

# THE LONDON-MADE '51 COLT NAVY WITH A COMPARISON TO ITS HARTFORD-MADE COUNTERPART

By Nathan L. Swayze

Although the talk that I am making today is on the '51 Colt Navy, this talk does not conflict with, or overlap, that talk that I made on the '51 Colt Navies at the Fall meeting of the Society held in Houston, Texas in 1971. That talk consisted of the physical characteristics of the four models made at the Hartford factory, while my talk today is confined to the three models known as the "London models", two of which were made in the London Armory, with a comparison of the standard London model to the Hartford-made models.

Too much history, I know, is boring; however, a bit of background is appropriate to see why, and how, Sam Colt became involved in his ill fated London venture.

Sam Colt has been described as a man of many characteristics, and most of them are probably true. A possible combination of a keen mind, restless spirit and built-in sales ability kept Colt constantly searching for additional markets for his sturdy revolvers.

The Hartford factory was firmly established and sales were exceedingly good. Colt's thoughts began to drift towards his possible share of the English gun market. He had taken out patents in London as early as 1835. His sales of guns, however, had been hindered by such things as import duties and tariff restrictions. Nothing definite had been done about manufacturing his guns in England. Colt realized that establishing a factory in England would present many problems; however, none of these obstacles were too great to overcome British objections to "foreign" American guns. To Colt, the only true answer to this problem was to produce his guns in England, using English labor and material.

Colt's first opportunity came in May 1851, when the Great Exhibition was held in the Crystal Palace in London. The Exhibition was to show superiority of British manufacture in several lines. The displays were not limited to British products only, because several other countries — including the United States — were invited to display. Items to be on exhibit were to be duty free. Colt needed no personal invitation to take advantage of this opportunity to set in motion his plans to promote his guns in England.

Most of the English gunmakers displayed only a few highly ornate arms, but, as usual, Colt took a different approach where his display was concerned. Several magnificent Colt weapons were



put on display; however, in addition to this, Colt brought over several hundred (duty free) revolvers, many being plain, unengraved models. The size of his display — if nothing else — was quite impressive.

Colt's decision to go "all out" on his Great Exhibition display was apparently a good one. From the very first, certain events — for Colt — took a good turn. It was during the exhibition that Colt became acquainted with — and cultivated the friendship of — Charles Manby. Manby was Secretary of the Institute of Civil Engineers. Colt immediately recognized the fact that here was a man who very definitely could be of help to him in the future. Cultivating Manby's friendship was not too difficult, because Manby spent a great deal of time at Colt's booth. A combination of Colt's interchangeability-of-parts system and the fact that the guns were made by machinery held a fascination for Manby.

A few bottles of booze (which Colt conveniently kept under the counter) were possibly of some help when Army and Navy officers — and other potential customers — dropped by to see Colt's display.

Another event occurred shortly after the opening of the Exhibition which, in the long run, was to be of help to Colt. After seeing — and hearing about — Colt's weapons, the Admiralty requested the Board of Ordnance to procure a few of Colt's weapons for testing. This was done, and Colt's revolvers were tested against Robert Adams' (of Deane, Adams and Deane) double action revolvers. At the time, public accounts of the outcome of the trial were a bit hazy, with the only report coming from Deane, Adams and Deane. Naturally, this report claimed the Adams' revolver came out best in the trial. In any event, Colt's guns were not recommended — and this hurt Colt. Never one to "say die", Colt came back fighting harder than ever. He resorted to one of his old and time-tested methods — bribery, to put it bluntly!

Although Colt's guns were in London on a duty-free basis while on display, he requested permission to withdraw some of his revolvers from his display. Stretching the truth just a bit, Colt wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury, Sir Charles Trevelyan, on October 15, 1851. He requested among other things, permission to withdraw "fifty pistols, assorted sizes, engraved and highly finished, which it is my wish to present to various distinguished gentlemen in England". He further stated: "About 250 pistols in assorted sizes — in my showcases at the Exhibition for the purchase of which I have received applications from many officers of the Army and Navy and other distinguished gentlemen in England whom I would like to gratify — and whom I have promised to notify if permitted to dispose of them." The "original five per-center" was back in the groove — doing business in the usual way!

Colt's greatest opportunity came on October 25, 1851, when he made his famous talk before the Institute of Civil Engineers. In his talk, Colt primarily stressed his method of making guns by machinery, in comparison to the "old fashioned" method used by the European gunmakers, who farmed out parts manufacture to various individuals who made these parts in their homes, shops, etc. Colt actually belittled this European "farm out" system by stating that women, and even children, could successfully work on his assembly line. This remark was certainly an offence to the age old British system of "apprenticeship".

Colt's rival, Robert Adams, was in the audience, and Adam's firm was still using the "old fashioned" system of gunmaking. Colt realized that he was treading on thin ice; however, in spite of this, he "took the bull by the horns" and waded in with both fists flying. At one point, Robert Adams suddenly rose to his feet and started lecturing in rebuttal to some of Colt's statements. Adams was probably justified in losing his patience, and temper, for Colt made several remarks aimed at belittling the double action, or self-cocking, revolver of Adams! He pointed out that so much pressure had to be exerted on the trigger (to self-cock the weapon) that the aim was naturally affected.

Another situation arose that helped Colt a great deal. Robert Adams proceeded to give his account of the shooting trial between his revolver and Colt's Revolver, and this report was favorable to his (Adams') revolver. Irked by Adams remarks, Sir Thomas Hastings (a member of the Board of Ordnance) who also attended the meeting, rose to speak and reminded those present that Adam's report of the trial was unofficial. Other members of the Institute then made some complimentary remarks regarding Colt's revolvers.

Feeling more confident regarding the future of his guns in England, Colt began in earnest to establish his London Armory.

After hiring Charles Manby as his agent, Colt opened offices and showrooms at No. 1, Spring Gardens. Manby finally located a suitable building on the Thames Bank near the Vauxhall Bridge (figure 1). This photo shows the building in London that Colt occupied from 1853 until 1857. Many changes have been made in the building since Colt's occupancy; however, the gateway is original.

And now that a bit of history is behind us, let's get into the two models made in the London Armory. I break these down into two categories, which can be identified and described as follows: (1) *Early Londons*: These were the ones that were the first to be assembled in London, mostly from parts sent over from the Hartford factory. (2) *London-Londons*: or you might prefer to call them *Later-Londons*, or maybe *Standard-London* would be better terminology. These are the ones that were produced in the London Armory, having the usual London characteristics of iron backstraps and iron trigger guards, high rounded screw heads, and the "U" non-beveled type loading notch in the barrel lug, etc.

At this point, I might add that the following information is based on the survey made when writing my book several years ago. I have not done any further research along this line, so there is always the possibility that those who have continued study in this same field could possibly have uncovered other facts that would not

Figure 1: Colt factory on the Thames bank near Vauxhall Bridge.





Figure 2: Early London, serial #1.

Opposite, Figure 3:

necessarily coincide 100% with the information developed in my survey.

*Early Londons:* Figure 2 shows Early London, serial # 1. This gun was formerly in the collection of the late Harry Knode.

Shortly after acquisition of my first Early London, the thought occurred as to how many variations might exist in this particular model.

When I wrote my book on the Model 1851 Colt Navy several years ago, the technical information was secured from a survey that was obtained by designing a "fill in the blanks" 4" x 6" card that contained 25 different characteristics of the '51 Colt Navy that were subject to variation. A card was completed on each Navy inspected. When an Early London was encountered, additional information was jotted down on back of the card. It soon became apparent, however, that there just weren't too many Early Londons laying around! This is certainly understandable, for the production of this particular model wasn't too

great — approximately 2100. The only alternative was to resort to a mail survey. A questionnaire was designed based on the Early London in my collection. This form, or questionnaire, was in a three columnar format, with the first column listing 21 characteristics subject to variation. The second, or middle column, was used to answer the questions from my Early London. The third column was left blank with the request to the owner to complete that column from his Early London. The only reason for giving such detailed information on how the survey was conducted, was the thought that if any of you should be contemplating research on an antique arm, this system might be of some help.

It is a known fact that antique gun collectors are the finest and most cooperative group; however, it was certainly brought home to me in conducting this survey. All but one person enthusiastically completed that third column, and returned the form immediately.

SERIAL NUMBER	BBL. LENGTH	LOAD. NOTCH	BBL. LUG	BBL. ADDRESS	DISTANCE BETWEEN ARROWS	L/L SCR. ENTERS FROM	LOCATION L/L SER. NO.	BACK STRAP	TRIGGER GUARD	NUMBER ON TRIG. GUARD	SIZE OF CYLINDER PIN
1	<u>6¼"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>2"</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>None</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
23	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/B</u>	1	<u>Small</u>
40	<u>7½"</u>	<u>Bev.</u>	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/R</u>	1	<u>Small</u>
76	<u>7½"</u>	V	<u>Thin</u>	<u>Early New York</u>	<u>2¼"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	<u>Small</u>
77	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	1	<u>Small</u>
87	<u>7½"</u>	V	<u>Thin</u>	<u>Early New York</u>	<u>2½"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	<u>Small</u>
99	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/R</u>	1	Large
167	<u>7½"</u>	V	<u>Thin</u>	<u>Early New York</u>	<u>2¼"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass	None	<u>Small</u>
181	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	1	Large
189	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
199	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	1	Large
208	<u>7½"</u>	V	<u>Thin</u>	<u>Early New York</u>	<u>2½"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R		Large
269	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
325	<u>5½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/B</u>	1	Large
342	<u>7½"</u>	V	<u>Thin</u>	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/B</u>	1	Large
387	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/B</u>	1	Large
476	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	<u>Brass S/R</u>	1	<u>Small</u>
826	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
947	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1016	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>2"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1129	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1317	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	<u>Small</u>
1326	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	
1385	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1396	<u>7½"</u>	<u>Bev.</u>	<u>Thin</u>	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1446	<u>7⅜"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>2⅛"</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Length</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1504	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	<u>Iron</u>	<u>Iron</u>	None	
1617	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	Right	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
1907	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>2¼"</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
2079	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Across</u>	Brass	Brass S/R	None	Large
2209	<u>7½"</u>	<u>Bev.</u>	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Across</u>	<u>Iron</u>	<u>Iron</u>	None	Large
2698	<u>7½"</u>	V	Thick	London	<u>1⅞"</u>			<u>Iron</u>	<u>Iron</u>		Large

Figure 3

The chart shown above is a condensed version of information received from the mail survey on Early London Models. All of the information received is not shown; however, the most important data is given. Those characteristics in bold represent variations from the basic, or standard, model.

Figure 4

Basic Characteristics	Variations
1. 7 1/2" Barrel	5 1/2" and 6 3/4" Barrel
2. "V" type (non-beveled Loading notch in Barrel Lug	Beveled Loading notch
3. Address. Col: Colt. London. (With Arrows)	Address Sam <sup>L</sup> Colt New York City (With Dashes)
4. Thick Barrel Lug	Thin Barrel Lug
5. Loading Lever Screw Enters From Right Side	Loading Lever Screw Enters From Left Side
6. Loading Lever Number Stamped Crossways and located in Middle of Flat Portion	Loading Lever Number Stamped Lengthways
7. Ormsby Signature on Cylinder	None
8. British Proof Marks in Usual Place	None
9. Colt Patent on Frame Set Far Back From Front End of Frame	None
10. English Type Hammer Knurling	"V" at Bottom Instead of Small Upward Curve
11. Brass Back Strap and Small Rounded Brass Trigger Guard	Brass Square Back Trigger Guard and Iron Back Strap and Iron Trigger Guard
12. Cylinder Pin Larger in Diameter	Cylinder Pin Smaller in Diameter
13. Hartford Type Screw Heads	None
14. "Colt's Patent" on Frame	None
15. Larger, Easier-to-Read Hartford Style Serial Number Stamping	None

The chart above shows the basic characteristics and variations of the Early London Model as developed from the mail survey. All of the guns included in the survey have the Ormsby signature on the cylinder, the usual British Proof marks, Colt's Patent stamping on the frame, Hartford type screw heads, and the easier-to-read Hartford style serial numbers.

Of course, data on so few Early Londons (about 35) does not necessarily present a true picture, yet it is a start, and data received from the survey showed a definite pattern had emerged permitting the delination of the basis characteristics and some of the variations. If several hundred had been included in the survey, a quite different picture might have emerged. Also, in conducting a mail survey, the possibility always exists that there will be differences of opinions, interpretation, honest mistakes can be made, and some of the guns may have been altered from their original state.

Figure 3 is a condensed version of the information received from the mail survey. You might not be able to read this on the screen; however, it will appear in the American Society Bulletin, for those of you who might be interested in studying it a bit closer. All of the information received from the survey is not shown; however, the most important data is included. Most of the columnar headings are self explanatory, but a few might bear further explanation. The sixth column "Distance between Arrows" is the distance between points of the arrows, or spear points. The column "Location L/L Serial Number" shows whether the serial number is stamped across, or lengthwise on the bottom of the loading lever. In the trigger guard column, the "S/R" means "small rounded", and the "S/B" means "square back". The "Number on T/G" doesn't refer to the serial number of the gun. This is a number that might, or might not, be stamped on the beveled front edge of the trigger guard directly above the serial number on the trigger guard. A theory has been advanced that this number represents a "batch" number, and those trigger guards with the numeral "I" were shipped to London in the first "batch". Of all the guns included in the survey that had numbers in this location, none were higher than "I". In the column headed "Size of Cylinder Pin", the "Small" means the diameter of the cylinder pin on the Hartford-made '51 Navies, and the "Large" means the slightly larger in diameter cylinder pins found on the London-made '51 Navies.

Those characteristics that are in heavier print, and underlined, are variations from the standard. In column two, note that three guns vary from the standard barrel length of 7½". Serial # 1 and serial # 325 could have had their barrels "chopped"; however, special order barrel lengths were not uncommon in Colt's operation. In the third column, note that three of the guns have beveled loading notches. Note in column four, "Barrel Lug", six are of the early thin type, while the rest are of the later thick type. Later on, a photo will be shown that will distinguish between the thin and thick type. In the fifth column, "Barrel Address", four have the New York address, while the rest have the London address. In the sixth column, there are several variances from the standard 1⅞". In the next column, the screw holding the loading lever entered from the right side, while only six entered from the left. The next column shows that

all serial numbers were stamped across the loading lever, with the exception of one that is stamped length-wise. The next column shows that all back straps were brass, with the exception of three that were iron. The trigger guard column shows mostly small rounded brass, with three brass square backs, and three that are made of iron. A few "batch" # 1 showed up in the next column. The last column mostly "larger in diameter" cylinder pins with seven of them being "smaller in diameter" types.

At this point, it appears that Colt did "scrape the bottom of the barrel" to send obsolete parts to London. First, the square back trigger guards shown in the third from right column must certainly have been obsolete. The square back trigger guards are on the First Model and Second Model '51 Navy, and only approximately 4200 of these two models were made. Next, the loading lever assembly was apparently obsolete. In the column entitled "Loading Lever Screw Enters From", we find that on six of them the screw enters from the left side. On the later navies, all the screw heads are on the right side. Why the loading lever screw, only, is on the left side, I'll never understand. It stands to reason that if a gun is to be disassembled, it is much more convenient to put the gun on the work bench, and remove the screws all from the same side. With one screw on the other side, the gun would have to be turned over. I'm sure Colt had a reason for this, but I've never been able to think up a good one.

Conversely, this trend of obsolete parts reverses itself in the column headed "Barrel Lug". Note that six have the thin barrel lugs, and the balance have the thick barrel lug. The thick lugs are an improvement, and they did not appear on the First and Second Model Square Back, or the Early Third Model.

With the information from the columnar chart in figure 4, we can now fairly well establish the basic characteristics and variations as developed from the mail survey. I won't go over each item of basic characteristics in the left column, and variations in the right column. This chart will appear in the Bulletin (along with the previous chart and all photos) for those of you who might be more interested in the details.

The columnar chart, as I previously advised, does not contain *all* the information from the mail survey — only the most pertinent information. Other information revealed that all guns in the survey have the Ormsby signature ("Engraved by W. L. Ormsby New York") on the cylinder, the Hartford type (flatter) screw heads, and the "easier to read" Hartford style serial numbers. The style on the later London model is a smaller, more severe, harder to read style. The Colt's Patent stamping apparently all came from the same die. There is an apostrophe between the "t" and "s" of Colts, and the "s" in Colts is broken about mid way. The top right arm of the first "t" in "Patent" is broken off. Serial number 1 and serial # 23 do not show these breaks in the die, but the next serial number in the



Figure 5: The "London-London" type which were made in London.

survey, (serial # 40), shows all of the breaks; so the breaks must have occurred between serial number 23 and 40. This same die was used on the balance of the Early Londons. As well as I could determine from the survey, most of the grips were the "Slim Jim" type found on the First and Second Model Square Backs, and into the Early Third model. The "Slim Jim" terminology comes from the thin diameter of the grips, which was thickened on the later models. They also have a distinct upward flair on each bottom side that gradually flattened out on later models.

Figure 5, the other category, or model, is the "London-London", or "Standard London", whichever you prefer. I use the term "London-London", because they were made in the London armory for sale on the London market. This is the model that was produced in the London armory having the usual London characteristics of iron back straps, large rounded iron trigger guards, high rounded screw heads, etc.

I'll give a quick run down on the London armory characteristics, and each characteristic will be dealt with more in detail when we get to the comparison of the London made and the Hartford made Navies.

If you are in a hurry, and don't have time to check other London armory characteristics, the quickest way to identify a London made Navy is to glance at the barrel address to see if the dashes (at each end of the barrel address) have points that resemble arrow, or spear, heads. If they do have these arrow or spear heads — it's London made. Figure 6 shows the two British proof marks, which are usually found on the left barrel housing just forward of the head of the barrel wedge, and alternately on the shoulders between the nipple recesses of the cylinder. These proof marks are the Crown over GP (left proof mark in picture) and Crown over V. The "GP" stands for "Gunmakers

Proof" and the "V" for "View". Both are marks of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers.

The front sight is the brass pin, or post type, the loading lever catch under the muzzle end of the barrel is the thin type, the barrel lug is the thick type, the loading notch in the barrel lug is the "V" non-beveled type, and many of them more closely resemble a "U" than a "V". The loading lever is standard, as well as the cylinder. The cylinder pin is slightly larger in diameter than the Hartford made Navy. The frame is the early or first type, that is, the percussion shield cut-out is located more on the lower one half of the percussion shield, and there is no cap slot. The Colt Patent stamping is the large type, and is set back further than on the Hartford models. Although the hammer is standard, the knurling on the spur is the usual cross hatch style; however, it is more symmetrical, deeper and is enclosed in an "inverted U." The back strap is iron, and the trigger guard is the larger rounded iron type. The one piece wood grips are the "Wasp waist" type, meaning there is a bulge in the curve. Also, the butt, on each side of the bottom of the back strap, has a distinctive upward flair. The style of the serial number stamping is the early smaller, severe, harder to read type. The screw heads are the high rounded type.

Figure 6: British proof on '51 Navy Colts

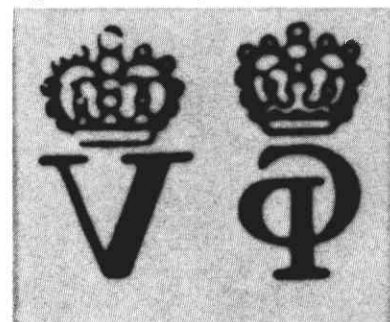




Figure 7: The "Hartford-London" made in Hartford for the London market.

flair. The style of the serial number stamping is the early smaller, severe, harder to read type. The screw heads are the high rounded type.

You will note that I have referred to only two London Models, and that is correct, for those two models are the only models made by Colt at the London Armory. There is a third category, or model if you prefer, and I call this particular Navy the "Hartford-London", because it was made in *Hartford* for the *London* market (figure 7). This model has the London barrel address, which is "Address Col. Colt London"; however, on this Hartford-London, the long dashes at the end of the barrel address *do not* have the arrow, or spear, heads. A photo of these two barrel addresses will be shown next, when the comparisons are made. This model has both brass and iron back straps, and brass and iron trigger guards.

And now let's get down to the last part of the title of this talk: With a Comparison to its Hartford-made Counterpart.

In comparing the variations in certain characteristics of the London-made Navy to the Hartford-made Navy, I am going to use the Standard London, rather than the Early London.

**Barrel Address:** In the figure 8 comparative photo, we see the barrel address of the London Navy, (top barrel), and the barrel address of the Hartford-London Navy, (bottom barrel). There are two primary differences in these two barrel addresses, First, as previously mentioned, note that the top barrel (London Address) has the two spear, or arrow, heads at each end of the long dashes, giving the appearance of two spears pointing to each end of the barrel address. The bottom barrel (Hartford-London) *does not* have the spear points. The second difference is in the punctuation marks used in each address. On the top barrel (London) there is a period after "Address", a Colon after "Col:", a period after

"Colt", and a period after "London". On the bottom barrel, (Hartford-London), there is only a period after "Col."

**Style of Serial Number Stamping:** In figure 9 we can see the difference in the two styles. The serial number stamping on the left is found on all London-made Navies, and I call this style the "smaller, severe, harder-to-read type." This same style was used on the Hartford models for the First Model Square Back, Second Model Square Back, and into the Early Third Model. The serial number style shown to the right is the style most frequently seen on the Hartford-made Navies, and I call this style the "larger, easier-to-read type." Beginning with the Early Third Model (about serial number 9200), this style was used until the end of production of the Navy.

**Front Sight:** In figure 10, all of the front sights noted on the London Navy were the brass pin, or post, type as shown on the top barrel in this photo. The Hartford Navies have not only the pin, or post, type, but also have the "dovetail" (middle barrel), and the "blade" (lower barrel) type front sights.

**Loading Lever Catch:** Figure 11 shows the loading lever catch, under the muzzle end of the barrel, on the London Navy is the "thin" type (upper barrel), while the Hartford Navies have both the "thin" and "thick" (lower barrel) type catches. The terminology "thin" and "thick" comes from the width of the catch where it is attached to the barrel. No differences were noted on the loading levers of the London and Hartford Navies.

**Loading Notch in Barrel Lug:** On the London Navy, the loading notch or "cut-out" (see figure 12) is the "V" non-beveled type (middle and upper barrel lug), while the Hartford Navies have the "V" non-beveled type, and the beveled type. (lower barrel lug). There is a distinct difference on many of the "V" non-beveled type loading notch on London Navies, for many of them more closely



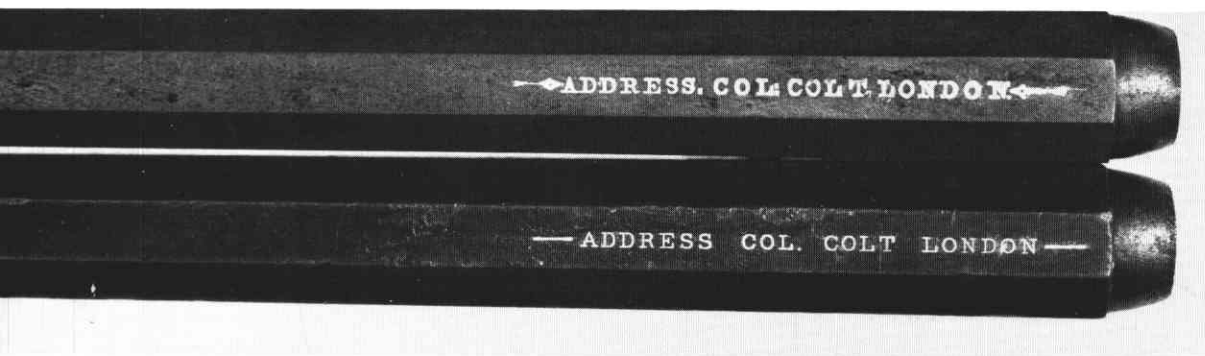


Figure 8: Barrel address comparison.

Figure 9: Serial number stamping comparison. London-made on left.

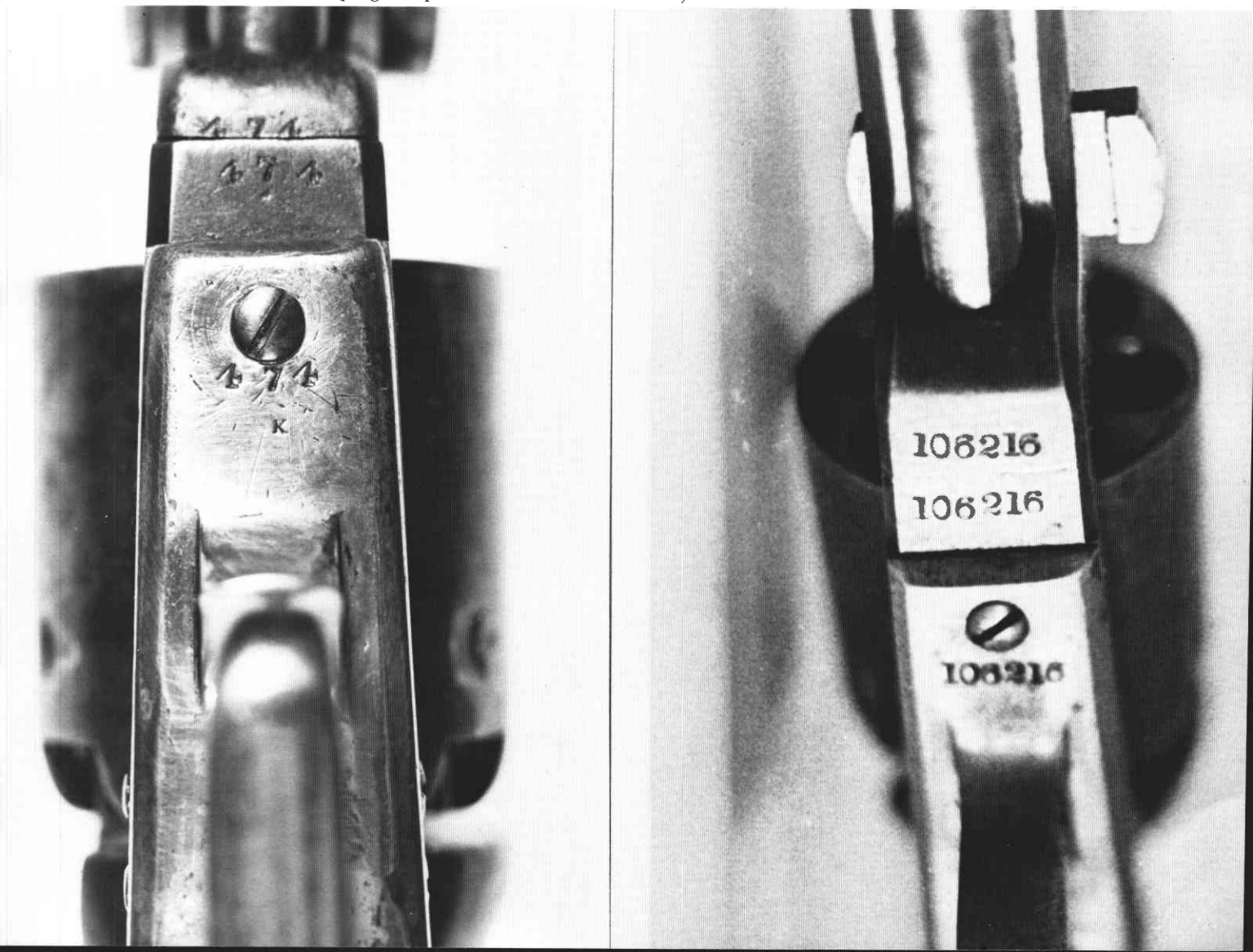
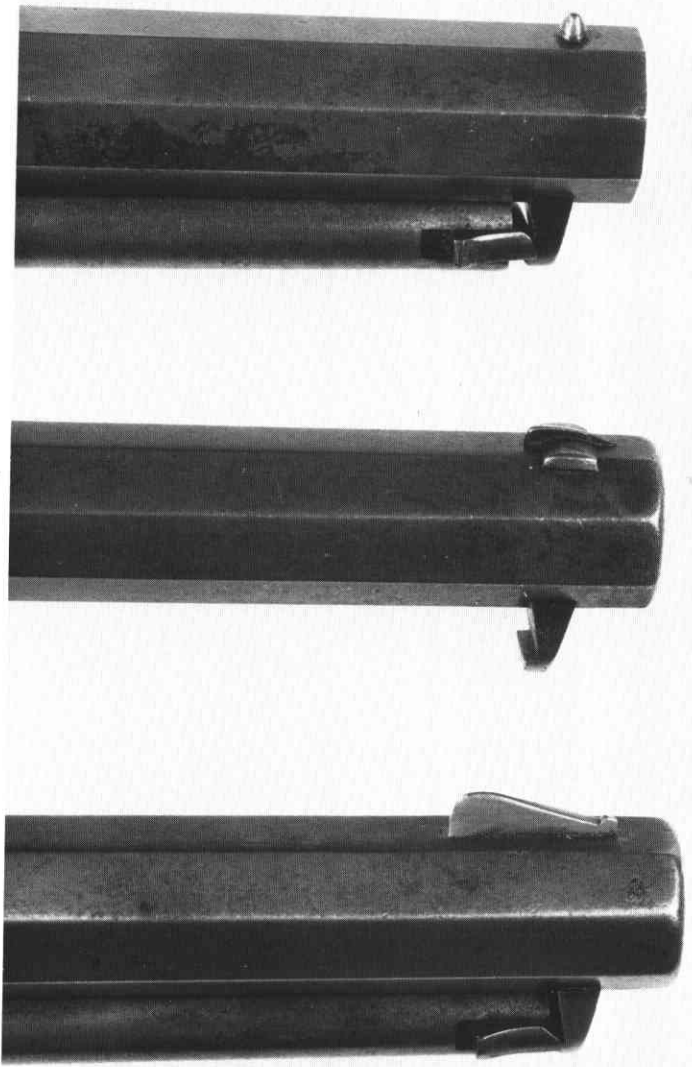


Figure 10: Front sight comparison; the London is at the top.



resemble a “U” than a “V”. I sometimes refer to these as the “bow legged “V”.

**Barrel Lug:** The barrel lug on the London Model is the “thick type” (lower barrel lug) (figure 13), while the Hartford models have both the “thick” and “thin” (upper barrel lug) lug. Again, the terminology “thin” and “thick” comes from the width of the lower portion, or spur, of the barrel lug.

**Frame:** The frame of the London model (figure 14) is the early type (upper frame), that is, the percussion shield cut-out is located more in the lower one half of the percussion shield, and there is no cap slot. The Hartford models have the early type frame, as well as the late type frame (lower frame). The late type frame has the percussion shield cut-out more in the center of the percussion shield, and a cap slot has been added.

Although some of the Hartford Navies have the four screw cut for stock frames, none were noted on the London Model.

**Colt Patent Stamping:** The London Model has the large type stamping, while the Hartford models have the larger type stamping, as well as some stampings with letters that are smaller. Although I do not know if this is true on all London models, on many of them the “S” in “Colts” is broken, and

the right arm of the first “T” in “Patent” is broken (stamping in upper photo) (figure 15). There is a slight difference in the location of the Colt Patent stamping on the London model in comparison to the Hartford models. The upper frame shows the stamping to be  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” back from the forward end of the trigger guard, and this is a London model. On the Hartford models, the earliest stamping (middle frame) is  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” back from the forward end of the trigger guard, and the later stampings (lower frame) were even with, or only slightly back, from the forward end of the trigger guard.

**Cylinder Pin:** I do not have a photo of the variation in diameter of the cylinder pin of the London model and the Hartford models, for this minute difference probably can’t be seen in a photograph. The cylinder pin of the London model is slightly larger in diameter than the cylinder pins on the Hartford models. About the only way to check this is to use a London model and a Hartford model, with neither one having had much use. The cylinder from the Hartford model will not slip all the way on the cylinder pin of the London model. Although some may dispute this variation, I have always found it to be true on those that I have checked.

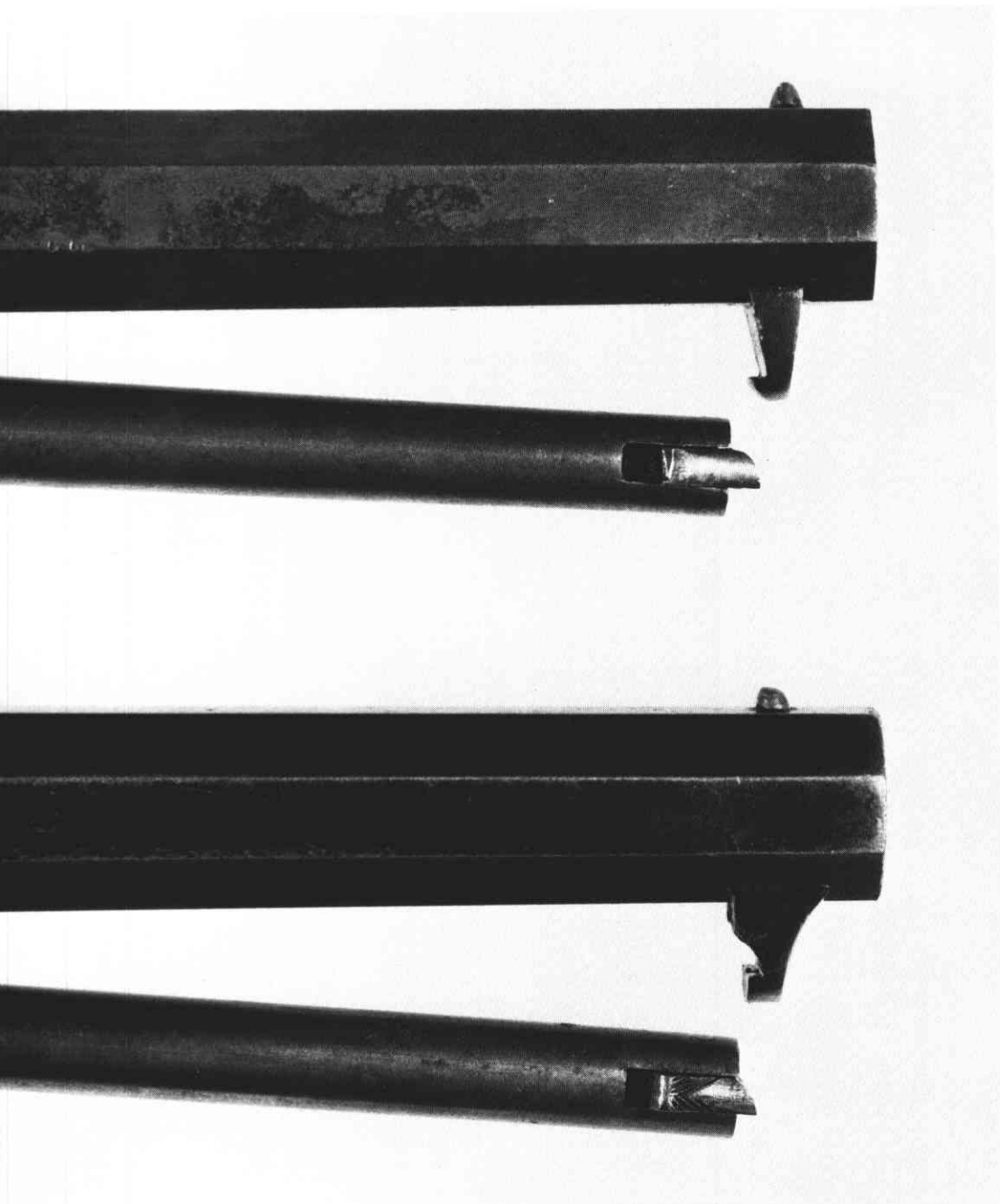


Figure 11: Loading lever catch comparison.  
London is at the top.

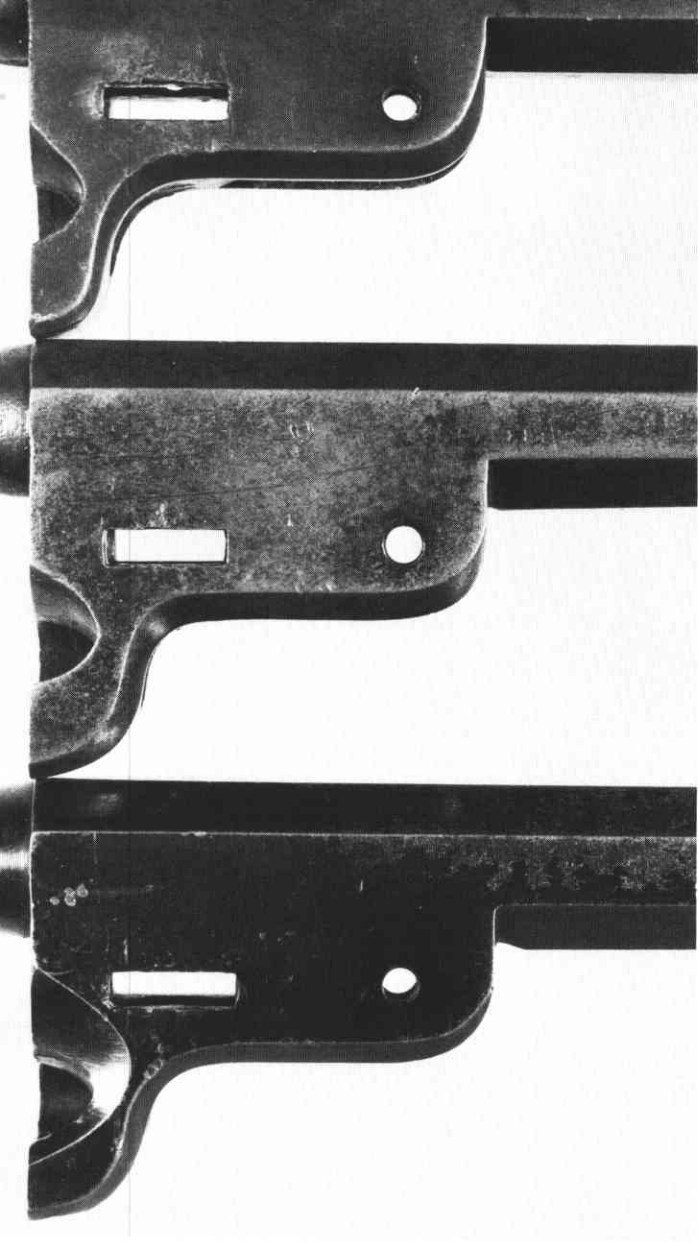


Figure 12: Loading notch in barrel lug comparison; London top two.

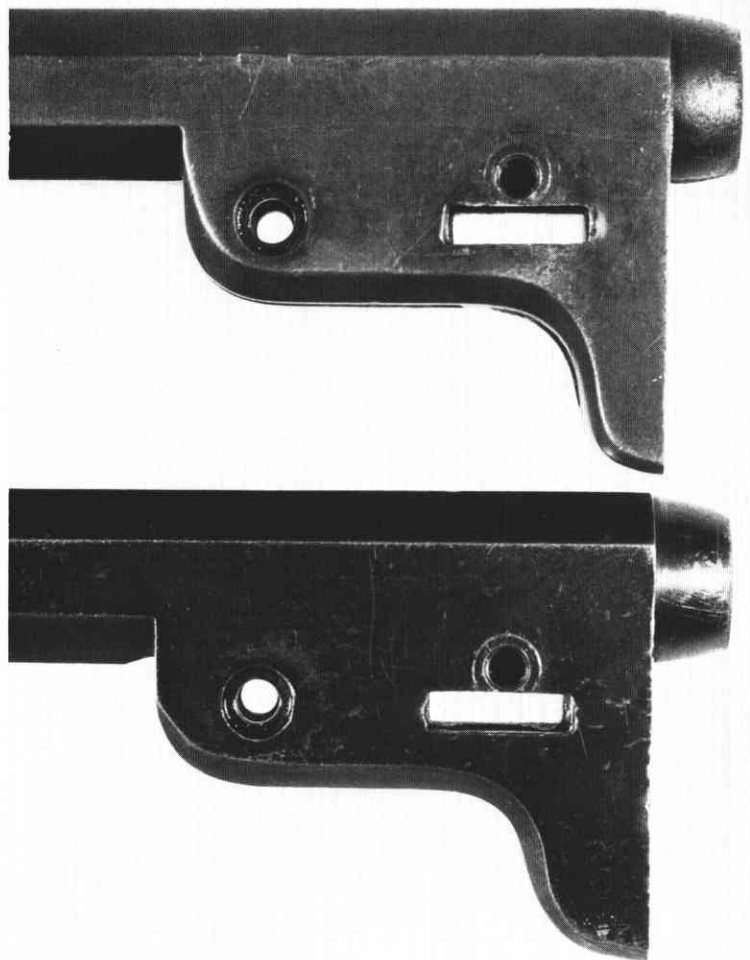
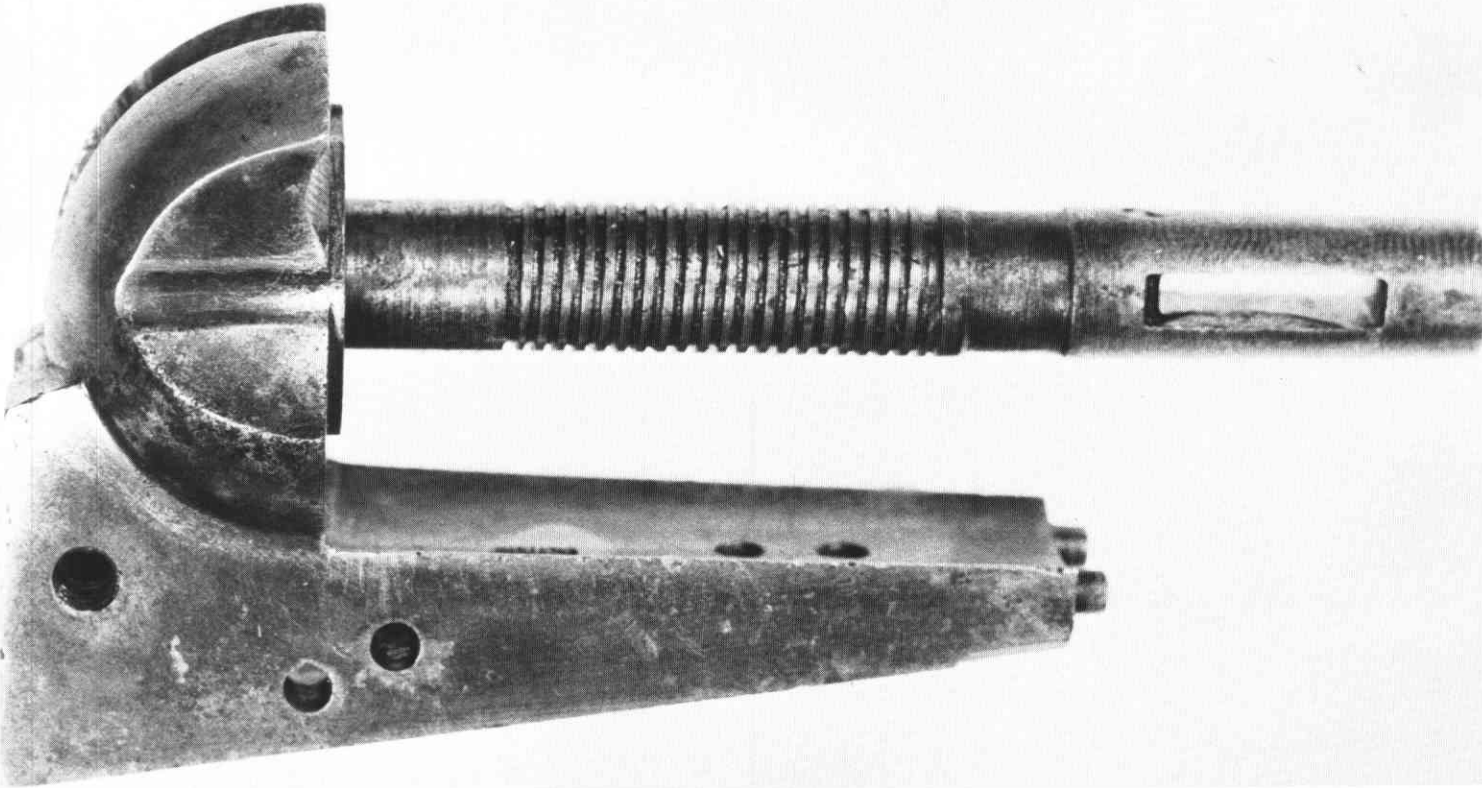
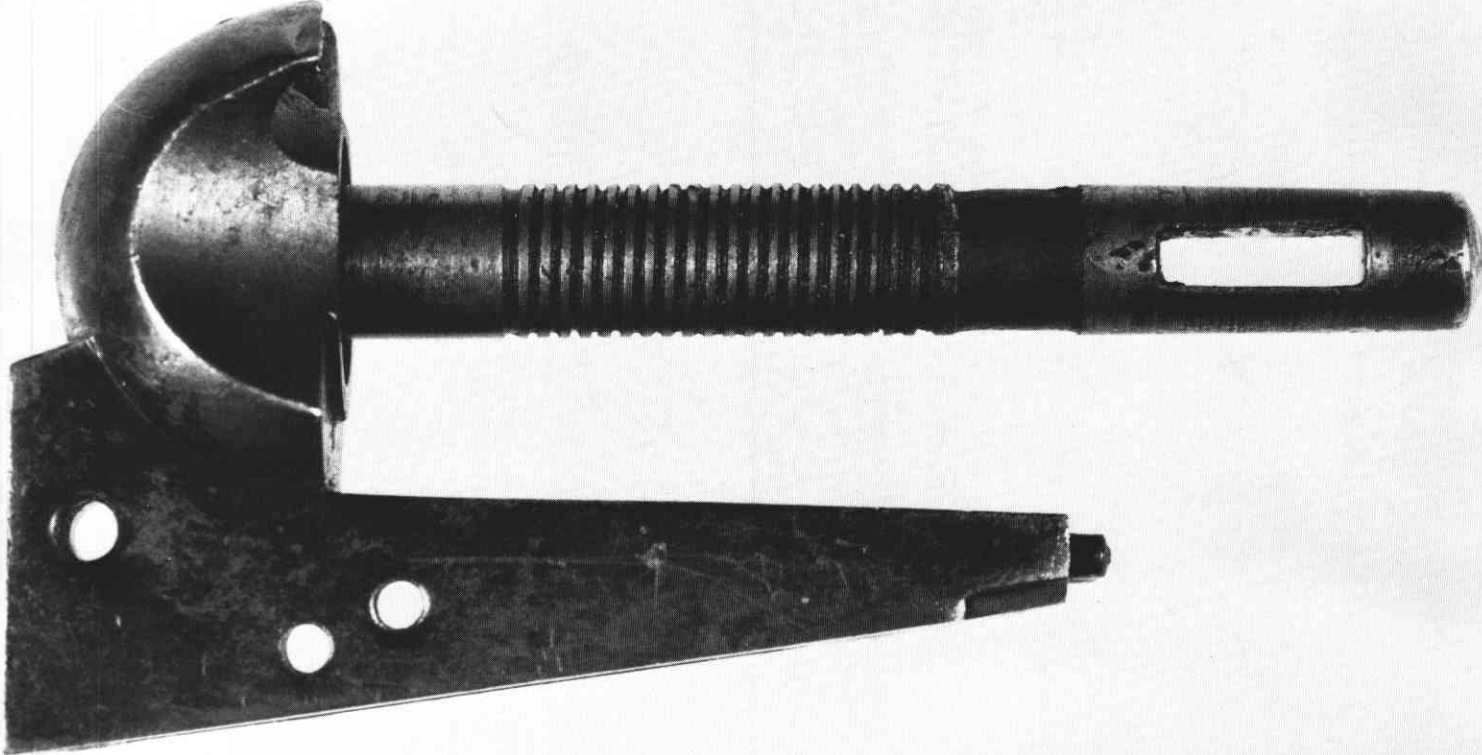


Figure 13: Barrel lug comparison.  
London is lower example.

Figure 14: Frame comparison. London is the upper example.



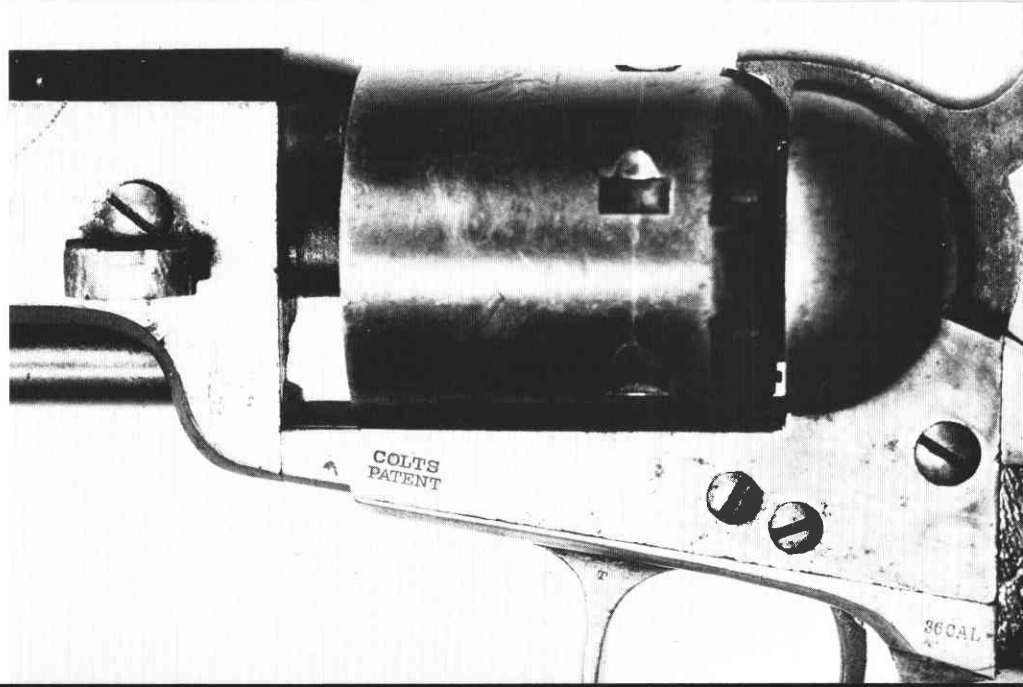


Figure 15: Colt patent stamping comparison. Upper is the London example.

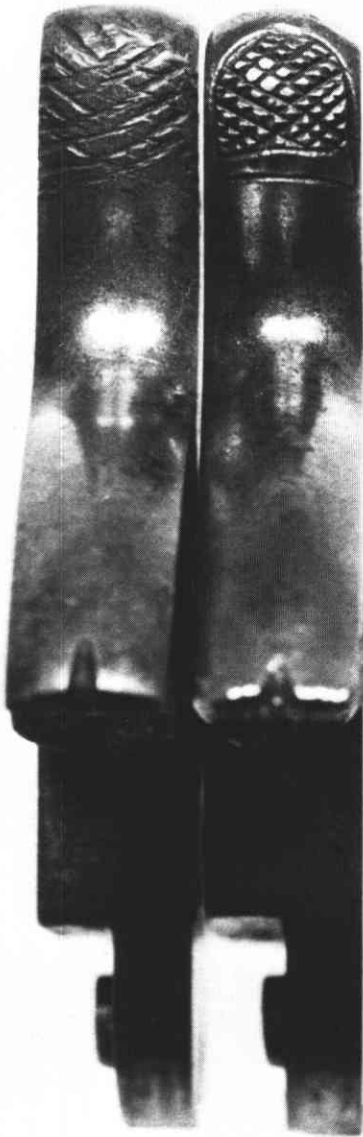


Figure 16: Hammer comparison.  
London-made on right.

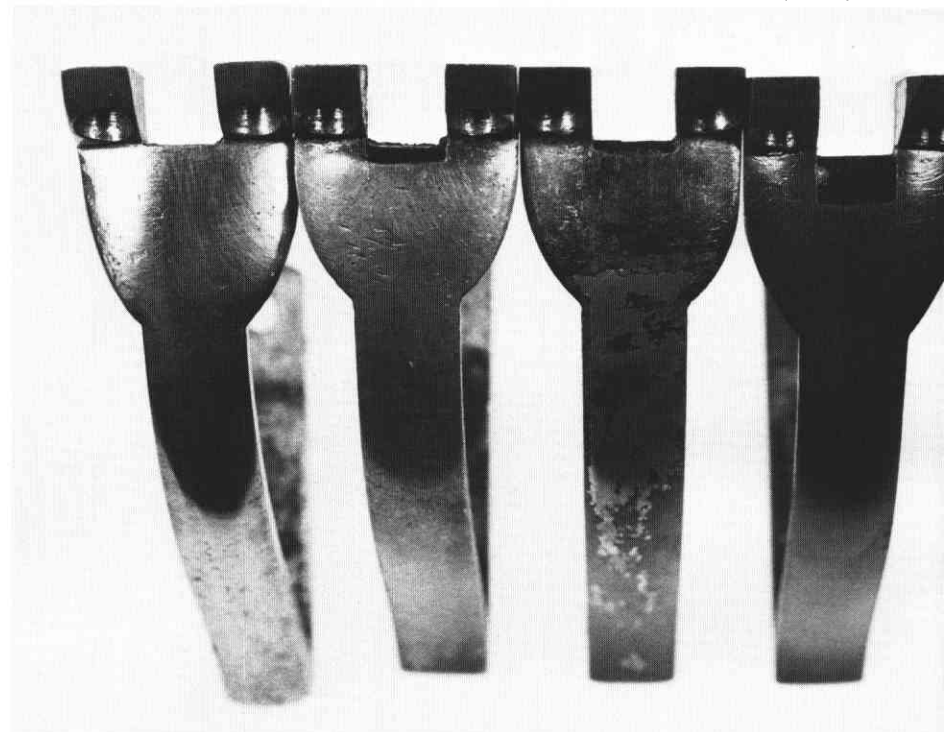


Figure 17: Back strap comparison. London-made is on the far right.

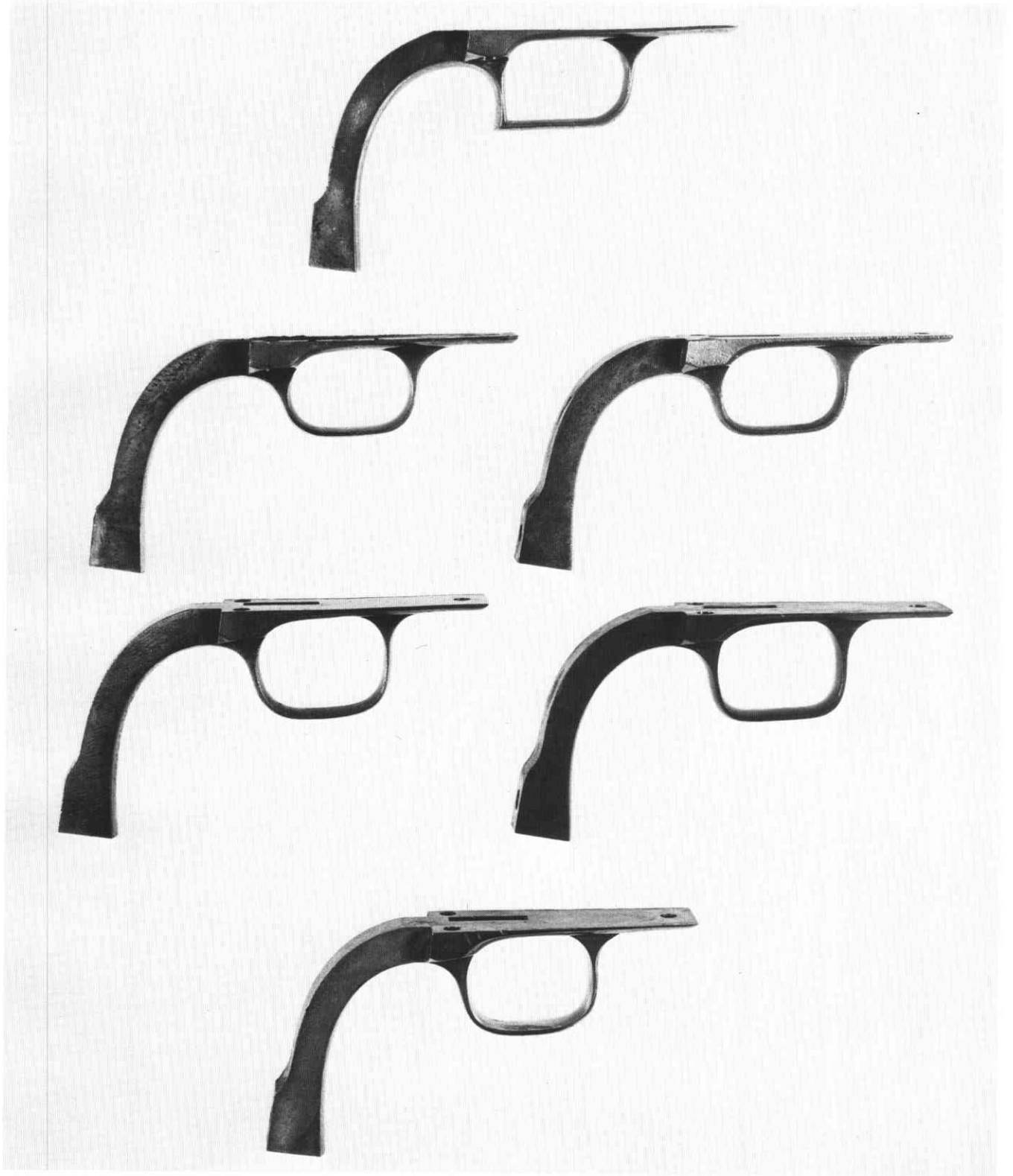
**Hammer:** Although the hammer on the London model (figure 16 right) seems to be standard when compared with the Hartford hammer, there is a difference in the knurling on the spur of the London model and the Hartford models. The hammer of the Hartford model is shown on the left in this photo. Note that the knurling is a rather thin, uneven cross-hatch design, unenclosed, while the knurling on the spur of the London hammer, (right hammer), is deeper, more symmetrical, and is enclosed in an “inverted U”, which is sealed at the bottom with two slightly crescent shaped lines.

**Back strap:** The back strap of the London model is iron, while the Hartford models were both iron and brass. There is one distinct difference in the iron back strap of the London model, and the iron back strap of the Hartford model. This difference is in the large milled groove in the top, broad flat portion of the back strap (far right back strap in

figure 17). The length of this groove (measuring back from the base of the hammer) is approximately  $\frac{3}{16}$ ". These same grooves on the Hartford models (first, second and third from left) range from no grooves at all to only small grooves.

**Trigger Guard:** The trigger guard of the London model is the large rounded type, made of iron, and the Hartford models are the square back made of brass, the large rounded iron and brass, as well as small rounded iron and brass. There are two types of the large rounded iron trigger guards used on the London model. One is the same type used on some of the Hartford models, which have the accented rounded bottom, and rounded bottom corners (left second row — from bottom — trigger guard in figure 18). On the other type large rounded trigger guard, the bottom of the trigger guard proper is flat and the two bottom corners have a smaller radii giving them more of a right angle appearance, (right second row — from bottom — trigger guard).

Figure 18: Triggerguard comparisons. Londons in the second row, from the bottom.





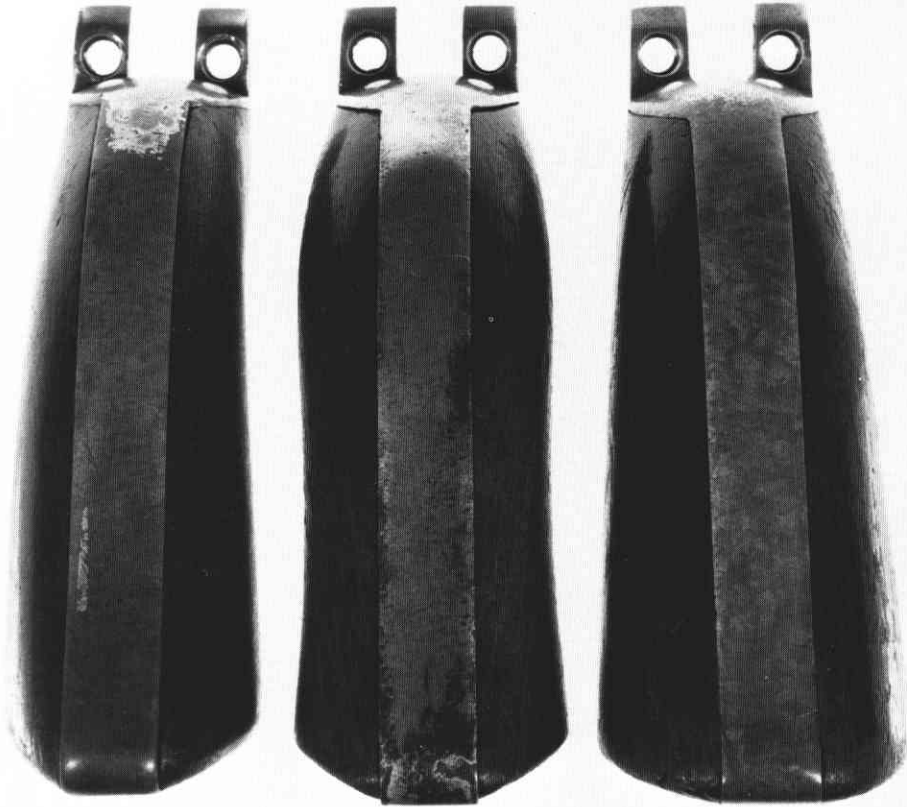


Figure 19: Wood grips comparison. The middle one is a London Navy.

**Wood Grips:** The London model has one distinct characteristic where the wood grips are concerned. The middle grip in figure 19 is from a London model, and you will note that there is a more pronounced “bulge” in the middle top portion than on the grips to the left and right. Also note the upward flair on each side of the bottom. By comparison, the Hartford grips on the left are known as the “Slim Jim” grips, so-called because of their thinness. This style grip appears on the First and Second Model Square Backs. Note that the bottom of each side has a pronounced upward flair. The Hartford grips to the right appear on later Hartford models, and while there is a *slight* “bulge” in the middle top portion, it is not near as pronounced as on the London model grips. Also note that on the Hartford grips to the right, there is a slight upward flair at the bottom on each side; however, this flair is not near as pronounced as on the London model in the middle.

**Screw Heads:** Again, there is no photo for this comparative feature, and I don’t think one is necessary. One distinct feature of the London model is the style of the head of each screw. On the London model, the screw heads are of the “high rounded” type, while the screw heads on the Hartford models are much flatter in appearance.

**Inspector’s Initials:** The Colt Inspector’s initials stamped on the London Model seem to follow the same pattern as on the Hartford models — with one exception. On the London models included in the survey, there were no inspectors initials, or numbers, on the bottom of the left side of the barrel lug. Inspector’s initials, and numbers, do appear in this location on many of the Hartford models.

Colt’s original appraisal as to the future of his guns in England was apparently not too accurate. He did finally receive several orders from the British military for his guns, but this wasn’t enough. Competition became worse, and the end of the war in Crimea greatly restricted the market of all gunmakers.

Colt had begun to dismantle his London Armory when, ironically enough, his lease for the Thames bank premises was mailed to him for his signature on December 16, 1856. In March, 1857, Colt applied for permission to transfer this lease to someone else — thus ending his London venture.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. R. L. Moore Jr. for the excellent photographs used in this talk, and, in closing, I only hope that you have enjoyed this presentation just one half as much as I have enjoyed giving it.