

PROVENANCE

First Model Spiller & Burr Serial Number 13

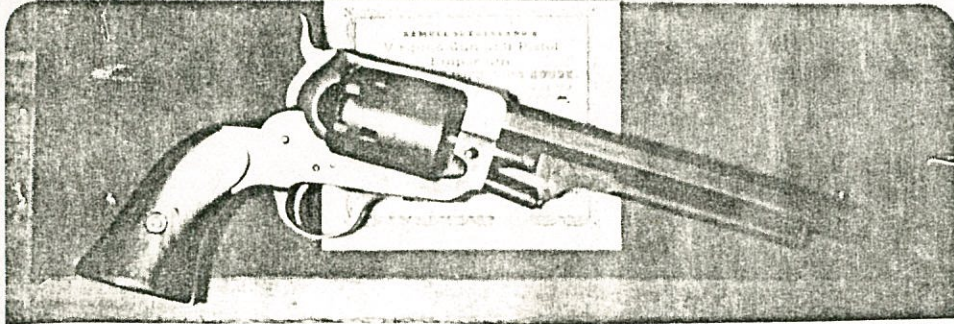
- Acquired in the spring of 1973 by William A. Albaugh in Maryland from a direct descendent of the Union soldier who brought the revolver home from the Civil War as a souvenir. While it is unknown what specific Union unit the soldier was a member of, the descendents felt it was likely a Wisconsin organization, as the earlier family members had emigrated from Wisconsin to Maryland in the post-Civil War years.
- This revolver was the featured example in the ground breaking, definitive article by William A. Albaugh III entitled: "Surprising New Discovery: First Model Spiller & Burr", NORTH-SOUTH TRADER Magazine, July, 1973 (Vol. I, No. 2).
- Pictured on page 31, THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN Magazine, January, 1974.
- Pictured in figure #2, page 12, The NORTH-SOUTH TRADER Magazine, March-April, 1976 (Vol. III, No. 3) in the article entitled: "EVOLUTION OF THE CONFEDERATE SPILLER & BURR" by Hayes Otoupalik.
- Pictured on page 167 of the 1978 book "THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF AMERICAN CIVIL WAR RELICS" by Sylvia & O'Donnell.
- Pictured on page 55 (top revolver in the left column) in the Confederate chapter written by William A. Albaugh III of the 1981 book "AMERICA - The Men and Their Guns That Made Her Great" edited by Craig Boddington.
- From the William A. Albaugh III Collection to Edward J. "Ted" Meredith, September, 1983.
- Pictured on page 30 of the 1987 book "CONFEDERATE REVOLVERS" by William Gary.
- Pictured on page 36 of the MAN AT ARMS Magazine, January - February, 1995, in the article entitled: "Spiller & Burr, One Confederate Manufacturing Firm's Struggle for Survival During the War Between the States" by Matthew W. Norman.
- Pictured on page 36, as well as in the group photograph of Spiller & Burr revolvers on page 47, of the 1996 book "COLONEL BURTON'S SPILLER & BURR REVOLVER, AN UNTIMELY VENTURE IN CONFEDERATE SMALL-ARMS MANUFACTURING" by Matthew W. Norman.

From the 1983 Confederate
Collection Log of
William A. Albaugh, III

Item #2

#2 ✓
page

A "one of a kind" Confed. Spiller & Burr



Pictured is Spiller & Burr #13 of the 1st model, of which this is the only specimen completely 1st model, has survived. Its near mint condition can be seen in the photo.

#13 was featured in an article I wrote for N/S Trader in 1973 which brought out the differences between the 1st and Stamboul models.

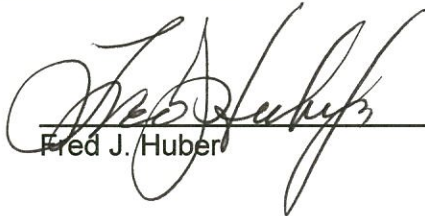
The gun was purchased in the spring of 1973 and its realistic value as of 1978 would be \$10,000, with Confed. holster.

April 5, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

The undersigned, FRED J. HUBER, acting on behalf of the estate of EDWARD J. MEREDITH, of Boca Raton, Florida, has transferred to BERNARD H. CROOKE of Pensacola, Florida, for considered value the below-described Confederate revolver. This subject revolver remained a part of Mr. Meredith's Collection of Confederate memorabilia at the time of his death.

Spiller & Burr brass framed Confederate copy of the Whitney "Navy" revolver. Serial Number "13" stamped on the frame underside (below the trigger guard), cylinder pin, underside of the brass trigger guard, grips, and the cylinder pin thumb bolt. Firm name, "SPILLER & BURR", stamped on the barrel top reading muzzle to cylinder. Ball type loading lever. The revolver was originally plated according to Confederate Ordnance Department specifications on the brass frame. Slight remnants of this plating remain on the grip frame and also in the trigger guard slot area of the frame. The unmarked cylinder has no safety slots on the ridges between the nipples. The lateral twist of the iron utilized in the cylinder is clearly evident, with the cylinder being completely original to this revolver. A pin front sight is inset on a plate notched into the muzzle area of the barrel.



Fred J. Huber

November 18, 1983

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The undersigned, Carl Burce Kusrow, acting on behalf of the estate of William A. Albaugh, III, of Tappahannock, Virginia, has transferred to Edward J. Meredith of Boca Raton, Florida, for considered value the below described Confederate revolver. This subject revolver remained a part of Mr. Albaugh's collection of Confederate memorabilia at the time of his death on February 26, 1983.

Spiller & Burr brass framed Confederate copy of the Whitney "Navy" revolver. Serial number "13" stamped on the frame underside (below the trigger guard), cylinder pin, underside of the brass trigger guard, grips, and the cylinder pin thumb bolt. Firm name, "SPILLER & BURR", stamped on the barrel top reading muzzle to cylinder. Ball type loading lever. The revolver was originally plated according to Confederate Ordnance Department specifications on the brass frame. Slight remnants of this plating remain on the grip frame and also in the trigger guard slot area of the frame. The unmarked cylinder has no safety slots on the ridges between the nipples. The lateral twist of the iron utilized in the cylinder is clearly evident, with the cylinder being completely original to this revolver. A pin front sight is inset on a plate notched into the muzzle area of the barrel.

This specific Confederate revolver is but one of two currently known complete examples of the first Model Spiller & Burr revolver and is the earliest surviving example. Unlike the later production Spiller & Burr revolvers with their thicker frames and the thicker strap over the cylinder, the First Model Spiller & Burr is a direct copy of the Whitney "Navy" revolver with the exception of the brass frame in lieu of the Whitney's iron frame.

First Model Spiller & Burr, serial number 13, was introduced to the collecting fraternity in an article which appeared in the NORTH-SOUTH TRADER Magazine entitled "First Model Spiller & Burr" by William A. Albaugh, III, July 1973 (Vol. I, No. 2). This article specifically detailed and pictured Spiller & Burr, serial number 13, and its place in the chronology of the firm history of Spiller & Burr. The cited article further identified that the First Model Spiller & Burr revolver utilized its own serial number range of 1 through approximately 50. When the inherent weakness of the thin brass frame became apparent to the manufactureres under firing stress, the brass frame was redesigned with production of the thick frame type, recommencing at serial number 1.

First Model Spiller & Burr, serial number 13, was acquired by William A. Albaugh, III, in either late 1972 or early 1973 in Hyattsville, Maryland, from the descendant family of a Union Army soldier who brought the revolver home from the Civil War as a trophy captured from a Confederate soldier. The name and unit of the Union soldier is unknown, but Mr. Albaugh's recollection was that the soldier had been in a Wisconsin unit.

This specific revolver is also pictured on page 55 of the book, "AMERICA - The Men and Their Guns That Made Her Great", ed. Craig Boddington, The Peterson Publishing Co., Los Angeles (1981). Additionally, this revolver is pictured on page 31, THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN Magazine, January, 1974.

Carl Bruce Kusrow
Carl Bruce Kusrow

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this 18th day of November 1983
at Reston, Virginia

Judy Thellman
NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires October 6, 1987.

June 1973

The 1st Model Spiller & Burr Revolver
by - Wm A. Albion

The War between the States ended in the
spring of 1865. During the ensuing years,
historians have been busy putting together
myriads of small pieces ^{related to the War in order} to establish ^{how} what
was done, ^{where}, why, by whom, and how
many. This research continues.

As a minute portion of this gigantic
jig-saw puzzle, the ^{development} [manufacture] and pro-
duction of the Confederate Spiller & Burr revolver
^{same as prod.}
have been sufficiently covered and documented so
that a reasonably clear picture of the establish-
ment appears.

(2)

Something just to have been pretty

throughly covered and obscured!

It has long been accepted that the S+B infant produced
a single model ^{revenue}
Now, one hundred and eight years

later, another ~~at~~ small bit has made its

appearance & gives a sharper focus on
the actuality of
this particular manufactory. Few ~~are~~

~~are~~ persons ^{are} aware that two

distinct models of this interesting

weapon were produced. This is due to the

fact that the manufacture of the "1st

model" was very limited in number

and ^{was} quickly superseded by the well

known ~~unusual~~ ^{gun} familiar to all local collectors

(2)

more who think highly of such consequences.

Fortunately for collectors, at least

two of the 1st models are still extant

to attest to their production.

To better follow the line of progression,

~~with the progress~~, let us turn back the pages of

history ~~of the 1860s~~ ~~of the 1860s~~ ~~of the 1860s~~ for

a closer but sketched look at available

documents that were written at the time these events were happening.

On Nov. 30, 1861 a contract between the

^{proposed} makers of the Spiller + Burr revolvers and the

C.S. Government was signed. This called for

a total of 15,000 revolvers ^{"substantially of the Colt's pattern"} to be delivered

to the Confederacy as follows: 4,000 by
 Dec 1, 1862, an additional 2,000 by Dec. 1, 1863,
 and the balance of 4,000 by June 1, 1864.

This total was never approached and
 it was not until after Dec. 17, 1862 that
 any revolvers were ~~produced~~ ^{forthcoming}. ~~At~~ ^{Only} approximately ~~this date~~

~~the~~ Col. Gorgas, Chief of Ordnance, CSA, ^{in Richmond, Va} was

furnished with examples of the ^{forms} revolvers
 made in Atlanta, Ga.

It is interesting that the correspondence
 refers to these as "samples" rather than
 "examples". While this ^{may be only} is a matter of
 semantics, ~~we~~ ^{we} feel ~~the~~ ^{the} latter term ~~is~~

4

~~word to better applied.~~

better
should be "example" or "sample" in this present

day and age denotes something free, and we
believe these ^{particular guns} ~~examples~~ were sent as a small
portion of the first lot due Dec 1, 1862, and ^{to be} paid for as such.

In commenting on ~~the~~ the guns, ~~it is written~~ they
^{are} described ~~as~~ not as of the Colt pattern, but
as ^{being} "mass-framed" ^{who designs} "Whitneys".

revolvers

The pistols were examined by
Major Downer, Comdg., Richmond, Va., C.S.A.

Armory who submitted ^{his} a report dated
Dec. 26, 1862.

He notes: that the catch on the

(5)

loading lever was of the type incidental
to the Whitney (ball & pin catch) and was
faulty in that after wearing awhile "will
become useless." To correct this, ^{Drumer} ~~the~~ suggested
that a catch "like that of the Colt" be
substituted.

He also recommended that a "slot be
cut in the base of the cylinder between the
ones into which the hammer ^{would} ~~not~~ fit,
holding the cylinder at a half revolution
and making a safeguard from accidental
explosion."

He also notes that the calibre of the pistols was somewhat smaller than the Colt. Favorable comment was given the rounding (crowning) of the barrel end which improved the appearance and was less liable to cut the holster.

In closing ^{Downer} ~~he~~ stated that the general workmanship was good, but ^{with the belief} ~~but he believed~~ this a *plain brass mounting ^{would be} superior to ^{one} plated, "as the plating soon rubs off on the parts most handled." In other words, the guns examined were plated.

★

②②②② 7

At the risk of being repetitious, we would like to stress the ^{pertinate} points of inspection which are as follows: #1, the loading lever catch was of the ball & pin (Whitney) variety, #2, ~~the~~ ^{the guns did not contain the} safety feature of a slot to engage the hammer in the base of the cylinder, #3, calibre some what smaller than Colt ^(.36 versus .44 cal), #4, barrel muzzle was crowned, #5, general workmanship was good, and, #6, the brass name was plated, ^{★ on outside?}

Having thus passed inspection, we assume the examples were accepted and issued to the Army.



~~the very small lot~~
the monograph

~~that is~~ in The Confed. Brass

(Am. Albright, 1455),

Frank Coet & Whitney, Mr Albright surmised

that a revolver then in his possession, was
a "sample" revolver. This gun was totally

unmarked but ^{showed} was identical to the

conventional model S&W except for ~~the~~ the

eye sight which consisted of a plate ^{inlet.} ~~inlet~~

into the barrel on which was mounted an iron

pin. As this gun contained none of the

~~of~~ defects noted in ^{Downer's report regarding,} ~~the~~ ~~lot~~

the 1st lot of guns, ~~as~~ ~~noted~~ Mr. Albright's

"~~should~~ ~~be~~ ~~in~~ ~~error~~" ~~the~~ ~~assumption~~ ~~was~~ ~~incorrect~~
must be in error.

Closer examination of the records leads
~~to the conclusion~~
 to the conclusion that the gun, then in the
 possession of Mr. Albaugh and which he
 described as a "sample," was in reality
 a model pistol. ~~It was written~~ This was
 requested ^{of the Spiller & Davis factory} by Col. Gorgas in Jan. 1863 ~~of the~~
~~the Spiller & Davis factory~~ as follows: "--- prepare
 as soon as possible, a model pistol of the
 pattern you have commenced to manufacture,
 and which should be fitted with a catch
 for loading lever in all respects like that
 attached to Colt's revolver's many size and

The calibre of the barrel of which shall also be of the size of the latter named arm ----- . The model is ~~mandatory~~ required by the Govt. as a standard of reference. ~~The~~

The cost --- will be defrayed by the Govt as it is intended to become the property of the Govt. -----

Mr. Albaugh's gun contained no serial. None was necessary as it was not to be included as a part of the contract.

We have no records reflecting either the date of the manufacture or delivery of this gun but ~~believe~~ ^{believe} suggest it was after the ~~first~~ ^{second} delivery of revolvers.

are not in line with the barrels and there is much too great an allowance of space between the ends of the barrel and the face of the cylinders through which gas can escape."

Having laid the necessary ground work, we hope, let us proceed with the 1st Model Spiller & Buss

Recently, two low serial numbered S&Bs have appeared. Both were of the "open frame" variety. ^{This term is used to mean} By this I mean that usually they more closely followed the Whitney style in that the barrel was screwed through the $\frac{1}{2}$ inch frame housing up to the face of the cylinder, leaving almost $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the threaded barrel visually apparent. In the conventional model, the

frame is 7/8 of an inch thick and the
end of the barrel does not protrude
beyond the housing.

The above is the only visible difference
the 1st conventional model.

between ~~the two models~~. However ~~close~~ ^{more than a}
casual examination ~~shows~~ reveals the 1st model

has: #1, a .35 caliber bore & opposed to ~~the~~

the ^{alto} .36 standard, #2, the frame was

brass plated (nickelated?), #3, loading level ~~let~~

is of the pin and ball type (same as in

the Whitney model), #4, the cylinder

contained no slots in its base into which

← the hammer could ~~not~~ rest on the half
 turn, #5, the fore end of the barrel is
 highly crowned (rounded), and #6, the
 foresight is of the pin and plate variety,
 as found on Mr. Albaugh's "Model" pistol.

~~Mag. Drumer's~~ ^{Mag. Drumer's} Report on the ~~Report~~ ^{Report} of Dec.

~~Report~~ ^{Report} of Dec.

In other words, ~~the~~ ^{these} are
 the identical guns
~~Report~~ is identical to the one

described in Mag. Drumer's inspection

report of Dec. 1862. ~~Drumer's~~ ^{The only variance} ~~the~~ ^{Drumer's}

is the pin and plate foresight about which

the ~~Drumer's~~ report made no comment,

Of the two open frame guns known,

attention was ~~first~~ called to the first a

few years ago by a photograph from

its present owner. The gun was a family

piece carried by Confederate ~~of~~ ancestor

during the war and with the original

~~scabbard.~~ ^{Holster} The photograph showed the

conspicuous "open frame," and additional

pictures showed the gun was stamped

in three places with the distinctive Spiller

& Burr die

Within the last month, the second 1st model appeared and we had the great pleasure of taking it apart and comparing it to the conventional S&B.

This gun was die stamped serial #13 in all places except for the (firm twisted) cylinder which was without serial number.

Oddly enough, the serials could be found only by disassembly. The firm name appears only on the barrel top. The gun contained all the features of the 1st model.

It retained much of its original

bluing although bore evidence of use
and service. Previous owner's initials were
scratched on the brass. The plating was

worn completely off the external brass
* Some traces, however, remained on the frame under the
parts. General workmanship was good. ^{grips}

Looking at #13, it appears to be
a direct copy of the Whitney, except
the Whitney had an iron frame while
#13's is of brass. We wondered how a
frame of brass this fragile could
with stand the gas pressure of
continued firing? The answer is, it

could not. The frame over the cylinder was warped, and while not actually cracked was in danger of buckling.

We immediately thought of Maj.

Barton's comment regarding the 40 revolvers received in May 1863 "there is too much great an allowance of space between the end of the barrel and the face of the cylinders through which gas can escape."

It is our belief that subsequent letters from Barton (now missing) suggested strengthening the frame and which by

so doing, brought the barrel end up flush
to the cylinder.

Following this suggestion and incorporating
it with Downer's remarks, the "model"
gun was prepared as a standard.


The only remaining modification
was in the foresight. While there was
nothing wrong with this type of sight,
it was considerably easier and less
expensive to insert the brass cone type
found on all conventional models.

Although we have no way of knowing how many revolvers were submitted as examples in Dec., 1862 indications are that the number was small, say five to ten.

We do know the next lot amounted to 40. We believe the first lot was serialized and that the second lot was a continuation of and of the same open frame model. The original serials, if we are correct, then we would have from 45 to 50 revolvers serialized from #1 through #50.

Of the second lot only seven revolvers were accepted. What happened to the

33 that were rejected.² We do not know, but we can conjecture. It is that all iron parts were extracted for reuse and that the frames were melted down for recasting into the sturdy frames found in the conventional model. Possibly the brass triggers guards were saved for reuse.

The next lot turned out were the new or conventional model and their serializations started with #1 and continued to the end of production.  which reached about 1,000.

Our theory that only the first lot
and seven of the second lot of forty
are open framed and the balance of the
forty reworked into the conventional model
is strengthened by the knowledge that
S&B serialized guns #12, #29 and #40 are
all the standard model altho #13 is open
framed.

To further support the canalization
idea, the writer has owned several S&B's
that bore partially obliterated loading levers
and trigger guards that were over stamped.

with the serial number of the with which
 it was mated. In these instances near
 the restamped serial is stamped a round
 "0" not the oval "0" as the last number of
 say [#] 310.

Also, we have observed ^{twisted over} cylinders devoid
 of serial, but with the same "round" "0"
 stamped on the base. It is evident that
 this "0" is the factory mark for a
 replaced part.

The discovery that there were
 indeed 2 models of the S & B is as

startling to me as it would be if
conclusive evidence revealed that there
was in fact three models of the
same Groszold & Gunnersons.

NORTH
SOUTH

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**Surprising New Discovery
First Model Spiller and Burr**

Focus on Corps Badges

Surprising New Discovery:

FIRST MODEL SPILLER & BURR

By William A. Albaugh III



The War Between the States ended in the spring of 1865. During the ensuing years, historians have been busy putting together the myriad of small pieces related to the war in order to establish what was done, how, where, why, by whom, and how many. This research continues.

As a minute portion of this gigantic

Careful examination of the two hand guns above reveals the conventional model Spiller and Burr top, superior in design to the "First Model" Spiller and Burr bottom. Notice the bowing effect on the frame above the cylinder on the pressure from firing.

jigsaw puzzle, the development and production of the Confederate Spiller and Burr revolver has been sufficiently covered and documented so that a reasonably clear picture of the history of the weapon exists. However, it has long been accepted that Spiller and Burr, in fact, produced only a single model revolver.

Now, 108 years later, another small bit of evidence has made its appearance to give a sharper focus on the activities of this particular manufactory. Few persons are aware that two distinct models of this interesting weapon were produced. This is due to the fact that the manufacture of the "First Model" was very limited in number and was soon superseded by the well-known gun familiar to all Confederate collectors. Fortunately for those who think highly of such inconsequential things, at least two of the "First Models" are still extant to attest to their production.

To better follow the line of progression, let us turn back the pages of history for a closer but skeletonized look at available documents which were written at the time these events were happening.

On November 30, 1861, a contract between the proposed makers of the Spiller and Burr revolver and the Confederate States government was signed. This called for a total of 15,000 revolvers "substantially of the Colt's pattern", to be delivered to the Confederacy as follows: 4,000 by December 1, 1862; an additional 7,000 by December 1, 1863; and the balance of 4,000 by June 1, 1864.

This total was never approached and it was not until after December 17, 1862, that any revolvers were forthcoming. On approximately this date, Colonel Gorgas, Chief of Ordnance, C.S.A., in Richmond, Virginia, was furnished with examples of the firm's revolvers, made in Atlanta, Georgia.

It is interesting that the correspondence refers to these as "samples" rather than "examples". While this may be only a matter of semantics, we feel that the better word would be "example". The term "sample" in this present day and age denotes something free, and we believe these particular guns were sent as a small portion of the first lot due on December 1, 1862, and to be paid for as such. In commenting on the guns, they were described not as of the Colt's pattern, but rather as "brass-framed Whitneys."

The pistols were examined by Major Downer, Commanding, Richmond, Va., C.S.A. Armory, who submitted his report dated December 26, 1862. He noted that the catch in the loading lever was of the type incidental to the Whitney (ball catch) and was faulty in that after wearing awhile, "will become useless." To correct this, Downer suggested that a catch "like that of the Colt" be substituted.

He also recommended that a "slot be cut in the base of the cylinder between the cones into which the hammer would fit, holding the cylinder at a half revolution and making a safeguard from accidental explosion."

He further noted with dissatisfaction that the caliber of the pistols was somewhat smaller than the Colt. Favorable comment was given to the rounding (crowning) of the barrel end which improved the appearance and was less liable to cut the holster.

In closing, Downer stated that the general workmanship was good, but held the belief that a "plain brass mounting would be superior to one plated as the plating soon rubs off on the parts most handled." In other words, the guns examined were plated.

At the risk of being repetitious, we would like to stress the pertinent points of inspection which are as follows: (1) the loading lever catch was of the ball (Whitney) variety, (2) the guns did not contain the safety feature of a slot to engage the hammer in the base of the cylinder, (3) the caliber was somewhat smaller than the Colt (.36 cal.), (4) the barrel muzzle was crowned, (5) the general workmanship was good, and (6) the brass frame was plated.

Having thus passed inspection, we assume the examples were accepted and issued to the army. In the monograph, *The Confederate Brass Framed Colt and Whitney* (William A. Albaugh

III, 1955), the author surmised that a revolver then in his possession was a "sample" revolver. This weapon was completely unmarked but otherwise was identical to the conventional model Spiller and Burr except for the foresight which consisted of a plate inlet into the barrel on which was mounted an iron pin. As this weapon contained none of the defects noted in Downer's report regarding the first lot of guns, the author's assumption must have been in error.

Closer examination of the records leads to the conclusion that the gun then in the possession of Mr. Albaugh and which he described as a "sample", was in reality a model or prototype. This was requested of the Spiller and Burr factory by Colonel Gorgas in January 1863 as follows: ". . . prepare as soon as possible, a model pistol of the pattern you have commenced to manufacture, and which should be fitted with a catch for loading lever in all respects like that attached to Colt's revolver's Navy size and the caliber of the barrel of which shall also be of the size of the latter naval arm . . . The model is required by the government as a standard of reference. The cost . . .

will be defrayed by the government as it is intended to become the property of the government . . ."

Mr. Albaugh's gun contained no serial. None was necessary as it was not to be included as a portion of the contract. We have no records reflecting either the date of the manufacture or delivery of this gun but believe it was after the second delivery of revolvers. It was not until another five months before the next lot of Spiller and Burr revolvers left the pistol factory in Atlanta to be inspected by Major Burton in Macon, Georgia.

On May 2, 1863, Burton wrote back to the pistol factory showing distinct disappointment in the "lot of 40 revolving pistols received." Of these 40, only 7 passed inspection and they "were by no means as perfect as they should have been." The others (33) presented two serious and fatal defects, viz: "The chambers are not in line with the barrels and there is much too great an allowance of space between the ends of the barrel and the face of the cylinders through which gas can escape."

Having laid the necessary ground work, we hope, let us proceed with the "First Model" Spiller and Burr.

Recently, two low serial numbered Spiller and Burrs have appeared. Both are of the "open frame" variety. This term is used to mean that visually they more closely followed the Whitney style in that the barrel was screwed through the 5/8 inch brass frame housing up to the face of the cylinder, leaving almost a 1/4 inch of the threaded barrel visually apparent. In the conventional model, the frame is 7/8ths of an inch thick and the end of the barrel does not protrude beyond the housing.

The above is the only visual difference between the "First Model" and the conventional model. However, more than a casual examination reveals that the "First Model" has: (1) a slightly smaller caliber than the Colt's Navy's .36 standard; (2) the frame was once plated (nickel?); (3) the loading lever is of the ball type (as is the Whitney model); (4) the cylinder contains no slots in its base into which the hammer could rest on the half turn; (5) the fore end of the barrel is highly crowned (rounded); and (6) the foresight is of the pin and plate type as found on Mr. Albaugh's "model" pistol. In other words, these are the identical guns as described in Major Downer's inspection report of December 1862. The only variance is the pin and plate foresight about which the initial report made no comment.

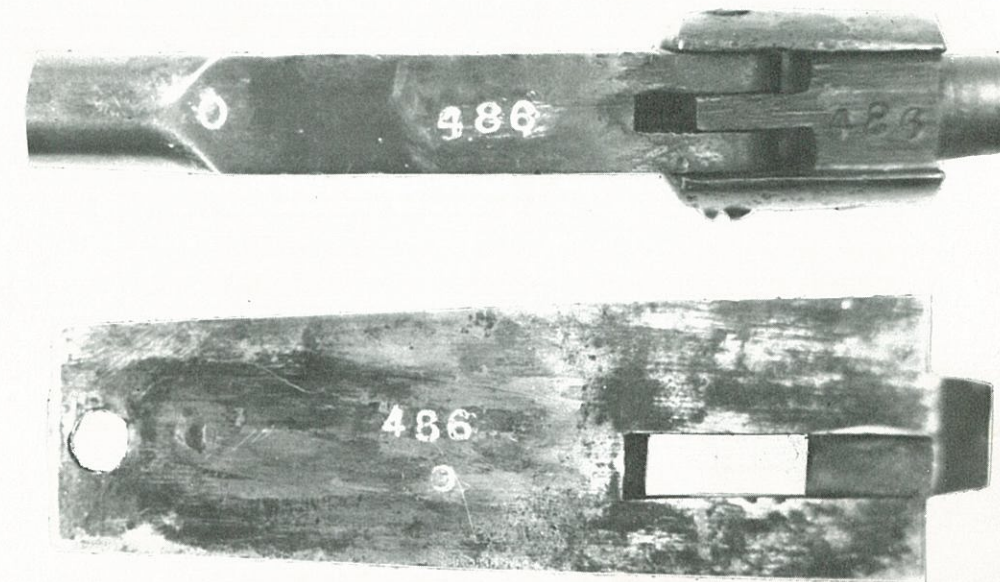
Of the two open frame guns known, attention was called to the first a few years ago by a photograph from its present owner. The gun was a family piece carried by a Confederate ancestor during the war and with the original holster. The photograph showed the conspicuous "open frame" and additional pictures showed the gun was stamped in three places with the distinctive Spiller and Burr die. To protect the owner, we do not disclose this gun's serial.

Within the last month, the second "First Model" appeared and we had the great pleasure of disassembling the weapon and comparing it to the conventional Spiller and Burr.

This gun is die stamped serial No. 13 in all places except for the iron twisted cylinder which was without serial number. Oddly enough, serials could be found only by disassembly. The firm name appears only on the barrel top. The gun contains all the features of the "First Model."

It retained much of its original

Top: Loading lever and trigger guard of "First Model" showing factory mark "O". Center: "First Model" cylinder (left) contrasted with conventional, note lack of safety slots in base on "First Model".



bluing although bore evidence of use and service. Previous owners' initials are scratched on the brass. The plating was worn completely off the external brass parts. Some traces, however, remain on the frame under the grips. The general workmanship is good.

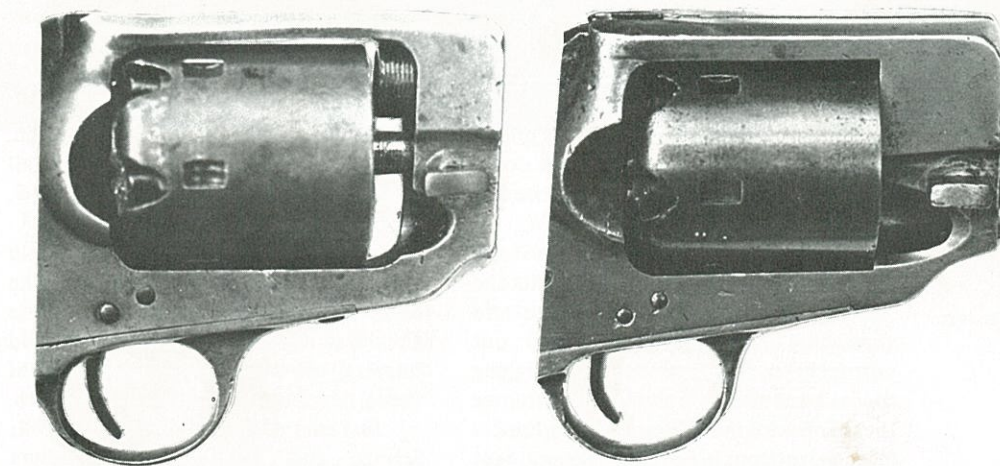
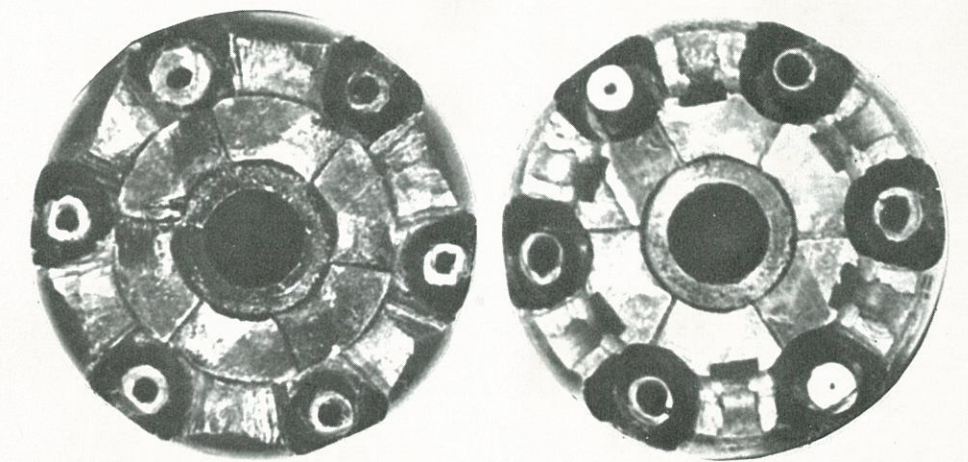
Looking at No. 13, it appears to be a direct copy of the Whitney, except that the Whitney had an iron frame while that of No. 13 is of brass. We wonder how a frame of brass this fragile could withstand the gas pressure of continued firing. The answer is, it could not. The frame over the cylinder is warped, and while not actually cracked, was in danger of buckling.

We immediately thought of Major Burton's comment regarding the 40 revolvers received in May 1863 - "There is too great an allowance of space between the end of the barrel and the face of the cylinders through which gas can escape." There is 1/8 inch between end of barrel and cylinder!

It is our belief that subsequent letters from Burton (not available) suggested strengthening the frame which by so doing brought the barrel end up flush to the cylinder. Following this suggestion and incorporating it with Downer's remarks, the "model" gun was prepared as a standard.

The only remaining modification was in the foresight. While there was nothing wrong with this type of sight, it was considerably easier and less expensive to insert the brass cone type found on most of the conventional models.

Although we have no way of knowing how many revolvers were submitted as examples in December 1862, indications are that the number was small, on the order of five to ten. We do know the next lot amounted to forty. We believe the first lot was serialized and that the second lot was a continuation of the original serials and of the same open frame model. If we are correct then, we would have from 45 to 50 revolvers serialized from No. 1 through No. 50 with open frames.



Bottom: Comparison of cylinder sections showing the open frame distinction of "First Model" (left). Note the increased thickness and tight cylinder fit on the conventional Spiller and Burr.

(Continued on page 32)

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(Continued from page 11)

Of the second lot, only seven revolvers were accepted. What happened to the 33 that were rejected? We do not know, but we can conjecture. It is that all iron parts were extracted for re-use and that the frames were melted down for recasting into the sturdier frames found in the conventional model. Possibly the brass trigger guards were saved for re-use.

The next lot turned out were the new or conventional model and their serialization started with No. 1 and continued to the end of production.

Our theory that only the first lot and seven of the second lot of forty are open-framed and the balance of the forty reworked into the conventional model is strengthened by the knowledge that Spiller and Burr serialized guns Numbers 12, 29, and 40 are all the standard model, although Number 13 is open-framed!

To further support the canabalization theory, the writer has owned several Spiller and Burrs that bore serials partially obliterated on loading levers,

trigger guards, and barrels which were overstamped with the serial number of that with which it was mated. In these instances, near the re-stamped serial there is stamped a round "0" and not the oval "0" as the last number of say, Number 310.

Also, we have observed twisted iron cylinders devoid of a serial, but with the same round "0" stamped on the base. It is evident that this "0" is the factory mark for a replaced part.

The discovery that there were indeed two models of the Spiller and Burr is as startling [to me] as it would be if conclusive evidence revealed that there were, in fact, three models of the Griswold and Gunnison Confederate revolver. One is again reminded of how intriguing is the hobby of Confederate weaponry and that the quest for further knowledge and discovery of new facets of it is never ending.

Collectors — beware of reproduction models of the Spiller and Burr. Always consult an authority before buying.

next issue

Strikes and Restrikes — Delayed to bring a more comprehensive look at the history of Scovill and Waterbury Companies/manufacturers of Civil War and pre-Civil War buttons — by A. H. Albert

Gettysburg Re-enactment — The Blue and Gray clash again on the fields of Gettysburg.

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VOL. III NO. 3 MARCH-APRIL 1976

Spiller - p. 10





FIG. 1 This type of Federal E. Whitney .36 caliber percussion revolver served as the model for the Spiller & Burr firm. (Author's Collection)

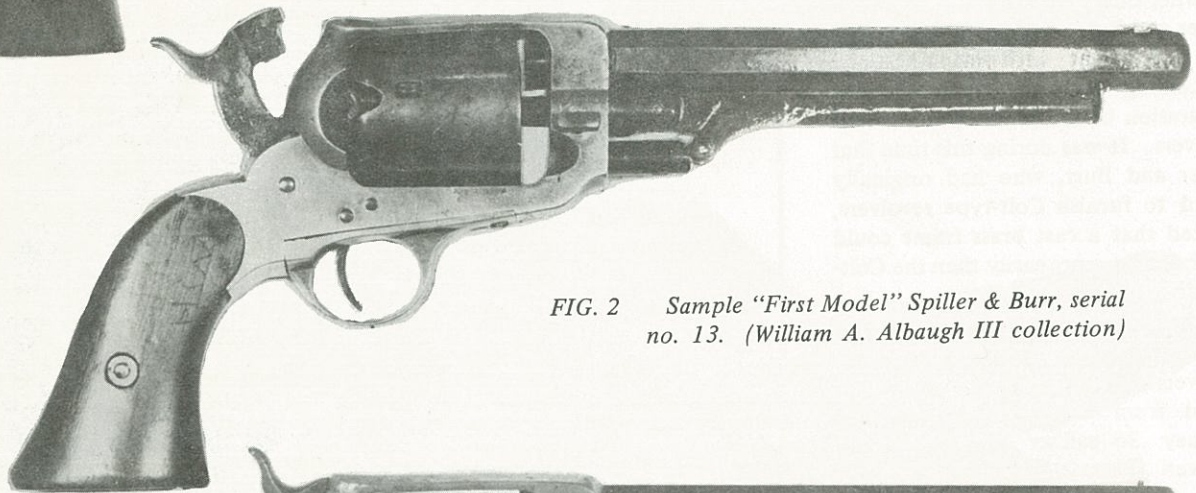


FIG. 2 Sample "First Model" Spiller & Burr, serial no. 13. (William A. Albaugh III collection)

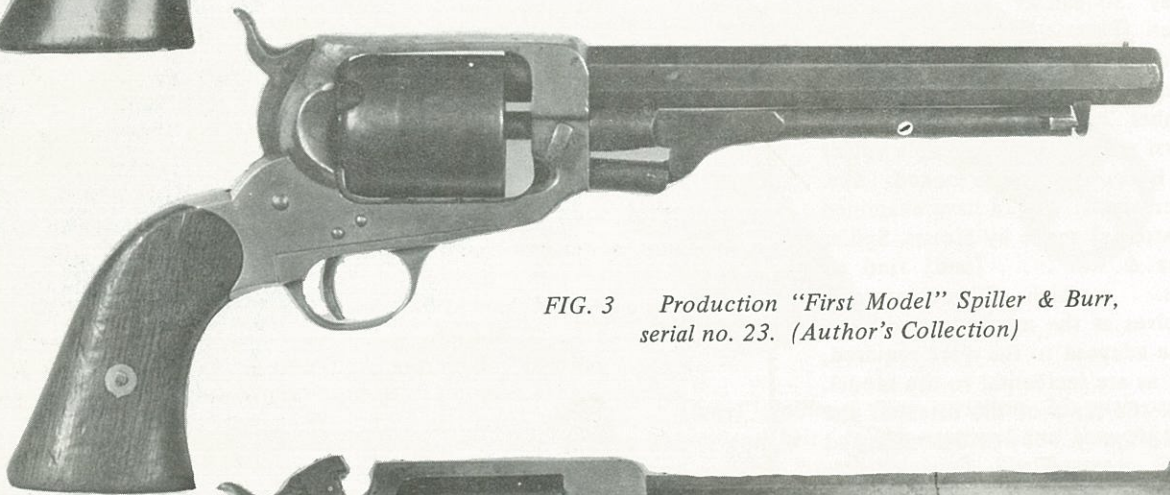


FIG. 3 Production "First Model" Spiller & Burr, serial no. 23. (Author's Collection)

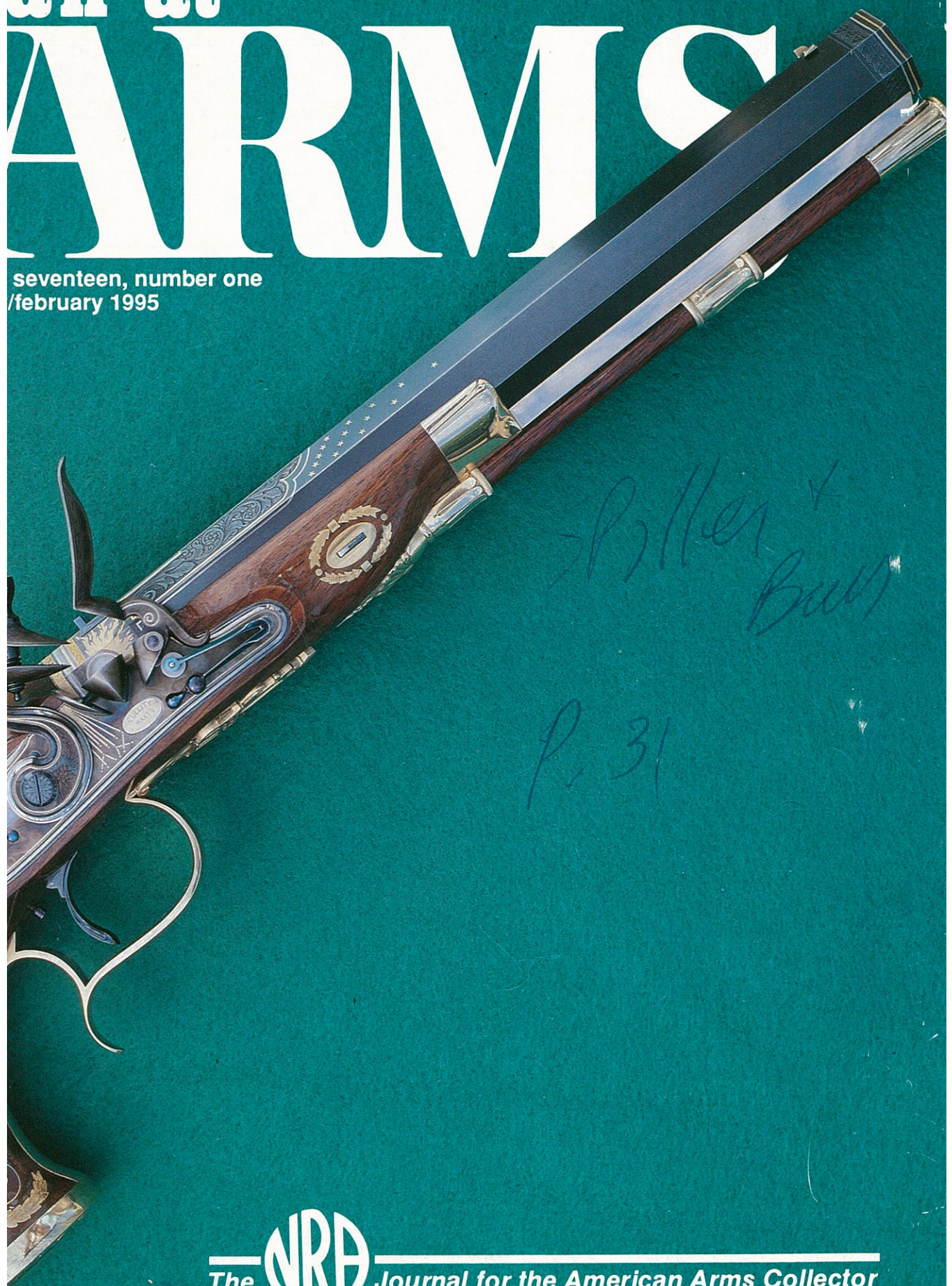


FIG. 4 Conventional "Second Model" Spiller & Burr revolver. (William A. Albaugh III Collection)

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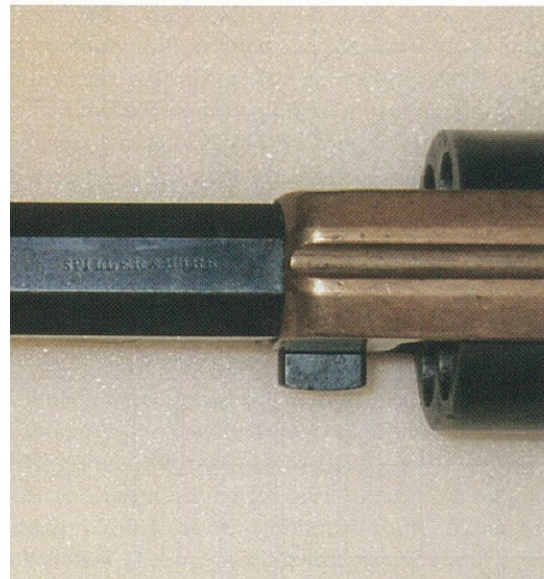
ARMS

seventeen, number one
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*Poller +
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P. 31



(top) First Model Spiller & Burr pistol, serial number 13.

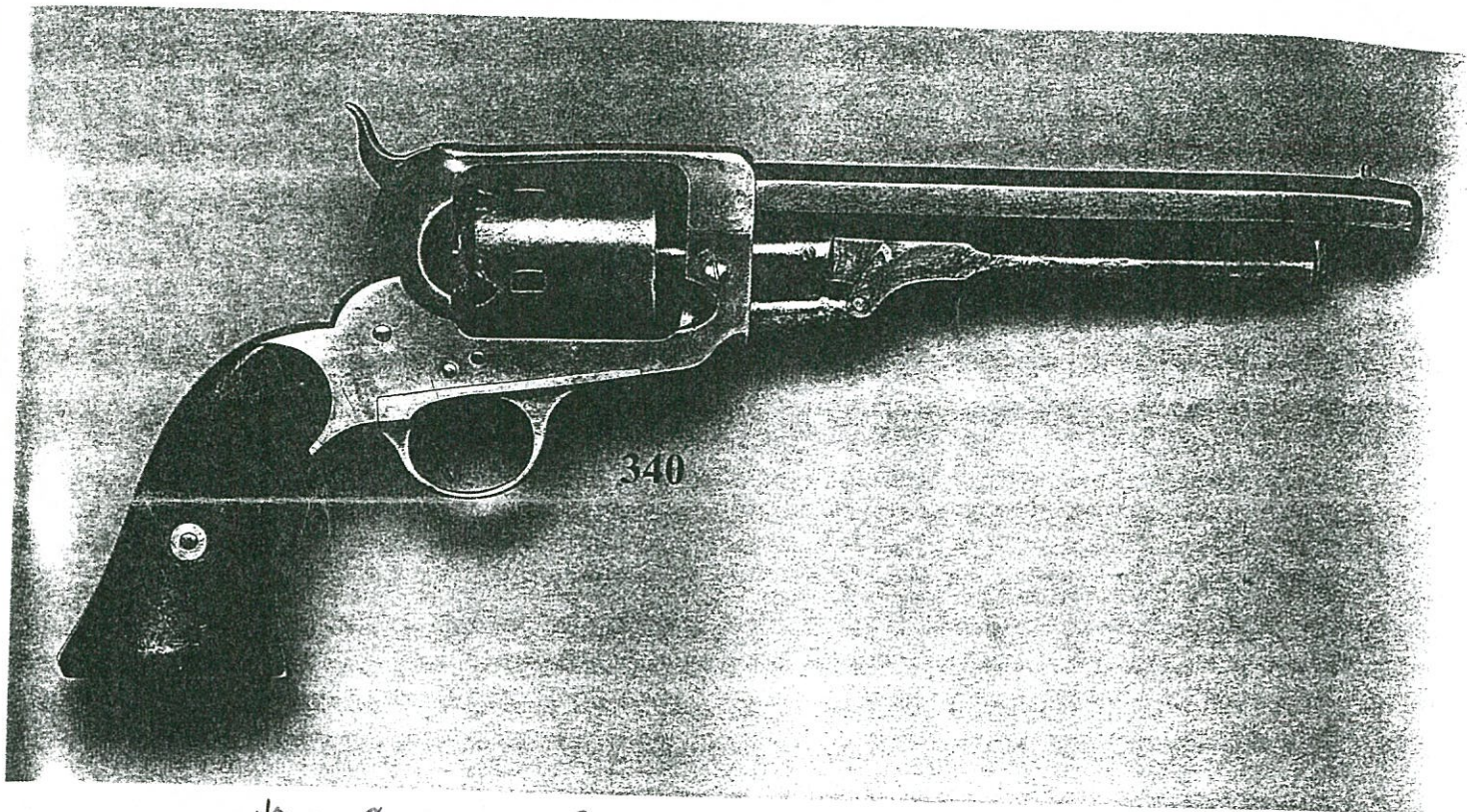
(left) Close-up view of First Model Spiller & Burr, serial number 13, showing the firm name stamped on the top of the barrel.

Courtesy of Ted Meredith

he found it “absolutely impossible” to fulfill the due to “the impossibility of procuring such s, (machinists, gunsmiths & brass finishers), as actively required for such work” and offered the rks for \$200,000.²⁷ Secretary of War James A. ecided not to purchase the pistol factory, but did a few contract changes, including an increase in e government also found skilled labor at a time one could get skilled labor, not even the govern- the course of one week, eight men were detailed e army and into the shops of the Atlanta Pistol

Factory. None of the men were ill or injured and all of them were skilled armorers.²⁸

The factory then entered a stage of production in which Spiller & Burr produced almost 10 pistols per day. This was not the machinery’s capacity but was much better than all previous attempts at productivity. By August 4th, Spiller & Burr had 112 pistols ready for inspection, and out of this number, 100 revolvers were accepted at the Macon Armory.²⁹ The steady stream of production continued throughout the fall. Between September and December, over 750 pistols were presented for inspection and over



Handwritten: ~~340~~ CON 2500A 2001

340. Spiller and Burr Revolver, 1st Model, First Type, SN 13

36 caliber 7" crowned octagonal barrel is marked with full firm name **SPILLER & BURR** on top flat. The brass frame and loading lever are the Whitney Second Model, First type configuration. SN appears on the bottom flat of the barrel, cylinder pin, cylinder pin thumb bolt, right side of frame beneath grip, inside of each grip, on bottom of frame beneath trigger guard and on top of trigger guard against frame. Cylinder is made without safety notches on rear face.

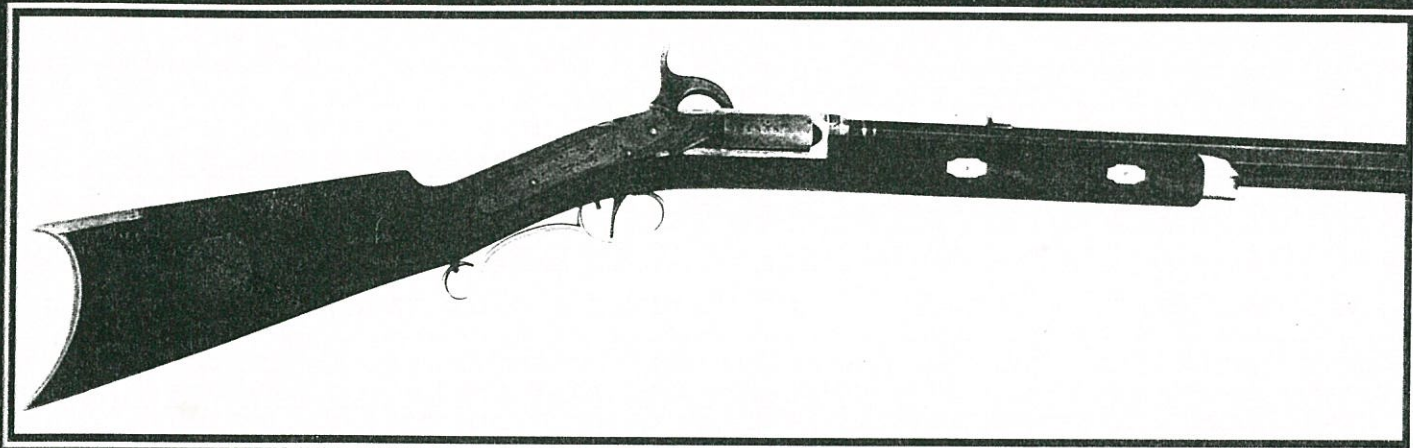
CONDITION: Fine. Barrel has a smooth dark patina and crisp edges with strong firm name and traces of blue at the frame. The brass pin front sight is set on a plate in the barrel. Cylinder has a dark patina matching the barrel and distinct twist lines and slightly battered cones. Loading lever has the same dark patina of other iron surfaces with a period mortise and tenon braised repair at the hinged junction to the cylinder pin boss. All exposed brass has a medium mustard patina with obvious silver plate beneath grips and in trigger guard slot. Brass buttstrap is scratched "JR" The butt of the grips is also scribed "JR". Right grip has faintly scribed initials "WSH" Grips are sound

with good edges with minor chipping at toe. PROVENANCE: Acquired Spring 1973 by William A. Albaugh in Maryland from a direct descendent of the Union soldier, probably from Wisconsin, who brought the revolver home as a war souvenir, featured cover and within **North/South Trader**, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1973, pictured **The American Rifleman**, January 1974, p.31, pictured **North/South Trader**, Vol. III, No. 3, March-April 1976, p. 12, pictured **The Illustrated History of American Civil War Relics**, 1978, p. 167, pictured **America-The Men and Their Guns That Made Her Great**, 1981, p. 55, sold to Ted Meredith, September, 1983, pictured **Confederate Revolvers**, 1987, p. 30, pictured **Man-at-Arms**, January-February 1995, p. 36, pictured **Colonel Burton's Spiller and Burr Revolver**, 1996, pgs. 36 and 47. Accompanied by a provenance file including some of the above noted publications.

NOTE: This is the only known extant example of the first group of Spiller and Burr Revolvers delivered to the Confederate Ordnance Department. There have been no recent sales of comparable Confederate handguns of such rarity and importance upon which to base an estimate. Meredith #4168

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Spiller & Burr First Model Revolver

by Richard M. Ahlstrom

The history of the Spiller & Burr revolver is recorded in many books and articles. The conventional Second Model is well known by all Confederate arms collectors. The history of the First Model or "Thin Frame" Spiller & Burr revolver is still evolving, and this article is meant to add a little to that body of knowledge.

The Spiller & Burr Company was founded in Richmond, Virginia by Edward N. Spiller, David J. Burr and Lt. Col. James H. Burton, who would act as the designer and the engineer of the Company. On November 30, 1861, a contract was signed with the Confederate States War Department to deliver 15,000 revolvers to the Government.

The Spiller & Burr Factory, at the request of the Secretary of War, relocated to Atlanta, Georgia on May 28, 1862.¹ It is not believed that any parts were produced up to that time. The reason for the delay was that the

Company was forced by the Civil War to make nearly all of their machinery from drawings for there were no suppliers of the specialized equipment nor even any patterns to go by. They were also plagued by the lack of adequate raw materials and never were able to find the necessary skilled workman and mechanics to sustain production levels.²

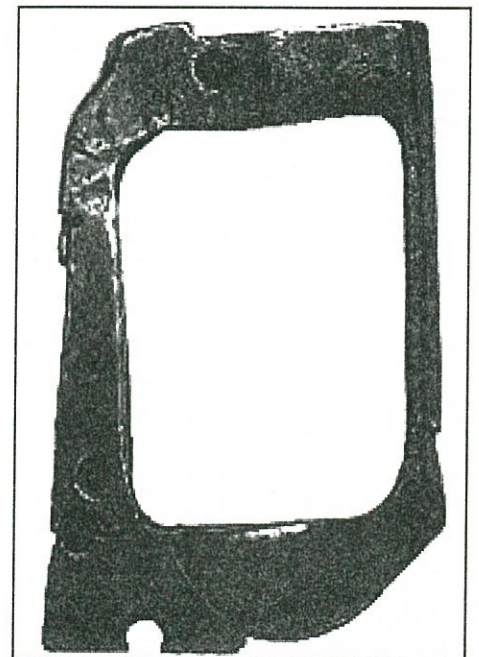
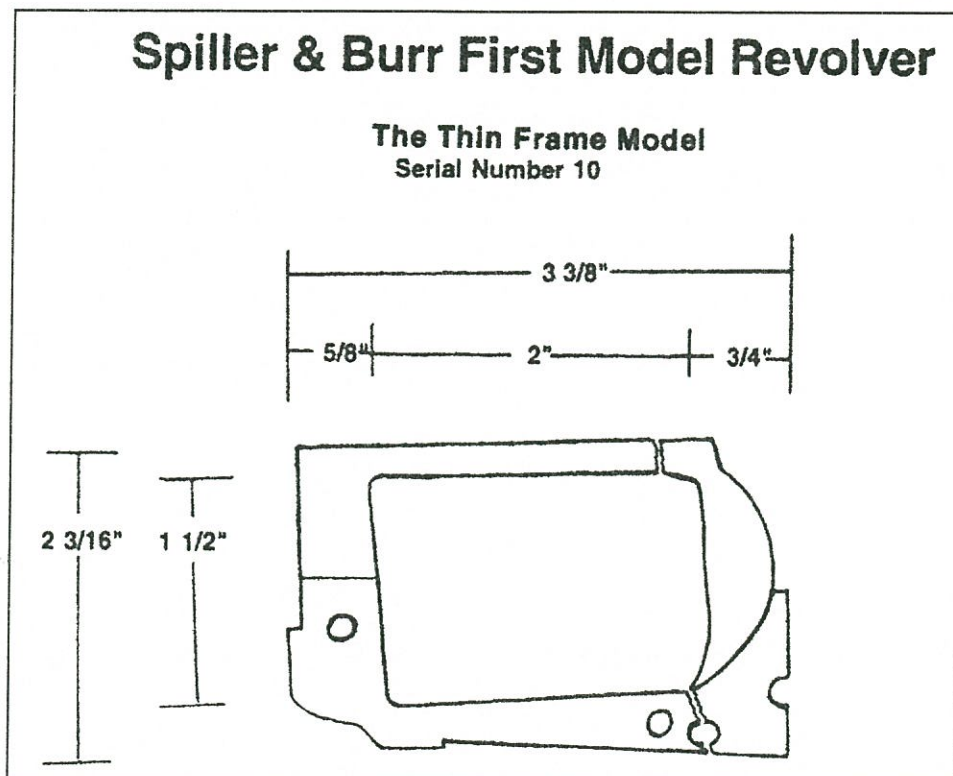
They chose the .36 caliber percussion Whitney Navy Model revolver as their prototype. It was felt to be superior to the more popular Colt for a number of reasons, one of the most significant was a solid frame. However, the lack of a source of steel necessitated fabricating the frames of cast brass.³

Frustrations rose on both sides, as the Confederacy cried for delivery and the manufacturers spoke out against the conditions under which they were expected to perform. It was not until November of 1862, one year after the Government contract had been signed,

that the first revolver parts were manufactured.

In December 1862 about a dozen revolvers were hurriedly submitted to the War Department for comment.⁴ Apparently these were not subjected to a rigid firing test. On December 26, 1862, Major W.S. Downer, issued a report on the evaluation of these samples. He suggested a larger bore, a safety slot on the cylinder base, a different type loading lever catch and a non-electroplated frame.⁵

By February 1863, the first revolvers, incorporating all of the suggestions of Major Downer, were produced at the Atlanta Factory.⁶ The distinctive feature of the First Model revolver was a frame design that copied the Whitney Revolver's feature and had the threaded rear section of the barrel exposed and unsupported. The Whitney's frame was of strong cast steel. However, the Spiller & Burr's thin brass top strap would fail when it was repeatedly subjected to the slugging effect of a ball leaving the cylinder and entering the bore.



Left, the drawing of the Spiller & Burr First Model Revolver frame; right, the full view of the frame.

It is unknown whether this problem was detected at the Factory, none the less, pressures to produce and the need for revenues, led to the delivery on April 29, 1863, of forty revolvers to the Confederate States Armory in Macon, Georgia.⁷

The revolvers were inspected and proof fired. Only seven passed. The remaining thirty-three revolvers were rejected and returned to Spiller & Burr.

The overwhelming rejection of the first "production" models of the Spiller & Burr revolver led to a flurry of activity and reaction. The two principals, Edward N. Spiller and David J. Burr desperately wanted to get out of the business. The Government was not sympathetic to the men or their problems and demanded that the design

and production problems be immediately corrected.⁸

Moses Hannibal Wright, Commanding Officer of the Atlanta Arsenal, took over the supervision of the Spiller & Burr Government Contract at about this time, and on May 20, 1863, wrote to the Chief of Ordnance, Josiah Gorgas, concerning the brass frames cracking and bursting at the top strap and stating that a design change to increase the strength of the frame would be forthcoming.⁹

In the summer of 1863, the Second Model Spiller & Burr revolver was designed. The frame was still brass, not steel, but, the 5/8 inch thick frame in front of the cylinder was increased to 7/8 inch and the 1/4 inch of threaded barrel that protruded inside the frame in the First Model, no longer was visible. The top strap was also widened and thickened.¹⁰

It is known that the 45 to 55 revolvers that made up the First Model or "Thin Frame" Spiller & Burr pistol were serialized from Number 1 upward. It is reported that two of these revolvers

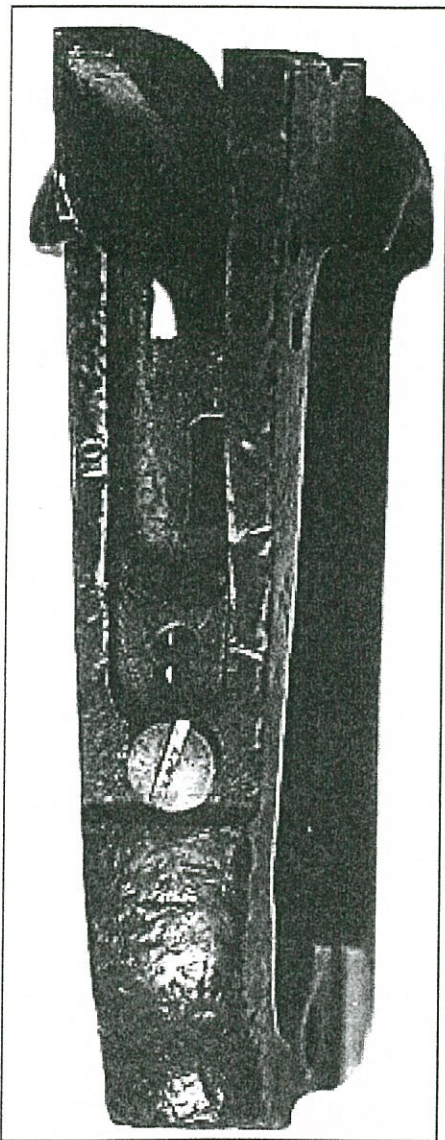
exist today (Serial Number 13 and 23).¹¹

The Second Model, with the re-designed frame, started their Serial Numbers all over again at Number 1 and continued in sequence to the end of production.¹²

The story of the Spiller & Burr Factory continues, but the First Model stops here.


There has been some speculation as to the fate of the remaining First Model revolvers. The recent surfacing of a third Spiller & Burr First Model frame (Serial Number 10), offers some solution to two questions. Precisely what were the problems that caused the revolvers' redesign? And, what happened to the unaccounted for First Model revolvers?

The Frame numbered 10, was discovered in 1955, on or near the site of the Armory in Macon, Georgia. A reasonable assumption is that this pistol was one of the group of forty sent to the Armory for review and acceptance. The inspectors accepted seven of these pistols and returned the remaining pistols to Spiller & Burr as unacceptable. At some point, this pistol, serial number 10, was subjected to repeated firings and was severely damaged by the Ordnance Inspectors. It clearly was not returned to Spiller & Burr for reworking.



The bottom of the First Model brass frame showing the serial number 10.

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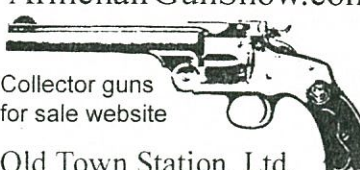
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The brass frame is warped and damaged in two places. The top strap, 3/4 inch wide and 1/8 inch thick, is broken at the inset opening for the hammer. Visual inspection would indicate that this was a likely spot for failure, for it is here that the already weak brass frame is divided by a 3/8 inch opening in the center of the frame to accommodate the hammer, when the weapon is fired.

The second area of damage is at the bottom of the frame at the screw hole that held the trigger in place. On the interior of the frame, the mechanism for cocking the hammer is housed in an inset that narrows the brass frame in that area to approximately 1/16 inch thick. Although it is not mentioned in any other literature, it seems proper to assume that this area was also subject

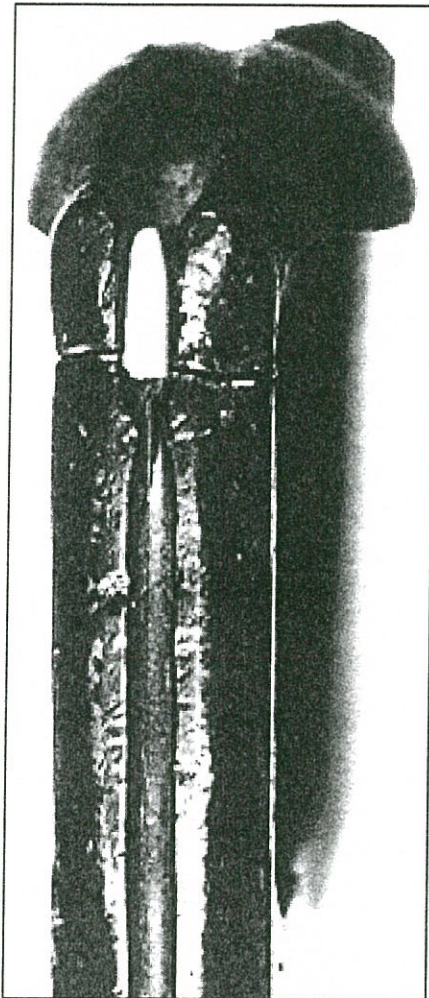
to failure on many of the First Model revolvers.

The two remaining examples of the First Model Spiller & Burr revolver do not demonstrate, as Serial Number 10 does, exactly where and why the First Model failed and the complete frame redesign became necessary.

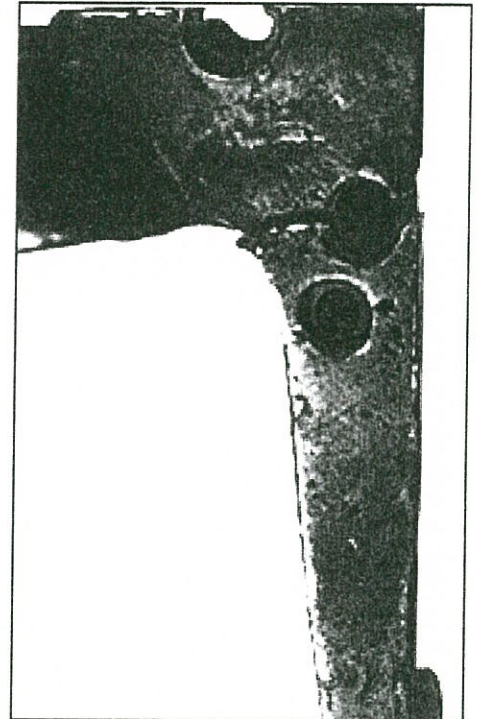
This brass frame shows no evidence of ever having been electroplated. This has been written about by others, since

a revolver, Serial Numbered 13, once in the collection of William A. Albaugh III, was reported as having some traces of the electroplating on the interior of the frame.¹³ The revolver, Serial Numbered 23, once in the collection of Hayes Otoupalik III, is not electroplated. Mr. Otoupalik identifies the Number 13 revolver as one of the sample weapons and Number 23 as one of the forty subsequent "production" models.¹⁴ The frame, Serial Number 10, must also be one of the forty "production" models.

Since the only other two surviving examples of the First Model revolver are complete revolvers, they offer few clues as to the fate of the remainder of the First Model production. From



The top of the frame, showing the crack along the top.



The side of the frame showing the crack through one of the screw holes, where frame was at its thinnest.

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Serial Number 10, however, a very definite clue as to the probable fate of the majority of this failed design revolver is in evidence.

The iron barrel, cylinder, hammer and internal working parts were removed from the frame. The brass trigger guard was also removed, although for some reason, one brass screw was re threaded into the base.

Then, the grip portion of the brass frame was sawed off. This last action points strongly to one conclusion. The flawed frame was being prepared for the melting pot. That had to have been the final disposition of most of the remaining examples of the First Model of the Spiller & Burr revolver.

Given the scarcity of raw material, it is likely to conclude that no later than December, 1864, this revolver and probably all other related revolvers were stripped and prepared for recycling, either at the Spiller & Burr Factory or at the Macon, Georgia Armory. Apparently, that recycling was almost 100% successful.

Footnotes

1. Matthew W. Norman, *Colonel Burton's Spiller & Burr Revolver* (Mercer University Press; Macon, Georgia, 1996) Page 26.
2. Newspaper, *Southern Confederacy* (Atlanta, Georgia, May 15, 1863) Page 4.
3. William A. Gray, *Confederate Revolvers* (Taylor Publishing Company; Dallas, Texas, 1987) Pages 29-30.
4. Matthew W. Norman, *Colonel Burton's Spiller & Burr Revolver* (Mercer University Press; Macon, Georgia, 1996) Page 34.
5. William A. Albaugh III, Hugh Benet Jr., Edward N. Simmons, *Confederate Handguns* (Broadfoot Publishing Company; Wilmington, North Carolina, Reprint 1993) Pages 68-69.
6. Matthew W. Norman, *Colonel Burton's Spiller & Burr Revolver* (Mercer University Press; Macon, Georgia, 1996) Page 49.
7. William A. Gray, *Confederate Revolvers* (Taylor Publishing Company; Dallas, Texas, 1987) Page 30.
8. Matthew W. Norman, *Colonel Burton's Spiller & Burr Revolver* (Mercer University Press; Macon, Georgia, 1996) Page 49-54.
9. Wright to Gorgas, May 20, 1863, Spiller & Burr, Citizens Files, National Archives & Records Administration, M346, Roll 971.

10. William A. Albaugh III, *Surprising New Discovery First Model Spiller & Burr* (North South Trader, Volume 1, Number 2, July 1973) Page 10.

11. Hayes Otoupalik III, *Evolution of the Confederate Spiller & Burr* (North South Trader, Volume III, Number 3, March - April, 1976) Page 33.

12. William A. Albaugh III, *Surprising New Discovery First Model Spiller &*

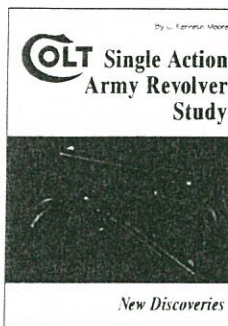
Burr (North South Trader, Volume 1, Number 2, July 1973) Page 11 & 32.

13. Hayes Otoupalik, III, *Evolution of the Confederate Spiller & Burr* (North South Trader, Volume 111, Number 3, March - April, 1976) Page 11.

14. Hayes Otoupalik III, *Evolution of the Confederate Spiller & Burr* (North South Trader, Volume III, Number 3, March - April, 1976) Page 12.

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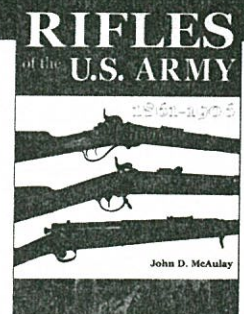
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**FIRST MODEL FIRST TYPE
SPILLER & BURR REVOLVER
SERIAL NUMBER 13**

Acquired in the spring of 1973 by William A. Albaugh in Maryland from a direct descendent of the Union soldier who brought the revolver home from the Civil War as a souvenir. While it is unknown what specific Union unit the soldier was a member of, the descendents felt it was likely a Wisconsin organization, as the earlier family members had emigrated from Wisconsin to Maryland in the post-Civil War years.

This revolver was the featured example in the ground breaking, definitive article by William A. Albaugh III entitled: "Surprising New Discovery: First Model Spiller & Burr", NORTH-SOUTH TRADER Magazine, July, 1973 (Vol. 1, No. 2).

Serial number 13 is the only example of the first model first type know to exist today.

April 5, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

The undersigned, FRED J. HUBER, acting on behalf of the estate of EDWARD J. MEREDITH, of Boca Raton, Florida, has transferred to BERNARD H. CROOKE of Pensacola, Florida, for considered value the below-described Confederate revolver. This subject revolver remained a part of Mr. Meredith's Collection of Confederate memorabilia at the time of his death.

Spiller & Burr brass framed Confederate copy of the Whitney "Navy" revolver. Serial Number "13" stamped on the frame underside (below the trigger guard), cylinder pin, underside of the brass trigger guard, grips, and the cylinder pin thumb bolt. Firm name, "SPILLER & BURR", stamped on the barrel top reading muzzle to cylinder. Ball type loading lever. The revolver was originally plated according to Confederate Ordnance Department specifications on the brass frame. Slight remnants of this plating remain on the grip frame and also in the trigger guard slot area of the frame. The unmarked cylinder has no safety slots on the ridges between the nipples. The lateral twist of the iron utilized in the cylinder is clearly evident, with the cylinder being completely original to this revolver. A pin front sight is inset on a plate notched into the muzzle area of the barrel.

Fred J. Huber