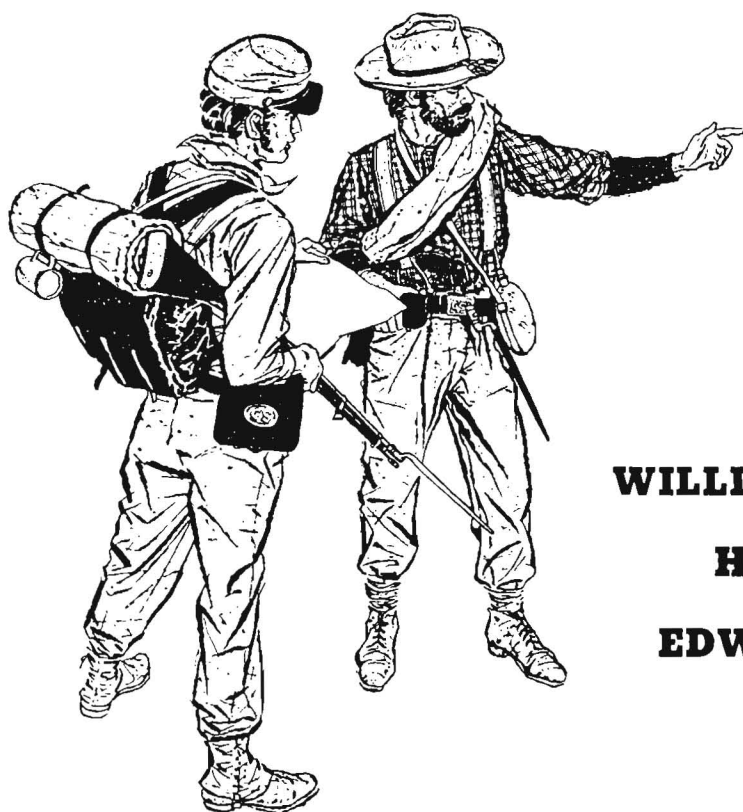


CONFEDERATE HANDGUNS

CONCERNING THE GUNS
THE MEN WHO MADE THEM
AND THE TIMES OF THEIR USE



BY
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703-533-1457

GEORGE SHUMWAY, *Publisher*

YORK • PENNSYLVANIA

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Produced in the United States of America

*Text set in Linotype Caledonia with display in Stymie Bold by
Ruttle, Shaw & Wetherill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Designed by Ray Riling, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

*Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 63-10982
SBN 87387-032-8*

GEORGE SHUMWAY, *Publisher*
R. D. 7 York, Pennsylvania 17402

CHAPTER 7

Le Mat

ONE of the most interesting Civil War revolvers is that made under the Le Mat Patent. Its unusual design has long made it desirable to collectors despite a great lack of information concerning its background. The almost total destruction of Southern records has placed the Le Mat revolver in a controversial class. There has been considerable conjecture as to whether it should be classed as Confederate or simply a revolver of foreign manufacture made for commercial sale. It is usually listed as being "a favorite with Southern officers." While few collectors will disagree with such a classification,

fewer still will list the Le Mat simply as "Confederate." Most have been willing to wait for documentary proof one way or the other.

While what follows does not pretend to answer all questions that might arise concerning these guns, we believe sufficient information is presented to prove that they are Confederate.

DR. JEAN ALEXANDRE FRANÇOIS LE MAT

In July, 1956, the authors had the extreme good fortune and pleasure of locating and interviewing Mrs. Eugenie Le Mat Eggleston,



Courtesy Confederate Museum, Richmond, Virginia

A LE MAT OF NOTABLE ASSOCIATION

A personal weapon of General P. G. T. Beauregard. This specimen is serial number 427. The carefully executed and restrained application of engraving dignifies this arm.

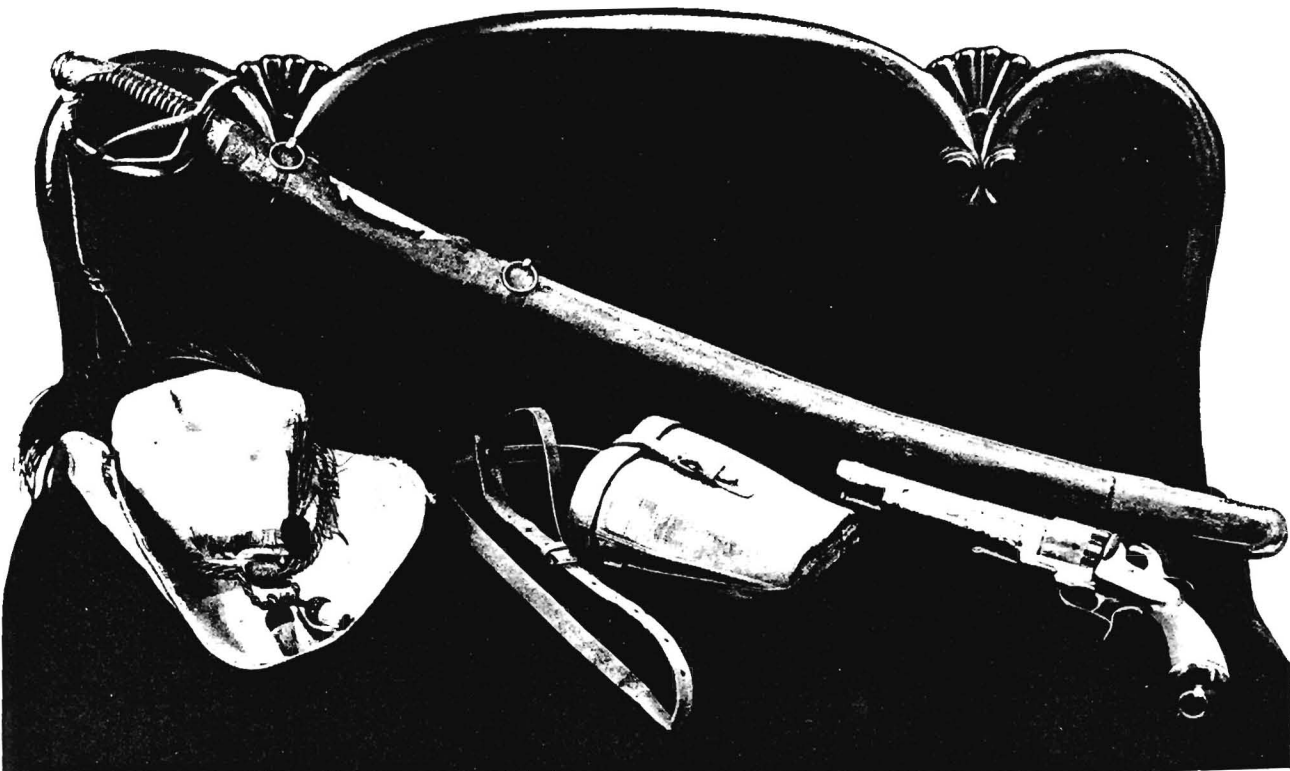
granddaughter of "Colonel" Le Mat, inventor of the "grape-shot" revolver. Although unacquainted with any details of revolver making, Mrs. Eggleston, with the utmost graciousness, granted us access to several photographs and considerable general information as to the Le Mat family.

Mrs. Eggleston stated:

I am the granddaughter of Colonel Le Mat and and the daughter of Maurice Le Mat, eldest son of the Colonel. My father was born in New Orleans in 1850 and he had one sister older than

The name "Le Mat" in accordance with the seagoing background of my family, meant "the mast" or "the good." My grandfather in his early days continued the family seafaring tradition and made many voyages to America. On one such visit he met and fell in love with my grandmother, Justine Sophie Lepretre, daughter of a well-to-do planter near New Orleans. After their marriage in the 1840's my grandfather settled in New Orleans, devoting himself to the practice of medicine.

Always of an inventive nature, about this time he invented a pistol whose manufacture completely absorbed the next few years of his life. He passionately embraced the Confederate States



Courtesy Confederate Museum, Richmond, Virginia

MEMENTOS OF THE PLUMED KNIGHT

The immortal Jeb Stuart's sword, field glasses, hat and Le Mat revolver, serial No. 105.

he named Anna. He had two younger sisters named Marie and Jeanne, also a brother Emil who was the baby of the family. My grandfather was born in Paris about 1824, being one of three sons.

when it came into being and foresook the medical profession to supply his beloved South with revolvers in their War of Independence.

I have no idea how he fared in this venture financially but I do know that the family always



Courtesy Mrs. Eugenie Le Mat Eggleston

JEAN ALEXANDRE FRANÇOIS LE MAT, CIRCA 1860

maintained a most comfortable establishment in Paris, presided over by an ex-slave who remained with us until her death.

According to my father, during this period of the Colonel's life he was constantly traveling between Paris and the Confederate States and after the war made many trips to America, although always maintaining his home in Paris. During the Franco-Prussian War he served as a surgeon for the French army. I know my grandfather had quite a reputation as an inventor and I wish I could give you more information as to his revolver, but oddly enough the thing I remember best is that he invented some sort of a fire extinguisher. In appearance my grandfather was a very distinguished personage; in character he was noble and generous, in disposition, kind and gentle. I am very proud to be his granddaughter.

Jean Alexandre François Le Mat received his degree as a Doctor of Medicine in 1842; the *Medical Register of New Orleans* carrying this record on page 188: "Porteur d'un diplôme du la faculté du Montpellier, delivré le 15 Juillet 1842." The same source, however, indicates that Le Mat did not secure his license to practice medicine in New Orleans until permission was granted by that city's Medical Committee at their meeting of November 28, 1849. In the meantime he had evidently married Sophie Lepretre, as the 1850 City Directory lists them as man and wife living at 188 Dauphine Street.

The first indication that Le Mat was of an inventive nature appears in 1856, when he was granted a patent by the United States patent office for a revolver which combined the features of the six-shot revolver and the single-barrel shotgun. This was assigned patent number 15925, dated October 21, 1856. It was described later by the New Orleans *Daily Delta* of June 21, 1861, as being ". . . one of the most formidable weapons of the pistol kind ever invented." Formidable was the correct word, for the revolver had a cylinder containing not six, but nine shots of .42 caliber which revolved

upon a central barrel of .63 caliber which contained a buckshot (so-called "grape-shot") cartridge. The revolving cylinder and the buckshot barrel were fired by the same hammer merely by shifting the hammernose up or down. As originally conceived, this hammer had two noses.

Dr. Le Mat appeared before a notary public, Theodore Guyal, on September 14, 1857, and filed a statement concerning his patent of October 15, 1856:

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

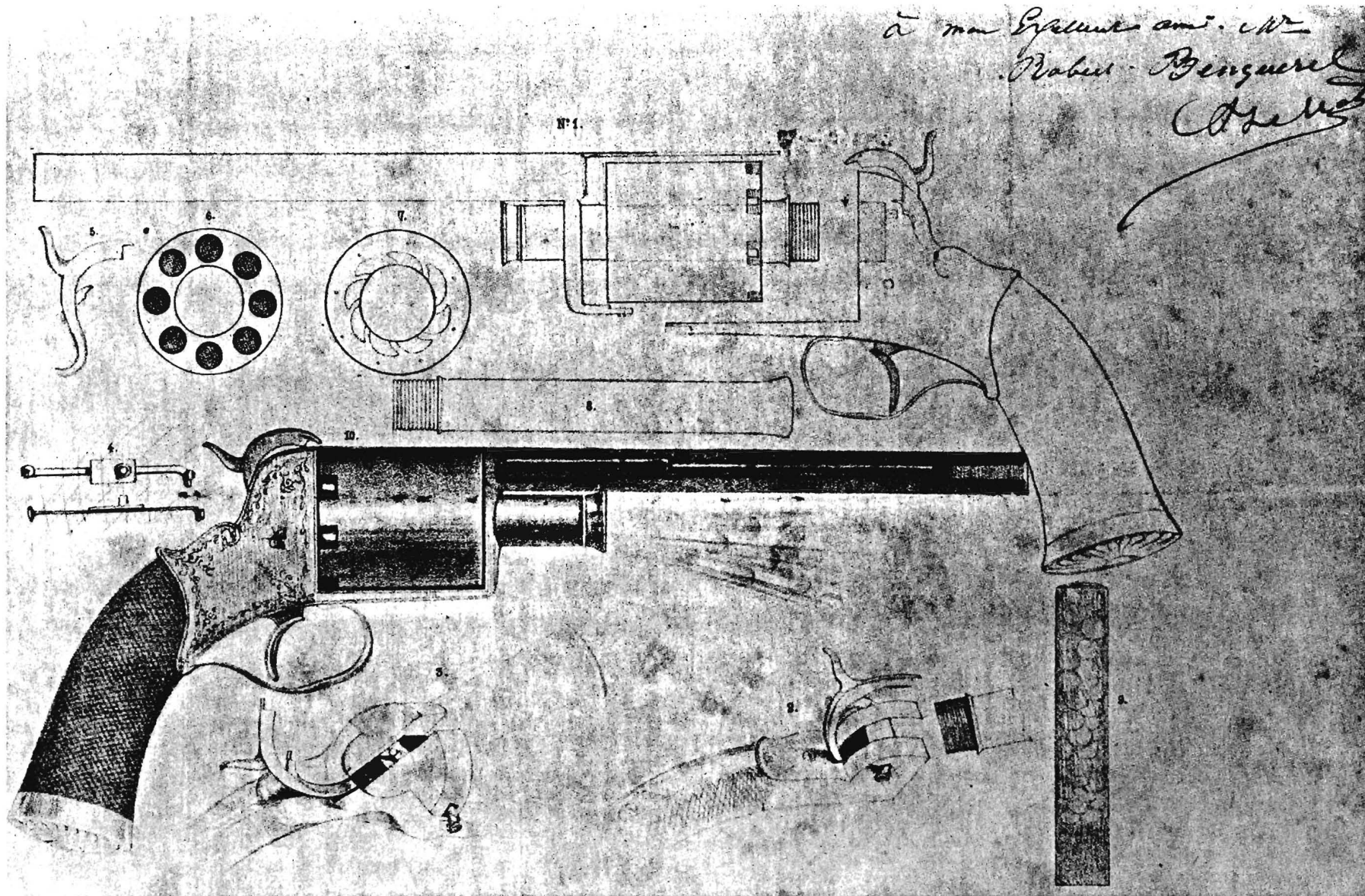
STATE OF LOUISIANA

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Be it Known that on this Fourteenth day of September in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Eighty-second:

Before me, Theodore Guyal, a Notary Public in and for the Parish and City of New Orleans, State of Louisiana, duly commissioned and qualified:

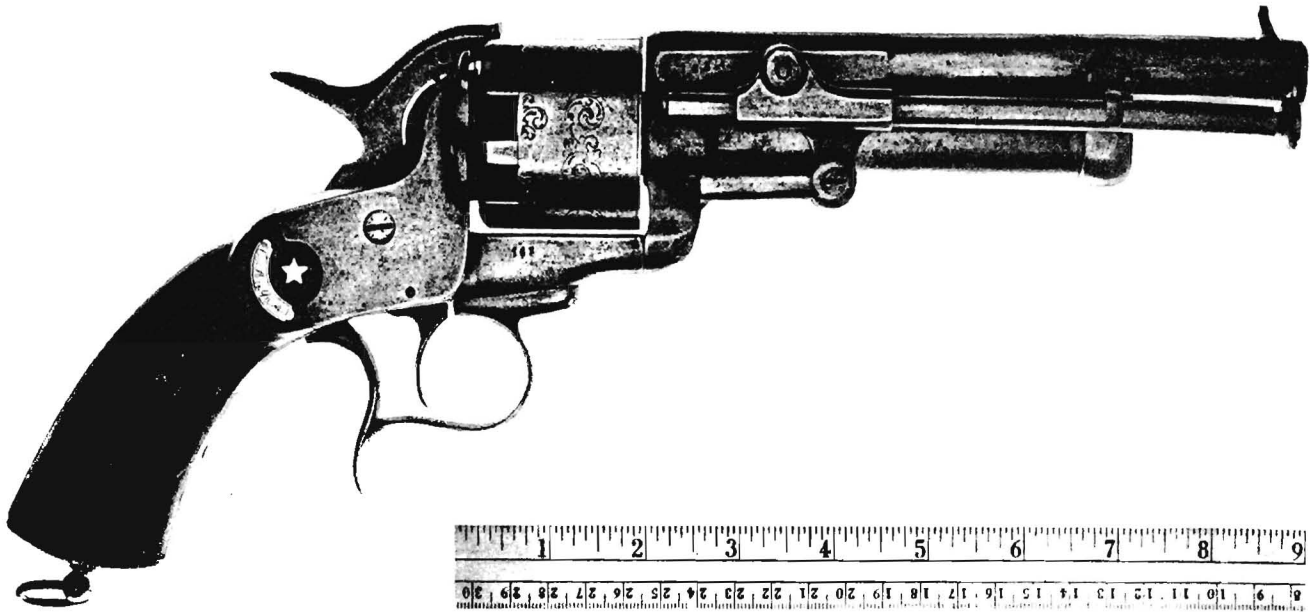
Personally came and appeared ALEXANDRE LE MAT, of the City of New Orleans, aforesaid who produced and exhibited to me said Notary a *Patent* issued by the Patent Office of the United States of America, granting unto him, the said Le Mat, his heirs, administrators or assigns for the Term of Fourteen years from the Twenty-first day of October One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-six, the full and exclusive right and liberty of making, constructing, using and vending to others to be used a new and useful *Improved Fire Arm*, the invention of the said Le Mat as fully described and delineated in the Schedule and drawings attached to said Patent, and in which the invention claimed by him and secured by said Patent consists of First: The substitution of a Shot Barrel to the solid cylinder as a Pin, upon which the revolving cartridge cylinder of revolvers constructed upon Colt's or similar systems revolve, in the manner and for the purposes as described: and Second: The Gun cock No. 11 with a double hammer a & b constructed and operating substantially as described and for the purposes specified.



Courtesy John W. Boyle

LE MAT'S ORIGINAL SKETCH

A pencil drawing signed by Le Mat and inscribed in French, "to my excellent friend Mr. Robert Benguerel." Robert Benguerel was Le Mat's friend and attorney in the clouded "New Orleans Affair." The reader's attention is invited to detail 6 on the sketch which shows only eight chambers for the revolver loads rather than the nine of all existing specimens. The official patent drawing covering U. S. Patent No. 15925, dated October 21, 1856, was obviously developed from this sketch and it conforms to the detail of the eight chambers as shown.



A FIRST MODEL LE MAT

Courtesy Samuel E. Smith

Serial number 163. The semi-circular inlay behind the silver star is marked *Co. A 18 Ga.* The 18th Georgia regiment was one of the state's most famous.

Which said Patent bears the No. 15925 and dated at the City of Washington on the Twenty-first day of October Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-six.

And the said Alexandre Le Mat having requested me, said Notary, to certify to the existence of the said Letter Patent in his possession. I have granted these presents under my Signature and Seal of Office at New Orleans on this fourteenth day of September in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-seven.
Theo. Guyal

The purpose of such a notarized statement obviously was the future promotion and sale of the revolver so patented. Copies of the statement could be handed out as affirmations of intent.

Two years later a working partnership was formed between Dr. Le Mat and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, at the time a major in the United States Army Engineers, stationed in New Orleans. Later he was to become one of the foremost Confederate generals.

THE LE MAT-BEAUREGARD PARTNERSHIP

The contract between Le Mat and Beauregard plainly indicates that the two fully intended first to protect themselves from imitations by securing patents in all major countries and, after this had been done, to manufacture and sell the revolver. This contract is dated April 4, 1859, and is entitled "Contract of Sales and Association." It provided that one-quarter of Le Mat's patent rights were to be ceded to Beauregard in exchange for certain favors which Beauregard, as a major in the United States Army, would be in a position to bring about, plus certain financial commitments.

Four days after the signing of the partnership agreement, Major Beauregard signed several notes to enable Dr. Le Mat to raise money to promote the grape-shot revolver. A copy of one of these notes reads as follows:

New Orleans, April 8th, 1859

Being the sole authorized Agent for the United States of Dr. Alexandre Le Mat for the sale and proper disposal of his Grape Shot revolver (a great and superior improvement on Colt's), I herewith promise to pay from his share of the first net proceeds of said sales or disposals—whatever sum or sums may be furnished him (including interest thereon @ 10% per annum) for the purpose of providing him with means to visit Europe for the sale or disposal of his Patents for said arm—

G. T. Beauregard¹

Beauregard's first attempt to publicize Le Mat's weapon was on March 2, 1859, when a quasi-official board composed of prominent Army, Navy and political personages gave the revolver a public trial. The report by this board was quite favorable.

New Orleans, March 2nd, 1859

We the undersigned have examined and tried the "Grape shot revolving pistol" of Mr. A. Le Mat of this city and feel no hesitation in stating that after a close examination of said arm, we consider it a great and important improvement on Colt's revolver. . . .

We consider this arm far superior to any we have seen for the use of cavalry acting against Indians or when charging on a square of infantry or a battery of field pieces. It is also indispensable for artillerist's in defending their pieces against such a charge, and for infantry defending a breach. . . . Its advantages in the naval service in boarding or repelling boarders is too obvious to require anything but passing notice. . . .

It is more than probable that the introduction and use of this pistol in the cavalry service would give to the latter the preponderance over the infantry, if not armed in like manner, for what would become of a line or square of infantry after its fire should have been drawn by the cavalry when the latter coming up to within a few paces would pour 10 shots into their very faces. . . .

We earnestly recommend that this arm should be introduced in our military and naval services,

so soon as the Government will find it practicable to do so. . . .

Signed by

L. Rousseau	A. C. Myers
Capt. U.S. Navy	Lt. Col. U.S. Army
G. T. Beauregard	R. Smith
B.V. Maj. U.S. Army	Late Capt. U.S. Army
F. E. Prime	G. W. Lay
1st Lieut. U.S. Engr.	Lt. Col. ADC
	to Gen. in Chief

We the undersigned have examined Mr. Le Mat's revolver and fully concur in the above opinions and recommendations.

I think highly of the above weapon
Winfield Scott

Braxton Bragg	P. O. Herbert
Late Lt. Col. U.S. Army	Late Brvt. Col. U.S.A.
N. G. Evans	Late Gov. of Louis.
Capt. U.S. 2nd Cavalry	E. K. Smith
	Capt. U.S. 2nd Cavalry ²

W. H. Stevens

The results of the trial were published May 21, 1859, in *The True Delta*, *The Bee* and *The Crescent* (all of New Orleans) in the form of paid advertisements. But shortly before their appearance Le Mat submitted this "Report of the Special Board" to Colonel Samuel Cooper, Adjutant General, United States Army, in Washington, D. C., on May 11, going to that city armed with various letters of introduction to the Honorable John B. Floyd, Secretary of War.

A board composed of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Johnston, First Cavalry, Brevet Major George D. Ramsey and Brevet Major Theodore T. S. Laidley, Ordnance, convened at the Washington Arsenal on May 11, 1859, and its report was transmitted as follows:

Washington, D. C.
May 11, 1859

Colonel:

I have the honor, herewith, to transmit the report of the Board of Officers instructed by Special Orders No. 80 of May 9th, 1859 for the pur-

pose of examining a firearm invented by Mr. Alexandre Le Mat.

Very respectfully, I am,
Your obt. servnt.

T. T. S. Laidley
B. Major, Capt. of Ord.
Recorder.

Col. S. Cooper
Adjutant General
Washington, D. C.³

Washington, D. C.
May 11, 1859

Col. S. Cooper
Adj. Gen.
Colonel:

The Board commenced by Special Orders No. 80 dated, War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, May 9th, 1859, "For the purpose of examining a fire-arm invented by Mr. Le Mat," met at Washington Arsenal, agreeably to instructions, and having performed the duty assigned them, have the honor to make the following report:

Description of the Arm

The arm presented by Mr. Alexandre Le Mat for examination is a revolving belt or holster-pistol. In its general features it resembles Colt's revolving pistol, having, like that, a revolving cylinder, containing several chambers, which are brought in turn, in the prolongation of the single barrel. The mechanism by which the cylinder is made to revolve is precisely that used in Colt's pistol.

The distinguishing feature of this pistol is the pin around which the cylinder revolves; This, instead of being solid as in the revolving pistols, is a pistol barrel of large calibre, which can be loaded at the muzzle with ball or buckshot, and fired with the same facility, and by the same means as the revolving cylinder.

The under part of the front end of the hammer is hinged, and revolves through an angle of 90°, and is readily made to strike at pleasure, on the cone of the central barrel, or on those of the cylinder.

The cylinder of the pistol presented has chambers for *nine* separate charges, and each chamber is capable of containing about sixteen grains of powder, and an elongated ball of 0.75 inch. in length.

The lever for ramming the balls of the cylinder is placed on the side of the barrel. It is made hollow to receive the rammer for the central barrel. This latter rammer is not fixed to the pistol but is retained in the hollow lever by the friction on its sides, the hole not being straight. The end of the hammer which strikes the cone is so formed as to prevent the explosion by the caps from bursting it, or scratching its lower end, as it sometimes prevents the cylinder from revolving.

Dimensions of the Arm

Length of the barrel	7.3 inches
“ “ “ cylinder	1.7 “
“ “ “ bore of central barrel.	6.6 “
Diameter of the cylinder	1.95 “
“ “ “ central barrel, ext.83 “
“ “ “ bore of central barrel65 “
“ “ “ bore of cylinder chambers41 “
Total length of pistol	14.1 “
Weight of the pistol	3.96 lbs.
Diameter of ball for the revolver	0.41 inch
Weight of ball for the revolver	206 gr.
Weight of charge of powder for revolver	16 gr.
Weight of ball for central barrel	406 gr.
Number of buckshot in cartridge	15 each
Weight of charge of powder for buckshot	40 gr.

Test Firing

The pistol was fired with 16 grains of powder and elongated ball, *twenty-five* times.

The central barrel was fired *three* times with balls and *ten* times with buckshot.

Penetration at 30 Paces

The elongated ball, with 16 gr. of powder, 2½ inches.

The round ball, from central barrel, 2½ inches.

Buckshot, at 15 paces, with 40 gr. of powder, 1 inch.

OPINION OF THE BOARD

The board are of the opinion that the arm presented by Mr. Le Mat is an improvement which adds materially to the efficiency of the revolver giving, as it does, a greater number of shots for the same weight of arm and also adding another barrel of large calibre, capable of throwing a heavy ball with a large charge of powder, or, more particularly, a load of buckshot, with great effect at short distance. It is a merit which is not known to be possessed by any other pistol now in use, whilst the additional mechanism for this purpose is practical and simple in its construction.

It is believed that improvements might be made in some of the defects as, for instance, in the lever for ramming, which is large and cumbersome and gives a clumsy appearance to the pistol.

From the nature of the trials which the board could give this arm, its durability (which is the only question with regard to it that requires to be tested) could not be thoroughly tried, and the board respectfully recommends that this arm be subjected to trial in the hands of troops that are in actual service in the field.

Very Respt. your obt. Servt.

J. E. Johnston
Lt. Col. 1st Cavalry
T. T. S. Laidley
B. Major, Capt. Ord.
Recorder.⁴

Although the board recommended the pistol be given a trial by the U.S. Army, there is no indication that this was ever done. However, Le Mat apparently took note of the board's remarks about the "clumsy appearing" loading lever, and it is believed that the Kerr type levers that appeared on some of his weapons were an attempt to overcome this criticism. Unfortunately, the Kerr type lever was not adaptable to the Le Mat pistol as it could not provide for the rod for the shotgun barrel.

While in Washington, Le Mat obtained a patent on a "New and improved hammer for revolving firearms." It was given patent number 24312. This patent is dated June 7, 1859.

If the names of some of the persons who have appeared in the past few pages are familiar, it is not surprising. In the "Report of the Special Board," conducted in New Orleans, Beauregard, Bragg, Evans and Smith became generals in the Confederate Army, while Huger died defending New Orleans as Lieutenant Commander, C.S.N. The "John B. Floyd, Secretary of War" to whom the letters of introduction were addressed was a former governor of the state of Virginia, and later a general, C.S.A. Joseph E. Johnston hardly needs an introduction to those interested in Confederate history, nor does Samuel Cooper who, two years hence, was to be Adjutant and Inspector General for the Confederate States Army. The C. Girard who witnessed patent number 24312 was, in a short time, to become Le Mat's partner and owner of a three-quarter interest in the revolver venture.

For the nine months following the date of the patent for the "Adjustable Hammer," the energetic doctor was in Europe. During this time he accomplished much in keeping with the terms of the partnership with Beauregard. It is noted that one of the letters of introduction written for Le Mat says that "he will visit Washington on his way to Europe." It is to be remembered also, that the patent for the "Adjustable Hammer" was dated June 7, 1859, while the French patent is dated July 20, 1859, so one sees that the busy doctor lost little time in proceeding to Europe. There he took out patents for his grape-shot revolver in Russia, Spain, Belgium, England, Prussia and Saxony.

At this point it might be well to introduce the standard markings that appeared on those pistols made in France. These were in two forms: *Col. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris* or *Syst. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris*. "Bte." is French for patent. The "s.g.d.g." is the abbreviation for "sans garantie du gouvernement" or, in other words, patented, but without guarantee of the government.

It is assumed that while in Paris Le Mat made arrangements for the production of his grape-

shot revolvers. Also about this time, unknown to partner Beauregard, Charles Girard was employed by Le Mat as "special agent in Europe."

This last we know because of a letter from Beauregard to Le Mat:

New Orleans 20 March 1860

My dear Colonel,

You tell me that you have received a letter from Dr. Girard, in which he seems to feel hurt by what we wrote directly to Messrs. Newton and [illegible] . . . wyck, concerning the active part I have in the matter of Revolver, etc., etc.

I am truly very sorry, but at the time I did not know that Monsieur Girard was your *special agent* in Europe, and that all correspondence should have passed through his hands, in order not to provoke his extreme sensitivity! In business, however, I know only of one way of procedure and of doing things; it is *in a regular manner!*

Either the thing we have undertaken is serious, or it is pure childishness: in this latter case one can act entirely on confidence—in the other case—it should be done in a regular way, even at the risk of vexing the susceptibilities, not too acute, of certain friends. Anyway, I have not done anything that I would not have done to one of my brothers—no more, no less. And the best proof that I was right is that you've just lost the sale of $\frac{1}{4}$ of your Patents for \$20,000 (which would have helped to eliminate all the difficulties in the manufacturing of the weapon *here* and in Europe), because you did not have the necessary documents *to prove* the purchase of European Patents! That in business your word or mine do not go any farther than the tips of our noses! Anyway, you are not immortal, unfortunately, and, after you, it won't be "the end of the world!"

Without any lack of confidence in your sensitive friend, I recommended to you, as you may well remember, to interest him strongly in our undertaking in order to encourage and to recompense him—and now he is angry at us!

As far as I am concerned, you should know, because I told you quite often—I am ready, whenever you wish, to sell my quarter interest for \$10,000, or to transfer it to you, *to you*, for the

amounts that I have invested in this business up to date, all the details of which are at your disposal—without asking anything for my work! I think your friend could not ask for anything more unselfish!

He also seems to think that you have ceded me this quarter interest for "a trifle." Trifle or no trifle, I offer it to him on the same conditions as to you—and I think that in every country of the world, a thing, good or bad, "is not worth more than it produces."

Under present circumstances I would be happy to leave matters in the same condition as they were before your letter of 27 January—if it can help our business, and to retain Dr. Girard as our General and Special Agent for Europe, because he stands high in my opinion, and I have full confidence in him. But shouldn't we at least possess all the necessary documents to prove, if necessary, *to our creditors* that we are not joking, and to our heirs that they can (perhaps) take over our labors where we left them, to lead to success and prosperity—

Yours devotedly

G. T. Beauregard

To Col. A. Le Mat
New Orleans, La.⁵

The partnership of Beauregard and Le Mat came to an end and on April 10, 1860, the former turned over a quantity of papers relating to the grape-shot revolvers. Fortunately, for those of us interested in such things, Beauregard kept duplicate copies and these are still extant. Two are of interest.

The first such paper indicates that all the leading firearms companies in the country had been queried, apparently as to the possibility of their manufacturing the Le Mat revolver. There is no indication that any replied affirmatively.

N. Orleans April 10th 1860


I gave this day the following papers to Col. Le Mat—

1. The Patents of France, U. States, Russia, Spain, Belgian [illegible]

- Not yet received—England, Prussia & Saxony—
- 2. Report of Special Board Wash. May 11th 1859
- 3. " of H. P. Andrews N.Y. Nov. 15th 1859
- 4. Answer of Manhattan Firearms Co. ? 1859
- 5. " " Bacon & Co. Oct. 31 "
- 6. " " Davis & Co. Nov. 1 "
- 7. " " Chicopee Falls Co. " 10 "
- 8. " " James T. Warner " " "
- Springfield Arms Co.
- 9. " " Muzzy & Co. " " "

The second included a listing of expenditures:

- April 6, 1859 Paid to make contract for Grape shot revolver as partner with Le Mat. \$500.00
- April 16, 1859 Paid to complete contract. 4,500—
- April 19, 1859 S. W. Thuil for copy on tracing paper of Grape Shot Revolver 15—



Philadelphia, Oct 24 1859

M. C. Girard

Bought of **JOHN KRIDER & CO.**

MANUFACTURERS OF

Guns and Sporting Tackle.

Aug 23	To	Labor on Patent Pistol	51 00	
Sept 6	"	" " " "	22 50	
17	"	" " " "	34 50	
24	"	" " " "	18 00	
Oct 15	"	" " " "	39 00	
	"	Forging ⁶⁶⁰ Brass Castings ¹²⁰ Blask ¹⁵⁰	9 30	
	"	silver plating ³²⁵ - extra labor ⁵⁰⁰ Engraving	9 25	
	"	Mahogany base ⁶⁰⁰ screw driver ¹⁰⁰ turnch	7 00	
24	"	6 days labor on pistol & ore	18 25	208 80

Philadelphia, Oct 20, 1859

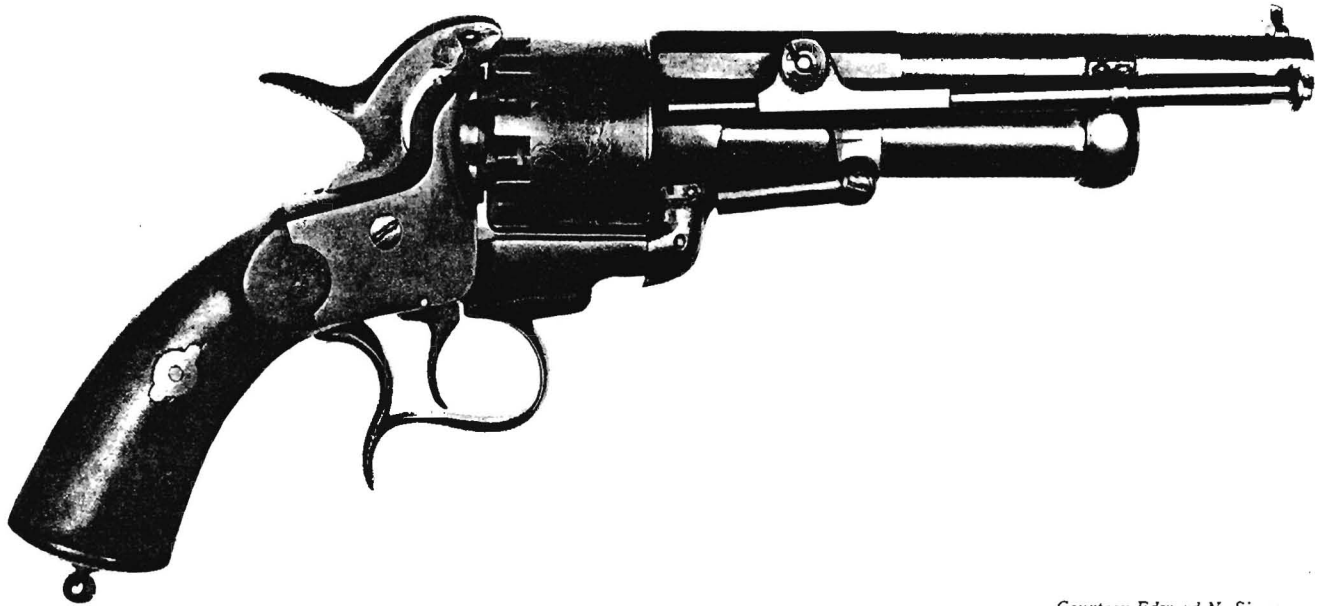
Received from M. C. Girard the sum of \$208.80 as above

John Krider & Co.

Courtesy Louisiana State University Archives

EVIDENCE OF THE FIRST LE MAT

Bill from John Krider & Co., Philadelphia, for "patent pistol," probably for the first working model.



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

LE MAT PERCUSSION REVOLVER

Marked Serial No. 1

May 25, 1859	To notices in 3 paper of Govt. Trial of Revl.	\$9—
[illegible]	Amedee Ducatel for contract	15—
Oct. 26, 1859	John Krider of Phila. for model Revolver	208—
Nov. 15, 1859	H. P. Andrews for expenses to various arms manufacturers	50.00
Nov. 27, 1859	Travelling expenses to & from the North on acc- of Grapeshot Revolver \$62½	125.00
Nov. 27, 1859	expenses in Wash. Ph. & N. Y. 1½ months at \$150 per mo-	225.00
Nov. 27, 1859	[illegible]	88.00
Nov. 27, 1859	Sundry small expenses in above cities	15.00
		<hr/>
		\$6,150.00 ^o

(It might be interesting to note that the correct total of the above expenditures is \$5,750.00, not \$6,150.00 as set forth.)

Aside from the "model" pistol made by John Krider of Philadelphia (which was cased with

full accessories) there is no indication of his manufacture of pistols. This seems odd as there can be no question that, as of this date, a number of Le Mat revolvers were in existence. How, for example, could the special boards in New Orleans or in Washington have fired and made reports on a nonexistent revolver?

Two early model Le Mat revolvers with serial numbers one and four are extant. They are marked simply "Le Mat's Patent." We assume they were made prior to Le Mat's appointment as Colonel in 1859 and were the ones used by the special board in New Orleans.

On July 2, 1860, Beauregard wrote Le Mat outlining the terms under which he had agreed to sell his one-quarter interest back to the inventor:

Supt's office New Custom house
New Orleans July 2, 1860

Col. Alexandre Le Mat
New Orleans, La.

Dear Sir,

I herewith authorize you to dispose of or sell your share (¼) of the Patent right or rights (American & European) of your "Grape shot

Revolver" *provided* that the proceeds thus obtained, shall go toward paying the sums advanced by me to you—& expended by me on account of said arm—and those guaranteed by me here on your account.

I will then cede back to you my share ($\frac{1}{4}$) of said Patent right or rights as sold by you—*provided* I am paid also the *pro-rata* of any excess on the sale of said $\frac{3}{4}$ shares, over the sums due me as above stated—& representing the present value of my share—G. T. B.

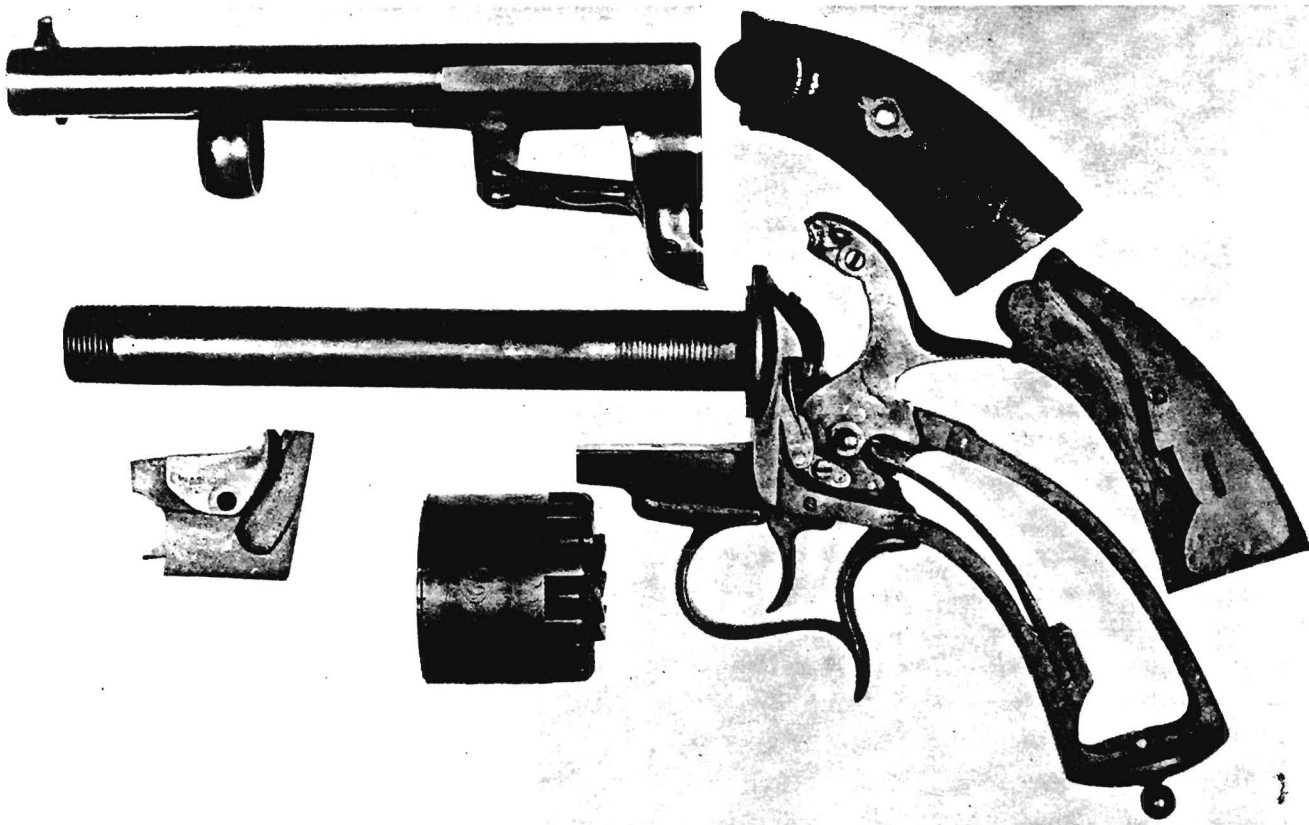
Yours very Truly,
G. T. Beauregard⁷

Subsequent events show that Le Mat purchased Beauregard's one-quarter interest in the patent rights and then disposed of a three-quarter interest to Girard, retaining only a one-quarter interest.

Although efforts to obtain national recognition for his grape-shot revolver were unsuccessful, Le Mat was at least accepted in his own state for, on November 15, 1860, the Louisiana Inspector General Maurice Grivot recommended that "The Guard d'Orleans be armed with 400 rifles and sabre bayonets and for the officers—improved revolvers, such as Colonel Le Mat's grape-shot revolver."⁸

THE LE MAT AND GIRARD PARTNERSHIP

Although Dr. Charles Frederic Girard had joined Le Mat in Paris early in 1860, it was not until July of that year that he became a full partner instead of "special agent." That Girard was an accomplished and rather remarkable



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

DISASSEMBLED NUMBER ONE LE MAT

Serial number 1, showing components.

person is demonstrated by his biography, as it appears in Smithsonian Institution Bulletin Number 42:

"Born March 9, 1822, he was educated at Neuchâtel, Switzerland, under Louis Agassiz who brought Girard to the United States in 1847. He remained at Cambridge under Agassiz until the fall of 1850, at which time he came to Washington, D. C., and worked under Spencer F. Baird as Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Baird gave Girard the opportunity to become associated with him in the plan which resulted in the establishment of the United States National Museum in 1857. . . ."

LE MAT CONTRACTS WITH THE CONFEDERATE ARMY AND NAVY

For a number of years it has been thought that perhaps some Le Mat revolvers were actually made in the South during the war years. However, the records simply do not bear this out, although there may have been plans afoot to do so. The New Orleans *Daily Delta* in June, 1861, states: "The firm of Cook and Brother contemplate the manufacture of Dr. Le Mat's grape-shot revolver." So far as the records show, the manufacture by Cook and Brother never got beyond the contemplation stage.

The Confederate Government was formed in the spring of 1861 at Montgomery, Alabama. Undoubtedly, both Beauregard and Le Mat were present during those first hectic weeks when all kinds and types of contracts and positions were being awarded.

Through Beauregard, Josiah Gorgas, previously a captain in the U.S. Army, was offered and on April 8, 1861 accepted, the rank of major in the Confederate States Army with the title of Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance.

On July 27, 1861, the Confederate Congress formally inquired of the Bureau of Ordnance as to arms on hand and as to what steps had been taken to secure additional weapons. This query

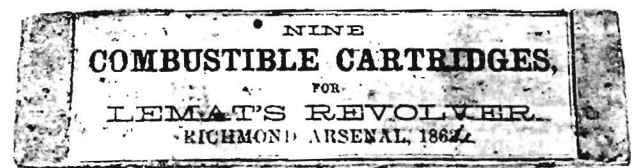


Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

LE MAT MARKINGS ON NUMBER ONE

These appear as shown on the barrel and inside of the side plate.

was answered on August 12, 1861, and it is interesting to note at that time the Confederacy had only one contract for the manufacture of revolvers: "Mr. Le Mat of Louisiana has an order to deliver 5,000 of his revolvers."¹⁰

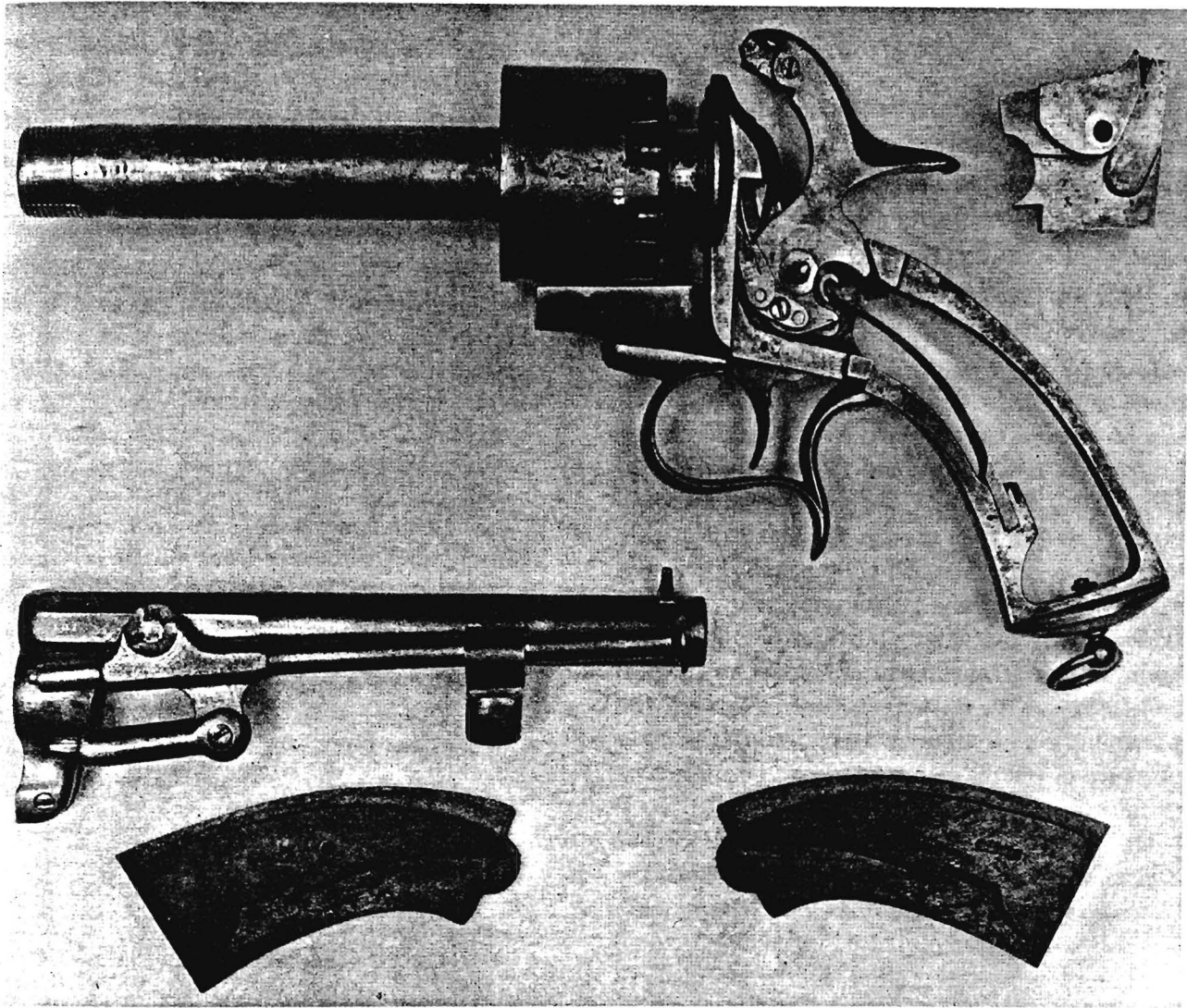


Courtesy Charles L. Bricker

PACKAGE OF LE MAT CARTRIDGES

Le Mat cartridges contained in square-type packs are quite scarce but this oblong shaped authentic package (4½" long) with original Arsenal label is an extreme rarity and may be unique. It is shown here, in print, for the first time.

While contracting with the War Department for 5,000 revolvers, Le Mat also secured a contract with the Navy Department, although the exact date is unknown, and its first mention does not appear until July, 1862.



DISASSEMBLED LE MAT

Serial number 101, showing components.

Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

Leaving Montgomery, Alabama, with his contract in his pocket, Colonel Le Mat proceeded to Europe. First, however, he stopped at Milledgeville, the capital of Georgia, long enough to receive a commission to purchase 2,000 English Enfield rifles at \$35 each for that state.¹¹

Meanwhile, the Confederate Government had chosen James M. Mason of Virginia and John Slidell of Louisiana, to proceed to Europe to establish credit by selling bonds or otherwise

securing loans. The *Charleston Mercury's* account of the sailing of Mason and Slidell notes that they were accompanied by "Colonel Le Mat, the inventor of the grape-shot revolver."

The subsequent capture of the English steamer *Trent* by the U.S.S. *San Jacinto* and the forcible removal of Mason and Slidell is too well known to repeat. Le Mat seems to have escaped attention and to have reached his destination safely.

LE MAT AND THE "NEW ORLEANS AFFAIR"

How long Le Mat remained in Europe is not known, but probably only long enough to deliver the contracts to his partner Girard and to make sure that their Paris manufactory was capable of handling the job. At any rate, early in 1862, we find him in New Orleans, where he remained until that city fell to the Union forces.

Most serious students who have attempted to piece together Le Mat's revolver-making activities have been greatly puzzled by certain cryptic references to him found in Volume 2, Series III, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*. These involve Le Mat in a highly mysterious "affair" which contains all of the elements necessary for a present-day television spy thriller. Only tantalizing portions of this "affair" are mentioned, insufficient to lead to any logical conclusion as to its true nature, although the possibility that it might have related to the manufacture of pistols in New Orleans could not be dismissed.

On page 771, Volume 2, Series III, of the *Official Records* (Navies) will be found the statement that a lawyer, one Robert Benguerel, was paid to negotiate for Le Mat in this "affair." Benguerel was designated as "my excellent friend" in a signed drawing of Le Mat's revolver patent which we illustrate.

It has been established, however, that Le Mat was merely involved in spiriting more than \$400,000 in gold out of New Orleans—right under the nose of U.S. General Benjamin Butler, who is better remembered for his nickname, "Beast."

LE MAT IN CHARLESTON, S. C., IN SEPTEMBER, 1862

Le Mat's whereabouts after the New Orleans "affair" are not known, but in September, 1862, on his way to Paris he stopped in Charleston, South Carolina, at the home of George Tren-

holm. Here he met a youngster named James M. Morgan who was a midshipman in the Confederate States Navy.

Morgan gives us one of the few descriptions we have of our inventor in *The Recollections of a Rebel Reefer*:

Soon there arrived a Frenchman, a Col. Le Mat, the inventor of the "Grape-shot" revolver, a horrible contraption, the cylinder of which revolved around a section of a gun barrel. The cylinder contained nine bullets, and the grape-shot barrel was loaded with buckshot which when fired would almost tear the arm off a man with its recoil.

Le Mat's English vocabulary was limited, and his only subject of conversation was his invention—so he used me to explain to the young ladies how the infernal machine worked.

Now that sounds all very easy, but one must remember that Le Mat was a highly imaginative Gaul and insisted on posing me to illustrate his lecture. This was embarrassing especially as he considered it polite to begin all over again as each new guest entered the room.¹²

THE CONFEDERATE ARMY CONTRACT AND THE CONTROVERSY WITH CALEB HUSE

While Le Mat had been in New Orleans, the production and delivery of the grape-shot revolver had gone well until July, 1862, when trouble began with the Confederate Ordnance representative in Europe. The first inkling of this controversy is found in a letter to Judah P. Benjamin, then Confederate Secretary of State and an old friend of the inventor:

Paris, September 30, 1862

To:

Hon. J. P. Benjamin,
Department of State, Richmond,
Confederate States of America

The establishment of credit here would save the Government from great embarrassment and

the enormous loss on exchange which it now suffers, as well as relieve the agents abroad from the difficulties of which they complain. I have been requested by Messrs. C. Girard & Co., who are making Le Mat's revolvers for the Government under contracts with the Navy and Army Departments with Colonel Le Mat, a partner in the factory, to forward their correspondence with the agents of those departments in Europe, and to request that effectual steps may be taken to fulfill the Government obligation in that respect. They complain of the loss of both time and money in consequence of the failure of Captain Huse to co-operate with them or carry out his instructions in spirit as well as in letter. I submit this matter without any expression of opinion to the proper departments, with a repetition of my suggestion that additional agents supplied with funds should be sent abroad for the purchase of arms, medicines, and other necessaries.

(signed) Edwin DeLeon¹³

Following DeLeon's letter to Benjamin, Le Mat's partner Girard also wrote the Secretary of State outlining his troubles with Major Caleb Huse, Confederate purchasing agent abroad:

Paris, December 9, 1862

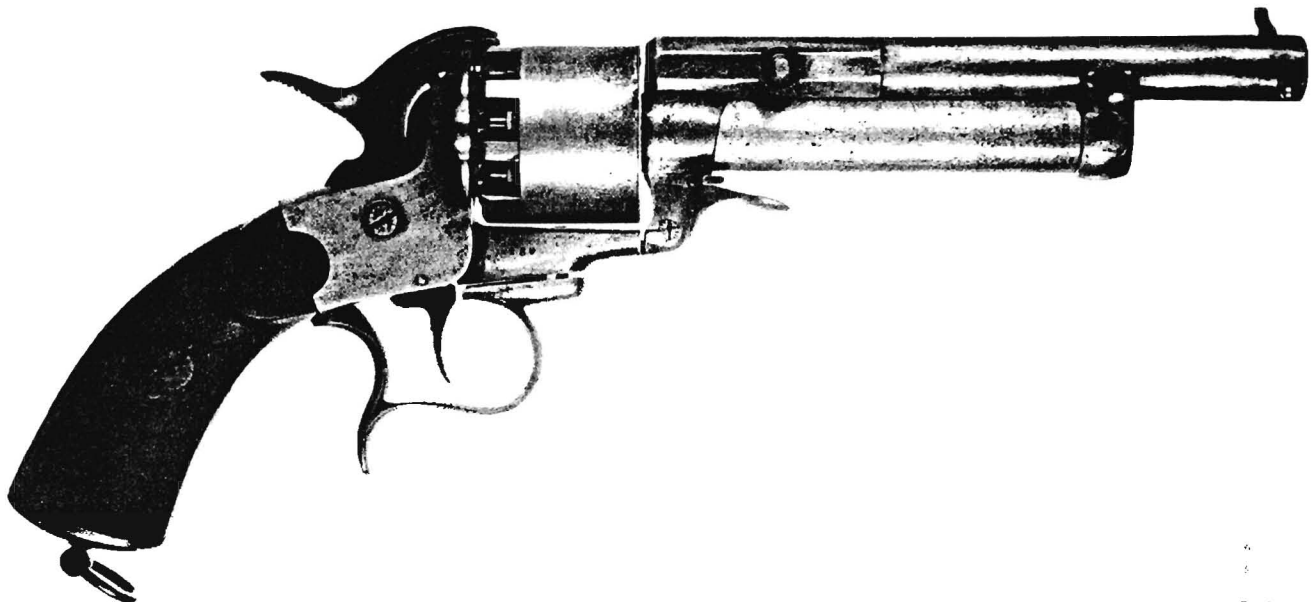
To The Honorable J. P. Benjamin,
Minister, Secretary of State of
The Confederated States of America,
Richmond.

Dear Sir,

We take the liberty of sending you a duplicate of the correspondence we had with Major Huse on the subject of "grape-shot-revolvers" for manufacture of which Mr. Le Mat obtained Contracts from the Confederated States.

A copy of same correspondence has already been sent by us to Colonel Gorgas, Chief of the Ordnance Bureau.

We are not going to make a detailed analysis of this correspondence which is very clear by itself.



Courtesy Chicago Historical Society

AN IMPORTANT LE MAT

This arm, serial number 189, was owned by Captain Henry Wirz, notorious commandant of Andersonville.

We shall only point out to you, Your Honor, that Major Huse has shown, from the very beginning of his mission in Europe, an evident spirit of hostility against us and our revolver, as well as against any commercial business to furnish the South, since in such business too high a premium would not be granted to him. Everything not controlled by him and consequently by the two firms with which he was associated was sure to be refused. It is so, that many contracts brought in Europe by persons desiring to make business with other firms were not concluded, these persons desiring to break the disastrous monopoly for the Confederation, which he was strongly trying to maintain. Nobody ever heard Major Huse being satisfied with the success of the Confederated Army and instead of backing up this Cause as being capable to triumph of all obstacles, he could be heard speaking in a quite opposite way, showing the victory of the North as being a very natural outcome.

This kind of domination he took on everything to be done for the South, stating he was their Sole Agent, with full power, did reduce the capitalists confidence and did restrict the Spirit of Adventure which was only asking to be a little bit more convinced on the intentions of the Confederated Government as well as on the reasons of the fight against the Federal Government.

In the case of our revolvers, Major Huse had the impudence to offer us for payment a sum lower than the actual manufacture price. Moreover, during the conversations with us, regarding our Contract with the Government, the latter was described by him as being of secondary importance because he insisted on the fact that what was capital was to accept or to refuse his own propositions. In other words he acted as if looking for his own interests rather than as a representative of his Government.

With a man considering the interest of his country and acting completely to obtain the best result of his mission, the South would have been purveyed on a far more higher scale and with more advantageous conditions.

During interviews we had with many contractors in England, as well as in France, we very often heard people state how much it was to

regret that the Government of the Confederated States was represented by such a man who was killing his credit. They also stated that the South people were Gentlemen but that this Captain Huse was nothing but a "Yankee" in his way of acting.

We have already said that it was in a spirit of hostility that he refused to help us in the execution of our revolver contracts. When we informed him, on September 5, that we had just obtained a new contract, according to which he was to receive our arms and pay for them in London, he suddenly left England on a pleasure trip to Germany, and during five weeks, he acted as if he was ignorant of this contract so much did he desire to see us in difficulty for the execution of the conditions we had accepted. Finally when he saw that we were ready to comply with our engagements he looked for a bad reason to refuse to inspect and to receive our arms and consequently not to pay. But the correspondence is so clear on this subject that we do not need to give more explanations. However, we consider necessary to point out, which the correspondence does not show, that during a conversation we just had in London with Major Huse, he told us that he received a confidential letter from Colonel Gorgas. In this letter, Colonel Gorgas would have given to Major Huse the confidential instruction that in case we would not deliver the goods within the stipulated terms (before November 1) he was giving him (Huse) the power to break our contract since, it was added, it was too expensive for the Government.

We do not want to continue to argue on that case and do not desire to formulate a complaint against Colonel Gorgas who may not have sent such a letter to Major Huse.

However, we thought necessary to relate this incident due to the fact that the correspondence (herewith included) of Mr. Huse as well as his behavior are demonstrating that he did everything in his power to put us in default: firstly his silence during nearly six weeks on the question we asked him, i.e., if he was able to pay our arms each time we could deliver them and secondly the bad tricks he was using in order to be

in a position to date his receipt only of the 8th of November.

We expect, Your Honor, to have your assistance as the Government in order to demonstrate that we did all we could to fulfill the stipulations of our contract: we have delivered on a simple receipt of Major Huse, before the first of November, the number of arms we promised to furnish.

We repeat that we have delivered these arms on a simple receipt of Mr. Huse without having received from him a single piaster to help us for the manufacture of them.

The money we have been obliged to borrow is putting us in such a position that our work regarding the next deliveries is depending only on the payment of the already furnished revolvers. Therefore, we hope that the Confederate Government, considering the attitude of Major Huse as being unfair, will give instructions to another agent of perfect loyalty.

Your Honor, we were plenty satisfied with the conduct towards us of Captain Bulloch, Agent of the Navy Department. We can only regret that Captain Bulloch has not been, up to now, in a position to pay us the arms, we have also delivered on a simple receipt. But, we repeat it, Captain Bulloch is a gentleman in the full sense of the word when Major Huse is only a miserable servant.

The recommendation letter you kindly gave to Mr. Le Mat for Messrs. Fraser & Co., Charleston, gave us the hope that their firm of Liverpool could have helped us. We have been very disappointed. The proposal we made to these gentlemen of Liverpool was not at all disastrous for them, we only asked them to give us the necessary money for the manufacture of our arms; these arms would have been delivered to them for further dispatching to America and the payment would have been made to them, being understood that the difference would only be paid to us when the funds would have reached Europe. We think that we could not offer them any better guarantee than the arms on which their advance of money would have been placed. These gentlemen told us that in spite of the unlimited confidence they had in the Government of the Confederate States, the amount of money they still were to

receive from this Government was higher than its credit on the place.

We asked them to indicate us another firm in Liverpool with which we could make an arrangement but their answer was that they did not know anybody. And that is for this reason that we have been put aside. There is evidently an agreement between them and Major Huse, in order to keep the monopoly of the Commerce with the Confederate States.

We just started conversations with Messrs. John and Thomas Johnson of Liverpool, have started the noble enterprise to establish a line of transatlantic boats for the supplying of the South. These gentlemen show more cooperation with us than Messrs. Fraser, Trenholm and Co.

Yours very truly,
C. Girard & Co.¹⁴

Caleb Huse of the old U.S. Army was early commissioned into the Confederate States service with the rank of Captain. On April 15, 1861, Captain Huse, "Corps of Artillery, C.S.A., on Ordnance duty" was "directed to proceed to Europe, without unnecessary delay, as the agent of this Government, for the purchase of ordnance, arms, equipments, and military stores for its use. . . ."¹⁵ With headquarters in England, Huse remained in that country during the entire war except for occasional buying trips on the Continent.

Huse is still very much of a controversial figure. Without question he had the ability to rub many people the wrong way, and his honesty, integrity and loyalty to the Confederacy were all questioned at one time or another to such an extent that he was the subject of an investigation. During the course of this investigation, Huse freely admitted "kick-backs" or money paid him by the persons from whom he was buying arms. In his defense Huse claimed that the persons with whom he dealt understood no other way of doing business and swore that the money so acquired was never spent in his own behalf, but was turned back to the funds supplied him for ordnance purchases.



LE MAT & GIRARD REVOLVER

Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

The number 9 is shown on the cylinder and "Le Mat & Girard's Patent, London" is engraved on the top flat of the barrel as shown.

The investigation cleared Huse of all charges, and he was passionately defended by his chief, General Gorgas, Chief of Ordnance.

We mention all this not to cast a reflection upon one considered by many as a brave and loyal soldier, but only to supply background for the correspondence that follows. It is suggested that the reader use his own judgment, although we cannot refrain from expressing our opinion that in regard to the Le Mat contract, Huse appears to have been most unreasonable.

The following excerpts from the correspondence between Caleb Huse and C. Girard & Co. are reproduced because they show the many difficulties that arose over the mechanical and financial operations of Le Mat and Girard during 1862 and 1863. These letters are taken from the *Captured Confederate Records*, letters received by the Confederate Secretary of War, file D-70, National Archives, Washington, D. C. These letters have never been published before and do not appear in the official records.

Passage Joinville No. 9
Faubourg du Temple
Paris 10th July 1862

Capt. C. Huse
Dear Sir:

We send you enclosed Copy of a letter handed to us by Mr. DeLeon from the War Department of the Confederate States, authorizing you to receive and pay for at London the revolvers which have been ordered from us by the Government.

We had already forwarded 400 direct to the Confederate States before receiving these new instructions and have now on hand an equal number, with others partially finished and can furnish you at the rate of about 200 every two weeks hereafter with your cooperation. Will you therefore do us the favor to inform us where we shall forward the weapons to you and what deduction you consider sufficient to cover the risk of transportation under these instructions—By this we understand the ordinary expense of transporting the arms to the Confederate States—

An early answer would greatly oblige

Your obed. S.

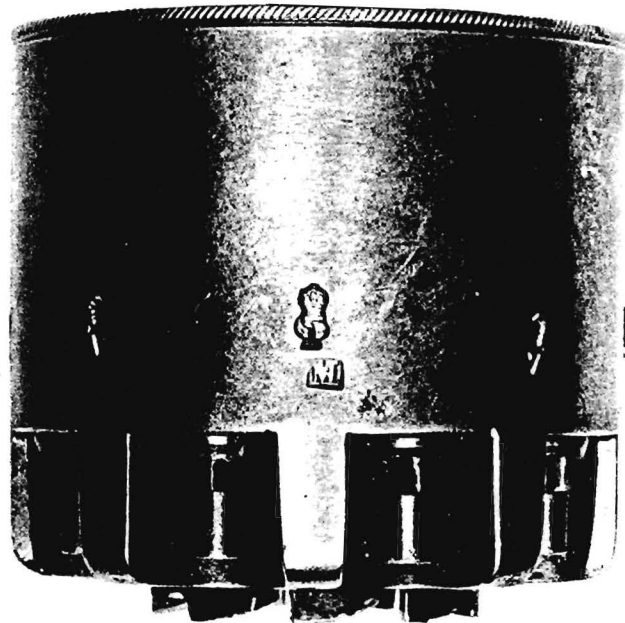
(signed) C. Girard & Co.

Capt Huse
58 Jermyn Street, London

The situation deteriorated rapidly from that point on, with Huse "pulling every trick in the book" to avoid receiving any more revolvers from Girard & Co. The prolonged haggling that followed apparently stemmed from the fact that Huse had not sufficient funds with which to make payment for any further shipment from Girard, although of course it would have been unthinkable to admit this. Instead, he raised an interminable series of pettifogging objections having to do with exchange rates, insurance, etc. (alluded to in Girard's letter to Secretary of State Benjamin), finally refusing to accept them on the grounds that their frames were made of cast iron, an unsuitable material for the purpose. They were in fact not cast of ordinary brittle gray iron, but of malleable iron which possessed

ample strength for the use intended. Huse appears to have been trying to stall Girard off until after November 1, 1862, at which time Girard's contract called for the delivery of 500 revolvers. Having accomplished this, he could claim non-fulfillment on Girard's part.

Girard, however, was not to be vanquished so easily. On October 24, he sent to Huse a shipment of 500 revolvers through Perreaux and Co., the English agents for Le Mat and Girard, accompanied by a receipt to be signed by Huse acknowledging delivery. Apparently the letter enclosing the receipt form went astray, and the November 1 deadline passed before another could be sent through Perreaux & Co.



Courtesy: H. L. Woodlief

LE MAT CYLINDER

Showing view and proof marks, as well as the mark (M) of the Confederate inspector, Lt. Murdaugh. Serial number 2394.

Huse, now firmly in command of the situation, refused to receive the pistols, claiming that they were not in conformity with the contract. This, of course, was in reference to the "cast iron" frames. As the receipt form, sent by Girard for his signature, made reference to the pistols

being in conformity with the contract, he would not sign it. He offered, however, to forward the shipment to the Confederate States War Department together with a report of the facts.

Girard, now desperate, accepted these terms with a final plaintive comment on the slur cast upon his choice of material: "... they are made of malleable iron between which and cast iron, there is a very wide difference, as is well known to all metallurgists." Without benefit of knowing what really went on in the mind of the Confederate purchasing agent, we wonder if the pistols would have been much more acceptable

to him had they been made of pure gold.

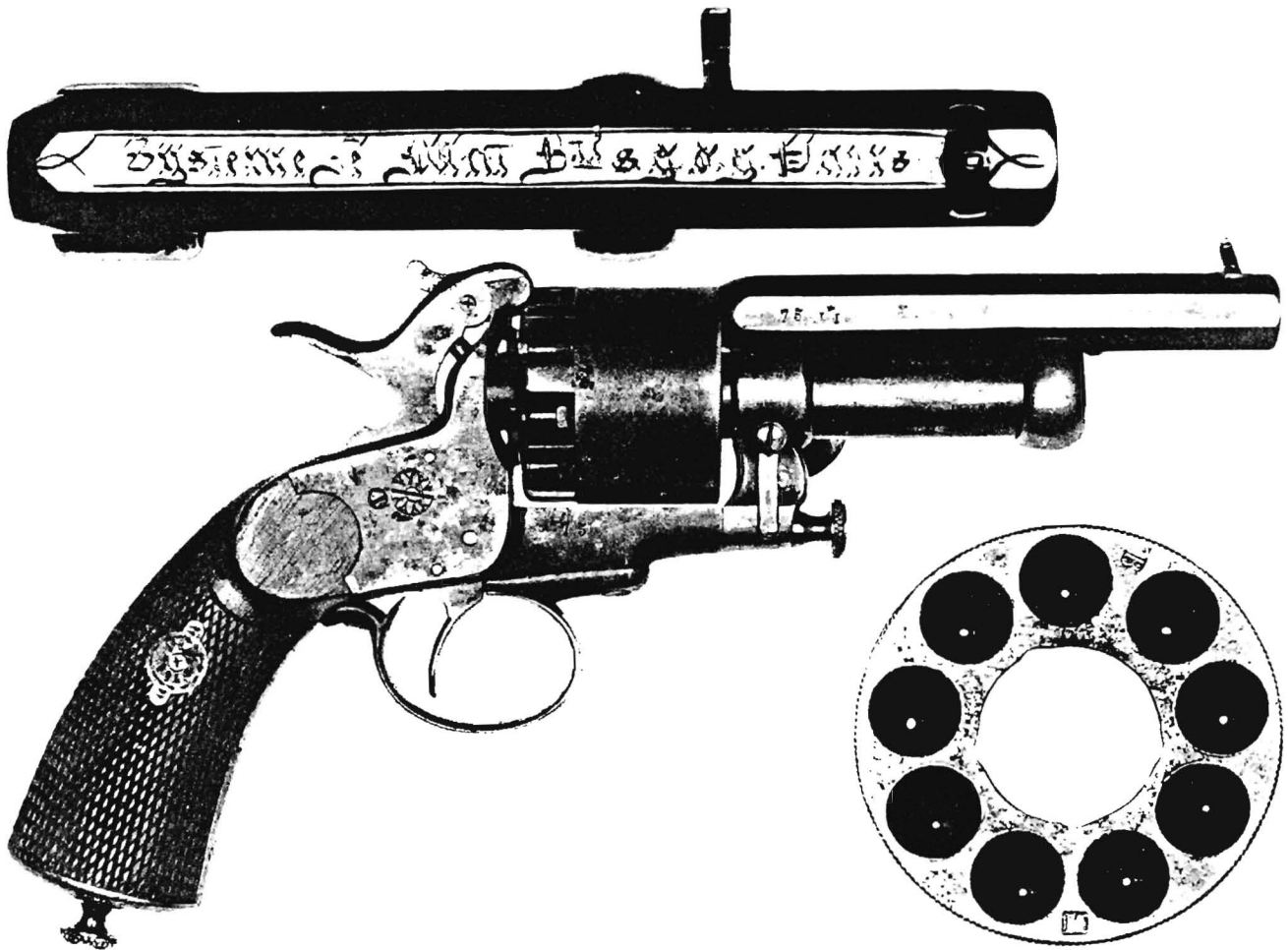
Finally, almost four months to the day from the start of what appears to be a senseless and time-consuming effort, Girard was informed that 500 of the revolvers had been accepted. Thus he had supplied the Confederate Army with 900 pistols.

5 Jeffrey's Square St. Mary Axe
London 11 November 1862

Messrs. C. Girard & Co.

Gentlemen:

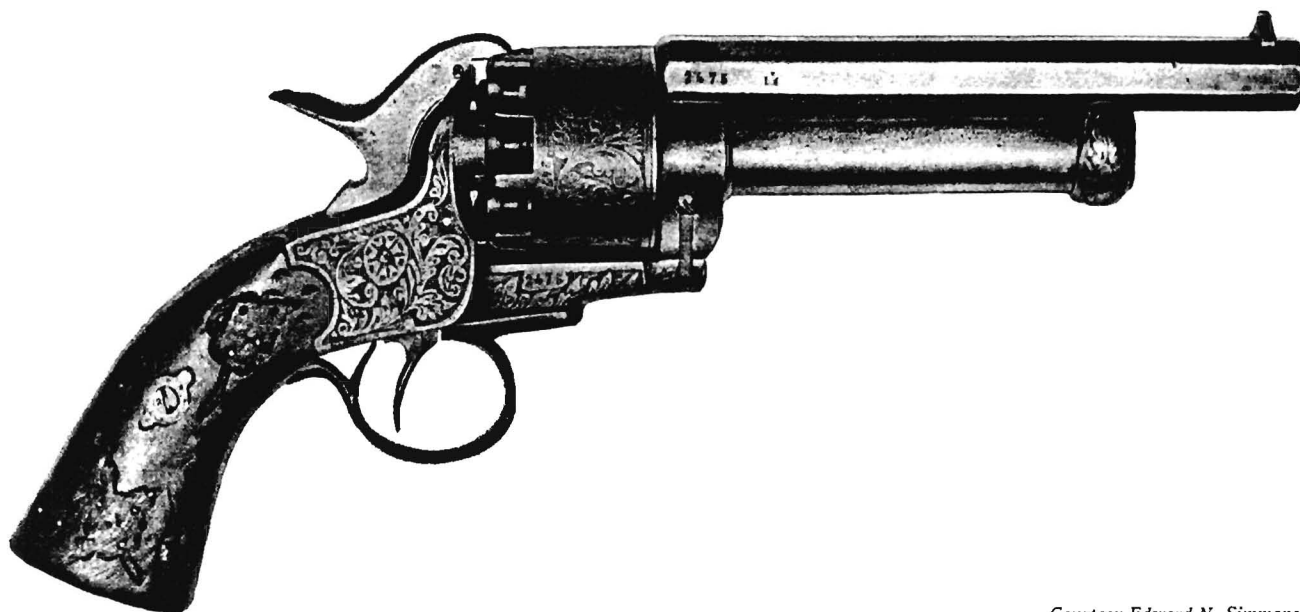
We beg to conform our respects of the 7th inst. in accordance with which Mr. Holmes called on



Courtesy Miles V. Standish

A BABY LE MAT WITH "M" MARK

Percussion type, serial number 75, with the star over LM marking on a side flat of the barrel. Also shown are cylinder and top of barrel. The cylinder shows the Murdaugh M. The barrel shows typical engraving. "Système Le Mat Bte s.g.d.g. Paris."



ETCHED AND ENGRAVED LE MAT

Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

The leaf inlays are missing from the grips. There is a possibility that the decoration was done in Egypt after the war for a former Confederate officer. Serial number 2475, with the star over LM marking on the barrel.

Major Huse, who informed him that he was willing to receive your 20 cases of revolvers, giving us a simple receipt for the same, which we have the pleasure to enclose you.

Major Huse promised to send us instructions for shipping, but these arrived too late on Saturday. The vessel however, was detained for them, and we now beg to advise having shipped them on board the S. S. *Lustika* bound we understand for Nassau.

We hand you the shipping charges omitting 10 pounds to your debit.

We are
(signed) Perreaux & Co.

Received November 8, 1862, of Messrs. Perreaux & Co. St. Mary Axe London, Agents of Messrs. C. Girard & Co. Paris.

Five Hundred (500) Le Mat's pistols for Confederate States War Department.

(signed) Caleb Huse.

And so ends the controversy between Caleb Huse and Le Mat and Girard. If there is additional correspondence, it does not appear. However, the absence of correspondence did not

mean that the troubles besetting the pistol manufactory were over.

The 500 Le Mat revolvers were sent aboard the S. S. *Lustika* on November 8, 1862. From England they went to Nassau, B.W.I., there to run the blockade into Wilmington, North Carolina. All this took time, so much so that by June 1, 1863, they still had not been received by Confederate Ordnance in Richmond, Virginia.

Richmond, Virginia
1st June, 1863

Major Caleb Huse
Sir:

In reference to Le Mat pistols they will of course not be received unless both cylinder & barrel are made of steel (the barrel may be of wrought iron). Malleable iron would not pass inspection & could be of course a sufficient ground for rejection—sending the pistols here alters the case however. The pistols have not yet arrived.

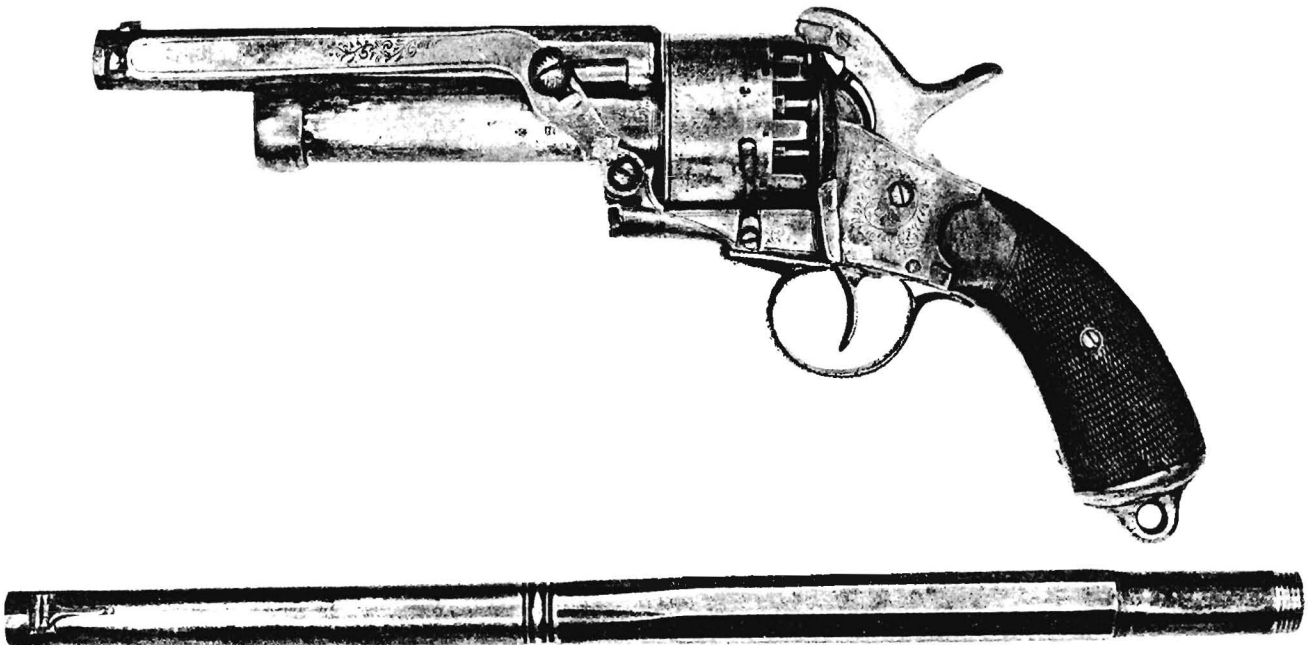
J. Gorgas
Chief of Ordnance.¹⁶

Without finances, the revolver factory of Le Mat and Girard ground practically to a halt.

Le Mat was in Paris to take care of the business at that end, so Girard decided to come to America to collect for the guns he had sold, evidently believing such a trip to be less expensive than accepting the English equivalent for Confederate dollars from Fraser, Trenholm and Co.

Girard and his pistols seem to have arrived in Richmond, Virginia, at about the same time, as

The foregoing seems like a strange question and just as strange an answer, since Girard & Co. had a contract calling for the payment to be made at the rate of \$35 for each pistol. A look at the depreciation of Confederate currency will do much to explain this odd situation. In the year 1862, \$2.50 in Confederate currency would have bought \$1 in gold. By August of 1863, \$21



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

LE MAT WITH EXTENSION SHOT BARREL

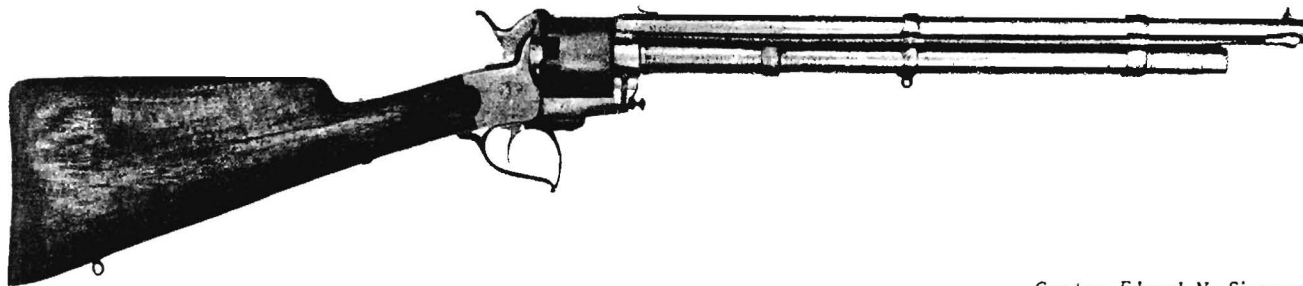
The extension barrel is fitted with the original high folding front sight to permit sighting when attached to the arm.

in July, 1863, he informs Gorgas, "Amongst the five last boxes one of which had been opened on its way hither, eight pistols were found missing, adding the latter to those previously reported as missing we come to the aggregate number of 18, for which we should like a settlement as per agreement."¹⁷

Colonel Gorgas agreed to pay Girard for the missing guns and asked Girard what price would be agreeable for payment. On August 11, 1863, Girard replied: "In response to your wishes I will state that I have parted with my pistols at the rate of \$50 each in Confederate notes and that I am willing to settle all of the 18 missing upon the same terms."¹⁸

in Confederate currency would have bought only \$1 in gold. In 1864 it would have taken \$51 to purchase \$1 in gold, and on January 1, 1865, the rate was \$60 to \$1 in gold. Thus it can be seen that if Girard had received \$35 each for his revolvers in 1862, he could have bought \$14 in gold for each gun, but the \$50 each he finally received in 1863 would have bought only \$2.83 in gold. The delay had been extremely costly to Girard & Co.

Colonel Gorgas had in the meantime asked his aide, Major E. M. Smith, the Assistant Chief of Ordnance, to inquire into the matter of just how many pistols were missing when they reached the Confederate States Armory in Rich-



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

LE MAT CARBINE

Serial number 88.

mond. A letter in reply from John W. Krepps dated August 13 stated:

In reply to your note of inquiry respecting the opening of the boxes of Le Mat's pistols sent here by Mr. Girard, I beg to say that I had the boxes opened in my presence and found seventeen pistols missing of the number the boxes were said to contain.

Two of the boxes were broken when received and Mr. Adams had one (one gun) broken up which was not included in the above.¹⁹

The "Mr. Adams" referred to was Master Armorer Solomon Adams of the Richmond Armory. Although the revolver was broken up for inspection, no record of the results of the test has been found.

A receipt signed by Charles Girard was found in the War Department Record Group 109:

Voucher No. 51
C. Girard & Co.
14th August 1863
\$900.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
To C. Girard & Co.

1863

August 14 For seventeen Le Mat's Pistols
from packages lost in transition
from Europe received for by
Major Huse as per Certified copy
attached

C\$50

\$850.

50.

\$900.

For one ditto broken up for in-
spection by Master Armorer
Adams.

Approved
J. Gorgas Col.
Chf. of Ord.

I certify that the above account is correct and just,
and that the property has been received and will be
accounted for,

Received, Richmond, Va. August 1863
MAJOR EDWARD B. SMITH,
ASSISTANT TO CHIEF OF ORDNANCE
Nine Hundred Dollars — — — — No cents, in full
of the above account

/s/ C. Girard & Company

It can be seen from the foregoing that on August 14, 1863, C. Girard & Co. was paid in full for the last of the Le Mat revolvers. If Girard had received \$35 for the other 482 guns, the amount would have come to \$16,870. When we add the \$900 received for the 18 guns that had been missing, we find that the total is \$17,770 for the entire 500 guns. During the previous nine months the factory had been practically idle. The depreciation of Confederate currency had made the delay especially costly, and as a result, 1863 saw very few grape-shot revolvers reaching the Confederacy.

During this same period the activities of the Confederate agents in Europe were also greatly curtailed. We find on page 30 of *Confederate Purchasing Operations Abroad*:

During several months of 1863, the activity of the agents came to a standstill. One reason was

the lack of harmony between the agents. The other was [uncertainty over] the Erlanger Loan [which was then being negotiated]. In the spring of 1863, at a general conference of the agents, Spence, Prioleau, Maury, Bulloch, North, Huse and Ferguson, it was agreed to suspend financial activity until the outcome of the loan could be determined.

As a result of the suspension of activity in Europe, very few records are to be found concerning the production or delivery of Le Mat revolvers, although a dribble continued to reach the Confederacy.

A personal letter from Colonel John M. Payne dated June 8, 1915, states in part: "I was assigned from the infantry to the Ordnance Corps in February, 1863, and was put in charge of Imported Ordnance and Nitre and Mining Stores at Wilmington, N. C., in July 1863. I rarely opened any packages but sent the original cases as directed by telegraph from Richmond; therefore I know but little beyond what I saw myself. . . . I recollect that 150 French made 'Le Mat's' were brought in. These consisted of chambered cylinders revolving around a central barrel, and this central barrel could also be fired. They were not approved. . . ."

Colonel Payne's records as "Collector of the Port of Wilmington, North Carolina, 1864-1865," are still preserved in the Confederate Museum, Richmond, Virginia. They contain many records as to pistols or revolvers which entered the Confederacy at Wilmington. The following excerpts are the only ones pertaining directly to the grape-shot revolvers: The steamer *Pevensey* on May 16, 1864, brought in "five boxes of Le Mat revolvers" as a portion of her cargo. They are noted to have been addressed "To Richmond" and for "W. D." [War Department.] On June 17, 1864, the steamer *Lynx* brought in "four cases Le Mat revolvers," similarly addressed and marked. Again on July 27 the *Lynx* brought in an additional "four cases of Le Mat revolvers."

Remembering that these revolvers were packed twenty-five to the case (or box), this would indicate that at least 325 passed through Wilmington, although Colonel Payne "recollects" only 150.

As far as we have been able to determine, these represent the last revolvers supplied on a contract that originally called for 5,000.

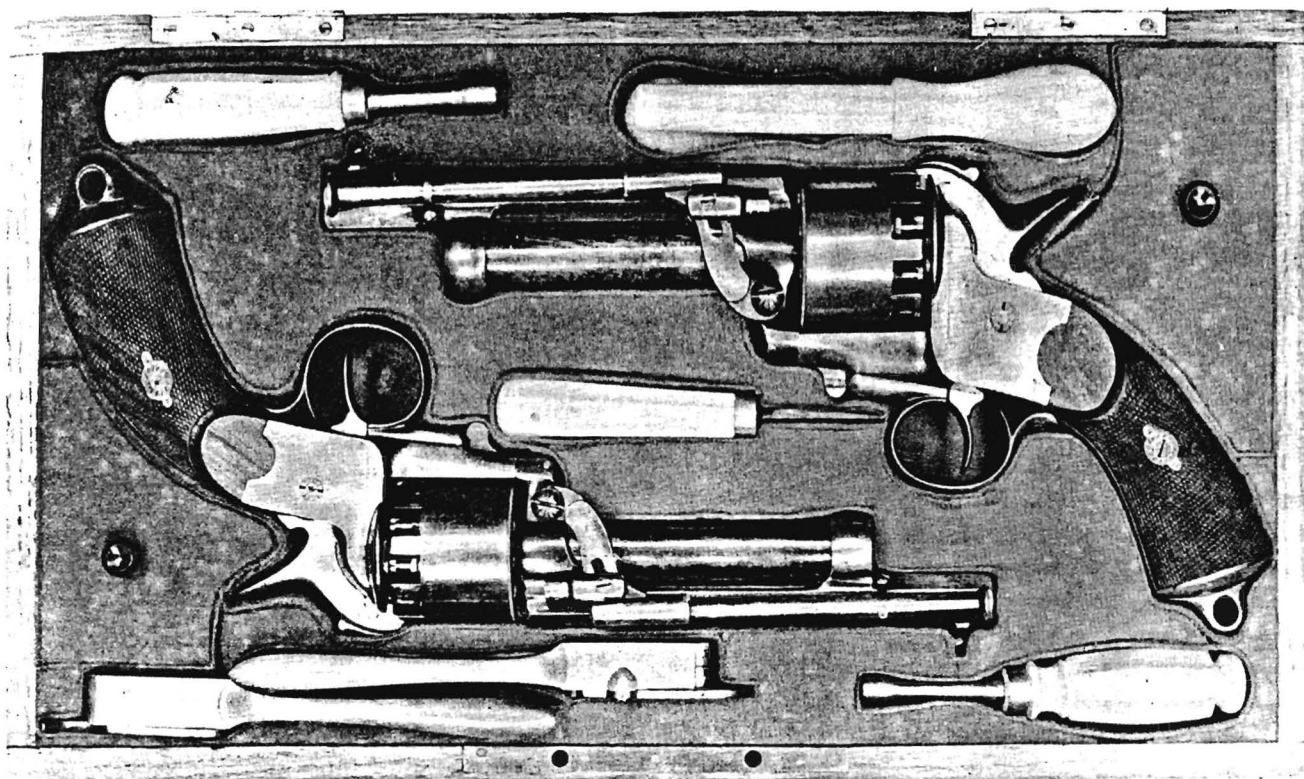
LE MAT'S CONTRACT WITH THE C.S. NAVY DEPARTMENT

The details of the Army contract are reasonably clear. For this we can thank the controversy with Huse which resulted in considerable correspondence. On the other hand, the contract or contracts with the C.S. Navy Department are obscure, and in our attempt at reconstruction we have had of necessity to resort in many instances to assumption and deduction. Even the date of the initial Navy contract is not known, nor are its terms. The order, however, was for 3,000 revolvers.

The first reference we find to the contract is dated July, 1862, with a letter from the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen Mallory, to Commander James D. Bulloch, whose greatest service was the purchase of ships and supplies for the Confederate States Navy. Bulloch was in Europe the greater part of the war and was a highly valuable assistant to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy.

On July 30, 1862, Mallory wrote Bulloch, who was then in Liverpool, saying in part:

You will observe by the term of the contract with Mr. Le Mat that the pistols are to be delivered and inspected in London and you will inspect them or designate an officer of the Navy in England to do so and receive them, after which you will pay for them out of any funds in your hands and forward them to the Confederate States. Two hundred pistols have been delivered and paid for here.²⁰



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

CASED PAIR OF LE MATS

Serial numbers 1078 and 1082, with original and complete accessories. The case is marked *Le Jeune/ 18 Passage Choiseul/ à Paris.*

From this we can see that as of July, 1862, the Confederate Navy had a contract with Dr. Le Mat for a number of revolvers of which 200 had already been delivered.

Bulloch's answer dated September 24, 1862, is quite clear:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th of July, inclosing copy of a contract with Mr. A. Le Mat for 3,000 grape-shot revolvers. . . . About a fortnight since I had a correspondence with the Messrs C. Girard & Co. of Paris, who assumed to be the contractors for the revolvers, and who desired me to fulfill that part of the agreement which devolved upon the agent for the Navy Department in England.

I informed these gentlemen that I was not authorized to act as general agent for the Navy Department, and, as I had no instructions in reference to the particular contract in question, I could not undertake to carry out its provisions.

Immediately upon receipt of your letter of July 30, in which you direct me to carry out the terms of this contract, I wrote to Messrs. C. Girard & Co. informing them of the fact and stating that I would make arrangements for the inspection of the pistols as soon as they could deliver them, at stated periods and in sufficient numbers to make it advisable. I was obliged to inform them at the same time that I had no available funds from which to make the prescribed payments, but to avoid, if possible, any delay in forwarding the arms. I requested them to suggest some means by which I could give them security for ultimate payment, and am now awaiting their reply.²¹

On October 25, Bulloch again wrote the Secretary of the Navy as follows:

Messrs. C. Girard & Co. have agreed to deliver the revolvers without payment being made here. No sample of the pistol furnished the War De-

partment has been sent me, and it is therefore impossible to judge of the relative character of those the Contractors are making for the Navy.²²

From this there seems little question that at this time the revolvers furnished the Navy were identical to those being supplied to the Army, otherwise Bulloch would not have needed a sample from the War Department. On November 7, 1862, Bulloch again wrote his superior:

First, contract for revolvers. This contract, whether regularly made over by Colonel Le Mat or not, is in the hands of Messrs. C. Girard & Co. of Paris. When these gentlemen, after some correspondence, declared their willingness to deliver the revolvers upon a simple receipt with or without payment, I directed the inspecting officer, Lieutenant Chapman, since relieved in this duty by Lieutenant Evans, to ask for a sample of the pistols already delivered to the War Department and to get a written certificate from the manufacturer that the one furnished him was identical with those previously accepted. He was then to see that the revolvers offered for the Navy came fully up to the sample. One hundred have been accepted by Lieutenant Wilkinson. Lieutenant Evans reports that these hundred are quite as well finished in every way as the sample, but adds that the barrels, lock frames, and hammers are of cast iron; that the contact between the barrels and cylinders is so loose as to permit much escape of gas; and that the cylinders, not being provided with springs, as in other repeating arms, are apt to revolve too far when the pistols are rapidly cocked, so that the hammers are likely to fall upon the divisions between the nipples when the firing is quick. These are such serious defects that I shall decline receiving any more of the revolvers under this contract unconditionally, but will write Lieutenant Evans to say to Messrs. Girard & Co. that he will forward the balance (of 400) subject to inspection upon arrival in the Confederate States. I presume you have not seen any of the pistols already sent forward, but beg that you will have them inspected and instruct me what to do in the matter as soon as possible. The ordi-

nary revolver costs in England about 63s, and the grape-shot revolver Messrs. C. Girard & Co. are now supplying can be manufactured by the London Armory Co. for something less than 5 pounds each.²³

Bulloch appears somewhat perplexed that, although the contract in question is drawn up in the name of Le Mat, it is actually being fulfilled by Charles Girard. He may not have been aware that Dr. Le Mat was in America at the time, and he had no reason to know that Girard was three-quarter owner of the revolver factory and was in fact its real manager.

Bulloch has considerable fault to find with the pistols, which as we have already seen, were to be identical to those furnished the War Department. Nevertheless, his inspecting officer accepted 100 of the 400 that were ready for delivery. The remaining 300 were to be sent directly to the Confederate States subject to inspection prior to acceptance.

Some slight additional information on the Navy contract is contained in a letter from Mallory to Bulloch dated January 7, 1863, in which Bulloch is informed that: "Should any serious defect develop, this contract shall terminate with the delivery of the first 1,000." Mallory further advised: "If you shall determine to limit the delivery to 1,000, only 800 remain to be received, and these 800 you will please decline to receive and advise the contractors that they will be received and inspected."²⁴

It is quite obvious that at the time of this writing the 100 accepted by Evans and the 300 additional revolvers had not yet reached the Confederacy. Apparently, then, a total of 600 guns had been shipped or delivered toward the Navy contract in 1862, of which 400 were still unreceived by January, 1863.

During the time Secretary of the Navy Mallory was carrying on this correspondence, he was also organizing his department for efficient work in providing for the needs of all the Confederate States Navy forces:

“He organized bureaus consisting of Orders and Details, Ordnance and Hydrography, Provisions and Clothing, which had charge of the paying of the naval forces, and a bureau of Medicine and Surgery. The detailed works of the C.S. Navy were soon being carried on by competent men, and the bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography was put under the able direction of Commander John M. Brooke.”²⁵

In regard to the guns made for the War Department, we again refer to a letter written to Caleb Huse by Gorgas on June 3, 1863, in which he advised: “In reference to the Le Mat pistols they will of course not be received unless both cylinder and barrel are made of steel (the barrel may be of wrought iron). Malleable iron would not pass inspection and would be of course a sufficient ground for rejection—sending the pistols here (to the Confederacy) alters the case however.”²⁶

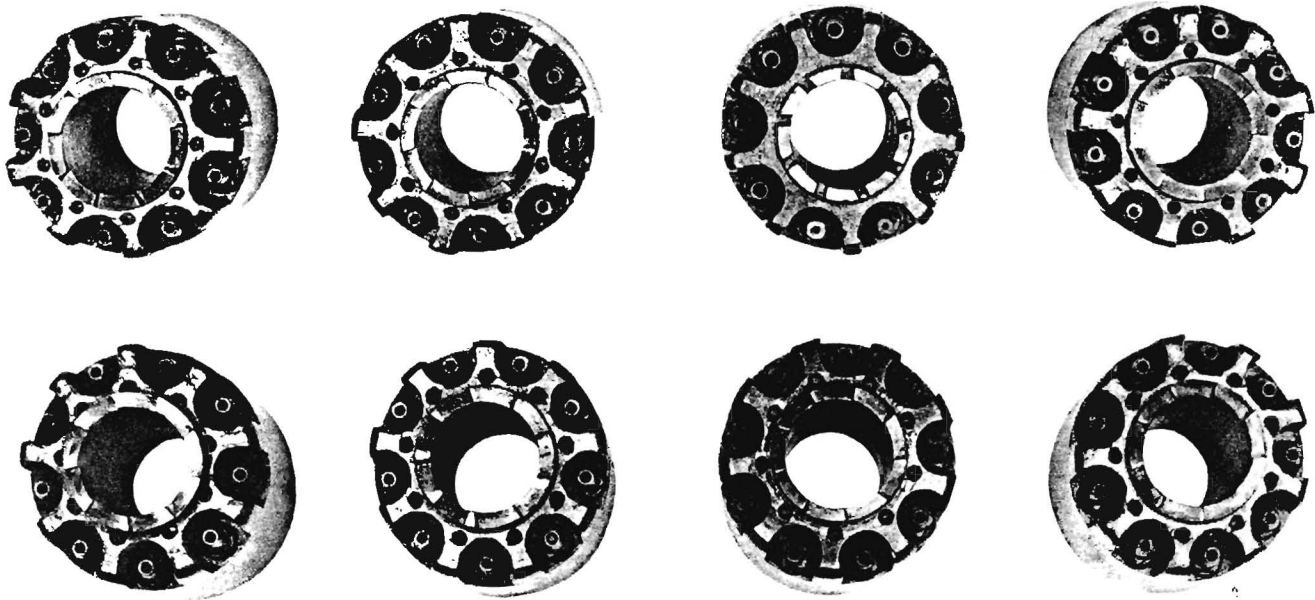
Now both the War and Navy Departments had adopted practically the same policy of rejecting the guns in Paris, demanding they be

sent directly to the Confederacy, where they would be inspected and accepted or rejected. Evidently some of the guns were rejected and subsequently put up for private sale. For example, in the *Richmond Whig*, December 4, 1862, Kent, Paine and Co., military outfitters of Richmond, advertise the sale of Le Mat revolvers.

It was about this time that production of the revolvers was at its low ebb. More than likely Le Mat was engaged in designing the improved cylinder and the “Baby” model revolver. He must have spent considerable time and effort in endeavoring to overcome the mechanical faults of his guns, as is reflected in their innumerable variations, both major and minute.

Evidently in 1863 there was a modification of the order that all guns be sent to the Confederate States of America. We are unable to find record of this modification, but a look at the revolvers themselves will prove our point.

Here a brief recapitulation is necessary. An undetermined number of revolvers were made prior to the war, but as of 1863, 900 had been



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

A GROUP OF 8 LE MAT PERCUSSION CYLINDERS

Top row, left to right, cylinders from arms numbered 21, 101, 309, 314. Bottom row, left to right, from arms numbered 663, 850, 2448; and from Le Mat and Girard Number 9.

delivered to the War Department and 600 to the Navy Department, a total of 1,500. Assuming that some 300 were made prior to the war and that the serial numbers on all guns are consecutive, let us look at a few specimens with serial numbers around 1800.

We find that the guns with serial numbers up to 1809 are marked: *Col. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris*. On guns after 1809 the markings change to: *Syst. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris*. This change in itself is not startling, although it might point to a further selling by Le Mat of his patent rights to Girard, whereby the pistols were made only under "Le Mat's system" and without the direct supervision of the Colonel himself. Indications are that if the partnership was not completely broken, they certainly were not working very closely together at this time. All this is not particularly soul-stirring, but it is of great interest to us that many of the known guns in the serial number range of 1810 through 2499 also bear London proof marks despite the Paris address on the barrel.

It appears that, in order to save time and money, the revolvers for the Confederacy were being made in France, then sent to London for proving. If they stood the tests they were there subjected to, they were then accepted by the Confederacy. Proof of having passed inspection lies in their bearing London proof marks.

A description of the method of proving gun barrels, applicable for use at this date and later, is thoroughly detailed in W. W. Greener's *The Gun and Its Development; with Notes on Shooting*, first edition, published in 1881 at London, Paris, and New York. The history, acts, rules, regulations, marks of proof, scale for proof of rifles and small arms of every description—together with mode of proving at London and Birmingham, with a brief paragraph on Belgian gun barrel proof—is included on pages 274-290 of Greener's book.

While in America collecting for the revolvers that had been delivered to the Confederacy prior

to his arrival in July, 1863, Girard somehow found time to write a book entitled *Les Etats Confédérés d'Amerique Visités en 1863*.

It is possible that he received some form of remuneration from the Confederate Government for this work, for despite his thus far unfortunate dealings with this government, the book is heavily biased in favor of the South in its conflict with the United States. It undoubtedly was an able bit of propaganda for French consumption. Lord knows, at this point, the Confederacy could use all she could get of favorable comment. The *New York Army Navy Journal*, January 16, 1864, mentions the book as a "form of memoir to Napoleon III, written by Dr. Charles Girard, former secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington. An entire chapter is taken up with Captain Brooke's (C.S.N.) celebrated gun (rifled cannon), and accounts of its performance. Captain Brooke favored the author with a description of the sea duel of the *Monitor* and *Merrimac* which so startled Europe and inaugurated a new system of Naval warfare."

Identified as "Captain" by the *Army Navy Journal*, John Brooke was actually Commander in Charge, Office of Ordnance and Hydrography, Confederate States Navy Department. Not only did he favor the author with a description of the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*, but he also favored him with another Navy contract for an additional 2,000 Le Mat revolvers. On April 7, 1864, Brooke wrote to Commander Bulloch:

Sir:

Herewith, you will receive a copy of a contract with Messrs. C. Girard & Co. for 2,000 "grape-shot revolvers," for the use of the Navy, to be delivered and inspected in England.

Commodore Barron has been requested by this office to select an officer to inspect and receive the pistols, and upon presentation of bills properly certified by such officer, you will please direct Messrs. Fraser, Trenholm & Co. to pay them according to the terms of the contract, chargeable to the appropriation for the ordnance for the Navy.

**DISASSEMBLED BABY LE MAT**

Serial number 75, showing components.

Courtesy Miles W. Standish

When the pistols are received for service with 10 rounds of ammunition for each (percussion caps to be included) please have them shipped by first favorable opportunity to Nassau, New Providence, consigned to L. Heyliger, Esq., agent, Navy Department, with instructions to him to

ship them to a Confederate port in lots of 250 each marked *OH, ND* (Ordnance and Hydrography, Navy Department), accompanied by invoices and letters of advice, or they may be shipped in lots of 500, if favorable opportunities offer, direct.²⁷

Looking closely through available records, we find no mention, Army or Navy, of a canceled contract. In fact, there is much to show that they were neither filled nor terminated. Be this so, why then the new contract for 2,000 revolvers? We believe it was because the new contract referred to what are now known as "Baby" Le Mats. It has been observed that the Baby Le Mats have a container screwed into the butt cap in lieu of a lanyard ring—a container with capacity for exactly ten percussion caps. This might fit in with the statement of being received "with ten rounds of ammunition for each (percussion caps to be included)." Ensuing correspondence from Commodore Barron also indicates that the second Navy contract was for the small caliber Le Mats rather than the regular size.

In sending a copy of the contract to Bulloch, Brooke mentions that it was with "C. Girard & Co." Possibly this also includes Colonel Le Mat, but we have no way of knowing what interest the Colonel had left at this time. We note, for example, that on April 15, 1862, provisional specifications had been filed by Le Mat and Girard on an English patent on the grape-shot revolver. We also note that the final specifications on this particular patent were furnished and signed by Girard and E. Gautherin on October 10, 1862. One of the provisions of the first filing is that the final papers must be delivered not later than six months from the first filing. The fact that Girard delivered the final specifications within the time limit indicates their intention of shifting operations and having the guns made in their entirety in England rather than in Paris, France. That Le Mat did not sign the final papers on the Le Mat and Girard's Patent, London, might mean only that Le Mat was in America at the time, or it might mean that he had ceded his entire interest to Girard. We believe it means only that he was not at hand to sign.

However, as the war proceeded, Gautherin and Girard became more closely connected, and

Le Mat moved farther toward the sidelines. It seems that Le Mat was content to devise improvements and to make the many changes reflected by the numerous variations in the guns. As Le Mat designed and developed the guns, the rights to manufacture were bought either partially or entirely by C. Girard, the financier; and when the financial difficulties of 1863 developed, Girard in turn received capital from Edward Gautherin and Co., which resulted in the partnership of Gautherin and Girard. Even this financial aid from Gautherin was not without its limitations, as we can see by a letter written to Mallory by John De Bree, paymaster for the C.S. Navy, who advises on April 28, 1864, that: "Messrs. Gautherin & Girard (the only ones upon whom past transactions give us cause to rely) have been greatly cramped and delayed by failure of the government to reimburse them for very heavy deliveries made in Texas."²⁸

The matter of finance was the determining factor in the branching out of the Le Mat and Girard partnership. The defects in the guns contributed to this lack of money, and the endeavor to overcome the defects led to other designs and modifications such as the improved cylinder lock for reliability and the contracts with the London and Birmingham proof houses for quality. These methods of operations led to further splitting of the partnership. The breach of the Le Mat and Girard partnership was widened to the extent that the revolvers produced during this period of operations resemble the products of two firms more than the efforts of one.

The revolvers delivered to the Confederate States Navy during 1864 must have been relatively few for several reasons, foremost of which was the manufacture of the new locking device which was time-consuming and delayed the delivery of guns for several months.

On January 11, 1864, Brooke had called to Commodore Barron's attention one Lieutenant William H. Murdaugh, stating:

Sir:

The rapid progress being made in England and France in the construction of ordnance, and in all that relates to the armaments of war, renders it extremely important that one of the naval officers abroad should be directed to procure for this office such information on these points as may be required. A supply of standard works embracing all branches of the art and manufacture of guns, projectiles, fuses, powder, etc., is needed. Lt. Murdaugh who is familiar with this subject and peculiarly well qualified for the work has expressed his willingness to undertake it. I therefore request he be assigned this duty.²⁹

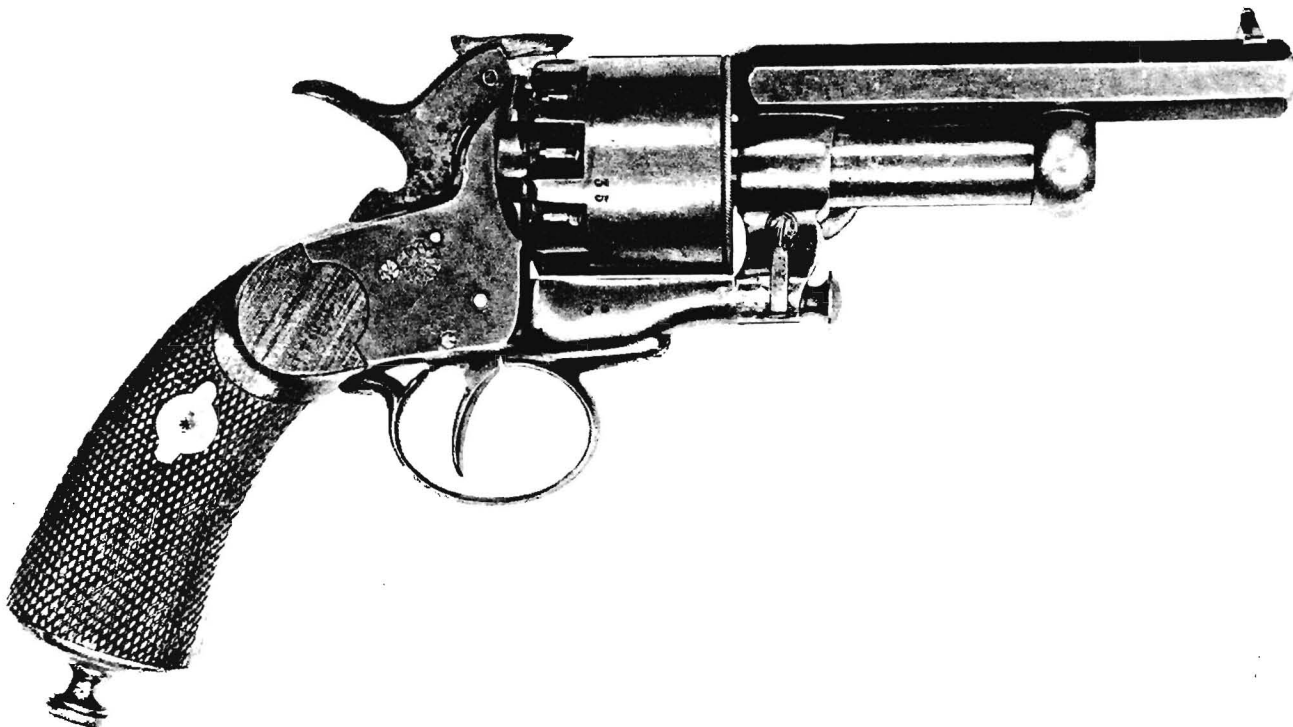
On June 13, 1864, Flag-Officer Barron wrote Lieutenant Murdaugh as follows:

Under a contract by the Confederate States Navy Department with Messrs. C. Girard & Co., for 2,000 grape-shot revolvers, for use of Confederate States Navy, you are hereby appointed

the officer to attend to the inspection and reception of the pistols. You will certify bills for all that may pass a satisfactory inspection, and direct the payment according to the terms of the contract.³⁰

On June 23, 1864, the newly-appointed inspector reported to Barron on his assignment:

In obedience to your order of the 13th instance I have inspected the pistols made by C. Girard & Co. under contract with the Navy Department and have the honor to report that from the general bad character of the workmanship I have declined to receive those which they had on hand ready for delivery. As a specimen of the workmanship, I would state that of the first seven examined six had defects, as follows: viz., In one the grape-shot barrel went off at the fourth or fifth fire of the revolving cylinder from a defect in the hammer. In the next the cylinder would not revolve from defect in the spring of revolving apparatus. In the next the hammer at times would



BABY LE MAT

Serial number 35 with the star over LM marking on the side of the barrel.

Courtesy M. Clifford Young

miss striking the nipple altogether, seriously damaging it. In the other three the fixed and revolving barrels were not true with one another when in position for firing, and in one of these the hammer did not strike square.

Of all examined, none appeared reliable, and almost all of them had serious defects, such as enumerated. In all, the metal of which the faces of the hammers were made was too soft.³¹

The Le Mat revolvers that were inspected and passed on by Lieutenant Murdaugh bear his stamp, which is the letter *M* in relief inside a square cartouche. This is to be found on the cylinders of the guns inspected.

Another factor involved in the delivery of guns to the Confederate Navy Department was that once the mechanical faults were corrected and passed, the guns had to be proved for actual firing. This final step was left to the London proof house. The steps involved were identical to those employed at the Birmingham proof house, with the exception that the provisional proof mark was not required on arms made outside of England. It has been observed that those revolvers bearing a Paris address, but which were proved in London, bear no provisional proofs, thus the absence of a bore number on the shot barrel is because they received both proofs at the same time.

Having the revolvers made in France but proved in London was unsatisfactory from the standpoint of time and money. This difficulty was readily overcome by having the revolvers actually made in England under the Le Mat and Girard patent. We know that they were made in Birmingham, England, and we assume that they were made by the Birmingham Small Arms Company.

Manufacture of the Baby Le Mats continued in Paris and apparently this was the only product there.

For Le Mat and Girard 1865 held promise of becoming the best year of all, and they must

have had high expectations for the production of the grape-shot revolver. On the other side of the Atlantic, the outlook for the Confederate States of America was exceedingly grim. The hopes of a victory were destined to be dashed by "overwhelming numbers and resources" as General Robert E. Lee so aptly put it in April of that year.

Seemingly, the difficulties of the past years had been overcome by the two contractors. The guns that were being made in Birmingham caused some confusion in serial numbers, inasmuch as the first ones produced were numbered with serials of 1 to 128 (and possibly higher) before there was enough coordination between Birmingham and Paris to stop the duplication of numbers. In order to avoid further duplication, numbers were jumped to the 5000's. If serial numbers are an indication of the number produced, 208 revolvers were made in this range before it was realized that it would be necessary to start at the 8000 level to avoid duplication. This is another indication that the first contract with the War Department for 5,000 guns and the first contract with the Navy for 3,000 guns were still in effect. The second contract with the Navy for 2,000 revolvers would present no problem, for they were of different sizes.

During the month of January, 1865, Commodore Barron annulled the Girard & Co. contract for the small caliber Le Mats, and Girard wrote to him on February 5, 1865, asking "for a copy of the order from the Navy Department of the Confederate States giving you authority to send such notice." On the following day Barron answered:

In reply to your request I have to state that the contract made by you with the Navy Department has been sent to me for my guidance, and in it you agree that 500 of said revolvers are to be delivered per month, the first delivery of 500 to be made before the 1st of November 1863. The terms stipulated in this agreement have by no



LE MAT PIN-FIRE REVOLVERS

Courtesy Miles W. Standish

Upper, serial number 165, with percussion shot barrel. Lower, serial number 20, is a "Baby" Le Mat.

means been complied with by you up to this day.³²

On February 7, Barron wrote to Commander John M. Brooke:

According to the terms of the contract made by Messrs. Girard & Co. with the Ordnance Bureau, the first 500 pistols were to have been delivered on the 1st of November, 1863. They have not been delivered up to this date, but 100 are now reported ready for inspection. I have directed these to be inspected, and such as are reported worthy

of being received, to be paid for, and have notified Messrs. Girard & Co. that I do not feel myself authorized to continue the inspection and receiving under the present condition of affairs until I learn the views of the department. The closing up of our ports by the blockade and the fall of Fort Fisher, thus rendering it quite impossible to get arms into the Confederacy and cotton out, together with a report from Commander Bulloch, financial agent of the department, of the shortness of money to meet all the engagements made under bona fide contracts and faithfully complied up, and the noncompliance of these

contractors with their agreement, have induced me to notify these gentlemen in order that they may not run into any further expense on account of this contract. They shall lose nothing by what they have already manufactured so far as they are reported favorably on. I do not think these gentlemen will have any just grounds of complaint after the indulgence that has been shown to them. They complain of my decision and are about to make a formal protest, which I shall forward to the bureau when it is received by me.⁸³

Girard had planned to send the Baby Le Mats to the Birmingham house with whom he held a contract for proof testing; but, of the 100 guns reported ready for inspection, little is known as to how many passed Murdaugh's inspection and were sent there. The last entry in Barron's diary is dated Paris, France, February 16, 1865, and confides, "Wrote to Bulloch today and directed him to pay for the pistols that may pass under the Girard & Co. contract with the Birmingham house." The highest serial number of a Baby Le Mat known to the authors is 75. It bears the Birmingham proof marks and has the Navy inspector's stamp of *M* on the cylinder with the Paris address on the barrel, as do all the Baby Le Mats.

April 9, 1865, marked an end to the war and to the possibility of Le Mat or Girard delivering any more grape-shot revolvers to the Confederacy. A summary of serial numbers indicates that they made revolvers with serial numbers up to 2500 with the Paris address on the barrels. In addition they made 100 Baby Le Mats in Paris. The number of guns made by the Birmingham house which are marked "Le Mat & Girard's Patent London" is not accurately known at this time, due to the lack of specimens available for study. There are about one dozen guns in this series of markings known to the authors, and they range in serials from 1 to 128 and then jump to 5208. One gun is known in this range. The next jump is to the 8000's, and there has been one gun reported with a serial number of

9009. These serial numbers do not reflect the true number of guns produced, for they would indicate a production of several thousand, which seems unrealistic at this time. We would guess that only about 500 revolvers were made in Birmingham. The partners who started out with hopes so high actually produced less than 3,000 percussion grape-shot revolvers.

THE TWO MODELS OF LE MAT REVOLVERS

Despite innumerable small variations, there were only two basic models of the Civil War Le Mat revolvers. These variations will be described, but first, the two basic models.

The outstanding features of the first model Le Mat percussion revolvers are: the part octagon and part round barrels; the loading lever on the right side; the spur on the trigger-guard; the full swivel lanyard ring in the butt; and the Le Mat trademark of script letters *L* and *M* enclosed by a circle. These features are found on revolvers with serial numbers from 1 to 450.

The distinguishing features of the second model Le Mat revolvers are: the full octagon barrels; the loading lever on the left side; the round trigger-guard; the fixed butt-ring for the lanyard; and the Le Mat trademark of block letters *L M* surmounted by a five-pointed star. The earlier second model revolvers retained one of the features of the first model: the spur type trigger-guards which were used until the supply was exhausted. Gun number 941 is the highest serial noted to retain the spur-guard. The full swivel lanyard rings were retained up to serial number 800.

THE VARIOUS BARREL MARKINGS OF LE MAT REVOLVERS

Dr. Le Mat patented his grape-shot revolver in the United States on October 21, 1856. For

this he would have needed a "patent model" pistol. This has never been found.

Although there is no question that some revolvers had been made by 1859, the first documentary evidence does not appear until the fall of this year, when the Beauregard papers show a receipt for a cased grape-shot pistol made for the partners by John Krider of Philadelphia, with its cost of \$208.80 itemized in detail. It was paid for by C. Girard, acting for Le Mat and Beauregard. The receipt dated October 24, 1859, shows it as a "patent pistol," but in a statement of expenditures made out by Beauregard and delivered to Le Mat the following year it is referred to as a "Model Revolver." The purpose of this gun is not known, but possibly it was to have been used for advertising or patent purposes abroad.

As Le Mat was appointed a "Colonel and Aide-de-Camp" on the staff of the Governor of Louisiana in 1859, we assume that those revolvers that do not bear "Colonel" as a portion of the barrel marking were made prior to 1859. An undetermined number of these were made, but numbers 1 and 4 are still extant. Possibly these were the revolvers used by the testing boards in New Orleans and Washington.

Upon Le Mat's appointment as Colonel, all revolvers made were numbered from 1 and continued to number 450, being marked *Col. Le Mat's Patent*. There are a few exceptions to this: namely, numbers 5, 309 and 346, which are marked *Col. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris*. These exceptions we regard as duplicated serials due to confusion in setting up manufacture at a new location. Setting aside these exceptions, we conclude that the guns bearing simply *Col. Le Mat's Patent* were made between 1859 and 1861. Of these 450, we believe approximately 300 to have been made before the outbreak of hostilities between North and South and during the time when Le Mat still had a three-quarter interest in the patents.

Where these first revolvers were made is not known, but the Beauregard papers indicate that

several of the large American gun makers were contacted in 1859, relative to the manufacture of the pistols. There is no indication that any of these firms consented to make them.

However, the fact that these revolvers are marked with the English (or American) word "Patent" leads us to the conclusion that they must have been made in England or America. As Le Mat had no English patents at the time but did have American patents, we can discount the possibility of English manufacture and conclude that they were made in America.

Placing ourselves in Le Mat's position in 1856, when he first wished a gun made for an American patent model, we believe we would have approached a local gunsmith to do the job. Had this workman done a creditable job, he would also have been engaged to have made the guns for the Army boards.

Probably the workman's shop would have been small and his potential output limited. As we began to envision the manufacture of thousands of our guns, we would have written persons capable of producing such amounts—namely, the large gun manufacturers—but in the meantime would have had the small production continue.

Meanwhile, we have obtained a French patent and a new partner, Charles Girard of Paris, France. Suppose this new partner had access to a plant in Paris where guns could be turned out in quantity and not by the hundreds as previously? We believe we would be tempted to move to France, particularly if the new partner owned a three-quarter interest in the business and insisted on it.

Still theorizing, if we did decide on a move to France and could not go ourselves, who would be the next best person to send? Why, the man who had been making the guns, of course! After all, he had the plans, specifications, tools and, best of all, the experience.

We believe that the first revolvers were made in New Orleans by an unidentified gunsmith. Although we are unable to locate such a name

in the New Orleans City Directories, it is possible that this gunsmith's name was Baguet.

THE FIRST SERIES OF MARKINGS

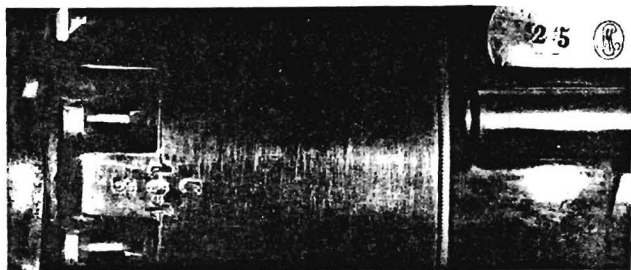
Revolvers with serial numbers 1 and 4 and with the simple barrel markings *Le Mat Patent* in engraved block letters are noted to have the name or word "BAGUET" stamped on the inside of their wooden grips and also on the inside of their metal side-plates. The same "BAGUET" is also to be found on the inside grips of revolver number 101, which has the barrel marking *Col. Le Mat's Patent*.

Thus we link a common denominator in the manufacture of the first series to the second series.

THE SECOND SERIES OF MARKINGS

The second series of barrel markings are *Col. Le Mat's Patent* engraved in script on the barrel top. Some are marked "COL. LE MAT'S PATENT" with engraved block letters.

To continue the theory of manufacture by the same person and/or tools, upon examining the serial number 101 microscopically, we find a fault or flaw in the "O." We are gratified to find this same break or fault also appearing in the later guns bearing the Paris address, showing that the same die was used.



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

FIRST TYPE OF LE MAT MARKINGS

Serial number 25, showing LM in a circle. The marking "104 CS" was probably added when the arm reached C. S. Ordnance Department. The only CS marking on a Le Mat known to the authors.



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

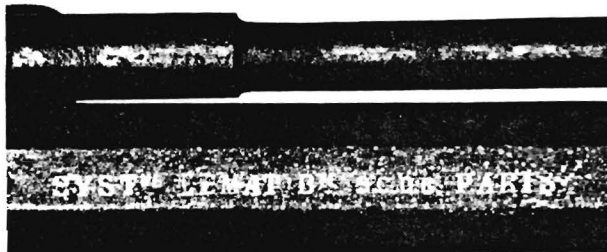
MARKING ON LATER LE MAT ARMS

The star/LM marking as found on the side of the barrel of serial number 2448.

Upon moving to Paris it was first decided to begin with serial number 1; but, upon reflection, and after at least five had been made, such plans were discarded in favor of continuing the existing serials which, by this time, were around 300. This series continued to approximately 350, when once again—for what reason is not apparent—it was evident that another false start had been made, and the "Col. Le Mat's Patent" was continued to serial number 450.

THE THIRD SERIES OF MARKINGS

Thereafter the barrel markings changed to reflect the change of address and French patent.

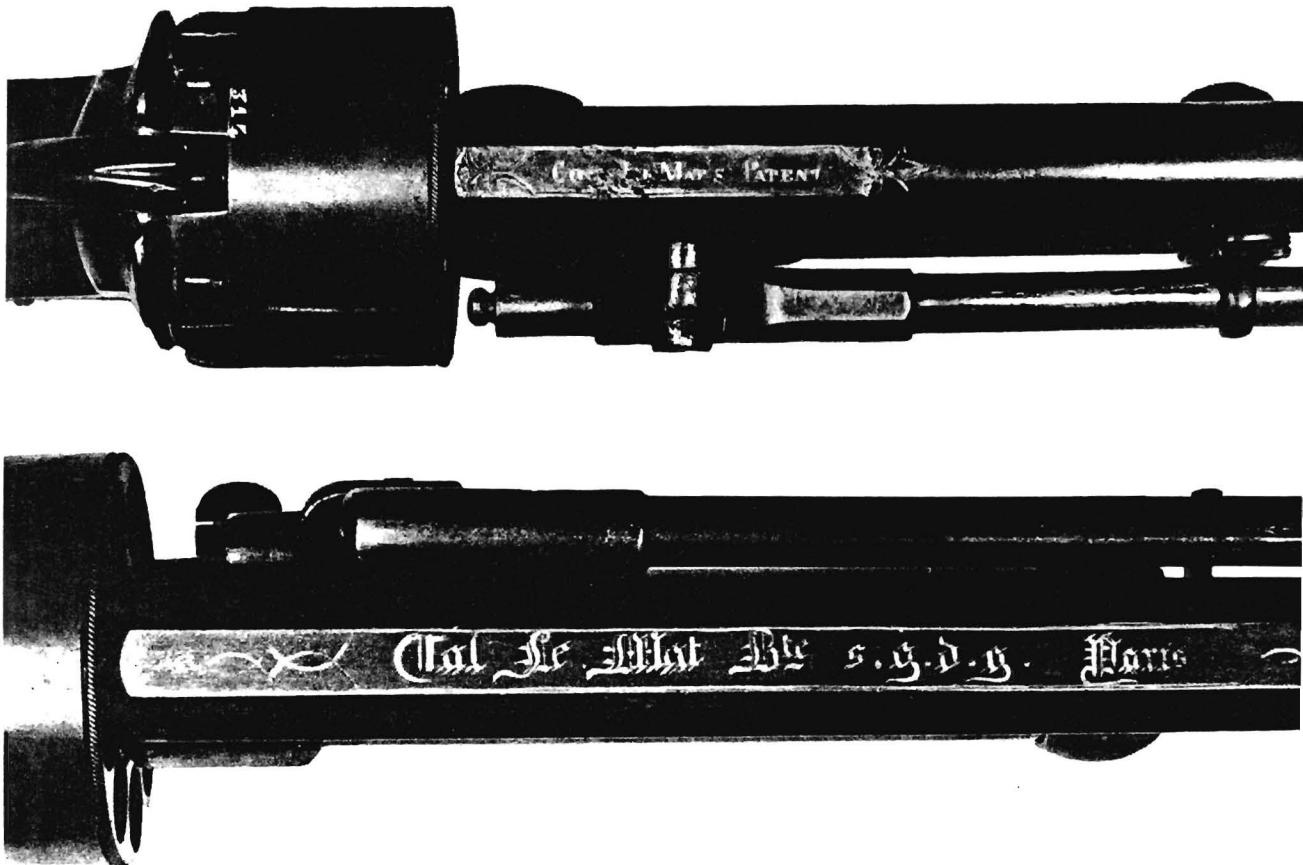


Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

LE MAT BARREL MARKING

The Paris address appears on top of the barrel of serial number 2448.

Henceforth, from serial 451 to a little over 1800, the barrel markings are consistent in showing *Col. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris*. It is our belief that guns with these barrel markings were made between 1861 and 1863, and were supplied to both the Confederate States War and Navy Departments.



SECOND AND THIRD LE MAT MARKINGS

Courtesy Miles W. Standish

The second barrel marking, on serial number 314, is shown at the top. The third marking, on serial number 1666, is shown below, together with the first Paris address.

THE FOURTH SERIES OF MARKINGS

In late 1863 or 1864, at serial number 1812, the barrel markings were changed—possibly to reflect an internal change in relationship between Le Mat and Girard—to *Syst. Le Mat Bte. s.g.d.g. Paris*, this being engraved with script letters on the barrel top. Others are found stamped, *SYSTme LEMAT Bte S.G.D.G. Paris*. The highest serial in this range known is number 2469. As we have stated, many guns in this series, although bearing the Paris address, also contain the London proof marks, showing that they were inspected and received by the Confederacy in London, England. Some also contain the *M* stamp of Lieutenant Murdaugh, the inspecting officer of the Confederate States Navy.

The *other series* of barrel markings found on the revolvers made in England are "LE MAT & GIRARD'S PATENT LONDON." These markings are engraved in block style letters. Upon comparison of these revolvers with the ones bearing the Paris address, it can be demonstrated that the former were made in England. The Le Mat and Girard revolvers resemble the Paris-made guns, but there are several points of variance which materially aid in establishing the fact of English manufacture.

The most important point of difference, of course, is that the London address is included in the barrel markings. One purpose of the address, among others, is to gain protection of the patent under which the gun was manufactured. The English patent number 1081 of April 15, 1862,

for the grape-shot revolver has been noted to have received full protection. Had the guns not been manufactured in England, the patent would have received only provisional protection. Another factor to be considered is the drawings accompanying the English patent papers. These illustrate distinguishing features of construction and design which are found only in the Le Mat and Girard revolvers. Some of these features which are most noticeable and easily observed are: the small type serial numbers; the flat, dark-grained grips of wood; the quality of checkering on these grips; the rifling in the barrels; the type and pattern of checkering on the hammer; and numerous other items which add up to evidence of English manufacture. The most tangible evidence of English origin of the Le Mat and Girard's patent revolvers is found in the proof marks on the barrels of these guns. A brief review of the method of proving guns at the Birmingham proof house reminds us that a preliminary proof test (provisional) was made on the barrels in order to eliminate those which were faulty or unable to withstand the pressures of firing. This method saved time, labor and money, as no time or labor was expended on barrels which would be lost later during testing. The provisional proof marks found on all the Le Mat and Girard revolvers consist of the bore number "18" and the crossed scepters. Later, after the gun was completed and assembled, it was given the final proof test and stamped with the *definitive* proof marks found on the Le Mat and Girard guns. These marks consist of the letter "v" surmounted by a crown for "viewed" and the letter "p" surmounted by a crown for "proved." The presence of the provisional proof marks on the Le Mat and Girard revolvers show that these guns were made in England, for neither time, labor or money would have been saved by shipping the guns "in the bright" for testing and finishing in England as heretofore assumed. We believe all guns in this range to have been for the Confederate States Navy.

SERIAL NUMBERS KNOWN TO THE AUTHORS

Le Mat percussion revolvers with the first series of barrel markings which were recorded by the authors are as follows:

- 1—Has "Baguet" stamped on inner side of grips.
- 4—Has engraved cylinder, the design of which is similar to No. 1. Has "Baguet" stamped on inner side of grips.

Le Mat revolvers with the second series of markings recorded are as follows:

- 1—Serial number only, in the Winchester Museum.
- 10—In Milwaukee Museum.
- 21—Carried by Private William F. Ruger, Company E, "Eutaw" Regiment, S. C.
- 25—Has "CS" and station number 104 on cylinder, indicating ship-board use.
- 28, 34, 37, 39, 47, 69, 71.
- 73—National Museum, Washington, D. C.
- 74, 90, 97.
- 101—Has "Baguet" stamped on inner side of grips.
- 107, 115—Carried by General J. E. B. Stuart, in Confederate Museum, Richmond, Va.
- 146, 156, 158.
- 163—Grip has silver inlay engraved, "Co A 18 Ga."
- 165, 167.
- 189—Carried by Major Henry Wirz, Commander of Andersonville Prison, Ga., now in Chicago Historical Society.
- 210, 212, 227, 240, 246, 269, 277, 282.
- 303—Carried by the Colonel of the Chesterfield Dragoons, Virginia.
- 314, 343.
- 354—In Fort McHenry Museum, Baltimore, Md.
- 390, 396, 402, 408.
- 427—Engraved "To Gen. P. T. Beauregard, CSA," now in Confederate Museum, Richmond, Va.
- 444.

Le Mat revolvers with the third series of markings are as follows: 5—The first octagon barrel Le Mat recorded. 309, 346, 459. 475—Carried by General Patton Anderson, CSA, now in Confederate Museum, Richmond, Va. 476, 496, 516, 518, 525, 536, 559. 576—Has Kerr-type loading lever. 578, 579. 586—In Jefferson Memorial, St. Louis, Mo. 608, 622, 626, 645, 648, 663, 667, 679, 690, 700, 737, 755, 780, 807, 825. 826—Said to have been carried by a Virginia scout. 830, 847, 850. 852—Carried by Col. John Lamb, CSA, North Carolina (supposedly one of a pair). 853, 861, 877, 912, 920, 937, 941, 944, 947,

964, 1002, 1078, 1082, 1094, 1097, 1121, 1125, 1131, 1222. 1273—Carried by General Braxton Bragg, CSA. 1303, 1312, 1375, 1405, 1495, 1506, 1511, 1552, 1573, 1608, 1626, 1645, 1666, 1672, 1694, 1703, 1739, 1757, 1774, 1809.

Le Mat revolvers with the fourth series of markings are as follows (the revolvers with the Murdaugh stamping also have London proof marks):

1812—At West Point Museum. 1824, 1849, 1876, 1888, 1891, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1929, 1937, 1952, 1978, 2003, 2143. 2145—Has London proof marks. 2162—In National Rifle Association Museum, Washington, D. C. 2239—Has CSN Inspector Lt. William H. Murdaugh's stamp "M" on cylinder. 2263—Has London proof marks. 2289—Has London proof marks. 2339—Has CSN Inspector Lt. William H. Murdaugh's stamp of "M" on cylinder. 2360—Inlaid with silver and has crescent and star motif. 2389—Has London proof marks. 2393—Has CSN Inspector Lt. William H. Murdaugh's stamp of "M" on cylinder. 2443—Has London proof marks. 2448—Has CSN Inspector Lt. William H. Murdaugh's stamp of "M" on cylinder. 2469—Has CSN Inspector Lt. William H. Murdaugh's stamp of "M" on cylinder.

The Baby Model Le Mat revolvers are marked with the fourth series of markings, and those recorded by the authors are: 18—Engraved frame and cylinder. 35. 72—No address or barrel markings. 75—Has CSN Inspector Lt. William H. Murdaugh's stamp of "M" on cylinder, also Birmingham proof marks.

There are two other percussion Baby Model Le Mats known to the authors, the serial numbers of which are not known.

Le Mat percussion revolvers with the "LE MAT & GIRARD'S PATENT LONDON" markings on the barrel which are known to the authors are as follows:

3—Has no external markings, the number 3 is found on inner parts. 9—Has barrel markings but no external serial number and the number 9 is found on the inner parts. Both Nos. 3 and 9 have

Birmingham proof marks. 128, 5208, 8074, 8084, 8177, 8448, 8483—Have Birmingham proof marks. 8490, 8626, 8917, 8948, 9009.

PERTINENT LE MAT PATENTS AND THEIR DATES

Number	Date	Subject
UNITED STATES		
15925	Oct. 21, 1856	Grape-shot revolver
24312	June 7, 1859	Adjustable hammer
24313	June 7, 1859	Automatic finger for closing cannon vents
97780	Dec. 14, 1869	Breech-loading revolver
FRANCE		
2408	July 20, 1859	Grape-shot revolver
	July 17, 1861	Improvements in cylinder locking
	April 27, 1865	"Baby" model revolver
BELGIUM		
6208	Oct. 30, 1857	Revolver
	July 20, 1858	Addition to revolver
7810	July 28, 1859	Finger for cannon vents
7812	July 28, 1859	Revolver [improvement on No. 6208]
ENGLAND		
1622	July 8, 1859	Grape-shot revolver
1081	April 15, 1862	Le Mat & Girard patent revolver
3131	Oct. 13, 1868	Breech-loading revolver
3218	Nov. 28, 1871	Safety lock for gun hammer [provisional protection only]

As before noted, in quoting from the Beauregard papers, patents were also taken out in Spain, Prussia and Saxony.

The English patent 1081 is of special importance because it positively identifies Girard

as the Charles Frederic Girard of Washington, D. C., as the partner of Le Mat, and also as the partner of Gautherin, in the firm of Gautherin and Girard.

One question which remains unresolved at this time is the matter of just when and where the pinfire model Le Mats fit into the series of revolvers. The first United States patent and the Belgian patent of 1857 contain drawings showing pinfire revolvers. It is reasonable to expect that at least a few guns were made under one or both of these patents. The serial numbers of the pinfire revolvers examined by the authors reflect

very little production of these guns, as no serial numbers above 200 have been recorded. It would be very easy to assume that the pinfire revolvers were made either before the war between the States or in the very first part of it, were it not for the physical construction of the guns, which points toward post-war production. Until documentary proof can be found, the establishment of the date of production of these revolvers must remain a question.

The above applies to the large pinfire Le Mat revolvers, as the construction of the Baby pinfire revolvers contains several features which iden-



Courtesy Edward N. Simmons

A POST-WAR LE MAT

This is a nine shot, 9 mm. center-fire weapon with a .50 caliber shot barrel. The weapon is serial number 30, and the top of the barrel is engraved "Colonel Le Mat." A bullet and a "grape-shot" are shown resting on the frame.

tify them as being made from parts left over after the Baby percussion Le Mat revolvers were discontinued.

Except for his patents, little is known of Colonel Le Mat's activities after the war. The New Orleans *Bee* of July 13, 1879, carried this notice: "Died in Paris the 24th of June, 1879, Sophie Justine Lepretre, wife of Dr. Le Mat." The Le Mats maintained their "establishment" in Paris. According to his granddaughter, Mrs. Eggleston, Le Mat—the inventor, the doctor, the Colonel—passed away quietly at this home a few years after the death of his wife.

The last trace found of Charles Girard after the war ended is to be found in the *Dictionary*

of *American Biography* in which is related: "After the close of the Civil War, Girard no longer found life in America attractive, and he entered a career in medicine in Paris, to which he devoted the next 20 years of his life. In 1870 he was chief physician to one of the military ambulances during the siege of Paris. The last recorded publication by Girard was an etiology of typhoid fever titled, *L'Ambulance Militaire de La Rue Violet*. This was published in Paris in the year 1895."

Thus the final curtain falls some 30 years after the Civil War, but we have the grape-shot revolvers of Le Mat and Girard as reminders of the part they played in this war.

FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

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23. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, pp. 291-292.
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28. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, p. 644.
29. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, p. 572.
30. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, p. 670.
31. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, p. 676.
32. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, pp. 795-796.
33. *Ibid.*, Series 2, Vol. II, p. 821.