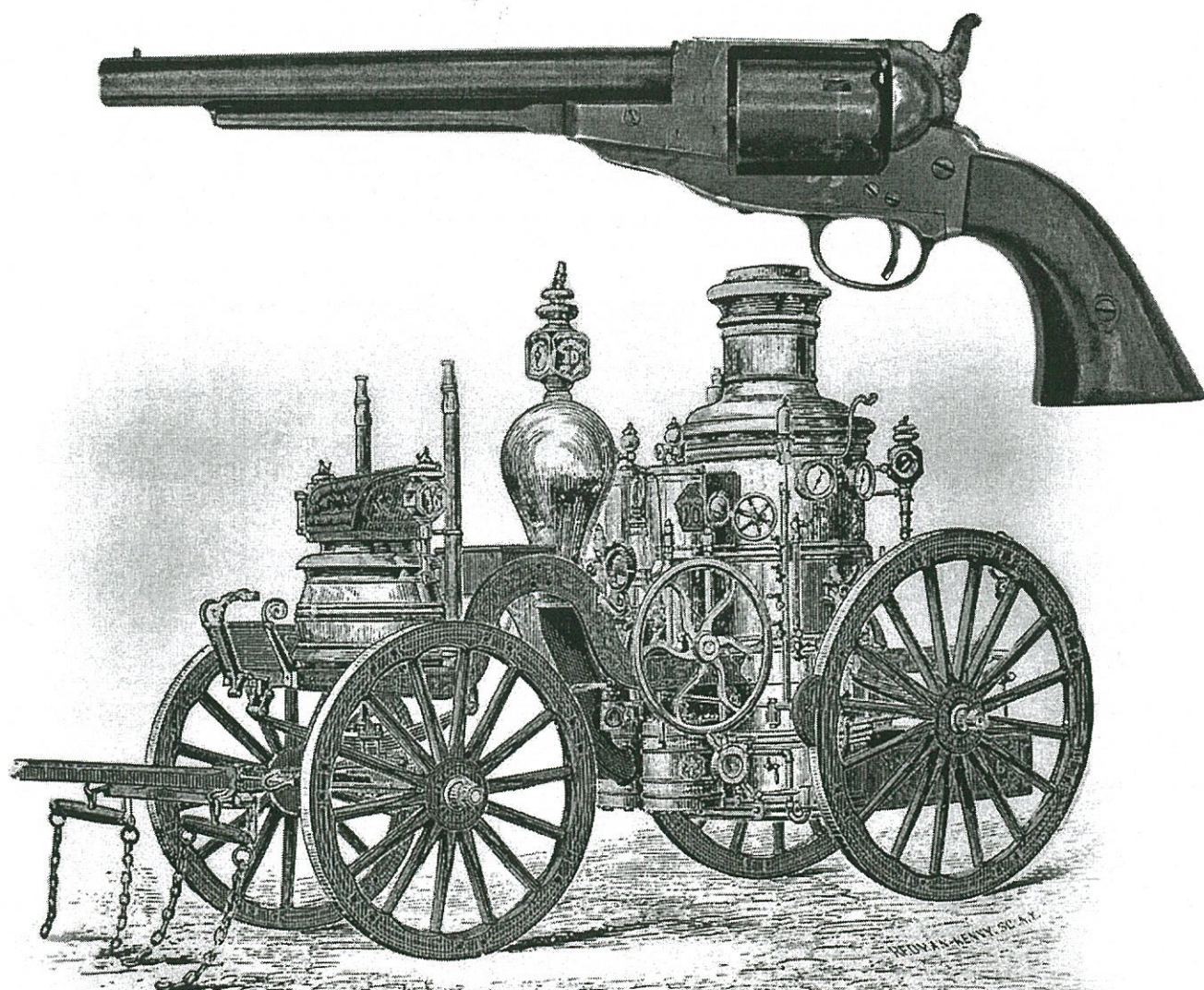


# ARMS HERITAGE

M A G A Z I N E  
DECEMBER 2013

## The Shawk & McLanahan Revolver



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One of the great rarities in gun collecting is the Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver. So few exist and so little has been written about them that many collectors of American percussion pistols have never seen one or perhaps have not known what they were looking at if they did. This article will attempt to update what has been previously written and hopefully add to the interest of this extremely rare American percussion revolver.

There are several references from long ago as to the history of these revolvers. Initially, the Shawk & McLanahan Navy revolver wasn't even listed in the early firearms references. Then, when it was discovered, it was thought to be a Confederate revolver because of its brass frame and the overall Confederate "look" about it. In an early Jackson Arms Catalog (#9 from about 1953, Item 218) Shawk & McLanahan Revolver serial number 37 was packaged with a Dimick Navy as: "A two-piece group generally accepted as Confederate" and was priced at \$1,600 for the pair. To put this into perspective, in this same catalog there were three Griswold and Gunnison revolvers (erroneously named then as the Griswold and Grier) priced from \$185 to \$325. And there were two Leech & Rigdon Navy revolvers that were priced at \$275 and \$335. The first contradiction to the Confederate connection of the Shawk & McLanahan was in 1962 when William Edwards published "*Civil War Guns*" and discussed a possible connection

to one of the makers of the Confederate Leech & Rigdon revolvers, but that the Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolvers were not considered as being true Confederate revolvers.

Then there were some writings that suggested the men behind the Shawk & McLanahan Company were Confederate sympathizers. Further research revealed that the organizers certainly were not Confederate sympathizers, as will be explored following.

#### **Abel Shawk, J. K. McLanahan and William Tegethoff**

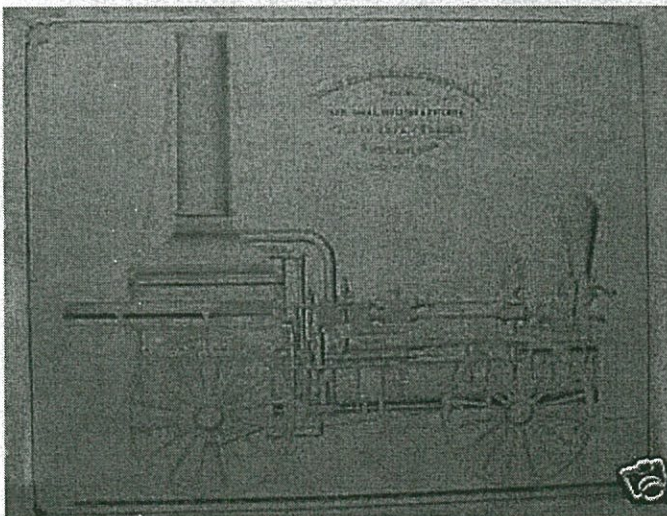
The period immediately preceding the Civil war was one where many arms manufacturers began operations through out the United States because of the expiration of Samuel Colt's patent and also because many anticipated the Civil War and thus the impending need for production revolvers. The St. Louis, Missouri area was particularly well established as one where many gun makers and gunsmiths had had much success in business because of the city's location along the important Mississippi River which made it a prime location for all sorts of trade and shipping to the North and South. During the Gold Rush, St. Louis was the last city where one could get equipment for a westerly trek and had since become well established for such business. Gun makers and retailers such as the Hawken, Gemmer and Dimick as well as many other lesser known firms apparently found that their access to people moving through the city who surely needed



new arms as well as the repair of older arms, helped make their businesses successful. This attractive location would seem to have appealed to the organizers of the Shawk & McLanahan Company.

Although there was little innovative in the Shawk & McLanahan revolver, its more easily manufactured cast brass frame and relatively simple single action operation (virtually identical to that of Colt as well as other revolvers) was certainly thought by its makers that it would be a good revolver that would be a successful seller.

The production start date of 1858 is based on when Abel Shawk (1) originally petitioned Carondelet (2), Missouri authorities to set up a factory for the manufacture of locks and fire engines with the firm name of Shawk & McLanahan (3). Previously, in 1853, Shawk had invented and made horse drawn steam powered fire engines while he lived in Cincinnati, Ohio. The first one took 9 months to build and cost that city \$10,000, a huge sum for the time. A very funny story related by his grandson is that when Shawk "made his appearance at a large fire in the City of Cincinnati, the volunteer fire department were (sic) very much annoyed (the engine threw a stream of water under 200 pounds of pressure for a distance of 186 feet) and attempted to destroy the engine, with the result that grandfather turned this powerful stream of water on them with remarkably disastrous effects." (4) When he had later sold one of his fire engines to the City of St. Louis, Missouri and came to St. Louis to demonstrate it, he then became a resident of that city. Charles H. Rigdon was the engineer of the fire engine (as well as a maker of scales and the owner of a machine shop in St. Louis according to city directories), thus his early connection to Abel Shawk.



*Engineered drawing from 1853 of a steam powered fire engine of Abel Shawk's invention*

It would seem likely that some of the machinery used for the production of the Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver was supplied originally by Rigdon. It should also be noted that Charles H. Rigdon was previously a citizen of Cincinnati and is reported to have left that city before Shawk, so it is entirely possible that they were acquainted before things started coming together in Carondelet. It was then reported that Mr. Shawk subsequently invented a rifling machine and commenced building these revolvers without benefit of any sort of patent at his factory on Market Street. His partners in the revolver enterprise were J. K. McLanahan and William Tegethoff. (5) Apparently, J. K. McLanahan's role in the formation of the revolver company was probably as financier as his name being associated with the firm disappears quickly. Interestingly, in July of 1861 there was a court order wherein the connection and joint activities of McLanahan and Shawk were legally severed with McLanahan gaining some of Shawk's money and patents, leaving Shawk in bad financial condition (6). Another reference stated that in 1863 Shawk attempted to gain a contract for the manufacture of muskets for the Union Army but was unsuccessful. Ironically, the plant that he had set up in anticipation of this operation ended up being used for the repair of muskets for the Army. (7).

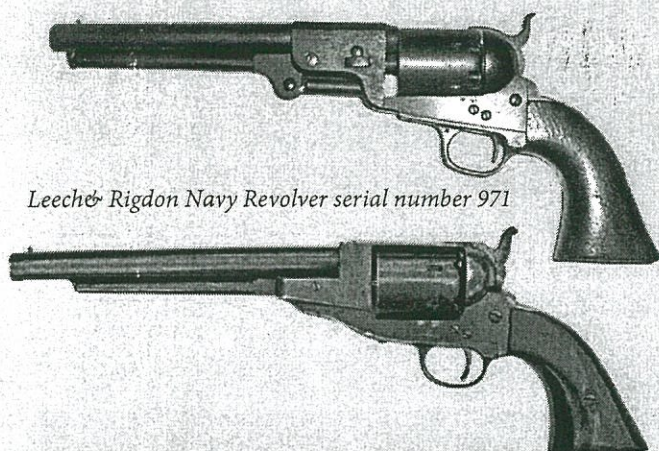
According to the letter by the grandson of Abel Shawk, Shawk sold out his interest in the revolver making enterprise not long after it was started apparently to concentrate on the manufacture of steam fire engines of his invention. (8) As the conflict between the States was drawing near, Shawk, reportedly a Pennsylvania Quaker with peaceful beliefs, broke with southern sympathizer Rigdon and returned to Cincinnati, Ohio (where he died in 1873). Rigdon then bought what machinery would be useful to him then took the machinery (as well as his mechanical knowledge) to Memphis, Tennessee in late 1859 or early 1860 to begin manufacture of Leech and Rigdon revolvers for the Confederacy.

It has also been written that the machinery for the Leech & Rigdon revolvers was sold to Thomas Leech & Charles H. Rigdon for use in their factory following the Shawk & McLanahan company ceasing its operation. The writer doesn't dispute the fact that because of the relationship of Charles H. Rigdon (who did have his own sophisticated machine shop in St. Louis) and Abel Shawk, that some of this equipment could be used, however the solid cast one piece brass frame of the Shawk & McLanahan Navy revolver



being so different than the three piece brass strapped and iron frame of the Leech & Rigdon as well as vast differences of the part octagonal/part round barrel of the Leech & Rigdon, would strongly suggest that some of the basic machinery could have been used, but that Leech & Rigdon would have had to fabricate much of what they needed for their revolver. It is entirely probable that the only Shawk & McLanahan machinery transferred to the Leech and Rigdon factory in Memphis, Tennessee was the rifling machinery that was invented by Shawk along with generic presses, lathes and milling machines that would have to be retooled for the new Leech and Rigdon revolver.

Note the differences between the Shawk & McLanahan revolver at top and the Leech & Rigdon below; the differences between the two are extreme and help support the fact that with the exception of basic parts making, any advanced tooling for one would not suit the other.



*Leech & Rigdon Navy Revolver serial number 971*

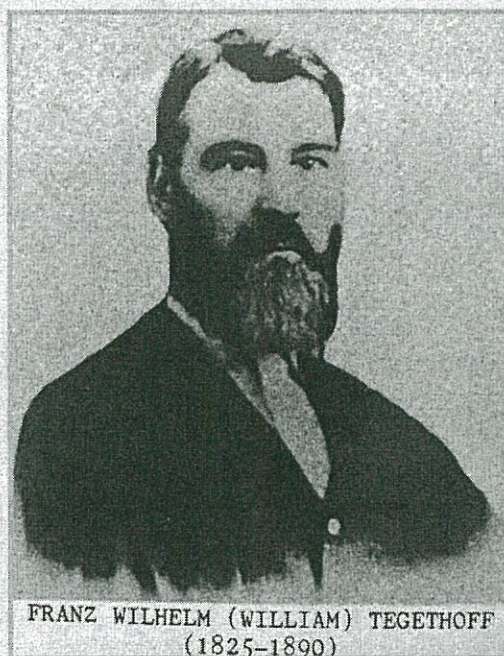
*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver serial number 2*

So it now appears that the Shawk & McLanahan revolver could have only been manufactured between 1858 and either late 1859 or early 1860 as much of the machinery that was used in its manufacture had left for Memphis with Rigdon or was sold off.

It is not known for sure whether William Tegethoff was still connected to the factory at this time, but he probably was not as we will see that he had caught "gold fever", as discussed shortly, and was in California. So it would be fairly conclusive that neither Shawk, McLanahan nor Tegethoff would be considered as Confederate sympathizers, but merely as men who were contemplating and working towards a successful firearms venture.

There are no known images of Abel Shawk or J. K. McLanahan.

## William Tegethoff



FRANZ WILHELM (WILLIAM) TEGETHOFF  
(1825-1890)

Franz Wilhelm Tegethoff was born in Germany on January 20, 1825 and immigrated to the United States on December 26, 1850 aboard the German vessel "Tarquin", according to a copy of the passenger list of that ship that the writer has obtained. Apparently upon his arrival in New Orleans, he almost immediately anglicized his name to William and went looking for work. The first reference found as to what he did for a living shows up in the St. Louis Directory of 1857, when he was 32 years of age. He is listed with an address of 31 Washington Street, which interestingly is in the same block as the Hawken shop which was listed as being at 21, 29, 33 and 37 Washington Street known as "The Old Stand" of St. Louis. So it is extremely likely that he was associated with the Hawken shop, probably as a gunsmith. Shortly after this date, the Shawk & McLanahan firm is set up with limited production for a short time. It now seems that Tegethoff was at least instrumental in the creation of the firm presumably as either the lead gunsmith or more probably the inventor of the revolver. Early Shawk & McLanahan revolvers marked only "Wm. Tegethoff" could have been used as the models for showing to potential investors, for initial tooling and production or perhaps Tegethoff originally envisioned the company producing these new revolvers in his own name but was persuaded otherwise for operational and financial reasons, much as it is done today. It has to be remembered that at that time, neither Abel Shawk nor J. K. McLanahan had had any experience in firearms manufacture. It is interesting



to see that revolver serial number 2 marked only "Wm. Tegethoff" has 4 lands and grooves as rifling. As Abel Shawk has been credited with inventing the rifling machine used for the majority of marked Shawk & McLanahan revolvers that have 7 lands and grooves, this may help substantiate that these earliest Tegethoff marked revolvers were prototypes complete with rifling done by William Tegethoff.

According to a Tegethoff family history (9), William and his wife Anna struck out for the gold fields of Placerville, California from about 1858 or 1859 until about 1863-64 when they once again appeared in the St. Louis City Directory. Family legend has it that while in Placerville that William Tegethoff "struck it rich" but failed to file his claim properly. But apparently he was able to at least retain some gold nuggets as he purchased some land in St. Louis upon his return. His occupation then was listed as a lumber worker at a sawmill. Some ten years later, he and his family set up a grocery store on the land that he had purchased, which became quite successful. William Tegethoff died on December 15, 1890 at age 65.

#### Technical Information on Existing Revolvers

General specifications of the Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver are:

.36 caliber percussion

Approximately 7" to 8" round barrel with either 4 or 7 lands and grooves and pin or blade front sight  
6 shot cylinder, some with one safety pin to engage a hole in the hammer face

Some have a roller on the hammer that is sometimes casehardened

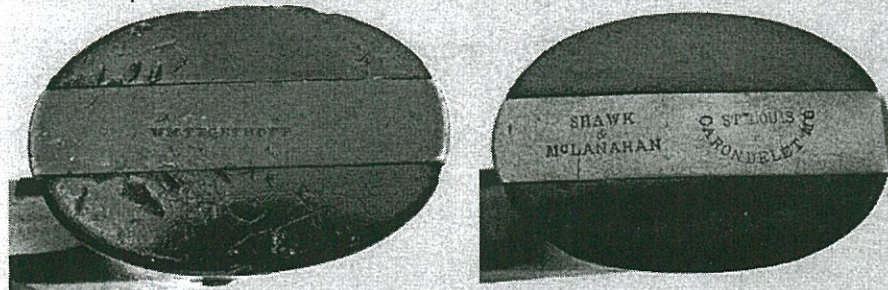
Cast one piece brass frame, most with a sighting groove on top strap

Varnished walnut grips

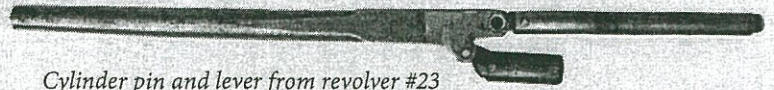
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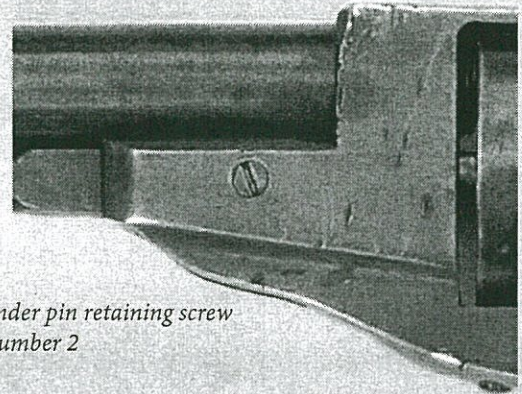


Marking of Serial Number 2 on left, of Serial Number 23 on right

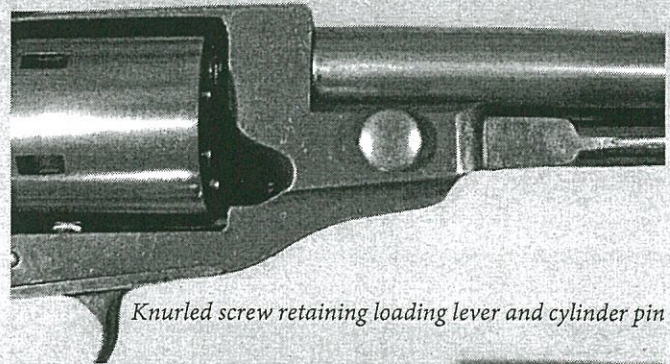


Cylinder pin and lever from revolver #23

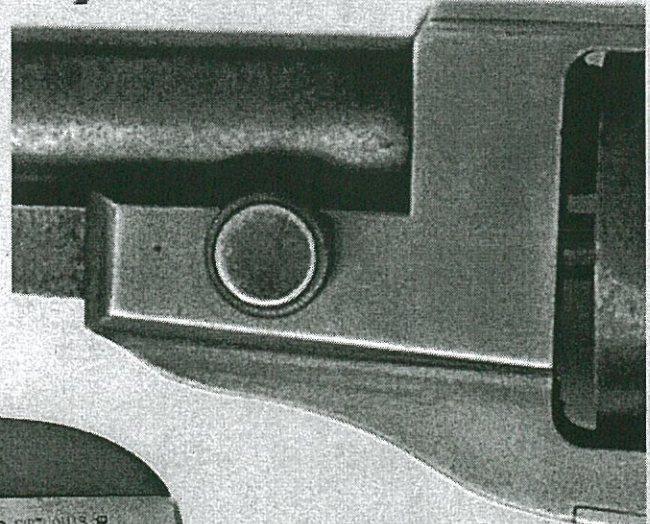
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Standard cylinder pin retaining screw from Serial Number 2



Knurled screw retaining loading lever and cylinder pin



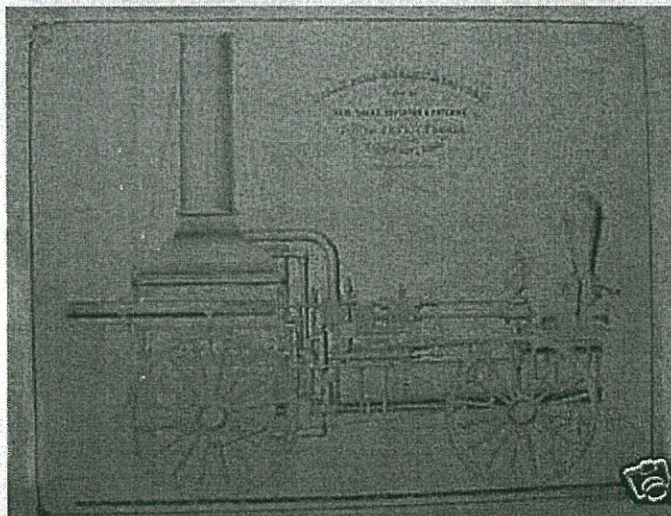
Serial number 16 on top, serial number 23 on bottom



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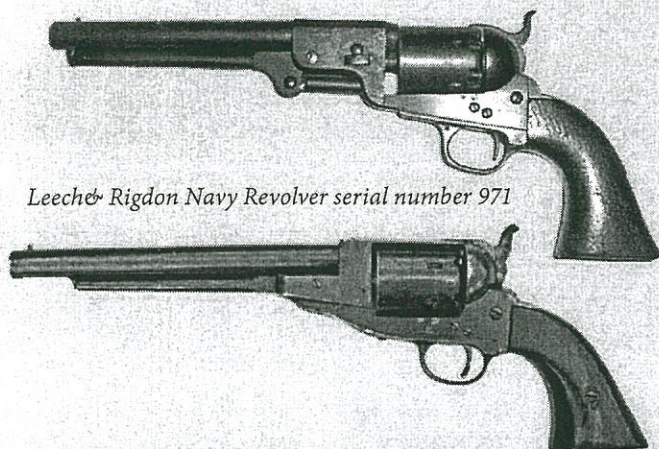
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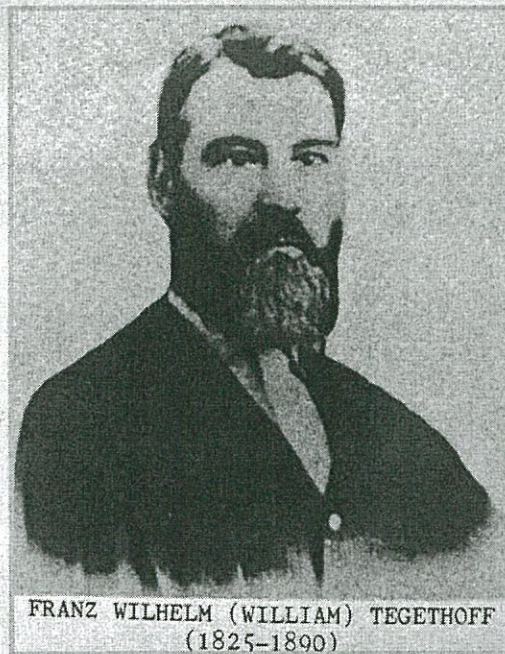
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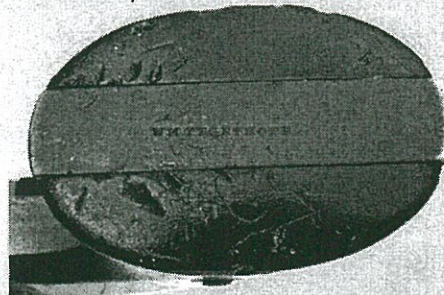
Cast one piece brass frame, most with a sighting groove on top strap

Varnished walnut grips

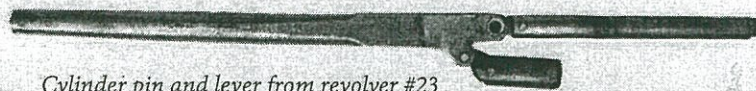
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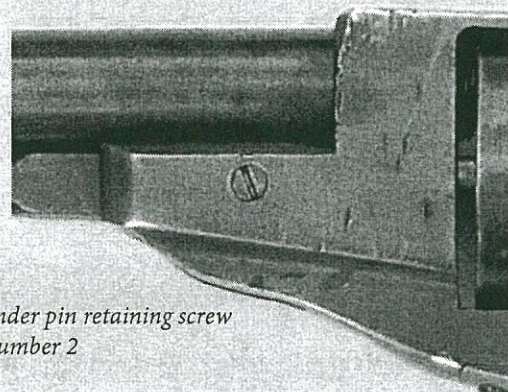


Marking of Serial Number 2 on left, of Serial Number 23 on right

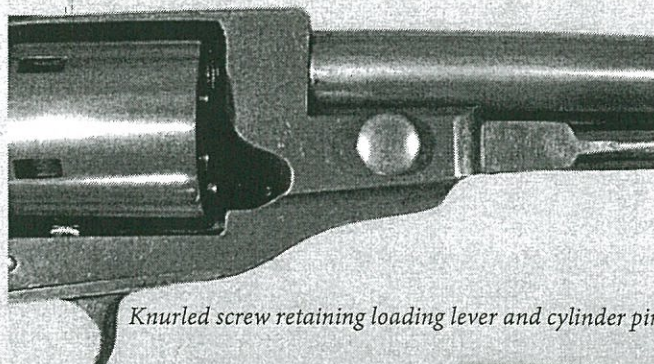


Cylinder pin and lever from revolver #23

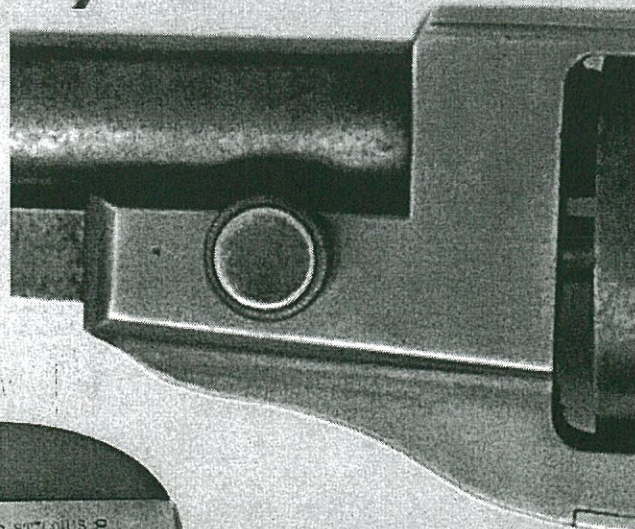
The cylinder pin is concealed within the frame and is connected to the loading lever with a swivel. Some are configured so that the pin can easily be separated from the lever when it is withdrawn. In most examples, the screw retaining the loading lever has to be removed from the left side of the frame to remove the lever and the cylinder pin.



Standard cylinder pin retaining screw from Serial Number 2



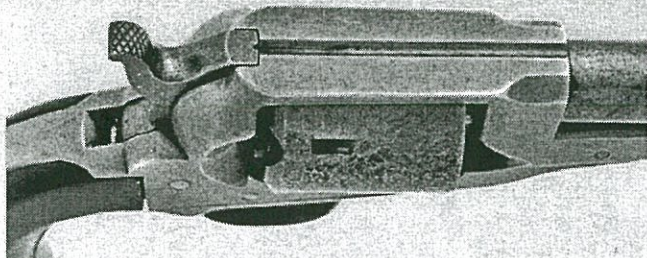
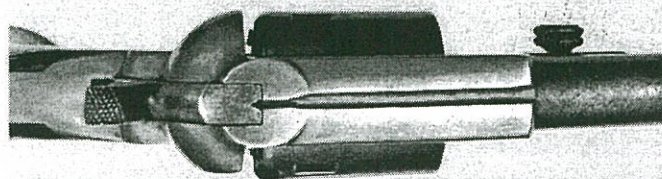
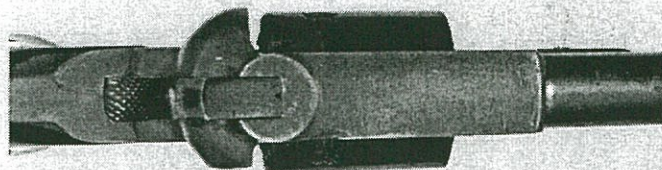
Knurled screw retaining loading lever and cylinder pin



Serial number 16 on top, serial number 23 on bottom



Revolvers serial numbered 16 and 23 each have a large knurled screw securing the loading lever and cylinder pin, which would seem logical for an easier disassembly.



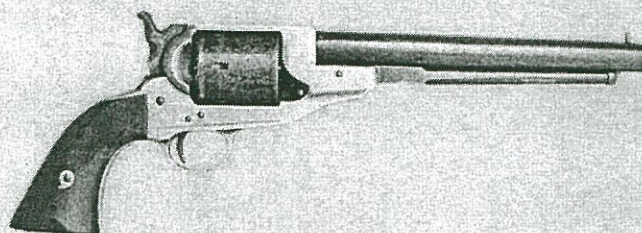
Topstraps of revolvers numbered 2, 23 at top and 37 at bottom

Some revolvers will have a plain top strap as seen on serial number 2 (at top of the first picture) and others have a sighting groove as seen on serial number 23, shown at bottom of the first picture. Serial number 37 has a variant frame without either the typical round reinforcement at the rear sight area with a sighting groove and beveling as shown in the second picture.

Early references stated that about 100 Shawk & McLanahan revolvers were made, but due to the spread of existing serial numbers and the lack of any serial numbers greater than serial number 39, this estimate would appear to be higher than those that may have actually been produced. The writer suggests that a total of no more than 45 to 50 revolvers were originally manufactured during the short time that the company was in existence.

As of the date of this writing, only 8 existing Shawk & McLanahan Navy revolvers are known to the writer. (10) No two are identical as one would normally expect to see from any sort of production gun maker. Following is an image and description of each of those known to the writer as of the date of this publication.

There is no consistency on serial numbering. The serial numbers of these eight revolvers and noted characteristics are as follows:



Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Marked "WM. TEGETHOFF"  
Serial Number 1

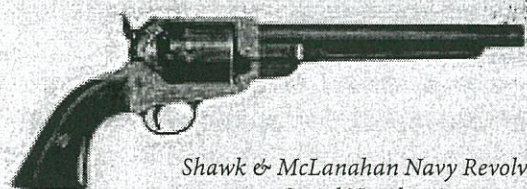
The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here, serial number 1, formerly in the collection of Ted Meredith, is stamped "WM. TEGETHOFF" on the cylinder and barrel with a single die. It is significant because it is the first Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver and it is a Confederate presentation gun with a solid silver holster. The holster is engraved with the seal of South Carolina and the inscription: "From Fellow Officers of the South Carolina Reserve Force Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1865 to a Fine Man & Officer Brigadier General James Chestnut CSA". Obviously presented well after the firm ceased operations, and with its uniquely plated frame, apparently the presenters thought it a fine enough gun to present to General Chestnut. This revolver has an 8" barrel with a pin front sight. It has a single safety pin on rear of cylinder. It is blued with a silver plated frame. This set is also pictured in *Civil War Relics from South Carolina* by Celeste C. Topper and David L. Topper, published by Celeste C. and David L. Topper, 1988 p. 81). Present whereabouts of this revolver are unknown.



Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Marked "WM. TEGETHOFF"  
Serial Number 2



The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here, serial number 2, is also neatly stamped "WM. TEGETHOFF" on the butt, cylinder and barrel with a single die. It has a 7-7/8" barrel with a pin front sight. The barrel is rifled with four lands and grooves. It has a single safety pin on rear of cylinder. It was originally finished bright with a plain brass frame. The casehardened hammer has a roller where it contacts the mainspring. It was reported that William Tegethoff was also a loan broker, either as a pawn broker or a predecessor of the old building and loan associations. (11) In any event, it would now appear that Mr. Tegethoff was very involved initially in the setting up of the Shawk & McLanahan Company for the very brief manufacture of these revolvers. As discussed earlier, perhaps at least these two earliest revolvers bearing only his name were the prototypes for their planned manufacture or to mark them for his own protection. This revolver is now in the collection of Perry Hansen.



*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Serial Number 8*

The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here, serial number 8, courtesy of Julia Auctions, is marked on the butt with the more typical "SHAWK & McLANAHAN ST. LOUIS/CARONDELET MO" stamping. It is interesting in that the forward portion of the frame housing the loading lever is of iron, apparently an expedient way to correct a bad casting. The cylinder pin is held in by an extra screw immediately in front of the cylinder. The barrel is 8" in length and it has a pin front sight. Finished blued originally with a plain brass frame. The present whereabouts of this revolver are unknown.



*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Serial Number 16*

The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here, serial number 16, is marked with the typical "SHAWK & McLANAHAN ST. LOUIS/CARONDELET MO" on the butt. The serial number

is externally marked on the loading lever only. It has an 8" barrel with a pin front sight and is rifled with 7 lands and grooves. It has a single safety pin on rear of cylinder. The large knurled screw to facilitate lever and cylinder pin removal enters from right side. The hammer also has a roller where it contacts the mainspring. This revolver was formally in the collection of William Locke and is pictured in the book about his collection (12). It is also shown as the example revolver in *Flayderman's Guide to Antique Firearms*, reference number 7A-096. (13) Courtesy Jackson Armory, Dallas, Texas.



*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Serial Number 23*

The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here, serial number 23, is also marked with the typical "SHAWK & McLANAHAN ST. LOUIS/CARONDELET MO" on the butt with a single die. The serial number is under the grips, rear of cylinder and bottom of loading lever. It has an 8-1/8" barrel with rifling of 7 lands and grooves and a pin front sight. It has a roller on the hammer and a single safety pin on rear of cylinder. Large knurled screw to facilitate lever and cylinder pin removal enters from left side. It was originally blued with a plain brass frame. From the collection of Hayes Otoupalik.

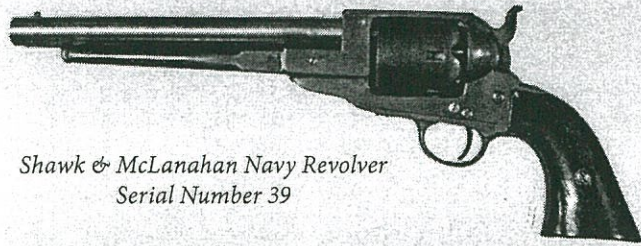


*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Serial Number 37*

The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here, serial number 37, has no makers' markings. The serial numbers are located on the bottom of the frame, cylinder, loading lever, rammer and cylinder pin. There is not a roller on the hammer and there is no safety pin on the rear of the cylinder. Iron blade front sight set in dovetail. It has a 7-3/32" barrel with rifling of 4 lands and grooves. The rifling interestingly is of four lands and grooves - a throwback to the rifling of the earliest revolvers marked "Wm. Tegethoff". The beveling at the front of the frame at the top and the lack



of the rounded portion of the top strap at the hammer slot, different from all of the others, indicates another example of the individual handwork seen on these revolvers. Originally from the collection of Lowell J. Wagner, with pictures courtesy of C. W. Slagle.



*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
Serial Number 39*

The revolver pictured here, serial number 39, has no makers' marks. The serial number is externally marked on the loading lever only. The barrel is 8" in length, with a brass pin front sight and the rifling is 7 lands and grooves. The top of the frame has a shallow sighting groove but the usual round reinforcing at the top of the hammer slot is not there. There is a roller on the hammer as well as a single safety pin on the rear of the cylinder. It was finished bright originally with a plain brass frame. From a private collection.



*Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver  
No Serial Number*

The Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver pictured here with no visible serial number or markings is from the Carl Metzger Collection at Texas A&M University and is in very fine condition. The iron parts were originally blued and it shows little signs of use. The writer believes that this revolver is from the very end of manufacture as it shows several refinements. It has a barrel of approximately 7-1/2" in length with an iron blade front sight set in a dovetail. The top of the frame does not have a sighting groove and the usual round reinforcing at the hammer slot is there. This revolver was finished blued originally with a plain brass frame. No roller on hammer. From the Texas A&M Collection, photograph courtesy of Bobby Vance.

There are no known accessories unique to the Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver such as powder flasks and bullet molds. So most likely the makers relied on flasks from American Flask and Cap Company and similar makers of generic flasks for use with their revolvers to avoid the extra effort and cost of making

them. Similarly, no bullet molds are known to the writer that are marked, so the makers probably relied on .36 caliber molds supplied for Colt and Remington Navy revolvers as well as others that were widely available to the trade.

In summary, it would seem that the Shawk & McLanahan Navy Revolver was certainly on par with many other percussion revolvers of the day and perhaps the financial gutting of the company by J. K. McLanahan was the primary reason that the company failed after such a brief existence. It does leave the collecting fraternity with an interesting, enigmatic and rare revolver to study and look out for.

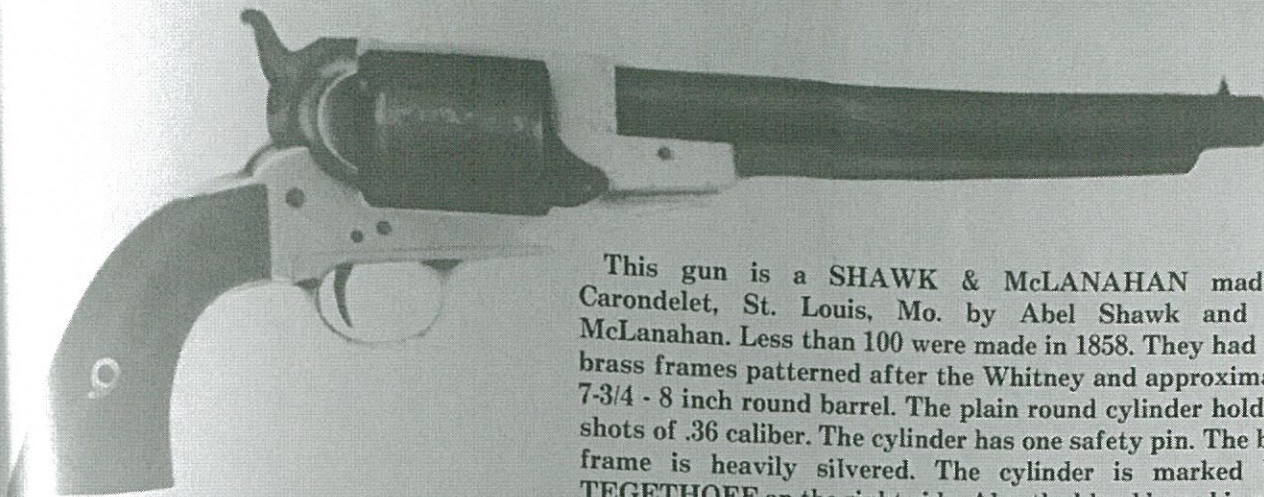
All of the eight examples that are known to the writer are shown here and he welcomes hearing of any Shawk & McLanahan revolvers not discussed here or any other information on the makers themselves. If others are documented, there will be a follow up article to include data on any newly recorded revolvers or any other significant information.

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#### END NOTES

1. Abel Shawk had anglicized his name from Wilhelm Abel Schalk.
2. Although the Carondelet area where the factory was set up is now within the city limits of St. Louis, it was a separate city established in 1851 southeast of St. Louis, Missouri. It was annexed by St. Louis in 1870.
3. Fuller, Claud E. and Steuart, Richard D., *Firearms of the Confederacy*, (Huntington, West Virginia: Standard Publications, Inc., 1944) p.267
4. Albaugh, III, William A., Benet, Hugh, Jr. and Simmons, Edward N., *Confederate Handguns*, (Philadelphia: Riling & Lentz, 1963) p. 41
5. Edwards, William B., *Civil War Guns*, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Company, 1962) p. 352
6. Albaugh, Benet & Simmons, *Confederate Handguns*, p.42
7. Steuart, Richard D., *The Story Of The Confederate Colt*, The Texas Gun Collector, July/August, 1956, # 66, published by The Texas Gun Collectors Association, Waco, Texas, p. 7
8. Albaugh, Benet & Simmons, *Confederate Handguns*, p. 41
9. Tegethoff, Mary Louise Krieger, *Tegethoff Descendents*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Robert E. Parkin Genealogical Research and Production Company, 1983) p. 31
10. There are rumors of one or two additional revolvers based on conversations with knowledgeable collectors, but serial numbers or data on them are unknown at this time.
11. Edwards, William B., *Civil War Guns*, p.352
12. Berryman, Robert B. and Sellers, Frank M., *The William M. Locke Collection*, (East Point, Georgia, The Antique Armory, Inc., 1973) p. 280
13. Flayderman, Norm, *Flayderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms...and their values*, 9th Edition, Gun Digest Books, Iola, WI, 2007, p. 371





This gun is a SHAWK & McLANAHAN made in Carondelet, St. Louis, Mo. by Abel Shawk and J.K. McLanahan. Less than 100 were made in 1858. They had solid brass frames patterned after the Whitney and approximately 7-3/4 - 8 inch round barrel. The plain round cylinder holds six shots of .36 caliber. The cylinder has one safety pin. The brass frame is heavily silvered. The cylinder is marked Wm. TEGETHOFF on the right side. Also the blued barrel is marked Wm. TEGETHOFF. The serial number No. 1 is marked on the butt frame under the varnished walnut grips. This is the only serial number marking.

Although made by Union sympathizers for several years before the Civil War, these revolvers were at one time considered to have Confederate connections, mainly by being included in an early article by R.D. Steuart, "The story of the Confederate Colt" in Army Ordnance magazine in 1934. Only eight examples of this pistol are known today. - written by Ted Meredith.

SC

Inimus Opibusque Parati  
From Fellow Officers  
of the South Carolina  
Reserve Force  
Jan. 3rd 1865

TO A FINE MAN  
& OFFICER  
BRIGADIER GENERAL  
JAMES CHESTNUT CSA



Solid silver holster.

