

The Woodruff Gun

Annotations to the Margreiter Article

Speculations on the “F” Engraved on the Woodruff at Old Fort Madison, Iowa.

The only marking found on any of the surviving Woodruff tubes is a capital “F” roughly engraved on the breech band of the tube on display at Old Fort Madison in Fort Madison, Iowa.

If I had to speculate about why this tube is marked this way, and I have no real evidence at this time to support this hypothesis, I would propose the following:

Except for the tube at Golden Hill State Park in New York, for which there is a reasonable explanation for how and why it got there, the Fort Madison tube was found the farthest north of any of the surviving tubes, about 50 miles north of Quincy. It was reportedly found in a farm field in Illinois across the Mississippi River from Fort Madison.

Woodruff guns were moved around quite a bit in regular service, so there does not seem to be a reason that they would be marked for identification. On the other hand, each of the Quincy self-defense Woodruffs was subscribed by a different group. I suspect that these subscribers also formed the core of each gun’s crew, so they would have an interest in knowing which gun was the one they had purchased, so they would be sure to serve and maintain their own gun. There were six Woodruffs subscribed, and “F” is the sixth letter of the alphabet. I propose that this is one of the six guns purchased for Quincy self-defense.