



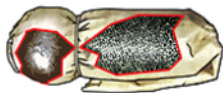
2018-03

Weapons — Brown Bess Musket

During the 1740's there were numerous muskets and long rifles used in North America. One of the most common in the British colonies was the 'Brown Bess' British flintlock musket. In 1722, the British government issued the first Brown Bess muskets using a pattern. The pattern was a new concept that standardized both the weapon manufacture and ammunition used. Each weapon had an overall length of 58.5 inches, a barrel length of 46 inches with a standard .75 caliber bore using a flintlock firing mechanism. A shorter 42 inch model called the Short Land Pattern was instituted later without any loss of accuracy. The Brown Bess remained the standard British infantry weapon from 1722 to 1838.



The Brown Bess introduced a number of advances starting with the flintlock firing mechanism. The standardization on size, calibre and weight, so the weapon might be manufactured by different suppliers, was a second major innovation. The standard size of ammunition allowed the manufacture / supply of common ammunition that replaced the requirement that soldiers carry powder horns and measure the amount of powder used for each shot. The issued paper cartridge contained the powder, ball and wadding in a single package. The soldier simply grasped the paper at the ball end, ripped the paper with his teeth at the other end, poured some powder into the flash pan and the remainder down the barrel. He then pushed the paper and ball down the barrel, using the rammer to move it all the way to the end. This paper cartridge solved several logistical difficulties for the British



army. Prior to the introduction of the Brown Bess, each soldier had to carry bars of lead and a mould to prepare the musket balls for their particular weapon. If a soldier used all prepared balls in a fire-fight,

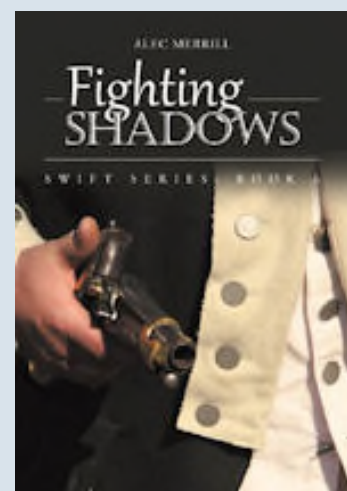
he could now use someone else's ammunition. It eliminated a common problem of pouring too much or too little powder into the barrel. Too much powder resulted in a powerful kick during discharge, often bruising the soldier's shoulder and sending the ball too high. Too little powder either resulted in the ball dropping too quickly or had the potential to foul the barrel.

Another feature of the Brown Bess, although not unique, was the small lug at the end of the barrel. This lug allowed the attachment of a 17 inch bayonet. It also provided a crude front sight.

The maximum effective range (the distance the ball can travel and still kill) of the Brown Bess is often quoted as 175 yards (160 metres). In reality few soldiers could hit a target at that range. Volley fire at 50 yards (46 metres) with 2-3 volleys per minute inflicted more damage and gained the British infantry a fierce reputation.



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