

BEST DEFENSE LOADS FOR THE .45 ACP

**COMPLETE BOOK
OF THE
45**

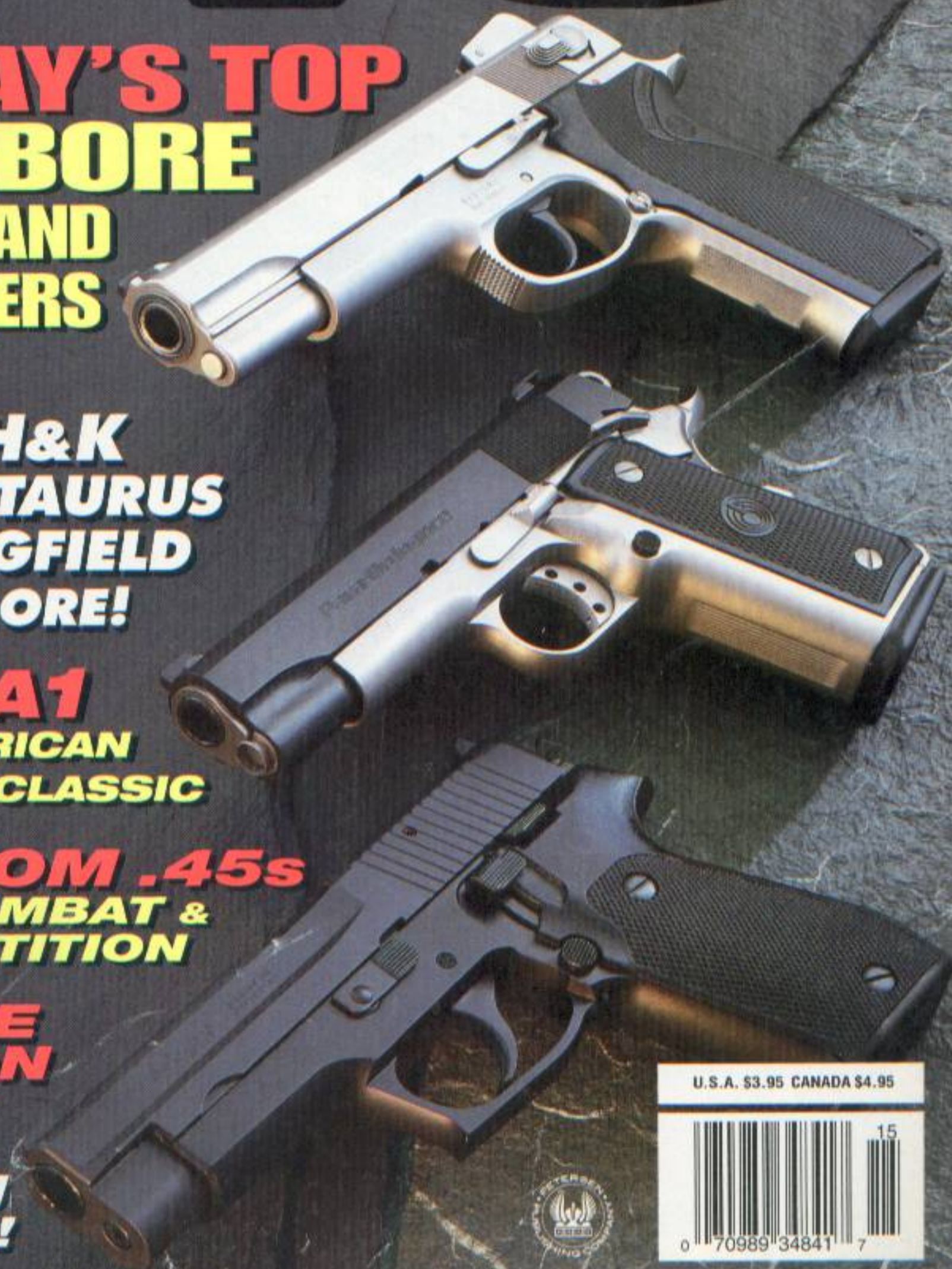
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zines carried pages of ads for Western-style holsters and split-second timers. But time was taking its toll on some of the machinery used to make the famous six-gun. In the mid-1970s, production was temporarily halted while manufacturing processes were updated.

Finally, a slightly revamped "third-generation" SAA rolled off the assembly line. Gone was the separate cylinder-pin bushing and the old-style threaded barrel. Some purists were incensed, and I can still remember a gun dealer in Southern California selling off all of his third-generation guns at \$345 apiece (less than his cost at the time), saying they weren't the same as the old Colts.

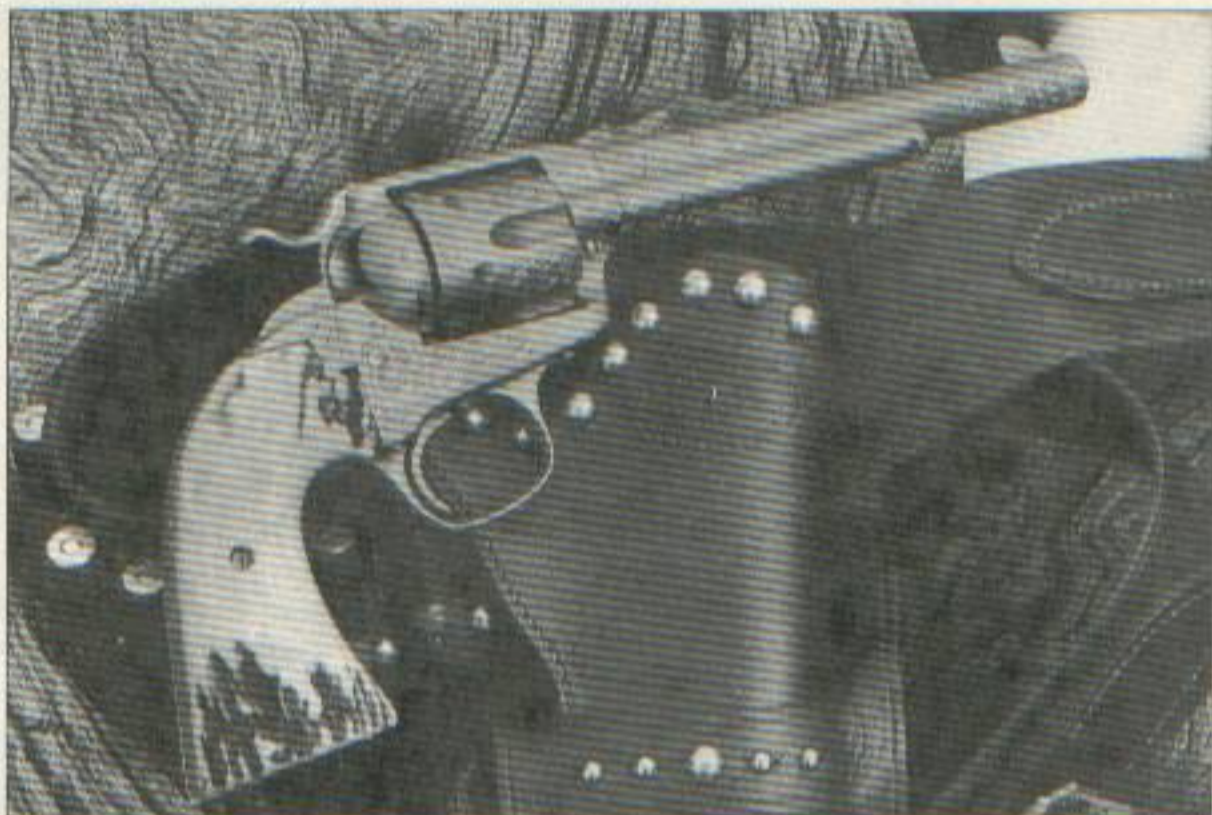
Boy, how I wish I had bought them all at that price! In 1981, it was announced that, due to the high cost of manufacturing (the intricacies of the Model P's 19th-century internal action still required hand-fitted parts), the Colt SAA would no longer be made. Fortunately, continued demand kept it alive.

Finally, just a few years ago, the Colt Peacemaker was relegated to the Colt Custom Shop as a special-order gun. Yet, it is still cataloged. However, some newer manufacturing techniques have been put into place, and these guns are what I refer to as "fourth-generation" Colts.

Of the first-generation guns, there are two subcategories: black-powder frame (with serial numbers below 165,000 and a screw in the front of the frame to hold the cylinder base pin) and those post-1896



Many SAAs have interesting pedigrees. A factory letter on most Colt pistols can be obtained for \$45 per letter by writing to Colt Historical Dept., Dept. G&A, P.O. Box 1868, Hartford, CT 06144.



A Bisley target model of the SAA was produced from 1894 to 1915 and featured swept-under grips and a lowered hammer spur. This version exhibits aftermarket engraving by Jim Riggs of Boerne, Texas, and a beautiful set of stag grips by Eagle Grips.

guns with a "smokeless-powder frame," which feature a spring-loaded crosspin in the frame to release the cylinder base pin.

Second-generation guns have an "SA" after their serial numbers, while third-gen-

Unlike so many other historical firearms, the end of the frontier did not spell the end of the Single Action Army.

eration Peacemakers have the "SA" in front of their serial numbers. The fourth-generation Colts have an "S" in front of the serial number and an "A" at the end of it.

As far as collectability is concerned, prewar Colts are the most coveted. After all, these are the guns that most likely saw action on the Western frontier, even if the factory letter states they were shipped to New York! No matter, they were around when there was still gunsmoke in the air and horses were the main mode of transportation.

The postwar Peacemakers are an interesting study in psychology. Up until recently, second-generation guns were pretty much ignored by the collecting fraternity. But now, with the growth of cowboy action shooting and the proliferation on the market of so many third-generation Colts that investors had been squirreling away, these second-generation Colts are rapidly climbing in value, mainly because their internal mechanisms are identical to the prewar sixguns. Indeed, I have seen some minty second-

generation guns fetch more at a gun show than a used first-generation (especially if it has its original 1950s black, white and red "stagecoach" box). However, third-generation Colts are hardly cheap, as most of them sell, mint in the box, for an average of \$1,000—slightly more if they are nicked. The same is true for fourth-generation Peacemakers.

Variations of standard barrel lengths are also an interesting collecting phenomenon. For many years, a third-generation, 12-inch Buntline Special would sell for less than a 7½-inch-barreled, third-generation SA—same gun, just a different barrel length. And while third-generation Buntlines are not in as great demand as the shorter barrel lengths, the same gun in a second-generation configuration can often fetch \$1,600 or more, depending on condition.

Sheriff's Models are another interest-



Reloading can result in even greater accuracy for both old and new Colts. Special low-recoil black-powder loads can also be worked up for Cowboy Action Shooting activities.

