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The C&S limited edition "Retro-1911" honors the very first production run of 500 pistols. Highlights include original style carbona bluing, nitred parts and 19 authentically reproduced original parts!

ROY HUNTINGTON

RETRO

A FLAWLESS 1911 FROM 1912!

There are six obvious differences between Bill's "original" retro-1911 here and the 1911A1. Can you spot 'em?

So there we were sitting around my kitchen table the evening before a 1911 "build" class I was hosting with Bill Laughridge, owner and guru of the Cylinder & Slide shop. We'd had just enough amber libation so that conversation was flowing, and we thought ourselves much smarter than we actually were.

Out of the blue Bill said, "I'm going to do a limited run of 1911s for the 100th anniversary of the breed. But, I want them to exactly mirror a gun as it would have left Colt in 1912, essentially one of the first 500 1911s made. What do you think about *that*?" grinned Bill.

So I thought about *that* some. "You mean,



While the picture doesn't do the carbonyl bluing justice, you can see the nitre-blued highlights. There's no screw in the mag release, as per the original. If you had seen one of the first 500 Colts off the line, you'd have seen this.



CYLINDER & SLIDE

GUN

you'll customize a Colt and make it look like an early gun?"

"Nope, it's going to be *exactly* like a 1911 made by Colt in 1912, like one of those rare minty ones you see in fancy collector's books. I've been nosing around, looking at early guns, finding what the differences are — and there are lots of differences — and I think I can do it. I'm actually going to have special parts made to match original specs."

"Really? Lots of differences? I didn't think there were that many," I said. "What, maybe sights and the safety and hammer or something?" Silly me.

"Oh, how about sights, firing pin and stop, barrel throat and contour, frame, hammer, sear, disconnecter, trigger, mag catch, grip safety, thumb safety, slide stop, mainspring housing, grip screws, recoil spring plug ... um, should I go on?"

"Geez Bill, I had no idea," I admitted. "How will you duplicate all that stuff?" I asked sincerely. At least as sincerely I can be with Bill.

"I'm finding out it won't be easy, and

that I should have started a year or two ago," laughed Bill.

In the spirit of the moment, I dug out my "old 1911 stuff" box and dropped it on the table. "Any of this help? I asked.

Bill started pawing through it. "You've got some great old parts here," he said, then stopped abruptly, holding up a magazine. "Do you know what you have here?"

"Um ... a sorta' old 1911 magazine?" I felt like I was in trouble. Like I got

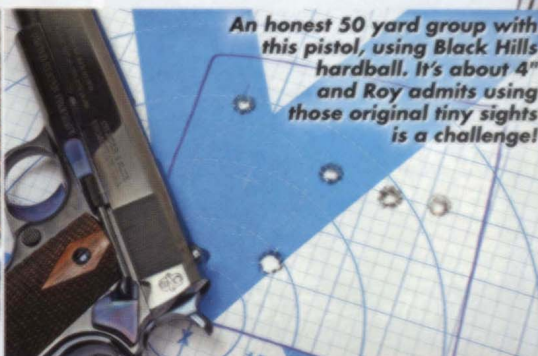
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The original mags had pinned base plates and the plate stuck out below the magazine body. Called "Visible Base" magazines, you're looking at lots of hand-work here! Note the lanyard loop on both the magazine and the bottom of the mainspring housing, and the "thin" grips screw heads



Note the shorter grip safety, flat mainspring housing and original style "double diamond" grips.



An honest 50 yard group with this pistol, using Black Hills hardball. It's about 4" and Roy admits using those original tiny sights is a challenge!

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caught with something I shouldn't have.

"This is an *original* one. From one of the earliest runs, if not the first run. I need it. I've been looking for one of these. Maybe you're useful after all," mumbled Bill as he pocketed the magazine. "Oh, I'm taking this old Navy-marked slide too."

I wondered if I would ever see them again. At least they were going to a good cause.

He Did It

At SHOT 2011 I saw the final result and it was stunning. Bill had a twinkle in his eye as he showed me his work. "More work than I ever thought," he said with a laugh. "But ain't they purty!"

And they were.

Bill said I'd get the first "shooter" he could release, and he was true to his word. Just before going to press, a "knock your socks off" 1911 showed up, and it literally stopped conversation at Brandon's gun store here in Joplin when I opened the box. If you've been lucky enough to see a real-live, in the flesh early Colt, one of those "new-in-box" rarities, you'll understand. Simply put, the workmanship of those early guns stands out — and here I was holding one just like them in my hand. For real.

While my photos don't do it justice. They might give you an idea of the depth of the carbona bluing, the nitre-blued pins and screws, the careful attention to detail Bill put into this limited run, and the living-history feel of it all. The changes are subtle at times, but the result is an overall feel to the gun distinctly different from a 1911A1 or anything newer. Shades of 1930s gangsters, Sergeant York, and hard men defending us against the bad guys.

The complete list of changes Bill had to make is astonishing (go to his website to check 'em out). While you're there, you'll get a solid history of how the early guns are different from modern ones. For instance, to create the original hammer, Bill had to have hammers made from extra-wide stock to accommodate the need for the wide spur (not to mention how to checker it!) and then had to machine the body of the hammer down to original specs.

The original firing pin stop (the plate on the rear holding the firing pin in place) had a very small radius at the bottom to help the cocking of the hammer. Later, it was discovered a more radical radius made it easier to cock, and used up less slide energy. It's a tiny thing, easily unnoticed, but the result of using an original design (that Bill had to create, of course) is it gives the pistol a unique *feel* when racking the slide. It's actually much harder rack

with the old-style stop.

Did I shoot it? Absolutely. Part of the deal I had with Bill was if he sent me a gun, I had to be able to shoot it to say what I learned. I had seen one before briefly (used it to take these pics) but it was not a shooter. The test gun (marked as a Navy gun) showed the same memorable finish and fit as the photo gun though.

Setting up in my backyard, I used Black Hills 230 Hardball (what else?). Bill had warned the gun seemed to shoot high in his initial shooting of about 20 rounds. And indeed, at 25 it was about 8" high, and a real challenge to shoot with those teeny-tiny sights. Groups hovered around 2.5" but sometimes I'd luck out with a 2". The action was smooth and the trigger crisp, but those sights are tough to use! My hat went off to Sergeant York and the other guys who actually fought with these guns.

Out of curiosity, I fired it at 50 yards. Not only did I surprise myself with a solid 4" group, but it was still about 6" high. Later, Bill said the very early gun he had examined (in the 300 serial number range) and had used to gauge the front sight, apparently had a worn or damaged front sight, making it too low. Further investigation revealed the front sight should have been higher, which would solve the "high shooting" issue. Bill made the change.

Final Thoughts

The gun felt unique as I shot it and enabled me to take a trip into the past. You'd never be allowed to shoot a mint specimen like this, so this was not only a treat, it made this remarkable celebration of an early Colt a tangible bit of history we could actually experience. And, with Bill's fitting, they have modern reliability. Bill is making 115 of these and will make no changes to them. He will have 25 others he would be willing to customize for you if you like. Since they are not Colts, there is no Colt logo, but other original style markings are to spec. Bill's "C&S" logo is present on the guns, and everything is tastefully and beautifully done.

The cost is an honest \$5,000, and Bill needs a \$2,500 deposit up front. I've seen many people drop \$2,500 to \$10,000 on custom 1911s, and some have multiples. With all due regard to the economy, cost of living and all the rest, this is a real deal. You simply can't have *this* gun built by a custom 'smith, because *they* don't have the original 19 parts needed! If you want an "original" mint 1911 from 1913, now's the chance. Bill told me he's already sold a bunch, just from word of mouth. Grab it if you dare — because soon they'll be gone.



For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/cylinder-slide

GUN TALK



The anniversary pistol is marked with the original patent markings and United States Property marking, while "Cylinder & Slide, Fremont, NE USA" replaces the original Colt markings.

guns. The end result is in my opinion the most faithful replica of the original 1911 that has ever been manufactured.

One of the prototypes was designated as a writer's sample. Several months later, Bill forwarded me the pistol you see in this piece. As I opened the box, I felt as if I was stepping back in time. The polishing and bluing were perfect and the Niter

parts accented the richness of the look. I felt as if I were shooting a 100-year-old piece of history!

Bill had a list of people who were waiting for the test pistol, so my evaluation time was limited. I was able to spend a morning on the range with the C&S 1911. With each round fired, I stepped a little further back in time. I ran a box or two of 230-grain FMJ and enjoyed each round. For a minute, I even thought that the ghost of John Moses

Browning was standing over my shoulder and smiling. In the end, I came away with a greater appreciation of the design and history of the pistol that has been in active service for 100 years.

There will only be 115 of anniversary 1911s. The first 100 guns will be marked "Model of 1911 U.S. Army". Ten will be marked "Model of 1911 U.S. Navy" and se-