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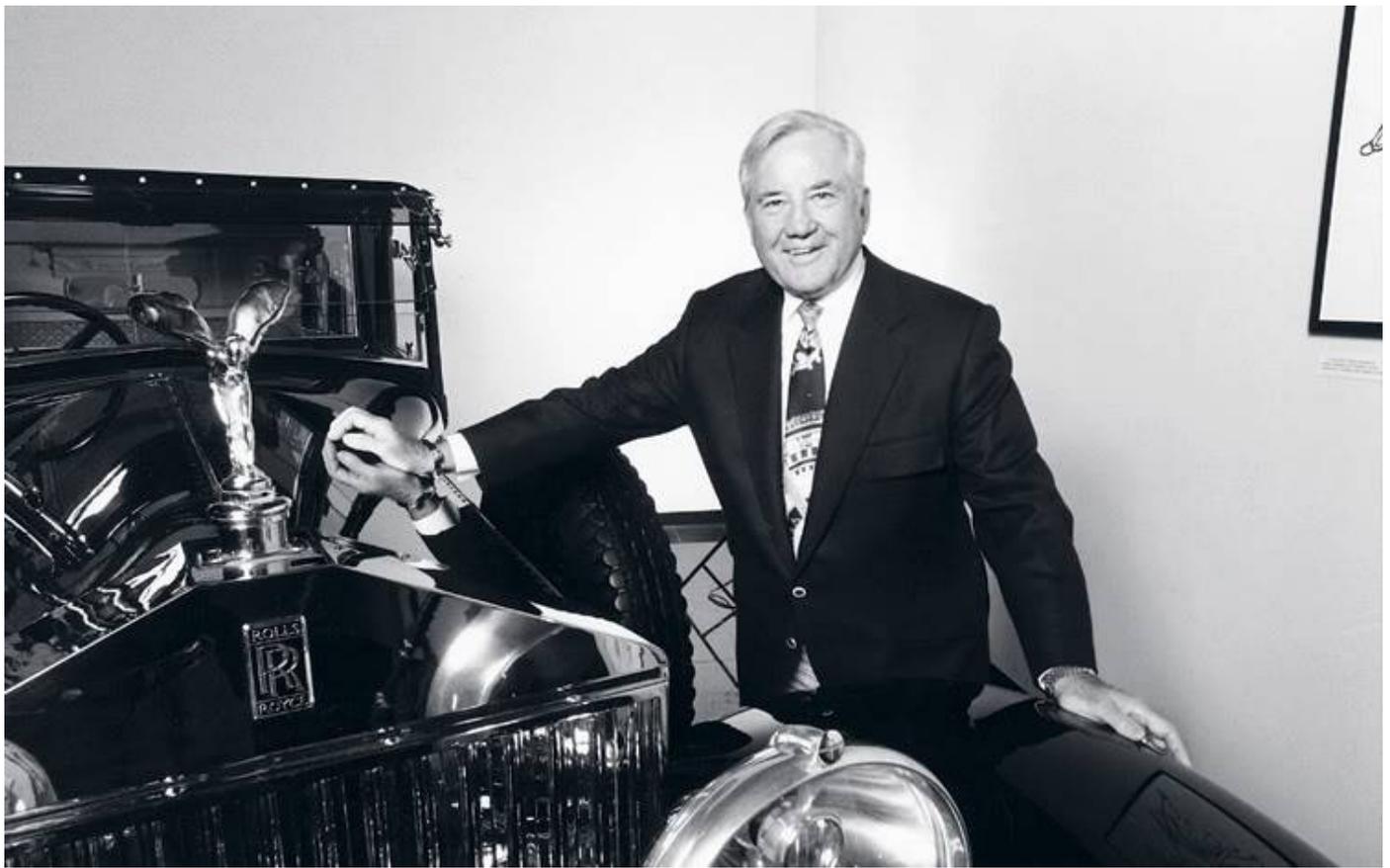
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Written for the December 2018 Premiere Gun Auction-#75



Lot 351: Excellent Pre-World War II Colt Woodsman First Series Match Target 22 Semi-Automatic Pistol with Box

Publishing icon Robert E. Petersen is well-known in two major collecting circles: cars and guns. Located in Los Angeles, the Petersen Automotive Museum is a must-see for car aficionados. After it opened in 1994, the plan was to build a Petersen Firearms Museum to house more than 7,000 firearms in his collection, but it never came to fruition.



Renowned firearms and automotive collector, Robert E. Petersen

After the dream of his own firearms museum waned, Petersen refocused his collecting habits and pared down the number of guns he owned. His mantra became quality over quantity. (Though quantity was still a big part of it.) At the same time, he began loaning firearms for display at the NRA National Firearms Museum, which was located in Washington, DC, at the time. Even after the museum relocated to Virginia in 1998, Petersen continued to loan his guns to the museum's exhibits. When he passed away in 2007, Petersen's collection still contained more than 2,000 firearms. Because of his relationship with the NRA, Mrs. Petersen allowed museum staff to have "first dibs" to select whatever they wanted from the collection – just as long as the items were placed on display. The result is a must-see exhibit on the "bucket list" of every gun guy.

The Robert E. Petersen Gallery at the NRA National Firearms Museum in Fairfax, Virginia boasts more than 400 firearms in a 2,000 square foot space. All of the big name manufacturers are represented: Purdey, Boss, Holland & Holland, Westley Richards, Browning, Parker, Winchester, Colt, Smith & Wesson, and so on. Big names in history are present, too: Annie Oakley, "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Dwight Eisenhower, "Black Jack" Pershing, John F. Kennedy, and more.



The Robert E. Petersen Gallery at the NRA National Firearms Museum

Even though that museum gallery contains some show-stopping pieces, it is only a small fraction – about 20% – of Mr. Petersen’s entire collection. In the years following his death, select pieces have been auctioned off. Some of them now reside in other prominent museum collections, such as the Institute of Military Technology in Titusville, Florida. Even so, many of the guns are still in the possession of his estate. That’s why the December 2018 Premiere Firearms Auction is so special: there are more than a dozen truly museum quality firearms from the Petersen estate up for bid! Let’s take a look at just a few of the guns and focus on a theme: the Colt Woodsman Match Target.

In production for 62 years, more than 690,000 Colt Woodsman semi-automatic pistols were made between 1915 and 1977. With three different series of guns and multiple variations including the pre-Woodsman, Woodsman, Target, Sport, and Match Target, it’s easy to see why the pistol was so incredibly popular.

Colt Woodsman First Series

The first pistols were originally called the “Colt Automatic Pistol, Caliber .22 Target Model.” Made between 1915 and 1927, they are known today as “pre-Woodsman” models. About 54,000 of these guns were made over the course of 12 years. Pistols in the Woodsman “1st Series” were made between 1927 and 1947 and they have a magazine release located on the bottom of the grip. During the 20-year production run, 112,000 were made. It’s

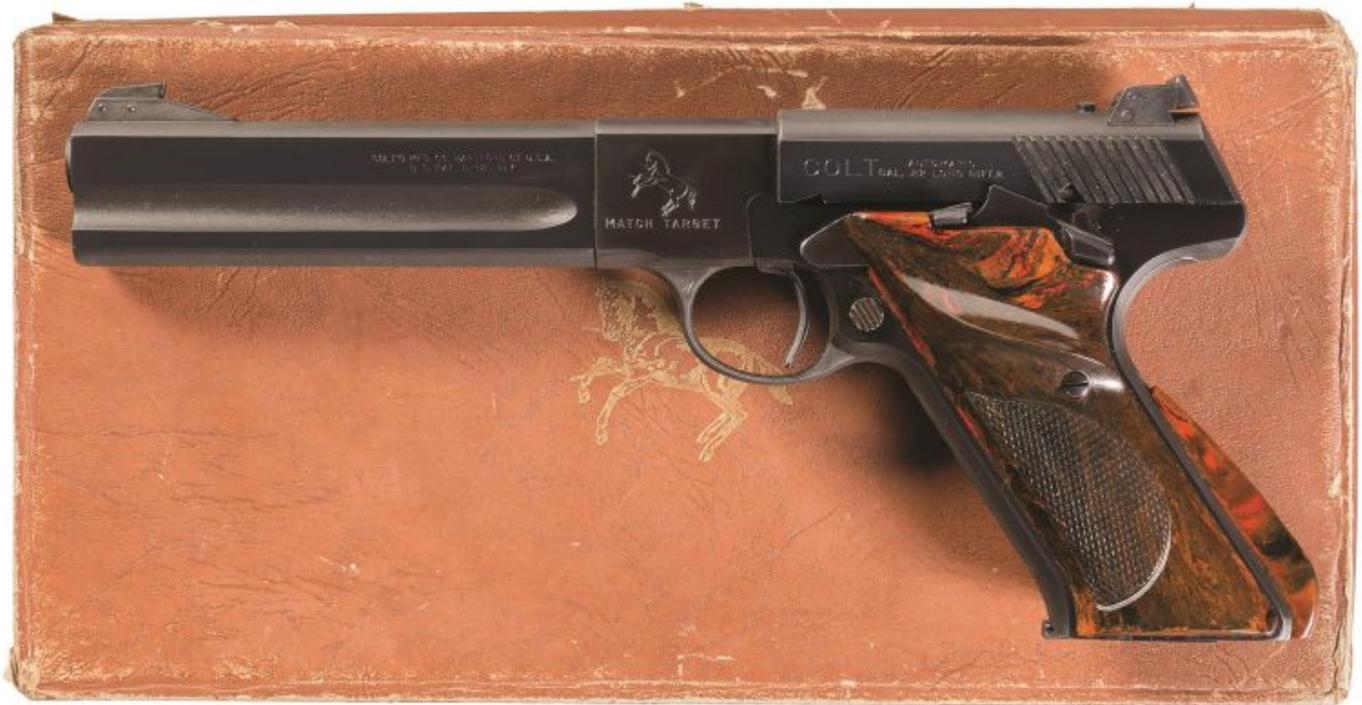
important to note that 1st Series guns made before 1931 were designed for standard velocity .22 ammo. A new style mainspring housing designed for high velocity ammunition was introduced around serial number 80,000 and guns after serial number 85,000 are certain to have the new mainspring.

The first example up for auction is considered a "1st Series" Match Target pistol because the magazine release is on the bottom of the grip. Approximately 16,000 of these Match Target guns were made between 1938 and 1944.



Manufactured in 1939, this pistol features an elevation adjustable Patridge blade front sight and fully adjustable rear notch sights. Whoever owned this pistol before Petersen took great care of it. For a 79-year-old gun, the finish looks like it just left the Colt factory earlier this week. The correct early style one-piece checkered "elephant ear" grips with silver Colt medallions are unmarred, having been spared the chipped fate of many contemporaries. This offering is the complete package: it comes with a screwdriver, bore brush, matching test target, instructions, and the original box featuring a Robert Petersen collection label on the bottom.

Colt Woodsman Second Series



Lot 347: Superb Colt Second Series Woodsman Match Target Semi-Automatic Pistol with Box

“2nd Series” pistols are easy to visually identify because the magazine release is on the left side of the frame near the trigger guard. Even though these pistols were made for the shortest amount of time – only eight years – they have the highest rate of production with an overall estimate of 146,000 guns. That comes out to 380 pistols a week.

The Match Target shown above is considered a “2nd Series” because the magazine release is located near the trigger guard on the left side of the frame. Manufactured in 1948, it has the standard Colt markings with the Rampant Colt standing atop the words, “MATCH TARGET.” This pistol is currently wearing mottled, checkered thumbrest grips and a matching mottled mainspring arch extension. It comes with an extra arch extension, bore brush, original test target, instructions, “Handling the Handgun” pamphlet, 1948 dated receipt, and an unnumbered correct model box featuring a Robert Petersen collection label on the bottom.

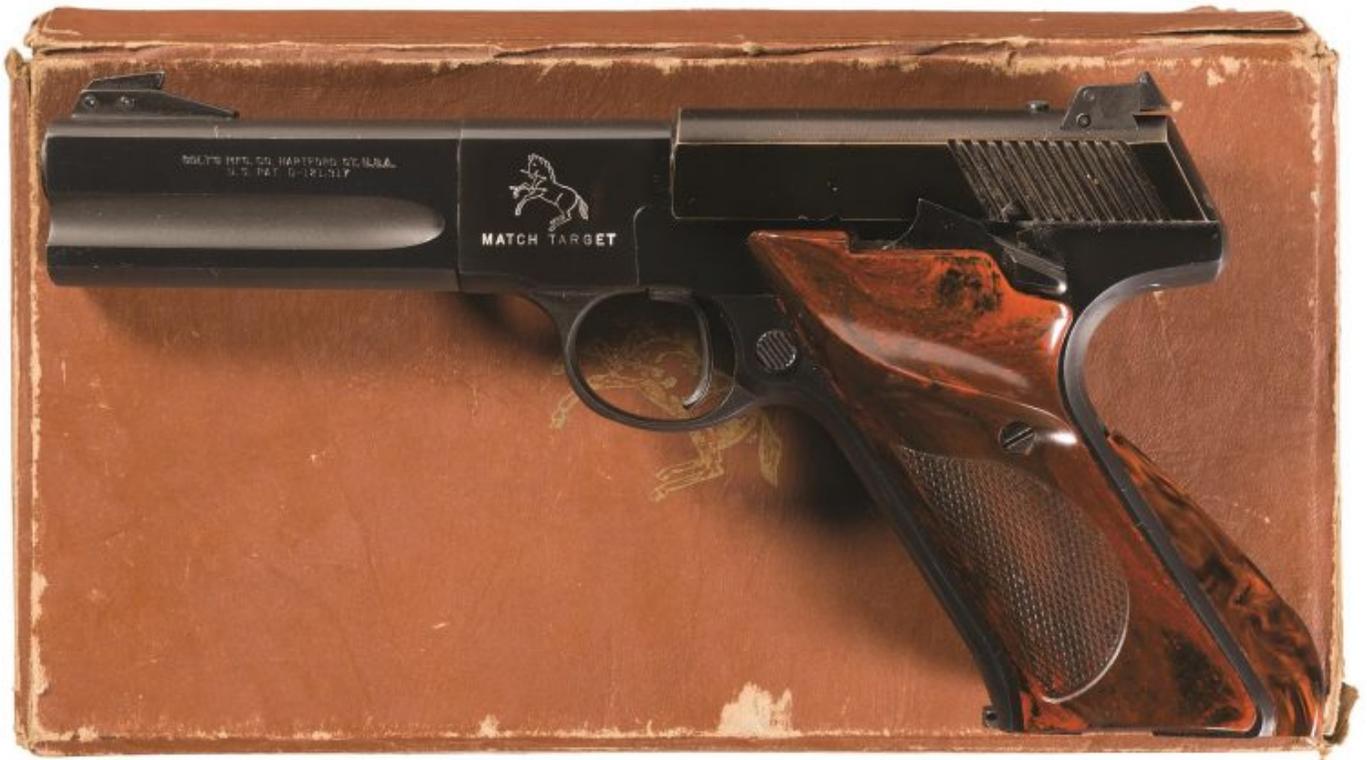
This next “2nd Series” Match Target pistol, made in 1949, has all of the standard Colt patent, caliber, and model markings. The gun is complemented with a set of mottled and checkered thumbrest grips and a matching mainspring arch extension, all in great shape. It comes with a matching numbered test target, instructions, an extra mainspring arch extension, bore brush, screwdriver, and a period correct model box featuring a Robert Petersen collection label on the bottom.



Lot 352: Colt Second Series Woodsman Match Target Semi-Automatic Pistol with Box

The final “2nd Series” Match Target we’ll look at was also made in 1949, but it is an exceptionally rare gun. Chambered in .22 Short and not the standard .22 Long Rifle, Colt manufactured only a small number of these guns for initial experimentation. Five more were made in 1949 for use by the U.S. team at the Pan American Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

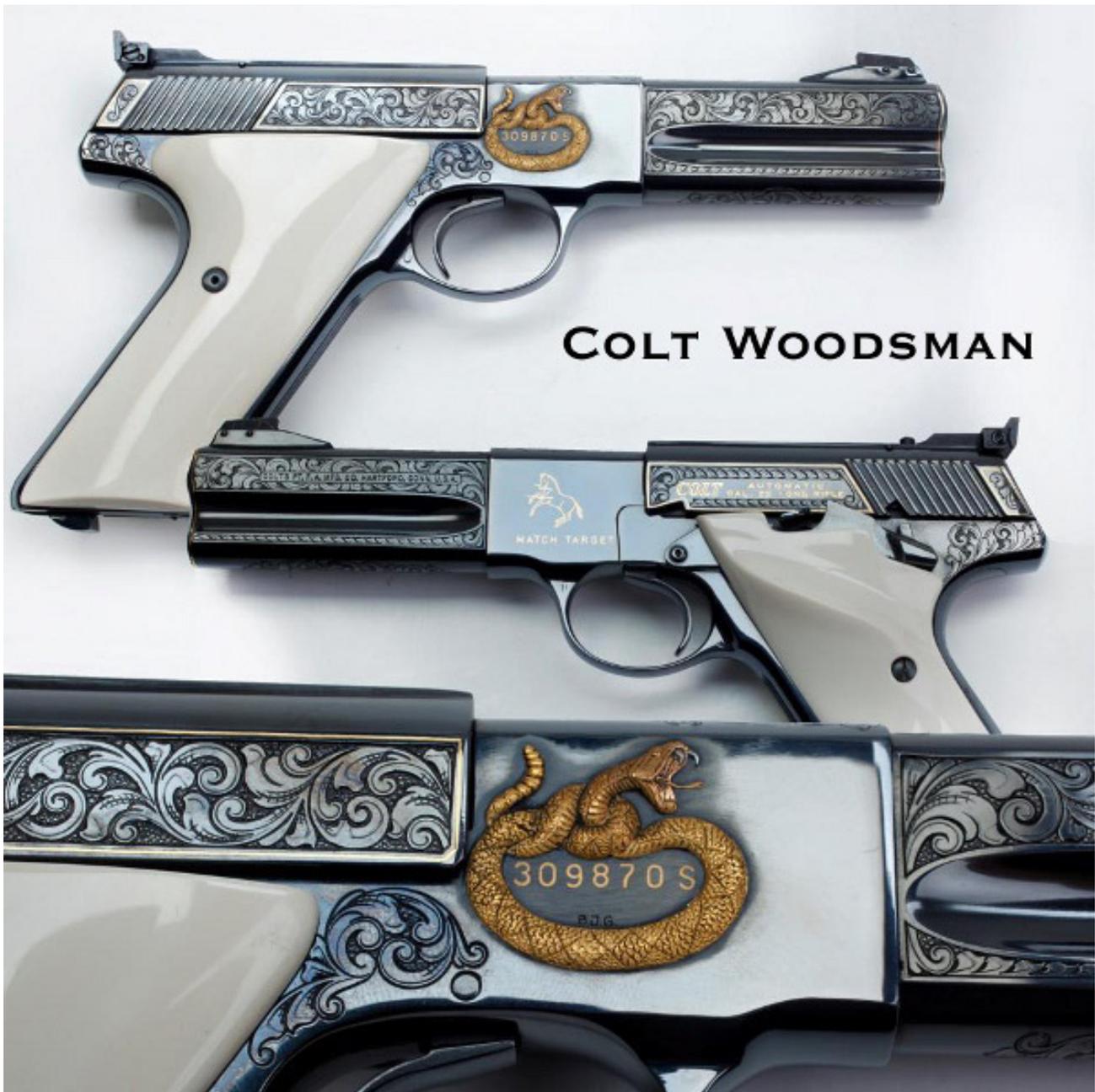
The .22 Short pistols used at the Pan American games were 2nd Series Match Targets with 4 1/2 inch barrels and alloy slides, just like the one offered here. The left side of the barrel has the two-line Hartford address/patent marking and a Rampant Colt above the words “MATCH TARGET.” The alloy slide is unmarked and lacks a slide stop. Overall, the gun retains 90% of its original finish. Fitted with beautifully mottled and checkered thumbrest grips and a mainspring arch extension, it comes with a bore brush and unnumbered correct model box featuring a Robert Petersen collection label on the bottom.



Lot 346: Extremely Rare and Excellent Colt Second Series Woodsman Match Target Semi-Automatic Pistol in Extremely Rare .22 Short with Box

Colt Woodsman 3rd Series

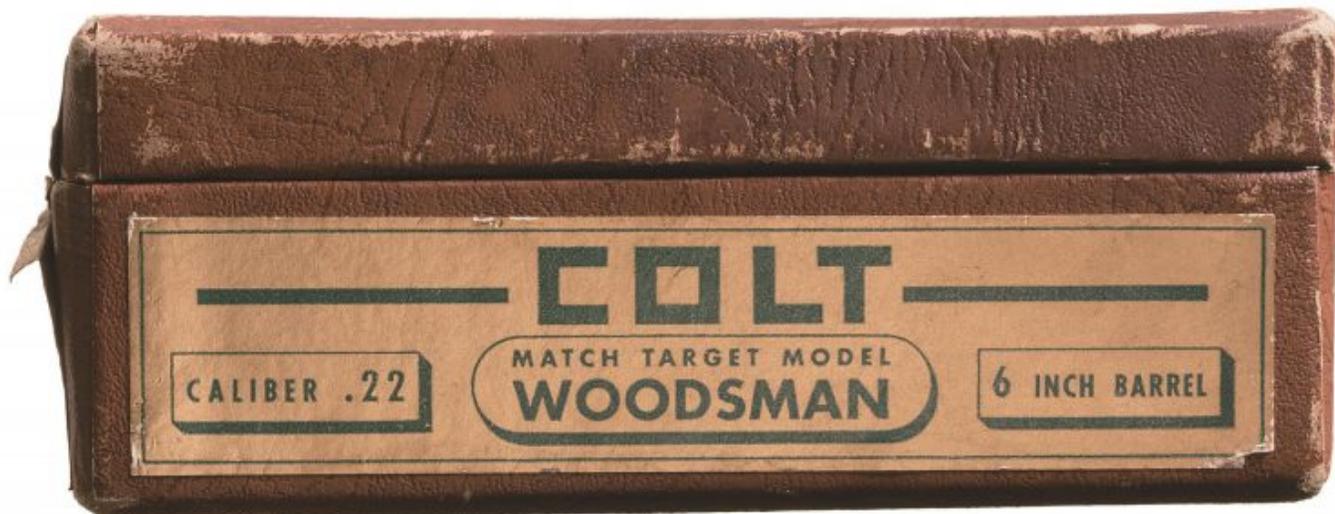
Made between 1955 and 1977, the “3rd Series” pistols went back to the original magazine release location on the bottom of the grip. All told, more than 100,000 guns were made over the course of 22 years. There aren’t any “3rd Series” pistols from Petersen’s collection offered here, but there are two magnificent cased examples in the NRA’s collection. One is engraved with a gold inlaid rattlesnake and the other has scroll engraving with gold accents. Both guns wear ivory grips.



COLT WOODSMAN

Photo courtesy of the NRA National Firearms Museum.

Colt Woodsman Collectors, the December's Premiere Firearms Auction marks one of the rare times when members of the public have an opportunity to add a gun or guns from the Petersen collection to their own private collection. Make your friends think you're opening a firearms museum and bring one of them home from the auction!



For More Colt Woodsman Photos Check the [Rock Island Auction Pinterest Page](#)
Colt Woodsman Pistols Sold In Our September 2018 Firearms Auction With Prices

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