



by Tim Smith



Smith & Wesson
 'Bicycle Gun' Safety Hammerless
 Double-Action Revolver in .32
 centerfire. Circa 1894-1902.
 Plaque reads: "With its two-inch
 barrel, the 'bicycle gun' was mar-
 keted as the perfect protection
 pistol for people traveling
 by bicycle."



Le Novo Hammerless Folding Trigger Double-Action
 Revolver in .25 Centerfire, circa 1900
 The plaque reads: "Diminutive in size, the Le Novo
 revolver had a trigger and grip that both folded into the
 gun, making it incredibly concealable and virtually unde-
 tectable in your pocket."

Do you ever wonder what attracts you to certain types of guns? My influences may have started at an early age. Growing up in Massachusetts in the 60's and 70's, I have memories of my father and uncle talking about how the state of Massachusetts was attempting to pass laws to ban all handguns.



A German Wheellock, circa 1630.

Plaque reads: "Wheellock - **The First Concealable Gun**

The earliest firearms - hand cannons and matchlocks - relied on a burning slow-match or smoldering ember for ignition. The wheellock was the first mechanical lock, circa 1500. It allowed a gun to be carried with a wound spring, loaded and ready to fire. Some attribute the design to Leonardo da Vinci. With it came the first gun bans. 'An especially dangerous kind of firearm have come to be used, which are called wheellock, with which a homicide can be easily committed. His Excellency, knowing that these are devilish arms, prohibits their being carried without explicit authorization, under penalty of having a hand publicly cut off.' - City Ordinance, Ferrara, Italy, 1523"

Images of antique firearms taken at the NRA Museum's display during the 2020 SHOT Show.



All Right Firearms Co. Little All Right Palm Pistol in .22 Rimfire, circa 1876.
 Plaque reads: "This diminutive palm pistol requires you to wrap your hand around the entire gun - including the cylinder - in order to engage the folding double-action only trigger mounted on the top of the frame."

Those conversations may have been an influence on me, as my first airgun was not a Red Ryder, it was Smith & Wesson Model 78G air pistol. The Model 78G was powered by CO2 and fired a single .22 caliber pellet, and best of all, it was a replica of S&W model 41 pistol.

Going back to my younger days, I remember seeing ads for the North American Arms mini revolvers. With all the handgun laws in the northeast, it was only something to dream about. After moving south, one of my new neighbors showed me that he carried a NAA mini revolver. I remember saying something to him like "I've always wanted one of those".

At SHOT, back in 2016, one of the booths that I visited was North American Arms. There, I had a conversation with Sandy Chisholm, President of North American Arms. I remember telling him that I had always wanted to own a

mini revolver. After looking at the many products on display, Sandy said something like "Tim, you need to get one." That November, I happened to see a NAA mini in a local gun store's display case, remembering Sandy's words, I pointed to the little gun, I said to myself "That's going home with me."

So, now that I own one, other variations of the mini revolver sparked my interest. Being hooked on the quality of these stainless steel and wood gems, I jumped on the chance to look at their new offering, the Ranger II.

Scholfield Inspired Styling:

In the late 1800's, Major George Schofield of the 10th Cavalry, improved the design of the revolver over Smith & Wesson's No. 3 "American" model firearm. While it may not be as well known as the Colt "Peacemaker", the Schofield

was the gun of choice of Hoby Gilman in the *Trackdown* TV show. It was also the main character in the *Deadman's Gun* series, that was a cross between westerns and Twilight Zone episodes.

Features & Specs:

The Ranger II's main feature is that it has a break-top design. That makes for easy loading and unloading. Pulling the hammer back to half-cock, allows the release lever to be pulled backward, now the top can be broken open. Next, the five cartridges can be inserted in the cylinder. After closing the "break top", the hammer should be positioned in cylinder's safety notch. The manual does a good job describing this process.

Unlike other NAA products, (excluding the Sidewinder), the Ranger II uses a star ejector, that partially lifts the cartridges out of the cylinder, making the gun easier to unload.

The Ranger II is small, weighing only 7.9 ounces and having an overall length of just six inches. However, it is large when compared to the North American Arms .22 short. The short billed as "*World's smallest and lightest five-shot Mini-Revolver*" weighs four ounces and has an overall length of 3.63 inches.

In my opinion, the Ranger II is the most attractive of all the North American Arms mini revolvers. Especially with the 2 1/2 barrel and boot style grip, proportionally, everything just looks right. It's not too long, it's not too short, it's not too big, its not too small. Plus, it feels well balanced.

Versatile and Customizable:

The versatility is one reason why I like the line of mini revolvers, especially their larger magnum frame size. On most .22 magnum models, their is an option of an extra cylinder to fire .22 long rifle (LR) cartridges. If the gun is carried for self-defense, installing the magnum cylinder and .22 mag loads is the option. Feel like plinking? Swap out the .22 mag cylinder, for the .22 LR cylinder and plink away using long rifle ammo, or even shorts.

As you may know, I like to make my airguns and firearms my own by adding accessories. While the Ranger II is not highly customizable,



North American Arms Ranger II in .22 Magnum with .22 LR conversion cylinder..



The Ranger II wearing engraved boot grips in a custom made, cross-draw holster.

wide variety of bird head and boot style grip are available. Many different holsters are available, ranging from pocket holsters, to cross-draw, and more. While my Ranger II does not have it, a custom serial number can be ordered from the factory for the ultimate in personalizing the gun.

On the Range:

The small, stainless steel gun attracted attention at the local indoor range. While most shooters used their AR-style rifles or polymer framed pistols, there I was with a .22 magnum revolver that would fit in my hand. With .22 LR and .22 mag ammo being in short supply, I broke into my stash of rimfire ammo to test the gun. Since I consider the Ranger II to be a premium gun, I did not use cheaper bulk ammo, but selected CCI Mini-Mags for testing.

Being a top-break, the Ranger II was easy to load. And the boot style grips allowed me to grip the gun with two fingers. Unloading is also easier than other NAA products (including the Sidewinder). Putting the gun on half-cock and pulling back on the top-break release allows the gun to open and the star ejector raises the cartridges out of the cylinder.

I knew that this was not going to be an Olympic quality shooter when it came to accuracy. But I was very happy to get playing card sized groups on seven yards. The sights provided good accuracy for such a little firearm.

Like other NAA mini revolvers, the Ranger II does have a safety mechanism. Putting the hammer in the cylinder's safety notch took some practice. That was done prior to going to the range and with an unloaded gun.

The Price:

The Ranger II, reviewed here, with its 2 1/2" barrel plus .22 mag and .22 LR cylinder combo has a MSRP of under \$640. A Ranger II with a 1 5/8" barrel with only the .22 mag cylinder has a MSRP of \$479. While they are not inexpensive, they are made to last and very well could be considered an heirloom gun. The Ranger II is NAA's "high end" gun. If the price is out of your range, don't worry, a standard NAA mini with a 1 1/8" barrel in .22 mag sells for under \$250 and you get the same high quality.

(Cont. on page 30)

Why a firearms article?

You may be asking yourself, "Why is there a firearms article in an airgun magazine?" Well, we airgunners, also like firearms. I asked a few of our writers, who also own North American Arms products, their thoughts on the mini revolvers.



Owning one may lead to owning several.

First up, Gene Salvino's comments.

"Beautifully made, I like them for their craftsmanship" followed by "A 'Watch' you can shoot". When asked about the Ranger II, Gene said "I do like the fact it is a top-break say Baby Schofield".

Next, the airgun evangelist, Ton Tones. "I love all of my North American Arms, but I carry my Ranger 2 the most. In the morning I go through my checklist... wallet, phone, keys, Ranger 2, cold steel knife, coffee... good to go."



"The moment when I realized I need another holster." - Ton Jones

Final Thoughts:

While the North American Arms mini revolvers are small, they are useful for a variety of tasks, from plinking to concealed carry. As Gene said to me "It would be reassuring to have that NAA as a hideout!" But, be warned, owning one may lead to owning more mini revolvers.



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Let's face it, it's no fun shooting if you can't hit the target! From the first use, it was like getting a new set of eyes. I suffered from 'fuzzy sight syndrome' [but] all of the sudden, I had become a much better shooter, able to hit each target on the first shot. The EyePal greatly enhances my enjoyment while shooting iron sights.



- TIM SMITH, PUBLISHER/OWNER, Airgun Hobbyist Magazine



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