

7

THE “ONA” REVOLVER FROM “ORBEA HERMANOS”

During the 1880s the only firm in Eibar classified as an “arms factory” was that of “Orbea Hermanos”; Following it and classified as an “arms workshop”, was the firm of “Anitua y Charola” which declared an average of around 25 workers from 1883-1893 and which, in 1881 had obtained a patent for the “*Merwin revolver*” (Merwin-Hulbert); “Orbea Hermanos” decided to also manufacture this revolver and triggered an interesting litigation which I will discuss in Chapter 10.

In 1883 “Orbea Hermanos” obtained a 20 year patent for a “pistol *revolver* named ONA” (the word “ONA” in the Basque language, Euskera, meaning “Good”) which was a revolver based on the Smith & Wesson First Model double action and which became popularly known not by this name but simply as the “Smith”, same as other copies of the Smith & Wessons; “Orbea Hermanos” made at least seven variations, as we can conclude from a Royal Order of October, 6, 1884 which recommended to Chiefs and Officers the use of “the model called by its makers the number 7” with a price of 40 pesetas and for the regulation cartridge.



ONA “Smith” revolvers, 11 mm caliber, Md.1884, 6 shot, double action; Left: “regulation” finish, serial number 33903, barrel length 151 mm. issue number 4019 (model adopted by the Navy?) Right: Nickel plated (commercial) specimen, serial number 99/679, barrel length 129 mm. Both marked “ORBEA HERMANOS Y C^a. EIBAR – CON PRIVILEGIO EN ESPAÑA”; Made between 1891-1895

This Royal Order, which ended the Oviedo Factory’s manufacture of revolvers and, any future prospects for the Ibarra gas extraction system, proclaimed to be regulation a revolver cartridge with the following characteristics: “Center fire, 11 mm caliber (.44), 1.3 gram powder charge, 16.6 gram bullet, measuring 19.8 mm in length, with a 24.5 mm long shell casing with a rim diameter of 13.1 mm and a rim height (thickness) of 1.4 mm”; Nomenclature “ 11 mm Md. 1884 revolver cartridge”, abbreviated to “C.11 mm Md.1884 for R.”

As long as this cartridge was used, any revolver, weighing between 850-900 grams and having a length between 240-260 mm, capable of fitting in a 270 mm long holster, could be acquired by the Chiefs and Officers of the Army for their official use; However, the Lefauchaux Md.1863, purchased and issued by the State, continued to be the regulation sidearm for the troops.

The Navy, however, made different dispositions; In 1881 Brigadier C. Barrios reported on the modified Lefauchaux and Kerr revolvers and stated that “it has been proposed and agreed to replace them with those of the Remington system, which are far superior”, but, eventually, it was the: “Smith & Wesson revolvers offered by “Orbea Hermanos” from Eibar, with those modifications approved by the Navy’s Special Artillery Board and approved by Royal Order of March, 17, 1881”, that were finally approved by another Royal Order of November, 18, 1885.

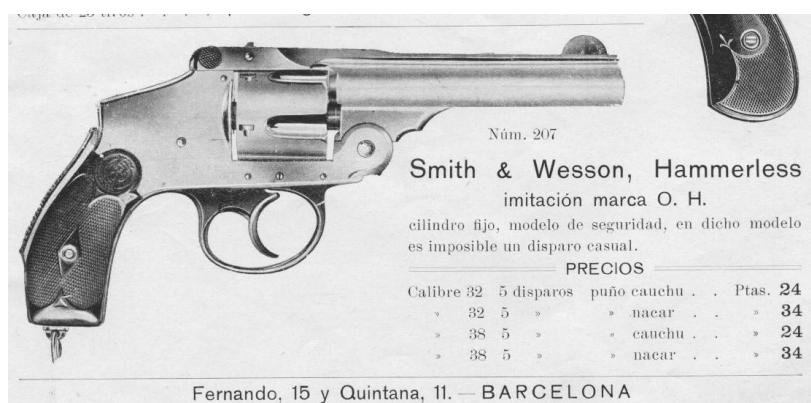
Therefore it was a model that differed in details from this firm’s N° 7 model and was denominated as the “*Rewolver Smith & Wesson modelo 1885*”, abbreviated to the “R.S.W. M°1885” by the above R.O, which estimated a need for 4,000 units for a contract that I do not know if it was actually executed; But the fact is that the “Smith N° 7” or a very similar gun, was in service in the Navy; I once spoke to a sailor who referred to them as “*de fogoneros*” (used by stokers)



Double action Smith revolver (ONA), six shot, 11 mm caliber, 160 mm barrel; Engraved and cased specimen, personalized for Don Bernardino del Solar Galvez (1842-1910), officer belonging to the naval Artillery Corps 1867 promotion; The damascene artistic engraving has obliterated the name of the maker and the weapon's serial number

In 1888 the firm of “Anitua y Charola” obtained an identical recommendation for Army use to that given to the “Orbea Hermanos” “Smith N° 7”, for one of its “Merwin” models, although the Army continued to prefer the “Smith”; That same year “Orbea Hermanos” increased the number of its models adding the “Hammerless Smith”, based on the Smith & Wesson Safety First Model.

The “Orbea Hermanos” factory was the first one in Eibar to install electrical energy in 1890; That same year Juan Manuel Ortega died and the following year the name of the Company was changed to “Orbea Hermanos y C^a” with the only surviving founder, Mateo Orbea, as its director; In 1894 it employed 105 workers and produced 50 “Smith” revolvers daily, both five shooters in calibers 320 and 380, and six shooters in 440 caliber.



Orbea Hermanos “Smith Hammerless” revolver, from an early 20th Century catalogue where the same gun, made by Smith & Wesson, was also offered, in 38 caliber at a price of 110-130 pesetas and, in 32 caliber for 100-120 pesetas.

The 1878 patent law required that, in order to maintain in force the 20 years of exclusivity granted by the registered patent, an annual and progressive fee had to be paid; This prompted “Orbea Hermanos y C^a” to renounce, in 1895, to continue to maintain the patent obtained in 1884 for the ONA revolver, which, from this moment on, could be manufactured by anyone; In that same year “Orbea Hermanos y C^a” ceased to be the only firm in Eibar classified as an “arms factory” as “Quintana Hermanos” was added to this category and as also was, in 1897, the firm of “Garate, Anitua y C^a”; However, Orbea established also a munitions factory and registered the only two logos attributed to its name: The anagram “OH” as a factory logo and a comet on the cartridges’s culotte; Also in 1897 “Orbea Hermanos y C^a” was reconstituted into a silent partnership as “Orbea y C^a” but continued to mark its arms “Orbea Hermanos y C^a”.

Mateo Orbea died in 1900 and it was around this time that the firm started to use its “norteamericano” type of marking, with a series of patent dates with very imprecise stamping which makes its reading difficult, following the “Orbea Hermanos y C^a.Eibar (España)” labeling, and which are repeated without any variation in all its “Smith” models, also including the “OH Trade-Mark” on the right side of the frame.

The Bergmann pistol adopted in 1903 was supposed to substitute the Guardia Civil’s, and any other troops’s, Lefauchaux revolvers, but their issue was delayed due to

difficulties in its manufacture and they were substituted by “Smith N° 7” revolvers which were acquired for that reason; A Royal Order of December, 29, 1907 instructed that the armaments of the different corps and units of the Army, Guardia Civil, and Carabineros, were to be exchanged for others “whose nomenclature adheres to the published State model” and the “Smith N° 7”, already being produced by several Eibar firms, was named as the “model 1884” acquired by the State.



“Md.1884”, 6 shot, 11 mm caliber, double action revolver, barrel length 128 mm, marked “ORBEA HERMANOS Y C^a. EIBAR (ESPAÑA) PAT. 4 MAYO 81 / 12 ABRIL 88, 21 MAYO 90, 4 JUNIO 900, 26 JULIO 900”, number 672/324.

Up until December, 29, 1907 the only thing bearing the “Md.1884” denomination was its 11 mm cartridge; This was updated by R.O of August, 23, 1915 and given the new denomination of “Model 1915 cartridge for the model 1884 revolver” abbreviated to “Cart. Mod. 1915 for Rev. Mod. 1884”.

NUEVO CATALOGO LANZA		
CARTUCHO: 11 x 24,5 español, mod. 1915	CODIFICACION:	NUMERO: 2103
DENOMINACION NUEVA: .44 corto, ordinario, mod. 1915 (10,5 x 24,5)		
FIG. 2103 	<p>Cartucho: Calibre 10,5 mm. Clase Guerra. Tipo Ordinario. Modelo 1915. Longitud 36. Peso 23 g.</p> <p>B A L A: Tipo Ojival, roma. Blindada. Cuproniquel. Plomo antimonioso. Longitud 19,2+0,6. Diámetro 10,8+0,02. Peso 16,5+0,2 g.</p> <p>Vaina: Tipo Cilíndrica, con pestaña. Latón 72/28. Alojamiento Berdan. Longitud 24,5+0,2. Peso 5 g. Moleteada.</p> <p>Cápsula: Tipo Berdan. 32 miligramos de mezcla fulminante. Latón 90/10. Diámetro 5,5. Peso 0,25 g.</p> <p>Pólvora: Fil. 41 (0,38 g). Progresiva. Sin humo. Una base. Laminillas.</p> <p>Características balísticas: Vel. inicial 195 m/s. Energía en boca 34 kpm. Presión (recámara) < 2000 kp/cm². Precisión H+V del 100 % menor de 15 cm a 50 m. Alcance máx. 2000 m. Alcance eficaz 50 m. Perfora 8 cm de tablón de pino a 50 m.</p> <p>Otros datos: No hay datos de envases y empaques. Declarado reglamentario por R.O.C. de 23 de agosto de 1915, especificando “para revólver mod. 1884”. Se supone fue fabricado en pequeños lotes en la Pirotecnia Militar de Sevilla. No estanco.</p>	

Specification card for the Mod. 1915 cartridge for the Mod.1884 revolver, in the Lanza Catalogue.