Pistol history:

All photos in this report are of stock 1911’s for comparison. None of the photos are of the pistol in question.

John M. Browning’s 1897 patent was the first issued for this pistol. For the military, it was adopted in 1911 by the Army, 1913 by the Navy and Marine Corps. Serial no. 40197 used as an example here, (photos on the first three pages are of this pistol) was shipped in a batch of 1000 1911s on July 30th, 1913 to the U.S. Navy Yard, Brooklyn New York. This example pistol appears to be a completely original 1913 NAVY marked pistol. Most M1911 pistols were marked “ARMY” (on the slide) and after 1915 all were so marked. “NAVY” marked pistols are highly sought after by collectors and are seldom found in original, let alone in excellent or better condition. This pistol is from the largest of the 11 batches of NAVY marked M1911s. Note how well the grip screws fit in the wooden stock holes and also note how crisp and clean the screw slots appear. Further note the slightly lighter smoky blue color of the small parts. The small parts were made harder than the frame or slide and will, as a result, take blueing different than the softer slide and frame. In the left view, note the concave mainspring housing retainer pin and the rounded rear sight. This appears to be original on your 1911.
Based on this information, your pistol was manufactured under the second year of the Navy contract in 1913. Probably in late September or October, based on known production numbers. Monthly production increased throughout this contract, which makes it difficult to nail down the actual month of production. While your Frame, Slide, and Barrel are not a matching set, all 3 were US Military production, very likely saw combat in at least one (if not two) wars, and your Frame and Slide are both manufactured by Colt, with your Barrel being manufactured under a subcontract by High Standard for Remington under Military Contract. Serial numbers 38,001 through 43,800 (5800 total) were manufactured for the US Navy in 1913. Yours is one of 133,999 Colt-manufactured M1911’s before the model changed slightly in 1924 and was re-designated M1911A1. It was one of only 60,000 M1911’s in US inventory the day the United States entered WWI.

Notice the razor sharp lines at the edges and where the slide sides blend into the top curve. Your slide is not original based on this factor as well as others. The barrels used in these pistols have the horizontal HP mark visible through the ejection port (yours does not, reference Barrel section later in this report), but have the second type finish that is smooth and the only machining marks visible through the ejection port are concentric to the axis of the barrel. This second type horizontally marked HP barrel was used from about serial #38000 to about serial #120000. The first type horizontal H marked barrel ran from about serial #25000 to about serial #38000 and it had a coarse black non reflective finish with machining marks running parallel with the axis of the barrel. A lanyard loop/two-tone or possibly a keyhole type magazine would have been original to this pistol made in 1913, making your magazines of a later era. The pistol would normally have been issued with a 1912 pattern swivel holster, not the type you have with web belt clips.
Your frame matches these markings, but your slide does not. Please note the frame area behind the trigger. A major change was made in 1924 to add chamfers (crescent cuts) in this location on both sides of the frame to allow a better reach for a trigger finger. The trigger was also shortened, the sights were improved, the mainspring housing was curved, the hammer spur was shortened, and the grip safety was lengthened. These changes are what denotes the M1911A1 as opposed to your M1911.

Your pistol was proofed by Major Walter G Penfield, who inspected the first 101,000 (1909-1914) Colt-manufactured 1911’s for Government orders. He was in charge of inspection and acceptance of pistols from the Colt factory, and his initials indicate the pistol had passed all Government inspections, and was accepted by his authority.

This stamped mark is clearly visible on the left side of your frame above the magazine release.
Here you can clearly see the differences between the M1911 (1911-1924) and the M1911A1 (1924 to present). Note the hammer, grip safety tang, curved mainspring housing, trigger, frame reliefs behind the trigger, and front sight. Note the differences in grips. Your pistol has plastic ‘artificial bone’ grips, you will be looking for those pictured in the upper pistol.
Slide:

The following two photos show the markings your original slide should have had. The US NAVY marking is very uncommon, and was only used for two years.

Note also the very sharp edge between the side of the slide and the curved top. This is typical of very early production pistols, and your slide does not have this feature.

In addition, an original 1913 Navy M1911 would have the Colt logo on the left side of the slide behind the cocking serrations. Earlier years produced for the Army had the logo in the same location with a circle around it. Your logo is superimposed between the patent and manufacturers information on the left side of the slide rather than the location pictured here.

Based on the location of the Colt logo (left side of the slide placed between patent and manufacturer’s information), we know that the slide was manufactured in 1919 or later. The very narrow front sight tells us that it was manufactured before 1924. Narrowing it down any further than 1919-1924 is probably impossible.

There are three ‘proof’ marks on the underside of the slide forward of the disconnector pocket. An A superimposed over a P, and a smaller G. The G designates it as a Government Contract order. The P denotes passing final inspection when received by the Government from Colt. I can find no credible reference to account for the A marking. It was clearly applied AFTER the proof mark, so was probably an armorer’s inspection/refit stamp later in it’s life, possibly an inspection prior to it’s second life in WW2.
Identifying marks on your slide are the key to determining its source and history. The key elements to consider are the sights (which are clearly Pre-1924) and the location of the rearing Colt logo (clearly post 1919).

What all this means is that the slide was manufactured sometime during WW1 or up to one year after. Odds are that it was DURING the war, and that it did see service in that war, and possibly WW2 also. At most, it is only 11 years younger than the Frame.
Barrel:

Manufactured for Remington Rand. First order was awarded to them on March 6, 1942. 125,000 early pistols had parts interchangeability issues, which possibly resulted in this barrel being taken from a complete Remington Rand pistol by either an ordnance inspector or a military armorer for use in another pistol. Right side of the barrel lug is marked HS (High Standard produced the barrels for the Remington contract in WWII), left side is marked with a P (proof mark, final inspection).

Your barrel is a perfect match for this marking. I would place this barrel in the 1942-1943 vintage based on these facts and some assumptions.
**Magazines:**

Original magazines for this 1913 pistol should have lanyard loops on the bottom.

Neither of these magazines is correct, nor do they match each other.

We’ll take these two magazines one at a time. The first is clearly identified by a stamped letter G on the top of the floorplate lip, and the offset overlapping spot-welded seam up the back spine. These were manufactured by General Shaver, a division of Remington Rand (known today as Remington). They were made under a contract to produce almost a million magazines for the US Government. Most of these shipped with Remington Rand 1911A1 pistols, beginning in 1943 and ending in 1945. It’s impossible to narrow down the date any further than these 3 years of WWII.
Here are some examples of this magazine (not pictures of your own):

Your identical General Shaver magazine had 7 rounds of old ammunition stored in it when I began, and probably has for a number of years. This has probably ruined the ability of the magazine to feed all 7 rounds (modern magazines have better springs and increase the capacity to 8). The final 2 or 3 rounds will probably not feed due to the spring set. This identification is 100% due to the G marking and style.
Magazine #2 is the one with the 4 pins holding the floor plate to the magazine body (one pin is missing). This magazine had 6 rounds of ammunition stored in it, and suffers from the same issue as magazine #1.

This magazine was manufactured by Colt for M1911’s in WWI beginning in either 1915 or 1916, and continuing on until the end of the war in 1918. This narrows down the date to a 3-year period, just as magazine #1. These dates mean that neither magazine would have been original to the pistol, but #2 is very appropriate for the era. This magazine would originally have had a 2-tone finish, with only the bottom half being blued. Your matching magazine has been modified with a file in the magazine catch notch, and the finish has degraded to the point that the 2-tone finish cannot be seen, but identification is 100% primarily due to the pinned floor plate. Examples shown here:
Holster:

Your Holster is the **1916 US Holster, Right Hand.** It was preceded by only 2 other 1911 holsters, the Model 1912 Mounted (Cavalry, Army only) holster, and the Model 1912 Dismounted (Infantry) Holster (Army, Navy, Marines). Identification was somewhat difficult, in spite of the 1917 year stamped on it. The manufacturer’s name is partially obscured by belt wear near the top, but there was only one WW1 holster manufacturer under US Government that ended with “….GOODS CO.” was the Warren Leather Goods Co of Worcester, Mass.

An example with intact stamping:

I assume the mismatched stamped letters W.E.H. are the initials of the serviceman this holster was first issued to. Your holster is stamped “**G.W.S.**” Ironically, these are the initials of my Step-Father, Gerald Wilbur Smith, but he served during and after WWII. Just a funny note.

A search of the draft registration cards for WW1 produces only two men with those initials. George W Hause of Trumbull, Ohio and G W Houese of Heard, Georgia. Normally these two similar surnames could be attributed to errors in recording that long ago, but in this case the hometown listing makes both of these legitimate finds.

I can find no reference to Lewie Bigler (LAB), who was probably a civilian owner of the holster many years later.

Further research may narrow down the original issue of this holster by researching these two soldiers.
Ammunition:

The 13 rounds of military ball ammunition (230 grain, FMJ) loaded in the two magazines and the 16 loose rounds in the bag are marked with the head stamp E C 42. These were manufactured in the Evansville Ordnance Plant in Evansville, Indiana in 1942 for use in WW2. The plant was operated between 1942 and 1944 by the Chrysler Corporation and produced billions of rounds. This is sometimes confused with ammunition produced at the Eau Claire, WI plant, but that plant only produced US .30 Carbine ammunition. Keep in mind that 45 Auto ammunition was also manufactured for use in Thompson Machine Guns during WWII.

Please note the picture above is a brass case. All 29 rounds of yours are STEEL cased. These rounds may be worth up to $2.50 each, but only in pristine (non-corroded) condition. Some of your rounds fit this condition. The Evansville Chrysler plant was a body and frame plant that opened in the 30's. During the war it produced .30 Carbine and .45 auto ammo. It was directed by the War Dept. to substitute steel for brass in .45 cases in late 42. Production ran from late 42 to early 43 on steel cased .45. After the war, the plant returned to making auto parts ONLY and was closed in 1959.

The box of Winchester ammunition has a head stamp of WRA 45 AUTO. WRA stands for Winchester Repeating Arms. These are 45 ACP FMJ 230 grain rounds. I’ve found this version of the Winchester Logo used on boxes from 1944-1954. The empty box, were it in good condition without the end flap missing, would be worth about $50 to a collector. In this condition (without the ammunition), it’s worth about $15. The value of the ammunition itself is probably no more than modern (new) ammunition.
Condition and Value:

A search of the draft registration cards for WW1 While I’m not a professional appraiser, I will make an attempt at this based on comparable pistols and prices I could find. My judgment on condition is purely my own opinion.

A user of the Gun Values Board owns an M1911 in Good condition, all original. SN 267248 manufactured in 1918. Value was estimated in the $1500 to $3000 range based only on a verbal description. To be in good condition, it must be all original, minor wear, and the finish must be near 90% or so.

A member of the 1911Forums board has a pistol from the 60,000 range (Navy model in the same order as yours) which is mismatched like yours, but manufactured in 1914. This pistol is a Navy frame, but with an army slide of the same era (older than yours) with a 90% or better finish, but an M1911A1 safety, trigger, and mainspring housing from WW2. This pistol was judged to be in the $400-$500 range due to the mismatches.

A member of the gunboards forum has a 1918 in a condition described as 95-98%. Prices for that pistol range from $600-$2000.

Rock Island Auction Company sold an M1911 SN 139571 (1917) in very fine condition cosmetically, and mechanically excellent. All parts match. It was estimated at $1000-$1500. This is an image of that actual pistol:
Now the crowning glory......the same auction house sold a pistol from the same lot as yours, serial number 43,788. Selling price is never listed, but it was estimated at $2500-$4000. It even has the correct ‘lanyard loop’ magazine. The description:

This is a nice example of a totally restored Colt U.S. Navy Contract Model 1911 Automatic Pistol manufactured in 1913. This pistol was one of 1,000 guns shipped to the Brooklyn Navy Yard on August 23, 1913. The left side of the slide is marked with the two line, two block 1897 - 1911 patent dates and address with the Rampant Colt behind the serrations. The left front of the frame is marked "UNITED STATES PROPERTY", the right side of the slide is marked "MODEL OF 1911 U.S. NAVY" and the small "H" inspection mark is on the back of the slide above the firing pin. The left side of the frame is marked with the circled "WGP" inspection mark of Major Walter G. Penfield. The serial number is marked right side of the frame behind the slide stop hole. All markings are highlighted in white. Low profile blade front and early rounded rear sights, smooth trigger, checkered magazine release, slide stop, thumb safety and hammer spur. All blue barrel marked with a "P" and "H" on top of the chamber, two tone magazine with lanyard ring on the bottom, lanyard ring on the heel of the frame and fitted with checkered walnut grips with diamond pattern around the screws.

Professionally restored to near mint condition. The magazine has also been restored and remains very good. The grips are excellent with only slight handling/storage marks, and very crisp checkering. The markings remain clear and crisp. Mechanically excellent.

Picture of the actual pistol:
Unfortunately, your pistol is both mismatched and in poor condition cosmetically. Overall mechanical condition is GOOD (capable of firing most likely) but not excellent. Based on these problems, I would value your pistol at $400-$600 once assembled and test-fired if you were to find and install original period grips. Cash doesn’t rule the world; its historical significance is without question in spite of the mixed eras of parts.

As I found your pistol, it was only in ‘field-striped’ condition, and assembled quickly. I did find, however, that the sear spring was installed incorrectly, which was preventing the pistol from cycling. Once installed correctly, it should be fine. The only other problem I’ve found since are the problems listed below, which contribute to the slide action being less than smooth:

Your blueing on the slide and frame is about 5% intact, and the barrel is 75%. The frame has been dropped or crushed twice, slightly bending the frame under the left side of the forward portion of the slide (left front corner of the shroud), and also slightly bending the slide rail of the frame inward at the magazine well, left side just to the rear of the slide lock hole. This bent rail contributed to the lack of smooth action. I took pictures of both of these flaws before repairing them. The bent portion out on the shroud was repaired to 100%. Your slide and frame did not mate well. I was able to straighten about 75% of the slight bend in the rail, and hand-lapped the slide to frame. It’s much smoother now. This may also be why one of your magazines was modified by filing the magazine catch notch, as the magazine would not fully insert to the proper depth with the frame rail being bent as it was. This lapping compound is the only abrasive I will use on your pistol. Anything more would be historical sacrilege, but the pistol SHOULD be in operational condition in spite of the mis-matched parts. The barrel has minor rust pitting in the grooves of the bore, but the lands look to be clean and sharp (likely from copper buildup protecting them). I’ll get as much of the rust removed as I can without ruining the integrity of the barrel. Accuracy and muzzle velocity should not be affected, as these are not continuous down the length of the barrel, and would not allow any gasses to escape past the bullet when fired. There is damage to the rear sight from being dropped as well.

The grip screws are only about 50% condition, but should be preserved as original. This is not uncommon. When holstered, those screws are exposed to the elements, as are the magazines, which are also in pretty rough shape. I had to sacrifice one of the grip screw bushings in order to save one of the 4 grip screws. I felt the screws themselves were more important, since the bushings cannot be seen when the grips are installed. That bushing has been replaced by me with one known to have been manufactured on an original M1911A1 production line (now owned by about the 5th or 6th company since Colt owned it in WW2).

The magazine catch lock pin has been bent and broken, but should still function. The magazine catch spring is also damaged, but functional. This is common damage even on modern 1911 style pistols, due to the owner not being familiar with the part. It is easily mistaken as a screw, but in fact is a cammed pin with a screw slot. The magazine catch must be half-depressed, then a quarter-turn of the screw/pin releases it.

All other internal and external parts show minor wear and very little rust.
References:

http://coolgunsite.com

http://www.m1911.org/history.htm

www.wikipedia.com

http://www.rawles.to/M1911_Mag_FAQ.html

http://www.oldammo.com/boxes.htm


http://www.1911pistols.org/