

WEAPONS

OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Gallery

By William Huo
April 6, 2017

1 Introduction

The Revolutionary war raged the continent of North America for 9 years. During the time from 1775 to 1883, 42 million people served and 840,000 people died. Although 17,000 of these people died from disease, including the 8,000 prisoners of war, the rest died from bullets, or on the tip of bayonets, swords, and knives. Weapons changed the course of the revolution not only by killing 823000, but it influenced the action's of both sides of the war.



Weapons at the Battle of Yorktown

2 Rifles

Pennsylvania long rifles were the first full American design. With a range of 300 yards and an effective range of more than 200, it was the longest ranged infantry weapon.

These rifles were used by riflemen to take down specific targets from long distances. Riflemen were usually guarded by people with muskets because many soldiers had plug bayonets, or bayonets with plugs in them designed to be inserted into rifles making them useless.

A group of riflemen led by Daniel Morgan was known as "Morgan's Riflemen". They were known to shoot at officers in order to cause confusion. This strategy won many battles that otherwise would have



Morgan's Riflemen

3 Artillery

The weapons with the longest range were the cannons with 2,000 yards as maximum range and 1,000 yards as effective range. They were followed by Mortars and Howitzers with maximum ranges of 1,400 and 1,300 and effective ranges of 750 yards respectively.

Cannons could be used to siege forts, defend forts, and fire from navy ships. They were known as "The Queen of The Battlefield"; the side without cannons would almost always lose. Because of this, the Patriots made their primary goal to capture enemy cannons and other artillery for

later battles. The capture of fort Ticonderoga, however, changed this because it gave the patriots a huge supply of ammunition and artillery. The Americans also received cannons from their French allies.

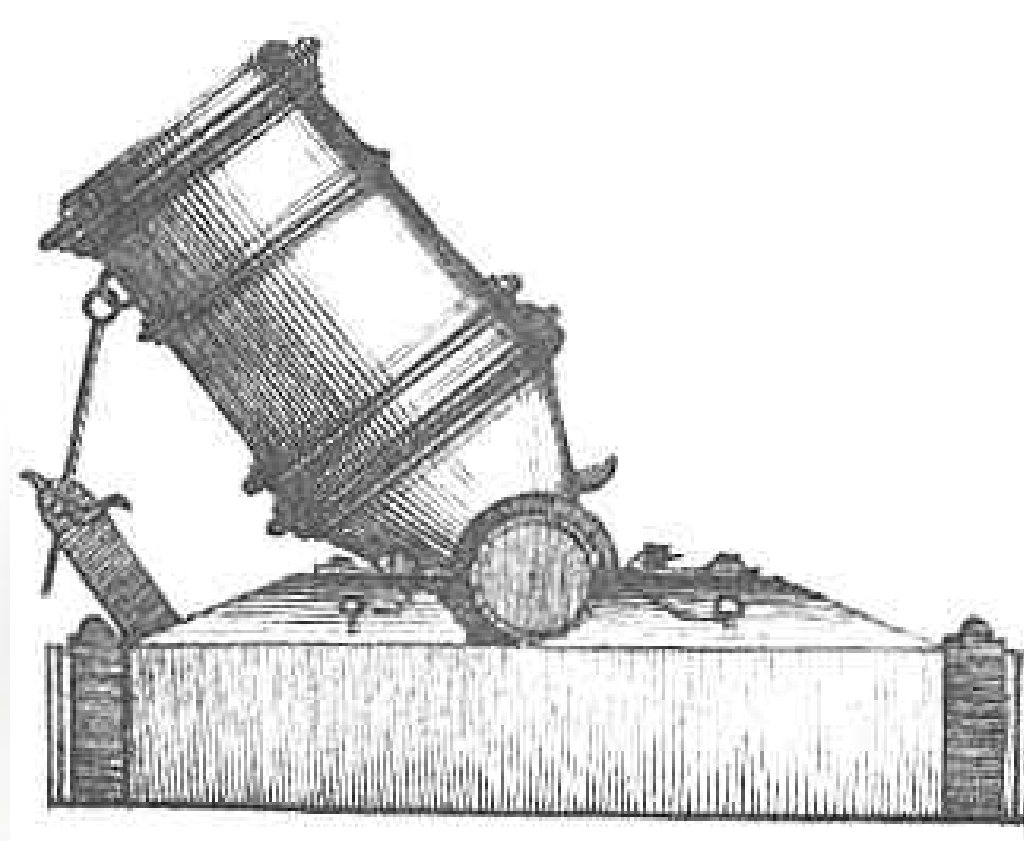
Cannons could fire 3 main types of shots. Solid iron balls were used to destroy enemy artillery and wooden structures. Grape shots were balls of lead in either a metal can or cloth bag which would release the lead after getting fired. Grape shots were primarily used by navy ships. Hollow bombs were filled with black powder

and, when timed correctly, would explode and rain debris on enemy soldiers.

Mortars, small cannons with short barrels on sleds or wood platforms, were used to fire bombs at enemy soldiers. They were much shorter but not mobile so Howitzers were made. They were just mortars that were more mobile and usually were transported using wheels.



American soldier stands guard in front of a cannon.



Drawing of a mortar



Howitzer in Yorktown National Park



Cannon firing



French artillery at the battle of Yorktown

4 Muskets

Muskets were the most common weapon used in battlefield. With British made Brown Bess used by both the British and Americans, and the French Charleville muskets used by the Americans and their French allies, muskets were the primary weapon of both sides of the war.

Muskets were often used with a ball that was smaller than the barrel to increase the ease of reloading. For example, the Brown Bess was a 75 caliber gun but it used a 69 caliber ball. The Charleville musket was 69 caliber but used a 65 caliber ball. This made the ball bounce around the barrel instead of going straight which made the guns not accurate. That is why soldiers armed with muskets lined up in battle and fired an array of bullets.

After firing, the side would either prepare their bayonets for a bayonet charge or charge with their bayonets. Bayonets were cutting weapons attached to the end of a gun. Used mainly to attack infantry forces, they could also be used to kill horses of cavalry, forcing them to fight on the ground.



A 1746 Brown Bess musket



Charleville Musket with bayonet

5 Pistols

A soldier wielding pistols was not a common sight. Though occasionally used by cavalry, pistols were not at all accurate and fired at a slow rate making it only ideal as last minute defense. In fact, it shot 2-3 bullets a minute.

Despite of this, many soldiers carried pistols and there were 2 main types, the heavy dragoon and the light dragoon. They could both be heavily decorated or left simple. The main difference between the two was the length of the barrel; the heavy dragoon had a longer barrel and the light dragoon had a shorter one



3 Light Dragoon pistols

7 Swords, Knives, and Tomahawks

Although some cavalrymen used pistols, cutting weapons were the primary weapons for soldiers on horseback.

Some officers would command there troops using sabers instead of halberds. Cavalrymen used swords to slice at soldiers below them. There were a vast majority of knives used including throwing knives, daggers, scalpers and skinners.

There were multiple Native American tribes siding with the British and a few siding with the Americans. All native soldiers were skilled at using the

tomahawk, a small axe used for hand to hand combat and could be thrown at enemies from a long range. Tomahawks were also used by American and British troops as a secondary weapon.



A military saber



A dagger



A knife



A sword



A steel tomahawk used by Colonists



A stone tomahawk used by Natives

6 Halberd

George Washington thought that officers with firearms would distract his forces and instead gave them halberds. Halberds were long spears with an axe on the end. on the other side of the axe, there was a hook.

Halberds were a signaling device used by officers to command their troops as well as a deadly weapon. The hook at the end of the spear was used to pull cavalrymen off of their horses and the axe and spear tip was used to kill them.



Caption

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the weapons of the revolutionary war are sometimes overlooked but the decisions and battle strategies show the importance of having the specific weapons there were. From stealing enemy cannons to sniping at officers, weapon choice and battle strategy lead the Americans to victory.



Caption