



# KEEPING A LOW PROFILE

PRICE:  
£1022



**Derek Landers** revisits Uberti's reproductions of the Winchester 1885, this time with the Low Wall version in the classic .44-40 calibre

**To say that I am a fan of the .44 Winchester centrefire cartridge is a bit like saying that cats like cream.** I have loaded tens of thousands of rounds over the years and its often quoted 'difficulty' in reloading could not be farther from the truth. Back in the days of handgun shooting, I, like many others since 1878, loaded the same cartridge in my revolvers and lever guns. Today, this same load (8.5 grains of Unique powder behind a 200-grain RNFP lead bullet) is my 'go-to' load for plinking if the range certificate allows it. Outdoors there is the opportunity to experiment with variations of powder type and weight using the same bullet. 1878, incidentally, is the date that Colt offered this cartridge in the venerable Peacemaker, five years after its inception in the Winchester Model 73.

### Late to the party

During the post-Civil War period, Winchester was busy turning out relatively low-powered lever-action rifles that were well suited to the needs of settlers and frontier folk who needed to put food on the table and fend off the odd marauding band of Indians. During the same period, others like Remington and Sharps were turning their hands to manufacturing large calibre, single-shot rifles

that would take down the buffalo that roamed the plains in their millions. It was not until 1876 that Winchester developed a series of larger calibres for their lever guns, albeit using the same comparatively weak toggle-link action of the smaller calibres.

It was a further nine years before a meeting with John Browning developed into a single-shot rifle bearing the Winchester name that could handle the powerful .45-70 Government cartridge. Browning had taken out a patent for his own single-shot rifle back in 1879 when working in a small shop with his brothers, but production was slow with their hand-powered machinery and only a small number of guns had been produced until the meeting with Winchester representatives. Knowingly or not, Browning had infringed on a patent held by Winchester, and the company's men were there to see things put

right. A deal was reached whereby Browning could complete the small number of guns he had on hand and Winchester was allowed to purchase the patent to the Browning rifle and every other patent that John Browning developed over the next 20 years. Most of these ideas were never put into production, but it meant that the competition could not get their hands on them.

Back at the Winchester factory, the Browning gun had a few modifications made to it before production commenced. The rifle was introduced to the public as the Model 1885 but was more commonly listed in the catalogue simply as the 'Single-Shot' model, their first departure from lever-action rifles.

### Great variety

Two types of receivers were offered by Winchester - the High Wall and the Low Wall. Although, all of the rifles that the Browning brothers had produced were of the High Wall type. The reason for the names is obvious when you look at the





The cartridges are extracted rather than ejected



Detail of the lever in the open position

The case colours are dark on this example



guns in profile, but the motive for the two styles is less so. With the High Wall frames, only the tip of the hammer is visible but with the Low models, you can see more of the hammer and part of the breech block. Coupled with these two basic styles was an enormous variety of calibres, barrel lengths, stocks, sights etc. This made it possible to have a gun tailor-made to your requirements.

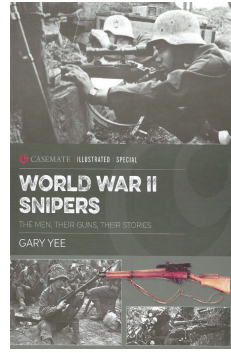
Whilst the Uberti 1885 models do not offer the bespoke options available from Winchester, there is still a good mixture of calibres available, particularly in the High Wall version where the larger calibres are found, but the choice of stock, sights and other variables is much more limited. With the Low Wall model that we have on test, the calibre choices are limited to four – two being rimfire and the others are the .44/40 that we have here and the .45 Colt. There are two options for

the stock design – a straight grip and the semi-pistol grip, the latter fitted to this rifle and designated the Special Sporting Model.

### Simple but strong

The wood is walnut, with the standard Uberti red/brown gloss finish. The wood-to-metal fit is very good, other than in the top tang area, where the cut-out was not as sharp as it could have been. Both the pistol grip and forend, the latter with a slight Schnabel-type tip, are crisply chequered, affording a comfortable and firm grip. The stock has the typical Winchester-style curved butt with a black metal plate. On some of the larger calibres I have seen a trap in the butt to take a sectional cleaning rod, but this one is solid. It may be possible to order the bored butt and appropriate rod on

## BOOKSHELF



**TITLE:** World War II Snipers  
**AUTHOR:** Gary Yee  
**PUBLISHER:** Casemate, Oxford  
**ISBN:** 9781636240985  
**PRICE:** £39.95  
 There have been many books written about snipers in WWII, but nothing ever like this

superb book which has to be the most comprehensive of its type. If there is any aspect on sniping which is missing from this book, then it is not important. All countries are included, ballistic data on ammunition, telescopic sights, the weapons and, most importantly, the men and women who used them on the battlefield. The author spent decades on research to prepare and present this thorough job of work on sniping, which sets the record straight on many things. The chapter on the Island Hopping campaign in the Pacific is excellent, with first-hand accounts. Highly illustrated throughout, this book is for weapon collectors, shooters, both male and female, and general readers with an interest in the subject. There is nothing to criticise about this book and readers will find it compelling.



**TITLE:** SU-152/ISU-152 Vs Tiger  
**AUTHOR:** David Greentree  
**PUBLISHER:** Osprey, Oxford  
**ISBN:** 9781472848642  
**PRICE:** £14.99

Tank design leapt forward during WWII, from the lightweight in 1939, to the heavy machines by 1945. When the Tiger appeared, it redrew the lines and the Allies had to come up with something to compete. In the case of the Russians, they came up with the SU-152, which technically was an SPG, which could take on the Tiger. This is the story of the contest between these two heavyweights and the battles they fought on the Eastern Front before continuing into Germany during the last weeks of the war. Both were relative late-comers to the war and this work covers development, deployment in battle and the final assessment. Excellent illustrations and text throughout are supported with maps and diagrams. Details and artwork of ammunition will please collectors, and the modellers will also like the illustrations. An absorbing work for general readers and enthusiasts.





There is some nice chequering on the grip



Detail of the standard semi-buckhorn rear sight, note the notches for elevation

this model but be aware that anything out of the ordinary often takes a long time for delivery.

Case colours are a little on the dark side and are applied to the receiver, breech block, the separate bottom tang, which includes the trigger mechanism, the combined trigger guard/lever, the hammer and the trigger. The 'tail' on the rear of the trigger guard looks rather small for a cocking lever but slip your thumb behind it and it is surprisingly easy to operate, even though the spring is fairly strong. The 30" octagonal forged barrel has a deep black finish with reasonably sharp edges, and on this model, the face of the muzzle is also blacked.

The sights are fairly basic, with the standard semi-buckhorn at the rear, which is adjustable for elevation (via a sliding, stepped bar) and windage. There is a plain blade on a dovetail at the front, which offers windage adjustment and is locked in place with a small grub screw. Optional tang rear (the top tang is drilled and tapped) and tunnel fore sights are available at extra cost. Please note that the Henry Krank catalogue and website show this rifle with a tunnel foresight, but this one came with the blade shown here.

This Uberti offering is a rather uncluttered, clean-lined rifle with no frills and operational simplicity is the order of the day, with the bonus that the simple action is also very strong.



The front sight is windage adjustable

**A bit of historic fun**

I'm not sure where the Model 1885 sits in the single-shot popularity list, but I would guess it is behind the Sharps and the Remington rolling block, and maybe even the Springfield Trapdoor edges it out. That seems a bit of a shame as this is a fine rifle and deserves more attention.

As stated above, it is very simple to operate. Dropping the lever, against a fairly strong spring, lowers the breech block to expose the breech and also puts the hammer on to half cock. Because of the block sliding the flat hammer face to push it back, a floating firing pin is fitted in the block rather than being integral with the hammer. Slip a cartridge into the breech, close the lever and pull the hammer to full cock, then you are ready to go.

After firing, drop the breech block, an extractor – rather than an ejector – on the left side of the breech draws the empty case far enough out for you to remove it by hand. On occasion, tilting the muzzle skyward and operating the lever smartly would throw the case clear to the rear.

The lever arrangement may seem a bit awkward, but in practice gives a comfortable hold with your second finger behind the trigger guard and the last two behind the spur. The plain flat trigger has a heavier pull than most will prefer but broke cleanly without a hint of creep.

The balance of the rifle is very good, despite that long barrel, and the gun can be comfortably held without a rest for extended periods, due to its relatively light weight. Plus, the mild .44/40 loads caused no undue recoil.

At 25 yards this rifle and cartridge combo will comfortably keep the shots inside a 3" circle for the average shooter, but this opens out considerably when you take it out to 100 yards, particularly if there is any kind of breeze blowing. Any further than that and a stiffer load will be needed to reduce your groups, but for me, the pleasure of these guns is the feeling of shooting a bit of history. Should you be using the rifle on a bench with rests, keeping it high enough for you to drop the lever without lifting the gun will allow you to get into a nice rhythm and you will be surprised how quickly you can get through your ammunition.

Cleaning a very easy, as you can get a rod down the barrel from the breech end and small brushes or cotton buds will do the bits around the breech area. If you are looking for a low-powered single-shot rifle, the 1885 Winchester makes a good alternative to the likes of the Remington rolling block.. **GM**

**TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION**

- Make:** Uberti 1885 Low Wall Special Sporting Rifle
- Type:** Single-Shot
- Calibre:** .44 WCF (.44/40)
- Barrel Length:** 30"
- Overall Length:** 46"
- Weight:** 6½ lbs
- Length of Pull:** 13"
- Price:** £1022.00 (At time of writing)
- Contact:** Henry Krank – [www.henrykrank.com](http://www.henrykrank.com)