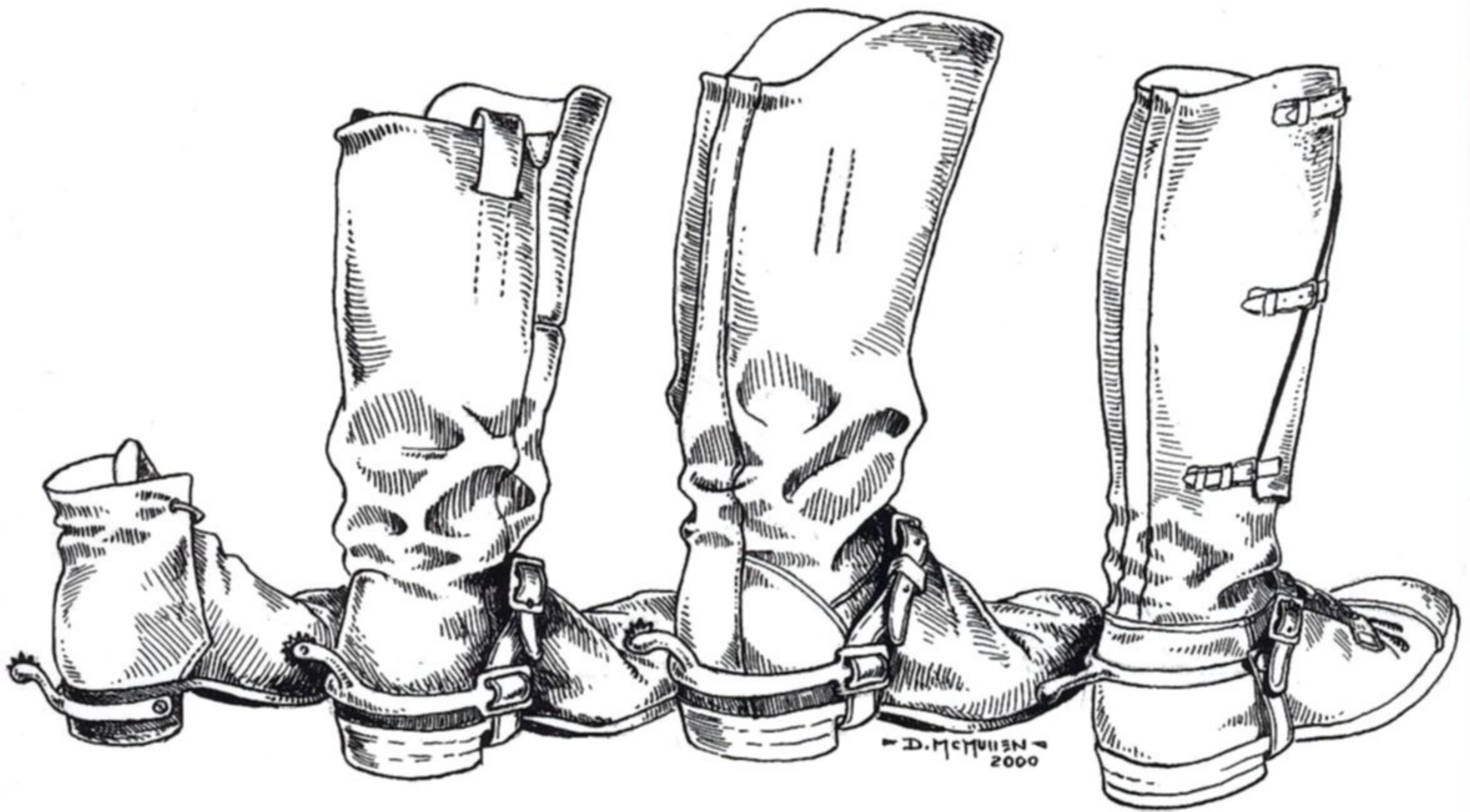


The American Military Spur

by
R. Stephen Dorsey



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Richard Lea

Books begin in a variety of ways, some with the frustration that no work exists that answers our questions; some with the finding of a wealth of artifacts that, then, leads to more research and some with the sudden realization that others share the same enthusiasms and questions. There are other motivators for research and authorship, but the three reasons above all apply to the author's commencement of this effort. At the 1999 Colorado Gun Collectors Association Show, I met Richard Lea of Colorado, and it seemed that we had many mutual US martial interests - one of which was US military spurs. Over the months following the show, Richard most generously contributed from his expertise and collection as well as his enthusiasm for the subject of military spurs. Without his collection as a data base and without his eye for detail, this book would have been much longer in coming and far less fun to do. In a very real sense, this book exemplifies our mutual desire to share what we know and our enthusiasms (as well as our remaining questions) with our fellow collectors.

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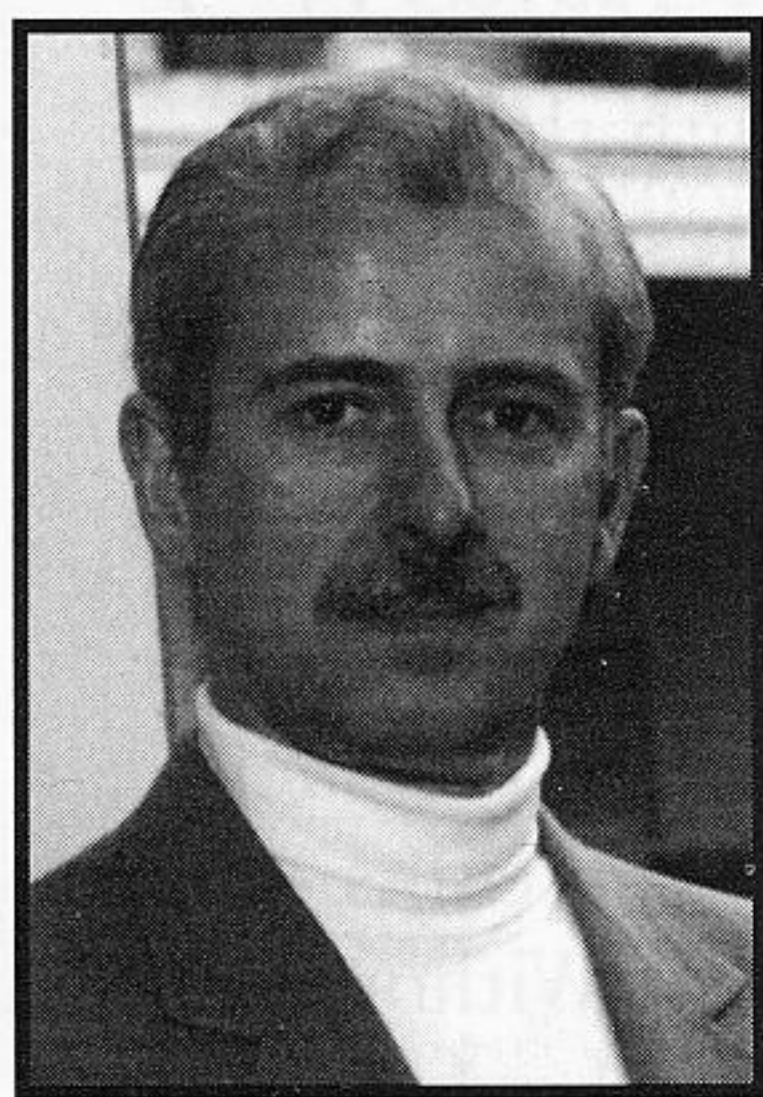
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About the Author

R. STEPHEN DORSEY



Raised in historic Missouri, home of Mark Twain, Thornton Grimsley, Samuel Hawkin, General Jo Shelby and many, many other well-known historic figures, it was no surprise that Stephen Dorsey's interest in history developed early in life and has continued to this day. His great-grandfather, Private L.C. Brown of Company G, Gordon's Regiment, Shelby's Division of the Cavalry of the Confederate States of America, served throughout the War, taking his honorable discharge from General Shelby's command, two months after the surrender at Appomattox.

As an army officer, Stephen Dorsey served in Europe as an Ordnance Technical Intelligence Officer, returning to the US to become the Project Officer for the last rifle project of Springfield Armory (the Special Purpose Individual Weapon, SPIW) and served there until the transfer of active projects to Rock Island Arsenal. Mr. Dorsey worked an additional 12 years at Rock Island Arsenal in the fields of procurement, cost analysis, and aircraft armament project management. During this time, he taught college-level courses at the army arsenals at Rock Island, Watervliet, Frankford, Picatinny and Redstone. Since leaving federal service, Mr. Dorsey has become a well-known writer in diverse fields such as the American military saddle and its related equipment, gun tools and accoutrements and, in addition, has two businesses: Collectors' Library, a publishing firm, and R. Stephen Dorsey Antique Militaria. He lives in the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

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THE AMERICAN MILITARY SPUR

INTRODUCTION

While there has been a great deal of writing about civilian, particularly “cow-boy” spurs, there has been nothing definitive written prior to this monograph on the spurs actually purchased by or manufactured by the military, for the military. This short study presents what is actually documented on the subject of military spurs. Where data are not available, the author has tried to put the artifact in the historical perspective by bracketing it with known spurs and data from periods before and after the spur in question. What this study does not attempt to do is address all variations known nor the fascinating but little-documented area of Confederate spurs.

Interestingly, the subject of Revolutionary War spurs and the spurs of the Confederate States of America have a great deal in common. In both cases, a young, non-industrialized country was drawn, unprepared, into a significant military conflict. Both of these forces had militia units prior to the conflict (especially in the case of the Confederacy) and their mounted members often had spurs that were either of the current military pattern or were closely patterned on them. The higher ranking (and wealthy) officers wore personally-purchased and non-standard spurs. These could range from unique patterns of spurs with gold or silver plating to slight variations such as rowel size and a high

polish. In both historic periods, the economies behind the military were under great stress for materiel and manufacturing expertise - making production more of a cottage industry and introducing great variation in the production of items that would normally be standardized. Another factor at the outbreak of these two great wars, was that spurs had been imported from several countries prior to the war and continued to be of great importance to the war effort. In both the Revolutionary War and the War for Southern Independence, imports from Britain, France, the German States and other countries provided all manner of horse equipment and arms. Both wars, also, employed sea blockades to prevent such imports, thereby placing greater strain on the economy of the blockaded country.

Both Revolutionary America and the Confederacy utilized captured war materiel of all kinds. The South, in particular, relied heavily on captured equipment, supplementing that with its rather widespread, cottage industry manufacture. While there are known patterns of Confederate-manufactured spurs and a few known makers, the reality of it is that any “dug” spur of a pre-War or Wartime type could be Confederate-used and a foreign spur of the period could also be from the boot of a Southern cavalryman.





OVERVIEW

The basic “roadmap” of US regulation spurs begins with the heavy usage of British spurs and American-made copies of those spurs in the Revolutionary War. Common American-made spurs, like their British counterparts, are unmarked and may vary only in being of lesser quality of manufacture. All known spurs of the time are of the type attached to the boot with two leather straps and had rotating rowels.

By 1830, the concept of affixing a spur to the boot or bootee heel by a screw or screws saw some usage but was discarded within the decade for a return to spurs held to the boot by two leather straps. Rotating rowels continued to be used.

Only in 1859 was a spur pattern adopted that can be identified with certainty today. Sadly, what this means is that in the preceding 80 years, we have only a few documented specimens of spurs actually used and those cannot be placed with any certainty in the category of “regulation”. In 1859, it appears that separate spurs were adopted for the mounted enlisted and commissioned officer ranks. While no pictures nor manufacturing specifications allow us to precisely identify these spurs, their survival in some quantity today and their greater individual provenance indicates their place in history.

The outbreak of the War for Southern Independence in 1861, while providing the collector a large field of U.S. officers’ military spur variations, merely increased the number of the standard enlisted spurs produced.

The enlisted design did not change form nor material during the War, though it was produced in immense quantity. Since officers’ spurs were personal purchase items, most were manufactured or imported by commercial firms - insuring great diversity in detail. All spurs, however, continued to be attached to the boot with two leather straps and to have rotating rowels.

In 1872, the Cavalry Board recommended adoption a new spur, indicated in Ordnance Memoranda No. 13 as differing from the Wartime spur only in having a smoother exterior finish. In reality, the new spur design differed in configuration from the Pattern 1859 and appears to have been produced in limited quantity until replaced by another design in 1885. The Pattern 1885 Spur (in both enlisted and officers’ configurations) continued in use until replaced in 1902. From that time until the final dismounting of the US Cavalry, spur design and materials are fairly well documented and specimens are available to collectors.

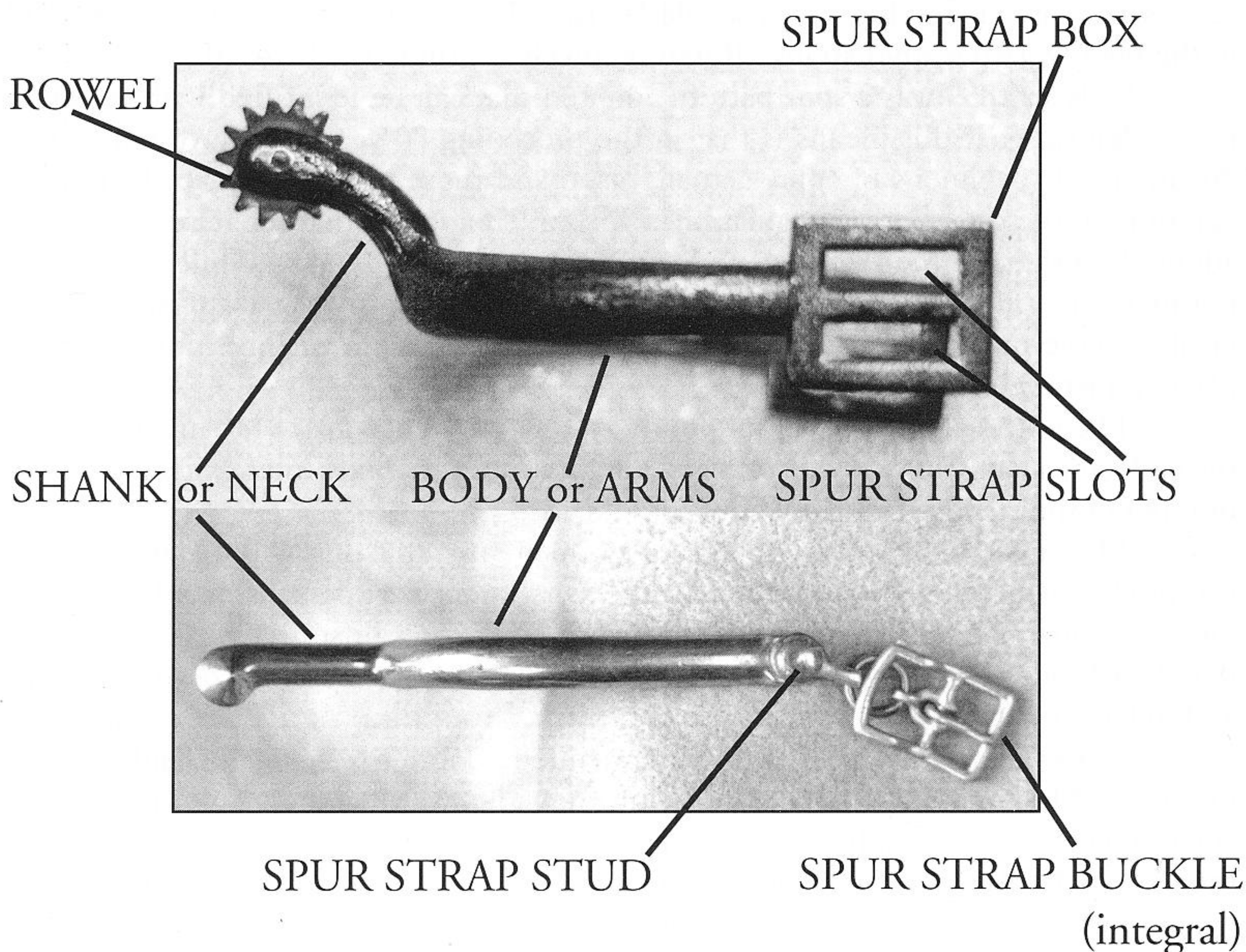
Military spur collecting is a fascinating and affordable hobby or adjunct to a larger cavalry collection. Much is not known and much is not documented, making the hobby both frustrating and fun. While I enjoy seeing the artistry in many cowboy spurs, I know that before the cowboy was relatively safe in his profession, the dragoon or cavalryman had ridden before him, wearing the spurs that I now collect.

I hope that this monograph will both provide a firmer footing for the collection of US regulation military spurs as well as serve others in their research of the subject.



TERMINOLOGY & MEASUREMENTS

There are several mechanical features of spur construction that are mentioned repeatedly in the following text. The army was very stingy with its identification of these features and collectors have developed a wide variety of names for for them. To avoid confusion, the following terms will be used to discuss areas of design or measurement:



Shank or Neck - This is the integral, extended portion of the spur; the portion holding the rowel and rowel pin if the spur design incorporated these features. The shank or neck has been measured from the **INSIDE** of the spur body to the tip of the integral shank. It does **NOT** include the measurement of any rowel.

Yoke or Arms - These are the paired arms that extend from the shank, around the heel of the footwear and terminate in screw holes, spur strap studs or a spur strap box.



Spur Strap Box - Since many military spur designs utilize a definite, angular box for attachment of spur straps, this terminology is satisfactory for description but it is not an area that consistently lends itself to good measurement. Many spur strap boxes have angled leading edges and cannot be precisely measured so, when felt necessary, the slot dimensions are occasionally given or the height of the box itself is given.

Spur Strap Studs - These are the metal, exterior "buttons" riveted on the exterior ends of many spur arms for attachment of slotted leather spur straps. While this feature was used up until 1945, it was in use in Europe hundreds of years before that.

Inside Curve - The interior surface of the spur arms.

Groove or Gutter - A cast-in feature found on the inside curves of many later (Late 1859 Pattern and later) enlisted spurs. This feature is felt to have allowed the inside curve of the spur a better grip on the heel of the boot or bootie as the spur was raked against the side of the horse. This feature was discontinued with the adoption of the Model 1911 Spur.

Because regulation US spurs differ in various, obvious ways, it was not felt necessary to take a variety of measurements that would be of little use in identification or appreciation of the spurs. One measurement that, regrettably, could not be offered with any consistency was that of width. While this measurement would be useful on new condition spurs, all of the specimens in study collections have been spread somewhat to fit boots larger than those or which the spurs had originally been designed. Where spurs were made in two different sizes, that fact has been noted in the text.



SERVICE / ENLISTED SPURS vs. OFFICERS' SPURS

To avoid confusion in understanding the distinction between these two categories, the following discussion is important. First, except for the rare times in US history when there either was no mounted branch of service (such as between 1821 and 1832) or when the mounted branch was expected to bring their own equipment (such as with the US Mounted Ranger Battalion, 1832-1833 or so), mounted enlisted personnel of the Regular Army were issued standard or "regulation" spurs. However, officers have been required to provide their uniform equipment, including spurs, since the earliest days of the Republic. Normally, officers' spurs generally followed the enlisted spur pattern but often differed in having a better finish (higher polish or plating) or embellishment that could be engraving, bas relief casting, fancy rowels, chains, etc. Also, officers' spurs could differ in design by having finer arms, finer shanks, longer or shorter shanks or a different sweep of the shank from the back of the spur body. Another way officers' spurs could differ from the service pattern would be in having different or finer attaching straps and buckles.

While the reader should remember that officers were required to provide their own uniform equipment, it should be understood that, particularly in the post-1859 period, government arsenals did manufacture special spurs for mounted officers. These spurs differed somewhat from the enlisted or service spurs, along the lines discussed above. While these were available for officers' purchase, they were not "regulation" in the sense that the pattern had been approved by the General of the Army but they were "official" in the sense that they were being made in the arsenal system to satisfy a current need, e.g. where the commercial market was unable to provide a fancier version of an enlisted pattern spur. This would be the case right after the Pattern 1859 (Enlisted) Spur was adopted and being made in government arsenals but before commercial manufacturers could respond to the need with officers' spurs.

In 1888, the army adopted a commercially-designed and -manufactured officers' spur. Later, Rock Island Arsenal produced several officers' spurs that are shown in manuals of the time. For the sake of convenience, it can be said that these spurs, documented in army equipment manuals, are truly "regulation". What, then, is the difference between an officers' spur made on the 1885 (Enlisted) Pattern and the Pattern 1888 Officers' Spur? The 1885 spur made for officers, with a



finer rowel and, possibly, a higher grade of polish, was an accepted variation that fell within the army's policy for officers to provide their own uniform equipment. The 1888 Officers' Spur was a standardized pattern approved by the General of the Army for officers' use. This subtle distinction may be of no importance to many collectors but it is technically important and does reflect the depth of one's knowledge of the subject.

Some last comments on this subject must be made. While spurs were issued or commercially-purchased, "regulation" or officially-sanctioned, there are two other areas related to spur design and use that must be acknowledged. First, while the Regular Army was required to follow a fairly narrow definition of its dress and equipage, mounted state militia units only loosely conformed to Regular Army policy. Some state units, of course, were almost indistinguishable from Regulars. Others clung to patterns of uniform outdated for decades. Still others, always on the Frontier, provided their own equipment and semblance of uniforms while their officers might or might not have a full or up-to-date uniform. Spurs, in these militia units across the country, would vary widely as to pattern. Some personalized specimens of officers' spurs will be shown to illustrate this usage. Lastly, it must be acknowledged that - particularly in the pre-1900 Cavalry - higher ranking officers could, and did, wear uniform articles that were anything but regulation. George Armstrong Custer's black velvet uniform, Teddy Roosevelt's wearing of a .38 revolver in a US Navy holster while leading the Rough Riders, General George Patton, Jr.'s, wearing of ivory handled revolvers, and the widespread carriage of presentation or especially-embellished swords, all attest to the penchant for higher-ranking officers to wear and carry distinctive uniform articles. The wearing of special, fancy, embellished or otherwise distinctive spurs was not uncommon in the ranks of mounted officers well after 1900. In earlier days of the Republic, when officers were drawn from affluent backgrounds and families, the variation in spurs must have been significant. The higher the rank, the greater the possibility that the spurs worn would be expensive, beautiful and non-regulation. And, the more independent the mounted unit, the greater the possibility that its officers would stray from what their more regulation-oriented counterparts were wearing in the way of spurs.



MATERIALS USED

Over the course of American history, several materials have been used for the construction of military spurs: iron, brass, bronze, german silver (nickel silver) and nickel steel. Each of these materials will be briefly discussed below. Essentially, cast iron or steel, brass, bronze and german silver (nickel silver) were materials that led themselves to easy casting due to the melting and flow properties of the metals. Casting was an important manufacturing technique in early days since it offered exact duplicates of the cast item, i.e. the spur, as well as production not requiring major equipment such as hammer forges. Such heavy production equipment was expensive and was not widely available in the US until well after the War Between the States.

Iron and Steel, Cast and Hand-forged

In early America, iron was either wrought iron or cast iron. Wrought iron, an iron with almost no carbon content, was the common, early manufacturing metal. Cast iron was wrought iron to which had been added some aluminum to aid in the casting process. Obviously, spurs manufactured with wrought iron had to be hammered from bar stock by hand and hand-finished. This process was slow and the products were not exact duplicates even though they could easily suffice for the service required of spurs. Cast iron, by comparison, was a faster process and produced as many duplicates as the producer desired. Cast iron, however, depending upon the producer and the complexity of the item, could include obvious or hidden occlusions or fracture lines. These could seriously weaken the spur, particularly at points of greater stress or thinness. Iron also had the drawback of being very apt to rust so that iron spurs needed to be protected with plating, painting or constant cleaning and oiling.. The last regulation iron spur was that shown in the 1841 Regulations.

Brass and Bronze

Brass is an easily-worked alloy of copper and zinc. It is more easily cast, wrought or forged than iron and can be finished to a bright, shiny finish. It is not as strong as iron but is not a particularly brittle metal unless it is cast with flaws in it or has been heated and/or worked to become brittle. Spurs cast of brass can be sand or investment cast to give a high degree of detail but all cast spurs required hand-finishing with saws, files and drills to become the finished product.



Bronze, the true “gun metal” is a stronger alloy of copper and tin. It is more wear-resistant and stronger than brass but is not as malleable nor as easily worked as brass. Bronze, however, was easily cast and for one US regulation spur was the metal used in production. Bronze is more brown in colour than brass and does not give the same bright shine that brass can achieve.

German Silver or Nickel Silver

This material is a white metal alloy of copper, zinc and nickel - and contains no silver. It is easily cast and is relatively strong. It can be polished to mirror brightness and, while it resists tarnishing, it does tarnish to a granular gold or light brown colour. German silver is no more wear-resistant than brass and may not be as wear-resistant as bronze but its beauty has kept it a popular spur material.

Nickel Steel

Nickel steel is a late-comer to the field of American military spurs, primarily because it requires a more sophisticated metallurgy than available in earlier years of American history. Both nickel and steel require higher temperatures for consistent alloying and the alloy does not lend itself to casting as well as it does to drop or hammer forging. For these reasons, the advent of nickel steel in regulation American military spurs was after 1900. The primary advantage to this alloy for equipment used out of doors is that, when the nickel is in sufficient proportion, the steel is very rust resistant. The percentage quoted in early ordnance publications is 27% nickel to 73% steel (itself an alloy). Early arsenal and commercial production of items such as spurs and the ubiquitous M1912 Stirrup apparently did not include enough nickel in the alloys used and the result was that the ordnance department had thousands of articles that continued to rust in service rather than resisting rust as intended.

These, then, were the materials from which all US military regulation spurs were made. Each had its particular strengths and weaknesses, both for production and for use. Happily, these materials were sufficiently robust that they could survive the 200-plus years of our nation’s history so that collectors can still find and enjoy the many variations available.



THE EARLY YEARS, 1776-1830s

The optimum design for spurs in the Americas had been well established many if not hundreds of years before the founding of the new Republic. From the earliest days of riders in British colonies, horse equipment was patterned on the designs and materials from Great Britain - usually by the straight-forward expedient of importation of British goods. Where Colonial craftsmen could manufacture those items locally, the patterns were, invariably, those of Britain. Fig. 1-6 show a selection of spurs drawn from actual specimens presented in the "Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution" by George C. Neumann and Frank J. Kravic. (Ref. 1) As noted in this work, most spurs of the time were of brass, wrought iron or silver alloy, and could be found plated with tin, silver or gold. As the reader can see, the designs are identical to commercially-made spurs from much later periods in American history. All have spur strap boxes with slots or stud-and-buckle arrangements for securing the spur strap to the spur and around the rider's boot. The methods of manufacture were either casting or fine hammer-forging, i.e. blacksmithing. Riveting of the shanks to the curved spur body was a common method of attachment when the spur was not cast in its entirety.

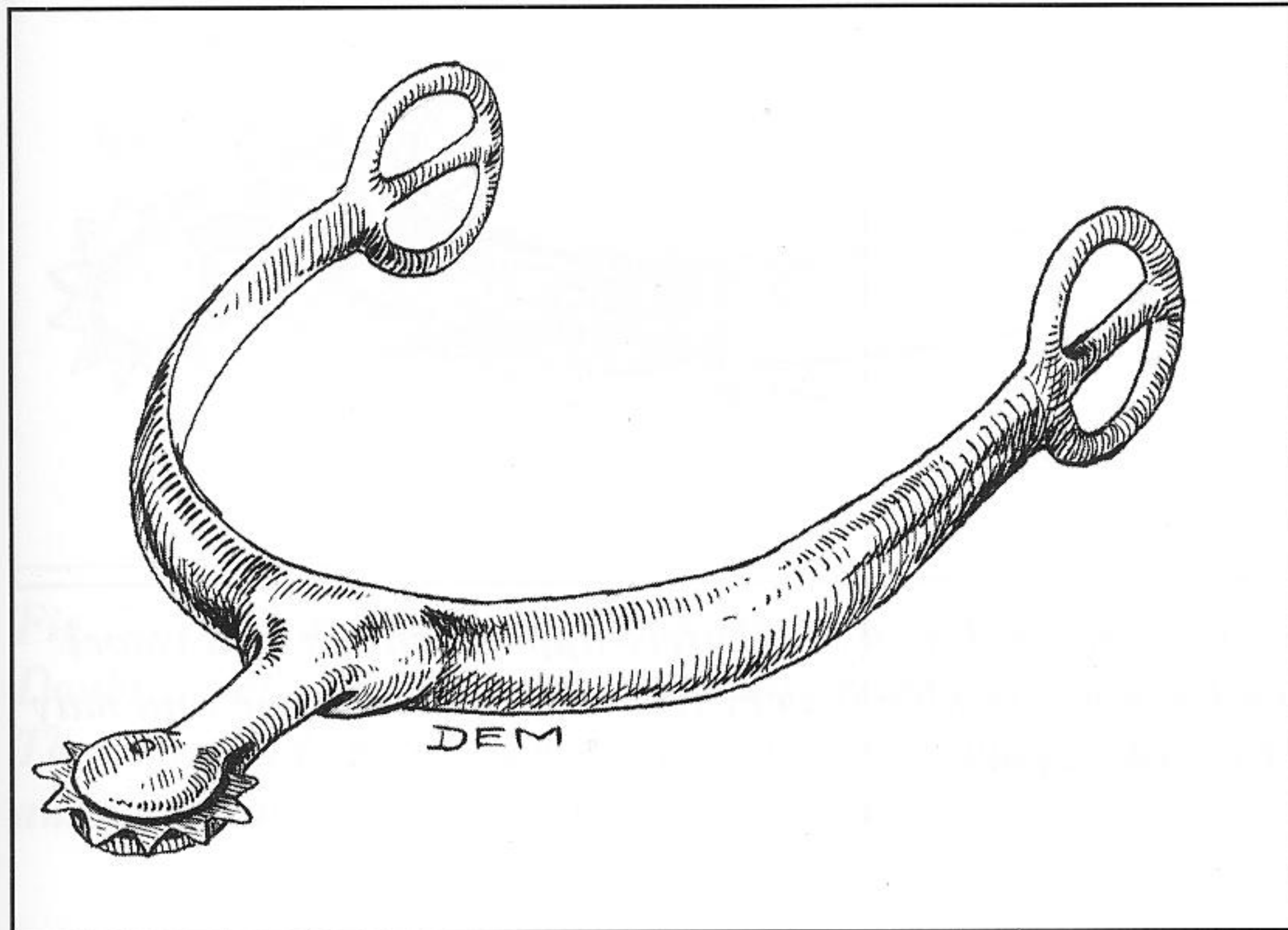


Fig. 1 - Probably of investment-cast brass, this spur was probably for an officer. The horizontal rowel and oval spur strap boxes are features that continued to recur in spurs for the next 200 years.



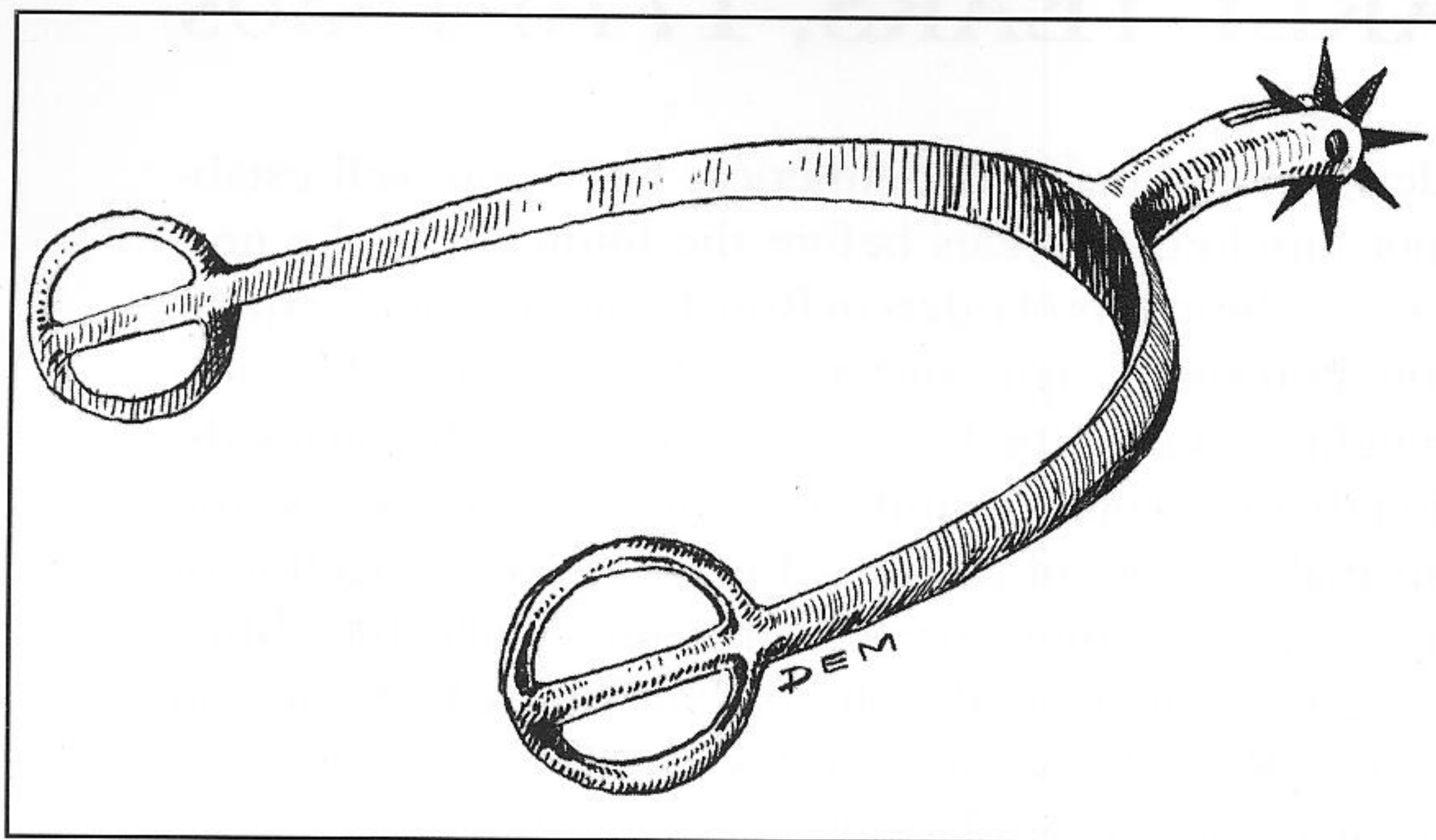


Fig. 2 - A very lightweight spur that was probably a commercial spur brought into military service by its officer-owner. It is not of robust design.

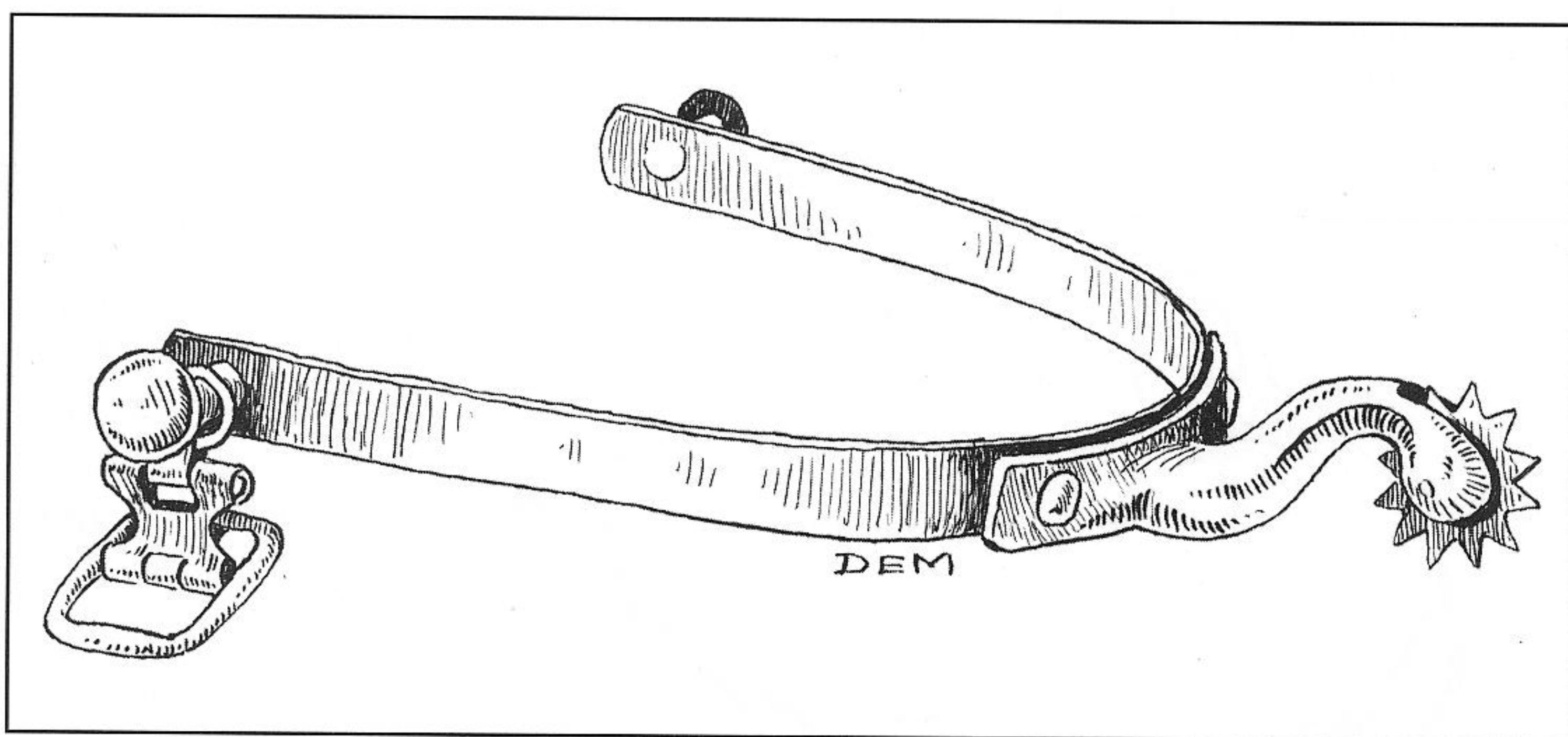


Fig. 3 - Probably an iron spur, this has a separately-applied shank and rowel assembly. The attached buckle assembly is very fine work for the time and may indicate a British or French import.



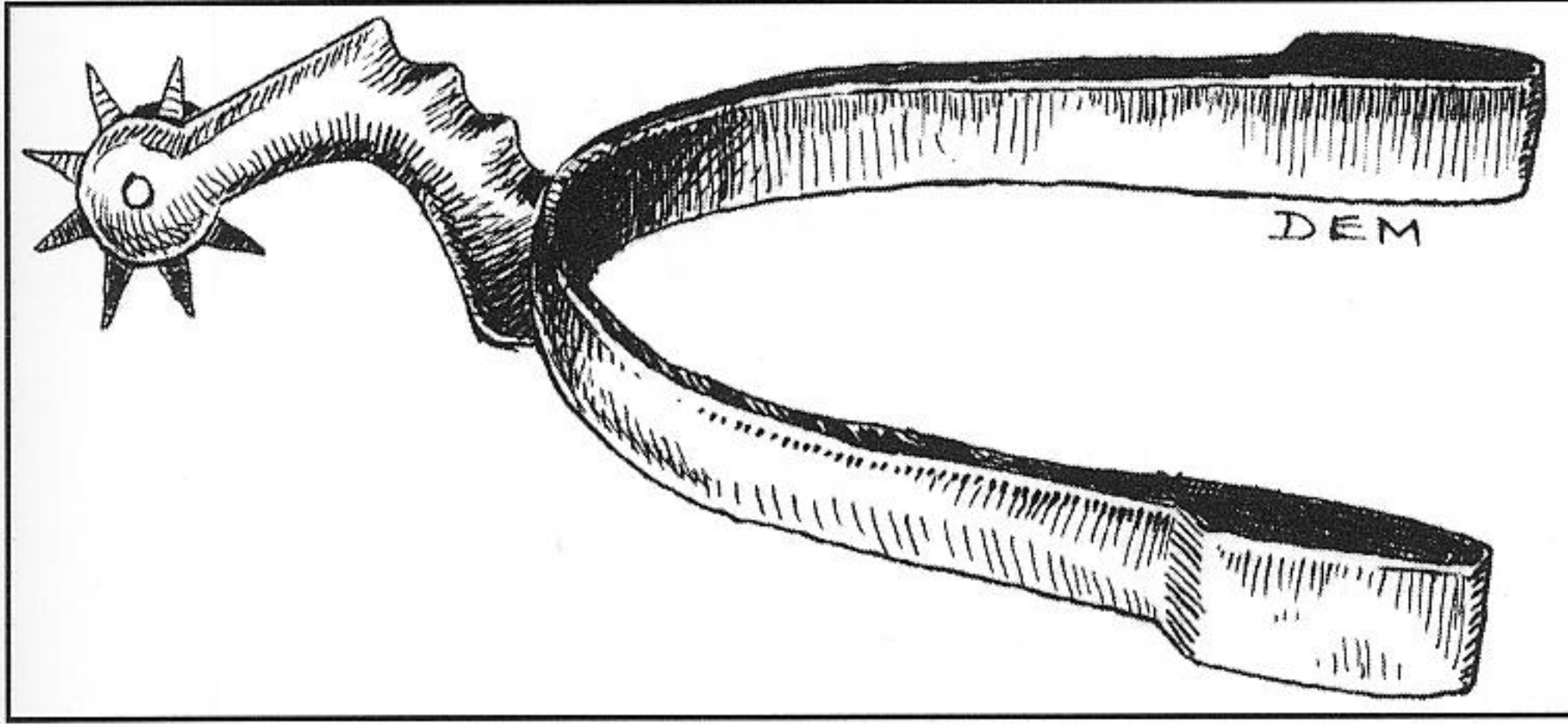


Fig. 4 - Probably of investment-cast brass, this spur has two interesting features: vertical cast-in spur strap slots and a "saw back" shank that continued as a popular style until after the War For Southern Independence.

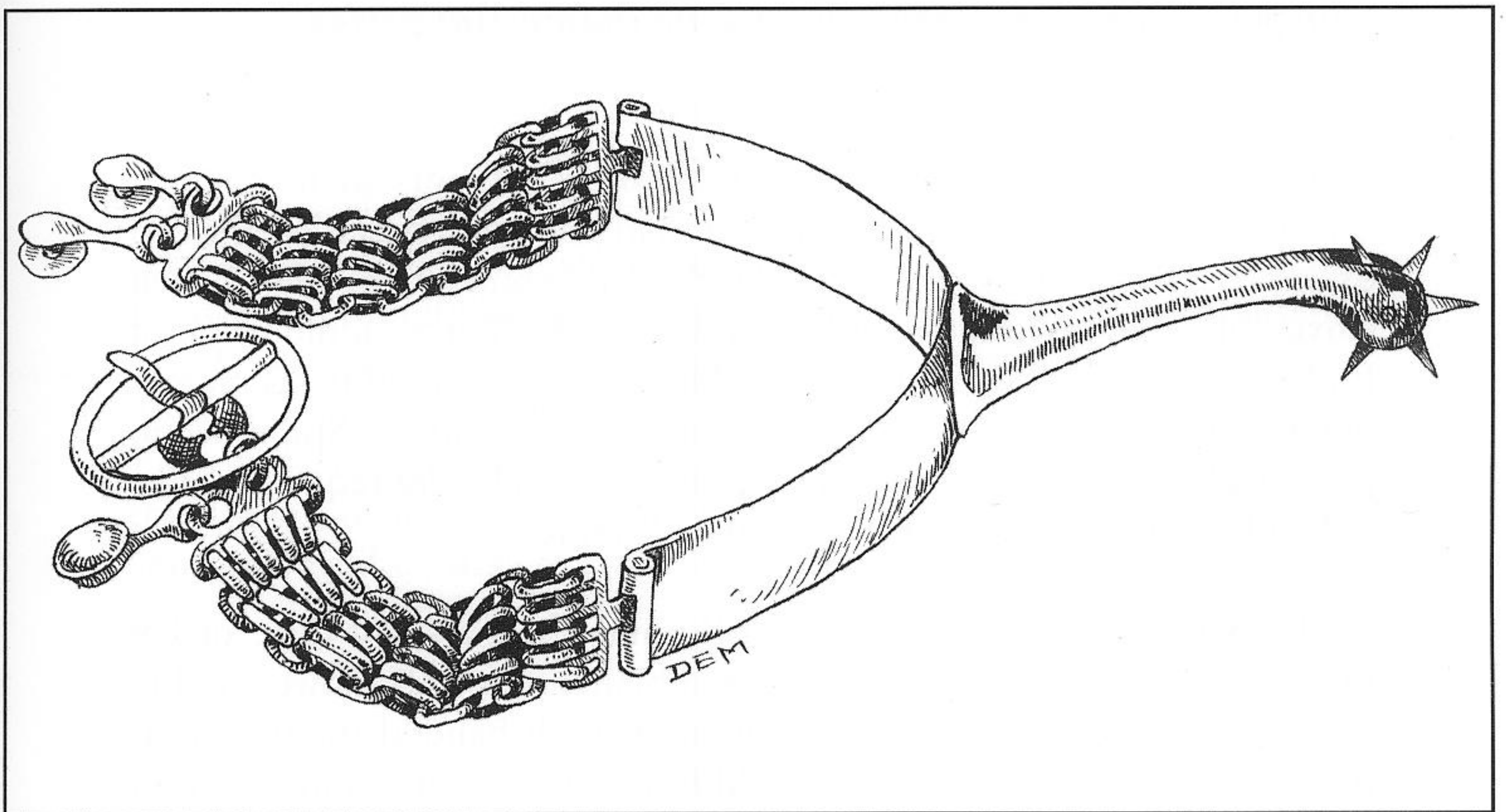


Fig. 5 - Of extremely complex design, these spurs exemplify the finest of the period. Doubtless of plated, investment-cast brass, the shank was forged separately. The chain side pieces were pretty but not robust. This style, imported from Britain and/or France continued to be popular with officers for many years.



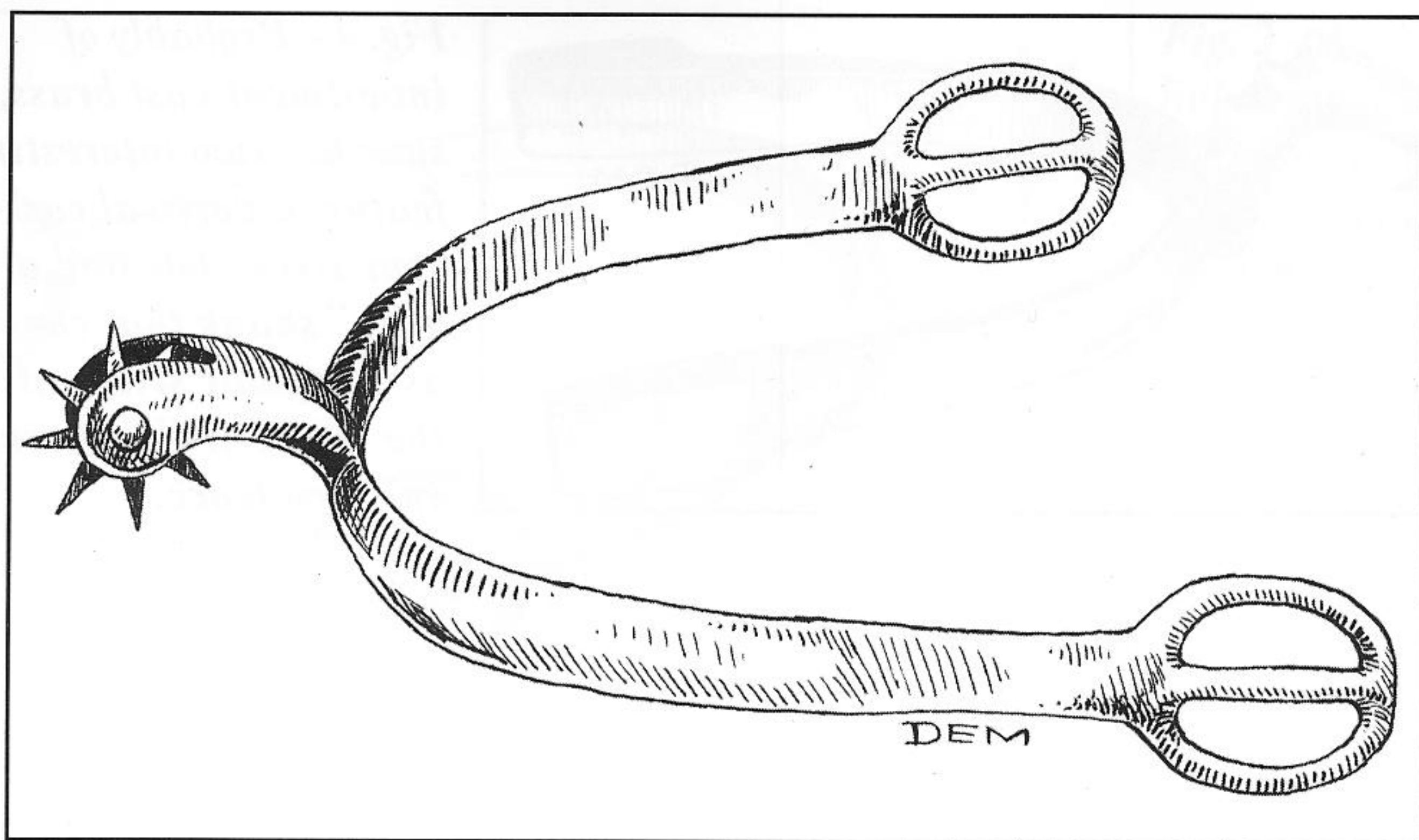


Fig. 6 - Probably brass, this early spur appears very contemporary with personal purchase spurs of the Late Indian War period.

Procurement of saddles and other, related equipments such as spurs, was specified as to type of article rather than a detailed specification. An example of this “type specification” is the 1812 contract between Tench Coxe, Purveyor of Public Supplies, and James Walker, a saddlemaker of Philadelphia, for horse equipments. The basic item, a saddle, is merely described as “One strong horsemans or trooper saddle”. Spurs, when purchased, got far less attention to their detail and were required, only, to be of a usable pattern and reasonably durable.

In the period between the War of 1812 and 1821, a small force of US Dragoons served as the army’s mounted branch. In 1821, however, due to government budget cuts, the dragoons were disbanded and the Frontier drew whatever protection it could from infantry units and mounted units raised locally for relatively local service. As would be expected, there was little standardization to many items of equipment, even within the small units - equipment being provided by the soldier himself. In summary, it can be seen that any early horsemans’ spur could be considered “military”. It would be a mistake to deny the historical and military importance of the commercial spurs pressed into service by the mounted militias, for those small units were the foundation of the mounted military strength of the Republic for many years.



THE DRAGOON PERIOD, 1830s - 1858

1833 DRAGOON SPUR 1841 DRAGOON SPUR GRIMSLEY PATTERN SPUR 1851 DRAGOON SPUR PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

In 1832, the federal government finally recognized that the increasing Frontier problems caused by white expansion into Indian lands required a more mobile military force than the infantry units committed to those several areas of friction. In particular response to the Indian forces under Black Hawk in western Illinois and to Indian threats in the Arkansas Territory, the federal government raised the United States Mounted Ranger Battalion, a 6 company, 600 man mounted unit for one year's service in the areas of greatest Indian threat. Somewhat similar to Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders 65 years later, the Mounted Ranger Battalion was drawn from the rough and ready civilian plainsmen, trappers, hunters and other outdoorsmen who populated the fringes of the Frontier. Each of these men brought all of their equipment including, if they used them, their own spurs. It is possible that, in that unit, no two pairs of spurs were alike - drawn as they were from every source imaginable.



THE 1833 DRAGOON SPUR (No authenticated specimen known.)

In 1833, recognizing the utility of a mounted military force, particularly with the daunting expanse of the Frontier, the federal government allowed the formation of the U.S. Regiment of Dragoons and began the phaseout of the Mounted Ranger Battalion. Overall management and recruiting for this new dragoon regiment was delegated to Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Kearny, a Regular Army officer. In one 22 April 1833 correspondence to the Assistant Quartermaster at the Philadelphia Clothing Bureau (Ref. 1), Kearney wrote the following spur-related request:

“Sir: Yours of the 18th was this morning received. Spurs made of Brass, plated in Iron will be more serviceable, & cheaper than others, & I prefer them. The Plate may wear off in time; but that is less objectionable, than the liability of Brass spurs to break.”

From this, it is apparent that Kearny mis-spoke himself and was intending to request iron spurs with brass plating since he goes on to note the “liability of Brass spurs to break.” (It should be noted that many later items of dragoon equipment such as stirrups and buckles were just as Kearny requested: brass-covered iron.) A few days later, the Army Adjutant General’s regulation for the uniform and horse equipments of the new dragoon regiment were released as the 2 May 1833, General Order No. 38. In that detailed order, the only notation related to the regulation spurs was, “Spurs - Yellow metal”. Whether this indicates that Kearny got his brass-plated, iron spurs or whether a decision was made to procure an all-brass or bronze spur is unknown. It is the author’s belief, however, based on known dragoon equipments from a somewhat later time, that the spurs adopted in 1833 were, indeed, iron with a brass plating or brass foil covering. While, at present, it is impossible to prove, I believe that the spurs were of the conventional, strap-retained variety and not the screw-retained variety adopted in 1841. I believe that, if Kearney had desired a spiked/screw-secured spur, he would have specified those characteristics since they were a departure from then-current designs.



THE 1841 DRAGOON SPUR

(No authenticated specimen known.)

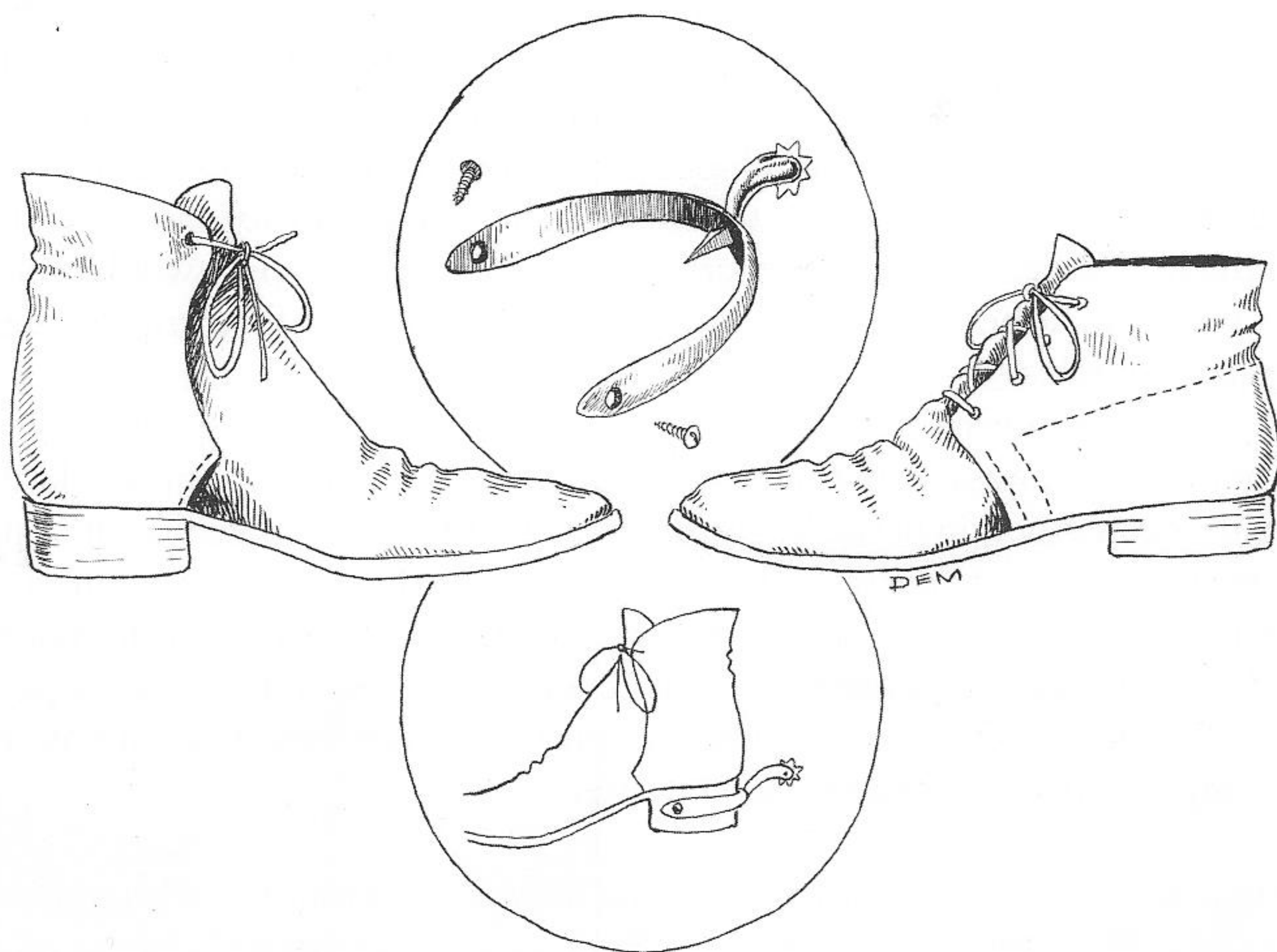


Fig. 1 - An artist's conception of the 1841 Spur, based upon existing but unauthenticated specimens. The ankle boot or bootee on the left was issued to dragoons and cavalry. The "Jefferson Boot" or bootee on the right was issued to all branches of the army and continued in service until about 1859.

The Ordnance Manual of 1841 describes the dragoon spur as follows:

"Spurs wrought iron, japanned black: the plate attached to the heel of the boot by a point behind and 2 screws at the sides - the shank - the rowel (steel)."



From this, it is clear that the spur was of the type that secured to the back and sides of the heel of the boot, therefore requiring no straps. Each spur had a small spike inside the inner curve and that drove into the heel of the boot. The tips of the two arms of the spur were secured to the sides of the heel by one screw on each side, making the attachment relatively permanent. The disadvantage of this system was its inflexibility and its reliance on the hold of the screws in the leather heel. If the heel became watersoaked, the side screws and the spike would tend to wear the softened leather and, eventually, to lose their grip in the enlarging holes.

Another weakness of the heel-spike design was related to the stacked leather construction of the heels themselves. Once the spike was driven into the heel (or set into a drilled hole), any up or down movement of the spur levered the spike against the stack of leather making up the boot heel. With wear and moisture, this leverage was certain to have separated the leather pieces in the heel - requiring the services of a bootmaker for repair. More will be said of this later.

Fig. 1 shows two types of boots, one of which is mounted with a spur in the 1841 manner. While the 1841 Spur shown is an artist's conception, an iron spur that fits the description of the Pattern 1841 was found on Bannerman's Island many years ago, wired to a Grimsley Saddle. (Fig. 2-4) While this is not iron-clad provenance, it suggests that the period of the saddle and of the attached spur were the same. Until the Pattern 1841 Spur can be positively identified, the spur shown in Fig. 2-4 gives the collector some concept of this rare pattern spur. It is important to note that, as shown in Fig. 2, the heel spikes of both spurs appear to have been purposely broken off - for reasons that will be discussed below.

In 1854-1856, a Military Commission to the Crimea was sent by the War Department to study various equipments and facilities of the European armies. One of the members of that Commission was the ambitious Captain George Brinton McClellan. Upon his return to the US in 1856, Captain McClellan, among many other items of military equipment, recommended the adoption of "Spurs to be screwed to the boot."



The recipient of the recommendation, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, had more military experience than the young captain and - on that specific recommendation - wrote to the Chief of Ordnance as follows (Ref. 20):

“As our cavalry must frequently act on foot moving in grass, brush and mud, there is an evident objection to the proposed mode of screwing the spurs to the boot. The necessity for allowing the spurs to rise when pressed underneath has led among the Mexicans to the abandon ment of the strap under the foot.”

This brief comment clearly indicates that the then-current US enlisted spur was not the screw-on type and is an excellent insight into the short life of the 1841 Spur.

Fig. 2

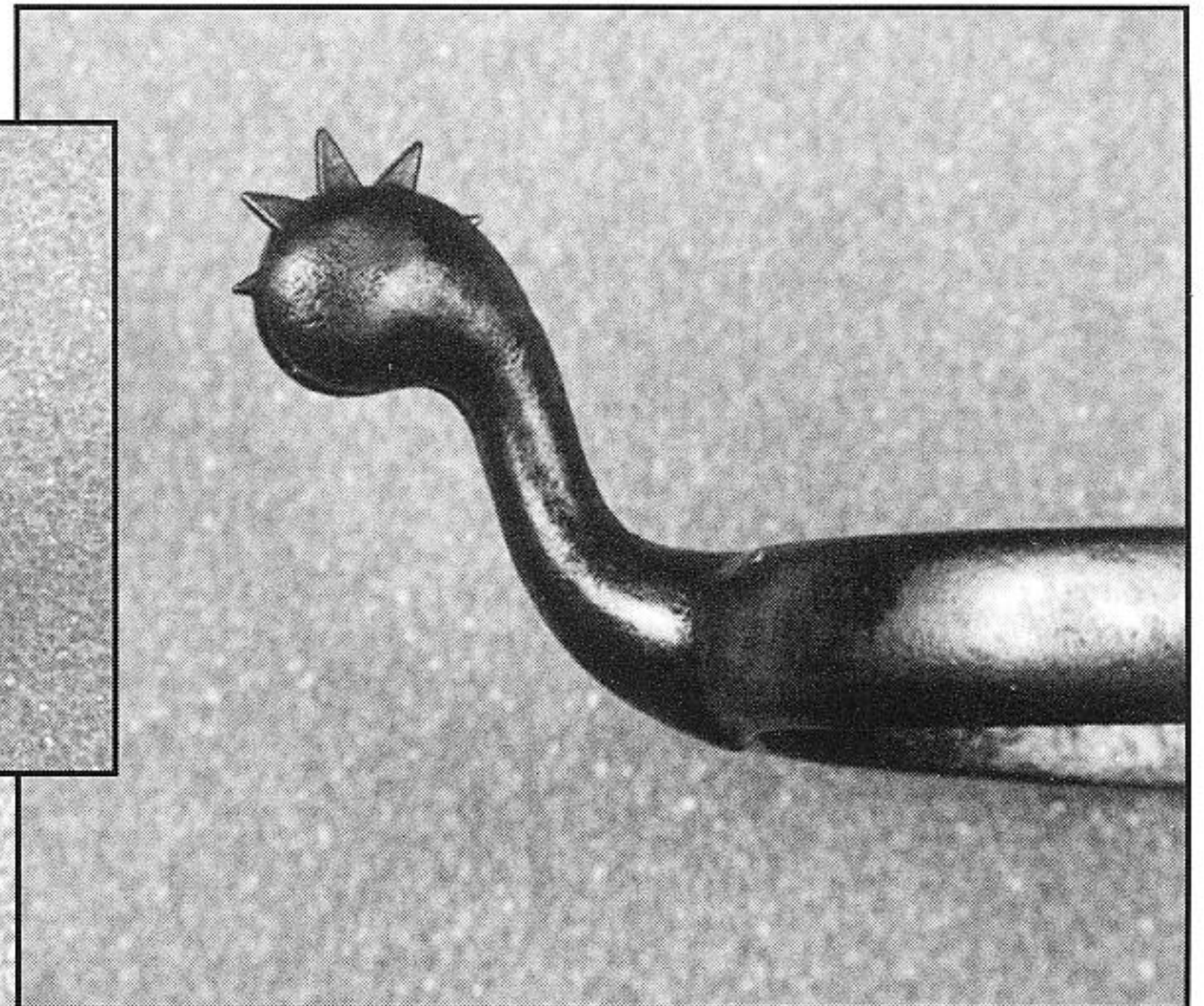
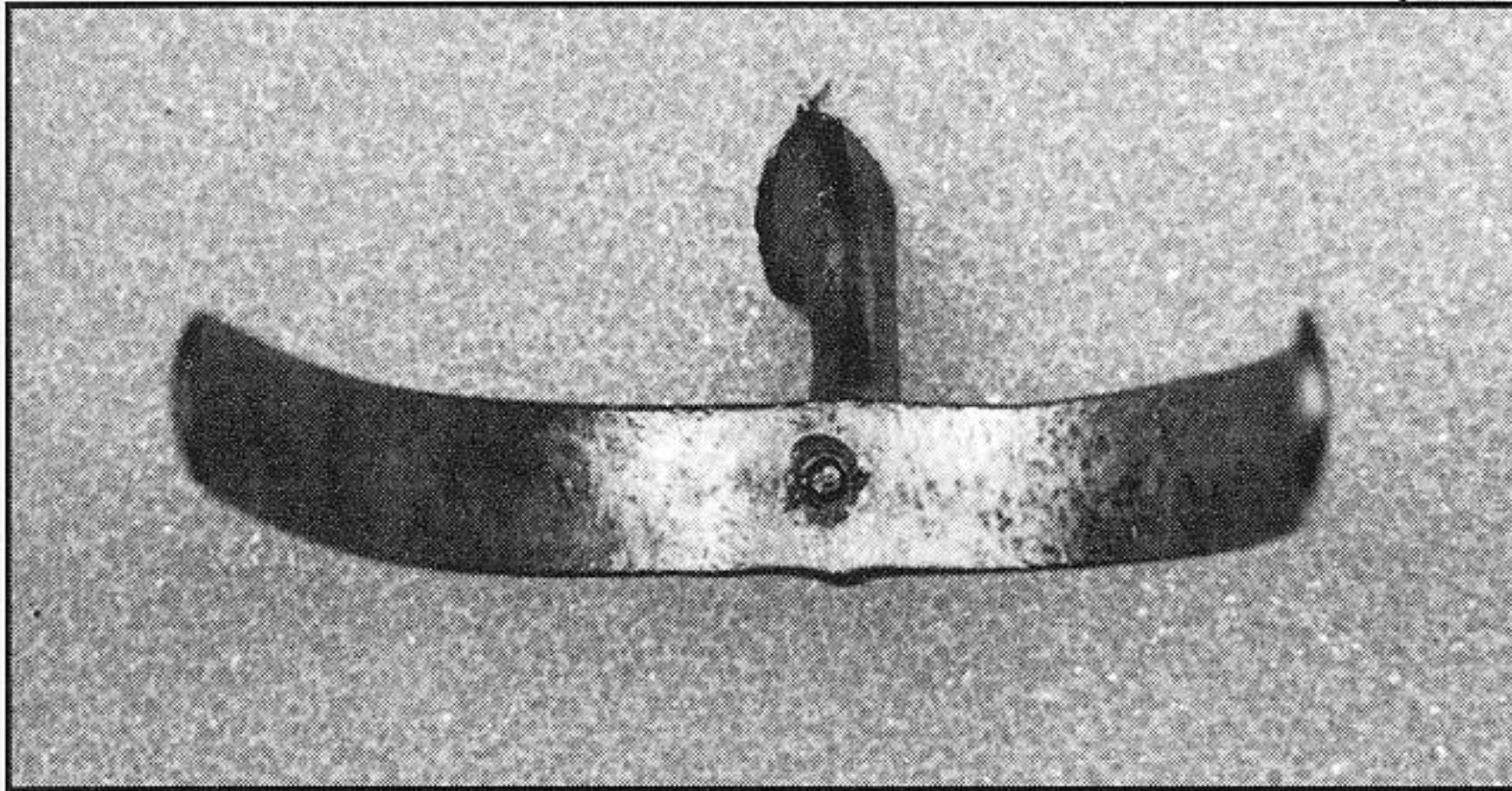


Fig. 3

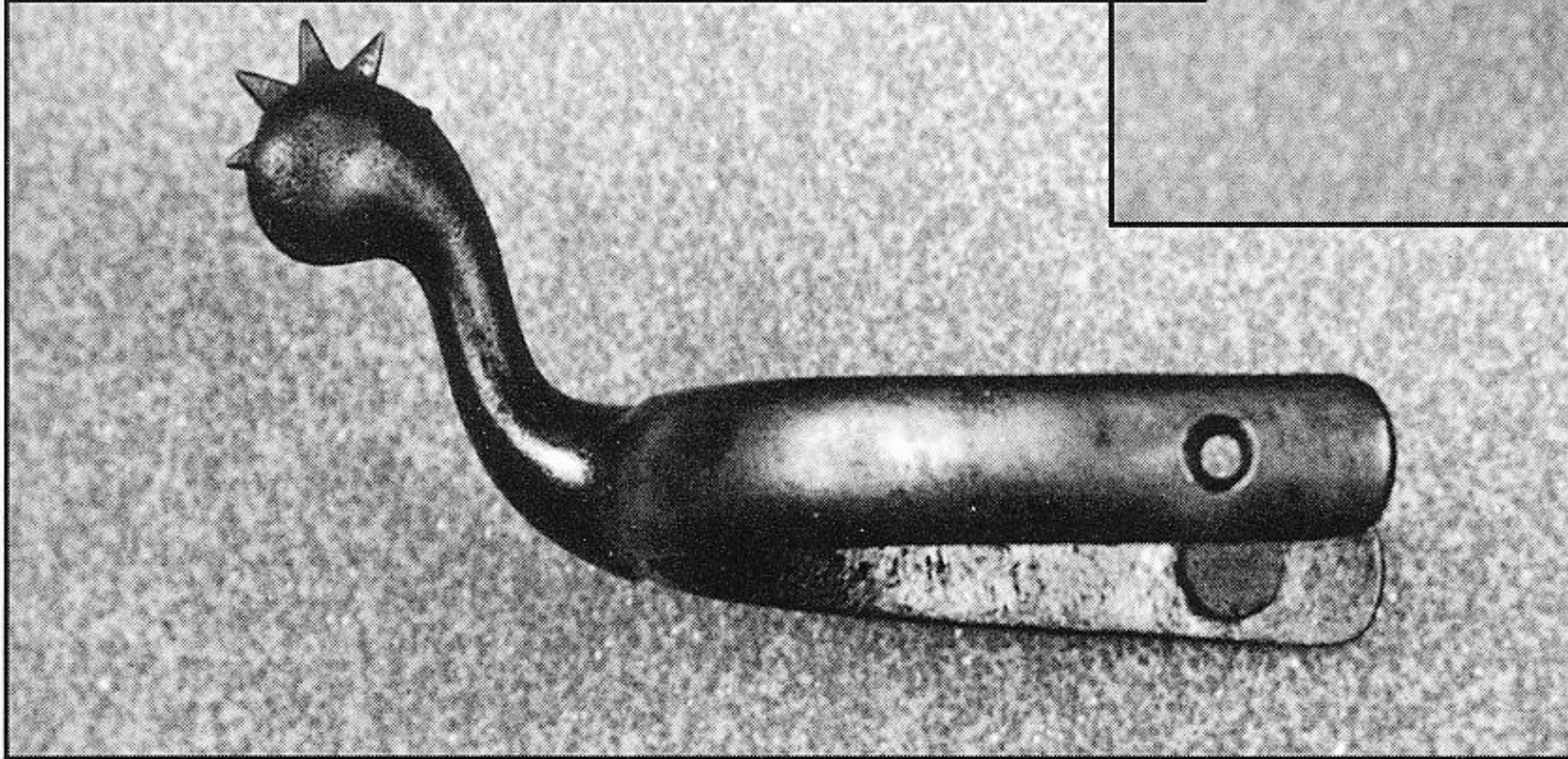


Fig. 4

Fig. 2-4 - Found many years ago on Bannerman's Island, wired to an 1847 Grimsley Dragoon Saddle, this spur is felt to be a specimen of the 1841 Dragoon Spur. Note that the heel spike was broken off (Fig. 2). The shank measures 1 9/16" in length and carries a coarse, 3/4" diameter iron rowel. A nearly identical spur was made much later and is shown in Personal Purchase Spurs on p. 44. Note that this later spur was probably in spur dealers' inventories well after 1890.



THE GRIMSLEY SPUR

In 1847, in response to the popularity of the new Grimsley Saddle with many dragoon officers, a special Cavalry Equipments Board met to review and approve a large number of items of horse equipments based upon "models presented for their inspection by Mr. Thornton Grimsley of St. Louis." (Ref. 2, Vol. 2) Included in this set of equipment were spurs of the Grimsley pattern. They are described as follows:

"Spurs - Of brass, corresponding in fashion with the model presented by Mr. Grimsley; the leather strap to be 3/4 of an inch wide. Fig. 11."

Randy Steffen cited the Cavalry Equipments Board report in detail and included a conceptual drawing of what he felt the spur might look like. The spur in the Steffen drawing is identical to the Pattern 1859 Spur, i.e. a common, roweled spur with two strap slots at the end of each branch and having a slightly curved shank or neck. The author has been unable to access this original report of the Cavalry Equipments Board and, so, cannot determine if the drawings that once accompanied that report are still with it and whether the spur shown in Steffen's work is identical to the report's "Grimsley Spur". At this point, the reader is left with two significant questions: First, was the Grimsley Pattern Spur adopted on the basis of the the board's recommendation? and, second, if adopted, was that spur put into production? The only evidence available to date, the 1851 Army Uniform Regulations, indicates that a new spur design (no screws nor heel spike) was adopted but it is unknown whether it was of Grimsley design nor when it was produced. The 1851 Army Uniform Regulations described the new spurs simply as:

*"SPURS - For all Mounted Officers - yellow metal, or gilt.
For all Enlisted Mounted Men - yellow metal, according to pattern."*



This wording suggests that officers could wear about any spur as long as it was of yellow metal or gilt. For mounted enlisted personnel, however, a pattern had been established and was shown in the 1851 military supply catalogue of William H. Horstmann & Sons of Philadelphia. This influential firm was, at the time, the premier supplier of military uniform articles and related equipments. Their illustrated catalogue of the new 1851 uniforms and equipment, included the Grimsley Saddle, saddle cloths, bridle, bridle bit, halter, girth - and enlisted spur. The artist's rendition of the spur in Fig. 5 may be the Grimsley Spur proposed in 1847, but until the original 1847 Cavalry Board's drawings are found, this is only a theory. Each illustrated page of the 1851 Horstmann catalogue noted by the author was hand-inscribed "Official - A. Jones - Washington - Adjutant Genl. - June, 1851", indicating that the equipage shown was, indeed, the official pattern for each article.

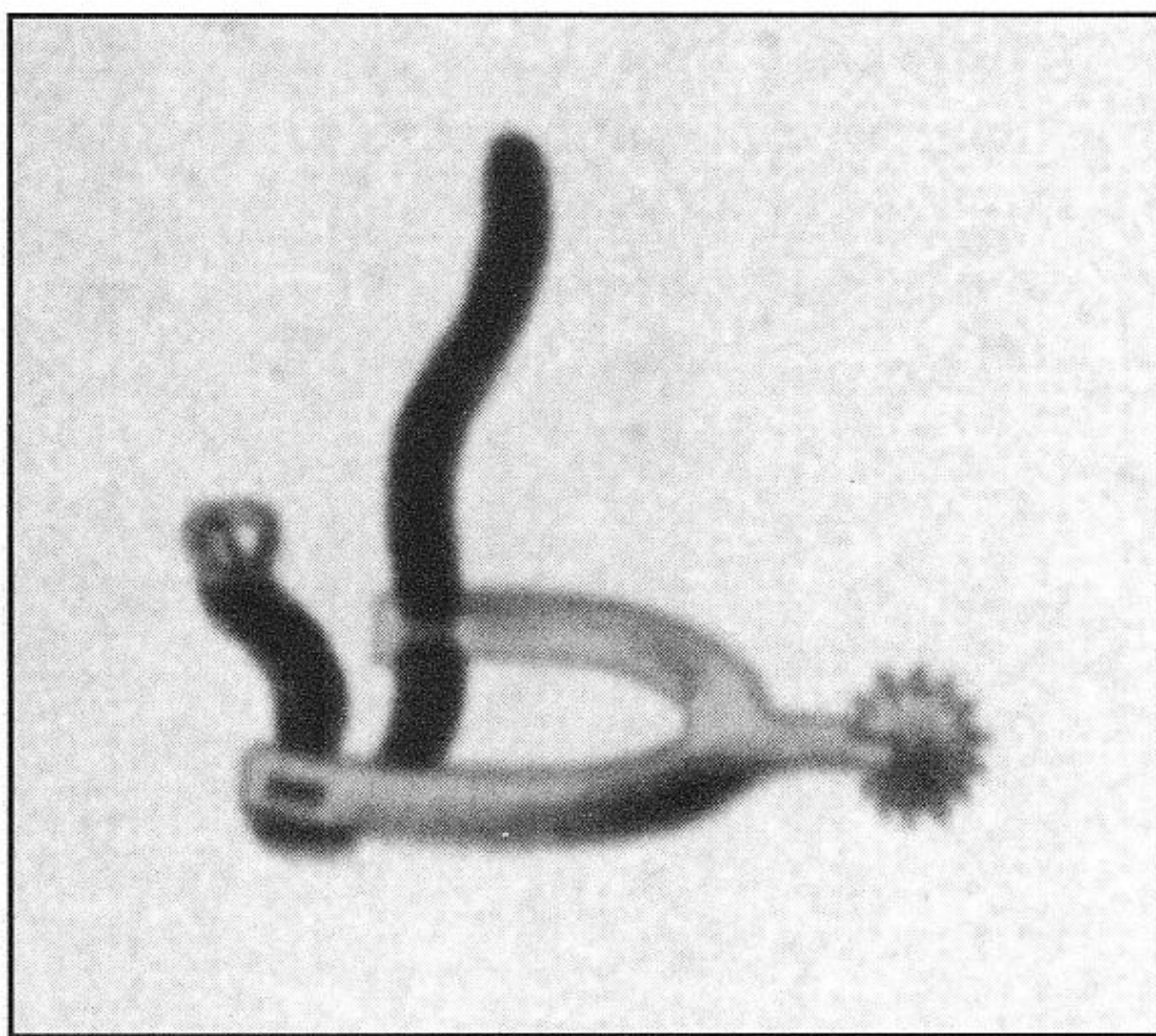


Fig. 5 - No spur of this exact configuration is known and it is the author's opinion that this drawing is an inaccurate artist's conception of a generic spur of the period. Whether it was based on the "Grimsley Spur" or not is unknown. By 1859, a markedly different spur was adopted for the mounted services.



The detail of the other articles drawn on the catalogue page with the spur are identical to known specimens of those items - from the exploded view of the Grimsley Saddle tree to the bridle bit and reins. This supports the possibility that the drawing of the simple spur also reflects the actual article in service or adopted in 1851. If that is the case, the spur itself differs greatly from the mass-produced Pattern 1859 that followed it eight years later. First, the 1851 Spur drawing does not have the well-defined, angular spur strap box adopted in 1859 and used for many years thereafter. The 1851 Spur strap slots are cast into what appear to be oval enlargements of the ends of the spur yoke. Second, the shank of the spur is definitely straight - unlike most of the patterns that followed it until 1911. Finally, the rowel appears much larger than later rowels. In the last analysis, however, it is the author's contention that the spur illustrated is not a true rendition of the actual spur in service or adopted for service in 1851. I believe that the drawing is more "generic" in nature, reflecting a brass spur set up for a spur strap and having an extended neck with a rotating rowel. Absent any spurs identical to the drawing shown, I doubt seriously that exact spur in the drawing was ever manufactured - but I do believe that the enlisted spurs actually produced were similar. Without a specimen of an identical spur to confirm the drawing, it would be impossible for a collector today to be sure that he did or did not possess a true Pattern 1851 Spur. And, without the 1847 drawings, confirmation of that pattern is also impossible.



PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

The following selection of spurs of the designs that could be purchased during the period of the 1830s - 1858 is, by no means, exhaustive. All officers at that time, generally, were mounted but only a fraction of the army's enlisted was mounted. For that reason, in the period specified, officers' spurs and enlisted spurs were probably of about the same number. Depending, however, upon the rank and wealth of the officer, almost any officer could wear almost any spur design he desired as long as it satisfied the finish requirements of his branch of service (yellow for dragoon or cavalry, silver for infantry, etc.) During this period, spurs fell into several broad design categories: strapped, strapped and chained, screwed-on and screwed and spiked-on. What the collector must remember is that these designs were almost all found in earlier times and, certainly, were for sale long after 1858 (as will be noted below). Two examples of a long-lasting design career are the two screw-on spurs (Fig. 7) in the 1922 Buerman Catalogue. Identical designs could be found in the 1830s and 1840s, so the collector should consider this as he procures specimens for his collection.



Fig. 6

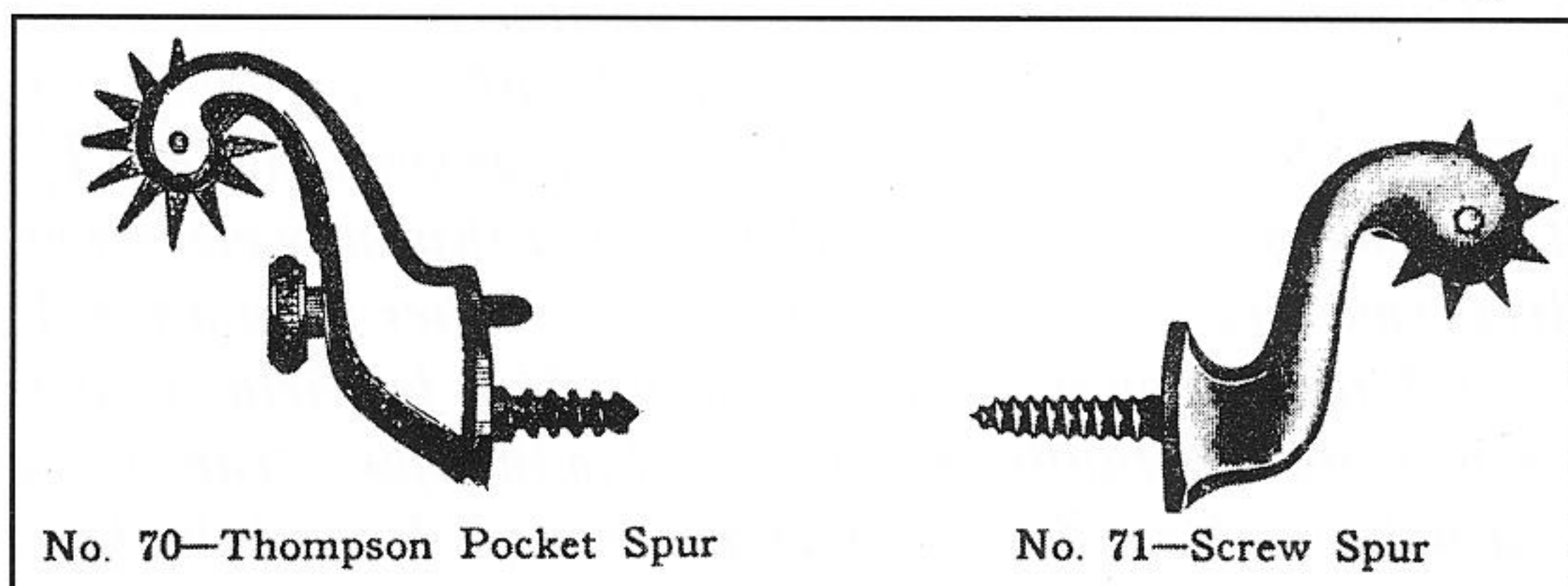


Fig. 7



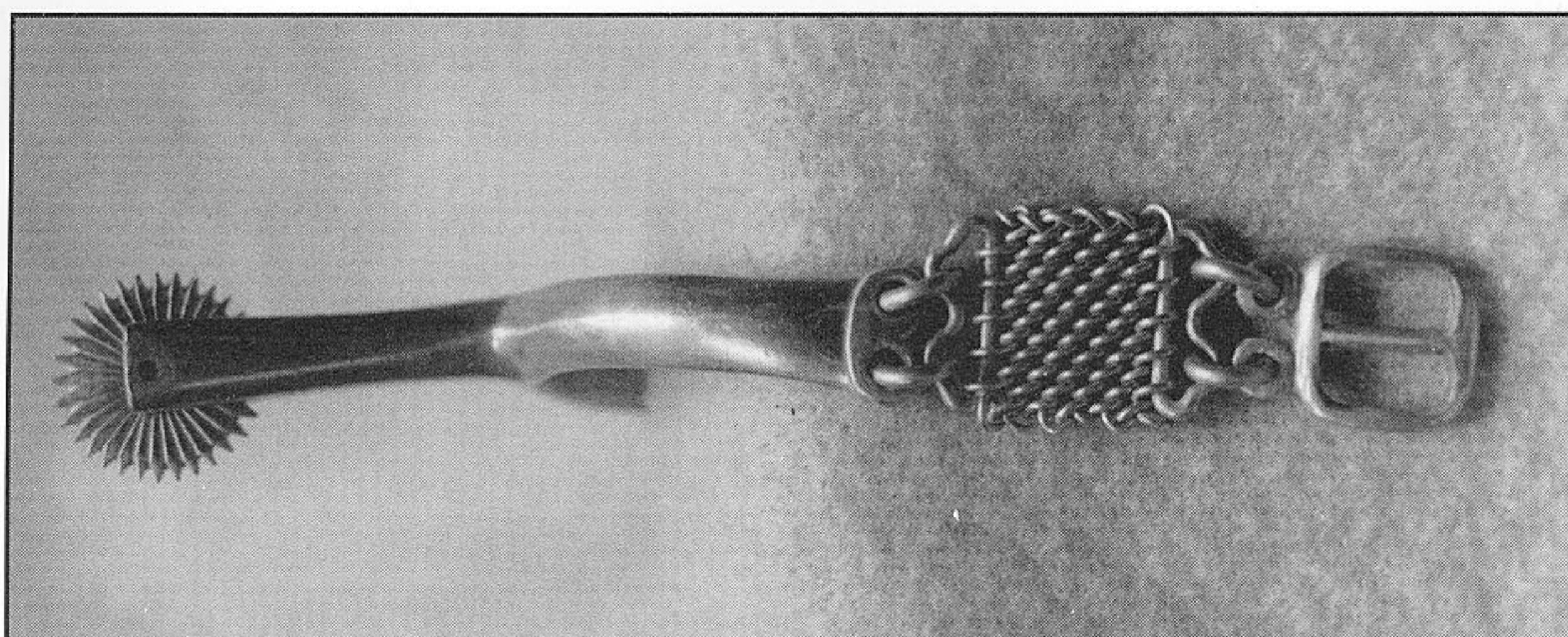


Fig. 8

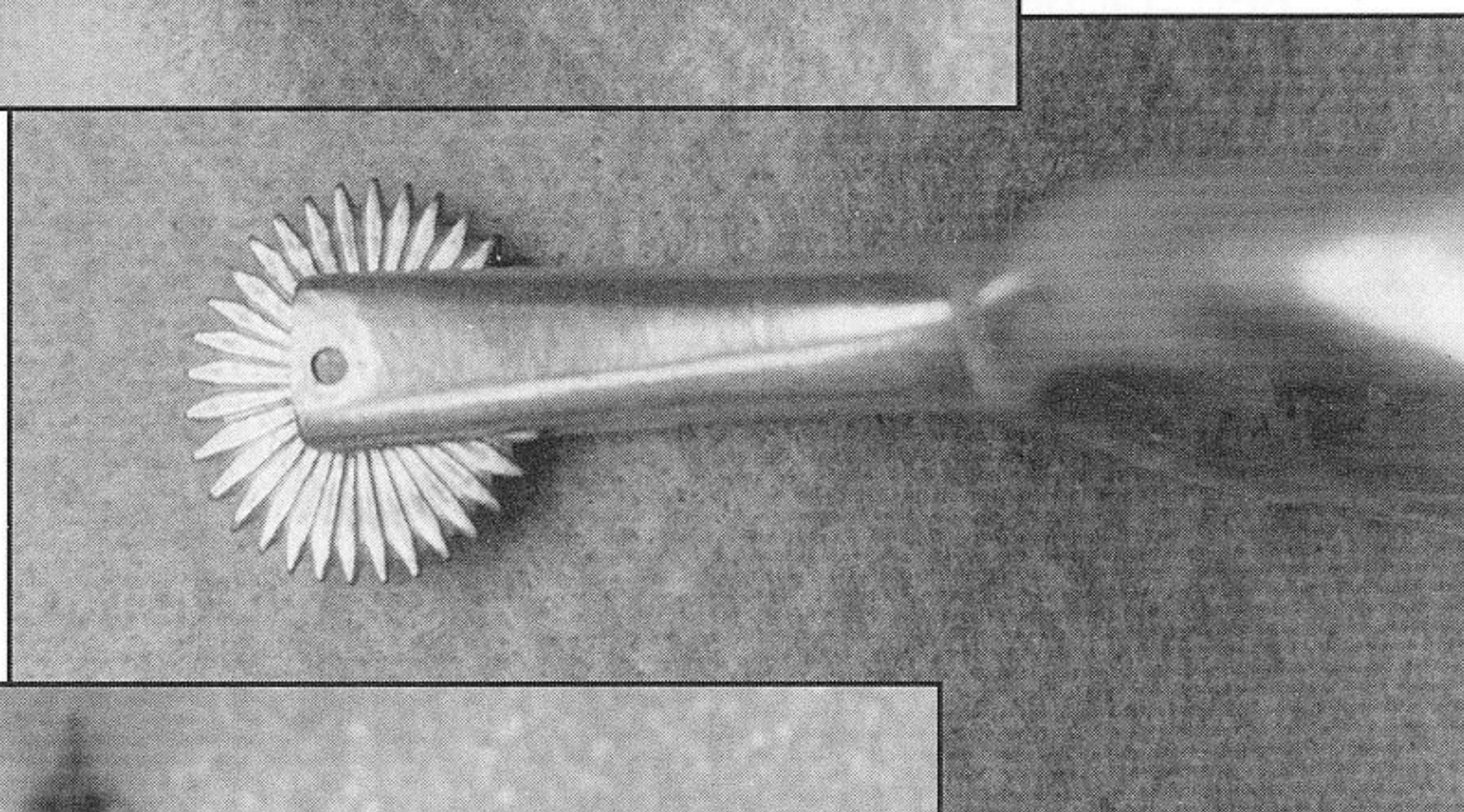


Fig. 9

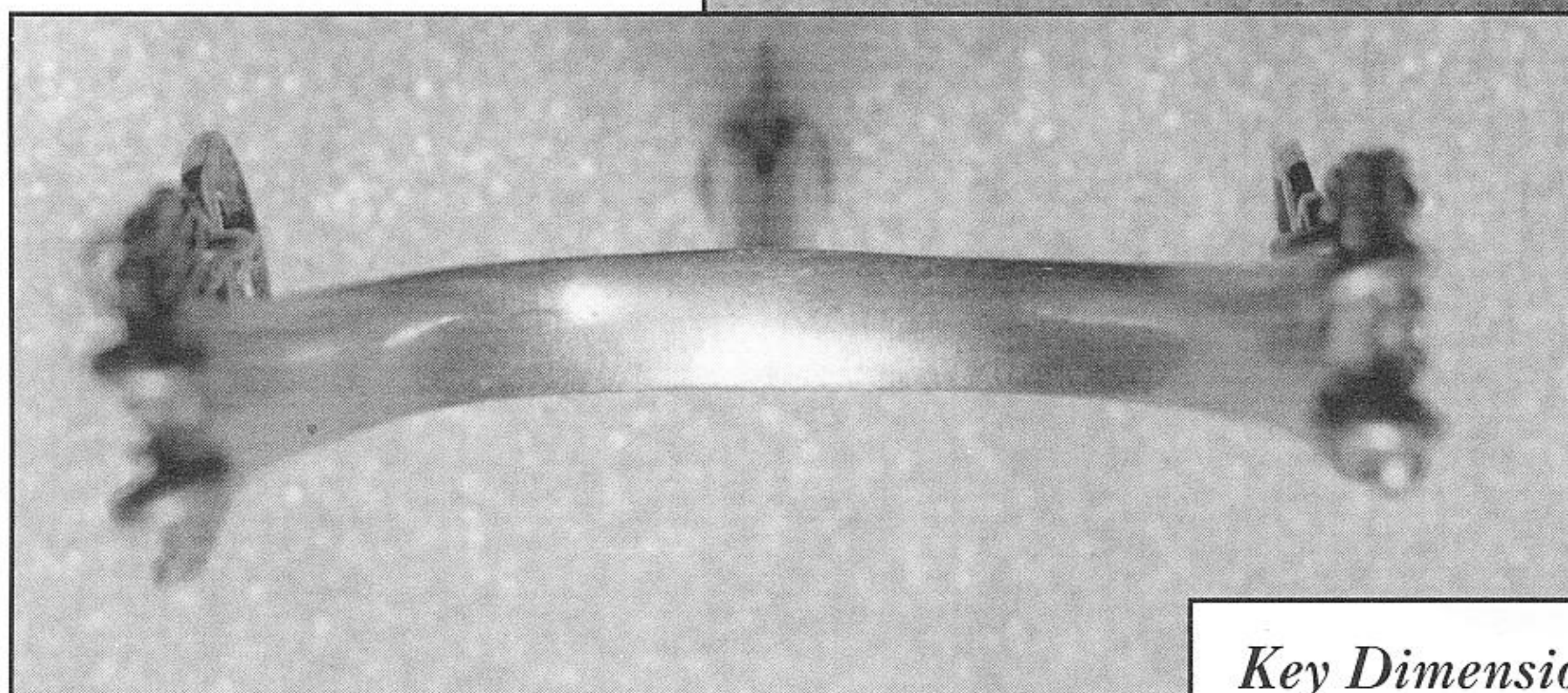


Fig. 10

*Key Dimensions:
Length of shank, less rowel: 1.76"
Diameter of rowel: 0.825"*

Fig. 8-10 - Possibly English-made, this beautiful, unmarked, gold-plated brass spur is typical of the spurs personally purchased by officers at least as early as the 1830s. A nearly-identical spur is shown in the drawings showing the "Uniform of the U.S. Corps of Engineers" through 1851 (Ref. 23) but this may merely be indicative of the type of dress spur preferred by that elite corps rather than a regulation spur. While quite graceful, the design is not sufficiently robust for field or everyday service in that the spur body is actually only attached to the spur strap slots by eight tiny chain loops - four holding the ends of each chain section. It is likely that this type of spur continued to be used by officers at least through the War Between the States.



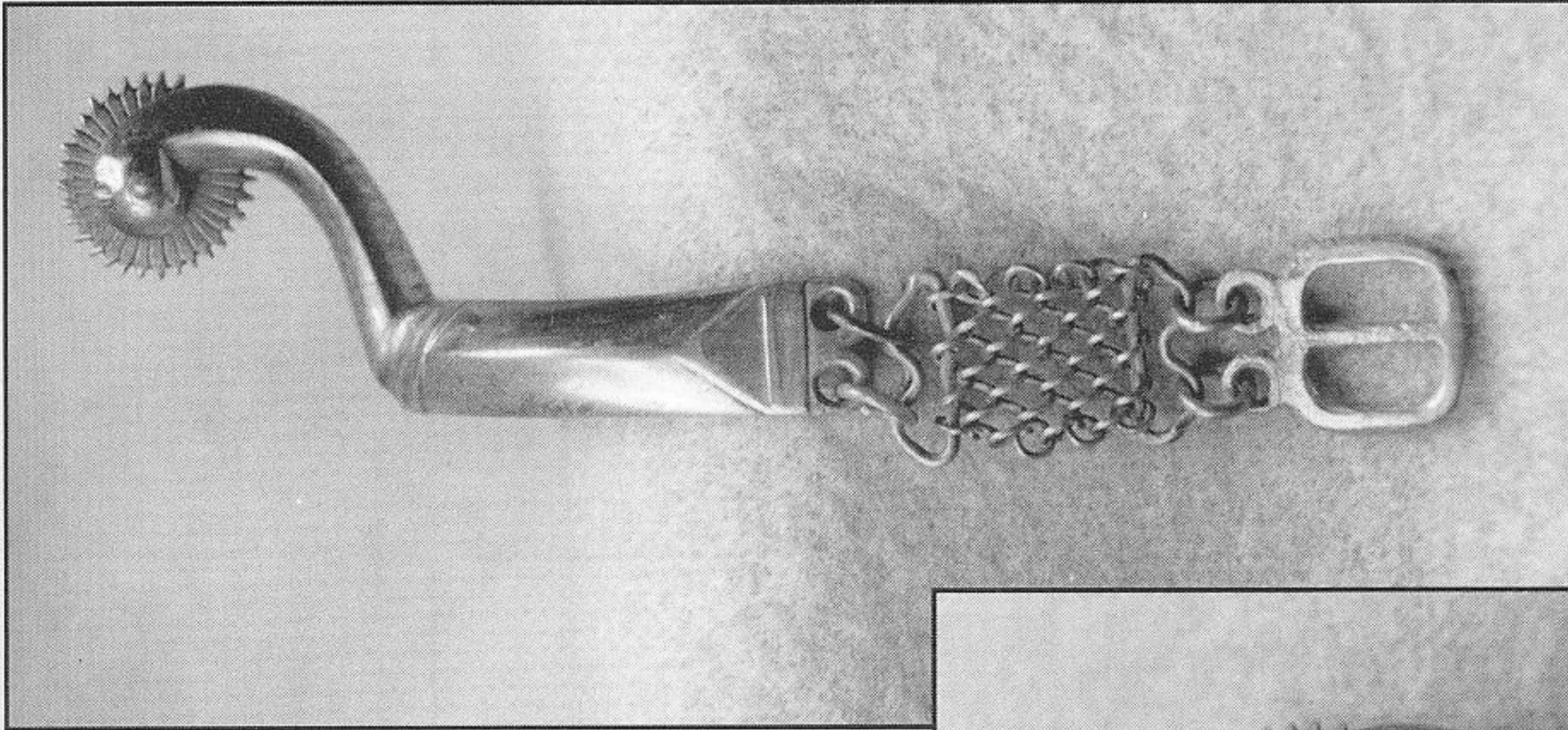


Fig. 11

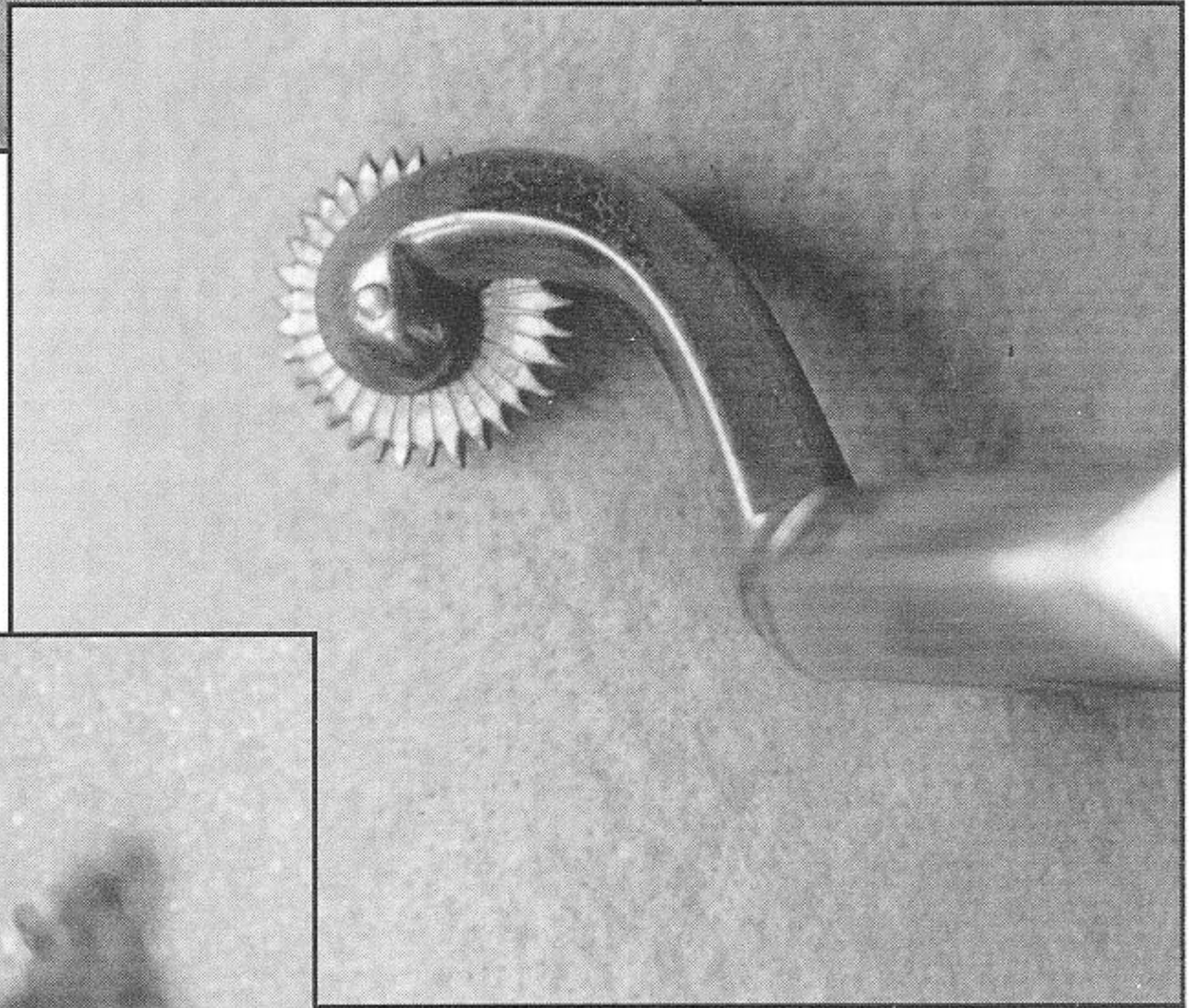


Fig. 12

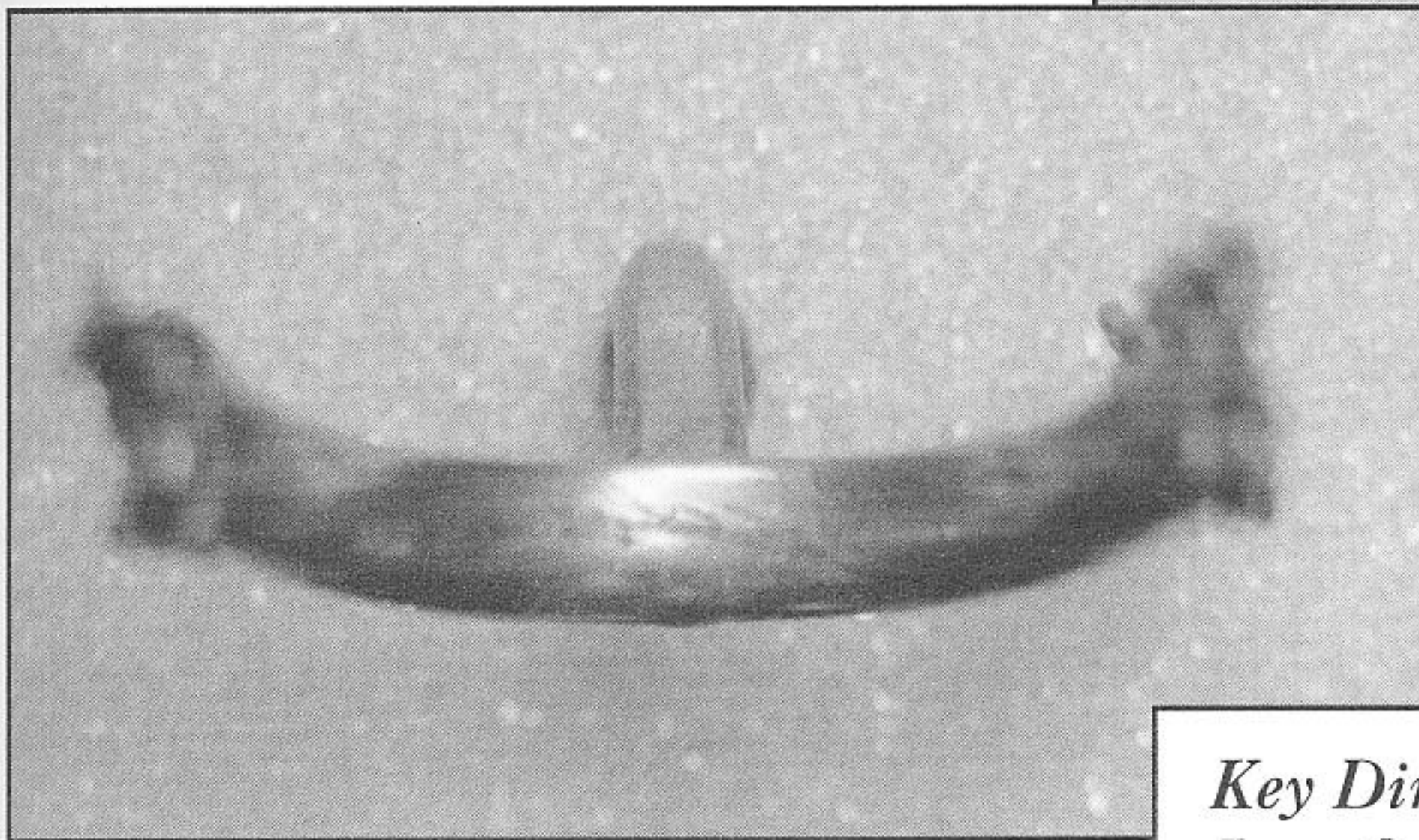


Fig. 13

Key Dimensions:
Length of shank, less rowel: 1.473"
Diameter of rowel: 0.825"

Fig. 11-13 - Another, probably English-made dress spur. Also gold-plated and unmarked, the similarities between this spur and the other shown indicate the same maker and period.



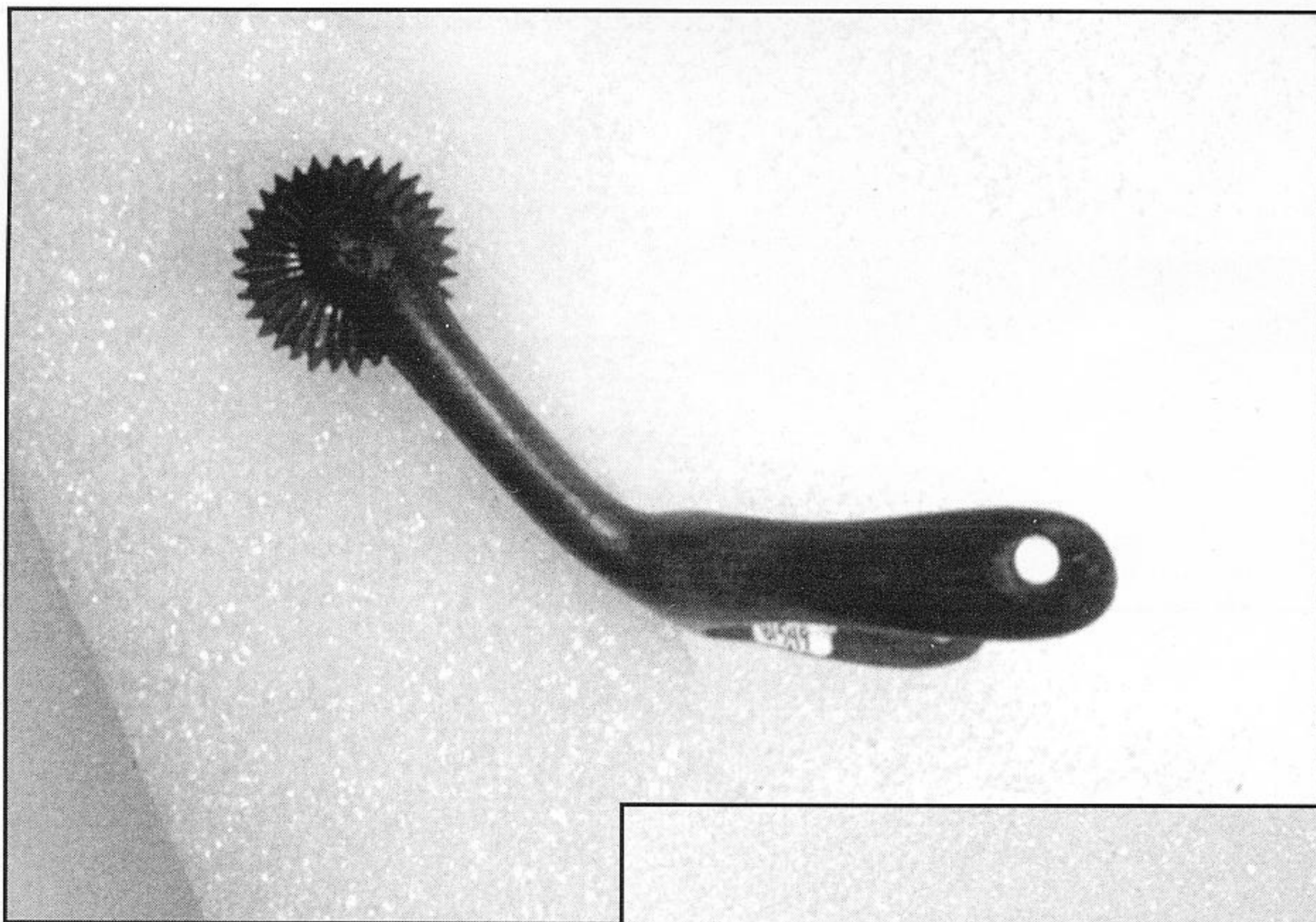


Fig. 14

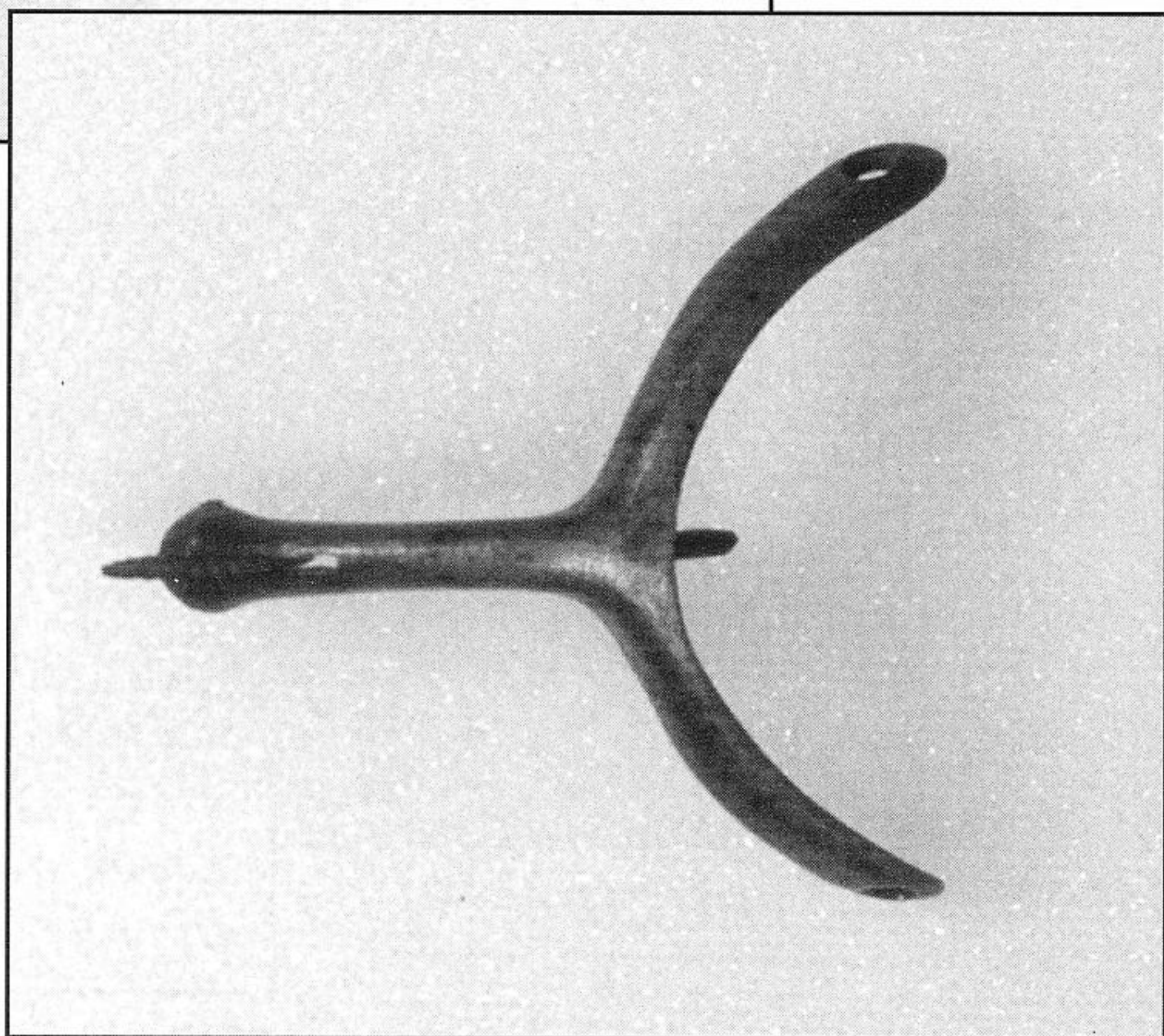


Fig. 15

Fig. 14 & 15 - From the Frontier Army Museum of Ft. Leavenworth KS, comes this silver-plated brass officers' spur. Of the early screw-and-spike-attached type, the silver plating indicates use by an infantry officer. The shank measures 1 3/4" in horizontal length. The rowel measures 3/4" in diameter and the heel spike measures 7/16".



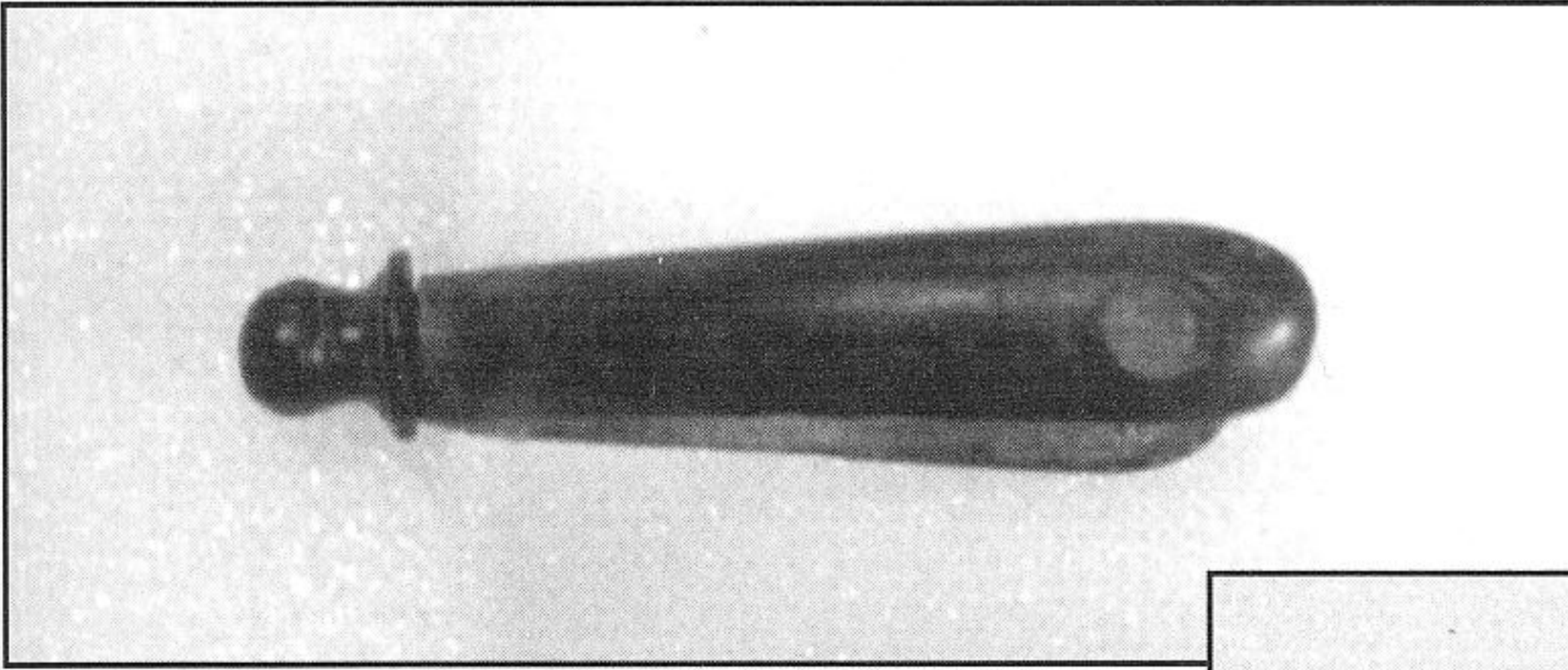


Fig. 16

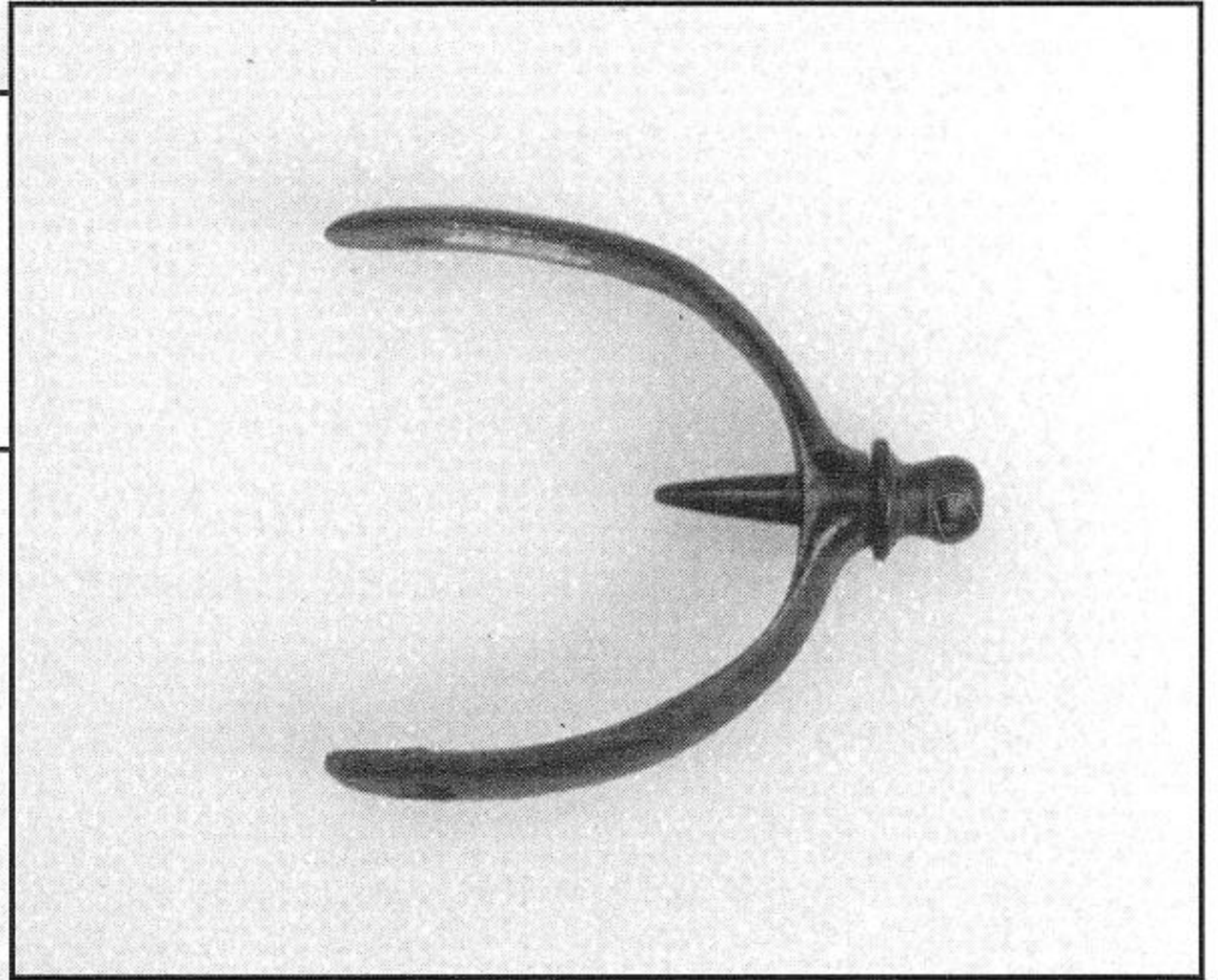


Fig. 17

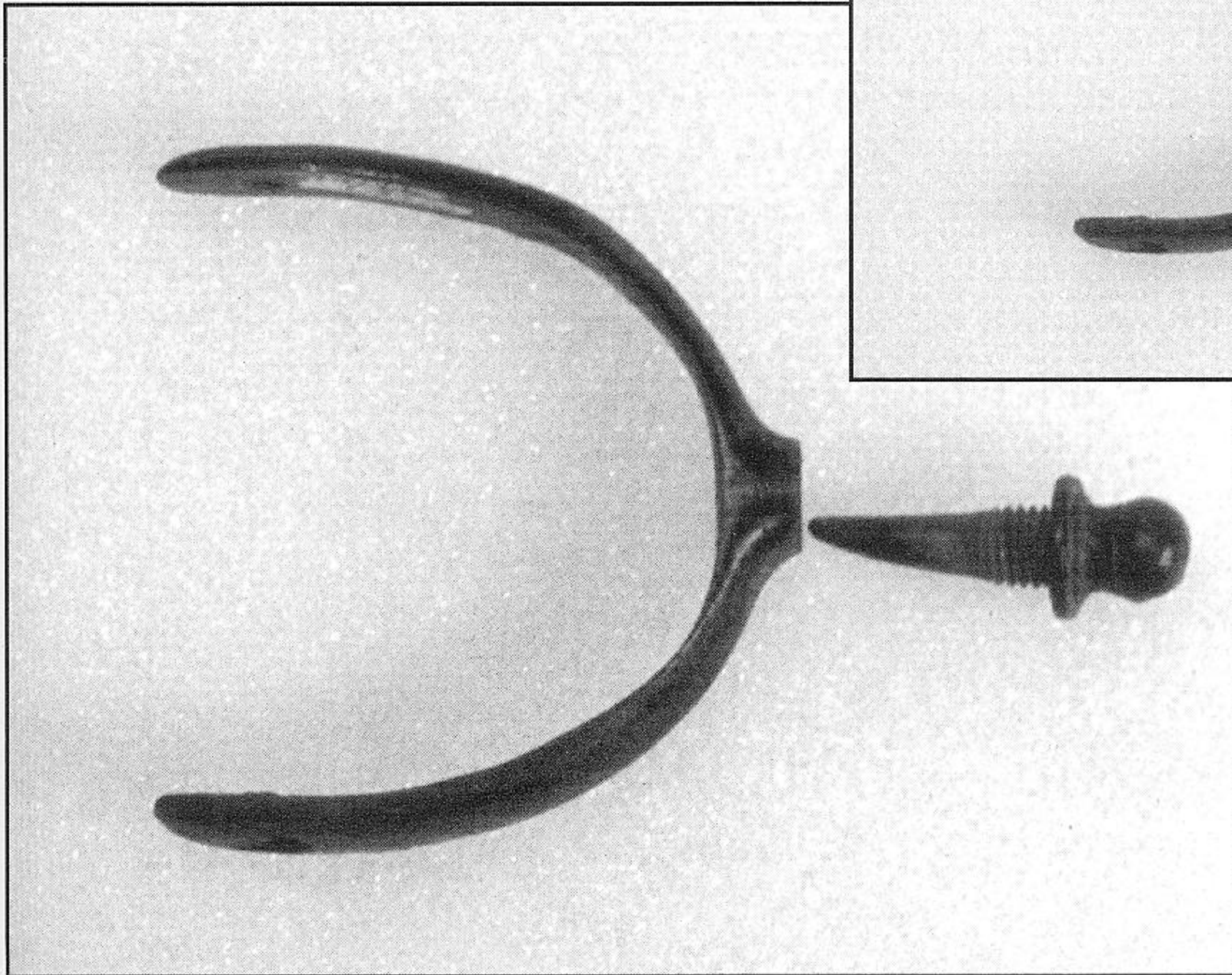


Fig. 18

Fig. 16-18 - A scarce "ball" or "stud" spur of white metal. Of the screw-and-spike-attached type, the heel spike is threaded and screws into the curve of the spur body, then into the back of the boot heel. The bulb-shaped knob is slotted to take a screwdriver bit. When assembled, the shank of the spur measures $\frac{3}{4}$ " in length. Also when assembled, the heel spike extends $\frac{5}{8}$ " from the outside of the spur body. The bulbous stud or knob measures $\frac{5}{16}$ " in diameter.



THE WAR YEARS, 1859 - 1871

THE PATTERN 1859 SPURS PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

THE PATTERN 1859 SPURS

The Pattern 1859 Spur is one of those items of equipment that, even at its time of use, was taken very much for granted - pretty much as it is today. Collectors generally recognize that there are embellished officers' patterns and, of course, the "plain Jane" enlisted pattern. The truth of the matter is, however, significantly different and this more refined definition of the subject may send collectors back to shows and dealers looking for these variations.

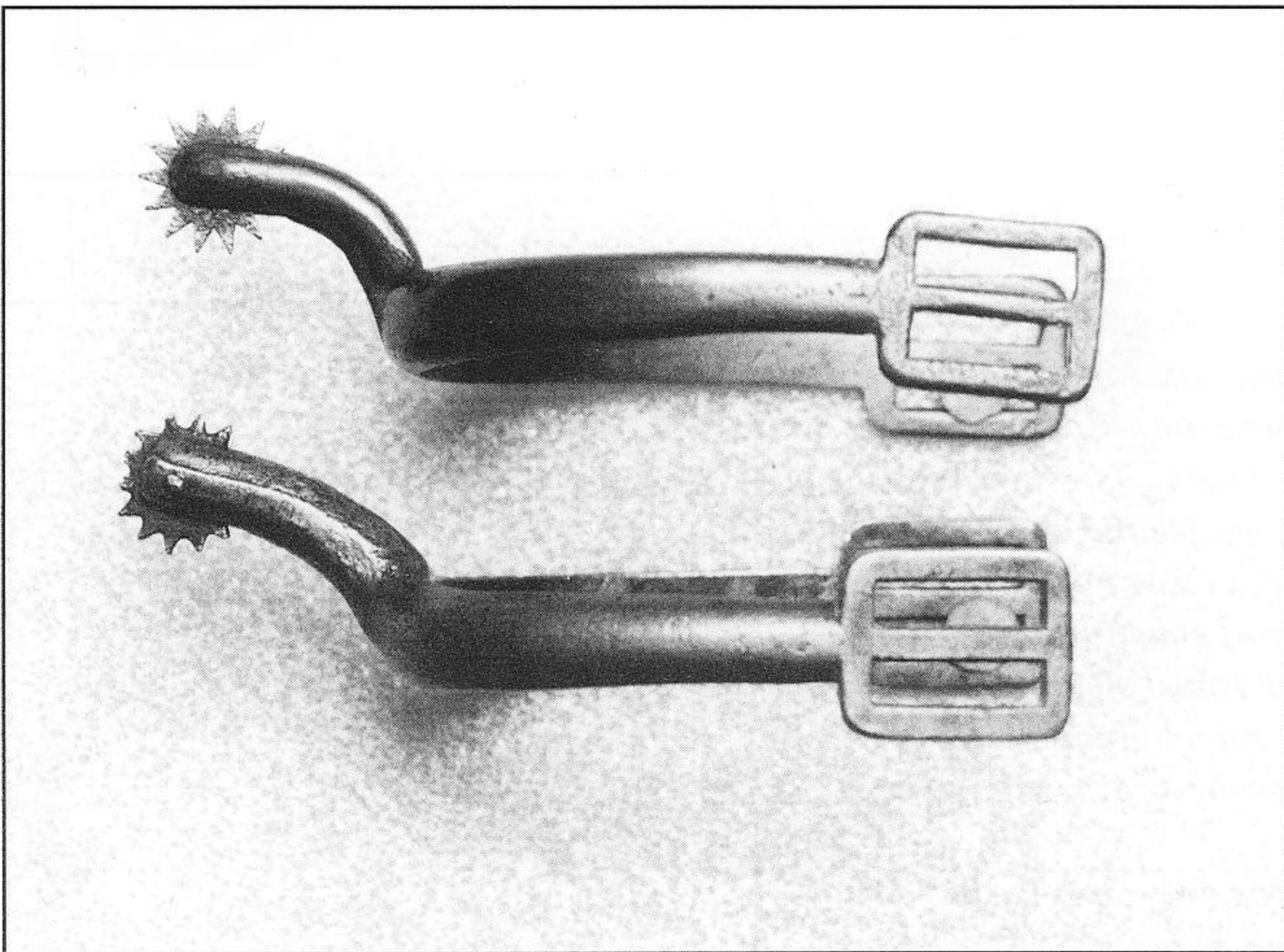


Fig.1 - The two basic variations of the Pattern 1859 Spur. Above - the more delicate Early Pattern with its more horizontal shank. Below - the heavier Late Pattern 1859 Spur with its more continuous arc shank.



There are three broad, initial guidelines: First, it appears that there are two distinct variations of the Pattern 1859 Spur: an Early Pattern and a Late Pattern (the latter probably coming out sometime in 1861. Second, it is known that the Late Pattern was manufactured in two sizes and it is likely that that is also the case for the Early Pattern. Third, it is also very likely that the arsenal system (Allegheny Arsenal, possibly Frankfort Arsenal, etc.) manufactured fancier Pattern 1859 Spurs for officers. Allegheny Arsenal was well known, before and during the War, to produce officers' equipments for direct purchase. Each of these variations will be discussed below and, where possible, shown.

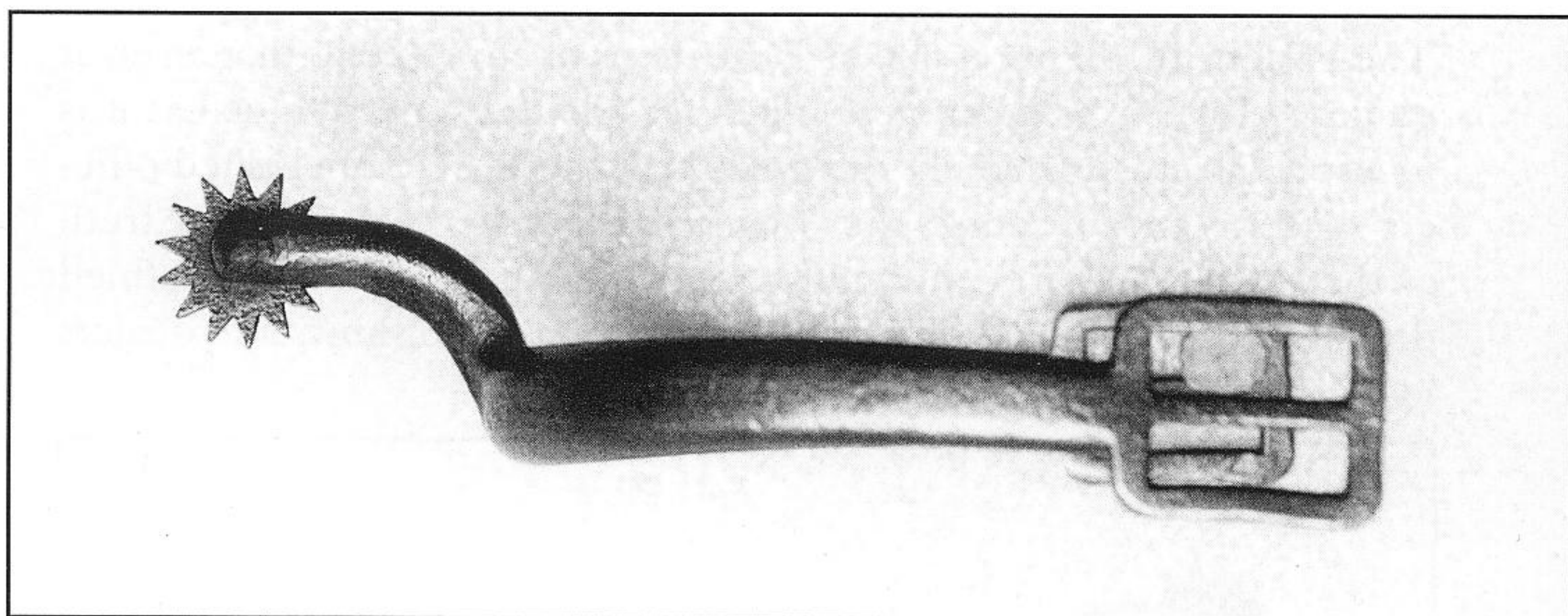


Fig. 2

Fig. 2&3 - All pattern 1859 Spurs were cast, leaving a slightly pocked or granular exterior surface. Once cast, the rough cast spurs were ground or hand-filed only as necessary to remove significant roughness. At that time, the rowel slot was sawn and the rowel pin holes were drilled prior to pinning in the rowel.

Measurements on this spur are:

Shank Length: 1.34"

Rowel Diameter: 0.74"

Spur Strap Box Length: 1.2"
(exterior)

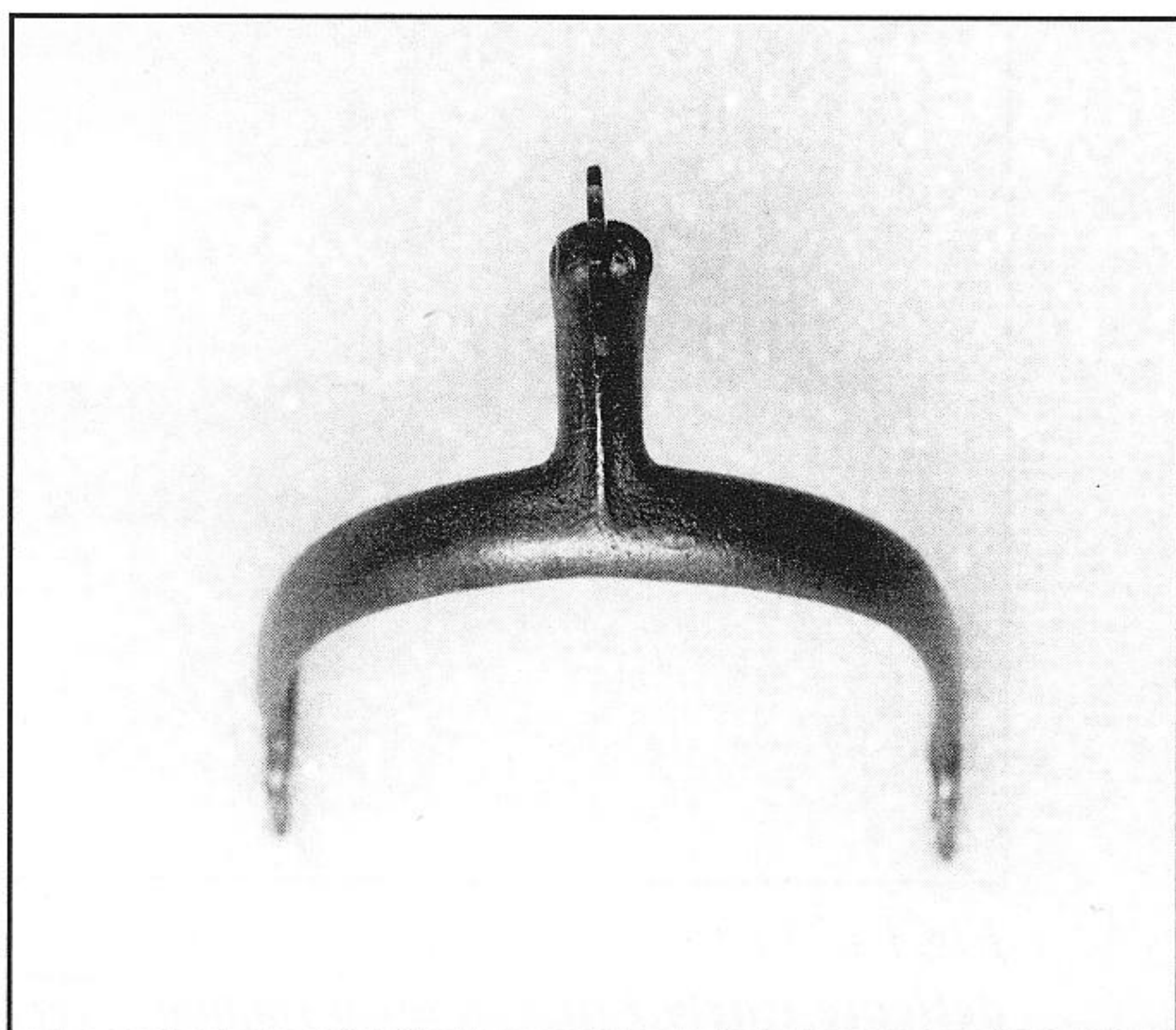


Fig. 3



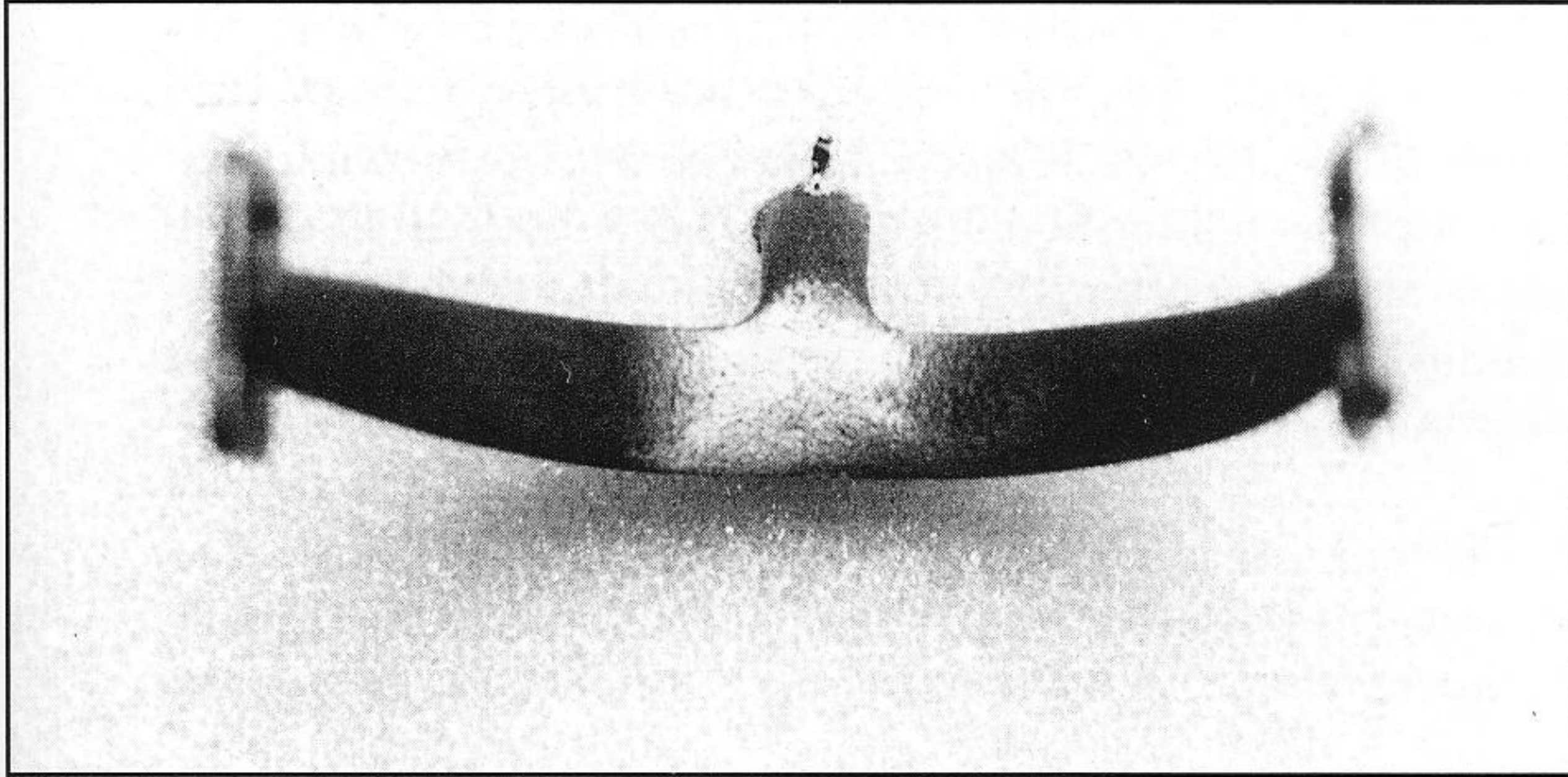


Fig. 4 - The Early Pattern 1859 Enlisted Spur differs from the Late Pattern in its lack of the interior groove or "gutter". With the adoption of the Late Pattern 1859, only officers' spurs remained ungrooved - a feature that continued in enlisted or service spurs until the adoption of the Model 1911 Spur.

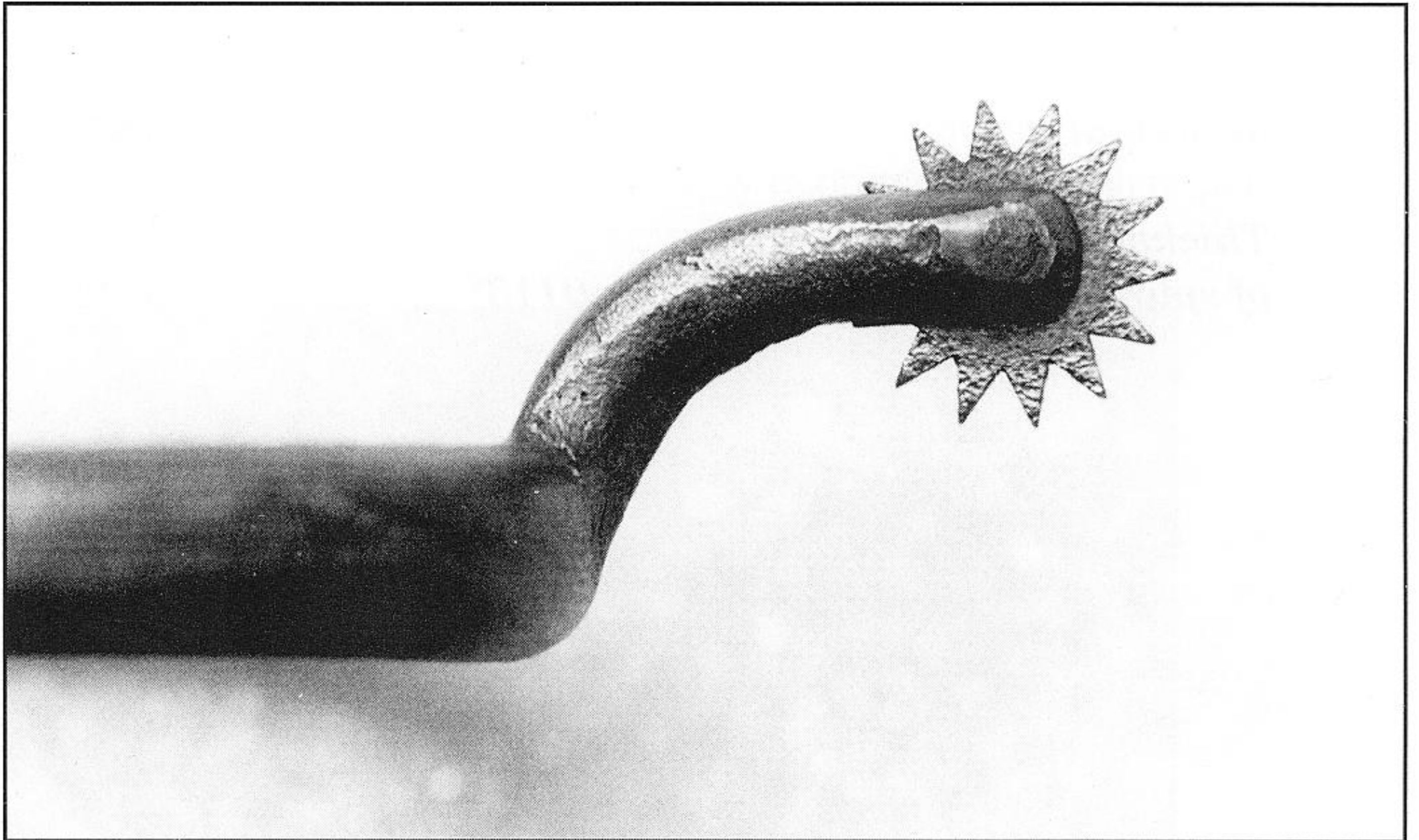


Fig. 5 - A closeup of the shank and rowel of an Early Pattern 1859 Spur. Note the rough casting marks on the shank. The rowel pins were slightly peened over to keep them from backing out.



The Early Pattern 1859 Spur - Both artifactual evidence as well as subsequent enlisted spur designs, indicates that the earliest Pattern 1859 Spur was significantly different from the Late Pattern. As shown in Fig. 1, the Early Pattern is lighter in construction, has a noticeably arched shank or neck and has a shorter shank, when compared to the Late Pattern. And, the Early Pattern does not have the groove or "gutter" cast into the inside curve of the yoke. (Fig. 4).

With both variations in hand, the lighter construction of the Early Pattern is quite apparent. The following comparative measurement table will give the reader some idea of the striking contrast between the two variations:

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Early Pattern</i>	<i>Late Pattern</i>
<i>Thickness at base of shank</i>	.0374"	.0461"
<i>Height of yoke at midpoint</i>	.046"	.0487"
<i>Thickness of yoke at midpoint</i>	.0176"	.0195"
<i>Thickness of metal of spur box</i>	.0113"	.0149"



It is felt that the army's early experience with the Pattern 1859 Spur brought out the weaknesses of its light construction and resulted in the more heavily-constructed Late Pattern. The second notable difference between the Early and Late Pattern 1859 Spurs is the arch of the shank from the yoke to the rowel. The Early Pattern shank rises sharply to about a half of its length, then turns to the horizontal. The Late Pattern shank rises to almost the same height but does so in a constant curve that never becomes fully horizontal (Fig. 1 & 6).

The third difference between the two variations of the Pattern 1859 Spur is the groove or "gutter" cast into the inside curve of the yoke of the Late Pattern Spur (Fig. 8). Apparently successful as a design feature, this groove was retained for all subsequent enlisted spurs until the adoption of the Model 1911. And, it is this consistency of design from the Late Pattern 1859 until 1911 that argues for the validity of our nomenclature, i.e. Early and Late Patterns. Similar design features' changes to the McClellan Saddle over the course of a few years constituted the two Wartime patterns: the Pattern 1859 and the Pattern 1864 McClellan Saddles. (Ref. 21) The grooving of the inside of the yoke was clearly not for lightening but served another purpose - most probably to allow the inside of the spur to better grip the heel of the boot or boot, reducing the vertical play of the spur when it was used. Officers' spurs of all eras did NOT have this groove, presumably to protect the finish or polish of their dressier boots.

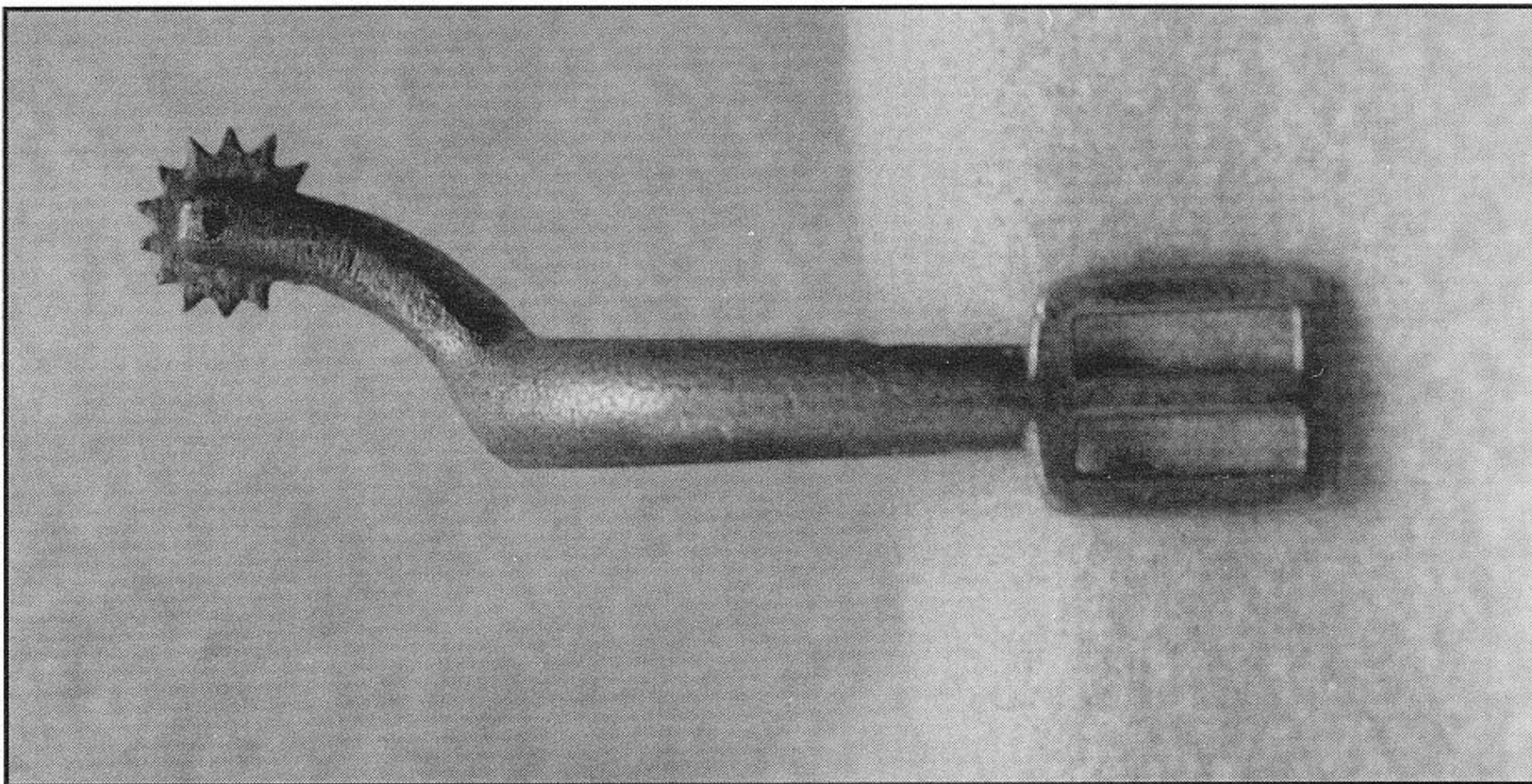


Fig. 6 - Side view of a Late Pattern 1859 Enlisted Spur. Measurements on this spur are: Shank Length, 1.58"; Rowel Diameter, 0.65" (worn); Spur Strap Box Length, 1.75" (exterior).



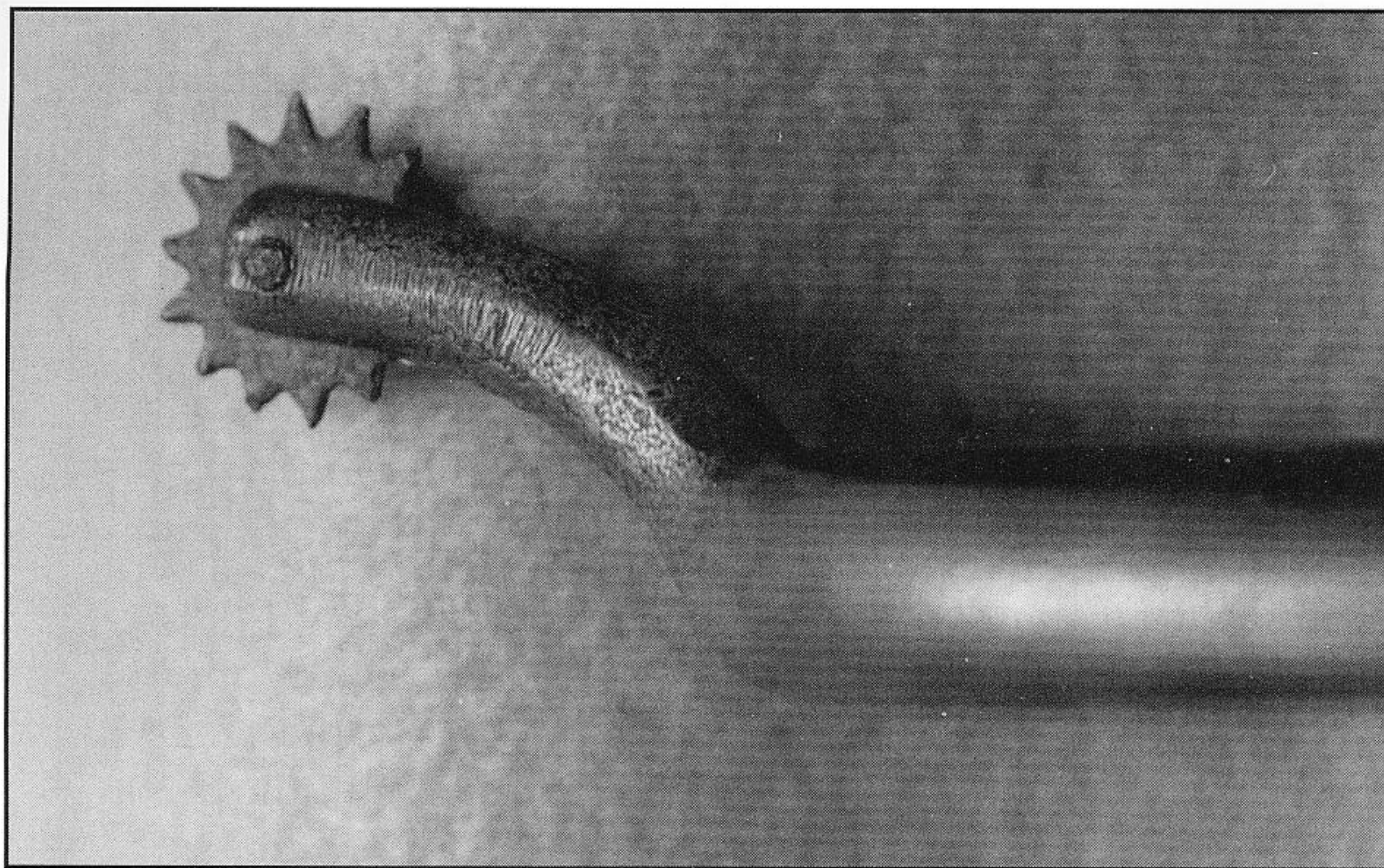


Fig. 7 - Closeup of the shank and rowel of the Late Pattern 1859 Enlisted Spur. Note the coarse filing flats on the side of the shank.

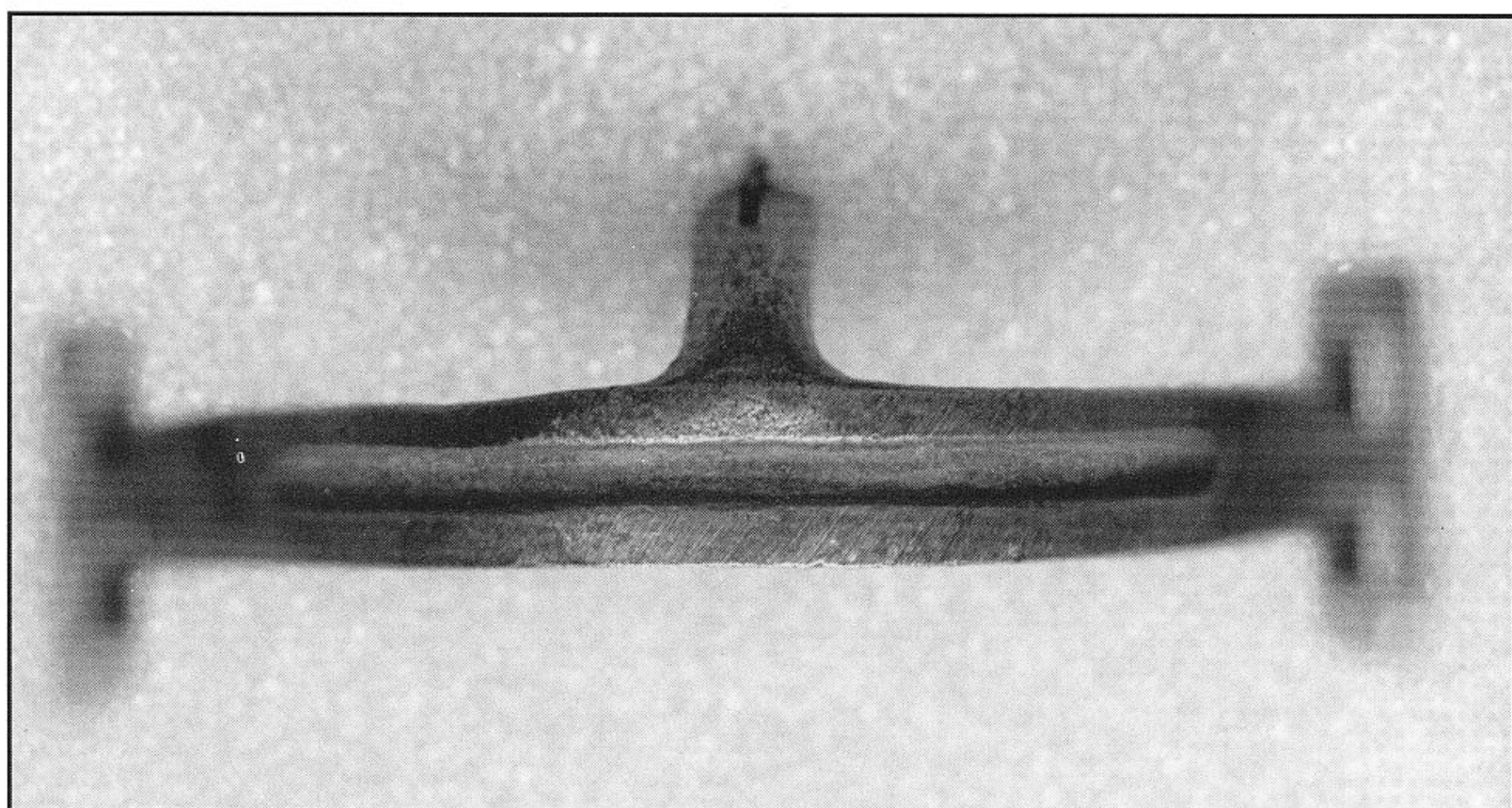


Fig. 8 - The heavy groove or "gutter" cast into the inner curve of the Late Pattern 1859 Enlisted Spur.



Initial production of the Pattern 1859 Spur took place at a time when the mounted services were comparatively small. It is the author's opinion that all pre-War spurs were, probably, arsenal manufactured - probably coming exclusively from one or two arsenals. It is known that these same arsenals, notably Allegheny, manufactured officers' equipment (e.g. saddles) simultaneously with production of enlisted equipment of the same type. The officers' equipment was offered for sale to officers by the Ordnance Dept. With the outbreak of the War, while some arsenal spur production may have continued, most federal spur production was contracted out to commercial manufacturers. Fig. 9 shows an Early Pattern 1859 Spur that is obviously not for enlisted use (being slightly adorned), but has cruder decoration than is found on the Later Pattern 1859 Officers' Spurs. Such a spur is much scarcer than more highly-decorated Later Pattern 1859 Officers' Spurs.

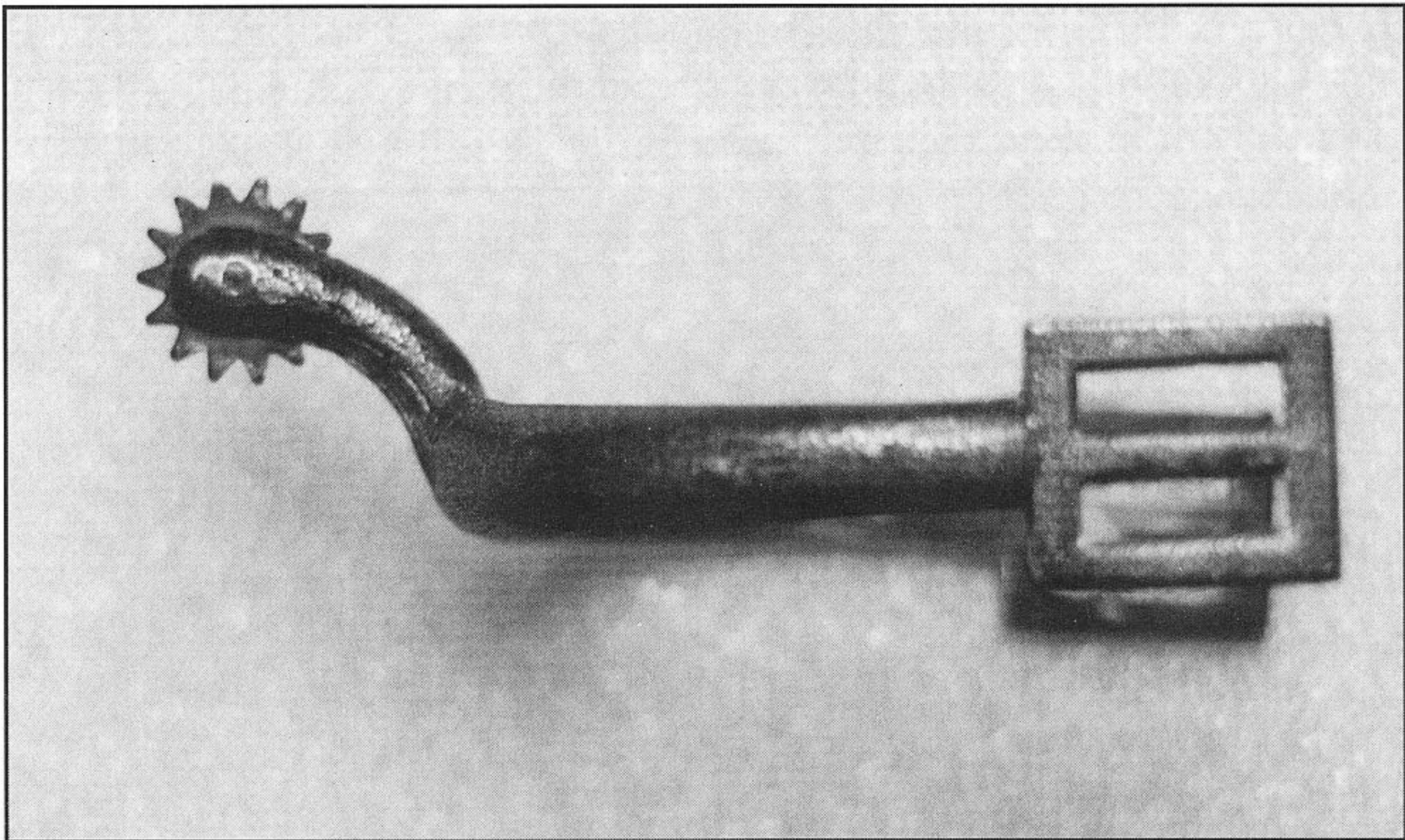


Fig. 9 - Early Pattern 1859 Officers' Spur. Note the sharp corners on the Spur Strap Slot Box (compare with Fig. 6).

Measurements on this spur are: Shank Length, 1.255"; Rowel Diameter, 0.73"; Spur Strap Box Length, 1.154" (exterior).



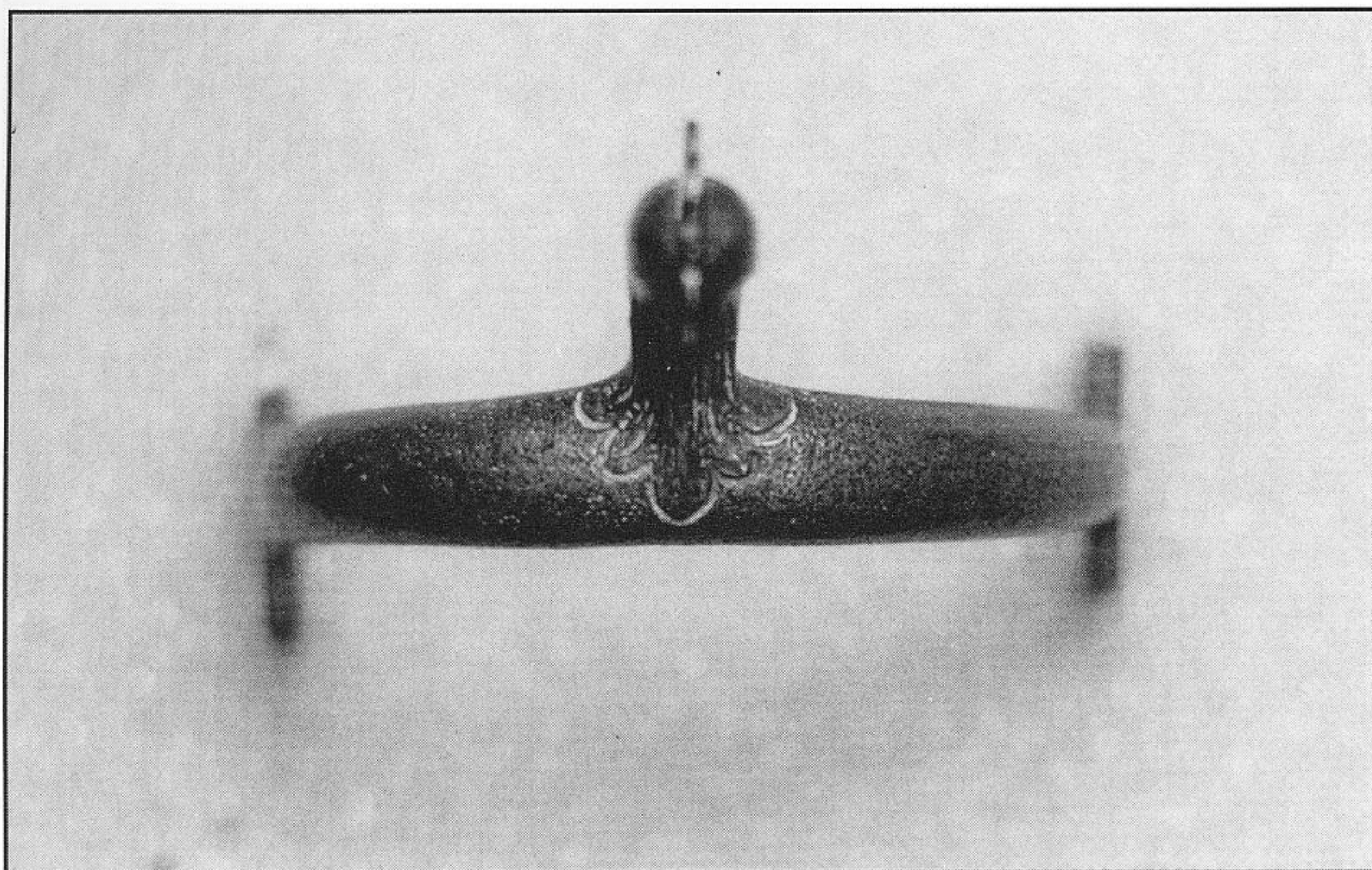


Fig. 10 - The tiny amount of decoration to the Early Pattern 1859 Officers' Spur was cast in.

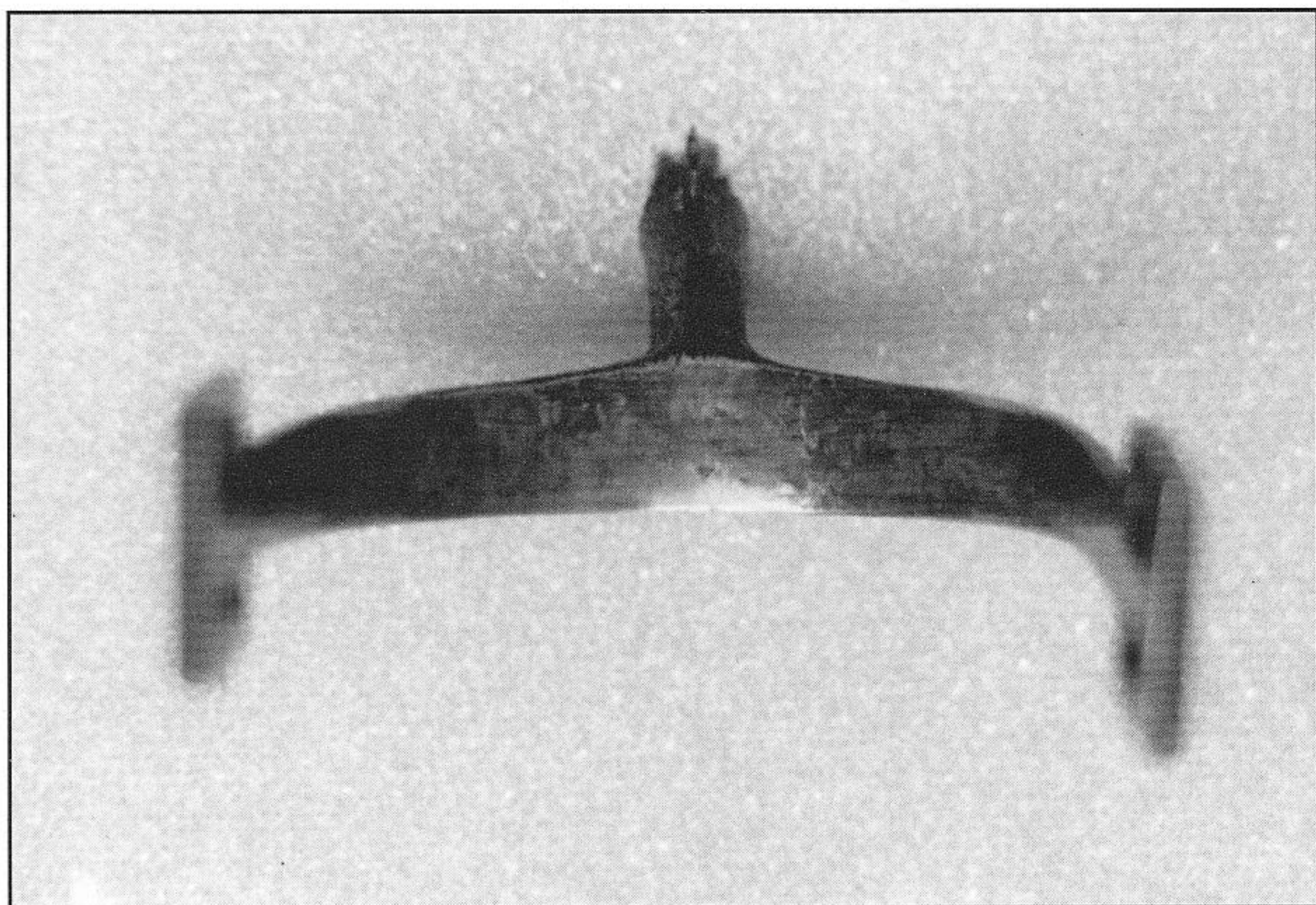


Fig. 11 - Both the Enlisted and Officers' Early Pattern 1859 Spurs had smooth interior curves.



The US Army's 1861 Ordnance Manual contained this description of the Pattern 1859 Spur:

"Spurs, (brass) - 2 spurs, 2 rowels; 2 rivets; 2 spur-straps, 19 inches long; 2 roller-buckles No. 11B; 2 standing-loops. Length of heel - for No. 1, 3 inches; for No. 2, 3 inches, Width of heel (for No. 1) 3 inches; (for No. 2) 3 inches. (inside measure.) Length of shank to centre of rowel, 1 inch. Diameter of rowel, 0.85 inch. Weight of spurs and straps .57 lb."

Note that there were two sizes of the Pattern 1859 Spur in 1861: No. 1 size was both longer and wider than the No. 2 size. While the constant spreading of the ends of the yoke make width measurement problematical, the length of the heel is an easy measurement for the collector. Measurements of actual specimens indicates to the author that the 1861 dimensions describe both the Early and Late Patterns of the 1859 Spur.

The Pattern 1859 Spur was a standard, regulation spur that could be used by all ranks. Spurs worn by officers tended, generally, to follow the form of the regulation spur but officers' spurs of that pattern varied significantly in decoration and finish. Officers purchased their own spurs and could wear just about anything they could afford.

The finished Pattern 1859 Spur was - compared to later cavalry enlisted spurs - a rougher item. Initially sand cast, the spurs were quickly dressed with a hand file and passed into the Ordnance system. The surfaces, both inside and out, are uniformly pitted (appearing today as coarsely sandblasted) and relatively non-reflective. The steel rowels are unadorned and have 14 coarse teeth. The one feature of the Pattern 1859 Spur not covered in the 1861 Ordnance description is the inclusion of a gutter or cast-in groove centered in the inside arc of the spur.

The Pattern 1859 Spur had many officers' counterparts made by a number of commercial manufacturers. These varied in quality and embellishment but are unmistakably of the 1859 pattern with boxed strap slots and distinctive yoke and neck configurations. Some of these can be seen in Fig. 10, 12 & 13.

At the end of the War, huge surpluses of all types of military equipment remained. Literally mountains of saddles, bridle bits, canteens, spurs,



uniforms, etc., were warehoused at several points east of the Mississippi. Reflecting a nation bled financially for the War, the federal government wasted no time in slashing the military budget to the point that it could be said that the military existed only as a national police force and the mounted arm of that force, the cavalry, was almost wholly involved on the restive Frontier. The Indian War of 1863 had been only a precursor to the violence that would characterize the Indian War of 1865 - 1885. To fight this Frontier war, the army was expected to "make do" with equipment on hand, i.e. the surpluses left after the War Between the States.

A Comment on the Finish of the Pattern 1859 Spur:

Unfortunately, many collectors and some writers today have uncritically accepted whatever stories or terminologies they picked up along the way of their hobby. One such error related to the Pattern 1859 Spur is the reference of its rough, sand cast finish as "stippling" - which it is definitely NOT. Stippling, is hand or machine-applied punching to roughen a metal surface for cosmetic or service reasons. It is a finish that is applied after fabrication of the item and takes quite a bit of time for application. The coarsely-ground and filed Pattern 1859 Spurs mass-produced prior to and during the War Between the States obviously did not require the tedious (and expensive) hand-stippling. The finely-pocked finish on these spurs is the natural result of sand casting - the process by which all of them were made. The finish is properly known as a "sand cast finish."



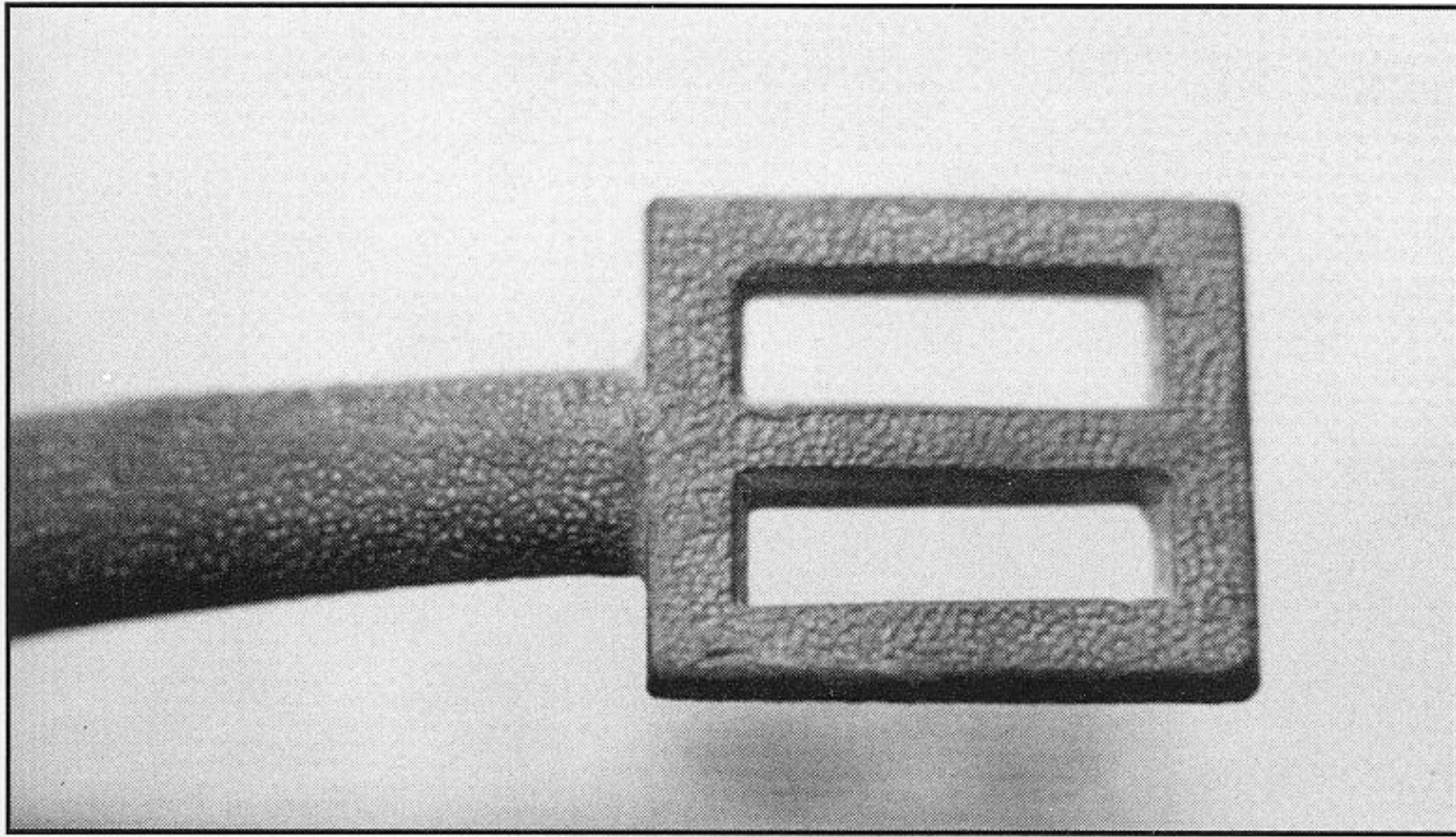


Fig. 12 - The consistency of the sand-cast surface on the outside of this Late Pattern 1859 Officers' Spur is so good that it could be mistaken for a hand-applied finish. Though unmarked, this spur is inspected "GTB", the initials of a known Allegheny Arsenal spur inspector.

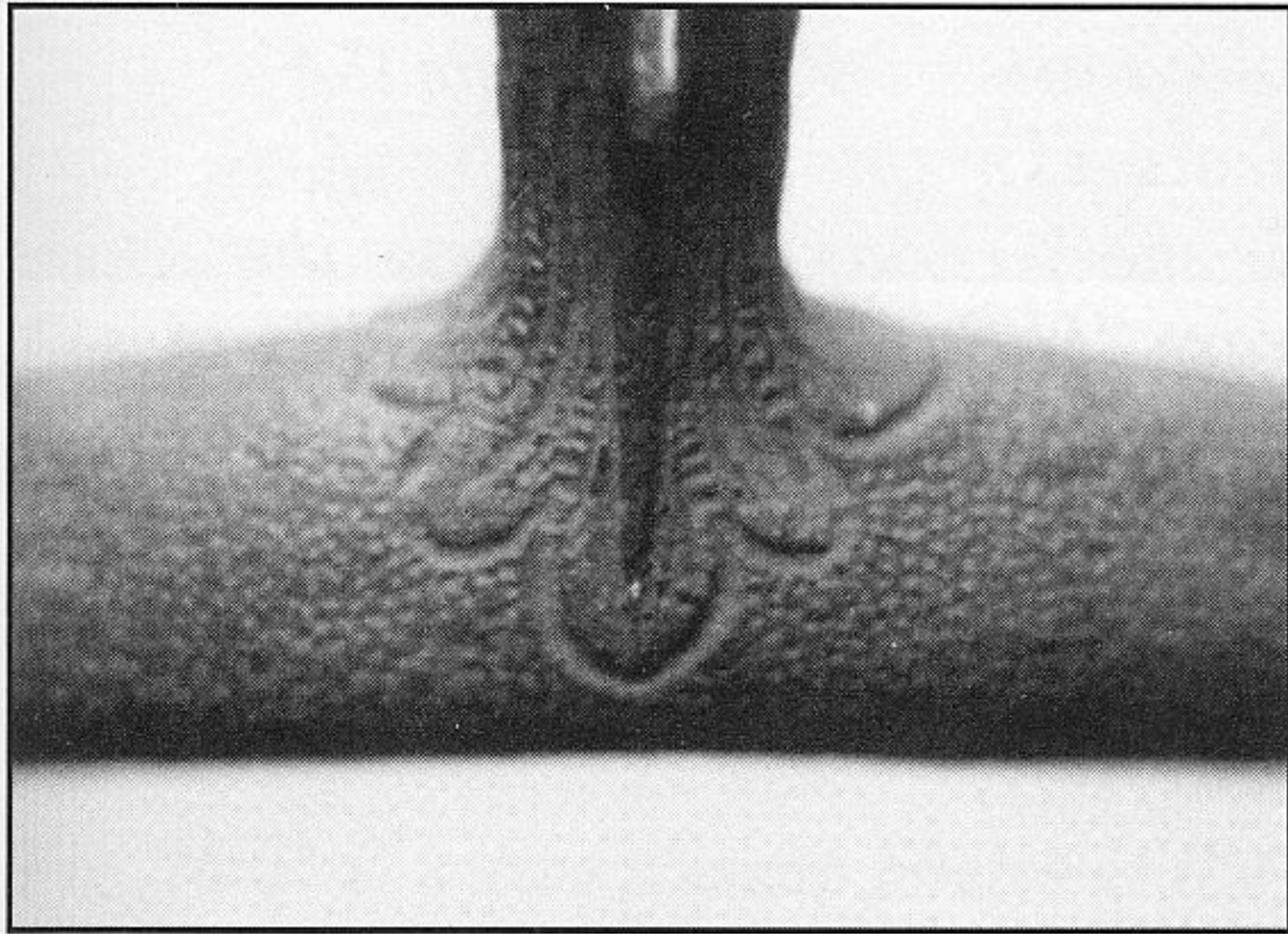


Fig. 13 - Another view of the officers' spur shown in Fig. 12. The clear detail of the simple, early style, five-lobed design is unusually good. The sand-cast surface is also very consistent and so good as to be decorative - but it was cast in and NOT hand-applied. Therefore, the surface cannot be considered to be stippled (a hand-applied decoration).

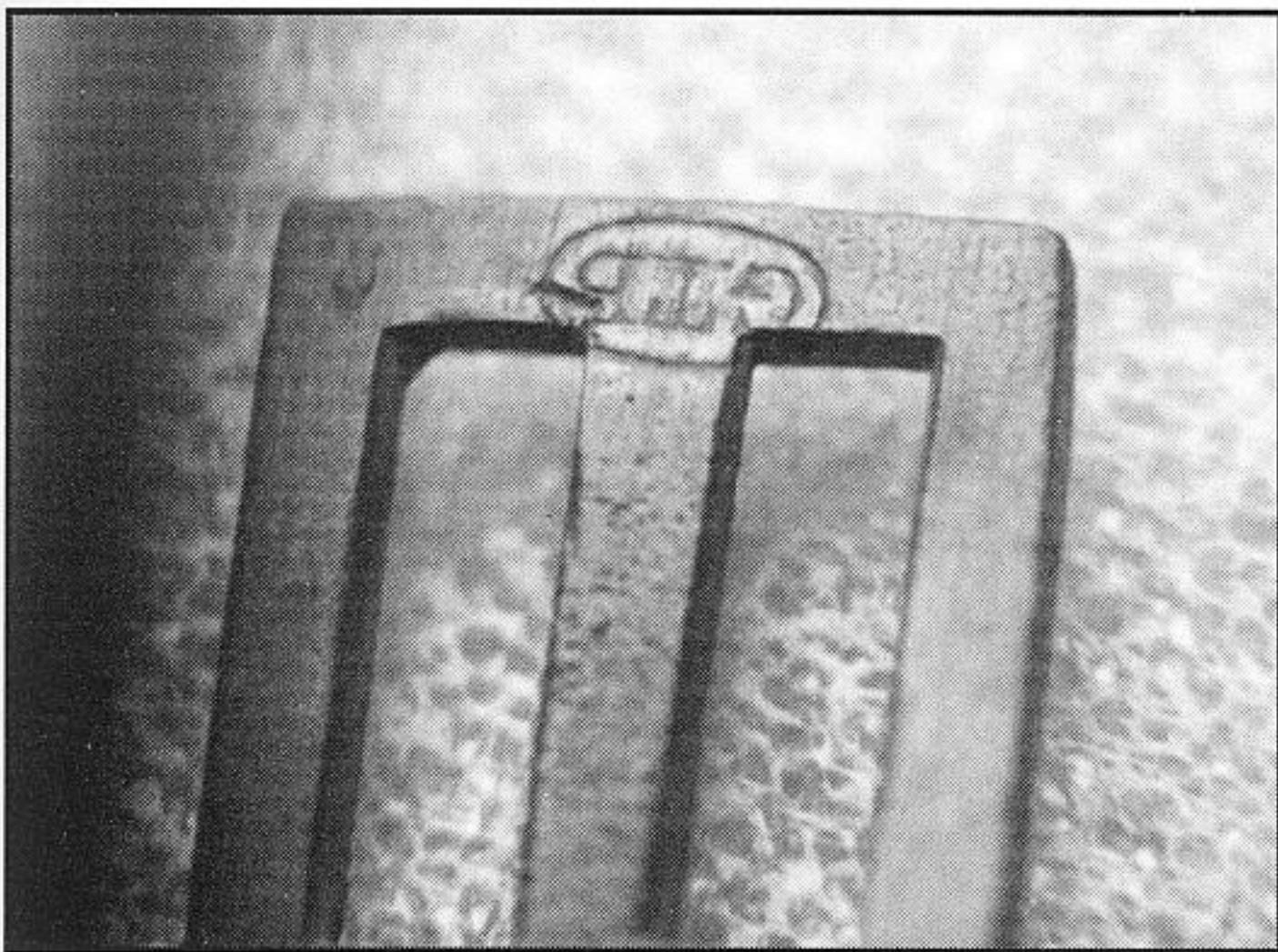


Fig. 14 - The "GTB" inspector's cartouche stamped on the inside of this unmarked, Late Pattern 1859 Officers' Spur is also found on Allegheny Arsenal-marked spurs. This feature, as well as the very high quality casting finish of the spur (Fig. 12 & 13), may indicate that it was manufactured at Allegheny Arsenal. Such inspected spurs are rare, particularly in this condition.



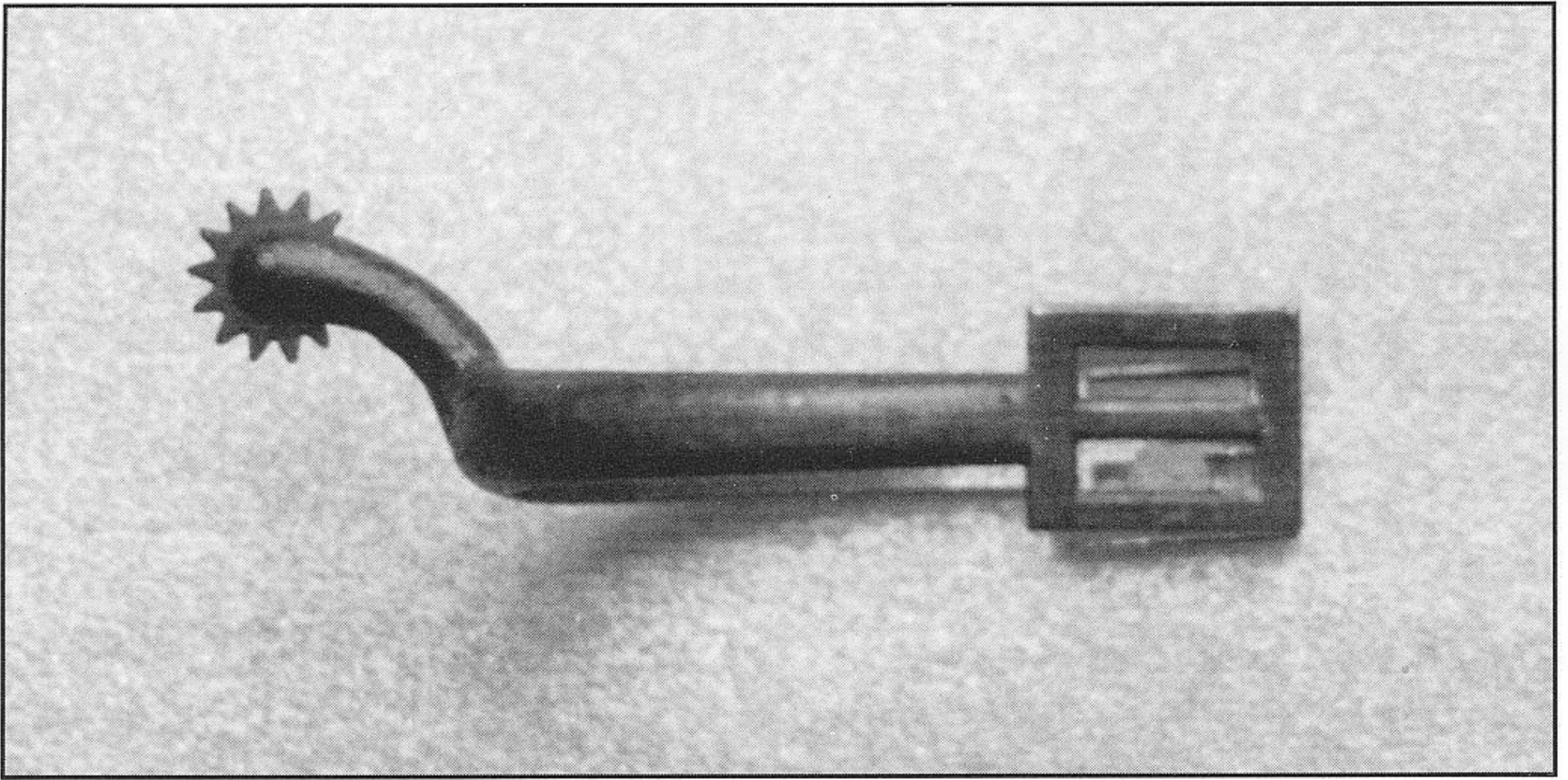


Fig. 15 - An example of what may possibly be the first year of production of the Late Pattern 1859 Spur, this rough-finished Officers' Spur has the standard, early pattern, five-lobed decorative design cast into the body at the base of the shank. Several features of this spur set are worth noting: the heavy spur strap slot box; the sharp corners to the boxes; the early style, cast-in decoration and the rare "U.S./1861" markings stamped inside each spur. Since Allegheny Arsenal-manufactured 1859 Spurs have more rounded corners to the spur strap box, it is likely that this spur is from a very early federal comemercial contract.



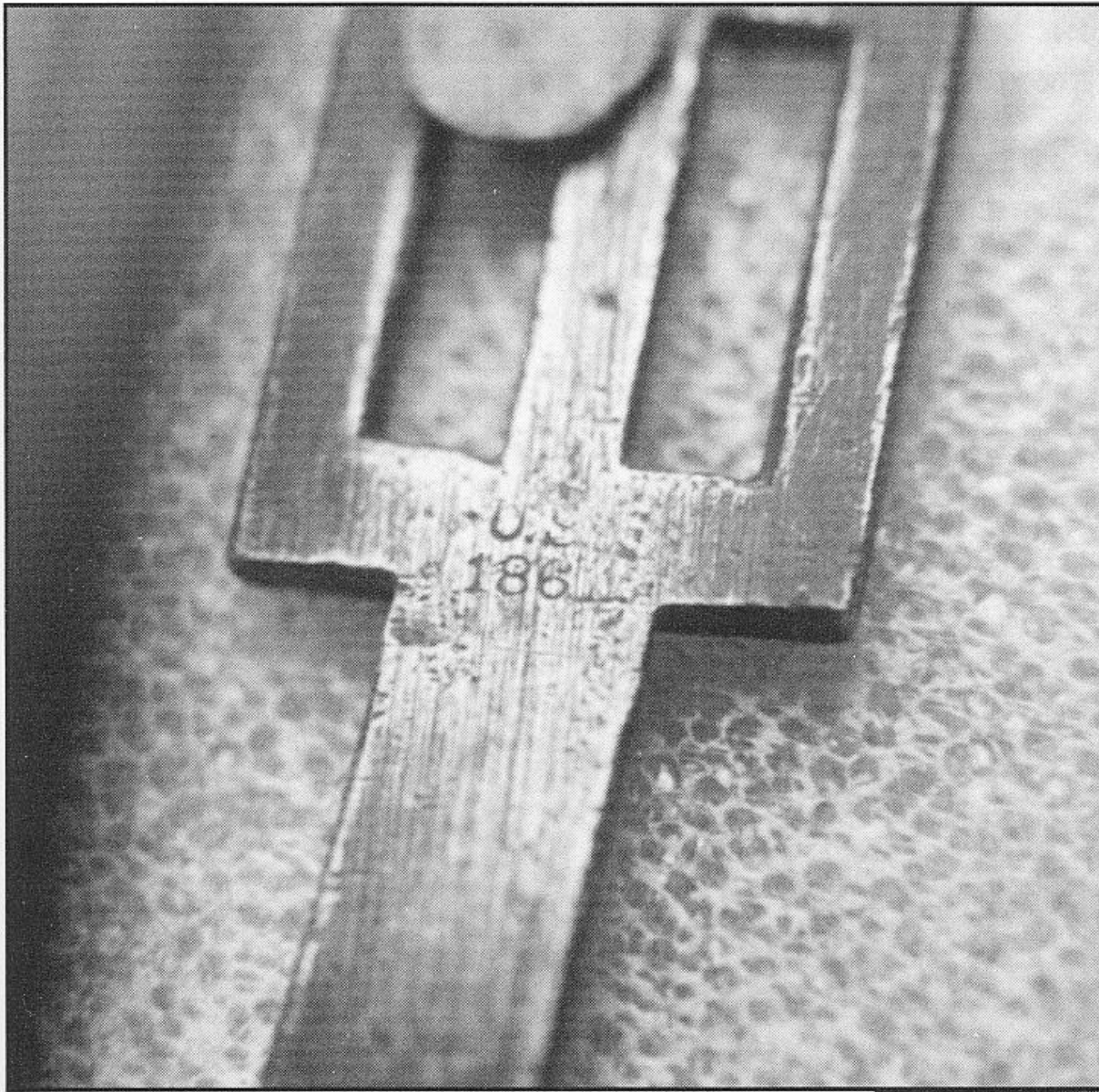


Fig. 16

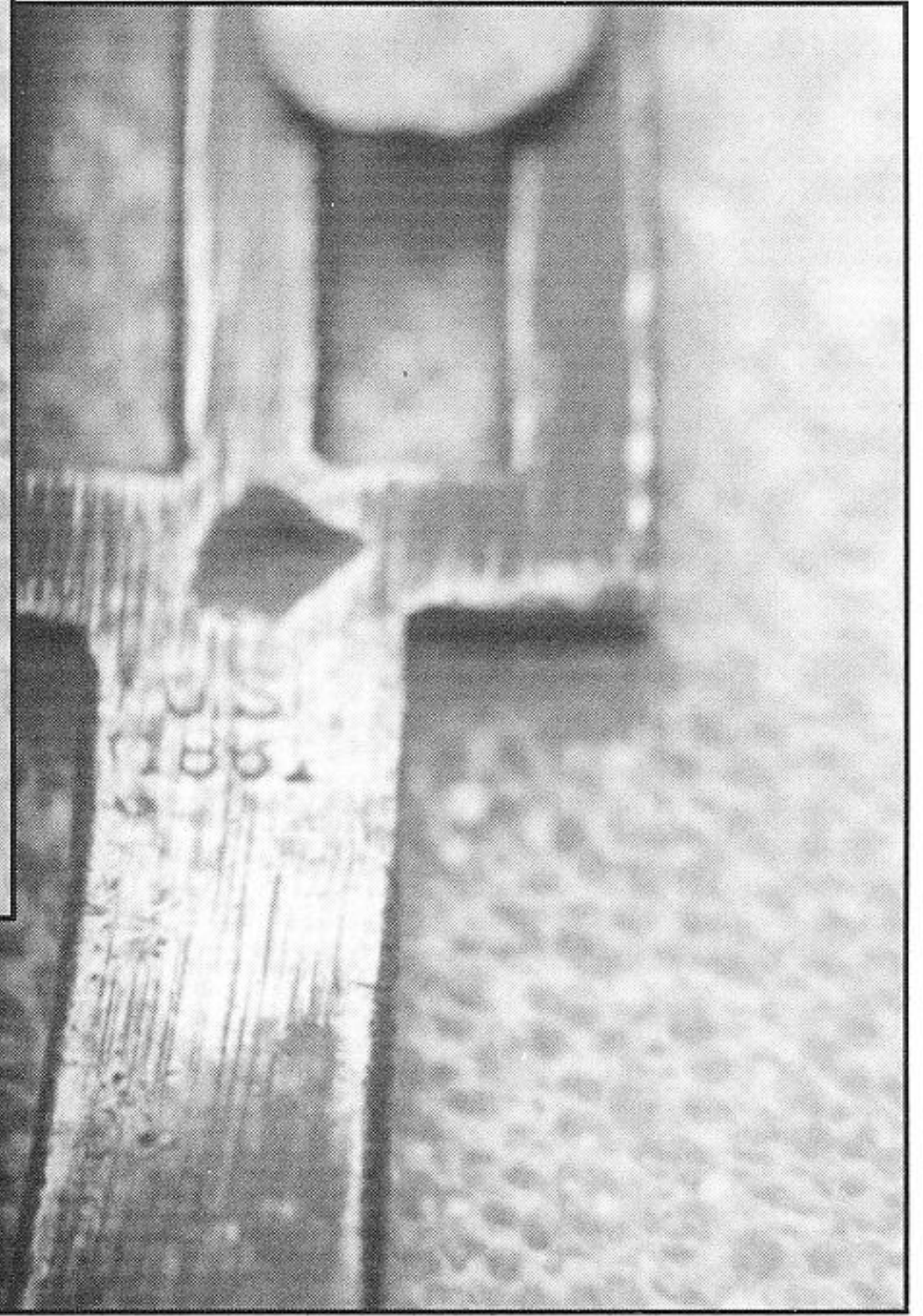


Fig. 17

Fig. 16 & 17 - Two closeup photos of the rare "U.S./1861" stamping found on the inside of each spur in the set of which one is shown in Fig. 15. This date on this Late Pattern 1859 Officers' Spur confirms the transition of design from the lighter, less robust Early Pattern 1859 Spur to the heavier Late Pattern 1859. This is the only example of this marking known to the author.

PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

At the time of the outbreak of the War Between the States, America was a country of horse transportation. The mounted man, in peace or war, was the norm in this country and his equipment - as a minimum - included a saddle, bridle and bridle bit and spurs. The War put even more



thousands of men who had heretofore not been mounted, on horseback - as mounted officers and members of light artillery and cavalry units. The suddenness of this huge undertaking created an immense demand for all horse and riding equipage which scoured both the American markets as well as those of Europe for many items such as spurs. Great uniform supply firms of the north such as J.H. McKenny & Co.; Schuyler, Hartley and Graham; Horstmann & Son and countless other military equipment suppliers increased their orders for current spur patterns and contracted for more. Patterns of all types were made in great profusion for what was, initially, a limitless market. While few illustrated catalogues from the period exist today, the immediately post-War catalogues of a few firms show the spurs that had been available for personal purchase during the War. The designs ran the gamut from the elegant riding spur through the obsolete screw-and-spike design to the highly decorated, stylized spur such as the eagle, dolphin and horse designs and infinite variations of the Pattern 1859 Spur. The accompanying pictures show only a few of the spurs that rode to war in 1861 on the heels of many officers and some enlisted riders. Many of the spurs that rode into the War, particularly in the South, had been in use prior to the War and some were heirlooms, handed down from much earlier times.

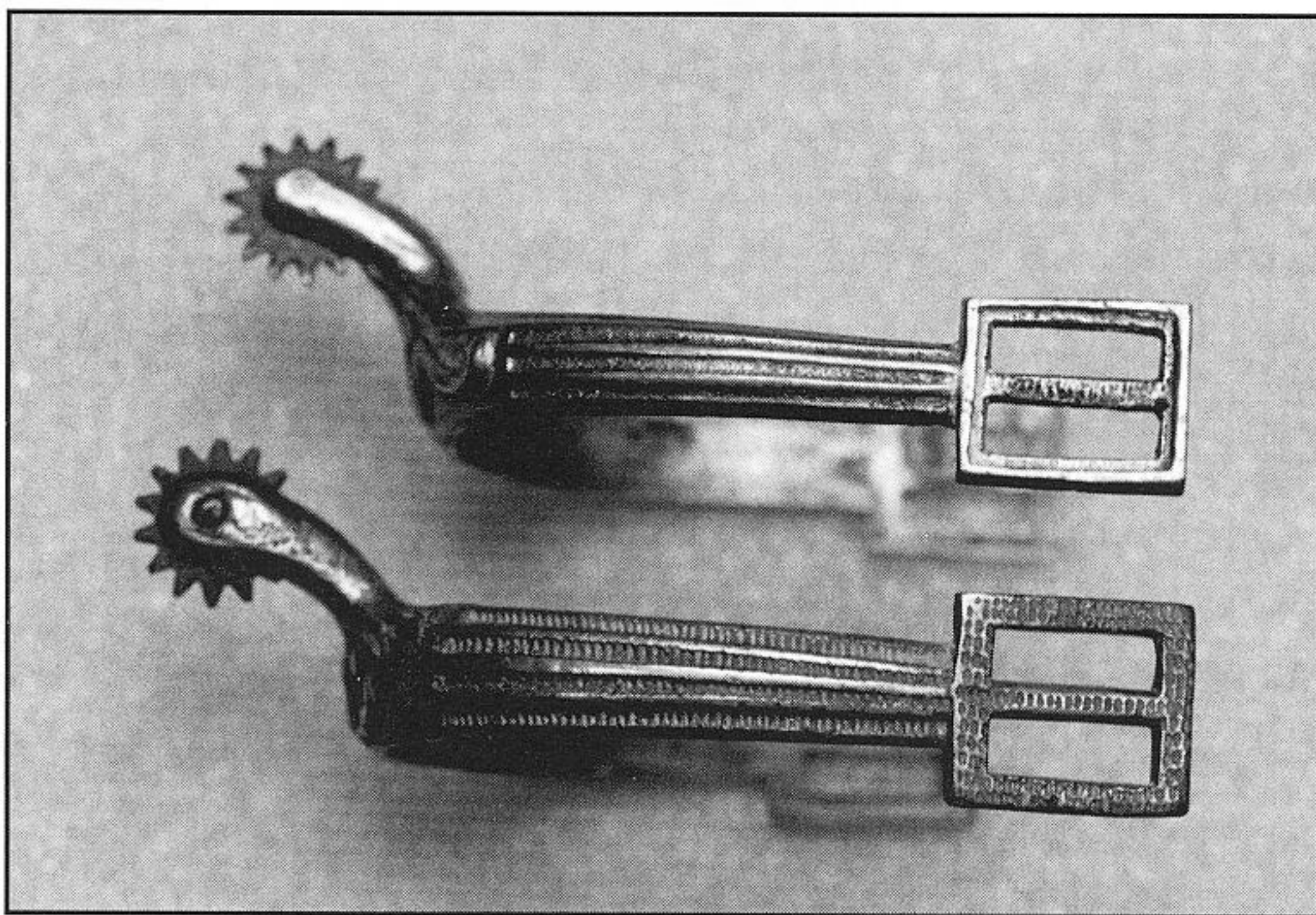


Fig. 18 - Two variations of officers' spurs of the Late 1859 Pattern. The top spur has somewhat narrow arms and is somewhat shorter than the spur below it. Neither spur has an inner groove or "gutter".

<i>Length of Shank, less rowel:</i>	<i>Top - 1.07"</i>	<i>Bottom - 1.179"</i>
<i>Length of Spur Strap Box:</i>	<i>Top - 1.076"</i>	<i>Bottom - 1.143"</i>
<i>Height of Spur Strap Box:</i>	<i>Top - 0.922"</i>	<i>Bottom - 0.977"</i>
<i>Rowel Diameter:</i>	<i>Top - 0.821"</i>	<i>Bottom - 0.8"</i>



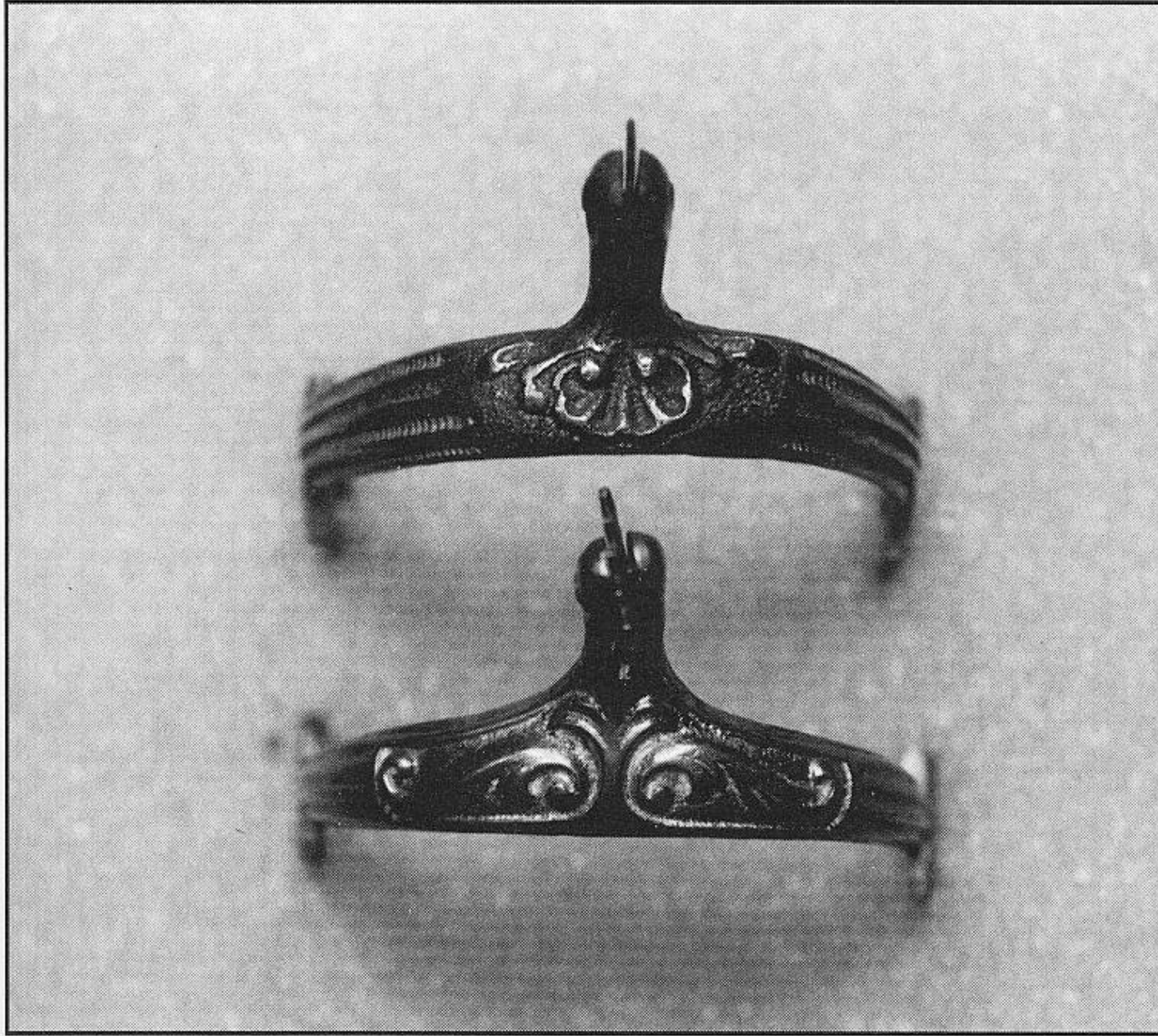


Fig. 19 - The detail of the cast and hand-finished designs is attractive and representative of the designs that could be purchased during the period. Note that the lower spur makes heavy use of hand stippling in the grooves of the branches and on the spur strap box, while the other spur has no stippling. Many of these spurs were further plated with brass or gold, then lacquered to prevent some wear and tarnishing. This process is called "gilding".

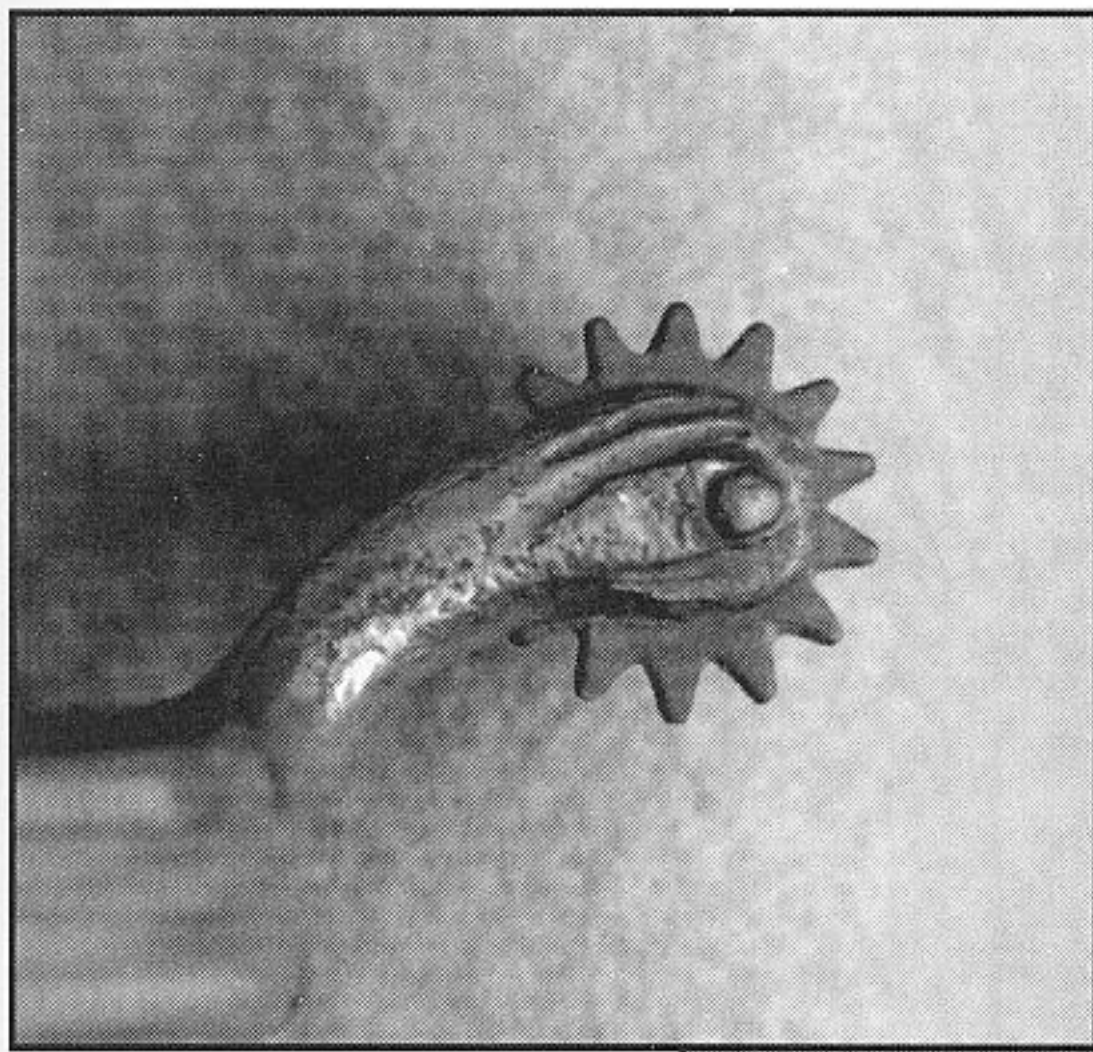


Fig. 20 - This small shank and rowel detail shows some coarse fluting cast in as decoration.

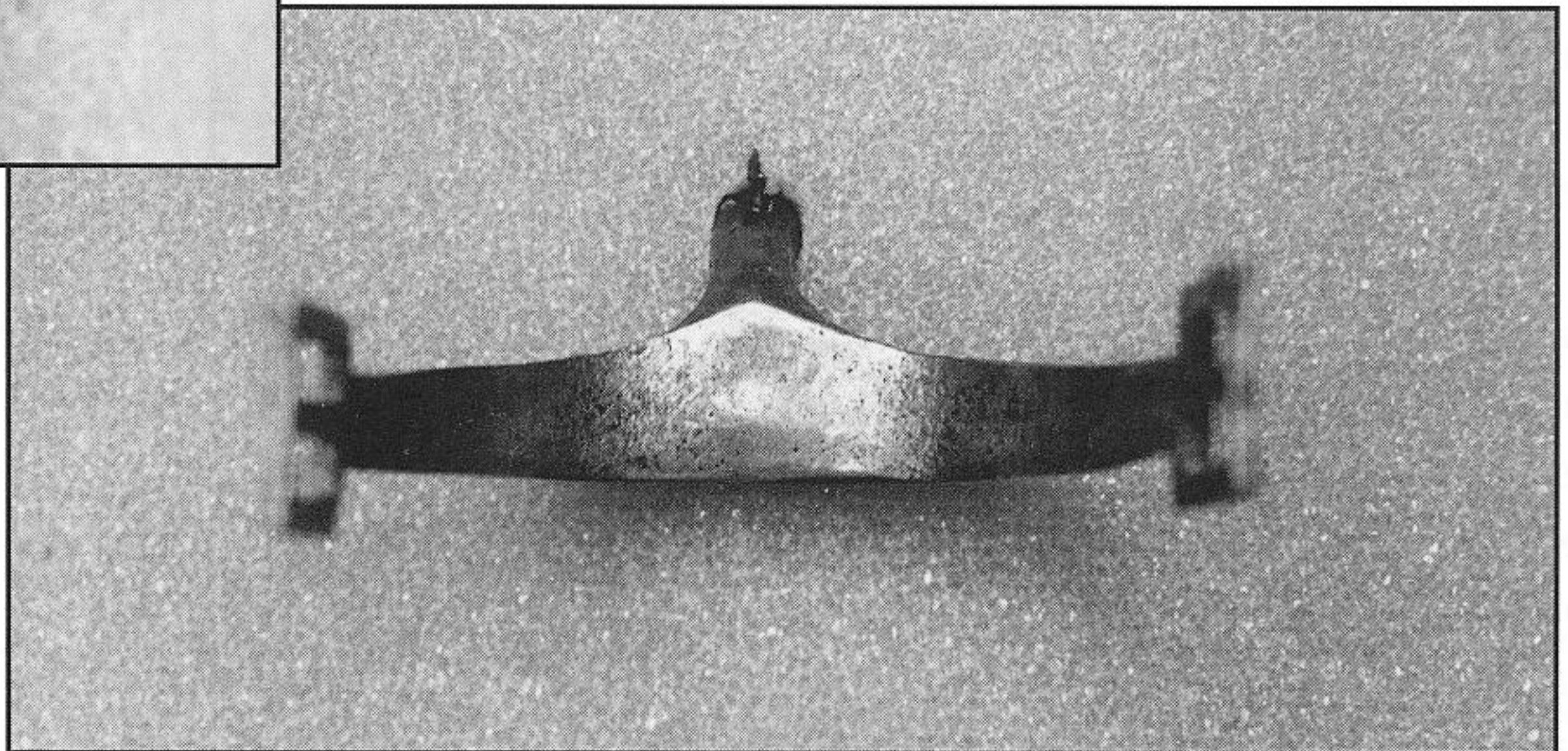


Fig. 21 - All officers' spurs of this era are smooth on the interior. They are rarely marked.



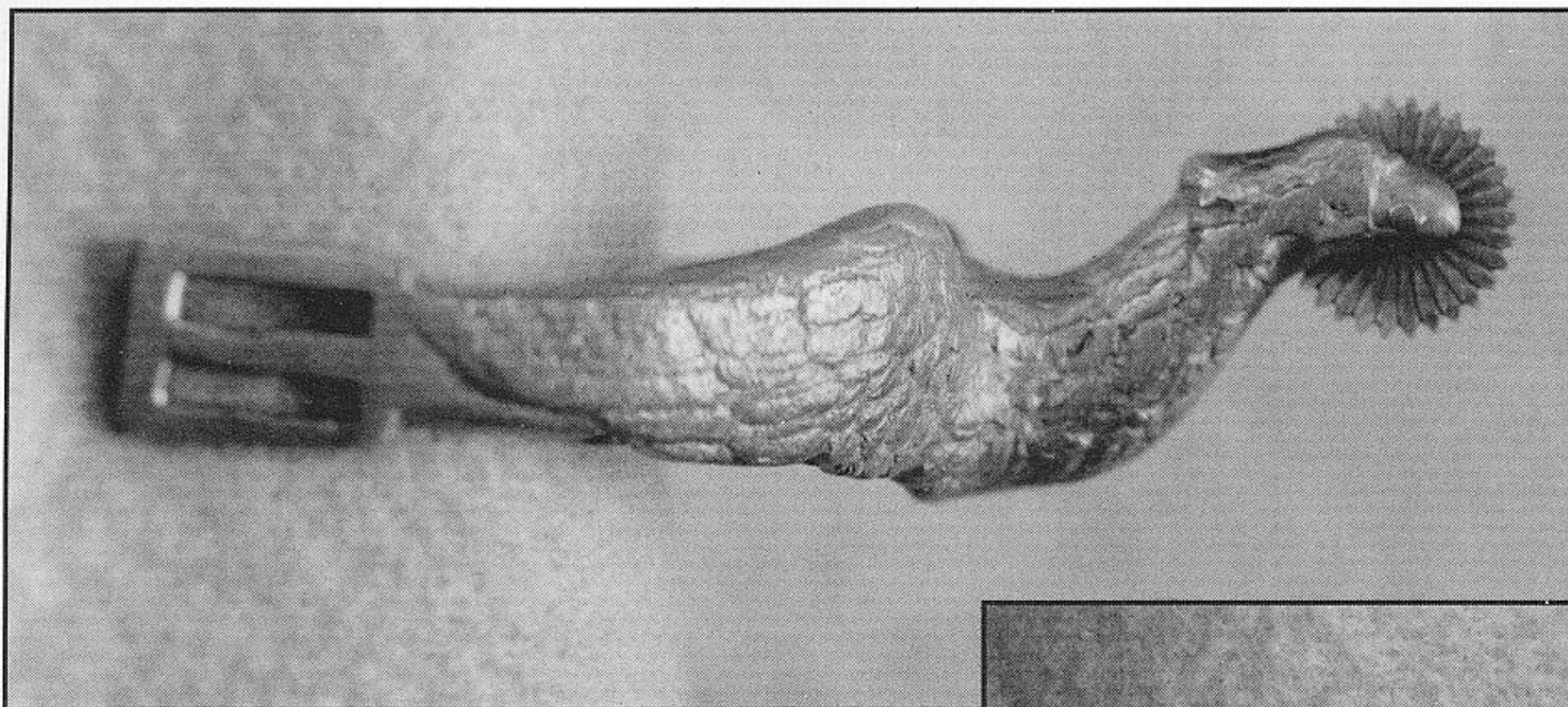


Fig. 22

Length of Shank, less rowel: 1.97"
Diameter of Rowel: 0.84"

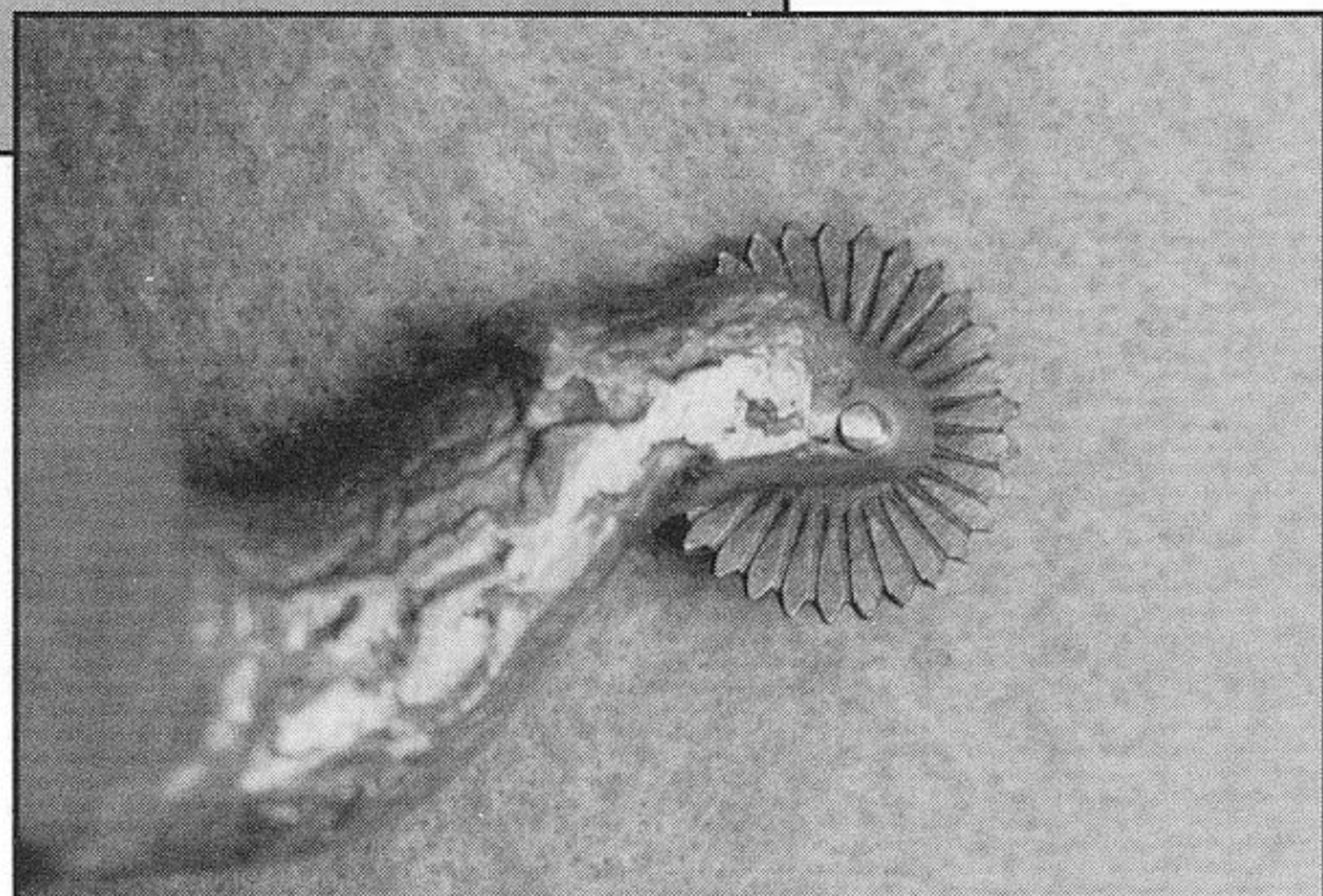


Fig. 23

Fig. 22 & 23 - A specimen of a lesser grade of the very sought-after Eagle Spur of the War Between the States Period. Shown also in Fig. 30 (an advertisement from a commercial military equipment supplier), the Eagle Spur could be purchased by anyone desiring it and was not, as popularly thought, a general officers' spur. Of cast brass with a steel rowel, these spurs were relatively crude (like the specimens shown) unless chased by hand to bring out the feather and eagle head detail. Some specimens even have colored glass for the eagle's eyes. When in the unchased condition, being merely polished, the spurs sold for less than those that had to be handworked to bring out greater detail. This lower grade of Eagle Spur may or may not have been gilded but, probably, was merely polished and lacquered for sale.

This particular spur, part of a pair, has an interesting history. Thomas W. Cooper of New York was one of Mr. Lincoln's mercenaries for the invasion and subjugation of the State of Missouri in 1861. Commissioned a second lieutenant, Cooper was assigned to the First Company of Fremont's Hussars then moved on to Co. D of the Fourth Regiment of the US Missouri Cavalry. During his service in this early part of the War, he served in the Battle of Bentonville, Pea Ridge and numerous other actions in northern Arkansas. He contracted typhoid while in Arkansas and was given a leave of absence - first to a hospital in Helena, Arkansas, then to a hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, where he died of his disease in October of 1862.



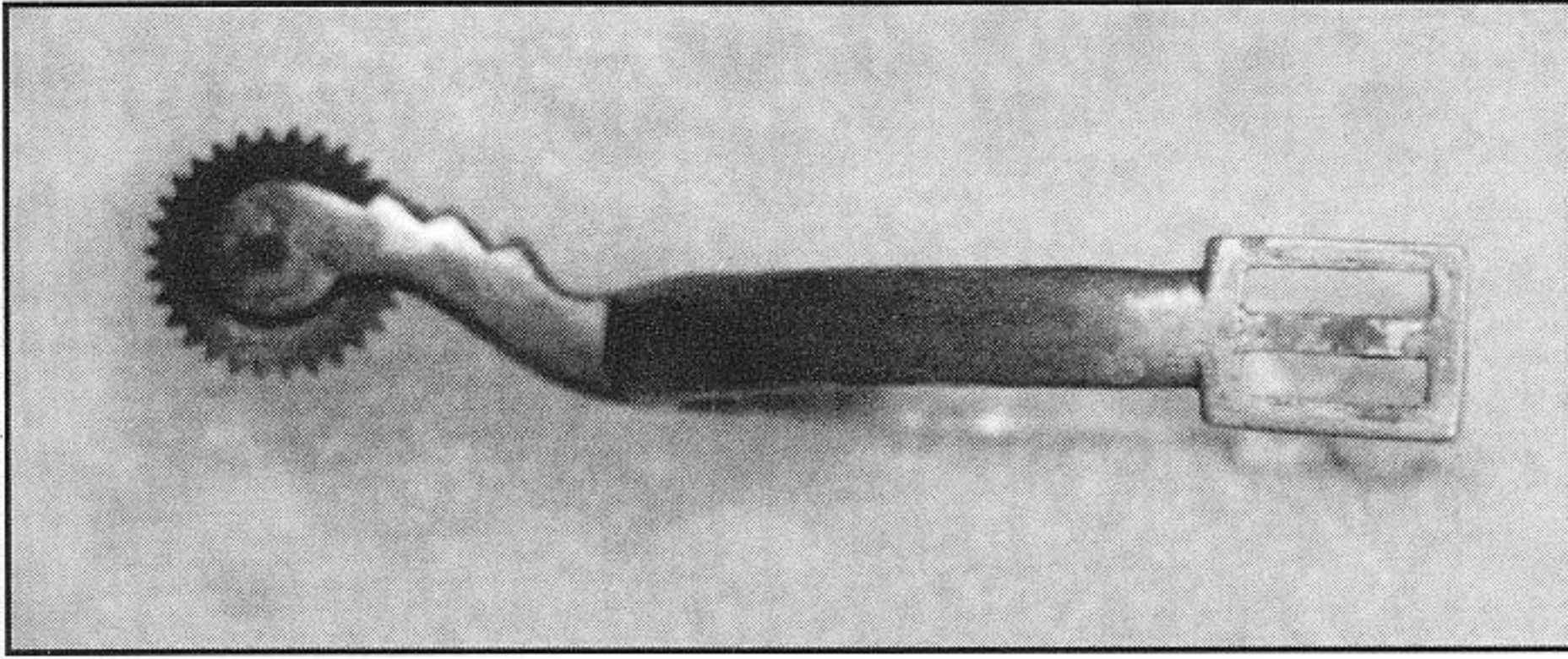


Fig. 24 - The "saw back" style of spur shank well pre-dated the War Between the States and Wartime-manufactured spurs were offered on the commercial market 20 years after the War. This attractive brass spur with its 1" diameter, fine, toothed iron rowel on a 1.75" shank is unmarked.

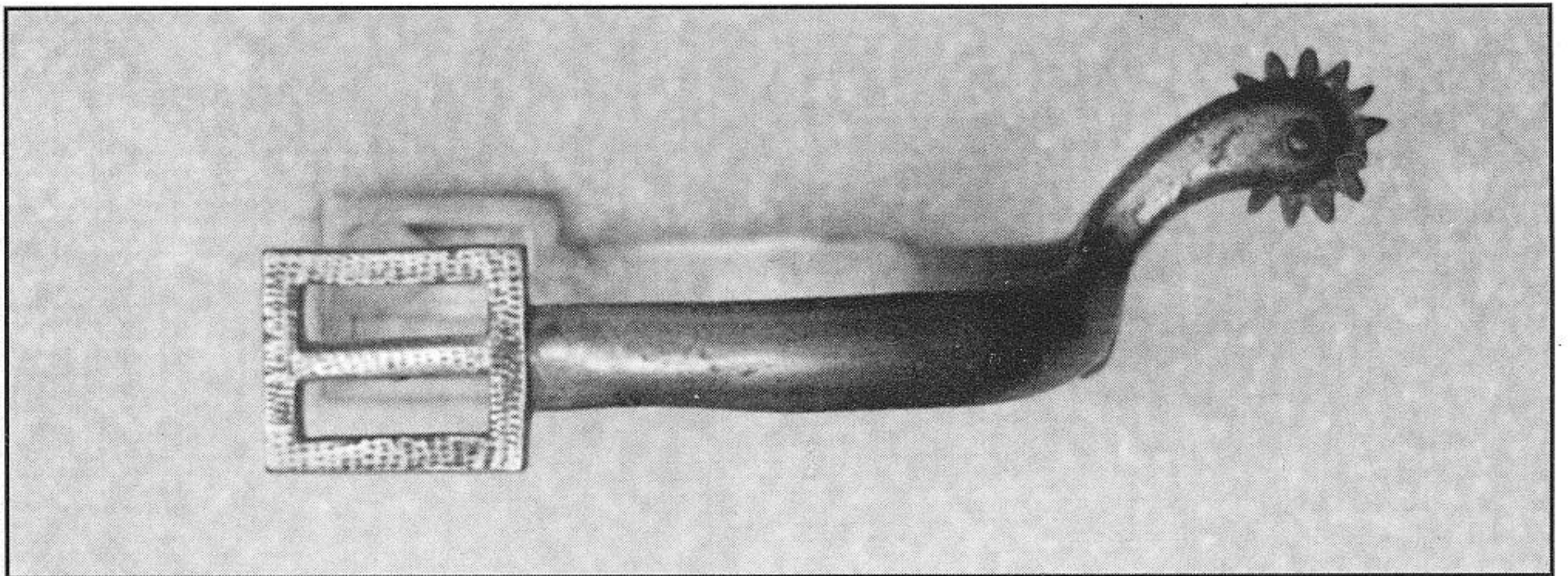


Fig. 25 - Of a very traditional Pattern 1859 styling, this brass officers' spur's only decoration is the stippling on the outer faces of the spur strap slot boxes. The only unusual feature is shown in Fig. 26.

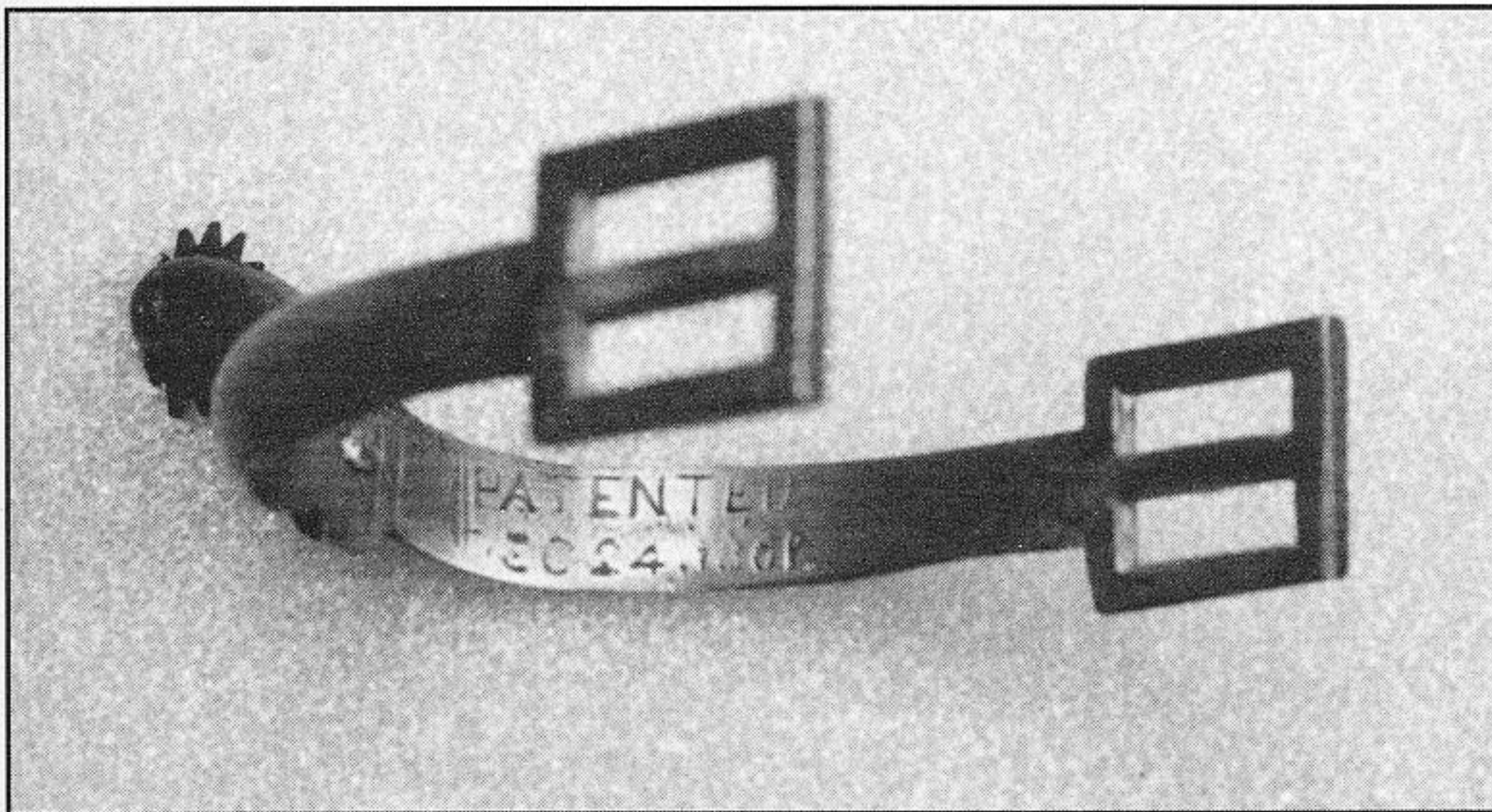


Fig. 26 - For whatever fancied reason, this type of spur has the following cast into the inner surface of the body: "PATENTED DEC. 24, 1861". No Patent seems to have been issued for whatever feature might have been construed, so it is felt that this was a marketing gimmick of dubious sales value.



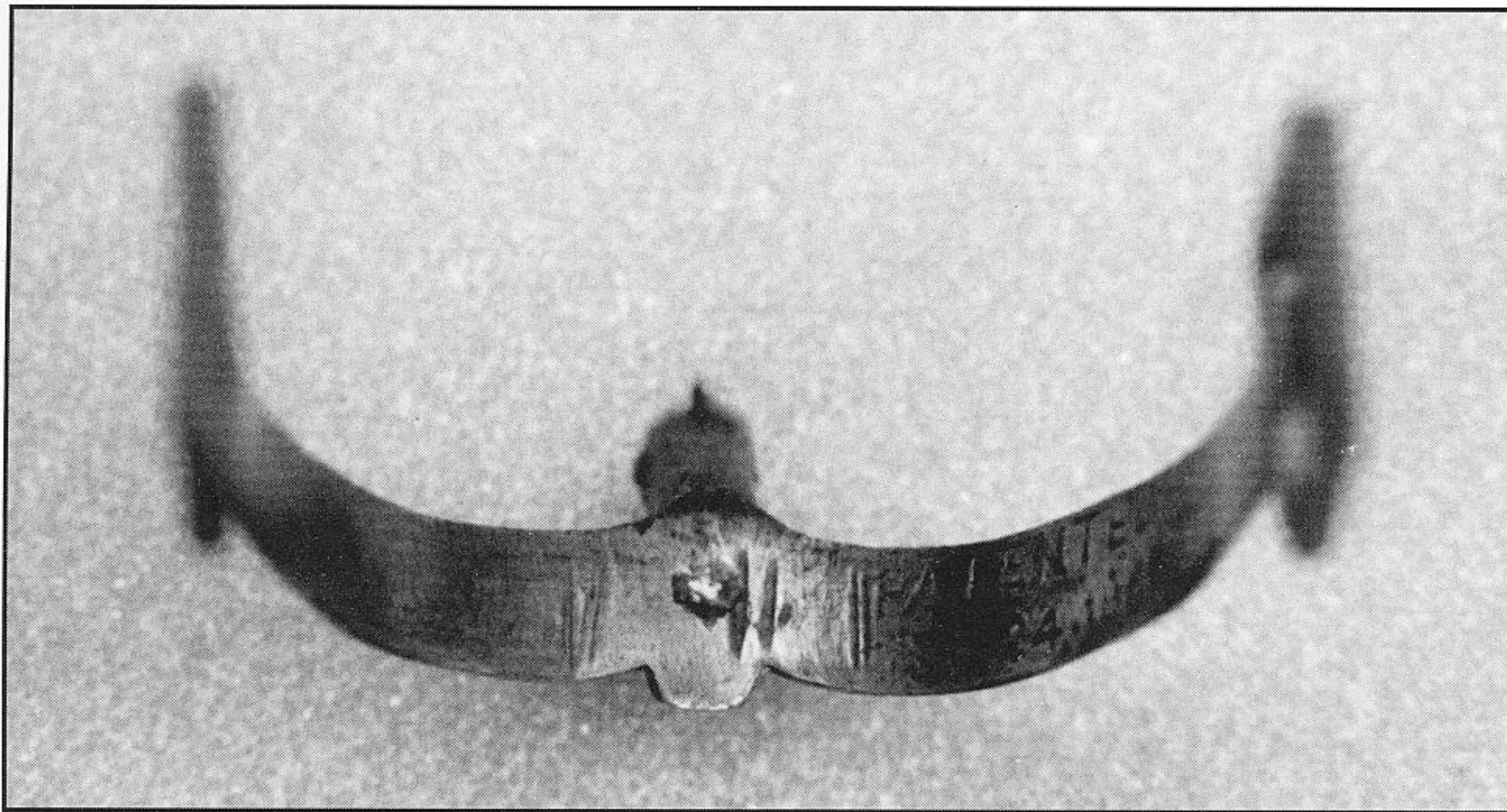


Fig. 27 - Typically smooth on the inside, as all officers' spurs of the time, the "circle" in the center is only a mark left from the casting process.

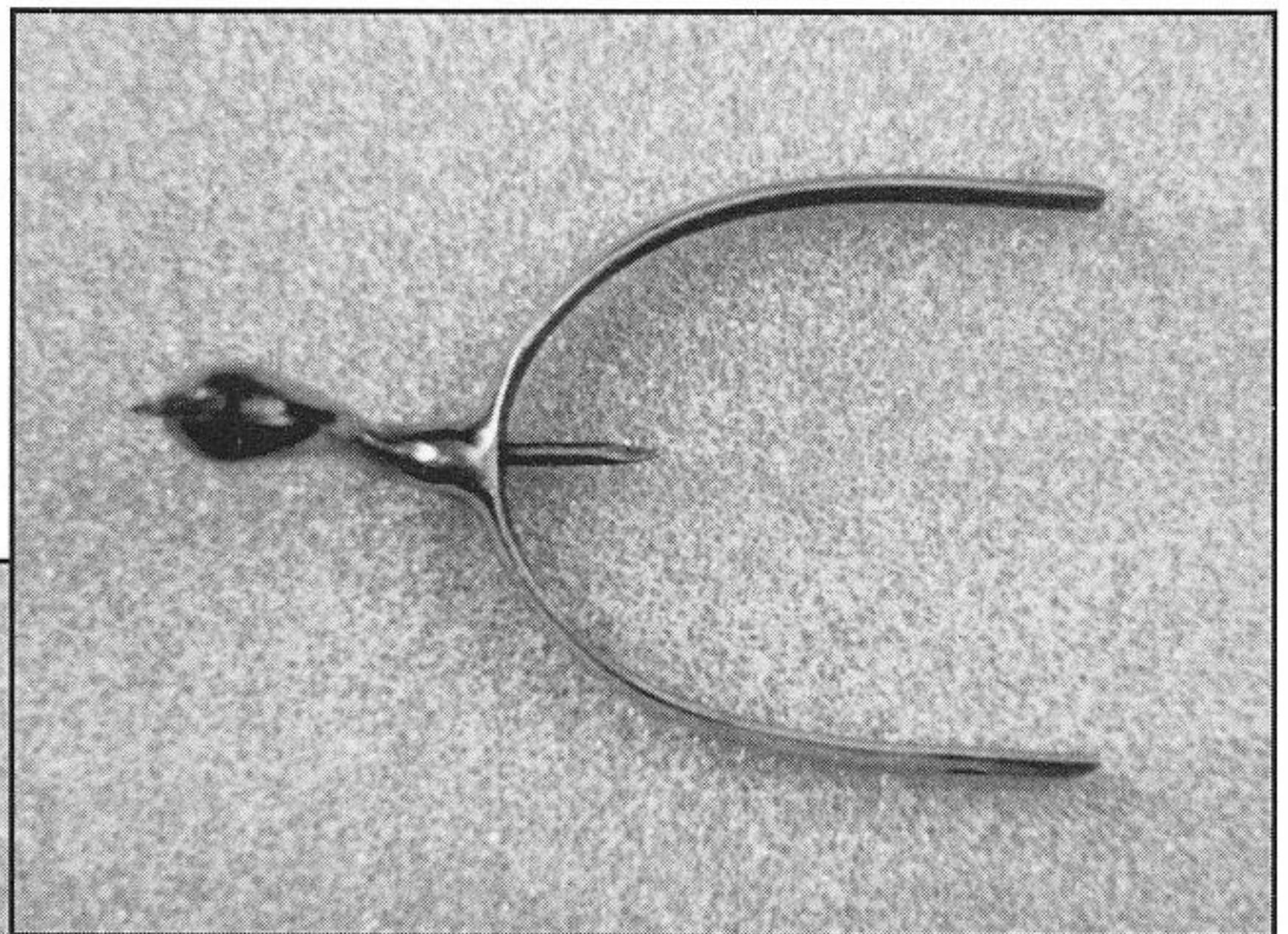


Fig. 29

Fig. 28

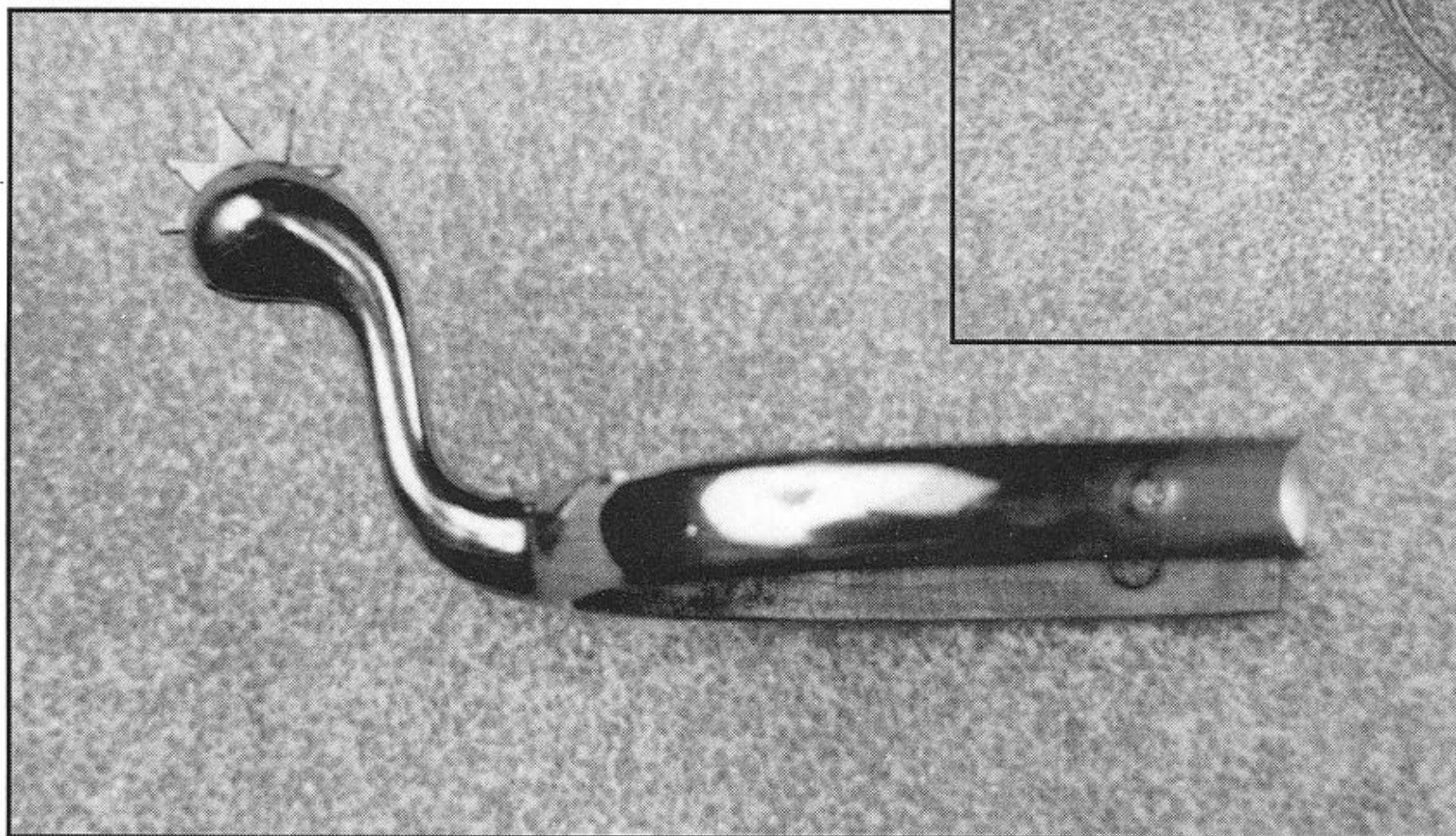


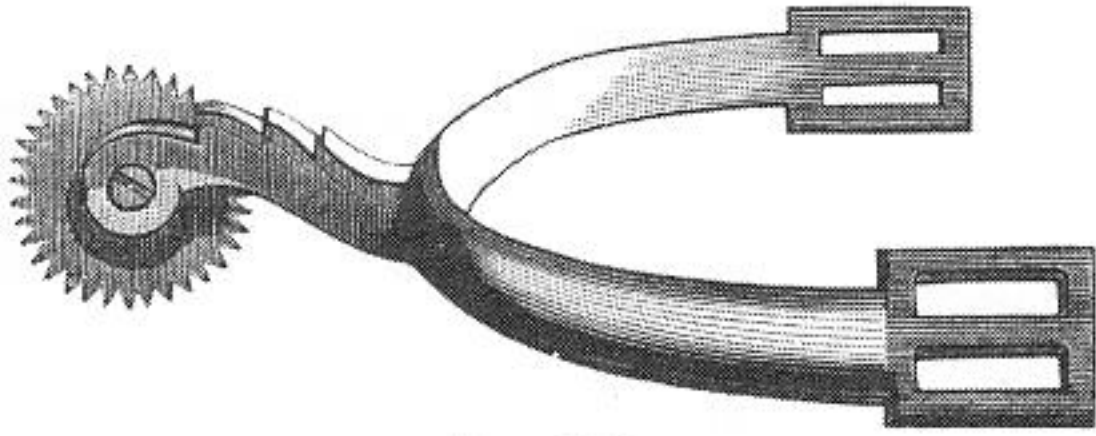
Fig. 28 & 29 - Except for the nickel plate, this spur might be mistaken for the 1841 Spur. Highly polished, the shank measures 1 1/2" long and the coarse 1841-type rowel measures 23/32" in diameter. The heel spike, shown in Fig. 29, is made exactly like a common, round house nail. Such spurs span the time frame from 1840-1890 and it is obvious that they were manufactured long after they had gone out of style in the military.



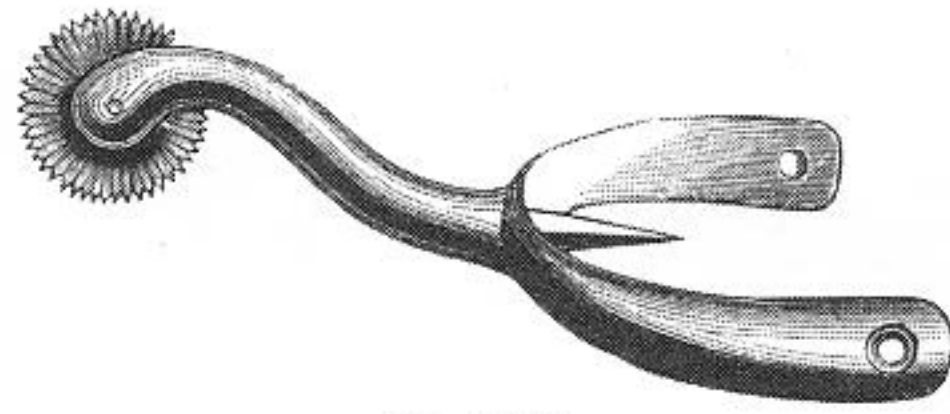
ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF MILITARY GOODS.

73

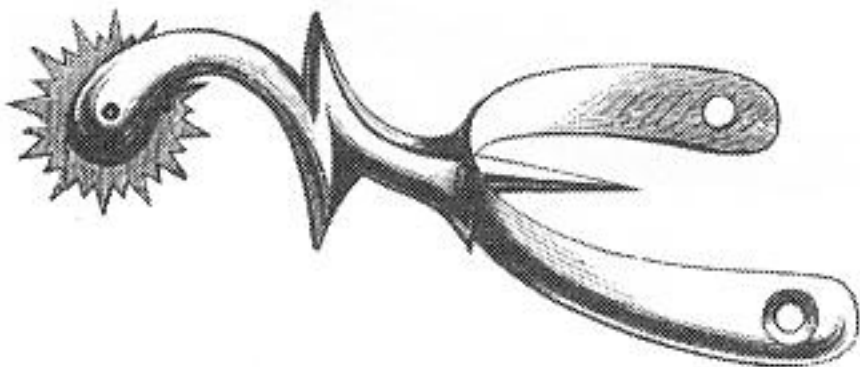
Spurs—Steel, Brass, Gilt, Plated, and Silver.



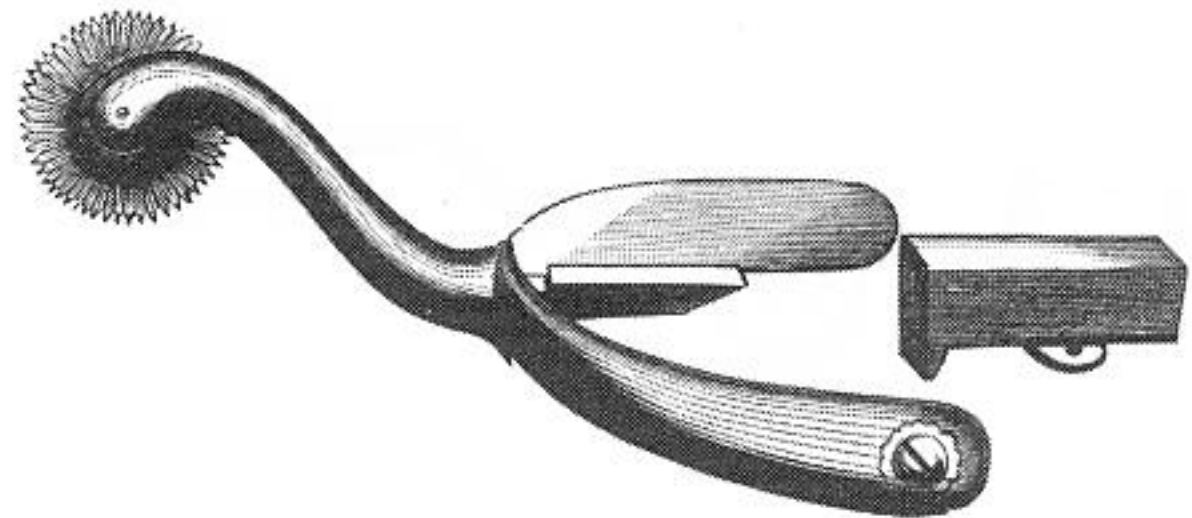
No. 204.
Strap Spur.



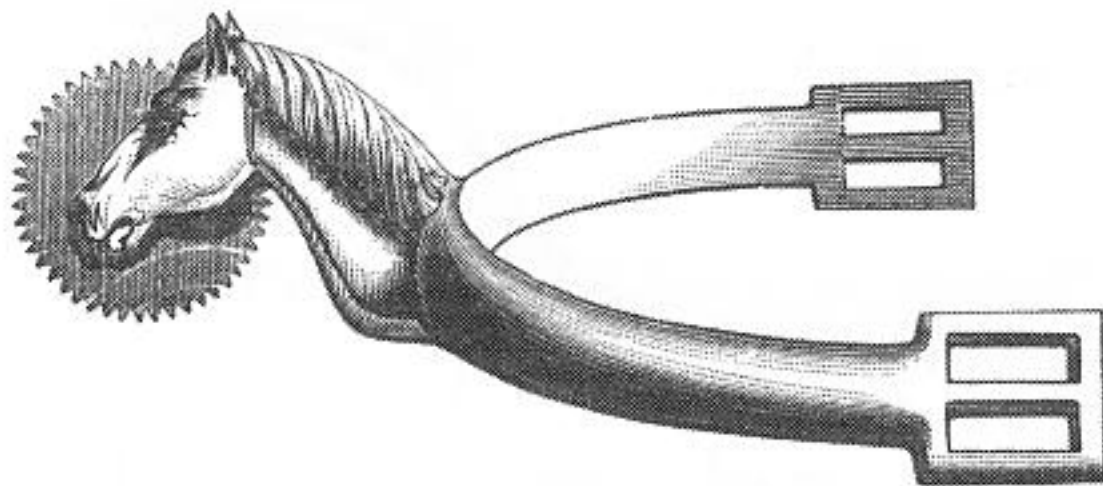
No. 205.
Screw-out Neck Spur.



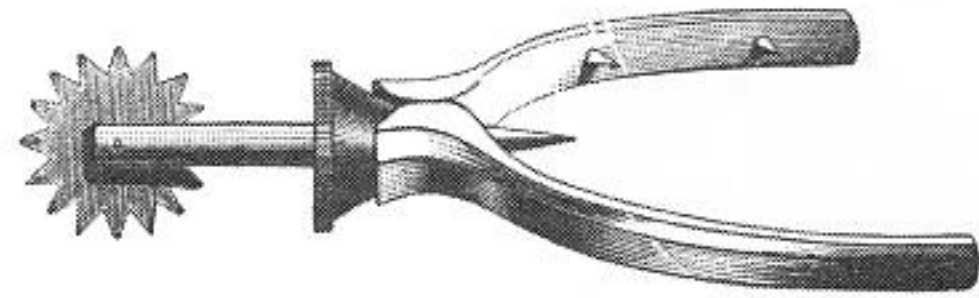
No. 206.
Screw-out Neck Spur.



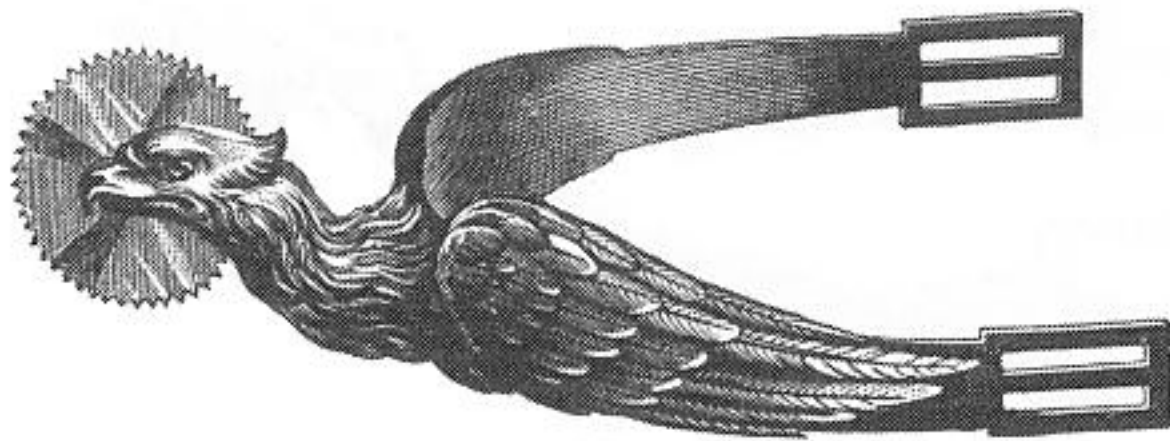
No. 207.
Patent Box Spur.



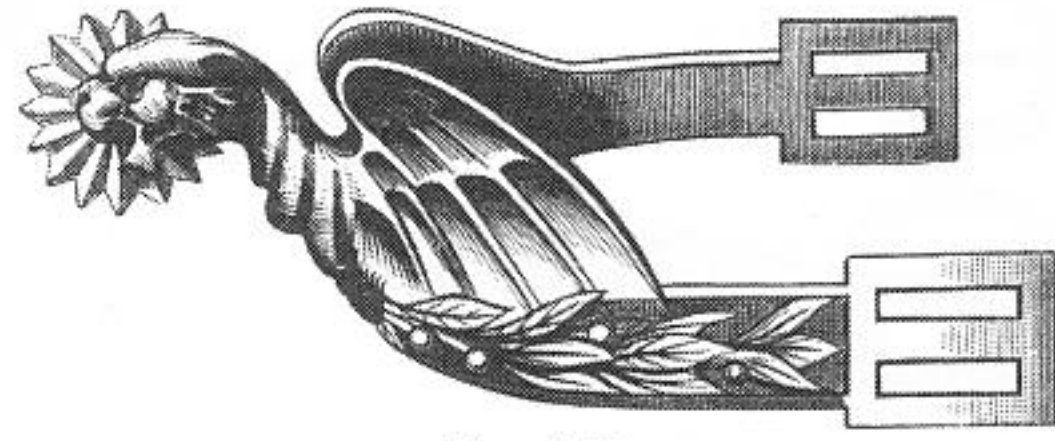
No. 208.
Horse-Head Strap Spur.



No. 209.
Garibaldi Steel Patent Spur.



No. 210.
Gilt Eagle Spur.



No. 211.
Extra Fine Dolphin Spur.

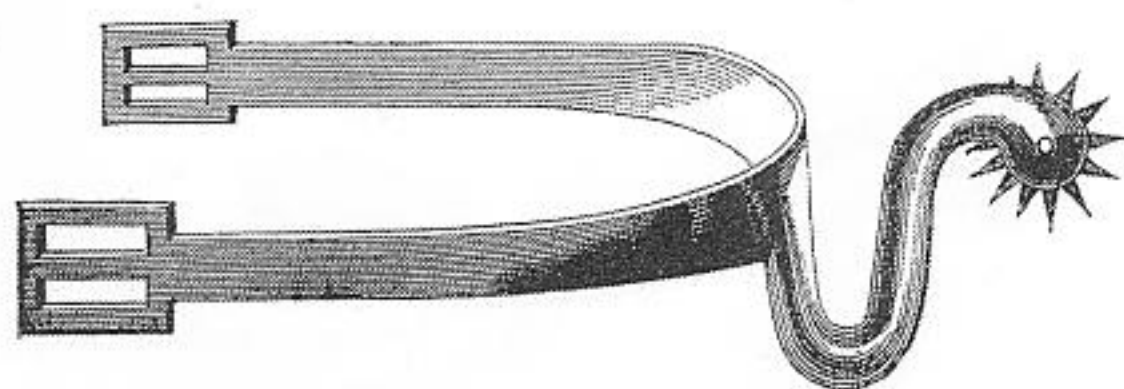
Fig. 30 - This cut is from an 1864 Schuyler, Hartley and Graham sales catalogue. Note the great variety of spurs offered for sale - several of which recur in later years on the commercial market.



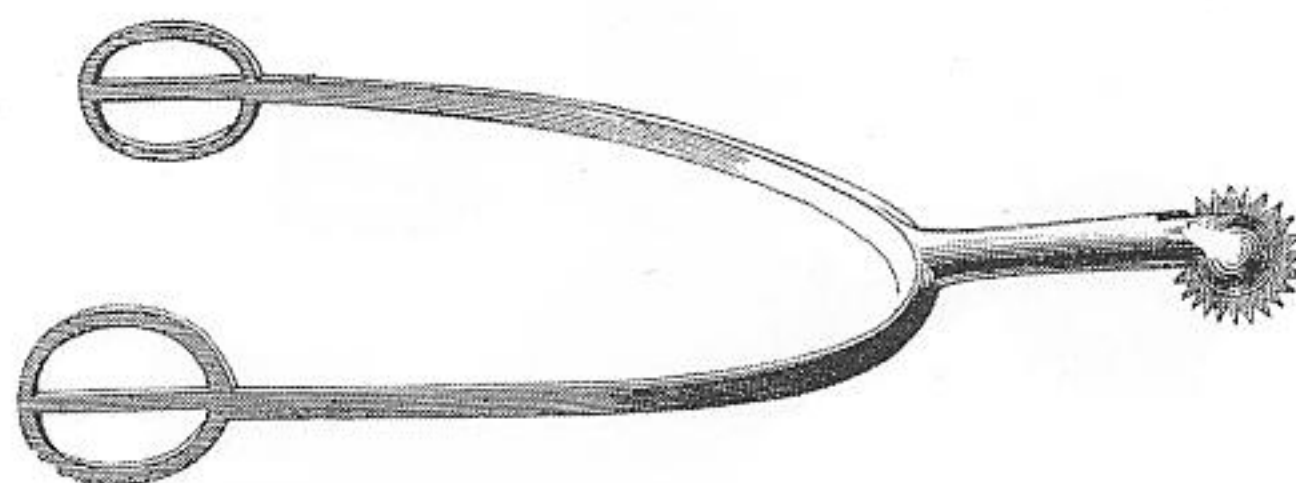
ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF MILITARY GOODS.

153

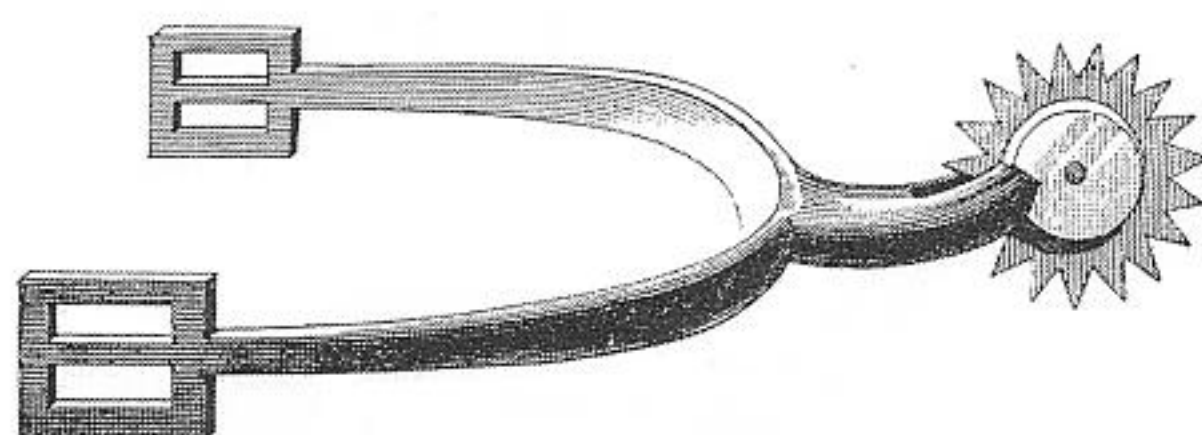
Steel, Brass and Gilt Spurs.



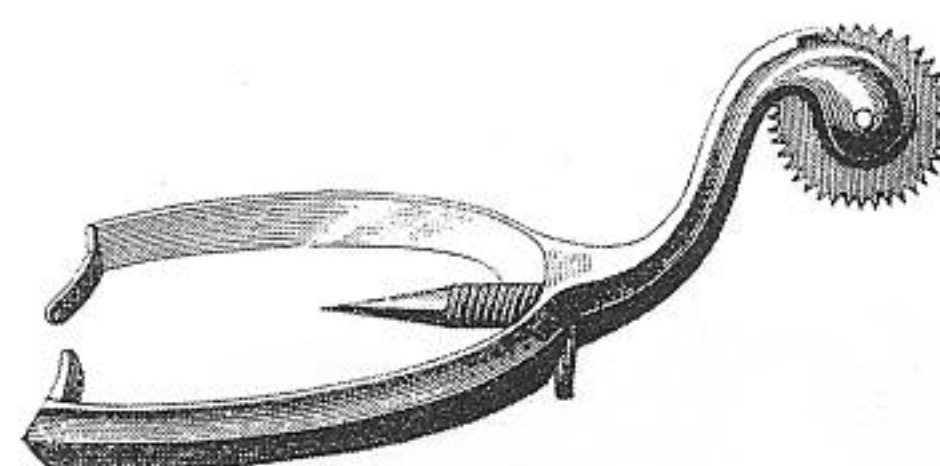
Steel or Gilt.
No. 439.



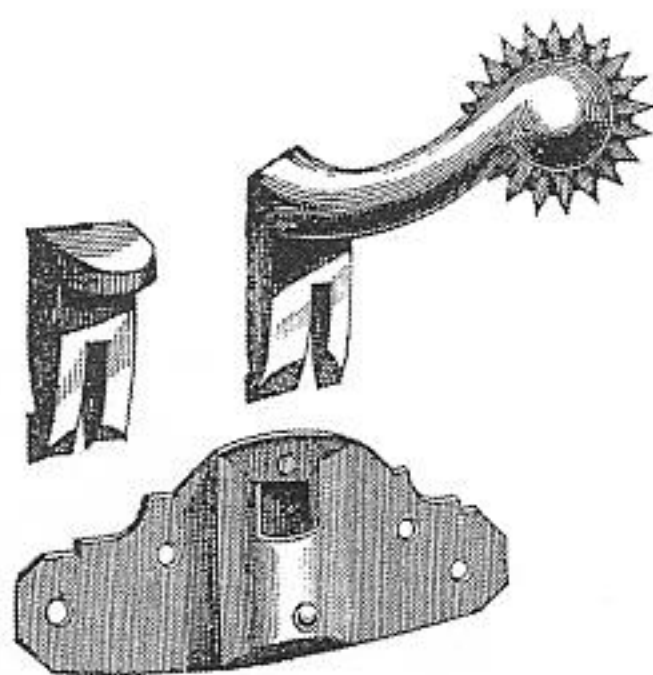
Steel or Gilt.
No. 440.



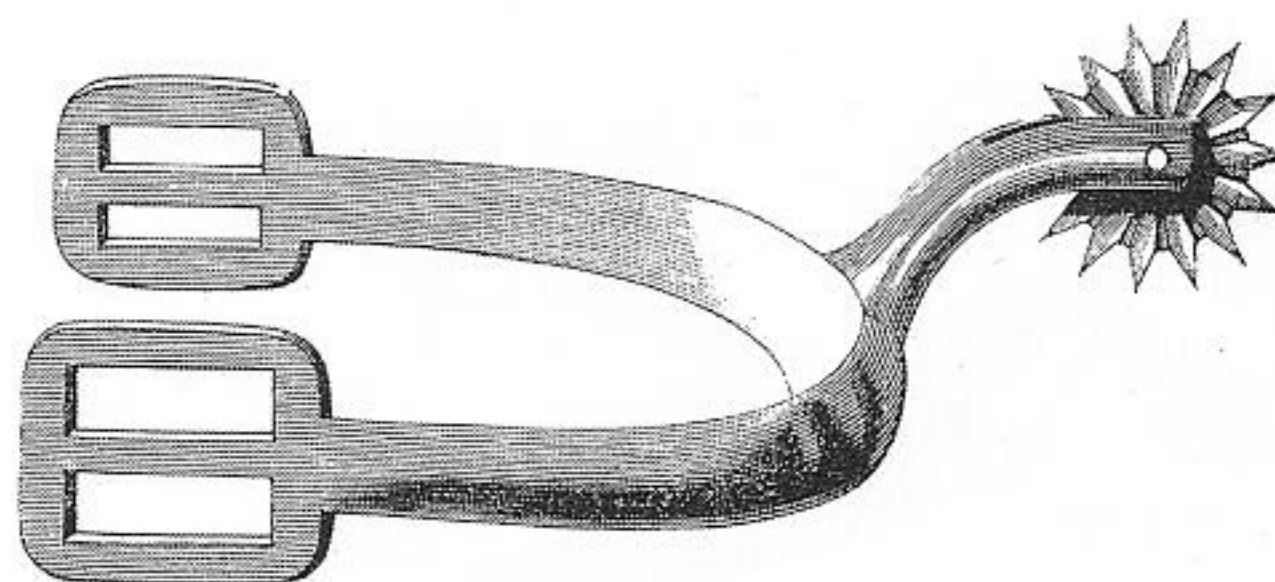
Steel or Brass.
No. 441.



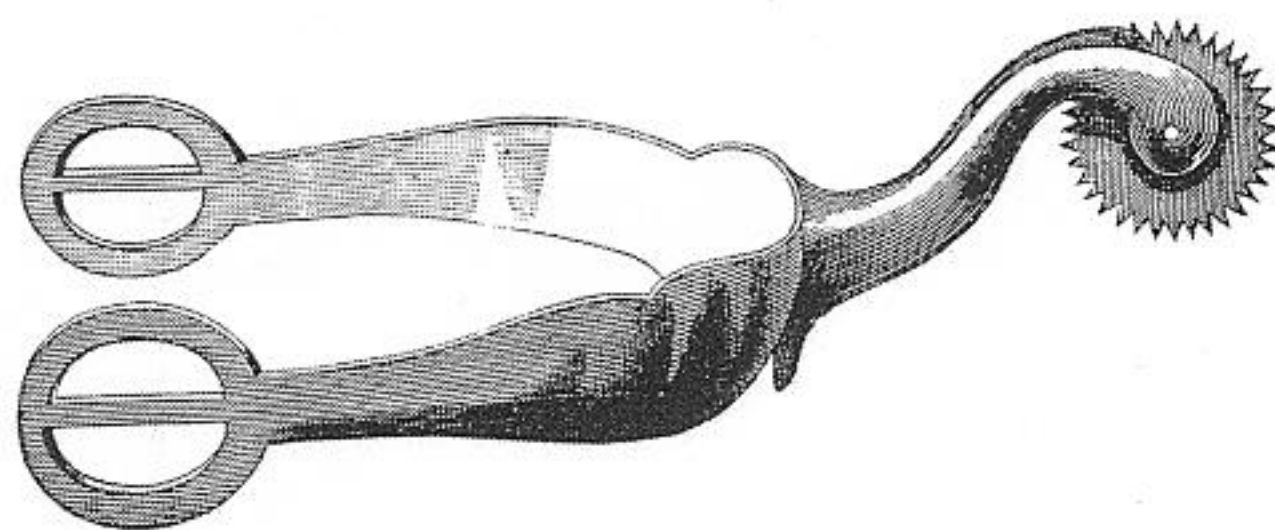
Steel or Gilt.
No. 442.



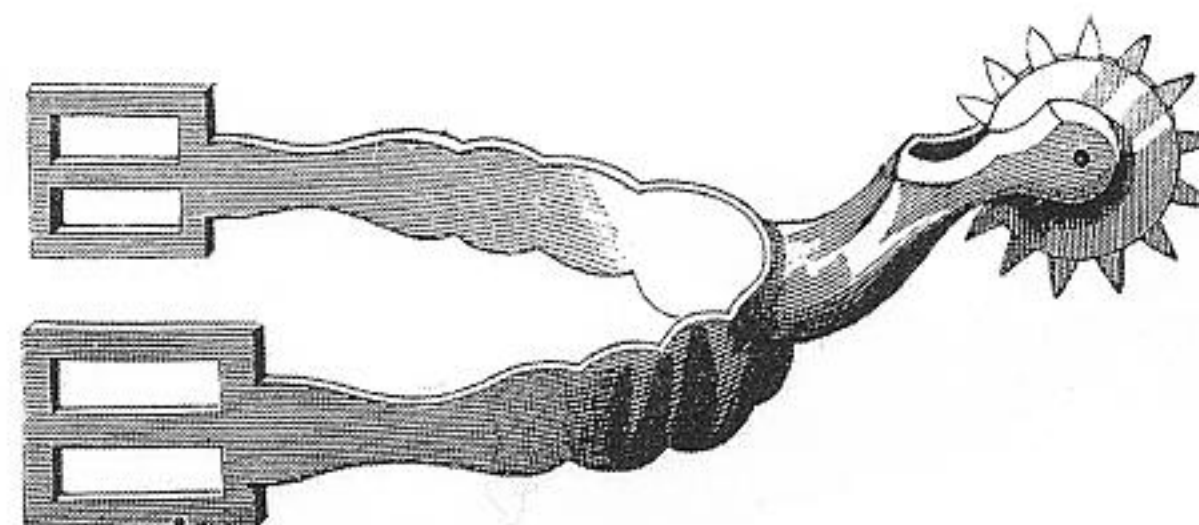
Steel or Brass.
No. 443.



Brass or Gilt.
No. 444.



Brass or Gilt.
No. 445.



Gilt or Silver Plated.
No. 446.

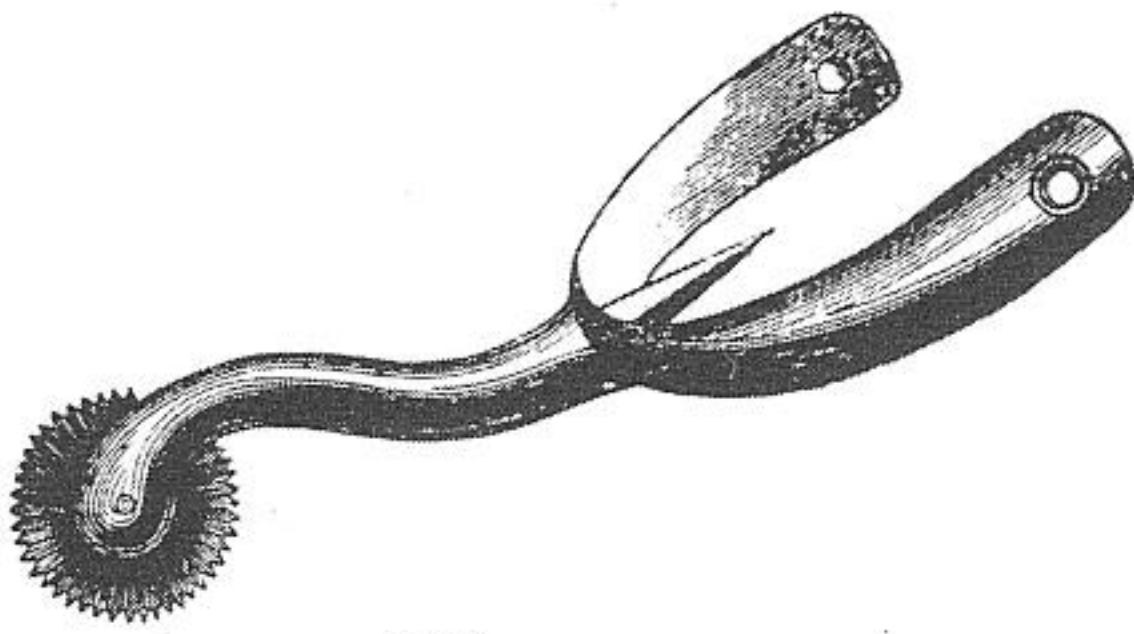
Fig. 31 - A page from the 1864 Schuyler, Hartley and Graham sales catalogue. All of these spurs could have been commercially purchased and used in the War - and thereafter.



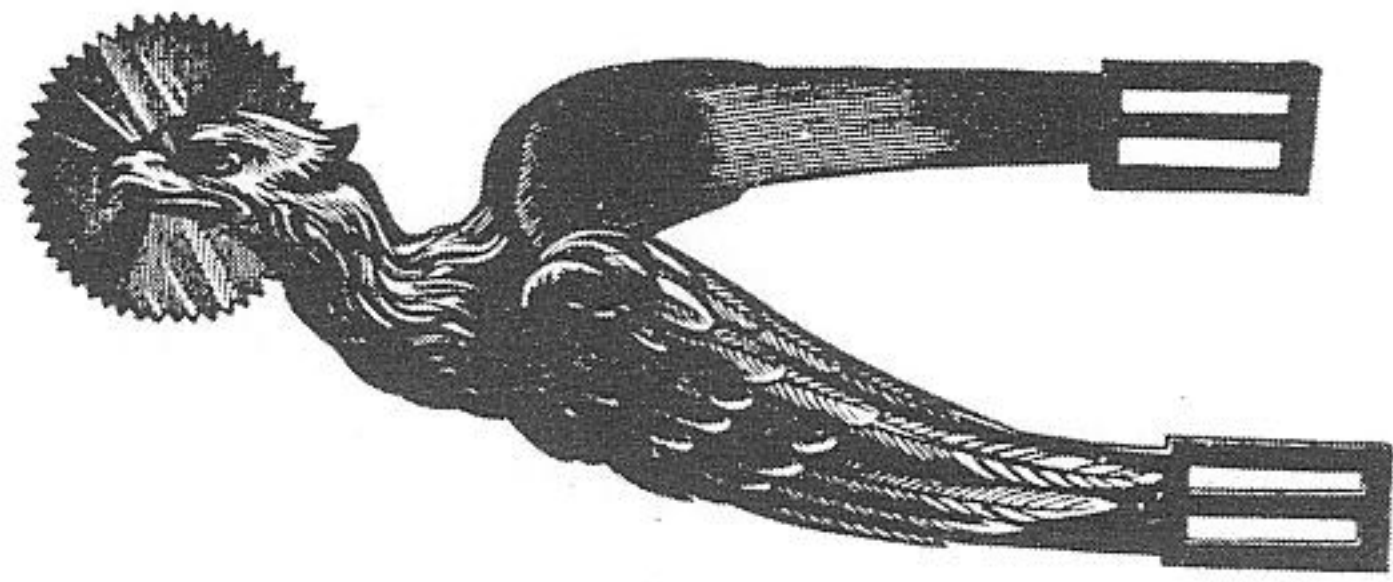
141 Grand Street, N. Y.

32

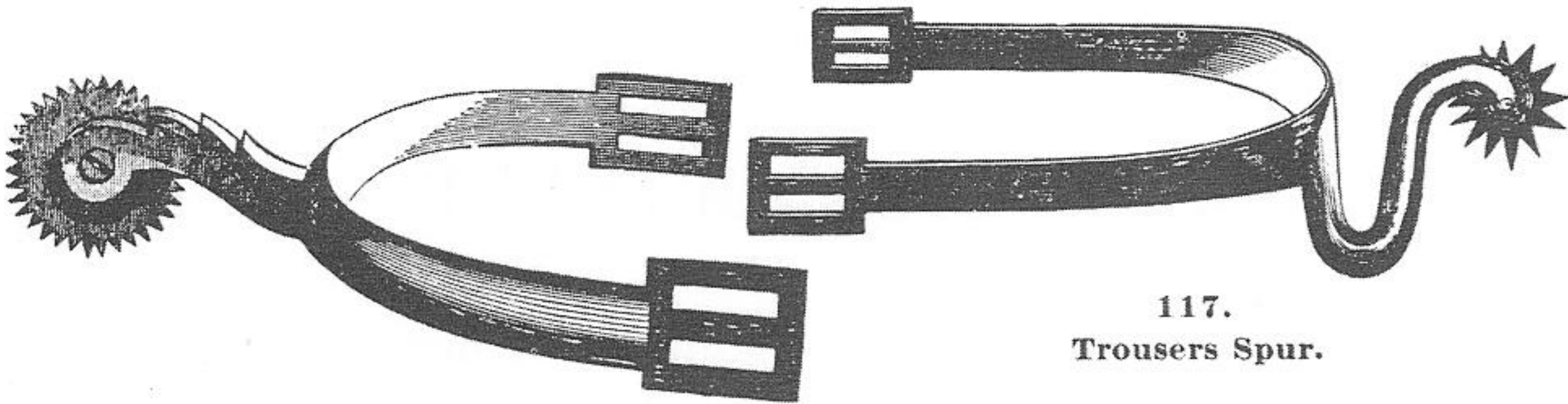
J. H. MCKENNEY & CO.

RIDABOCK & CO.
SUCCESSORS TO

115.
Screw Spur.



116.
Eagle Strap Spur.



117.
U. S. Reg. Spur.

117.
Trousers Spur.

Fig. 32 - This page from an 1872-period Ridabock Military Goods catalogue clearly shows the continued offering of commercial spurs known to have been used in the War Between the States. Note that Spur 117 is called a "U.S. Reg.(ulation) Spur" though it was never adopted by the U.S. Army.



THE FRONTIER WAR YEARS, 1866 - 1884

PATTERN 1872 SPUR
1881 ANSON MILLS EXPERIMENTAL SPURS
PERSONAL PURCHASE SPUR

PATTERN 1872 SPUR

The vast Frontier, stretching from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean reminded the cavalry and the Ordnance Dept. of the lessons learned years before when the US Dragoons made their way across the West. The harsh climate, with widely varying temperatures, as well as the seemingly limitless miles required to establish a military presence was a far cry from the geographical size of the War just past. This disparity in size and harshness took its toll on men and equipment, forcing field commanders to consider, test and request new concepts and equipment. Between 1871 and 1872, two different army equipment boards met and made recommendations related to equipment patterns submitted to them. One of the more minor recommendations of the last 1872 Board of Officers was for a “new” spur and its justification shows that even a dry Ordnance Memorandum has its moment of humor. The recommendation for a new spur reads as follows:

“Spurs - The Board recommend that the spurs be smooth finished before issue, as they can be thus kept in better order.”

What the cavalry wanted was a shiner spur, something dressier for guard mount and parade. Whether the spur was rough as a corncob or smooth as a baby’s bottom had no significance for its performance or getting “out of order.” However, a generous Secretary of War approved most of the 1872 Board’s recommendations and the Pattern 1872 Spur was adopted.



Once again, however, army records offer no clear description of a newly-adopted spur. In this case, though, there is some defense for its omission: the Pattern 1872 Spur closely resembles the Pattern 1859 (Enlisted) Spur but with a polished exterior finish. Once the reader sees a specimen (Fig. 1), this fact is obvious. While only a coarse-tooth rowel pattern of 1872 Spur is known, it is possible that an officers' variation exists - the only difference between the two likely being the number of points on the rowels. Until a fine-toothed rowel specimen is found, though, this is merely a theory.

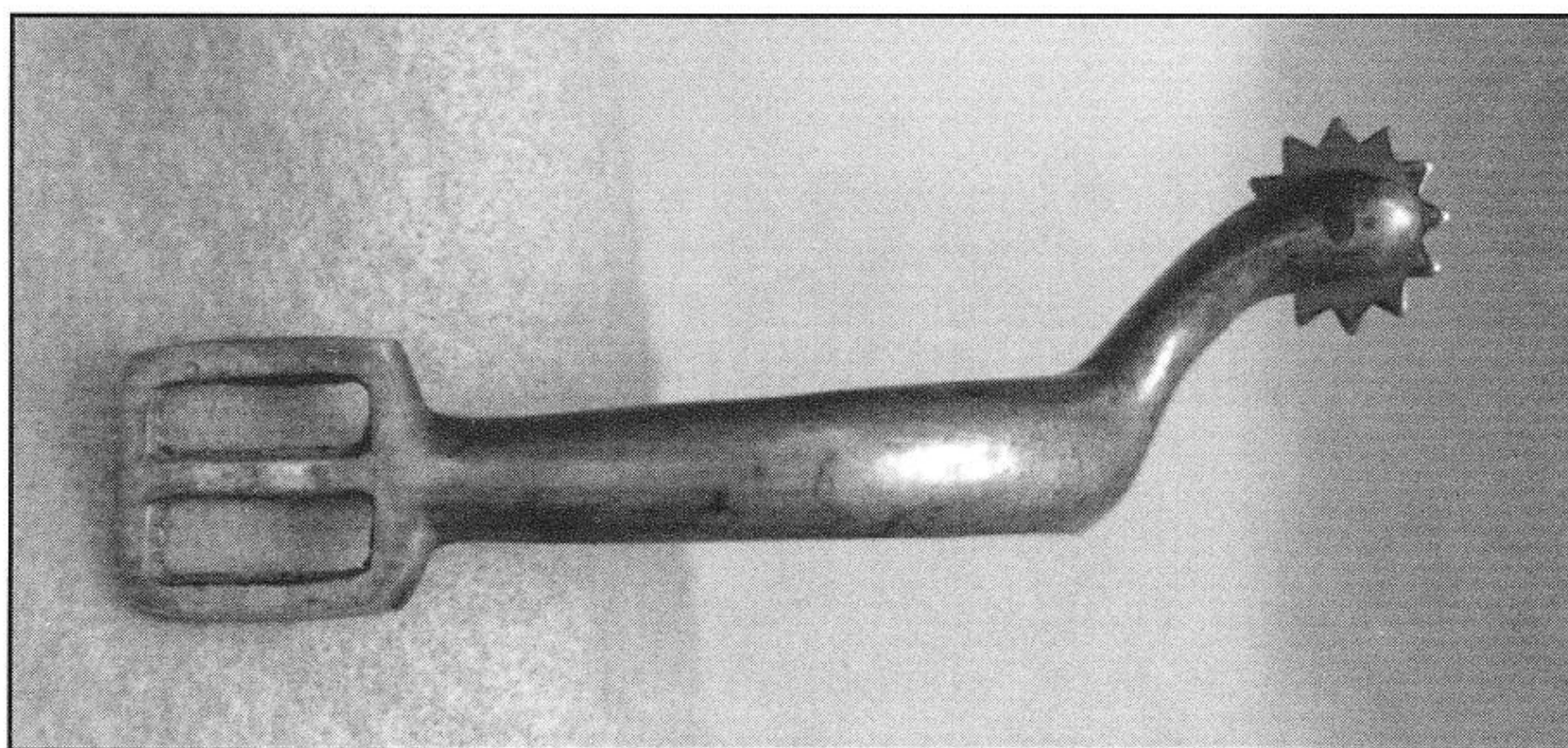


Fig. 1 - The Pattern 1872 Spur probably did not see much manufacture for a number of years after its recommendation by the Cavalry Board and qualified approval by the Ordnance Department and the Secretary of War. The only substantive difference between this spur and the tens of thousands left over in surplus after the War, was the more carefully-rounded exterior surfaces and the smoothness of their surface. When manufacture did take place, probably in the late 1870s, it was in government arsenals. Note that this spur, like the Pattern 1859 Spur, was THE regulation spur, there being no recommendation by the Cavalry Board for an Enlisted (or Service) spur and an Officers' spur. The 1872 has the same coarse-pointed rowel of the 1859, with 14 points. The steel rowel is secured with a soft iron pin that is polished to fit flush to the rowel stud.

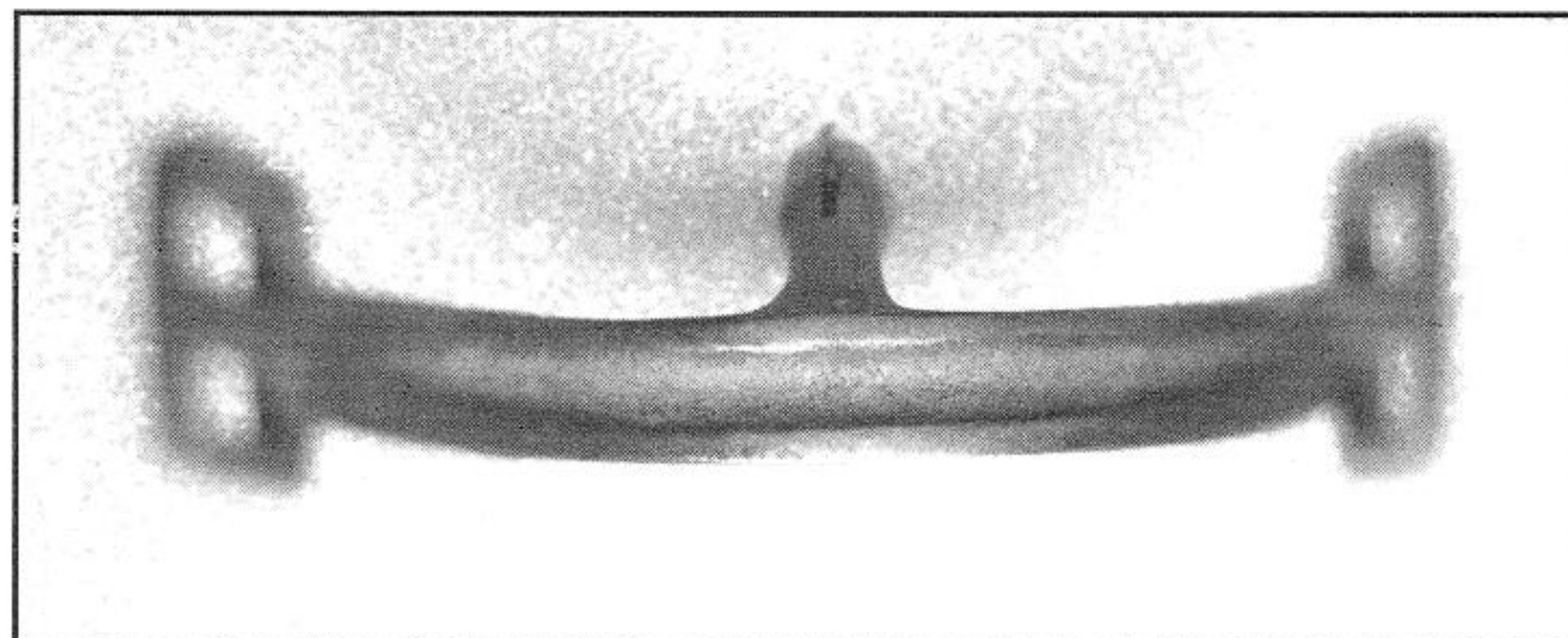


Fig. 2 - the inner groove or "gutter" of the 1872 is wider than that of the Pattern 1859. The groove in the 1872 measures about 0.31" at its widest.



In late 1873, yet another Board of Officers was convened (Ref.) to consider cavalry equipments. Though not stated, this third equipment board in three years clearly indicates that the combat branches, particularly the cavalry, needed different and better equipment to cope with their mission in the American West. The result of this board was Ordnance Memoranda No. 18, now a classic reference for the serious student of the cavalry. The Board's only comment regarding the current (Pattern 1872 Spur) and its straps was that they required no change. At that time, the spur straps were described as being 3/4 inches wide; the buckle of brass wire.

Production of the Pattern 1872 Spur almost certainly was limited for a number of years. The army had vast quantities of War surplus materiel and spurs were included on that list. In the indorsements by the reviewers of the Board's recommendations, a common restraint is voiced:

"- - in carrying out the changes, alterations and additions recommended, it is suggested that the large quantity of stores on hand of old patterns be utilized, and the changes, &c., be made as rapidly as a due regard to economy will permit. S.V. Benet, Acting Chief of Ordnance."

"The present stock on hand could be exhausted gradually, leaving the new equipment to accumulate in store, ready for emergency. or for use after the present supply is exhausted.. W. T. Sherman, General of the Army."

"The Secretary of War concurs with the General of the Army and the Chief of Ordnance, that the stores on hand of old patterns should be utilized before issue of new patterns. H. T. Crosby, Chief Clerk."

Changeover to the new pattern was probably slow. Whether the entire cavalry received the new pattern by the time it was recommended to be replaced by the Pattern 1885, is unknown. Two things are known, however: few specimens of the Pattern 1872 exist today and, comparatively, many, many more Pattern 1859 (Enlisted) Spurs are seen. Simple attrition in the West can explain some of this disparity but the author feels it is likely that the restrained approval of the Board's recommendations by higher authority resulted in low production of the Pattern 1872 and continued issue of the Pattern 1859 Spur well into the 1870s.



One last comment must be made about the 1872 Spur. Randy Steffen, in his pioneering work, *THE HORSE SOLDIER, 1776-1943*, Vol. 3, page 183, has provided a conceptual drawing of what he felt was the 1872 Spur. Unfortunately, this drawing is not completely accurate but has been uncritically accepted by many collectors as "the" 1872 Spur - which it is not. The 1872 Spur exists in sufficient quantity that its identification is certain. The primary fault with the Steffen drawing is the very flat back to the shank leading to the rowel. While this flat-shank feature exists in a common commercial spur of the Indian War period, the true 1872 Spur, as shown in the photos here, has a very round shank just like that of its Pattern 1859 predecessor. The flat-shank commercial spurs are shown in the *PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS* section following.

THE 1881 ANSON MILLS EXPERIMENTAL SPURS

Major Anson Mills of the 10th US Cavalry had excellent credentials as a field officer but he was also a gifted designer who would eventually be best known for the development and manufacture of the now-famous family of woven web equipments and the looms to produce them. In Fiscal Year 1881, the Report of the Chief of Ordnance to the Secretary of War, Appendix 27, contained a report entitled "Report on the Manufacture of One Thousand Spurs and Straps of the Pattern Designed by Major Anson Mills, Tenth Cavalry, by Lieut. L. L. Bruff, Under the Direction of Bvt. Lieut. Col. D. W. Flagler, Commanding the Rock Island Arsenal." This report chronicled the manufacture of 500 each of two models of Mills Spurs (Fig. 3). Both of these models were produced in the small size. Today, these experimental spurs are quite rare and, for that reason, the text of the description of the spurs and the assembly of the parts are included below:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SPUR - The finished spur is shown in Figs. 21 and 22. As will be seen by a reference to the plate, there are two different models of the spur, marked 'Model A, small size,' and 'Model B, small size,' the difference being in the shape and assembling of the leather parts, the metal parts being the same in both.

The spur shown in Fig. 21, model A, small size, is composed of a heel strap a, or 'main leather band,' as it is called by the inventor, of which the rowel-



plate *b* is riveted, a lower strap, or under strap *c*, passing under the boot; and a spur-strap, *d*.

These parts are shown in Figs. 14, 13, and 12. The metallic parts of the spur are the rowel-plate *B* (Fig. 21), the yoke or frame *e*, the shoulder *h* (all of brass in one piece), the rowel *f* of steel, the rowel-pin of steel, the buckle *k*, of brass, eyelet *l*, and the brass rivets and burs, marked 1, 2, and 3. Fig. 22 shows the second model, marked model *B*, small size; *a* is the heel-strap, as represented in the figure. The different leather parts belonging to this model are shown in detail in Figs. 18 and 19.

In the model *A*, small size, Fig. 21, the buckle is fastened to the under-strap by means of a small projectin *c* (Fig. 13), which is twined over the bar of the buckle and riveted, the tongue passing through the slot. In Fig. 22, model *B*, small size, the buckle is fastened to the spur-strap with a rivet, as shown in Fig. 19.

The buckle is shown in Figs. 19 and 20. The eyelet *l* (Fig. 21) is intended for the insertion of a button attached to a steel wire double loop for strapping down the trousers. None of these loops have been made here.

Two sizes of the leather parts for the spur model *A* can be made, the larger size being shown in Figs. 15, 16, and 17, but they were found to be so large and clumsy when completed that only the small size was made at the request of the inventor.

The size of the leather parts for the model *B* can be varied by lengthening the heel-strap and spur-strap. Five hundred pairs of each model, small size, were made.

ASSEMBLING THE PARTS - The rowel is riveted in the yoke with a rotary press. The rivet is increased in diameter throughout its entire length by this operation, and the hole in the rowel is made 1/16" larger than the rivet to allow for this increase.

The rowel-plate is riveted to the heel-strap by the same press, as it was found impossible to do the riveting by hand without the plate. The leather parts are assembled after the rowel-plate has been riveted. In the spur model *A*, the spur-strap, and the heel-strap are placed together and the eyelet inserted; the heel-strap and the under-strap on the other side are then assembled in the same manner; the end of the under-strap with the slot in it is then inserted between the heel-strap and the spur-strap, and the whole riveted. The holes punched in the straps serve as guides for making the others."



Fig. 21.

MODEL "A" - SMALL SIZE.

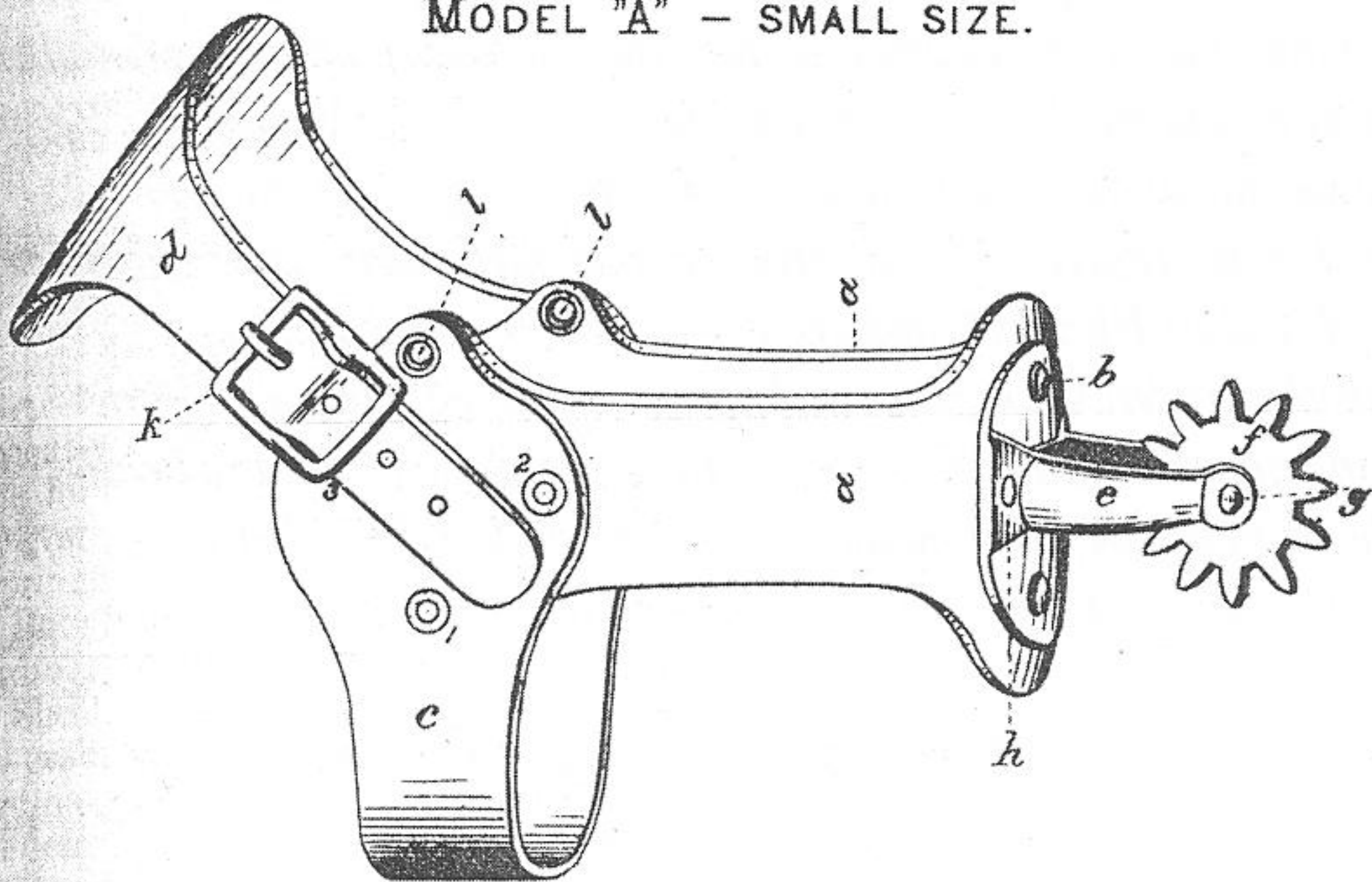
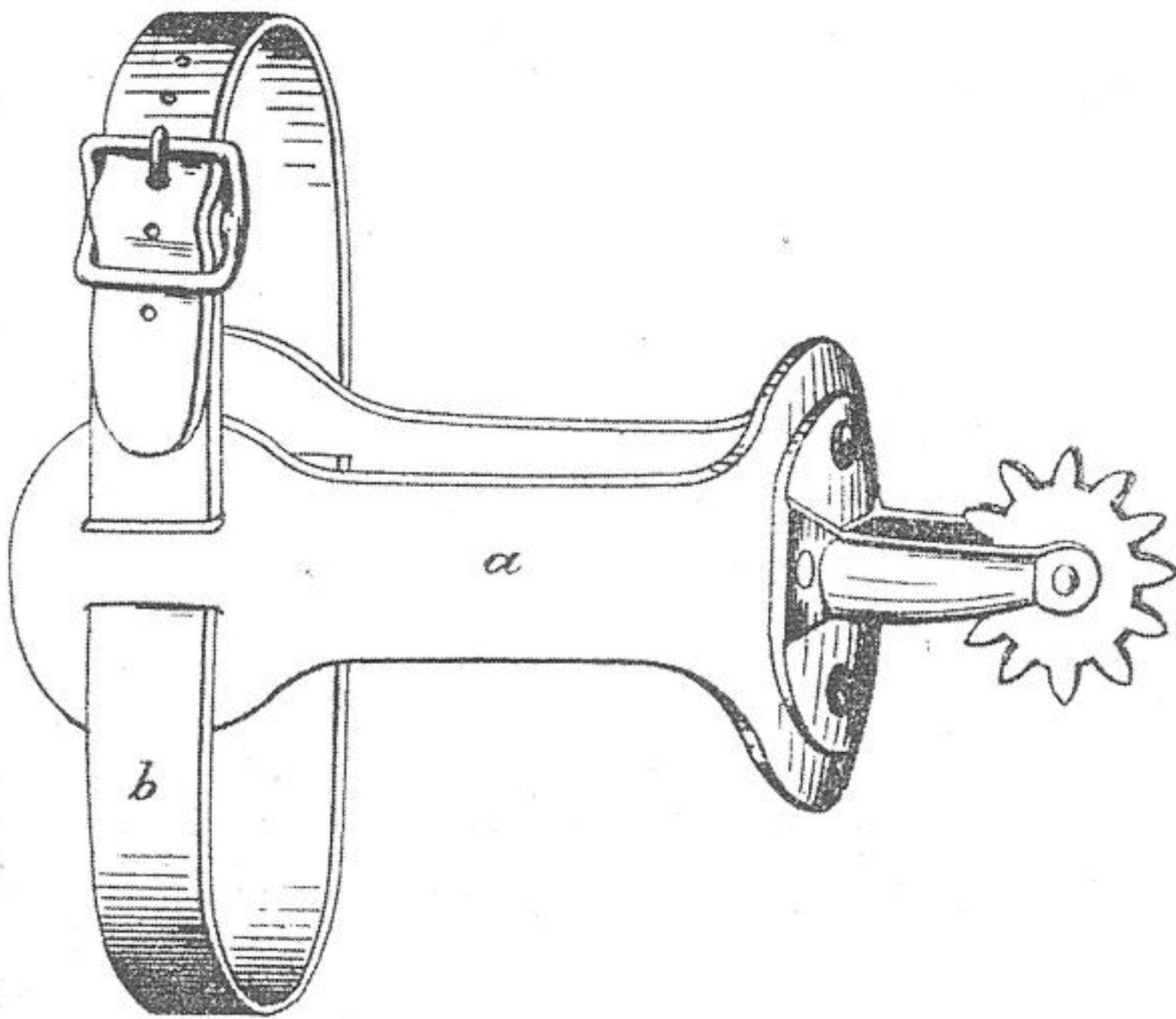


Fig. 22.

MODEL "B" - SMALL SIZE.



Appendix 27--1881.

Fig. 3 - The two models of the Mills Spurs. 500 pairs of each model were manufactured by Rock Island Arsenal. Undoubtedly the ugliest spur in American history, they are, today, quite rare and desirable.



PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

As discussed earlier, a Randy Steffen conceptual drawing of what he took to be an 1872 Spur is inaccurate in one significant feature and that has misled many collectors. The Steffen drawing shows an 1859/1872-type spur (Ref. 2, Vol. 3, page 183) with a distinctly flat back to its shank. This flat back feature, while not found on the 1872 Spur, is found on a common brass, commercial spur of roughly the same time period. Fig. 4 shows such a spur with a small, military-style rowel. Fig. 5 shows two more of this identical type but with different rowels. Both of these latter spurs are stamped inside with the number "11" on one side of the inside (Fig. 6), indicating that the number relates to a spur body model or style (regardless of rowel assembled to it.) It is felt that this series of old commercial, military look-alike spurs was what Steffen was drawing in his depiction of the Model 1872 Spur. These spurs could have been purchased and used by enlisted and officers alike, but they were never regulation military.

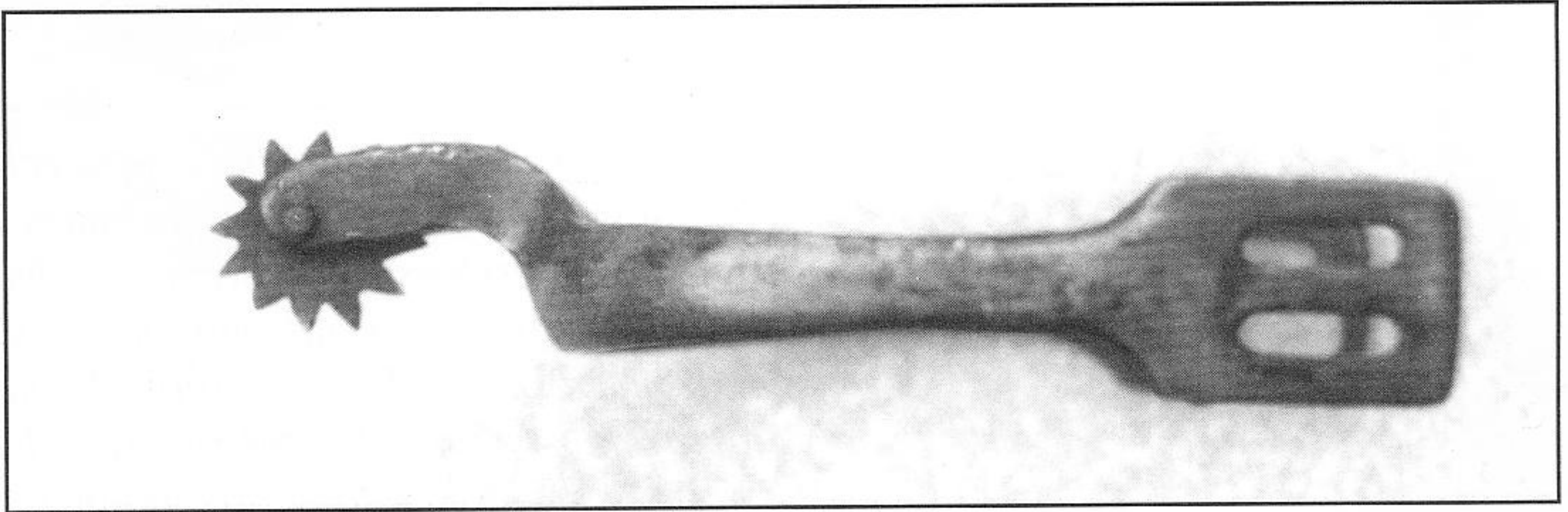


Fig. 4 - This fairly common, brass spur has long been assumed to be "military" but is, however, a purely commercial spur that saw considerable production with a variety of rowels. (See Fig. 5) Where the mis-identification may have started may have been the drawing in Volume 3 of Steffen's book, THE HORSE SOLDIER (Ref. 2) On Page 183, in Fig. 203 of that work, Steffen showed a conceptual drawing of a spur with a distinctly flat back to the shank. It is the author's opinion that the spur drawn was the commercial spur shown here in Fig. 4-7. As shown earlier in this work, the Pattern 1872 Spur had a round neck. As a matter of fact, no regulation U.S. spur ever had a flat back to the shank.



Fig. 5 - Two variations of the commercial spur so commonly mistaken for a military spur of the 1860-1890 period. Not only are the rowels different, but the bodies of the spurs are of noticeably different lengths. All spurs of this pattern seem to have disproportionately smaller strap slots than military spurs. The lower spur in the picture is a good example of the small slots in a box that is quite large and flat. Both spurs have a 1 1/8" shank. The larger rowel measures 1" in diameter and the smaller rowel measures 3/4". The spur strap boxes on both pairs are thinner than any military spur and the slots are generally a little shorter. The spur strap slots on the lower spur in the photo are only 9/16" long, as compared to the 13/16" slots on the Pattern 1859 Spurs.

Fig. 5

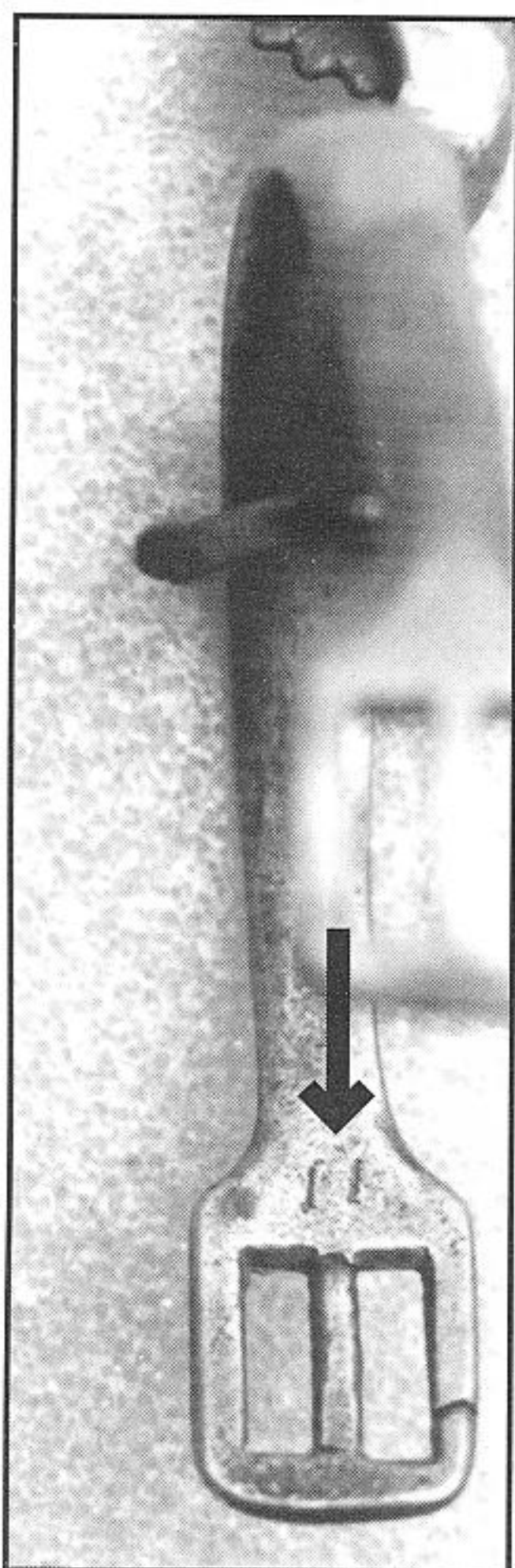
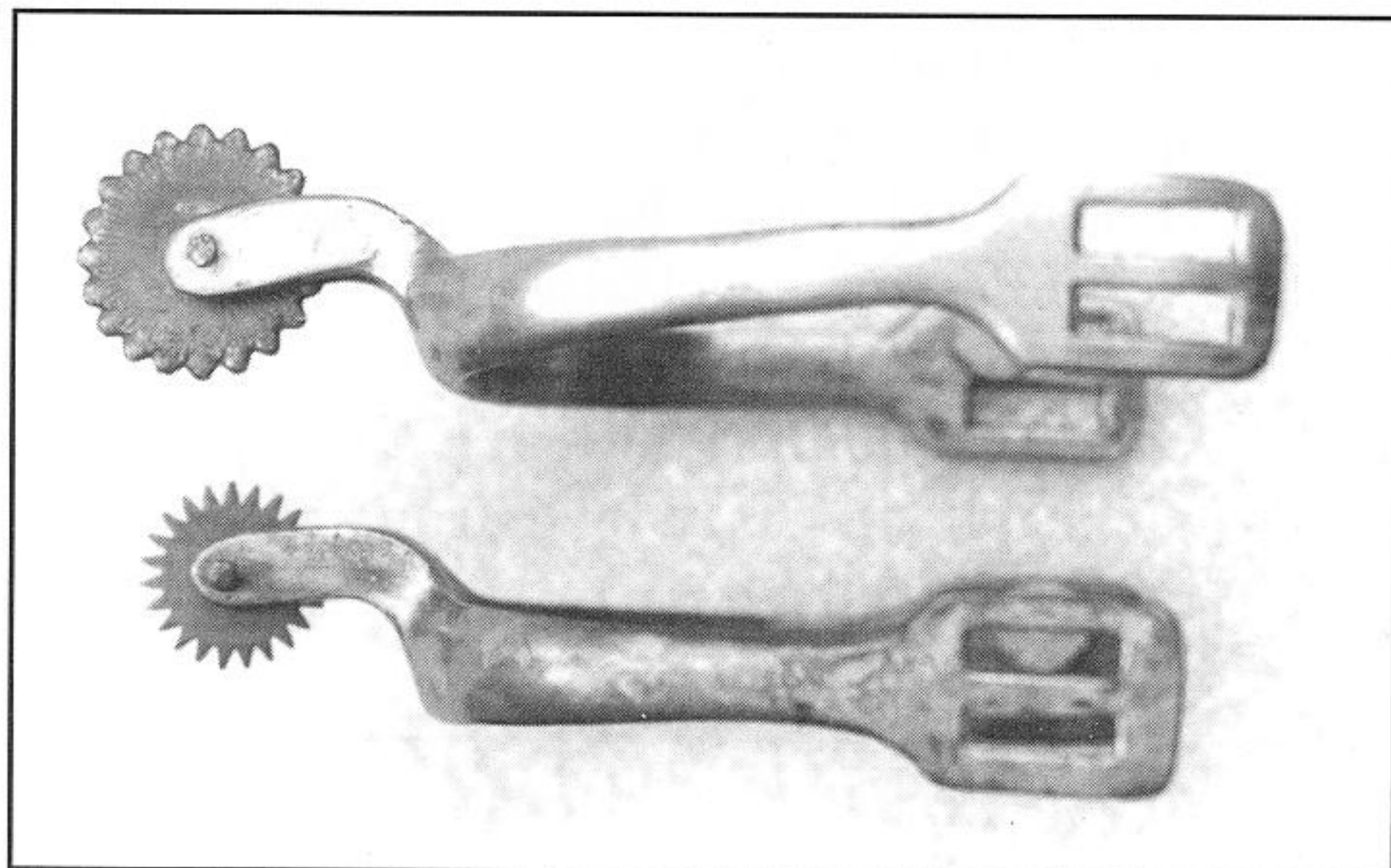


Fig. 6

Fig. 6 - Supporting the claim that these are actually commercial spurs is the stamp of "11" seen on two of three different spurs of this pattern (arrow). The spurs themselves differ slightly in body length and strap box dimensions, but the overall configuration is the definitely flat-backed, dropped shank. It is the author's opinion that "11" was the manufacturer's style number for this spur body. Certainly, neither of the pairs of spurs on which this number appears was a military spur.

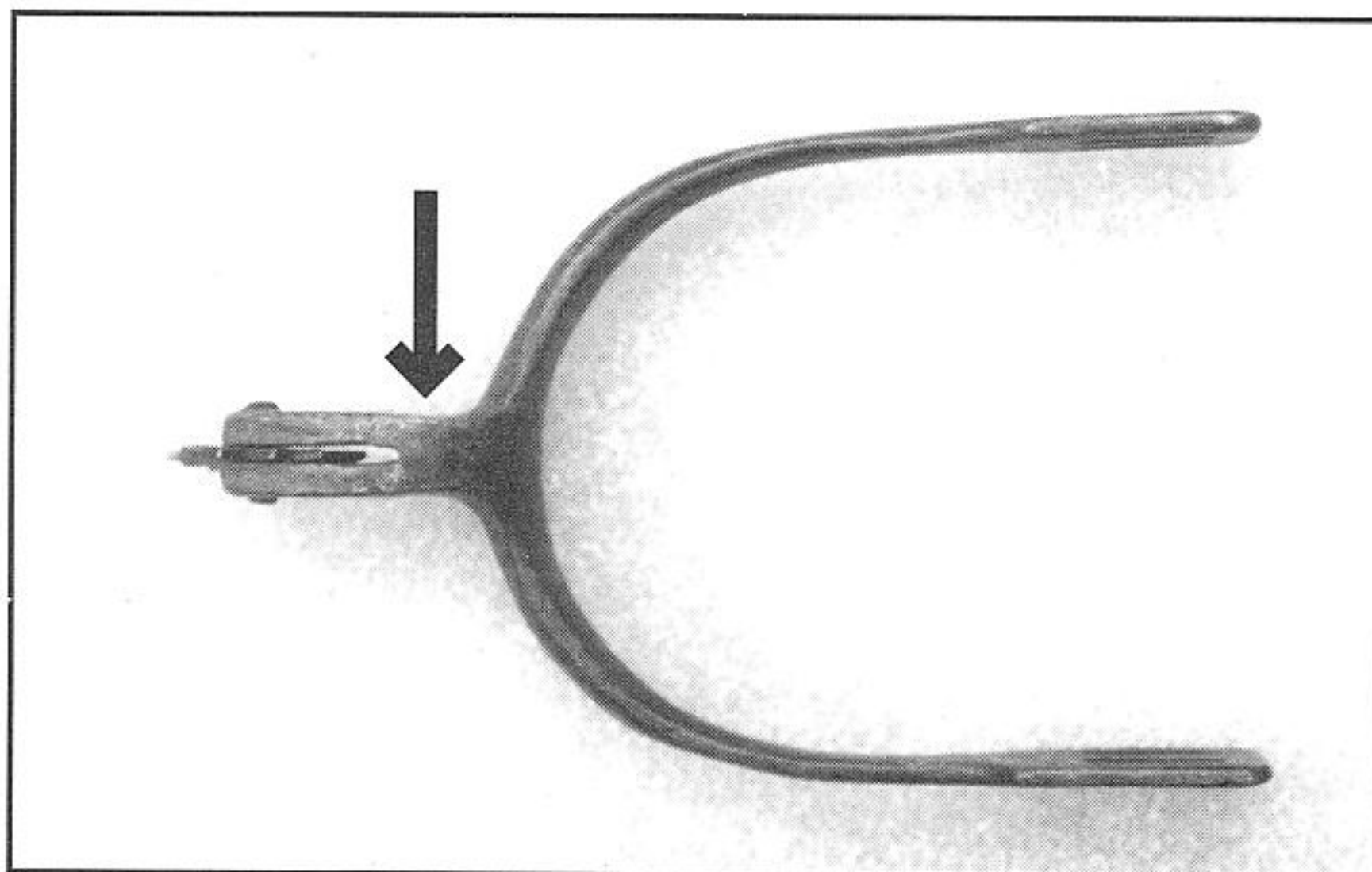


Fig. 7

Fig. 7 - In this view, the arrow points to the flat back of the spur shank. This is a feature never found on a regulation U.S. spur.



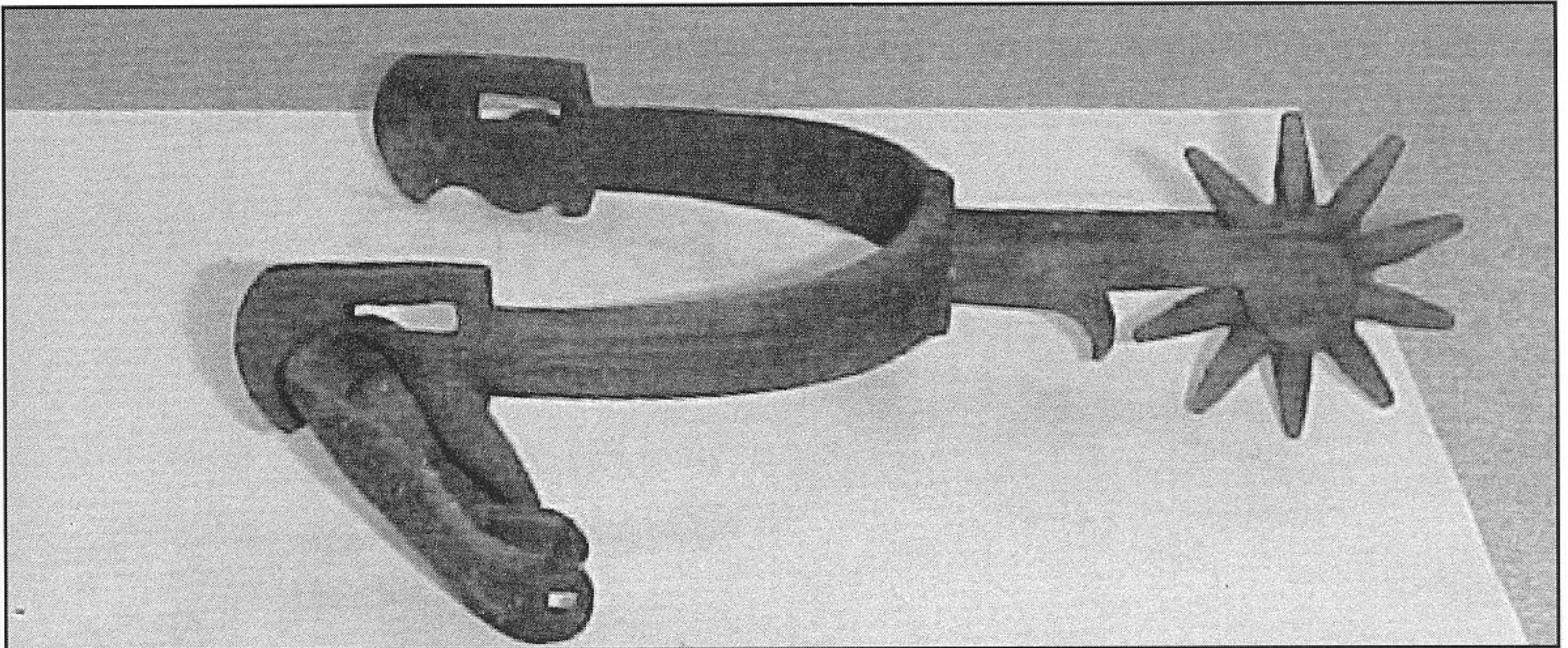


Fig. 8

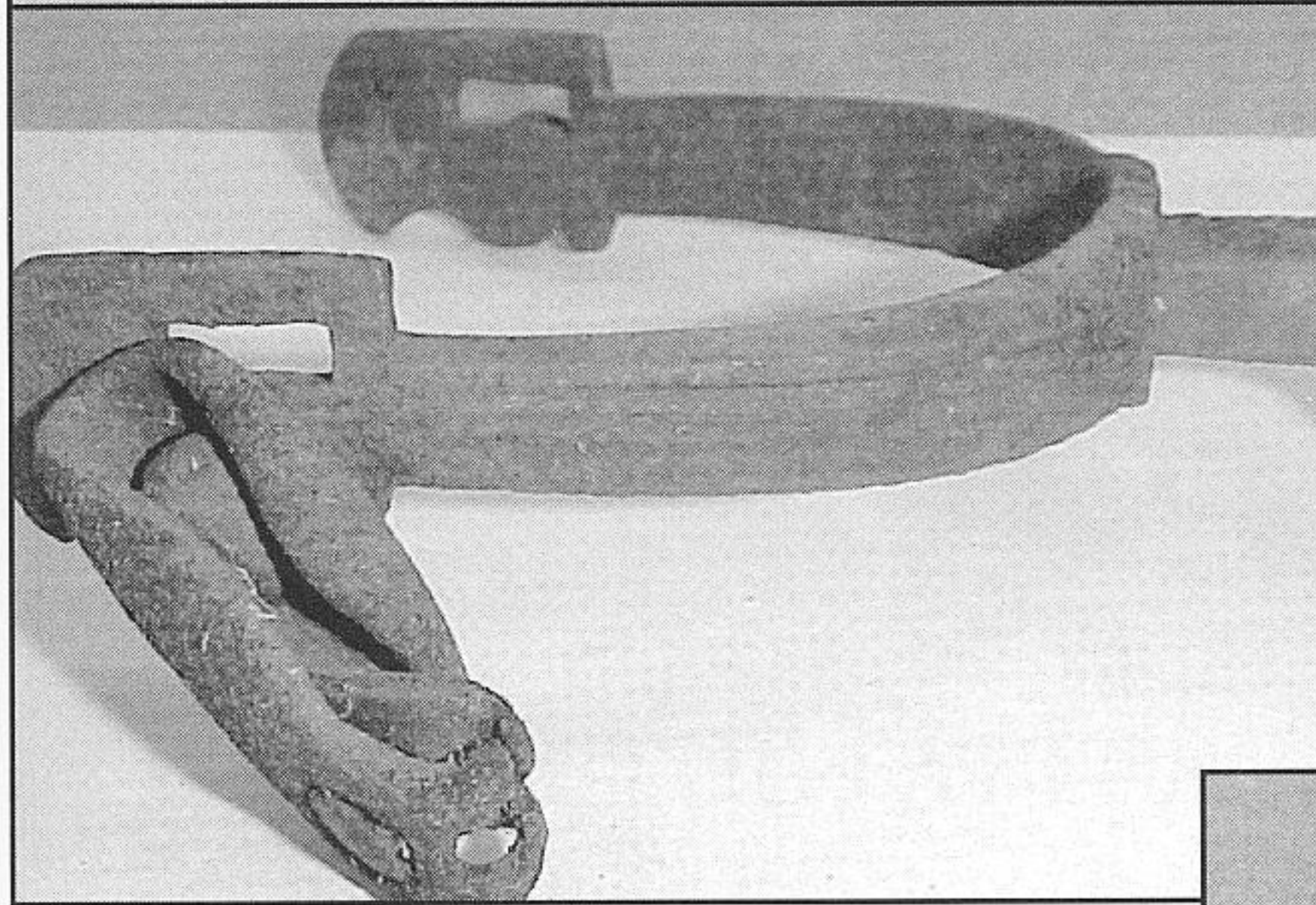


Fig. 9 - A fragment of the dessicated spur strap still clings to one of the spur strap studs on one side. Note that this side of the arm has a cast-in design of four parallel, raised ridges.

Fig. 10 - This side of the Deep Coulee/Calhoun Hill Spur shows a finer, more detailed cast-in design on the outside of the arm. Note how well the dry climate has preserved the overall spur.

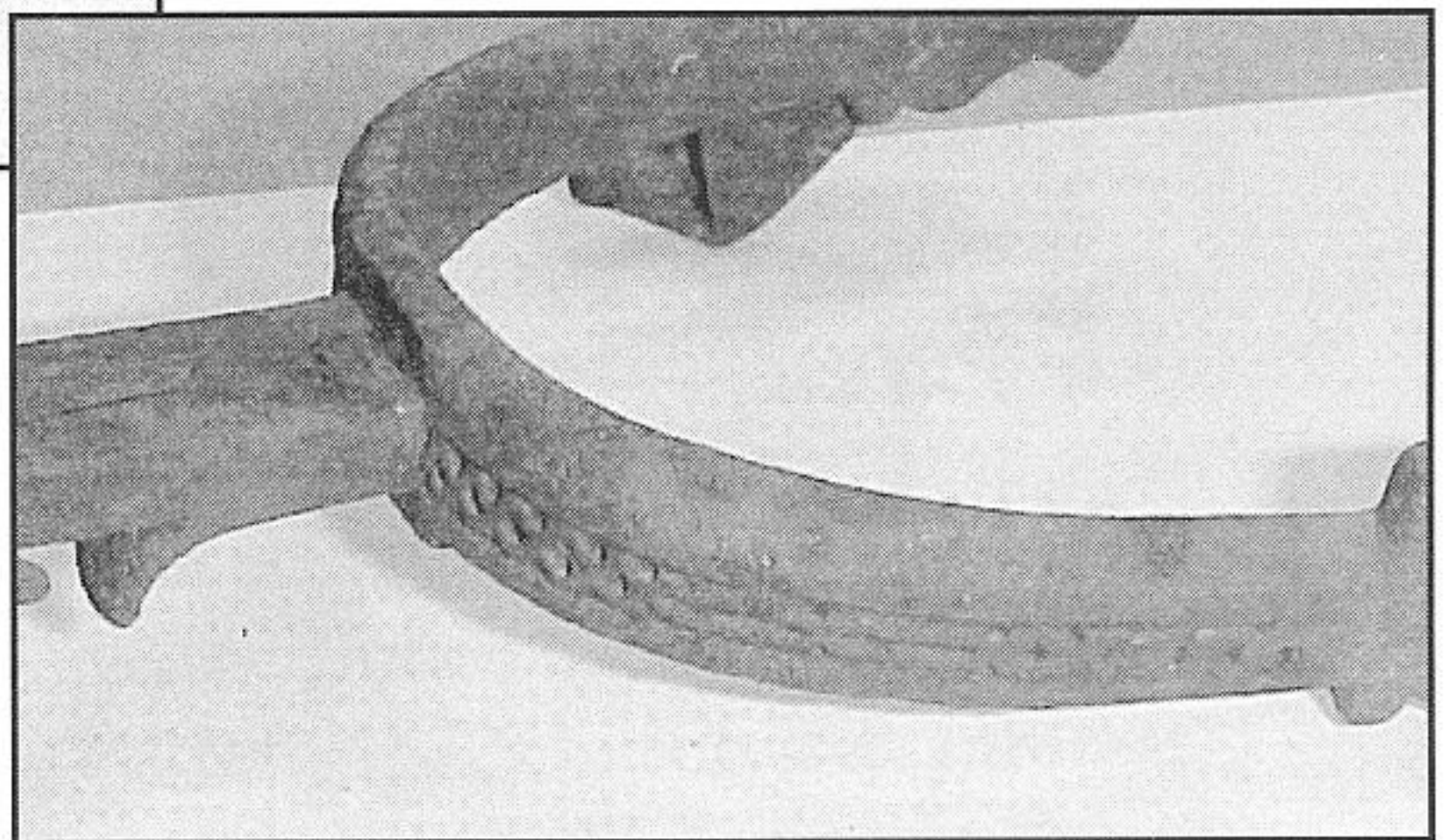


Fig. 8-10 - One of the most interesting and evocative spurs to come to light in recent years was found in the upper reaches of the famous Deep Coulee near Calhoun Hill in the environs of the famous Battle of the Little Big Horn. (Ref. 22) Found in 1994, this obviously personal purchase spur probably belonged to one of the officers of that ill-fated command. With a piece of one original spur strap still attached, this iron spur is in remarkably good condition. The large, 3/4" rowel reflects the Spanish/Mexican spur influence but the balance of the spur design is easily American of the period from the 1830s on. The spur strap attachments are fairly sophisticated, including a stud and strap slot on each end of the arm. The shank measures 2 3/4" long.



THE LATE INDIAN WAR AND THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, 1885 - 1910

PATTERN 1885 SPUR
PATTERN 1888 OFFICERS' SPUR
PATTERN 1903 SPUR
PATTERN 1903 BOX SPUR
VARIANT PATTERN 1903 OFFICERS' SPUR
PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

THE PATTERN 1885 SPUR

The Pattern 1872 Spur had one weak area: the neck was of one diameter and, when the tip of the neck was split for the rowel, then drilled for the rowel pin, the structural integrity of the tip of the spur at that point was seriously weakened. The author suspects that the adoption of the Pattern 1885 Spur, with its relatively massive, lobed neck was in response to breakage at the tip of the neck on Pattern 1872s in service. Interestingly for the contemporary collector, the Ordnance Memoranda No. 29 that chronicles the many new items of horse equipments, has good drawings of the new spur and its spur strap (Fig. 5). The new spur is described simply as: "Of cast brass, smooth finish, with 3/4 - inch bar loop on side for spur straps F, with steel rowels 27/32 inch diameter." The spur straps are described as: "Made of collar leather, 7 to 8 per square foot, with brass wire buckle and a standing loop."



The Pattern 1885 (Enlisted) Spur was made in some quantity and is possible that it was made in government arsenals in two configurations: the coarse-roweled Enlisted Pattern and the fine-roweled Officers' Pattern. However, only the Enlisted Pattern is shown in Ordnance Memo No. 29 (Fig. 5). Commercially-manufactured 1885 Officers' Spurs were made and used. Pattern 1885 Enlisted Spurs manufactured by Rock Island Arsenal were marked "R.I.A.", as shown in Fig. 2. By the publication of the 1891 Ordnance Price List, the army no longer reported any inventory of Civil War surplus spurs nor Pattern 1872 Spurs, indicating that they had been sold to commercial enterprises such as Francis Bannerman and Sons. The 1885 Spur continued in service through the Spanish American War and into the new century. Its large-lobed design served as the design base for its replacement, the Pattern 1903 Spur.

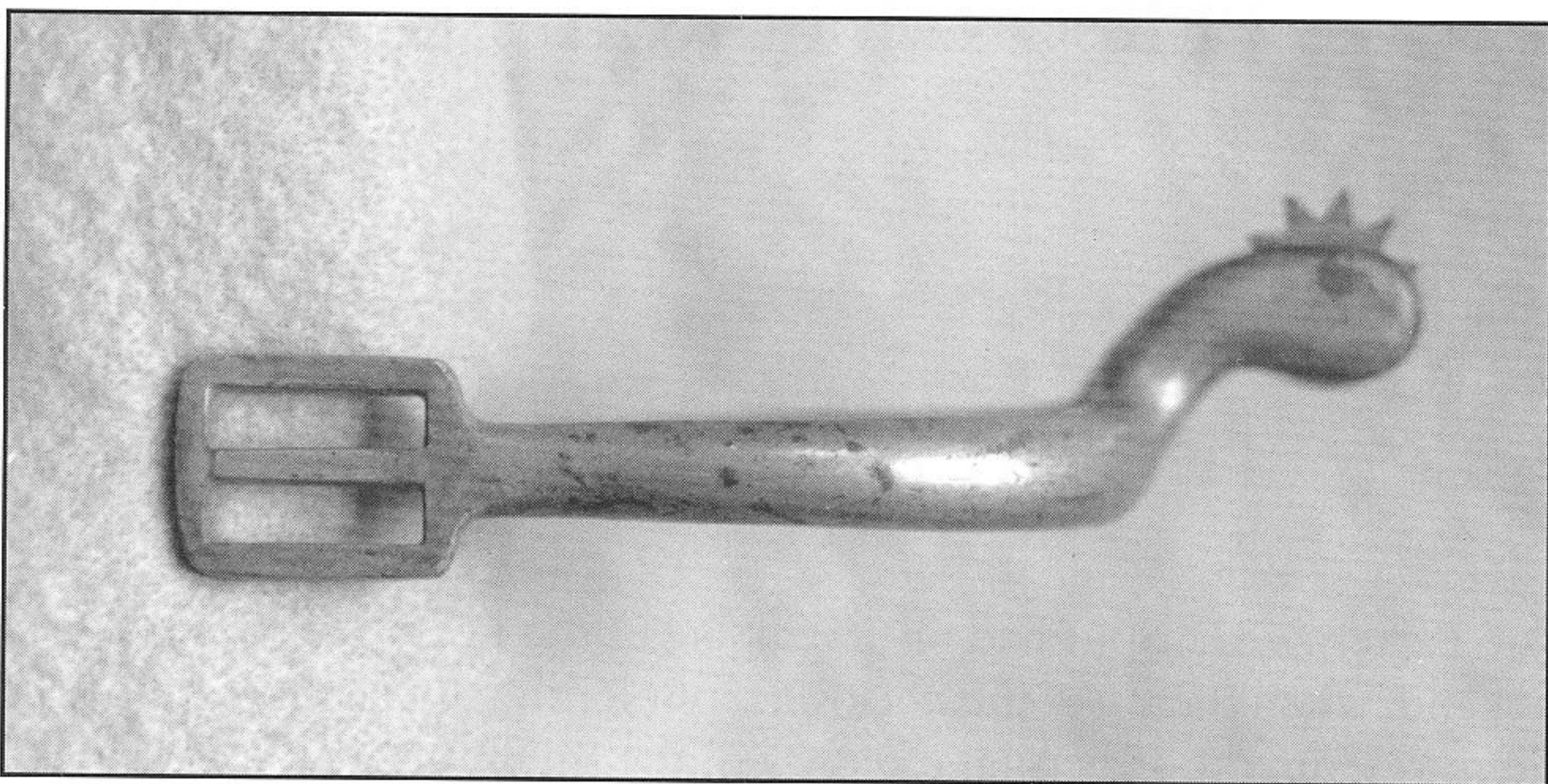


Fig. 1 - The Pattern 1885 Spur was adopted to correct two weaknesses that had plagued both the Pattern 1859 and Pattern 1872 Spurs: a small diameter shank or neck and a very weak area at the tip of the shank where the shank was slotted as well as drilled for the rowel pin. Both of these areas were known to break, particularly the point at which the pin weakened the tip of the shank. Another feature of the Pattern 1885 Spur shows clearly in the photo: the coarse-pointed rowel is now only exposed on the upper 40%. This is consistent with the horseman's proper use of the rowel and allowed for a stronger, lobed head on the shank.

Shank Length, less rowel: 1.436"

Rowel Diameter: 0.81"

Spur Strap Box Height: 0.89"



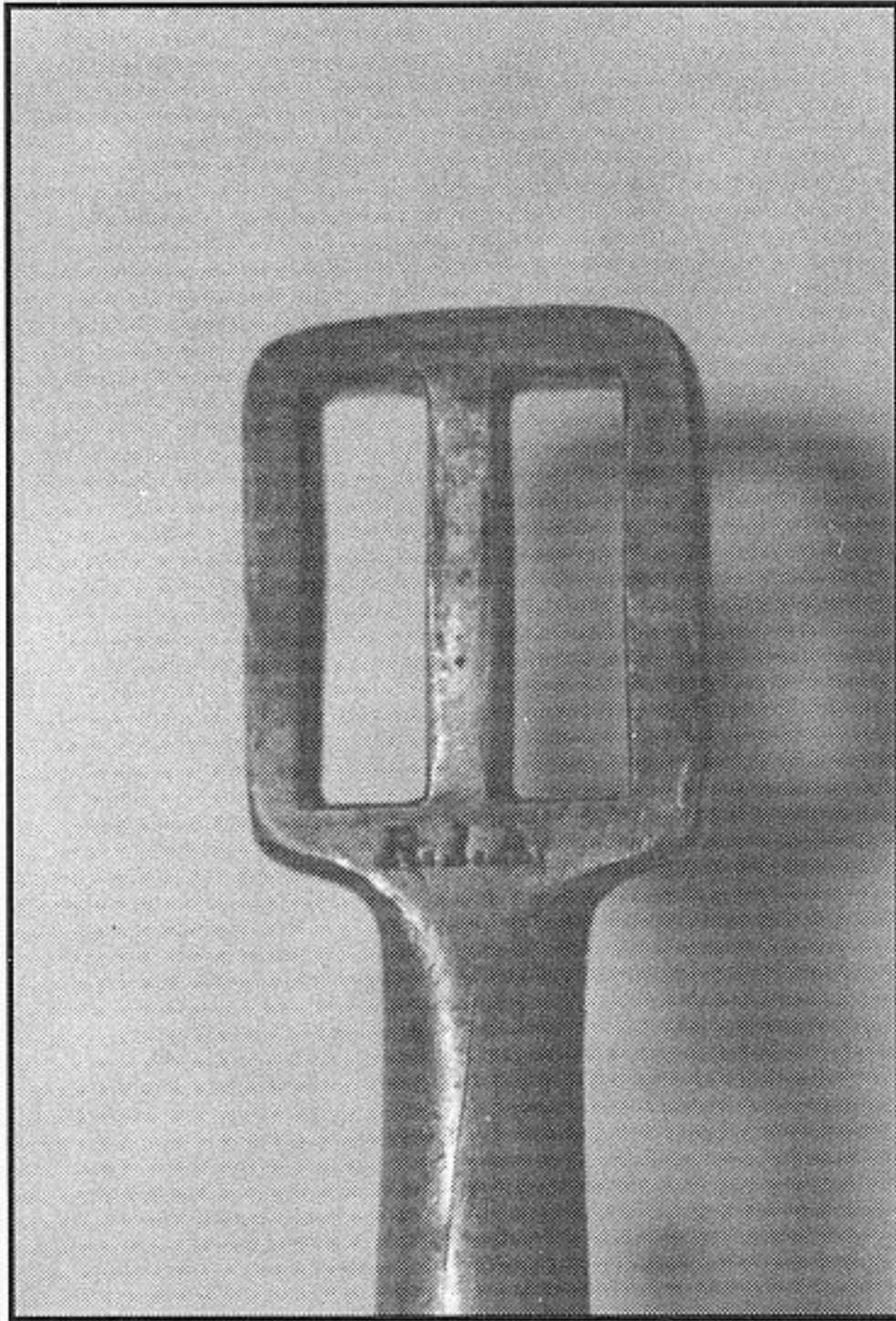


Fig. 2 - The Pattern 1885 Spurs marked "R.I.A." are both very desirable and are the only one of this pattern known to be marked by the producing arsenal. It is unknown what other arsenals might have made this spur.

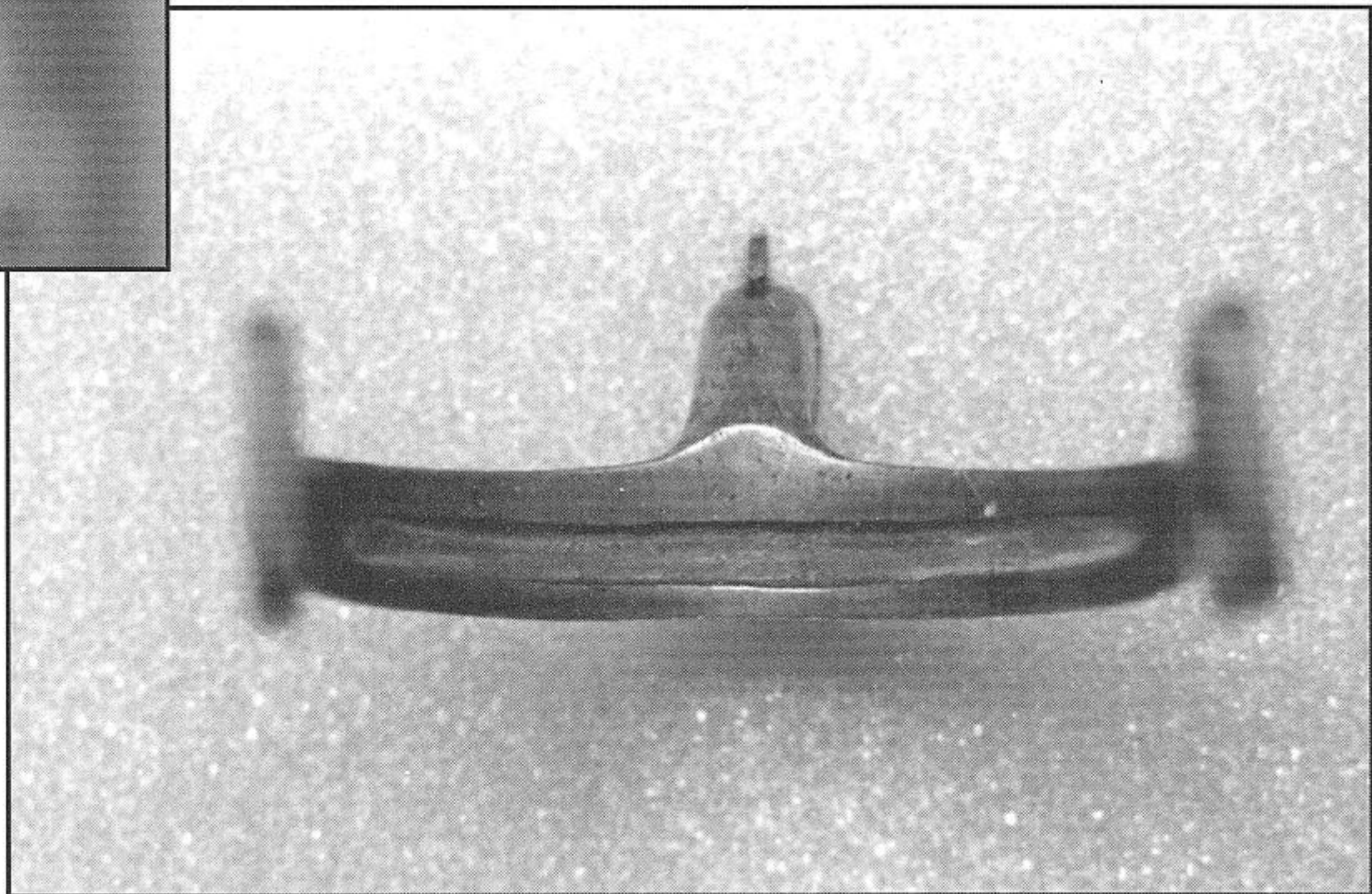


Fig. 3 - The inner curve of the Pattern 1885 Spur, like its predecessors, has a cast-in groove.

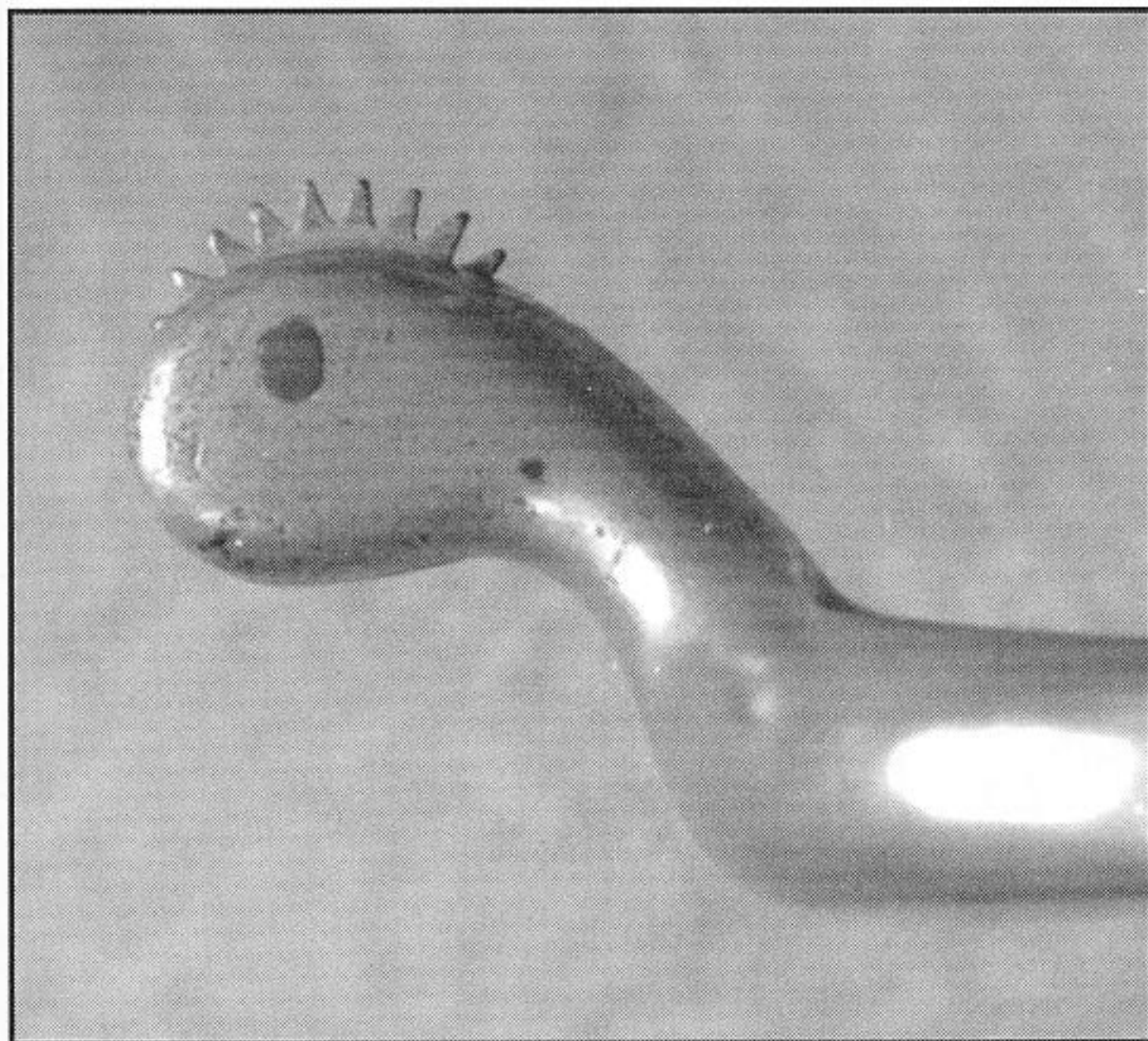


Fig. 11 - An officers' spur of Pattern 1885 configuration is shown here. Like almost all early military spurs, it is not marked in any way so it could be of arsenal or commercial manufacture. There are several distinguishing features of this spur. The first two are the fine-toothed rowel (20 teeth) and the higher polish on the exterior surface of the body and shank. Two other features are its shorter overall length as well as the heavier bars in the spur strap box. This spur is shown and discussed in more detail on Page 74.

Length of shank, less rowel: 1.213"
Diameter of rowel: 0.742"



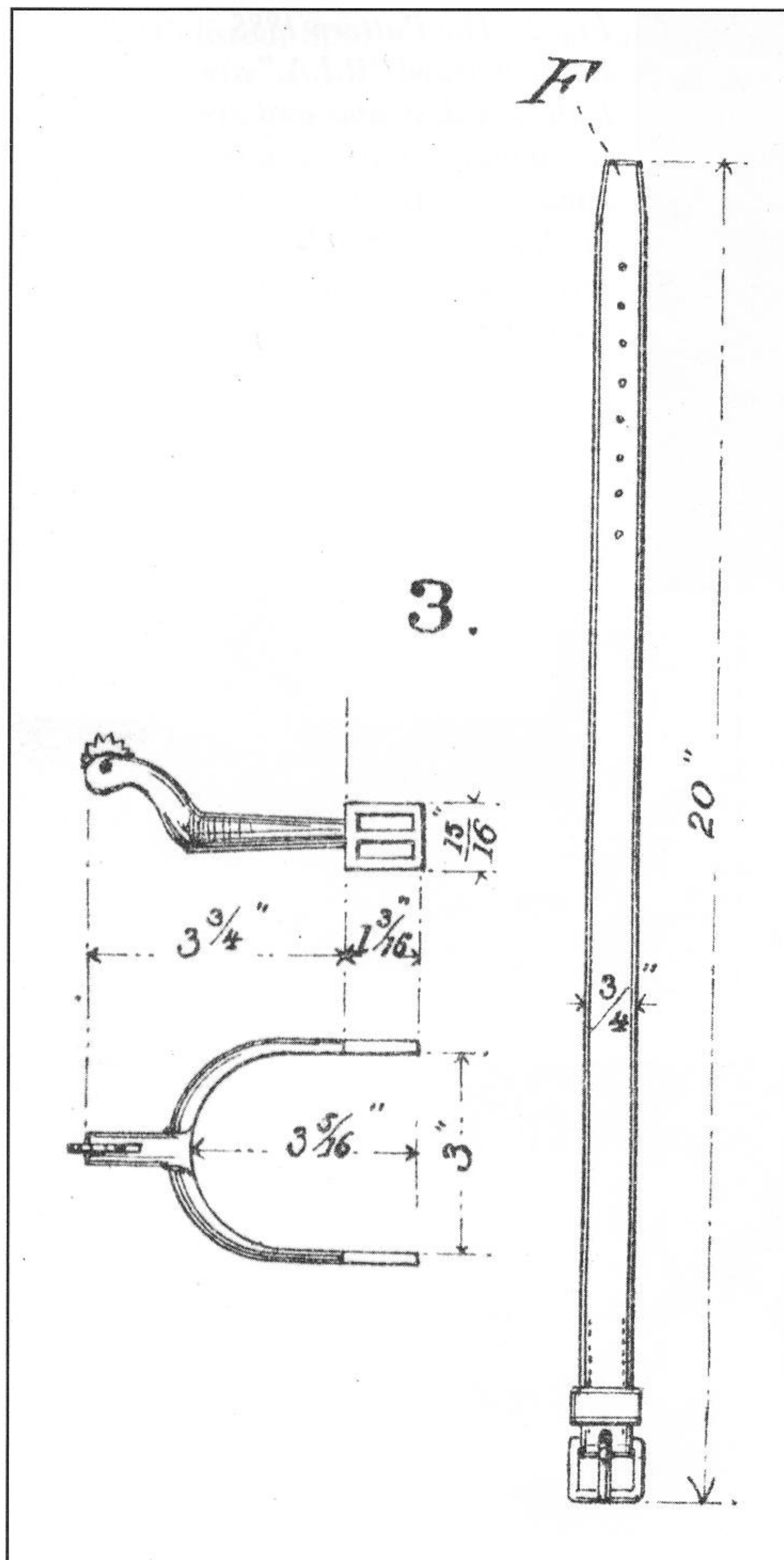


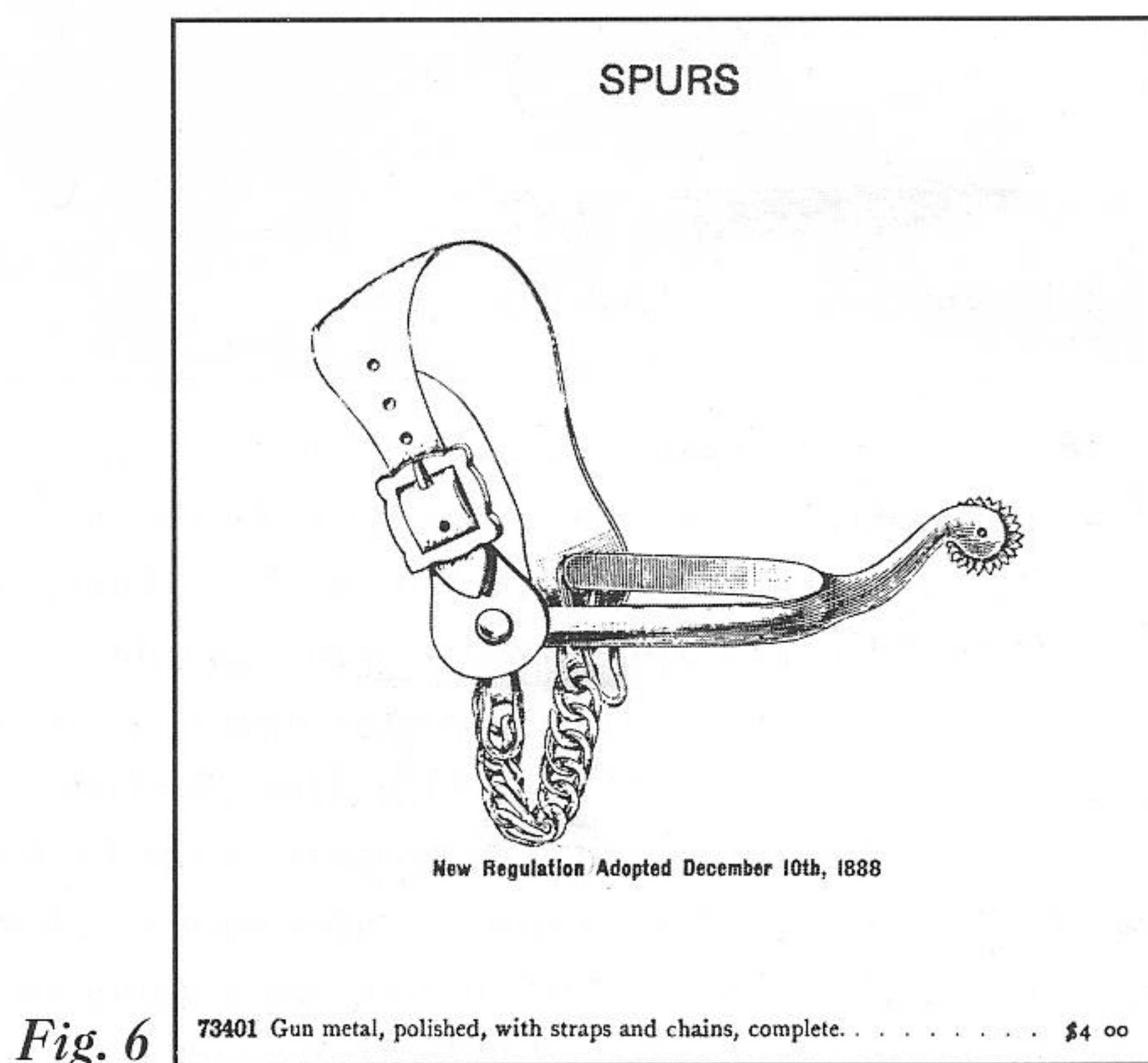
Fig. 5 - Directly from Ordnance Memoranda No. 29, this drawing shows the newly-adopted 1885 Spur. The spur strap was almost certainly the same strap shown in the 1874 Ord. Memo. No. 18.



THE PATTERN 1888 OFFICERS' SPUR

The relatively-peacetime army being what it was, apparently the Officers' Pattern 1885 with its fine-toothed rowel was insufficient for the cavalry's sense of pomp and pageantry. On December 10th, 1888, the Quartermaster of the Army adopted a new spur, specifically for mounted officers. (Fig. 6) Designed by the firm of Horstmann Brothers & Co. of Philadelphia, the spur itself differed from the fine-toothed Pattern 1885 (Officers') Spur in several, subtle ways. First, the rowel in the new spur was over 3/4 exposed. Second, the shank of the new officers' spur swept up from the lower edge of the spur body rather than arcing up from the center or top of the spur body, as in the 1885 Pattern. Third, the new officers' spur was not slotted for spur straps but utilized two spur strap and chain studs riveted at the ends of the arms. This stud feature, it will be remembered, goes back at least to the period of the American Revolution.

The enhancement for the new spur was in its fancy, wide leather boot strap with nickel buckle and a brass chain for the instep. A personal purchase item for officers, these spurs, with their straps and chains, are scarce today. However, as shown in Fig. 30, a page from the 1922 August Buermann catalogue, this exact spur and strap was offered well after it was no longer a regulation spur and was offered in regulation brass and non-regulation nickel and nickel steel ("Never Rust").



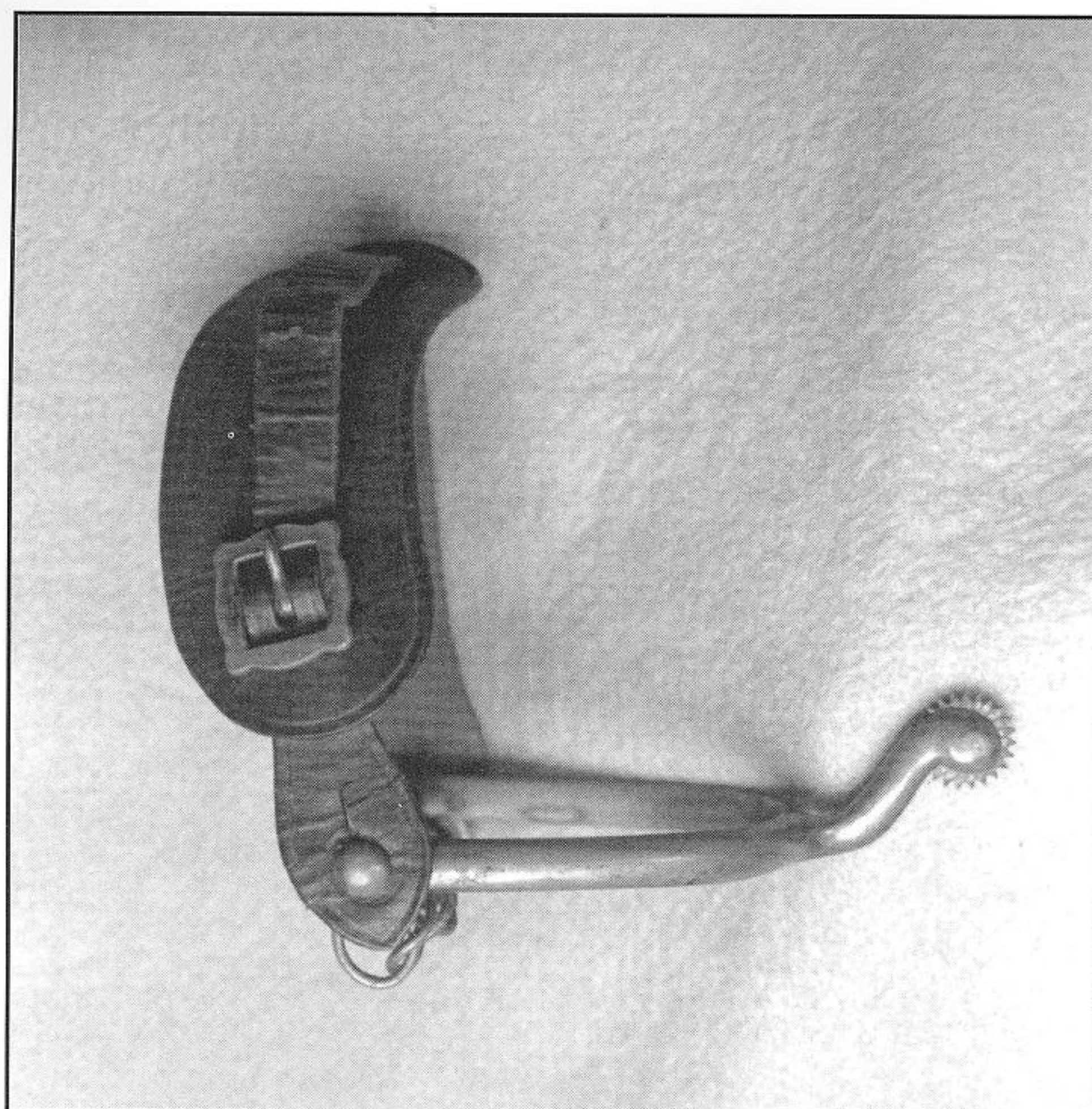


Fig. 7

*Length of shank,
less rowel: 1.578"*
Diameter of rowel: 0.77"

Fig. 8

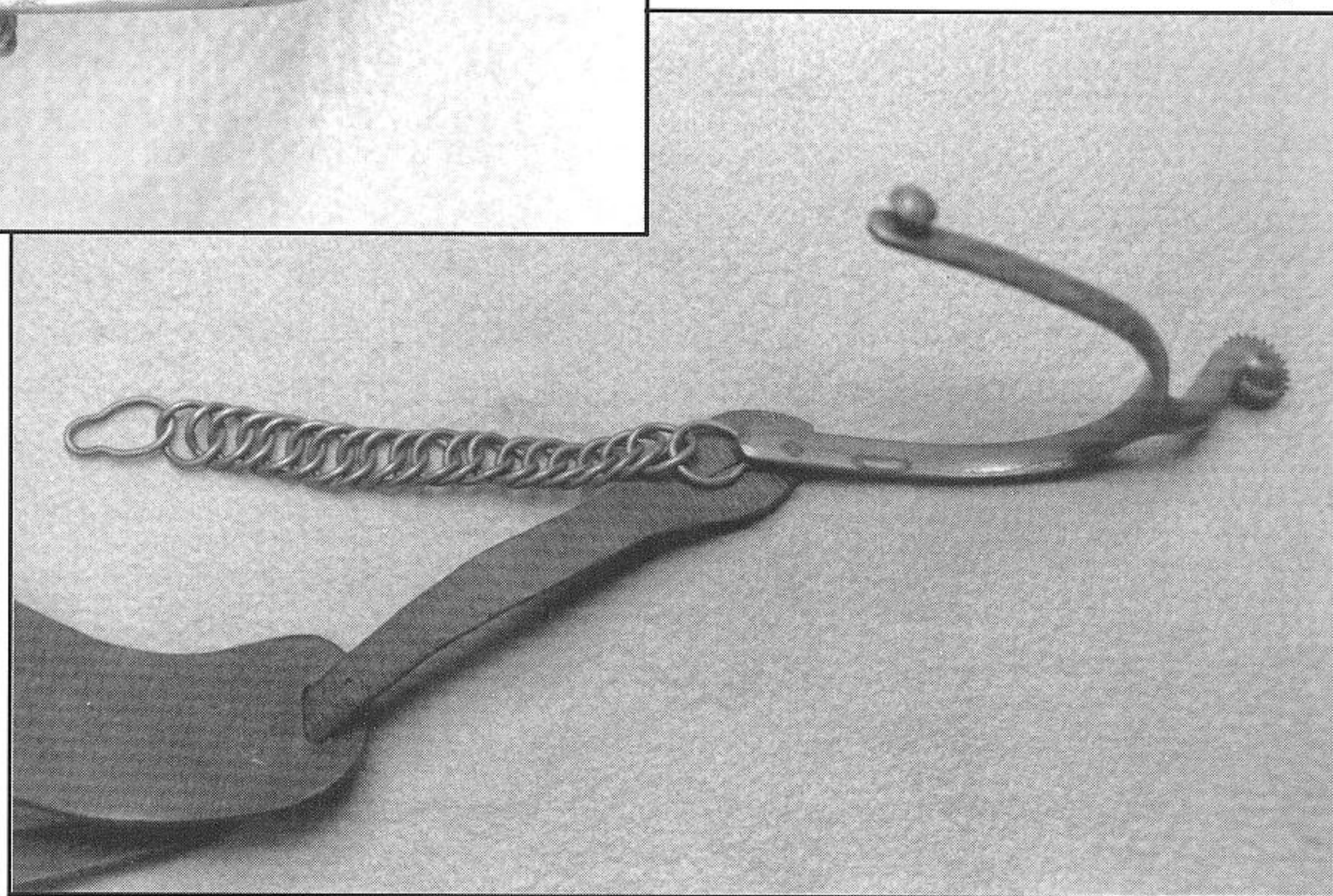


Fig. 7 & 8 - The Pattern 1888 Officers' Spur actually included a special leather strap with a larger sliding boot guard as well as a special pattern buckle and a detachable brass chain. Designed by Horstmann & Son in New York, the spur differs greatly from the Pattern 1885. The spur itself is more slender in construction and the shank or neck begins lower on the body of the spur and rises to a lobed end that is more symmetrical than the large lobe of the 1885. Also, the fine-toothed rowel of the 1889 is about 80% exposed. One other, obvious feature is the lack of spur strap slots and the replacement of the "box" with two spur strap studs, as shown above. The somewhat pear-shaped rings at the ends of the brass chain allowed the chain to be removed easily from the studs for cleaning and polishing.



THE PATTERN 1903 SPUR

In 1903, the army adopted two spurs to replace the Pattern 1885 (Enlisted) Spur and the Pattern 1888 Officers' Spur. The first of the new spurs was the Pattern 1903 Enlisted Men's Spur. Nearly identical to the Pattern 1885 (Enlisted) Spur, the new 1903 differed only in having strap-locking studs cast into the outside of the center bars of the strap loops (Fig. 9 & 11) and having the arsenal initials and date of spur manufacture stamped on the base one side of the strap loops (Fig. 12). Like the Pattern 1885, the spurs were of cast brass with a polished exterior and had a coarse, ten-tooth, decarbonized steel rowel pinned into the lobe of the neck. The inner curve of the spur retained the cast-in groove of the Pattern 1885. The Enlisted Spur Straps differed slightly from the Pattern 1885 in having two extra sets of holes (two lines of six holes each) (Fig. 9 & 10) to engage the locking studs cast into the center bars of the strap loops. The stirrup straps continued to use the brass wire buckle and the standing loop. The description of the 1903 Enlisted Spur is quoted from the 1905 Horse Equipments Manual (Ref. 9).

"Spurs for enlisted men are made of cast brass, with loops and studs for the spur strap. The rowels, made from soft decarbonized sheet steel, are 0.875 inch in diameter, with ten teeth, and are fastened into body in the same manner as those for officers."



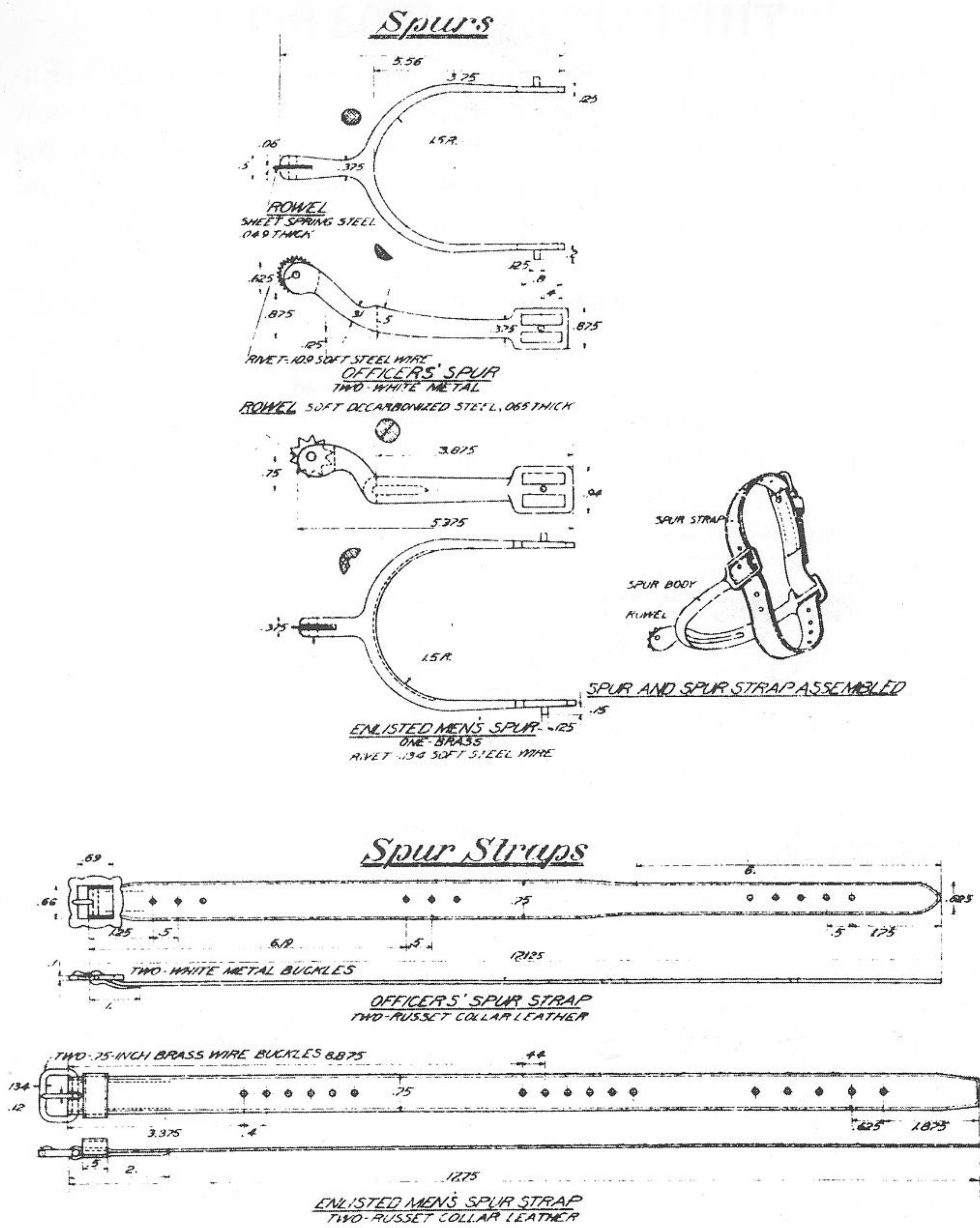


Fig. 9 - Reprinted directly from the 1905 "Horse Equipments and Equipments for Officers and Enlisted Men" (Ref. 9), these drawings clearly show the two types of Model 1903 Spurs and Spur Straps.



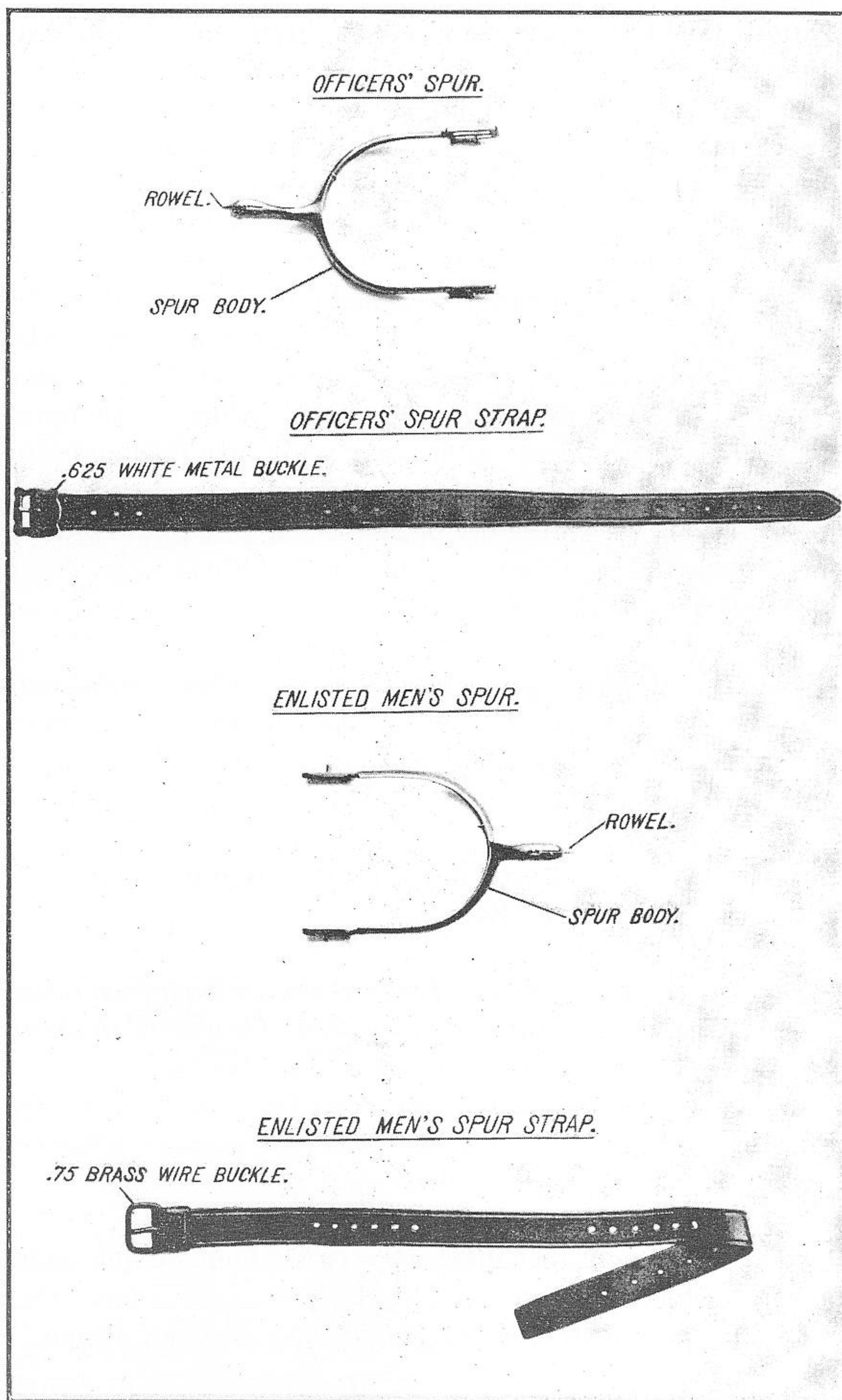


Fig. 10 - Reprinted directly from the 1908 "Horse Equipments and Equipments for Officers and Enlisted Men" (Ref. 10), these photos actually offer less detail than the 1905 drawings.



The Pattern 1903 Officers' Spur and Spur Strap were of different patterns from the enlisted articles. As can be seen in the comparison drawings from the 1905 manual, the Officers' Spur had a more graceful sweep to the neck and the traditional 24-tooth steel rowel. Other differences were that the Officers' Spur had no cast-in groove on the inner surface and the arsenal initials and date are stamped on the inside, center curve of the spur. Most interesting, however, was the fact that the Ordnance manual describing this spur (Ref. 9) called for it being made of "white metal". Two different pairs of these spurs have been examined by the author and all four spurs are of cast brass and show evidence of an exterior nickle plating. This would give the spurs a "white metal" finish but would allow them to be made in the easy, traditional manner of investment-casting and plating. It is fairly clear that the actual officers' spurs were intended to be "white" in appearance (due to plating) but were cast brass beneath that. The description of the Officers' Spur is quoted from the 1905 Manual (Ref. 9):

The bodies of officers' spurs are made of polished white metal, with bar loop and stud for spur strap on each side. The rowels, made from sheet spring steel 0.049 inch thick, have twenty-four teeth, are 0.75 inch in diameter, and fastened into body by a rivet of soft steel wire."

The Spur Straps, as can be seen in Fig. 9, are different and their descriptions are quoted from Ref. 9:

The straps for both officers and enlisted men are made from russet collar leather 8 to 9 ounces per square foot. The officers' straps are narrowed at the ends and fitted with 5/8-inch bar buckle of white metal, while those for enlisted men are uniform in width and fitted with a 3/4-inch brass wire buckle. Dress spur straps for officers are the same shape as russet straps but made from black leather."

The reader should note that there were two colours of spur straps for officers: russet for normal duty and black for dress occasions. Also, the officers' spur strap buckle (Fig. 9 & 18) is a special, fancy design.



By the time of the printing of the 1908 Horse Equipments Manual (Ref. 10), three minor bits of information were included regarding the spurs: the soft steel wire rowel rivet was identified as being 0.109 inch in diameter, the enlisted spur rowel was identified as having a thickness of 0.0625 inch (slightly thicker than the officers' rowel) and the enlisted spurs were described as being made of "bronze".

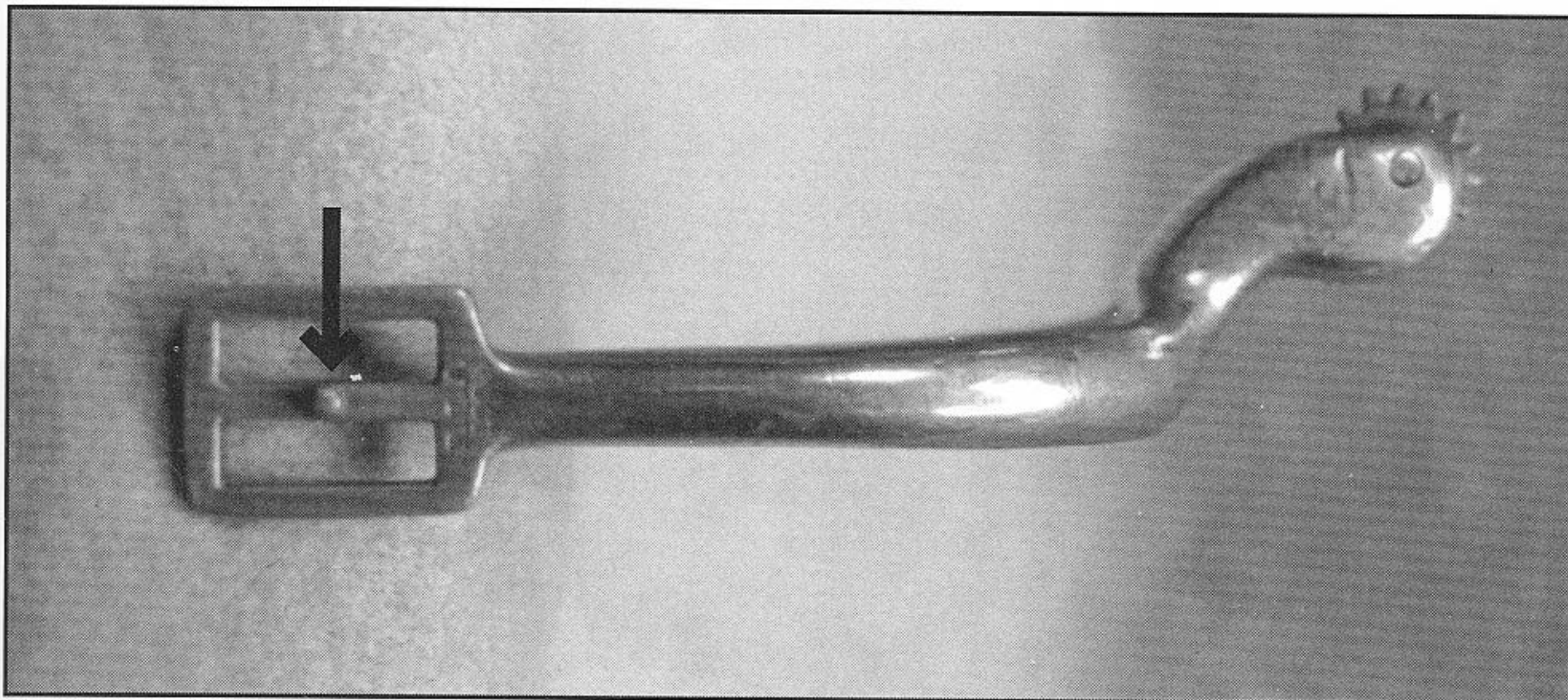


Fig. 11 - The Pattern 1903 Enlisted Spur is an easily-identified design follow-on to the Pattern 1885. Retaining the overall configuration of the Pattern 1885, the new brass spur was the only spur the enlisted ranks could wear. The improvement of the Pattern 1903 Enlisted Spur was its introduction of strap locking studs cast into the center bar of each spur strap slot box. (Arrow) The spur straps at the time of initial issue in 1903 were of russet leather and had brass buckles, japanned brown.

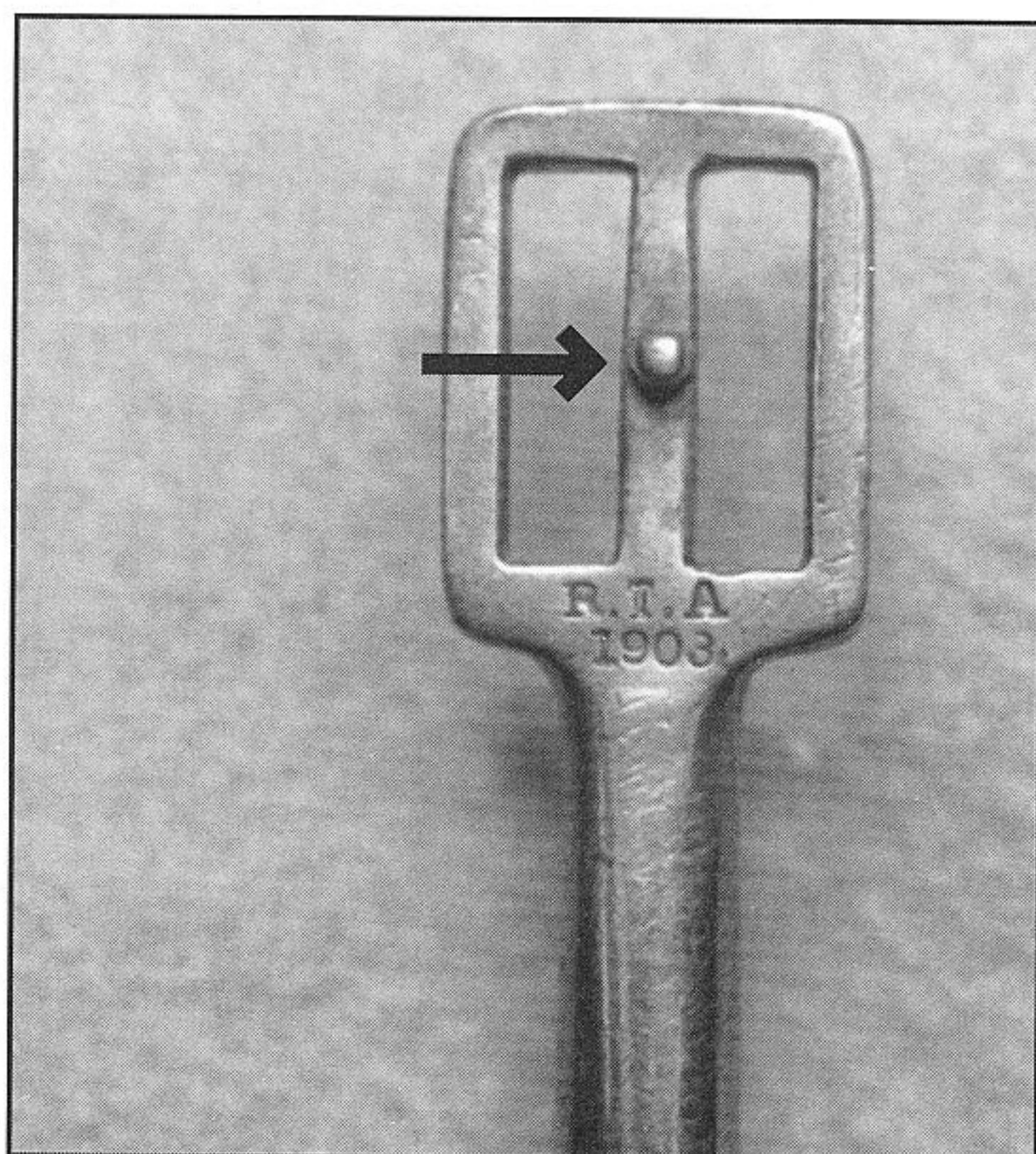


Fig. 12 - All Pattern 1903 Enlisted Spurs are stamped "R.I.A." over the date of manufacture on one side of the spur. As can be seen, the finish on this spur is excellent - easily as good as officers' spurs from earlier times.



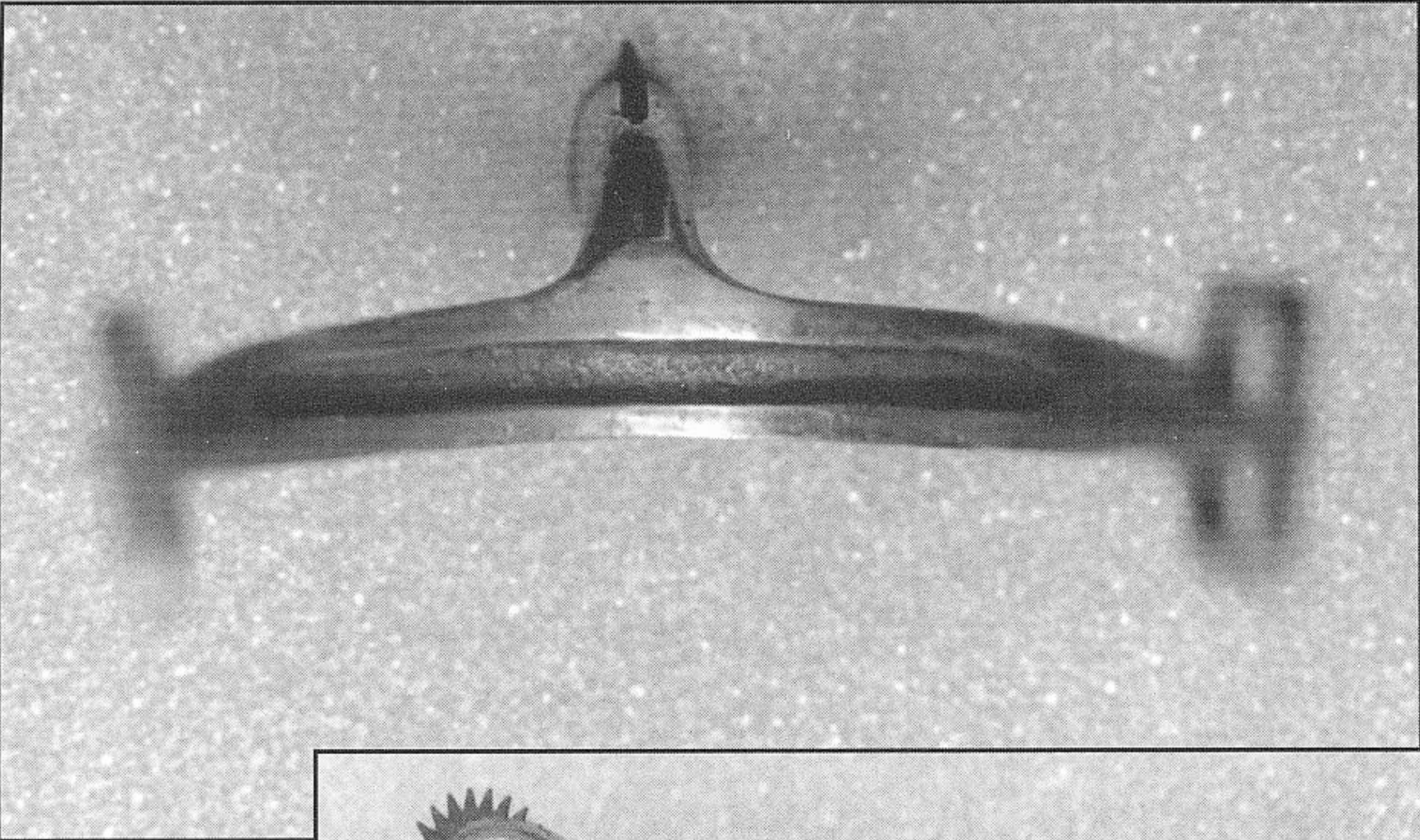


Fig. 13 - The inner curve of the Pattern 1903 Enlisted Spur continues the tradition of the groove or “gutter”, but the raised surfaces are polished smooth.

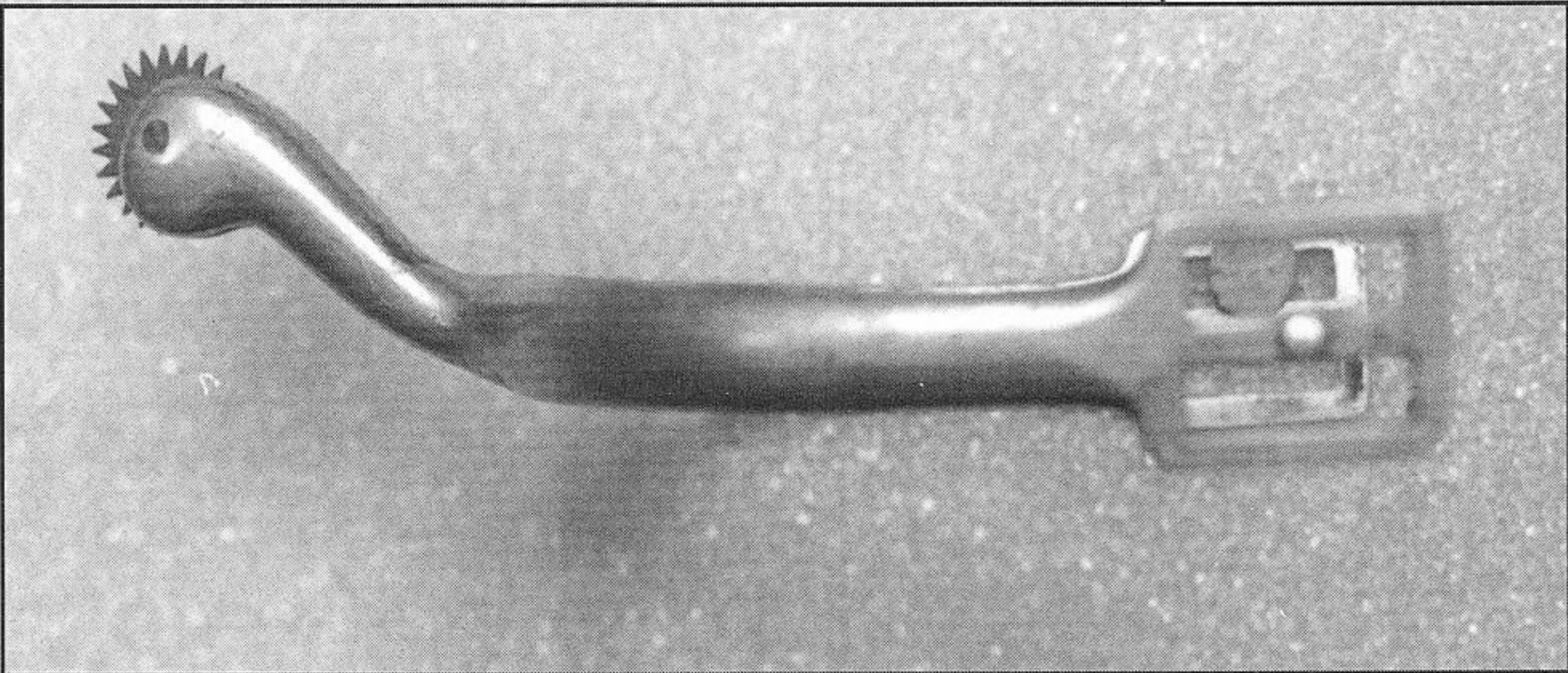


Fig. 14 - A scarce Pattern 1903 Officers' Spur in nickel steel. This spur differs from the Enlisted Spur in several ways: the “white metal” used; the more graceful sweep of the shank from the spur body to the tip and the absence of an inner groove or “gutter”

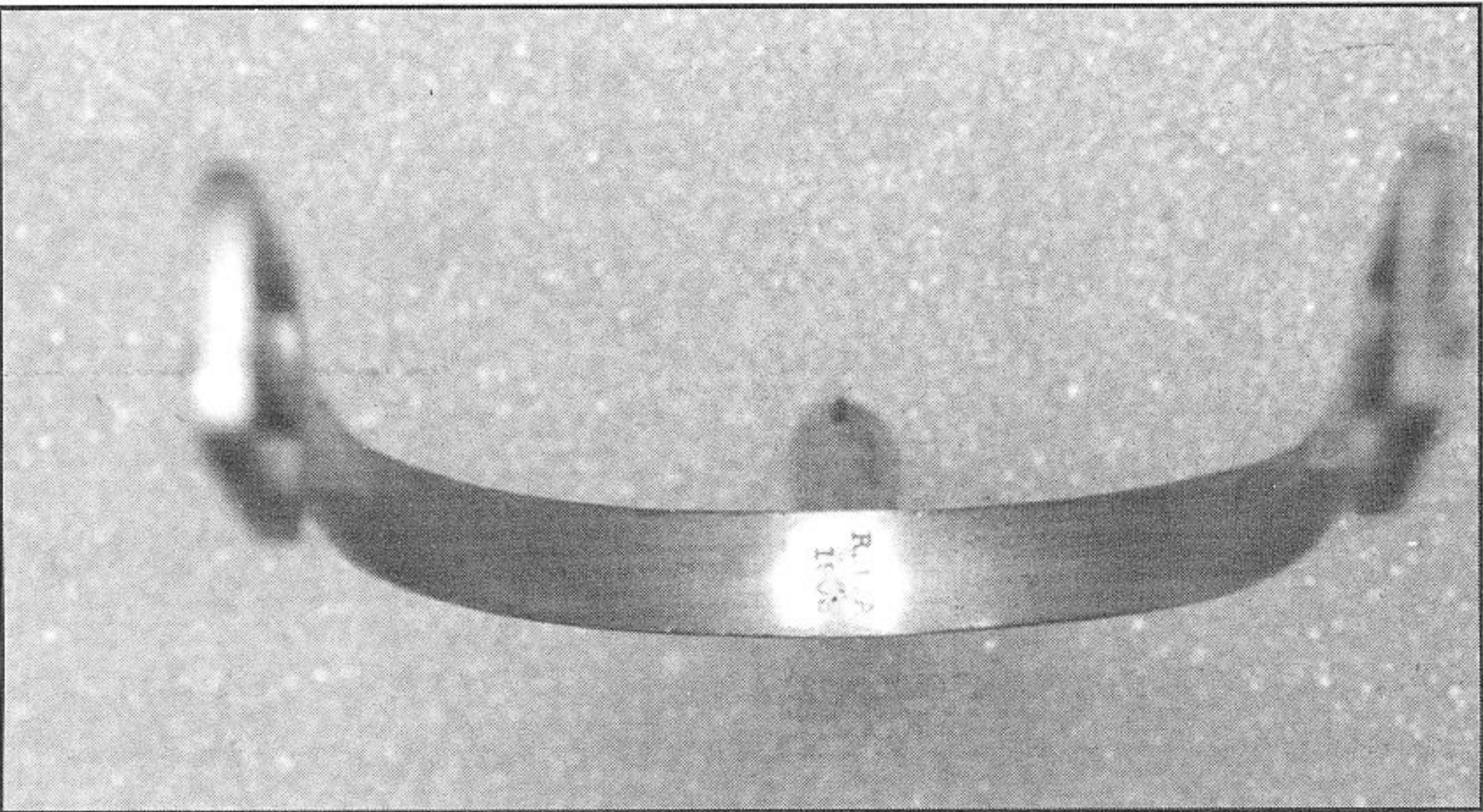


Fig. 15 - The inner curve of the Pattern 1903 Officers' Spur shows yet another difference between it and the Enlisted Spur: the arsenal's initials and date of manufacture are stamped inside rather than on the exterior of the spur strap box.



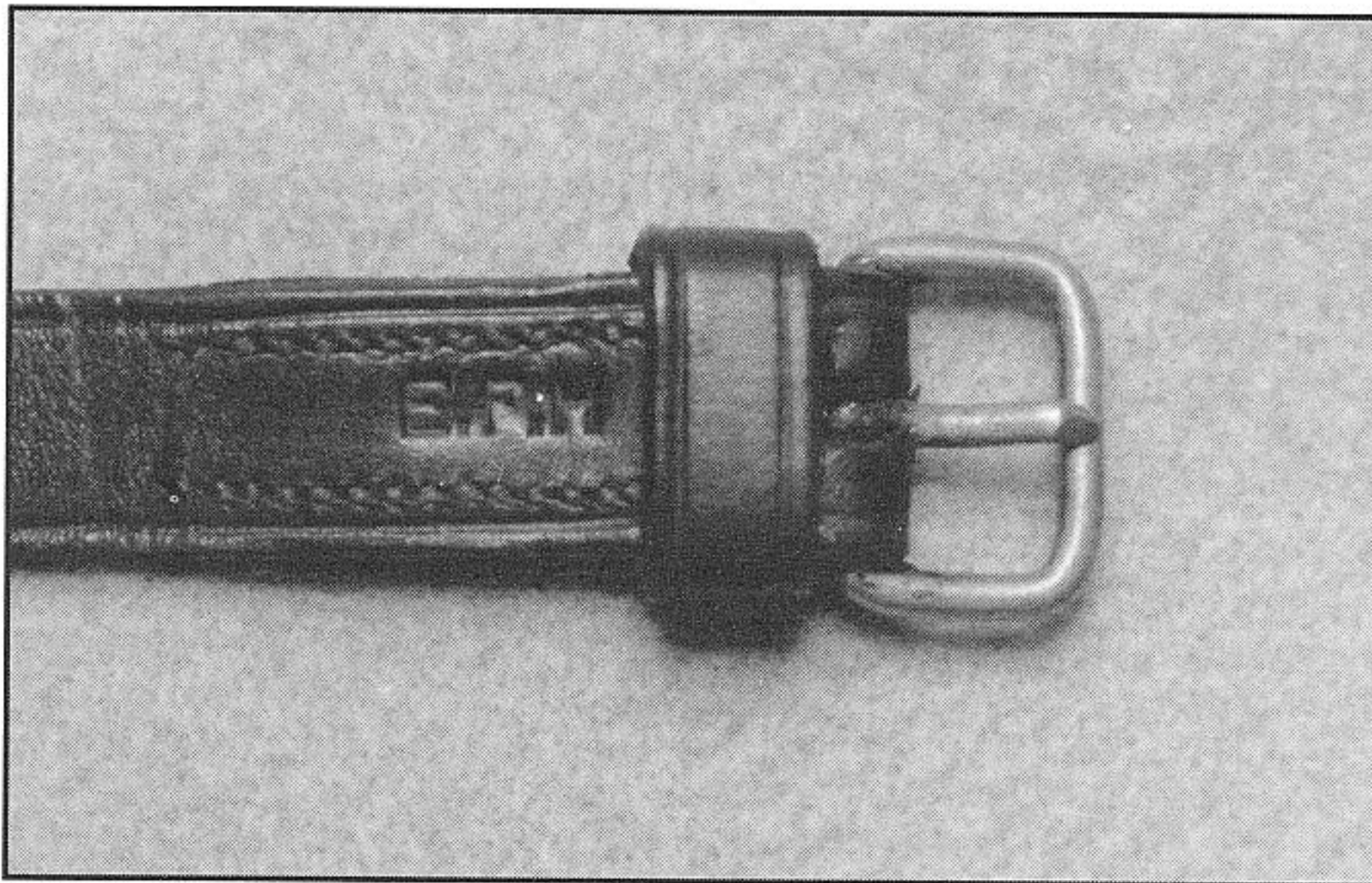


Fig. 16 - Very scarce in this crisp and inspected condition is this black Model 1885 Spur Strap. It has a brass wire buckle and a standing loop. The position of the inspector's initials is typical for these straps.

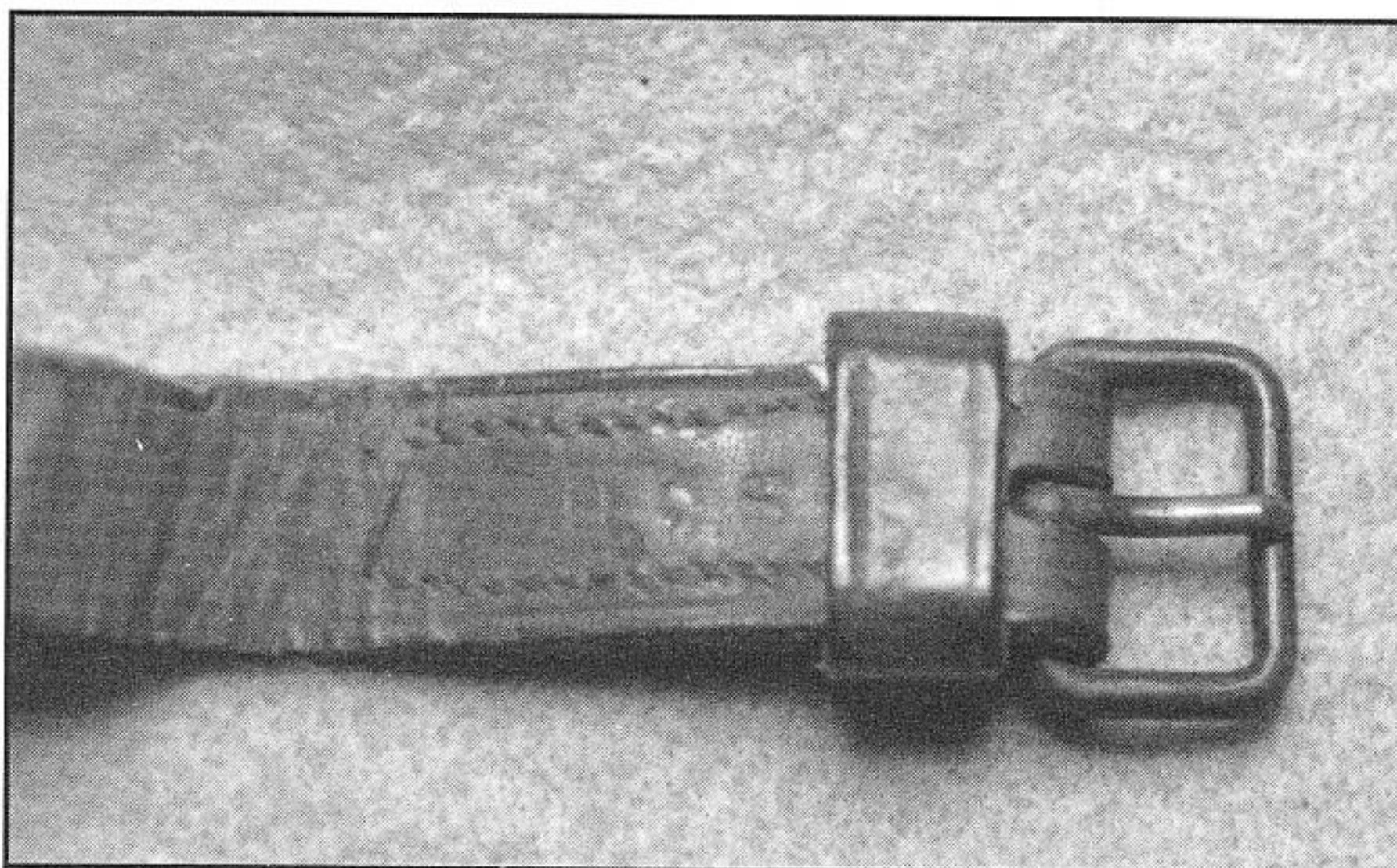


Fig. 17 - A very scarce Model 1903 Spur Strap with a brown japanned brass wire buckle and a standing loop. The basic pattern was unchanged from the 1880s. The inspector's initials are just behind the standing loop.

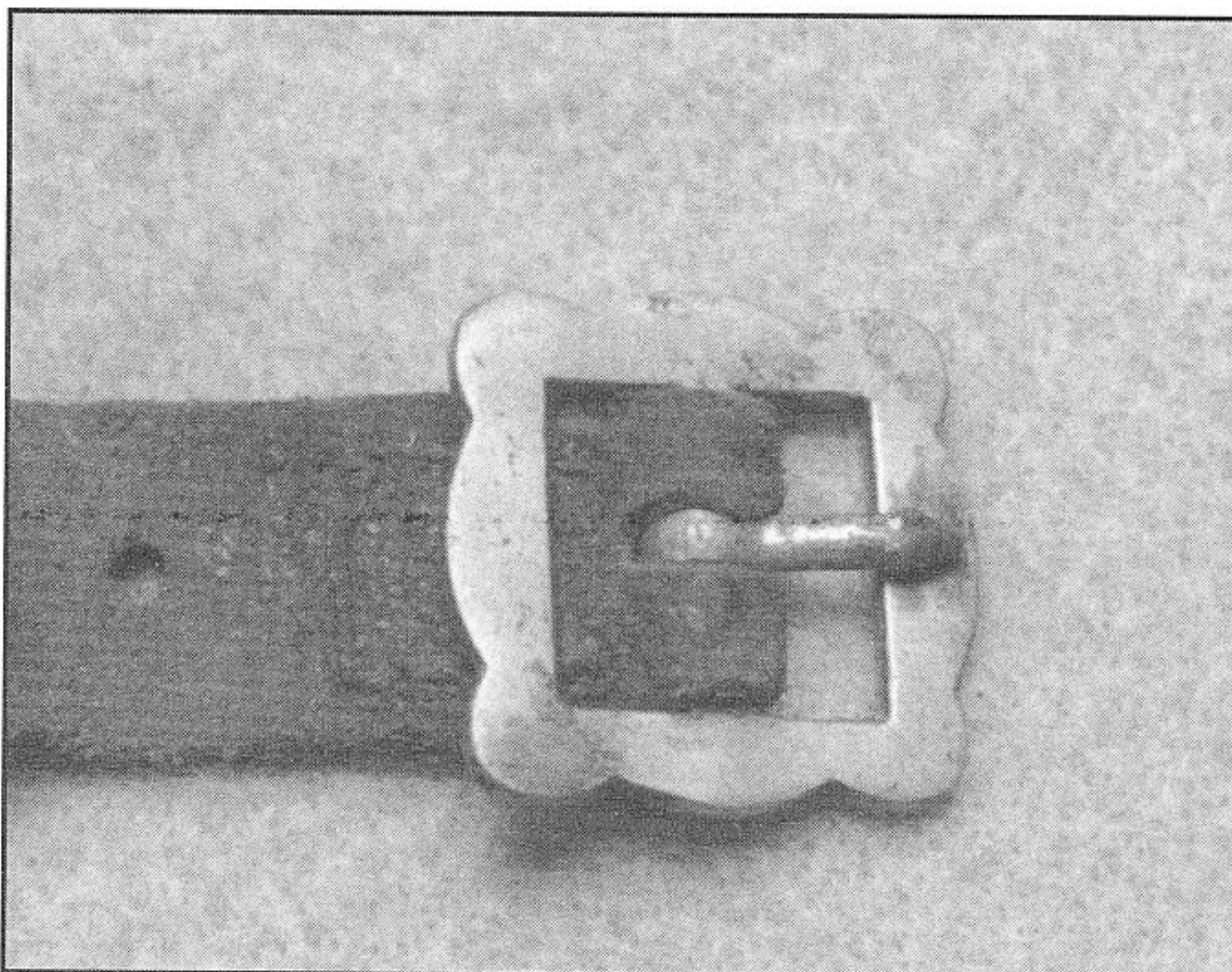


Fig. 18 - Another scarce spur strap: a black, dress M1903 Officers' Spur Strap. The decorative buckle is of regulation pattern and is nickel steel.



THE PATTERN 1903 OFFICERS' BOX SPUR

One of the least-known of the US military spurs are these diminutive, nickelled steel spurs. Beautifully made with a high polish and false rowel, these spurs were designed to lock neatly into nickelled steel holders or "boxes" that were permanently fitted into the backs of the heels of an officer's boots. To attach, the square shaft at the back of each spur was inserted into the spring-loaded "box" in the boot heel and locking was automatic. To remove, the spur was pulled sharply back from the heel and the box spring released the spur.

The rowels of these spurs are forged integrally with the shanks and are not serrated - to avoid catching on the cuff of the trousers. The only known specimens of this model of spur are dated "1903" and are first listed in the Ordnance Price List of 1903 at a total price of \$2.20 per pair (with boxes). By 1908, these spurs were no longer offered in the Ordnance Price List. Complete sets of these spurs are rare today.

Interestingly, the box spur design was not a new one in 1903. American commercial military suppliers during the War Between the States offered what was called a "Patent Box Spur" that was nearly identical to the Rock Island Arsenal spur box and locking mechanism and differed only in having a longer shank and rotating rowel. While the implication is that this design is an American patent, it is possible that a close variant was patented in England during or before the same time frame.

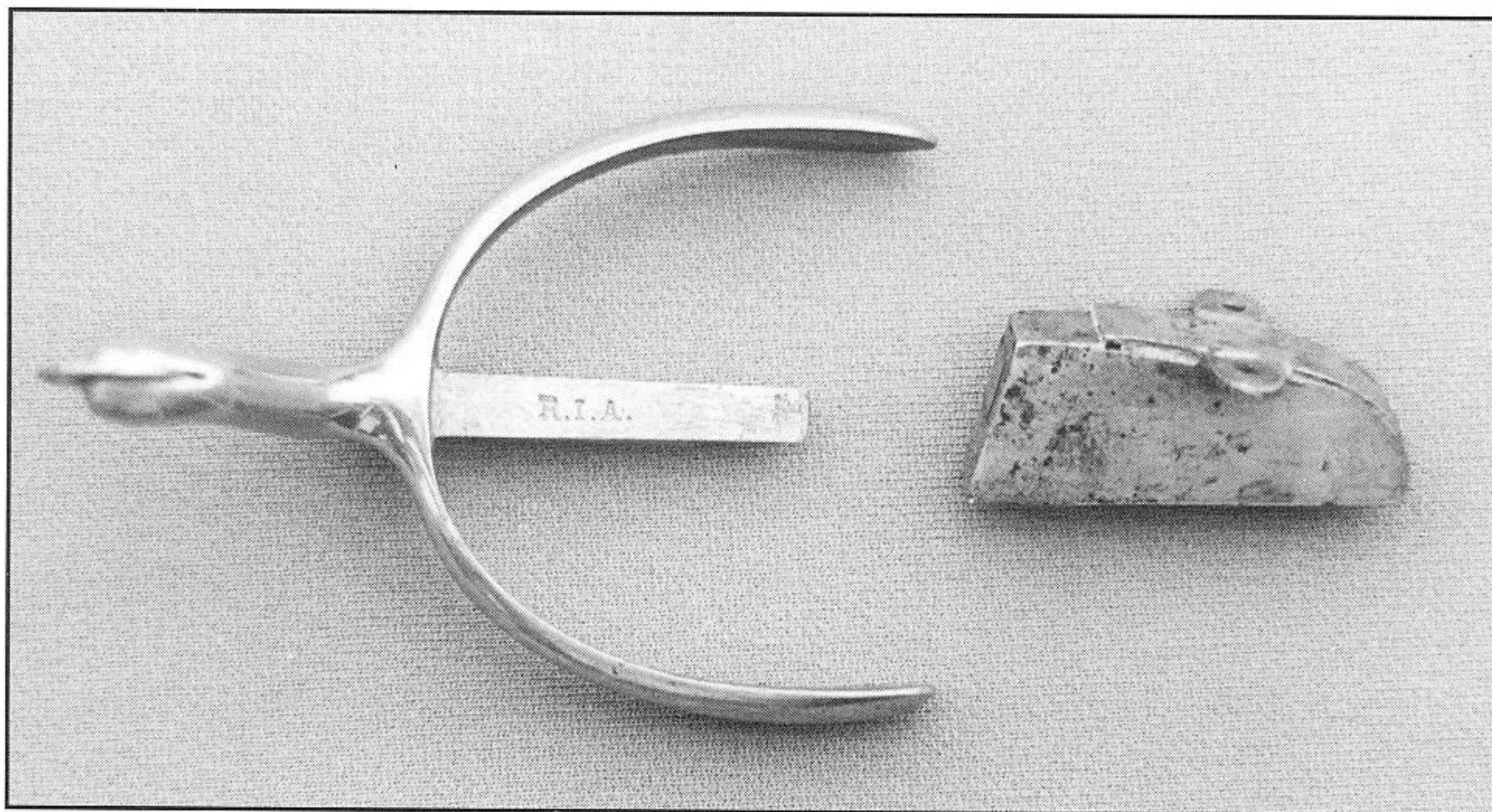


Fig. 19 - View of the upper side of the 1903 Box Spur and the side view of the box that was built into the boot heel.



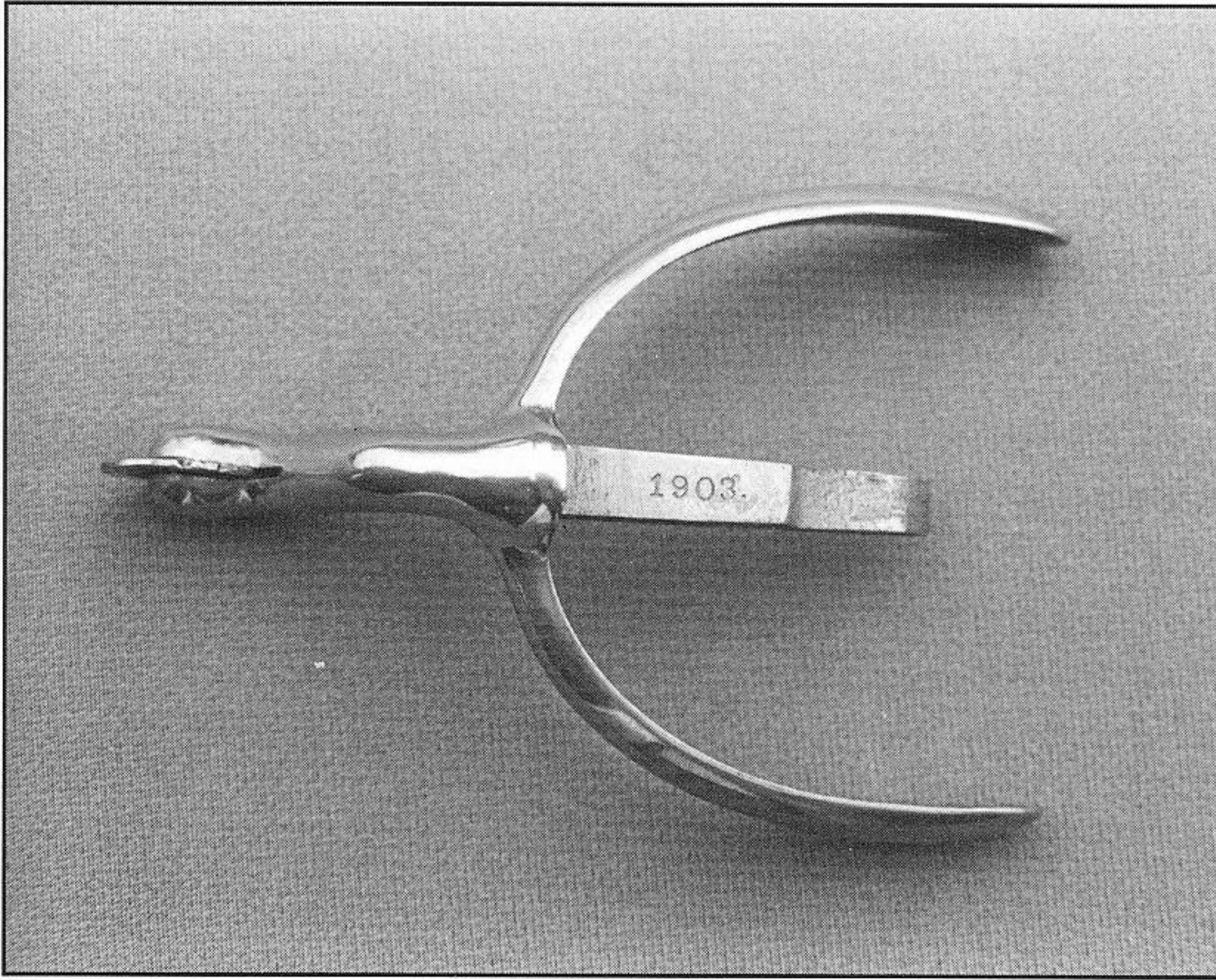


Fig. 20 - The lower side of a 1903 Box Spur, showing the "1903" date.

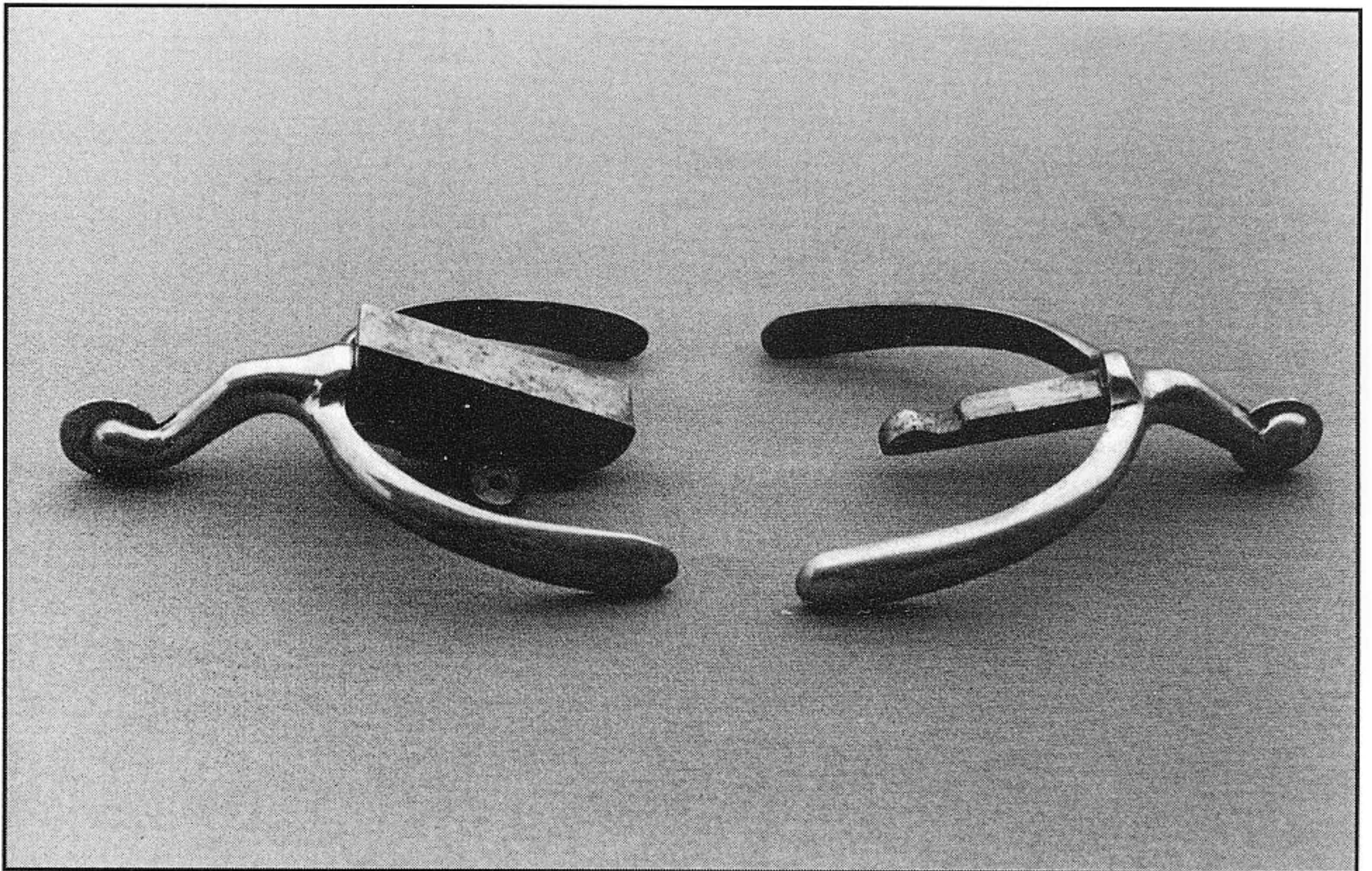


Fig. 21 - A pair of 1903 Box Spurs showing (left) a spur and box locked together and (right) a spur removed from the box.



VARIANT PATTERN 1903 OFFICERS' SPUR

The mechanical specifications for the Pattern 1903 Officers' Spur directed that the inner curve of the body of the spur be smooth, i.e. ungrooved, whereas the Enlisted version had both the cast-in groove or "gutter" and a coarse-toothed rowel. Interestingly, a near-new condition, "R.I.A 1909" spur has been discovered that has features of both the enlisted and officers' spurs. This spur (Fig. 22) was clearly assembled from an enlisted spur body with the cast-in groove, then nickel plated and assembled with an officers' fine-toothed rowel. When mounted on the boot, the inner groove could not be seen and only the higher arc of the shank would reveal the origin of the spur body. The author's opinion is that this "1909"-dated officers' spur is one of the last of the Pattern 1903 produced and that the arsenal chose - in light of the adoption of an entirely different pattern of spur in 1911 -, to modify an enlisted spur body rather than set up to manufacture a short run of the officers' spur bodies.

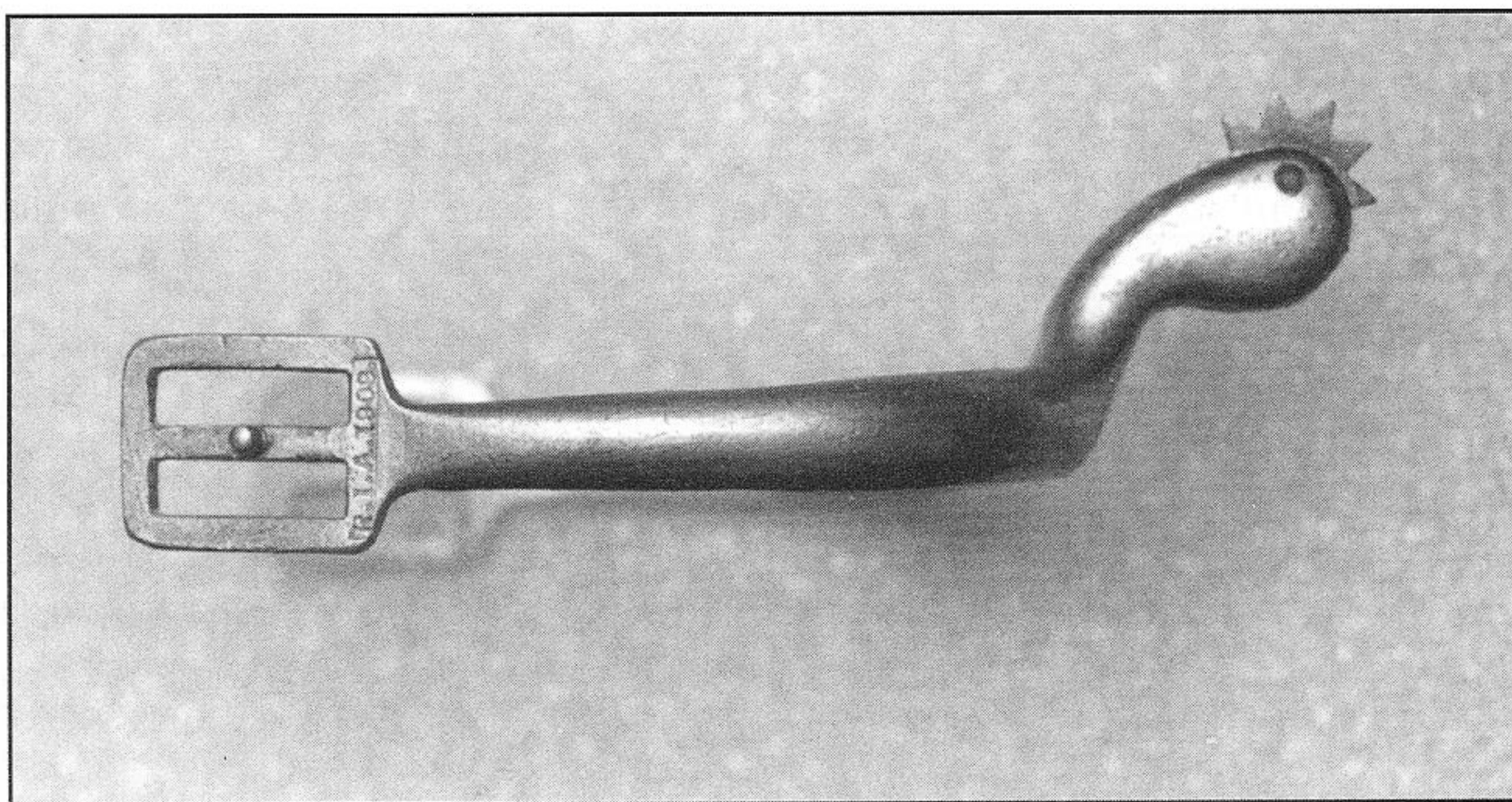


Fig. 22 - The only obvious, unusual feature of this Pattern 1903 Enlisted Spur is the change in the manner of marking the arsenal and date in one line. However, a colour photo or physical inspection would show that this spur has been nickel plated at the time of manufacture. Based on the description of regulation spurs (officers' and enlisted), this spur must be for officers. However, the coarse-toothed rowel had, up until this point in time, been closely identified with officers' spurs. (Note: there is no question that this rowel was installed at the time of manufacture.) For whatever reason, Rock Island Arsenal manufactured this Pattern 1903 Enlisted Spur - then transformed it into an Officers' Spur by nickel-plating the body.





Fig. 23 - The new, one-line style of marking enlisted spurs is shown on this 1909-dated specimen.

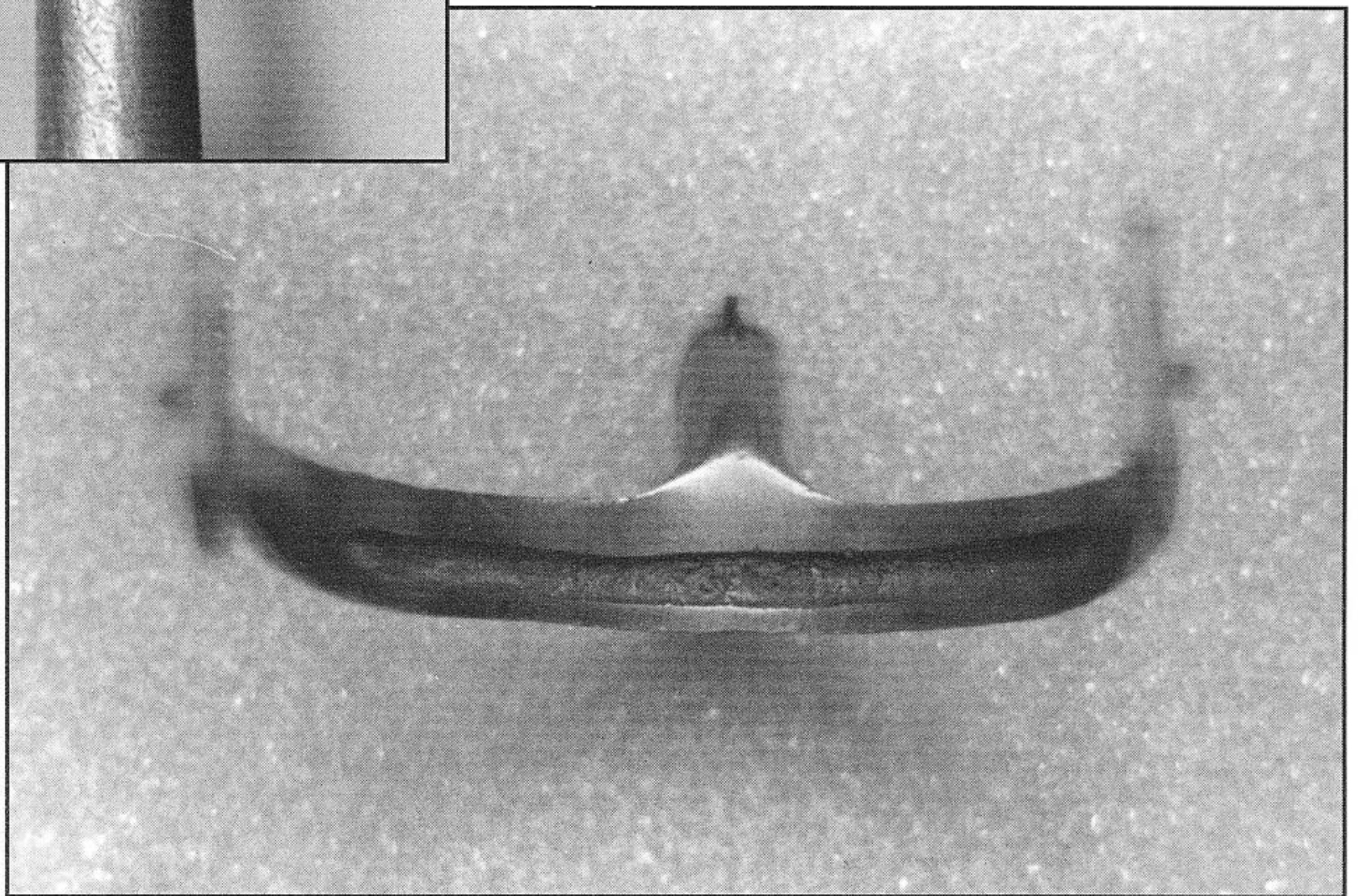


Fig. 24 - The presence of the traditional "enlisted groove" in the 1909-dated Officers' Spur shown above, supports the theory that Rock Island Arsenal transformed at least some Enlisted Spurs into Officers' Spurs by the simple expedient of nickel plating the spur bodies.



PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

Fig. show a commercial pattern 1885 Spur. The spur shown is very close to an arsenal-manufactured specimen except for two subtle mechanical differences: first, the arms of the spur are too short to be of regulation pattern and, second, the spur strap boxes differ slightly in both size and shape from regulation spurs. The finish is an unusually high polish and the spur has an officers's style fine-toothed rowel. This spur has a narrow, enlisted style groove cast into the inner curve of the body (not found on regulation officers' spurs) but the groove is much narrower than that of the regulation pattern enlisted spur.

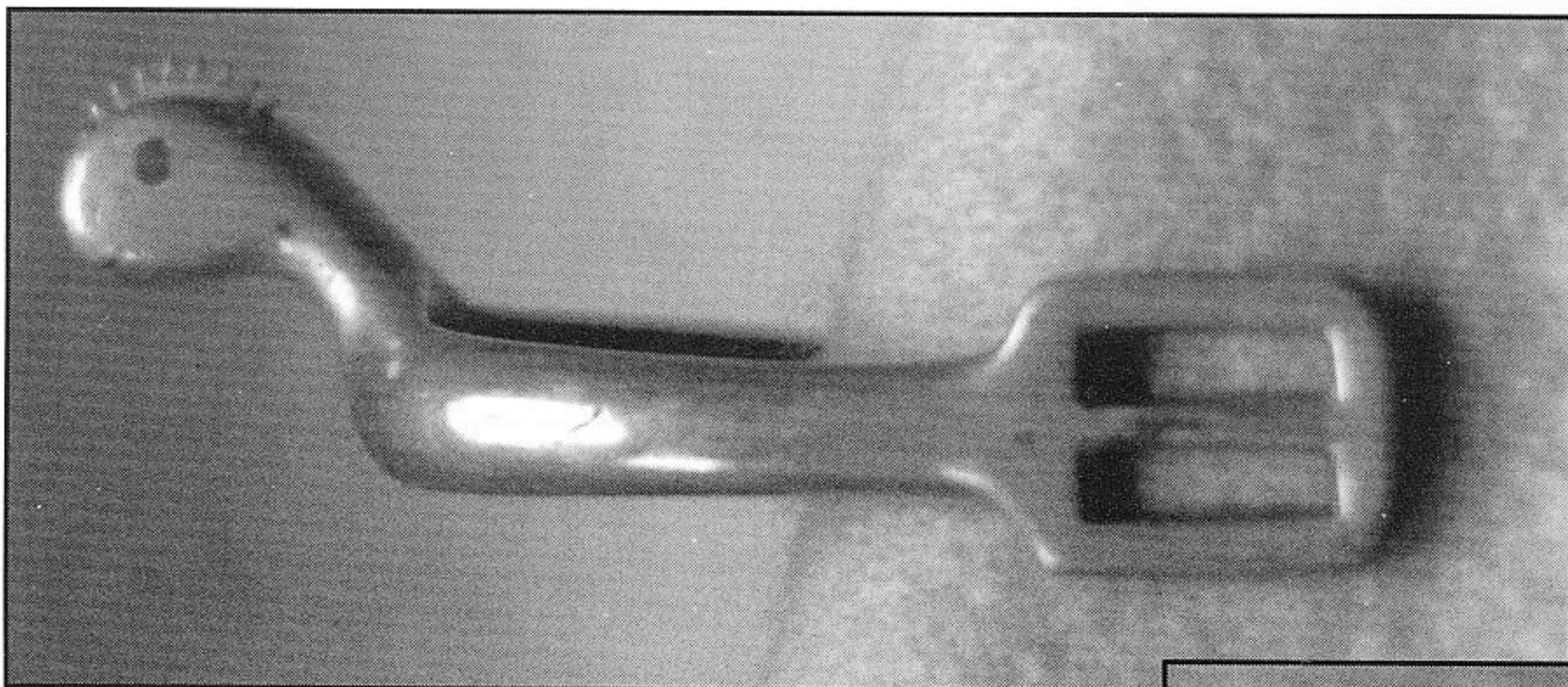


Fig. 26 - A closeup of the fine-toothed rowel in this high quality commercial 1885 Spur.

Fig. 25 - An unmarked, commercially-manufactured Pattern 1885 Spur. There are several distinguishing features of this spur. The first two are the fine-toothed rowel and the higher polish on the exterior surface of the body and shank. Two other features are its shorter overall length as well as the heavier bars in the spur strap box.

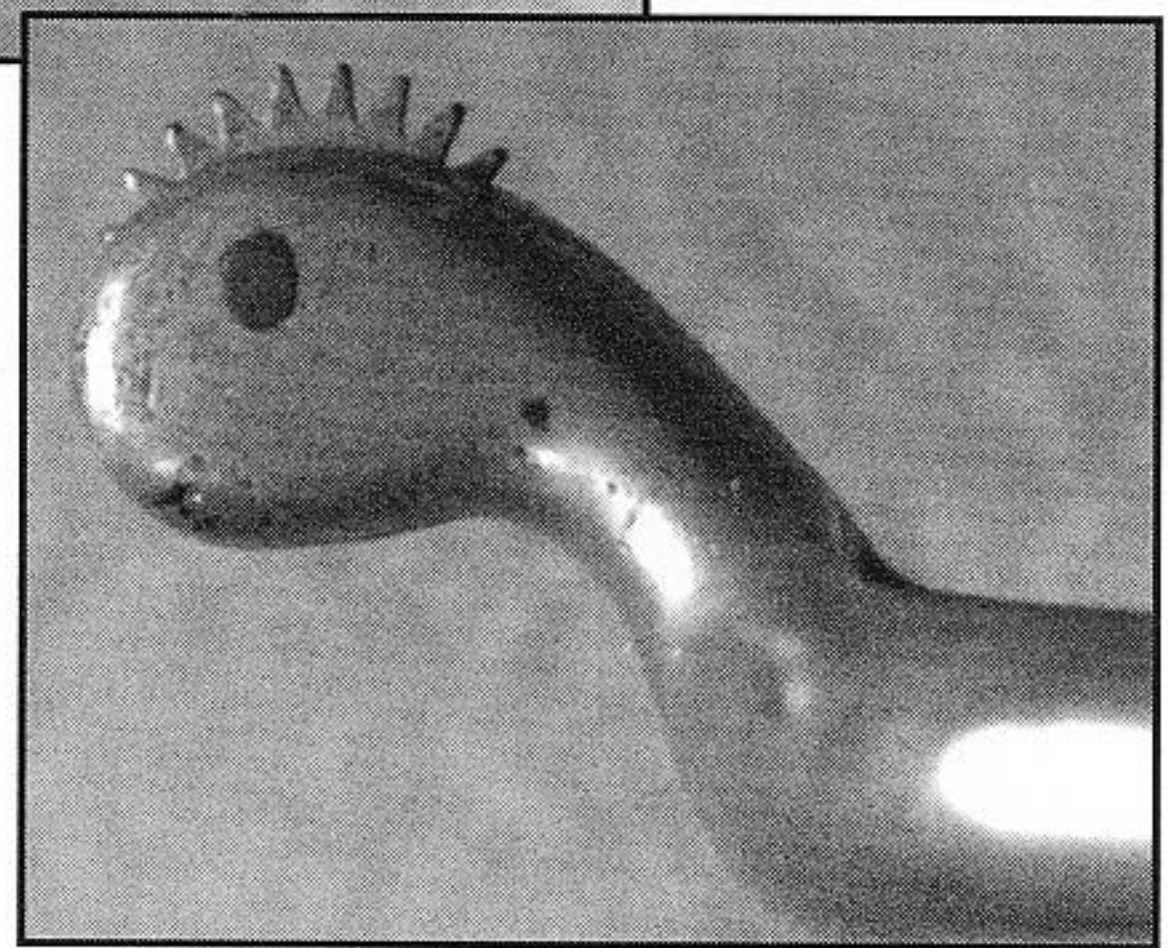
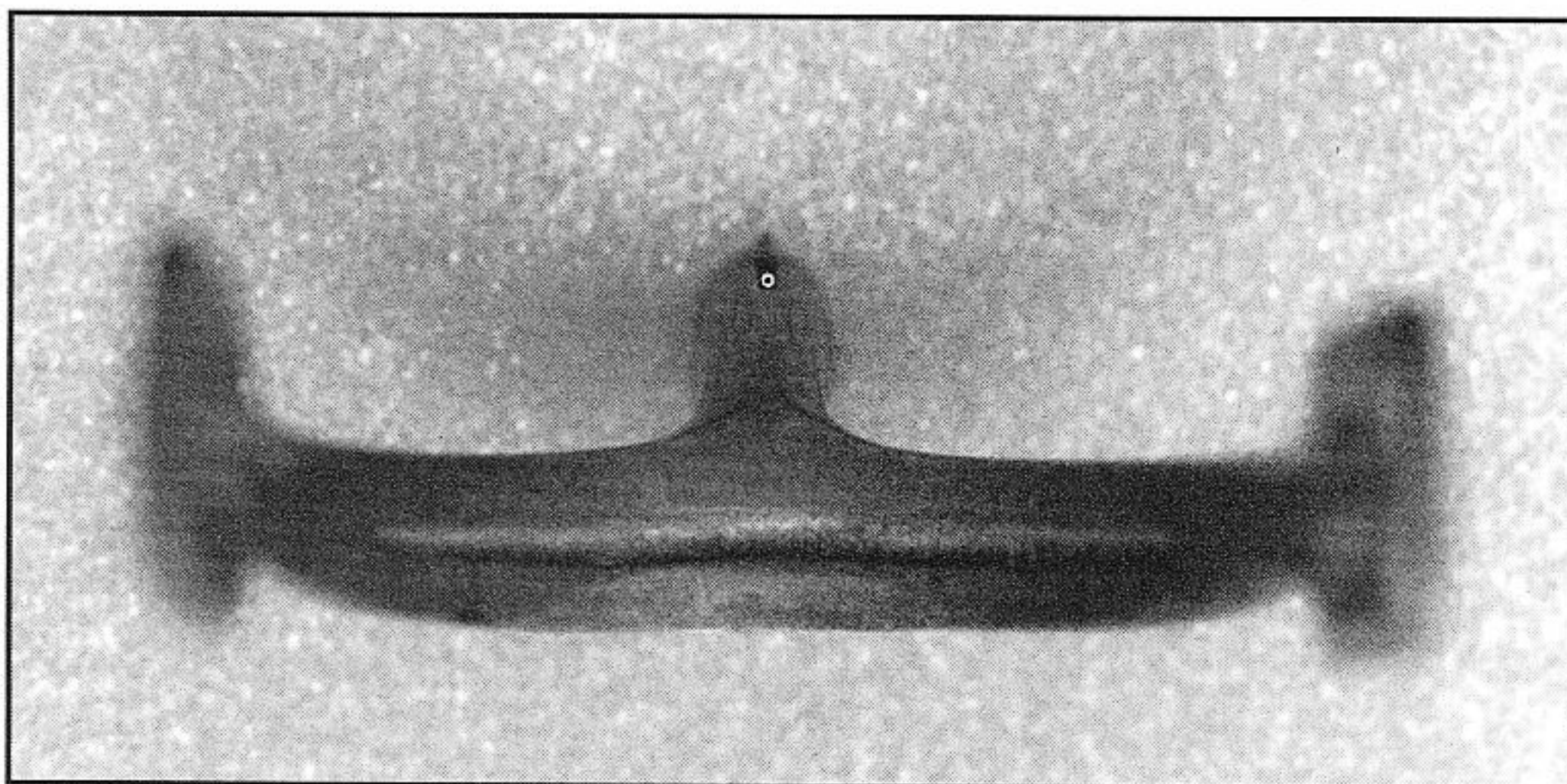


Fig. 27 - The very narrow, cast-in groove in the inner surface of this spur is at odds with the officers'-style fine-toothed rowel. The odd combination of these features argues for commercial production - unrestrained by arsenal manufacturing conventions.



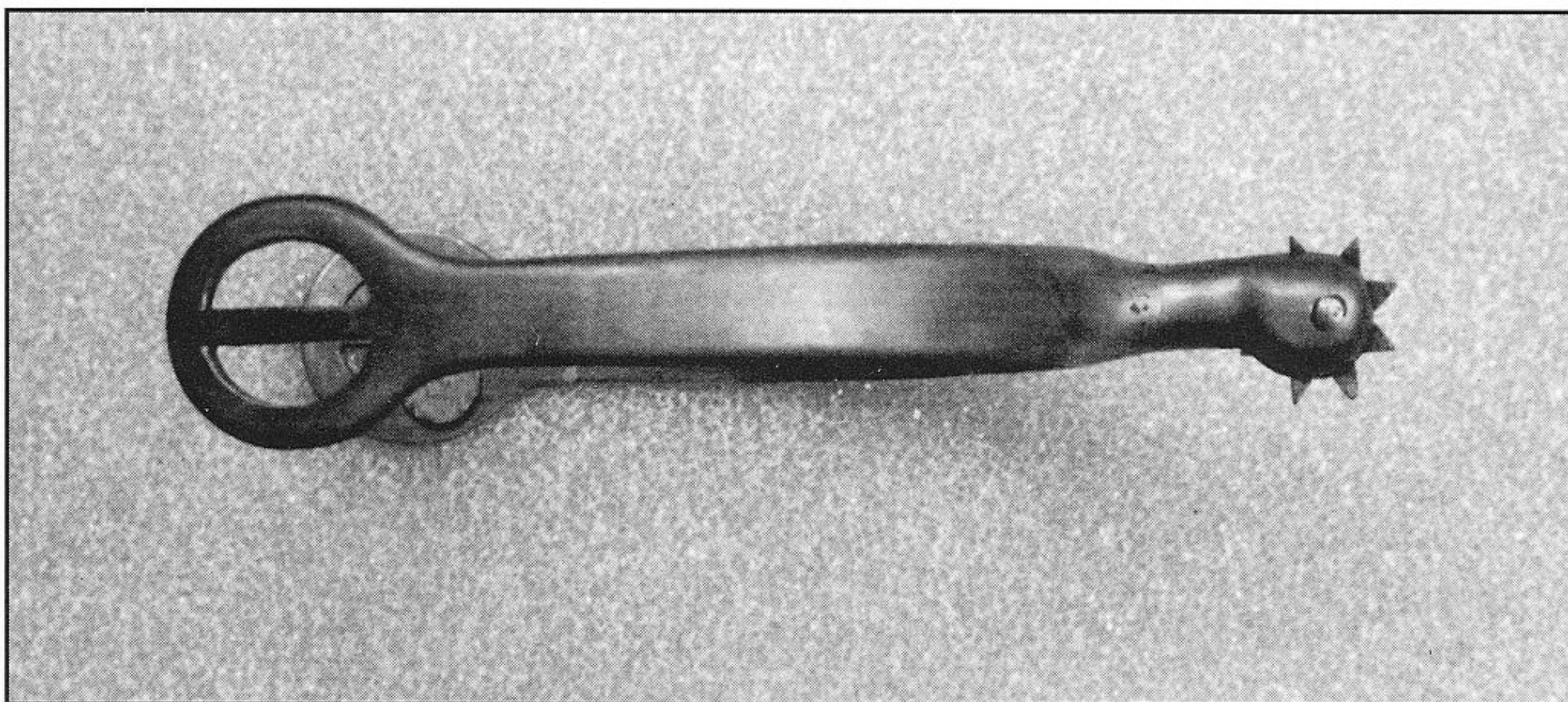


Fig. 28

Fig. 29

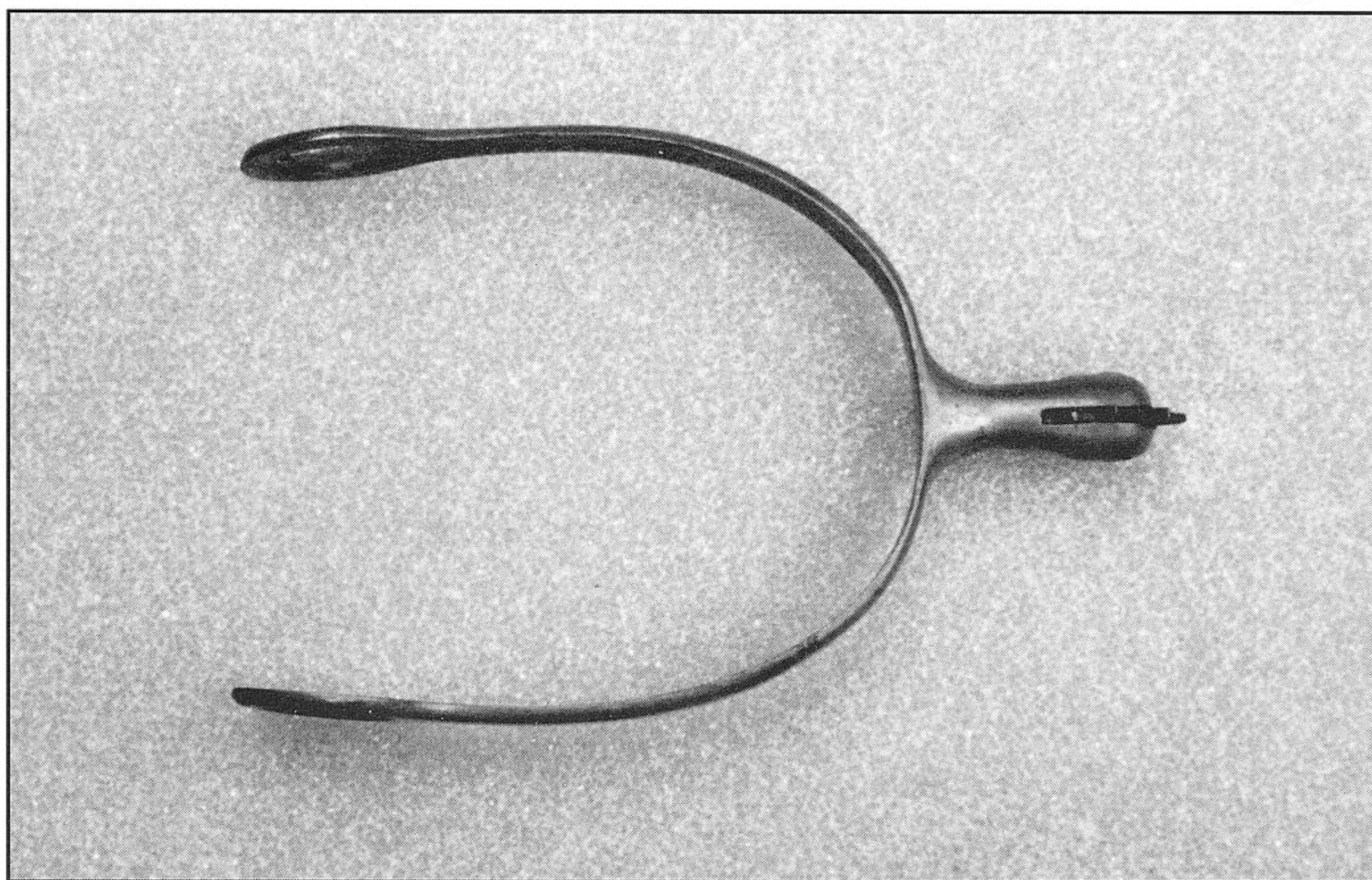


Fig. 28 & 29 - Probably dating from the 1880s-1890s, these brass spurs are each engraved inside, "1st LT. JOHN RAZIEN". Lt Razien was not a Regular Army officer, so was one of many mounted officers of the state militia. Such commercial spurs were common in the militias and served both East and West. The shank measures 1 3/8" and the coarse-toothed iron rowel measures 2 3/32" in diameter.



The firm of August Buermann Manufacturing Co. in Newark, New Jersey, was the premier US manufacturer of metal bridle bits, spurs and stirrups, in the post-1900 period. Fig. 30, a page from that firm's 1922 catalogue (Ref. 17), shows several officers' style and one enlisted style "regulation" spurs with their spur straps. One significant feature of the Buermann offering is that any of these spurs could be had in solid brass, solid nickel or nickel steel ("never rust"). In the lower portion of that page, under the heading "Patent Improved U.S. Army Spurs", two other, military style spurs are shown. The reader should note that these spurs have rearward-canted spur strap boxes and Buermann patent stampings on the inner curves of the bodies. While looking much like U.S. spurs, the rearward-canted spur strap boxes are identified in other Buermann publications as being a Canadian type.

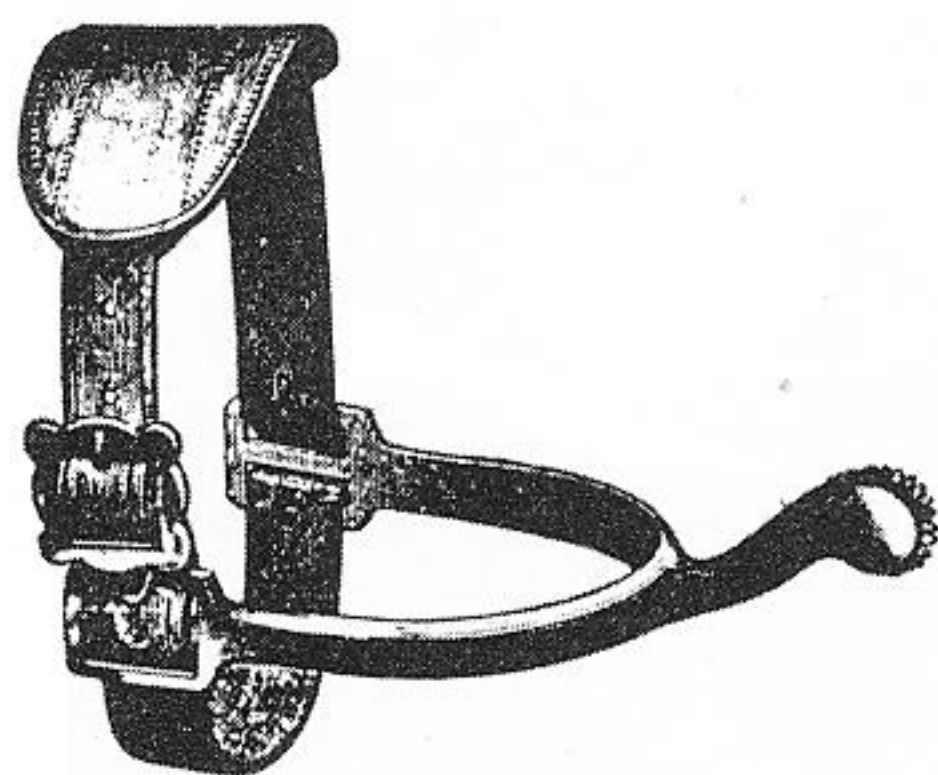
The officers' spur in the upper left hand of Fig. 30 (No. 1902), is a true regulation Pattern 1903 Officers's Spur - when it is in nickel or nickel steel ("white metal"). In brass, the same spur would not be regulation. The nearly-identical spur shown on the upper right hand of Fig. 30 (No. 103), while of the identical rowel, shank and body shape, is not a regulation Pattern 1903 Officers' Spur by virtue of the spur strap/chain studs used at the ends of the arms. Fig. 31-32 show the exact Buermann spur No. 1903 with its original Buermann straps. The Buermann trademark is clearly shown at the arrow in Fig. 32. The unique leather covering of the two arms of the spur was to protect the finish of the officers' boots and is believed to have been offered as an option to buyers by Buermann. Similar coverings were, doubtless, applied to arsenal-manufactured 1903 Officers' Spurs by unit saddlers.



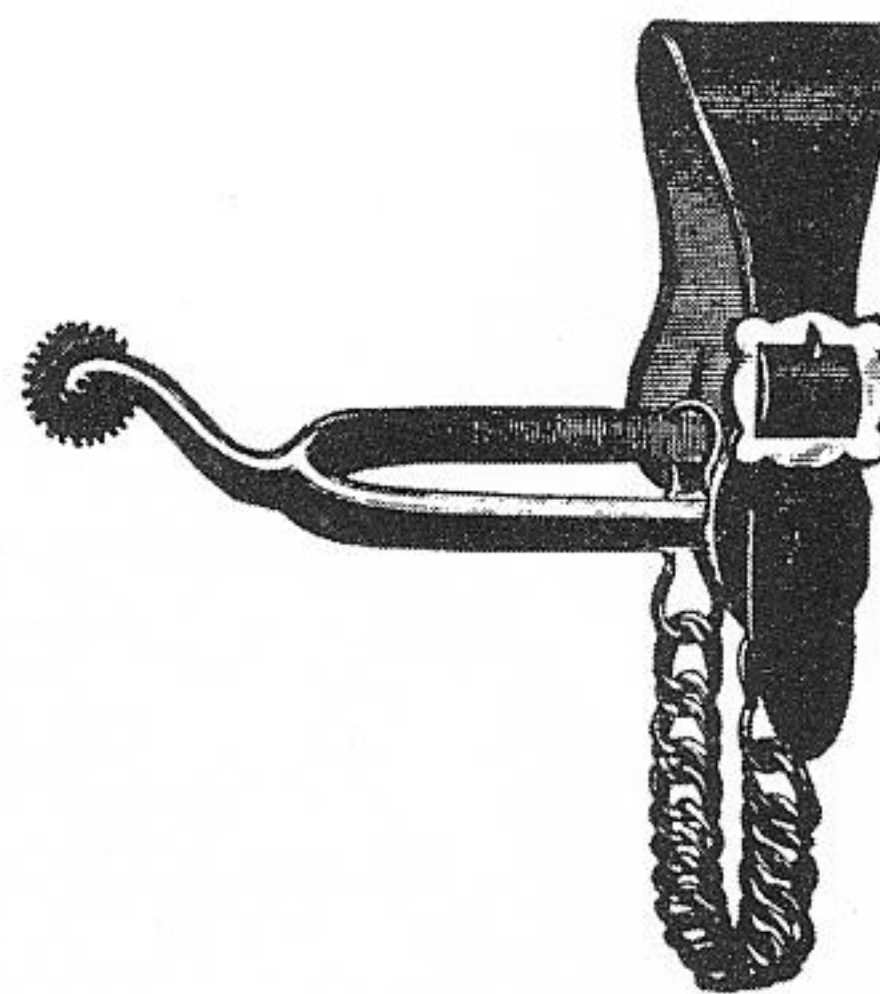
"STAR  BRAND"

BUERMANN'S U. S. REGULATION
Officers' and Privates' Military Spurs

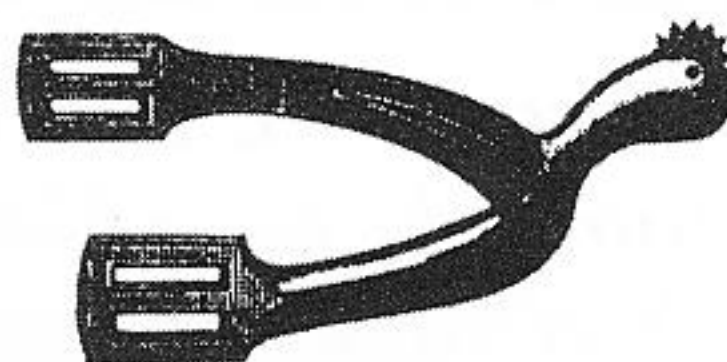
ONE PIECE



$\frac{7}{8}$ inch Steel Rowel
No. 1902
U. S. Regulation Officer's Spur

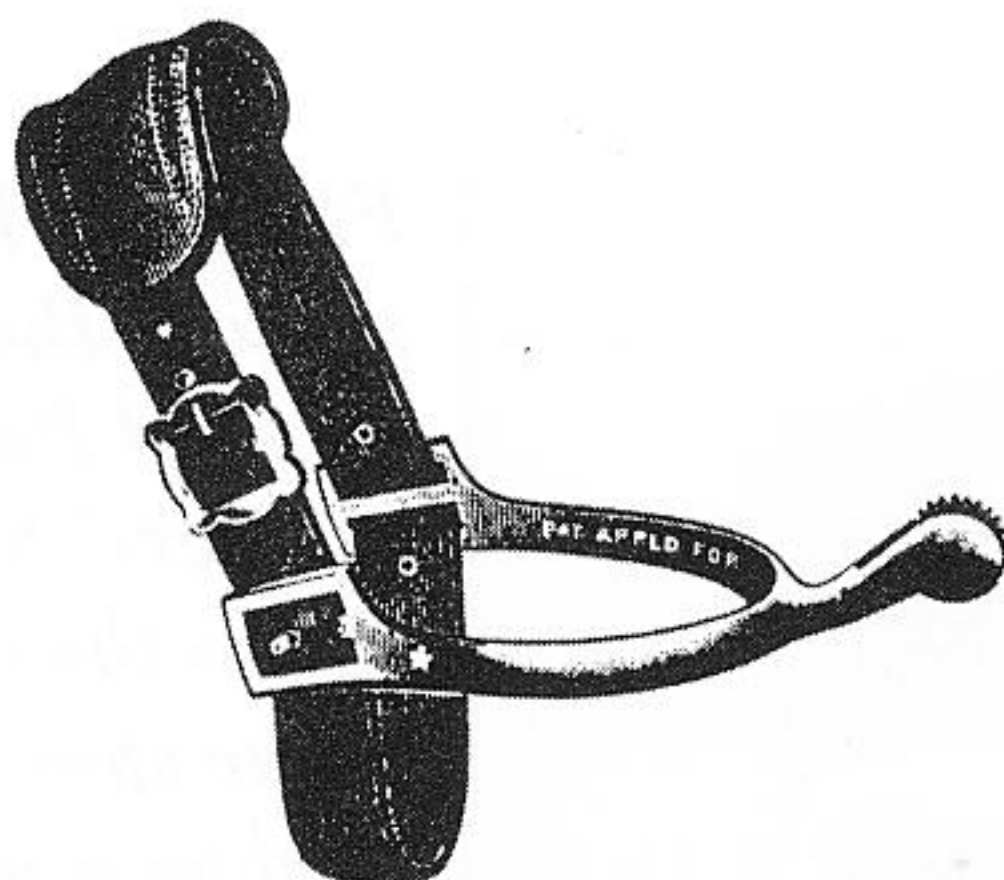


$\frac{7}{8}$ inch Steel Rowel
No. 103
Reg. Army Officer's Spur
Complete with Under Chains

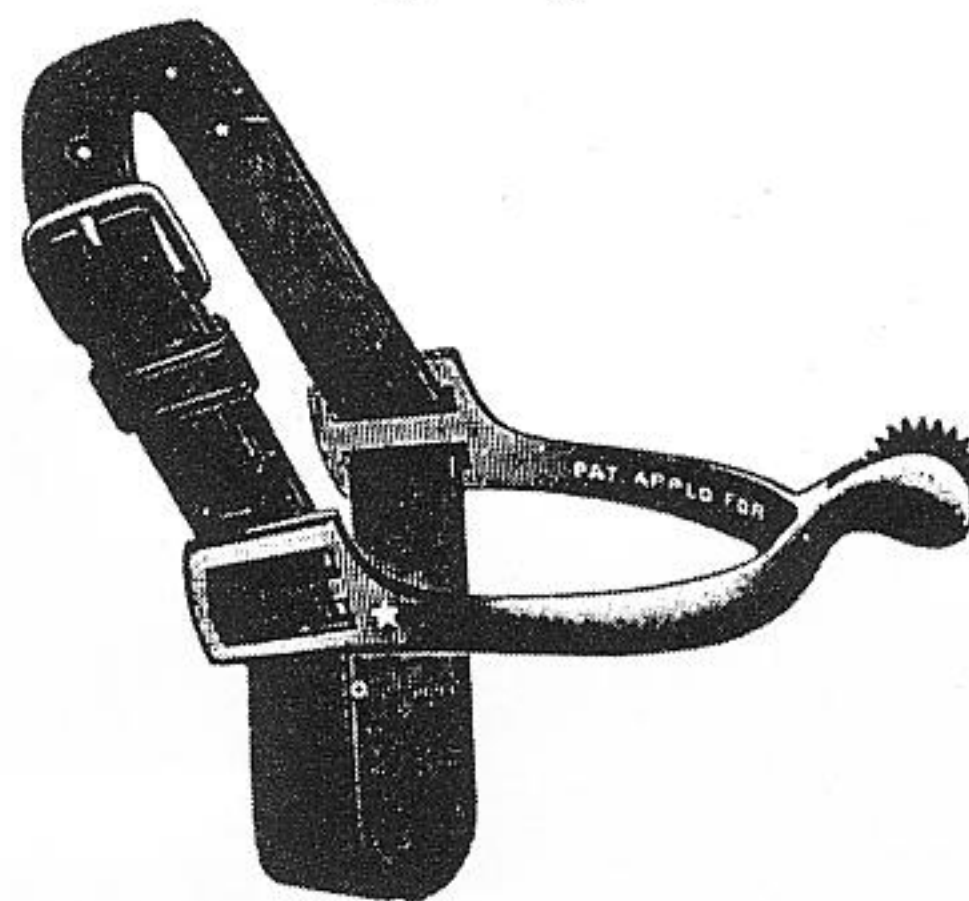


$\frac{7}{8}$ inch Steel Rowel
No. 1229
U. S. Regulation Cavalry Spur

Patent Improved U. S. Army Spurs



No. 1500—Patent
Officer's Spur



No. 1600—Patent
Cavalry Spur

Patented Sept. 13, 1910

Made in Solid Brass, Solid Nickel and Never-Rust.

Fig. 30 - Page from 1922 Buermann sales catalogue.



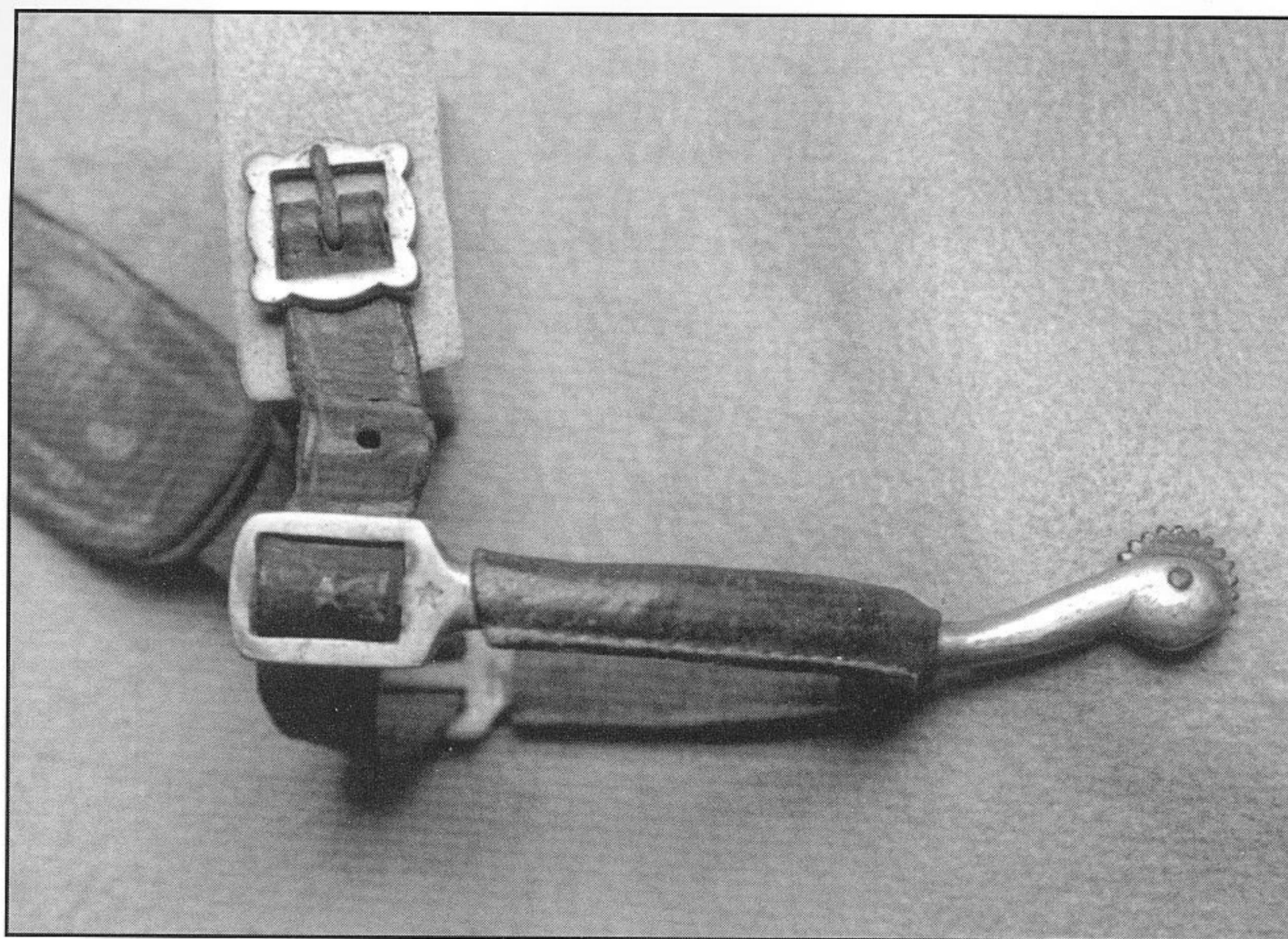


Fig. 31 - This commercially-made, nickel steel, 1903 Pattern Officers' Spur is scarce in and of itself, but also features the period leather covering favored by some officers to protect the heel of their boot. Made by August Buermann of New Jersey, this spur was offered by Buermann exactly as shown: with the special leather covering as well as the fancy nickel buckle on the spur strap. In the background can be seen the boot guard that was part of the spur strap. Note the fine-toothed rowel.

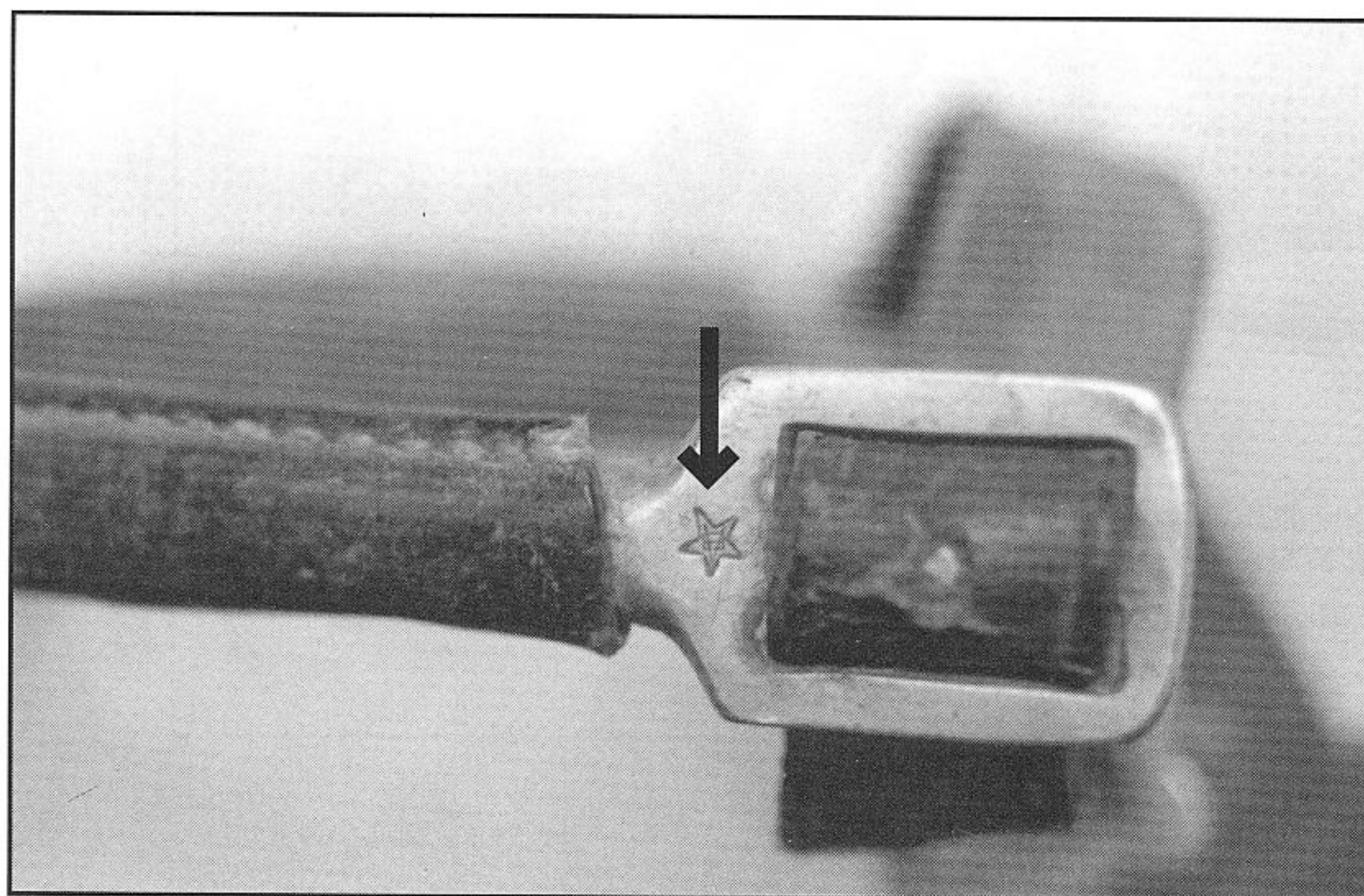


Fig. 32 - This closeup photo of the leather-covered Pattern 1903 Officers' Spur clearly shows the engagement of the spur strap locking stud on a hole in the spur strap as well as the trademark of August Buermann: an "A" over a "B", surrounded by a five-pointed star.



Figure 33 is an example of a non-regulation, personal purchase spur of the 1903 Officers' type. It has the non-regulation spur strap studs on the ends of the arms and is in non-regulation solid brass. Interestingly, inside one arm is engraved "LIEUT. F.A. PERRY / DENVER, COLO." Lieutenant Perry does not appear to have been a Regular Army officer and was probably a member of the Colorado State (Militia) Cavalry around the turn of the last century.

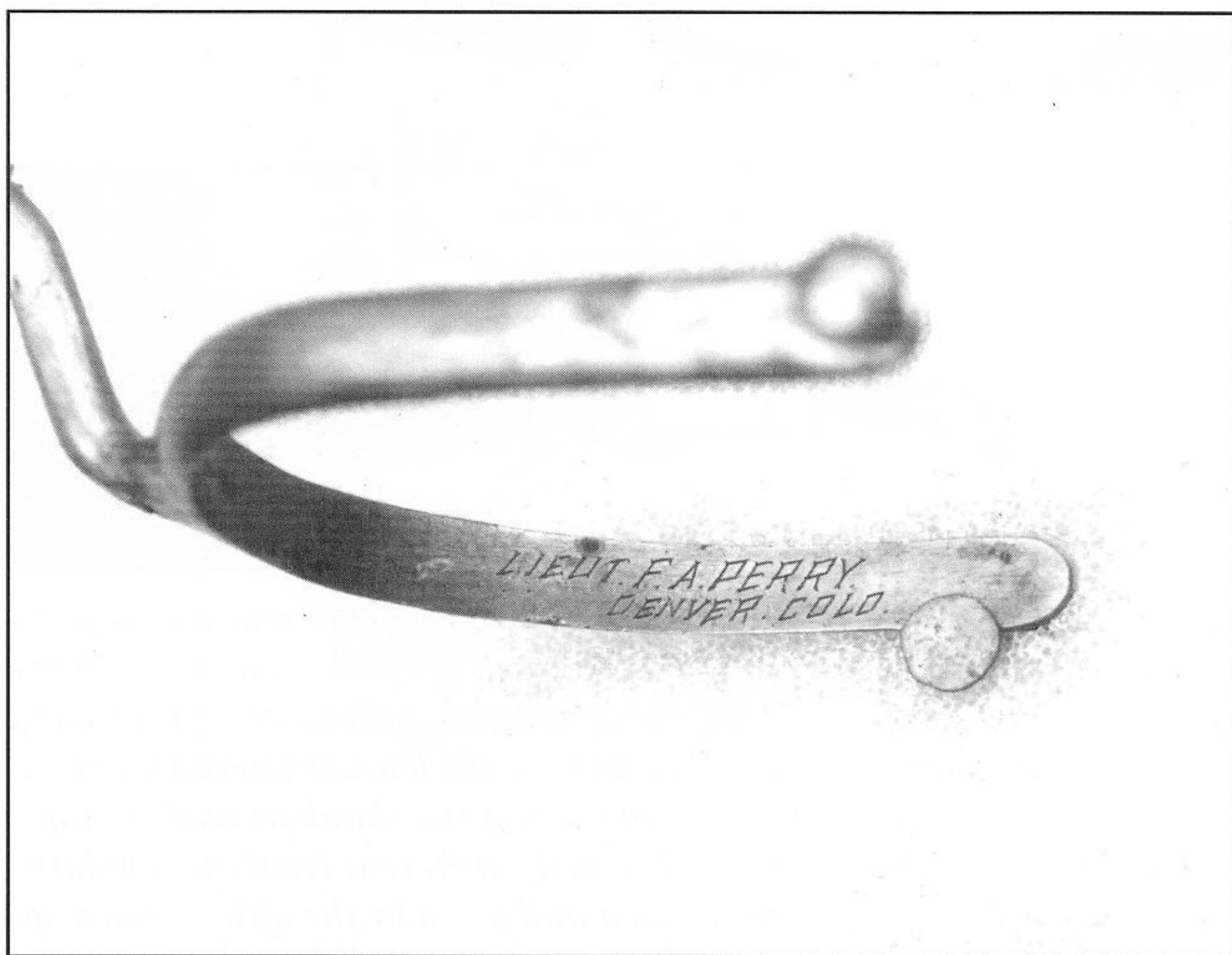


Fig. 33



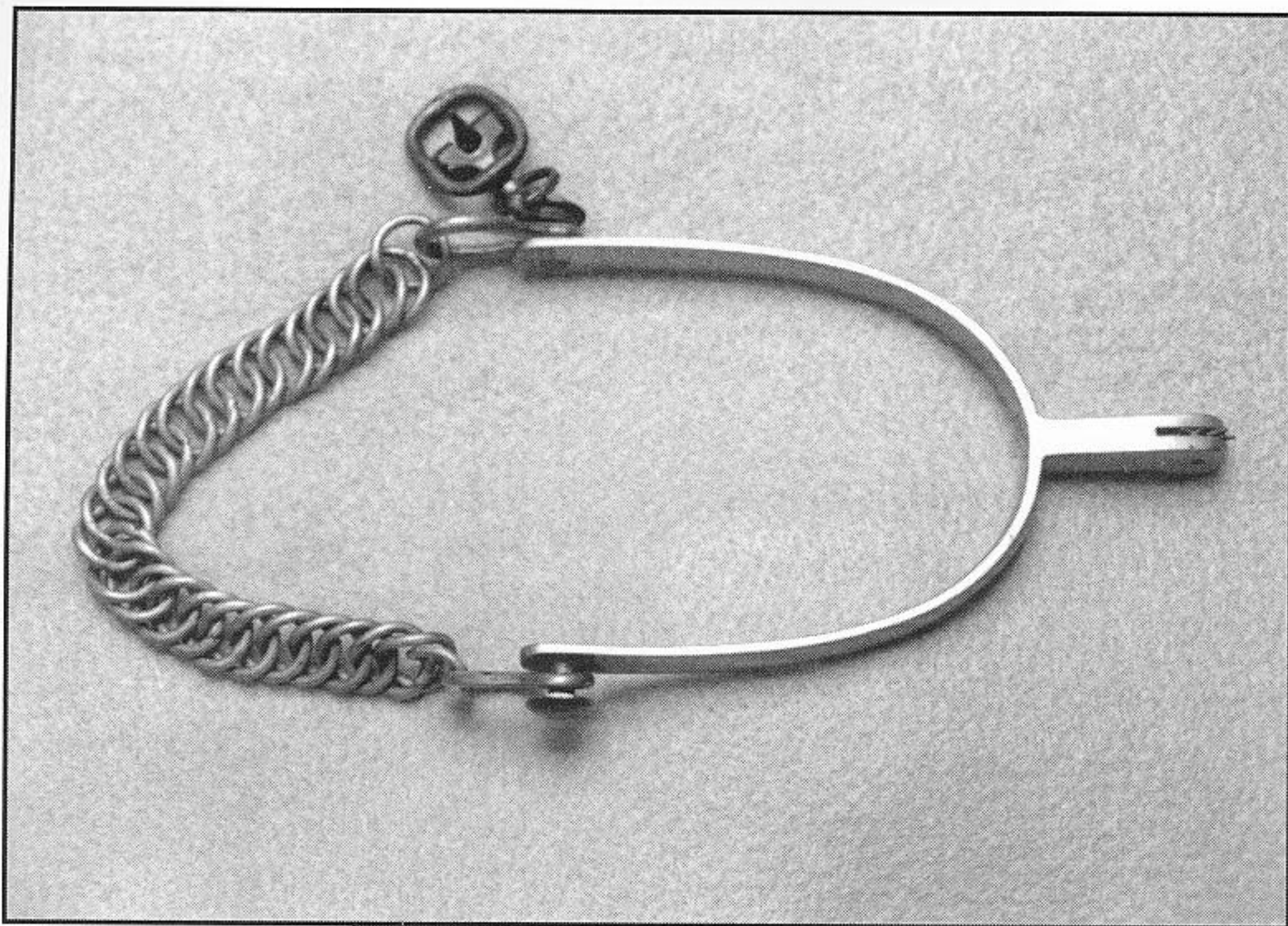


Fig. 34

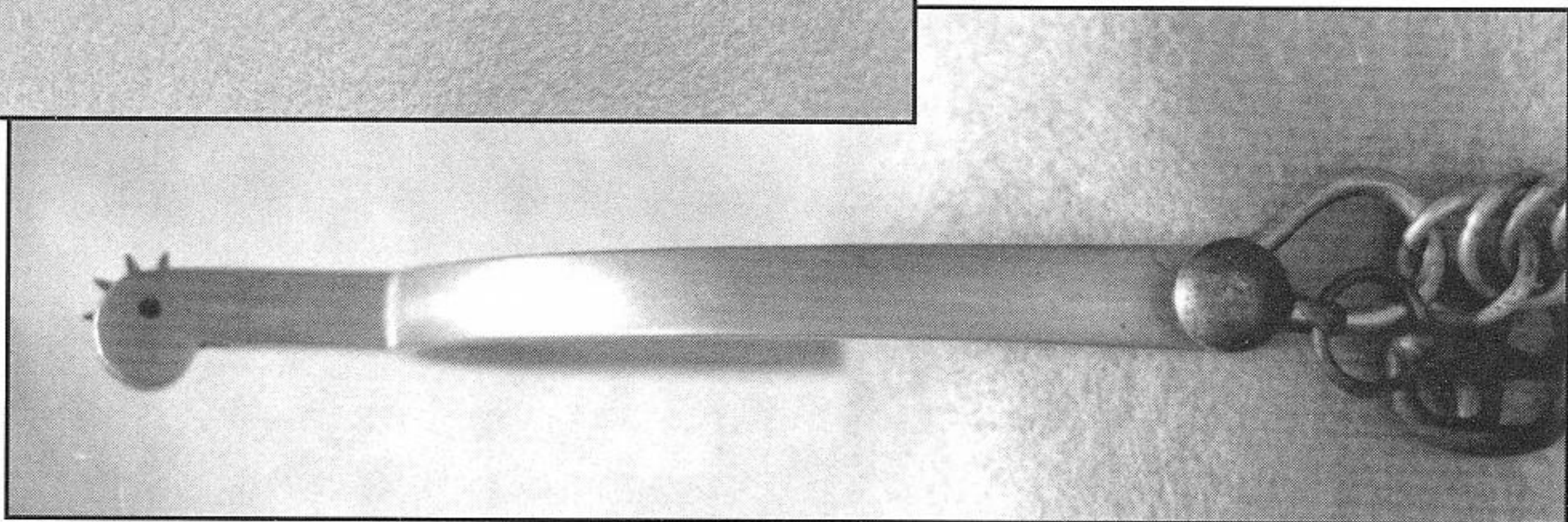


Fig. 35

Fig. 34 & 35 - This extremely high grade nickel steel officers' spur was a personal purchase item that could have been purchased and used any time from 1900 to 1945. Probably of English manufacture, this graceful spur has a rotating rowel and a nickel steel chain for under the boot. It is missing the leather stirrup strap that went over the top of the boot. Having flats on all sides of the shank as well the top and bottom edges of the body, this spur was distinctly different from the regulation spurs of the time - precisely why it was purchased and worn by the officer. Such spurs were offered for sale by all quality riding outfitters in the U.S. and were sold to military as well as civilian riders. The shank measures 1.175".

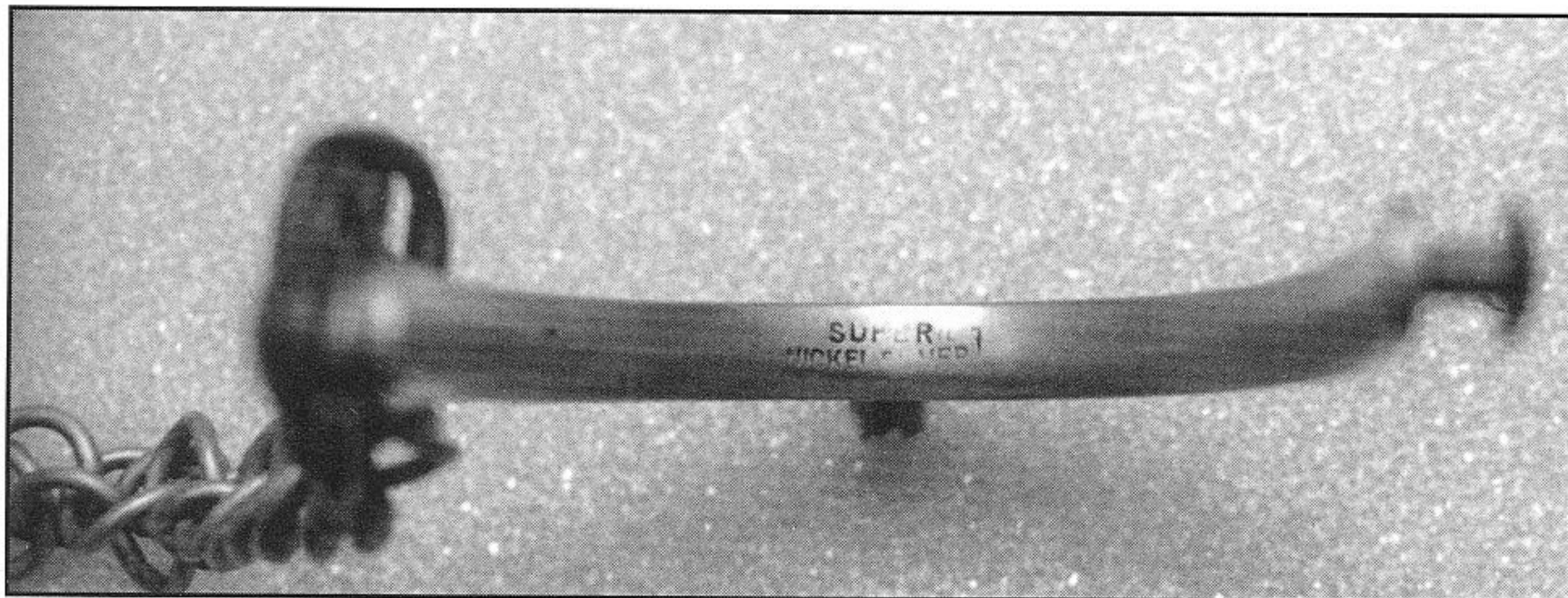


Fig. 36 - The inside curve of this officers' spur is stamped "SUPER" over "NICKEL SILVER"





Fig. 37 - This officers' boot is properly fitted with the personal-purchase officers' spur shown previously. Note that the spur strap is fitted with a leather lacing guard to protect the lacings from wear and from picking up dirt and debris.



THE GREAT WAR, PEACETIME CAVALRY AND TAPS, 1911 - 1945

MODEL 1911 SPUR BUERMANN "EXPERIMENTAL" MODEL 1914 SPUR PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

MODEL 1911 SPUR

In the years between 1908 and 1917, the army was busy developing a number of new saddles and many related items of cavalry/horse equipment. In particular, the development from 1910-1912 resulted in a pair of new cavalry saddles and a large number of new items to accompany them: the Models 1912 Officers' and Service Saddles. In this collection of newly-designed items was a new spur, common to both officers and enlisted men: The Model of 1911. Essentially, it was an extremely durable, streamlined, forged spur without an integral rowel. It also had an outside strap buckle secured by a link of nickel steel. It should be noted that the spurs came as a Left and a Right, due to the placement of the captive strap buckle on the outside of each spur. Quoting from the Model 1912 Cavalry Equipments Manual, the new spur was described as follows:

"This article is drop-forged from one piece of 27 per cent nickel steel, the strap and stud being riveted in place. The service and officers' spurs are identical and known as spur, model of 1911.

The spur is placed on the shoe well up toward the upper part of the counter, buckle on outside of foot. Wearing the spur in the position indicated preserves its life, favors the proper use of the spur as an aid, as well as conforming to the proper practice. This is a steel spur, and can be polished without injury. Adjust the upper strap to the foot by its buckle, attach the spur to the foot and detach it therefrom by pulling the inside end of each strap over the spur button, instead of by using the strap."



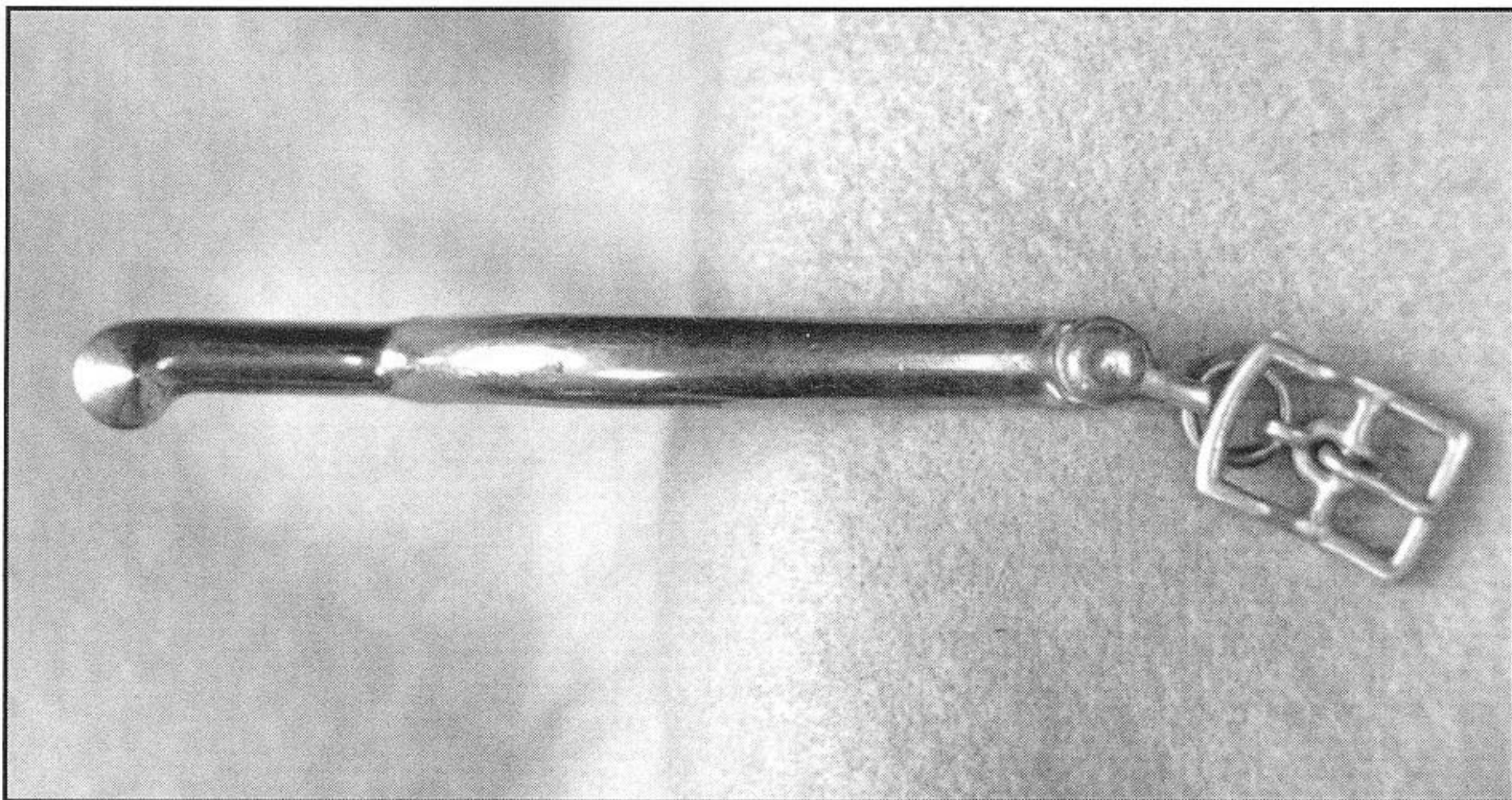


Fig. 1 - The graceful Model 1911 Spur was adopted as a spur for enlisted personnel and officers. It was forged of 27% nickel steel and had two spur strap studs riveted onto the two arms. There was a "Right" and a "Left" spur to each pair and two straps to each spur. One strap went over the top of the boot to engage the buckle and the other went under the boot and in front of the heel to keep the spur from rising. For this reason, while the straps are similar, they are not identical.

In this period of 1911-1917, there is an inconsistency in the Ordnance documents describing the spurs actually "regulation" at that time. The Horse Equipments Manual printed in 1917 continues to list and show photographs of the Pattern 1903 Officers' and Enlisted Spurs and Spur Straps - leading one to believe that the Pattern 1903 was still in Regular Army Cavalry service at that time. However, a document more timely and up-to-date in any given year was the annual Ordnance Price List. These appear to have been published about every two to four years and contained the identifications and prices of all of the components of many items of small arms, horse equipments, officers' equipments and miscellaneous articles. For a collector and research, these are truly invaluable and have been reprinted for that purpose. In any event, the Ordnance Price List of 1913 (Ref. 15) lists two types of spurs: a "Spur, each, 28 cents" and a "Spur, model of 1911, each, 65 cents". Neither price included the cost of spur straps. The same listing contained the spur straps in both standard (russet, though not so-called) and black. It is probable, then, in 1913, the mounted services were still making the transition to the M1911 Spur.



In the 1916 and 1917 Ordnance Price Lists, two types of spurs are listed under the Old Model Cavalry Equipments listing: a "Spur, old model" at 28 cents each and the Model 1911 Spur. The Model of 1911 Spur was the only spur included in the M1912 Equipments for all enlisted and officers. Absent later price lists being available to the author, it is my opinion that - by the outbreak of the Great War - the M1911 Spur had completely replaced the Pattern 1903 in cavalry service. This opinion is supported by the large numbers of Model 1911 Spurs still available as well as the manufacture and issuance of the Model of 1914 Experimental Spur (a spur that would not have been tried if the Pattern of 1903 had been considered satisfactory for further service.). The 1917 Horse Equipments Manual (actually the second revision of the 1905 Manual - Ref. 9) apparently had not been thoroughly revised and the Pattern 1903 Spurs had, inadvertantly, not been shown to have been replaced with the current (M1911) pattern.

As late as the 1917 Ordnance Price List, two types of Model 1911 Spur Straps were being shown for sale: black (leather) and black patent leather.



Fig. 2

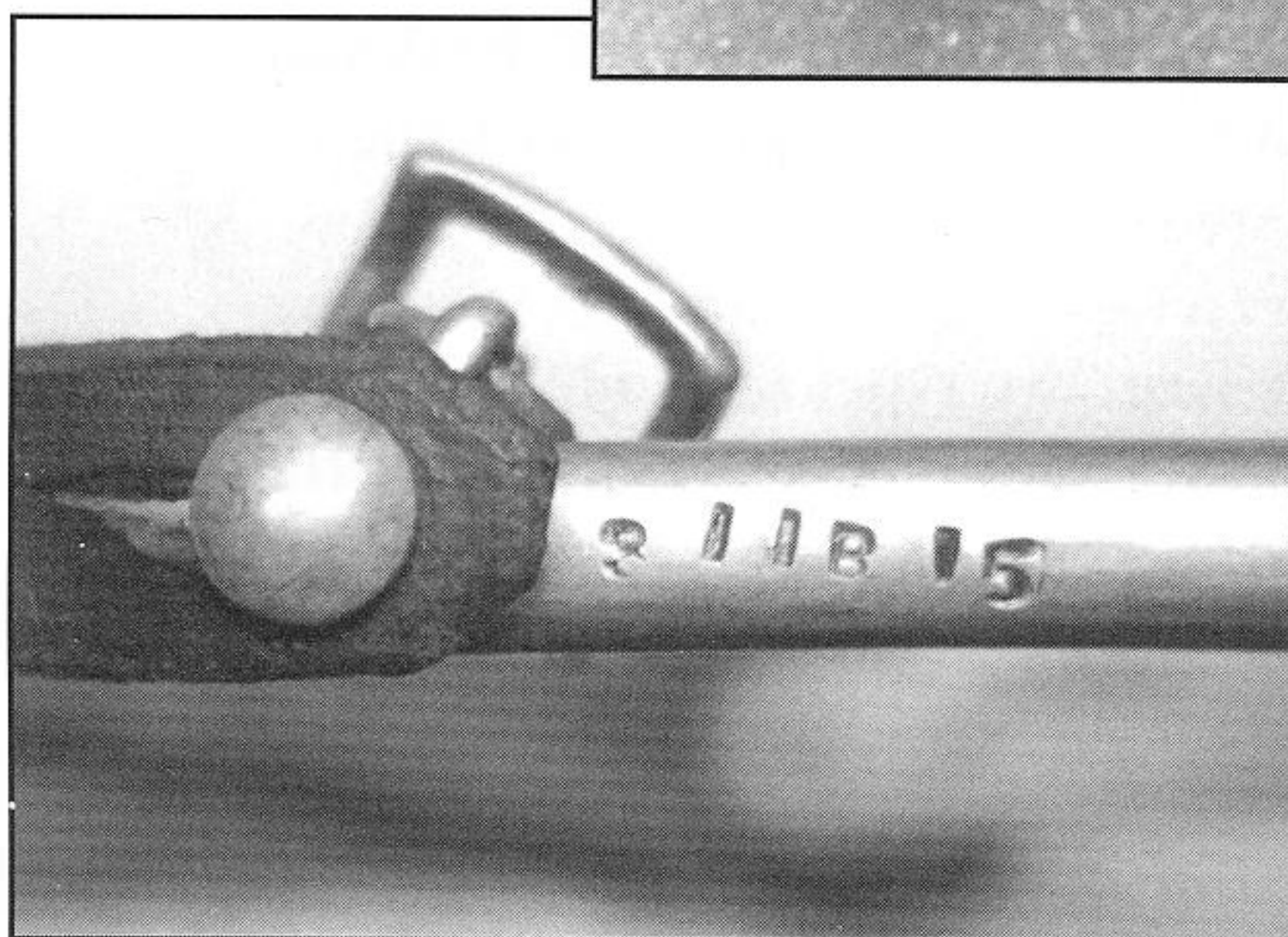
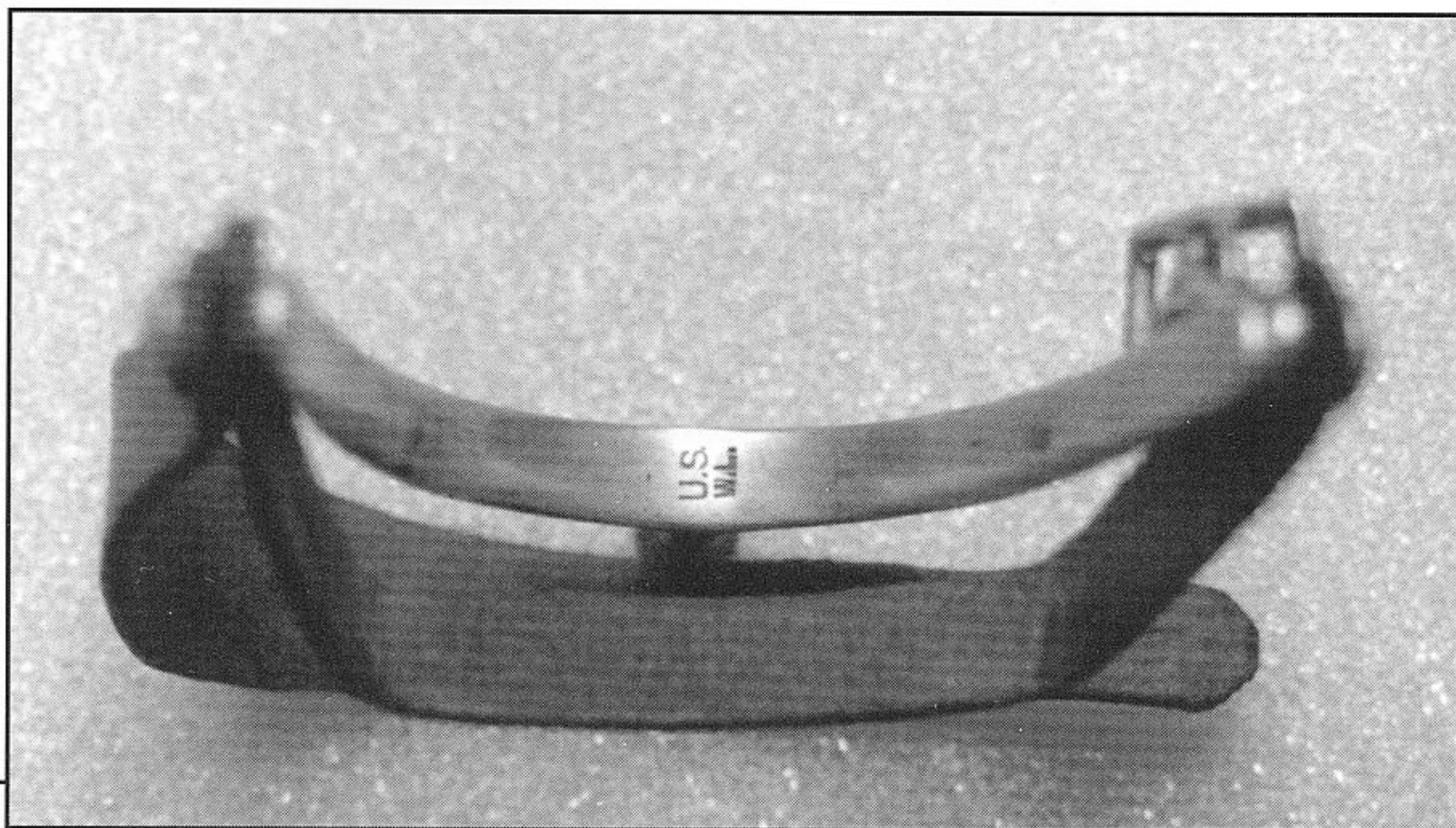


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

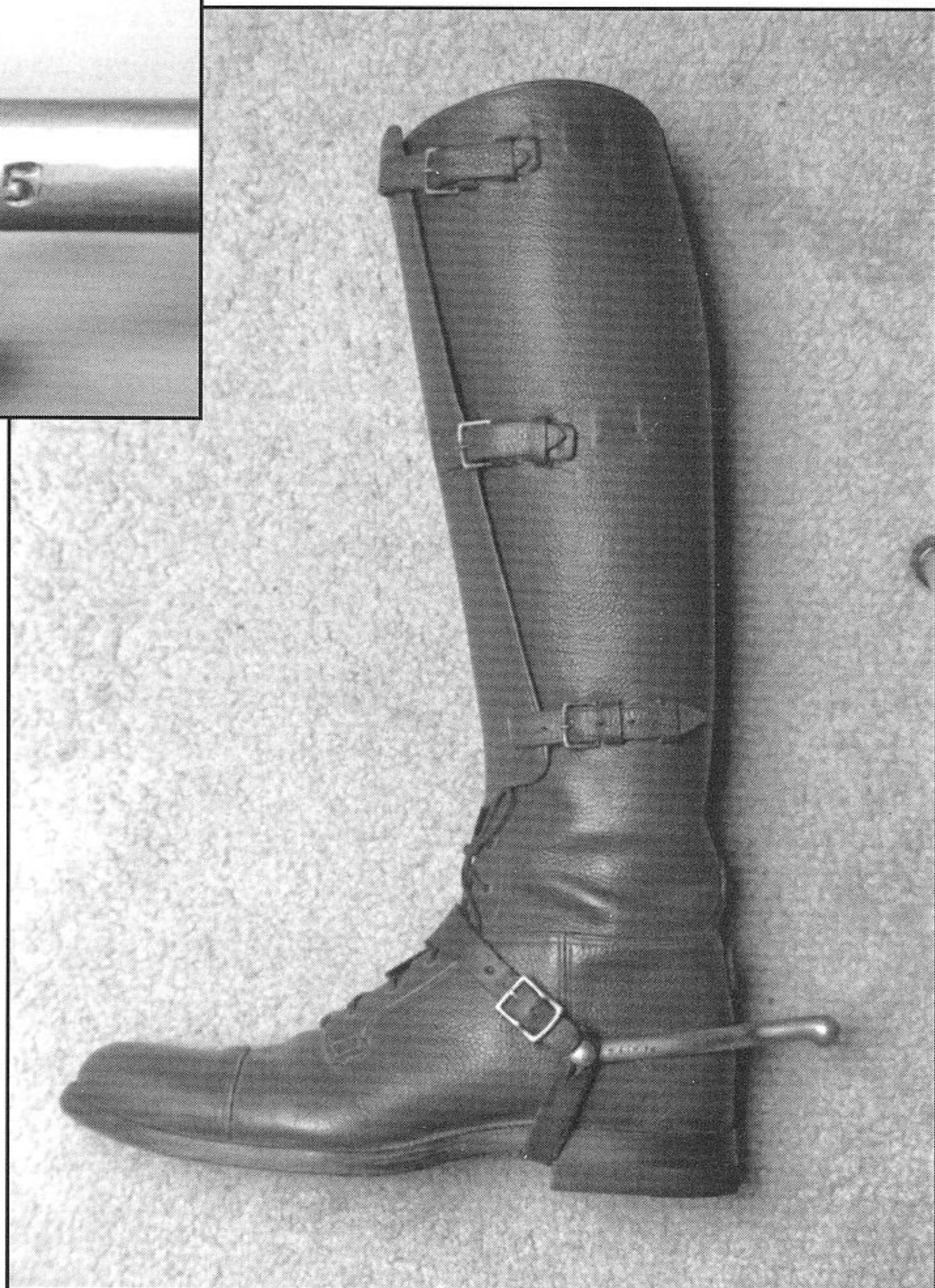


Fig. 2-4 - Three views of this Model 1911 Spur show its unit markings (311th Regt., B Company, #15), its government property mark and manufacturer's initials ("U.S./W.L.") and its proper mounting on the Model 1938 Cavalry Boot (Enlisted).



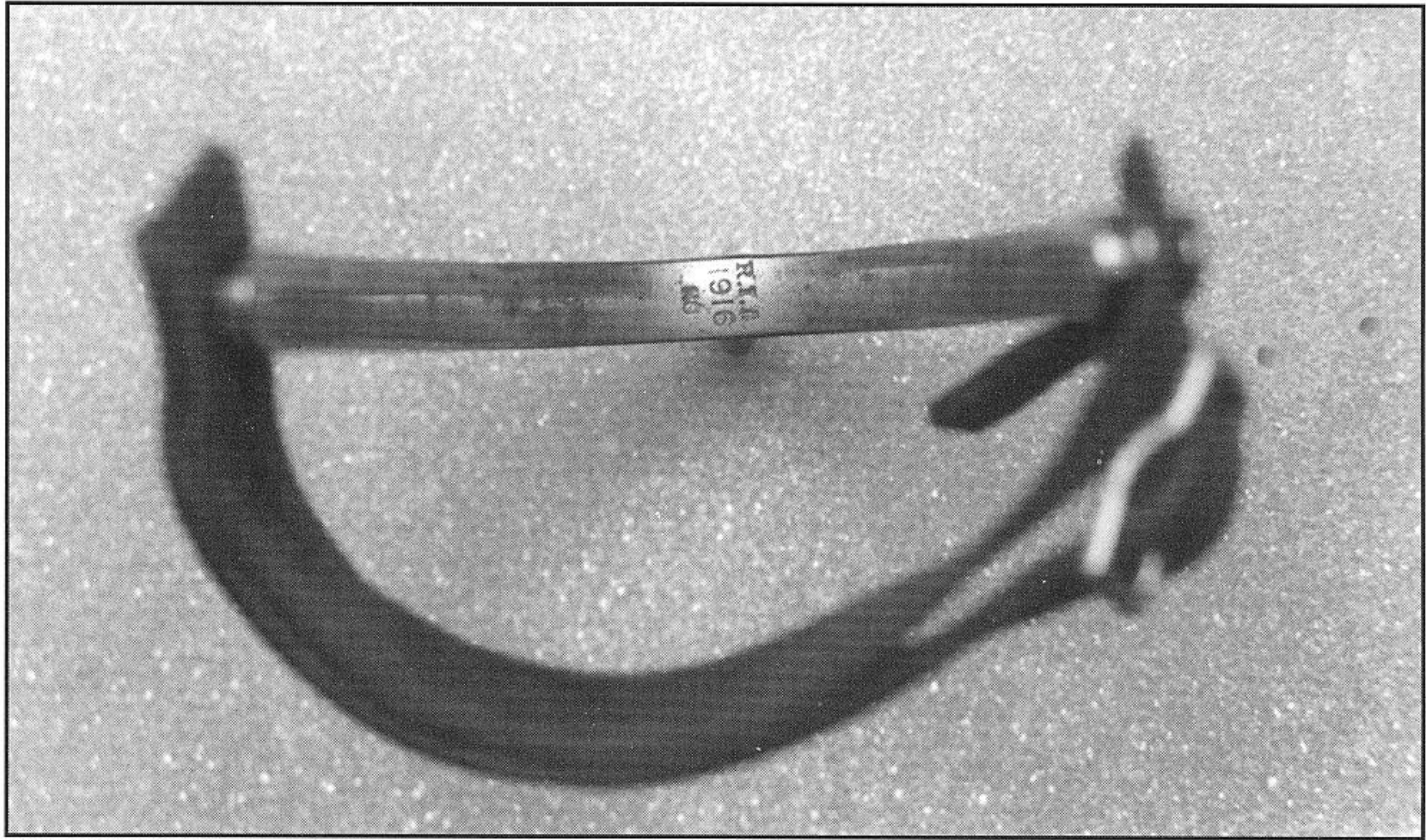


Fig. 5 - The early style of Rock Island Arsenal stamping showing a date of manufacture and an indication of "N.S." for nickel steel.

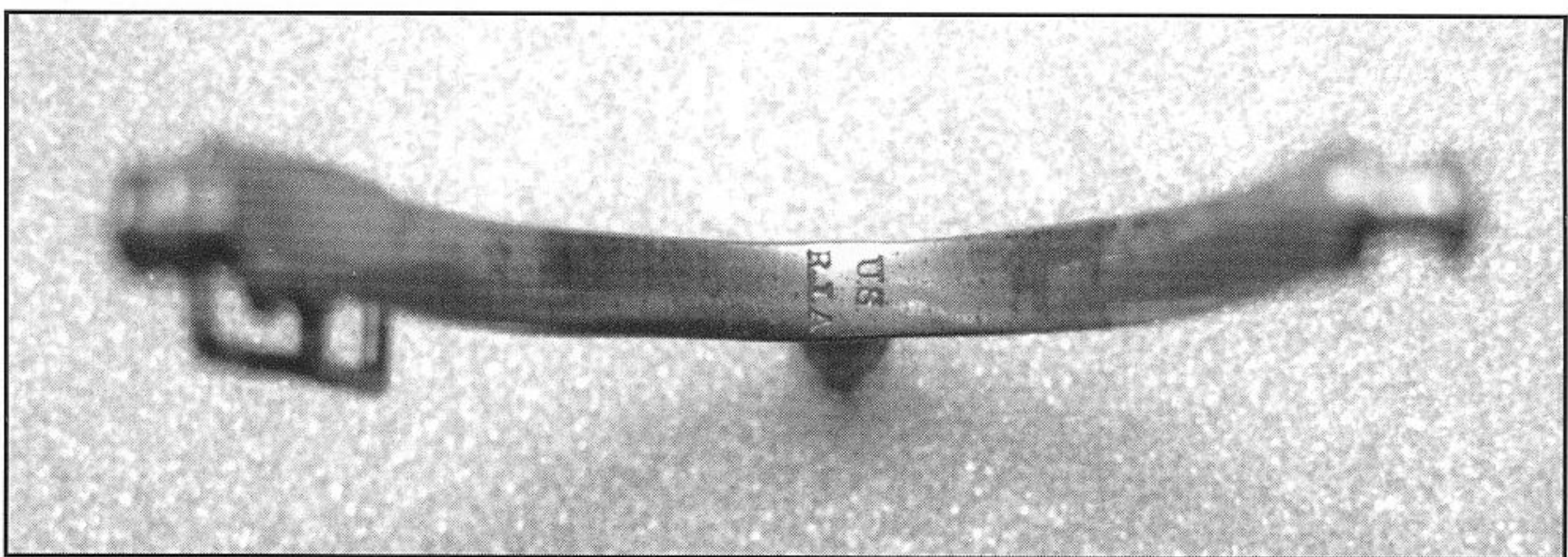


Fig. 6 - The later style of arsenal markings: a simple "US" over "R.I.A.". It is believed this began about 1918.



MODEL 1914 EXPERIMENTAL SPUR

The Model 1914 Experimental Spur was the development of the famous spur manufacturer, August Buermann, of Newark, NJ. The August Buermann firm had been in business since at least the middle of the Indian Wars and Buermann himself was a prolific designer of spur and bridle bit variations. In 1882, Buermann patented a spur with two strap studs on each side (Fig. 7). Shortly after the army's adoption of the Model of 1911 Spur, Buermann apparently offered the army a spur similar to the Model 1911 but with the four studs of his 1882 patent as well as downward-tilting ends to the yoke. The purpose of this double stud and tilting yoke design was to give the best possible angles of tension for the two spur straps on each spur. Each XM1914 Spur, as shown in Fig. 8 & 9, is a sleek and beautifully-finished piece. Each pair has a right and left-hand spur with a buckle mounted on the front, outside stud by a nickle steel link. As shown in Fig. 10, these spurs are stamped "US" over "A.B." at the center of the inner curve. The four studs are forged in. Apparently, the army did not feel that the Buermann design was a sufficient improvement to continue production for more than a trial quantity and testing did not warrant adoption of the Buermann design. All of these spurs appear to be of Buermann's manufacture.

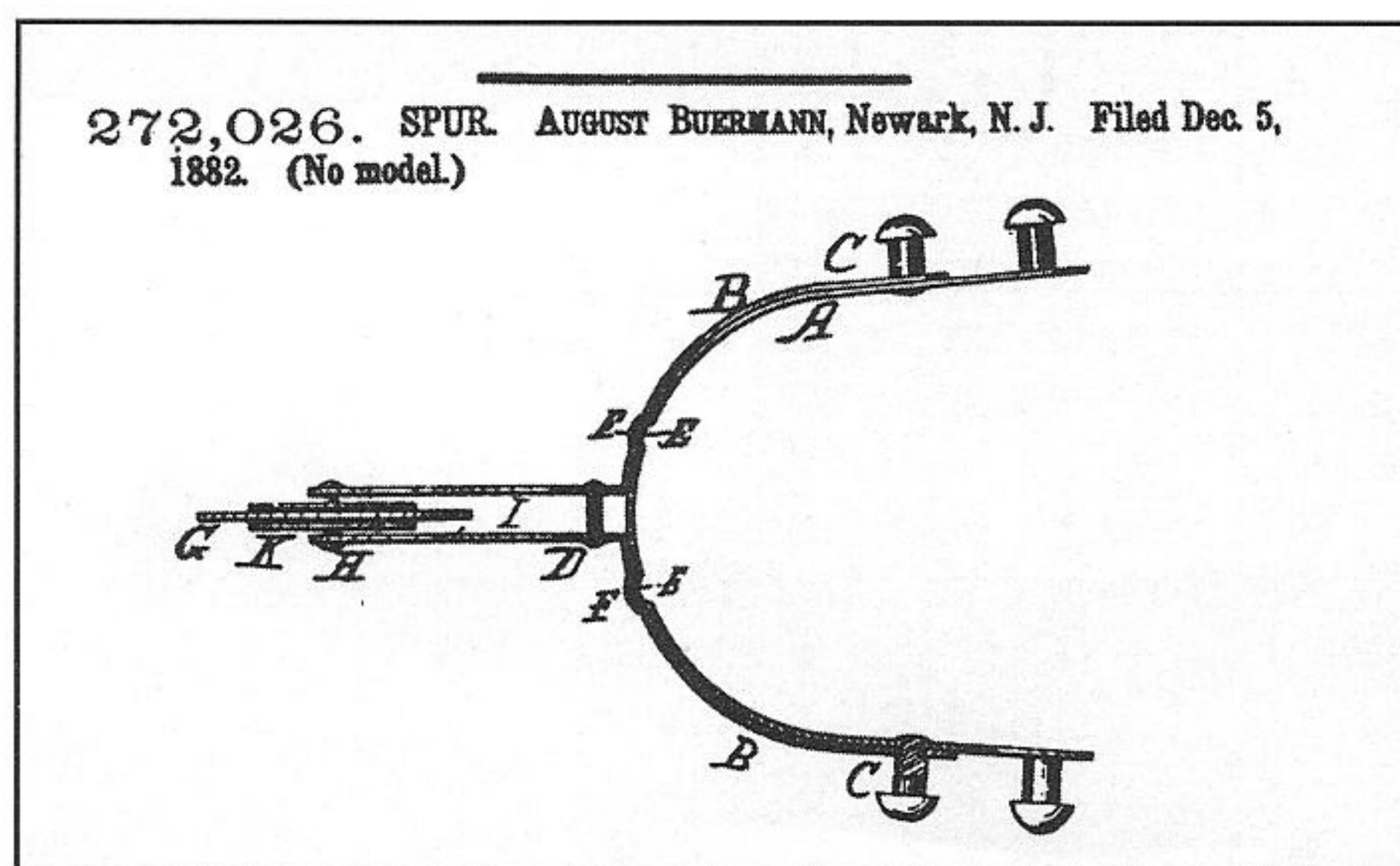


Fig. 7 - The 1882 Buermann patent filing for an improved spur included the double spur studs he later proposed to the army. This feature, however, was not claimed in the 1882 patent.



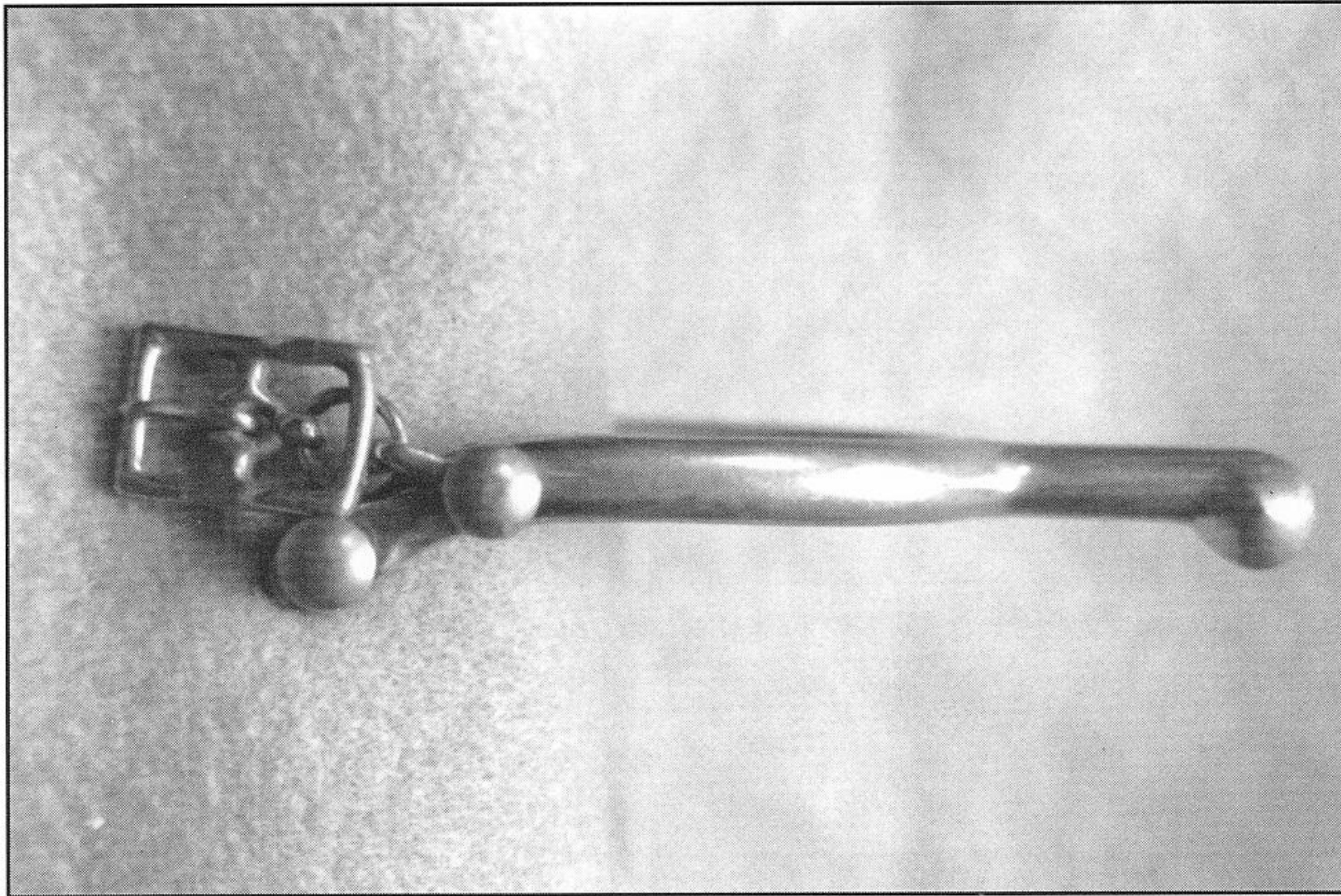
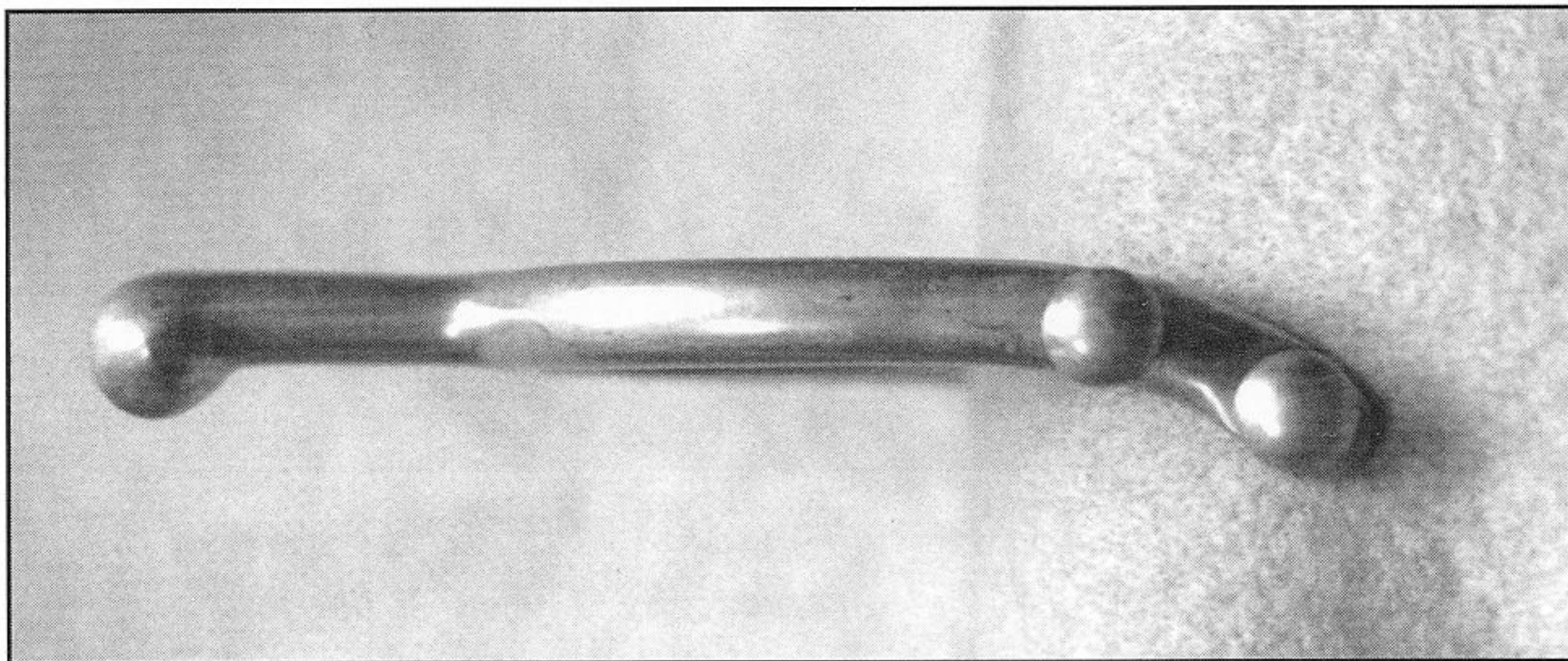


Fig. 8 - The spur shown is for the right foot (buckle on the outside). The dropped end to the arms and additional studs allowed an optimal angle for the pull of the spur straps but added weight and expense over the already satisfactory M1911 Spur.



*Fig. 9 -
The inside
arm of the
right hand
XM1914
Spur.*



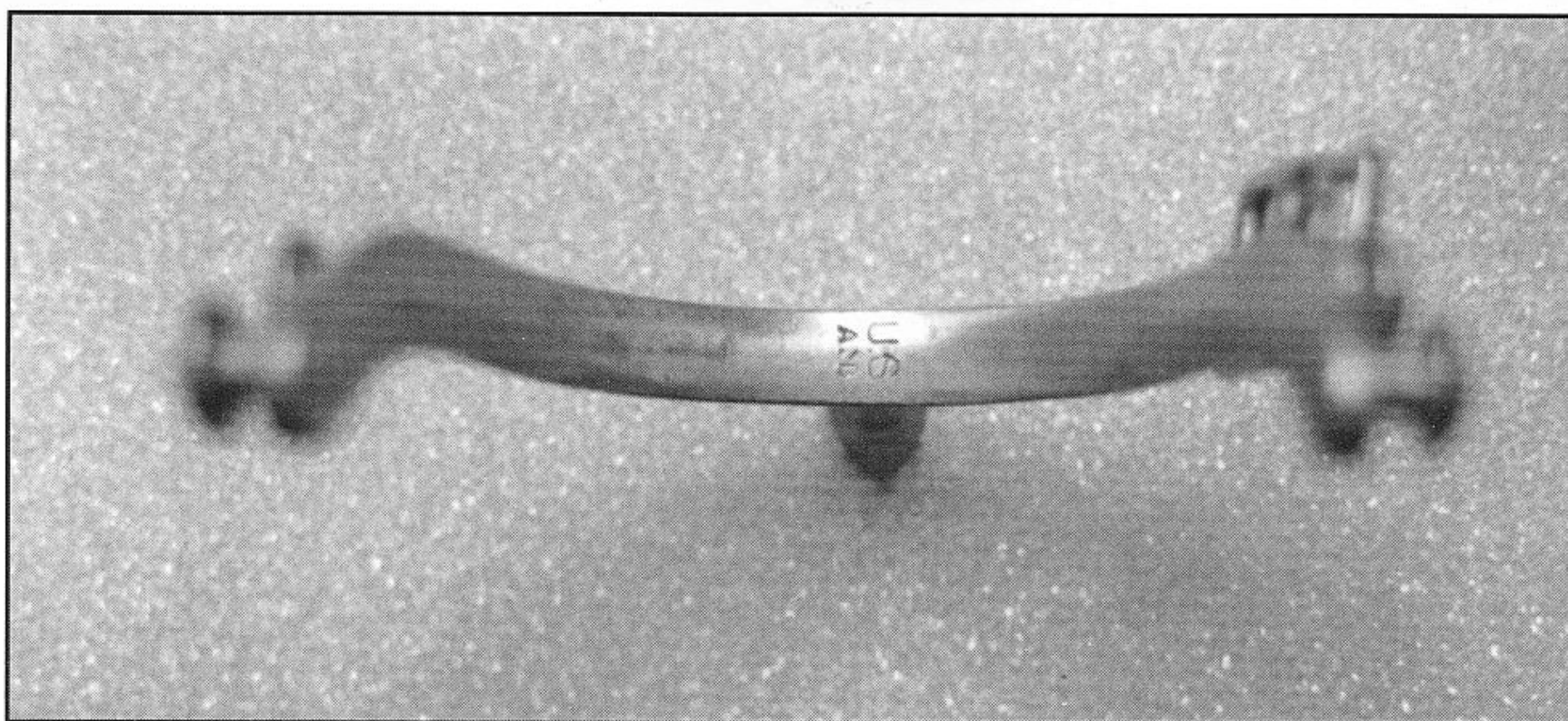


Fig. 10 - All Experimental M1914 Spurs were manufactured by Buermann and the inside marks read "US/A.B." (August Buermann).

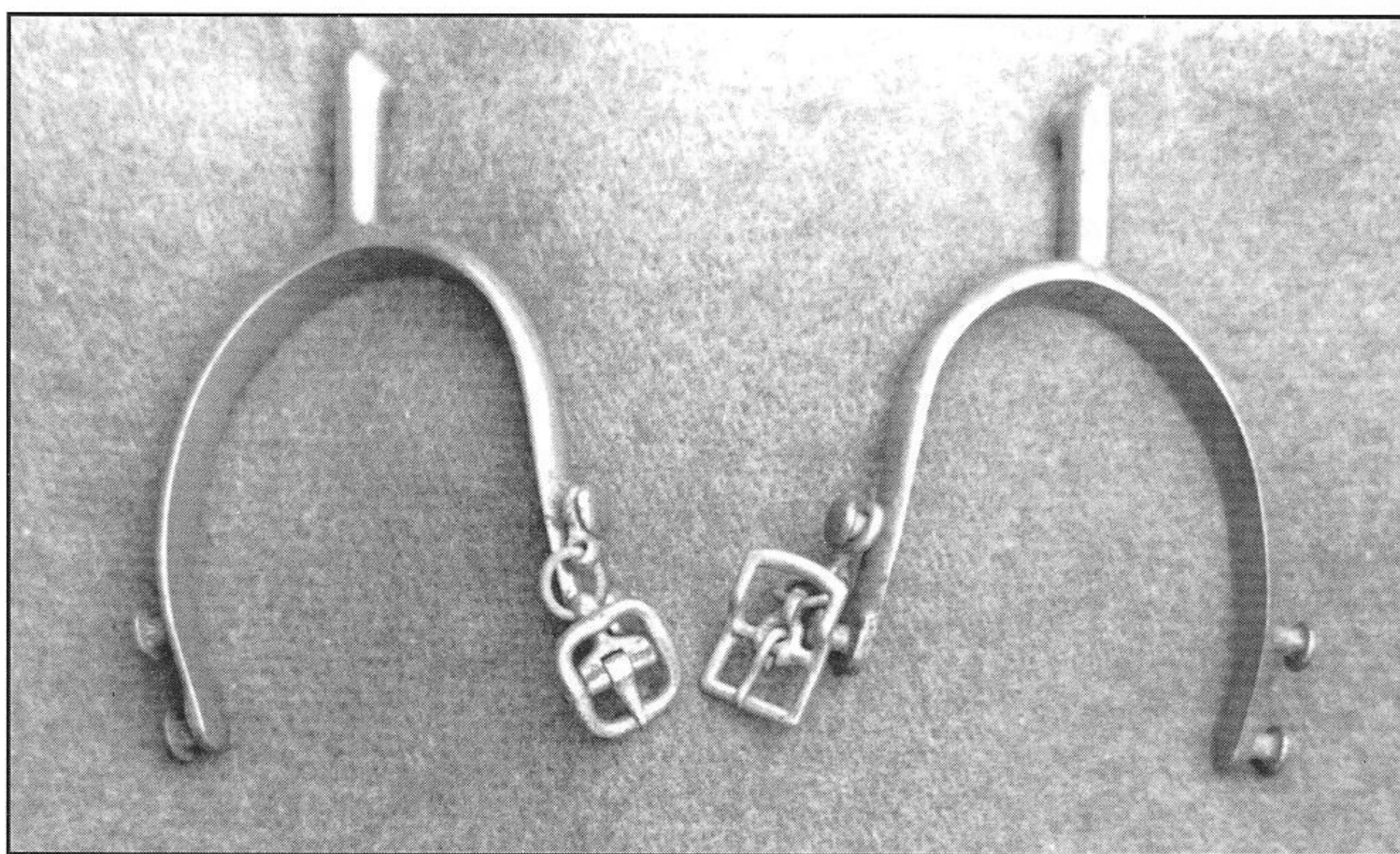


Fig. 11 - A comparison of a British-made XM1914-type spur on the left and the authentic XM1914 on the right. The most obvious difference is in the typical British buckle with its very rounded corners, as compared to the relatively sharp-cornered U.S. regulation spur buckle.



PERSONAL PURCHASE SPURS

The variety of personal purchase military spurs in the period of 1911 - 1945 is almost endless. Not only did the US have a number of spur makers but they, also, imported a number of foreign (primarily British) spurs. And, with the US participation in World War I, American officers and enlisted personnel could visit shops in France and Britain on a first hand basis and pick out spurs they intended to use in post-war years.

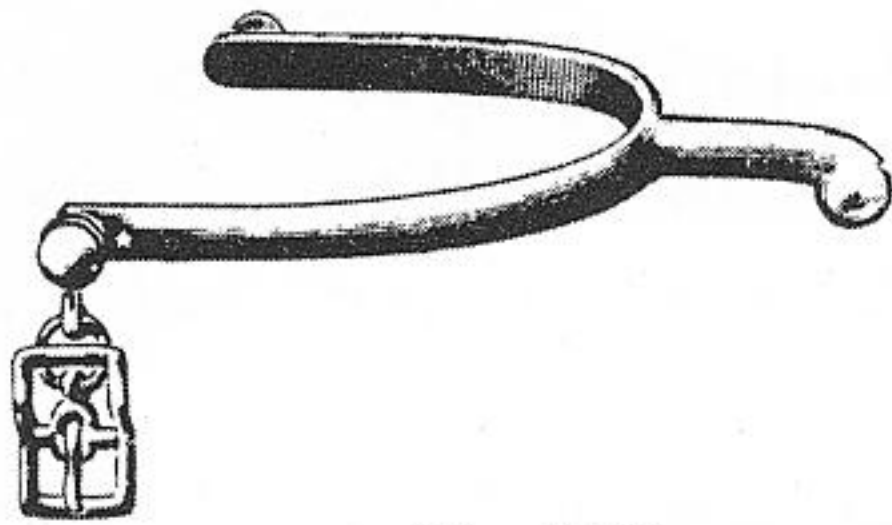
Fig. 12 is a page from the 1922 sales catalogue of August Buermann. (Ref. 17) As it shows, Buermann offered not only regulation pattern M1911 Spurs but also variations of that spur and specimens of the Experimental Model 1914 Spur. These spurs could be ordered in the regulation, non-roweled style or with special order rowels of a number of types.



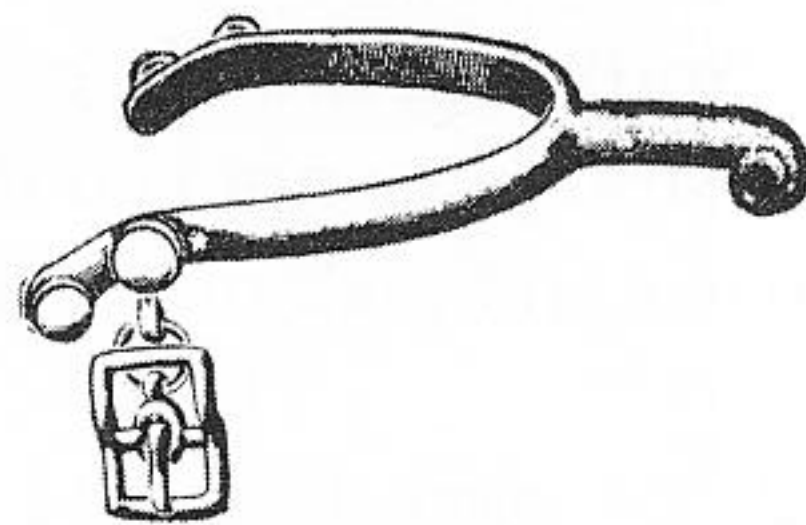
"STAR BRAND"



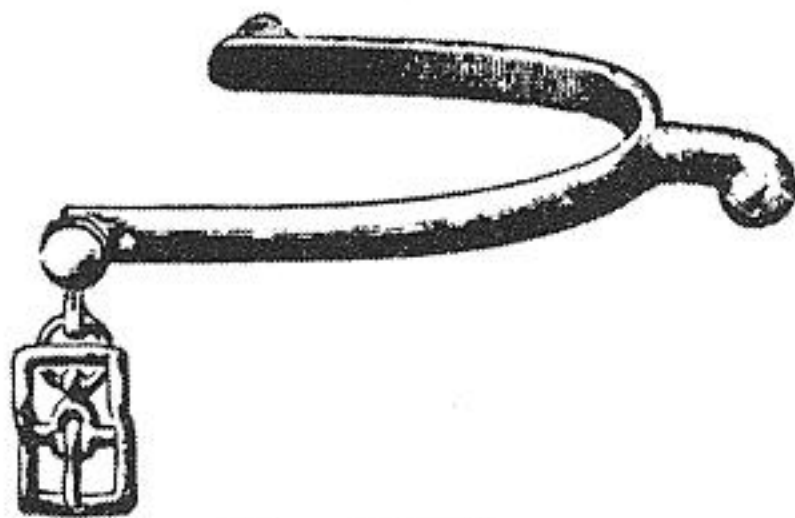
BUERMANN'S
U. S. Regulation Army Officers' Spurs
ONE PIECE



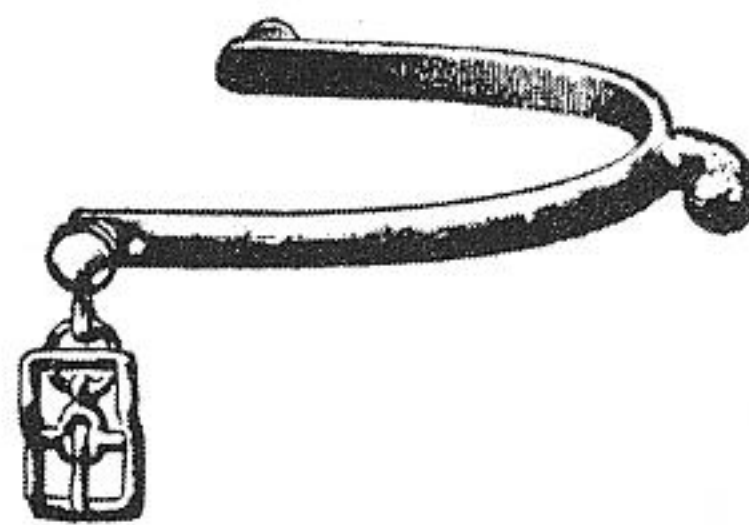
No. 1911
Standard U. S. Regulation
Never-Rust
Without Rowel
1½ inch Shank
No. 1915—Ladies
1 inch Shank



No. 1914
1½ inch Shank



No. 1912
For Dress Occasion
1 inch Shank
No. 1916—Light
1 inch Shank



No. 1913
For Dancing
½ inch Shank

Also made with Rowels to order.

Buermann's Canadian Military Spurs



No. 1700—Loop Side Spur
Never-Rust
No. 1700
2½ in. Straight Neck, Long Heel Band
No. 1800
1½ in. Straight Neck, Long Heel Band

Buermann's Under-Chains for Spurs



No. 1911 or No. 103
UNDER-CHAINS FOR SPURS

Made in Never-Rust and Nickel Plated Steel 7½, 8½, 9, 10, 11 inch Lengths

Fig. 12



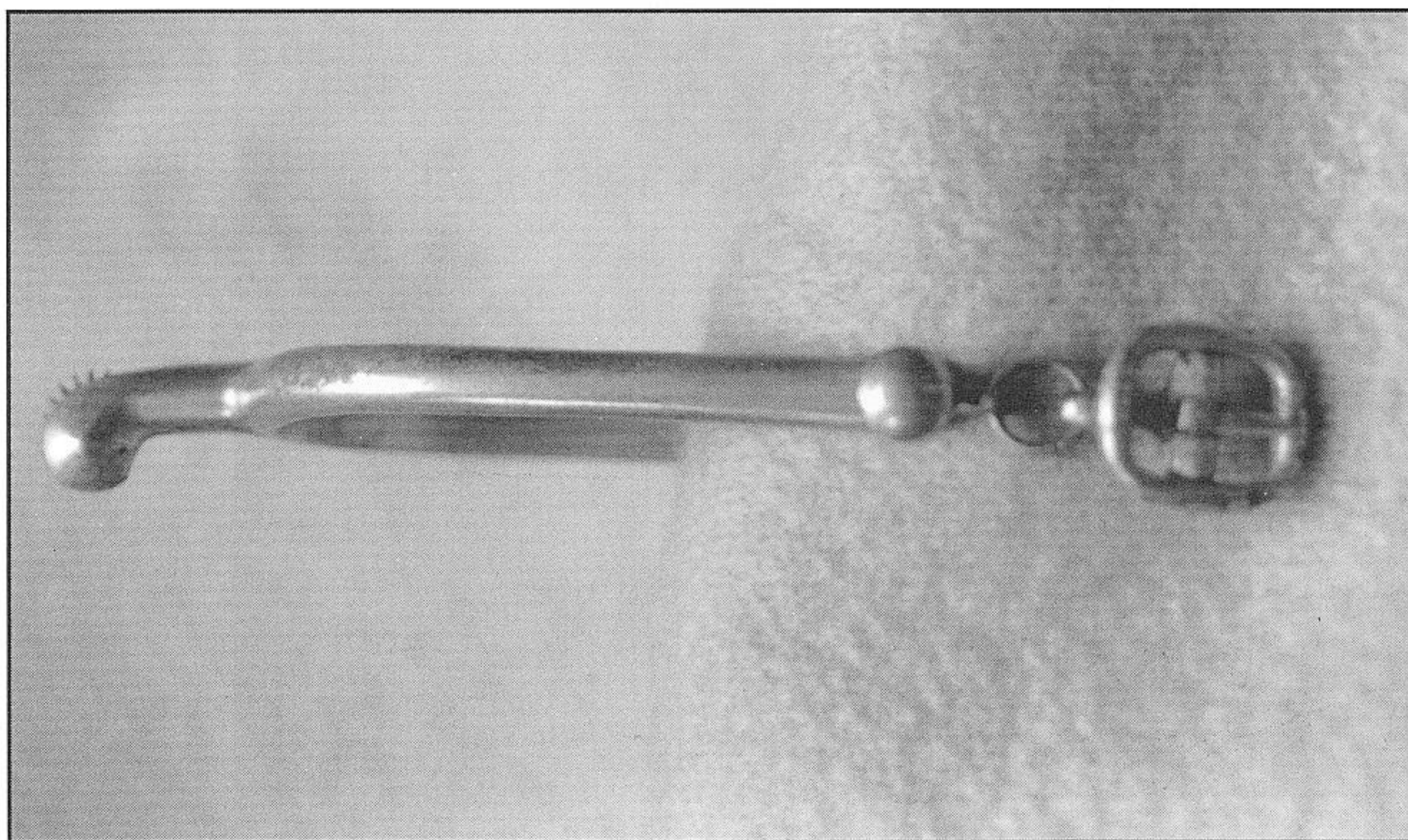


Fig. 13 - Looking very much like a slender Model 1911 spur with a tiny, rotating rowel, this English-manufactured spur is another example of a spur commonly purchased by officers from 1910 to 1945. The rounded buckle is the give-away for its origin. The tiny rowel only exposes about 30% of its fine teeth on the upper side of the head of the spur. While of the 1911 pattern, this spur is definitely more slender in construction. The shank measures 1.512”.

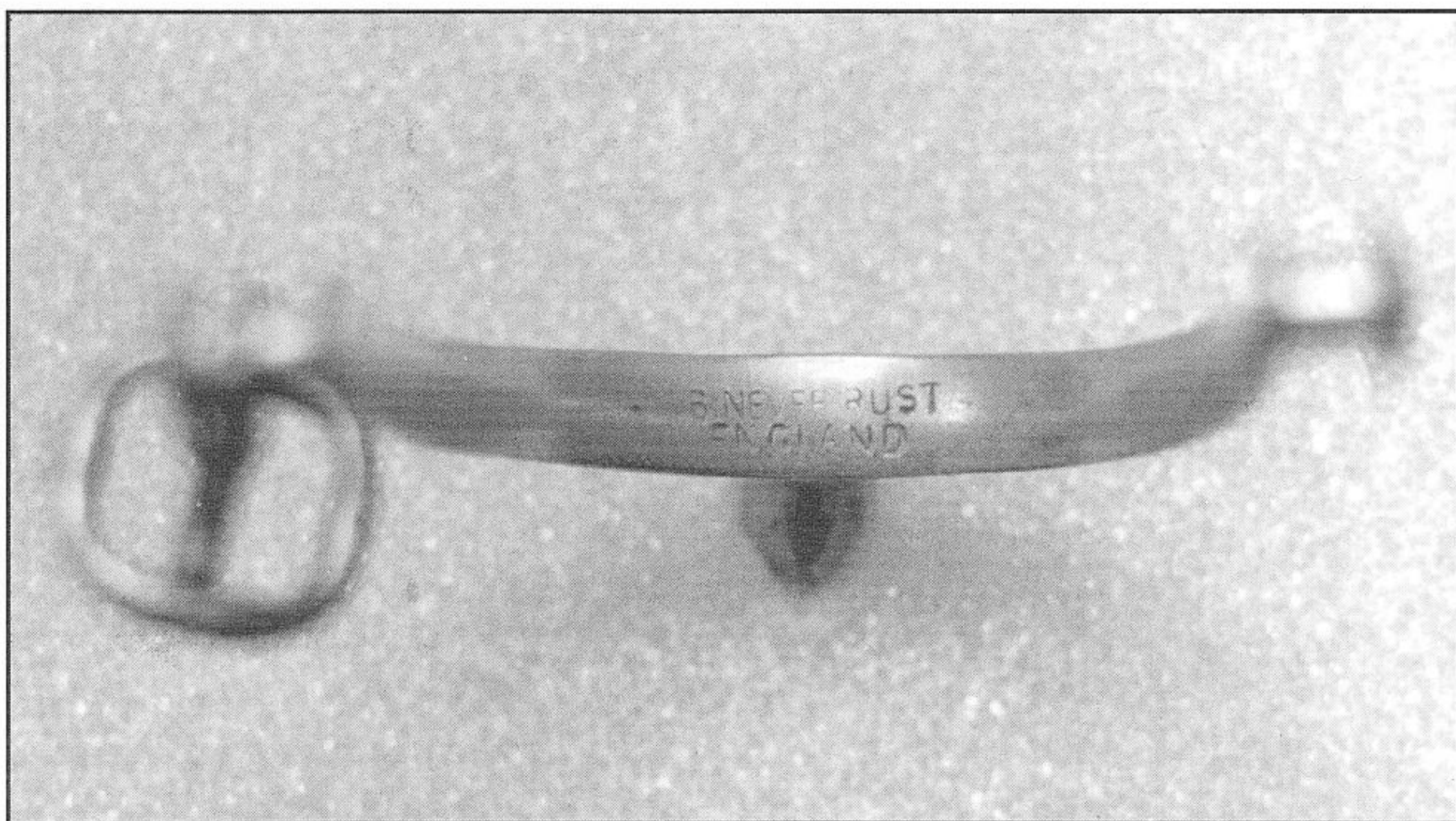


Fig. 14 - The inside curve of this spur is clearly stamped “NEVER RUST” over “ENGLAND”.



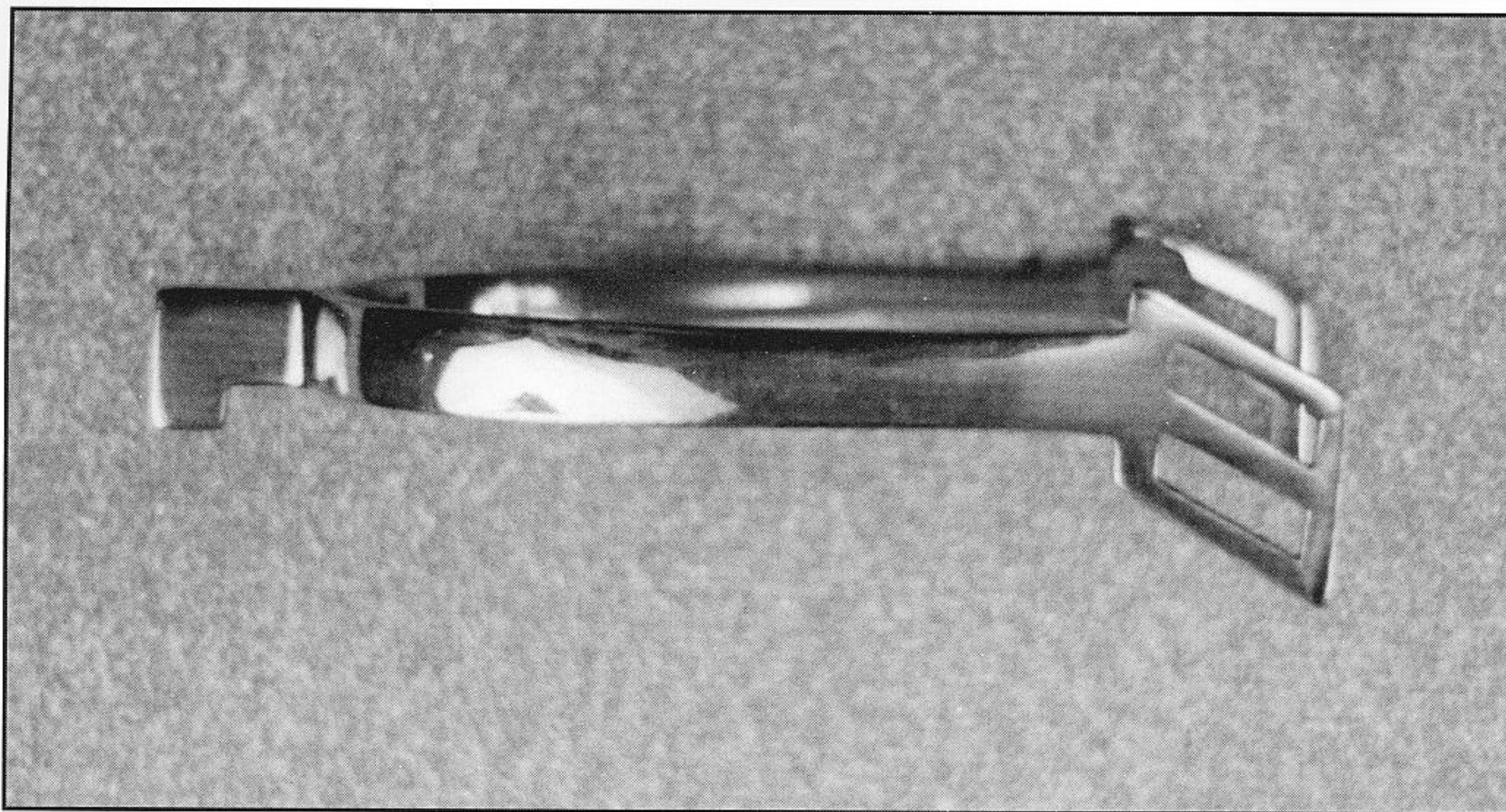


Fig. 15 - An unusual style steel spur with bright chromium finish, it is probably of American manufacture sometime after 1920. On the inside curve, it is stamped "REVEILLE", indicating that it was intended for the military rider.

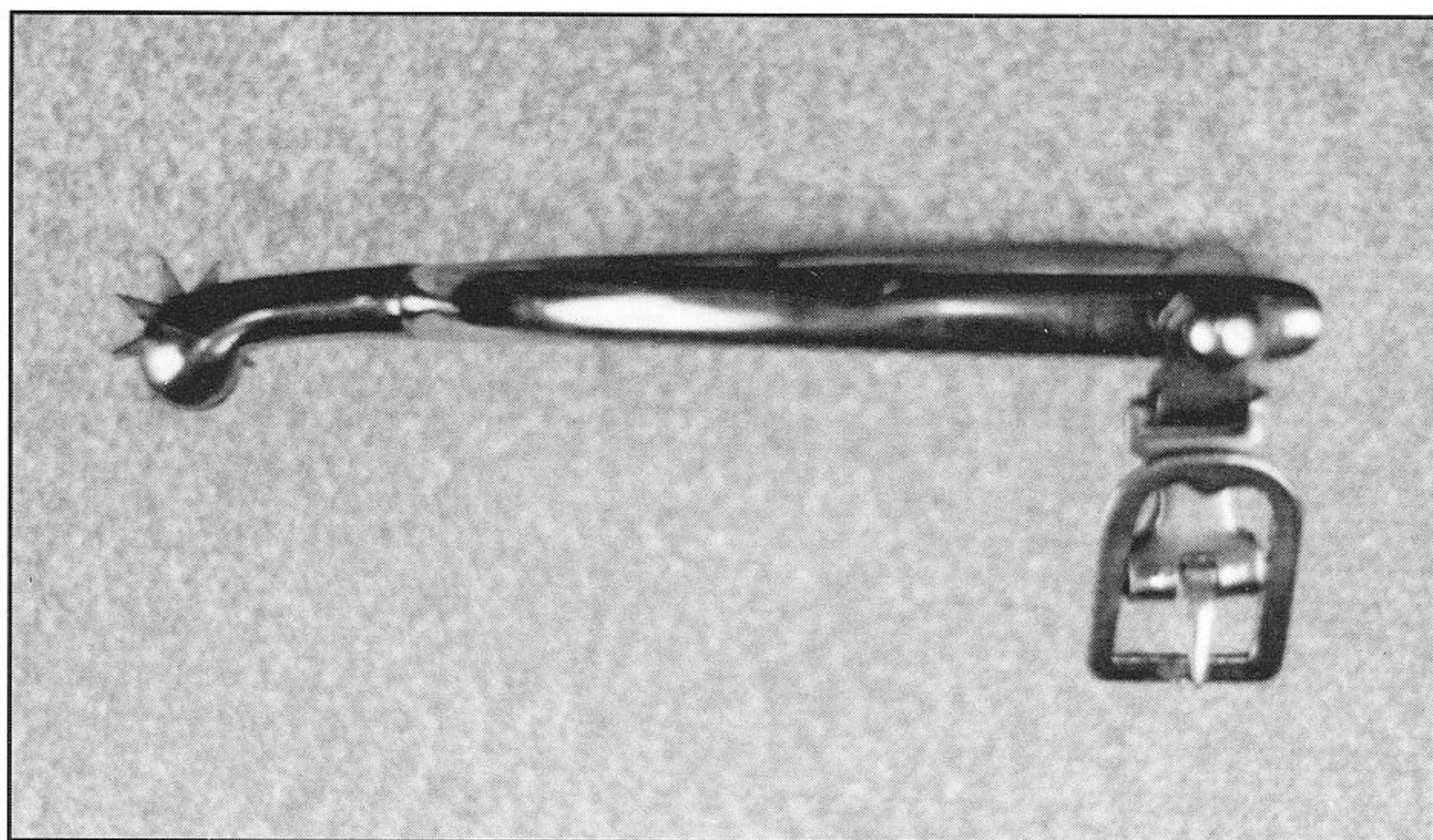


Fig. 16 - Another, probably post-1920 steel spur with a highly-polished chromium finish. Quite slender by contrast to the regulation M1911, the arms of this spur only measure 0.322" in height, in comparison to the heavy, 0.41" height of the M1911. Interestingly, this delicate, unmarked spur has a fairly coarse rowel of a type harkening back to the 1841 Spur.





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The story of the American military spur begins with the first military riders who fought for their right to be free of a distant king, his laws, taxes and military. Long before there was a cowboy, the military rider was patrolling and protecting the Frontier and, as that Frontier moved west, the dragoons and cavalry opened the trails and made the West safe for settlement, ranching and agriculture.

The spurs shown in this book made real history and, until recently, have been overshadowed by the more highly-decorated but more modern spurs of the cowboy and contemporary spur maker. Plainer and previously taken for granted, the American military spur was present for duty in the roll call of our nation's history: Yorktown, Resaca de la Palma, Brandy Station, the Indian War of 1864, the Little Big Horn, the Geronimo Campaign, the Pershing Expedition into Mexico and the countless, unsung mounted patrols and skirmishes that settled America from sea to shining sea.

