U.S. Model 1842 Pistol

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H. Aston & Co.  I.M. Johnson  Palmetto Armory

Exploded Views:

PARTS LEGEND

5. Link screw  15. mainspring  28. Trigger guard plate
6. Left rammer link  16. mainspring screw  29. Trigger guard bow
7. Right rammer link  17. Biddle screw, top  30. Rear trigger guard screw
8. Swivel shoulder  18. Biddle  31. Trigger guard nut (2)

AMERICAN RIFLEMAN
The U.S. Model 1842 .54 cal. percussion pistol with 8½" barrel was manufactured by Henry Aston and Iras N. Johnson, both operating in Middletown, Conn. While the majority of pistols encountered are from either of these two contractors, pattern pistols were produced at Springfield Armory and a variant was made at the Palmetto Armory in South Carolina prior to the Civil War.

The graceful lines of earlier U.S. martial flatlocks (many of them later converted to percussion) were continued with this percussion smoothbore. Henry Aston, a former employee of Simeon North at Springfield Armory, received a contract for 50,000 pistols at $6.50 each on February 25, 1843. Specifications for the Model 1842 included all brass furniture, even to the blade front sight, and attachment of the trigger guard was by two spiral nuts instead of riveting as in earlier models. After the reorganization of Aston's company in 1850, his former employee, Iras N. Johnson, received an independent contract for 10,000 pistols at $6.75 each.

Date stamping on the barrel tang as well as the lockplate was commonly done by both makers of this 2-4½, 12 oz. pistol. Government inspection stamps are found usually on the barrel tang and on the left side of the stock near the lockplate. Original finishing called for all metal surfaces to be left bright except for the blued trigger.

Firing a half-ounce .54 cal. round ball, the Model 1842 provided a potent single-shot package in the Mexican War period, and the guns saw limited use as late as the Civil War. The new Palmetto Armory variation, produced by William Glaze & Co. in Columbia, S.C., can be characterized as a Model 1842 pistol with changes in both barrel and lockplate markings and use service with Southern forces of this period.

While many other percussion firearms of U.S. military origin have been reproduced by foreign and domestic manufacturers, the Model 1842 has yet to get such attention.

**Disassembly Instructions**

After holding the breech for an unlimited charge, the hammer (25) should be drawn back to the half cock position so as to clear the tupple (36). Loosen the front and rear idler plate screws (11 & 12) slightly. Once the screw heads have risen above the surface of the idler plate (12), a light, non-marring mallet can be used to gently tap them and free the lockplate (14). Prying the lockplate out from the other side may result in scratching of the surrounding wood (Fig. 3). After the lockplate mechanism has been removed from the stock (34), pull out the ramrod (3). Unscrewing the lower screw (5) will free the ramrod assembly. The barrel band (16) can be tapped off the stock using a wood drift. The barrel (1) is held in place by the tang screw (35) which terminates in the trigger guard plate (26) (Fig. 4).

To disassemble the lock mechanism, apply pressure to the mainspring (15) with a mainspring tool or a shop vice and pull. After removing the mainspring screw (16) the compressed mainspring can be withdrawn from the lockplate. After removing the bottom block screws (15) the barrel can be taken out. Remove the top block screws (17) and the barrel (18). The hammer (25) is held in place by the hammer screw (23). Remove the screw spring (22) and the screw spring (21). Tap the tumbler (20) rear of the lockplate (Fig. 5).