

WHITETAIL with a WINCHESTER 1873

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #54 —



A decent 10 point whitetail taken with a Winchester 1873, made in 1892.

It had to happen sooner or later – ‘the gun that won the west’ going with me on the Nail Ranch hunt in Texas. Finding a good Winchester Model 1873 saddle ring carbine (SRC) in 44-40 was the problem; it had to be all original – not refinished or tinkered with. Also, since I like to shoot all my guns, it needed to be mechanically sound and have a great bore. And one more thing, it had to fit my budget. If you’ve ever been on the hunt for something that was almost impossible to find, you know what I went through. But finally there it was – laying on a table at the Tulsa Gun Show; and it went home with me.

The 1873 must have accounted for untold numbers of deer and other critters from its first production in 1873 till long beyond the introduction of the much-improved Model 1894 in 30/30; which set an entirely new standard, with the higher velocity from smokeless powder. In total,

Winchester made 720,000 rifles and carbines of this model, finishing up in 1919.

Now an 1873 SRC, in any caliber, is a short-range proposition; the

barrel is only 20" long, the sights are crude, the stock is low, the trigger is heavy and a 44-40 only generates about 650 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. At any rate, those were the alibis I offered my guide – telling him to get me a nice buck within 50 yards.

It was the second day of the three-day hunt before there was much activity. We had set up on an open flat, with very little cover, hoping to rattle a buck out of some dense brush

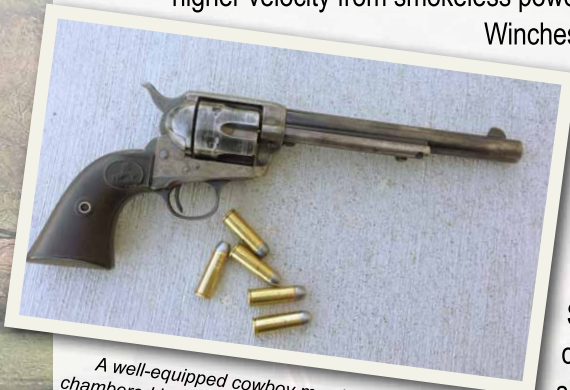
– just over the ridge. It was clear and sunny, with very little wind.

We had rattled for quite a spell and were about ready to move on, when this buck came in from the left side. He was in no hurry

and we watched him for several seconds. There was a two-wire fence about 50

yards out and I had established that as my max distance. The buck angled up to the fence, jumped over and stopped to look around – at 45 yards. I was sitting, with my back against a small bush, and had him in my sights the whole time. He stopped, I popped and down he went – a whitetail buck with an 1873 Winchester – the gun that won the west.

"...we watched him for several seconds."



A well-equipped cowboy may have carried a Colt S&W Army chambered in the same caliber as his saddle ring carbine.



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Albany, Texas
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This 1873 Saddle Ring Carbine has seen lots of use, but it's mechanically sound with a great bore.