

Collectible .45 Autos

Prices for collectible Colt .45 1911 and 1911A1 pistols and their variations have risen dramatically since they were introduced almost a century ago.

Current-production Colt Government Model .45 autos (the nomenclature for commercial pistols) sell for between \$500 and \$550, but the older models can be much more expensive.

John L. Guest, a Dallas, Texas-based architect who's the current president of the Colt Collectors Association (CCA), said, "The market on Colt .45s has just gone out of sight. The prices on original pieces have probably gone up 30 percent the last few years.

"Some of that increase has probably been driven by a couple of books about the original models, which have educated and made collectors more confident about what to look for in the expensive collector items."

Lowell E. Pauli, an engineer in Milwaukie, Oregon, is the CCA's historian and a collector whose cache of .45s runs well into the hundreds. He said prices for most "average" 1911s range from \$500 to \$2,500 or more. "It becomes a factor of what the contract is," he said, referring to which manufacturer built a particular gun. "The Springfield Armory 1911 commands a premium. I know personally of a World War I-era NRA-marked Colt that sold for \$4,500. Navy-marked 1911s get similar prices."

A true find, however, would be a North American Arms Company-marked 1911. The Canadian manufacturer made only about one hundred .45 Autos. "Those will sell for \$10,000 to \$15,000," Pauli said. "Mine is number 86. I've only seen one that had a serial number over 100."

Pauli said he thought the most interesting A1s carry Singer marks. "During World War II, the Singer sewing machine company only manufactured about 500 A1s," he said. "Those have sold for \$15,000."

For more information on Colt firearms, contact the Colt Collectors Association, Attn. Karen Green, 25000 Highland Way, Los Gatos, CA 95030, telephone (408) 353-COLT.