

A Newly Identified Kenansville Confederate Sword

John W. McAden Jr

Back in March 1965, Syd Kerksis, well-known relic collector, dropped me a line saying he had a "Johnnie" sword that might interest me. Syd thought it had been made in North Carolina and would be a great research subject because of its staff and field configuration. He had acquired it from an unknown Georgia collection. I received the sword in April (Figure 1) and was very pleasantly surprised at its fine design and superior craftsmanship.

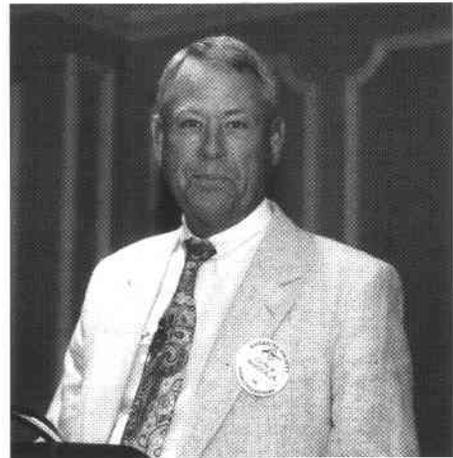
The cast brass guard had the classic wreath design surrounding the letters "CS," with a star at the apex, centered between the two branches of the wreath. The design of the guard was very similar to the classic Confederate Staff and Field swords manufactured by Boyle and Gamble in Richmond, Virginia, and those made by B. Douglas and Company of Columbus, Georgia. The grip is leather-wrapped and was bound by a double strand of brass wire, as can be seen from the indentation in the leather.

The blade measured 29½ inches long and had an unstoppered fuller on each side. The leather scabbard was brass-mounted. What immediately caught my eye was the backstrap of the guard, which had a flat surface and bore the initials "LF" and "1861." I had seen nothing like this before!

Naturally, I thought of the famous Kenansville, North Carolina, edged-weapons maker Louis Froelich, but realized that there were no previous specimens known (at least to me) with such attribution.

As some may recall from previous presentations by Fred Edmunds¹ and John Frawner² in American Society of Arms Collectors bulletins 54 and 66, respectively. Louis Froelich was a German immigrant who arrived in the United States in the 1850s, landing in New York City. He showed good judgment in moving south and did so just before the War Between the States. He worked with a firm known as Loeb and Swarzman in Wilmington, North Carolina, and set up and operated their button business. An ad begins in Wilmington's *Daily Journal* edition of May 31, 1861, and runs for some period advertising the firm as manufacturers of buttons, etc.

Although subject to conjecture, it is quite probable that Froelich left Loeb and Swarzman and established a sword manufactory in Wilmington with a partner named Estvan, a partner who turned out to be a rogue. Froelich teamed up with Col. Estvan in a sword-making venture with a contract with the State of North Carolina, and this whole partnership



ended in disaster. This seems to have occurred in late fall of 1861. Because Froelich seems to be unaccounted for for 2 to 3 months, this is possibly the period when the swords were made.

In March 1862, Froelich terminated the partnership with Estvan and moved to Kenansville and opened the Confederate State Armory, which had no connection with the central government in Richmond. In Kenansville he now made swords, knives, pikes, cutlasses, buttons, and accoutrements on contract for the State of North Carolina. Interestingly, all the swords attributed to Froelich up to now were marked with Roman numerals (Figure 2). However, he made some type of sword earlier with Estvan that has never been identified. It is also interesting that the Froelich Sword Factory was identified in official records in Wilmington on February 3, 1863.³ The question comes to mind, "did Froelich have anything to do with this operation, or was it just the closed factory of Froelich and Estvan from 1861?"

About June 1987 I was invited to a dinner party at Bill Rand's home. Bill is a friend of mine whom I have known since childhood, but I had not been to his home since I had moved back to Wilson, North Carolina, in 1965. As I entered his den, I immediately noticed a sword over his fireplace.

As I looked at it I knew that it was one just like mine! Later, as Bill and I talked, I asked if I could examine it and he let me take it home to compare it with mine. Sometime later, when Bill and I talked, he told me it belonged to Uncle O. R. Rand, Col. 3rd Regiment NCHG, and that it had been presented to him by his men. It seems Oscar Ripley Rand volunteered for service and was elected Captain of a com-

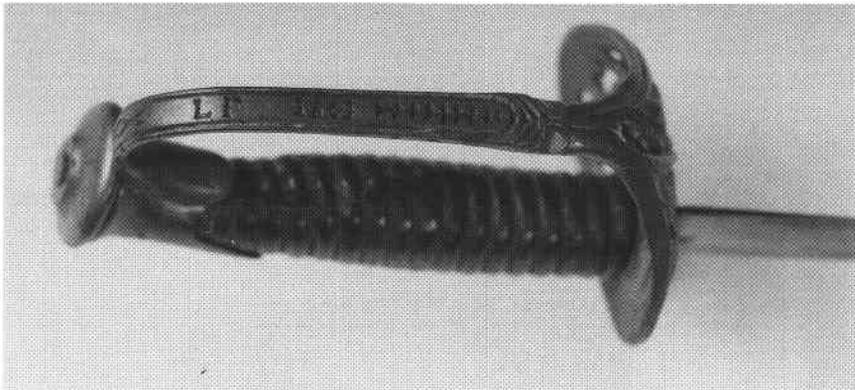
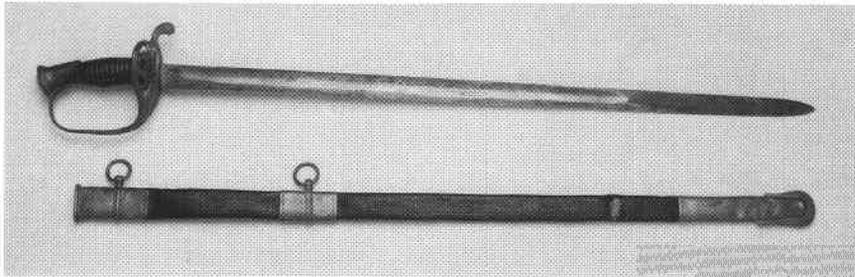


Figure 1. Newly Identified sword—J. McAden Jr. Coll.

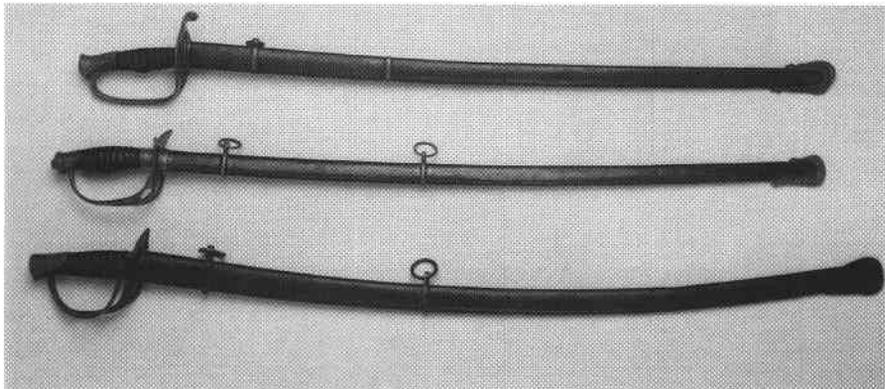


Figure 2. Three Louis Frolich swords—J. McAden Coll.

pany of infantry known as the "Wake Guard" composed of men from Wake County, North Carolina, on May 29, 1861.

This Company was mustered into service as Company D 26 NC Infantry August 31, 1861. This regiment was under the command of Col. Burgwyn, later to become the famous Boy Colonel Henry King Burgwyn, Jr. Capt. Rand was

captured at New Bern, North Carolina, on March 14, 1862, and was exchanged September 20, 1862.

When he returned, Col. Burgwyn recommended Capt. Rand for the rank of Lieutenant Colonel when it became vacant. No action was taken, and a second letter was sent through channels; again, no action was taken, even though

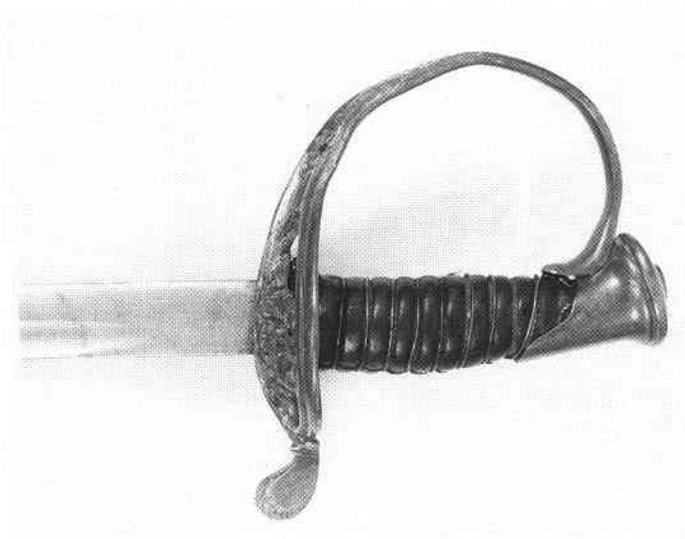
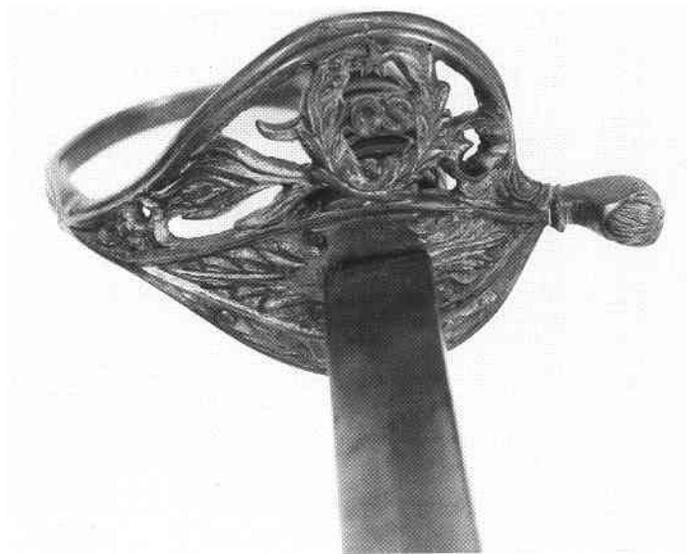
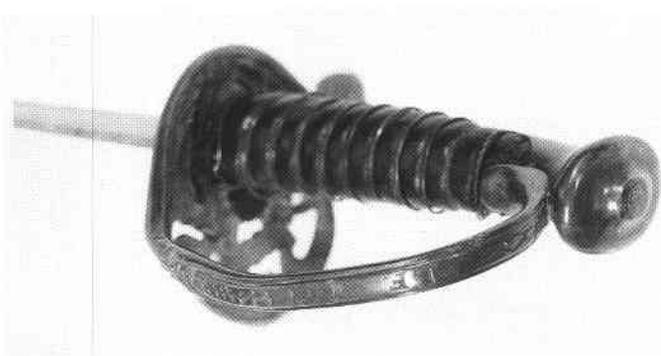
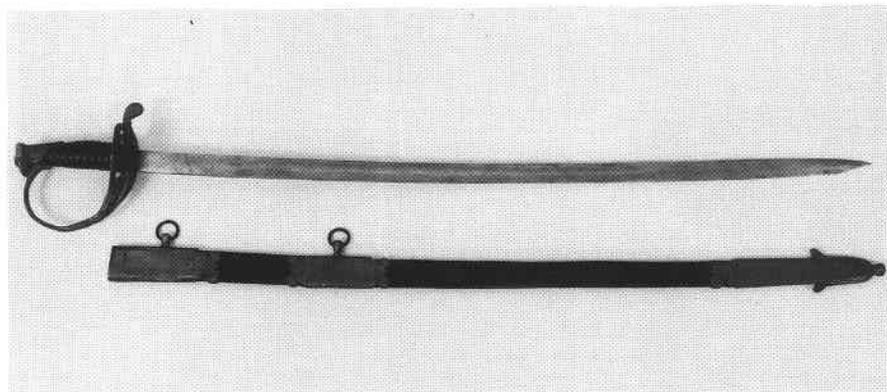


Figure 3. Colonel O. R. Rand sword. Photographs courtesy Greensboro Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina.

he had received high recommendations. It appears that after his release he returned home and served no more active duty but was made Commander of 3rd Regiment NCHG sometime in 1863.⁴

Figure 3 shows the Col. Rand sword. You will notice the same design on the guard and back strap—the blade has the slim style used by Froelich in other swords he manufactured at the Confederate States Arsenal. There is also a nice inscription (very lightly etched), “PRESENTED BY THE 3RD REGT NCHG TO COL O. R. RAND November 7, 1864.”

On the reverse side of the blade (very lightly etched) is “L. Froelich and Co, Kenansville, N. C.” The inscription is so faint that it was impossible to photograph.

The two swords together certainly were made by the same person.

Evidence:

- LF 1861 on the back strap.
- Wreath with CS and star.
- Straight blades with leather scabbard.

- Inscriptions L. Froelich and Co. Kenansville on Col. Rand’s sword.
- Providence of owner.
- Louis Froelich maker of swords first in Wilmington, North Carolina, later in Kenansville, North Carolina.

There is no doubt in my mind that this sword was made by Louis Froelich, but I leave it to you to decide for yourself from the evidence presented.

It also occurred to me that while I thought that my sword was a Froelich product, it took a dinner invitation to a friend’s house to help me uncover the identity of a previously unknown Kenansville sword! I would like to invite you to come by the exhibit room and see the two swords on display.

FOOTNOTES

1. Fred Edmunds, American Society of Arms Collectors, Bulletin No. 54.
2. John Farmer, American Society of Arms Collectors, Bulletin No. 66.
3. Correspondence from General Whiting to General French. Official Records, Series I, Vol. 18, p. 868.
4. Rand Diary, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.