

Trap Guns

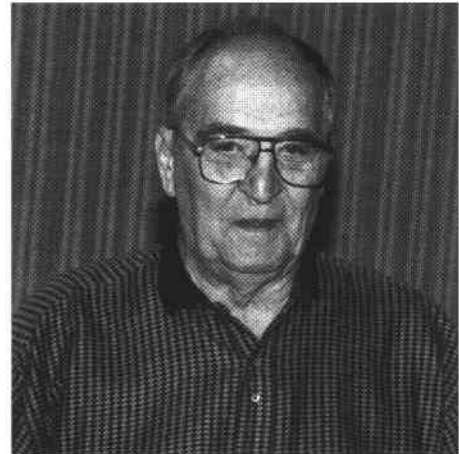
Melvin Flanagan

Relics of the past, trap guns are devices which are designed to be shot automatically at men or animals that come into the line of fire, and to kill or wound by a projectile or, in some instances, by concussion. Trap guns are also called set guns, spring guns or trip guns.

At first, the use of a firearm for trapping animals or protecting property probably occurred by setting a rifle or shotgun in place and using a line secured to bait for trapping or to a door or other object for protection from intruders.

A 1743 drawing by James Isham, an official of the Hudson's Bay Company, illustrates a makeshift trap gun to take a fox (Figure 1).¹ A flintlock shoulder arm is secured to two posts, with a trigger stick tied to another post. A line ran from the trigger stick to a baited stick placed crosswise in a short trench. The fox entered the trench from the far side, triggering the flintlock when it tugged on the baited cross stick and line.

Another reference to using a shoulder arm for trapping is in the 1913 through 1925 catalogs of the F.C. Taylor Fur Company of St. Louis, Missouri.² "The idea of a trap gun dates back to the pioneer days, when a bear hunter could secure a bear with more certainty by setting a rifle and shooting him than trying to hunt him or catch him in traps.



Setting a shoulder arm is neither practical nor advisable, as a rifle or shotgun soon becomes rusty and worthless, whereas in the trap gun the mechanism and the outer parts are enameled so as to be rust proof and serviceable at all times. Setting a shoulder arm is also dangerous, as man or domestic animals might run against it, discharging the gun and thereby being killed."

It appears that conventional shoulder arms continued to be used for a long period of time for trapping and pro-

A reproduction of James Isham's 1743 drawing of a Setting gun then used by the Hudson's Bay Company. (Hudson's Bay Record Society)

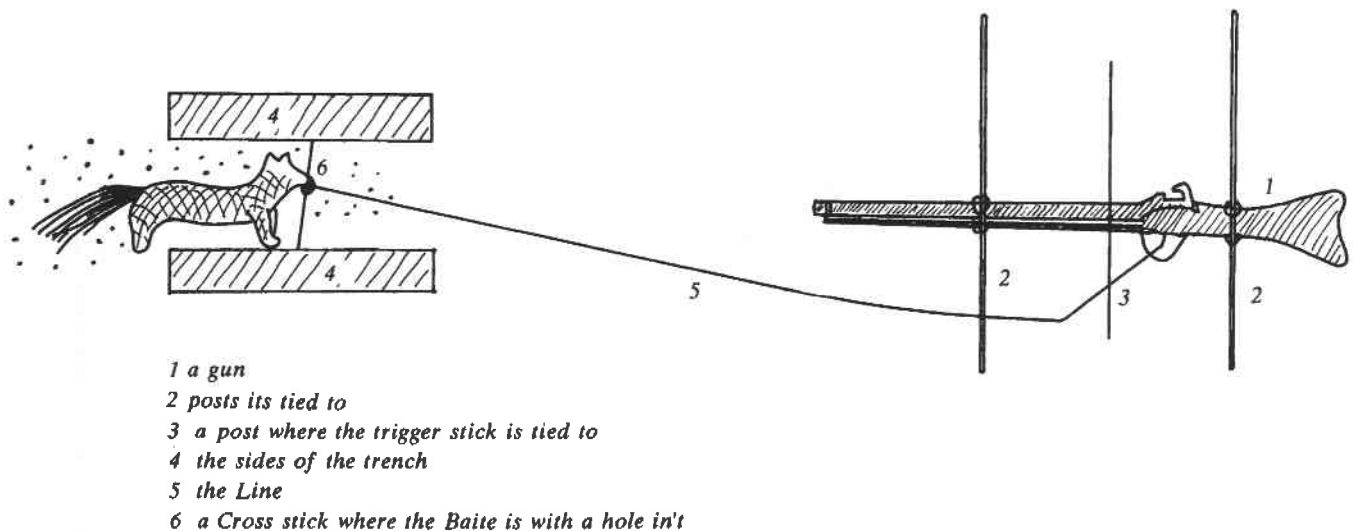


Figure 1. A reproduction of James Isham's 1743 drawing of how a shoulder arm was then used for trapping by the Hudson's Bay Company.

tecting property in spite of the obvious drawbacks in using them. It had to be time consuming to position and secure them in place and to devise a method for triggering the weapon. These deficiencies were overcome by designing trap guns that were protected from the elements and that could readily be set in place for the intended use.

While a trap gun was always on duty for its intended use, whether it was dark or light, hot or freezing, it could not make a determination of who or what it was shooting at.

A trap gun could also serve as an alarm gun, its discharge telling any one within hearing that it had been discharged. A few alarm guns could also be used as trap guns, the inventors suggesting, in the patent specifications, that a ball could be used in addition to the charge of powder used to sound the alarm.

The wheel lock was the first ignition system that made it possible for firearms to be used as trap guns. Very few exist today; one is pictured in *Firearms Curiosa* by Lewis Winant (I now own that gun) (Figure 2).³ This trap gun is probably of German origin and was made by converting a wheel lock carbine for use as a trap gun. The rifled, .78 caliber barrel is now 15 ½ inches long. The butt of the stock was altered to permit fastening to a post or other object and is secured by a bolt through a hole in the stock. The gun is equipped with a set trigger. The trigger can also be fired either by pushing on a rod that runs under the stock or by pulling on a wire that runs through the stock. It can still be used as a hand-held firearm. Another example of a wheel lock trap gun can be found in *Hand Cannon to Automatic* by Herschel C. Logan, Plate 15 (Figure 3).⁴ It is obvious from the engraving on the wheel lock lock that this firearm was designed originally as a trap gun. The engraving "pictures a servant fetching the treasure box to his master." Both of these guns appear to have been intended for indoor use.

An English flintlock spring gun (Figure 4), of a type that was used against game poachers and grave robbers, is fairly well known; examples are in many gun collections. The trap gun was of iron encased in wood for protection against the weather. The flintlock was protected from weather by a tin cover, which rarely accompanies the gun today, that could be slipped over it after the gun was primed and cocked. The spring gun usually has a blunderbuss barrel mounted on an iron rod, free to turn right or left. The trigger by which it was fired needed to be pulled forward and was fastened to a steel rod to which the trip wires were attached. Each of these trip wires were spread in a different direction and were laid a few inches off the ground, allowing just enough slack for the gun to turn freely upon the pivot on which it was mounted. Thus, whichever wire first tightened, that would be the wire along which the gun would point at the moment of discharge. Some of these trap guns

were made with an adjustable pivot so that they could be set to kill instead of wounding by giving them enough elevation to strike the victim in the body or head instead of in the legs. These were used from about 1780 until 1827, at which time they were forbidden by law to be used.⁵ Warning notices such as "Man Traps and Spring-Guns Set Here" were a common feature of the English countryside.⁶ (I have a sign, "Steel Traps & Spring Guns set in these premises" (Figure 5), that came with two English pinfire alarm guns.)

Another type of flintlock trap gun (Figure 6) is an all-steel pistol that has, as part of the grip, a clamp which could be fastened to any suitable support. This would prevent the gun from moving when pointing at a door or window to which the cord was attached. In addition, there is a ring attached to the right side of the barrel so that the gun could be mounted on a post, which would allow the gun to swivel toward an intruder. There are no markings on the gun. Known as the "Chicken Thief" trap gun,⁷ it is either of French or Belgian manufacture. This gun can also be used as a conventional pocket pistol.

Shortly after 1820, with the invention of percussion cap ignition, firearms became more reliable. The firing mechanism became simpler and inclement weather was less of a factor in their use. This development led to the design of more trap guns for taking non-human species. This did not mean that trap guns were no longer used against men only that they were produced in fewer number and were therefore less prevalent. Trap guns were produced to take all types of animals, including game, fur bearers, predators and pests. A few flintlock-to-percussion alterations are known. The example shown in Figure 7 uses a French military flintlock lock, circa 1780-1816, an 11-inch section of an unknown .68 caliber military musket barrel⁸ and a unique trigger mechanism that fires on push or pull.

The first United States Patent for a trap gun, number 17,297, was issued to Frederick Reuthe of Hartford, Connecticut, on May 12, 1857 (Figure 8). Calling it a "Jaw Trap," the patent states, in part, ". . . have invented a new and useful Trap for Capturing and Destroying Wild Animals." The trap gun pictured in the patent drawing has two barrels, sliding and expanding springs with barbs that cause the trap gun to discharge when pulled, and a center barbed spear for bait.

Added Improvement Patent 203, was granted on July 6, 1858 (Figure 9). Only the drawing page is available; the specification page is missing. The drawing page shows a single-barrel model configuration with a removable pistol grip handle and a ring on a shaft, each threaded for attachment to the trap gun body. The main spring hammer has an extension for cocking purposes, and the arm holding it in cocked position is modified so that the trap gun can be fired by pulling on a

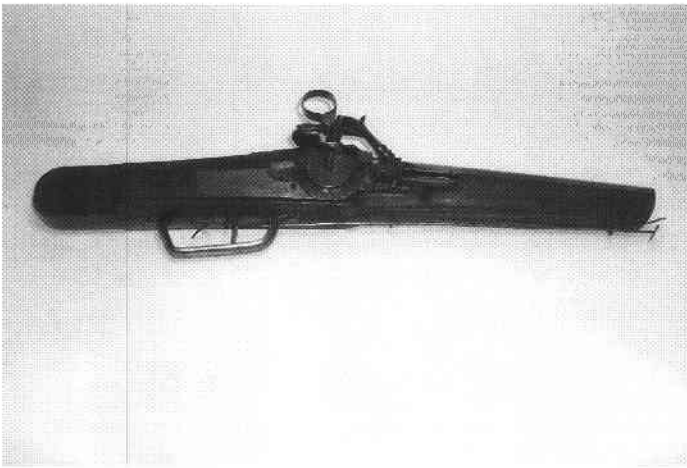
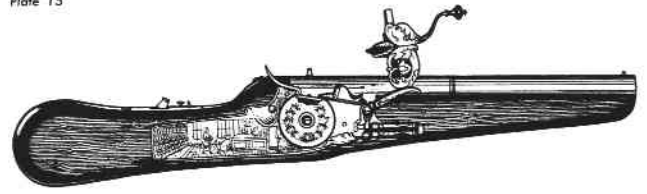


Figure 2. Wheel lock trap gun.

Plate 15



TREASURE ROOM WHEEL LOCK TRAP PISTOL

Length from tip to tip, 20½ inches. Barrel 10¾ inches. The engraving on the lock plate undoubtedly denotes the use of this unusual wheel lock oddity. It pictures a servant fetching the treasure box to his master. This type of arm was guardian of such an ancient treasure room . . . and it was self-firing! A string attached to the trigger on top of the stock ran through what appears to be front and rear sights, but which are in reality eyelets . . . and on over to the strong room door. If the door was opened unknowingly . . . the wheel lock did the rest.

Figure 3. Illustration of wheel lock trap gun (*Hand Cannon to Automatic* by Herschel C. Logan).



Figure 4A. English spring guns.



Figure 4B. English spring guns.



Figure 5. English sign warning of the use of steel traps and spring guns.

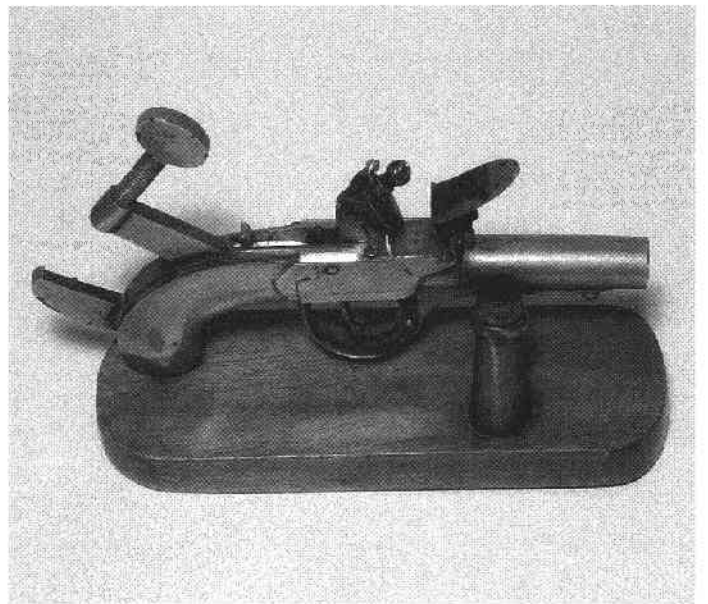


Figure 6. "Chicken Thief" trap gun.

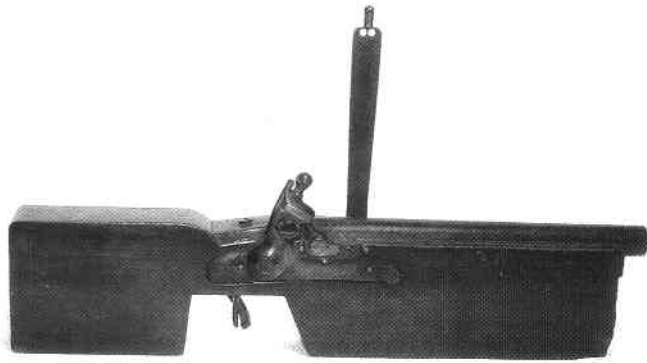


Figure 7. Flintlock converted to percussion trap gun.

small projection on the arm that holds the hammer in the cocked position. The middle barbed spear for holding the bait has been eliminated. The trap gun can be used as a side arm, but the barbed bait-holding trigger might make it difficult to carry in a belt or pocket.

There are at least five different models or variations of the Reuthe trap gun. The first model (Figure 10) conforms to U.S. Patent 17,297 drawings. It has 19 parts or pieces, compared to the seven to nine used in later models. The engraved markings are *Fred. Reuthe - wild animal trap 1857*. The two round, .25 caliber 3 3/8 inches long and are octagonal at both the breech and muzzle. The muzzles are notched and have engaging lugs on each side of the trigger housing. The breech ends are fastened to a steel plate that also holds the trigger housing; the barrels are held by threaded knobs. The trigger housing is held by a threaded ring used for attaching the trap gun by a chain to a tree branch or other object. The main spring, which is also the hammer, is cocked by raising a trigger-shaped arm. With the barbed trigger in the retracted cocked position, this trap gun measures 9 inches long, 1 1/8 inches wide, 2 3/4 inches high and weighs .77 pounds.

The second model (Figure 10) is probably the earliest model made in quantity. It is a two-barrel model, and the barrels, trigger housing and a ring for securing the trap gun by a chain "to the branch of a tree or other suitable position" are of cast iron, in one unit. The improvements shown in Added Improvement Patent 203 are incorporated into this and all other models of the Reuthe trap gun. All of these models, and later models, had a black enamel finish. Marked in raised cast letters in three lines is HARTFORD CONN/E REUTHE'S PATENT/MAY 12' 1857. There are decorative knobs on the rear of the 3 1/8 inch .28 caliber barrels. When cocked, the measurements are 9 1/2 inches long, 2 inches wide, 2 inches high with a weight 1.15 pounds. All examples that I have

*F. Reuthe,
Jarr Trap,
No 17,297,
Patented May 12, 1857.*

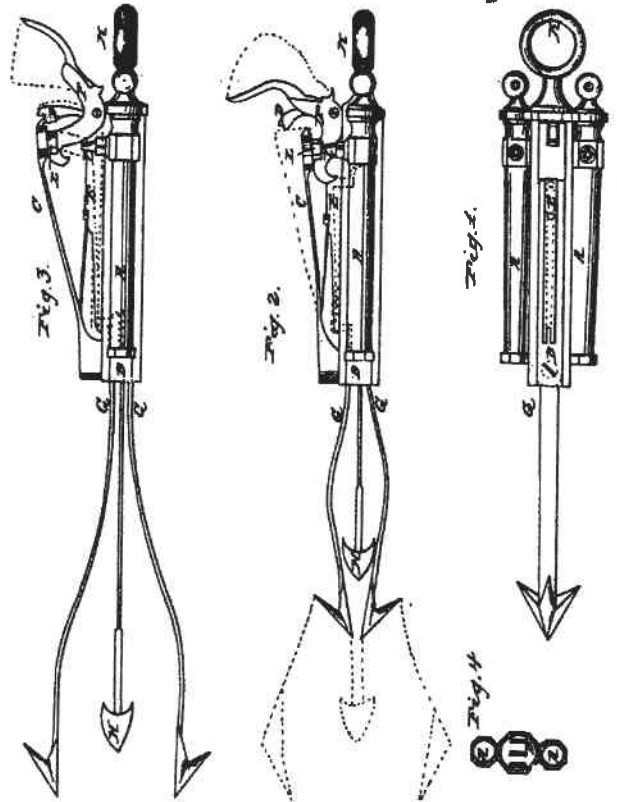


Figure 8. F. Reuthe trap gun, patent no. 17,297, patented May 12, 1857.

examined have a 3 1/8 inch diameter steel rod with a 3/8 inch diameter ring at the end attached to the trap gun and a 1 1/8 inch diameter ring at the free end. These have serial numbers in the 1xx to 3xx range (I own serial numbers 176, 226 and 340).

The third model (Figure 10) is a two-barrel model of larger size without decorative knobs on the rear of the 5-inch long .44 caliber barrels. There is a projection at the rear with a threaded hole to receive a threaded rod with a ring at the end, which was used to secure the trap gun to a tree or other object. The dimensions in the cocked position, without the threaded rod, are 10 1/4 inches long, 3 inches wide, 2 3/4 inches high with a weight of 2.7 pounds. The threaded rods are of various lengths. Markings in cast raised letters are HARTFORD CONN/E REUTHE'S PATENT/MAY 12' 1857. I have not found serial numbers on this model.

The fourth model (Figure 11) is smaller than the third model and is the one most commonly found. It has two .28 caliber 4-inch-long barrels. It was made to receive either a pistol grip handle or a steel shaft with a ring, as shown in Added Improvement Patent 203. Marked in three lines in

F. Reuthe,
Jaw Trap,
No 203, A.I. Patented July 6, 1858.

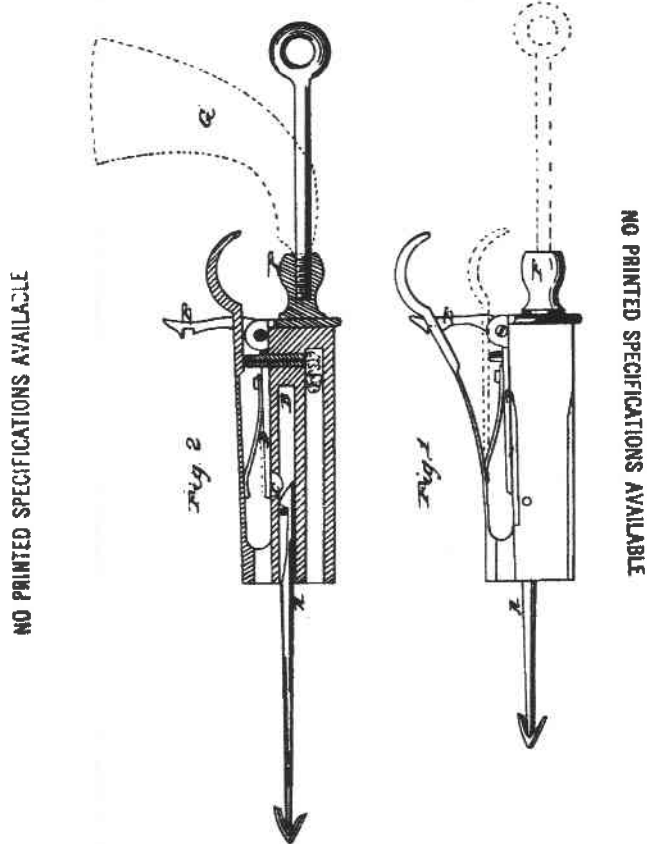


Figure 9. F. Reuthe Added Improvement trap gun, patent no. 203, patented July 6, 1858.

cast letters is F. REUTHE'S/PATENT/MAY 12' 1857. In the cocked position, without any attachments, this trap gun is 9 ½ inches long, 2 ¾ inches wide, 1 ½ inches high with a weight of 1.55 pounds. The pistol grip adds .58 pounds, the ringed shaft about .1 pounds. The serial numbers on this model, I have observed, are much higher, 22xx to 28xx (I own serial numbers 2249, 2297, 2769, 2827 and 2884).

The fifth model (Figure 11), the single-barrel model shown in Added Improvement Patent 203, is much smaller than any of the two-barrel models. Without either attachment it measures, in the cocked position, 6 ¾ inches long, ¾ inches wide, 2 inches high with a weight of .41 pounds. The 3-inch-long barrel is .28 caliber. The pistol grip weighs .45 pounds and adds 2 ¼ inches in overall length. The ringed shaft weighs .07 pounds and adds 3 ¾ inches in length. Marked in raised cast letters in two lines is F. REUTHE'S PATENT/MAY 22" 1857. This model is found both without serial numbers and with serial numbers ranging from 1xx to 17xx (I own serial numbers 103 and 1713 and two without numbers).

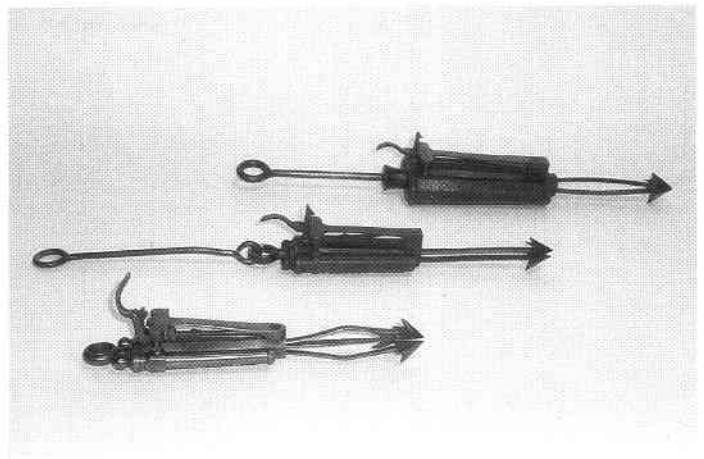


Figure 10. Group of Reuthe trap guns; model 1, bottom, model 2, center, model 3, top.

Henry S. North and John O. Couch of Middletown, Connecticut, obtained U.S. Patent 24,573, for an invention they termed a "Game Shooter," on June 28, 1859 (Figure 12). The gun is a combination hand-held pepperbox and animal trap gun. A single percussion nipple fires all six barrels simultaneously. When it is used as a trap gun, a short cord attached to a rod projecting from the center of the barrel cluster holds the bait and causes the gun to fire when an animal takes the bait. An eye on the backstrap is used to suspend the gun from a tree limb or ground stake.

The first model of this gun (Figure 13) follows the patent drawing in using a knurled-edge disk as the hammer. This gun has six 1 ¼ inch long unfluted .28 caliber barrels. Markings, when present, are NORTH & COUCH, MIDDLETOWN, CONN. The gun is about 7 ½ inches long and weighs .98 pounds. A serial number is found on the rod on which the disk hammer slides on the frame and on the barrel cluster. The serial numbers I have observed on both models are under 100 (I own serial numbers 64 and 97).

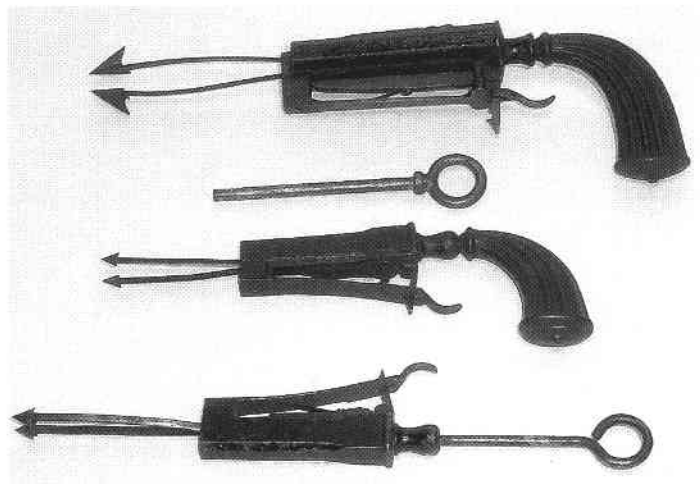


Figure 11. Group of Reuthe trap guns; model 4, top, model 5, bottom.

The second model (Figure 13) has a spur hammer. There are six 2 ½ inch fluted .31 caliber barrels marked NORTH & COUCH. MIDDLETOWN, CONN. PATENTED JUNE 28TH 1859/ADDRESS J.D. LOCKE 197 WATER STREET. N.Y. The flat-sided frame is made of either iron or brass.¹⁰ The gun is about 6 ¼ inches long and weighs about .95 pounds (iron frame model). A serial number is found on the bottom of the grip strap (I own two iron frames, serial numbers 23 and 25).

John P. Wilson of Frankfort, New York, and John F. Thomas of Ilion, New York, were granted U.S. Patent 22,911 on February 8, 1859, for a burglar alarm. (Figure 14). Mr. John F. Thomas, a master mechanic at E. Remington & Sons, Ilion, New York, was also granted a patent in 1858 for the cane gun that Remington manufactured.¹¹ This very small burglar alarm does not look dangerous and is not considered by most collectors to be a trap gun, only an alarm gun. However, in the patent specifications, the inventors state that "the barrel is then loaded with powder and ball if desired." The alarm gun is attached to a door frame with a gimlet screw, the muzzle pointing through the door opening. The edge of the door strikes the hammer, firing the gun. It is very likely the ball would hit any person entering, intruder or friend. I have found two different sizes of the burglar alarm. The smallest is ¾ of an inch by 1 ½ inches and is marked J.P. WILSON/PATENTED FEB. 8 1859/ILION N.Y. A larger version is marked WILSON MFG. Co/NEW YORK/PAT'D. FEB. 8. 1859 and measures 1 inch by 2 inches. Both have brass barrels, are about ¼ of an inch thick and have .22 caliber bores (Figure 15).

On January 31, 1860, John P. Wilson of Frankfort, New York, was granted U.S. Patent 27,017 for an animal trap (Figure 16). The design of this patent was based upon the burglar alarm that he and John F. Thomas invented, U.S. Patent 22,911. I have never seen one of these; it would be exciting to find one.

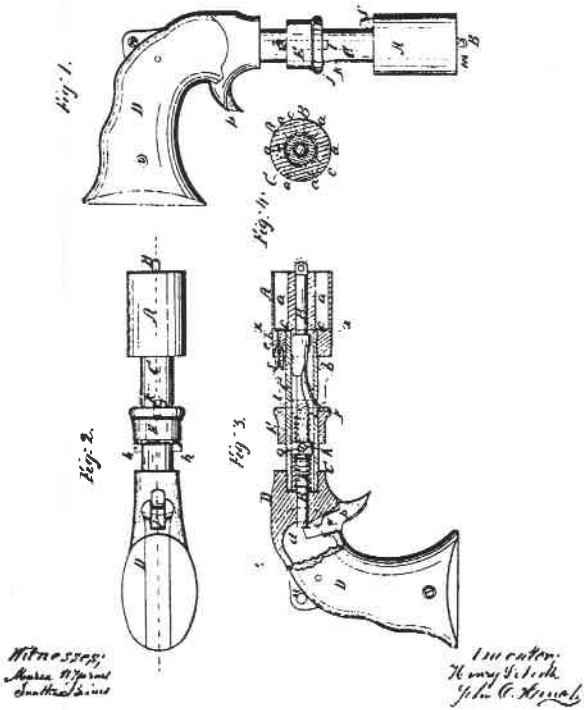
Mr. George Smith of New York, New York, obtained U.S. Patent 32,539 on June 11, 1861 (Figure 17). He called the device "a Combined Burglar-Alarm and Animal-Trap." The gun as produced (Figure 18) differs from the patent drawing in two respects: three barrels instead of the one shown, although the patent specification mentions "one or more fire-arms barrels," and, instead of a simple countersunk hole for attachment, a swivel device, with a wood screw for attachment, that allows the gun to transverse about 120 degrees is attached to the .34 caliber barrels. Bait may be attached to the wire loop at the muzzle if the device is to be used as a trap gun or, if it is to be used as a burglar alarm, cords may be run from the loop to one or more windows or doors.

The .34 caliber, 2 ¼-inch-long barrel cluster with a single centrally mounted nipple fires simultaneously as a volley. The trap gun, made of cast iron, is 8 ¾ inches long, 1 ¾ inches wide, 1 ¾ inches high and weighs about 1.5 pounds. It is marked, on either the flat, bar-type hammer or on the top flat surface of the center barrel, GEO. SMITH & CO. N.Y./PAT'D JUNE 11, 1861. The marking on the barrel is rarely seen.

U.S. Patent 290,605, for a burglar alarm, was granted to George M. Pratt of Middletown, Connecticut, on December 18, 1883 (Figure 19). He described his invention as an "efficient fire arm for protecting orchards and vineyards from the depredations of animals and thieves, and which is also adapted for use as a protection against burglars in houses, barns, corn cribs, and other places containing valuables. If the barrels should not be in line with the animal when it comes in contact with the cord, it will be obvious that slight pressure on the cord will rotate the barrels and bring them substantially in line with the intruder, thus killing or injuring the same when the barrels are discharged."

This all-metal (mostly cast iron) galvanized percussion device (Figure 20) has two 4-inch barrels, slightly larger than .38 caliber, that converge slightly at the muzzle. The barrel group has a stud that slips into a 2-inch base so that the gun will rotate full circle. When cocked, the trap gun measures 6 inches long, 2 inches high, 2 ¼ inches wide and weighs about 1.5 pounds, with base. The hammer release arm is marked with the patent date, Dec. 18, 1883. Later, a safety was added to this trap gun. Directions for setting the trap gun are shown in Figure 21;¹² it is obviously to be used as a burglar alarm.

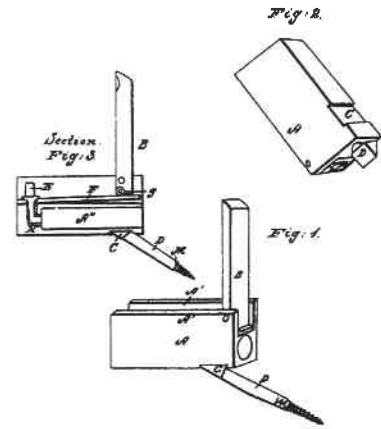
William C. Foreman and Stanton Foreman of Bidwells Bar, California, were granted U.S. Patent 414,306 on November 5, 1889, for an animal gun (Figure 22). This gun (Figure 23) was designed for killing gophers, ground squirrels, moles and other burrowing animals. While several gopher trap guns were patented prior to this date, this is the earliest patented gopher trap gun known to be commercially produced. The barrel, the frame to the rear of the barrel and the steel stake are cast together in one unit. The long wire trigger has a double loop at the end which must be pushed to activate the hammer. The hammer strikes a percussion cap to fire the .50 caliber gun. Excluding the trigger wire, the gun is 16 inches long overall (the barrel is 5 ¾ inches long and the stake is 10 ½ inches long) and weighs about 2.5 pounds. The double loop end of the trigger is designed to hold a piece of cardboard, which is not an obstruction to the ball. The gun is placed with its stake sticking in the ground and the disk on the trigger projecting a short distance into an animal burrow. With burrowing animals,



Witnesses:
 Marcus W. Jones
 Jonathan Davis

Inventor:
 Henry North
 John C. Couch

Figure 12. North and Couch trap gun, patent no. 24,573, patented June 28, 1859.



Witnesses:
 J. Ed. Hamilton
 W. H. Thomas

Inventors:
 John P. Wilson
 John F. Thomas

Figure 14. J.P. Wilson and J.F. Thomas alarm gun, patent no. 22,911, patented February 8, 1859.

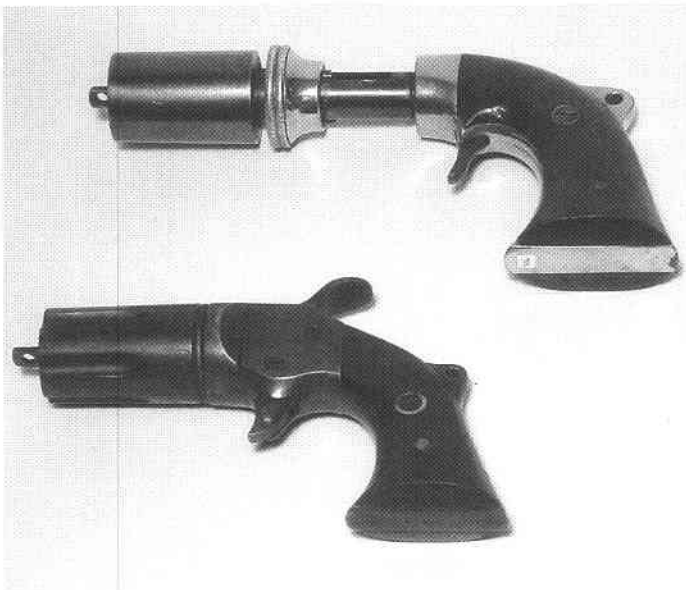


Figure 13. North and Couch trap guns; disk hammer, top, spur hammer, bottom.

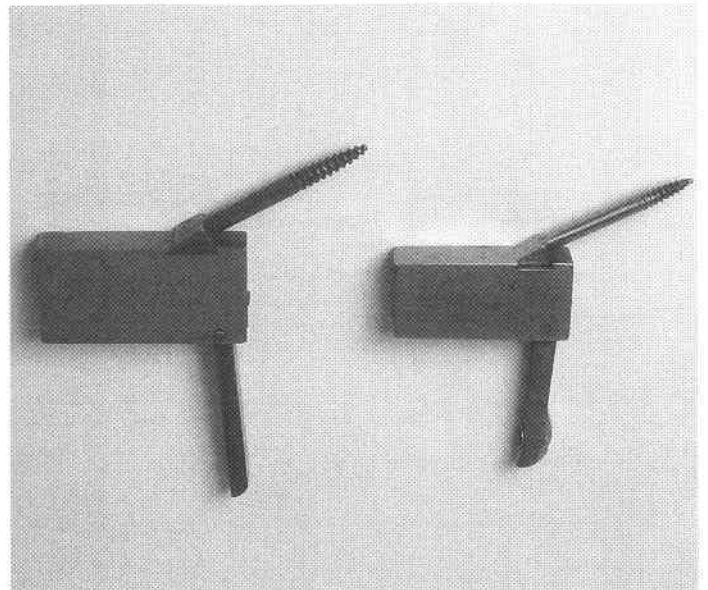


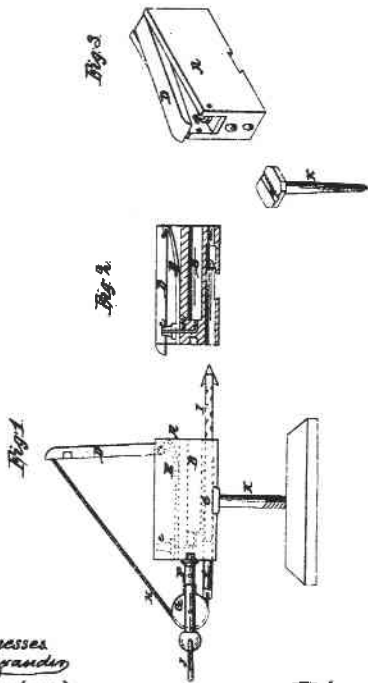
Figure 15. Wilson alarm guns.

J. P. Wilson,

Jaw Trap,

No. 27,017.

Patented Jan. 31, 1860.



Witnesses
L. A. Alexander
A. J. Johnson

Inventor
John P. Wilson

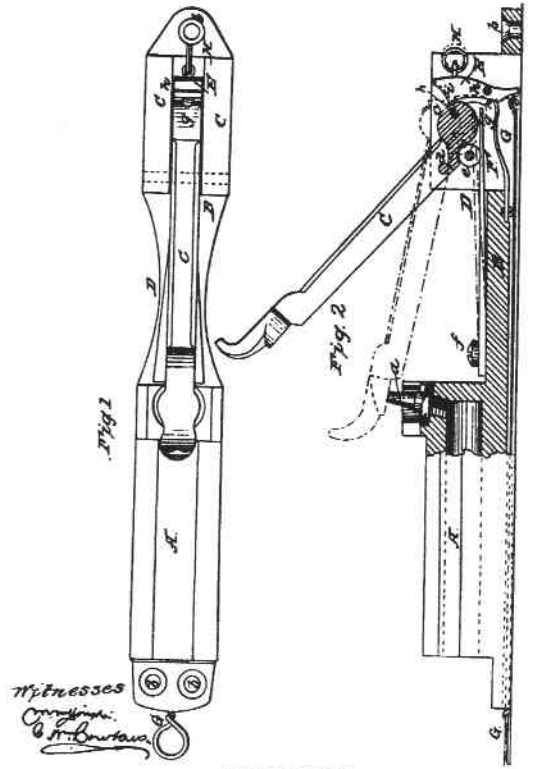
Figure 16. John P. Wilson trap gun, patent no. 27,017, patented January 31, 1860.

G. SMITH.

Burglar Alarm and Animal Trap.

No. 32,539.

Patented June 11, 1861.



Witnesses
Wm. B. Brown
G. H. Brown

Figure 17. G. Smith trap and alarm gun, patent no. 32,539, patented June 11, 1861.

(No Model.)

G. M. PRATT.
BURGLAR ALARM.

No. 290,805.

Patented Dec. 18, 1883.

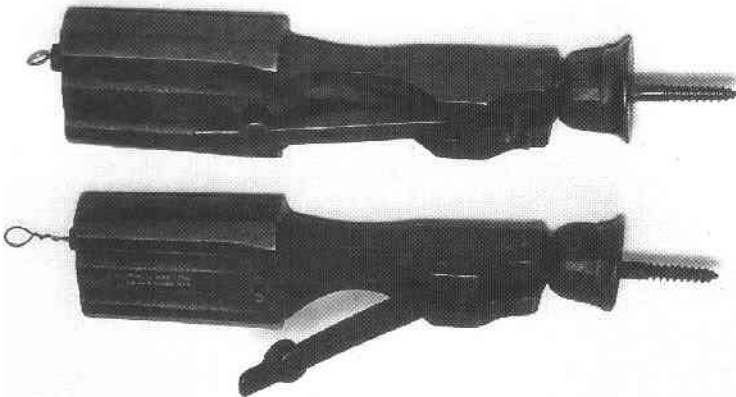
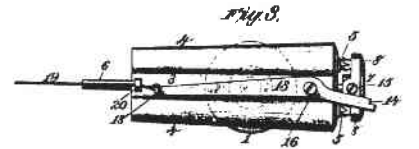
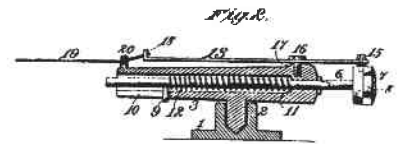
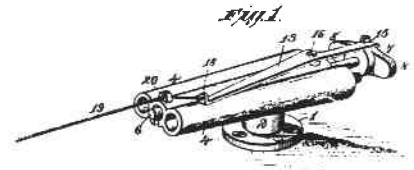


Figure 18. Smith trap and alarm guns; top gun cocked, barrel markings; bottom gun fired, hammer markings.



Witnesses
Chas. Bennett
Edw. R. Ryan

Inventor
George M. Pratt.
By James S. North

Figure 19. G.M. Pratt burglar alarm, patent no. 290,605, patented December 18, 1883.

PRATT'S BURGLAR ALARM AND ANIMAL TRAP.

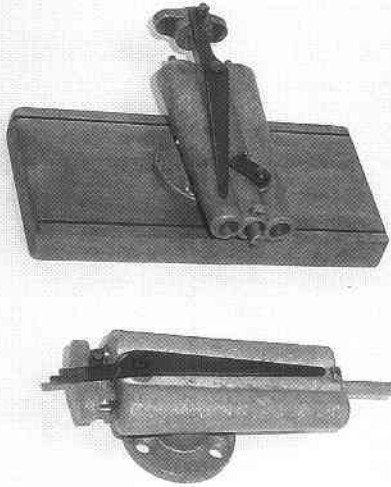
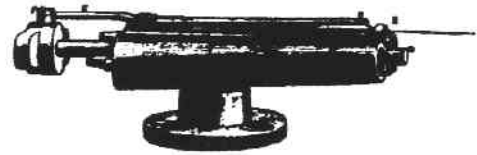


Figure 20. Pratt alarm and trap gun; model with safety, top.



DIRECTIONS FOR SETTING THE ALARM.



Screw the socket (A) to a small piece of board or to a post. Then load one or both barrels with blank charge, and place the Alarm where you wish it to stand. Then take a fine thread or wire, pass it through hole (B), and fasten the end in hole (C). Then carry the other end to any distance you wish it to cover. Stretch comparatively taut, and secure to some stationary object. Then take the barrels out of socket (A), and place the hammer-rod (D) against something, and push the hammer back till the trigger engages with the roll on hammer. Then place the barrels back in socket (A), and put on the caps.

Use Union Metallic Cartridge Cos.'s Caps No. 11.

MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

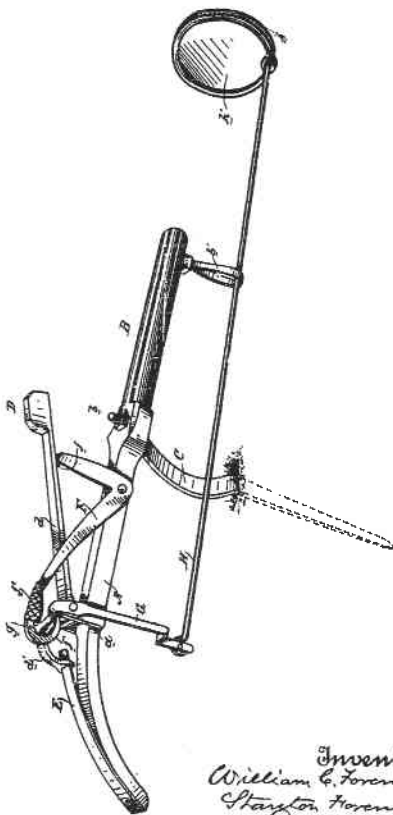
Figure 21. Pratt instruction sheet.

(No Model.)

W. C. & S. FOREMAN.
ANIMAL GUN.

No. 414,306.

Patented Nov. 5, 1889.



Witnesses,
Geo. H. Strong
J. H. Merrill

Inventors,
William C. Foreman
Stanley Foreman
By Dewey & Co.
attys

U.S. PATENT OFFICE

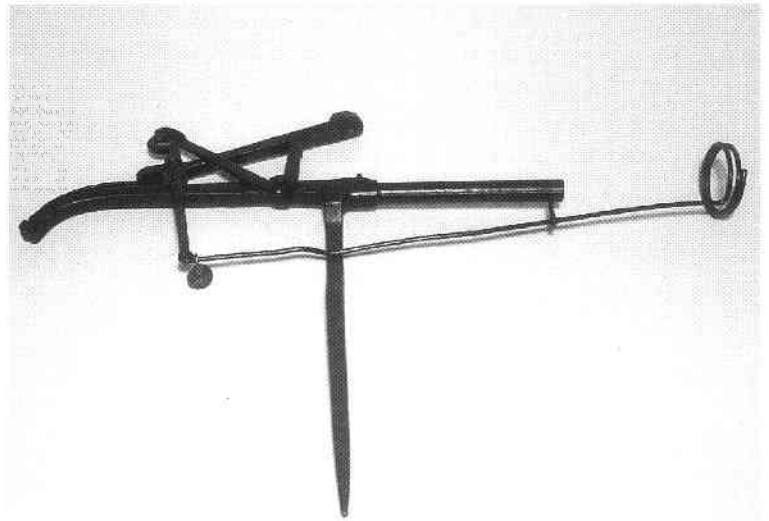


Figure 23. Foreman trap gun.

Figure 22. W.C. & S. Foreman trap gun, patent no. 414,306, patented November 5, 1889.

gophers especially, curiosity is a factor to be relied upon. A gopher, upon seeing light enter a hole which he has voluntarily closed, will always return to close it and, either by coming directly in contact with the disk or by throwing a load of dirt against it, will release the trigger, discharging the gun.

Another early gopher trap gun was invented by William Cameron of Milpitas, California, and was granted U.S. Patent 459,674 on September 15, 1891 (Figure 24). The device is described as an "Impalment Trap" in the patent application, where Cameron stated that "the object of my invention is to provide an automatic trap-gun for the killing of moles, gophers, or the like." One model (Figure 25) is about 8 ½ inches long, exclusive of the trigger rod, 2 inches wide, 1 ¾ inches high and weighs 2 pounds. The base of the gun is made of cast iron and PAT. SEPT 15, 91 is in raised letters in a recess on the bottom rear of the casting. The .90 caliber gauge, cast brass, 2 ¾-inch-long barrel has a ¼ inch round, 1 inch long, rod-like projection at a right angle to the side of the barrel, which holds the barrel in place in the trap frame. The barrel is simply dropped into the cradle-like brackets in the frame. With the exception of the steel operating spring, all of the firing mechanism is made of brass, including the firing pin. Another model is slightly smaller, 8 ½ inches long, 1 ½ inches wide, 1 ½ inches high and weighs 1.2 pounds. The .50 caliber cast brass barrel is 2 ¾ inches long. The patent date is cast in raised letters on the bottom of the base. This trap gun is shown in the patent drawing as muzzle loading with percussion cap ignition; it is not known if any guns were produced that way. The firing mechanism is very similar to the drawing in the patent papers, which fires when pushed by a rodent. As is the case with most gopher trap guns, the pest is killed by concussion; no projectile is needed.

The F.C. Taylor Fur Company of St. Louis, Missouri, sold a trap gun that later bore their name. They first advertised the trap gun in the December 1913 issue of Hunter-Trader-Trapper magazine (Figure 26) and in the 1913-1914 Taylor catalog, calling it the Sure Shot. The 1914-1915 issue of the Taylor catalog (Figure 27) has testimonials from trappers who had used the Sure Shot.

The Sure Shot trap gun was invented by Charles D. Lovelace, who was a resident of San Angelo, Texas, when this trap gun was granted U.S. Patent 1,098,742 on June 2, 1914 (Figure 28). Lovelace was granted six U.S. Patents relating to trap guns. The last three patents all relate to trap guns sold by the F.C. Taylor Fur Company and most had their markings.

It appears that a trap gun manufactured by the Texas Gun Co. of San Angelo, Texas, was the trap gun advertised by Taylor in the December 1913 issue of Hunter-Trader-Trapper magazine and in the 1913 through

1916 Taylor catalogs. The Texas Gun Co. manufactured a trap gun conforming to patent number 1,098,742 (Fig. 29). This trap gun is stamped PAT. APD FOR/MFG. BY TEX. GUN CO./XL, X and a serial number/SAN ANGELO, TEXAS is on the rear of the brass receiver (Figure 30).

The Taylor Fur Co. catalogs have different drawings of the Sure Shot trap gun than those shown in their 1917 and later catalogs. A "device for setting heavy or light" is pictured in the 1917 catalog drawing of the trap gun (Fig. 31). It is an arm with a set screw for adjusting the trigger pull. At that time, the trap guns started to be marked with F.C. Taylor markings and a June 12, 1914, patent date.

One marking, PAT. JUNE 2' 14/MFD. FOR F.C. TAYLOR CO./ST. LOUIS, is in raised brass cast letters on the top of the brass receiver along with a raised area for a serial number. This trap gun is shaped similar to the Texas Gun Co. trap gun (Fig. 32).

A brass receiver model shaped differently than the above model is marked F.C. TAYLOR CO./ST. LOUIS beside PAT. JUNE 2, 14. I have seen only one with this marking; most have the F.C. TAYLOR CO./ST. LOUIS markings ground off (Fig. 32). This possibly could be the model that the Funsten Bros. & Co. fur company sold as the "Sure Shot" trap gun (Figure 33).

Another model with a zinc alloy receiver, made differently than any of the others, has a removable plate on the top of the receiver, which is held in place by two machine screws, marked PAT JUNE-2-14/F.C. TAYLOR/ST. LOUIS (Figure 32). It is difficult to find one of these trap guns complete; most are damaged by the forces generated when the cartridge fires.

The Sure Shot trap gun is about 9 inches long. The .38 caliber, 4-inch-long, smooth-bore barrel is held in place with a threaded pin which extends through registering holes in the receiver and a groove in the barrel. Below the breech block is an adjustable guide device for the hooked bait setting operating rod. Pulling on this rod causes the trap gun to fire. This trap gun is mounted on a 15- to 17-inch-long steel stake with a swivel fork that permits the trap gun to rotate and move up and down. The trap gun had all exposed parts enameled so as to be rustproof.

The Sure Shot sold for \$3.85 plus postage from 1913 through 1919. In 1920 the price became \$4.65 plus postage. In 1922 the price was lowered to \$2.75, then in 1924 the price was \$3.35, and \$3.15 in 1925. This is the last year that it was listed.

In the fall of 1922, the F.C. Taylor Fur Co. introduced an improved version of the Sure Shot, naming it the Fur Getter. Two patents were granted to Charles D. Lovelace. U.S. Patent 1,497,758 (Figure 34), granted June 17, 1924, when he resided in San Antonio, Texas, was for a trap gun

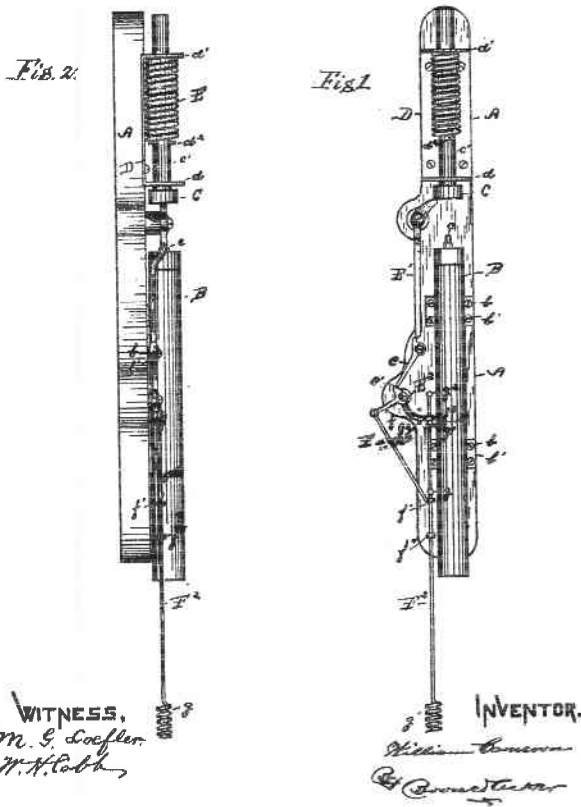


Figure 24. W. Cameron trap gun, patent no. 459,674, patented September 15, 1891.

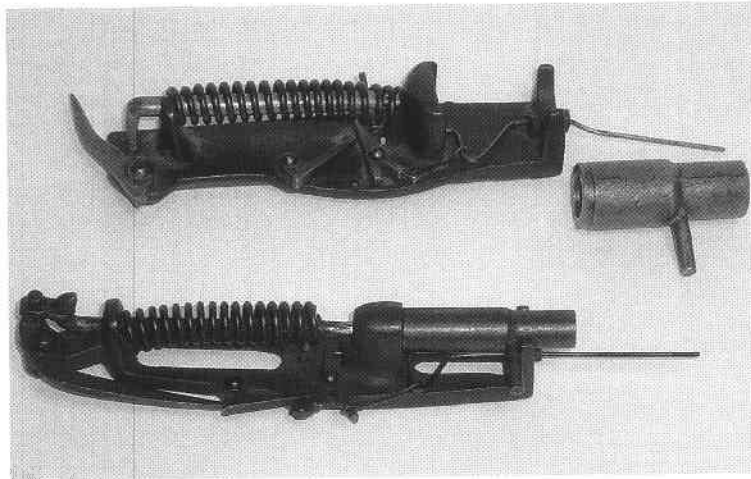



Figure 25. Cameron trap guns.

GO GET THAT "CRITTER"

The fur season of 1913-1914 has begun and F. C. Taylor & Co., St. Louis, must have furs. We want every kind and can pay full value for every piece of fur that is fit to use regardless of its size or quality. We want your furs—all of them and the sooner you get them to us the better. Ship those you have now by express or parcel post and keep on shipping as fast as you get them. We will send money right back by return mail.

COME ON WITH YOUR FURS!

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS NEW FUR GETTER SURE SHOT TRAP GUN



Shoots 38 cal. Shot or Ball Cartridges and will Kill Anything from the Smallest Mink to the Largest Coon without Damaging the Fur.
Weights only 1 1/2 lbs.—can be easily carried—absolutely safe to man and domestic animals—can be set, ready for use, in two minutes and never fails to shoot.

The **SURE SHOT** is especially recommended in Northern Sections where the ground is covered with snow, or the mechanism of the gun is so protected that no amount of snow, sleet or frosting can affect its working properly, thus making it useful in weather that would put a steel trap out of commission. The gun can also be set on the ice by driving stake down into it.

WRITE FOR FULL INFORMATION

TRAPS—ANIMAL BAIT—SUPPLIES

Our Trappers Supply department is thoroughly up-to-date both in respect to class of goods carried and prices charged. Our stock of supplies is the largest and most complete carried by any house and buying in cannot take advantage of all discounts enables us to furnish goods at the very lowest prices. Our line compares every known article that a hunter or trapper actually needs and we can furnish anything from a high grade gun to a collar for your dog at surprisingly low prices.

Your name and address on a postcard will bring our fur price lists, supply catalogue and book on trapping to you.

F. C. TAYLOR & CO

FUR EXCHANGE
BUILDING

AMERICA'S
GREATEST
FUR HOUSE

St. Louis.

Always mention the HUNTER-TRADER-TRAPPER when writing to advertiser.

Figure 26. C.C. Taylor Fur Co. ad in December 13, 1913, Hunter-Trader-Trapper magazine.

F. C. TAYLOR FUR CO
AMERICA'S GREATEST FUR HOUSE
ST. LOUIS, MO.

SURE-SHOT TRAP GUN

DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR
FUR BEARING ANIMALS

NEVER FAILS
TO
SHOOT

Shoots 38 Cal. Shot or Ball Cartridges and
**WILL KILL ANYTHING FROM THE SMALLEST MINK TO THE
LARGEST GRIZZLY WITHOUT DAMAGING THE FUR.**

Weights only 1 1/2 lbs.—can be easily carried—absolutely safe to man and domestic
animals—can be set, ready for use, in two minutes and never fails to shoot.

The Trap Gun is one of the long looked for and long desired inventions for modern trapping. It is also one of a trap gun that back to pioneer days when a hunter could secure a bear in nearly half the time and with more certainty by setting a rifle and shooting than than trying to hunt him or catch him in traps.

Setting a shoulder arm is neither practical nor advisable as a rifle or shot gun is exposed to the weather soon because rusty and worthless, whereas in the Trap Gun the mechanism is protected and the outer parts are constructed so as to be set and set and serviceable at all times. Setting a shoulder arm is also dangerous as man or domestic animals might run against it, discharging the gun and therefore being killed, while with the SURE SHOT the muzzle of the gun is pointed toward the ground all the time and it cannot be discharged by running against it, a direct pull on the bait being necessary to fire the gun.

The gun is protected upon its muzzle in such a way that no matter how the bait is moved, the gun is not upon him and the first effort he makes to enter the bait snare, discharges the gun and kills instantly.

The SURE SHOT is especially recommended in Northern Sections where the ground is covered with snow, as the mechanism of the gun is so protected that no amount of snow, sleet or frosting can affect its working properly, thus making it useful in weather that would put a steel trap out of commission. The gun can also be set on the ice by driving stake down into it.



THE ONLY
GUN—THAT
FINDS ITS OWN AIM
—NEVER SHOOTS
TILL IT GETS AIM
—AND NEVER
FAILS TO SHOOT—
ABSOLUTELY SAFE.

GOOD FOR WOLVES.

"We killed three wolves and one skunk with the Sure Shot Trap Gun. Cost but nothing. We are trappers and boys on wolves."
Ole, Wis.

BALL CARTRIDGES FOR WOLVES.

"I found the Sure Shot to be entirely satisfactory. I caught three wolf heads with it. I have used the ball cartridges when I set for wolves."
Ole, Wis.

GOOD FOR FOX.

"The Trap Gun is fine. I set it for 2 rabbits, 2 opossums and 2 beaver cubs."
Anson, Md.

KILLS LARGE OR SMALL ANIMALS.

"The Sure Shot Trap Gun is all right. I set it for a mink and caught a mink in a trap. The covering the gun I set it and found a mink next morning shot behind the ear, and he here says I set it in a hole. To set it I set a mink and I set it in a hole."
Ole, Wis.

IT NEVER MISSES.

"The Sure Shot Trap Gun I got from you last winter is all right. I killed a good many animals with it. I had but one miss. I shot a good many animals with it. I had but one miss. I shot a good many animals with it. I had but one miss."
Ole, Wis.

ALL YOU CLAIM IT TO BE.

"The Sure Shot Trap Gun is all you claim it to be. I killed 2 mink, 2 opossum, 2 musk and 1 beaver. I had but one miss."
Ole, Wis.

THE TRAP FOR THE TRAPPER.

"I like the Sure Shot trap. It is the best article I have ever used. I improved my catch by using the Sure Shot trap. I used only the one. I set it for a mink and I caught it. I set it for a mink and I caught it. I set it for a mink and I caught it."
Ole, Wis.

GOOD FOR MINK, COON, ETC.

"The Sure Shot Trap Gun is all right. I set it for a mink and I caught it. I set it for a mink and I caught it. I set it for a mink and I caught it."
Ole, Wis.

PRICE OF GUN	
Each	\$3.81
Per Doz	42.00
(Shipping weight of Gun 2 lbs.)	
PRICE OF CARTRIDGES	
Ball, per Box of 50	80
Shot, per Box of 50	70
(Shipping weight per box not included)	

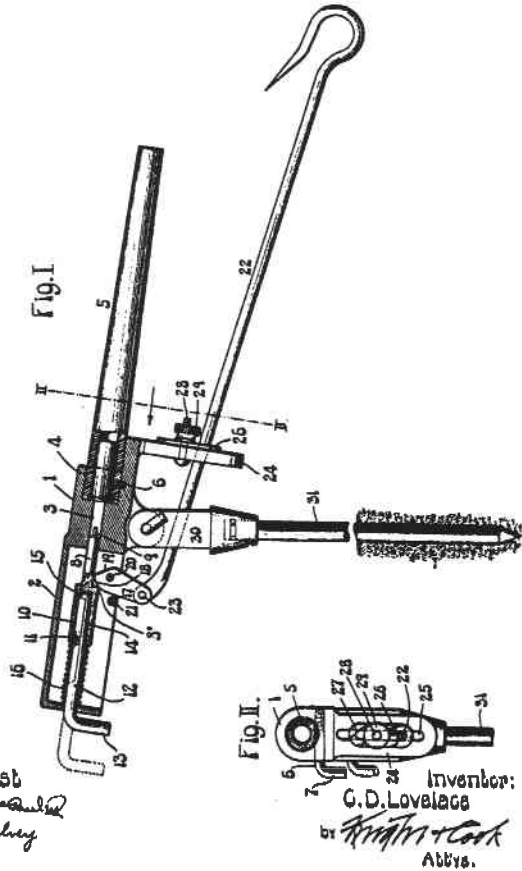


Figure 27. Sure-Shot trap gun advertisement in 1914-1915 Taylor Fur Co. catalog.

1,098,742.

O. D. LOVELACE.
TRAP GUN.
APPLICATION FILED MAR. 01, 1913.

Patented June 2, 1914.



Attest
a. j. m. [signature]
M. Falvey

Inventor:
C. D. Lovelace
by [signature]
Atty.

REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION, U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Figure 28. C.D. Lovelace trap gun, patent no. 1,098,742, patented June 2, 1914.

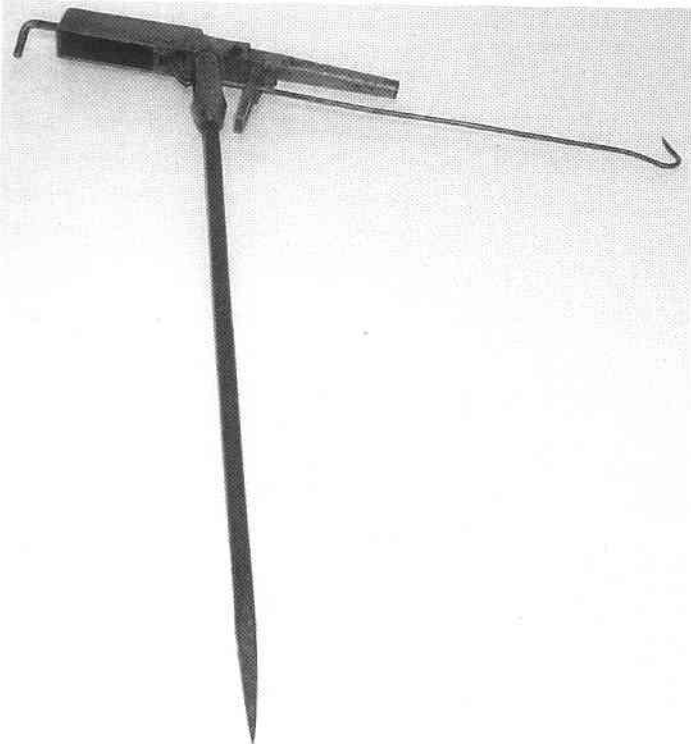


Figure 29. Texas Gun Co. trap gun.



Figure 30. Texas Gun Co. markings.

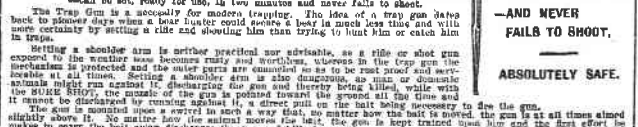
IF YOU GET IT FROM TAYLOR—IT'S GOOD

Animals Never Suffer if Taken "THE HUMANE WAY" With
The Sure Shot Trap Gun.

For four years the "Sure Shot" has been listed in this Catalog and the demand has steadily increased each season. Thousands of America's most successful trappers are getting their furs the "humane way" by using one or more of these guns.

SHOOTS 30 CAL. SHOT OR BALL CARTRIDGES AND WILL KILL ANYTHING FROM THE SMALLEST MINK TO THE LARGEST GRIZZLY WITH-OUT DAMAGING THE FUR.

Weights only 1 1/2 lbs.—can be easily carried—absolutely safe to man and domestic animals—can be set, ready for use, in two minutes and never fails to shoot.



Price \$3.85 Each
Mailing Weight 2 Pounds
If sent by mail, Postage Extra.

THE ONLY GUN—THAT FINDS ITS OWN AIM—NEVER SHOOTS TILL IT GETS AIM—AND NEVER FAILS TO SHOOT, ABSOLUTELY SAFE.

The Trap Gun is a necessity for modern trapping. The idea of a trap gun (set back to shoulder days when a bear hunter could go into a bear in much less time and with more certainty by setting a club and shooting him than trying to hunt him or catch him in traps.

Setting a shoulder arm is neither practical nor advisable, as a rifle or shot gun exposed to the weather soon becomes rusty and worthless, whereas in the trap gun the mechanism is protected and the main parts are chambered so as to be rust proof and vermin proof at all times. Setting a shoulder arm is also dangerous, as men or domestic animals might run against it, discharging the gun and thereby being killed, while with the SURE SHOT, the muzzle of the gun is pointed toward the ground all the time and it cannot be discharged by running against it, a direct pull on the butt being necessary to fire the gun.

The gun is mounted upon a spring so that, no matter how the butt is moved, the gun is at all times aimed slightly above it. No matter how the animal moves (up, down, left, right) the gun is kept trained upon him and the first effort he makes to carry the bait away discharges the gun and kills instantly.

The SURE SHOT is especially recommended in Northern Sections, where the ground is covered with snow, as the mechanism of the gun is so protected that no amount of snow, sleet or freezing can affect its working properly, thus making it useful in weather that would put a steel trap out of commission. The gun can also be set on the ice, by setting stakes down into the ice.

A few letters from trappers who use the SURE SHOT!

GOOD FOR WOLVES.
"We killed three wolves and one wolverine with the Sure Shot Trap Gun. Two bad otters. We get twenty dollars a day."
—A. NEMEC.

KILLS LARGE OR SMALL ANIMALS.
"The Sure Shot Trap Gun is all O. K. and it will kill anything from a mink to a bear. On receiving the gun I set it and found a coyote next morning shot behind the ear, and the third night I got a bobcat. In all, I got 9 coyotes and 5 bobcats in twenty days."
—W.M. HARPOLE.

GOOD FOR MINK, COON, ETC.
"Your Trap Gun is out of sight. I used it only two weeks and shot 6 mink, 3 coon and 2 opossum. Now I am killing big game with it."
—D. A. THOMAS.

Price of Gun, each, \$3.85; Per Doz., \$42.00.
Mailing weight of Gun, 2 lbs.

We have a big stock of 38 cal. smokeless fire cartridges for use in the Trap Gun which we will sell, while they last, at following prices:

PRICE OF CARTRIDGES.
Ball, per Box of 50.....\$2.00
Shot, per Box of 50.....\$2.00
Cartridges cannot be sent by mail.

EXTRA We recently obtained 125 extra large size Trap Guns which shoot 12 gauge shells loaded with either Ball or Buck Shot. These guns are intended for Bear, Large Wolf, Mountain Lion, Panther and similar animals. They are expensively made by one of the largest Fire Arm Manufacturers in the country and are a beautiful piece of mechanism. Originally intended for distribution in Africa and Asia, where they are in common use, for big game, but the war has caused the manufacturers to stop making them until the great conflict is over, and we succeeded in getting a few to introduce here in America. These guns have never sold for less than \$15.00 each, and at present prices for raw material they cannot now be produced so as to sell at that price. We want to get the number that we have into the hands of big game hunters, so we offer them at much below actual production cost.

Price of Extra Large 12 gauge Trap Gun.....\$4.50
If ordered with one or more of the 38 caliber Trap Guns shown above.....\$3.85
Mailing weight of large gun, 8 lbs. Postage extra if sent by mail.

SPECIAL

Figure 31. 1917-1918 Taylor catalog showing "device for setting heavy or light."

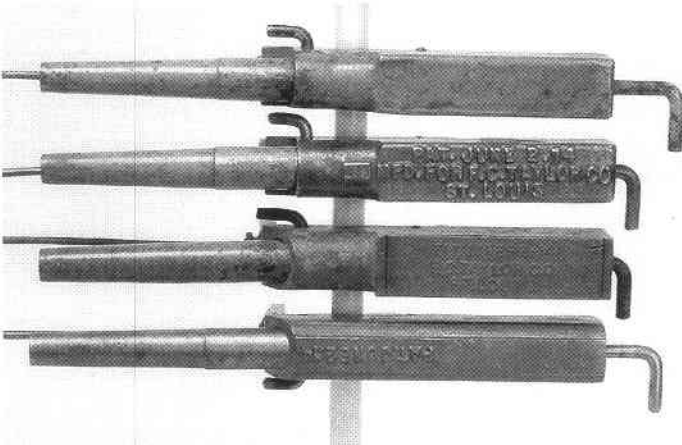


Figure 32A. Top views of Texas trap gun (top), similarly shaped Taylor marked trap gun, alloy metal receiver Taylor marked trap gun and differently shaped receiver with Taylor markings removed (bottom).

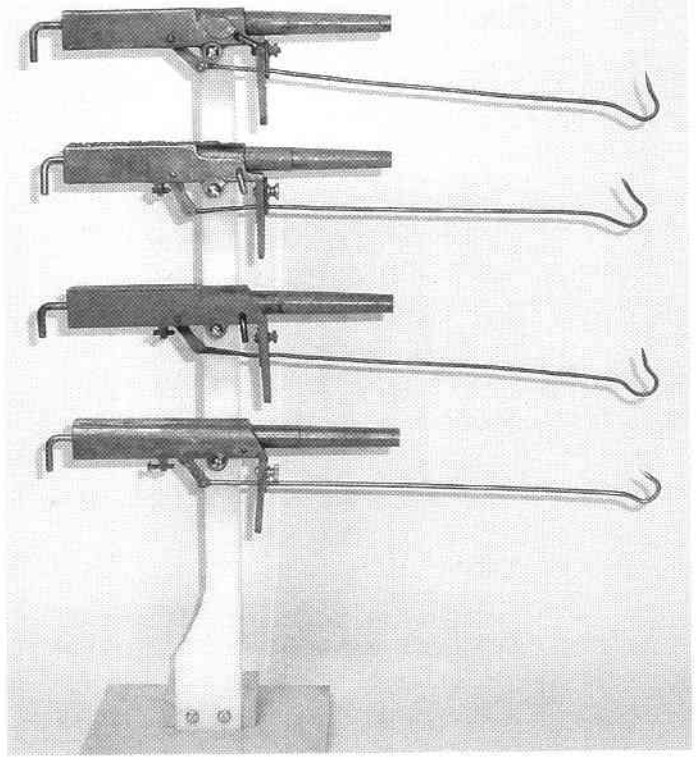


Figure 32B. Side views (without steel stakes) of Texas Gun Co. trap gun (top), similarly shaped Taylor marked trap gun, alloy metal Taylor marked trap gun and differently shaped receiver with Taylor markings removed (bottom).

and side arm. U.S. Patent 1,512,992 (Figure 35), granted October 28, 1924, at the time he was residing in Fort Worth, Texas, was for a trap gun mounting. These patent designs were incorporated into the Fur Getter. The Taylor 1922-1923 catalog featured the Fur Getter on the front and back covers and used two full inside pages to introduce the new trap gun (Figure 36, a-d).

SURE SHOT TRAP GUN

A GUN THAT HITS THE BULL'S EYE EVERY TIME

Every time you use a cartridge with this gun you get another pelt. You can't beat that for a good proposition. This gun never fails.

\$3⁸⁵

Postage Extra
FINDS ITS OWN
AIM AND NEVER
MISSES



Your trapping outfit is not complete without one or more of these guns. Sets can be made with it anywhere—on snow, ice, water or land—and animals which cunningly avoid steel traps fall easy victims. It records no failures; every time the trigger is pulled an animal drops dead in its tracks. Unerringly and unflinching, it places shot or ball in a vital spot. No animal is too small or too large; weasel or grizzly bear, it gets them all.

The Sure Shot Trap Gun is in effect a miniature heavy calibre rifle mounted on an iron pin. The firing mechanism is protected from the weather, and snow, sleet, or freezing will not put it out of commission. All exposed parts are nicely enameled. The gun revolves on the pin, so that it is always trained directly above the bait. No matter which way the bait is turned, the gun has a dead aim. The barrel points downward, preventing any possibility of any accident.

Shoots 38 calibre shot or ball cartridges. Adapted for animals of any size. Small, and weighs only 1½ pounds. Just as easy to set out a string of these guns as ordinary traps.

PRICE OF GUN

Each	\$ 3.85
Per Doz.	42.00

Mailing weight of Gun, 2 lbs.

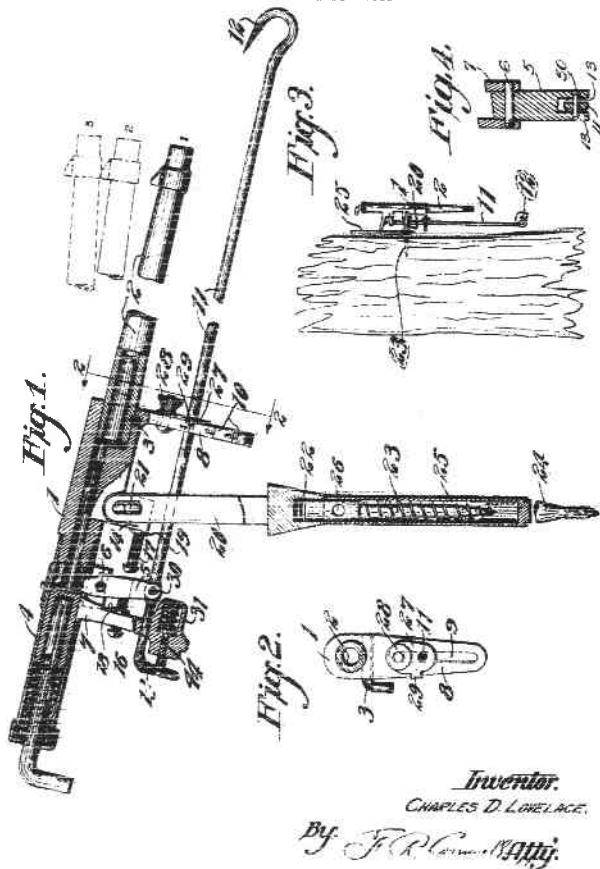
PRICES OF CARTRIDGES

Ball, per Box of 50.....	\$1.00
Shot, per Box of 50.....	1.00

Cartridges cannot be sent by mail.

If sent by mail, postage is extra.

Figure 33. 1917 Funston Bros. & Co. fur company catalog advertisement.



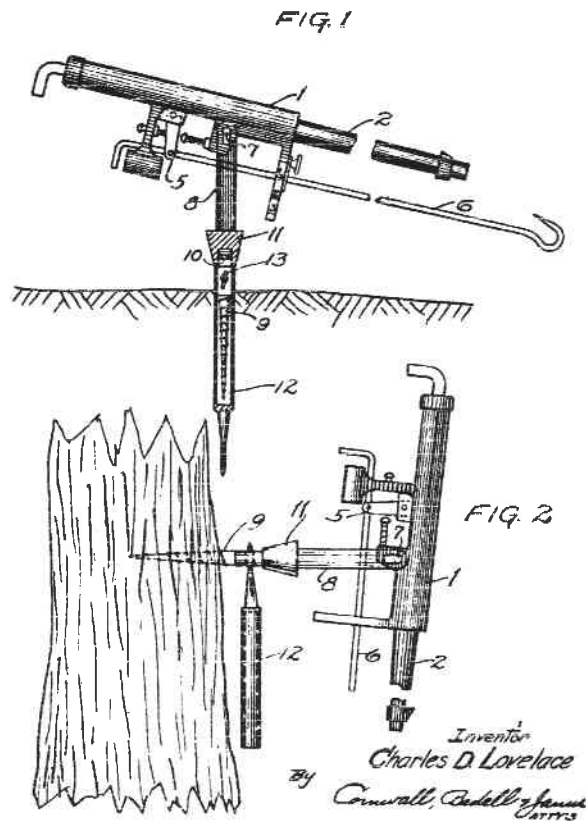
Inventor
CHARLES D. LOVELACE.
By J. R. Cornwall, Attorney.

Figure 34. C.D. Lovelace trap gun, patent no. 1,497,758, patented June 17, 1924.

This new trap gun was made with a .22 caliber, 5 1/2-inch-long rifled bronze barrel with a large blade front sight and a notched brass receiver. It is 11 1/4 inches long overall, plus bait rod. With the stake and bait rod removed, leaving only the barrel and receiver, and with the added gripping lugs used as a hand hold, the trap gun could be used as a side arm. Starting with the 1925-1926 catalog, F.C. Taylor no longer advertised using the trap gun as a side arm.

The Fur Getter is marked, on the left side of the receiver, TAYLOR FUR/F.C. TAYLOR FUR CO. ST. LOUIS. MO.. On the right side the markings are PAT'D JUNE 2 1914/OTHER PAT'S PENDING. These markings did not change, even after the patents were granted, during the nineteen years it was sold. All of the Taylor Fur Getters have a serial number on the bottom of the barrel and receiver; the highest number I am aware of is in the 31xx range.

The mounting stake was redesigned so that the trap gun could be mounted either on the ground or in a tree trunk or log. The swiveling mount socket receives the upper end of a 3/16-inch-diameter, 2 1/4-inch-long freely rotating wood screw that is held in place in the socket by a pin. An 11 1/4-inch-long steel stake, hollow on the upper end,



Inventor
Charles D. Lovelace
By Cornwall, Radell & Jones, Attorneys

Figure 35. C.D. Lovelace trap gun, patent no. 1,512,992, patented October 28, 1924.

slides over the screw and is held in place by matching holes in the screw and stake, which are secured to each other by a cotter pin. The lower end of the stake is reduced in size and pointed for easier penetration of hard or frozen ground, and also could be driven into a tree trunk or log to provide a starting hole for the wood screw. The stake end can be inserted in the hole in the screw and used as a lever to rotate the screw.

In the book *Mossberg More Gun For The Money* by Victor and Cheryl Hanvin,¹³ it is reported that O.F. Mossberg & Sons made the Fur Getters for F.C. Taylor Fur Co. on a contract basis.

In 1922, the trap gun sold for \$4.00 postpaid. In 1925 it sold for \$3.85 postpaid or, with 100 .22 caliber N.R.A. cartridges, \$4.50, you pay the express charges. In 1929 the selling price was \$3.85 postpaid or, with 50 .22 caliber Palma cartridges, \$4.25 express prepaid. The 1936 selling price was \$3.35 with 50 .22 long rifle cartridges, you pay the express charges. In 1941 the Fur Getter sold for "\$5.05 with 50 cartridges, you pay the express, supply is limited—none can be manufactured during present emergency." This is the last year it was listed.

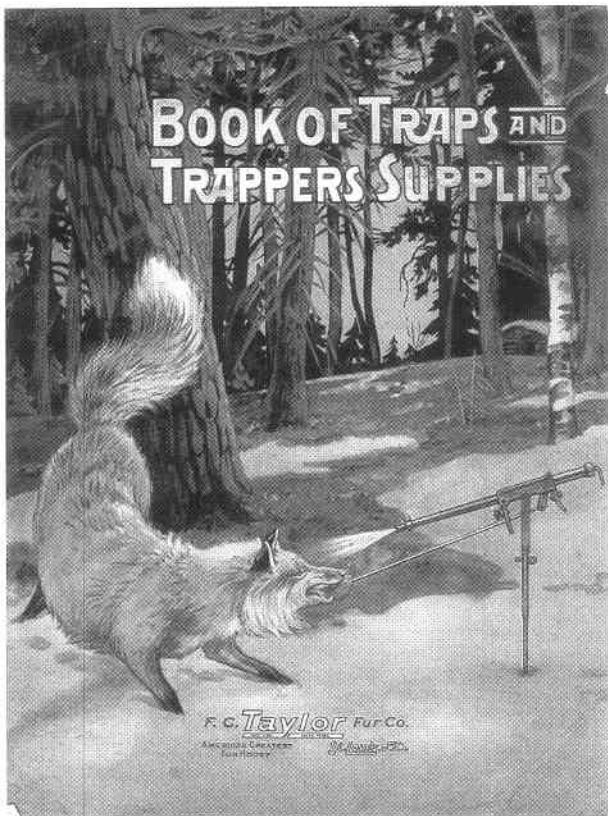


Figure 36A. Front and rear covers and two inside pages from the 1922-1923 Taylor Fur Co. catalog.



Figure 36B

F.C. Taylor Fur Co. *LARGEST* TRAPPERS MERCHANDISING DEPT. IN AMERICA *St. Louis, MO., U.S.A.*

Taylor Fur Getter

A NEW .22 CALIBER TRAP GUN THAT KILLS

PATENTED JUNE 2, 1918
OTHER PATENTS PENDING.

The principle and in constructing the Taylor Fur Getter is identical with that of the Bone-Blow Trap Gun first fitted to an animal in the fall of 1911. Patents were allowed on June 2, 1914 and 1915, and several patents covering the many intricate details incorporated in this new device have since been applied for and are now pending.

TRAP GUN—RIFLE—PISTOL COMBINED

The value of this invention lies in the fact that when not in use as a Trap Gun, it can be carried about and used as a pistol or rifle. By removing two screws and one cotter pin the Taylor Fur Getter is transformed into the most little pocket rifle or pistol ever launched. The barrel has been especially rifled and is not only extremely accurate, but has unusual penetrating power.

PRICE \$4.00 POSTPAID

GET THE THING FOR KILLING ANIMALS CAPTURED IN STEEL TRAPS. Carry the Fur Getter with you when setting your traps. You will find it invaluable for killing muskrat and other animals.

Figure 36C

This trap gun was patented by George Karr of Silver City, New Mexico. Application was filed on October 5, 1931, and patent 1,884,721 was granted on October 25, 1932 (Figure 37). The patent was assigned to Explosive Bait Corporation of New Mexico. The gun was shipped in a con-

F.C. Taylor Fur Co. *LARGEST* TRAPPERS MERCHANDISING DEPT. IN AMERICA *St. Louis, MO., U.S.A.*

Taylor Fur Getter

FINDS ITS OWN AIM — NEVER SHOOTS UNTIL IT GETS AIM — AND NEVER FAILS TO SHOOT

THE Fur Getter is mounted upon a swivel in such a way that no matter how the animal moves the hair of the barrel of the Fur Getter is kept trained upon him and the first effort he makes to carry the bait away, discharges the gun and kills instantly. The Fur Getter is absolutely safe to operate and is not dangerous to man or domestic animals. When set as a trap gun the muzzle is always pointed toward the ground and it cannot be discharged by running against it, a direct pull on the bait being necessary to fire it.

AMMUNITION INEXPENSIVE

The Fur Getter is chambered for .22 long rifle cartridges, but to obtain the best results we recommend the 22 long rifle, N. R. A., as the barrel has been especially rifled for that particular load and best results are obtainable with it. If your local dealer can supply you, we would suggest that you buy your cartridges from him. If ordered from us, the price will be 65 cents per 100 and we will have to ship by express (charges collect) as cartridges cannot be sent through the mail.

SPECIFICATIONS

The Fur Getter is made exclusively for F. C. Taylor Fur Co. by an eastern fire arm manufacturer and no expense has been spared to make it mechanically perfect in every way. The barrel is made of bronze, has great tensile strength, and is more satisfactory than steel because it is practically unaffected by the strongly corrosive action of the residue of exploded powder. This feature makes it at all times ready for use as a pistol. The frame is made of brass, beautifully finished and lacquered to prevent rust. The trigger mechanism is enclosed and unaffected by weather conditions. All material is of the very best quality obtainable and it is only because our first order was for an extremely large quantity that we can offer the Fur Getter at so low a price. The bait rod is made of spring steel and the staple is a combination of hollow steel tubing and solid steel rod, properly tapered so as to be easily driven in ground. It is a very fine piece of mechanism and one who will be proud to show to your friends and neighbors.

LIGHT—COMPACT—DEPENDABLE

When complete weighs only nine pounds. When used as a rifle or pistol weighs only nine ounces. Can be set as a trap gun, ready for use in two minutes and never fails to get the fur.

PRICE \$4.00 POSTPAID

WITH \$9.22 CALIBER N. R. A. CARTRIDGE
BY EXPRESS \$4.65—You Pay Express Charges

TAYLOR FUR GETTER AS A TRAP GUN

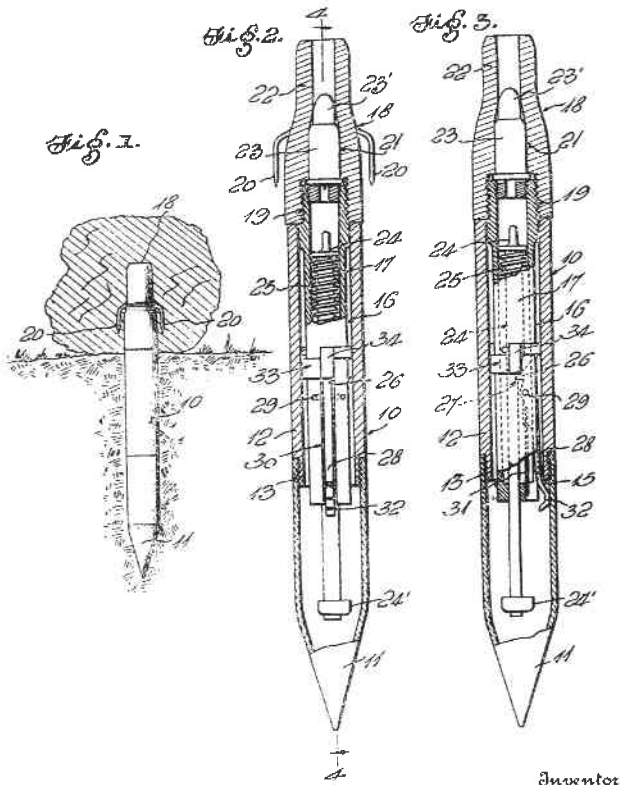
WITH STOCK REMOVED FOR TRAP USE

WHEN USED AS RIFLE OR PISTOL

READY TO FIRE—EASY TO AIM

Figure 36D

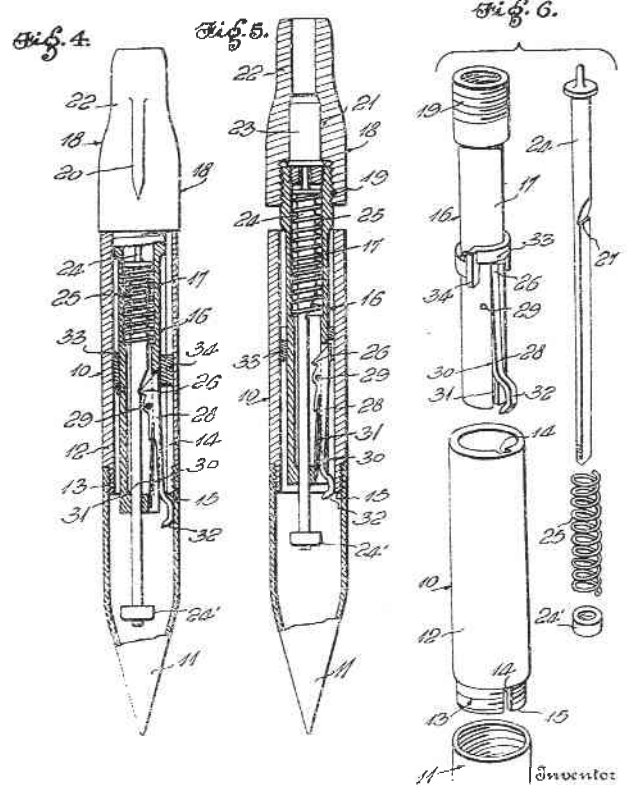
tainer that has much information relating to the trap gun. Printed on the container is the following: "A new, original, automatic device for instantaneous and humane killing of predators and fur bearing animals. Price \$9.75-Postage Prepaid-After 10 Days Return to EXPLOSIVE BAIT CORPO-



Witness
H. Woodards

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Figure 37A. G. Karr trap gun, patent no. 1,884,712, patented October 25, 1932.

Figure 37B

RATION Silver City, New Mexico." There are also pictures of the trap gun, a cougar or mountain lion, and either a howling wolf or coyote. Space for the mailing address and serial number of the gun is also provided.

The trap gun is 8 1/2 inches long and 1 inch in diameter, with a portion of the barrel section being 1 1/2 inches in diameter (Figure 38). The trap gun separates into parts for loading and setting. The 6-inch section that is placed into the ground is made of three threaded sections that screw together. The upper section has an internal groove throughout its length that the trigger fits into. The middle piece is threaded full length, connecting the upper and lower pieces. The lower piece is hollow to accommodate the firing pin and is tapered to a blunt point. This piece is placed into the ground first.

The 5 1/2-inch-long part that contains the firing mechanism and barrel separates into three threaded parts that screw together after a .25 caliber ACP cartridge is loaded. The barrel section has four fish-type hooks of two different lengths that are attached at the base and hold bait. The barrel screws onto a knurled section that screws onto the portion containing the firing pin, trigger and safety. The knurled

section adjusts the head space for the cartridge and turning it after the trap gun is set releases the safety. The only markings are PAT. Pending and serial number 1082.

This trap gun is well made of many machined precision parts, which made the trap gun very expensive to manufacture. The patent application states that "One object of the invention is to provide a comparatively simple gun which possesses few parts, may therefore be easily and inexpensively manufactured, and sold at a reasonable price." This trap gun was not simple as compared to others. The selling price, \$9.75 postpaid, when compared to the Taylor Fur Getter selling price of \$3.85 postpaid, would be a very large price disadvantage to overcome.

There were around 130 U.S. Patents relating to trap guns during the time period 1857 through 1988. During the same era there were also about 320 U.S. Patents for alarm guns, some of which were also included in the 130 trap gun patents. These devices can either be used as an alarm gun or a trap gun. These patents are useful for identifying a device and how it was to be used. There are other trap guns that were made and sold, but not patented, that can be identified by markings cast or stamped on the gun. There are also trap

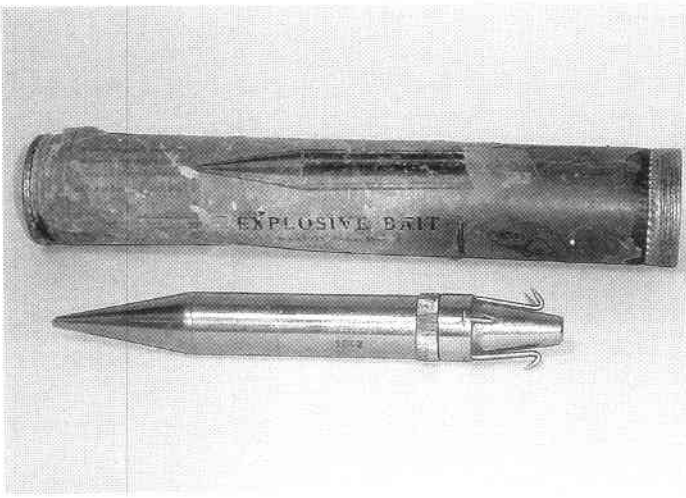


Figure 38. Karr (Explosive Bait Corporation) trap gun and shipping container.

guns that were made for personal use and were not made for sale. They represent one- or, at most, few-of-a-kind.

There are very few patents for trap guns in other countries.¹⁴ Only one is found for Great Britain, number 7,737, which was granted, in 1897, to James Roger Booth of Barrie, Canada, who also was granted U.S. Patent 575,204 on January 12, 1897, for the same invention. Two trap guns for gophers were patented in Germany in 1881. The next trap gun to be patented in Germany, in 1970, was also a gopher or mole trap gun, the Auber Schuss-Falle mole gun, which was being sold and used in Germany as of 1998. There are not any trap gun patents listed for France.

A few trap guns are found from Europe. One is listed in a reproduction of French company Adolp Frank's ALFA 1911 Catalog¹⁵ of small arms, hunting and outdoor equipment (Figure 39). The trap gun is 12 gauge pinfire, 8 ½ inches long with a 3 ¼-inch-long barrel (Figure 40). The breech block lifts away from the barrel, which has Belgian proof marks, and is secured by a cotter pin that engages a groove in both the barrel and breech block. The hammer is a curved flat steel spring and is held in the upraised cocked position by a small metal piece with a small ring in the center. A string

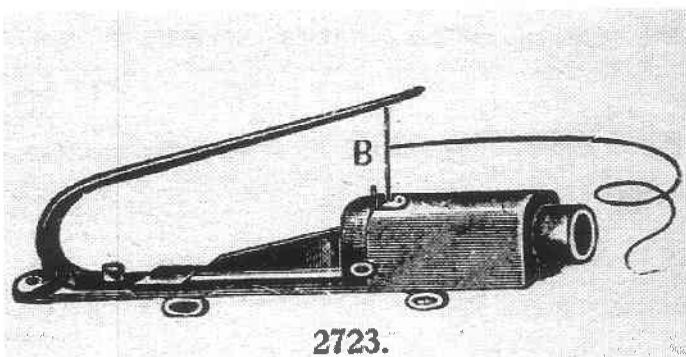


Figure 39. Advertisement from Alfa 1911 catalog showing a pinfire trap gun.

tied to the ring holds the bait and, when the string is pulled, the gun fires. This trap gun was also sold and used as an alarm gun. There are many variations of this type of pinfire trap gun.

As with many collectibles, there are fakes being made in an attempt to deceive collectors of trap guns. Most that have been encountered to date can best be called "fantasy" trap guns, as they are not copies of any existing trap gun that was actually commercially produced. In other words, the fake trap guns are not true replicas of any authentic trap gun. Most of the fake trap guns encountered are of good design, well made, and have fooled knowledgeable collectors, including me. The fake trap guns are represented as being antique, not recently made. They are sometimes described as prototypes or development models, patent models, tool room models or anything else the seller thinks will enhance the possibility of a sale. As there is not much information available today on trap guns, it is very easy to fool collectors into thinking that they are buying a rare trap gun, possibly a one-of-a-kind.

Available information leads me to believe that most of the fake trap guns I have encountered are made at or near Omaha, Nebraska, where they first became available. Similarities in workmanship and metal stamping tools indicate that they are probably made by a single individual. They are now seen for sale from coast to coast in the United States. There are at least thirty versions or models of these fake trap guns.

The following clues are provided to assist you in recognizing the most commonly seen fake trap guns. Most of the fakes are made of *machined brass*. If the gun fires a *barpoon*, it is probably a fake. There is no known authentic trap gun

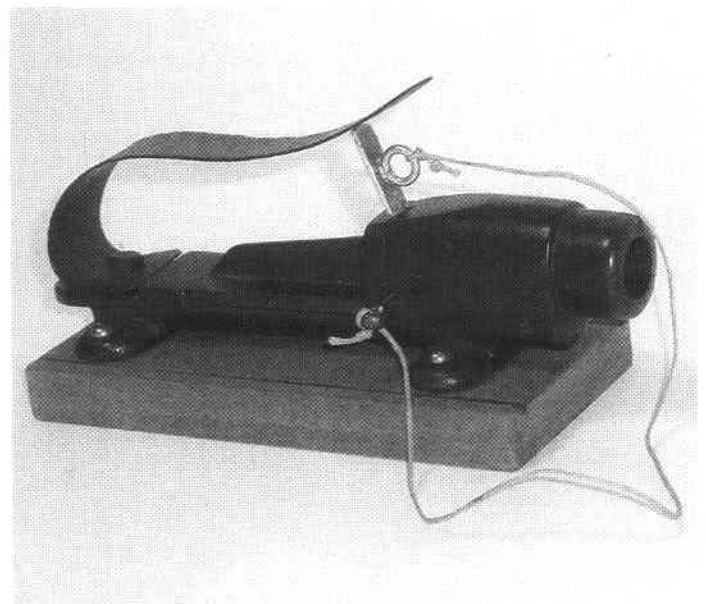


Figure 40. Pinfire trap gun similar to the one shown in Figure 39.

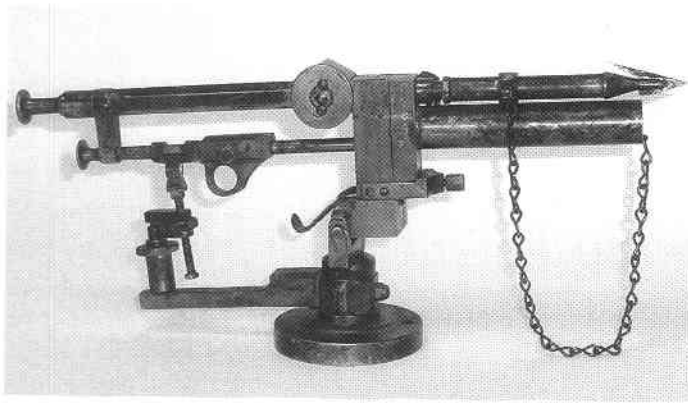


Figure 41. Fake trap gun marked *INTERNATIONAL ARMS PROVINCE DU QUEBEC CANADA*.

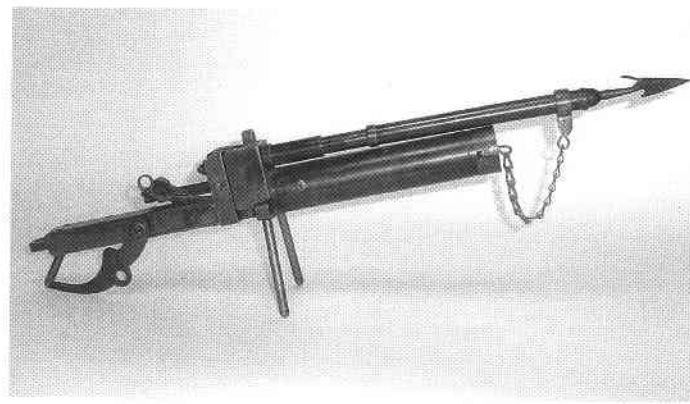


Figure 42. Fake trap gun marked *E & R MAYNARD ARMS Wash SETRAP pat 5/84*.

that fires a harpoon. If the gun is made *very elaborately* and is *cased*, it is most likely a fake. If the *markings are stamped one letter or numeral at a time*, be cautious, as legitimate trap guns are almost always stamped with a “gang stamp” or “roller stamp,” or the markings are made during the casting of the trap gun parts. Be aware of the possibility of *artificial aging* produced with chemicals on the brass parts. If you think you are buying a *one-of-a-kind* trap gun, you probably are—until the next one is made a month from now.

Markings on some of the fake trap guns I have encountered are *Marble Arms Mfg. Co., Marble Safety Axe Co., OYSTER BAY INDS./OFM & CO, MFD. BY O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS, OBERST SCHMIDT-ZURICH 1902, GETSEM GUN CO LINCOLN NEB, GETSEM GUN CO LINCOLN NEB “JUNIOR,” R.F. SEDGELY INC. PHILADELPHIA PA., JAKOB WEBBER & CO FLORENCE NEBRASKA, MFD BY CRAFTON BRASS WORKS CRAFTON PENNSYLVANIA USA PAT 1878, OSTERREICHE WERKE ANSTALT, 45G URINARIUS, INTERNATIONAL ARMS PROVINCE DU QUEBEC CANADA* (Figure 41), *ELEY BROS. LONDON, NORTH & COUCH 1858, E & R MAYNARD ARMS Wash SETRAP Pat 5/84* (Figure 42). Many do not have any markings and I am sure that there are markings I am not aware of. Two of the most interesting fakes are pictured in Figures 41 and 42, the type with harpoons. Common sense tells you that harpoons are not needed on a trap gun, but they sure are different and interesting. Most of the fake trap guns are not made this elaborately, but they function better than some of the authentic trap guns that I have encountered.

I have shown just a few of the many types of trap guns that are available to collectors. There is not a large quantity of these to collect as production of many of the trap guns is estimated at less than 100. It is possible to buy most of what

is presented here today for \$1000 or less. A few shown here are in the \$2000 price range. There are trap guns that can be purchased for two hundred dollars or less (not shown). This could be a good category for a neophyte collector because of the relatively reasonable prices.

I would not recommend that any one try to use one of these trap guns. Most have a hair trigger and just cocking and releasing the action can injure you. In preparing for this talk, I was injured twice while taking pictures and required bandaging.

NOTES

1. Gerstell, R. 1985. *The Steel Trap in North America*. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. 352 pp. Fig. 40, page 61. Drawing reproduced by Ron Monro.
2. F.C. Taylor Fur Co. Catalogs 1913–1914 through 1924–1925.
3. Winant, L. 1955. *Firearms Curiosa*. Bonanza Books, New York, New York. 281 pp. Fig. 113, page 113.
4. Logan, H.C. 1944. *Hand Cannon to Automatic*. Standard Publications, Inc., Huntington, WV. 200 pp. Plate 15.
5. George, J.N. 1947. *English Guns and Rifles*. Small-Arm Technical Publishing Company, Plantersville, South Carolina. 344 pp. Page 222.
6. *Ibid.*, page 222.
7. Winant, L. *Firearms Curiosa*. Fig. 114, page 114.
8. Moller, G. *American Military Shoulder Arms, Volumes 1 and 2*. Discussions about the trap gun.
9. Flayderman, N. 1998. *Flayderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms* (7th edition). Krause Publications, Iola, Wisconsin. 654 pp. Page 326, 7B-011.
10. *Ibid.*, page 326, 7B-012.
11. *Ibid.*, page 148, Remington Rifle Canc.
12. Winant, L. *Firearms Curiosa*. Fig. 123, page 119.
13. Hanvin, V. and Hanvin, C. 1995. *Mossberg More Gun For The Money*. Blue Book Publications, Inc., Minneapolis, MN. 304 pp. Pages 47–49.
14. Hellwig & Drummond. 1994. *Trap Patents*. Hellwig's Eigenverlag, 40668 Lank-Latum, Germany.
15. Schroeder, Joseph J., Jr. 1970. *Arms of the World—1911*. Digest Books, Northfield, Illinois.