



GRAND CURTIUS

ARMS DEPARTMENT **GUIDEBOOK**



CIVILIAN WEAPONS

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DEFINITION

A firearm is a tool that is used to launch one or more projectiles, in a specific direction and over a specific distance, using the force of the expanding gases produced when a chemical substance explodes.

Over time, various firing devices have been developed to ensure maximum efficacy, ease and safety, with minimal inconvenience. As a result, portable firearms can be classified depending on whether the weapon is loaded via the muzzle (1400–1850) or via the breech (after 1850).

***Matchlock**

The earliest black-powder firearms were fired by holding a lit match in front of the flash pan. Matchlocks, which were the first mechanism to be used in firearms for increased safety, were developed in the early 15th century and remained in use until approximately 1720, alongside other firing devices.

An S-shaped arm, known as the serpentine, is fixed to the lock, and holds the lit match. The mechanism allows the shooter to rotate the serpentine, which would ignite the primer powder contained in the flash pan. The touch hole (a channel running between the flash pan and the base of the cannon) subsequently allows the flame to travel and ignite the propellant powder.

***Wheellock**

This complex mechanism, which is sometimes attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, debuted at the beginning of the 16th century and resembles a clockwork mechanism. Its advantage lies in the ability to carry a loaded and ready-to-fire weapon.

A circular, toothed piece made from steel (the wheel) is found on the lock and is ac-

tivated by a spring and a chain, via a rotating movement. The wheel provides a friction surface for the iron pyrite, which is contained in the dog of the weapon. The friction between the pyrite and the wheel causes a spray of sparks, thus igniting the primer powder.

***Flintlock**

During the 16th century, simpler mechanisms, which were based on the same principle as the lighter, began to appear. A piece of flint with a bevelled edge, which is held in place by the dog, strikes a metal piece (the frizzen) when the trigger is pulled. The impact causes a spray of sparks, which fall into the flash pan with the ignition powder, causing the cover of the flash pan to raise. This system, which is more reliable than the matchlock and cheaper than the wheellock, would find popularity throughout Europe for more than two centuries.

***Percussion lock**

Thanks to developments in chemistry in the 18th century, the explosive properties of mercury fulminate and silver were discovered. As a result, the black powder that was used for firearms was replaced by fulminates at the beginning of the 19th century. In terms of mechanics, the dog was replaced by a hammer that strikes a piston and the primer.

***Loading via the breech**

Though it had been discovered long before, the breech-loading system could not be used until the issue of sealing the breech on the shooter's end had been solved. However, important innovations, such as cartridges with an expandable metal breech, made it possible for the system to develop during the second half of the 19th

century. As cartridges became more generic, weapons with no apparent dog became more common, while the bolt-action system (the sequence entailed closing, percussion, opening and ejecting the empty shell casing) and the repetition system (the manual action of the bolt made it possible to eject a used casing and move ammunition from the magazine to the barrel) were developed.

***Automatic weapons**

At the end of the 19th century, weapons appeared that were capable of firing a series of shots by applying pressure to the trigger. This system, which was used for military purposes, employs the force generated by the recoil or the combustion gases from the powder. Semi-automatic weapons, which were also used for military purposes and, sometimes, for hunting, were based on the same principle; however, they required the shooter to release the pressure and apply it to the trigger again between each shot.



ABBREVIATED DICTIONARY

Barrel a tube-shaped part of the weapon that is used to launch projectiles.

Bore the interior of the barrel.

Breech on muzzle-loading weapons, the breech is the reinforced part at the bottom of the barrel. It contains the load. In more modern weapons, the breech is positioned behind the barrel, in order to ensure airtightness against the gas produced when firing and to facilitate the propulsion of the projectile towards the muzzle of the weapon.

Bullet projectile fired by a gun.

Butt part of a firearm that is traditionally made from wood and is used for gripping.

Calibre this refers to the diameter of the projectiles, as well as the interior of the weapon's barrel.

Carbine firearm in which the bore of the barrel has spiral stripes.

Cartridge kit that contains the bullet (or bullets), the propellant powder and the primer

Chamber combustion chamber at the rear of the barrel. Ammunition is inserted into it before it is struck and propelled.

Cylinder the cylindrical, rotating part of a revolver containing multiple chambers that the bullets enter from the weapon. These then appear, successively, at the rear of the barrel.

Dog a mechanical piece that ignites the primer powder in older firearms, or which strikes the cartridge primer in more modern weapons (matchlock dog, wheellock dog, flintlock dog, etc.)

External trigger part of the firing mechanism that the shooter pulls to fire the shot.

Flash pan hollow part that contains the primer in matchlock, wheellock and flintlock weapons.

Lock the mechanism of a firearm that facilitates percussion.

Muzzle the part of the weapon that projectiles are expelled from and, in older weapons, into which ammunition is loaded.

Pistol handgun with a chamber that is integrated into the barrel or aligned with it.

Primer the explosive material that causes the propellant combustion that fires the gun.

Ramrod device that is used to push the projectile against the powder and through the muzzle of the gun.

Revolver handgun with a system of chambers that rotate in front of the barrel.

Rifle firearm with a long barrel and shoulder stock.

Stock a piece made from wood or plastic that is positioned under the barrel and which makes it possible to grip the weapon, while protecting the shooter's hand from the heat of the barrel.

Trigger the internal part of the weapon between the external trigger and the dog. When it is pulled, the external trigger causes the internal trigger to rotate, which allows the dog to strike the primer.

Trigger guard metal loop that protects the trigger from accidental pressure.

Wadding device that is plant-based in origin. It is used to wedge the projectile against the explosive charge.



HISTORY OF THE ARMS TRADE IN LIÈGE

From the 16th century to the present day, the expertise of Liège gunsmiths has been recognised all around the world. Though they are often viewed in a negative light, weapons and their production are a key part of our regional economy. The Principality of Liège was a strategic point at which to establish the gun-making industry. All of the elements needed for its development were found there: wood and coal as fuel, iron as a raw material and the Meuse and its tributaries as a source of hydro-electric energy.

The gun-making industry began to develop in Liège during the 16th century. However, there is little information about where and how weapons and ammunition were made at that time. In any case, the city initially made its name thanks to its artillery: cannons, bullets and powder. In 1492, the city was declared politically neutral, which allowed it to establish trade relations easily. Furthermore, river and road transport allowed Liège's output to be exported to France, the Netherlands and Germany.

During the 17th century, the production of arms took off in Liège, thanks to the manufacture of portable firearms (to the detriment of artillery weapons, for which production in the region had been declining). The development of this industry benefited from European conflicts like the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) or the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). The majority of these weapons were not signed and very few details remain about their production until the middle of the 17th century. There has never been a Liège association for gunsmiths. Artisans in this field were divided into one of the professions in the 32 *Bons Métiers de Liège*, depending on their speciality. These specialised labourers worked at home. Those who were known as "arms manufacturers" were, in reality, merchants. They sourced orders and then entrusted them to local craftsmen, who

were scattered throughout the suburbs. Gradually, regulations would attempt to control production, which had, until then, been governed by a "laissez-faire" approach. As a result, authorities tried to establish a test starting in 1672, in order to ensure the quality of the products. However, this did not become official and mandatory until 1810, under the reign of Napoléon Bonaparte.

The Liège armoury would suffer greatly during the tumultuous period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era. Arms manufacturers in Liège lost their neutral status, which allowed them to trade with all nations. The armoury fell into the hands of the military, first under the Republic and then the Empire. They would impose increasingly stringent restrictions on both production and trade.

Jean Gosuin, a Liège gunsmith who aided in the fall of the Ancien Régime, obtained the sole right to manufacture weapons in Liège in 1801. In reality, Gosuin managed a "warehouse" that received weapons made by gunsmiths working in the traditional manner – independently and at home. However, these were subject to rigorous standards. In fact, the French regime implemented a variety of manufacturing rules that had never been heard of before. This turned the gun-making industry in Liège on its head and readied it for the development of new technologies in the not-so-distant future. Gradually, over the course of the 19th century, the mechanisation of gun parts changed the very structure of the profession. In terms of civilian weapons, Henri Pieper founded the first Liège company to mass produce gun parts with machines in 1886. This was the first time that this method, which he imported from the United States, was used in Europe. Between 1860 and 1890, the use of machinery became increasingly widespread. This increased productivity and competition with the new

JAN DE CORTE ALSO KNOWN AS JEAN CURTIUS

Jan de Corte, whose name is Latinised as Jean Curtius, was born in Basse-Sauvenière in 1551. He married Pétronille de Braaz when he was 23. She was the daughter of a rich merchant and they had two sons together. Jean Curtius – whose name inspired the adage, “Rich as a Curtius from Liège”, which was used up until the end of the 18th century – made his fortune in the arms and gunpowder industry. He exported these and sold them to the Monarchy of Spain, who appointed him as an arms dealer. He was also a banker, miner, collector and patron.

In 1609, the truce that was declared in the Dutch Revolt abruptly stopped the shipping of military materials, despite Spain’s financial commitments. In order to revitalise his business, Curtius decided to travel to Spain in 1616 and engage in metal-working, which had been a Liège speciality since the beginning of the 17th century.



Jean Wirick, Portrait of Jean de Corte, chiselled engraving, Anvers, 1607 – Grand Curtius collection © City of Liège

Previously, he had partially financed the construction of Quais de la Batte and Quais des Tanneurs between 1595 and 1597 and had purchased the canonry at the quay and replaced it with his residence and his warehouse. These buildings comprised a large house at the front, which was colloquially known as the “palace” and a private residence at the back. The former was used to host guests. The residence also had gardens, stables, quarters for the staff and more. A year before his death, his son sold the “palace” to Mont-de-Piété, while the residence would remain in the Curtius family until the 19th century. After a long industrial career, Jean Curtius died on 13 July 1628 in Liérganes, Spain.

PROOFHOUSES

After receiving complaints about the quality of the arms being produced in Liège, the prince-bishop, Maximilien-Henri de Bavière, issued a decree on 10 May 1672. This made it mandatory to test the barrel of all firearms. This had to be performed in a public place and by a certified tester. The Perron icon, a symbol of the city, was awarded. This test would align with Napoleon’s decree of 14 December 1810. This established the process and the operating conditions for the proofhouses. Today, the proofhouse in Liège is still in operation and is still mandatory for all kinds of firearms.

FABRIQUE NATIONALE D'ARMES DE GUERRE

On 15 October 1888, a group of manufacturers from Liège created the public limited company called “Les fabricants d’armes réunis”. Their goal was to win a tender to supply the Belgian army with Mauser-style repeating rifles. The company launched its activities in 1889. It was called Fabrique Nationale d’armes de guerre. A factory was built in Herstal to house the various equipment needed to fulfil this significant order. In 1898, the FN joined forces with John Moses Browning, a renowned inventor with a litany of achievements, and became the world leader in automatic weapons, particularly pistols. During World War II, the FN was taken over by German troops. Its activities would not resume until the conflict had ended. Today, the FN Herstal group is recognised the whole world over for the quality of its products.

weapons-manufacturing plants like those in the United States. After Belgium earned its independence, the country was once again neutral and restored its ties with all of the potential markets. Liège achieved incredible success in 1860, as the leading city in the world for arms manufacturing.

During World War I, the occupying German forces demanded the closure of arms factories

In the period between the two wars, the gun-making industry in Liège did what it could to get back on its feet, despite rising salaries, difficulties in recruiting labour and increased competition. However, the economic crisis of 1929 threw the gun-making industry into crisis.

Though the re-arming of European armies in 1935 breathed new life into it in the run-up to World War II, this would leave a lasting legacy in the sector, which would need several years to recover. This gave rise to increasingly standardised production.

Since then, wars, changes in society, workers’ rights and social advances, as well as anti-war movements, have caused many shifts in this field. However, arms manufacturing in Liège is still one of the cornerstones of the Walloon economy today.



Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre (Herstal), circa 1900
© University of Liège



THE ARMS MUSEUM COLLECTION

The Arms Museum, which was opened in 1885 through the work of Pierre-Joseph Lemille, a local arms manufacturer, and the municipal authorities, is one of the oldest museums in the city. In the beginning, its goal was to collect as many portable firearms as possible from all over the world, in order to show industry professionals the work of the finest gunsmiths in the world. With time and countless acquisitions, the museum collection became one of the largest of its kind in the world; in addition to portable firearms, civilian weapons and military guns, it gradually expanded to blades, defensive weapons, weapons from the fur trade, ammunition, medals and other badges, etc. Located in Jean Curtius' "palace" since September 2018, the museum showcases approximately 600 exceptional pieces in its civilian weapons department, tracing the history of weapons from the 16th century to the 21st century. These attest to the expert craftsmanship of the Liège armoury, which still enjoys an exceptional international reputation to this day.





DOUBLE-BARREL WHEELLOCK PISTOL BELONGING TO LOUIS XIII

King Louis XIII of France developed a keen interest in science, art and crafts from a very young age, as well as an interest in weapons and military exercises. A jack of all trades, he alternated between mechanics and gunsmithing, among other things. The king also possessed an exceptional collection of weapons, which were carefully maintained by the best French gunsmiths from this period. His weapons chest was the most imposing part of the royal collections; the pieces that it houses today attest to the king's military education.

The official mechanic to Louis XIII, Jean le Bourgeois, who was originally from Lisieux in Normandy, was hired, along with his brothers, Pierre and Marin, to care for the clocks, firearms and other intricate machinery in the royal collections. He would have produced this pistol sometime around 1610. The weapon, which comprises two barrels that are held together by a metal ring – as opposed to welding – was low calibre for that time. Its finish suggests that it was not intended for the battlefield. Its intricate carvings and decorations make it a piece of art and a collector's item. Stolen in the 19th century, this weapon came to the collections of the Arms Museum through private collectors.



PISTOL BELONGING TO NICOLAS NOËL BOUTET

Born in Paris in 1761, Nicolas Noël Boutet was recognised as the best gunsmith of his time.

Renowned for the mechanical and decorative perfection of his output, he established a career as a gunsmith to King Louis XVI, before becoming the artistic director responsible for manufacturing carbines in Versailles in 1792. In 1798, he became the general manager responsible for manufacturing arms and the repair workshops in France. Boutet produced elegant and reliable weapons until his death in 1833. His decorative repertory included references to the contemporary penchant for antiquity. He was preoccupied with quality and design and surrounded himself with exceptional craftsmen, including talented silver smiths, in order to produce masterpieces of gunsmithing.

VERSAILLES WEAPON FACTORY

Inaugurated in 1793, this workshop, which manufactured weapons of war, was established in the Aile du Midi in the Palace of Versailles. Upon its creation, manufacturing was overseen by Nicolas-Noël Boutet. This factory would produce a 1793 model carbine rifle, which was used by armies and referred to as "An III carbine". However, the factory produced various kinds of weapons, such as rifles, carbines, sabre-briquets and muskets. Weapons of honour and ceremonial weapons were also produced there. The decoration, chiselling and gold-plating of these weapons was exceptionally intricate, making them true treasures.



GUN COLLECTION FROM THE EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE IN PARIS IN 1889

The Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889 was divided across 50 hectares, stretching from Champ de Mars, Trocadéro and Esplanade des Invalides. Though the highlight of the exhibition was undoubtedly the Eiffel Tower, which was made to celebrate the centenary of the French Revolution, the Palais de la Guerre was held at Esplanade des Invalides. This pavilion, which had a 150-metre-long façade, opened with a portico in the shape of the Arc de Triomphe and brought together an impressive collection of weapons. The Palais des Industries Diverses also devoted one of its galleries to portable weapons. This majestic gallery showcased hunting rifles, swords, foils and pocket revolvers, though it was somewhat overshadowed by the neighbouring exhibition. New models from major French manufacturers were also presented there, including an early system that armed itself automatically and flat pocket revolvers that resembled wallets.

During this Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889, Belgium showcased a section that was devoted to various industries at Avenue du Bourdonnais. Every industry wanted to be represented, including lace

THE GEERINCKX HOUSE

In the 1860s, Geerinckx, a Liège-born gunsmith, moved to 93 Boulevard Montparnasse in Paris. His work was renowned for the quality of the mechanisms and the plain finish of the parts. The "Almanachs de l'étranger à Paris" note that this gunsmith was one of the few who still manufactured his guns and rifles entirely in Paris. In addition to producing guns, Geerinckx had a firing range, that is, a place where shooters could stand and shoot at a training target.

manufacturers from Mechelen, glass makers, individuals engaged in bodywork, cabinet makers and furriers. A section devoted to civilian and military weapons was found opposite the English pavilion. Hunting rifles, revolvers, daggers and hunting knives drew interest in this gallery.

This gun collection won the gold medal at the 1889 exhibition.



LE RAPIDE

Designed by a Belgian priest, Father Roland, who designed arms in his free time, this hunting rifle is known as a "sound concentrator". An adjustable ring is fitted on the end of the barrels. It reduces the impact of the detonation and makes it possible to focus the spray of small pellets. This reduces the extent to which they scatter and increases their range. A precursor to modern "choke" and "silencer" systems, this device was primarily used for military weapons and high-calibre artillery pieces. .



ANSON AND DEELEY RIFLE

In 1875, British-born William Anson and John Deeley, both of whom were employed by Westley-Richards in Birmingham, revolutionised the gunsmithing industry by proposing an alternative to the traditional lock mechanism. This simplified percussion mechanism, which did not have exterior dogs, would become known as the "Anson & Deeley system". Both of these ingenious hammerless batteries (which means they have no exterior dogs) – which is armed via the balance of the barrels – comprised a mere five parts, all of which are simple and sturdy: the dog (which bears the cocking hammer), the main "V" spring, the cocking lever, the trigger and the trigger spring. When opening the weapon, the forearm lug drives the cocking lever. This, in turn, causes the dog to rotate, which shifts and presses on the spring. When it shifts, the dog is pulled back by the trigger, meaning the weapon is ready to fire. Pulling the trigger causes it to shift on its axis and release the dog. This is pushed by its spring and strikes the prime in the cartridge.



BROWNING B25 ENGRAVED BY FÉLIX FUNKEN

In 1897, the Fabrique Nationale d'armes de guerre in Herstal sent its commercial director on a trip to the United States, where he learned about new techniques that were used to manufacture bikes. While there, he met with the famed inventor and gunsmith John Moses Browning, who was known for the twenty technical patents that had been rewarded to Winchester, as well as his principle of gas recovery, which he applied to the early prototypes for machine guns that were developed by Colt. During this meeting, Browning offered the FN director a licence to manufacture the new automatic 7.65 mm x 17 mm) pistol, which he had just developed. This was the beginning of a fertile industrial collaboration.

Shortly before his death in 1926, Browning completed work on his final masterpiece: the B25 rifle. This was the first rifle with over-under barrels in the history of hunting weapons. Its percussion mechanism was located at the centre of the weapon. The technical principle behind this weapon brings together the inventor's years of experience and expertise. Browning anticipated the needs of hunters at the time and understood that practitioners preferred a single plane when aiming and a single selective trigger. This weapon, which has been manufactured in Belgium since 1931, experienced great commercial success and continues to do so.

FÉLIX FUNKEN

In the aftermath of World War I, the Fabrique Nationale created a new department to handle the many orders for aesthetically appealing hunting weapons. This department was entrusted to Félix Funken, whose talents as an engraver had already attracted acclaim. This engraving workshop brought significant growth; by the end of the 1960s, it employed nearly 180 engravers.

Félix Funken made a major contribution to the reputation of the FN's hunting weapons; furthermore, he majorly revitalised the range of motifs that were engraved on weapons. The pieces signed by him are characterised by a predilection for classic English trends (acanthus leaves and hunting scenes). In particular, he drew from Art Deco. Funken was directly inspired by contemporary architectural lines when decorating this B25. Produced for the "1939 Liège International Exhibition of Water Techniques", the artisan decorated the butt of this hunting rifle with a series of lines that evoke rippling waves on the water.



MAUSER-STYLE BOLT-ACTION CARBINE

The bolt-action mechanism describes the movable breech on the barrel of a weapon, which is opened and closed manually via a steel handle. This is resistant to high pressures, thanks to the use of modern cartridges, which make it possible to hermetically seal the barrel on the cartridge. This causes the bullet, the flame and the combustion gas to move towards the front of the barrel. After shooting, the breech is opened by rotating the handle from 60 to 90°, making it possible to eject the empty case, cock the cocking hammer and release a new cartridge from the magazine. This is found beneath the breech. The bolt-action mechanism, which was developed by Paul Mauser, came to the fore in the early 20th century as the standard.

MAUSER WAFFENFABRIK

In 1867, Wilhelm and Paul Mauser designed the first rifle loaded by a rotating breech for the royal arms factory in Oberndorf, Lower Saxony. After the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, this model – the Gewehr 71 – was adopted by the German army. While working on repeating rifles, Paul Mauser developed an incredible range of weapons, including the Gewehr 93 model, which would achieve international success. Five years later, he created his masterpiece: the Gewehr 98. Its bolt-action system caused a considerable increase in sales by the German company. Following this commercial success, the Mauser brothers' factory was sold to the Loewe industrial group. This was one of the largest consortiums of gunsmiths in the world and even took over FN Herstal for a time.



BORCHARDT C-93

The first truly effective semi-automatic pistol in the history of handguns, the Borchardt C-93 was designed by Hugo Borchardt, an engineer, in 1893. He was working for Ludwig Loewe, a Germany company, at the time. The shape of this weapon was unusual for this time and it brings together technological innovations, such as the minor recoil of the barrel and the handle, which holds an ejectable magazine. Though this weapon was not widespread, due to its size and poor ergonomics, it served as a precursor to later models, such as the Luger P08 and Luger Parabellum, which were used by the German army during both world wars. Designed by Georg Luger, who improved upon the general balance of Hugo Borchardt's weapon, this semi-automatic weapon was an incredible success with both civilians and the military when it was released five years later, becoming an instant classic.



GLOCK

Founded by Gaston Glock in 1963, the Austrian-based Glock rose to prominence in the 1980s, thanks to its mass production of a new kind of semi-automatic pistol: the Glock. Today, it is considered to be one of the most effective and reliable handguns in the world. The company has been particularly innovative, with Glock being the first to integrate polymers into the production process for one of their pistols: the Glock 17. In addition to exceptional ergonomics, the use of these synthetic thermoplastics made it possible to produce a lighter weapon that is less prone to corrosion and has a less intense recoil, thanks to the flexibility of the material. Fitted with a large magazine, Glock pistols are also fitted with an original safety system: a small lever on the trigger must be pressed in order to pull it. As a result, if the weapon is triggered quickly, the shot cannot be fired “accidentally” without first pressing this lever. Genuinely revolutionary from a technical standpoint, Glock pistols have enjoyed – and continue to enjoy – phenomenal commercial success.



PISTOL WITH JUXTAPOSED BARRELS

Pistols appeared as early as the 16th century. They initially had a matchlock system, followed by a wheellock and then a flintlock system. In approximately 1610, French gunsmith Marin le Bourgeois, who worked in the workshops at the Louvre under the patronage of Louis XIII, invented the classic flintlock system. This was the final, most advanced version of the various flint-based mechanisms. Loading the propellant powder was a dangerous task. It was loaded through the muzzle of the gun via a powder flask, prior to the use of wadding. The large handle was often equipped with a heavy metal pommel known as a "cap". This could be used as a mace after the pistol had been fired once. However, in rare cases, some of these pistols were equipped with multiple juxtaposed barrels. In this case, each barrel had its own flintlock mechanism, so that several shots could be fired in a row.

IN THE MOVIES... PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

The "Pirates of the Caribbean" series, which comprises five films, charts the peak period for piracy in that region. Over the course of two centuries (between 1520 and 1720, approximately) piracy did indeed develop in the Caribbean, to the detriment of the Spanish colonial empire, which controlled the region that was called "New Spain". Fleets loaded with a year's worth of silver production were prime targets for these fearsome adventurers. Pirates, buccaneers, filibusters and other privateers equipped themselves with flintlock pistols that were relatively easy to handle and boarded ships that were lagging behind the others.



DERRINGER

The Derringer is a type of small pocket pistol, which was designed and developed by Henri Deringer, an American gunsmith based in Philadelphia. He gave this type of gun his name and manufactured it between 1835 and 1868. The original Derringer percussion pistols had an inscription with his name and their production location (Philadelphia). In fact, many copies were subsequently marketed by other manufacturers using this name. As a result, this name has come to be applied to any pistol of this kind. However, these manufacturers often spelled it incorrectly, with two "r"s instead of one. This resulted in the incorrect spelling being widespread today (*Derringer). While Henri Deringer's model only allowed the pistol to be fired once before it needed to be reloaded, most subsequent models added a second chamber and barrel, in order to allow two shots (double Deringer). This type of weapon, an original model produced by Henri Deringer himself, was used to assassinate the American president, Abraham Lincoln, in 1865.



IN THE MOVIES...

GANGS OF NEW-YORK

Amsterdam Vallon, the son of a priest, witnessed the death of his father in a confrontation in New York in 1846. This clash was between a group of Americans of English descent and a group of Irish immigrants. Once he reaches adulthood, he aims to avenge his father's death. Upon uniting the Irish people in his neighbourhood, he confronts Bill the Butcher, his father's murderer. The film is set in the notorious Five Points neighbourhood in Manhattan, a place where life is violent and fraught with difficulties. Gangs make the law and plunge the neighbourhood into a bloodbath, notably through the use of very discrete Derringer pistols.

THE SCOTTISH SYSTEM

Around 1700, small pocket pistols came onto the scene. Here, these were known as "Scottish" due to their British roots. Most are characterised by one or more screw barrels, which made it possible to load them from the rear of the breech. Other pistols look the same, but have a classic fixed barrel. As a result, these must be loaded via the muzzle. These pistols originally used a flintlock mechanism and would change in line with subsequent technical advances. "Scottish" pistols were manufactured in Liège, in particular, until the early 20th century.

EXPRESS CARBINE: THE SAFARI CARBINE

Safaris (a term originating in Swahili) originally involved exploratory trips to African lands. However, starting in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, colonists from all over Europe, who were arriving en masse, found a new "hobby": big-game hunting expeditions. The term "safari" thus took on a new meaning... Colonists soon created the first "reserves" to limit subsistence hunting by local populations and attract Western hunting enthusiasts. In terms of African animals, the lion, leopard, Cape buffalo and, above all, the elephant and rhino are the preferred targets and are known as the "big five". In order to facilitate the hunting of these impressive creatures, powerful weapons that fired high-calibre bullets, thanks to large amounts of powder, were manufactured. Some of these produced an impact that is capable of stopping wild animals in their tracks, as well as animals with thick skin. At this time, many dual hunting carbines, which were equipped with a central percussion system and known as "Express carbines", were thus manufactured using the same principle that was used to produce classic double-barrel rifles. However, these were mounted on robust, reinforced butts. This carbine was designed to withstand the extreme conditions of the savannah (very intense heat, etc.). The colour of the barrel was achieved using a marbling technique, the result of a chemical and thermal treatment that produced soft steel inside the barrel and very hard steel on the outside.

IN THE MOVIES... JUMANJI

Jumanji is a jungle-based adventure game. It might seem like a standard board game; however, the messages written on each space come to life. Lions, rhinos and face-tious monkeys escape from the game. Van Pelt, a poacher known as the mad hunter who comes from the game, is armed with a high-calibre safari carbine and wears a pith helmet and safari jacket.



WINCHESTER CARBINE

In 1860, the engineer Benjamin Tyler Henry, who was the technical director of Winchester at the time, developed the Henry rifle. This was the first reliable and functional repeating rifle and the precursor to all Winchester carbines. This manual repetition is performed using the trigger guard lever. The metal reserve cartridges are contained in a tube-shaped magazine under the barrel. A few years later, in 1864, a violent conflict broke out between Benjamin Tyler Henry and Oliver Winchester. Henry left the company for good as a result. Once the Civil War had drawn to a close, Oliver Winchester took over and asked one of his best workers, Nelson King, to perfect the Henry rifle and turn it into the first Winchester carbine. This would become the Model 1866, also known as the "Yellow Boy", due to the use of gilded bronze on the breech casing. The next rifle, the Winchester 1873, which came with various improvements, was named "The Gun that Won the West". These guns were a resounding success and did in fact become synonymous with the conquest of the West.

IN THE MOVIES...

BUFFALO BILL

Raised by a family that opposed slavery, William Frederick Cody led a life full of adventure, participating in the Native American wars and riding for the Pony Express, the service used to quickly deliver post. He was nicknamed "Buffalo Bill" for supplying workers who were building the Kansas Pacific railway with buffalo. He was immortalised by Ned Buntline, who narrated his adventures in dime novels and a travelling theatre show that recreated the feel of the American West. Like Winchester carbines, Buffalo Bill is a prevailing icon of the Far West, fuelling the imagery used in western movies.



WALTHER PPK

Produced by the German company Carl Walther starting in 1929, the semi-automatic Walther PP (Polizei Pistole) pistol quickly achieved incredible success. The key to its success lies in its small size, its simple mechanism, which is directly activated by the recoil, and the reliability of its innovative safety system, which made it possible to carry the loaded pistol safely. The pistol was highly regarded by European police and was widely used by the German army during World War II. Furthermore, starting in 1931, the Walther PPK (Polizei Pistole Kurz) began production. This more compact version had a light alloy frame.

IN THE MOVIES...

JAMES BOND

James Bond, a fictional character created by Ian Fleming in 1953, is also known by his code name, 007. He is an agent of the Secret Intelligence Service, the United Kingdom's foreign intelligence organisation. In the opus "Dr. No", which was released in 1962, Major Boothroyd, the man responsible for technical equipment and, in particular, weaponry, manages to convince Bond to give up his Beretta at M's request, since it is seen as a woman's weapon. He replaces it with a Walther PPK. This compact pistol is an undeniable asset to James Bond and can easily be carried in a holster beneath his tuxedo jacket without arousing suspicion! The Walther PPK became an icon of the James Bond series and, despite disappearing for a few films, was used by the famous secret agent again in "Quantum of Solace" and "Spectre".



COLT M1911 PISTOL

Designed by John Moses Browning, the M1911 semi-automatic pistol is also known as the "Automatic Colt Pistol (ACP)", or the "Colt 45". This is due to the unique calibre of the ammunition that could be chambered in the original model (.45 ACP). This high-calibre weapon fires eight shots (seven cartridges in the magazine and one in the barrel chamber) and produces a significant recoil when fired. This model was soon adopted by the American Armed Forces, who wanted a pistol that was sturdy, easy to handle and reliable. They would use it for 74 years – between 1911 and 1985 – notably during both world wars. To this day, many American gun enthusiasts consider this gun to be the best semi-automatic pistol on the market. This once again proves Browning's genius – if proof was still needed! Furthermore, the updated version from 1926 – the M1911A1 – was widely used during the Korean War and the Vietnam War and is still used by certain branches of the American army, as well as organisations like the FBI and SWAT.

IN THE MOVIES... PULP FICTION

A 1994 gangster movie from Quentin Tarantino, this film recounts three parallel stories. The protagonists are Vincent Vega and Jules Winnfield, two hit men who are hired by Marsellus Wallace. Armed with their chrome-coated Colt 45s, they bounce between assassinations and off-kilter conversations.



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