



Remington Rolling Block Rifle



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occurred." Spain tested the rifle by soaking it in seawater for a day, resulting in it being covered with a thick coat of rust. Still, it worked perfectly. Other countries, in trials, fired it 2,500 times, filed down the cartridges so they would burst in firing, and even fired off a ramrod from the barrel. Never did a gun fail.

Although U.S. military contracts were small, other countries adopted the rolling block enthusiastically, and Remington produced more than one and a half million rifles by the beginning of the 20th Century. Although repeating arms had largely superseded single shots by the turn of the century, many of these rifles were still being used by major powers during World War One and by smaller nations as late as the 1930s. The rolling block was chambered in calibers from .22 rimfire to .50-caliber centerfire. The accuracy of these rifles became legendary, and in the hands of the Americans against the Irish, they helped to carve out a 934 to 931 point victory at the international rifle matches of 1874 in Creedmoor, New York.

The rifle illustrated for this article is a U.S. Model 1871, manufactured in 1872. This gun incorporated an improvement designed as a safety feature. When a normal rolling block's breech was closed, a damaged or rusted firing pin stuck in the forward position could conceivably set off the round in the chamber. This would be while the breech was not supported by the fully cocked hammer, and could result in a blown breech. The improvement made for this model, known as the "locking action," caused the hammer to fall to half

cock as the breech was closed, thus preventing the breech from opening. It required the user to then bring the hammer to full cock to discharge the piece in the usual manner. Slightly over 10,000 of this model were made for United States service in 1871 and 1872, all in caliber .50/70 Government. They featured barrels measuring 36" in length and used the same rear sight, ramrod and bayonet as the earlier .50/70 Model 1868 "trapdoor" Springfield. These unique rolling blocks were specially manufactured at Springfield Armory under a royalty agreement with Remington, and are desirable and valuable collectors' items today.

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In recent years Remington revived the rolling block rifle as a replica, and offered it in caliber .45/70 in 2007. Two versions were offered through the Remington Custom Shop in Mid-range Sporter (30" standard tapered barrel) and Silhouette (30" heavy untapered barrel) configurations. Numerous stock and trigger options were available, with a manufacturer's suggested retail price of over \$3000.

Today, those original rifles are still considered classics for their simplicity, ruggedness, accuracy and efficacy. They represent an interesting, historic and vital chapter in United States rifle design. Many are still being shot today, and collectors treasure them.

