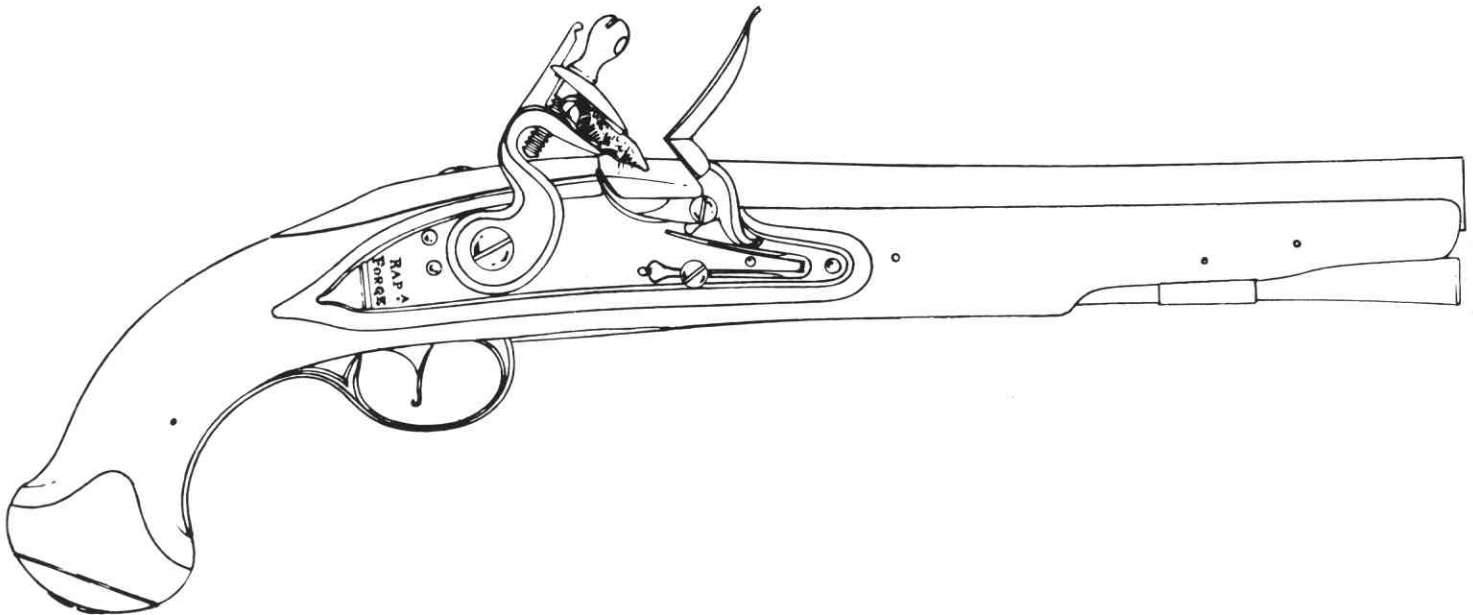


THE RAPPAHANNOCK FORGE

by Nathan L. Swayze



I can't think of a more propitious time, or place, to deliver this paper on The Rappahannock Forge than in the year 1975, here in West Virginia. Why? Because it was this past April, 200 years ago, in 1775, that the British Regulars marched on Lexington and Concord, resulting in—among other things—the “shot heard 'round the world” that was the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and the Rappahannock Forge—where some of the first weapons for the Continental Army were made—was located in Virginia, about two miles from Falmouth, on the Rappahannock River.

Prior to and during the first part of the Revolutionary War, the Colonies had much the same problems as the South prior to and during the Civil War. One common problem was not only the lack of a sufficient number of weapons to fight a war, but the lack of the proper type of weapons to fight a war. There were, of course, many weapons in the Colonies. Many of them were obsolete weapons left over from the French and Indian Wars, and, up until England declared an embargo on shipments of weapons to the Colonies, many imported English weapons were purchased by the Colonists. These were, however, mainly weapons for protection and for hunting purposes, and they weren't too adaptable for warfare.

There were relatively few gunmakers in the Colonies at that time. Ironically enough, some of the finest gunmakers that ever lived resided in a small section of Pennsylvania, and it was here that the greatest majority of the fine Pennsylvania rifles—commonly called “Kentuckies”—were made. Although the Pennsylvania rifle very definitely had a place in the Revolutionary War, it was not suitably adaptable to the linear warfare tactics of the day, primarily for two reasons—slowness in loading, and lack of a bayonet. This rifle used not only a greased patch under the ball, but the ball itself was tight fitting, making loading slow in comparison to the British infantry, whose minimum requirement was to load and fire once every fifteen seconds. The lack of a bayonet left the Rifleman defenseless for the inevitable charge. Although these fine rifles were extremely accurate, these two drawbacks certainly limited their use during the war. Even if they were adaptable to linear tactics, it would have been impossible for these gunsmiths to supply a sufficient number of rifles quickly, for each was hand made by one man, which was a time consuming job.

There were also those who might best be called gun “assemblers”, for they assembled muskets—from parts already on hand—many of which were apparently made for military use, under very lax requirements of the various militia units that existed throughout the Colonies. Many examples are in collections today that have, for example, an English barrel, a French lock, with the hardware being a combination of British, French, German and even “home made” parts. Many have a stud on the top, or bottom, of the muzzle end of

the barrel for attachment of a bayonet, giving them a “semi-military” status of possibly having seen militia use.

To cope with their problems, “Committees (or Councils) of Safety” were organized, with Massachusetts establishing the first one in February, 1775. Among other things, it was the duty of the various Committees to obtain arms, and this is where James Hunter and his Rappahannock Forge comes into the picture.

James Hunter came to this country from Scotland, where he settled in Virginia and became a successful merchant and planter. His first venture into the iron business was when he purchased a forge on the banks of the Rappahannock River, which became the basis of the Hunter Iron Works. John Strode had previously been a farm superintendent for Hunter, and because he had done such a good job, Hunter made him Foreman of the Forge and other manufacturies. The date that Hunter first began producing weapons is apparently not known at this time. One early reference is dated May 4, 1776, when the Council of Virginia ordered 1200 pounds of powder remain in Fredericksburg, which is close to Falmouth, with “100 pounds for proving arms at the manufactory and at Mr. Hunters”. Hunter's arms production apparently pre-dated this reference, for in 1826 Henry Banks, who was the son of the Superintendent of the manufactory, published a book about his father. In his book, the younger Banks states that his father recruited skilled workmen in Pennsylvania for the purpose of making arms “shortly after the war began”, which could be as early as the summer, or fall, of 1775. There is evidence that pre-dates even this statement. This evidence is in the form of a Rappahannock Forge lock in a re-stocked musket now in the collection of the Concord Antiquarian Society. More on this musket will be given later.

On June 6, 1776, Hunter presented a few muskets to the Virginia Convention of Delegates. The muskets were so well made that they ordered the committee to Contract with Hunter “for as many good muskets, with bayonets, sheaths, and steel ramrods as he can manufacture within 12 months from this time, at the rate of six pounds for each stand”. The next day the Committee issued a warrant for 25 muskets, representing 25 sample arms that he submitted to the Convention of Delegates as proof of his ability to supply well made arms. Later references show many entries relative to Hunter's supplying arms to the State. Various numbers of muskets are shown (with amounts paid)—fourteen on June 17, 1776, sixty on August 8, twenty-five on November 22, and on December 8, the entry shows the amount paid but does not specify the number.

At this stage, a rather odd combination of events began—a combination of the need for arms, and the apparent lack of cooperation on the part of the government. There can be little doubt as to the

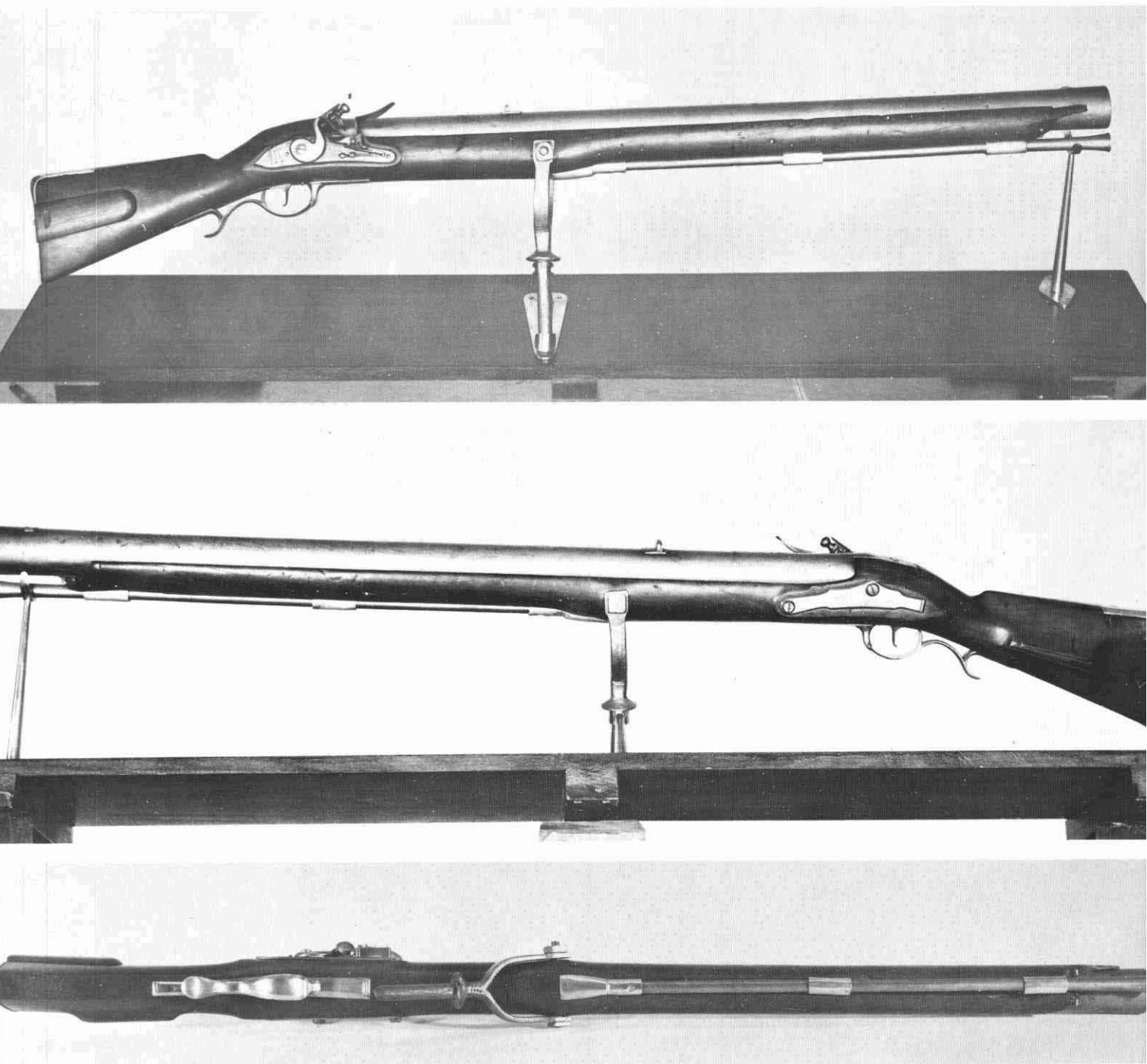


Figure 1. Rappahannock Forge wall gun in the Smithsonian Institution.

urgency of Hunter supplying badly needed arms, yet even in the face of this, certain events began to develop that sadly hindered Hunter's ability to produce arms. When Patrick Henry was elected governor, he wrote to Hunter urging him to increase his production of arms. On February 19, 1777, John Strode, writing from Rappahannock Forge, answered this request by giving ideas as to how the facilities could be expanded. He cautioned, however, about over expansion, and, as a means of self protection, suggested a ten year contract—and that was about as far as he got on that suggestion! He also listed other things that had to be corrected. He advised that Hunter had made little or no profit on the previous production of arms, teamster's wagons had been confiscated for military use, and many of the workmen had been drafted into military service. The situation became so bad that in late 1780, Hunter was forced to suspend production of small arms due to lack of skilled help.

At this time, Benedict Arnold, who was now in British Service, was in Virginia with a raiding party. In an effort to save the military supplies at Richmond, the small arms were moved to Westham, where the British sent a party and destroyed the foundry, but overlooked some damaged muskets. An appeal immediately went out to Hunter to repair the muskets, but unfortunately, Hunter was unable to do so. He too had removed much of his equipment to protect it from raiding parties. A combination of this, plus the fact that he had no skilled workmen, prevented him from making the necessary repairs, even though he was anxious to do so. In explaining why he was unable to effect the repairs, Hunter outlined a plan of re-establishing the small arms production for the benefit of the State. He even offered to produce arms at no profit to himself, providing his workmen would be exempt from military service. Before anything could come of

this offer, Hunter was forced to further remove tools and equipment to the extent of "a total stoppage of everything", because of rumors of the approach of Banastre Tarlton, known as "Bloody Tarlton".

Evidence, in the form of a letter written by Hunter in November 1781, indicates the re-establishment of the Rappahannock Forge. This letter deals mostly with swords, with more about this later.

On April 22, 1782, Hunter wrote to the effect that he still wanted to produce and repair arms; however, this letter stated: "little attention" previously given his operation had finally forced him to discharge all of his workmen. This final explanation apparently brought an end to the operation of the Rappahannock Forge by Hunter.

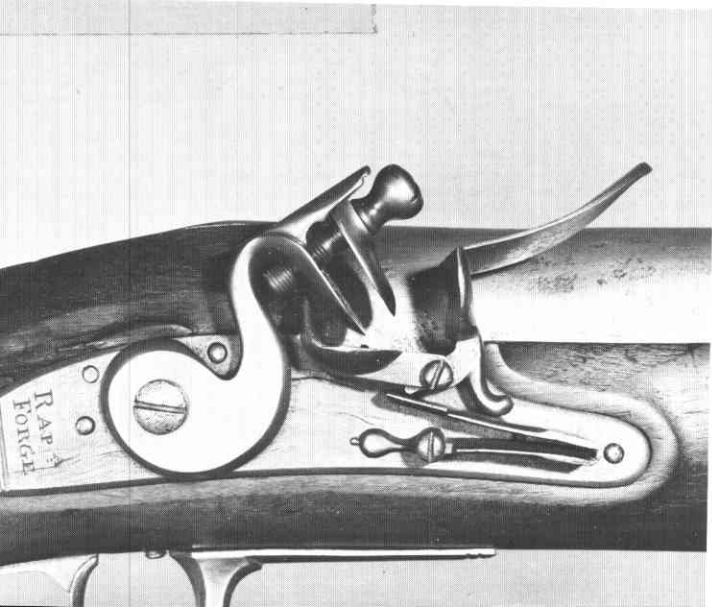
James Hunter died in 1785.

Production at the Rappahannock Forge wasn't confined to muskets alone. Henry Banks, at the age of sixteen, obtained permission from his father to work as James Hunter's clerk. Banks' account gives information on John Strode, and he also mentions the trip to Pennsylvania to secure workmen and states: "These were soon fully employed and most rapid progress in making muskets, pistols, carbines, horsemen's caps, camp kettles, spades, shovels, etc. was made".

Although the horsemen's caps, kettles, spades, shovels etc. would be very nice accoutrements for a collector to own, I have omitted research on these items, and I don't even know if any survived. Banks' account also mentions carbines, and I know of none that survived, even though some may still exist.

Swords are mentioned in Banks' account, yet I have been unable to locate a sword collector, or a Revolutionary War collector, who has seen a sword that can definitely qualify as a

Figures 2 and 3. Close up of the wall gun in the Smithsonian Institution.



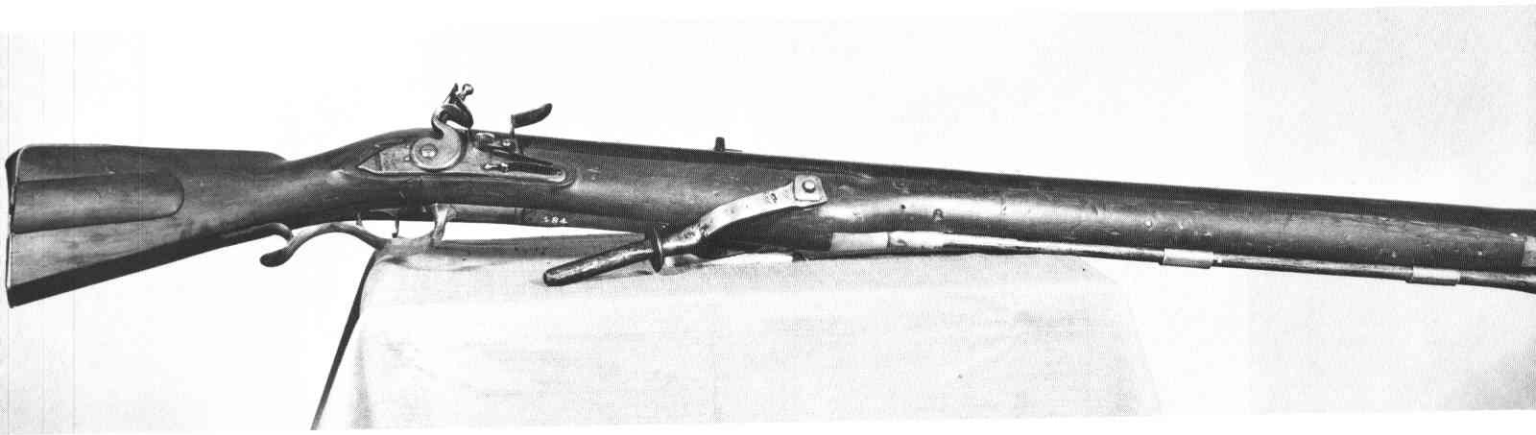


Figure 4. Wall gun in West Point Museum Collection.

Rappahannock sword, for none are known to exist—as far as I know—that are marked “Rapa Forge”. This, in itself, is rather strange for concrete evidence certainly exists that Hunter did produce swords at the Rappahannock Forge. On March 29, 1781, Hunter received a request from Major Richard Call, of the 3rd. Dragoons. A horseman’s sword accompanied this request with the information that Lt. Col. Washington wanted Hunter to use this captured sword as a pattern for production of swords by Hunter. This was about the time of the “Bloody” Tarlton rumor, and Hunter could do nothing about the request, for he had practically dismantled his equipment and had no workmen. As previously mentioned, there is evidence that Hunter re-established his operations and proceeded with the sword request. This evidence is in the form of a letter dated November 1781, and among other things mentioned, was the previous request for swords: “I also have in hand a thousand horsemen’s swords to the pattern forwarded from General Green’s army by order of Col. Washington”. Hunter states “I have in hand” and does not specifically state that he *made* the swords; however, the terminology seems proper, and we can probably assume that he did make the swords. If these one thousand swords were delivered to the military, and issued, a mortality

rate of 100% is certainly a high one! There are however, several swords in existence today that have an “H” stamped on the knuckle bow, and some have attempted to tie these particular swords to Hunter. Most of these turned up in the New Jersey area. There is one at the Morristown National Historical Park, one in the Smithsonian, and at least two in private collections. One hilt was recently excavated by the State of Virginia in the Kinds Mill Tract near Williamsburg. Although Hunter is known to have made swords, no one knows what they look like; therefore, at this time, to my knowledge, there is no way to substantiate these “H” marked swords as Hunter’s work.

Although sixteen year old Henry Banks did not mention wall guns as one of the products of the Rappahannock Forge, there are four wall guns known to exist today. (Figure 1). These heavy, rifled weapons are known as “wall guns”, “Amusettes”, (which means a light field cannon), and “rampart guns”, with the word “rampart” meaning a fortification, or embankment, to protect soldiers. They were made as a fill-in between the shoulder arm and cannon. They are approximately five feet in length and weigh in the neighborhood of fifty pounds. The swivel, attached to the stock, enabled the gun to be turned in a 360 degree circle, as well as up and down. The bottom portion of the swivel

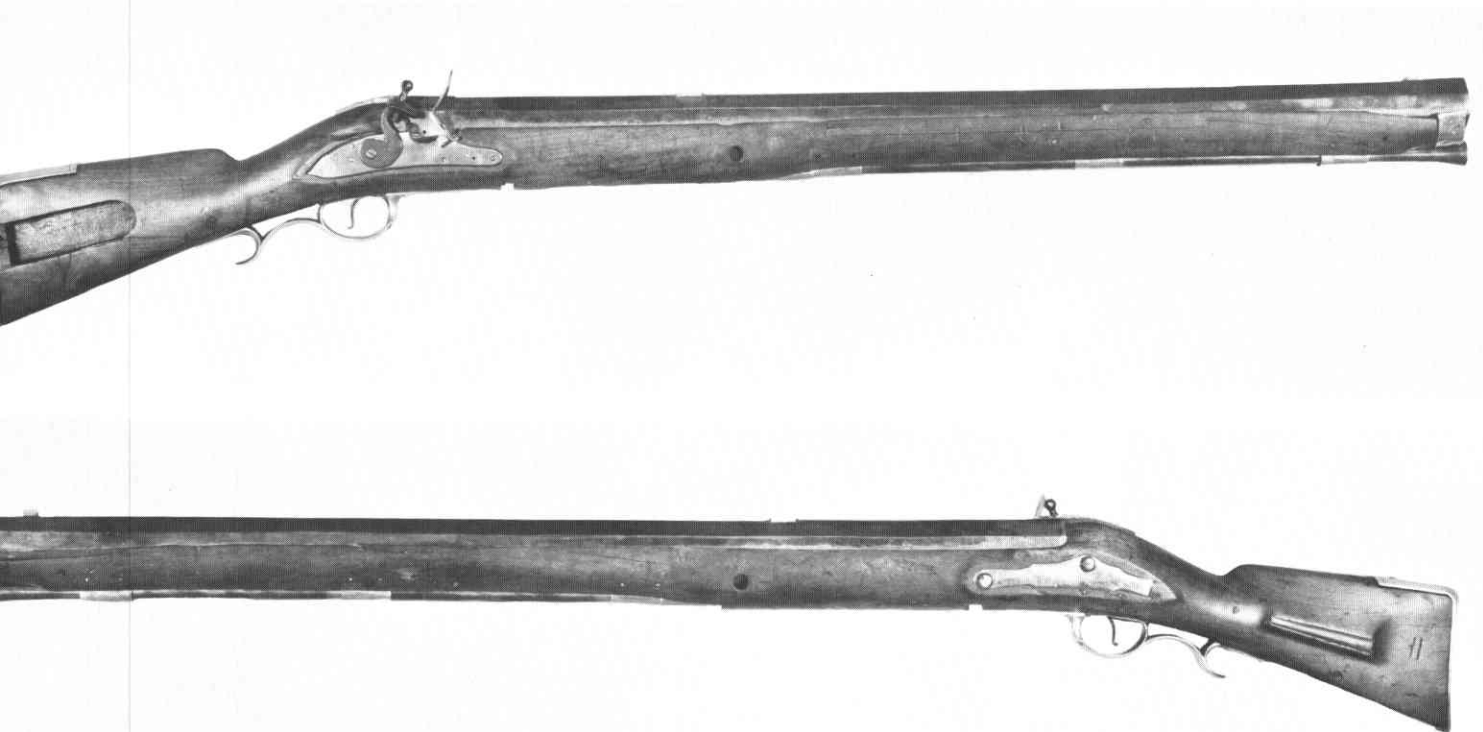


Figure 5. Wall gun in the Rock Island Arsenal.

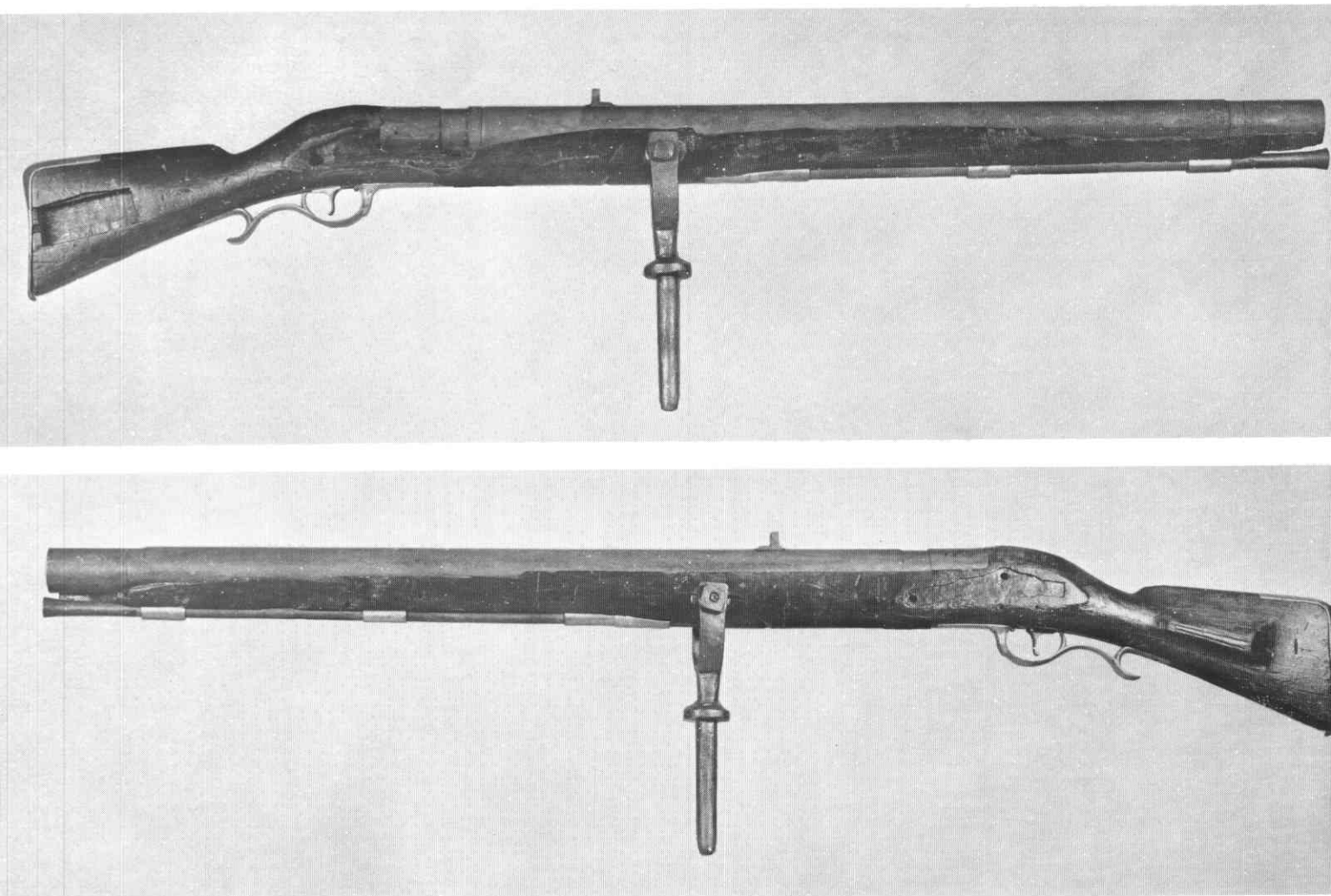


Figure 5A and B. A second wall gun in the Rock Island Arsenal.

of this gun indicated the swivel was slipped into a metal sleeve, or hole, to be fired from a fixed position. Other wall guns, however, have a “spiked” or pointed bottom indicating it can be driven into wood quickly, giving it more mobility. Although these wall guns weren’t used too much during the Revolutionary War, their use was certainly important. The effectiveness of these weapons were attested to when General Charles Lee, writing from Williamsburg in 1776, wrote to Washington that he was obtaining *four ounce* rifle-amusettes, for they “will carry an infernal distance, the *two ounce*d hit a half sheet of paper 500 yards distant”.

If I were asked to give a word picture of these wall guns, I would say they are basically modeled from the early German rifle, for they have a “squatty”, thick appearance, with a relatively straight stock. The influence of the early Pennsylvania rifle makers (who patterned their rifles after the early German rifles), is quite evident in the sliding wood patch box, the accentuated curl

at the rear of the brass trigger guard, the short brass fore end cap (missing on this gun), as well as the brass side plate.

This is the second view of the same wall gun, and it is in the Smithsonian collection. This gun was transferred to the Smithsonian from the Rock Island Arsenal in 1958. At that time, the wooden patch box cover, and the cock was missing. These two pieces were replaced by the Smithsonian, using the West Point wall gun as a pattern. Figure 2 shows a close-up of the lock with the replaced cock. The lower view in Figure I is a bottom view of the same wall gun, showing the brass hardware. Here again, the squared, flat ends of the trigger guard and bottom ram rod thimble are quite similar to the Pennsylvania rifle. Of the four Rapa Forge wall guns, this Smithsonian gun is the only one that has Hunter’s name engraved on the barrel (figure 3). Note that all the letters are capital letters; however, the “I” and “H” are taller than the rest. I call this to your attention, because some of Hunter’s other weapons have his name engraved

on the barrel with all letters being the same height. Note the first initial, which stands for "James", is an "I". During this period, the letter "I" was used as "J". I do not know the weight of the Smithsonian wall gun. The overall length is 61½", the barrel is round, 44 5/16" long, and the bore is 1³/₁₆". The hardware is brass. The name "Rapa Forge" appears behind the cock, with the second "A" of "Rapa" being a small high "A" with two small dashes underneath it. An assemblers mark, a Roman numeral "II" appears inside the lock plate, inside the side plate and on the lock plate screw and barrel tang screw. Inspectors initials "IP" are stamped inside the lock plate, and these same initials are stamped on the inside of the lock plate of some of the Rapa Forge pistols.

Figure 4 is in the West Point Museum collection. This gun appears to be a duplicate of the Smithsonian gun just shown. The short brass fore end cap, previously mentioned as missing on the Smithsonian gun, is intact on the West Point specimen. I do not know the weight of this gun. The overall length is 61", the barrel is round, 44¼" long, 1³/₁₆" bore and rifled with 12 lands and grooves. The hardware is brass. The name "Rapa Forge" appears behind the cock as shown in the lower portion of Figure 4, with the same small high "A", with two small dashes underneath. The initials (Inspectors) "IP" and "R" (or possibly a "P") is stamped inside the lock plate. Several of the parts behind the lock plate bear the assemblers mark, Roman numeral "IV".

This next wall gun is in the Rock Island Arsenal (figure 5). Here we begin to see a variation, for you will note this specimen has an octagonal barrel, rather than round. This gun weighs 57 pounds, is 61¼" overall length. The barrel is octagonal, 44¼" long, 1³/₁₆" bore, with thirteen land and grooves.

The hardware is brass. The name behind the cock—although extremely light in the photo—appears to be "Rapa Forge". Inspector's initials "IP" are stamped inside the lock plate, and there are no other markings.

The wall gun in figure 5 A & B was—or is—in the Rock Island Arsenal. The weight of the gun is 48½ pounds, and I have no information on any markings. We encounter another variation in this specimen in the form of the recessed area on the muzzle end of the barrel, and the recessed section just forward of the barrel tang.

Below is a chart of the specifications and markings—of the four wall guns just shown—that were available to me. I won't go over them, for they have been previously mentioned. The chart is simply for those of you who might be interested in seeing a condensation of this information for comparative purposes.

If you were to ask an antique gun collector—one who doesn't specialize in the field of U. S. martial arms—to name the first of the U. S. single shot martial pistols, the chances are that his answer would be: "North and Cheney". This, of course, would be the wrong answer, for the first U. S. single shot martial pistol is the Rapa Forge pistol (figure 6).

The Rapa Forge pistols are basically 15" in overall length, the barrel is 9", and the caliber ranges from 66 to 69. For those of you who are interested in minute details, there are several minor variations in these pistols. Some have raised "beaver tails" on that portion of the stock surrounding the barrel tang, and some do not. Some have Hunter's name engraved on the barrel, and some do not. Some have flat head screws holding the cock, while others are the high rounded type, and the two side plate screws are the high rounded type. The end of the top portion of

	SMITHSONIAN	WEST POINT	ROCK ISLAND I	ROCK ISLAND II
WEIGHT	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	57#	48½#
O/A LENGTH	61½"	61"	61¼"	✓
BARREL	ROUND	ROUND	OCTAGONAL	ROUND
LENGTH	44 5/16"	44¼"	44¼"	✓
CAL.	1³/₁₆"	1³/₁₆"	1¹/₁₆"	✓
MARKING	I-HUNTER	NONE	NONE	NONE
RAP ^ FORGE MARKING	BEHIND COCK	BEHIND COCK	BEHIND COCK	✓
INSIDE LOCK PLATE	II IP	R (OR P) IP SEVERAL IV's	IP	✓
INSIDE SIDE PLATE	II	UNKNOWN	NONE	✓
HARDWARE	BRASS	BRASS	BRASS	BRASS
SCREWS				
LOCK PLATE	II	UNKNOWN	NONE	✓
BBL TANG	II			

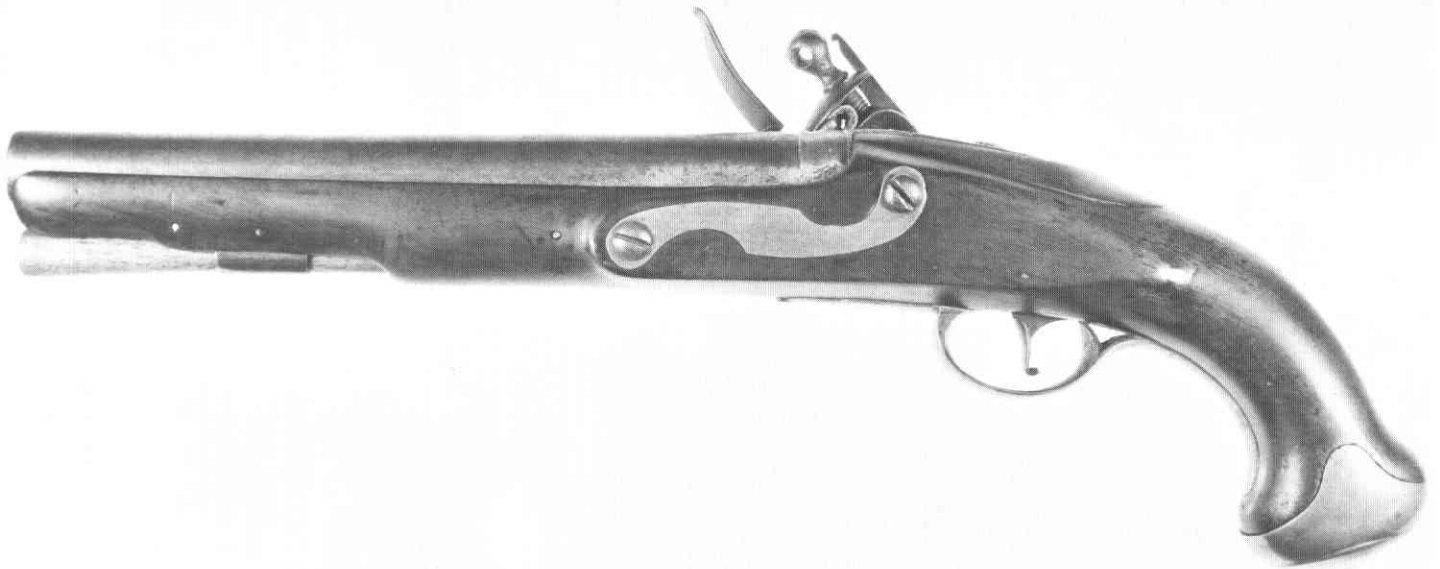
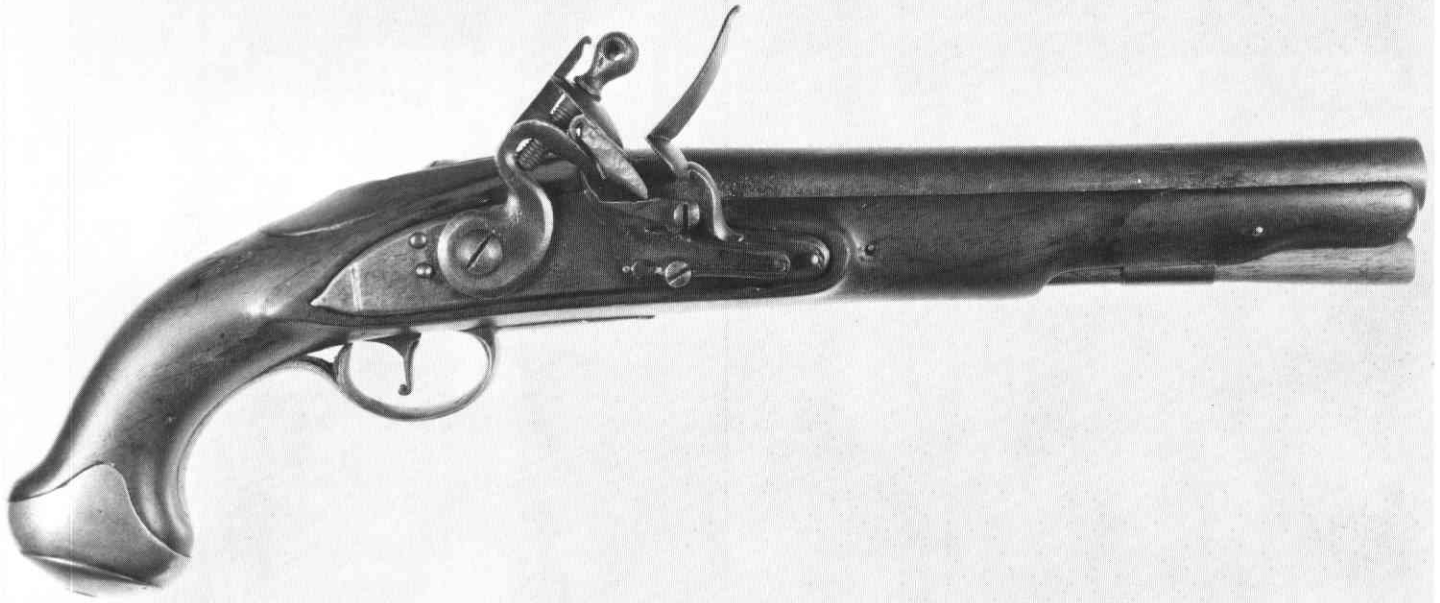
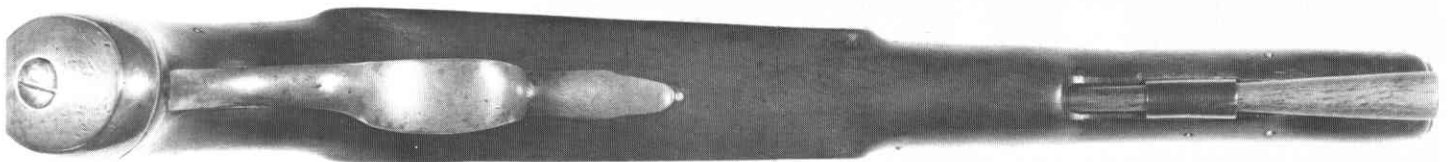


Figure 6A, B, C. Rapa Forge pistol.



the frizzen spring is straight on some, while others have an end that is slightly semi-moon shaped. The design of the finial, in front of the frizzen holding screw, differs on some of the pistols. Some have raised turnings at the breech end of the barrel, and some do not. Some have more of a "hump" at the bottom of the frizzen—just above the bottom curl—than others. Some are more elaborate—with engraving and raised carving—than others.

This pistol was formerly in the William Locke collection, and it is now in my collection. Upon acquisition of this pistol, I was fortunate in obtaining, from Robert B. Berryman, the original papers telling the story of some of the genealogy of this pistol, or how it first came into the hands of the gun collecting fraternity. Many times this information is known on antique weapons, and it should be recorded—preferably by notarized statements. Sadly, though, this information is many times not recorded. Without this, the history can be lost by death of the owner, or changed by honest errors, when the "word of mouth" method is used. When these things happen, this information is gone forever for future owners of the weapon as well as for history. Many times, this information is quite interesting. The notarized statement on this pistol is dated June 26, 1953, and it is signed by Charles S. moved to 600 South Lee Street, Alexandria, Virginia, and a man named Hancock lived at 605 South Lee Street. In 1933, young Hancock—who was about sixteen years old—brought Mr. Wilburn a flint lock pistol and a cavalry saber, and Mr. Wilburn bought them. Mr. Wilburn describes the pistol as marked "Rapa Forge" in two lines behind the hammer, and "I Hunter" on the barrel. Mr. Wilburn further states that the young boy told him that he found the pistol and saber in the attic of his home. Mr. Wilburn goes on to say that Mr. Hancock (the young boy's father) bought the house at 600 South Lee Street from a Mr. Nightingale, whose family had long been residents of Alexandria. A Mr. Nightingale was the first Chief of Police of Alexandria, was part Indian, had pierced ears and wore ear rings as large as silver dollars, and there is a portrait of him hanging in the police station of Alexandria. Whether or not this pistol was ever in the Nightingale family will

probably never be known; however, circumstantial evidence certainly seems to point in that direction.

As to some of the minor variations that I previously mentioned, notice the raised "beaver tail", high rounded screw head on the cock, the "hump" in the frizzen, the finial just forward of the frizzen holding screw, and the straight end on the top portion of the frizzen spring.

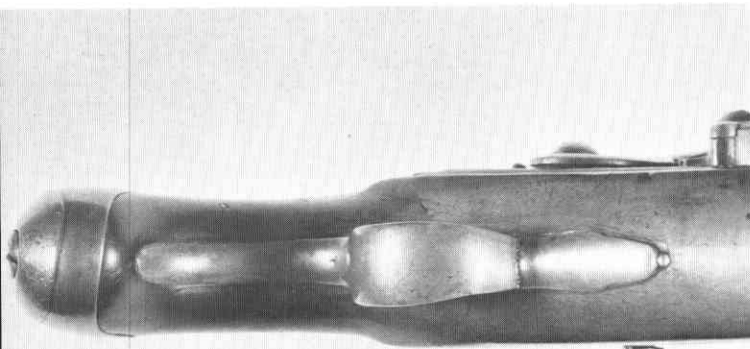
The "lazy S" side plate is similar to contemporary British martial pistols, as well as French muskets. Note the two high rounded screw heads, and the raised turning at the breech end of the barrel.

The outside markings on this pistol consist of "Rapa Forge" in two lines behind the cock. The last "A" of "Rapa" is a small raised "A". The other outside marking is "I Hunter" on the barrel. Other markings on this pistol—as well as other markings on the other Rapa Forge pistols—consist of inspector's initials and assembler's marks, in the form of Roman numerals. There are usually two sets of inspector's initials stamped inside the lock plate. Sometimes two initials are shown, and sometimes only one initial. Assembler's marks, or Roman numerals, are usually found in the ram rod channel of the wood stock, underneath the breech end of the barrel, on the inside of the lock plate, on various parts inside the lock, and sometimes on the inside edge of the butt cap, inside bottom of the cock, on the comb of the cock, and on the inside of the trigger guard and trigger plate.

Although I am not an expert along this line, the Rapa Forge pistols appear to be a good, sturdy weapon that will stand much use. Upon close inspection, however, this pistol certainly shows the workmanship of a neophyte gun maker, in contrast to some of the English, French, etc. contemporary military pistols of the period. Note the bow of the trigger guard. One side seems to be fairly symmetrical and semi-moon shaped, while the other side is much straighter. In figure 7 photo, note the fitting of the brass butt cap. Not only does it lean to the right, but the right side is much lower than the left. Five marks appear on one portion of the exposed surface of the barrel, and also on the thick triangular portions of brass trigger guard.

Figure 8 shows the "I Hunter" engraving on the barrel. On this pistol, all the letters are of the same

Figures 7 and 8. Close ups of the pistol in Figure 6.



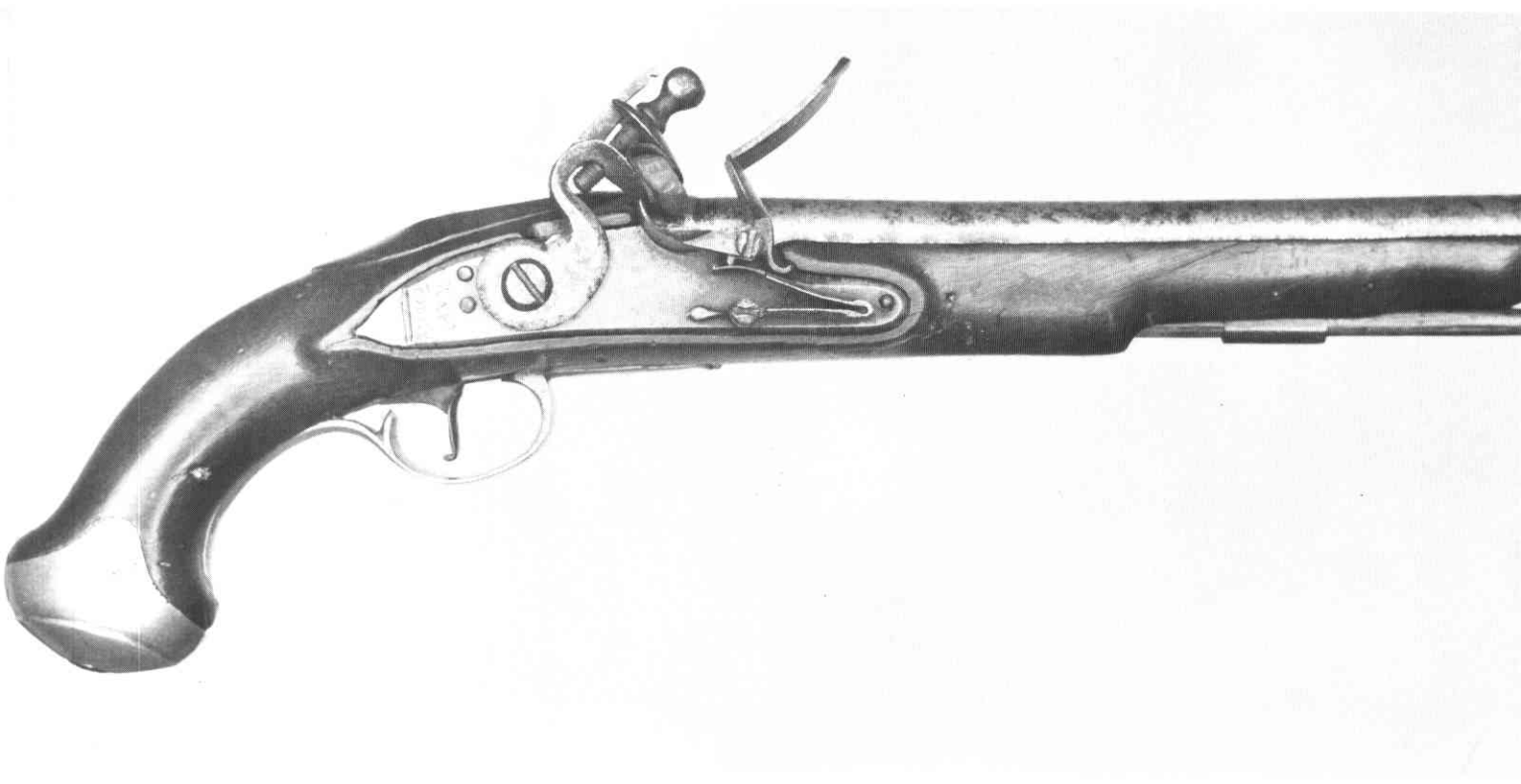
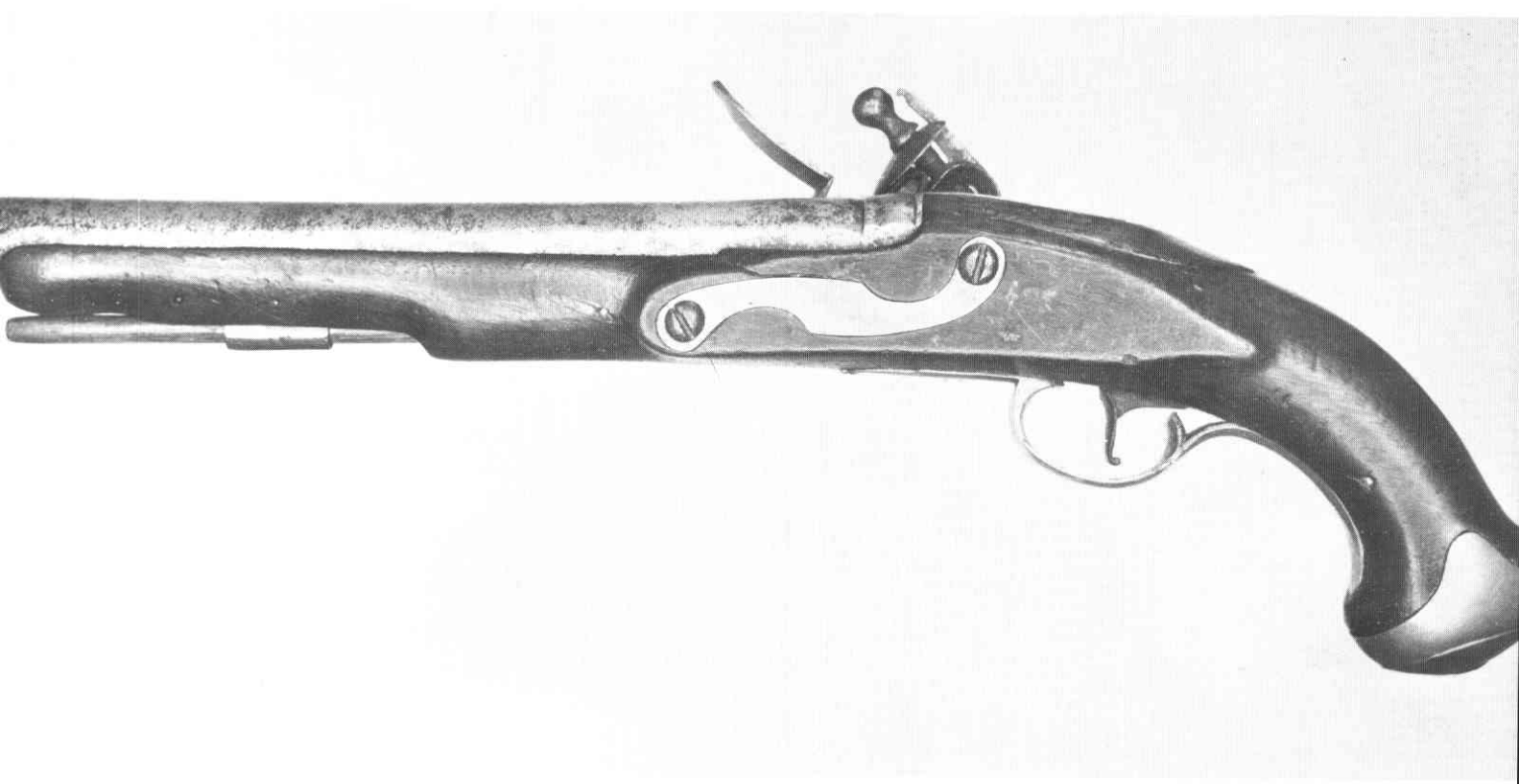


Figure 9A, B. Another example of a Rapa Forge pistol.



height; however, on some of the others, the "I" and "H" are taller than the other letters. Another example of crude workmanship can be seen in the raised turning at the breech end of the barrel. The top of the turning is wider than the bottom. So far as I can tell, this pistol is all original, with the possibility that the ram rod thimble is a replacement. The fore end of the wood stock has been repaired.

Figure 9 is in the collection of Ed Bitter of Long Island, New York. It is quite similar to the pistol previously shown; however, there are a few minor variations in the two. Neither this pistol, or the one previously shown, is martially marked. This one has the usual "Rapa Forge" in two lines behind the cock, and "I Hunter" is engraved on the barrel. The cock holding screw is the large flat head type, the top end of the frizzen spring is slightly moon shaped, and there is no distinct "hump" on the bottom portion of the frizzen. While the cock holding screw is the flat head type, the two side plate screws are the high rounded head type as found on the other Rapa Forge pistols. This gun also has the raised "beaver tail" around the barrel tang, as well as the raised turning at the breech end of the barrel. Figure 10 shows a close-up of the "I Hunter" engraving on the barrel, and you will note that all the letters are the same height.

Figure 11 is in the collection of Samuel E. Smith—one of our members whom some of you might know! The "Rapa Forge" marking is in two lines behind the cock, but the name "I Hunter" is not engraved on the barrel. It appears that the cock holding screw is the flat head type, the end of the top portion of the frizzen spring is straight, and there is a "hump" on the bottom portion of the frizzen. He thinks his pistol has been re-stocked; however, if it has, it was certainly done contemporary with the gun's use. He could be right, for the grip appears to be a bit longer than those previously shown, and there doesn't seem to be as much curve in the grip. Repairs have been made to the fore end of the wood stock, and with possible exception of the re-stocking, the balance of the gun is original. The back side of the same pistol shows the two side plate screws to be the high rounded head type, and the breech end of the barrel has the raised turning. The most interesting feature in this photo is the martial markings on the side plate. A clearer view of these markings can be seen in figure 12 which is a close-up of the side plates of the Samuel E. Smith pistol and a Rapa Forge pistol in the collection of Joe Desserich. The top pistol is that of Samuel E. Smith and the martial marking is "P L D No 34 1 T". The bottom pistol is Joe Desserich's and the martial marking

Figure 10. Detail of Figure 9.





Figure 11A, B. Another example of the Rapa Forge pistol in the Samuel E. Smith Collection.

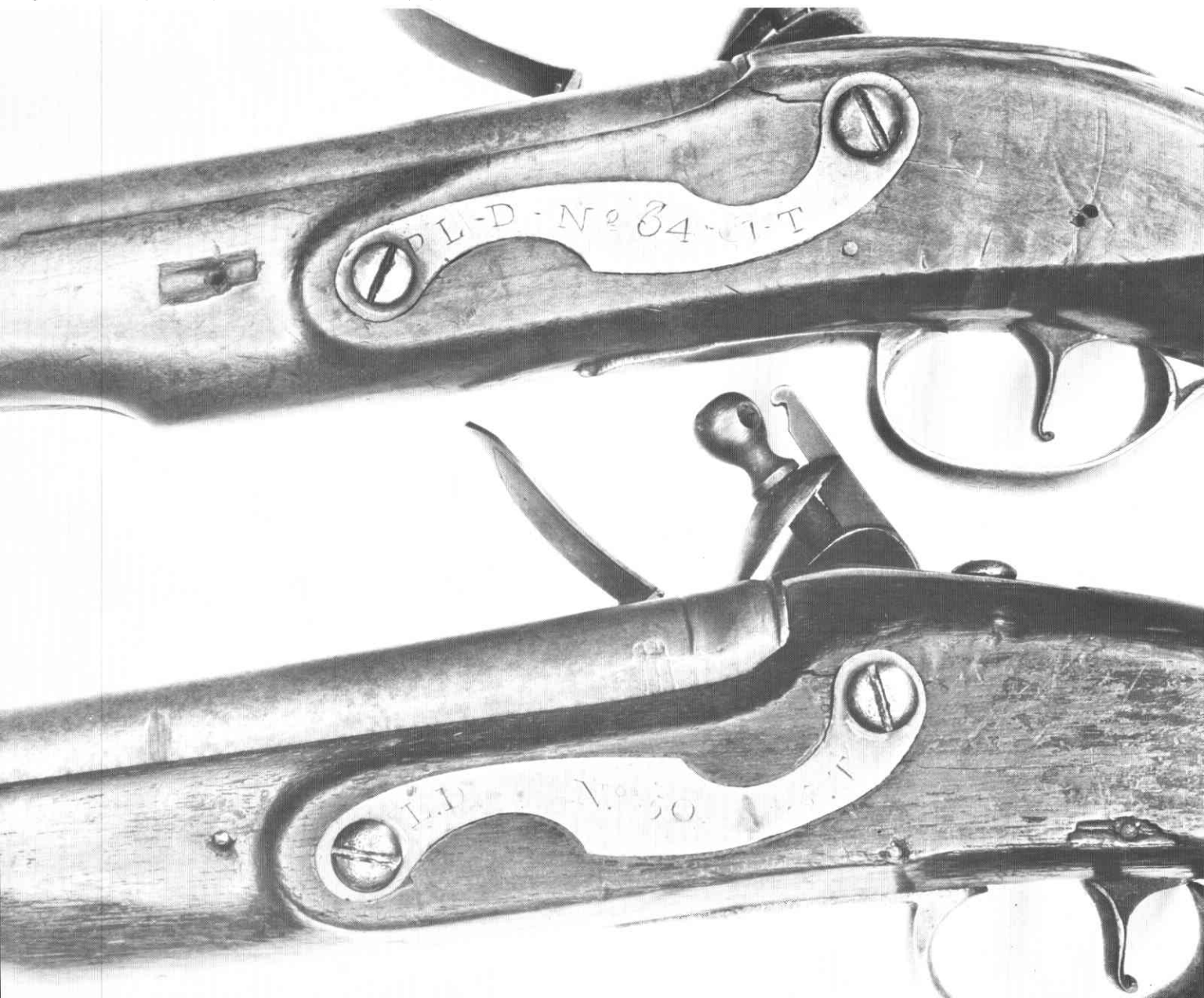


is "A L D No 50 T". There will be more on Joe Desserich's pistol later. In addition to the martial marking on the side plate, the Samuel E. Smith pistol has another one. Although I don't have a photo of this marking, it has RGT engraved on the brass butt plate. There is an interesting story behind this gun also. It first came into the hands of the gun collecting fraternity via a "picker" who spotted it in the attic of a New England farm house, while attempting to buy some antique furniture. In the event you live in a part of the country that has no "pickers", a "picker" is a person who goes to old homes, etc. searching for old things to buy to sell to collectors or dealers. The "picker" sold the pistol to William E. Florence, who immediately traded it to Samuel E. Smith.

This next pistol is the one I previously mentioned as being in Joe Desserich's collection (figure 13). The martial markings on the side plate were previously given, and the brass butt plate is marked "3 RGT" in one line. This pistol is a

re-conversion. For those of you who are interested, this pistol (as it was originally re-converted) is pictured in Plates 55-56-57 of Albaugh and Simmons CONFEDERATE ARMS. Apparently, the person who performed the original re-conversion wasn't too familiar with the original lock assembly of the Rapa Forge pistols, for Plate 56 clearly shows a rain-proof pan, which is much too late an improvement for the Rapa Forge pistol era. This same plate also shows a flat "ring neck" or reinforced cock, rather than the "goose neck" cock of the Rapa Forge pistol. In piecing together information given to me, it would appear that this pistol was originally in the collection of Richard D. Steuart of Baltimore, and upon his death, it was purchased by William Locke, who possibly sold it to Mr. Riss. Harry Knode was the next owner and from there, I know not. The lower closeup in figure 13 shows the changes made from the original re-conversion to more conform to the true Rapa Forge lock. The cock and pan are now the proper

Figure 12. Side plates of the Samuel E. Smith (top) and Desserich (lower) pistols.



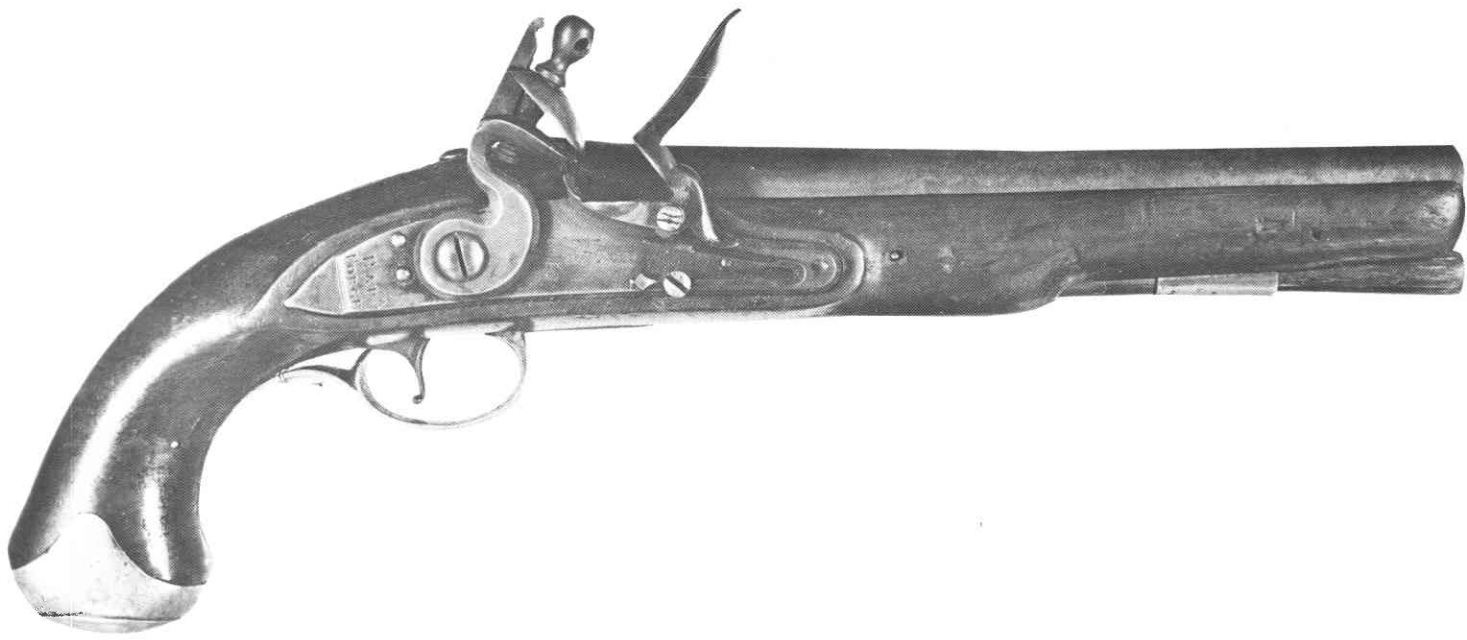


Figure 13A, B. The Desserich Rapa pistol.



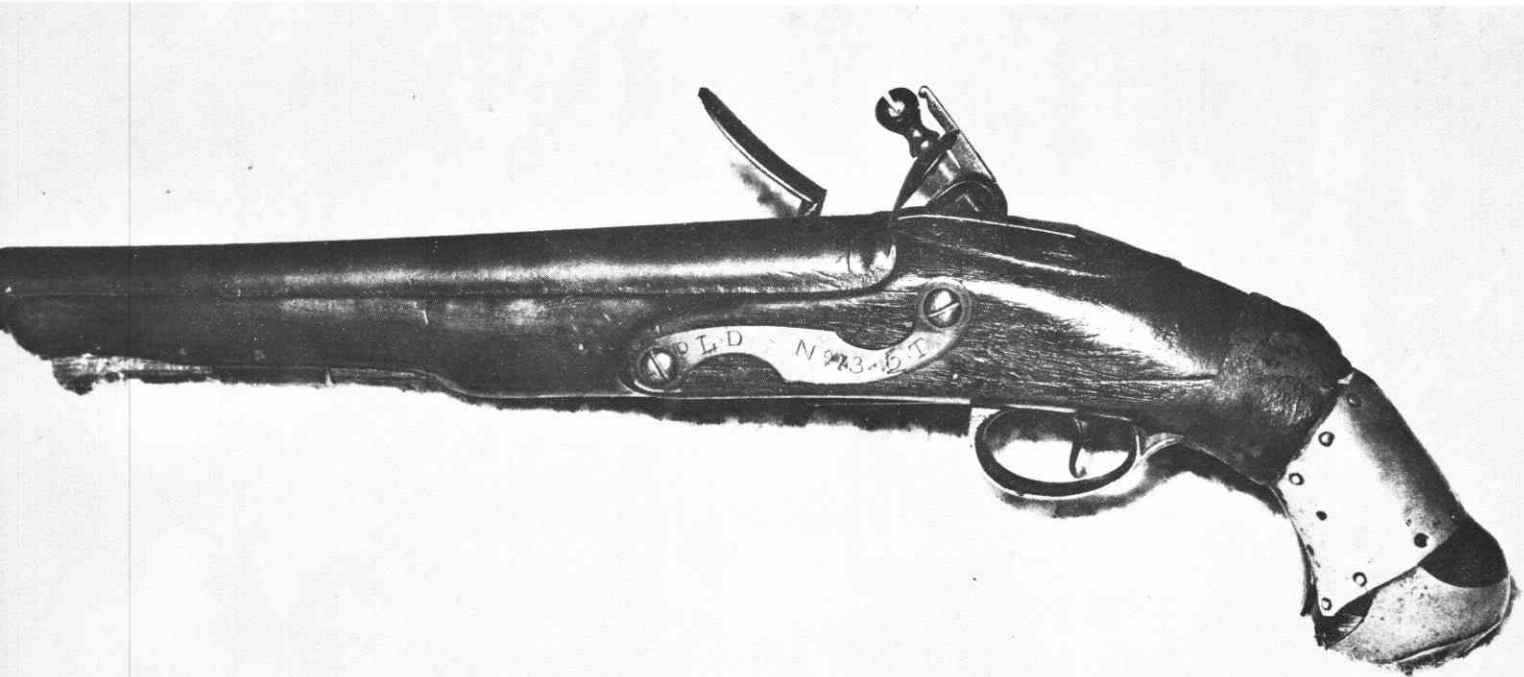
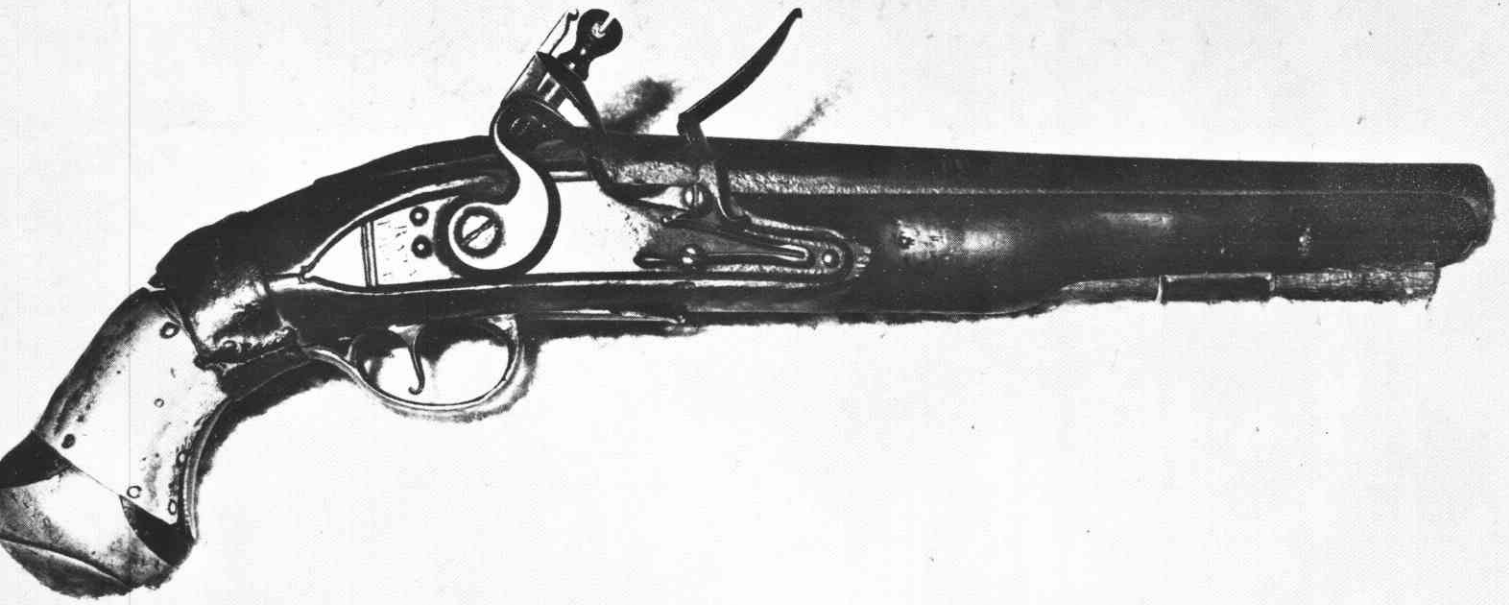


Figure 14A, B, C. The Peterson Rapa Forge pistol.

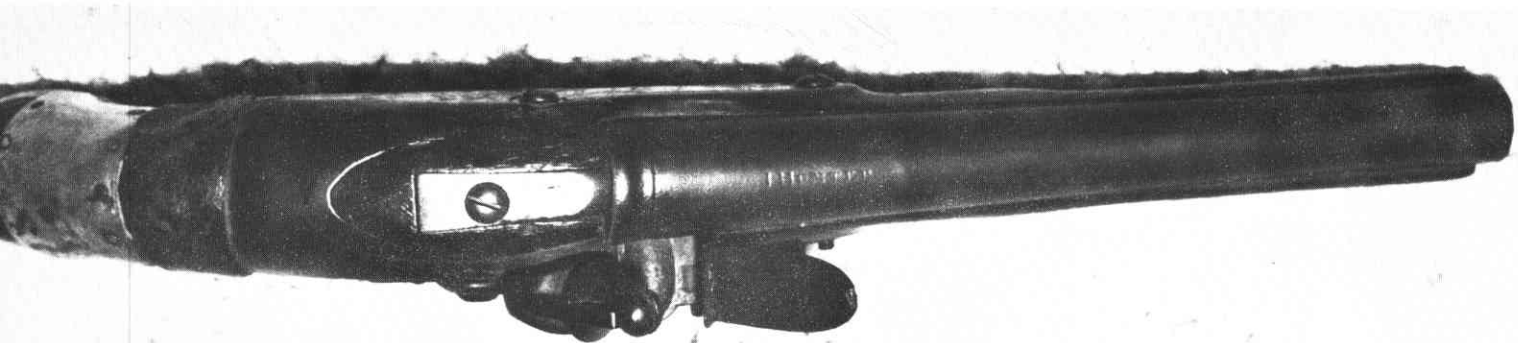
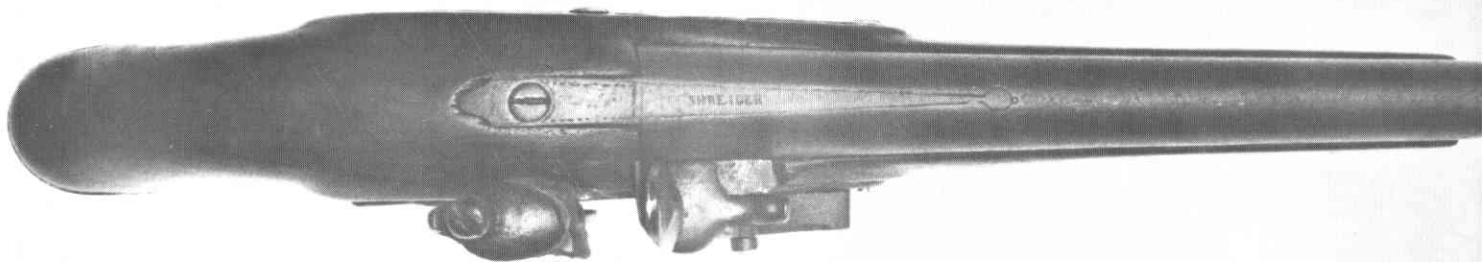




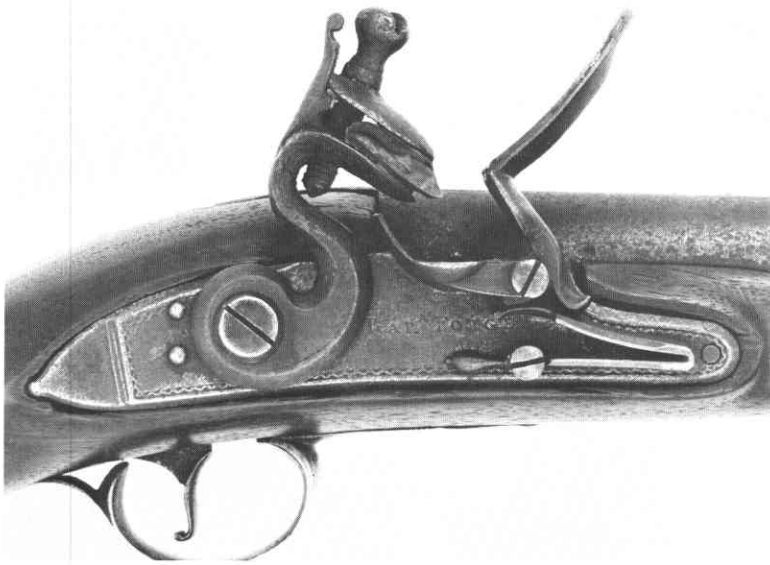
Figure 15A, B, C. The Wertemberger Rapa Forge pistol.



type. In checking this photo with the lock close-up as shown in Plate 56 of CONFEDERATE ARMS, it appears that in addition to the cock and pan, the frizzen and frizzen spring were also replaced. The lock—as it now is—is certainly closer to the true Rapa Forge lock.

The pistol in figure 14 is in the collection of one of our members, Dr. Walter Peterson. The outside markings are the usual "Rapa Forge" in two lines behind the cock, and "I Hunter" on the barrel. This one has the large flat head cock holding screw, and the top end of the frizzen spring is straight. There is very little "hump" at the base of the frizzen. You will note that the back side of this gun is martially marked in the same place as the two previously shown. The side plate is engraved "P L D No 13 2 T". "3 RGT" is engraved on the brass butt cap. There is an additional marking on this pistol that is not on the two previously shown. In addition to "I Hunter" engraved on the barrel, "P L D" is also

engraved on the barrel. This pistol also has the raised "beaver tail" and the raised turning at the breech end of the barrel. To me, this pistol has quite a bit of character in the form of the wrist repair. This repair is a brass sheet, held by mostly brass nails and a few scattered iron nails. The leather wrap is stiched with sinew, and this leather wrap apparently conceals a large screw that was used for further reinforcement. The top view shows the "I Hunter" marking on the barrel. The "I" and "H" are taller than the other letters. This photo is a bit dark, and although the "I Hunter" is visible, the "P L D" cannot be seen. This pistol first came to light with Val Forgett, who obtained it from the family who had it as a "hand-me-down" item. This family originally resided in Boston, but they were living in New Jersey when Val obtained the gun. While residing in Boston, this "pirate pistol" (as they called it) was given to one of their ancestors, for protection, by an "American" pirate



Figures 16 and 17. Details of the Wertemberger pistol.



sea Captain (who was a family friend) just before he sailed from the Port of Boston as a Privateer Captain. This history is the “word of mouth” system previously mentioned, and it is only natural that possibly each generation embellished the story just a bit, winding up with the “pirate gun” nickname. This pistol is 100% original.

Figure 15 is a very interesting pistol, and it is in the collection of one of our members, James M. Wertenberger. Credit however, for technical information furnished to me, and some of the photographs, must go to Walter O'Connor of California. Prior to James M. Wertenberger's acquisition of this pistol, I had corresponded with Mr. O'Connor, who sent me copies of his file on this particular pistol. He had completely disassembled this pistol, and listed each part as to size, marking (if any)—even down to the number of original and replacement pins that traverse the stock! Thank heavens for dedicated researchers, particularly those who will share their information and knowledge with others!

This is another gun with recorded lineage—and very interesting! This pistol was sold at a public farm sale in Chester County, Pennsylvania in 1908. It was purchased by H. Mercer—an early arms collector-shooter—for the magnificent sum of \$1.25! Mr. Mercer's collection, consisting of some 40 guns, came into the hands of Donald Mercer, his son, in 1955. In 1967, Donald wrote to the POWDER FLASK column of THE GUN REPORT seeking information on this pistol. His letter was published in this column in the August, 1967 issue. A west coast dealer saw the letter, contacted Mr. Mercer, bought the collection, and Walter O'Connor acquired the pistol from this dealer, and subsequently sold it to James M. Wertenberger.

Several variations from the pistols previously shown occur in this one. On the back side, you will note the side plate is similar to some of the Pennsylvania rifle side plates, rather than the “Lazy S” on the others. There are two ram rod thimbles, instead of one. The raised turning at the breech end of the barrel is missing, and there is no “beaver tail” surrounding the barrel tang. The side plate screws, as on the others, are the high rounded head type. Figure 16 is a close-up of the lock, and we can see the rope-like engraving outlining the lock plate. The “Rapa Forge” marking is in *one line in front of the cock*, rather than in *two lines behind the cock* as on the others shown. Another slight variation is the period, or dot, behind the “Rapa” and “Forge”, which do not appear on the previous pistols shown, and there is no small dash or dashes under the small raised second “A” of “Rapa”. The frizzen spring has the semi-moon shape at the end of the top portion, and the “hump” on the bottom of the frizzen is not as pronounced. At the bottom of figure 15 is a bird's eye view showing the barrel marking. In addition to the lack of the raised turning at the breech end, there are two more barrel variations. First, the barrel tang terminates in a stepped down, blunted point, while those on

the others just shown are squared at a right angle to the tang itself. Second, there is a 3½” tapering flat with an engraved outline, and the name “Shreider” is engraved in this area. Thus far, no one—including myself—has been able to identify this name. As I mentioned previously, the pistol in my collection shows some “shoddy” workmanship, and figure 17 is shown to bring out one feature in particular that certainly shows more effort. In addition to the engraving on the lock plate and side plate, plus fancier ram rod thimbles with raised rings at the ends, note the inletting on the bottom of the lock cavity of the wooden stock. The tumbler, as seen in the inside view of the lock, has what I call the “parrot head” shape. Note that in the bottom of the lock cavity, the inletting is very neatly done to accommodate the shape of the tumbler.

When this pistol was originally purchased by the elder Mr. Mercer, the top jaw of the cock was missing. Although the remainder of the cock was contemporary with the gun's use, it was not the proper type. The cock has been replaced, and 4⅞” of the fore end of the stock—which was missing—has been replaced. The balance of the gun is original.

The pistol in figure 18 is fancier (raised carvings and grotesque butt plate) than the one just shown. It has several characteristics in common with the one just shown. There are two ram rod thimbles. Figure 18 also shows the Rapa Forge marking on the barrel—which is brass, 70 caliber, and slightly belled at the muzzle. Note the long pie shaped barrel flat—similar to the one just shown—that terminates in an oval. The flower engraved in the oval is very similar to a flower engraved on the trigger guard bow of the previous pistol. Also, the rope-like engraving around the barrel tang is similar to the outline engraving surrounding the lock plate of the previous pistol. The style of the Rapa Forge engraving on the barrel—block letters with serifs—is similar to the other pistols; however, the letters on this pistol seem to be leaning to the right, while the letters on the others lean to the left. A dot, or period, is used under the high “A” of “Rapa” in lieu of the dashes on others. A close-up of the lock is shown only because some of you sharp eyed flint collectors might possibly have noticed a couple of things in the overall photo previously shown that doesn't quite stand up for a gun made during that period. You will note the lock has a rain proof pan, which is one of the last improvements made in the flint lock era. Also, the frizzen spring has a roller that isn't normally found on pistols of the Revolutionary War era, and the cock is the flat ring-neck, or reinforced type. On closer inspection, it is quite obvious that the entire lock is a later replacement. The original lock was longer, and had a pointed tail, as evidenced by the triangular wood plug to the rear of the rounded tail of the lock plate, and the moon shaped plug just forward of the front end of the lock plate. I do not

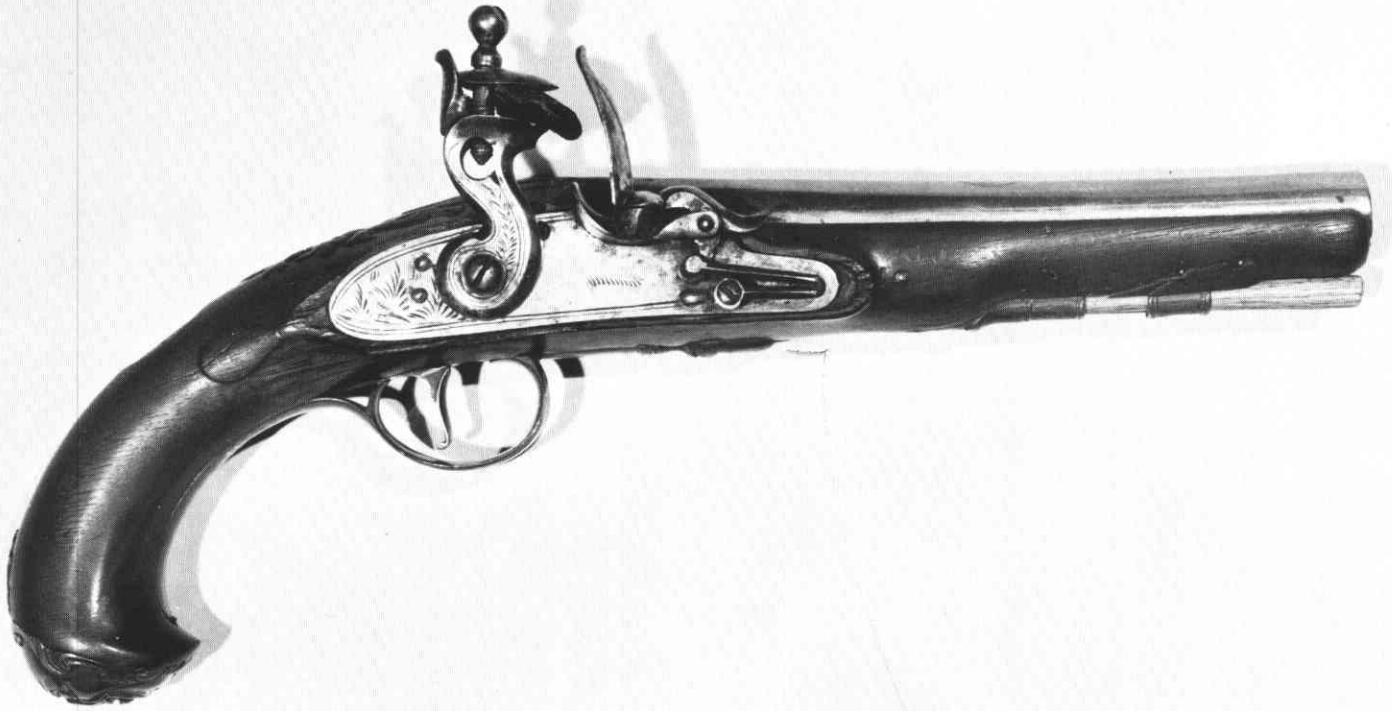
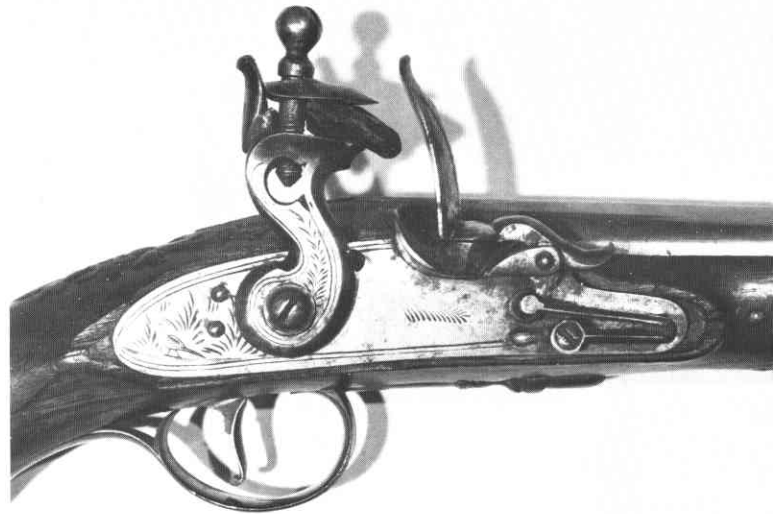
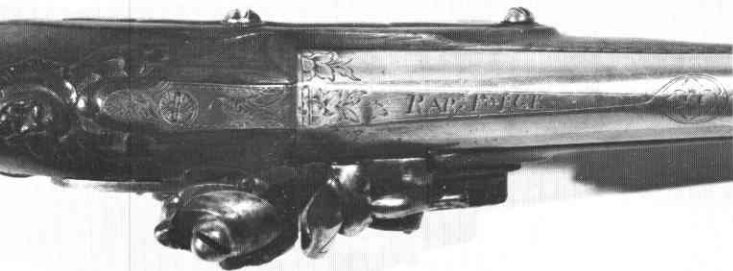


Figure 18A, B, C. Maryland Historical Society Rapapa Forge pistol.



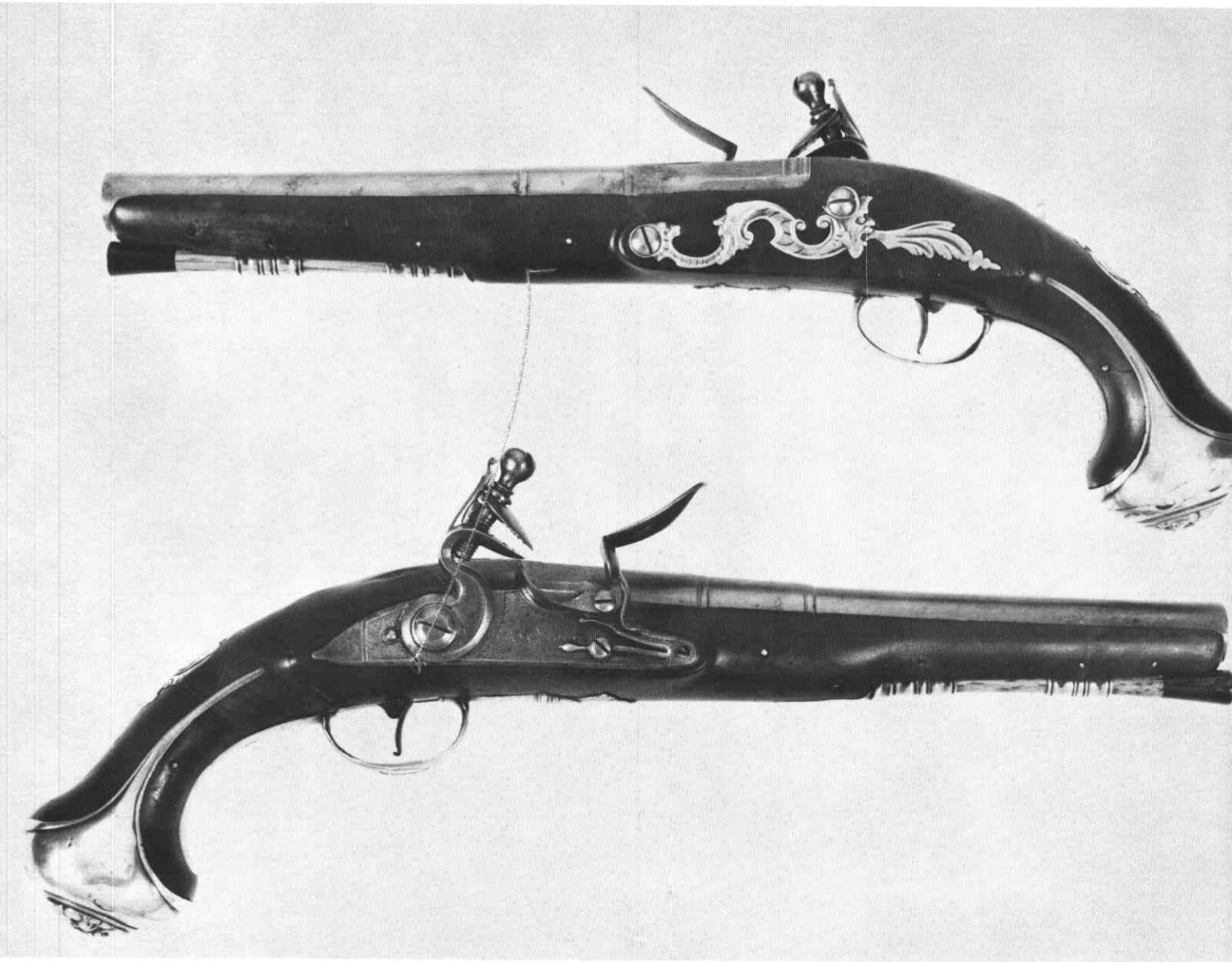


Figure 19. The General Charles Lee pistols on display at the Smithsonian Institution.

know if there are any assembler's marks on the wood stock or under the barrel, trigger guard, etc.

This pistol is on display at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, and has a famous background in the form of its original owner. In 1944, Mr. Lloyd Rawlings, of Baltimore, presented this pistol to the Maryland Historical Society, and stated that the pistol was originally owned by Col. Moses Rawlings. A check on Colonel Moses Rawlings reveals that on June 17, 1776, Congress decided that two additional companies of Riflemen should be raised in Maryland, and four in Virginia. Colonel Stephenson, a Virginian, was Commander of one of these Companies, and his second in command was Colonel Rawlings, a Marylander. Recruitment did not go well, and most of the Regiment was captured at Fort Washington, on Nov. 16, 1776. Washington had been authorized to raise sixteen additional Regiments. On January 12, 1777, Moses Rawlings was appointed Colonel of one of these sixteen additional Regiments, presumably on the basis that Rawlings, after his exchange, could reorganize the remnants of his previous Regiment and re-raise it. This didn't work out too well, and on April 8, 1779 Rawlings Rifle Corps was ordered to incorporate into the

German Battalion. Rawlings couldn't take this, and he resigned sometime after May 11, 1779.

Many of you will probably recognize figure 19 for they are the famous General Charles Lee pistols on display at the Smithsonian, and they have been pictured in several books devoted to Revolutionary War arms. The pistols are 14 1/8" in overall length, the barrels are 8 3/4" long and 72 caliber. The butt caps and trigger guards are silver, and the ram rod thimbles are steel. Inspector's initials "IE" are stamped inside the locks, and there are no Roman numeral assembler's marks. Figure 20 is a close-up of one of the locks, and you will note the "Rapa Forge" is in *one* line in front of the cock, and the rope like engraving around the lock plate is similar to the engraving on James M. Wertenberger's pistol as well as the pistol in the Maryland Historical Society collection.

General Charles Lee was quite a person, and his Revolutionary War history is very interesting. Briefly, he was English and started his military career by entering his father's regiment in 1747. He was on Braddock's Campaign in 1755, went to the Mohawk Valley, purchased a Commission as a Captain, was adopted by the Mohawks and "married" the daughter of a Seneca Chief. He

Figure 20. Detail of one of the General Lee locks.



	BITTER	SWAYZE	SMITH	PETERSON	DESSERICH	WERTENBERGER
Overall Length (Straight)	15 5/16"	15 1/8"	14 5/8"	14 7/8"	14 3/8"	14 9/16"
Barrel Length	9 1/16"	8 15/16"	9"	9 1/16"	8 11/16"	8 13/16"
Cal.	.69	.67-.68	.67-.68	.66	.67	.68
Top	I HUNTER	I HUNTER	None	PLD I HUNTER	I HUNTER	SHREIDER
Under	VIII (on Barrel) VIII (on Bbl. Tang)	V (on Barrel) IV (on Bbl. Tang)	XIII	XI	Can't Remove	C
Wood Stock	VIII (in Bottom of Ram Rod Channel)	V (in Bottom of Ram Rod Channel)	?	XI (in Bottom of Ram Rod Channel)	None	None
Outside Lock Plate	"RAPA Forge" (In Two Lines Behind Cock)	"RAPA Forge" (In Two Lines Behind Cock)	"RAPA Forge" (In Two Lines Behind Cock)	"RAPA Forge" (In Two Lines Behind Cock)	"RAPA Forge" (In Two Lines Behind Cock)	"RAPA Forge" (One Line In FRONT of Cock)
Inside Lock Plate	FK K VII VIII	FK K VII	IP K XIII	IP H II XI	Can't Read (Too Pitted)	IE IP
Trigger Guard	(Can't Remove)	(Can't Remove)	(Can't Remove)	(Can't Remove)	(Can't Remove)	XI
Butt Cap	VIII	None	(Can't Remove)	XI	(Can't Remove)	XI
Inside Side Plate	VIII	V	XIII	XI	?	X
Ram Rod Thimble	VIII	V	?	?	?	None
Back Side of Cock	VI	VII	None	(Can't Remove)	Reconversion	(Cock is Replacement)
Cock Tang	?	None	?	II	Reconversion	(Cock is Replacement)
Frizzen	?	VII	?	None	Reconversion	None
Arm of Sear	VIII	VII	None	None	II III (Inside Main Spg.)	III
Screws: Lock Plate	(Can't Read)	V (on Both)	None	XI	?	None
BBL Tang	VIII	V	XXI	XI	?	None
Butt Cap	None	None	(Can't Remove)	None	?	None
Martial Markings	None	None	PLD #34 1T RGT	PLD #13 2T 3-R-GT	ALD #50 5T RGT	None

served with distinction under Burgoyne in Portugal, and retired on half pay in November 1763. In 1765 he became a soldier of fortune in the Polish army, went back to England, and came to America in 1773, where he immediately became associated with the revolutionary element. Seeing possibilities for himself, he advocated the raising of an army, and proceeded to purchase an estate in West Virginia. In 1775, Congress appointed him a Major General. Some of his characteristics came out when he served in the Siege of Boston, where "his dirty habits and obscenity gave offense", but he was "endured for what he was supposed to know". He even, at one time, attempted to discredit Washington, hoping to get his job. In the Monmouth Campaign, he didn't do well at all as a field commander, and this, in addition to his conduct afterward, resulted in a Court Martial trial, where he was vindicated. He was later dismissed from the service, and, as one historian

said in 1951 "An enigma Lee was—and still is".

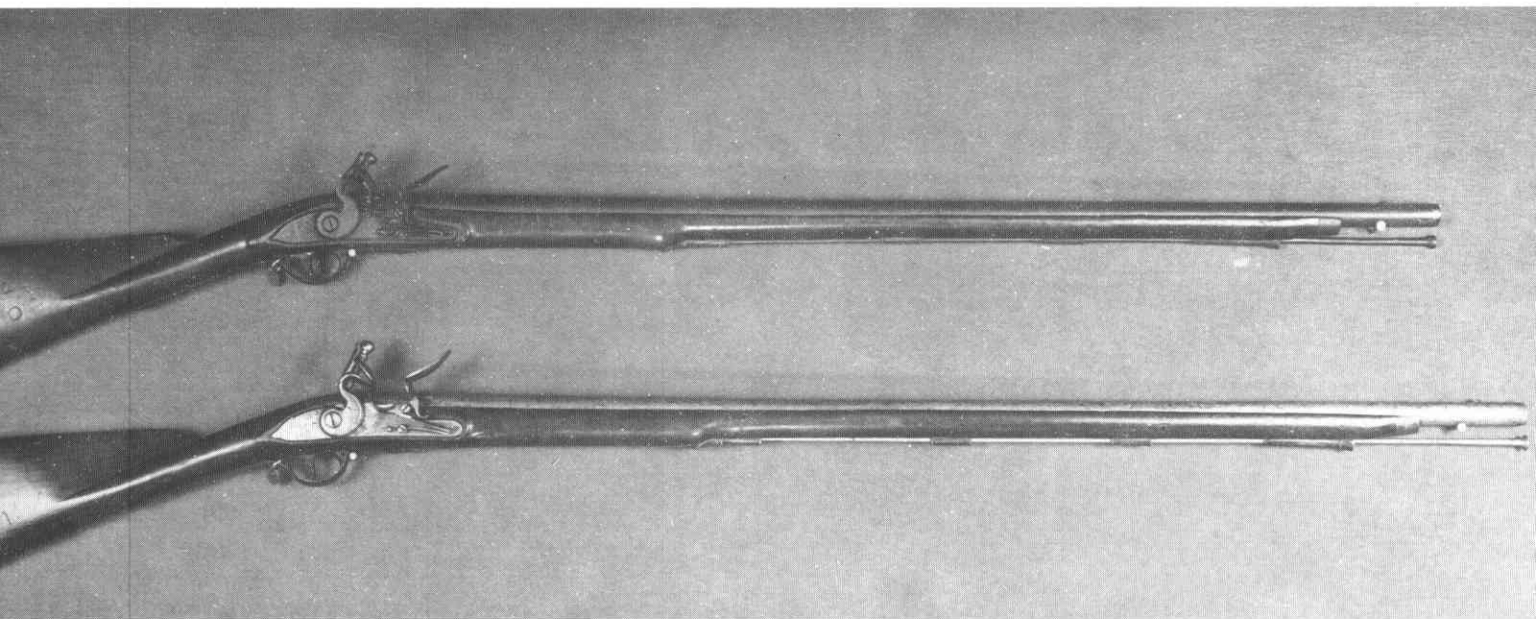
In showing the previous pistols, I only gave the outside markings; however, in giving the general description of the Rapa Forge pistols, I did mention that inspector's initials were stamped inside the lock plate, and assembler's marks (in the form of Roman numerals), were filed in various places. I did not give all the information on each pistol as it was shown, for it not only would have been time consuming, but it would probably have been boring to many of you. The columnar chart above gives all the information that I obtained on each pistol. The pistols in the first two columns are grouped together, because they are quite similar. The next three, in columns 3, 4 and 5, were grouped because they are martially marked. The question marks represent questions that weren't (or couldn't be) answered in the mail survey.

Figure 21 shows two muskets that are in the collection of one of our members, Robert B.

Berryman. With the exception of the barrel length, James Hunter used the Long Land Pattern—commonly called the “First Model”—British Brown Bess musket as a model for his muskets. The top musket is 57¾” in over-all length, and barrel is 41½”, approximately 80 caliber. The bottom musket is 60⅞” in overall length, and the barrel is 44”, approximately 80 caliber. The barrel length of the British Long Land Pattern is 46”. The top musket definitely doesn’t have a “chopped” barrel, as evidenced by the placement of the ram rod thimbles, and the swell in the wood stock just below the bottom ram rod thimble. Figure 22 shows a close-up of the locks of the same two muskets. The shorter musket is the top photo, and the longer musket is the bottom photo. Both have the usual “Rapa Forge” in two lines behind the cock, both cock holding screws are the large flat head type, the ends of the top portion of the frizzen springs are straight on both, and the bottom one has a distinct “hump” just above the curl, while the “hump” on the top one isn’t quite as distinct. In the first part of this paper, I mentioned certain minor differences in the pistols. One of those mentioned was the finial on the bottom portion of the frizzen spring; however, I did not point out these differences on the pistols. The two finials in this figure are a good example of this variance. Note the finial in the top photo is shaped like a tear drop, with a small rounded teat on the end, while the one in the bottom photo is shaped like the point of a spear. Another Long Land Pattern feature appears on the muskets. The top jaw of the cock rests on a shoulder milled on the inside of the tang of the cock, while the top jaw of some of the pistols are the “wrap-around” type, that is, the rear of the top jaw is slotted to where it fits

around three sides of the cock tang. The cock tang on the muskets are the thin, wide, flat type, while those on some of the pistols are the rectangular type. Inspector’s initials “IP” are stamped on the inside of the lock plate of these inside of the lock plates of the Smith, Peterson and Wertenberger pistols. Assemblers marks—Roman numeral II—are filed on many of the parts inside the lock of the shorter musket, and XIII is filed on many of the parts inside the lock of the longer musket. Figure 23 shows a bird’s eye view of the brass butt tangs of the two muskets. The long three stepped tang terminating in the small round finial is a close copy of the butt tang of the British Long Land Pattern musket. The “No 36” is the shorter musket, and this number is the musket’s issue number. The “No 411” is the longer musket. Figure 24 shows a bird’s eye view of the “I Hunter” engravings on the barrel. The “I” and “H” are taller than on the other letters. Note the two horizontal dashes between the “I” and “H” are the same as the two dashes that appear under the high “A” of “Rapa” on the pistols. The top barrel is the shorter of the two muskets, and the bottom barrel is the longer. A half moon is stamped under the breech end of the barrel of the longer musket; however, this half moon doesn’t appear under the barrel of the shorter musket. This same half moon (in approximately the same place) is stamped under the breech end of the barrel of James M. Wertenberger’s pistol, and this is the only pistol that has this stamping. Figure 25 shows the brass side plates of the two muskets. They are convex, and a copy of the British Long Land Pattern. The top photo is the short musket, and the bottom photo is the long musket. Note the two asterisks, or stars, stamped on the wood stock,

Figure 21. Rapa Forge Muskets.



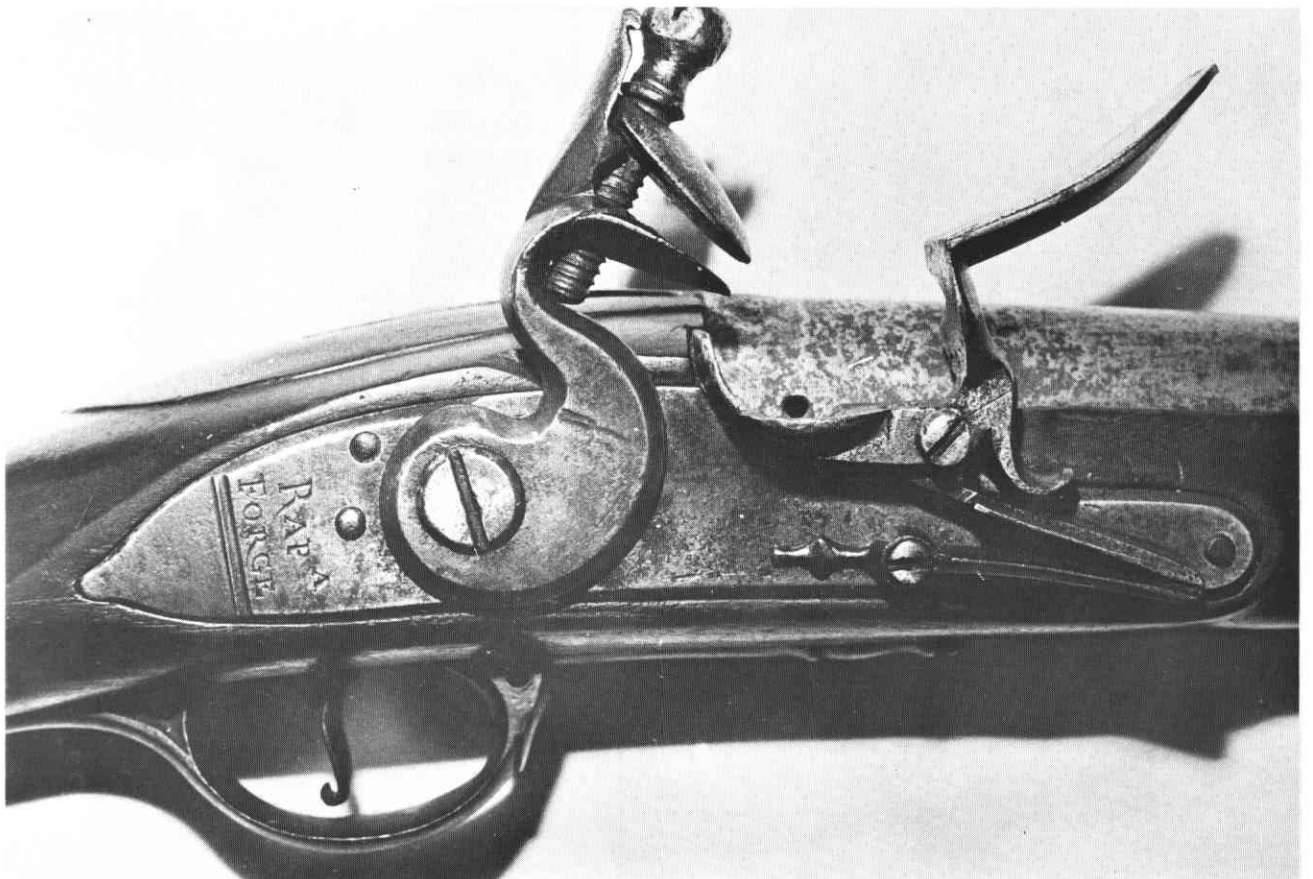
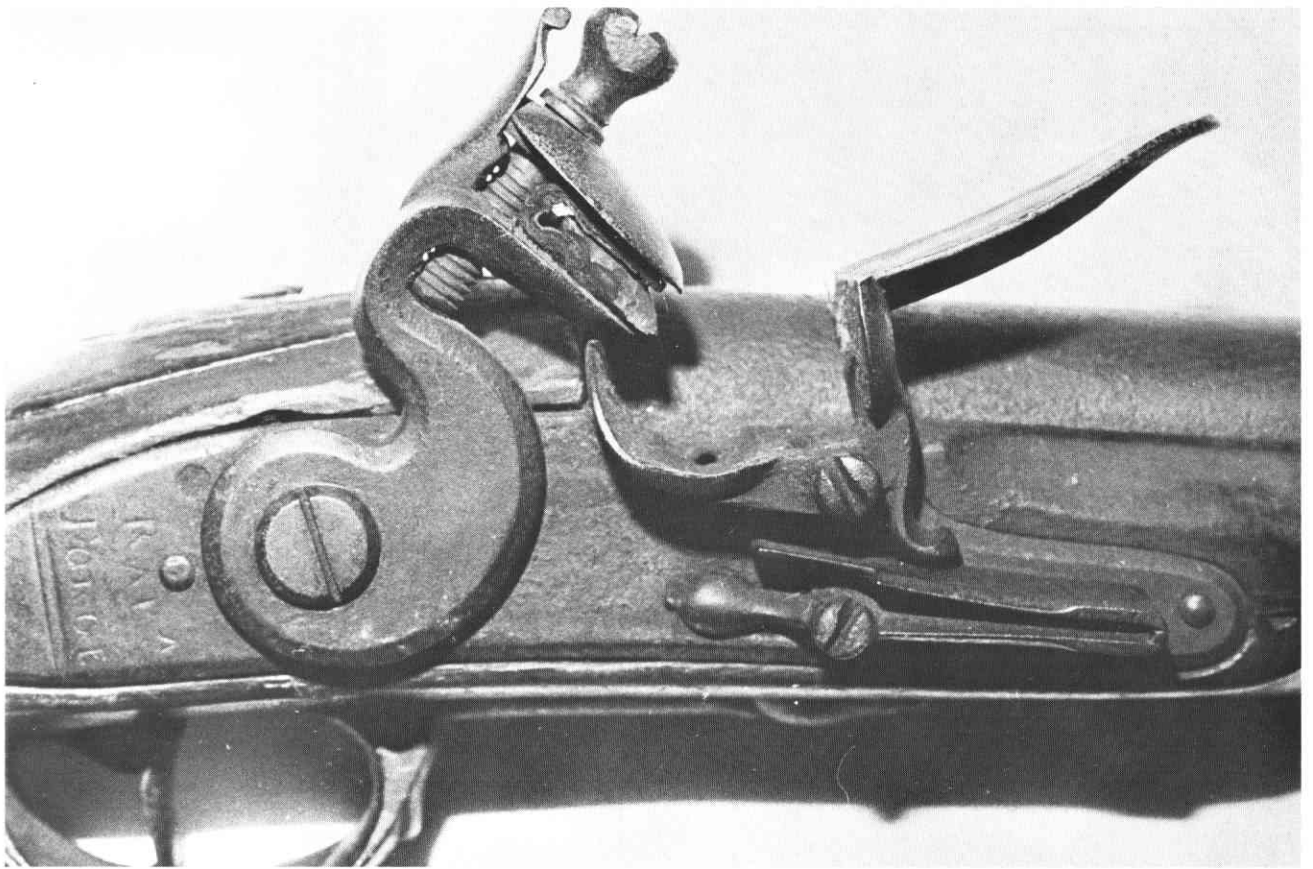
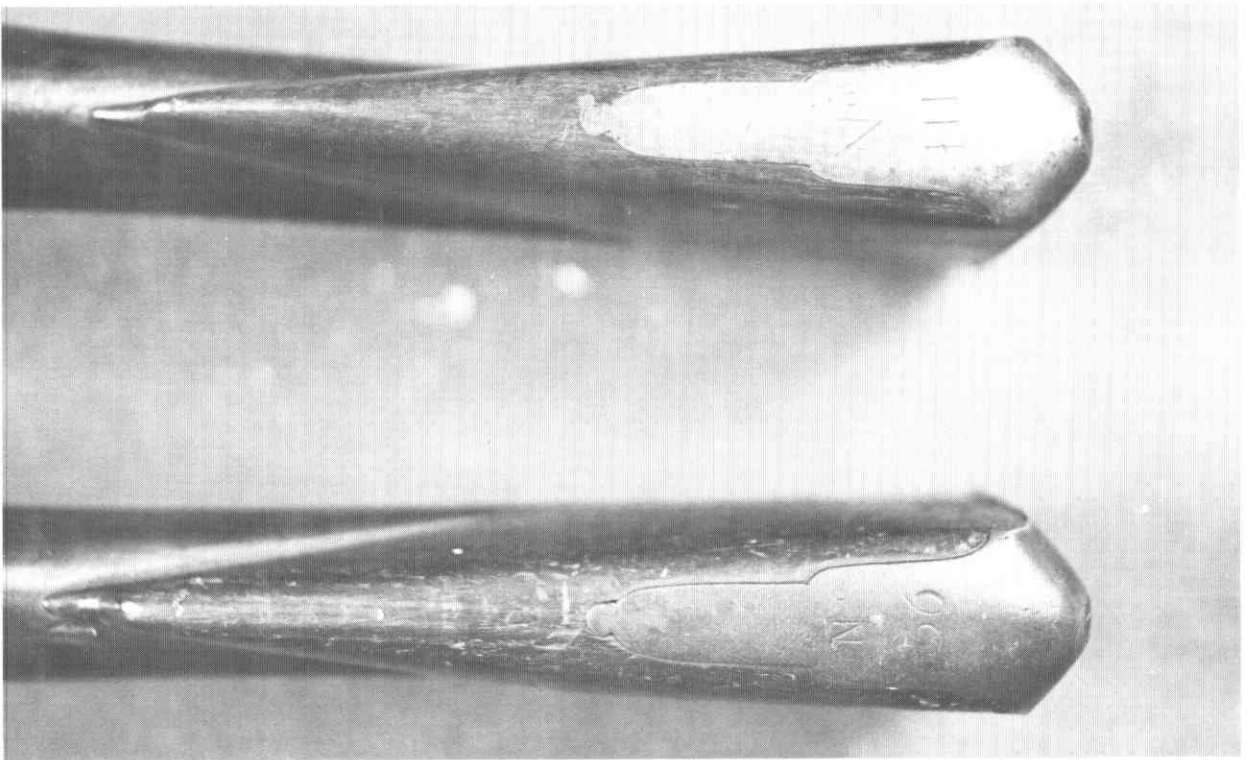
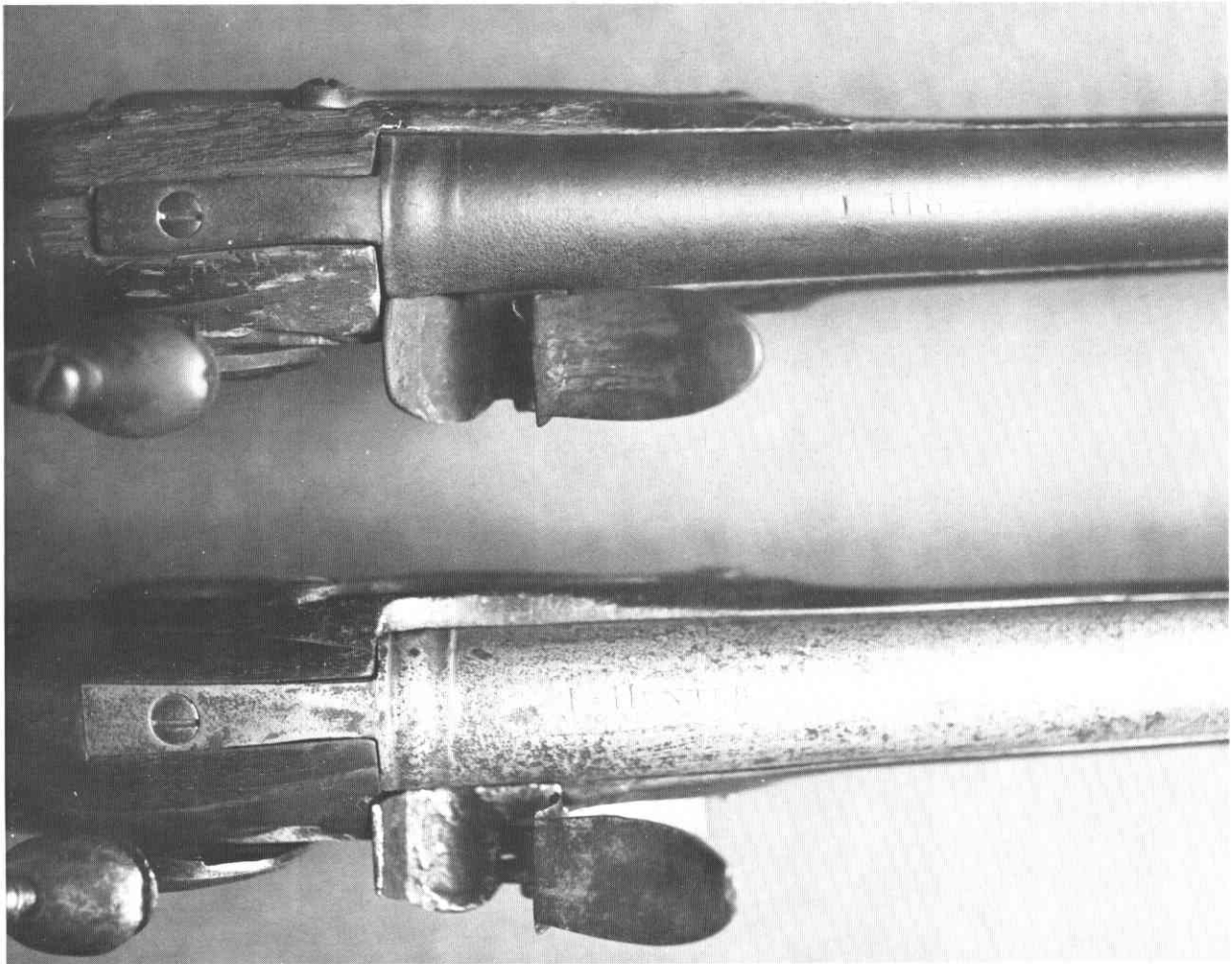
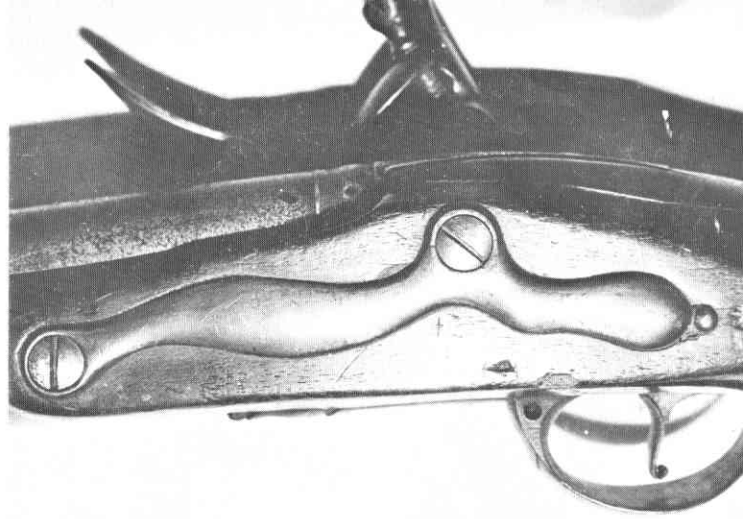
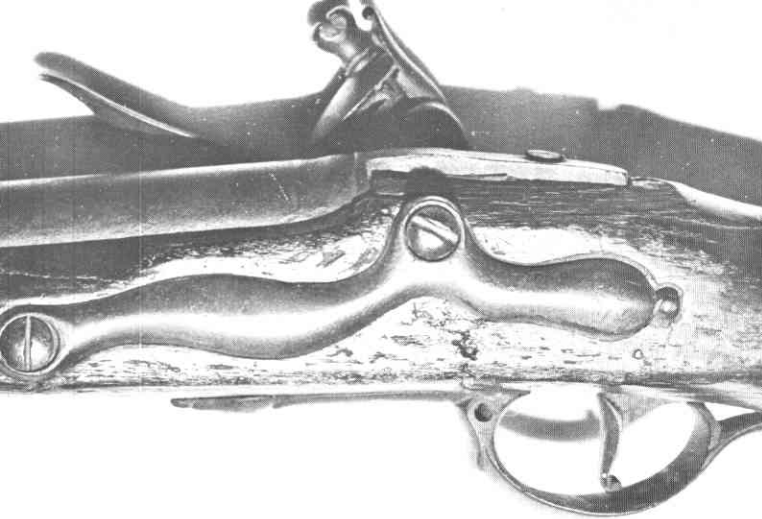


Figure 22. Details of Figure 21.



Figures 23 and 24. Details of Figure 21.





Figures 25 and 26.
Details of Figure 21.

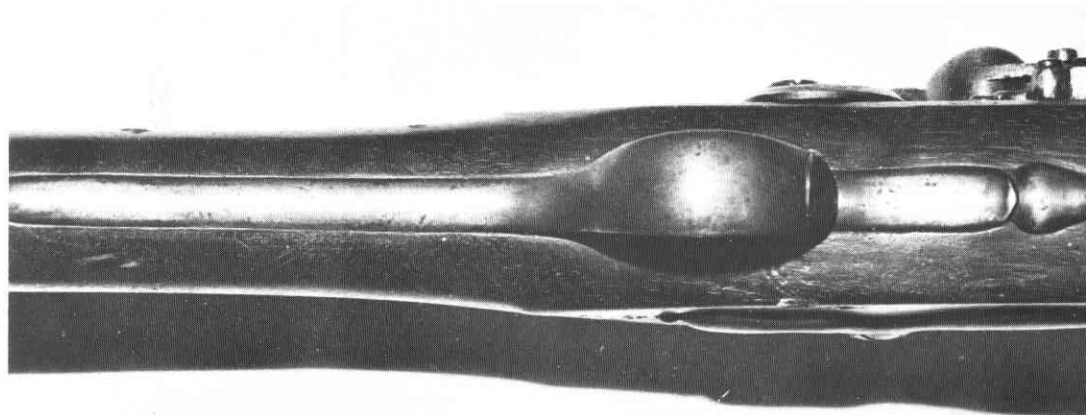
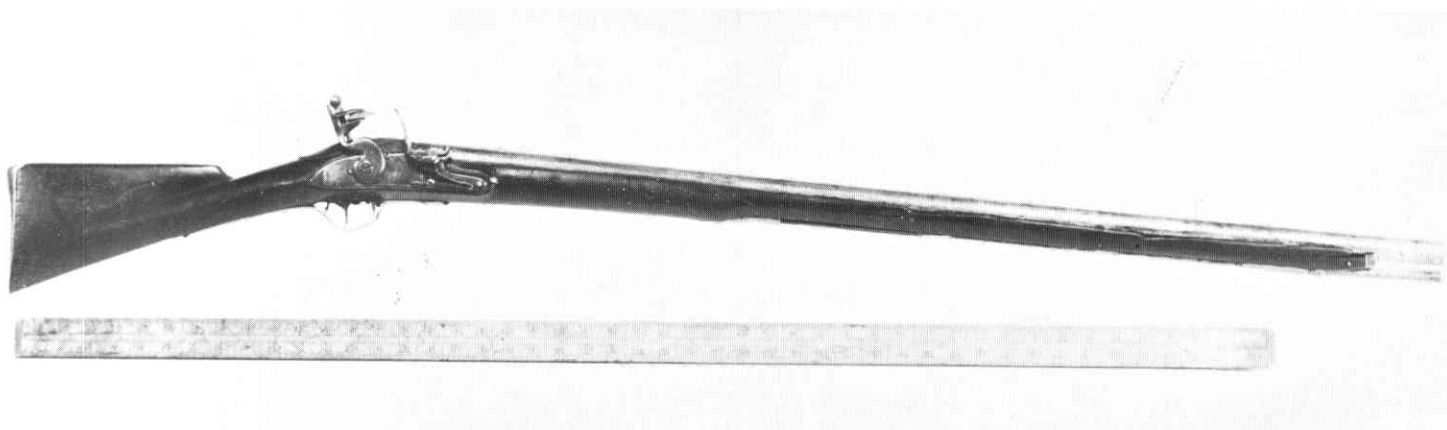


Figure 27. O'Neill Rapa Forge Musket.



just behind the side plate in figure 25. I do not know what these designate, and, as far as I know, this is the only Rapa Forge weapon that has this marking. Figure 26 shows the brass trigger guard of the longer musket, and it is a close copy of the Long Land Pattern trigger guard. Robert B. Berryman sent a small sample of the wood stock of the longer musket to the Wisconsin Wood Laboratory to ascertain the type of wood used to make the stock. The laboratory analysis showed that the wood is American Black Walnut. The next musket (figure 27) was, at one time, in

the collection of Art O'Neill, a former member of the American Society who died in 1961. Using a magnifying glass, and the measuring stick, as closely as I could figure, the overall length of this musket is 53½", and the barrel length is 40". Figure 28 shows a close-up of the lock, which has the same characteristics of the previous muskets. Figure 28 lower shows the brass butt plate, with the issue number as "No 576". I do not know the present whereabouts of the musket, whether "I Hunter" is engraved on the barrel, or whether any inspector's initials and assembler's marks are present.

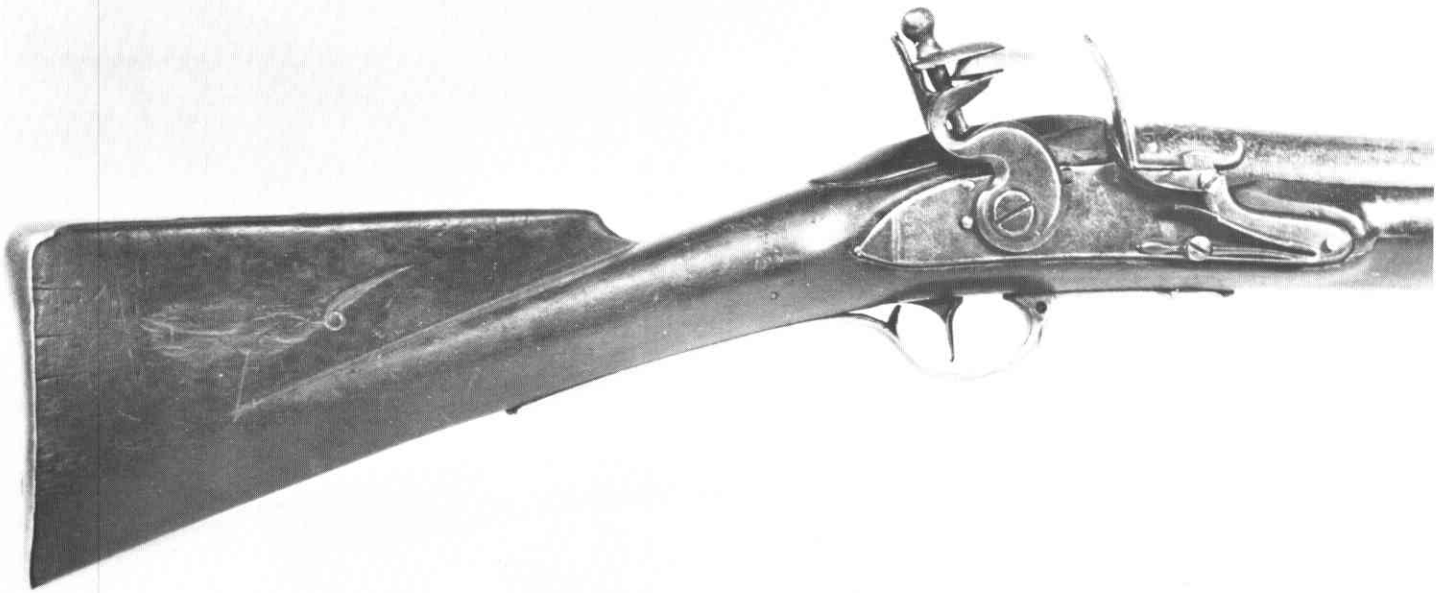


Figure 28A, B. Details of O'Neill Musket.

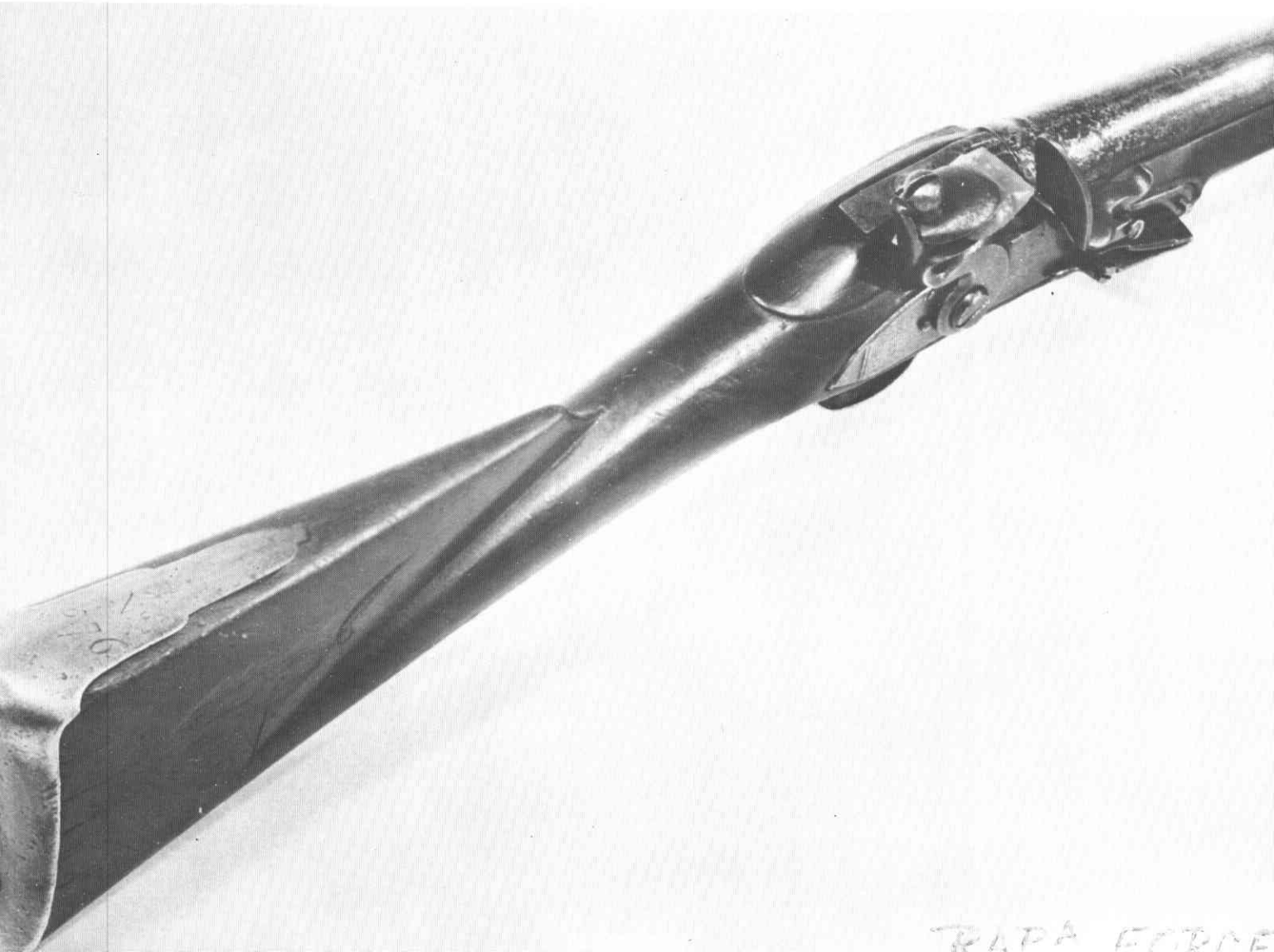




Figure 29A, B, C. Flanagan Rapa Forge Musket.

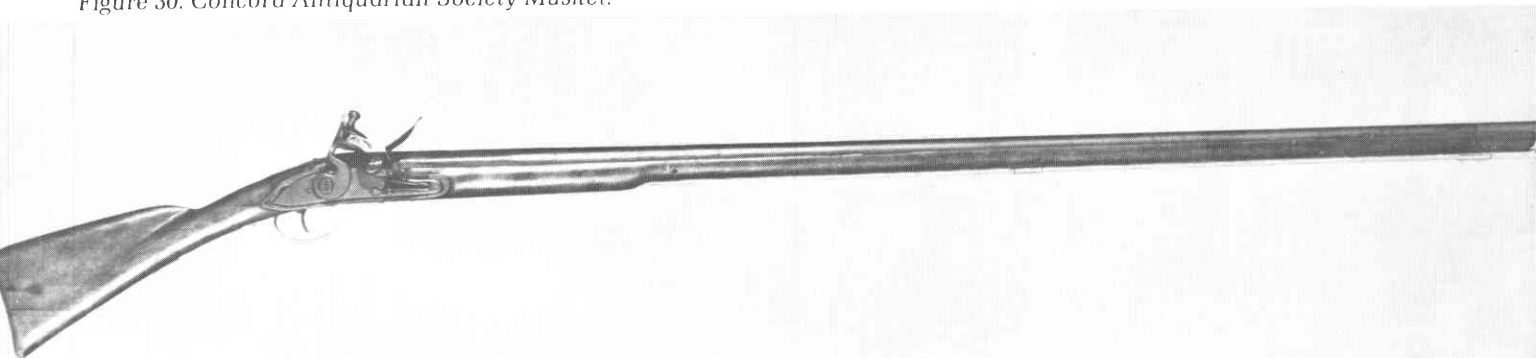


Figure 29 is a close-up of the lock plate of a Rapa Forge musket recently acquired by one of our members, Edward R. Flanagan. The firing system has been converted to percussion, and—unfortunately—other changes have been made. It is in “attic” condition, has been changed into a half stock fowling piece, and the butt end of the wood stock has been lengthened by adding a 2” piece, filling the old tang inletting, and adding a new shotgun butt piece. Unfortunately, the original brass butt plate did not come with the gun; so the issue number is unknown. The side plate is the same as on the other muskets. The “I Hunter” engraving is on the barrel, with the “I” and “H” being taller than the other letters

as on the other muskets.

During an earlier portion of this presentation, I gave the information that—according to the book that the younger Banks wrote about his father—James Hunter was making arms “shortly after the war began”. I also mentioned a musket that might possibly pre-date this information. This musket (figure 30) is known as the “Meriam Musket”, and it is in the collection of the Concord Antiquarian Society. It is the subject of a very interesting, and well written, article in the November, 1973 issue of *THE GUN REPORT*, entitled *JOSIAH MERIAM, PATRIOT GUNSMITH*, by Willard C. Cousins. Briefly, Josiah

Figure 30. Concord Antiquarian Society Musket.



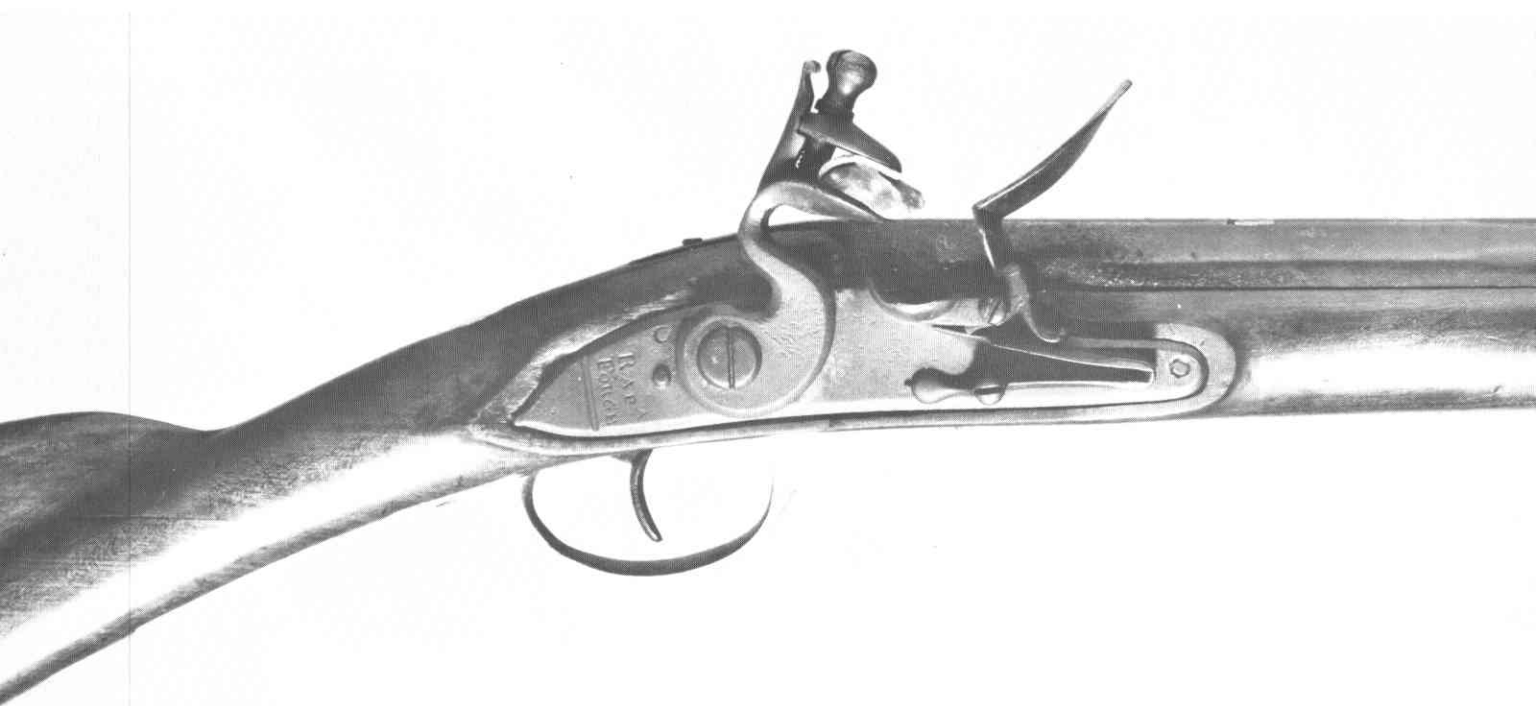


Figure 31. Lock of the musket in Figure 30.

Meriam was a gunsmith who resided in Concord, Massachusetts. His father, who was also a gunsmith, made the original dog lock musket during the French and Indian War, circa 1702-1714. The barrel was the most serviceable part of the musket; so the re-stocking was done around the barrel, shortly before the outbreak of the Revolution. Josiah Meriam was a Sargeant in Lt. Joseph Hosmer's company of Minutemen, during the march on Lexington and Concord. He used this musket in the battle at the North Bridge. My first thought in reading this article was whether or not the Rapa Forge lock was a later addition to the re-stocked musket. (Figure 31) This is a close-up of this lock. I wrote to Mr. Cousins and asked if he, or anyone else, had carefully examined the lock cavity in the wood stock to determine if there was any evidence of re-inletting, or re-cutting, to accommodate a replacement lock. Mr. Cousins advised that he had personally examined the cavity in the wood stock, and also had his gunsmith (whom he considers to be one of the finest) to also examine this feature of the musket. Neither one of them found any evidence of a later fitted lock, and they both are convinced that the Rapa Forge lock is original with the re-stocking. Mr. Cousins spent many, many hours checking the family geneology and lineage on this musket. Assuming all of the documented geneology and lineage is correct, this does present evidence of pre-Revolutionary gun work by Hunter; however, I know of no other evidence to substantiate this early entrance into the gun making business.

And now let's get down to that nasty little four letter word that all honest collectors, and dealers,

abhor. It's spelled F-A-K-E.

There seems to be two schools of thought regarding information on fakes. One school believes it is wrong to publish information on fakes, for it gives the faker information—and ideas. The other school believes that the more information given to collectors on possible fakes, the better off we will all be. I'm afraid that I am a member of the second school of thought, for the information given to collectors probably more than offsets the information that a faker will pick up. He'll probably get the information anyway—and he usually manages to trip himself up on some minute detail that he has overlooked!

There can be little doubt that James Hunter used the British early Light Dragoon pistol as a pattern for his Rapa Forge pistol. The top pistol in figure 32 is an early British Light Dragoon pistol, while the bottom pistol is a Rapa Forge pistol. The early British Light Dragoon pistol was introduced circa 1759; so it stands to reason that some were in the Colonies at the outbreak of the Revolution. Many of these British pistols were made by individual contractors, and others were assembled at the Tower and Dublin Castle; so variations do occur, not only from the standpoint of individual gunmakers styles, or whims, but also from standard changes made over the years. The early English Light Dragoon pistols were made with flat lock plates and flat goose neck (as well as flat reinforced throat) cocks, as well as rounded lock plates with rounded goose neck cocks. Some had only one ram rod thimble, while others had two. I have selected this photo of an early British Light Dragoon pistol, because it has the flat lock plate

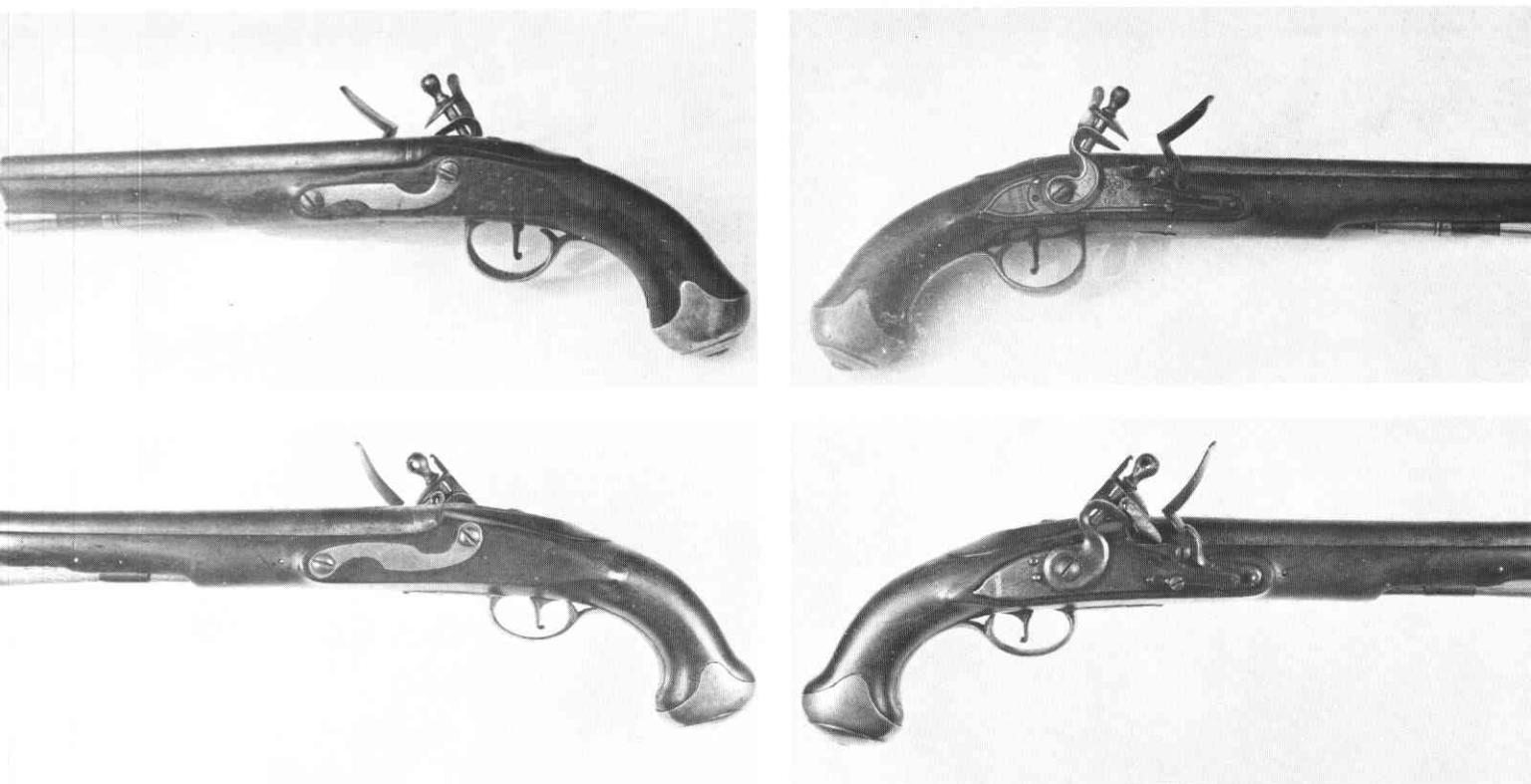


Figure 32. A Dublin Castle Light Dragoon pistol (top) and a Rapa Forge pistol (lower).

with a flat goose neck cock, which is the same as the Rapa Forge pistol. This pistol has “Dublin Castle” behind the cock, and it is in the collection of Warren Moore. Looking at the reverse side of these two pistols, you will notice the similarity of the two pistols as to shape, hardware and the “Lazy S” sideplate. Note also that both have the raised “beaver tail” surrounding the barrel tang, and raised turnings at the breech end of the barrel, that is so common on most of the British military weapons.

Although I know of none that exist, you can readily see that it is possible to fake a Rapa Forge pistol, just as the Model 1843 N. P. Ames percussion pistol is sometimes faked into an 1843 Deringer percussion pistol (which is much rarer), and the Model 1842 Aston percussion pistol is sometimes faked into a Model 1842 Palmetto Armory percussion pistol (which is much rarer). I give you this information—along with the photos—even though it is inconceivable, to me, that anyone would pay the going price for a Rapa Forge pistol without either knowing something of the background of the pistol, or having it checked by an authority.

The most notorious Rapa Forge fakes look like this one shown in figure 33, and there are at least three of them. This particular one is the “grand-daddy” that spawned the others. All three have been around for quite some time, and have been in some prominent collections. We normally

look on a fake as a spurious weapon that has been altered to look as much as possible like the genuine thing. I know that by this time some of you are thinking: “How can that horrible looking thing possibly pass as a Rapa Forge pistol?” I’m going to give you the true story of these fakes—even though it is not generally known—and then you will understand—for this original fake was not made with the intention of being a fake!

Albert Foster Jr. was a Vice President of Colt. He lived in New Jersey, and he had a fine gun collection. In the early twentieth Century, little, if anything, was apparently known about Rapa Forge pistols. Mr. Foster did not know what a Rapa Forge pistol looked like, and he knew very little about the Rappahannock Forge—understandably so on both items. At that time, he decided that he would like to have a pistol that represented the Rappahannock Forge type. Knowing that Virginia (where the Rappahannock forge was located) had—during the Revolutionary War—purchased some arms (including pistols) from Prussia, he proceeded along this line. Apparently, he didn’t know what the Prussian pistols of that era looked like either, but he was apparently familiar with the bulbous butts of the revolutionary period Dutch Naval pistols. With these thoughts in mind, he commissioned a gunsmith to alter a pistol to his specifications. He later showed this pistol to an antique gun dealer, who became so interested in the pistol that after a length of time—and

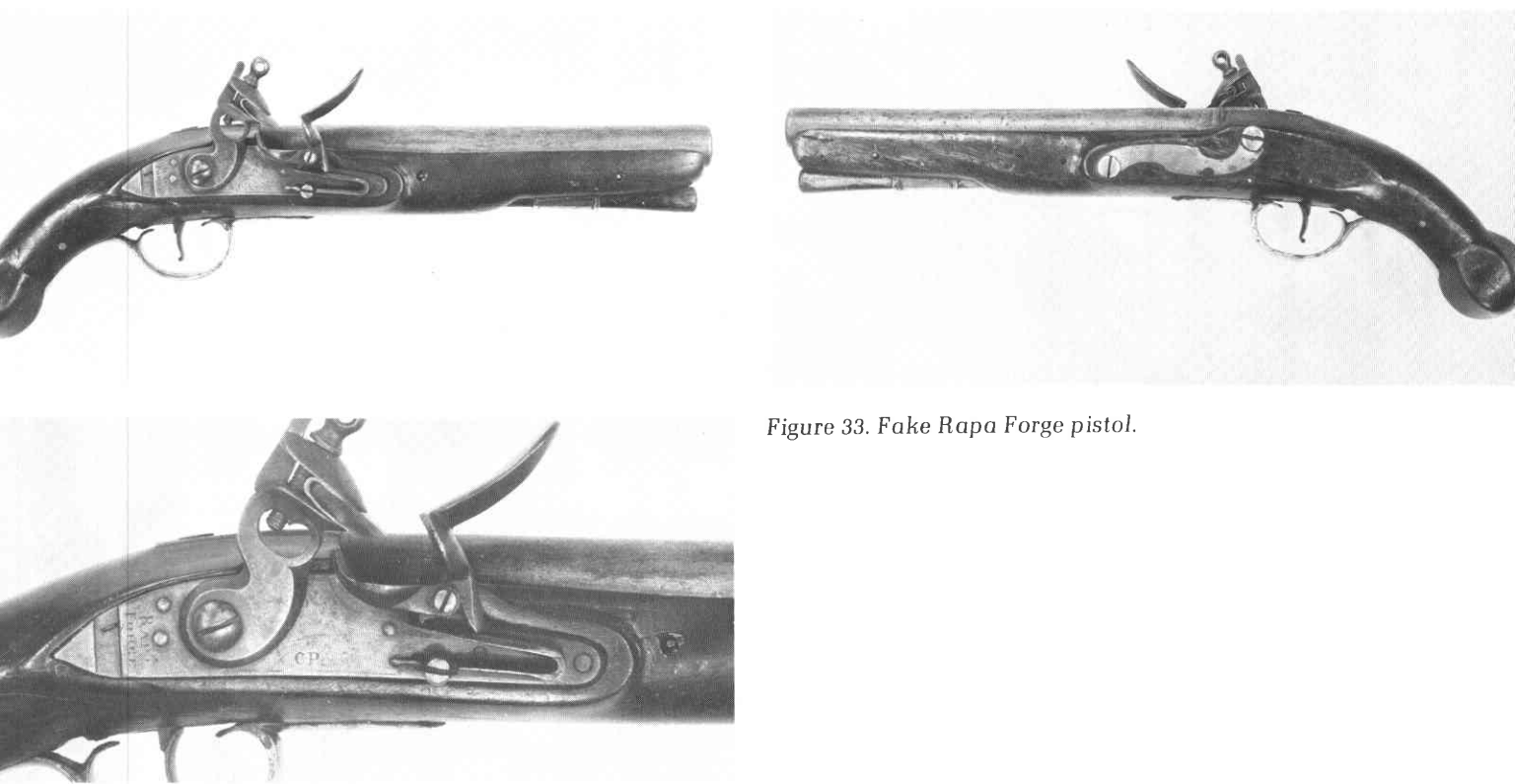


Figure 33. Fake Rapa Forge pistol.

persuasion—Mr. Foster sold the pistol to him with the definite understanding that it would not be sold without a clear explanation of how it was made—in other words, it was a fake, or rather the figment of one man’s imagination. The antique gun dealer must have forgotten this promise, for he sold the pistol, and—as luck will have it—the purchaser proudly showed his “Rapa Forge” pistol to—of all people—Mr. Foster! This was when the “egg hit the fan”, for Mr. Foster was so mad, and upset, he made the dealer take the gun back. Apparently, this true story of these fakes did not circulate too freely in those days, for, as I previously stated, these fakes have been in several prominent collections. Claude Blair, in his book *EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN ARMS*, pictures one of these fakes (item 616). Mr. Blair secured this photograph from a perfectly reliable source, with every reason to believe that it was genuine. In Arcadi Gluckman’s book *UNITED STATES MARTIAL PISTOLS AND REVOLVERS*, the Rapa Forge pistol is described as having “bulbous butts hexagonal shaped” with a “double necked, flat beveled hammer”. The description also includes a “C P” on the lock plate and “G W” on the back side of the wood stock. I do not mention the last two items with the thought of exposing fake material in gun books, but merely to bring out the point that apparently, at that time, these fakes were looked upon as being—like Coca-Cola—“the real thing”. Looking at the close up of the lock, I do not

know what the wide vertical recessed strip behind the cock is, unless it was one method of eliminating the gunmaker’s name. The “C P” previously mentioned is quite clear in this photo, and it presumably stands for “Commonwealth of Pennsylvania”. From the looks of the trigger, trigger guard, side plate and the raised turnings at the breech end of the barrel, it is conceivable that a British Light Dragoon pistol might have been used in the altering process. With the exception of the markings mentioned previously, the only other outside marking is a crude “C” over “36” on the trigger guard.

This next fake (figure 34), as you can see, is quite similar to the one previously shown. The “C P” has been omitted from the lock plate, and the vertical recessed strip to the rear of “Rapa Forge” is much wider than the one previously shown. This is the fake that is pictured in Claude Blair’s book.

I know of one other fake that is in existence; however, I was unable to obtain a photograph of it. Of the three similar fakes that I know of, this one is the only one that I have had an opportunity to personally examine. Similar in looks to the other two, this one has the same wide vertical recessed strip, with the “C P” on the lock plate. The letters “G W” are stamped twice on the back side of the wood stock behind the side plate. There is certainly evidence on this particular gun that it wasn’t originally intended to be authentic, for on the inside of the lock plate, there is a British Crown

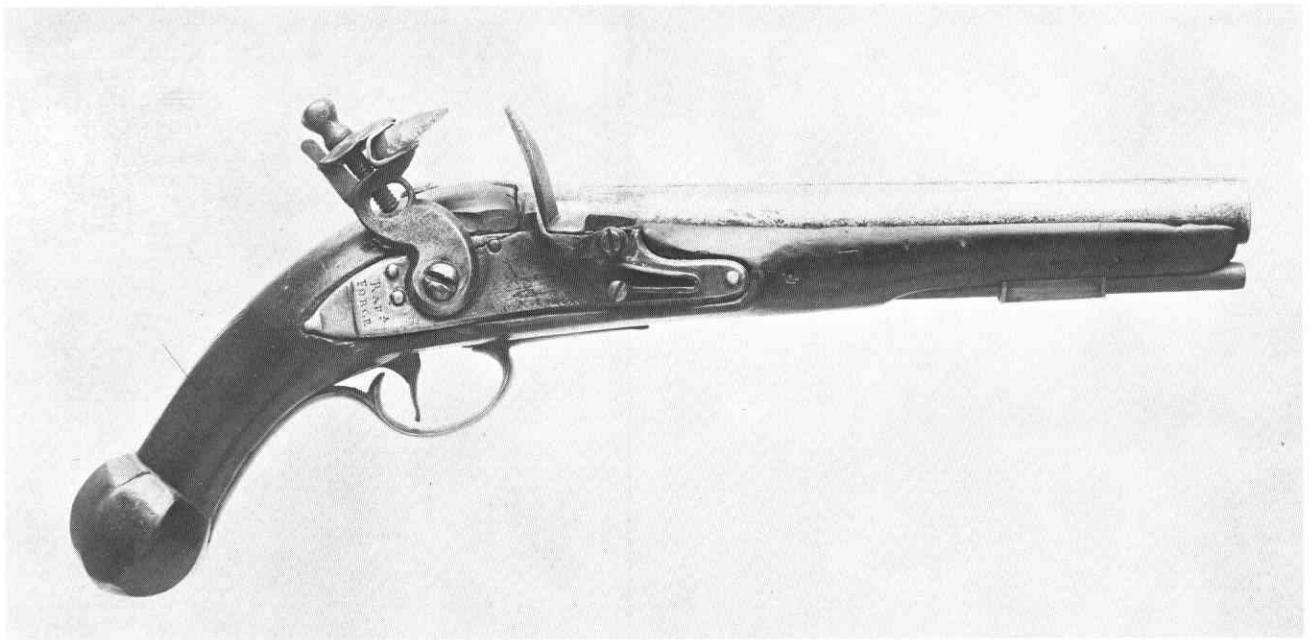


Figure 24. Yet another Rapa Forge fake.

over "C", and on the bottom of the trigger guard bow is a British Crown. No effort was made to remove either of these British markings.

I don't think I need to tell you that authentic Rapa Forge weapons are extremely rare. During the past two years, in talking and corresponding with quite a few collectors, dealers, etc., my research reveals that the only surviving specimens are four wall guns, ten pistols and four muskets. This certainly doesn't mean, however, that others do not exist. I think it is a very distinct honor to the American Society of Gun collectors to have on display here today four of the ten pistols, and two of the four muskets. I seriously doubt that this many Rapa Forge weapons will ever again be assembled under the same roof at the same time.

The end results of two years of gathering information for this paper cannot be credited to one person only, for many contributed photographs, vital and interesting information on James Hunter and the Rappahannock Forge, and names of persons and institutions that owned Rapa Forge weapons. My thanks and sincere appreciation to Robert B. Berryman, Ed Bitter, Willard C. Cousins, Ed Flannigan, Craddock R. Goins, Leon C. Jackson, Dr. James R. Lucie, Maryland Historical Society, Dr. R. L. Moore, Jr., Warren M. Moore, Harold Peterson, Dr. Walter D. Peterson, Walter O'Connor, Rock Island Arsenal, Samuel E. Smith, James M. Wertenberger and the West Point Museum.