

## **Police Unit Marks**

Authors' Note: An examination in detail of all German police organizations and all police unit marks is far beyond the scope of this book. Our intent is to illustrate the variations of police organization and marking practice as they relate specifically to the Pistole 1908. Don Maus has exhaustively covered the full topic book History Writ in Steel: German Police Markings 1900-1936, which we recommend for advance study. He is due credit for interpreting the heretofore unrecognized markings of police organizations such as Bremen, Thuringia, Mannheim in Baden, and Hesse.

By the end of the nineteenth century the German army had begun applying identification stamps to its small arms, to designate state ownership and to whom the arms were issued. In January of 1909 the army issued comprehensive marking instructions to establish the systematic unit marking system which enables modern-day collectors of Imperial military Lugers to identify and place their guns within the context and conflicts of WWI. The practice was formally abandoned in 1916.

In 1919 the unit marking requirement for the Reichswehr was reinstated, and in 1921 the ministry of the Army issued a directive establishing a provisional unit marking practice, to be used until the establishment of the new formal system in 1922.

As the German police generally followed Army practices, individual police organizations began marking their own equipment as early as 1900. In 1920 an unpublished directive from the Weimar government required the marking of all Police small arms. The requirement did not include a formalized system, and the origins and meaning of markings such as numbers found on the rear frames of P08s (presumptively called “rack numbers” by collectors) or cryptic grip strap unit markings are often conjecture.

As the German country consisted of a confederation of states, each state promulgated its own identification scheme. The unit marking system for the Prussian Schutzpolizei was established in 1922 and these well-known, documented markings are foremost in the minds of collectors when considering police Lugers. Although other forces' markings share fundamental similarities—the type of organization, the city (or district), duty location (*Dienstort*) if applicable, and weapon number—the actual manner of marking varied from state to state.

By 1919 the state-controlled urban police organizations were known as the *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police). A new, national “police army”, the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police), was established to combat political unrest. The Allies recognized the Sipo as a violation of the Treaty of Versailles, and demanded it be disbanded. In 1920 the German state police forces were reorganized into the formal embodiment of the Ordnungspolizei, its three major enforcement arms being the *Staatspolizei* (State Police); the *Gemeindepolizei* (Communal Police), and the *Schutzpolizei* (Protection Police). The banned Sicherheitspolizei essentially became the Schutzpolizei.

In Bavaria the *Polizeiwehr Bayern* (Bavarian Police Army) was established as the state defense force. By 1920 the issue of arms to the PwB had been completed, and the Bavarian Police Inspectorate issued instructions for the marking of weapons “at troop level.” In 1922 the IMKK ordered the Pw.B. disbanded as a forbidden paramilitary organization under the Treaty of Versailles.

This was the end of unit marking of pistols in Bavaria. Bavarian municipal police organizations did not unit mark their P08 service pistols, and there are no reported examples. In 1930 the Bavarian Interior Ministry issued an instruction for unit marking the Kar 98 rifle and its accessories, but these well-documented markings only applied to the rifles, never to P08s.

Some unit marks are encountered which do not relate to specific municipalities or locales, but identify functional police forces—*Grenzpolizei* (Frontier or Border Police) for example, or the *Hafenpolizei*

(Harbor Police) or *Bahnpolizei* (Rail police). It is necessary to know the detailed structure and terminology of the German police forces to identify these marks.

February 17<sup>th</sup> 1937, stamping of unit codes on arms is no longer required.

Lugers found in collections in North America, or more recently which are being found in estates of deceased veterans, have primarily come from the Western theaters of WWII. U.S. and Canadian troops were active accumulators of surrendered firearms, the trophies of war, which could legally be possessed at home. British troops were generally prohibited from bringing back weapons. P08s (and P38s) captured by the French became the standard post-war service pistols for the French army and Gendarmerie. The proportions of reported Police unit mark samples by location generally follow the geographic WWII battle distribution of the respective Allied armies.

Lugers surrendered to the Russians in the Eastern theaters were confiscated and put into storage in the Soviet Union. Many of them were transferred to East Germany where they were reworked for use by the *Deutsches Volkspolizei* (DVP, popularly known as the VoPo) and other national army and defense organizations. Russian-capture and former East German surplus Lugers have been sold to U.S. distributors for hard currency over the last 20 years, bringing with them unfamiliar unit marks .

Not all police Lugers unit marked. Observation suggests that only thirty to forty percent of the P08s in Police service actually have unit marks.

Reporting and interpretation of Police unit marks can be a challenge for the collector and historian. Marks were applied by police armorers, and their skill levels or attention to detail meant that the marks were not always stamped precisely as required by regulation. Unit markings are often removed or cancelled and others applied, as the organization of the German police changed or the weapon was transferred among different police services. Some unit marks are simply unknown, unrecognized, or misunderstood.

The Prussian unit marking regulations are specific in detail, down to the sizes in millimeters of letters and numbers. When examining or reporting police unit marks it is important to be accurate in these details, even including the presence or absence, and positions, of periods. All of the letters, numbers, their relative sizes, and the periods separating them are meaningful within the marking regulations, and affect the marks' interpretations.

It is important to know that "Landjägeri" was a Prussian designation. "Landespolizei" (LAPO, LP) was used in all other states to designate uniformed, barracked Order Police. In some circumstances the police forces were so small that a single body served as both rural and urban Order Police.

The following unit mark descriptions are not inclusive of all unit marks to be found on German police weapons. They are intended to provide insight into the major differences in German states' unit markings, and are the markings most likely to be encountered by Luger collectors. A comprehensive presentation of German police organizations and their markings is beyond the scope of this book, and readers interested in further study should read History Writ in Steel by Don Maus.

### Prussia Unit Marks

The earliest known instruction for marking Prussian police P08s was issued in 1920 for the newly-formed Sicherheitpolizei. The document has not survived, and is known from its cancellation in subsequent marking instructions. Some confusion in marking identification results from the S designation for the Sicherheitpolizei.

In 1922 the Prussian Interior Ministry issued instructions for unit marking of weapons, cleaning sets, machine gun equipment, field glasses, and bicycles in service with the Prussian Schutzpolizei. The

instructions specified in detail the organization the item was assigned to and its property number, the location of the markings, and the size in millimeters of the individual marking elements.

The following is an example of a typical Prussian Schupo unit mark. According to the instructions, the requirements were:

- S.Sch.**= S. (for Schutzpolizei) District (in this example, Sch., Schleswig), 4.1mm high
- II.** = Roman numeral designating individual unit (in this example) or independent centuria within an administrative district, 4.1mm high
- 1.** = Arabic numeral designating a centuria within a unit, 3.1mm high
- 214.** = Arabic numeral designating the sequential property number, 2.1mm high
- (not in example) = Arabic numerals, final digits of factory serial number, 1.5mm high

Unit marking of the Pistole 1908 was to be stamped on the front grip strap. Continuing with the example, this grip strap mark would read:

**S.Sch.II.1. 214.**

S.	Sch.	II.	1.	214.
Schutzpolizei	Schleswig District	Second Command	First Centuria	weapon number 214
4.2mm	4.2mm	4.2mm	3.1mm	2.1mm

The Schutzpolizei districts do not designate cities themselves, but law enforcement district commands which were based in those cities. In a particularly large district a unit or Centuria might be stationed in another city within the district. One of the problems in interpreting unit marks (both police and military) is that they were issued by an administrator to professionals who were well versed in the terminology and composition of the forces involved. This contemporary knowledge is not shared by the modern collector, who must engage in research for understanding.

The marking instructions can be ambiguous, and leave room for misinterpretation by unit armorers. Examples are encountered in which both the Unit and Centuria are represented by Roman numerals. The 3.1mm Arabic numeral requirement also has a cryptic reference to serial numbers on magazine bases, which is not observed in practice. The 1.5mm final digits of the serial number are not seen on actual markings.

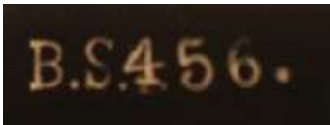
Each of the marking elements is followed by a period. The presence or absence of a period, and its position, are crucial in the accurate reporting and interpretation of unit marks. The marking instructions required cancellation of previous gripstrap markings.

Although not made explicit, known examples make it clear that P08 holsters were expected to be unit marked along with their guns.

In 1932 the Landjägererei (barracked rural order police) was instituted, and a new set of marking instructions was issued to account for them. Apart from minor revisions to eliminate complexity, the actual marking requirements are the same, save for the addition of a letter designating the unit as Schutzpolizei (S), Landjagerei (L) or Kriminalpolizei (K). The Kriminalpolizei were non-uniformed detectives who carried pocket pistols, and the K designation is never found on P08s. A few districts were eliminated or added and are reflected in the list.

The 1932 instructions include an illustration showing the locations of stampings on various parts of weapons. The P08 holster is included, designating the unit mark stamping on the upper-right of the holster back. Also included are loading tools, cleaning rods, and (muzzle covers). (magazine bases are also included, although it is unclear exactly what was to be stamped *{unless it is the primary/secondary magazine number?}* and unit markings are seldom found on magazines.

In 1937 all the German state police forces were placed under the control of a central government ministry, and an instruction was issued terminating unit marking of police equipment.  
 NOTE: the vast majority of these unit markings are from police lugers, a few are from police bayonets, or other pistols.



**Brunswick**                      **B.S.**                      **(PROTECTION POLICE)**  
 From Don's book *Braunschweigische Schutzpolizei*

<b>Prussia</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>1932</b>
District	(Schutzpolizei)	(prefixed with S. L. or K.)

Allenstein                      S.Al.

Al.



Arnsberg                      S.Ar.

Ar.



Aurich                      S.A.

A.



Breslau                      S.Br.

Br.



????



Düsseldorf                      **S.D.**

Erfurt                      S.E.

Frankfurt/Oder                      S.F.









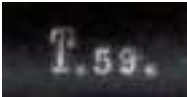



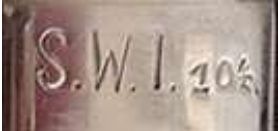

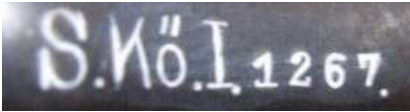
D.

E.

F.



Gumbinnen	S.G.		G.	 	
					
					
Hannover	S.H.		H.	EARLIER?? <<<<<<	MAYBE
(alternate)	S.Hn.				
Hildensheim	S.Hi.		Hi.		
					
Kassel	S.C.		Ka.	(1914 Mauser)	
Koblenz	----		Kz.		
Königsberg	S.Kg.		Kg.		
					
Köslin	S.K.		K.		
Leignitz	S.Li.		Li.		
Lüneburg	S.L.		Lg.		
Magdeburg	S.Mg.		Mg.		
					
Marianwerder	S.Ma.				
					
					
Merseburg	S.Me.		Me.		
					
Minden	S.Mi.		Mi.		
					
					
Münster	S.M.		M.		

				
Oppeln	----			Op.
Osnabrück	S.O.			O.
Potsdam	S.P.			P.
Schneidenmühl				
1	S.S.			----
				
			bayonet	
Schleswig	S.Sch.			Sch.
Schneidenmühl				
1	----			S.
Sigmaringen	----			Si.
Stade	S.Sta.			Sta.
Stettin	S.St.			St.
Stralsund	S.Sd.			Sd.
Trier	----			T.
				
Westpreussen	----			Wpr
				.
				
				
Wiesbaden	S.W.			W.
Occupied Rhineland				
				
Köln	S.Kö.			Kö.
Aachen	S.An.			An.
Wiesbaden	S.Wi.			----
Berlin				

Berlin was by far the largest and most populous city in Germany. In 1922 the Berlin Schutzpolizei was a precinct-based organization with six separate precincts identified by location (West, Central,






South, North, East, and Southeast); and centralized Command, Mounted Police, and Communications. By 1932 the Berlin Schupo had been reorganized into a single, centralized police command.

In this example, the 1922 grip strap mark would read:

**S.B.M.I.R.142.**

S.	B.	M.	I.	R.	214.
Schutzpolizei	Berlin	Mitte (Central Precinct)	First Centuria	Revierhauptmannschaft (Precinct Police)	weapon# 214
4.2mm	4.2mm	4.2mm	3.1mm	4.2mm	2.1mm

The 1932 marking instructions are simplified to **S.B.** (Schutzpolizei Berlin) and the weapon number, and required cancellation of the earlier marks. Equipment acquired after 1932 can be identified by having only the S.B.nn. mark.

	1922		1932
Berlin	-----		B.
West (West)	S.B.W.		-----
			
Mitte (Central)	S.B.M.		-----
Süd (South)	S.B.S		-----
Nord (North)	S.B.No		-----
Ost (East)	S.B.O.		-----
Südost (Southeast)	S.B.So		-----
Command (maintenance & supply)	S.B.Ko		-----
Mounted Police	S.B.B.		-----
Communication	P.N.B.		-----



## Prussia Police Schools

The Prussian Interior Ministry established schools for Police training in various cities throughout Prussia. During the Weimar era some of these were closed and some were established elsewhere, as reflected by the differences between the 1922 and 1932 marking instructions.

The marking instructions specify **P.** (Polizeischul, Police School), city., and weapon number. There are some exceptions designating such schools as Landjägereischuls, School markings are not always stamped in accordance with marking instructions (e.g. PM. / P.M., LSAI. / LS.AL.)

### Police Schools

#### (Polizeischul)

1922

1932

Allenstein

Ländjägeri

School

-----

LSAI

.

Berlin

P.B.



-----

Bonn

-----

PB.

Brandenburg

P.Bg.



PBd.

a.d. Havel

Burg

-----

PBg.



Frankenstein

-----

PFr.

Hannover

P.H.

-----

Hannöversch-

Münden

PMd.

Hessen-Nassau

P.He.

Hildensheim

Phi.

Kiel

PK.



Münster



PM.



Niederschlesien

P.N.

Ostpreussen

P.O.

Police Institute

-----

P.I.

Police Institute

for Technology

and Transport

-----

PTV.



Pommern

P.P.

Rheinpolizei

-----

Rh.P.




Sachsen

P.S.




-----



Schleswig-Holstein	P.Sch.	-----	
School for Physical Training	Ps.L.	Pl.	
Senior Service Police Academy, Potsdam	H.Ps.	HP.	
Sensburg	-----	PS.	
Treptow a.d. Riga	-----	PT.	
Trier Ländjägeri School	-----	LST.	
Westfalen	P.W.	-----	

### Bavaria Unit Marks

Polizeiwehr Bayern	Pw.B.	
Einwohnerwerh Bayern	EWB	

The Polizeiwehr Bayern marking instructions comprehensively followed the pattern of the Prussian police marking system. The Pw.B. units were divided into:

<b>J.</b> inspectorate staff	<b>Gr.</b> group staff	<b>T.</b> technical centuria
<b>St.</b> patrol units	<b>N.</b> communications units	<b>Fl.</b> aviation units
<b>P.</b> arsenals	<b>K.</b> automobile units	

These letters were to be followed by Roman numerals indicating detachments: I, II, III, IV, V. Arabic numerals 1-27 indicated the number of the Centuria, and smaller Arabic numerals indicate the weapon number. These marking instructions were not followed, and the only marks found are Pw.B. on the grip straps, with no other indicators. The Pw.B. was ordered disbanded by the IMKK in 1922.

*{PwB example here—don't have one}\*



DWM 1917 dated Imperial serial 8947c

Police with sear safety and mag. safety removed, front grip strap marked



Toe / heel of luger



gripstrap of same luger

From Howard Collins so we can figure out what year these are

