

# C. Roger Bleile

Author, Engraver, Arms Consultant  
FEGA Official Historian  
*FEGA.Historian@gmail.com*

May 20, 2021

Subject: Colt Second Model Dragoon pistol #9343

To whom it may concern:

I have been asked to examine an engraved and silver-plated Colt Second Model Dragoon pistol, serial number 9343 bearing the inscription "*Presented to Col. John C. Hays / Compliments of Sam Colt, Nov. 24, 1849*" with the aim of authenticating the engraving, markings, and finish of said pistol. Along with the inscription, the pistol features bold scrollwork, an eagle motif, a portrait within an oval, and other hand engraved embellishments as well as carving in the butt of the grips.

My examination focused on several elements, including the style of scrollwork, scroll elements and shading, ornamental motifs, border designs, metal cutting techniques, and the presence or absence of a signature or distinctive engraver's mark. I have examined these elements for points of comparison with known and documented examples of the work of known engravers.

In the case of #9343, I have personally examined the pistol as well as high resolution photos of it. Upon first seeing the pistol, it was immediately obvious that it was engraved in the style of renowned 19<sup>th</sup> century engraver, Louis Daniel Nimschke (1832-1904) whose workshop was in New York City and was active from 1850 to 1904.


Dragoon #9343 was in my possession for approximately one month during which time I fully disassembled the pistol and subjected the gun to close scrutiny of every part assisted by a Leica A60 binocular microscope. During this time, I made copious notes of my findings and associated research. You will find attached my 16-page outline report detailing all aspects of my examination including conclusions regarding the authenticity and originality of #9343, its specifications, condition, engraving, markings, and finish.

To summarize my findings, I have determined that #9343 is an authentic Colt Second Model Dragoon pistol, with period correct engraving, made in 1850. All hand engraving, stamps and roll die markings were applied prior to the original silver plating of the steel parts. The brass backstrap and trigger guard were silver plated prior to the inscription and ornamental motifs being engraved but the serial numbers and factory stamps are crisp and under the plating.

All scrollwork and the eagle motif on the right barrel lug are the early work of L. D. Nimschke. The portrait on the left lug is unidentified and most likely an idealized representation of a Texas Ranger. The engraver of the portrait cannot be specifically determined. There was no engraver's signature or mark found on the gun. Nimschke only signed a small portion of his later work, even more rarely on pistols. At this early stage of Nimschke's career it is highly unlikely that he would have signed any of his work.

In conclusion, Colt Second Model Dragoon .44 Caliber Percussion Revolver, Serial Number 9343 with extensive engraving, including the inscription "*Presented to Col. John C. Hays / Compliments of Sam Colt, Nov. 24, 1849*," is authentic, original, and, save for carving in the butt and handling marks, unaltered. It is the earliest engraving by Master Engraver Louis D. Nimschke known to this examiner.

Sincerely,



C. Roger Bleile

Author of American Engravers, American Engravers-The 21<sup>st</sup> Century, American Engravers III, Firearms Engraving Facts, and Roger Bleile's International Illustrated Glossary of Engraving. Founding Charter Member of the Firearms Engravers Guild of America and recipient of the FEGA James B. Meek Award.

**Colt Second Model Dragoon .44 Caliber Percussion Revolver  
Serial Number 9343 With Presentation Inscription to Col.  
John C. Hays from Sam Colt**

Examiner

C. Roger Bleile\*

**General Description**

- Colt Second Model 1848 Dragoon percussion revolver
- Manufactured 1850
- Serial number 9343
- Caliber: .44
- Barrel: Octagonal to round, 7 1/2 inches, silver plated
- Weight: 4 pounds 2 ounces
- Stocks: Smooth walnut
- Finish: Extensively engraved and silver plated
- Loading lever:
  - Vertical catch
  - Scroll engraved
  - Silver plated
- Mainspring: Flat
- Hammer:
  - Roller bearing
  - Scroll and "wolf head" engraved
- Sights:
  - Rear; Notch in hammer
  - Front; Semi elliptical blade
- Trigger guard:
  - Silver plated brass
  - Square back
  - engraved
- Backstrap:
  - Silver plated brass
  - Inscribed and engraved
- Cylinder:
  - 2 3/16 inches long, 1 7/8 inches circumference
  - Hand engraved scrollwork
  - W. L. Ormsby roll die not applied
  - Serial number stamped

- Cylinder stop notches:
  - Rectangular with guide grooves
- Six chambers
- Lock frame:
  - U. S. military marked
    - U.S. stamped on left side of the lock frame below COLT'S PATENT indicates that the revolver was one of those originally intended for the US Army.
      - Guns rejected by the Army for any reason were set aside and later used for civilian sale or presentation.
      - Colt had 5,000 frames of First Model Dragoon stamped U.S. overestimating the actual number of guns that were eventually ordered by the army. Thus, many civilian/presentation Dragoons are martially marked.
  - Scroll engraved
  - Silver plated

### 1. Inscriptions

- a. Inscribed, in hand engraved script, on backstrap (in two lines):
  - i. Presented to Col. John C. Hays*
  - ii. Compliments of Cham Cole, Nov. 24, 1849*
- b. Inscribed on grip shield (in three lines):
  - i. DEFENDER (all caps, hand cut Roman letters)
  - ii. of (lower case, Roman)
  - iii. Texas (Roman with unique styled x)
- c. Grips:
  - i. Marked in pencil in the backstrap groove: 9343
  - ii. Carved into the butt:
    - 1. T ☆ R (on right grip)
    - 2. C. TAYLOR (on left grip)

### 2. Markings

- a. Serial number 9343 stamped in following locations:
  - i. Bottom of barrel where it meets the lock frame.
  - ii. Bottom of barrel wedge.
  - iii. Bottom of frame where it meets the barrel.
  - iv. Trigger guard below screw.
  - v. Butt below screw.
  - vi. Bottom of cylinder arbor.
  - vii. Loading lever flat

- b. Barrel address:
  - i. -ADDRESS SAM<sup>L</sup> COLT-NEW YORK CITY-
    - 1. Roll die stamped in Roman caps.
- c. Dot indicating special handling at the Colt factory:<sup>i</sup>
  - i. Bottom of barrel, above serial number.
  - ii. Bottom of frame, below serial number.
  - iii. Trigger guard below, serial number.
  - iv. Butt, below serial number.
- d. Letter Q is stamped on the trigger guard below the serial number and dot.
- e. Left frame panel in three lines:
  - i. COLT'S
  - ii. PATENT
  - iii. U.S.
- f. Right rear triangle of trigger guard post:
  - i. Stamped six pointed "rework" star.
- g. Left front triangle of trigger guard post:
  - i. Stamped with the Roman letter F factory inspection mark.
- h. Under side of backstrap:
  - i. Stamped Roman letter T factory inspection mark.
- i. Left side of the front strap:
  - i. Deeply stamped with a Roman letter R (upside down)
    - 1. Without magnification the above appears to be a tiny square shape stamping.
- j. Left side of the front strap, 17/64" from bottom:
  - i. 3/32" circle is stamped.
    - 1. May indicate that the gun was condemned by a military inspector.<sup>i</sup>
- k. Stamped letters noted in g-i above are factory inspection marks and should not be confused with military sub-inspector's stamps as #9343 was not a military issue gun.

### **3. Engraving**

- a. The revolver is extensively engraved in a style of scrollwork commonly known to collectors as "Nimschke" scroll or "New York" scroll because Louis D. Nimschke (1832-1904) (hereinafter referred to as LDN) practiced his trade in New York City.<sup>ii</sup>
- b. The aforementioned scrollwork is evident on the following parts of the gun:
  - i. Both sides of the muzzle

- ii. Both sides of the barrel where the round section meets the flat panels (lugs)
  - iii. The left and right rectangular sections above the barrel lugs.
  - iv. Left barrel lug to the sides of the portrait oval.
  - v. Right barrel lug to the sides of the eagle motif.
  - vi. Left and right panels of the loading lever.
  - vii. Left and right lock frame panels.
  - viii. Left and right recoil shields.
  - ix. Entire circumference of the cylinder.
  - x. Left and right sides of the hammer neck.
- c. The left barrel lug features an engraved oval containing a line engraved image of the bust of a man having a mustache, goatee, wearing a bow tie over a high collar shirt, and having a hairstyle typical of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - d. The right barrel lug features a patriotic motif with an eagle, looking to its right, with upraised wings. The eagle is holding a shield featuring a large, five-pointed, "Texas" star. On the shield's left is a flag with a single star and on the opposite side is an American flag and cannon barrel.
  - e. Both sides of the hammer are engraved with the head of a creature that is sometimes known as a "wolf's head" or a "dragon head" and scrollwork on the hammer neck.
  - f. Microscopic examination of all of the above (a-e) reveals traces of silver plating within the cuts which indicates that engraving on these parts was cut prior to the silver plating being applied.
  - g. Engraving cuts are sharp, indicating the plating of these parts of the gun is original and not a refinish.
  - h. The flat bottom of the trigger guard is engraved with an entwining line motif with dots at the junctures.
  - i. The butt strap is engraved with an entwining line motif with dots at the junctures.

#### Notes and Remarks

##### 1. Scrollwork engraving

- a. Microscopic examination indicates that the engraving was cut with the hammer and chisel technique.
  - i. No indication of engraving with pneumatic or other power assisted gravers that have been in common use for 60 years.
  - ii. All scroll spirals are highly concentric, consistent with LDN work.
- b. Inside scroll finials are of two types consistent with the style and cutting techniques used by LDN.

- i. The LDN characteristic bifurcating or forked terminal cuts of the finials are found on the scrollwork of the muzzle, hammer neck, left and right recoil shields, the right frame panel, and to the left of the eagle.
  - ii. Scrollwork of the cylinder, left lock frame panel, left and right of the portrait oval, loading lever panels, scroll at back of barrel where it meets the panels, and to the right of the eagle features scroll finials cut in the common style used by most gun engravers, including LDN.
- c. Hairline shading of leaves at the confluence of scroll spirals is consistent with LDN technique.
- d. Overall internal and external leaf structures and line shading are consistent with LDN work.
- e. Crescent/tick marks, in descending size, along the stem of the scrolls are consistent with LDN technique.
  - i. In many cases, LDN used the edge of a circle punch to create the marks and at other times he merely made a nick with his graver.
    - 1. This has been verified on many known LDN guns. He sometimes mixed both techniques on the same gun.
- f. Where appropriate, all cuts are beveled consistent with LDN cutting.
- g. The background has been textured with a circle punch.
  - i. The background punching is not as meticulous as found on later LDN works and is less evenly filled on the left lock frame panel and recoil shield as on the opposite side.
    - 1. This may be an indication of early work or that someone else in the shop was assigned the background work. This is not unusual in an engraving shop where apprentices and journeymen are employed.
- h. The scrollwork on the left and right rectangular sections above the barrel panels are engraved with a different style of scrollwork than other sections of the barrel and frame.
  - i. This scrollwork is not in the style of the rest of the scrollwork on the gun. It could have been cut by LDN or any competent engraver working in the same shop.
    - 1. The stylistic difference may be simply a way of adding variety to the piece.

- i. Progression marks<sup>iii</sup>
  - i. Known examples of LDN's work on a wide variety of firearms exhibit scrollwork with and without *pronounced* progression marks in the cuts, as described by Dr. Harris.
  - ii. Dragoon #9343 has been examined under a Leica A60 binocular microscope to determine the extent of progression marks.
    - 1. Progression marks are visible to the extent that they clearly indicate engraving by hammer and chisel.
    - 2. Pronounced progression marks as illustrated by Harris are not in evidence throughout but can be seen in some areas.
  - iii. I have experimented on steel and brass using onglette, square, and flat chisels to replicate the progression marks illustrated by Harris and personally observed on some LDN work. I have also discussed this issue with various Master gun engravers.
    - 1. The obvious presence or absence of stepped progression marks is related to the type of graver used for the cuts. Flat gravers tend to make more pronounced, stepped progression marks than an onglette or square graver.
      - a. High resolution images of LDN's gravers published by the Metropolitan Museum of art show various types of gravers that LDN could have used on any particular job, therefore, the cuts may or may not have pronounced progression marks on any given job.
      - b. I have observed that pronounced progression marks are more in evidence on smaller examples such as Colt Open Top .22s, S&W Tip-Up .22 and .32 revolvers and other makes in similar size range as well as later LDN examples.
      - c. In a conversation with a top Master engraver, we were in agreement that LDN purposely induced the pronounced progression marks to give the work more "sparkle" on guns that were gold, silver, or nickel plated such as the gold-plated Remington on page 72 of the Harris book.
- j. It is my conclusion that the cutting technique employed on Dragoon #9343 is consistent with Nimschke's engraving when an onglette graver was used for the primary cuts.

- i. Onglette gravers were and are the primary scroll cutting gravers in use by gun engravers trained in Germany, as Nimschke was.

## **2. Hammer**

- a. The head and spur of the hammer have been engraved with the image of a fantastic creature.
  - i. This is a common practice on percussion revolvers and to a lesser extent on cartridge firing revolvers.
  - ii. Collectors and catalogers often refer to these hammers as “wolf’s head,” “dragon head,” or the head of a chimera.
  - iii. The head on Dragoon #9343 has been closely compared with images of verified LDN revolvers and those reproduced in the famous Nimschke pattern book.
    - 1. The hammer of #9343 exhibits an excellent match to those that have been cut by LDN.
      - a. Of particular note is the shape of the nose, the eyes, head feathering, and the crescent shaped scales on the sides of the hammer spur.
      - b. Comparison with many non-LDN guns shows marked differences in the way other engravers depicted the creature on the hammer sides.
- b. The neck of the hammer has been scroll engraved.
  - i. The scroll finials on both sides exhibit the bifurcating or forked terminal cuts with appropriate beveling closely associated with LDN’s scrollwork.

## **3. Trigger guard**

- a. The brass trigger guard/front strap casting has been silver plated as was Colt’s practice on commercial and presentation Dragoons.
- b. Engraving
  - i. The bottom of the trigger guard bow has been hand engraved with an entwining line motif with dot punches at the intersections.
  - ii. A nick and arc border has been hand engraved into the bottom edges of the trigger guard.
  - iii. A double leaf pattern has been hand engraved into both trigger guard shoulders.
    - 1. Microscopic examination of the hand engraving cut into the trigger guard shows no sign of silver plating within the cuts indicating the engraving was cut after the original plating was applied.
    - 2. All designs and cutting are consistent with other LDN work.

c. Stamping

- i. Serial number, below which is a dot<sup>i</sup>, and below which is stamped the letter Q factory inspection mark.
  1. Q inspector's mark observed by this examiner on other Colts of similar vintage.
    - a. Second Model Dragoons with the following serial numbers:
      - i. 9968, 10135, 10160, and 10173
- ii. Letter F on the left side of the trigger guard.
  1. Identical F factory inspection stamp has been noted on other Colt Dragoon revolvers.
- iii. Six pointed "rework" star on the right side of the trigger guard.
  1. The "rework" star is known to have been employed by the Colt factory to denote a gun that had been sent to the factory for repair such as a broken spring or malfunctioning lock work.
  2. Silver plating was found within the recesses of the stamping.
    - a. The stamp would have been applied a considerable time after manufacture. Because of its small size and shallow depth, the punch would have carried the plating into the recesses.
- iv. An upside-down R stamped into the left side of the front strap is of an unknown meaning or significance to this examiner.
- v. A 3/32-inch circle is stamped below the R.
  1. May indicate condemned by military inspector.<sup>i</sup>
- vi. Stampings are crisp showing silver plating within the recesses of all stamping.
  - a. Indicates that the stampings were punched prior to plating and not a refinish.

**4. Back strap/butt casting**

- a. The brass back strap/butt casting has been silver plated as was Colt's practice on commercial and presentation Dragoons.
- b. Engraving
  - i. The butt portion of the casting has been hand engraved with an entwining line motif with dots punched at the line junctures.
    1. A common LDN motif.
  - ii. Both flats where the grip meets the frame are engraved with a fan motif.

1. A common LDN motif.
- iii. The vertical portion of the backstrap has been inscribed in two lines as follows:

1. *Presented to Col. John C. Hays*

2. *Compliments of Sam Colt, Nov. 24, 1849*

- a. Examination of the inscription and comparison with other known LDN inscriptions appears to this examiner to be expertly cut though inconsistent with LDN's usual lettering style, particularly the letter H in the name Hays but this does not positively exclude LDN as the engraver of the inscription.

- i. There were engravers in factories and sub-contract shops that specialized in lettering, inscriptions, and monograms.

1. Herbert Houze, in *Colt Factory Engravers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, writing about Daniel Stevens indicates that Stevens was employed to cut inscriptions on soft metal (brass, copper, gold, and silver) parts such as trigger guards and backstraps.<sup>iv</sup>

- ii. Ultimately, it is not possible to identify the engraver of an inscription.

- iii. Sam Colt was made a Lt. Col in September 1850 by Connecticut governor Thomas H. Seymour<sup>v</sup>, thus the inscription of "Sam Colt" rather than Col. Colt is consistent with the way Colt styled himself prior to his appointment and is in accord with the date inscribed.

- iv. The backstrap, including the inscription, shows numerous signs of handling nicks, dings and scars.

1. Microscopic examination of these scars indicates that they all occurred after the inscription was cut.

2. In most cases the scar or dent protrudes into the graver cuts.



1. This is not unusual when the presentation is decided upon after the gun has been finished.
- c. Stamping
- i. Serial number 9343 is appropriately stamped into the butt below the screw hole.
  - ii. A dot is punched directly below the serial number.
  - iii. On the under-side of the backstrap is stamped a Roman letter T factory inspection mark.
    1. Stampings are crisp showing silver plating within the recesses of all stamping.
      - a. Indicates that the stampings were punched prior to plating and not a refinish.

## 5. Cylinder

- i. Scroll engraved with dot punched background, consistent in style and technique with the engraving on the frame and barrel.
- ii. Serial number is framed within an engraved rectangular border.
- iii. A high percentage of the original silver plating remains.
  1. A few spots where the plating has flaked off.
  2. The plating is worn off where the cylinder stop bolt has rubbed between the cylinder stops.
- iv. All engraving is crisp with plating in the cuts.
  1. Shows no signs of refinish.
  2. Serial number is as originally stamped with crisp edges.
- v. The roll die was not applied to the cylinder which indicates that #9343 was intended to have a hand engraved cylinder from the beginning of its manufacture.

## 6. Lock Frame

- a. Left panel and recoil shield.
  - i. Shows a high percentage of the original silver plating with only a small amount of flaking around the COLT'S PATENT stamping and adjacent scrollwork.
  - ii. All engraving, dot punching, and stamping is crisp with original plating in the recesses of the cuts and stamping.
- b. Right panel.
- c. Approximately 50% of the original silver plating has flaked off the panel.
  1. Engraving and dot punching is crisp.
- d. Right recoil shield.

- i. Capping notch shows about 80% original plating with an area flaked off in the center.
- ii. Remainder of right recoil shield shows some flaked off plating.
  - 1. Engraving is crisp with plating in the recesses of the engraving.
- e. Bottom flat of lock frame that meets the barrel.
  - i. Approximately 40% of plating on the exposed area is flaked off.
  - ii. Serial number and dot<sup>i</sup> are crisp having plating within.
- f. Cylinder arbor.
  - i. Shows approximately 50% of the original silver plating some of which has blackened from tarnish.
  - ii. The serial number is clearly stamped on the bottom of the arbor near the free end.

## **7. Barrel**

- a. 7.5 inches in length
- b. 60-70% of original silver plating remains with some flaked off areas on the lugs and cylindrical portion of the barrel.
- c. All engraving is crisp with original plating within the cuts.
- d. Serial number is stamped on the underside in the appropriate location with a “special handling” dot<sup>i</sup> above.
  - i. Stamping is crisp with original plating in the recesses.
- e. Left barrel lug.
  - i. The scrollwork is described above.
  - ii. Portrait oval.
    - 1. Contains a line engraved image of the bust of a man having a mustache, goatee, wearing a bow tie over a high collar shirt, and having a hairstyle typical of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.
      - a. At this time no contemporary image of Hays is a match for the subject depicted within the oval.
        - i. It is more likely that the subject within the portrait oval was meant to be a representative example of what the engraver, from an Eastern perspective, pictured a typical Texas Ranger to look like. This is not unlike allegorical figures engraved to represent liberty, victory, or patriotism.

- b. The identity of the engraver of the portrait is open to question as it is very difficult to determine in any case. Comparison of this portrait with known examples on guns and pictured in LDN's record book do not favor LDN as the engraver. Nimschke's method of shading a face with hatching and cross-hatching to show its contours is more detailed than the absence of shading in the subject at hand.
  - i. Favorable comparison has been observed with portraits *attributed* to Waterman Lily Ormsby, Sr. (September 9, 1809 – November 1, 1883) on the following Colt revolvers pictured in *Magnificent Colts*:<sup>vi</sup>
    1. 1849 Pocket #38385-Sam Colt.
    2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoon #10223-Marquis du Lafayette.
    3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoon #10222-George Washington.
    4. Though these simplistic portraits were attributed to W. L. Ormsby, Sr. and appear to have been cut by the same hand as that of #9343, it is a highly unlikely conclusion due to Ormsby's renown and skill as a banknote engraver. Rather the portrait may have been cut by LDN at this early stage of his career or W.L. Ormsby, Jr.
- f. Right barrel lug
  - i. Features a patriotic motif with an eagle, looking to its right, with upraised wings. The eagle is holding a shield featuring a large, five-pointed, "Texas" star. On the shield's left is a flag with a single star and on the opposite side is an American flag and cannon barrel.
    1. Close examination reveals significant similarity to Nimschke's style of depicting a patriotic eagle along with his techniques of cutting and shading.
- g. Barrel address on the top rectangular panel:
  - i. -ADDRESS SAM<sup>L</sup> COLT-NEW YORK CITY-
    1. Font size and style are consistent with that found on other authenticated 2<sup>nd</sup> Model Dragoon revolvers.

2. Roll stamping is crisp showing plating within the recesses.

a. No indication of refinishing.

**8. Loading lever and rammer**

i. Silver plated with some flaking at scrollwork and rod of lever.

ii. Serial number stamped on the flat portion of lever that is adjacent to the barrel.

1. Numerals are crisp with plating in the recesses.

a. No indication of refinishing.

**9. Grips**

a. Well figured walnut.

b. Varnished

c. No military inspector's cartouche.

i. As #9343 was not a military issued revolver there should be no grip cartouche.

d. Perfect fit to grip frame.

i. No chips or cracks.

e. Numerals 9343 penciled on the backstrap recess.

f. Butt of left grip carved:

i. C. TAYLOR

g. Butt of right grip carved:

i. T ☆ R

ii. The most likely explanation for the above marking is that it is the mark of Creed Taylor, Texas Ranger, who rode with Hays in the Ranger force.

**Examiner's conclusions**

1. #9343 is an authentic Colt Second Model Dragoon revolver.

a. Not a replica, copy, or brevet.

b. All measurements are correct.

c. All markings are appropriate to a civilian/presentation gun.

d. Wear and patina of age is appropriate.

2. All hand engraving is period correct. In style and technique.

3. All scrollwork and the eagle motif are the early work of Louis Daniel Nimschke.<sup>ii</sup> The earliest example observed by this examiner.

a. By microscopic examination and comparison with known works and pattern book prints.

4. All hand engraving on the backstrap and trigger guard assemblies were cut after the silver plating was applied.

a. The inscriptions may or may not have been cut by Nimschke.

- i. It is nearly impossible to determine with any degree of certitude the engraver of an inscription by stylistic or technical evaluation.
    - ii. Inscriptions and monograms were routinely cut by someone other than the engraver of the ornament, scenes, figures, or motifs applied to a gun.
    - iii. Handling marks impinging on the inscription are an indication that the gun was inscribed before it left Colt.
  - b. It is unknown why the inscriptions were cut after plating but various circumstances could account for this, i.e.:
    - i. The gun was made, engraved, and assembled before the presentation was decided on.
- 5. The plated finish is original.
  - a. All markings are crisp showing no signs of refinishing such as worn-down or recut stamping.
  - b. Plating is present within all stamping, indicating that no stamping or inspection marks were added after plating.
- 6. All engraving is crisp, showing no signs of refinishing or recutting.
- 7. Rework star stamping.
  - a. The presence of this mark is an indication that at some point #9343 was sent to the factory for repair or modification.
    - i. The nature of the repair or modification is unknown.
    - ii. May have been sent for repair of the lock work.
    - iii. Without substantiating documentation, the nature of the rework cannot be known with certainty.
- 8. Carving in the grips.
  - a. A modification done outside the Colt factory.
  - b. Without substantiating documentation, positive identification of the person who carved the grips is unknown, though Creed Taylor is the most likely person the carver was indicating.
- 9. Portrait within an oval on the left barrel lug.
  - a. It has not yet been positively determined exactly who the portrait is meant to depict though it is most likely an idealized image of a Texas Ranger.
  - b. Like an inscription, the engraver of a portrait is difficult to determine.
  - c. Nimschke cannot be ruled out as the engraver but it could have been cut by one of Nimschke's contemporaries.
- 10. Engraver's signature.
  - a. #9343 has been disassembled and examined in detail for any engraver's signature or distinctive mark with none found.

- i. This is as expected because in 1850 it was extremely uncommon for gun engravers to sign their work. More so for German engravers, especially an 18-year-old journeyman.
- ii. In later years, LDN was known to sign a small percentage of his work in various ways, though even more rarely on pistols.

### Summary

Colt Second Model Dragoon .44 Caliber Percussion Revolver, Serial Number 9343 with extensive engraving, including the inscription "*Presented to Col. John C. Hays / Compliments of Sam Colt, Nov. 24, 1849,*" is authentic, original, and, save for carving in the butt and handling marks, unaltered. It is the earliest engraving by Master Engraver Louis D. Nimschke known to this examiner.

### End Notes

i Wilson, R. L., *The Colt Engraving Book-Volume One*, page 68-69, SPECIAL FACTORY MARKINGS FOR ENGRAVED ARMS, Dot (.)

ii Louis Daniel Nimschke, born July 14, 1832, Ebersdorf, Reuss, Schleitz, Germany. Died Brooklyn, NY, April 9, 1904. Trained and apprenticed in Zella St. Blasii, Germany under Valentin Ernst Moritz. Accounts vary as to Nimschke's arrival in NYC. As early as 1849-1850. Nimschke's famous scrapbook of engravers pulls begins with the date of 1850 and is written in English rather than his native German. This is an indication that he was living and working as a journeyman engraver in the US at that time.

iii Harris, Fredric A., *Firearms Engraving as Decorative Art*, (1989), pages 72-77.

iv Houze, Herbert, *Colt Factory Engravers of the 19th Century*, (2012), page 105.

v Edwards, William B., *The Story of Colt's Revolver-The Biography of Col. Samuel Colt*, (1957), page 268.

vi Wilson, R. L. and Lee, Robert M., *The Magnificent Colts*, volume II (2011), pages 510-511.

**\* Examiner, C. Roger Bleile has been a hand engraving practitioner since 1976. He is the founder of the Firearms Engravers Guild of America (FEGA) and functions as the guild's historian. Bleile is the recipient of FEGA's James B. Meek award for his ongoing service and contributions to the hand engraving community.**

Bleile is also the author of *American Engravers* (1980), *Firearms Engraving Facts* (1982), *American Engravers-The 21st Century* (2010), *American engravers III-Masterpieces in Metal by America's Engraving Artisans* (2015). An extensive, illustrated introduction to Michael Kennelly's *Smith & Wesson Engraving* was also authored by Bleile who has as well authored numerous articles for The Engraver magazine. Roger Bleile's International, Illustrated Glossary of Hand-Engraving Terminology is an online resource of over 400 hand engraving terms with accompanying illustrations. It has been viewed thousands of times.

*C. Roger Bleile*