

= Winchester Model 1897 =

The Winchester Model 1897 , also known as the Model 97 , M97 , or Trench Gun , was a pump action shotgun with an external hammer and tube magazine manufactured by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company . The Model 1897 was an evolution of the Winchester Model 1893 designed by John Browning . From 1897 until 1957 , over one million of these shotguns were produced . The Model 1897 was offered in numerous barrel lengths and grades , chambered in 12 and 16 gauge , and as a solid frame or takedown . The 16 gauge guns had a standard barrel length of 28 inches , while 12 gauge guns were furnished with 30 inch length barrels . Special length barrels could be ordered in lengths as short as 20 inches , and as long as 36 inches . Since the time the Model 1897 was first manufactured it has been used by American soldiers , police departments , and hunters .

= = History = =

The Winchester Model 1897 was designed by the famous American firearms inventor John Moses Browning . The Model 1897 was first listed for sale in the November 1897 Winchester catalog as a 12 gauge solid frame . However , the 12 gauge takedown was added in October 1898 , and the 16 gauge takedown in February 1900 . Originally produced as a tougher , stronger and more improved version of the Winchester 1893 , itself a takeoff on the early Spencer pump gun , the 1897 was identical to its forerunner , except that the receiver was thicker and allowed for use of smokeless powder shells , which were not common at the time . The 1897 introduced a " take down " design , where the barrel could be taken off ; a standard in pump shotguns made today , like the Remington 870 and Mossberg 500 series . Over time , the model 97 became the most popular shotgun on the American market and established a standard of performance by which other kinds and makes of shotguns were judged , including the most expensive imported articles . The Winchester Model 1897 was in production from 1897 until 1957 . It was in this time frame that the " modern " hammerless designs became common , like the Winchester Model 1912 and the Remington 870 and the Model 1897 was superseded by the Winchester Model 1912 . However , the gun can still be found today in regular use .

= = = Improvements From the 1893 = = =

In the new Model 1897 , many of the weaknesses that were present in the Model 93 were taken into account and remedied . These improvements included :

The frame was strengthened and made longer to handle a 12 gauge 2 ¾ -inch shell , as well as the 2 ½ -inch shell .

The frame at the top was covered so that the ejection of the fired shell was entirely from the side . This added a great amount of strength to the frame of the gun and it allowed the use of a 2 ¾ inch shell without the danger of the gun constantly jamming .

The gun could not be opened until a slight forward movement of the slide handle released the action slide lock . In firing , the recoil of the gun gave a slight forward motion to the slide handle and released the action slide lock which enabled immediate opening of the gun . In the absence of any recoil , the slide handle had to be pushed forward manually in order to release the action slide lock .

A movable cartridge guide was placed on the right side of the carrier block to prevent the escape of the shell when the gun was turned sideways in the act of loading .

The stock was made longer and with less drop .

Of the improvements , the slide lock is the one that really made the gun safer . This improved slide lock kept the gun locked until actual firing occurred which prevented the gun from jamming in the case of a misfire . The slide lock " stands in such a relation to the body of the firing pin as will prevent the firing pin reaching the primer until the pin has moved forward a sufficient distance to insure locking of the breech bolt . " This prevents the action sleeve " from being retracted by the hand of the gunner until after firing , and hence rendering the fire arm more safe "

== Description ==

The Winchester Model 1897 evolved from the Winchester Model 1893 . The Model 1897 and 1893 were both designed by John Browning . The Model 1897 is an external hammer shotgun lacking a trigger disconnect . This means that the user can hold the trigger down while cycling the shotgun and once the action is returned to battery the gun fires . The gun itself is classified as a slide action pump shotgun . It was the first truly successful pump @-@ action shotgun produced . Throughout the time period the Model 1897 was in production , over a million of the type were produced in various grades and barrel lengths . 16 @-@ gauge guns had a standard barrel length of 28 inches , while 12 @-@ gauge guns were furnished with 30 @-@ inch length barrels . Special length barrels could be ordered in lengths as short as 20 inches , and as long as 36 inches . Along with various grades and barrel lengths , the Model 1897 came in two different chamberings . One was the 12 gauge and the other was the 16 gauge . The shells should be of the 2- ¾ inch or 2- ? inch model . Any shells larger are not recommended . An average Model 1897 held 5 shotgun shells in the magazine tube . After including the one shell that could be held in the chamber , the average Model 1897 held a total of 6 shotgun shells . However , this would vary from grade to grade . When working the action of the Model 1897 the forend (fore grip) is pulled back , forcing the breech bolt to the rear which extracts and then ejects the spent shell while simultaneously cocking the external hammer by pushing it to the rear . When the forend is slid forward again , the breech bolt pushes a fresh shell into the gun 's chamber and locks into place . This action of sliding the forend back and forth (pumping) is why the gun is classified as a slide action (or pump) gun .

The Chinese company Norinco has made an effort to reproduce this firearm . The Norinco 97 is an almost exact copy of the Winchester 1897 , produced in both Trench and Riot grades , yet lacking in the fit and finish of the originals .

== Grades of the Model 97 ==

== Original Prices ==

When the Model 1897 was first introduced , the price depended upon what grade was being purchased and what features were being added to that specific gun . To purchase a plain finished shotgun would cost the buyer \$ 25 . Whereas to have an engraved receiver with checkered and finer wood included , it would cost \$ 100 . The more expensive grades of the Model 1897 were the standard , trap , pigeon , and tournament grades . These were the grades that were normally equipped with an engraved receiver and with checkered , finer wood . The less expensive and plainer grades were the Brush , Brush Takedown , Riot , and Trench . These grades were not given the higher valued wood or special designs . This is because these guns were designed and built for hard abuse . These grades stood a higher chance of being badly damaged so there was no need to put extra money into them for appearance purposes . As the functions that were performed with these grades required them to be lightweight it was not beneficial to use heavy and expensive wood when designing them . Most often , when these grades were purchased , they were purchased in high numbers . By designing these grades with standard wood and finish , it kept the prices at a lower level .

== Military use ==

The Model 1897 was popular before World War I , but it was after the war broke out that sales of the Model 1897 picked up . This was because many were produced to meet the demands of the Military . When the United States entered World War I , there was a need for more service weapons to be issued to the troops . It became clear to the United States just how brutal trench warfare was , and how great the need was for a large amount of close @-@ range firepower while fighting in a

trench , after they had observed the war for the first three years . The Model 1897 Trench grade was an evolution of this idea . The pre @-@ existing Winchester Model 1897 was modified by adding a perforated steel heat shield over the barrel which protected the hand of the user from the barrel when it became over @-@ heated , and an adapter with bayonet lug for affixing an M1917 bayonet .

This model was ideal for close combat and was efficient in trench warfare due to its 20 inch cylinder bore barrel . Buckshot ammunition was issued with the trench grade during the war . Each round of this ammunition contained nine 00 (.33 @-@ caliber) buckshot pellets . This gave considerable firepower to the individual soldier by each round that was fired . This shorter barrel and large amount of firepower is what made this grade ideal for trench warfare . The Model 1897 was used by American troops for other purposes in World War I other than a force multiplier . American soldiers who were skilled at trap shooting were armed with these guns and stationed where they could fire at enemy hand grenades in midair . This would deflect the grenades from falling into the American trenches and therefore protect American soldiers .

Unlike most modern pump @-@ action shotguns , the Winchester Model 1897 (versions of which were type classified as the Model 97 or M97 for short) fired each time the action closed with the trigger depressed (that is , it lacks a trigger disconnect) . Coupled with its six @-@ shot capacity made it effective for close combat , such that troops referred to it as a " trench sweeper " . This characteristic allowed troops to fire the whole magazine with great speed . The Model 1897 was so effective , and feared , that the German government protested (in vain) to have it outlawed in combat . The Model 1897 was used in limited numbers during World War II by the United States Army and Marine Corps , although it was largely superseded by the similarly militarized version of the hammerless Model 1912 .

Other military uses of the shotgun included " the execution of security / interior guard operations , rear area security operations , guarding prisoners of war , raids , ambushes , military operations in urban terrain , and selected special operations . "

= = World War I protests = =

Although the Model 1897 was popular with American troops in World War I , the Germans soon began to protest its use in combat . " On 19 September 1918 , the German government issued a diplomatic protest against the American use of shotguns , alleging that the shotgun was prohibited by the law of war . " A part of the German protest read that " [i] t is especially forbidden to employ arms , projections , or materials calculated to cause unnecessary suffering " as defined in the 1907 Hague Convention on Land Warfare . This is the only known occasion in which the legality of actual combat use of the shotgun has been raised . However , the United States interpreted their use of the shotgun differently than Germany . The Judge Advocate General of the Army , Secretary of State Robert Lansing carefully considered and reviewed the applicable law and promptly rejected the German protest . France and Britain considered using shotguns as trench warfare weapons during World War I. The shotgun in question was a double @-@ barreled shotgun , which was not used because they were unable to obtain high powered ammunition and that type of gun is slow to reload in close combat .

= = = German Response = = =

The rejection of their protest greatly upset the German forces , because they believed they were treated unjustly in the war . Shortly after the protest was rejected , Germany issued threats that they would punish all captured American soldiers that were found to be armed with a shotgun . This led to the United States issuing a retaliation threat , stating that any measures unjustly taken against captured American soldiers would lead to an equal act by the United States on captured German soldiers .

= = Other uses = =

After the war , a shorter @-@ barrelled version of the Model 1897 was marketed by Winchester as a riot gun . Messengers of The American Express Company were armed with this weapon as were various police departments throughout the US . The differences between this riot version and the trench version were the riot version lacked the heat shield and bayonet lug , and all trench guns were equipped with sling swivels , whereas most riot guns were not .