

NOTE:

L&R # 693 is pictured on page 13 (plate 11) of **Confederate ARMS**, BY William A. Albaugh, III, and Edward N. Simmons, publ. by Stackpole, (1957)

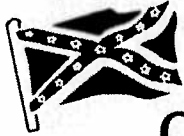
693 is identified as having been carried by Col. Harry Gilmor, of the 2nd Maryland (Confederate) Cavalry.

This statement is in error, as this picture is transposed with the picture (Plate 10) at the bottom of page 12, which is the Gilmor gun.

Both L&R revolvers, however, are original and in excellent condition.

Fred Edmunds





THE
Confederate States
ARMORY & MUSEUM

Nancy I. Edmunds
Director
Frederick R. Edmunds
Curator

LEECH & RIGDON CONFEDERATE PERCUSSION REVOLVER # 693

Thomas Leech, moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1854, and established a cotton brokerage firm with four English partners. Realizing soon thereafter that a North-South conflict was imminent, the **Thomas Leech & Co.** firm headed in a new business direction: that of purchasing and manufacturing military equipage for sale. The firm sold military items under the name of **Memphis Novelty Works, Thomas Leech & Co.**, beginning in August of 1861, manufacturing swords, side knives, buckles, spurs, belts and brass castings. Advertisements were placed in *The Memphis Appeal* for the purchase of copper, zinc and brass and noted that orders were being accepted for swords of all types, knives, bayonets, stirrups and spurs, etc.

It is at this early stage that Leech associates himself with Charles Rigdon, a machinist and scale maker from St. Louis, who had moved to Memphis in 1859 or 1860. There is evidence that while in St. Louis, Rigdon might have been involved in the manufacture of **Shaw & McLanahan** revolvers. **Leech & Rigdon** formed a partnership in early 1862, changing the firm's name first to **Novelty Works**, and later, to **Leech & Rigdon**.

Yankee successes at Forts Henry and Donelson in early 1862, threatened Tennessee, so **Leech & Rigdon** relocated operations to Columbus, Mississippi (where Briarfield Arsenal had been planned). The **Leech & Rigdon** revolver was first manufactured at Columbus, where Rigdon had brought his St. Louis machinery. It is believed possible that up to 200 pistols could have been manufactured at Columbus.

Soon, the Union threatened Columbus (late 1862), so **Leech & Rigdon** moved their operation to Greensboro, Georgia, in February of 1863, continuing the manufacture of pistols exclusively, in March, and dropping their other products.

Leech & Rigdon had a contract with the Confederate Government for the manufacture of 1500 revolvers (on the Colt's patent) so, at Greensboro, they continued to manufacture pistols in fulfillment of that contract. Records from the Augusta Arsenal

indicate that from September of 1863 to March of 1864, some 903 revolvers were received from **Leech & Rigdon**, 814 of which were issued. **The revolver at hand here, #693, was no doubt, one of the 814 issued.**

The **Leech & Rigdon** partnership was terminated by a dissolution agreement recorded on December 13th, 1863. Thus ended the partnership, but **not** the manufacture of the Leech & Rigdon revolver! Less than two weeks later, Rigdon formed a new partnership with Jesse Ansley and others, under the name and style of Rigdon, Ansley & Co., for the purpose of Manufacturing pistols (Colt's Navy Repeaters) under contract with the Confederate Government.

Ridgon & Ansley immediately began the move from Greensboro to Augusta, Georgia, taking all of the gun-making machinery and workers with them. The new firm also undertook to complete the **Leech & Rigdon** contract for 1500 pistols, stamping them with the "**Leech & Rigdon**" name, and generally, making them the same as the original models, many of which had already been issued.

At the completion of the original contract, Rigdon & Ansley entered a new contract for the production of 1500 pistols. These were to of an 'improved design', with twelve cylinder stops, a Colt-type loading lever catch, instead of the pin-and-ball type catch, and channel in the recoil shield. The highest serially numbered Rigdon & Ansley known is #2373, so it is generally believed that somewhat fewer than 900 pistols were made before production ended in April of 1865.

It is to be noted that serial numbers run consecutively throughout the production of **Leech & Rigdons** and **Rigdon & Ansleys**.

With this background in mind, we will begin to examine, in detail, **Leech & Rigdon #693**, a revolver made in Greensboro, Georgia, near the end of 1863:

Leech & Rigdon # 693

Cylinder:

Stamped **693** reading from the left side between cylinder shoulders: cylinder pins present and intact: cylinder stops well milled, but without lead-in grooves found on later models: cylinder excellent with all original percussion nipples intact, showing a very pleasing brownish patina. It is to be noted that the early very small stamping dies were used for the serial numbers throughout, while the larger stamping dies were used in the **Leech & Rigdon** CSA lettering dies.

Further noted that these very small stamping dies used for number stamping, began with serial # 1 -L&R and continued through R&A # 1950, when larger dies were used thereafter.

Barrel:

Leech & Rigdon CSA, stamped in its usual broken-die fashion, quite well struck, on the top flat of the octagonal barrel housing, reading from muzzle to breech. Half-round, half-octagon barrel measures 7 and 7/16ths inches long, and has its original cone-shaped brass front sight. 693 stamped on the bottom portion of the barrel lug where it joins the frame; loading lever catch is deeply stamped inversely at the end, 693 and is of the ball and pin type (the second type to be used, the first being the ball catch only; barrel shows the very same brownish patina as is present on the cylinder, and for that matter, the remainder of the gun. Rifling is the correct 7 lands and grooves with clockwise twist, and is clean and deep.

Loading Lever:

Correctly stamped 693 on the top flat portion, and in excellent original condition, as is the plunger: pin and ball type loading lever as mentioned above: both loading lever screws are original.

Grip:

Original one-piece walnut in excellent condition, showing a pleasing patina: perfectly wedged to the gun: no markings.

Backstrap:

Original brass backstrap in excellent condition, showing an aged patina: correctly stamped 693 at the butt: original butt screw.

Trigger Guard:

Original brass trigger guard, correctly stamped 693 at the bottom, just forward of the trigger bow and below the screw: also a small cryptic four-dot stamping between the serial number and the trigger bow; this cryptic mark has been seen on a number of **Leech & Rigdon**s. Patina matches that of the backstrap: all screws are original and in excellent condition.

Frame:

Original iron frame showing a minor casting flaw at the bottom breech-end which appears to have been braised on both sides: not a distraction, but rather a proud badge of Confederate ingenuity in repairing minor flaws in their manufacturing processes: stamped 693 at the lower forward portion of the frame where it joins the barrel lug in a perfect-tight fashion.

Arbor:

The arbor upon which the cylinder rotates is correctly stamped 693 at the top front above the wedge cut-out, and in excellent condition.

Hammer:

Original and in excellent condition, having the sighting notch in the top front portion: also having a cut-out in the front face to accommodate locking into the safety pins on the rear of the cylinder: knurling at the thumb-piece is deeply cut and attractive: correct original roller at bottom of the hammer where it engages the original mainspring.

Wedge:

Original Colt-type wedge with spring, stamped 693: wedge screw original: both show pleasing patina.

Internal Parts:

All are original.

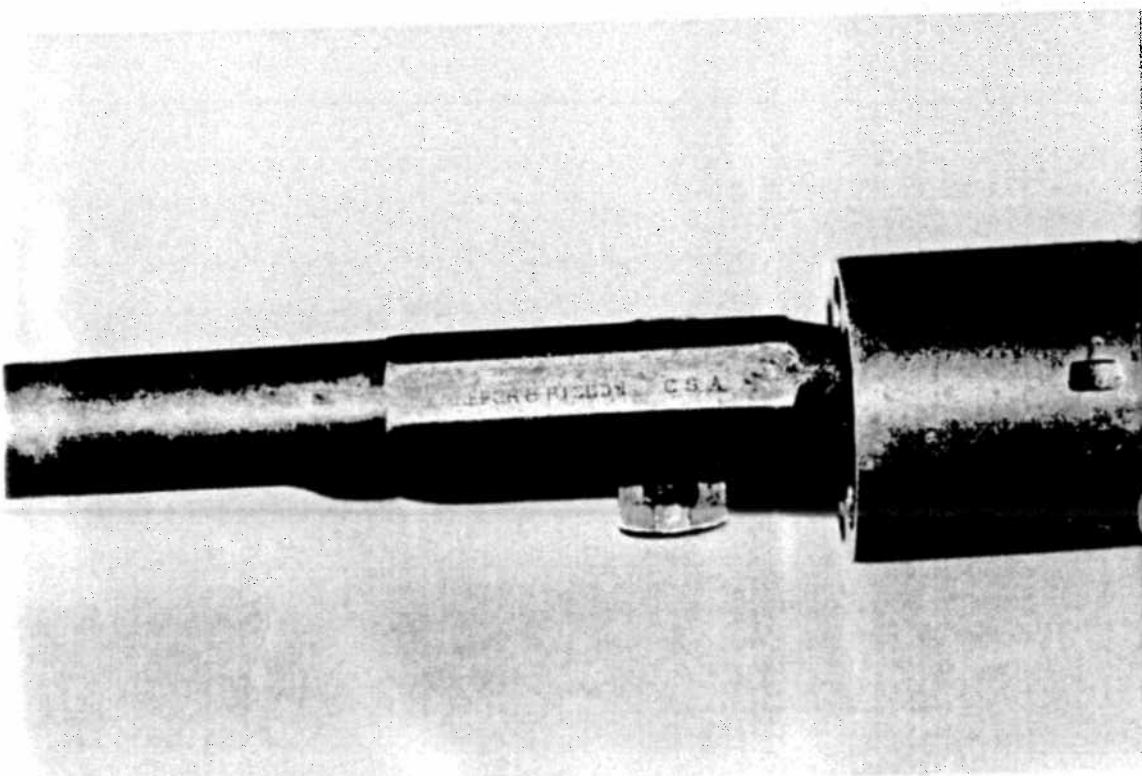
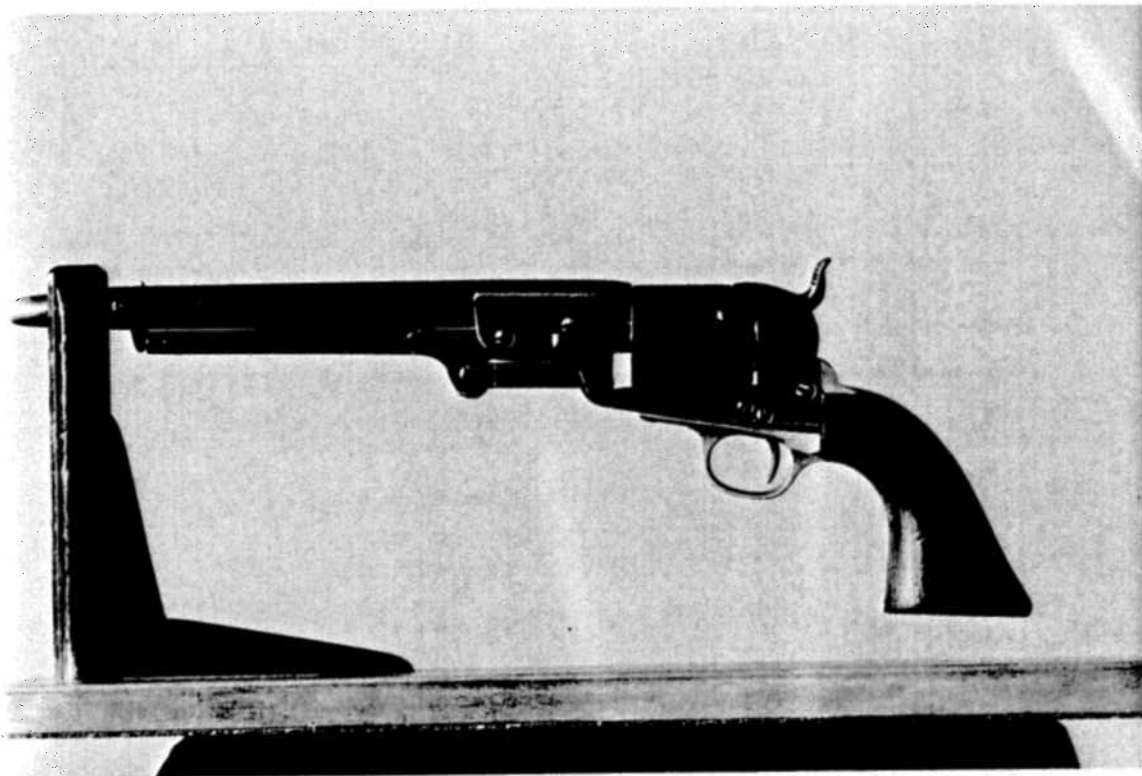
Conclusion

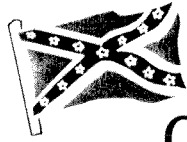
Leech & Rigdon , 693, is completely original in all respects, down to the last screw. It is definitely one of the finest examples of this manufacturer known. It has never been cleaned and shows a very consistent and pleasing aged patina throughout. This is a piece suitable to take its place in the finest collection.

Dated: January 20th, 2003
Vero Beach, Florida


Frederick R. Edmunds

Leech & Rigdon Confederate Percussion Revolver # 693





THE
Confederate States
ARMORY & MUSEUM

You have

Nancy I. Edmunds
Director
Frederick R. Edmunds
Curator

LEECH & RIGDON CONFEDERATE PERCUSSION REVOLVER # 693

Thomas Leech, moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1854, and established a cotton brokerage firm with four English partners. Realizing soon thereafter that a North-South conflict was imminent, the **Thomas Leech & Co.** firm headed in a new business direction: that of purchasing and manufacturing military equipage for sale. The firm sold military items under the name of **Memphis Novelty Works, Thomas Leech & Co.**, beginning in August of 1861, manufacturing swords, side knives, buckles, spurs, belts and brass castings. Advertisements were placed in *The Memphis Appeal* for the purchase of copper, zinc and brass and noted that orders were being accepted for swords of all types, knives, bayonets, stirrups and spurs, etc.

It is at this early stage that Leech associates himself with Charles Rigdon, a machinist and scale maker from St. Louis, who had moved to Memphis in 1859 or 1860. There is evidence that while in St. Louis, Rigdon might have been involved in the manufacture of **Shaw & McLanahan** revolvers. **Leech & Rigdon** formed a partnership in early 1862, changing the firm's name first to **Novelty Works**, and later, to **Leech & Rigdon**.

Yankee successes at Forts Henry and Donelson in early 1862, threatened Tennessee, so **Leech & Rigdon** relocated operations to Columbus, Mississippi (where Briarfield Arsenal had been planned). The **Leech & Rigdon** revolver was first manufactured at Columbus, where Rigdon had brought his St. Louis machinery. It is believed possible that up to 200 pistols could have been manufactured at Columbus.

Soon, the Union threatened Columbus (late 1862), so **Leech & Rigdon** moved their operation to Greensboro, Georgia, in February of 1863, continuing the manufacture of pistols exclusively, in March, and dropping their other products.

Leech & Rigdon had a contract with the Confederate Government for the manufacture of 1500 revolvers (on the Colt's patent) so, at Greensboro, they continued to manufacture pistols in fulfillment of that contract. Records from the Augusta Arsenal

indicate that from September of 1863 to March of 1864, some 903 revolvers were received from **Leech & Rigdon**, 814 of which were issued. **The revolver at hand here, #693, was no doubt, one of the 814 issued.**

The **Leech & Rigdon** partnership was terminated by a dissolution agreement recorded on December 13th, 1863. Thus ended the partnership, but **not** the manufacture of the Leech & Rigdon revolver! Less than two weeks later, Rigdon formed a new partnership with Jesse Ansley and others, under the name and style of Rigdon, Ansley & Co., for the purpose of Manufacturing pistols (Colt's Navy Repeaters) under contract with the Confederate Government .

Ridgon & Ansley immediately began the move from Greensboro to Augusta, Georgia, taking all of the gun-making machinery and workers with them. The new firm also undertook to complete the **Leech & Rigdon** contract for 1500 pistols, stamping them with the "**Leech & Rigdon**" name, and generally, making them the same as the original models, many of which had already been issued.

At the completion of the original contract, Rigdon & Ansley entered a new contract for the production of 1500 pistols. These were to of an 'improved design', with twelve cylinder stops, a Colt-type loading lever catch, instead of the pin-and-ball type catch, and channel in the recoil shield. The highest serially numbered Rigdon & Ansley known is #2373, so it is generally believed that somewhat fewer than 900 pistols were made before production ended in April of 1865.

It is to be noted that serial numbers run consecutively throughout the production of **Leech & Rigdons** and **Rigdon & Ansleys**.

With this background in mind, we will begin to examine, in detail, **Leech & Rigdon #693**, a revolver made in Greensboro, Georgia , near the end of 1863:

Leech & Rigdon # 693

Cylinder:

Stamped **693** reading from the left side between cylinder shoulders: cylinder pins present and intact: cylinder stops well milled, but without lead-in grooves found on later models: cylinder excellent with all original percussion nipples intact, showing a very pleasing brownish patina. It is to be noted that the early very small stamping dies were used for the serial numbers throughout, while the larger stamping dies were used in the **Leech & Rigdon** CSA lettering dies.

indicate that from September of 1863 to March of 1864, some 903 revolvers were received from **Leech & Rigdon**, 814 of which were issued. **The revolver at hand here, #693, was no doubt, one of the 814 issued.**

The **Leech & Rigdon** partnership was terminated by a dissolution agreement recorded on December 13th, 1863. Thus ended the partnership, but **not** the manufacture of the Leech & Rigdon revolver! Less than two weeks later, Rigdon formed a new partnership with Jesse Ansley and others, under the name and style of Rigdon, Ansley & Co., for the purpose of Manufacturing pistols (Colt's Navy Repeaters) under contract with the Confederate Government .

Ridgon & Ansley immediately began the move from Greensboro to Augusta, Georgia, taking all of the gun-making machinery and workers with them. The new firm also undertook to complete the **Leech & Rigdon** contract for 1500 pistols, stamping them with the "**Leech & Rigdon**" name, and generally, making them the same as the original models, many of which had already been issued.

At the completion of the original contract, Rigdon & Ansley entered a new contract for the production of 1500 pistols. These were to of an 'improved design', with twelve cylinder stops, a Colt-type loading lever catch, instead of the pin-and-ball type catch, and channel in the recoil shield. The highest serially numbered Rigdon & Ansley known is #2373, so it is generally believed that somewhat fewer than 900 pistols were made before production ended in April of 1865.

It is to be noted that serial numbers run consecutively throughout the production of **Leech & Rigdons** and **Rigdon & Ansleys**.

With this background in mind, we will begin to examine, in detail, **Leech & Rigdon #693**, a revolver made in Greensboro, Georgia , near the end of 1863:

Leech & Rigdon # 693

Cylinder:

Stamped **693** reading from the left side between cylinder shoulders: cylinder pins present and intact: cylinder stops well milled, but without lead-in grooves found on later models: cylinder excellent with all original percussion nipples intact, showing a very pleasing brownish patina. It is to be noted that the early very small stamping dies were used for the serial numbers throughout, while the larger stamping dies were used in the **Leech & Rigdon** CSA lettering dies.

Further noted that these very small stamping dies used for number stamping, began with serial # 1 -L&R and continued through R&A # 1950, when larger dies were used thereafter.

Barrel:

Leech & Rigdon CSA, stamped in its usual broken-die fashion, quite well struck, on the top flat of the octagonal barrel housing, reading from muzzle to breech. Half-round, half-octagon barrel measures 7 and 7/16ths inches long, and has its original cone-shaped brass front sight. **693** stamped on the bottom portion of the barrel lug where it joins the frame; loading lever catch is deeply stamped inversely at the end, **693** and is of the ball and pin type (the second type to be used, the first being the ball catch only: barrel shows the very same brownish patina as is present on the cylinder, and for that matter, the remainder of the gun. Rifling is the correct 7 lands and grooves with clockwise twist, and is clean and deep.

Loading Lever:

Correctly stamped **693** on the top flat portion, and in excellent original condition, as is the plunger: pin and ball type loading lever as mentioned above: both loading lever screws are original.

Grip:

Original one-piece walnut in excellent condition, showing a pleasing patina: perfectly wedged to the gun: no markings.

Backstrap:

Original brass backstrap in excellent condition, showing an aged patina: correctly stamped **693** at the butt: original butt screw.

Trigger Guard:

Original brass trigger guard, correctly stamped **693** at the bottom, just forward of the trigger bow and below the screw: also a small cryptic four-dot stamping between the serial number and the trigger bow; this cryptic mark has been seen on a number of **Leech & Rigdon**s. Patina matches that of the backstrap: all screws are original and in excellent condition.

Frame:

Original iron frame showing a minor casting flaw at the bottom breech-end which appears to have been braised on both sides: not a distraction, but rather a proud badge of Confederate ingenuity in repairing minor flaws in their manufacturing processes: stamped **693** at the lower forward portion of the frame where it joins the barrel lug in a perfect-tight fashion.

Arbor:

The arbor upon which the cylinder rotates is correctly stamped **693** at the top front above the wedge cut-out, and in excellent condition.

Hammer:

Original and in excellent condition, having the sighting notch in the top front portion: also having a cut-out in the front face to accommodate locking into the safety pins on the rear of the cylinder: knurling at the thumb-piece is deeply cut and attractive: correct original roller at bottom of the hammer where it engages the original mainspring.

Wedge:

Original Colt-type wedge with spring, stamped **693**: wedge screw original: both show pleasing patina.

Internal Parts:

All are original.

Conclusion

Leech & Rigdon , 693, is completely original in all respects, down to the last screw. It is definitely one of the finest examples of this manufacturer known. It has never been cleaned and shows a very consistent and pleasing aged patina throughout. This is a piece suitable to take its place in the finest collection.

Dated: January 20th, 2003
Vero Beach, Florida


Frederick R. Edmunds

