

# NORTH PISTOLS AND THEIR VARIATIONS<sup>1</sup>

by

C. MEADE PATTERSON



SIMEON NORTH — Patriarch of U. S. Pistol Makers

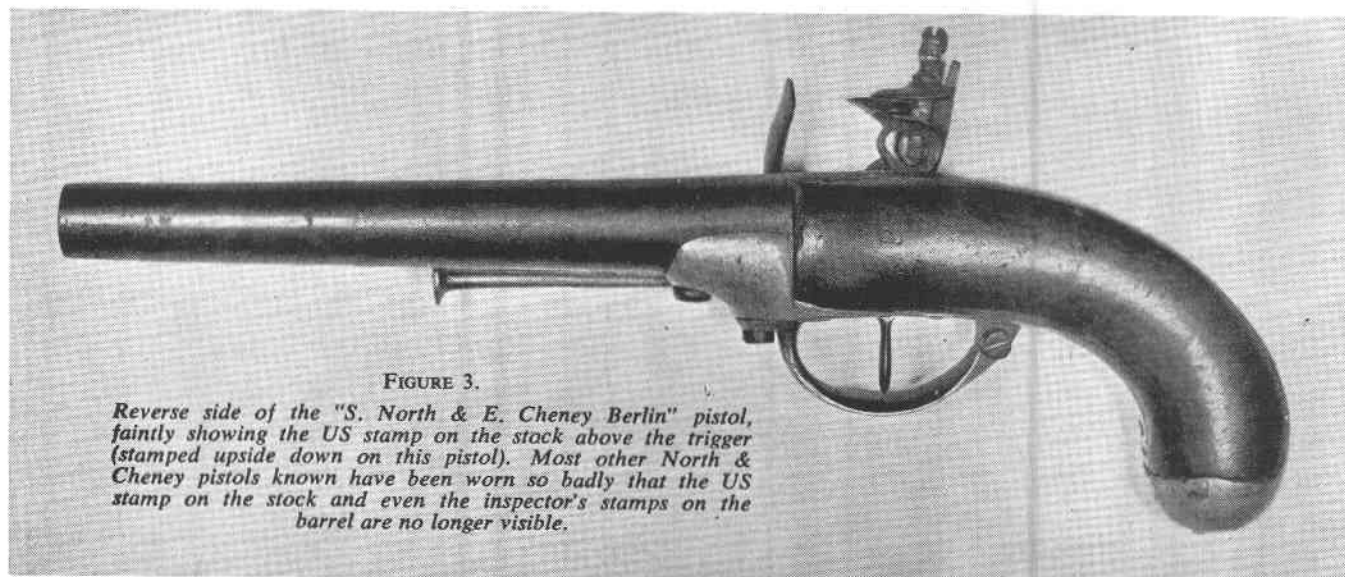
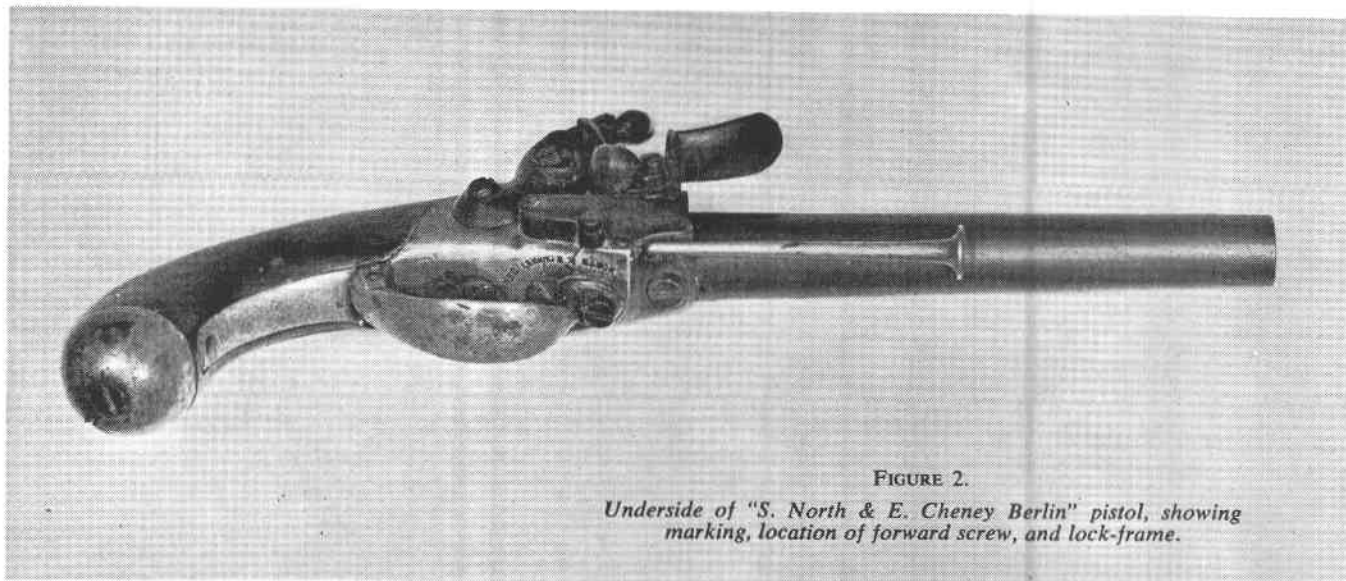
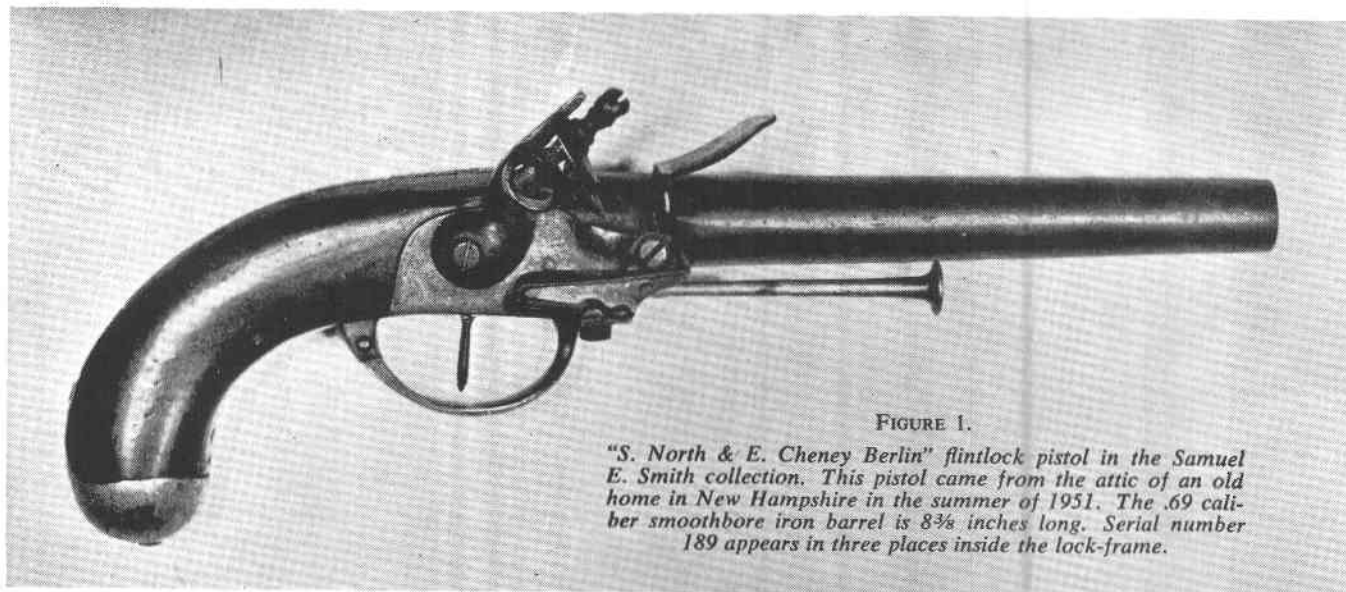
*(Photo courtesy of Samuel E. Smith)*

## INTRODUCTION

For 30 years of domestic arms production (1799 to 1829), Simeon North supplied pistols to our armed services. He has been well named the “first official pistol maker” of the United States by his descendants. Simeon North was born at Berlin, Connecticut, July 13, 1765. His boyhood memories were filled with recollections of the Revolutionary War. Like other Connecticut boys of his day, he expected to be a farmer. In 1795 he bought a saw mill run by water power and converted it to the manufacture of scythes. A neighboring gunsmith, Elias Beckley, further influenced young Simeon.

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## EARLY BERLIN, THE NORTH & CHENEY

The thought of manufacturing pistols for the Government occurred to Simeon North, and a contract was obtained on March 9, 1799 to produce 500 pistols at \$6.50 each. It was natural at this time to turn to one of the French models used during the Revolutionary War. The Charleville Model 1763 musket had been selected as the pattern of the young nation's first muskets a few years before, and it was decided at this time to produce pistols like the French Model 1776, more generally known as the Model 1777. North's first pistols delivered in batches were so well received and the need so great that a larger contract for 1,500 additional pistols of the same pattern at \$6.00 each was accepted the following year on February 6, 1800. Altogether 2,000 North & Cheney Model 1799 pistols were made, with delivery being completed by September 11, 1802. (Figures 1, 2 and 3)

Although an admitted copy of the French Model 1777, there are differences called for in the North contract and there are other differences which may be noted upon direct comparison between the North & Cheney pistol and its French predecessor. North & Cheney barrels were to be 8½ inches, an inch longer than the French barrels. However, it appears that thrifty Simeon was not one to waste a good barrel that was a wee bit scant, and some of the known North & Cheney pistols have barrels up to ⅛ of an inch shy of the contract length.

Since these exceptionally rare and valuable North & Cheney pistols were a copy of the French pistol, it may seem strange why there has not been more faking in changing and re-stamping a French pistol into a North & Cheney. The brass frames would be easy to stamp and it certainly would not be too difficult to add an inch of barrel length to a French pistol, considering the remarkably skillful work that has been done in stretching cut-down Walker revolver barrels back to their original nine inches. However, there are many, many "little" differences which, when they fail to check in comparison with a known original North & Cheney, would be pretty conclusive in exposing a fake. A few of them will be briefly mentioned here.<sup>2</sup>

The North & Cheney pistols have an additional screw, a trifle larger than the forward trigger guard screw, holding the barrel to the frame. No French pistols have been noted with the extra screw.

North & Cheney pistols were not made with

belthooks. Most, but not all French pistols were equipped with iron belthooks. Merely removing the belthook would be simple in creating a fake, but there remains the approximate one-half inch cut in the brass frame just to the rear of the trigger on the French pistol which would have to be either filled in or rounded off and smoothed out. The former is very difficult. The latter could be done, but a depression remains and such has been noted on two fakes examined a number of years ago. Of course there is no problem if the faker is fortunate enough to obtain a French pistol originally made without a belthook.

Frizzens on the North & Cheney pistols have a greater extreme height than on the French models, running about 1½ inches tall as against ⅞ to ¾ inch less on the French. This is not too good a test, however, remembering North's tolerance on barrel lengths.

Backstraps on the North & Cheneys examined have been the same width from tang to butt, whereas the French version shows a noticeable taper from top to bottom of the grip.

North & Cheney pistols were numbered serially in three hidden places: on the underside of the barrel at the breech, on the shoulder of the breech plug, and on the brass lock-frame where the barrel is attached. Nothing will be said here about the size and style of numerals in the serial number, but it would be well to compare a pistol that one was considering purchasing with a known genuine specimen to determine correct numerals — just in case the faker has become more educated than the work done on several examples noted in the past.

The underside of the brass lock-frame at the trigger guard was stamped in an interrupted curve either "S. NORTH & E. CHENEY BERLIN" or "NORTH & CHENEY BERLIN" (Figure 2). The barrels are stamped "U-S" on the top at breech and lightly marked "V ♦ P" on the left side at the breech. The wood stock is stamped "US" on the left side directly opposite the hammer (Figure 3).

Elisha Cheney, usually pronounced "Chainey", was a brother-in-law of Simeon North, but his part in the early pistol contract has not been determined.

<sup>1</sup> From an address presented at the meeting of the American Society of Arms Collectors, Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio, May 21, 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Although not originally a part of Mr. Patterson's address at Cincinnati, the Editor felt our ASofAC readers would appreciate more information on the famous North & Cheney pistols and so induced Samuel E. Smith to add his information to Mr. Patterson's otherwise complete North pistol story. Mr. Smith's additions include mention of markings, discussion of variations and detection of faking, and all serial number and survival ratio data.



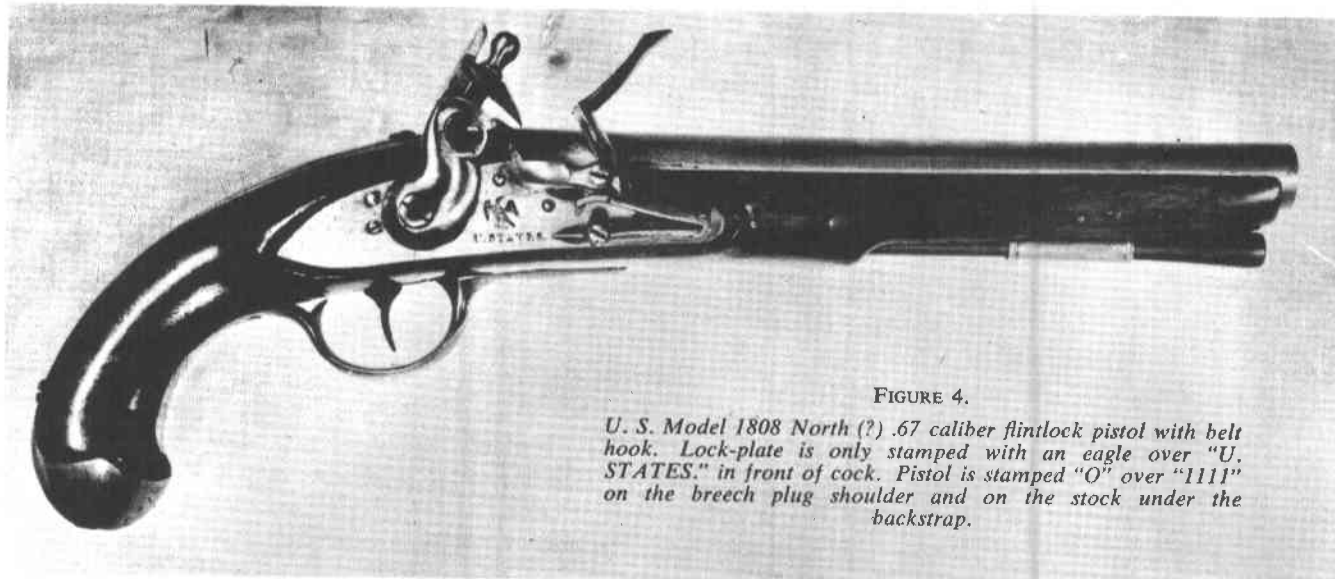


FIGURE 4.

*U. S. Model 1808 North (?) .67 caliber flintlock pistol with belt hook. Lock-plate is only stamped with an eagle over "U. STATES." in front of cock. Pistol is stamped "O" over "1111" on the breech plug shoulder and on the stock under the backstrap.*

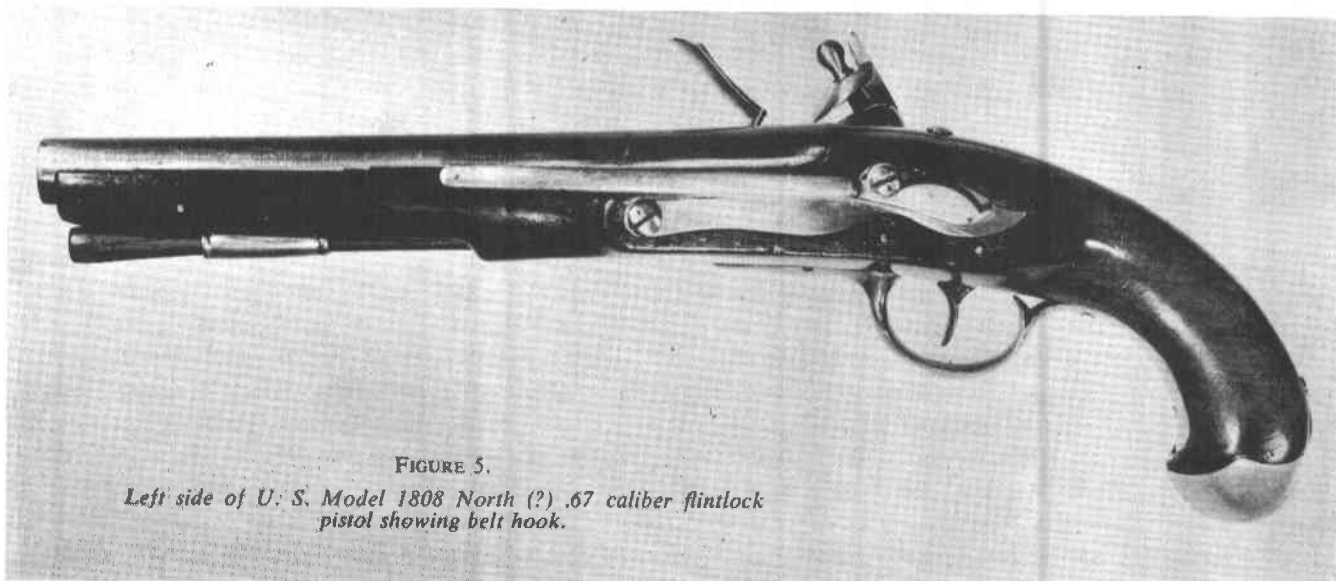


FIGURE 5.

*Left side of U. S. Model 1808 North (?) .67 caliber flintlock pistol showing belt hook.*

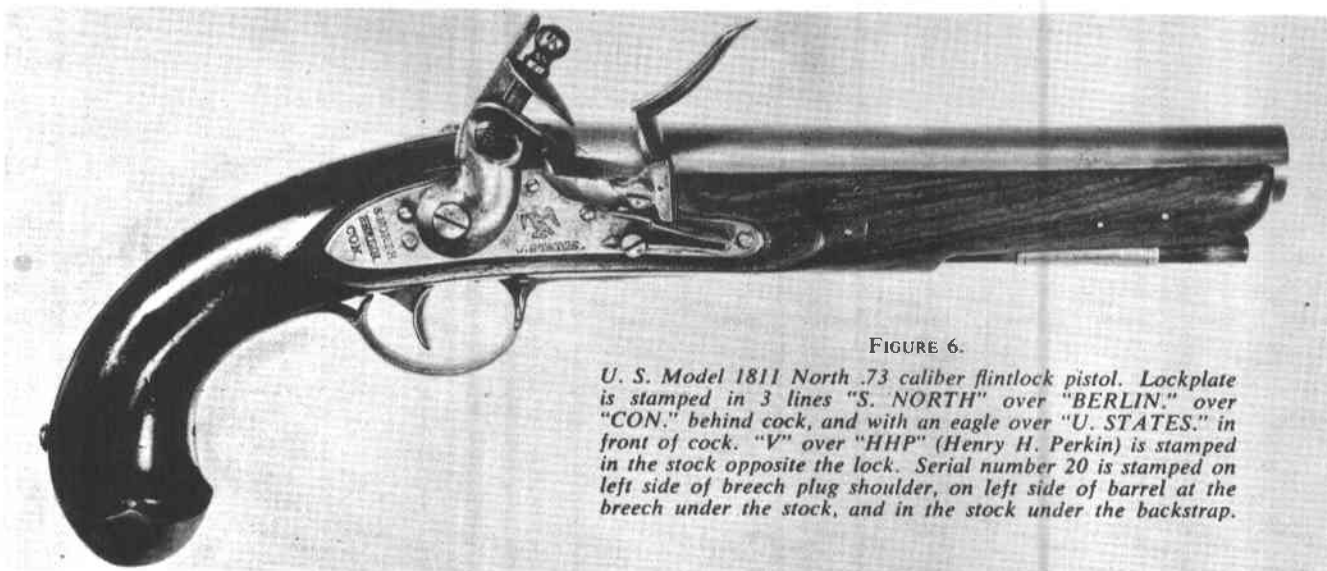


FIGURE 6.

*U. S. Model 1811 North .73 caliber flintlock pistol. Lockplate is stamped in 3 lines "S. NORTH" over "BERLIN." over "CON." behind cock, and with an eagle over "U. STATES." in front of cock. "V" over "HHP" (Henry H. Perkin) is stamped in the stock opposite the lock. Serial number 20 is stamped on left side of breech plug shoulder, on left side of barrel at the breech under the stock, and in the stock under the backstrap.*

Cheney was a clockmaker, and it has been said that he manufactured such small parts as the pins and screws. Others regard him as having been a financial backer of the first North contracts. The North family has discounted any active participation by Cheney in the manufacture of pistols and their belief is backed by the fact that only Simeon North signed the second North contract of February 6, 1800 for the additional 1,500 pistols. So far, the first contract has not been located so we do not know how it was signed.

The authors of *SIMEON NORTH, FIRST OFFICIAL PISTOL MAKER*, published at Concord, N. H. in 1913, although doing a fine pioneering work in telling about Simeon North and his pistol making, were in error as to what type of pistol the contracts of 1799 and 1800 called for. The book illustrates and describes the model 1811 full stocked pistol and calls it the 1799 contract. Fortunately the authors located and printed the entire February 6, 1800 contract in the book and in Part Second of that contract is stated, "That part of the breech of the pistol which lies within the Brass may be formed round on the under part instead of being squared". That description clearly

refers to a brass framed North & Cheney of course and not to a full stocked later model pistol with no brass frame.

Today there are very few North & Cheney pistols in existence. Their survival rate seems to be less than one per cent. Between 15 and 20 specimens are all that are known of the original two thousand. Information provided by serial numbers collected by Sam Smith over many years suggests that the first 500 pistols were numbered consecutively from 1 to 500 and were those marked "S. NORTH & E. CHENEY BERLIN", and that the 1,500 pistols of the second contract were numbered consecutively from 1 to 1,500 and were those marked simply "NORTH & CHENEY BERLIN". The number of specimens available for examination is so few that such conclusions are only considered possibilities. Why the survival of these North Model 1799 pistols is so low remains a mystery. Perhaps it remains for someone engaged in arms research at Archives in Washington to locate a hitherto unknown War Dept. directive of the early 1830's instructing Ordnance officers to have withdrawn from storage and broken up for scrap, all of the "old model brass pistols".

## LATER BERLIN, PISTOLS WITH FORESTOCKS

With the completion of the 1799-1800 contracts, Simeon North made no more pistols for the United States until June 30, 1808 when he entered an agreement with the Navy to supply 1,000 pairs of boarding pistols at the price of \$11.75 a pair. An additional contract for 500 more pairs of Model 1808 Navy pistols at \$12.00 a pair was obtained December 4, 1810. These pistols have ten-inch barrels held by pins to a full-length stock. The brass buttcap has a curious umbrella shape typical of Berlin pistols of this and later models. A belt hook was mounted on the left side opposite the lock so that the seaman's hands would be free for climbing and using the cutlass. These Model 1808 pistols are never found with any proofmark on their barrels. A serial number is found stamped in the wood of the stock under the iron backstrap and in the left side of the breech plug shoulder. The pistol in the author's collection is number 214. Most of these pistols were converted to percussion later on, and many flintlock specimens often prove to be re-converted. This pistol is usually called .64 caliber, but those measured have been .67 caliber.

The common lockplate marking is an eagle over "U. STATES" between cock and battery, and "S. NORTH" over "BERLIN" over "CON" behind cock. Some are known with "U. STATES" on top

of the barrel. Another variation, such as the pistol shown in Figures 4 and 5, has the same eagle over "U. STATES." on the lock, but no markings whatever behind the cock. One might think at first that the typical "S. NORTH" over "BERLIN" over "CON" stamping has been removed, but this is not the case; the lockplate has uniform thickness throughout and the eagle over "U. STATES." stamping is perfectly sharp. This particular lock is ½ inch longer than the usual Model 1808 North pistol locks that are marked with North's name and address. It has been suggested that another contemporary made these pistols, but the eagle stamping is identical with those signed by North. It has also been suggested without support that these are early unsigned pattern pistols. The fact that its number is not a conventional serial number, but is "O" over "1111" might lend some basis to this thought.

The next North pistol (Figure 6) is the Model 1811 .69 caliber contracted for on November 18, 1811, with Tench Cox, Purveyor of Public Supplies, for 1,000 pairs at \$11.87½ a pair. This pistol is more often called Model 1810, but the Model 1811 designation is preferred because it refers to the actual contract date. This pistol is shorter than the Model 1808, having an 8½ inch barrel held by pins to a full-length stock. Bore diameters have been found

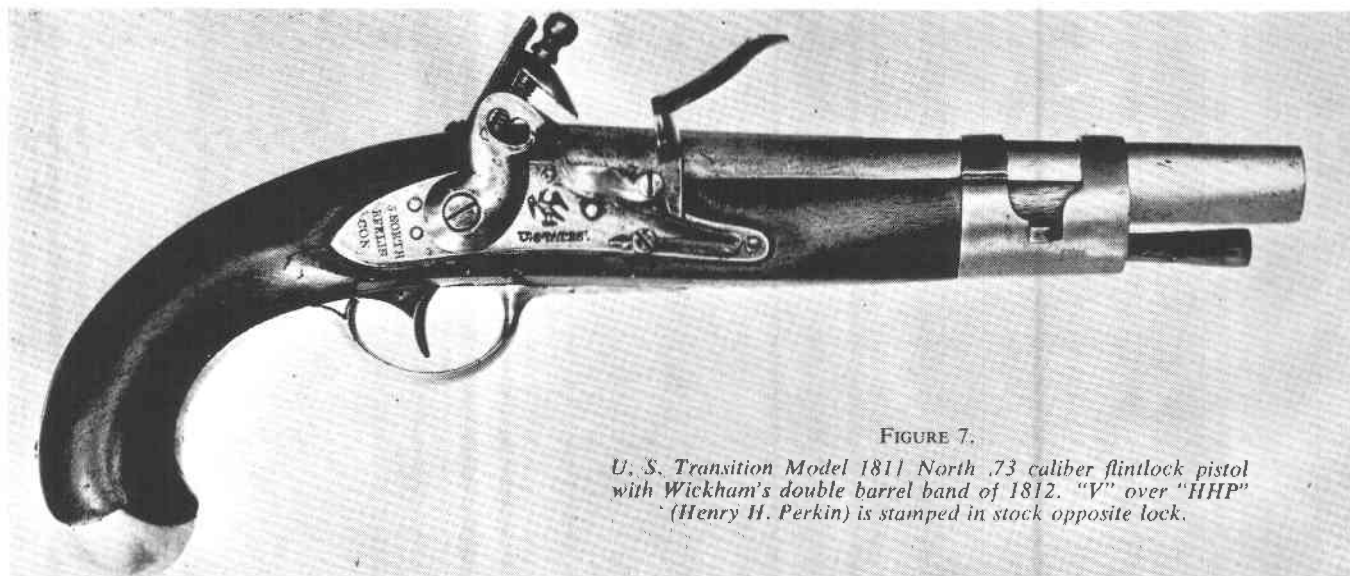


FIGURE 7.

U. S. Transition Model 1811 North .73 caliber flintlock pistol with Wickham's double barrel band of 1812. "V" over "HHP" (Henry H. Perkin) is stamped in stock opposite lock.

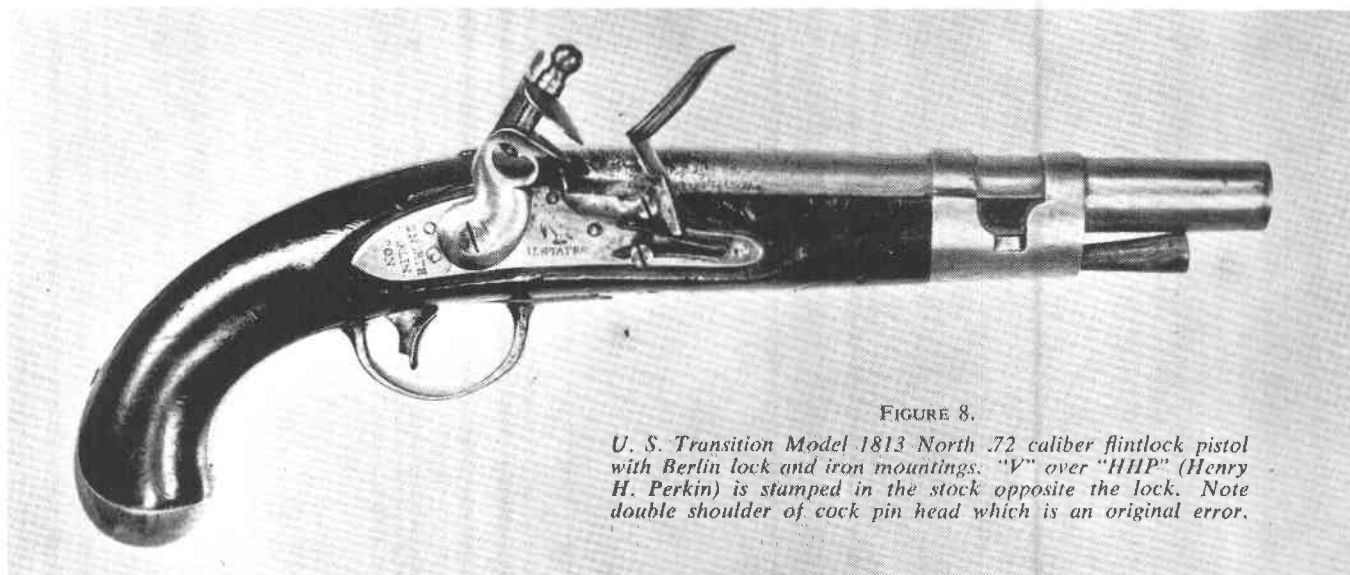


FIGURE 8.

U. S. Transition Model 1813 North .72 caliber flintlock pistol with Berlin lock and iron mountings. "V" over "HHP" (Henry H. Perkin) is stamped in the stock opposite the lock. Note double shoulder of cock pin head which is an original error.

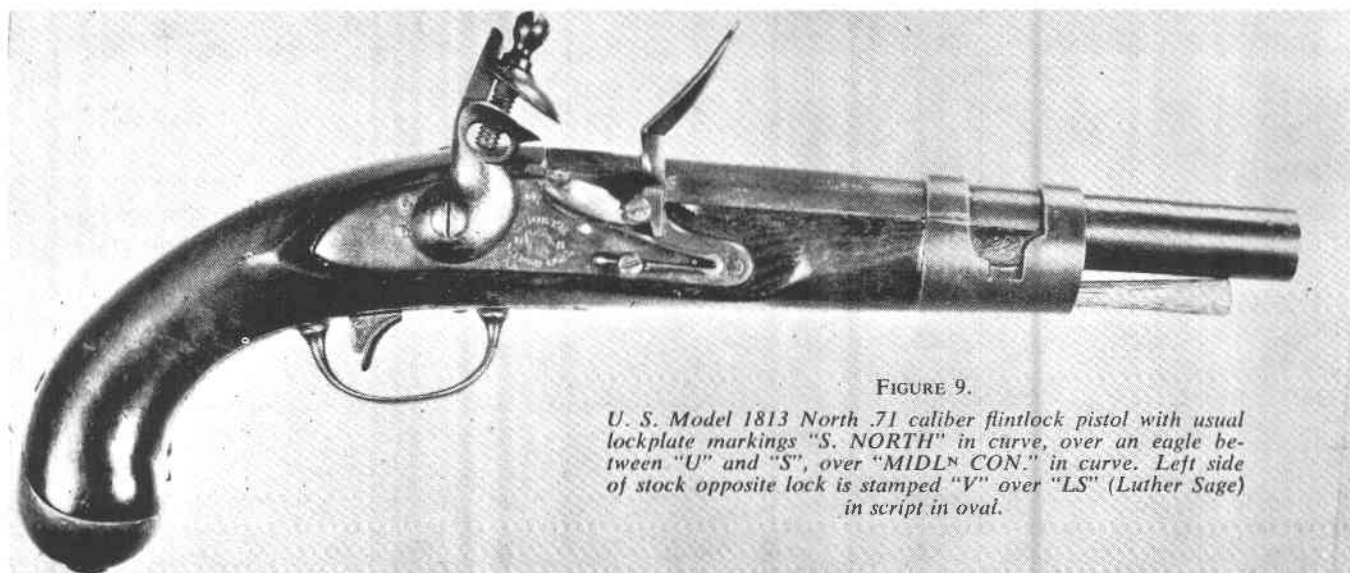


FIGURE 9.

U. S. Model 1813 North .71 caliber flintlock pistol with usual lockplate markings "S. NORTH" in curve, over an eagle between "U" and "S", over "MIDL CON." in curve. Left side of stock opposite lock is stamped "V" over "LS" (Luther Sage) in script in oval.

to measure from .69 to .73 caliber. Mountings are brass and sometimes bronze. The umbrella buttcap was continued. Numbers, which may be batch numbers instead of serial numbers because they are usually low (these three are numbered 20, 27, and 31), are found stamped in two places; in the stock under the backstrap and in the left shoulder of the breech plug, and sometimes in a third place on the left side of the barrel at the breech under the stock.

Although the North Model 1808 pistol carries neither proofmarks nor inspector's marks, the North Model 1811 has both. The barrels are either proofmarked "P" (proved) over "US", or "US" over an eagle head over "CT" (contract) in a countersunk oval over "V" (viewed). Some have regarded "CT" as standing for "Connecticut", as it might very well where North pistols are concerned. This proofmark also appears, however, on barrels of U. S. contract muskets made in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts as well as in Connecticut. A small "P" also is sometimes found stamped on the backstrap. "V" over initials "HHP" for Henry H. Perkin, Ordnance Inspector and son of Joseph Perkin, first Superintendent at Harpers Ferry Armory, are stamped in the stock opposite the lock on the North Model 1811 pistols with "P" over "US" proofmarks. "CW" in a trefoil for Charles Williams is stamped in the stock opposite the lock on this North Model 1811 pistol with the proofmarks "US" over eagle head over "CT" in oval over "V".

While this contract was in process of manufacture, Marine T. Wickham of the Ordnance Department stationed at Philadelphia hit on the idea of retaining pistol barrels in their stocks by spring-held bands

in musket fashion rather than by means of the awkward pins. Wickham's suggestion was accepted by his superiors and on December 8, 1812, Secretary of War William Eustis ordered six pattern pistols to be made with barrel bands at Harpers Ferry. Twenty-four pattern muskets were also ordered at the same time. These became the Model 1812 pattern muskets. Whether or not North was ordered at this time to manufacture the undelivered balance of his contract of 2,000 Model 1811 pistols with two-ring barrel bands is not known, but North Berlin pistols with the usual brass mountings, 8½ inch barrels, and a Wickham two-ring barrel band (Figure 7) were manufactured either under this contract or at the beginning of the next. These variations have the "P" over "US" proofmarks on the barrel and the "V" over "HHP" inspector's marks in the stock opposite the lock.

Not much time elapsed between the order to manufacture six pattern pistols with Marine T. Wickham's improvement and the granting of a new wartime contract to Simeon North on April 16, 1813. This contract was nearly three times the total of all his preceding pistol contracts combined. North had been encouraged to expand his capacity in anticipation of this new five-year contract for 20,000 pistols to be made like the six Wickham pattern pistols recently completed at Harpers Ferry. The price agreed upon was \$7.00 a pistol. A larger armory was opened six miles away at Middletown in the summer of 1813 to handle this enormous contract. Simeon's son, Reuben, stayed on at Berlin to continue the manufacture of some parts. As a matter of fact, the Berlin factory continued in operation until 1843.

## MIDDLETOWN

The new pistols with two-ring barrel bands were iron mounted throughout, their barrels were increased in length to nine inches, their caliber remained that of the musket or .69, and all parts were to be interchangeable. These Model 1813 North pistols were first produced using left over locks of Berlin manufacture and markings of the previous pistol contract of 1811 (Figure 8). When the old lock supply had been exhausted, new Middletown locks were made. These new locks were stamped with an eagle between the letters "U" and "S" with "S. NORTH" in a curve above and "MIDL<sup>N</sup> CON." in a curve below (Figure 9). The back end of the lockplate was rounded for the first time and left unmarked. Some have been reported showing a date behind the cock such as "1814", but these extra date marks, judging from those that have been seen,

are not believed to be original. Other changes in the Middletown lock which differed noticeably from the Berlin lock included:

1. An inclined brass pan without fence in place of the horizontal pan with fence.
2. Elimination of the thumb angle in the hammer (battery, steel, or frizzen).
3. Enlargement of the cock.
4. A rounded finial on the battery spring replaced the spearhead finial made at Berlin.

Opening the new factory at Middletown resulted in many delays in the delivery of Model 1813 pistols. Simeon North was constantly explaining to the Ordnance Department why he was behind in his deliveries. Furthermore, he was censured for selling pistols in Boston at the expense of his obligations to the Ordnance Department. The War of 1812 had placed



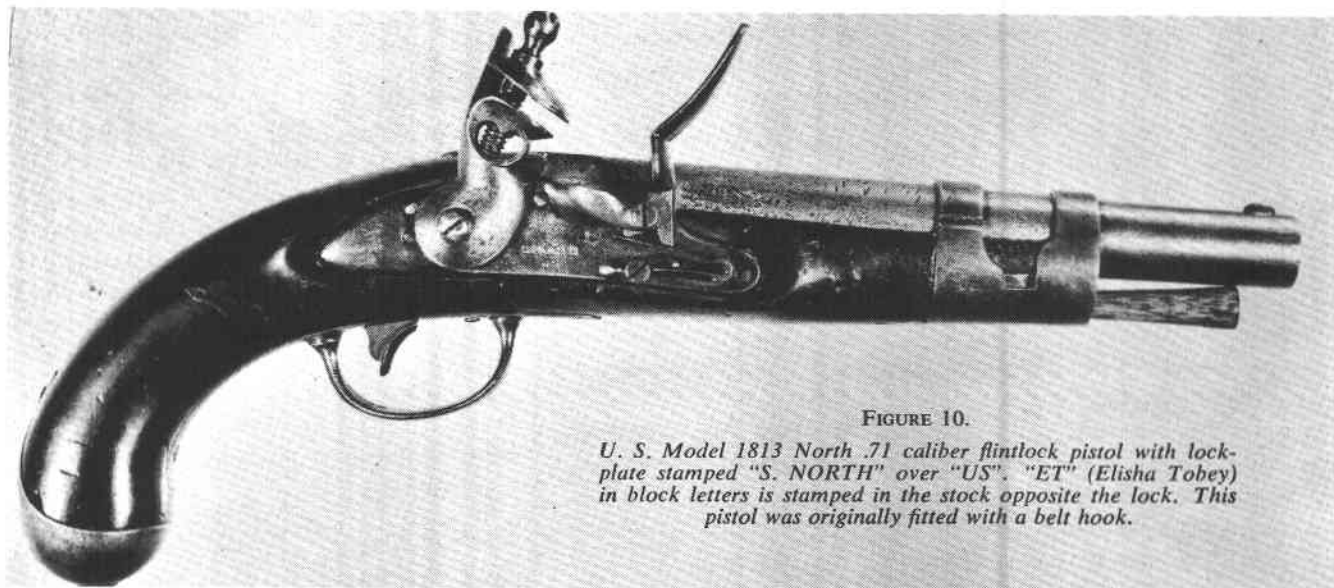


FIGURE 10.

*U. S. Model 1813 North .71 caliber flintlock pistol with lockplate stamped "S. NORTH" over "US". "ET" (Elisha Tobey) in block letters is stamped in the stock opposite the lock. This pistol was originally fitted with a belt hook.*

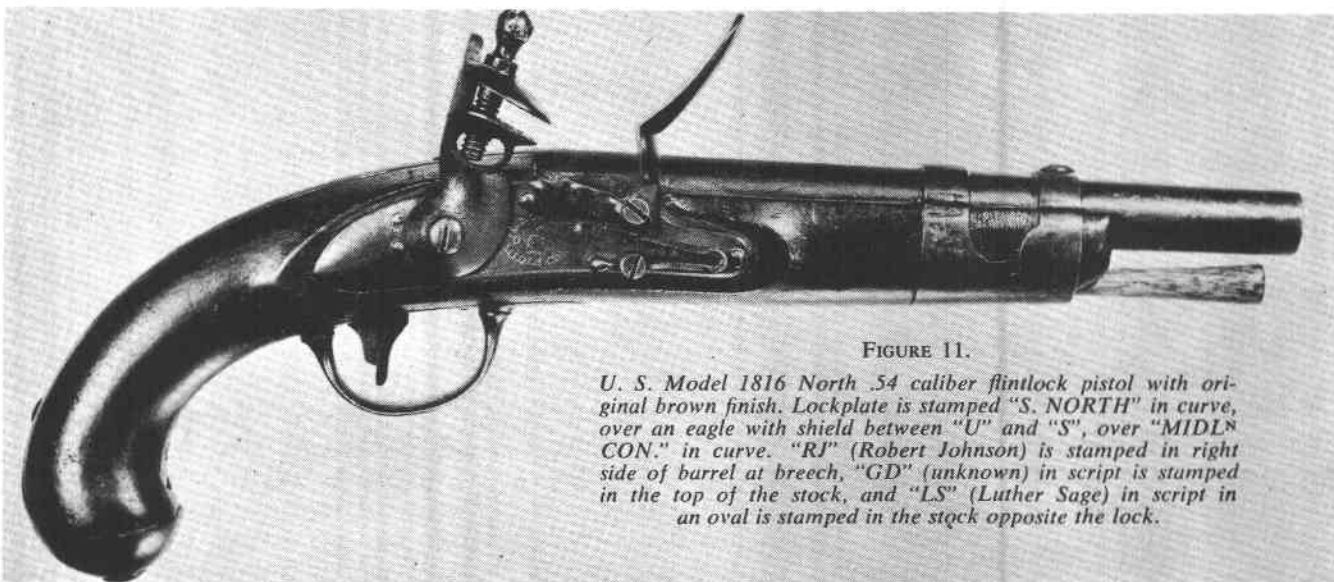


FIGURE 11.

*U. S. Model 1816 North .54 caliber flintlock pistol with original brown finish. Lockplate is stamped "S. NORTH" in curve, over an eagle with shield between "U" and "S", over "MIDL<sup>N</sup> CON." in curve. "RJ" (Robert Johnson) is stamped in right side of barrel at breech, "GD" (unknown) in script is stamped in the top of the stock, and "LS" (Luther Sage) in script in an oval is stamped in the stock opposite the lock.*



FIGURE 12.

*U. S. Model 1819 Harpers Ferry .54 caliber pattern pistol, as followed by North, converted from flintlock to percussion. Lockplate is stamped "1819" under sliding safety bolt and an eagle over "US". Backstrap is stamped "HARPER'S FERRY. 1819."*



a premium on North's pistols. By June 22, 1815, more than two years after the contract, only 1,156 pistols had been delivered. The contract had specified delivery in five years of all 20,000 pistols. Meanwhile, another complaint had arisen. Pistols of musket bore were disliked by the armed services because of their excessive recoil. The prevalent opinion was that pistols should shoot  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce rifle balls — not one-ounce musket balls. This valid criticism to the Ordnance Department resulted in their negotiating a revised contract on January 8, 1816, with North. The undelivered balance of the 1813 contract for 20,000 pistols was to be manufactured with .54 caliber, nine-inch barrels, all iron mountings were to be browned, all parts were to be interchangeable, and a year's extension in time was granted. Instead of terminating in 1818 the five-year period agreed upon in 1813, the deliveries now could run into 1819. North agreed to these terms when a \$1.00 increase in price per pistol was stipulated. Where the price had been \$7.00 each for the Model 1813 pistols, the price was increased to \$8.00 each for the Model 1816 pistols.

Although made as a part of the same contract, the differences between the North Model 1813 and the North Model 1816 pistols are distinct:

1. Model 1813 pistols are .69 caliber, and Model 1816 pistols are .54 caliber.
2. Model 1813 pistol barrels are usually octagonal at their breech end, whereas Model 1816 pistol barrels are round throughout their entire length.
3. Model 1813 barrel band is not fluted at the base of its forward ring, whereas the bases of both band rings are fluted in Model 1816 pistols.
4. The stock ends flush with the front of the barrel band in Model 1813 pistols, but the stock projects in front of the barrel band in Model 1816 pistols.
5. Model 1813 pistols have no front sight, but Model 1816 pistols have a brass blade front sight mounted on the forward ring of the barrel band.

Some North Model 1813 pistols were equipped with belt hooks, apparently for naval duty. No Model 1816 pistols are known with authentic belt hooks. Some Model 1813 pistols have plain locks without the eagle (Figure 10). They are simply stamped in two lines between the cock and the battery, "S. NORTH" over "US". The contract of April 16, 1813, specified that the eagle stamp should be used on the pistols delivered. No clear explanation has been offered as yet to account for these pistols marked in this different manner. The similarity in lock markings to the later Model 1826 pistols made for the Navy, which are stamped in two

lines between cock and battery "U.S." over "S. NORTH.", suggests possible naval service, especially for those pistols where belt hooks were used. Some are known, however, that were never fitted with belt hooks. Another minor but interesting point is the observation that the eagle on the North Model 1813 lock has no shield in front of it. Though reduced in size from the Berlin eagle that preceded it, the 1813 eagle resembles it in this particular respect. The eagle of the North Model 1816 lock, even early ones with the "MIDL<sup>N</sup> CON." markings, always has a shield in front of it.

Model 1813 North pistols with Berlin locks usually are stamped "V" over "HHP" (Henry H. Perkin) in the stock opposite the lock. Their Berlin-type barrels, which are round throughout, are stamped "P" over "US". Model 1813 North pistols with Middletown eagle locks are usually stamped "LS" (Luther Sage) in script in oval, and sometimes "V" above the oval in the left side of their stocks opposite the locks. Their octagonal breech is stamped "P" over "US" on its left-hand slanting flat, and often "H.H.P." on its right-hand slanting flat above the vent. North Model 1813 pistols with the two-line marking without the eagle have the same barrel markings, "P" over "US" and "H.H.P.," but "ET" (Elisha Tobey) in block letters is sometimes found stamped in the stock opposite the lock.

Model 1816 North pistols (Figure 11) have barrels stamped "P" over "US" or "P" and "US" on their left side at the breech. Sometimes the barrel inspector's initials, such as "RJ" (Robert Johnson), are stamped in the right side of the barrel above the vent, and sometimes a number, such as "5", is stamped in place of the initials. Inspectors' initials usually found stamped in script, in ovals, in the stock opposite the lock include "LS" (Luther Sage) and "ET" (Elisha Tobey), and in script, without ovals, "OA" (Oliver Allen) and "JN" (John Newbury). Screw heads of Berlin North pistols are usually stamped with an assembly mark such as a circle or a circle with a tail, a dot or a pattern of dots, a dash or a pattern of dashes, or a distinct Roman numeral, but the Model 1816 pistol screw heads are usually stamped with the assembly mark of a single letter of the alphabet. Letters ranging from "A" to "Z" have been noted. Presence of another letter indicates a replacement part from another pistol of the same model. These letters are also stamped on the mountings.

Sometime during the production of the Model 1816 pistols, the lockplate marking was changed. This new marking shows a slightly different eagle with shield between the letters "U" and "S" with "S. NORTH" in a curve above and "MIDL<sup>TM</sup>

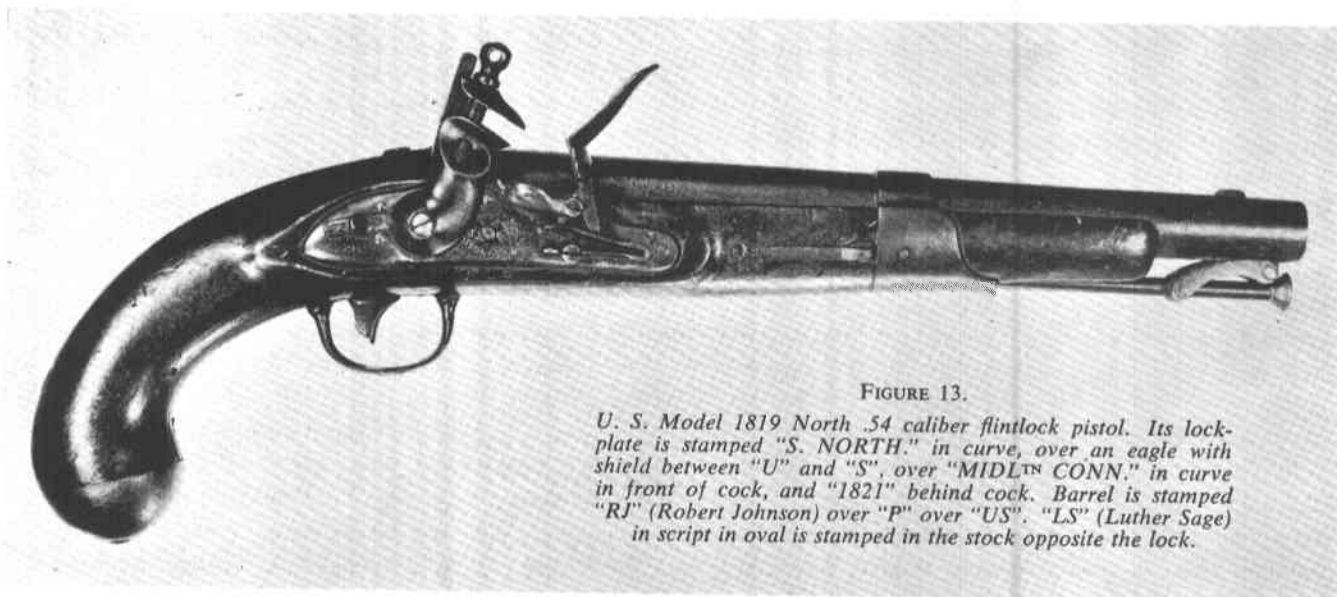


FIGURE 13.

*U. S. Model 1819 North .54 caliber flintlock pistol. Its lockplate is stamped "S. NORTH." in curve, over an eagle with shield between "U" and "S", over "MIDL<sup>TH</sup> CONN." in curve in front of cock, and "1821" behind cock. Barrel is stamped "RJ" (Robert Johnson) over "P" over "US". "LS" (Luther Sage) in script in oval is stamped in the stock opposite the lock.*

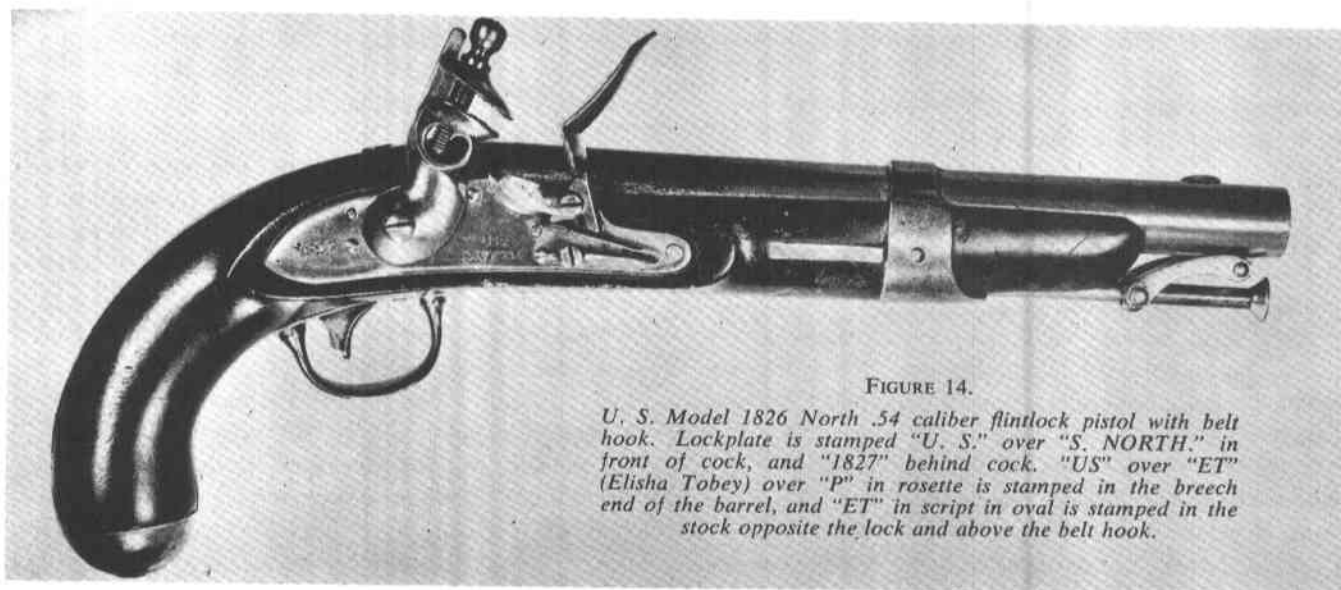


FIGURE 14.

*U. S. Model 1826 North .54 caliber flintlock pistol with belt hook. Lockplate is stamped "U. S." over "S. NORTH." in front of cock, and "1827" behind cock. "US" over "ET" (Elisha Tobey) over "P" in rosette is stamped in the breech end of the barrel, and "ET" in script in oval is stamped in the stock opposite the lock and above the belt hook.*

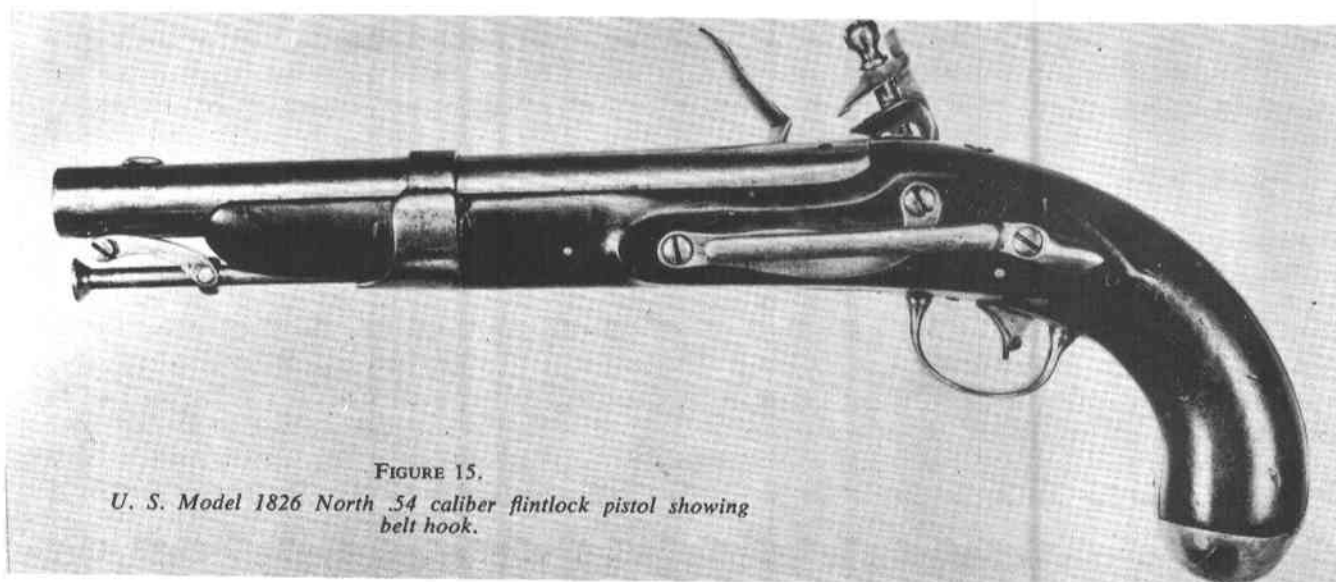


FIGURE 15.

*U. S. Model 1826 North .54 caliber flintlock pistol showing belt hook.*

CONN." in a curve below. Note the addition of a "T" to the Middletown abbreviation and the addition of a second "N" to the Connecticut abbreviation. Model 1816 pistols with this style of stamping have been named Model 1817 pistols without justification. The date of the change to the second stamping is not known. If it were known, it would hardly deserve the status of a separate and distinct model. Probably this later lockplate stamping was used in pistols of 1818 and 1819 manufacture.

Simeon North gathered momentum during the production of his Model 1816 pistols at his Middletown plant. His deliveries were prompt and by the spring of 1819 he was looking for an additional contract. Nearly all 20,000 pistols of the April 1813 contract had been delivered. Unfortunately for the Government and the common good, his accelerated production had been too late to satisfy the dire need for pistols occasioned by the War of 1812. It is estimated that of the 20,000 pistols made under the 1813 contract, approximately 1,500 pistols were Model 1813 made during the War and about 18,500 were Model 1816 made afterwards. It is presumed, without evidence to the contrary, that North continued making .69 caliber pistols from June 22, 1815, when 1,156 had been delivered, until January 8, 1816, when the revised contract was negotiated for .54 caliber pistols.

Harpers Ferry designers turned out six pistols of a new pattern in the spring of 1819. Two of these pattern pistols still survive: one altered to percussion (Figure 12) and another in flintlock in William M. Locke's collection. The barrel had been lengthened to ten inches; a single ring barrel band farther down on the stock replaced the two-ring barrel band of Marine T. Wickham that had been used on the transition Berlin pistols and the Middletown pistols of 1813 and 1816; an iron button-head swivel ramrod replaced the easily lost, separate hickory and iron ones of earlier models; and a sliding safety bolt was introduced to lock the tumbler securely when the half-cocked pistol was not in use. Many collectors prefer the Model 1819 pistol for its more graceful shape to earlier pistols produced by North. This Harpers Ferry Model 1819 pattern pistol was first described in an article in the August 1949 issue of *THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN*. Its lockplate is stamped with the same but smaller eagle over "US" that appears on Harpers Ferry muskets of 1819 and the same eagle that appears on some 1819 Harpers Ferry rifles of the 1803 Model. The model date "1819" is stamped at the back end of the lockplate under the sliding safety bolt. "HARPER'S FERRY. 1819." is stamped on the iron backstrap and "US" is stamped in the buttcap tang. Character-

istic Harpers Ferry proofmarks, as used in 1819 on muskets, are stamped at a reduced scale, in keeping with the size of the pistol, in the breech end of the barrel where "V" over "P" over an eagle head appear.

Simeon North, now going strong at his Middletown factory, accepted another five-year contract for 20,000 Model 1819 pistols of the style of the Harpers Ferry pattern pistols on July 21, 1819, at \$8.00 a pistol (Figure 13). He completed this contract ahead of schedule, delivering 2,000 in 1820, 7,000 in 1821, 8,000 in 1822, and 3,000 in 1823. No Model 1819 pistols made by North are known dated 1819, 1820, or 1823. Only locks dated "1821" and "1822" behind the cock and under the sliding safety are known to collectors. Some without any dates at all are presumed to be of early, or 1820, manufacture, this having been the established practice on all previous North pistols. Apparently enough dated locks were made in 1821 and 1822 to carry through to the end of the contract in 1823. Some Model 1819 North pistols fitted with belt hooks are believed to have been produced for naval service.

The lockplate marking of the Model 1819 pistols, except for the date behind the cock, is exactly the same as the second type of lockplate marking found on the North Model 1816 pistols, that is the eagle with shield between the letters "U" and "S" with "S. NORTH" in a curve above "MIDL<sup>TM</sup> CONN." in a curve below. These lockplate markings were a carry-over without change from the last of the Model 1816 pistols which were still being manufactured after acceptance of the Model 1819 contract. Barrels for these pistols were proof-tested by North's neighbors in Middletown, Robert and John D. Johnson. Accordingly, some are stamped "RJ" over "P" over "US" and others are stamped "JDJ" over "P" over "US" in the left side of the breech end of the barrel. Ordnance inspectors' initials found stamped in script usually within an oval in the stock opposite the lock include "LS" (Luther Sage), "ET" (Elisha Tobey), "JM" (Justin Murphy), "JN" (John Newbury), and "JW" (Joseph Weatherhead). The sliding safety proved a short-lived innovation, and it never was used again on any U. S. martial single-shot pistol. It is understood that the projecting thumbpiece caught on the holsters and their housings (flaps) when the pistols were drawn or replaced.

The Model 1826 Navy pistols with 8 $\frac{5}{8}$  inch barrels, swivel ramrods, and belt hooks (Figures 14 and 15) were the last of the line of U. S. martial pistols made by Simeon North. Three thousand of these pistols were manufactured for \$7.00 each under three separate contracts for 1,000 pistols each, dated November 16, 1826, December 12, 1827, and



FIGURE 16.

*U. S. Model 1813 North .71 caliber pistol converted from flintlock to percussion by drum. Lockplate is stamped in 2 lines "S. NORTH" over "US". "H.H.P." (Henry H. Perkin) is stamped in right slanting barrel flat at breech, and "ET" (Elisha Tobey) is stamped in stock opposite lock. Pistol was formerly fitted with belt hook.*

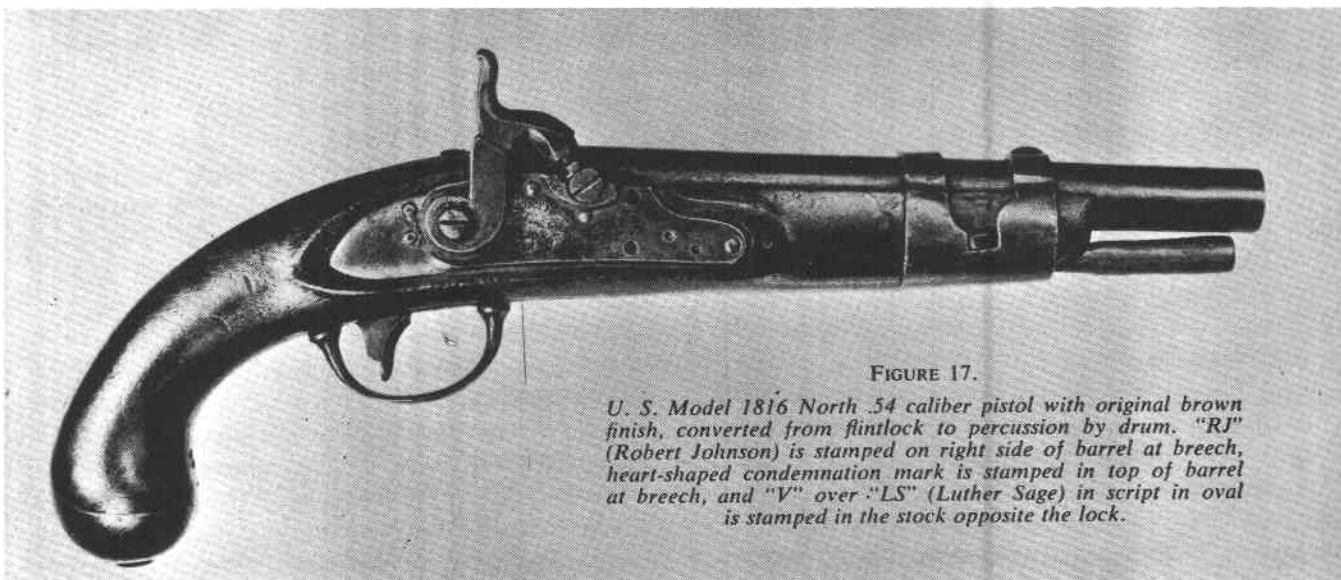


FIGURE 17.

*U. S. Model 1816 North .54 caliber pistol with original brown finish, converted from flintlock to percussion by drum. "RJ" (Robert Johnson) is stamped on right side of barrel at breech, heart-shaped condemnation mark is stamped in top of barrel at breech, and "V" over "LS" (Luther Sage) in script in oval is stamped in the stock opposite the lock.*

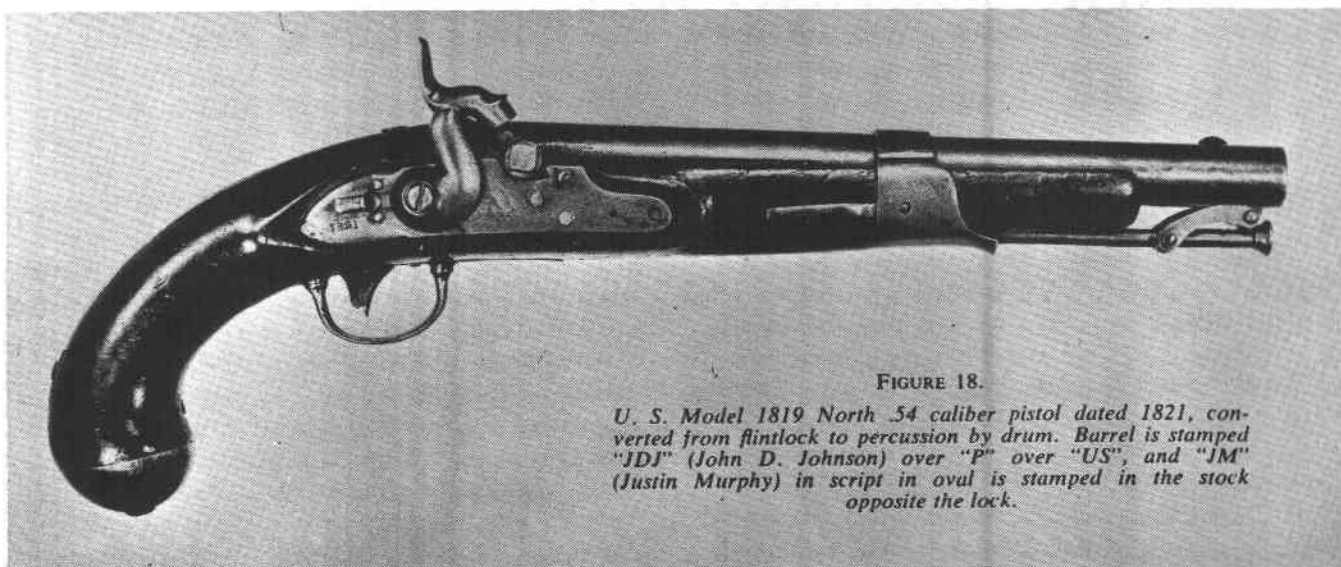


FIGURE 18.

*U. S. Model 1819 North .54 caliber pistol dated 1821, converted from flintlock to percussion by drum. Barrel is stamped "JDJ" (John D. Johnson) over "P" over "US", and "JM" (Justin Murphy) in script in oval is stamped in the stock opposite the lock.*



August 18, 1828. Their lockplates are stamped in two lines between cock and battery "U. S." over "S. NORTH." and "1827" or "1828" behind cock. Elisha Tobey inspected all 3,000 of the completed pistols for the Navy. The breech end of the barrel is usually stamped "US" over "ET" over a countersunk "P" in rosette, and "ET" in script in an oval is stamped in the stock opposite the lock and above the belt hook. Other barrels are stamped "US" over "AH" (Asabel Hubbard) over a countersunk "P" in rosette, showing that this inspector passed some of the barrels. A small anchor indicating Navy use is stamped near the proofmarks on some barrels. Simeon North had become interested in rifle manufacture in 1823, and had been producing U. S. Model 1817 rifles in the interval between the Model 1819 and 1826 pistol contracts. At the end of the

1826 pistol contracts, an additional opportunity to manufacture Hall's patent breech-loading rifles had been offered him, and much to John Hall's annoyance, he had accepted it. He first made Hall's patent rifles and carbines and later made improved Hall Carbines which were produced at Middletown as late as the 1850's. Thus, delivery of the Model 1826 pistols closed a famous military pistol-making epoch that had lasted for 30 years, (1799 to 1829). U. S. pistol manufacture had been dominated all that time by a single enterprising man, Simeon North, who had delivered 50,000 flintlock pistols to our armed forces. His pistol saw service in the Wars with Tripoli, the War of 1812, the Seminole Wars, the Black Hawk War, and the Mexican War. Converted and flintlock North pistols were even used as late as the Civil War.

## APPENDIX — North Pistol Conversions

	drum	bolster	cone on barrel
Model 1799	--	--	--
Model 1808	X	--	--
Model 1811	X	--	--
Model 1813	X	X	--
Model 1816	X	X	--
Model 1819	X	X	--
Model 1826	--	--	X

Conversions to percussion of all North flintlock pistols, except the North & Cheney Model 1799, have been observed. The most common conversion, the drum conversion, has been seen on all other models except the Model 1826. Some drum conversions of Model 1808 and 1813 North pistols (Figure 16) suggest military conversion through use of a large plain percussion hammer. Most of the other conversions using this system are readily identified as the work of private gunsmiths who brought discarded military flintlock pistols up-to-date for private citizens during the percussion period (Figures 17 and 18).

Bolster alterations to percussion are considered bonafide military alterations which kept an additional supply of otherwise serviceable pistols in readiness for use. Some of these military conversions like Figure 19 have "A. W." stamped on the bolster face, suggesting that the famous martial pistol maker, Asa Waters, may have altered them. Some North Model 1813 pistols with bolster alterations to percussion carry concealed conversion serial numbers. J. S. White had one stamped "152" on the inside of the lockplate, in the wood behind the lock, and under the barrel. This converted Model 1813 pistol (Figure 20) has "100" stamped in the barrel side of the

military-style percussion hammer, on the inside of the lockplate, in the wood behind the lock, and under the barrel. Some North Model 1816 pistols with bolster alterations were also fitted with iron buttonhead swivel ramrods at the time of conversion.

Evidently, many North Model 1826 Navy pistols were converted to percussion while still in the Navy's possession. So thoroughly was the job of conversion done that it is difficult to find an original flintlock pistol of this model. Many have been reconverted like the North Model 1808 Navy pistols. All Model 1826 North Navy pistols converted to percussion, that have been observed, are of one type, indicating simultaneous uniform alteration. They have a large nipple screwed into the top of the barrel and a military-style percussion hammer made offset to strike the barrel-mounted nipple (Figure 21).

North pistols, both flintlock and converted, are found with unusual punch marks stamped in the breech end of their barrels. They range in depth to nearly ¼ inch and are regarded as "condemnation marks". The thought behind this conception is that these punch marks branded the pistol once and for all as no longer fit for firing. Just as the service life of the pistol began with its proofmarks, so its service life ended with the application of these condemnation marks by the Ordnance Department. These punch marks have been found on the barrels of North Model 1816 and 1819 pistols. Various shapes have been noted including a dot, a crescent, a heart, an arrowhead, a rectangle, and a square. Sometimes a man's name and organization appears on top of the barrel followed by the word "CON<sup>d</sup>" (condemned?) in conjunction with one of these marks.