

**FIREARMS IN
AMERICAN HISTORY,
1600 TO 1800**

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Firearms in American History, 1600 to 1800 by Charles Winthrop Sawyer

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CHARLES WINTHROP SAWYER

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A Home of Ancient Arms

Frontispiece

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IN
AMERICAN HISTORY

1600 to 1800

BY
CHARLES WINTHROP SAWYER

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As the Sawyer collection of firearms lacked a number of pieces necessary to illustrate this work, application was made to several other collectors for permission to photograph arms in their collections. To Messers MARK FIELD, CHARLES D. COOK, DR. J. B. THORNTON, W. A. LAWRENCE, J. M. SCRAFFORD, and FRANCIS R. BANGS, grateful acknowledgment is made for their exceeding kindness, courtesy, and generosity.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

(1600 to 1775)

THE INFLUENCE OF FIREARMS

THE Colonists in America were the greatest weapon-using people of that epoch in the world. Everywhere the gun was more abundant than the tool. It furnished daily food; it maintained its owner's claims to the possession of his homestead among the aboriginal owners of the soil; it helped to win the mother country's wars for possession of the country as a whole. These facts alone raise the interesting questions of what the Colonists used for weapons and where they got them. Further, the ultimate outcome of all strife between the Colonists and other people was victory for the Colonists. While the Colonists may have been excellent fighters, operating in the main upon home ground, and while their wars with other white people were side issues of European wars and to a considerable extent dependent upon the outcome there, it is nevertheless a fact that a war is composed of two factors, only one of which is the combatants themselves. Every war and every battle is made of

two factors: the strength, experience, and skill of the combatants have much to do with the issue; also so do the weapons with which they destroy each other.

An investigation of the firearms of the early struggles in America yields various results. Besides the simple and direct one of rejuvenating a long lost knowledge are others of greater importance. Firearm makers of old were men of surprising ingenuity and artistic skill. Ingenious solutions of problems in form, balance, decoration, boring, grooving, throating, disposition of parts, mechanisms for turning, stopping, locking and unlocking, present to the inventor of to-day bases upon which to build again. Ornamentation by means of form, chiseling, engraving, embossing, openwork, gilding, inlaying with gold, silver, ivory, mother-of-pearl, so far surpassed anything attempted now that reference to the antique would be absolutely necessary in the production of a modern decoration of real merit. The immensity of the firearms industry of old is beyond the imagination of the uninitiated; it clearly indicates the necessity of studying the close relation between skill with arms and human progress. The money value of so great an industry had a strong influence upon the economics of the times, and needs attention in regard to the present and the future. Debatable aspects of history are clarified by the presentation of infor-

mation hitherto neglected regarding weapons used in critical periods of decisive warfare; and history is enriched by the addition of facts connected with those antique implements which assisted in the spread of civilization, the growth of a new nation, and affected the totality of human progress.

It is a matter of only three centuries since the present populous and highly civilized United States of America was one vast wilderness, not affected in any way by the few scattering settlements of white people from Europe who maintained a precarious existence in the midst of the native population of savages. Later, when the villages became thriving towns and the neighboring savages were greatly weakened in numbers and strength, England became ruler of the land. Then France, having possessions on the north and claiming the wilderness to the west, strove with England for what she possessed. In these French wars the Colonists became acquainted with each other, and of united sympathy and purpose. When England's rule was no longer acceptable they formed a league against her, and the struggle for freedom which began in 1775 terminated the Colonial period.

The Colonial period, which was one of almost constant warfare yet also one of tremendous growth, divides into the period of skirmish and warfare with