

MEMENTOS WITH HISTORY (37)

TWO INTERESTING "MODEL OF 1861" BOARDING KNIVES



Left: The US Navy's Model of 1861 DAHLGREN bowie knife bayonet, designed by Admiral John .A. Dahlgren, USN, towards the end of the 1850s and made in limited numbers, in four variants with minimal differences, for use in his ship, the USS Plymouth, by the Ames Manufacturing Company of Chicopee, Massachusetts; Conceived by Dahlgren not as a bayonet but as a boarding and utility knife, short but massive (2.2 pounds, 16.7 ", without the scabbard) capable of piercing and of giving a powerful chop with its heavy blade; Its mechanism of attachment to the Model of 1861 Plymouth-Whitneyville Navy rifle was conceived secondarily as the Navy refused to pay for a knife but not for a bayonet; Many specimens do not even attach well to the rifle without requiring individual adjustments; In 1866, one year after the end of the US Civil War, there were 6,264 rifles still in naval inventories but we do not know how many bayonets and, of these, many (??) were destroyed, and others sold in public auction; Bannerman's, dealer in surplus military arms, was still offering them for \$10.00 in their 1927 Catalogue with the comment that "they are today very rare pieces".

Right : In sharp contrast in design and functional concept, the Spanish Navy Model of 1861 boarding knife was a lighter weapon (1 pound, 14.5 ") with a piercing-cutting, wavy, double edged, Kriss type blade, no doubt useful in hand to hand combat and also for other tasks (cutting ropes , knots, etc); Its design and adoption actually date from 1861 but, due to the Toledo Factory being otherwise occupied, initial production was by private makers, apparently in Seville, and these specimens are usually lacking any markings; Toledo began its manufacturing in 1867 and these specimens bear the TOLEDO marking on the obverse ricasso and 1867 on its reverse; Then during the 1870s they were marked FABRICA / DE / TOLEDO / 187- on the obverse ricasso; They were produced there intermittently until 1888 but continued to be in use for a number of

years; A total of around 3,000 were made but to these we must add 360 more obtained in the USA from "Schuyler, Hartley and Graham", military suppliers in New York City; We do not know who actually manufactured them; These were made under Spanish contract as equipment for thirty gun boats made in the USA for service in Cuba and they lack any maker's markings; They were supplied with black leather scabbards with brass throat and finial, same as the Seville and Toledo made units, but in addition they were each delivered in an individual sack or bag; Most of them were destroyed by the Navy once declared obsolete and are therefore today, very scarce; Thanks to my friend J. L. Calvó for the very interesting information.

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