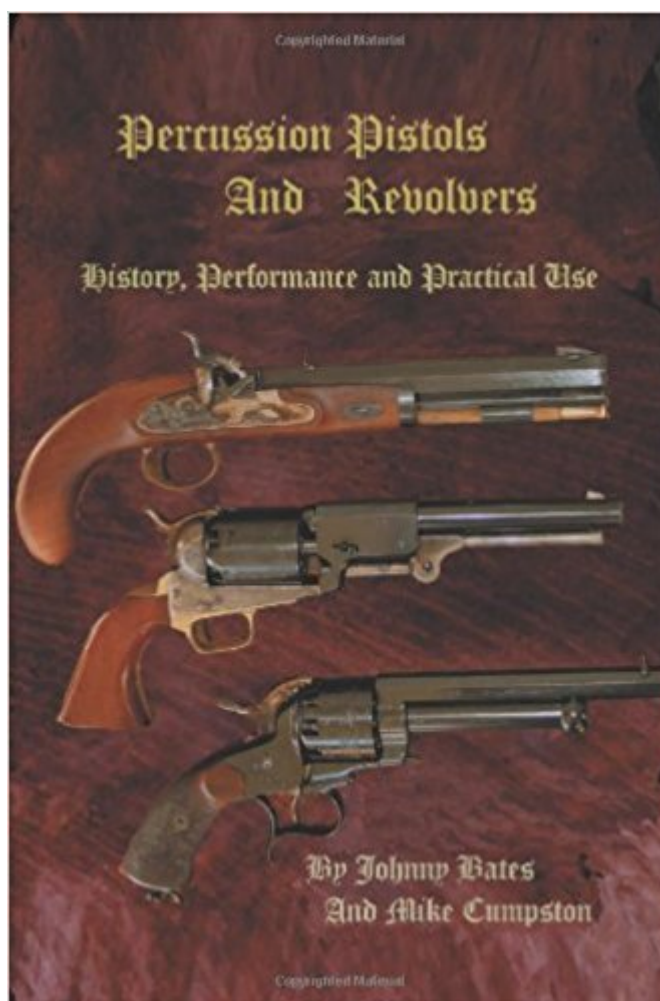


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# Percussion Pistols And Revolvers: History, Performance And Practical Use



## Synopsis

In the early transition from the long-lived flintlock system, handgun development closely paralleled that of the long arms. With the advent of the revolving pistols, however; came patents that created monopolies in revolver production and the through-bored cylinder necessary for self-contained metallic cartridges. The caplock revolvers took on a separate evolution and remained state of the art long after the widespread appearance of cartridge firing rifles and shotguns. They rode in the holsters of explorers and adventures across the world and granted safe conduct in the back alleys of industrial slums right up until the last quarter of the 19th Century. Handguns possess a mystique distinctly different from that of other firearms. They are tools of personal empowerment-chosen by their owners to provide independence and freedom of movement. In the ambitious, optimistic early years of western industrial civilization they were the emblem of liberty and equality and the bane of repressive governments and social movements. Largely because of the traditions that emerged in the time of the caplock pistols and revolvers, they remain so in the early years of the 21st Century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Johnny Bates and Mike Cumpston live in central Texas. The lifelong shooting enthusiasts have researched and written many articles about modern and historic firearms, which have been published in mass-market magazines.

OK, I bought this as a "how-to" for my "new" hobby, black powder revolvers. As such, it's OK, but

still left some gaps in what I wanted to know. As I don't know any BP revolver shooters, I've had to learn this all myself, and this really didn't do that for me. But, as a reference book this would rate a SOLID 5 stars. This covers the topic from end to end and in depth. For this purpose the book is excellent. If that's your need, I highly recommend it.

I count this as one of my better acquisitions in the field of 19th Century firearms books. There is an awful lot of good, hard to find information packed within, including details on maintenance (including assembly/disassembly procedures), general use and loading instructions, specific load results with different powders, and observations on the quality of various reproductions. As the authors state early on in the book, they pull no punches when giving their honest assessment of the quality of the various reproductions out there. One also finds valuable suggestions on improving the reliability of various reproductions, such as gunsmithing tips for the pocket percussion revolvers to prevent cap fragments from binding up the cylinder. Very useful stuff. I also love the colour graphic on the cover - it immediately attracted my notice when I was skimming through the myriad "recommendations" on . I do have some suggestions for improvement for a 2nd edition, in the highly unlikely event the authors ever read this droll review and actually want to go for a 2nd edition....:1. There are a number of minor, but noticeable typographical and administrative type errors in the book, such as using "heals" instead of "heels." Basically needs a sharp-eyed editor to go through and insure proper word usage.2. While the black and white illustrations are generally adequate, they are a bit grainy (owing to the resolution and also, I think, the paper used) and are often too small. Indeed, some are actually quite tiny. This is usually not a serious problem, but in some cases when they are used to illustrate an important detail (such as the LeMat pictures on pp 144-145 and some detailed mechanism shots on pp 92-94) it is hard to make out what is being shown. In such cases it is a bit of a problem. I would suggest, then, that a 2nd edition of this fine work at least have larger and sharper black and white photos. Further, if possible, select illustrations should be done as sharp, full colour plates. One that comes to mind is the photo of an original Colt Walker at the beginning of chapter 12. I would have loved to see a full-colour, full-page plate of this wonderful firearm. Surely 6-12 colour plates, perhaps focusing on original firearms such as the aforementioned Walker, bound into the centre of the book should not be too great a challenge? At the least the cover illustration could be sharpened up a bit (it is great, of course, but could be a bit better).3. If possible, an appendix that goes into more detail of the various reproductions and their manufacturers, with discussion as to reliability, attention to detail, overall quality, etc.4. Also of great use would be an appendix that gave contact information for and brief descriptions of companies that make accessories, such as

replacement springs, etc., for percussion revolvers. A further help would be a similar list of gunsmiths who specialize in repairs, tuning, etc. for these magnificent firearms.<sup>5</sup> Something that may or may be of interest to the authors (and, thus, may or may not be within the scope of this book) are certain experimental percussion revolvers. For example, one company (Big Iron Barrels) can bore out Dragoons and similar revolvers up to .58 (!!!!) calibre (reducing capacity to five shots). Such conversions are unhistorical, but interesting nonetheless. If the authors were interested in this, an appendix discussing it might be in order.<sup>6</sup> On a purely trivial note, it might be of interest to use 19th Century fonts (such as Baskerville Old Face) and formatting conventions on both the text and cover to give the book a more Victorian Era appearance. Not important, but it would seem to fit well with the subject matter of the book (and I did like the font used with the captions). I hope the foregoing does not give a negative impression of this treatise. If you are a percussion revolver enthusiast I think you will find this book very useful, and really ought to procure a copy for your collection.

I was very excited to order this book, as I am fascinated by the history of firearms. And in that respect, this book doesn't disappoint. It provides a pleasing overview of percussion pistols and revolvers that is quite informative, and I particularly enjoyed the authors' information on their modern-day testing of reproduction black powder pieces. However, the publisher really let the authors down - badly. Many of the photos in the book are much smaller than they need to be, making it difficult to see the finer details of the guns being discussed. As well, the captions and labels for the photos are in an archaic font that is extremely small and practically unreadable. Too, there are a number of grammatic and typographic errors that are jarring - clearly this book was not thoroughly edited and proofread before it went to press. Is this book worth buying and reading? Absolutely. If you have an interest in the pistols and revolvers of this time period, or their modern-day descendents, and you can overlook the typos and bad layout choices, this is a book you won't regret owning. I only hope that there will be improvements made in any subsequent editions of this book. If so, I'd happily purchase an updated version.

A cheap re-do of a previous edition.

Great book. Well written, interesting and informative. I wish it was a bit longer, but I can recommend it to anyone interested in the subject.

Books written by an author who actually knows things tend to be as pleasurable as they are rare. Percussion Pistols and Revolvers by Johnny Bates and Mike Cumpston is such a book. The authors write with a wonderfully dry sense of humor. "LePage performed valuable service by keeping the gentle classes entertained with full-featured target pistols. At the same time, they kept the population of the peerage from getting out of hand by making duelers of the same general pattern." Or discussing the introduction of conical bullets: "It is possible to find claims that the bullet was superior to the round ball because of increased penetration, greater target impact, and better flight characteristics. There were also frequent claims that the bullet was more accurate. The experts who made such claims were on solid scientific footing. They made perfect sense although none of them was true." This book is a hoot to read. Percussion Pistols and Revolvers covers the history of the cap lock handguns. It gives an unvarnished examination of the quality of the modern replicas and explores the availability of parts for the same. The book provides practical advice on loading, shooting, and cleaning the guns. And the book reports on the performance of the guns individually. All of this is done with a skepticism of conventional wisdom and an insistence on actual observation. When discussing the introduction of paper cartridges, "We put together a few such cartridges using cash receipt paper treated in a solution of Hi Yield Stump Remover." It's that kind of book.

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