

The McCormick Pistol Mystery—An Update

by Ed Bitter

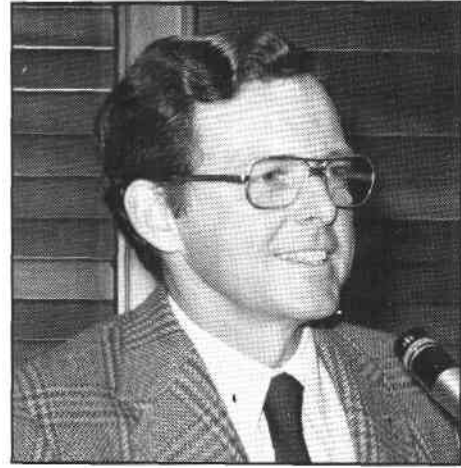
The impending threat of war with France resulted in contracts being let in 1798 for the manufacture of military arms by private American contractors. The Secretary of the Treasury, Oliver Wolcott, under the Act of July 5th, 1798, made 27 different U.S. Contracts for a total of 40,200 stands of the French 1763 Charleville pattern musket (U.S. Model 1795).

It is not known exactly when W. Robert McCormick, a native of Ireland, came to America, but we do know that he leased Globe Mill, just north of Philadelphia, for his gun manufactory in 1798. McCormick received the second largest contract, dated July 5th, calling for 3,000 muskets at \$13.40 per stand. Records show that for this same contract he received \$4,000 on account in 1799. Records also point out that he delivered into Skuylkill Arsenal 2005 muskets between 1797 and 1800, probably on this very same contract.¹ Since he received no further payments on this contract for long arms, it is believed that it was this unhappy, incomplete contract order that precipitated his economic downfall.

On August 12th, 1799, McCormick submitted an offer and on November 5th, 1799, his offer was accepted and thus McCormick contracted with the State of Virginia for an additional 4,000 Charleville muskets at \$13.40 each. It is possible that as many as 600 muskets were produced on this contract.² The lockplates of those few hundred muskets are marked with his name, "McCormick," "Globe Mill," and the date, "1800." Robert McCormick failed financially in July, 1801 and was sent to debtors' prison in the fall of that same year. His incomplete contract was taken over by James Haslett, a fellow Irish countryman and erstwhile foreman in the McCormick gun manufactory. This, of course, ended the short and stormy career of Robert McCormick, gun maker and weapons assembler or artificer, and he seems to have disappeared from history until recently, when collector-researchers such as Major James Hicks began to unearth and sift carefully through our early National Archives and letters.

To date, we are still unable to find any record that Robert McCormick produced flintlock martial pistols on contract for the Federal government, or for anyone, for that matter. But since 12 to 15 specimens do exist, with at least three of these specimens stamped clearly on the left flat of the stock, "McCormick," we must conclude that some sort of a contract was awarded to Robert McCormick. And further, since two of the specimens stamped "McCormick" are horseman's pistols, and the third is a ship's pistol, it is reasonable to conclude that perhaps two small separate pistol contracts were awarded McCormick.

For some strange reason most pistol contracts from 1797 to 1807 are missing or never formally existed. The following letter to the Secretary of War from the Purveyor's Office in Philadelphia might explain the reason for the unfortunate gap in these historical records:



"5th July 1800

Sir:

I had the honor to receive your letter on the 2nd with the inclosures, with respect to Mr. Ketland's claim on account of locks imported. I had previous to the receipt of your letter made enquiry into the circumstances attending it, and though the date of Mr. Francis' order is between four or five years ago, yet as it appears that the number will not be exceeded including these, and that the order has been verbally continued from year to year. Col. Hodgdon agree with me in opinion it would be best to purchase them especially as by letting them be sold to others it would be opening the security against embezzling public arms by having them marked "United States" as these are so marked. *It is a misfortune that almost the whole of Mr. Francis' contracts were verbally made without any memorandums in his books or knowledge of the circumstances communicated to Mr. Govett his clerk etc. etc."*

In order to help fill in the history of the various known McCormick-type pistols, let me go back just a bit and review some of the documents from our National Archives, plus some private records. Much information can be found in Major James E. Hick's book, *United States Ordnance, Vol. II*. And, thanks to two excellent articles by Henry C. Knode, "McCormick Pistols," published in *The Texas Gun Collector*, July 1954, Issue No. 48; and "More About McCormicks" also published in *The Texas Gun Collector*, June 1955, Issue No. 59, we are able to solve much of the McCormick pistol mystery.

In 1795, it was decided by our Federal purchasing office in Philadelphia, to purchase musket and rifle locks in England from the firm of Ketland & Co., of London and Birmingham. The order was placed through their American branch, Fountain Head, located in Philadelphia and run by family sales representatives, John and Thomas Ketland.

The following is an excerpt from a purchase order letter from Tench Francis, purveyor or Federal storekeeper for the U.S. Naval Service located at Skuylkill Arsenal in Philadelphia at that time.

Purveyor's Office
Philadelphia 28th, Sept. 1795

Mr. John Ketland
Sir:

On receipt of this be pleased to order your house in England to prepare and ship for this place or New York three thousand rifle locks and screws and three thousand musquet locks and screws agreeable in every respect to the pattern furnished, all their parts are to be hardened, and on the plates "UNITED STATES" must be neatly stamped—you will be pleased to remember that this is my first attempt to procure goods from the Fountain Head and that you are to expect very considerable orders from me in future if you use me as I am confident you will—

With Great Respect
I am Sir
Your most Ob. Sert.
Tench Francis, Purveyor

It is not known at this writing when and if the 3000 imported rifle and 3000 imported "musquet" locks, all "neatly" stamped, "UNITED STATES," were ever delivered. But there is a letter from Tench Coxe, Purveyor of Public Supplies to Irvine which states—"150 rifles may be purchased—the locks for them procured from the Arsenal (Schuylkill Arsenal of Philadelphia) which you can supply—will thank you for order for 100 gun locks similar to those supplied General Shee they are for the Indian Department."

It is clear from this correspondence that some rifles were purchased from various American gun makers without locks—the locks being furnished the contractors by the U.S. government arsenals. Many of these locks were English imports made by Ketland & Co.

It is further documented that another 3000 English locks were ordered by the U.S. in 1800 from Ketland & Co. It is also known that a shipment of 1551, $\frac{3}{4}$ size rifle locks or pistol locks were delivered in that same year (1800) from Ketland & Walker. It is further believed that those locks also bore the markings, "UNITED STATES" and "KETLAND & CO." Yet to date only a surprisingly few of these "UNITED STATES" stamped locks have turned up in collections.

The smaller $\frac{3}{4}$ scaled "Ketland & Co." rifle locks stamped "UNITED STATES," and imported by our Federal government from England, were suitable for military pistols and light

"musquets" or rifles. These imported locks are today found on the very rare Robert McCormick type U.S. Horseman's Pistols and Ship's Pistol—Model 1797-1800. It is also well documented that the Indian Department drew on the same rifle lock supply to have made up into the early Indian Department "Musquets," U.S. Model 1800-1808. These smallish muskets were produced by various "Indian Contractors" in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, area for our friendly American Indians.

Major Hicks, in his book, *United States Ordnance*, Vol. 11, Page 16, published a copy of a very interesting bill signed by Thomas Ketland, in Philadelphia, dated 15th July 1800.

Its heading reads as follows:

"Invoice of Gun Locks shipped by Ketland and Walker on board the ship Washington, James Williamson, master, bound for Philada for the A/C/ & Risque of the United States Government."

The invoice describes two cases shipped, one for 864 " $\frac{3}{4}$ United States hardened locks" and another for 687, "ditto United States Locks" totaling 1551 locks. Also included on the invoice are charges for "carriage to London" which might suggest that the locks were made or shipped originally from the Ketland plant in Birmingham. The 1551 locks came to approximately \$2,500.00 or about \$1.60 per lock. There were additional charges at London, which included various taxes, Bills of Lading, Insurance, etc., bringing the invoice to \$2775.83. Finally there were more charges for Uncle Sam at Philadelphia, such as Custom House duty, Bond and Permit Freight from London, and portorage which brought the final bill up to \$3239.74 or approximately \$2.09 each.

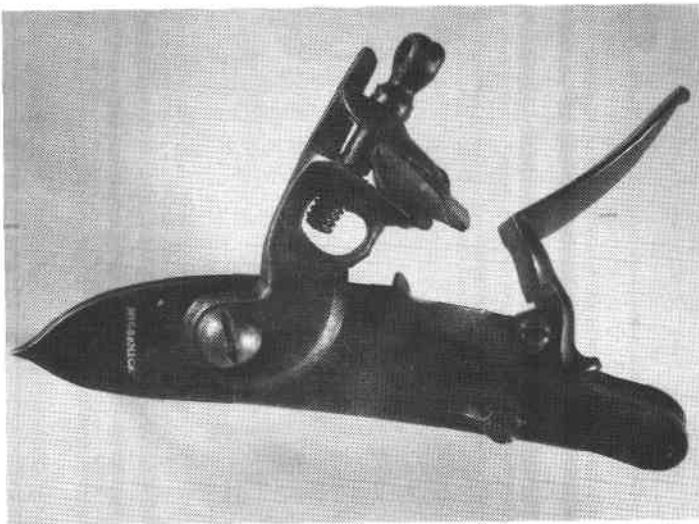
The final entry on this shipment is found in the official receipt book of J.M. Harris at the Skuylkill Armory near Phila. "Received August 9th, 1800 of Israel Whelen the above specified two cases containing fifteen hundred and fifty, $\frac{3}{4}$ United States hardened locks."

That one extra lock on the invoice and elimination of one lock by Harris was quite possibly the model being returned with the order for quality control and comparison.

After a detailed study of the Ordnance Department Arsenal Day Book and Ledger at Skuylkill, Philadelphia, the late Lt. Col. R.C. Kuhn wrote that he was absolutely certain that Robert McCormick never made a pistol or a musket. He felt sure that McCormick merely assembled and fitted the parts of these pistols and muskets. The various parts were issued to him on a voucher or memo receipt, and when he returned the finished hand or shoulder weapon, he received a receipt signed by the Arsenal storekeeper. The U.S. Auditor would then pay up the face amount of the signed receipt upon presentation by the contractor.

During the period of 1797 and 1800 our Ordnance Department referred to our Federal Arsenals as Military Storerooms. They were, Skuylkill, at Philadelphia, Pa.; West Point, New York; Springfield, Mass.; New London, Va.; Manchester, Va.; Fort Washington, Harpers Ferry, Va.; New Haven, Conn.; and Middletown, Conn. The storekeepers were Tench Francis, who bore the title of Purveyor; John Harris and Israel Whelan were also classified as storekeepers at Skuylkill Arsenal or Military Storeroom.

Col. Kuhn points out that the storeroom at Skuylkill, and probably all the other arsenals as well, consisted of many Ordnance parts bins. These bins contained the various individual



Musket Lock—McCormick contract of July 5, 1798.

pistol and musket parts. These individual component parts were purchased by the U.S. from various European suppliers, and were ordered from local American arms makers as well.

Pistol barrels, for instance, were supplied by American makers Adam and John Ansted. In addition some brass and iron barrels were ordered from Europe.

Pistol and rifle locks were imported from the English firm of Thomas & John Ketland; five other pistol lock makers were American.

Pistol stocks were supplied by John Miles and Henry Fraley, local gunsmiths.

Ordnance regulations during this period clearly directed that, "U.S. and name of contractor will be stamped upon the lock plate under the pan. The manufacturer and the year in rear of the cock, and "UNITED STATES" on lock rear of hammer. The initials of the inspector shall be placed on the stock opposite the lock." Since the face of the imported McCormick type lock plates were already heavily engraved and stamped by Ketland, the standard Ordnance regulations were not followed to the T. The "U.S." was stamped on top of the barrel near the breech, or was branded on the underside of the stock near the triggerguard. Unfortunately, the date of pistol assembly was dispensed with completely, and, further, only McCormick, the contractor, seems to have stamped his name on the left flat of the stock of his finished article.

Voucher No. 149, dated 6/14/1798, and signed John Harris, storekeeper at Skuykill Arsenal on one side and Robert McCormick, pistol assembler or artificer, on the other, shows that McCormick was issued:

- 40 Pistol Barrels
- 40 Pistol Stocks
- 40 Pistol Guards - Brass
- 40 Pistol Caps - Brass
- 40 Rifle Locks (for Pistols)

Another voucher, no. 83, dated 4/15/1799, signed Tench Francis, Arsenal Storekeeper, shows the following individual component parts issued to Robert McCormick:

- 100 Rifle Locks (Pistols)
- 100 Pistol Barrels
- 100 Pistol Stocks

This was for the purpose of producing 100 finished pistols, and when their assembly was fitted and completed, were to be delivered back into the military stores at Skuykill Arsenal.

The R.G. Receipt Book, of John Harris, Skuykill Arsenal, storekeeper, shows the date, the number, and the type of pistols that Robert McCormick assembled and fitted from government owned parts, and delivered back to the Arsenal completed:

ROBERT MCCORMICK PISTOLS DELIVERED

8-6-1799	82 Horseman's Pistols
8-10-1799	16 Horseman's Pistols
12-11-1799	100 Pistols
	<hr/>
	198 Total

A very exciting and new source of light has been shed on the 100 Ship's Pistols. Dr. Hal Fellingner, of Allentown, Pa., was recently able to secure from the heirs a microfilm of a heretofore unpublished section of the Tench Coxe papers. These private papers show that 100 McCormick Ship's Pistols were delivered on board the U.S.S. Constitution, in the year 1800, for sea service. This then, for the first time, would complete the

recorded cycle of the 100 Martial McCormick Ship's Pistols—first issued in parts by Skuykill Arsenal on 4/15/1799, then assembled by McCormick, delivered back to the arsenal on 12/11/1799, and finally delivered to the U.S.S. Constitution for naval duty in 1800.

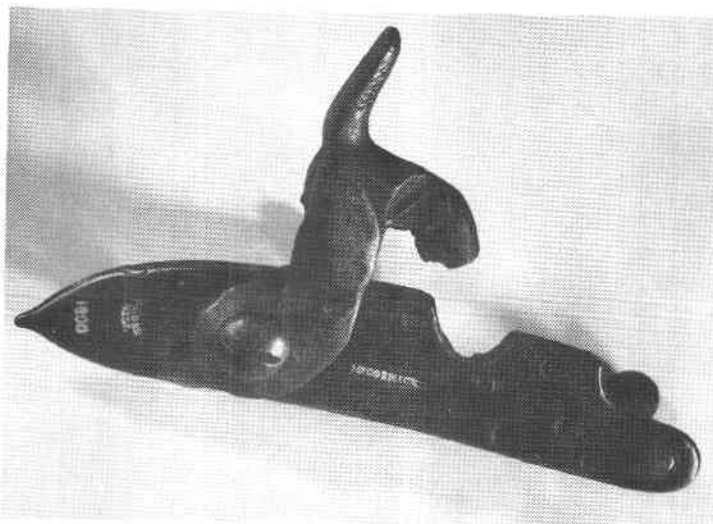
Five other contemporaries of McCormick were also issued pistol parts from U.S. Ordnance supplies, and they too, assembled and fitted them into finished pistols and delivered the completed weapons back to the arsenal. The other five pistol assemblers were: John Miles, Thomas Annelly, John Nicholson, Jr., Joseph Morgan and Frederick Schnider. The records of their assembled pistol deliveries to the Skuykill Arsenal are also found in the same R.G. Receipt Book of Storekeeper, John Harris. The records of their deliveries are as follows:

JOHN MILES OF PHILA., PA.		THOMAS ANNELLY	
8-16-1797	50 Ship's Pistols	8-8-1797	22 Pistols (probably Horseman's)
9-8-1797	50 Ship's Pistols	9-15-1797	10 Ship's Pistols
11-10-1797	50 Ship's Pistols	10-10-1797	10 Ship's Pistols
4-9-1798	2 Ship's Pistols	12-9-1797	20 Ship's Pistols
10-16-1798	100 Horseman's Pistols	3-23-1798	10 Ship's Pistols
12-23-1798	100 Horseman's Pistols	4-5-1798	40 Ship's Pistols
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	352 Total		112 Total

JOHN NICHOLSON, JR.		JOSEPH MORGAN	
8-16-1797	50 New Ship's Pistols	8-20-1797	10 Ship's Pistols
10-19-1797	50 New Ship's Pistols	10-9-1797	12 Ship's Pistols
2-7-1798	40 New Ship's Pistols	10-25-1797	6 Ship's Pistols
3-3-1798	2 New Ship's Pistols	11-16-1797	10 Ship's Pistols
	<hr/>	12-23-1797	12 Ship's Pistols
	142 Total	5-16-1798	16 Ship's Pistols
		6-16-1798	18 Ship's Pistols
			<hr/>
			84 Total

NOTE—that while all six gunsmiths assembled and fitted ship's pistols, only two of them produced horseman's pistols: John Miles, Jr., and Robert McCormick.

Although a minimal amount of information is available on Robert McCormick, we can possibly shed light on McCormick pistols by studying the records of John Miles, Sr., one of his gunsmith competitors. John Miles came to the U.S. and worked in Philadelphia about 1790, and died May 1st, 1808. Lt. Col. Kuhn, while researching in our National Archives, found that the U.S. issued to John Miles, for the purpose of making 50



Musket Lock (converted) McCormick Virginia contract Nov. 5, 1799.

ship's pistols, the following ordnance parts:

7/7/1797	50 bbls.
	50 stocks
	50 pistol caps brass
	50 pistol guards brass
	50 rifle locks

and on subsequent dates additional ordnance parts were issued to Miles:

9/8/1797	50 same as above
7/28/1798	100 bbls pistol
	100 guards pistols
	100 brass caps
8/28/1799	100 pistol locks (rifle)
	100 pistol bbls.

In the first two ordnance assembly orders John Miles merely assembled government parts; in the third government ord-

nance issue, Miles probably supplied the stocks and the locks; and in the final ordnance assembly order John Miles contributed the stocks, butt caps, and trigger guards.

As mentioned before, the Receipt Book of John Harris, U.S. Ordnance Dept. also records deliveries to the Skuykill Armory of finished pistols assembled or produced by John Miles. The storeroom receipt entries read as follows:

8/18/1797	50 Ship's Pistols
9/8/1797	50 Ship's Pistols
11/10/1797	50 Ship's Pistols
4/9/1798	2 Ship's Pistols
10/16/1798	100 Horseman's Pistols
12/23/1798	100 Horseman's Pistols
	<hr/>
	352 Total

PISTOL #1. ROBERT McCORMICK U.S. HORSEMAN'S PISTOL—CIRCA 1798

The overall length is 16¼", with full length walnut stock, and stamped on the left flat of the stock just to the rear of the side plate with a large "V" with a small "x" just above. Further to the rear, on the same left stock flat, the maker's name, "McCORMICK" is die stamped vertically. This is one of the few specimens that clearly ties McCormick, the gun maker, directly to the various flintlock pistols known as McCormicks.

The round iron barrel is 10¼" long, and is .67 caliber. The barrel proof stamp, although not the exact die, is very similar to the barrel stamp on Pistol #2—a raised eagle head over a raised "P," all in a slender sunken oval. The oval in Pistol #1 is stamped in the opposite direction of Pistol #2, the head of the eagle is toward the breech. The top of the barrel near the barrel tang is also stamped "US."

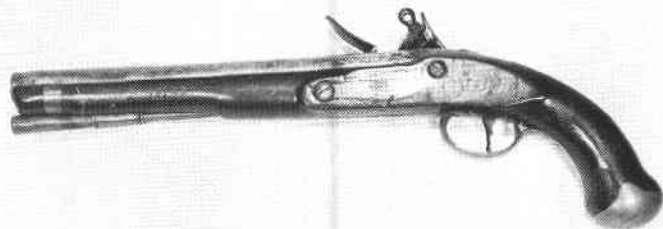
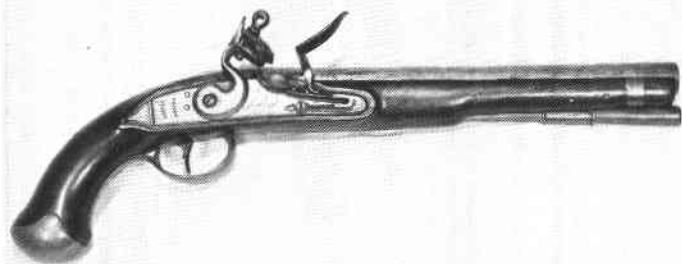
The mountings of the Horse Pistol are brass; the fishtail type buttcap with graceful side extensions is very different from the Ship's pistol; a lighter and more graceful trigger guard, a simple military side plate, are the three most pronounced physical

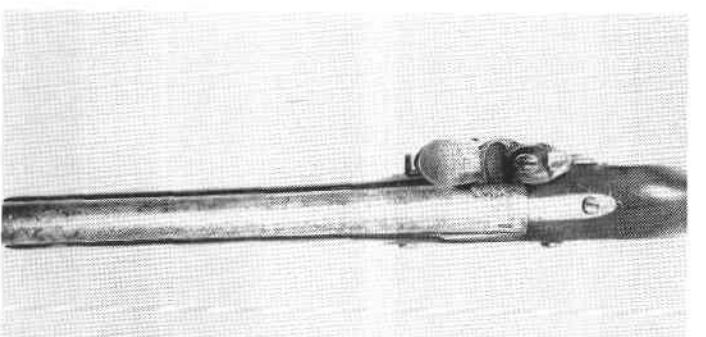
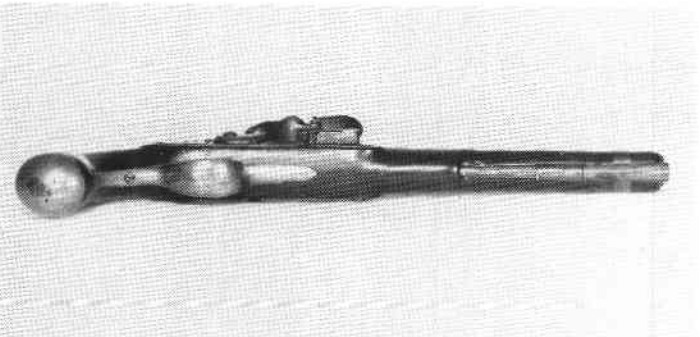
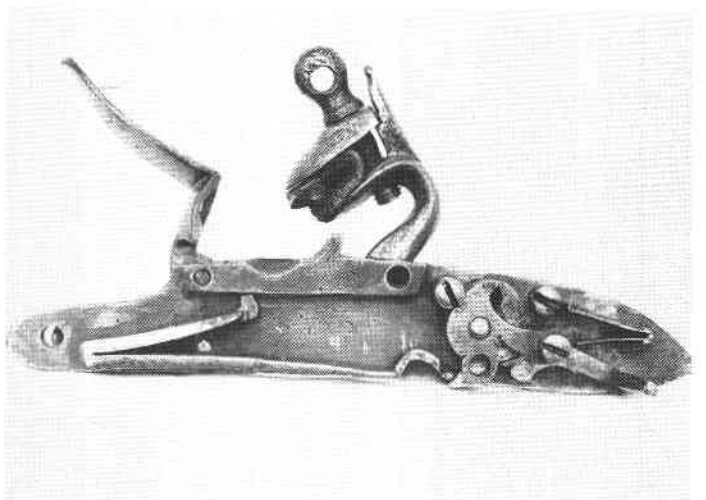
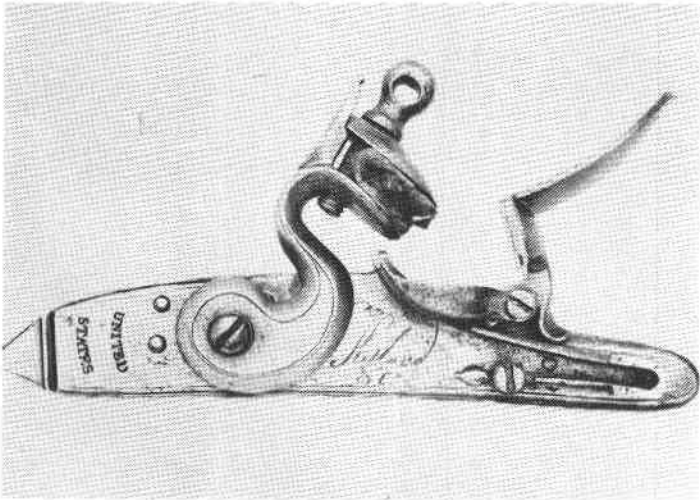
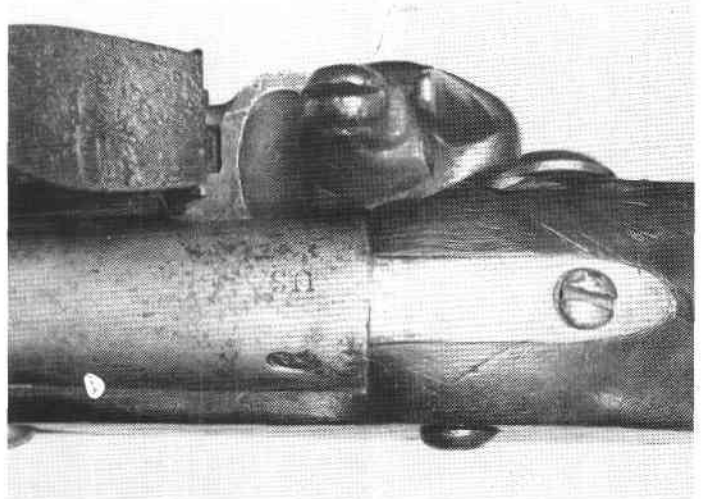
differences from Pistol #2. The single ramrod pipe and the familiar wide brass forestock band are both very similar on the Ship's pistol and the Horseman's pistol.

The flat iron lock plate with double vertical step-down slashes to the rear is 5-13/16" long. The face of the Horseman's pistol lock is very similar to the plate on the 2nd pistol, and the "Ketland & Co." engraving and the "UNITED STATES" stampings are exactly the same as the Navy Pistol #2. It also has the same integrally fenced pan, the flat gooseneck hammer, and the curl-toed frizzen. The most significant differences between the two are the double vertical slashes to the rear of the horse pistol plate; the slightly more delicate taper to the top of the comb, and the different model hammer screw, with eye—all rather unimportant differences.

The interior view of lock plate #1 is almost exactly like the ship's pistol lock, the only addition being the lockmaker's initials stamped upside down in the center of the lock: "TK."

I purchased this fine specimen from Frank Russell in 1978.





PISTOL #2. ROBERT MCCORMICK U.S. SHIP'S PISTOL—CIRCA 1799

The overall length is 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ " with a full walnut stock and an iron belt-hook on the left side. Beneath the side plate, and still visible, the stock is stamped "US."

The round iron barrel is 10" long; and is .67 caliber. The barrel is proofed on the top left side near the breech with a small raised eagle head over a raised "P", all in a slender sunken oval. The very top of the barrel near the tang is stamped "US."

The mountings are brass, which includes a bird's head or umbrella-type buttcap, a rather heavy triggerguard, an exaggerated Navy side plate with a graceful tail extension to the rear for the support of the belt hook, a single large ramrod pipe, and finally, a wide brass forestock band.

The flat iron military lockplate with fine line border is 5 $\frac{12}{16}$ " long, and has an integral fenced pan. It has a flat gooseneck hammer, a curl-toed frizzen. The lockplate is stamped in two

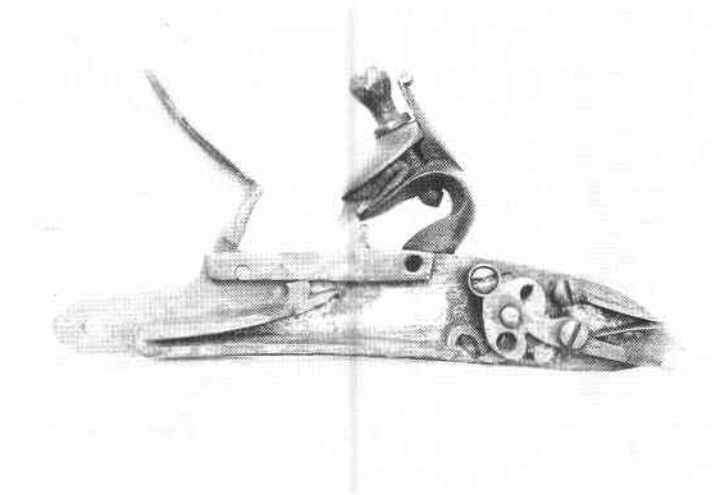
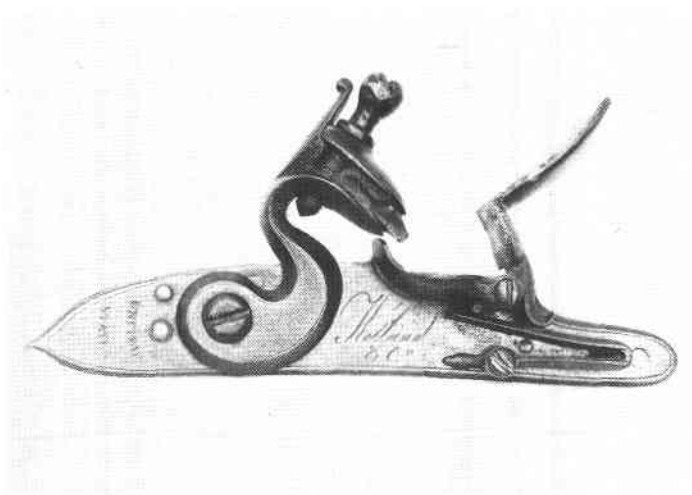
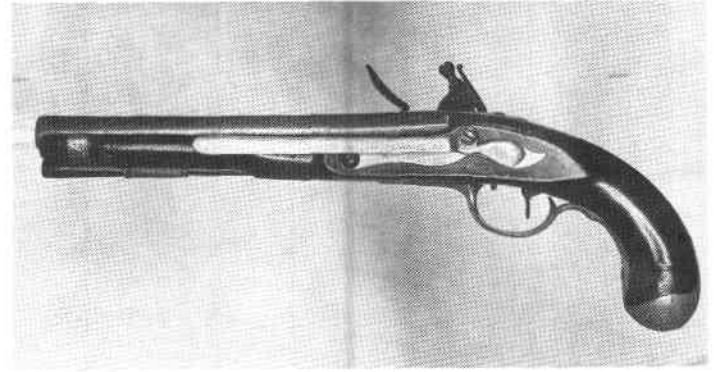
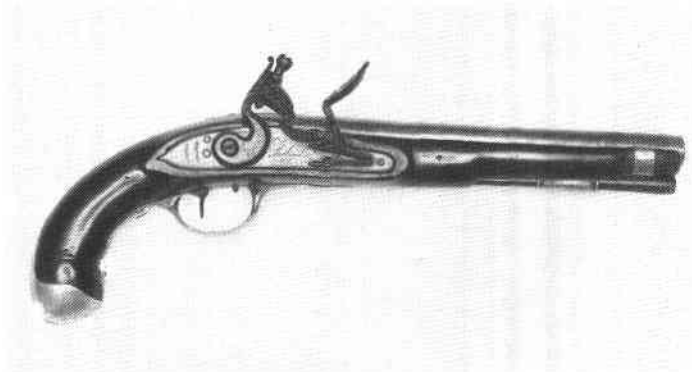
vertical curving lines, "UNITED" "STATES," behind the hammer. And the lockplate is engraved in stylized script in the center, "KETLAND" "& CO." in two lines.

Another feature of this ship's pistol lock is that the face is completely flat, with no vertical slashes to the rear. Sam Smith's McCormick Navy pistol lock, on the other hand, does have the double vertical slashes.

Other notable design features are the curl to the toe of the frizzen and the graduated spear point ending to the frizzen spring; the bun at the top of the comb; and that the face of the frizzen has been re-shod.

The interior view of the Ketland & Co. lock is typical of the late lock type used in most of the U.S.-made martial flintlock pistols. Note that there is no mainspring screw to hold the mainspring to the back side of the lockplate.

I purchased this Ship's pistol from Norm Flayderman.



PISTOL #3. ROBERT MCCORMICK U.S. SHIP'S PISTOL—SECOND VARIETY

This martial pistol is almost identical in shape, proportion and design to Ship's Pistol #2, the second boarding pistol described above, but there is one major difference: the lock stampings. When I first saw this piece, I was almost certain that it had the wrong lock, or a replaced lock. But, after careful study, I am convinced that the lock is original with the weapon. Why McCormick produced a standard U.S. Navy Pistol with a more decoratively embellished lockplate is a mystery.*

The overall length of Pistol #3 is $16\frac{7}{16}$ " and it is walnut stock-
ed with an iron belt hook on the left side. There is no visible "US" stamp on the left flat of the stock as in Ship's Pistol #2, but the stock flat was shaved at one point in its history and we cannot tell if it ever was stamped "US," or with the assembler's name.

The round iron barrel is $10\frac{1}{16}$ " long and is .68 caliber. The barrel is proofed on the top left side near the breech with a rather delicate raised eagle head over a raised "P," all in a slender sunken oval—very similar to Ship's Pistol #2.

The mountings are brass, and, again, all very similar in design to Ship's Pistol #2. The brass hardware includes the bird's head or umbrella buttcap, the heavy military trigger guard, the naval side plate with extension to the rear to help support a belt hook, the single large ramrod pipe, and the familiar McCormick wide forestock band.

With this Ketland lock plate, we have a complete decorative

departure from other known McCormick Pistol lock plates.

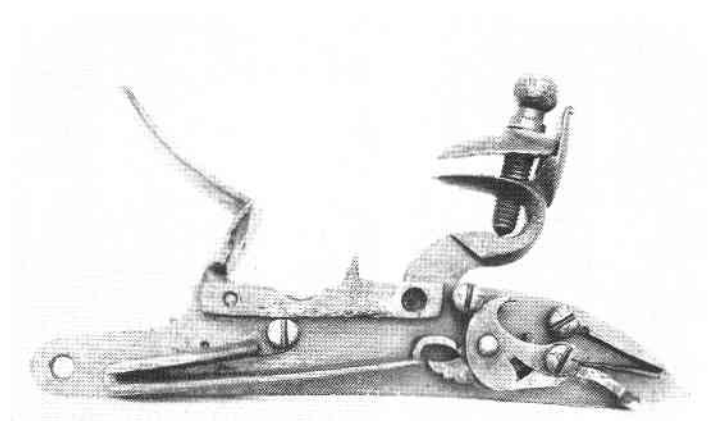
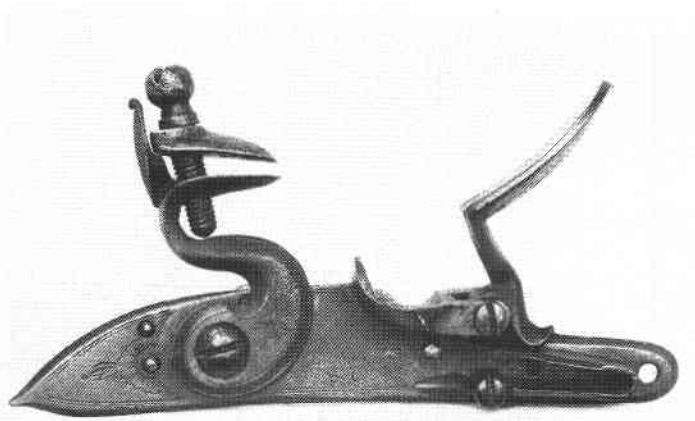
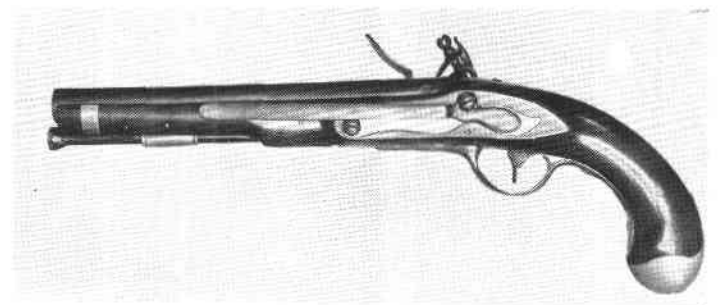
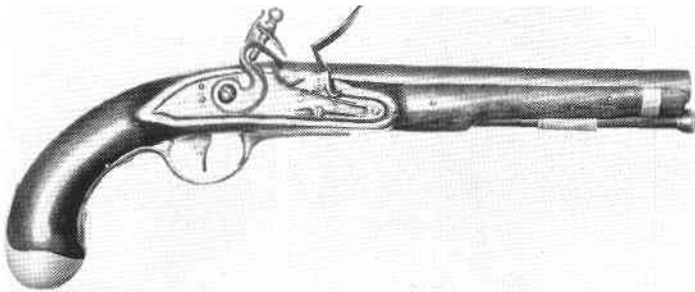
The general design features are very much like lock specimen #2: the same flat lock face, the same integral pan with fence, the curved toe of the frizzen, the frizzen spring does end in a very pronounced spear point. The flat-faced hammer with the gooseneck shape, and the graceful comb ending atop with a pleasant bun to the rear, are almost the same as Lock #2. Overall length is $5\frac{1}{16}$ ".

The lock stamping and engraving are very different. First, the lock maker's name is stamped with Roman lettering in two horizontal lines in the center of the plate, "KETLAND & CO." The lock plate border, made up of two parallel lines, turns rather decorative to the rear of the hammer, becoming a flower petal and sprig almost surrounding the bridle screw. The face of the bordered hammer shows evidence of two engraved flower clusters.

After careful inspection, it is my opinion that, although the lock markings appear to be civilian, the lock is definitely military in design and is original with this pistol stock.

The interior details of this McCormick Navy lock variation are extremely similar to the first two locks. There do not appear to be any lock maker's initials, but most of the screw heads and the pan are marked with an "X" or an "I." There is also the addition of mainspring screw to hold the mainspring more securely to the lockplate.

This pistol came to me from Mark Aziz.



**PISTOL #4. ROBERT MCCORMICK TYPE U.S. SHIP'S PISTOL—THIRD VARIETY
MAKER UNKNOWN — CIRCA 1798**

Pistol #4 is probably not a McCormick Naval Boarding Pistol, but more than likely made by an unknown contemporary arms manufacturer, circa 1798, possibly one of McCormick's five competitors: John Miles, Thomas Annelly, etc.

The overall length is 16 $\frac{3}{16}$ "; it has a full length walnut stock with an inleted iron belt hook. The left flat of the stock, behind the side plate and belt hook is stamped vertically in three lines "MARSH," "M.A.," and a large viewed stamp "V." It is thought, but not yet confirmed, "MARSH" was the name of the officer in charge of the Western Navy Yard at Washington, D.C., or the inspecting officer there who viewed the conversion of the Navy pistols when they were converted from flint to percussion, probably in the 1830s and 40s. Both Lee Bull and I have specimens of early Thomas French Ship's Pistols with the same stampings on the left stock flat of each pistol. They have both been converted to percussion.

The round iron barrel on #4 is 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ " long and is .675 caliber. The barrel is proofed on the top left side of the barrel near the breech with a small raised eagle head over a raised "P," all in a slender sunken oval. Just below the barrel proof is a small stamp "WNY" which could stand for Western Navy Yard, one of our Navy repair yards. The top of the barrel near the tang is

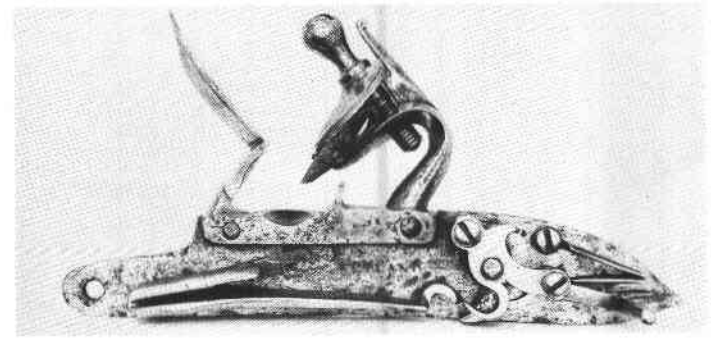
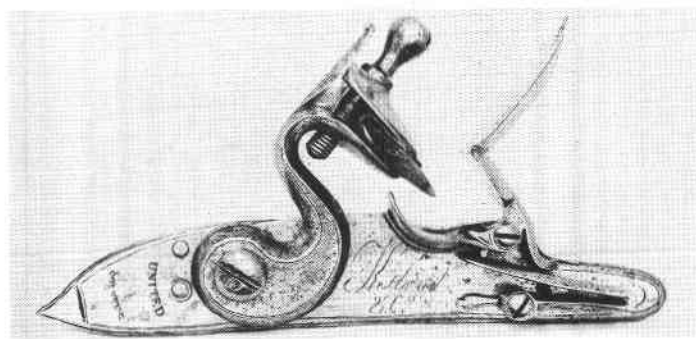
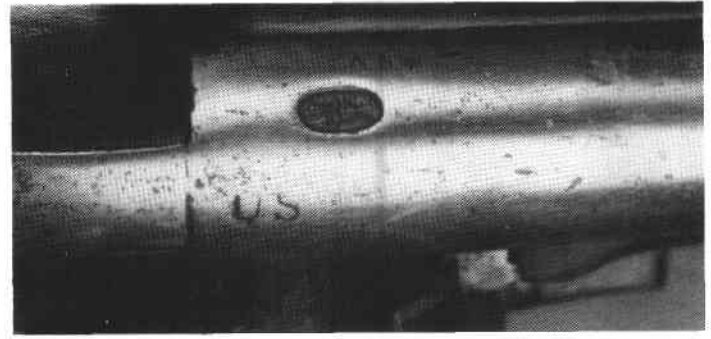
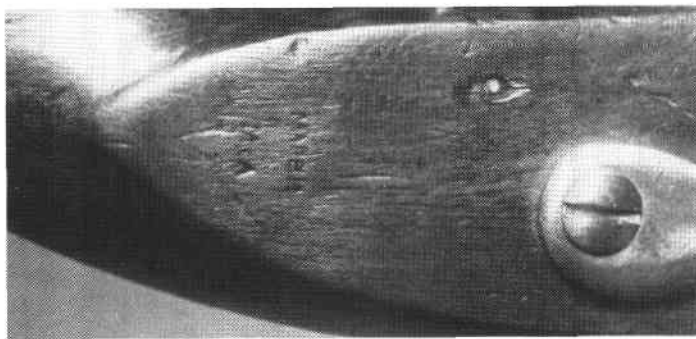
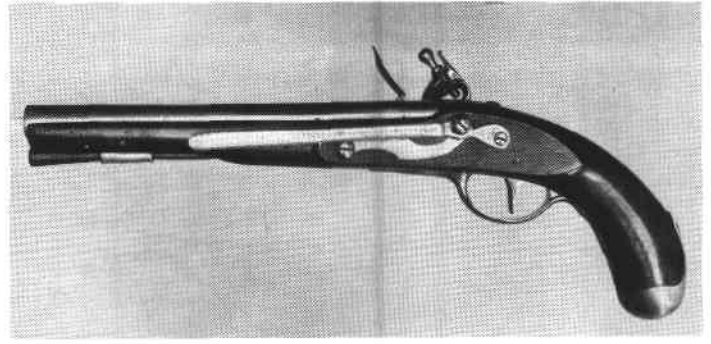
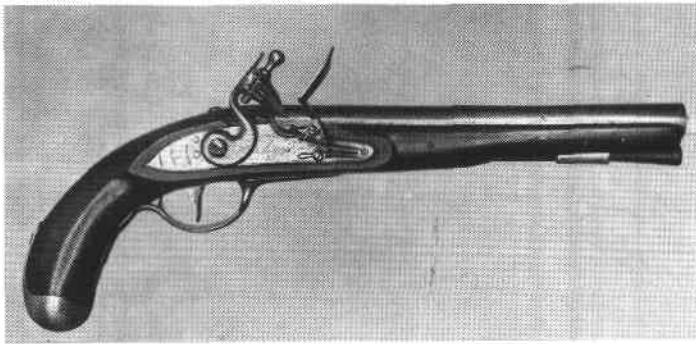
stamped "US."

The mountings are brass: they include a bird's head or umbrella type buttcap, the heavy military trigger guard similar to Pistol #2, but this is anchored to the grip with only one screw. There is a single ramrod pipe. The side plate is a major departure from Ship's Pistol #2, in that it is the smaller and simpler military side plate, one usually seen on Horse Pistols. There is no graceful rear extension to reinforce the Naval belt hook. Another departure is the absence of the familiar McCormick brass forestock band.

Again, we have another standard imported military Ketland lock. The flat face of this 4th lock plate is just like lock plates #1 and #2, even with the same stamping and engraving, "KETLAND & CO." in stylized script before the hammer and with Roman letters "UNITED STATES" stamped in two curving vertical lines, behind the hammer. This lock was converted and reconverted.

The overall length is 5 $\frac{11}{16}$ ". The backside of the lock is quite similar to the other with the exception of the dramatic flaire to the bridle. The center of the plate is stamped in Roman lettering, "KETLAND," rather than the lock maker's initials.

This pistol came to me via the Bill Locke collection.



KETLAND LOCK PLATE #5 (Indian Department Rifle)

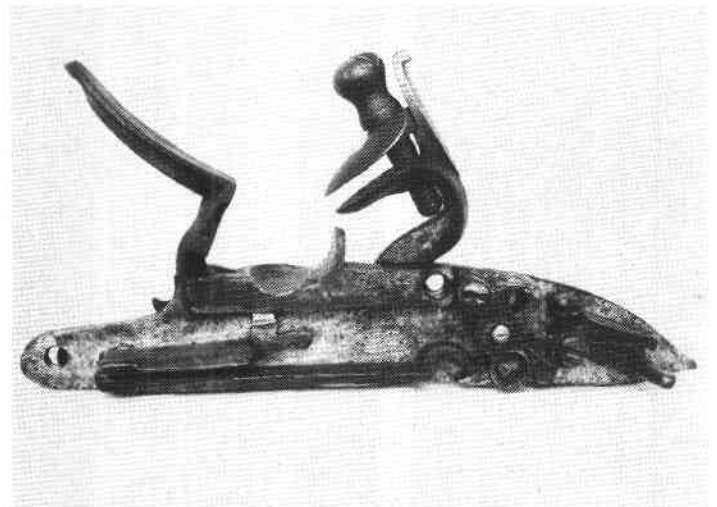
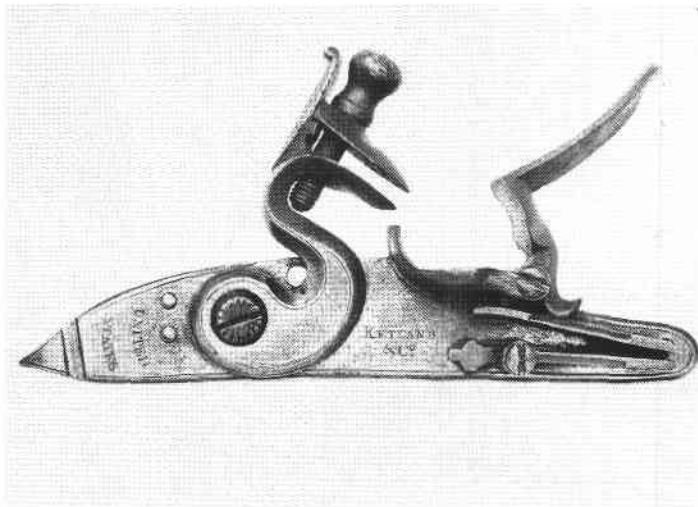
The flat faced Ketland Indian musket lock plate is very similar in every way to pistol locks 1, 2 and 4. But note that the stamping in the center of the plate "KETLAND & CO." is done with Roman letters, in two lines, exactly like pistol lock 3. The overall length of this musket lock plate is $5\frac{13}{16}$ ".

The back side of the Indian Department Ketland lock plate is like Plate 1 and 2, the only minor addition being the tiny initials "TK."

A study of McCormick's Muskets shows us that he did stamp his name "McCormick" on the lock or the left flat of the stock, with a die about $\frac{7}{8}$ " long and $\frac{1}{8}$ " high. Since the pistol locks were slightly smaller ($\frac{3}{4}$ size), and since the pistol locks were already completely stamped and engraved, the only logical

place for Robert McCormick to advertise his produce was on the left stock flat. It is the author's opinion that McCormick die-stamped his name on all his work. Of the dozen or so known McCormick-type contract hand weapons, we only know that three of them are stamped on the left flat with the same die ($\frac{7}{8}$ " x $\frac{1}{8}$ "). Two of these are horseman's pistols and the third is a ship's pistol, as we stated before.

Another variation not photographed here, nor seen by the author, is reported to be in the collection of the late Joe Desserich. It is an unstamped horseman's pistol, with all the familiar McCormick physical characteristics, but one very unusual characteristic is a fowled anchor barrel proof stamp. This suggests one of McCormick's competitive contractors.



COMPARISON OF McCORMICK-MARKED PISTOLS WITH OTHERS

The last series of pictures on the next page, compare the standard "McCormick" pistol at the top of each picture with the unmarked barrel and unmarked stock at the bottom of each photo.

Note the difference in the design of the stock, and the hardware; the strong angle of the grip, small ramrod receiver, unusually shaped side plate, and the decoratively engraved trigger guard, similar to Halbach, John Miles Jr., and other Pennsylvania gunsmiths.

The unmarked barrel is exactly like the marked barrel and the locks are exactly the same, the only difference being that one lock is slightly longer.

By comparing the style of a "signed" and an unstamped McCormick type pistol, one cannot help but feel that these pistols were assembled and fitted not only by two completely different gunsmiths, but by two different gunshops as well.

Still another variety of the McCormick type Horseman's pistol is the extremely fine specimen owned by Dr. Pete Peterson. It differs from the above three Horseman's pistols in the following manner:

1. It has a very large bulbous butt cap.
2. The barrel proof stamp is a small round eagle head over a small raised "V", all in a very small sunken oval.

In conclusion:

- A. Our Federal government in the late 1790s and early 1800s

did, in fact, purchase musket locks and rifle or pistol locks from English makers.

B. The various musket and pistol locks and other components were stored for emergencies in our several Federal Arsenals.

C. When the need arose, contracts were let and the parts were issued to designated private arms assembler contractors such as John Miles Sr., Robert McCormick, etc. They, in turn, fitted and assembled the parts into a finished pistol, ready for military service.

D. Since the Federal government, in the late 1790s, did let pistol contracts (no records found to date) to a number of arms assemblers, and quite probably issued ordnance to each contractor, and although all the pistols must be of a similar pattern, each contractor produced a pistol slightly different from the rest.

E. Thus, the various U.S. 1797-1800 model pistols that are unmarked by their maker (assembler) are still a mystery—and should be designated *McCormick-type* pistols.

F. For the present, only those pistols with the "McCormick" name stamped on their stock should be called "MCCORMICK" pistols.

G. But I wish to make it absolutely clear that I consider all unsigned or unmarked McCormick-type pistols just as rare and valuable as the "MCCORMICK" stamped pistols.

H. And finally, I am certain that the mystery of who made or assembled the unidentified McCormick-type pistols will be revealed by the research of future arms historians among the membership of our American Society of Arms Collectors.

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the following A.S.A.C. members, without whose kind help and guidance this particular article could not have been written:

Col. Sam Smith
Dr. Pete Peterson
Jim Wertenberger
Tom Wood

I would also like to acknowledge and applaud the in-depth research material already contributed by early arms researchers and collectors:

Major James E. Hicks
Lt. Col. R.C. Kuhn
Harry C. Knode

Thank you all for your patience.

INFORMATION SOURCES

"McCormick Pistols" by Harry C. Knode, *The Texas Gun Collector*, Issue No. 48, July 1954.

"More About McCormicks" by Harry C. Knode, *The Texas Gun Collector*, Issue No. 59, June 1955.

Letter from Lt. Col. R.C. Kuhn, published in *The Texas Gun Collector*, Issue No. 59, June 1955.

American Society of Arms Collectors, Bulletin No. 3.

Dr. Hal Fillinger's Microfilm of *New Family Letters and Documents of Tench Cox*.

U.S. Ordnance, Vol. No. 2, by Maj. James E. Hicks.

U.S. Martial and Semi-Martial Single Shot Pistols, Charles Edward Chapel.

United States Martial Pistols and Revolvers, Arcadi Gluckman.

Guide to Antique American Firearms by Norm Flayderman.

*Editor's Note: The lock shown on p. 19 is a typical Ketland civilian pistol lock of the period: the mystery is how it got in a batch of plain military locks.

