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FORT GRIFFIN ECHO

North Central Texas, Shackelford County, Fort Griffin and the Flat

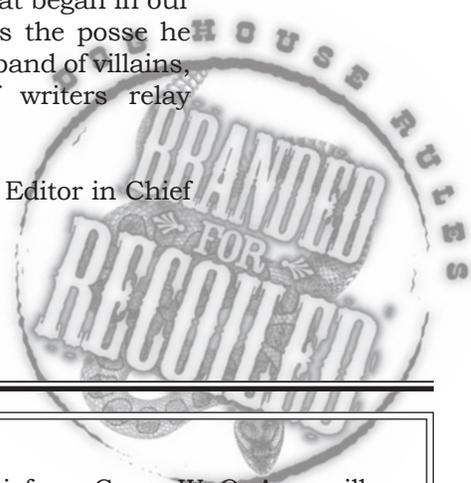
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We Texans take our martyrs and legends very seriously. Not all legends need be the likes of Davy Crockett and Sam Houston, however. No, there are other types: legends of faith, legends of politics, and even legends of industry. Samuel Colt, despite being a Yankee, certainly falls into the last category. While he may never have taken up arms for Texas Independence, fought Indian raiders, or stared down a gang of banditos, in a way Sam Colt's presence was felt from Fort Griffin to San Antonio. For where would Texas' fighting legends be without their six-guns? In this issue of the Fort Griffin Echo we pay tribute to the legend of Colt. With the debut of a new column, *The Man and the Myth*, we present the man himself, while this issue's Weapon Report details the firearms he made, which in their turn made him.

In addition to these two "themed" articles, Thomas L. Gregory continues the series of real-life newspaper stories that began in our last issue. Mr. Christopher S. Warner complements the posse he revealed in our first issue, by presenting a complete band of villains, Adams' Outliers. Finally, our ever-vigilant staff writers relay important events from the community.

- Cyrus W.Q. Argenville, Editor in Chief



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THE WEAPON REPORT

BRADLEY W. HINDMAN

“Abe Lincoln may have freed all men, but Sam Colt made them equal.”

“God created men. Samuel Colt made them equal.”

“God didn’t make all men equal, Sam Colt did.”

“God made man equal. But, Colonel Colt made some more equal than others.”

“God made every man different; Sam Colt made them equal.”

Anyone who has ever played a Western roleplaying game has probably read or heard at least one of these quotes. It would seem to be an unwritten rule that, in one permutation or another, this phrase must appear wherever and whenever the guns of the Old West are discussed; appearing so often it has become rather trite. I hope gentle reader; you will forgive the inclusion here once realizing that, while trite, it is extremely relevant in the present context.

This installment of *The Weapon Report* covers the early firearms manufactured by the companies of Samuel Colt; in particular, all standard-issue caplock firearms manufactured between 1837 and 1872. In addition, you may notice all statistics include misfire modifiers, and many include misfire quirks. For an explanation of these rules please see *The Fort Griffin Echo, Volume 1 Number 1* (page 3). Since the game statistics for each weapon have been balanced with the possibility of a misfire in mind, it is strongly recommended Judges either use those misfire rules, or restrict character access to the more powerful weapons.

Colt Percussion Firearms

Colt Firearms (1836 – 1872)

When Colt invented his first revolver, he was still a young man with little means. Because his immediate family lacked the funds necessary to stake his business, Samuel Colt appealed to a rich uncle and other industrial backers. While this allowed Colt to found the Patent Arms Manufacturing Company and build a factory in Paterson, New Jersey, it ultimately led to the venture’s failure. For while Colt was the company’s number one salesman and kept the factory operating smoothly, he wasn’t, technically, in control. Samuel Colt’s cousin, Dudley Selden, served as the General Manager. The cousins’ relationship was fractious at best, as Selden was fiscally conservative and felt many of Colt’s efforts in public relations and marketing were too extravagant. Eventually, in 1840, the continuous friction led to Selden’s resignation and replacement by John Ehlers, an important stockholder. Colt’s relationship with Ehlers

proved even less productive, if possible, and Colt eventually sued Ehlers and Patent Arms over improper crediting of royalties. Partially in response to the lawsuit, Ehlers filed for bankruptcy in 1842 and the company’s assets were liquidated.

The Paterson factory produced several thousand rifles, shotguns, and pistols over its 6 years of operation, all working on Sam’s patented revolving cylinder design. From the very beginning Colt sought to obtain government contracts for his revolving arms; however, the military didn’t yet fully appreciate the value of repeating arms and deemed Colt’s new weapons as unreliable, due to “complexity of construction and consequent greater liability to derangement and accidents.”¹

Stemming from the unfavorable reviews by army ordnance officers, only a small number of the Paterson factory’s Colt arms saw military service. Yet, those weapons seeing action were well received by soldiers in the field. While this appreciation couldn’t save Colt’s initial company, it did grant Colt a second chance. During the

¹Colt Firearms from 1836, James E. Serven, Stackpole Books, Harrisburg Pennsylvania, 1954