

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

HIGH-TECH[™]

ADVENTURE GUNS[™]



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
Publication History	3
Art Acknowledgments	3
About the Author	3
1. USER'S MANUAL	4
Costs and Customization	4
Optional Rule: Cost Factor	4
Firearms and the Law	4
Western Gun Slang	5
2. SIX-SHOOTERS AND	
LEVER-ACTIONS.	6
Non-Repeating Pistols	6
Revolvers	9
Chain Fire	9
Smokeless Ammunition	17
Semiautomatic Pistols	19
Shotguns	20
The Coach Gun	21
Shotgun Chokes	22
A Load of Dimes	24
Muskets and Rifles	25
Musket and Rifle Projectiles	25
Ammo Supply	29
Mechanical Machine Guns	36
Machine Guns and Autocannon	40
Cannon	42
Space Guns	43
3. SHOOTING SUPPLIES	44
Ammunition Tables	44
Firearm Accessories	45
Trap Guns and Grave Torpedoes	45
Hand Grenades	46
INDEX	47

About GURPS

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

The [.45-75 half-magazine] Winchester, which is stocked and sighted to suit myself, is by all odds the best weapon I ever had, and I now use it almost exclusively, having killed every kind of game with it, from Grizzly bear to bighorn . . . The bullet, weighing three-quarters of an ounce, is plenty large enough for anything on this continent . . .

– Theodore Roosevelt, Hunting Tips of a Ranchman

INTRODUCTION

GURPS High-Tech: Adventure Guns describes the firearms and other “high-tech” weapons used from the second half of the 19th century until the Great War, the period of the great adventurers and explorers in the Wild West, *In Darkest Africa*, in Transylvania, along the Indian North-West Frontier, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. It also details guns that were used at home – by gentlemen, criminals, policemen, homeowners, or hunters all over the world. The arms featured in this supplement could outfit American gunslingers, Indians, and homesteaders in the Wild West (and the Weird West!); British Victorian detectives, hunters, explorers, and soldiers; Prussian officers and German archaeologists; and ordinary people of that time and age. This volume is ideally suited as a companion to **GURPS Big Lizzie**, **GURPS Cliffhangers**, **GURPS Horror**, **GURPS Infinite Worlds: Britannica-6**, **GURPS Lands Out of Time**, **GURPS Mysteries**, **GURPS Old West**, **GURPS Steampunk**, and various timelines in **GURPS Infinite Worlds**. Those who wish to play out their **GURPS Monster Hunters** campaigns in the late 1800s will also find it informative. It is designed to work with the optional firearms rules in **GURPS Gun Fu** and **GURPS Tactical Shooting**.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Several entries are based on descriptions from **GURPS High-Tech** (2007), written by Shawn Fisher and Hans-Christian Vortisch, and older editions written by Michael Hurst, but have been considerably expanded. Others first appeared in **GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns, Volume 1** (2008) and **GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns, Volume 2**



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(2008), written by Hans-Christian Vortisch, but now contain period information. Some were developed from material in the *Pyramid* article “In Her Majesty’s Service” (2003), also by Hans-Christian Vortisch.

Where a gun’s statistics differ from those in an earlier book, like **High-Tech**, use the **Adventure Guns** version. These minor changes reflect newer, more accurate information and details.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hans-Christian “Grey Tiger” Vortisch, M.A., began writing for **GURPS** as a freelancer in 2001. He was author or co-author of **GURPS Covert Ops**, **GURPS High-Tech, Fourth Edition**, **GURPS Modern Firepower**, **GURPS Special Ops, Third Edition**, **GURPS Tactical Shooting**, **GURPS WWII: Motor Pool**, and many e23 publications on martial topics. He has written additional material for numerous other **GURPS** books; authored, translated, edited, or contributed to several German and British **Call of Cthulhu** products, including Sixtystone Press’ *Investigator Weapons*; and published many articles in American, British, and German gaming magazines. Hans has been an avid gamer since 1983. His nongaming interests include shooting, science fiction, history, cinema, and punk rock. He lives in Prussian Berlin.

REVOLVERS

Duellists, travellers, and the rowdy bullies of the New World enjoy the doubtful honour of having brought the pistol to its present sanguinary perfection. It is the weapon of the self-dependent man . . . Unhappily, the drunken bully and gambler of America and Mexico has found the six-shooter convenient, and carries it more regularly than his tooth-pick.

– *Daily Telegraph* article from 1869

The revolver was the most popular handgun during the timeframe covered by *Adventure Guns*. Quick-firing and offering a multi-shot capability, it was the weapon of choice for close-range fighting. Both single-action and double-action weapons were common – see *Trigger Mechanisms* (*High-Tech*, p. 82).

Allen Pepperbox, .31 Caplock (USA, 1837-1864)

Pepperbox pistols were forerunners of true revolvers. Instead of a single barrel, they had a barrel for each chamber. They became popular in the 1830s and were common until the 1850s, when revolvers of improved patterns quickly replaced them. This gun, designed by Ethan Allen, was a small double-action-only pepperbox with 3.5" smoothbore barrels and spurless hammer – treat it as “hammerless” (*Tactical Shooting*, p. 32). Tens of thousands were made. Such weapons were popular with civilians in England and the U.S., and widely used during the California Gold Rush. Despite their technical obsolescence, pepperboxes were still in use during the American Civil War and even later, mainly because the guns cost only 1/3 of the price of an equivalent Colt revolver. The Allen had a reputation for chain-firing (see below).

Colt No. 5 Holster Model, .36 Caplock (USA, 1838-1840)

Also known as the “Texas Paterson,” this was the largest single-action revolver made by Colt’s at Paterson, New Jersey. It was called “the gun that made all men equal.” The No. 5 was the first mass-produced revolver; about a thousand were made. Some 180 were issued in 1839 to the Texas Navy (*GURPS Old West*, p. 92), which used them in the war with Mexico in 1843, and then passed them on to the Texas Rangers (*Old West*, p. 93) in 1845.

To reload, the cylinder *must* be removed. Total time to detach and reinsert the cylinder is 15 seconds. Reloading the chambers follows the usual rules for caplocks (*High-Tech*, p. 86), but spare cylinders (\$130, 0.8 lb.) can be preloaded to save time.

A Colt No. 5 is used by scout Jacob Wheeler in *Into the West*. The first specimen ever, supposedly hand-made in 1835 by Samuel Colt himself, plays a prominent role in *Supernatural*. This gun was at some point converted (*High-Tech*, p. 164) to fire .38 Long Colt cartridges with silver bullets (*GURPS Loadouts: Monster Hunters*, p. 13, or *GURPS Horror*, pp. 52-53).

Mariette Poivrière, 12mm Caplock (Belgium, 1839-1877)

Invented by Gilles Mariette, this double-action-only *poivrière* (“pepperbox”) had four 3.5” smoothbore barrels. It differed from American and English designs in the loading

procedure: Each barrel had to be screwed off to allow placing the powder and ball in the firing chamber, and then screwed on again. This required a special key, which was often integrated in the handle of a bullet-mold tool (*High-Tech*, p. 163) supplied with it.

The gun’s hammer was located below the frame, making it “hammerless” for the purposes of concealing and fast-drawing (*Tactical Shooting*, p. 32). Unfortunately, the hammer then would normally rest on one of the chambers, which made it unsafe (*High-Tech*, p. 93). To avoid accidental discharge, one of the barrels had to be left unloaded or at least unprimed; the cap was then inserted only in the last moment before a fight was expected. Alternatively, the hammer could be manually put to rest between two chambers.

Mariette pepperboxes in 9.5mm Caplock were available with as many as 24 barrels: Dmg 2d-1 pi, Wt. 2.8/0.34, Shots 24(60i), Bulk -3, Rcl 2, Cost \$750. These were *much* rarer.

Chain Fire

It was a cheerful weapon – the “Allen.” Sometimes all its six barrels would go off at once, and then there was no safe place in all the region round about, but behind it.

– Mark Twain, *Roughing It*

Some caplock revolvers suffered from a defect known as “chain fire.” This mishap particularly befell designs that didn’t properly shield the percussion caps from each other. Sometimes, setting off one of them would lead to the explosion of an adjacent one, or even all of them in a catastrophic chain reaction.

For weapons noted as being prone to chain-firing, an 18 on the attack roll means a number of shots are fired simultaneously in one burst. *Rapid Fire* (p. B373) determines how many hit the intended target – and don’t forget to check for *Hitting the Wrong Target* (pp. B389-390)! The number of shots affected can be determined with a die roll. For example, with a six-shot revolver use 1d (minimum one additional shot).

A chain fire in anything but a pepperbox revolver can also damage the weapon by hitting components forward of the cylinder.

Colt M1847 Walker, .44 Caplock (USA, 1847-1848)

This huge, single-action, muzzleloading revolver (15.5” long with a 9” barrel), while not exactly successful, founded the fame of the Colt big-bore guns. Named after former Texas Ranger Colonel Samuel Walker, who had ordered them for the Army, the revolver was made at Whitneyville, Connecticut. Thus, it was also known as the “Whitneyville-Walker.” It was usually loaded with paper cartridges (*High-Tech*, p. 86); reloading it with loose powder and ball increases reloading time to 20 seconds per chamber. The guns were made of inferior steel, and at least one in five burst in service. Any malfunction (p. B407) explodes the gun, inflicting 1d-1 cr ex on the firer!

A thousand were made for the U.S. Army (its first repeating handgun), and a further 100 for sale to civilians. Its huge size can be seen in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, where a brace of Walkers is carried by gunslinger Josey “Mr. Lightning” Wales in belt holsters. It also is in the hands of Texas Ranger Captain Augustus McCrae in *Lonesome Dove* and of Mattie Ross in Henry Hathaway’s *True Grit*.

Greener Facile Princeps, 10G 2.875" (U.K., 1876-1939)

This double-barreled weapon was the first hammerless shotgun – dropping the barrels down automatically cocked the internal strikers. It typically had 30" choked barrels. From 1880 on, the gun was fitted with automatic ejectors; before then, it had Shots 2(3i). The cost in the table is for the plainest version, whose excellent workmanship still rates +1 to reactions (see p. 4). Twice the cost buys a finely engraved gun, resulting in +2 to reactions.

Shotgun Chokes

Shotgun chokes constrict the barrel of a shotgun at the muzzle. First patented in 1866 and popular by the late 1870s, they were developed to better control the pattern of a shotgun blast. This increases *effective* range (which is not the same as 1/2D range). By constricting the barrel at the muzzle, the pellets of a multiple-projectile load scatter less quickly and less widely.

The following optional rules can be used for choked guns. Chokes are normally used with shot that is smaller than buckshot; see *Shot Sizes* (*High-Tech*, p. 173).

- *Unchoked* barrels have no constriction at all (this is also called a *cylinder choke*). This is the baseline assumption for all shotguns in *GURPS*. All coach and riot guns (p. 21) automatically have cylinder bores, as does any shotgun with a sawed-off barrel; most other guns can be ordered without choke. Only cylinder-bored guns can fire slugs without losing their Acc bonus.

- *Choked* barrels are constricted at the muzzle. Numerous grades are available, including *modified* and *full* chokes. For simplicity, these are all treated the same. Maximum constriction during the 19th century is full choke, with the barrel's bore narrowed by about 5%. "Extremely close range" (p. B409) for a choked barrel is 20% of 1/2D range, rather than 10%. *Beyond* this range, subtract 1 from effective Guns skill, but multiply the number of hits scored by 1.5 (cannot exceed the number of pellets fired). Most full-bore specialty ammunition (*High-Tech*, p. 103) is incompatible with a choke.

By the late 19th century, most hunting guns had chokes of some kind. The chokes of the time couldn't be changed after manufacture, except by sawing off the barrel (*High-Tech*, p. 106). The only exception to this was the Roper Repeating Shotgun (p. 21), which had a screw-in choke like some modern guns, but that weapon didn't meet with commercial success.

Stevens Model 1877, 10G 2.875" (USA, 1877-1882)

The Stevens Model 1877 was a double-barreled hammer gun with a unique triple trigger – the third trigger forward of the normal two triggers was used to open the gun. It came with 30" unchoked barrels and automatic extractors. Twice the cost gives a decorated weapon (+1 to reactions; see p. 4). A sawed-off coach gun (p. 21) is used by dentist "Doc" Holliday in the O.K. Corral fight in *Wyatt Earp*.

Remington Model 1878 Heavy Duck Gun, 10G 2.875" (USA, 1878-1882)

This double-barreled hammer gun had unchoked 30" barrels and no extractors. The finest factory version, with

engraving and checkered English walnut stock, costs double (+1 to reactions; see p. 4). Some 2,500 were made.

Colt Model 1878, 12G 2.625" (USA, 1878-1889)

This good-quality double-barreled shotgun had exposed hammers. It was relatively expensive, and only 22,700 were made. It had 30" barrels (available both choked and unchoked) and external hammers. It lacked automatic shell ejectors. It was also available in 10-gauge 2.875": Dmg 2d-1 pi, Wt. 10.3/0.28, RoF 2x11, ST 12†, Rcl 1/7, Cost \$1,100. The finest factory version, with engraving and choice furniture, cost 2.5 times as much (+1 to reactions; see p. 4). A number were made as coach guns (p. 21) with unchoked 18" barrels: Wt. 9/0.28, Bulk -4.

A coach version is used by Pinkerton detective Byron McElroy in James Mangold's *3:10 to Yuma*, Sheriff John Chance in *Rio Bravo*, "Old Man" Phillips in *Rio Lobo*, and lawman Wyatt Earp in *Wyatt Earp*.

W. Richards Hammer Gun, 10G 2.875" (Belgium, 1880-1900)

Named in an attempt to lure buyers into thinking this was a genuine Westley Richards gun from the famous English maker, this was actually a cheap double-barreled hammer gun made in Belgium. Many thousands were imported to the United States and sold through mail-order companies such as Sears, Roebuck. Outlaw William Munny uses a sawed-off coach gun (p. 21) in *Unforgiven*.

Spencer Model 1882, 12G 2.625" (USA, 1882-1890)

Designed by Christopher Spencer, this was the first pump-action shotgun ever made. More expensive and malfunction-prone than the traditional double-barreled guns of the time, it was slow to find commercial success. A hammerless design, it featured an underbarrel tube magazine and a choked 30" barrel. Some 20,000 were made. The U.S. Army bought 240 in 1885. It can be seen carried by a deputy in James Mangold's *3:10 to Yuma*.

The Bannerman *Model 1896* (1896-1900) was the same weapon with different markings.

When Spencer closed its doors and Bannerman bought its assets, parts were still in storage for around 3,000 guns. Francis Bannerman had them assembled and sold them under his own name. The Ohio State Police adopted this gun around the turn of the 20th century. Despite its late date, it wasn't safe for smokeless ammunition (p. 17).

Colt Model 1883, 12G 2.625" (USA, 1883-1895)

This hammerless double-barreled gun was one of the finest – and most expensive – American shotguns available in the 19th century. Only 7,366 were made. Most were chambered for 12-gauge shells and had choked 30" barrels. However, the weapon could be ordered in any gauge and with any barrel.

MUSKETS AND RIFLES

The best gun for buffalo hunting was a short muzzleloading rifle of large bore. With such a weapon the hunter dispensed with a ramrod; he charged his gun simply by pouring the powder down the barrel, and dropping a bullet from his cartridge bag – or his mouth – into the gun, then “sending it home” by sharply striking the butt of the rifle upon his thigh or upon the pommel of his saddle.

– Douglas Branch, Frank Dobie, and Andrew Isenberg, *The Hunting of the Buffalo*

The rifle was the most important weapon in many areas. In addition to being the primary military arm, it could be used on game from a considerable distance. This offered a useful stand-off range against enemies and dangerous beasts. Its long barrel, better sights, and shoulder stock to brace it made it easier to use than a handgun, even at short range. Most of these long arms were also more powerful than a handgun or shotgun, providing better penetration and wounding capability. Additionally, many of the available repeating rifles held more shots than other handheld guns.

Enfield P/1853, .577 Caplock (U.K., 1853-1866)

The *Rifled Musket Pattern 1853* made at the Royal Armoury at Enfield was Britain’s military rifle until the adoption of cartridge breechloaders. The P/1853 was standard issue in the Crimean War. It was sold all over the world as far away as Japan (there known as the *Minyee-juu*), and most European nations adopted similar weapons. Both sides in the American Civil War used hundreds of thousands of Enfields. After the war, the weapons were sold in large numbers as surplus to homesteaders in the American West, at 10% cost. They were still available in the 1880s. In fiction, it can be seen employed by Confederate and Union soldiers in *Gettysburg* and *Glory*, and Chief “Lone Watie” and Chief “Ten Bears” in *The Outlaw Josie Wales*.

It used paper cartridges (*High-Tech*, p. 86) with Minié bullets (*High-Tech*, p. 109). Without cartridges, reloading takes 40 seconds, or 60 seconds with ordinary balls. Alternate projectile options included SAPLE (Dmg 3d+2 pi+ with a 1d-2 [1d-1] cr ex follow-up) and multiball (Dmg 1d+1 pi, Acc 2, Range 50/550, RoF 1x3, Rcl 1), but both were rare. The rifle took a 0.8-lb. socket bayonet (Reach 1, 2*).

From 1866, the British Army converted their Enfield muzzleloader into a metallic-cartridge breechloader, using a conversion devised by Jacob Snider (*High-Tech*, p. 164). This was the *Snider Pattern I* (1866-1873) in .577 Snider: Malf. 17, Dmg 4d+1(0.5) pi++, Range 200/2,200, Wt. 10/0.1, Shots 1(3), Cost \$375. The Snider fired a bullet with a plug that performed like a hollow-point (*High-Tech*, p. 166). If Rudyard Kipling is to be trusted, this often resulted in a “big blue mark in his forehead, and the back blown out of his head.”

Some 815,000 Sniders were made. Although soon superseded in front-line service by the Martini-Henry (p. 29), the

Snider remained in service with colonial forces for quite some time, and many weapons found their way to other users. It was the Indian army’s rifle until the turn of the century. In Japan, it was known as the *Sunaidoru-juu* (“Snider gun”) and saw service in the Boshin War from 1868 to 1869. It remained standard issue until the 1880s in Japan. The Canadian Northwest Mounted Police (*Old West*, p. 99) were armed with it from 1873 to 1878. By the end of the 19th century, many people hunted with them in Africa and parts of Asia. The dervishes in Shekhar Kapur’s *The Four Feathers* use Sniders.

The *Snider Pattern II* (1867-1868) was a carbine with a 21.5” barrel issued to cavalry, artillery crews, etc.: Malf. 17, Dmg 3d+2(0.5) pi++, Range 180/1,900, Wt. 6.7/0.1, Shots 1(3), Bulk -4, Cost \$350. It was still sold commercially in the late 1870s. One such carbine captured from a bank arsenal in 1878, nicknamed “Betty,” became the favorite weapon of Australian bushranger Ned Kelly, as correctly shown in *Ned Kelly*. Native hunter Samuel uses a surplus carbine in *The Ghost and the Darkness*.

Volcanic Repeating Rifle, .41 Volcanic (USA, 1855-1860)

One of the first lever-action repeating firearms, this was the direct ancestor of the famous rifles later introduced by Winchester. Developed by Messrs. Smith and Wesson, it fired a “rocket ball” cartridge that was a curious hybrid: self-contained but completely caseless, with the propellant and percussion cap in a hollow in the base of the bullet. Ammunition was loaded in a tubular magazine below the barrel from the front. It takes one second to open the tube before reloading or to close it afterward. The tube magazine had an open slit below, which allowed dirt to enter. A neglected weapon could end up with Malf. 16.

Musket and Rifle Projectiles

The hole in the point of [an] Express Bullet is made to take a .22-caliber rim fire cartridge blank . . . so that the hunters of Grizzlies and other ugly game can use them as explosive bullets.

– Sharps advertisement from 1880

Many musket and rifle bullets of the 19th century performed like hollow-point bullets (*High-Tech*, pp. 166-167), typically because they were made of pure, soft lead or of such a construction that they easily deformed on impact. By the 1870s, true hollow-points with an actual cavity in the bullet tip appeared, initially only for hunting purposes. In 1890, the first jacketed hollow-point for use in small-bore rifles was introduced, developed at Dum Dum Arsenal in India for military service in the .303-caliber Lee-Metford repeating rifle (pp. 32-33).

In 1872, Samuel Mead patented an “explosive” bullet for sporting purposes, to take down big game. This consisted of a large-caliber bullet (minimum 10mm/.40 caliber) into which a hole was drilled (or that was already cast with a hole in it). This hole was made large enough to take a blank .22 Short rimfire cartridge back-to-front. When the blank was set off on impact against a hard-enough target (including bone), the bullet would be ripped apart. However, this wasn’t an actual *explosive* effect, just a different way of ensuring bullet expansion. Treat it as a hollow-point except that it works on a roll of TL-2 or less on 1d. Double cost. The most common commercial “explosive” round was made in .50-95 Winchester Express.

INDEX

- Accessories, 45-46.
Advantages, gun possession and, 5.
Allen Pepperbox, 9, 18.
Ammunition, 44-45; *dimes as*, 24;
 explosive, 25; *hollow-point*, 25; *silver*,
 24; *smokeless*, 17.
"Apache" criminal gang, 7, 14.
Autocannon, 40-43; *ammunition*, 45; *table*,
 41.
Beaumont-Adams Mk I, 11, 18.
Belt swivel rigs, 45-46.
Berdan PVB-1870, 29, 35.
Bergmann Nr.3, 19, 20.
Bergmann Nr.5, 19, 20.
Borchardt C93, 19, 20.
Bullard Express, 32, 35.
Bullets, *see Ammunition*.
Burgess Folding Police Gun, 23-24.
Canadian Northwest Mounted Police, 11,
 16, 25, 31.
Cannon, 42-43; *ammunition*, 45.
Carr & Avery Union Repeating Gun, 36.
Cartridge belts, *canvas*, 46; *leather*, 45.
Chain fire, 9.
Chamelot-Delvigne Mle 1873, 14, 18.
Characters, gun possession and, 5.
Coach guns, 5, 21; *see also Shotgun*s.
Cody, William "Buffalo Bill," 12, 13, 27.
Cogswell Improved Revolving Pistol, 10,
 18.
Colt .41 House Pistol, 13, 18.
Colt .44 Open Top, 14, 18.
Colt Lightning Rifle, 32.
Colt M1847 Walker, 9, 18.
Colt M1848 Dragoon, 10, 18.
Colt M1851 Navy, 5, 10, 18.
Colt M1860 Army, 12, 18.
Colt M1873 SAA, 5, 14-15, 18.
Colt M1892 New Army, 17, 18.
Colt Model 1849 Pocket, 10, 18.
Colt Model 1855 Revolving Rifle, 26, 35.
Colt Model 1855, 21, 24.
Colt Model 1877 Lightning, 15, 18.
Colt Model 1878 D.A., 15-16, 18.
Colt Model 1878, 22, 24.
Colt Model 1883, 22-24.
Colt Model 1895, 41, 42.
Colt New Pocket, 17, 18.
Colt New Police, 17, 18.
Colt No. 5 Holster Model, 9, 18.
Colt-Thuer No. 3, 7, 8.
Control Ratings (CR), 4-5.
Cost Factor (CF), 4.
Costs, 4; *modifiers*, 4; *tech level and*, 4.
Crescent Arms Hammer Gun, 23, 24.
Customization, 4.
Decorated guns, 4.
Deringer, 6, 8.
Dimes, as ammunition, 24.
Disadvantages, gun possession and, 5.
Dolne Revolver Combine, 14, 18.
Earp, Wyatt, 13, 15, 22, 31.
Eclipse Meteor, 21, 24.
Elswick 4" B.L. Mk II, 42, 43.
Enfield Mk I, 16, 18.
Enfield P/1853, 25, 35.
Evans Sporter, 29-30, 35.
Firearms License perk, 5.
FN-Browning Mle 1900, 20.
Frank Wesson Dagger-Pistol, 7, 8.
Gardner .450 G.G. Mk I, 39-40.
Gatling M1874, 36-37.
GPK Gew88, 33, 34, 35.
GPK Reichsrevolver 83, 16, 18.
Grave torpedoes, 45.
Greener Double-Grip Pistol, 8.
Greener Elephant Rifle, 32, 35.
Greener Facile Princes, 22, 24.
Grenades, 46.
Gun batteries, spaceship, 43.
GURPS, 4, 22 ; **Big Lizzie**, 3; **China**, 34,
 38, 40-42; **Cliffhangers**, 3, 33, 39;
 Cops, 15; **Deadlands: Weird West**, 10;
 Gun Fu, 3, 6, 19, 28, 30, 33, 34, 45;
 High-Tech, 3, 4, 5, 7-14, 16-27, 29, 30,
 32-36, 39, 41-46; **High-Tech: Pulp**
 Guns, Volume 1, 3, 13, 14, 16, 17, 29;
 High-Tech: Pulp Guns, Volume 2, 3,
 42; **Horror**, 3, 9, 24, 46; **Infinite**
 Worlds, 3; **Infinite Worlds:**
 Britannica-6, 3, 10, 39; **Lands Out of**
 Time, 3, 34; **Loadouts: Monster**
 Hunters, 9, 24, 31, 46; **Low-Tech**, 37,
 42; **Martial Arts: Fairbairn Close**
 Combat Systems, 20; **Monster**
 Hunters, 3; **Mysteries**, 3; **Old West**, 3,
 9-16, 19, 21, 23-25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 38,
 42; **Spaceships**, 43; **Spaceships 7:**
 Divergent and Paranormal Tech, 38,
 43; **Steam-Tech**, 37, 38, 41;
 Steampunk, 3, 4, 10, 17, 24, 29, 33, 37,
 38, 40, 42, 43, 45; **Tactical Shooting**,
 3, 5, 6, 8-10, 12-14, 16, 17, 21, 26, 28-
 34, 45, 46; **Who's Who 2**, 12, 14, 15,
 17, 19, 20, 24, 31, 32, 42.
H&H Paradox Gun, 23, 24.
Handguns, *see Pistols, Revolvers*.
Hanes Excelsior, 46.
Harden Star, 46.
Hardin, John Wesley, 12, 15.
Henry Rifle, 27-28, 35.
Hickok, "Wild Bill," 10, 27.
Holland and Holland gun, 23, 24.
Holliday, "Doc," 15, 21, 22.
Hotchkiss 1-pounder, 38, 39.
Hotchkiss 6-pounder Q.F. Mk I, 42, 43.
Hotchkiss Canon de Montagne, 42-43.
Ketchum Grenade, 46.
Krag-Jørgensen M1892, 34, 35.
Lancaster Howdah, 8.
Lebel Mle 1886, 32, 35.
Lee-Metford Mk I, 32-33, 35.
Lefauchaux Mle 1854, 11, 18.
Legality, 4-5; *traits related to*, 5.
LeMat Grape Shot Revolver, 11, 18.
License perk, 5.
Lindsay Young America, 6-8.
Loomis IXL No. 15, 21, 24.
Luger Parabellum, 20.
Machine guns, *ammunition*, 44-45; *full-*
 automatic, 40-42; *mechanical*, 36-40;
 tables, 39, 41.
Mannlicher-Carcano Mod 91, 33, 35.
Marianne Poivrière, 9, 18.
Martini-Henry Mk I, 29, 35; *ammunition*
 debacle, 29.
Mauser C78 Zick-Zack, 16, 18.
Mauser C96, 19-20.
Mauser Gew98, 34, 35.
Mauser IG71, 29, 35.
Maxim .450 M.H. Mk I, 40-41.
Maxim 1-pounder Q.F. Mk I, 40, 41.
Merwin & Bray Deringer, 7, 8.
Mosin-Nagant PV-1891, 33, 35.
Muskets, *see Rifles*.
Nordenfelt .450 G.G. Mk II, 38-39.
Parker Lifter, 21, 24.
Perk, new, 5.
Pistols, *accessories*, 45-46; *ammunition*,
 44; *non-repeating*, 6-8; *semiautomatic*,
 19-20; *slang*, 5; *tables*, 8, 20; *see also*
 Revolvers.
Projectiles, *see Ammunition*.
Quality, improving, 4.
Reid's My Friend, 12-13, 18.

I have often been asked why five shots without reloading were all a top-notch gunfighter fired, when his guns were chambered for six cartridges. The answer is, merely, safety.

– Stuart Lake, Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal

Remington Double-Derringer, 7, 8.
 Remington M1871 Army, 7, 8.
 Remington Model 8, 34-35.
 Remington Model 1875, 15, 18.
 Remington Model 1878 Heavy Duck Gun, 22, 24.
 Remington Model 1889, 23, 24.
 Remington New Model Army, 12, 18.
 Remington No. 1 Rolling Block, 28, 35.
 Remington-Elliott Pocket Repeater, 7, 8.
 Remington-Keene Model 1880 Sporter, 31, 35.
 Remington-Rider No. 3, 23, 24.
 Remington-Whitmore Hammer Lifter, 21, 35.
 Revolvers, 9-18; *accessories*, 45-46; *ammunition*, 44; *malfunction*, 9; *slang*, 5; *table*, 18; *see also Pistols*.
 Rexer Machine Gun, 41, 42.
 Rifles, 25-35; *accessories*, 45-46; *ammunition*, 25, 44-45; *table*, 35.
 Riot guns, 21; *see also Shotguns*.
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 17, 20, 31, 32, 42.
 Roper Repeating Shotgun, 21, 24.
 Rupertus Model 8 Pepperbox, 12, 18.
 S&W .32 Safety Hammerless, 17, 18.
 S&W .44 D.A. Frontier, 16, 18.
 S&W No. 1, 11-12, 18.
 S&W No. 3 Russian, 13-14, 18.

Savage M1859 Navy, 12, 18.
 Scheufler Polizeirevolver M86, 16, 18.
 Sharps M1859, 26-27, 35.
 Sharps No. 2 Derringer, 6-8.
 Sharps Sporting Model 1874, 5, 31, 35.
 Shattuck Unique, 8.
 Shotguns, 20-24; *accessories*, 45, 46; *ammunition*, 44; *chokes*, 22; *coach*, 5, 21; *riot*, 21; *sawed-off*, 5, 21; *slang*, 5; *table*, 24.
 Skoda M.93, 41.
 Slang, 5.
 Smith and Wesson, *Volcanic guns*, 6, 8, 25, 35; *see also specific S&W guns*.
 Space guns, 43.
 Spencer M1860, 28, 35.
 Spencer Model 1882, 22, 24.
 Springfield M1861, 27, 35.
 Springfield M1873, 30, 35.
 Starr M1858 Army, 11, 18.
 Stevens Model 1877, 22, 24.
 Steyr-Mannlicher M.88, 32, 35.
 Steyr-Roth M.7, 20.
 Styling, 4.
 Tables, *ammunition*, 44-45; *autocannon*, 41; *automatic machine guns*, 41; *cannon*, 42; *hand grenades*, 46; *mechanical machine guns*, 39; *muskets*, 35; *non-repeating*

pistols, 8; *revolvers*, 18; *rifles*, 35; *semiautomatic pistols*, 20; *shotguns*, 24; *spaceship weapon*, 43.
 Texas Rangers, 9, 19, 27, 30.
 Tranter Man-Stopper, 13, 18.
 Trap guns, 45.
 Turbiaux Le Protector, 7, 8.
 Volcanic No. 2 Army Pistol, 6, 8.
 Volcanic Repeating Rifle, 25-26, 35.
 W. Richards Hammer Gun, 22, 24.
 Webley Mk I, 17, 18.
 Webley Mk III M&P, 18.
 Webley No. 2 British Bull Dog, 14, 18.
 Webley No. 5 New Model Army Express, 16, 18.
 Webley RIC No. 1, 13, 18.
 Wells, Fargo & Company, 14, 23.
 Wesson & Leavitt Dragoon, 10, 18.
 Western gun slang, 5.
 Whitworth Rifle, 26, 35.
 Winchester Model 1866, 28, 35.
 Winchester Model 1873, 30, 33, 35.
 Winchester Model 1876, 31, 35.
 Winchester Model 1886, 32, 35.
 Winchester Model 1887, 23, 24.
 Winchester Model 1892, 33-35.
 Winchester Model 1893, 23, 24.
 Winchester Model 1894, 34, 35.
 Winchester Model 1897, 24.



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