



## THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR – INFANTRY – CARTRIDGE BOXES

In the Civil War soldiers used paper cartridges in their rifles. The paper cartridge was full of black powder. To fire his rifle, a Civil War soldier needed a paper cartridge and a percussion cap. These caps looked very much like the caps for toy cap guns sold today. The soldier put the percussion cap into the firing chamber of his rifle. Then, he tore open the paper cartridge. He emptied the black powder into the barrel of the gun. Next, he packed the powder into the barrel with a ramming rod. When the soldier pulled the trigger, the hammer came down on the percussion cap. Pop! This ignited the black powder. The musket ball or bullet zoomed down the barrel of the gun. Boom! The bullet sailed through the air toward its target.

Cartridges were carried in a black leather box. It was often slung from a strap that went over the left shoulder. The strap crossed the chest. The box sat on the soldier's right hip. It was easy for the soldier to reach the cartridges from there. Most of the time the strap had a brass chest plate with an eagle on it. The cartridge box contained a brass "USA" plate on the flap.