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# The Flintlock Musket: Brown Bess And Charleville 1715-1865 (Weapon)



## Synopsis

The flintlock or firelock musket is one of the truly iconic weapons in history: first used on the battlefields of the Thirty Years' War and the English Civil War, it was carried by both sides at Bunker Hill, Waterloo and the Alamo, and can truly be said to have dominated warfare for more than 150 years, until the advent of cartridge ammunition and breechloading weapons in the 1840s and 1850s and were still being widely used as late as the American Civil War in the 1860s. During the 18th century flintlocks tended to follow one of two basic patterns: from 1722 the British .75-calibre model, the 'Brown Bess', offered better man-stopping qualities and influenced the Prussians and others, while from 1717 the lighter, handier but more sturdy French .69-calibre Charleville served as a pattern first for the other Bourbon kingdoms such as Spain, then the American Springfield family of weapons, and finally for just about everybody else in Europe during the Napoleonic era. Featuring specially commissioned full-colour artwork, this engaging study examines the role played by the flintlock in close-order combat on European and other battlefields, employing first-hand accounts to show how tactical doctrines were successfully developed to overcome the weapon's inherent limitations; it also explores the use of the flintlock musket by individuals in irregular warfare, chiefly in North America. These two threads are combined in an analysis of the weapon's lasting impact; notwithstanding its frequently negative portrayal in popular films and otherwise respectable histories, it was extremely effective and the first truly universal soldier's weapon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The flintlock musket enjoyed a long service life as a weapon of war. It equipped armies around the world from the European wars of the early 1700's through the conclusion of the American Civil War. The weapon itself was relatively simple to build and use, yet with it, farmers and tradesmen could be turned, with a little training, into deadly infantrymen. "The Flintlock Musket" is an Osprey Weapon Series book by Stuart Reid, with illustrations by Steve Noon and Alan Gilliland. Roughly the first third of the book is devoted to a detail technical description of the flintlock and its evolution over time. Another large segment is devoted to the struggle of mainly European armies to develop tactics to best employ the flintlock musket on the battlefield. The last and perhaps best third is a concise history of its use on the battlefield, touching examples in Europe, India, and North America. The text is nicely supported by a collection of photographs, diagrams, and period and modern illustrations. As the author notes, the flintlock musket lasted such a long time because, coupled with a bayonet, it was a highly lethal weapon whose users, whether Highland light infantry, Indian Sepoys, or American farmers, required relatively little training to become effective in battle. Recommended as a highly readable introduction to the topic.

Since I shoot a replica 1777 Charleville and some of my friends shoot replica "Brown Besses", I was interested in what this book had to offer. Although there is a discussion of the differences between the Charleville and Brown Bess (the Charleville is judged superior, which I would agree), the differences are more technical than operationally significant. The book concentrates on the development of tactics for the military flintlock musket (a word on nomenclature: "musket" is generally used now to refer to any type of muzzle-loading longarm. If it is rifled, rather than smoothbore, it is referred to as a rifle-musket). These two flintlock muskets were the instruments with which France and England made themselves into world powers - the standard infantry weapons from the early 1700s through Waterloo, some being used as late as our Civil War. It is also interesting how little these muskets changed over that hundred year period; more tweaks than substantive changes. The 1766 Charleville was used extensively by American forces in the Revolution and was the basis for the 1895 Springfield - the first American made military longarm. A book aimed more at the general reader than the specialist, it will give the reader a good picture of these iconic arms and how they were used.

Historical information and great overview of the development of the most fundamental change in military tactics until the machine gun is brought forth and the tank.

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