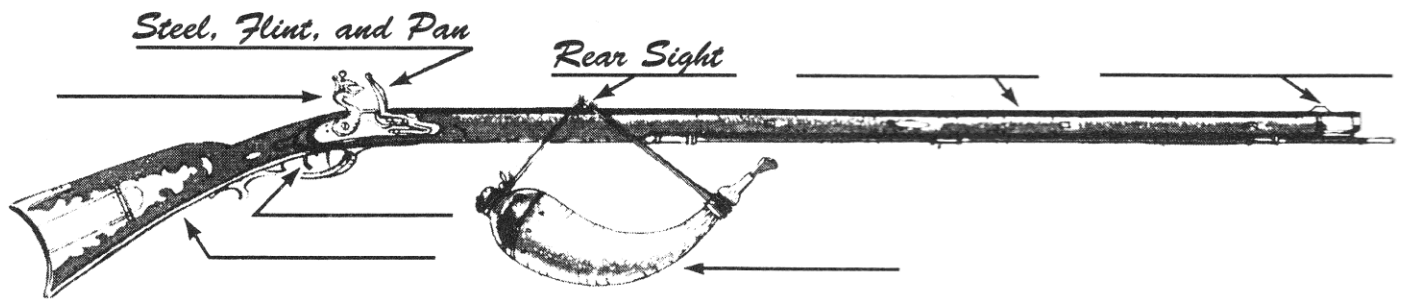


## SYMBOL OF AMERICA: THE KENTUCKY RIFLE



Rifles like the one shown above were first made in Pennsylvania in the early 1700's. They became affectionately known as "Kentucky" rifles after Daniel Boone and other pioneers made them famous.

Before the invention of the Kentucky rifle, the most popular gun in the colonies was the musket. But the musket was not well suited to frontier life. It was too heavy to carry on long journeys. It was inaccurate and it had an effective range of fewer than 100 yards.

The Kentucky rifle was a great improvement on the musket. The musket barrel had a smooth bore, or interior, in which the lead bullets fitted loosely. The rifle barrel had *rifling* or spiral grooves, cut into the bore. The grooves made the bullets spin as they were fired; this increased the accuracy of the gun.

Also, the rifle bullet fitted tightly in the barrel. Therefore the full force of the exploding powder was

used to expel the bullet, making it travel much farther and faster than the musket ball.

Other advantages of the rifle were that it used less powder and smaller bullets than the musket. These things were important to pioneers, who took long journeys, and to hunters, who might stay in the woods for months and had to carry all their powder and shot with them.

Of course, the advantages of the Kentucky rifle were also important to soldiers. Early in the Revolutionary War, the British were astounded at the range and accuracy of American guns. The British army had no such weapons as these.

Defeating the British and winning the West for America were difficult jobs. The Kentucky rifle did much to make both jobs easier.

### ***Loading and Firing the Kentucky Rifle***



1. The story on the opposite page tells you that the musket was not well suited to frontier life. On the lines below, list briefly the disadvantages of the musket as compared with the Kentucky rifle.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was there about the rifle's barrel that helped make the rifle more accurate than the musket?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What improvement did the rifle have over the musket to help the rifle bullet travel faster and farther than the musket ball?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the two guns used the most powder and lead?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What features of the rifle were important to pioneers and hunters?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Explain why most soldiers – especially English soldiers – had muskets and NOT rifles during the Revolution.

9. If you were an American commander, how could you take advantage of this new firearms *technology*? Describe some ways you would use soldiers with rifles differently than the rest of your army who had muskets.

6. Read the descriptions below of some of the parts of the Kentucky rifle. Then write the name of each part in the proper place on the diagram on the opposite page. Some parts have been labeled for you.

**Stock**—the wooden part that rests against the shoulder when the gun is aimed

**Barrel**—the metal tube through which the bullet travels

**Sights**—aiming devices; one at the rear and one at the front of the barrel

**Trigger**—the lever that fires the gun

**Hammer**—springs forward when the trigger is pulled, striking the *flint* against the *steel*. Sparks ignite powder in the *pan*, which in turn fires powder in the barrel.

**Horn**—container for gunpowder

7. The drawings on the opposite page show how a Kentucky rifle was loaded and fired. Match the descriptions below with the drawings. Write the number of the correct drawing in front of each description.

\_\_\_\_\_ The ramrod tamps down the bullet.

\_\_\_\_\_ Grains of powder are poured into the pan of the rifle.

\_\_\_\_\_ A lead bullet and a greased patch are put into the barrel.

\_\_\_\_\_ The hammer strikes the flint against the steel, causing sparks.

\_\_\_\_\_ The pioneer aims the rifle.

\_\_\_\_\_ A measure of powder is poured into the barrel of the rifle.