

# Simeon North and the U.S. Model 1813 Pistol

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## SECTION I SIMEON NORTH, THE MAN

The North family started life in the Americas with the arrival of John North. He set sail from London and arrived at Boston aboard the vessel *Susan and Ellen* in April 1635.

Six generations later on July 13, 1765 Simeon was born. He was the fourth son of Jedediah and Sarah North. Their home was located on the north end of the village of Berlin, Connecticut. Like his father and grandfather before him, Simeon began life as a farmer. In 1786, at the age of twenty-one, he married Lucy Savage also of Berlin. Before her passing on February 24, 1811 they produced eight children. Simeon remarried later on in life and had one more child with Lydia Huntington of Middletown, Connecticut.

Records show that North's farm was 66 acres and made up of several parcels. On June 10, 1795, North purchased land on Spruce Brook, adjoining his farm. With this land he got an old sawmill and a dam. Within a few years he had added on to the existing building and not only was he in the business of sawing lumber but he also used the basement as a forging room for making scythes. The prices ran from 75¢ to \$1.67, according to size and quality. Good steel cost about 16¢ a



pound and charcoal cost \$7.00 per 100 bushels. It was in this factory that Models 1799, 1808, and 1811 pistols were made.

It is interesting to note that wages ran \$6.00 to \$12.00 per month and many of the workers contracted to work for a specific period of time. As skilled workmen were hard to find, much of the workforce was comprised of apprentices. Many of the workmen boarded with one or another of the

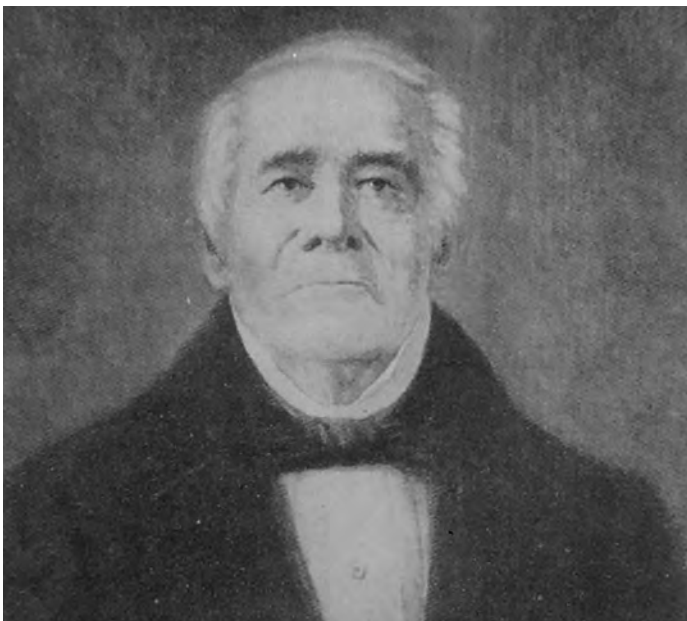


Figure 1. Simeon North. From "Simeon North first official pistol maker".



Figure 2. The Berlin Homestead. From "Simeon North first official pistol maker".

North families, and the account books show that the workmen were charged \$1.25 per week for board. Washing was included in the board.<sup>1</sup>

At the age of thirty-four North secured his first contract for 500 pistols. This contract was soon followed by a second contract for 1500 more pistols. These contracts were for what is known as the U.S. Model 1799 Pistol. Following completion of his 1799 contracts North continued the manufacture of farm implements. In June 1808, North secured a contract to make 1000 pairs of Boarding Pistols for the Navy. By December 1810, an additional contract for 500 more pairs had been obtained. On November 18, 1811, before deliveries to the Navy were completed North entered into a contract for 1000 pairs of Horseman's Pistols.<sup>2</sup> When this contract was completed in 1815, only 606 Pin Fastened and 550 Iron Banded pistols were delivered.<sup>3</sup> North's next contract was for the Model 1813, it is this model that we will come back to as the subject of this article.

These were busy times for North. He was a Lieutenant Colonel of the Connecticut Sixth Militia Regiment from 1811 to 1813 and he was thereafter known as Colonel North. Construction was in progress on a new factory in Middletown, a three story stone and brick building. This 36 × 86 foot factory on a good water source could employ nearly 100 workmen.

The U.S. Model 1816 Army Pistol, actually a continuation of the 1813 contract, followed, and enough pistols were made to complete the 20,000 called for by the contract. In July 1819, North secured another contract for 20,000 pistols. The Model 1819 pistols were completed and delivered by 1823. Next North obtained a contract for 7200 U.S. Model 1817 common rifles followed by three contracts for the U.S. Model 1826 Navy Pistols; each contract was for 1000 pistols. This ended North's pistol contracts with the United States. From this point on North devoted his business life to constructing the Hall Breach Loading rifles and carbines. North died on August 7, 1852 at the age of eighty-seven and is buried at Indian Hill cemetery in Middletown.<sup>4</sup>

## SECTION II THE CONTRACT

The following is the contract for the Model 1813 Pistol. Notice that this contract is for 20,000 pistols and parts. In reality only 626 pistols would be delivered to the Army. In mid 1815 Colonel Wadsworth of the Ordnance Department expressed the opinion that having a pistol of musket caliber was wrong and that pistols should be of rifle caliber. By January 1816 this contract was changed and the caliber was that of the rifle. Now North is left with proofed barrels, locks, stocks and some completed pistols, so he went to the Board of Navy Commissioners with an offer to sell them



Figure 3. Simeon North—Patriarch of U.S. Pistol Makers. From ASAC Bulletin No. 2.

these pistols. The Navy purchased 1000 of them in the fall of 1816. It appears the Army agreed to purchase all pistols that were completed prior to the caliber change, so North went to work and got rid of 85 locks and barrels left over from the Model 1811. More on this in the next section.

### *The Contract*

*Know all men by these presents, That it is hereby mutually agreed by, and between, the United States, by Callender Irvine, Commissary General and Simeon North, of Berlin Connecticut; that the said Simeon North shall and will manufacture, and deliver within five years from the date hereof, Twenty thousand Pistols, of the size, dimensions and workmanship to the pattern pistol exhibited with the following exceptions, Viz: "Hammer pin too large & enters crooked. To be made the same size of the small pins of the lock. The threads on the small lock pins to be increased about one size. The thread in cock defective, and cock pin and jaw too loose. The sear spring pin hole in plate to be put the same distance from the axle-tree hole as the sear pin hole is. The Pistols are to be stocked with wood cut from the butt or root of the tree having natural turn." It is agreed that the said Simeon North shall furnish to every hundred pistols, the following named articles & component parts of Pistols, that is to say; en bullet screws and Ten screw drivers, Fifteen main springs & Cock Pins, Ten hammer springs, Sear springs, Rammers Hammers & setts side pins & Five cocks. Tumblers, Sears, Pans, Jaws, Bridles, Band springs, Butt screws, Triggers, Setts small lock pins & setts breech pins. Each Pistol not to exceed 3 1/2 pounds in weight, and are to have on each one of them the letters U.S. and an Eagle stamped on the plate of the lock, also the*

name & place of residence of the manufacturer, the component parts of pistols are to correspond so exactly that any limb or part of one Pistol may be fitted to any other Pistol of the Twenty Thousand; One thousand pistols with the extra parts of limb complete to be delivered in the first year, four thousand in the second year & five thousand in each succeeding year until the whole shall have been completed; the Pistols are to be delivered at Norwich County or at New York, if it should be required after the danger of Capture by the enemy shall have ceased. It is further agreed, that the price of the said Pistols with extra parts complete is and shall be Seven Dollars each Money of the United States, payable to the amount of each and every parcel delivered, on demand after strict & regular inspection, by a person or persons to be appointed for that purpose by the United States and after such inspector shall certify that the said Pistols with their extra parts complete have been so by him inspected & passed agreeably to Contract. An advance of Twenty thousand Dollars, to be made to the said Simeon North on his Bonds with sufficient sureties for the faithful execution of the Contract.

A deduction of one Dollar from the price of each pistol delivered is to be made, till the whole advance money is accounted for. It is expressly conditioned, that no member of Congress is or shall be admitted, to any share or part of this contract or agreement, or to any benefit to arise thereupon.

WITNESS the hand of the said Callender Irvine, Commissary General, and the Hand and Seal of the said Simeon North this Sixteenth day of April 1813.

The Pistols to be proved & inspected and the Boxes furnished for their transportation to be at the expence of the United States.

Sealed & delivered in the SIMON NORTH

presence of:

E.J.B.Labrouss

(seal)

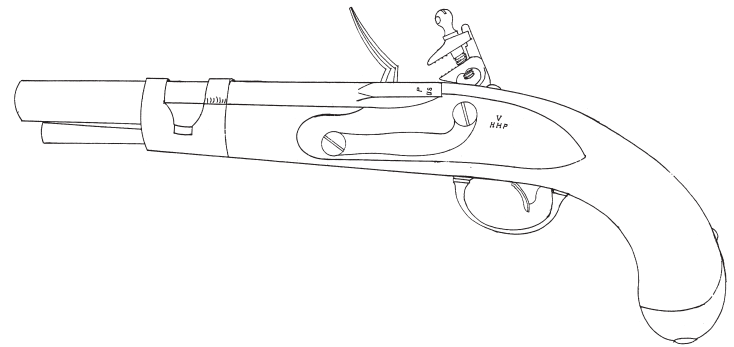
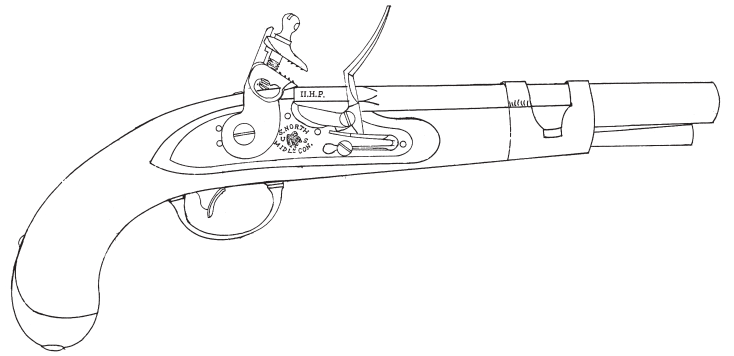
CALLENDER IRVINE

Commy Genl. (seal)<sup>5</sup>

### SECTION III THE PISTOLS

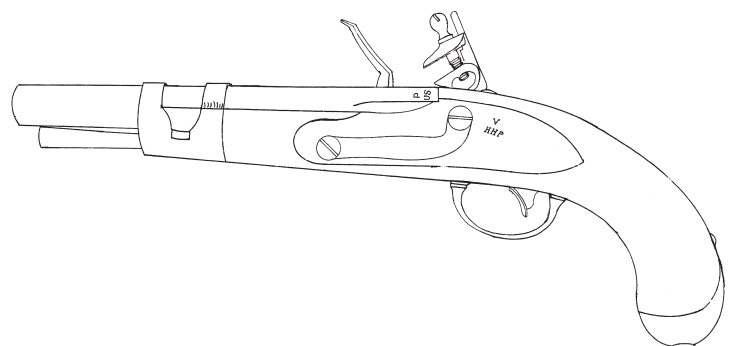
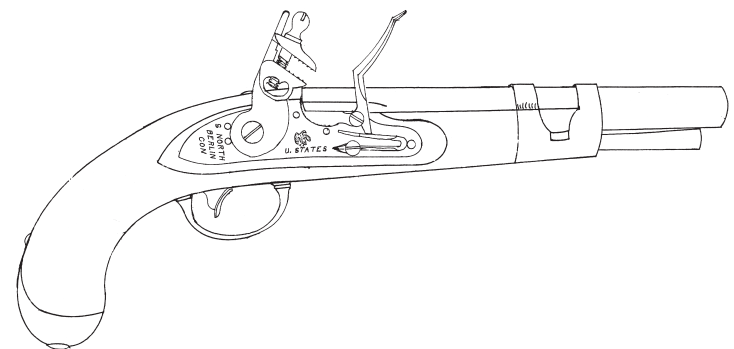
Although all the pistols discussed here are Model 1813s or Model 1813/16 Navy contract, they are quite different.

Pistol #1—This pistol is of the standard configuration for this model. What makes it unusual is that it is one of the first pistols inspected. You will note that this pistol has the standard “Eagle Lock” and the barrel is marked P over U.S. on the left flat with an HHP on the right flat. This pistol also has a V over HHP on the left stock flat, indicating its inspection prior to the first week of January, 1817, which was Henry H. Perkins termination date. These pistols are seldom encountered today.

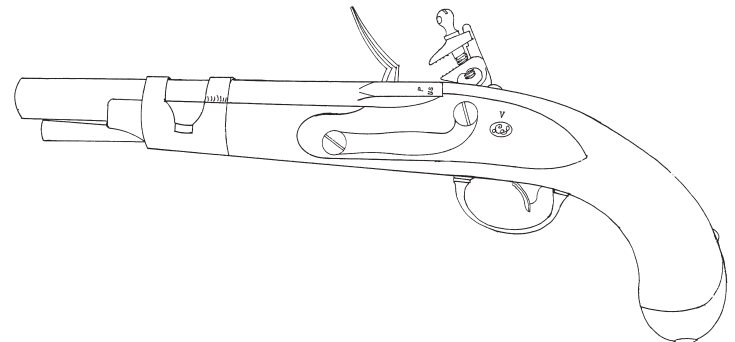
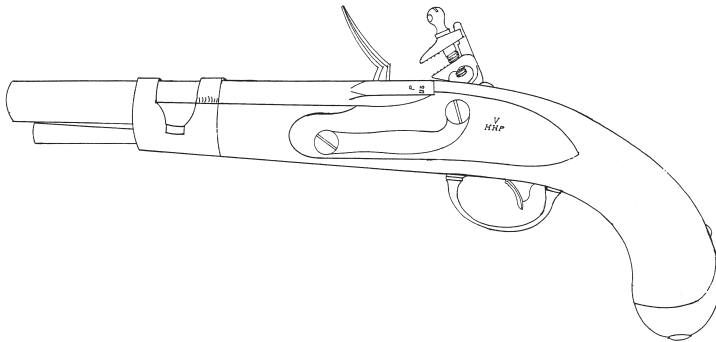
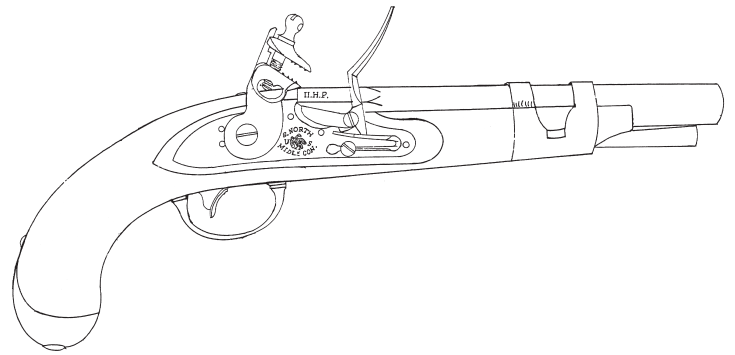
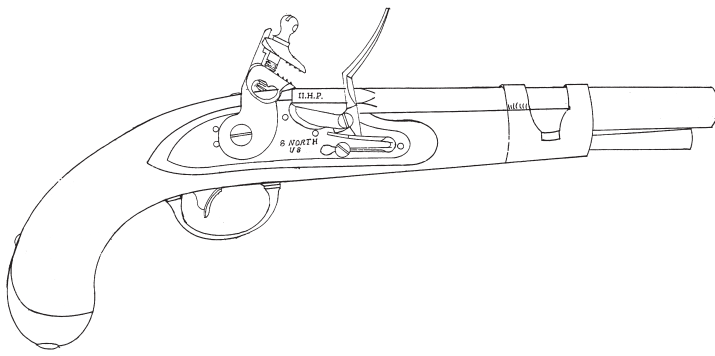


Pistol #1 Model 1813 Army, Early Inspection, Standard Pattern.

Pistol #2—These pistols have been called transitional pistols but they should be called the Model 1813 flat lock pistol. They were created after an agreement with ordnance to accept the remaining .69 caliber pistols. This pistol has the iron furniture of the current model but uses the left over



Pistol #2 Model 1813 Army, Flat Lock.

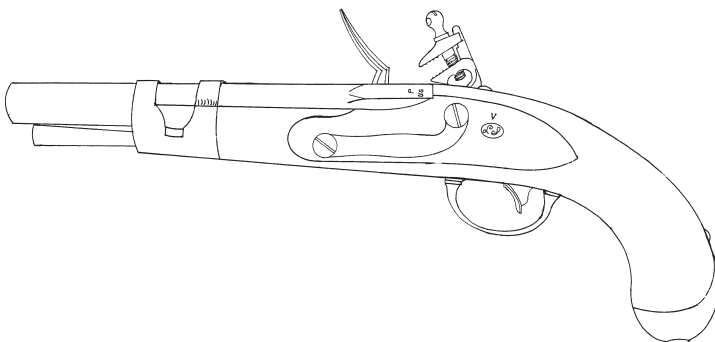
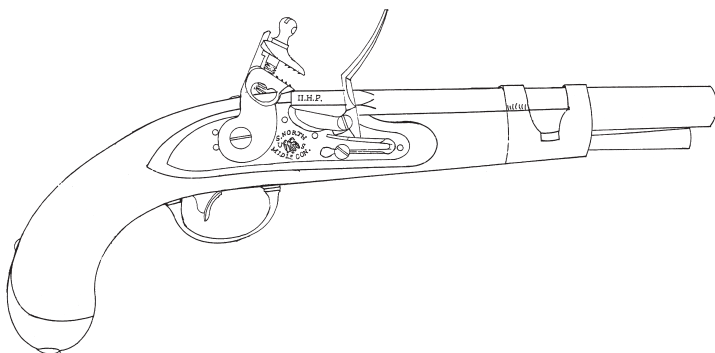


**Pistol #3 Model 1813 Army, Two Line.**

**Pistol #5 Model 1813 Army Extended Fore Stock.**

locks and barrels of the Model 1811. The entire length of the lock is flat and marked with an eagle over U-States forward of the hammer; the tail is marked S. North, Berlin, Conn., in three lines. The barrel is marked P over US. A V over HHP will be found on the left stock flat. Of the 85 submitted for inspection probably less than 10 exist today.

Pistol #3—This pistol is commonly called the two line Army. It has all the standard features of the model except for the lock. The lock will simply be marked, S. North over US, ahead of the hammer. The left stock flat will have a V over HHP. These, like Pistols #1 and #2, were probably all inspected at the same time. As far as is known, there is no reason for this lock marking. These are quite rare today with only 3 to 5 known.



**Pistol #4 Model 1813 Army, Later Inspection Standard Pattern.**

Pistol #4—This is the most commonly seen pistol of this model; it has the standard Eagle lock, the barrel will be marked P over US on the left flat. The right flat may have the familiar HHP stamped on it. The left stock flat will have a V over a script LS in an oval. This marking indicates that Luther Sage replaced Henry H. Perkin.

Pistol #5—This pistol is the same as pistol #4 with one major exception, the fore stock extends past the iron band by approximately 3/4 inch. At first glance it looks like the Model 1816, that is until you notice the octagon breech and .69 caliber bore. These are quite rare today with probably less than 5 known.

This next group of three pistols is the Navy version of the Model 1813 Army. Remember, after the Ordnance Department proposed the change to North's contract to reduce the caliber from .69 to .54 North found himself with a large quantity of proofed barrels, completed locks and possibly finished pistols. To take care of the problem North offered these pistols to the Board of Navy Commissioners,

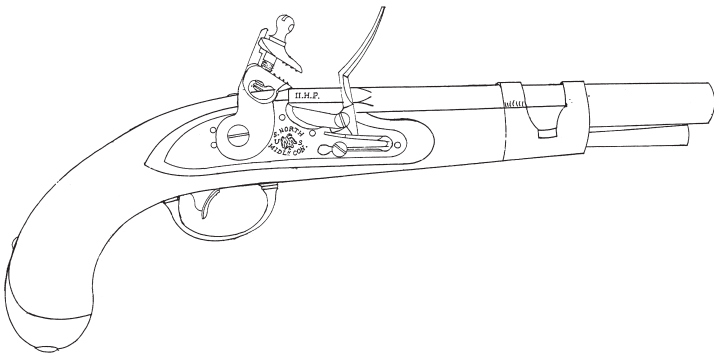
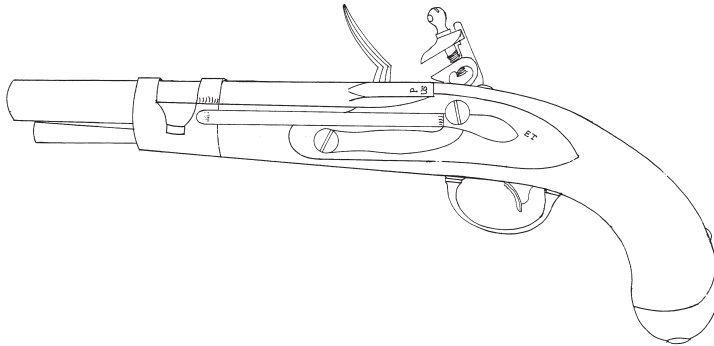
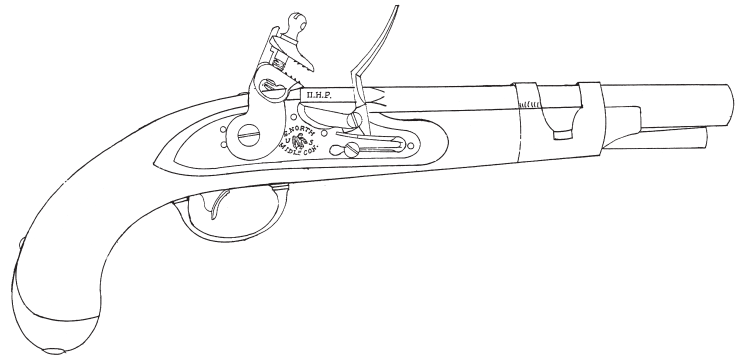


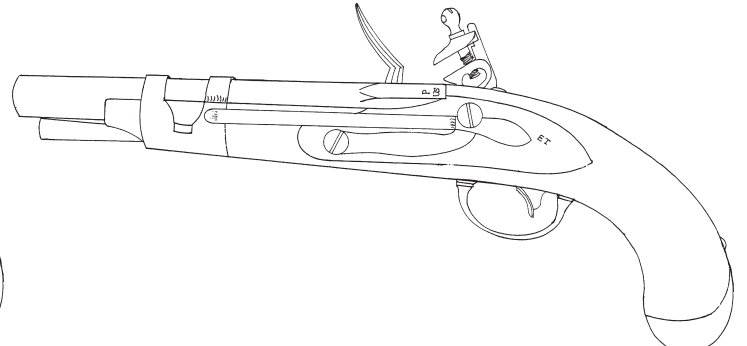
Figure Pistol "A" Model 1813/16 Navy, Standard Pattern.



Pistol "B" Model 1813/16 Navy, Two Line.



Pistol "C" Model 1813/16 Navy, Extended Fore Stock.



they accepted, and bought 1000 of them. These pistols were inspected and accepted in the fall of 1816. Perhaps we should consider calling these pistols the Model 1813/16 Navy.

Pistol "A"—This is the standard model. It has the Eagle lock, the barrel will be marked on the left flat with a P over US, the right flat will have an HHP on it. This pistol came with a 7" belt hook fastened by one screw to the side plate. Today many are found without this hook and a wood plug inserted in the hole where the belt hook stud would have been. The other important mark will be found on the left stock flat to the rear of the belt hook. This will be a block style letter ET, the mark of Navy Captain Edward Trenchard.

Pistol "B"—This pistol is the same as Pistol "A", except for its lock markings, with the simple S. North over US forward of the hammer. These pistols with their two line locks are quite rare. Only half a dozen or so exist today.

Pistol "C"—This pistol is also the same as Pistol "A" except that it has a 3/4 inch stock extension forward of the barrel band. This small piece of wood makes this the rarest of this model. Only 1 or 2, maybe 3 of these are known.

NOTES

1. S.N.D. North and R.H. North, *Simeon North First Official Pistol maker* (Concord, N.H.: The Rumford Press, 1913) pp 22-30.
2. Edward Bitter and Samuel Smith, *Historic Pistols—The American Flintlock* (New York: Scalumandre Publications, 1985) p.121.
3. Jeska, Robert, *Simeon North Pistol Correspondence* (Plainwell, Michigan: Author published, 1993) p.189.

4. Bitter, *loc. Cit.*, p. 124.

5. Major James E. Hicks, *Notes on United States Ordnance* (Mount Vernon, NY, Author published, 1940) p. 45.

Hicks, Major James E. *Notes on United States Ordnance*. Vol. I. Mount Vernon, N.Y: Published by the Author, 1940.

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Jeska Robert. *Simeon North Pistol Correspondence*. Plainwell, Michigan: Published by Author, 1993.

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