

# Confederate Arms are Not Rare

Charles L. Foster

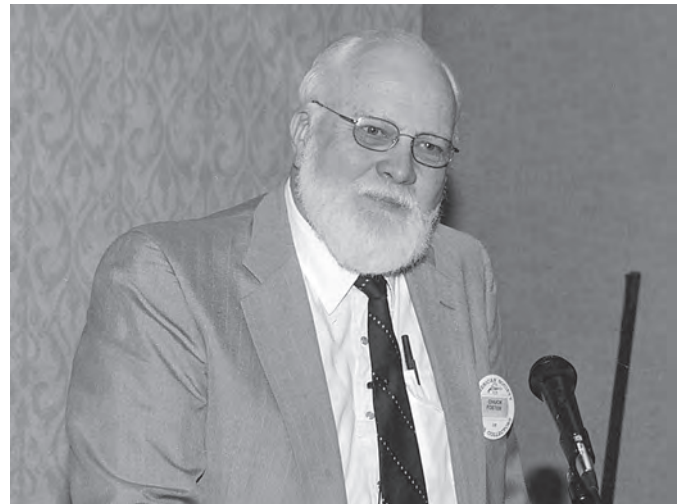
While the program says I am going to talk about an overview of Confederate arms, I would rather title my talk, "CONFEDERATE ARMS ARE NOT RARE". I also considered calling this presentation "SEVENTY THOUSAND".

Let me suggest some reasons for this talk. I hope that I am not only speaking to you here today but also through you to new collectors because I want to invite more participation in my field of interest. However, I do hear a lament from some who are interested in Confederate history that samples of arms from the great "Late Unpleasantness" are cost prohibitive. Indeed many primary Confederate arms are now beyond the reach of all but a very few. Today, I intend to suggest that collecting opportunities still exist. Let me come back to my title "CONFEDERATE ARMS ARE NOT RARE" or the shorter "SEVENTY THOUSAND".

July of 1863 was a month of pronounced tragedy for the south. The casualties were staggering. Lee's army, THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, had ended its second northern offensive. After three days of fighting at Gettysburg, a wagon train some seventeen miles long carried the wounded on a painful trek back to Virginia. This time, Lee's army did not hold the battlefield, abandoning some 25,000 small arms to the enemy.

Along the banks of the Mississippi River on July 4, General Pemberton surrendered Vicksburg and his army to the Federals. Many of the soldiers would be exchanged to fight again, but not their arms. Forty thousand small arms were lost that day! Further down river, General Gardner surrendered his command at Port Hudson, Louisiana on July 9. Once again some 5,000 stand of arms were counted among the stuff of war lost to Southern ordnance.

Imagine the strain on Josia Gorgas, chief of Ordnance, and his subordinates—seventy thousand weapons lost in the first nine days of July. So when I say Confederate arms are not rare, I call attention to this fact. These lost arms needed to be and would be replaced. Lee's army had been largely re-equipped with rifled long arms for the Gettysburg campaign, when that same army had, only a year before, began the Sharpsburg campaign with a predominance of smoothbores—perhaps as many as sixty thousand rifled muskets and rifles supplied in one year. From where were all these guns coming?



Now, in keeping with our own political season I wish to use a little "spin" by enlarging the definition of what is collectible for the Southern enthusiast. To help new collectors get started, I compiled the following list of common and still affordable firearms that, I believe, fought 80% of the war because they were the principle arms carried and were available in large numbers:

- Any U.S. Model 1816 Musket altered to percussion
- Any U.S. Model 1842 Musket
- Any Model of a Continental Import
- Any U.S. Rifle-Musket of .58 caliber
- Any Pattern of 1853 "Enfield" Rifle Musket
- An Austrian Lorenz Rifle-Musket
- A Sharps Carbine
- A Spencer Carbine

This same list, although it was intended for Federal Collectors can, with modification, also represent the most frequently employed Confederate arms.

How did the Seceded states obtain firearms? I have divided that information into the following seven categories:

- Civilian arms in the South at the outbreak of hostilities;
- Property of the seceding state governments;
- Arms in Federal repositories in Southern states;
- Arms captured as the result of battle;
- Arms purchased from the North;
- Arms purchased abroad;
- Arms manufactured in the South during the war.

I want to briefly explain and illustrate each of these categories. In doing this I admit I am straying somewhat from the original intent of the ASAC. I have not brought the best or the rarest examples for display, I have brought the most common. While primary Confederate arms such as Spiller and Burr, Cook and Brother, Ashville Armory, and others are the most sought after today, they do not represent the weapons most often issued to the Confederate forces. I hope you will be indulgent and consider the importance of encouraging new collectors, something I believe is and should be a goal of our society. As we examine each piece I will from time-to-time make brief comments.

#### CIVILIAN ARMS

Samuel Sutherland Boot Pistol—This is a J. J. Henry boot pistol. It is item number 615 in the United States Cartridge Collection Catalogue. Stamped “S. Sutherland, Richmond Va.”, it was presented to the collection by Mr. George D. Bryant of Farmington, CT on February 29, 1888. Mr. Bryant was a member of Company D 1st Connecticut Cavalry and captured the pistol from a Confederate soldier during the 1864 Wilson raid against Richmond.

Continental Pistol, Samuel Sutherland, Richmond, Va—This smooth bore pistol of .60 caliber was a flintlock. Stamped with Sutherland’s name and address, I can’t tell you if he retailed the gun or altered it to percussion. I can tell you that pistols were in very short supply throughout the war years and every variety was pressed into service.

Schneider and Glassick Shotgun—This imported sporting arm is marked Schneider & Glassick, Memphis. It had been cut down and had a sling swivel added to the toe of the stock. Carved in the cheek side of the stock is the name, “W.B. Miller, Hopkins Cty. Tex.” I have yet to identify Mr. Miller, but I would not be surprised if he was a member of the Texas Frontier Battalion.

On January 8th, 1865, at Dove Creek, Texas some 380 men of the Frontier Battalion attacked Kickapoo Indians on their way to old Mexico. Armed mainly with shotguns and country rifles, the Texans discovered the Indians were armed with rifle-muskets. Unable to match their firepower the Texans suffered 26 dead and 23 wounded. The Kickapoo went on without further molestation. Indeed, many Confederate Soldiers in distant theatres of war would never see a regulation military arm.

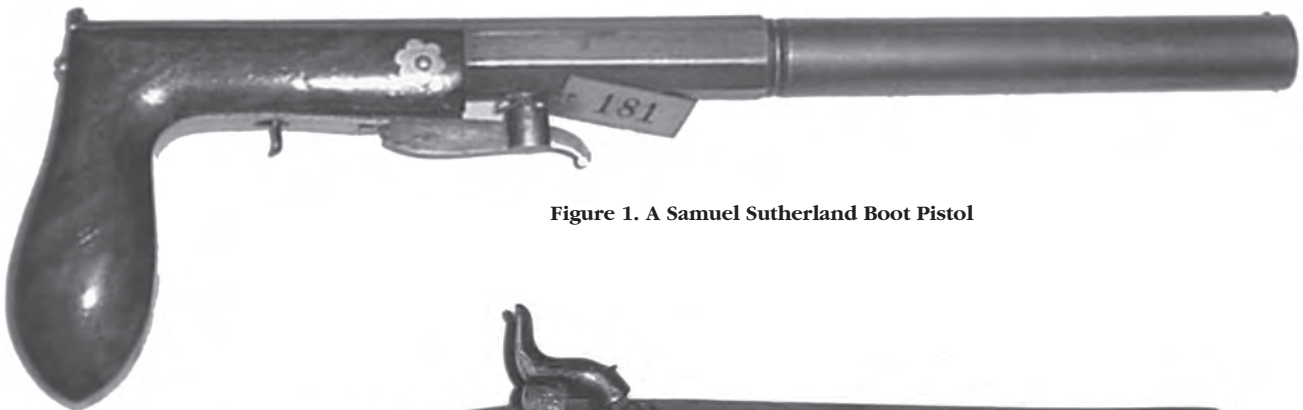


Figure 1. A Samuel Sutherland Boot Pistol



Figure 2. A Continental Pistol stamped Samuel Sutherland



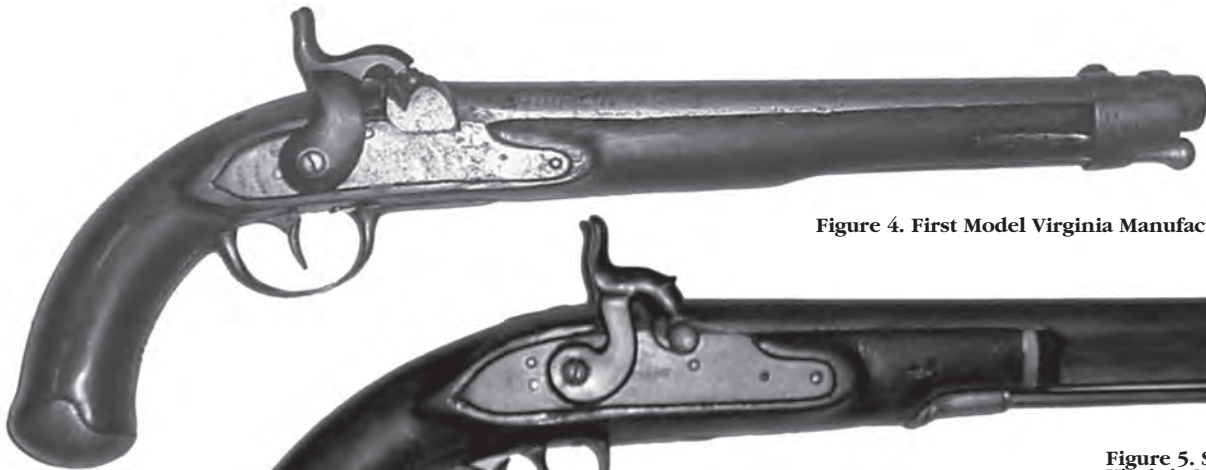
**Figure 3. A Schneider and Glassick Shotgun**

PROPERTY OF THE SECEDING STATES

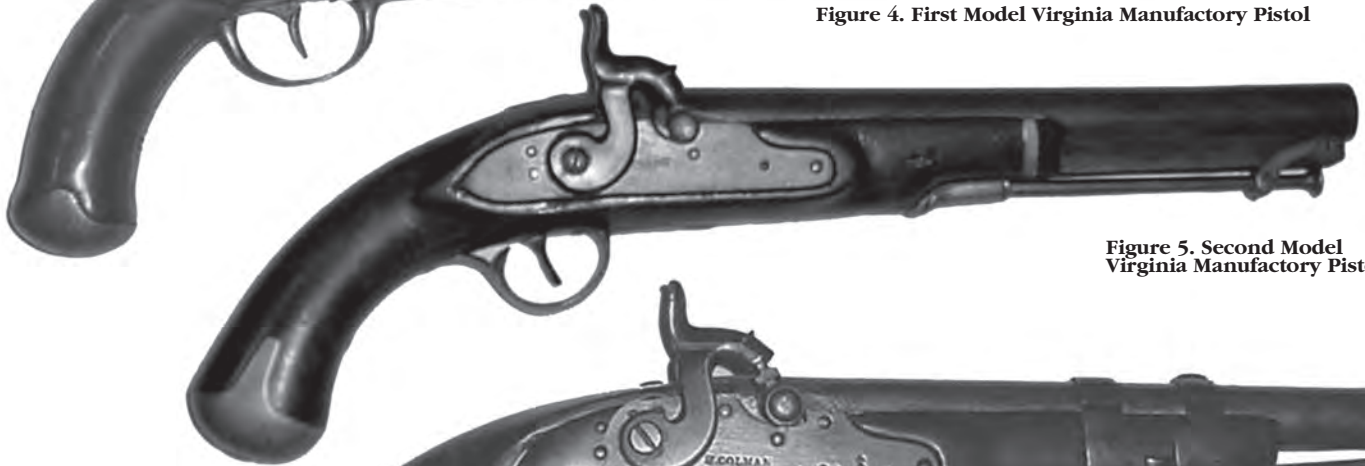
The Virginia Manufactory is the best example of State owned arms. Thousands of arms were in State hands even though the Manufactory had ceased production in 1820. Virginia issued these old arms to her troops as well as those of other states. Here we see two pistols, a First Model and a Second model as examples. They were altered in the same manner as were many longarms. It was the muskets in storage, however, that played a large role in the early war years.

South Carolina and North Carolina stamped some of the arms in their possession prior to the war; this Model 1816 pistol is one example. The barrel is stamped S. Carolina, but the lock was re-stamped "H. Colman"; Frank Seller lists Colman as a Boston gunsmith for the year 1847. This pistol is the example cited in Mr. Seller's book. I believe some questions remain as to the history of this gun.

A Model 1816 musket by Eli Whitney now altered to percussion is stamped at the breech "S. Carolina". This arm was carried by George Atkinson of the 7th South Carolina Infantry. His unit was part of General Kershaws Brigade and was heavily engaged throughout the war.



**Figure 4. First Model Virginia Manufactory Pistol**



**Figure 5. Second Model Virginia Manufactory Pistol**



**Figure 6. An 1816 "South Carolina" marked North Pistol**

## ARMS IN FEDERAL REPOSITORIES

Various Federal storage points yielded a variety of arms for the Southern Cause. Our first example is a Hall's Patent rifle altered to percussion in the South.

At some point an unusual repair had been affected. A collar was fashioned with a slight taper and slides over a slimmed frame and stock in order to hold the breech shut for discharge. One of the most vexing problems for southern arms makers was the proper tempering of springs, large and small. The spring that serves the normal breech latch broke, so adding the collar was the answer. Crude but workable! At some point in the war this Hall was carried by Sargent Peyton A. Edwards Company A, 17th Texas Cavalry (dismounted). They were part of Granbury's Texas Brigade.

This Model 1842 Springfield musket dated 1851 was one of thousands available to both sides, Model 42 muskets were reliable arms. This very plain example is hard used with a hard history. It was carried by three soldiers, two of whom served in the 54th Virginia Infantry. Harvey D. Sowers of company A enlisted on September 10, 1861 and deserted on September 6, 1863, returning to his unit on December 1, 1863. He died in 1920 and rests in the Knob cemetery, Floyd County Virginia. Harvey D. Wilson also of Floyd County enlisted in March of 1862 and deserted on September 3, 1863. A third name, "J. Roberts" is on this musket as well, but no information about him has been found. The 54th Virginia was one of only two Virginia Infantry units to serve in the Army of Tennessee.



Figure 7. An 1816 "South Carolina marked Eli Whitney Musket"



Figure 8. A Southern Hall's Patent Rifle



Figure 9. Repair close-up—Hall's Rifle





Figure 10. 1842 Springfield Musket

#### ARMS CAPTURED AS THE RESULT OF BATTLE

This common Enfield rifle-musket dated 1862 was produced by William Tranter. It represents nearly one million imported English arms.

The musket has a story to tell. Arkansas Post was a place fifty miles up the Arkansas River with a Confederate bastion called Fort Hindman. Thirty thousand Union troops captured the five thousand defenders on January 12, 1863. Among the Union soldiers was Carlos W. Colby of Company G, 97th Illinois Infantry. He recorded the following in his diary.

... "here all our men threw away their old guns and took Enfield rifles captured from the enemy" . . . "These guns were up to date English make" . . . "When the ordnance officer found we made the change he made a terrible kick, for he had no cartridges to fit the new guns, and a lot of the old ones on hand that he had no use for, but the kick came to late, for we had the newer guns and the old ones had been turned over as captured property".

Here is just the opposite of what I promised. Capture went both ways and I could not resist the example. Property such as this 1863 Sharps carbine which was U.S. and turned in as Confederate property. These men had no regard for future collectors or researchers.

L. C. Holt of Gantt's 9th Battalion Tennessee cavalry was captured at Fort Donelson on February 16, 1862. Exchanged, he later captured this carbine from the 14th New York cavalry at New Port Louisiana. On July 2, 1863, while on picket duty outside Port Hudson, Holt again fell captive. Exchanged once again, he ultimately landed in the Pettigrew General Hospital No. 13, Raleigh NC. On May 13, 1865, he signed his parole as one of the soldiers surrender at Bentonville.

Richmond Rifle-Musket—First look shows a Model 1855 musket with a Harpers Ferry lock dated 1857. Actually this is a Richmond built from parts. Was the lock at Harpers Ferry or was the lock gleaned from a damaged arm on some field of action. As collectors we worry about Richmond locks placed in federal guns in the 1960s, here we have the reverse, a Federal lock placed in a Richmond product in the 1860s. More about Richmonds later.



Figure 11. Enfield Rifle-Musket

Figure 12. Enfield Rifle-Musket Markings

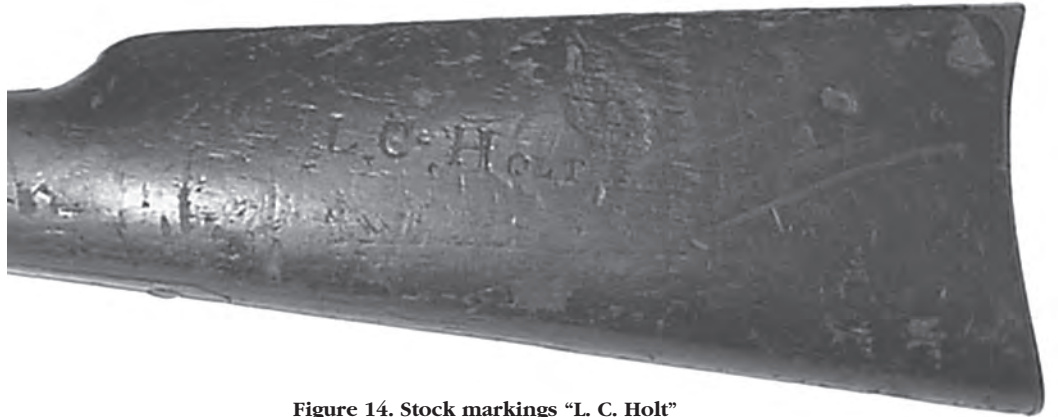


Figure 14. Stock markings "L. C. Holt"

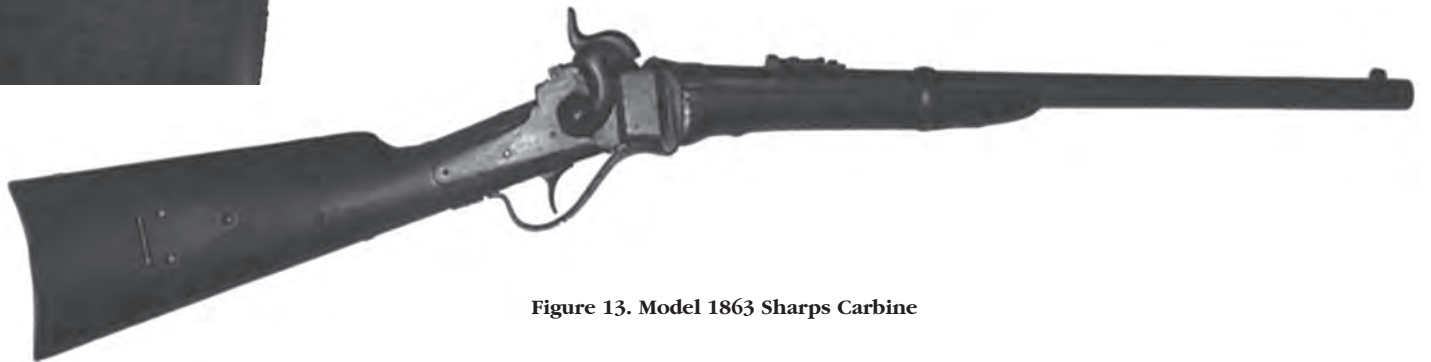


Figure 13. Model 1863 Sharps Carbine

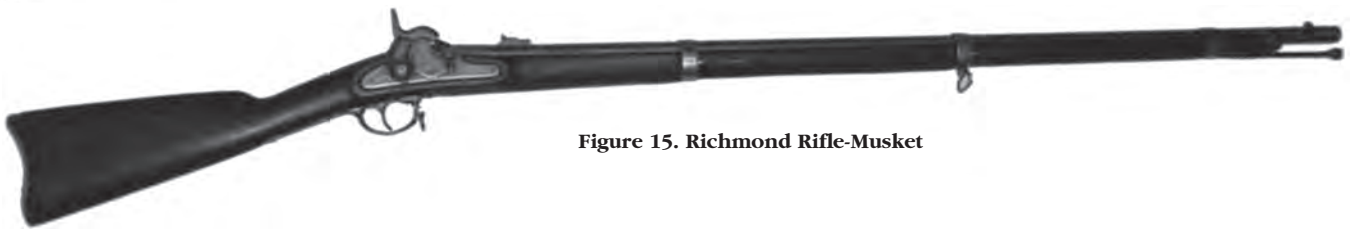


Figure 15. Richmond Rifle-Musket

#### NORTHERN PURCHASE

Eli Whitney produced copies of Enfield rifles and muskets. This first type rifle is an example of that work which began in 1859. Georgia was an early customer and this rifle was issued to 1st Volunteers Infantry Regiment composed of militia units prior to the war. At first, used at various locations for coastal protection, the stampings on this gun represent the Saint Simon Guard stationed on Saint Simon Island. The unit would later be transferred to the Army of Tennessee. The rifle is lightly constructed and I doubt that it saw much service.

Maynard Carbine—While the .50 caliber model was the most desired the South did accept the .35 Caliber model as well. Sold through Poultney and Trimble of Baltimore, this carbine was issued to the Bolivar troop, 1st Mississippi Cavalry. H. L. Reneau carved his name in the stock of this First Model Maynard. Fighting around Dallas Georgis, near New Hope Church, Reneau was killed in action.



Figure 16. Eli Whitney produced Enfield Copy



Figure 17. Saint Simon Island Guard markings



Figure 19. Stock Markings



Figure 18. .35 Caliber Maynard Carbine

#### ARMS PURCHASED ABROAD

Bill Edwards in his book *Civil War Guns* called the Enfield the North's second rifle because of the large number imported. I say, the Enfield is the South's first rifle. Purchased by the Confederate Central Government, by State Governments as well as by speculators, totals may exceed 350,000 firearms.

Our example is based on the Pattern of 1860 Rifle. Rushing to fill an order the contractor used green wood which is now warped. The fore stock has rotated around the barrel until a ramrod can no longer pass through the channel. The wrist has cast to the left at a pronounced angle. The rifle was carried by Thomas Griffin a private in company I, 7th Louisiana Infantry. Brigaded with the Louisiana tigers under the command of Harry Hays, these soldiers were some of the shock troops of Lee's army earning the title of, "Lee's Tigers".

Windsor Rifle-Musket—Originally intended for England, surplus Windsors were available due to a cancelled contract. I refer you to the book by Madaus and Murphy for a very detailed description of how some of these arms went to Georgia.

This arm is marked in such a way as to show it was in old Mexico. The breech is stamped "DURANGO" and there are other marks showing use south of the Rio Grande. Abraham Lincoln sent arms to Mexican nationalist fighting Max-millian and the French Foreign Legion. Some of the arms sent were Federal models and some may have been captured Confederate arms in good condition. More research needs to be done to uncover this overlooked story.

English Sea Service Musket—We have a long history of importing arms and our next example most probably reached our shores long before the Civil War. It is a pattern 1780 Sea Service musket altered to percussion by the Union Arms Company of Richmond, VA. Old as it may be, it was solid and strong and carried a bayonet, which was needed and was used.

Lorenz Rifle Musket—Both sides received arms from Austria. The south purchased 110,000 Austrian arms, but I do not know how many reached Con-federate hands. The Army of Tennessee in winter quarters at Dalton, GA received a large shipment in anticipation of the campaign of 1864. Our past member, Beverly DuBose had a bullet swedging press from the Atlanta arsenal which was stenciled to read, “.54 Caliber for the Austrian and Mississippi rifle.” These arms were very serviceable, but not equal to the Enfield or Springfield pattern rifle-muskets.



Figure 20. 1860 Enfield



Figure 21. A Windsor Rifle-Musket



Figure 22. "Durango" markings on breech

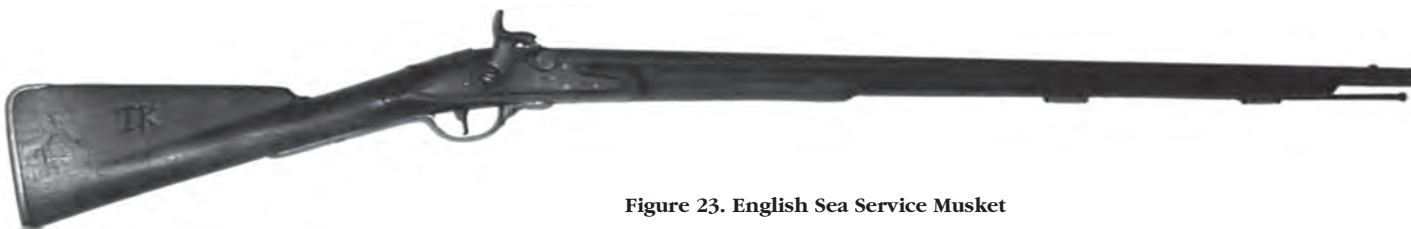


Figure 23. English Sea Service Musket



Figure 24. Confederate Alteration



Figure 25. Austrian Lorenz Rifle-Musket



## WARTIME MANUFACTURE

Of the various manufactures during the war, Fayetteville was the second most prolific, and I believe the best made Confederate arm. This example was carried by "I. W. Thomas", Company K, 1st Confederate Infantry. He served until December 17, 1864 when he was wounded and captured at Franklin TN. Shot in the forearm, then treated at the U.S. General Hospital, Nashville, he was held at several prison camps before being released on June 5, 1865.

Richmond Rifle-Musket—Dated 1864 this example represents the most successful Confederate production of small arms. No other Confederate long arm is, in my opinion, more difficult to authenticate than a Richmond. Made from captured and recycled parts as well as original manufactured parts, any combination is possible. Here is part of a report regarding construction of arms at Richmond. I quote only a small part of the report sent to Secretary of War, James A. Sedden.

. . . "The number of arms manufactured and made up of parts derived from capture and other sources for the year ending November 30, 1864 were:"

Rifles caliber .58 . . . 12,778

Carbines . . . 5,354

Pistols . . . 2,353

This report reflects only one year and should give pause to those collectors who want to change parts around to "improve" an example. Many arms that should be of use to the student have been ruined by this practice.

Because the *Bulletin* reaches hands beyond our membership, perhaps this talk will encourage a new or existing collector to consider this most compelling area of American arms history. You too can carry encouragement to beginning collectors. While many primary Confederate arms are quite expensive, there are still available, unrecognized and unappreciated examples; common arms, graced by common men faced with extraordinary difficulty and danger in the defense of their homeland.



Figure 26. Fayetteville Rifle



Figure 27. "I.W. Thomas CoK"



Figure 28. Richmond Rifle-Musket

I have always guided my collecting by saying to myself . . . "If it went up with Pickett, it's good enough for me." I also remember a dedication in a book authored in 1877 by Walter H. Taylor. Colonel Taylor was Robert E. Lee's adjutant-general and the staff officer closest to General Lee. On April 9, 1865, 90,000 Union troops surrounded Lee's army at Appomattox Courthouse. Lee had no other choice but to surrender. Colonel Taylor recalled that day when he penned the following dedication for his book:

To The Eight Thousand Veterans (The Surviving Heroes of the Army of Northern Virginia)  
WHO IN LINE OF BATTLE ON THE 9th DAY OF APRIL, 1865 WERE REPORTED PRESENT FOR DUTY  
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

Many Confederate arms are not rare, but because of men like those remembered by Colonel Taylor none are now common!