

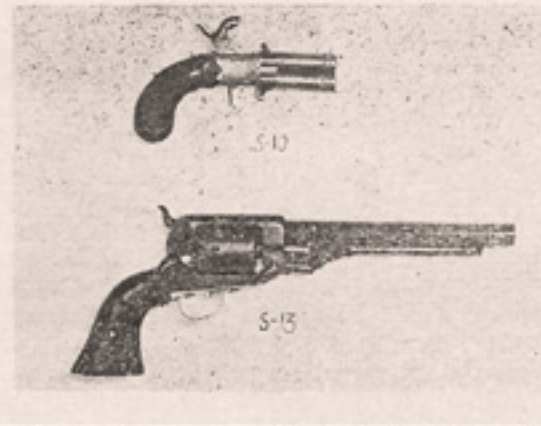
Weapons that Won the West

By D. R. KING, High River, Alta.

THE ancient Chinese, often referred to as the fathers of gunpowder, first brought out their discovery through the use of crude cannon and firecrackers. Although the firecrackers were by far the most popular use, unending wars made the cannon useful too, at times. Even at the first they realized the need for weapons smaller than the ponderous big guns. This need resulted in the production of the "hand cannon", which was just that, a cannon with a handle which could be aimed and fired by one man. There is no definite reference as to when the pistol came into common use in western countries, but hand and shoulder guns have advanced together through the years of improvement.

The western provinces of Canada came into being during a unique era, one in which a complete change-over was taking place in the history of fire-arms. As a result it is not strange that so many and varied makes and models of guns are to be found in Alberta. Perhaps the most notable advent was the invention of the percussion primer cap. First used around 1842, it gave the frontiersman a new lease on life in that it cut reloading and firing time to half that of the flint lock, as well as stepping up efficiency of firing. Of course, the flint lock came first, but with the percussion cap came something new, the repeating weapon. Although some flintlock pistols were brought out with twin barrels and locks, the cap lock fostered the real repeater. In most cases this consisted of a battery of barrels or chambers revolving on an axis in such a manner as to place each charge alternately under the hammer. Some earlier models had two fixed barrels with a hammer for each, the same as the flintlocks.

In the accompanying photo, S-10 is a good example of the revolving barrel type. This two-barreled job preceded the multi-barreled "pepper-boxes" but employs the same principles. The actual piece is of English make, the smith being Lang, Haymarket, London (there is still a Haymarket St. in London). Preferred by gamblers and gentlemen of the day it was commonly used as a sleeve gun. Having been charged from the muzzles, a lead ball was forced down each barrel, and both nipples capped, one being protected by the curved tang projecting below the gun, the other being exposed to the hammer. The weapon was carried at half-cock, in which position the safety behind the hammer could be used to insure security against accidental firing. The trigger remained folded up in the frame. On occasion of use the safety would be released and the hammer drawn to full cock, whereupon the trigger flipped down, making the piece ready for firing. If a second shot was necessary, which was probably often, the hammer was brought to half-cock again and the barrels twisted by hand to place the undischarged chamber and cap under the hammer. Since the barrel's length is only one and three-quarters of an inch, it is obvious that the



gun would be effective at a very limited range — the belly-prod method.

Elaborate engraving on the entire piece shows skillful workmanship and the gunsmith's love of his labor. The hammer, driven by a terrifically strong spring, is in the customary shape of the serpent, complete with eyes and mouth. Perhaps I may spare a few lines to explain the reason why this shape of hammer is so prevalent on old weapons. In the dear dead days of long ago, when the rifle was loaded by hand and fired by a fuse, the long wick or "slow match" was applied to the priming hole by a lever cut in the form of a snake or serpent. Thus the "match-lock" was equipped with a "serpentine". When the crude trigger was pulled, it allowed the glowing end of the wick, which was merely a piece of string smouldering on one end, to come into contact with the powder train set at the touch hole, thus setting off the charge (if everything was in order and the firer was lucky). Evidently the fancy snake-shaped hammer was popular with European gun makers, for when they came to America the practise was continued, and many modern guns still bear hammers suggestive of the serpent with the tail arched.

To get back to the cap-lock, the piece shown is in perfect condition. The fine walnut butt is inlaid with much-graven silver and checked neatly on both sides. Made entirely by hand, it is quite workable, and makes a very satisfying bang when fired. Although it does not have any relation to the history of Western Canada, it does typify the craftsmanship and ingenuity of the time, and serves to introduce the second gun of this instalment.

S-13 is the big brother of S-10. It is a Whitney Navy Revolver, cap and ball, of caliber .36. A hand loader, the gun is

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equipped with a ramming lever just under the barrel. When this is jacked down it actuates the cupped rammer which seats the bullet on the charge. The six chambers in the cylinder are loaded from the muzzle end and each ball placed alternately under the rammer and forcibly seated on the powder. Either a round or conical bullet may be used. When loaded, percussion caps are fitted upon each of the six nipples at the rear of the cylinder. Being single action only, the piece must be cocked for firing.

The Whitney was first manufactured at the Whitneyville Armories, Connecticut, where 11,214 were purchased by the government during the Civil War. They became immensely popular with men and officers of both sides, and during the year 1862 were copied by the Confederate Forces, being manufactured both at St. Louis and Augusta, Georgia. The frames of these were slightly different in that they were cast of brass and bore the stamp C.S. on the left side. One might expect to find this gun most anywhere in the States, but the actual piece pictured was picked up in an abandoned cabin in Northern Alberta where it had been lying on a shelf for countless years. When found, the trigger was missing, but as the thread of the trigger screw still remained in place, it is to be presumed the trigger was lost accidentally rather than being purposely removed to facilitate fanning for quick fire. The lightness and excellent balance undoubtedly made it a popular pattern of handgun for a number of years after the Civil War, for there were many other guns brought out which look and act nearly identically to the Whitney, all with the hump-backed hand grip and long barrel. Even today it is a nice gun to hold and shoot.

Our consignment to the Calgary Bull Sale will consist of 4 bulls sired by **MODEL REAL PRINCE DOMINO 3rd 183335** and 2 sired by **WORTHY PRINCE 143790**.

We showed the first three grade steer calves sired by **Model Real Prince Domino 3rd** at the Edmonton Spring Show (March, 1949) where they won **Grand Champion Baby Beef** and **Reserve Championship** of the show; also 1st and 2nd in the open class under 900 pounds. **Worthy Prince** was sire of the Edmonton Spring Show 1946 and 1947 **Grand Champions** and the 1948 **Reserve Champion**.

We will also have 2 **Model Real Prince Domino** bulls and one **Mercury Domino 175th** bull at the Edmonton Bull Sale, March 21 to 24.

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