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## Luis Arrieta Cañas and His LePage Smith & Wesson Revolvers

by T. Logan Metesh



Smith & Wesson's New Model Number Three single-action revolvers were introduced in 1878, riding the wave of popularity from earlier Model Three variants. When production stopped 34 years later, a total of 35,796 had been made. Interestingly, even though they were available to buyers as brand new guns as late as 1912, all of the frames were made before 1899. This makes them all legally classified as antiques, even if the gun in question was finally assembled and sold in the final two years of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century.

To say that the model was a worldwide favorite would be an understatement. While approximately 21,000 of them were shipped to customers in the United States, the other 14,000 (or ~40%) were sent to foreign countries, including Russia, Turkey, Japan, Australia, Cuba, England, Germany, Argentina, Italy, Switzerland, China, and France.



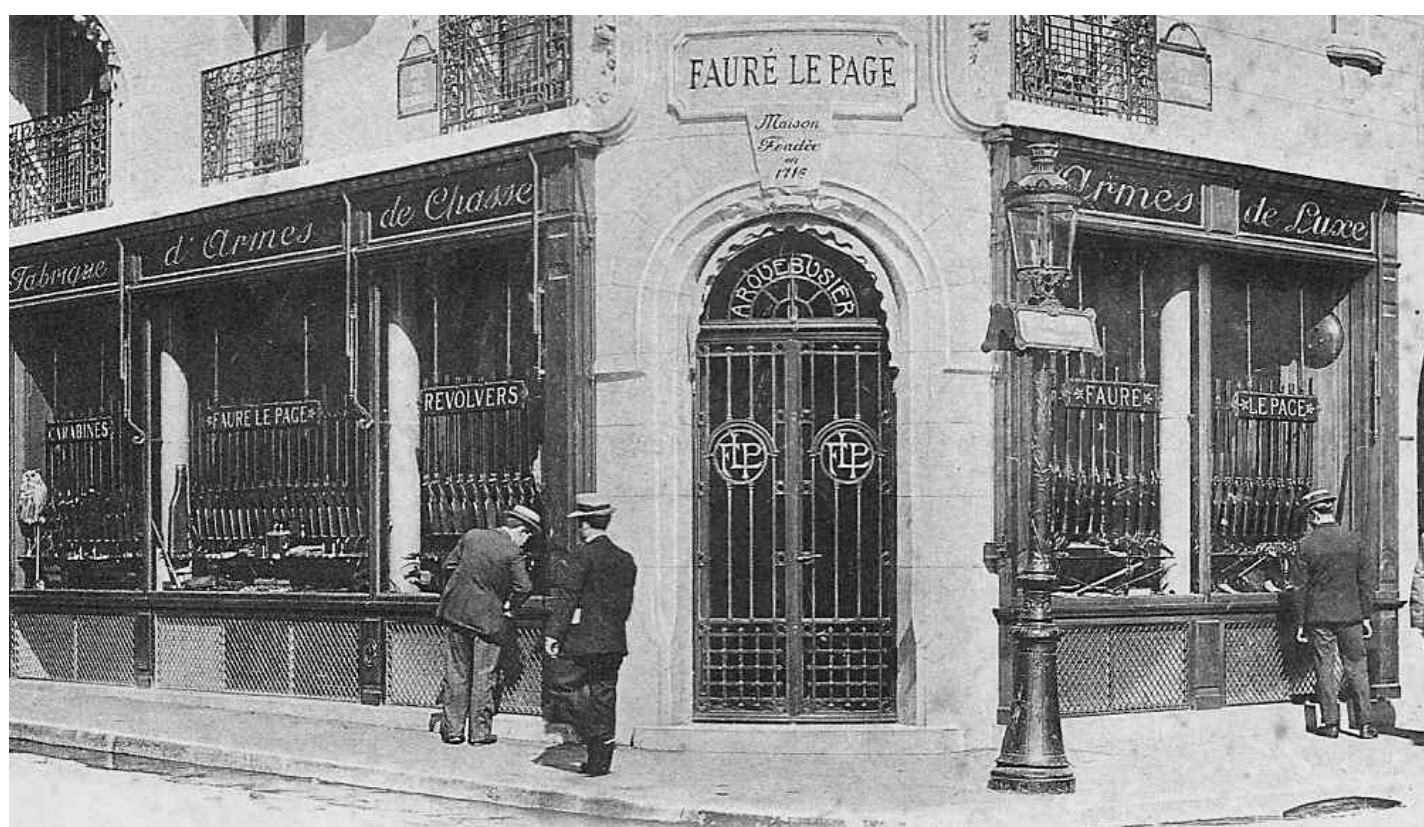


*Luis Arrieta Cañas*

One of the customers in France was Luis Arrieta Cañas, who became one of the largest champions of the arts in Chile, particularly when it came to music. Before making his mark in the arts, he studied agronomy in both Belgium and France. Upon returning to Chile, he attended law school and became a lawyer. Still, he was drawn to the arts.

Eventually, Cañas used land purchased from his father to build the centers of Chilean arts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is also credited with founding the Peñalolén Musical Days, an experience for both performers and fans that introduced then-unknown musicians and musical styles to Chile.

Cañas was a fascinating figure in many ways, but our interest lies with the time he spent in France. While in Paris studying the science of soil management and crop production, Luis found his way into a shop located at 8 rue de Richelieu, which was at that time the home of the Le Page gunmaking dynasty. Begun in 1717, the Le Page name was already more than 160 years old and well established as one of the finest gunmakers in Paris, if not all of France. Among the firm's previous clients were Kings Louis XVI and XVIII, King Charles X, and Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, just to name a few.



*Original LePage Storefront*

Instead of looking for a gun made by Le Page (which was likely well out of his price range), Cañas was in the market for a gun - well, a pair, really - made by Smith & Wesson and simply retailed by Le Page.



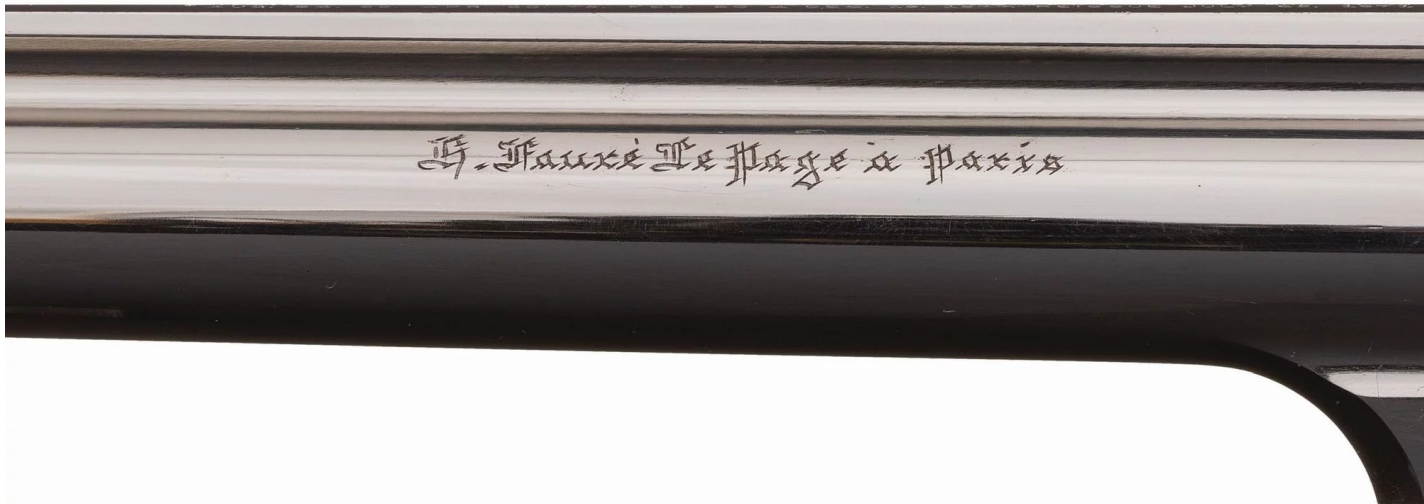


*Lot 197: Fantastic Pair of Parisian Retailer Marked and Cased Smith & Wesson New Model No. 3 Revolvers with Luis Arrieta Cañas' Monogram*

The pair of Smith & Wesson New Model Number Three single-action revolvers purchased by Cañas are not sequential, but they're close: only 40 serial numbers apart. The left side of each barrel has the Parisian retailer marking: "H. Faure Le Page a Paris," and the top strap of each revolver features an engraved monogram for Luis Arrieta Cañas. Even though Le Page didn't make the revolvers, they put their own work into the guns by adding an in-house custom trigger guard finger spurs.



Each revolver bears French proof marks on the cylinders, and the guns' serial numbers are all matching on the butt, right grip panel, cylinder, barrel, and barrel latch.



The double gun, fitted retailer case is embossed, "FAURE-LEPAGE/8.RUE DE RICHELIEU/A PARIS" on the inside of the lid, has "Luis Arrieta Cañas" engraved inlaid brass inscription plaque on the exterior of the lid, and contains a case key and two brass tipped wooden cleaning rods.





The Le Page store still stands at 8 rue de Richelieu, and it still bears markings of its former use: the ghost outline of the company letters can still be seen above the entrance arch, the doors still bear the initials “FLP,” and the word “arquebusier” still adorns the fanlight window above the door.



*The LePage building today.*

Now 302 years old, the Le Page name and company are still in business, but it has long since moved on and changed product offerings. Today, they focus on arms-themed luxury leather goods for women, with collection names such as “daytime arms” and “ceremonial arms,” as well as products with names like “calibre” and “cartoucherie.”

While you can no longer buy a fine firearm from Le Page, you can still carry on its historic name. The December 2019 Premier Gun Auction is your chance to own this remarkably well-made and well-traveled pair of revolvers. Made in Springfield, Massachusetts; retailed in Paris, France; owned by a resident of Santiago, Chile; offered for auction in Rock Island, Illinois; and found a new home in...