

March 29, 2020

American Civil War Artillery (Cannon)



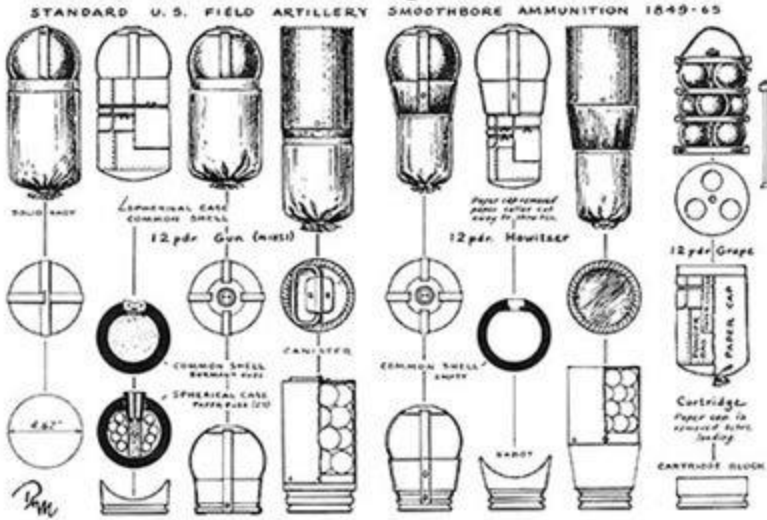
Civil War Artilleryman, encampment at PMM.

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin.)

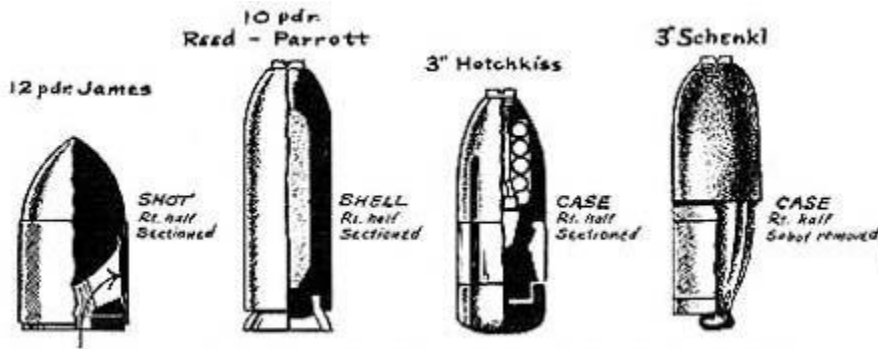
No other implement on the battlefield has for so long commanded respect than that of artillery – the king of battle. Regardless of how artillery is utilized, be it on land or sea, or even now mounted inside of an Air Force gunship, it has a devastating effect on manpower and morale.

During the American Civil War both armies utilized artillery in countless battles to varying degrees of success. By the time period of 1860-1865 the canon had been developed to a point that it would not see further enhancement until years later. Breach-loading, varying sizes of payload and amazing accuracy had already been accomplished – but it still needed individuals to site the gun in and run some quick mathematics, to pull the lanyard, and horses to drag it into place.

Examples of the munitions used by ordinance crews during the American Civil War are listed below and illustrated at right;



Examples of shot, and case, canister, and grape.



Examples of shot, shell, case.

- Solid Shot
- Shell
- Case Shot
- Canister
- Grape Shot

The Pennsylvania Military Museum has an excellent display of artillery through the ages, including American Civil War era, on exhibit in the gallery; they include Napoleon and a Tredegar. While these images allow one to gain a better understanding of their design, experiencing them in person conveys the weight and magnitude far better.

**ADVANCE**


## King of Battle: Artillery

For centuries, soldiers used gunpowder artillery against fortified positions and attacking armies. Between 1700 and 1950, these weapons were refined into the modern artillery armies use today.

- ★ New methods of casting guns were developed between 1770 and 1860.
- ★ Breech loading weapons were developed by the end of the American Civil War in 1865.
- ★ A recoil system that allowed the gun to return to exactly the same position after each shot was developed by the French in 1897.

World War I was the great age of artillery. Newer explosive shells made all weapons more effective. Huge barrages of thousands of guns softened up the enemy's position before an attack. However impressive, cannon could not break the stalemate of trench warfare. Continued advances in technology produced new systems with greater ranges and accuracy. The *King of Battle* continues to be used into the 21st century.

**Putting Things Up**  
 Artillery shells are usually referred to by the size of the projectile they fit, rather than the weight or the weight. For example, a "12 pounder" fires a 12 pound shot and a 12 inch gun fires a round 12 inch in diameter.



C



## 12 pounder Bronze Napoleon Cannon

711819  
Transfer from The Adjutant General,  
Ft. Indiantown Gap

- ★ muzzle loader
- ★ direct & indirect fire
- ★ smoothbore

The Napoleon was the most commonly used artillery piece during the Civil War. Named after its designer, Emperor Napoleon III of France, the 12 pounder Napoleon was designed to replace earlier 6 and 12 pounder guns in Europe and America. The Napoleon was capable of direct fire, like a gun, or indirect fire, like a howitzer. It also used a deadly anti-infantry round known as canister, a cylindrical container made of thin tinned iron filled with small lead balls. When fired, it exploded like a shotgun shell and was devastating to infantry formations.







## 12 pounder Howitzer Tredegar Iron Works

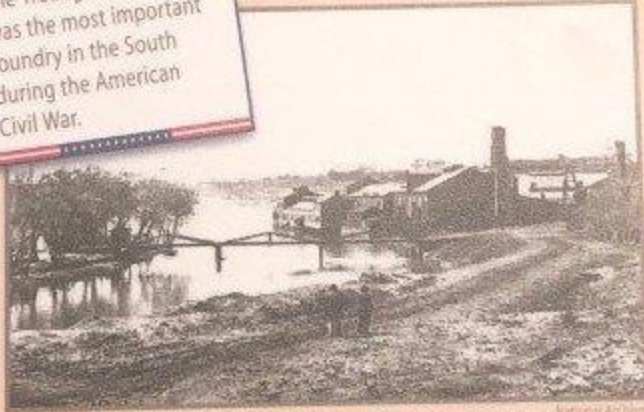
MMW 3.1

Transfer from Valley Forge Military Park

- ★ muzzle loader
- ★ indirect fire
- ★ smoothbore

### Tredegar Iron Works

The Tredegar Iron Works was the most important foundry in the South during the American Civil War.



National Archives

*(located on rear platform)*

This cannon is a muzzle-loading, smoothbore howitzer designed to hurl shells at high angles at entrenched targets. It was produced in 1861 by Tredegar Iron Works (seen above), Richmond, Virginia, and marked for use by the State of South Carolina. The howitzer was made obsolete by the 12 pounder Napoleon. By 1864 these guns were probably used only when better weapons could not be found.