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"THE THOMPSON LEGEND"

Vol. 34

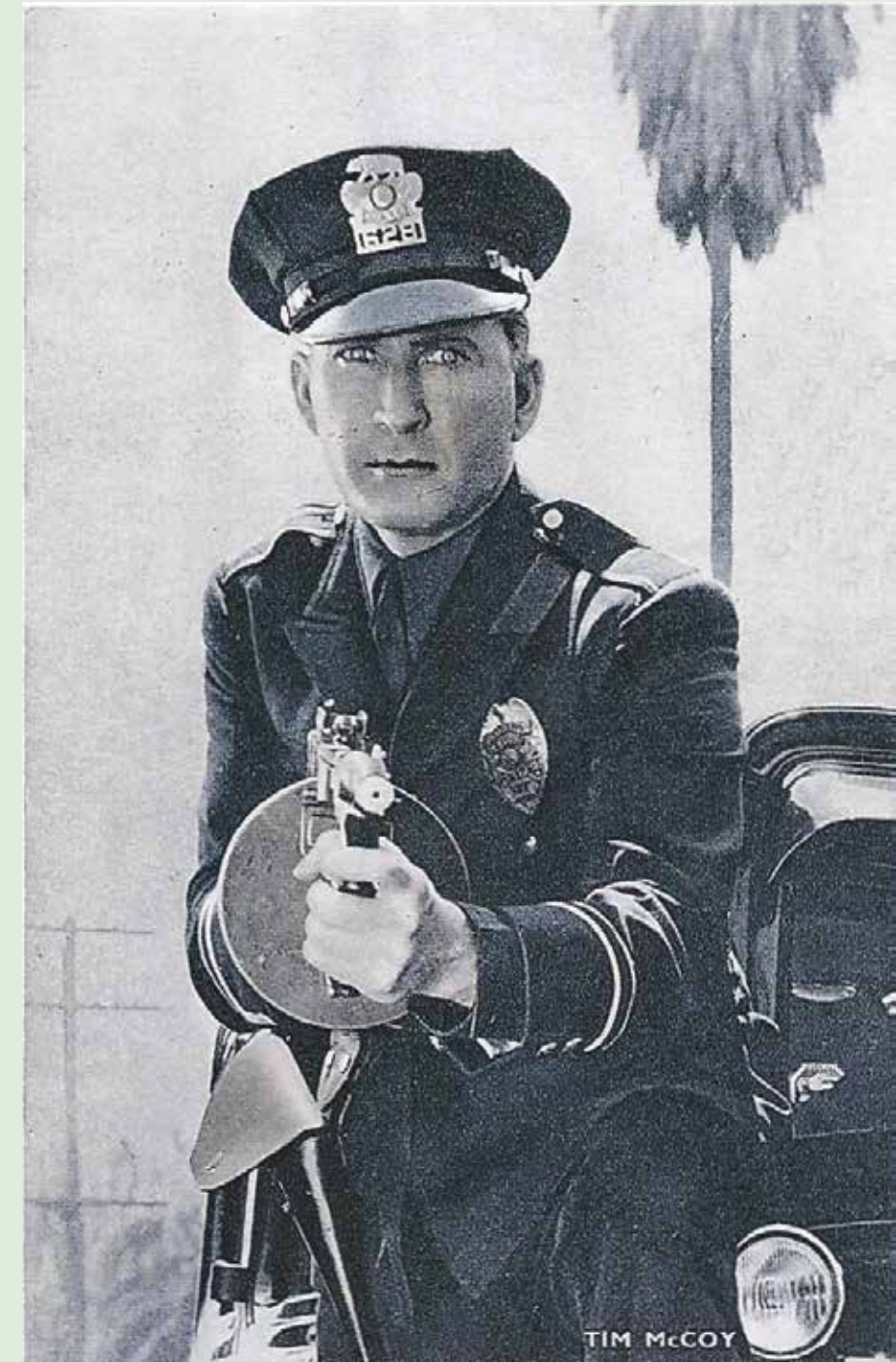
On The Side Of Law And Order

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Actor Tim McCoy "On The Side Of Law And Order"



**MICHIGAN STATE POLICE COLT THOMPSONS -
SERVING
"ON THE SIDE OF LAW AND ORDER"**

**BY
SIG**

The Michigan State Police (MSP) as exists today were originally formed as the Michigan State Troops Permanent Force aka Michigan State Constabulary in 1917. Colonel Roy C. Vandercook was the first commanding officer. One of the first recruits and members was Lt. Del Vandervoort who will later have involvement in the acquisition of several Colt Thompsons by the Michigan State Police.

Auto-Ordnance Corporation (AOC) having missed the opportunity to sell their new creation during WWI, looked for opportunities to sell elsewhere. State Constabularies were an obvious target. There were 12 Colt Thompsons purchased by the MSP for use On the Side of Law and Order. Another 3 were confiscated or forfeited to them. This story will visit the known history for all 15 of these, starting with the purchased Colt Thompsons. References to locations noted below are as documented on the original Internal Revenue Service, Form 1, Registration of Firearms, submissions in 1934, unless otherwise noted.

PURCHASED THOMPSONS

In July 1922 the MSP made the first two Colt Thompson acquisitions of NO's 1668 and 1723, they were assigned at the East Lansing and Paw Paw posts respectively. East Lansing was the headquarters at the time and Paw Paw perhaps could be argued was located strategically to address bootleg activity.

Both of these Thompsons were originally shipped as Model 1921A's, however the Form 1 for NO 1668 indicates it had a compensator. There were noted date discrepancies on the Form 1's vs shipment records. In the case of the compensator for NO 1668, it was most likely an error on the Form 1 or this particular Thompson was shipped back to AOC and fitted with a compensator. Thompson NO 1668 has not been observed to confirm it's compensator status. NO 1723 has been seen for sale recently and was observed with a smooth and obviously not an original barrel.

NO 1766 is a Model 1921A that was shipped to Lansing, Michigan in April 1923 and was assigned at the Jonesville post. A fellow TATA member is the current caretaker for this Thompson.

There appears to be a minor error on the Form 1's submitted showing acquired dates for NO 1668 as April 1923 and NO 1766 as July 1922. Based on AOC shipment records it is likely that in 1934 this was a slight error on the Form 1 entries.

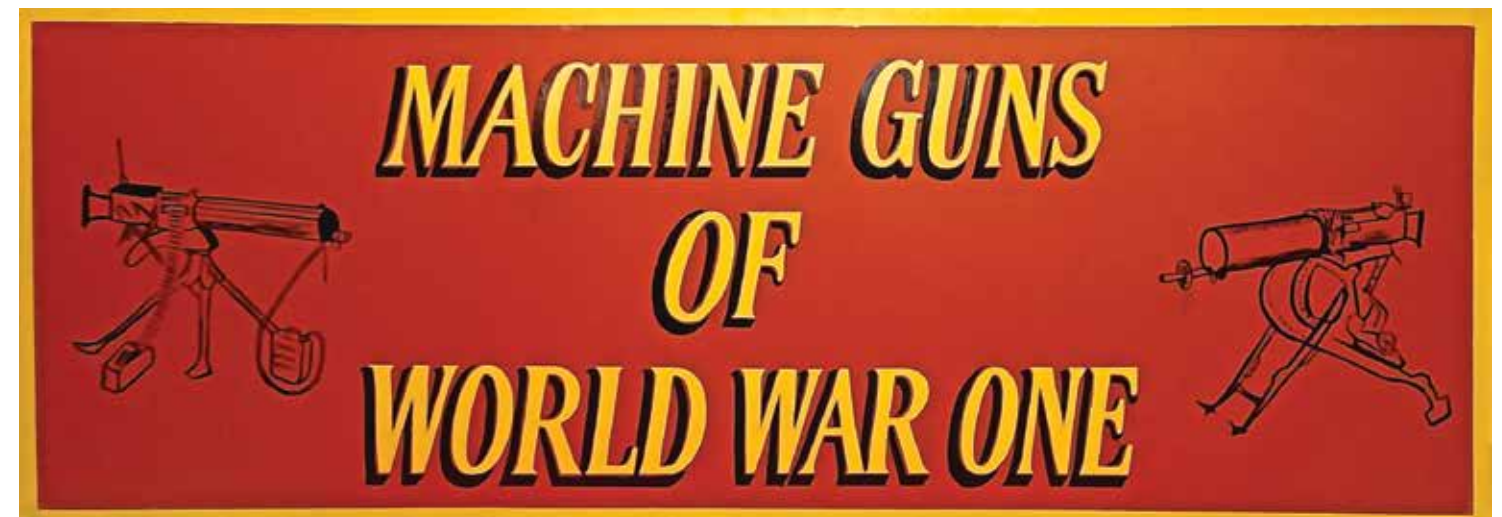
From 1923 and until 1929 the MSP went without further acquisitions either through purchase or confiscation.

In 1930 well known AOC salesman and distributor E.E. Richardson (EER) became involved with the purchase of additional Colt Thompson submachine guns for the MSP. Richardson was based out of Maumee, Ohio, his authorized distributor territory included Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. He was coming off of a very successful first year as distributor in 1929 having sold 54 Thompson submachine guns, earning him at least a commission of \$4,158 just for the guns sold not including any commission on Thompson accessories that may have been included. Clearly he was doing very well when the average income for 1929 was not much more than \$2,000.



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MODERN TIMES

All 12 Colt Thompsons purchased by the MSP were transferred out of the MSP in April of 1974. These 12 were traded to class three dealer Dick Wray in Cincinnati, Ohio along with 12 Colt Pythons for Smith & Wesson Model 76 submachine guns. At the time of the transfer there were two unregistered Thompsons that the MSP attempted to trade as well, one was Colt Thompson NO 4398 and the other a Savage NO. S-280391. NO 4292 was not presented for trade, perhaps because it was retained for display. NO 4385 also was not presented for trade. As presented above the MSP currently has 3 Colt Thompsons in inventory, all confiscated or forfeited. It is unknown what became of the Savage Thompson, but it is not in their hands today.

Contributors this author would like to recognize include Phil Shertzing MSP historian, PHD, Professor and Retired Inspector from MSP, Mike Arrowood Retired MSP, Detective Lt. Brian Bergeron from MSP Forensic Science Division in Sterling Heights, Tracie Hill, Gordon Herigstad, Greg Fox, Mike Wank, Melissa Mercer-Tachick, Tom Davis. If TATA members know the location of MSP Thompons please contact the author through TATA so updates to this story can be published as new information is uncovered.

Footnotes:

- 1 April 4, 1930 EER to AO McNaughton
- 2 March 30, 1930 EER to AO McNaughton
- 3 April 1, 1930 EER to AO Larkin



The Sig research team with their hunted treasures. Now it is time to give them back. No seriously, give it back. You know that you do not have any ammo.

His 1930 goal was to double his sales and in the first 3 months of 1930 had sold 22 already.¹

In 1930, Commissioner Oscar Olander headed the MSP and at the time he was clearly concerned about the safety of his officers based on a published letter. This letter is shown here in excerpt from the Commissioner to Gov. Fred W. Green:

“During the months of August and September, 1929, our various detachments, especially those in the southern part of the state, received information that liquor law violators and other criminals would use every possible force to prevent interference with their unlawful occupations. Following are some of the happenings since last September which might be called to your attention:

Commissioner Olander goes into some detail on seven recent shooting incidents with criminals and the Michigan State Police.

I believe that the police officers of Michigan are now facing their severest test in their battle with the thug. Every police department is handicapped by lack of proper equipment. The majority of criminals travel in the best cars obtainable and in most of our encounters with bandits we have been forced to pursue eight-cylinder cars with four and six-cylinder cars.

At the present time our equipment appropriation is over-drawn but in order to meet the emergency that arisen, I would recommend the purchase of the following equipment:

<i>Three seven-passenger touring cars equipped with bullet-proof windshield and bullet proof screen in front of the radiators</i>	<i>\$14,400.00</i>
<i>Six Thompson sub-machine guns</i>	<i>1,100.00</i>
<i>Twelve bullet-proof vests</i>	<i>1,500.00</i>
<i>Tear Gas, flares, flashlights, etc. for 3 cars</i>	<i>450.00</i>
 <i>Total approximate cost</i>	 <i>\$17,450.00”</i>

It is worth noting that this funds request for the Thompsons was \$100 less for six than published pricing at \$200 each for a total of \$1,200.

Richardson wrote a letter to the Commissioner on January 19, 1930. Along with sharing his own thoughts on the difficulties that the MSP officers faced with criminals, he explained that he was an authorized Auto-Ordnance Corporation Thompson submachine gun distributor and only sold Thompson submachine guns and accessories, and he was ready and able to assist. Richardson noted that he had just equipped the Jackson Penitentiary in Jackson, Michigan with Thompson submachine guns. A meeting was requested on the 21st.

On the 23rd of January EER provided a written quote to Commissioner Olander backing his verbal quote of the same day,

6 Thompson Submachine Guns - Model 21 AC (which includes compensators)	\$200.00	\$1200.00
12 type L (50 cap.) Drums	\$ 21.00	252.00
6 XVIII Box Magazine	\$ 3.00	18.00
6 Boxes (50 each) Peter’s (Shot Cartridges)	\$ 2.25	13.50
		\$1483.50

This was fully \$100 higher, just for the guns, than the requested funds from Commissioner Olander to the Governor. It is also noted handwritten on the quote from EER "Included 2,000 rounds of Winchester Staynless – Free". It could be surmised that the offer of free ammunition may have been an attempt to offset a lower price offered.

A trip to New York was made by EER to visit with AOC to discuss the Michigan State Police business. His discussions centered on ensuring that the order would not be filled through other sources. EER was counting on his contract with AOC that which gave him exclusive territory rights to among other states Michigan. His trip to New York was to confirm that AOC would uphold that contract. "I particularly wanted to be assured that no one would be permitted to cut in on this business which I personally worked up."² On February 19, 1930 EER attempted to follow his quote with the Commissioner asking "how the bids run on Thompson Sub-Machine Guns"? On March 30th EER became aware that the bid had been awarded "However, a local dealer stepped in and did cut prices, placed the order with the Bostwick-Brawn people in Toledo"³.

Bostwick-Braun was and still is a hardware supplier and at the time also an arms dealer in Toledo, Ohio. Even with the restrictive AOC sales policy somehow an order of six (6) Thompson's were sold and delivered to them in March of 1930. In theory with the new policy AOC should have been provided a signed government purchase order on official letterhead from the lawful end user in order to accept the order and shipment. If that purchase order indicating Michigan State Police had been presented there was contractual and verbal assurances between EER and AOC that such an order would not have been filled, unless sold by EER.

Who was the "local" dealer in Michigan? By way of official Michigan State Administrative Board Purchase Orders and other correspondence after this sale, it was determined to be VanDervoort Hardware Company, located in Lansing, Michigan. One of the owners, Del VanDervoort, was one of the original MSP troopers in 1917, he had resigned in 1919 to open a hardware store with his brothers, according to a MSP historian. Most likely the VanDervoort brothers provided the original quote in order for the Commissioner to submit his request for funds to the Governor, as the request was prior to correspondence with EER. Pricing would have been easy to quote lower than full price as the jobber and dealer prices allowed substantial profits to be made.

Purchase order for the MSP guns to VanDervoort, cutting out E. E. Richardson.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
 MICHIGAN STATE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD
 ACCOUNTING AND PURCHASING DIVISION
 LANSING

DATE: 3-26-30 NO. 29536
 TO: VANDERVOORT HARDWARE CO
 ADDRESS: LANSING MICHIGAN
 RES. NO. 110 CODE: 274

SHIP TO: DEPT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
 ADDRESS: LANSING MICHIGAN
 APPROVED: O FOR E
 7672-3

DIRECTIONS
 1. CHECK NUMBER MUST BE PLAINLY MARKED ON ALL PACKAGES AND SHIPPING TONS.
 2. RECEIVED INVOICE IS TO BE DISPLAYED ON PACKAGES FOR THE PURCHASER'S INSPECTION AND MAIL TO STATE COMMISSIONER OF STATE LABOR.
 3. ALL GOODS MUST BE SHIPPED SEPARATELY.
 4. ALL CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THIS ORDER, MUST BE REFERRED TO PURCHASING DIVISION.

QTY	DESCRIPTION	UNIT	PRICE	AMOUNT	TOTAL
6	THOMPSON MACHINE GUNS MODEL 21 AC WITH COMPENSATOR	EA	195 00	1170 00	
12	FIFTY ROUND AMMUNITION DRUMS FOR SAME		20 00	240 00	
26	TWENTY ROUND BOX MAGAZINES FOR SAME		5 00	130 00	
6	WEBB CARRYING CASES FOR THOMPSON GUNS COMPENSATOR TYPE		16 50	99 00	
9	PETERS SHOT CARTRIDGE 45 CAL 50 ROUNDS PER BOX		2 25	20 25	
5000	45 CAL AUTOMATIC BALL CARTRIDGES		37 17	185 85	
25	30 CAL REMINGTON BOLT ACTION CARTRIDGES - 20 IN BARREL		35 41	885 25	
25	12 GAUGE WINCHESTER RIOT GUNS 18 IN BARREL-MODEL 1897		28 62	715 50	
1000	12 GAUGE SHOT GUN SHELLS NO 3 HUCK SHOT LOAD	LOT	38 63	38 63	
1000	30 CAL SPRINGFIELD AMMUNITION		75 75	75 75	
5000	38 S & W SPECIAL MID RANGE - SHARP SHOULDER CARTRIDGES		19 92	99 60	
10000	38 S & W SPECIAL METAL POINT		24 11	241 10	4715 00

Rev 3-17-30 ✓
 + Rev 4-1-30 ✓
 O Rev 4-4-30 ✓
 Rev 4-5-30 ✓

APPROVED: A C KYLE-LINE

There are two other confiscated or forfeited and also unregistered Colt Thompsons that are still with the MSP. First and also at the MSP Training Academy is NO 4398, also a Model 1921A. The condition of NO 4398 as of June 2011 was good. There is no information discovered as to how NO 4398 came to rest at the MSP Training Academy. Second, NO 4385, a Model 1921A, is at the MSP Forensics Science Division in Sterling Heights, Michigan. The condition of this Colt Thompson, observed in October 2011 was extremely corroded on the outside and interestingly not so corroded internally. The story told at the lab to people on tours is NO 4385 had one time belonged to the infamous Purple Gang, although research has not been able to document that statement. A former director for the Lab stated that divers recovered NO 4385 from the Detroit River and it eventually was forfeited to the MSP, also an undocumented story. Both NO 4398 and 4385 were first shipped to Buckeye Cycle Company of Akron, Ohio in August and May 1927 respectively. That in itself seems significant in that two Thompsons first shipped to Buckeye Cycle Company eventually wound their way into the hands of the MSP, and are in two completely different states of condition.

A 4th Colt Thompson was rediscovered as part of this research and was the subject of another previously published article, it resides at the Jackson County Sheriff office in Jackson, MI.

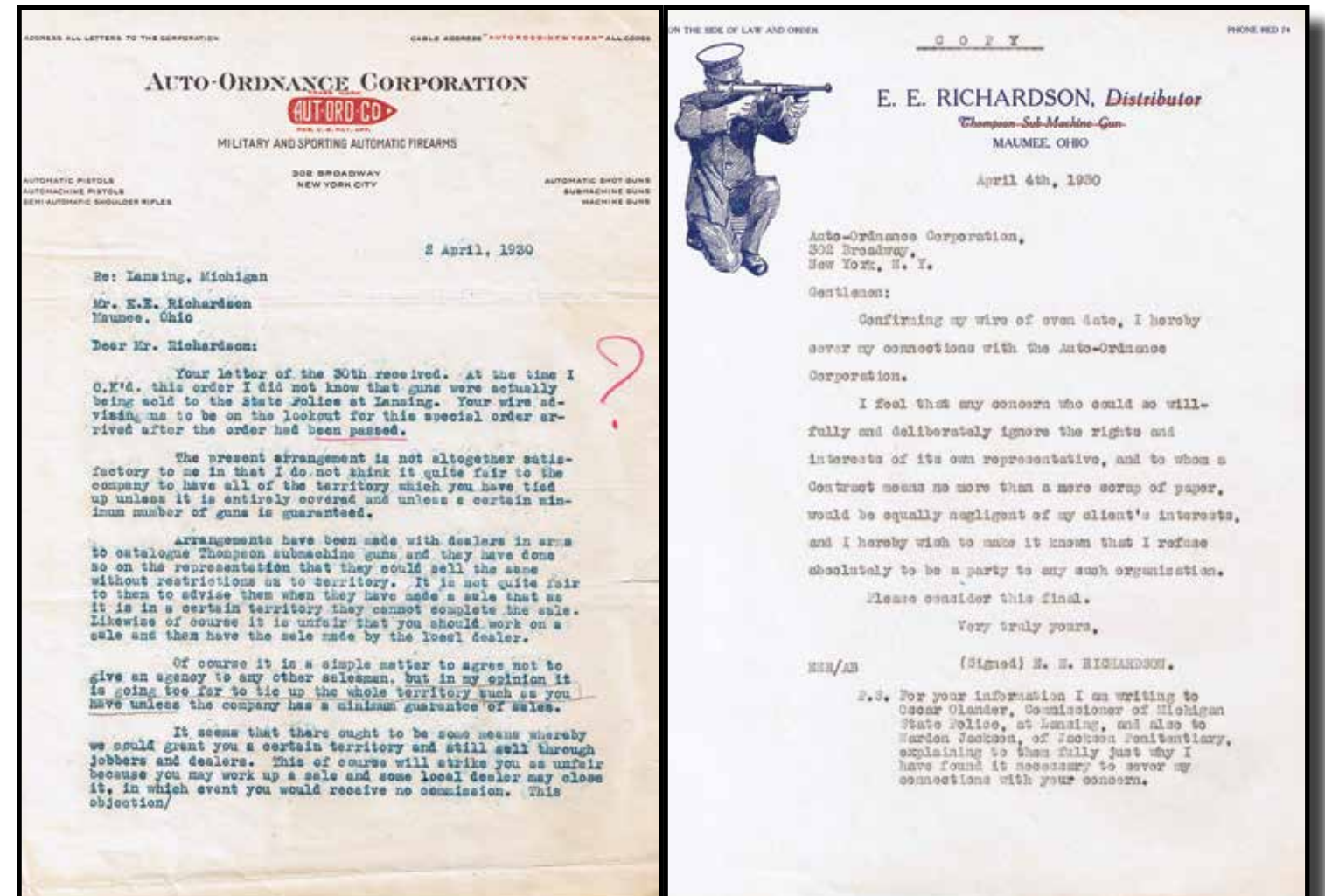


A well traveled S/N 4385 after storage in water. Note how clean the interior is compared to the outside.



CONFISCATED OR FORFEITED THOMPSONS

There is a known confiscation of Colt Thompson NO 4292. This is documented on the Form 1 submission in 1934, on line 4 for Date of Acquisition as "December 11, 1929 (By Confiscation)". NO 4292 a 21A was stationed at Cheboygan, indicating this was pressed into service with the MSP. Further research has yet to identify the specific incident that caused this seizure. This Thompson was first shipped in July 1927 to Shelton-Payne Arms Company in El Paso, Texas. Clearly this Thompson traveled a long way and on its path found its way into criminal hands before being confiscated. Additional hand written notes on the Form 1 copy indicated "Original in Lobby Display". It is not clear if the notation was in reference to the original Form 1 document and/or the Colt Thompson itself. Interviews with former members of the MSP and others have indicated there was a Colt Thompson on display at one time, perhaps it was NO 4292 along with its original Form 1. As a reference 12 of the Form 1's discovered during this research were the original documents, not copies, a 13th Form 1 for NO 4292 was a copy only. Also of interest, NO 4292 happened to be registered, yet was not one of the Colt Thompsons traded in for other firearms in 1974 and as of June 2011 is assigned at the MSP Training Academy. It is in good condition.



(Left) Letter from AO trying make excuses for sale to VanDervoort's. (Right) E. E. Richardson's reply. Note the strike out through TSMG.

This news that a local dealer had filled the order was of course devastating to EER. He had made two trips of 180 miles one way to Lansing to pursue the order, and a visit to the New York offices of AOC, since first uncovering the opportunity. EER was extremely upset and noted the same through several letters of correspondence. He resigned as an Auto-Ordnance Distributor on April 4, 1930.

The above activity in early 1930 resulted in the delivery to the MSP of six Colt Thompsons NO's 8061, 8639, 8799, 8812, 8831, and 9253, all were Model 1921AC's. These went from AOC, to Bostwick Braun, to VanDervoorts Hardware and finally to the MSP on April 5, 1930. NO's 8639, 8799 and 8812 were assigned at the East Lansing Post. NO's 8061, 8831 and 9253 assigned respectively at the Jackson, Marquette and Rockwood posts. This author is the current caretaker of NO 8061.

Through a series of letters and a special meeting in New York, Auto-Ordnance and E.E. Richardson did resolve their differences and a new contract was later drafted and signed on May 19, 1930. In addition EER was paid a commission of \$191.02 for the MSP order, this was a very strong signal on the part of AOC of the importance to them of EER's efforts. Beginning in August 1930 correspondence between the VanDervoort's and EER established VanDervoort Hardware as the EER representative of record in Michigan with an agreement to split commission's 50/50 on future sales.

The next two MSP acquired Thompsons were purchased through VanDervoort Hardware These were NO's 6007 and



(Top) Receiver view of S/N 4398 compared to (Right) S/N 4292.
(Bottom) The Form 1 for S/N 8061



REGISTRATION OF FIREARMS
(This form to be carried, in duplicate, for each firearm possessed)

November 8, 1934

To Collector of Internal Revenue at **Detroit, Michigan**

The undersigned hereby registers, as required by section 16(c) of the National Firearms Act, the firearm described below possessed by him on July 26, 1934.

(1) Name **Dept. of Public Safety**, place of business or employment **State of Michigan**
(2) Home Address **So. Harrison St.**, City or town **East Lansing**, State **Michigan**

(4) Date of acquisition **April 5, 1930**

(5) Is firearm still in your possession? **Yes**. If transferred between July 26 and September 24, 1934, state when and to whom.

(6) If still in possession place where firearm is usually kept: Address **Mich. State Police**, City or town **Jackson**, State **Michigan**

(7) Kind of firearm **Thompson Sub-machine Gun, (with Compensator)**

(8) Serial No. **8061**, Model **1921**, Caliber **.45 Automatic**

(10) Manufacturer **Colt's Factory, Hartford, Conn.**

Given and subscribed to before me this **3** day of **December**, 1934, by **James L. Engert**, City **So. Harrison St.**

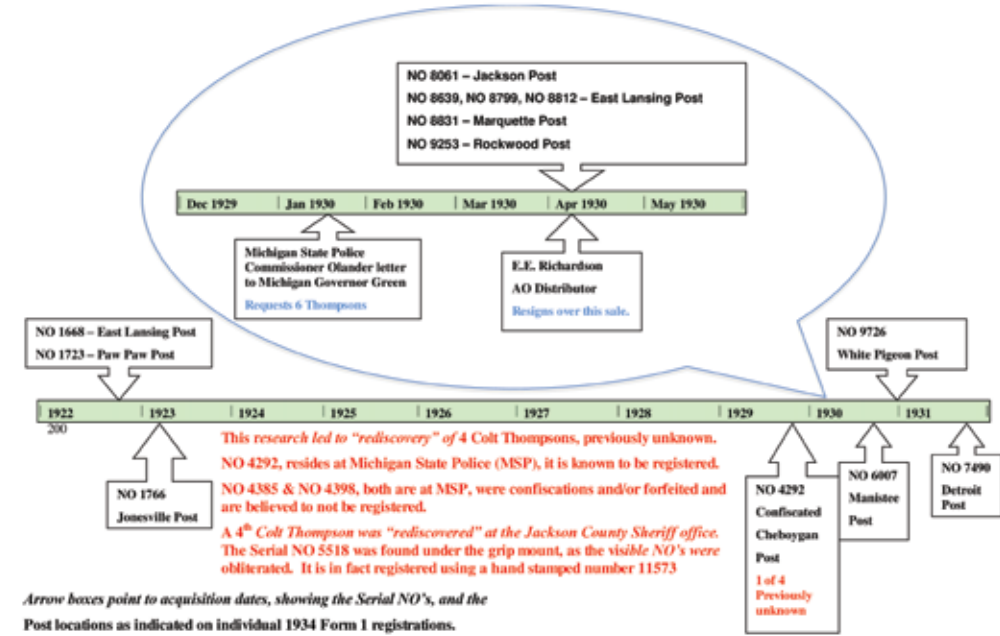
NOTARY PUBLIC **East Lansing, Michigan.**

Received for registry this **fourth** day of **December**, 1934.

9726, were Model 1921AC's, acquired in August and November 1930. They were assigned at the Manistee and White Pigeon respectively.

MSP purchased their last Colt Thompson NO 7490 as a Model 1921AC. The Purchase Order was direct to Auto-Ordinance as the sales policy required at the time in September 1931. This Thompson was assigned in Detroit. Two years later Prohibition was repealed.

Michigan State Police Colt Thompsons - Acquisition Timeline "On The Side of Law & Order"



Arrow boxes point to acquisition dates, showing the Serial NO's, and the Post locations as indicated on individual 1934 Form 1 registrations.

Form 1 summary details, with corrections based on shipment records

Acquisition Date	Line (6) City	Serial No.	Line (7) Kind of firearm Notes
July 1922	East Lansing	1668	Thompson Sub-Machine Gun. (With Compensator)
July 1922	Paw Paw	1723	
April 1923	Jonesville	1766	
April 5, 1930	Jackson	8061	(With Compensator)
April 5, 1930	East Lansing	8639	(With Compensator)
April 5, 1930	East Lansing	8799	(With Compensator)
April 5, 1930	East Lansing	8812	(With Compensator)
April 5, 1930	Marquette	8831	(With Compensator)
April 5, 1930	Rockwood	9253	(With Compensator)
September 6, 1930	Manistee	6007	(With Compensator)
December 8, 1930	White Pigeon	9726	(With Compensator)
October 23, 1931	Detroit	7490	(With Compensator)
December 11, 1929	Cheboygan	4292	MSP Training Academy - Lansing, MI
Unknown date		4385	MSP Forensics Lab - Sterling Heights, MI
Unknown date		4398	MSP Training Academy - Lansing, MI

Confiscated or forfeited
Form 1 summary details
Unregistered