

Mystery Martini

It looks like a Martini rifle. But is it?

by Dominick Pisano

One of my customers told me he was sending another large Martini my way to have fitted to a machined stock. When it arrived the rifle looked somewhat like a large Martini mainly because of the pivoting breech block — as pioneered by Henry O. Martini of Boston, Massachusetts — and the overall size and appearance of the receiver. However, the lever was part of the trigger guard which was not very Martini like. All Martini rifles I have encountered feature the lever behind the trigger guard loop, with the original Peabody side hammer action being an exception. The biggest difference with my customer's rifle was that the trigger assembly was a separate unit attached to a trigger plate. I had never seen a build quite like this and it was something of a mystery to me.

I looked for markings that might provide some clues. All I found was the following inscription on the left side of the frame: hry ryennsr. Under that was the Swiss cross with the text "aardy (suisse)" inscribed below,

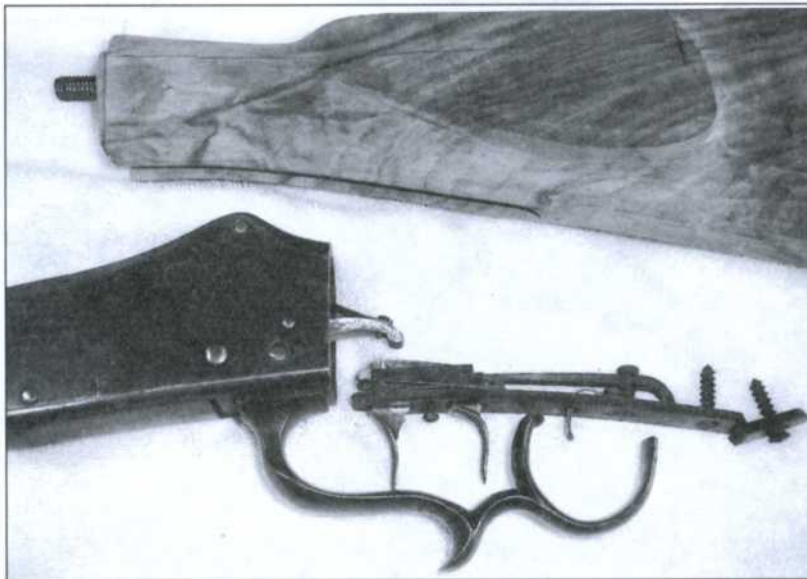
indicating the action was made in Switzerland. There was a small lever on the lower right side of the frame which served as a safety. That was it. There were no proof marks of any kind. The unit came without a barrel so I could glean no information via that source. I looked through all of my single shot books and could find no reference to this action.

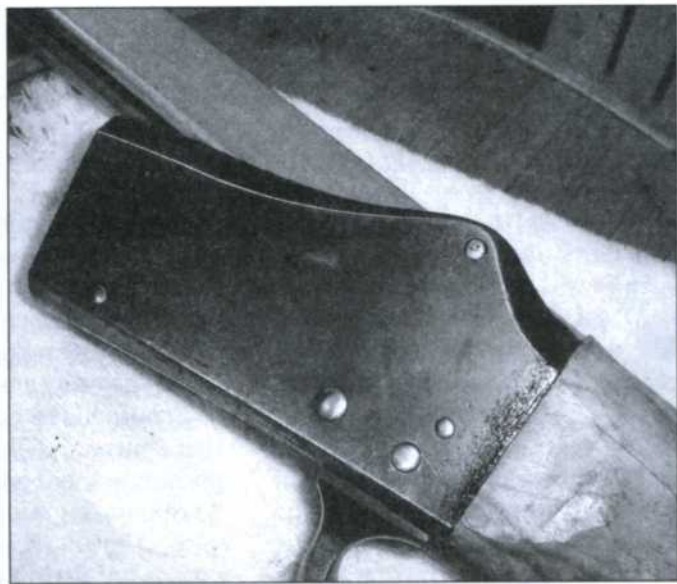
Be that as it may, I began the process of fitting the action to the machined stock. The action had a small lever coming out of its rear and a small spring attached to it. Again I had never seen anything like this before and assumed it was part of the firing mechanism, however, I could not confirm this until the fitting process was well under way.

Despite having never before seen this particular Martini variant, fitting the action turned out to be a fairly straight forward process as there was stock bolt which made a ready

reference with the fit of the action to the stock. Using a combination of chisels and rotary burrs on the Dremel tool I made short work of completing the task. The key elements to inletting the stock on this action was to be certain that the abutment fitted perfectly up against the rear action rim. Just as important though not visible to the eye was to get the front wall of the stock firmly up against the rear wall of the frame. This is necessary because the contact here is the main area for absorbing the rifle's recoil upon firing. Failing to precisely fit this area would allow the recoil to be thrust directly against the rim, which abuts the frame, and eventually chipping it out. I mixed up a small batch of Brownells Acraglas Gel and carefully lined the rim of the frame and the forward portion of the stock with the bedding compound. In addition to a mirror-perfect fit, the epoxy serves the second purpose of

Below left: Left side view of the Swiss Martini. Note the separate trigger plate which contains all the trigger components and the small lever and spring protruding from the rear of the action. Below right: Trimming away the black smudge left by stock inletting marker using a sharp chisel.





insuring that the wood is perfectly sealed. Any moisture which manages to get into this area can wick up into the end grain of what is the weakest area of the stock. Of course I first applied wax to all metal surfaces to be certain that I could safely remove the stock once the Acraglas had set. I applied wax to the stock bolt as well. After a 24 hour wait I unscrewed the stock bolt and removed the stock from the frame. It was a perfect fit.

Next came the fitting of the trigger plate and trigger assembly. I had several guides to go by which greatly

Above Left: Fine fitting the stock using a dremel tool and diamond burr.

Above Right: The action is fitted to the stock.

assisted me in this task. First there was a small tenon in the forward portion of the trigger plate which fit snugly into a corresponding mortise in the lower rear of the frame. The second item was a small spring that served as a lock for the operating lever when it was in the closed position. Using black stock inlet-

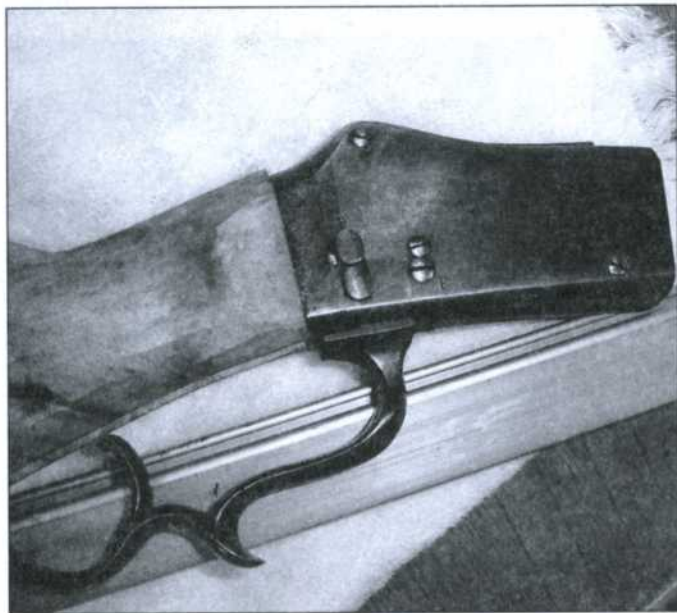
ting marking agent I made certain that the components of the trigger assembly were free to operate and not binding on wood. This took several try and fits before I was satisfied with the task.

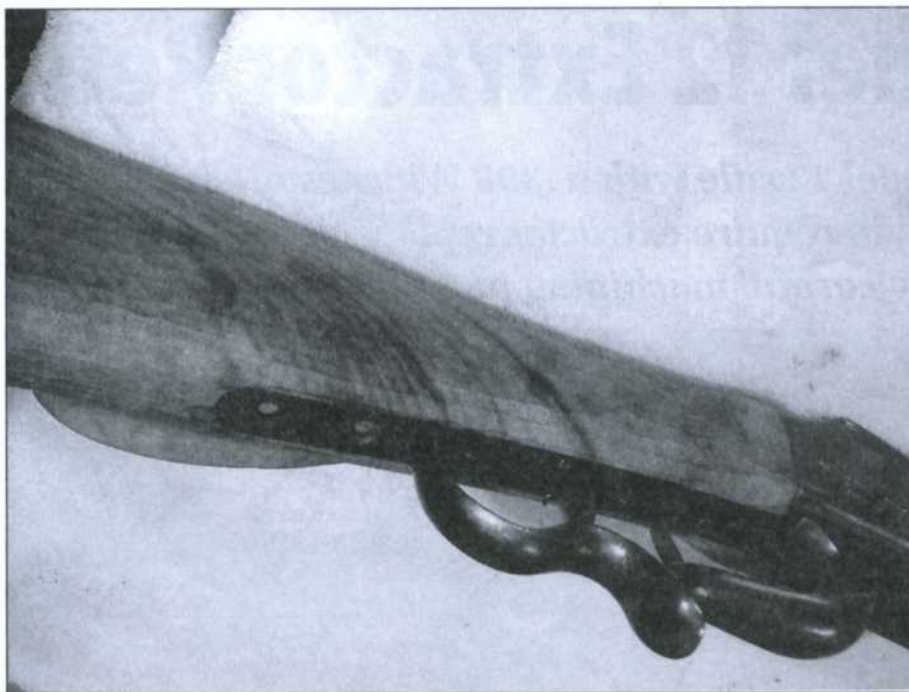
When I thought all was in order I assembled the butt stock to the action and fit the trigger plate/trigger

Below left: Right side view of the action fitted tightly up against the stock.

Note the safety lever in the lower right corner.


Below right: Fitting the trigger plate to the stock.





Above: At this stage the trigger plate fitting is nearly completed, save for drilling holes and fitting screws to the rear tang of the trigger plate.

assembly. Everything fit into place after a bit of fine tweaking. Most importantly, the double set trigger operated perfectly, with the set trigger needing just the finest touch to release the striker. I felt good about the

project. Not only did I learn about an entirely new and different type of Martini action, I was able to fit it into the stock so that the customer would be delighted with the effort. Mystery solved! 

Below: A left top quartering view of the action showing the pivoting breech block. This is the original Peabody design seen in a multitude of various Martinis from the small Cadet model to the large Martini Enfield made in the millions and used by the Brits during the halcyon days of the British empire.



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