

He Invented the Gun That Helped Tame the Frontier

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

NINETY-NINE years ago this month—on February 25, 1836, to be exact—there was issued in Washington, D. C., a patent for an invention which probably attracted little attention at the time, but which was destined to be a maker of American history. During the next three quarters of a century it would not only become a common name (analogous in usage to Pullman for a sleeping car and Ford for an automobile) but it would also be an important factor in taming the American frontier and revolutionizing military tactics.

That last is a quotation from the recent biography of the man to whom the patent was issued—"Yankee Arms Maker—the Incredible Career of Samuel Colt," written by Jack Rohan and published by Harper and Brothers. For the invention which was patented just a century ago was the revolver, the most successful firearm of its kind in history.

Connected with Samuel's Colt's revolver are two interesting paradoxes. One of them is that this weapon, which would become so much a symbol of the "Wild West," was produced by a native of one of the oldest-settled parts of the East. The other is that it, an instrument in the conquest of a wild land, had its real genesis at sea.

Samuel Colt was born in Hartford, Conn., July 19, 1814, the third son of Christopher and Sarah (Caldwell) Colt. His mother was a daughter of Maj. John Caldwell, a veteran of the Revolution. The fact that she was the daughter of a soldier and therefore had no prejudices against firearms probably had much to do with her son's early interest in guns. At the age of eleven Sam Colt was indentured to a farmer near Glastonbury and during his service there two factors had a decided influence in shaping his future career.

The only books in this farm home were the Bible, the almanac and a volume known as the "Compendium of Knowledge." Young Colt spent most of his spare time reading the latter. In it he found considerable scientific information—an extended account of the work of Robert Fulton, "inventor" of the steamboat, an article describing the galvanic battery and a formula for making gunpowder.

Even more important, however, was the time he spent during his errands to the village store where, according to his biographer, "cracker-barrel philosophers weighed the destiny of the republic. The outstanding doings of the Revolution were still being discussed. From men who had the story from their fathers when it was fresh news; from the recollections of old men who had been on the ground, Sam heard the legends of the shooting of General Fraser, at Saratoga, by Tim Murphy, and of other marvelous deeds Murphy had performed with his double-barreled rifle. Wide-eyed with intelligent interest, the lad often listened to speculation as to the casualties that might have been inflicted had the whole Continental army been armed with like weapons. If some nation could invent a gun that would shoot five or six times without reloading, that nation would rule the world, in the opinion of the Glastonbury military observers. But of course the thing was impossible. Sam, listening mouse-like as he waited for the storekeeper to put up his order, missed nothing of what was said.

"Analyzing the discussions at his leisure, he discovered that Robert Fulton and several other inventors had accomplished things deemed impossible—until they were done. He concluded that the local forum's opinion on repeating firearms might not, after all, be infallible. He decided he would be an inventor and create the 'impossible' gun."

Thus was the germ of the idea planted in the Yankee boy's mind. It developed a little farther a year later when he went to work in his father's textile plant at Ware, Mass. There he had access to various chemicals and the opportunity to borrow tools of all kinds from the millwrights. Expanding upon the idea of Tim Murphy's double rifle, he bound four barrels together and tried to make them revolve so that each, in turn, would come under the lock and fire. But more often than not all four fired at once so he had to give it up as a bad job.

Next he was apprenticed to a Captain Spaulding of the brig "Coro" which was sailing from Boston on a voyage to Calcutta, India. Young Sam wasn't especially thrilled over life as a sailor but he did enjoy watching some of the old salts carve odd little knick-knacks out of wood. While he had been employed in the textile factory at Ware, he had made the acquaintance of a young mechanic named Elisha K. Root who had explained to him the value of making working drawings and then wooden models of some of the things he was trying to invent.

Watching the sailors carve, Sam remembered Root's advice about models and set about learning to carve. "He acquired considerable proficiency, but when the voyage was half over he was without any idea on how to construct a model," says Rohan. But one day in the Indian ocean a real inspiration came to him.

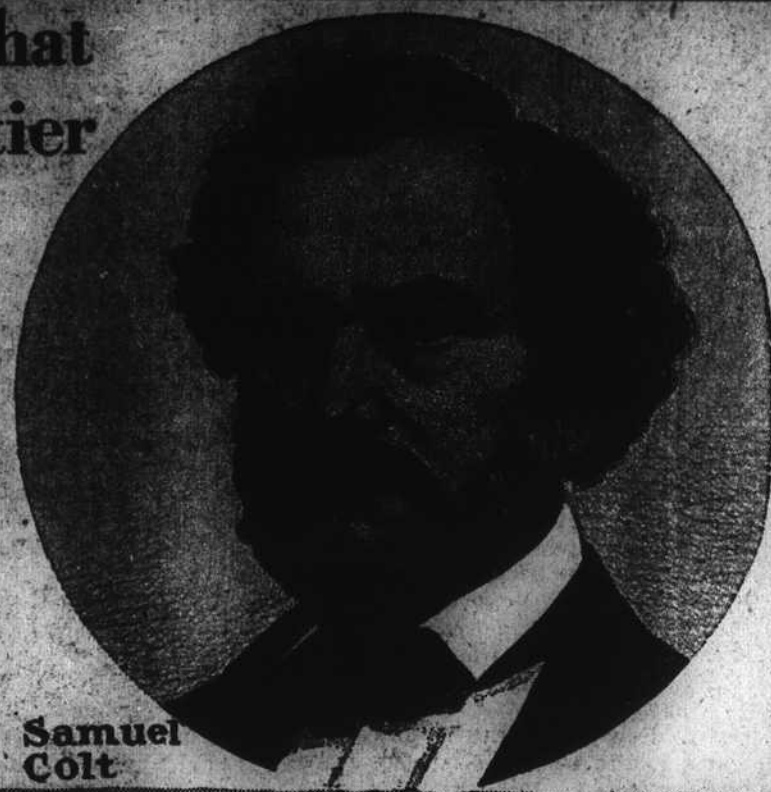
"Standing idly watching the steersman, he noticed that, regardless of which way the wheel was spun, each spoke always came directly in line with a clutch that could be set to hold it. He watched for a long time and finally caught himself yarning holes in the rim—holes which successively came in alignment with a stationary aperture—which the young inventor's imagination identified as the bore of a pistol. The revolver was conceived! Sam had found the key for his leisure. With the jackknife that cost less than a dollar, he started to whittle out the foundation of a fortune which was to run into millions!"

By the time the voyage was over he had a working model of his revolver, complete in every detail and satisfactory in performance. Upon his return home he showed his invention to his father, who caught his son's enthusiasm, promised to finance the making of two revolvers and to pay for obtaining the patents if they worked as successfully as Sam said they would.

However, the gunsmiths whom Christopher Colt engaged to make the revolvers looked upon the idea as "boyish nonsense and thoroughly unworkable." Also, they wanted to charge so much for their work that the elder Colt's enthusiasm cooled and he decided not to waste much money on the guns. So he engaged an ordinary mechanic to do the work. He turned out a crude piece of workmanship which was far from being a faithful reproduction of young Sam's idea. The result was that one of the revolvers wouldn't fire at all and the other burst at the first shot.

Discouraged by this experience, young Sam told his father that he would never rest until he had secured a competent gunsmith, who could do the precise fitting and delicate adjusting necessary to a revolver, and had given his invention to him. So he went back to work in his father's textile mill, hoping to save enough money to employ a gunsmith who could do it.

As a result Colt was able to sell a considerable number of revolvers to the army and navy.



Samuel Colt



The Cavalry Charge

BY FREDERIC REMINGTON

All pictures shown above, from Rohan's "Yankee Arms Maker—the Incredible Career of Samuel Colt," courtesy, Harper and Brothers, publishers.

clusively to the War department their value as weapons for our soldiers. Another significant event at about this time was Colt's meeting with Capt. Sam H. Walker, a famous Texas Ranger leader, who had come to Washington with a delegation of frontiersmen to urge the admission of the new Republic of Texas as a state in the federal Union.

Up to this time Colt had been making a .34 caliber revolver but out of his conference in New York with Walker came the .45 caliber Walker-Colt which soon became a favorite weapon on the southwest frontier. A few years later this gun became even more significant in that part of the country.

By the time Texas was admitted to the Union in 1845 war between Mexico and the United States was inevitable. President Polk sent a force under Gen. Zachary Taylor to the Rio Grande to "protect" the new state against its former rulers, the Mexicans. When a detachment of American cavalry was ambushed by a Mexican patrol, its commander, a Captain Thornton, was the only man who escaped and he had shot his way to freedom with a brace of Colt revolvers.

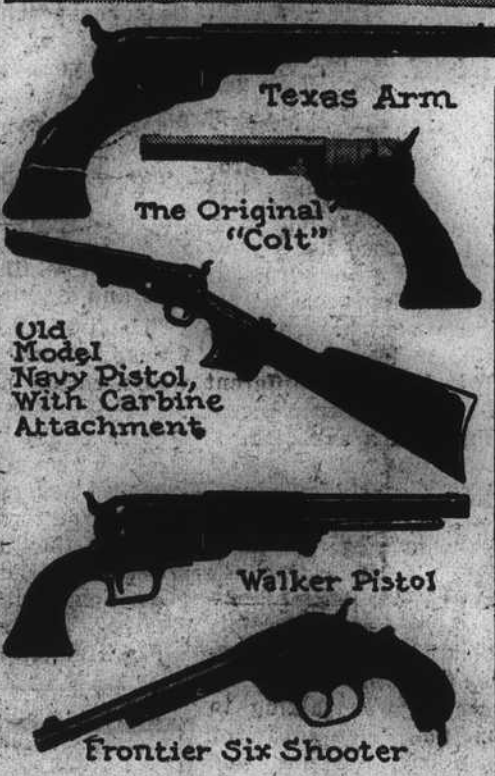
General Taylor was impressed by this fact and asked for more information about these weapons. Capt. Sam Walker of the Rangers, who was guarding Taylor's lines of communications, told the general that the only thing wrong with the revolvers was that there were not enough of them. Thereupon Taylor sent Walker to Washington to make known this need to the President and the result was an order on Colt for 1,000 of his revolvers, which he at once supplied. More than that he put over as clever a publicity campaign as any modern press agent ever thought of doing.

"It was not the sales of his revolvers to the army that made Sam Colt," says Rohan. "It was the manner in which he capitalized the victories of the Americans over numerically superior forces. The revolvers in use at Resaca de la Palma, Monterey and Buena Vista were few and far between. But those few, when Sam Colt got to spreading the story around the world, accounted for the defeat of the Mexicans. And the latter, glad of any excuse for their humiliation, cheerfully corroborated his claim!"

If the Mexican war gave Sam Colt his first real start, the War Between the States sent his enterprise booming toward the pinnacle of success. The extent of that conflict soon called for production of the new weapon on a bigger scale than ever before. In 1861 the Colt factories turned out nearly 70,000 revolvers. The next year production jumped to more than 110,000. But the inventor did not live to see the amazing success of the thing which he had whittled out of wood on the brig "Coro." He died January 10, 1862, but others carried on his work.

When the war ended and Americans set about to conquer the last frontier, Colt's invention became increasingly important in that conquest. It hung at the hip of virtually every horseman of the plains, whether Texas Ranger, trooper in the United States army, cowboy, frontier marshal or outlaw. It barked in cavalry charges against the wild tribesmen of the Comanche, the Sioux and the Cheyenne; its roar was heard in many a frontier dance hall and saloon in the cow towns on the Texas cattle trails. It became not only a synonym for a certain type of firearm and a common name, but it also became a symbol of the reign of law in a lawless land. "Judge Colt" was judge, jury and executioner and a man's life depended upon the quickness of the "draw."

That era ended just 30 years after Sam Colt died. One event was significant of its close. Into the little town of Coffeyville, Kan., one day in 1892, rode the Daltons. When one of the hottest street battles ever fought in the West was over, the Daltons, last of the old-time bandit gangs, had been wiped out. The "Wild West" was no more. Incidentally, among the weapons found in the streets of Coffeyville that day was the Colt "frontier six-shooter" which is pictured above and which hangs on the wall of the room in which this article is being written.



mechanic, to set up a gunshop in Baltimore and begin making samples of his revolvers.

He also interested his father in the project again and the result was a trip to Europe where he secured patents on his weapon in England, Prussia and France. Returning to America he borrowed \$800 from his father and went to Washington where on February 25, 1836, his historic patent was granted. Then he set about organizing a corporation to manufacture and market his weapon and on March 5, 1836, the New Jersey legislature chartered the "Patent Arms Manufacturing company" of Paterson.

But despite this triumphal culmination of the young Yankee's efforts to create the "impossible gun," his future path to success was a rocky one. There were quarrels with his relatives over the management of the company in which they had invested their money, there were all sorts of financial troubles, struggles with competitors, lawsuits over patent infringements and other difficulties for this pioneer industrial enterprise.

To the student of the history of American business and industry this new biography of Samuel Colt is interesting because it shows that he "was the first of the great American industrialists. Colt, not the modern motor car manufacturer, conceived and first utilized standardized machine production, division of labor and the assembly line."

"He was one of the first, if not the first, large-scale employer to assume responsibility for the well-being of his employees. Colt showed the way to the modern promoters of wars . . . he was the precursor of the modern munitions kings—a pioneer in the art of playing one nation against another to increase his sales."

Equally interesting is the part which his weapon played in the military history of this country and more particularly in the history of the frontier. Unable to conjure "moss-backed brass bats" in the War department that his revolver and his revolving rifle were superior to the smooth-bore musket and single-shot horse pistol to which they were devoted, he next tried to get the Navy department to adopt them. But again he was unsuccessful. Then the panic year of 1837 almost wiped out his business.

But an Indian war saved him—the war with the Seminoles in Florida. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, quartermaster general of the army, was in charge of operations against the Seminoles and his second in command was Col. William S. Harney, a fine field officer, who regarded Colt's invention with great favor. Harney realized that "the revolvers were just the arms needed in the peculiar type of war waged by the Indians. The tactics of the Seminoles were simple. They would lie in ambush for the federal soldiers and make a bold attack, drawing the fire from the single-shot muskets. Then, while the soldiers were reloading they would swarm over them with the main Indian force and annihilate them. Troops armed with guns shooting six times would be a sad surprise to the Indians and Colonel Harney was soldier enough to know it."

Sweet Sixteen

By MICHAEL SAUNDERS

ROBERT FRASER, JR., sat down abruptly. He could feel the symptoms coming on again. Spots before his eyes. His heart beating like a trip-hammer. He had to do something quickly or else suffer the consequences. He reached for pen and paper and wrote rapidly:

Dear Cora:

I love you in spite of everything, Bob.

Then came the long wait. On the first day, he whistled. On the second day, he sang. On the third, he whistled and sang. On the fourth, he was off key whether he whistled or sang. On the fifth, he was off to inquire at the dead-letter office. On the sixth, it came. A purple envelope with a heavenly lavender scent. He almost swooned when he read it.

Dear Bob: Your handwriting was so atrocious that I could not read a word of your letter. Won't you come over and say in words what you have written? I live only one block away, you know. Cora.

To go or not to go, that was the question. The last time he had visited Cora, he had offered to fix the radio for her father. Mr. Conway was one of those radio fanatics who far, far into the night keep their ears glued to the speaker as they dial for distant stations. It had taken one hour of perspiration before Bob had stepped back and declared the set as good as new, if not better. Mr. Conway then had turned on the switch and given the dial just one twist. Pop! And all the radio tubes had exploded. So had Mr. Conway. It had not been the well-placed kick that Bob had been indignant about; it had been the injury to his pride.

What to do? The situation obviously called for some masterstroke, some coup d'etat. It was then his eyes lighted on his father's typewriter. Again he composed a letter; this time typewritten in bold, clear, unmistakable words.

Dear Cora: I love you. Bob. Two weeks passed before another lavender letter was placed under his door. He locked himself in his room before he dared open the letter. It was well he did. It read: Dear Mr. Fraser, Jr.:

"Your sentiments of the 27th received and read. We are sorry to state that we are not in the market for such goods. However, we suggest you try your wares elsewhere. We are sure there must be a market for them. Sincerely, Miss Conway. P. S.: How could you! P. P. S.: I never want to see you again.

All right! That was okay with him. From now on, no more women. He would go into the world and make himself famous. Then the whole world would grovel at his feet. Even Cora.

But Bob soon discovered it was a very lonely task. And besides, being office boy in his father's office was not his idea of setting the world on fire.

Three weeks passed, and he was beginning to feel a little discouraged about the whole affair. Perhaps if he left home and started life over again far from home, he would become successful. With this thought in his mind he reached home one night to find a letter awaiting him. One look at the envelope and he went cold all over, and his worst fears were confirmed. It was from Cora's father. His hands trembled as he tore open the envelope.

Dear Bob: Ever since you left, my daughter has taken to moping around the house. That was perfectly satisfactory to me. But lately she has taken to listening to the radio as succor from her sorrow over some nincompoop. She listens to it night and day—the Blighted Romance hour, the Lovelorn program, Bing Crosby, and the Voice of Experience.

Now, if this nincompoop doesn't come over to tear Cora away from this radio so that I can use it once in a while, I'll pay him a visit and whip the everlasting daylight out of him. Thomas Conway. The nincompoop went over.

Ancient News Service

On November 6, 1834, the United States Gazette, of Philadelphia, reprinted election returns from New York morning papers of the same day—the most extraordinary despatch ever forwarded in this or any other country, for so great a distance, save by telegraphic signals." The papers were carried to Amboy, N. J., by steamboat in two hours and twenty-five minutes. From there, the Gazette explained, a locomotive of the partially completed Camden and Amboy railway "preceded to the present termination of the road, 54 miles, in 2 hours and 15 minutes, and with a horse and sulky the remaining five miles were performed in 25 minutes"—total running time, five hours and five minutes.

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PATTERN No. 1787-B



1787-B

A house dress, after all, is a house dress—yet it needn't be "just another house dress," as convincingly demonstrated in this unusually trim and clever design. The V neck front and back is made in a contrasting material and emphasized by the effective use of bright buttons. The short and comfortable set-in sleeves are finished with pointed cuffs, also in contrast and button trimmed. The blouse is gathered to the skirt under a self-fabric belt, and the skirt features a full-length front panel with novel pockets achieved by the distinctive cut of the side pieces. These pieces, pointed and button trimmed, harmonize with the motif used in the collar and cuffs, and there are kick pleats in the front necessary for active household duties.

Choose your favorite cotton—percale, gingham, chambray, or plique—in your most becoming color and make it up in an hour or two.

Barbara Bell Pattern No. 1787-B is available in sizes 14, 16, 18, 20, 40 and 44. Corresponding bust measurements 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42 and 44. Size 16 (34) requires 3 1/2 yards of 35 inch material, and 1/2 yard contrasting. Every Barbara Bell Pattern includes an illustrated instruction guide which is easy to understand.

Barbara Bell Pattern No. 1787-B can be procured for fifteen cents. The Barbara Bell Pattern Book featuring winter designs is ready. Send fifteen cents today for your copy. Send your order to The Sewing Circle Pattern Dept., 247 W. Forty-third St., New York, N. Y. © Bell Syndicate.—WNU Service.

Throw Me a Cable, Captain, and I'll Give You a Tow!

A man in search of a quiet holiday set out in a small sailing boat, his only equipment consisting of provisions and a wireless set. He sailed serenely for several days, until at last he sighted one of those liners which resemble small towns rather than ships, says the London Observer. The appearance of the little boat created excitement on board the liner, which slowed down. The captain was wondering whether it was a matter of going to the rescue when the holiday maker moved to his transmitter and tapped out the message: "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Cornaro Learned Gentle Art of Dying Old at Age of 40

History's outstanding example of the value of hygienic living is Luigi Cornaro, whose serious sickness when he was forty years of age directed his attention to regulating his habits of life. Instead of dying before fifty, as a result of what was considered starvation diet, he lived to be one hundred. In his eighty-fourth year he wrote his celebrated book showing how he had achieved health, high spirits and an unflinching interest in the life of his age.

The Mind Meter

© Bell Syndicate.—WNU Service.

The Syllables Test

In this test there are two columns of syllables. Take a syllable out of the first column and unite it with one in the second column to form a word. When you are finished, you should have ten words.

First Column	Second Column
1. ros	1. tues
2. pal	2. lee
3. na	3. cord
4. prem	4. rel
5. let	5. nar
6. cou	6. try
7. col	7. lect
8. con	8. tram
9. bar	9. pon
10. bur	10. sal

Answers

1. rostrum	6. coupon
2. paltry	7. concert
3. nasal	8. collect
4. premise	9. barrel
5. lettuce	10. burzar

Jiffy Knit Sweater With Matching Hat

PATTERN No. 5513

Any four-to-eight-year-old will be warm as toast in this sweater and cap set. The sweater's a "jiffy" knit—just plain knitting combined with yoke and sleeves of easy lacy stitch, and finished almost before you know it. The cap done in a straight strip, gathered at the top, also includes these two stitches, adding a pom-pom for good measure. Choose a colorful yarn, and there'll be no "insisting" she wear it!

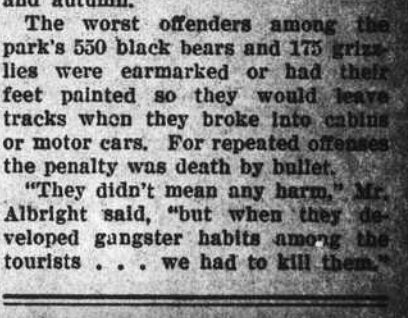
In pattern 5512 you will find complete instructions for making the set shown in sizes 4, 6 and 8 (all given in one pattern); an illustration of it and of the stitches needed; material requirements.

Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) to The Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 250 W. Fourteenth St., New York, N. Y.



Yellowstone Bears Develop Gangster Habits; Are Shot

With depression, Yellowstone tourists have grown fewer, hotel scraps scarcer, and bears hungrier. In Washington recently Director Horace Marden Albright announced that the National Park service had been forced to kill 40 Yellowstone black bears and one grizzly last summer and autumn. The worst offenders among the park's 530 black bears and 175 grizzlies were earmarked or had their feet painted so they would leave tracks when they broke into cabins or motor cars. For repeated offenses the penalty was death by bullet. "They didn't mean any harm," Mr. Albright said, "but when they developed gangster habits among the tourists . . . we had to kill them."



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