

AMERICA'S FIRST INVENTION

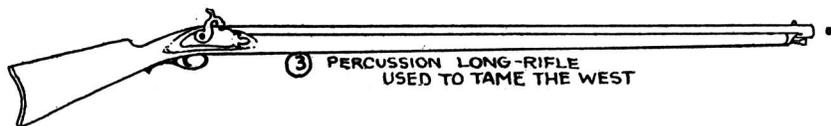
A HomeschoolRadioShows Listening Guide
written by Cindy Horton

The program "America's First Invention" was originally heard on Adventures in Research, a syndicated radio program broadcast in the early 1950s.

Summary

The year is 1778, and the war of independence between Great Britain and the American colonies is in full swing. The British troops are highly disciplined, expertly trained, and equipped with plenty of food, clothing, and ammunition. The Americans are underfed, undisciplined, and constantly running short of gunpowder. How did this rag tag band of colonists win the war?

The Pennsylvania long rifle.



The rifle had been known for many years—with its distinctive grooves inside the barrel that gave the fired bullet a spiral spin, making it travel farther than a bullet from any other gun. In Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the law of the land was the law of survival, and the men who used the rifle were constantly improving it. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, a Pennsylvania long rifle could accurately hit a target from 100 yards away. This was a vast improvement over the British musket.

A newspaper article read by the British General Thomas Gage told of a demonstration in which sixty colonists hit a target at 150 yards. Incredulous, he ordered spies to watch an upcoming shooting exhibition at Cambridge Commons in Massachusetts.

At the exhibition, a man placed a line of seven inch poles at one end of a field. He

began pacing off the measurement to the place where the riflemen would line up. Fifty yard, 100 yards. People began to laugh. No one could hit those poles from 100 yards away! The man kept walking until he reach 250 yards from the target poles. The riflemen lined up, took aim, and fired. Every single pole was hit.

General Gage was shocked at the report and offered a £20 sterling reward for the capture of a Pennsylvania rifleman and his weapon. A man called Merchant was captured and sent to England to demonstrate the rifle. General Gage was certain that Englishmen would be inspired to enlist in the British army, but the rifle demonstrations had the opposite effect.

Loading a rifle took 30 seconds, twice as long as loading a musket. With its amazing accuracy, British soldiers couldn't get anywhere near the colonial soldiers to engage in bayonet fighting. The Redcoats called the colonists "savages with a most remarkable rifle."

The Pennsylvania rifle had won the frontier in the first place and now held it for its very own.

Pennsylvania Long Rifle links:

<http://www.explorepahistory.com/displayimage.php?imgId=5092> (photo of PA long rifle)

<http://www.airbum.com/NeatShtpix/LongRifle.html>

<http://www.ourancestry.com/rifle.html>

Revolutionary War links:

<http://www.theamericanrevolution.org/>

<http://www.patriotresource.com/people/gage.html>

Discussion Questions:

What other reasons do you think helped the colonists defeat the British in the American Revolution?

If you had been a young British man when Mr. Merchant demonstrated his Pennsylvania long rifle in England, how would you have reacted? Would it have made you enlist so you could help "whip the Americans," as General Gage hoped? Or would you have felt like either of the two men in the radio program?

What qualities make a good soldier? Just his weapon, or is there something more?

Moral Lesson:

The British in the program seemed to think that because their musket had been the best for so many years, because they had been the most powerful nation in the world, no one could ever defeat them and no one could ever be stronger.

The Bible is full of examples of people whose pride became so great they couldn't see past it. Look up these verses regarding pride: Psalm 10:2, 76:3; Proverbs 11:2, 13:10.

Can you see a relationship between the British leaders' pride and the causes of the Revolutionary War? What about the outcome of the war?

In the radio program, General Gage did not want to believe that any weapon was more accurate and more powerful than the British musket. We must be careful to keep the humble mind of Jesus Christ and remember that, though we have talents and abilities, God does not call us to be the greatest among the brethren. Remember these verses.

But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. -Matthew 19:30

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. -1 Peter 5:5

Copyright 2008, HomeschoolRadioShows.com, all rights reserved. No reproduction or redistribution allowed.

Coloring Page: The Pennsylvania Long Rifle



