THE GUNS BEHIND THE LEGENDS

ARSENALS

Inside the Gun Collections of 36 American Legends



EVERY GUN LABELED · EVERY PRICE DATED

WITH ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS

FAMOUS ARSENALS

THE GUNS BEHIND THE LEGENDS, CHECKED AGAINST THE RECORD

Arsenals

Inside the Gun Collections of 36 American Legends

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THE FOUR LABELS

Every gun in this book carries one label: Owned, Gifted, or Screen-used. A fourth tag, Disputed, marks any attribution the record does not settle. The next pages explain them.

PRICES

Every auction price carries the house, the month and the year, and says whether it includes the buyer's premium. Prices age.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Every photograph is credited under the picture with its source and its date. The photographs remain the property of their owners. They are shown in one monochrome tone throughout the book.

SAFETY

This is a history book, not a manual. Handle every firearm as if it were loaded, and follow the law where you live.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The Guns Behind the Legends

Why this book checks every gun against the record

EVERY MAN WHO GREW up on Westerns has a picture in his head. The Duke reaching for his Colt. The Rifleman working the lever faster than the eye can follow. A general with ivory grips on his hip. A president with a shotgun over his shoulder on a cold morning in quail country.

Most of those pictures are true. Some of them are not quite true. And a few of them are not true at all.

That is the reason for this book. Over the last twenty years the guns of famous Americans have come out of closets, estates and studio vaults and gone across the auction block, and the prices have climbed past anything a collector would have guessed when these men were alive. Every sale brings a story with it. Some of those stories are backed by factory letters, estate papers and museum records. Others are backed by nothing more than a confident catalog description and a good photograph.

WHY THESE MEN OWNED GUNS

For most of the men in this book, a gun was not a costume. It was a tool of the job, a prize, a gift between friends, or the thing they did on a Saturday morning.

Some carried guns for work. Pat Garrett was a sheriff, and the Colt he used to kill Billy the Kid on July 14, 1881, had been taken from one of the Kid's own gang at Stinking Springs. Theodore Roosevelt's Smith & Wesson revolver was shipped from the factory to "Colonel Roosevelt" on May 12, 1898, the day he left to join the Rough Riders in San Antonio.

Some won their fame with a gun in their hands and were given guns because of it. Annie Oakley made her name as an exhibition shooter, and on March 25, 1903, the Marlin company presented her with a gold-plated, engraved Model 1897 rifle. A silver shield on the stock still says so.

Some were collectors and hunters who spent their own money. Gary Cooper owned at least two rifles custom-built for him by Griffin & Howe, and when he died his estate sent 26 guns to a Beverly Hills dealer on a typed inventory, each one listed by serial number. Steve McQueen's estate sale in 2006 offered eighteen firearms, among them three Parker shotguns, and the catalog's notes on refinishing and worn parts show they were used.

And some gave guns away. Elvis Presley bought engraved revolvers and handed them to friends, policemen and a sheriff who once did him a favor. In December 1970 he brought a

commemorative Colt .45 to the White House as a present for President Nixon.

Then there are the outlaws. Clyde Barrow's .45 was, by the account of Frank Hamer's son, "believed to have been stolen from the federal arsenal in Beaumont, Texas." Not every gun in this book was come by honestly. The book tells you which.

WHY MOST FAMOUS GUNS TURN OUT TO BE PROPS

Here is the hard part. The guns you remember best, the ones on the screen, were usually not the star's at all.

For decades the studios mostly rented their guns rather than buying them. The biggest supplier was Stembridge Gun Rentals, founded after the First World War on the Paramount lot, which at its peak held around 10,000 guns. A Stembridge gun went out on a picture, came back to the racks, was cleaned and went out again on the next one, sometimes in another star's hands. When the company's movie guns were sold in Anaheim, California, in June 2007, a Winchester carbine the catalog called "one of two used by John Wayne" in *Stagecoach* (1939) brought $115,000 at the hammer. It had never belonged to him.

The paper trail shows the same thing again and again. Steve McQueen's cut-down Winchester "Mare's Leg" from *Wanted: Dead or Alive* is listed on a Stembridge invoice of October 1958: "#852678 issued to Steve McQueen 10/10/58." Issued, not sold. The *True Grit* carbine that sold for $88,500 in January 2021 still carried its Stembridge rental number, S1015. Chuck Connors's famous rifle from *The Rifleman* sold in December 2025 with copies of the Stembridge invoices for its cleaning and upkeep.

James Nottage, a curator at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles, put it plainly in 1997: "the truth is that most of the stars did not own or possess the guns they used on film. The bulk of firearms were rented from specialty companies." He added a warning collectors still need. Just because a gun was in a star's own collection "does not mean that it was used on film." It takes more evidence: stills, posters, papers from the people who made the picture.

That leaves two easy mistakes, and both cost money. The first is to believe a movie gun was the star's own. The second is to believe a star's own gun was in the movies. A dealer's tag can do either in one line. Prop guns also came in pairs and spares. There is more than one Rifleman rifle, more than one *Stagecoach* carbine, and more than one Colt that claims to be "the" John Wayne Colt.

HOW THIS BOOK SEPARATES THE TWO

Every gun in this book gets one label, and the label comes from the paper, not from the legend.

A gun is Owned when a record ties it to the man: a factory letter, an estate inventory, a museum accession, or an auction lot whose provenance holds up. It is Gifted when an inscription or presentation papers survive. It is Screen-used when a film, a still or a rental invoice puts it on camera, and the text says plainly whether it ever went home with him. And it is Disputed when the record does not settle it.

Disputes are printed, not smoothed over. When Bonnie Parker's .38 and Clyde Barrow's .45 sold in 2012, the Associated Press reported $504,000 for the pair. The auction house's own lot pages today show $514,500, including the buyer's premium. Nobody has explained the gap, so the book gives you both figures. When a museum's own dates do not fit the story told about a gun, as with an Annie Oakley rifle the museum dates to 1905, four years after she left Buffalo Bill's show, the book says so.

Where the paper is strong, it is very strong. Pat Garrett's Colt carries a chain of custody from the night at Fort Sumner to a 2021 sale, including a notarized copy of a 1906 letter signed by Garrett himself. That paper is why it sold for $6,030,313, a world auction record for any firearm.

WHAT THIS BOOK DOES

It takes 36 American legends, from the screen, the White House, the battlefield and the frontier, and it asks the same plain questions about every gun in their lives.

Did he own it, or did it belong to the studio? Was it a gift, and who gave it? Where is it now? What did it sell for, at which house, in which month and year? And is there anything in the record that says otherwise?

When the record is clear, you get the answer. When it is not, you get both sides, printed side by side, and you can make up your own mind. Nothing is averaged out and nothing is smoothed over to make a better story.

At the back of the book are the tools to do the same with your own guns: a guide to Hollywood guns that turned out to be props, and a guide to tracing your own gun's history through factory letters and serial numbers.

HOW EACH CHAPTER WORKS

Every full chapter follows the same plan, so you can lay one arsenal beside another.

It opens on a moment: a day, a place, a gun. Then it introduces the man, and then The Arsenal File: one page listing every gun in his life that the record can speak to, with its label, where it appeared and where it is now. By the Numbers gives the key figures at a glance.

The Collection walks through the guns one by one, each with its label and the evidence behind it. Where They Are Now tells you which ones you can still go and see. A Myth vs. Fact box settles the story everyone repeats. And Do You Own One? turns to your own gun safe: the models from his collection that still turn up at gun shows and estate sales, what to look for, and what they bring.

Every chapter ends with its sources, so you can check the work yourself.

A WORD ON PRICES

Auction prices make headlines, and they also go out of date. So every price in this book carries the auction house, the month and the year, and says whether the buyer's premium is included. A price tells you what one buyer paid on one day. It is not a promise about tomorrow.

A WORD ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Every photograph is credited under the picture with its source and its date, and all of them are printed in one warm monochrome tone, so the book reads as one piece from cover to cover. Where the best picture of a gun is an auction house's own photograph, the credit says so.

TURN THE PAGE

The next page explains the four labels you will see under every gun. After that, we start where any book about American guns should start: with John Wayne, and the question of which Colt was really his.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Owned, Gifted or Screen-used

Most famous guns turn out to belong to a studio. So every gun in this book carries a colored tag under its heading: a claim about where the gun came from, checked against the record.

Owned

LABEL · OWNED

He bought it or kept it, and the paper trail says so: a factory letter, an estate inventory, a museum accession, or an auction lot with provenance.

Gifted

LABEL · GIFTED

Someone presented it to him, or he presented it to someone else. The inscription or the presentation papers survive.

Screen-Used

LABEL · SCREEN-USED

It appears in a film or a show. It may have been his, or it may have gone back to the rental house when the cameras stopped. The text says which.

Disputed

LABEL · DISPUTED

An auction house or a family says it was his, and the record does not settle it. You get both sides, printed, not averaged.



PART ONE

The Duke and the Cowboys

The Western stars, on screen and off

01 John Wayne: The Duke's Real Sixgun



01

ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS / 7 OCTOBER 2021

John Wayne

The Duke's Real Sixgun

The catalog said $20,000 to $40,000. The bidding stopped at $517,500, for the one Colt with a paper trail to the Duke's own hand.

On Thursday, October 7, 2021, in Rock Island, Illinois, lot 2465 came up for bidding. The catalog called it "John Wayne's Colt Single Action Army Revolver," and the auction house had put a modest figure on it: $20,000 to $40,000. More than 27,000 people had looked at the lot page before the sale.

The gun itself had a plain start. Colt's factory records show it left Hartford on August 7, 1909, a blued .45 with a 5½-inch barrel, shipped to a "John E. Dougty," address unknown. Somewhere in the next half century it was cut down and rebuilt: a 4¾-inch barrel and cylinder in .44 WCF, new grip straps, and an oversized trigger guard, because, the catalog said, the hand that carried it did not fit a standard one.

When the hammer fell, the bid stood at $450,000, more than eleven times the top estimate. With the buyer's premium, the price was $517,500.



The Colt Single Action Army, serial 309795, as Rock Island Auction photographed it for the October 2021 sale.
ROCK ISLAND AUCTION COMPANY · OCTOBER 2021

That number is the reason this chapter exists. It is also a warning. John Wayne carried a gun through decades of Westerns, but very few of those guns were ever his. Hollywood rented its firearms, and when a picture wrapped, the guns went back on the rack. So the question a collector asks about any "John Wayne gun" is the question this book asks about every gun in it: what does the record actually say?

THE SHORT ANSWER · ROCK ISLAND AUCTION, OCTOBER 2021

Wayne's own customized Colt Single Action Army and gun belt, the rig he wore on the cover of Life in January 1972, sold for $517,500 including the buyer's premium. Its paper trail runs through a 1976 appraisal of his collection and a notarized statement from the man he gave it to.

THE MAN

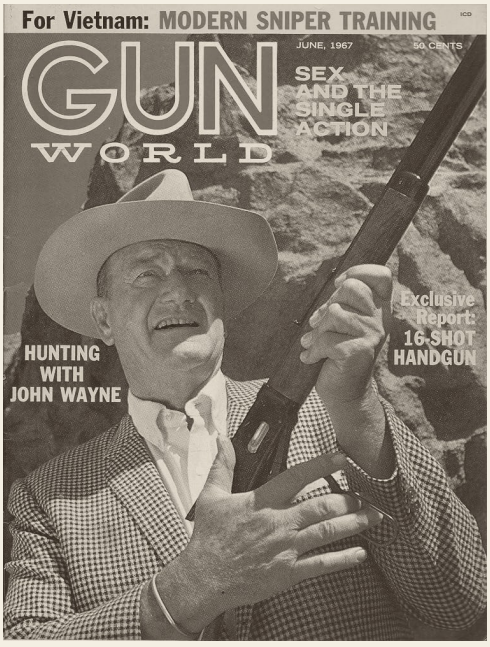
He was born Marion Morrison in Winterset, Iowa, in 1907, and became John Wayne on a studio lot. For a decade he worked through low-budget Westerns. His first film handgun, in *The Big Trail* in 1930, was a Remington 1861 percussion revolver. In nearly every Western handgun role after that, he carried a Colt Single Action Army.

The break came in 1939 with John Ford's *Stagecoach*. Wayne's Ringo Kid makes his entrance in Monument Valley spinning a cut-down Winchester carbine. He does not even wear a six-gun in the picture. From then on the big-loop lever-action and the single-action Colt were part of the man as much as the walk and the voice.



Wayne's Colt and holster, photographed on his hip in 1966.
JOHN R. HAMILTON · 1966

Off the screen, he collected. Just before his death in 1979 he gave more than two hundred items to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. In the museum's own words, the gift included "sixty-four firearms, including the rifle he used in Stagecoach." That gift is the largest documented body of guns that were truly his.



Gun World put Wayne on its June 1967 cover under the line "Hunting with John Wayne."
GUN WORLD MAGAZINE · JUNE 1967

One caution: no auction or museum record found for this book documents a shotgun or hunting rifle Wayne personally owned. His traceable guns are Westerns.

THE ARSENAL FILE

John Wayne, 1907–1979

Every gun the record can speak to, with its label, where it appeared and where it is now.

GUN	LABEL	WHERE IT APPEARS	WHERE IT IS NOW
Colt SAA #309795, .44 WCF, Catalin grips, with his belt rig	OWNED	*The Cowboys*, *True Grit*, *Rooster Cogburn*; the 1972 *Life* cover	Private buyer, Rock Island Auction, Oct 2021
The "trademark" ivory-look .45 Colt, c.1893	DISPUTED	His later Westerns	Said to be at the National Cowboy Museum
His own Stagecoach rifle	OWNED	*Stagecoach* (1939)	National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum
Stembridge Stagecoach carbine #795913, .32 WCF, cut to 15½"	SCREEN-USED	*Stagecoach* (1939)	Sold June 2007; very likely the NRA Museum's
Winchester 1892 carbine, Stembridge S1015	SCREEN-USED	*True Grit*, *Rooster Cogburn*	Private buyer, Brian Lebel's, Jan 2021
Colt SAA #203786, Stembridge double	SCREEN-USED	*True Grit*	Sold June 2007
Great Western Arms pair, engraved	GIFTED	*The Shootist* (1976)	Said to be at the National Cowboy Museum
Winchester 1892 marked BATJAC	SCREEN-USED	*Hondo*, *McLintock!*, *Big Jake*	NRA National Firearms Museum (loan)
Pair of Winchester Model 94 Centennial '66	OWNED	Off screen	Private buyer, Rock Island Auction, Dec 2024
B-Western Colt, .38-40, shipped 1928	GIFTED	His 1930s Westerns	Sold, Little John's, Nov 2003
Great Western Arms .357 Atomic	DISPUTED	Off screen	Private buyer, Rock Island Auction, Oct 2025
Pair of S&W .38/44, "JW" grips	DISPUTED	Off screen	Offered, Milestone Auctions, Jan 2018
Studio guns from The Big Trail, Rio Lobo, Liberty Valance, Big Jake	SCREEN-USED	Those films	NRA museum; Valance Colt sold June 2007

BY THE NUMBERS

$517,500
his Colt SAA with premium, Rock Island Auction, Oct 2021

64
firearms he gave to the National Cowboy Museum, 1979

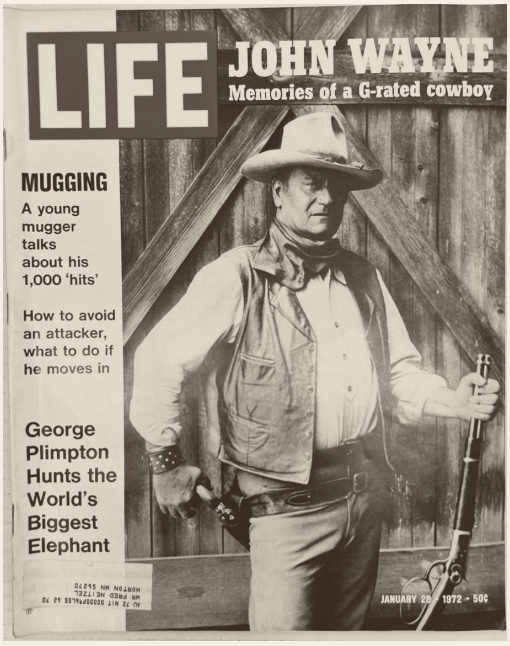
11×
the hammer price over the top estimate, 2021

THE COLLECTION

The Colt from the Life cover

LABEL · OWNED

This is the gun the chapter is built around. On January 28, 1972, *Life* magazine put Wayne on its cover, in costume for *The Cowboys*, under the line "Memories of a G-rated cowboy." On his hip is this Colt, in this belt.



Life magazine, January 28, 1972: Wayne in costume for *The Cowboys*, wearing the rig that sold in 2021.
LIFE MAGAZINE · JANUARY 28, 1972

The rig was made for him in the 1950s, according to the auction catalog, "because his fingers did not fit in a standard SAA trigger guard." The grips were not ivory. They were Catalin, an early plastic that yellows with age, and they were molded with finger grooves. Rock Island's research says most of his duplicate film revolvers were modeled on this one gun. The rig was worn in many pictures, "the last being Rooster Cogburn" in 1975.



Wayne on the set of *The Cowboys*, 1972, the Colt on his hip and a carbine in his hand.
BOB WILLOUGHBY · 1972

The gun's later life is just as well documented. In 1978 Wayne gave the Colt and its belt to Gary Hess, an engineer at his company, DECO, as thanks for helping to save the business. Hess later set this down in a notarized statement, and two witnesses signed statements of their own. A 1976 appraisal of Wayne's gun collection lists the revolver by its serial number, 309795. The belt held .44 WCF rounds and one .45-70 trapdoor cartridge, which the catalog says Wayne carried as a tribute to the soldiers of the Indian Wars. Before the sale the rig was displayed at the John Wayne Theater at Knott's Berry Farm, and it was the model for the bronze statue of Wayne at John Wayne Airport in Orange County.

The record: owned, carried on screen, and tied to him by an appraisal, a notarized gift and a magazine cover. One honest caveat: even Rock Island's own lot text uses the word "purportedly." The paperwork is strong, but part of it rests on statements made years later.

The other "favorite" Colt

LABEL · DISPUTED

Here the record splits in two. In 2006 Phil Spangenberger, the firearms editor of *True West*, wrote that Wayne's trademark revolver was a different Colt: a 4¾-inch .45 made around 1893, which came from a studio prop department and first appeared in his films in the late 1960s. Wayne, he wrote, took the gun home and tea-dyed the grips himself, and his son Michael said the backstrap carried an amateur engraving, "Joe E. Turminello." According to Spangenberger, Wayne left this gun to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

Rock Island's 2021 catalog tells it the other way: the .44 he gave to Gary Hess was the favored gun, and the others were built to look like it.

Both accounts come from people close to the guns. Neither settles it. The museum's online collection does list a "Colt Model 1873 Single Action Army," object 1979.10.211, credited "Gift of the John Wayne Family." But the record gives no caliber, barrel or grips, so it cannot say which Colt it is. Until the museum publishes more, the honest label is Disputed.

The Stagecoach carbines

LABEL · SCREEN-USED

The famous twirl in *Stagecoach* needed a short gun. On June 5, 2007, at the Stembridge Armory sale run by Little John's Auction Service in Anaheim, lot 100 was a Winchester 1892 saddle-ring carbine in .32 WCF, serial 795913, its barrel cut to 15½ inches. The catalog called it "one of two used by John Wayne in the original 1939 version of 'Stagecoach.'" With a barrel under 16 inches it fell under the National Firearms Act, and the buyer needed federal approval to take it home. It sold for $115,000 before the 12 percent buyer's premium.

The NRA National Firearms Museum displays a *Stagecoach* Model 1892 in .32-20, cut to 15 inches "so John Wayne could spin the gun much like he would a pistol," and records that it came to the museum in 2007. It is almost certainly the same carbine, though no single document says so, and the museum gives 15 inches where the auction catalog gave 15½.

Stembridge Gun Rentals was the armory behind the studios. It was founded after the First World War on the Paramount lot and at its peak held around 10,000 guns. A Stembridge gun was a working prop, rented by the picture, which is why the label here is Screen-used and not Owned.

The rifle he kept

LABEL · OWNED

The second *Stagecoach* rifle is a different matter. The rifle Wayne himself kept from the picture went to Oklahoma City with the rest of his 1979 gift, and the museum says so in its own words.

The True Grit carbine

LABEL · SCREEN-USED

Rooster Cogburn's big-loop Winchester is the gun most people picture when they hear Wayne's name. One of the True Grit carbines sold on January 23, 2021, at Brian Lebel's Old West Auction in Mesa, Arizona, as lot 317, for $88,500. The published result does not say whether that figure includes the buyer's premium.



The Stembridge carbine, rental number S1015, sold in January 2021 (top), and Wayne carrying a big-loop carbine in *True Grit* (bottom).
ANTIQUES AND THE ARTS WEEKLY · FEBRUARY 2021

It was not Wayne's own gun. It was a Stembridge rental, marked S1015, in .44-40, with the enlarged loop and shortened barrel that let him spin and cock it one-handed on horseback. When Universal made the sequel, *Rooster Cogburn*, in 1975, the studio asked Stembridge to gather the same guns again, and two Stembridge invoices from that picture came with the carbine. So did a signed statement on its history from Christopher Hearn, the collector who has lent a True Grit Winchester to the NRA National Firearms Museum.

"The thing that he did with his that made it very unique," the NRA museum's director, Jim Supica, said in 2011, "was he made an extra large loop on that lever." The loop was not new in 1969. It is already on the *Stagecoach* carbine of 1939.

The record: a genuine screen gun with studio paperwork, used in two of his pictures. It belonged to the armory, not the actor.

The True Grit Colt that was a double

LABEL · SCREEN-USED

Studios kept spares, and Wayne's Colt had them. At the same 2007 Stembridge sale, lot 88 was a Colt Single Action Army, serial 203786, converted to fire blanks, its frame stamped "S," "RKO" and "S371," with old ivory grips Stembridge added. The catalog said Wayne carried it in *True Grit*. It brought $81,000 before premium: a remarkable price for what was, in the end, a stand-in for the gun on his hip.

The Shootist pair

LABEL · GIFTED

For his last film, *The Shootist* (1976), Wayne carried a pair of engraved single-action revolvers made by Great Western Arms of California and engraved by Carl E. Kourts of Long Beach. According to *True West*, the company had given the pair to Wayne many years before, and he left them, too, to the National Cowboy Museum. The gun thrown across the saloon in the picture was, Spangenberger noted, "a cheap double."

The production company's carbine

LABEL · SCREEN-USED

Wayne also made Westerns. The NRA museum has shown, on loan, a big-loop .44-40 Winchester 1892 carbine marked BATJAC, his production company, used in *Hondo* (1953), *McLintock!* (1963) and *Big Jake* (1971). It belonged to the company, not to him.

The guns from his own gun room

LABEL · OWNED

Away from the cameras the record is thinner, but it exists. At Rock Island Auction on December 8, 2024, a cased pair of Winchester Model 94 Centennial '66 commemoratives, a .30-30 rifle and carbine, sold for $17,625 with the premium, against an estimate of $3,000 to $5,000. The case carries a plaque reading "from John Wayne's personal collection," and the lot came with a 1975 appraisal of his collection, made by The Grant Boys of Costa Mesa, which lists both rifles by serial number. (Whether this is the same appraisal the 2021 Colt cites, dated 1976, or a second document, is not settled.)

The B-Western Colt

LABEL · GIFTED

The six-gun of his low-budget years was a 5½-inch .38-40 Colt, shipped in 1928, with ivory grips. Michael Wayne told *True West* the cinematographer Archie Stout gave it to his father, who passed it on to him. After Michael's death it sold at Little John's in November 2003 for a bid of $20,000. *True West* is the only source found.

Two claims without papers

LABEL · DISPUTED

At Rock Island on October 3, 2025, an early Great Western Arms revolver in .357 Atomic, estimated at $2,500 to $4,000, brought a $16,000 hammer. Its only link to Wayne was the consignor's typed note: Wayne gave it to the stuntman Johnny Thunder, and was "believed" to have owned the first three Great Westerns. It fits the *Shootist* story, but it is the seller's word.

In January 2018 Milestone Auctions of Ohio offered a pair of S&W .38/44 Heavy Duty revolvers with ruby-set "JW" grips. No documents were described; no result was found.

The rest of the studio rack

LABEL · SCREEN-USED

Museum labels account for more guns in his hands, all studio or prop-house property.

The Big Trail (1930). The Remington 1861 of his first starring role, shown with a *Cahill U.S. Marshal* double shotgun and a *McQ* Browning Hi-Power in an NRA museum exhibit at John Wayne: An American Experience, Fort Worth, 2024 to 2026.

Rio Lobo (1970). A big-loop Winchester 1892 rented, per Stembridge paperwork, to him or BATJAC for *Rio Lobo* and *The Shootist*; and a prop-house copy of his Colt with "yellow catalin finger groove grip panels."

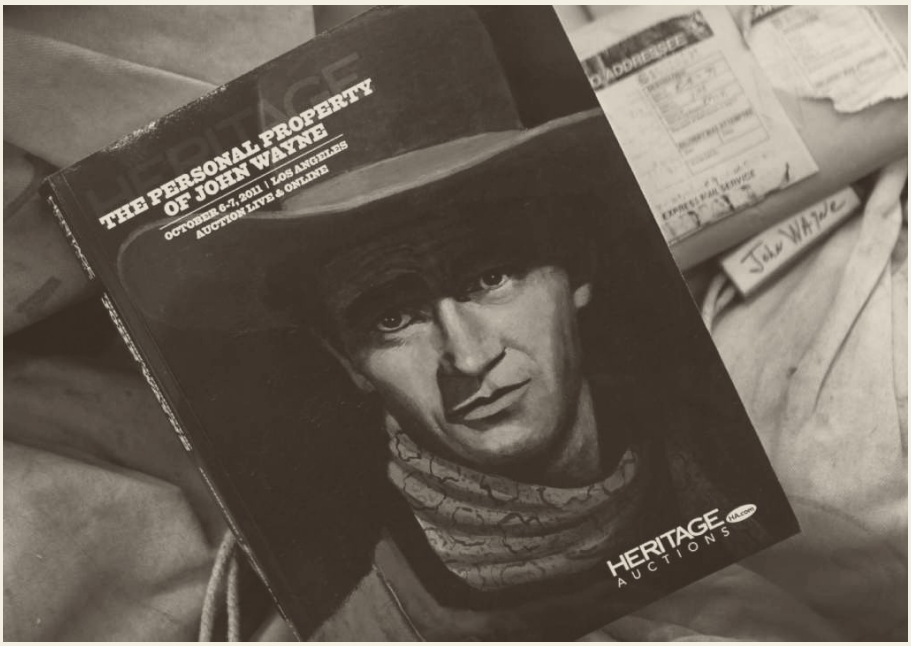
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962). Stembridge Colt #174269, its hammer spur widened for fanning, sold at Little John's in June 2007 for $26,000 before premium.

Big Jake (1971). A Remington .41 double derringer that Wayne hands to "Little Jake," played by his son John Ethan Wayne.

WHERE THEY ARE NOW

The 2021 Colt and the True Grit carbine went to private buyers. The 64 firearms he gave away in 1979, the largest group of his own guns, are in Oklahoma City. The NRA National Firearms Museum holds the Stembridge *Stagecoach* carbine and has shown the BATJAC carbine on loan.

His family kept the rest of his belongings until October 6 and 7, 2011, when Heritage Auctions sold "The Personal Property of John Wayne" in Los Angeles: more than 700 lots, which brought $5,383,209. It held no guns. The only shooting item was a holster and gun belt from *El Dorado*, lot 44010, estimated at $4,000 to $6,000, which sold for $77,675 including the 19.5 percent premium.



The catalog for Heritage Auctions' sale of Wayne's personal property, October 2011.
HERITAGE AUCTIONS / HOUSTON CHRONICLE · OCTOBER 2011

SEE IT YOURSELF

His 1979 gift is at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 Northeast 63rd Street, Oklahoma City, whose Western Performers gallery shows him "as both performer and collector." Which of the 64 guns are on view is not published: call ahead (405-478-2250) and ask for the *Stagecoach* rifle.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: Wayne's famous Colt had ivory grips.

FACT: They were Catalin, an early plastic that yellows to the color of old ivory on film, molded with finger grooves. The same grips were copied onto his duplicate revolvers. Only the Stembridge double sold in 2007 wore real ivory, and Stembridge, not Wayne, put it there.

DO YOU OWN ONE?

You do not need $517,500 to own a John Wayne gun. In the years after his death in 1979, Colt and Winchester both honored him, and those guns turn up at gun shows and estate sales. Keep the box, the case and the papers: every strong result below came with them.

MODEL	HOW TO SPOT IT	DATED RESULT
Colt John Wayne Commemorative SAA, Standard (1982, 3,100 made)	.45 Colt, 4¾", blued with gold etching and his portrait, wooden case	$2,000 hammer, Rock Island, Feb 2022; $1,900 hammer, Sept 2012
Colt John Wayne Deluxe (1982)	Silver-plated, ebony grips. 500 were advertised; Rock Island believes about 90 were sold	$8,500 hammer, Rock Island, Dec 2025
Colt John Wayne Presentation (1982, 100 planned)	Royal Blue and gold, his signature on the backstrap	$16,100 with premium, Rock Island, Feb 2022
Winchester Model 94 John Wayne Commemorative (1981)	.32-40, 18½" barrel, engraved gray receiver, his signature on the tang; 49,000 for the U.S., 1,000 for Canada	$3,000 hammer with box and scabbard, Rock Island, Dec 2025; Canadian issue $1,600, Apr 2018
Winchester 1892 John Wayne 100th Anniversary (2007)	.44-40, 19" barrel, large loop lever	$2,000 hammer, Rock Island, Jan 2021; $1,900, Apr 2022
Colt "Duke" New Frontier .22 (1984, 5,000 made)	.22 single action, sold new for $475	No dated result found



A Colt John Wayne Presentation commemorative, one of the top grade, offered at Rock Island in February 2022.
ROCK ISLAND AUCTION COMPANY · FEBRUARY 2022

Original Colts. With a real Colt Single Action Army, the generation matters most. First Generation guns were made from 1873 to 1941. The Second Generation ran from 1956 to 1975, with serial numbers ending in "SA." The Third Generation began in 1976. A rampant colt stamped on the back of the cylinder, with the serial number on the front, marks a Second Generation gun. Some guns from 1976 to 1978 were built on leftover frames, so check the details before you trust the suffix.

The big-loop carbine. If you want to work a lever the way the Duke did, Winchester sells a Model 1892 Large Loop Carbine, made by Miroku in Japan, at a list price of $1,499.99 in October 2026.

Every price above is a single sale on a single day. Hammer prices exclude the buyer's premium; "with premium" prices include it.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Rock Island Auction Company, Sporting & Collector Auction #1038, lot 2465, "John Wayne's Colt Single Action Army Revolver," sold October 7, 2021; RIAC blog, J. Engesser, "John Wayne's True Grit Revolver," September 24, 2021.

PR Newswire, "John Wayne On-Screen Revolver Sells for Over Half Million Dollars," October 13, 2021; Journal of Antiques, "Gavels 'n Paddles: John Wayne revolver, $517,500."

Old West Events, "John Wayne's Winchester 1892 SRC Used in True Grit and Rooster Cogburn," lot 317, January 23, 2021; Antiques and the Arts Weekly, "John Wayne's True Grit Carbine Loads Up $88,500 for Brian Lebel," February 2021.

Little John's Auction Service, *The Stembridge Armory Collection*, catalog, June 5, 2007; Original Prop Blog, prices realized, June 18, 2007.

NRA National Firearms Museum, Hollywood Guns gallery: *Stagecoach* (1939) Winchester; *True Grit* (1969) Winchester; John Wayne BATJAC carbine.

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, "This Week in the West: John Wayne," June 9, 2025.

P. Spangenberger, "John Wayne and the Peacemaker," *True West*, September 2006; "John Wayne's Six-Gun Clone," *True West*, March 2010.

Heritage Auctions, Signature Auction #7045, "The Personal Property of John Wayne," October 6–7, 2011, lot 44010; Associated Press, October 8, 2011.

Rock Island Auction Company: lot 4093/3552 (Model 94 Centennial '66 pair, Dec 2024); lots 1039/967, 56/1910, 4096/1568, 1039/4858, 4096/601, 73/778, 2039/1034, 2057/889.

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, online collection, object 1979.10.211, Colt Model 1873 Single Action Army, "Gift of the John Wayne Family."

NRA National Firearms Museum, Hollywood Guns: *Rio Lobo* (1970) Colt and Winchester 1892; *Big Jake* derringer. KPCC/LAist, February 25, 2011.

John Wayne: An American Experience, Fort Worth, "The John Wayne Gun Collection," exhibit page, 2024.

Little John's Stembridge catalog, lot 126 (#174269); True West, "John Wayne's Silver-Screen Shootin' Irons," November 2007.

Rock Island Auction Company, sale #1049, lot 229, October 3, 2025. Task & Purpose, on the Milestone Auctions sale, January 11, 2018.

American Rifleman, "Collecting Second Generation Colt Single Action Army Revolvers"; Winchester Repeating Arms, Model 1892 Large Loop Carbine.

The photographs in this chapter come from the auction houses, publications and photographers credited under each one. Every photograph is shown in the book's monochrome tone.

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