

Hunting Bags and Shooting Accessories

in Virginia & North Carolina,

A Pictorial Mini-book in 3 Parts

Part 2

By

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Priming horns are small powder horns that accompanied larger primary horns used with flintlock firearms. However, all small horns are not necessarily priming horns. Figures 12a and 12b show an assortment of small horns. In Figure 12c, two samples of black powder are provided. The bottom sample is coarse-grain, FFg powder while the top sample is fine-grain FFFFg. Often, but not always, slower burning, FFg powder was used as the main charge in the barrel, whereas faster burning, FFFFg was used in the flintlock pan for more rapid ignition of the main powder charge. There were always exceptions of course. Some shooters would use the coarser powder for both the main charge and the priming charge in the pan. The reverse was not true because using fast-burning FFFFg as the main charge could result in excessive barrel pressure causing failure.

In Figure 12a, all the small powder horns could have been used as flintlock priming horns. They also simply could have been primary horns for small-bore, percussion rifles for local hunting.

The top horn and fourth down in Figure 12b are likely priming horns, the latter cut down from a damaged larger horn. Because of their large spout openings, the second, third, and fifth horns down in Figure 12b were likely used for carrying salt, a dietary necessity, on extended hunts.



Figure 12a



Figure 12 b



Figure 12c



Figure 13

Gun flints, as seen in Figure 13, accompanied hunting bags associated with flintlock guns. Occasionally, a pouch, fabricated to hold gun flints and other small items in a hunting bag, is encountered.



Figure 14a

Gun hammers, like those in Figure 14a, were used with flintlock guns, mainly to dress gun flints and to tighten flints in cock jaws. Gun hammers are profusely illustrated and discussed in detail in our article, *Gun Hammers vs. Button Hole Cutters* on this website. In lieu of gun hammers, turnscrews (screwdrivers) as in Figure 14b are sometimes found associated with hunting bags. Of course, a stout knife blade would work in a pinch for tightening flints in cock jaws.



Figure 14b

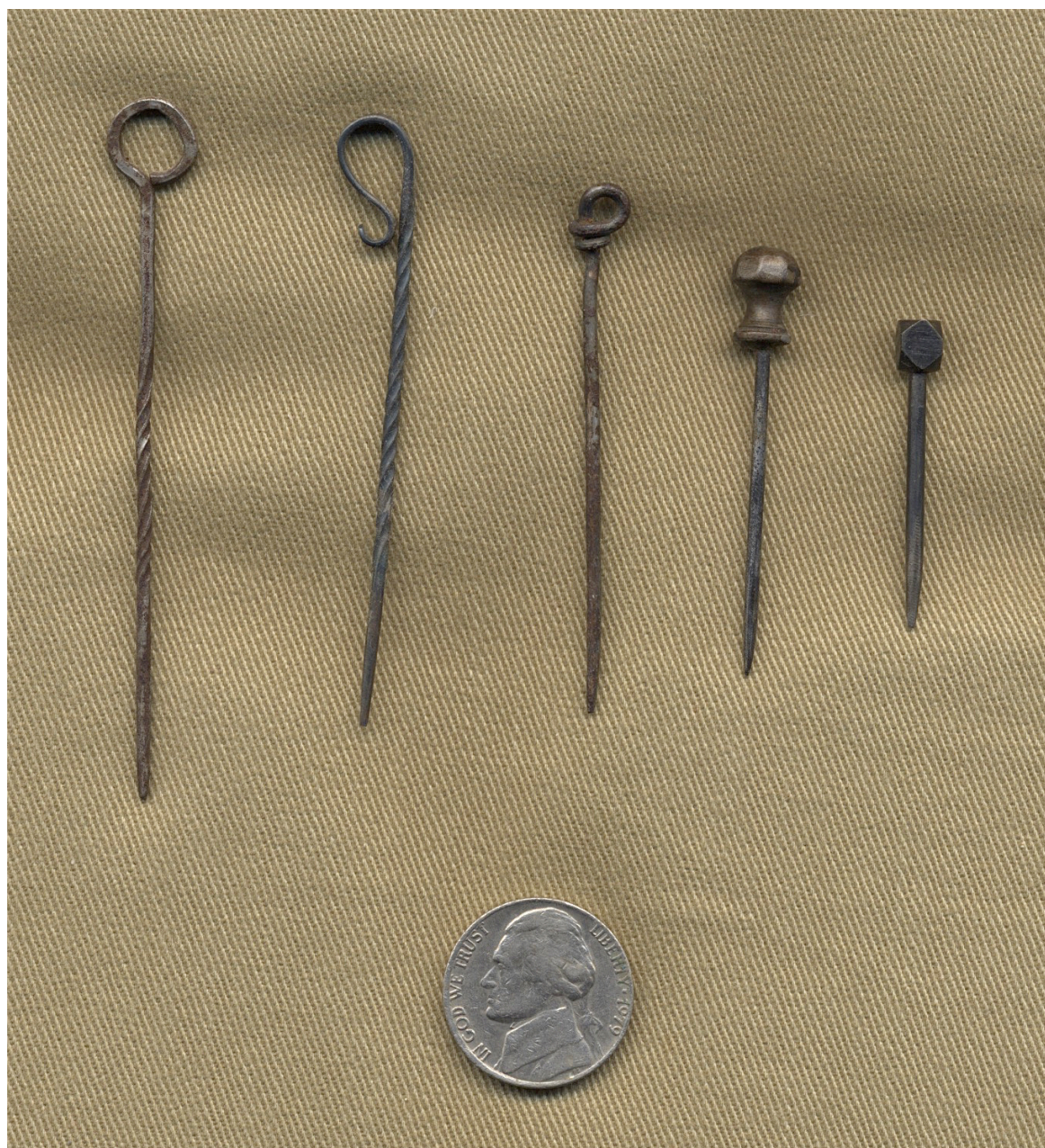


Figure 15a



Figure 15b

Figure 15a illustrates five assorted picks used for cleaning touchholes in the barrels of flintlock guns. These would be carried in several different ways: stuck in a small hole in the bottom of the buttstock and retained with beeswax, carried in the patchbox of a longrifle, clipped under the cheek piece of a longrifle, suspended on a thong from a hunting bag, or carried inside a hunting bag. Anyone, who has carried a longrifle in the woods with a pick stuck in its stock or clipped under its cheek piece, knows that the pick will not stay there very long.

Figure 15b shows a pick inserted into the touchhole of a Virginia flintlock longrifle.

Sixteen powder measures, fabricated in a variety of materials, are presented in Figures 16a through 16d. Powder measures would have been standard equipment of hunters using both rifles and smooth-bore guns. For ready use, powder measures usually would have been suspended on a leather thong, string, or chain attached to the shoulder strap of a hunting bag and long enough to be tucked into the bag or a scabbard on the strap when not in use. Fixed-capacity powder measures were sized to throw a load for a particular firearm and were not necessarily interchangeable with other firearms. Such measures range in capacity of around 20 grains of black powder for small-caliber rifles to over 100 grains for large smooth-bore guns. An example of a 20-grain powder measure is the turkey spur on the bag in Figure 3b. Adjustable powder measures generally could be set for up to 100 grains.

All the powder measures in Figure 16a are made from deer antler and are for rifles. In Figure 16b, from left to right, the rifle measures are pewter, sheet iron (tin), and sheet brass. Clockwise from upper left in Figure 16c is a wood rifle powder measure, a bamboo smooth-bore or large-rifle measure, a cow-horn rifle measure, and a horn powder measure for a smooth-bore gun. Four adjustable measures, three in iron and one in brass, are shown in Figure 16d. The measure on the right retains its leather scabbard for securing it to a bag shoulder strap.



Figure 16a



Figure 16b



Figure 16c



Figure 16d

A rifle was built in a specified caliber based on the desired number of balls produced by a pound of lead. All rifles required a bullet mold exactly sized to form a bullet just shy of the rifle bore diameter. The bullet produced would then need a cloth patch to engage the rifling. The bullet mold came as standard equipment with the rifle from the gunsmith.

There are two basic types of single-cavity bullet molds in Figure 17a. All are forged iron. The top three molds are completely handmade and decorated examples by the gunsmith to accompany his rifle. The bottom three are commercial examples, likely made in Birmingham or Sheffield, England. In these, the gunsmith would simply cut the cavity in a blank mold to the proper caliber for the rifle. Figure 17b shows a blank, commercial, bullet mold and the bullet-mold cherry used to cut the cavity. On these single-cavity molds, the gunsmith sometimes would mark the number of bullets per pound of lead (see Figure 17a, bottom middle mold).

An unsigned, brass, gang mold (Figure 17c) is for a buck and ball, smooth-bore gun. This mold, probably made by Connecticut gunsmith,

Josiah Miller, apparently found its way into the Valley of Virginia in the eighteenth century.

Figure 17d shows an assortment of bullets/balls, fine or bird shot, and buckshot. Bullets, balls, and buckshot generally were cast in molds using a ladle to melt and pour the lead. A ladle, such as in Figure 17e, along with a bullet mold would have been gear associated with a hunting bag.

Shot, on the other hand, was formed by pouring molten lead through a sized screen in a shot tower. Shot took its shape as the lead solidified in the air on its way down the shot tower and was quenched in water at the bottom of the tower. Shot would have been purchased commercially.



Figure 17a



Figure 17b

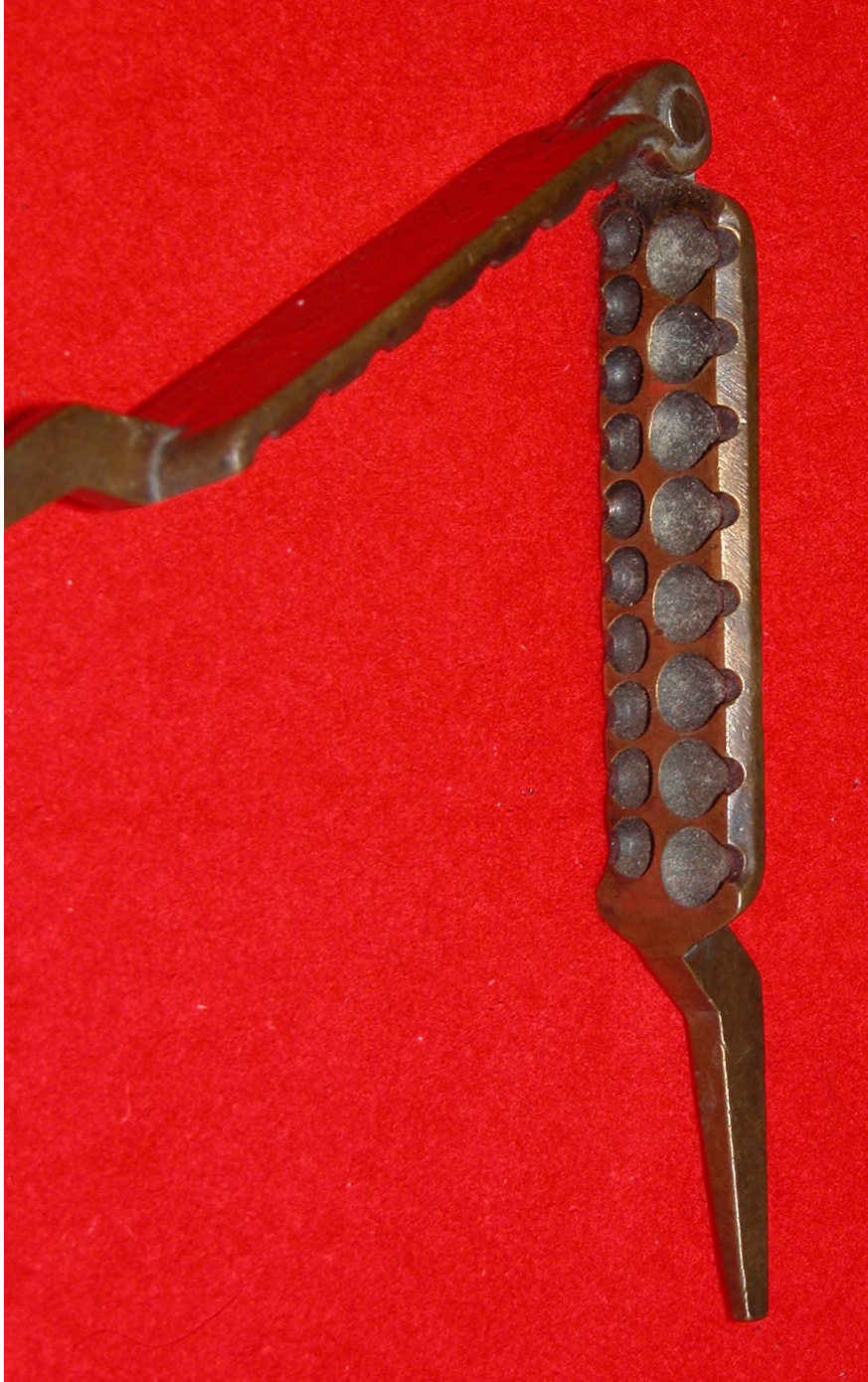


Figure 17c



Figure 17d

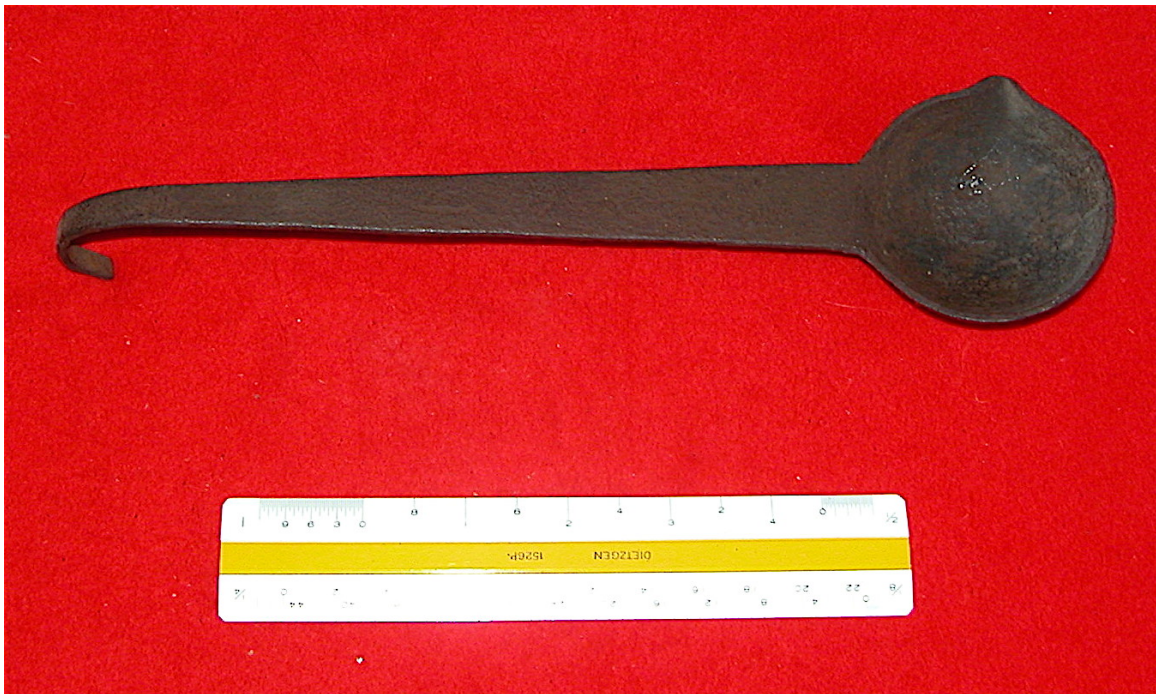


Figure 17e

When a bullet is cast in a bullet mold, a stem of lead or sprue, formed by the hole in the mold leading to the bullet cavity, remains attached to the bullet. This sprue must be removed before a bullet can be used. With a bullet mold handmade by a gunsmith, a cutting tool of some fashion was needed to remove the sprue. Three small, gunsmith-made, sprue cutters are pictured in Figure 18a. Of course, any other type of period end-nipper or cutting tool could have been used to cut sprues, not just purpose-made sprue cutters.

The manufacturers of the commercial, bullet molds solved the problem of cutting sprues from bullets cast in their molds. They incorporated a crescent-shaped, sprue cutter into their bullet molds just below the mold hinge (see Figure 17a, bottom three molds). Figure 18b shows: bullets cast in the mold (upper left) with the sprue attached, a sprue being nipped from a bullet with a purpose-made, sprue cutter (lower left), and a bullet with sprue attached ready for trimming in the integral sprue cutter on a commercial bullet mold. Also note on the commercial bullet mold in Figure 18b the number, 38, indicating that the gunsmith cut the cavity in the mold to produce 38 bullets to a pound of lead.



Figure 18a



Figure 18b

Bullets for rifles, as well as balls and buckshot for smooth-bore guns, would have been carried loose in a hunting bag or in a separate container of sorts in the bag. Shot was carried in a separate pouch, either in a hunting bag or suspended on a shoulder strap. Figures 19a through 19f cover these container options. Figure 19a shows a six-inch, wood bullet block with rifle bullets and surrounding, trimmed patches set for ready use. In the field, this option would have afforded rapid reloading of a rifle. While undoubtedly used extensively, few bullet blocks survive. A large-spout bullet horn is in Figure 19b. Three bullet and/or shot pouches for hunting bags are in Figures 19c and 19d. The pouch on the left is cloth, has a brass commercial measure, and was likely for shot. The other two pouches are leather with wood spouts. The spout on the middle pouch in Figures 19c and 19e is small and would suggest that it is a shot pouch. However, its stopper is hollowed out (see Figure 19d) to serve as a small powder measure, suggesting the pouch was designed for use with a small-caliber rifle rather than a smooth-bore gun. The pouch spout on the right (see Figure 19c) and bottom (see Figure 19d) is large enough to accommodate bullets and probably did so. Obviously, all three could have been used for shot.

The two shot pouches in Figures 19e and 19f are shoulder-strap types. The double-pouch, left example is commercial, the other a homemade single pouch example. Both have commercial, brass, shot measures.



Figure 19a



Figure 19b



Figure 19c



Figure 19d



Figure 19e

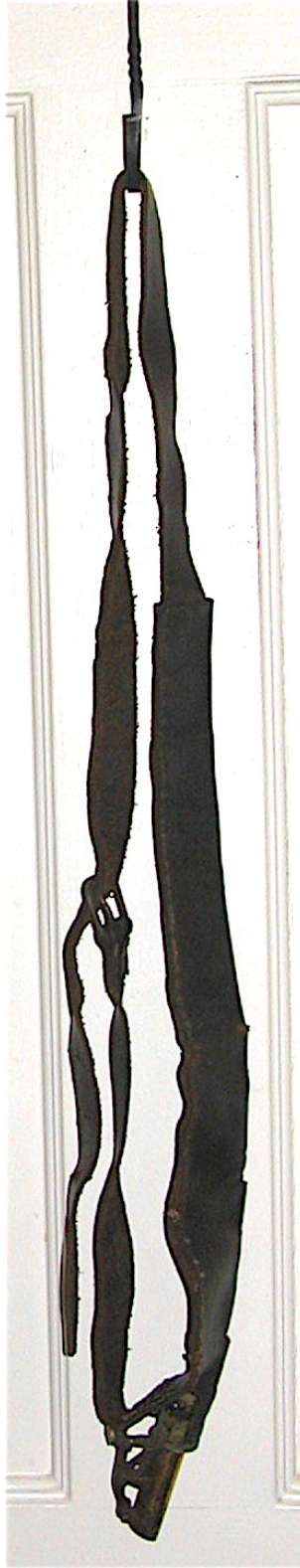


Figure 19f

Patch knives, hunting knives, folding knives, and bag axes found in Virginia and North Carolina, such as those in Figures 20a, 20b, and 21 are illustrated and discussed in our article, *Blades in VA and NC-From Stones to Steel* on this website.

Figures 20c and 20d show how a ball is set in the bore of a rifle surrounded with patch material. A slice across the muzzle of the rifle with a patch knife separates a patch from the patch material. Patches were usually, but not always, lubricated with animal grease or human saliva. Some were used dry. Patch material would have been carried in the hunting bag. Pre-cut, individual patches and grease could have been carried in a rifle's patchbox.

Some riflemen started the bullet and patch in the rifle muzzle with a purpose-built, bullet starter, similar to those seen in Figure 21. However, most riflemen likely started the bullet and patch with a ramrod or a thumb. Bullet starters associated with hunting bags and longrifles are rare. They are far more common in cased sets of pistols.

Diminutive axes such as in Figure 22, suitable for carrying in hunting bags, are occasionally encountered. Usually, these bag axes are well made, have steel bits, and are sharp. While their true purpose is

unknown, chopping probably was secondary to cutting tasks like skinning. In any case, they are not common.



Figure 20a



Figure 20b



Figure 20c



Figure 20d



Figure 21



Figure 22

End of Part 2