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*Lot 3349: William & John Rigby Retailer Cased and Marked London Armory Co. Beaumont-Adams Double Action Percussion Revolver*

Civil War arms collectors are no doubt familiar with James Kerr and the revolvers that bear his name. They may also be familiar with the Beaumont-Adams self-cocking revolvers of the same period. In a wider vein, collectors of fine guns of all kinds know the name Rigby and the quality that is synonymous with it. More obscure, however, is the firm known as the London Armoury Company. The cased Beaumont-Adams revolver offered here can be considered the intersection where all of the aforementioned names meet.

The gun's namesakes are Robert Adams and then- Lieutenant Frederick E. B. Beaumont. Adams patented the first successful double-action revolver on August 22, 1851. His arms were on display at the Crystal Palace Exhibition, along with those of a competitor: Samuel Colt. Beaumont served with the Royal Engineers and was a veteran of the Crimean War. His design contributions included the addition of a hammer spur and his patented invention of a single- and double-action lock. After Adams and Colt exhibited their guns at the Crystal Palace, Adams' design took off in popularity. It was available in a bigger caliber, was better made, and offered faster double-action shooting.



*The Crystal Palace was the primary hall for the Great Exhibition of 1851, held in Hyde Park, London.*

Adams' initial revolver, which was manufactured in partnership with John and George Deane, is credited with driving Sam Colt out of business in Britain. In 1852, Colt opened a factory in London. Just four short years later, unable to compete with Adams, Colt closed the factory in 1856. That same year, the Beaumont-Adams self-cocking revolver – more commonly known as double-action today – debuted on the market. The revolver was .44 caliber, had a five-shot cylinder, sported a 6.25-inch barrel, and was blued with the exception of the trigger and hammer, which were finished bright. Finely checkered one-piece walnut grips rounded out the gun.

Early examples of the Beaumont-Adams were fitted with a rammer designed by John Rigby and patented in 1854. The design was not as popular as the improved rammer designed by James Kerr, which is present on this revolver. Rigby's rammer was disliked because it tucked away into part of the pistol grip when not in use. Some felt that it got in the way and prevented the shooter from getting a solid grip on the gun. Kerr's rammer came to rest along the left side of the barrel when not in use. It was out of the way of the shooter and also provided better loading leverage.

Manufacture of the revolver was done principally by the London Armoury Company, which was created in 1856 after Adams split with his previous business partners, the Deanes. Adams sat on the Board of Directors and James Kerr was the plant's superintendent. (Incidentally, Kerr and Adams were cousins). Initial production at the armory consisted of Pattern 1853 rifle muskets. Soon, the armory began making the Beaumont-Adams handgun as well as Kerr's double-action revolver. Kerr production began in 1859 after Adams left and production of the Beaumont-Adams ceased.

Some other licensed production of the Beaumont-Adams was done by A. Francotte, C. Dandoy, and other firms in Liege, Belgium and Birmingham, England. Those examples will bear markings on the top strap indicating their location of manufacture. This particular revolver was made by the London Armoury

Company, as noted by the L.A.C. stamp on the upper left barrel flat near the other British proof marks.



Even though the model no longer featured his patented rammer, John Rigby and his brother William were still astute businessmen. A good gun is a good gun, no matter the design. As a result, this cased example bears the brothers' names and their Dublin location on the top strap, indicating that they were the retailers for this gun.

The case's fitted interior boasts an olive green baize lining that exhibits very minimal wear despite its age and is outfitted with an assortment of accessories, including a cap tin, bullets, screwdriver/nipple wrench, pocket powder flask, bore rod, and bullet mold. The nitre bluing on the top of the bullet mold is in exquisite condition, retaining 95% of its color. The revolver itself retains 80% of its original bluing, with wear in exactly the places you'd expect it to be – at the muzzle, on the cylinder, and other assorted high points and sharp edges. The finely checkered wood grips exhibit very little wear, with only minor blemishes that do not detract from the overall appearance.

Beaumont-Adams revolvers found themselves in some very interesting hands both during and after the Civil War. One cased example was engraved and presented to Confederate General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson as a gift from the inventor, Robert Adams. Two others were in the possession of Midshipman John Thompson Mason aboard the *CSS Shenandoah*, which holds the distinction of being the last Confederate asset to surrender on November 11, 1865 – seven months and two days after Robert E. Lee met with Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. Those three historic revolvers are all in the collection of The American Civil War Museum (formerly the Museum of the Confederacy) in Richmond, Virginia.



Kerr's revolvers also found themselves in prestigious hands before and after the war. One example from the London Armoury Company was in the possession of the Confederacy's only president, Jefferson Davis, as he fled south from Richmond in 1865. Shortly before his capture, Davis presented the revolver to his personal escort, Captain Given Campbell. This historic revolver was sold by RIAC in 2014 to a private collector, who loaned it to the NRA National Firearms Museum, where it was on display in a stand-alone exhibit case until just last year.

So you see, this beautifully cased Beaumont-Adams revolver isn't just another Civil War-era collectible. Instead, it is a remarkable intersection of a Crimean War veteran, two seasoned arms inventors, the only Confederate president, a pair of well-known Dublin-based arms makers and dealers, multiple other important Confederate soldiers, and the collections of two prestigious museums.

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