

Early Marine Corps Swords

Dr. Charles Cureton

The subject of early Marine Corps swords is so shrouded in myth that it has blinded historians and collectors as to their actual history to this day. Every Marine recruit is taught that the officer's Mameluke came into use with the presentation of a jeweled Mameluke saber to First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon by Hamet Karamanli after the legendary campaign against Derna in 1805. The story goes that the sword was so popular was this sword that every Marine officer had to have one. The style consequently came into widespread use, so much so that American Mameluke sabers that predate the regulation 1826 model are considered by historians and collectors to have Marine Corps association or are rationalized as being unofficial deviations from the official pattern, the latter a direct reflection of our independent American spirit.

Admittedly, the Mameluke saber was and is an exotic and attractive design (Figure 1). Its relative rarity in the



Figure 1. Captain Philip R. Fendall (seated) and Second Lieutenant George G. Stoddard, 1863. (Photograph courtesy of Dave Sullivan) The adoption of the Army foot officer's sword in 1859 did not result in the complete abandonment of the old pattern sword. As exemplified by Captain Fendall, some officers continued wearing the regulation 1826 Mameluke officers' sword well into the Civil War.



United States and the known history of Presley O'Bannon having carried one makes it easy for us to want every Mameluke to be Marine Corps. It also helps us in our ignorance that historians do not know much about the early Marine uniforms either, because a study of the uniform in photographs, portraits, and contemporaneous illustrations provides helpful hints as to the pattern of the actual swords being carried during the 1798 through 1875 period. Our understanding of the patterns of swords carried by musicians and noncommissioned officers is also mistaken. In reference after reference, it is the contemporary Army models that have been identified as having also been used by the Marine Corps. The Army attribution was so persuasive that historians and collectors simply never questioned it. The purpose of this survey is to sweep away our misunderstandings, establish a more accurate history of Marine Corps swords from 1798 to 1875, and set the stage for a later more focused in-depth analysis of the various patterns identified. The findings presented here are based on documents contained in Marine Corps Historical Center collections, National Archives Record Group 127, Marine Corps Quartermaster Department Records, and 4th Auditor Records.

This survey concludes a thorough search of all pre-1861 available Marine Corps Quartermaster Department documents and historical records regarding the early Marine Corps swords and presents the histories of the earliest saber patterns worn by Marines, their styles and descriptions, their evolution over time, and their relationship to the patterns worn today. The objective is to define the early-19th Century patterns and their historical development, and to establish

those early Marine Corps models that until now have been unknown or misunderstood by collectors and historians.

The swords carried by Marine noncommissioned officers and musicians are the least understood. The only enlisted men authorized to carry swords were staff noncommissioned officers, sergeants, and musicians. There were not only limitations on who could carry swords, but there was also a hierarchy within the three groups as to which pattern swords were carried by whom. In October 1831, Commandant Archibald Henderson informed the Secretary of the Navy that:

“The Non-commissioned Staff and Orderly Sergeants of Posts will wear swords . . . Other Sergeants the same in addition to a Musket and Cartridge box . . . Fifers and Drummers of the Corps . . . shall wear swords in lieu of the Cartridge box and bayonet.”¹

In other words, noncommissioned officers of the staff—the sergeant major, quartermaster sergeant, chief musician, and drum major—were only armed with the sword, as were sergeants in command of a ship’s detachment. When so assigned, these sergeants took the title of “orderly sergeant” (Figure 2). All other sergeants, however, carried a musket, cartridge box and shoulder belt, a bayonet, and a double-frogged shoulder belt in addition to the sword. As Commandant Henderson stated, musicians carried no other weapon than the sword.

To date, there is very little information found in Marine Quartermaster Department records as to the types of swords issued to staff noncommissioned officers, sergeants, and



Figure 2. Orderly Sergeant James Buckner, c1863. (Photograph courtesy of John Buckner) Orderly Sergeants were sergeants in command of a ship’s guard of Marines that was too few in numbers to require a commissioned officer. Also known as first sergeants after 1859, they were armed as officers, that is, with the sword and not with the musket. James Buckner’s regulation 1859 noncommissioned officers’ sword survives and is shown on these pages. He is wearing the undress enlisted frock coat adopted in 1859.

musicians prior to September 1832. In December 1798, the commandant briefly noted in a letter that “*Sergeant’s swords have brass handles*”² (Figure 3). An inventory of supplies furnished to the Marines on the Frigate Constellation listed 20 “*Grenadiers*” swords and for the Frigate United States, it listed “*6 brass mounted Hangers*.”³ The next comment about swords was in August 1819, when a Navy agent wrote that he had purchased:

“Fourteen Sergeant’s and six Music swords which I have purchased at five dollars each . . . I could not procure those for the Music as short as you directed, but if you approve, three of the number can be shortened to the length you direct.”⁴

Ten years later, Lieutenant Colonel Miller, commanding at Marine Barracks Philadelphia, told the Quartermaster of the Marine Corps, Captain Elijah Weed, that

“Horstmann, from whom you purchased some non-commissioned officers’ swords, is about sending out an order to Europe, if you wish any.”⁵

In summary, what is known about enlisted swords before 1832 is that they had brass hilts, that there was a difference between the sword patterns carried by noncommissioned officers and musicians, that alterations were made to the blade length of the musician pattern to make it suitable for boy musicians, and that at about circa 1828 William H. Horstmann provided some swords to the Marine Corps.

William Horstmann was not a sword manufacturer, and it is not clear how many orders the Marine Corps placed with him, nor if there was an established pattern. By the early 1830s, however, quartermaster correspondence shows that the department was focusing on a specific manufacturer and specific types of swords for noncommissioned officers and musicians. On 11 January 1832, Lieutenant Colonel Miller in Philadelphia informed Captain Weed that:

“The Manufacturer who furnished the Music Swords sent to you last May [1831] was to furnish a number of Sergeants Swords at Your request. At the time he could not procure the blades. Recently he has received some superior blades from Germany, and also the scabbard the brass mounting of a superior

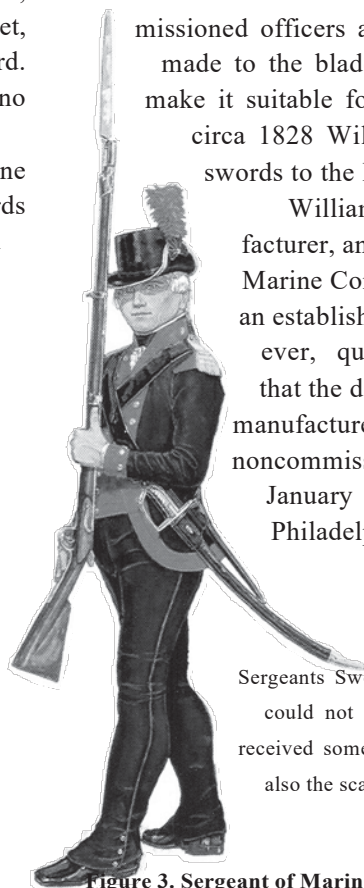


Figure 3. Sergeant of Marines, c1797. Painting by the author. When Congress decided in 1797 to reestablish a Navy and a Marine Corps, the new Marine Corps was initially provided with surplus clothing and equipment out of Army stores. The swords provided were described only as “brass mounted Hangers” and likely were part of the French-made equipment transferred from the Army. This illustration used the contemporary French Army enlisted sword as its model.

quality [than] manufactured here. These swords, however, cannot be furnished for less than \$5 each. They are superior to anything we have used in the Corps and with all probability outlast any of the former. Will you have them?"⁶

Based on Miller's recommendation, Captain Weed decided to acquire the swords, but Miller never went through with the purchase. He subsequently told the Quartermaster:

"Previously to my ordering the one hundred Swords alluded to in my letters of the 11th of Janry last . . . of the American Mounting. I . . . came across a sword lot of forty two that I obtained at the low price of three dollars and twenty five cents. These with a sample one of the American mounting I will ship You. The samples will come at \$5 but you will readily see they are of a superior quality and finish and will in all probability outlast nearly . . . two of the other kind."

Lieutenant Colonel Miller had acquired 40 swords of an unknown type but his preference was for for the American hilted German blades, as he goes on to say:

"It is most desirable however that we employ the American Manufacture[d hilts]. Independently of the superior quality, I think the mountings are more suitable and easier kept in order. I want therefore you would show the one sent to the Commandant. Swords have taken a rise in Germany of about eighty cents, at two Guilders each, and unless I can procure another one soon at three dollars twenty five I shall direct the balance of the one hundred you requested me to order of the American Manufacture."⁷

Although Miller never referred to the "American Manufacture" by name, it was Frederick W. Widmann, who, on 3 September 1832, was paid "for Sixty Sergeants Swords, amtg to Three hundred Dollars."⁸ Widmann of Philadelphia would be the sole source for noncommissioned officer and musician swords from 1832 until his death in 1848, after which, the firm of William H. Horstmann and Sons acquired Widmann's machinery and continued these pattern swords under the Widmann-Horstmann name.⁹

What were these swords? Marine records never describe the swords beyond cost, the name of the manufacturer, and the use of a distinct noncommissioned officer type, an adult musician type, and a type for boy musicians. The Marine Corps Museum had no examples of Widmann-marked swords, but, fortunately, Andrew Mowbray's *The American Eagle-Pommel Sword* was published in 1988 and showed a number of Widmann types. Since most of the examples shown are too ornate in design to be likely candidates for adoption by the Marine Corps for its noncommissioned officers and musicians, there remained only three suitable patterns worth considering. The noncommissioned officers' sword is the one shown on page 195, and the boy's musician type followed on page 196. The adult musician's sword is No. 105 on pages 114–116 of Harold L. Peterson's

*The American Sword: 1775–1945*¹⁰ (Figure 4). Confirming their identity was not easy since they were all identified as having militia provenance, none had inspector's marks, and their blades were partially blued and decorated with the gilt etched designs common to officer swords of the period. The absence of inspectors' initials could be discounted since Quartermaster Department correspondence concerning swords shows that the department did not order swords to be made but bought them from stocks on hand. These swords were therefore made for the wider militia market, which would account for the ornamented blades, and, beyond a visual inspection were not put through any tests, hence no inspector's marks. Quartermaster documents also indicated that the boys' swords had a blade length of about 24 inches and this compares well with the 23 3/4-inch blades on the examples cited by Mowbray and Peterson.

Confirmation on the identification of Widmann non-commissioned officers' sword comes from several sources. It was first suggested to the author by the sword shown being carried by an unidentified orderly sergeant in a portrait painted by Marine private E. C. Young about 1832 (Figure 5). Private Young was not a particularly skilled artist, but the unusual uniform details he shows are verified in Quartermaster Department correspondence and this in turn made his rendering of the sword worth a second look. He showed the orderly sergeant wearing an eagle-head-hilted sword having a black leather grip and a slightly curved blade.¹¹ The illustrated sword matched the Widmann sword shown on page 195 in Mowbray. From this identification it followed that the less expensive adult musician sword would likely be the simplified eagle-head hilted sword shown on page 114 of Peterson's book while the boy's version is number 106 on page 116. The preliminary identity of all three was subsequently confirmed by drawings in the pre-Civil War Horstmann catalog, since Horstmann continued the Widmann patterns after 1848. The catalog not only illustrated the three swords, it listed them as "sergeants," "musician," and "boy musician" swords.¹² (Figures 6–15).

There has been some confusion over the types of swords prescribed for noncommissioned officers and musicians when the Marine Corps adopted new dress and equipment in 1859. The problem originated with the wording of the regulation which described the noncommissioned officers' and musicians' swords as "Same as U.S. Infantry."¹³ This statement has been interpreted to mean that Marine non-commissioned officers and musicians had the same swords as their counterparts in the Army. A study of quartermaster correspondence, contemporary photographs, and the 1859 regulations' own illustration, however, show that while marine noncommissioned officer and musician swords were *similar* to those carried by "U.S. Infantry," they differed in a number

of significant respects (Figure 16). The Marine musician sword is like the Army model 1840 noncommissioned officers' sword but without an inner counter-guard while the Marine noncommissioned officers's sword is a simplified version of the Army foot officers' sword of 1851. The first con-

tract for the 1859 pattern Marine swords went to Horstmann in early 1859; the second contract went to Ames in November 1859 with delivery in 1860, and the third contract in 1861 went again to Horstmann, after which Bent and Bush received all sword contracts.¹⁴ Musician swords manufactured

under the July 1861 and subsequent contracts lacked the inner counter-guard, while noncommissioned officer swords would have a reduced inner counter-guard.

Of the enlisted swords adopted in 1859, the musicians' sword is the least understood (Figure 17). The musicians' sword was initially the Army model 1840 noncommissioned officers' sword with both inner and outer counter-guards. This was quickly modified by the removal of the inner counter-guard, thus creating a musician's sword that was unique to the Marine Corps (Figure 18). Boy musician swords were the same as those carried by adult musicians but with shortened blades and scabbards. Blade length was 31 inches for adult musicians and 24 inches for boy musicians. The identifying characteristic, then, of the Marine 1859 musician sword should be the absence of an inner counter-guard, but finding these swords has proven difficult because, after the Army's 1872 uniform regulations took effect, the War Department directed the removal of the inner counter-guard from all noncommissioned officer swords. Determining which swords are Marine musician and which are later Army-modified noncommissioned officer swords is problematic, but there are some clues.

Marine swords were made or provided by Horstmann, Ames, and Bent and

Bush. Horstmann and Ames swords will carry their respective makers' marks. The 1859 Horstmann contract-made swords had the inner counter-guards and would not be identifiable as Marine. This is also true for swords made under Ames' 1860 contract; however, it is not believed that many musician swords were furnished under these contracts. The

unique Marine musicians' sword began with the July 1861 contract, which called for swords made without the inner guard. Swords manufactured after July 1861,

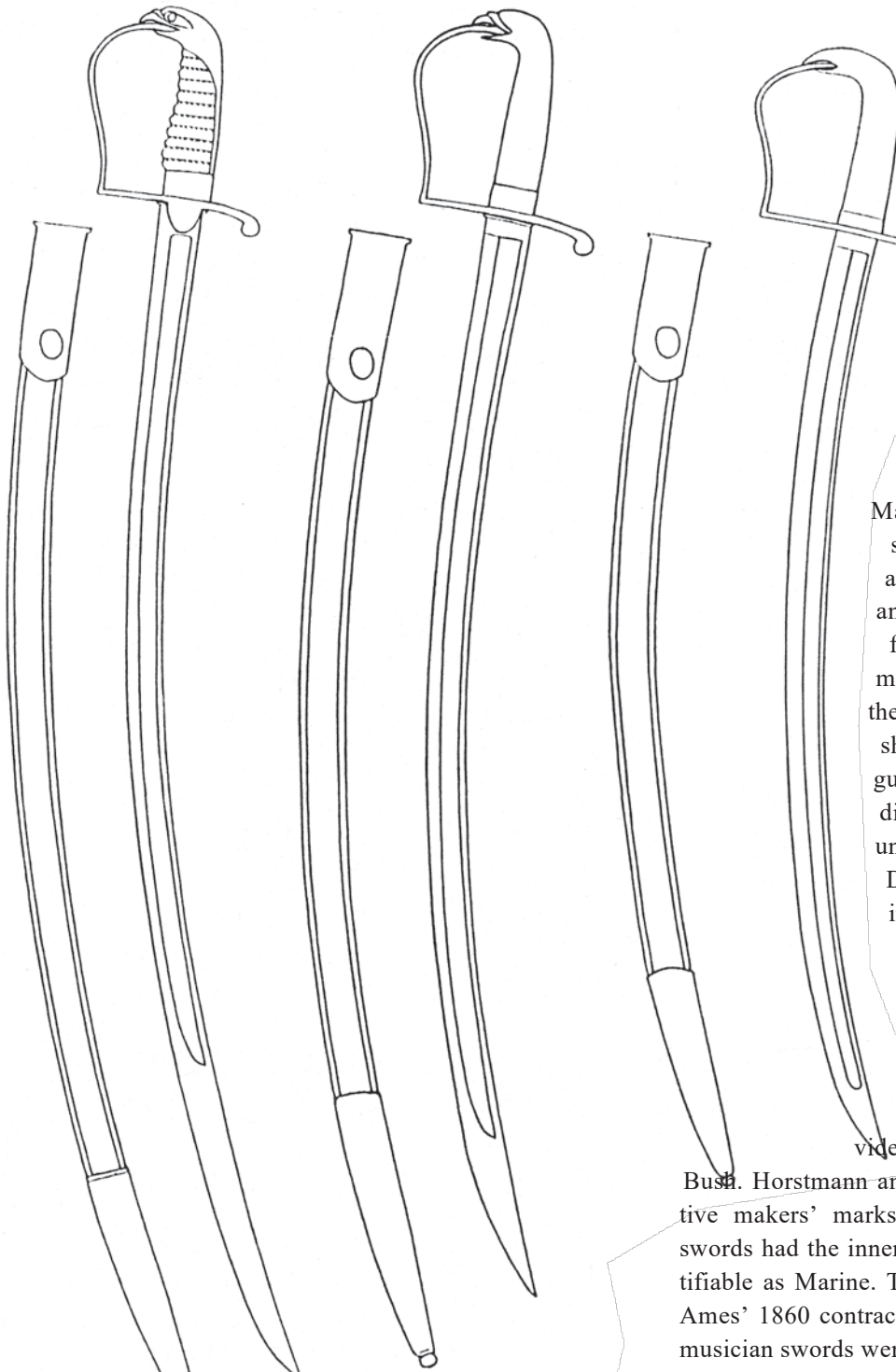


Figure 4. Left to right: Drawings of the Marine Non Commissioned Officers' sword, Marine adult Musicians' sword, and Marine boys' musician sword. (Drawing by the author.) Designed and produced by Frederick W. Widmann, in the late 1820s or early 1830s, the non commissioned officers' sword had a black leather grip with brass mountings; the adult musician's sword was similar but had an all-brass hilt while the boys' musician sword had a 24 inch blade and a highly stylized all-brass eagle-headed hilt. Made originally for the militia market and continued in militia use, the first confirmed purchase of these swords by the Marine Corps was in 1832.

Figure 5. (Top) Drawing of an Orderly Sergeant, by Private E. C. Young, c1832. (Marine Corps Museum collection) Young was not a particularly skilled artist, but since all the details of the uniform, musket, and headdress are absolutely accurate, so to is the sword in all likelihood. In most respects except the scabbard bands, the sword shows all the attributes of the Widmann noncommissioned officer pattern. Note the absence of a musket sling. Since Marines rarely campaigned on land, they were not provided musket slings until after the Civil War.

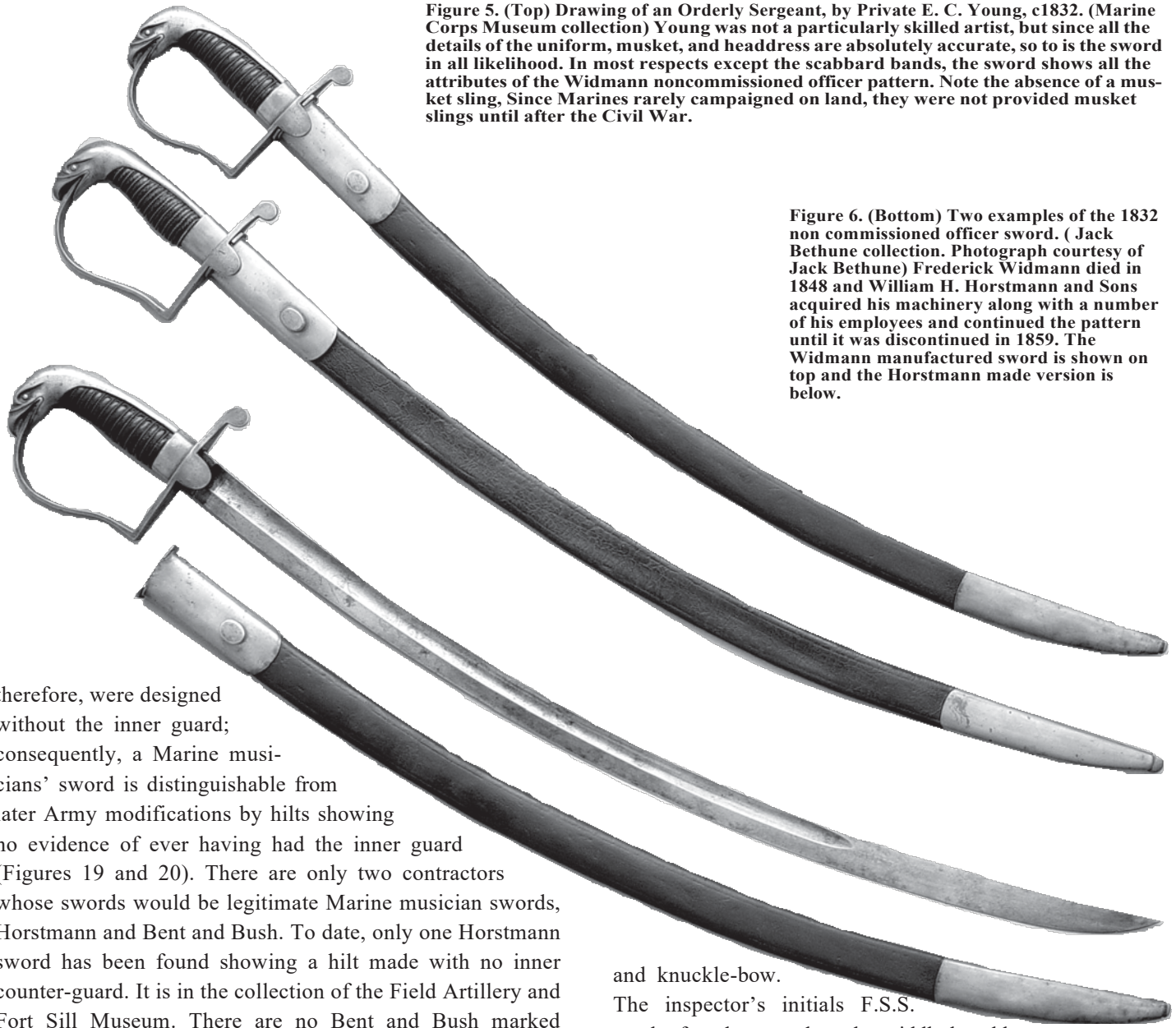


Figure 6. (Bottom) Two examples of the 1832 non commissioned officer sword. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) Frederick Widmann died in 1848 and William H. Horstmann and Sons acquired his machinery along with a number of his employees and continued the pattern until it was discontinued in 1859. The Widmann manufactured sword is shown on top and the Horstmann made version is below.

therefore, were designed without the inner guard; consequently, a Marine musicians' sword is distinguishable from later Army modifications by hilts showing no evidence of ever having had the inner guard (Figures 19 and 20). There are only two contractors whose swords would be legitimate Marine musician swords, Horstmann and Bent and Bush. To date, only one Horstmann sword has been found showing a hilt made with no inner counter-guard. It is in the collection of the Field Artillery and Fort Sill Museum. There are no Bent and Bush marked swords of any model, so it is believed that the firm did not make swords but instead sold swords made by other firms.

There is one sword known that has all the characteristics of the Marine musicians' sword and may be one of the swords provided by Bent and Bush. Made by C. Roby and Co., West Chelmsford, Massachusetts. It conforms to the Army model 1840 noncommissioned officers' sword in every respect except for the absence of an inner counter-guard (Figures 21–25). Dated 1863 and marked on the reverse ricasso "C. ROBY./W. CHELMS. S." The obverse ricasso is marked: "U.S./1863/F.S.S." The latter mark "F.S.S." was made by inspector Frederick S. Strong, who surveyed all Roby-made swords. Blade length is 32 inches and the sword is complete with its brass-mounted leather scabbard. Parts inventory control number "194" was stamped on the lower ferrule while the number "236" was stamped on the pommel

and knuckle-bow. The inspector's initials F.S.S. can be found stamped on the middle knuckle-bow, the obverse side of the drag, and on the obverse ricasso. The sword hilt is notable for the complete absence of any indication of ever having an inner counter-guard. It is believed that all converted Army noncommissioned officers swords show some sign of the inner counter-guard; consequently, the Roby sword is a strong candidate as a Bent and Bush furnished Marine musicians' sword.

Compared with the problems and confusion associated with developing the new 1859 uniform, the development of new pattern swords for noncommissioned officers and musicians happened with little comment, even though these constituted the first change in pattern since the 1820s. The ease of development likely had much to do with the fact that the two swords being adopted for sergeants and musicians were so closely based on well-established Army patterns, allowing experienced military dealers to merely modify the existing



Figure 7. The 1832 Marine non commissioned officers' sword. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) The Widmann-made noncommissioned officers' sword was an elegant but simple and sturdy design. Its adoption by the Marine Corps ensured that this style of eagle-headed sword with the wide curved blade stayed in use until 1859, long after it had gone out of fashion with the Army and militia.

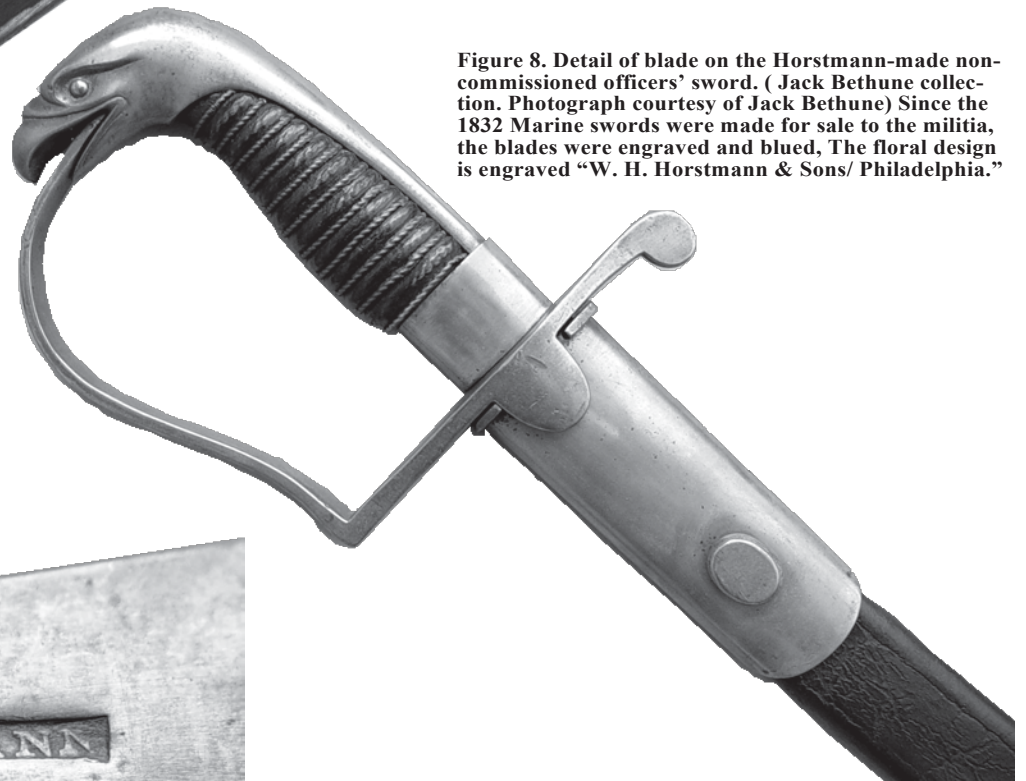


Figure 8. Detail of blade on the Horstmann-made non-commissioned officers' sword. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) Since the 1832 Marine swords were made for sale to the militia, the blades were engraved and blued, The floral design is engraved "W. H. Horstmann & Sons/ Philadelphia."



Figure 9. Detail of Horstmann-made hilt. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) There are no significant differences between the swords made by Widmann from those made by Horstmann. This Horstmann sword has a wider ferrule than the Widmann example and the eagle head is at a slight upward angle.



Figure 10. Detail of Horstmann mark on the underside of the forward portion of the guard of the non commissioned officers' sword. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune)



Figure 11. Detail of Widmann-made hilt. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) The Widmann example has a more horizontal angle to the eagle head than seen on the Horstmann version.



Figure 12. Detail of "W. Widmann/Philad" mark on the underside of the guard. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune)

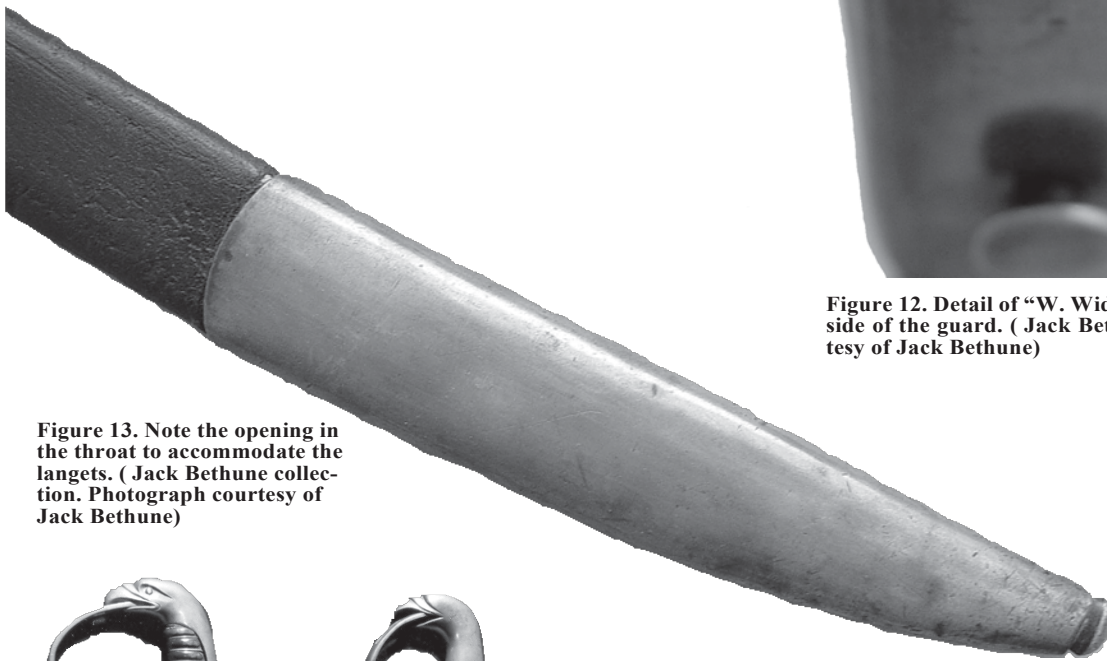


Figure 13. Note the opening in the throat to accommodate the langets. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune)



Figure 15. The 1832 non commissioned officers' sword (left) with a variant adult musicians' example (right). (Collection unknown, photograph in possession of the author) This version of what in the Marine Corps was the adult musicians' sword differs from the type associated with Marine musicians in the absence of a frog stud and the "D" guard knucklebow instead of the "P" guard.



Figure 14. Detail of the scabbard tip. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) The button "drag" on the 1832 is a characteristic of the Widmann-Horstmann scabbards.



Figure 16. Orderly Sergeant James Buckner, date unknown but believed to be June 1860. (Photograph courtesy of John Buckner) The transition to the regulation 1859 uniform took from 1859 to 1861 to fully implement. The dress uniform was particularly slow to emerge which accounts for Orderly Sergeant Buckner being photographed in what amounts to a hybrid dress uniform. To create a dress uniform, Buckner added the dress uniform's epaulets to his undress frock coat. The image is also notable for showing the first version of the 1859 uniform cap which featured a brass pompon instead of the later scarlet wool pompon. Buckner is holding his Horstmann-made regulation 1859 non commissioned officers' sword. It is possible that this sword is one of the twenty-four non commissioned officer swords acquired from Horstmann in late 1859.

Army patterns rather than develop new pattern swords from nothing. The sword for noncommissioned officers was essentially the Army model 1851 foot officers' sword (Figure 26) but with the scabbard altered to be carried from a frog rather than from slings. The grip and blade were also slightly different from those seen on most officer swords as well. The first contract for the new pattern Marine swords went out on 23 April 1859 to Horstmann and Brothers to furnish 150 "sergeants" swords made to "the various lengths as usual." Nothing further occurred with swords until 11 October when the commandant had to point out to the Assistant Quartermaster, Captain William A. Maddox, that he was using the wrong sword as his pattern. He was supposed to base the noncommissioned officers' sword on the Army foot officers' sword adopted for Marine officers with the differences being that the hilt of the noncommissioned officers' sword was brass and not gilt, the grip was leather instead of

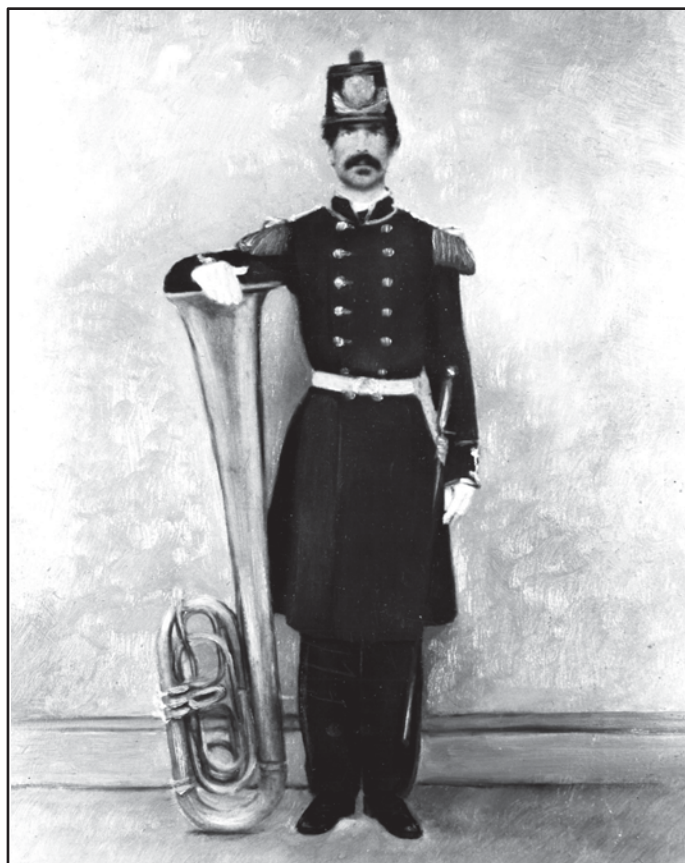
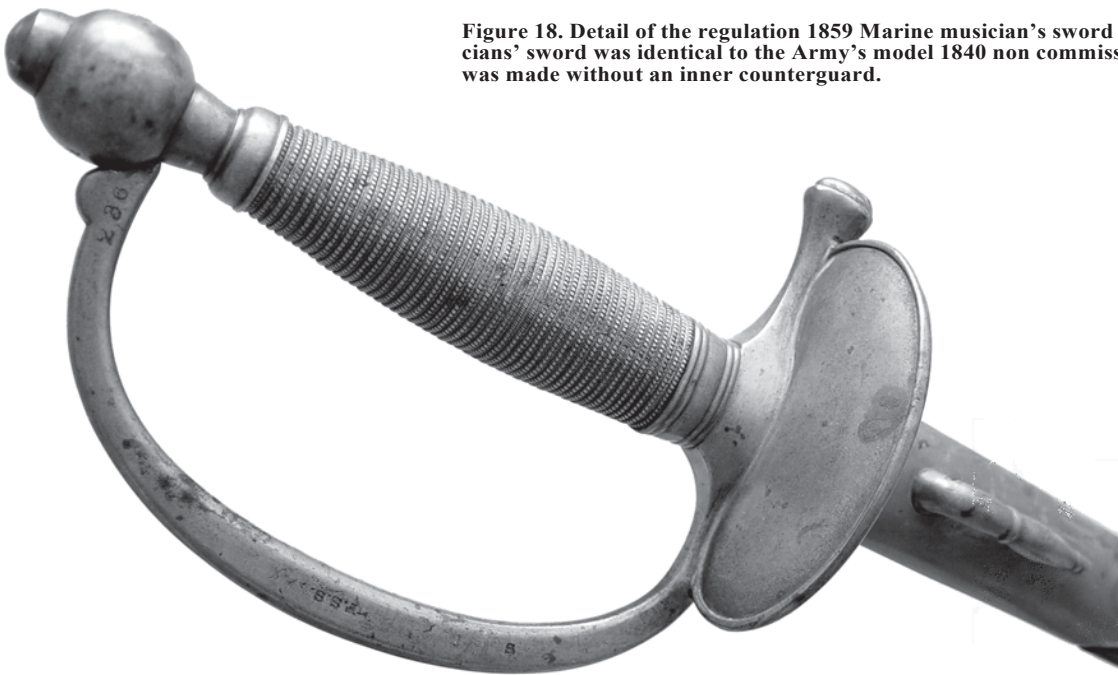


Figure 17. Bandsman Nicola Pistorio. Pistorio enlisted in the Marine Corps in April 1856 and served with the Marine Band until April 1877. He is wearing the regulation 1859 enlisted dress uniform, which for musicians was scarlet instead of dark blue. From photographs taken of the Band in 1863, it appears that the long skirts shown here was unique to the musicians of this organization. Bandsman Pistorio shows the distinctive regulation 1859 musicians' sword with its characteristic single counterguard.

sharkskin, the blade was undecorated, and the scabbard had only a throat mount with a stud for the sliding frog. Four days later, the Quartermaster, Major Daniel J. Sutherland, sent Captain Maddox an example of the sergeants' sword enthusiastically approved that day by Commandant John Harris, which establishes 15 October 1859 as the official date for the present-day Marine noncommissioned officers sword. The first production noncommissioned officer swords came from Horstmann, who provided 24 of them in late December. On 17 October, Harris approved the new model musicians' sword. When bids came in for the year 1860 supplies, Ames received the contract for noncommissioned officer swords (\$5.50) and musician swords (\$4.40). It is not known how many swords Horstmann and Ames actually provided under their contracts.¹⁵

A good example of the noncommissioned officers' sword is the one issued to Orderly Sergeant James Buckner (Figure 26). In a photograph likely dating to 1860, Buckner holds the 1859 noncommissioned officers sword (Figure 16). This sword survives. Made by Horstmann Brothers and Sons, it is one of the earliest examples of this pattern. Horstmann Brothers and

Figure 18. Detail of the regulation 1859 Marine musician's sword hilt. The 1859 Marine musicians' sword was identical to the Army's model 1840 non commissioned officers' except that it was made without an inner counter guard.



Figures 19, 20. Two views of the reverse side of the regulation 1859 Marine musicians' sword. Since the musicians' sword was made without the inner counter guard rather than having it removed, the Marine hilt on what otherwise would be an Army non commissioned officers' sword should show no evidence of there ever having had an inner guard as seen with this example. On the other hand, after the Army changed to a new pattern uniform in 1872, the War Department directed the removal of the inner counter guards of the non commissioned officers' swords; consequently, all Army swords modified under this order have some indication of the inner guard and are not Marine Corps.



Figure 21. There are two swords known to the author that have the characteristics of the Marine 1859 musicians' sword. Made by C. Roby and Company of West Chelmsford, Massachusetts, it is dated 1863 on the obverse and stamped "F.S.S." for Frederick S. Strong, the inspector for all Roby made swords.



Figure 22. Bent and Bush was not a sword manufacturing firm but a military goods dealer, consequently, no swords for the Army or Marine Corps have been found marked with the company's name. Bent and Bush had the contract for swords to be provided to the Marine Corps in 1863 and it is believed that the close adherence to Marine specifications suggests that Roby was the subcontractor to Bent and Bush.



Figure 23, 24, 25. The inspector's mark was stamped on the ricasso, knuckle-bow, and drag while the parts inventory control numbers "236" and "194" were stamped on the pommel, knuckle-bow, and lower ferrule respectively.

Sons received contracts for noncommissioned officer and musician swords in early 1859 for delivery in 1859, and in 1861 for delivery in 1861 and 1862. Since Orderly Sergeant Buckner was in the United States while between ships only from May to July 1859 and did not return until August 1861, after the uniform shown was no longer in use, it is probable that the image was taken in June 1859 and the sword is 1 of 24 delivered by Horstmann that year. It has features typical of Horstmann-made Army swords; that is, the hilt decoration is not as finely done as seen on Ames swords (Figure 27), and the pommel cap appears to be of two-piece construction, though that point is debatable (Figure 28). The blade is similar to officers' blades except that it is without decoration or etching of any sort. Etched blades were officially introduced with the 1875 uniform changes. Buckner's scabbard has the brass throat mount and drag characteristic of all Marine noncommissioned officer

swords. Another characteristic of the noncommissioned officers' model is the leather-wrapped grip.¹⁶

On the matter of Marine officer swords, any interpretation that has the Mameluke saber in Marine use before 1826 is not supported by either written, pictorial, or anecdotal sources. There was initially no standard pattern for Marine officers. Uniform regulations dated 19 April 1810 merely stated: "*Yellow-mounted Sabres, with Gilt scabbards.*"¹⁷ In 1821, officer swords were described as: "*Sabres . . . Brass, or gilt scabbards.*"¹⁸

One sword, three portraits, and one contemporaneous illustration exist and they demonstrate the variety of swords possible under such loose guidelines. The oldest portrait is of Jonathan Church (1798–1801), painted by an unknown artist and showing Church wearing the uniform prescribed for officers in 1798 (Figure 29). All that can be seen of the sword is a gold-colored hilt of the style typical of a small sword such as



Figure 26. Marine Corps regulation 1859 noncommissioned officers' sword owned by Orderly Sergeant James Buckner. The Marine noncommissioned officers' version of the Army foot officers' sword differed from the latter by its having a leather wrapped grip and unmarked blade. Officer examples generally had fish-skin grips and etched blades.



Figure 27, 28. Made by *Horstmann Brothers and Sons* in 1859, this example is likely one of the twenty-four acquired by the *Marine Corps* that year. It has features typical of *Horstmann-made Army swords*. The hilt decoration is not as finely done as seen on *Ames swords* and the pommel cap appears to be of two-piece construction (a characteristic of early *Horstmann foot officers' swords*).



Figure 29. Portrait of First Lieutenant Jonathan Church, artist unknown, c1799. Since the accouterments provided by the Army to the Marine Corps had black leather belts, officer shoulder belts were black as well. Officer swords were of no fixed pattern other than the requirement that hilt and scabbard mounts were gilt.

shown on page 145, figure 127, in Peterson's *The American Sword: 1775–1945*¹⁹ (Figure 30). A second miniature portrait of First Lieutenant Lee Massey (1807–1812) also by an unknown artist and painted about 1810 (Figure 31) shows a similar hilt as Church's, but the portrait of First Lieutenant John Rogers Fenwick (served from 1799–1811) painted sometime between 1806 and 1809 (the year he was promoted to captain (Figure 32), depicts him with the British pattern 1803 general officers' saber, distinguishable by its white grip and crowned "GR" knuckle-bow²⁰ (Figure 33). The last portrait representing this period is of Brevet Major John M. Gamble (Figure 34). He is depicted wearing the undress uniform of a major, a brevet rank he received in April 1816, and he holds a French Army staff officers' saber (Figure 35) similar to that carried by Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Franklin Wharton (1798–1818) during the same period. Commandant Wharton's sword (Figure 36) is the only extant sword from this period and it has the characteristic French stirrup knuckle-bow, langets, semi-pistol grip, and a 32-inch-long, single-edged, curved

blade with a false edge extending back 11 inches from the clipped point.²¹ The scabbard and hilt are gilt brass. In a circa 1814 watercolor illustration of a Marine lieutenant and a private by Charles Hamilton Smith, the officer carries a curved sword having an all-brass scabbard and stirrup hilt. The lieutenant's hand covers most of the hilt but it is evident that the sword was worn from a shoulder belt and the scabbard lacks suspension rings.²²

The first regulation pattern Marine officers' Mameluke sword (Figure 37) was provided to all officers in 1826. Just exactly how or why the Marine Corps selected the pattern 1826 Mameluke-hilted sword as the regulation sword for all officers is simply unknown. Prior to 1825, there are no letters, documents, or any references whatsoever about Mameluke sabers. The only pre-1826 Mameluke sword attributed to a Marine officer is the one given to Lieutenant Presley N. O'Bannon in 1805 by the Viceroy of Egypt prior to the Derna campaign. O'Bannon's Mameluke sword is rumored to be currently in the collection of the Kentucky Historical Society and is similar to the swords given to two



Figure 30. British pattern 1796 foot officers' sword. (Drawing by the author) The sword hilt shown in the portrait of Lieutenant Church is similar to the British foot officers' pattern 1796 sword of the period.



Figure 31. Portrait of First Lieutenant Lee Massey, artist unknown, c1809. (Marine Corps Museum) Serving from 1807 until his death by drowning in 1812, Massey is shown as a first lieutenant, a rank he received in January 1809. First lieutenants in the Marine Corps wore the epaulet on the right shoulder. Massey's sword is similar to the one carried by Lieutenant Church and is likely the British 1796 foot officers' sword.



Figure 32. Portrait of First Lieutenant John Rogers Fenwick, artist unknown, c1806. (Marine Corps Museum) Fenwick was commissioned as a second lieutenant of Marines in November 1799 and was promoted to first lieutenant in December 1801 and to captain in August 1809. The uniform he is wearing in the portrait was first prescribed in March 1804 consequently the portrait cannot have been done any earlier than 1804 nor any later than August 1809 when he was promoted captain and the epaulet would have shifted to the right shoulder with a gold lace counterstrap on the left. John Fenwick is shown carrying a British general officers' pattern 1803 sword. The British general officers' sword was distinguished by its white grip and crowned "GR" on the knuckle-bow. Note how Fenwick skillfully wrapped his sword knot around the knuckle bow in such a way as to obscure the "GR" and most of the crown.

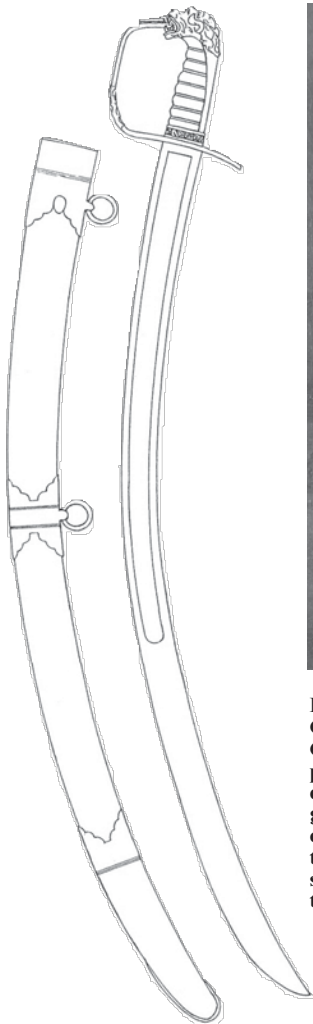


Figure 33. British pattern 1803 general officers' sword. (Drawing by the author) The sword shown carried by Lieutenant Fenwick is a slightly more decorated version of the light infantry company officers' 1803 pattern sword.



Figure 34. Portrait of Brevet Major John M. Gamble, artist unknown, c1816. (Marine Corps Museum) Gamble received a brevet promotion to major in April 1816 and is depicted wearing the two epaulets of a field grade officer. He also has on a single-breasted undress coat that was loosely based on the 1798 undress uniform description. His sword is one of the numerous variations on the French Army staff officers' saber.

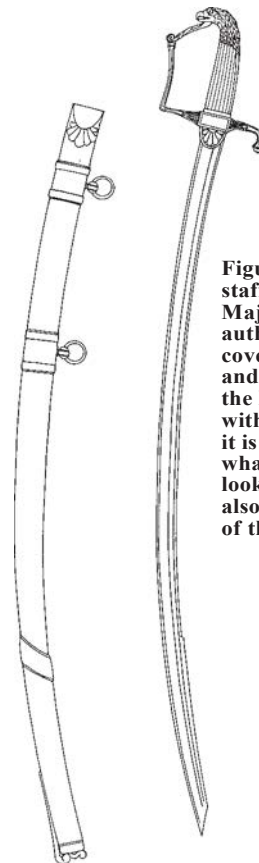


Figure 35. French Napoleonic era staff officers' sword. (Drawing of Major Gamble's sword by the author) Major Gamble's hands cover part of the sword's hilt and as examples are known of the French staff officers' saber with pommels of different types, it is impossible to know exactly what the design of the pommel looked like. Scabbard decoration also varied according to the taste of the buyer and his pocketbook.

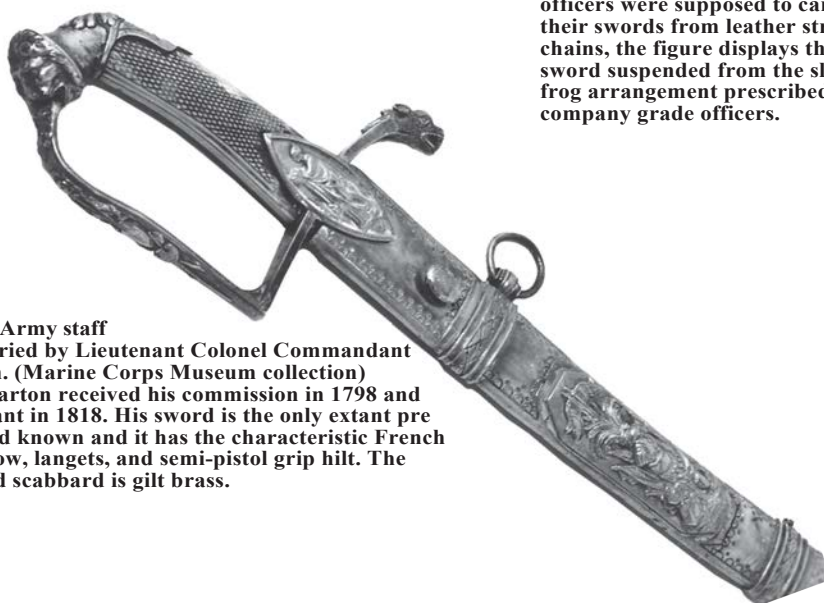


Figure 36. French Army staff officers' saber carried by Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Franklin Wharton. (Marine Corps Museum collection) Commandant Wharton received his commission in 1798 and died as commandant in 1818. His sword is the only extant pre 1826 Marine sword known and it has the characteristic French stirrup knuckle-bow, langets, and semi-pistol grip hilt. The highly ornamented scabbard is gilt brass.

Figure 37. Marine field grade officer, 1839– 1859. Regulation 1826 Marine Mamaluke officers' sword belonging to Major Levi Twiggs. (Smithsonian Institution photograph) The uniform shown belonged to Major Twiggs and is the pattern adopted in 1839. This is the officers' uniform worn for the balance of the period the 1826 model was in use. While field grade officers were supposed to carry their swords from leather straps or chains, the figure displays the sword suspended from the sliding frog arrangement prescribed for company grade officers.



other participants, Captain Isaac Hull and Midshipman Mann (Figure 38). All three are workmanlike sabers with curved blades and brass-mounted leather scabbards (Figure 39). None are jeweled and the principal decorations are limited to the use of gilt brass on one, gold etching on another, and geometric lines incised into the brass work. The story that the American favorite to take over as the Bashaw of Tripoli, Hamet Karamanli, gave O'Bannon his own jeweled Mameluke is not borne out by the surviving examples. Shortly after the campaign ended, Lieutenant O'Bannon returned to the United States and resigned from the service in March 1807. Within the Marine Corps, little if any notice was taken of O'Bannon's Mameluke at the time and there so far has been no correspondence found referencing O'Bannon and the Mameluke saber.²³

The only change in the description of officers' swords that occurred prior to 1825 was in an order dated 22 March 1821 which stated: "*Broad swords with gilt or brass scabbards.*"²⁴ The change in terminology to "broad sword" indicates an attempt by the Marine Corps to follow the Army's move to an eagle-headed sword having a narrow straight, instead of the previous curved, blade.²⁵ Adoption of the straight blade signaled a distinct shift in military sword styles and is one of the defining elements of the 1820s Army uniform; however, there is no evidence in Marine records that officers commissioned prior to 1821 gave up their old pattern swords as long as they were serviceable. For example (Figure 40), in the painting "The Dance—Jack Tar Ashore" by an unknown artist about 1824, a Marine first lieutenant has a sword similar to the one depicted by Hamilton Smith but with rings on the brass scabbard.²⁶

When the Mameluke sword was adopted, no deviation was allowed from the prescribed pattern (Figure 41) and all other type swords immediately went out of use. There is no correspondence surrounding the decision to adopt the

Mameluke saber in 1825 that has been found nor are there any illustrations of a Mameluke-style sword being carried by a Marine officer prior to the pattern's distribution in 1826. The first description of the official Marine Mameluke occurred on 26 April 1825. Although the order was suspended on 22 December 1825, it was reinstated without change on 30 January 1826, along with the provision that it was to take effect on 1 May. The 30 January order further noted that the directive might take place earlier if the swords purchased by the Quartermaster Department from the contractor arrived before that date. Unlike the contemporary Army's description of its swords, the Marine Mameluke description is very specific:

"All Officers when on duty either in full or Undress Uniform, shall wear a plain brass scabbard sword or saber, with a Mameluke Hilt of White Ivory and a gold tassel; extreme length of sword, three feet one inch and a half[,] curve of blade half an inch *only*, to serve as cut or thrust; the hilt in length (which is included in the extreme length of the sword) four inches and three quarters, width of the scabbard, one inch and seven eights, width of blade one inch."²⁷

Such detail (Figures 42–45) could only have come from the writer viewing an actual example, which puts the first sword as being at headquarters by April 1825 at the latest. It is not known when the sword was purchased or from whom, but it is likely that the sword originated in England since the entire first consignment of swords came from there. Authorization to purchase the pattern sword would have been sometime in 1824 in order for an example to be available by April 1825. In any case, the commandant ensured uniformity

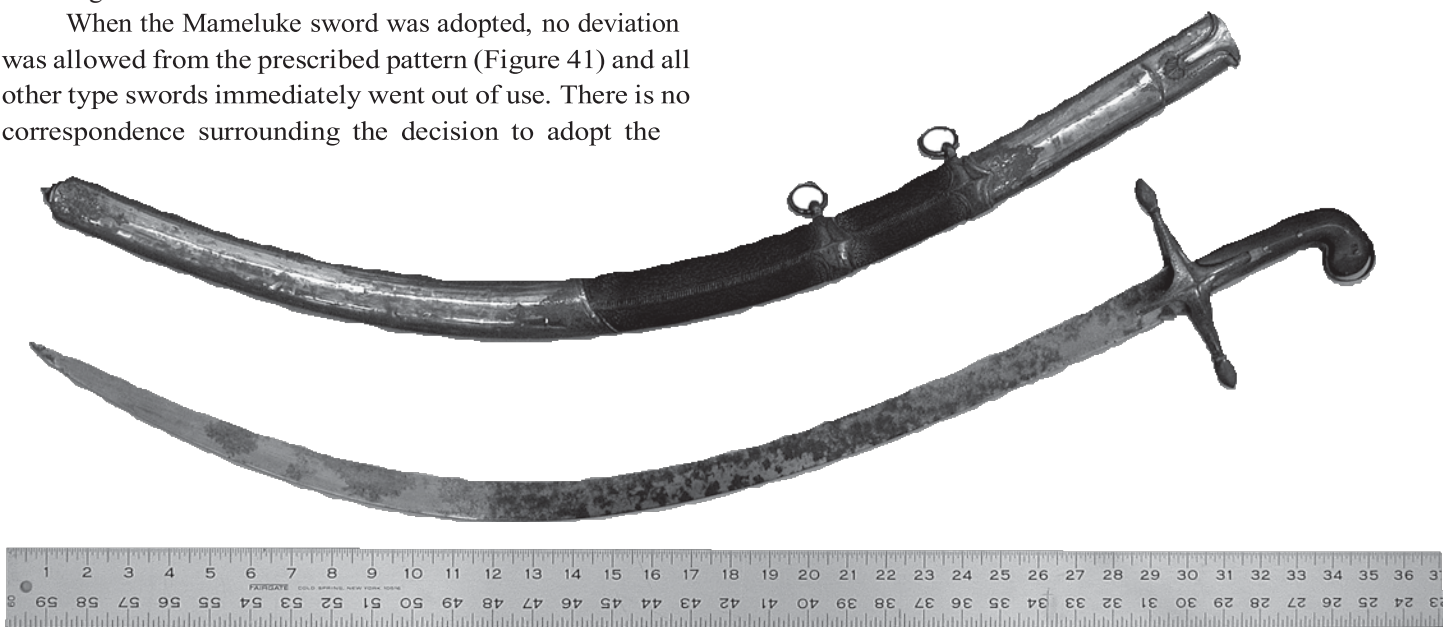


Figure 38. Mameluke saber given to Midshipman Mann in early 1805 prior to the campaign to seize Derna. (Naval Academy Museum photograph) The only pre-1826 Mameluke sword actually documented to a Marine officer is the one given First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon. O'Bannon's sword may no longer exist, however, the examples given to Captain Isaac Hull and Midshipman Mann do survive. They are both very similar and can be characterized as workmanlike sabers with curved blades and brass-mounted scabbards.

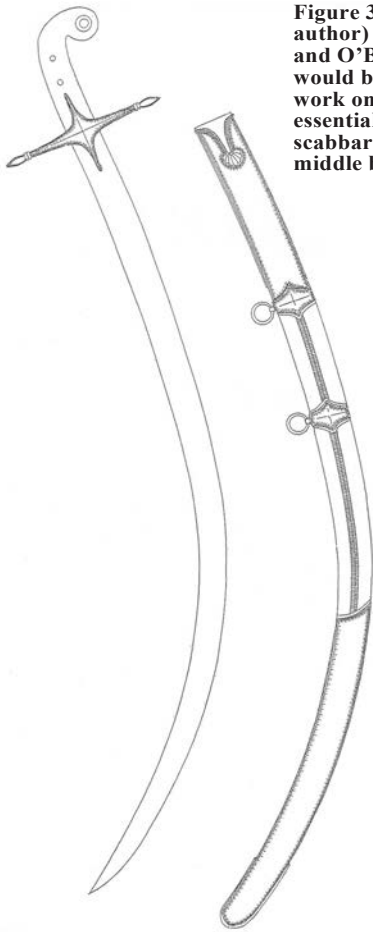


Figure 39. Mamaluke saber worn by Midshipman Mann. (Drawing by the author) Since the Viceroy of Egypt presented the sabers to Isaac, Mann, and O'Bannon at the same time it is believed that O'Bannon's saber would be similar to Isaac's and Mann's. The drawing shows the brass work on the throat and upper band, middle band, and drag which was essentially geometric lines incised into the brass. The leather part of the scabbard shows between the upper and middle bands and between the middle band and the drag.



Figure 40. Detail from "The Dance - Jack Tar Ashore," artist unknown, c1824. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The identity of the first lieutenant is unknown, however, he is wearing the uniform prescribed in 1821. Even though the 1821 uniform regulations called for "broad swords," there is no evidence that officers gave up their old pattern swords. The sword held by the lieutenant is typical of the style used during the War of 1812 but going out of fashion by the 1820s in favor of swords with narrow blades.

throughout the Marine Corps by having the Quartermaster Department purchase the new sword for every serving officer. The swords were ordered from the firm Henry Young and Company of New York City. Henry Young was not a sword manufacturer but an importer of military goods. The supply arrived in New York City in early February 1826 and was shipped to Headquarters in Washington, D.C. from where they were then shipped to the various Marine Barracks. It is likely that, since the swords arrived in New York City, the officers stationed there were the first to receive the 1826 pattern sword as there is no mention in Marine correspondence about shipping swords to the New York establishment. Otherwise, once the swords arrived in Washington, in March, the Quartermaster Department first provided them to the officers at Headquarters and in Philadelphia, and then to officers stationed at Boston and Norfolk in April. The cost was \$45 each, and all officers had to make arrangements with the Paymaster at



Figure 41. Marine Corps Regulation 1826 officers' sword carried by Captain William L. Shuttleworth. (Marine Corps Museum photograph) William Shuttleworth purchased this Ames made regulation 1826 Mamaluke upon his promotion to captain in 1857. Though this sword is one of the few examples known of the 1826 pattern having an engraved blade, it conforms exactly to swords acquired for all Marine officers in 1826. It has the six-pointed star rivet heads to the grips associated with officer swords made towards the end of the 1826 to 1859 period.

Figures 42, 43. Marine Corps Regulation 1826 officers' sword. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) The regulation Marine officers' Mameluke was first described in early 1825 and no deviation was allowed from the prescribed pattern. Examples of the 1826 sword are remarkably consistent in design and construction, though there are some minor differences in some details such as in the rivets and blade fullers. The sword is unmarked and the owner is also unknown, however, the sword is consistent with all known Marine regulation 1826 Mamelukes.

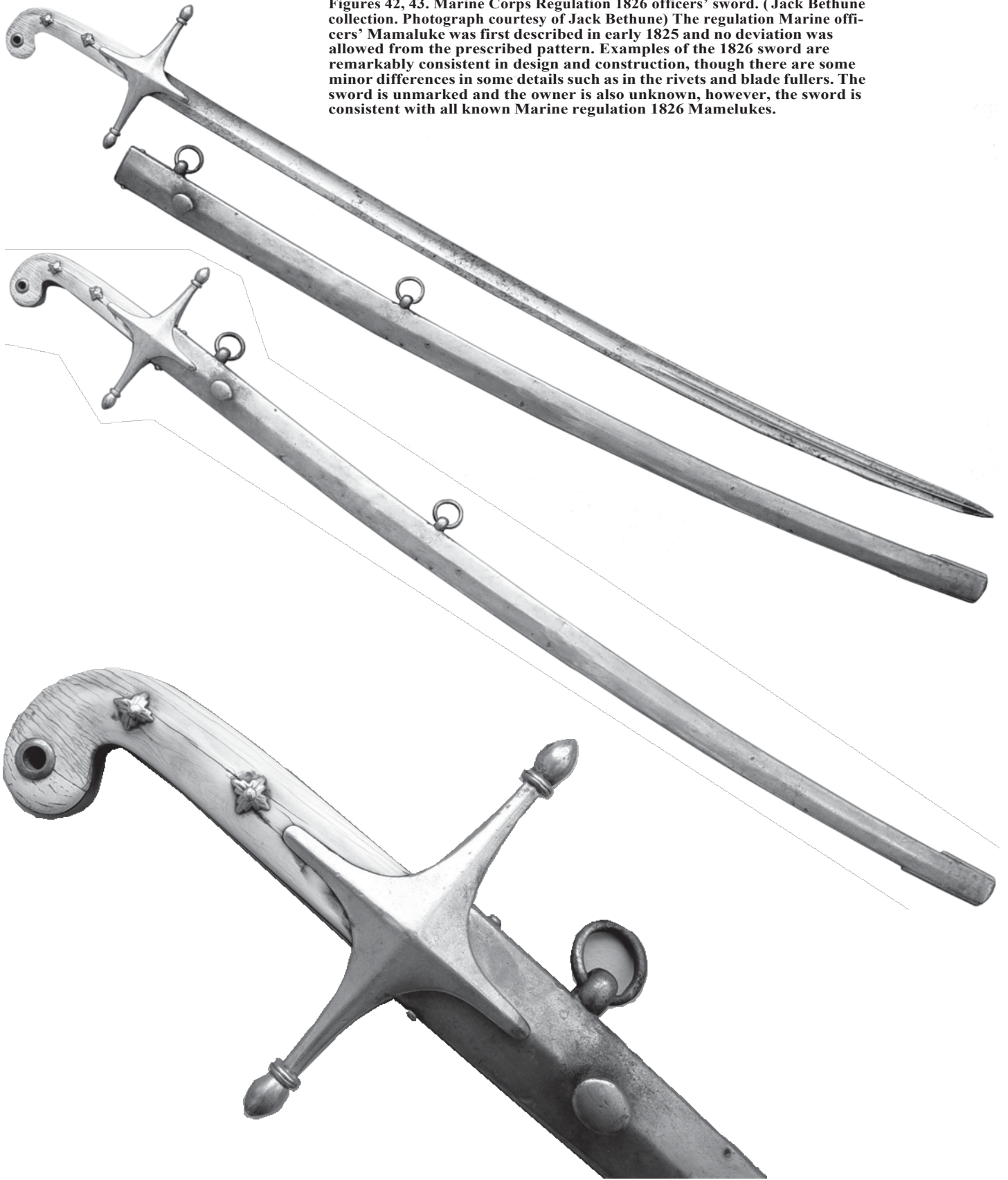
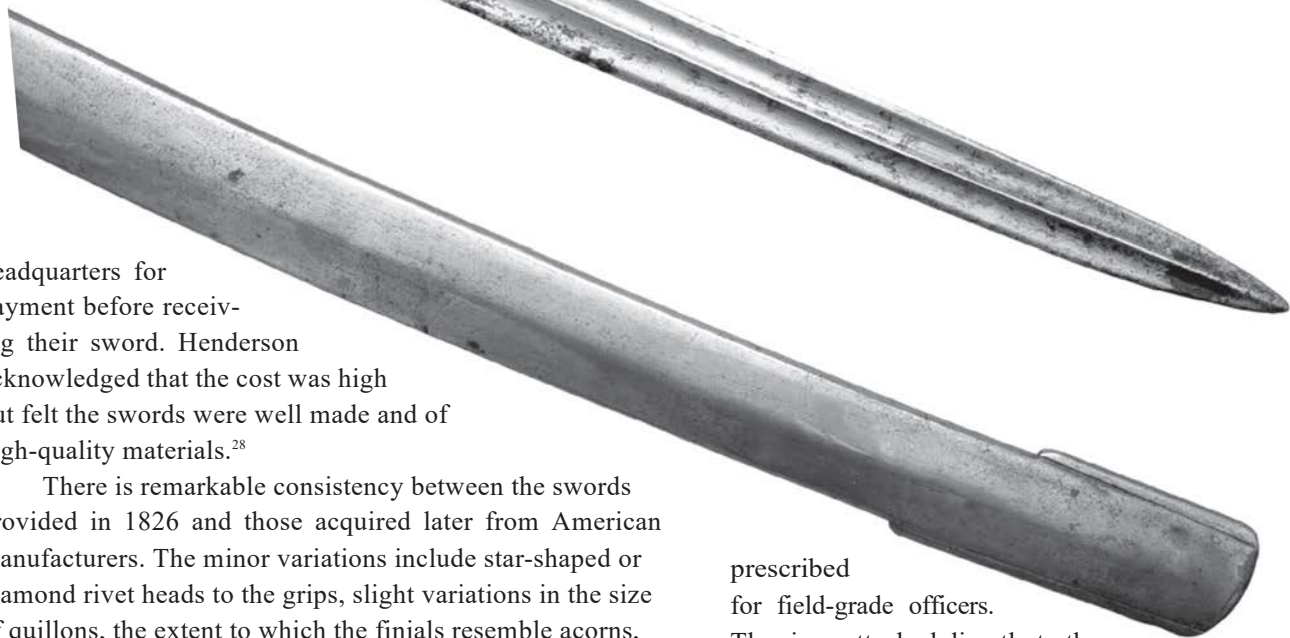


Figure 44. Detail of regulation 1826 officers' Mameluke. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) While the date of manufacture of this sword is unknown, the rivet heads are similar to ones seen on swords believed to have been part of the 1826 consignment sold to all serving Marine officers. Consequently, the four-leaf rivet head design is believed to be indicative of swords either part of the 1826 shipment or manufactured early during the pattern's period of use.

Figure 45. Detail of lower blade and scabbard. (Jack Bethune collection. Photograph courtesy of Jack Bethune) The blade is 1 inch wide, slightly curved, and has a single fuller about two thirds the length of the blade then dividing into two fullers running to the point. The tip of the scabbard is square with a slight drag.



headquarters for payment before receiving their sword. Henderson acknowledged that the cost was high but felt the swords were well made and of high-quality materials.²⁸

There is remarkable consistency between the swords provided in 1826 and those acquired later from American manufacturers. The minor variations include star-shaped or diamond rivet heads to the grips, slight variations in the size of quillons, the extent to which the finials resemble acorns, and minor differences in fullers on the blade. The hilt consists of two Mameluke-pattern ivory grips, which fastened on either side of a brass frame that also held the tang of the blade. Everything was held in place by two pins that passed through the ivory grips, center frame, and blade tang. The pins, or rivets, ended with star-shaped brass heads, though Commandant Henderson's sword (Figures 46 and 47) has rivets that lack the brass heads common to Major Levi Twiggs' and Commandant John Harris's swords, both of which were part of the 1826 shipment. The pronounced pommel is pierced for a sword knot, and the hole is lined with brass (Figures 48 and 49). The single-piece cross quillons terminate in acorn-like finials with langets and ears. The blade is 1 inch wide, slightly curved in accordance with the April 1825 description, and is single-edged with a 3-inch-long false edge. On some swords, such as the Ames-made example inscribed to "Captain W[illiam] L. Shuttleworth," there is a broad fuller that extends from the ricasso all the way to the point, whereas, on Henderson's sword the fuller runs to about 12 inches from the point, then divides and becomes two narrow fullers that in turn continue for about 8 1/2 inches. Shuttleworth was promoted to captain in October 1857, which dates the sword to at least that year. The scabbard on all swords is brass with a pronounced median ridge on the obverse and reverse sides. The tip of the scabbard is square with a slight ridge or drag. Scabbards all have a stud to facilitate being carried from a sliding frog, as stipulated for all company officers, and two suspension rings for the slings called for on the sword belts

prescribed for field-grade officers.

The rings attached directly to the scabbard without bands²⁹ (Figure 47).

Why did the Marine Corps adopt the Mameluke sword? Again, the lack of official and private correspondence on the subject strongly suggests that there was little internal pressure for the sword. With one exception, there are no illustrations showing a Marine officer with a Mameluke prior to 1826. The single exception (Figure 50) is an undated lithograph titled, "*Uniform worn ___ 1819. Officer of U.S. Marines.*" In this lithograph, an officer, wearing what appears to be the 1806 officers' uniform coat, white pantaloons, and Hessian boots, carries a very accurately rendered 1826 Mameluke saber from a shoulder belt. The drawing with its date has long been one of the chief pieces of evidence supporting claims for the pre-1826 use of the Mameluke by Marine officers; however, a reading of the illustration's full caption calls the 1819 date into immediate doubt. The complete title continues with:

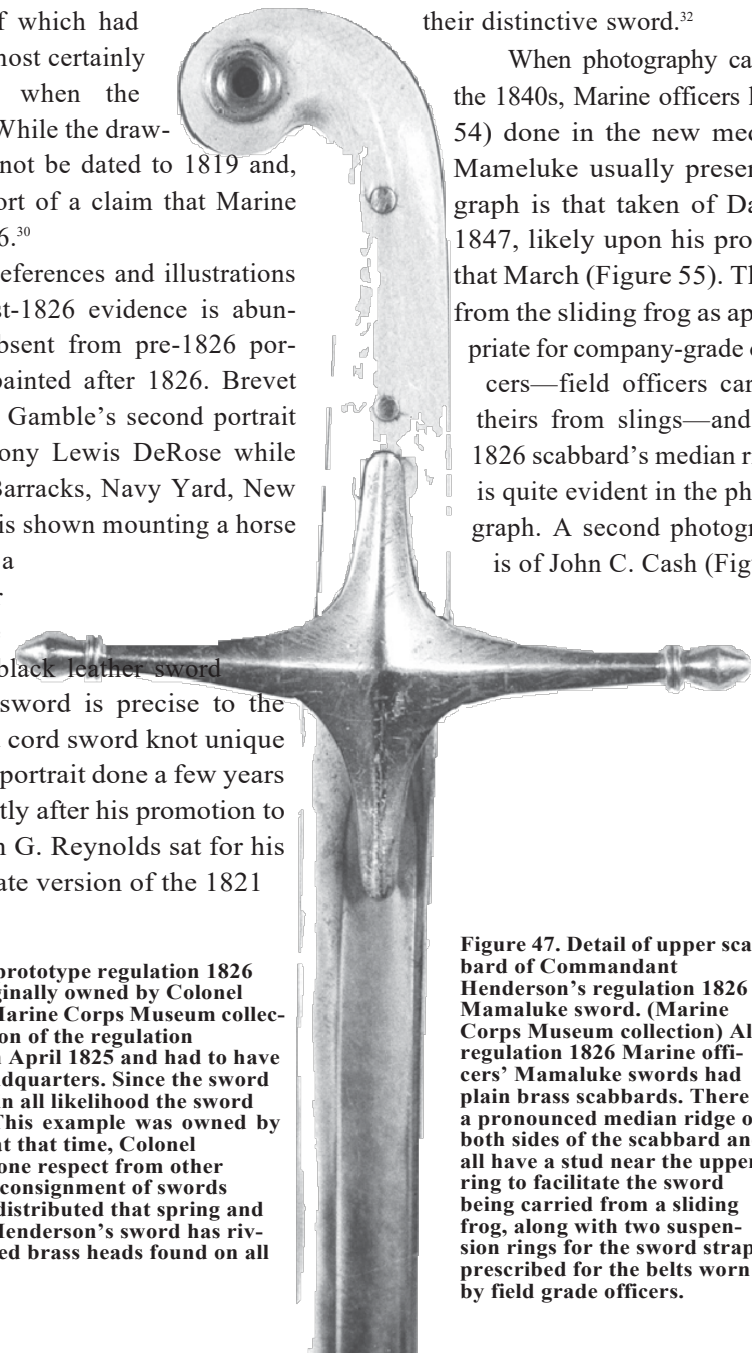
"From a painting by a former officer of that corps: the original in the possession of Major I. T. Doughty, U.S.M.C. [published by] Charles Desilver, Publisher, 1229 Chestnut St. Philada./ L. N. Rosenthal Lith. 327 Walnut St. Phila."

Major Isaac T. Doughty did not enter the Marine Corps until September 1837, so he would not have been an eyewitness. While Charles Desilver was the publisher of the illustrated 1859 regulations, the style of the artwork resembles drawings done by Lieutenant Christopher C. Floyd, an officer who served from September 1818 to December 1824. Lieutenant Floyd was a somewhat prolific artist who

had a keen eye for detail but an ego that caused him to sometimes create fanciful drawings depicting events from his life as a Marine officer. Sensitive to the slightest real or imagined indignity, Floyd was constantly in trouble with his superiors and was often suspended from duty for insubordination. In his drawings, he tended to make himself the “hero” against his enemies, often his superior officers, and he mixed exaggerated or imagined uniform embellishments with details that are very accurate and supported by Quartermaster Department records. Many of Floyd’s drawings were done after he left the service in 1824, which likely accounts for the mixing of older and newer uniform features on some figures. Assuming the lithograph is from Floyd, he shows the officer in a chapeau and uniform coat that are correct for the 1820s but has him wearing a shoulder belt, pantaloons, and Hessian boots, all of which had gone out of use about 1821 and almost certainly would not have been around when the Mameluke came into use in 1826. While the drawing is intriguing, it absolutely cannot be dated to 1819 and, therefore, cannot be used in support of a claim that Marine officers used the sword before 1826.³⁰

Given the lack of pre-1825 references and illustrations about the Marine Mameluke, post-1826 evidence is abundant. The sword is completely absent from pre-1826 portraits but prominent in portraits painted after 1826. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel John Marshall Gamble’s second portrait was painted about 1827 by Anthony Lewis DeRose while Gamble commanded the Marine Barracks, Navy Yard, New York City. In the portrait, Gamble is shown mounting a horse and wearing the 1806 pattern coat, a reduced-size chapeau, overalls or trousers over short boots, and the 1826 Mameluke hanging from a black leather sword belt with matching slings. The sword is precise to the 1825/26 order, including the gold cord sword knot unique to the pre-1859 uniform. Another portrait done a few years later is of a company officer. Shortly after his promotion to first lieutenant in May 1833, John G. Reynolds sat for his portrait (Figure 51) wearing the late version of the 1821

Figure 46. Detail of hilt to the possible prototype regulation 1826 Marine officers’ Mameluke sword, originally owned by Colonel Commandant Archibald Henderson. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The detailed and precise description of the regulation Mameluke sword was first published in April 1825 and had to have been based on an actual example at headquarters. Since the sword would have been the first in the series, in all likelihood the sword would have gone to a senior officer. This example was owned by the commandant of the Marine Corps at that time, Colonel Archibald Henderson, and it differs in one respect from other swords known to have been part of the consignment of swords received in the late winter of 1826 and distributed that spring and summer to every officer of the Corps. Henderson’s sword has rivets that lack either the leaf or star shaped brass heads found on all other 1826 Mameluke swords.



uniform. Although the artist did not quite get the regulation Mameluke’s details correct, it shows all of the sword’s distinguishing features such as the brass scabbard, frog stud, suspension rings, ivory hilt, and acorn-like finials (Figure 52). A more accurate depiction of the early Mameluke is in the portrait of Second Lieutenant Addison Garland painted about 1835 (Figure 53). In this portrait, Garland is standing with the sword in its plain brass scabbard held in front of him. Other details such as the sword knot, sword belt, and belt plate are also clearly shown.³¹ While pre-1826 officer portraits either do not show a sword or the sword depicted is of any type, generally English or French, after the 1826 shipment, the Marine Mameluke shows up in most portraits painted after that date. The prominence of the Mameluke in these portraits suggests that Marine officers were proud of their distinctive sword.³²

When photography came into widespread use in the 1840s, Marine officers had their likenesses (Figure 54) done in the new medium with the regulation Mameluke usually present. A well-known photograph is that taken of Daniel J. Sutherland about 1847, likely upon his promotion to first lieutenant that March (Figure 55). The sword is shown carried from the sliding frog as appropriate for company-grade officers—field officers carried theirs from slings—and the 1826 scabbard’s median ridge is quite evident in the photograph. A second photograph is of John C. Cash (Figures



Figure 47. Detail of upper scabbard of Commandant Henderson’s regulation 1826 Mameluke sword. (Marine Corps Museum collection) All regulation 1826 Marine officers’ Mameluke swords had plain brass scabbards. There is a pronounced median ridge on both sides of the scabbard and all have a stud near the upper ring to facilitate the sword being carried from a sliding frog, along with two suspension rings for the sword straps prescribed for the belts worn by field grade officers.

Figure 48. Detail of hilt to Captain William L. Shuttleworth's regulation 1826 Marine officers' Mamaluke sword. (Marine Corps Museum collection) There is remarkable consistency between the swords provided in 1826 and those acquired later from American manufacturers. The only notable difference between Commandant Henderson's sword likely made c1825 and Captain Shuttleworth's was made in 1857 is the star shaped rivet heads.

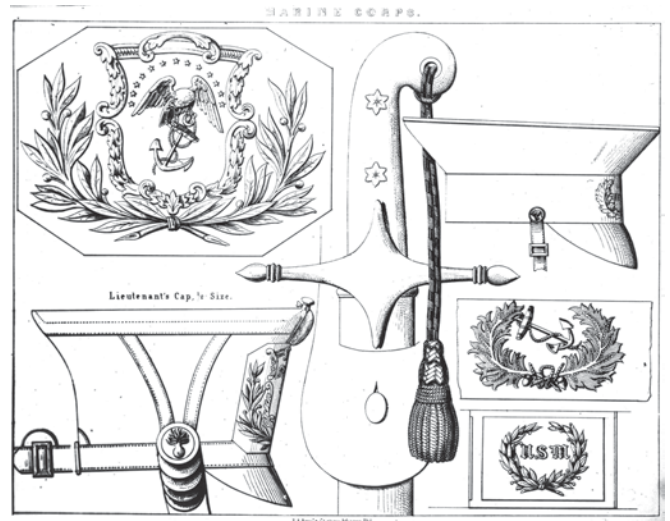


Figure 49. Illustration that accompanied the 1852 Marine Corps uniform regulations. (Marine Corps Museum collection) Except for some very minor changes in dress and insignia, the 1852 regulations virtually duplicated the 1839 uniform regulations. The 1852 publication, however, was the first Marine uniform regulation accompanied by illustrations and the first to show the officers' Mamaluke. The pins or rivets used to hold the grip to the tang and brass frame are clearly shown and correspond exactly with those seen on Captain Shuttleworth's late production sword.



Figure 50. Drawing "Uniform worn 1819 Officer of U.S. Marines." (Marine Corps Museum collection) There are no paintings or illustrations of Marine officers before 1826 that show the Mamaluke sword. The print seen here was believed to be proof supporting pre 1826 use, however, the full caption to the print indicates that it was likely printed in the 1850s. With some allowance for artistic liberty, the sword shown is the regulation 1826 Marine officers' Mamaluke.



Figure 51. Portrait of First Lieutenant John G. Reynolds, artist unknown, c1833. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The absence of pre 1826 pictorial evidence showing Marine officers with either the Mamaluke saber or sword calls the assumption of the design's early popularity into serious question, especially in light of the sword's prominence in post 1826 paintings, illustrations, and later photographs. This portrait was painted shortly after John Reynolds promotion to first lieutenant in May 1833. While the artist did not get the details of the sword hilt correct, he did catch the sword's distinguishing features, particularly the plain brass scabbard, frog stud, suspension rings, ivory grips, and the acorn-like finials.



Figure 52. Portrait of First Lieutenant Thomas English, artist unknown, c1828. (Marine Corps Museum collection) Thomas English sat for this portrait after the distribution of swords occurred in the spring and early summer of 1826 but prior to his brevet promotion to captain in August 1829, which makes this one of two known portraits painted within two years of the pattern's introduction. The prominence of the Mameluke in post 1826 portraits suggests that Marine officers were proud of their distinctive sword.

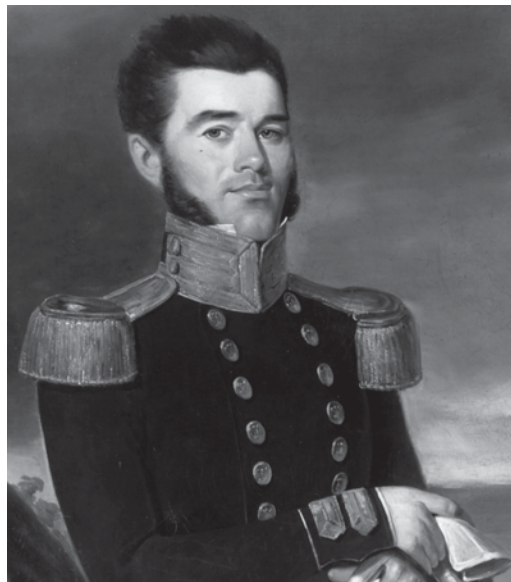


Figure 53. Portrait of Second Lieutenant Addison Garland, artist unknown, c1835. (Marine Corps Museum collection) A more accurate depiction of the 1826 sword is from the portrait of Lieutenant Garland painted about 1835. Garland is shown in the dark green uniform coat prescribed as part of the 1834 uniform changes and he has removed his sword and scabbard from the sliding frog to stand with it in front of him. The 1826 pattern's distinctive finials and plain scabbard are evident.



Figure 54. Major Levi Twiggs, c1845. (Marine Corps Museum collection) With the exception of the waist belt, the uniform and sword seen in the photograph are now part of the Marine Corps Museum collection and were on exhibit at the Smithsonian for a number of years. Field grade officers carried the sword from leather straps or from metal chains as seen here.



Figure 55. Lieutenant Daniel J. Sutherland, c1846. (Photograph courtesy of Dr. William J. Schultz) An officer's rank when in full dress was determined by the thickness of the epaulet's bullion fringe and the number of loops or bars on the cuff. For Major Twiggs, the bullion was 1/2 inch diameter while for lieutenants the bullion was 1/8 inch and the number of loops to the cuff was four for all field grade and two for all lieutenants. Lieutenant Sutherland carries his sword from a sliding frog as called for in the regulations. Until the late 1850s, the fashion was for fitted garments with tight sleeves.

56 and 57). He wears the same dress uniform as Sutherland's but has the dark blue trousers and scarlet stripe adopted in 1849. His image was likewise taken at the time of his promotion to first lieutenant in September 1852. The sword hangs from the sliding frog and has the same pre-1859 sword knot seen in Gamble's portrait. There are no discernable differences between the two swords in the photographs, and both display the characteristic plain brass scabbard of the first-pattern Mameluke. The 1826 pattern Mameluke was discontinued with the 1859 uniform changes, and the Army model 1850 foot officer's sword replaced it; however, not all officers abandoned the old sword (Figures 1 and 58). One prominent example is that of Lieutenant John Campbell Harris. Colonel Commandant John Harris gave his Mameluke (Figures 59 and 60), one of the original shipment from 1826, and regulation 1839 belt to his nephew, Lieutenant John Campbell Harris, and Lieutenant Harris wore it throughout the war. The belt is the pattern introduced for field-grade officers in 1839 and, except for the "USM" belt plate, would have been appropriate for all officers after 1859. Lieutenant Harris also continued to use the distinctive early sword knot³³ (Figure 61).

By the late 1850s, the Marine Corps was the only service whose officers were still carrying a sword designed in the 1820s as their regulation model. Despite the



Figure 56 and 57. First Lieutenant John C. Cash, c1852. (Photograph courtesy of Peter Buxton) It is likely that this image was taken just after his promotion to first lieutenant in 1852 as a number of uniform details are certainly post 1848. Except for the dark blue trousers, Lieutenant Cash wears the same uniform as Daniel Sutherland. In 1849, the Marine Corps replaced the light blue trousers with dark blue, edged scarlet, stripes for dress and no stripes for undress. Cash has created a formal undress uniform by combining the dress coat with the plain dark blue undress trousers. The two cuff loops of a lieutenant can be clearly seen in this image as well as the bell-crown cap prescribed for all company grade officers. The detail image shows the position of the sword when carried from a frog. The sword knot is the same as seen on Colonel Commandant John Harris' sword.

distinctiveness of the Mameluke, it had not yet achieved the status of icon, and a board of officers meeting in early 1859 chose to replace it with the Army model 1850 foot officer's sword (Figure 62). They felt that the Army sword was more efficient, the hilt protected the hand better, and the leather scabbard would not dent or bend as frequently happened with the brass scabbard. Unlike the War Department—which mandated the foot officers' sword for company officers lieutenant through captain and the Staff and Field Officers' sword, Model 1850, for officers ranking as major and above—the Marine Corps prescribed the foot officers' sword for all officers regardless of rank. The brass-wire-wrapped grip is wood and covered with sharkskin and topped by a Phrygian helmet pommel. The pommel is decorated with a spray of oak leaves, and the knuckle-bow, which is pierced where it joins the pommel for a sword knot, widens near its base to form an oval counter-guard. The design of the oval counter-guard consists of two branches connected by a pierced dense spray of leafy foliage, rosettes, and decorative scrolls. The typical blade is 1 1/8 inches wide, slightly curved, and single-edged with a false edge that begins about 8 inches from the point. Unlike the 1826 Mameluke, which tended to plain unmarked blades, the blade of the 1859 Marine sword is etched with floral sprays, military trophies, and other features typical of Army swords, with "E PLURIBUS UNUM." on the obverse side and "U.S." on the reverse. There were no official markings indicating Marine use, and the Marine 1859/Army 1850 sword can be identified as having been carried by a Marine officer only if there are personal markings indicating name and service. All metal parts of the hilt and scabbard are gilt brass (Figures 63 and 64). The scabbard is black leather with a brass throat



Figure 58. First Lieutenant John Campbell Harris, c1864. (Photograph courtesy of George Menegaux) The regulation 1826 officers' sword was discontinued with the 1859 uniform changes and the Army model 1850 foot officers' sword replaced it. Not all officers, however, abandoned the old sword. One prominent example is Lieutenant John Campbell Harris. Colonel Commandant John Harris gave his Mameluke to his nephew, John Campbell Harris, and he wore it throughout the war. The belt, sword, and sword knot are in the Marine Corps museum collection.

having one suspension ring, a middle band also with a suspension ring, and a tip with drag. A number of officers favored the Mameluke-hilted sword, but attempts to have it reinstated failed until the 1875 uniform changes.³⁴

The early history of Marine Corps swords is less exotic than previously thought, but what emerges are a number of regulation patterns that were previously unknown. Research into Quartermaster Department records, contemporary portraits, period illustrations, and early photographs very clearly show that prior to 1826 there is nothing to support Marine officers carrying the Mameluke other than Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon, and he only for a



Figure 59 and 60. Detail of Colonel Commandant John Harris's regulation 1826 Mameluke. (Marine Corps Museum collection) Note the design to the rivet heads holding the grip in place have the same leaf configuration as seen on the unprovenanced sword in Jack Bethune's collection. The Harris Mameluke is one from the original 1826 shipment, consequently it is believed that the leaf rivet is indicative early-regulation 1826 swords while the six-pointed star comes later. It is also possible that the early swords coming from England use the leaf rivet while later American-made swords used the star. This blade is engraved with the maker's name and address: "Prosst/ Manufacturer to the King/ London."



Figure 61. Sword knot to Colonel Commandant John Harris's Mameluke. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The prescribed sword knot was a gold and scarlet thread mix and had thick bullion fringe (see illustration from the 1852 regulation), however, this sword knot can be seen in the photographs of Major Twiggs and Lieutenant Cash and in a portrait (not shown) of John Gamble painted about 1828 while there is no evidence of the regulation knot actually being used.

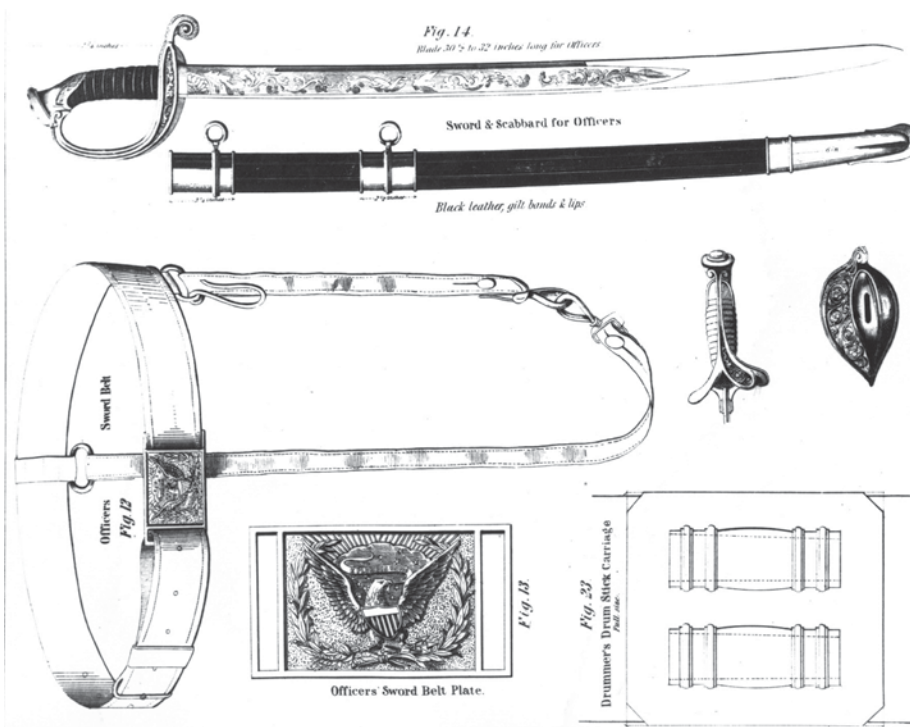


Figure 62. Illustration that accompanied the 1859 Marine Corps uniform regulations. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The sword and scabbard depicted in the Marine uniform regulations of 1859 was copied without change directly from the Army's own illustrated regulations. This is also true for the belt, belt plate, and drummers' stick carriage and it underscores the strong influence the Army had on Marine Corps clothing and equipment development.

short time. After the 1826 Mameluke was adopted and distributed, the distinctive Marine pattern consistently shows up in portraits and photographs with no deviation in design, as is also true with all extant Mameluke sabers regardless of whether the sword was part of the original shipment from England or of later American manufacture. The prominence of the 1826 sword in portraits and photographs, even into the Civil War, shows that officers were proud of their distinctive sword, so it stands to reason that, if individual officers carried the Mameluke before 1826, there would be some evidence. There is no evidence and, while a number of officers did have portraits done with their swords, every sword seen can be identified as a contemporary French or British pattern. While it would be nice to say that O'Bannon's sword influenced the adoption of a Mameluke-hilted sword in 1825/26, there is no proof. The association between O'Bannon and the later adoption of the Mameluke was a connection made in the twentieth century with no more substantiation than wishful thinking.

The swords carried by noncommissioned officers and musicians are an altogether different story. Where all Mameluke sabers in the United States gained an association with Marine use, no pre-1875 swords other than Army models would be attributed to Marine enlisted men. In actuality, from the late 1820s the Marine noncommissioned officers and musicians had their own distinct pattern swords acquired from Widmann and later Horstmann. Then, in 1859, when the pattern changed, it was to a modified Army model 1850 foot officers' sword for noncommissioned officers and a modified version of the Army model 1840 noncommissioned officers' sword for musicians. Undoing long-established myths on Marine swords was the unexpected result of research into Quartermaster Department records. Where the author had assumed a connection between O'Bannon and the Marine Mameluke, there was none, and where the author had assumed that Army and Marine NCOs used the same model swords, this was also wrong. Instead, this survey of early Marine Corps swords shows an institution that, though small and with a strong tendency to use Army uniform and equipment designs, was equally determined to set itself apart.

While this survey clarifies Marine Corps sword development from 1798 to 1875, it is not a definitive study. There remain gaps in the research, particularly for the 1798 to 1821 period and for the 1861 to 1875 period, which were considered beyond the parameters of the original research project. Reviewing both Quartermaster Department records, 4th Auditor records, and commandant's correspondence might provide manufacturers' names for the pre-1821 period and, for the post-1860 era, would indicate any changes in enlisted sword specifications. The latter is of some importance as the Marine Corps Museum has at least one "musicians" sword with two turned down counter-guards and an etched "USMC"

marked blade. This example fits what is currently believed to be a post-1875 pattern except that the blade carries a Horstmann mark that the firm discontinued after 1868. There has also been no detailed analysis of the 1826 pattern Mamelukes nor has there been any study of the two and possibly three Mameluke sabers given by the Viceroy of Egypt in 1805. Unfortunately, the one unknown among the three sabers is the one in the Kentucky Historical Society that is attributed to Lieutenant O'Bannon but all donor information is believed to have been lost long ago. In short, there is much left to do in furthering our understanding of early Marine swords; however, the value such information would have on our understanding of these iconic pieces would make such an effort worthwhile.

Figure 63. Second Lieutenant A. W. Ward, c1863. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The trend in men's fashion in the 1850s was to garments that were less confining and more comfortable. Lieutenant Ward's uniform shows the new fit precisely—the body of the coat is still fitted but the amount of padding was reduced while the sleeves became wider. The sword appears in profile and is exactly as illustrated in the regulations.



Figure 64. First Lieutenant Henry Clay Cochrane, c1864. (Marine Corps Museum collection) The adoption of the Army foot officers' sword coincided with the adoption of the Army infantry's bugle-horn device along with the other material already discussed. There were no "Marine" distinctions to the prescribed sword and that combined with the other uniform items made for a decided Army-look when in the undress uniform shown here. From an examination of three surviving swords, the only way to distinguish a Marine officers' sword from an Army foot officers' sword is when the Marine sword is engraved with the officer's name and "USMC." All were marked on the upper bands of the scabbard or on the hilt.

NOTES

1. Commandant Henderson to Secretary of the Navy, 12 October 1831, National Archives, Record Group 127, Letters Sent.

2. Commandant Burrows to Stephen Higginson, 29 December 1798, as cited in Major Edwin N. McClellan, *Uniforms of the American Marines: 1775–1829* (Washington, D.C., Marine Corps History and Museums Division, 1982), p. 10.

3. Inventory of Equipment and Uniforms provided the Marine Corps, 9 August 1798.

4. William Read for George Harrison, Philadelphia, to Gale, 11 August 1819, cited in McClellan, p. 62.

5. Lieutenant Colonel Miller, Philadelphia, to Captain Weed, 22 March 1829, National Archives, Record Group 127, Letters Received.

6. Miller to Weed, 11 January 1832, NA, RG 127, Letters Received.

7. Miller to Weed, 12 April 1832, NA, RG 127, Letters Received.

8. Frederick Widmann, Philadelphia, to Weed, 3 September 1832, NA, RG 127, Letters Received.

9. E. Andrew Mowbray, *The American Eagle-Pommel Sword: The Early Years—1794–1830* (Lincoln, Rhode Island: Man at Arms Publications, 1988), pp. 194–196.

10. Harold L. Peterson's *The American Sword: 1775–1945* (Philadelphia: Ray Riling Arms Books Company, 1973), pp. 114–116.

11. MGySgt Wendell C. Parks, "Sgt E. C. Young, Artist of the Old Corps," *Fortitudine* VII, No. 2 (Fall 1977): 10–11.

12. E. Andrew Mowbray, *The American Eagle-Pommel Sword: The Early Years—1794–1830* (Lincoln, Rhode Island: Man at Arms Publications, 1988), pp. 194–196; Harold L. Peterson, *The American Sword*, pp. 114–116; Phone conversation between the author and Norm Flayderman.

13. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Regulations for the Uniform and Dress of the Marine Corps of the United States, October, 1859* (Philadelphia: Charles Desilver, 1859), p. 6.

14. Sutherland to Maddox, 23 April 1859; Marks to Maddox, 11 October 1859; Sutherland to Maddox, 15 October 1859; Sutherland to Maddox, 27 December 1859; Sutherland to Marks, 17 October 1859; Sutherland to Ames, 22 November 1859, NA, RG 127, Letters Sent; Ames contract, 1 December 1859, Register of Navy Contracts and Agreements, 1858–1864, p. 21, NA, RG 217; John D. McAulay, *Civil War Small Arms of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps* (Lincoln, Rhode Island: Andrew Mowbray Publishers, 1999), pp. 54–55, 79.

15. Sutherland to Maddox, 23 April 1859; Marks to Maddox, 11 October 1859; Sutherland to Maddox, 15 October 1859; Sutherland to Maddox, 27 December 1859; Sutherland to Marks, 17 October 1859; Sutherland to Ames,

22 November 1859, NA, RG 127, Letters Sent.

16. Photograph and sword courtesy of Tom Buckner.

17. Uniform Regulations, April 19, 1810, cited in Major Edwin North McClellan, p. 47.

18. Marine Corps Order, May 1821, cited in McClellan, p. 72.

19. Harold L. Peterson, *The American Sword*, p. 127.

20. Brian Robson, *Swords of the British Army: The Regulation Patterns, 1788–1914* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1975), pp. 141–145.

21. Marine Corps Museum collection; Peterson, *The American Sword*, pp. 165–166.

22. Charles Hamilton Smith, "Costumes of British and Foreign Armies," (c. 1814).

23. Harold L. Peterson, *The American Sword*, pp. 166–168; phone conversation, author with William Bright, Kentucky Historical Society, 19 May 2006; Collection Naval Academy Museum; Collection Connecticut Historical Society Museum.

24. Marine Corps Orders, 22 March 1821, cited in McClellan, p. 70.

25. War Department, *General Regulations for the Army* (Philadelphia: M. Carey and Sons, 1821), p. 160.

26. Unattributed, "The Dance—Jack Tar Ashore." c. 1824, Marine Corps Museum Collection.

27. McClellan, p. 85.

28. Marine Corps Order, 26 April 1825: Marine Corps Order 30 January 1826: Letter Henderson to Lieutenant Colonel Richard Smith, 24 January 1826; Letter Henderson to Smith, 13 February 1826, cited in McClellan, pp. 85, 86, 88, and 89.

29. Commandant Archibald Henderson's sword, collection Marine Corps Museum; Commandant John Harris's sword, collection Marine Corps Museum; and Captain William L. Shuttleworth's sword, collection Marine Corps Museum; Peterson, *The American Sword*, pp. 168–172.

30. Drawing "Uniform worn _ 1819 _ Officer of U.S. Marines," Marine Corps Museum; *A General Register of the Navy and Marine Corps of the United States*, 1848; Lieutenant Christopher C. Floyd drawings, Marine Corps Museum.

31. Portrait of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel John Gamble, by Anthony Lewis DeRose, c. 1828; portrait of First Lieutenant John G. Reynolds, artist unknown, c. 1833; Portrait of Second Lieutenant Addison Garland, artist unknown, c. 1835.

32. Collection Marine Corps Museum.

33. First Lieutenant Daniel J. Sutherland, c. 1847, photograph courtesy of Dr. William J. Schultz; First Lieutenant John C. Cash, c. 1852, photograph courtesy of Peter Buxton; First Lieutenant John Campbell Harris, photograph, c. 1864, photograph courtesy of George Menegaux.

34. Harold L. Peterson, pp. 81–82, p. 170.