

KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY!

PART 3:

INDUSTRIAL FIREPOWER

THE FIRST ARTICLE IN THIS series took a look at the earliest firearms that emerged on the battlefield. The second article took a look at the advancement of firearms as they overtook bows and crossbows as the preferred ranged weapons on the battlefield. This final article in the series showcases the emergence of the firearm as the dominant form of personal protection thanks to the development of multi-chambered firearms.



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THE REVOLVING REVOLUTION

From the 18th to the mid-19th century, firearms continued to be improved upon to the point that they became the sole weapon of a traveler or soldier thanks to fixed bayonets, improved accuracy, and higher bullet capacities. A soldier with a single revolver could now shoot up to a half-dozen enemies before needing to reload! The sword continued to see use as a cavalry weapon while hand axes and knives were carried more as tools than weapons.

The development of the percussion cap and the subsequent “cap and ball” or “caplock” firearms not only made the weather no longer an issue, but also fostered the development of true multiple capacity firearms. Early caplock firearms were still muzzle-loaded, so the multi-barreled pepperboxes were usually smoothbore weapons. The development of the revolver enabled the shooter to put the bullet directly into the chamber rather than down the barrel, making rifled barrels practical.

Pepperbox and revolver designs proved to be inefficient for rifles and carbines, as the former was too heavy and the latter had the nasty habit of shooting metal slivers into the shooter’s bracing hand. Until the development of rimfire and centerfire cartridges, rifles and carbines would largely remain single-shot weapons.

INDUSTRIAL CAMPAIGNS

All of the firearms in this article have something in common—they were invented long after the face of warfare had changed. Personal body armor was largely a thing of the past, except for ceremonial purposes, and many soldiers didn’t bother carrying melee weapons for protection. Indeed, the nobles and gentry largely replaced their swords with walking sticks.

If the GM wishes to run an industrial setting modeled on the Georgian or Victorian eras, then the firearms in this article become the dominant weapons of the setting. It is up to the GM to decide how far firearms technology has advanced—in America, flintlocks continued to be used right up until the American Civil War; other settings may have pepperboxes but no true revolvers.

In such settings martial characters (fighters, paladins, and rangers) tend towards the Archery, Dueling, and Two-Weapon Fighting fighting styles (archery style applies to all ranged weapon attacks, and a gunfighter with a revolver in each hand makes for a deadly opponent!). If feats are being used in the GM’s campaign, then the new feats at the end of this article should help characters adapt to new tactics.

Note that even prior to this era, many cities and towns passed gun control laws (there’s a reason the Three Musketeers primarily use their rapiers while in Paris) and it’s hardly civilized to walk into a social function with your pistols and rifles. Thus, disguised and easily concealed weapons (weighted walking sticks, hidden daggers, and pocket pistols) are also standard equipment for characters in industrial campaigns.

MAD GENIUSES AND STRANGE INVENTIONS

While the firearms in this third article are certainly more advanced than the typical medieval range of standard fantasy settings, there is still a place for them as a “secret technology” in the hands of alchemists or other genius inventors. Rather than a weapon for the masses, the creation of such firearms are closely guarded secrets and likely only carried by the creature that created them or trusted allies.

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When used in this manner, such firearms are one-of-a-kind artifacts that are difficult to reproduce, especially if the rest of the world lacks firearms or has only developed early versions. Indeed, magic may play a role in the creation of such weapons, as an alchemist or other inventor “cheats” in order to bypass the usual technologies necessary to craft such weapons.

WEAPON PROPERTIES

The following weapon properties new to firearms in this article are described below. Other new properties are described in previous articles in this series.*

Capacity. The firearm contains multiple bullets that may be fired before the weapon needs to be reloaded. When reloading, the creature may choose how many shots to load the firearm with up to its maximum capacity.

Firearms with this property do not need to reload until all shots are fired. Thus, a firearm with the Capacity property may be used to make multiple attacks in a round, but may only be fired once as an action, bonus action, or reaction during the same round in which it is reloaded.

Chain Fire. One problem with early multi-chambered firearms is that the spark of igniting the gunpowder could accidentally ignite all barrels. If a multi-chambered firearm such as a pepperbox or revolver is used in a ranged attack and a 1 is rolled, then the creature must make a chain misfire saving throw. On a roll of 10 to 20 the weapon misfires as normal. On a roll of 1 to 9 the weapon instead suffers a chain misfire, igniting an additional 1d2 chambers. All bullets fire at the same target, but the additional bullets have disadvantage on the roll and automatically miss if the target is beyond the normal range.

* Walt Ciechanowski, Keep Your Powder Dry!: Firearms for Fantasy Campaigns, EN World EN5ider, <https://www.patreon.com/posts/keep-your-powder-7797923>; and Walt Ciechanowski, Keep Your Powder Dry!: Early Modern Firearms, EN World EN5ider, <https://www.patreon.com/posts/keep-your-power-7985372>.

Variant Firearms

As innovation led to variable calibers and multi-shot barrels, there was a lot of experimentation and variation within each type of firearm. Pepperboxes, for example, were usually built with five or six barrels, but some were built with a dozen barrels or more. Similarly, revolvers had ammunition of varying sizes – a small caliber pistol is easier to hold steady when firing, but larger caliber versions pack a bigger punch.

Rather than make an exhaustive list of each possible combination of firearm, those listed on the Weapons Table are “average” versions of their type and should suffice for most purposes. GMs seeking more variation can increase or decrease the die type to represent a larger or smaller round, while a gun that carries more barrels is likely heavier (while still using smaller bullets to decrease the overall weight) and probably draws disadvantage on attack rolls without the use of a rest.



If a chain misfire is used with a revolver, then the gun is also damaged and cannot be used until the gun is repaired with a gun kit during a short rest. If the chain misfire is used with a revolving carbine or rifle, then the creature using it also takes half damage from the extra bullets as they rip through its hand.

Double-Action. The firearm has mechanisms that enable it to fire more quickly. When the wielder uses this weapon to attack as an action, bonus action, or reaction, it may attack twice, but the second attack has disadvantage. Creatures with the Extra Attack or Multiattack feature do not suffer disadvantage on the second attack.

FIREARM DESCRIPTIONS

The following firearms are appropriate to the industrial era.

Carbine. A carbine is simply a musket or rifle with a shorter barrel. It is prevalent amongst cavalry forces as it is easier to fire from horseback than longer firearms. The carbine detailed here is a smoothbore carbine.

Pepperbox Pistol. The most popular multi-shot pistol prior to the introduction of a reliable and safe revolver, the pepperbox pistol uses rotating barrels for each bullet. Due to such rotation, it takes a longer time for a pepperbox pistol to become fouled. With the advent of the revolver the pepperbox still remains popular due to its double-action firing method, but the invention of the double-action revolver ultimately renders the pepperbox moot.

Pepperbox Rifle. This rifle is built with rotating barrels and, due to its heavy weight, is limited to four barrels (although pepperbox rifles built for large or particularly strong creatures may have more barrels).

Pocket Pistol. A pocket pistol is a small, palm-sized firearm that is designed for concealment. The pocket pistol grants advantage on Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) checks when concealing it on one's person. On the downside, pocket pistols have an extremely short effective range and its bullets travel more slowly, doing less damage than a regular pistol. Also, the pocket pistol's compact design limits it to one or two-barreled models.

Revolver. The development of precision parts made it possible for the development of the revolver, which separated the cylinder from the barrel, allowing the creature to rotate the cylinder and greatly reduce the weight of the weapon. The first revolvers, and the one listed here, is a single-action design. Double-action revolvers are much more complex, and often don't exist in settings with "inferior" pepperboxes.

Revolving Carbine and Rifle. The revolving cylinder design was also applied to rifles and carbines, although they were more difficult to use as fragments leaving the chamber tended to impale the creature's secondary hand (as it is in

SIMPLE RANGED WEAPONS

| Name | Cost* | Damage | Weight | Properties** |
|-------------------|--------|---------------|--------|--|
| Carbine | 400 gp | 1d12 piercing | 7 lb. | Ammunition (range 50/150), loading, loud, misfire, two-handed |
| Pepperbox Pistol | 500 gp | 1d10 piercing | 4 lb. | Ammunition (range 20/60), capacity (6), chain fire, double-action, loud |
| Pepperbox Rifle | 650 gp | 2d8 piercing | 12 lb | Ammunition (range 100/400), capacity (4), chain fire, double-action, heavy, loud, two-handed |
| Pocket Pistol | 200 gp | 1d6 piercing | 1 lb. | Ammunition (range 10/30), capacity (2), chain fire, loud |
| Revolver | 600 gp | 2d6 piercing | 3 lb. | Ammunition (range 50/200), capacity (6), chain fire, loud |
| Revolving Carbine | 700 gp | 2d6 piercing | 8 lb. | Ammunition (range 100/400), capacity (6), chain fire, loud, two-handed |
| Revolving Rifle | 800 gp | 2d8 piercing | 9 lb. | Ammunition (range 200/800), capacity (8), chain fire, loud, two-handed |
| Rifle | 500 gp | 2d8 piercing | 9 lb. | Ammunition (range 200/800), loading, loud, misfire, two-handed |

* Costs are for settings where such firearms are commonly available. The GM should feel free to increase the cost if the weapons are sufficiently rare; in some settings they may even be considered priceless "magic" items!

** New properties are described in *Keep Your Powder Dry! Firearms for Fantasy Campaigns*.

front of the chamber holding the barrel). Using a revolving rifle or carbine without some protection on the hand and wrist (a thick glove is enough) causes 1 point of damage to the creature every time it fires the weapon.

Rifle. The rifle is simply a musket with a rifled barrel (an early name for a rifle was a “rifled musket”). Rifles get deadlier with the introduction of the expanding bullet.

EQUIPMENT

All of the equipment and options listed under “Gunpowder and Ammunition” and “Customizing Firearms” in the previous articles is available for the firearms contained in this article. In addition, there are a few new and amended options listed here.

Ammunition, bullet (50). Bullets are getting smaller as firearms technology improves. 3 gp; 1 lb.

Triangular Bayonet. With the ubiquity of socket bayonets during this period, it wasn’t long before someone developed a more effective blade that leaves nastier wounds. The triangular bayonet’s shape leaves irregular punctures that are difficult to heal. A creature using a musket or rifle affixed with a triangular bayonet does 1d8 damage, or 1d10 when wielded with two hands. A creature may also use an un-affixed triangular bayonet on its own, doing 1d6 damage. 5 gp; 1 lb.

NEW FEATS

Greased Lightning

You are exceptionally fast with multi-shot firearms, whether it be your quick aim or your ability to fan the hammer. You gain the following benefits:

- ▶ Add 1 to your Dexterity ability score (maximum of 20).
- ▶ When using a firearm that has a capacity greater than one, then you may treat it as if it has the double-action property.
- ▶ If the firearm already has the double-action property, then you may ignore the disadvantage normally applied to the second shot. You may do this once per round.

Mounted Musketeer

You are a fearsome combatant on horseback. You gain the following benefits:

- ▶ Any mount that you are riding can take the Dash action as a bonus action (otherwise, you would use your action to spur it to Dash).
- ▶ You don’t suffer from disadvantage when making a ranged attack against an opponent within 5 feet of you. 🐾

