Colt with tight throats for increased accuracy with lead bullets. This cylinder

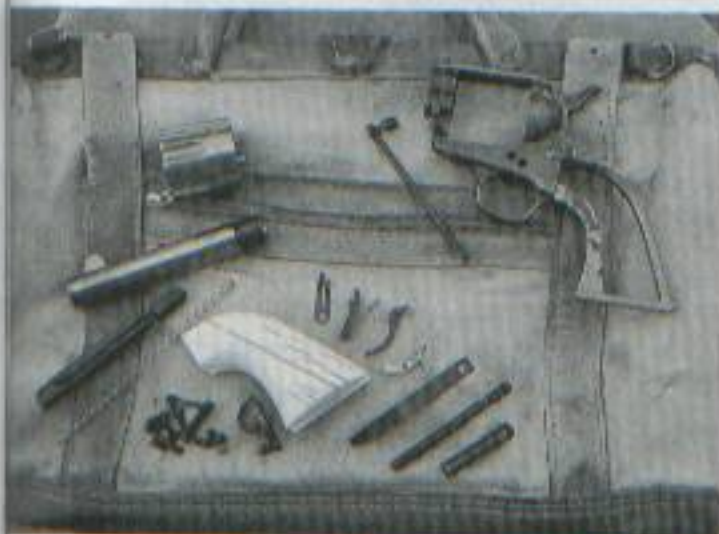


After engraving, fire-blued screws and silver plate were added.

will then be beveled and fluted in keeping with early 1st Generation characteristics and fitted to the cylinder window using a new base pin and bushing.

Phase II

As part of Phase II, the "Reliability Phase," Eddie advised he would replace all internal parts on 224468 with either new original Colt parts or with Peacemaker Parts, a line of replacement parts manufactured by Peacemaker Specialists that are historically accurate for style and finish for



224468 is readied for reassembly with its new barrel, cylinder and internals.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Generation Colt SAAs and Bisleys. Hard-to-get original internals like 1st Generation base pins or appropriate length trigger screws are available from Peacemaker Parts, as well as other components like hand assemblies and hammer rollers. Want to replace all the bugged screws in your otherwise pristine Model P? Peacemaker Parts offers complete screw sets in either blue or nickel for your prize piece. Peacemaker Parts are available through Brownells or Midway USA.

According to Eddie, parts to be replaced in 224468 will include all springs, its hand, bolt, trigger, ejector spring, base pin latch, all screws, and possibly the ejector housing and loading gate (if needed). Eddie will then meticulously mate all the new parts and give 224468 his deluxe "Gunslinger" makeover, which is his top-of-the-line, "ya gotta feel it to believe it", action job.

At this point in the project Eddie will equip 224468 with a set of one-piece elephant ivory stocks. These ivories will be fabricated so the outside bark from the tusk will be visible, adding an unbelievable

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dimension to what are otherwise already classy handles. Besides the unique and exquisite grain structure normally encountered with real ivory, those made using the outer or bark portions of the tusks are imbued with stripes and checks, varying in color from black to brown to blue, that only add to and enhance the overall beauty of this grip material.

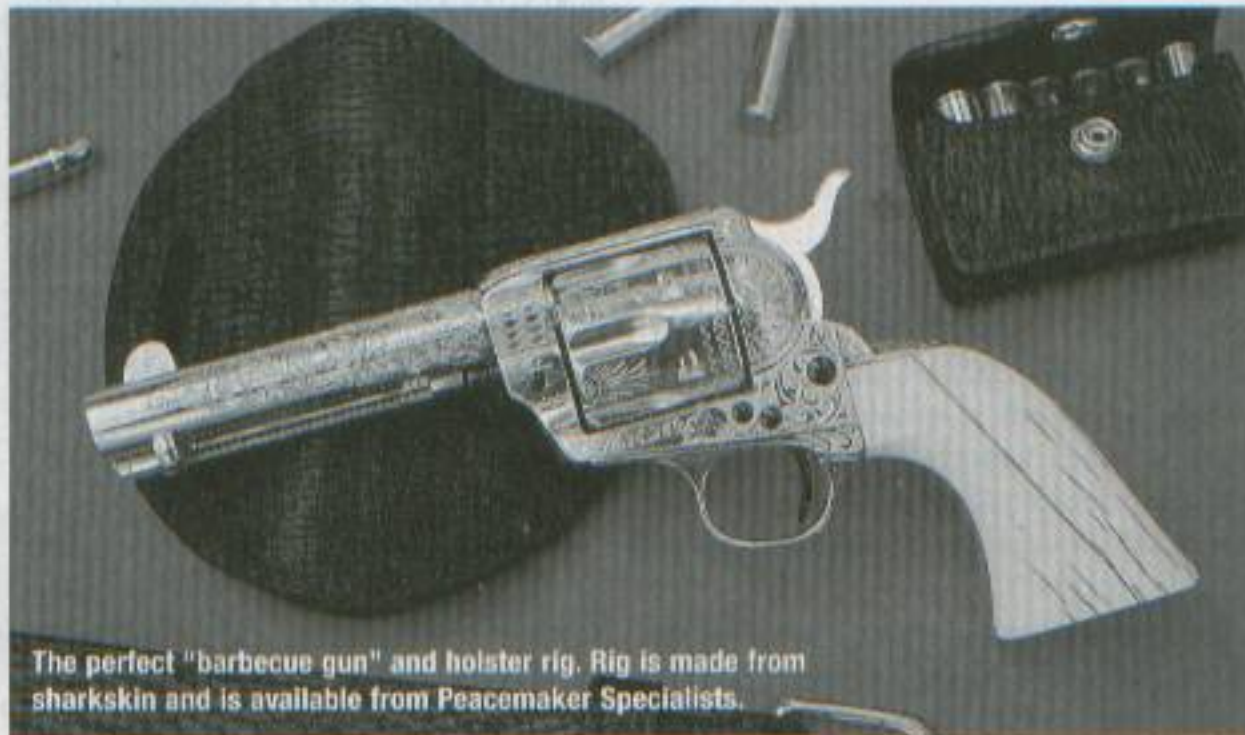
When 224468 is all back together, Eddie will target it in with Black Hills 250-grain Cowboy loads, turning the barrel and filing the front sight as necessary. Just to make 224468 a little more shootable, Eddie said he might open and square up the rear notch a little, as those on 1st Generation guns came with a pretty hard-to-see, shallow V-notch, which doesn't mate up as well with a nicely squared-edge front sight as a square notch does. Then, when the 224468 is all back together and dialed in, it will be sent off for Phase III—cosmetic enhancements. More on that later.



Eddie at work on 224468.

I returned to Peacemaker Specialists in October 2002 to examine and photograph Eddie's progress to date on 224468. The pistol now wore its new cut-and-crowned 4.75-inch barrel that had been properly marked for a 1902 vintage pistol, and this had been mated up with its new rebored and reconfigured cylinder. Barrel/cylinder gap appeared to be in the .003 to .004 of an inch range. When I walked into his shop, Eddie was fitting a new bolt to the old pistol, having most of the other action work completed.

I'm here to tell you those one-piece "bark" ivory grips that 224468 now wore looked phenomenal. Since the gun was to be refinished, these stocks had been ground and fitted right on the top strap and triggerguard of 224468 so their fit was absolutely perfect. I noticed that in fitting



The perfect "barbecue gun" and holster rig. Rig is made from sharkskin and is available from Peacemaker Specialists.

the grips, the two notches that had been on 224468's front strap had been polished off. I don't know, but I would have probably left these notches intact, maybe even highlighting them with gold fill, as they had seemed so in keeping with the character of this sixgun. But gone they were.

Although Eddie still had more internal work to complete on 224468, he assembled it so we could handle it and take some pictures. All that was left to ready 224468 for its final phase was a little more action work, the mating of a couple of surfaces, and targeting. Next step, making it pretty.

Phase III—Engraving and Silver Plate

Serial #224468, now all back together and running smoothly, next went to local Redding engraver Clinton Finley in April 2003 for its cosmetic makeover. Finley is no stranger to me, having performed his metal magic on a Colt SAA that had formerly belonged to my father, which I inherited upon his death. A plain Jane, 3rd Generation pistol, Finley transformed it into a silver-plated piece of art I call "Pop's Colt," a pistol destined someday to be inherited by my son, Chad.

From the book of Colt Engraving, Eddie selected five different engraving designs, all Helfrict style, from the period 1871 through 1921, for Finley to

incorporate onto the surfaces of 224468. The barrel and cylinder's design came from one gun, while the motif for its recoil shield came from another. Its top strap's scheme came from a third pistol, while the front end of its frame took its pattern from a fourth.

It took Finley somewhere in the neighborhood of 40 hours to prep and engrave the exterior surfaces of 224468, and I was fortunate enough to catch him on the day he put the finishing touches to Eddie's pistol. As usual, I wasn't disappointed by his work.

From what was once a rusted and busted relic, 224468 was now a bona fide composition of mechanical mastery and artistic presentation, awaiting only a plating of silver and some fire-blued screws to set it off.

The Silk Purse

The makeover of 224468 was completed in July 2003. Only its serial number betrays the fact that it isn't a brand new, recently manufactured pistol. But this is more than just a prettied-up old short gun. It is now better than it ever was. Beneath its silvery, highly ornate exterior beats the

Engraving, ivory grips and silver plate. 224468 is shown here with another Finley engraved pistol holstered in a silver-conchoed rig from El Paso Saddlery.



heart of a warrior. More finely fitted than it ever has been and dimensionally superior than before, 224468 is now capable of accurately launching 250-grain lead projectiles to exactly where its fixed sights look. Its action is buttery smooth and its trigger releases like breaking glass when subjected to around three pounds of pressure. It is the epitome of the "Texas Barbeque Gun," a top-of-the-line, dress-up pistol to be proudly worn and displayed at local gatherings where the carrying of handguns is not only tolerated, but encouraged.

This is one pretty pistol. But beyond pretty, it is a highly refined example of gunsmithing art. Capable of both pleasing and protecting, thanks to the efforts of Eddie Janis of Peacemaker Specialists, 224468, once destined to be cannibalized for its parts, will now most certainly be around for many years to come.

For a complete catalog of what Eddie has to offer, send S4 to Peacemaker Specialists. ☉

For more information contact:

Peacemaker Specialists

Eddie Janis, Proprietor
PO Box 157, Dept CAS
Whitmore, CA 96096
(530) 472-3438
www.peacemakerspecialists.com

Clinton Finley, Engraver

4176 Saint Patrick Ave, Dept CAS
Redding, CA 96003
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