

Chapter 9

A PASS AT PLATING

This Relatively Inexpensive Kit Can Create A Gold Or Silver Finish On Your Favorite Firearm

The plating kits from Texas Platers are available in several models, ranging from the Gunsmiths' Special which can be used to plate several guns to kits for plating only one or two pistols. Illustrated are the components available for plating with copper, brass, silver, nickel or 23K gold. The more precious metals have become relatively expensive. (Right) In setting about replating this derringer, author made certain the rig was hooked up correctly to batteries.



IN GUN WORK, one often is called upon to do many seemingly unrelated chores not directly related to the gun's action or woodwork. This is particularly true when one is repairing, restoring or just cleaning a highly ornate gun that is gold or silver plated.

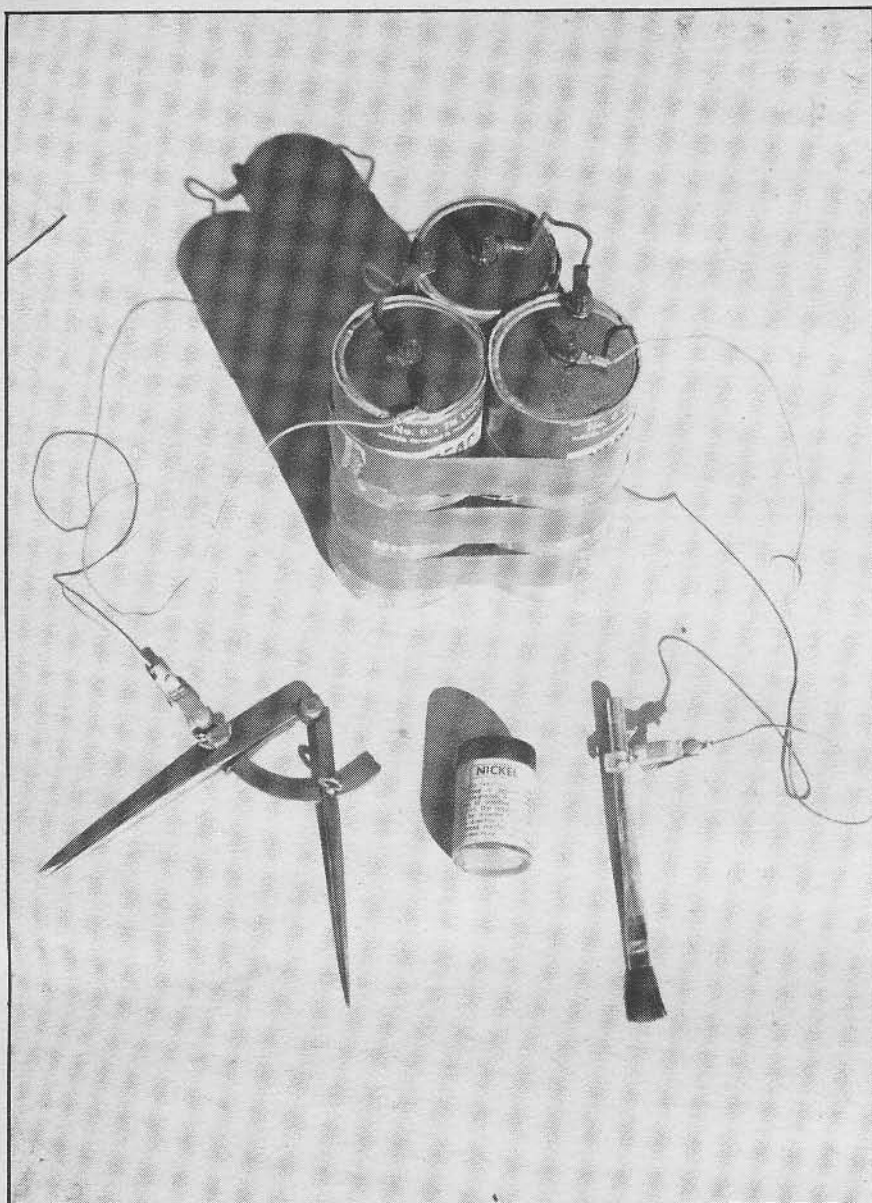
Over the years, both domestic and foreign arms manufacturers have produced guns that were highly engraved and in many cases, featured gold or silver plate — or both. Quite naturally, such plating is relatively soft. When buffed or polished with harsh cleaners or polishes, the plating ultimately is worn away. In the case of pistols or revolvers, such precious metal coating can be stripped from the gun's exterior by ill-fitting, unlined holsters. However, Texas Platers Supply (2453 W. Five-Mile Pkwy., Dallas, TX 75233) has a plating kit. For novice and professional alike,

this kit is unsurpassed for the restoration of plating on firearms. I have used this kit for many years and can attest to its effectiveness in producing top-quality plating, whether gold, silver, nickel, copper or brass.

Simple to use, the kit requires only two #6 dry cell batteries connected in series — three volts — for general plating work. The five different kits are available ranging from the professional Gunsmiths Special to the Hobbyist Special, so it might be wise to write Texas Platers for their price list on each of the five kits and to determine which best fills your specific need. Refills of the gold, silver, copper, brass and nickel compounds are available from the same source. The gold compounds produce pure 24-karat gold plating and the silver plating is genuine.

In lieu of the two #6 dry cell batteries, one can sub-





Required for plating are two or three #6 dry-cell batteries that are wired in the sequence shown here. This setup was made in preparation for silver plating these dividers.

stitute a battery charger or battery eliminator as a source of power. For longer battery life and possibly faster plating, three #6 dry cells can be utilized, wired in series.

While these kits are designed specifically for gun replating, this doesn't limit their use in plating other items. Tools, musical instruments, household cutlery and a nest of other items all may be plated with this kit. Aluminum is excluded however.

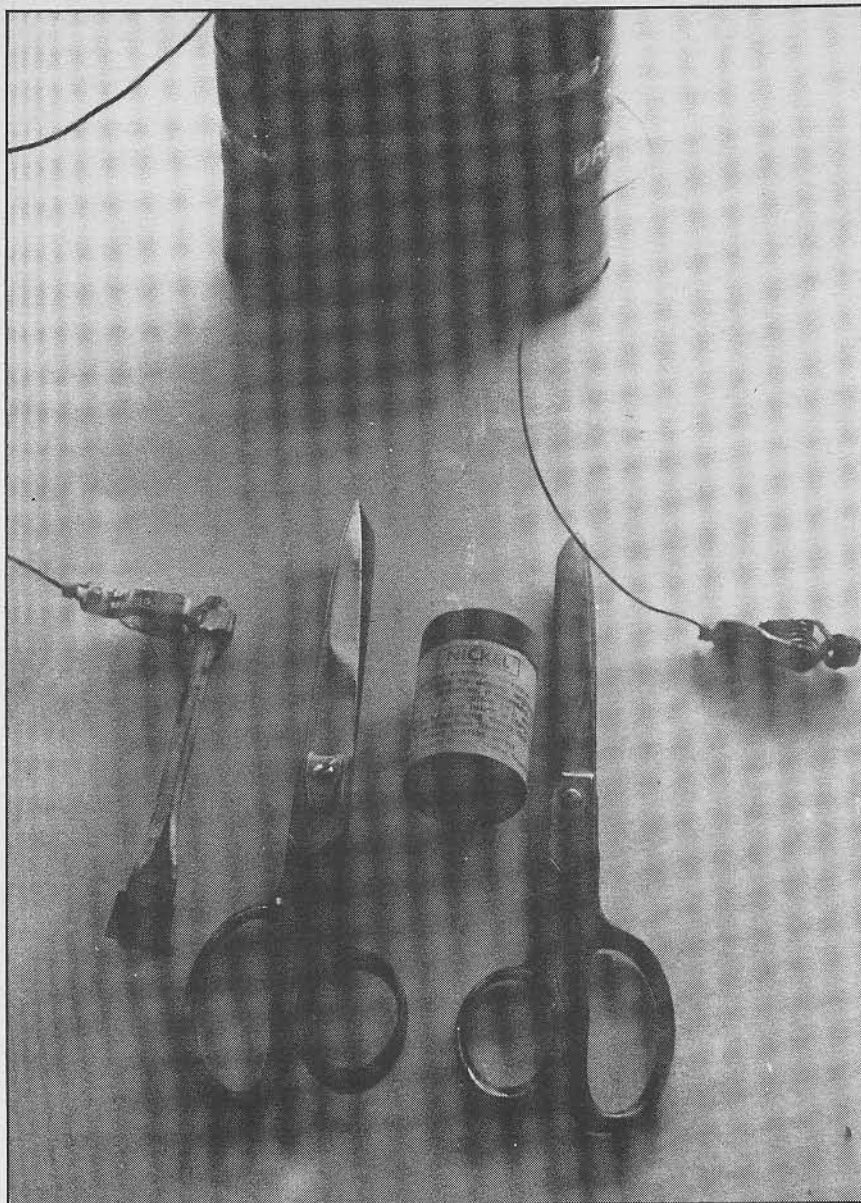
With the batteries wired correctly in series, the brush connected to the *positive* pole and the gun part connected to the *negative* pole, this kit is ready to use.

Prior to any application of the plating material, however, the metal must be absolutely clean and the areas to be plated polished. Should the metal surface be coated with oil, wax, dirt or any other foreign substance, the plating metal will not adhere to the surface. This results in a waste of the expensive compounds, so make sure the surface to receive the plating is clean and polished properly.

The procedure for using this kit is quite simple. With the

batteries correctly wired in series, the item to be plated properly connected, dip the brush into the compound, making certain that the bristles and the underside of the anode is well covered. Use a short circular motion, making certain the anode always is pressing the bristles of the brush lightly against the work. Keep the brush always in motion while plating; do not stop. Dip the brush in the compound at intervals to renew the supply of plating metal. Brush each square inch or any smaller surface for at least thirty seconds for light platings, longer for heavier coatings if desired.

Around my gunshop workbench, I have found that by plating certain tools with nickel, rusting is reduced to zero. While gold and silver plating would produce the same results in preventing rust, they are hardly desirable due to their softness and lack of durability under constant use. This is especially true when working with oily or dirty hands. Too, the gold and silver compounds are a bit expensive for such purposes.



Tools such as these well worn scissors can be replated with nickel to preserve and restore them. Those on right show years of use. On left, scissors have been buffed, then replated with kit.

I have been able to restore the worn plating on valuable collector guns to "as original" condition, making my clients extremely happy. Utilizing pure gold and silver as they do, these kits are not inexpensive. However, for every dollar expended on these kits, ten dollars in profit can be realized easily. At today's precious metal prices, professional plating shops charge a small fortune for even the smallest job. So, these plating kits are ideal for the gun worker or the professional gunsmith whose plating jobs are somewhat sporadic in terms of time.

The plating applied to your satisfaction, you may wish to give the surface a softer matte finish, reducing the high polished finish to a duller tone. This may be accomplished by lightly rubbing the plating with crocus cloth or fine steel wool; however, this dulling process must be done with an extremely light-fingered touch. As gold and silver both are extremely soft metals, they are removed easily with overzealous polishing or rubbing.

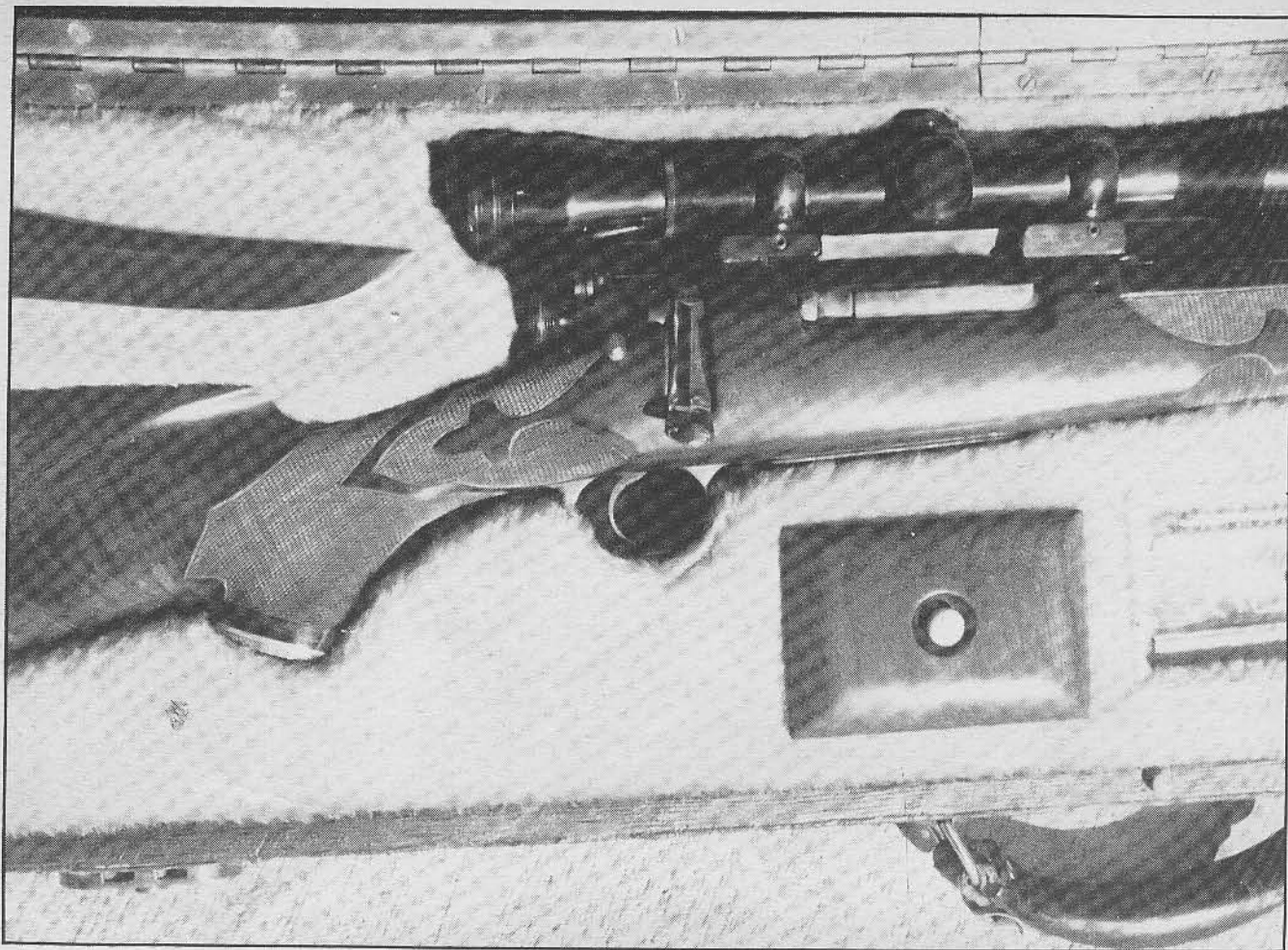
Once the desired finish is achieved, a protective coating

is needed for the sake of durability. Clear lacquer in aerosol cans is available at most paint stores. Using the best brand available, the lacquer should be misted onto the plated surfaces, then allowed to dry thoroughly. Do not overspray.

In lieu of the aerosol cans, brushing lacquer may be used, utilizing a soft mink hair bristled brush. Flow the lacquer on in a smooth, even coat. When the lacquer has dried thoroughly, the surface might be given a coating of pure carnoba wax to further protect the surface.

The plating job completed, one should clean the plating tools thoroughly; but first replace the lids on the compound jars to prevent them from drying out. Wash the brushes clean, removing all compounds from the underside of the anode, then allow these brushes to dry.

The wiring clip that connected to the brush and the one that was attached to the work surface also should be washed thoroughly to remove any compound. Even minute traces of compounds left on these vital components will affect



Various parts of custom rifles can be plated with gold or silver, thus enhancing appearance and value. The author's custom Springfield .308 Norma magnum rifle has the bolt handle, thumb safety knob and the extractor gold plated.

your work adversely the next time they are used.

Chrome plating is not practical with brush platers such as this. However, I have found that a good plate of nickel applied to chromed surfaces overlaying brass, copper or bronze works out quite well. However, there will be a slight difference in color. This is hardly noticeable and not objectionable.

In addition to regular full surface plating, one might like to plate his initials or a design on some particular item. Using the nickel compound, it is only necessary to mask off those sections of the design where plating is not desired, then proceed with the plating operation in the usual manner. The plating compound will not adhere to any surface covered with the masking tape, only to those surfaces within or surrounding it.

After having used this kit for many years, I have found that when my plating job wasn't successful, it was because I invariably had been responsible for some minute oversight. These failures were a result of any one of the following: (1) Reversed current with the brush and work connect-

ed to wrong wires; (2) broken wires or bad connections; (3) insufficient compound on the brush or the compounds were mixed on the brush; (4) low batteries; (5) lacquer or other transparent materials on the work; (6) inversion of the compounds because of improperly cleaned brushes; or (7) clips not solidly attached to work or brush. Check for each of these and you should have no problems with the Texas Platers kit.

I have replated such items as gold-plated watch cases, costume jewelry, small derringers, hammers, triggers and other firearms components, screw heads, washers, and a host of other items. If it is made of metal, it can be plated with this kit. Read the directions furnished with each kit thoroughly, then follow them to the letter if a perfect plating job is expected.

An added note concerning nickel plating: Add a few drops of water to the nickel compound and raise the voltage up to twelve volts. This is possible when using a battery charger as a source of power. Nickel plating seems to do a better job if the solution is thinner than the other compounds.

When gold or silver plating steel, it is necessary to use a copper undercoat. First plate the steel with copper, clean it thoroughly, then apply the gold or silver compound in the conventional manner.

Change the brushes each time a different solution is used and never use a brush that has not been cleaned thoroughly and dried. It may sometimes be advantageous to increase the voltage to six or eight volts. A bit of experimentation will soon determine whether to use three volts or increase it to as much as twelve volts. I've found this depends upon the composition of the metal being plated.

While this plating kit is highly recommended for touch-up and smaller jobs around the gunshop that require gold,

silver, brass, copper or nickel plating at a nominal cost, it must be recognized that more complex and costly plating outfits are needed for those who want to do large production work. However, when one goes into more complex plating, he will need additional space for such an outfit and can look forward to the outlay of considerably more cash.

Professional plating outfits begin at around \$125 for Brownell's Hoover Plating Outfit, increasing in price to as much as \$500 for large-capacity plating outfits. These are hardly necessary in any gunshop, however, unless one intends to go into complete plating of rifles, shotguns and pistols. This is a highly specialized field in itself and is not recommended for the amateur or beginning gun crafter.

The author nickel plated the bullet mould and powder flask for the cased derringer covered in another chapter. In lieu of the #6 dry-cell batteries, Bish used his power charger set at six volts as a power source with success.

