



Model 1842 N.P. Ames "pointed lockplate" pistol, one of the first three hundred delivered.



The 1842 pistol, left side. Note the point on the stock.

# U.S. Model 1842 Percussion Pistols Navy and Army

H.B. (Luke) Woods

There have been several articles written about the Model 1842 pistols, but to my knowledge this is the first one that attempts to discuss the known lock and barrel markings and to illustrate as many of them as possible. Pistols with different dates and inspection marks are not shown, but included are two experimental stocked Astons, a cased pair of Astons, Palmetto pistols, and a pistol utilizing a surplus Aston barrel in its construction.

The Navy pistols will be discussed first because they are the earlier dated pistols.

## THE AMES NAVY PISTOLS

N.P. Ames, Jr. was commissioned by the government to visit the leading armories of Europe, to observe their methods and products. While visiting England, he no doubt had the opportunity to view one of Nock's British Navy boxlocks. On his return, and knowing the U.S. Navy was interested in firearm improvements, Ames lost no time in having his agent, Dan Tyler, who must have accompanied Ames on tour of the European Armories, write to the Board of Navy Commissioners, on 30th November, 1841:

Gentlemen:

Since my return, we have received from the Ordnance Department a model of the British Marine pistol, and we are now preparing a pistol which we trust will please you. As soon as it is finished, I shall take measures to submit it for your examination.

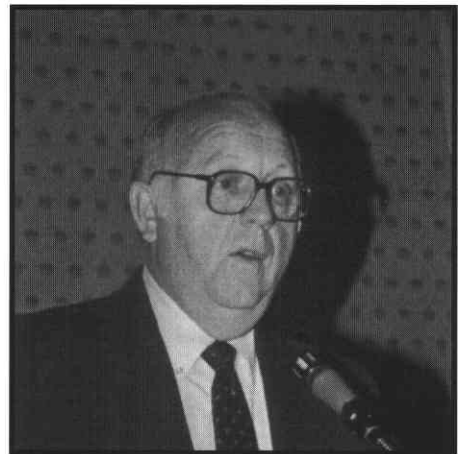
We must assume that a gentlemen's agreement had been reached to purchase Navy pistols because of the following correspondence:

(1) Letter dated 23rd April, 1842, N.P. Ames to the Board of Naval Commissioners. This is a long letter having to do primarily with the production, delivery, and payment relative to a sword contract, but it also contains the following sentence: "We shall be ready for an inspection of the carbines and pistols very soon."

(2) Letter dated 5th August, 1842, from Dan Tyler to the Board of Naval Commissioners:

Sirs:

We are now ready for an inspection of three hundred pistols, and the work on the remainder is very well advanced; as there is but very little variation from the ordinary pistol, I suppose almost any inspector can



proceed at once to the inspection, without difficulty, if so, we can complete one delivery very soon.

(3) Letter dated 8th August, 1842, from Lewis Warrington of the Board of Navy Commissioners to N.P. Ames:

Sir:

Your letter of the 5th instant has been received. As Capt. Thornton of the Army will inspect the carbines furnished under the contract with Mr. Jenks, the Board will request him to inspect the pistols also.

(4) Letter dated 9th August, 1842, from Lewis Warrington to Capt. W.A. Thornton, U.S.A. Ordnance Depot, New York:

Sir:

We have a number of pistols at Mr. Ames' factory, which we should be glad if you would inspect and would be pleased to know, should it suit your convenience, when you will be able to inspect them.

(5) Letter dated 9th August, 1842, from Lewis Warrington to N.P. Ames:

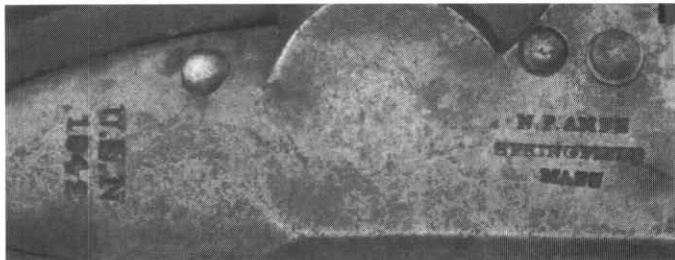
Sir:

Capt. Thornton has been requested by the Board, should it suit his convenience, to examine the pistols you have now ready for inspection under your contract.

(6) Letter dated 24th August, 1842, from Lewis Warrington to Capt. Thornton:

Sir:

The Commissioners have received your letter of the 20th. The board is pleased with the results of your tests of Jenk's carbines. They are much obliged by your service



1842 date on the lockplate of an Ames pistol.

on this occasion, and enclose herewith, authority from Col. Talcott, to attend to the proving and inspection of the pistols also. The pattern pistol has been forwarded to you by Harnden's Express.

(7) Letter dated 24th August, 1842, Col. George Talcott, Chief of Ordnance:

Sir:

The commissioners of the Navy have a number of pistols made by Mr. D. Tyler, Agent for Ames Mfg. Co., Springfield, Massachusetts and having just heard that a portion of the barrels were ready for proof, they request you to allow Capt. W.A. Thornton or any other officer you may deem most suitable to inspect them. This will be a great accommodation, and much promote our convenience.

Lewis Warrington

(8) Letter dated 25th August, 1842, from W.M. Crane of the Board of Naval Commissioners to Captain Thornton:

Sir:

You will herewith receive a copy of the contract this day forwarded to be signed by Dan'l Tyler, Agent for the Ames Manufacturing Company, for two thousand pistols for the use of the Navy. Although this contract has not yet been signed, you will please be governed by the copy now sent, in making the inspection of such as have been finished.

Highlights of the contract are as follows:

Dated 1st September, 1842, it calls for a production of two thousand pistols at a price of \$5.00 each. The pistols are to be delivered on or before the 1st of June, 1843. It also specifies a minimum of three hundred pistols per inspection batch, and that the pistols are to be manufactured to the standard of a pattern pistol, described and furnished by the Ames Company. The pistols should bear the name of "N.P. Ames, Springfield, Mass., U.S.N., 1842", and Ames furnish a \$3,300 bond. Delivery shall be at the Navy Yards at Boston, Massachusetts, and New York. The contract also states that the material used shall be of the best quality, that the various parts or pieces shall be of uniform dimension and be interchangeable. The pistols shall be subject to, and undergo, the proof and inspection established by the Ordnance Department of



1842 date on the tang of a "pointed lockplate" Ames.

the Army, or any other authorized by the Navy Commissioners.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The first three hundred pistols were certainly made and probably delivered before the contract was signed. These pistols are the ones that collectors today call the "pointed lockplate" Ames. They are all dated 1842 and differ in a number of ways from the later-dated Ames. The major difference is that the lockplate is thicker and has a beveled edge with a rounded rear surface, which terminates in a point at the rear. The grip portion of the stock is thinner and approximately  $\frac{1}{16}$  -  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches longer. The back of the stock also corresponds to the lock and is shaped to a point. In all other respects the two versions are identical. The barrels are six inches, round, and .54 caliber smooth bore. All furniture is brass, polished bright; the barrel is browned and the lock fireblued, and the pistols have bright steel swivel ramrods.

The remaining Ames pistols in both the first contract (two thousand pistols) dated 1st September, 1842, at \$5.00 each, and the second contract (twelve hundred pistols) dated 21st September, 1844, at \$4.75 each, had the flat, rounded lock plate with a shorter, heavier grip and were dated 1843, 1844, 1845. Mostly 1844, 1845, and mixed dates (1844 - 1845) are observed. One pistol is known with the rounded lock that is dated 1842. Evidently the lock and stock were changed somewhere early in the first contract. The letter dated 5th August, 1842, from Dan Tyler to the Board of Naval Commissioners might give some insight.

Sir:

We are now ready for an inspection of three hundred pistols, and the work on the remainder is very well advanced; as there is but very little variation from the ordinary pistol, I suppose almost any inspector can proceed at once to the inspection, without difficulty. If so, we can complete one delivery very soon.



**Model 1842 N.P. Ames, showing the rounded, flat, lockplate that was standard production after the first three hundred.**



**A lockplate dated 1844.**



**Another 1844 lockplate; this pistol's barrel is dated 1845.**

- 144 Carbines
- 144 Pistols
- 144 Swords
- 144 Powder Flasks
- 120 Boarding Pikes
- 72 Boarding Hatches
- + Percussion Caps



**Barrel marking on an 1844 dated pistol**



**Barrel marking on an 1844 dated pistol with mixed dates.**

The highlights of this contract included the following:

The Carbines, Pistols, Swords, and Powder Flasks to conform in all their parts to those now being manufactured for the Naval Service of the United States, (and) shall be subject to, and sustain the rigor of proof required by the Navy Department.

The U.S.R. pistols are identical to the standard, rounded lockplate N.P. Ames Navy pistols, except for the lockplate markings and the barrel markings. The early serial numbered pistols were marked only "J.C.B." over "P" on the barrel; the pistol illustrated is number 4. After the first few, the pistols I have seen are marked "U.S.R." over "1843" over "J.C.B." over "P". All lock plates are marked the same: "N.P. Ames" over "Springfield" over "Mass." in the center, and, at rear, "U.S.R." over "1843". It is not known whether J.C.B. was Joseph C. Bragg or John C. Beaumont: both worked at the same time and were Navy inspectors.

All N.P. Ames Navy pistols have six inch smooth bore .54 caliber barrels, interchangeable parts (except the first three hundred pistols) and swivel ramrods. None were rifled. The inspectors were primarily Wm. A. Thornton, Richard Paine, Joseph C. Bragg, John C. Beaumont, Rufus Chandler and Joseph Lanman. All Ames box-lock pistols should be proofed on the back flat of the stocks.

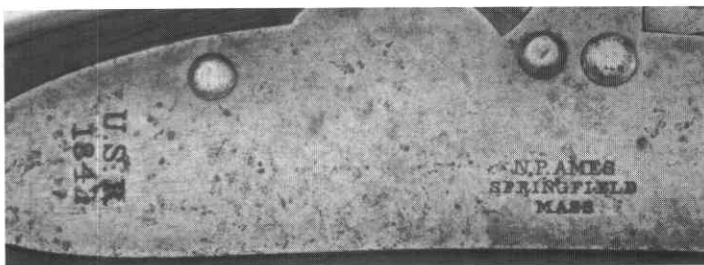
After the first three hundred pistols, Ames redesigned the pistol for some reason. Why, I don't know: all the "pointed lockplate" Ames that I have observed have been used and most have seen hard use. I can't remember one that had a broken stock or a problem with the lock. It could have been a cost saving measure by N.P. Ames.

The second contract was to be completed before 1st October, 1845, and delivered, like the first contract, to New York and Boston Navy Yard. This contract was completed on time.

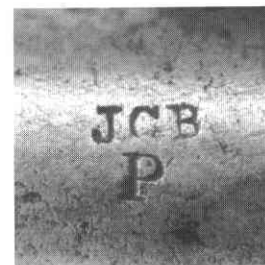
The N.P. Ames 1843 pistol with the U.S.R. markings was certainly a mystery until the contract between the U.S. Revenue service (now the Coast Guard) and Wm. Jenks of Springfield, Massachusetts, was found. The contract, dated 5th December, 1843, called for the manufacture of weapons. Jenks did not have a facility to manufacture arms; at the time he was associated with N.P. Ames: therefore, the N.P. Ames marked U.S.R. pistol! The contract lists the following:



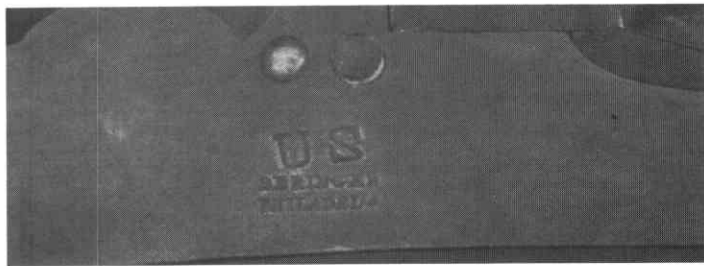
Model 1842 N.P. Ames pistol dated 1843 and stamped "U.S.R."



An 1843 dated U.S.R. lockplate.



Barrel marking on U.S.R. pistol, serial no. 4.

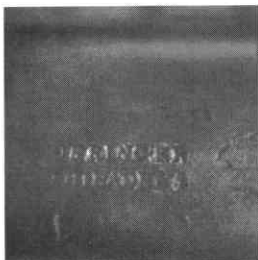


Lockplate marking on a Deringer pistol.

#### THE DERINGER NAVY PISTOLS

Henry Deringer of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania "offers to make" twelve hundred Navy boxlock pistols of the same pattern as previously made by N.P. Ames at \$4.98 each. The contract was signed 1st July, 1845, and can be found in R.G. 74, entry 162, Volume 1, pages 112, 113, 114. During the same year, Deringer purchased machinery from N.P. Ames that was used to produce his pistols under contract for the Navy, and it was with this machinery that Deringer expected to produce his pistols. Deringer Navy pistols are identical to N.P. Ames pistols except for the lock markings and minor variations.

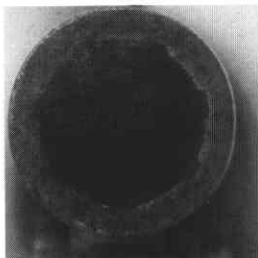
There are three different lock markings. The first one has "Deringer" over "Philadel<sup>a</sup>" in the center of the lockplate. Barrels are known with nothing, or "Deringer Philadel<sup>a</sup>" on top. The second lock marking has a large "U.S." over "Deringer" over "Philadel<sup>a</sup>" in the center of the lock, and "Deringer" over "Philadel<sup>a</sup>" and "R.P." (Richard Paine) on the barrel. The Deringer Navy pistols that are rifled and sighted have these same markings. These pistols are reputed to be the first rifled pistols purchased by the U.S. Government. They have very deep, seven grooved, rifled barrels and front and rear sights.



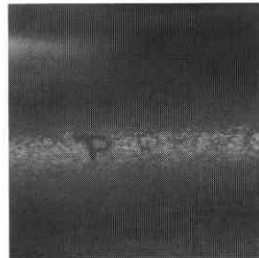
Barrel marking on the US-marked Deringer pistol.



Barrel marking and rear sight of the rifled and sighted Deringer pistol.



The rifling in the Deringer pistol.



Barrel marking of the 1847 dated Deringer.

The rarest of all Deringers is the third lock marking: this is marked "Deringer" over "Philadel<sup>a</sup>" in the center of the lock plate and at the rear of the lock, "U.S.N." over "1847". The barrel is marked only with a "P".

How many Deringer Model 1842 pistols were actually made? No one knows for sure. The recorded correspondence shows that Henry Deringer was experiencing difficulty from the beginning:

Georgetown, D.C.  
June 6, 1846



Lockplate of the 1847 dated Deringer.

powder nor ball for that purpose.

Deringer wrote 24th April, 1847, for someone to inspect barrels. Paine finally inspected three hundred thirteen barrels and rejected thirty-one barrels, therefore two hundred eighty-two barrels were accepted. This inspection was completed 3rd May through 22nd May, 1847. In a letter written 18th May, 1847, to the Navy Commissioners, Paine reported that he approved two hundred eighty-two barrels, stamping them on top of the barrel "R.P."; those that were rejected were stamped "R.P." under the barrel.

Deringer wrote:

Phil. Aug. 5, 1848

Commnd L. Warrington  
Ch of Bureau of Ord. etc.  
Washington City  
Dear Sir:

Yours of the 27 July was received during my absence of several days, otherwise it would have been answered sooner. I am proceeding on with my contract with your Bureau slowly and will make a delivery of part of the work sometime the coming fall. I have already expended more than all the pistols will amount to, in material etc. etc. yet I am determined to complete the contract.

Yours respfy & c.  
Henry Deringer  
per H.M. Deringer

The Navy Yard at New York wrote 26th December, 1848: "No need for Paine at Philadelphia for the defaulted Deringer contract."

Of the Deringer pistols known, Richard Paine has been the only inspector; and I would say that there should be no inspector marks stamped in the stock, although I have seen two such pistols. To my knowledge there were no deliveries.

Mr. Warrington  
of the Bureau of Ord. & Hydography  
Washington, D.C.  
Dear Sir:

Owing to the great delay in preparing machinery etc. (for the speedy manufacture of small arms upon the uniform system) has been the reason why my contract for 1,200 pistols has not been already completed within the time prescribed. The barrels are all ready in their rough state, the stocks sawed, the lock work forged and many other parts ready or now delayed, waiting completion of the milling, boring, and drilling machines for which my entire force are now at, hastening it to an early completion. The expense I have incurred in machinery etc. is little short of what it would be, were the contract for 20,000 instead of 1,200 pistols. I trust the above explanation will prove satisfactory to the department and further time will be granted to complete the contract.

Very respfl  
Yr Obt Servt  
Henry Deringer  
per B.M. Deringer

Richard Paine was assigned to inspect 11th January, 1847.

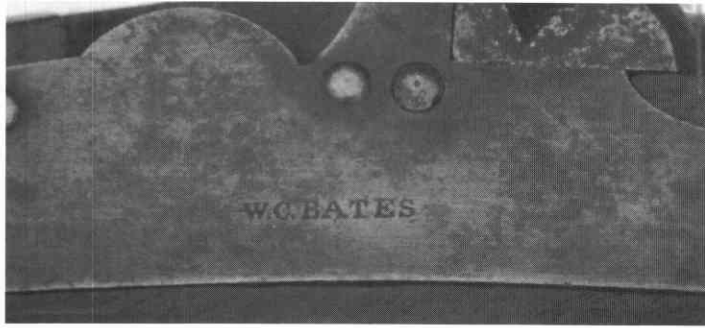
Bureau of Ord & Hygrophy  
January 11, 1847

Lt. Jas S. Palmer  
Asst. Inspr. of Ordn. U.S.N.  
Philadelphia  
Sir:

I have engaged the services of Mr. Richard Paine of Springfield, Mass. as an assistant to you in inspecting pistols at Philadelphia. He has been requested to meet you on the 20th of this month at the manufactory of Mr. H.M. Deringer at which time I desire the inspection to commence and herewith enclose a copy of the contract for your signature.

Respectfully,  
Your Obt Svt,  
L. Warrington

On the 19th January, 1847, Warrington wrote to Lt. James S. Palmer, Asst. Inspector of Ordnance U.S.N. at Philadelphia that Deringer is not ready, so told Paine to delay leaving Springfield for Philadelphia. Lt. Palmer wrote 20th January, that he has but three hundred barrels ready to proof and has neither



**Lockplate of the W.C. Bates boxlock.**

#### THE W.C. BATES PISTOL

The last Navy Model 1842 pistol has the W.C. Bates-marked lockplate. The top of the barrel is also marked "W.C. Bates". Ernest D. Laube, "Unusual U.S. Model 1842 Boxlock Pistol" in *The Gun Report Magazine* of June, 1969, page 20, did an in depth article on this pistol which is the only one known. It seems there were two "W. Bates" working at Springfield Armory during the time Ames was working on his contract for the Navy. William and Walter Bates, no middle initials, are present in the pay records. The only mark other than the lock and barrel markings, is a "25" on the underside of the barrel. The pistol shows no evidence of being altered in any way. The W.C. Bates on the barrel is barely visible, whether from a faint stamp or use isn't known.



**Model 1842 Henry Aston pistol dated 1846.**

#### THE ASTON MODEL 1842 ARMY PISTOLS

After immigrating to this country from England, Henry Aston of Middleton, Connecticut, gained a great deal of experience as an arms maker while employed by Simeon North; he established his own company in 1845. It is felt by many martial collectors that Henry Aston was the gunsmith that made the famous North duellers. On 25th February, 1845, Aston received a contract from the Ordnance Department which called for thirty thousand percussion pistols at a cost of \$6.50 each, to be produced on a pattern which had been approved in 1842.

Pattern pistols for the Model 1842 pistol were made at Springfield Armory and are marked with the Springfield Eagle and "U.S.M." on all major parts and "M" on small parts. Other than the pattern pistols, all Model 1842 Army pistols were produced under

contract.

Specifications for the Model 1842 pistol stipulated, essentially, that with the exception of the percussion lock and the use of brass furniture, the arm was to be made on the same dimensions as the present model, i.e., The Model 1836 flintlock pistol. The design in the side plate and the two-piece trigger guard assembly are the only other changes.

The pistol is .54 caliber, smoothbore, fourteen inches in length and weighs two pounds, twelve ounces, has a black walnut stock which extends three-fourths the length of the pistol, and an 8½ inch barrel which was finished bright, with a brass blade front sight. All have swivel ramrods and brass mountings finished bright. There are two lock markings: the first beginning in 1846 and continuing through 1850, was "U.S." over "H. Aston" in the center of the lockplate

and to the rear, in three vertical lines, "MIDD<sup>IN</sup>" over "Conn" over the date. The second beginning in 1851, and through 1852, was "U.S." over "H. Aston & Co." in the center of the lockplate, and the rear of the lockplate identical to the earlier version. Barrel markings are the same except for the different inspectors and dates. Also there should be inspector marks on the stock: these will be stamped on the side opposite the lock. There are usually two inspector marks, one the final inspection at the factory, the other probably the acceptance inspection at the delivery destination.

#### THE ASTON NAVY PISTOLS

The Navy purchased three thousand H. Aston pistols from the Army in May, 1850, and all were probably marked with the standard Army markings. The following correspondence indicates that fifteen hundred were completed and the remainder would be completed in the next few months:

Bureau of Ordnance  
May 20, 1850

To: Honorable Wm. B. Preston, Secretary of the Navy  
Sir:

I beg leave to call your attention to the subject of small arms for the Navy, and to request that a supply of pistols to the amount of three thousand of the percussion kind, and the best make be obtained by an application to the Secretary of War. They should be of the caliber most used by the Army, (thirty-two balls to the pound, it is believed) by which uniformity may be obtained and preserved in both branches. When these are procured, we shall then have neither pistols nor muskets, except of the most approved kind, the Army make.

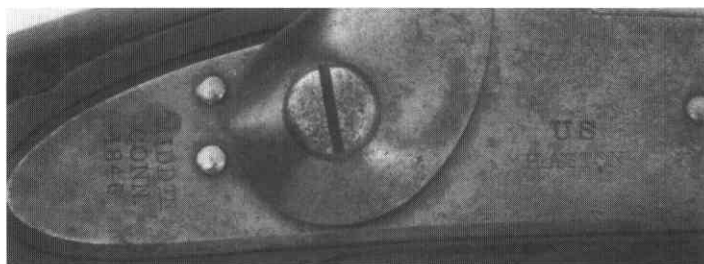
The difference in length, size and caliber of the pistols hitherto used in the Navy, has been a cause of inconvenience, and often a source of trouble.

Lewis Warrington  
Chief of Bureau of  
Ordnance & Hydrography

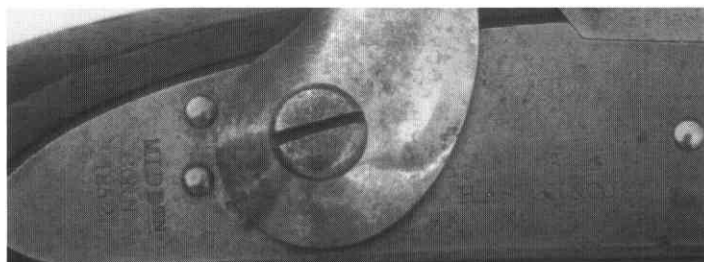
There were other letters between Wm. B. Preston, Secretary of the Navy, Lewis Warrington, Chief of Bureau, and George Talcott, Col. of Ordnance. The highlights of this correspondence stated that fifteen hundred percussion lock pistols of the Army make and caliber could be furnished immediately and would be shipped from the New York Arsenal to the Navy Yard at Brooklyn, and the remaining fifteen hundred would be shipped from the New York Arsenal to the Navy Yard at Brooklyn, New York, when completed.

Also this letter from Talcott to Henry Aston:

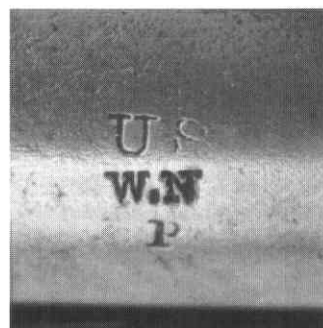
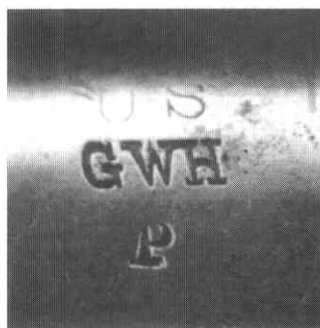
Ordnance Department  
Washington, May 27th 1850



Lockplate of the H. Aston pistol.



Lockplate of a pistol marked H. Aston & Co.



Aston barrels with different inspector's marks.



Two inspector's marks on the stock of an Aston pistol.

Mr. Henry Aston  
Middleton, Conn.  
Sir:

You will please make for this Department three thousand percussion pistols, in addition to those to be furnished by your present engagements. They are required to replace that number supplied by this Department for the use of the Navy.

Respectfully  
Yr Obt Servt  
G. Talcott Bt Brig. Gen.  
Col. of Ordnance

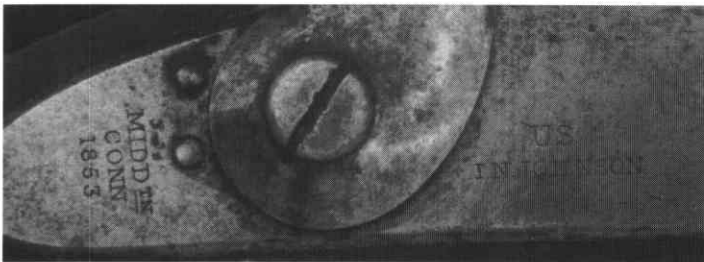
As indicated earlier, I believe all Aston pistols were marked "U.S." over "H. Aston" in front of the



hammer and at the rear of the lockplate in three vertical lines, "MIDD<sup>IN</sup>" over "Conn", over the date. The barrel was also marked with the appropriate markings, "U.S." over inspector's initials over "P".

There are several Aston pistols marked with an anchor on the barrel and "P" over "GG" on the bolster of the lock. It is my opinion that these pistols were either purchased by Guert Gansevoort, when he was purchasing arms for the "Union Defense" in 1861 and was assigned to the Brooklyn Navy Yard as inspector of the Navy Ordnance, or after the Civil War, in 1865, when the Navy was regulating the Navy-purchased arms subsequent to storage and utilization. The 1865 date is also the appropriate time frame for the anchor stamping.

Occasionally an Aston pistol that has been either tinned or nickel plated will turn up and be identified as a Navy pistol. After examining several of these pistols, it is my opinion that they have been done by individuals, and therefore, not contracted for or issued by the Navy.



**Lockplate of the I.N. Johnson pistol.**

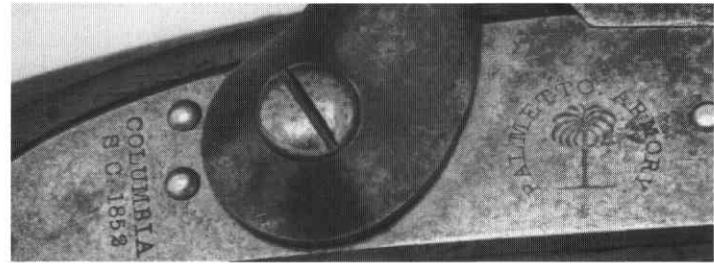
#### THE JOHNSON MODEL 1842 ARMY PISTOLS

I.N. Johnson received a contract 28th March, 1851, from the Ordnance Department, calling for ten thousand Model 1842 pistols, using the same pattern as Henry Aston. The pistols were to be delivered at a cost of \$6.75 each. Johnson had been a partner in the firm H. Aston & Co., but resigned that position when he received the contract from the Ordnance Department.

Johnson pistols are identical to Aston pistols except for the lock markings, "U.S." over "I.N. Johnson" stamped forward of the hammer and to the rear, in three vertical lines, "MIDD<sup>IN</sup>" over "Conn." over the date. All ten thousand pistols were delivered, with 1855 the final year of production. Therefore, all I.N. Johnson pistols will be dated 1853, 1854, or 1855.

The Model 1842 percussion pistol by Aston and Johnson was regarded as the finest pistol of its time. The pistols were very reliable and saw service through

the Civil War. Inspectors were many: James Harris, S. Knows, Stillman Moore, Walter North, William Anderson Thornton, and George Wright, to name a few.



**Lockplate of the Palmetto pistol.**

#### THE PALMETTO ARMORY PISTOLS

In 1851, the State of South Carolina authorized the establishment of a State Armory, the purpose of which was to arm the State Militia with small arms. On the 15th April, 1851, the state entered into a contract with William Glaze and Benjamin Flagg for this purpose. Glaze was a partner of James Boatwright, who had already established the Palmetto Armory in Columbia, South Carolina, for the purpose of supplying arms to the State Militia. Flagg had been superintendent of the Waters armory in Millbury, Massachusetts, and probably entered into an agreement with the Palmetto Armory when they purchased the pistol and musket machinery from Waters. The contract called for one thousand pairs of pistols, and all were made and delivered in 1852 and 1853. The Palmetto pistol is identical to the Model 1842 pistol except the lock and barrel markings. The lock is stamped in front of the hammer, "Palmetto Armory", forming the upper part of a circle over "S★C", the "S" and "C" separated by a star. Within the circle is a Palmetto tree. To the rear of the lockplate is "Columbia" over "S.C." over "1852". The barrel is marked on the left flat, "Wm. Glaze & Co.", and on top, "P.V." with a Palmetto tree, and "1853" on the tang. There shouldn't be any inspector marks on the stock of the Palmetto pistols.



**The William Glaze & Co. marking on a Palmetto pistol.**

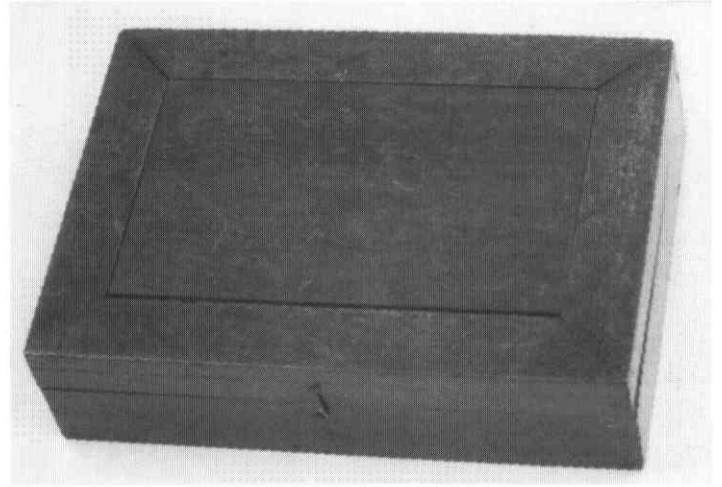
## OTHER MODEL 1842 PISTOLS

A cased pair of Aston pistols were found in New Richmond, Ohio, in a log cabin along the Ohio River in the late 1930s. They are the only cased pair of 1842 Aston or other contractor pistols known. They are unusual, not only because they are cased, but they are heavily rifled and sighted. All other markings are

standard H. Aston markings; the pistols are dated 1847. The bullet mold is a single .54 caliber mold with a sprue cutter and no U.S. markings. The case is all original and has never been relined or refinished. This cased pair of Henry Aston pistols may have been presented to someone in the military service in 1847.



**The opened case with guns, mould, and cartridge.**



**The dovetailed walnut case.**



**Barrel markings and rear sight on both pistols.**

## THE SHOULDER-STOCKED PISTOLS

The two shoulder stocked Aston pistols are certainly unusual. The first pistol is a standard Model 1842 H. Aston pistol altered for a shoulder stock, dated 1849, and with standard marks. The only alteration to this pistol was a slot cut into the back strap, and a locking device in the stock to affix a spur-like finger which is  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches long.

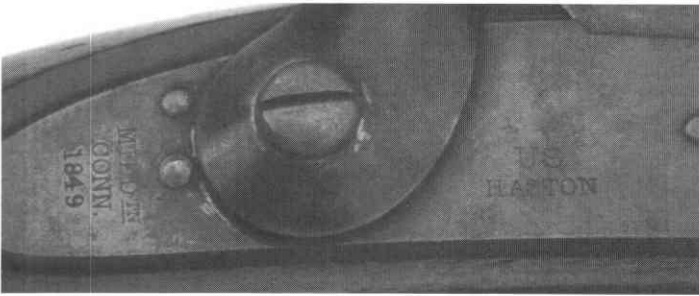
There is also a release button behind the trigger guard to release the stock from the pistol. The stock

itself is serial no. 2 and of walnut with a brass butt plate. The stock is  $11\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, four inches high at the butt, and approximately  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches thick at the widest point.

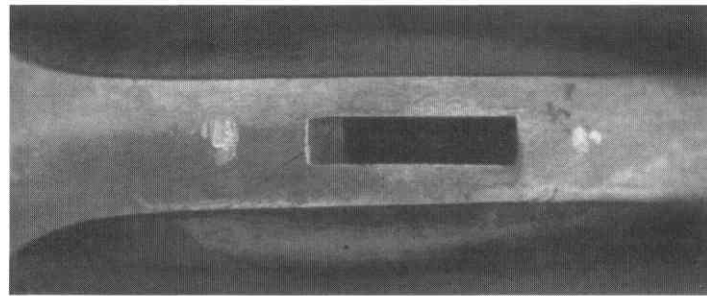
The second H. Aston pistol altered for a shoulder stock has been changed in a number of ways. It began as a standard H. Aston pistol, then had the brass butt cap and strap replaced by an iron butt cap and back strap. The back strap has two slots cut into it, similar to the back strap of a 1855 Springfield pistol carbine.



**The shoulder-stocked H. Aston pistol dated 1849.**



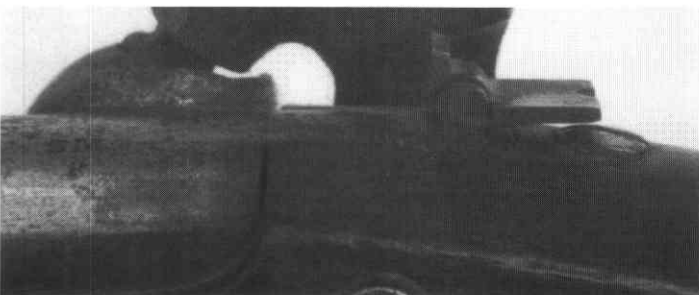
**Lockplate of the 1849 stocked Aston.**



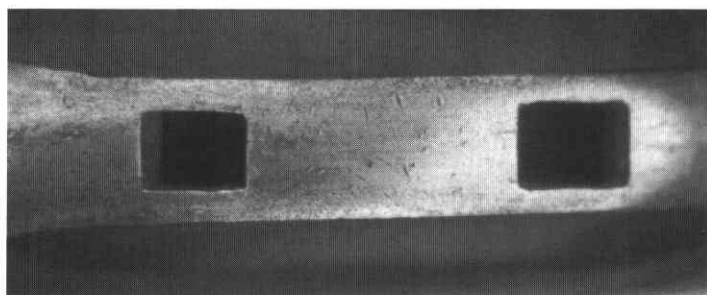
**The slot cut into the backstrap of the 1849 stocked Aston.**



**The stocked H. Aston with 1855 date on the tang.**



**Leaf sight and barrel markings on the 1855 stocked Aston.**



**Slots in the iron backstrap of the 1855 Aston.**

The stock itself is a pistol carbine stock. The brass barrel band has had a sling swivel added, as has the butt cap. The barrel has been rifled, the tang has been dated 1855, and a leaf sight has been added.

Why the shoulder stocked Aston pistols? One can only speculate. In Andy Lustyik's fine article "The Birth of the U.S. Model 1855 Pistol Carbine (Part 1)", *The Gun Report*, May, 1975, he states:

A few barrels were rifled by Mr. Buckland, prior to the commencement of the experiments. However, many more barrels had to be prepared to carry out the various suggestions that arose during the progress of the experiments, increasing the whole number tried considerably beyond the number originally proposed.

There were eight inch and ten inch barrels used in the experiment. They could have used stock Astons for the eight inch barreled pistols.

Stocked Aston pistols are very limited. I know of only two other guns, one at the Springfield Armory, the other in the Winchester Museum.

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Surplus Aston barrels were used in the production of pistols after the contract was fulfilled. The so-called Confederate Garrett single shot pistol is probably the best known to the collecting fraternity. The barrel and ramrod are surplus Aston or Johnson parts attached to a brass frame with internal springs and walnut grips. The maximum number produced was five hundred or less. The late Sam Smith of Markesan, Wisconsin, confided to me several years ago that he had seen one of these brass frame pistols marked "Waters".

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The final pistol using a surplus barrel (next page) is an enigma. When I first saw it in a Dexter Arms catalog of the early 1940s, I believed it to have a Model 1842 Army barrel, as the others have. It is the only Allen & Thurber-marked specimen I have seen with a military barrel. Since then there have been thoughts that the barrel may be of the Model 1836 pistol pattern, but this hasn't been confirmed. In any event, it is a most interesting specimen.

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These are certainly not all of the experimental Model 1842 Army pistols known: there are several others with different capping systems that I have seen. If anyone knows the whereabouts of any Model 1842 Navy or Army pistols different from the ones presented in this paper, I would certainly be interested in talking with that person.

I would like to thank David T. Smith and Susan Swearingen for their assistance in preparing this article. The pistols are all from my personal collection.

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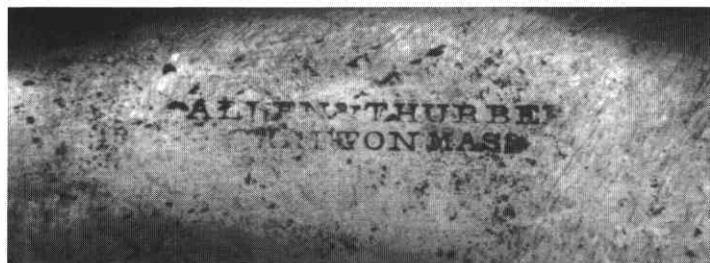
The "Confederate Garrett" pistol with a Model 1842 Army barrel.



**An Allen & Thurber pistol with a Model 1842 Army barrel.**



**Barrel proof marks on the Allen & Thurber pistol.**



**The Allen & Thurber marking on the frame.**



**The other side of the Allen & Thurber pistol.**