



# *A New Boss Over/Under*

An innovative addition to a classic design

*by Donald Dallas*





Boss's 1812 Edition:  
the world's first  
ambidextrous shotgun.





**L**ONDON GUNMAKER Boss & Co., established in 1812, is famous for bringing the gun world two important innovations: the first successful single trigger, in 1894, and the first—and to many the most beautiful—British over/under gun, in 1909. Apart from a self-opening mechanism introduced in the 1930s, the firm, although continuing to build guns of the highest quality, has not introduced another significant innovation. Until now.

Recently Boss announced an all-new gun with a new innovation based on its world-renowned over/under. The gun is stunning not only because

it is the first sidelever over/under produced by Boss, but also because each gun is supplied with two sidelevers—interchangeable for left- and right-handed shooters. In other words, Boss has produced the world's first ambidextrous shotgun.

Named the 1812 Edition for the year that company founder Thomas Boss completed his apprenticeship with Joseph Manton, the gun is a celebration of everything Boss is famous for: style, beauty, craftsmanship and innovation. Because the two sidelevers allow the gun to be converted to right- or left-handed use, the 1812 Edition can be passed down through generations no matter the recipients' dominant hands. Or if the gun is sold later, it can be adjusted easily to any shooter. With both sidelevers included from new, there will be no need for another sidelever





◀ Because two sidelevers are included with each gun, there is no need to make a new lever—and possibly have it embellished by another engraver—should the gun be sold or given to someone with a different dominant hand.

side-by-sides and was impressed not only with their ease of handling, but also with their slender shape and aesthetic beauty. So it was DeMoulas's vision to create a modern sidelever Boss.

As a lefty himself, DeMoulas was inspired to create a gun with sidelevers that could be fitted to either side of the action. He began the process by having conversations with his gunmakers, and then each member of the team—from the barrelmaker to the engraver—worked collaboratively with DeMoulas and Boss factory manager Matt Ward to build a gun that had never been seen before yet one that remained as elegant and rakish as a Boss gun should be.

As its starting point, the team took a Boss prototype sidelever gun that had been made 20 years previously. John Varney, an actioner with Boss for 42 years, had built the sidelever O/U for a customer. It was a toplever gun that he had modified to a sidelever, and over four years the current Boss gunmakers developed the new model. Each part of the gun had to be subtly adapted to fit around the new action and maintain the world-renowned Boss shape; it was a completely collaborative process.

Following the untimely death of John Varney four years

▶ Sidelever over/unders Nos. 11,001 and 11,002 took nearly 2,000 man-hours each to build.

to be created and engraved—perhaps by someone other than the original engraver.

Looking at Boss's history—and, indeed, the history of gunmaking in general—for the past 100-plus years, guns typically have been built with toplevers that open to the right, making them difficult for left-handed shooters to operate. Similarly, of those sidelevers that were fitted, most were placed on the right side of the gun. This means that for well over a century there has not been a gun available to both right- and left-handed shooters.

Boss did build sidelever guns in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but in the past 100-plus years the firm has produced toplever guns. Recently Boss & Co. owner Arthur DeMoulas began shooting a pair of vintage Boss sidelever



ago, DeMoulas and the gunmaking team decided to dedicate the gun to Varney's memory and produce a gun that he would have been proud of. Jason Craddock, an actioner who had worked next to Varney for 20 years, became an integral part of the project.

With DeMoulas's drive and vision for the new gun, the action was conceived, developed and crafted into its final form. Then in late 2020, after nearly 2,000 man-hours of building per gun, sidelever over/unders Nos. 11,001 and 11,002 were launched. Certainly the guns have the "wow" factor, as they are stylish, elegant and so Boss. In describing the development, Craddock summarized: "Boss, guided by tradition, not bound by it."

In developing the gun, DeMoulas studied many Boss sidelevers and spent many hours getting the design proportions and shapes just right. The sidelever is very much part of the Boss tradition, and the idea was to continue that tradition while ensuring that the new gun could work in a way that no sidelever has before—in essence creating a truly ambidextrous gun.

The sidelever mechanism is a thing of beauty. The hand-checked thumb push at the top is angled slightly forward, so that when depressed it is parallel with the action, to stop the thumb from slipping off. The lever curves gracefully around the action, and such is the standard of Boss craftsmanship that if the gun is held up to the light, no light is visible between the lever and the action. Each gun is completely bespoke to the customer's wishes and is available in the many combinations of Boss's world-renowned shapes and styles, including beading around the lockplates.

A great deal of attention also has been paid to the top strap, now devoid of the toplever. The top strap is wide at the head of the action, and then gently reduces in size to where it meets the safety. Not a single part of the top strap is flat; it is all gently curved—and held from any angle, the vision of the top strap sans lever is a delight to behold. A traditional beetle-back safety perfectly complements the sweep of the top strap with its rounded, checkered design.

The gun is engraved in the world-renowned Boss rose & scroll style developed by the Sumner family in the late 19th Century. Until 1939 the Sumners engraved all Boss guns with rose & scroll in small bouquets. This engraving is instantly recognizable as "Boss," and the company's in-house engraver, Christophe, executed the pattern.

The gun incorporates many traditional Boss features, yet it is unique and modern.



According to Arthur DeMoulas: "The 1812 Edition is inspired by the past, very practical, easy to use in the field and available to all shooters—regardless of which side they shoot on—in a way that no gun has been before. Another Boss gun, marked out by its elegant shape and timeless design and built by hand to the very highest standards by some of the most gifted craftsmen in the world."


DeMoulas is enormously proud of his entire team at Boss & Co. and of his ownership of the company, and in this new gun the firm has perfectly captured the spirit of founder Thomas Boss and his innovative successors like John Robertson. All would have been proud of this new gun—proud to see that more than 200 years after it was founded, Boss & Co. is still leading the way. ➔

For more information, contact Boss & Co., [bossguns.com](http://bossguns.com).

Donald Dallas lives in Fife, Scotland, and has written a number of books on the history of British sporting guns and rifles. Subjects have included Boss & Co., John Dickson & Son, David McKay Brown and British gunmakers of the 21st Century. For more information, visit [donalddallas.com](http://donalddallas.com).

▲ Because the gun has no toplever, extra attention has been paid to the top strap—which is gently curved and engraved in the renowned Boss rose & scroll style.





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