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A Truly Magnificent Colt: Sergeant Clark's Model 1839 Paterson Carbine

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William Goodwin Renwick, Robert E. Petersen, and Robert M. Lee - they were three of the most well-known arms collectors of the 20th century and they all owned this Colt Model 1839 Paterson Carbine at one time or another. This carbine even earned a spot in two iconic books about Colt firearms: *Magnificent Colts* and *Steel Canvas*. This information alone should clue you in to how incredibly historic and important this gun truly is. You should want to go place a pre-auction bid right now.

If, however, you need more convincing, then please do read on - and then go place your pre-auction bid.

Before moving to Connecticut and opening up the factory with the now-iconic blue onion dome, Sam Colt's original factory was located in Paterson, New Jersey. It was there that he developed his earliest revolvers and began his rise to prominence as one of the world's most recognizable names in firearms.

Survival rates on early Colts of most models are low, making anything produced in the Paterson factory popular with collectors. When you factor in that only 950 Model 1839 Paterson Carbines were produced in the first place, it becomes easy to see what makes them so desirable.



Outfitted with a 24" octagon smoothbore barrel, the six-shot cylinder features beautifully roll-engraved panel scenes which have become synonymous with Colt's early revolvers. The matching serial number "711" is found in multiple places, including the lower tang screw, two buttplate screws, trigger guard, breech end of the barrel, breech end of the cylinder, wedge, recoil shield face, and cylinder pin collar. Only the buttplate, which bears the number "277," is different.



This particular Paterson Carbine is fitted in a select grade American walnut stock with an eloquent silver presentation plaque beautifully inset on the right side. Based on the buttstock's finish and the bossed lip around the inlaid plaque, it is believed that the carbine was purpose-built for presentation and not just adapted for that use. Purchased in June 1842 by the state of Rhode Island, it was destined to be a gift from the governor. The inscription on the plaque reads, "Presented by/His Excellency Samuel Ward King,/Govr. of the State of Rhode Island/TO/Henry C. Clark/Orderly Sergeant R.I. Carbineers./As a slight memento of the gratitude of the/State for services rendered during the/late Dorr insurrection/July 4th 1842."



The insurrection referred to in the inscription takes its name from Rhode Island politician and reformer Thomas Wilson Dorr, who was a prominent figure in the push for universal manhood suffrage. Yes, you read that right - manhood suffrage. In the 1840s, Rhode Island still restricted the vote to men owning \$134 in land, which was no small sum at that time. Rhode Island's legislators met to draft a new constitution which would put an end to the voting restrictions, but it was ultimately defeated. Not willing to give in that easy, Dorr and his followers drafted their own constitution and government. With that action, the state briefly had two governing bodies, one run by Thomas Dorr and the other by Samuel King, who declared Dorr's action an insurrection, imposed martial law, and expanded the state militia to include the Rhode Island Company of Carbineers that is mentioned in this gun's inscription.



The Company of Carbineers was commanded by a well-to-do New York merchant named James N. Olney, and his men were part of the state's defenders who defeated Dorr's attack on the arsenal at Providence. Governor Samuel King offered a \$5,000 reward for the capture of Dorr, but he eventually surrendered himself in 1843 after a new constitution was finally enacted that granted universal manhood suffrage. Dorr was found guilty of treason, but his life sentence proved wildly unpopular with the public, and he was released after just one year.

In recognition of the Carbineers' service and their successful defeat of the armed insurrection, Governor King presented its officers and senior sergeants with inscribed carbines like this one on July 4, 1842. Sergeant Henry C. Clark's personal life is a bit of a mystery. It's possible Clark is the Smithfield, Rhode Island, resident listed on the Civil War muster rolls of the 1st Rhode Island Detached Militia Company B, but more research is needed to prove this definitively.



What is proven definitively is that this rare carbine is in extremely fine external condition and in mechanically excellent internal condition. The barrel, frame, and cylinder retain 70% bright original blue finish with the balance thinning to brown. All of the cylinder scene remains, and the trigger guard retains traces of original blue, which is visible in the protected areas. Patterns of original case colors remain on the hammer and buttplate, and the stock is in fine condition, retaining most of the original varnish, with minor handling/storage marks.



When this piece of history crosses the auction block in the December 2019 Premier Gun Auction, there's one more thing that will be proven definitively: the new owner will be in the company of some of the most revered arms collectors to ever live, and they will add their name to the list of impressive provenance that accompanies this carbine. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime chance to add your name to history.