

QUEEN ANNE PISTOLS

1650-1750

by John Chalapis

I would like to begin my talk with a brief description of a Queen Anne pistol.

To call the pistols of my topic "Queen Annes," is a misnomer. From all the information that I have been able to compile, there is little evidence to substantiate any relation to Queen Anne or to the furniture style called "Queen Anne." The closest association that I have been able to assume is, that during the reign of Queen Anne, 1702-1714, the so-called Queen Anne pistol was in a state of development and refinement. Some of the finest examples of this type of pistol are to be found in this period, although the majority were made in the later Georgian period.

To my knowledge there has been comparatively little information written to describe and clarify the Queen Anne pistol. I am sure that all of you have a visual idea of a Queen Anne, but if you are asked to describe it, it becomes very difficult. For every positive statement that can be made about the Queen Anne pistol, a counter statement can be made. For example:

"All Queen Anne pistols have turn off barrels." There are many examples that do not screw off (see figure 1).

"The lock is always integral with the breech." I have several examples with detachable side locks (see figures 2 and 3).

"The barrel is always cannon shaped at the muzzle." I have seen Queen Anne pistols with large flared muzzles, which could be called blunderbuss Queen Annes.

So, therefore, my description will not refer to the exception, but to the general rule of Queen Anne pistols.

The classic Queen Anne pistol may be said to be a breech loaded pistol – turn(screw) off barrel – the lock is integral with the breech – the cock is located on the side of the lock and generally has no wood forward of the lock (see figures 4, 5, and 6). The butt of the grip has a slight curve forward terminating in a bulbous swell, and is usually capped with a silver butt cap. Also accepted in this description are the "fish tail" butts which have the more common shape of the holster pistols of the period. This type was also capped in silver, steel, brass or in a combination of these metals. The early Queen Anne pistols occasionally may be found with rifled barrels, but the majority have smooth bores.

Available evidence indicates that the Queen Anne pistols were first introduced in England during the last half of the seventeenth century. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 probably had the greater impact on English gunmaking than any



other single event in history. For it was because of the revocation of this edict that thousands of Europeans left the continent for their religious freedom and immigrated to England.

Among these immigrants were a group of Huguenots that brought with them their creative skills, arts, and most important, new ideas. Included with these new artisans were many fine gunmakers who would soon make their names prominent in English gunmaking (figure 7). Some of the names you will recognize: Monlong, Dafte, Barne, Gorgo, Delaney, Trulocke, Turvey, Ermindinger, Annelly, Wynn, Paris, Barbar, Gandon and Segallas. I realize that my opinion on the significant contribution of the Huguenots is contrary to Mr. John Hayward's opinion who states, "English gunmaking was not so profoundly affected by the immigration of the Huguenots." I have tried to be objective in my reasoning and feel that after much study, my conclusions are justified.

The Queen Anne pistol offered several mechanical advantages over the more common holster pistol of the period. In the loading process, the barrel was unscrewed and the powder was placed in a chamber in the breech. Then a ball was placed on a concave depression at the mouth of this chamber. The ball was slightly larger than the diameter of the bore. Upon the ignition of the powder, the oversize ball was forced through the bore and this made for a more positive gas seal and in turn gave more power (velocity) to the projectile. It must be remembered that in muzzle loading, the ball is often bruised or deformed when ramming it down the muzzle. This, of course, was not the case in this type of loading, thus it afforded better accuracy.

The lock plate and the lower grip tang were forged in one unit with the breech. The internal parts of the lock were screwed and fastened to this solid structure (see figures 8 and 9). The main spring was attached to the lower grip tang, and as you can see, this made for a very sturdy and sound mechanism. Hypothetically, it was possible, if one of these pistols were dropped, and the wood completely broken off

Figure 1. So called "Night pistols." Barrels do not unscrew, no safety. Made by Wynne-Delaney, London.

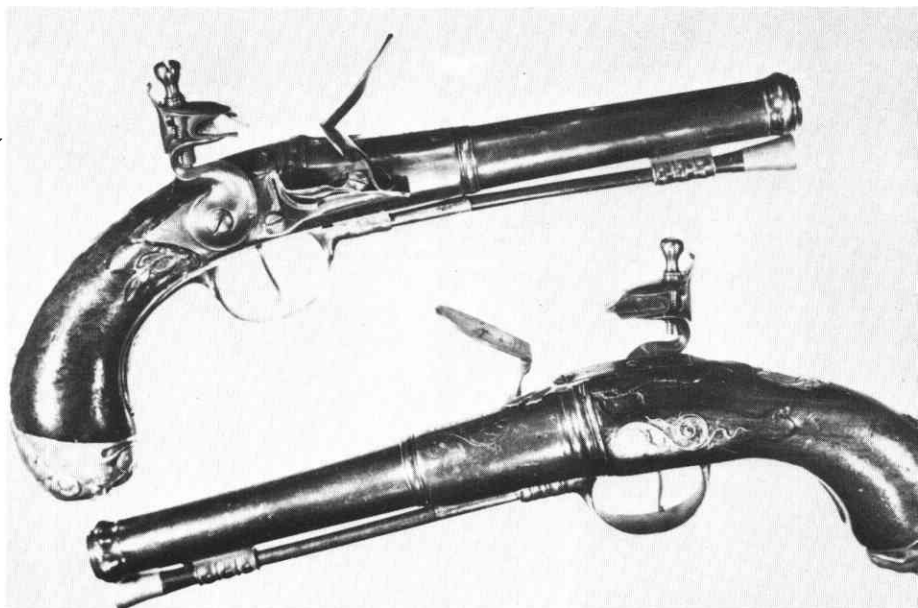


Figure 2. Detachable lock, by Barbar.

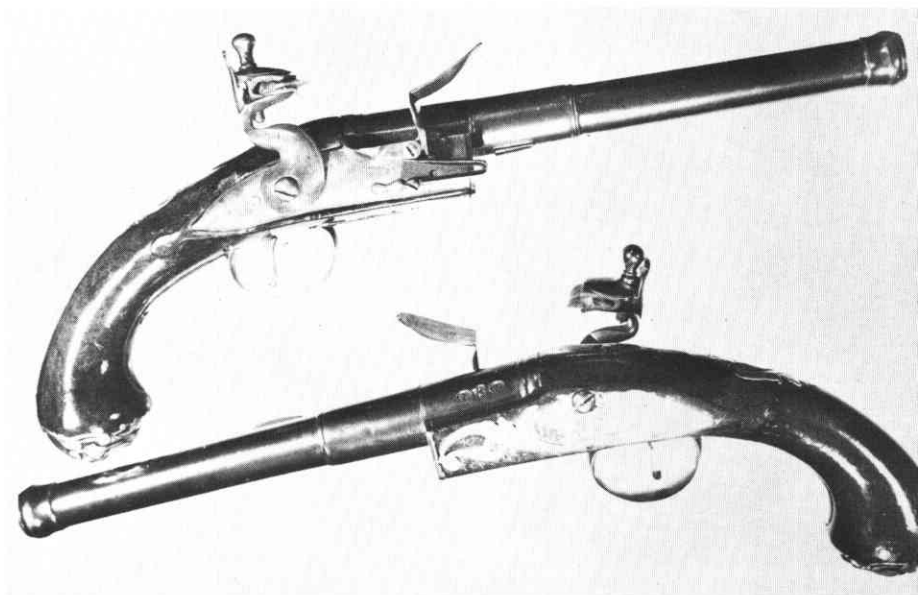
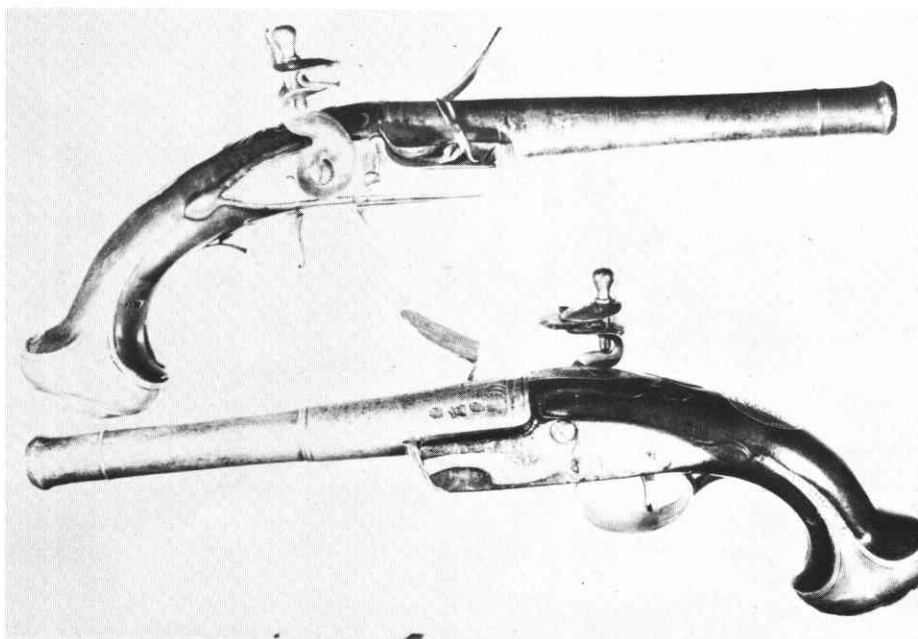


Figure 3. Detachable lock, brass furniture, inverted "V" shape frizzen spring. By Turvey.



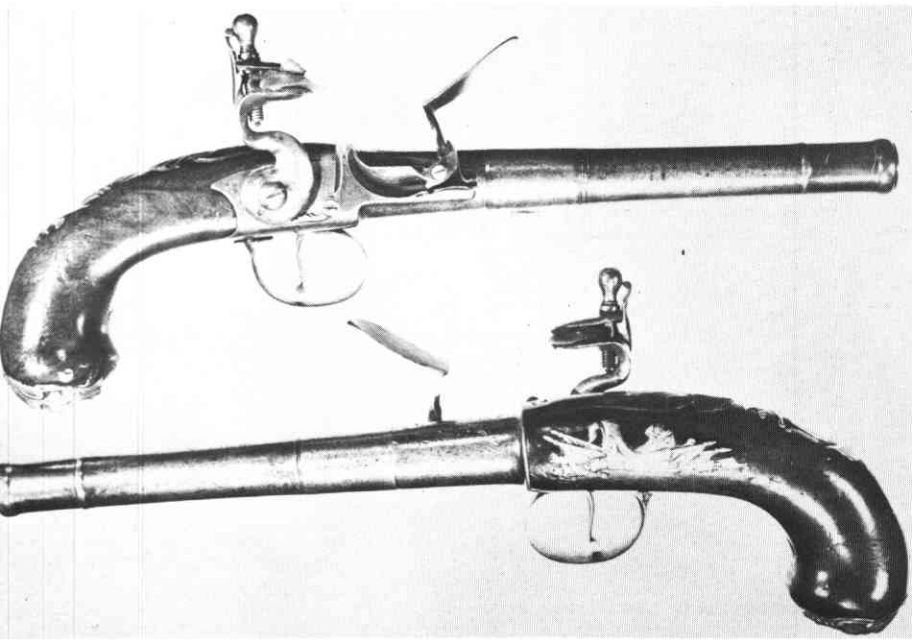
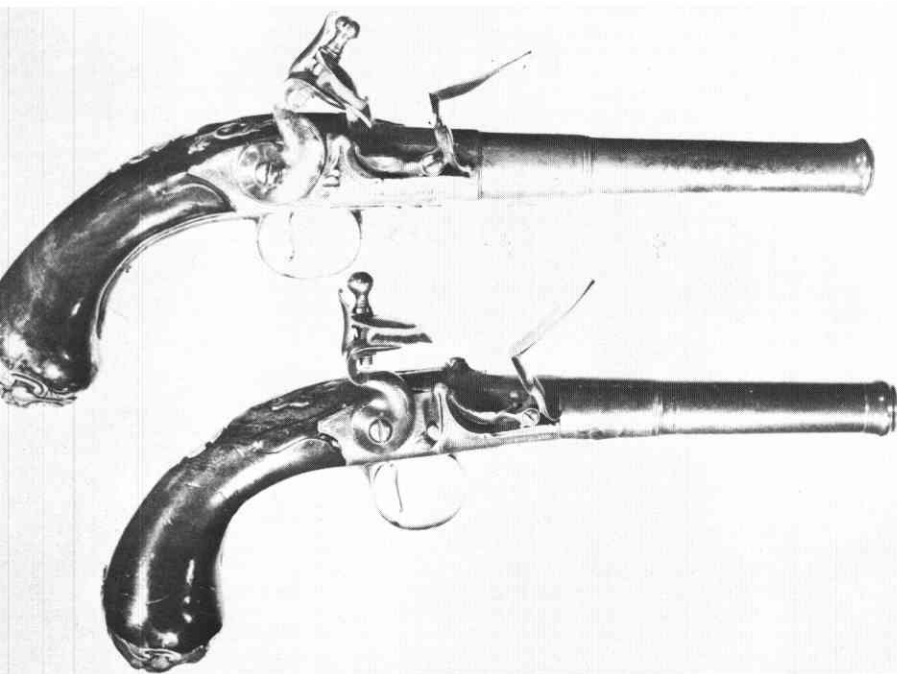


Figure 4. Typical example of a Queen Anne type, by Wislon, 1720-1750.



Figures 5 and 6. Typical early types by Freeman. Pans are rain proof. Furniture is silver.

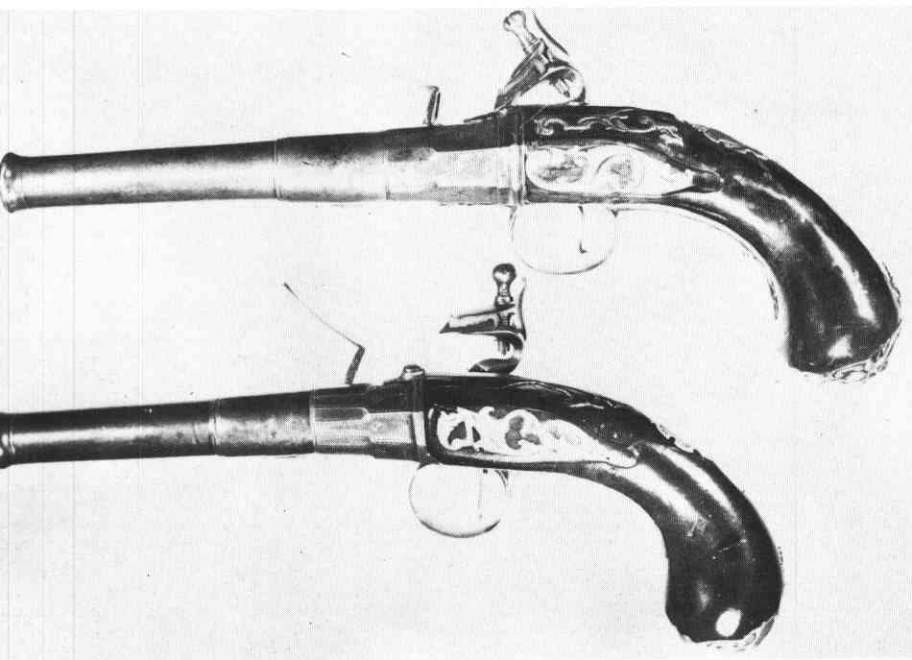
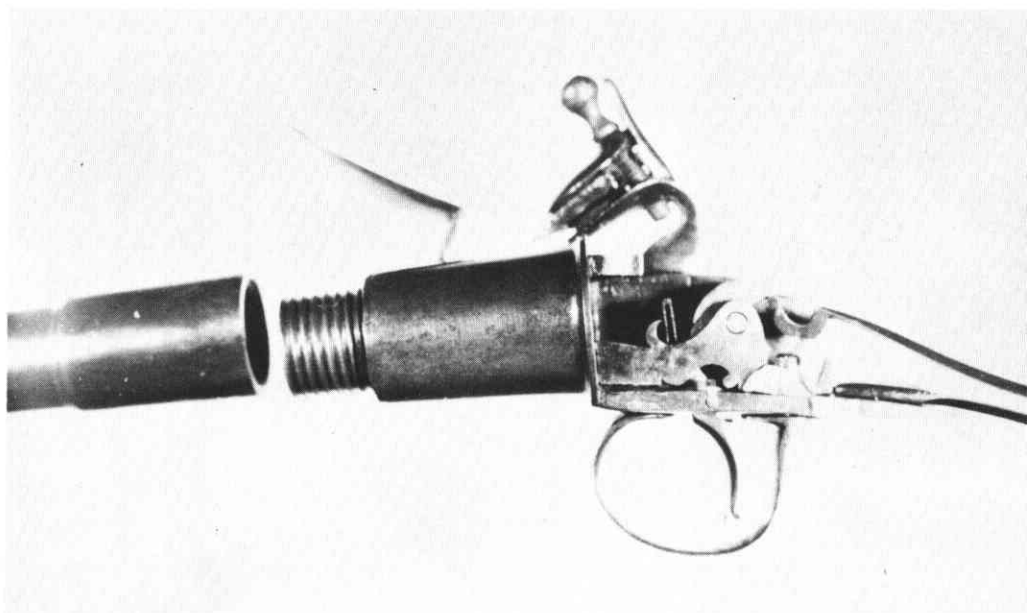
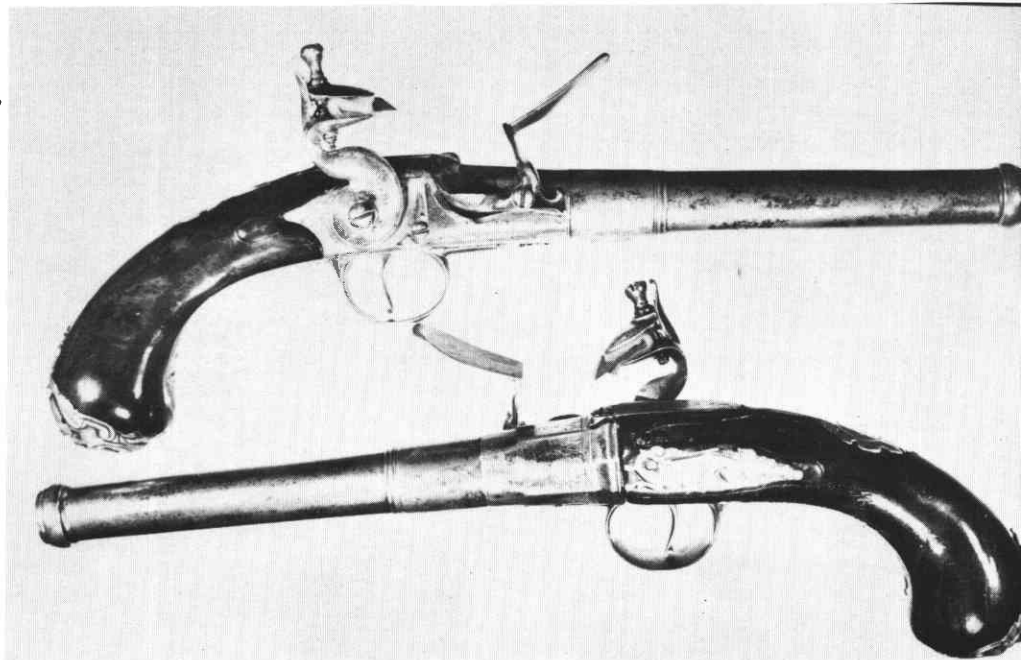
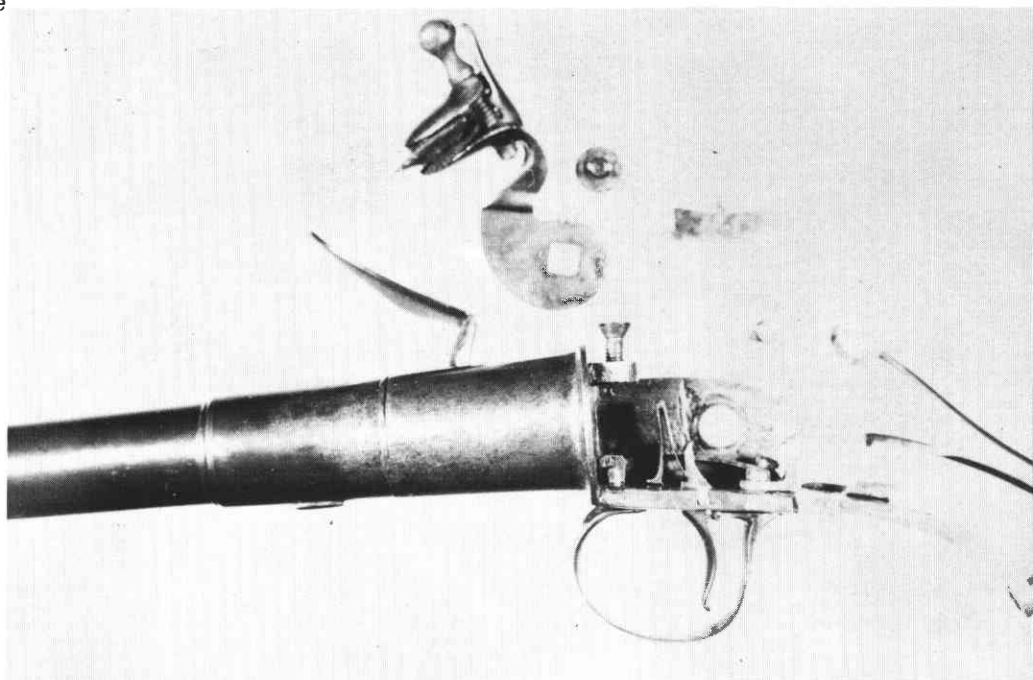


Figure 7. P. Gandon, London, a Huguenot maker. Note octagonal breech, sliding safety trigger guard, and modified top breech tang.



Figures 8 and 9. Internal view of a Queen Anne type lock.



— the pistol would still be operable. This, of course, would not have been possible with the more common side lock pistols of the period.

As a comparative study of the designs of Queen Anne pistols, I would like to quote from John Hayward's book, *THE ART OF THE GUNMAKER*, Volume 2.

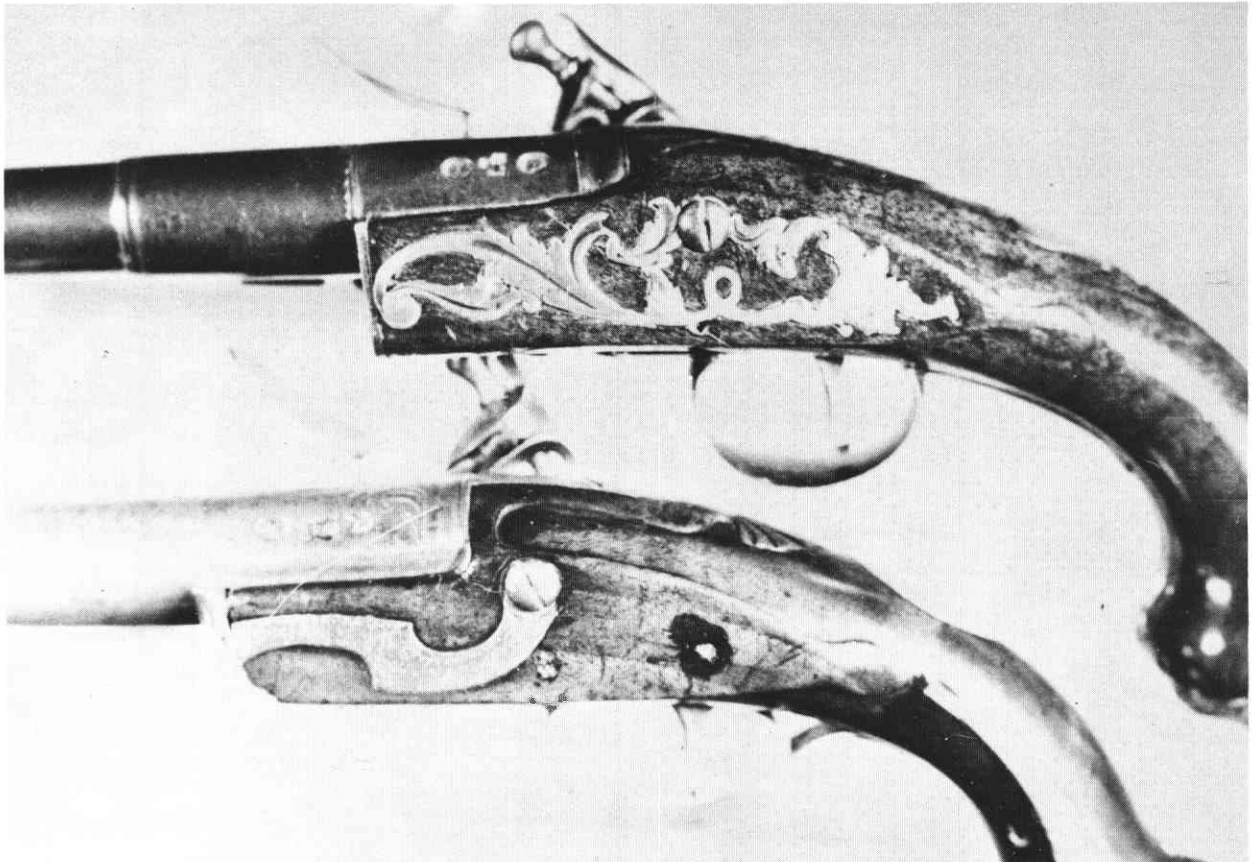
“The English ideal of simplicity of design and avoidance of profuse ornamentation is clearly expressed in the typical firearms of this period. The stocks of both fowling pieces and pistols were devoid of carving except for a moulded border around the lock and side plate and a shell behind the tang of the barrel. The wood was now a straight grained dark walnut of almost mahogany colour, which provided an excellent foil for the massive silver mounts. The latter were plain in design recalling the aristocratic restraint of Queen Anne vessels, and remained so even after the middle of the century, where elsewhere the roccoco taste was introducing the most adventurous twists and turns into gun mount design. The side plate commonly took the appropriate though somewhat obvious form of a trophy

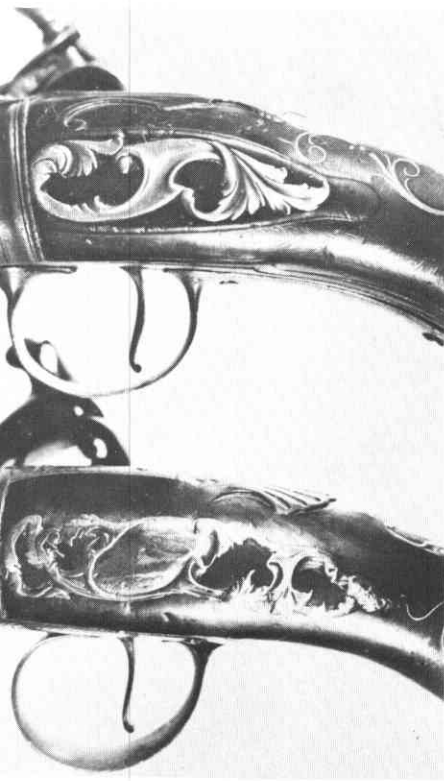
of arms. A number of stock patterns of this particular motif existed. A popular alternative was composed of foilate scrolls (see figures 10 to 16).

“Toward the middle of the century an asymmetrical cartouche was introduced as a centre point of the scrolls on which the owner's crest or monogram could be engraved. Space for his arms were available on the thumbplate, which now also took on an irregular outline (see figures 17 to 20).”

This is not to say that the gunmakers did not take advantage of decoration and embellished their works further. We find examples of silver wire inlays following closely the French patterns, and on some of the later Queen Annes we find examples of the neo-classical designs which represented the Greek and Roman motifs (figures 21 and 22). The majority of these pistols display engraving, to a modified degree, on the metal parts. These designs were more often done in scrolls, flowers, leaves, birds, and sometimes with humanistic faces. Other areas of decoration were the frizzen spring tang, the front trigger guard tang, and the top breech tang which were often terminated in a leaflet design (figures 23 and 24).

Figure 10. Barber and Turvey pistols with detachable sideplates.

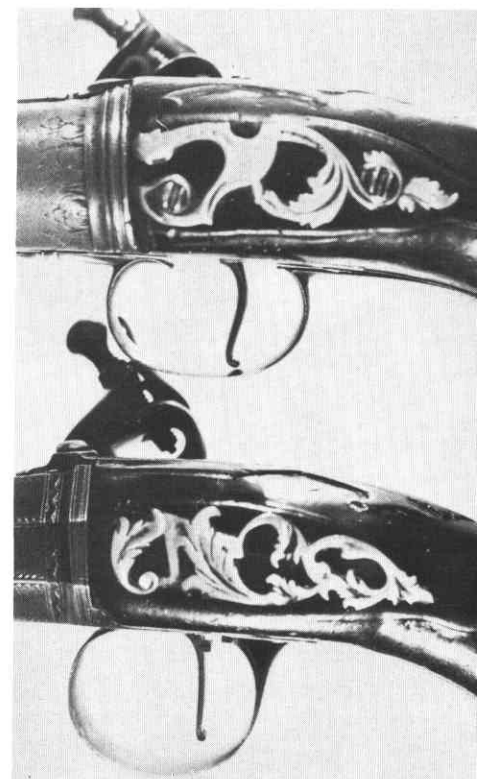




Figures 11, 12, 13. Sideplates
top—by Halfhide
lower—by Gibson



top—by S. Love
lower—by I. Drew



top—by Brooke
lower—by Freeman

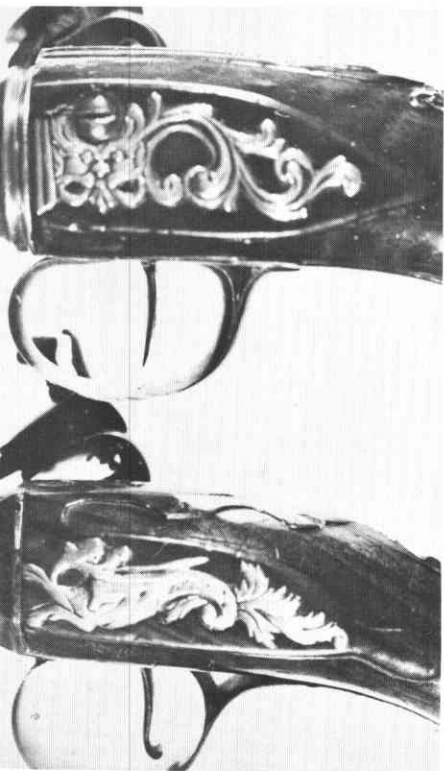
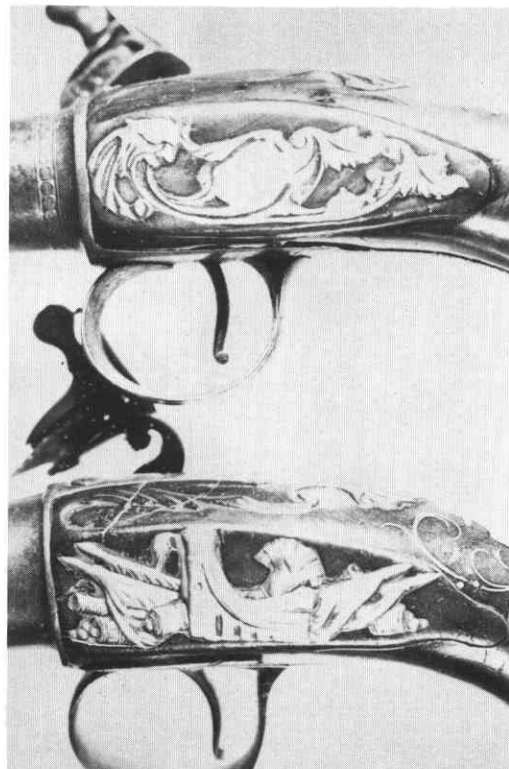


Figure 14. Sideplates by
Huguenot makers
top—by I. Segalas
lower—by Malron



Figures 15 and 16. No side-
plates
top—by W. Turvey
lower—by F. Crisp



top—by T. Annely
lower—by Wynn and Delaney



Figure 17. Early symmetrical thumb pieces. Pistols by Wynne-Delaney, Freeman, Freeman.

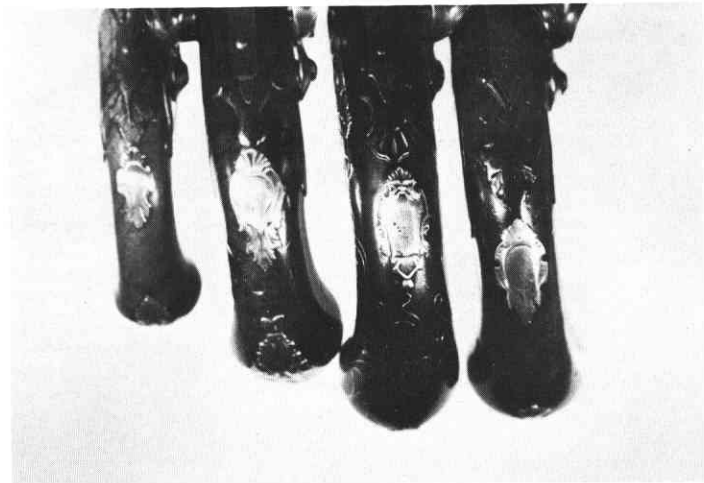


Figure 18. Baroque style symmetrical thumb pieces. Pistols by Delaney, Brooke, Mayo, and Gandon.

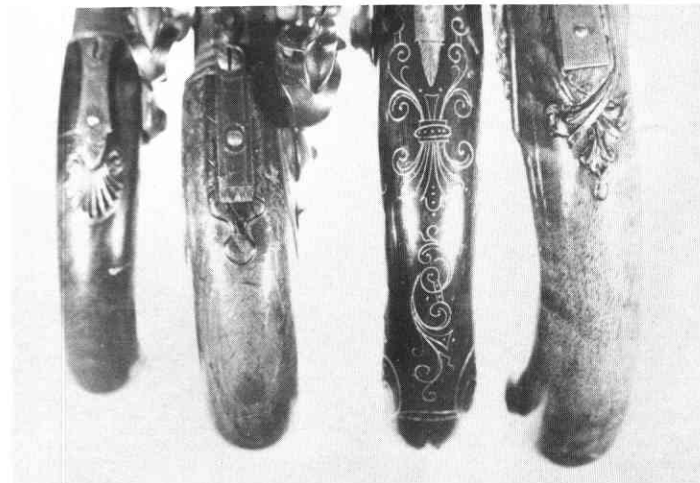


Figure 19. Rococo style thumb pieces, a symmetrical. Pistols by Moore, Drew, Barbar.

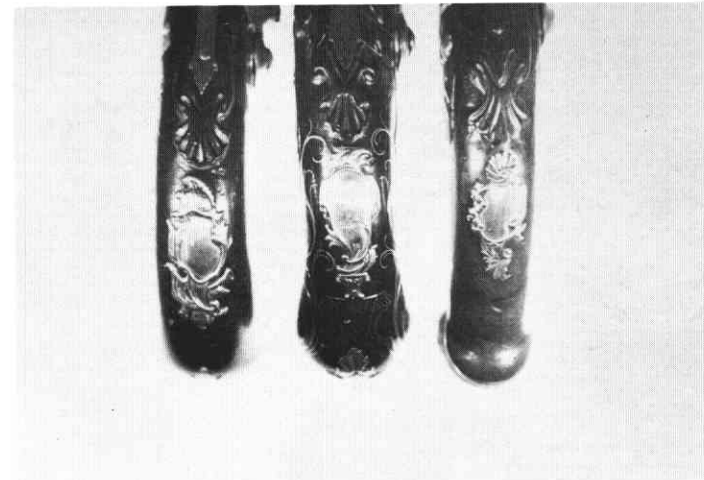


Figure 20. No thumb plate. Note tang embellishment. Pistols by Turvey, Crisp, Annely, and Segalas.



Figure 21. Silver wire inlays, neo-classical designs. Pistols by Annely, Drew, and Halfhide.

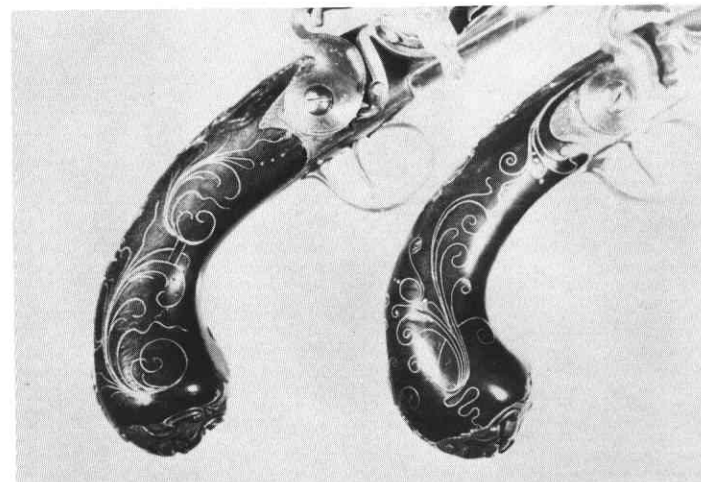


Figure 22. Silverwire inlays of French style. Pistols by Gibson and Mayo.

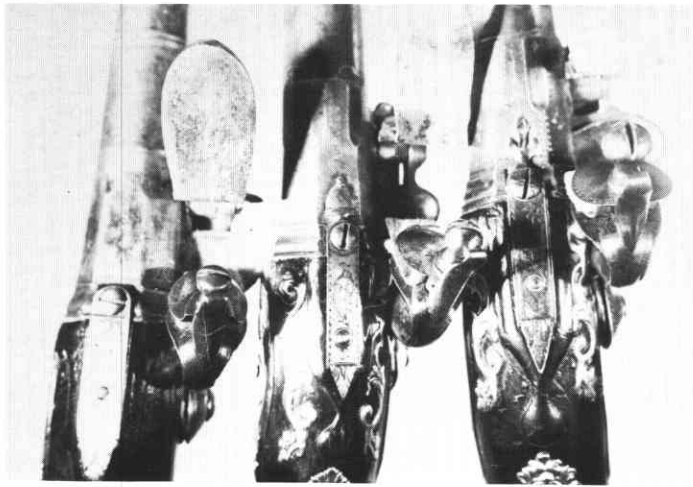


Figure 23. Octagonal breech and overlapping tang on early eighteenth century pistols.

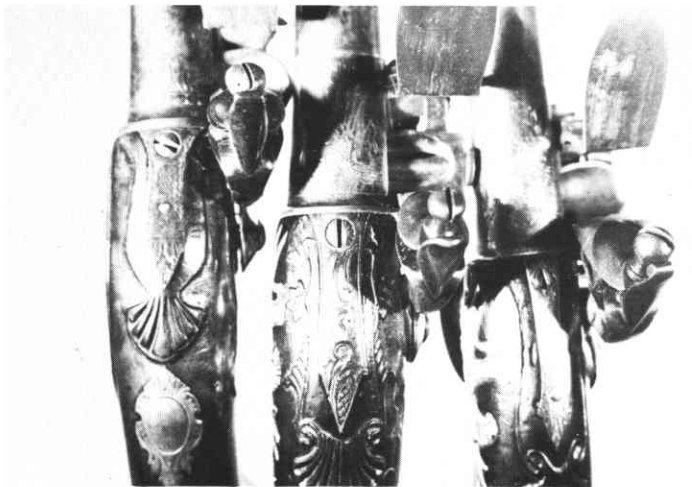
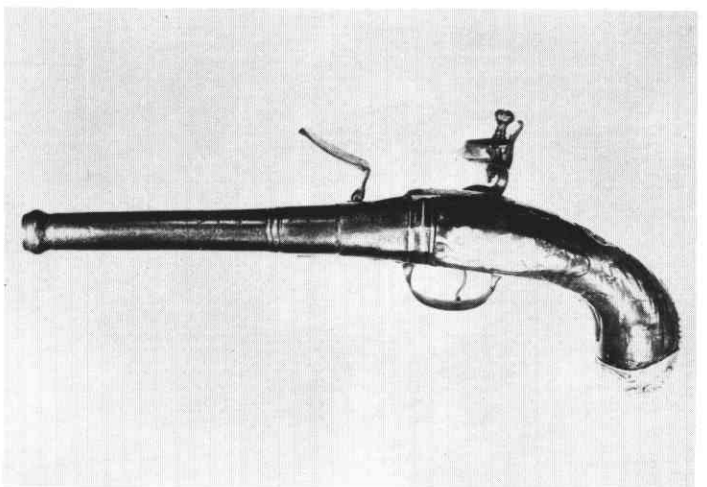
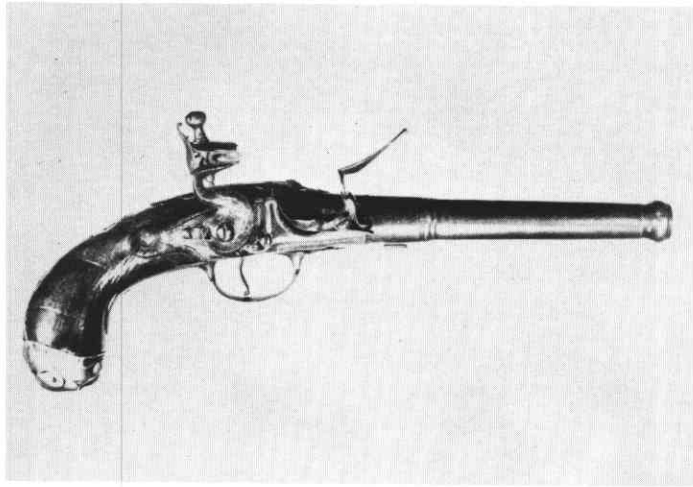
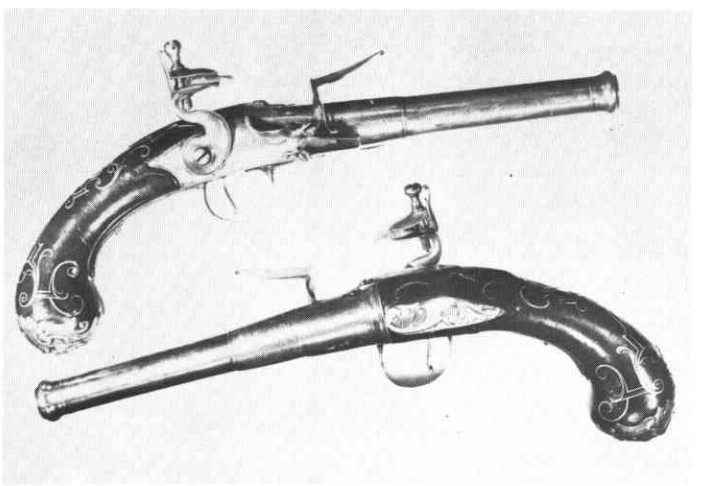
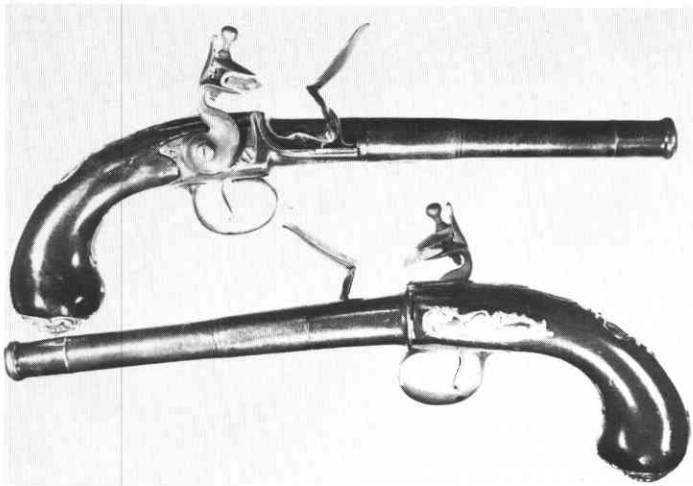


Figure 24. Late examples with round breech, without overlapping tang.



Figures 25 and 26. Early type with octagonal stepdown barrel. Barrels have a 7 groove no twist rifling. Note safety lock to cock. By David Wynn.



Figures 27 and 28. Later types with all round barrels. On right by L. Alley of Dublin, Left by George Halfhide with "V" frizzin springs.



Top left – figure 29. Butt caps, all silver, iron with silver round, and all brass.

Top right – figure 30. Huguenot style butt caps.



Figure 31. Examples of grotesque faces.

On many of the early Queen Anne pistols, I find one esthetically beautiful feature on the barrels which seems to have disappeared after the first quarter of the eighteenth century, this is a step down design on the barrels from octogon to polygon to round and terminating in a pronounced muzzle ring (figures 25 to 28). Again I would like to quote from Hayward's book in reference to this design. "One early feature which was to continue on all cannon barrel pistols was the muzzle ring. Originally, this was designed not only to be decorative but to prevent chafing in the saddle holster."

Another interesting area of study are the butt caps (figures 28, 30 and 31). The grotesque mask butt cap which has become synonymous with Queen Anne pistols, offers an interesting area for research. The grotesque mask first appeared in England during the seventeenth century. One art authority compares the grotesque faces with the gargoyles found on the architectural structures in France. Another observer has called them "death demons." An observation that I have made but have been unable to substantiate, concerns the face on the lion face butt cap.

It appears that this style was favored by the Huguenots, and could possibly be called a typical Huguenot characteristic.

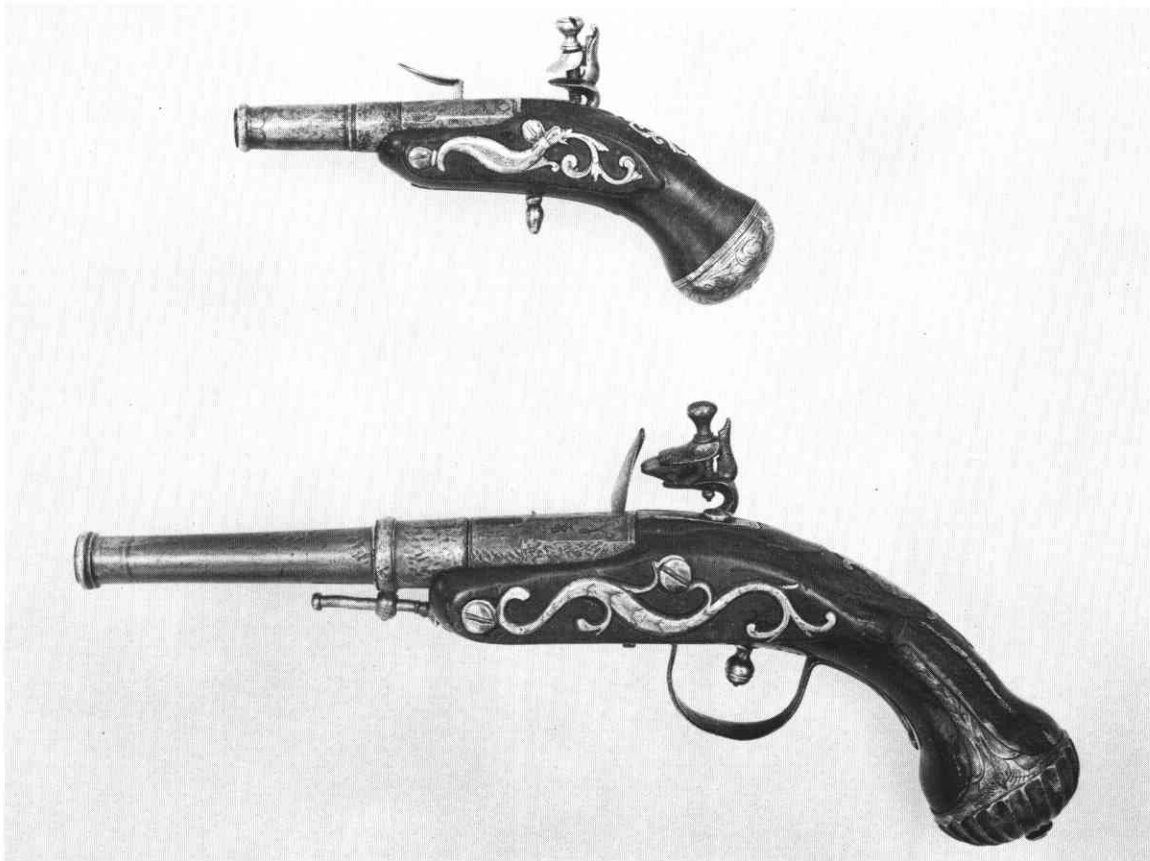
I would like at this time to point out some of the characteristics of Queen Anne pistols of the late 17th and early 18th century (figure 32 to 35). Probably the first and the most obvious point to be considered is the absence of the trigger guard, and the use of a small round button type trigger. Root wood was quite popular for stocks during this period, but was not very practical because of its brittleness and susceptibility to cracking. Esthetically, the root wood was much more beautiful than the straight grained woods that were later utilized. The use of a bridle on the pan was lacking, and when a safety was incorporated it took the form of a "dog catch." At the point where the barrel was unscrewed, a link or chain connected the two parts of the barrel; that is, the breech and the barrel. The comb of the cock had a pronounced curvature, and it was considered more ornate. The barrel was often rifled but for some unexplained reason rifling seemed to have disappeared with the later Queen Anne pistols. The grip had a straighter line design, similar to the holster pistols of the time.

During the second decade of the 18th century, the top breech tang appeared with the faceted breech. The purpose of this tang was to fasten the wooden grip to the top of the metal structure. A dark, straight grained walnut wood was used for stocking the grip, and a symmetrical silver thumb plate was incorporated.

In the final period of the Queen Anne, the top overlapping Breech tang disappeared, and the breech



Figures 32 and 33. Early Queen Anne types. Iron furniture, detachable locks. Lower pistol by E. Nicholson. C. P. Bedford collection.





Figures 34 and 35. Early types. Lower pistol by L. Barbar, circa 1710. C. P. Bedford collection.



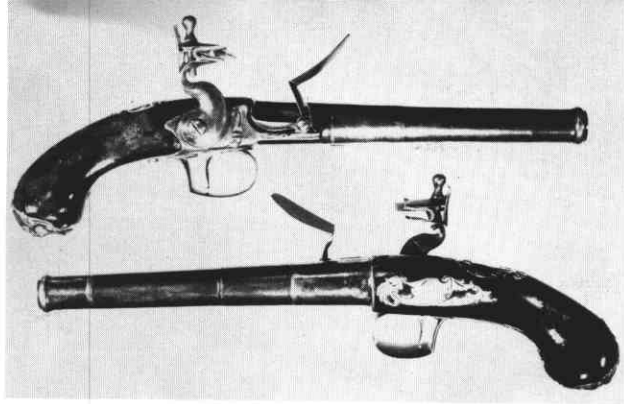


Figure 36. Example by I. Drew, London, of sliding trigger guard safety, rain proof pans, and stand of arms sideplate.

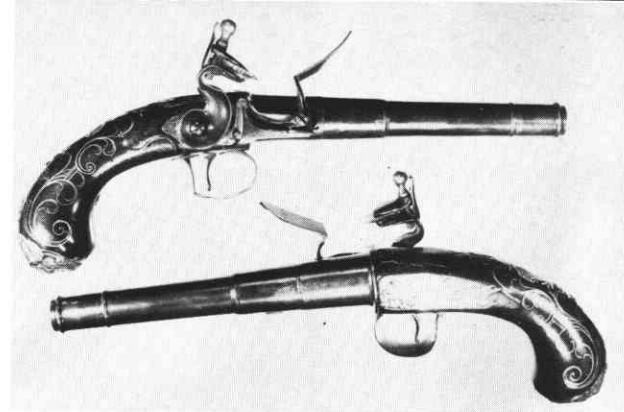


Figure 37. Button safety release at rear of trigger guard by I. Clarkson.

now took a round shape. The sliding trigger guard safety was almost universally used (figures 36 and 37), and the bulbous swell of the butt became modified and thinner.

As I had mentioned earlier in my talk, the descriptions that I have given are only generalities and I would like to point out some of the variations that are to be found on Queen Anne pistols. There are several examples of superimposed Queen Anne pistols, in which two loads could be inserted into one barrel. With the aid of a small lever on the pan, the forward and rear touch holes could be exposed to facilitate ignition (figure 38). Quite rare are the right and left hand cocks (figures 39 and 40). These were probably made at the individual's special order.

There are examples of Queen Anne's with double cocks and double pans. These were designed to strike simultaneously on both sides of the breech for the purpose of certain ignition. There are a few specimens of Queen Anne pistols employing the La Chaumette system of loading, which later became known as the Fuerguson system of breech loading. By this method, a lever was turned from the bottom side of the grip which exposed a cavity on the top of the breech and the powder and ball were inserted. This, of course, eliminated the screw off barrel.

Another innovation introduced during the later Queen Anne period was the button safety release. Upon depressing the button located on the bottom of the grip tang, the trigger guard could be pushed forward to engage the safety or pulled back to disengage it. This variation has been attributed to Joseph Clarkson (see figure 37).

Because time does not permit, I have only mentioned a few of the variations to be found on Queen Anne pistols and I feel a need for a more complete and comprehensive study of this topic. I would also like to mention that the box lock, center cock variety that came into vogue during the last half of the 18th century, was purposely not included in my talk as I feel that this variety was not the true Queen Anne but a modification of less expensive design and manufacture.

In conclusion I would like to state, that in my opinion, the Queen Anne pistol was to England what the Pennsylvania Kentucky rifle was to America—the first true firearm development of the nation.



Figure 38. Superimposed by J. P. Freeman. Iron buttcap with silver pommel, sliding safety bolt on frame, and lever on pan to expose second touch hole.

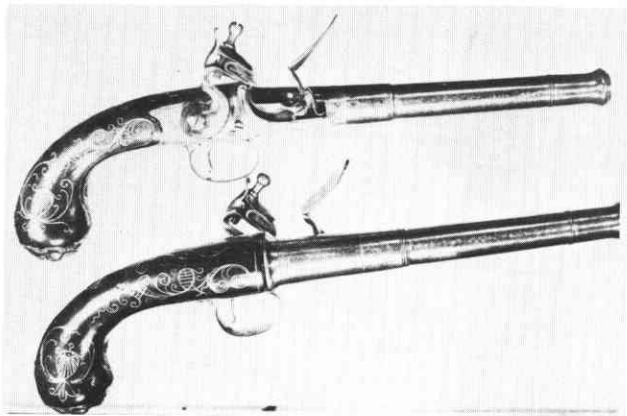


Figure 39. T. Annely pistols, 14 inches overall, with right and left hand locks.

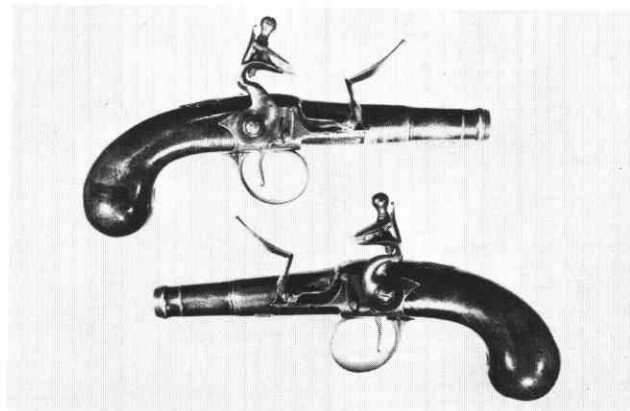


Figure 40. W. Turvey pocket pistols with right and left hand locks.