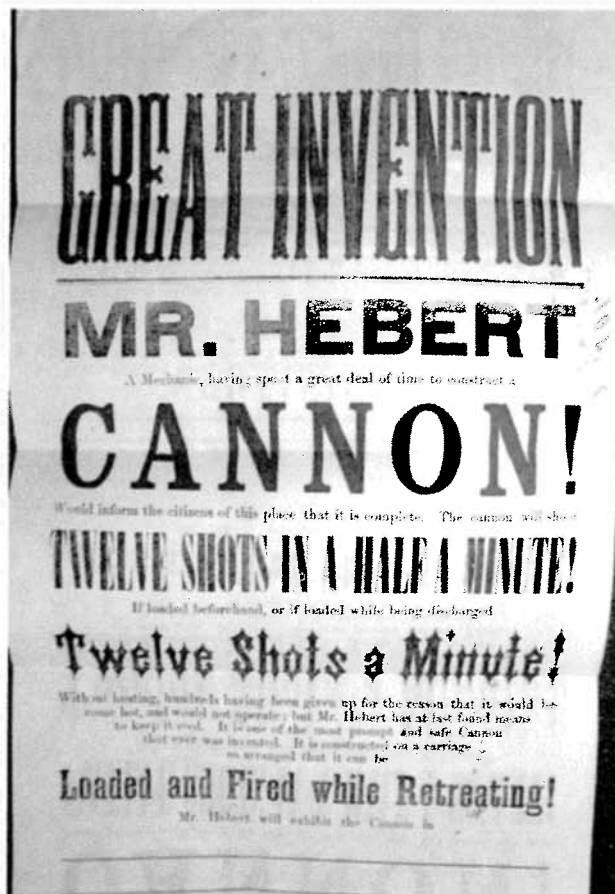


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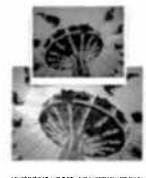
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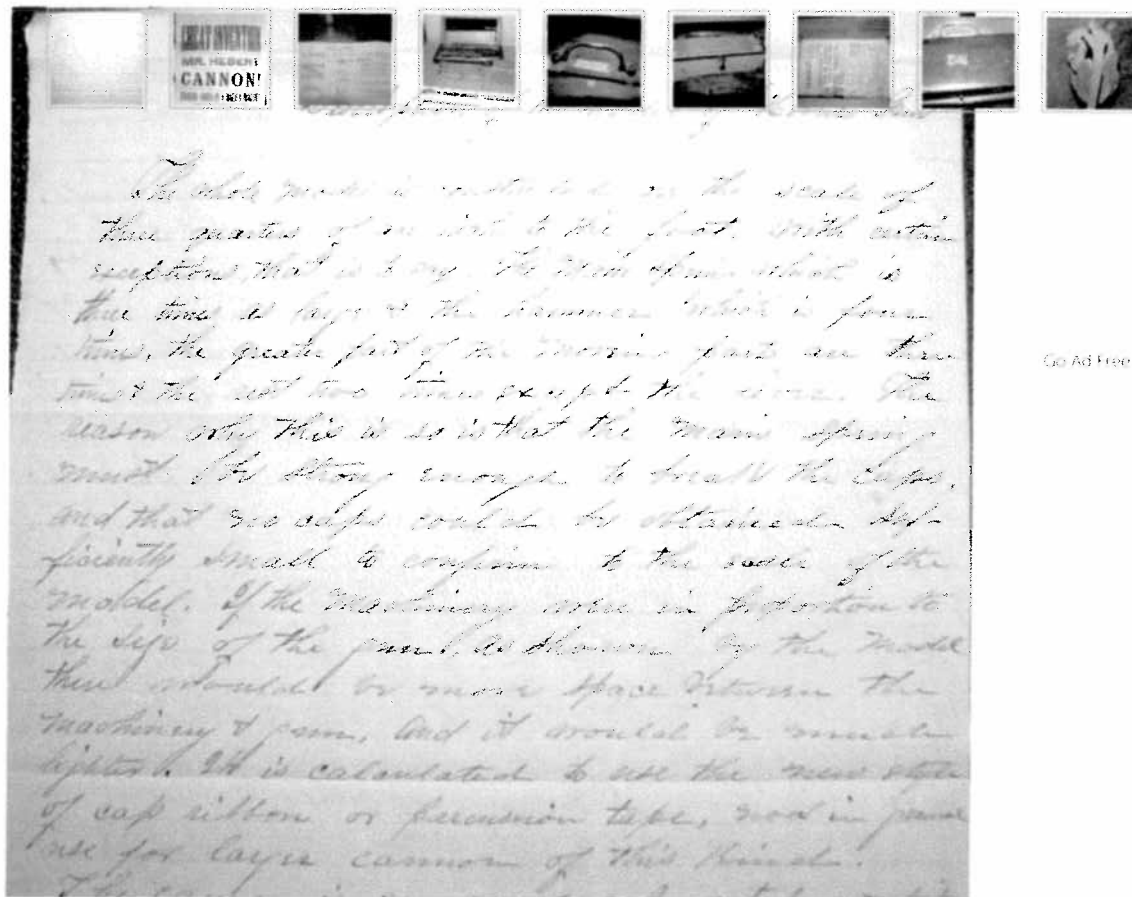
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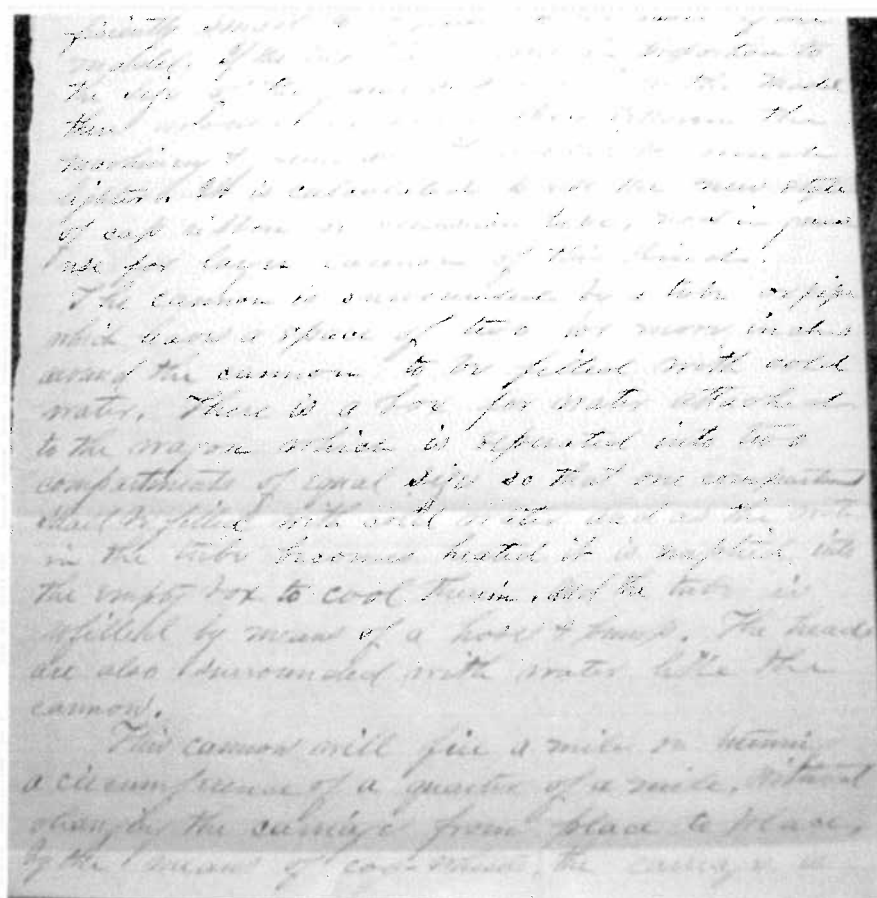
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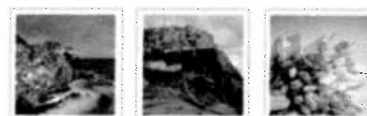
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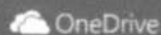
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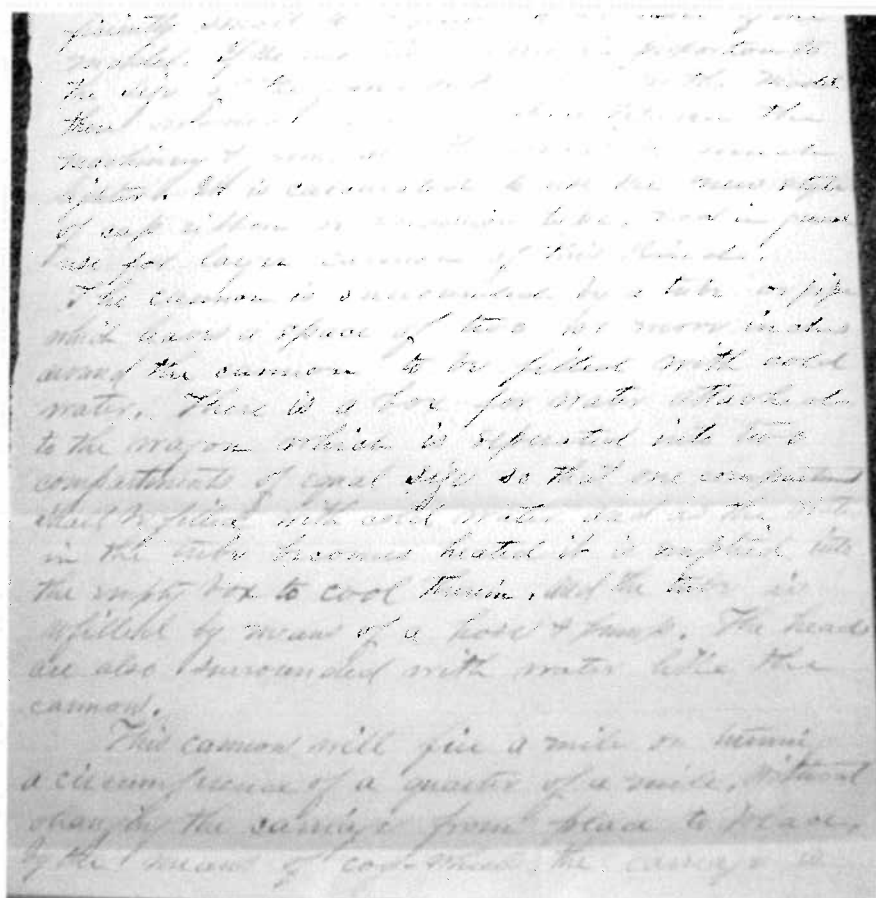
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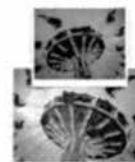
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Hebert cannon

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Hebert's rapid-fire watercooled
cannon 1862

I purchased this working cannon model at a small auction house in upstate NY about 15 years ago. The model cannon came in a wooden carrying case, with a patent awarded to the cannon's inventor for a railroad-car coupling (patent 104,306.) Inventor Alexis Hebert's drafting set was a separate lot which I won as well, so his items remained together.

The model is fully functional; when the lever is cycled the entire cylinder with 12 chambers moves

Hebert cannon
rearward to disengage the gas seal
from the barrel, rotates to align the
next chamber with the barrel, then
moves forward to re-engage the barrel
gas seal again. The same type of
motion is used in the famous late
19th C. Nagant military revolver used
by Russia. The barrel of the cannon
is water-cooled, however the hoses
have long-since disintegrated. I
found some period documentation
listing Alexis Hebert as a
"mechanic." I'm not sure what trade
that translates to in modern terms,
but it is clear to me from inspecting
and working the complex mechanism,
that Hebert was a highly-skilled
engineer and craftsman.

About a decade after I acquired the
model, I decided to see if he could
learn more about it. I couldn't find
a patent for it, or even a patent
application, but I'm not that
familiar with doing patent searches.

I then went to the National Archives

Hebert cannon

I in Washington DC, and looked through the extensive "Inventions" file from the War Department (there must be 10,000 small tri-fold letters in those files!) I eventually found the letters and the broadside pictured in the slideshow linked below. Included were Hebert's letters to the War Department, but no official reply, if in fact any was sent. The War Department normally required either drawings or a model to give serious consideration to an invention of this kind, and Hebert apparently submitted only a handwritten description of the operation of the model. It isn't clear whether Hebert ever had a full-sized version of the cannon, nor what he actually demonstrated in Malone, NY, in the event advertised by the broadside pictured. If anyone knows the whereabouts of a full-sized Hebert cannon, kindly let me know, as I'd at least like to photograph it.

I learned from a website* maintained

Hebert cannon
by the "Northern New York Tombstone
Transcription Project" that Alexis
Hebert is buried in Webster Street
Cemetery, Malone, Franklin County,
NY, with many family members. Here's
a transcript from two adjacent
tombstones:

HEBERT

(On the front:)

Alexis HEBERT Dec. 21, 1815 - Nov.
10, 1890

Sophia His wife May 23, 1821 -
Nov. 20, 1900

(On the back:)

Napoleon Mar. 4, 1843 - June 25,
1864

HEBERT

Alex HEBERT 1863 - 1910

Hebert cannon

*<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~frgen/franklin/malone/webster.htm>

Sergt. 27 Reg. U.S. Inf. Band

echloading model, partial inventory, mine 120

Inventor

Type of Gun

W.G. Armstrong Typical
Armstrong Screw-tightened wedge,
gravity recoil check field gun

George Brayton Strap
gun, 4 trunnions, one each 90 degrees
around

C.F. Brown
Reciprocating bolt driven by carriage
wheel (impractical)

John M. Cochrane Rotary
multi-chambered, chambers in horiz.
plane

Alexis Hebert ditto

W.W. Hubbell Rotary
breech similar to "French 75mm"

Potter

