

Some American Descendants of the Smallsword

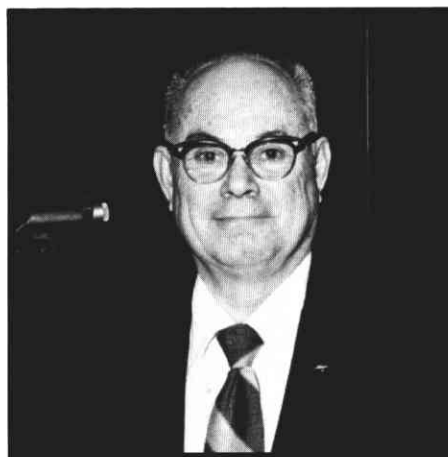
by: Robert H. McCauley, Jr.

In order to understand antiques of any category, it is essential to acknowledge and appreciate the truism that style begets style. Objects are never designed in a cultural vacuum but each is the product of accumulated knowledge, experience, and cultural heritage interpreted by a maker in his own time. Not only was the smallsword no exception, but its basic design was remarkable for its acceptance and success. Even after the smallsword became obsolete, its stylistic influence can be traced in a host of later swords. Many such were adopted by the United States military, militia, and other uniformed organizations. I intend to present here a brief study of that usage.

In order to visualize the eventual fate of the style represented by the smallsword, it is essential to briefly describe it. Although authorities differ as to the country of its origin — some say Holland, some say France — there is no doubt it was a scaled-down version or adaptation from the rapier. It was designed to be carried by civilians, particularly by gentlemen of “quality” in the highly stratified society of western Europe as it existed from about 1660 until almost the end of the eighteenth century. Eventually the civilian custom of wearing a sword as an article of everyday dress was abandoned and the practice came to be limited to ceremonial occasions.

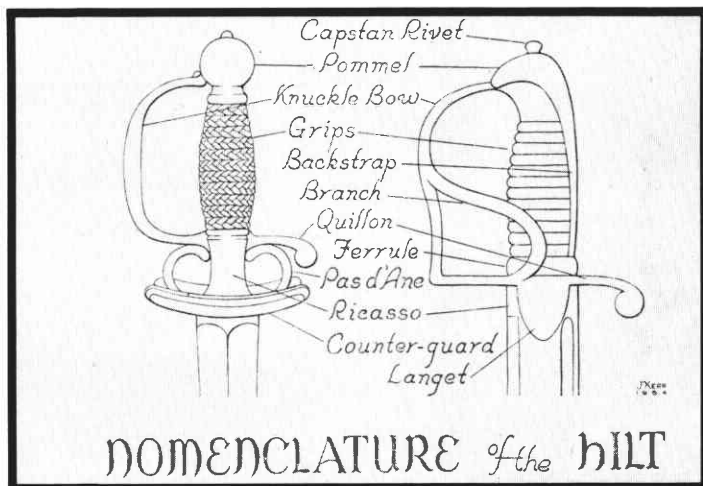
During approximately 150 years when smallswords were used, there were many changes and variations in styles and patterns of both the hilt and the blade some of which give clues to the probable age of individual swords.

Hilts were made of several kinds of metals, variously decorated, and ranged from severely plain to elaborately rococco depending on the owner's pocketbook and the maker's craftsmanship. However elaborate, the decoration rarely interfered with the basic functional design of the weapon. In its earliest form, the components of the hilt include a bilobate counterguard, the shallowly concave “shells” in outline usually of the form of a pair of kidneys back-to-back. In some examples the counterguard is heart-shaped, a type often referred to as a “boat shell” guard. The symmetrical grips vary from elongate barrel-shape to columnar and square in cross section. They surmount a sort of stem, variously shaped, called the ricasso, from the top of which two branches, the *pas d'ane* rings, curve downward to the counterguard. Originally these were intended for insertion of the fingers in the same manner as had been the custom with the archetypical rapier. At the point where the grips join the ricasso, a branch of metal extends outward, then back and in again, making the pommel to form a knuckle guard. Opposite the point of emergence of the knuckle guard, another branch



extends forward above the line of the back edge of the blade to form the quillon. This usually bends to the obverse side and terminates in a finial, often tear drop in form. Some smallswords lack the knuckle guard, or have only a chain. In such specimens there are two quillons forming a slender cross guard. The pommel is usually ovoid, obovoid, or globular, and may be more or less flattened. In late examples it is frequently urn-shaped.

In the latter years of the smallsword genre, the bilobate counterguard was often replaced by an oval, or broadly lenticular form. The *pas d'ane* rings were reduced, at first to mere spurs, then entirely omitted. In later smallsword styles, a second quillon often appeared opposite the first. Both curved toward the blade at the ends so that the finials might support the counterguard.



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Reprinted from the American Society of Arms Collectors Bulletin 36:19-28

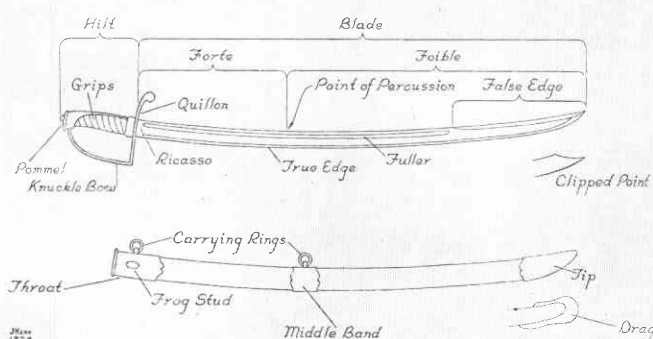
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The smallsword blade is intended for thrusting, and except for rare flamboyant examples, is always straight. In cross-section, the blade may assume various forms, sometimes a different one at each of two or more positions on the same blade. The most familiar cross-section shapes include lenticular, flattened hexagonal, diamond, and a broad-based three-sided form with concave sides. The latter type is variously called "hollow", "hollow-ground", "three-cornered triangular", etc. For a right-handed user of a three-sided blade, the median ridge or the angle opposite the broadest side is always on the right or obverse side. Many blades were made with the forte (basal portion) enlarged to improve strength and balance. The resulting type is known as a colichemarde. In its most highly developed form, the hollow three-sided colichemarde blade was superbly functional, relatively sturdy, and potentially deadly. Although originally a civilian weapon, military officers, all gentlemen of course, found it to be appropriate for dress wear, and sometimes for more serious uses. Often military colichemarde blades are flattened hexagonal in cross-section, suggesting sacrifice of blade rigidity for trimness of appearance and ease of wearing.

Scabbards were of lightweight material, usually vellum or thin leather, and molded directly upon the blade for perfect fit. The scabbard mountings reflected the mode or manner in which the sword was carried. Most commonly it was suspended from two straps or chains attached to the left side of the belt of a right-handed man. The metal throat piece, or locket, provided attachment for one strap, the band attachment for the other. The point was always protected by a scabbard tip, the chape. The method of wearing the sword was more a function of clothing style than of the form of the sword itself, thus the scabbard attachments were dictated by fashion.

Gentlemen who owned a smallsword quite often had more than one, the number limited only by inclination and financial means. They wore the sword judged most appropriate for an occasion: one plain and unostentatious for daytime street wear; one more frivolous or ornamental for a social occasion; another, costly and impressive for an event of state or ceremony; and perhaps one draped in black for mourning.

TERMINOLOGY of the SWORD And Scabbard



(From *The American Sword 1775-1945* by Harold L. Peterson. With permission of the author and the publisher).

In the early eighteenth century, the smallsword had reached the peak of its use in England and France as well as in Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. It was only natural that American colonial gentlemen were familiar with and wore them, and that American silversmiths were busy hilding and mounting smallsword blades to produce the results we so much admire today. The American colonials were English subjects dependent for possessions upon trade with the mother country, and were therefore guided and influenced in their tastes and fashions by the usages in England.

By the time of the American Revolution, civilian use of the smallsword had declined among Americans. The gentlemen who owned or had worn them were people of quality and substance, if not wealth. Some became active in the military on both sides of the controversy. Many smallswords came out of retirement in America when the war began, and many were carried either as military dress swords or for use in fighting when nothing else was available.

In prestige value, they were the "top of the line" as swords went then, particularly the silver-hilted examples. George Washington owned perhaps five smallswords, at least one being a survivor of the French and Indian War. Washington's inaugural sword was silver-hilted with a boat shell guard and a flattened hexagonal colichemarde blade. He presented another silver-hilted flattened hexagonal bladed colichemarde to General Benjamin Lincoln after the Battle of Yorktown. This sword is on display in the Museum of History and Technology. The Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore has still another silver-hilted colichemarde said to have been given by George Washington to Thomas Johnson who purportedly nominated Washington for Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Johnson was no military man but a distinguished gentleman, personal friend of Washington, member of the Continental Congress, staunch supporter of the revolutionary effort, and Maryland's first governor.

A number of smallswords still exist which once were owned by Americans before or during the Revolution. We can only feel a sense of frustration knowing that the history and provenance of so many is irretrievably lost.

After the Revolution, Congress fittingly appropriated funds and directed to be made ten ornate silver-hilted smallswords suitably decorated and inscribed for presentation to military officers who were judged to have earned the respectful gratitude of Americans by their distinguished service. The swords were made in France and eventually awarded to them or to their heirs.

This first sword (1), even though it is little more than a relic, illustrates the typical style and lines of a smallsword. Nevertheless, we may respect the character of this sturdy example with its plain steel-hilted three-sided blade. It has seen much action, held in the sweaty hand of a former owner even after the grips lost the original wire wrapping. Leather bands held on with copper tacks prevented any further splitting. Whether or not it was the owner's weapon of choice we cannot say.

Here we see (2) a typical smallsword hilt mounted upon a colichemarde blade. The plain brass hilt was originally silver-gilt, and along with the highly functional three-sided blade projects a feeling of no-nonsense competency.

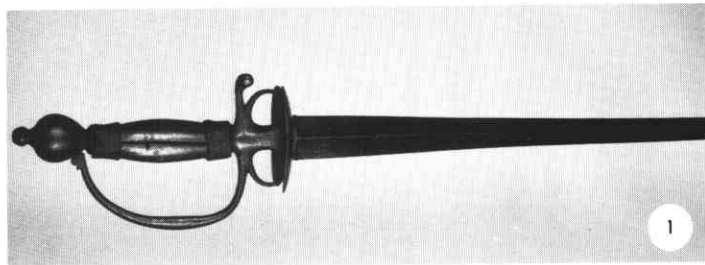
In times of need and desperation, a time such as the American Revolution, old weapons were brought out for action with little regard for their originally intended function or capability. When necessary, old hilts were rebladed and old blades rehilted. The main thing was to get them ready for the fight. When you think you need one, after all, a sword is a sword.

This sword (3), probably used about the time of the Revolution, shows a contemporary restoration of a hilt of an earlier period. The use of bone instead of wire-wrapped wood for the grips is practical, though a departure in style, while file marks on the metal suggest haste or lack of concern for appearance. Mounted on a rather slender blade with the basal 4 1/2 inches hexagonal, the remainder diamond-shaped in cross-section, the product is apparently the result of some colonial or militia officer's attempt to provide himself with an appropriate sidearm.

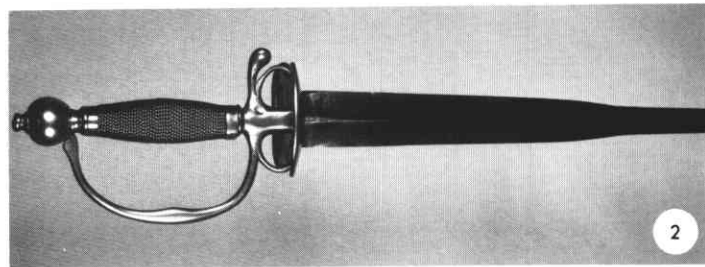
Here (4) is an example of an effort to salvage a brass smallsword hilt by mounting it on a replacement blade. It appears that in forging the wide diamond cross-section blade, the smith had difficulty keeping it straight. But since the 27 1/2 inch blade is too short for proper smallsword function, and the bend in the blade provides a slightly curved cutting edge, we may be charitable and accept the possibility that it was intended that way. Besides, most of the nicks are on the cutting edge. We can only speculate about the intent of the maker and the owner. However, smallsword hilts are known to have been mounted on cutting blades by or for Americans (Peterson 1965, pl. 90).

Another sword (5) shows how style can be ignored in favor of utility in time of need. Possibly during the time of the Revolution, some privateersman or sea-going patriot needed a boarding weapon when the only blade available was an old colichemarde. A little ingenuity resulted in a custom-made special cutlass hilt with ridged wood grips to keep it firm in the hand. The resulting catfish-caviar combination was no longer a smallsword and not quite a cutlass either; but at least the bearer was armed.

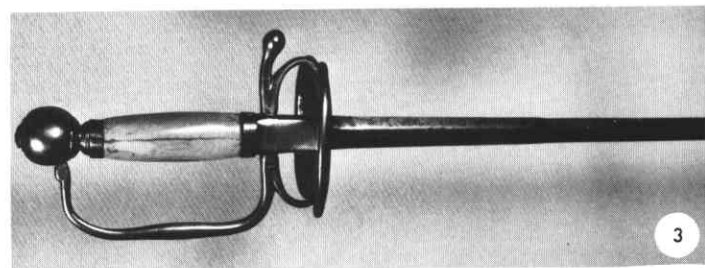
Although the smallsword was the dress sword of first choice of military officers during the Revolution, several interesting questions come to mind. What subsequently happened to the form of the smallsword in the United States? And what if any effect did the accepted "classic" style eventually have on the patterns of military and related swords in this country? The smallsword did not suddenly disappear at the end of the war, but continued to be worn at least for special occasions. George Washington's reluctance to abandon it is a prime example. But as its use as a serious personal defense weapon became more unlikely, a degeneration in functional style occurred which can be traced through American specimens.



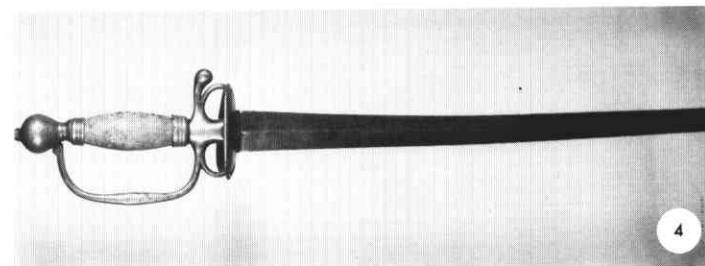
Relic smallsword of the Revolution.



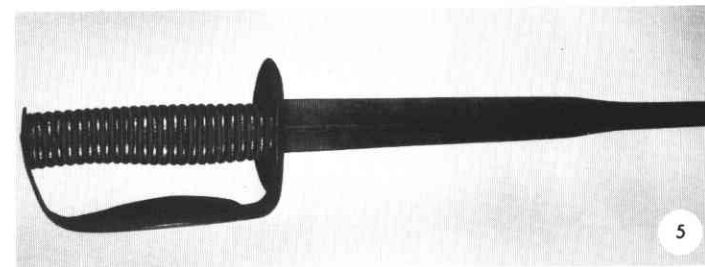
Brass hilted colichemarde.



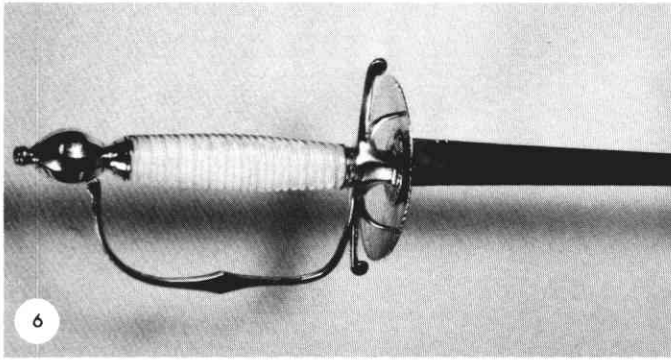
Early Smallsword with contemporary restoration ricasso and bone grips.



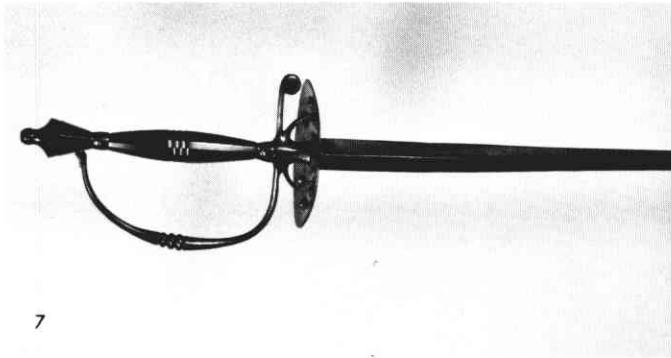
Early smallsword with contemporary replacement blade.



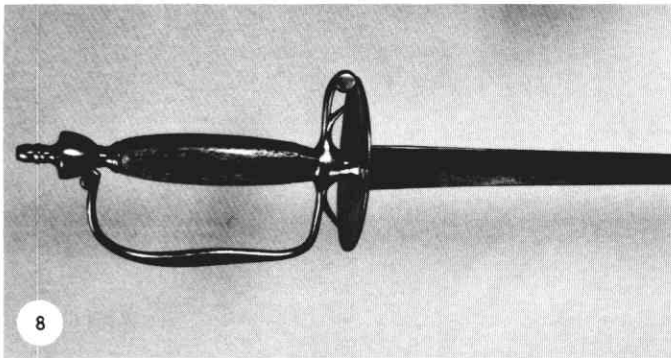
Cutlass-hilted colichemarde.



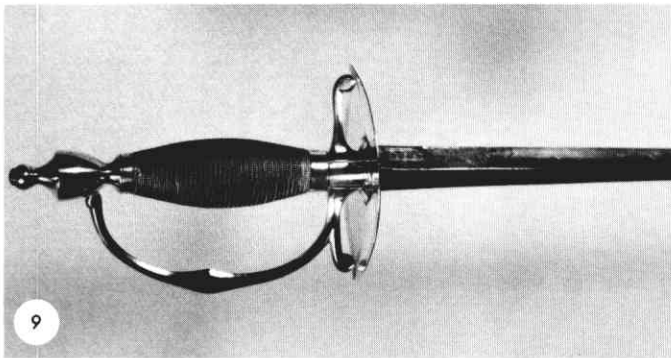
American silver-hilted smallsword, ivory grips.



Wells & Co. steel-hilted smallsword.



J. H. Lau smallsword adapted for fencing.



Silver-hilted presentation smallsword.

In this silver-hilted example (6), the *pas d'ane* rings are reduced to mere spurs which give some support to the oval counterguard. The presence of a quillon below the knuckle guard is a transitional feature, and the spiral-grooved ivory grips, once wound with silver wire, give it an American touch. Unfortunately this weapon is unmarked. The three-sided blade is rather long at thirty-four inches.

A steel-hilted specimen (7) is stylistically similar. The counterguard is oval and decorated with eight beaded steel rosettes on the side toward the hilt. The *pas d'ane* rings are reduced to spurs. The grips, though faceted, are almost too slender for an effective hold. The urn-shaped pommel is characteristic of the late 1790s to which I assign this sword. The slender three-sided blade measures 32 3/4 inches, and the base is engraved in script, "Wells & Co./New York." It is recorded that a Lemuel Wells was in business in New York from 1790 to 1807 (Peterson 1965, p. 271). Certainly not intended as a serious weapon, this must have been a ceremonial or mourning sword.

Another example of the same period, although similar in style was obviously intended for a different purpose. It has a plain brass hilt, again with the urn-shaped pommel but with strictly functional brown-stained bone grips. It is engraved in script across the widest side of the blade "Couleaux & Cie./Klingenthal." On the other side it is similarly inscribed, but lengthwise, "J. H. Lau/New York." The slender 34 1/4 inch blade is proofmarked and very well made. Obviously not a dress sword, its point terminates in the stem of a protective button characteristic of a fencing or theatrical weapon.

This smallsword (9) is an example of the late style with the ricasso and *pas d'ane* rings entirely missing. It is silver hilted, unmarked, with a graceful urn pommel, two quillons, and a broadly lenticular counterguard. The silver wire-wrapped grips are barrel-shaped, slightly flattened side to side, and generously proportioned to fit the hand. I consider the blade to be German made, probably in Solingen. It was originally blued at the base with engraved and gilt decoration. Only the engraving remains, and includes on the reverse flat of the blade a small eagle holding a ribbon in its beak beneath thirteen stars, the whole surrounded by an oval wreath. The underside of the counterguard bears the engraved legend, "N. Hunt Ormsbee / Presented by his Uncle A. Hunt." I have not learned anything from these two names to help identify or date this sword but the eagle decoration of the blade (10) closely resembles that on the blade of an iron-mounted stirrup-hilted cavalry officer's saber of a style in use from the period of the Revolution until shortly after 1800.

The colichemarde blade provided the smallsword with improved effectiveness as a weapon, but because they were infrequently used for actual fighting, the blades and hilts of most smallswords were made light and delicate. Nevertheless, the colichemarde blade was not entirely abandoned.

A rather exotic appearing sword (11) produced for the American trade, combined a thirty inch colichemarde blade of flattened hexagonal cross-section with a stirrup

hilt which we associate with non-commissioned officers' swords of about the 1790 period. It is very well made, with iron mounts, and ebony grips. When the engraved rendering of the U.S. coat of arms is compared with that of an American Light Horse saber, it is clear the blade would have contained the legend, "WILHELM. TESCHE. PETERS. SOHN. IN. SOLINGEN FECIT" if there had been any space on which to put it. (12)

By the last decade of the eighteenth century, the smallsword in its pure form had fallen out of use by American military officers. The regulations of 1787 called for sabers for officers, but were modified by 1801 to require cut and thrust swords. This terminology is sufficiently inexact to include both curved and straight blades provided they had an edge and a point, but specifically excluded smallswords which had no intended function except the thrust.

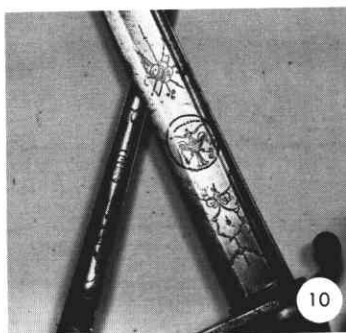
Among many patterns which fit this regulation, one is particularly relevant. This sword (13), identified as the British "Infantry Officers' sword, pattern of 1796" (Latham 1971, Nos. 32, 33), is said to have been worn as early as 1770 and to have a hilt identical with that of a double-edged Prussian officer's sword of 1750. Whatever its lineage, the style of the hilt bespeaks its smallsword heritage, a whisper of elegance still faintly evident in the United States in the twentieth century, as we shall see.

Officers were expected to provide their own swords. Before 1832, when specific patterns began to be designated by regulation, American military officers could select from among a variety of styles so long as the color of mount and length and shape of blade were within requirements. Some officers chose to carry swords identical to the 1796 British infantry pattern, or weapons which differed only slightly. All were suitably embellished with the U.S. coat of arms.

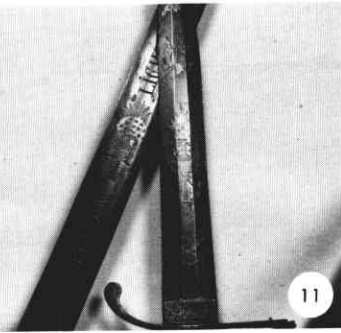
We do not know the rank or branch of service of the officers who carried these, but the distinctive modified smallsword hilt style mounted upon a straight cut and thrust blade was established in America in the early nineteenth century and adopted by some officers. A sword of this kind, once owned by an engineer officer is assigned to the period 1805-1820 (Peterson 1954, No. 127). Of course, such swords are no longer true smallswords but adaptations intended to present the appearance of one.

Another smallsword adaptation used by English infantry officers about 1780 was introduced into this country in modified form, apparently in conformance with regulations which specified cut and thrust or straight swords for officers on foot (Latham 1967, pl. 16).(14) American examples I have seen have eagle head pommels instead of the original turnip form, ivory instead of wire-wrapped grips, and single-edged rather than diamond cross-section blades. Apparently this was not a generally popular pattern; at least very few are seen today.

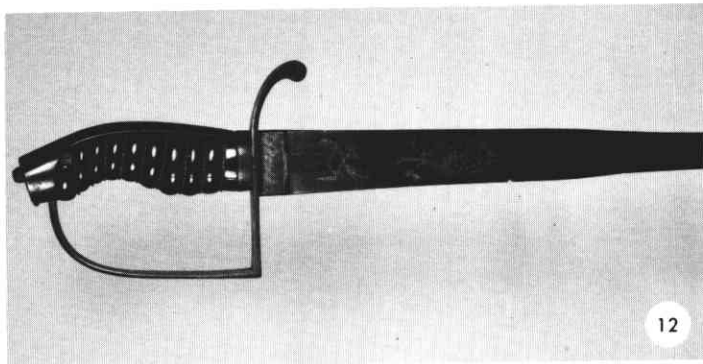
The regulations of 1832 describe the first official adoption of a specific smallsword styles for part of the dress of certain U.S. military officers. Prior to that date, the regulations of 1813 had vaguely required "small swords" for the Medical Staff of the Army, and in 1821 "yellow mounted



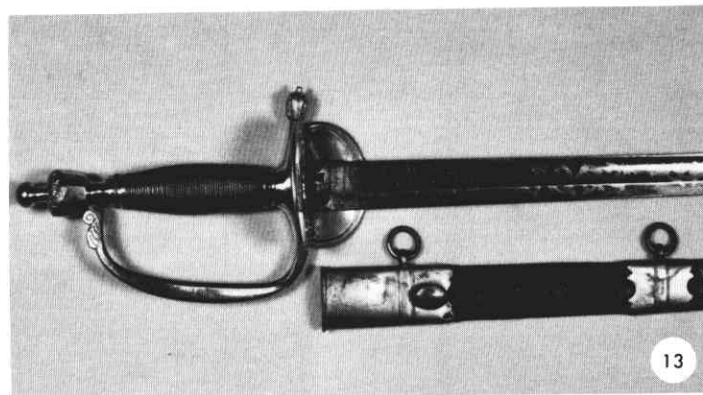
Engraved eagles on silver-hilted smallsword and contemporary cavalry officer's saber.



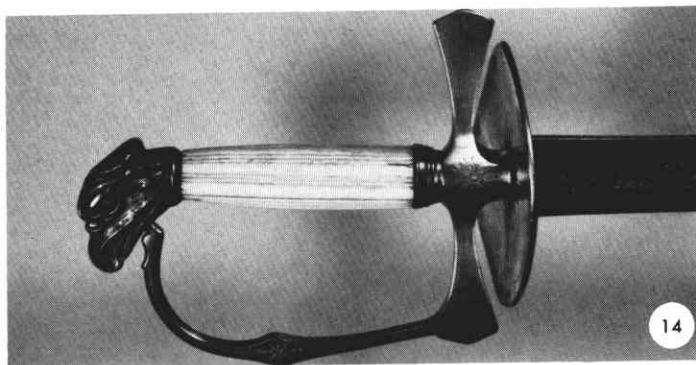
Engraved eagles on infantry colichemarde blade and American Light Horse saber.



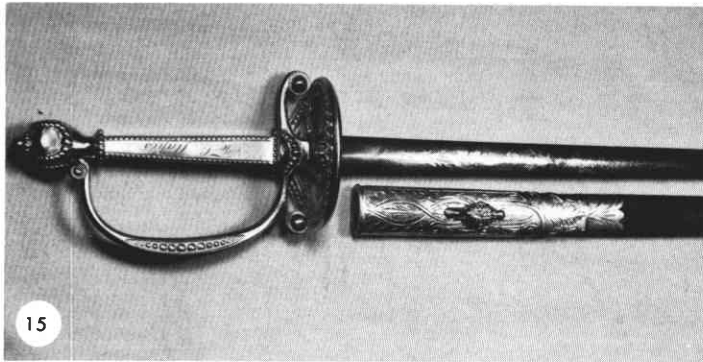
Infantry officer's or non-com sword with colichemarde blade.



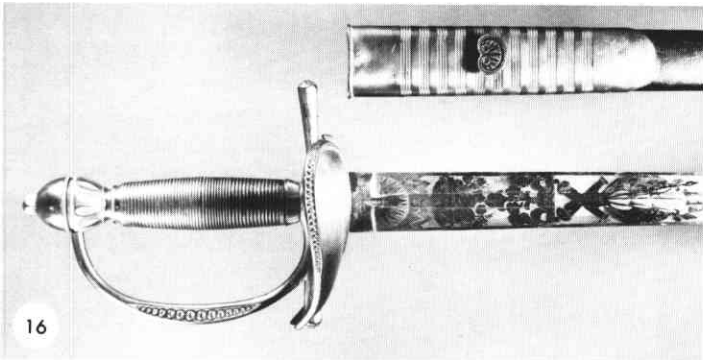
American example of 1796 British infantry officers' sword.



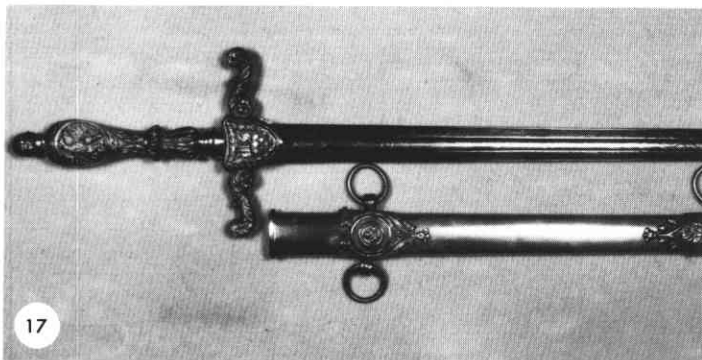
Eagle-head adaptation of a 1780 British infantry officers' sword.



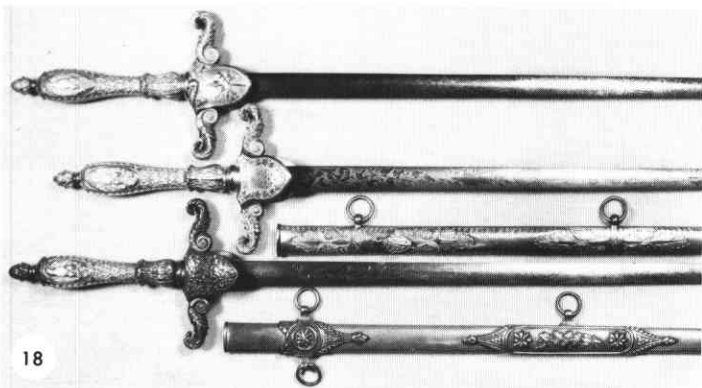
15
Late example of U.S. 1840 Medical Staff officers' sword.



16
U.S. 1832 general officers' sword.



17
U.S. 1832 Pay Department sword.



18
Three variations of the U.S. 1840 Pay Department officers' swords.

small swords." But in 1832, the sword called for was to be a "small sword, gilt hilt and mountings: black scabbard," a description which also applied to the sword of the Pay Department. The sword adopted (15) was a copy of the British diplomatic or "court swords" of the time. The entire hilt resembled a typical smallsword with gilt finish and a characteristic beaded decoration. The grips of the American version are nearly square in cross-section, columnar, and slightly tapered toward the pommel. The two quillons terminate in a forward-turned ball finial with a decorative rim. The obverse counterguard is kidney-shaped, but the reverse is a mere stub turned up permitting the sword to hang close to the body. The blades of specimens I have seen are lenticular in cross section, made by Ames, and decorated with etching. Decorations include two unique features: a bearded head, presumably representing Aesculapius; and a female figure wearing a hoop-skirted gown, and holding a staff with a liberty cap. The sword shown was presented to a Pay Department officer, and the scabbard is probably more ornate than most. The officer was Major Charles Mapes, paymaster from 7 January 1835 until his discharge 23 September 1842. I know of no other example of this pattern known to be a Pay Department sword. Although this sword became obsolete in America in 1840, it is interesting that the British version survives and is in use as a diplomatic and court sword today.

Also in 1832 (16), a sword was adopted for general officers which, while certainly not a smallsword, has a hilt of a style indirectly derived from a type of smallsword well known in England in the previous century. The heart-shaped, so called boat shell counter guard, is thought to have originated in Scandinavia, but was also used in France. An interpretation of this distinctive hilt style was adopted for English general officers in 1814, and the hilt of a version which lacked the *pas d'ane* rings, was nearly indistinguishable from that regulation for swords of officers of the British heavy cavalry in 1822. The American sword is a handsome pattern with a broad, double-edged blade. Scabbards could be gilt mounted black leather, gilt brass, or steel.

By 1840, and probably before, the very meaning of the term smallsword had been modified if not lost. Thus, military regulations which called for small swords did not literally mean "smallswords" in the strict sense, but only swords with relatively light, straight blades, decorative in appearance, and not intended for combat. This is exemplified by the regulations of 1840 which specified "small sword and scabbard according to pattern" for Army Medical Staff and Pay Department officers. This pattern is very familiar today, though some variations may not be. (17) (18) The origin of this hilt design is not known to me, but its affinity with the smallsword hilts which lack a knuckle guard seems clear. Blades were slender, straight, and usually lenticular in cross-section. Thus the 1840 Army regulations preserved the smallsword in modified style.

The regulations of 1840 also designated a new sword for infantry officers in apparent imitation of a smallsword adaptation which became regulation for line officers, gen-

erals, and officers of the Royal Guards in France in 1816. In the United States, the swords for infantry officers and noncommissioned officers afoot were single-edged and similar in basic pattern. (19) In its early manufacture, the 1840 noncom sword hilt was made of red brass. The example shown was made by Ames in 1848, a scarce version of a common sword. (20) The red alloy was found objectionable, and the swords were recalled and replaced with the yellow brass-hilted type usually associated with the Civil War. The officers' model had the blade etched, (21) the knuckle guard and the pear-shaped pommel embellished with floral decorations, and the inner kidney-shaped counterguard hinged. A different sword was adopted for U.S. infantry officers by the War Department 9 April 1850, but the noncom model continued in use into the twentieth century.

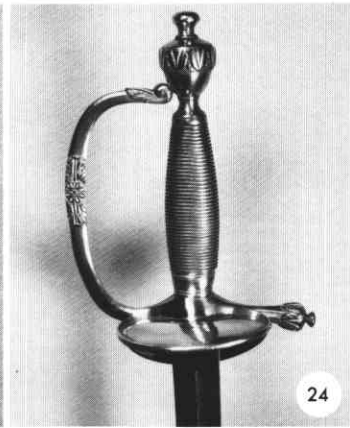
Officers of state troops also adopted this pattern, at least to some extent (22). One state, Louisiana, went further. Doubtless in proud token of its French heritage, a coliche-marde blade was mounted with this hilt which bears the coat of arms of the state on the obverse counterguard. (23)

The following example with brass grips is one about which I feel a little puzzled. Although designated as the "Foot Officers Sword, Model 1840," (Peterson 1954, No. 71), I believe that designation should also apply to the similar sword described above. (24) Whatever its exact status, a sword hilted in this style but with silver grips later became regulation for generals. The pattern is illustrated in the 1851 Army uniform regulations with a metal scabbard, as the sword for general officers, with the verbal description, "straight sword, gilt hilt, silver grip, brass or steel scabbard." The same nonspecific description appears in the regulations of 1861, 1872, 1882, 1888, and 1899. But more significant is the observation that this sword imitates much earlier swords already shown, which in turn imitate the British Infantry Officers' sword of 1796, a modified smallsword style. In *Ordnance Memoranda* No. 22, 1878, a sword of another pattern for general officers is illustrated. It resembles the following model while technically continuing to conform to the regulations quoted above.

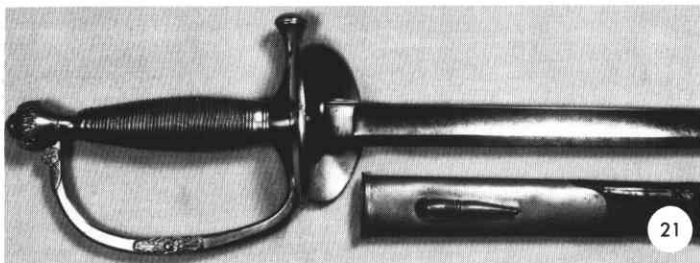
The next sword (25) is familiar to collectors today as the Model of 1860 staff and field officers' sword, and because it was in use until 1902, there are numerous variations. It was prescribed for certain staff and staff corps officers (U.S. Army General Orders No. 21, August 28, 1860). It was trim, attractive, and easily carried, though considered useless as a weapon and not popular with officers who expected to see action. By 1872, however, it was the required sword for all officers on foot with the exception of Pay Department and Medical Staff. The pattern was evidently derived from a Model 1817 regulation French sword for generals and other high ranking officers. A mechanical improvement was the addition of a small branch connecting the knuckle guard with the obverse counterguard. The pommel, described as "an inverted frustrum of a cone," is the hilt feature which deviates most from typical smallsword style. Nevertheless, the general appearance of the smallsword is preserved. All the exam-



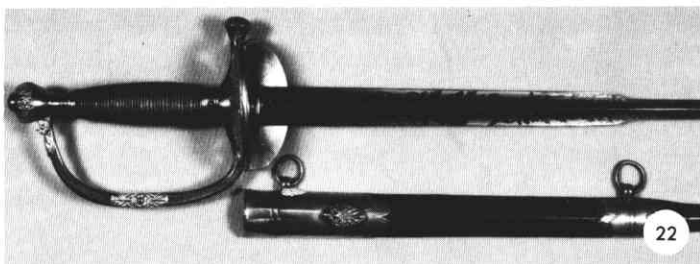
U.S. 1840 non-commissioned officer's sword dated 1848.



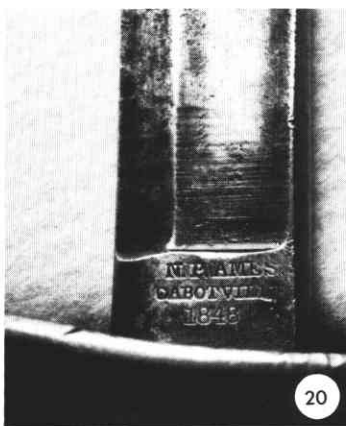
U.S. 1840 foot officers' sword, variant.



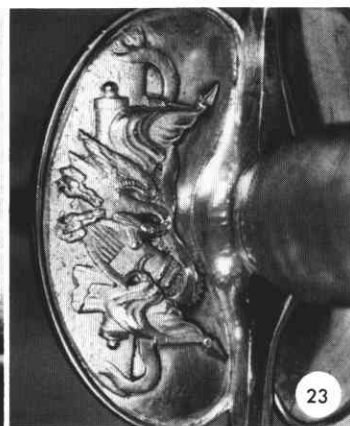
U.S. 1840 foot officers' sword.



State of Louisiana officer's sword with coliche-marde blade.



1848 dated mark on 1840 non-com sword.

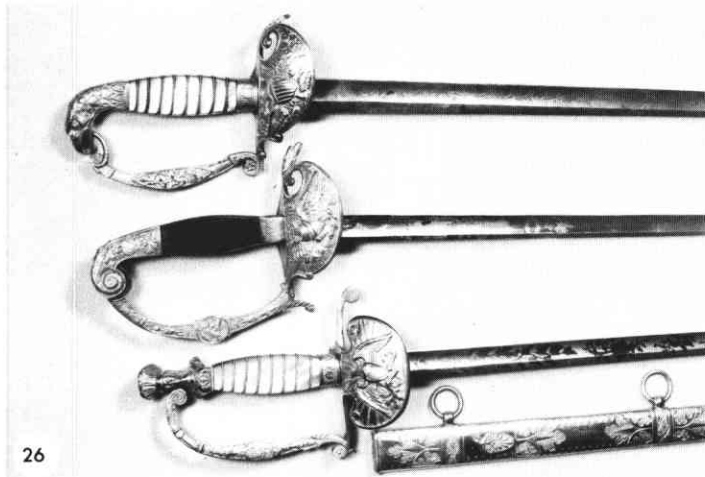


Counterguard detail on Louisiana officer's sword.



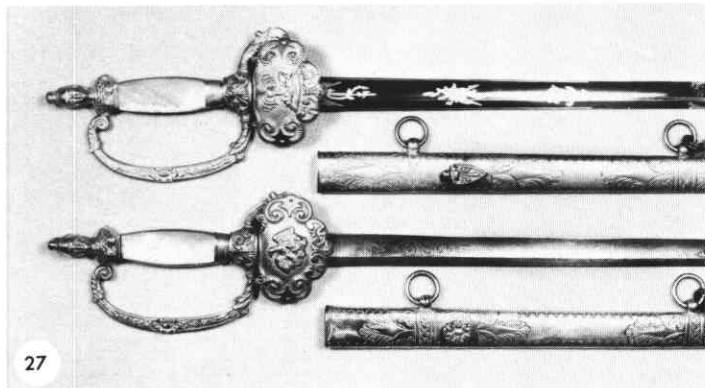
25

Springfield Armory 1860 staff and field officer's presentation sword.



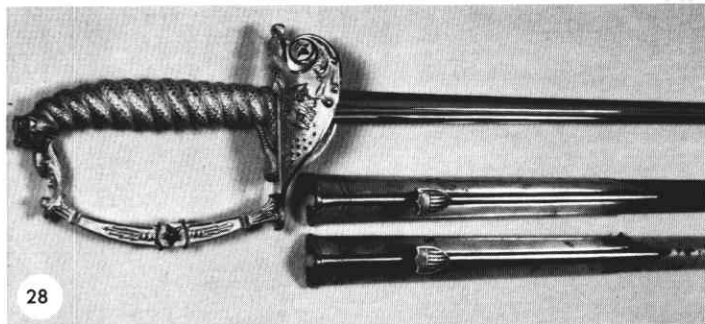
26

American modified smallswords with turned down counterguards.



27

Liberty-head pommel modified smallswords, counterguards with U.S. eagle and South Carolina palmetto.



28

U.S. 1840 engineer officer's sword, variant.

ples I have seen have double-edged blades, usually diamond-shaped in cross section.

The smallsword tradition is revealed in the regulations of 1872, 1882, and 1888 because this sword is referred to as ". . . the small, straight sword now worn by officers of the General Staff . . ." It became a very popular pattern in this country, not only for the U.S. Army but also for veterans' groups and various fraternal, quasi-military, and non-military organizations. Some were made at the Springfield Armory; and many others including numerous variations were provided by private firms which manufactured and marketed such items. One version, made to be carried in a frog, is shown in the 1877 Horstmann Bros. & Co. catalogue of military goods, and also in the 1882 Ridaback & Co. catalogue designated as a "U.S. non-Commissioned" officers or the "New Reg. Com. Staff Officers' Sword." It also saw some use by field musicians. The example shown (25) is a presentation piece made at the Springfield Armory. It differs from those usually seen, in that the hilt is cast in finer detail, and the reverse counterguard is hinged. It was presented to Lt. Col. George McClellan Derby by a Major Lea Febiger. Derby, an engineer officer, had the interesting experience in the Spanish American War of being shot down while manning an observation balloon just prior to the Battle of San Juan Hill.

Another line of stylistic adaptation of the smallsword should also be acknowledged. The sometimes elegant smallsword was regarded as a mark of prestige, but from the standpoint of the military, it was much too fragile, and the bilobate or oval counterguard made it awkward to carry. A modification was developed in France about 1808-1810, becoming well established between 1814 and 1820 in which the reverse counterguard was reduced to a mere stub, and the obverse counterguard was enlarged and turned down. Such a hilt lay closer to the body, and the remaining counterguard invited all manner of decoration. Pommels became subject to a wide variety of in-the-round symbolisms, and knuckle guards were lavishly ornamented. Such swords came into wide use in America as one of the styles which conformed to the 1821 military regulations requiring a straight bladed sword for officers on foot. Blades of the American versions are usually single-edged for at least half the basal part, unlike those of true smallswords. (26) Pommels occur in a variety of forms, chiefly eagle heads, but Indian heads, liberty heads, knights' heads, and a variety of others exist, including the figure of a nautilus on one for a naval medical officer. The large turned-down counterguard is often kidney-shaped but occurs in various other forms including one with a forward-curving swirl. It is invariably decorated with symbolic motifs, usually cast in relief, generally including a prominent eagle, but often also figures of liberty, ships, anchors, shields, stars, flags, arms, etc. In a few examples, the knuckle bow connects with a modified ricasso rather than the guard, and preserves a feature of the smallsword style abandoned in most swords of this type. All have grips of a shape, if not construction, characteristic of the

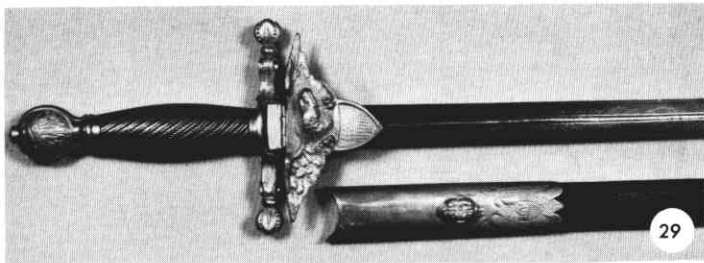
smallsword. (27) Such swords were evidently popular, at least prior to 1840, and were used by the U.S. military as well as by many militia organizations. It is usually impossible to determine which patterns were carried by U.S. officers, but there is one notable exception.

The 1840 regulations introduced a highly original sword for U.S. Army engineers. (28) The hilt pattern incorporates use of two entwined rattlesnakes to form the grips and parts of the pommel and guard. The down-turned counter-guard is swirled forward, and the result gives little of the feeling of a smallsword. The three-sided tapered blade, however, resembles some French patterns, and is pure smallsword. The regulations specified a "light rapier, with shell . . . guard," suggesting that, to the mind of the military ca. 1840, a three-sided blade meant "rapier." This example with an undecorated Ames blade differs from most in having an eagle where the engineers "castle" is usually seen. It also has two scabbards, one black, one white.

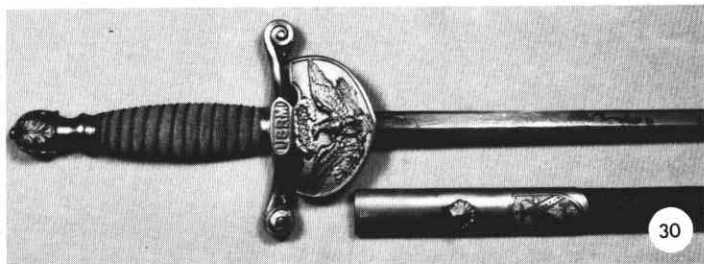
Another regulation pattern, that for the Revenue Cutter Service was designated a "small sword" in the regulations of 1834 and again in 1843. (29) It lacked a knuckle guard and had a fairly heavy double-edged straight blade, lenticular in cross-section, sometimes with a narrow median fuller. Except as a broad interpretation of the smallsword-type which lacked the knuckle guard, there was little reason other than semantics to call it a small sword. Ironically, the last of the so-called small sword patterns for this service (then the U.S. Revenue Marine), in most cases had a lighter blade, diamond-shaped in cross section, little more reminiscent of the smallsword. (30) Both patterns had large down-turned obverse counter guards, and smaller, plain, down-turned kidney-shaped reverse counterguards.

The fate of the straight-bladed swords with the popular large ornate counterguards is interesting because the style persisted. The Ames Sword Company offered four eagle head swords of this type as "Military Association Swords" in their wholesale trade catalogue. (31) This catalogue is not dated but has a picture entitled, "General Office and Factory 1927" on the cover. Prices in a separate circular ranged from \$6.00 to \$10.00 depending on choice of pattern and whether the mountings were brass, nickel, or gilt. It would be interesting to know how many were sold, and how to recognize them when they surface as antiques at gun shows today.

Up to now, I have not mentioned the sword category in which the smallsword style was modified the least. The diplomatic service used "court swords" of several models, nearly all of which, except for their turned-down counter guards, closely resemble smallswords. One of the earliest of these (32) was in use from 1830 to 1850 (Peterson 1954, No. 155). It has a slender, tapered, three-sided smallsword blade as do nearly all diplomatic swords, and is a fair example of the type. A later one (33) is said to have belonged to the U.S. ambassador to Bulgaria about the time of World War I. It is German made, and the single-edged straight blade is marked, "Deutscher/Offizier Ver-



U.S. 1834 Revenue Cutter Service officer's sword.



U.S. Revenue Marine officer's sword, ca 1870.

THE AMES SWORD CO., CHICOPEE, MASS. 5

MILITARY ASSOCIATION SWORDS AND BELTS
(Appropriate for Any Military Association)

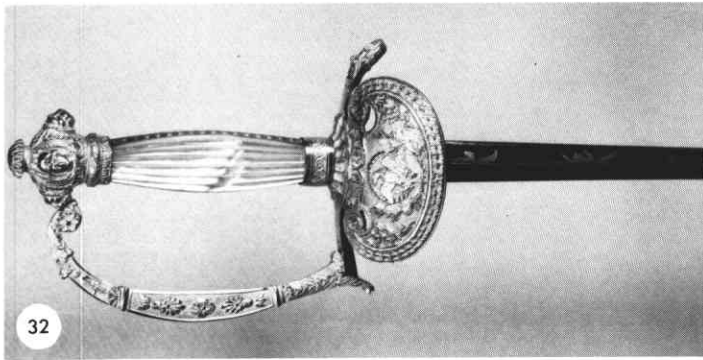
MILITARY ASSOCIATION SWORDS AND BELTS

No.		Mountings		
		Brass Plated	Nickel Plated	Gold Plated
636	Sword, plain blade	\$10.00	\$11.00	\$13.00
637	Sword, plain blade	12.00	13.00	15.00
638	Sword, plain blade	11.00	12.00	14.00
639	Sword, plain blade	13.00	14.00	16.00
964	Belt, black harness leather	3.30	3.60	4.00
994	Belt, black enamel leather	4.10	4.40	5.00
1040	Belt, covered with all gold lace, or with lace of gold and colors (as specified)		11.50	12.00

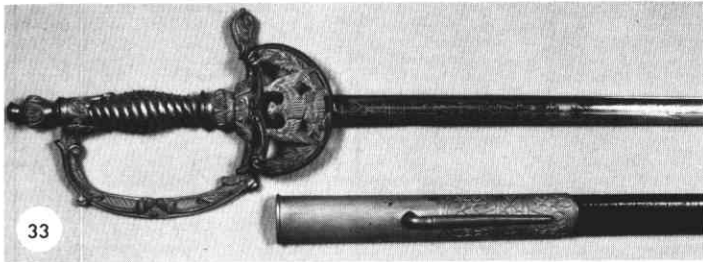
(For Sword Cases, See Page 28)

31

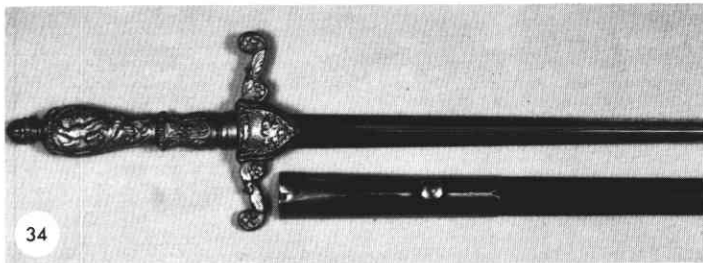
Page 5, Ames Sword Company, Catalogue No. 32, ca 1929.



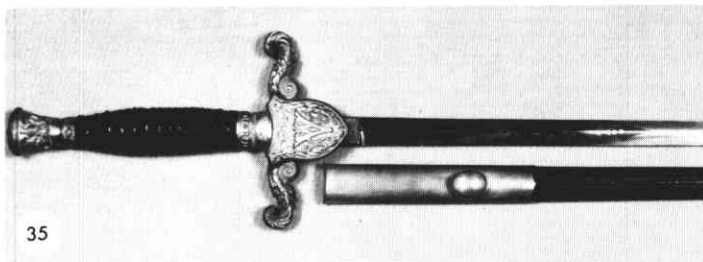
U.S. diplomatic sword, 1830-1850.



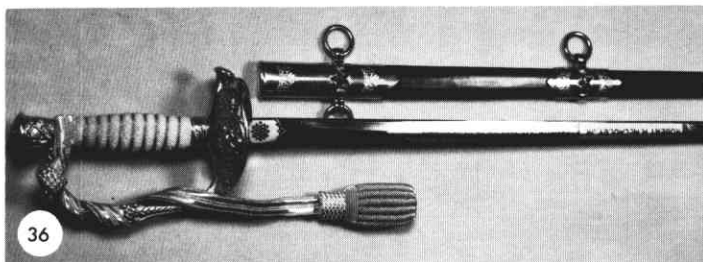
U.S. diplomatic sword, ca 1914.



Veteran Guard "rapier", ca 1877.



New Haven Greys Veteran sword.



U.S. Public Health Service officer's sword.

ein/Berlin." It has the appearance of a court sword, but the U.S. coat of arms in filigree on the guard does not counteract the German style of the pattern.

Having tried to trace the influence of the smallsword style this far, I cannot resist mentioning a sword which has long puzzled some sword collectors (34). The hilt is a reduced version of that for medical staff and pay department officers. It has been speculated that it was intended for noncommissioned officers or even civilian employees in one of those services. The mystery seems solved by the fact that it appears in the 1877 Horstmann Bros. & Co. catalogue as a "Veteran Guard, Rapier." Interpretation of contemporary semantics tells us this sword has a three-sided smallsword blade as indeed it does.

The New Haven Greys Veterans' sword is somewhat similar. (35) The grips and pommel are adapted from the 1860 Staff and Field sword while the guard imitates that of the 1840 Medical Staff and Pay Department. The straight blade is diamond-shaped in cross-section. This example was made by Gaylord Manufacturing Co. which merged with Ames when the Ames Sword Company was formed in 1880.

To wind up the story, I wish to mention one more sword pattern which appeared as a spin-off of the 1860 Staff and Field officers' sword (36). In 1890 it became regulation for the U.S. Marine Hospital Service. It was the same sword in general pattern, but distinguished by substitution of the Marine Hospital Service Corps device for the U.S. coat of arms, white grips, and other details. By 1913, this organization had become the U.S. Public Health Service, but the sword pattern did not change, and is still regulation today. I show you here my own sword, one of four made by Wilkinson in 1964, as evidence that descendants of the smallsword are still extant.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Lois, my wife, who typed the manuscript, photographed the swords, and made a number of critical and important suggestions. Without her help this article would have been impossible.

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