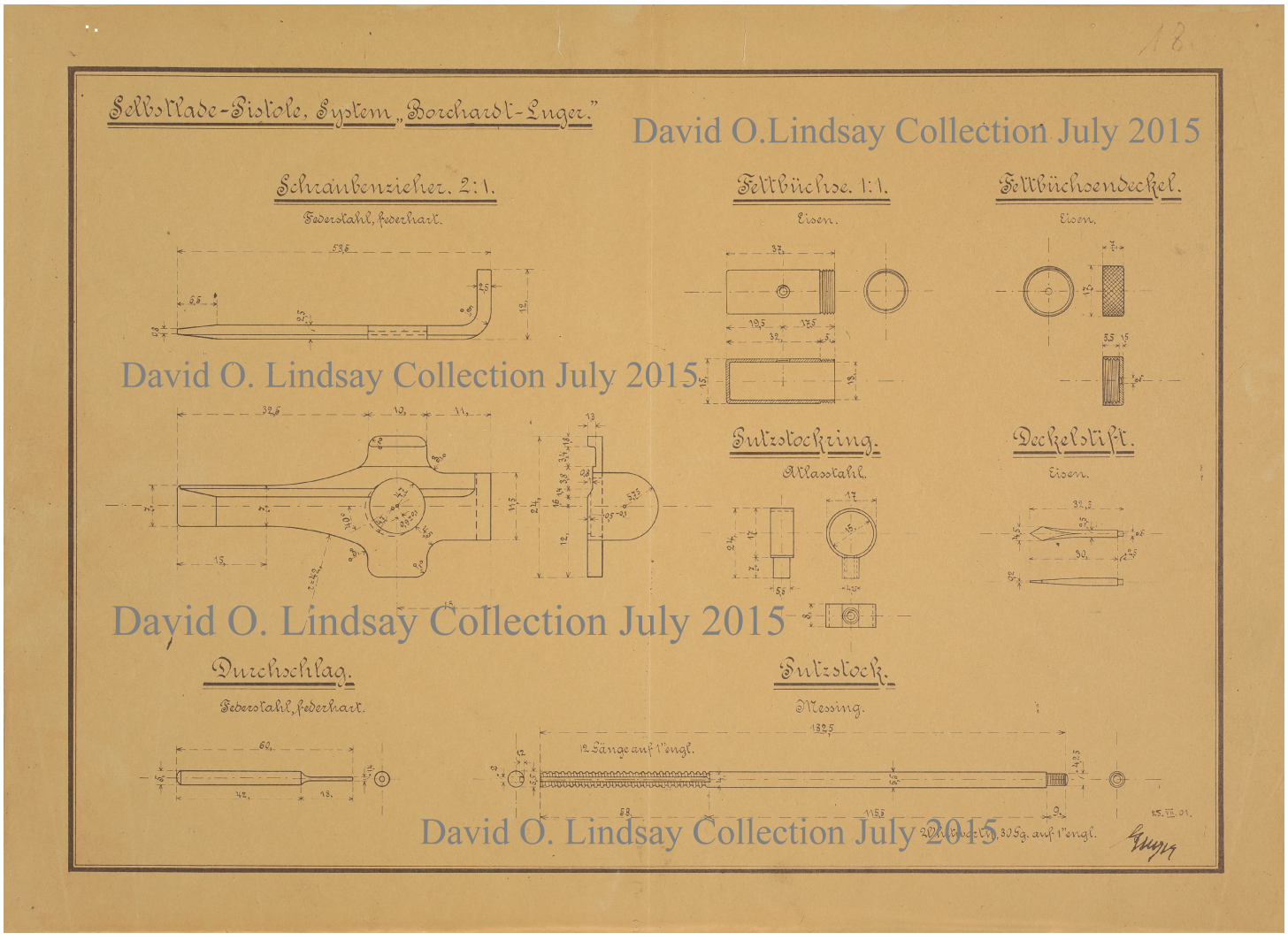
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE “SELBSTLADE-PIST0LE, SYSTEM, BORCHARDT-LUGER” MAGAZINE LOADING TOOL, SCHRAUBENZIEHER 1898 - 1904

by David O. Lindsay 8 May 2019

During the 1899-1901 Swiss Army trials of the Borchardt/Luger pistol, a need was recognized for a tool to assist with loading the eight cartridge magazine.
The follower button on the magazine was very thin and flat making it difficult for an individual to load the magazine using only the thumb. Offhand comments made by the individuals loading the pistol magazines during these trials caused DWM (George Luger) to design a combination loading tool, identified as “Schraubenzieher” or screwdriver. The tool assisted in loading the magazine, removing the grips and disassembling the breech block.



This is the original undated blueprint/drawing, signed by George Luger, entitled “Selbstlade-Pistole, Borchardt - Luger” from the author’s collection. It provides the shape and dimensions for the first version of the combination tool. Selbstlade pistole meaning self loading pistol.

The table below provides the actual measured dimensions of 3 Lang Hals (Long Neck) tools from the author's collection. Below that are photographs of the tools.

Tool Elements	Drawing	#1859 Modified	#2180 Modified	#2201 Non-modified
Thumb Lever Thickness (TLT) mm	2.50	2.76	2.89	2.86
Tool Body Thickness (TBT) mm	2.50	2.60	2.65	2.64
Blade Width Tip (BWT) mm	7.00	7.07	6.88	6.91
Flange Width (FW) mm	24.00	24.16	24.12	23.93
Total Length (TL) mm	53.50	54.13	54.52	53.90
Weight (WT) g	NA	10.768 g	11.223 g	11.524 g

HT-DWM-LN Fs 1859

HT-DWM-LN-Rs 1859

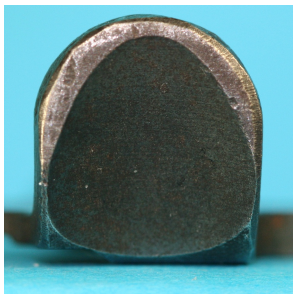
Modified Long Neck Tool

HT-DWM-LN-Ms 1859

HT-DWM-LN-Fs-2180

HT-DWM-LN-Rs-2180

Modified Long Neck Tool



HT-DWM-LN-Ms-2180

HT-DWM-LN-Fcs 2201

HT-DWM-LN-Rcs 2201

Non-modified Long Neck Tool

HT-DWM-LN TLcs 2201

The

Modified Tool

Non-modified Tool

A closeup view of the difference between the two long neck magazine loading tools.

Over the years, hearing stories and reading accounts of why there is an original and a modified Luger magazine loading tool led me several directions. The first information revealed that the magazine was designed for the .30 caliber Luger cartridge. The original long necked loading tool design (see Page 1) might not depress the magazine follower button enough to allow the loading of the 8th cartridge. It was reasoned that the thumb lever would hit the top of the magazine finger knob, not allowing the 8th cartridge to go into the magazine. The engineered solution was to use a 15 mm diameter cutter to remove 2.2 mm of metal from the top of the tool thumb lever, allowing the follower button to go lower, and the 8th round to load into the magazine. I believe, as others, that after a number of tools were made and tested, DWM concluded that either tool would load the magazine and the additional machine work was terminated. The modified tools already produced were included in deluxe boxed commercial sale pistols plus sold separately. Additional theories put the modified tool as the original design. The cutting on the thumb lever was necessary for the tool to function properly. The drawing on page one does not support this theory. The drawing does not indicate the location and size of a cut in the thumb lever. Collectors, including the author and William Guion, conducted tests and found that either tool would load 8 cartridges into the magazine.

As a collector, I expect with the limited number of early tools produced (possibly 2,500-3,000) there are more tools without the modification than those with the ground thumb lever modification. Michael Reese II, in his book *1900 Luger U.S. Test Trials*, states that 1,000 magazine loading tools were included with the field test pistol and accessory shipments of October 1901. Were they non-modified or modified long neck tools or the shorter neck tools of the future? Where did they go? US Cavalry officers did not comment on having a magazine loading tool in their after action reports. There were comments on every other facet of the pistol. Most likely tools were never issued with the pistols, magazines or holsters. Additional information tells us that the early Luger magazine designs were improved, which also helped correct the problem, if there was one.

After all has been said and done, the Swiss never adopted the magazine loading tool. They used the concave lid of the brass bottle in their weapons cleaning kit to assist in loading their Luger magazines.

The following page provides photographs that demonstrate how to use the magazine loading tool.