

ARMAMENTS OF THE TROOPS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD, 1788-1931
(14)

“OFFICERS” PISTOLS USED, IN ADDITION TO THE MODEL USED BY
THE BRIGADE OF ROYAL “CARABINEROS”,
DURING THE REIGN OF FERNANDO VII

(Translation by Hector J. Meruelo)



“Commercial” cavalry pistol made following the model of the one that equipped the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros” in the period 1820-22 ; With a 193 mm long, 17 mm (“de a 19”) caliber barrel engraved in gold with marking “Y/BAR/ZA/BAL” under crown; Spanish lock inscribed “Ybarzabal”; Checkered grips and iron fittings; The triggerguard is inscribed “M/AL/VER/DI” under crown (M. Alberdi, Eibar); Specimen number 1962-1526 of the Collection of the Museo Militar de Montjuïc, missing the belt hook.

Several good quality pistols were made with the general characteristics of the pistol issued to the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros” in the period 1820-22 which, judging from their diversity and lack of inscriptions relating them to that Brigade, I feel can only be described as “commercial”, optional equipment of Chiefs and Officers of the other Royal Household Corps and of the Army and not only of those of the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros”.

The specimen shown, and the next one, were made by Gabriel Benito de Ibarzabal; However, this type of “commercial” pistol was manufactured not only by this maker: Jose. M. Pelaez in his book “Armería vasca de lujo en el siglo XIX”, page 175, shows a specimen marked by Ramon de Zuloaga “master and examiner” of the Royal Placencia Factory who participated in the construction of pistols of the “2nd model” for the Royal Corp of “Guardias de la Persona del Rey”.

Since Gabriel Benito de Ibarzabal was not a “master” of the barrelmakers Guild the fact that his marking, with his last name under crown , as befitting a master, is seen on the barrel of the specimen shown, perhaps identifies a master of the same last name; Ramiro Larrañaga mentions several, among them Ignacio de Ibarzabal as “Barrelmaker, Placencia, 1762”; The use of this marking, or that of another deceased master, may have been “leased” by the master’s widow, a practice that was denounced by the artilleryman Don Juan Senovilla, along with other irregularities practiced by the Guilds who controlled the production of the Royal Placencia Factory in its last years.



“Y/BAR/ZA/BAL” markings, the first one the classical type of a master of the barrel makers Guild; The second one an older “maker’s marking” of a commercial gunsmith from Eibar.



“Commercial” cavalry pistol along the lines of the model used by the Brigade of Royal “Carabineros” in the period 1820-22; 200 mm. long , 18 mm caliber (“de a 17”) with oval marking “Y/BAR/ZA/BAL” and inscribed “En Eybar”; French lock, checkered grips, brass fittings. (Foto Diana Armi)

On the 8th of June of 1813 the Cortes in Cádiz made free enterprise possible by a decree authorizing the creation of factories and the hiring of workers; This entailed breaking the Guild system and was the beginning of its long agony, as before a year went by Fernando VII derogated all the laws passed by the Cortes upon establishing the Constitution of 1820.

After the 1823 French intervention all the legislation produced during the Constitutional period was annulled, and the obligatory Guild membership was re-established and maintained until 1834 when the privileges enjoyed by the Guilds were again abolished and they disappeared as a legal institution in 1836 upon the establishment of free enterprise.

As far as the manufacture of firearms this affected only the “commercial” makers, as in the Royal Factories in Oviedo and Placencia, and the one established in Seville in 1832 and closed in 1848, the manufacture of those models approved for the Army continued to be produced under the Guild system.

In the Royal Oviedo Factory the Guild system was not dissolved until 1858 when the craftsmen were hired as employees of the Artillery Corp; From this date on the Royal Placencia Factory had to compete with the private industrialists and businessmen who wanted to participate in this activity of making armaments for the Army: Ibarra, Aldasoro, Riera, Zuazubizcar, etc, the resistance made by their Guilds to renouncing their privileges was one of the causes that finally dictated their dissolution in January of 1865.

Juan L. Calvó
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