

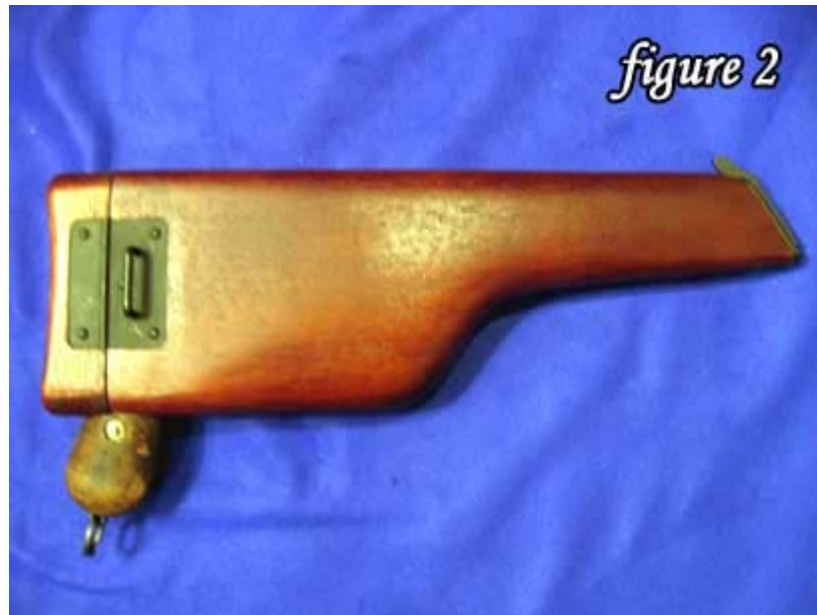
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The C96 Mauser pistol, the so called Broomhandle named because of the way the grip looks like, is a firearm that could be considered at the apex of mil surp pistol collecting. Along with the Luger and the P38, it is probably one of the most recognized of all "old" pistols/firearms out there. In fact, the Broomhandle was even used as the basis of the Han Solos blaster in the *Star Wars* movies.



The Broomhandle was a varied and long history. Original development of the self loading pistol started in 1894, it yielded

the C-96 (Construction 1896). At the time, the 7.63mm cartridge was the most powerful handgun cartridge and was not surpassed until the 1950's with the development of the .357 Magnum. The pistol was in production for about 40 years and was adopted by a number of countries militaries, however, never in a grand numbers as other hand guns were. Most likely this was because of the expense of manufacture and its awkwardness of handling. The Broomhandle was, however, quite popular with the civilian market and was purchased as private weapons to be carried by officers in a number of countries. Even Winston Churchill carried a C96 while in the service.



The Broomhandle was also chambered in 9mm Luger in WW1 (it was also chambered in 9mm Mauser (rare)). The 9mm Luger (Parabellum) weapons will have a red "9" engraved into the pistol grip to distinguish them from 7.63mm models. After WW1, because of treaty limitations, Mauser was completely forbidden to build firearms. However, as time went on, enforcement became lax and Mauser went back to building firearms, notably a shorter barreled C96. The shorter barrels (3.5 to 3.9 inch length) were a consequence of the original treaty which forbade barrels over approximately 4 inches (100mm). These shorter barreled pistols became known as "Bolos". These were not the first Bolos made nor do ALL Bolos have the shorter barrels (originally, there were long barreled Bolos made before the war), but by far the short barreled Bolos are the most common. The Bolo nickname may have come about because Russian Bolsheviks purchased many of these weapons, but this cannot be proven.



Additionally, the weapon was copied by a number of countries, notably China which produced a .45 ACP version, and Spain which created its Astra copies. A full auto version with detachable magazine was also created and is named after the German word for rapid fire, Schnellfeuer, the model of 1932.



Because all variants, models, and makes of the C96 command premium pricing, it is best to proceed with caution when buying one of these pistols. There have been instances of fakes. There are pistols that are parts guns that do not command the highest of prices. This is truly a "buyer beware" pistol. Do your homework and ask lots of questions. Additionally, many pistols have either been rebarreled or barrel lined from the original condition. There are a number of sources of information that can

be accessed. Print books include:

- *System Mauser: A Pictorial History of the Model, 1896 Self-Loading Pistol*, J. Breathed and J. Schroeder
- *Broomhandle Pistol 1896-1936*, W. Erickson, C. Pate
- *Know Your Broomhandle Mausers*, R. Berger

And excellent online source of information as well as access to true aficionados of anything C96 can be gotten at the C96 Forum at:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/C96\\_Forum/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/C96_Forum/)





Lastly there comes the issue of safety. Obviously, these pistols are old. True original mint condition pistols are rare and one would never even think of firing them. Caution must be taken when/if you want to fire any C96. It would be wise to have it looked over by a competent gunsmith.

Beware, 7.62 x 25 Tokarev ammo will fit in the C96, however it is **too hot**, can create **too high of pressures** and destroy your pistol as well as **seriously injure you** and bystanders. **Do not** use it in your C96. Instead, there are companies (FNM Portuguese) that make correct loads for the 7.63 Mauser at a reasonable price. Reloading is another option, and the correct dies, brass and bullets are available through numerous sources.



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