

man at ARMS

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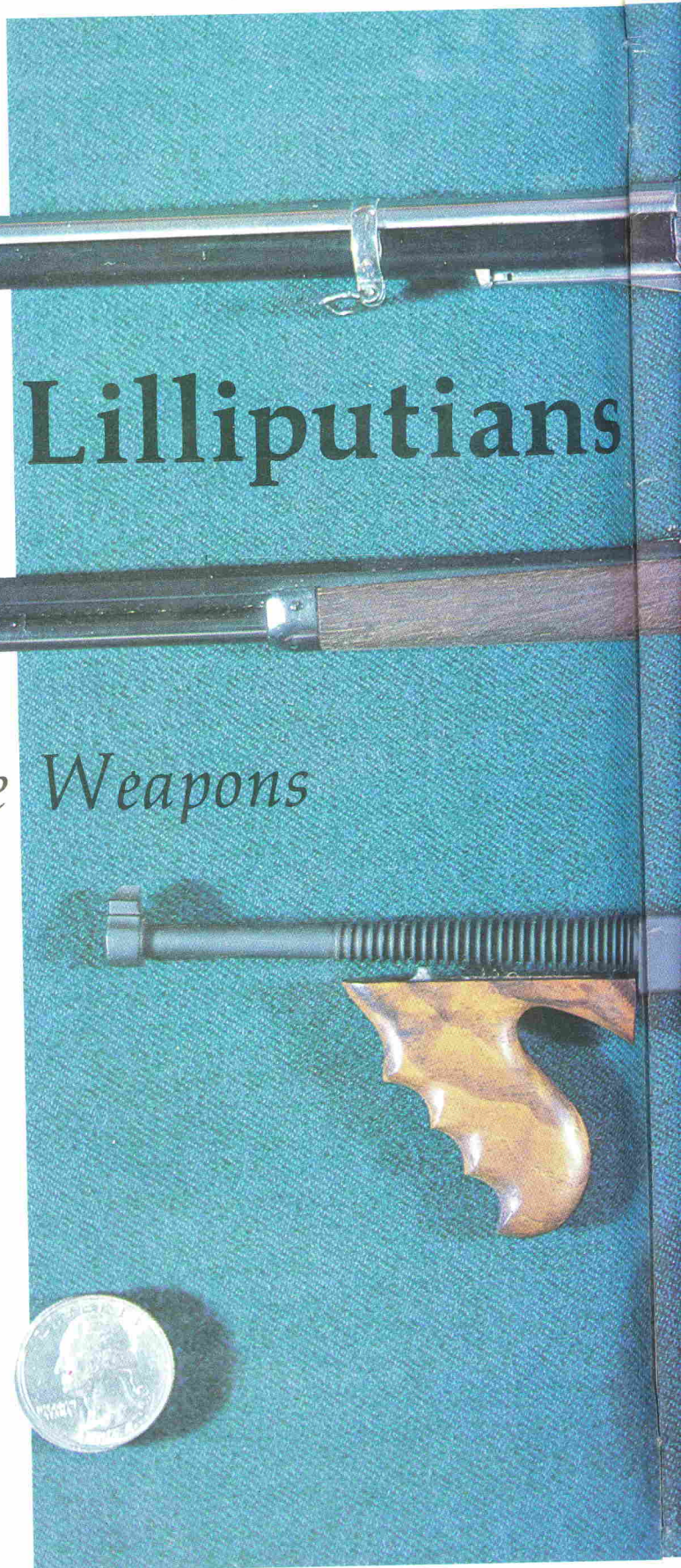
the magazine of
arms collecting-investing

FLASH!
MAN AT ARMS
ACQUIRES
ARMS GAZETTE
see page 49

Arming the Lilliputians

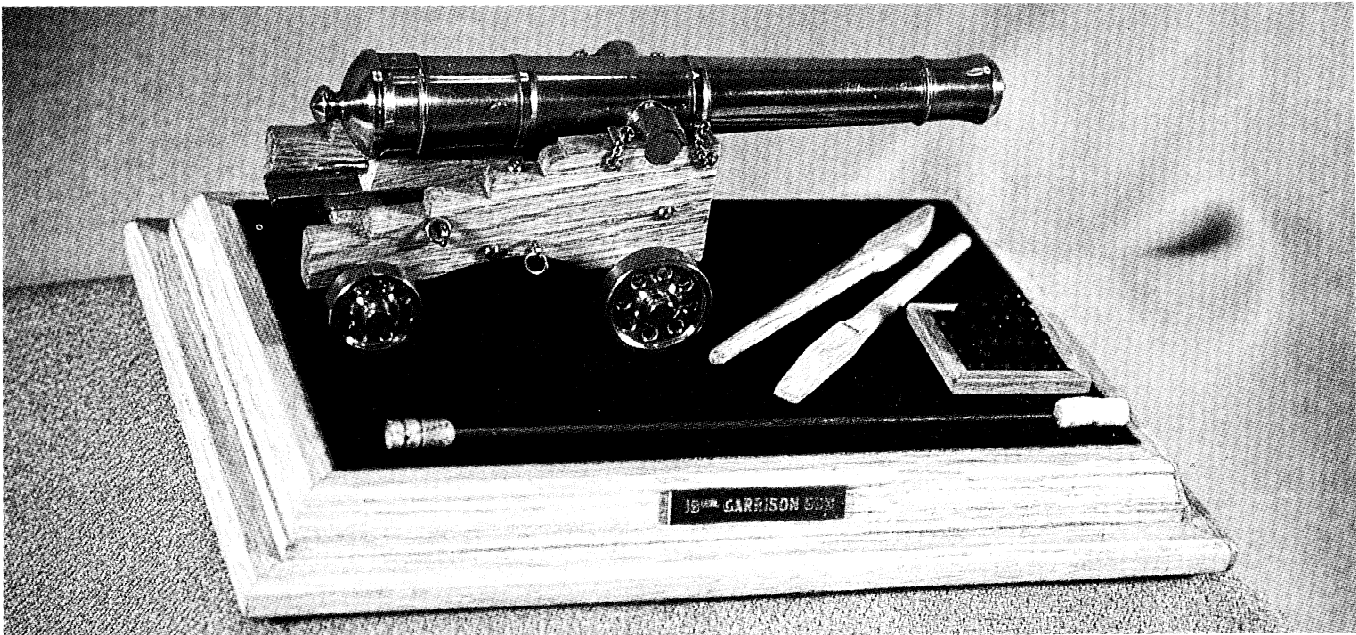
Collecting Miniature Weapons

by Joseph J. Macewicz





Representing three ignition systems, from top to bottom: the Colt Root revolving carbine in one-third scale with the metal left in its white condition; next the easily recognized Winchester Model 1866 with its "yellow" receiver/frame in two-fifths scale, and finally the Thompson model 1927, submachine gun in one-third scale. Note the highlighted markings on the tommy gun. (Guns shown actual size.) Maker — David Kucer.



In Europe fine scaled models of cannon are more collectible and demand higher values than in the U.S. This fine model has two hundred hours of time spent in making it and its accessories.

IN INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, when someone tells you that "you think small," you certainly wouldn't consider the remark very complimentary. However, if you are a maker or a collector of fine miniature arms and weaponry, thinking on the Liliputian scale is a prime prerequisite to enjoying, appreciating and understanding these beautiful artifacts.

Miniatures have been called many things by many people: minikins (in ancient times), minuscule, petite, curios, minis, and even models. Defining what properly constitutes a miniature firearm may be the best way to introduce this fascinating subject to the uninitiated. An ideal miniature firearm would be built in an exactly reduced scale, preferably at least two-fifth or smaller. It would be made out of the same materials as the original, have the same finishes and markings, and have all of the operating features of the full-sized piece. In addition it must be fully capable of functioning and cycling through all of the operations and be able to fire with the proper ammunition. Also, where possible, it should be built or manufactured using the same techniques as the original model.

Similar comparisons can be drawn for other miniatures such as edged weapons, articulated suits of armor, and even cannon. However, such fine collectables as military figures, "lead soldiers," model tanks and planes are not considered "miniatures" by any stretch of the imagination if the above mentioned criteria and qualifications are applied. These equally fascinating subjects should be treated on their own merits and will not be part of this article.

What type of individual is the maker of miniatures? What talents and disciplines must he have to work under

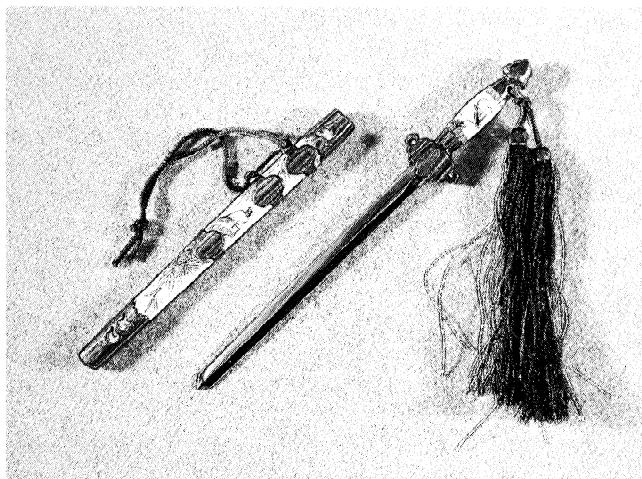
such regimented conditions? Basically the miniature makers fall into two broad classifications, based on the type and number of miniature firearms they want to produce. One artisan uses the "hand" as much as possible, rather than machine tools. This type of maker best exemplifies the techniques used in the making of a Kentucky rifle or a one-of-a-kind piece. The other type of maker will utilize whatever equipment and machinery he may have available. He will utilize "manufacturing" methods and will probably produce a limited production run of certain models and types. However, because of the very limited market, production is likely to be only a dozen or so pieces at best.

Both types of makers share many of the same skills and talents to varied degrees of proficiency. In essence they are metalworkers, artisans, craftsmen, gunsmiths, gunmakers, jewelers, watchmakers, lockmakers, machinists, tool-makers, fabricators, metallurgists, engravers, silver and goldsmiths. Add to that list the patience of a monk, the eyesight of an eagle, and the steady hand of a currency plate-maker. Such a listing of disciplines and requirements will quickly eliminate many very skilled people from pursuing such a demanding occupation. Does this mean that we don't have as many makers now as in ancient times when this profession supposedly was in its prime? Hardly. At the present time, there are probably more such craftsmen around than at any time in history, especially in the United States and Canada.

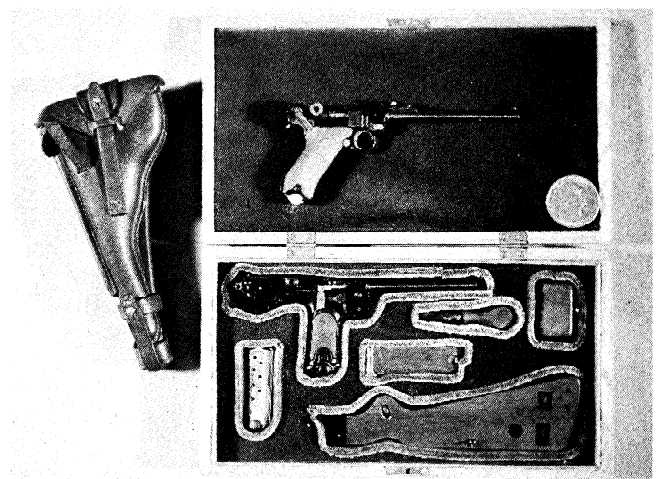
Time is just as important a factor in the making of finely detailed miniatures as are the related skills and talents. It may take anywhere from two hundred hours to make a single-shot derringer to as many as several



Charms and novelties such as the three representative pieces are still easily and inexpensively available. Some fire blanks; others, such as the upper left example, can actually fire small flares and can be used as signal guns. Various makers, mostly from Europe.



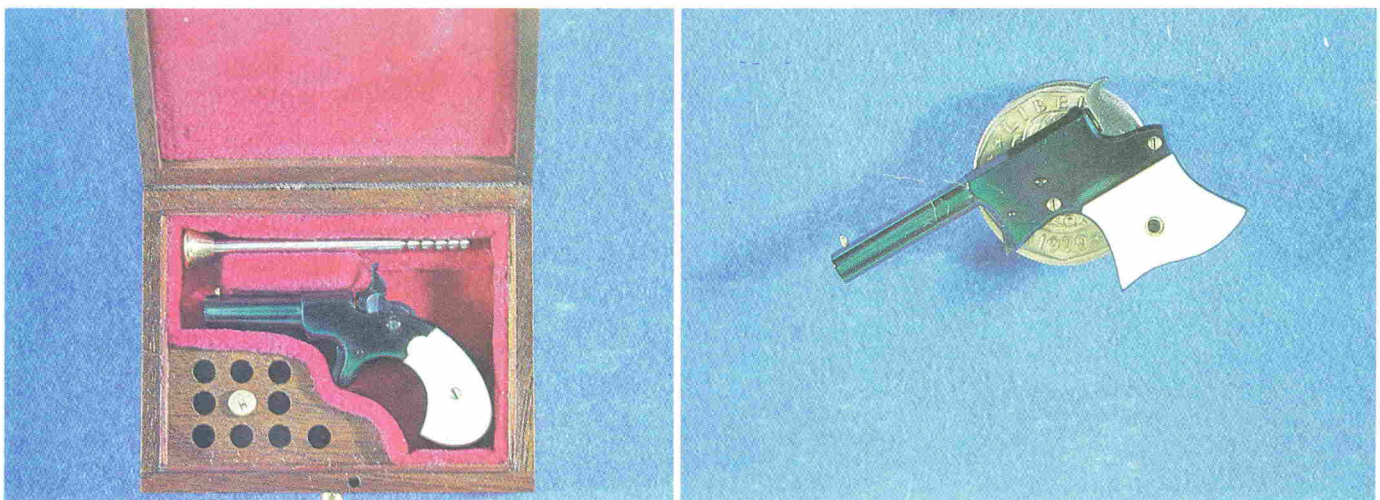
Though a handsome example of the Samurai sword, this letter opener is not made in the same manner as regular swords being without temper lines and forgings. Should a piece be found made by a sword maker of old, it would be considerably more valuable and hence a fine collectible. Pieces such as this example were used by the Japanese as toys for the "Childrens Day Festival" celebrated by many Japanese families. Maker unknown.



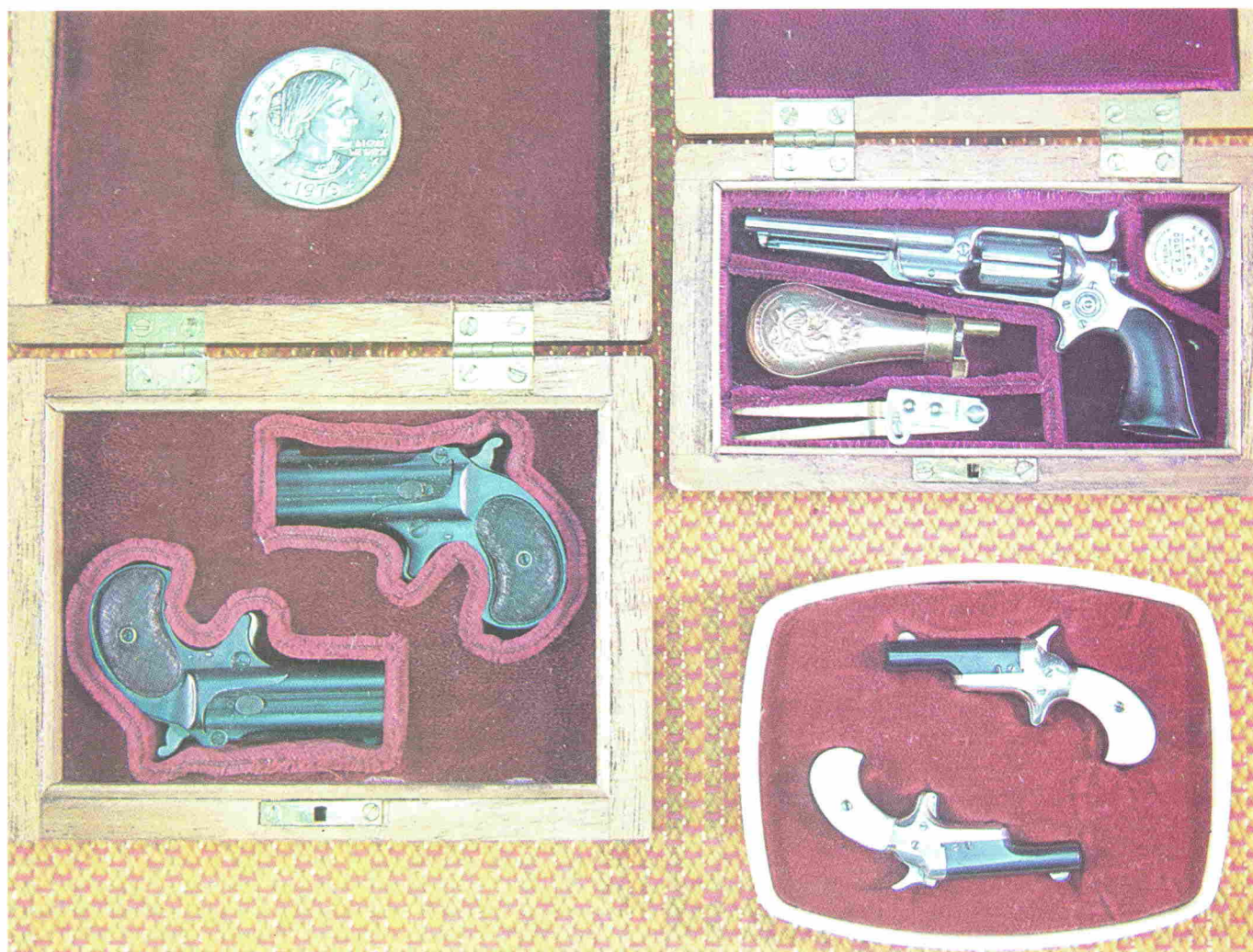
Both the upper Artillery Luger and the lower 1893 cased Borchardt are extremely difficult to manufacture in full size. Imagine the problems in trying to duplicate those efforts in one-third scale! It is not unusual to have to make as many as two dozen springs just to get one to fit and operate properly. Each of the semi-automatic pistols is cased with shoulder stock, cheek-piece, extra magazine, tools, oiler and spare parts. The Luger has some of these items in the brown leather holster on the left. Maker — David Kucer.



Identically cased and in two-fifths scale are the 1851 Colt Navy with the octagonal barrel, and the 1860 Colt Army with the round barrel, copper flask, brass bullet mold, case-hardened frames, blued barrels, and ivory grips. Maker — David Kucer.



Beautifully finished in blue with ivory grips are these two examples in one-fourth scale of the single shot Remington derringers cased with cleaning rod and dummy cartridges. Maker — Larry Smith.



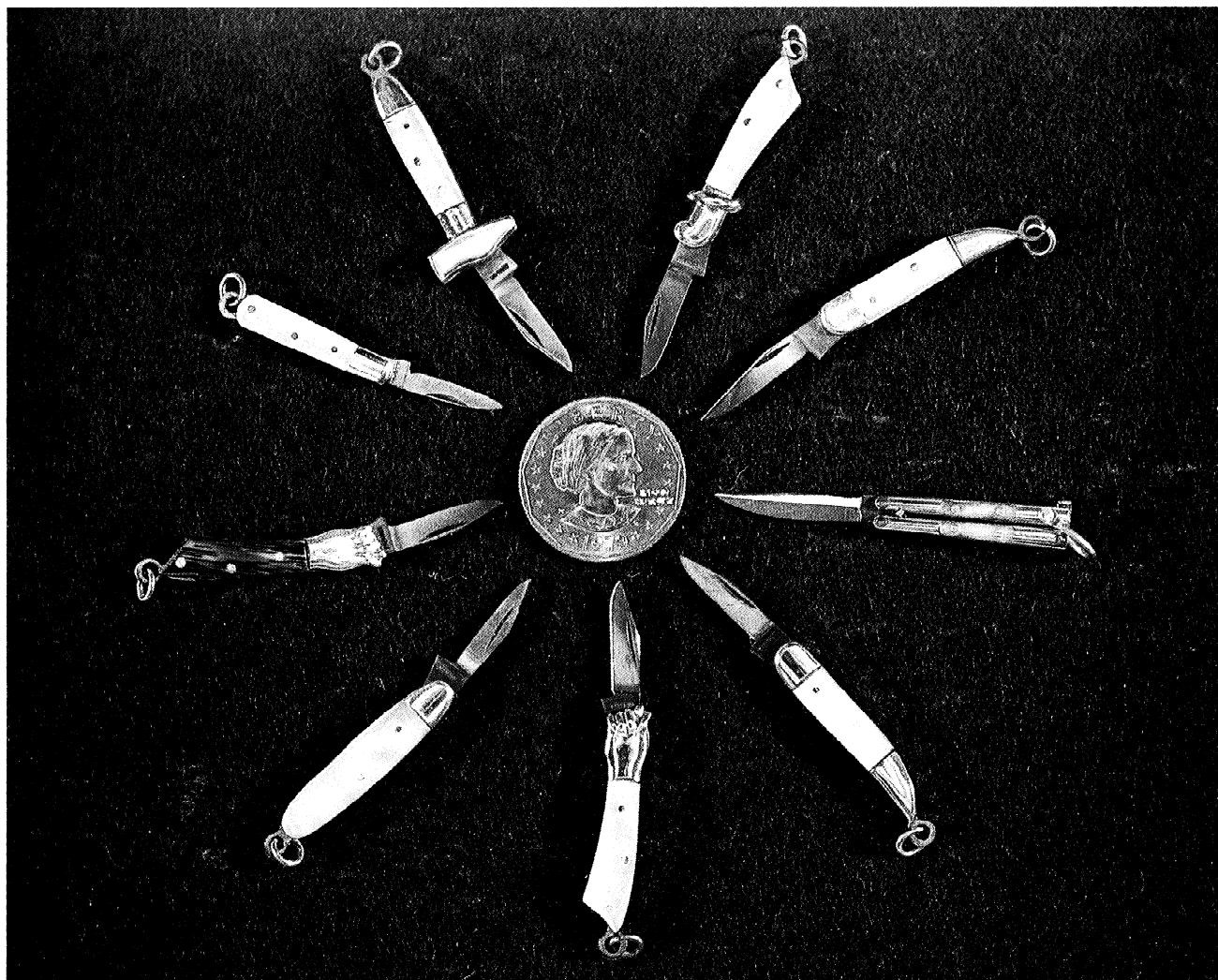
On the left is a cased pair of Remington Double Derringers in two-fifths scale with one having hard rubber grips (standard) and the other having ebony (special feature). In the upper right is the revolver-sized version of the Colt Root patent, cased with powder horn, flask in copper, and metal cap box, all in one-third scale. An interesting use of man-made ivory has been made in the casing of the pair of .41 caliber Colt single shot derringers. However, the pistols are equipped with natural ivory stocks. The frames are made of sterling silver, not just plated as the full-sized ones are. Maker — David Kucer.

thousand hours to execute a Thompson submachine gun, or a highly engraved double wheellock. That is one main reason why many times the makers will not and can not produce the number of minis which the market will bear. Also, the demanding work required on a museum quality piece does not permit a steady eight or nine hours of uninterrupted activity, not where a single mistake or slip-up can cause the scrapping of many hours of work. Since there is no short cut to producing quality craftsmanship, there will never be a surplus of finely executed miniature arms of any sort.

The history of miniature firearms making dates back to almost the very invention of gunpowder and guns! A few of the finest museum collections have examples of wheellocks made in the 1560's. No matter when they were made, minis reflect a master's touch and must be considered as labor-of-love projects. Otherwise their acquisition costs would be almost prohibitive. Since it is

extremely difficult to put any kind of hourly rate on a high-art object, this costing system should not be attempted in establishing its value. Better to acquire it for what it really is, an example of a man's dedication to his art, history, and culture.

In ancient times when miniatures were mainly commissioned by royalty, costs were secondary considerations, pride of ownership being foremost. Nowadays there are two types of collectors: the investor and the arms student. The former has the resources to invest in this form of high-art and expects a return on investment, while the latter is a true collector and want to pass on to his posterity something of historical and cultural importance. In the latter type of collector, we have found a person who can build up a fine collection by trading, or by making a duplicate to be used as bait in acquiring additional collectable pieces, and otherwise working diligently on an interesting pastime.



An assortment of one-third scale pocket knives with various blade configurations and grip materials. Collecting small "folders" is a fairly inexpensive way of building up a collection of "edged" weapons. Various makers.

The techniques used by regular gun collectors apply directly to miniatures. Know your subject, and keep your wallet tightly closed until the proper time to pick up that exceptional piece or real bargain. Bargains may not mean getting the "cheapies," as these items do not appreciate and are really hard to dispose of later. Trading is still the best way to get what you really want. We know of at least one instance where a maker did trade, but not for financial gain. Because this foreign maker was an aficionado of our western culture, he gladly exchanged some museum quality items for some relatively common Colt single actions and Winchester rifles. The end result was that both traders were equally thrilled at the outcome.

Up until 1973 there wasn't a single American organization that could bring together the miniaturist, both the maker and the collector, on common ground to pool their combined interests. Information prior to that time was sparse in that only one good book had been published on the subject. A few magazine articles could

be found, but they were very sketchy to say the least. A group of collectors organized the Miniature Arms Collectors/Makers Society, Ltd. (M.A.S.), which has been serving as a central group to acquire and disseminate information on miniatures.

If it takes so much time and skill to make a miniature, who can afford to collect them? Obviously, miniature collecting is not for everyone. Museum quality pieces demand and get top prices. Perhaps you might have to set your sights a little lower and settle for miniatures that don't have all of the features you may desire. Why not turn to scale models, novelties, charms, and even toys as a ready source of collectables? Age, rarity, and even the popularity of the original item and the individuality of the piece all reflect the value and further enhance the value of the specimen, and they are, after all, part of the fascinating world of miniatures.

For more information contact the Miniature Arms Society, Joseph J. Macewicz - Secretary, 104 White Sand Lane, Racine, Wisconsin 53402.