

14. Visit with the owner. Make friends. Does he seem to know his guns? Will he talk to you? Does he give you straight answers? Will he look you in the eye? Does he have a good reputation? What do others say about him?

15. If you are buying a gun for a collection or investment, does he have a factory letter with the gun? These can be secured from the Firearms Museum, at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, where old Winchester records are housed.

16. Look for special features on the gun. Each special feature increases the value. Look for shorter than normal, or longer than normal factory installed barrels. Short magazines; shotgun buttplates; half-octagon, half-round barrels; single or double-set triggers; original engraving; pistol grip; factory original checkered wood, take-down feature; tang sights, etc.

17. Even if the price is plainly marked, double check it with the owner. Don't be afraid to ask him if it's his best price or to make him an offer different than the marked price. Tell him what you are willing to pay. Remember, an expensive gun is not necessarily the best gun. And a cheap gun is not always a good buy.

18. Check around for guns just like the one you are interested in. If you're at a gun show, look at as many guns as you can that are similar. Compare features, condition and price. Ask lots of questions. Most all gun owners love to talk about guns.

19. If you have a friend more that is more experienced than you, have him take a look at the gun. Ponder it a while if you can't make up your mind. Have a cup of coffee and think about which you would regret more . . . buying the gun . . . or not buying it? If you like it and it fits your criteria and budget, BUY THE GUN! Enjoy it.

20. If you can't find just what you are looking for . . . don't buy any old gun. Wait until you find what you want. Tell a reputable dealer what you are looking for. Give him your name and phone number or email address. If he runs across something, have him contact you. Owning old lever action Winchesters is a fun hobby, and a connection with the history of this country!

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**ASK US HOW TO JOIN  
THE WINCHESTER ARMS  
COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION.**

*For more information  
check into these fine reference books:*

THE WINCHESTER BOOK - George Madis  
Art & Reference House, Brownsboro, TX 75756

The Winchester Model 94: the first 100 years  
Robert C. Renneberg  
Krause Publications, Iola, WI, 54990

For a look at our guns  
check out  
**TapaderasWinchesters.com**  
or email us for the latest list.



## HOW TO BUY AN OLD LEVER-ACTION WINCHESTER

a **FREE** guide  
to help you buy  
with confidence  
the gun you want

**TapaderasWinchesters.com**

**Jim Grueter & Steve Bly**

Jim - P.O. Box 216 - 302 Lapwai Street  
Steve - P.O. Box 157 - 815 Camas Street

Winchester, Idaho 83555

ph (Jim) 208.924.5037

ph (Steve) 208.924.5885

fax 208.924.7303

steve@TapaderasWinchesters.com

jim@TapaderasWinchesters.com

**1.** If you are serious about it, take a pencil and piece of paper with you to write down information about each gun. At a gun show, there are so many guns it is easy to forget which one had which features. **ASK PLENTY OF QUESTIONS ABOUT ANY GUN YOU ARE INTERESTED IN.**

**2.** Make up your mind **WHY** you want an old Winchester. To shoot? To collect? For investment? To hang on the wall? For cowboy action shooting? To hunt with? To own a piece of history? Your intended use will determine what to look for and how much you should pay.

**3.** Look for the model number. It should be on the upper tang (the top metal strap going back into the buttstock) or on the barrel. Look for a caliber marking on the barrel. If there is no caliber marking on a Winchester 1873, it's a 44-40. If there is no caliber marking on a Winchester 1876, it's a 45-75.

**4.** Look for the serial number. It will be on the lower tang, or the bottom of the receiver. The lower the number, the older the gun. If you want a pre-WWII Winchester 1894, look for a number lower than 1,300,000. If you want a pre-1964, Model '94, look for one lower than 2,200,000. (Design changes in 1964 make guns after that date less desirable.)

**5.** Determine how much, if any, of the original blue finish is left on the gun. Is the bluing turning brown? Is it gun metal silver? The more original blue, the more valuable. If

in doubt, ask the owner if the gun has been re-blued. Refinished or re-blued is okay for a shooter, but it loses collector value. Is there any pitting in the metal? Any rust? Have there been extra holes drilled?

**6.** Check the outside of the barrel. Is it the correct length? If you don't know, ask the dealer if it's the original length. Is the lettering on the barrel crisp, or does it look polished, rounded? Is there pitting or rust?

**7.** Check the inside of the barrel ... the bore. Ask to borrow a bore light and look inside. Here's a rating system we use:

- 1 = very bad, just a hole
- 2 = heavy pitting, some rifling
- 3 = dark bore, pitting, corrosion
- 4 = shootable
- 5 = decent rifling - some corrosion
- 6 = good rifling, minor pitting
- 7 = shiny, some wear, minor pitting
- 8 = bright & shiny, slight wear
- 9 = near perfect
- 10 = as new, perfect

Ask the owner to rate the gun. How good a bore you need depends on your use of the gun.

**8.** Examine the condition of the wood. What is the finish like? Has the wood been sanded? Refinished? How does the wood fit to the metal (is the wood flush or higher than the metal?) Undersized wood reduces value. Are there big flaws in the wood, such as nails, bolts, wire wrap, holes drilled, inlaid items, tacks, repairs? Look for little flaws, like chips of wood missing, and cracks in the wood. Take your time, examine it carefully.

**9.** Check the buttplate. Does it look correct? There are 3 different shapes to look for. A sharply curved crescent was standard on rifles. A more gradual rounded curve was standard on carbines. The straight, shotgun buttstock was custom ordered on either. Does the buttstock fit tight? Is there pitting or rust on it?

**10.** Look at all the screws. Are there any missing? Are the screw heads battered? Are they nice? Do they match the rest of the gun?

**11.** Ask the owner to let you work the action. Cock the gun. Look inside. Do the parts look original? Look for cracks, welds, signs of excessive wear. Is the action smooth, rough, sloppy? Ask him how the gun shoots. Is it easy to get ammo for it? Where? Ask the owner if you may pull the trigger. Always respect his instructions.

**12.** Ask the owner the date of manufacture. Most will have a book that lists the year the gun was made. If he doesn't, write down the serial number and ask someone else to look it up for you. The older the gun, the more value it can retain.

**13.** Inspect the sights. Are they the original ones that came with the gun? If you don't know, ask the owner. Do they look as worn as the rest of the gun? Are they special ordered? Are they other than factory installed? Is there something unique about the sights? Double check for extra holes drilled for sights or scope mounts.