



Collecting No. 1s

Ruger No. 1 Rarity Tables

Estimates of Rarity of the Various Configurations and Calibers of the early
Non-prefix Ruger No. 1 Rifles

I bought my first No. 1, a very early 130-prefix 1B in 7mm Remington Magnum in November of 1972. Since that time, with only a couple of exceptions, I've used No. 1's exclusively for what hunting opportunities I've had. Two of the best write-ups in existence on the No. 1 and single shot rifles in general are by John Wootters. The Foreword in Joe Clayton's No. 1 Book and the May 1990 issue of Petersen's Hunting, The Petersen's Hunting article, titled "The One-Shot Mystique" has a few sentences I'd like to pass on. "A man who opens a case in hunting camp and lifts out a single-shot rifle makes a statement about himself. It may be quite unconscious, or it may be pure egotistical one-upmanship, but it does project the image of a superior marksman and a hunter of above-average skills."

Personally, I like the Ruger No. 1 Single Shot, for all those many good reasons written many times before. It is a beautiful and classic rifle! The first shot is the one that counts; the very few big game animals that I have managed to miss with the first shot - I didn't hit them with any of the other shots either!

I have been a No. 1 collector since 1976, when I acquired my second No. 1. In March of 1977, I met Joe Clayton at the Dallas Arms Collectors show. A year later, I found my first two non-prefix rifles. They were a .243 with a 22" barrel, AH forearm and no sights(with knockout wood) and a .22-250 1B with target scope blocks with a Unertl scope on it. At that early date, Joe said he had not seen one of the target scope block configurations. I was hooked!!- and still have these first two rifles in my collection today.

The Clayton Ruger No. 1 Book was published in 1983; it had a lot of good information and some beautiful color photographs. I realize that today it is quite hard to come by and usually quite expensive! In the nearly 25 years since it was published, more has been learned, many limited exclusive special runs have been made and the Internet has helped spread the information. As it relates to non-prefix rifles, the No. 1 Book provides the information that:

- The first rifle "commercially shipped" was #935, 26" barrel, beavertail forearm in .308 Winchester on September 15, 1966.*
- The last non-prefix shipped was #5290 in January, 1975.
- The highest number shipped was #8437 in May, 1972.
- Only about 7500 non-prefix rifles were made.

* Joe told me that the Factory had advised him that #935 was the first rifle shipped and that it was 1966. At one time, I owned #935, as new in the box. The box had the U.S. postage stamps and the Newport cancellation on September 15, 1967. There was a great effort to have the No. 1 announced and written up in all the major magazines for their October 1966 issue, but that is for another story. I believe the first No. 1's were shipped in March of 1967. I would certainly like to hear from anyone who has a rifle with an earlier shipping date. Why did I ever sell it???

From this information, we know that approximately 7500 rifles were produced and shipped over a relatively long period of time-until 1975. Obviously, 130-prefix numbered rifles were manufactured and shipped simultaneously beginning in 1970. I believe the majority of the rarer configurations and calibers to have been assembled prior to 1970; after that time, the standard models and calibers are catalogued, with the information that "no specifications other than those listed will be offered" However, the General Megee rifle in .32 S&W Long is an exception.(Clayton Book page 37 and Shooting Times, April 1971 The General published an article in the American Rifleman, January 1970, which is probably what earned him the special consideration for a unique rifle. This article was very complimentary of the accuracy of No. 1 rifles in .270 Winchester and .222 Remington.

Calibers

Calibers that were published as being available or that are known to me in the non pre-fix rifle are: .222 Remington, .22-250 Remington, .243 Winchester, 6mm Remington, .25-06 Remington, .264 Winchester Magnum, 6.5 mm Remington Magnum, .270 Winchester, .280 Remington, 7×57, 7mm Remington Magnum, .308 Winchester, .30-06, .300 Winchester Magnum, .300 H&H Magnum, .338 Winchester Magnum, .375 H&H Magnum, .45-70, .458 Winchester Magnum. Those published as being available, but not known to me are the .264 Win. Mag., 6.5mm Rem. Mag., .300 H&H Mag., and .338 Win. Mag. The .25-06 was listed available as a 1V in in 1971 and as a 1B in 1973. The 7mm Rem. Mag. and .300 Win. Mag. were listed as available in the 1V in 1973. The.45-70 was listed as available in S24H in 1969 and as a 1S in 1970(with 22" medium weight barrel). The .45-70 in 1H is only known in the prefix series and is a rare rifle.

Rarity Points

Many collectors have had difficulty understanding or interpreting the Ruger No. 1 Evaluation Table in the Clayton No. 1 book, especially as it relates to the non- prefix serial number configurations and calibers. I believe much of the problem lies with using these "Rarity Points" as an absolute, rather than a relative indicator. Also, at the rare end of the scale, my observations and experience are somewhat different; we all have the benefit of another 25 years collecting experience. In summary, the Rarity Points are based on Configuration, Caliber and Digits in the serial#; this applies to the non-prefix rifles.

Caliber points are:

- .22-250 Remington & .308 Winchester-3
- .243 Winchester, 6mm Remington & .30-06-4
- .270 Winchester, .375 H&H Magnum, .45-70 & .458 Winchester Magnum-5
- .222 Remington, 7mm Remington Magnum & .300 Winchester Magnum-6
- .25-06 Remington-7
- .280 Remington-8
- 7×57-10
- .264 Winchester Magnum-11

Configuration points are:

- S26M Beavertail no sights-2
- S22L Beavertail no sights, S22L AH no sights & S26M Beavertail Target Scope blocks-3
- S22L AH sights & S26M AH no sights-4
- S26M AH sights & S24H-5
- S26M Beavertail sights & S26M AH Target Scope Blocks-6
- S22M-7, and S22L Beavertail sights-8

Serial # points are: One digit-10, Two digit-8, Three digit-6 and Four digit-4.

The Scale is: Nice rifle 0-4, Collectable 5-7, Rare 8-10, and Very Rare 11+.

1967 Catalogue

The 1967 Catalogue spread on the No. 1 contains a wealth of information. If you, as a collector have not read it thoroughly, I would certainly recommend it. The Catalogue describes how these different rifles could be ordered; the customer picked the barrel weight and length, the caliber, the forearm style and the sighting equipment-rib and sights or no sights or target scope blocks. I suggested several years ago a shorthand system for identifying the various configurations that I believe is much more convenient. It uses two or three letters to describe the barrel weight, forearm style and sighting equipment. It works well for the 10 configurations that are the most difficult to describe. These are:

- BB- 26" barrel, Beavertail forearm, no sights(the present 1B)
- BBS- 26" barrel, Beavertail forearm, Sights
- BBB-26" barrel, Beavertail forearm, target scope Blocks
- BH- 26" barrel, Alex Henry forearm, no sights
- BHS- 26" barrel, Alex Henry forearm, Sights(what was the 1S)
- BHB-26" barrel, Alex Henry forearm, target scope Blocks
- AB- 22" barrel, Beavertail forearm, no sights(the present 1AB)
- ABS-22" barrel, Beavertail forearm, Sights
- AH- 22" barrel, Alex Henry forearm, no sights
- AHS- 22" barrel, Alex Henry forearm, Sights(the present 1A)

On the above, I will note that the 26" barrels are the "B" or medium weight and the 22" barrels are the "A" or light weight. The other 3 configurations are the 1V, 1H and 1S in .45-70

With this new Configuration terminology, I will provide some examples of the failure of the rarity points! A 4 digit in BB and .22-250 racks up 9 points(4+2+3; Rare) and a 4 digit AB and .308 totals 10 points(4+3+3; Rare). A 3 digit of any caliber and configuration becomes Very Rare by this Evaluation Scale. Therein lies the problem!

What is Rare and Very Rare as compared to what?

My Caliber rarity:

- Common-.22-250 Remington, .308 Winchester, .243 Winchester
- Fairly Common-.222 Remington, 6mm Remington, 7mm Remington Magnum, .30-06
- Rare: .25-06, .270 Winchester, 7×57, .280 Remington, .300 Winchester Magnum
- Very Rare: .375 H&H Magnum, .45-70, .458 Winchester Magnum

My Configuration scale: (% is of 7500 rifles)

- Common-----BB (60%)
- Fairly Common---AB (15%)
- Somewhat Common- AH (8%)
- Rare-----BH (6%)
- Very Rare-----BHS, AHS, BBB, BBS (2% each)
- Very, Very Rare- BHB, 1V (less than 1% each)
- Not Often Found- ABS, 1H, 1S(.45-70) (less than .5% each)

Now, down to the nitty-gritty!! There are 127 possible combinations of Caliber and Configuration. This is derived from the 12 calibers in the 10 configurations (10x12=120) adding the 4 calibers of the 1V, the 2 calibers of the 1H and the 1S in .45-70 (120+4+2+1=127) A statement from the No. 1 book that the BB in .22-250 and the AB in .308 accounted for over 20% of the production and three assumptions is the basis for these estimates.

Assumptions:

- The BB is the most common configuration-estimate 60%
- The AB is the second most common configuration-estimate 15%
- The common rifles are the BB in .222, .22-250, .243, 6mm, 7mm RM and .30-06 and the AB in .308, which account for 60% of the production (The converse is true; these common calibers in any configuration other than the ones listed makes for an uncommon rifle!)

.375 H& H	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<25	-	-
.458 WM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<25	-	-
.45- 70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<25

NM=Probably Not Made

* In the development of the 1V Configuration at least one .222 Remington rifle was produced. It is serial# 6580 and was made in February, 1970. It was never shipped; it was sold on the Ruger Auction in September, 2007. No other 1V's in .222 are known, either with a non-prefix receiver or in the early 130-prefix. Another previously unknown non-prefix 1V, this one in .243 Winchester, has been auctioned on the Ruger Auction Website in May of 2008. It is #7233. This caliber was produced in the 1V configuration in later years, but no other non-prefix or 130-

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Note that 16 Caliber/Configurations are projected as not produced; that leaves 111 likely different rifles to look for! The numbers estimated as production for each Caliber/Configuration are based upon a percentage of the 7500 non prefix rifles produced. The percents that were estimated are:

14%=1050, 11%=825, 9%=675, 6%=460, 5%=375, 2%=150, 1%=75, <1%=<50, <.5%=<25, <.1%=<8.

I believe that the percents from 14% to 5% are accurate within +/-1%; the percents from 2% to <.1% are accurate to within +/--.5%. That is an out for me in that some of these rifles which I list as <25 and <8 just may not have ever been made! One other very interesting calculation can be made from the percents--that is that the 12 most common rifles make up 70% of the production, and that the next 19 Caliber/Configurations are 19% of the production, AND the rarest 80 Caliber/Configurations are only 11% of the rifles. For a long time, I have stated to interested or beginning collectors that any non prefix rifle other than a BB or a .308 Winchester AB is a very rare rifle! And there are some very rare rifles that are BB depending on the caliber. A low or unique serial number or prior ownership by a prominent individual could add a "special" rarity on its own. Even the quality of the wood can affect the desirability. Every collector knows that the buttstock can range from "pine board plain" to the finest of figured walnut.

Special Rifles

One very rare type of rifle I have not mentioned yet is the "one of a kind" that does not fit the caliber/Configuration charts. One example is the S24M beavertail in .222 Remington, serial# 2103 pictured on page 120 of the Ruger No.1 book. These rifles do exist; they are very special and were made for special people. There better be a story behind the rifle that makes sense; they weren't made for just anyone! I doubt the factory could or would verify them, so it's the history and story and your experience that you have to rely on.

Last Comments

I do not consider the grooved front sight to be anything other than a variation; it is a result of whether a rifle was made earlier or made later. Likewise, with the checkering pattern on the Alex Henry forearm, it is simply an indication of the time frame the rifle was finished. As a different example, all of the non-prefix 1V's I am familiar with do not have the diamond checkering pattern on the bottom of the beavertail forearm, which is proper for the time frame in which they were completed and shipped. The .45-70's also have the later Alex Henry forearm and checkering pattern. The "S" safety stamp is another variation that results from the time frame of marking. Many of the 1V models of the 1970-1972 period have this safety marking, as do other early 130- prefix rifles. These last comments, grooved sights, checkering patterns and safety markings are what I consider to be manufacturing variations, not differences in configuration. In closing, I want to stress again that these are my estimates based on the stated assumptions, observed ratios, and calculations to achieve the correct percentages. Any No. 1 owners having one of these scarcer Caliber/Configurations(<25) are solicited to report to me that these rifles do exist!

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