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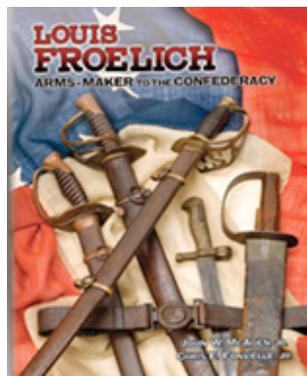
Louis Froelich: Arms-Maker to the Confederacy

By John W. McAden Jr. and Chris E. Fonvielle Jr.

(June 2009 Civil War News)



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Illustrated, endnotes, bibliography, 90 pp., 2008. SlapDash Publishing LLC, 311 Florida Ave., Carolina Beach, NC, 28428, \$49.95 plus shipping.

While many of us are familiar with the “CSA” knucklebow cast swords, there has been little information regarding their origin or the fact that the company that made them was responsible for the manufacture of other types of weapons, accoutrements and buttons.

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Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. brings us the history of these objects and a good look at businessman Louis Froelich who was responsible for their production during the Civil War. Added to this work are actual examples from the collection of John W. McAden Jr. as well as material from public and private collections.

This combination of writer and collector gives us a fascinating look at the work of one arms operation in North Carolina and its contributions to the Confederate armies.

Louis Froelich emigrated from Bavaria in 1861 and settled in Wilmington, N.C. His first work was with the Wilmington Button Manufactory. Following its closing Froelich and a partner opened the Wilmington Sword Factory, later changed to the C.S.A. Arms Factory.

This plant not only produced edged weapons, but also a variety of accoutrements and sunburst buttons which went to the field in large numbers. Froelich also made some guns including the prototype “thirty-six shooter Rifled Revolver.” A fire in early 1863 prompted Froelich to move his operation to Kenansville, N.C., where it was destroyed during a Federal cavalry raid.

The business was rebuilt and continued to supply Confederate forces until finally overrun by the Union army in March 1865. Louis Froelich died in 1873 after a successful postwar



life in agriculture.

The book's color photo section contains numerous examples of Froelich's work as an arms maker. Covered here are the Staff and Field Sword with CS and star, Staff and Field with CSA on a ribbon, Staff and Field with CSA cast into the hilt, CSA officers' cavalry saber, enlisted cavalry saber, short swords, bowie knives, saber bayonets, lances, belts and buckles, and buttons.

A section of miscellaneous edged weapons which are sometimes connected to Froelich but without full documentation is included.

This book is well written and the photography is superior with a lot of close-up pictures. It includes maps, advertisements, period photos and pictures, helpful endnotes and a bibliography.

It is an excellent presentation of just one arms company in the Confederacy and its output through most of the war. The history of Froelich's production and variety of arms will be a welcome addition particularly for the collector, student of 19th-century technology, historian and select museum personnel.

Review:

Dale E. Biever

Dale E. Biever received his M.Ed. in American history from Kutztown University. He is past vice president for administration and former member of the Board of Governors of the Company of Military Historians. A retired educator, he was registrar at the Civil War Library and Museum in Philadelphia.

Historical Publications Inc.

234 Monarch Hill Rd.
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Free Sample, and Advertising:
(800) 777-1862
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Our email address is: mail@civilwarnews.com