

# Modern Black Powder Proofmarks

## Unraveling The Mystery Of Icons

BY DENNIS ADLER

When you purchase either a 2nd or 3rd Generation Colt Blackpowder Arms revolver, it bears the Colt patent stamping on the frame and the Colt address on the top of the barrel. There is also a serial number stamped on the bottom of the frame, again on the bottom of the barrel lug, trigger guard and buttstrap. The serialization indicates the year or period of manufacture, and this is as straightforward as model identification gets. Even though many of the Colt parts for the 2nd Generation, and all of the Colt parts for the 3rd Generation were cast in Italy, the guns were finished and assembled in the United States by Colt or the Colt Blackpowder Arms Company, and Colt pistols, regardless of the origin of their components, bear only Colt markings.

The same model gun, an 1860 Army for example, manufactured in Italy and sold by Uberti or F.LLI Pietta, is stamped with a variety of markings – Italian Proof House devices, manufacturer's symbols and an encoded date of manufacture. It is usually a combination of heraldry and letters, which need to be decoded. The same is true of flintlock and percussion lock pistols and long rifles manufactured by Uberti, F.LLI Pietta, ArmiSport, Davide Pedersoli, and Armi San Paolo SRL (Euroarms) which comprise the major Italian manufacturers currently in production.

The Italian proof houses in Gardone and Valtrompia have been around for a very long time but as far as reproduction black powder arms are concerned, the dating begins in 1954. Prior to 1954, the year of proof was indicated in full Arabic numerals.

Following is a chart displaying the year of proof symbols used from 1954 to 2009. These are traditionally found within a box next to the individual proof house symbols. From 1954 through 1970 Roman Numerals were used. Roman Numerals and Arabic Numerals were combined in 1971, 1972, and 1973, and Roman Numerals were used again in 1974. Since 1975 two capital letters have been used exclusively.

Symbol	Year of Proof	Symbol	Year of Proof	Symbol	Year of Proof
X	1954	XVIII	1962	XXVI	1970
XI	1955	XIX	1963	XX7	1971
XII	1956	XX	1964	XX8	1972
XIII	1957	XXI	1965	XX9	1973
XIV	1958	XXII	1966	XXX	1974
XV	1959	XXIII	1967	AA	1975
XVI	1960	XXIV	1968	AB	1976
XVII	1961	XXV	1969	AC	1977

Symbol	Year of Proof	Symbol	Year of Proof	Symbol	Year of Proof
AD	1978	AU	1989	BN	2000
AE	1979	AZ	1990	BP	2001
AF	1980	BA	1991	BS	2002
AH	1981	BB	1992	BT	2003
AI	1982	BC	1993	BU	2004
AL	1983	BD	1994	BZ	2005
AM	1984	BF	1995	CA	2006
AN	1985	BH	1996	CB	2007
AP	1986	BI	1997	CC	2008
AS	1987	BL	1998	CD	2009
AT	1988	BM	1999		

As to the placement of proof house symbols, it depends upon the model of gun, and the level of embellishment, the latter often dictating a discrete location on the underside of the barrel or frame on highly engraved examples.

There are two standardized proof house marks. The first is the provisional Gardone proof, consisting of a star surrounded by eight lands and grooves over a coat of arms featuring a hammer and anvil and crossed bayoneted rifles; the second is a star surrounded by eight lands and grooves over the capital letters PN. All firearms produced in Italy since 1950, regardless of type, receive the first stamping. The second, also instituted in 1950, is the first black powder proof for Gardone and Brescia, and is only used on black powder arms. Thus all black powder arms must bear both proof house symbols.

Finally, there is the manufacturer's mark. This is often confusing unless one is familiar with the manufacturers' insignia. Most use their logo, while some combine their name and logo, or use an abbreviation as their logo. Earlier guns generally bear only their manufacturers' mark, while more recent production has been seen using both an emblem and company name.

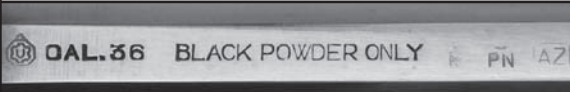
Davide Pedersoli, one of Italy's oldest manufacturers has had three logos since 1957. The earliest was a diamond inside a circle. This is rarely seen. This mark



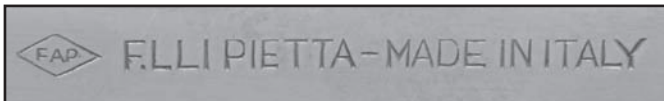
These are the three standard stampings on every Italian-made black powder revolver, pistol, rifle and shotgun. From left to right: year of manufacture, Gardone V.T. black powder proof house stamping, and Gardone proof house stamping. The year of manufacture is?



The underside of this screw barrel deringer manufactured by Pedersoli shows only the dp logo. Both proof house marks are present and a boxed BL denoting the year of manufacture as 1998.



Aldo Uberti S.r.l. was founded in 1959 and has always used a capital U surrounded by an octagonal device, which is actually the muzzle of an 1851 Navy (their first gun) with six lands and grooves and the front sight. This photo of a Paterson barrel has a boxed AZ indicating a manufacturing date of 1990.



F.LLI Pietta always uses its diamond logo with the initials FAP. This is the barrel from a Le Mat revolver and it also bears the company name and country of origin. The proof house marks and manufacturing code are stamped elsewhere on the gun.



Here is an example of a manufacturer using two different styles. The stand-alone Palmetto palm tree logo on this screw barrel derringer, and the logo and company name on the barrel of this 1851 Navy.



Arms originally manufactured by Armi San Paolo S.r.l. or Euroarms S.r.l., now the proprietary name, bear the DGG emblem representing the company's founders, Grassi, Doninelli, and Gazzola.



Armi Sport uses a circular device with the capital letters AC.

was followed by the image of an anvil with PEDERSOLI above it in capital letters and the initials DAP inside the anvil. This again is rarely seen, except on very early models. The company logo, a lowercase dp within an oval, has been used for more than 40 years. This logo is often followed by the DAVIDE PEDERSOLI or PEDERSOLI name in capital letters. In short, there is no mistaking a Pedersoli product!

The same is true of Aldo Uberti, S.r.l, which has used the same logo since its founding in 1959 – a capital U contained within an octagonal barrel device.

For Fratelli Pietta, another of Italy's leading manufacturers of black powder pistols and long arms, the initials FAP contained within a horizontal diamond identify F.LLI Pietta; often followed by F.LLI PIETTA in capital letters.

Palmetto, which manufactured a variety of black powder arms distributed primarily through Dixie Gun Works, used a very recognizable palm tree within a circle as their company logo.

Armi San Paolo S.r.l., established in 1970, uses the last names of the original founders Grassi, Doninelli, and Gazzola as a symbol, DGG, usually contained within a circle. Beginning December 31, 2001, Armi San Paolo officially became Euroarms Italia S.r.l. The same logo is used on all Euroarms models.

Armi Sport, which produces an exceptional line of single shot percussion pistols like the French Le Page, Sharps rifles, and the popular Spencer rifle for Taylor's & Co., uses an AC within a circle, (AC for Armi Chiappa founder Rino Chiappa's last name).

Armed with this information it is now possible to identify the maker and year of manufacture on any black powder rifle, shotgun, pistol, or revolver produced since 1950. ■



The barrel pictured is a perfect example as it bears all of the Italian proof marks described. This is from a Deluxe engraved Pedersoli Le Page pistol, and all of the stampings are on the underside of the barrel. From left to right (upside down) are the test house and black powder proof house stampings, followed by a boxed BM, denoting a manufacturing date of 1999, then the gun's serial number, a dp oval manufacturer's mark, as well as the PEDERSOLI name, pistol caliber and notification that the gun is for black powder only. This warning appears on the barrel or barrel lug of all black powder arms manufactured in Italy.