



Part of special collection includes this group of early American revolvers and Winchester rifles, presently on display. Battalion photo by David Keahey

Firearms reflect American history

By GREG PROPPS

You've just been given a walk in your first class of the day and you've got some free time on your hands. Why not use it to give yourself a short course in firearm history at the Metzger-Sanders Firearms Collection in the Memorial Student Center?

The collection, located directly above the main desk in room 342, has a reputation of being "one of two most outstanding Colt firearms collections in the world" according to Jim Stribling, chairman of the Metzger-Sanders Firearms Collection committee.

Although the items in the collection span the development of firearms over six centuries and include several countries, the main emphasis is on the evolution of the American-made Colt revolver and repeating rifle. These Colts played a major part in early American military campaigns and accompanied the settlers as they moved west. According to Stribling, these guns represent the "basic tools of the settlement of a new nation."

Along with the antique firearms, the collection includes about 50 replicas of earlier Colt models. These replicas were made by Colt as limited commemorative editions and are in mint condition.

The Colts are the stars of the collection, but there are many firearms worthy of attention. Early examples of matchlock and flintlock pistols are displayed, as well as early Remington rifles, Smith and Wesson pistols, and several cases of European made oddities. Many of these firearms are extremely rare — several are one of a kind.

The collection came to Texas A&M in two parts. The first and largest part was donated by the family of Carl Metzger in 1949. Metzger, a Dallas dairyman, collected firearms and related items most of his life. He designated Texas A&M to receive the collection at the time of his death.

Because of lack of space in the MSC, the Metzger collection was not opened to the public until August 1952.

The addition of the Sam Houston Sanders Commemorative Colt Collection was made possible by Dr. Sanders in 1973. Sanders is a 1922 graduate of Texas A&M.

The Sanders collection includes 88 of the 92 commemorative issues made by Colt, but because of space limitations, only half of these are displayed.

The complete firearms collection, containing nearly 600 pieces, has been recently appraised for over \$1 million. Due to a rapid rate of appreciation, it is insured for less than that amount.

Two separate alarm systems guard the collection at all times. One is a sonic system that detects movement inside the cases themselves, and the other is confidential Stribling said. The firearms are further protected by keeping them in a dry atmosphere and a constant temperature, and each piece is cleaned and inspected annually.

Stribling indicated that as more money is made available, several more display cases will be added allowing "interpretive work" to further tie the collection to American and world history.

The collection is open daily from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. There is no admission charge.

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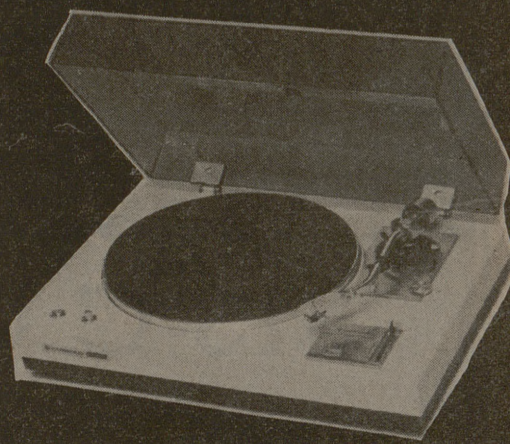
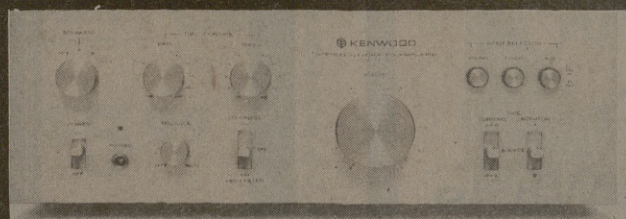
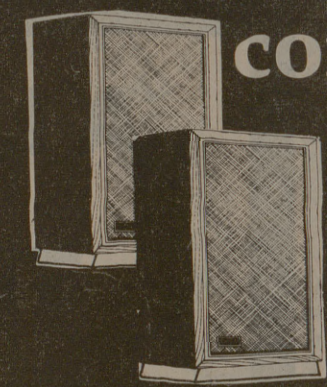
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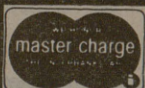
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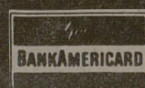
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