

## Why Kerrs?

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I think the first question anyone asks us as collectors is inevitably: "What do you collect, and why?" As we all get to answer the first part at every business meeting, for many years you all know I collected Kerr revolvers. (Figure 1) The short answer to the second part is that I thought they were cool and different and it was something that was in my price range when I began collecting them.

The longer answer, however, deals with an overall collecting philosophy that my father taught me. As a young man, my father was like many collectors: his interest in owning far exceeded his ability to buy. So, like many of us, he read, went to museums and gun shows to learn more about the subject.

Most every one of you in this room knew my father and the things he collected. He was pretty well known for his collection of original muzzle loading artillery (Figure 2) and



Figure 1. Why Kerr's?



Figure 2. All Forgetts love cannons.



also presentation swords with an emphasis on Lloyd's swords (Figure 3) relating to Lord Nelson.

Not as well known is that, as a younger man in his 20's, he focused on collecting Morse rifles (Figure 4), eventually having a collection so renowned, he was featured on the cover of *Shooting Times*. When I was a teenager I asked him why he collected Morse rifles and he told me, "I thought they were neat and it was what I could afford at the time."

I remember that conversation with him very clearly. I was about 13 years old and we were at an Ohio Gun Collectors Show (Figure 5). Like many budding collectors, I was feeling frustrated as it was my desire to learn everything about guns. After walking and looking at hundreds of tables at that show, I realized there was a virtually endless variety of makes, models, calibers, finishes, generations and barrel lengths to be known. My father seemed to know every single



Figure 3. Val Sr. and one of his numerous presentation swords.



one off the top of his head. How was I ever going to get there?

I expressed this frustration to my father at dinner—that he knew all this stuff and compared to him I didn't know anything. I was 13 and didn't have any perspective on who my old man was at that point.

He laughed and said, "Well, first of all, Valmore, you are 13 years old. When I was 13 I knew the same as you about guns. And, as much as I know, there is far more to be known that I will never learn, nobody can know everything. Enjoy looking and learning at guns and you will go as far as your desire takes you."

He told me about collecting Morse rifles and how he tried to learn everything there was to know about them and to assemble the best collection he could. He told me to find something I liked and could afford and start there—that's what I did.

The next Spring at the 1985 Baltimore Gun Show, I was strolling along the aisles of the old Armory, quizzing myself on the basic model guns: Winchesters, Colts, Smiths (pretty much everything in the Navy Arms catalog), when I came across a percussion pistol I had never seen before with an

unusual side-hammer design. (Figure 6) I asked the dealer if I could pick it up, which he kindly allowed me to do. The first thing I saw was the name "Kerr's Patent" on the gun. Even though it was pretty rusty, I thought it was neat looking and knew Navy Arms didn't make it, so I thought it must be pretty unique.

I looked at the price tag and it was the grand sum of \$500. I had just been hired by *Guns & Ammo* as their Youth Editor and was being paid the grand sum of \$453 a month whether I was assigned an article or not and had just received my first paycheck. I raced back to my father's table and told him about the gun I saw and wanted to buy. His first question was "How much is it?" I told him it was \$500 and asked if I could borrow the difference as I only had \$450.

When I said that, his face had the same look of disappointment as when he saw my report card. He told me to show him my \$450, which I had in twenties, all crumpled up in my pocket. His brow furrowed further and he dismissively took the money out of my hand and said, "Valmore, let me show you how this is done."

He handed me three crisp, brand-new \$100 dollar bills and three fifties and said, "Put \$350 in your shirt pocket and put the other two fifties in your right front pocket." He then told me that when we went back over to the dealer to tell the dealer he had a very nice gun and to ask if he would take \$350 for it. "Now, here's the important part," he said. "Have the money fanned out in your left hand when you ask him and be sure you are holding the gun with your right." I very nervously went over with my father and did what he said, to which the dealer replied, "Well, I'd take \$400." Before the look of shock could take over my face, my father had somehow taken the \$350 out of my hand, added another \$50 of his own and we were halfway back to my father's table. We got back behind the table, he smiled, put out his hand and said "You did really well, that was a good deal. Now give me the other \$50 you owe me."



Figure 4. Young Val Forgett—Morse rifles?



Figure 5. So many choices, what to collect?



Figure 6. A \$400.00 Kerr—in 1985 . . .

It was my first Kerr, and I was hooked (Figure 7).

In the 25 years that followed, I owned 47 Kerr revolvers, including six cased models, over a dozen J.S. Anchor marked ones and serial numbers 1, 2 and 6. I handled and viewed dozens more. I learned everything I could about Kerrs, and then last year I sold my collection. So now, let me tell you what I learned.

### KERR, KARR, KARE???

First off, let me discuss the very last thing I learned about Kerrs, which I learned just this month, and that is, what exactly is the proper pronunciation. As I have made clear in my presentation so far, I pronounce it “Kerr” as that is how my father pronounced it and introduced me to it. I had heard it pronounced several different ways in the 20 years I had collected by fellow collectors who I respect, so, how to find out the answer? Having my own name brutally mispronounced in every fashion possible, I am aware of the importance of this small detail. So, the question became, how do I find an accurate answer?

I must give credit to Whit Fentam, the curator of the National Firearms Museum, who gave me the means with which to find the answer. Whit said, “Why not look up somebody named Kerr in England, call them on the phone and ask them how to pronounce their name.”

Brilliant in its simplicity, that’s what I did.

I googled the name “James Kerr—England” and came up with three different websites and contacts, to which I e-mailed all three with the question. Two of the three e-mails bounced back as not being current e-mails, but I did get a very thoughtful reply from the third (Figure 8), a James Kerr of James Kerr Photography in England. His answer was as follows:

Dear Mr. Forgett:

You raise an interesting question.

The Earls of Lothian, whose family name it is, pronounce it Karr and this is probably the most “correct” and

“upper class” way, this is the pronunciation I use.

Because Kerr phonetically sounds like Cur, many people adopt this pronunciation for ease of convenience—say Car in a shop and it will be written down as “Car,” particularly in England.

In Lowland Scotland, where we originate from, locals pronounce it “Care,” with a long “A”.

There was also a well known British actress who made her name in Hollywood who died recently called Deborah Kerr, and she always pronounced it as Car.

Again, you raise an interesting question to which there is no absolute answer.

I hope that helps,

Regards,

James Kerr of Abbotrule (To give you my full title!)

P.S.—by the way, were James Kerr revolvers any good?

### JAMES KERR AND THE LONDON ARMORY

So, to quote my new friend from England, there is no absolute answer to the pronunciation. As to his question if James Kerr revolvers were any good, they were no doubt extremely popular with the Confederate Cavalry, but did not seem to have much a market before or after the Civil War.

When I first started researching Kerrs in the mid 1980s, there was precious little material on them. The only writeup I knew of was Hank Gaidis’s detailed article in the 1979 *Gun Report*. He began that article by stating, “Mention the Kerr’s Patent Revolver and even a student of this outstanding weapon has a bare knowledge of its history.” Hank was right on the money, as in over 20 years of research I feel like I have barely scratched the surface on James Kerr and his revolver.

No person has ever turned up any of the company records for the London Armory (Figure 9), which is any historian’s best source of primary information on the history of



Figure 7. Kerr? Karr? Kair?



Figure 8. James Kerr of Abbotrule.



a gun making firm. Speculation is that it either was thrown out after the company was liquidated in 1867 after the Civil War, or that some of the records may have gone to Spain along with the equipment that was sold off. Even if they did make it that far, it is very, very unlikely that any of it survives today. Thus, to research the history of the London Armoury and Kerr revolvers, we must rely on the limited records of the British, United States and Confederate States governments regarding Kerr deliveries, as well as that of memoirs of those associated with their production and sale.

Kerrs were first produced in 1859 by the London Armoury Company, founded on February 9, 1856 as a Joint Stock Company whose primary investors included well-known makers Robert Adams, Frederick Edward, Blackett Beaumont, William Harding and James Kerr, with Adams becoming the Managing Director due in large part to holding the largest number of shares of stock. Adams had transferred his revolver patent rights and machinery from a previous endeavor as gun maker in the firm “Deane, Adams and Deane.” Kerr was Adams’ cousin and had worked with Adams previously at Deane, Adams and Deane.

Located at 54 King William Street, the London Armoury Company first began production of the Beaumont-Adams revolvers, but that endeavor was short-lived due to a conflict between the partners on the focus of manufacture of Enfield pattern 1853 muskets for the British government, as well as for private arms sellers. This decision led to Adams selling his interest in the company and stepping down as Managing Director in 1859.

The company directors replaced Adams with Frederick William Bond as the manager and James Kerr as the factory superintendent. Kerr had recently been awarded two patents for an improved version of the Adams patent revolver (Numbers 2896 and 242) (Figure 10). The first Kerr Patent revolver was produced approximately March of 1859 and was tested on April 25, 1859 at the Royal Arms Factory at Enfield.

In looking at Kerr Serial Number 1, which is very likely the gun tested at Enfield (Figure 11), one can see the oversized screws on the entire revolver. This was likely done to make it easier to assemble and disassemble the gun for inspection. It also has a number of other relatively unique features (Figure 12), including a flat steel grip cap with no



Figure 9. The London Armoury Company—1859.



Figure 10. Kerr serial number 1.



Figure 11. Oversized screws.



Figure 12. Grip cap. Hammer block.



lanyard loop, a hammer block system seen on early model Kerrs below serial number 1,000 (Figure 13) and a dove-tailed front sight. Serial number 1 was manufactured in .44 caliber, or 54 gauge as the British refer to it. Kerrs had a number of variations in manufacture I will go over as well.

Even with this successful test, Kerr revolvers sold slowly in 1859 and 1860. It appears that approximately 1,000-1,500 revolvers were sold in this time period (Figure 14), some to volunteer militia such as the 1st Sussex Artillery Volunteers, who purchased 100 Kerrs. Most appear to be commercial sales both domestically and to the United States.

### CALEB HUSE AND THE LONDON ARMORY

It was not until that famous trip by Caleb Huse on behalf of the Confederate States of America in April of 1861 that the London Armory Company and its Kerr Patent revolver met with true success (Figure 15).

Caleb Huse's endeavors on behalf of the Confederate Government have been covered widely in writings and lectures. Howie Madus's talk on the subject was as in-depth and complete as could be done. Not to plow too deep into that

territory, it was Huse's decision to engage the London Armory Company on behalf of the Confederacy that makes the Kerr so historically relevant today. Confederate records show that only Kerr revolvers and LeMat revolvers were purchased overseas for the Confederacy, making them the two most important handguns of the Confederacy. The contract Huse executed with the London Armory Company also called for 100% of the production to go to the Confederacy, meaning that all Kerr revolvers produced from April of 1861 to the end of the Civil War were to be shipped to the Confederate States. In fact, London Armory was known as the Official Armory of the Confederate States, leaving no doubt that it was running at 100% capacity for delivery to the Confederacy.

In that time period, it is estimated that approximately 9,000 revolvers were produced and shipped, along with approximately 70,000 Enfield muskets. The first shipment of Kerrs arrived in Savannah, Georgia on September 18, 1861 aboard the steamship Bermuda. While all factory records of shipments of Kerr revolvers to the Confederacy are lost to time, we know from Confederate records that there are seven additionally known shipments of Kerrs to the Confederacy, with the last being March 8, 1865 aboard the steamship Ann Fanny from St. George to Havana carrying eight cases of Kerr revolvers.

The 9,000 Kerr estimate has been established as reasonably accurate by two documented facts (Figure 16). The first is that Caleb Huse established a contract with the London Armory that called for all production to be delivered to the Confederate States. The second is that serial number ranges of Kerr revolvers in the United States range from the mid 1,500's to over 10,000. The famous Squad Roll of Lt. Julian Pratt of the 18th Virginia



Figure 13. Dovetail front sight.

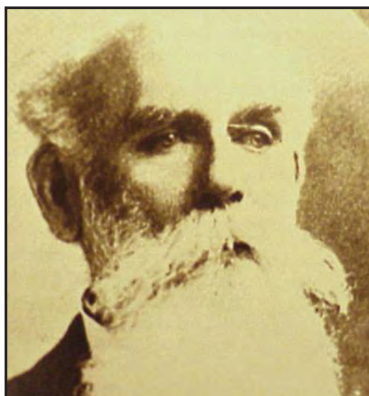


Figure 15. Confederate purchasing agent Caleb Huse.



Figure 14. 1 of 100 guns sold to 1st Sussex Artillery Volunteers.

SQUAD ROLL		SQUAD ROLL
Sam Shewalter	Re. 9955	Revs. Pt.
Sam Sharp	Re. 9864	
Frederick Williams	Re. 9927	Revs. Pt.
J. M. Williams	Re. 9940	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 9961	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 3111	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 9974	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 3221	Revs. Pt.
Henry R.	Re. 275	Revs. Pt.
Conrad E.	Re. 3869	
Auto Rott	Re. 9949	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 3863	
Frederick	Re. 15465	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 9240	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 5052	Revs. Pt.
Frederick	Re. 18776	Revs. Pt.
Frederick		Adams

Figure 16. Lt.G. Julian Pratt's squad roll.



Cavalry documents Kerr revolvers with serial numbers as high as 9,974 being issued, leaving little doubt as to the accuracy of the 9,000 number. How many actually made it through the Union blockade is another story (Figure 17).

It is widely accepted that five out of six ships coming from Europe to the Confederacy evaded the blockade, or 83.3%. Using this math, it can be assumed that approximately 7,500 Kerr revolvers did make it to Confederate shores, making it by far the most widely used revolver of the Confederacy, with far more issued than its famous French counterpart, the LeMat.

### JS ANCHOR MARKING?

One of the great mysteries of Kerr revolvers is the “JS Anchor” marking on the interior of the revolver’s grip (Figure 18). It is universally agreed that this is one way to designate a gun to be genuinely Confederate, but what does the mark signify and are all Confederate Kerr’s JS Anchor marked? Like many aspects of the Kerr, the first part has no definitive answer, but several reasonable possibilities, including the following:

1. The J.S. stood for James Slidell, Confederate Commissioner of Europe. While possible, Slidell was stationed in France, not England, and there is no other indicat-

ing link between Slidell and the Kerr revolver, leaving this possible, but not likely (Figure 19).

2. The stamp stood for James Seddon, Confederate Secretary of War (Figure 20). Also possible, but there is no mention of this in any Confederate documents of the period.

3. The stamp stood for J. Schuyler, the senior partner of the company Schuyler, Hartley and Graham, who were an early customer of Kerr revolvers (Figure 21). Records show that they purchased a total of 16 revolvers in early 1861, hardly making them a memorable customer, even at that time. Again, this is an unlikely answer.

4. The stamp was actually a U.S. stamp, as was demonstrated on other arms of the period that had become damaged or modified, but still used as an inspector’s mark (Figure 22).

Judging by the strong relationship between the London Arms Company and the Confederate Government, it is unlikely this is the case. But, it is a possible answer due to another suspected answer:

5. The stamp stood for J. Smiles, a British stock maker for the London Armory, whose name does appear on the stocks of some London Armory muskets (Figure 23). If Smiles also produced the grips for Kerrs, this is a logical possibility (Figure 24). As a gun maker myself, I can tell you that if Smiles happened to have a stamp on hand that identified his work without having to go to the expense of making a new one, he would have used it. It is even possible he would have modified a U.S. stamp to make it a J.S. if it served his purpose of getting the guns marked quickly and cheaply.

When you are manufacturing guns for war expediency, nobody gives much thought to making “correct” stamps for future generations; you are focused on making

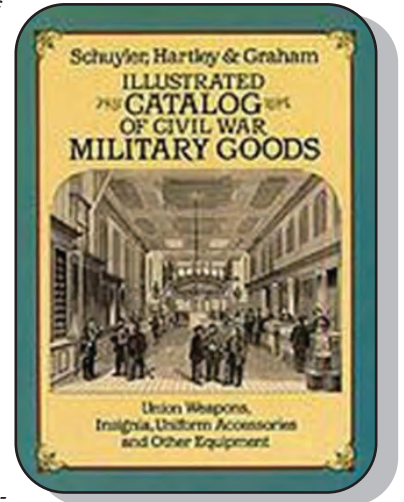


Figure 21. Schuyler, Hartley and Graham?



Figure 17. Confederate blockade-running routes.



Figure 18. The great J.S. anchor mystery.



Figure 19. John Slidell, Confederate Commissioner to France?

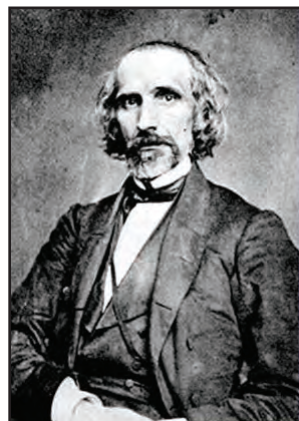


Figure 20. James Seddon—Confederate Secretary of War?

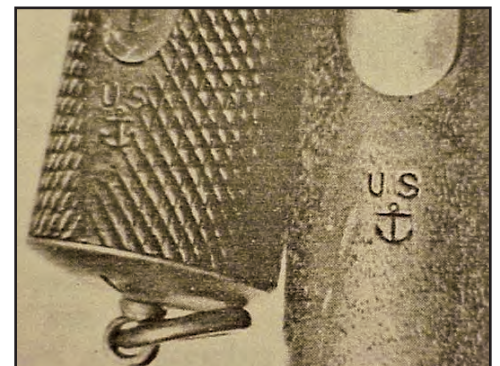


Figure 22. J.S.—Modified U.S.?





Figure 23. Stockmaker J. Smiles.



Figure 24. J.S. Anchor marked Enfield Stock.

the product, identifying it as your product and getting paid. I have seen Kerr revolvers with the JS Anchor marking done very lightly, very deeply, double hit, even one that had been stamped upside down. Despite this, the grip was still installed and shipped, as that's what war expedient manufacturing is all about—getting the product out.

This, to me, seems logical as it would also explain why not all Kerrs shipped to the Confederacy had this marking. It is very likely that London Armory would have engaged Smiles as the primary grip maker, but also purchased grips from secondary makers as needed (Figure 25). So, to answer the second question, are all Confederate issued Kerrs JS Anchor marked? It is my opinion the answer is no. The most relevant marking on a Kerr to identify it as a Confederate issued gun would be the serial number range.

To turn the question around and ask, "Are all JS Anchor marked Kerrs Confederate?" I would say yes. My reason for saying this is twofold. First, if we assume that the London Armory farmed out the grip manufacture to J. Smiles, it would have likely done so in reaction to the need to greatly increase production for the Confederacy. If it was only turning out 100 guns for the Sussex Volunteers, they would not have had a need to subcontract. But, if they knew every one they could make would be purchased, that is a strong incentive to have an outside source. Second, the serial number ranges where I have encountered the JS Anchor marking would fit the 9,000 gun paradigm of delivery that is logically correct.

In checking my serial number records for Kerrs I have either owned or observed and taken notes on, out of 66 guns in the serial number range of 1,050 to 10,164—those being the lowest and highest numbered guns with J.S. Anchor markings I have ever seen—56 of them (or 85%) had the JS Anchor mark and 10, or 15%, did not. Why would there be 15% of guns shipped without the marking? Again, the most likely answer is the London Armory used a secondary source for grips, possibly even pulling from their own inventory as they were found in boxes around

the factory and mixed in. Having worked in gun factories and been in dozens of them, the concept of the perfect factory keeping perfect inventories and perfect records is a myth. If somebody found 50 grips from an earlier run, the plant manager is not going to say, "Whoa, these don't have the J.S. marking, that's going to screw up collectors 150 years from now, go burn them in the stove." He would have said, "Put them in the pile to get assembled," and off they would have gone.

Perhaps as a gun maker I am biased to this opinion, but I believe this explanation to be the most likely. Sometimes in the absence of hard evidence, one must be guided by logic and this, to me, seems logical, but again, there is no definitive proof.

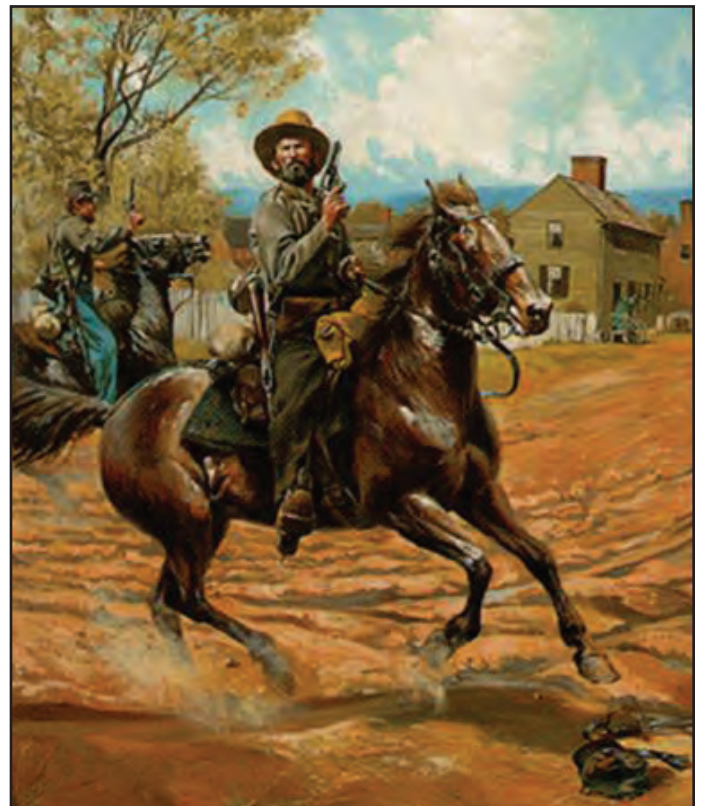


Figure 25. What makes a Kerr Confederate?



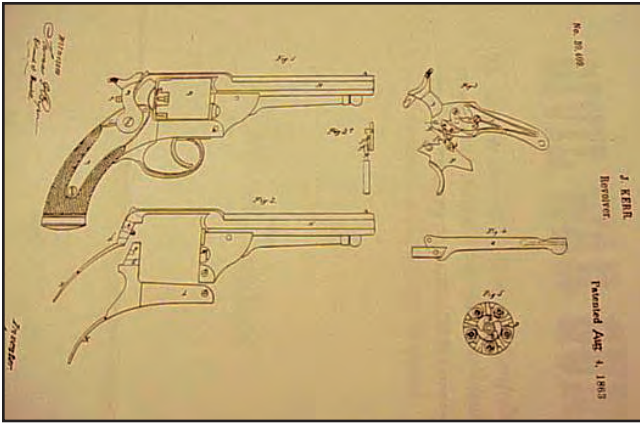


Figure 26. Kerr's U.S. Patent 39,409 August 4th, 1863.

## END OF THE LONDON ARMORY—BANK OF ENGLAND AND SPANISH KERRS

As early as 1863, James Kerr may have recognized that there was a good possibility the Union was going to emerge victorious over the Confederacy for in on August 4, 1863, Kerr was awarded US Patent number 39409 for his revolver, indicating his concern to protect his design after a Union victory (Figure 26). Only an arms dealer could have the kind of faith to allow him to believe that one side of a conflict would gladly continue buying the same weapons from the same source that supplied their bitter and defeated enemy.

By this time as well, the London Armory had moved to a new plant in Victoria Park Mills, while the old factory was offered for sale to Caleb Huse and the Confederacy (Figure 27). The Confederate Government considered moving the factory to Macon, Georgia or offshore to Bermuda, but decided that the risk of running the Union blockade with machinery was too high. There was also a concern as to how to find sufficient skilled workmen to run the factory. The concept of Rosie the Riveter was still about 90 years away. They elected to put their funds into finished weapons rather than ownership of the factory. General Josiah Gorgas, Chief of Confederate Ordnance (and Caleb Huse's boss), lamented,



Figure 27. General Josiah Gorgas, Chief of Confederate Ordnance.

faced dire times. After failing to establish any new clients of significance, the doors were closed in April of 1866, just one year after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox.

Despite the myth that the London Armory went bankrupt due to the Confederate states not paying its debt, the Confederacy's European bankers did in fact pay all debts, even though it meant financial ruin for them. (I guess bankers were different then.) It appears the liquidation was actually tied to a larger issue with British banks at the time having liquidity issues. Rather than try and sell the company as an ongoing concern, it is believed that the shareholders merely liquidated the assets to shore up these other financial obligations. (In that regard, I guess bankers have not changed.)

Like any good arms merchant, James Kerr continued in the firearms business, selling Kerr revolvers assembled from existing stock, his most notable customer being the Bank of England, possibly for their guards much the same way Wells Fargo purchased Schofield revolvers in the 1880s (Figure 29). The James Kerr Company continued to sell arms for many years afterwards, and was the official armorer for the British National Rifle Association.

The factory itself is believed to have been sold to a company in Eibar, Spain based on the markings of both percussion and cartridge revolvers of the Kerr design (Figure 30). I



Figure 28. Confederate states lay down arms.



Figure 29. Bank of England markings on Kerr Topstrap.



have owned and seen two different types of Spanish-made revolvers of the Kerr design. The first was a true percussion gun that appears to be made from existing stock of British parts. The second was a transition model that appears to be a conversion of a percussion gun to a true cartridge revolver in 12mm. It is not known how many Spanish Kerrs were made, but they are infrequently encountered. In twenty years of walking gun shows and scanning auction catalogs, I would estimate I have seen one cartridge Kerr for every 10 British percussion guns. Based on that, I would estimate the number made is perhaps one to two thousand pieces.

James Kerr passed away in 1888, leaving behind the legacy of manufacturing the most widely used revolver of the Confederate States of America.

### KERR DESIGN, VARIATIONS AND PROGRESSIONS

So, what of the Kerr design itself? Was it any good? Judging it against its contemporaries, it is a fairly innovative revolver with several unique features (Figure 31). Its most unique feature is the side-lock design, allowing easy access to its internal workings to repair and replace parts, unlike

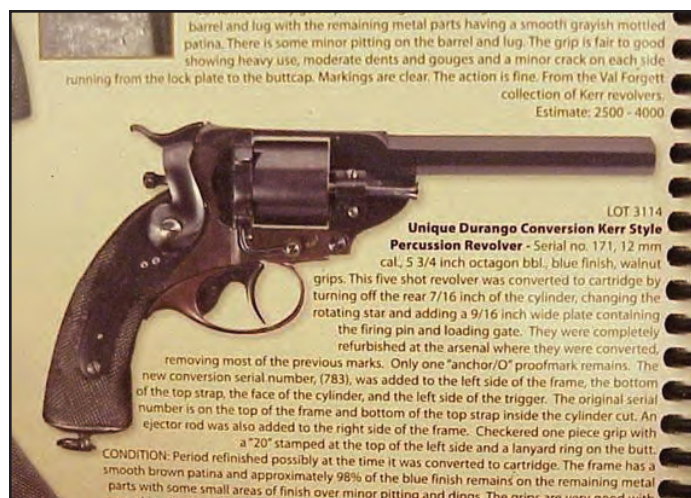


Figure 30. Spanish Kerr revolver.



Figure 32. Side hammer.

Colts or Remingtons of the period that required more advanced disassembly for repair (Figure 32). Its side-hammer design also made for ease of replacement if the hammer was damaged or broken, again, a far better design than others of the day (Figure 33). Finally, the cylinder pin is accessed from the breech, making disassembly safer, particularly if the gun is still loaded.

A perfect example of the perils of disassembling a loaded gun is documented in my father's LeMat book, where Lt. Simeon Cummings of the *CSS Alabama* was accidentally killed disassembling the gun (Figure 34). Lemat's frame key is located in front of the cylinder, and it is likely Cummings had the gun pointing directly at him when it discharged, killing him instantly.

On the negative side, Kerrs were 5-shot revolvers, while most all .36 and .44 caliber revolvers of its time were 6-shot (Figure 35). The Kerr mechanism also appears to be more fragile than Colts or Remingtons as most every Kerr I have ever encountered had broken springs.

Kerrrs were made in both .44 and .36 caliber, or 54 and 80 bore as the British refer to it, with full octagonal barrels (Figure 36). Kerrs could be produced in either single or dou-



Figure 31. Side lock design.



Figure 33. Rear cylinder pin.



ble action, but the vast majority of guns produced were of single action design (Figure 37). Kerrs also had two distinct lever designs, shown here.

The Kerr had two different style frames, one with a flattop and one with a grooved top (Figure 38). The flattop models I have encountered are mostly very early and very

late numbered guns, but the vast majority of guns I have seen have the grooved top.

Standard markings included the engraving of "London Armory" on the lock (Figure 39); the right side of the frame was marked "Kerr's Patent", followed by the serial number (Figure 40). There had been early debate about if the numbers were actual serial numbers, of which there is no doubt they are. The confusion was likely due to US guns having their patent numbers marked in a similar location, thus causing this confusion.

The left side of the frame was marked "London Armory" (Figure 41). In earlier guns, this would sometimes be marked on the top strap as well (Figure 42).

Proof marks were placed on the top left flat of the barrel as shown (Figure 43).

These are what would be considered the 'standard' Kerr markings and variants. I would like to finish my presentation by showing the progression of Kerr revolvers as I have witnessed them in the guns I have owned, to demonstrate the variations I have encountered in designs and markings.

Serial number 1: As I earlier stated, this gun has a fairly unique grip shape and features that I have only



Figure 34. Lt. Cumming's Lemat—Front frame key.



Figure 35. 5-Shot cylinder.



Figure 36. .44 cal (54 bore) and .36 caliber (80 bore).

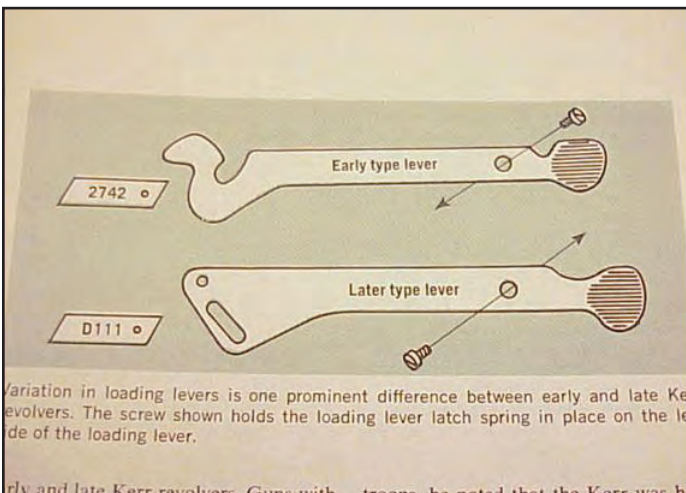


Figure 37. Kerr early and late lever designs.



Figure 38. Flattop (top) and grooved (bottom) topstraps.



encountered in one other Kerr, Serial Number 12 (Figure 44). This gun is in .44 caliber. I have tried to photograph it to show all the features discussed, including the oversized screws, grip cap, hammer block and dovetailed front sight.

Serial number 2: This gun has the grooved top as discussed, and is almost entirely unmarked except for the marking "Kerr's Patent No. 2" on the right side (Figure 45), in the



Figure 39. Standard lock marking.



Figure 41. London Armoury marking.



Figure 43. Kerr proofmarks.

same spot as all others, but in a unique pattern and font, a Belgium proof marked (Figure 46). This is a unique variant I have not encountered another type of. Unlike serial number 1, this gun is in .36 caliber.

Serial number 6: This gun has the same grip shape as serial number 1, but has the grooved top and, unlike serial number 1, is in .36 caliber and does not have the hammer block (Figure 47).

Serial number 59: The earliest cased model I have encountered, here we see the classic Kerr revolver grip shape and grooved top strap and .36 caliber bore (Figure



Figure 40. Serial number marking (not Patent #).



Figure 42. Early topstrap marking.



Figure 44. Kerr serial number 1.



48). This was one of 100 guns made for the Sussex Artillery Volunteers and marked on the grip cap as shown (Figure 49).

Serial number 328: The same as 59 with the exception of no Sussex markings (Figure 50). This was also the first Kerr I ever purchased, the one for \$400. One should note the improvised lanyard loop installed on the grip (Figure 51). Although it does not fit the serial number range, judging by the condition of this gun and the lanyard, I would put this gun in that famous, nebulous category of “possibly Confederate.”

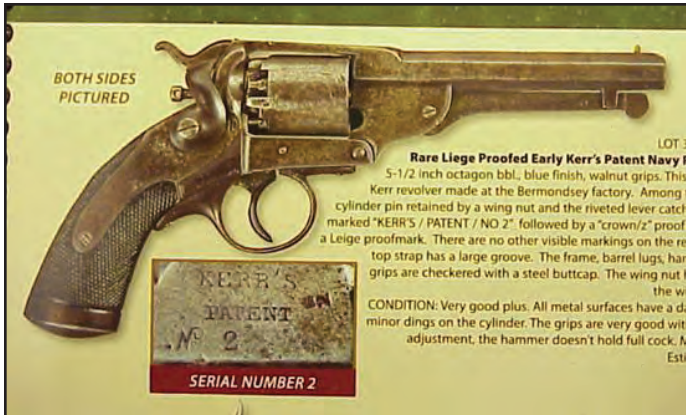


Figure 45. Kerr serial number 2—right side.

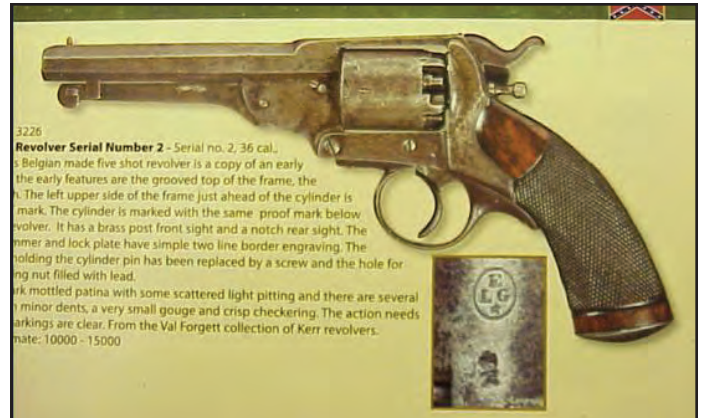


Figure 46. Kerr serial number 2—left side.

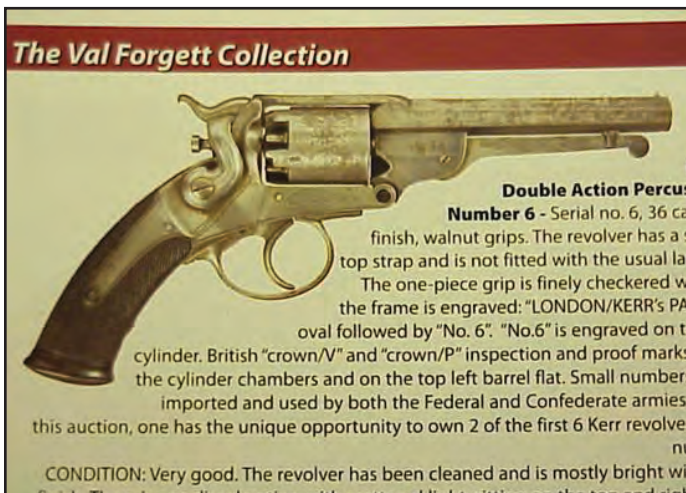


Figure 47. Kerr serial number 6.



Figure 48. Cased Kerr serial number 59.



Figure 49. Kerr serial number 59—grip cap.



Figure 50. Kerr serial number 328.



J.S. Anchor Serial number 4596: I had owned 12 J.S. Anchor marked Kerrs, this one falling in the middle of the series to show as a typical example in design and marking of Kerrs manufactured for export to the Confederacy (Figure 55).

The highest numbered Kerr with the J.S. Anchor marking I ever encountered was serial number 10164. The next highest gun I owned was 10172, which did not have the

marking, nor does serial number 11011, indicating it is likely that the JS marking ended at this time.

#### CASED CONFEDERATE KERRS

All of the cased Kerrs I have ever encountered, with the exception of 1, were serial numbered below or above Confederate contract guns (Figure 56). We saw serial number 59 previously; here are a few more examples:

Serial number 814: This is an outstanding factory engraved cased Kerr (Figure 57). This gun is in .36 caliber and has the rarely seen hammer block.

Serial number 3351: In a red velvet case with London Armory seal, J.S. Anchor marked (Figure 58). This is a unique cased gun in that the casing material is burgundy whereas all other examples I have seen of cased Kerr revolvers are in Kelly green. It is possible this was a presentation gun for the Confederacy as the gun is properly serial numbered and marked to be Confederate. It is also possible it was cased post-war.

Serial number 10,620: An example of a post-Civil War manufactured cased Kerr (Figure 59).

Serial number 10,715: Again, a classically cased gun (Figure 60), but this is the flattop model in .44 caliber with the Bank of England marking on the top strap (Figure 61), which is the only marked example I have ever seen.



Figure 51. Kerr serial number 328—improved lanyard loop.



Figure 52. Kerr serial number 631.



Figure 54. Kerr serial number 1178 anchor marking.



Figure 53. Kerr serial number 1178.

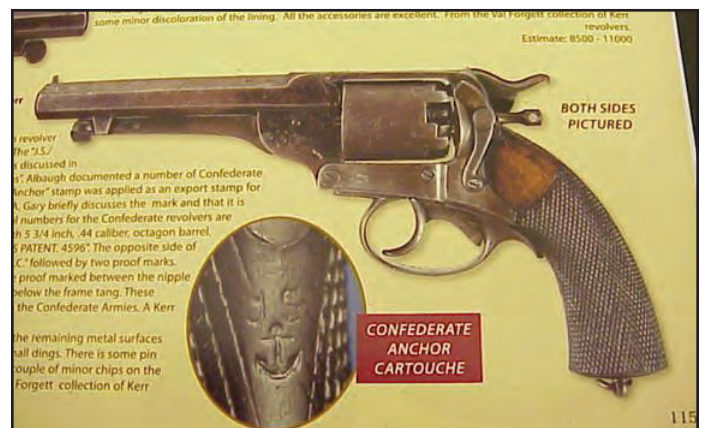


Figure 55. Kerr serial number 4596.



## SPANISH KERRS

Serial number 4010: This is identical to a London Armoury Kerr, with the exception of a small amount of engraving on the frame and the presence of the marking "Fabrica De Durango," signifying its manufacture in Spain (Figure 62).



Figure 56. Kerr serial number 814.



Figure 57. Kerr serial number 814 engraving detail.



Figure 59. Kerr serial number 10,620.



Figure 58. Kerr serial number 3351.



Figure 60. Kerr serial number 10,715—Bank of England.

Serial number 171: A fully converted Kerr revolver to 12mm (Figure 63). The conversion appears to have been done by turning back the rear of the cylinder, modifying the rotating star and adding a plate that contains the firing pin and loading gate, almost a fixed frame version of a Kirsck conversion.

Of the hundreds of Kerrs I have handled, the Spanish cartridge ones have consistently shown the least amount of wear and use.

My entire adult life I have collected Kerrs and been involved in the replica firearms business. That combination has often led to people asking me, "Navy Arms makes a LeMat revolver, why don't you make a Kerr replica?" (Figure 64) The business answer is that I'm not sure we could sell the 5,000 units it would take to recoup our tooling costs. The emotional answer is, "Well, we do sell other guns from the War of Northern Aggression, so, we might."

Having owned some outstanding Kerrs and assembling what I believe to be a very good collection and learned everything I could on them, I sold all my Kerrs and am looking to get into lever guns of the lesser makers. But, like many in this room who still own their first gun, I did keep that first \$400 gun, as my example.





Figure 61. Detail on Bank of England engraving.



Figure 62. Spanish Kerr serial number 4010—percussion.

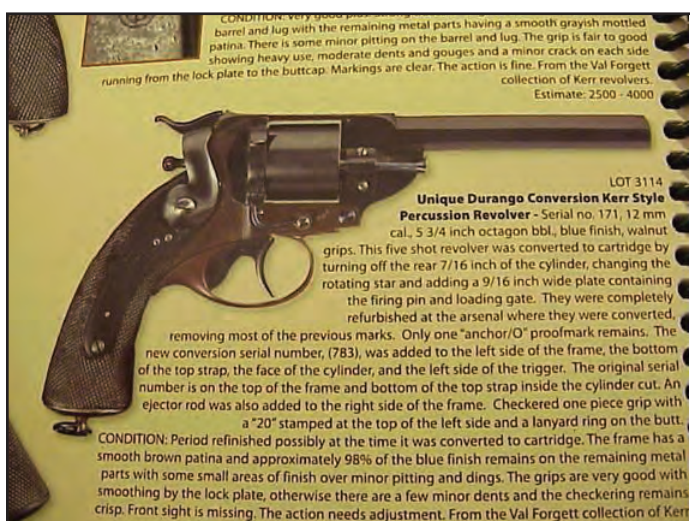


Figure 63. Spanish Kerr serial number 171—12mm cartridge.



Figure 64. A Navy arms Kerr???

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