

RARE AMERICAN CARBINES: THE C.C. BRAND

by Jeff Goodson



Figure 1. C.C. Brand carbine, serial number 61. Author's collection (photos by Don Summers).

One of the rarest and least studied of 19th century American carbines is the C.C. Brand. Among the earliest metallic cartridge breechloaders, it is also known as the Brand breech-loading single shot carbine¹, and as the Allen², Allen I³, Brand and Allen, and Allen-Brand carbine.⁴ Summary statistics on the gun are presented in Table 1.

The Brand carbine (Figure 1) was designed and developed by Christopher Crandall Brand, born in Hopkins, Rhode Island in 1813. He operated the Brand Firearms Company in Norwich, Connecticut from 1852 until his death in 1875. Brand ran a successful whaling supply company in Norwich in the 1850s, and was best known for a percussion shoulder-fired whaling gun that he patented. It was the most popular and longest used whaling gun of its kind, seeing service from the 1850s until the start of the 20th century.¹

Brand was a prolific inventor. He received several breechloading patents during the Civil War, including for a revolving rifle in 1862⁴ and a single shot, breech-loading pistol that fired the .52 Spencer rimfire cartridge.¹ Brand's major carbine-related patent (#35,989) was dated July 29, 1862 (Figure 2). The first part of it applies to breech loading firearms using metallic cartridges. It covers the elements of a breech mechanism that uses a "sliding breech pin...and lock that work in unison when opening and closing the breech..."⁵ This includes a set of jaws attached to the lock that grab the rim of the spent cartridge for removal (Figure 3).

Edward Robinson of New York manufactured virtually all of the Brand long arms, including a series of test rifles, carbines, muskets and rifle-muskets. Their marketing was carried out by Enos G. Allen, a Boston businessman who collaborated with Brand in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴ Although tenacious, Brand and Allen were largely unsuccessful selling Brand firearms to the U.S. Ordnance Department. Ed Hull, who did the seminal research on Brand long arms in the late 1970s, groups Christopher Brand in with Samu-

C. C. BRAND.
Breech-loading Fire-arm.
No. 35,989. Patented July 29, 1862.

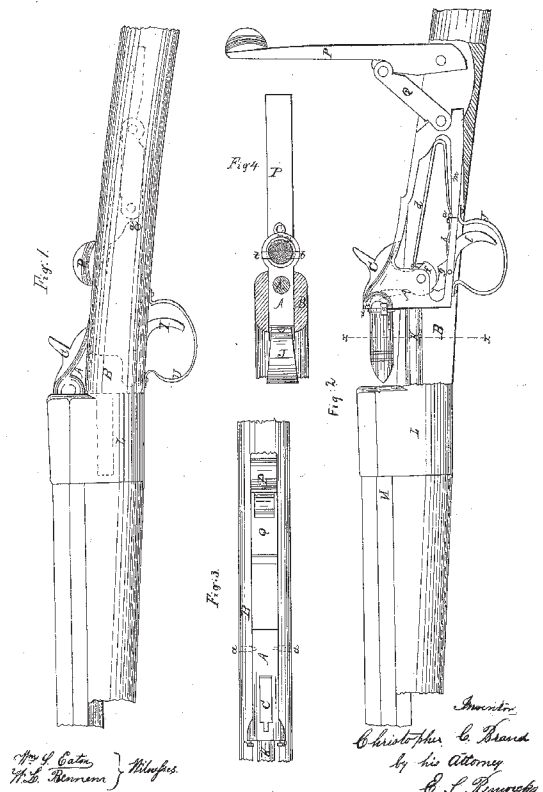


Figure 2. C.C. Brand patent drawing #35,989.

el Marsh, Nathan Clement, William Mont Storm and other patent breechloader inventors who tried and failed to secure U.S. government contracts.⁴ That said, recent evidence² indicates that a limited number of Brand carbines were procured by Ordnance for state militia use during the Civil War.

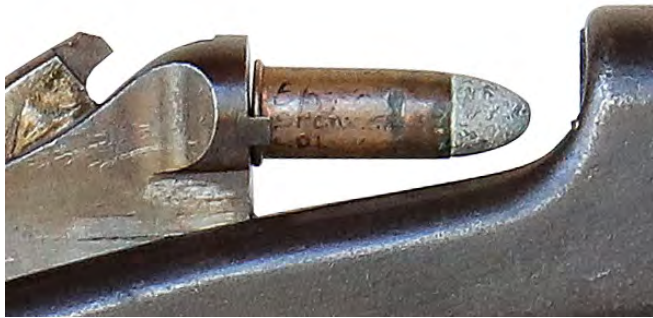


Figure 3. C.C. Brand jawed extractor mechanism, serial number 61 (photo by Don Summers).

Total Estimated Production

The total production of Brand's carbines is unknown. Probably 150 or fewer were made. Flayderman states that production was 'very limited', and he lists them as 'rare.'¹ Exactly how rare is unclear, but only five surviving specimens and a carbine action were located during recent research (Table 2). One, serial number 61, is in the author's collection (Figure 1). Serial number 28/123 is in the Cody Firearms Museum (Figure 4); another is in the Maine State Museum (Figure 5); and both a carbine and a carbine action are pictured in Lustyik.⁶ The fifth complete carbine, different from that in the Maine State Museum, which was acquired from Norm Flayderman in 1964, is known from Flayderman's much later Catalogue #95.⁷

Hull points out that it's unlikely that Edward Robinson would have agreed to manufacture just a small number of test and trial guns for Brand.⁴ Supporting both this and the total production estimate of 150 or less is the existence of serial numbers 28, 61 and 123. Also supporting the estimate is the Ordnance Department's listing of 27 "Allen carbines" in .52 caliber that were in Ordnance stores as of June 1868. This strongly suggests that lim-

ited production of these carbines occurred during the Civil War,² and that they were procured by the Ordnance Department. These must have been C.C. Brand or Allen-Brand carbines, moreover, since the only other Allen carbines they could be confused with are the .31 caliber Allen trial carbine discussed in Fuller;³ Allen's production .44 caliber drop-block carbine; or the .54 caliber military-style faucet-breech carbine Allen made for Civil War field trials as described by Henry.⁸

It's not known for certain whether Brand's carbines were numbered together with Brand rifles and muskets, or in their own series. None of the handful of other known Brand long arm survivors are known to carry a serial number, however, suggesting that the carbines were serialized on their own. Unfortunately, the near absence of internet records for Brand long arms of any kind – except his whaling guns – preempts validation of this hypothesis.

Serial Numbers

Just two of the five Brand carbines discussed here are known to have serial numbers; serial data are lacking on the other three (Table 2). On serial number 61, matching serial numbers are located on the bottom of the barrel under the forearm and at three locations on the articulated breech mechanism – the latter only visible when the breech is open. The butt of the stock and the inside of the butt plate on serial number 61 both carry the number 15. The Cody Firearms carbine carries serial number 123 on the bottom of the barrel under the forearm, and serial number 28 under the activating lever.⁹

U.S. Inspection Marks

None of the known surviving specimens are documented as showing either a U.S. government inspection cartouche on the stock, or any sub-inspection or proof marks anywhere on the guns. This includes serial number 61, almost certainly a production carbine.

Major Variants

No major variants are known. Although Ordnance lists those still in storage as of June 1868 as .52 caliber,² all of the known surviving carbines are reported to be chambered in .50 caliber. (Serial number 61 calibers at .50 at the muzzle, and .54 at the breech).



Figure 4. C.C. Brand carbine serial number 28/serial number 123 in the Cody Firearms Museum, Object ID# 1988.8.1505.

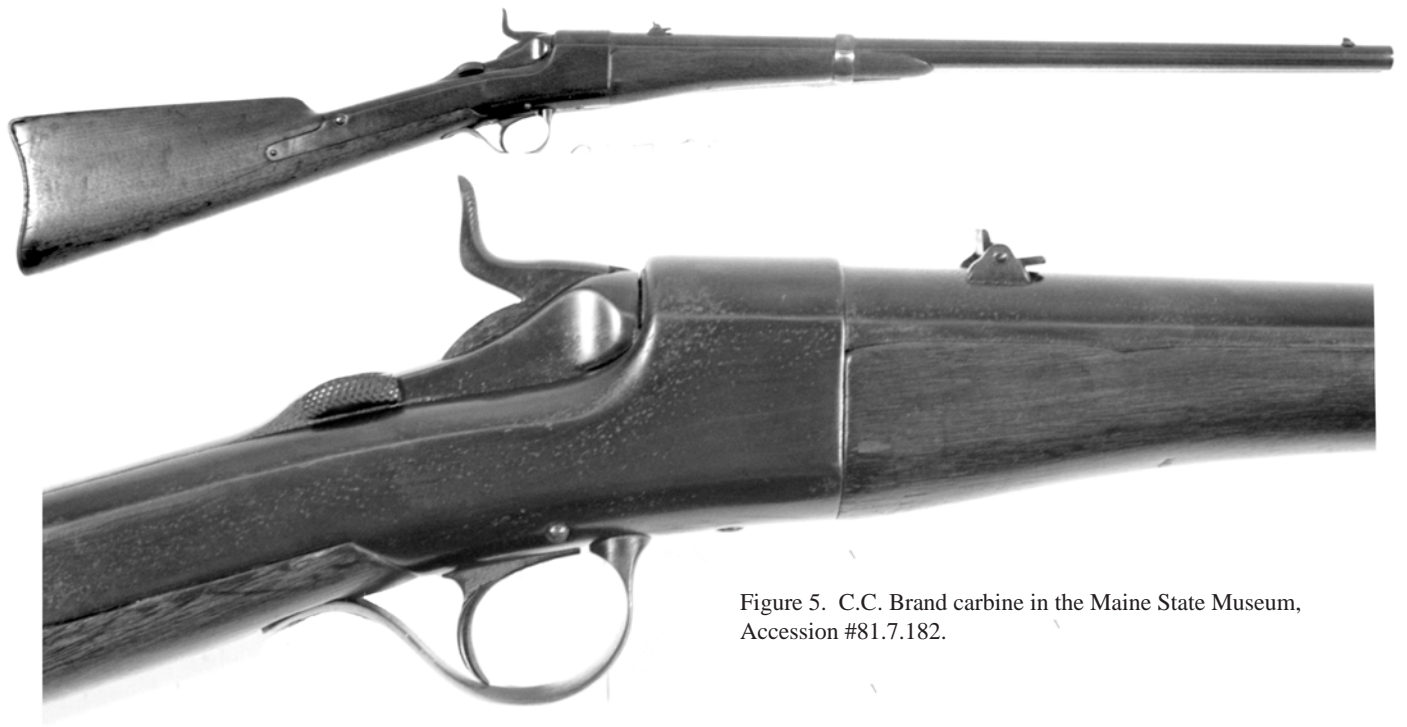


Figure 5. C.C. Brand carbine in the Maine State Museum, Accession #81.7.182.

The discrepancy may be due to the lack of standardized caliber nomenclature in the 1860s, and/or lack of true caliber data on the guns at the time the 1868 inventory was carried out.⁷

All but one of the known surviving carbines have a saddle ring and bar. Lustyik identifies the carbine without a bar as the gun entered in the January 1865 breechloading trials at Springfield Armory. Uniquely, this gun also carries the markings of E. Chamber-

lin of New York as manufacturer instead of E. Robinson.⁶ While Fuller states that two Allen trial carbines were entered in those trials, he provides a photo of only the right side of one of them.³

Carbine Quality

At least one significant quality issue with the C.C. Brand carbine has been noted. Lustyik wrote in 1962 that

Table 1. C.C. Brand Carbine Summary Statistics.

<i>Other Names:</i>	<i>Brand Breech-Loading Single Shot Carbine; Allen I; Brand and Allen; Allen-Brand</i>
<i>Manufacturer:</i>	<i>Edward Robinson, N.Y., for Christopher C. Brand. One by E. Chamberlin, N.Y.</i>
<i>Flayderman ID:</i>	<i>9B-040</i>
<i>Years Made:</i>	<i>Circa 1862-1865</i>
<i>Overall Length:</i>	<i>Test carbines and S/N 61: 36-3/4" (Hull 1978)</i>
<i>Loading Port:</i>	<i>Breech</i>
<i>Breech Action:</i>	<i>Sliding breech (USPTO 1862)</i>
<i>Ammunition:</i>	<i>Metallic cartridge</i>
<i>Caliber:</i>	<i>.50</i>
<i>Shot Capacity:</i>	<i>Single shot</i>
<i>Bore:</i>	<i>Rifled; 3 lands/grooves (S/N 61); Allen-patented irregular right gain twist (Hull 1978)</i>
<i>Barrel Length:</i>	<i>22"</i>
<i>Barrel Form:</i>	<i>Round</i>
<i>Front Sight:</i>	<i>Trapezoid on rectangular base; dovetailed into top of barrel (S/N 61)</i>
<i>Rear Sight:</i>	<i>Short, two-leaf folding type graduated to "100", "250" and "500" yards (S/N 61)</i>
<i>Attachments:</i>	<i>Saddle ring on left side with 2" ring bar (S/N 61); one known without (Lustyik)</i>

“one fault of the weapon was that the tang lever could not be closed down if the hammer happened to be in the full-cock position. Furthermore, a hasty and careless attempt to remedy this situation could result in the hammer falling and striking the cartridge, before it was completely chambered.”

After rejection by Ordnance in the 1865 Springfield trials, Hull reported “no further record of their testing or use” by the military.⁴

During the war, Brand and Allen were concurrently pitching private sales directly to both individuals and state militias. Brand’s 1863 catalogue makes clear that a major marketing focus, even in the middle of the war, was on selling sporting arms with interchangeable rifle and shotgun barrels to the general public.⁴ Military sales, however, were apparently the primary focus. Flayderman writes that Brand long arms “were evidently privately sold to officers or militia units...Promotional literature by the manufacturer lists quite a few actual testimonials as to their field and campaign usage.”¹ These included testimonials from officers who didn’t actually test the gun personally, such as Major General John Hooker in October 1862.⁴

Use in the Civil War

The C.C. Brand isn’t listed as a carbine procured by the Ordnance Department during the Civil War, in either Executive Document 99¹⁰ or the Department’s 1866 rackup of carbines that were procured during the war.¹¹ But it wasn’t for lack of trying on the part of Christopher Brand and Enos Allen. Brand breechloading long arms were tested at least eight times in four years, including five times in carbine configuration from 1863 -1865 (Table 3).⁴

Table 2. Located C.C. Brand Carbines.

Location	Serial Number	Caliber	Saddle Ring/Bar	Manufacturer	Notes
Cody Firearms Museum	28/123	Listed as “.50 RF”	Yes	E. Robinson, N.Y.	S/N 28 on activation lever; S/N 123 on barrel under forearm. Object ID# 1988.8.1505.
Goodson Collection	61	.50	Yes	E. Robinson, N.Y.	S/N 61 on barrel under forearm, bottom of breech and bottom of activating lever; “15” on butt plate and butt stock.
Maine State Museum	none stated in museum documentation	Listed as “.56-50”	Yes	E. Robinson, N.Y.	Accession No. 81.7.182.
Flayderman Catalogue #95	no data	.50	Yes	E. Robinson, N.Y.	Hull file notes.
Lustyik (complete carbine)	no data	Listed as “.56-50 Spencer”	No	E. Chamberlain, N.Y.	Referred to as “Allen-Brand.” Made for Breech loading Carbine Trials of 1865 at Springfield Armory. Lustyik 1962, Plates 48 and 49, p 45-46.
Lustyik (action only)	unmarked	unknown	Yes	unmarked	Referred to as “Allen-Brand.” Lustyik 1962, Plate 49, pages 46.

Table 3. C.C. Brand Long Arm Trials Dates.

Trial Location	Date	Configurations Tested
<i>U.S. Navy Yard.....</i>	<i>June 30, 1862:</i>	<i>Musket</i>
<i>West Point.....</i>	<i>reported July 22, 1862:</i>	<i>Rifle</i>
<i>Navy Ordnance Yard:.....</i>	<i>reported February 19, 1863:</i>	<i>Musket</i>
<i>Washington Arsenal.....</i>	<i>reported February 26, 1863:</i>	<i>Musket, rifle and carbine</i>
<i>HQ Army of the Potomac.....</i>	<i>March 11, 1863:</i>	<i>Musket, rifle and carbine</i>
<i>West Point.....</i>	<i>reported April 23, 1863 (unsanctioned):</i>	<i>Rifle-musket and carbine</i>
<i>Washington Arsenal.....</i>	<i>January 1864:.....</i>	<i>One rifle, two carbines</i>
<i>Springfield Armory.....</i>	<i>January 1865:.....</i>	<i>Rifle and carbine</i>

In 1863 Brand was advertising the availability of his long arms to military companies in lots of one hundred and up. Lustyik wrote that 111 Brand muskets in .54 caliber and 30,000 rounds of Allen & Brand cartridges were issued to the Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment in 1863, but this information came from a Brand catalogue and was apparently only a requisition – no evidence of an actual purchase has yet surfaced.⁷ The 27 Allen breechloading carbines on the 1868 Small Arms Carbine stores list as of June 1868², however, indicates that a modest number of carbines were indeed procured by Ordnance – almost certainly for state volunteer cavalry use.⁷ Which state militia(s) received them is unknown.

Post-War Disposal

Post-war sales of the 27 Allen/Brand carbines still in federal storage in June 1868 is not documented. As no record has been uncovered that they were sold to the various intermediaries supplying the Franco-Prussian War at the end of the decade, it is likely that they were auctioned off in later years directly to the public. The balance of the carbines in this Ordnance procurement were most likely either lost during the war, retained in state stores, or taken home by the soldiers who used them.

Survival and Rarity

Lack of solid production data for the C.C. Brand carbine renders calculation of a known survival rate for this carbine impossible. That said, attrition of the guns appears to have been very high. As of the time of writing, only five surviving C.C. Brand carbines plus one action have been located (Table 2). Others no doubt exist, but the near absence of internet records on them suggests that the true survival rate for Brand carbines is very low. Use in service by officers and militia units during the Civil War probably accounts for much, if not most, of that attrition.

Between very low production and high attrition during the Civil War, the C.C. Brand is today one of the rarest of 19th century American production carbines. The rarity of the gun, its role in the Civil War, its role in early American firearms evolution and its unique breech loading action make identification, acquisition and preservation of surviving examples a high collector priority.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

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