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- [Shotgun Markings Guide 1865-1940](#)
- [Stevens Arms Company History by Joe Vorisek](#)
- [List of Peoples Names and Where They Worked in the US Firearms Industry \(pre 1940\)](#)
- [O.F. Mossberg & Sons, A Short Illustrated History](#)
- [A Basic Reference Guide to Old Firearms \(Serial Nos. etc.\)](#)
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CORNELL PUBS TRIVIA

March 2012

Browning Firearms

1. John Browning's father, Jonathan, was born in Tennessee and headed West. Where did he settle and whom did he follow?
2. Believing that "a man does best that for which he is suited," how did John and Matthew Browning operate the gunshop after they inherited it from their father?
3. A rival arms manufacturer said "I don't know what you received for that [what?], but I would have given half my factory for it." What was it?
4. John Browning was hunting in the marshes near the Great Salk Lake in 1892 when he noticed the movement of nearby rushes after he discharged his gun. What did this observation lead to?
5. How many rounds per second did the Browning Peacemaker fire?
6. The Browning automatic pistol was one of the first practical automatic pistols. It was patented in 1897 and began manufacture in 1900. How many of these were made over the next twelve years?
7. Browning brought out the .45 caliber military pistol in 1905, and it underwent military tests. At the time, it had the distinction of being the only small arm to complete the tests with a perfect record. How many rounds did a single pistol fire without a malfunction?
8. The US Military tested automatic rifles in 1917, on the eve of war in Europe, searching for better weapons. Browning brought two new guns and within a year sold 48,000 of them. The Brownings were brilliant gunmakers and shrewd businessmen, but did they also drive a hard bargain with the US Military?

The answer to every question is from “A History of Browning Guns From 1831,” published by Browning Arms Co. of St. Louis, MO. A reprint of this book/brochure is available on our website.

1. John Browning’s father, Jonathan, was born in Tennessee and headed West. Where did he settle and whom did he follow?

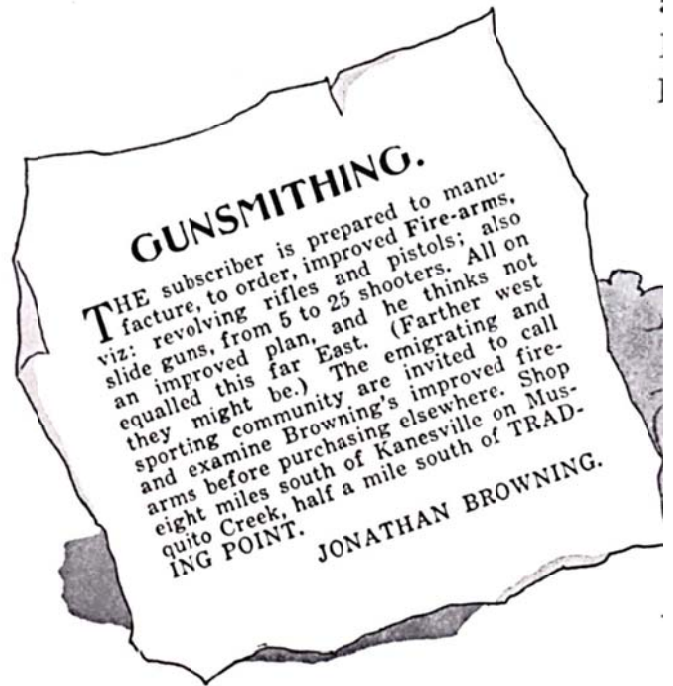
Utah, Brigham Young. Jonathan Browning moved from Tennessee to Kentucky, where he learned the art of gun making . From there, he moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, site of the “Mormon War in Illinois” after the death of Joseph Smith.

He then moved to Kaneshville, IA, where the advertisement adjacent was published.

In Iowa, Jonathan Browning made two repeating rifles, one of which had a five shot “slide” repeater.

In 1851 Browning loaded up his family and led a wagon train to Utah, where he set up a shop in Ogden.

Browning was one of the earliest Mormons, as was his son John (born in 1855).



2. Believing that “a man does best that for which he is suited,” how did John and Matthew Browning operate the gunshop?

Focused on different aspects.

John Browning had already shown aptitude for designing rifles, and was given responsibility for creating new ideas. In contrast, his brother Matthew was charged with the commercial efforts of the shop.

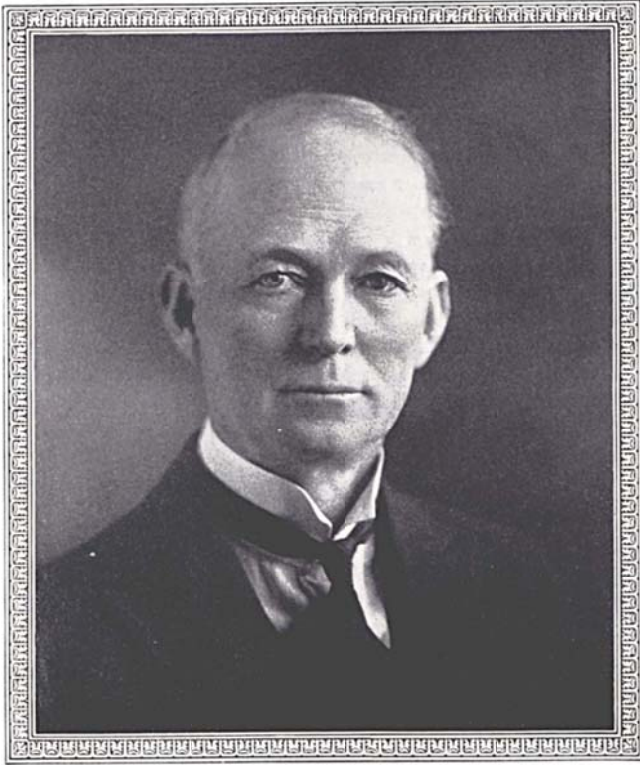
This relationship became so successful over time that John became a legendary gun designer and Matthew became one of the leading financiers of the American West.

In their first manufacturing venture, the brothers made 600 rifles by hand. They intentionally sold none of them despite interested buyers, and instead set up a

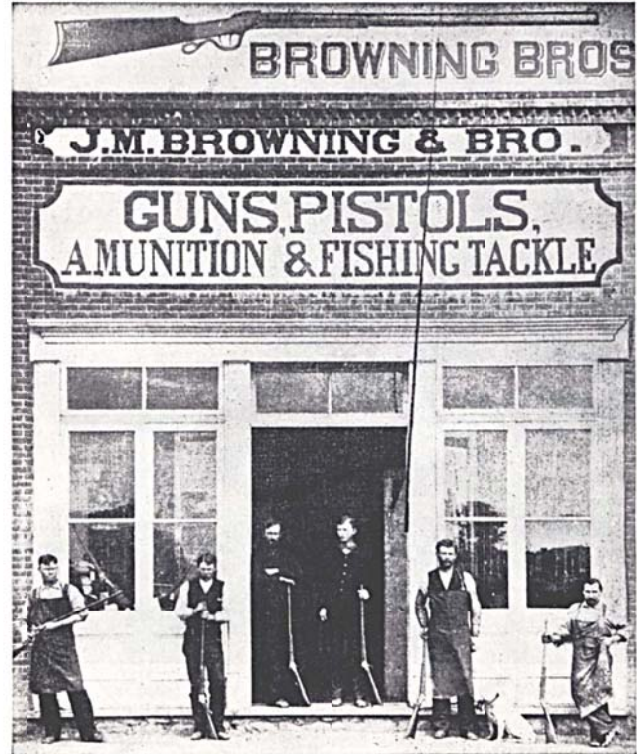
storefront when they had finished building the rifles.

A Winchester representative then purchased the entire inventory, and the patent to manufacture them.

With the proceeds, the Brownings purchased a two-story storefront several blocks away and the meteoric rise of the Brownings was underway.



MATTHEW SANDEFUR BROWNING
1859 - 1923



3. A rival arms manufacturer said “I don’t know what you received for that [what?], but I would have given half my factory for it.” What was it?

Patent on his Repeater. John Browning received a patent in 1884 for the basic design of the lever action repeating rifle, which soon monopolized the market for repeating rifles. It became known as the '86 Model Winchester.

From the brochure: “The cartridges are carried in a tubular magazine under the

barrel; a lever operates the mechanism, opens the breech, cocks the gun, ejects the empty cartridge, picks up and inserts the new cartridge into the chamber, closes the breech and securely locks it, and in less than a second’s time, the trigger finger is in position for the next shot.”



4. John Browning was hunting in the marshes near the Great Salk Lake in 1892 when he noticed the movement of nearby rushes after he discharged his gun. What did this observation lead to?

Gas-operated Automatic Firearms.

It occurred to Browning that if the movement of the rushes was caused by powder gasses being ejected from the muzzle, then he could use that force to automatically load a gun.

To test his theory, Browning drilled a small hole in a five pound piece of iron and placed it close to the muzzle of a rifle. He fired, allowing the bullet to pass through the hole, and the iron moved – implying there

was adequate gas pressure to pursue an automatic weapon.

In an early test, Browning attached a concave cap with hole just before the muzzle, which was attached to a rod that attached to the action. Later experiments changed the setup, and led to the only gas-operated machine gun used in the Spanish American War. Later, this became known as the Colt Machine Gun (a Browning product).



Experimental model of first Browning gas-operated automatic firearm.

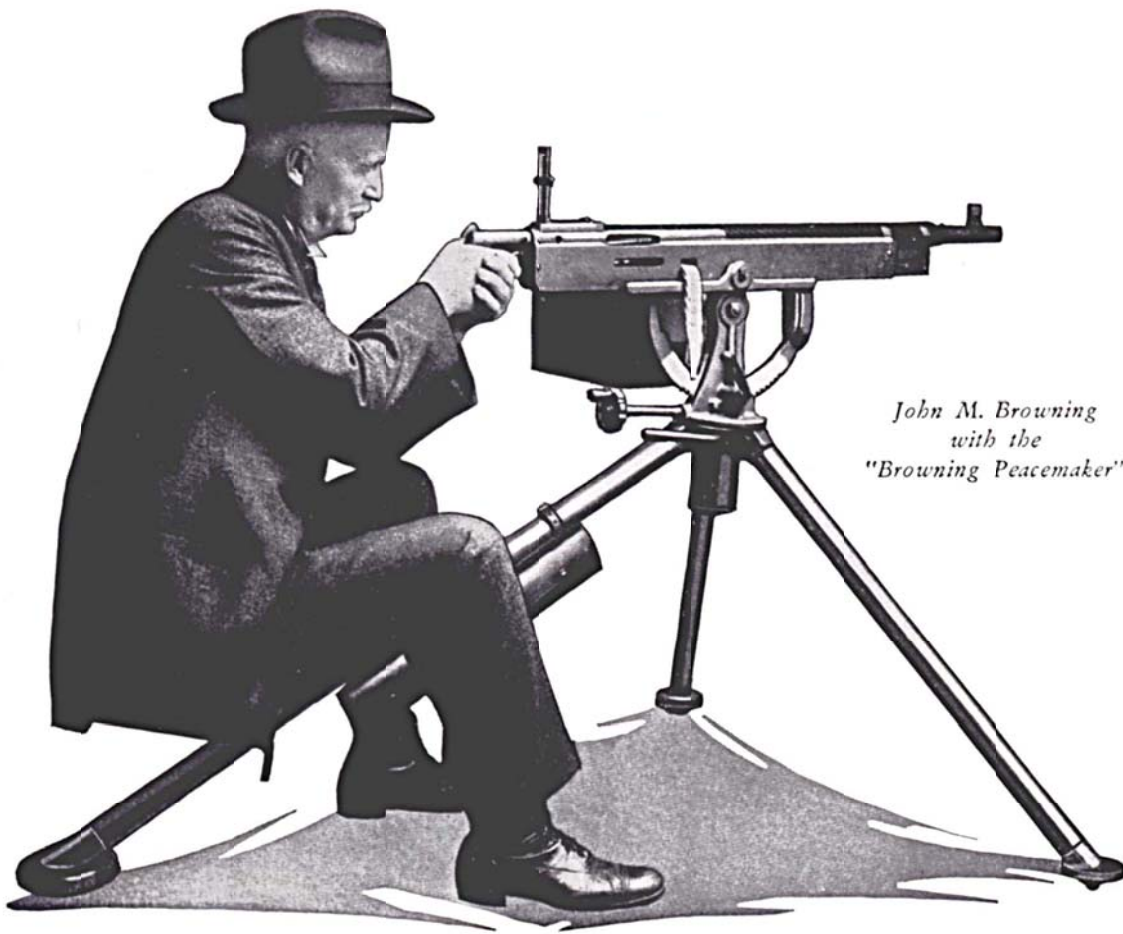


Second experimental gun with a hole underneath the barrel through which the gas passes to operate the mechanism through a piston.

5. How many rounds per second did the Browning Peacemaker fire?

Ten. Before the Peacemaker, machine guns were generally hand-cranked. The gas-operated Peacemaker was a marvel

at the time, and played a part in saving the Foreign Legations in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion.



*John M. Browning
with the
"Browning Peacemaker"*

6. The Browning automatic pistol was one of the first practical automatic pistols. It was patented in 1897 and began manufacture in 1900. How many of these were made over the next twelve years?

One million.

Browning connected with Fabrique Nationale D'Arms de Guerre of Liege, Belgium to manufacture his pistol. It was introduced in 7.65mm in 1902 and 250,000 were manufactured in the first six years.

In 1906, the company began production of the .25 and .38 caliber models.

By July, 1912, one million of these pistols had been made *without a change of any kind*. On completion of the one millionth pistol, King Albert of Belgium conferred upon John Browning the title of "Chevalier de l'Order de Leopold." Just a

few years earlier, the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia conferred on Browning its John Scott Legacy medal.



*Browning
Automatic Pistol
9 m/m short (.380 Caliber)
1928 Military Model*



*Front
View*

Medal awarded by the City of Philadelphia, Trustee under the will of John Scott of Edinburgh, Scotland.



Medal presented to John M. Browning when King Albert of Belgium conferred upon him the title of Cbevalier de l'Order de Leopold.

7. Browning brought out the .45 caliber military pistol in 1905, and it underwent military tests. At the time, it had the distinction of being the only small arm to complete the tests with a perfect record. How many rounds did a single pistol fire without a malfunction?

Six thousand.

During the test, all sorts of freak loads were used, some with deficient charges and some with excessive charges. The gun was

dropped in acid, and covered in sand and dust. Over a half million of these handguns were with American troops in 1918.

8. The US Military tested automatic rifles in 1917, on the eve of war in Europe, searching for better weapons. Browning brought two new guns, and within a year sold 48,000 of them. The Brownings were brilliant gunmakers and shrewd business men, but did they also drive a hard bargain with the US Military?

No, they accepted a low-ball offer for the use of their patents for light and heavy machine guns during WWI.

Browning brought the Browning Heavy Water-cooled Machine Gun and his Browning Machine Rifle, later known as the

Light Browning, then the Browning Automatic Rifle or BAR.

In tests, one of the guns fired 20,000 rounds without a malfunction. The brochure states that Browning took that gun home and fired nearly 20,000 additional rounds without a malfunction.

Another gun was fired for 48 minutes and 12 seconds continuously.

The company states that John Browning offered the Government's first offer for retroactive payment for its use of patents related to the two guns at a 90% discount to the going rate, and the Secretary of War wrote the note below.

WAR DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON

November 13, 1917.

My dear Mr. Browning:

I have learned from Major Little of the patriotic and generous attitude taken by you in the negotiations for the use of your patents of light and heavy machine guns in this emergency, and beg leave to express my appreciation of it.

You have performed, as you must realize, a very distinct service to the country in these inventions, and contributed to the strength and effectiveness of our armies. You have added to that service by the attitude you have taken in the financial arrangements necessary to make your inventions available to the Government.

Cordially yours,

(Signed) NEWTON D. BAKER,
Secretary of War.

Conclusion

For our readers who would like to learn more about the history of Browning, we invited you to see the catalogs we offer and the brochure used for the material for this Q&A, “A History of Browning Guns from 1831,” published in 1942.

Though we have not read it, we see that “The History of Browning Firearms:

Fortifications Around the World” by David Miller gets some good (and some not-so-good) reviews on Amazon.

If I’ve gotten something wrong, then please let me know and, if possible, cite your source. My goal is to help preserve history and I strive to get it right!

editor@cornellpubs.com