

The Imperial “G.M.S.G.” DWM Lugers

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[I would like to dedicate this thread to the late Don Maus, whose pioneering research into Imperial-era Lugers marked G.M.S.G.—“writ” into their chamber steel—first sparked my interest in this subject.]

The marking **G.M.S.G.** appears stamped atop the chambers of a small number of reported 1908 Commercial DWM Lugers manufactured around 1913. When considered alongside contemporary records of the *Großherzoglich Mecklenburg-Schwerinscher Landesgendarmerie* (Grand Ducal Mecklenburg-Schwerin State Gendarmerie), the physical and historical evidence strongly supports the conclusion that **G.M.S.G.** denotes property of that rural constabulary [1].



[For purposes of comparison, and as an example of how scholarship has evolved, a published Luger forum expert speculated (in 2006) that the marking: “*I believe it is an early post war military police or guard pistol issued to local German security troops. I think we’re talking 1945 - 1948 here. The GMSG is most probably an English abbreviation, rather than a German one. ‘German Military Security Guard’ or something like it?*”]

Yet the story is not straightforward: later Weimar-era re-stamps, re-markings, and inconsistent documentation have introduced gaps and ambiguities that require careful evaluation. This brief article brings together the institutional history and the surviving arms evidence into a single narrative, offering a coherent framework for assessing and interpreting these rare pistols. The following exploration builds on Don Maus’s foundational work on **G.M.S.G.** Lugers [see 1, 2].

The Landesgendarmerie of Mecklenburg-Schwerin

The *Großherzoglich Mecklenburg-Schwerinscher Landesgendarmerie* (**G.M.S.G.**) served as the rural police force of the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, a small northern German state that existed within the German Confederation and later the German Empire from the early nineteenth century until the monarchy’s dissolution in 1918, after which it became the Free State of Mecklenburg-Schwerin within the Weimar Republic.

Structured along military lines, the gendarmerie combined civil policing duties with a military hierarchy. Administratively, it reported to the Minister of the Interior, yet organizationally and disciplinarily it remained subordinate to a military commander. This hybrid arrangement reflected the broader German gendarmerie model—civil in function but military in ethos—charged with maintaining order and enforcing the law across the duchy’s rural districts and small towns.



Estimating the exact personnel strength of the **G.M.S.G.** is difficult, but small German states of the period typically maintained gendarmerie forces numbering in the low hundreds. The Mecklenburg-Schwerin force was headquartered in Schwerin under the command of Major von Oertzen, and around 1912 the organization comprised approximately 130 personnel. These men were distributed across six mounted districts and equipped with standard Imperial-era police arms—primarily the *Reichsrevolver*, supplemented by carbines and sabers appropriate to mounted service.

The G.M.S.G. Lugers

Don Maus [1] documented a very small group of weapons with the **G.M.S.G.** marking. As of this writing four Imperial Model 1908 DWM commercial Lugers, along with one Dreyse M1907 pistol and one saber bear the **G.M.S.G.** marking. On three of the Lugers, this mark appears on the chamber along with a unique single- or double-digit **serial number** immediately above it, and again on the front grip strap, seemingly serving as a **weapon number**.

In several cases, a shortened form of the chamber marking—**M.S.G.**—appears on the front grip strap, paired with a Weimar-era inventory number (e.g., *M.S.G. 967*, *M.S.G. 1193*, *M.S.G. 1196*). These front-strap numbers were typically over stamped on the location where Imperial-era weapon numbers had originally been applied.

After the fall of the Grand Duchy in 1918, it became common Weimar practice to remove or abbreviate royal or ducal identifiers from existing property marks. This explains why earlier examples that retained the full **G.M.S.G.** chamber stamp were later police-property-stamped with the truncated **M.S.G.** on the front strap [1].

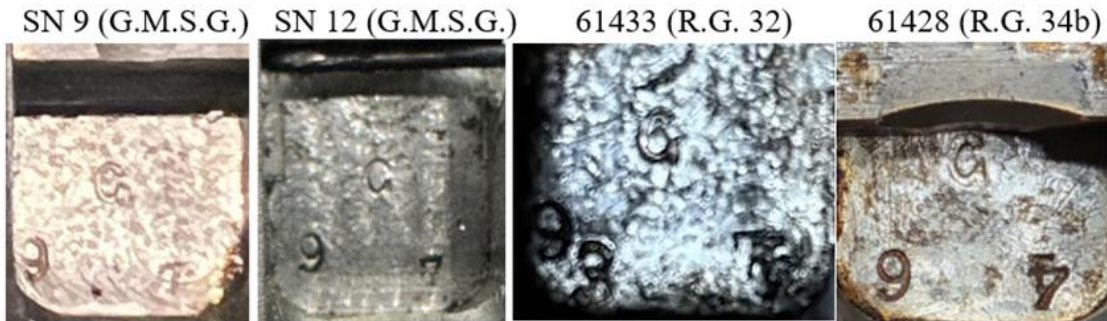
Shared Features

Despite their very small number, the known **G.M.S.G.** Lugers are all Model 1908 Commercial and exhibit several consistent traits:

- They carry the lazy **C/N** commercial proof on the left receiver, barrel, and breech block.
- They lack a stock lug.
- They have factory-installed hold-open latch.
- The **G.M.S.G.** marking is deeply and precisely stamped (under the blue) above the chamber, in the position normally reserved for a date on military Lugers.
- Each reported Luger displays a single- or double-digit **weapon number** (e.g., *No. 6, 9, 12*) on the chamber above the **G.M.S.G.** marking; this number also functions as the gun's **serial number**.
- That serial number is additionally stamped on the front grip strap, extractor, forward toggle link, rear toggle link, breech block, trigger bar, safety bar, face of the trigger side plate, face of the locking bolt, safety catch, trigger, hold-open latch, receiver stop lug, receiver axle, firing pin, and on the back of both grip panels.
- **Later Weimar-era unit markings** applied to the front strap omit the initial “**G**”, reading simply **M.S.G.** with a newly assigned weapon number. Below is a figure that shows the remnant of the original weapon number (12) underneath the later struck number (1196) for Luger No. 12.



- **All known examples** of these Lugers exhibit added **sear safety**, indicating continued police service into the interwar period and possibly well beyond.
- **SN 9** and **SN 12** share the following markings (refer to figure below) in the forward frame-well: “**G, 9, 7.**” According to G&S [6], the *G* (accompanied by one to four other letters or numerals) represents the principal inspection mark: “*Commercial pistols in the serial range 47,000–70,000 produced over this period (1911–13) are similarly ‘G’ marked.*” Such marks help us date these Lugers.
- The identical 9 and 7 worker marks in the frame well suggest that these two pistols were not randomly selected commercial Lugers from that period. Rather, they were likely assembled contemporaneously—within the same week or month—by the same team of workers who applied those marks.



I would liken the **G.M.S.G.** Lugers to the Model 1908 “**R.G.**”-marked commercial Lugers manufactured by DWM during 1913/14, of which approximately 200 were produced [5]. These Lugers were built with a hold-open and without a stock lug, and they bear the lazy *C/N* commercial proof on the left receiver, barrel, and breech block. This group of **R.G.** Lugers was procured from DWM’s commercial production and falls within the commercial serial-number range **60xxx–61xxx** [8]. The **R.G.** engraved on the left frame panel denotes the *Reichs-Gendarmerie*, a paramilitary police force responsible for maintaining order in the German-occupied Alsace-Lorraine region of France. An example, **R.G. 34b** (SN 60428), is shown below.



It is notable that the frame-well markings of **G.M.S.G.** Lugers Nos. 9 and 12—namely {**G, 9, 7**}—bear similarities to those observed on **R.G. 34b** (SN 61428) and **R.G. 342** (SN 61433), which exhibit the respective markings {**G, 9, 3, 7**} and {**G, 9, 4**}, as depicted in the figure above [9]. This correspondence places **Nos. 9 and 12** squarely among the commercial Lugers produced in **late 1913**.

Reported G.M.S.G. Lugers

To date, **four Lugers** with confirmed **G.M.S.G.** chamber markings have been documented:

1. **6/G.M.S.G.** — reported by Don Maus's *History Writ in Steel* [1] and on the forum [2].
2. **9/G.M.S.G.** — in the collection of [@rlatham](#) [3] and was referenced in [1].
3. **12/G.M.S.G.** — recently sold by *Amoskeag Auction Company* (from the collection of Robert Beckmann).
4. **G.M.S.G./14** — auctioned by **Rock Island Auction Company (RIA) in 2015** [4].

The Weimar era **front-strap property marks** are: *M.S.G. 1193* (No. 9) and *M.S.G. 1196* (No. 12). The close correspondence between those property numbers and their chamber numbers—**1196 – 1193 = 3**, paralleling **12 – 9 = 3**—suggests that these pistols were **reworked together** when the new inventory numbers (stamped over the original weapon numbers) were applied.

The following are pictures of the **9/G.M.S.G.** and the **12/G.M.S.G.** Lugers.

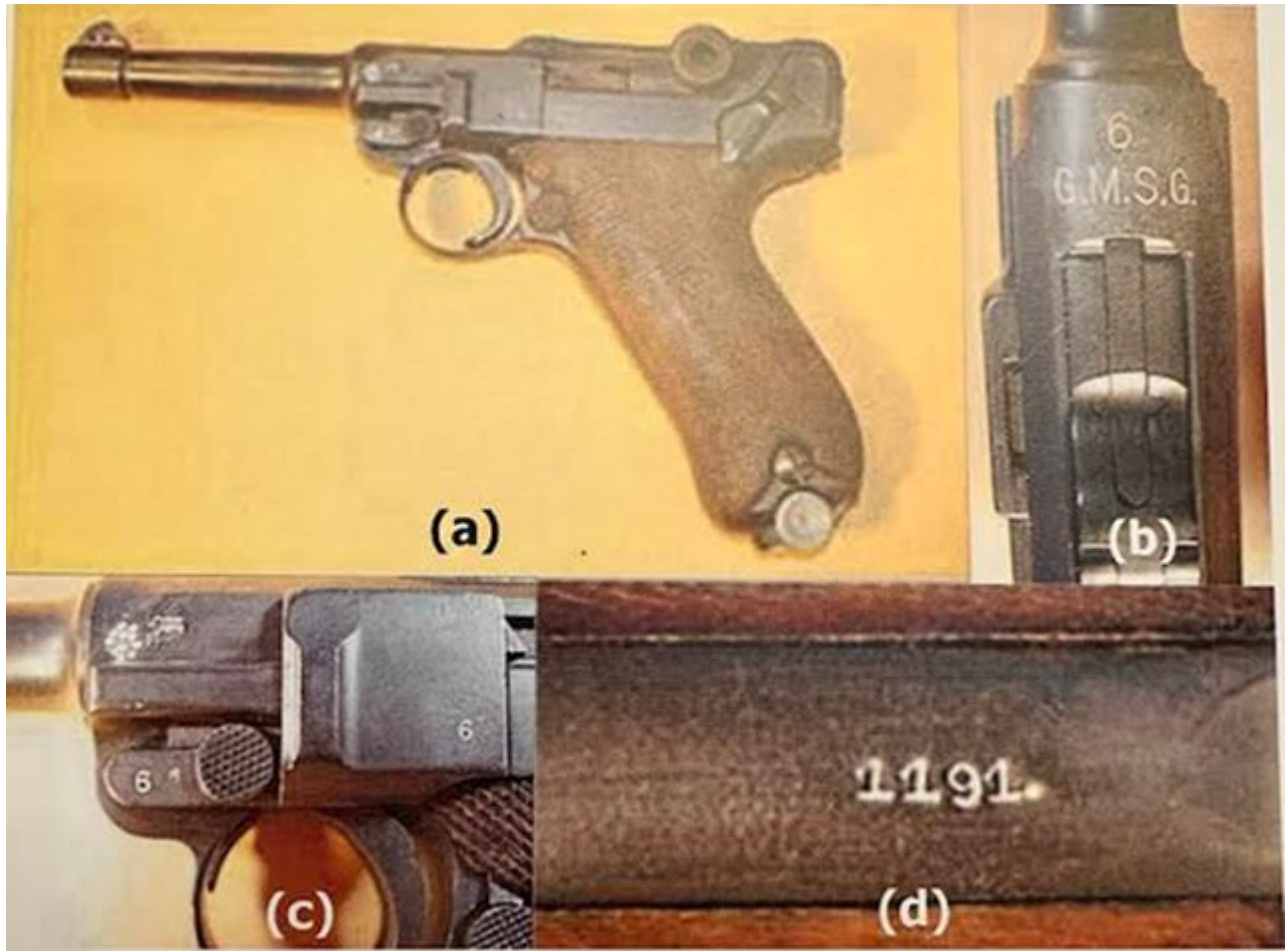
The 9/G.M.S.G. Luger [9]



The 12/G.M.S.G. Luger



The 6/G.M.S.G. chamber-marked Luger (which later saw service with the East German police—VoPo) departs from this pattern, as its front strap is marked only with the number “1191.”, lacking the “M.S.G.” prefix observed on the other two Lugers. Nevertheless, the re-stamped weapon number clearly aligns with those of Nos. 9 and 12, fitting the same numerical sequence. Images of this Luger are shown below as reproduced in [1].



The fourth DWM Model 1908 Commercial Luger bears the chamber marking **G.M.S.G./967** and an **M.S.G. 967** stamp on its front strap. According to the RIA description [4], the pistol “looks like it was originally number ‘14’ below that ... is compete with two matching tin plated magazine with original wooden bases. Both of the bases were originally stamped with the full serial number (60729) and the original property number “14” below. When it was converted into a Police Luger, the top/front end of the base was restamped with the new property number “967”, and the lower edge of the base was correctly numbered in a Police manner with “1 and 2” over the old number “14”.” The preceding suggests that the Luger was first factory-numbered property #**14** before being re-designated **967** during a later reissue. Like the other three known examples, this pistol was configured as a police Luger, featuring the later-added **sear safety**.

No. 14 differs from Nos. **6**, **9**, and **12**, however, in that the original number “**14**” was applied beneath the **G.M.S.G.** chamber marking. It also retains its factory DWM commercial serial number **60729** on the front of the frame, barrel and (later added) on the left side of the receiver.

This Luger does **not** carry the last two digits of the serial number (‘**29**’) nor of the original weapon number (‘**14**’) on the visible faces of the small parts—except for the rear toggle—consistent with standard marking practice for 1908 Commercial DWM Lugers.



On page 243 of *History Writ in Steel*, Don Maus notes:
“The third [note: No. 12 was not known to Don] P.08 is very puzzling. It was reported by Charles Kenyon as being a ‘late B.K.I.W.-era Luger,’ based on its serial number, which was not reported. He states, ‘... the G.M.S.G. marking certainly appears original roll-die impressed. This example also has “hand-struck” digits “937” added through the blue.’ Kenyon is certainly a credible judge of manufacture date and had knowledge of at least one other similar P.08. Figure 15-19 [reproduced below] is a comparison between the mark reported by Kenyon and one of those [No. 9] on a 1908 Commercial DWM P.08. Although the photo from Kenyon’s article is not very clear, it is obvious that, while otherwise apparently identical, the G.M.S.G. stamp is positioned differently ...”



Maus's observation highlights the persistent ambiguity surrounding the so-called "937" pistol, whose markings suggest an authentic Imperial-era **G.M.S.G.** impression later supplemented by Weimar-period hand-stamped digits. If Kenyon's statement that this is a "late *B.K.I.W.-era Luger*" is taken at face value, then—as Maus notes—there is a clear contradiction in the presence of an Imperial-era **G.M.S.G.** stamp on a pistol supposedly assembled in the late 1920s. Furthermore, the positional variance of the chamber marking, when compared with known examples such as Nos. **6**, **9** and **12**, is striking—especially within such a small production sample.

I propose that the Luger reported by Charles Kenyon as a late *B.K.I.W.-assembled G.M.S.G.* pistol was, in fact, another DWM Model 1908 Commercial Luger (bearing lazy *C/N* proofs and lacking a stock lug). I strongly suspect it is the same pistol later auctioned by RIA as **G.M.S.G./967**, and that the number "967" was simply misreported by Kenyon as "937." If so, the apparent anomaly disappears entirely.

Going through the September 2001 issue of *The Gun Report* (p.13, 51) I came across Charles Kenyon Q & A section where a reader asked about help identifying a **G.M.S.G.** Luger (that was seen at a shop in New Jersey). The following is Kenyon's answer (along with the picture on the left (below) he had in his archives. I have placed to its right the picture of the Luger from the RIA auction.

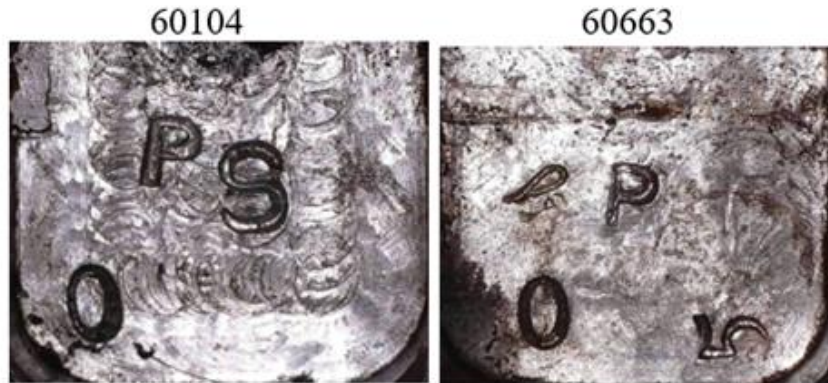


"A[nswer]. This is another item that jogged my memory and I dug out an old photo shown here (Photo 2). As can be seen, the G.M.S.G. marking certainly appears original roll die impressed. This example also has "hand struck" digits "937" added through the blue. I don't know the meaning of the marking but the example shown here has sear safety added, indicating it was in the hands of some German police unit in the early 1930s. The serials on the two I know of indicate later B.K.I.W. production. I recall seeing an example at an Ohio Gun Collectors show in the very early 1960s. I do know that only a very few so marked Lugers have been reported. I also recall that only a few months ago one was listed in The Shotgun News by a large New Jersey arms outlet - probably the one you visited. Perhaps some reader has a more definitive answer. C.K."

So, Kenyon's statement that the Luger was a "later B.K.I.W. production" was based on "The serials on the two I know indicate later B.K.I.W. production." But, he also wrote that "Perhaps some reader has a more definitive answer." So, it seems that Kenyon based his answer on a poor photo of the chamber markings. He did not realize that this was G.M.S.G. Luger #14 with the 14 over struck with 967. Also, he realized that he does not have a good answer and invited readers to chime in.

Given the small size of the G.M.S.G. force at the time these Lugers were procured from DWM, it is reasonable to infer that only about a dozen pistols marked "xx/G.M.S.G." were ever produced—perhaps supplemented by a several (?) examples marked in the reversed sequence "G.M.S.G./xx." The tight numerical clustering of the documented guns (Nos. 6, 9, 12, and 14) reinforces the view that this was a very limited acquisition, likely to represent a small, specifically ordered batch supplied to the Mecklenburg-Schwerin Gendarmerie. The highest reported handgun with the G.M.S.G. designation is the Imperial-era weapon number "63", a Dreyse M1907 [1].

One would expect the frame-well markings of No. 14—with its commercial serial number 60729—to resemble those found on pistols such as SN 60104 or especially 60663, as illustrated in the figure below [9]. However, this pattern departs from the {G, 9, 7} configuration common to Nos. 9 and 12. This discrepancy supports the conclusion that the first dozen G.M.S.G. Lugers were manufactured as a distinct batch, separate from the later-numbered No. 14.



Who Applied the G.M.S.G. Stamp?

Was the marking applied at the DWM factory, or later by an arsenal or organization associated with the Landesgendarmerie? Maus offers a clear opinion on this point:

“The two 1908 Commercial [G.M.S.G. Lugers] have the same serial numbers as the weapon numbers, suggesting they were stamped at the same time. I don’t think these guns could have left DWM without serial numbers. I think factory application is a much more likely thesis than stamping by the police unit.” [2]

Some may speculate that it is unlikely DWM would have gone out of its way to roll stamp **G.M.S.G.** along with a special sequence of serial numbers **1–12** that also served the customer as weapon numbers. Yet some features of **No. 14** complicates the picture. On that pistol, the placement of **G.M.S.G.** is shifted upward on the chamber, with **“14”** below it. No. 14 also uses a standard commercial SN **60729** frame—interestingly, within the serial range of the **R.G.**-marked Lugers.

Once the weapon number **14** was no longer doubling as the gun’s serial number, it makes sense to interpret **“14”** as a *suffix* to **G.M.S.G.**, paralleling the marking logic seen on the **R.G.** Lugers. During the Weimar era, the original front-strap weapon number **“14”** was removed, replaced with **M.S.G. 967**, and the digits **967** were stamped over the chamber’s earlier **14**. It is interesting that this pistol has a weapon number (967) that is over 200 numbers away from Nos. **6** (1191), **9** (1193) and **12** (1196), suggesting that it was among a different batch of weapons that were renumbered during the Weimar era.

If the **G.M.S.G.** marking was *not* applied by DWM, then the Landesgendarmerie (or a contracted workshop) would have needed to perform a remarkably coordinated and technically sophisticated operation: acquire a dozen 1908 Commercial Lugers, scrub all serial-number markings, roll stamp **G.M.S.G.** to exceptional factory-like quality, apply new serial/weapon numbers, and then re-blue the pistols. Such a procedure would have been highly unusual and labor-intensive.

I have closely inspected the stampings on **No. 12**. Judging by the absence of any evidence of scrubbing (see images below) and by the precision and depth of the impressions, it remains entirely plausible that DWM customized this small group of Lugers for an “influential”

organization. This would not be unprecedented: as Jan Still notes regarding the **R.G.** Lugers, “The *R.G.* engraving is under the factory bluing and was probably done at the factory prior to final bluing.” [7]



Would the low serial numbers **6**, **9**, and **12** pose a risk of duplicating other Commercial DWM Lugers? Not at all—because much like the dated military DWM Lugers, the **G.M.S.G.** chamber marking establishes these pistols as a **separate serial series**, isolating them from standard commercial production.

Why, then, does **G.M.S.G./967** (originally **G.M.S.G./14**) retain the factory commercial serial number **60729**, rather than following the dual serial-number/weapon-number format seen on Nos. **6**, **9**, and **12**? And why is the **G.M.S.G.** stamp positioned higher on its chamber? These differences may reflect a **transition in marking convention**—from the early “**xx/G.M.S.G.**”

pattern to a later “**G.M.S.G./xx**” format—indicating a procedural shift at DWM once the original commercial serial number was retained. If correct, No. **14** (and any future higher-numbered examples that may surface) would represent a second marking style, analogous to the practices seen on R.G.-marked, militarized police Lugers of the same period.

I am hopeful that more **G.M.S.G.** Lugers will emerge, allowing us to refine and test these hypotheses.

In Summary:

- A possible contract (or informal arrangement) was made around **1913** between DWM and the Grand Ducal Mecklenburg-Schwerin State Gendarmerie to produce a *small, specially serialized* group of commercial Lugers. So far, Nos. **6, 9, and 12** are known. These pistols were factory-marked **xx/G.M.S.G.** on the chamber, with the one- or two-digit number serving **both** as the serial number **and** the weapon number.
The same number was stamped on the front strap, and—unlike standard commercial Lugers—was applied military-style on all internal and external small parts. These Lugers featured the lazy C/N proofs, a factory hold-open, no stock lug, and no other acceptance marks. The pattern of these features suggests this small batch may have been intended possibly for **officers** within the relatively small gendarmerie force.
- The consistency of the forward frame-well worker markings on SN **9** and **12** indicates that these pistols were likely manufactured **as a group**, within a short time span, perhaps within the same week or so.
- After the initial batch of about twelve pistols, a **marking transition** appears to have occurred. A second, very small (?) number of Lugers—built on **standard commercial serial-numbered frames**—were chamber-marked **G.M.S.G./xx**. In this later style, the **xx** served *only* as the weapon number and was applied to the front strap as well. Only one such Luger has been reported with weapon number “14.” The frame well worker markings on No. 14 suggest that this group of Lugers was produced several months after the first batch. The military-style last-two-digits numbering on exposed small parts was discontinued, likely because the additional customization no longer seemed warranted.
- **G.M.S.G.** Lugers are closely reminiscent of the **R.G.-marked** (Reichs Gendarmerie) commercial DWM Lugers of 1913/14. However, based on current reporting, the **G.M.S.G.** Lugers are **far rarer**.
- All known examples were later reworked with the added sear safety, and the front strap was stamped with a new Weimar-era weapon number (over stamping the original). In almost every example, the renamed unit designation **M.S.G.** precedes the new number. The numerical correspondence between the **new** and **old** weapon numbers for the first dozen suggests that these pistols **remained together as a group** when they underwent their Weimar-period rework.
- In the absence of official documentation, further discoveries and reporting of additional **G.M.S.G.** chamber-marked DWM Lugers, particularly those with weapon numbers 15 and above, will be essential to corroborate, or refine, the analysis presented above.

References:

- [1] *History Writ in Steel, Don Maus* (pp. 242-244).
- [2] [G.M.S.G. Identified --- Maybe, maybe not!](#) & [What is this ???](#)
- [3] [DWM Luger #9 G.M.S.G.](#)
- [4] [RIA Auction.](#)
- [5] *Central Powers Pistols*, Jan Still, pp. 64-65, 71.
- [6] *The Borchardt & Luger*, J. Gortz and G. Sturgess (red books, p. 573).
- [7] *Imperial Lugers*, Jan Still (p.58).
- [8] [Reichs Gendarmerie Lugers](#)
- [9] Special thanks to [@rlatham](#) for providing the pictures of No. 9 Luger, and [@EdD](#), [@Brandon M](#) and [@AlexSupertramp](#) for providing frame-well pictures of 1908 Commercial DWM Lugers.