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The 1819 North

By David V. Stroud



Top



Left side up, point left

I constantly think about which gun to write about in my *Dispatch* articles, but I never start actually putting pen to paper until a few days before the article is due. I've done this since the first issue of the *Dispatch*, and the editor simply refers to me as "Deadline Dave."

The main reason for my procrastination is the difficulty of obtaining photographs of the specific weapons. Therefore, when I got the email Thursday that my article was due Monday, the time for thinking vanished as I scrambled for gun photos. Hence, the 1891 North. Actually, I have been wanting to do a piece about Simeon North's 1819 since I wrote an article on his Model 1816 flintlock in the *Dispatch* about three years ago. Having photographs at hand cinched the deal.

There are other reasons as well. I've admired flintlocks since seeing Fess Parker as Davy (David) Crockett on the silver screen when I was a youngster. My contention is that Rangers could only arm themselves with current weapons.

The government paid \$8.00 per pistol for 20,000 North 1819s to be issued in pairs. The first 2,000 were delivered in 1820; 7,000 in 1821; 8,000 in 1822; and the remaining 3,000 in 1823.¹

When Stephen F. Austin organized mounted men to "range" the colony and protect the settlers from Indians in 1823, the North 1819 was available. Later Texans probably used this veteran weapon of the Black Hawk, Seminole, and Mexican Wars in their revolution against Mexico in 1835-1836. In fact, *Texian Iliad* has an excellent sketch of a New Orleans Gray in an Alamo room, his back to the wall. He is clutching one of North's

¹ Arcadi Gluckman, *United States Martial Pistols & Revolvers* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1956, 56-57.

1819 flint pistols in his right hand and a Bowie knife in his right.² The New Orleans Grays were two companies of militia organized in that city to fight in Texas during the revolution. One company was in the Alamo.



North lock plate



Script

The popular belief that percussion weapons immediately replaced flints is incorrect. Back in the day, frontiersmen were reluctant to give up their flint friends for the new brass caps. Flint was not only inexpensive (free), but it was also easier to replace than the costly brass caps one had to buy in a settlement. Therefore, flint weapons continued to be used long into the percussion era.

Simeon North's MODEL 1819 flintlock Army pistol is equipped with a .54 caliber, ten-inch, round, smoothbore barrel that fires a half-ounce, spherical, lead ball. Its total length is fifteen and one-half inches, and it weighs two pounds, ten ounces. A single, spring-fastened band holds the barrel in place, and the muzzle is equipped with a knife-like sight near its end. A rear sight is located on the barrel tang and extends down the rounded, swell-shaped, curved-in butt to meet a short branch of the butt cap. The lock plate is flat, beveled in front and rounded at the rear. A sliding safety to hold the hammer at half cock was placed on the exterior of the lock plate behind the hammer. The lock plate is marked "S. North" over an American eagle and shield. The letters "US" are at either side over "MIDLTNCONN" and "1821," which is the date of production. The rear, left top of the barrel is stamped "JDJ," positioned above a "P," which is over "US."

The '19 North's longer, more slender barrel provides better balance, more accuracy, and more symmetry in appearance than the 1816 North. Those factors make it one of the most attractive primary martial flint pistols, and it packs a lot of history.

² Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Iliad: a Military History of the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 124.