

Buying & Shooting: Two Accurate Rifles for only \$100

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I was getting desperate, I had not purchased a new, surplus rifle (*an intended oxymoron*) in over a month. When I went to my favorite, local source - **EVERYTHING WAS GONE!** Not really - when the end

of summer comes around they put all of the military rifles in the back and pull out the huntin' rifles.

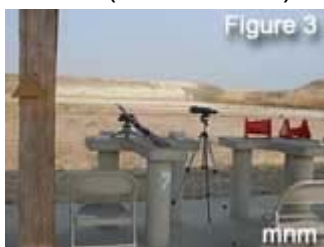
I had yet to catch the end of summer rut that my friends usually do. I like venison as much as the next red blooded American male does but....



Lately, I had been shooting everything I owned and was getting a little bored with the same-o, same-o. On the other hand - I had very little funds to remedy this ailment.

They brought out most of the rifles they had in the back, for me to gander at and paraded them by, like some New York fashion show . I had been keeping my eye on an Arisaka they had on the rack, priced around \$100, but to my dismay it had been sold.

I had seen a couple of 1891/30 Mosin-Nagants and asked if they still had them on hand, and they did. On close inspection - both rifles had decent rifling and nothing broken (*or unfixable*).



One 1891/30 was actually in pretty nice shape, except for a couple of dings in the stock. It was made in 1922 and had the Octagon type receiver (*as shown in figure 12*).

The other 1891/30 was made in 1939 and had the later round type receiver (*as shown in figure 13*). It also had almost no bluing and the stock was dinged up pretty bad. It was a promising project rifle. Besides having a very clean barrel and rifling - it had one hell of a good trigger

pull. Not your normal Military rifle creep, but crisp and sharp. This 1891/30 was worth the gamble. The nicer of the two rifles (1922) was priced at \$89 and the faded beauty (1939) was only \$39. **I offered \$100 for both and was pleased to have my offer accepted.**

***Note:** Never offer what is displayed on the price tag. You will find there is always bargaining room on the sales price. It also helps if you stay on top of things and do a little research on the baseline market price for the rifle you are trying to purchase - Shotgun News is a good resource for this on Surplus Military Rifles. I knew that I could easily get half way decent Mosin-Nagants these days for around the \$50 price range for each.

PREPARATION FOR THE BIG DAY

I had been loading both some new Norma brass and also some once fired Winchester brass. I had decided to see if I could get one of these rifles in shape enough to use for the Military Silhouette Competition. I loaded up Hornady 180 grain BTSP with 43 grains of 4064. This would not be my final load for the competition, but would be a good starting place to shoot these two 1891/30s on my very first outing.



I spent the Thursday and Friday before going shooting getting the rifles in shape.

1) I completely disassembled both rifles.

2) I steel woolled both stocks and used **WATCO Rejuvenating Oil** in several coats to clean and restore what appeared to be close to the original Military finish. It worked.

3) I had to clean and degrease all of the metal on both rifles. I used **Birchwood Casey Gun Scrubber Solvent/Degreaser** to accomplish this.

4) The earlier 1922 - 1891/30 only needed touching up on the bluing. The 1939 needed to be completely redone - it was worn all the way down to the bare metal. I steel woolled all of the exposed metal parts in preparation - per the bluing instructions.

5) I have tried the Birchwood Casey Perma Blue Liquid Gun Blue and have found I prefer the darker finish of **Birchwood Casey Super Blue Liquid Gun Blue**. I blued, cleaned with soapy water, and steel woolled (each three times) before attaining the desired finish.

After reassembling both rifles - I was pretty happy with how they turned out. I was now ready to head off to the range and try out my new babes. I had eighty rounds loaded and was for this trial!



I loaded up the 1922, 1891/30 first with cartridges. **Figure 5** shows my grouping after I had fired off around 3 magazines, finally getting the front sights set properly for windage.

***Note:** Use a brass hammer and punch as shown in **figure 4** for moving your front sights. This prevents marring or leaving permanent marks on your rifle. Also remember to move the front sights in the opposite direction you want the desired point of impact to be on the target. This means - if I need the point of impact to move further right - I would move the front sight to the left. I also recommend taking a pencil and marking a line on the sight and sight base, so you know your starting place.

After getting both rifles sighted in, I was ready to record my shots. I loaded the 1922 twice with 4 rounds each time and achieved what is shown in figure 5. Very accurate! I was indeed pleased.



Next I prepared to fire the 1939 to be recorded. Again I fired two magazines of four cartridges. The grouping was not as tight as the 1922, but was acceptable.

One peculiarity I did notice while firing both rifles was that the 1922 rifle had problems chambering and locking the bolt down on the rounds assembled with Winchester brass. The 1939 did not have this problem. I at first worried about some sort of bore or headspace issue - but noticed that the brass was most likely the issue. Both rifles cycled the Norma loaded brass without exception.

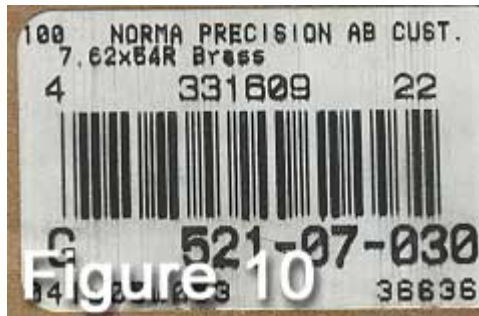


After inspecting the brass I discovered that the Winchester brass had no rim and the Norma brass did have a rim as shown in **figure 8**. I thought to myself - "did I purchase the wrong type of ammo or brass?"



After inspecting the

boxes that the Winchester brass came in I found it was labeled **7.62X54R** as shown in **figure 9**.



After inspecting the box that the Norma brass came in it also showed **7.62X54R** as shown in **figure 10**. I have no idea why the difference between the two cases. I also had a Romanian, M-44, Nagant Carbine

with me and tried cycling both ammo types in it and had no problems at all.

So to rap up this adventure - for \$100, I was able to pick up two pieces of history. One 1891/30 manufactured just prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union, when Nagants were still made of fairly reliable quality.



The other 1891/30 was made just after the rise of the Soviet Union in 1922.

The future of these two rifles? I plan on trying a different load of 168 grain BTSP bullets with 46 grains of IMR 4064. After trying this load on the 100 yard range I will then decide which rifle I will then take to the 300 yard range and the 500 meter Silhouette range for further tests.



Overall I am happy with the bargain. I have single Military rifles that I have paid 5 to 10 times more, each and still do not achieve comparable accuracy to these two Mosin-Nagant 1891/30s.

jlm