

# CLASS IS AS CLASS DOES

AUTO-ORDNANCE'S STAINLESS 1911 IS A  
NEW RENDITION OF THE JOHN M. BROWNING CLASSIC.

BY STEVE GASH



**T**he Model 1911 semiautomatic pistol has endured for more than a century, in the face of countless new handgun designs, new materials (i.e., polymers), and the development of new cartridges for it. But class is as class does, and shooters can still have a Model 1911 just about any way they want it, as many firms offer the iconic arm in a dizzying array of configurations and chamberings. However, the original construction of solid steel remains a perennial favorite.

A recent version of the classic Model 1911 is from Auto-Ordnance Corp. It is constructed of stainless steel, with a couple of appropriate “polymer” parts thrown in to enhance utility. I received one of the new pistols for review, and it is indeed an impressive piece of firearms history: a *gin-u-wine*, recoil-operated 1911 that exhibits fine workmanship. Everything is nicely fitted, and I could detect neither any play between the slide and frame, nor could I push the barrel hood down when the gun was in battery.



The exterior of this new 1911 is finished in Savage Stainless Cerakote, and it not only is protective, but also is a really classy finish. The new Model 1911 has “Auto-Ordnance” on the left side of the slide. The model number, company name and location (Worcester, Massachusetts), and the serial number are on the upper right side of the frame. The pistol comes in a sturdy, hard-plastic, 10x14-inch case that is formfitted. This case should provide excellent











STAINLESS 1911	
MANUFACTURER	Auto-Ordnance Corp. auto-ordnance.com
TYPE	Recoil-operated autoloader
CALIBER	.45 ACP
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	7 rounds
BARREL	5.0 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	8.5 in.
WIDTH	1.3 in.
HEIGHT	5.35 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	38.7 oz.
GRIPS	VZ G10
FINISH	Savage Stainless Cerakote
SIGHTS	Three-dots setup
TRIGGER	6.12-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Manual thumb safety, beavertail grip safety
MSRP	\$1,324 (day sights); \$1,408 (night sights)

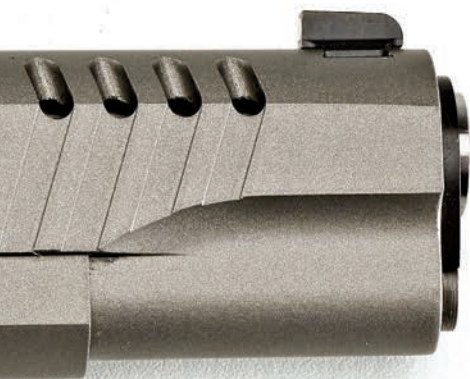
protection if the owner has to travel by air. The owner's manual and the obligatory safety lock are in the case with the gun, but there isn't room for a spare magazine. The gun's warranty is for one year to the original purchaser.

The pistol is a solid handful and weighs 38.7 ounces. It has an overall length of 8.5 inches and is 1.3 inches thick over the left-side thumb safety.

The only parts on the pistol I could find that are not metal are the VZ G10 stocks, which are attached with hex screws, and the synthetic trigger. The trigger has a small setscrew in its face for overtravel adjustment. My sample pistol's trigger has very little take-up and virtually no overtravel, and while the trigger breaks crisply, the pull weight is rather heavy, at 6 pounds, 1.9 ounces.

That said, Auto-Ordnance has incorporated a number of enhancements. For one, except for the parts mentioned earlier, the entire gun is constructed of stainless steel. The frame, slide, and barrel are forged, and the sear and disconnector are machined from solid bar stock. The parts are then heat-treated for durability. The front of the slide has four lightening cuts on each side (they are decorative as well), but the barrel is not ported. The slide also has cocking grooves front and back. The dustcover does not have a Picatinny rail on it, and that's okay with me.

One feature on this Model 1911 that I don't like is the one-piece guide rod. It protrudes through the hole in the recoil plug, and this makes disassembly more difficult. Of course, you can take off the entire top half of the frame in one piece, but if



this were my pistol, I would install a two-piece guide rod in a heartbeat. (I also would have a gunsmith lighten the trigger pull.)

Two sight arrangements are offered by Auto-Ordnance. The gun I used for this report has a tactical-rack-type rear sight that has two small white dots. The notch in the rear sight is 0.164 inch wide, and it's U-shaped to mate with the white dot in the front sight. The face of the rear sight has fine striations to reduce glare. The rear sight also has a setscrew, so it would appear to be drift adjustable for windage.

The front sight has one white dot, and it's considerably larger than the dots on the rear sight, and together they make for a perfect open sight picture. Both sights are dovetailed into the slide. The front sight post is 0.157 inch wide and 0.179 inch tall. Auto-Ordnance calls this sight arrangement the "Combat Day Sights."

The rear sight is marked "N1P" and "TG-H3," and the front sight is marked "TG-H3." The other available sight set is the TRUGLO night sights.

The magazine release button, slide stop, hammer, grip safety, and thumb safety are finished in black. The thumb safety is a delight, as it clicks up and down with ease, thanks to its extended lever.

The hammer is skeletonized, and the extended grip safety has a deep cutout that perfectly accepts the back of the hammer at fullcock. There will be no "hammerbite" with this combination! Plus, the high-sweep beavertail grip safety has a prominent memory bump that ensures it is fully disengaged for each shot. It also encourages a uniform grip, and it did just that for me.

The 5.0-inch match-grade barrel is chambered to .45 ACP, and it has a 1:16-inch twist rate. The feedramp is properly dimensioned and polished mirror bright, so rounds slither into the chamber without a hitch. The mainspring housing and the front of the grip are nicely checkered at 20 lines per inch, enabling a firm grip. The stocks are VZ G10 grips.

The Auto-Ordnance Stainless 1911 comes with one, seven-round stainless-steel magazine, and its baseplate is drilled and tapped for a pad. Of course, quality extra magazines are available.



Auto-Ordnance's new Stainless 1911 is finished in Savage Stainless Cerakote, and it comes with VZ G10 grips and a one-piece recoil spring guide rod.



Okay, it's a well-made, good-looking piece of hardware, but how does it shoot? I'm glad you asked!

The hardest part of this evaluation was rounding up a supply of factory ammo. I received some high-tech loads from Federal and Hornady. And I had a couple of partial boxes of some older factory ammo (some of which is probably now discontinued), but I shot it anyway.

Several of the new loads would spell doom for a bad guy. For example, Hornady's Critical Defense load has the 220-grain FTX bullet that registered 1,038 fps over my Oehler Model 35P chronograph, for a muzzle energy of 526 ft-lbs. It grouped into 2.06 inches and was the best of the "modern" ammo. The polymer Flex Tip in the hollowpoint prevents clogging if the bullet passes through clothing, something that can make hollowpoint bullet performance inconsistent. It is perhaps noteworthy that this Hornady ammo was loaded with Small Pistol primers.

I fired the pistol at 20 yards off a sandbag rest, shooting three, five-shot groups for each of the 17 loads. The overall group average was 2.24 inches. The seven factory loads averaged 2.22 inches, and the 10 handloads averaged 2.25 inches. Obviously, this Model 1911 could hold its own in a firefight.

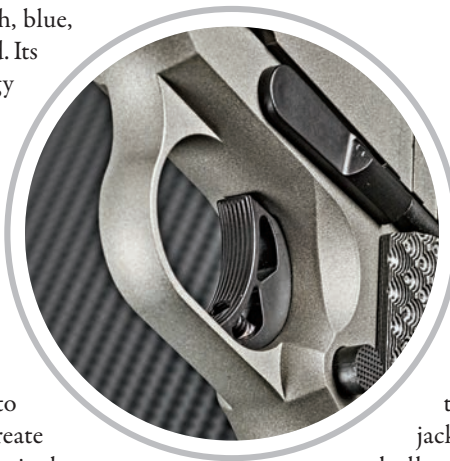
Federal has a couple of new loads also meant for personal defense. The Syntech Defense is loaded with a 205-grain



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hollowpoint that is wrapped with a tough, blue, synthetic coating. It's a wicked-looking load. Its average velocity was 912 fps with an energy of 379 ft-lbs, and it shot into 2.58 inches. The other new Federal defense load is the Personal Defense Punch that is loaded with a 230-grain JHP. It produced an average velocity of 882 fps, an energy of 345 ft-lbs, and an average accuracy of 2.44 inches. This unique bullet breaks into three segments and the core upon impact. The core is designed to penetrate 12 to 18 inches through heavy clothing into ballistic gelatin, and the three segments create secondary wound channels more than six inches deep. This is high-tech ammo! These two loads also use Small Pistol primers.

I also tested Federal's Law Enforcement Tactical factory-loaded ammunition that is loaded with the top-performing 230-grain HST JHP bullet. It produced a velocity of 973 fps, an energy of 431 ft-lbs, and an average accuracy of 2.59 inches. This load uses Large Pistol primers.



The pistol's trigger is synthetic, and it features vertical grooves and an overtravel adjustment screw.

Plus, as my faithful readers know, if it can be handloaded, I will do it. In as much as I have fired many thousands of handloaded .45 ACP rounds in matches, I reviewed my records and recreated several loads that have proven themselves in other pistols and included them in this review. These included a few jacketed bullets, but most were with cast alloy bullets. The company that made the cast bullets went through a few name, owner, and location

changes, including E&E Bullets and Bushwhacker Bullets, but all the bullets I used were made on the same Magna molds and sizer equipment prior to the company going out of business for good.

The results of my shooting are shown in the accompanying chart, but in a nutshell, the test gun gobbled up every load fed

## AUTO-ORDNANCE...THEN AND NOW

**THE HISTORY OF AUTO-ORDNANCE CORP. IS A FASCINATING** journey through the ins and outs of corporate maneuvers to arrive at its current prominent station in the gun world.

In 1914 Gen. John T. Thompson retired from the U.S. Army. He had an idea for a self-loading (fully automatic) rifle and used his time studying such arms. In 1915 Thompson discovered a patent issued to John Blish, and he negotiated a deal with Blish for the rights to his patent. Blish's patent was for a delayed blowback action, which Thompson found would be unsuitable for his proposed .30-06 rifle, but it would work fine with the .45 ACP cartridge.

Thompson's proposed venture needed financial backing, and this came from investor Thomas F. Ryan. Thompson founded Auto-Ordnance Corp. in 1916 in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He hired Oscar V. Payne as a design engineer and named Theodore H. Eickoff as chief designer. By 1919 Thompson's idea had developed into a submachine gun that was nicknamed the "trench sweeper" and eventually became known as the "Tommy Gun."

The first run of the Thompson submachine gun was in 1919, but the initial production of the Model 1921 was

by Colt, and it was used by law enforcement before the military. A small run of the Models 1928 and 1928A1 was made by Savage and stamped "TOMMY GUN."

This was late for World War I, and by 1939 Auto-Ordnance was deep in debt to the heirs of Thomas F. Ryan, who had passed away in 1928. In July 1939 controlling interest in Auto-Ordnance Corp. was transferred to investor J. Russell Maguire. Later, Maguire, Marcelus Thompson (John T. Thompson's son), and Thomas Kane reacquired the company, but Maguire continued to hold the majority of the shares, and eventually, the other investors sold their shares to him.

In the 1950s the assets of the original Auto-Ordnance Corp. were transferred to Numrich Arms Corp. Then, in 1999, Auto-Ordnance was bought by Saeilo Enterprises Inc., the parent company of Kahr Arms, which is now headquartered in Greeley, Pennsylvania, with a manufacturing facility in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 2015 Kahr Arms Co. changed its name to the Kahr Firearms Group, denoting its ownership of the Auto-Ordnance, Thompson, Magnum Research, BFR, and Desert Eagle brands. Kahr left New York in 2013 and opened a new modern 40,000-square-foot plant in Pike County, Pennsylvania.







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it without a single bobble. There were no failures to feed, fire, or extract. Plus, the accuracy was as good as my seasoned-citizen eyes can do with any open-sighted handgun these days—and these are excellent open sights. As I mentioned earlier, the overall average of the 10 handloads was 2.25 inches.

It is customary to express a load's power as muzzle energy in foot-pounds, and I did that for these loads. However, since the .45 ACP is used so much in many match situations, I also reverted to the good old power factor (PF) number as used in various competitive formats. Power factor is calculated by multiplying the bullet's velocity in fps times its weight in grains and dividing the product by 1,000. The PFs of the factory loads were the highest, ranging from 184.7 to 228.4. The PFs of six of the 10



The slide has four lightening ports on each side up front that meet the four front grasping grooves.

handloads were above 160, frequently used to determine major PF in some venues.

Overall, this nice, new Model 1911 shot very well. One of the most telling characteristics of the groups I shot was that almost all were nice, round clusters, with only an occasional flyer, which I attribute to the heavy trigger or perhaps a “loose nut” shot (that’s me, the “loose nut” at the end of the grip). Due to the pistol's weight, the perceived recoil was rather mild.

I think a full-size Model 1911 is a bit heavy for everyday carry, but there's no doubt this stainless pistol stoked with any of the jacketed-bullet factory loads would put a quick and decisive end to an armed confrontation.

The two traditional 230-grain FMJ loads I had on hand also did well. The Speer Lawman Target ammo produced an average velocity of 803 fps and an average accuracy of 2.32 inches. The other 230-grain FMJ ammo was from PMC, and it averaged an exciting 1.10 inches with an average velocity of 827 fps.

As you can see from the chart, my handloads included representative jacketed and cast bullets. The Hornady 230-grain XTP bullet was loaded over 9.2 grains of Blue Dot, and it was right on the heels of the Critical Defense factory load at 947 fps, with an energy of 458 ft-lbs. The group average was 2.62 inches. The Sierra 185-grain Full Patch Jacket (FPJ) liked a charge of 5.9 grains of Winchester Super Field (WSF) that produced a velocity of 824 fps, and accuracy averaged 2.26 inches.

The cast bullets were SWCs weighing 155, 175, and 185 grains; a 220-grain Truncated Cone (TC); and a 236-grain RN. Overall, the SWCs were slightly more accurate than the TC and RN bullets, but all would be adequate for most match situations. Personally, I am partial to the 155-grain SWC over 5.8 grains of VihtaVuori N310 at 1,045 fps. Its groups averaged 2.20 inches.

As a final “test,” I attacked my hanging 0.75-inch-thick steel plate with an assortment of leftover cast- and jacketed-bullet handloads. Let's just say the plate took a beating.

Overall, this new Model 1911 shot well, and due to the pistol's weight, felt recoil was rather mild. So, except for the heavy trigger pull and the aggravation of the one-piece



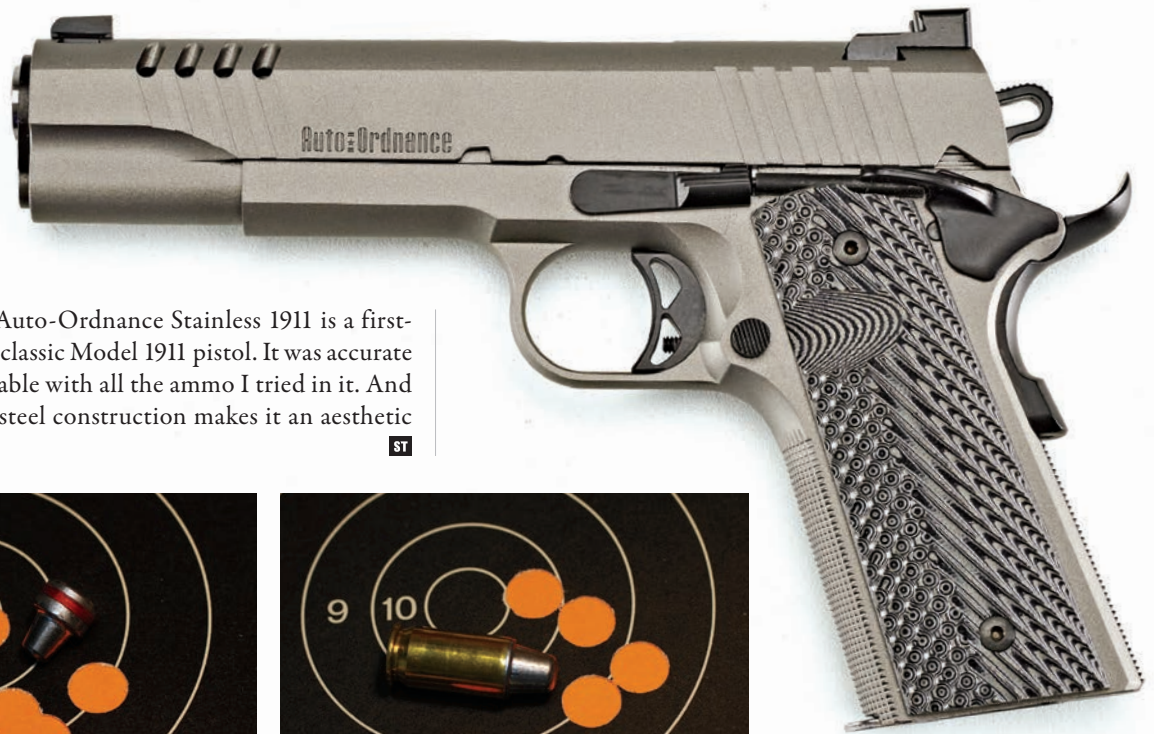
The Stainless 1911 is offered with day sights as well as with TRUGLO night sights. Shown here is the TRUGLO rear night sight.



The front sight dot is larger than the rear sight dots. Again, shown here is the night sight. The sights are dovetailed into the slide.



One seven-round magazine comes with Auto-Ordnance's Stainless 1911.



guide rod, the new Auto-Ordnance Stainless 1911 is a first-rate rendition of the classic Model 1911 pistol. It was accurate and 100 percent reliable with all the ammo I tried in it. And the snazzy stainless-steel construction makes it an aesthetic standout. **ST**



The new Stainless 1911 proved to be pleasingly accurate with factory-loaded ammo and handloads. It averaged 2.24 inches overall with 17 different .45 ACP loads.

### AUTO-ORDNANCE STAINLESS 1911 VELOCITY & ACCURACY

BULLET	POWDER		CASE	PRIMER	COL (IN.)	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	POWER FACTOR	ENERGY (FT-LBS)	20-YD. ACC. (IN.)
	(TYPE)	(GRS.)									
<b>.45 ACP, 5.0-in. Barrel</b>											
Bushwhacker 155-gr. Cast SWC	American Select	6.1	Fed.	Fed. 150	1.245	1033	18	8	160.1	367	2.09
Bushwhacker 155-gr. Cast SWC	VV N310	5.8	Fed.	Fed. 150	1.245	1045	24	9	162.0	376	2.20
E&E 175-gr. Cast SWC	VV N320	5.4	Fed.	Fed. 150	1.250	960	32	12	168.0	358	2.59
E&E 175-gr. Cast SWC	WSL	4.8	Win.	Fed. 150	1.250	875	28	11	153.1	298	2.48
Bushwhacker 185-gr. Cast SWC	Bullseye	4.6	Fed.	Fed. 150	1.250	789	27	10	146.0	256	1.77
Bushwhacker 185-gr. Cast SWC	WSL	4.9	Win.	Fed. 150	1.250	829	23	9	153.4	282	2.54
Sierra 185-gr. FPJ	WSF	5.9	WCC-62	WLP	1.215	824	23	8	152.4	279	2.26
E&E 220-gr. Cast TC	W231	5.1	Mixed	Fed. 150	1.230	839	33	12	184.6	344	1.93
Hornady 230-gr. XTP	Blue Dot	9.2	Fed.	Fed. 150	1.205	947	16	6	217.8	458	2.62
E&E 236-gr. Cast RN	W231	4.7	Mixed	Fed. 150	1.206	815	35	11	192.3	348	2.02
Federal Syntech Defense 205-gr. TSJ					1.254	912	59	23	187.0	379	2.58
Hornady Critical Defense 220-gr. FTX					1.250	1038	43	16	228.4	526	2.06
Federal 230-gr. Hydra-Shok					1.208	862	19	8	198.3	380	2.48
Federal Law Enforcement Tactical 230-gr. HST					1.210	973	68	27	223.8	431	2.59
Federal Personal Defense Punch 230-gr. JHP					1.208	882	24	9	202.9	354	2.44
PMC Target 230-gr. FMJ					1.262	827	59	23	190.2	349	1.10
Speer Lawman 230-gr. TMJ					1.262	803	52	19	184.7	329	2.32

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of 10 rounds measured 10 feet from the gun's muzzle. All load data should be used with caution. Always start with reduced loads first and make sure they are safe in each of your guns before proceeding to the high test loads listed. Since *Shooting Times* has no control over your choice of components, guns, or actual loadings, neither *Shooting Times* nor the various firearms and components manufacturers assume any responsibility for the use of this data.