





Courtesy Dr. Robert L. Moore

▲
A 12-stop Augusta with a
number 4.

Chapter 4

Augusta Machine Works

The Confederate revolver attributed to the Augusta Machine Works is somewhat of a mystery. Since it is not marked with a name, some collectors question whether this is the revolver made at that site, while others question whether any revolvers were manufactured at the Machine Works. It is a fact that the Confederate Government had a factory located in Augusta, Georgia, known as the Augusta Machine Works, but what war materials it produced has never been verified.

Other questions arise as to whether 6-stop and 12-stop revolvers were made at the same place, and if so, why? Are these revolvers of Confederate origin or not?

This revolver is a close copy of the Colt Navy, with a full octagon barrel, brass trigger guard and back strap, and a Colt Navy-type loading lever catch. The rifling has six lands and grooves with a slight clockwise twist with no gain. It has a deep oval shape to the trigger guard, a finely checkered hammer spur, a roller on the hammer, and a spring on the wedge.

There are specimens in existence which have either 6-stop or 12-stop cylinders. The 6-stop cylinders have safety pins and a slot in the hammer face, while the 12-stop cylinders, of course, have no safety pins.

The guns have assembly numbers on most parts, but no serial numbers. They are called assembly numbers because the marks are not visible on a fully-assembled gun. They consist of one-digit numbers or letters, and there are duplications on all of them. The dies used were extra large for a handgun.

The marks appear on the rear of the barrel lug beside the hole for the plunger, the top of the loading lever flat, and the loading lever plunger. Other marks show up on the top of the wedge, the rear of the cylinder between the nipples, the back of the frame beside the hammer, and the front of the frame between the locking studs. They also are located on the back of the hammer, the inside of the back strap, and the inside of the trigger guard plate. A number does not appear on the rear of the 6-stop cylinder because the safety pins are in the way.

Some of the numbers on guns existing today include: two 12-stops with #4, a 6-stop with #4, two 6-stops with #7, two 12-stops with the letter J, a 6-stop with the letter K, and a 12-stop with the letter L. If this small group is representative, it can be assumed that about half the guns were stamped with numbers and half with letters. Also, about half had 6-stop cylinders and half had 12 stops.

Without serial numbers it is difficult to



▲ Augusta revolver 7 with the 6-stop cylinder.

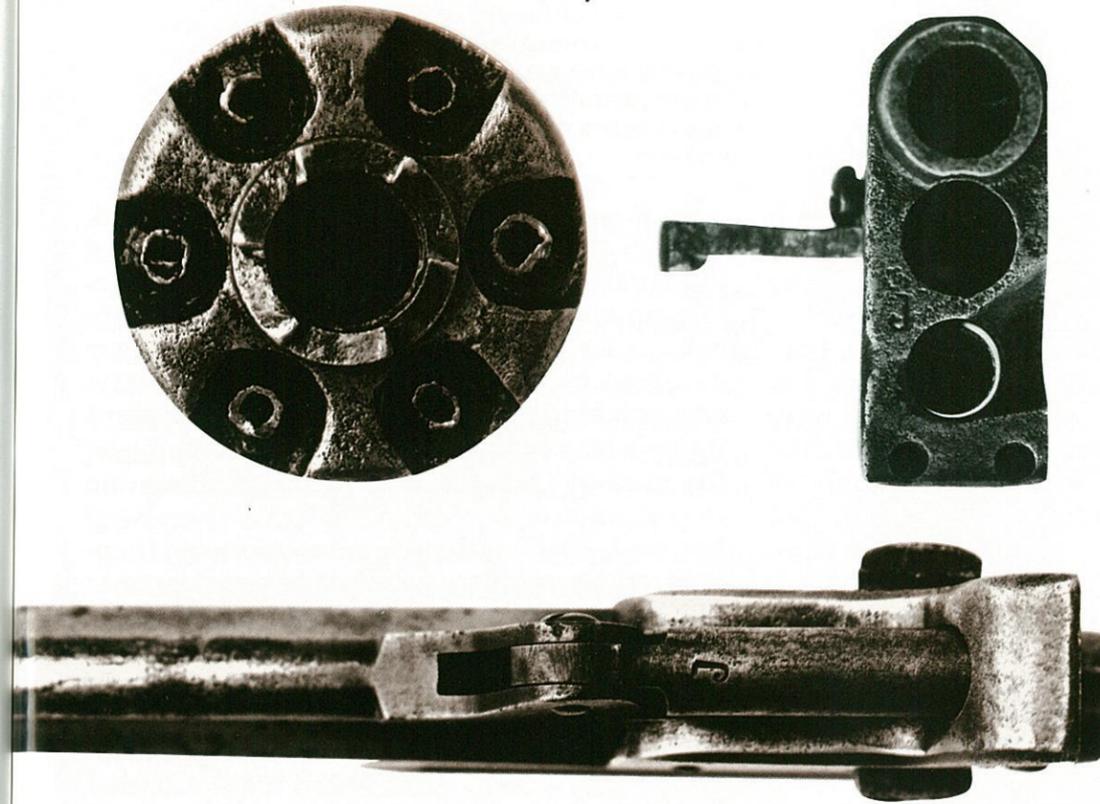


▲ Courtesy Don Bryan
Augusta revolver J with the 12-stop cylinder.

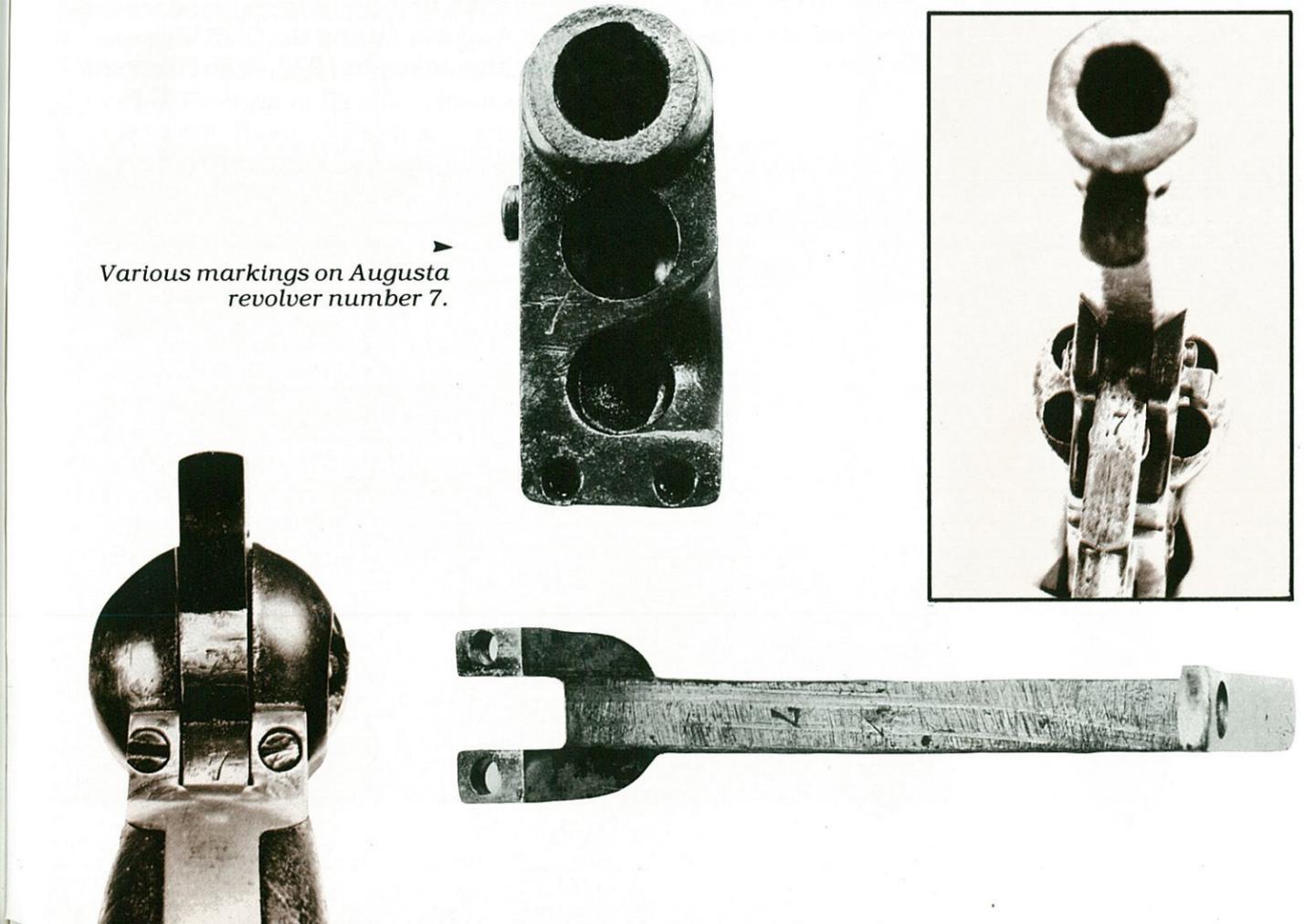
estimate the total number of revolvers produced. A comparison with the Columbus revolvers offers some possible conclusions. An estimated 100 Columbus revolvers were manufactured, and today there are more Augusta revolvers in the hands of collectors than Columbus revolvers. This could indicate that either more than 100 Augustas were made, or that the end of the war was near and so the

revolvers did not receive long or hard use, thus the higher survival rate.

It is absolutely certain that the 6- and 12-stop cylinder pistols are of the same origin. All characteristics, including the large oval trigger guard, are identical. The rifling was made with the same rifling machine and the assembly numbers and letters were stamped with the same dies. Why produce both a 6- and



◀ Various markings on Augusta revolver J.



▶ Various markings on Augusta revolver number 7.

12-stop revolver? They probably started out copying the 6-stop Colt Navy, then decided to adopt the improved safety device provided by the 12-stop cylinder.

Was the revolver manufactured by the Confederacy? This can be answered by looking at the brass on different specimens. Some were made with yellow brass and others with the bronze-colored brass that is typical only of Confederate arms. The gun is definitely not European because it also has American threads on the screws.

Finally, was this gun made at the Augusta Machine Works? In fact, was any revolver made at the Augusta Machine Works?

In *Confederate Handguns*, Bill Albaugh presents two letters and a deposition stating that handguns were made at the Machine Works. James W. Camak, an attorney at Athens, Georgia, wrote in March 1915 that pistols were made at the Confederate government-owned pistol factory in Augusta.

In a letter to E. Berkeley Bowie in 1918, Samuel C. Wilson, secretary, Department of Public Health, Augusta, wrote: "A pistol factory at Augusta between Jackson and Campbell, Adams and D'Antignac streets, now occupied by the Augusta Lumber Company, was operated by the Confederate Government under a Maj. N.S. Finney, Chief of Ordnance on the staff of Gen. B.D. Fry, commanding the Department of Augusta. The pistol was long-barreled, six chambered, percussion cap, paper cartridge, similar to Colts, and considered at that time one of the best in our service."

The description of the revolver in Wilson's letter fits that of the designated Augusta revolver, including the statement that it was one of the best made in the Confederacy. Remember, too, that people writing about these events in 1915 and 1918 could still get their information first hand from persons who had lived in Augusta during the Civil War.

In a deposition taken in 1928, J. B. Patterson

Disassembled Augusta revolver J.

