

oses Browning's Model of 1911 Pistol

areas around the grip screws left smooth, giving the classic "double diamond" appearance still somewhat in vogue today.

The Model 1911 saw use in the Punitive Expedition to Mexico in 1916, and was the standard pistol during World War I. Besides Colt's, 1911s were also made by Springfield Armory and Remington-UMC. A few were made by North American Arms in Canada during the war, but none were accepted. A.J. Savage had a contract, but only managed to produce some slides, most of which were later used on reworked pistols.



The 1911 pistol evolved into the 1911A1 pistol in 1923-1926 with minor modifications. 1911s and 1911A1s served during WW II, Korea and Vietnam. Some still give service today in the hands of military special units who need the big pistol's power. The 1911 design soldiers on, with no sign of its popularity ever waning.

Original, unaltered Model 1911 pistols are scarce, with most having been overhauled with non-original parts in the military service. Collector prices are now escalating into the stratosphere, with the 100-year anniversary of WW I rapidly approaching. The 1911 is a true classic handgun. If you can find a good example today, consider yourself very fortunate!

Sgt. Alvin C. York

One particularly distinguished marksman with the Model of 1911 pistol was Sgt. Alvin C. York. On October 8, 1918, York, then a corporal, armed with a 1903 Springfield* rifle and a 1911 pistol, fought the Germans in the Argonne Forest in France.



After his platoon had suffered heavy casualties, York assumed command of his squad. They worked their way behind the enemy position and captured a large group of German soldiers who were preparing a counterattack. As his men remained under cover – guarding the prisoners – York worked his way into position to silence the enemy machine guns. "And those machine guns were spitting fire... you never heard such a racket in all of your life," recalled York in his diary, "I began to exchange shots with them. There were over 30 of them in continuous action, and all I could do was touch the Germans off as fast as I could...I don't think I missed a shot. All the time, I kept yelling at them to come down."

One of York's opponents, 1st Lt. Vollmer, emptied his pistol trying to kill York. Failing to injure York, and seeing his losses, Vollmer offered to surrender the unit to York, and he accepted. By the end of the fight, York and his men marched 132 German prisoners back to the American lines. York was promoted to sergeant and awarded the Medal of Honor.

In 2006, an expedition to the Argonne sought to discover the scene of York's heroism from old documents, maps and accounts. In this they were successful, and recovered a number of artifacts, notably including a large number of Remington-UMC .45 cartridge cases, headstamped "17" for 1917. They are absolutely certain the casings came from York's 1911.

By the way, York's pistol turned up missing over the years, and the search for it is still on today. It's serial number 25468, so if you find it, you'll have an absolutely priceless treasure!

**Note: Although his unit had been issued 1917 Enfields, York is said to have acquired a 1903 Springfield on his own because he preferred the sights over those on the Enfield.*