

The Pinfire Page



Above; A miniature Damascene sword marked with the city of its origin Toledo, Spain.

Left; A pin showing a similar design motif, also from Toledo Spain.

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The Toledo Pinfire

During the past 100 years or so, the 2mm Pinfire pistol has evolved from a small Gentleman's watch accessory to becoming a backpackers or skiers signaling device. During these years, many different designs and styles have emerged, some have their history well documented with patent numbers and related papers, while others, are still very obscure. The Berloque style pistol is the most common form, and it is about a particular style of Berloque that this article is written.

The name Toledoware comes from Toledo, a city in central Spain, on the Tajo (Tagus) River, near Madrid. The most famous industry is the manufacture of swords. The City's craftsmen produce this highly

Right Top; Another similar gold pinfire.

Far Rt. Top. A gold, pinfire marked "BH" on the top of the barrel

Right Bottom; This all steel pinfire is marked GB on the top of the barrel.

Far Rt. Bottom. The right side of the Behner pistol shown below.

Below; A gold, 2mm pinfire stamped "BEHNER" on the top of the barrel.



decorative art form, Moorish in design and quite unlike the normal souvenirs that other Spanish Cities produce. It's usually a metal finish with black, silver and gold in which the black metal is engraved or acid etched to various depths to reveal the different layers. This is now part of a large tourist industry and the articles can range from jewelry to letter openers or miniature swords, the list is endless, but the pinfire pistol is among them.

I cannot say that these pistols are all original Toledoware, but they are so similar in their execution and design, that by calling them by that name, is an easy identifier for a collector. My investigations have lead me to believe that these were

produced on a much smaller scale than the standard Berloque with nickel grips, if not, more would be known about them. This also leads me to think they were the work of individual artists or jewelers, as the body of the gun is usually of much better quality and workmanship than the standard Berloque. The pistols seem to date from the early 1950's to mid, or late 1960's The style of the hammer and shape of the body of these pistols are contemporary with the pistols produced in Austria at that time. Whether these were actually produced in Austria or from another part of Europe, I'm not entirely sure. If I had to guess I would say Belgium or France. I doubt very much whether these pistols were actually produced in Spain. My conclusions are either,

that the grips were manufactured in Spain and exported. Then fitted onto pistols for sale elsewhere. Or, what is more likely, is that the pistols were imported, possibly by only one particular company and the grips made to fit, and were simply another Spanish tourist item.

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