

Sandow's Spring Grip Dumbbell

Eugen Sandow · the "Gentlemen's" pattern, seven springs · c. 1899



Shown: the photograph from your own listing.

PIECE

Sandow's Spring Grip Dumbbell, Gentlemen's pattern

DATE

c. 1899

WEIGHT

Approx. 3 lb

MAKER

Eugen Sandow · mail-order exercise equipment

MATERIAL

Nickel-plated metal; leather-cloth covered handles; seven springs

REFERENCE

A comparable example is held by the York Barbell Museum

The instruction sheet that shipped with these dumbbells opened with a promise that reads like medicine and sells like a manifesto: *"The regular use of Sandow's Grip Dumb-Bells will supply every organ and muscle of the body with that gentle exercise which is so necessary to the human system."* This is the Gentlemen's pattern of that device, seven springs and nickel-plated handles, offered by the man who made strength a spectacle.

Sandow was born Friedrich Wilhelm Müller in Königsberg in 1867 and became the most photographed body of his age, known today as the father of modern bodybuilding. He invented his own exercise equipment, including rubber strands for stretching and the spring-grip dumbbells he designed to exercise the wrists, and in 1901 he organised what is believed to be the world's first major bodybuilding competition, at London's Royal Albert Hall, judging it beside Arthur Conan Doyle. This piece is not a curiosity from a junk drawer: it is a product from the man who turned physical culture into a public business.