

8

THE “SMITH” REVOLVERS FROM “LARRAÑAGA, GARATE Y C^a”

“Smith & Wesson” No. 3 New Model , 6 shot, 44 caliber, revolver, with trigger guard hook, barrel length 178 mm, marked “GARATE E HIJO – EIBAR (ESPAÑA)”; Serial number has been erased; Made around 1882-83 (¿?) after the expiration of the “Orbea Hermanos” Privilege, but before Crispin Garate’s partnership with Juan José Larrañaga in 1884.

Following in importance the manufacture of “Smith” revolvers by “Orbea Hermanos”, was Manuel Garate’s work shop; The trade mark “Garate e Hijo” can be found on copies of the Smith & Wesson No.3 New Model, a model which, had also been made by “Orbea Hermanos” and “Garate, Larrañaga y C^a” for the “Guardias de Cuba” (the Cuban Civil Guard).

In the Eibar Industrial Register for 1880-81 Manuel Garate declared a shop with four workers; In the 1882-83 Register the same shop appears under his son, Crispin’s name who, in the following year became associated to Juan José Larrañaga in the firm of “Garate, Larrañaga y C^a”; Larrañaga was also a second generation arms maker as his shop had been founded by his father in 1846.

In 1884 ‘Garate, Larrañaga y C^a’ declared 15 workers; In the following year it moved to a different address, changing its name to “Larrañaga, Garate y C^a” and declaring 17 workers, making it the largest “arms work shop” in Eibar at the time, followed by “Anitua y Charola”; Then, in 1886 Vicente Arizmendi’s shop became the largest with 31 workers, and in 1887-88 “Anitua y Charola” with 39 and 34 workers respectively; In 1890-91 “Larrañaga, Garate y C^a” recovered the first position with 36 and 34 workers, but it disappeared in 1892 due to Crispin Garate’s death.

In 1888 “Larrañaga, Garate y C^a” attended the Barcelona Universal Exposition and, the journalist Nicolas Bustinduy reported that they exhibited there “twelve Smith single and

double action revolvers with different modifications , another five Colts, also single and double action, in different calibers, plus a Bull-Dog and a revolving pistol; They also exhibited two twelve shot repeating lightning-rifles in different calibers, plus three modified Remington carbines, a Winchester, and another similar twelve millimeter rifle”.

The “revolving pistol” had been patented by Juan José Larrañaga in 1883, as also was the Remington modification in 1884; The “lightning-rifle”, based on the Colt’s Patent Lightning, had been patented by “Larrañaga, Garate y C^a” in 1885; They also patented in 1886 a type of lock inspired by the Smith & Wesson Schofield, another revolver based on the 1873 Colt, and another similar revolver, although in double action and with a jointed hammer spur, as in some of the Merwin & Hulbert Co’s models; In 1888 he applied for a patent “for a Smith revolver modified with a Colt frame”, in 1889 for another one for “reforms to the Smith & Wesson revolver” and in 1890 he obtained the last one under his name for a “modification to the single action Smith revolver”.



Six shot, single action, 44 caliber, “Smith” revolver, barrel length 173 mm, marked “LARRAÑAGA, GARATE Y C^a. EIBAR(PRIVILEGIADO)”, number 18,318; In the close-up photo we see a latch which facilitated the rapid release of the cylinder; This was the “improvement” granted a “privilege”, which although making the weapon’s construction more economical, offered no great usefulness.

It was “Larrañaga, Garate y C^a” who started the manufacture in Eibar of Colt 1873 based revolvers and for this reason the “Colt’s” are usually mentioned as their “specialty”, although their “Smiths” were more frequent and more in demand in the national Spanish market; However, the main customers for both revolvers were actually the Quintana brothers in Mexico.

Those patents obtained by “Larrañaga, Garate, y C^a”, which continued to be called “privileges” in the fashion of the old royal decree of 1826, included features taken from the North American production but also some original ones from the firm’s designers; Those, such as the Schofield lock and the jointed hammer spur, borrowed from the original American models, were introduced in order to make their products more

attractive, while those of original design were due to attempts to make the weapon's construction simpler and more economical.



Single action “Smith” revolver with Schofield lock, six shot, 44 caliber, barrel length 182 mm, marked “LARRAÑAGA, GARATE Y C^a. EIBAR (PRIVILEGIADO)”;
Specimen from the Eibar Gun Smiths School Museum.

The similarity between the “Smith” revolver shown below and the ONA N^o 7 patented by “Orbea Hermanos” is obvious; Although the Orbea patent was in effect until 1895, perhaps the cylinder release system and the jointed hammer spur features included in it, and covered by the “privileges” obtained by “Larrañaga, Garate y C^a” differentiated it enough from the “ONA” to avoid their being sued by “Orbea Hermanos”, as I have no knowledge of any such suit.



Double action, six shot, 44 caliber “Smith” revolver, barrel length 129 mm, marked “LARRAÑAGA, GARATE Y CIA. CON PRIVILEGIO EN ESPAÑA”, serial number 1,038

In 1890 Crispin Garate joined Jose Francisco Anitua in creating a new foundry but Crispin died in an accident in the construction of the new shop; His heirs then joined Anitua in the firm of “Garate y Anitua” which in 1894 became “Garate, Anitua y C^a”, located in Manuel Garate’s shop, “the first one to make revolvers in Eibar”.