



Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews

M1855 Volcanic Pocket Pistol

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.

M1855 Volcanic Pocket Pistol

History of Volcanic Repeating Arms and the Volcanic Pocket Pistol

In July of 1855, the Smith & Wesson name was changed to the Volcanic Repeating Arms Company. Business was conducted under the Volcanic name from 1855 to 1857, when it was reorganized as the New Haven Arms Company in April 1857. Volcanic remained as the trade name for the lever action pistols and carbines. The simplest method of telling the difference between arms made by the two incarnations of the company are the mark "VOLCANIC" on the Volcanic Arms Company firearms, which switched to "PATENT FEB. 14, 1854 / NEW HAVEN, CONN." on the New Haven Arms Company products.

The New Haven Arms Company produced an estimated 850 of its Lever Action No. 1 Pocket Pistols with 3-1/2" barrels. They produced a further 225 pistols with 6" barrels which fetch a significant premium over the standard model. They featured unfinished brass frames and blued barrels. Engraving was extremely rare.¹

Information Specific to this Firearm

The pistol bears the marking "NEW HAVEN, CONN. PATENT FEB 14, 1854" and the serial number is 419, placing it at approximately halfway through the production run.

¹ Norm Flayderman, *Flayderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms and Their Values*, Ninth Edition (Gun Digest Books, 2007), 304–5.