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See Page 67.



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# COLLECTOR NEWS

**JOHN R. HANSEN, JR.**



## COLLECTING MINIATURE FIREARMS

ONE AREA of arms collecting that has always fascinated me is collecting miniature arms. When I say miniature arms, I don't mean the pot-metal stampings that are sometimes passed off as being legitimate. The miniatures that really impress me, and I think I can safely say a large percentage of the collecting public as well, are high quality reproductions; guns reproduced as small as one-eighth scale that must be carefully scrutinized under magnification in order to tell them apart from the originals.

Typically, more exotic materials go into the manufacture of miniatures than their normal production examples. It seems as if no expense is spared on these little guns. This could be because not much of the precious materials are needed. All work, with the exception of some machining to keep parts true and additional copies similar, must be executed by hand. While there are machines which could take on such delicate tasks, none will do as thorough a job as an individual craftsman's hands.

Another aspect to this kind of collecting is the thrill of holding something of tremendous value in the palm

of your hand; similar to the effect of a precious stone.

As Merrill Lindsay stated it in his book, *Miniature Arms*, "There is much to be said for the collection of miniatures. They do not take up much space in today's compact living quarters, and they permit a gun collector to pursue his hobby without the nuisance of requiring a permit and a license. Too, wives are more apt to tolerate miniatures, I suppose that they appeal to the doll sense in women. Miniatures certainly are not as frightening as full-size guns or working shooters."

"As an investment they are great," Lindsay continues. "There could well be a surplus of gold or a slump in the diamond market, but there will never be a surplus of hand craftsmanship of this high degree."

Don't get the wrong impression; the creation of miniature arms is not a new invention. In fact, there are examples which date from the 1590s and even prior to that date. Of these much older miniatures, the well known makers were in Germany and Austria. As time went on these manufacturers started taking on more familiar names

# Barbee Knives

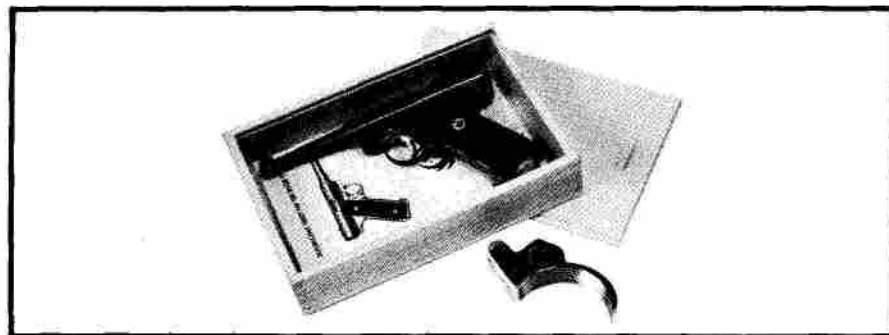


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Miniature reproduction of Sturm, Ruger Standard Auto pistol made by David Kucer is complete down to tiny instruction booklet and wood box which housed originals. Scale comparison is demonstrated by full-size trigger in photo.

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such as Flobert, Liege's, August Francotte and others. Some of today's big names in miniatures are Walter Agnoletto from Turin, Italy; Billy Johnson from Alabama; and a gentleman named Tom Weston who has miniature specialists working for him in Mexico City.

As any experienced collector will tell you, all you need to get started collecting miniature firearms is patience, knowledge, or a lot of money. I don't doubt that there are miniature arms still in unsophisticated hands waiting to be placed in an appreciative collector's home. However, don't be in a hurry to find these little treasures unless you're ready to pay for them. A carefully thought-out purchase may be expensive, but if it was well researched, the expenditure should have known value before and after the purchase.

In the past twenty years or so, there seems to have been an unlimited exercise of the craftsman's miniature art. There are modern-made copies of Gatling guns which are best differentiated by the size of the ammunition they shoot. Other recent treasures include fully operable Thompson sub-machine guns chambered for .22 rim-fire ammunition and solid gold, two-inch long .45 autoloading pistols with moving slides and magazines which drop out.

Perhaps one of the more exciting things to occur in the field of collecting miniatures has been generated by the Ruger Collector's Association (RCA). They have come up with a miniature version of the famous Sturm, Ruger Standard Auto pistol. These miniature Standard Autos are entirely hand-crafted by David Kucer of Canada, and are faithfully reproduced at exactly one-third scale. The actual pistol he chose to copy is the early Red Eagle model and his attention to detail is remarkable. His copies are fully functional: The slide moves back, the safety is fully operable, the magazine, complete with loading button drops out of the butt, and the trigger lets the hammer off with a pleasing little tick. In addition to all this, Kucer also reproduced the dovetail-cornered wooden box that the early guns came in. He also came up with a microprint instruction manual, which is small, but fun to read.

The reproduction of these guns will be limited to twelve units: eleven miniature RST-4 models and one miniature RST-6 model. The price of these guns is more than justifiable upon close examination. The total production of twelve pistols will be serial numbered 0001-0012 and will cost \$2000 each. Serial number 0001 was presented to William B. Ruger, president of Sturm, Ruger and Co., and the original designer of the Standard Auto. The presentation was made at the NRA show in San Antonio, Texas, during the annual RCA luncheon. It would be a lean understatement to say that Bill Ruger was thoroughly impressed by that magnificent example of the miniature gun makers' craft.

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