



THE
Confederate States
ARMORY & MUSEUM

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Confederate
Baby LeMat Revolver
Serial # 31

There has been no in-depth study of the Baby LeMat pistol, such as been accomplished on the regular LeMat pistols. We are aware that there are basically two (2) models of the LeMat, the First Model, having its loading lever mechanism on the right side of the barrel, having a spur trigger guard and a swiveling lanyard ring in the butt. The Second Model has its loading lever assembly on the left side of the barrel, a rounded trigger guard and lanyard hole in the buttcap. There has been a further sub-model designation which carries some mixed features of the First Model and Second Model: this is referred to as the Transition Model, and was first so recognized and labeled by M. Clifford Young, of Boston, a premier Confederate small arms collector.

Much has been written about those models mentioned above, but what of the Baby LeMat?

Dr. John M. Murphy's **Confederate Carbines & Musketoons**, 2nd edition, pub. 2001, at page 161, Murphy writes, "Of particular interest is the rarest (about ten specimens known) and most coveted of the LeMat percussion revolvers, the diminutive .32 and .41 caliber 'Baby' model. It is unique in one other, very unusual, respect, as well. Unlike all of its big brothers which have smoothbore lower barrels that fire grapeshot, the Baby models' lower barrels, like those of the carbines, are rifled. Obviously, being rifled, they were not designed for shooting "birdshot", as one writer has suggested." (source, Young)

In the book, **LeMat, The Man, The Gun**, by Valmore J. Forgett, pub. 1996, there is very little treatment given the Baby LeMat, but on page 71 (ibid), Forgett states that the revolver

barrel is 4½ inches long and reduces the .42 caliber revolver to .32 caliber, and the .63 caliber grapeshot barrel to .41 caliber smoothbore. (Actually, while the caliber measurements are accurate, the .41 caliber barrel is actually rifled).

Forgett goes on to state that 2000 of these Baby LeMats were ordered by the Confederate Navy. He then makes reference that they were ordered from Girard & Cie., successors of LeMat. He states that of approximately 100 Baby LeMats delivered early in 1865, "every one of the only about ten known specimens have the last Paris marking on the barrel, **SYSTme LeMat Bte s.g.d.g.Paris**, in old English-style script, and all were percussion models, of course. There are now 12 known specimens.

Forgett states that the Baby LeMat, a small sized version of the Second Model LeMat, first appears on Paris Patent #17,875, dated April 27, 1865. Girard & Cie 'jumped the gun', and began production on the Navy contract before the new patent was granted, and delivered 100 small LeMats early in 1865, which were accepted. Confederate Lieutenant William Murdaugh, was the inspector for these arms, and there are questions as to how many of the 100 pistols delivered were accepted....and/or whether the balance were rejected or were repaired for some later issue or sale. At any rate, we assume that the letter "M" is Murdaugh's inspection stamp. Forgett goes on to say that Baby LeMats are considered Confederate arms because they were made pursuant to contract with the Confederate Government, even though they "were delivered in England too late to get to the Confederacy and see service in the war..."

William B. Edwards' **Civil War Guns**, shows only a small picture (page 367) of the Baby LeMat, but states that it was not a contract-made piece, and where it fits into the LeMat story is "unknown".

William A. Gary's **Confederate Revolvers**, pub. 1987), in his chapter on the LeMat Revolvers, makes no mention of the Baby LeMat revolvers: an additional sign of its rarity.

Even though published some 40 years ago, **Confederate**

Handguns, by Albaugh, Benet and Simmons, is still regarded as the 'Bible' on its subject matter. At page 112, the authors advance the theory that a new contract for an additional 2000 LeMat revolvers for the Confederate Navy, was for Baby LeMats. Further correspondence confirmed that this second Navy contract was for the smaller caliber LeMats "rather than the regular size". **Confederate Handguns** pictures Baby LeMat #75, disassembled, on page 111, and Baby LeMat #35, fully assembled, on page 113. It should be noted that both of these revolvers are shown with some repetition in various books and publications. At the time of publication of **Confederate Handguns**, serial numbers #18(engraved model), #35, #72(no address or barrel markings), #75(with Murdaugh's "M" stamping on the cylinder and Birmingham proof marks), two others known to exist without further informatuion available.

Firepower From Abroad, The Confederate Enfield and The LeMat Revolver, by Wiley Sword, pub. 1986, covers contracts for LeMat pistols and the interactions between Confederate agent Caleb Huse and C. Girard & Co. manufacturer, but makes no mention of Baby LeMat revolvers. Only regular-size LeMats are discussed.

The undersigned has attempted to present a brief overview of what background information exists concerning the Baby LeMat revolver. Much further research needs to be accomplished so that we may place the baby in his proper place in the family LeMat.

July 11, 2003
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania


Frederick R. Edmunds

NOTE: Though this report is written on our museum letterhead, we have been closed since mid-July of 1999. We continue to be active collectors and researchers of things Confederate.

This report may be supplemented from time to time as further information becomes available.

Baby LeMat #31 Serial Markings

LeMat #31 was completely disassembled and studied for its markings and its condition. It appears that this piece was never loaded, let alone fired, and if it was, it had to be a single test firing because there is no evidence that a ball or percussion cartridge was ever placed in any of the cylinder bores or fired through the main barrel. Neither is there any evidence that the rifled single barrel was ever loaded and/or fired. There is gun-blue finish evident on all these interior surfaces, which appears uncompromised.

The serial number "31", is stamped in individually-stamped characters, on sixteen (16) different parts of the gun, as follows:

1. inside surface of trigger guard tang
2. left side of hammer near pivot screw
3. right upper side of trigger
4. right side of frame below cylinder
5. right side of larger barrel near frame
6. right upper side flat of barrel assembly near breech
7. loading lever, on inside surface
8. plunger, on inside surface
9. on ramrod
10. on shaft of tubular butt-knob
11. on external face of frame locking pin
12. on loading lever screw shaft
13. on grip screw shaft
14. on external surface of cylinder
15. on inside surface of cylinder-turning ratchet arm
16. on inside surface of linkage arm, connected to ratchet arm

Additional Markings of Inspectors

1. A star stamped over "LM" on the right side flat of the breech end of the barrel, just ahead of the serial number

2. inside grip forestrap of frame, near butt, a cryptic "C", is stamped
3. inside grip forestrap of frame, 1½ inches above the "C" stamping, is a star stamping.
4. the same star stamping is found on the right inside of the grip, about opposite the star stamp above noted
5. inside surface at top left side of backstrap, is stamped the number, "2"
6. inside faceplate on bottom of frame is stamped with a cryptic "D"
7. inside surface at barrel lug location, is the cryptic stamping, "B"
8. the same "B" stamping is also found on the face of cylinder

The star stampings referred to above, all seem to be identical.

While certain LeMat pistols seem to have parts interchangeability to some degree, they were still products of much hand fitting and close tolerances in machining and fitting which were not generally obtainable by Confederate arms makers.

Because of close machining tolerances and additional hand-fitting, it was necessary to serialize the various parts during the manufacturing processs, so that after finishing the parts, they could be reassembled and a perfect fit achieved.

Sometime during this process, various inspections were made and inspector's marks applied.

In conclusion, it appears that Baby LeMat #31 is 100% original in all respects, retaining much of its original blue finish: it is a superb specimen of an extremely rare Confederate handgun.

July 10, 2003

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania


Frederick R. Edmunds