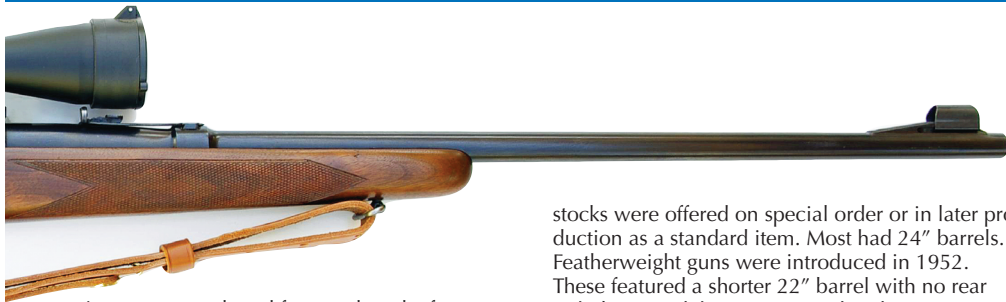


# 1964 Winchester Model 70



receiver tang was altered from a cloverleaf to an elliptical configuration in later production to lessen the chance of a split stock in that area. Early and transition guns had an enlarged-diameter section on the barrel which mounted the rear sight and accepted a forward (third) stock screw.

Pre-World War II rifles (up to early 1942) have serial numbers from 1 to about 60,500. The bolt shrouds on these will be flat on top rather than round, and the bolt handle will have a 90-degree step at the base. Pre-war rifles will all have charger clip slots in the front of the rear receiver bridge. Later (transition) guns had these only by special order or on the target rifles in .30-06 only. These early guns will not be drilled and tapped on top of the receiver for scope mounts. However, they will have two drilled and tapped holes on the left side of the receiver for peep sights; early scope mounts also utilized these holes for scope mounting.

"Transition" guns were made from 1945 until 1951. Serial numbers ranged from 60,500 to 87,000 on the standard actions, and from 63,200 to 121,700 for magnum actions. Apparently two assembly lines were used for these two different actions. The safety was changed so it was swung to the muzzle to fire. These rifles have two scope mounting holes on the rear bridge, and the top of the receiver had no recessed wavy lines as did later production. The rifle illustrated is a standard transitional rifle in caliber .30-06, manufactured in 1949. As a point of information, most rifles have the year of manufacture stamped on the bottom of the barrel just in front of the receiver.

Final pre-1964 production was carried out through late 1963, ending at serial number 581,471. The safeties on these had an extension that projected over the side of the sleeve. In 1964, Winchester could no longer afford making Model 70s the old way, which was to virtually hand craft them. Skilled labor was costly. The "new" Model 70 featured cheaper construction, a push-feed action, sloppy barrel free-floating with an unsightly excessive gap and impressed checkering, started at serial number 700,000. The era of quality had come to a grinding halt.

Standard-Grade rifles featured plain walnut stocks with hand checkering on the fore end and the handgrip area. Monte Carlo (elevated comb)

stocks were offered on special order or in later production as a standard item. Most had 24" barrels. Featherweight guns were introduced in 1952. These featured a shorter 22" barrel with no rear sight boss, and the trigger guard and magazine cover were made of black anodized aluminum. The buttplate was also aluminum instead of steel, and the stock had two 7" holes drilled under the buttplate. The Super-Grade guns had rather bulky cast quick-detachable sling swivel bases. The magazine covers for these had "SUPER GRADE" stamped on them. Redfield sourdough front sights were used, and the wood was a higher grade with more figure and deluxe wrap-around checkering. These had grip caps and black forend tips. They usually have engine-turned decorative polishing swirls on the bolts. The Westerner rifles were available in either .264 or .300 Winchester Magnum, and had 26" barrels. The Alaskan versions were chambered in either .338 Winchester Magnum or .375 H&H Magnum, and had 25" barrels. The African rifles were chambered in .458 Winchester Magnum and had 25" barrels. Other versions were the "carbine" with a 20" barrel (1936-1946), Super Grade Featherweight, Super Grade African, National Match, Target, Bull Gun, and Varmint. Calibers ranged from .22 Hornet to .458 Winchester Magnum. All actions were "long," with blocks in the magazines to accommodate the shorter cartridges such as the .243 and .308 Winchester.

Pre-1964 rifles have a mystique of their own. They were hand fitted and great care was taken in their manufacture. Minute of angle or sub-MOA groups were usually achieved. The Mauser-type action enabled controlled feeding, and chambering was reliable even upside down. The demand for a return to the pre-'64 action resulted in its eventual re-introduction as the "Classic" rifle by Winchester, although it was not strictly faithful to the original design. Winchester no longer makes firearms in New Haven, Connecticut, but the modern FN-owned facility in Columbia, South Carolina, is producing new Model 70s resembling the originals. These have a different trigger assembly and vary in smaller details.

The pre-1964 Model 70s have achieved cult status, and demand is high for examples in good clean condition. The "rifleman's rifle," when found, will command a substantial price, with the rarer calibers bringing premium sums. Accurate, refined, ergonomic, reliable and aesthetically pleasing, they are classic in every sense of the word.