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High Standard .17 Caliber Rimfire Cartridge and Pistol by Lew Curtis

In the early 1950s, High Standard explored the possibility of introducing a .22 Long Rifle cartridge necked down to .17 caliber. The objective of this initiative was to introduce a low cost plinking cartridge to increase public interest in shooting. The .17 caliber ammunition would be cheaper since the lead in the .22 bullet was a major cost driver in .22 Long Rifle ammunition. Cheaper ammunition would lead to increased sales of High Standard pistols. The .17 caliber was apparently selected since this was the standard air rifle caliber.

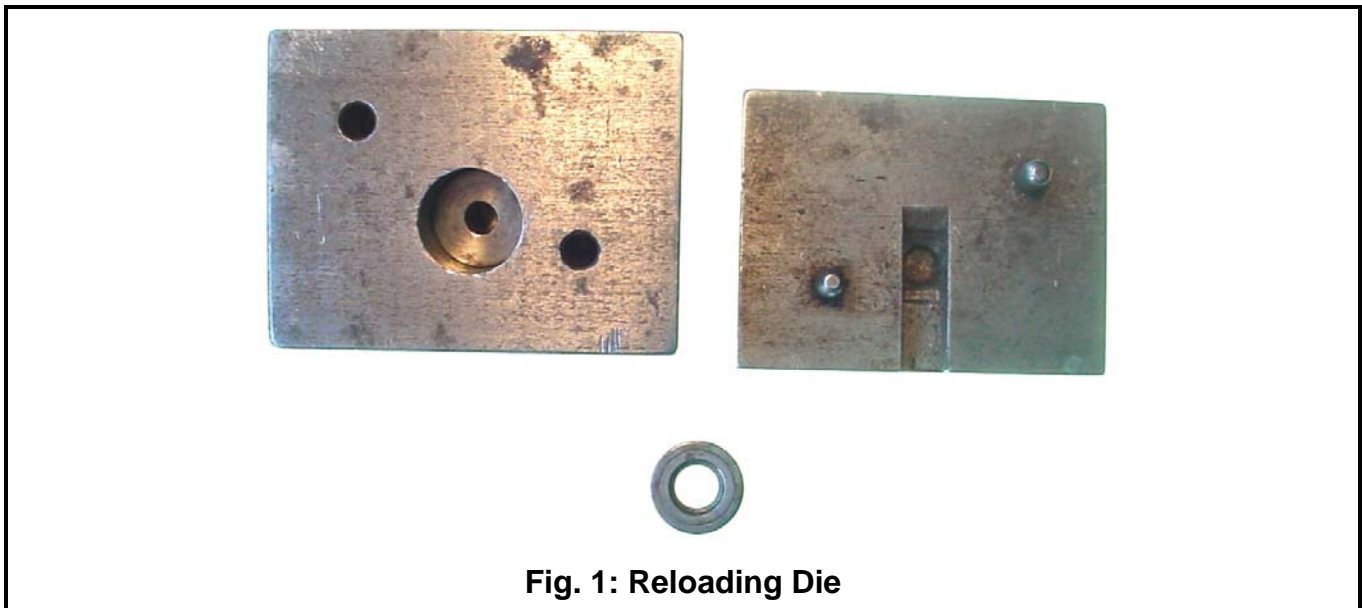


Fig. 2: Reloading Die Marking

The .17 Rimfire ammunition was produced by High Standard using the "single stage, three piece die" (Figure 1). The die is marked ".22-.175" clearly indicating it was intended to convert .22LR cases to .17 Rimfire cases (Figure 2). Several thousand .17 Rimfire bullets were purchased from Winchester as a single lot and were essentially a scaled down .22 Long Rifle bullet patterned after the Winchester lubaloy design. The die resized the case and crimped the case to the bullet all in one step. High Standard apparently used whatever .22 Long Rifle cartridges were at hand. They removed the bullets and then used the die to reload the case with the .17 caliber bullet.



Fig. 3: High Standard Rimfire Pistol with barrel section

The pistol (Figure 3) is the only known weapon chambered for the .17 Rimfire cartridge. It was reportedly made for High Standard in the early 1950s as a test weapon for development of the cartridge and is a "one-of-a-kind" gun. The pistol was reportedly made in Europe and is completely unmarked. Note the barrel cross section imbedded in plastic which must be some kind of a test article.



Fig. 4:
.17 High Standard Rimfire cartridges that came with the gun.
Left to right: ball, dummy, brass case, copper case & nickel case

With the pistol were two loaded. .17 Rimfire cartridges, a dummy with a single hole in the case and an assortment of cases which came with the pistol (Figure 4). The bullets in these three loads were much shorter than the lubaloy bullet used in the normal .17 Rimfire cartridges, and these loads may have predated the normal load, or perhaps postdated it.



Fig. 5:
.17 High Standard Rimfire headstamps that came with the gun. Left to right: Super X on nickel case, H on brass case, and bottom are U headstamps on both copper and brass cases

High Standard is rumored to have produced a few (perhaps four) barrels for their Sport King and Field King pistols which were chambered for the .17 Rimfire. The purpose of these barrels was for market testing of the cartridge. One story is that these four barrels along with

a few boxes of ammunition were passed out to selected High Standard customers. Available High Standard records contain no reference to these barrels and it may be that they were never produced.

The information above was reportedly provided to John Hintlian by a retired High Standard gun designer, Harry Siefried.